

101 - Ismaili Heroes

(late 19th century to present age)

(volume one)

Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali



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By

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In their fondest memories



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Foreword (posthumous)

"MEMORIES OF GREAT ISMAILI HEROES"

By

late Wazir Ghulam Hussain S. Thavar (1907-1963)

The Ismaili community has produced a great number of *fidais*, whose incredible services gave rise to the prosperity that we enjoy today. It is most important to perpetuate their memories to instill the religious fervour of their sacrificial feats in the minds of the growing class, and also induce the youths to render like meritorious services.

It is a natural inspiration, which prevails in all countries and peoples to preserve the memories of their great heroes. The Hindus still safeguard the memories of their ancient gods, such Ram, Krishna, Prahalad, etc. in the form of different festivals and implant in the new generation to keep it up. The Christians have as well steadily kept alive the memories of Lord Christ, Saint Mark, Saint Paul, Saint Joseph, etc. In the Islamic world, the memories of the Holy Prophet, Hazrat Ali, Imam Hussain, Hasan, etc. are commemorated. These great people were martyred in obedience to God, and gleaned the noble illustrations of their obedience and sacrifice,

Through the ages, the heroes took birth in the world, and their memories were kept alive. Had the culture of preservation not existed, the present generations would have been absolutely void of this great heritage. Every individual will admit that it is necessary to keep memories of the *fidais* for the betterment of the community. The educated class is well acquainted, and is stirring to revive the memories of the forgotten personages, who with their matchless services have immortalized their eminence in all the religious and social fields. Miranbai, Akho and Nazir glorified the infinite phenomena, and enlightened their inner feelings in the world. Gokhale, Dadabhai and Sir Sayed Ahmed exhorted the lessons of patriotism to the people. The Hindus kept the memories of these great persons along with their inner spirit. The memories of the courageous persons execute cardinal role in building a brighter future for the generations ahead.

Hasan bin Sabbah, the great *fidai* flourished in our community. Remembrance amongst the Ismaili community is alleged to him for bringing Imam Hadi to the Alamut fort and getting him ascended to the office of Imamate. His selfless sacrifice, courage, and loyalty inspired by the *farman* of the Imam, pushed him to risk his life. His numerous qualities have inspired acts of loyalty and dedication by various people.

Pir Satgur Nur, Pir Sadruddin, and Pir Hasan Kabiruddin, the great Ismaili missionaries entered the Indian territories foreign to them and preached inexpressible philosophy of the true path and redeemed us. We shall always cherish them in our heart with thankfulness.

Nasir Khusrao, another great missionary wandered in the awful forests and unknown lands on foot to spread Ismailism. He promulgated in all length and breath and persevered his journey without food and water, depended solely on roots and grass. The *fidais* and *mawlais* of Badakhshan, Samarkand, Khorasan, and Pamirs still retain his memory in reverence.

Known as the Lion of Kathiawar and considered as a crown of the whole Indian Ismaili population, late Wazir Ismail Gangji's sacrifice to the Imam and services to knit the community, are still glorified among the elders, who were associated with him. When they relate his biography, a fresh ripple in their bodies penetrates with wonderful light glittering in their eyes. Wazir Ismail Gangji exhorted the philosophical aspects of the great Pirs' *ginans*. He elaborated its depth by using his charming oratory skills in such a manner that the listeners became true lovers of the Imam. The Junagadh *jamat*, the lovers of the Imam are the live testimony for it.

Who is not acquainted with the memory of late *fidai* Jamal Mukhi? His sweet oratories, smoothened with *ginans*, have made Ismailis of every village he visited reinforce their loyalty towards the Imam.

Who is not familiar with great *fidai,* late Hashim Master Bogha, who led entirely an astute life? With his extended knowledge, he translated Arabic and Persian books into Gujrati, including the translation of the *dua* composed by Pir Sadruddin along with its commentary. He destitued his opponents using the Holy Koran, Hadiths, and countless other evidences as his foremost weapons.

It is necessary to draw the attention of the Ismailis to revive and perpetuate the memories of so many great *fidais*. The younger generation will indulge itself in its essence by hearkening the noble achievements of their services, hence applying this philosophy to their lives.

Before making other arrangements, it is necessary to celebrate their anniversaries every year. On these occasions, famous scholars and thinkers must highlight the marrow of their biographies, their meritorious devotion, and the principal features of their services that have lofted their names. They must exhort the lesson worthy to follow and inspire the people to accomplish great works, hence contributing to the community's prosperity.

The thinkers, scholars, leaders, and writers of the community must elucidate the gist of this subject, to therefore express their individual views and stimulate the growing interest of the community.

Quarterly "**Fidai**" (Bombay, January, 1928, 1:4, pp. 221-222)

Preface

LIVES OF GREAT MEN ALL REMIND US,
WE CAN MAKE OUR LIVES SUBLIME.
AND DEPARTING LEAVE BEHIND US,
FOOTPRINTS ON THE SANDS OF TIME.

The motive, which induced me to compose this volume, is to present reliable and well-documented biographies of one hundred and one Ismaili heroes of the late 19th and 20th centuries. This literary work is a first attempt hitherto in designing the biographies of eminent persons of the worldwide Ismaili community. Its main purpose is to glorify, honour, exalt their virtues and incredible services, and to kindle a more living spirit in the present generation. In the old times, the record of contemporary relied only onto the memory of men, and it was handed down by tradition from sire to son. The community paper in 1908, however utilized pens and cameras to chronicle events into an imperishable form.

A community of petty hawkers and traders over two centuries ago has produced a number of great men who have left their glorious print in constructing the Ismaili history. This volume is not an attempt to catalogue all their biographies, but to mention a few of the prominent ones whose spirit of services both inside and outside the community should be constant source of pride and inspiration in this age and in the future.

This unique volume unfolds the vivid history to refresh the memory of the Ismaili heroes from late 19th century down to this age, and to enlighten the minds of the new generations on whose shoulders lies the responsibility to serve the community.

Research into the lives of the Ismaili heroes is accompanied with special difficulties: scattered records and passing away of most of the old persons who have treasured reliable information of their memories. Instead, we find a romantic and edifying fiction. Their early lives have been the subject of much romance and conflicting traditions. Quite a cycle of legends has been grown and woven round it. Its study was extremely rugged with deep, narrow and tortuous valleys of disappointments on many occasions. The accessible written and oral materials have to be studied, analyzed and judged, which enabled the shaping of a quick reference work to the biographies of the more personalities. The compiler has thus endeavoured to include a list of names that are likely to be met in the course of reading or otherwise. The biographies of most of other Ismaili heroes have however been omitted: they will be included in the second volume of this book to avoid lengthening the present volume.

This book attempts to relate the story of one hundred and one greatest of the Ismaili individuals, who have built and are building the annals of the glorious edifice of honorary services within the community. Their lives are full of colour, which boldly discarded the age-long burden of illiteracy, which provided no reward in return.

This tract does not claim to be a comprehensive treatise, but it affords a glance at the history of great nobles through the windows of accessible written and oral sources.

Bear in mind that this is not a doctoral dissertation, but more like the denouement of an arduous work, labour, and interest of one individual. Like any plan of execution, I am fully conscious of my humanity; no doubt, my attention will soon focus onto certain errors that I have been called upon. However, if a single reader is thus persuaded and benefited by this labour of love, I should be amply rewarded.

Without the generous collaboration of several colleagues in the country and abroad, this book would not have been possible. I wish to express my deep gratitude to the pioneer efforts of particular individuals and institutions. I owe my deepest gratitude to **Rai Rehman Kanji**, the Chairman of the Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah & Religious Education Board for Pakistan for his kind cooperation. I also acknowledge my special appreciation to **Dr. Rai Abu Aly A. Aziz** (Vancouver) and **Varas Kassim Ali Muhammad Jaffer** (Karachi).

Over the course of my research, I benefited the assistance of individuals of all walks of life, who without restraint and reluctance have made contributions. I am truly indebted to them all for the many hours they spent with me. On this juncture, I will pray for the eternal peace of late **Itmadi Nuruddin Baksh** and late **Alijah Rehamatullah Nasir Talib**.

Without the painstaking reading of the original draft by the staff of the global renowned, **HERITAGE SOCIETY,** many parts comprising complex matters would have remained in need of further clarification. I cannot find appropriate words to express my gratitude for their minute observations on the materials. The preparation of this volume also involved commentary imprints of **Mr. Noor Ali Valliani of Hyderabad, Mr. Zulfikar Meghani, Mr. Aziz A. Reimoo, Mrs. Noor Jahan Amir Baksh, Itmadi Vazir Ali Fakir Mohammad, Dr. Shafique N. Virani** of Harvard University, **Mr. Zain Al-Abidin Pyar Ali, Alijah Mansoor Ali Wazir Mukhi Jivabhai Bhanji Karimi, (Atlanta)** etc. for their valuable assistance and encouragement, and I express my gratitude to them.

Last, but by no means least, it would be ungracious of me not to recognize my debt to **Alijah Sadruddin Dharas** and **Kamadia Salim Dharas** (Albuquerque) for their invaluable assistance, both morally and financially in moments of crises. It will be a part and parcel of my life to remember the outstanding cooperations of the Dharas family - indeed a driving force of my study.

Wazir Ghulam Hussain S. Thavar (1907-1963) was one of the greatest writers. Seventy years ago, he cherished the desire to preserve the biographies of Ismaili heroes, and wrote an important article in the Ismaili periodical, **Fidai** (Bombay, 1928). His noble scheme wielded great influence, inducing me to incorporate his article in this volume as a **Posthumous Foreword**. I pray that Almighty may bestow eternal peace to his soul, Amen.

I conclude this preface with my preferred invocation. It bespeaks my vision:

"Speak the truth, even if it were against yourselves"
(Koran, 4:134)

"Do not mind the fury of kings in speaking the truth before them. They only possess your body, but they have no power over your soul." (Bible, Luke: 12:4)

Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali (Alijah)

November, 2002

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ABDUL RASUL ALIBHAI KASSIM LAKHA, WAZIR
(1916-1998)



The genealogical tree of the renowned Lakha family draws back to their forefather named Surji. His son was Jairaj, and grandson was Manji. The son of Manji was Lalji, who had four sons, Punja, Virji, Lakha, and Kalyan. They lived in a village, called Berberaja, about 12 miles away from Jamnagar, Kutchh.

Lakho, better known as Lakha, was a hawker and lost his house in a terrible famine. Reduced to extreme destitution, he wandered from village to village in search of livelihood. His son Kassim, who was born in 1853, had to toil and moil in Kutchh. Nothing is known of his early life except that he worked in a grocery shop.

The drought and water shortage had remained the buzzwords in Kutchh, and weather conditions had taken a heavy toll onto the economy of the entire region. Consequently, people moved elsewhere in search of subsistence. When Kassim Lakha was 18 years old, he left his birthplace and boarded a dhow at Porebandar, with few Ismailis, and landed in Zanzibar in 1871. He started his work in Sultan Sayed Bargash's firm (1870-1888). Within a year, he was well established with the Sultan. He was promoted to an advance party responsible for providing logistics to the Sultan's campment as he toured various parts of his lands, including Pemba and coastal strip of Mombasa and Malindi upto Lamu. He learnt how to cook for the retinue. He was tall, very strong, and well built and could lift a cooking pot weighing over 100 lbs. When he felt well settled, he called his mother and his wife, Ratanbai Pradhan with whom he had married in 1870, just before he left India. They came both by dhow to Zanzibar by the end of 1871. In 1880, Kassim Lakha's first child was born, a daughter Kursha. In 1884, a son, Mohammad, was born.

It is a known fact that most of the Indian Ismailis came to Africa with entrepreneurial skills in their blood, business in their brains and immense calibre to labour in their muscles, but with empty pockets. This illustration richly permeated the life of Kassim Lakha, who earned his bread and butter by the sweat of his brow.

After having worked with the Sultan's firm for nearly 10 years, he moved to Lamu with his family, where he opened a small grocery shop. His family enlarged with the birth of Fatima, Alibhai, Hassan, Sakina, Rehmatullah, and Jina. He employed a Hindu teacher, Raval, from Zanzibar, to teach reading and writing to his children.

Kassim Lakha was a social worker and focused on helping the Ismailis who came from India. He was also appointed Mukhi of the Lamu Jamatkhana. In 1898, he and his family moved from Lamu to Mombasa, where he stayed for a few years to establish a small shop.

In 1903, soon after the railway reached Kisumu, this city became their new home. In 1905, he was appointed by Varas Alidina Visram (1815-1916) to be the inspector of all his shops in Uganda. His son Mohammad was also employed in the same firm as a manager of the Kisumu branch. The other three brothers, Rehmatullah, Hassan, and Alibhai were also employed in the same firm as junior accountants, where they learnt bookkeeping. Kassim Lakha's job required a great deal of travelling, which was difficult because bicycles and bullock-carts were used in and around Kisumu, while dhows were used to navigate on the lake. Because of such excessive travelling and poor medical facilities, he died in Kampala in 1910 of malaria. It should be recorded that the plague broke out in Kisumu in 1905, resulting in heavy casualties in the town. Without discrimination of cast and creed, Kassim Lakha hurled in the field as a saviour by supplying medical facilities at his own expenses. In appreciation of his invaluable services, the government built a clock tower in Kisumu to honor his memory. Sir Robert, the governor of Kenya, performed its opening ceremony on August 19, 1938.

His four sons, Rehmatullah (d. 1943), Hassan (d. 1982), Mohammad (d. 1936) and Alibhai, revived the memory of Kassim Lakha. Kisumu and the districts around were not healthy areas. Alibhai, the son of Kassim Lakha contracted smallpox, and was later on struck by appendicitis whilst at Sio Port, where no medical facilities subsisted. He had to ask Kurji Megji to go by bicycle to the nearest post-office, Mumias located at the distance of 50 miles to send a telegram to Kisumu requesting a doctor's help. His brother Mohammad picked him up with a tugboat, therefore having him operated sooner.

In 1910, his brother Mohammad resigned from the firm of Varas Alidina Visram, and with his brothers he ventured into the product business. The family affair henceforth became known as Alibhai & Rehmatullah. Products such as groundnuts, hides and skins were bought by Indians and sold to European firms stationed in Kisumu for export. Gradually, Alibhai and his brothers opened up depots in Kendu Bay, Homa Bay, Karungu and Kisii, all in south Nyanza. More depots were opened in central Nyanza from Luanda and Yala to Asombo Bay, and north Nyanza in Sio Port and Mumias and in Tanganyika at Musoma and Mwanza. The Ismailis at the employment of their family manned the depots. Alibhai supervised the business in Sio Port.

As the family expanded its business, it began exporting directly. Instead of selling the product to English firms in Kisumu, it was being sold through Mombasa directly to the importing companies in England. Prosperity smiled upon the family. Alibhai was sent to Mombasa to open up a branch. Now the family owned a fleet of dhows, running on the lakes under the supervision of Dhanji Manji at Kisumu. In sum, they built up a vast business of cotton ginneries, land and property, import and export, palatial hotels, investment companies, coffee factory, and plantation. Henceforward, each family member began to assume his or her patronymic name as Lakha.

Abdul Rasul was the son of Alibhai Kassim Lakha, who was born in Mombasa, Kenya on November 11, 1916. He was the first family member to access education. He did his early schooling in the Aga Khan School in Mombasa, and passed senior Cambridge in 1933. In 1934, he joined his family business, beginning with cotton ginneries followed by bakery, confectionery, biscuits, whitehouse bakery, and sisal farm.

Abdul Rasul Alibhai Kassim Lakha was a social worker, and like his father, perpetuated the tradition of service in various fields. He was the charter member of the Lions Club in Nairobi in 1958, and later its Chairman (1971-72). He was also the Chairman of the Kenya Cotton Association (1963-1976), the nominated member of Kenya Government on Parastal Board, Kenya Lint & Seed Marketing Board (1963-1975), the nominated member of Kenya Government on Parastal Board, Kenya Sisal Board (1972-1974) and vice-Chairman of the Board (1974-1978), a member of the Executive Sisal Growers Association (1966-1969), as well as its Chairman (1970-1974), etc.

Abdul Rasul Alibhai Kassim Lakha rendered exceptional services within the community. He was a member and Hon. Secretary of the Ismailia Supreme Council for Africa with Count Fateh Ali Dhala as President in 1945-51. He was the Chairman of H.H. The Aga Khan Provincial Education Board (1951-1954), the Hon. Secretary of H.H. Prince Karim Aga Khan Provincial Council, Nairobi (1954-1962) and the Director of the Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd. (1973-1983).

He was also the President of the Ismailia Association for Kenya (1968-1971) and the Mukhi of Darkhana Jamatkhana of Nairobi (1964-1966 and 1966-1968). Furthermore, in 1952, he was a delegate of the Nairobi Provincial Council at the Evian Conference in Evian, France. He also attended the Conference of the World Ismailia Associations in Paris.

Through his many talents and the incredible service rendered, he merited the title of **Alijah** in 1946 with a gold medal during the Diamond Jubilee. He was crowned with the title of **Wazir** in 1962.

Wazir Abdul Rasul Alibhai Kassim Lakha died on December 30, 1998. Two sons, Shamsh Kassim Lakha and Akbar Kassim Lakha and a daughter Nargis ensured the family line.

Wazir Abdul Rasul Alibhai was a robust-tempered man who prioritized his children's education. He often advised them that the only legacy he had given them was a good education. Shamsh Kassim Lakha was the first family member to obtain a post-graduate degree. Wazir Abdul Rasul Alibhai, who was also a literary person, compiled few articles, such as, "**The Sultan's Aide-de-Camp**" (pp. 26-27), "**Cotton in Kavirondo**" (pp. 152-153) and "**Plague & Politics in Kisumu**" (pp. 162-163), published in "**We Came in Dhows**" (Nairobi, 1996).

ABDUL RASUL ALIDINA VISRAM, VARAS
(d. 1923)



He was born in Bagamoyo, Uganda. He was a trader and became known as the "uncrowned king" in Uganda until 1922. The High School of Mombasa stands out as one of the shining examples of his many large-hearted charities. According to the report of the **Times of India** (June 8, 1919), the British bestowed him the title of **M.B.E.** (Member of British Empire) in appreciation of his invaluable services and loyalty to the British government. His appearance in the arena of community services began with the establishment of the Ismaili Council on November 5, 1905 when he was appointed as one of its member.

To fulfil the will of his father Varas Alidina Visram (1851-1916), he spent a colossal amount to settle the Indian Ismailis in Kenya and in Uganda. One of his initiatives was to build a *musafarkhana* for them. He also established a library opened to all Ismailis and presented it to the Imam on June 30, 1916. The Ismaili Council donated 40,000/- shillings for the erection of an Ismaili Boarding in Kampala, to which he financially contributed. In his letter of July 24, 1918, the Imam approved the scheme and declared to give a plot for it in Kampala. He followed the tradition of his illustrious father by consolidating a school in Mombasa, Varas Alidina Visram High School, specially dedicated to the loving memory of his father. Its foundation stone was laid by the then British East African acting governor, C.C. Boringan on January 20, 1919. This institution provided adequate education to the Indian children, hence justifying the colossal amount of 250,000/- shillings spent on its creation. Khaki Shivji, a famous Ismaili architect from Karachi designed the building. Manohar Dass personally visited the school in 1937 and comments in his book, "**The Land of the Beauteous Black**" (Bombay, 1937, p. 71) that, "His Highness Aga Khan's High School at Mombasa, houses in a well-equipped and well-attended institution, which makes the pride of that town."

He visited India in 1920, where he pledged donations with an open-hand to assist the destitute class. He visited Kathiawar on August 14, 1920, where he was greeted at Junagadh station by Varas Habib and *Kul Kamadia* Ghulam Hussain and the *jamat*. Mukhi Walji Dossa, Kamadia Mithabhai Ratansi (d. 1928), N.M. Budhwani (d. 1944) wentto Junagadh and brought him by car in Dhoraji on August 19, 1920. On November 8, 1920, he arrived in Nairobi, where Abdullah Suleman Damji accorded him a lunch party at the residence of M/S Valibhai Hashim & Co. The members of the Council and the Panjibhai Club were also invited to a meeting that he presided, and which discussed the welfare of the community. It lasted for two days and one night in the Jamatkhana. This particular *jamat* raised an amount of 297921 shillings, which was dedicated to The Khoja Sports Club. In appreciation of his exceptional and remarkable services, the Imam bestowed upon him the title of **Varas.** He died on September 27, 1923.

ABDULLAH HASHIM GANGJI, COUNT
(1906-1982)



Hashim Gangji was a native of Bhuj, Kutchh but migrated to East Africa in 1871. His son Abdullah was however born in Zanzibar in 1906, where he did his early schooling and subsequently went into business. He was an eminent clove merchant.

Prince Aly Khan arrived in Bombay on December 3, 1934, whereas the Imam set foot on January 4, 1935. Lucky was Count Abdullah Hashim for he was visiting India at that particular time period. Before his departure on December 15, 1934, he was given a warm farewell party by the Central Panjibhai Club. In his speech, he said, "It is the duty of every man to serve his community." On that occasion, he donated a large amount to the Central Panjibhai Club. Mukhi Ibrahim Ladha, Chairman of The Helping Society, garlanded him and threw him a party in the hall of the Aga Khan School.

During his visit to India, he went to Bhuj, Kutchh, where he arranged a *ruhani majalis* for his late father on February 26, 1935. He sent a *mehmani* to the Imam along with presents for Prince Aly Khan and Prince Sadruddin. In his telegraphic message through Mukhi Rashid Kanji, the Imam graced him with **Best Paternal Blessings**.

In 1937, he was appointed the Hon. Secretary of the Aga Khan Supreme Council for Africa. He had an honour to give a stupendous reception to the Imam on January 30, 1937 at the Aga Khan's Panjibhai Club. It was attended by 1400 distinguished guests, and was so magnificent in appearance that none amongst the guests had ever seen such a lovely decorum.

He was appointed as a member of the Aga Khan Executive Council for Africa (1957-1962), and then became its President and Chairman in 1946. In addition to his previous mentioned function, he was also the Chief Financial Minister of H.H. The Aga Khan Ismaili Council in Zanzibar, President of Aga Khan Legion in Africa for Platinum jubilee, member of Zanzibar Legislative Council, Indian National Association, Muslim Association and Milad-e-Nabi Association. He was also the Director of the Jubilee Insurance Co. (1940-1947) and the Diamond Jubilee Trust Ltd. (1946-1950).

On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee in Africa in 1946, he was awarded a gold moon, a diamond ring, and a watch for his meritorious services. He was also appointed an Advisor of the Ismailia Association for Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika.

He was bestowed the title of **Itmadi** in 1952, **Wazir** in 1954 and **Count** in 1964. He died on September 26, 1982.

ABU ALY ALIBHAI AZIZ, DR., MISSIONARY
(b. 1919)



Varas Amir Chand (1837-1911) sprang from a noble family of gupti Ismailis in Punjab. He was employed in a governmental department in Amritsar and retired in 1880. He inherited land from his forefathers, and became one of the most famous landlords in Punjab. In 1882, Imam Aga Ali Shah appointed him *Kul Kamadia* for Punjab, Frontiers and few regions near Afghanistan. He performed his duties with such marked distinction that during his first visit to Amritsar in 1897, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah appointed him Mukhi on January 1, 1897 with a title of **Varas** for Punjab and Frontier province, including the regions lying on the borders of Afghanistan. He also travelled with the Imam in Sialkot between January 2, 1897 and January 11, 1897. Varas Amir Chand visited Bombay several times. His last visit took place in the middle of 1908 and gave valuable and informative statements twice in court during the Haji Bibi Case on July 28 and July 29, 1908. He is also credited to have converted a portion of the depressed class to Ismailism, as well as helping them financially to run their cottage industry.

In 1911, he died at the age of 74 years. Varas Amir Chand was also consigned to collect the tithe from village to village. His task pushed him to indulge in a daily meticulous procedure, which consisted of washing his hands and fingers. And one meritorious illustration, whose equal seems to have not yet came on record, was that he made a secret will to a certain person that after the ritual bath of his dead body, he must wash his hands and fingers at least thrice with soap, so that no smell emaning from the Imam's coins remained before interment.

Varas Amir Chand's son Bhagvandas mostly served the local *jamat* in Amritsar. His son Panalal was however much active, who kept the torch of service burning.

On January 20, 1914, the Imam summoned about eight prominent leaders of the *gupti jamats* of Punjab at his residence in Poona, in which Panalal, the father of Abu Aly was also included to discuss the revelation of the *gupti* Ismailis as Muslims in Punjab.

There was a minor group of Hindus in Kabul, headed by Bairam Diyal, who professed the Ismaili faith secretly. The local Ismailis in Afghanistan, however, knew them well and deposited their tithe to them, who in turn remitted it to the Imam in Iran, then in Bombay. In 1915, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah sent a special message through Panalal, asking them to wear Muslim costumes and assume Islamic names. The Imam's call created a salutary effect upon the people and Mukhi Fakir Chand in Kabul was the first one to apply the Imam's recommendations. With the efforts of Panalal, the Ismailis in Kabul received a new lease of life and immersed themselves into Islamic traditions through Ismailism.

On November 18, 1916, the Imam commanded them once again to submit to their faith publicly and to abandon the Hindu customs by assuming Muslim names. On that juncture, the Imam gave new names to these eight leaders, including the names of their fathers and children. Abu Aly's father, Panalal was named as Ali and his grandfather, Bhagvandas became known as Aziz. Alibhai Aziz also dedicated all of his time to serve the community. He was selected as a member of The Aga Khan Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee from Punjab, whose first meeting was held on October 12, 1935 in Aga Hall, Nesbit Road, Bombay.

Abu Aly, the son of Alibhai Aziz, the world-renowned senior missionary was born in Amritsar, India on August 21, 1919. His early education started at the age of 4 years at a Hindu private nursery school, conducted by a Brahmin *pandit*. He then attended a private Primary School located in the Government High School in Amritsar, and finally followed the science stream in Saint-Xavier College, Bombay. He also attended a Madressa to study the Koran and Hadith at the age of 7 years as an extra-curricular activity. He also studied architecture, agriculture and law, notably the Islamic jurisprudence.

His religious education started the moment he could sit in his grandfather's lap, the sage Kamadia Aziz Ali. In Bombay, he had the opportunity to expand his knowledge by interaction with missionaries, such as Pir Sabzali (1884-1938), who was his mentor from childhood, Chief Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad Asani (1878-1951), Ibrahim Jusab Varteji (1878-1953), Alibhai Nanji (1893-1978), Sayed Muhammad Shah (d. 1945), Sayed Munir (1882-1957), Sayed Mustaq Ali Didar Ali and many others.

Due to his linguistic skills, he was called upon to serve in the civil and military censor office. Incidentally, W. Ivanow (1886-1970) recommended his name to handle the task of scanning the public mail. Thus, he had the privilege of having worked across the table with W. Ivanow for five years during the Second World War (1939-1945).

In 1938, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah commanded him to join the Ismaili Mission at the Recreation Club Institute, Bombay, and within a short time, he acquired the necessary skills and attained great proficiency in mission field.

He played a key role in the arrangement of the Diamond Jubilee of the Imam in 1946 and participated in different committees. The Imam selected him to recite the *ginan* after the recitation of a Koranic verse by a Syrian Ismaili on March 10, 1946 in Bombay. The Imam graciously graced him with a special robe of honour and a golden turban.

The first "Ismaili Mission Conference" was held in the auditorium of the Aga Khan High School, Dar-es-Salaam to discuss the religious education and the training of the missionaries and teachers. The Imam inaugurated the Conference on July 20, 1945 and told the delegates that the Africans should no longer rely on missionaries from abroad, but produce its own manpower in their Mission Centre.

Soon after the Diamond Jubilee, the Imam ordered Abu Aly in Bombay to take over the charge of the Mission Centre as its Principal. He came to East Africa in July, 1946 and was destined to attend the Diamond Jubilee Celebration on August 10, 1946 in Dar-es-Salaam. According to the wish of the Imam, the Mission Centre was opened on May 10,

1947 at Dar-es-Salaam under the administration of the Ismailia Association for Africa, Mombasa. Alijah A.G. Abdul Hussain, the President of the Ismailia Provincial Council, Dar-es-Salaam, performed its inauguration ceremony. This Mission Centre took the standing of a college, producing several trained missionaries and religious teachers.

He was the President of the Muslim Association for Tanganyika for 3 years (1950-1953). When Tanganyika liberated on December 9, 1961, the Prime Minister Rashidi Kawawa invited the Muslim *ulema* and scholars to assist the government in including the Muslim law to the New Constitution of Tanganyika. One of them was Abu Aly in Dar-es-Salaam, known as Shaykh Abualy A. Aziz. He also exhorted Islamic education for two years (1962-63) in the course for Adults Programme under the University of Dar-es-Salaam.

The first Conference for reviewing the rites and ceremonies with the members of the Executive Council for Africa was held on January 10, 1964 in Mombasa at Count Fateh Ali Dhalla's residence. Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai, Count Ghulam Hussain Ismail, Wazir Madatali Count Mulji Nazarali and Wazir Abdul Malek R. Kassim Lakha attended it. Missionary Abu Aly was also invited, including Missionary Ghulam Ali Shah, Alijah Ghulam Hussain Juma Haji, Jaffer Ali R. Budhwani and Noor Mohammad Rehmatullah. It was followed by another Conference on September 24, 1964.

During the gracious visit of Hazar Imam in India at the end of 1967, he was requested to deliver *waez* to the *jamats*, who were extremely touched by his words. The Mukhi and Kamadia of Darkhana *jamat*, Bombay sent their report to the Imam on December 27, 1967, to which he replied:

January 6th, 1968

My dear Mukhi and Kamadia:

I have received your letter of 27th December, and I give my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings to all my beloved spiritual children of the Bombay Darkhana *Jamat*.

I am very happy to hear that my *jamats* of Bombay and Suburbs took a keen interest in the *waez* given by Missionary Abooali in various Jamatkhanas.

Kindly convey my best paternal maternal loving blessings to Missionary Abooali for his devoted services during his visit to India.

You should find out from the Ismailia Association of Tanzania whether Missionary Abooali could tour to India every year for at least a month, if not two months, and then communicate the Association's answer to me.

He also attended the grand Waezeen Assembly in Bombay inaugurated on December 10, 1967, and presided by Itmadi Ghulam Ali S. Morani, the then President of the Ismailia Association for India. He delivered informative lectures and dealt with the question/answer session on December 16, 1967. The President prepared the report of the assembly and

sent it to the Imam on January 10, 1968. The Imam replied as follows:

January 29th, 1968

My dear President:

I have received your letter of January 10th, and I have read your report with much interest.

I am happy to hear that the Waezeen Assembly held on the 10th December at the Dharkhana Jamatkhana was well attended by my spiritual children and I give my best loving blessings to all my beloved spiritual children who participated in the Waezeen Assembly.

I give my best paternal maternal loving blessings to the following missionaries for their devoted services to my India *jamat*:

Missionary Kassim Ali M.J.
Missionary Abooali
Missionary Noormohomed Rahimtullah
Missionary Noordin Amlani.



Missionary Abu Aly A. Aziz is a global itinerant and has travelled extensively. He visited Tajikistan in 1995, where 72 years before him, the famous Missionary Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) had set foot in 1923. There is perhaps not a single Jamatkhana in the world where he has not delivered a *waez*. Behind all his success is his personality, so attractive that he won the hearts of millions who have never even seen him, but have only known his incomparable services for the Imam and *jamats*. In his missionary framework, he is seen as a creative, courageous, and patient. He is ambitious, but does not let himself be blinded by his personal interest. He labours for his faith not for own sake. With his talent and invaluable services, he was blessed with the titles of **Alijah**, then **Rai**.

He started his mission career at the age of 11 years. His life now bridges a long span of 83 years, in which more than ten thousand lectures, speeches, and deliveries are on record to his credit. Ever since the taperecorder appeared commercially at the beginning of 1950, his lectures and speeches have been preserved which are in tune of about 3000 audiocassettes, circulating around the world among the Ismaili *jamats* and to some extent among other communities.

He also uses his poetic skills to lyrically express in Urdu his ardent love for the Imam. He is gifted with a vivid intellect, with a conspicuous literary talent. Being a man of literary genius, he gained the opportunity to carry on his literary pursuits and became a frequent contributor to different periodicals. No less than a trenchant writer, he published 19 books and booklets and some more are forthcoming. He is well versed in English, Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Gujrati, Punjabi, Kutchhi, Hindi, and Swahili. His famous works are **Jashan-i**

Golden Jubilee (Urdu, 1936), **Radde Batil** (Gujrati, 1947), **Anant Akhado** (Gujrati tr.1947), **Zahoor-i Haq** (Gujrati, 1948), **Mazhab-i Ismailia** (Gujrati, 1948), **Religious Correspondence Course** - three volumes (Gujrati, 1948), **Divine Gems** (English and Kiswahili, 1955), **Fuhari Ya Islam** (Kiswahili, 1956), **Ismaili Dharmic Course** (Gujrati, 1957), **Christianity from its own Sources** (English, 1961), **Pork-Its Prohibition in Islam** (English, 1961), **Ghadir-i Khum** (Gujrati, 1969), **A Brief History of Ismailism** (English, 1974), etc.

He is well versed in the literature of the *ginans* and steeped in the Ismaili philosophy and history. The most significant feature of his *waez* delivery is that he provides the materials to the *jamat* in accordance with the demand of the time and is so lucid that the listeners remain attentive for many hours. Those who have heard him on a platform are aware of the brilliance of his unmatched oratory.

After spending almost 40 years in East Africa, he now lives in Vancouver, Canada. His mission, which he has started at the age of eleven years, still continues. He also spends time replying to his many well-wishers' letters.



Missionary Abu Aly believes that a man is never too old to learn. It is good news to know that he obtained his doctorate degree of Ph.D. on April 30, 2001 from the Senior University International, Wyoming, U.S.A. after studying for 29 months. His thesis, **Miracles and Gnosis,** described the life and work of Pir Satgur Nur in 200 pages.

It is through his own effort that he rose from a very humble position in life to the summit of greatness. May Mawlana Hazar Imam grant him a long life, health and courage to serve the world Ismaili community more and more till his last breath, *Amen.*

Ahmed Ali Nizari Piredina, Wazir
(1886-1964)



Piredina was born in Hyderabad, Sind. He migrated near Muscat with his family. His son Ahmed Nizari was born in 1886 and became known as Ahmed Nizari or Nizari Piredina.

Not much is known of his early life. It is however said that he could speak Arabic, Persian, English, Hindi, Gujrati, and Sindhi fluently. He is said to have visited Karachi in 1920, where the Imam emphasized upon the Ismailis to go to Baghdad and Basra to hunt business opportunities. It seems that he was well settled in Muscat, but had decided that Iraq would be ideal for his business career. He launched his business trip in 1932 for Iran and Iraq and finally settled in Basra. He worked on the docks as a stevedore, which was convenient when dealing with business in gold.

There were scarcely 12 to 15 Indian Ismaili merchants in Basra. They opened a new Jamatkhana on October 31, 1920 at the premises of M/S Pesan Allana Bros. in New Street, Basra. Alidina Vidha of M/S F. Alina Co. was the first Mukhi and Fakir Mohammad Jaffer his Kamadia. When Ahmed Nizari arrived in Basra, there were about 50 to 60 Ismailis. He accelerated his business and became so prominent in Iraq that the local inhabitants called him Abu Jaffer.

In 1950, he made a flying visit to Kuwait, and found it favoured his business more than Basra. He negotiated a partnership business with a firm, M/S Sabih al-Barak in Kuwait. Later on, he ventured into the business of diamonds and pearls. He prospered and conducted his business transactions all over the world. He also generated close contacts with all classes of people in and outside Kuwait. He helped many Ismailis in their business settlement in Kuwait. He is reported to have visited several villages in Iran inhabited by Ismailis.

Pride he had none: he was a simple and kind-hearted in whom were embodied almost all the qualities of a prudent gentleman. He was rich, and thus a generous donor for numerous causes. His generosity spread over London, Africa, Iraq, Pakistan, India and Kuwait. He thought of arranging separate premises for the Jamatkhana in Kuwait, which would attract new Ismaili families. He started the first Jamatkhana in Kuwait in 1952 when there were comparatively fewer Ismaili families. Wazir Nur Mohammad Khalfan was the first Mukhi with Huzur Mukhi Juma Abdul Karim as Kamadia. He continued to serve between 1952 and 1966.

In 1954, the Imam visited Basra before the Platinum Jubilee. Wazir Ahmed Nizari took 50 Ismailis from Kuwait and brought them to Basra at his own expense. The Ismailis got

an opportunity to present their individual *mehmani*, and earned blessings of the Imam on January 31, 1954. He also gave a gold ginny to each Ismaili. It is also known that he brought about 200 Syrian Ismailis in Karachi during the Platinum Jubilee in 1954, hence paying out of his own pocket for their expenses.

When the Ismaili population grew in Kuwait, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah gave permission to open the first Ismaili Council in 1955. Ahmed Nizari was appointed as its first President with Alijah Abdul Malik Badruddin as its Honorary Secretary.

Indeed, he was a great philanthropist to the Kuwait *jamat*. In appreciation of his incredible services, he was bestowed the title of **Itmadi** in 1951 and the title of **Wazir** in 1954.

Hazar Imam flew to Kuwait for a visit on January 21, 1958 at 10.00 a.m. with his mother in the period of Sheikh Abdullah bin Salim al-Sabbah's reign (1950-1965). The Ismaili leaders, the *jamats* of Kuwait, Basra and Syria, the British Consul of Kuwait and Abdullah Jabir, the minister of education for Kuwait, etc. accorded a rousing welcome to the Imam at the airport. The Imam gave *didar* to the Ismailis in the visiting hall of airport and departed. On that occasion, Wazir Ahmed Nizari covered the expenses of the whole programme.

He died in London on November 14, 1964 at the age of 80 years.

He had a son, Wazir Mukhi Jaffer Ahmed Nizari and a daughter, Khatija. When Prince Aly Khan visited Kuwait in 1953, Wazir Jaffer sent a chartered plane for him. He was appointed Mukhi in 1966 with Kamadia Jaffer and Joint Kamadia Alijah Sardar Ali Murad Ali and continued to serve till 1972. Wazir Mukhi Jaffer died in 1998 in London and left behind four sons and two daughters.

AHMED DEVJI, HAJI
(1859-1925)



He was born in 1859 it Porebandar and came to Bombay at the age of 15 years. He worked in a furniture store and gained sufficient experience to become one of the leading furniture merchants. He maintained the quality and standards of his furniture so well that he received large orders several times from the Indian rulers. The Amir of Afghanistan once ordered for new furniture on February 1907, for the decoration of his newly built palace in Kabul. His firm was known as M/S Ahmed Devji Bros.

He was one of the founder members of the Khoja Panjibhai Club, Bombay which was established on May 28, 1900. He is remembered for his generosity and helping hand during the famine in Kutchh in 1900-1. He clothed, fed and housed about 1500 Ismailis, who migrated from Kutchh to Bombay. He also funded the burial of the deceased ones. In 1908, the British India granted him the title of **J.P.**, and the Imam also presented him a *khilat* to appreciate his excellent services. When he received these rewards, about 150 members of the Khoja Panjibhai Club honoured him in a reception, where his noble services were applauded.

When Missionary Ibrahim Jusab Varteji (1870-1953) was still out of the Ismaili fold, Seth Vali Muhammad Pir Muhammad invited him to the programme of Mulbai Pirbhai Haji Charitable Dispensary in Bombay on May 29, 1900, which was also attended by the Imam. Missionary Varteji presented a Persian quatrain to glorify the Imam. Ahmed Devji introduced Varteji for the first time to the Imam at the end of the programme.

Ahmed Devji also played a primary role in the Khoja Panjibhai Club, and was once appointed as its Chairman. He also built the Khoja Sanitarium at Porebandar, whose opening ceremony was performed by the Imam on March 29, 1905. On that occasion, he took 1500 guests with him from Bombay to Porebandar at his own expenses to witness the opening ceremony of the sanitarium. The Imam also arrived in Porebander with 300 guests by a chartered steamer.

Ahmed Devji was also the first appointed Honorary Secretary of the newly formed Ismaili Council in Bombay on April 9, 1906 with Varas Ibrahim Muhammad Rawjee (1862-1911) as its President.

He donated furniture and Rs. 5000/- to the Kandi Mola School, Bombay, that was opened on January 16, 1909.

During the annual *majalis* at Poona when the Imam officially declared the Constitution of the Ismaili Council in front of 5000 Ismailis on January 8, 1910, he was bestowed the title of **Alijah**. He was also appointed the President of the Council in 1911 with Dr. Rajab Ali Ramji Lakhdhir as Honorary Secretary, and remained on post till his death. His secret tendency of rendering remarkable service further emerged in his personality when he was associated with the Council. He also travelled to Europe several times to see the Imam for community matters.

Ahmed Devji took a leading role in the first All-India Muslim Educational Conference. The Bombay government awarded him the title of **Khan Bahadur** and **Kaisar-i Hind.**

In 1918, a terrible famine broke out in Kathiawar. He contributed a colossal amount to the relief funds and also collected a donation of Rs. 1,25,000/- in Bombay.

Indeed, he was one of the beloved leaders of the Imam. When he became ill, the Imam visited his house in Bombay four times.

The Afghans raided British India in Delhi and conducted slaughter, violating the treaty negotiated between Afghanistan and British India. The situation was going from bad to worse in the country. Meanwhile, the Imam released his statement from Europe on May 24, 1919, emphasizing upon his followers to demonstrate their loyalty to King George. The Ismaili Council also reacted in Bombay. Ahmed Devji wrote a telegram on June 4, 1919 along with the Imam's message as far as Chitral to Mukhi Shah Abdul Mian, who conveyed it to the Ismailis. The Mukhi sent the following telegraphic message to Ahmed Devji on June 18, 1919:

Haji Ahmed Devji,
President Ismailia Council,
Bombay

Received your telegram of June 4th with orders from Sir Aga Khan. Thanks very much. Kindly convey my best respects to Sir Aga Khan and request that I have proclaimed word by word his orders to all peoples and children widely from Chitral to Badakhshan and all men considered themselves good fortunates hearing these words and all are gladly ready to sacrifice themselves for British Government as soon as they hear more from His Highness. Mukhi Shah Abdul Mian.

Ahmed Devji was a member of the All-India Central Khilafat Committee in Bombay in 1920 with Fazal Karim Ibrahim, Muhammad Karim, Muhammad Haji, Sharif Devji Kanji, Muhammad Chhotani, Rehmatullah Merali Chinai, etc.

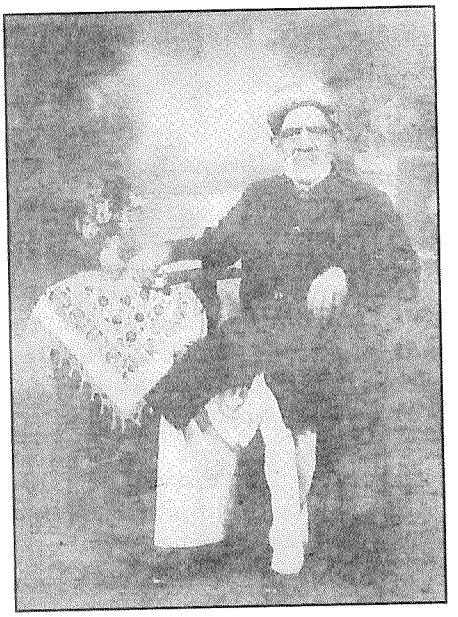
Hashim Premji offered Rs. 10,000/- with a piece of land to build a new Jamatkhana in Porebandar when the Imam graciously visited his bungalow in Poona on March 13, 1920. The Imam accepted with blessings and told him to dispose off the old Jamatkhana and spend its proceeds in the construction of the new Jamatkhana. The Imam confided the supervision of the construction to Ahmed Devji and his brother, Ismail Devji.

His health was none of the best due to heavy strain of work. Eventually, he retired from the Council, but the Imam did not appoint a new President to take his place, and declared him an **Honorary President.**

In 1925, he had gone to Iraq and died in Najaf, where he was buried.

His son, Itmadi Ghulam Hussain (1896-1960) joined the business of his father in the prime of his life. In 1934, he visited Iran and Iraq and became an eminent businessman. The British India awarded him the title of **J.P.** Like his father, he continued to serve the *jamat* in different fields. His career in the arena of community services began in the Central Education Board in 1935, where he served for several years. He was a member for 18 years and then Vice-President of the Aga Khan Gymkhana, Bombay. He was also a member for five years, then the President for over five years in the Supreme Council for Kathiawar. He was also the managing member of the Ismaili General Hospital and the President of the Kathiawar Girls Orphanage, Rajkot. He also rendered valuable services during the Golden and Diamond Jubilee occasions. He died on July 14, 1960 at the age of 64 years.





Tar Muhammad Madhavji Madhani, aged 87 years in 1932, hawking sweet-balls for a pie. He collected Rs. 400/- out of his meagre income and presented to the Kandi Mola Jamatkhana, Bombay a big electric clock. Prince Aly Khan was highly struck with his spirit and enthusiasm. He called for him and appreciated his enthusiasm.

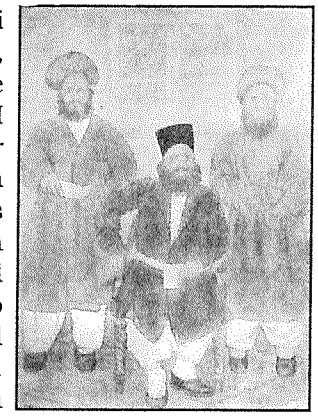
ALARAKHIA SUMAR
(d. 1880)



Mukhi Alarakhia Sumar was originally of Mulla Katiar, Sind, but his family came to settle in Bombay. He was an eminent merchant of cloth and sugar. He became Mukhi of the Bombay Jamatkhana soon after the death of Mukhi Alibhai Padamsi in 1848.

The Ismailis possessed a graveyard near Dongri, Bombay since 1790, measuring 12706 sq. yards. He and Kamadia Khaki Padamsi extended the site by purchasing an adjoining plot of 6978 sq. yards from Nilaji Lakshamji for Rs. 11500/- in September 1856.

During the Aga Khan Case in 1866, when the dissenting group publicly joined the Sunni fold on October 20, 1861, Imam Hasan Ali Shah issued a decree, expressing his desire to bring the Ismailis to conform to the practices of the Shia Imami Ismaili creed of his ancestors, regarding marriage ceremonies, ablutions, funeral rites etc. The decree reads: "He who may be willing to obey my orders shall write his name in this book that I may know him." Its copies were kept in Bombay, Sind, Kathiawar and Zanzibar for signatures. Except for a handful of persons in Bombay and Kathiawar, an almost unanimous acceptance was received from the Ismailis. In the meantime, Mukhi Alarakhia Sumar and Kamadia Khaki Padamsi played a key role, and called a meeting in Bombay Jamatkhana on August 16, 1862. Habib Ibrahim, the head of the seceders and his son Ahmed Ibrahim and a few others were also summoned, but none of them responded. Thus, a notice of 21 days was delivered to them, effective from August 23, 1862 with no positive response in return. Consequently, they were forever ostracized from the Ismaili community. The seceders formed a group, called The Reformers' Society. Finally, they filed out a suit in April, 1866 against the Imam in the Bombay High Court, known as The Aga Khan Case. Mukhi Alarakhia Sumar and Kamadia Khaki Padamsi rendered meritorious services in prosecuting the Aga Khan Case.



After winning the case, Imam Aga Ali Shah is reported to have crowned the Mukhi's group with the titles of *Ismaili fidais* and *Ismaili soldiers*.

Let us pause here for a moment to examine an important event. Most of the seceders used to attend the Jamatkhana before their excommunication, and joined in the prayers but did not shake their hands during the utterance of *shahjo didar*. Mukhi Alarakhia Sumar however told the *jamat* not to take their refusal seriously. Conversely, the other members of the *jamat* continued the practice of *shahjo didar* as usual, and were called as the

Panjibhai, (a brother shaking hand), a distinctive epithet of the loyal Ismailis. Later on, the term *Panjibhai* was used in contrast to the seceders, who were known as the *Barbhahiya*.



Few words must be added at this juncture for Kamadia Khaki Padamsi, who was also closely associated with Mukhi Alarakhia Sumar. He was originally from Mundra, Kutchh, and his family later on settled in Bombay. He was a leading trader of furniture and glassware. He became Kamadia of Bombay Jamatkhana, where he served for 22 years. He spent huge amounts during the Aga Khan Case as well as for the welfare programmes of the community, hence, being exempted from the payment of tithe. In 1875, he was a witness on behalf of the *jamat* during the case of Hirbai-Gorbai Case. He died on June 21, 1877, while his close associate, Mukhi Alarakhia Sumar died in 1880.

ALI MUHAMMAD JESSA BHALOO, WAZIR
(1917-1968)

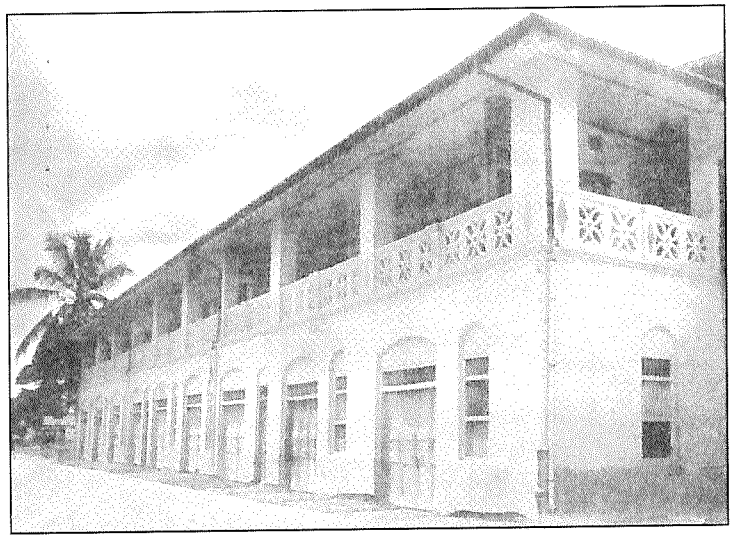


Ali Muhammad Jessa Bhaloo was born on July 21, 1917 in Zanzibar, where he got his early education. Later on, he proceeded to London for a higher education. He also qualified as F.I.C. (Fellow of the Institute of Commerce) and F.R.Econ. S. (Fellow of the Royal Economic Society) in England.

He formed his business soon after he terminated his education, which flourished financially. He was a leading dealer of radio spare parts and some electronic items. He was also the manufacturer's representative and insurance property, etc.

Ali Muhammad Jessa Bhaloo was the Honorary Secretary of the Royal Overseas League, London, a member of Chamber of Commerce, Zanzibar and the Indian National Association of Zanzibar, and the President of Muslim Welfare Association for Zanzibar.

When he went to London, he was appointed Kamadia (1933-1934). He was also the President of the Boys Scout in Zanzibar.





His father Alijah Jessa Bhaloo Walji built, **Alijah Jessa Bhaloo Walji Maternity Home** in Zanzibar. Mukhi Merali Manji opened it on March 21, 1923. On January 30, 1937, the Imam visited the Maternity Home supervised by Varasiani Kulsoombai Jessa Bhaloo. The Imam was much pleased to see the family welfare project and blessed Ali Muhammad

Jessa and his brother Hussain Jessa. The Imam also visited their residence, close to the Maternity Home and had a group picture taken with them.

He also served as the Imam's Estate Agent and Attorney. He was appointed the Honorary Secretary of the Ismailia Council in Zanzibar in 1941, and also served as Mukhi (1943-1946). He was a member of the Aga Khan Ismailia Executive Council in 1941 and the Supreme Council for Africa (1946-1955). He was noted for his generosity and donated a large amount to the Aga Khan Maternity Home, Zanzibar. In appreciation of his great and exceptional services, the Imam bestowed upon him the title of **Wazir** in 1946 with a gold medal.

He was also an influential person in Zanzibar. His family arranged a grand reception to honour H.H. Sultan Sayed Sir Abdullah bin Khalifa bin Harub to celebrate his 51st birthday on Saturday, February 11, 1961 at the Aga Khan High School, Zanzibar. The entire premises and the grounds were well decorated and illuminated. A large number of Zanzibar's elite community was invited, about 800 honorable guests. When the British President, Sir George Mooring arrived with his wife, they were warmly greeted by Wazir A.J. Bhaloo and his family members including Count Ghulam Hussain Ismail. A short while later, Varasiani Kulsoombai Bhaloo received the members of the royal family, including the princesses. Rai Hussain made a welcoming speech and congratulated the guests. Sheikh Sayed Umar Abdullah al-Alvi, the Principal of the Muslim Academy, on behalf of H.H. Sultan thanked the Bhaloo family and the Ismaili community. He requested the Ismailia Council to convey to the Imam the efforts sustained by his followers as well as the Bhaloo family's contribution.

He married Shireenbai, the daughter of Dr A.J. Merchant of Bombay. He had four sons and two daughters.

Wazir Ali Muhammad Jessa Bhaloo died in Zanzibar on April 14, 1968.





ALI MUHAMMAD R. MACKLAI, HUZUR WAZIR
(1894-1971)

Rahmatullah Mulji Macklai was born in Kera, Kutchh in 1843, but came to Bombay for business purposes. He was a self-made man, whose business of gold and silver flourished due to his efforts. He was the first merchant to introduce the gold bars, bearing the seal of the royal mint to save the people from buying imitation gold. His services in the religious field were incredible. In 1913, he retired and consigned his business to his sons. He died in 1928 at Versova at the ripe age of 85 years and was buried in Bombay.

The most prominent son of Rahmatullah Mulji Macklai was Ali Muhammad Macklai, who was born in Kera, Kutchh in 1894. He left school in 1909 after metric and joined his father's bullion business in 1913. He became one of the most famous broker managers of Finance and Bullion Exchange in Bombay. His vast experience in the field can be judged from the fact that the government of Iraq once invited him in Baghdad for necessary advices. He was also a leading broker in the Stock Exchange in Bombay. He was a member of the Committee of The Indian Merchants Chamber. His enterprise, Ali Muhammad Macklai & Sons, acted as a representative of North British and Mercantile Insurance Co. Ltd. for a long time.

Ali Muhammad Macklai joined the Ismaili Dharmic Library in 1912 as a member, and was elected its Honorary Secretary with Dr. Ali Muhammad Nasser Karamsey as President. He also erected volunteers corps in 1912, whose members wore silver medals as a symbol of their allegiance.

The Central Board of Missions of Bombay came into existence in 1912. Its President was Ismail Virji Madhani with Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad as Honorary Secretary and Rahim Moloo as Joint Secretary. Later on, Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai became its President. Many Ismaili historical events pushed individuals to serve the community with great zeal. For carrying out the religious activities efficiently with a maximum of benefit for the *jamats*, the **Recreation Club** was established in 1919 under his control, which sprang from the Central Board of Missions of Bombay. Its activities were carried in a house at Dhupelia Building, near Bhindi Bazar, Bombay.

In 1914, he became an Honorary Secretary of the Ismaili Dharmic Library, publishing a monthly "**Ismaili Sitaro**" since 1908.

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah ascended to the throne of Imamate on Monday, August 17, 1885 in Bombay Darkhana Jamatkhana at the age of 8 years. On that occasion, a group photo of the eminent persons present and the Imam was shot. This photo remained

unpublished for 30 years. In 1915, the Imam gave the photo to Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai to be published for the first time in the **"Ismaili Sitaro"** (Bombay, 7:4, 1915).

The name of the **Recreation Club** was changed into the **Recreation Club Institute** on February 10, 1921 with a mandate to train the regular missionaries and teachers. The Imam officially announced Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Rahmatullah Macklai as its first President with Alijah Hasan Ali Lalji Devraj as its Chief Honorary Secretary. The Imam who commented the following gave the name Recreation Club Institute: **"So that you can work for the material world in day time, and for the religious world at night."**

The Imam visited the Recreation Club Institute for the first time on August 5, 1923 and inspected its workings. The Imam wrote a Persian quatrain in the personal diary of Huzur Wazir Macklai with his own handwriting, the only known verse written by the Imam, which reads:

Atish bjan afrokhtan, az bahray janan sokhtan,
Az man baist amokhtan, in karha karay man ast.

"How to kindle a fire in the soul and burn oneself for one's beloved should be learnt from me as this is one of my jobs"

He was the President of The Central Education Board in 1920 and was also appointed as a member of the Panjibhai Club, Bombay on September 23, 1923.

The Imam made his next visit to the Institute on November 24, 1923 and February 23, 1924, where he was satisfied on each occasion to see its working, hence donating one lac rupees. During his next visit on March 12, 1924, the Imam said in presence of 900 guests:

Gentlemen,

I spoke here last year when I had given as a motto a well-known Persian verse, which I am sure you have not forgotten. Today, I will give you a small motto and that is "Work no Words." Labour for the welfare of other is the best way of improving oneself, because its results are sure and certain. If you work for yourself, you are never happy. This is not a new idea, but an outcome of the experience of thousand years of history.

Gentlemen,

Come and take interest in this Institute; give your ideas, advice, and help to this Institute more especially to its Industrial Department, which will bring bread and butter, happiness, and satisfaction to many of you. With these few words, I will ask the President to announce the gifts offered by different persons to this Institute.

The Imam appointed him as an Honorary Major of the H.H. The Aga Khan Young Volunteer Corps, Bombay on March 14, 1924 on the recommendation of the volunteer corps.

In 1926, the British India crowned him the title of **J.P**. On Sunday, June 19, 1927 during the historic occasion of Eid-i-Ghadir, the first unfurling ceremony of the Ismaili Flag (My Flag) was performed by his hands according to the order of the Imam in Thana Jamatkhana, near Bombay. It was performed in the presence of eminent leaders and began at 4.30 p.m. with the inauguration speech of Wazir Kassim Ali Fateh Ali (1896-1978), Kamadia of Thana Jamatkhana. It was followed by the speech of Huzur Wazir Macklai. He performed the historical unfurling ceremony with the traditional music of the band. On that occasion, the Imam's telegraphic message was also read before the audience.

He visited Europe and the United States and returned after five months on November 18, 1930. During his visit, he was granted audiences with the Imam in Europe on several occasions. On October 26, 1930, the Imam graced him an audience before his departure and he brought the Imam's messages of blessings to the Indian *jamats*.

In July 1931, a group in the Rajkot *jamat*, called themselves "The Rajkot Khoja Yuvak Mandal" emerged in opposition to the Ismaili Council, headed by Ismail Kanji Hirani. It was a rebellion against the peaceful machinery of the local council. These half-crazed instigators launched a crusade against the leaders through pamphlets, letters, and speeches. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai paid a visit to Rajkot with Alijah Hasan Ali Devraj in accordance with the orders of the Imam. He delivered impressive speeches in different places to save the Ismailis from being misguided. He suppressed the rival group and restored peace in Rajkot.

In 1933, he re-organized the framework of the Recreation Club Institute. Accordingly, the Bombay office of the Recreation Club represented its branches in Poona, Ahmadnagar, Gujrat, Ahmadabad, Karachi, Kathiawar, Punjab, Birar, and Burma, virtually the whole India. The Institute represented the cultural and social services. It also maintained orphanages, a department of information for trade and commerce, a large library, the handing out of scholarships to the Muslims of Kera, and an employment department. In a reception to honor the Imam hosted by the Recreation Club Institute on Thursday, December 21, 1933 it Bombay, the Imam remarked, **"The bright future of the Recreation Club is ahead. It is my blessings that its spiritual flag may hoist in the whole world from here."**

Huzur Wazir Macklai was also founder and President of the Islamic Research Association in Bombay, established on February 1, 1933. Dr. M.B. Rehman, Dr. U.M. Daudpotta, Saif F.B. Taiyabji, W. Ivanow were its founding members along with A.A.A. Fyzee as the Secretary. The Imam was the Patron of the Islamic Research Association with Sir Ross Masud, the Vice-Chanceller of Aligarh University as the Vice-Patron.

He also visited Europe, and on the eve of his departure, a large number of the Ismaili leaders came to see him on April 7, 1934. The Imam graced him an audience and sent the following telegraphic message for the Bombay *jamat*:

Cannes: April 22, 1934

Beloved children
Bombay

I received Major Macklai today. On behalf *jamat* kissed hand. I send my paternal blessings all Bombay spiritual children. Hope to come out end November.

He was awarded a gold medal in 1936, with "**Straight Bar"** in view of his invaluable services during the Golden jubilee. During the same year, he was appointed Private Secretary of the Imam and Mata Salamat. He was also appointed member of the Council for Bombay on February 29, 1936.

He visited South India in 1936 and held a meeting with Sir Mirza Ismail, the *dewan* of Mysore at his residence. He was shown the rare collection of the Persian paintings, where he found the painted picture of the Ismaili Imam Nizar Ii (1585-1628), which he brought and published in the weekly "**Ismaili**", Bombay for the first time in the Golden Jubilee Number of January 9, 1937.

He attended the Golden Jubilee of the Imam on March 1, 1937 in Nairobi. He had the honour of standing near the weighing scale and declaring the Imam's weight (3200 ounces) before the *jamat*. On that occasion, he was awarded the Gold Medal of **Chevron** with **Straight Bar.**

The Ismailis prospered considerably in East Africa soon after the celebration of the Golden Jubilee in Nairobi on March 1, 1937. On that occasion, an Economic Conference was held under his chairmanship to draw up the plans for the economic welfare of the community in East Africa.

Huzur Wazir Macklai was the first President of The Aga Khan Legion in 1940, which was set up for the organization of the Diamond jubilee in Bombay. He worked incessantly from its inception covering a period of three years until the organization was fully functional.

He continued to serve the Recreation Club Institute as President between 1912 and 1936. Varas Chhotubhai (1904-1978) was appointed the next President, served between 1936 and 1937. Huzur Wazir Macklai was once again appointed President between 1937 and 1948. In view of his long exceptional services, the Imam crowned him with the unique title of **Commander-in-Chief.**

In April 1943, he had worked quietly during the explosion in Bombay, and went to all the pharmacies to collect medicine and bandages and to treat the injured, who were pulled out of the wreckage.

During the first Ismaili Mission Conference held in Dar-es-Salaam on July 20, 1945, to which he was specially invited, the Imam paid a rich tribute to his noble works in his speech. "**I cannot go further without telling you at once that we all owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Macklai who has accomplished a wonderful work. He has, like anybody else, weaknesses but he has done a great deal of work that will remain**

historical, and has made a great name for Ismailis amongst all learned circles by establishing the Islamic Research Association and by getting men like Dr. Ivanow and Mr. Fyzee to look into the ancient documents. And, I think, we cannot do better than pass a resolution of thanking and appreciating the work done by Mr. Macklai."

It must be recollected that the name of the **Recreation Club Institute** was changed into the **Ismailia Association for India** in 1944. He was appointed the President of Ismailia Association for India with Alijah Rajab Ali Mohammad Dandawala as Vice-President and Itmadi Rehmatullah Virjee as Hon.Secretary.

The Imam intended to extend the activities of the Ismailia Association beyond the Indian sub-continent to other parts of the world. During the Mission Conference in Dar-es-Salaam on July 21, 1945, the Imam ordered the leaders of Nairobi that, **"You must establish an Ismailia Association similar to the one in Bombay. Mr. Macklai, the President of the Ismailia Association in Bombay, has much served the community, and in doing so, has spread the light of the Ismaili faith. His name shall forever be remembered in history on account of his services."**

Accordingly, the **All-African Ismailia Association** came into existence in 1946 with Count Mohammad Ali Dhalla as President and Wazir Ramzan Ali H.M. Dossa as Hon. Secretary. Its headquarters was first in Nairobi, then Mombasa.

He retired in 1946 from the Ismailia Association for India as President. The Imam appointed Itmadi Abdullah Sumar Shivji as the next President with Itmadi Rehmatullah Virjee as Vice-President and Huzur Mukhi Yusuf Ali E. Dossa as Chief Secretary. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai was appointed the **"World Head"** of the International Ismailia Associations in 1946. Under his new mandate, he became the World Head of the Ismailia Association for Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, India and Pakistan, with a branch in Dacca.

He was also the founder and President of The Ismaili Society of Bombay, to which Prof. W. Ivanow played a major role in its establishment on February 16, 1946. The British India also designated him an **Honorary Magistrate**.

In February 1948, Huzur Wazir Macklai received a letter from the Imam, wanting him to come in Africa. He left Bombay by a Kampala Steamer in July 1948 and arrived in Mombasa, where he stayed for four days, and then went to Nairobi by train. The Imam arrived in Nairobi on August 1, 1948 and gave a *didar* to the Ismailis in the evening. On that occasion, the Imam discussed the Constitution of the Ismailia Associations with him, and he graciously presented an automatic Omega gold watch, which the Imam put into his wrist. He then went to Dar-es-Salaam, while the Imam went to Mombasa and Zanzibar and reached Dar-es-Salaam, where he presented a draft of the Constitution to the Imam.

On August 25, 1948, a grand *didar* programme was arranged in Dar-es-Salaam, where, the Imam announced the introduction of the Constitution of the Ismailia Associations for Africa and appointed three Presidents for three Associations for Africa. The Imam also gave orders for the constitution to be accepted and followed in India, Pakistan and other parts of the world.

The Imam went to Kampala, whereas Ali Muhammad R. Macklai was sent to Cairo by the Imam. There, he encountered the University's renowned professors, with whom he discussed research works on Ismailism. He then set foot in Alexandria, where he met the University of Alexandria's vice-chancellor and other scholars. He visited the museum of Cairo and inspected the rare monuments of the Fatimid Caliphate. He also toured Fuad University's campus, including its library.

His Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah of Iran declared Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah an Iranian citizen with a distinguished title of **Hazratwala**, i.e. **His Royal Highness** in 1949. As the World Head of the International Ismailia Associations, Huzur Wazir Macklai sent a telegraphic message to the emperor of Iran on December 23, 1949:

Minister in Waiting,
His Imperial Majesty Shahinshah of Iran,
Tehran.

Most respectfully beg to submit on behalf of the Ismailia Associations all over the world our expressions of gratitude and appreciation for the recognition bestowal on our most beloved and revered Hazar Imam His Royal Highness The Prince Aga Khan by His Gracious Majesty The Shahinshah and His Government. All the followers of His Royal Highness have been most pleased and happy at the renewed contact with your great country. We pray the Almighty God for a long life of His Imperial Majesty and a prosperous Iran.

Ali Mahomed MacklaiAli Mahomed Macklai
World Head, Bombay.

In reply to the above letter, he received following message:

Your telegram of gratitude to His Imperial Majesty The Shahinshah on the occasion of His Majesty's bestowal of title to His Highness The Aga Khan is greatly appreciated and I am commanded by my August Sovereign to convey His Imperial Majesty's satisfaction for your kind expression.

Ibrahim Hakimi
Imperial Court Minister.

In appreciation of his long and meritorious services, the Imam conferred upon Ali Muhammad R. Macklai the unique title of **Huzur Wazir** (minister in presence) during the *Saligrah Darbar* in 1950. He was the first Ismaili to be graced with such grand title.

It was his hobby to collect rare historical documents. He came across a Koranic manuscript of the Mughal emperor Jahangir's period, which was written in beautiful letters with thin layers of gold, and a pictorial book of that period. He consigned these collections to Alijah A.C. Rahmatullah (1902-1963) to be presented to Mata Salamat on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee Conference of the Ismaili leaders in Cairo on March 15, 1953.

He also visited Karachi during the occasion of the Platinum jubilee on February 3rd, 1954 with his wife Huzur Wazirbanu Jenubai.

He continued to serve as the World Head for six years, between 1946 and 1954. In conclusion, he worked for 40 years to fulfill the Ismaili mission.

Huzur Wazir Macklai thus retired from the post of the World Head of the Association in August 1954 when he was in Africa. He came in Karachi, where Chief Mukhi Wazir Chagla (1885-1966) garlanded him at the request of Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy (1905-1956) on October 30, 1954 at a reception. In his speech, he said, "I am retired from all the institutions since last three months, and I have seen many things during my years of service."

After assuming the Imamate on July 11, 1957, Hazar Imam visited Karachi on August 4, 1957. On that occasion, Huzur Wazir Macklai got an audience with the Imam, where he discussed important matters.

Huzur Wazir Macklai was not a regular writer; nevertheless, he was a frequent contributor to periodicals. His article **"Discipline"** was published in the weekly **"Ismaili"** on May 8, 1926. His last article, "**Ismaili Research Studies**" appeared in the Imamate Day issue of "**African Ismaili**" on July 1970 and "**Ismailis in Human Society**" in "**Ismaili Digest**" on September 1956.

In summary, Huzur Wazir Macklai was a J.P., Hon. Magistrate, Founder President of the Recreation Club Institute, of the Islamic Research Association, of The Ismaili Society and of The Aga Khan Legion, a Member of the Local Council, a Honorary Major of H.H. The Aga Khan's Bombay Volunteer Corps, etc.

He died at the age of 77 years on Wednesday, July 21, 1971 in Bombay. In his message sent to the Ismailia Federal Council for India, in which after bestowing blessings for his soul, prayer for his eternal peace, and sympathy to his family for their great loss, the Imam said, "**Wazir Macklai's devoted service to the *jamat* will always be remembered by my *jamat* and by myself and he will be deeply missed by all.**"

Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad R. Macklai got married twice. His first wife, Fatima gave birth to three sons: Aziz, Ramzan Ali, and Shaukat. With his second wife, Jainab, he had Sultan Ali, Abdul Sultan, Sultan Ahmed, Habib, Nizar, Shiraz, and a daughter, named Shamsi.





ALIBHAI NANJI, MISSIONARY
(1893-1978)

Bhagat Walji Velji was one of the most dedicated persons in Mekhandi, Porebandar, having four sons, Nanji, Premji, Jivraj, and Ali. The elder son, Nanji, had a son Hussain and a daughter Jetbai with his first wife. He had three daughters, Manbai, Nurbai and Hirbai and a son Alibhai with his second wife.

Alibhai, the son of Nanji was born in Mekhandi on Sunday, June 10, 1893. His father Nanji Walji owned a small fertile land at the end of the village. He was a devoted person and very knowledgeable of *ginans*; therefore, his son Alibhai acquired his formal religious education at home.

Jivraj, the younger brother of Nanji lived in Porebandar. He suggested his elder brother to export onion and garlic in Bombay and Karachi in order to maximize the profits. Accordingly, Nanji consolidated funds arising from his fertile land and obtained a loan from local merchants. He purchased a large quantity of onion and garlic and shipped it to Karachi for sale. Unfortunately, the ship had an accident due to fierce sea storms, ruining his entire enterprise. Out of frustration, he sold out his garden to pay his debt. Soon afterwards, he came to live in Madhupur with his family in 1897 and started a small shop of grams to ensure his livelihood. Time is a great healer and with the passage of years, the wound of his big loss had cured. Equipped with abundant stamina and vitality, he worked and made progress. He then proceeded to Porebandar with his family.

His son Alibhai took his formal education in Porebandar. He passed the 7th class of Gujrati and got admitted in the Middle, where he learnt English upto 4th class. He also learnt to master Urdu and Arabic. His father was his religious tutor, but he deepened his knowledge by chatting with the elders of Junagadh. He enhanced his erudition in Islamic history and philosophy from reading books. In the meantime, he married in 1910 to Rahmat Banu, the daughter of Ismail Jamal in Porebandar. Unfortunately, Nanji died on the same day in the evening, at about 5.00 p.m. Nanji is said to have summoned the Mukhi and Kamadia few hours before his death and said, "I will leave the world in the evening. Don't mourn. Perform the marriage of my son without any delay." Hence, the marriage of Alibhai Nanji was solemnized simply on the same day after prayers.

When the Imam visited Kutchh on February 20, 1910, Varas Moledina Megji (1854-1926) implored for three expert teachers for the schools of Sinugara, Badalpur and Nagalpur (Kutchh). The Imam ordered Varas Kassim to make its arrangements. Meanwhile, Varas Habib, the son of Varas Kassim visited Porebandar, where Mawji Ramji, who lived across from Alibhai Nanji, hosted him. By talking with Alibhai Nanji, he thought this man was

an ideal teacher for Kutchh. He approached his mother Kaisarbai, who agreed to let her son go. Thus, Varas Habib deputed Alibhai Nanji, Hashim Jamal and Hirji Haji towards Kutchh to convert them into secular and religious teachers.

Varas Moledina Megji posted Alibhai Nanji in Sinugara, Hashim Jamal in Nagalpur and Hirji Haji at Badalpur. Alibhai Nanji reached Sinugara, about two miles from Nagalpur where 400 Ismaili families resided. He did not found a single chair for the teacher or benches for the students in the old school, which was built by Rajab Ali Jagasi of Bombay. The students used wooden slates, on which they spread dust and wrote with inkless wooden pens. Alibhai Nanji possessed a rare ability to focus his mind steadily on the distance horizon and at the same time concentrated his whole effort on what was practically possible: he was very perseverant. He did not care about the poor condition of the school and continued his teaching. Meanwhile, his students demonstrated an excellent performance during the annual *majalis* in Nigar, Kutchh in 1912. It deeply struck the audience, notably some Ismaili wool-traders, such as Bandali Nathu Dhiraniwala, Dhanji Bandali, Manji Bandali, Kassim Bandali, etc., who offered donations for the school. The premises of the Jamatkhana consisted of a big room in the compound was renovated and equipped with furniture, where he started the school. Later on, Rajab Ali Jagasi donated Rs. 5000/-, meanwhile other generous persons shared the cost of the erection of a new building for a school. He managed to spot a plot near Jamatkhana on the main road, where school was going to be built. With untiring efforts, he brought the school from primary level to secondary level. Varas Moledina awarded him the certificate of appreciation for his invaluable services in the domain of education.

After being settled in Sinugara, he called his wife and his mother. He devoted most of his time at the school. Varas Moledina promoted him as the Head Master and the Supervisor of all the Ismaili schools running in Kutchh.

In 1918, influenza broke out in Kutchh, resulting in the demise of his wife and of an infant son, Mitha. His sister Nurbai and her husband Kara Kanji wrote him several letters, insisting upon him to come to Veraval. Soon after his arrival, he delivered some impressive *waez* in the Jamatkhana, and conquered the hearts of the *jamat*. His sister arranged his marriage in 1919 with Fatima, the daughter of Musa Kamal. Meanwhile, he received a telegram from Sinugara on the third day of his marriage that his other son, Bachu passed away. He returned to Sinugara with his wife and resumed his usual service.

The Ismailis in Kutchh were the victims of old customs and did not permit the education of females. For many centuries, the Ismailis bred in the shadow of illiteracy. He concentrated his attention on the healthy growth of the community through the channel of education. Alibhai Nanji first gained the confidence of the *jamat* and then laid great stress on the education of girls. The welfare of future generations and the healthy progress of the community, he pointed out, depended upon the education of women and mothers. He also propagated that no community could rise to the height of glory unless women were side by side to men. In conclusion, he succeeded as a realist and a true social worker.

In 1920, the Imam visited Kutchh, where no missionary was present in the pendol. Alibhai Nanji was asked to give a *waez*. He delivered a touching *waez* before a massive congregation of people, and a moment had scarcely elapsed when Imam's arrival took place, thus he

curtailed his *waez*. The Imam entered the pendol, sat on the chair, and asked Varas Moledina, "Who was performing *waez*? Tell him to continue it." Thus, Alibhai picked up the thread of his *waez* and impressed the audience. The Imam told to Varas Moledina to bring Alibhai Nanji to Bombay for leisure purposes. Henceforward, a new chapter in his life was added. When he came to Bombay with Varas Moledina, the Imam told him to join the Recreation Club Institute as a regular missionary in 1920. He accepted the offer and took necessary training from the Chief Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad (1878-1951) for a period of six months.

The Ismaili mission of conversion was brisk in those days around Hyderabad, Sind among the depressed class. The new converts needed proper religious understandings. Mukhi Itmadi Ghulam Hussain Varu, the President of the Supreme Council for Karachi (1929-1937) wrote a letter to the Recreation Club Institute in 1922 to provide an expert missionary. Alibhai Nanji was commissioned to this task in Sind. With the help of Varas Karim Kassim (1878-1958), he lived six months with the new converts in Hyderabad and gave them the necessary understanding on Ismailism. In 1923, the Imam also sent him in Poona for the same purpose.

Alibhai Nanji sailed for East Africa with Missionary Sayed Munir (1882-1957) on September 1925 and delivered *waez* in Zanzibar, Uganda and Kenya under the guidance of the Supreme Council for Africa. In 1926, the Imam visited East Africa for 43 days and Alibhai Nanji, who was yet in East Africa, was included in the Imam's staff. Meanwhile, he learnt from Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) the sudden death of Varas Moledina Megji on February 7, 1926. In summary, Alibhai Nanji was the head of the *didar* and *mehmani* programmes, as well as gave *waez* in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Mombasa and finally returned to Bombay in April 1926.

The Imam enjoined upon him to deliver a *waez* in Burhanpur and Ahmadabad amongst the new converts. He worked hard and made the *gupti* Ismailis exposed, who subscribed to their faith openly in Burhanpur with new Islamic names. These Ismailis declared their faith publicly as Muslims, and performed a demonstration in a procession in the village. Alibhai Nanji also arranged *majalis* for three days, where he conveyed *waez*. He also moved for some time in Bhavnagar and publicly exposed the Kachhia caste as the Ismaili Muslims. By virtue of his deep knowledge, he also debated on several occasions with the great renowned persons of other communities but he always succeeded in the deliberation. In fact, he proved himself creative, bold, courageous, patient, and dedicated.

In May 1928, he left Mundra, Kutchh and came to live in Manavadar in Junagadh with his family. His second trip to East Africa started on December 18, 1929. His tour covered Dar-es-Salaam, Zanzibar, Nairobi, Kampala, Mozambique, and the districts of Tanganyika. He had the knack of appeasing quarrels, and dispelled the differences between the members of the Dar-es-Salaam Council with the other *jamats*. He also visited Tabora, Ujiji, Belgium Congo and Lisbon with four members of the Council and returned to Bombay in September 1931.

He was an orator of a high order with impressive and persuasive styles. He gained immense fame in Bombay, where he was invited several times in different Jamatkhanas. He wielded great influence over the entire community so much that the Jamatkhanas were always

full when he delivered a *waez*. Once he went to the main Jamatkhana of Bombay to perform a *waez*, where it bewildered him to see a heavy rush of the people. When he reached the stairs, the volunteers on duty who did not know him, stopped him and said, "You cannot go up because the house is full." The volunteers regretted and saluted him when someone pointed out that he himself was Missionary Alibhai Nanji.

Alibhai Nanji came to Manavadar in October 1931, where his second wife died in 1932. His mother also passed away three months after his wife's demise on March 28, 1932. His third marriage with Sonbai alias Shireenbai, the daughter of Rawjibhai Hashim was solemnized on February 22, 1933.

The Imam deputed Pir Sabzali several times to reconcile the internal problems of the *jamats* in Punjab and in the Frontier. Since Pir Sabzali was touring East Africa, the Imam sent Alibhai Nanji to Punjab and to the Frontier as his Special Commissioner. He debuted his visit on July 11, 1937 with his assistant, Missionary Amir Ali Khuda Baksh Talib. He conveyed the Imam's message, warded off differences, and restored peace. He sent its report to the Imam, who graciously graced him his best loving blessings through a message to the Recreation Club Institute. Pir Sabzali was so pleased with his noble work that he sent him special words of compliment from Zanzibar.

Meanwhile, the health of his third wife Shireenbai deteriorated due to stomach pains. She was taken to Rajkot for treatment, where she died on January 3, 1946.

During the partition of India in August 1947, he was on duty in Karachi, hence decided to settle down in Pakistan. He was appointed in the newly formed Ismailia Association for Pakistan in 1948. He made extensive trips to Sind and Punjab to perform *waez*.

He also started Mission Classes in Karachi, Hyderabad, Tando Muhammad Khan, Sukkur, Shikarpur, Larkhana, Sultanabad, and Dadu. His contribution was significant in training new missionaries in Pakistan. The Ismailia Association for Pakistan sent its report to the Imam, to which he responded:

June 2, 1955

My dear President & Members:

I send my best paternal maternal blessings to all my beloved spiritual children who attended the Mission Assembly for their service, and to all teachers and students, assembled on this occasion.

I give my best loving blessings to the following missionaries for their devoted services:

Missionary Alibhai Nanji
Alijah Mukhi Ghulamhoosain Hashim
Missionary Rahimtullah
Missionary Jan Mahomed
Missionary Mohomed Jagan

Alibhai Nanji was also deputed in Goa, Bombay, Calcutta, Colombo, etc. He visited Dacca on October 19, 1955 on *waez* duty. He also traveled to Narayanganj, Barisal, Khulna, Jessore, and Chittagong. In conclusion, it was an informative tour, which was covered in "**Paigham**" on December 15, 1955, pp. 14-16.

Due to his talent, ability, and invaluable services, he was granted the title of **Alijah.** He possessed not only oratorical skill, but was also an adroit writer, and compiled many useful write-up and books. His famous book is **"Chirag-i Siratal Mustaqim."** (1947). With the help of Missionary Hamir Lakha, he also published the biography of Varas Moledina Megji (1854-1926) of Kutchh, entitled **"Smurti Zankar"** in Karachi in 1961. He also compiled four books, which remained unpublished. He is ranked amongst the men of most deep knowledge, quality that was demonstrated through his literary works.

He submitted his retirement letter to the Ismailia Association for Pakistan on February 16, 1965 due a decrease in his vision and hearing, and assured his co-members to continue to concentrate his efforts in the study of *ginans* at home. Wazir Ghulam Hyder Bandali (1905-1986), the President sent a report on February 26, 1965 to the Imam including his letter explaining his reasons for retiring.

He passed the rest of his life in Hyderabad. The Imam made a gracious visit of Hyderabad on December 21, 1964. While the *mehmani* ceremony, he drenched in thoughts, "The Imam is now young. Will he recognize me?" When his turn came, the Imam said to Mukhi Hasan Ali Varas Karim, "**Look Mukhi that old man is my Missionary. He has served my grandfather for many years.**" The Imam also blessed him and said, "**Your material world and your world hereafter have been prospered. I am the Lord of hereafter.**"

Missionary Alijah Alibhai Nanji rose to the summit of greatness due to his missionary skills. An eloquent speaker and a trenchant writer, gentle and alert in appearance, thoughtful and cultured, known equally for his devotion, service, courage, sympathy, and insight, he enjoyed the immense love and affection of the Ismaili world.

He served 10 years as a teacher in Kutchh and 45 years as a regular missionary. He died in Hyderabad, Sind on Tuesday, February 7, 1978 at the age of 85 years. Mawlana Hazar Imam sent the following message through the President of Ismailia Association for Pakistan on April 20, 1978:

My dear President:

I have received your letter of March 5th, and I was much grieved to hear about the sad demise of Al-waez Alibhai Nanji.

I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the service submitted for the soul of the late Al-waez Alibhai Nanji, and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. Late Al-waez Nanji's devoted services to my Association will always be remembered by my *jamat.*

I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings to the family of the late Al-waez Alibhai Nanji for their courage and fortitude in their great loss.

He was blessed with a large family; however, seven of his sons expired in infancy. He left behind five sons, Abdul Rahim (d. 1999), Abdul Hussain, Sadruddin, Hasanali and Mohammad Ali; and four daughters, Sakina (d. 2000), Rawshan, Nurbanu and Izzat Khanu.

Huzur Mukhi Abdul Hussain has served mostly in the literary field, and compiled many articles and books. He worked mostly in the history of the Indian Pirs, and his book, **"Pir Padharia Apan'e Dua'ar"** divided into two volumes was published in Bombay in 1986. He leads a retired life.

Mohammad Ali, known as Itmadi Mohammad Ali Khoja was born at Dhari, Kathiawar in 1942, and came with his family in Hyderabad soon after the independence of Pakistan. He got his early education in Noor Mohammad High School. He became M.A., LL.B. from Sind University. His career in the arena of community service began with Cub Pack in Hyderabad as a cub, and ultimately became a Scout and then the Incharge of Pani Company for about five years. He was also an Honorary Secretary of the Ismailia Young Boys' Sewak Company for over four years, Honorary Secretary and Vice-President of H.R.H. The Aga Khan Scout Band, Hyderabad for five years. He also acted as an Honorary Teacher of Religious Night School, Hyderabad for seven years. He served as the Hon. Secretary of the Decoration Society, the Graduates' Guide, and the Waezeen Board of Ismailia Association for Pakistan for two years, etc. He was also appointed Chairman of the Library & Free Reading Room, Hyderabad. He also served as Hon. Secretary and Chairman of the Hy-Sultanabad Education Board, and by virtue of this post, he was made member of the Hy-Sultanabad Council for two years. He also served as Chairman of the Regional Education Board for Sind, and also as an Ex-Officio member of the Ismailia Supreme Council, Hyderabad. He gave his services as Hon. General Secretary of the Board of Directors of Platinum Jubilee Co-operative Housing Society Ltd. for four years. Itmadi Mohammad Ali Khoja was also a member of the Hyderabad Lion Club. He was President of the Hy-Sultanabad Council in 1972 and again in 1976. He was also appointed President of the Aga Khan Sind Regional Council (1976-1983). In 1975, he also attended the Paris Conference.

Itmadi Mohammad Ali Khoja worked in United Bank Ltd. in Hyderabad. He came to live in Karachi due to his transfer, where he also spared adequate time to the service of the *jamat*. He was appointed President of the Ismaili Council for Karachi & Baluchistan (1984-1990). When his position got transferred from Karachi to Dubai, he served as an Economic Portfolio Member of the Council for G.C.C. and Dubai. In appreciation of his invaluable service, he was honoured with the title of **Itmadi** in 1993 in Dubai. In 1996, he returned to Karachi as a Senior Executive Vice-President of the United Bank Ltd. He soon joined PICIC as a Managing Director since 1996 till now. He is the Chairman of Gulf Commercial Bank, the Chairman of Banker Equity Ltd, the Director of Phillips Electrical Company, etc.

Afroze, the wife of Itmadi Muhammad Ali Khoja also served for 5 years in Girls Guide, Shoes & Pani Companies in Hyderabad, Sind. She was a social worker/volunteer in the Aga Khan Health Centre for 5 years, and worked for 4 years in the Young Women Association. She was also a teacher in the Religious Centre for 7 years, member of the Library & Reading Room for 2 years. She also served in the Marriage Committee for one

year in Clifton Jamatkhana, Karachi

Amber Khoja, the daughter of Itmadi Mohammad Ali Khoja is also a social worker and serves as a member in the Tariqah Board since 1996. She is a Co-op member for the Human Resources Development Committee in the Kharadhar Council, and a teacher in the Clifton Religious Centre, also a member of the Aga Khan Youth and Sports Board.

During her stay in United States, Amber Khoja served as a teacher in the Religious Education Centre for 2 years in Houston, a member of the Pakistan Student Association, Houston, a member of the Muslim Student Association, Houston, and a member of Education Development Syndicate International, Houston. In New York (1995-1997), she was a teacher in the Religious Education Centre for 2 years, a member of NYREC Resource Committee, and also worked on the establishment of the Muslim Student Association & Pakistani Student Association at Fordham University.

During her stay in Dubai (1989-1995), she was the Assistant Patrol Leader of the United Arab Emirates Girls Guide Troop, School Clubs, and worked in the Chouelfat Pottery Club, Chouelfat Environment Club and was a member of the Aga Khan Student Organization, etc. Afsha, another daughter of Itmadi Muhammad Ali Khoja is also a social worker in the United States.

Mohsin, the son of Itmadi Mohammad Ali Khoja also served in Mubarak Shaheen Scouts (1978-84), Mubarak Little Star Flute Band (1982-85), Platinum Orchestra (1985-86), Clifton Scouts Troop (1986-89), Clifton Orchestra (1987-89) etc. He served as an Honorary Teacher in the Austin Religious Education Centre in United States (1989-93) and as Vice-Principal (1992-93), co-founded the Austin Jamat Boy Scouts of America Troop in 1993, and finally initiated and administered the Ummah Network since 1993. He was as well a member of the Committee for Religious Education in UAE (1994-95), a member of the Committee for Economic Affairs, Council for UAE (1995-96) and rendered services with the Dubai Ismaili Orchestra (1994-97). He also led as a musician at the McGill Ismaili Student Association Talent Show in Canada (1997-99). Presently, he is a member of the Jamatkhana Development and Imara Local Committee, Council for Southwestern, USA (1999 to now) and the Hon. Secretary of the Project Spark, Southwestern, USA (since 2002).

Moazzam, another son of Itmadi Mohammad Ali Khoja also served as a member of Cub-Pack (Shaheen Scouts) in Hyderabad in 1977 and a member of the Mubarak Housing Society's Orchestra. He also joined the Scout Troop in Clifton, Karachi. In the United States, he started a brand new scout group in Austin, Texas, which is still running. He also joined the Austin Orchestra. Soon after his graduation, he moved to Dubai, where he served as a member of the local Educational Board, where he continued to teach in the Religious Night School. He also pursued his music passion as a member in Dubai Orchestra. In 1994, he moved to United States for his MBA. In New York, he taught at the Religious Centre. In 1997, he moved to Houston and has been rendering services as a member of the Houston Orchestra.



ALIBHAI PREMJI TYREWALA, ITMADI
(1898-1966)



Alibhai Premji Tyrewala was born in Bombay in 1898. Nothing is known of his early life. He started a small shop of second-hand tires on Grant Road, Bombay. He gradually erected two big stores of tires and old cars.

His career in *jamati* services began when he became a lifetime member of the Ismailia Students Library, Kandi Mola, Bombay in 1923 till his death. He was also the Treasurer of the Central Panjibhai Club, Bombay.

Itmadi Alibhai was one of the founders of the Fidai Academy, Andheri, Bombay, and served it since its existence in 1928 till his death. He was its Supervisor, Treasurer, Hon. Secretary and Vice-President (1959-1966).

He also founded the Fidai Girls Educational Institute in 1944. The Imam appointed him as its first President (1944-1964). During his longest service of 20 years, he funded this institution with massive sums on several occasions. In 1946, he also launched a trip to East Africa to raise funds. In 1966, he was made member of its managing committee.

He was the Hon. Secretary of the Aga Khan Legion, Karimabad. As Vice-President of the Central Panjibhai Club, he made excellent arrangements for the lodging of Ismailis in 1946 during the Diamond Jubilee in coordination with the Volunteer Corps.

He was also the Hon. Secretary of the Platinum Celebration Committee. When Prince Aly S. Khan visited India to attend the token ceremony of the Platinum Jubilee, Alibhai Premji Tyrewala was also included in the delegation.

He had been in Geneva when Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah expired on July 11, 1957. He had the honour to participate in the group photo of the leaders with Hazar Imam in Barkat Villa and was the first to take the *dastboshi* of Hazar Imam amongst the leaders. He also went to Aswan with the leaders on July 17, 1957 to attend the burial ceremony of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah.

He also rendered incredible services for 20 years in the Volunteer Corps. His services to the Ismailia Helping Society were admirable as well. He served for six years as a Managing Member of the Masalawala Cooperative Bank Ltd. He regularly donated to the H.R.H. The Aga Khan Girls Academy, Rajkot. He used to offer a sewing machine to each marrying girl of the academy. In appreciation of his long meritorious services, the Imam conferred upon him the title of **Itmadi** in 1958.

Itmadi Alibhai Premji Tyrewala died on Thursday, July 21, 1966 in Bombay at the age of about 68 years. The Imam sent the following message on October 4, 1966:

I was much grieved to hear of the sad demise of Itmadi Alibhai Tyrewala. I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late Itmadi Alibhai Premji, and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace.

Kindly convey my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings to the family of late Itmadi Alibhai for their courage and fortitude in their great loss.

My spiritual children of India and myself will always remember Itmadi Alibhai Premji's devoted services to my *jamats* of India. His example of selfless work for the *jamat* and myself will be kept alive for many years by the memory of such a fine and much loved person. Our *jamat* has lost a remarkable member whose work will no doubt be continued by all those who admired him, which is my deepest wish.

In view of his social services, the Greater Bombay Municipal Corporation gave the name **Shri Alibhai Premji Marg** to the Lamington Cross Road in Bombay. R.A. Patel, the Minister of Industries, Electricity, and Printing Presses of Maharashtra State inaugurated the opening in a ceremony on January 25, 1969.

Wazir Ali Muhammad C. Padamsi, the President of the Federal Council for India declared the opening of the **"Itmadi Alibhai Tyrewala Gate"** in loving memory of Alibhai Premji Tyrewala on December 29, 1969 at Fidai Bagh during the celebration of the Fidai Institution's Triple Jubilee Year. On that occasion, the family members of Itmadi Alibhai Tyrewala also pledged the **"Fidai Kaniyadan Fund."**



ALIDINA ALI MUHAMMAD ASANI, RAI
(1884-1952)

Ali Muhammad Alidina, the son of Mukhi Alidina Asani (1793-1881) was an eminent contractor in Karachi. In addition, his brothers and himself managed a business of hides and skins. They extended their mercantile activity as far as Burma. Ali Muhammad was an influential person, sharing a close friendship with the British officers in Karachi. He was also in good terms with Muhammad Rawjee (1830-1897), Sir Karim Ibrahim (1840-1924), and some other eminent persons of the Persian Gulf. Upon the visit of emperor George V in Karachi in 1905 when the monarch was only Prince of Wales, Ali Muhammad lodged him in the Panjibhai Club house, located in the Garden area at his own expenses. The Commissioner of Sind expressed officially his gratitude for his great hospitality by making an announcement in the "**Gazette of Sind**" in 1905. In addition, he hosted a warm reception for the Prince of Wales with 500 guests in Karachi on March 19, 1908. He also took a leading part in community affairs. He filed a suit against the Twelvers in Karachi, claiming for his rights on a plot lying in Rampart Raw. Later on, in 1912, the court proclaimed being in favor of the Ismailis after his death. He was popularly nicknamed "Alu Seth" and died in 1910.

Ali Muhammad married thrice. His son Alidina was born on March 4, 1884, in Karachi from his first wife. He had a son and a daughter with his second wife. Abbas and Hasan Ali were the sons whom his third wife gave birth to. Alidina received his early education in Sind Madressa School, Karachi and then joined his father's business.

Alidina Ali Muhammad married to Zainab, the daughter of Dr. Datoo Mukhi Ramzan Ismail (d. 1939) in 1900 in the presence of the Imam. The Khoja Panjibhai Club came into existence in Karachi on June 26, 1905 his nomination as the first Hon. Secretary followed. He became later on President as well. He was also Councilor of the Karachi Municipal at the end of 1906. The Khoja Panjibhai Library was the first Ismaili library in Karachi, which was established on July 1, 1908. He was made its first President with Dr. Datoo Mukhi Ramzan Ismail as Vice-President, Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad as Hon. Secretary and Kamadia Hussain Alarakhia as a member. The Imam appointed him as a member of the Ismaili Council in 1909, and also as a member of the Constitution Committee of the Council to frame rules and regulations. He was also appointed Hon. Secretary of the Council in 1910.

The Imam honored Alidina Ali Muhammad Asani with the title of **Alijah** on January 18, 1912. Being the Honorary Secretary of the Council, he had the privilege to read the welcome address before the Imam in Karachi on February 17, 1912 at the premises of the Khoja Panjibhai Club in the Garden area. The Imam again visited the Panjibhai Club in the

afternoon on the same day, where he humbly told the Imam that, "The plan of a new construction for the *Baitul Khiyal* has been prepared," after which he presented its design. The Imam scrutinized it and said, "Is its foundation strong?" He replied, "Yes, Mawla." Then he read the names of the donors as per Imam's order, i.e., Alidina Ali Muhammad, Rehmatullah Lalji of Bombay and Muhammad Jaffer Karmali donated Rs. 10,000/- each and Varas Muhammad Remu and Mukhi Muhammad Abdullah of Gwadar contributed Rs. 500/- each. The Imam congratulated and blessed them, and laid its foundation on next day.

He also became President of the Ismaili Supreme Council for Karachi on September 1, 1913 for a period of a year according to the new rules. The Imam extended his mandate for another year, therefore being dismissed from his functions continued on August 31, 1915 instead. He was appointed President of the Supreme Council for the second time between September 1, 1917 and August 31, 1918. His mandate was further extended up to September, 1917. When an annual report of the Council alongwith his services were submitted, the Imam became happy and congratulated him through a telegraphic message from Europe.

He possessed an open heart and a generous hand like his father. He also promoted secular education amongst students and awarded them prizes every year in loving memory of his father. With the help of his friends, he built the top floor of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana in Karachi in 1918. When the Imam visited Karachi on May 15, 1918, Alidina Ali Muhammad designed a plan to enlarge and build a second floor to the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, which cost was Rs. 45000/- to which he contributed Rs. 15000/- . He himself supervised the construction works. It was opened on June 30, 1919.

His wife Zainab and his daughter were social workers. She practiced during the world war for the Sind Women Branch for Relief Fund. In 1916, for the first time, the governor of Bombay, Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington visited Karachi. The Sind Women Branch hosted a reception for Mrs. Wilmington at the Frere Hall, Karachi. Mrs. Vestropani, the wife of the Karachi Commissioner consigned Zainab to present a splendid locket of flower to Mrs. Wilmington. When Lord Wilmington became the governor of Madras, his wife Mrs. Wilmington presented a beautiful broach to Zainab in appreciation of her valuable services during the world war.

On January 18, 1919, Alidina Ali Muhammad laid the foundation of the top floor of the Garden Jamatkhana, Karachi. The two brothers, Itmadi Bhula Khimani (1860-1922) and Merali Khimani (d. 1941), donated Rs. 30,000/- for its construction. Alidina Ali Muhammad laid the foundation stone in the presence of about 700 Ismailis. He supervised the whole construction process till its completion and donated required materials. When its report was sent through the Council in Europe, the Imam sent a telegraphic message from Canes on January 21, 1919:

Paternal blessings all dear children. Very glad my letter of thirty August (1918) about proposed Garden building and hearty congratulations. Thanks for generous donation to donors.

Once ready, it was opened for religious service. The Imam sent the following message from Paris on July 9th, 1919:

Hearty congratulations my beloved children with my sons and daughters on opening ceremony. Paternal blessings to donors and thanks for entertainment. Convey publicly my thanks and blessings Garden quarters for opening and entertainment. Convey publicly my paternal love and blessings Bundally for services. Tell him I accept his offerings with blessings. Sending this message through you as his address not given. Inform all children hope soon be with you in body. I am always with you in thought and heart.

In March 1919, British India issued a Gazette, designating him an **Honorary Second Class Magistrate**. The Young Khoja Ismailia Kathiawadi Mitr Mandal came into existence in 1912 in the Kharadhar are, which inaugurated a night school for children. On April 21, 1919, a grand function presided by Alidina Ali Muhammad was organized to perform its opening ceremony.

On April 30, 1919, the Working Committee of the Ismaili Women of the Sind Women Branch for War Relief Fund arranged a function in the Garden area in Karachi. Mrs. Lawrence, the Vice-President and the wife of the Commissioner of Sind honored Zainab, the wife of Alidina Ali Muhammad for her meritorious services.

The H.H. The Aga Khan Volunteer Corps and the Reading Room was founded on May 3, 1919. He presided the function of the opening ceremonies of the above institutions.

The Afghans raided British India in Delhi and committed slaughter, violating the treaty between the Afghanistan and British India. On that juncture, the Imam advanced his support to King George and advised his followers to demonstrate their loyalty in a message released from Europe on May 24, 1919. The Ismaili Council in Kharadhar, Karachi also reacted and held a grand meeting, presided by Alidina Ali Muhammad on June 4, 1919. The house resolved that, "The Ismailis, the followers of the Aga Khan declare their dedication and loyalty for the King of England, condemn the attacks of the Afghans in Delhi, breaking the friendship of late Amir Abdur Rahman with British India, and assured to give their services to restore peace and order." The copies of the resolution were forwarded to the Viceroy of India, the Governor of Bombay and the Commissioner of Sind.

Varas Bandali Kassim (1875-1956) and Alidina Ali Muhammad were famous generous persons in Karachi. A certain Rajan Dossa was highly touched with their towering generosity and dedication in rendering services. He composed a poem to pay them a well-deserved tribute, which was published in the **"Ismaili Satpanth Prakash"** (Bombay) on August 27, 1919.

The Imam arrived in Bombay from Europe on March 2, 1920. On that occasion, a deputation from Karachi went to Bombay to make a humble submission for the Imam's gracious visit in Karachi. The deputation was comprised of Varas Bandali Kassim, Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad, Kamadia Ghulam Hussain Varas Vali, Chief Mukhi Rehmatullah Lutf Ali, Mukhi Hussain Mukhi Alarakhia, Kamadia Kassim Shalu, Kamadia Sajan, Dr. Datoo Mukhi Ramzan Ismail, Mamu Mukhi Alarakhia, Fakir Muhammad Vali, Basaria Piru,

Huzur Mukhi Ratoo Thavar, Ali Karim, Rahim Basaria , etc. Thus, about 40 persons from Karachi, Makran coast and Sind were granted an audience with the Imam, after which their humble request was acceded.

On that occasion, the Khoja Panjibhai Club of Bombay in collaboration with the Vidhiya Vinod Club, Sahitiya Utejak Mandal and other institutions, arranged a grand assembly at Hasanabad, Bombay, where the Mukhis, Kamadias, leaders and titleholders of different parts of India also participated. This grand gathering was presided by Alidina Ali Muhammad. The house resolved to hold the All India Khoja Ismailia Conference for the enhancement of education, economy and welfare of the Ismailis.

The Imam arrived in Karachi on April 10, 1920 and visited firstly the Kharadhar Jamatkhana on Sunday, April 11, 1920 where he said, "**Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad has offered to build a girls school in his late father's name, Ali Muhammad Alidina. It will cost about Rs. 60,000/- to Rs. 70,000/- and Alidina Ali Muhammad will pay half of the costs and the remaining will be procured in the form of a grant from the government. Alidina Ali Muhammad is serving very much and his late father, Ali Muhammad had served the Imam exceedingly well since his childhood, and his grandfather, Mukhi Alidina had also served the Imam very much since his childhood and continued it excellently till his last breath. (Both of them) have served me very much since childhood. Alijah Alidina surpassed those two in the field of service since his childhood; therefore, I give him much blessings.**"



He also continued his services as the managing member of the Ismaili Library and the School Board. He toiled hard to promote education among the female population in Karachi according to the guidance of the Imam. He insisted on having a separate Girls School, therefore, he got a plot located in the Kharadhar area from Municipality, measuring 3000 sq. yards. With the help of his brothers, Itmadi Hasan Ali (d. 1949) and Varas Abbas, he built the "**Ali Mahomed Mukhi Alidina Khoja Ismailia Girls School.**" The Imam laid the foundation stone on April 11, 1920. Mr. P.R. Cadell, the Commissioner of Sind, Mr. Martin, the Collector, Mr. Steven, the civil surgeon, the leaders and the *jamats* participated at that function. On that occasion, the Imam said the following about Alidina Ali Muhammad,

"He put the community under his obligation with his generosity." At the *mehmani* of Varas Bandali Kassim on Sunday, April 25, 1920, the Imam also said at the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi, **"Alijah Alidina has also done two righteous works, i.e. he started the additional portion of the Jamatkhana, built it, and shared the expenses with President Bandali for the additional portion of the school. Likewise, he cherished the desire to spend a large amount to start a new school for girls. I give Alijah Alidina more and more blessings and congratulate him. You have done extremely well and righteous works, and I pray for you. You will see good occasions and children of your daughters and sons. I give much blessings, *Khanavadan.*"**

On Tuesday, April 20, 1920, Alidina Ali Muhammad presented his *mehmani.* The Imam said, **"This Alijah has served me to a great extent. His late father, Ali Muhammad and grandfather, Mukhi Alidina had also served the house of the Imam very much. Alijah Alidina has been serving this *jamat* since he became a member of the Council and tried orienting all of the *jamati* works. He has also served in the reforms, relating to the Ismailism. I give him much blessings and grace you *Khanavadan.*"** On that occasion, he had the chance to put on a gold chain to the Imam.

During the concluding days of the tour, the Imam said on Thursday, May 6, 1920 that, **"You Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad are the Imam's army. You always served me very much like Jibrail. I am happy with your work. Once again, I tell you that you have served me absolutely round the clock to a great extent, and I give you much blessings, *Khanavadan.*"**

The Imam also said on April 11, 1920 that, **"When the girls school has been built up, it is incumbent upon all women to take the benefits of this school."**

On Thursday, May 6, 1920, the Imam also said about these two prominent leaders in Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi: **"President Bandali Kassim and Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad took a leading part in all righteous works. I have said in the *mehmani* ceremony yesterday that President Bandali Kassim and Alidina Ali Muhammad shared all the righteous works. There is not a single righteous and benevolent work, in which they are excluded. I give more and more blessings to both of them."**

It is also a known fact that during the 27 days visit of the Imam in Karachi between April 10, 1920 and May 6, 1920, Alidina Ali Muhammad assumed all of the expenses of the Imam's stay in Karachi along with the staff members.

The school was built on the pattern of The Khoja Ismailia Girls School in Nairobi. P.R. Cadell, the Commissioner of Sind opened it on Saturday, May 11, 1926. With the opening of the new girls' school in Kharadhar, the Shia Imami Ismaili Girls School, founded in 1906 in the Jamatkhana was liquidated. During its inauguration, there were only 87 female students, and soon afterwards, peaked at 224 students. The Imam granted Rs. 3000/- per year, in which Rs. 1400/- was for the Kharadhar Girls School and Rs. 1600/- for the Garden School. The Karachi Municipal Corporation granted Rs. 425/- and the Sind Education Board, Rs. 800/-

He was also honored with the title of **Khan Saheb** by the British government on January 1, 1921. In view of his meritorious civil services, the road between the old Light House Cinema and the K.M.C. Building at M.A. Jinnah Road, Karachi was named as **"Alidina Ali Muhammad Road"** by the Sind government in 1921.

Varas Bandali Kassim hosted a banquet at Garden on August 26, 1921 to glorify his invaluable services. It was presided by Dr. S.G. Haji (d. 1924). The British India also appointed him **First Class Honorary Magistrate** in 1925.

During the issue of the Patadi Murder Case in Gujrat, the Ismailis were harshly persecuted by the Kori caste. On August 4, 1925, Alidina Ali Muhammad held a general protest meeting in Karachi under his presidentship in the presence of 2500 Ismailis and condemned the Patadi Murder Case.

He was again appointed President of the Supreme Council for the third time between April 17, 1928 and July 25, 1935.

He was appointed President of the Recreation Club for Karachi office in 1933. He also led a deputation of Karachi and Sind in Bombay where he presented a *mehmani* to the Imam on December, 1933 with a humble request to pay a gracious visit of Sind. The Imam said that, **"I give my paternal blessings to my beloved spiritual children of Sind. I intend to visit Iran for some important works, and will come in Karachi on those days to give *didar* to the *jamat*."**

It appears through different reports that his business went bankrupt. The Imam is reported to have advised him to proceed to Nairobi to regain his fortune. In August 1935, he left Karachi with his family members and arrived in Nairobi with the Imam's letter, addressed to the governor, to whom Alidina Ali Muhammad was related. As long as he inhabited Nairobi, the government regarded him a VIP and invited him in all receptions and banquets. In those days, Pir Sabzali was visiting African countries as a Special Commissioner of the Imam. The Young Ismailia Recreation Institute accorded a banquet to Pir Sabzali on October 28, 1935 at the Assembly Hall of the H.H. The Aga Khan High School, Mombasa. On that occasion, Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad was also invited. With the request of President Jaffer Ali Mohammad, Alijah Alidina garlanded Pir Sabzali.

It was his endeavour that the African Provident Funds Society Ltd. came into existence in Mombasa on October 1935. He also laid the foundation stone of the house of Hasham Ismail Lakhani in Kisumu on October 28, 1935.

He was also blessed with the title of **Rai** at the end of 1936 for his incredible services.

He started his fresh business in construction works in Nairobi. He also served the *jamat* in different fields. He visited Bombay to attend the Diamond Jubilee of the Imam in 1946.

He died at the age of 68 years in Nairobi on August, 1952. He left behind two sons, Jaffer Ali and Sultan Ali. Jaffer Ali had four sons, Muhammad, Amin, Mirza and Karim; while Sultan Ali had three sons, Ali, Muhammad and Karim.



ALIDINA KANJI RAMJI, WAZIR
(1843-1948)

Kanji Ramji originated from Samaghoga, about 14 miles from Mundra, Kutchh. He had a religious proclivity since childhood. His habits were very simple and he lived a saintly life till last breath, so much so that the Imam during his first visit to East Africa said, **"What should be the *momin's* qualities, habits and manners are seen in Kanji Ramji. Everyone must follow them accordingly."** (Zanzibar: July 5, 1899). He was also the Mukhi and became known as the **"Dini Darwish of Kutchh"** due to his pious life.



His son Alidina was born in 1843 in Samaghoga. Kanji Ramji set out for a journey with his 12 years old son, Alidina in 1855 and sailed from Mandavi to Zanzibar after the difficult trip of 21 days. Alidina was confided to the care of his uncle Ismail Ramji. Alidina slowly managed the shop. After being satisfied that his son had mastered his profession, Kanji Ramji returned to India.

In 1857, Alidina accompanied by his uncle and aunt, left Zanzibar for India, where he go married at the age of 14 years to a girl named Lalbai. He returned to Zanzibar and centered his attention to his business and *jamati* services.

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah made a tour of East African countries for 3 months and 10 days in 1905. The Imam appointed Alidina Kanji as a member of the first Ismaili Council on August 20, 1905. The Imam also consigned him charge of the Aga Khan Club. He was finally appointed Mukhi of the Zanzibar Jamatkhana on March 19, 1914 with the gift of a traditional robe, a turban and a gold watch in appreciation of his meritorious services.

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah arrived in Zanzibar on January 31, 1937. During the *didar*, the Imam summoned Wazir Mukhi Alidina Kanji by his side and said, **"I am pleased to see you. You have very well served the *jamat* and Imam. Due to this service you are very healthy. I am much pleased with you. You have rendered a lot of service."** To this, he said, "Mawla, it is due to your blessings that I have such a good health and even at this age I can see clearly, walk and go to Jamatkhana. I can discharge my duties of prayers and *Ibadat* in sitting posture on the ground." The Imam said, **"I am much pleased with you and shower my blessings upon you. I shall summon you to my bungalow. I have to tell you many things."**

Clad in robe and turban, Mukhi Alidina arrived at the bungalow at the prescribed time. The Imam asked Captain Majid Khan (d. 1956), Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai (d.

1971) and Chief Wazir Hasan Ali Kassim Ali Javeri (d. 1968) and others who were in attendance, to leave. The Imam ordered for tea and asked Mukhi Alidina to drink it. He expressed his inability, but the Imam insisted him to drink. Then, the Imam said, **"It is said that you are 92 to 93 years old. Is it true?"** The Mukhi agreed. The Imam said, **"Who can say that you are so old? God has blessed you with good health, so you still look young."** The Mukhi said, "Mawla, you and only you are my Lord. I am enjoying such a healthy life only due to your kind and merciful blessings." The Imam said, **"You have a perfect faith like your father Kanji Ramji. He was also a great devotee. Hearing your talk, I remember the soul of your father."** When the Imam mentioned the name of his father, Mukhi Alidina wept profusely and tears burst out of his eyes. The Imam took a handkerchief from Mukhi's jacket and wiped his tears with his own hand.

When Wazir Mukhi Alidina gained peace and composure, he humbly said, "Mawla, I have three wishes." The Imam allowed him to state the wishes with the assurance that they would be granted. He said, "Mawla, my first desire is to extend the span of my life up to your Diamond Jubilee." The Imam said, **"How can that be possible? You have already attained 92 to 93 years of age. You are asking for 10 years more of life. Even the Insurance Company will decline the risk of your life. How is it possible?"** Mukhi said reverently that he cherished the desire to see the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee. The Imam said, **"Alright, your wish is granted. *Inshallah*, you will certainly see my Diamond Jubilee. Now let me know your second wish."** The Mukhi said, "Grant an integrity of my *Iman* till I breathe my last." The Imam said, **"Your wish is granted."** In his third wish, he urged that the name of the Mawla should remain on his tongue at the time of parting forever from this earthy world. The Imam repeatedly granted all the three wishes with assurance and best blessings.

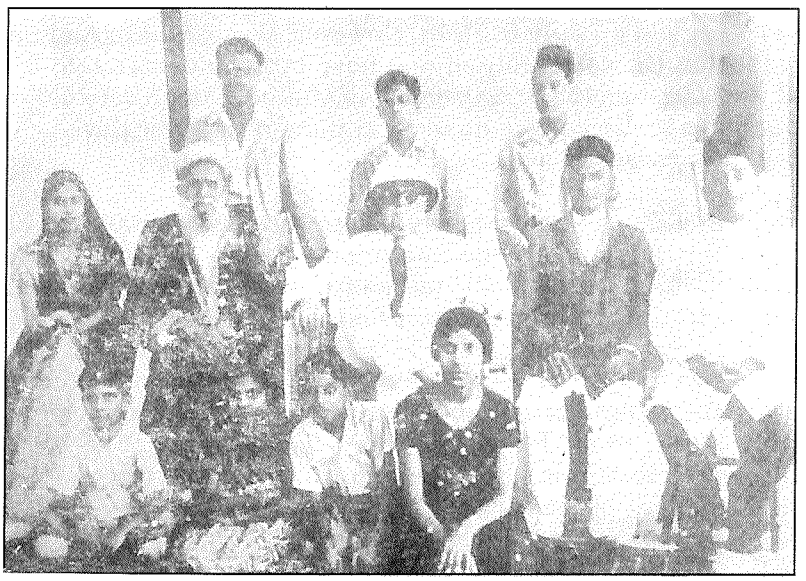
The Imam attended a garden party on February 7, 1937, hosted by Count Ghulam Hussain Jindani (1891-1983) at the Aga Khan Club. The distinguished persons, including the ruler of Zanzibar attended it, Sultan Sayed Khalifa bin Harun, the Resident (Governor) Sir Richard Renkins, etc. The Imam introduced Mukhi Alidina to them and said, **"Look at my young devotee. How healthy he is at such an advanced age? He has served my father, grandfather and grandmother."** The Sultan said, "He has friendly relations with us as well as my forefathers who had come from Muscat. Our relation with Alidina is still as healthy as it was then." When the party was over, Mukhi Alidina set foot towards the Jamatkhana about three miles away from the Aga Khan Club. On the way near the entrance, the Imam's car overtook him. The Imam made the car stopped and asked him to shake hands with his Begum, saying that she was very happy to see you in fine fettle at this advanced age. The Imam then said, **"Alidina, I am proud to see that you have served my forefathers and now you have been serving me. I see you have a true faith, as such I am very happy."** Mukhi Alidina bent down in reverence. Then, the Imam went on his way.

Mukhi Alidina was hale and hearty even at an advanced age. He could read and write without assistance and retained clear visions and was able to chew sugarcane with his original socket of teeth. He was attending regularly Jamatkhana and maintained accounts and records himself. He enjoyed a robust health, and took a pretty long walk every day. His indefatigable energy, his shinning enthusiasm for every work made him more active than many a young man. He had wonderfully defied old age, and kept it at bay. His

physical and mental powers were as alert as ever.

On May 5, 1945, the Imam said to the *jamat*, **"The old people should walk extensively at least once a week. For the advantages of such exercise, you turn to Mukhi Alidina Kanji, who is over a hundred years of age. How healthy he is? His late father Kanji Ramji used to walk from Poona to Mahabaleshwar, a distance of about 50 miles for the *didar* of the Imam. I don't mean that you must also undertake such an adventure. I say is that you must also have enough walking twice or thrice a week."**

The Imam gave an audience for *didar* at the Aga Khan Club in Zanzibar on June 26, 1945. The Imam asked Count Ghulam Hussain Jindani to bring Mukhi Alidina onto stage. The Imam said to him, **"Mukhi, this time after the *jamati* works are over, I shall come to your shop. I am very happy to see you. How are you now?"** He said, "Mawla, my health is very good due to your blessings. I go to Jamatkhana and sit on the ground for *Ibadat*. I have received full benefits of the blessings you have very mercifully bestowed upon me." After having performed *jamati* works, the Imam walked to the shop of Mukhi Alidina. It was close by. The Imam said that he had come to see the workings of his shop. The Imam also said, **"Now you consign all business works to Jaffer Ali and keep your mind in peace and free from worries. Do you remember that my Diamond Jubilee will take place next year. You will have to come to Dar-es-Salaam at that time."** The Imam also saw the books of account maintained by Mukhi Alidina, and said that he needed not to trouble himself with writing them. Jaffer Ali would take care of it. The Imam also advised him to take rest and live happily. The Imam said, **"Come to my bungalow with your family today, in the evening. I shall bestow upon you the honour of being photographed with me along with your family."**



Wazir Mukhi Alidina Kanji and his family went to the bungalow, where the Imam was photographed with them.

On August 2, 1946, he was called in presence of the Imam through Count Jindani. The Imam said that on August 10th, the Diamond Jubilee would be celebrated and added, **Mukhi, I have conferred you the titles of Wazir upon the persons whose services are less than yours. However, when I mentioned about granting the title of Wazir on you, you have asked for blessings instead of the title. I have bestowed many blessings on you."** Putting his blessed hand on his shoulder and head, the Imam said that all his wishes had been accomplished, and asked if there were any more. Mukhi implored in reverence, "Mawla, give me life till you come again." The Imam smiled and said that since all his wishes had been fulfilled, it was enough. However, the Mukhi was not disappointed, and the Imam continued to say, **"I don't say that you will be alive till I visit Zanzibar again, but *Inshallah*, you will be very much there when I visit Africa again. Then you will be free."**

During the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee in 1946, the Imam also graced a *didar* to the *jamat* in the Club. The Imam made Wazir Mukhi Alidina Kanji sit by his side and told the *jamat*, "**Today, the *jamats* of the entire world see Mukhi Alidina. All the *jamats* see my great devotee who is about 103 years old. He has rendered excellent services to me. All the *jamats* should see Mukhi Alidina Kanji, who is on stage, before returning home."** The Imam repeated once again, **"Look, Mukhi Alidina Kanji with your own eyes, *Khana Abad*."**

In Zanzibar, the **"Tanganyika Standard"** published in its issue of May 20, 1948 that, "Vizier Alidina Kanji, a well known Zanzibar merchant and follower of H.H. the Aga Khan celebrated his 107th birth day last week. He came to Zanzibar 92 years ago and during the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in Dar-es-Salaam, His Highness the Aga Khan conferred him the title of **Wazir**"

The Imam visited Kampala on July 6, 1948. However, Wazir Mukhi Alidina was suffering from urinary problems. He was admitted to a hospital. The doctor said to Jaffer Ali that such an ailment was common to young people. As Mukhi, though very old, retained health and spirit, he should feel relieved by a minor operation. After three days he was discharged from the hospital, but it was followed by a trouble with digestion.

He was fully conscious till the end. Shortly before the final curtain, he sipped the holy water and some milk. He spoke at the final moment, "Ya Sultan Muhammad Shah, I beseech your protection." The name of the Imam was on his tongue till his soul left the earthy body for ever. In the meantime, Count Abdullah Hashim Gangji (1906-1982) came to see Wazir Mukhi Alidina on July 16, 1948. He said to the Mukhi that he had been commanded to see him in Nairobi before going to see the Imam. The Imam also told him to enquire whether the Mukhi had to make any request. The Mukhi said that there was nothing and that his time to bid farewell to this world was near. The Mukhi also said, "I am very highly indebted to Mawla for keeping my faith safe till the end. I wish to submit my humble thanks for that blessings."

Finally, on July 23, 1948, he left for the heavenly abode.

The Imam sent the following message from Kampala on July 26, 1948: -

Convey my most loving blessings and affectionate thoughts for the soul to the family of the beloved Vazir Alidina Kanji. I am happy that he lived till I came to Africa. I hope his grandson will follow the tradition of his grandfather and great-grandfather.

On August 16, 1948, the Imam gave a *didar* in Zanzibar. While ascending the stairs up the stage with his hand on Jaffer Ali's shoulder, the Imam enquired about the demise of Wazir Mukhi Alidina. Jaffer Ali said, "He was fully conscious till the end, imploring for the integrity of his faith and marched out from this world with your name on his tongue." The Imam was pleased to hear and said, **"He was fully devoted and a perfect believer. I am pleased that all his desires were satisfied. He has rendered excellent services. You have performed a very difficult task of looking after such an old person, therefore, you shall flourish in life. For this, I give my special blessings to you."**

After the plane carrying the Imam from Tanga for Zanzibar, the Imam told to Mata Salamat that he summoned Mukhi Alidina Kanji all the time as soon as he reached Zanzibar. He was no more then. The Imam said, **"Give me my *tasbih* from my pocket, so that I may converse with his soul and bestow blessings on him."** This incident was related to Jaffer Ali by Hajiani Zainab, Mrs. Rai Mohammad Ali Rashid, the Secretary to Mata Salamat. She also said that the Imam remembered Wazir Mukhi Alidina as soon as the plane neared Zanzibar.

Wazir Mukhi Alidina Kanji had five daughters, all of whom predeceased him. His fifth daughter, Khatija expired in 1945, just a few days before the Imam's visit, who sent a message from Mombasa on June 12, 1945 to Mukhi Bhaloo of Zanzibar Jamatkhana that, **"Best blessing to Huzur Mukhi Alidina Kanji and give him consolation that his daughter is with me in my presence and he should not fret. Looking forward to meeting him."**

Khatija, the wife of Dhalla Kassim left behind six sons and three daughters, the eldest among them being Jaffer Ali, an honorary missionary since 1935. The Imam showered blessings on him in 1937 in Zanzibar for his success in his *waez* activities. In 1959, Hazar Imam honoured him with the title of **Wazir**.

ALIDINA VISRAM, VARAS
(1851-1916)



He was born in Kera, Kutchh in 1851 and came to Zanzibar by a sailing vessel in 1863 at the age of 12 years. He proceeded to Bagamoyo to work as an assistant to Sewa Haji Paroo (1851-1897). After having earned enough money, he began to organize caravans for domestic travelling. His business expanded, at first slowly but later more quickly. He had extended his operations all along the caravan route, opening branches of operations of his firm in Dar-es-Salaam, Sadani, Tabora, Ujiji and of Kalima and Tindo in the Belgium Congo.

In the formative stage, he purchased cloves, wax, ivory, etc. from the native people in the villages and towns around Zanzibar instead of cloth, salt, grains, etc. Soon afterwards, he ventured in the trade of ivory on large scale and made rapid progress. The European travellers visited the north of Kenya to hunt and collect ivory. Varas Alidina was also solely given the contract to provide packed foods to the hunters.

In 1885, he joined Nasser Virji and had a chain of stores between Bagamoyo and Ujiji having bought the business of Sewa Haji Paroo (1851-1897) with several branches. After the death of Sewa Haji Paroo on February 10, 1897, he took over his caravan trade, thus upbringing it to a logical conclusion of what Sewa Haji had started by expanding it as far as Uganda, Kenya and parts of Congo Free State and Southern Sudan. He moved beyond trade into other businesses, and towered his name as the **"King of Ivory"** in Africa.

In 1888, he focussed his attention to British East Africa and opened many stores along the railway line in Uganda. He was permitted to install canteens at every station. He also obtained the contract of paying the railway workers their salaries as well as providing funds to the railway authority. By 1904, he began working with governments to expand businesses and develop agriculture. In conclusion, he built over 70 branches, a vast commercial empire, stretching from the wilderness of Kenya and Uganda.

He had several dhows and a small steamer on Lake Victoria and a well-organized transport service from Mombasa to Uganda with one telegraphic address all over_pagazi, meaning transporters. He had seven large plantations, mainly planted different varieties of sugar cane and rubber with experimental plots of grams, fruits, flowers, tea, and cotton. He employed a fleet of over 3000 workers for his projects. He also owned several ginneries, the first of which was opened at Entebbe in 1910. He purchased raw cotton in Uganda and processed in his ginning factories and shipped the pure cotton by railway for Mombasa to be exported in Bombay.

A model migrant, Varas Alidina Visram was also a model businessman. Indeed, his success seems to have been the product not only of a keen business sense, but also of the good reputation he enjoyed. Around 1907, he became the close friend of Kings, Kabakas, Chiefs, Ministers, Envoys, Generals and Admirals

Varas Alidina Visram was reputed for his open heart and generous hand. He donated a massive sum for the construction of the first Jamatkhana in Kisumu in 1905, which was inaugurated by the Imam. When the Imam visited Kisumu, the *jamat* prepared a special cart of four horses. Varas Alidina and Mukhi Varas Hashim Jamal (1880-1970) and two other Ismailis relieved the horses and joined themselves with the cart to pull it. The Imam asked its reasons amazingly. Varas Alidina Visram said, "Mawla! It is our desire to pull the cart like your horses from here to the Jamatkhana." The Imam said, **"I accept your ardent zeal, which should not be demonstrated in this manner. You are my spiritual children. Varas Ismail Gangji had removed off the slogan, Khoja! lift the load *(khoja uthao boja)*. Now I will never allow you to lift this load. Come out of it and join the horses. You come and sit with me in the cart."**

He was also one of the founder members of the Ismaili Council for Mombasa, which was established on November 4, 1905 with President Mukhi Ibrahim Nanji.

It was in 1905 that the Imam advised him to invite the indigent Ismailis of Kathiawar and help them settle down in Kenya and Uganda. He and Mukhi Valji Hirji of Mombasa invited a bulk of Indian Ismailis to the African continent.

With the help of Mukhi Varas Hashim Jamal, he assisted new immigrant Ismailis to settle in Kisumu and other parts of Kenya in 1911. He established small provision stores, which sold sesame seeds, beans, peanuts, rice, jiggery, ghee, and much later hides and skins. These immigrant Ismailis settled in Homa Bay, Mumias, Sio Port and other small towns.

He was bestowed the title of **Varas** for his invaluable services. It must be recorded that he was the first titleholder of **Varas** in Kenya and Uganda. When the Imam was gracing *didar* in Nairobi in 1914, he was sitting on the floor beside the chair of the Imam. He at once saw the tears bursting out of the Imam's eyes. It perplexed him so emphatically that he also wept. Soon after a short while, he dared to ask the Imam its reason. The Imam said, **"My followers in the world are so visible in my sight as the lines in your palm. I am now looking at my followers of Kutchh, who are the impoverished peasants. I am ruffled to see their deplorable conditions."** To this, Varas said, "May I do something for them?" The Imam said, **"You can do everything for them. You arrange to bring them and allot 10 acres land to each of them. I will send them in Africa on my expenses."** He agreed and made a plan with his Assistant, Rashid Khamisa. It however took him little time, but became successful and brought many Indian Ismailis in Africa. They first joined as employees and later they started their own shops. It is said that the 90 percent of the Ismailis, who attained their prosperity in Kenya and Uganda, owe their settlement to him. They came as his employees and later established their own business.

And no doubt his reputation was enhanced by the substantial fund he donated to Namirembe Cathedral, to the Red Cross and to a hospital in Kampala.

He lived to see 65 years of hard life bring prosperity in Africa, and made regular annual visits to every main branch of his vast business empire. On one of his routine trips to branches in Congo Belgium to recover the outstanding amount from the petty merchants, he failed to get it. He was highly shocked, hence contracted a cold fever while he returned and died very soon in Mombasa on June 30, 1916.

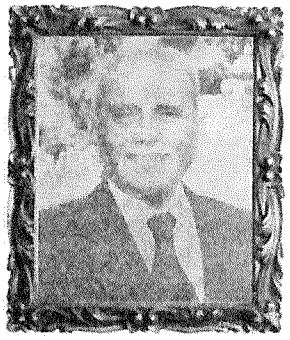
His son, Varas Abdul Rasul (d. 1923) built a High School in Mombasa to commemorate the name of his father. A memorial bronze of Varas Alidina Visram was presented by Rajab Ali Hasham Paroo, his life-long associate and his General Manager, and was unveiled in Mombasa on September 9, 1937 by the governor of Kenya. This school stands as a remnant of his numerous pioneering feats.

Varas Alidina was certainly an Asian who pioneered the East African economy, and helped the British Government in all possible ways in development issues.

Dr. Cyril Ehrlich writes in **"The Uganda Economy 1903-1945"** (p. 18) that, "Perhaps the most important individual in the early history in East Africa, Seth Alidina Visram was responsible for laying the firm foundation not only of trade in Uganda but of such industries as cotton, sugar, rubber, tea and various other agricultural products as well as of shipping across Lake Victoria." According to **"Oriental Nairobi"**, "An interesting point is that the Khoja community was in East Africa even before the foundation of Nairobi, the merchant, Prince Alidina Visram, also known as the Uncrowned King of Uganda, extended his activities on the mainland from Mombasa to the lower reaches of the Nile."

Sir Frederick Jackson, the governor of Uganda described him as "a charming old gentleman, respected by everyone in the country, high and low, white or black."





AMIR ALI, CAPTAIN, VARAS
(1910-1978)

Vali, the son of Rehmu Bhagat was a devoted person in Bhuj, Kutchh. He left Kutchh for Sind, and ultimately settled in Karachi. Soon after the retirement of Mukhi Alidina Asani (1793-1881) from the post of the Estate Agent in 1873, Imam Hasan Ali Shah appointed him the second Estate Agent for Karachi and Sind. The Imam also bestowed upon him the title of **Varas**. His descendant became known as the Valliani family in Karachi and Sind. Varas Vali rendered his services with devotion and died in 1878. The third Estate Agent after him was Varas Basaria, who died in 1918. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah then appointed Varas Ibrahim, the son of Varas Vali as the fourth Estate Agent. Varas Ibrahim (d. 1924) retired in 1920 and he was followed by Wazir Rahim Basaria (d. 1927) as the next Estate Agent. The sixth Estate Agent was Varas Ghulam Hussain (1938), the son of Varas Ibrahim and he was followed by Karim (1881-1968), the son of Varas Ibrahim as the seventh Estate Agent for Karachi and Sind. In sum, the office of the Estate Agent remained in Asani, Valliani and Basaria families.



Not only Karim was the recipient of the title **Wazir**, but the Imam also granted him the unique title of **Senior Wazir** in 1954. He retired in 1954 due to his eye weakness. His son, Captain Amir Ali, the eighth Estate Agent, followed him. Senior Wazir Karim died on Wednesday, October 23, 1968 at the age of 87 years. Upon his death, the Imam sent following urgent message on October 25, 1968:-

URGENT PARIS 25th Oct., 1968
Time 15-15
Urgent

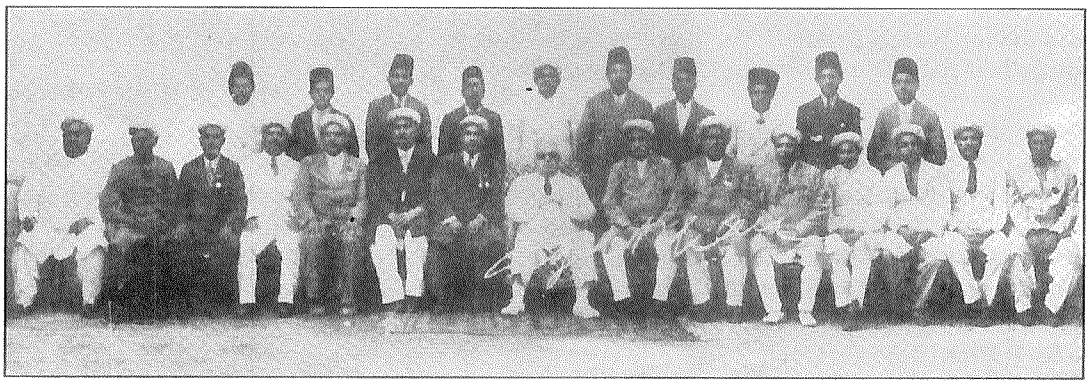
Wazir Amirali Currim,
Care Mumtaz,
Karachi.

I was deeply grieved to hear of the sad demise of your beloved father Senior Vazir Currim. I send my most affectionate special paternal maternal loving blessing for the soul of late Senior Vazir Currim and pray for the eternal soul of late Senior Vazir Currim and I pray that eternal peace rests upon his soul. Late Senior Currim's long devoted service to my Pakistan *jamat*, my grandfather, my family and myself will always be warmly remembered and he will be dearly missed by us all. I send my most affectionate loving blessings to Varsiani Fatmabai, Vazir Zulfikarally, yourself and all members of your family my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings

for your courage and fortitude in your irreparable loss. Affectionately Agakhan. Co Urgent.

Varas Captain Amir Ali, the son of Senior Wazir Karim was born in September 4, 1910. He completed his Inter Arts in D.J. Sind College, Karachi in 1928-29. He proceeded on his first foreign trip in 1933 when the historic Indo-British Round Table Conference was held in London, where the Imam granted him an audience in Ritz Hotel. He brought the Imam's messages in India for Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah and Sir Abdullah Haroon (1872-1942), insisting upon them to keep up the pressure through the columns of the press for the separation of Sind from Bombay Presidency. These messages induced Captain Amir Ali to start an English weekly, called **"Sind Sentinel"** with Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana (1906-1985) and himself as co-editor. It played a vital role for the cause till April 1, 1936 when the ultimate object of Sind separation was achieved. In summary, Sind became a separate province under the 1936 Provincial Autonomy Reforms. He also closed down the publication of his weekly paper in 1936.

His marriage took place in June, 1935 in a simple ceremony and laid the best example for the affluent class. The Imam was happy of his simple marriage and sent a telegraphic message to his father from Europe, which reads: **"Best blessings Karachi children your family entertainment marriage occasion. Delighted good news economic marriage ceremony."**



There was only one Supreme Council in Karachi till 1935. In 1936, the Imam visited Karachi and introduced young blood in the newly formed Ismailia Supreme Council for Sind. He was appointed member with Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana, Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy and Varas Abbas Ali Muhammad, etc. His age at that time was 26 years and was the youngest among the members. He was also appointed the member of Educational Board in 1936 and Honorary Secretary of Janbai Maternity Home in Karachi.

In 1941, he joined the army at the instance of Prince Aly S. Khan, who felt that there were no Ismailis in the army and someone should initiate. So, he responded and was almost the first Ismaili to join the armed forces in the Infantry Division during the second world war in 1941 as a King's Emergency Commissioned Officer, and rose from 2nd Lieutenant to Temporary Major's rank. He was sent to Mahow for a training of 18 months. Due to the emergency, the course was crammed into six months. He was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant in May, 1942. He was posted mainly in Assam up to the river Chindwin on

Burma border, and was charged in the famous siege of Kohina and Manipur on the Burma front and became the recipient of three war service medals. When the war ended in 1945, he was given an option for release in July, 1946 and granted the rank of an Honorary Captain.

On return to civilian life, he applied himself to agriculture in Sind around Tando Bagho. He worked under the guidance of his maternal uncle, Wazir Sabzali. Later, he went to his rice mill in Badin and supervised it for over two years.

His father was an honorary Estate Agent and his weakness of sight did not allow him to work. The Imam relieved him in 1954 with a special title of **Senior Wazir** and appointed his son Captain Amir Ali as the next Estate Agent. He was the 4th in succession from his great-grandfather, Varas Vali.

Prince Aly S. Khan also appointed him his honorary Estate Agent for Pakistan, including for Prince Sadruddin and Prince Amyn Muhammad. The Imam appointed him as his constituted Attorney for Pakistan. He was also the Liaison Officer of the Imam for the Ismailis of Iran, Iraq, Shaikhdoms of Persian and Arabian Gulfs, Afghanistan, Burma, Malaya and Sri Lanka.

He was appointed an Ex-Officio Member on the Ismailia Federal Council for Pakistan and all other Supreme and Local Councils, and also on the Economic Planning & Grants Council for Ismailis in Pakistan.

During the Coronation Ceremony of the King of Iran on October 26, 1967 at Golestan Palace, Tehran, the Imam summoned him in Iran. On those days, it perplexed Reza Shah Pahelvi, the King of Iran to see him to take away and place the shoes of the Imam. The King asked, "Is he your servant?" The Imam said, "No, he is one of my family members."

He died on December 21, 1978 at Karachi. The Imam sent following message on December 22, 1978 through the Ismailia Federal Council for Pakistan:

I have learnt with the deepest sorrow of the passing away of one of my senior most *jamati* leaders in Pakistan, Wazir Amirali Currim. I send my most affectionate warmest special loving blessings for the soul of late Wazir Amirali Currim and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace.

The late Wazir Amirali Currim's long and devoted and able services since the time of my late grandfather will always be remembered by the *jamat* and by myself and he will be greatly missed by us all. His passing away is a profound loss to my *jamat* and to me personally for Wazir Amirali had set an example of dedication and hard work, for the *jamat* in Pakistan and elsewhere, and I had many occasions to know how deeply the late Wazir cared about the *jamat's* unity and spiritual and worldly happiness. Late Wazir Amirali Currim had succeeded his father as Estate Agent to the Imam, that is to one of the highest offices in the *jamat* and in doing so he was continuing an admirable tradition of service to the house of the Imam, that his father had begun before him.

Her Highness the Begum joins me in sending our heartfelt sympathies to the family of the late Wazir Amirali Currim and at this time of sorrow and bereavement they are all particularly in my heart, thoughts and prayers.

The Imam also sent another message to his wife, Varasiani Kulsum and family as follows:

I have learnt with great pain and sorrow of the sudden passing away of your husband Wazir Amirali Currim. I send you and sons Aziz and Salim and all the members of your family my most affectionate paternal maternal special blessings for service with best loving blessings for the soul of late Vazir Amirali. I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. The late Wazir's devoted services since the time of my late grandfather will always be remembered by my *jamat* of Pakistan and elsewhere and by myself and he will be greatly missed by us all.

Your late husband was one of the most trusted and loved spiritual children of the worldwide *jamat* and his worldly ceasing is a profound loss to the *jamat* and to me. He will always be present in my heart and thoughts and prayers.

Her Highness the Begum joins me in sending you and your family our heartfelt condolences in your painful bereavement.

I send you all my most affectionate special loving blessings for courage and strength to bear this tragic loss. You are all in my heart and prayers.

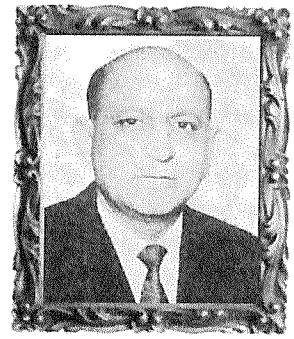
Prince Sadruddin also sent following telegraphic message to this effect:

For family late Wazir Captain Amirali Currim deeply distressed. Just heard tragic news-sudden demise. My dear friend Captain Amirali whose dedicated lifelong service to my family will never be forgotten. My late father equally appreciated his invaluable cooperation and present Hazar Imam and he can never be replaced. My wife and myself share your terrible loss and grief. We pray the Almighty that he may rest in peace. Please accept our most affectionate thoughts.

Prince Amyn Muhammad also sent following message:

Have learnt with great pain and sorrow passing away of Wazir Amirali Currim. Please accept my heartfelt condolence in your great loss. Vazir Amirali Currim's devoted services since the time of my late grandfather for the Imam and the community will always be remembered by us all.

I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. May Allah give you all strength and courage to bear this great loss.



AMIR ALI FANCY, WAZIR
(1914-1978)

Alibhai Lalji is reported to have migrated from Junagadh, India to Mombasa, Kenya in 1880 to explore business opportunities. His son Hussain also came from India in 1912, and settled however in Mwanza. Later on, his son Hasan Ali and the rest of the family joined Hussain in 1920 in Mwanza. They jointly ran a general store, called Alibhai Lalji & Sons, and made steady progress.

Hasan Ali liked modernity in dressing and eating. He was meticulously dressed and was easily distinguished in a crowd of Asians. Due to his modern tastes, he was nick named as Hasan Ali Fancy.

Amir Ali Fancy was one of the five sons of Hasan Ali Fancy. He was born on July 14, 1914 in Mombasa. He studied up to four classes and started his business career at the age of 12 years in 1926. Lots of Europeans came shopping at his store, enabling him to pick up English. His interest grew and he started learning English at the age of 20 years. Amir Ali Fancy married Anarbai Kassim on January 14, 1937.

His appearance in the arena of community services began when he joined the cooperative societies in the Lake District towns of Tanganyika. He also became a member of the Provincial Council, and then the Supreme Council in East Africa. On an occasion, an auction of land took place in Ukumbi village. Some Ismailis together bought a big plot for the Jamatkhana. He suggested them to resell the plot to the shopkeepers at a higher price, and the difference in money should go towards creating a fund to build the Jamatkhana. Thus, the *jamat* procured a tidy sum to meet the expenses of the construction of a prayer hall.

He was fond of hunting in the jungles around Mwanza and the hills and vales of Sarangati were his favourite grounds. Several times he had miraculously escaped from the lions and the cannibal tribes. When Prince Aly Khan knew about his fondness for hunting, he made special trips to Mwanza.

In 1946, he visited India with his brother-in-law, Meghani, where he found no business opportunities. He arrived in Karachi on July 1947. When the movement of the partition of India was at its climax, he found the Hindus in a frenzy to sell everything and leave for India. Having inspected the situation, he took a decision in nick of time to settle down in Karachi one month before the independence of Pakistan. He concluded a deal to buy an iron and steel re-rolling mill from a Hindu merchant and a godown full of iron and steel scrap at a throwaway price. He intimated his family in Africa to dispose off all interests

and migrate soon to Pakistan. This decision marked the beginning of a vast business and an industrial empire he was to build in Pakistan over the later years. The early days in Karachi were trying times, but with hard work and determination, he prospered his business.

He became a business magnate very soon in Pakistan, played a pioneering role in the industrial development of Pakistan and made tremendous contributions to the socio-economic activities. In 1954, he was conferred the **"Order of Merit"** (Officer of the Order of Merit of Republique Italy) from the Italian government in recognition of his valuable contribution in expansion of trade with Italy. In 1956, he was also a member of trade delegation to East Africa.

He was the Chairman of Pakistan Oil Refinery Ltd., New Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd., Pakistan Chrome Mines, Steel Corporation of Pakistan Ltd., Crescent Jute Mills Ltd., Jessore Jute Mills Ltd., Peoples Jute Mills Ltd., Farooq Textile Mills Ltd., Commerce Bank Ltd., Pakistan Tourism, Industrial Management Ltd., etc.

He was also the Director of Karachi Gas Co. Ltd., Sui Gas Transmission Co. Ltd., Pakistan Insurance Corporation Ltd., Karachi Electric Supply Corporation Ltd., Pakistan Services Ltd., Pakistan Industrial Credit & Investment Corporation Ltd., Zeal Pak Cement Factory Ltd., etc.

Besides being associated with import and export houses, the Government of Pakistan had taken him up on the Advisory Panel on Investment, Ministry of Finance, etc. Outside Pakistan, he was a member of the Advisory Council of the International Industrial Conference and an Executive Committee Member of Pakistan Council, International Chamber of Commerce, etc.

He was also the first Chairman of Pak-Ismaili Multi-purpose Cooperative Society, Platinum Jubilee Finance Corporation, Industrial Promotion Service, Pak-Ismailia Publications Ltd. He was also one of the founders of the periodical, **"Ismaili Mirror"** which he financed and provided his own office to use it with telephone and other facilities.

In 1954, as a member of the Supreme Council for West Pakistan, he was actively associated with Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah. Before the Platinum Jubilee, the Imam summoned a meeting of the leaders and told them that the amount collected for the jubilee was to be utilized for the welfare of the *jamat*. He also got a hand-written letter of the Imam that he desired the amount to be used in such a way that the Ismailis learn to stand on their own feet and not become dependent economically, or otherwise, on anyone. He at once responded to the letter and committed himself to carry out the Imam's wishes. He went ahead to form a Special Committee, of which he became the Convenor, and worked out a viable programme to establish cooperative societies and recommended the setting up of the Platinum Jubilee Finance and Investment Corporation to assist the cooperative credit societies at a low interest rate of only 2%. The proposal met Imam's approval and the Corporation came into being in August, 1954, of which he was elected as its first Chairman. Subsequently, he was also elected the Chairman of Platinum Jubilee Cooperative Bank. In recognition of his meritorious services, the Imam conferred upon him the title of **Wazir** on July, 1955.

The Aga Khan Charitable Trust came into existence in 1960, and he was its first Chairman. Prince Sadruddin played an important part in giving advice and partly financing this Ismaili rehabilitation project. 10 blocks of 24 flats each were initially planned to rehabilitate the poor Ismaili families. A large piece of land was acquired in the barren area of Federal "B" Area, Karachi. Before he retired, he saw to it that the Karimabad colony got an official status with the formation of a local council.

His family's benevolent fund came into existence in 1960 with a capital of Rs. 16,00,000/- known as the Fancy Foundation. He was its Chairman since its inception. This foundation provided scholarships to deserving students. It also donated a large library to the Staff College at Quetta.

The Ismailis of the Common Wealth presented an honour to Queen Elizabeth in Karachi in February 1961. He represented them along with industrialists.

In summary, he was the Chairman, the Managing Director and the Director of 36 to 40 companies before his death, including his own multi-million family concerns of business, industry and mining interests, and controlled a total work force of almost 4000 employees. He was also the Director and an Advisor to a few government and non-government organizations.

His career of leadership in a real sense began when the Imam established the Ismailia Federal Council for Pakistan on March 21, 1961 and had the distinguished honour of becoming its first President. The foremost task he took up was the framing of the constitution for the *jamat* in Pakistan. He held innumerable meetings and drew up a workable constitutional framework. This work was his first major achievement. During his period, the Imam visited thrice Pakistan. The Imam also graciously accepted his invitations twice to stay at his bungalow, Aminar in Karachi. The first time in 1964, and the second time in 1970 with Begum Salimah.

The Imam was so pleased with his works in planning the Aga Khan Charitable Trust, and the Aga Khan III Foundation schemes in Karachi that he was specially assigned to do the ground work for the Aga Khan Foundation in Geneva, which he did, and which is now one of the finest of its kind.

In resettlement of the Ismaili refugees from Burma, Varas Amir Ali's timely action proved productive. As soon as the distress was reported, he flew to Burma and met with the Ismaili leaders and worked out the shifting of the Ismailis. He organized further action and flew to Dacca and made necessary arrangements, and the mission to resettle the Burmese Ismaili refugees was successful.

The birthday of the Hazar Imam was celebrated on December 13, 1964 in a grand *darbar* at the Aga Khan Gymkhana, Karachi in the presence of over hundred thousand Ismaili, including delegations from around the world. This unique occasion would forever remain carved in the hearts of Ismailis, because the Imam personally graced the celebration of his own birthday for the first time with his followers. The Ismailis were submerged in the ocean of mirth and joy. On that occasion, Varas Amir Ali Fancy delivered a welcoming speech on behalf of the Federal Council and said, **"To us, our great Imam, you are a**

symbol of truth and justice. We feel that it is through your illuminating presence, whether you are in our midst or not, we continue to march on the road to salvation, success, peace and prosperity. In this material age, when our worldly happiness and benefits take control of the human mind, our Imam's constant guidance, forethought and words of wisdom to follow the spirit of Islam give us more and spiritual upliftment."

Accepting the homage, the Imam said, **"My happiness at being with you on this occasion is deep and pure, all my thoughts, all my hopes and all my prayers are for you."**

The Imam performed the cake-cutting ceremony on the same day in the evening in the presence of distinguished leaders at the bungalow of Varas Amir Ali Fancy.

He laid the foundation of Platinum Jubilee Co-operative Housing Society Ltd. at Hyderabad on October 4, 1964.

The first ever World Ismaili Socio-Economic Conference was held in Karachi in December 15, 1964. It was a landmark in the Ismaili history, therefore, he worked hard for its success. He was elected as the President of its Executive Board with Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai and Itmadi Ali Muhammad C. Padamsee as the Vice-Presidents.

Miss Naseem, the daughter of Varas Amir Ali Fancy was married to Mr. Zulfikar Pyar Ali Khanbhai of Nairobi on December 19, 1964 at Muslim Gymkhana, Karachi. The Imam graciously attended the marriage and presented an emerald to the bride and a *shawl* to Varas Amir Ali Fancy.

The Imam established **I.P.S.** (Industrial Promotion Service) in 1964, and he was made its first Chairman.

As the President of the Federal Council, he hosted receptions and dinners for some important personalities of the world, such as Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II, Mr. John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of United States, Malaysian Prime Minister, Sheikh Zaki Yamani, Minister for oil and petroleum of Saudi Arabia, etc. On November 14, 1962, Field Marshall Muhammad Ayub Khan, the President of Pakistan performed an opening ceremony of the Pakistan Oil Refinery Ltd. at Korangi, about 10 miles off Karachi, and then attended the dinner programme at the residence of Varas Amir Ali Fancy with ministers and distinguished leaders.

The prestigious Standford Research Institute of the United States appointed him a member of the executive committee. The organization holds an annual seminar, when eminent business and industrialist magnates and economists of the world are invited to deliver talks on economic matters at global level. He had the singular honour to be invited from Pakistan. He was also invited to attend meetings of the International Monetary Fund at Washington.

His quality of leadership won him universal admiration, not within but outside the community. He was always kind, sympathetic and a great philanthropist. He retired from the post of President at the Federal Council for Pakistan in December 1972. The Imam

showered upon him with best loving blessings for his incredible services.

He dwelt in Abu Dhabi since 1975, where he was appointed Special Advisor to Sheikh Faisal bin Sultan al-Karimi of Sharjah. He was confided to work out a plan for some important industrial projects in North Yemen.

The last few years he travelled extensively inspite of being handicapped by a serious cardiac ailment. His spirit, courage and capacity to work were a matter of constant surprise for his relatives and friends. Almost two months prior to his death, he developed serious complications in his lungs and kidneys and was quite unwell. He desired to be brought home to Karachi, and kept cheerful till the last day when he said, "My journey home has started."

A few weeks before his homeward journey, the Imam in Paris fortunately granted him a private audience. When he took leave, the Imam said, **"I admire the way you have been struggling. If there were more persons of your fortitude, the face of the *jamat* could change."**

He returned to Karachi on August 10, 1978. His condition shattered on August 12, 1978. The doctors were not sure if he would survive that night. His wife Varasiani Anarbai was worried and had already telephoned all her children abroad to reach Karachi. She told her husband that, "The children are coming home. I have not told them how critical your condition is. Will not you wait till they arrive? How would I face them if you depart now?" Varas Amir Ali was in virtual comma, but he nodded his head, implying he would wait for the children. After few hours he opened his eyes, regained consciousness. He breathed his last on the evening of August 13, 1978 after seeing all his children.

During the sad demise of Varas Amir Ali Fancy, the Imam sent following telex-message to Varasiani Anarbai Fancy: -

I have learnt with greatest sorrow of the passing away of your husband Wazir Fancy and send to you and all the members of your family my warmest and special and most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for courage and fortitude in your bereavement and for the eternal peace and rest of the soul of Vazir Fancy. For eleven months the late Wazir set an example of dedication and hard work for the *jamat* in Pakistan in his capacity as President of the Federal Council and during those years the *jamat* made note of the worthy progress much of which was due to the immense personal effort of your husband. At a national and international level the late Vazir was one of Pakistan's most respected entrepreneurs and his passing away is a deep loss to his country, to the *jamat* and to me personally. You and your family are at this time of sorrow particularly in my heart, thoughts and prayers. My wife has especially asked me to tell you how much she too participates in your grief.





AMIR ALI MUHAMMAD ORMADAWALA, ITMADI
(1917-1967)

Amir Ali Muhammad Ormadawala was born in 1917 in the house of Mohammad Hirji of Amerali. His father died in 1918 when he was hardly a year old. His mother, Sambai had a religious proclivity and rendered her services as the Mukhiani of the Ormada *jamat*.

He was given adequate religious training since childhood. He entered the arena of community services when he became the Chairman of the Ormada School Board. He also served as a member of the Ormada Council, and became the Kamadia and then Mukhi of the Jamatkhana. In appreciation of his dedicated services, the Imam bestowed upon him the title of **Alijah** in 1946.

It may be noted that in the early centuries, Ormada was a part of Kalat State under Makran domain. It was given to Jam of Lasbela by Khan Nasir Khan. It remained in Lasbela State till 1972. When Jam Ghulam Mohammad, the ruler of Lasbela visited Ormada in 1933, he appointed Azharuddin as the first Naib Tehsildar of Ormada. In the time of the 8th Naib Tehsildar, Mr. Allah Dino (1945-1946), an earthquake devastated Ormada, in which the Jamatkhana was also destroyed. Its report was communicated in Bombay to the Imam through a delegation of the Ormada *jamat*. The Imam granted permission to build a new Jamatkhana. Mukhi Amirali extended his timely and valuable cooperation in building the new Jamatkhana and donated a large amount in return. He served the Ormada *jamat* for five years.

He launched a trip of Karachi in 1948, and found it an ideal place for his business. He worked hard and built a successful business in Karachi.

He was indeed a man of manifold qualities, notably a source of encouragement to social workers. He was a noble soul and possessed pleasing and lovable personality. He was appointed Kamadia of the Garden Jamatkhana on March 21, 1961. In view of his invaluable services, the Imam promoted him as Mukhi on December 25. 1964 in place of late Wazir Mukhi Hussain Peera, who died on September 12, 1964. He executed the office of the Mukhi till his last breath. The Imam also bestowed him the title of **Itmadi**.

He became an ex-officio member of The Ismailia Federal Council for Pakistan and the Ismailia Association for Pakistan. He was also a member of the Aga Khan Karachi Jamatkhanas Construction Advisory Committee, the Pak-Ismailia Cooperative Bank Ltd., Education Board and Platinum Jubilee Finance and Investment Corporation. He played significant part in the construction of the new Jamatkhana of Garden area.

He performed the column concrete filling ceremony of the third floor of the Garden Jamatkhana on July 11, 1966.

Mukhi Itmadi Amir Ali Ormadawala died on Monday, October 23, 1967. The Imam sent the following urgent telegraphic message on November 18, 1967 to the Garden Council:

Paris Telexe de Lassy,
Par Luzarches 62 29 1142,
Karachi.

My dear President and Members,

I have received your letter of October 24th, and was much grieved to hear of the sad demise of Aitmadi Amirali Mohammed Ormarawalla, the Mukhi of Garden *Jamat*.

I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late Aitmadi Amirali, and pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace.

Kindly convey my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings to all the members of late Aitmadi Amirali's family for courage and fortitude in their great loss.

Late Aitmadi Amirali's devoted services will always be remembered by my Karachi *Jamat* and myself.

He was like a lion of service and was an example to all, but which few could emulate.

While appointing Rai Jumabhai Sadruddin Khemani, the President of the Garden Council as the new Mukhi for Garden Jamatkhana, the Imam sent following message on January 1, 1968 to the Federal Council for Pakistan that:

My dear President and Members,

I appoint with my best paternal maternal loving blessings Rai Jooma Sadruddin Khemani as the Mukhi of Garden *Jamat*.

I send my best paternal maternal blessings for the soul of late Mukhi Amirali Mohomed Ormarawalla and pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace.

Until 21st March, 1968, the Vice-President of the Garden Council should attend to the functioning of the Garden Council.



Amir Ismail Bin Muhammad
(1828- 1896)

Soon after the Fatimid Khilafat in 1171, Saladin (d. 1193), the Ayyubid ruler massacred the Nizari Ismailis in and around Egypt. Most of the Ismailis migrated to Syria and settled in the surroundings of Khwabi and Kadmos. With them came the grandfathers of Amir Ismail bin Muhammad, who made Tanitah, a village near Kadmos as their abode.

Amir Ismail bin Muhammad was born in Salamia, Syria in 1828. He came from a family, who was noted for their selfless services to the Imam and the *jamat*. He took his early education in Damascus. He inherited some fertile tracts around Salamia. He was a dedicated and social worker among the Syrian *jamats*.

He knitted the scattered Ismailis in Salamia. He raised funds to grant loans to the Ismaili farmers and also distributed parcels of land to them with complete equality. Within few years, the number of the Ismailis in Salamia multiplied, and they formed a self-sustaining community.

He was the first Estate Agent of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in Syria since 1890. He was a prominent figure in Salamia and the Ottoman authorities appointed him the director of the Municipality. The Imam bestowed upon him the honorific title of **Saif ad-Dawla** in 1890. In 1895, Himadi Umar, the chief of the Momin Shahis and the bitter enemy of the Ismailis made a false report to the Ottoman authorities to take actions against the Ismailis, who were working against the government. Amir Ismaili tried to persuade the authorities in Hamma to rescind their decision to conscript them from Salamia, but he failed. He traveled for Istanbul to procure better result, where he again failed. Finally, he set out for Bombay to seek Imam's directions, but died on the way to India in 1896. He is well remembered among the Syrian *jamats* for his meritorious services.



ASS'AD SHAH KHALILI
(1915-1966)

He was known as Brigadier General Amir Ass'ad Shah Khalili, and was born in 1915. He took up a military career in Iran and became an officer in army of His Imperial Majesty the Shahanshah of Iran. He rose to his rank very soon and served as Adjutant in the Defence Ministry. As his services were required in the Police Force, he was seconded to the Police of the State and retired as a Chief Police. He had many medals and decorations to his credit.

He was the estate agent of the Imam since 1951 in Iran. After his retirement, he started his own small business and became the directors of three business firms.

His younger brother, Shah Rukh Shah Khalili was promoted in the army as Brigadier General in 1963, and was posted in Shiraz in the province of Fars as the head of the police department. When De Gaulle, the French President visited Shiraz, he was honoured with the French Legion of Honour. His other brother, Colonel Abdul Ali Khan Shah Khalili was in the defence department. All these brothers were landowners and very influential and served the Ismaili *jamats* in Iran.

Ass'ad Shah Khalili attended the first Ismailia Socio-Economic Conference in Karachi on December 15, 1964 and died in 1966 in Iran.



ASHAD ALI HAJI
(1885-1958)

Virji Kamadia, known as Vira Bhagat was Mukhi of the Junagadh Panjibhai Club. His family's profession was to cut the stones to be sold in the market. He sustained a close relationship with Wazir Ismail Gangji (1788-1883), from whom he acquired religious knowledge, and he gradually became a missionary. Jamal Megji, the son of Virji Kamadia was a brilliant orator. He delivered his first *waez* in Junagadh and won the hearts of the *jamat*, including Varas Ismaili Gangji, who said, "Your status will become too high."

In 1892, the Imam visited Jamnagar and blessed him with the title of **Bodh Kamadia**. The Imam also enjoined the district Kamadia, Thavar Ladha, to work as his assistant. Jamal Megji visited every district and spread the Ismaili faith. He is reputed to have started the tradition of the annual *majalis* in Jamnagar, Vancaner, Rajsitapur, Kotada Sangani, Nigar, Panderkavada, Jam Jodhpur, Vardha, Dholera and Poona. When he started the annual *majalis* in Goga, the Imam said, "This *majalis* is the mother of all *majalis*."

On April 15, 1900, the Imam said to the *jamat* in Jamnagar that, **"I have sent some *farmans* for you to Wazir Kassim and wrote two names. These two persons will visit the villages and organize the *majalis* and will impart you the meaning (of the *ginans* & *farmans*). The names of these two persons are Jamal Megji and Thavar Ladha. I appoint them, and they will exhort you the meaning. It is incumbent on you to accord them due respect when they return. You must respect them as if they were special guests. You must concentrate when they interpret *ginans*."**

Alibhai Jamal, known as Ashad Ali Haji was the elder son of Missionary Jamal Megji, who was born in Junagadh on March 4, 1885. He had gone to Europe early in the century and established his business in France. He also served as Kamadia in the Paris Jamatkhana with Mukhi Murad Ali.

During the First World War, he proceeded to Spain in 1914, where he also found some Ismaili businessmen. He was a social worker and devoted like his father, therefore, the Imam appointed him Mukhi of the Spain Jamatkhana. He was a true Ismaili and those who loved him treasured religious knowledge.

His most noble service was to help the unemployed Ismailis till their settlement in Spain. He also encouraged the employed Ismailis to venture into the business field.

Mukhi Ashad Ali Haji died on July 3, 1958 and was survived by his wife and seven children.

BANDALI KASSIM, VARAS
(1875-1956)



Vali, the grandfather of Varas Bandali Kassim was originally from Bhuj, Kutchh. He took up his abode at Karachi with his eight years old son, Kassim and resided in Kharadhar, Karachi. Kassim joined his father's firm, dealing in leather and made steady progress. Kassim had five sons, Merali, Bandali, Muhammad, Rashid and Karim.

His son Bandali Kassim was born in 1875. Soon after his rudiment education, he took over the charge of his business with his brothers and became known as an "uncrowned king" among the business magnates. His business extended to Europe through M/S Volcart Bros. He opened many branches of his firm in Sind. He erected a big factory in Lyari quarter, Karachi to dye the leathers to be exported to Europe.

He also continued to follow his forefathers' footprints to serve the community as a part and parcel of his life. He joined the Khoja Panjibhai Club as a member. The Imam appointed him a member of the Ismaili Supreme Council on December 17, 1917 through a telegraphic message from Europe. He was appointed President of the Supreme Council between September 1, 1919 and August 31, 1921. He also published the **"Rules of the Shia Imami Ismaili Council of Karachi"** in 1920.

He was noted for his piety and generosity. He donated a large amount to the Relief Fund of Kathiawar in 1919 and also gave a handsome amount for the scholarship of the Ismailis in Kharadhar School in Karachi. He gave Rs. 30,000/- for extending the premises of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi, which was opened on June 30, 1919. He also provided furnitures to the Ismaili Library and Panjibhai Club and funded the Religious Night School for many years. In 1919, he formed the "Late Kassim Vali Private Khoja Ismailia Orphan Fund" and donated Rs. 10,000/- for the welfare of the poor Ismailis.



His wife Khatija was also a social worker. She was the President of the Ladies Committee. She rendered admirable services to the War Relief Fund for Sind branch. When Mrs. Lorrence, the wife of the Sind Commissioner, hosted a farewell banquet at the Wadi, Garden area on April 30, 1919, Khatija read the welcome address.

His exports in Europe suffered a setback during the outbreak of the First World War. The British India however purchased his leathers, to which a Committee was formed of five eminent traders under his headship. He continued to supply the government on commission basis until the end of the war in 1919.

When an economic slump struck the traders during the First World War; the local banks held up to sanction loans to the traders in 1917. It caused intensive hardships to the local Ismaili traders. He came forward to help them and formed a Khoja Ismailia Trading Company with a reserve capital of five million rupees, each share cost Rs. 100/- He himself purchased its shares as a promoter for Rs. 1,25,000/- The Board of Directors elected him its Chairman. It was registered with the government on March 7, 1918. In its first ordinary meeting held on April 1, 1919, the director Varas Fadhu Piru Khalikdina (1885-1936) said in his opening speech that, "Seth Bandali Kassim assisted the Company on several occasions, and procured a handsome profit for the Company through his leather business. He also provided funds and manpower." In his reply as a Chairman, Varas Bandali said, "This is not a major work whatever I have done. I have executed it sincerely as my communal duty."

This institution began to lend money to Ismaili traders. He also increased the reserve funds of the Company through different methods. For instance, he deposited a sum of Rs. 10,000/- for the Khoja Ismailia Volunteer Corps, Rs. 1300/- for the Khoja Young Kathiawadi Ismaili Mitr Mandal, Rs. 700/- for the Garden Volunteer Corps, Rs. 5000/- for the Khoja Ismailia School, etc. Hence, these institutions received annual profits against the above fixed deposits.

He helped the destitute, treated the ailing families and aided the students in accessing education. He also assisted Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan and encouraged him to seek higher education. He was also the patron of the Lady Daffrin Hospital and Civil Hospital, and merited the status of **Honorary Magistrate** in Karachi.

On Sunday, April 11, 1920, the Imam said in Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi that, **"President Bandali Kassim has declared building a maternity home for Ismaili women, costing about Rs. 50,000/- to Rs. 75,000/- He has volunteered to build it in the name of his mother, Janbai. I give him many blessings. He will also build a home in the name of his father, Kassim Vali for the poor Ismailis; costing about Rs. 100,000/- I give him much blessings. President Bandali Kassim has launched excellent and benevolent projects, for which I am pleased and give him many blessings."**

On April 10, 1920, the Imam paid a visit of 27 days in Karachi and attended the marriage ceremony of his son, Ghulam Hyder on Sunday, April 25, 1920. The Imam asked Master Abdul Rasul to act as a *vakil* of the bridegroom and he would execute as a *vakil* of the bride. The Imam graciously presented the gold chains to the couple and tendered them congratulations.

In view of his indefatigable services, the Imam also said in his *mehmani* at the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi on April 25, 1920 that, "**President Bandali, you have toiled and moiled very much. I give you more and more blessings. You have a son and I pray that he may emerge in the community as a luminous lamp, and that his descendant**

also multiply at large. You will get happiness from your son. As you are near to me here, you will be near to me also hereafter. You have performed many works, relating to religion, such as extending the premises of the Jamatkhana, building it and also doing other benevolent works, such as the maternity home, poor house, banu shalla, school, etc., and donating colossal amount for them. Besides, you have performed many other excellent works; therefore, I give you more and more blessings, *Khanavadan.* You have executed recently many admirable works, for which I became much happy with you. *Khanavadan.*"

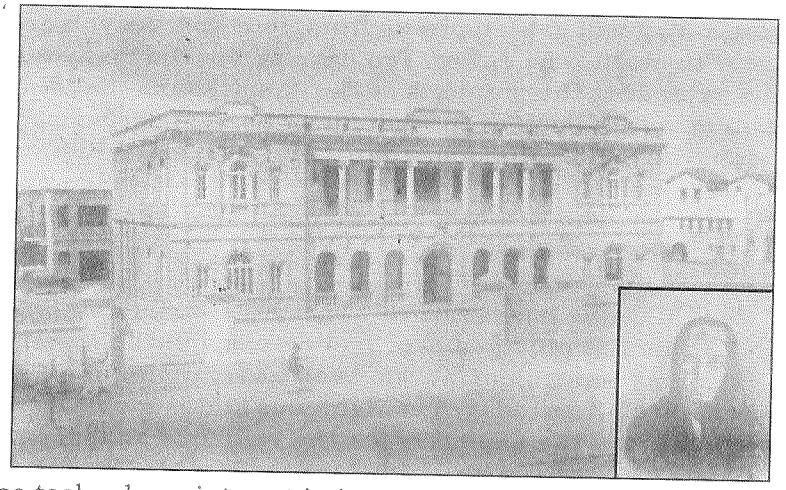
On Monday, April 26, 1920, the Imam said in Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi that, **"President Bandali Kassim has rendered excellent services to the *jamat.* He has also performed many excellent benevolent works, such as remitting me Rs. 1,50,000/- in Europe, which I am disclosing today. The righteous and laudable works are those that President Bandali bears the expenses for the religious school, which is held during night hours by the Kathiawadi Mitr Mandal. Besides, he gave Rs. 5000/- separately and constantly gives other donations. I give many blessings for it. *Khanavadan.*"**

Both Bandali Kassim and Alidina Ali Muhammad were famous in Karachi for their implication in all the righteous and benevolent works. A certain Rajan Dossa was highly touched with their noble works and composed a poem to pay them a well-deserved tribute and published it in the "**Ismaili Satpanth Prakash**" (Bombay) on August 27, 1919.

On Thursday, May 6, 1920, the Imam also said about these two persons at Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi, "**President Bandali Kassim and Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad take a leading part in all the righteous works. I have told them in the *mehmani* ceremony held yesterday that President Bandali Kassim and Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad shared in all the righteous works. There is not a single righteous and benevolent work, in which they are excluded. I give more and more blessings to them.**"

While granting him the title of **Alijah**, the Imam said in the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi on Thursday, May 6, 1920 that, "**The title of the Alijah is higher. I confer this title upon President Bandali Kassim. Call him President Alijah Bandali Kassim by now onwards. I give much blessings.**"

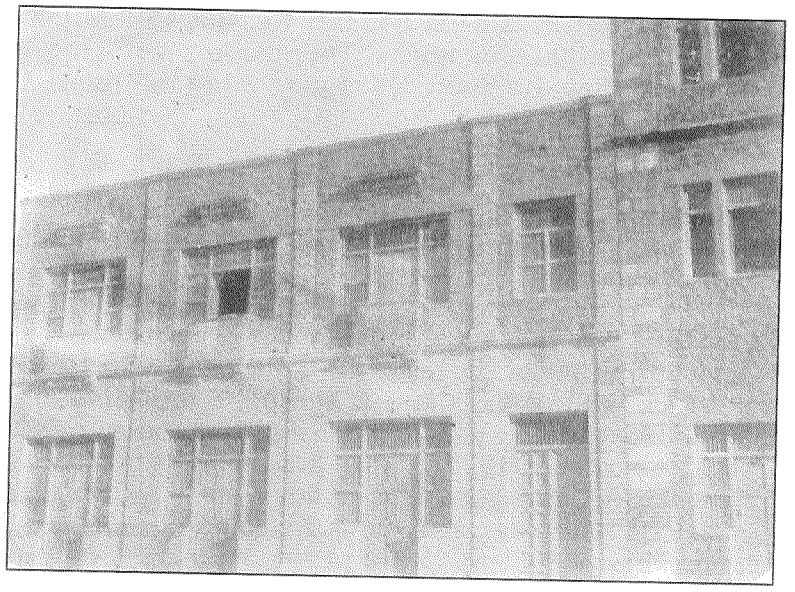
The total number of the Ismailis in Karachi around 1920 was about five thousands, and they were in need of a maternity home. The Imam hired one midwife in 1920. The average birth per month was 17 in 1923. Varas Bandali Kassim, a farsighted philanthropist obtained a plot of 3227 square yards for a maternity home from Harichandrai Vishandas, the President of Karachi Municipal. In 1920, Imam laid foundation of the maternity home at Kharadhar, Karachi. Varas Bandali Kassim donated Rs. 1,50,000/- for it, whose construction began in May, 1923. It was completed within four years and was inaugurated by J.L. Rieu, the Commissioner of Sind on April 15, 1924. It was named **"Janbai Kassim Vali Khoja Ismailia Maternity Home** " in the loving memory of his mother and was presented to the Imam. It was well equipped for the treatment of mothers and their newly born babies. It contained an operation room, waiting room and other seven rooms with 24 beds. It was furnished with the latest medical facilities under his supervision, and his



wife Khatija also took a keen interest in it.

The Imam also laid the foundation of a Khatijabai Khoja Ismailia Banu Shala (Ladies Industrial Home), adjoining the *musafarkhana* in Kharadhar area in 1920, which was the personal project of Varas Bandali Kassim, costing Rs. 20,000/- in the memory of his wife, Khatija.

He was appointed President of the Supreme Council for Karachi for the second time between March 1, 1922 and May 20, 1922. The Imam again appointed him as a President for the third time, which he executed between September 1, 1923 and August 31, 1924.



In the old locality of Musa Lane, near Kharadhar, Karachi, Varas Bandali Kassim is reputed to have built a poor house at the cost of one million rupees, known as "**Seth Kassimbhai**

Vali Khoja Ismaili Poor House". Mukhi Rahmatullah Lutf Ali of Kharadhar Jamatkhana performed its opening ceremony on October 29, 1923. The Ismaili Council presented him a *shawl* and another by Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad. It was built on a site of 439 square yards, accommodating about 18 families. These houses were allotted to the destitute families at the rent of one rupee per month.

In 1934, the heavy fluctuations in the market cost him substantial losses, resulting his business to bankrupt. It depleted him day after day till his economical condition absolutely deteriorated. He presented a *mehmani* to the Imam in 1936. The Imam asked, "Did you suffer heavy loss in the business?" He replied affirmatively. The Imam asked, "Nothing remained with you?" To this, he said, "Mawla! I am absolutely depleted and I have nothing in my possession." The Imam put his blessed hand on his shoulder and said, "Don't worry. I am with you." With the blessings of the Imam, he certainly captured a profitable deal in the market. If ever a man shaped his destiny, it was Varas Bandali Kassim. He exercised every-increasing prudence, thrift, intelligence, and caution till his persistence was amply rewarded.

He was also honoured with the title of **Itmadi** in 1936 and **Varas** in 1950 in appreciation of his meritorious services.

His elder brother, Merali alias Rashid Kassim was also a generous and gave scholarships to the Kharadhar School, Karachi and also built the third floor of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana for Rs. 25,000/- He died in Karachi on Sunday, July 25, 1920 at the age of 55 years.

His younger brother, Karim Kassim lived in Hyderabad, Sind. He was the councilor of the Municipal and the President of Ismaili Council for Tando Division.

He died in Karachi on Sunday, March 11, 1956. His wife Varasiani Khatija however continued to serve the community. In 1936, the Imam formed a Ladies Committee under the Ismaili Council for Karachi, whose first President was Varasiani Khatija. She also died in April 1980 at Karachi.

Few words must be added for Wazir Ghulam Hyder Bandali, the son of Varas Bandali Kassim. He was born on October 15, 1905 in Karachi. He served in the field of health, education, and library and held key posts in the community. He was the President of Kharadhar Council for 6 years, the President of Supreme Council for Pakistan for 4 years and the President of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan for 17 years. For his long devoted services, the Imam conferred upon him a title of **Wazir**. He died on May 21, 1986. In his message, the Imam said,**"The late Vazir Ghulam Hyder Vazir Bandeali's long devoted services to my *jamat* of Pakistan will always be remembered by my *jamat* and by me and he will greatly missed by all."**



BANDALI MUHAMMAD LADHA
(d. 1940)

Aloobhai, the grandfather of Bandali Muhammad Ladha was a dedicated servant of the Imam in Kutchh. He visited Iran to see Imam Hasan Ali Shah. His son Muhammad Ladha migrated to Karachi with his family, and became the third Mukhi of Garden Jamatkhana in Karachi in 1905. In those days, the Ismailis from Kutchh flocked in Karachi, making the population of Garden area over 1500. The existing premises of the Jamatkhana became too small to accommodate the Ismailis; therefore, Mukhi Muhammad Ladha donated a piece of plot, adjoining the Jamatkhana, where a new Jamatkhana was built. He was also appointed President of the Supreme Council for Karachi on June 1, 1911 till November 30, 1911.

The Imam made a gracious visit of Karachi for 27 days on April 10, 1920. The city was filled with ten thousand Ismailis of different places. The Council formed a Managing Committee of ten members with Ghulam Hussain Khalfan as its President to control the whole administration. Bandali, the son of Mukhi Muhammad Ladha also rendered his services as a member and earned Imam's blessings.

The Imam appointed Bandali, the son of Mukhi Muhammad as Mukhi of the Garden Jamatkhana on Thursday, May 6, 1920 and said, **"Today, I appoint Bandali Mukhi Muhammad as Mukhi for the Garden *Jamat*. I appoint him in place of his late father, and also appoint Mukhi Bandali as a member of the Council."** (Then, the Imam spoke to him.) **"Mukhi Bandali, your late father rendered excellent services to the Imam and the *jamat* and you also render excellent services."** It may be well recorded that Mahomed Jagran was the first Mukhi of the Garden Jamatkhana between 1843 and 1863. Bhanji Rahimani (1815-1918) was the second Mukhi between 1863 and 1905, he died at the age of 103 years. The third Mukhi was Mohammad Ladha, who served between 1905 and 1912. He was followed by Jivraj Ladha, who served for seven years (1912-1920). Bandali Mohammad Ladha was the fifth Mukhi (1920-1939) in succession.

He took leading parts in the Ismaili School Board and the Ismaili Club and other institutions, and funded them generously for their development. He founded the Young Ismailia Garden Volunteer Corps on April 1, 1919 with the cooperation of Mukhi Merali Khimani.

He was also an elected member of Karachi Municipal in 1923, and served for over 16 years.

Between September 1, 1924 and August 31, 1925, he served as the President of the Supreme Council. The Khoja Panjibhai Club honoured him with a warm reception on

October 31, 1924 in view of his outstanding services. Ladak Punjani, the President read a welcome speech in appreciation of his devoted services in different fields.

In view of his dedicated services, the Imam blessed him with the title of **Itmadi**. The Imam ordered to place a marble plate in Jamatkhana's hall in his memory, whose unveiling ceremony was performed by Wazir Rahim Basaria (1885-1927) on December 29, 1924.

Soon after the establishment of Wazir Rahim Boarding in 1928, he was appointed as its Superintendent.

He also founded the Garden Scout Troop in 1930 and worked hard to popularize it in the mass. In recognition of his services to the Scout Troop, he bore the title of "**The Lion-hearted Man of Garden *Jamat***" in 1940. The Court of Honour of the Scout Troop awarded him a **Thanks Badge** on February 28, 1940.

Mukhi Bandali Muhammad Ladha died on November 6, 1940.



LEADERS

* Leaders are responsible for future leadership. They need to identify, develop and nurture future leaders.
* Leaders can delegate efficiency, but they must deal personally with effectiveness.
* A leader must be a judge of people. For leaders choose a person, not position
* Leader don't inflict pain; they bear pain
* The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant.

- **"Leadership is an Art"** (London, 1989) by Max De Pree



BASARIA FADHU, VARAS
(1848-1918)

Basaria I, the ancestor of the later Basaria family was a devoted person in Bhuj, Kutchh. His son was Fadhu, who travelled on foot to behold Imam Shah Khalilullah in Iran, where Fadhu died. Fadhu had three sons, Ghulam Ali, Basaria II and Jaffer. The most shinning figure among them was Basaria II, known as Basaria Fadhu.

Basaria Fadhu was born in 1848. Nothing is known of his early life. He however was well educated and a man of great responsibility. When the Honeymoon Lodge came into the possession of Imam Hasan Ali Shah in 1870, Varas Basaria Fadhu renovated the whole premises at his own expenses.

Imam Hasan Ali Shah appointed him his third Estate Agent for Karachi and Sind in the beginning of 1881 in place of Varas Vali. He discharged his services honestly and efficiently and travelled on horses in the villages of Sind for the betterment of the poor Ismailis. He was also famous for his generosity both inside and outside of the community.

In 1883, he married to Rani (d. 1927), the daughter of Varas Vali. She gave the birth to a son, Rahim.

In 1894, the Imam visited Gwadar for seven days. Varas Basaria, Mukhi Alarakhia and Mukhi Hashu with a few other Ismailis also visited Gwadar. They were lodged in a separate tent near the Imam. They presented a humble request to the Imam for a *didar* programme in Karachi. The Imam graciously accepted and returned to Bombay, from where he sailed for Karachi and stayed for 25 days.

On Wednesday, January 3, 1912 at 11.00 a.m., the Imam visited his residence in Kharadhar, Karachi and showered blessings upon his family members.

His contribution in the first and second War Loan during the world war (1914-1919) was exceedingly well. The Ismailis celebrated with great pomp the 41st Birth Anniversary of the Imam on August 3rd, 1918 in Karachi. On that festive occasion, a grand function was organized with dinner at the Kharadhar Jamatkhana. Mr. Martin, the Collector of Karachi was also invited along with his wife. Dr. Haji and Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad introduced him to Mukhi Rahmatullah Lutf Ali, Varas Basaria Fadhu, Varas Ibrahim Varas Vali and the members of the Council. Mr. Martin took the opportunity to speak of the Imam's valuable services. He mentioned the fact that he felt indebted to Varas Basaria Fadhu for investing Rs. 1,25,000/- in the first and second War Loan. He awarded the Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the Viceroy of India.

With the cost of Rs. 50,000/- he started the construction of a *musafarkhana* in Kharadhar, Karachi in 1918, and during its construction, he passed away. His son Wazir Rahim Basaria however completed the project.

Since Varas Basaria Fadhu was overwhelmed in his work, he requested the Imam for an assistant to overcome the strain of work. The Imam appointed his son, Rahim Basaria to assist him in Karachi.

Dr. Datoo Mukhi Ramzan Ismail donated Rs. 9000/- for the construction of the 3rd floor of Kharadhar Jamatkhana, which was opened by Varas Basaria Fadhu on August 3, 1918. This event was most probably the last one he attended before his death.

Varas Basaria Fadhu served for 37 years and died in Karachi on Thursday, October 23, 1918 at the age of 70 years. The Imam sent a telegraphic message from Europe and blessed the departed soul for eternal peace. The Imam also insisted to keep his memory, and appointed Varas Ibrahim, the son of Varas Vali (d. 1881) as his fourth Estate Agent for Karachi and Sind.

On Sunday, April 11, 1920, the Imam said in Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi that, **"Late Varas Basaria has built a *musafarkhana*, adjoining the Jamatkhana at the cost of about Rs. 70,000/- Varas Basaria served the Imam very much since childhood. I give him much blessings and also bless all his family members."**

During the *mehmani* on Sunday, April 18, 1920, the Imam said, **"The family members of Varas Basaria Fadhu Vali, young and old have served me to a great extent. Varas Basaria Fadhu was their guardian, who served me very much. All of you must have seen Varas Basaria. During his life, he performed *chhanta* and religious ceremonies using his intelligence and ability. He carried on his business and also rendered services to the *jamat*. When the time of his departure (from the world) came, he performed all his religious rites with his own intelligence and ability. I implore his son Wazir Rahim, his family and Varasiani to not mourn his death. I pray that Wazir Rahim may have a long life after him and become a great son, and serve me after him."** The Imam also said to Varasiani Gulshakarbai that, **"Do not have grief in the heart. Wazir (Basaria) served me more than what I can say, *Khanavadan*. One who serves me, he shall get its rewards."**

In conclusion, Varas Basaria Fadhu, his wife Rani and son Wazir Rahim Basaria lofted their names in history as most devoted and dedicated persons. The Imam said on December 15, 1927 at Bombay Jamatkhana, **"Varas Basaria, Varas Rahim and the mother of Varas Rahim have served my house very much. Varas Rahim has served me with love, dedication and whole-heartedly, and for that I give my best blessings. These three will remain alive in my thought, and I will remember (them) all the times. Although, they have left this undurable world, they are alive in my heart."**

Besides, one can measure the grand status of the father and son from another *farman*, which was made also in Karachi on January 26, 1938 that,**"He (Varas Muhammad Remu) is like a member of *Ahl al-Bayt* just as Wazir Basaria and Wazir Rahim became (the members of) *Ahl al-Bayt*."**

BUDHWANI, KASSIM MITHA
(1890-1939)



Kassim Mitha Budhwani's father Mithabhai Ratansi Budhwani was born in Dhoraji, India in 1844. He was the Kamadia of Dhoraji Jamatkhana till his last breath. Kamadia Mithabhai, who was also lovingly called as Ad or Bata, was the President of the Dhoraji Local Council and the Khoja Panjibhai Club. He was a devoted and dedicated social worker. Truth, love and honesty all the times sprouted in his speech. His oft-spoken words were, "One who works is a Kamadia." He prepared tea at daily at midnight in the Jamatkhana. He always felt proud when the known or unknown persons visited his house. He was the first to come forward in Dhoraji *jamat* to dig a grave by his own hands for the burial of a dead Ismaili.

Being a Kamadia, Mithabhai never felt wrong while serving and often he himself cleaned the Jamatkhana till late hours in night. One incident may be cited here to indicate how he took pride in calling himself a servant of the *jamat*. Once an unknown Ismaili passenger came to Dhoraji Jamatkhana at 1.00 a.m. when Kamadia Mithabhai was sweeping its floor. He exclaimed loudly, "Oh jamatbhai, Oh jamatbhai." When Kamadia opened the front door, the passenger asked the address of Varas Devasi of Bhayavadar. Kamadia told him that he resided near the Jamatkhana premises. The passenger thought that he was a servant, he told him to take the luggage and to escort him. Kamadia Mithabhai lifted his luggage and went with him at the house of that person. When the door opened, the residents became greatly surprised and asked the reason of his coming. He said that he brought their guest. When the passenger found that the person carrying his luggage was the Kamadia; he became ashamed and apologized. Kamadia said, "Don't worry. I am a mere servant of the *jamat*. I think that there is much honour in becoming a jamatbhai, and no service is more accreditable than it "

Once Kamadia Mithabhai is said to have told to his elder son, Kassim that, "We should surrender one member of our family, who may devote his whole life in the service of the Imam." To this, Kassim said, "I propose Nuruddin for it since he has a talent. I will look after his family." During the Imam's visit to Bombay, when they divulged their noble decision, the Imam was exceedingly pleased and said to Nuruddin, "Well, you serve my *jamat*. I will take care of your family."

Kamadia Mithabhai died on May 1, 1928 at 3.15 a.m. in Dhoraji. During the *mehmani* of the Dhoraji *jamat* on January 16, 1934 in Bombay, the Imam said, "**He was a very nice person**" for three times. The Imam also appointed his elder son, Kassim Budhwani as the next Kamadia for the Dhoraji Jamatkhana with the title of **Alijah.**

Kamadia Mithabhai had three sons, Karamali, Kassim and Nuruddin, each of them were nicknamed Budhwani.

Kassim Budhwani was born in 1890 in Dhoraji, studied up to 5th grade and joined his father's business in the prime of life. He showed dedication since childhood. The Imam visited Rajkot for *didar* on February 20, 1910. He took a pot of flowers at the main gate of pendol to be presented. The Imam accepted it smilingly. Once, he was late and the Imam asked, "Where is the flower boy?" But as soon as the Imam spoke his words, Kassim Budhwani appeared, which implies the boy's deep love for the Imam since childhood.

His business was to toast grams, but then decided to open later on a grocery shop. The daily sale was Rs. 10/- only, but due to his hard work and honesty, the sale increased from Rs. 1500/- to Rs. 2000/-

He was fair with all of his customers, whether he sold them an item worth a penny or a thousand rupees. He never claimed excess profit on any item, and the influx of the customers was so high that the six weighing scales in his shop became insufficient.

He was noted in his city for his generosity and helped the destitute secretly. His treatment in any matter was alike with the Muslims and Hindus. He dispelled their social problems and there was not a single week passed without being becoming their mediator. He worked in arranging marriages of Muslims and Hindus and helped them financially. His behaviour with people was commonly fraternal and sweet, and he became so popular in the state that the renowned Maharajas called him, **Khandwala Kassimbhai** recognizing sweetness in his speech.

In March 7, 1924, the Supreme Council for Kathiawar began to supervise 19 local councils, in which 29 villages fell into the jurisdiction of the Dhoraji local council. Kassim Budhwani was appointed as a member of Dhoraji Council. He dispelled the family disputes and the divisions in the Supreme Council for Kathiawar. His personality was so attractive that there was not a single case unsolved in his presence. He played a key role in the internal disputes of the *jamats* of Veraval, Rajkot, Gondal, Kotada, Sangani and Porebander. He was included many times in the committee for solving disputes by the Supreme Council for Kathiawar.

When a flood devastated Dhoraji, the merchandise of the Ismaili and non-Ismaili merchants washed away in the flood. In the catastrophe, he gave them goods on credit without profit motive and got their business flourished. He himself bore the loss of five thousand rupees, which could not be recovered. He also exempted another five thousand rupees to the shopkeepers who were unable to refund him. The local Hindus were so struck with his selfless services that they called him their Saviour. Sir Bhagatsingh Bahadur, the head of the Gondal State himself came to his shop with his family when he was helping the stricken people, and celebrated his valuable services.

He devoted his whole life to *jamati* services. He was dedicated with unwavering faith in Ismailism and remained in the company of Mukhi Ibrahim of the Dhoraji *jamat*. Like a lion of Sorath, he was also valiant in venturing any work, and was as well an obedient son.

His hospitality much like his father was highly admirable. He was in the front rank in Kathiawar in the matter of donations, and made a handsome contribution to the Golden Jubilee Fund Committee.

On January 19, 1936, N.M. Budhwani went to Valkesar, Bombay with his elder brother Kassim Budhwani to see the Imam along with few members of the Panjibhai Club. He introduced his brother before the Imam, saying, "He is my elder brother." The Imam summoned Kassim Budhwani near his chair and said, **"You deal with the business, while (N.M.) Budhwani is my servant."** The Imam also said, **"You conduct the business. (N.M.) while Budhwani serves me excellently."**

In the will of Mithabhai Ratansi (d. 1928) it was mentioned the following, "The Imam is happy with the publication of the **Ismaili Aftab**, therefore, you continue to let Nuruddin to serve whatever he likes. The Imam will prosper your business." In summary, Kassim Budhwani supervised the business to sustain the family of his younger brother, who was not working but serving in different fields. He was so watchful that he commanded his younger brother to travel in 2nd class instead of 3rd class in the train, and himself traveled in 3rd class at all times. He would say, " The Imam's representative must create a good image in public."

On April 20, 1919, the Dhoraji Religious Library held a special meeting. N.M. Budhwani, the Honorary Secretary put a proposal for the publication of a periodical in Dhoraji, which met an approval of all members. It was resolved that its first issue, known as the "**Ismaili Aftab**", should be published during the 42nd *Salgirah* of the Imam, and N.M. Budhwani was appointed its editor. This periodical played an important role in the awareness of the Dhoraji *jamat*.

The first issue of **Ismaili Aftab** came out on July 2, 1919, wherein V.N. Hooda wrote an article on the Imam. According to the report of "**Ismaili Satpanth Prakash**" (Bombay, September 25, 1919), "In the accounts of our Hazar Imam in the first issue of the **Ismaili Aftab**, some local Muslims in Dhoraji misunderstood it, but N.M. Budhwani expertly dispelled it." It simply suggests that the publication of the **Ismaili Aftab** was an early brick of the hatred the local people had since 1919, and cost the life of Kassim Budhwani after about 20 years.

The Imam is reported to have said to Kassim Budhwani in 1918 that, "You quit Dhoraji and select another place for business if possible." To this comment, he responded, "My business procures me immense profits, so I want to live here." The Imam said, "Well, you live in Dhoraji, but be careful." It was a prediction of an incident that was to take place after 20 years.

On January 19, 1939, the **Ismaili Aftab** published a Birth Number when its editor N.M. Budhwani was out of station, and Kassim Budhwani looked after the press. He merely watched the press, and nothing else. It covered certain poetic verses to glorify the Imam. The non-Ismailis grossly misinterpreted it and a band from a Muslim community gathered near the river. The average people in the gang had not read or seen the **Ismaili Aftab**, but poured down on the streets what was stimulated in their ears. They set the Ismaili shops and houses on fire and caused damages. Most of the fearful Ismailis harbored at the

residence of Kassim Budhwani, because their lives were threatened. When Kassim Budhwani realized the gravity of the situation, he thought it advisable to discuss with their leaders for a peaceful solution. His family members advised him not to go, but he told them that, "The *jamat* is in intensive trouble and it is improper to care only for me."

Accompanied by his intimate friend, Kanji Nanji, he came to the residence of Haji Umar Ahmed Machiswala (1938-1942), the President of Memon *jamat*. They came at the office of the Memon *jamat*, which very soon became surrounded by the excited gang. He tried his best to redress the situation. It seems that the discussion yielded a peaceful negotiation. Kassim Budhwani came out of the office with Abdul Sattar Haji Abdullah and other persons under the protection of the police. Before he got into the car, an assailant dashed him, attacked him with a dagger and stabbed him. Kassim Budhwani reclined and fell to the ground. Kanji Nanji took him to the State Hospital with his bloodstained clothes, but he expired before having any treatment administered to him.

A.S. Naviwala and A. Karim Panwala wrote in the **"Dhoraji-na Memon'no Itihas'ni Arsi'ma"** (Karachi, 1990, p. 144) that, "The great tragedy in the entire case was that Kassim Mitha (Budhwani) had nothing to do directly or indirectly with anything being printed in the periodical (**Ismaili Aftab**). He was not even associated with the press. The negotiations whatever he executed were to maintain the discipline of the community and to avoid harming the unity of the Muslims, which victimized his life."

About 22 accused persons were arrested, and for their release, the opponents began to threat the imperturbable Ismailis in Dhoraji. On the other hand, the rivals played another card diplomatically and offered Muhammad Ali Jinnah to become a pleader, which he refused. Hence, they hired I.I. Chundrigar and a Hindu barrister, who managed to release the accused in 23 days. The other accused were however sentenced for 6 years, but they escaped from jail on October 24, 1940, when the jail was being washed during the birth anniversary of Sir Thakur Bhagvadsingh (1884-1944).

On February 9, 1939 in the pendol of Rajkot Boarding, the Imam said while looking at Alijah N.M. Budhwani that, "**Your elder brother is martyred. He is in my presence. Do not lament for him. He merited the status of a *Shahid* like the persons in the time of Imam Hussain. You lament for yourselves and for the *jamat*, but not for him.**"

The Imam said to Alijah N.M. Budhwani at the bungalow of Rai Kassim Ali Manji Nathu that, "**I have claimed that your elder brother has become a *Shahid*, a martyred one. Now you put off the mourning clothes.**"

In Junagadh, the Imam said on February 10, 1939 that, "**Whatever occurred for Alijah Kassim Budhwani is that he merited the status of a *Shahid*. He laid down his life alike what happened in the time of Imam Hussain. Inform his family and his brother that he was very fortunate to lay his life to the cause of religion and joined in with the *Shahids*. By forgiving the person who murdered Alijah Kassim Budhwani, you and the family will be rewarded twice for your gesture. He sought an opportunity that he sacrificed his life for the cause of his religion and became martyred.**"

In the *ruhani mehmani* of Alijah Kassim Budhwani, the Imam said at Junagadh on February 11, 1939 that,"**Call him Shahid Kassim. I give him a status of a *Shahid*. Both (Nuruddin and Shamsuddin, his sons) are my sons. I have given their names. The companions in the time of Imam Hussain sacrificed their lives for the Imam, (and likewise) Alijah Kassim Budhwani sacrificed his life for his religion. He was courageous and valiant.**"

In Junagadh, the Imam sent a written *talika* on February 13, 1939 and said, "**I order to place the photo of Alijah Shahid Kassim Budhwani in the Dhoraji Jamatkhana and in the hall of Supreme Council for Kathiawar, and I give the title of Alijah to Nuruddin, the son of Shahid Kassim.**"

In 1939, N.M. Budhwani designed to publish **"Sir Aga Khan's Africa Golden Jubilee Granth"** into Anglo-Gujrati. He cherished a desire to dedicate it in loving memory of his elder brother Shahid Kassim Budhwani. He wrote a letter to Imam in London on June 6, 1939, imploring for a kind permission. F. Blain, the Private Secretary of the Imam replied him from Ritz Hotel, Picadely, London on June 30, 1939 that, **"In reply to your letter of 6th June, His Highness says you may dedicate the book to Alijah Shahid Kasambhai."** Thus, the above book was published in loving memory of **Shahid Kassim Budhwani.**

Kassim Budhwani had three sons, who later on came to live in Dacca and Barisal in Bangladesh, Itmadi Nuruddin, Alijah Shamsuddin, Alijah Bahadur Ali and a daughter, Khatija.

Itmadi Nuruddin, the elder son of Shahid Kassim Budhwani served as Mukhi of the Hyderabad, Deccan Jamatkhana as well as President of the Council. His other son, Shamsuddin built the Jamatkhana of Barisal, Bangladesh and presented it to the Imam. His son, Huzur Mukhi Bahadur served for three years as a Chairman of the Regional Tariqah Board for Frontier and Pakistan and also served as Kamadia and Mukhi of the Barisal Jamatkhana.



Few words must be added for Nuruddin Mitha Budhwani, better known as N.M. Budhwani, whose meritorious services in Dhoraji in the field of journalism and education were inestimable. N.M. Budhwani worked as an editor of the "**Ismaili Aftab**" for 25 years and earned appreciation from the Imam, Lady Ali Shah, Prince Aly Khan, Mata Salamat and Princess Tajudawla. He was famous as an educationalist and journalist. Only a socio-economic survey of the progress of the community shows what he had done to eradicate customs of the old school of thought in the community. He also followed the footsteps of the Imam and strived hard for the unity between the Muslims and Hindus. He established the first Girls School in Dhoraji and supervised the Dhoraji Night School. He also started Religious Night Schools in certain centres of Junagadh and Jam Kadorana. With his untiring efforts and propaganda, the first Khoja Volunteer Corps came into existence in Dhoraji, Kathiawar in 1920. He published the **Ismaili Aftab** on July 2, 1919. On August 27, 1919, the Ismaili Sahitiya Utejak Mandal, Bombay hosted him in a banquet for marking the bright beginning of the **Ismaili Aftab**. On September

8, 1919, The Kandi Mola Ismaili Students Library arranged a similar function in his honour, presided by Hashim of M/S Thavar Pir Muhammad & Sons. It was participated by Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj (1882-1930) and over 500 Ismailis. Missionary Varteji (1878-1953) made a speech and appreciated his valuable services for the Dhoraji *jamat*. The President gifted him a silver casket and a Silver Moon fabricated by the hands of Ali Muhammad Merali. On September 13, 1919, the Vidhiya Vinod Club also honored him in a gathering, presided by Ismail Lalji. The Hon. Secretary Major A.J. Lakhpati (1884-1947) presented him a Silver Moon. Ghulam Ali Lalji, on behalf of The Shia Imami Ismailia Mitr Mandal at Thana, Bombay honored him on September 15, 1919. The Ismailis of Dhoraji in Bombay gave him a warm ovation. He also raised a separate printing press for the **Ismaili Aftab**, whose opening ceremony was performed by Mr. Ghulam Hussain Basaria on April 25, 1924. In May 1924, the 7th Gujrati Literary Conference was held, in which all journalists, writers, poets and scholars of Gujrat and Kathiawar attended. An Ismaili deputation also participated under N.M. Budhwani's along with V.N. Gheewala's, G.D. Anil's and V.N. Hooda's supervision. Hundred-year-old Ismaili books as well as two-hundred-year-old *ginans* manuscripts were exhibited. Budhwani spoke of the Ismaili contribution in promotion of the Gujrati language by the Ismaili Pirs.

The Imam arrived in Bombay from Europe on December 14, 1933. In the *mehmani* of the Dhoraji *jamat* at Aga Hall on January 16, 1934, the Imam celebrated the achievements of "**Ismaili Aftab**" and its editor, N.M. Budhwani, and bestowed him the title of **Huzur Mukhi** . The Imam said that, **"Aftab is serving very well. Paper is the tongue. Devoid of paper (means) devoid of tongue. It is the duty of all to support it. It is best for the Ismaili *jamat*. Give the news, religious articles, trade, finance and quotations to the whole world; it is the duty of a journalist. It benefits the Mazhab (religion). Expand the Paper, at least by one page more. It is the duty of the Ismaili *jamat* to submit advertisements."**

The Ismailia Students' Library, Kandi Mola, Bombay therefore, gave him the honour on January 19, 1934 in the hall of the Recreation Club. The speakers like A.J. Chunara (1881-1966), Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) and V.N. Hooda (1889-1959) admired his literary skills. He left Bombay on January 23, 1934 for Dhoraji, where he was also given a warm welcome in a function on February 5, 1934. N.M. Budhwani continued his services and completed 25 years of the **Ismaili Aftab** in 1944. It was the first Indian Ismaili journal to have completed 25 years. On January 19, 1936, he and his elder brother visited the Valkesar bungalow, Bombay to attend the *mehmani* of the Panjibhais. The Imam blessed them and said, "Budhwani, you come here." When he came near, the Imam said, "I have received a telegram of your Maharaja." He said, "Yesterday, I was in Ganod for the function of the Viceroy, where the Maharaja collected the telegraphic address from me, and also gave me a letter." Then, he delivered the letter to the Imam, who told him, "Did you get my medal?" He said that he would get it as his name was included on the list. He then introduced his elder brother. The Imam said, **"You deal the business, while (N.M.) Budhwani is my servant." The Imam also said, "You conduct the business. (N.M.) Budhwani serves me excellently."** The Imam appreciated his invaluable services, and became the recipient of the title **Alijah** in 1936 during the Golden Jubilee. He was also awarded a **Gold Medal**, a high distinction honour. He died in September 1944. His son took over the charge of the **Ismaili Aftab** as a next editor till 1946.

CHAGLA VALI MUHAMMAD, WAZIR
(1885-1966)



Chagla Vali Muhammad's forefathers were originally from Mulla Katiar, Sind. They migrated to Lasbela and finally settled in Karachi. Amongst them, Vali Muhammad, known as Vali Bhagat came to live in Kharadhar, Karachi. He was a religious teacher, and a *ginans* reciter in Jamatkhana. The Imam paid a gracious visit to Karachi for 27 days on April 10, 1920. On that occasion, a large concourse of ten thousand Ismailis flocked in the city. The Council formed a Managing Committee to control its administration. Vali Muhammad extended his incredible services as a member, presided by Wazir Col. Ghulam Hussain Khalfan (1887-1967). He had three sons, Chagla, Jaffer and Kassim.

Chagla Vali Muhammad was born in Karachi in 1885. Religion was a deep and abiding place in his heart since childhood. Nothing is known of his early education, except that he got little formal education and started to work in a Hindu's leather shop, and then in his prime age, he ventured into the small business of hard thread for boats. He had been also in Burma and Sri Lanka, dealing the business of rubber and pearls with the partnership of Alijah Shahban Moim. He lived almost ten years in Rangoon. He then worked in a Karachi fish harbor, exporting fish in Colombo, also earning commission on the fish auctions.

His first debut in community service was when he became the head of the Nandi Committee in 1931 in the period of Chief Mukhi Hussain Mukhi Mamu (1928-1934) of Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi. It gave him a scope and opportunity to display his skills. In 1945, he was appointed Mukhi of the *Baitul Khayal Brotherhood* for two years (1945-1947).

When Chief Mukhi Merali Alarakhia of Kharadhar Jamatkhana in Karachi died all of a sudden in 1945, the Imam appointed his Kamadia Khimji Lawji as the next Chief Mukhi, Kassim Ali Mehr Ali as the Kamadia and Shahban Datoo as the Naib Mukhi. On March 10, 1946, the Imam appointed Chagla Vali Muhammad as **Chief Mukhi** of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana during the Diamond jubilee at Bombay. It is said that he bewildered to hear his appointment and humbly requested that, "I have to stay in Rangoon for business purposes." To this, the Imam said, "You quit it. I bless for your prosperity." He returned to Karachi and took charge of his duty as Chief Mukhi on March 21, 1946 with Kamadia Varas Jan Muhammad and Naib Mukhi Itmadi Nazarali Nanji. With his appointment as Chief Mukhi of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi, he also continued to serve as Mukhi of the *Baitul Khayal Brotherhood* for one year till 1947.

During his period, the Imam declared the Kharadhar Jamatkhana as the Darkhana of Karachi by a telegraphic message on December 6, 1946, which reads: **"Loving paternal maternal blessings spiritual children now in Dharkhana Karachi."**

Chief Mukhi Chagla was fondly known as **"Mukhi Chagla"** and was dearly loved by young and old alike. He possessed a great gift of oratory and high sense of humor. He conquered the hearts of the *jamats* in Pakistan and of the Ismailis worldwide.



He extended invaluable services in the Diamond jubilee. He also became a member of Kharadhar Ismaili Council (1946-1950), the member of Ismaili Supreme Council (1950-1960) and the executive member of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan (1948-1960). He was also a director of the Platinum Finance Corporation. In order to commemorate the auspicious occasion of the Platinum Jubilee in Karachi, the H.R.H. Prince Aga Khan Platinum Jubilee Association was formed. It also aimed to float a Company under registration with Pakistan Companies Act. Wazir Ibrahim Manji was appointed its President with Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy and Mukhi Chagla as the Vice-Presidents. He rendered exceptional services during the Platinum Jubilee and one can see the photo of the jubilee, showing him standing reverently near the Imam on the round moving stage.

The Imam arrived at the Karachi airport on January 31, 1954 on the occasion of Platinum Jubilee. It was announced for the *jamat* in the Jamatkhanas not to come at the airport except the leaders and title-holders. Unfortunately, over 5000 Ismailis flocked at the airport, resulting in a misadministration due to the lack of volunteers to control the influx of people. The rush could hardly be controlled, but the Imam was serious to behold the multitude. When the Imam reached the governor house, he told the leaders, "Did you come to revolt at the airport? I am not happy to see the mismanagement. It was against my instructions." Mukhi Chagla seriously noticed the displeasure of the Imam. He at once went to the camp and other Jamatkhanas and asked to recite a *tasbih* for forgiveness.

He himself also wept very much, and then went to see the Imam and sought forgiveness on behalf of the *jamat*. The Imam said, **"I am happy with you. I give my best blessings to the *jamats* with merciful sight. *Khanavadan*."**

In 1956, he suffered from hernia. He sent his medical report to the Imam in Paris. The Imam wrote him to get operated in Paris. He was worried as he had never been in Europe. In the meantime, the Imam sent another letter, informing him that Mukhi Pirbhai of the Paris Jamatkhana would look after him. Finaly, his problems were solved and he proceeded to Paris. He was well received by Mukhi Pirbhai at the airport, who took him to the Imam's residence. On the next day, the doctors examined him and recommended for an operation. Mukhi Pirbhai showed him the whole city as per Imam's instructions. He underwent an operation very soon. The Imam also came to see him several times in the hospital. Mukhi Chagla thus recovered. He went to the Imam's residence before leaving Paris. The Imam said, " **I have granted you ten more years**." When he reached Karachi, he related to the *jamat* the detail of his tour in his speech, and concluded with tears trickling down his cheek that, **"The Imam looked after me in the hospital more than my own mother."**

The deputation of Pakistan comprised 20 leaders, who visited Aswan, including Mukhi Chagla, where the burial of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah took place on Friday, July 20, 1957. Thousand of Ismailis from all over the world attended this ceremony to have the last glimpse of the mortal remains of the 48th Imam. It was a tragic scene as the mourners were sobbing with eyes moisted with tears. Mukhi Chagla also wept profusely while looking the bier said, **"Did you grant me ten years to see this sad scene?"**

On December 11, 1955, Huzur Wazir Ghulam Ali Allana (1906-1985), the President of the Supreme Council for Pakistan, performed the opening ceremony of the new Jamatkhana in Lahore. On those days, a meeting of the Supreme Council was also held in Lahore. Rai Hussain R. Goawala, the Hon. Secretary announced the names of the new title-holders, and Chief Mukhi Wazir Chagla was given an honour to garland them on behalf of the Supreme Council during the opening ceremony of the Lahore Jamatkhana.

He rendered meritorious services during the first visit of the Imam on August 4, 1957 after assuming the Imamate and also on the occasion of the *Takhat Nashini* of Hazar Imam in Karachi on January 23, 1958.

In his period, the scheme for building the new Jamatkhana in Kharadhar area was designed. The Imam appointed him as President of the Jamatkhana Construction Advisory Committee to raise donations, etc. This Committee was consigned the entire construction process of the Dharkhana Jamatkhana of Kharadhar as well as the new Jamatkhana of the Garden area.

He retired from the post of Mukhi on March 21, 1960 after serving as Chief Mukhi for 16 years. With his retirement, the title of **Chief Mukhi** granted especially to each Mukhi of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana came to an end. The title of **Chief Mukhi** was enjoyed by six Mukhis of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi between 1902 and 1960, who are Mukhi Rehmatullah Lutf Ali (1902-1928), Mukhi Hussain Mukhi Mamu (1928-1934), Mukhi Ghulam Hussain Varu (1934-1937), Mukhi Merali Alarakhia (1937-1942), Mukhi Khimji Lawji (1942-1945) and lastly Mukhi Chagla Vali Muhammad. It implies that the title of

Chief Mukhi remained in force for 58 years.

With his talent and invaluable services, he merited himself the title of **Huzur Mukhi** in 1939, **Alijah** in 1946, **Itmadi** in 1950 and **Wazir** in 1951.

Wazir Chief Mukhi Chagla Vali Muhammad died in Karachi on Wednesday, February 16, 1966 at 11.30 p.m. at the age of 81 years. According to the resolution of the Kharadhar Council, the bier was taken from the Jamatkhana compound on next day at 3.25 p.m. Thousands of mourners participated alongwith the cream of the community leadership in the bier procession. The members of Band, Volunteers, Rovers and Scouts were marching in front with full uniforms to escort the funeral cortege in a befitting honour to this great leader. In a hushed silence, the mourners traversed the distance. The Imam sent the following message through the City Council on March 7, 1966: -

I have received your letter of February 17th, and was much grieved to hear of the sad demise of Chief Mukhi Chaglabhai Valimohamed, after many years of devoted and selfless services to my *jamats* of Pakistan. I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late Vazir Chagglabhoy, and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. Late Vazir Chaglabhai's long devoted services to my various institutions and *jamats* in Pakistan will be remembered by all my spiritual children of Pakistan.

His services were quite exceptional and he was dearly loved by all. His loss is a loss to the whole of my *jamat* and I have no longer a spiritual child whom I loved greatly. He is in my thoughts and my prayers.

The Imam also sent a message on March 7, 1966 to his wife, Varasiani Fatimabai Chagla as follows: -

I send you and your family my best paternal maternal loving blessings for your husband's services with best loving blessings for courage and fortitude in your great loss. The late Mukhi rendered unique services to my *jamat* and myself and he had and always will have a unique place in my heart and affection. He will always be in my thoughts and prayers.

CHHOTUBHAI, ISMAIL MAHOMED JAFFER, VARAS
(1904-1978)



Ramzan Ali (d. 1886), son of Sabzali Hansraj, a dedicated social worker and businessman in Mundra, Kutchh, had six children: three sons: Mahomed Jaffer (1874-1918), Rahim (1880-1929) and Pir Sabzali (1884-1938); and three daughters: Fatimabai, Jainabai and Sonbai.



Mahomed Jaffer, a successful businessman in Bombay and Europe, generously willed one lac rupees to build a sanatorium for sick and convalescent Ismailis. However, because he passed away before he could build it, it was left to his son, Ismail, to realize his father's humane dream. In 1931, he actually built a large sanatorium in Panchgani, known as **Bagh-e-Rahat,** at a cost of approximately Rs. 130,000.

Ismail was born to Mahomed Jaffer and his third wife, Shirin. Mahomed Jaffer's daughter, Fatima, was born to his first wife, while both his second and fourth wives died giving birth (the latter, giving birth to twins). Mahomed Jaffer himself passed away on October 27, 1918, and only his daughter, Fatima, and his son, Ismail survived.

Ismail, the son of Mahomed Jaffer, fondly known as Varas Chhotubhai in world Ismaili circles, Chhotu **Mia'n** of Lady Aly Shah, or the **Issu** of Prince Aly Khan, was born in Bombay on June 5, 1904. Although he lost his mother in 1906, when he was barely two, the void in the infant's life was quickly filled by his gifted grandmother, Meghbai (1850-1945), who instilled in him a fiercely deep-rooted love for the Imam and service to the *jamat*.

Meghbai, who often visited Lady Aly Shah at Wadi, Bombay, sometimes also took her grandson, Chhotubhai, with her, as Lady Aly Shah was very fond of him. It was during these visits that she taught him to read the Holy Koran. He was so close to Lady Aly Shah that later on she used to even send special messages through him to the Mukhis of Kadak and Kandi Mola Jamatkhanas. She saw in him a potential leader, destined to render great services to the community.

Chhotubhai attended Saint Mary's Boys' High School in Bombay, later venturing into the real estate business and becoming a leading property dealer in 1927. Philanthropic by nature, he devoted himself selflessly to serving the *jamat*. Many scholarships and stipends

to widows flowed unabatedly from his munificent pockets. It was through his own diligence, hard work, and unwavering and compassionate commitment to community service that he raised to prominence, becoming one of the most recognized household names in worldly Ismaili circles.

Over the years, Varas Chhotubhai served in many *jamati* and civic institutions. First, his nomination as Mission Secretary (1928-1933) and then as Hon. Chief Secretary (1933-1936) and President of the Recreation Club Institute in Bombay, with Itmadi Rehmatullah Virji as Chief Secretary, for a year (1936-1937) was followed by his appointment as member (1934) and Hon. Secretary (1934-1936) of the Bombay Ismailia Council.

Active in Bombay's civic affairs, he was elected member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, and had the titles of **Justice of Peace** and **Honorary Presidency Magistrate** conferred upon him by the British Indian Government.

Not happy with just giving of his time tirelessly, he generously opened up his pocket book to many deserving causes. At the opening (by Alijah Mukhi Ali Muhammad Ibrahim Virji) of the Fidai Boarding and Orphanage on December 13, 1928 in Bombay, Varas Chhotubhai enrolled himself as the first life patron.

His service to the Imam's family is legendary: As Prince Aly Khan's personal secretary, he travelled with him in India, Burma and the Middle East. He also accompanied Lady Aly Shah to Syria and Lebanon in 1930-31, sought his counsel and support from the early 1930s till her demise.

After Pir Sabzali, Chhotubhai's uncle, returned from an extensively long touring Central Asia, he persuaded Varas Chhotubhai and other *jamati* elders to join him on another long tour of Europe and of the Middle East. To mark this momentous occasion, on May 23, 1924, Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Rehmatullah Mecklai threw a farewell party for them at the top of the Taj Hotel in Bombay. Departing Bombay on May 24, 1924 on the mail steamer **Caledonia** of P & O Co., they landed in England and proceeded to Italy, France, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Germany, Syria, and Egypt, returning to Bombay on November 5, 1924 at the completion of a long, successful tour.

In 1925 Wazir Rahim Basaria asked Chhotubhai to be amongst the ten staff members chosen to serve during the Imam's visit to Zanzibar, East Africa. So on January 7, 1925, Varas Chhotubhai journeyed to Zanzibar with Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) and other *jamati* elders, returning to Bombay on April 18, 1925.

Lady Aly Shah was prescient about Chhotubhai's leadership role in life, as over the years, the Imam and Prince Aly Khan relied on his intelligence, dedication, hardwork, and discretion over and over again. In serving the Imam, his family and the *jamat*, Varas Chhotubhai undertook many trips: A few years after his East African trip, in April 1930, Varas Chhotubhai was called upon accompanying Lady Aly Shah to Damascus, Palestine and other historical cities, as her personal secretary. Later, she settled into a bungalow perched on a picturesque hill in Sofar, near Beirut.

And when Prince Aly Khan's steamer, the Merietta Pasha, dropped anchor at Beirut on July 22, 1930, Varas Chhotubhai was the first one to go aboard to welcome the Prince. He then re-emerged with him and introduced the Prince to the governor of Salamia, Mir Mirza Varas Suleman and other dignitaries.

Soon after, Prince Aly Khan and Varas Chhotubhai were on their way by car to see Lady Aly Shah in Sofar. They continued on to Homs, where 400 Ismaili horsemen gave Prince Aly Khan a rousing welcome. As befitted as a beloved Prince, they entered Salamia in a procession, making their way to the Jamatkhana, where a *darbar* was held for this historical event. In front of the devout Ismailis who waited patiently to catch a glimpse of the heir-apparent, the Ismaili governor of Salamia read this poignant message from Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah: **"I am sending my beloved son to you, and you should consider him as equivalent to my own coming. I am sending the Prince in the capacity of my heir-apparent."** Prince Aly Khan used the occasion to bestow the title of **Alijah** on Kamadia Mir Mirza Haji Mustapha, with the help of a wooden stick.



Although Prince Aly Khan was born and raised in Europe, he felt completely at ease riding horses in Salamia, adorned in Arabian sartorial splendor, which prompted Varas Chhotubhai to remark, "How elegant you look in an Arabian dress," to which Prince Aly Khan quipped, **"Of course! Although I was born in Europe, the Arabian blood of the Holy Prophet nevertheless flows in my veins."** Major A.J. Lakhpati (1884-1947) was so touched by this charming exchange that he ended up composing a beautiful poem to praise the Prince.

Before Prince Aly Khan returned to Sofar, a six-hour drive from Salamia, where Varas Chhotubhai was to join him in a hunting expedition. But the Prince, who had a penchant for driving fast cars, made it to Sofar in just one hour! From Beirut, Prince Aly Khan returned to Europe, while Varas Chhotubhai went back to Salamia with Lady Aly Shah. He went on to visit Damascus and Palestine before returning to Bombay with Lady Aly Shah on October 3, 1930.

After arriving in India on November 21, 1930 on the mail steamer **Ranchi** of P & O Co., Prince Aly Khan toured Northern India by rail. The "Punjab Mail" stopped at Kalyani before arriving at Gwalior on December 8, 1930. Accompanying the Prince, as his guests were N. M. Dumasia, the author of **"The Aga Khan and his Ancestors"** (Bombay, 1939), M. S. Jassani, and the Syrian officer Haji Mustapha. Captain Majid Khan (d. 1956), his bodyguard, was helped by Lt. Col. Pir Muhammad Madhani and Major A.J. Lakhpati; Varas Chhotubhai went along as his private secretary.

By December 10, they arrived in Agra to visit the legendary Taj Mahal. Another 23-mile drive brought them to the fascinating Fatehpur Sikhri. The next day in Delhi, they toured the Delhi Fort, Grand Mosque and the enchanting Kutb Minar. Then it was off to Jalandar, where Capt. Dass was waiting to welcome them on behalf of Kapurthala State. Two days later, on December 13, after a short 14-mile drive, their caravan reached Kapurthala,

where Maharaja Sir Jagjit Singh welcomed them to Jagjit Palace. Their days were filled with sailing and hunting waterfowls, as well as deer in the jungle. Two days later, on December 13, after a short 14-mile drive, their caravan reached Kapurthala, where Maharaja Sir Jagjit Singh welcomed them to Jagjit Palace. Their days were filled with sailing and hunting waterfowls, as well as deer in the jungle.

Taking their leave after two days, they drove to Amritsar, and from there another 28 miles to Lahore, where more historical sights captivated them, including the Shalimar Gardens, Emperor Jahangir's tomb, and Shahi Masjid.

After getting to Ratlam by train, they drove another 84 miles to Indore, where Mukhi Nur Mohammad Somji of the Ratlam *jamat* welcomed them. However, as guests of H.H. Maharaja Dhiraj Raj Rajeshwar, they spent the night at his palace before returning to Indore, where they were met by Vazir ad-Dawla, the Prime Minister of Indore. Then they left for Dharampore by the Punjab Express. After Pir Sabzali joined them at the Godhra station, they reached Surat on December 20. In Dharampore, they stayed at the Narshih Vilas as special guests of Suryawanshi Maharana Shri Vijaydevji. The next day, on a hunting trip in the jungle, Prince Aly Khan managed to hunt down a 71/2-foot long panther and a deer. The magnanimous Maharaja of Dharampore, who presented Prince Aly Khan with a fine robe, also gave a gold ring to N. M. Dumasia, gold buttons to Varas Chhotubhai and Capt. Majid Khan, and robes of filigree to the others.

All too soon, Prince Aly Khan's Northern Indian tour came to an end, and he and his party returned to Bombay on December 24, 1930 by the Kathiawadi Express. Prince Aly Khan then departed for Europe on January 17, 1931. As his personal secretary, Varas Chhotubhai had remained by the Prince's side during the entirety of his month-long tour.

At the completion of his successful and eventful Indian tour, on Prince Aly Khan's return to Europe, the Imam sent the following telegram to his Bombay *jamats*:

Marseilles, France

Children - Bombay

My son arrived. He sends his best affectionate thoughts and I, my paternal blessings to all the councils, *jamats*, ladies volunteers, punjebhais, boys, and girls for so much loving attention during his short visit . Our affectionate thoughts always with you.

In 1908, when other Indian communities benefited from their co-operative institutions, the Muslim community had none. In 1930, Varas Chhotubhai was instrumental in the establishment of a co-operative institution to help the Ismaili victims of economic depression and unemployment that eventually became a leading financial institution, registered under the Government Co-operative Act by twelve promoters. It was the first of its kind, not only amongst the Ismailis, but amongst the Muslims of Bombay as well.

Prince Aly Khan, who visited the office of The Ismailia Co-operative Bank Ltd. on December 15, 1933, was warmly received by the community leaders, and after inspecting the bank premises, he asked many questions. Varas Chhotubhai singled out by the President for

his meritorious service, as the steady progress of the bank was mainly due to Chhotubhai's hard work and persistence, was presented with a *shawl* by Prince Aly Khan.

After Prince Aly Khan's departure, Hussain Ali M. Rehmatullah, the Mayor of Bombay commented in the visitor's book: "During my visit I was pleased to see the fine progress made during only a few years, and the efficient manner in which its affairs are managed. I congratulate the Committee on their achievement and wish the Institution a long life of still greater utility."

On December 14, 1933, Sultan Mohamed Shah together with Mata Salamat and Prince Aly Khan stepped off the **Rajputana** of P & O Co. to a welcoming thunderous applause. Varas Chhotubhai once again served as Prince Aly Khan's private secretary during this visit, and accompanied him by air to Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Agra, Jubblepore, and other cities. They also visited Rangoon, Burma from January 7 to January 17, 1934.

On the way back from Mahableshawar by car on December 25, 1933, when the Imam and Mata Salamat stopped briefly at the sanatorium at Panchgani, Varas Chhotubhai welcomed them warmly. As the Imam inspected the premises, he asked Dr. Ghulam Ali Chandu and Jusab Allana Manji many questions, and after blessing them, he returned to Bombay.

When Prince Aly Khan visited the **"Ismail House,"** which Varas Chhotubhai had built at Sandhurst Road, Bombay, on December 14, 1933 at 10.15 a.m., he was warmly received by Varas Chhotubhai, Dewan Mohammad Ibrahim Mohammad Rawjee, and Ramzan Ali Machiswala, along with other distinguished guests. Entering the study, Prince Aly Khan smiled as he looked at a photo of Chhotubhai's late father, and noted: "The shadow of the central part of your father's image is seen in your face." Prince Aly Khan then entered the main hall where he accepted the family *mehmani*, and talked freely with all those present.

A few weeks later, the Imam accepted Chhotubhai's invitation to visit Ismail house as well. In preparation for the Imam's visit to "**Ismail House**" on January 9, 1934, a brightly decorated tent was pitched at Sandhurst Road (East) for a grand banquet, and Varas Chhotubhai, Pir Sabzali, Ramzan Ali Machiswala and Alijah Ghulam Hussain Bandali Somji welcomed the 1500 guests at the main gate. When the Imam arrived at 10.30 a.m., he granted the family a private audience and accepted their *mehmani* on the first floor, and lauded Varas Chhotubhai's significant and considerable services.

At the reception, where the Imam stayed for 45 minutes, he presented Chhotubhai with a gold medal with the Imam's image on one side and an English inscription on the other, on behalf of the Ismailia Cooperative Bank's directors. And before the entire audience, he also pledged the sum of one thousand rupees for the Fidai Boarding on Varas Chhotubhai's behalf.

So on January 20, 1934, when the Imam and Prince Aly Khan visited the Fidai Boarding, Varas Chhotubhai translated Prince Aly Khan's speech into Hindi for the audience. As he approached the microphone, he blurted out, "This is the first time I have ever used a microphone," to which Wazir Ghulam Hussain H. Thavar (1907-1963) remarked, "But it is one of the best opportunities to do so." Overhearing their little exchange, Prince Aly Khan cheerfully added, "Yes, it is a very fine opportunity."

After the Imam's departure from India, The Central Panjibhai Club of Bombay hosted a grand reception at the Recreation Club Institute to honor the new title-holders and leaders on March 17, 1934. The programme began with a stirring speech by Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad R. Mecklai, as one by one, he highlighted the meritorious services of the distinguished leaders. Referring to the services of Varas Chhotubhai, he said, "Alijah Ismailbhai Mahomed Jaffer, known as Chhotubhai, is Prince Aly Khan's personal secretary, and the Imam casts a graceful eye on him at all times. He was destined to serve the community and religion since his childhood, and became a leader at a very young age. He has served with great sacrifices, travelling to Syria with Prince Aly Khan, where his services were highly valued. And he has recently been appointed a member of the Bombay Council."

In 1934, when the Ismailia Students' Education Society was first established, with Ghulam Hussain B. Somji as its first President, it faced many challenges. However, under Varas Chhotubhai's dynamic leadership -- as its second President -- the society engaged in a flurry of constructive activities: for example, it organized regular elocution and essay writing competitions, debates, symposiums, social gatherings, sporting events, and numerous other activities to enhance the students' opportunities and education.

After providing the Society with suitable premises as well as generous financial aid and books, Chhotubhai became known as the father of the I.S.E.S., as he continued to nurture it with his paternal guidance, helping the disadvantaged students with scholarships and textbooks. Additionally, he also set up a library and an information bureau for the students.

The following year Chhotubhai was called upon to get involved in the significant Jubilee celebrations. In response to the Imam's telegram to the Bombay Ismaili Council on August 12, 1935 asking them to set up a committee (of active, educated members) to prepare for his Golden Jubilee celebrations, the Aga Khan Golden Jubilee Committee was formed, with Lady Ali Shah's help and advice, which she inaugurated on October 16, 1935 at Bombay's Aga Hall.

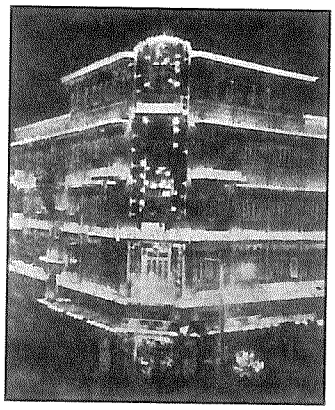
Sir Ibrahim Rehmatullah (1862-1942) was named President and Ghulam Ali G. Merchant Vice-President; Pir Sabzali, who headed up a working committee responsible for collecting donations, sought Itmadi Ghulam Hussain's support to include Varas Chhotubhai in the Committee as well. The Working Committee, which met at Varas Chhotubhai's home, debuted their fund-raising campaign with the Kathiawar *jamat,* succeeding in raising five million rupees.

Nine sub-committees were also set up to synchronize the various aspects of the Jubilee celebrations. To eliminate duplication, Varas Chhotubhai, President of the Control Committee, which coordinated with the Presidents of the Reception and General Arrangement committees, ensured that the thousands of guests were received and seated appropriately.

Five short months after the prodigious groundwork was laid, the great moment finally arrived. The historic Golden Jubilee celebrations were held at Hasanabad on January 19, 1936, and Ghulam Ali G. Merchant, the Vice-President, read a welcome address on behalf of the *jamats.* In his response, the Imam expressed his happiness at the occasion and accepted the gold presented by his followers, pledging to use it for the upliftment of the

Indian *jamat*s. So, to put that plan into action, he asked Ghulam Ali G. Merchant, Rahimtullah Chinoy, Kassim Ali Manji Nathoo, Ali Muhammad R. Mecklai and Varas Chhotubhai to form the Gold Grant Committee.

That same evening, though, the Imam, with Begum Saheba, took a drive through Ismaili neighborhoods to enjoy an unsurpassed display of illuminations: they headed for Mazgon from the Willingdon Sports Club, arriving at Dongri via Hasanabad, and were met by homes adorned in ribbons of light, bursting in color.



According to **"Golden Jubilee Granth"** by N. M. Budhwani (Dhoraji, 1937, p. 32), "Ismail Mahomed Jaffer, **J.P.'s** 'Ismail House' at Dongri was more attractively lit than all the other buildings in the neighborhood: The garlands of red and green bulbs encircling a multi-colored crown were extremely eye-catching."

On this unique occasion of the Golden Jubilee, Varas Chhotubhai was awarded the Gold Medal with the Straight Bar for his extraordinary services, and was appointed President of the Recreation Club Institute (1936-1937). Itmadi Rehmatullah Virji (1910-1982) served as Executive Secretary.

Also during the Golden Jubilee, after the Ismaili missionaries of India and East Africa presented the Imam with a historical medal, which he graciously accepted, they had a group photograph taken with him. Included in the photograph were: Missionary Hamir Lakha, Jamal Virji, Pir Sabzali, Tar Mohammad Rawjee, Ghulam Hussain Virji, Moloo Alarakhia, Hussaini Pir Muhammad, Nagji Mohammad Ali, Badruddin, Varas Chhotubhai, and Ali Muhammad R. Macklai.

Once again, when the Imam needed help with a cherished project, he singled out Chhotubhai in 1939 to take charge of merging the various Ismaili sports and recreational clubs in Karachi, including the Khoja Panjibhai Club, the Young Khoja Ismailia Sports Club, the Aga Khan Sports Club, etc. into one organization. Chhotubhai responded with alacrity, travelling to Karachi as a **Special Commissioner** of the Imam, where he stayed with Abdul Mohammad Juma Valliani in the Garden area for one month, and meeting with the respective club leaders to brainstorm the idea of replacing the existing myriad sports clubs with one that would please many persons. His mission accomplished successfully, with characteristic proficiency, in a written report to the Imam, Chhotubhai recommended

creating **The Aga Khan Gymkhana,** a plan the Imam graciously approved in mid-1940. It was thus that on November 2, 1940 history was made in Karachi, and the Aga Khan Gymkhana opened its doors to all Ismaili sports enthusiasts; Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy was named its first convenor.

In 1942 Varas Chhotubhai first moved to Mombasa, East Africa and then to Nairobi in 1966 to live with his son Mehdi. In 1974 he went to live with his son Mahomed Jaffer in Karachi.

While in Kenya, Chhotubhai became a partner in the Kenya Fish & Provision Supply Co., and also worked as a property and estate developer. However, as community service, his first love and true calling flowed untiringly in his veins, he was soon enlisted, along with Count Fateh Ali Dhalla and Count Kassim Ali R. Paroo, to take an active role in the construction of the new building for the Jubilee Insurance Co., which marked an important milestone in the East African Ismailis' progress. Lord Michel, the governor of Kenya, formally opened the building in a ceremony held on September 10, 1951, and later presented special gifts to the above-mentioned three leaders, on Chairman Count Ibrahim Nathoo's (1905-1962) behest.

Varas Chhotubhai was also appointed member of the Ismaili Council in Mombasa, and the Imam tapped him in 1953 for his Syrian projects to assist Ismailis in business.

On February 20, 1954 he was also invited to attend a token 20-minute ceremony of the Platinum Jubilee at the Semiramis Hotel's Cleopatra Hall in Cairo. In the presence of 62 delegates, the Ismaili leaders presented the Imam with 70 gold guineas, a gift the Imam graciously accepted, and then gave away one guinea to each leader, including Varas Chhotubhai, whom he asked to go back to Salamia to complete his projects.

During his second trip to Syria with Count Hassan Kassim Lakha (1892-1982) in 1953, Varas Chhotubhai got the Ismaili farmers - who sold their cotton to the local Jews at a very low price - to form a cooperative movement, and established a cotton ginnery for them, which still exists today. On February 23, 1955, after departing for Cairo from Zanzibar, he made another trip to Salamia, where he stayed until 1956, coming into close contact with Dr. Mustapha Ghaleb and Prof. Arif Tamir, whom he brought with him to Africa in 1956, to deliver lectures on Ismailism.

When the Ismailia Association was first formed in 1951, it was headquarted in Nairobi, Kenya. Count Nazar Ali Madatali Suleman Virji, its first President (1951-1953), was followed by Wazir Ghulam Hussain K. Issani (1954-1955), and when Varas Chhotubhai became its third President (1955-1959), with Rai Mohammad Ali Rashid as an Hon. Secretary, the Ismailia Association headquarters was transferred from Nairobi to Mombasa. Once again, with his unflagging commitment and enthusiasm, Varas Chhotubhai became an active and dynamic President, implementing many important, original programs.

Varas Chhotubhai's original idea to send East African teachers to Pakistan for Mission teacher training under the supervision of Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy (1905-1956), pleased the Imam, who then sent the following message on January 3, 1956 to the four students - Shams Tabriz G. Dhirani, Amir Ali G. Jinnah, Hasan Ali H. Nazar Ali, and

Ismail H.J. Khan:

My dear Dr. Hoodbhoy,

Regarding the four mission students from Africa recently arrived in Karachi, will you please convey to them my best blessings and my wishes for their great success.

At the completion of the first group's training, Varas Chhotubhai sent a second batch of 18 students to Karachi in 1958 and 13 additional students in 1959.

Not one to rest on his laurels, he had several booklets on Islam published at his own expense for circulation among Ismailis and other Muslims. The East African Muslim Welfare Society, Mombasa, distributed it freely among the new converts in Africa.

In 1955, Prince Sadruddin visited him at his home in Nairobi, as did Prince Aly Khan in April 1956.

After attending the Imam's *didar* in London on May 4, 1960, he was blessed with a personal audience with the Imam in Paris, where he also met the President of the Ismailia Association for Kenya, Wazir Lutfali Merali, who was touring Europe. They took this opportunity to hold a meeting and dined at the residence of Mukhi Mohammad Pirbhai in Paris.

Just a few days later when Prince Aly Khan was tragically killed in a car accident near Paris on May 12, 1960, Varas Chhotubhai was still in Paris. But his final burial took place on July 10, 1972 in Salamia, Syria, as Prince Aly Khan had willed. In deference to the Imam's wishes, only 36 delegates from India, Pakistan, Africa, Europe, the United States and South East Asia were able to attend the ceremony. Additionally, four special guests were also invited: Varas Chhotubhai (Nairobi), Dewan Ghulam Hussain Jindani (Mombasa), Tutti Hussain (London), and Varasiani Gulzar Muller.

The delegates and guests first met in Nice. The embalmed body of Prince Aly Khan was transported to Damascus on July 10, 1972 by a chartered Air France plane. Next, the coffin was taken by helicopter to Salamia from Damascus, accompanied by Prince Amyn Muhammad, six delegates, and four special guests, while Prince Sadruddin traveled in another helicopter with the other delegates. The coffin was lowered into its final resting-place on the same day.

The Imam commissioned Mr. Kamal Khan, his estate agent for Syria, and Varas Chhotubhai to devise a plan for a mausoleum, which was successfully completed, after many challenges, at a cost of 15,000 British pounds.

He also held the office of estate agent for the Imam in India until his retirement in late 1964, when he returned to Kenya.

Prince Sadruddin visited Varas Chhotubhai twice in Nairobi, once when he was operated on at the Nairobi Hospital in 1966, and a second time at his home in 1973, when he underwent treatment for his eyes.

For his dedication and services, he received the title of **Alijah** in 1932, **Rai** in 1936, and **Wazir** during Diamond Jubilee in 1946.

In 1974, he relocated to Karachi to live with his son Mahomed Jaffer. He had fulfilled his father's dream to build Bagh-e Rahat, the sanatorium at Panchgani, Bombay in 1931. As a life-patron of the Fidai Academy & Orphanage in Bombay since its inception on December 13, 1928, he visited it several times and also generously donated funds to it. On his October 19, 1930 visit, though, he commented in the visitor's book, "The general discipline of the boarders was exemplary. We examined the building and appreciate their sleeping accommodations."

In 1976 he donated Bagh-e Rahat to the Fidai Academy & Orphanage, in loving memory of his father. (Rai Akbar Ali Itmadi Alibhai Tyrewala was President and Rai Kassim Ali H. Zagmagia was the Honorary Secretary at the time.) The Imam sent Varas Chhotubhai his best loving blessings in 1978, after the property's legal transfer.

In August 1978, when Varas Chhotubhai fell ill and required surgery, he chose to return to the same surgeon who had previously operated on him in 1966 at the Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi. His three sons and two daughters immediately went to Nairobi, to be by his side. His son Rai Sadruddin flew from Los Angeles via Paris, where the Imam graced him with an audience on October 21, 1978 and said to him, "**He has served several Imams.**" The Imam added that he was praying for the health of Varas Chhotubhai and sent him his best loving blessings, as well as holy water for Varas Chhotubhai and the family.

Although the operation was successful, due to his age and some post-operative complications, he passed away within a couple of days of his surgery, on October 30, 1978.

Varas Chhotubhai was quiet, unassuming, generous, kind, and compassionate. A gentleman who liked to call himself a servant of the *jamat,* preferring to sit in front of the Mukhi rather than in the specially designated area for title-holders in the Jamatkhana.

He left behind a widow, the well-educated, home-schooled Varasiani Ashrafbai, born in 1911. She was the daughter of Kamadia Alijah Musa Jaffer Pradhan (1850-1925), a famous merchant and commission agent, who built the three-storied Musa Building at Palkhi Molla, Bombay, for Rs. 250,000, which he generously donated to the *jamat* for the use of 55 indigent Ismaili families. Though one floor of the building was reserved for a maternity home, known as Sakinabai Maternity Hospital, built in loving memory of his wife, Sakina, to provide free treatment to the sick. Dr. Jarbai Pestenji Khambata was the physician in attendance. The opening ceremony of Musabhai Building and Sakinabai Maternity Home was performed on May 15, 1918 by Sir Currimbhoy Ibrahim (1840-1924). Alijah Musa Jaffer Pradhan, who was appointed Kamadia of Bombay's Darkhana Jamatkhana soon after the death of Kamadia Ismail Kassimani in 1909, served for six years until 1915, and was given the title of **Alijah** for his services. The British Indian Government also awarded him the title of **Justice of Peace.**

The marriage of his daughter Ashrafbai to Varas Chhotubhai was solemnized on February 22, 1928 at Valkesar bungalow. The Imam recited the *nikah* as the *vakil* of the bridegroom and Syed Mushtaq Ali represented the bride. Varasiani Ashrafbai is about 91 years old

and lives with her elder son, Wazir Mahomed Jaffer, in Karachi.

Varas Chhotubhai's three sons and two daughters have followed in his footsteps and continue to serve the *jamats* in many ways.

His son Mahomed Jaffer, born on September 1, 1930 in Karachi, is a barrister-at-law, was Hon. Secretary of the Ismaili Council for the United Kingdom (1954), a member of the Ismailia District Council for Dacca (1956-1961), President of the same Council (1961-1969), member of the Federal Council for Pakistan (1969-1972), member of Owner's Representative Board of the Aga Khan Hospital and Medical College Foundation (1976-1994), member of the Constitution Review Committee (1984-1986), Chairman of the Shia Imami Ismaili International Conciliation and Arbitration Board (1987-1993), and Chairman of the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (1994-2000). For all his outstanding services, he was given the title of **Wazir** during Mawlana Hazar Imam's Silver Jubilee.

Varas Chhotubhai's second son, Sadruddin Jaffer, born on June 22, 1934, was the first Mukhi of Los Angeles *jamat* in 1967, and thereafter the first President of the Council for Western USA. He has been given the title of **Rai**.

His third son, Mehdi Jaffer, born on September 18, 1936 married Zaibun, the daughter of Tajdin Rahematulla Kassim Lakha (1914-1999) in 1961. A pharmacist by profession, and also a businessman, Mehdi Jaffer settled in San Diego, California in 1969. His community service began in the 1960's with the Education Board in Kenya, and continued in California in various institutional and *jamati* positions. He has served as Mukhi of San Diego *jamat* several times over the years: 1981-82, 1984-85, 1985-87 and 1996-99.

His daughter, Fatima, born on June 2, 1938, married Shahabuddin Juma, and was the Captain of the Ladies Volunteer Corps of Los Angeles *jamat* and a member of the National Conciliation and Arbitration Board of USA. She received the title of **Huzur Mukhiani** and then **Alijiani**.

Leila, the youngest daughter, was born on October 18, 1940. She is noted for fund-raising drives for the *jamat* in Los Angeles and is an ardent social worker.

The love, dedication and service to Imam and *jamat*, which characterized and guided Varas Chhotubhai's life, continue not only in his children but also amongst his grandchildren and great-grand children. They continue to serve and volunteer in various institutional and *jamati* positions in the Indian subcontinent, Africa, Europe and North America.

CHUNARA, ALI MUHAMMAD JAN MUHAMMAD, WAZIR
(1881-1966)



Dhamu Chunara also known as Dharamsi Panjuani was an eminent trader in Bhuj, Kutchh. He visited Iran with his wife Mulibai to behold Imam Shah Khalilullah in Yazd in the beginning of 1817. The Imam granted him a sealed letter of patent in Khojki script and also bestowed upon him the title of Dharas. He had two sons, Sumar and Virji. The son of Virji was Rahimtullah, whose son was Ghulam Hussain. The son of Sumar was Premji, whose son was Jan Muhammad, the father of Ali Muhammad.

Ali Muhammad, the son of Jan Muhammad, known as A.J. Chunara was born in Bhuj in 1881, where he acquired his formal education. He sprang from family well known for their piety, and himself had great enthusiasm, courage and zeal to serve the community. In 1892, he came to Bombay and worked in a shop of hats. Soon afterwards, he started his own shop, which became known as Karim Jamal Topiwala. He attended Jamatkhana regularly and heard *waez* attentively, inducing him to study Ismailism. His first debut in community service was when he joined the Kandi Mola Shukarvari Brotherhood in Bombay, and came into the contact of many eminent individuals.

It must be known that he had also acted as a Social Secretary of the Imam in 1904 and took visit of Dacca with the Imam during the early meetings of the Muslim leaders for the formation of the Muslim League in 1906.

His first poem into Gujrati appeared in the "**Ismaili Sitaro**" in September 1910. It was admired in the community, inspiring him to make further study. In 1910, he entered the arena of journalism and started a fortnightly paper, **Khoja Mitr** and then **Khoja Hitvardak.** These papers did not last for a long time.

The newly formed Ismaili Sahitiya Utejak Mandal confided him the compilation of the Ismaili history in 1916, and his "**Fatimi Khilafat ane Imamo'ni Badshahi'ma Ismaili'ni Jahojalali**" (The Fatimid Caliphate and the Glory of the Ismailis during Imam's Sovereignty), published in 1918, which provided him a scope and opportunity for display of his literary skills.

In February, 1919, when the Imam was in Europe, a false rumour spread that he would become the king of Mesopotamia. The Imam sent following cable on February 25, 1919 to a correspondent in Bombay, insisting that it might be given publicity: -

"Please deny as never true my candidature for Mesopotamian throne. Whole thing false rumor and no foundation."

The Imam strongly refuted that he never advanced his candidature for the throne of Iraq. This news also reached the Ismailis. On March 13, 1919, a grand gathering was arranged by V.V. Club, in which A.J. Chunara delivered an impressive speech and condemned the report of the newspapers. On behalf of The Young Ismaili Vidhiya Vinod Club, A.J. Chunara, A.J. Lakhpati, Honorary Secretary and R.V. Charnia, the Honorary Joint Secretary published a gist of the speech of A.J. Chunara, entitled **"Iman-ni Roshani"** in May, 1919, and its 4000 copies were distributed in all parts of India.

In 1922, he cherished a desire to publish a weekly paper to the Recreation Club, Bombay. His proposal was submitted to the Imam, who gave quick approval. Thus, the first weekly Anglo-Gujrati paper, "**Ismaili**" was published on Sunday, October 7, 1923 under his editorship.

He was also appointed a member of the Panjibhai Club, Bombay on September 23, 1923. The Recreation Club Institute organized a grand Missionary Conference between September 28, 1923 and September 30, 1923. In its opening session, a Subject Committee was formed with 20 members, and A. J. Chunara was appointed its Chairman, which passed four important resolutions to enhance the standard of the Ismaili mission. He was also the member of the central board of the Recreation Club. It is to be recorded that the resignations of the officers in the Bombay *jamat* were forwarded to the Imam for new appointments. He was consigned to sign each resignation letter before forwarding it to the Imam.

He was not a missionary, but a journalist. Nevertheless, he was gifted with oratorical skill and lectured on different occasions. During the 47th *Salgirah* of the Imam, the Merchant Club of Bombay organized a lecture programme at Fazal Ladha Building on June 1, 1924, where he gave a lecture on "**Islam and Shariah**."

He visited Karachi for the first time on October 12, 1924 and delivered an attractive lecture on "**Islam and Shariah**" on October 26, 1924 in the Ismaili Library, Kharadhar, Karachi. On next day, he also gave a lecture in the Lassi Jamatkhana and in Ranchhorline Jamatkhana on October 29, 1924. On the same day at evening, he performed a *waez* in Kharadhar Jamatkhana on the night of *Chand Raat*. On October 30, 1924, he also lectured in Garden Jamatkhana. He left Karachi on October 31, 1924 for Hyderabad, Sind, where he lectured thrice during his two days' visit and returned to Bombay.

In 1924, he wished he could compile a comprehensive volume on the history of the Ismaili Imams. He however could not centre his attention in the study due to the strain of works of the weekly "**Ismaili**".

He also made a trip of East African countries during the gracious visit of the Imam and left Bombay on January 21, 1925. He returned to Bombay on April 9, 1925.

During the 50th *Salgirah* of the Imam, the Merchant Club of Bombay organized a lecture programme at the same premises on May 22, 1927. He spoke effectively on "**Imam and Mankind**" for 75 minutes and moved the audience to great extent.

He visited Calcutta in 1927 and went to Vardha on May 29, 1927. He lectured for 90 minutes in the Jamatkhana, and encouraged the Ismailis to adopt one orphan to upbring

and educate him, which would be considered as an act of a true *fidai*.

In 1928, he embarked on the study of the Ismaili history once again. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai (1894-1971), the President of Recreation Club advanced his support in this project. The staff of "**Ismaili**", namely Hussain Sharif Bharmal, Alijah Hasan Ali Rahim Nathani, whose poetic name was Asmat at first, then Nasim and Alijah Abdullah Bible, also assisted him. Alijah Hasan Ali Rahim Nathani (d. 1962), well rooted in Arabic, Persian and English; visited several libraries and brought rare informations for the **Nurun Mubin** of A.J. Chunara. Hussain Sharif Bharmal was another essential individual, who wandered to probe historical informations. He was employed with the periodical, **"Nizari"** and knew Arabic well, and also compiled the Gujrati commentary of ten chapters of the Holy Koran with translation and transliteration and was published by the Ismaili Printing Press in 1940.

In reply to the letter of the Religious Study Group of Mombasa, Kenya, Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Rahmatullah Macklai wrote on November 22, 1957 that, "Ali Mahomed Janmohamed Chunara assisted by Husein Shariff Bharmal and Hasanali Rahim, spent most laborious eight years in researches and preparation of above book (**Nurun Mubin**), which was published first in Gujrati in January, 1936." (Vide **"Private and Confidential Subjects Discussed"** , 1953-1959, p. 76)

It is well on record that Rai A.M. Sadruddin (1906-1980) had compiled "**Shajra**" in Urdu in 1922, containing the biographies of the Ismaili Imams. Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) showed it to the Imam, who was very pleased and ordered to publish it with his own expenses. Rai Sadruddin visited Bombay in 1923, where he was asked to see Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai, and the latter directed him to A.J. Chunara for its publication. His book "**Shajra**" remained unpublished. It was however thoroughly studied by Rai Hasan Ali Rahim Nathani, who drawn it up on the plan of "**Nurun Mubin.**" This is the only reason that Rai A.M. Sadruddin proudly claimed that, "The **Nurun Mubin** was born out of his unpublished **Shajra**." A.J. Chunara did not mention the name of the persons without whose contributions, the completion of **"Nurun Mubin"** would not have been possible.

The first edition of **"Nurun Mubin"** got published in January 1936, containing the history upto 1934-35. Its 180 pages were reprinted in 1950. Its Urdu edition also published in 1940, wherein the name of the translator was not mentioned. Its second edition came out in 1950, containing history upto 1949 in the time of Wazir Ghulam Hussain S. Thavar (1907-1963), the President of the Ismailia Association for India, which was edited by Missionary Jaffer Ali Mohammed Sufi (1908-1963). The third edition published in 1951.

On April 17, 1959, the President of the Ismaili Association for India wrote a letter to the Imam about the next edition of **Nurun Mubin**. The Imam sent following message on April 22, 1959: -

My dear President & Members,

I have received your letter of April 17th.

It is in order for you to republish the Gujrati edition of Nurun-Mubin.

Hence, its fourth edition published in 1961 in the time of Jusab Ali Ismail Ukka, the President of the Association. Itmadi Sultan V. Nur Mohammed edited it. Its dummy copies were also sent to A.J. Chunara in Karachi for necessary verification.

It appears that Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah recommended twice to read **Nurun Mubin.** The Imam said, "Read **Nurun Mubin, Haft Bab,** the book of Pir Shihabuddin Shah and the Fatimid Caliphate." (Bombay: 3/12/1950), and also said, "Read **Nurun Mubin** and the book of Maulana Rumi in education. Learn the history of the Imams and study it." (Nagpur: 17/1/1951). With the passage of time, new historical documents and original source materials have been discovered, revealing important historical facts. In sum, A.J. Chunara was destined to write a volume, and deserves appreciation for the historical work he produced almost 65 years ago when it was the crying need of time for a major historical volume in India.

In 1929, he participated in the All-India Muslim League Conference as a journalist in Delhi and took that opportunity to visit the Aligarh University.

The Kandi Mola Ismaili Students' Library arranged a flag hoisting ceremony on December 10, 1933 at the premises of The Fidai Boarding & Orphanage in Andheri, Bombay, presided by Haji Muhammad Juma Jan Muhammad, the Vice-President of the Recreation Club Institute. On that occasion, A.J. Chunara made a moving speech and said, "The flag reflects glory of our past history of Egypt and Alamut. The Ismailis must individually remain united while knowing its importance. To retain its glory, one should respect it, needing unwavering unity. It also needs sympathy and love, and these qualities, if developed; we will be able to revive our past glory under the umbrella of the Imam. The Ismailis led prosperity in past, and there are even many Ismaili states today out of India; on the mountains, which are called "roof of the world".

In 1935, the "**Ismaili**" published a Golden Jubilee Edition, and when he presented its copies to the Imam, the Imam said; "**Now you have become a great journalist. The whole world praises this Edition.**"

He started publication of "**Nizari**" and "**Al-Islah**" and merited the grade of the first Ismaili editor to handle the three periodicals at a time.

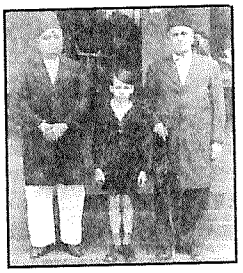
Once the Imam's car passed through the Ismaili Printing Press after visiting the Jamatkhana. The Imam stopped the car and called for Chunara from the printing press and talked with him in the car for few minutes. In many occasions, the Imam is reported to have asked, "Where is Chunara?" The Imam however made a formal visit of the press in 1940. On April 4, 1939, Prince Aly Khan also visited the Ismaili Printing Press. In 1946, Prince Aly S. Khan also stopped his car and visited the press.

He made extensive trips of Gujrat, Kathiawar, Sind, Punjab and Bengal, and also Burma. After the death of Pir Sabzali in 1938, the Imam deputed him as a Commissioner for Sind and Punjab, which he carried out with dedication till 1945. He also served as a member of the Supreme Council for Punjab.

Two years before the Diamond Jubilee in Africa during the world war, a deputation from India visited East Africa. It included Chief Wazir Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri, Joint Mukhi Kassim Ali Manji and Missionary Hamir Lakha. A.J. Chunara was in Poona under treatment. He was also invited to join, but he could not. Meanwhile, Captain Majid Khan wrote him a letter, which reads:

Under the instructions from Mawlana Hazar Imam H.H. The Aga Khan, I have to inform you as under: -

Inform Chunara visit Africa most important. The Indian work can live on assistant. African climate gives strength and change.



Despite his impairing condition, he readily accepted to make tour of Africa, where he recovered his health and propagated with Missionary Hamir Lakha in different villages to celebrate the Imam's Diamond Jubilee with great pomp.

He continued to serve as an honorary editor of the "**Ismaili**" in Bombay for about 23 years, and retired in 1946. The "**Ismaili**" weekly however continued to be published by Fateh Aly Ibrahim Merchant.

In 1946, he started an independent Anglo-Urdu paper, and the Imam is reported to have named it, "**Al-Islah.**" He came to settle in Karachi with his family in June 1948, and continued to publish **Al-Islah,** which was named later on as **"Al-Islam"** . He was also appointed an executive member of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan (1948-1949).

Another instance of Chunara's inter-communal popularity was his election as a Treasurer of the Gujrati Writers' Association, which was formed by writers of all Muslim communities. He was also appointed an office-bearer of the Committee of the Muslim Gujrati Journalists' Association in Karachi.

In 1950, he visited Europe, and after his return, he planned to publish a journal from Karachi during the preparations of the Imam's Platinum Jubilee. He published "**Platinum Jubilee Review**" on August 17, 1952, which sprang from **"Al-Islam."** It continued to be published till February 7, 1954 when his age at that time was about 72 years.

On July 23, 1952, the Imam sent a letter through Ismailia Supreme Council that, "**Alijah Chunara should be asked to publish a special Platinum Jubilee Review, showing the advantages of funds which will be entirely for the welfare of the community, and generally explaining the meaning of Platinum Jubilee and my Imamate. Alijah Chunara is a very able man and he should not be kept silent.**"

He did not receive any titles until 1952. When the leaders of Pakistan submitted a request, the Imam said, "**He is my servant, needing no title**". Nevertheless, he was honored with the title of **Alijah** in 1952.

He had also made a long tour of Europe and Middle East with Rahim Ali Muhammad in 1955. The weekly **"Ismaili"** covered its details on October 2, 1955 and October 9, 1955. He narrated that he left Karachi by Air France on July 14, 1955 and reached London on the next day and earned the *didar* of the Imam on July 16, 1955 in the Jamatkhana. The London *jamat* celebrated the Platinum Jubilee Day on July 19, 1955 in Sevoi Hotel in presence of the Imam, Mata Salamat, Prince Aly Khan, Prince Karim and Prince Amyn. Vijia Lakashami Pandit, the Indian High Commissioner, Ikramullah, the High Commissioner of Pakistan, and the Governor of Kenya, Uganda and other ambassadors, including 550 Ismailis. The Imam graced the second *didar* on July 21, 1955. A.J. Chunara left London on July 22, 1955 for Paris, where he stayed for four days. He left Paris on July 26, 1955 for Frankfurt, and on the same evening, he left for Stockholm. He left for Denmark and came in Copenhagen on July 30, 1955. He arrived in Hamburg on the next day and then Amsterdam. He also visited Brussels and then proceeded to Geneva and contacted the Imam's Secretary for getting an audience with the Imam. The Imam sent him a message that he would see him personally on next day at the Royal Hotel. At length, he saw the Imam on August 7, 1955. He again met the Imam on the next day and had a photograph with the Imam. The Imam asked him the reason of his European tour. To this, he said, "I came here to earn money." The Imam said, "You thought about earning money after services at reaching to the age of 80 years; while other prefer first to earning money and then for the services."

He left Geneva for Cairo on August 9, 1955 and visited the historical places. He left Cairo for Beirut on August 13, 1955 and then arrived at Damascus on August 16, 1955. He also visited Salamia, Syria and found that there lived almost 40,000 Ismailis in Syria with 53 Jamatkhanas. He left Beirut and returned to Karachi by Air France on August 21, 1955. In sum, he toured for about 20,000 miles.

In 1956, he visited Bombay and Poona, where he was given befitting honour. On May 11, 1956, the Council of Poona and the *jamat* hosted him a grand reception at Narangi Bagh, Poona. The function was presided by Wazir Daud Suleman Sajan. On that occasion, the meritorious services of Wazir A.J.Chunara were highlighted before the audience.

His untiring and phenomenal services for over 50 years, were acknowledged with the title of **Wazir** in 1960. During his last visit to Karachi, Prince Aly S. Khan called for him and talked with him. In 1960, he virtually retired from the *jamati* activities.

In 1964, his health deteriorated, he submitted a *mehmani* through Captain Varas Amir Ali Karim (1910-1978), the estate agent of the Imam in Pakistan. The Imam sent following message for him: -

October 6, 1964:

I have received your letter of 7th September, and I give my best paternal maternal loving blessings to Vazir Alimohamed J. Chunara and his wife Jenabai for service with best loving blessings for their health.

Kindly convey my best loving blessings to Vazir Chunara for his past devoted services and good work for my *jamats* in Pakistan.

Wazir Ali Muhammad Jan Muhammad Chunara died in Karachi after a long span of 85 years on March 23, 1966.

The Imam sent following message on April 7, 1966:- "**I send my best paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late Vazir Chunara, and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. Late Vazir Chunara's devoted services to my *jamats* of Bombay and Karachi will always be remembered by all. He was an example and a pillar of strength for so many years of fruitful service.**

I give my best paternal maternal loving blessings to all the members of late Vazir Chunara's family for courage and fortitude in their great loss. I am sure that they will continue in the footsteps of the late Vazir, and that they will find great happiness and satisfaction in doing so."

Wazir Ali Muhammad Jan Muhammad Chunara was a versatile litterateur and journalist. He was frank, impartial, far-sighted, balanced, warm-hearted, thoughtful, dedicated to the service of the community. He possessed superior abilities and was well informed in literature. He had few encounters with the Arya Samaj and sustained literally contests with them on several occasions. His memory being so tenacious that he had only to read once, in order to learn it by heart.

He was a frequent contributor to the periodicals, and also produced a galaxy of books, such as "**Elahi Mat,**" "**Khat Nirinjan**"of Pir Sadruddin, "**Chunara'no Chabuk** (1920), "**Khuli Chithi'nu Bhoparu**" (Bombay, 1917), "**Fatimite Khilafat**" (Bombay, 1918), **"Isha'at-i Islam etal-i Shu?"** (1923), "**Alamut'no Yodho**" (Bombay, 1924), "**Arabia ane Imamate**" (Bombay, 1919), "**Adam thi Ali**" (Bombay, 1920), "**Haqiqi Ismaili Aino**" (Bombay, 1917), etc. He also published following books after joining the Recreation Club Institute: - "**Ilahi Mat,**" "**Ismaili Nar Ratano**" (1931), "**Ismaili Virlao**" (1932), "**Nurun Mubin**" (1936), etc.



DATOO MERU, ALIJAH
(1868-1939)

Lakhpat, an oldest port of Kutchh, lying near the Indus river was a native soil of his family tree. The population dropped from 15000 to 2500 persons in 1851 due to severe famine, and the area became almost desolated. His grandfather, Thavar walked down to Badin, Sind with some Ismaili families. Later on, Thavar is reported to have gone to Muscat, located on the Gulf of Oman coast and isolated by a hill range. Thavar is believed to have worked with Baledina Asani (1802-1896), the Estate Agent of Imam Hasan Ali Shah in Muscat. He made Gwadar as his next home, where he died. He was survived by three sons, and Mehr Ali was a famous figure among them, who was also called Meruani or Meru and he had three sons, Muhammad, Datoo and Bana.

Datoo, the son of Meru of great talent and merit and striking calibre was born probably in 1868. Religion was a deep and abiding place in his heart since childhood. Born and bred in Gwadar, he took little education at home. He however knew Kutchhi, Sindhi, Gujrati and English to some extent. He could also speak Persian soon after his journey in Iran in 1923. He married to Kaisarbai, the sister of Varas Muhammad Remu (1860-1924). He was an ordinary fish and cotton merchant, and associated for a long time in the business of Varas Muhammad Remu as a partner. Soon after the death of Varas Muhammad Remu in 1924, his business remained to the extent of fish.

Alijah Datoo Meru was appointed the Kamadia of Gwadar *jamat* (1900-1910) at the age of 32 years. During the gracious visit of the Imam in Gwadar on April 1, 1905, he was presented a *shawl* on April 15, 1905. When the first Council in Gwadar was established, he became its founder Honorary Secretary (1905-1924).

In 1905, the first major project of the Gwadar Council was to establish the school. Alijah Datoo became the first President of the School Board. The name of the school was "**Imami Ismaili Khoja Jamat School**", where English and Gujrati were taught.

In 1910, he was appointed Kamadia of Pasani Jamatkhana with Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) as a Mukhi. On January 6, 1912, the Imam presented the *shawls* to the persons, who had donated large amounts to the construction of Gwadar Jamatkhana, viz. Kamadia Datoo Meru, Mukhi Tajar Mukhi Ahmed, Varas Muhammad Remu, Mukhi Muhammad Abdullah and Badruddin Hamirani.

With the consultation of the School Board, Alijah Datoo Meru cordially invited Col. A.B. Dew, an agent of the Governor General and Assistant Political Agent of the Vizir of Baluchistan on January 17, 1921, to make a visit of the Ismaili school. He inspected the

mode of education and emphasized on the teaching of Persian. The students sang a song, "God may save our gracious king." Col. A.B. Dew appreciated the President of the Council and other leaders. He wrote his remarks on the Visitors Book that, "I visited the school today at the kind invitation of managing committee of the Khoja Institute. I was a great pleasure to see the instances and generosity of the H.H. Aga Khan Saheb and a good sound education is being given to the children. And I venture to congratulate His Highness in the loyal cooperation of his followers in so enthusiastically carrying out his wishes."

He became the Mukhi of Gwadar Jamatkhana (1920-1923), and played important role in the building of the Gwadar Jamatkhana.

The Imam came to Bombay from Europe in 1923. Prince Aly Khan also came at the age of 12 years for the first time in India with his mother Princess Theresa. The Imam made an extensive tour of Kathiawar, where the Ismailis of all over India had arrived. The Imam arrived in Anand on February 5, 1923 and Rajkot on February 6, 1923, where over 30,000 Ismailis assembled. The Imam also visited Kesod on February 16, 1923, and also gave *didar* in Upleta, Bhayavadar, Jam Jodhpur and Porebander. He came in Limadi on February 22, 1923. In sum, the Imam returned to Bombay on February 26, 1923 after a tour of 20 days. Immediately, the Imam proceeded for Madras on March 3, 1923. Alijah Datoo Meru also went to Kathiawar with his family and returned to Karachi, where he received an urgent telegram of Pir Sabzali from Bombay on March 22, 1923. It read: "Come Bombay soon. Imam summoned you. Don't delay and haste to catch first arriving steamer." The gracious call of duty beckoned him for action as he prepared to go to Bombay instead of Gwadar.

It appears that the Imam was in Bombay after the visit of Kathiawar between February 26, 1923 and March 3, 1923 and during these days, he made a programme to depute a person on his behalf in Iran and Alijah Datoo was recommended for it. The Imam seems to have told to Pir Sabzali to summon Alijah Datoo to Bombay after completion of his visit to Madras. It is said that Pir Sabzali made a search of Alijah Datoo in Kathiawar and eventually came to know that he had set out for Karachi. Thus, Pir Sabzali sent an urgent telegram to Alijah Datoo in Karachi at the address of the Recreation Club's office on March 22, 1923.

Alijah Datoo Meru reached Bombay with his family on March 28, 1923. He asked Pir Sabzali the reasons of his urgent call. To this, Pir Sabzali said, "Imam will summon you soon after the trip of Madras to make a *farman* for you. Be prepared for Iran." He said, "I am ever ready to go anywhere provided I am ordered by the Imam."The Imam returned to Bombay on April 2, 1923 and graced a *didar* to his Iranian followers, known as the *Khalu* at Hasanabad on April 3, 1923, where Alijah Datoo was also summoned. The Imam told him, **"Datoo, you have to go Iran. Thousands of my followers reside in Iran. You must see them and convey them my blessings, and submit me a report of their conditions, what you observed."**

Alijah Datoo at once bowed his head to indicate his readiness. Few questions however crowded in his mind as he had never been in Iran ever before, and knew Urdu and English a little, and also how far he should go inside Iran. And a moment had scarcely elapsed when the Imam asked, **"Datoo, are you afraid of going alone? Whom will you take**

along?" To this, he replied, "To whom you Khudawind recommend." The Imam selected five *Khalu* followers, and asked, "**Wherever will you go?**" Khalu Kassim Mukhi Yaqub Ali made its reply that, "Sirjan, Kahek, Babak, Kirman, Khorasan, etc. will be ideal places to visit. Mahallat is at a furthest distance, where we cannot go." The Imam said,"**Why not? You must go to Mahallat. Make a journey of Iran for six months. There is now transport of motor and car etc.**"

The formalities of passports and papers executed on April 7, 1923 and Alijah Datoo decided to leave Bombay on April 19, 1923 by **Bhimora** steamer. The Recreation Club Institute hosted a warm reception to him on April 18, 1923, participated by the members, leaders of Council and *jamat*.

The caravan of Alijah Datoo Meru composed of five Khalu Ismailis, Ali Khan Masum Ali, Kassim Mukhi Yaqub Ali, Muhammad Hussain Ghulam Hussain Sherkani, Abbas Ibrahim Khorasani and Hasan Ali Abbas Khorasani. The Bhimora vessel sailed from Bombay on April 19, 1923 and reached Karachi on April 22, where Varas Muhammad Remu already informed the *jamat* through a telegram. The members of Recreation Club and leaders received him at the port, notably Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad (1884-1952), Varas Fadhu Piru Khalikdina (1885-1936), etc. Proceeded thence to Gwadar, he was given there a rousing welcome on April 23, 1923 by Kamadia Abdullah Nandu Pratani, Mukhi Tajar Muhammad, Kamadia A'ali Rahmatullah, Bandali Hamir, Abdul Hussain Mukhi Khuda Baksh, Bandali and Kamadia Muhammad, etc. Varas Muhammad Remu from Bombay also informed the leaders of the Gwadar *jamat* through a telegram. Alijah Datoo left his family in Gwadar and sailed for Muscat on April 26, 1923.

Alijah Datoo Meru arrived at Port Abbas on April 27, and left on May 11, 1923. He passed through different towns and villages till he reached Shahr-i Babak on May 19. His caravan at last arrived in Kirman on May 20, Yazd on September 26, Ispahan on October 3, and Mahallat on October 15, including Kahek, Tehran and Qumm on November 5. He departed from Tehran on November 12, and came in Mashhad, and thus, he crossed a distance of 600 miles during 20 days. He departed from Mashhad on December 25, and reached Quetta by train on January 31, 1924. He arrived in Karachi by train on February 3, 1924 and went to Bombay by sea. The hospitality that he received from the Iranian Ismailis was unprecedented. He submitted a report of his journey of 11 months to the Imam, who was immensely happy for his successful mission.

On March 7, 1924, he merited the title of **Alijah** and earned blessings and benedictions of the Imam. It was indeed his useful mission he ventured in Iranian towns, villages and cities. The worth of his mission can be measured from the *farman* of the Imam, which was made before the Gwadar *jamat* at Bombay on April 7, 1924 that, "**It is also for you whatever have been spoken for Mukhi Datoo of Gwadar. Pir Sadruddin came to India from Iran for religious *dawat* for you. Likewise, Mukhi Datoo has gone to Iran for the *dawat* of the followers. This is a very great work.**"

The original narrative of his journey was published for the first time into Gujrati in weekly "**Ismaili,**" Bombay (July 12, 1925 to July 19, 1925) under the title of "**Mumbai'thi Mahallat**." This important material was shrouded for over 24 years. It appeared for the second time in "**Ismaili Crescent**" (Dar-es-Salaam) on September 14, 1969, incorporated

with some insignificant additions and changes. Over 55 years later, Shihabuddin Gwadari translated the text into Urdu in **"Gohar-e-Gwadar"** (Karachi, 1994). For its English translation, vide **"Travels of Alijah Datoo Meru in Iran"** (Karachi, 2001) by Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali.

The Recreation Club Institute honoured a grand party to Alijah Datoo Meru and Pir Sabzali for blessed with the titles of **Alijah**. The function was presided by Ahmed Rahim on March 12, 1924. Both were presented the welcome address written on the hand-woven cloth encased in silver caskets.

The Imam left Bombay for Europe on March 15, 1924 by a mail steamer **"Cledonia"** of P&O Co., and Alijah Datoo Meru also left for Gwadar on March 17, 1924. In Gwadar, the *jamat* hailed him in princely reception on June 14, 1924, presided by Mukhi Tajar Muhammad, the Vice-President of the Council.

He visited Chahbar as a member of the Council with Mukhi Tajar Mukhi Mohammad to survey the economical condition of the Ismailis. It is a seaport on the coast of Gulf of Oman on southeast of Iran. They left Gwadar on August 3, 1924 and trekked for eight days on camels. They performed *waez* in the villages populated by the Ismailis. They left Chahbar on August 20, 1924 and arrived in Muscat by ship, called **Bankura**, where they held about 19 *majalis* and delivered *waez* in the time of Chief Mukhi Itmadi Khalfan Murad Ali (1877-1953) and Kamadia Mohammad Abdul Karim.

Varas Muhammad Remu, the founder President of the Gwadar Council (1905-1924) was diabetic. His health was getting worse in October 1924. He was taken to Karachi with Alijah Datoo Meru for necessary treatment on November 2, 1924. He unfortunately expired on November 5, 1924. The Karachi Council sent an urgent telegraphic message to the Imam in Paris. In his urgent message of November 6, 1924, the Imam blessed the departed soul, and added, "**Appoint after full consultation Karachi Council and Coast (for) new President in his place till I come India.**" Alijah Datoo Meru was in Karachi and with the consultation of the members of Makran Coast; a resolution was passed to appoint him as an Acting President for Gwadar Council. Soon after the arrival of the Imam from Europe to Bombay on January 22, 1926, the services of Alijah Datoo Meru was confirmed as a President of the Council. He continued to serve in Council till 1937, and was followed by his elder son, Varas Ibrahim (1901-1982).

On July 10, 1925, a son of the Kori in the village of Patadi in Gujrat disappeared. The rival group propagated that the Ismailis had killed him, and they damaged the premises of Jamatkhana and destroyed the religious books. The Ismailis in all parts of India condemned the incident, which affected the Gwadar *jamat*. Alijah Datoo Meru called a meeting of the Council on August 22, 1925 and condemned the event. He also raised funds for the Ismailis of Gujrat. The incident is known as Patadi Murder Case, and in its verdict on December 7, 1925, the Court declared the Ismailis innocent. It may be noted that Muhammad Ali Jinnah pleaded for the Ismailis.

It will be interesting to learn that in 1926, a certain Hindu, called Ishvardas Karam Chand heard the lecture of an Ismaili, Abdullah at Naklank Lecture Hall in Gwadar. The gathering was presided by Kamadia Ahmad Aali Rehmatullah, the manager of C.J. Hoodbhai

in B.I.S. & Co. Ltd. The lecture touched the heart of Ishvardas, who embraced Ismailism on next day with the hands of Alijah Datoo Meru.

It appears that the health of the Imam did not allow him to make constant long tour of India from Europe. He deputed Prince Aly Khan in India as a ***Valiahad*** to represent him. On that occasion, Alijah Datoo Meru sent following telegraphic message to the Imam:-

Sep. 15, 1930

H.H. The Aga Khan,
Care Coutts,
London.

For auspicious occasion Prince Aga Ali Shah designated Waliahad behalf of Gwadur *jamat* respectfully crave permission to tender sincerest congratulations to him and most submissively offer entertainment from *jamat*. Earnestly praying Khudawand for kind acceptance and benediction.

In his reply, the Imam sent following telegram:-

Sep. 19, 1930

Beau Rivage

President Alijah Datoo Meiroo,

On this occasion best paternal blessings and always night and day thinking of all dear Gulf spiritual children.

The Imam also appointed him as his estate agent in 1932 for Gwadar, Ormada and Pasani *jamats*.

In 1932, the British Empire designed a master plan to build an airport at Gwadar, and Alijah Datoo Meru was given its contract.

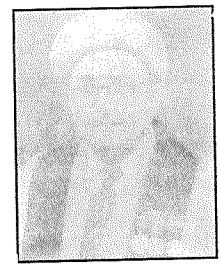
Prince Aly Khan visited Gwadar for three times, when he was the President of Gwadar Council (1924-1937). The first visit of Prince Aly Khan for one hour took place on February 15, 1933 with Pir Sabzali and Hashim Hood. The airport was at the distance of 9 miles from town. The *jamat* reached at airport before two days on camels, where the tents were erected for temporary lodging. Prince Aly Khan gave an audience to the *jamat* in a decorated tent and accepted their *mehmani*. He said through Pir Sabzali that, "I accept the *mehmani* on behalf of my father with best loving blessings." Prince Aly Khan also said, "You are delighted to see me, but I am delighted thousand times more than you. I have never dreamt for visiting here, but your love has fetched me over here." Captain Ibrahim Datoo Meru then read a welcome speech on behalf of the Council. In his reply, Prince Aly Khan said, "I am happy to know how your Council is working. I have never thought of an existence of a school in this barren village, but it gave me immense happiness for it." On that occasion, Alijah Datoo Meru garlanded him on behalf of the Council and Mukhi Tajar

Mohammad on behalf of the *jamat*.

During the *mehmani* at Bombay on December 18, 1933, the Imam appreciated the Gwadar *jamat* for the befitting welcome of Prince Aly Khan. The Imam also said that after the visit of the wife of the Viceroy of India in Gwadar, she admired it before him in London for the warm welcome accorded to her.

Prince Aly Khan launched his next trip in Gwadar on January 18, 1934. His third visit took place with his Begum on January 26, 1937. Alijah Datoo Meru greeted him all the times as a President of the Council and administered the whole management.

He was certainly a silent social worker. Ever present, helpful and full of kindness were specific features in his life. The faith in Ismailism burned with steady flame in his heart till his last breath. He played prominent roles in the *jamats* of Gwadar, Muscat, Pasani and Ormada, Karachi and Sind. He was also noted for his valuable services in Karachi and Bombay. He died in Muscat on August 25, 1939, where he was buried.



His sons continued the legacy of the services with the *jamats* all the times. His elder son, Varas Mukhi Ibrahim Datoo was born on November 4, 1901 in Gwadar, where he took his formal education. He resided in Karachi for three years to learn English in St. Patrick School. He mostly served as a member of Panjibhai Club in Gwadar since 1920, which became the Volunteer Corps, of which he was the Captain. Soon after the retirement of his father, he was appointed the President of the Gwadar Council (1937-1946). After the Diamond Jubilee of Imam in 1946, he migrated towards Colombo, where he was appointed as a Kamadia in 1950 with Wazir Mukhi Saboor Chatoor (1899-1967). He donated a princely amount in building the new Jamatkhana in Colombo. Mukhi Saboor Chatoor reported the Imam the progress of its construction on May 27, 1952. In his message on June 1, 1952, the Imam graciously blessed the donors. Sir Oliver Gontal, the minister of Foods & Agriculture on November 30, 1952, performed the opening ceremony of the new Jamatkhana. On that occasion, Varas Ibrahim Datoo delivered a touching speech.

He became the Mukhi of Colombo Jamatkhana after the retirement of Wazir Mukhi Saboor Chatoor on July 11, 1966. He also attended the marriage of the Imam in Paris on October 28, 1969. He also visited Salamia to attend the burial ceremony of Prince Aly Khan on July 10, 1972. It seems that he was a literary person and compiled "**Why not A.D., But A.H., A.C. or C.E.**" (**Ilm**, London, vol. 4, no. 2, Dec., 1978, pp. 34-5) Varas Ibrahim Datoo was honored with the title of **Wazir** and died on March 24, 1982 in Colombo.



The second son of Alijah Datoo Meru was Rai Mukhi Shamsuddin, who was also born in Gwadar on January 6, 1915, where he got his early education. He served as a member and Captain of the Volunteer Corps for several years. He became a member of the Council. He migrated towards Hyderabad Deccan in 1946, where he continued his services with Volunteer Corps. According to the guidance of the Imam, he joined the Mission Course, and became a talented missionary. He arrived in Karachi in 1951, where he started his business as far as Gwadar.

He also became the Vice-President of Gwadar Council (1956-1961) and the Mukhi (1961-1976). He passed rest of his life in Karachi, where he died on December 31, 1988.

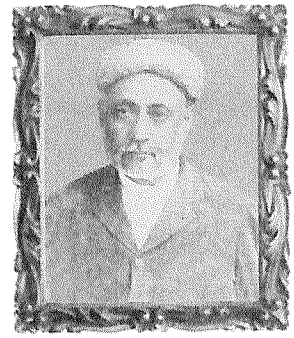


Itmadi Kamadia Badruddin, another son of Alijah Datoo Meru was born on July 20, 1917 in Gwadar. He too was an active worker in Volunteer Corps and became the member of the Council. He served as the Kamadia (1952-1961) and as President of the Council (1966-1972). He came to live in Karachi, where he extended his outstanding services in the construction of the Nizari Jamatkhana. He died on October 27, 1999 in Karachi.



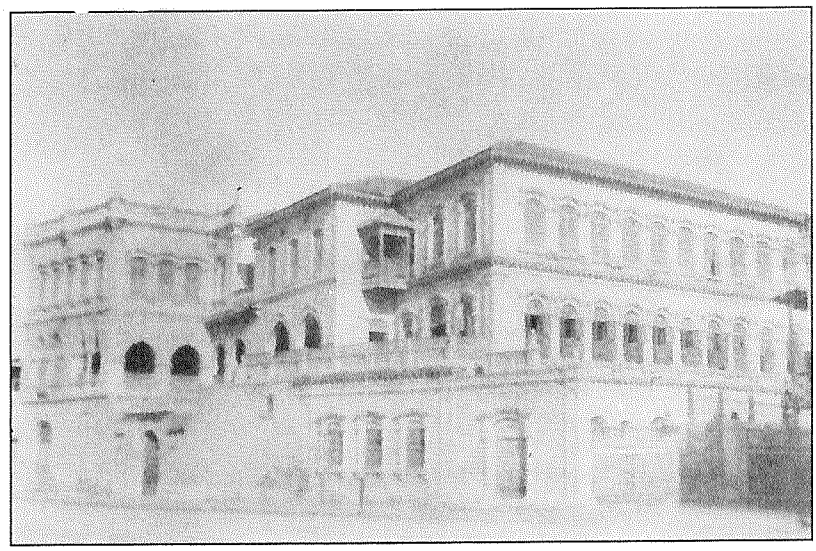
Nuruddin was the youngest son of Alijah Datoo Meru, who was also born in Gwadar in 1918. He was interested in decorative and engraving skills and took leading part in decoration of the Jamatkhana on festive occasions. He migrated towards Nairobi in view of the guidance of the Imam. He then proceeded to Vancouver, Canada, where he died a few years ago.

DATOO, MUKHI RAMZAN ISMAIL, DR.
(d. 1939)



Mukhi Ramzan Ismail (d. 1910) was a prominent leader. Imam Aga Ali Shah appointed him the Mukhi with Kamadia Hashim for the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi in 1882. Mukhi Ramzan was also an elected member of Karachi Municipality in 1854. He served the ailing persons in the community with his means and materials during the outbreak of plague in 1897. Mukhi Ramzan Ismail had eight sons, and the best known among them were Mukhi Rehmatullah, Mukhi Teja, Sabzali, Mukhi Nazar Ali or Mukhi Nanda, Ghulam Hussain or Gulu and Dr. Datoo.

Dr. Datoo was well educated with religious tendency since childhood. His appearance in the circuit of community services began when the plague, in a virulent form, broke out in 1897 in Karachi. To stem the tide of this dreadful scourge, he joined his father and came to the rescue of the patients and displayed no caste or radical prejudices. Some patients cherished desire to attend the first marriage of the Imam in 1897 at Poona with Shahzadi Begum. Dr. Datoo also followed his patients, and opened his small clinic in the camp at Ganesh Khand. It bewildered Lady Aly Shah to see his spirit and she admired his services for the patients.



He built the upper floor of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana for gents at the cost of Rs. 9000/- its opening ceremony was performed on August 3, 1918 by the hands of Varas Basaria Fadhu (1848-1918). The Imam tendered congratulation through a message from Europe.

He became the member, then the President of the Ismailia Supreme Council for Karachi between September 1, 1918 and August 31, 1919. He is noted for serving the community for 30 years. During the disease of influenza in Karachi, he rendered excellent services to the Ismailis with Dr. H.P. Limoria.

On Sunday, February 23, 1919, a garden party was entertained to Dr. Datoo and Dr. Limoria in the compound of the Panjibhai Club at Garden quarter, for enumerating their valuable services. They were gifted silver caskets by the Young Khoja Ismailia Volunteer Corps for Kharadhar, Karachi. The function was presided by Varas Muhammad Remu of Gwadar.

During his visit, the Imam appreciated his valuable services on Sunday, April 11, 1920 at Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi and said,**"Dr. Datoo Mukhi Ramzan has constructed a new additional upper floor for the *Baitul Khiyal Brotherhood*, costing about Rs. 10,000/- I give him many blessings."** On Thursday, May 6, 1920, the Imam also said to him, **"You have rendered more and more services to me, therefore, I am highly pleased with you, and bless you. You continue to serve all the times excellently as a member of the Council. *Khanavadan*."**

While talking of Dr. Datoo in Bombay in Recreation Club on March 27, 1922, the Imam said, **"He is now old. It is worthful if he works voluntarily or serves in other field. I bless him. The central committee may write him on my behalf for a membership. He has many persons working under him, and it will be better to teach the children. How long a person can work alone? Well, he is a doctor for new converts, not for old followers."**

Dr. Datoo died on January 19, 1939. He had a son, Shahban and a daughter, Jainab. Shahban died on September 7, 1955 and had seven children, Ismail, Hussain, Muhammad, Sadruddin, Sakina, Mariam and Alijiani Fatima Khanu.



DAYABHAI VELJI, VARAS
(1870-1937)

Veljibhai (d.1922) had two sons in Kathiawar, Dayabhai and Kassimbhai with two daughters from his first wife. He had also two other sons, Hussainbhai and Valibhai with one daughter from his second wife. Among these four sons and three daughters, the most famous was Varas Dayabhai Velji.

Varas Dayabhai was born in Bhankh, Kathiawar most probably in 1870 and lost his mother in infancy. His father thus married second time. Varas Dayabhai was eager for education, but could not acquire it and learnt Gujrati to some extent from his sisters.

His family surrounding don't appear to be very amicable and at an early age, he left his home. He travelled by train without ticket for Vancaner and then returned to Ahmadnagar. He worked in the shop of a certain Veljibhai. He then started to live with his own family. He worked hard and honestly for about eight years and made a little saving till he was able to carve out his own career. Soon afterwards, he became an eminent leather merchant and commission agent. His office known as Dayabhai Velji & Co. became famous in Ahmadnagar with its branches in Bombay, Poona and Kanpur.

He married at the age of 18 years. Unfortunately, his wife and a newly born child died very soon. He married a second time at the age of 21 years in 1891 to a certain Sakarbai, who was blessed with two daughters, Fatima and Jena and a son of great merit and talent, named Musa.

His business flourished to great extent in Ahmadnagar, about 150 k.m. from Poona, situated on western India on the Sina River. Its original name was Bhinar and was conquered in 1310 by the Bahmani ruler, Malik Ahmad Nizam Shah. He founded Ahmadnagar in 1490. It is now a district of Maharashtra State, covering an area of 6586 sq.miles.

Varas Dayabhai imported machinery from Calcutta and installed a tannery in Ahmadnagar. He entered into the trade of bones and exported its powder in Europe. His wife and his brother also helped him in his business. He became one of business magnates in Ahmadnagar in 1912, where hardly 20 Ismailis resided.

He employed a large amount of people of ethnic groups, who lived like beasts in forests and rural areas. For entertaining adequate provisions of nourishment and education to their children, he housed them with his own expenses. The famous famine of 1900 was also a terrible blow on India. Most of the people left their children in destitution and let

them wandered for food. Varas Dayabhai gave shelter to these children. Without using a little force of obligations, he preached them and brought most of them in Ismaili fold. He also built a new Jamatkhana in Ahmadnagar on the road, known as Dayabhai Road.

In 1903, the Imam is reported to have said to Missionary Jamal Megji in Bombay that,**"Have you ever been in Poona?** " He said, "Not at all." The Imam said, **"There is my one *momin* in Ahmednagar. You go to Ahmednagar after performing here your *waez*. He is a true *momin*. You then proceed to Kudachi, where resides his brother, Kassim Velji, who is also a true *momin*."**

Jamal Megji sent his message in advance to Varas Dayabhai that, "I have been ordered by the Imam to see you. I am coming." When Missionary Jamal Megji reached Ahmednagar, Varas Dayabhai arranged his *waez* programme in the Jamatkhana, and proposed him to arrange an annual *majalis* in Ahmednagar and he would bear its whole expenses. Jamal Megji said, "Not in Ahmednagar, but in Poona provided you find it far better, so that the Ismailis of Bombay can also participate." Varas Dayabhai admired his plan and contributed enough funds for the annual *majalis* in Poona. The Imam also told to Jamal Megji to see Kassim Velji in Kudachi, where he went with Varas Dayabhai. Kassim Velji told him that, "You have given chance to Varas Dayabhai, now you also let me share. I am ready to serve in the annual *majalis* wherever your organize it." Jamal Megji said that, "You share funds for the *majalis* for Jam Jodhpur in Kathiawar." Kassim Velji shared along with Varas Dayabhai. Accordingly, the first annual *majalis* in Poona started in 1904 under the supervision of Varas Dayabhai.

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah attended the fourth annual *majalis* of Poona on January 12, 1908 and formed a Majalis Committee to maintain the accounts, viz. Kamadia Haji Nazar Ali, Nainsibhai Pirbhai, Rahim Moloo, Dayabhai Velji, Hashim Kanji, Moledina Megji, Laljibhai Nanji and Alibhai Kunvarji. Later on, Varas Dayabhai was consigned the entire administration of the annual *majalis* of both Poona and Virpur. The Imam said on January 10, 1910 to the members of the Majalis Committee that, **"God will recompense you rewards for your exertions."**

The Ismaili Council for district Ghat came into existence in February, 1910. Dayabhai was appointed its President with Safar Ali Jan Muhammad Jamal Pradhan as Honorary Secretary. It covered the administration of Poona, Solapur, Bijapur, Pachapur, Ahmednagar, Kolapur, Hyderabad, Sikandarabad, Ajmer, Agra, Lahore, Kanpur, Delhi, etc.

On December 3, 1912, he went to Bombay with his wife and invited the Imam to attend the marriage of his son, Musa. Since the wedding date was inconvenient, the Imam said, "I will attend the marriage provided you postpone it for one month." He agreed and decided to perform the marriage during the 10th annual *majalis* in Virpur. He made another request to propose a fateful date for it. The Imam fixed the date 28th. His wife Sukkubai said that it seemed not ideal date, because it carried an even figure. The Imam said to Varas Dayabhai, "Ask her, who has made all the dates. No date is imperfect, all are equal." The Imam gave him a period of one month for wedding preparations. Unfortunately, the wife of Varas Dayabhai expired in the first week of January 1913 before the marriage.

Varas Dayabhai also worked hard in the annual *majalis* and fair in Virpur. For attending the 10th annual *majalis* in Virpur, the Imam left Bombay by a special train for Gujrat and Kathiawar in January 1913. The train reached Surat on January 12, 1913 and on the same day at Sidhpur. The Imam left Sidhpur on January 15, 1913 for Limadi, and then arrived at Virpur on January 22, 1913. Thakkur Surshin, his son Hamirshin, the Dewan and the Ismaili leaders accorded him a rousing welcome at the station of Virpur, including Varas Dayabhai. The Imam attended the *majalis* and graced *didar* on 22nd, 24th, 28th, 29th and 30th January 1913.

By orders of the Imam, a large number of Ismailis from Bombay, Kutchh and Karachi flocked together in Virpur. On January 28, 1913, the food for the wedding reception was cooked for about 10 to 12 thousand people, but the estimation was beyond the expected figure. It reached to 30 to 35 thousand people. It was a problem and a matter of prestige for Varas Dayabhai to feed the outnumbered guests with insufficient foods. He however managed other items of the meal, but failed to arrange the sweetballs (*ladoo*) for the guests. Worries crowded in his mind as there were few minutes in lunchtime. He at once approached the Imam in the *majalis* hall and implored, "Mawla, I have tried as much as I could. The time is very short and the sweetballs are less than the guests." The Imam said, "Well, show me your kitchen." Varas brought the Imam in the room where insufficient sweetballs were placed in plates. The Imam took a piece of sweetball, broke it into pieces and powdered it. The Imam recited something on it, then spread the powder on all the sweetballs and said, "You cover the plates with a white cloth and serve the *jamat* without picking up the cover." The Imam also uttered the words, **"More blesssings, more blessings, blessing, blessing."**

The *jamat* was entertained with lunch, yet there was plenty of food. The sweetballs were served for three days, but it remained inexhaustible. Varas Dayabhai requested the Imam that the sweetballs were plenty and the *jamats* were leaving the *majalis*, and wished to entertain another meal to the *jamat* once again. The Imam disallowed it and said, "Not at all. The time is over. It was only for the wedding reception of your son. You give its parcels to everyone who are leaving and to those who need for marriages in this *majalis*." Accordingly, each person was given four extra sweetballs at the conclusion of the *majalis*.

During his last *didar* on Thursday, January 30, 1913, the Imam made a *farman* that, **"Dayabhai Velji has worked too much in this fair and the *jamat*, moiling and toiling all the times in such noble cause and works too much in Poona. I, therefore, appoint him as a Wazir for Poona. I have come here in Virpur to attend the marriage of Musa, the son of Dayabhai. I had not desired to visit Virpur and its fair in this year had the marriage not been performed. And if I may have come next time, the fair would have been organized in other place or in Rajkot. My programme (for Virpur however) destined due to the occasion of this marriage, and as a result, some other good works have also been solemnized."**

The fair of *majalis* in Virpur was administered exceedingly well by Kassim Velji, the brother of Varas Dayabhai. The Imam also visited the *majalis* hall on January 31, 1913 and admired the administration of lodging and fooding of the guest Ismailis.

Before departure, the Imam told him to build a Boarding in Virpur for the new Ismaili children. Varas Dayabhai spent massive amount and erected a Boarding with seven boys during its inauguration. It was certainly the first Shia Imami Ismaili Boarding in India, which was opened on August 1, 1913. Varas Dayabhai was its President with Nur Muhammad Panchan as an Honorary Secretary.

He had a severe shock when his second wife expired in 1913. He married for the third time in 1915 to look after his children. His third wife, Khatijabai, who had four daughters, Gulbanu, Sherbanu, Shakar, Daulat and a son, Aziz. Unfortunately, she remained constantly ill. The Imam told him to marry once again. His fourth marriage was performed with Santokhbai of Kotada. His two wives, the sick and the fourth one however lived together. His fourth wife mostly looked after the children.

He then centered his all attentions in Ahmadnagar. He brought a multitude of people in depressed class and fostered them with his own expenses. He protected many orphans in their destitution, and raised them from poverty to a steady income. The local people opposed his mission and filed a suit against him. He won the case and resumed his noble mission undaunted. He converted the ethnic people and gave them shelter, food and education. He employed them and arranged their marriages with houses to live freely in the Ismaili circles. With the guidance of the Imam, he constructed a philanthropic educational institution in Ahmadnagar in the name of the Imam, known as the Sultania Orphanage in 1918.

He was noted for giving his incredible services in the annual *majalis* in Poona for several years. He spent large amount for the participants in the *majalis*. In 1920, the newly formed H.H. The Aga Khan's Bombay Volunteer Corps arranged three special trains from Bombay to Poona.

Varas Dayabhai was most obedient servant of the Imam. During the *majalis* in Poona in 1920, he approached the Volunteer Corps on the first day of the *majalis* with a request to take over the charge of the food distribution. The officers told him that the volunteers were assigned to keep order and were unable to serve food in uniforms. Varas Dayabhai ruffled for solutions. When the Imam graced the *majalis* hall, Varas Dayabhai humbly reported it to the Imam in presence of Lt. Col. Itmadi Pir Mohammad V. Madhani (1896-1959). The Imam smiled and said, "Indeed, it is right. The volunteers are our soldiers and are in charge of the safety of the *jamat*. It is not part of their duty to serve foods." Varas Dayabhai bowed his head in reverence. To show the volunteers that he was not displeased with them, he very broad-heartedly looked after them and provided meals in their camps. He also visited it twice a day to watch their comforts, and conquered their hearts.

It appears that most of the Ismailis of Bombay flocked in multitude in Poona to attend the *majalis* after a tedious journey. Their insufficient lodging in Poona was also a major problem. Thus, the Imam abolished the tradition of *majalis* in Poona through an official announcement on Monday, March 20, 1920 that,**"There are much hardship and difficulty to the *jamats* in the *majalis* of Poona. The people face hardship and me too. Today is the last *majalis* in Poona, and there will be no more *majalis* in Poona. But when I will visit Poona, there will be (the *majalis*) for the *jamats* of Poona and district Poona, including Ahmadnagar, Kurchi, Banglore, Varagal, etc. and organize the**

***majalis* for them and accept their offerings and *mehmanis*. This *majalis* hall is now changed into the school hall. You people have come from a long distance after a tedious journey of train and expenses. You also got here no adequate facility of your lodgings and faced much troubles. I accept your *dastboshi*, not once but for ten times. The Indore *jamat* is free from district Poona. Make your own Council with four members in it. You set out for Bombay soon after taking the (last) dinner on today."**

Unfortunately, a false rumour spread in the arena of narrow-minded people in Bombay that the *majalis* in Poona was wound up due to embezzling of its funds. When it was brought to the kind notice of the Imam, he became highly displeased. On Wednesday, May 13, 1920, the Imam graced a *didar* at his bungalow at Mazgon, Bombay, where Varas Dayabhai Velji, Wazir Rahim Basaria, Mukhi Murad Ali Ghulam Hussain Naginwala of Paris, Alijah Alibhai Muhammad of Burma and Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad, etc. were summoned. The Imam said to the *jamat* that,**"You listen with care and write down and follow it outside the *farman* I am making just now. Certain foolish people talk that Wazir Dayabhai Velji has misappropriated the funds. This is absolutely false. The people talking alike are liars and speak untrue. The people are talking that Wazir Dayabhai Velji has embezzled the funds of the *majalis* (of Poona), which is absolutely false, having no grain of truth. Wazir Daya is a very nice person and performs excellent works all the times. He has served me too much and serves constantly. He has toiled much to start a Boarding in Virpur, which runs excellently. The account of Virpur Boarding is also entirely transparent and fair. He also renders some other services of my house; therefore, I give my best blessings to Wazir Daya.**

I have abolished the *majalis* in Poona due to the hardship of the *jamats*, and there is no fault of Wazir in it. There was a shortage of space in the *majalis* in Poona, and the people of Bombay and Kathiawar were facing intense trouble, resulting in its closure. Besides, there were other problems too, because most of the people belonged to Bombay, who spent unnecessary for railway fares and as such it has been abolished. I perform the ceremonies for Bombay *jamat* in Bombay and give *didar* for eight to ten days and perform *dastboshi* and other works, nevertheless, the people of Bombay flocked (in Poona) and spent unnecessary money to the railway, which is not advisable. That is why it has been abolished. *Inshallah*, when there will be the growth of the people in Poona division, I will start the *majalis* for the Poona division."

Varas Dayabhai Velji never disheartened with the charges of being peculated the funds, and continued his noble mission. He however obtained immense relief in the official clarification of the Imam.

On March 27, 1922, the Imam formed a committee of Recreation Club for Deccan and appointed him as its President with Ghulam Hussain Kassim Daud Suleman of Poona as an Hon. Secretary alongwith other seven members. The Imam also said to him,**"You can discharge three works. Help and send the Khojas of Kathiawar in Deccan, who have no significant business. Bring up the children of depressed class in the houses of Deccan state. People having a divine grace of Rs. 5000/- to Rs. 6000/- (as income) in Kathiawar, they should visit Deccan occasionally and adopt one or two children and keep them as their servants and upbring them. This is an excellent work. It is**

easy to find the orphans in Deccan." The Imam also told after a short while, **"Your Ahmednagar is convenient and ideal more than whole Kathiawar. It is not suggestible to leave the land beneath your legs. Your land is there (in Ahmednagar)."**

When the Imam visited Ahmadnagar on March 7, 1923, he said to him in the *mehmani* that, **"Do you know my benedictions upon you and your family? The actions *(amal)* must be good which is superior to other. It is better than the worship of a thousand years to execute the benevolent works and redeem the others. This work is far better than to worship a thousand years."** Then, the Imam addressed the *jamat* that, **"Conduct the business, earn money and perform the benevolent works like Wazir Daya, is doing in the Boarding of Virpur. It is better to redeem others than to worship a hundred years."**

The Imam launched his trip for Ahmadnagar on January 30, 1924 and gave *didar* to the *jamats*. On that occasion, the Imam said to Varas Dayabhai that, **"Your family will prosper in this world and the world hereafter. Live like a *Shahid* in both worlds. Our religion is a blissful (path). The *Shahids* cut down their heads and whatever you are doing; it is an act of the martyrdom. The overwhelm happiness and cool temperament with bliss spring out in these noble works. These are above the crore of rupees while looking these children. I am pleased to see these orphans. Get good works from these children. Teach them skills of trade. Keep your both eyes equal upon your own and these children. You also take care of these children (same) as the efforts are being made in the nourishment, upkeep and teaching the business skills to your own children."**

He, thus accommodated the new Ismaili boys in the Sultania Orphanage and the girls were kept in his own residence and he loved them as if his own sons and daughters without any distinction.

The Imam attended the *mehmani* of Virpur Boarding on February 11, 1923 and told to the boarders, **"Are you happy? Do you eat good meal? I give my blessings to you all the children of Virpur Boarding."** The Imam also visited the Virpur Boarding on the following day. On February 26, 1924, the Imam formed a new committee for Virpur Boarding with Varas Dayabhai its President and Huzur Mukhi Nur Muhammad Panchan as its Honorary Secretary. The committee was also comprised of five members, viz. Rahmatullah Alibhai, Kamadia Kassim Ali Hasan Ali, Kamadia Jessabhai Saju, Safar Ali Karim Macklai and Habib Ladha Pirani.

The constant outbreak of famine in Kathiawar harmed of the economy of the people. Thus, the Imam said in Rajkot on February 14, 1923 that, **"The frequent famine hovering over the region of Kathiawar interrupted the business. The *jamat* (of Kathiawar) is also large. They must quit their abode for other places, such as Deccan, Burma, Barad, Varangal and around Poona, and open there shops by one or two persons (in the family)."**

Accordingly, Varas Dayabhai examined the business opportunity in Deccan. He wrote a letter to the editor of the weekly **"Ismaili"** on February 19, 1924 which was published on February 24, 1924 that, **"Our Ismailis of Kathiawar, desiring to deal business in**

Deccan may bring two to three hundred rupees individually with character certificates. We will start their business. The poor Ismailis who cannot afford it, they may also come with the guarantee of the respectable persons."

A.J. Chunara, the editor of the **"Ismaili"** applauded the sincere offer of Varas Dayabhai in the next issue on March 2, 1924. He also made an appeal to the interested Ismailis to respond to the call of Varas Dayabhai and seek the golden chance. With the help of Alijah Alibhai Kunvarji, Varas Dayabhai flourished many Ismailis in Ahmadnagar with small business. The Colonized Department of the Council for Kathiawar also held a meeting on March 8, 1924, presided by Nur Mohammad Babul. The house appreciated the efforts and campaign of Varas Dayabhai and issued letter of congratulation. Later on, the Colonized Department took over the charge to flourish the Ismailis in Deccan under the Council.

Soon afterwards, the Imam also visited Ahmadnagar on March 7, 1923 and said, **"You inform to one another that I have made a *farman* in Kathiawar that how many persons can start their business here? You inform the Supreme Council about the prospect and communicate the news of this place and announce in the Jamatkhana. It is also (an act of) worship. There are few villages in the south and you inform as far as Ceylon. When two persons are well settled in business, then call other persons."**

Missionary Hamir Lakha came in Sind at the end of 1923. He selected five young Ismaili boys according to the guidance of the Imam and took them to Ahmadnagar on January 30, 1924, where he arranged their marriages with the orphan girls when the Imam was also in Ahmadnagar.

Varas Dayabhai also made a humble request to the Imam to provide at least three missionaries to exhort religious education to the new Ismailis. The Imam arranged the missionaries, notably Hamir Lakha. These missionaries stayed at the house of Varas Dayabhai. They exhorted to the new Ismailis the philosophy of Ismailism. These missionaries were also enjoined to give the Islamic names to the new Ismailis. Some students also got the training of the mission, notably Musa Jaffer, who belonged to the Kachhia caste and became a famous missionary.

An Ismaili tourist made a surprise visit of Sultania Orphanage in Ahmadnagar. He published his observations in the weekly **"Ismaili"** (Bombay, February 6, 1927, p. 10). In his article, he wrote that, "I have an opportunity to see Varas Dayabhai Velji on January 27, 1927 at 9.00 a.m. and at 10.00 a.m., a tea-party was accorded in the Orphanage by the Varas Saheb to Nawab Sayed Aminuddin, the Collector of Ahmadnagar. There are about 70 new Muslim orphans in the Orphanage. Each child presented different dialogues in a sequence in Hindi and Gujrati, in which the "*Parmarth*" was an excellent presentation. Four teachers are employed, one new Muslim, two Khojas and one Muslim. While inspecting the account of expenditure and income of the Orphanage, it implies that Varas Saheb has to make financial sacrifices every month. The residence of the children is comfortable, excellent and clean. The cleanliness of the children is also commendable. The education is also on a standard level. I was extremely pleased to watch the religious zeal of the children while going to the Jamatkhana at evening. I must say that Varas Saheb and his family shower affectionate feelings upon the visitors. They look at the orphans lovingly more than their own children. Musabhai, the elder son of Varas Saheb has great leaning

towards the education and takes front part in the education of the Orphanage. I felt happiness to see Varas Saheb acting on this principle. The people must know that the foundation of today's Virpur Boarding is due to him."

Varas Dayabhai also took a visit of Sialkot with Alijah Hasan Ali Devraj to attend the annual *majalis* on May 6, 7, 8, 1928

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah visited his house whenever he was on the tour of Ahmadnagar. The *mehmanis* were presented to the Imam in each room, decorated with varieties of the items. Once in such *mehmani*, Varas Dayabhai suddenly heard his granddaughter crying loudly and became worried. He sent her out of the room. Meanwhile, the Imam asked him, "How many daughters do you have?" He said, "I have six daughters and two granddaughters." The Imam said, "Let them cry. They will be healthy if they cry."

Varas Dayabhai Velji was also appointed the President of the Recreation Club Institute for Deccan branch in 1930, and continued to serve it till his death.

He submitted his *mehmani* directly by telegram to the Imam in Europe since 1930. The first telegram he sent in the beginning of June, 1930. The Imam sent him following telegraphic message:-

Marseilles, France : June 26, 1930
Time: 12 a.m.

Varas Daya Velji,
Khoja Merchant,
Ahmadnagar.

Best paternal blessings from self, son on happy occasion entertainment.

Prince Aly Khan paid a flying visit to India on November 2, 1930. He visited different parts of India and returned to Bombay on December 24, 1930 from Dharampore by Kathiawar Express. The Ismaili leaders gave him a warm welcome at the station. Varas Dayabhai cordially invited Prince Aly Khan to visit Ahmadnagar for shooting. Prince Aly Khan came in Ahmadnagar on December 30, 1930. He with a well-known local hunter, S. Ismail and Musabhai Varas Dayabhai and party shot a few deers in the Dothra forest in the vicinity of Ahmadnagar on December 30, 1930. He also visited the Sultania Orphanage and had a group photograph with the orphans. He distributed prizes to the children and attended five marriages of the orphans on January 1, 1931 in the compound of the Orphanage. About 150 special guests were invited by Varas Dayabhai from Bombay, Poona and Thana. The string band greeted the guest of honour with music. Sayed Mushtaq Ali Didar Ali recited the *nikah*. Huzur Wazir Ali Mohammad Macklai read the welcome address on behalf of Varas Dayabhai, who presented a brief report of the Orphanage from 1918 to 1930. He said that 60 boys and 2 girls were in the Orphanage, who were being taught Gujrati, Urdu, Sindhi and Arabic. He also said that 17 orphans bethroded in the Orphanage.

Prince Aly Khan said in his speech that he was highly pleased to learn that the Orphanage was being run with the expenses of Varas Dayabhai and would report it to the Imam that

how he and his family members took care of the orphans. Then, Varas Dayabhai, his wife and a daughter humbly presented a diamond pin to Prince Aly Khan, who left Ahmadnagar on January 2, 1931.

Lady Ali Shah sent her congratulation message to Varas Dayabhai on the occasion from Bombay and admired his valuable services.

Meanwhile, the All India & Burma Ismaili Deputation, comprised of the leaders from Bombay, Karachi, Burma, Poona, Ahmadnagar etc. visited Yervada Palace in Poona on Saturday, January 3, 1931 and submitted a humble request to Prince Aly Khan to prolong his stay in India. Ghulam Ali Ghulam Hussain Merchant read the address before Prince Aly Khan on behalf of the deputation. Prince Aly Khan was pleased and blessed them, but showed his inability to prolong his stay. He however promised to visit Bombay Jamatkhana on January 6, 1931. On that occasion, Prince Aly Khan very graciously called for Varas Dayabhai near his chair and blessed him on behalf of the Imam and appreciated his meritorious services. He also gave him five fountain pens to be presented to the five newly married couples of the Sultania Orphanage. He also gave him a precious *pachhedi* for his daughter, who took care of the orphans. In sum, Prince Aly Khan left for Europe on January 26, 1931, and reported all about the Indian *jamats*. The Imam sent following message to all the *jamat* that,**"My best affectionate thoughts and paternal blessings entertainment occasion my son's visit."**

He was anxious to mingle the new converts in the stream community of the Ismailis, and tried to send them in different cities. He employed few educated new Ismaili boys in the Ismaili firm at Bombay. In 1930, he sent two such boys in Rangoon, Burma, namely Dost Muhammad and Hasan Ali. Wazir Mukhi Jivabhai Bhanji (1866-1938) employed them in his firm in Rangoon. Varas Dayabhai also sent two other Ismailis in East Africa. In 1931, he performed marriages of 17 orphan couples, some of them were sent to Hyderabad, Sind and East Africa.

In 1923, there were 71 boarders in Virpur Boarding, out of which 44 students were learning Gujrati in Virpur and 27 students were getting education of English in its branch in Rajkot. Virpur was a small village without a college for higher education; therefore, he concentrated his attention in its branch in Rajkot and gave away the charge of Virpur Boarding to others. He was once again called back and appointed as President of the Virpur Boarding as resolved by the Managing Committee on September 29, 1924. Between 1923 and 1930, the Rajkot branch came up on a progressive track. The Imam ordered him to make it a separate Boarding. It was raised on the same site in 1931 with the expenses of Rs. 45,000/- He already humbly invited the Imam for its opening ceremony, but the Imam informed him that his son would open it. Varas Dayabhai also invited Lady Ali Shah, who accepted his invitation provided the girls he had adopted were also invited. Varas Dayabhai happily accepted. Prince Aly Khan, Lady Ali Shah and others travelled by train from Bombay in a saloon and he travelled in the third class with his family and bore all the expenses. The opening ceremony was performed in a cheerful environment on January 7, 1931.

It implies that he administered as the Supervisor of the Sultania Orphanage in Ahmadnagar and the Shia Imami Boarding in Rajkot with close attachment in Virpur Boarding. In

addition, he was also the President of the All India Majalis Committee till his death.

The Imam arrived at Bombay by **Rajputana** mail steamer of P. & O. Co. on December 14, 1933. About ten thousand Ismailis thronged at sea-port and gave a rousing welcome to the Imam, including Varas Dayabhai. On that occasion, the marriages of his elder daughters, Gulbanu with Kassim Ali Ismail Varas Shivji of Agra and Sherbanu with Sadruddin Faizullah Nanji Varind of Burma was performed in presence of the Imam at the bungalow of Valkesar in Bombay on February 18, 1934. Sayed Mushtaq Ali Didar Ali recited the *nikah* with the Imam, who acted as the *vakil* of the brides. Varas Dayabhai presented a diamond ring to the wife of the Imam. Looking this, the Imam said smilingly that he was deprived of the present. Varas Dayabhai immediately arranged another diamond ring and presented to the Imam and earned best loving blessings.

At Yervada Palace in Poona, the Imam attended the *mehmani* of the Kathiawar Council on December 23, 1933. The Imam restored the previous appointments of the Council and merged four villages with Ahmadnagar under Varas Dayabhai Velji. Its official announcement was made on February 19, 1934.

Meanwhile, Mr. W.W. Smart, the Commissioner of Central Division, made a flying visit of the Sultania Orphanage on October 27, 1934 and wrote on the Visitors-Book that, "I visited the Orphanage and school maintained for Khoja boys and girls by Messrs Dayabhai Veljee. The teaching is directed to preparing the boys for a commercial or industrial career, which is a very wise course. There are 2 masters for 35 boys; the girls go to a Marathi School in the town."

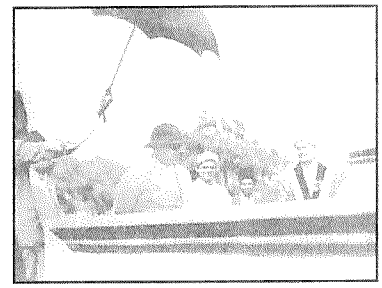
During his visit to India, the Imam attended the grand reception hosted by the Municipality in Ahmednagar on February 2, 1935. It was followed by a lunch from Mr. M.D. Bhaushali. On that occasion, Varas Dayabhai was also invited. The Imam also visited the residence of Varas Dayabhai, where he stayed for one and half hours. The residence was vividly decorated and the Imam visited each room, where individual *mehmani* was displayed. The Imam entered the room of Musabhai at first and accepted his *mehmani*, then visited the room of Varas Dayabhai, and then in the room of Varasiani. The Imam also made a visit of the Sultania Orphanage at evening at 5.30 pm, where he stayed for half an hour with the students and returned to Poona on the same night.

In appreciation of his outstanding services, Varas Dayabhai was awarded the Golden Jubilee Medal in 1936 with **Chevron Bar**

Once he travelled with the Imam in a car in Bombay. On one occasion while getting out of the car and the driver closed the door, his finger was wounded. The Imam dressed it, and told in private to Chief Wazir Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri (1877-1968) that, **"His fatal hour approached."**

Six months after the above incident, the health of Varas Dayabhai shattered. He felt that the shadows of death were closing upon him. He told to his family to route an urgent telegram to the Imam at 12.00 a.m. in Europe. The reply of the Imam reached at 4.00 a.m. with best loving blessings and he expired on the same moment.

After the long and devoted services, Varas Dayabhai Velji breathed his last in 1937 at the age of 67 years. The Imam arrived in India in the end of 1937 and visited Poona and Ahmadnagar. The Imam graced *didar* on January 10, 1938 and said,**"The *momin* Ismaili children which I am looking here, each of them is equal to a crore of rupees or the bungalow and I consider it to have paid me much price."**



The Imam also visited his house and blessed the family members. The Imam also visited the Sultania Orphanage and then visited the grave of Varas Dayabhai, who was buried in the compound of the Orphanage. The Imam walked upto the grave and stood few minutes in front of it with utmost serenity and said,**"Wazir Daya was a true believer. He executed the religious (mission) of Prophet Muhammad and converted a multitude of people as Muslims. Keep blossoming the rose flower on his grave. The rose was a favourite flower of Prophet Muhammad."** The Imam also appointed his son, Musabhai as the President of the Orphanage and the Boarding.

It is worthwhile to quote Ruzbihan Baqli as writing in his **"Abhar al-Ashiqin"** (ed. By Henri Corbin, Paris, 1958, p. 77) that, "When the Prophet saw a rose, he kissed it and pressed it to his eyes and said that the red rose was part of God's glory." A. Schimmel writes in her **"Mystical Dimensions of Islam"** (New York, 1955, p. 222) that, "The Prophet's love for roses may have induced the poets to call him "the nightingale of the Eternal Garden" for he discloses to the faithful some of the mysteries of God, the Everlasting Rose."

The one and the only way in which we have to record his greatness, he all along was a true, faithful, dedicated and most obedient in the services of the Imam. He made in his whole life an article of faith to toil in the moral and physical welfare of the orphans. He instituted and sustained the conviction in the minds of the children that the Imam was their true and abiding parent and, as such, no Ismaili on earth was ever an orphan. He loved the orphans without any discrimination. Among the orphans he loved a black girl immensely, whom he took in the *mehmani* in Bombay before the Imam in 1933. He procured close relations with the Muslims in Ahmadnagar. When any Muslim died, he or his son attended the funeral ceremony in the mosque, lying just opposite his residence.

Varas Dayabhai Velji left behind two sons, Musa and Aziz and four daughters, Gulbanu, Shakarbanu, Sherbanu and Daulat.

The tradition of the services remained unbroken in the family of Varas Dayabhai Velji. Soon after his death, his son Wazir Musa, who was born in 1895, became the Presidentof the Rajkot Boarding, the All India Majalis Committee and the Sultania Orphanage, which was closed during the Hindu-Muslim riots in 1947, and the children were shifted to the Rajkot Boarding. He transformed the Rajkot Boarding into a modern institution of the orphans with his untiring efforts. It must be recollected that the Imam attended his marriage in Virpur in 1913.



The forest of Ahmadnagar was an ideal hunting ground of deer. Prince Aly Khan occasionally visited Ahmadnagar during his hunting expedition and stayed at the residence of Varas Dayabhai. His son Wazir Musa also accompanied him and drove the bullock cart loaded with deer from Ahmadnagar to Yeravada Palace in Poona. Prince Aly Khan, Captain Majid Khan and few boys of Sultania Orphanage also travelled in the cart.

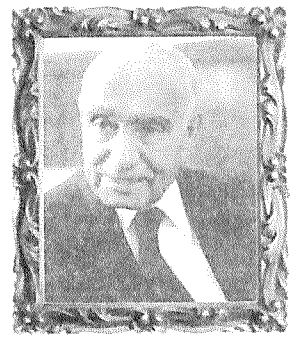
He laid the foundation stone of the newly built Jamatkhana in Surat on October 20, 1938 in presence of a concourse of the Ismailis and leaders.

Wazir Musa is reputed to have contributed Rs. 50,001/- during the Diamond Jubilee in 1946 and became the third among the best donors. He had a privilege to hold the umbrella of the Imam on the stage during the jubilee. He also passed on the boxes of diamonds to Itmadi Kassim Ali Manji Nathu, who was passing on to Kamadia Ibrahim Rajan Mehr Ali, who was putting the diamonds ultimately on the weighing scale.

During the celebration of the Platinum Jubilee, the Imam deputed Prince Aly Khan in India on January 23, 1955. Wazir Musa had an honour to be presented the jubilee plate from Prince Aly Khan in Poona. The services of Wazir Musa in Ahmadnagar were so outstanding that once Prince Aly Khan remarked, **"Ahmadnagar is a *jamat* because of Musabhai."**

He also served as the President of All India Majalis Committee for 25 years till his death. He became the President of the Council for Ahmadnagar, and the Trustee of Diamond Jubilee Trust, etc. He was the Director of National Land & Building Committee and the President of Ahamadnagar Municipal Corporation. The British India bestowed upon him the title of **Khan Bahadhur**. He rendered his services as an **Honorary Magistrate** for four years.

Wazir Musa died on May 14, 1962 at the age of 67 years. His wife Varasiani Jenabai (d. 1991) took over the charge of the Boarding in Rajkot as its President, while his brother, Itmadi Abdul Aziz became the President of All India Majalis Committee. Varasiani built a prayer-hall in the Boarding. Daulatbai, the youngest daughter of Varas Dayabhai also joined the Boarding as a member in 1962 and served with Varasiani for about 27 years. When Mawlana Hazar Imam visited India, Varasiani Jenabai presented her *mehmani*. The Imam plucked a rose flower from his own garland and put in the hand of Varasiani Jenabai with best loving blessings. It suggests that the rose flower has become a traditional symbol of the meritorious services in the family of Varas Dayabhai Velji, which will leave a major imprint on the history for generations to come. The Imam also made a tour of India for 26 days from January 3, 1978. Begum Salimah made a flying visit of the Rajkot Hostel on January 8, 1978 and was bewildered to see how a lady president handled the whole administration of a hostel.



EBOO PIRBHAI, DEWAN
(1905-1990)

Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai, the first Chairman of the Leaders' International Forum, was born at Bombay on May 27, 1905. His father, Pirbhai Gangji belonged to a noble family.

He came in Nairobi in 1910 with his family, where he took his early education at the Duke of Gloucester School. Without much formal education, he became a taxi owner-driver in 1926.

Based on hard work from this beginning, he built up a vast fleet of vehicles and diversified into servicing the needs of the growing East African safari industry. He married to Kulsoom, the daughter of Karamali Nathoo. She was educated at Seaforth College and Cambridge, and Cheltenhem Ladies College in England.

His first debut in community service was when he joined the Volunteer Corps in 1923 at Nairobi at the age of 17 years. In 1937, he was destined to drive the Imam's car. In 1944, he became the Private Secretary of Prince Aly Khan and his wife.

During the Diamond jubilee in Dar-es-Salaam on August 10, 1946, he performed his duties efficiently. The Imam blessed him for his dedicated services and said,**"Mr. Eboo's name is sure to remain in the history of Islam."** The Imam also told him to start his own petrol pump station. He ventured into the field and became one of the leading car dealers in East Africa.

Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai rose gradually to prominence, first in Municipal affairs of Nairobi on whose City Council he sat from 1938 to 1943 as a President, and then in national politics as a member of Kenya's Legislative Council from 1948 to 1960. He was also a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. These were the formative years of Kenya's freedom movement, culminating in the Lancaster House Conference, which eventually led to the country's independence under Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, whose close friend Sir Eboo cherished with affection. He was also a close friend of Daniel Arap Moi, the President of the Republic of Kenya.

In recognition of his national services, King George VI awarded him the **OBE** (Order of British Empire) in 1946 and in 1952 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II honored him with a Knighthood and the Coronation Medal. He also served as the President of the Central Muslim Association of Kenya from 1938 to 1958. In recognition of his services to the Muslim community, he was awarded the title of **Brilliant Star of Zanzibar** in 1956, and **The Commander of the Green Crescent Cross of the Comores** in 1966.

He was appointed member of the Nairobi Council from 1938 to 1943, and also became the President of H.R.H. The Aga Khan Supreme Council and Executive Councils for Africa. He was also a member of the Aga Khan Legion in 1946 and during the Diamond jubilee in Africa; he became Imam's private secretary during the tour and was awarded gold moon, diamond ring and a watch.

During the first Ismaili Mission Conference held in Dar-es-Salaam on July 20, 1945, he was specially invited to participate in it.

The Imam summoned a conference of the Ismaili delegates in Cairo to review the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee upon the completion of 70 years of his Imamate. Dewan Eboo Pirbhai attended the conference. The delegates mutually discussed in the morning and met the Imam at evening on March 15, 1951 in Hotel Semiramese. The Imam emphasized that the programme should be worked out on the pattern of Golden and Diamond Jubilees to improve the social and economical conditions of the Ismailis. The Imam, Mata Salamat and Prince Aly Khan invited them on next day for a lunch at Mohamedali Club and graced them with a photograph.

The Imam deputed him to Aden as his High Commissioner with Missionary Jaffer Ali Muhammad Sufi (1908-1963) on December 12, 1955. In Aden, there were hardly 20 to 25 Ismailis. Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai held a meeting with the governor and solved the problems faced by the Ismailis. With his efforts, the sites for the Jamatkhana and a graveyard could be arranged for the first time in Aden.

He was in a long line of community leaders in Africa, Asia and Middle East and devoted lifetime services for the progress of the *jamat* worldwide. This encompassed lying sound institutional foundations for the upliftment of the *jamat* with a network of schools, hospitals, health clinics, business cooperatives, housing societies, investment trusts and an insurance company.

He was among the group of supporters of the efforts initiated by Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah, and since continued by Hazar Imam, for the educational advancement of the indigenous East African Muslims as the most effective way of ensuring their full participation in the national life of their countries.

During the *Takhat Nashini* programme of the Imam in East Africa in 1957, he rendered excellent services in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. He also accompanied the Imam in 1958 on the visit of Europe, Canada and United State. He was made the Vice-Chairman of the first World Ismailia Socio-Economic Conference held in Karachi on December 15, 1964 and also addressed on behalf of the 54 delegates from African countries like Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Republic of Malagasy, Republic of Congo, Rawandi, Burundi, South Africa, Portuguese East Africa, Aden, etc.

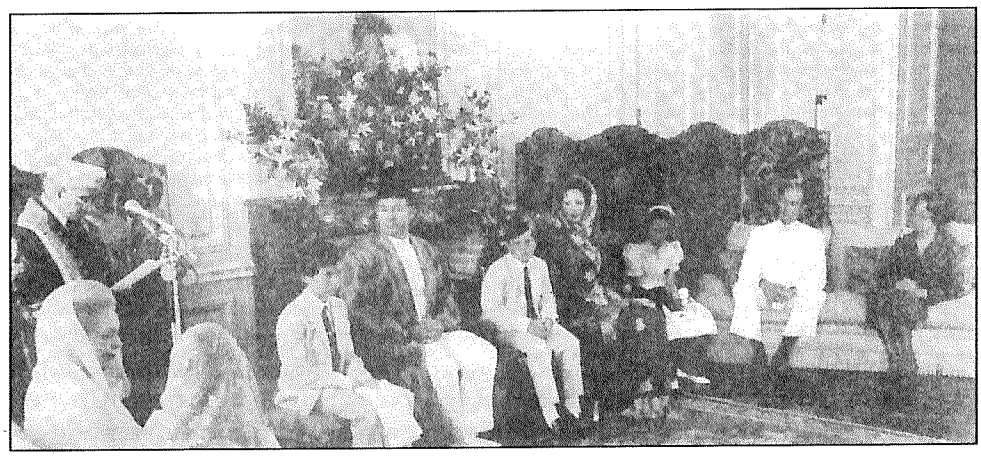
In 1972, the Ismailis were expelled from Uganda. On that juncture, he is credited to have settled most of the Ismailis in Canada according to the guidance of the Imam.

He also served as Chairman of the Jubilee Insurance Co. since 1953, a Senior Director of the IPS and TPS and the Diamond Jubilee Trust, Chairman of the Aga Khan Foundation

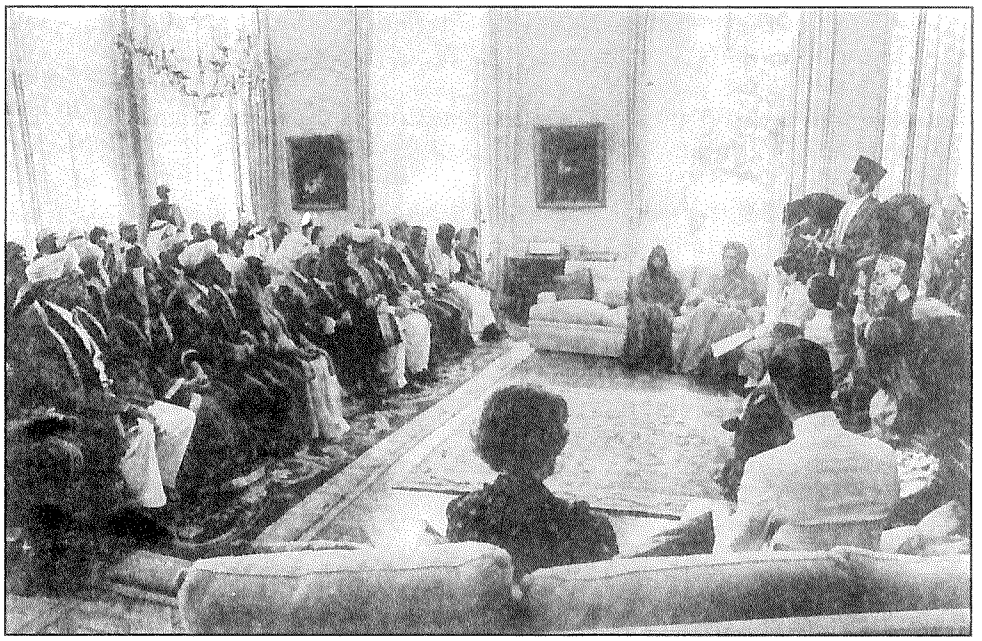
(Kenya) since 1980, Chairman of H.H. The Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismaili Supreme Councils for Africa, Canada, United States and Western Europe since 1973, the member of the Board of Governors of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, and the Chairman of the Ismaili International Leaders' Forum since 1977.

He attended the fourth International Review Meeting of the world Ismailia Associations in Bombay as its Chairman on January 13, 1982.

On Sunday, July 11, 1982, the world leaders visited Aiglemont to tender cheerful felicitations on behalf of millions of Ismailis to their beloved Hazar Imam. It was on this day exactly 25 years ago, that the Imam acceded to the throne of Imamate in Geneva. Leaders of *jamats* represented Africa, Bangladesh, Canada, Europe, India, Kuwait, Kenya, Malagasy, the Middle East, Malaysia, Pakistan, Portugal, Rwanda, Burundi, Syria, Singapore, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States and Zaire and more countries that any other previous jubilees. The Imam made his gracious arrival in a big hall with Begum Salimah, Princess Zahra, Prince Rahim, Prince Husayn, Princess Tajuddawlah, Mata Salamat, Princess Yasmin and Prince Amyn Muhammad.



The scene was picturesque, the atmosphere was charged and the exuberance and boundless. Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai had the honour to address on behalf of the world *jamats* and said,**"It feels as though it was only yesterday that the young Prince Karim became our 49th Imam. On the other hand the sheer scope and weight of your achievements in this brief time-span makes us feel as impossible for so much to be achieved in so brief a time-span. For him, this day constituted as milestone in the continuation of the vast work done by Mawlana Hazar Imam's grandfather. The sheer magnitude of the achievements that were to come could not then be comprehended by the *jamat*. For, as the 49th Ismaili Imam, you have given unstintedly of your time and energy in guiding us on the *Siratul Mustaqim*. You are doing so with the paternal, maternal concern and benevolence, and with indulgence that have been the foundation of the unique link between the Imam and the *jamat* since time immemorial."**



The Imam referred to that day as a **"historical occasion"** and prayed the worldwide Ismailis with best loving blessings.

By his talent and invaluable services, he merited the titles of **Alijah** and **Rai** before 1946. He was bestowed the title of **Wazir** in 1946 and **Count** in 1954. During the grand occasion of the Silver Jubilee Darbar in London in July 7, 1983, the Imam conferred upon him the title of **Dewan** for his over 50 years invaluable services. In his *farman*, the Imam said, **"What I wish to do today is to recognize in an exceptional manner in front of the *jamat*, the services of a member of the *jamat* who has served my grandfather, who has served me, and who has served the *jamat* consistently for more than 50 years, taking even personal risks at times of crisis in the developing world, extending to the *jamat* all the benefit of his time and wisdom, and I have decided to give the title of Dewan to Count Sir Eboo Pirbhai. This is also a symbol, because the Imam is saying to the *jamat* that the Imam wishes to recognize publicly, exceptional service by a very young man."**

Sir Eboo Pirbhai was present on that occasion and his eyes were moisted with tears when he heard the Imam's *farman*. With the help of Wazir Amir Bhatia, he climbed on the stage with his wife and submissively bowed his head, uttering *"amen."*

The last few days of his life were marred by illness and physical affliction, which he bore with the same tranquility and peace of mind, which marked his whole path through life. He breathed his last in London on Thursday, January 4, 1990 at the age of 85 years.

His funeral service held at the Parkland's Ismaili Cultural Centre Hall, attended by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya the Hon. Daniel Arap Moi, the Vice President and Minister for Finance Prof. George Saitloti and a host of Cabinet Ministers, the Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, members of Parliament, the Nairobi Provincial Commissioner and the British High Commissioner to Kenya, members of the leaders International Forum, office bearers of the Aga Khan Foundation, Geneva, the staff from the Imam's Secretariat and office bearers of Imamate Institutions in Kenya and overseas, etc.

In a message, the Imam said,**"Sir Eboo's leadership has been a major source of inspiration to members of my community in volunteering their services in various capacities to assist in improving the quality of life of all those among whom they live. Sir Eboo's life and work spanned the critical years of Kenya's recent history and the country's emergence to nationhood in which, as a member of the country's Legislative Council and a leader of the wider Muslim community, he played a significant role. His quiet and gentle manner, his humility and above all his thoughtfulness and wisdom earned him the esteem and affection of all those, regardless of rank or position, who came in contact with him."**

In his message, Daniel Arap Moi, the President of Kenya paid a glowing tribute to him that, "The late Sir Eboo was a friend of many and he passionately believed in the development and welfare of others. One of his outstanding qualities was his service to the people irrespective of their nationalities. He will always be remembered for spearheading various development projects in this 50 years at the helm of the Ismaili community; he promoted the development and expansion of the community's institutions. He was respected and admired by all in the Ismaili community and indeed by all Kenyans, the cruel hand of death has taken away an irreplaceable personality from amongst us all. At this time of grief and sorrow, I convey to his bereaved family, His Highness the Aga Khan, the Ismaili community, relatives and friends, my heartfelt sympathies and condolences. May the Good Lord grant them strength and courage to bear the loss."

Sir Michael Blundell, the veteran European leader in Kenya said, "Sir Eboo was indeed the forerunner and later a leader in the great contribution to the development of Kenya, which has been made by the Ismaili community....With His Highness' support he guided the community along the path of Kenya citizenship at a time when other people were hesitant to take this step. 'Eboo' as he was affectionately and universally known, always supported the idea of a non-racial Kenya in which all communities could play a part and never wavered in its support. The last few years of his life were marred by illness and physical affliction, which he bore with the same tranquility and peace of mind, which marked his whole path through life. Kenya as a country and many individuals in it will be the poorer for his passing away."

In an editorial, the **'Daily Nation"** of Kenya wrote on January 5, 1990, "The death of Sir Eboo Pirbhai in London yesterday after a long illness closes a chapter of Kenyan history - a history in which he played a distinguished role as one of the most influential leaders of the Asian communities in this country both before and since independence. A close confidant and friend of the late President Kenyatta and the close friend of President Moi, Sir Eboo never sought the limelight of publicity. He will be remembered above all as a

gentle and modest man. His influence was nonetheless profound and throughout his life he worked persistently for moderation and racial harmony at home and abroad. Above all, he will be remembered for his tireless work as a leader of the Ismaili community worldwide and for a life-long devotion to his Imam. At an age when most men have long since retired from active work, Sir Eboo travelled constantly and he will be mourned today by a host of colleagues and friends across the globe. The "**Nation**" salutes the passing of a distinguished Kenyan patriot, one man who devoted so much of his life to the service of his fellow men."

In sum, Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai was in a long line of *jamati* leaders in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, who devoted a lifetime of honorary services towards the vision of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah and Hazar Imam for the upliftment and progress of the *jamat* worldwide. This encompassed laying sound institutional foundations for the progress of the *jamat* with a network of schools, hospitals, health clinics, business cooperatives, housing societies, investment trusts and an insurance company. He was a gentle and modest man. His influence was nonetheless profound and through out his life he worked persistently for moderation and racial harmony at home and abroad. He will be remembered for his tireless work as a leader of the Ismaili community worldwide and for a life-long devotion to the Imam.

On November 2, 1990, the Imam paid rich tribute once again to Dewan Eboo Pirbhai before the African Delegation at Aiglemont, France that,**"The principle of honorary service, the principle of concern for the weak, the principle of love and affection, of never letting personal differences affect the service that one renders to the *jamat*. These are principles, which I will always sustain, defend and remind you of them whenever it is necessary. And these are principles that Sir Eboo represented, and I am happy that you mentioned Sir Eboo this evening, because he upheld those principles, and he taught many generations of Ismailis around the world, to understand and uphold those principles. And in that what he has left, I think, is a very strange lesson, or a set of lessons. When I looked at the delegates today, and indeed yesterday, and the day before, I thought to myself, how many of you had worked with Sir Eboo. Practically all the delegates that I have seen in the last three days, in one way or the other, have worked with Sir Eboo, and therefore, you are the representation today, of this knowledge and understanding of our *tariqah*, and his total commitment to the principles, and in that sense, I am happy you mentioned him. I am happy that the work that you are doing continues in that tradition which he represented so magnificently, and as you know, I have given and continue to give special blessings for the eternal peace and rest of soul of Sir Eboo, and for *Mushkil Asaan* for his family and for happiness."**

He left behind three sons and three daughters. His son Badruddin was a law graduate from Cambridge and a student of Bar-at-Law in London. On August 15, 1962, he was appointed the President of Ismailia Council for Great Britain, and The Supreme Council for Africa. He made also significant contribution to the development of tourism in East Africa, and in the tourism section of the I.P.S. He died on May 2, 1971 in London at the early age of 45 years.

FADHU PIRU KHALIKDINA, VARAS
(1885-1936)



Nur Muhammad was a devout Ismaili, who lived in Jimpir, Sind. His son Khalikdina however took up his abode at Jerruk. Khalikdina had three sons, Piru, Yonus and Juma. The elder son Piru, also called Pir Muhammad, was the Mukhi in Jerruk. Mukhi Piru had four sons, Fadhu, Aziz Ali, Amir Ali and Ghulam Hyder. The most prominent among them was Fadhu.

The real name of Fadhu was Fida Hussain, but he became better known as Fadhu. He was also called Fazal Ali. Fadhu was born in Jerruk on May 9, 1885. He was admitted in Alumal Trikamdas School for primary education in Karachi. He joined N.G. High School for higher education. After his father died in 1913, he had to take over charge of his father's business. He also became a Commission Agent of a British firm, Ralli Bros. Ltd. in Karachi, exporting bones.

In 1915, he was appointed the President of the Recreation Club Institute's office in Karachi. He also became the President of the Khoja Ismailia Co-operative Credit Society in 1915 with Itmadi Hashim Lalu (1880-1961) as its Hon. Secretary. In the same year, he was appointed as President of Anjuman-e-Ismailia in Hyderabad.

In 1916, while in Lahore on a business trip, he visited Delhi when he heard of the arrival of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah. The Imam granted him an audience, advising him to apply his expertise in the advancement of the community's services. He then proceeded to Lahore, and thereafter returned to Karachi.

The Imam launched a historical trip of 27 days in Karachi from April 10, 1920 and visited the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, and said, "**Fadhu Piru Khalikdina has candidated for Rs. 30,000/- to open the Khoja Ismaili Dispensary in memory of his late father. I give him much blessings.**" The Imam performed an opening ceremony of the Fadhu Piru Khalikdina Charitable Dispensary on May 5, 1920. Mr. T.K. Unam Singh was appointed its medical officer.

On the eve of his departure from Karachi, the Imam said on Thursday, May 6, 1920 in Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi that, "**I give you the high title of Itmadi. Itmadi Fadhu Piru, I also appoint you a member of the Council. I have conferred an honorable title of Itmadi in young age with the membership of the Council. This title is vested after the services of several years, but I bestowed upon you the title of Itmadi in youth without performance of any (significant) service; and also appointed as member of the Council. You must render an excellent service, so that every one may admit**

that you deserved the title and position. I enjoin upon you the responsible work, suiting the (office of) Itmadi. Whenever Itmadi Fadhu Piru may visit in any village, the respective *jamat* must assist him properly in every work. Itmadi Fadhu, I command you that you do not hamper in the works of the three Councils, i.e., the Councils of Tando Muhammad Khan, Shah Turel and Sakaro. You work as an Itmadi in Sind and perform your duty properly in the Karachi Council as a member. Khanavadan."

Fadhu Khalikdina was given the assignment to travel into interior Sind in 1920 to survey and collect information of the Ismailis and their economical conditions and submit its report to the Imam. During his survey, he found many destitute children deprived of education. He brought most of them in Karachi and gave them education at his own expense.

In the meantime, he was transferred from his firm in 1922 to David Sason Company in Hyderabad, which was a bone factory. In Hyderabad, he however continued his noble services and employed many needy Ismailis.

He was also appointed the President of the Provincial Committee of the Recreation Club Institute for Sind and Baluchistan in 1922. The Recreation Club Institute organized a Missionary Conference between September 28, 1923 and September 30, 1923. In its opening session, a Subject Committee was formed with 20 members, including Fadhu Piru Khalikdina.

On July 1, 1924, the Supreme Council for Karachi elected 14 members for the School Board, in which he was also included. On August 14, 1924, he opened the new Jamatkhana in Talar, Sind. He was also nominated as the President of the Khoja Ismailia Provident Funds Society in 1932.

The Khoja Ismailia Cooperative Credit Society came into existence in Karachi in 1931 to assist the down trodden small traders. In its formative stage, there were few promoters, viz. Pir Sabzali, Varas Ghulam Hyder Varas Bandali, Varas Captain Amir Ali, Varas Hussain T. Ramzan, Rai Ghulam Hussain Khalikdina, etc. Soon afterwards, from meager yet most valuable capital in those depressed times, the society made steady headway under the leadership of Fadhu Piru Khalikdina.

The Sukkur Barrage, officially the Lloyd Bridge, on the Indus River, about three miles below Sukkur Gorge, was the pride of Sind's irrigation system. Lt. J.G. Fife first conceived the idea of the Sukkur Barrage in 1855, but a complete scheme was not made for another 60 years. Sir Arnold Musto, an engineer was appointed to further the project. He submitted his plan to Bombay Presidency, and in April, 1923, the Secretary of State of India sanctioned it at an estimated cost of Rs. 22.5 crores. Its construction commenced in January, 1925 and was completed by December 31, 1932. His Excellency the Viceroy of India, performed its opening ceremony on January 13, 1933. He turned on switch operating the regulator and declared the canal open. It became a backbone of the economy of Sind, providing through its network of canals, irrigation to an area of 7.63 million acres, which consisted of approximately 25 percent of the total canal-irrigated area of the province. Hence, the Sukkur Barrage was converted into valuable land for the people as their crops doubled

within a short period of time. The uncultivated, infertile and coarse-textured soil, began to be tilled and new crops began to flourish. The entire barrage debt of Rs. 22.5 crores, which Sind owed to the Bombay Presidency, was to be liquidated within 15 years. In its size, the Sukkur Barrage was 4725 feet wide with nearly 2000 bridges and regulators and 66 sluice gates, capable of holding water upto R.L. 194.6 feet.

The British government in Sind put 1,725,124 acres of the Sukkur Barrage on sale at an affordable rate. There was a tremendous scope for pioneering and colonization in these regions, providing opportunities for poor farmers. Due to the success of the Sukkur Barrage, the Imam told Fadu Piru Khalikdina to acquire a piece of land and to convert it into a new colony specifically for the poor Ismailis. He purchased a large area of 644 acres in a barren and infertile region in Bulgai Jodhpur railway station, near the field of Sukkur Barrage. He offered 444 acres of land to each Ismaili family, and successfully settled them with his own funds. This new settlement was named an **Agricultural Colony**, and subsequently the **Sultanabad Agricultural Colony**. On April 1, 1933, the Khoja Ismailia Cooperative Agricultural Association Ltd. came into existence to lend money to the peasants without interest. At this time, the colony was populated by 350 Ismailis and included three grocery shops and a mutton shop in the locality. In 1933, the Imam graciously sanctioned its name as the **Sultanabad Colony.** Fadhu Khalikdina was also made the President of Sultanabad Khoja Council in 1936. Mr. Jenkins the then Agricultural Officer in Sind, remarked that it was the second best colony of its kind.

Upon hearing of this settlement, the Hindu landowners opposed this scheme and competed to build their own colony called Pritamabad. When the objectives of the Hindus failed, they requested to open a shop in the Sultanabad colony, which was refused.

The Sultanabad Colony took Fadhu Piru Khalikdina six years to establish. He also purchased the surrounding lands as ordered by the Imam. He laboured to solve the water problem and rid the surrounding territory of dangerous animals.

Varas Khalikdina also donated 200 acres of the land to the Diamond Jubilee Trust. This land was used for welfare. The Ismailis who had come here to settle down mostly belonged to Mirpur Sakaro in the district of Thatta. Some families from Kapur, Tando Bagho and Talhar also migrated to the Sultanabad colony.

In December, 1933, the Hyderabad Council sent a delegation to Bombay to submit a humble request for the gracious *didar* of the Imam in Hyderabad, Sind. The delegation included Varas Karim Kassim, Fadhu Piru Khalikdina and Ghulam Ali Itmadi Ghulam Hussain, the President of the Council.

In a *mehmani* in Hasanabad Bombay on January 3, 1934, the Imam said to Fadhu Piru that, **"You have built the Sultanabad and also serve in other places. How many people are in Sultanabad?"** To which he answered, "350 Ismailis and 150 non-Ismailis." The Imam asked, **"How much land do you have in possession**?" He said, "700 acres have been acquired at different rates for 43 families. They are working cooperatively on 600 acres of land." The Imam said, **"You have worked hard. Partnership is an ideal situation. It is beneficial and all will become land-owners gradually."** The Imam also asked, **"What is the rate of the land?"** He said, "Rs. 125/- per acre. The region was a barren

jungle. It has been transformed into good condition with your best blessings." The Imam continued to say that, "**The time is very critical. Progress will be made not promptly but slowly. It will take 5 to 10 years. Keep applying the Persian language. There will be prosperity when Sind will be separated and many people will come there.**" The Imam also said, "**I have tried hard for the separation of Sind. Everything occurred in Sind. Aga Hasan Ali Shah also arrived in Sind at first. I was also born in Sind.**" Fadhu said, "The Muslims are still in the rear of education in Sind" The Imam said, "**When the Muslims will be educated, they will defend their religion and none will waver in their faith.**" The Imam said to Varas Khalikdina's son Ashiq Ali, **"Have courage like your father and keep serving.**"

During the above *mehmani*, the Imam declared new appointments of the Council for Tando Mohammed Khan, in which six new members were added. Three of these belonged to the Sultanabad Colony, namely Fadhu Piru Khalikdina, Juma Nandu and Allana Arab. The Imam also appointed five new members for the Sind School Board, including Fadhu Piru Khalikdina.

On January 3, 1934, a banquet was hosted at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay for Fadhu Piru in honour of his meritorious services by Rai Alidina Ali Mohammed, Kamadia Merali Alarakhia, Mukhi Hoodbhai Mukhi Saluani, Major Ghulam Hussain Khalfan, Varas Mohammed Remu and other dignitaries of Bombay.

During his visit to Bombay, Fadhu Piru initiated a fundraising drive to collect donations for the school in Sultanabad. He presented a list of donors to Prince Aly S. Khan on January 13, 1934 at Hasanabad. Prince Aly S. Khan was delighted and blessed the donors.

Varas Fadhu Piru, Itmadi Ghulam Hussain Varu, Alijah Ismail Muhammad Jaffer, **J.P.**, Ghulam Ali Allana and Amir Ali Varas Karim were selected for a new committee by the Imam to build another new Ismaili Colony in Sind. The Imam told the members, "**Build a new colony in an arable land, rich with abundance of water, and name it Imamabad Colony. It is the responsibility of the committee to choose the land for the colony. The committee must investigate good piece of land with water supply. Have courage in this project and take much care of the water supply.**"

The Imam commenced his *didar* in Karachi on February 1, 1936 for one week. A fleet of about 600 men and women from Sultanabad Colony submitted a report in the Imam's presence. It was read before the Imam, revealing that the Ismailis failed to achieve the fruits of their investment in the beginning of 1932 due to the scarcity of water. They faced many hardships including the horror of the wild animals. With the timely guidance of the Imam, they resumed the cultivation in 1933 and yielded better results. A report indicated that there were now about 800 Ismailis and 200 other inhabitants in Sultanabad area. The government also allotted lands to 200 new applicants on ownership and thus, another 44 Ismaili families could be accommodated. In total, the Ismailis occupied 1700 acres of land in 1936. This report gave evidence of the invaluable services of Fadhu Piru Khalikdina.

The Imam was satisfied with the above report and blessed the Sultanabad *jamat* and said, "**Had Itmadi Fadhu Piru not worked hard, the Sultanabad Colony could not have reached to its zenith.**" The Imam also conferred upon him the title of **Wazir** and said,

"I give the title of Wazir to him for his meritorious services. He had served well and founded the Sultanabad Colony, which is highly a noble work. The Punjabi, Shikhs and Qadiani migrated to foreign countries and invited their co-religionists to flourish in their colonies. Keeping this in mind, the work of the Sultanabad has been done yet 50 percent. It is necessary to establish another new colony to fill the gap. If another 1500 acres land are procured, another such colony can be flourished."

On March 21, 1936, the first official Jamatkhana with a school was inaugurated in Sultanabad, Sind. There was a burst of cheering in the Ismailis. Varas Fadhu invited the H.R.H. Prince Aga Khan Band from Kharadhar, Karachi to demonstrate the traditional music.

The last few years of his life were marred by illness. He came to live for short time at Jimpir in the Thatta district, Sind for the recovery of his health. He died on Tuesday, September 22, 1936 and was buried in the location of Amir Pir. Paying his glowing tribute, Jenkins, the Chief Agricultural Officer in Sind said that, "He was indeed by his nature an excellent person in whole India."

In 1967, the leaders of Sultanabad Colony, including Mukhi, Kamadia and Nasir Ali, D.S.P. remembered the exceptional services of Varas Fadhu Piru Khalikdina. They resolved to organize an annual *majalis* in his loving memory. The first *majalis* started in 1969, but it was discontinued in 1976.

Varas Fadhu Piru Khalikdina was born into a wealthy family but he was not proud. He sat on the floor with the poor. He protected many orphans and helped then to achieve steady progress. He was a very kind-hearted man and was always willing to educate the poor. He was a pioneer in accelerating the economical condition of the Ismailis in Karachi and Sind. His iron will and determination helped in surmounting the obstacles he had faced in his life. In his administrative framework, he was creative, bold, courageous, patient and of strong will.

He married a woman belonging to Mulla Katiar and had two sons, Muhammad Kassim, who died at the age of 23 years, while Alijah Ashiq Ali, who continued the tradition of his illustrious father, was the member of the Managing Committee and Hon. Treasurer of the Khoja Ismailia Students Union. Fadhu Piru Khalikdina also had two daughters.

Fidai Khorasani
(1850-1925)

Muhammad bin Zain al-Abidin bin Karbalai Daud Khorasani, was also known as Fidai Khorasani and Haji Akhund in Iran. He was born in 1850 in Dizbad, a village located in the mountains between Mashhad and Nishapur. He traced his descent from Khaki Khorasani (d. 1646), the famous Ismaili poet. Fidai Khorasani took his formal education in Dizbad and studied in Bakiriya Madrasa in Mashhad. He was knowledgeable in religion since childhood and explored rare historical documents on Ismailism.

He visited India in 1896 for the first time to see Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah, who assigned him to an important teaching position in Iran. He stayed two years in Bombay, and fortunately attended the first marriage of the Imam with Shahzadi Begum in 1897 at Poona. He made his second visit to Bombay in 1900, where he passed few years. In 1903, the Imam appointed him as a *mu'allim* in Iran and Muhammad Hussain Mahmudi as a Special Commissioner to deal with community affairs with the Persian government. He returned to Iran with a new mandate and visited the different villages to impart religious education to the Ismailis.

In 1906, Fidai Khorasani paid his third and last visit to Bombay, where he had an opportunity to testify in favour of the Imam during the hearings of the Haji Bibi Case. He returned to Khorasan soon after the court's ruling in Imam's favour in 1908. In Bombay, he also came into the contact of Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj (1842-1930) and Master Hashim Bogha (1863-1912).

Imam Hasan Ali Shah had made certain arrangements for the affairs of the Ismailis in Iran a few years after his migration. He appointed Mirza Hasan as his estate manager, whose seat was in the village of Sidih, between Qain and Birjand. Mirza Hasan was the son of Mirza Hussain bin Yaqub Shah Qaini, a famous *dai* in Kohistan who composed numerous religious poems. His family served for 40 years in Iran. Mirza Hasan died in 1888 and his son, Murad Mirza, who rebelled against the Imam, inherited his office. He pretended that he was the leader like his forefathers. He also claimed the rank of *hujjat* for himself at first, asserting that he was the *hujjat* capable of having access to the Imam. He prevented the Ismailis of Khorasan from visiting the Imam in India and planted a net of spies everywhere in Iran, forcing the Ismailis to forsake their faith and espouse his creed.

Murad Mirza also advanced his support to Haji Bibi, the widow of Muchul Shah (d. 1903) during the Haji Bibi Case in 1908. Soon afterwards, he propagated that Samad Shah, the son of Haji Bibi was the legitimate successor of Imam Aga Ali Shah, and mustered hisgroup in Khorasan. It should be known that Samad Shah spent 20 years in the armed forces of British India and was in Iraq during the first World War. He took a chance to visit Sidih to meet the supporters of Murad Mirza. He never claimed the Imamate, but it was Murad Mirza, who waged propaganda against the Imam. There were however some

differences between Samad Shah and the Imam during the case, which were soon eliminated. The Imam sent him as his special commissioner to Hunza in 1930. When Samad Shah died without a son during the second World War the supporters of Murad Mirza became the Twelvers in Iran.

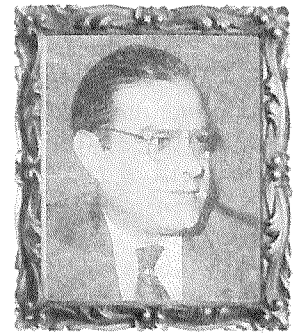
Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in the meantime established direct contacts with the Ismailis in Iran to undermine the rebellious mission of Murad Mirza. He sent a special *farman* in Iran through Fidai Khorasani in 1908 to stop paying their religious tithe to Murad Mirza. In 1910, the Imam introduced certain changes in the religious practices and rituals in Iran. Murad Mirza started to intrigue against the Ismailis. With the help of the local Twelvers, the house of Fidai Khorasani was pillaged in Dizbad when he was on his mission in Qain. Later, a certain Twelver leader, Mulla Muhammad Bakir, gathered a mob and attacked Dizbad to arrest the Ismaili leaders. Fidai Khorasani was on a trip to Birjand, but his brother Hasan and a few others were captured and taken to Darrud, near Nishapur. The guards inflicted on them strokes of a whip, and tortured them severely with sharpnails in prison. They were forced to curse the Imam in public, which they refused with their unwavering faith, and declared boldly, ***"We will embrace death, but never dwindle our faith."*** It was some time later that a gang of local Twelver leaders scourged them to death.

The Imam mobilized his intensive efforts of influences and prevented further massacre of his followers in Iran through the intervention of the British Consul at Mashhad. Fidai Khorasani exhorted Ismaili *tariqah* to the Ismailis so deeply that Murad Mirza could not withstand and died at the end of 1925.

After providing long and inestimable services to the Ismaili *jamats* in Iran, Fidai Khorasani died at Dizbad in 1925 and was buried next to the grave of Khaki Khorasani. His authority passed to Sayed Suleman Badakhshani. In the meantime, the Imam also deputed an Indian follower, named Alijah Datoo Meru (1868-1939) as his Special Commissioner in Iran with new guidance. He sailed from Bombay on April 19, 1923 and visited different villages in Iran during his journey for about 11 months and returned to Bombay on February 4, 1924.

Fidai Khorasani was a natural-born speaker and thousands would come to listen him and enjoy the beauty of his oratory. He was also a distinguished writer. He compiled many books, such as "**Irshad al-Salikin**" (1900), "**Kash al-Haq**" (1914), "**Kitab al-Danish-i Ahl-i binish,**" "**Haqiqat al-Ma'ani**", "**Diwan**" of 12000 verses, and "**Kitab-i Hidayat al-Mominin al-Talibin**" ed. by A.A. Semenow, Moscow in 1959.

GHULAM ALI ALLANA, HUZUR VARAS
(1906-1985)



Ghulam Ali Allana traced his descent from a certain Haji, and whose son, Vali was a small merchant in Lahari Bandar, Sind. When the port of Lahari Bandar dried up, Vali came in Jerruk, where he lived with his son Saleh. The son of Saleh was Aloo, whose business expanded as far as Bhuj, Kutchh. Natho, the son of Aloo lived for some time in Bhuj, Kutchh and then settled down in Mulla Katiar, Sind. Natho's son was Khalfan, who migrated towards Karachi with his wife, called Lakhanni. Khalfan was the care-taker (*jamatbhai*) in the Kharadhar Jamatkhana. He had four sons, Allana, Pesan, Ghulam Hussain and Mohammad; and four daughters, Fatima, Khatija, Zainab and Mianbai. Allana joined a Jewish firm in Karachi to repair the watches. In 1882, Allana started his own small shop of repairing and selling the watches, and ultimately he was destined to become a leading dealer of watches. Allana was a thrice-married man. He had two sons, Hussain and Fijey from his first wife. He had no child from his second wife. His third wife was Sharafi, the daughter of Mukhi Hashu, and the mother of Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana.

Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana was born in Karachi on August 22, 1906. He took his education in Sind Madressah, which he left while studying Standard II English in 1920 at St. Patricks High School. After matriculation, he enrolled at the D.J. Science College, in Sind. Later on, he was studied at Ferguson College, in Poona. He came from a well-known business family of Karachi, and himself was the director of Alsons Industries Ltd., Madorina Watch Co. Ltd. and Allana Watch Co. Ltd. He had also taken an active interest in trade leadership before the partition of India.

He was closely associated with Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah during the decisive and final phase of the establishment of Pakistan. Even after the appearance of Pakistan on the map of the world, he continued to work for his party and became the Finance Secretary of All Pakistan Muslim League. He was also appointed as the Chairman of the Press Commission of Pakistan in 1948. In 1949, he founded the Islamic Chambers of Commerce & Industry and was its President for five years, the longest term held by any individual. He was also the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Pakistan Iron and Steel Syndicate Ltd., the Director of Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd.

He represented Pakistan at scores of International Conferences. He was elected to the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization for three consecutive terms of three years each from 1948 to 1957, representing the employers of the world. He notably represented in San Francisco in 1948, in Geneva in 1950 and 1951 and Sri Lanka in 1950. In May, 1948, he was elected unanimously the Mayor of Karachi city. In recognition of his meritorious services to free trade in the free world, he was unanimously elected in

1956 the President of the International Organization of Employers, with its headquarters in Brussels. He represented Pakistan at the United Nations and the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations. He was a member of the Karachi Municipal Corporation for over twenty years, and as Mayor of Karachi, he represented Pakistan at the World Mayors' Conference in Geneva.

He was conferred the customary Golden Keys to the cities of San Francisco and Philadelphia, the Freedom of the City of Paris, and Keys to Buffalo, Patterson, Prague, Geneva and Rome, which was the highest honour a city paid to a distinguished visitor. He was also the leader of Pakistan's non-official Goodwill Trade Mission to 11 countries, the member of Karachi Hajj Port Committee and the member of Karachi Road Transport Authority (1956-1958). In addition he was a member of the Pakistan Legislative Assembly, General Secretary of Sind Provincial Muslim League and President of Karachi Muslim League.

Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana made a tour of Europe in 1950 as the head of a non-official trade mission. He had a meeting with the Imam in Paris in May, 1950. He had also a chance to see the Imam before leaving Europe at Lausanne in the bungalow, known as Chateau Dorigne on July 17, 1950. Wazir Karim Ibrahim (1881-1968), Wazir Ghulam Hussain Khalfan (1887-1967), etc. were with him. He told the Imam that he intended to leave London on July 22, 1950 and would stay in Syria for a week. The Imam told him that he should visit Salamia, Khawabi and other places in Syria, and gave him two written messages, one for the Syrian *jamat* in French and another for the *jamat* of Pakistan, Iraq and Persian Gulf. He came with his colleagues in Damascus on July 23 and was well received by Amir Mirza, Amir Abdullah Tamir, the member of Syrian parliament and Amir Mustapha. They left Damascus on July 25 and reached Salamia by car, and conveyed the message of the Imam. They also visited Masiyaf, Tali Dara, Khawabi, Kafat, Mzarah, Malki, Bet Khasrun, Jooa al-Shail, Akar Zacti, Kharbatel, Faras, Beo Dibeh, etc. Finally, they arrived in Tripoli from Khawabi and then went on to Beirut and Khaldun, and reached Damascus and returned to Karachi.

He was also a member of Pakistan's Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September, 1962, and was elected the Vice-Chairman of the 2nd Committee of the 17th session of the U.N. He also became Chairman of the UNCHR and led a UN working group to study the position of human rights in Chile (1975-1979). In 1979, he was elected as a Chairman of the United Nations Trust Fund to render financial and legal relief to political victims in Chile. In recognition of his outstanding services, he was presented the United Nations **Peace Award** in 1976. The Human Rights Organization of Pakistan also awarded him the **Human Rights Medal** in 1978. He attracted international recognition when he was elected Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. He was elected the Vice-Chairman of Economic and Financial Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. He was also elected as the Chairman of the Afro-Asian and Latin American Group of the Countries, which participated in Cairo Conference. During the session of the General Assembly, he was appointed as an Acting Leader of Pakistan Delegation. In view of his outstanding services, an important road in Kharadhar, Karachi has been named after him.

He married Jenubai in the year 1928, with whom he had two daughters and a son. She was elected as a member of the Sind Legislative Assembly in 1937 during the time of

separation of Sind from Bombay Presidency. She continued to be a M.L.A. until 1952. She was the first Muslim lady in Indo-Pakistan to be appointed as a parliamentary Secretary in 1931, a post that she held upto 1951 in the Sind government.

Ghulam Ali Allana was recognized as a poet of merit in English, and his poems were published in Pakistan, England and United States. His work**"Presenting Pakistan Poetry"** published by Pakistan Writers' Guild, containing the verses rendered into English poems from Urdu, Bengali, Sindhi, Gujrati, Punjabi, Pushto and Baluchi. It is the only book of its kind in literature being a pioneering venture in a new literary field. His poems have also been published in three anthologies of English verse, namely "**Commonwealth Poetry of Today"**, published by Beclose & Sons, "**Commonwealth Poems**" published by John Murray and Spring Anthology of 1967. The distinguished poems included respectively are the "**Specter is on the Move"**, "**I had Reached your Door Steps**"and"**Pilgrimage."**In view of his literary genius, the international literary community honoured him with a number of awards and distinctions. He was a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, London, Vice-President of United Poets Laureate International and Poet Laureate of Pakistan. The President of Philippines awarded him a gold medal for poetry. He also received the Laureate Crown for poetry by Poets Laureate International, the Certificate of merit by Centro Studie, Scambi International, Rome and a medal for outstanding contribution to Literature and Culture by the same body.

The Secretary General Kurt Waldheim awarded the **Peace Medal** of the UN once again to Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana on November 25, 1977 for his distinguished services on a global basis in the humanitarian field. The International Leonardo da Vinci Academy of Rome conferred a **Diploma of Honours** on him on October 11, 1980.

Huzur Wazir Allana's contribution of community services was also innumerable. He was appointed a member of the Ismailia Supreme Council, Karachi in 1933. In 1954, he was elevated to the Presidentship of the Supreme Council, a post that he held until 1961. In 1961, the Imam appointed him as the Constitutional Advisor to the *jamat*.

In appreciation of his incredible services, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah crowned him with the title of **Huzur Varas** in 1951.

It should be added that he played a vital role in obtaining the plot for the present Jamatkhana of Kharadhar, Karachi. In this context, a plaque was placed in the hall of the Jamatkhana by order of the Imam in February, 1970.

The creative poet in Dr. Allana remained active to the last moment. From his deathbed, he wrote on Thursday, March 7, 1985 the following verses:-

If you want to live, you must continue to eat;
Oh! when you enter the grave, the worms will
make a rich feast; of your lifeless body.

Huzur Varas Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana passed away on Friday, March 8, 1985 in Karachi. In his message of March 20, 1985, the Imam recounted "**long and devoted services**" rendered by late Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana to the Imam, his grandfather and the Imam's family members. The Imam said that, **"The Ismaili *jamat* and I will miss on an outstanding leader and Pakistan will mourn one of her most erudite sons. I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace."**

Ghulam Ali Allana made an outstanding contribution in the literary field. Some of the titles of his books are:- **Presenting Pakistan Poetry, Some of My Yesterdays, Love Tales of the East, Incense and Echoes, Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah: The Story of a Nation, Pakistan Movement : Historical Documents, The Silent Voices of Intuition, Our Freedom Fighters, His Highness Aga Khan III, Pen Portraits of Painters, Thus Spake Man, Recollections on Respect, Reverence and Revolt, A Rosary of Islamic Reading, The Silent Hour, The World Within, The Pakistan Movement Struggle, Alberuni, Bazgasht, Dhanakaal, At the Gate of Love, The Hills of Heaven, Ke Parada ke Sad, Asanji Azadi ja Agwan, Shah Abdul Latif** etc. He also compiled the translation of the **Holy Ginans** in 1985, published by the Tariqah Board for Pakistan.



GHULAM ALI SHAH, MISSIONARY
(1910-1968)

Ghulam Ali Shah was the son of Sayed Muhammad Shah, a native of Qaimpur, about 10 miles from Khairpur in Bhawalpur State, founded by Qaim Khan Arabni in 1747. Sayed Muhammad Shah was a famous landowner. He was a Twelver and well rooted in Islamic studies, and he had over 6000 followers in his village.

Sayed Muhammad Shah was a learned scholar. He thoroughly studied the concept of the Imamate. Over time his thoughts became wrapped up in the presence of an Apparent Imam in the world. In 1911, he left Qaimpur and proceeded to Middle East in search of an Imam. He would wander like a restless man, looking lost and forlorn, with an agitated mind. After many years he reached in Najaf and paid homage to the shrine of Hazrat Ali. It was during this period that the pendulum at last swung on other side. He prayed, "Mawla! Your *Noor* is ever present on earth. Unfortunately, I cannot recognize it. I am disappointed with earthy life. Either give me death or your recognition." With this prayer, he slept and dreamt, and was inspired to return to India, where his search would materialize.

Sayed Muhammad Shah came to India and held a meeting with Khwaja Hasan Nizami in Delhi, who directed him to see the Aga Khan in Bombay. He paid no attention and proceeded to Hyderabad, Sind in 1920, where he opened a Unani Dawakhana in Shahi Bazar. He became a close friend of Varas Karim Kassim (1878-1958) and exchanged religious knowledge with him.

Once he discussed with Varas Karim Kassim about the Imam, who took him to Karachi where the Imam was to come for *didar* between April 10, 1920 and May 8, 1920. A large gathering of Ismailis flocked at the seaport and accorded a standing ovation to the Imam. He saw the radiant face of the Imam and admitted that it was the very image he had seen in the dream. On that juncture, a complete change revolved in his mind. Itmadi Nazar Ali Abdullah managed to bring him and Maulavi Abdul Hussain Bachal in the pendol for Imam's *didar* for Ismailis only. He was convinced and he forwarded a written application to the Karachi Council for embracing Ismailism, but received no response.

In 1922, the Imam was in Bombay, where he went and forwarded a fresh application to the Bombay Council, but failed to get any response. He at last slept at Kandi Mola, Bombay for three days without food and water, and supplicated. The Imam sent his servant to bring Gulam Ali Shah to his residence. He was brought before the Imam, where he took an oath of allegiance. He also offered his 6000 followers of Qaimpur, but the Imam refused and said that he only accepted his family, not his followers. He said, "I also take the *bayt* of my family members, but I don't know what happened to them during last 12 years."

The Imam said, "You should not worry. Your family members are alive. I accept them as my followers."

Sayed Muhammad Shah joined the Recreation Club Institute with the order of the Imam and taught Arabic, Persian and Urdu to the young missionaries. He himself also became a regular missionary very soon. During his visit to the Recreation Club Institute at Bombay on March 27, 1922, the Imam said, "Sayed Muhammad Shah will stay at one place, which will be profitable if he works there, and you observe his working." The Imam also advised him to work in Saranpur, Ludiana, Ambala, Ferozpur, Jalalbad, Gujranwala and Sind, and to send his report to the Central Board every six months.

Sayed Muhammad Shah also conducted the mission classes in Pandervada, Kawda and C.P. Brar. He often said to his students that, "Dear children, I have yet a lot of religious treasure, which you must learn at once. You will repent after my death, lamenting that you missed to take its advantage. Take away as much knowledge as you can." The famous students among them who had become the missionaries were Alijah Hadi Muhammad K. Virani, Alibhai Hashim, Nur Muhammad Hashim, etc. Itmadi Hashim Lalu (1880-1961) was one of his close associates. Sayed Muhammad Shah retired in the middle of 1945 and returned to Bombay where he died at the end of 1945.

His son, also named Ghulam Ali Shah was born in 1910 in Qaimpur in Bhawalpur State during the period of Amir General Sir Sadik Muhammad Khan V Abbasi (1907-1947), the 13th Nawab of Bhawalpur State.

He learnt the Koranic teaching from his father and studied the works of Rumi, Hafiz and Shams Tabriz at home. After completing his education, he joined the police department in Bhawalpur State, but his father brought him to Bombay in 1928 when he was about 18 years old. Ghulam Ali Shah also took missionary training in Bombay. Having attained excellence as a regular missionary in 1932, he visited Punjab with Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) and delivered his first *waez* in the Jamatkhana of Gadi Kapura in the district of Mardan. He also entered into literary deliberations with the Araya Samaj and other Muslim theologians in Punjab.

He served the Ismaili community for about four decades as a missionary. He had good command in Arabic, Persian, English, Sindhi, Urdu and Gujrati. He was a born orator.

He married Gulbanu, the granddaughter of Kamadia Talshi in Kathiawar in 1934. In 1936, he took a visit of East Africa for two years. In 1938, he also joined the mission of conversion in India.

He was also a poet and his poetic name was Azhar. His famous composition was published in "**Fidai**"(Bombay, Dec., 1939), in which he paid rich tribute to Pir Sabzali.

In Karachi, Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy supervised the Mission Class since 1944 as Chairman on behalf of the Ismailia Association for India. He asked for an efficient missionary to conduct the class. Missionary Ghulam Ali Shah had been sent to Karachi from Bombay. He conducted the class till the end of 1953, and produced many prominent missionaries.

He visited East Africa in 1954 and resided in Mombasa. He delivered *waez* in different quarters of East African countries, and conducted the Ismaili Gents and Ladies Mission Classes in Dar-es-Salaam as a Principal for 18 months and trained about 40 new young waezeens. After completing the *waez* training course, he returned to Mombasa on October 21, 1954. He stayed in East Africa up to 1966 and during this period, he visited India, Pakistan, Chitral, and other parts of Africa.

In January, 1964, the Imam gave permission to start a "Mission Training Centre" in Dar-es-Salaam. Accordingly, Wazir Ramzan Ali Hussain Megji Dossa, the President of the Ismailia Association for Kenya spoke in the main Jamatkhana of Mombasa on the importance of the Mission Training Centre plan. He said that with the cooperation of Wazir Al-Noor Kassim, the Education Administrator of Tanganyika, a wing was allotted in the newly built hostel for this training programme. He also declared that it would be initially started with 20 students and Missionary Ghulam Ali Shah would be the tutor-incharge for two years. During the opening ceremony of the Waezeen Centre in Dar-es-Salaam on May 5, 1964, he had been specially invited, and Rai Shamsuddin Tejpar, the President of Ismailia Association for Tanganyika appreciated his inestimable services in Africa to bring forth promising waezeens. On January 8, 1964, the Conference of all the Presidents of the Ismailia Associations of the world was held in Mombasa and the delegates were shown the Mission Training Centre. The Ismailia Association for Tanzania submitted a report of the Mission Centre to the Imam on May 7, 1965. The Imam sent following message:-

15th Dec., 1965

My dear President,

I have received your letter of 7th May, with the report of your Association which I read with great interest.

I give my best paternal maternal loving blessings to all beloved spiritual children mentioned in your report for their devoted services.

Kindly convey my most affectionate loving blessings to Alijah al-waez Gulamali Shah for his devoted services to the Mission Centre.

The Imam also sent another message, which reads:-

21st Dec., 1965

My dear President,

I have received your letter of 30th November, with the report of your Mission Centre at Dar-es-Salaam which I read with much interest and pleasure.

I send my most affectionate loving blessings to al-waez Ghulam Ali Shah Muhammashah for his devoted services.

Ghulam Ali Shah retired in Africa and returned to Karachi in the beginning of 1966. He remained active in giving benefit of his knowledge to the *jamats* in Pakistan. In 1966, the Ismailia Association for Pakistan deputed him to Punjab to conduct the *waez* training. With the collaboration of the Ismailia Association, he started a Mission Class for 37 students at his residence in Nizari Society, Karachi in 1967. The President sent its report to the Imam on January 10, 1967. The Imam sent the following message on January 22, 1967:

My dear President,

I was happy to receive your letter of 10th January and to know of the opening of a mission class with the able teaching of Al-Waiz Ghulam Ali Shah in the Nizari area.

Kindly convey my most loving paternal maternal blessings for service on this occasion to Al-Waiz Ghulam Ali Shah and the 37 girl and boy students of the new class.

He was a frequent contributor to the different periodicals. His "**Taqalid means Itahat**" ("**Ismaili**", Bombay, November 1951) and "**Ismaili Pir and their Conversion**" appeared in the "**Paigham,**" Karachi on November 15, 1963 and March 23, 1964. His last article was "**Pak Hastio**" ("**Ismaili Crescent,**" Dar-es-Salaam, May 2, 1965 and Sep. 10, 1965). His booklet, **"Sada'i Haq"** (Call to Truth) was published into English by The Ismailia Association for Tanganyika in Dar-es-Salaam.

A week before his death, he delivered his last *waez* in the *Satara Brotherhood* in Kharadhar Jamatkhana for seven days. His health deteriorated and on October 1, 1968 and he was admitted in the epidemic disease hospital with history of septic tooth and diabetes. He was diagnosed as case of tetanus, which proved fatal, and he died on Thursday, October 3, 1968 in Karachi at the age of 58 years. The Imam sent following message to the Ismailia Association for Pakistan:

October 24, 1968

I have received your letter of 8th October, and was much grieved to hear of the sad demise of al-waez Alijah Ghulam Ali Shah. I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late Alijah Ghulam Ali Shah and pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace.

Late Alijah Ghulam Ali Shah's devoted services to my *jamats* in various countries will always be remembered by my *jamats* and myself and he will be missed by us all.

On that day, the office of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan was closed. News of his death was reported by telegraphic messages to Sir Eboo Pirbhai, the President of Executive Council for Africa and all the Ismailia Associations and Mawlana Hazar Imam. When the news of his sad demise reached East Africa, the Advisory Board, Head Quarter Department, Dar-es-Salaam Committees and Section, the Waezeens and Teachers and the Staff of the Ismailia Association for Tanzania passed their condolences and its copies were endorsed to the Executive Council for Africa, the Ismailia Associations, his family, etc.

His wife Gulbanu died in 1966 and they had had no children. They had adopted an African girl, called Anisa in 1954 when she was two years old.His wife Gulbanu died in 1966 and they had had no children. They had adopted an African girl, called Anisa in 1954 when she was two years old.



Very often amongst you, there is a sense of concern that if you are no longer in office, you are no longer serving and if you are no serving the Imam is not concerned with what you are doing. But I want you to know that this has been the case. Every spiritual child who has served the Imam in one way or the other continues to serve him because he has been chosen by the Imam to serve and that service does not stop because you are a councillor in one year and no longer a councillor the next year. Because in many cases first of all, councillors and other spiritual children working in our institutions are relations of yours, secondly they are acquaintances of yours, thirdly you have identified very often to the Imam who are the young spiritual children coming up and who deserve to be given a chance of service to the *jamat*, fourth, because wisdom is the privilege of you, more than very often, of the younger generation. So the whole concept of continued service is fundamental in our *jamat*, and I wanted you to know this. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Karachi, March 17, 1983)

The tradition of service in the *jamat* is a tradition, which is not a few years old. It is centuries old. And those of you who know their history will know that right from the time of Hazrat Ali, and Imam Hussain, members of the *jamat* have rendered honorary service to the Imam and to the *jamat*. And I have an admiration that this tradition is as strong as meaningful in the twentieth century, and *Inshallah*, in the twenty-first century, as it was centuries and centuries ago. And it is my deepest belief that the strength of the *jamat*, the progress that it has been able to make, the way in which it has face trial and tribulation, and more often than not, been successful in facing these trials and tribulations, which are part of life, that that is due largely to the workers in the *jamat*; those who do not seek titles, they do not seek offices of appointment on demand, they gain their happiness and their satisfaction in rendering service to the *jamat* and service to the Imam. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : London, July 6, 1983)

GHULAM HUSSAIN MOHAMMAD ALI DHARAS, WAZIR (1903-1973)



Devji, the son of Lalji was a native of Junagadh, India. He was an eminent wool merchant, having immense devotion in social services. According to the available information, Devji is said to have joined the Ismaili caravan in Bhuj, Kutchh headed by a certain Dharamsi Punjuani which was bound for Iran for the *didar* of Imam Shah Khalilullah (1792-1817) in Yazd at the beginning of 1817. They started from the port of Mandavi, Kutchh and boarded for Muscat and landed at Port Abbas, and reached Yazd on camels. Yazd is situated between Isfahan and Kirman on the route leading to Baluchistan.

It was a tradition prevalent in India to bestow the title of *daras* or *dharas* (to behold) to one who beheld the Imam in Iran. The term *dharas* had been also mentioned in the letters of Imam Shah Khalilullah addressed to the Bhavnagar *jamat* on May 23, 1792. In one another letter of July, 1794, the same title is used for the *jamats* of Sind, Kutchh and other places. Thus, Devji became known as Devji Dharas. We must recall on this juncture that the honouring of the title, *dharas* continued in India till 1842 when Imam Hasan Ali Shah arrived in India. The practice of visiting Iran to see the Imam virtually came to an end, since the Imam henceforth resided in India amongst the followers, therefore, the traditional title *dharas* was replaced by the title of *darvesh*, both stood equal in rank. It sounds that the title, *darvesh* or *dharas* were not liked to the followers, it had to be withdrawn. On September 1, 1885, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah said in Bombay that, **"We vested the title of *darvesh* to the *jamats* in past, but some did not like the title of *darvesh*, and for this special reason, we withdrew the title of *darvesh*."** It is nevertheless learnt that the Imam granted the title of *darvesh* to the Mukhi of Bukoba Jamatkhana in Uganda on March 16, 1937. It is worthwhile to note that the title *dharas* continued in the family of Devji till now, which is a unique example in the Ismaili world.

It is related that Devji Dharas had been in Bhuj, Kutchh on his business trip in 1819. On June 16, 1819, an earthquake of uncommon severity for more than two minutes, rocked the whole western India, the force of which most violently affected Kutchh. In Bhuj, nearly 7000 houses were shattered and 1150 people buried alive in the ruins within minutes. Devji Dharas fortunately survived, but lost his merchandise loaded on camels. He did not run away from the affected field. He and his four servants rescued lives of many Ismailis and non-Ismailis, and provided them relief aids what were available to them. Indeed, it was zeal to serve mankind, a natural gift whose legacy continued in his family.

The son of Devji Dharas was Ali, and whose son Mohammad followed footsteps of his forefather, and left behind two sons, Hasham and Ghulam Hussain and a daughter, Jetbai.

Ghulam Hussain was born in 1903, where he took secondary education. He migrated to Zanzibar in 1924. He started his business in Pemba in 1925. He also carried on his business in Zanzibar in 1949 and in Dar-es-Salaam in 1953. In 1955, he came in Mtwara, where he conducted his mercantile business.

It is to be noted that Tanzania formerly was known as United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, covering an area of 364,943 square miles. It was a German colony from 1891 to 1919, and then the Britain occupied it soon after the first world war (1914-1919). Tanganyika liberated on December 9, 1961, but its name, Tanzania was adopted on October 29, 1964. It is divided into 21 administrative regions.

Ghulam Hussain was a devoted and a dedicated worker since childhood. It appears from early records that he survived hardship before his business became a success. Regardless of the obstacles, he carved out his own career. The intelligence with which he was gifted enabled him to surmount all his adversaries. His iron will and determination helped in surmounting difficulties and put him on the road to steady progress. Soon after establishment of his business, it appears that he began to take active role in different institutions.

It must be noted that the car of Missionary Shahid Khuda Baksh (1890-1925) skidded into a trench while going from Kilosa to Iringa on December 12, 1925. It cost the lives of three passengers, viz. Missionary Khuda Baksh, Lalji Ladha Punjani and Varas Mukhi Karam Ali. Kanji Nanji, the President of the Ismaili Council for Tanganyika declared a donation scheme for the welfare of the children of Missionary Khuda Baksh. Wazir Ghulam Hussain is reported to have joined in the campaign, and shared not only a princely amount, but also generated donations in Pemba, Iringa, Kilosa, Mtwara, Mbeya, Morogoro, Lindi, etc.

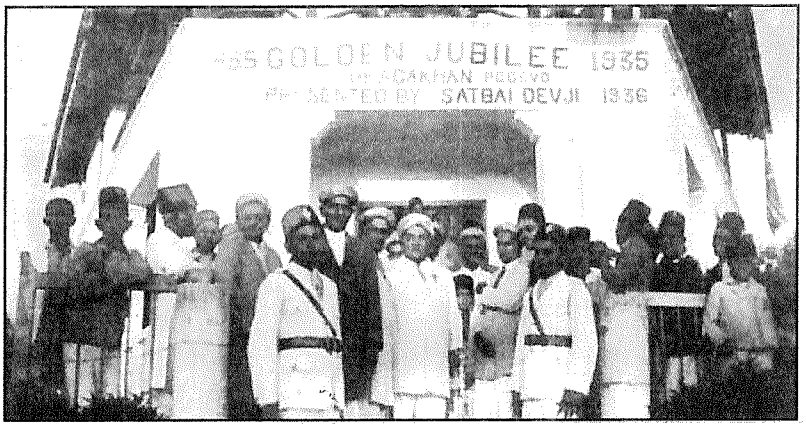
Princess Mlle Theressa Maghlioni (1889-1926), the second wife of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah expired on December 2, 1926 in Paris. The Council resolved to observe a mourning for a month in Tanganyika, and appointed Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas to inform the Ismaili merchants to close their business transactions on that day, which he did as the Imam's courier.

The Golden Jubilee was celebrated in Nairobi on March 1, 1937. The Supreme Council for Africa had launched the All Africa Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee, comprised of 18 members, which also formed an Executive Committee of 6 members to raise donation and administer the programme. Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas extended his full cooperation to the Executive Committee in southern Tanzania and other regions during the campaign. He also joined in the arrangement of sending the Ismaili families in Nairobi from different villages.

The year 1937 marks as a revolutionary time for the Ismailis, in economic field. During this time, the main was the project of the Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd., which took its birth from the historic occasion of the Golden Jubilee. The Ismailis never ventured into the field of Insurance business. The Imam emphasized to the leaders to come forward. On February 20, 1937, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah said to the leaders in Dar-es-Salaam that, **"I will make insurance of my estates and houses provided you establish an Insurance Company. I will give you a business of over 40,000 shillings. You then get insurance**

policies from the affluent class, then you start life insurance policies, which will be profitable to you." The Imam talked with the leaders for 30 minutes before finalizing the project. After the end of 30 minutes, the Imam summoned them and said, **"Who will take responsibilities as the Directors of Insurance Company? I will give insurance of my all houses when you are ready for it. I am now an old, and no company will take risk of my life policy, but I will give insurance of Prince Aly Khan and Prince Sadruddin. You start life policy after some time, and make its head office in Mombasa."** Then, the Imam declared names of seven Directors.

The importance of Insurance Company and its role in the economic building were propagated through different channels in Africa. The initial honour however must go to Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) who, at the command of the Imam, took upon himself the onerous task of enlisting the new company's shareholders as well as business, and he travelled widely in Africa. Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas voluntarily joined the campaign of Pir Sabzali in southern Tanzania in acquiring business for the company. Pir Sabzali visited Pemba-Wete on May 10, 1938, where he stayed for five days. Wazir Ghulam Hussain arranged to sell over 2000 shares in Pemba in one day. Pir Sabzali raised a capital of 2 million shillings and also brought the insurance business for about 20 million shillings in Africa with the help of veteran leaders, notably Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas, and others.



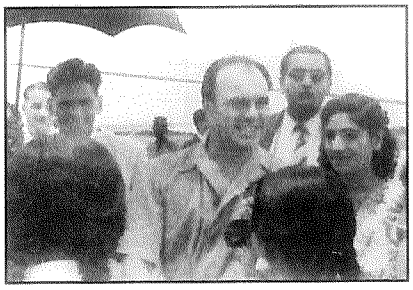
Pir Sabzali, the Special Commissioner of the Imam launched his third trip in Africa on January 5, 1937, where he stayed for 23 months. Wazir Ghulam Hussain arranged his lodging and remained at his service during his tour in Pemba. Wazir Ghulam Hussain gave him a princely reception. Reinforced with the kindness of Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas, Pir Sabzali made successful trips in the villages. Pir Sabzali admired Wazir Ghulam Hussain's services and hospitality in a letter from Dar-es-Salaam on August 6, 1938. His letter was a true reflection of his feeling. Pir Sabzali referred to him as his brother in the letter, expressing his deep gratitude for his exceptional hospitality, and also wished to see him again.

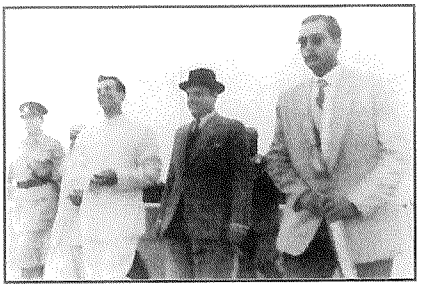
Wazir Ghulam Hussain was appointed the President of the Ismailia Provincial Council for Pemba-Wete (1937-1948) during Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah's visit to Dar-es-Salaam on February 15, 1937. Its jurisdiction covered the towns like Ziwani, Masuka, Matamba, etc. Pemba is an island in Indian ocean off north-east coast of Tanzania, having an area

of 379 sq.miles. Its capital is Wete, which is included with island of Zanzibar. He was also the President of the Ismailia Provincial Council for Zanzibar (1948-1949), covering the towns of Pemba Chake-Chake, Mkokotoni, Mangafwani, Membe-Miwili, Chawke, etc. He was also the member of the Ismailia Supreme Council for East Africa (1949-1951) out of 26 members.

He also attended the second East African Muslim Conference held in the Muslim Hall, Mombasa. It was sponsored by East African Muslim Welfare Society on July 27 and July 28, 1948. This historic Conference was presided by Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah.

Prince Aly Khan rendered inestimable military services to the Allies during the first world war (1914-1919). He established "**Grand Victory War Fete**" at Nairobi 4th and 5th March, 1943 for generating war funds- a record taking for any fete ever held in East Africa. Rai A.M. Sadruddin (1906-1980) was commissioned to propagate the scheme as the Chief Publicity Officer. Sir Henry Moore, the governor of Kenya performed its opening ceremony on March 4, 1943 in presence of a concourse of people. Besides, its prominent patrons were Lady Moore, General Sir William Platt, E.A. Command, Admiral Sir James Somerville and Air Vice-Marshal H.S. Kerby. It was a fair for enjoyment of children with 64 stalls of games of every description, including arts and craft exhibition, manned by 240 Ismaili workers. Dr. Hasanali E. Nathoo was its Chief Organizer. Hazar Imam and Prince Amyn Mohammad, who had been in Nairobi since May 27, 1941 also visited the fair with their governess Miss Dorris Lyon. Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas not only shared his services in the fair, but also purchased 501 tickets in advance.





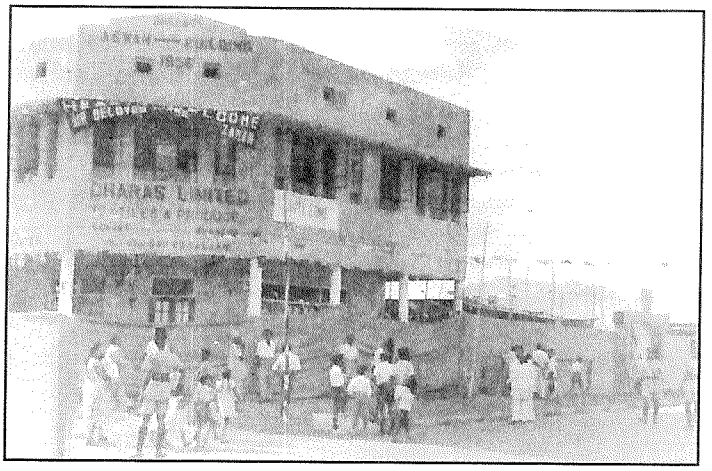


He also acted a Private Secretary of Prince Aly Khan during his visit to Mtwara, Tanzania in 1956. He also joined in the hunting expedition of Prince Aly Khan in the jungles around Mtwara.

In 1956, he reverently sent a sample of "**My Flag**"- the Ismaili banner to Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah. On April 28, 1956, the Imam showered his best loving blessings through a message and hoped that his beloved spiritual children would always keep it rising and flying with devoted spirit and faith.

He delegated the African *jamat* during the burial ceremony of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in Aswan in 1957. His team started their tour from Dar-es-Salaam on July 14, 1957 with eminent leaders, including Sir Edward Francis Twining, the governor of Tanganyika between 1949 and 1958, who represented the royal family of Queen of England.

The Imam visited Mtwara for the first time after assuming Imamate on November 27, 1957 during the period of Mukhi Alibhai Shamji and Kamadia Hasan Ali Rawjee. Mtwara is an administrative region of south-east Tanzania, having an area of 31881 sq.miles. Wazir Ghulam Hussain had taken up the entire administration with his son, Alijah Sadruddin Dharas. The Imam performed the religious ceremonies inside the Aswan Building of M/S Dharas Ltd., and blessed Wazir Ghulam Hussain with best loving blessings.

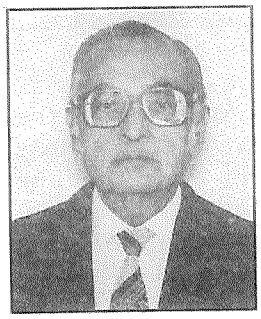


Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas was also well-versed and he was also well liked by the elders. He was never impulsive or arrogant and was always well-mannered towards those of comparatively humble degree. One of the obstacles in the community progress of the villages was the question of funds. Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas found the solution, and destitute members of the community received generous help through him, while his own family knew nothing. He was a generous donor for numerous causes. He continued his donations to the Foundling Home in Dar-es-Salaam. His diligent work for the welfare of Ismailis produced astounding results. In Africa, the community ran mobile dispensaries as well as maternity homes and clinics in villages. He arranged for their lodging and extended his assistance to them.

Unfortunately, one of the greatest social heroes in the Dharas family expired in a road accident when he was going to Mombasa from Dar-es-Salaam by bus. According to the report, the bus broke down on the way. Fate decreed that Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas should wait for another bus of the same line with others. Before another bus could come, his own bus collided with a truck He got a ride of a car, which was going to Tanga, which is on the way to Mombasa. Before he could get into the car, which was parked at the distance of 200 meters from the front of the bus, a piece of iron rod accidentally gushed out underneath the bus and speedily flew to the distance of 200 meters, and it hit the left side of his forehead, which proved fatal. He received serious injuries, and was taken to the Pangani Hospital, where he expired on September 12, 1973 at 6.00 a.m. He was buried at Tanga on September 14, 1973. His life bridged a long span of 70 years. Compassionate he was, cherishing the poor, just in all his dealings, a jewel of generosity, his heart an ocean of kindness. His personality was clothed in his transparent sincerity. It was his oft-spoken words,**"Render service as much as you are able, and be ever ready to dispel the affliction of your brothers. The best days of man's life are those in which he renders service."** He came from a family that had a s special aptitude for community services.

Mention must be made of Jenabai, the wife of Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas. She was the daughter of Hasham Lakha Dossani Junagadhwala, and was born on December 13, 1906. Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas married her in 1920, and brought her in Africa. In 1925, she also moved to Pemba with her husband, where her first child, called Kulsoom was born in 1926. She was a devoted woman and took active role with her husband in all community services as a partner. She served as the Mukhiani of Pemba Jamatkhana, and took leading part in the Women Committee as a member and Chairperson. She breathed her last at the age of 61 years in the Aga Khan Hospital, Dar-es-Salaam in 1967.

A son of great talent and merit, named Sadruddin Dharas and a daughter, Kulsumbai, survived Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas. He also adopted Salim in 1950 in Zanzibar. Sadruddin Dharas and Salim Dharas are active in their different community services, maintaining the illustrious tradition of Dharas family. It is deemed necessary to throw some light on their exceptional services.



Alijah Sadruddin Dharas was born on January 3, 1936 in Pemba. He acted as a Private Secretary of the Imam during an unexpected tour of the Imam in Pemba on November 18, 1957. He warmly received the Imam at airport with other leaders. It should be mentioned that Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah generously built educational institutions and mosque in various centres of Pemba island irrespective of cast and creed. On November 18, 1957, the citizens of Pemba island seized an opportunity to honour the Imam. On that occasion, Sheikh Said bin Ali al-Mugheri presented the Imam a casket, bearing the words: **"These historical landmarks shall for ever remain as fountains of spiritual and secular enlightenment."** The Imam was also offered a tray with a silver scissor to perform the opening ceremony of Sir Said bin Ali Memorial School. Alijah Sadruddin Dharas was enjoined with the administration of the entire programme, which he executed successfully and earned best loving blessings of the Imam.

During the first visit of the Imam in Mtwara on November 27, 1957, he remained close with his father in the whole supervision. He had a privilege to translate Imam's *farman* into Gujrati before a gathering of a thousand people during the grand *darbar* on November 28, 1957 in well decorated tents, which were pitched beside the Aswan Building.



The Imam made an extensive tour of East African countries and arrived in Dar-es-Salaam on October 25, 1966. The Imam visited Lindi on October 26, 1966 and on same day visited Mtwara with Varas Abdullah Tejpar. Mr. John Nazunda, the Regional Commissioner warmly welcomed the Imam at airport. Alijah Sadruddin Dharas controlled the Imam's programme in Lindi and Mtwara when he was an Honorary Secretary of the Ismailia Regional Council for Mtwara.

The Islamic torch of the Holy Prophet's mission was always kept burning under the Aga Khan Development Network.The AKDN asked Alijah Sadruddin Dharas to survey 18 mosques and madressa and 5 schools, which were on the border zone areas of valleys of Ruvuma river, facing Mozambique, where the liberation war had begun since September 25, 1964. Mr. Samora Machel emerged as the leader of the movement on February 3, 1969, who intensified his guerilla operations on the northern border, and extended soon to the south, where the Portugueses started construction of the Cobora Bass dam. Indeed, it was too difficult task when the guerilla warfare against the metropolitan power in Mozambique was at its peak. Alijah Sadruddin Dharas determined not to retreat in his sacred Islamic cause, a shinning tradition of the Holy Prophet. His family and others were much worried of endangering his life in explosive zones, but the call of duty beckoned him for action. He told everyone that, **"Death in service of Imamate would only be a divine blessing and Mawla's presence is always with me, so don't worry."** The Regional Commissioner of Mtwara accorded him written permission on April 8, 1970 to travel in border areas. He boldly launched his mission in the company of Shaikh Abdullah Athumani, Saidi Katapala, Akbar Nagji and Haider Hirji. As a Chairman of the Moslem Mosques Renovation Committee, he defended as a brave warrior in battlefield. He weathered the storms and succeeded in the mission bequeathed to him. He submitted the final report to the surprise of all, and received deep appreciation from A.P. Kassam, Hon. Secretary of the Ismailia Provincial Council, Mtwara on July 15, 1971.

In 1971, he generated a princely amount of donations for four Jamatkhanas of Mikindani, Nanyamba, Mahuta and Namikupa with close attachment with Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai (1905-1990).

The Ismailia Association for Tanzania assigned him the compilation of a write-up in December 21, 1978 on the early settlement and the progress of the Ismailis for over a hundred years (1840-1970). It was the first literary attempt hitherto ever explored by the Ismaili Institution in East African history. He launched his research efficiently, and researched through mass literature. He prepared his capsule history in 1980-81, which was extolled both inside and outside the community. In his letter of March 9, 1981, Amir Bhatia of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London remarked it as an extremely important work for the Archives of the Institute. He also compiled his article on the celebrations of the jubilees of the Ismaili Imams, which deeply moved the eminent personnel, notably Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai. He also worked hard in research of 329 Ginans of "B" category in 1977, which he sent to the Ismailia Association for Tanzania. He also cast his hard working on "**Kalam-i Imam-i Mubin**" (1st vol.) and forwarded his important comments to the Ismailia Association for Tanzania in 1978.

Alijah Sadruddin Dharas rendered a magnitude of the services. These may be summed up that he served as a Hon. Secretary of the Ismailia Provincial Council, Mtwara (1964-1968), the manager of H.H. Prince Aga Khan Primary & Nursery Schools (1969-1970), the Chairman of the Southern Regional Committee for H.H. Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Tanzania (1970-1971), the Regional Representative member for Ismailia Provincial Council, Mtwara (1971-72), the member of the Advisory Board for H.H. Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Tanzania (1977-1981), the Co-ordinator of the 28 Regional Centres of the Ismailia Association for Tanzania, where 1700 students were taught by 102 tutors. He was also appointed the member of the National

Religious Education Committee for United States (1986-1987), etc.

Alijah Sadruddin Dharas is credited to have focused his mind on the working of the institutions on many occasions, and worked out his observations and suggestions to the high bodies. He also represented and participated in national and international conferences and seminars. He sent a Memorandum to Jalaluddin Jaffer, Hon. General Secretary of the Ismailia Association for Canada on August 14, 1974; who assured to deal his valuable suggestions in the President's Conference in Paris. He also sent another useful Memorandum to Varasiani Gulzar Muller on August 18, 1974. In reply on October 3, 1974, Dewan Eboo Pirbhai, the President of the Ismailia Supreme Council for Europe, Canada and United States, mentioned, that the points which he had raised in the Memorandum were discussed in the World Ismailia Associations Conference at Nairobi in 1974, and assured him that his points would be inserted on the agenda of the Conference to be held under Hazar Imam's chairmanship. Alijah Sadruddin Dharas participated in the Ginan Workshop on April 15, 1977 in Karachi, representing the Advisory Board of the Ismailia Association for Tanzania. He took part in the Conference of the Provincial and District Chairman as a special delegate in Dar-es-Salaam between May 13 and May 14, 1978. He attended the International Ismailia Associations Conference at Nairobi in 1979, representing the Ismailia Association for Tanzania. He visited with Nizar Rajabali in Mbeya, Iringa and Morogoro to inspect the condition of religious education. He prepared his three reports with rich proposals and sent them to the Chairman of the Ismailia Association for Tanzania. In reply on December 5, 1981, the Executive Secretary assured him to implement his suggestions soon after their Secondary Manpower Training Programme. Pursuant to the Paris Conference of 1975 under the historic Chairmanship of Hazar Imam, several programmes were chalked out with specific time frames heralding a new era of international collaboration among the Ismailia Associations all over the world. It was also resolved that the Ismailia Associations would meet periodically at the global level to review the progress. The first International Review Meeting to this effect was convened in Nairobi in 1976, 1977, 1979 and 1980. For the first time, Wazir Abdul Mohammad Muscatwala, the President of the Ismailia Association for India had the fortunate privilege of hosting such a meeting in Bombay between January 13 and January 15, 1982. Alijah Sadruddin Dharas attended the Conference as a delegate of Ismailia Association for Tanzania. It was held at the Taj Mahal Intercontinental Hotel, chaired by Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai, who also presented tokens to the participants on the concluding day at a grand function at the Oberoia Hotel. Alijah Sadruddin Dharas also attended the 3rd All Africa Zonal Conference of Ismailia Associations held in Nairobi at the Nairobi Serena Hotel on May 15 and May 16, 1982. It was participated by 28 delegates and 68 observers, chaired by Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai. It is to be noted that the first North American Zonal Conference was held in 1977 and the second in 1979. Its third Conference was organized between July 31, 1981 and August 3, 1981 at the premises of the Doral Country Club, Miami. Alijah Sadruddin Dharas represented the Ismailia Association for Tanzania in several Conferences. He participated the fourth North American Zonal Conference in the same capacity between August 18 and August 21, 1983, at the Ladha Hotel in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Wazir Amirali P. Haji and Rai Amir Mamdani, the Presidents of Ismailia Association for Canada and United States chaired this Conference alternately. He also worked in the World Ismailia Associations Co-ordinating Committee and submitted his report on 14 primers on May 11, 1983.

On July 7, 1983, Alijah Sadruddin Dharas represented on behalf of Madatali H. Lakhani, the Chairman of Ismailia Association for Tanzania to attend the grand ceremony of the presentation of Academic Awards, organized by the University of London Institute of Education and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. Its Guest of Honour was the Imam. Alijah Sadruddin Dharas also attended the 4th Africa Ismailia Associations' Zonal Conference in Kinshasa, Zaire between April 20 and April 24, 1984 during the period of Sadruddin Kassam Nanji, the President of the Ismailia Association for Zaire. The Ismailia Association for United States cordially invited him to participate in the Graduation Ceremony of the Religion Teachers on June 11, 1986 at Atlanta.

Alijah Sadruddin Dharas rendered incredible services to the Information Office of the Ismailia Council for Tanzania during the silver jubilee visits of the Imam and remained close with liaiso-fieldwork with Press Information Office. In his gracious message on October 23, 1984, addressed to the President of the Ismailia Council, the Imam said:-

I also give my best paternal maternal loving blessings to the following beloved spiritual children for their good work and devoted services to the information office. I very much appreciate the work they have done during my silver jubilee visits.

Alijah Aziz Hussain Poonawala
Alijah Mohamed Shivji
Alijah Amir Sumar
Akbar Dhalla
Sadruddin Dharas

Alijah Sadruddin Dharas also organized the National Religious Education Meeting in Albuquerque between October 11, and October 13, 1985 and won admiration of Razia Pullen, the Chairperson of the Ismailia Association for the United States on October 23, 1985, who titled him as a good leader and model for teachers. He also attended the Mission Study at the El Buen Samaritano Methodista Church in Albuquerque on March 2, 1991, where he made a presentation on the common beliefs of two great religions, Islam and Christianity.

In view of his long and unstinted services, he was given the title of **Alijah** in 1983 during the Silver Jubilee celebrations.

The family tree of Dharas family indicates that its branches continued the legacy of the services for the Imam and the *jamat* from African continent to United States. Alijah Sadruddin Dharas married Mumtaz, the daughter of Ibrahim Kurji from Pemba Chake Chake, on Dec. 27th 1958. She has also rendered her services in all the Brotherhoods, notably in the Food Committee. Alijah Sadruddin has three children, one daughter and two sons. His daughter Shainul married Nasiruddin Jivraj Mawji Dewji of Mtwara, and has a daughter, Selina and a son, Karim. Both Shainul and Nasiruddin have served as Mukhiani and Mukhi for *Mawla no Rojo Brotherhood.* Murad and Rahim are the only sons of Alijah Sadruddin. Murad married Rozmina. They have two daughters and a son. Their first daughter Nabila died in infancy at the age of 9 months, while their second daughter is Nabila II. The name of her only son is Jamil. Murad, the son of Alijah Sadruddin is a volunteer and his wife is an assistant volunteer for facilitator in the Jamatkhana. Rahim

is the second son of Alijah Sadruddin, who is married to Alnar, they have a daughter, named Inara. Rahim is a member for Youth & Sports at the national level, and the Kamadia for *Mawla no Rojo Brotherhood* in Albuquerque Jamatkhana.



Salim Dharas was born on August 25, 1950 in Zanzibar. He also took leading parts in different institutions. He started his services with the Aga Khan Secondary School, Dar-es-Salaam on December 2, 1966, followed by the Agriculture & Co-operative Training College, Mahiwa Lindi from June 26, 1967 to 1970. He was the member of the Aga Khan Gents Volunteer Corps, Mtwara (1971-73) as well as associated with Elrain Gessellschaft Fortbuilding College, West Germany. He was the portfolio member for the Aga Khan Youth & Sports Committee, Mtwara (1976-1977), the Acting Hon. Secretary for the Provincial Council for Mtwara (1978-81), etc. The Imam graciously appointed him the Kamadia for a higher Brotherhood on July 11, 1978 in Mtwara Jamatkhana (1978-82). On December 13, 1982, he was appointed the portfolio member for the Ismailia Association for Kinshasa, Zaire and is credited to have delegated the 4th All Africa Zonal Conference in Kinshasa, Zaire between April 20 and April 24, 1984, which was chaired by Rai Ameer Kassim Lakha. In his advance message of April 18, 1984, Hazar Imam showered best loving blessings to all the participants. In Kinshasa, he also rendered his inestimable services to the Audio Visual and Religious Book Departments of the Ismailia Association for Zaire. In his letter of July 30, 1984, Alijah Sadruddin Nanji, the Chairman deeply extolled his valuable contributions. Dr. Farouk Topan of the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London also wrote on June 18, 1984 to the Chairman of the Ismailia Association for Zaire for the untiring services of the members, including Salim Dharas. He was also appointed the Kamadia for a Brotherhood in Kinshasa on July 11, 1983. His services continued soon after the migration of Dharas family in United States since November 2, 1984. He served as the volunteer member for R.E.C. Albuquerque, New Mexico (1985-86). He also participated in the 1st All America National Religious Education Convention in Albuquerque on October 11, 1985. He was also appointed the Kamadia for a high Brotherhood on December 13, 1987 for three years in Albuquerque. He was also taken as a member for Albuquerque Health Committee on July 11, 1991 for two years. He also rendered his valuable services as a member without portfolio in Albuquerque Committee (1993-96). Hazar Imam once again showered his blessings by appointing him the Kamadia for a high Brotherhood in Albuquerque on December 13, 1996 for three years. He also extended his best services in the arrangement of the Conference of the Council at Albuquerque. Sultan Ali Khowaja, the Hon. Secretary of the Ismailia Council for Southwestern United States also congratulated the workers in his letter of November 9, 1998. Salim Dharas was appointed the Kamadia for Albuquerque Jamatkhana with Mukhi Hamid R. Sheriff on July 11, 1999 in accordance with the following expressed *farman* of Hazar Imam, addressed to the President and members of the Ismaili Council for United States on July 9, 1999.

9th July, 1999

My dear President and Members,

On the occasion of Imamate day, the 11th of July, 1999, I appoint with my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings all the beloved spiritual children mentioned on the enclosed lists as Mukhis and Kamadias of Jamatkhanas in the U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand.

I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings to the newly appointed Mukhis, Kamadias, Mukhianis and Kamadianis for success in their duties, with best loving blessings to the retiring Mukhis, Kamadias, Mukhianis and Kamadianis for their past excellent and devoted services.

I send my most affectionate loving blessings to all the beloved spiritual children of U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand *Jamat.*

He presently serves as the Kamadia of Albuquerque Jamatkhana, and ever ready to extend his outstanding services in the world. The readers must know that Kamadia Salim Dharas ascended as an angel to give a new life in compilation of this book, and helped the author in its study and publication, which shall be ever remembered.

Kamadia Salim Dharas married Rosemin, the daughter of late Hyder Ali Nanji Ahmed and Rohshan Jiva Hirji on Feb. 27th 1976.Rosemin served as Assistant Secretary for Regional Council for Mtwara and served almost in all the Brotherhood*s*. She is now the present Kamadiani in Albuquerque Jamatkhana. Kamadia Salim Dharas is the father of a daughter, named Sharmin.

GHULAM HUSSAIN MOHAMMAD JINDANI, DEWAN
(1891-1983)



Naser was from Jamnagar, Kutchh and he came from a noble family. He migrated towards Zanzibar in 1851 to find a better life for his family. He had only a son, called Mohammad, who was born in Zanzibar in 1864. Mohammad Naser served the *jamat* devotedly in different fields. He was also noted for his generosity. When the first Ismaili Council established in 1905 at Nairobi with Varas Mohammad Rehmatullah Hemani as its President, Mohammad Naser was also appointed as one of its founder members (1905-1914).

On January 15, 1912, the Imam sent him a letter from Karachi and appointed him as his Estate Manager to take care of the Imam's estates in Zanzibar in place of Varas Saleh. He took over its charges also from Kamadia Pradhan.



Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah made his third visit to Africa in 1914. The Imam arrived at the port of Zanzibar by a French mail steamer, **Oxes** on July 15, 1914 at 3.00 a.m., and graced the *didar* in the Jamatkhana at 8.00 a.m. On that occasion, the Imam said, **"The bungalow which Mohammad Naser has arranged for my stay is very excellent. I give him best blessings."**

Mohammad Naser spent handsomely on travelling and entertaining the guests, and gave all expenses of Imam's visit to Zanzibar in 1914. On August 2, 1914, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah said in view of his generous services that,**"Since my arrival, you have been serving me day and night. It is not enough when I say *Khanavadan* for you, even if I keep saying *Khanavadan* day and night. Your entertainment (*mehmani)* does not confine to it, but continued since my arrival over here, because the bungalow with foods, including for the staff - all have been provided by you. Besides, you discharge your duty feasibly and help the Council and *jamat* all the times, and participate in all occasions. You also render my other services excellently, for which I give you much blessings."**

Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah also invested him the title of **Wazir** on August 6, 1914 and said, **"You are Varas means Wazir from today. When the African *jamat* was small, there were three Wazirs, but now it is a big *jamat*. I have sent thousand of people during ten years in the villages of Kampala, Uganda, Majunga, etc. Thus, there must be at least four Wazirs in Africa. Wazir Mohammad Rehmatullah and Varas Alidina Visram are (Wazirs) at present, and I also vest in Mohammad Naser the office of Wazir."** The Imam also presented him the robe, ring and a pin with best blessings.

When the Khoja Panjibhai Club came into existence in Zanzibar, Lyoid William Mathew, the British Counsel General inaugurated its room on September 9, 1899. Initially, there were about a hundred members, each paying the membership fee of Rs. 4/- per year. When its members took no interest, the Imam ordered to exempt its fees, and himself started an annual grant of Rs. 3500/- for its upkeep. On that juncture, Mohamed Naser worked hard in the progress of the Khoja Panjibhai Club. He introduced many recreation activities and gave a new life to the Club. On March 21, 1926, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah said to Ghulam Hussain, the son of Mohamed Naser in a *mehmani* that, **"Earlier, your father, Mohamed Naser organized the Panjibhai Club in an order in 1899, rather he gave new life to the dormant members. He also helped too much in past, and served the community financially. You too serve with full heart like your father."**

Wazir Mohammad Naser died at the age of 60 years on September 29, 1924. His son, Ghulam Hussain maintained the tradition of the illustrious services of his father.

Ghulam Hussain Wazir Mohammad Naser Jindani was born in Zanzibar on August 8, 1891. He took his education in Zanzibar and became one of the business magnates, and owned many valuable estates.

He took important parts in the community services. He sailed for London on December, 1924, and reached Marseilles via Genoa, and finally arrived to Villa Yakimour in Cannes. Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah graced him an audience in the Ritz Hotel, and prayed for the soul of late Wazir Mohammad Naser Jindani. On that juncture, the Imam conferred upon him the title of **Wazir.**

Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah arrived in Zanzibar on February 17, 1925, where he declared new members for the Council. Varas Mohammad Rehmatullah Hemani was appointed the President with Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani as its member. The Imam also declared 9 members for the School Committee, including Ghulam Hussain Jindani as its Chairman with Abdul Hussain Jaffer Rahim as Hon. Secretary. The Imam also told to them, **"You must form the sub-committees, three for secular and three for religion educations, and three for the girls. You should avail full benefit of my grant and send me your report directly, and endorse its copy to the Council. Have much courage for it."** In the Ladies Committee, twelve members were appointed, including his sister, Kamadiani Kulsumbai. The Imam also vested him the title of **Wazir,** and said, **"I have conferred the title of Wazir to you in Europe. Now I award the title in public and also appoint you the member of the Council."**

The Sultan of Zanzibar hosted a standing ovation to the Imam in a princely reception on February 21, 1925. It was attended by distinguished persons, notably Shaikh Suleman bin Naser, Shaikh Hammad bin Hamid, Shaikh Saeed bin Hamid, Wazir Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani, Varas Mohammad Rehmatullah Hemani and other 22 special guests of honour.

Wazir Rahim Basaria (1885-1927) died on February 15, 1927 in Bombay. The Supreme Council held an urgent meeting in Zanzibar to pay him a well-deserved tribute. It was also resolved to close the businesses on February 16, 1927. The Council and *jamat* performed the religious ceremony for late Wazir Rahim Basaria at the residence of Wazir

Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani, where Missionary Alidina Mukhi Mamu delivered *waez.*

In 1934, one African delegation visited London to discuss with the Imam to promote education system in the villages of East Africa. The delegation comprised of Ghulam Hussain Jindani (Zanzibar), Alijah Kassim Sunderji (Dar-es-Salaam) and Mukhi Rajab Ali Kassim Suleman Virji (Mombasa). Soon after the meeting, he and his wife took an opportunity of visiting Cairo and returned to Zanzibar on October 8, 1934.

On February 7, 1937 during the occasion of Golden Jubilee, Mr. and Mrs. Jindani hosted a dinner to the Imam and Mata Salamat at the Aga Khan Club. It was attended by 1000 guests, including the Resident (Governor) Sir Richard Renkins and Lady Renkins, Sultan Sayed Khalifa bin Haroon, the ruler of Zanzibar, etc.

On March 1, 1937, the Golden Jubilee was celebrated in Nairobi, making the hearts of the Ismailis full of happiness and excitement. The Supreme Council for Africa formed the All Africa Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee comprised of 18 members, in which Wazir Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani was selected as a member from Zanzibar. The All Africa Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee held a meeting and launched an Executive Committee of six members to control the entire supervision, in which Wazir Ghulam Hussain Jindani was also selected as its member. The ceremony of Golden Jubilee was performed at the ground of The Aga Khan Club, where a mammoth concourse of 70,000 Ismailis assembled. It took about 40,000 shillings to decorate the *pendol.* In the middle, a platform of 100 square yards was erected for weighing ceremony. On that occasion, Wazir Ghulam Hussain Jindani had a privilege to read the welcome address. In his speech, the Imam graciously accepted the gift of gold and declared it's use for the upliftment of his spiritual children, thus formed a Gold Grant Committee to devise the best means of applying the money for different social and welfare projects. The Imam also declared nine members of the Gold Grant Committee, such as Wazir Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani, Varas Abdullah Sharif, Alijah Ismail Jivraj Pirani, Varas Kassim Sunderji Shamji, Wazir Fateh Ali Dhalla, Wazir Hassan Kassim Lakha, Dhanji Jadawji Bhatia, Alijah Hashim Ismail Lakhani, and Sir Eboo Pirbhai. Later on, the charge of the Gold Grant Committee was taken over by the Central Committee in 1946 with a fund of 10,000 pounds.

On that occasion, Imam Sultan Muhammed vested an hereditary title of **Count** to Ghulam Hussain Jindani and Abdullah Sharif Kanji. The Imam also resented him a **Gold Medal** of **Chevron Bar.** This was the first occasion where the conferment of the title of **Count** was introduced specifically in East Africa. This had never been done anywhere in the Ismaili world.

Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah emphasized to the Ismaili leaders to establish an Insurance Company, and summoned a meeting of the leaders and experts on February 20, 1937 at Dar-es-Salaam and said,**"I will insure my estates and houses and provided you to establish an Insurance Company. I will give you a business of over 40,000 shillings, and then you procure the insurance business from rich class, and then start life insurance policy, which will be more profitable to you."** The Imam gave 30 minutes to the participants to finalize the project. After an end of 30 minutes, the Imam summoned them and asked, **"Who will take responsibility of the Directors for Insurance Company?**

If you are ready, I shall give insurance of my all houses. I am now an old, and no company will take risk of my life policy, but will give you life policies of Prince Aly Khan and Prince Sadruddin. You start life policy after some time, and make its head office in Mombasa." The Imam also declared the names of the Directors, such as Count Ghulam Hussain Jindani, Varas Mohammad Varas Saleh Kassim, Count Hassan Kassim Lakha (1892-1982), Varas Zaver Karshan, Varas Kassim Sunderji Shamji, Alijah Dhanji Jadawji Bhatia and Kassim Ali R. Paroo (1906-1998). The Jubilee Insurance Co. finally came into existence on August 3, 1937. The fledgling company began its small office in Mombasa with a staff of six and assets of only 500,000/- shillings. Its Directors served for 30 years without fees or travelling expenses. Few years later, the promoters were privileged to see the benefits of the insurance project. It is to be recorded that after the Imam's family, the family of Count Ghulam Hussain Jindani were the largest shareholders of the Insurance Company. Public in nature, the Jubilee Insurance Company provided a productive spur to the economy of the African Ismailis.

Ghulam Hussain Jindani was also appointed the Chairman of the Aga Khan's Executive Council for Africa (1937-1946). He and his wife, Fatimabai were also appointed the ex-officios of the Ismailia Supreme Council for Africa. The Imam enjoined upon him the authority to ordain the rules of the Ismaili Councils for Africa. He shaped the Constitution and published it for the first time in 1937.

The Jindani family had proud privilege of serving the Imam and the *jamat*. Varasiani Sonbai, the mother of Count Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani worked in different fields, In recognition of her outstanding services, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah, graciously presented her a gold medal in Zanzibar on January 31, 1937.

Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) had started his third and last visit of Africa on January 5, 1937 as a Special Commissioner of the Imam, where he stayed for 23 months. On February 10, 1938, a son was born in the Jindani family. Pir Sabzali received a letter from the Imam, who told him to see Count Ghulam Hussain Jindani in Zanzibar on his behalf and congratulate for the birth of a son. The Imam also told Pir Sabzali to present him two rupees with loving kisses and named the son. When Pir Sabzali came to Zanzibar during the course of his tour, he met the Count and Countess and presented congratulations to them on behalf of the Imam and named the son as Mahomed. He was the second son, the first was Abdul Mahomed, who died at the age of 10 years on June 2, 1924. A daughter was also born on April 24, 1927. The husband and wife were longing reverently for a son till the birth of Mahomed.

Prince Aly Khan arrived in Mombasa on February 19, 1939. Wazir Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani accorded him a warm ovation at airport. He acted as a Private Secretary of Prince Aly Khan during the tour. Prince Aly Khan was an exceptional hunter and took him in his hunting expedition in the forest of South Masai.

He was also appointed the President of the H.H. The Aga Khan Legion for Africa (1942-46)

On May 26, 1946, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah convened at Nairobi, a Territorial Conference for the Diamond Jubilee. Eminent leaders representing the African *jamats*

participated in the conference. It was officially resolved after a long discussion with the Imam that the venue of the Diamond Jubilee would be Dar-es-Salaam. Count Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani and Alijah Karam Ali Mahomed managed the arrangement of the Territorial Conference, and won the best blessing of the Imam.

The Diamond Jubilee of the Imam was celebrated in Dar-es-Salaam on August 9, 1946. Wearing a robe of white and silver brocade, studded with five-pointed stars and a headwear woven of gold thread, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah was warmly welcomed at the Sports Ground of the Aga Khan Club by seventy thousand people, including the governor of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. On that unique occasion, Count Ghulam Hussain Jindani was credited to read the welcome address on behalf of the African *jamats*.

He was appointed the first Chairman of the Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd. with 19 directors in 1940. Its head office was situated at Kilindini Road, Mombasa with a branch in Kampala.

Count Ghulam Hussain Jindani was generous donor for several causes. In 1949, the Imam said to him, "Would it not be nice if I had a Jamatkhana in Paris?" On that juncture, he humbly presented five thousand British pounds for the construction of the Jamatkhana at 36, Rue de Prony, Paris.

Count Ghulam Hussain Jindani rendered his services with such marked distinction that the Imam vested him the coveted title of **Dewan** through a telegraphic message on December 29, 1948. It reads:- **"Occasion Imamate record I confer on you for all your great services title Dewan for first time given in Africa."** It is to be noted that Count Ghulam Hussain Jindani was the first recipient of title of **Dewan** among the African leaders - an honorific conferment forceful unparalleled for 35 years till his death in 1983.

Prince Aly Khan passed away on May 12, 1960 in a tragic motor car accident near Paris. It was Prince Aly Khan's wish, that he should be buried in Salamia, Syria. His burial ceremony took place on July 10, 1972 in Salamia. With respect to the desire and wishes of the Imam, only 36 delegates of India, Pakistan, Africa, Europe, United States and South East Asia attended the ceremony. Only four special guests were also invited, viz. Dewan Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani (Mombasa), Varas Chhotubhai (Nairobi), Tutti Hussain (London) and Varasiani Gulzar Muller. The delegates and guests first gathered at Nice. Air France Chartered Boeing transported the embalmed body of Prince Aly Khan to Damascus on July 10, 1972. The coffin committee transferred the coffin by a helicopter from Damascus to Salamia escorted by Prince Amyn Muhammad alongwith six delegates and four guests. Prince Sadruddin with other delegates travelled in another helicopter. The coffin was lowered into the last resting place on the same day.

The Imam arrived in Mombasa on February 15, 1976 with Begum Salimah when Dewan Ghulam Hussain Mohammad Jindani was about 85 years old. While looking him in the airport, the Imam said, **"Dewan you look 92 years."** Since then, he implanted a conclusive thought in his mind that the span of his life would be 92 years.

His life certainly bridged a long span of 92 years, and expired on May 26, 1983. The Imam sent following message to his wife, Countess Fatimabai on June 27, 1983:-

Her Highness the Begum and I have learnt with great pain and sorrow about the passing away of your beloved husband Dewan Count Jindani in Mombasa. I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of the late Dewan Count Jindani and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. I send you and all the members of your family my most affectionate paternal maternal special loving blessings for strength and courage in your great loss. The late Dewan Count Jindani's devoted services to my late grandfather, to my late father and to my *jamat* of all Africa will always be remembered by my *jamat* and me, and he will be greatly missed by all. In this painful time of bereavement, my dear Countess, you and your family are particularly in my heart and thoughts and prayers.

Countess Fatimabai was also devoted in her community services. She died in June, 1989. The Imam sent following message from London to her son, Mahomed on July 21, 1989:

I was deeply grieved to learn of the passing away of your mother Countess Fatma Jindani in Nairobi.

From my very young days when I was in Kenya, I well remember the late Count and Countess Jindani and how their services to the Imam and the *jamat* had continued for many many years. Ultimately to be recognized by the late Count being given the title of Dewan for the first time in the *jamat*. The late Dewan and Countess Jindani had rendered truly exceptional services and I give my special paternal maternal loving blessings for the eternal peace and rest of their souls. I very much hope that their wonderful tradition of service will be continued by you and other members of your family.

I send you and all the members of the Jindani family my most affectionate loving blessings for courage and fortitude in your great loss. You are all particularly in my heart and thoughts and prayers in this difficult time.

Dewan Ghulam Hussain Jindani was a kind, honest, sincere and served the community through thick and thin for an eventful period of over 40 years. He left behind an enviable record of services. His kindness, humility, and desire to shoulder the burden of others, distinguished him from the formative stage of his career from the rest of the community. He would never let a poor man feel that he was destitute. Indeed, the lowly would be given extra consideration. Kindness to others was like a mission of life to him. His philanthropic disposition blossomed into charities and donations even when his business was still struggling to find stability. His hospitality was famous not only in African countries, but applauded as far as India and Burma. It was a day of happiness when he hosted guests at his residence. Suffice to write his invaluable services that the Imam merited him as the **Power behind Throne** and **The Executive in Parliament** in his one private letter. As for the Supreme Council for Africa, the Imam said,**"You must humour them."**

Dewan Ghulam Hussain left behind seven daughters, Samira, Amina, Munira, Zainab, Gulzar, Shireen, Mira and a daughter, Mahomed.

GHULAM HUSSAIN S. THAVAR, WAZIR
(1907-1963)



Thavar Pir Muhammad hailed from Dhoraji. It is said that he left Dhoraji in 1890 with his sons, Shakur Thavar and Hashim Thavar and arrived in Deccan, Hyderabad. He again moved towards Bijapur, where he opened his small grocery shop. His sons were traders of cutlery items and bones. Soon afterwards, Thavar Pir Muhammad ventured into the business of leather. His elder son, Shakur who was born in 1880 had established the Sholapur Tenneries at very young age in Sholapur and became a pioneer merchant of leather. Shakur Thavar died on June 4, 1952 at the age of 72 years.

Ghulam Hussain, the son of Shakur Thavar was born in 1907 in Bombay and he was educated in Sholapur. He was the partner of Shakoorbhoy Thavarbhoy & Sons and the owner of Sholapur Tanneries at Sholapur.

He is reputed in the service of the community in Bombay since his childhood. In 1922, he joined the Kandi Mowla Students Library and published a quarterly journal **"Fidai"** in 1926.

Ghulam Hussain Thavar was a renowned writer, journalist and a devoted social worker. He also rendered valuable services as the President of the Fidai Academy, Andheri, Bombay (1946-1949), the Director of the Ismailia Cooperative Bank Ltd., the President of Leather Merchant Association and the President of Sholapur Rotary Club in 1944-45. He was also an office bearer of the Lodge Royal Jubilee, Sholapur, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of Sholapur District Boy Scouts Association and the District of Sholapur.

He served as the President of the Ismailia Association for India for three years (1948-1952). He was the first to have started the tradition of trained Honorary Waezeens in India in 1950. Ghulam Hussain Thavar introduced the Mission Assembly so successfully in India that the Africa and Pakistan Associations followed his example and established the Mission Assembly.

After his retirement from the Ismailia Association, Ghulam Hussain Thavar became the Vice-President of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration Committee, and succeeded to collect twenty lacs rupees in India. The publication of the **"Platinum Jubilee Bulletin"** was his landmark efforts. He assured to his associates that he would bear its loss. When it faced a loss of seven thousand rupees, he reimbursed as per his words.

Ghulam Hussain Thavar also served in the Ismaili Council in Poona for 25 years as a member, then its Hon. Secretary and the President. He was also a member of the Ismaili

Council for the Deccan for 22 years, during which period he was elected for three terms as the President. He was also the Chairman of the Platinum Jubilee Investment Ltd. in 1952.

In 1954, Ghulam Hussain Thavar had the honour of accompanying Prince Aly S. Khan to visit about 13 quarters in India.

Ghulam Hussain Thavar died on Wednesday, May 22, 1963 in Chittagong. In a message on June 4, 1963, the Imam said that,**"I am much grieved to know the sad demise of Vazir Ghulam Hussain Thavarbhoy. I give paternal maternal best loving blessings to the late Vazir Thavarbhoy and pray eternal peace for the soul. Best blessings to the family of late Vazir Thavarbhoy for courage and fortitude in their great loss."**



I want to say today how happy I am with the excellent service you are rendering and to remind you that so much of the progress that has been able to be made, in the past in the *jamat*, has been due to the spirit of service which members of the *jamat* render to the *jamat*, to the Imam of the time and to the institutions of the *jamat*. This is a fundamental principle in Islam and in our *jamat*. It is a principle, which has existed for years and years and years. And those who uphold that principle are specially close to me, and I hope that this principle, this tradition will be upheld in our *jamat* for always, no matter what part of the world the *jamat* is living in, and that this will be and continue to be fundamental foundation on which we can build for the betterment of the *jamat*, the successful work in the years ahead. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Vancouver, April 22, 1983)



HAMIR LAKHA, MISSIONARY
(1888-1963)

Lakhpat was the oldest port of Kutchh, situated near Indus river. It depopulated from 15000 to 2500 in 1847 during a famine and became absolutely desolated. Hamir Lakha's grandfather migrated from the depopulated region of Lakhpat and came in Sind, where he rendered valuable services in different villages. It is related that Bibi Mariam (1744-1832), the mother of Imam Hasan Ali Shah visited India with Mirza Abul Kassim in 1829 to resolve the internal strifes of the community in Bombay. She arrived in Karachi via Muscat, and reached Lakhpat after visiting Jerruk. The temperature of Lakhpat was so scorching that the people travelled at night on camels. It was the grandfather of Missionary Hamir Lakha, who arranged her nocturnal journey between Ramki Bazar and Lakhpat. He well cushioned the camels and made the journey of Bibi Mariam comfortable.

Ramki Bazar was a small village between Sind and Kutchh in district Tharparkar, about 32 miles from Badin. It was an ancient town and a bustling commercial center where trade caravans came from all parts of India. All kinds of grains and cottage butter were brought from interior Sind and transported on camels in Bhuj, Mundra, Mandavi, etc. It appears that 250 to 300 Ismailis of Kutchh lived in this area. His grandfather had come from Lakhpat and settled in the village called Nindo, near Badin, with his 18 year old son Lakho (1829-1928). Lakho was well built and very muscular. He also held a natural command on mathematics and was competent in maintaining the accounts. Seth Rahmatullah was an Ismaili merchant in Ramki Bazar, who learnt the talent and honesty of Lakho. He employed him in his firm to maintain the accounts.

Wrestling was a popular pastime among the people in Sind. Lakho was tall and well built. Once he is said to have fought with a renowned champion of Ramki Bazar and hurled him on the ground at first attempt, but this was no ordinary fall. The stricken champion lay motionless on the ground. Seth Rahmatullah was so amazed with Lakho's honesty that he blessed the marriage of his daughter Lalbai married to him. They had a son - Hamir Lakha.

Hamid Lakho, Hamid Lakhani or better known as Hamir Lakha was born on Monday, January 23, 1888. He had three brothers, Piru (elder), Nazar Ali and Piru (younger). His elder brother Piru expired during the outbreak of the plague in India in 1900. It aggrieved his mother, Lalbai to great extent, and when his younger brother was born, he was named as Piru (younger), whom his mother placed in the service of the mausoleum of Pir Tajuddin in Badin at the age of 15 years. He became known as Mukhi Piru, who served for 70 years and died at the age of 85 years.

Once his mother sent him in the jungle to cut the wood. He went with an axe, but suffered with fever on account of scorching heat. His mother told that she would never send him for wood-cutting. There was no facility of education in district Tharparkar. When Hamir Lakha was 9 years old, his father Lakho sent him to his relative in Bhuj, Kutchh for education. He learnt Gujrati in the school, returned and joined his father's small business. Hamir Lakha heard many *waez* in Kutchh.

It was some time later that his family came to live in Hyderabad, Sind, where he acquired further education, and then ventured in the leather business. He was the honorary secretary of Anjuman-e-Islam in Hyderabad with Varas Fadhu Piru Khalikdina as its President in 1915. In 1920, he started his services as a volunteer in Hyderabad, and also became its Captain. He was also the Incharge of The Khoja Ismailia Library in Hyderabad in 1922.

In 1919, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah sent a message for the youths of Sind through Varas Fadhu Piru Khalikdina (1885-1936) to join the mission centre. Hamir Lakha rejoiced to hear it, but could not offer, as he was much occupied in his business. Unfortunately, he met a great loss and lost his capital in the business deal.

Hamir Lakha, the down-trodden leather merchant went to Bombay for the *didar* of the Imam in January, 1920. In his *mehmani*, the Imam put his both hands on his shoulders and said,"**Hamir, how are you? Will you now become a missionary? Both your shoulders are now equal.** " He bowed his head with humility and said, "Mawla, I must become a missionary and will serve you till last breath as your true and sincere servant."

Hamir Lakha joined the Recreation Club Institute and came into the contact of the eminent missionaries and scholars. With this influence, Hamir Lakha transformed into a renowned missionary. On February 8, 1921, the Imam told the Recreation Club to make his stay in Bombay for two months only. He toured all over India and won the hearts of the listeners.

During the meeting of the Recreation Club on March 27, 1922, he informed the Imam that there were about eight hundred people in Sakaro, Sind and million of people resided in Tharparkar, which should be proselytized. The Imam said,**"Tharparkar is much beneficial. Listen, you go there, where 1200 people live, not 800. You make a trip of Tharparkar in this year and gather informations, which is a region under British domain."** After a short while, the Imam also said, **"You take help of your brother, Ramzan Ali in Tharparkar. Do not seek assistance from the Khatri caste or other wicked people."** The Imam also told him,**"You are allowed to acquire new associate members. Do not do work that may cause displeasure to the people - regardless of their age. You write to Varas Daybhai Velji, he will arrange for it."** During the *mehmani* of the Recreation Club at Mazgon, Bombay on April 1, 1922, Hamir Lakha lyrically expressed his ardent love for the Imam. Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah blessed him and said, **"You direct the route of Tharparkar to the Hyderabad Committee."** To this, he said that he had recommended few capable persons to the Karachi Committee. The Imam said, **"You will find such persons who are not true Ismailis, therefore, you take away those who will not be helpful to the Recreation Club."** He immediately embarked on the new mandate, and operated proselytizing mission among the depressed class of Tharparkar for two years.

In 1923, he is said to have humbly requested to the Imam that his memory was weak and he was forgetting all that he had learnt. Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah asked him to open the buttons of his shirt and marked on his breast with his finger, and said, **"You will never forget and enjoy good command in your memory."** With the blessings of the Imam, he gained a natural extraordinary memory.

On January 30, 1924, Hamir Lakha selected five young Ismaili boys in Sind according to the advice of the Imam and took them to Varas Dayabhai Velji in Ahmadnagar, where he arranged their marriages with the orphan girls. Even though he had to make tour in different parts of India, he assigned this noble work to other responsible people and returned to Karachi.

With the cooperation of Major Paria Rahim Dino of Hyderabad, missionary Hamir Lakha established a new volunteer corps at Shah Turel, Sind on August 15, 1924. The President of the Volunteer Corps was Ahmad Mukhi Fadhu with a Vice-President Karim Mukhi Hasham and Honorary Secretary as Master Tharu Mukhi Alidina. The Volunteer Corp started with 17 members.

Hamir Lakha's services were great in the community as a missionary and as a writer. The management of library organized a reception on December 14, 1924 at Madras, presided by Vali Mohammed Ibrahim Karim Chhatriwala to accord a warm honour to Missionary Hamir Lakha. Vali Mohammed Ibrahim, Abdullah Sumar Shivji, Premji Giga, Isa Lalji Devraj, Alibhai Kara, etc. delivered their speeches and spoke of the worthy services of Missionary Hamir Lakha.

Alijah Kassim Manji built a big hall with five underground lodging chambers for the *Baitul Khiyal Brotherhood* in Bharapur, Kutchh in loving memory of his father, Patel Manji Dhanidina. Hamir Lakha was on his *waez* duty in those days in Kutchh, and he was given an honour to make its opening ceremony in 1925.

He also visited East African countries with Wazir Rahim Basaria, Pir Sabzali and Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad, and left Bombay on January 7, 1925. Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah arrived in Zanzibar on February 9, 1925. Hamir Lakha returned to Bombay with Pir Sabzali on April 18, 1925.

After a long journey of India and East Africa for 17 months, he returned to Hyderabad, Sind in June, 1925. Mukhi Rahmatullah Bana, Maria Rahimdina, the President of Council and other 30 dignitaries warmly received him at the station.

Hamir Lakha was bold to hold public discussion with the opponents of the Ismailis. In 1926, he challenged in public Haji Naji and Ali Rajan, the famous writers of the Twelvers and offered to elucidate from their books that they believed in the divinity of Ali as well as their amazing belief about Holy Koran. He also proposed the names of some eminent scholars to make impartial judication of the proceeding, viz. Khwaja Hasan Nizami, Maulana Muhammad Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Abdul Majid Badauni, Maulana Nazir Ahmad Khujadi, Pir Ghulam Mujadid, Nasir al-Islam Kazi Asadullah Shah, etc. He also recommended Ahmadabad as the venue of deliberations. He was well prepared to resolve the matter once for all, but his challenge was not accepted. Before leaving for Iraq,

Hamir Lakha once again challenged to Haji Naji and Ali Rajan on January 2, 1927 through a publicity in the Ismaili periodical, but his enemies stood in awe of him and did not respond to it.

Hamir Lakha visited Basra in the end of February, 1927 and delivered *waez* in the *jamat*. During his departure, the Managing Committee of the Ismaili Library accorded him a warm reception on March 13, 1927. Hasan Ali Abji, the President paid rich tribute to his services. He left Basra for India on March 15, 1927.

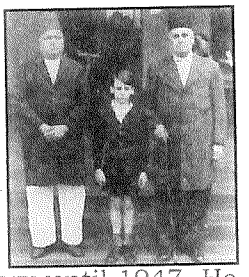
He was also a prolific writer and a frequent contributor to the leading periodicals. On August 1, 1929, Hamir Lakha was also declared a best writer in the quarterly **"Fidai"** and obtained first and second ranks at a time. He was awarded the first prize of **"gold moon"** presented by Lt. Col. Itmadi Pir Muhammad V. Madhani (1896-1959) on behalf of The Kandi Mola Ismaili Students Library.

The Mundra, Kutchh Council held a meeting on November 28, 1934 and on November 29, 1934 to review the latest condition of the Ismailis in Kutchh. It was presided by Suleman Haji Kassim, the port officer of Kandla port. During the meeting of the local council, Missionary Hamir Lakha was especially invited. In his lecture, he said, "Looking at the councils in Kutchh and its rules and regulations, an awakening came up among the Khoja Ithna Asharis, and they are compelled to establish similar councils and rules for their own community. I am confident that those who speak against the Ismaili rules and regulations will have to repent either now or later."

During the second world war, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah sent a telegram to Huzur Wazir Macklai, the President of Recreation Club Institute in Bombay, to depute an expert missionary in East Africa. Huzur Wazir Macklai sent a telegram to Missionary Jamal Virji in Rajkot, who could not respond in time. He urgently called for Hamir Lakha in Hyderabad, Sind by a telegram, where he was contacted within three days. Hamir Lakha sailed to Africa on a ship that was leaving on the same day. The journey by sea was dangerous due to the war, but he reached Africa with full determination in 1944. He visited almost 114 villages, traveled by car in jungles for more than 5000 miles.

The first "Ismaili Mission Conference" was held in the auditorium of the Aga Khan High School, Dar-es-Salaam presided by Count Nimji Zaver on July 20, 1945. Missionary Hamir Lakha was also invited in it. During his speech in the last session, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah said, **"As rightly said by one of our missionaries, Mr. Hamir Lakha, that with regard to religion you must never reason with people who have no religion. This is perfectly true because Islam and Ismailism are built on *Iman* and *Momin*."**

Missionary Hamir Lakha was sitting right in front of the Imam, and did not understand English language. He was perplexed and confused as to why his name came up. He had mixed feelings of happiness and fear. Happiness because the Imam referred to him in the speech. Fearful because what if he had done something wrong resulting in the Imam mentioning his name. He was told that the Imam brought up his name with reference to the notice that with regards to religion, one must never reason with people who have no faith.



In 1946, he was nominated as a member of The Aga Khan Legion Committee to generate funds for the Diamond Jubilee in East Africa, in which he discharged his duties with enthusiasm. For his devoted services, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah conferred upon him the title of **Alijah** at Nairobi in 1946.

Missionary Hamir Lakha continued his services as a regular missionary until 1947. He also gave his services to the Estate Office of the Imam in 1950 in Karachi. He also delivered *waez* on big occasions in Pakistan.

In 1950, he also started his services in the mission department of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan, which he continued till his death. In 1951, the Imam said in Karachi in a *mehmani* of the missionaries that, "**Hamir Lakha is a speaking book.**" He was also given the title of **Rai** in 1954 by Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah.

Hamir Lakha visited many different cities and villages of India, Pakistan, East Africa, Iraq, Burma, Gwadar and Makran coast.

In 1960, when Hamir Lakha was in Sultanabad, Sind some robbers entered the Jamatkhana shooting in the air. The robbers thought that he was the leader and asked him to deliver the keys. One of them pointed a gun to his chest. Hamir Lakha boldly said, "Well, you shoot me." When it was fired, the bullet did not pass through the gun. The robber tried again and again but failed. Hence, they fled from the premises.

Hamir Lakha fulfilled the promise he had given to the Imam in 1920 that he would remain as a missionary till his last breath. During the last period of his life, he was unable to stand for long time due to pain in his knees; he would sit on the chair or at the window side of the Jamatkhana while performing *waez.*

He dressed in white throughout his life and led a simple life. He was a brilliant speaker. Those who heard him are aware of the brilliance of his unmatched oratory. He had also good knowledge of Arabic and Persian. His memory being so tenacious and gifted, that he had only to read once in order to learn by heart. Hamir Lakha was gifted with vivid intellect with and literary talent. In the choice of books, sometimes he would exhibit an uncanny aptitude and he would have a small library when he traveled. He would say, **"I shall part with friends, not with my books."**

He became famous with article **Khudai Jalvo** which was published in "**Ismaili Satpanth Prakash**" for six years from 1920 to 1926. Thus, his reputation as a writer was soon established and he was approached by the editors to write for their periodicals.

His other famous write-up in "**Nizari**" entitled,"**Ahwal-i Karbala**" continued to be published for four years from 1926 to 1930. He also possessed the poetic faculty, and composed few poems for the Ismaili periodicals.

It may be noted that when he prepared his first article to be published in the Ismaili journal, he wrote his name ***Hamid Lakha Musannif*** as an author. The word *musannif* means author or writer, but the Gujrati composer, who didn't know Urdu, published his name into Gujrati as ***Hamir Lakha (mu) sinnaf,*** omitting *mu* in the *musinnaf.* In Persian, the term *sinnaf* or *sannaf* means kind, manner, form or sort. He liked it and adopted **Sinnaf** as his pen-name.

He possessed superior abilities and was well informed in literature. In application of writing skills to his services, he attained an almost equal eminence. He compiled several books in Gujrati and Sindhi. The most famous were **"Muraslat Number"** (Part I, 1920), **"Muraslat Number"** (Part II, 1921), **"Shahadat'jo Sacho Matlab"** (1926), **"Ithna Ashari Sadaqat"** (1927), **"Bootparsto-ni Behayai"** (1928), and**"Karim Ghulam Ali'je Kharji Khiyal'ji Tardid"** (1928), **"Mian Karim Ghulam Ali Fadhwani-ji Khul-e Khat-jo Javab"** (1928), etc. In 1951, he also compiled his own biography, entitled**"Halat-i Zindgani Hamir likhi"** which is not accessible.

He also published in Mombasa a Souvenir in English and Gujrati on the auspicious occasion of Diamond Jubilee on August 10, 1946. The Souvenir itself speaks of how much he was popular among the *jamats* in East Africa.

He was regular in his attendance of Jamatkhana both in the morning and evening. He died on March 16, 1963 in Hyderabad, Sind at 4.10 a.m. in the Jamatkhana, at the age of 74 years

It is to be noted that three eminent people passed away in Pakistan within 17 days. All three were connected with the Ismailia Association for Pakistan. The Ismailia Association arranged a grand *majalis* on April 7, 1963 for the departed souls in Garden Jamatkhana, Karachi viz. Missionary Hamir Lakha (d. March 16, 1963), Missionary Jaffer Ali Sufi (d. March 18, 1963) and Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah (d. April 1, 1963). Wazir Ghulam Hyder Bandali (1905-1986), the President sent a humble service to Hazar Imam with a report on April 9, 1963. In his reply, the Imam sent following message on April 20, 1963:

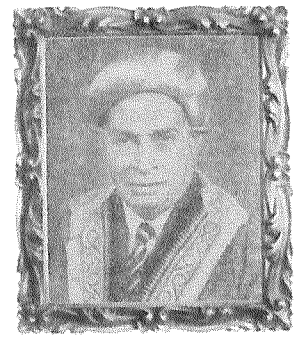
My dear President,

I have received your letter of April 9th.

Kindly convey to the office bearers and members of the Ismailia Association, waezeen and religious teacher my best loving paternal maternal blessings for service, with best blessings for the souls of the late:

Rai Hamir Lakha
Alijah Jafarali Sufi
Vazir A.C. Rahamtoola of Khulna

I pray that their souls may rest in eternal peace. My three spiritual children had rendered truly excellent services to myself and my *jamats.* They lived fine lives of hard work and service and were exemplary spiritual children.



HASHIM JAMAL, COUNT
(1880-1970)

Jamal Pradhan was a famous figure in Kutiana, India. His elder son, Hashim, was born in 1880, who did his early schooling in India and helped his father in his shop in his free time. He studied upto 7th class and joined the school as a teacher. In 1901, he left the school and decided to immigrate to Africa. When he bid farewell to his schoolmates, Maneklal Nanji, the headmaster said, "How much would you give to the school if God may bless you with Rs. 10,000/-". To this, Hashim Jamal said, "I will donate Rs. 500/- to the school." The headmaster also said, "When you try your fortune, you must come back to improve the condition of your old school. Do not forget us." True to his promise, many years later, he donated Rs. 500/- generously to his old school.

Hashim sailed from Bombay and arrived in Zanzibar via Aden. When he came to Mombasa, he came into contact with Varas Alidina Visram (1851-1916), who employed him in his firm. His first task was to establish a business outlet for him in Port Florence (Kisumu). Soon afterwards, he came to Kisumu at the end of 1901 with the completion of Mombasa -Lake Victoria railway line.

Hashim and Varas Alidina Visram together helped new immigrant Ismailis to settle in Kisumu and its vicinity. They established small provision stores, dealing in commodities, such as sesame seeds, beans, peanuts, rice, jaggery, ghee and much later hides and skins. They settled in Homa Bay, Mumias, Sio Port and other small towns.

Hashim was all alone with no family close by and no Jamatkhana to offer prayers. In the meantime, Kisumu began to change around 1905. Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah paid a visit to this Lake town when there were hardly 70 Ismailis. The Imam inaugurated the first Jamatkhana for Kisumu and its district. This magnificent Jamatkhana was built with the generous donations from Varas Alidina Visram, other pioneers and Hashim donated 10,000/- shillings. On the recommendation of Varas Alidina Visram, the Imam appointed Hashim as the first Mukhi and the President of the Provincial Council for Kisumu. He walked to Jamatkhana daily at 4.00 a.m. until the age of 90 years.

Mukhi Hashim started his own business in Kisumu. With the guidance of the Imam, he applied for and obtained 100 acres farm in Muhoroni, about 35 miles from Kisumu. His business prospered and was in a commanding position to call for his family from India to his newly adopted homeland. His brother, Ibrahim Jamal came to Kisumu in 1913 with his parents. He was never miser, he was very generous with his wealth, and donated a handsome amount to Kisumu Girls School in 1921.

Mukhi Hashim served as the first Mukhi (1905-1919) and the President of the Kisumu Provincial Council (1905-1914). He also served as a member of the Council. He again became the President of the Council from 1920 and 1925, and continued to remain its member between 1926 and 1931. He was again appointed the President of the Council in 1932 and served till 1962.

In appreciation of his incredible services, he was bestowed the title of **Alijah** in 1926 and **Varas** in 1937 and **Count** in 1946. His generosity and philanthropic services earned him the name **Bwana Mzuri** (Noble Man) in Kisumu. A road was named after him in recognition of his meritorious services. During the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Ismailia Cooperative Building in Kisumu on November 7, 1957, Hazar Imam called upon Count Hashim Jamal to recite the *ginan.*

The new Jamatkhana was opened at Malkisi on November 8, 1959, which comes within the jurisdiction of Provincial Council for Kisumu. It was built at the cost of 35,000/- shillings and the opening ceremony was performed by R. S. Winser, the District Commissioner of Elgon Nyanza. On that occasion, Count Hashim Jamal had an honour to hoist the Ismaili banner, My-Flag on the new Jamatkhana.

Count Hashim Jamal was also the Vice-Patron of the East African Muslim Welfare Society, and handled the finance of the Society in Kisumu. He rendered unique services to the cause of Islam in Nyanza province. The Mumias Mosque with a school, the Arab School and Muslim Mosque in Kisumu are the results of his foresight and hard work. Count Hashim Jamal died most probably in 1970.

Mention must be made of his brother, Ibrahim who after arriving in Kisumu in 1913, received his early lessons in English from a station master. He attended the Indian Government school until 1915. In 1916, he went to India and on his return, his wife, Sakinabai, accompanied him. During his visit to India in 1923, he learnt from Major A.J. Lakhpati (1884-1947) an idea to set-up the Volunteer Corps. He made a report to the Provincial Council for Kisumu, which subsequently appointed him as a Major, which he served between 1923 and 1945.

Ibrahim served as the first Chairman of the Kisumu Education Board in 1936 and as a member of the Kenya Central Board (1936-1945). The Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd. was set up in 1937; and he became its agent for Nyanzi Province.

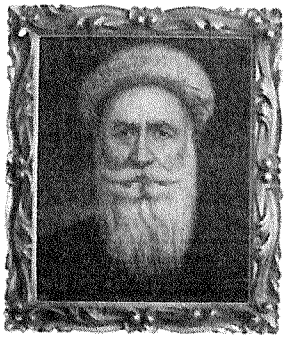
It was during this period that Ibrahim, on several occasions, accompanied Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah and Prince Aly Khan either as a driver or a member of the entourage. His best memories are of a boat trip around the Lake Victoria with the Imam. In 1945, when the Imam visited Kisumu, there were comparatively fewer families. The Imam granted family audience at his residence, and graciously visited the business of Count Hashim and Ibrahim.

Ibrahim was appointed the President of the Kisumu Provincial Council between 1948 and 1954. He also attended the Avian Conference in 1952. Encouraged by the Imam, he rushed back to Kisumu to ensure the early opening of the newly built the H.H. The Aga Khan Primary School and H.H. The Aga Khan Maternity Home & Dispensary by Sir Evelyn

Baring, the governor of Kenya. These two institutions continued to stand out even today as two of the finest in Kenya. In October, 1982, the expansion of this very hospital was one of the major silver jubilee projects. Hazar Imam laid the foundation stone to this extension. In view of his exceptional services, he was granted the title of **Varas**.

Among the children of Count Hashim Jamal, Wazir Ramzan Ali is eminent to serve as the President of Kisumu Provincial Council. His another son, Rai Amir Ali was born on September 29, 1931 and received his early education at Government High School, Kisumu and later at Aga Khan High School, Mombasa. He was an Honorary Secretary of Aga Khan Provincial Education Board in 1950 and became its Vice-Chairman in 1954. He was the member of Aga Khan Kisumu Council (1954-1962). He was awarded the title of **Huzur Mukhi** in 1954 and **Rai** in 1956. He also rendered valuable services as a member and Chairman of the Advisory Board of Government Asia Primary School, Kisumu and also Government Asian Hospital, Kisumu. He also served as the President of Nynza Muslim League, Nynza Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Kisumu and the member of Kenya Legislative Assembly. He was also an official nominee of Kenya Africa National Union.

Keep the tradition (of service) alive and remember that this work makes the Imam specially happy, specially happy and it is leadership, although there are no titles given or very rarely, this is leadership. This is leadership in service and I think that this is truly exceptional, it is fundamental pillar in our *jamat*. Keep it strong and develop it in the years ahead. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Vancouver, April 22, 1983)



HASHU THARUANI
(1820-1915)

The critical examination of the extant sources shows that the Ismailis resided in large number in the villages inside Iranian Baluchistan. It is related that a group of nomad Ismailis entered into the Indian Baluchistan and settled in the southern coast of Lasbela when Jam Ali Khan (d. 1766), one of the chief of the Aliani family of the Jamot tribe of Arab, established his power in Lasbela in 1742. He was succeeded by his eldest son Jam Ghulam Shah (d. 1776) and his younger brother, Jam Mir Khan I (d. 1818) became the third ruler. He was followed by Jam Ali Khan (d. 1830) and his son Jam Mir Khan II (d. 1888), the fifth ruler of Lasbela.

When Imam Hasan Ali Shah resolved to bid farewell to his native abode in 1841, the persecution of his followers thickened in Iran. The Ismailis who inhabited Iranian Baluchistan also migrated to some other safe place to ward off the hovering distress. Some of them are reported to have harboured in the Indian Baluchistan and settled in Lasbela. In those days, the Ismaili merchants of Bhuj, Kutchh had extended their mercantile activities as far as Sonmiani, the seaport of Lasbela, where they gradually spread in the interior regions and lived with the Iranian Ismailis.

The Iranian Ismailis in Lasbela however maintained their own Iranian cultural traditions and customs. With the passage of time, they absorbed the local traditions, which richly sounded in their names, such as **Nim, Foto, Laung, Aachar, Jaffer, Karami, Ibn, Ibu, Hashu, Shalu**, etc. When the Ismaili merchants of Kutchh came into their contact in Lasbela, they however retained their own cultural tendency, which sounded in their names, such as **Angaro, Sumar, Araba, Jumo, Khamiso, Chhanchhar,** etc. The most prominent family among them was Aloo or Alwani family. Later on, the original Iranian Ismailis in Lasbela immersed in Indian culture through the learning of the religious education from the Ismailis of Kutchh.

The Ismailis, who later on migrated to Karachi and flourished the Lassi *jamat*, mastered the study of the *ginans*. How did they know the *ginans* when they were originally Iranians and had nothing to do with the tradition of *ginans?* In fact, they learnt the *ginans* from the Ismailis of Kutchh. The Ismailis in Lasbela thus emerged as a new generation of the mixed blood of Iran and India, who began to assume the names henceforward as **Bhalu** (Baledina), **Jafu** (Jaffer), **Gulu** (Ghulam Hussain), **Mamu** (Muhammad), etc.

The province of Las or Lasbela in Baluchistan is about 100 miles long and 80 miles wide. It is bounded to the south by the sea, to the north by the Jahlawan Hills, and to the east and west by ranges of high mountains, which descend from the great mass occupying

Baluchistan, and separate it from Sind and Makran. Lasbela was divided into seven towns (*niabats*): Welpat, Shehr Lyari, Miani, Hab, Kanrach, Ormada and Uthal.

The Ismailis in Lasbela prospered and spread in different villages. In 1796, a terrible famine in Lasbela forced the local people including few Ismaili families to move towards Karachi, but their informations are inaccessible. They however said to have built few cottages, and raised a Jamatkhana on the site, presently known as Inayat Ali Mohammad Bachlani Building. Later on, a caravan from Uthal is reported to have proceeded towards Sonmiani, and then to Karachi in 1843. Varas Khatau hailed originally from Kutchh and was a rich merchant in Sonmiani, exporting wool, ghee, gum and oil of different kinds. Imam Hasan Ali Shah left Afghanistan and reached Quetta on October 5, 1842 and then went to stay for a month with Shahnawaz Khan, the Khan of Kalat. He then proceeded to Sonmiani after crossing the hilly tracks of Baluchistan, and stayed at the residence of Varas Khatau, the son of Aloo, whose family became known as Alwani. The Imam graciously vested him the title of **Varas**, and he became the first to be titled on Indian soil. In Sonmiani, the Imam launched several hunting expeditions with Varas Khatau. Soon after the Imam's departure, Varas Khatau arranged to send the Ismaili caravan in Karachi, which landed at the bank of Lyari River, where they formed a small *jamat* at Mir Mohammad Baluch Road in Lyari quarter. This location was famous for having two wells of drinking water, known as Mithawada, and then became known as the Lea Market, which was built in 1930. They raised the existing small Jamatkhana made of mud and chopped grass. Their first Mukhi was Sukhio Thavarani (1843-1853).

In 1852, Jam Mir Khan II (1830-1888), the ruler of Lasbela persecuted the local Ismailis and held them in great abhorrence. When the resentment turned violent, some Ismailis are reported to have lost their lives. In search of a peaceful land when a severe famine broke out in Uthal, few Ismailis families resolved to seek harbour in Karachi. In the form of a caravan of camels, they trekked down to tedious passages of 116 miles in the mountains and reached Karachi after three days. They alighted at the bank of Lyari River. The most prominent among them were the families of Hashu and Shalu. These wretchedly poor Ismailis built some cottages of mud and straw. They had also brought some cattle with them from their native land and entered into the business of hides and skins on small scale. Some also professed in matting, goat-hairs, etc. They made rapid progress and formed the Lassi *jamat* in Karachi. Most of the Ismailis in Karachi called it as Miran Pir *jamat*, but the Imam pointed out in 1920 that,**"It is not the *jamat* of Miran or other Pirs, but it is my own *jamat*, therefore, it must be identified as the *jamat* of Lassi."**

Among the predecessors of Mukhi Hashu Tharuani, a certain Kanju deserves special attention. He came from a Persian stock, originally settled in Makran and Persian Baluchistan to the south of Kirman. He had two sons, Khaku and Ghulam Mohammad or Gulu. Beju (or Bijjar) was the only son of Gulu, who left behind three sons, viz. Amir Baksh, Khuda Baksh and Ali Baksh. The son of Ali Baksh was Khamiso, who, owing to draught and scarcity of food grains and fodder, is said to have wandered throughout the Persian Baluchistan in search of bread and butter, and finally settled down in Uthal, which is situated on the Karachi-Bela highway, about 74 miles from Karachi and 38 miles from Bela. It was originally a small quarter, but then became the district quarter.

Khamiso is said to have worked with a Hindu gold merchant to weigh the gold in Lasbela. He had been also in Ormada and Gwadar for several times. He had two sons, Tar Muhammad and Jan Muhammad, who were the local peasants.

Hashim or Hashu, the most prominent figure among the Lassi *jamat* was the son of Tar Muhammad, who used to recite the *ginans* in the prayer-hall. The name Tar Muhammad gradually began to be pronounced as Taru, Tharu or Tharuani. The name of his son, Hashim changed also in the same usage as Hashu or Hashuani. Presently, the name **"Hashu"** is also spelt as **"Hashoo"** and **"Hashuani"** as **"Hashwani"** in the descendants of Mukhi Hashu.

Hashim the son of Tar Muhammad, became known as Hashu the son of Tharu. Hashu was born most probably in 1820 in the village of Shaikh Raj, between Uthal and Bela in Lasbela. The local people generally called the Ismailis as the Shaikhs, who lived thickly in a village between Uthal and Bela, which also became known as the Shaikh Raj (abode of the Shaikhs or Ismailis). Nothing is known about his formal education. It however infers from old records that he was not absolutely unlettered. It is said that he worked as a peasant with his father in Uthal, and his grandfather took him several times in the villages of Lasbela.

Hashu arrived in Karachi at the age of 33 years in 1852. According to the census report of 1852-3, the Karachi town contained 13,769 inhabitants, and the suburbs 8.459, making a total of 22,227. It was the period of Sir H. Bartle E. Frere, who was the Commissioner of Sind between 1851 and 1857. Mukhi Hashu had no grain left for camels and little or no forage for them. Nothing left but a few bags of rice and three or four of flour. This was the only reported capital of Mukhi Hashu in Karachi. He worked for few months in a shop near Nigar Cinema, and then started his own petty business of hides and skins. He would purchase and sell to the retailers. In the first week of April, 1878, the heavy fluctuations in the leather market cost him a substantial loss, resulting his business bankrupt. It depleted him day after day till his economical condition absolutely deteriorated. His wife comforted him to repose his trust in the Imam. A sad, shrunken figure, nearly overwhelmed with the calamity, but cool and courageous still.

If ever a man was master of his destiny, it was Mukhi Hashu. On October 20, 1878, the wheel of fortune turned to his favour. On that day, he was sitting outside his shop, waiting for the customers. He suddenly saw one European approaching him and asked, "Who is Mr. Hasoo. I am looking for Mr. Hasoo." The stranger was an agent of M/S Ralli Bros. Ltd., a leading British firm based at 25, Finsbury Circus, London, E.C.2., who heard many feats of his honesty. He needed an honest broker for the business of hides and bones and offered him its agency unconditionally. Hashu discussed with him through an interpreter and accepted the deal. Henceforward, he entered into a new business field, where he worked hard. Later on, he also got the agency of cotton and grains. He spent his years ahead working as hard as ever, despite a constant decline in health. His efforts brought him slowly and slowly to the summit of fame till 1882, when his business flourished to a steady progress, and became an eminent and affluent merchant in Karachi. It is said that he was also offered by other commercial firms, such as David Sasson, Mackinon Mackenzie, Forbes Campbell, etc., but he continued his association with the Ralli Bros. Ltd.

His thought now turned to wider spheres of human interest. His contact with people during the course of his business was not confined to business alone. He built many water tanks and installed several taps in the poorer quarter of Lyari, Karachi for the poor residents. Many stipends to widows flowed from his generous and capacious pocket. His personality was genial, optimistic, helpful, simple and noble that is truly philanthropic. He would loosened his purse strings to almost all appeals for funds needed by the destitute.

In 1873, Imam Aga Ali Shah, when officiating as a Pir, visited Karachi and appointed him the Mukhi of the Lassi Jamatkhana with Talib Haji as the Kamadia, and granted him a traditional *shawl*. He was the third Mukhi of Lassi Jamatkhana (1873-1912). The first Mukhi was Sukhio Thavarani (1843-1853) and the second Mukhi was Alarakhia Talib (1853-1873).

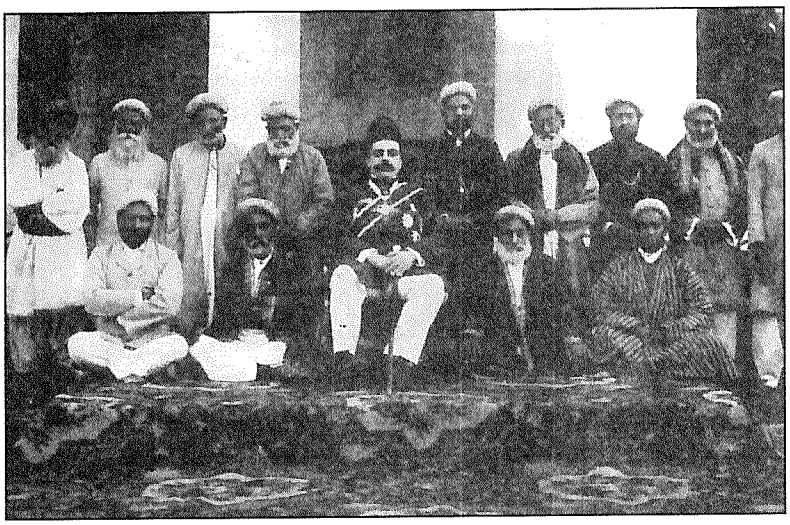
In 1894, the Imam visited Gwadar for seven days. Varas Basaria, Mukhi Alarakhia and Mukhi Hashu with few other Ismailis also visited Gwadar. They were lodged in a separate tent near the tent of the Imam on sea-side. They presented a humble request to the Imam for the *didar* programme in Karachi. The Imam graciously accepted and returned to Bombay, and then he sailed for Karachi and stayed for 25 days.

He loved having people over for meals. What distinguished him was his attitude of brotherhood towards everyone, was the respect for elders, affection for kith and kin, and consideration for the neighbours. He fed the hungry, clothed the needy, housed the destitute and helped the ailing persons regardless of cast and creed. His generosity surpassed all charity. In 1902, the torrential rains raged Karachi, followed by a fierce flood. All over, there were deluge and inundation, and the Lyari quarter was submerged in water. The pitiable plight moved his heart. He hurled himself in the field as a warrior for a week and rescued over a hundred fishermen, and provided them shelter and foods. The people had by now became accustomed to look upon him as one who could always be trusted in the hour of emergency.

His speech clearly sounded the Indo-Persic stock. He had full black expressive Persian eyes, the regular sharp-cut Iranian features and the long, thick and flowing beard. He had a natural talent in solving the disputes of the community members. They had such abiding trust on him that they would rather approach him for adjudication than resort to the Council. He took in hand no work without reconciling the issue.

In 1902, Mukhi Hashu invited the Imam at his residence to attend his humble *mehmani*. The Imam did not attend, saying, "I will not come to your house, because there is your one virgin daughter." It was his daughter, called Sharafi (or Ashrafi, Ashraf), who was not yet married. Mukhi Hashu took its serious notice and stood in the Jamatkhana and offered for a spouse of his daughter. Khalfan, the servant of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana sent a proposal for his son, Allana, who was already a twice-married person. Mukhi Hashu accepted it and the marriage of Sharafi solemnized with Allana. The Imam was pleased with the wedlock and visited his house and graced him best blessings. The Imam also said to Sharafi, **"Your children will be fragrant like roses and will glorify their names in the world."**

In 1902, the Imam had a photograph with 13 devout followers at the premises of Wadi in Garden, Karachi. These fortunate persons were Mukhi Hashu Tharuani, Varas Ibrahim Varas Vali (d. 1924), Varas Basaria Fadhu (d. 1918), Mukhi Muhammad Ali Ghulamani, Kamadia Rehmatullah Lutf Ali, Kamadia Talib Haji, Kamadia Hashim Fadhu, Mukhi Ramzan Ismail (d. 1910), Alijah Ali Muhammad Mukhi Alidina (d. 1910), Bana Nanji, Fakir Muhammad Vali Muhammad, Mukhi Muhammad Ladha and Kamadia Jaffer Notta.



After doing the photo-shoot with the leaders, the Imam made them stayed inside and told the *jamat* outside that, **"If you want to behold the dwellers of paradise on earth, you go inside and see the thirteen persons."** The *jamat* slowly walked inside and bewildered beyond measure to see these thirteen enlightened persons. Since then, the Ismaili families in Karachi kept the above group photo in their homes.

In 1907, Mukhi Hashu Tharuani made a humble submission to the Imam for his retirement at the age of 87 years, owing to rheumatic affliction of the joint. The Imam blessed him and said, **"You make a stair between the Jamatkhana and your house, but do not abandon my services, because I still have to take services from your blood and bones."** His building adjoined the premises of the Jamatkhana and was a little higher. He prepared a wooden ladder of three to five steps at the joining point and entered the Jamatkhana from his house. He continued his service under this facility for further 5 years as a Mukhi.

In those days when the Council did not exist in the community, the five elder persons under the Mukhi formed a traditional committee, known as the *justi*. Mukhi Hashu efficiently dealt the working of the *justi* in Lassi, and the Imam desired that his impartial tendency of giving verdict should be benefited. The Imam sent a telegraphic message from Europe and appointed him the first President of the newly formed Ismailia Supreme Council for Karachi on June 1, 1910. Henceforth, he executed two high offices in the community. His impartiality coupled with his coolness of mind and natural desire to do well made him an asset to the newly formed Council. Never would he flinch from speaking the truth or siding with the weak nor would he create unnecessary hitches in the Council,

nor would he abstain from denouncing that which may breed trouble, nor lose temper and heap insults on his opponent or make, so to speak, the worst of a good job.

Mukhi Hashu led a saintly life and never ran after wealth. Rather, the wealth ran after him. He was of a compromising nature and would say, **"It is better to be a part of solution rather than the cause of dispute."** He always spoke softly, was never short of temper. If ever he felt annoyed, which was seldom, he would sit down and sort it out. Sometimes he would punish his inner self and take a coin from his pocket as a penalty and deposit in the Jamatkhana. None found him to lose temper even in the most provocative situation. Once a son of Shalu family threw dirt on Mukhi Hashu during the thick of a dispute. He did not mind it and went to his house. He warned his sons not to take its revenge. On that evening, Mukhi Hashu came to the house of Shalu to attend the engagement ceremony of his son. This is a best example of his sincerity. In 1902, Vali Shalu lodged complaint against Mukhi Hashu before the Imam. The Imam looked at Mukhi Hashu and asked, "What Vali Shalu is speaking for you?" Mukhi Hashu with folding hands said nothing except that, "This servant (*bando*) is a sinful." Vali Shalu once again complained and when he repeated it thrice, the Imam said, **"Why do you dispute like beasts? Look at Mukhi Hashu. His silence is a sign of a true believer."**

To go to him in a depressed state of mind was to return cheerful and full of hope. Indeed, he was a source of joy. If he turned in conversation towards a friend, he turned not partially, but with his full face and his whole body. In shaking hand he was not the first to withdraw his own; nor was he the first to break off in converse with a stranger, nor to turn away his ear. He treated friends and strangers; the rich and poor with equity, and was loved by the common people for the affability with which he received them, and listened to their complaints.

He could not prolong his services in the Supreme Council for Karachi by virtue of his weakness, and tendered his retirement on November 30, 1910. He also retired from the post of the Mukhi in 1912. During his visit to Lassi Jamatkhana, the Imam presented him a *shawl* on January 16, 1912 and said, **"Well, you have given an application for retirement due to an old age. I appoint Kamadia Hussaini in your place and appoint Hood Shaluani as a Kamadia."** The Imam had a group photograph with the new and old members of the Council on January 16, 1912.

Mukhi Hashu rendered his services as a Mukhi (1873-1912) for 39 years, which is the longest period among the Mukhis of the Lassi *jamat*, and also for six months as the founder President of the Supreme Council for Karachi. Wedded to his invaluable services and the weal of the *jamat*, he worked incessantly until he had literally grown grey in it.

It must be known that there was a house of Mukhi Hashu in Uthal, Lasbela. Chief Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad (1878-1951) seems to have visited Baluchistan for the first time. He left Karachi for Sonmiani on August 23, 1912 and proceeded towards Uthal and stayed in the house of Mukhi Hashu. He returned to Karachi via Sonmiani on October 7, 1912.

The last few years of his life was marred by illness and physical affliction, which he bore with tranquility and peace of mind. It was about 7.45 a.m. of December 21, 1915 when

a Hindu Dr. Pritamdas examined him at his residence and said that he was quite well. No soon did the doctor leave the residence than Mukhi Hashu came down, saying, "I feel little pain." He lowered down himself on the wooden cot, asking his daughter, "Give me a wrapper (*chadar*)." He covered his face down to his feet and uttered his last word,**"My time to depart from this mundane world has come"** and expired in this state at 8.30 a.m. after a long span of 95 years.

Mukhi Hashu married twice and had four sons, viz. Baledina, Jaffer, Ghulam Hussain, Muhammad and two daughters, Hira and Bhanari from his first wife, called Ha'ansi. His other children from his second wife, called Thari were Abdullah, Kassim, Bana, Hussain, Nazar Ali, Ali Muhammad and Ismail; and four daughters, viz. Sharafi, Jena, Chhati and Mariam.

On January 27, 1938, Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah visited the newly built bungalow of Mukhi Varas Hussain, the grandson of Mukhi Hashu, who reverently welcomed the Imam as saying that it was his bungalow. The Imam entered with the support of a stick and looked all around and spoke thrice,**"Mukhi Hashu's bungalow is very nice."** The front wall of the bungalow was well decorated with the photos of the Imam, Mukhi Hashu and Kamadia Abdullah. The Imam came near the photo of Mukhi Hashu and pointed with two fingers as saying, **"His image is in my eyes. He is visible here in my sight."**

In 1952, when Rai Suleman Hoodbhoy, the Chief Honorary Secretary of the Supreme Council for Pakistan, had an audience with Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in London, the Imam asked him whether the *jamat* of Lassi remembered late Mukhi Hashu. To this, he replied affirmatively. The Imam said, **"Be it known that he was a Mukhi in this world and the world hereafter."**

It appears from the accessible records that the Imam have sent his most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for services presented by the Hashwani family for the soul of Mukhi Hashu Tharuani on May 17, 1985, July 8, 1987, February 5, 1988, February 12, 1990, etc.



HASSAN KASSIM LAKHA, COUNT
(1892-1982)

The renowned Lakha family traces their descent back to their forebear, named Surji. His son was Jairaj, and whose son was Manji. The son of Manji was Lalji, who had four sons, Punja, Virji, Lakha and Kalyan. They dwelt in the village, called Berberaja, about 12 miles from Jamnagar, Kutchh.

Lakho, or better known as Lakha was an origin of Jamnagar, Kutchh. He was an ordinary businessman. He unfortunately lost his house during the famine in Kutchh. Reduced to extreme poverty, he wandered from village to village in search of means of subsistence. His son Kassim, who was born in 1854, also passed a destitute life. Nothing is known of his early life except that he worked in a grocery shop on daily wages. The constant famines in Kutchh had almost swept away the economical resources of the people, who began to move elsewhere to sustain their lives. Kassim, the son of Lakha migrated with few Ismailis towards East Africa. Dressed in rags, he landed in Zanzibar in 1871. He called his mother and wife, Ratan Pradhan whom he had married in 1870, just before he left India. Kursha was their first child and she was born in 1880. The family grew with the birth of Fatima, Alibhai, Hassan, Sikina, Rehmatullah and Jena. Later on, he came in Lamu in 1877 to try his fortune. He was the first among his family members to venture into the business field. Kassim Lakha was also a devoted social worker and helped the Ismailis who came from India. He died in 1926 at Kampala, Uganda. He left behind four sons, Rehmatullah, Hassan, Mohammad and Alibhai.

Hassan, known as Hassan Kassim Lakha was born in Lamu in 1892. His father employed a Hindu teacher, called Raval, a Brahmin from Zanzibar, and brought him to Lamu to teach reading and writing to the children. The secular education did not go beyond 3rd or 4th Standard. They also attended the local *madressa* to learn Holy Koran, and the Ismaili Religious School, where they learned the *ginans*. In 1898, his father moved from Lamu to Mombasa. But it was only for a few years, for in 1903, soon after the railway line reached Kisumu, Hassan Kassim Lakha moved to Kisumu with his family. His sons joined the firm of Varas Alidina Visram. In 1907, Hassan, although he was only 15 years old, was recruited by an English firm, called Bousted & Clark Ltd., and taken to Jinja.

Hassan left Bousted & Clark Ltd. in 1915 and expanded the family business by going in cotton business. In 1918, his family had ginneries at Mbale, Kwapa and Butiru.

In 1933, Hassan contracted blackwater in Kampala. His brother Mohammad and Rehmatullah reached there. The critical moment came, and all hope was lost. But the gift of life was given at the last instant and Hassan survived.

As a businessman, he was engaged in multifarious activities. Together with his brothers, he founded extensive business and industrial interests in projects, such as a hotel chain in Uganda, coffee curing works, coffee plantations, hides and skins and sisal. In Kenya, he was one of the early pioneers in cotton ginning and was the founding Chairman of the Oceanic Hotel Group of Companies in Mombasa. With Count Abdullah Hashim Gangji, he pioneered the jute interest of the community in Bangladesh.

In 1926, Hassan Kassim Lakha was appointed an Hon. Secretary of the Ismailia Council in Uganda with Valibhai Jamal as its President. On April 30, 1933, the Ismailia Council for Kampala visited Bukoba, where they found the worst condition of the Jamatkhana premises. Merali Jiva, the President created a donation with his Hon. Secretary, Count Hassan Kassim Lakha. Mukhi Hashim Rajab Ali and Hirji Sharif also shared in it. Count Hassan K. Lakha played key role in the construction of the new Jamatkhana, whose foundation stone was laid by H.H. Alshop, the District Officer on December 22, 1933 in presence of 500 guests.

On June 16, 1937, Mr. Fraser, the President of the Chamber of Commerce for Uganda performed an opening ceremony of the new building of the Merchant Bank of Uganda Ltd. with Count Hassan Kassim Lakha in Kampala.

Hassan Kassim Lakha had a most colorful life. His community services were diverse and distinguished. His services during the Golden Jubilee were manifold. He had an honour to host the Imam and Mata Salamat with distinguished leaders in Kampala on March 15, 1937 in the Imperial Hotel. The dignitaries also attended it, notably the governor of Uganda. He made a welcome address and said, "It is not necessary to introduce an international personality of the Aga Khan as he is direct descendant of Holy Prophet and Hazrat Ali. His words are considered as rules by million of Muslims in Africa and Asia. He holds an important office and authority of a religious leader that none equals him in the world. He is famous for his close alliance and loyalty with the British empire. He has warded off many complicated issues by his brilliant calibre and diplomacy. His services are spread in the spheres of religion, politics, social and humanity. He is eminent saviour to rescue the world in many terrible calamities soon after the first world war. He is noted for a patron of sports and learning. He has attracted the Indian communities in Africa for his outstanding services regardless of cast and creed."

On the following day, i.e. March 16, 1937, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah presented him a diamond pin in the Jamatkhana in appreciation of his valuable services.

Hassan Kassim Lakha served as a Hon. Secretary in the Council for 14 years (1926-1940). In 1940, he was appointed its President. He also served as the member of the Federal and Supreme Councils for Africa. He was also a Director of the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust Ltd., and Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd.

Hassan Kassim Lakha was one of the trustees of the East African Muslim Welfare Society since 1945. His material and financial cooperation to the cause of Islam were inestimable. He went to West Africa in the Society's goodwill mission in 1954 at his own expenses. He also initiated several welfare projects for the Muslims in East Africa.

He also toured with Prince Aly Khan with other Kenya leaders from Nairobi to Cairo, Alexandria, Syria, Palestine, etc. in 1944

Hassan Kassim Lakha's family was endowed with great riches of heart, and stood second highest donor to weigh Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah against diamonds in 1946. Innumerable schools, social halls, community institutions and clock towers bear testimony of his generosity.

The Imam is reported to have once asked him,**"What have you done for me so far?"** He was surprised and summed up what he had done. The Imam said, **"These can be done easily by an old lady. I am asking what you have done for me?"** He remained silent for a moment. The Imam said,**"You must do the foundling home, which is the work for me."** He started the movement of adoption of the orphan and destitute children in Africa and gave them education.

Hassan Kassim Lakha was invested the title of **Wazir** in 1937 and **Count** in 1954 in appreciation of his valuable services.

The Imam summoned a conference of the Ismaili delegates in Cairo to review the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee upon the completion of 70 years of his Imamate. Count Hassan Kassim Lakha represented the *jamats* of Uganda. The delegates discussed mutually in the morning and met the Imam at evening on March 15, 1951 in Hotel Semiramese. The Imam emphasized that the programme should be worked out on the pattern of Golden and Diamond Jubilees to improve the social and economical conditions of the Ismailis. The Imam, Mata Salamat and Prince Aly Khan invited them on next day for a lunch at Mohamedali Club and graced them with a photograph. The Imam left Cairo for France with Mata Salamat on March 17, 1951. Prince Aly Khan offered the delegates to join him on his visit to Syria on March 18, 1951. Count Hassan Kassim Lakha accepted with other 11 leaders and made a flying visit of Salamia.

Prince Aly Khan performed an opening ceremony of the Kibuli Mosque in Kampala in March, 1951, whose foundation stone he had in 1941. Count Hassan Kassim, the President of the Provincial Council of the East African Muslim Welfare Society presented a welcome address in presence of 2000 guests. He said, "We have collected donation of 35,00,000/- shillings, in which the Imam shared for 16,72000/- shillings. The funds of the Society are utilized for new schools, mosques, dispensaries, etc. for the welfare of the Muslims of Africa." The Kibuli Mosque covered an area of 82 acres, consisted of primary and secondary schools. Prince Badru donated it in loving memory of his father, Sultan Mulu Mbogo. It cost 400,000/- shillings, and half of it was donated by the Imam.

In 1953, Hassan Kassim Lakha visited Salamia, Syria with Varas Chhotubhai (1904-1978). The Jews purchased raw cotton around Salamia from the Ismaili farmers at a lower price. Count Hassan Kassim Lakha and Varas Chhotubhai raised a cotton ginnery for them according to the guidance of the Imam, which still exists in Salamia.

Hassan Kassim Lakha had an honour to perform an opening ceremony of the new Jamatkhana in Fortportal, Uganda on December 27, 1960.

He spent almost 20 years of his eventful life in Mombasa, where he died in 1982 at the age of 90 years and left behind his widow and ten daughters.



In his message of condolence, the Imam acknowledged his services and paid a glowing tribute that, **"It is a singular honour for any family to have had amongst it such a remarkable spiritual child as my late Count."**

Nizar Ali Jeraj Pirbhai was born on June 15, 1941 in Dar-es-Salaam. He was a religious person since childhood and was regular in Jamatkhana. He recited *Dua* at a very young age of 5 years, which he learnt from his parents at home. He began to recite *Dua* of *Gatpat* at the age of 9 years, and also sang the *ginans*.

He was an only son of his parents. He never told a lie or uttered a single abusive word. He was a brilliant and well-disciplined student in school. The headmaster quoted excellent example of his conduct and progress. He was a very quiet, respectful and obedient. He never annoyed his teachers and so he was admired and loved by all the teachers.

Unfortunately, he expired on October 31, 1954 after being ill for four days at the age of 14 years. It is significant to note that his birth and death took place in the same room of the same hospital.

The Imam sent following message upon his untimely death:-

December 2, 1954

The President,
Ismailia Association for Dar-es-Salaam,
Dar-es-Salaam.

My dear President,

I give my best paternal maternal blessings to late Nizarali Huzur Mukhi Jeraj Pirbhai and pray for the rest of his soul.

He is an angel in heaven and all my beloved school children should follow his example and perform religious ceremonies with the same faith and zeal he always showed in his lifetime.



HOODA, VALI MOHAMMED NANJI
(1889- 1959)

Hooda Vali Mohammed Nanji was the son of Nanji Amarsi, a well-known religious man. Nanji Amarsi passed most of his lifetime in Limadi and also went to live in Pretoria. He had taken due care of the religious and secular education of his son, Vali Mohammed. He died at the age of 73 years on August 28, 1933. His son, Vali Mohammad Nanji Hooda, known as V.N. Hooda was born in Bombay in 1889. Nothing is known of his early life. He was however a well-educated and a learned scholar, teacher and editor.

V.N. Hooda's appearance in the arena of the community service began in 1915, when he joined the religious night school as a teacher in Kandi Mola, Bombay, which was established in 1910 with Master Kanji Mitha Jivan as an honorary teacher. He observed that the students wasted their time after leaving the school in the evening, and that they should continue the religious activities. He emphasized upon the need of a library to the students of higher classes. Hussain Mukhi Poonja Jasraj and Ghulam Hussain Sidu, two young students, who were ardent juveniles in their teens, started a small library with 20 books at their home and enrolled the membership of the students who left the school after completing the course. V.N. Hooda encouraged them and found what he actually expected from the outgoing students. When the members increased with the collection of books, these two students who managed the affairs, needed a cupboard to be kept in the hall of the school, which he arranged for them.

Meanwhile, Mawji Nur Mohammed Kabani came from Rangoon and joined them. Later on, Jaffer Ali Alibhai Parshotam also joined its managing committee. This library emerged as the Kandi Mola Ismailia Students Library on May 10, 1918 with the President Murad Ali Ghulam Hussain Naginwala. V.N. Hooda continued to serve it till he became its Supervisor on June 17, 1928.

In its annual function organized by Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj (1842-1930) and presided by Mukhi Megji Mulji (1861-1932) on April 28, 1918, the Religious School for Kandi Mola glorified the valuable services of V.N. Hooda and awarded him a gold moon.

He was a journalist and a writer. He worked in the **"Ismaili Aftab," "Ismaili", "Ismaili Satpanth Prakash"** and **"Aina"** as an editor.

V.N. Hooda also served the Fidai Academy and Orphanage since its inception on December 13, 1928 as an Honorary Supervisor.

It will be worthwhile to mention that V.N. Hooda was the first to translate few *ginans* into English for the research works of Prof. W. Ivanow (1886-1970), who reproduced them in his book, "**Collectanea**" (Holland, 1948). W. Ivanow writes in his preface that, "With regard to the present volume in particular, its nucleus is formed by translation of a representative collection of specimens of the so far almost completely unknown literature of Satpanth, or Indian Ismailism. For many years I tried to induce my Ismaili friends to do something on such lines, but various attempts usually were abandoned very soon, never attempting fruition, until the task was undertaken by Mr. V.N. Hooda." W. Ivanow (pp. 2-3) also remarks, "A representative selection of either whole works or extracts has been translated into English by a Khoja specialist, Mr. V.N. Hooda, as published further here. This, through forming only a small portion of the whole Satpanth literature, nevertheless, supplies sufficient materials to permit us to assess its general outlines, and arrive at some conclusions. As far as I know, this is the first occasion on which translations from the original *ginan* literatures have been published."

V.N. Hooda also served in the Supreme Council for Kathiawar, Kathiawar Educational Central Board, H.H. The Aga Khan Volunteer Corps, Ismaili Central Board of Education, Ismailia Scholarship Committee, etc. He was the founder of the Kandi Mola Boys Scouts Group, and was the first person to have introduced the scouting activities in the Indian Ismaili community. He was also an Ex-Lt. of the Volunteer Corps, the Manager of the Khoja Sindhi Press, an Honorary Head Master of Kandi Mola Religious Night School, the founder of the Kandi Mola Pani Company, Honorary Supervisor of The Kandi Mola Ismaili Students Library, the member of the Managing Committee of Fidai Academy and Fidai Girls Education Institute, the Manager and the Supervisor of the H.H. The Aga Khan's Central Education Board's Scholarship Committee, Honorary Secretary of the Press and Publicity Department of the Ismailia Association for India (1944-1949), etc.

On November, 1954, a Conference of the scholars of all religions held at Sunrabai Hall, Bombay, presided by Pandit Ratan Muni Sushil Kumar. The scholars of Islamic sects, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Jainism, Buddhism, Shikhism, Arya Samaj, etc. were invited to deliver lectures. Wazir Muhammad Ali G. Fazalbhoy (1916-1981), the President of the Ismailia Association for India was occupied in the community works, therefore, V.N. Hooda and B.G. Sharif represented the Ismaili community. Morarji Desai, the Chief Minister of Bombay, opened the Conference. Both representatives introduced Ismailism and Islam in their speeches.

He was invested the title of **Huzur Mukhi** in 1950 and **Alijah** in 1956.

He died on Wednesday, November 18, 1959 at the age of 70 years and left behind two sons. His principal works are: -**"Imam Mawjood"** (Part I & II),**"Ghulshan-i Ilm"** (1917), **"Bal Bodhmala", "Hoodakruti Sangra", "Khoja Gnanti'nu Gorav"** (Dhoraji, 1927), etc.

IBRAHIM SULEMAN, HAJI, WAZIR
(1889-1966)



Ibrahim Suleman's ancestors came from Kutchh, and a certain Rahim among his forefathers took his abode in Jerruk, Sind. Rahim had two sons, Haji and Merali. The son of the latter was Alidino, known as Aloo, who was present during the ascension ceremony of Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah at Bombay in 1885. The former Haji had a son, called Ghulam Hussain, also known as Ghulu or Wazir Ghulu. Since he was the breeder of the hawks, the people also called him Ghulu Ba'azwala in Jerruk. He was well-versed in Persian, therefore, Imam Hasan Ali Shah took him to Bombay in 1844 as an interpreter. He also used to translate the Persian *farmans* of the Imams in Indian languages. He served three Imams in India, and notably as a religious tutor of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah. Imam Hasan Ali Shah also vested him the title of **Wazir**. He also attended the ascension ceremony of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in 1885, and died in 1895 at Bombay. In his letter dated 23rd May, 1953 addressed to Wazir Dr. I.S. Haji, the grandson of Wazir Ghulam Hussain Haji, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah said, **"Your grand-father was one of our greatest servants and he played a great part in the early years of my Imamate. It can also be said of your father that he was a great and most devoted servant."**

It will be interesting to learn that Wazir Ibrahim Suleman Haji presented the following historical photograph before Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in 1954 at Karachi, and humbly asked to recognize his forefathers from it:-



The Imam took the pen at once, marked and wrote the names of Aloo and Goloo (Ghulu) on the photograph with his own handwriting.

Wazir Ghulam Hussain Haji was married twice. He had two sons from his first wife, i.e., Dawood and Suleman; and one son and three daughters from his second wife, i.e., Ashiq Ali, Dariakuli, Fiji and Shireen.



The most prominent among them was Suleman, known as Dr. S.G. Haji (d. 1924). He had four sons from his first wife, - Col. H.S. Haji, Dr. C.S. Haji, Wazir I.S. Haji and Dawood. The second wife of Dr. S.G. Haji was Shireen, the daughter of Walji Punja and the cousin of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and she was the mother of Akbar, Asghar, Saleem, Khatija, Zainab, Fatima, Sher Banu, Dawlat and Mariam.

Wazir I.S. Haji or Ibrahim Suleman Haji was a well-known figure among the Ismailis of Pakistan, India, Africa and Burma as the Honorary Private Secretary of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah. He was born in Karachi in 1889 and was educated in Sind Madressah-tul-Islam. He organized the Muslim students of different Indian colleges as a kind of association when they presented an address in a silver casket to Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah in Bombay as their humble token of appreciation of the most indefatigable services in the cause of Muslim University at Aligarh.

Soon after graduation, Wazir I.S. Haji went to England in 1914 for higher studies as a special student of the Imam. He was called to the Bar (Grays Inn) in 1917. He passed B.Sc. (Economics) in 1918 from the London University, and was the first Muslim to achieve this distinguished academic degree. He arrived in Karachi, where the Panjibhai Club accorded him a warm reception on May 3, 1919. On his return to Bombay, he started his practice as a Barrister. He was also elected as a member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

Before his appointment as a Presidency Magistrate in 1934, he was a joint Hon. Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Muslim League with Muhammad Ali Jinnah as a President. Both at the Bar and also on the Bench, Ibrahim Suleman Haji had several famous cases to deal with. He had shown considerable forensic acumen and judicial ability in his legal career. After he retired in 1944, he resumed his practice, and became the Chief Justice of Janjira State (1945-1948).

Wazir I.S. Haji was appointed the member of the Ismaili Council in Bombay in 1921. Not only during the period of the Diamond jubilee, but also subsequently worked as the Honorary Secretary of the Imam. He also acted as the Honorary Private Secretary of Prince Aly Khan during his visit to India in 1952. He was also the member of the Ismaili Federal Council for India and the Vice-President of the Ismailia Association for India. He was finally appointed the President of the Federal Council for India (1958-1963). Col. Jamal Nasr, the President of Egypt visited India in April, 1960. During a function held in Bombay on April 9, 1960 by the ten organizations, including the Ismailia Federal Council for India, presented an honour to the Egyptian President. Wazir I.S. Haji represented the Ismailis and presented a silver casket to him. Wazir Akbar H. Merchant, the President of Bombay Council garlanded him. When Col. Jamal Nasr departed for Cairo, he sent a

message of goodwill to the Federal Council through his Consul in India and admired the Ismaili community. He also sent his photo framed with silver along with an autograph in it. Wazir I.S. Haji sent its report to the Imam on May 6, 1960. Hazar Imam sent following message on May 12, 1960:-

My dear Haji,

I have received your letter of 6th May and am pleased to know that the presentation of the Casket to President Nasser was a success.

During the war between India and China at the end of 1962, Wazir I. S. Haji called an urgent meeting of the Federal Council for India and resolved to make an appeal to the Indian *jamats* to contribute to the Prime Minister National Defence Fund. The copies of the appeal were read in all Jamatkhanas in India, and it was also endorsed to Zakir Hussain (1897-1969), the President of India on November 8, 1962. The President sent following message on November 12, 1962 that:-

Dear Haji Saheb,

Thank you for your letter of the 8th November.

I am happy to know that an Appeal has been issued by H.R.H. Prince Aga Khan's Federal Council for India for contributions to the National Defence Fund. I am deeply touched by the patriotic determination that I know lies behind these efforts. As you know we have difficult times ahead, but with the cooperation of all citizens, we shall, God willing, see through them.

On the other hand, the Imam also sent a telegraphic message to the Indian Ismailis through Federal Council on November 12, 1962 that:-

I am glad my spiritual children in India are solidly supporting Prime Minister's call to nation. I am happy to read your timely and practical Appeal to *jamats* jointly with local Councils. I expect my spiritual children to do their duty loyally and contribute generously. I give my best loving paternal maternal blessings to them for their sacrifice during National Emergency. Please convey to *jamats* they are always in my thoughts and near my heart in my prayers for early peace with success. Affectionately Aga Khan.

In response to his call, the Ismailis alone in Bombay contributed Rs. 88,000/- in a day for the Prime Minister Defence Fund. The Ismaili delegation led by Wazir I.S. Haji met Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India at Delhi on December 17, 1962. The delegation presented a letter of the Imam to the Prime Minister, declaring the donation of two lac rupees.

Wazir I. S. Haji retired from Federal Council for India as a President on March 21, 1963. He was invested the title of **Alijah, Itmadi** and then as a **Wazir** on March 21, 1960.

He was also a good writer and compiled few articles, such as **"He Lives in Our Grateful Hearts"** ("**Ismaili**", Bombay, August 4, 1957), "**His Highness Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah The Aga Khan III"** (Ibid. July 13, 1958), **"My First Political Speech"** (Ibid. August 10, 1963)

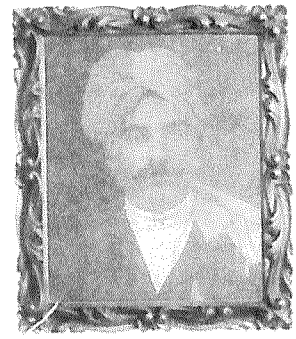
He died on Sunday, October 23, 1966 at Bombay. The Imam sent following telegraphic message:-

LT Daresalaam : 28th October, 1966
AGAFEDERAL
BOMBAY

Was much grieved to hear of sad demise of Vazir Haji. I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late Vazir Haji and I pray that his soul rest in eternal peace. Vazir Haji's long devoted services to my *jamats* of all India as President of my Federal Council for many years and as a member of many institutions in India will always be remembered by my spiritual children and myself. Kindly convey my most affectionate loving blessings to Varasiani Izzatkhanu and family for courage and fortitude in their great loss.



Few words must be added for his wife, Varasiani Izzat Khanum (1899-1984). She was well educated and a keen worker in social welfare field. In 1935, when the Imam established the Health Board Centre Committee in Bombay, she was appointed its member and subsequently became its Hon. Secretary. She was one of the two first lady members of the Ismaili Council in Bombay. In 1939, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah appointed her as a member of the Governing Body of Kathiawar Health Centre, and she became its Chairperson between 1940 and 1953. In 1946, she worked in several committees during the Diamond jubilee. She organized ladies volunteer in the camps to look after the small children, and was awarded the Gold Medal by the Imam. In 1952, she was summoned at Calcutta, then at Delhi to discuss with the Imam and Mata Salamat on Health Centres and Child Welfare in India. She was vested the title of **Huzur Mukhiani, Alijiani** and then most coveted title of **Varasiani** in 1951. Upon the death of her husband, she donated a sum of Rs. 10,000/- to The Ismaili General Hospital, Bombay for a permanent bed in the name of her husband and herself. She died at Bombay on August 18, 1984 at the age of 85 years.



IBRAHIM JUSAB VARTEJI, MISSIONARY
(1878-1953)

Mukhi Muhammad, surnamed Bhojani was famous for his piety and generosity in Kathiawar and was the head of the Vartej village, about 5 miles from Bhavnagar on behalf of the Bhavanagar State. He was also the Mukhi of Vartej Jamatkhana and played significant role in its construction. He and his family members are also known as the Bhojani family. Imam Hasan Ali Shah had visited Bhavnagar and was highly impressed with his devoted services. His son Jusab also served the Vartej *jamat* and donated a piece of land to extend the premises of the Jamatkhana.

Jusab had a son, called Ibrahim, known as Ibrahim Jusab Varteji. He was born in 1878 in Vartej, where he took his formal education. He would be unwilling to go to school. When he was in the third class, he once hid himself in the Jamatkhana instead of going to the school. When it was complained to his family, he tried to run away, but tumbled down at first floor, resulting an injury in his head. Between the year 1886 and 1892, when he was in the 7th class, he found the rousing influence of the Twelvers tenaciously in his village. He liked to read their periodicals, especially the monthly paper, "**Raha-i Najat**" edited by Haji Ghulam Ismail. He also learnt the Koran from Maulvi Najaf Ali of Bombay. He was so impressed with the creed of the Twelvers that he began to attend their *majalis* with his friends. He would often play truant in company with others of same mind, laughing and teasing when they saw Bhagat Devraj, Kamadia Nasir or Kamadia Jethabhai, who visited Vartej.

Ibrahim Jusab Varteji learnt Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Gujrati and devoted his services for the Twelvers. He started to write different articles in "**Raha-i Najat**" and "**Rafiq al-Mominin.**" He was also blessed with poetic faculty, and composed many poems, which appeared in the monthly "**Bahar-i Majalis**" edited by Munshi Masum Ali in Mahuwa.

In 1893, Ibrahim Jusab Varteji joined a local school as a teacher for Rs. 5/- per month. He also started to learn English for two years. Then, he was employed as a *mu'allim* in the Shiite school for two months and earned much reputation. In 1895, he married a lady of the Twelvers. In the meantime, he came into the contact of a police superintendent, called Temulji, who appointed him in a police department.

Once he was invited in Chamardi to inaugurate the first mosque in the village, where he presented his poem before the audience and won the hearts of the Twelvers. In 1899, he visited Bombay with Ghulam Hussain Pirbhai and met a certain Kassim Nanji, who employed him in The Padamabai School with the salary of Rs. 20/- per month when he was 21 years old.

He had been in Bombay between 1899 and 1906. He came into the contact of Nazar Ali Hasan, the elder son of his uncle, Hasan Muhammad, known as Mukhi Hasan. Nazar Ali had also a leaning towards the Twelvers, then abandoned it, and studied the vedic literature. On the other hand, Varteji became the head master of the school, and tried to attract the Ismaili students towards the creeds of the Twelvers. He was known here as a **Qavi Master** (poet teacher) for composing many poems.

Seth Vali Muhammad Pir Muhammad, the famous merchant of glassware, invited him in the Mulbai Pirbhai Haji Charitable Dispensary, built in the memory of his sister, called Mulbai at Pala Gali, Khadak, Bombay, which was visited by Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah. Varteji was offered to present his poem on May 29, 1900. Varteji was facing a delimma, since he did not like to displease the Twelvers, and also wanted to glorify the Imam through his poem. He, therefore composed his poem into Persian, not in Gujrati. When the Imam arrived in the dispensary, he lyrically expressed following quatrain, and none in the audience could understand except Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah :-

Imruz khurshid azkuja tuluashud,
ajugast dil'e gul afzud khushnud.
Rawnaq-i haza shafakhana i'n sabab ast,
ke amdast chu'n shah sultan Muhammad.

"Where did the sun (of happiness) rise today, drenching our flowery hearts with treasure of joy? Yes, the beauty of this dispensary is an advent of Shah Sultan Muhammad."The Imam asked, "Who composed it?" To this, Seth Ahmad Devji (1859-1925) introduced him as a school teacher. The Imam told to bring him at his bungalow. Varteji found a harsh agitation in the circle of the Twelvers when the meaning of above quatrain was revealed to them. The negative reaction was so violent that he could not go to see the Imam as per the advice of Kassim Nanji.

Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah departed for Burma on June 1, 1900. The Ismaili leaders came at the Bori Bunder Station to bid farewell to the Imam. Seth Vali Muhammad Pir Muhammad transcribed the above Persian quatrain in Urdu letters with golden ink, and decorated into a frame, desiring to present it to the Imam at the station, and also took Varteji with him. Seth Vali Muhammad managed to present Varteji before the Imam, who was with the leaders out of his saloon. Varteji took the frame with its front side facing his breast and before he spoke anything, the Imam said, "Is it the same quatrain you have recited in the dispensary?" He replied affirmatively with utter surprise. He presented and lowered down and touched the feet of the Imam. The Imam said, "Put it into the saloon." Varteji placed it and came out in twinkle of eyes. He once again bowed his head in reverence, wondering, how the Imam traced the Persian quatrain without looking its front side? This was the first occasion that cultivated a revolution in his mind.

Ibrahim Jusab Varteji frequented his meeting on every evening with Seth Vali Muhammad and discussed on Vedic and Sufic teachings. With the desire of Kassim Nanji, he began to compile his poetic work, "**Hyder Hullas,**" based simply on religious thoughts. He also quoted some Sufic verses and resolved to publish as "**Vali Villas.**" Meanwhile, he contacted to Wazir Mukhi Virji Premji Parpiya (1881-1946), who was well rooted in Sufism. This was his historical meeting and in its memory, he advertised in his book, "**Hyder Hullas**" that

he would soon publish verses relating to the Vedic and Sufic thoughts with the pen-name, **Prem Vali.**

Seth Jan Muhammad Devji also arranged his meeting with Sir Karim Ibrahim (1840-1924), who offered to purchase 100 copies of "**Hyder Hullas**" and he also met Fazal Visram, who assured to extend his cooperation.

In Bombay, Varteji had an opportunity to see many eminent individuals -. Alarakhia Shivji Manek, Vali Muhammad, Jaffer Ranmal and Nawab Mosin al-Mulk etc. He also met the followers of Bahai religion, notably Mirza Maheram.

In 1907, he returned to his village, Vartej and joined Harji Jamal School as a head master for Rs. 14/- per month. He also repaired for Ahmadabad and came into the contact of Sayed Bakir Mihan, Jilani Mihan, Nizamuddin A. Quraishi, Maulvi Nizamuddin, Nanamihan Rasul, Sayed Sajjad Hussain, the friend of Moloo Kanji and Haji Naji. He stayed two months in Ahmadabad with his elder brother, Nazar Ali Jusab. When he returned to Vartej, a change further twisted in his religious thought and began to avoid the *majalis* of the Twelvers. He joined as a head master in Harjibhai Jamal Charitable School at Bhavnagar with a salary of Rs. 20/- per month. He however continued to generate his contact with the Twelvers and the Hindus and participated in their deliberations.

Henceforth, his mind crowded on the issues of the doctrine of the hidden Imam and the practice of *tabara,* and the pendulum began to swing on the reverse side. Meanwhile, a certain tourist, called Fariduddin offered to convince him on the *tabara* system. He discussed with him for three hours and came to the conclusion that, "**No religion exhorts to revile a person. Islam holds superiority over all the religions. How Islam will allow it?"** He began to be hated among the Twelvers by now onwards.

On one day he passed through a road, facing the shrine of Shela Shah Pir and accidentally collided with a galloping horse. He tumbled down and his head collided with the stones and fainted. It caused a bleeding in his left ear. The people took him to the state hospital. On third day, he found a police constable with a boy, his parents and brothers around his bed. He was asked, "Did this boy collide you with his horse?" He thought that he was on the verge of death, he refrained from making the boy responsible. He was forced to recognize the boy, but he said that he knew nothing. The police relieved the boy, and he recovered his heath within 15 days.

Eventually, in pursuit of a true path, Varteji came to a final conclusion that the Ismailism was the true path of Islam. He repented for reviling the Ismaili faith in past. Meanwhile, an Ismaili of Bhavnagar, called Daud came from Zanzibar. Whirled in worries, he revealed his desire to embrace Ismailism and asked, whether the Ismailis would accept him. Daud assured him, "It is the special *farman* of the Aga Khan that his doors are open for all. One who intends to enter, he can do. One who wants to get out, he can do so."

It was however decided to keep this matter a secret, and Daud assured him to find a best solution. In Bhavnagar, his request to join Ismailism was declined. Daud also could not gain favour from the Ismaili leaders, and on the contrary, a certain Ismaili beat him. Daud feared too much, and returned back to Zanzibar before schedule.

In 1914, Varteji came to Bombay at the age of 35 years. With the assistance of Balubhai, the manager of the Bombay Provincial Bank, he joined the bank as a clerk. He tried his approaches to embrace Ismailism, but failed. At length, he wrote an application and mailed it to the Ismaili Council with following opening verse:-

Dhayo sagala dharam'ma guru'ni karva got,
Ismaili'ma akhar'e jadi khudai jayot.

"Roamed in all religions in search of Lord.
Ultimately found Divine Light in Ismailism"

Haji Ahmad Devaji, the President of the Ismaili Council accepted his application at the end of 1914. Varteji writes in his "**Vedic Islam**" (p. 4) that, "In my Mukhi family, my grandfather Mukhi Muhammad had an opportunity to serve Imam Hasan Ali Shah when he visited Bhavnagar, and used his influences exceedingly for the service and earned blessings. As a significant mark, I now inherited alone the service of the *Ahl al- Bayt* from my Bhojani family and the family of the Mukhi."

His father's sister, Ladubai of Vartej, residing in Kandi Mola, Bombay, rejoiced immensely for his reverting to the Ismaili fold. She invited him at her house and congratulated with sweets and said, "Son, you have received the rewards of the services rendered by your grandfather, Mukhi Muhammad to Imam Hasan Ali Shah."

He joined Khoja Panjibhai Club in Kandi Mola Jamatkhana at first, where Kamadia Manjibhai Ghulam Hussain hailed him. It was a major decision in his life, but he cared for nothing. The leaders of the Twelvers offered him all means and materials he needed, which he declined.

On the next week, he met the Ismaili writers like Wazir Mukhi Virji Premji Parpiya, Kassim Ali Ladha Lakhamsi, Suleman Ibrahim, etc. He was offered to become the editor of "**Ismaili Sitaro,**" but he showed his unability and continued to work in the bank.

Seth Manji Ghulam Hussain Padamsi presented him the Ismaili literature. He also met Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj, who applauded his bold decision. Kassim Ali Ladha gave him a copy of the *farman*, "**Bahr-i Rahmat**" into Khojki.

On the auspicious occasion of the *Salgirah* of the Imam, the Khoja Panjibhai Club celebrated a dinner party under the Presidentship of Alijah Juma Sharif (d. 1919) at Chopati on September 19, 1914. Ibrahim Jusab Varteji was also given a special invitation, where he presented his first poem oriented in Ismailism and won admirations in the audience.

Soon afterwards, he left his job with the Bombay Provincial Bank and worked with Ismail Jivraj of Mombasa in a shop which he left within a year. With the kind cooperation of Ismail Ibrahim Ukka (d. 1927) and the humble offer of President Haji Ahmad Devaji and Hon. Secretary Dr. Rajab Ali Ramji Lakhdhir and Manji Ghulam Hussain Padamsi, he was employed in the Shia Imami Ismailia Council in Bombay as a clerk.

He was gifted with vivid intellect with conspicuous literary talent. His literary career emerged when he became an honorary editor of the "**Ismaili Sitaro**" in November 9, 1914. He published the transliteration and translation of the **mathnawi** of Maulana Rumi in Gujrati in "**Ismaili Sitaro**" in 1915. He also gave his services as an honorary editor of the fortnightly paper, "**Khoja Reformer**". He was the editor of two journals at a time, and became a popular figure among the Ismailis. He also became an Hon. Secretary of The Ismaili Literature Society in 1915 with Ali Muhammad Nassurbhoy as the President.

On Friday, January 22, 1915, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah arrived in Bombay from Europe, and took a visit of the Ismaili library on March 24, 1915, where Varteji presented a Persian poem before the Imam and earned best loving blessings. He also joined the Recreation Club Institute as a missionary.

Pandit Radhakrishna, the ring leader of the Arya Samaj asked 25 questions to the Ismailis and circulated them through pamphlets in English and Gujrati in the year 1913. These questions were not responded by any Ismaili writer. In 1916, Varteji replied him with irrefutable arguments in his book, entitled "**Aftab-i Haqiqat.**" Seth Jaffer Sher Muhammad assisted him in its publication. The Ismailia Sahitiya Utejak Mandal honoured him a reception and awarded a gold ring and watch.

He also maintained close contact with Mukhtar Nanji, A.J. Chunara, Mirza Muhammad Jairaj, Rajab Ali Kassim Mevawala, Rajab Ali Khimji, Juma Muhammad Damania, Kurban Alibhai Jivraj, etc.

On January 4, 1917, Varteji was to have a meeting with Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) at Bombay, in which he boldly told that he was on the right path. According to the reports of the newspapers, he produced evidences to Gandhi, who said, "I do not say about the new converted Khojas." Gandhi also spoke to Thakkur that, "I cannot tell any more before these arguments. We must exhort not to abandon Hinduism to those Christians and the Muslims who hate Hinduism." Varteji also requested Gandhi to control those Hindus, who were persecuting the new converted Ismailis.

In 1918, Varteji sailed for East Africa by Khusaro Steamer. He came first to Mombasa, where the members of the Ismaili Council requested him to prolong his stay. He stayed in Mombasa and met the Mukhi and Kamadia of the *jamat*, including Varas Abdul Rasul Alidina. He also met Madad Ali, the member of the Council and the Hon. Secretary, Kassim Nur Muhammad. He also took a chance to see Missionary Nasir. When he arrived in the Jamatkhana at evening, he found there hundred percent attendance just 30 minutes before the prayers. After five days, he went to Zanzibar, where he stayed for six days. Here he met his daughter, Kulsoom, who married to a Twelver, Nasir Nur Muhammad, who also became an Ismaili very soon. In Zanzibar, he received honour and returned to Bombay after 10 days.

In 1919, the Young Ismailia Vidhiya Vinod Club came into existence in Bombay, organizing lecture programmes. He was also invited on several occasions to deliver lectures on different topics.

The most memorable occasion in his life was his meeting with the Imam with the help of Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Rehmatullah Macklai in April, 1920. It was a meeting that gave immense vigour in his faith. He writes in his **"Vedic Islam"** (p. 83) that, "The divine light reflected in my eyes. The condition of my jovial and steely beliefs transformed into gold. The doubtful clouds dispersed in my heart, where the radiant sun of the Imamate glistened." In his **"Vedic Islam"** (pp. 3-4), he published the photo of Ali Muhammad R. Macklai and writes, "Your brother has taken me in the holy presence of Hazar Imam, and became a reason for making it a golden hour of my life, in whose remembrance, I feel it personal happiness to seek an opportunity to preserve your beautiful photo in this book as a service to the Ismailis."

Inasmuch as he professed the faith of the Twelvers despite his birth in the Ismaili family, and then when he embraced Ismailism, he had to face a heap of problems, which he warded off efficiently. He was asked several written questions, which he scholarly answered through different books. The Arya Samaj, the Sunni and the Shia were looking at the Ismaili mission with evil eyes and began to entertain grudge against them. They strove hard to defame the Ismaili mission and poured down a bulk of pamphlets, letters, advertisements and question papers to discredit the Ismailis all over India. To encounter their diabolic propaganda, Varteji came up and never missed to reply them. By virtue of his deep knowledge, he literally debated amidst the teeth of very bitterest opposition and harsh theological storms.

The young students of Karachi insisted the Recreation Club Institute to depute Varteji in Karachi to solve their religious problems. He arrived in Karachi on July 17, 1920 and stayed in the house of Bana Bhula Ali in Garden area. Not only he convinced the students, he also delivered *waez* in all the Jamatkhanas.

On January 27, 1924, H.H. Sir Shuja al-Mulk, K.C.I.E., the Mehtar of Chitral arrived in Bombay and took a visit of the Recreation Club Institute on February 7, 1924 with his sons and vizir. On that occasion, Missionary Varteji delivered an impressive lecture to glorify the Islamic message for mankind.

He also visited Burma for the first time and returned on October 4, 1926. He made another flying trip of East Africa for 18 months between September, 1931 and February, 1933; and performed useful *waez*. He also attended the opening ceremony of the new Jamatkhana in Iringa by the hand of Count Abdullah Sharif Kanji, the President of the Supreme Council for Zanzibar. He delivered a touching *waez* in the new Jamatkhana and earned appreciation. In **"Tanganyika Saligrah Annual"** (Dar-es-Salaam, 13th June, 1938, pp. 193-6), he had drawn his important observations for the African Ismailis in a write-up, **"Africa Niwasi Ismaili'no Itihas."**

Missionary Varteji held several public deliberations boldly with the scholars and learned individuals on the topic of an "Apparent Imam" on earth.

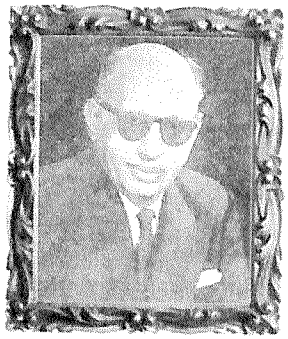
He visited East Africa once again and arrived in Dar-es-Salaam on February 20, 1933. In the village of Mayombo, some Twelvers offered him for an open discussion. He told that he would talk with one who knew Koran. They told that they did not know the Koran and offered to discuss with their scholar, Izharul Hussain, living in Bhubey. He promised them

to visit that village after 15 days. His meeting was arranged with Izharul Hussain at Mahabu. Mukhi Alibhai Kanji and 25 Ismailis accompanied him, while the strength of the Twelvers was over 400. His topic of the discussion was to prove an apparent Imam instead of a hidden Imam. He produced arguments and references of their books. His discussion continued on the second day, and on the third day, Izharul Hussain fled from the platform.

Missionary Varteji passed rest of his life in the service of the Imam as a writer, poet and missionary. He passed restless time during the Golden Jubilee in 1936 and Diamond Jubilee in 1946 in his usual services. He was a devoted and dedicated Ismaili till his last breath. He was ambitious, but it was never personal. He laboured for his faith not for own sake.

In May, 1953, his health impaired and hospitalized for 30 days. He made a flying trip of Ahmadabad. He was discussing with young Ismailis inside the Jamatkhana on August 3, 1953 at 10 a.m. Unfortunately, he fell into prostration all of a sudden, uttering *Ya Ali, Ya Ali* and expired in this state. The Ismailis thought that he would soon retire from prostration, and left him alone. The servant of the Jamatkhana also found him in this state at noon, who vainly tried to raise him up. He immediately reported the Mukhi and others, who found him dead. He was buried in Ahmadabad. His wife Pulalibai and a daughter, Kulsoom had expired during his lifetime.

He has compiled almost 40 books, and also was the editor of **"Ismaili Sitaro", "Khoja Reformer"** and **"Hindi Panch Himayati"** . His famous books are **"Ismaili Chabuk"** (reply to Pandit Ramchandra of Surat), **"Aftab-i Haqiqat"** (reply to Radha Krishna), 1916, **"Arya Prakash'ni Udhatai"** (reply to Arya Prakash), 1917, **"Khuli Chithi'nu Bhoparu", "Arya Samaji Pandito'nu Pokar"** (1919), **"Islami Ekaita"** (1918), **"Naklank Bavani", "Ismaili Vedant", Vedic Islam** (1921), **"Satpanth'ni Devio"** (1926), **"Satpanth'ni Sachai"** (1926),**"Atam Darshan"** (1926), **"Padari'nu Lecture"** (1926), **"Railway Musafir"** (1927), Part I & II, **"Khrasti thai ek musalman'ni Varta"**(1927), **"Akashi Sankar", "Om thi Ali," "Dua'na Dushman'ne Zatako", "Hazar Imam'ni Hidayat and Munafiqo'no Duragrah", "Agakhani Khudai Zarkat",** etc.



IBRAHIM NATHOO, COUNT
(1905-1962)

Ibrahim Nathoo was born in Nairobi on March 13, 1905. He was educated at Government Indian School, Nairobi, then in Esplanade High School, Bombay; St. Xavier's College, Bombay; Trinity Hall, Cambridge; and Owen's College, Victoria University, Manchester. He was a prominent freemason, holding Grand Lodge honours and District Grand Lodge Honours.

Count Ibrahim Nathoo did considerable work in civil defence during the second world war (1939-1945) and he was a member of the Indian Manpower Committee. He had been chosen by the government of Kenya to represent at the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1952. He was also the Director of Imperial Hotel in Uganda and Lombard Banking Ltd. in Dar-es-Salaam.

Count Ibrahim Nathoo was a member of the Advisory Committee on Asian Education, Kenya (1932-1953), the member of the Kenya Legislative Council (1944-1961), and the Minister for Public Works in the Kenya Government (1954-1961). He also attended the Kenya Constitutional Conference in London in February, 1960.

The Provincial Council of Nairobi honoured him a warm reception for his valuable services. On that occasion, Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai (1905-1990) said in his speech that, "Hon'ble Ibrahim had performed important works for the upliftment of the Ismailis, particularly worked brilliantly as an Administrator of the Educational Department for over last ten years."

He was also an eminent social worker in the community. For instance, he was the Chairman of the Aga Khan Education Board, Nairobi (1937-1943), the member of the Kenya Central Education Board (1943-1945), the Administrator of the Central Council of Education for Africa, Kenya (1945-1954) and the Advisor to the Kenya Education Administrator (1954-1958). He was also appointed as an Advisor to the different social welfare agencies working in the field of Economics. He also rendered his services as the Honorary Private Secretary to Prince Aly Khan (1940-1959) and the Honorary Private Secretary to the Hazar Imam (1957-1959). Count Ibrahim Nathoo also toured with Prince Aly Khan with other Kenya leaders from Nairobi to Cairo, Alexandria, Syria, Palestine, etc. in 1944.

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah summoned a conference of the Ismaili delegates in Cairo to review the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee upon the completion of 70 years of his Imamate. Count Ibrahim Nathoo also attended the conference. The delegates discussed mutually in the morning and met Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah at evening on March

15, 1951 in Hotel Semiramese. The Imam emphasized that the programme should be worked out on the pattern of Golden and Diamond Jubilees to improve the social and economical conditions of the Ismailis. The Imam, Mata Salamat and Prince Aly Khan invited them on next day for a lunch at Mohamedali Club and graced them with a photograph. The Imam left Cairo for France with Mata Salamat on March 17, 1951. Prince Aly Khan offered the Ismaili delegates to join him on his visit to Syria on March 18, 1951. Count Ibrahim Nathoo accepted the offer with other 11 leaders and arrived in Salamia, where he learnt much about the Syrian Ismailis.

The Imam posted him in Pakistan and appointed him directly as his advisor in May, 1962 to the Central Bodies like The Aga Khan Trust, Economic & Planning Board, Karis Multipurpose Cooperative Society, Central Education Board, etc. He was also a member of the Advisory Board of Pak-Ismailia Publication Ltd.

For the social welfare and development of the Ismaili institutions in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Count Ibrahim Nathoo arrived in Dacca on October 28, 1962. He remained busy studying various living conditions of the Ismailis in Pakistan and multifarious problems affecting the community.

In view of his long invaluable services, he was awarded the title of **Alijah** in 1942, **Rai** in 1946, **Wazir** in 1951 and **Count** in 1954.

He married to Nurbanu, the daughter of Hasham Jan Muhammad in 1926. He had a son, Ali and two daughters, Naseem and Semira.

Count Ibrahim Nathoo died in Karachi due to heart attack on November 29, 1962.

IBRAHIM RAHIMTULLAH, SIR
(1862-1942)



Ibrahim Rahimtullah was a son of Rahmatullah Kadar, a well-known merchant in Bombay. Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah was born in Bombay on May, 1862 in a family having no political tradition. He took his education in Elphinstone High School. He was a diligent student and showed particular aptitude for arithmetic, algebra and geometry. His failure in the Matriculation examination in 1897 marked an end of his scholastic career, and he joined his elder brother, Muhammad Rahmatullah in business. The death of his father in 1880 was a great calamity for the young brothers, who were left without any experience in business.

Ibrahim Rahimtullah chalked out a different field for himself. It was a beginning of a busy and changing age in India; and there was enough animation in the city life of Bombay. In the meantime, the All Indian National Congress came into existence in 1885, therefore, his youthful days were cast in auspicious times.

Ibrahim Rahimtullah had slowly but steadily paved his way to the front until he was honoured to be described by the Imam as **"the most distinguished member our community has produced in Western India."** In 1892, he joined Bombay Municipal on behalf of the Mandavi Board. His association with the Corporation therefore covered an uninterrupted period of 26 years of strenuous work.

In 1895, he foretold an incoming danger of the plague in Bombay, but the British India ignored it. Eventually, the disease broke out in 1897, making the victims of countless lives. He became the President of the Standing Committee of Bombay Municipal in 1898, and was elected as a Mayor of Bombay in 1899 and received great deal of encouragement from Sir Pherozesha Mehta. His services for his city were manifold, and there was hardly a single subject of civic importance, which he did not deal within a spirit of broad statesmanship. In 1898, the Bombay Municipal deputed him as a representative in Bombay City Improvement Trust, where he served for 20 years (1898-1918). In 1899, he was honoured as **J.P.** When he became a member of the Provincial Parliament, the Ismailis honoured him in a grand banquet on August 4, 1900.

Ibrahim Rahimtullah was a member of Bombay Legislative Council (1899-1912), Imperial Legislative Council (1913-1916), Government's Executive Council for Education and Local Self-Government (1918-1923), the President of Legislative Council, Bombay (1923-1928), Member of Indian Legislative Assembly in 1931, whose President in 1931 to 1933, the Chairman of Indian Fiscal Committee (1921) and he became the first Indian Muslim to hold this post; the member of Royal Commission on Labour in 1929 and also delegated

to Round Table Conference, London in 1930.

In 1904, during the conference of the Congress at Bombay, he was elected to a committee of that body to consider its constitution. All through the stormy period of 1907-1910, when the bulk of the Muslims held aloof from the Indian National Congress, he lent his support equally to the Congress and the Muslim League. In 1904, he became the Sheriff of Bombay, and was also honoured the title of C.I.E. in 1907. In May, 1908, he proceeded to England for treatment and returned in October, 1908.

With the advent of the Morley-Minto Reforms, he widened his activities to take full advantage of the added privileges. He was the first, at any rate in the Bombay Council to use the right of introducing private Bills. His Bill for the registration of charities introduced in 1910. Lord Thomas Sydenham, the then governor, the chief justice of Bombay High Court, the Press and the general public supported the Bill. In 1911, the British India granted him the title of Knighthood.

In the end of 1912, he sought election to the Imperial Legislative Council, and was also elected for the second time in 1916. His most enduring work in the Imperial Legislative Council was in the sphere of India's commercial and industrial progress. It was due largely to his efforts that the three important commissions - The Industrial, Railway and Fiscal Commissions, which have assisted to shape the Indian government's policy in regard to industries, railways and tariff, were appointed. He was appointed the President of the Fiscal Commission on October, 1921.

Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah also proposed the British India to take due measure for the defence of vast Indian sea-coast. He published his article in **"The Times of India"** in January, 1918 and emphasized the creation of the Indian Navy. The Imam also buttressed his views and according to N.M. Dumasia in **"The Aga Khan and His Ancestors"** (Bombay, 1939, p. 237) that, "The Aga Khan is strongly in favour of the view advanced by Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah that for the defence of the extensive sea-coast of India, there should be sufficient Indian material."

When in the beginning of 1918, Sir Mahadev Chaubal retired from his membership of the government of Bombay, the choice fell on him to fill that vacancy. It was a tribute to his eminence in public life and reputation for statesmanship. He also was an ordinary fellow of Bombay University in 1921. The British India honoured him with the title of K.C.S.I. (Knights of the Star of India) on November 21, 1924. He was also awarded a silver medal of **Kaisar-i Hind** for his valuable services and generosity.

It was his intention to seek election to the Legislative Assembly after his retirement. But suddenly in May, 1923, two months after his retirement from the Executive Council, came the news of the demise of Sir Narayan Chandavarkar Ganesh (1855-1923), the nominated President of the Bombay Legislative Council. At the earnest request of Sir George Lloyd, the then governor, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah accepted the presidentship of the Legislative Council. His term of the office terminated on February 18, 1925.

The governor as a non-official member of the Council nominated him with a view to his eventual election as its President. When the nominations were announced on February

19, 1925, no one opposed the nomination. He became the first elected President of the Bombay Legislative Council.

Ibrahim Rahimtullah also took a prominent part in the deliberations of the All-India Muslim League and he favoured free and compulsory education during the 4th session at Nagpur in December, 1910. He was a delegate to the first Hindu-Muslim Unity Conference, Allahabad, 1911 under the Presidentship of Sir William Waddarburn. He also became the President of AIML during the 7th session in Agra, 1913, and the Vice-President during the 9th session in Lucknow in December, 1916. He also presided the All India Muslim Educational Conference in Bombay on December 27, 1924. According to **"The Aga Khan and His Ancestors"** (Bombay, 1939, p. 180), "In the Bombay Presidency the community over which the Aga Khan presided with such distinction possess such eminent leaders as Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah who, like his revered leader, valiantly pressed Muslim claims."

Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah was also a member of Joint School Commission, the President of Muslim Gymkhana, Vice-President of Anujman-e-Islam, and the President of Mulji Jivraj Library.

He died in June, 1942 at Bombay. He had one son and a daughter by his first wife. He married second time in 1903, having three sons and three daughters.

It is to be noted that the Bombay Municipality has given the name of the road as Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah Road between the J.J. Hospital and Bhindi Bazar.

Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah Opthalmic Department opened in the Ismaili General Hospital on December 20, 1959. S.C. Bhut, the Charity Commissioner of Bombay, in a gathering in Aga Hall, Bombay, performed its inauguration ceremony. The trustees of late Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah have donated a sum of Rs. 48,000/- for it. On that occasion, the Imam sent following telegraphic message :

Gastaad : 18th Dec., 1959

Lt. President
Ismaili Hospital
C/o Convivial,
Bombay

Most happy at opening of Opthalmic Department in our hospital. This has been much needed service for many years. I sincerely thank His Excellency Charity Commissioner for opening the new wing and hope it will achieve every success.

Prince Aly Khan also sent following message from New York:-

New York : 17th Dec., 1959
Lt. President
Ismaili General Hospital
C/o Convivial,
Bombay

Send warmest affectionate greetings and blessings on happy occasion opening twentieth December in name of donor late Sir Ebrahim Rahimtoola of Opthalmic Department for outdoor patients of all community. This will be wonderful service to people.

Few words must be added for his son, Wazir Ibrahim Rahimtullah. He was born on March 10, 1912 at Bombay. He was a close associate of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. After the partition of India, he came in Pakistan and played important role in the politics. He was the governor of Sind and Punjab and a Federal Minister. He became the first High Commissioner of Pakistan to England at the age of 35 years in 1950. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah has described him in his **Memoirs** as the brilliant son of a brilliant father. The Imam conferred upon him the title of **Wazir** in 1954. He died in Karachi on January 2, 1991 at the age of 78 years.

In the past, there has been a magnificent, honourable, and a challenging tradition of honorary service to the *jamat* and to the Imam of the time. I do not want to change that tradition; it is a wonderful tradition, it is a tradition that has served our *jamat* for centuries and which has produced absolutely exceptional result. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Bombay, January 9, 1978)



ISMAIL GANGJI, VARAS
(1788-1883)

Gangji, the father of Ismail was one of the famous and dedicated social workers in Junagadh *jamat*. He had never gone to school, his family members called him *gang* i.e., unlettered, and became known as Gangji, making his original name disappeared in the records. He was however a man of middle class. His son Ismail is supposed to have been born around 1788 and his fame soon reached incredible heights as the Varas of Junagadh.

Varas Ismail Gangji, crowning the towering name of the **Hero of Kathiawar**, was a petty spice trader on foot with a bag on his shoulder and wandered from one village to another and was a cheater to give less in weighing. He sold spices in place of the bales of cotton and disposed off in the market. He passed almost 25 years in this trade, which he started at the age of 6 to 7 years.

He was regular in the Jamatkhana, and would attend wherever he went for his sale. He acquired his religious education from Rai Rahmatullah of Bombay. Once he attended the Bantwa Jamatkhana and heard following stanza of the *ginan*:-

False thine scale and balance uneven,
Measures and weighs heavily counterfeit;
Gave away less and creature grabbed more,
And didn't care for his self.

He heard above verses attentively and gazed at the boy who recited. It moved him so much that he had tears in his eyes. He came to Mukhi Rai Rahmatullah with a firm determination not to cheat his customers and sought forgiveness of his sins. He approached his mother nervously, expecting to be scolded, and revealed his final decision. She spoke softly and uttered words of encouragement.

The ancestors of the Nawabs of Junagadh have a long and glorious legacy of heroism through out the Mughal period. It was Sherkhan Babi, who after consolidating his foothold in Gujrat, assumed the fame of Bahadur Khan Babi and declared himself Nawab of Junagadh in 1748. His Highness Sir Mahabatkhan II Babi Bahadur (1851-1882) was the fifth in the lineal descent from Bahadur Khan I, the founder of the ruling house in Junagadh. His Highness Sir Mahabatkhan II was the 7th Nawab of Junagadh in order of succession. The Junagadh State was also known as the Sorath Sarkar.

Junagadh State was comprised of an area of 3193 sq. miles in those days. According to the census taken in 1871, the population of the State was 389021. The Ismailis in

Junagadh State lived mostly in Junagadh city, and not in Verawal, Kutiyana, Mangrol or Wanthali. The Nawab in the Junagadh State was the final and absolute authority and the administration conducted under his direction by a Dewan assisted by heads of various State departments.

His father Gangji was an employee in the wardrobe (*jamdarkhana*) of Junagadh State. The wardrobe on those days had a wide testimonial of opulence and magnification of Nawab Shahi. Gold, rich gem stubbed ornaments and jewellery, valuable garments and clothes were stored in the wardrobe. Gangji was working as an assistant keeper of a certain Javerbhai. Varas Ismail Gangji also joined the wardrobe in 1819 as an ordinary worker without salary.

During the festivals and other occasions, the visitors brought gifts in the court for the Nawab in Junagadh. Lavish foods were served to the guests, resulting wastage of huge sugar, cinnamon, betel nuts, cardamom, etc. and these were scattered on the floor. The sweeper collected the stuff, but Varas Ismail disliked the wastage. He would sort out each item on the floor and store them on every occasion. When he had collected a fair amount, he delivered them to his supervisor, who was perplexed to see his honesty and loyalty. Very soon, he was made an assistant keeper of the wardrobe.



Once the wife of the Nawab lost her precious necklace. He found it and returned to the Nawaba. His honesty and loyalty were appreciated, causing the Nawab to promote him to a very elevated post. He was confided the Revenue Department and soon afterwards, he became the head of the departments of the Treasury and Mint in 1821.

Varas Ismail Gangji visited different villages and collected inestimable revenues. For the purpose of land revenue administration, the Junagadh State was divided into 12 districts with a total of 842 villages. He also took leading part in the welfare programmes of the State. It was he who initiated a plan to start a railway line in Junagadh. Eventually, the

main railway line from Jetalsar to Verawal for the first time in Junagadh was begun and was opened for traffic in 1888 after his death. He was also appointed the head of the provisions and supplies of the State. Varas Ismail Gangji became a best model of an honesty in the Junagadh State.

Once he had to go outside the State to buy some valuable articles for Mr. Lint, the then political agent. He was given a letter of introduction, insisting all those concerned to treat him with honour due to a high official. The Nawab also gave him a piece of land in appreciation of his 50 years services in 1869. He was granted a land in the village of Anandpur, where he built quarters for the destitute. This is on the records of the Junagadh State, and the extract of the Document No. 11 reveals: "You have been loyally serving us in person for the last fifty years. You have carried out all the responsible jobs entrusted to you with exemplary honesty, and unswerving loyalty. In the state purchases of jewellery for the Heir apparent, we have received huge saving almost a lac of rupees. Besides, you have executed all the orders of Queen Mother with respect, honour and love, and you have never abused the confidence or power vested in you." (This Document has been signed and sealed on the fourth day of Kartak (Vad) S.Y. 1925, or 1869 A.D.)

The Duke of Edinburg, the future king Edward VII (1901-1910), as Prince of Wales, visited India. The Rajas, Maharajas, Nawabs, Feudatory nobles from all parts of India gathered in Delhi in 1877, where the Prince of Wales was holding a *darbar*. The Nawab of Junagadh intended to be invited in the *darbar*. He told to Varas Ismail Gangji, who arranged his invitation through the influence of Imam Hasan Ali Shah. The Nawab of Junagadh was among the Indian Nawabs to be graced with the honour of the very first audience with the Prince of Wales

Imam Hasan Ali Shah hosted a royal banquet to the Duke of Edinburg and Edward VIII in 1877 at the Aga Hall, Bombay. The entertainment of the guests was consigned to Varas Ismail Gangji, who arranged for expert cooks from Ahmedabad, closely related to Wazir Alibhai Bhoora (1900-1996). Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), Nawab Mohsin al-Mulk (1837-1907), Sir Nawab Mahabat Khan (1851-1882) and Hasan Ali Effendi (1830-1895) were the distinguished guests in the banquet. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah related the event in his **"The Memoirs of Aga Khan"** (New York, 1954, p. 35) in these words: "When the Prince of Wales paid his state visit to India, he was entertained at Aga Hall by my grand-father, and commented with interest on the number of tiger skins displayed."

Imam Hasan Ali Shah visited Kathiawar in 1853. Varas Ismail also went for didar and served the *jamats* for three without any rest. In the same year, he also came to Bombay for didar in Wadi. The tradition has it that when Imam Hasan Ali Shah came down from his bungalow to grace an audience to the *jamat*, he saw Ismail Gangji at his first sight. He said in a burst of anger, **"Ismail! you have bothered my son Ali Shah in Kathiawar. I know how you misbehaved with him."** The Imam returned, without gracing didar - the *jamat* was confused and had tears in their eyes. Varas Ismail Gangji did not say anything, he just bowed his head in humility . On the second and third day, the same thing happened and the Imam rebuked him with severe words, but he spoke nothing. The perplexed *jamat* now began to talk that how wicked he was that they got no didar during last three days and the Imam went away in anger.

Despite mental agony, he worked hard and continued his duties unmindful of the disappointment, which had enveloped his heart. On fourth day, the Imam summoned him in audience in Wadi and said, "**Ismail! I tried your faith harshly, but it proved unwavering like Mount Girnar. You possess an ocean of patience and the gravity of your tolerance is remarkable. With this sense of tolerance and patience, you are the right person to look after the welfare of our *jamat*, and now, you are the Wazir of whole Kathiawar. I am much happy with you and give you much blessings.**" The tears trickled down from the eyes of Varas Ismail Gangji and he stood before the Imam with his head bowed servilely. Imam Hasan Ali Shah vested him the title of **Wazir**. He expressed his inability for the magnitude of the work that was assigned to this post. Imam Hasan Ali Shah said, "**Ismail! you do not worry. You will handle the job with full responsibility. You will be guided in your work by my blessings and you will carry out the work. Success and glory shall be your reward. This is my wish, Ismail."**

Swift in thought and action, he could formulate his plans on the spur of the moment. He was indeed one of those individuals who combined theory with practice. On that night, Varas Ismail Gangji was greatly worried for the responsibility of the *jamat* of Junagadh vested in him. He wept and passed sleepless night. His two servants, Abu Samji and Mitha Ismail also did not sleep and watched the worries of their master. He gained patience very soon and started his services in Junagadh as Imam's Wazir.

The economical and social conditions of the Ismailis in Junagadh was the most deteriorated in the whole of India. The social sphere of life was no less than a hopeless condition. The weak were buried under the machinery of the unjust economy. It was a chronic disease spreading day by day in the Ismaili society. The lower strata of the Ismailis were the diggers of graves, barbers, porters, tiffin carriers, manual labourers, domestic servants and road construction workers. Sufficient reliable data is accessible in the voluminous writings that Varas Ismaili Gangji reacted sharply to the ailing state of the Ismailis.

To embark upon the mammoth task of reforms, one needs strength of resolution. Self-confident to face the challenge of the time, having insurmountable obstructions, he felt with ever more conviction that the reforms of his fellow beings had fallen to his lot with the blessings of the Imam. Being a profound and learned scholar, he was also blessed with the remarkable insight of a saga, he had no difficulty in locating the source which had shattered the social and economical conditions of the Ismailis. His first step was to find a solution for those who were at the most lowest class. He had to unite them on their traditional platform, i.e., their regularity in the Jamatkhana. He renovated the Jamatkhana of Junagadh. He allotted the duties to the fleet of field workers, including himself.

On that occasion, the grand procession of the Nawab Mahabat Khan passed near the Jamatkhana, and the Nawab was shocked to see his high minister working as a labourer. He told to Varas, "Do you lift the bags of sands?" He replied, "Yes Sir. I am a priceless slave of this *jamat*, and today it is my turn to work." The Nawab was impressed beyond measure.

Varas Ismail Gangji united them and knitted together with his well dressed personality with glorious manner and habit. He played an important role for the services of the Ismailis of Junagadh and Kathiawar, he was in charge of settlement and their steady progress.

He worked veritably like a brave lion in the community.

Varas Ismail Gangji then turned to improve the worst conditions of the Ismailis and he took few more firm measures to get to the root of their economical condition. The Ismailis were destined to dig the graves. He himself was well aware, of this fact, therefore, he too once dug a grave. When this was reported to Nawab Mahabat Khan that his high minister had dug the grave, Varas Ismail Gangji was summoned to the Nawab.

Varas Ismaili Gangji said, "None except the Ismaili Khojas are reserved for digging graves. I am also an Ismaili. What's wrong in it?" The Nawab said, "Well, I agree it, but I cannot allow my minister to take part in this." To this, Varas Ismail Gangji boldly said, "But I will either do it as your ex-minister or give me your word that no Khoja will dig graves from today." Nawab Mahabat Khan acceded to his proposal and issued his decree that the Khojas specifically would not dig graves and it would be consigned to the depressed class in the state.

After performing the spade works, Varas Ismail Gangji centered his attention towards the common folk in the community. This problem was resolved different measures. There were few affluent persons in the community, whom he exhorted to venture into the wholesale business of vegetables, and supply to the Ismaili retailers. Gradually, the labour class joined the business. Once he saw a poor Ismaili porter struggling under the weight of a heavy stone, which he was carrying on his back. Moved by pity for his inferior condition, Varas Ismaili Gangji ordered him, "Drop the stone" and he did so. Varas Ismail Gangji set him up as a vendor for vegetables.

These new reforms brought the Ismailis of Junagadh slowly into the middle and the higher economic classes of the society. It certainly marked the turning of the tide for them. The old proverb, ***"Khoja uthao boja"*** (Khoja! lift the load) denoting the Ismailis of Junagadh gradually came to an end.

Varas Ismail Gangji was regular in the attendance of the Jamatkhana and came before the Mukhi and Kamadia. He was a high official of the state and then a veteran leader of the community, but where the question for the service of the community arose, he would consider himself as lowest of the low. He unrolled daily the mats and spread on them floor. He started the recitation of the *ginans* before prayers. He also delivered *waez*. After an end of the evening prayers, his servants searched daily into the Jamatkhana the new visitors or travellers and brought them for dinner. This tradition of hospitality continued till the death of his son, Varas Kassim.

Once on Friday, he was offering prayers in the Jamatkhana, a messenger came in haste and said, "Nawab Saheb summons you urgently." He told, "Tell him that I will come after an end of the prayers." The messenger returned with another message of the Nawab to come very soon. This time, the Varas gave him the keys and told, "Go and tell to the Nawab that I resign from the post, since I cannot serve two Lords at the same time. I am a servant of the State during the day, and a servant of my great Lord at night and on that hour, none can order me." Varas then appeared before the Nawab after his religious service,. Quite amazingly, the Nawab embraced him with his breast, felicitated and thanked to learn the worth of the divine worship.

The great untapped reservoir of Junagadh's wealth was Gir and the Girnar forests. They formed the greatest natural attraction for all classes of first class tourists, sightseers, wild game hunters and lion killers. As one enters the State from the north-east, the rock of Mount Girnar rises up from the plains around in one black granite block of phallic shape. The slopes, valleys and glades of Mount Girnar form the block known as the Girnar forests. While the Gir forest lies several miles to the east. This is a region of densely covered plains and low jungle-clad ranges of hills and constitutes what is called the Gir forests. The Girnar forest is 70 sq. miles in area, while the Gir forest covers about 500 sq. miles of Junagadh territory. The dense Gir forests are the only abodes of lions, and were a pet hunting ground for the nobility and native chiefs. Imam Aga Ali Shah was fond of hunting lion and tiger and visited Gir forest and Mount Girnar with Varas Ismail Gangji.

In 1876, the State had only 25 Gujrati schools, 5 girls' schools, one Sanskrit Pathshala, one Urdu Makhtab and one high school. Under such condition, Varas Ismail Gangji started some schools for the education of the Ismailis. He also waged war against cruel customs, which had entailed ignorance upon females, and created prejudices against them in the minds of parents, who were grinding their daughters in the millstone of illiteracy. He strongly opposed to the artificial barriers, which debarred women from taking their rightful position in life.

Varas Ismail Gangji was the undisputed leader of the community beyond any doubt, and his humility knew no bounds. He would treat everyone with equal dignity and uniformity. He would offer due respect to the Mukhi and Kamadia. In those times, the Mukhi of Junagadh Jamatkhana was a certain Najubhai, a humble roof and tiles worker by profession. On the occasion of the marriage ceremony of his son, Ibrahim, Varas Ismail invited and gave him a front seat with the dignitaries of the state and the Nawab Saheb. They queered to mark besides them, a man dressed in simple rustic clothes, and asked the Varas to introduce this man to them. Varas Ismail told them with pride that, "He is an elder of our community, the Mukhi of the Junagadh *jamat*, and as such he is the representative of the Imam and I stand before him every evening with folded hands, seeking pardon for all my guilty acts."

It was Varas Ismail Gangji who liberated the Ismailis in Junagadh from the labour works not suiting to their status. His sense of justice was proverbial. Every *jamat* would offer him ready response and utmost cooperation. He was a strict disciplinarian too. If he would find the small children smoking, he would put them into the lock-up. To the elderly offenders, he would give them stricker punishments, and the relatives of the offenders would support his corrective methods. During his lifetime, the Junagadh *jamats* were free from such debasing habits.

Varas Ismail Gangji was also commissioned to collect the religious dues in Sind and Kathiawar for some times. Kamadia Nazar Ali in Sind and Kamadia Sabzali Damani in Kathiawar executed the responsible office under his control.

He was a lover of knowledge and gifted man of literary genius, notwithstanding the pressure of work, which his duties entailed upon him, he always found time to read book, which included a wide range of subjects. He had a good collection of the *farmans* of the Imam. He attended the annual *majalis* of Ganod, where he arranged an elephantine crowd and

imparted the Ismailis the *ginans* and the *farmans*. It was a significant quality of his oratory that once who heard him attentively, he became so impressed that he desired for next gathering with him. During his visit to Ahmadabad on October 13, 1903, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said,"**Wazir Ismail interpreted the *ginans* and was very courageous. The other persons in the *jamat* also became courageous after listening his *waez*, and as a result, thousand of individuals began to deliver *waez* after him.**"

N.M. Dumasia writes in his "**Short History of the Aga Khan"** (Bombay, 1903, p. 262) that, "Ismail Gangji was doing hard works to impart the Khoja *jamat* the philosophy of their Ismaili faith and the *farmans*. He himself commanded the status of a rich man, even then he organized *majalis* every year at the shrine of Hasan Pir in Ganod, inviting the *jamats* of Kathiawar. He delivered *waez* for five days on the Ismaili faith. Making them aware of the religion, he imparted them to follow the path of truth, thus he served the Ismaili *jamat*."

Varas Ismail Gangji had two sons from his two wives. His first wife was the mother of Wazir Kassim Ismail Gangji, who continued to work on the footprint of his father and died on February 9, 1910 in Kathiawar. His another wife is said to have belonged to Lucknow, the mother of Itmadi Ibrahim.

In the path of devotion and worship, Varas Ismail attained the height of spiritual greatness. His soul was in communion with God. Divine love was intermingled in his blood. Once the topic of his worship and devotion came up for discussion and comparison with another personage, of his times, when Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah was implored to give his verdict: "Mawla! what is the difference between the person and Varas Ismail?" The Imam said, **"Oh, that personage would be standing behind Varas Ismail."** On another occasion, the Imam is reported to have said that,**"When God Almighty commanded the souls to offer salutation, the second to offer salutation was Salman Farsi and third in order was Varas Ismail."**

It is related that Imam Aga Ali Shah gave a *tawiz* (locket) in 1882 to Varas Ismail to be tied on the shoulder of his ailing son, Itmadi Ibrahim with an instruction to read it soon after the recovery of his health. When he recovered, the *tawiz* was opened, wherein was written into Persian, "i darja'e pir sadruddin" (the status of Pir Sadrudidin).

Varas Ismail Gangji died On August, 1883 in Junagadh and a large number of the Muslims and Hindus joined in the funeral ceremony and paid glorious tribute. Nyalchand, the State Chief Officer expressed on that occasion that, "Saurashtra hero was waking Saurashtra void of an indispensable asset by his passing away."

In accordance with the commands of Imam Aga Ali Shah, the last rites of Varas Ismail were performed in the *majalis* in Ganod. The Imam also in person attended the last rites, and during the luncheon, he sent for a sweet-meat ball and ate a part of it with relish and showered his blessings on the gathering. Thousands attended the luncheon which was inexhaustible by virtue of the divine blessings.

It was through his own exertions that he rose from a very humble position in life to the summit of greatness. His oft-repeated words were: "Imam's love is everything for the

Ismailis, nothing is more than it. Procure love with the Imam if you want to enjoy happiness of life and death" and "Live like a lion and surrender before the angel of death as a lion." He also used to utter the words, "My life is not mine. It is an asset of the Imam."

Imam Aga Ali Shah visited Junagadh at the end of 1883 and offered prayers at his grave. He gave his verdict on the occasion and said, "**Another hero like Varas Ismail would never be born.**"

On that occasion, the Imam is also reported to have gave the posthumous title of a **Pir** to Varas Ismail Gangji. It appears that the elder group of the Ismailis considered it a private *farman* and never divulged it publicly. This was kept as a secret for over 70 years till Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah mentioned it in his *farman*. In a question of Count Kassim Ali R. Paroo (1906-1998), the Imam said, **"To become a Pir, it is not necessary to be Ahl al-Bait as all Imams' examples prove. Men like Wazir Ismail of Kathiawar was declared Pir after his death by Imam Aga Ali Shah."** (vide, **"Private and Confidential Subjects Discussed"** by Religious Study Group of Mombasa, Kenya, 1953-1959, p. 45). The conferment of the title of **Pir** was an unprecedented honour to glorify his meritorious services. Under his wide leadership, the Ismailis in Junagadh came up with flying colours, and were given legitimate protection in the State with their cultural, social and religious interests sufficiently safeguarded and their principal importance as a Muslim community adequately secured. Indeed, he piloted the ship of Junagadh with talent, skill, courage and brought it safely ashore.

Imam Aga Ali Shah appointed his elder son, Kassim as his **Wazir** with the younger son, Itmadi Ibrahim as a *Kul Kamadia*. The Junagadh State however appointed Ibrahim to the office of his late father. When Itmadi Ibrahim died on June 24, 1897, the Imam appointed Habib, the elder son of Varas Kassim as a *Kul Kamadia* in 1900, and when he died on February 9, 1910, the Junagadh State bequeathed the office of the treasury to Varas Kassim.

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah is also reported to have said that, **"Varas Ismail converted sixty thousand believers, and taken ten thousand with him."**

Itmadi Ibrahim served as the *Kul Kamadia*, while Varas Kassim was enjoined the office of his father. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah made following *farmans* for them:-

"Varas Ismail had been serving too much to my house from beginning to now. Gangji, the father of Varas (Ismail) had been serving us since the time of my grandfather. My father Aga Ali Shah assigned the office of Varas to Kassim after the death of Varas Ismail and the office of *Kul Kamadia* to his brother Ibrahim; and put on the robe by his (Aga Ali Shah) hands. He (Varas Kassim) had served too much during these ten years." (Mangevadi: 30.12.1893). The Imam also said, **"Obey like Varas Ismail and Varas Kassim. Varas Kassim had been appointed by me in Kathiawar."** (Ibid)

"It is enjoined upon all *jamats*, young and old to listen properly the orders of Varas Kassim and follow what he commands. Varas Kassim commands authority on my behalf over the whole Kathiawar. One who disobeys Varas Kassim, it means he disobeys my *farman*. One who commits hostility with him, it means he commits

hostility with me. I will be very happy with him who acts upon the orders of Varas Kassim." (Junagadh: 19.4.1900)

The Imam then presented the robe of honour to Varas Kassim and said, **"You always served the Imam and do it again. You advise the *jamat* in religious matter to attend the Jamatkhana."** (Ibid)

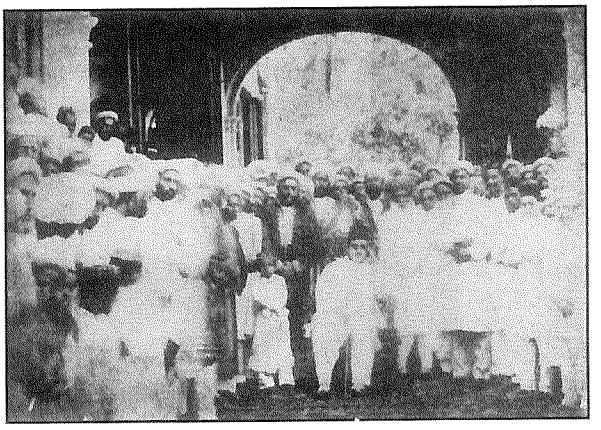
"Wazir Kassim is the head of you all the Varas. Keep listening all the times the orders of Wazir Kassim and do not exceed it. This is an obligatory act I am enjoining upon you." (Mangevadi: 2.11.1903)

"The *jamat* of Junagadh remained firm in faith since the time when Aga Hasan Ali Shah arrived in India. The whole *jamat* and Wazir Ismail, Wazir Kassim, young and old, men and women, all have served to my house too much." (Bombay: 19.12.1933) Imam Aga Ali Shah is reported to have told to the Junagadh *jamat* to recite daily the *tasbih* of *Ya Ali Ya Muhammad* and *salwat* for 14 times in the Jamatkhana in the name of Varas Ismail Gangji and pray for him. Later on, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah included the names of Varas Kassim and Itmadi Ibrahim in the *tasbih*. This practice is still operative only in Junagadh Jamatkhana. It indicates the great and incredible services of the Gangji family for the Imam and the *jamat*.



ISMAIL KASSIMANI
(1853-1909)

The Revered Noble Personality of Africa, known as Kamadia Ismail Kassimani was born in Zanzibar in 1853. He was a talented and active since childhood, and he soon became a leading merchant. In 1883, he came to Bombay on a business trip. His kind manner, intelligence and his personality made him an important individual both within the community and outside the Ismaili community in Bombay.



Upon the death of Kamadia Muhammad Choth in Hasanabad, Bombay on October 2, 1892, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah appointed Ismail Kassimani as the Kamadia for Hasanabad Jamatkhana with Mukhi Ladakbhai Haji, and had a group photograph with him and the *jamat*. In 1893, a communal riot broke out in Bombay and the Imam sent a message to his followers not to involve in it. Kamadia Ismail Kassimani was commissioned to convey the Imam's message to the Ismailis. He addressed them in very effective words and quieted the affairs.

It was his untiring efforts that the Khoja Panjibhai Club came into existence on May 28, 1900 in Bombay. He was a President and a life patron. He also played an important role in reconciling the internal disputes of the community, before the establishment of the Ismaili Council.

In 1901, a terrible famine broke out in Kutchh and Kathiawar, forcing many Ismailis to migrate towards Bombay. To stem the tide of this dreadful scourge, he clothed and housed the stricken people with his means and resources. The British India honoured him the title of **J.P.** to appreciate his invaluable services.

With the help of few interested individuals and the kind permission of the Imam, Kamadia Ismail Kassimani founded "His Highness the Aga Khan Anglo Vernacular School" in the hall of the Jamatkhana in Khadak, Bombay. It was opened on August 26, 1901, providing the education on the pattern of the Kinder Garden. He was its President and the Vice-Patron.

He died at Bombay on April 4, 1909.

JAFFER ALI A. BHALWANI, HONORARY MISSIONARY
(1903-1990)



Mukhi Rai Abajibhai Nathu Bhalwani was the Mukhi of Sanosara *jamat* in Saurashtra. He was a *hakim* by profession and treated the Ismailis free of charge. His wife Galabai (d. 1907) was also a dedicated social worker. Mukhi Rai Abajibhai died on February 10, 1956 and left behind four sons, in which Jaffer Ali Bhalwani was most prominent figure among the Ismailis.

Jaffer Ali Bhalwani was born on December 27, 1903 in the village of Sanosara in Saurashtra. He took his education upto 7th class in his village, and started working with his father. He was interested in the study of Ismaili literature since childhood.

He married in 1920 and moved to Bombay with the permission of his father. He first came in Ahmadabad, where Ghulam Hussain Basaria, the President of the Religious School offered him to join as a religion teacher for three months. He accepted it and the day before he took the charge, a certain Nur Muhammad Aliji Mona came from the village of Methan of Sidhpur district with a letter of Varas Memonji Dossan of Meta, the President of Dhandhar and Patanwada Division Council. It was addressed to Ghulam Hussain Basaria, insisting to provide one religion teacher with immediate effect for 100 students in the village of Methan. Ghulam Hussain Basaria changed his mind at once and showed it to Wazir Jaffer Ali Bhalwani with a request to go to Methan, where he was needed more than Ahmadabad. Wazir Jaffer Ali Bhalwani accepted the new offer and decided to go to Methan for three months.

He departed for Methan on March 21, 1922 with Nur Muhammad Aliji Mona and reached next day. He took charge of the religious school on March 23, 1922. It was the first phase of his religious career at the age of 19 years.

He rendered untiring services in Methan and when he completed his terms for three months, he asked to be released from his post, but his term was extend for three months, which he accepted. After the end of six months, he was once again requested to continue his services till new arrangement. In this way, he continued giving religious education to the students for two years.

In 1924, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah made a historical visit of Sidhpur. Varas Memonji promised Jaffer Ali Bhalwani to give him a chance of Imam's audience for his dedicated services. He prolonged his stay till Imam's gracious visit. The Imam made an arrival in Sidhpur on February 14, 1924. Jaffer Ali Bhalwani was presented before the Imam with the 100 students. The Imam was given its report, who blessed him. Varas Memonji said

to the Imam that Jaffer Ali Bhalwani was called from Ahmadabad for three months, and since no replacement could be arranged, he extended his term for two years, and now he would like to move from Methan. The Imam said, "This teacher will never go after closing the school. I pray that he will make more progress and earn respect." Jaffer Ali Bhalwani heard the words of the Imam and assured to Varas Memonji that he would never leave until he would be asked to leave.

Jaffer Ali Bhalwani now took leading parts in other community works. He handled the correspondence of the Mukhi and Kamadia with other *jamats*. He continued his services in Methan for 12 years (1922 to 1934).

In 1934, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah made a visit of Bombay, where he also went with other leaders. The *jamat* of Methan submitted a report to the Imam that Jaffer Ali Bhalwani had prepared two to four teachers in Methan like himself, and they also wanted to relieve him. The Imam blessed him and said, "You are talented in keeping the accounts. I transfer you in the Itmadi Department of Kathiawar. Your posting will be as a Provincial Kamadia instead of a teacher from today. You go to Junagadh and see Wazir Ghulam Hussain Kassim, where you work under his directions."

He joined the Itmadi Department in Junagadh in 1934. Wazir Ghulam Hussain Kassim received a letter after few years from Bombay to depute a trained provincial Kamadia for Yeotmal for some time in place of Alijah Sunderji Versi, who was sick. He wrote a letter to Jaffer Ali Bhalwani, who was working in the district of Ahmadabad. When he received the letter, he first came to Junagadh and delivered his charge and reached Yeotmal on December 31, 1942.

Jaffer Ali Bhalwani heard that Alijah Sunderji Versi had expired one day before his arrival, he had to take charge of C.P. Brar district on January 1, 1943. He had to travel in the whole district from one village to another, where he delivered *waez*. He also arranged religious gatherings, about eight times in a year in eight different villages, - Akapuri, Anji, Saikheda, Kumbhari, Akolabazar, Siroli, Kwtha and Titavi.

During the occasion of Diamond jubilee, the report of his dedicated services was submitted to the Imam, who blessed him and appointed him also an ex-officio of Nagpur and Yeotmal Councils and also assigned him the works in the villages of Hyderabad, Deccan. He came to C.P. Brar in April, 1946 and made Vardha as his centre.

In appreciation of his valuable services, the Imam vested him the title of **Huzur Mukhi** in 1947, **Alijah** in 1948, **Rai** in 1949, **Itmadi** in 1950 and **Wazir** in 1951. It implies that he merited five titles in five years, which is a unique example.

In 1950, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah visited Poona, where he declared an establishment of a Council in Hyderabad, Deccan with the President Itmadi Nur Muhammad Khan Bahadur Wazir Ahmad Alidina. Later on, Wazir Jaffer Ali Bhalwani was appointed as its ex-officio. He was also appointed the Joint Secretary of Birar Council on November 16, 1954, and the Imam blessed him for his appointment in a message of December 10, 1954. Prior to this, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah made him the Vice President of C.P. Birar Council and ex-officio of Hyderabad State Council.

In 1955, the Religious Educational Central Board was founded in Hyderabad, Deccan, and Jaffer Ali Bhalwani was appointed its first President. He also played an important role to build the new Jamatkhana in Hyderabad, Deccan.

On January 17, 1955, he was given a special title of **Honorary Missionary** with the following message of the Imam from Aswan :-

My dear spiritual child,

In view of your longer and dedicated services, I confer upon you the title of Honorary Missionary. This honour is above all which I bestow upon you.

I give you my most loving blessing for your best present work.

Jaffer Ali Bhalwani was also a writer and compiled many books in Bombay, such as **Ghulshan-e-Ilm** (1963), **Bhalwani Bhandor** Part I (1963), Part II (1965), Part III (1968), **Piyara Imam'ni Piyari Vatto** (1968), **Tip'e tip'e Sarovar Bhara'i** (1969), **Piro ane Sayedo Rachit Ginano** (1981, 1982), **Wazir Mukhi Alidina Kanji Ramji'nu Jivan Chalitr** (1986), **Varas Bhagat Kara Ruda** (1986), etc.

Wazir Jaffer Ali Bhalwani expired on October 2, 1990 at the age of 87 years.

JAFFER ALI MUHAMMAD SUFI, MISSIONARY
(1908-1963)



Jaffer Ali Muhammad Somji, surnamed Sufi was born at Karachi in 1908, where he took his formal education, both religious and secular. He started his career as a religious teacher as well as a supervisor of Wazir Rahim Boarding School. He also became a regular missionary in Karachi, and then moved to East Africa.

In 1932, Jaffer Ali Muhammad Somji was appointed as a religious teacher of Boys High School in Mombasa, where he also established The Young Ismailia Recreation Club Institute, and also started a periodical, called **Gulshan-e-Ilm.**

In 1936, he came in Nairobi and worked as a superintendent of Rehmatullah Valji Hirji Boarding for two years. In 1938, he visited Bombay and with Imam's guidance, he joined Recreation Club Institute.

In 1947, Jaffer Ali Muhammad Somji published the first volume of the Rumi's **mathnawi** into Gujrati. He was also well versed in the Ismaili history, the Ismailia Association for India gave him the task to edit "**Nurun Mubin**" of Wazir Ali Muhammad Jan Muhammad Chunara in 1947 for its second edition. He worked on it for two years and updated the historical accounts from 1935 to 1949. He also updated its third edition till 1951.

In 1954, Jaffer Ali Muhammad Somji was sent to Mombasa, where he served for five years, and then moved to Nairobi. He played an important part in the training of the young waezeens in Dar-es-Salaam with Missionary Ghulam Ali Shah, and returned to Mombasa on October 21, 1954

The Imam deputed Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai to Aden, Yamen as his High Commissioner on December 12, 1955 with Missionary Jaffer Ali Sufi. There were only 20 to 25 Ismailis in Aden. Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai met the governor to solve the local problems of the Ismailis and succeeded in getting separate plots for the Jamatkhana and a cemetery. Missionary Jaffer Ali delivered his *waez* in Aden as well as worked as an assistant of Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai.

Missionary Jaffer Ali Sufi then came to Karachi with Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai. Mukhi Noor Ali Gwadarwala accorded him a tea-party on December 31, 1955 in the Aga Khan Gymkhana. Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy, Varas Sher Ali Alidina, Wazir Ali Muhammad Jan Muhammad Chunara, etc also attended it.

Soon afterwards, Jaffer Ali Sufi proceeded to Bombay for performing *waez.* He also visited Rangoon and attended All Burma Annual Majalis held on 19th, 20th and 21st April, 1956 and entertained the *jamats* with his *waez.*

Missionary Jaffer Ali Sufi died on Monday, March 18, 1963 at 12.10 a.m. in the Platinum Jubilee Hospital in Nairobi at the age of 55 years. The Imam sent following message on his sad demise:-

Gastaad: March 20, 1963

Deeply grieved to hear sad demise missionary Jafferali Sufi. I send my most affectionate loving paternal maternal blessings for the soul of late missionary Jafferali and pray his soul rest in eternal peace. Best blessing late missionary family for courage and fortitude in their great loss.

It may be noted that three eminent individuals passed away within a span of 17 days, who were associated with the Ismailia Association for Pakistan, - Missionary Jaffer Ali Sufi (d. March 18, 1963), Missionary Hamir Lakha (d. March 16, 1963) and Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah (d. April 1, 1963). The Ismailia Association for Pakistan organized a grand *majalis* on April 7, 1963 for the departed souls in the Garden Jamatkhana, Karachi. Wazir Ghulam Hyder Bandali (1905-1986), the President sent a humble service with a report to the Imam on April 9, 1963. Hazar Imam sent following message on April 20, 1963:-

My dear President,

I have received your letter of April 9th.

Kindly convey to the office bearers and members of the Ismailia Association, waezeen and religious teachers my best loving paternal maternal blessings for service, with best blessings for the souls of the late:

Rai Hamir Lakha
Alijah Jafarali Sufi
Vazir A.C. Rahmatoola of Khulna

I pray that their souls may rest in eternal peace. My three spiritual children had rendered truly excellent services to myself and my *jamats.* They lived fine lives of hard work and service and were exemplary spiritual children.

JAFFER RAHIMTULLA
(1870-1912)



Jaffer Rahimtulla was the younger brother of Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah (1862-1942). He was born in 1870 and after the death of his father, his brother Ibrahim Rahimtullah gave him adequate education. After his matriculation in 1888, he joined the university and passed B.A. (Hon.) in Philosophy and Logic. He then proceeded to London in 1894 for high education in laws and eventually became the barrister. He studied in London the laws of inheritance of the Ismailis for about 30 months, and intended to compile a book for it. He was inspired to include the brief history of the Khoja Ismaili community in his book.

He returned to Bombay in 1897 and joined the Bombay High Court. He was elected as a member of the Municipal Corporation for the Mandavi Ward in 1898. He merited the title of **J.P.** in 1901. He was also a fellow of University of Bombay in 1904 and the member of the Standing Committee.

Jaffer Rahimtulla was gifted with conspicuous literary talent and he was well versed in the Persian language. He published his book, **"The History of the Khojas"** in Gujrati on September 30, 1905 and dedicated it in the name of Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah after getting gracious permission. It is divided into 30 small chapters in 287 pages.

Jaffer Rahimtulla also worked as an auditor for the Anjuman-e-Islam for four years at Bombay, and then became its Hon. Secretary.

He was also a member of the managing committee of the Khoja Panjibhai Club, and also became its Chairman. He died in 1912.



JAFFERALI ALI MEGJI, COUNT
(1909-1968)

Jafferali Ali Megji was born on December 16, 1909 in Dar-es-Salaam. Soon after his education, he joined the services of the community in different fields till he became the Honorary Secretary of the Council in 1937 and served for nine years with zeal and enthusiasm. He also established Corporations in Tanganyika.

In 1948, he was appointed the President of the Ismailia Association for Tanganyika, and held the post for eight years. He was also the director of the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust (1945-1968). He earned the blessings of the Imam on several occasions for his outstanding services, and was invested the title of **Count** in 1959.

He died on March 21, 1968. The Imam sent following message to his son on April 4, 1968 that:-

My dear spiritual child,

I have received your letter of 28th March, and I was much grieved to hear of the sad demise of your father, Count Jafferali Ali Megji.

I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late Count Jafferali A. Megji and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace.

I give you and your family my best paternal maternal loving blessings for service with best loving blessings for strength and courage in your great loss. Your father rendered many years of sterling service to the Imam of the time and the *jamath*, and his loss will be sorely felt by all. Indeed your father is very much in my heart and thoughts.

The Imam also sent another message on April 11, 1968 through the Ismailia Council for Dar-es-Salaam that:-

My dear President,

I was sad to know of the death of Count Jafferali Ali Megji.

Kindly convey my most loving blessings to his family for courage and fortitude in their bereavement with best blessings for his soul and its peace and rest.



JAN MUHAMMAD HANSRAJ, VARAS
(1838-1902)

Jan Muhammad Hansraj was born in 1838 in Kutchh. Not much is known about his early life. He however made a trip of Zanzibar in 1852 and ventured in the business field. He started first a retail store with his brother, Kanji at Bagomoyo, and eventually expanded into wholesale trade. He is still remembered as industrious and generous, who helped the arriving Ismailis in Africa.

Jan Muhammad Hansraj owned at least five stone houses with plots in Bagomoyo, and was also the deputy of Sir Tharia Topan (1823-1891) in the town since 1860.

He helped build the town's Jamatkhana and was appointed its Mukhi. In 1896, the Imam especially sent a written message to him from Bombay, investing him the title of **Varas**.

He was a generous and helped the institutions of the Ismailis, notably he gave 50,000/- shillings for the poor Ismaili Widow's Home at Zanzibar in 1900. He also built a religious school and died on December 12, 1902 at the age of 65 years in Zanzibar. His Widow's Home was indeed a blessing for the destitute. His son Mukhi Muhammad completed the project, known as Jan Muhammad Hansraj Khoja Dharam Shala. F.H.O. Wilson opened it on August 14, 1904.

During his third East African journey, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah told to the members of the Ismaili Council on July 19, 1914 in Zanzibar that late Varas Jan Muhammad Hansraj had purchased and presented the premises of the Jamatkhana, therefore, place a marble plate on the wall of the Jamatkhana, and engrave his name thereon.



JIVABHAI BHANJI, WAZIR
(1866-1938)

Jivabhai Bhanji traced his lineage from a certain Bhagat Virabhai Devasi, who lived in the beginning of 15th century in Kathiawar. Paraptani is said to be his only son, and his son was Parpiya. Karim was the younger son of Parpiya, and the son of the former was Bhima, who also lived for some time in Mundra, Kutchh with his son Hamid. The next generation followed by Hamid was Bhanji, who passed a hard life in Kathiawar in poverty with his two sons, Jiva and Kassim.

Jiva, the son of Bhanji was born on Monday, January 1, 1866 in Upleta, Kathiawar, where he acquired a formal education. Reduced to an extreme poverty, he was determined to try his fortune in different places. He roamed from one city to another till he reached Calcutta after three months. In the meantime, a certain tourist from Burma advised him to proceed to Rangoon for better prospect. He sailed for Rangoon at an early age of 14 years in 1880.

No sooner had he reached at Rangoon sea-port than he feared to enter in the city. He passed three days in dilemma around the port. His pitiable condition soon disappeared when he made contacts with some Indians, who arranged his lodging in the city and helped to find his job. Jivabhai Bhanji first worked at the shop of a certain Memon merchant for three years. Upon termination of contract, he opened his own small grocery shop, toasting pulses and grams in 1883. He worked hard till steady progress in Rangoon. Like other Ismailis and Indians, he gradually dominated the retail business, which has been also mentioned in **"The Encyclopedia of Islam"** (London, 1960, 1st vol., p. 1333) that, "Ismailis (Khojas) and Gujratis dominated the retail trade in Burma."

The British occupied Burma in 1885, and annexed it with Indian empire as a province on January 1, 1886, and appointed their own Commissioner. With the political upheavals, most of the Indian merchants left Burma. In those days, there were handful Indian Ismailis in Burma, who started the first Jamatkhana in Rangoon in 1889 at Mughal Street.

Having laid a firm foundation in his retail business, Jivabhai Bhanji called for his brother, Kassim from Kathiawar to help him. He ventured into a wholesale transactions of different varieties of grain, and imported them from India. He became a business magnate and began to be counted in an affluent class of Rangoon. He also established a flour mill in 1918, known as **The Bombay-Burma Flour Mill**, which was renamed as **The Union Flour Mill** after 1946. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah also made a gracious visit of the mill in the end of 1922. Besides, he was also an importer of the grains, ghee, oil and spices from India. He was also a commission agent of Liver Bros. for the soaps and Zeeyawadi Sugar

Mills for sugar. He was also an owner of two other grocery shops in Rangoon.

It is said that Jivabhai Bhanji visited Kathiawar for the first time after his arrival in Burma in the middle of May, 1900 to see his family. Meanwhile, he heard that Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah was leaving Bombay for Rangoon on June 1, 1900. He rushed back to Rangoon, where the Imam graced his first *didar* on June 6, 1900. This was Imam's first visit to Burma, which he referred to in his **"The Memoirs of Aga Khan"** (New York, 1954, pp. 91-92) that, "From India I made a brief tour of Burma and met my followers there for the first time." It is further added that when the Imam was accorded a rousing ovation at airport, the Imam addressed to his followers that, **"I can never forget the keen interest taken in your welfare by the leading British statesman whom it was my good fortunate to meet, and the best advice I can give you is to be devoted in your loalty to our gracious sovereign and to do all you can. Your interests are always my first thoughts and I hope under the Union Jack, we shall be able to rise to that higher level of civilization which the beneficial rule of England has placed within our grasp."**

Jivabhai Bhanji was appointed as the Mukhi of Rangoon Jamatkhana in 1904 in place of Mukhi Ramji with Ibrahim Virji Ismail as his Kamadia.

The first Ismaili Council for Burma came into existence at Rangoon on January 8, 1910, whose first President was Mukhi Jivabhai Bhanji with Khatau Fadhuani as its vice-president. It comprised of six other members - Mohammad Jasraj, Alijah Ali Mohammad, Mohammad Ku'narji, Ismail Hakimji, U'Kan Gyi Nanji and Ibrahim Kamadia Virji, who represented the then 500 Ismailis spread in Rangoon, Mandalay, Prome, Bassein, Pyaubwe, Toungoo and Tavoy.

Jivabhai Bhanji held two key posts at the same time, i.e. he was the Mukhi of the Jamatkhana and the President of the Council. The Constitution of the Council however was enforced on February 16, 1914.

After becoming the President, he launched his first scheme to move from the old worn out Jamatkhana, situated in Mughal Street, Rangoon. He also acquired another new premises in the same location for the Jamatkhana by the end of 1910.

Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah made his second auspicious visit to Burma and gave first *didar* on February 7, 1914 to about 400 Ismailis. On that occasion, Mukhi Jivabhai and his Kamadia Ibrahim Virji Ismail submitted a humble request that they had been serving as the Mukhi and Kamadia for a long time and wish to retire from the posts. The Imam asked to give the names of the new Mukhi and Kamadia. Mukhi Jivabhai humbly proposed Kassim Mohammad as a Mukhi and Ismail Hakimji as a Kamadia. The Imam made these two persons stood in the audience and congratulated them and said that they would be the Mukhi and Kamadia for the next three years, effective after the departure of the Imam on February 18, 1914.

Mukhi Jivabhai presented his *mehmani* on Sunday, February 8, 1914. The Imam graciously blessed him, and in appreciation of his meritorious services, the Imam vested him the title of **Wazir** and he stood first in Burma to be merited with this grand title. The Imam said, **"You have worked hard. I invest you the title of a Varas, means (the office of the)**

Vizirate. It indicates that I make you Vazir of whole peninsula of Burma." The Imam also said, **"You are the Mukhi till February 18, 1914, and then you execute the office of a Varas after my departure."** On that day, the *jamat* was entertained with a lunch on behalf of Mukhi Jivabhai.

On Tuesday, February 17, 1914, a day before departure, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah graciously presented the *shawl* and *khilat* (robe) to Mukhi Jivabhai and other leaders and told them to wear. Referring to this visit, the Imam writes in his **"The Memoirs of Aga Khan"** (New York, 1954, p. 161) that, "The early months of 1914 found me on another visit to Burma. I then took a step of some importance in respect to my Ismaili followers. I advised them to undertake a considerable measure of social and cultural assimilation."

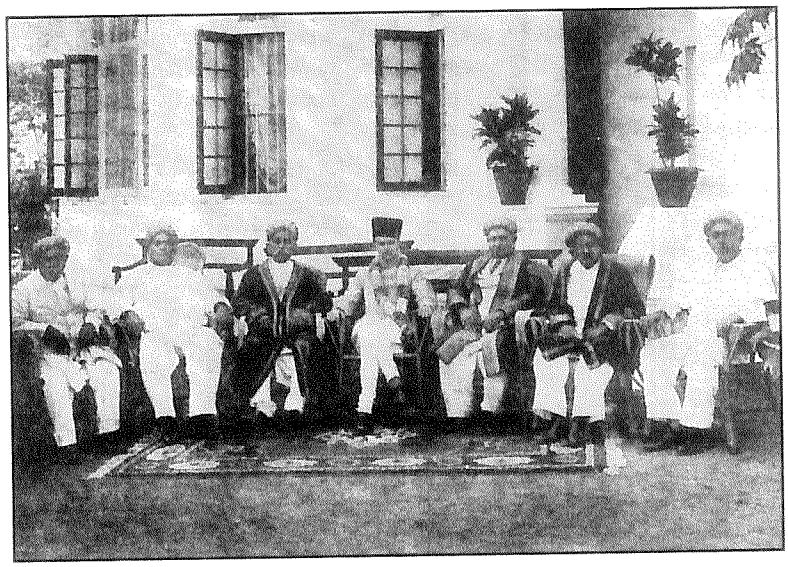
In 1916, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah conferred him to be responsible for office of the Estate Agent, whose official power of attorney he received from Bombay. He made another record of becoming the first Estate Agent of the Imam in Burma, which he continued to hold till his death in 1938. The office of the Estate Agent was vested in Rai Mukhi Hussain Ali Ibrahim Virji.

Mention should be made of Alijah Ali Mohammad, one of the members of the Council in Rangoon, arranged a dinner party at his bungalow on March 27, 1921. He mostly invited the elder leaders, - Mukhi Jivabhai Bhanji, Alijah Alibhai Hakimji, Baghwan Mukhi Mehr Ali, Walji Ahmed, Fajula Mukhi Nanji, U'Kan Gyi Nanji, Ismail of Goa & Sons, etc. Alijah Ali Mohammad addressed the audience and spoke of the measures to be taken for the progress of the Ismailis in Burma. Mukhi Jivabhai seconded his proposal and after a long discussion, it was resolved to establish **The Burma Ismaili Trading Company** to help the small dealers and poor Ismailis. Each leader declared their individual contribution and a sum of Rs. 4,00,000/- was raised as an initial capital, wherein the contribution of Mukhi Jivabhai was Rs. 75,000/-

Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah commissioned him to promote education among the girls in 1922. With this new mandate, he embarked on his mission. He was also appointed the President of the **H.H. The Aga Khan Vernacular School** in 1923.

On December 28, 1928, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah arrived in Bombay from Europe and proceeded to Delhi on next day to preside over the All India Muslim Conference. This conference was held on January 1, 1929 with 600 delegates and 3000 guests. The Ismaili leaders in India of different parts were also invited, including Mukhi Jivabhai Bhanji from Burma. This was Imam's short visit in India and left Bombay for Europe on January 5, 1929.

Prince Aly S. Khan arrived at Burma for the first time on January 7, 1933. His plane landed at the Migaladone Aerodrome in Rangoon. The Ismaili leaders, including Varas Mukhi Jivabhai accorded him a rousing welcome. Prince Aly S. Khan stayed in the bungalow of Alijah Ali Mohammad, known as the Noorani Bagh, where a group photograph was taken. Mukhi Jivabhai remained at the services of Prince Aly S. Khan with other Burmese leaders during the visit of Rangoon. It should be noted that a deputation of Burma, comprised of Alijah Ali Mohammad and Mukhi Jivabhai presented a humble service of the Burmese *jamat* at Hasanabad, Bombay on December 19, 1933. Looking them, Imam



Sultan Mohammed Shah said, **"You have entertained Prince Aly S. Khan too much when he had been in Rangoon. You have served him and were very hospitable to him. I give you best blessings."**

After a long wait of five years, the impatient Indian *jamats* received a glad news of the gracious visit of the Imam in India through a telegraphic message from Paris dated November 27, 1933 that, **"Reaching Bombay December. Happy see good spiritual children on arrival. But do not want them spend money temporary building for reception. Just wish see them arrange reception open space near port."**

The news of Imam's visit spread rapidly all over the Ismaili world and the *jamats* were extremely restless for the *didar*. Representing the Burmese *jamats*, a deputation led by Alijah Ali Mohammad, the President of the Ismaili Council for Burma and Mukhi Jivabhai, the Estate Agent of the Imam and other 40 persons, arrived at Bombay to make humble request in a *mehmani* for the *didar* program in Rangoon. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah with Mata Salamat and Prince Aly S. Khan arrived on Thursday, December 14, 1933 at 3.00 p.m. by the steamer, **Rajputana** of P & O. Co. About 5000 Ismailis had gathered at Belardpier Mall to greet the Imam, where a simple tent was erected as per Imam's instructions for the reception.

Alijah Ali Mohammad and Mukhi Jivabhai were fortunate for getting a chance to stand behind the Imam's chair on the stage inside the tent. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah made his holy appearance in the steamer at 3.30 p.m. and walked towards the tent. The Ismailis accorded a rousing welcome to the Imam. When the Imam began to climb on the stage, he saw two leaders of Burma behind his chair. Looking at Varas Mukhi Jivabhai, the Imam said, **"I have just met your son in Europe."** The mention of the **"son"** did not refer to the **"real son"** of Mukhi Jivabhai, but he was Abdul Rasul, the son of Wazir U'Kan Gyi Nanji, who held a very high respect for Wazir Mukhi Jivabhai as his own father, and Mukhi Jivabhai also loved him like his own son. After becoming a barrister in London, Abdul Rasul returned to Rangoon and became the President of the Supreme Council for

Burma between 1945 and 1947.

The Burmese deputation got a chance of the *mehmani* on December 19, 1933 at Hasanabad, Bombay including Mukhi Jivabhai. The Imam blessed them and told to go back to inform the *jamat* that he would visit Rangoon in the beginning of March, 1934.

On March 2, 1934, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah departed from Calcutta for Rangoon with Mata Salamat by the steamer, **Khandala** and reached Rangoon on March 6, 1934. Mukhi Jivabhai, Mukhi Ismail Hakimji, Kamadia Kassim Bhanji, Alijah Ali Mohammad and others warmly accorded a rousing ovation to the Imam. The first *didar* was arranged on March 7, 1934. The Imam bestowed the *jamats* with paternal maternal best loving blessings. Pir Sabzali translated the Imam's *farmans* into Gujrati with his loud voice.

The occasion of Thursday, March 8, 1934 must be marked a historical day for the Bhanji family when the marriages in Bhanji family were also performed in the Jamatkhana after *didar*. It was the marriages of Rai Abdul Aziz and Rai Jumabhai, the sons of Mukhi Jivabhai and Akbar Ali and Noor Banu, the son and daughter of Kamadia Kassim Bhanji. Pir Sabzali recited the *nikah* ceremony as per Imam's order.

In 1935, Pir Sabzali made his second visit to Rangoon to raise the funds for the Golden Jubilee of the Imam. With the cooperation of Mukhi Jivabhai, he also visited Mandalay and generated a sum of Rs. 32,000/- in Burma, in which the contribution of Mukhi Jivabhai was significant. Mukhi Jivabhai however could not attend the Golden Jubilee. His award of the "**Gold Medal**" with "**Straight Bar**" was however declared during the Golden Jubilee.

Mukhi Jivabhai married Fatimabai in Rangoon in 1921. She was born in 1903 in Poona, India and died in Karachi on March 18, 1973. His another wives were Monghibai (1868-1904) and Santokhbai (1880-1921).

Mukhi Jivabhai Bhanji expired in the early morning of Thursday, September 15, 1938 in Rangoon. The Imam prayed with paternal maternal loving blessing for eternal peace of the departed soul in reply to the *mehmani* presented by the family members and the Council. He left behind 12 sons, - Varas Ghulam Hussain, Varas Hasan Ali, Varas Hasan, Rai Abdul Aziz, Rai Juma, Alijah Razak, Rai Rahmat Ali, Habib, Abdul Mohammad, Sadruddin, Alijah Mansur Ali and Badruddin. He had also 9 daughters, - Mithibai, Saambai, Noorbai, Fatimabai, Alijiani Sakina, Khatijabai, Safat Khanu, Mehr Banu and Nabat Khanu.





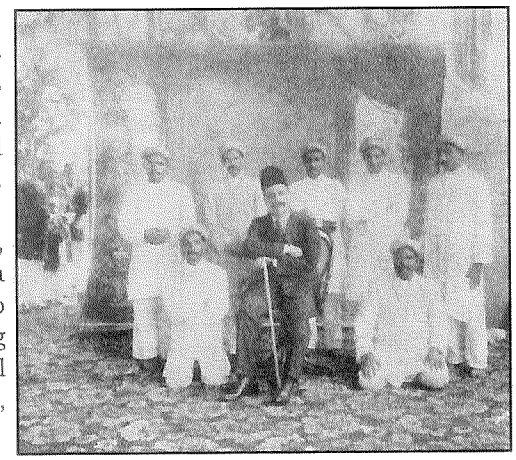
JUMA BHAGAT ISMAIL, MISSIONARY
(1868-1935)

Juma Ismail or Juma Jan Muhammad traced his descent from a certain Ramal, who lived in the village of Buara in district Thatta, Sind and died in Jerruk. His son mostly dwelt in Kutchh and returned to Bhambor in Sind. The Kalhora rulers of Sind were his deadly enemies, therefore, the son of Ramal came in Karachi, assuming the name, Bambo. His son was Motiyo, who lived in district Badin. His son Allana, whose son Vali resided in Tando Bagho, Sind and looked after the shrine of Pir Tajuddin. Vali married to Jusafa and had two sons, Ismail and Ramzan. Ismail had three sons, Muhammad, Piru and Juma; and four daughters, Chhatal, Karamsi, Mama and Fatima. Ismail came in Karachi, where his son Juma or Juma Bhagat was born.

Juma Bhagat was born in the Lassi area of Karachi in 1868, where he acquired his early education. He learnt the *ginans* at the age of 12 years in the school built by Imam Aga Ali Shah in Karachi. His service career began since 1883 as a reciter of the *ginans*, and delivered *waez* for the first time in 1891.

He however resided for the most part in the locality of Musa Lane, near Kharadhar, Karachi in the Seth Kassimbhai Vali Khoja Ismaili Poor House. He also passed his life in Gwadar, Sind, Bombay, Burma and served in East Africa for 20 years.

Juma Bhagat was in Karachi when Imam Hasan Ali Shah passed away in Bombay. About 12 days before the death, Imam Ali Shah had been in Karachi and after three days, the Imam went to Bombay. During the short visit, Juma Bhagat was on the port during arrival and departure of the Imam.



Juma Bhagat was a small trader and made his business trip as far as Zanzibar. He extended his business also to Burma. During his stay in Africa, he continued to serve the *jamat*. He was well-versed in the *ginans* and he was also a talented missionary.

During the second visit of East Africa in 1905, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah assigned Juma Bhagat for performing *waez*. The Imam also appointed six other persons to acquire *waez* training from him, namely Ghulam Hussain Jaffer, Fazal Muhammad, Hashim Visram, Abdullah Dhalla, Moledina Alarakhia, Megji Mehr Ali.

He also founded the first **Ismaili Mission Centre** in East Africa in 1905. In one of the *farmans*, the Imam said, "**Bhagat Jumabhai Ismail had rendered great and excellent services to my house. He had done hard work in Africa to establish the Mission Centre in 1905 and laid the foundation of the missionaries.**" (Nairobi: 14/4/1945). In the speech in the Ismailia Mission Conference held in Dar-es-Salaam on July 20, 1945, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah paid rich tribute to him that he was one of the great missionaries who rendered invaluable services to him. Juma Bhagat executed his services as a Chief Missionary in East African countries.

During the visit, the Imam emphasized upon the Council to open religious schools in African countries. The Khoja Imami Ismaili Schools were opened in Dar-es-Salaam, Zanzibar and Bagomoyo on November 9, 1905 with the grant of the Imam. Juma Bhagat was incharge of holding the examinations of the schools after every six months, whose report was sent to the Imam through the Councils.

In 1908, Juma Bhagat arrived in Bombay and took a leading part as a witness in Bombay High Court during the Haji Bibi Case. He surprised the court while producing old manuscripts of the *ginans* of some 343 years on August 5, 1908, and another dating 1576 A.D. His ancestors were the custodians of the shrine of Pir Tajuddin in Sind, and they inherited the oldest manuscripts of the *ginans*, which ultimately came into the possession of Juma Bhagat.

It is to be noted that Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah visited the room of the Panjibhai Club in Karachi on February 17, 1912. On that occasion, the Imam had a photograph with four eminent missionaries - Juma Bhagat, Hussaini Pir Muhammad of Karachi, Sharif Shivji of Kathiawar and Abdul Hussain Talib of Gwadar.

In September, 1924, Juma Bhagat visited Kenya and Uganda and delivered *waez*. During his stay at Nairobi, he dispelled the internal disputes of the *jamat* through his impressive *waez*. In 1925, Juma Bhagat was on African tour and delivered *waez* in different villages. He travelled from Uganda in the same year and went to Egypt and Sudan to see the Ismailis.

It may be recorded that Ghulam Hussain Varas Vali was the first title holder of **Alijah** in Karachi. His wife, Fatima (d. 1930) was the first Ismaili lady missionary in India among the women and the sister of Juma Bhagat. The daughter of Fatima was Rehmat, who married to Chief Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad in 1918.

His last tour of *waez* was in Junagadh between February 12, 1927 and July 23, 1927 and returned to Bombay on next day, and he virtually retired from the Recreation Club Institute, Bombay in 1933.

Juma Bhagat had visited East Africa again and founded a library inside the Jamatkhana of Nairobi in 1933. Prince Aly Khan visited the library on February 14, 1951, where Rai A.M. Sadruddin delivered a speech on the importance of the library and remembered Juma Bhagat as the founder of the library.

According to the report of the weekly "**Ismaili**" (Bombay, November 11, 1934, p. 11), the Piru Khalikdina Dispensary, Karachi was being run on the grant of the Imam, and missionary Juma Bhagat also provided them free medicines.

He passed his retired life in Sultanabad, Sind since 1933. He was suffering from diabetes and underwent an operation in Hyderabad, Sind. During the operation, he disallowed use of chloroform to the doctors.

Missionary Juma Bhagat died on January 31, 1935 at the age of 67 years. He left behind a son, Bandali. Nurullah Bhagat was the son of Bandali, who was a missionary in East Africa and died in Karachi.



I am aware that it is not necessary for me to meet the leaders and the members of all institutions for them to do good work. And I do not want those with whom I do not have regular contacts to think that I am unaware of the wonderful service, which they are rendering to my *jamat*. I am well aware of it. And I want them to remember this because I appreciate deeply the service, which they are rendering. It is a service to which I attach the greatest value. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Karachi, March 18, 1976)



JUMA JAN MUHAMMAD
(1850-1912)

Juma Jan Muhammad was born possibly in 1850 in Bombay, where he got his early education. He was a leading leather merchant in Bombay and a commission agent. He was also an owner of a tannery at Dharavi. He extended his business as far as Europe and Burma.

Juma Jan Muhammad also waged war against the parents who were grinding their daughters in the millstone of illiteracy, and exerted in promoting education among the females, and took keen interest in the unity of the community. In 1897, he rendered valuable services during the outbreak of plague in Bombay. Mr. Kennedy, the Police Commissioner of Bombay wrote him a letter of appreciation for his outstanding services. In 1904, the British India appointed him **J.P.** (Justice of Peace).

Juma Jan Muhammad was one of the founder members of the Ismaili Council in Bombay since its existence on April 9, 1906. He also served as a Private Secretary of the Imam. He took a live interest in Kera, Kutchh Case and gave his services to the *jamat* for many years. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah appointed him as a *Kul Kamadia*.

During the proceeding of the Haji Bibi Case in Bombay, the Bombay High Court had deputed a mission in Zanzibar in June, 1907 to record the witness of the eminent Ismailis. The mission was comprised of some lawyers and the Ismaili leaders, notably Juma Jan Muhammad, Haji Kamadia Nazar Ali, Mukhi Jamal Megji, Alibhai Bhaloo, Kamadia Bhimji, etc.

Juma Jan Muhammad was invested the title of **Alijah**, and died in Bombay in 1912.

His son Haji Muhammad Juma Merchant also became known as one of the devoted social workers in the community. Haji Muhammad Juma was born in 1894 at Bombay, where he acquired his formal education. He joined his father's business soon after completing the education. He founded the Young Men's Khoja Association when he was under graduate, and became its President in 1916. He also served as an Honorary Secretary of the Recreation Club Institute in 1922, and also its Vice-President in 1931 and an Acting President in 1933. In 1930, he founded the Ismailia Cooperative Bank Ltd., and became its founder President (1930-1939). The Bombay government appointed him an Honorary Organizer of Cooperative Society in 1932, and as its Advisor in 1934. He was the first Muslim in Bombay to get this honour.

Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah visited his home at Bandra, Bombay on January 10, 1934. The Imam graciously accepted his family's *mehmani* and asked few questions while looking the photo of late Juma Jan Muhammad and blessed them. Sultan Ali, the elder son of Haji Muhammad Juma Jan Muhammad humbly presented an engraved photo to the Imam, which he had prepared with his own hands. On that occasion, the Imam presented a *shawl* to Haji Muhammad.

In appreciation of his meritorious services, the Bombay government awarded him the title of **Khan Bahadhur** in 1939 and **J.P.** at the end of 1939.

Juma Jan Muhammad was elected as Vice-President of Girgam Cooperative Institute in 1935. He was also elected in the "B" ward and entered into the Municipal Corporation, Bombay in 1935. He built a building with four floors that had the latest amenities like safe-deposit vault etc. Prince Aly Khan performed its opening ceremony in 1937. He was also appointed as a member of the Ismaili Council, Bombay where he served for 10 years. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah granted him the title of **Alijah** in appreciation of his valuable services. During his retirement from the Council, he was given a warm reception, and his oil paint photo was unveiled in the building of the Ismailia Cooperative Bank Ltd., by the hand of Sir Fazal Ibrahim Rahimtullah. In 1946, Juma Jan Muhammad was appointed the member of the Economic Committee of the Diamond Jubilee Celebration Committee. The Imam awarded him a diamond ring with an engraving: **"Best Blessings from Aga Khan".** In 1950, he was graced an audience of the Imam and Mata Salamat. He also travelled extensively in Europe, Egypt, Japan and Middle East both on business and pleasure trips with his wife.

Alijah Haji Muhammad Juma Merchant expired at the age of 60 years on January 10, 1955. On June 9, 1955, the family members erected "Merchant Free Reading & Library" in the hall of the Welfare Society, Bombay in loving memory of Alijah Haji Muhammad Juma Merchant. Its opening ceremony was performed during a function, presided by Alijah Habib Alibhai Walji. The speakers paid rich tributes to his outstanding services.



KARAM HUSSAIN, MISSIONARY
(1882-1934)

The Shamsi Ismailis in Punjab, the followers of Pir Shams (d. 1356), mostly practiced the Ismaili faith in solitude in the garb of the Hindus, and became known as the *gupti* (secretive). These *gupti* Ismailis mostly resided in 73 different villages in Punjab. Most of them revealed themselves from the Hindu culture, and emerged in public and assumed the Islamic names soon after the orders of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in 1910. The Imam is reported to have issued his next orders in 1912, 1914 and 1916 to cut down the old customs of Hindu customs and become practicing Muslims. In 1914, with the help of missionary Pir Muhammad Hussaini Asani (1878-1951), a certain Mahesh Das or Mahesh Chand dropped his name and assumed the name, Shamsuddin. His ancestors came from a Rajput and he passed early period of his life in Jhang, Pakistan, where he became known as Jhangi Rajput. He left Jhang and settled in the village of Pir-i da Kot in Kalayanwala. Later on, he moved in the village of Haria Hatiyada in Hafizabad.

Mahesh Das assumed the name of Shamsuddin and his five sons also followed him, such as Mithra Das became Ali by name, Kirpa Ram as Rahim Baksh, Javanda Ram as Karam Hussain, Piramal Das as Karim Baksh and Wazir Chand as Muhammad Ismaili. The most prominent among them was Karam Hussain.

Karam Hussain was born most probably in 1882 in the village of Pir-i da Kot in Kalayanwala, near Hafizabad in district Gujranwala. He then came to live in Hafizabad and finally settled in Multan, where he got his formal education. Soon after his education, he worked as a T.T. in the railway department in Multan. Later on, he left the government job and started his own jewellery shop on a small scale.

Karam Hussain was interested in religious literature, and made very deep study on Ismailism. He gave religious education to the children and he himself delivered *waez* in the Jamatkhana. He was also noted to have held deliberations with eminent scholars of Arya Samaj, a vigorous reform sect of modern Hinduism, founded in 1875 by Dayananda Sarasvati (1824-1883), whose aim was to revive the Vedic rules in India. Karam Hussain also held many public discussions with the Hindu *pandits* in Punjab to justify Ismailism and Islam.

The tradition of the annual *majalis* brought good results in some places in India to unite the scattered Ismailis. In Punjab, the similar annual *majalis* for three days also started in Sialkot and Hazro with the guidance of the Imam. On each occasion, two lambs were slaughtered in Sialkot. Once after the lambs were slaughtered, some local Hindus started propaganda that the local followers of the Aga Khan had killed a cow. This resulted in a

dispute within the whole community both the Ismailis and the Hindus. The Hindus declared a social boycott with the Ismailis of Sialkot, Jalalpur Bhatia, Pind Dad Khan and Multan. When their prestige was at stake, the Ismailis reported to Lady Aly Shah in Bombay by telegram about the social ostracism. She contacted to the Governor by telephone, to which the soldiers were sent in Sialkot. It was judicated at length that it was an awful superstition to ascribe to the members of a peaceful and civilized community that they had killed a cow. The court fined some Hindu leaders and most of them apologized.

Pandit Radha Krishan, the head of Arya Samaj was a *gupti* Ismaili by birth and came from Cambalpur, near Rawalpindi. He was not much in favour of the g*upti* Ismailis declaring themselves as Muslims. He troubled the Ismailis with the help of the Hindus. Radha Krishan published "**Aga Khan aur uske karishm'e**" from Punjab into Urdu. The Ismaili missionary Varteji replied him through a book, "**Aga Khani Khudai'no Zarkat**"in 1919 from Bombay. When the aggressive propaganda reached its climax, it provoked and inspired the Ismailis to fight back. Karam Hussain designed a plan to begin a literary deliberations with Radha Krishan. He did not like to put the Ismailis at the mercy of the opposition of the Arya Samaj.

Karam Hussain came to Bombay and revealed his plan to the Imam. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah told him,, **"You leave him - a divine decision will resolve the issue"** Within a few days, the British India arrested Radha Krishan for violating peace and order and he was imprisoned, where he died in 1921. Radha Krishan however appealed to the Imam from prison for his release, but his attempts failed. Karam Hussain visited Bombay the following year, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah asked him about Radha Krishan. He said that he had died in prison. The Imam said,**"This was a divine decision. Was it not excellent?"** He reverently bowed his head in humility.

It would seem that the principal weapon in Arya Samaj against the Ismailis was their propaganda through the media of newspapers. Hence, Kesh Ram emerged in Punjab and propagated in the newspapers. The Ismailis approached the literary circles from Karam Hussain to Sir Muhammad Shafi, a famous advocate in Lahore, who assured that Kesh Ram could not withstand before the noble personality of the Aga Khan. Some Ismailis also visited Bombay and reported the anti-propaganda of Kesh Ram to Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah, asking "We intend to file a suit against him." The Imam said, "Let the dogs bark. Leave them alone and do nothing. People of Punjab are my followers."

On January 2, 1917, the members of the Arya Samaj informed Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) that, "The Hindus are embracing the faith of the Aga Khan in multitude, therefore, you prevent them." Gandhi was in Bombay at that time, he summoned these Hindus who were converted recently, and advised them not to abandon Hinduism. He also told them, "I do not interfere in your faith, but suggest you keep an open mind that the Hinduism is a good religion, and it is not advisable to exceed its boundary." They replied him, "**We have not abandoned our community, but reached in an original abode. You should also enter this original house, because we found in the Aga Khan whatever was in Ram, Krishna or Vishnu. Why should we live in the house of images, absolutely void of light. Why we do not enter the house, which is the house of the living light, the apparent and protective house of the light.**"

Soon afterwards, the members of the Arya Samaj made an approach of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He visited Multan with his friends and Hindu leaders at the end of 1917 and summoned the new converted Ismailis. Karam Hussain, Nazar Ali Sharaf, Sadruddin, Missionary Ghulam Ali Zafar Hyderi, Muhammad and Rahmat Ali Sharaf, etc. went to see him. Nehru told them, "You continue to adore the Aga Khan, but do not assume the Islamic names." Nazar Ali Sharaf said, "We have a *mazhar* of God in presence. Do you have, or at least its match? If so, let us see?" The aim of Nahru failed in convincing them.

In 1922, Karam Hussain visited Shahpur in district Mianwali in Punjab and met Karam Chand, who asked him five religious questions in writing. In reply, he was vigorous in his cogent arguments as revealed from his book, "**Mazhar-i Dhat-i Haq**" (Part I).

Karam Hussain visited Bombay in 1923 and learnt much about Ismailism from Pir Sabzali. During the Conference of the Recreation Club in Bombay on March 2, 1923, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah formed a Committee of the Recreation Club for Punjab, and appointed Pir Sabzali as its President with Karam Hussain as Hon. Secretary.

By the end of 1923, Karam Hussain founded **The Punjab Ismailia Mission Club** in Multan, and became its first President with Rai A.M. Sadruddin as an Honorary Secretary. The Mission Club began to publish useful books into Urdu.

Dr. Naqal Sin wrote him a letter on June 13, 1924 from Sialkot, asking different religious questions, which he excellently replied in his book. Dr. Naqal Sin once again wrote him on July 17, 1924 and it was also answered through his book with arguments and references. In the meantime, the Arya Samaj published few books against the Ismailis in 1929, viz. "**Aga Khani Gupt Panth", "Da'm Fareb", "Dhul'ki Pol**" etc. The religious sentiment of the Ismailis was rudely shaken in Punjab by the onslaught of these literatures. Karam Hussain dealt with them through literary encounters and calmed them down very soon.

The overt hostility of the Arya Samaj continued. In the first week of April, 1925, they organized a grand function in Sialkot, in which Pandit Pariyanand of Baroda spoke ill words against the Ismailis, branding them non-Muslims. The local Ismaili *jamats* took its serious notice. Karam Hussain was in Multan in those days and wrote to the *jamats* the measures to be taken against the Arya Samaj. The *jamats* issued a hand-bill that Missionary Abdul Hussain Bachal of Sind with other Muslim scholars would give lecture in the theatre at Sabzi Mandi, Sialkot on 5th, 6th and 7th April, 1925 to refute the allegations of the Arya Samaj. Thousands of people assembled at the prescribed venue, where the propaganda of the Arya Samaj was not only repudiated, but evidences were shown that the Ismailis were the true Muslims.

In October, 1924, Pir Sabzali collected a donation of Rs. 4000/- in Punjab for building a new Jamatkhana in Sialkot. Ghulam Hussain Jivraj of Karachi built it under the supervision of Karam Hussain, and his brother, Rai Muhammad Ismail and Missionary Inayat Ali of Kalayanwala, also assisted him. He left his jewellery shop to his elder son in Multan and resided in Sialkot with his brother. Both built the Jamatkhana within 22 months. This new Jamatkhana was completed and opened by the hands of Pir Sabzali in 1926.

Karam Hussain was appointed as the first President of the Ismaili District Council for Multan on March 21, 1928. He also became known as President Karam Hussain among the Punjabi Ismailis. He remained busy in dealing with the opponents and had to stay few months in Sialkot and other cities. On account of his constant absence in Multan, Varas Nazar Ali, the Vice-President and some other members of the Council passed a resolution in 1930 against him for the appointment of a new President. A copy of the resolution was forwarded to the Imam in Bombay. In his reply, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah wrote that, **"Karam Hussain is a life-president of the District Council for Multan, and there will be no replacement for him."**

Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah arrived in Delhi on February 20, 1934, where about 2000 Ismailis from Punjab and Frontier *jamats* assembled for *didar*, including Karam Hussain. The Imam told them, **"It is my blessings and prayers that you remain happy. God is One. Muhammad is His apostle. Koran is a true book. Kaba is a direction for all. Imam is present before you and is with you. You are Muslims. Live together with other Muslims. Utter *Salam Alaikum* to the Muslims. You have come from far. I was to come to you. I can never part myself from you."**

In Delhi, the opponents started their opposition against the Ismailis and waged propaganda against the Ismailis and the Imam. In order to impede them, Pir Sabzali, Wafi Ahmad, the President of the Sialkot Council, Karam Hussain and some missionaries of East Africa clarified through a press conference that the Ismailis followed the principles of Islam and there was no distinction between the Ismailis and the Muslims.

Karam Hussain had generated friendly terms with Sayed Muhammad Shah, the father of Missionary Ghulam Ali Shah. They exchanged their religious knowledge several times on different occasions.

Karam Hussain was noted for his piety and regularity in attendance in Jamatkhana. He suffered from diabetes at the later period of his life. Once a tumor was diagnosed on his waist. He mostly depended on domestic medicines, but it was not cured. He then consulted to Dr. Vashu Ram, who examined and suggested for an operation. Karam Hussain did not smell chloroform and told to inform him just 15 minutes before an operation. When he was informed, he closed his eyes and started meditating. Dr. Vashu Ram performed the operation , which lasted for almost two and half-hours. The doctor was amazed at the calmness of Karam Hussain's body during the operation and when he asked him how he maintained such a state, Karam Hussain replied that he remembered the name of his spiritual master.

His untiring services in the exposition of the *gupti* Ismailis with other eminent missionaries cannot be ignored. The last known group of the *gupti* visited Bombay, and in their *mehmani* on January 27, 1935, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said, **"The Khojas became revealed as the Ismailis with the preaching of Pir Sadruddin, while you were revealed with my *farmans*. Likewise, the *jamat* of Surat was also revealed with my *farmans*. I am very happy with the *jamat* of Punjab and Surat and give them many congratulations."**

The last few years of Karam Hussain's life were marred by illness and physical affliction, which he bore with tranquility and peace of mind. He died in a room, now a library in the

Jamatkhana at Pak Gate, Multan at 7.00 a.m. on September 3, 1934 at the age of 52 years. In his message through Mukhi Hussain, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said, "**The soul of late Karam Hussain reached my presence.**"

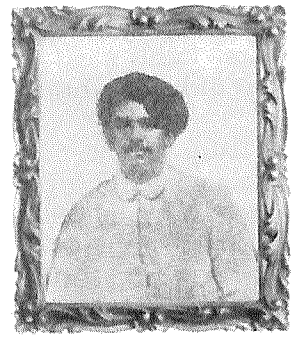
Pir Sabzali came in Multan from Hyderabad, Sind on September 27, 1934 to pay condolence to his son Mukhi Shamsuddin. He left Multan for Amritsar on September 29, 1934. According to his will to his son, the place where he died was donated for the Jamatkhana, which was built under the supervision of Rai Juma.

He had five sons, viz. Ahmad, Safdar Ali, Muhammad, Ghulam Ali and Mukhi Shamsuddin.

It is to be noted that the sister of Karam Hussain had served as a Mukhiani in Multan Jamatkhana for over 25 years. She was the mother of Rai A.M. Sadruddin. When she died in 1951, the Imam graciously remembered her as a **Lady Mariam** in a cable message to Rai A.M. Sadruddin.

Karam Hussain had a rare ability to keep his mind focused steadily on the distance horizon, and at the same time concentrated his whole effort on what was practically possible. When he resolved to accomplish something, he seldom gave up its pursuit. Swift in thought and action, he could formulate his plans on the spur of the moment. He was ambitious, but it was never personal. He laboured for his faith not for own sake. Upto the moment of his last breath, he placed his heart and soul in the service of the Imam and the Ismailis. He was one of those rare men who combined theory with practice.

Karam Hussain was a prolific writer of his time, and published many books through Ismaili Mission Club, Multan. His best known work is "**Mazhar-i Dhat-i Haq**" (Part I, II & III) published in 1923, and its third part known as "**Naklank Darpan**" appeared in 1924. His other books were "**Shri Naklank Maharaj ka Shankar**", "**Qandil-i Rah'i Rast**" (Part I, II & III), and the translation of "**Si Harfi**" of Syed Muhammad Shah into Urdu. He was also a frequent contributor to the periodicals of Multan, Lahore and Delhi.



KARA RUDA, MISSIONARY
(1881-1931)

Kara Ruda came from the village of Shishang in Saurashtra, India, but there are also reports that show Kara Ruda's birthplace to be in Mengani, Virpur or Lodika in 1881. He however spent many years in Rajkot, where acquired his education.

His name was Kader Ali, and he became known as Karabhai. When the people found him compelling in religious beliefs, they called him **Kara Ruda** (Kara, the true), making him known as Kara Ruda, or Bhagat Karabhai.

He was a contemplative and blessed with deep spiritual insight since childhood. He is reported to have taken his friends at the river bank in a winter season, and told them to sit for a while and meditate. His friends concentrated but only for a little while, but Kara Ruda remained so engrossed for such a long time that his face and forehead glistened with perspiration much to his friend's amazement.

Kara Ruda took his admission in the Alfred College soon after his matriculation, where Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) also received education. He studied upto Intermediate level. Besides English and Gujrati, he could recite Sanskrit verses fluently. He took enough knowledge on Ismailism and mastered the *ginans*.

On June 1, 1900, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah departed from Bombay to make his first visit of Burma. Kara Ruda also went to Rangoon and had a *didar* on June 6, 1900. It is said that the Imam ordered Kara Ruda to stay in Rangoon for few months to give religious education to the students. He founded the religious school in Rangoon and served as its supervisor. He also visited Mandalay, Burma to see his relative, Mukhi Ismail of Goa & Sons who died on May 31, 1919.

Kara Ruda joined the Police Department of Rajkot Agency in 1902. He was an outspoken and would never accept bribes. He was promoted from Superintendent to the Commissioner, and he became famous as the most ethical officer in the whole of Saurashtra.

Kara Ruda was regular in his prayers and he could concentrate for many hours. His faithful wife Sonbai also joined him. Both would sit in deep meditation for hours in the basement of his residence in Rajkot.

Kara Ruda was the most loyal, truthful and ethical officer. No one could corrupt to bribe him. Once a rich man dared to offer him hundreds of thousands rupees as bribe in a big case of the Agency Fund. On hearing his offer, Kara Ruda casting an eye of hatred,

annoyingly said, "The lion would never eat grass even if he was starving." The briber said, "Why are you rejecting such a big amount? You will never find anybody offering such a huge amount." To this, he said, "Many will be found making such offers, but none like me to reject it."

Being a responsible police authority, he had to go to different places on duty, and thereby seized the opportunity to propagate Ismailism. A faithful practicing individual always desires to lead a peaceful life, such was not the case for Kara Ruda. How could a job in police department and prayers be coordinated? He decided to leave the police department. The Political Agent suggested him that he was free to execute his preaching works, and could devote his spare time for the Agency's work; since it was their pride to have him in their department. He however kept on insisting and finally his resignation was accepted. He was also awarded testimonials of his honesty and best performances. He worked in the police department for 12 years and retired with honour in 1914.

After being relieved from the responsibility of his service, he could devote enough time to deliver *waez* in different parts of India. He joined the Central Board of Mission, Bombay in 1914, and travelled widely to perform his *waez* duties. He held religious gatherings almost in all the places and solved the religious problems of the people. He was well versed in the *ginanic* literature and is said to have memorized over 500 *ginans*.

Despite his regular services as a missionary, he continued to practise deep meditation. He had inspirations of spiritual knowledge from his childhood. Under whatever circumstances, either congenial or adverse, meditation was his compass. He acquired deep knowledge of Yoga, which he applied cautiously and elevated himself from higher spiritual stages. It is related that Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said to Huzur Kamadia Haji Nazar Ali (d. 1916) that, "**The speed of Bhagat Kara Ruda is so brisk in meditation that pierces one to another stages in elevation.**" Whenever the Imam was on tour of Bombay, he summoned him at his bungalow and talked for many hours. Itmadi Karim Jinnah, one of his close associates, narrated that the Imam once said, **"It is only Kara Ruda in India, who knows me in reality."** Once the Imam visited Junagadh, he took the Imam to his village and hosted the Imam with great reverence at his home.

It is generally maintained that Kara Ruda never participated in the public functions, but it appears that he was not so rigid. For instance, Kara Ruda was once in Rangoon on his duty when Hussain Ali Abdullah, the Honorary Secretary of The Youngmen Ismailia Association was leaving for Bombay and was given a warm honour on January 25, 1920 in the Union Hall of the Association. With the request of Mohammad Abdullah, the Treasurer and Ahmad Ali Moledina, the Joint Secretary, Kara Ruda presided the whole function.

In view of his incredible services, he merited the title of **Varas** on February 11, 1921.

On March 27, 1922, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah told him during the visit of the Recreation Club in Bombay that, **"Don't abandon Hirahgat and Patel, and give some grants to Rajkot. Don't give up them. You should impart the knowledge you have and convert them. You work in Rajkot with courage and seek help of 200 individuals from Botadwala, where there aren't any problem."**

In 1922, Kara Ruda was elected a member for Rajkot in the Provincial Committee of Mission for Kathiawar of Recreation Club Institute with Itmadi Ghulam Hussain Varas Kassim as its President. He was also appointed the minister of the Education Department of the Recreation Club Institute on September 30, 1923.

He also trained few ladies in Bombay and Rajkot to deliver *waez* on esoteric *tariqah* of Ismailism. His wife also became a missionary in 1924. The main feature of their *waez* was to inspire for the practice of midnight worship.

Kara Ruda made a flying visit of Karachi between September 10, 1926 and October 17, 1926 and delivered *waez* in all Jamatkhanas, and held many private gatherings. Each word of his speech penetrated into the hearts of the listeners like an arrow. In the period of Wazir Rahim Basaria (1885-1927), the Imam consigned him the duty of *waez* in Karachi in 1927. He was so captivating that the *jamat* wept like children and took the *chhanta* for their forgiveness.

Kara Ruda died on March 3, 1931 at the age of 50 years and left no child behind. During his *Ruhani Mehmani*, the Imam said, "**The soul of Bhagat Kara Ruda is annihilated. He will remain always in my remembrance. He departed when he was engrossed in deep meditation.**" On December 31, 1933, the Imam blessed his wife Varsiani Sonbai for the eternal peace of the soul of Bhagat Kara Ruda.

Kara Ruda wrote several commentaries on the *ginans* by his own hands. According to his own view, the Ismaili Pirs had converted half a million people to Ismailism and they composed over ten million stanzas of the *ginans*.

Missionary Varas Kara Ruda was endowed from birth with deep spiritual insight and strong common sense combined with sympathy and love for his fellow beings. He immersed in the interpretation of the ideas, which absorbed the greater part of his attention and concentration. He was contemplative, thoughtful and fond of loneliness.



KARIM IBRAHIM, SIR
(1840-1924)

Karim Ibrahim's father Ibrahim Pabani came from Mandavi, Kutchh. He was an eminent owner of the ships, sailing in Arabian and Zanzibar coasts. He had three sons - Ladha, Datoo and Karim. Ibrahim Pabani died in 1857.

Karim Ibrahim was born on November 18, 1840 at Mandavi, where he acquired his formal education. When his father died, he was about 16 years old. He prospered his business in Bombay and opened the branches as far as Hong Kong, Shanghai and Calcutta. Karim Ibrahim earned distinction as an industrialist and businessman very soon. He built up an extensive sea trade with China during the days when modern ships had not yet replaced sailing vessels and the hazards of the sea voyage were dangerous. His enterprise was an inspiration for many other Ismailis to establish business connection with China in silk, crockery, tea and cotton.

In 1854, Karim Ibrahim got married and when his first wife expired, he married Phoolbai in 1876. Phoolbai was the daughter of Visram Sajan. In 1883, he was nominated by the British India as **J.P**

Karim Ibrahim also managed a cotton mill in Bombay, which he sold. He then obtained the agency of the Prince of Wales Mills, also known as Hong Kong Mills for three years. In 1888, he built a new mill in his name, and became an owner of 17 mills and ginning factories. He was also known as the **King of Cotton**. He had a caravan of 40,000 workers in his mills and factories . His industry was like a small village. He also opened his agency in Japan in 1895. N.M. Dumasia writes in "**The Short History of the Aga Khan**" (Bombay, 1903, p. 243) that, "Karim Ibrahim is considered as a royal trader, and his one firm alone runs as a standard bank."

When the Prince of Wales visited India, Karim Ibrahim was knighted on November 14, 1905. He was also appointed the President of the Anjuman-e-Islam on October 30, 1906.

The British India made him Baronet, and he became the first Baronet among the Indian Muslims in 1910 when he was 73 years old.

Karim Ibrahim donated three lacs for the Prince of Wales museum. On March 10, 1910, he also donated four lacs and fifty thousand rupees to British India for promoting education in the Science Institute. He also granted ten lacs to Bombay University for scholarship to the students.

He was a generous and he also played a prominent role in the welfare of the community. Karim Ibrahim opened many orphanages, notably Karim Ibrahim Khoja Orphanage, which was opened on Sunday, April 24, 1894 and the Ibrahimbhai Girls School in Mandavi, Kutchh. He also built in Mandavi a resting house for the tourists.

He died on September 26, 1924 at 3.30 pm. at the age of 84 years in Bombay. Sir Lesaley Wilson, the governor of Bombay started to raise funds on February, 1925 to build **Sir Karim Ibrahim Memorial Fund**, and completed the task on April 3, 1925.



I would like you to recollect that an enormous amount of responsibility for progress, for worldly progress, rests on your shoulders, because you are the young men and young women sometimes a little older than young that you are of the young men and young women who have accepted the responsibility to serve voluntarily in the *jamat*. This responsibility is a magnificent challenge, and when you succeed, it is a blessing every day in your life, because you are giving out of your love and affection and your charitable feelings to members of the *jamat* and other, in your service, and this, in Islam, is a blessing. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Hyderabad, Sind, March, 1989)



KARIM ISMAIL MANSAWALA, VARAS
(1867-1956)

Varas Karim Ismail Mansawala, the first title holder of **Varas** among the *gupti* Ismailis of North Gujrat, was born in 1867 in Mansa, Gujrat and came with his family to Bombay at the age of 6 years in 1873.

He witnessed last 14 years of the Imamate of Imam Hasan Ali Shah, and blessed with the *dastboshi*. When Imam Hasan Ali Shah passed away, in 1881 and was buried in Hasanabad, he joined with the labourers in the construction of the mausoleum. Varas Karim Ismail Mansawala also present during the ascension of Imam Aga Ali Shah and took oath of allegiance.

His father, Ismail used to make the shoes of Pir Shihabuddin Shah, he also accompanied his father at the residence of Pir Shihabuddin Shah. When Pir Shihabuddin Shah passed away in 1884 and his infant son, Abul Hasan Shah was declared as a Pir at the age of 3 months, the Ismailis went to see the new Pir, who was in the arms of his mother. Varas Karim also took chance to see the infant Pir. When Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah ascended in 1885, Varas Karim was about 18 years old and had seen the Imam ascending to the throne.

Varas Karim Ismail served the *jamat* silently for 27 years. In 1912 when he was 45 years old, he was appointed the President of the newly formed Visnagar-Mansa Division Council, where he served till 1933. In the meantime, the council was transformed into Sidhpur District Council, and he was again given chance to serve as its President, which he did for 22 years till his last breath. He played prominent role to bring the Ismailis of Sidhpur *jamats* on a steady progress.

The tradition has it that a shoe-maker, called Harji Mochi was a devoted follower of Pir Shams. The descent of Harji Mochi is said to have flourished in Sidhpur in North Gujrat, mostly involved in the leather business. Varas Karim Ismail traced his lineage from the line of Mochi Momins. In 1920, he sewed with his own hands a pair of slippers for the Imam in Bombay in memory of his ancestor, Harji Mochi and presented to Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah. The Imam accepted it and blessed him. The Imam also invested him the title of **Varas** for the *gupti jamat* of North Gujrat in appreciation of his long and inestimable services.

Varas Karim Ismail Mansawala was appointed the member of the Industrial and Commerce Department of the Recreation Club Institute on April 1, 1924. He also served as the Provincial Secretary (1925-1933) of Recreation Club Institute, Bombay.

The Imam graciously visited his bungalow on January 10, 1934. Imam Sultan Mohammamed Shah blessed his family members. His son Abdul Aziz presented the Imam a fine stick, which the Imam accepted and returned it to him as a gift.

In 1936, during the occasion of the Golden Jubilee, he also visited the villages of Kathiawar with Pir Sabzali to collect donations. In 1944-45, he was conferred to be incharge of the whole Saurashtra to collect donation for the Diamond Jubilee, and lastly he also worked hard to raise funds for the Platinum jubilee in the villages of Sidhpur district.

In 1950, Varas Karim Ismail Mansawala was 83 years old and had a chance to see the Imam in Hasanabad, Bombay during the *didar* program. The Imam called for him and asked his age. Instead of showing his age for 83 years, he erroneously said 50 years. The Imam asked, "Did you see Shah Hasan Ali?" To this, he replied affirmatively. The Imam calculated on the fingers and said, "Your age should be 83 years." He became highly surprised and said, "Mawla, now I have became an old man and please accept my resignation from the post of Council." Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said, "You are still young, you are not old." He continued his services with the Council till his death.

In 1954, Prince Aly Khan visited Bandra, Bombay. Varas Karim Ismail was sitting with other individuals in the Jamatkhana. When Prince Aly Khan saw him, he came near and sat down on the floor with him and talked with him for few minutes.

During the last years of his life, he retired from his business of leather works. Varas Karim Ismail died on April 8, 1956 at the age of 92 years, and left behind two sons and a daughter. In his message from Canes on April 13, 1956, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said, "**I pray my best maternal and paternal blessings to late Varas Karim for his life long devoted services. I pray for the soul. Best blessings for services.**"



KARIM KASSIM, VARAS
(1878-1958)

Karim Kassim was the younger brother of Varas Bandali Kassim (1875-1956). He was born in 1878 in Karachi, where he acquired his formal education from Sind Madresa-tul-Islam School upto fourth class. He held a strong command in English, Gujrati and Sindhi languages. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan was his classmate.



Karim Kassim left Karachi most probably in 1908 and made Hyderabad as his next home. He built a beautiful bungalow at Prince Aly Road, Hyderabad. The bungalow was an expensive and also an exclusive construction. Prince Aly Khan also stayed at the bungalow during his visit to Hyderabad.

He had a vast flourishing leather business, and besides Karachi and Hyderabad he had its branches in Bombay, Delhi, Lahore, Agra, Kanpur, Quetta, etc. Karim Kassim was an owner of more than 100 acres of land on the bank of Phuleli river in Hyderabad, where he built beautiful gardens and residential buildings, decorated with latest swimming pools, known as Karim Bagh. He was the first in Hyderabad to introduce the motorcar and telephone.

Karim Kassim enjoyed prosperous and eventful life. He was a member of the Municipal Corporation in Hyderabad for 25 years and elected every year. He had cordial relations with the eminent individuals of his time, namely Nizam of Deccan, Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, Sir Haji Abdullah Haroon, etc. He also had friendly relations with the feudal families of Sind, including Mir of Khairpur, Talpur, Mirs and others. He also had close contacts with influential British officers.

Karim Kassim was a dedicated social worker both inside and outside the community. The Viceroy of India also conferred upon him the title of **Khan Bahadhur** in 1918 for his meritorious services during the first world war.

On May 6, 1920, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said in the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi that, **"I appoint Karim Kassim as my Wazir. Wazir Karim Kassim will execute his office as a Wazir of all over Sind and I tell to all the *jamats* of Sind to follow the orders of Wazir Karim Kassim and assist him in the community affairs."** The Imam also told him, **"Wazir Karim Kassim, I congratulate for your office of the Wazir and**

bless you. *Inshallah*, you will work to enhance unity in the *jamats*."

The Jamatkhana in Hyderabad was built in 1899, when there were about a hundred Ismailis in the town. The *jamat* increased after 25 years and reached upto 325. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah donated Rs. 20,000/- for the new Jamatkhana. Varas Karim Kassim donated Rs. 10,000/- and other donors shared for Rs. 11,000/- The new plot was purchased for Rs. 18,000/- and Varas Karim Kassim laid its foundation stone on Tuesday, July 21, 1924. All the Ismailis, including Huzur Mukhi Hussain Alarakhia, Mukhi Rahmatullah Bana, Kamadia Vali Mohammad Suleman, Missionary Hamir Lakha, etc, attended the foundation ceremony.

Karim Kassim was appointed as the President of Khwaja Ismailia Sind School on January 20, 1926 and he was also the President of the Hyderabad branch of the Recreation Club Institute. He was also the first President of the Ismailia Association for Sind in 1928, formerly known as the Anjuman-e-Ishait-i Islam.

Karim Kassim also took active part to re-establish and re-settle a number of people who lived in the slum area in the interior parts of Sind. He extended his monetary support to set up and maintain small businesses for their livelihood. He also acted as the President of H.H. The Aga Khan Council for Hyderabad and Upper Sind, whose jurisdiction extended from time to time to Punjab and Frontier.

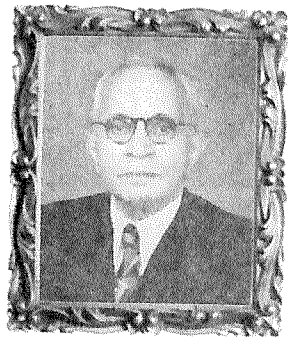
In 1941, the British India declared him as **J.P.** (Justice of Peace).

Karim Kassim is also credited to have arranged marriages in Sind and spent his own money in the ceremonies. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah was so pleased with his noble service that he awarded him the special title of "**Commissioner for Marriages**" with a silver casket and a letter of appreciation in 1949.

He married twice. His first wife was Danabai, who gave birth of a son, Hussain and a daughter, Zainab or Jenubai. Zainab married to Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana. She was the first Muslim lady in India to be appointed as a parliamentary secretary in 1931, a post that she held upto 1951 in the Sind Government. She was also elected as a member of the Sind Legislative Assembly in 1937 at the time of the separation of Sind from Bombay Presidency and continued to be M.L.A. upto 1952.

His second wife was originally a Hindu Rajput, called Khushali. She embraced Ismailism by the hands of the Imam and was named, Kulsoom. She was well educated and interested in the Islamic History. She also performed *waez* locally in Hyderabad, and was also the founder President of Ladies Committee. She died in Hyderabad on October 8, 1955. She was the mother of a son and six daughters.

Varas Karim Kassim died on December 8, 1958.



KASSIM ALI HASAN ALI JAVERI, CHIEF WAZIR
(1877-1968)

Sayed Imam Shah (d. 1520) is said to have launched a brisk mission in Gujrat. He converted a certain Khoja Jiva in Khambat, Gujrat. Khoja Jiva was well rooted in Ismailism and he himself converted large number of Kanabi caste of the Hindus, notably Motilal, Daya Ram Nathu, etc. The descendant of Motilal migrated to Surat during the time of Imam Nizar II (1585-1628), who deputed Sayed Abdul Nabi in India, whose tomb is in Kankara Khadi, near Surat. He was followed by the *vakils*, Hasan Pir (1652-1715), Sayed Ghulam Ali Shah (d. 1792), etc.,

Motilal, the ancestor of Kassim Ali H. Javeri practiced Ismaili faith in the mantle of a Hindu, and his descendants lived in various cloaks, shaded with the Hindu social custom for a long period, and they became known as the *guptis*. They performed the religious service in the house of Jedas Prabu for 75 years in Surat. Later on, the house of the forefathers of Kassim Ali H. Javeri was used for 45 years as the Jamatkhana, where Imam Aga Ali Shah is reported to have visited for five times.

The *gupti* Ismailis of north Gujrat abandoned the scarf of concealment, cutting down the Hindus customs, and revealed themselves as the Muslims with the orders of the Imam at the end of 1914. Bhagat Ramji Shivji Mehr Ali (1844-1919) arrived in Surat with an expressed *farman* of the Imam for the *gupti*. Meanwhile, a local newspaper in Surat, called "**Deshi Mitra**" propagated against the *gupti* Ismailis. It gave the guptis strength and courage to reveal their true identity in public. The first group comprising of 70 individual came forward and introduced themselves on June 10, 1915 and Islamitized their names. Among them, Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri (Hindu name Chhabildas Harkisandas Javeri), and his brothers, Didar Ali Hasan Ali Javeri (Hindu name Dayabhai Harkisandas Javeri), became the Mukhi and died in 1919, Nuruddin Muhammad Hasan Javeri (Hindu name Nanabhai Harkisandas Javeri), who died in 1954; and Karamali Hasan Ali Javeri (Hindu name Kalidas Harkisandas Javeri) became distinguished as the Ismaili Muslims and abandoned the Hindu customs. They also published their Islamic names in the Government Gazette and placed a sign board on their Jamatkhana, designating it as the Shia Imami Ismaili Jamatkhana.

Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri was born on May 12, 1877 in Surat. His surname was **Dhupelia** as his father Hasan Ali's (1844-1924) profession was in the incense, a kind of fragrant substance, called *dhup*. Soon afterwards, his surname became **Javeri** for his business in jewellery. His father Hasan Ali died on March 29, 1924 at the age of 80 years. Kassim Ali was a leading trader of the diamonds in Bombay. In 1897, when the first marriage of the Imam solemnized in Poona, the *gupti* Ismailis of Surat administered an

excellent arrangement and became familiar among the Ismailis.

In 1900, Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri went to Europe on his mercantile trip and lived in Paris, where he and his brother, Alijah Nuruddin Muhammad Hasan Javeri (d. 1954) erected M/S D.N. Javeri & Co. He made a Jamatkhana in his residence with Murad Ali as Mukhi and Ashad Ali Haji as the Kamadia. His brother, Alijah Nuruddin Muhammad served as the Mukhi between 1907 and 1909.

Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri returned to India in 1908 during the Haji Bibi Case and produced a letter which was 120 years old in the court. Imam Shah Khalilullah Ali had bestowed it upon his two ancestors, namely Shivlal Prabu and Waja Mulji, and clarified that the tithe and offerings presented to the Imam, absolutely belonged only to the Imam. He also refuted that the growth of Ismailism was not originated before 50 years.

He again went to Paris and returned to India in 1914 and lived in Surat. He began to serve the *jamat* with his efficiency and ability, and settled finally in Bombay since 1920.

In 1922, he was appointed the Kamadia of Darkhana Jamatkhana of Bombay. He also became a Private Secretary of the Imam in 1926. In 1930, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah sent him to Syria as his special commissioner. In 1932, the Imam appointed him as a Chief Mukhi.

Muhammad Ali, the son of Chief Wazir Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri, Bar-at-law, became the first Ismaili to obtain the degree of LLB (Hon.) in London in 1933.

It is beyond power to express his valuable services he had extended during the Golden Jubilee in 1936, and was awarded a **Gold Medal** with **Chevron** and **Straight Bar**.

Lady Aly Shah left for Iraq in January, 1938. Special arrangement were made for her comfort, and for that reason the Imam took with him Hussain Ali, the son of Chief Wazir Javeri by air to Basra, where he made all possible arrangements for her quiet and peaceful landing.

The first meeting of The Aga Khan Legion was held on December 12, 1940 at the residence of Joint Mukhi Rai Kassim Ali Manji Nathu of Darkhana. It was presided by Prince Aly Khan to review the arrangements and the funds for the Diamond Jubilee. Chief Wazir Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri presented his diamond ring of Rs. 6000/- with enormous cash to Prince Aly Khan, making it an auspicious initiative.

He also attended the first Ismaili "Mission Conference" held in Dar-es-Salaam on July 20, 1945.

He was consigned to manage the tour of Europe to arrange the diamonds and bring them safely to India for the Diamond jubilee in 1946 with Wazir Abdullah Sumar Shivji (d. 1960). It was indeed a perilous assignment, which he accomplished after some initial problem. The diamonds from London Diamond Syndicate made a five thousand mile journey from England in H.M.S. Derbyshire. He was a veteran leader, so was a great social worker. Whenever the Imam made his tour of *didar* in India, he took all responsibilities

of the arrangements on his shoulders.

He bore the title of **Chief Wazir** in November, 1949 and became the first to be graced with this honorific conferment, and none else merited till this day. The Council, *jamats* of Darkhana, Kandi Mola and Hasanabad, the Ismailia Association and other institutions honoured him in a grand reception. The Ismailia Association also gave him a reception, and President Alijah Ghulam Hussain S. Thaver explained his services in his speech. The World Head of the Ismailia Association, Huzur Wazir Ali Mohammad Macklai spoke in his speech that, "I knew him when I was eight years old. The Jamatkhana of the *guptis* existed at C.P. Tank, where our Institution started its initiative works. He still looks the same today, as he did then, 50 years ago. The Imam commanded the *guptis* to reveal themselves in 1914. Kamadia Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri did not hesitate, but overcome the situation instantly and responded the Imam's call at once. I never found him loosing his temperament."

He also rendered his invaluable services to the citizens of Bombay. The Bombay government vested him the title of **Khan Bahadur** in appreciation of his services.

Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri was also a member of Bombay Council, and the founder member of the Federal Council for India. His services during the Platinum Jubilee were beyond measure. He also rendered his services to the Diamond Jubilee Trust and Platinum Jubilee Investments Ltd. He served the Ismaili *jamat* in different capacities for about 50 years.

Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah summoned a conference of the Ismaili delegates in Cairo to review the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee upon the completion of 70 years of his Imamate. Chief Wazir Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri also attended on behalf of the Indian *jamats*. The delegates discussed mutually in the morning and met the Imam in the evening on March 15, 1951 in Hotel Semiramese. The Imam emphasized that the program should be worked out on the pattern of Golden and Diamond Jubilees to improve the social and economical conditions of the Ismailis. The Imam, Mata Salamat and Prince Aly Khan invited them on next day for a lunch at Mohamedali Club and graced them with a photograph.

The Imam visited India after independence to see the *jamat* in 1950 and 1951. Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri's health was impaired, nevertheless, he stood in Imam's service actively.

In 1946, the Imam formed a Diamond Jubilee Trust. Later on, some members stood against the Trust in 1953. Muhammad H.H. Premji and his colleagues filed a suit against the Trust in Bombay High Court. The Chief Justice and Justice Tendukar probed the issue, and dismissed the case and gave verdict in favour of the Trust on September 14, 1953. Chief Wazir Kassim Ali Javeri played a vital role in its prosecution. The Imam sent a message to the Council for his admirable role on September 17, 1953 that, "**For the best reconciliation in Diamond Jubilee Case, I am very happy. All the Ismailis in India will remember him for ever for the result of reconciliation.**"

It is to be noted that some irresponsible individuals raised some unbearable doubts in Poona. Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri delivered a long speech in Narangi Bagh Jamatkhana to clear the doubts. The gist of his speech was published in the **"Platinum Jubilee Bulletin"** (Bombay, January 15, 1954), in which he said, "The glory of Imam Aga Shah Khalilullah was like an emperor. The daughter of the Iranian king was the wife of Imam Hasan Ali Shah, who inherited enormous ornaments and massive wealth in dowry. Due to some disputes, Aga Hasan Ali Shah came in India and brought his wealth with him. The belt of the Imam was embedded with diamonds and pearls of million rupees. The big diamond stubbed in the buckle of another belt cost lac of rupees and I have seen a like belt worn by Pir Shihabuddin Shah. The treasure of Aga Hasan Ali Shah was inexhaustible and full of gold. These are the facts of my own experience. He was so generous that the gold bars were given away in charity all the times. In past, the Ismailis in India were not as refined as they are now, when hardly 75 Ismaili families resided in Bombay. The Imam guided and financed them in business fields. He established schools and other welfare organizations. Today, these Ismailis hold a front rank in all fields as a progressive community because of his guidance. Besides, they have become great traders in other countries. The Imam would visit the Jamatkhana on every Saturday in Poona long before 50 years. The Ismailis of Bombay also came in Poona for *didar* and blessings. They stayed in a compound just opposite the railway station. They were fed daily from the kitchen of the Imam, called as *anbar,* spending Rs. 50,000/- per month. Each two individuals were given enough food that would be enough for twelve people. The Imam spent colossal amounts for his followers. The royal charity of the Imam irrespective of cast and creed is well known in the world. His financial assistance is continued in health and education fields for the welfare of the followers. The Ismailis must realize these facts and be not misguided in the current propaganda and keep their faith firm."

Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri was also invited to Cairo to attend the token ceremony of the Platinum Jubilee on February 20, 1955. The ceremony was held in the Cleopetra Hall of Hotel Semiramese, attended by 62 delegates. It was a solemn ceremony of 20 minutes. The Ismaili leaders most humbly presented 70 gold *ginnies* to the Imam, which was graciously accepted. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah presented the same gold *ginnies* to the delegates. Besides, the Imam also presented it to Chief Wazir Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri and Wazir Abdul Hamid Ali.

His invaluable and unstinted services can be judged from the following message of the Imam, which was mailed to him on February 1, 1956 that:-

My dear Kamadia,

You spent your whole life serving me and if I am to give you blessings, I have to do it all days and every day for the rest of my life. But I tell you how very much I appreciate your life long service.

You had the luck to be born about the same time as myself. So you served me every day of my life almost I have to write this to you because otherwise I would have to write often my blessings to you.

Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri visited Cairo to see the Imam and presented services on behalf of the Indian *jamats*. The Imam sent following message through the Federal Council for India on February 11, 1956 that:-

LT AGAFEDERAL
Bombay

My Chief Mukhi Vazier Kamadia Kassamali presented services and *dastboshi* all Bharat *jamats*. I send my most loving best paternal maternal blessings to all. My beloved spiritual children of all Bharat ever in my thought and close to my heart.

The marriage of Rahmat Banu, the daughter of Itmadi Hussain Ali Javeri, the son of Chief Wazir Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri was performed by Amir Ali, the brother of Count Abdullah Hashim Gangji of Africa, on March 4, 1956 at Vallabhai Patel National Stadium, Bombay. Prince Aly S. Khan attended the wedding.

During the last days of his life, his health deteriorated and needed much care. He at last died on Tuesday, May 28, 1968 at Bombay. The Imam sent following telegraphic message:-

Geneva: June 1, 1968

Was much grieved to hear of sad demise Chief Vazir Kassum Ali Javeri. I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late Chief Vazir Kassum Ali Javeri and pray for eternal peace rest his soul. Late Chief Vazir Kassum Ali served my India *jamat* well and loyally for many years and will be greatly missed by my *jamat* and myself. I send my best loving blessings to Javeri family for courage and fortitude in their loss.

His sons Itmadi Hussain Ali and Itmadi Hashim Ali continued to serve the community on the footprints of his father.

KASSIM ALI MUHAMMAD JAFFER, MISSIONARY
(b. 1925...)



Saboo, the great grandfather of Varas Kassim Ali lived in Jerruk, Sind. His grandfather, Karmali and his family known as the Sabooani family migrated to Karachi and settled in the location of Kharadhar. The father of Varas Kassim Ali was Muhammad Jaffer (1856-1946), served as a volunteer, and supplied the vegetables and fruits daily in the Honeymoon Lodge for Imam's family. In 1920, he generously contributed funds in the building of the premises of the *Baitul Khiyal* in Kharadhar Jamatkhana.

Muhammad Jaffer died in 1946 at the age of 90 years. He had married twice and had no child from his first wife, called Virbai. He is reported to have sought permission from the Council with the consent of his wife for the second marriage. When he made a humble submission, the Imam asked the reasons. He said that he wanted children. The Imam conceded on a condition that as the children came; the wealth would disappear, what he would prefer? He gave choice for the children.

Muhammad Jaffer proceeded to Ahmednagar with his wife at the invitation of his close friend, Varas Dayabhai Velji (1870-1937). He married Fatimabai of the Sultania Orphanage. From this marriage, he was blessed with seven sons, Fateh Ali, Sadruddin, Shamsuddin, Kassim Ali, Ghulam Hyder, Ashiq Ali and Noor Ali; and four daughters, Khatoo, Malek, Gulshakar and Noorbanu. The most prominent personage among them under our review is Varas Kassim Ali Muhammad Jaffer.

Varas Kassim Ali, the sixth child, was born on January 26, 1925 at Janbai Maternity Home, Kharadhar, Karachi. During four years of secondary education, he remained as a boarder in Wazir Rahim Basaria Boarding, Garden, Karachi. He finished his MA from Bombay University in 1942. In 1944, when he was a member of the Aga Khan Band, his father preferred him to become a missionary, adding that he would serve him with a cup of milk with his own hands. Indeed, the achievements show that his father spoke symbolically and aimed for him much sweeter things than milk.

Kassim Ali joined as a religious teacher of Kharadhar Night School in 1942 till 1948. He was also a Cub Master of Kharadhar Cub Pack and was one of the leaders to take the cub band to Bombay to attend the Diamond jubilee of the Imam in 1946. He also joined the Waez Class Training Course in 1944 in Karachi for one year, sponsored by the Ismailia Association for India. On March 21, 1948, he emerged not only as an honorary missionary of the newly formed Ismailia Association for Pakistan, but also became its founder member. In 1950, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah expressed a desire to have 500 waezeens instead of 5 waezeens. Varas Kassim Ali played an important role in organizing waezeen classes

for both gents and ladies through out Pakistan. He also became the Honorary Joint Secretary and then Honorary Secretary of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan between 1953 and 1966.

Varas Kassim Ali is credited to have recited the Holy Koran during the Platinum Jubilee on February 3, 1954 in Karachi. He had also an honour of Tilawat-e-Koran during the *Takhat Nashini* of the Imam on January 23, 1958 at Karachi and Bombay on March 11, 1958. The Imam also promoted him in the Ismailia Association for Pakistan by appointing him its Vice-President (1963-1972). In 1972, he became the President of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan for eight years (1972-1980). During the time of his office as the Vice-President and President, various programs were organized, where the waezeens were trained for India, East Africa, Iran and Syria.

Varas Kassim Ali launched his first ex-Pakistan visit in East Africa on September 3, 1954, which was his personal visit. When he was returning, Count Lutaf Ali Merali Lalji, the President (1960-1963) of the Ismailia Association for Kenya requested him to extend his stay to deliver *waez* in different quarters in East African countries with his own expenses. He accepted it and visited different places with Count Lutaf Ali Merali Lalji and delivered *waez*. Count Lutaf Ali sent its report to the Imam in Europe and the Imam appreciated the services of Varas Kassim Ali in a message.

He returned Karachi via Bombay, where he also delivered *waez* and Rai Mahdi Hasan Ali, the Mukhi of Darkhana Jamatkhana presented him a gold ring.

On October 31, 1954, an assembly was arranged at Garden Jamatkhana to honour the invaluable services of Varas Kassim Ali Muhammad Jaffer in presence of distinguished leaders, such as Chief Mukhi Wazir Chagla Vali Muhammad (1885-1966), Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai (1894-1971), etc. Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy (1905-1956) mentioned his services in his speech and read following *farman* of the Imam:-

19th October, 1954

The President and Members,
Ismailia Association,
Karachi.

My dear President and Members,

I give my best loving blessings to Hon. Missionary Huzurmukhi Kassimali Jaffar for the good work he has done in Africa; also to yourselves for sending such an able member of your own Brotherhood there.

I give special blessings for his zeal and convincing preaching and all the trouble he took to travel by air, rail etc., to many different centres.

On that occasion, a copy of the above holy message in a frame was presented to him by the hands of Chief Mukhi Wazir Chagla Vali Muhammad.

With the request of the East African Ismailia Associations, he visited East Africa on April, 1959. He delivered *waez* for over 8 months in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. On the eve of his departure from Nairobi, he was honoured in a banquet of the Ismailia Association for Kenya in Nairobi on Saturday, January 16, 1960 at the Diamond Jubilee Hall. It was attended by 250 guests. Wazir Lutaf Ali Merali, the President of the Ismailia Association for Kenya made an opening speech, enumerating his meritorious services for eight months in East Africa. In his speech, Count Kassim Ali Paroo said, "Sometimes, I become tired listening to the *waez* of the missionaries, but Missionary Kassim Ali has sweetness in his eloquence and an art of presenting. The sweet echo of his melodious voice still lingers in our ears." He left Zanzibar on January 18, 1960.

The Ismailia Association for Kenya sent a report of his *waez* to the Imam on January 18, 1960. In his reply, the Imam said:

My dear President and Members,

I have read your report of 18th January with much interest.

I am very happy with the good work you are doing, and I give my best loving blessings to all the members of the Ismailia Association for their devoted services.

Kindly convey my best paternal maternal blessings to Missionary Kassamali M. Jaffer and all those who accompanied him during his tour of East Africa, and offered travelling expenses.

Varas Kassim Ali Muhammad Jaffer also participated in Ph.D. scholars' deliberations to work out establishment of the Institute of Ismaili Studies and submitted its report in the World Ismailia Associations Conference chaired by the Imam in 1975 at Paris. He was also appointed as the member of the Review Committee of the Institute of Ismaili Studies Ltd., London in 1978 and was graciously blessed with the personal message of the Imam.

About 2700 Ismailis from 20 countries gathered to pay last tribute to the 48th Imam at Aswan, whose official resting of body was to take place in a mausoleum. Mawlana Hazar Imam arrived in Cairo on February 18, 1959 and held a meeting with President Nasser of Egypt. In Aswan, a tent was pitched for a *didar*. Hazar Imam was to reach from Cairo to Aswan at 5.00 p.m. on February 19, 1959, but the train was late and reached at 9.30 p.m. The *jamat* was waiting anxiously in the tent from 6.00 p.m. On that occasion, Varas Kassim Ali delivered *waez* with the recitation of Holy Koran. The *jamat* waited anxiously till 11.30 p.m. then the Imam regretted for not coming for *didar*. The Imam visited the tent on next day at 8.30 a.m. and graced the *didar*. The bier of the 48th Imam was lifted on that day at 3.00 p.m. from Nur al-Salaam to the mausoleum on the hill. Varas Kassim Ali recited the verses from Holy Koran, including the verse from Sura Noor inside the mausoleum.

The Imam visited Goa for the first time on October 27, 1960. On that occasion, the Imam commanded him to recite Sura Ikhlas at the opening ceremony of the new Jamatkhana.

His honorary services were never confined to his homeland, and made several tours abroad to deliver *waez* on several occasions. He visited East Africa in 1954, 1959, 1965 and 1966, Syria in 1965 and 1972, Europe in 1984, a long tour of 75 days in United States of America and Canada in 1981, in 1989 for 72 days, in 1992 for 15 days, in 1994 for 20 days, in 1996, 1998, 2000 and lastly in 2002.

His long tour with Professor Jawad Muscati in 1965 was a historical. He left Karachi on February 24, 1965 for East Africa and visited various cities. He left East Africa on March 13, 1965 and reached Cairo, where he stayed for six days. He visited al-Azhar Mosque and the universities and he also held meetings with the famous scholars and professors on Islamic studies. He left Cairo on March 19 and arrived in Beirut for one day. He proceeded to Salamia, Syria on March 21, 1965 where he performed *waez* and arranged many gatherings. He left Salamia on March 26, 1965 for Khawabi. On the way to Khawabi, he took an opportunity to see the town of Masiyaf. After visiting Khawabi, he arrived in Damascus on March 29, 1965, and took visit of the universities and libraries. He returned to Beirut on April 1, 1965 and came in London on April 4, 1965. Then he proceeded to Paris on April 20, 1965. The Imam graced him an audience on May 4, 1965, where he submitted the report. He was fortunate to have another audience with the Imam on next day. On his way back to homeland journey, he also visited Lausanne *jamat* in Switzerland, and then reached Kuwait, where he stayed for five days and delivered *waez*, and finally returned to Karachi.

Varas Kassim Ali had an opportunity to make a trip of Chitral in the same year. It must be noted that he had four hours drive on 33 miles mountainous road along Kivu Lake, while going from Uganda to Congo and the view point at the height of 8170 feet. He had also been on Usumbara mountains while going to Lushoto in Tanzania and also travelled on Lebanon hills along Mediterranean as well as on the loftiest mountains of Khwabi in Syria. But his trip of Chitral in Pakistan surpassed in all respects. He started his journey from Peshawar on October 20, 1965 with a deputation headed by Varas Captain Amir Ali (1910-1978), who was commissioned by the Imam for the welfare of the Ismailis in Chitral. The deputation comprised of Professor Jawad Muscati, Itmadi Qamaruddin M. Hashwani and Akbar Allana for economic problems.

Varas Kassim Ali left Peshawar with the deputation on October 20, 1965 by jeeps and after travelling 150 miles via Mardan and Malakand, reached Dhir. Before reaching Darosh, they passed through Lawari peak, about 8000 feet high. They passed steep hilly tracks with scores of dangerous blind curves. They reached Chitral on October 21, 1965 and had a meeting with the ruler of Chitral on next day. On October 23, 1965 they resumed their journey and after passing a passage of 55 miles, they reached Buni in Mastuj Tehsil, and then returned back to Chitral on October 25, 1965. They also visited Lotku, about 30 miles from Chitral, 15 miles by jeeps and 15 miles on horses. They finally returned to Chitral on October 28, 1965 and then took return journey on next day.

The Imam made the visit of the East African countries on October 18, 1966. The Imam summoned him especially for translating the *farmans* into Gujrati before the *jamat* in

East Africa. At the end of the tour, the Imam sent him following message on December 16, 1966 that:-

My dear Missionary Kassamali,

I was very happy indeed with your excellent work during my visit to East Africa. I send you my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for your good work and devoted services.

With regards to all the problems you have referred to me, I will write to you again giving you my decisions, once I have been able to consider the matters.

Your work in East Africa was excellent and I could not have been happier with it.

It will be interesting to cite an incident that during his auspicious visit of East Africa between October 18, 1966 and December 11, 1966, Hazar Imam made many *farmans* against the degrading habits of drinking and smoking. Varas Kassim Ali was on his duty in East Africa, and when he returned, he explained the gist of the *farmans* in Aden and Karachi Jamatkhanas. He also emphasized upon those who were smokers and addicts of alcohol. His delivery struck the hearts of the listeners, and most of them abandoned the diabolic habits. Among them was an individual, an addict of drinking and smoking for 16 years. It was not so easy to give up old habit in an instant, but he was determined to give it up in view of Imam's orders. On fourth day following his abandonment, he suffered with a fatal heart trouble and expired. Varas Kassim Ali prepared a report of his tour of East Africa, Aden and Karachi and sent to the Imam on January 20, 1967, including the incident of the above person in particular. The Imam sent following message on January 24, 1967 that:-

My dear Missionary Kassimali,

I have received your two letters dated 20th January, and have read the contents with great interest.

I am very happy indeed with your good work, and I give you my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for your devoted services.

I am happy to hear that you were able to stop in Aden on your way to Karachi and that my *jamat* in Aden was able to listen to your wa'z.

I give my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings to the deceased spiritual child mentioned in your report, and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. I send him my special loving blessings for having given up his 16 years' old habit of drinking and smoking.

The Imam made a gracious visit of India for 23 days on November 5, 1967. The Imam intended that Missionary Kassim Ali should accompany him in the Indian tour for making translation of the *farmans* during the *didar* programme. The Imam sent following message to Varas Amir Ali Karim, the Estate Agent of the Imam in Pakistan on October 2, 1967

that:-

My dear Amirali,

I would like you to inform Missionary Kassamali to accompany me during my visit to India next month.

Missionary Kassamali should be available from 5th November to 28th November in India.

During his Indian tour, he also attended the grand waezeen assembly at Bombay on December 10, 1967, presided by Itmadi Ghulam Ali S. Morani, the President of Ismailia Association for India. On that occasion, he delivered a *waez* and explained the gist of the *farmans* of the Imam. The President sent its report to the Imam on January 10, 1968. The Imam sent following message:-

29th January, 1968

My dear President,

I have received your letter of 10th January, and have read your report with much interest.

I am happy to hear that the Waezeen Assembly held on the 10th December at Darkhana Jamatkhana, was well attended by my spiritual children and I give my best loving blessings to all beloved spiritual children who participated the Waezeen Assembly.

I give my best paternal maternal loving blessings to the following missionaries for their devoted services to my India *jamat*:-

Missionary Kassim Ali M.J.
Missionary Abu Aly
Missionary Noormohamed Rahimtoola
Missionary Noordin Amlani

In 1969, Varas Kassim Ali was one of the two well-informed waezeens who were desired by the Imam to attend the First World Ismailia Association Conference at Paris, and also attended the dinner reception hosted by the Imam. On that occasion, Hazar Imam introduced him to Begum Salimah and said,**"This missionary has travelled thousands and thousands miles with me to various countries."**

It was in the month of June, 1972 that Hazar Imam asked him to go to Damascus. He made the trip of the historical city, where he met Kamal Khan, the estate manager of the Imam. Kamal Khan escorted him to Salamia, where he stayed for a few days. He was also told to study the rites and ceremonies of the Syrian *jamat* and prepare its report. In those days, the final burial ceremony of Prince Aly Khan was also performed on July 10, 1972. He had an honour to recite the *fatiha*. Later on, he went to Sardinia with Kamal Khan

to see the Imam. Kamal Khan returned and he alone met the Imam and submitted the report. He then introduced the changes recommended by the Imam for the Syrian *jamats*.

In 1988, Varas Kassim Ali was appointed the National Convenor for the Senior Citizens' Activities Committee under the Aga Khan Social Welfare Board for Pakistan in 1989.

In 1989, Hazar Imam mentioned to the *jamat* in Hyderabad, Sind for him that, **"He was the President, but I preferred to call him a Missionary."** It is indeed one of the pleasing and gracious remarks for him.

Varas Kassim Ali attained unique opportunities of translating the holy *farmans* during the *didar* programmes of the Imam in Rangoon, Pakistan and Goa (1960), India (1962 and 1967), East Africa at Commore Island and Madagascar (1966), London (1979), Portugal (1983), Singapore (1986), Bangladesh (1986 and 1993) and Pakistan (1964, 1970, 1976, 1989 and 1991). This is one of the privileged services of his career.

His contributions in the literary field are equally fruitful. Apart from compiling different articles for the Ismaili periodicals, he also composed **"Precious Pearls"** (1954) and **"Precious Gems"** (1959) the holy *farmans* of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah and Hazar Imam in 1954. In 1955, he wrote a thesis on the Imamate entitled, **"Ever Living Guide"** duly approved by Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah. He is also well versed in the study of the *ginans* and compiled the selection from **"Saloko Moto", "Saloko Nano"** and **"Anant Akhado"**. In 1993, his another work, **"Jawahir-e-Ginan"** was compiled with different themes, and the compilation of over 350 verses sorted over 17 chapters with introduction and explanation on each chapter in Urdu based on Holy Koran in 1986. The Ismailia Association for Pakistan published all these works.

Varas Kassim Ali made an excellent attempt of the English rendering of the **"Moti Venti"** of Pir Hasan Kabiruddin with meaning, and also started the English rendering of **"Jawahir-e-Ginan."** In August, 1995, he compiled subject-wise 250 verses of the Holy Koran, entitled **"Guidelines from Holy Quran,"** spread over 14 chapters on fundamental concepts, practices, ethics, etc. with introduction of each chapter. Pre-published copies of the three precious works have however been distributed to colleagues and friends world over.

In conclusion, the services of Varas Kassim Ali Muhammad Jaffer in the field analyzed above, are so invaluable and worth-mentioning that it is beyond words to elaborate in details. He has continued his services without respite till today.

He was vested the title of **Huzur Kamadia** and **Alijah,** he was later blessed with the titles of **Rai** and **Itmadi.** Varas Kassim Ali was vested with the title of **Varas** on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Imam in 1983.

May Mawlana Hazar Imam grant him longer life, health and courage to serve the world Ismaili community more and more till his last breath, Amen.

KASSIM ALI R. PAROO, HONORARY MISSIONARY
(1906-1998)



In 1852, Haji Paroo and Jaffer Paroo, two brothers emigrated from Bhuj, Kutchh and settled in Zanzibar. The son of Jaffer Paroo was Hasham Paroo, whose son was Rajab Ali. The son of Rajab Ali was Count Kassim Ali R. Paroo.

Count Kassim Ali Paroo was born on October 31, 1906 in Bagomoyo, Tanganyika. His whole family migrated to Mombasa, Kenya in 1913. He joined Government School in Mombasa (1911-1916). There weren't any facilities for higher education in Mombasa till November, 1918, therefore, he joined Gharashia College (1917-1920). He also was admitted in Torfield School, Eastborn, England (1920-1922), and in Gondoal, Kathiawar in India, and finally in Saint Paul School (1922-1924).

His father, Rajab Ali worked several years as a General Manager in the firm of Alidina Visram. Later on, he established his own business in 1922. Upon completion of his education, Count Paroo returned to Mombasa and joined his father's business in 1924. Besides being associated as the Director with his own business concerns namely R.H. Paroo & Sons Ltd. and Jubilee Hardware Ltd., he also became the Managing Director of Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust Ltd., and the Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd. He also managed a Company in 1962 under the name of Coastal Bottlers Ltd. and acquired the franchise of Coca-Cola products for the Coastal Region in Kenya.

His first contact with a public institution was with the Social Service League, Mombasa (1927-1946) as a member and he was four times as its Chairman (1932, 1936, 1940 and 1946) and again (1982-1998). He rendered his valuable services as an Honorary Secretary of Indian Sports Club (1929-1931) in Mombasa, and eventually became its President (1932-1936). He was one of the founder members of the Rotary Club of Mombasa in 1944, and its Honorary member again in 1980.

Kassim Ali Paroo was the Chairman of Indian Merchants' Chamber, Mombasa (1937-1945), the member of Indian Merchants Chamber Federation (1940-1945), the member of the Hindi Association for Mombasa (1928-1947), and the member of Kenya Legislative Council (1942-1945). He also represented the Indian National Congress of East African every year in India. He was also the member of East African Muslim Society in 1945, the trustee and treasurer of Pandya Memorial Clinic Society in 1944 and the Chairman of Muslim Electors Advisory Board in 1952.

He also served Kenya Government on various responsible posts between 1942 and 1945. At one time he held as many as 25 important posts in the various Government departments

and committees. Kassim Ali Paroo was also the member of East African Production & Supply Council. He was Copra and Coconut Oil Controller and one of the delegates of East African Governments Trade Delegation to India in 1944. He was also one of the members of Daudi Bohra Education Society.

He was the member of H.H. The Aga Khan Provincial Education Board (1933-1936), Chairman of H.H. The Aga Khan Central Education Board for Kenya (1937-1945), the member of the Ismailia Provincial Council (1943-1946), the President of Ismailia Provincial Council (1943-1946), the member of H.H. The Aga Khan Federal Council in 1954, the Managing Director of Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust Ltd., and Jubilee Insurance Co., etc. Kassim Ali Paroo also served the Supreme Council from 1954. He was also a General Inspector of the Ismaili Corporation and Cooperative Building Society. He was also the President of the Ismaili Council for Mombasa.

Kassim Ali Paroo travelled between 1917 to 1992 to Pakistan, India (11 times), Nepal, Cairo, Hong Kong, Japan, Burma, South Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius, England and Europe (14 times), Belgium Congo, Middle East and Syria, Canada and United States, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (many times).

Kassim Ali Paroo was a literary person and studied different religions. He also started a separate Study Group of 17 young members at his residence in July, 1953 with the approval of the Ismailia Association. He was a good speaker and became one of the renowned missionaries in East Africa. In appreciation of his incomparable services, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah conferred upon him the title of **Honorary Missionary** in 1953.

In appreciation of his meritorious services, he was invested the title of **Alijah** in 1943, **Rai** in 1948 and **Wazir** in 1953. In recognition of his outstanding services in religious field, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah bestowed on him the title of **Count** and cabled its message on September 8, 1954 that, "**I have much pleasure in giving you the title of Count for your devoted services with best blessings, but the highest title you have is that of Honorary Missionary.**" He is reported to have lectured in 70 Jamatkhanas in East Africa and 44 Jamatkhanas in other countries.

In July, 1952, the Imam summoned the Avian Conference in Europe for making necessary amendments in the Constitution of the African Councils. Count Kassim Ali R. Paroo attended it as the President of the Ismaili Council for Mombasa. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah's health was not good and he confined to bed. Even in this state of health, he spared five complete days to hear the verbal and written reports and had a total sitting of 18 hours with the delegates. At the end of the Conference, the Imam sent following cable message:-

ixles Bains
August 3, 1952

Very glad to hear various excellent resolutions Evian Conference carried out in spirit and letter. All those who help receive double blessings. Very glad ladies intend when A new clothes ordered have western fashion economic material clothes made as Burma for all unity with new western African ideals. For economic reasons old

fashioned clothes should be worn till used up by time and age when new clothes ordered new fashion should become general.

It is said that once Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah held a conference in London, where he found Count Paroo absent. The Imam asked, "Why is Count Paroo not present in the conference. It will be postponed if he does not participate." He was summoned immediately from Africa by a telegram, and then the conference started in his presence.

The Imam performed an opening ceremony of the Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi on September 10, 1958 in presence of Sir Evelyn Baring, the governor of Kenya. The Imam noticed an absence of Count Paroo He was called on telephone to participate in the ceremony.

Count Kassim Ali Paroo had been in Karachi on March 13, 1959 and in Bombay on March 23, 1959, where he was accorded a befitting welcome by the Ismailia Associations to appreciate his valuable services. He emphasized upon the young missionaries to deliver *waez* on scientific method, based on new interpretations.

The Imam arrived in Beirut on July 25, 1959 and proceeded to Damascus on July 26, 1959 after staying for three days. The Imam visited Salamia on July 29, 1959, Khwabi on July 31, 1959 and returned to Beirut on August 1, 1959. During the visit, the Imam worked out a plan to establish a bank with an investment of 35,00,000 shillings. The Imam deputed Count Paroo to Syria to open an Ismaili Council of 11 members, the Educational Board of 7 members and a Welfare Society of 40 members. He was also told to make a survey for an opening of a bank in Salamia for the benefit of the Ismailis. He left Mombasa on August 9, 1959 and returned on August 27, 1959. During his visit, he also handed over the cheques of the donations, which the Imam had made donations to. For instance, 2,00,000 shillings for Damascus University, 1,10,000 shillings for Municipal Corporation of Salamia, 20,000 shillings for Damascus Museum, 54,000 shillings for Syrian Police Department, 7000 shillings for Beirut Police Department, 1,25,000/- shillings for T.B. Hospital of Beirut, etc.

In the meantime, the Syrian government passed a resolution in September, 1959, claiming that any one who opened a bank in Syria, would have to invest a minimum amount of 60,00,000/- shillings, whose 70 percent shares should belong to the citizen of United Arab Republic. This new rule became a hindrance in the opening of a new bank. The Imam sent Count Paroo once again to make further investigation. He arrived in Beirut on November 21, 1959 and held meetings with the officers of Arab Bank Ltd., Istra Bank and Banku al-Ahlina Bank and discussed that when a new bank was opened in Salamia, whether they would open their branches. He came to Damascus on November 23, 1959 and then proceeded to Salamia on November 25, 1959. He returned to Beirut on November 27, 1959 and resumed his discussion with the bankers. He prepared a final report and left Beirut for Adis Ababa on December 1, 1959 and came to Mombasa on December 4, 1959. He submitted his report to the Imam along with his suggestions.

Count Kassim Ali Paroo married in 1929 and when his wife expired in 1944, his second marriage took place in 1947. He had five daughters and one son. His second wife died in 1997.

Only three days before his death, Count Kassim Ali Paroo performed a cake cutting ceremony at the Rotary Club in Mombasa. He died on Saturday, June 10, 1998 at the age of 92 years. His final advice was:-

"I shall pass through this world but once, any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to human being let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Count Kassim Ali R. Paroo served Kenya and its people in different fields and also to the Ismaili *jamat* with remarkable integrity and devotion, courage, zest and zeal. He had been for many years a leading and pleasing personality in Mombasa. He was a resourceful person with robust, realism, wealth of experience and wisdom, sense of judgement, cheerful attitude. His legacy to all of us was the spirit of love and service and the fruitful work he left behind.



And those spiritual children who have done service to the *jamat* without thinking of titles, without thinking of councils, and who have done this service privately in a discreet manner, without thinking of any compensation whatsoever in a worldly manner, these spiritual children have my very, very affectionate blessings. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Nairobi, October 4, 1962)

All forms of voluntary service have a much higher value today than ever before. And our *jamat* distinguishes itself, I am proud to say through voluntary service. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Mwanza, November 24, 1982)



KHUDA BAKSH TALIB, MISSIONARY
(1890-1925)

Khuda Baksh Talib's forefathers came from Talhar, Sind who migrated to Lasbela via Karachi, then Ormada and made Gwadar finally as their home. His grandfather Karami had four sons, namely Talib, Pir Baksh, Fazal and Datoo. Talib's main source of income was in the dealing of dried fish. He had five sons, Nasir, Ghulam Hussain, Fakir Mohammad, Abdul Hussain and Khuda Baksh. Khairibai, the mother of Khuda Baksh was a renowned lady missionary.

Khuda Baksh Talib was born in Gwadar in 1890, where he obtained his formal education, and also learnt Arabic, Persian and Gujrati. He had a deep interest in the literature and regularly read the **Ismaili Satpanth Prakash**, (Bombay), published by Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj. His interest in literature can be judged from the instance that The Shia Imami Ismaili Mitr Mandal had published a book, "**Qaumi Chitr**" by Ghulam Ali Lalji in 1919. Khuda Baksh went through it and wrote his observations on September 4, 1919, which were published in the **Ismaili Satpanth Prakash** (September 25, 1919). He wrote, "If all the Ismailis may read this book, there will be no distinction between those who have a firm belief and those who don't in our community." He also quoted the *farman* of the Imam in his letter that, "No complaint in the hearts of the poor, and no pride in the minds of rich will prevail."

Abdul Hussain Talib, the elder brother of Khuda Baksh was an enthusiastic social worker. He was also a devoted missionary, having good command in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Gujrati. He was also well versed in the **mathnawi** of Rumi. He was also a Mukhi of *Baitul Khiyal* and *Chand Raat Panjibhai Brotherhoods*. It appears that he was a prolific writer and published few articles in the **"Ismaili Sitaro"** in 1911 in Khojki. When Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah made a visit of the Khoja Panjibhai Club in Karachi on February 17, 1912, he had a photograph with four eminent missionaries, viz. Abdul Hussain Talib, Hussaini Pir Muhammad of Karachi, Juma Bhagat of East Africa and Sharif Shivji of Kathiawar. On October 21, 1918, there was an outbreak of influenza in Gwadar, resulting 13 casualties in the Ismaili community within 15 days. Abdul Hussain was one of those victims, and died on October 30, 1918.

Khuda Baksh married in 1912 and was employed in the firms of Kamadia Ibrahim and Kamadia Alibhai Rehmatullah in Gwadar. He could not concentrate in his job, because his restless mind was in quest of some purposeful pursuit, which could make his life meaningful. After the death of his brother, Abdul Hussain Talib, he came to Bombay with his wife, Zawer at the end of 1919 and resided at Hasanabad. He was employed in a firm in the Bombay bullion market at first, and also began to take interest in religious study.

He studied Hindu literature and came into the contact of the renowned missionaries.

He is reported to have helped Ibrahim Jusab Varteji during the compilation "**Vedic Islam**" in 1921 for verifying the Koranic quotations. He is mentioned and given credit in the preface of the book.

On February 8, 1921, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah ordered the Recreation Club that, **"You open an orphanage in Anand for 75 to 80 children of depressed class, for children over five years. Employ a native doctor for which a grant of one thousand rupees have been approved."** Accordingly, an institution, called **Naklank Ashram** was raised in Anand, near Ahmedabad to exhort the tenents of Ismailism to the new converts. Khuda Baksh also worked in the Naklank Ashram with Missionary Haji Muhammad Fazal. His mode of presentation was so lucid and effective that thousands of people were impressed and waited for his *waez*. He was well rooted in Hindu literature and presented Islamic message to the Hindus masses. On those days, his health deteriorated in Anand. The Imam was notified of his illness in Bombay on March 27, 1922. The Imam asked, **"Have you appointed a native or English doctor in Anand?"** To this, the Imam was told that a doctor had been hired. The Imam said, **"Who is he?"** The Imam was told that he was a Christian doctor. The Imam said, **"Don't appoint such doctor. Appoint an expert one or a native doctor."** When he recovered, the Imam enjoined upon him to train Ali Mohammad Vali Najar as a missionary.

In one Gujrati article, "**Saru Sahitiya Surshti-ma Sumitr**" by Rahim Karim Varteji, published in the weekly "**Ismaili**" on February 18, 1934, it sounds that Khuda Baksh Talib was in Karachi in 1923 and propagated the need of the periodical in the community. He also made an appeal as a chief guest in the functions of the Kharadhar Library, Karachi in this context. He also brought new subscribers for the newly published "**Ismaili**" weekly of Bombay.

On October 24, 1923, a grand function was organized in the hall of the Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi. It was presided by Varas Muhammad Remu Mawji. It was attended by a large gathering, including Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad, Dr. Haji, etc. On that occasion, Khuda Baksh Talib lectured on "**The aims of Recreation Club and the duties of the Ismailis**", which was destined to be his first public oratory.

The Recreation Club Institute organized a Missionary Conference between September 28, 1923 and September 30, 1923, in which a Subject Committee was formed under Ali Mohammad Jan Mohammad Chunara. It added 20 members, including Missionary Khuda Baksh Talib. He put his proposal in the Subject Committee on September 30, 1923 seconded by Haji Mohammad Rahmatullah and I.J. Varteji, Nur Mohammad Zaver, Kara Ruda, Mukhtar Nanji and Hasan Datoo. His proposal was acceded and resolved that, "The need of creating new missionaries is acutely needed, a centre for it must be opened around the location of Bombay, where necessary training may be given to the young boys of above 14 years of age."

Khuda Baksh Talib also visited Rangoon, Burma for about 15 days, where he performed *waez* and lectured in the assemblies. He participated in the 10th Annual Majalis in Rangoon on 6th to 8th December, 1923. He delivered *waez* with Missionary Rajab Ali Khan

Mohammad and Missionary U Kan Gyi Nanji. On that occasion, the Mukhi and Kamadia of Gondia *jamat* arrived to raise funds for a new Jamatkhana. Khuda Baksh made a humble appeal to the *jamat* to share in this noble cause. The *jamat* contributed a big fund for the Gondia Jamatkhana. On December 10, 1923 he also presided the function of the Ismaili Religious Library and spoke on the importance of the libraries in the community. He also visited Thazi, about 306 miles from Rangoon. He returned to Madras on December 24, 1923 where he stayed for 8 days and went to Banglore.

After the completion of his historic visit of Jamnagar, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah reached Sidhpur by a special train on February 14, 1924 for the *didar* programme. Kuda Baksh Talib was specially commissioned for *waez*. These four days of waez were one of the most memorable occasions of his life. Facing the open site of the bungalow of Mulla Muhammad Ali Shaikh Sarf Harerwala, an eminent Bohra leader, a grand tent was pitched, where five thousand Ismailis from twenty villages around Sidhpur, strained their necks to catch a glimpse of the young missionary. He delivered *waez* so forcefully and lucidly that no one stirred. He prepared a tight schedule of *waez* and started four days in advance. It took two hours at evening and one hour at midnight and one hour before morning prayer. The people from Bohra community were also allowed to listen his *waez*. They too came in a large numbers dressed in their traditional golden turbans and they stood around the congregation.

On the second day, the Imam arrived in the camp at 10.30 a.m. Khuda Baksh Talib introduced a Harijan family before the Imam, saying that they were professing Ismailism in secret for one year, and now they wished to embrace Ismailism publicly. He also implored the Imam to bless them with new Islamic names. The six members of the family, comprised of a husband, a wife and four children and they were asked to come near the Imam's chair. The Imam showered best blessings upon them. The man was given the name of Safar Ali and his wife as Rehmat. The Imam told them to get the names of the four children from the Mukhi of the *jamat*.

In Sidhpur, some prominent members of local Bohra *jamat*, namely Mulla Ghulam Ali Jivanji Essaji Madraswala and others arranged a tea-party in Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah's honour at evening on February 15, 1924 at Mohibi Bagh. They warmly welcomed the Imam and presented a big plate of silver coins. They insisted suavely that Khuda Baksh Talib must address exclusively their community in their mosque. The permission was granted, and Imam told to Khuda Baksh Talib, "**Listen, whatever knowledge you possess, make it exhorted.**" He went to Bohra mosque on next day. Thousands of Bohras heard him for about two and half hours in engrossed attention. He explained the continued series of the Imamate and emphasized upon the need of the Imam in every age. His arguments were irrefutable and based on historical facts, touching the audience to great extent.

It is learnt that some people of other community hated Khuda Baksh Talib's association with the Naklank Ashram. His opponents befriended him at first and hatched a plan to poison him through covert friendly means. He however warded off the danger, and became sick for three days. When it was brought to the attention of the Imam, he said that, **"The poison was so fatal that he could not have survived, but I removed the poison when it was being poured."** In the meantime, the Imam curtailed the activities of Naklank

Ashram in 1925.

Khuda Baksh Talib led a simple life, having peaceful and polite nature. He ate simple food and was a strict observer of the principles. His voice was so sweet that he won the hearts of million peoples. His life was devoted to a cause, an implicit and unwavering loyalty to the Imam. He was a brilliant speaker. To listen to him, when he opened the treasure-box of his knowledge, was to lose count of time. From his inexhaustible storehouse he would pick out treasures one after another, dress them in moving and vivid styles and keep the audience riveted to their seats for hours. He was most dutiful and his greatness can be judged from an example referred to by the President, Wazir Ghulam Hussain Thavar, during the 19th conference of the Ismailia Association for India on October 29, 1951--once Khuda Baksh Talib's duty was issued in Hasanabad, Bombay, where he was told, "The attendance of the *jamat* is only 20 to 25 persons and it will perhaps not suit you. We should recite the *ginans* instead". He replied, "I may not have thousand people present, but will still deliver a waez for these 20-25 persons. I will perform *waez* if there are only two listeners. If no one will come to listen me, I will go to jungle and stand before a tree and perform *waez.*"

Zawer, the wife of Khuda Baksh Talib, expired all of a sudden at Bombay on Monday, March 23, 1925 at the age of 30 years due to the skin disease. When the news of her death spread, his relatives, friends and well-wishers from abroad sent him a bulk of letters of condolence. Khuda Baksh himself was highly shocked and was not feeling well. He received numerous letters of condolences from his friends, family and well wishers, and since he could not reply each one individually, he published his statement in the weekly **"Ismailis"** on March 29, 1925 that, "My wife expired on March 23, 1925. It is my duty to reply these telegrams and letters, but due to my impairing health, I cannot do that. I am thankful through this paper from the core of my heart to all brothers who have sent me their messages."

The Arya Samaj celebrated the anniversary of Dayanand on April 9, 1925 in Bombay, inviting the Muslims, Hindus, Parsi and Christians to participate in the programme. Dr. Kalyandas J. Desai, the Convenor of the Arya Samaj of Bombay, offered Dayanand to preside over the function. Dayanand said that it was a conference of all the religions, but no Muslim, Parsi or Christian participated. The eyes of the people dilated narrowly in wonder when one young man of slim physique, wearing a Turkish cap, stood up boldly and exclaimed, "I am a Muslim present over here." Dr. Kalyandas asked his name. He said, "Khuda Baksh Talib Gwadari" and asked for a permission to speak. He was asked, "What do you want to speak?" To this, he said, "I will first discuss about Arya Samaj, then I will divulge my faith before the audience." He was asked "Will you speak on six handy topics.?" He said, "I am ready to speak on the topic prescribed for me." Dr. Kalyandas talked with some other *pandits* and let him to prepare his written topic to be read for 30 minutes on next day.

On April 10, 1925, Khuda Baksh came and asked three questions from the book, **"Satyarth Prakash"** to Pandit Ramchandra. The *pandit* sought advices from other *pandits*, but failed to reply in the given five minutes. The *pandits* admitted that they knew nothing about the creation of the universe. On that occasion, the *pandits* could not withstand and terminated the function.

During the celebration of the 48th *Salgirah* of Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah, the Merchant Club of Bombay at Fazal Ladha Building organized a grand function on Tuesday, May 26, 1925. The prominent and the distinguished guests were Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj, Ali Muhammad Macklai, Ghulam Hussain Bandali Samji, A.J. Chunara, etc. The function was presided by Manji Ghulam Hussain. On that occasion, Khuda Baksh Talib lectured on "**Ismailism**". He began his lectures with these words, "My today's lecture deals with what is Ismailism? I will declare that I have recently joined the mission works. It is a tradition in Islam that one who is a learned, he can lead the prayers. But the tradition in our religion is different, where a child can lead the prayers in presence of the elders. Likewise, my status before you is same." Then he spoke on the Ismailism and its origin with full confidence and impressed the audience. This was fated to be his last public lecture.

The Imam started his visit to East African countries and reached Nairobi on February 9, 1925. He sent a telegraphic message through Wazir Rahim Basaria to Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai that, "**Send Missionary Khuda Baksh in Africa, where his services are urgently needed.**" Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai was in his chamber, puzzled with the telegram. How would convey the Imam's desire, especially at this time when Khuda Baksh was so distraught over his wife's death and the added responsibility of his children. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai and Alijah Hasan Ali Devraj conveyed him the Imam's massage. Khuda Baksh Talib responded it promptly.

He left behind his four sons and a daughter. The elder Amir Ali was 13 years old. The second son, Aman Ali was 9 years old, the third son Didar Ali was 4 years, the fourth son Yaqub Ali was the youngest among them, while his only daughter, Mariam was hardly 7 years old. The officers of the Recreation Club came at sea-port to bid him farewell. It was the time for the steamer to sail and it gave its first signal. The visitors started dismounting, but the children of the missionary did not get down and remained embraced with the breast of their father. When the second signal came on the hooter, the officers of the Recreation Club began to part the weeping children till the third final signal was heard. He lovingly patted his children and said, "Khuda Hafiz my dear children." None perceived that it was destined to be their last meeting. The father and the children suffered terribly the pangs of separation.

He left his children on the mercy of God. His children lived few days with Ali Muhammad Macklai till their aunt, Kulsoom came from Gwadar to look after them.

Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad Asani, Sayed Munir, Juma Ismail, Lalji Dossa and Muhammad Abdullah, etc. were active in their mission at that time in the different centres of East Africa.

Khuda Baksh Talib sailed for Africa in the company of Missionary Alibhai Nanji. He reached Zanzibar on October 11, 1925 and began to deliver his impressive *waez* in the different *jamats*. He had to travel into the villages where it was difficult to travel. Sometimes he travelled 500 to 1000 miles to complete a round of duty.

There was only one private Boarding in Africa under Bhagat Mohammed Premji of Junagadh. It was necessary to raise a Boarding with a school on community level, therefore, the

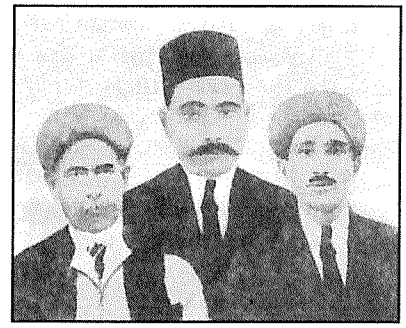
Imam told to the Council on February 16, 1925 to work out its plan. Accordingly, Khuda Baksh as a representative of the Ismaili Council for Dar-es-Salaam and Varas Mukhi Karam Ali Daya, the member of the local Council were consigned to search a suitable location for the Ismaili Central Boarding and School in the territory of Tanganyika. It was announced in the Council's meeting, "Who will accompany Khuda Baksh Talib?" Varas Mukhi Karam Ali Daya was the only one to volunteer to accompany Kudha Baksh Talib. The Council made their itinerary from Dar-es-Salaam to Kilosa and then Mwanza.

Few words must be added for Varas Mukhi Karam Ali Daya. He was a businessman in Dar-es-Salaam, and was invested the title of **Varas** in 1914, and his name is also mentioned in the book of the Farmans for Zanzibar. He was also the Mukhi of Dar-es-Salaam Jamatkhana, and served as a President of local council. He continued his services as a member of the Supreme Council in 1925. He was also the President of the local Aga Khan School. In Kilosa, Huzur Mukhi Megji Visram built a school, whose opening ceremony was also performed by Varas Mukhi Karam Ali Daya on May 18, 1925. He was very generous with his wealth, and he donated a large amount for the library in Dar-es-Salaam. He left behind his wife and four daughters. He was an ex-President of the local Indian Association, therefore, he was paid a glowing tribute upon his death and the report of the resolution was also published in the local newspapers.

Both Khuda Baksh Talib and Varas Mukhi Karam Ali Daya started their journey on November 21, 1925 and visited many villages in search of a location for the project. They arrived at Kilosa, where Mukhi Bhimji Hamir honoured them. Then they had to proceed to Iringa, and then back to Dar-es-Salaam. Kilosa is a district, producing best quality of cotton in Tanganyika. It is comprised of three main villages, viz. Kilosa Bomani, where only 150 Ismailis lived at that time, Kilosa Kotani, where 45-50 Ismailis resided and Kilosa Morogoro, where hardly 15 to 17 Ismailis lived. Khuda Baksh Talib and Mukhi Karam Ali Daya had been in Kilosa Bomani, about 150 miles west of Dar-es-Salaam.

On the other hand, according to the report of August 17, 1924, no missionary had visited Iringa for last 20 years due to bad transportation. There was a railway line between Dar-es-Salaam and Kilosa, but no proper route existed between Kilosa and Iringa. Most of the people had to travel for 10 days from Kilosa to Iringa on foot through bush roads, which were quite dangerous. On June 28, 1924, Missionary Jairaj Merali reached Iringa after facing many hardships, where he stayed for 8 days. He had to go Kilosa and was not familiar with the routes, therefore, Lalji Ladha Punjani escorted him for Kilosa.

It was the same Lalji Ladha Punjani, who came from Iringa to take Khuda Baksh Talib and Mukhi Karam Ali Daya to Iringa. Nothing is known about Lalji Ladha Punjani. There was no school in Iringa, the *jamat* raised a fund from 18 donors, amounting 20,010 shillings, in which Lalji Ladha Punjani shared for 210 shillings. When Khuda Baksh Talib and Varas Mukhi Karam Ali were in Kilosa, Mukhi Motilal Patel in the Jamatkhana of Iringa made an announcement, "Who will voluntarily go to Kilosa to bring Khuda Baksh Talib and Varas Mukhi Karam Ali?" None came forward, because of the bad weather and heavy rain. It was Lalji Ladha Punjani alone who willingly offered his services. The Mukhi gave him a car to bring them to Iringa.



Lalji Ladha Punjani managed to reach Kilosa during the heavy rains. Then the three of them started from Kilosa on December 12, 1925. On account of heavy raining, the main road was badly damaged, and after a slow driving of three hours, their car unfortunately skidded into a deep trench of water. The accident proved fatal victimizing all the three of them. The local villagers in the jungle had seen the car falling into the trench, and they rushed back to Kilosa to report it. Before the Ismaili leaders and workers reached, they were all found dead. With the help of the local people, the three dead bodies were lifted from the pit and taken back to Kilosa for burial.

The tragic news spread rapidly in Tanganyika, and it was mourned by all the different communities. The Ismailis closed their business and transactions. M.O. Abbasi, the editor of the weekly "**African Comrade**" published a special report of the accident. The Supreme Council for Dar-es-Salaam routed an urgent telegram to the Imam on December 15, 1925, which received a prompt reply that: "**Those who have sacrificed their life for Allah and religion are in first rank of *Shahids*. Keep the photographs of the desceased persons in all the Jamatkhanas of Africa.**" The text of the telegram was engraved in a marble plate, and placed where the accident took place. In his another cable message on the same day from Nice, the Imam said, "**Three victims accident gave their lives as martyr heroes for Master and Religion. Their place is with the martyrs who died for religion. All honour this funeral occasion. My thoughts are with them.** The Imam also said in another telegram on December 19, 1925 that, "**Inform that these *Shahids* are close to my thoughts. Their photographs should be kept in all the important prayer-halls.**"

It is worthwhile to know that the Imam had made a meaningful *farman* to the missionaries during his last visit to East Africa, about ten months before the above incident that, "**You are the missionaries and have offered me your bodies and wealths. The meaning of the missionary is that, he should offer his body and wealth**" (Zanzibar: 18/2/1925). And, this is exactly what happened with Lalji Ladha Punjani, Kudha Baksh Talib and Varas Mukhi Karam Ali.

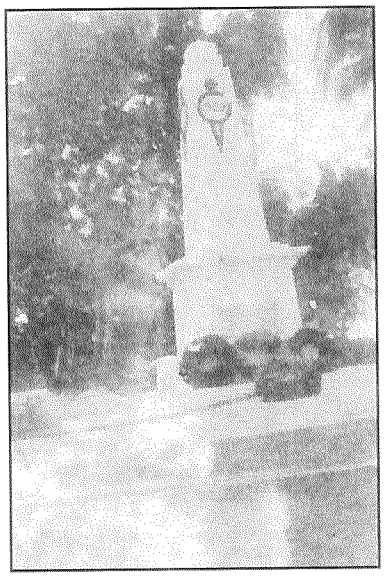
The wise old men relate that it was the oft-repeated words of Shahid Khuda Baksh that, "**The valiants always cherish desire for the field. If one dies, he must die in the field rather than on the bed in illness. It is better to die in the services than in the suffering.**"

In the meantime, the Gents and Ladies Volunteers Corps for Dar-es-Salaam also submitted individual services to the Imam for the departed souls.

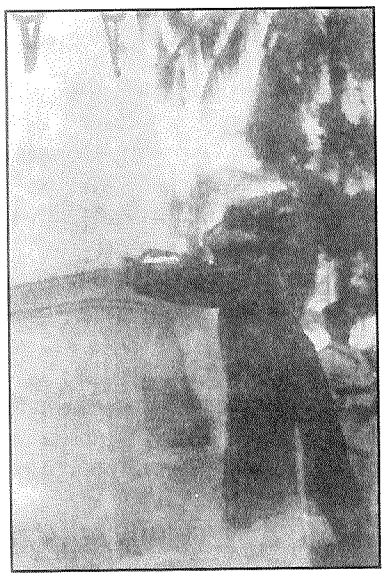
Khuda Baksh Talib remained in Africa for about 61 days and died as a *shahid*. In Tanganyika, a fund was established for the welfare of his children.

On July 16, 1927, a grand function was organized by Alidina Datoo Patel in the location of the library in Dar-es-Salaam, attended by Kanji Nanji, the President of the Council and many other prominent individuals. Dhanani, the head-master of the Ismailia School made an opening speech and spoke on the past services of the great Ismailis heroes and

concluded with few words for Khuda Baksh Talib. Another speakers, Major Murji and Mukhi Akbar Ali Ratansi Kanji, followed him. The latter made a humble appeal to the audience to build a *musafarkhana* in Dar-es-Salaam, or make a new floor of the existing one in loving memory of Khuda Baksh Talib. In conclusion, it was announced that the Imam had been apprised through the Council of a memorial in loving memory of the three *shahids*, including the collection of the welfare funds for the children of Khuda Baksh and Lalji Ladha in Tanganyika with the effort of the Mukhi Akbar Ali Ratansi Kanji. In reply, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah blessed the *jamats* of Tanganyika for this noble initiative.



Eventually, in 1932, a monument was erected in the Ismaili grave-yard of Dar-es-Salaam in memory of these three *fidais*. Alijah Mukhi Kanji Nanji, the President of the Ismaili Council for Dar-es-Salaam, performed the opening ceremony of the memorial.



In 1947, missionary Alibhai Nanji published, **"Chirag-i Sirat al-Mustaqim"** which he dedicated in loving memory of Shahid Khuda Baksh Talib and Pir Sabzali.

It will be befitting if we may call him as ***Sayed Shahid Khuda Baksh*** in view of the Imam's *farman*, who said in Bombay on March 27, 1922 that, **"He is a Sayed, who dies for the Recreation Club."**

Missionary Khuda Baksh's children became orphans within 8 months and 17 days. His eldest son, Amir Ali however continued to follow his father's footsteps and became a missionary. He also went to East Africa under Ismailia Association, and then he visited India several times. He died in 1959. The other three sons of Shahid Khuda Baksh Talib and a daughter settled in Canada with their families.



LADAKBHAI HAJI
(1827-1907)

Ladakbhai Haji came from the Haji Bhalu family, and was born in Kera, Kutchh in 1827. He came to Bombay with his father due to a terrible famine in Kutchh at the age of 6 years in 1833. His father was a wood-cutter. In 1835, his father returned to Kutchh, where he died in the beginning of 1836.

Soon after the death of his father, Ladakbhai Haji led a destitute life. He came to Bombay at the age of nine years. He lived and worked with his maternal uncle for 12 years free of charge. In 1840, he returned to his native land and got married.

When Imam Hasan Ali Shah visited Kera in 1845, Ladakbhai Haji came from Bombay and took active part to honour the Imam. He served the Imam with dedication and earned blessings. He returned to Bombay very soon. This time his uncle hired him and agreed to pay him a meager salary. When his uncle died, he inherited his business. This marked a turning phase of his life.

He opened a godown for storing coals. He worked hard and purchased few parts of the jungles in Kosta and Ali Bagh. Within a short period, he became one of the leading wood merchants in Bombay.

In order to expand his business, he purchased lands in Wadi in 1848, where he built big godowns. In 1868, he bought another piece of land, measuring 2000 square yards to build his bungalow. He also sought permission from Imam Hasan Ali Shah to construct a compound at Kandi Mola in Bombay. The Imam said, "Today is a very good day." Since it was a Saturday, an auspicious, so he also asked permission to build his own bungalow. The Imam said, "Today is a very nice day. I pray for it." Ladakbhai Haji started construction of his bungalow on that day and upon its completion, he implored the Imam for its opening ceremony. The Imam graciously accepted and performed the ceremony, and blessed him and rested for ten minutes in the bungalow.

In 1864, Ladakbhai Haji purchased another useful plot of land in Hasanabad, measuring 16000 square yards. The Imam summoned him in Wadi and said, "Did you purchase a plot in Mazgon?" To this, he replied affirmatively. The Imam said, "Well, your plot is mine." He presented it to the Imam, who visited it every evening. Once the Imam came in Hasanabad after noon and made a mark in one spot with his stick. When Imam Hasan Ali Shah passed away in 1881, he was buried on that spot.

Ladakbhai Haji was also a life member and then Vice Patron of The Khoja Panjibhai Club, Bombay.

A fanatic killed Mukhi Hasan Ali of Darkhana, Bombay on June 22, 1878, therefore, the Imam appointed Ladakbhai Haji as the Mukhi.

In 1882, Imam Aga Ali Shah visited Karachi. Mukhi Ladak came from Bombay and visited Honeymoon Lodge and submitted a request for the *didar* program in Bombay. The Imam declined the invitation. He said, "Mawla, I have given a word to the *jamat*, who trust upon me and they have sent me to Karachi. It is a matter of my prestige. If you will not come, I cannot show my face to the *jamat*." But, the Imam continued to decline the invitation. Ladakbhai Haji continued to say, "I have promised to the *jamat* that I would surely bring the Imam for *didar*. If you will not come, which face may I present to the *jamat*?" The Imam still declined. When he found no sign of hope, he came to the Garden Jamatkhana on foot and started his solemn supplication. His nocturnal petition continued till morning. Finally, his petition was answered. The Imam on the other side, told to his attendant, called Gulu (d. 1895),"Go and bring Mukhi Ladak." Gulu searched for him in the town and found him in the Garden Jamatkhana and brought him at Honeymoon Lodge. The Imam said, "I am restless since you left the bungalow. What do you want?" Mukhi Ladak requested to make a programme of *didar*. The Imam said, "Well, don't lament. Inform the *jamat* that I am coming." The jamat was blessed with the Imam's *didar*.

He helped the Ismailis of Kutchh with his own means and resources during the terrible famine in 1901.

The group of the elders, known as the *justi* was working in the Jamatkhana before the existence of the Ismaili Council, to solve the problems of the individuals. Mukhi Ladak served as the head of the *justi* till the existence of the first Council in Bombay on April 9, 1906.

Mukhi Ladak Haji, was also known as the Great Saint of Bombay, and he served devotedly as a Mukhi till death for 30 years. He died on May 5, 1907 at the age of 80 years.

Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said in Bombay Jamatkhana on November 28, 1907 that,"**Mukhi Ladak has taken much exertions and served the *jamat*; and I will give its rewards to the soul of Mukhi Ladak in *batin*.**"

The Imam also said in the *majalis* of Poona on January 9, 1910 that, "**Late Mukhi Ladak Haji and late Kamadia Ismail Kassim have served the *jamats* excellently, resulting their association with the 33 crores emancipated souls.**"

LAKHPATI, ABDULLAH JAFFER, MAJOR
(1884-1947)



Abdullah Jaffer's grandfather belonged to Lakhpat, Kutchh and migrated to Bombay in search of livelihood. His father Jaffer was an agent of properties and estates in Bombay, and was a devoted social worker of the Khoja Panjibhai Club. He was better known as Jaffer Dalal, and Abdullah was his elder son.

Abdullah Jaffer was born in 1884. He was well versed in religion since childhood and rendered his services in various fields. He joined his father's profession and became known as Abdullah Jaffer Dalal. Later on, he adopted the name of his native place, Lakhpat in his name, and became known as Abdullah Jaffer Lakhpati. He also assumed *abd* (slave) as his poetic name. Nothing is known of his early life except that he was a broker since the prime of life, and also a passport agent and opened his office at Palkhi Mola, Bombay.

He was blessed with the poetic flair. He started his composition in the literary field, and soon afterwards, he also composed social and religious poems, appearing almost in all the periodicals of the community. He became famous not only in the literary circles, but also in the rest of the community. His poems were also recited in the *majalis* and other occasions. His philosophy was deep with eminent idealism. Within his own small assembly of literary men, his position may well be compared with that of Dr. Samuel Johnson. He was the life and soul of any gathering, literary or otherwise. No lyrical symposium was considered to be complete without his inevitable presence. His special and unique gift of reciting and repeating not only his own works but also that of his colleagues was so overwhelming that he could not be challenged by anyone. He also composed poetry that expressed his love for the Imam and revealed the true identity of the Imam.

His real social services however began with the existence of The Young Ismaili Vidhya Vinod Club in 1915. This club was the centre of the patrons of literature. The members of the club dived to fathom the vast ocean of religious literature and analyzed big social questions like affection and brotherhood towards mankind. He was appointed an Honorary Secretary of the V.V. Club in 1917 for three years.

It is to be noted that during the three days *majalis* on 9th, 10th and 11th May, 1919 and the opening ceremony of the new Jamatkhana in Ahmadabad, the congregation of the Ismailis arrived in the city. He and the members of the V.V. Club rendered their services to the Ismailis of Bombay visiting Ahmadabad. They reserved a separate buggy within a week and stood at their service in the train. Lakhpati gave his excellent service during the *majalis*. At the end of the *majalis*, he was inspired to create volunteers for the services of the community. With the cooperation of Abdullah Jaffer Lakhpati, Pir Muhammad

Madhani and Rahimtullah V. Charnia, the H.H. The Aga Khan Bombay Volunteer Corps came into existence in 1919. He became the first Vice-Captain of the Corps and finally a Major.

During his long services for 28 years, one could see his intellectual superiority and deep sense of duty, which he discharged most devoutly and creditably. He had a clear vision of every subject and could act with courage and conviction. His alert mind and enlightened outlook on all matters brought him success after success in every sphere of his activity. He was indeed a tower of strength to the volunteer movement. He is to this day remembered by the volunteer corps of Indo-Pakistan who still pay him rich tribute for his noble deeds in the cause of Ismailism and the volunteer corps. His is remembered in the presentations of all Volunteers as the founder of the Volunteer Corps.

In a grand gathering of the Recreation Club Institute presided by Haji Mohammad Juma Jan Mohammad on November 23, 1923, Lakhpati delivered an impressive lecture entitled, **"The Preaching of Islam."**

When Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah visited any part of India for *didar* program, he was always present at the service of the Imam. He had a unique privilege as the bearer of the green parasol with the Imam in various *pendols.*

Abdullah Lakhpati rendered invaluable services in Gujrat and Kathiawar. He also served in Bombay during the Palestine Conference. In 1923, the Ismailis of Anad district in Gujrat were threatened and became a target of social revolt. The Naklank Ashram of the Ismailis was burnt and reduced to ashes and terrible events took place within a short time. The Recreation Club Institute of Bombay sought the assistance of the volunteer corps to protect the community. Under the able leadership of Major Lakhpati, some officers and volunteers of the headquarters and Hasanabad Division were sent on duty for restoring peace in the affected areas. The atmosphere was surcharged with horror for the Ismailis. The opponents were armed with terrifying weapons. Major Lakhpati played a key role and subdued the excitement with his admirable ability. As long as peace was not established, he continued to post his volunteers there and they performed constant duty of guarding the Ismailis and their properties.

In 1923, Varas Jamal Ibrahim visited Bombay from Kisumu, Kenya. He came into the contact of Major A.J. Lakhpati and learnt how to set up the organization of the Volunteer Corps. With the guidance of Major Lakhpati, the Volunteer Corps thus came into existence in Kisumu.

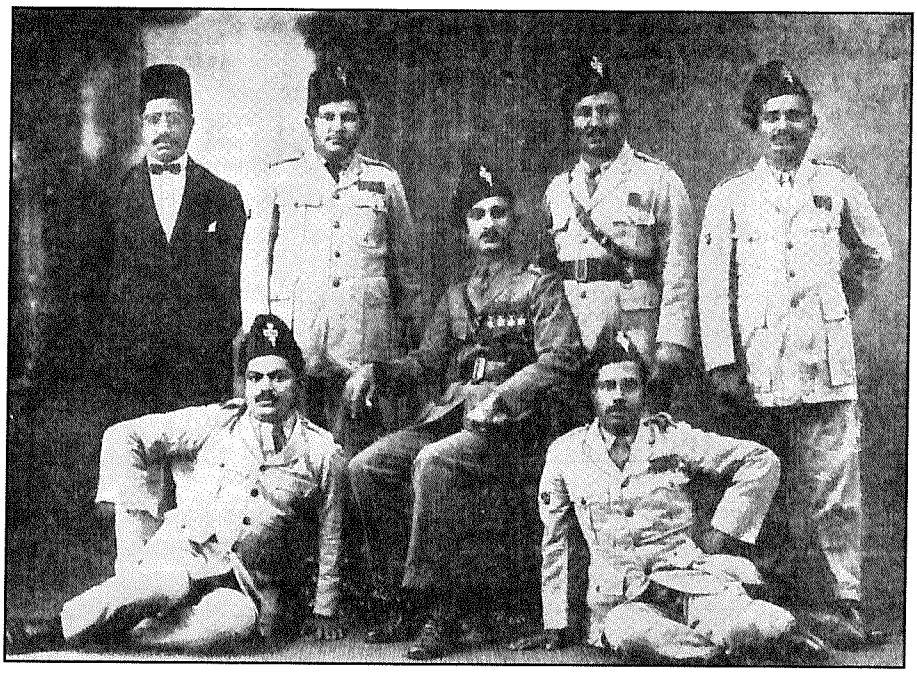
In 1924, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah endorsed five fairs at various places in Kutchh and Kathiawar. He told to Varas Rahim Basaria and Chief Wazir Kamadia Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri that, **"Pen down letters on our behalf, to the Mukhi, the Kamadia and the Captains of the Volunteer Corps of the five places where the festivals of fairs are to be held, conveying them the intelligence that the five officers of the Bombay Volunteer Corps shall accompany us and direct them to entrust the full charge of the management of the fairs of their respective places to them and give them to Captain Pirmahomed."** Three copies of the letter were typed and dispatched to Ahmadabad, Vadhwan and Junagadh with the three officers of the volunteer corps

under the leadership of Major Lakhpati. The other two officers served in the compartment of the train adjoining the saloon of the Imam.

A.J. Lakhpati was appointed a member of the Publicity & Literature Section of the Recreation Club Institute on April 1, 1924.

Kader Hussain Merali Manji spoke in his speech in the grand function of the Bombay Volunteer Corps on May 7, 1927 that when the Imam made a visit of Kutchh in 1925, the staff members of the Imam sailed from Bombay to Kutchh. Unfortunately, the boat capsized in a fierce storm. Major A.J. Lakhpati was also present with them and valiantly jumped into the sea and saved the lives of the staff members of the Imam as well as the documents and the papers.

In 1927, the torrential rains poured in Gujrat and Kathiawar. The towns and villages were almost submerged. The five brave officers of the volunteer corps, including Major Lakhpati, without least care of their business, family or lives, journeyed to the affected areas, riding horses or camels for many hours and visited every Ismaili family. They raised a relief fund for the stricken Ismailis and provided provisions for them. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah decorated each of the officers with a meritorious medal for their invaluable services.



In 1929, Major A.J. Lakhpati's health deteriorated and he was hospitalized. The doctors tried all possible remedies for his illness but all in vain. Blood transfusion was their last hope. It was an uncommon practice to render blood-transfusion in those days. No one dared spare his blood as it is being commonly practised today. But some of the officers and volunteers donated blood willingly. One by one the volunteers donated blood to save the life of Major Lakhpati. These six bold individuals were A.J. Karachiwala, Lt. R.I. Charnia, Jaffer Karamali, H.I. Modi, Muhammad Bhaloo and Ali Muhammad Merali.

The Viceroy Lord Irwin visited Bombay in 1930. The Government of Bombay sought the good offices of a dozen officers and volunteers who were loaned as C.I.D. officers in free service. Major Lakhpati was also joined and rendered valuable services between January 13, 1930 and January 19, 1930. K.J. Petigara, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, granted to each of them the certificate of appreciation on January 22, 1930.

Prince Aly Khan visited India for the first time in 1930 and Major Lakhpati had an honour of travelling with him all over India. He was awarded silver and gold medals for his commendable services. In 1931, Prince Aly Khan also presented him a lovely tiny box of gold with his autograph engraved thereon the inscription: **"For faithful and good service"** and promoted him from Vice-Captain to Captain.

He was also a brilliant painter, and most of his designs appeared in the title covers of the Ismaili periodicals. He also prepared a beautiful genealogical chart of the Imams during Golden Jubilee. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah visited Hasanabad, Bombay on February 27, 1936 and attended the *mehmani* of 24 institutions of volunteers, scouts and guides. The volunteers presented the Imam a Guard of Honour. On that occasion, Major A.J. Lakhpati humbly presented his genealogical chart to the Imam. The Imam was much delighted and gave him loving blessings. On February 29, 1936, the Imam made him the Captain for the Bombay Volunteer Corps.

In 1936, Major A.J. Lakhpati was also awarded Golden Jubilee Medal by the Imam for rendering valuable services during the Golden Jubilee occasion.

In 1937, a society of the Ismaili poets, called **"Ismaili Kawi Mandal"** was founded in Bombay, and Major A.J. Lakhpati was made its first President, which he remained a member to his last day.. The society recognized him as the first Ismaili poet in India.

During the visit of the Imam in Porbander, India, Natwarsinha, the Maharaja of Porebander hosted a reception to the Imam on February 15, 1939. On that occasion, one poet recited few verses to glorify the Maharaja. The Imam also ordered Major Lakhpati to sing the praises of the Maharaja in verses. Major Lakhpati came forward and glorified in such dynamic words that the Maharaja overwhelmed beyond measure, and said, "I have never expected such beautiful Urdu poetry recited by a Khoja Ismaili." He called for the Major to award him a prize of Rs. 500/- But, the Imam said, "He will never accept it because he is a millionaire (*lakhpati*)." The sense of humor of Major Lakhpati were famous in the Ismaili circles and when the reception ended, he told to his colleagues in jovial expression that, "Lo! my pockets are quite empty, but the Imam made me a millionaire." He was a man of middle class in the society, but very religious, he was certainly a millionaire for possessing enormous wealth of unwavering faith.

He visited the East African countries for the first time in 1939. His accounts of journey was published in **"Fidai"** (September, 1939), in which he wrote that the Ismailis had reached their peak after establishing the Jubilee Insurance Co. in East Africa. He made an appeal to the leaders to open its branches in India or venture in the field. He also emphasized upon The Ismailia Cooperative Bank of Bombay to initiate the project. He wrote, "The memory of late Itmadi Pir Sabzali Ramzan Ali flashed in the mind during the tour. To bring the Africa to the summit, late Sabzali earned the reputation of the special

commissioner of the Imam. The major steps he had taken to boost the progress of the Ismaili institutions are incomparable. It is humble appeal to the Imam to create another Pir Sabzali in India and Africa, so that he may complete the incomplete works of the *jamats* for their prosperity." (p. 176)

In 1944, Prince Aly Khan presented him a valuable watch. Major A.J. Lakhpati was also awarded the **Prince Aly Shah Medal, Good Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Golden** and **Diamond Jubilee Medals**. In the Huzur Staff of the Imam and Prince Aly Khan, he was also included with Lt. Col. Pir Mohammad Madhani.

During the terrible blast in Bombay ship-yard in 1944, his services were urgently needed. He worked hard with other volunteers and rescued many people.

During the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee in 1946, the Aga Khan Legion Committee staged a mammoth procession through the streets of Bombay. It was a colourful, pompous and gorgeous procession. The mounted cavalry galloped splendidly in front with camels and elephants. Then came the gallant infantry in the colourful costumes of the Ismailis of different parts of the world. The heroic events of the Ismaili annals were depicted and portrayed in the elaborate and epic procession. Major Lakhpati rode on horseback at the head of the procession, representing the leaders of the volunteer corps, scouts and girls guides.

With Lt. Col. Pir Muhammad Madhani, he worked efficiently in the administration of the Diamond Jubilee in 1946 at Bombay. He was especially assigned general supervision to issue duty orders. His arrangement was wonderful and unique. Few days later, Prince Aly Khan wished him and Lt. Col. Pir Muhammad Madhani to be present at the Land's End Bungalow to decorate them with Diamond Jubilee Gold Medals. Prince Aly Khan awarded
them the Medals and said to them, **"You both are the pillars of the Volunteer Corps."**

It is related that once during a conversation with the Imam, Major Lakhpati had expressed to the Imam that he did not want to be alone during his last moments. The Imam smiled and assured him that he would not be alone, but his son would be by his side. Prince Aly Khan visited India in 1947 when the health of Major Lakhpati deteriorated. On March 17, 1947 he nevertheless went to the bungalow in Valkesar to see Prince Aly Khan. Prince Aly Khan offered the treatment in best hospital on his expenses, but he did not accept it. On March 21, 1947, Major A.J. Lakhpati sent his goodwill message of Navroz to Prince Aly Khan. Once again Prince Aly Khan told to Lt. Col. Pir Mohammad Madhani, "You admit Major Lakhpati in a good hospital for his treatment." Later on, he was admitted in the Ismaili General Hospital in Khoja Mola, Bombay, where Prince Aly Khan went to see him with a basket of flowers and fruits.

He composed some verses verbally in the hospital few days before his death, saying, ***"If you find a little sign of grief on my face when I died, you beat me with shoes in hatred."***

He died on Sunday, April 13, 1947 at 8.20 a.m. in the hospital at the age of 63 years. His death caused widespread grief and mourned by the host of all classes and communities. When his bier passed through the streets, the people showered rice from the buildings in lamentation. A huge multitude of people participated with his bier, appearing like an elephantine procession and his bier moved ahead slowly as if a vessel sailed on the shoulders of the people. Sparks and flames of anguish blazed up in the hearts of the people. He was laid to rest in midst of thousands of the mourners.

Prince Aly Khan paid a rich tribute in following words during his death:-

London: 19/4/1947

Please convey to Major Lakhpati's family and to the whole Bombay Volunteer Corps my profoundest sympathy. We have lost in Major Lakhpati, a pillar of Ismailism and a true and sincere friend, but his memory will always remain with us.

Paying his tribute to Major Lakhpati, Lt. Col. Pir Muhammad Madhani writes in **"Ismaili Volunteer, Scouts and Guides Souvenir"** (Bombay, 1954) that, " Today we have lost in Major Abdullah Jaffer an individual that will forever be remembered. Major Abdullah Jaffer Lakhpati who has not remained in our midst but whose happy memory fondly lingers with us for ever. He has gone to the next world but our heart pays respect and tribute to his loyalty and heroism, sincerely and silently. Indeed, **"Abd"** was the apple of our eye. He was the palpitating heart of the Volunteer Corps. By his death such a void is created that it shall never be replaced. "Abd!" we feel your absence."

Major Lakhpati became almost a legendary figure, which always shines, in the literary firmament. He was like a meteor that blazed a trail and like a meteor he went out of the firmament leaving a void. The community will have to wait many years or decades before a literary giant again looms over the horizon.



LALJIBHAI DEVRAJ
(1842-1930)

He was born in 1842 in the village of Kapaya, Kutchh. His name was Lalji and his father Devraj came to Bombay when he was hardly few months old. The loss of his mother in 1844 forced his father to hire a woman to nurse the 2 year-old child.

Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj learnt Gujrati upto grade four, and acquired little knowledge of English. He was betrothed to Lailabai in 1860. Two years after his marriage, his father Lalji died in 1862.

He visited Hong Kong, Canton, Shanghai and China between 1860 and 1863 to gain experience in the business field. He opened his small shop of umbrella in 1864 at Kalbadevi in Bombay. Later on, he concentrated himself in the business of glassware and kerosene and therefore obtained its agencies from British India. His business flourished and became one of the leading glassware merchants and commission agents. He also made his business trips to the Middle East, Gulf and Iran. He also extended his business field in Goa, Margau and Mapasa in 1884. He was blessed with obedient sons, who also joined their father's business.

He sprang from a family well known for their piety; he was also as dedicated and manifested unwavering faith. During a *mehmani* on March 2, 1900 in Hyderabad, Sind, the Imam said to him, "**The *shaitan* cannot beguile a steady person such as yourself.**"

Let us go back to 1882, when the population of India was about 200 million, the number of the school-going children was hardly 300 lakh. The Municipal Corporation of Bombay afforded only 1.17% of funds to education from its revenue. With the help of Rahimtullah Muhammad Sayani (1847-1902), Imam Aga Ali Shah established the first Khoja Ismaili School in 1882 in the city of Bombay. Two Hindu teachers taught 50 to 60 students. This school marked a small but veritable beginning of a renaissance in the Indian community. Later on, Kamadia Ismail Kassimani (1853-1909) founded His Highness the Aga Khan Anglo Vernacular School in the hall of the Khadak Jamatkhana with the Imam's permission. It was opened on August 26, 1901, providing education starting from the Kindergarten level. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah formed an education committee of two persons, Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj and Nainsibhai Pir Muhammad Ruwala (1852-1924) to promote religious and secular education. The Imam strongly encouraged them to knock on every door to promote education. Soon afterwards, Master Hashim Bogha (1863-1912) also joined the committee.

Laljibhai Devraj resolved to focus his energy on educational field, therefore, confided his business to his sons in 1901 and centered his attention onto the noble cause. He gathered more than 500 students in the school within a period of two years. He also raised His Highness The Aga Khan Girls School at Khadak, Bombay, where 11 teachers taught 300 girls. It must be noted that an Ismaili girl, Gulbanu Ismail Jan Muhammad, who was the first Muslim girl in Bombay to pass Matriculation in 1904, acquired her formal education in this school.

In 1903, the Ismaili Literature Society came into existence to enhance the notion of religious education. Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj became the society's President with Wazir Virji Premji Parpiya (1881-1946) as its Hon. Secretary. Master Hashim Bogha was appointed as its Supervisor. This small institution played a vital role in publishing religious literature.

He was also appointed as a member of the newly formed Ismaili Council for Bombay on April 9, 1906.

Ibrahim Jaffer Somji and Kassim Ali Ladha established the first Ismaili Dharmik Library in the compound of the Darkhana Jamatkhana on August 20, 1905. Karim Rahim Zain al-Abidin was appointed President with Ramzan Ali Rajab Ali as Hon. Secretary and Manji Ghulam Hussain as Hon. Auditor. The Imam became its patron with Mukhi Laljibhai as the vice-patron and a treasurer. It was some time later that he was appointed its Chairman. The library was also coordinated by a committee, called "Utejak Mandal", whose mandate focused onto propagation of the importance of literature. The library rented a big room in a residential place in order to host a collection of over 500 books. It also published two periodicals, viz. **Ismaili Sitaro**, the first monthly journal, whose first issue came out on Sunday, August 21, 1908, followed by The **Khoja Mitr**. For financing these papers, he also formed the Ismaili Hidayat Funds, in which he shared a handsome contribution.

Laljibhai Devraj formed a Text-Book Committee to provide text-books to students. Master Hashim Bogha and Manji Ghulam Hussain assisted him in his initiative. Master Hashim Bogha published **"Ragmala"** in 1906 to enable the students to learn the *raga* of the *ginans*.

In 1908, Missionary Jamal Megji performed an impressive *waez* in the main Jamatkhana of Bombay, insisting the *jamat* to come forward to start annual *majalis* in Kutchh. Laljibhai Devraj and Nainsibhai Pir Muhammad offered their services and pledged handsome funds. The first annual *majalis* started in Nigar, about 3 miles from Nagalpur in Kutchh on March 10, 1907, where he delivered a *waez*. He also raised a donation of Rs. 30,000/- for the *majalis* funds. In addition, he became the Mukhi of the *majalis* and since then, he became known as Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj.

His contribution to the first Ismaili Dharmik Library was matchless. Dr. Ali Mohammad Naser Karamsey, the President of the library humbly presented a report in a *mehmani* in Poona on January 7, 1911, enunciating the incredible services of Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj. In response, the Imam said: "**You are doing excellent work, helping the first Ismaili library and other institutions, missionaries, schools, etc. You are providing power to the Ismaili faith. Your work is highly virtuous, such as a major general and colonel's work would be. I give you blessings for it.**"

The Imam visited the Ismaili Dharmik Library on January 9, 1908, March, 1911, January, 1914 and March 1, 1915. The Imam said during his visit in March, 1911 that, "**I am much happy to see this library and congratulate those persons who helped this institution. I am also happy to know the help advanced by Mukhi Lalji Devraj, Jafferbhai and Alijah Haji Ahmad. Since this institution is an important centre to promote education in our *jamat*, I wish you all the best for it.**"

In the interim, he made a collection of religious books, and raised a small library inside his printing press in 1914 to permit Ismailis to have free access to the available literature.

In 1915, the Imam formed a new committee of five individuals, viz. Dr. Rajab Ali Ramji Lakhdir, Ismail Ibrahim Ukka, Mohammad Jaffer Mukhi Alarakhia, Nainsibhai Pir Muhammad Ruwala and Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj. In 1916, the Imam introduced two other persons in the committee, yielding to a total of ten members. In 1917, the school came under the control of Central Board of Education. The foundation stone of the new school was laid on March 23, 1924 with the hands of Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj at Sandshuster Road, Bombay. When Ghulam Ali Ghulam Hussain, the President requested him to make a speech, he showed his inability due to an old age, therefore, his son Alijah Hasan Ali Devraj addressed the audience.

Mukhi Laljibhai also established a Banu Shala (Ladies Industrial Home) in the compound of the Darkhana Jamatkhana, where the Ismaili girls were given basic training of sewing, embroidery works and cooking. About 12 formed tutors were employed to train 300 girls on Imam's grant.

He also financed other schools in Kandi Mola, and spread his yeoman services in other parts of India. It became a significant feature of his career to assist the Ismaili schools irrespective of reward or fame. Later on, these schools came to be supervised under the newly formed institution, called The Khoja Ismaili Education Board in 1922.

Imam Aga Ali Shah is said to have bequeathed him to unearth rare and old manuscripts of the *ginans*. He launched a campaign in Sind, Kathiawar, Gujrat and Kutchh and collected a bulk of old manuscripts. Most of the Ismailis willingly delivered him their collections, some sold them to him, and others gave them to him on the word that he would return them. For about six months, he employed few scribes to make copies of the *ginans* and *farmans* in Khojki script and then distributed them among the Ismailis. He got the copies transcribed through the persons whose handwritings were hansome, notably Bhagat Karimbhai Mohan Vartej, who was given three annas for writing 1000 words in Gujrati and four annas for 1000 words in Khojki. When the demand increased, he started a litho print to supply more copies. When the demand increased further more, he made up his mind to prepare the Khojki types for printing purpose. He travelled throughout India, but none could design the Khojki font type. Meanwhile, he read in the newspapers that there existed a facility in Hamburg, Germany capable of preparing the printing types of any script.

He visited Germany in 1903 for a period of three months and succeeded to prepare the Khojki types for the first time. He returned and established the Khoja Sindhi Printing Press on June 27, 1903 at Palkhi Mola, Bombay. It boosted his courage when the Imam

stressed upon publishing religious books in Khojki. He mobilized his capital in the project. The **Satveni** was the first publication of the press.

The Khoja Ghulam Hussain Press, operated by Alauddin Ghulam Hussain (1858-1914) and his son Hussain since 1880, published the *ginans* and *farmans* into litho print. These books were so costly that all the Ismailis could not afford them. For example, a book of 100 *ginans* was sold in Rs. 3.50 and the book of *dua* in Rs. 0.75. The advent of the Khoja Sindhi Printing Press had a major impact on the literary field. With his hard exertion and firm determination, the Ismailis could afford the publications at a lower cost. He continued to print the religious literature into Khojki for 17 years. When the Imam made a *farman* to publish the religious literature into Gujrati in 1919, he started the Gujrati publications. He indeed played an important role in facilitating the switch from Khojki to Gujrati. With the development of the printing type, the printed form gradually replaced the lithographs. Mukhi Laljibhai bore the loss from his own pocket and distributed the profit thereof to the Ismaili library and the schools.

The Khoja Sindhi Printing Press was a boon and basic brick of the Ismaili literature. It paved a way in the growth of journalism within the community. Suffice it to say that it gave a new drift to the Ismaili journalism.

The Indian Ismailis are indebted to him for publishing the *ginans* before it decayed. It ensues from his editions that he did not indicate the criteria he had followed to edit the *ginanic* literature. When he noticed its adverse reactions, he made an advertisement in the **"Ismailis Satpanth Prakash"** (Bombay, April 12, 1918), which reads: "We hereby appeal with due respect to the missionaries, devouts and the persons, well rooted in the study of the *ginans* that the *ginans* lying in our press have been copied from the accessible hand written manuscripts. We make an appeal to bring to our notice with evidences the errors and shortcomings in the *ginans* we have brought forth after a labour of seventeen years. We will make amendments in the new editions provided we had truly committed mistakes. We have however copied in two to three editions, and none among the community has yet raised an objection for any alteration, which is an ample evidence of the doubtlessness of our publications. Nevertheless, the reason to make an appeal is to make ourselves free from committing errors, and it is the duty of the scholars of the *ginans* to respond to our appeal." He seems to have become victim in modern critics, but the scholars must take a look upon the foregoing declaration before drawing their conclusions.

The library also organized essay and lecture competitions. The winners were awarded prizes and their names published in the Ismaili periodicals. His name was undoubtedly immortalized as the real founder of the Ismaili journalism in India. He also became a patron of Ismaili Literature Society in Bombay in 1910.

In 1915, he also started **"Ismaili Satpanth Prakash"**, whose editor was V.N. Hooda and Harjibhai Poonja, but discontinued in the year 1927.

He was the President of The Ismailia Sahitya Utejak Mandal, Bombay and extended his inestimable services. He however resigned from the post on February 19, 1918 by virtue of his old age.

In January, 1919, N.M. Budhwani, the editor of the **"Ismaili Aftab"** (Dhoraji) had a meeting with Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj and wrote that, "I had an opportunity to see Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj. He is now about 75 years old, resides near the main Jamatkhana and renders honorary services to the *jamat*. He is an old man, but his thoughts are modern.

He gives much priority to education. He has done a lot of work to spread education within the community. He himself supervises the printing press without profit motives and bears its loss. He is regular in the attendance of morning and evening Jamatkhana. He was an unsparing man, and there is not a single institution in the *jamat* where his generous hand has not penetrated."

The monthly **Ismaili Satpanth Prakash** continued to be published for seven years in Ahmedabad. When he retired on February 19, 1918, the publication of **Ismaili Satpanth Prakash** came under the Ismailia Sahitiya Prakash Society.

Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj handed over the Khoja Sindhi Printing Press to the Recreation Club Institute with the first Ismaili periodical, "**Ismaili Sitaro**" in 1922, which discontinued after a span of 14 years. Instead, the Recreation Club Institute started the publication of the weekly, "**Ismaili,**" whose editor was Wazir Ali Muhammad Jan Muhammad Chunara (1881-1960). Its first issue came out on October 7, 1923.

On March 3, 1924, the Imam visited Khadak Girls School, and said while looking at Mukhi Laljibhai that, "**I am much happy to see you. When this educational institution had been started, there was not a single person to work for it. You alone have worked hard at that time and performed an excellent work. You were however alone, but rendered an excellent work.**"

His intimate colleague, Nainsibhai Pir Muhammad Ruwala deceased on October 3, 1924 at the age of 72 years. He was born in Rataria, Kutchh in 1852. Soon after his formal education, he entered in the petty business of cotton waste in 1868. Later on, he moved to Bombay and started his own cotton business. He had rendered incredible services for 35 years along with Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj.

The unfurling ceremony of the Ismaili flag was performed for the first time in India on June 19, 1927 at Thana Jamatkhana. Soon afterwards, it was followed in other parts of India. Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj had an honour to unfurl the Ismaili flag on Bandra Jamatkhana, Bombay on July 4, 1927.

While addressing in the Central Health Board on January 15, 1928 at Bombay, the Imam said, "**I am much happy to know that the Bombay school has made tremendous progress during last several years. When it first started, its initiative was insignificant. At that time, Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj and others worked hard, resulting in the opening of its branches in the locations of Bombay. This school serves excellently to the community. I wish for its high success and prosperity.**"

Overpowered with pain and fatigue, there was not an ounce of energy left in him. But even in the state of bodily frustration, his mind was alert and active with unwavering faith. Once Wazir Ghulam Hussain Thavar (1907-1963) went at his residence with few

friends when his health was impaired. When the matter of the literature grossly discrediting the image of Ismailism in a hideous form came into the discussion, he exclaimed at once, "Alas! I am too old. My hands and legs are shaking in weakness. I have now no energy, otherwise, I will have taken measures against the derogatory literature."

Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj, who was also known as the **Grand Old Man** and the **Father of Education** and **Father of Ismaili Journalism,** expired in Bombay on October 6, 1930 at the age of 88 years. He had five sons, viz. Rehmatullah, Hasan Ali, Issa, Abdullah, Hussain and a daughter, Kulsoom.

At the Aga Hall in Bombay, the Imam said to his sons during the *Ruhani Mehmani* on December 22, 1933 that, "**Your father had served my house too much, and wherever his children are - whether in Goa, Madras, Bombay, etc., in the Recreation Club, Council or Panjibhai Club, they are serving me. I give you many many blessings.**"

The Imam also called his sons and their children near the chair and heard of their activities. The Imam graced them *dastboshi* and told to Alijah Hasan Ali Devraj that, **"Alijah, you are also serving my house and keep it continued."**

His son Rahmatullah Lalji (1876-1918) introduced Persian classes in the Vidhiya Vinod Club (Bombay) and also wrote many important articles in Ismaili periodicals. He financed the religious night school of Kandi Mola, Bombay. As well as raised a group, known as the Valkesar Panjibhai to present the fruits of every season to the Imam at the Valkesar bungalow. Ultimately, it took the formation of the **Valkesar Panjibhai Majalis** in Bombay. Later on, he moved to Goa and helped the incoming Ismailis in their settlement. He also served as Mukhi of the Goa *jamat*. He had 4 sons and 5 daughters.

Hasan Ali Lalji was the first Hon. Secretary of the Recreation Club Institute since 1922. He was appointed the Mukhi of Bombay Darkhana Jamatkhana in 1934. He also executed the function of President of the Council Committee in Kutchh with Mukhi Hashim Bhimji as Hon. Secretary. He left behind 2 sons and 3 daughters. His son, Mahdi rendered incredible services to the *jamat* as the Mukhi. Mukhi Mahdi died in November, 1949 and the Imam sent following telegraphic message:

Marscillee : 12th Nov., 1949
Time : 11.45 a.m.

My most loving blessings to the memory of our beloved Mukhi Mahdi. Loving blessing and condolence to his family. His life long devotion and service like his father, uncles and grandfather are always in my thoughts. Renewed blessings to the Laljee family.

The third son of Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj was Issa Lalji, who was born on August 3, 1891. He was appointed as the Mukhi of Madras Jamatkhana on January 4, 1934 and served for eight years. He then migrated to Bangladesh, and died in Karachi on November 2, 1976. He had 6 sons and 5 daughters.

Abdullah Lalji also served as the Mukhi for Goa *jamat* and was crowned with the title of **Wazir** in 1960. He left behind 2 sons and 4 daughters.

Hussain Lalji was the fifth son of Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj, and also served as the Mukhi in Goa and Poona Jamatkhanas. In 1922, the Imam appointed him as a member of H.H. The Aga Khan's Ismaili Central Board for Education for Bombay. He was given the title of **Wazir** in 1970. He had 7 sons and 4 daughters, and died in May, 1971. It must be known that his son, Jaffer presented a *mehmani* at Wadi, Bombay in 1970 and asked a name for his newly born son. The Imam named his son **Lalji**. Soon afterwards, the Imam attended the *mehmani* of Issa Lalji, where he said, **"Lalji is a Hindu name, but I gave this name to Jaffer's son, because your late father Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj had rendered tremendous services, and I gave this name to revive his memory."**

Kulsoom was the only daughter of Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj. She was also a social worker and married to Vali Mohammad Haji Ladak.

In 1951, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah is reported to have asked to Ibrahim Jaffer Somji, "Who is the richest person in Bombay?" To this, he said, "Dewan Muhammad Rawjee is most affluent." The Imam said, **"Not Dewan Rawjee, but the family of Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj. His son Hasan Ali in Bombay, Hussain in Poona, Issa in Madras and Abdullah in Goa served as the Mukhis. Indeed, the family of late Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj is the richest one."**

MANJI GHULAM HUSSAIN PADAMSI
(1883-1925)



He was born and raised in Vaghnagar, Kathiawar in 1883. He was a persuasive religious since childhood. His father, Ghulam Hussain Padamsi was once a famous hostage of Imam Hasan Ali Shah, who died on September 15, 1927.

Manji Ghulam Hussain came to Bombay in 1896 at the age of 13 years, and worked in his uncle's glassware shop, Saleh Muhammad Padamsi. He controlled the whole business after his uncle's death, brought it on steady progress, and became one of the business magnates in Bombay. He formed The Bombay Glassware Merchant Association in 1923 and became its first President till his death.

His appearance in the arena of community services began through the membership of the Panjibhai Club in Kandi Mola, Bombay and was soon appointed its Kamadia. He also served as the Hon. Auditor of the Ismaili Dharmik Library, Khadak, Bombay in 1905. He became the first honorary chief secretary of the Recreation Club Institute. He established the Kandi Mola Girls School on January 16, 1909 and served as Honorary Secretary with Rehmatullah Devji as a President.

He strove much to promote the notion of education amongst the girls and served many years in the Kandi Mola Girls School. It was his oft-repeated words, **"By educating a boy, one gets an educated individual; but by educating a girl, one gets an educated family. So long as girls are kept in the miserable ignorance, all the universities and colleges are a waste."** He would also say, **"Women are treated in society as a lifeless machine, incapable of participating with men in the pursuit of education. Let her world not be confined to her home, beyond which she does not know."**

He spent colossal amount for the marriages of girls who completed their education. He was also a member of the Ismaili Council. In 1922, he was made the member of the Supreme Council for Kathiawar, and in the same year, he was appointed the member of the Central Education Board for Kathiawar. In 1924, he became the President of the Supreme Council for Kathiawar, and also the President of the Central Education Board for Kathiawar. In the second grand conference of the councilors of the local and Supreme Councils for India, held on March 4, 1925 at Jodhpur, he was elected to preside over the conference. He was also a member of the cabinet council for The Aga Khan's Bombay Volunteer Corps. He was also generous and granted a princely fund for the premises of the Ismailia Central Free School in the name of his father, and for the new Jamatkhana of Sarthan.

He died on November 24, 1925 at his Padamsi Seaview Bungalow, Bombay at 6.00 a.m. The Imam said at the Bombay Jamatkhana on January 22, 1926 that, **"I am sad for Manji's demise. He served me tremendously. His services are glorified in all places. He was a chief (*sardar*) in the Kathiawar Supreme Council."**

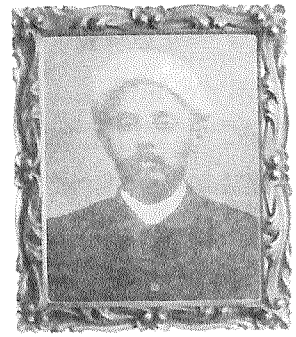


There is a magnificent tradition in honorary service in the *jamat*, in India and elsewhere. To all the *murids* who render this honorary service, I give special blessings, because their service is going to be more and more important in the years ahead. And therefore, this tradition of honorary service must be upheld. At the same time, our institutions must become more and more competent, more and more qualified, more and more focused, more and more answerable, so that, they anticipate the needs of the *jamat* and they serve the *jamat* better and better. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Bombay, November 22, 1992)

Remember that we have a magnificent tradition of honorary service. And that our institutions are what they are because of the numbers of *murids* who offer honorary service and I hope that tradition will continue for decades and decades and decades. That the *jamat* and the Imam will always be happy to have so many *murids* offering honorary service because that is one of the principles, one of the ethics of our *tariqah* and we must uphold that strongly. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Bombay, November 23, 1992)

My admiration and my pride that there are so many *murids* who are rendering such wonderful service to the *jamat*, its institutions, and the Imam of the time. And I give you my special blessings for this work, for this excellent work. And although perhaps you cannot always perceive the magnificent results that you are achieving because he who is in the woods sees the trees around him, not the woods. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Nairobi, July 11, 1991)

MASTER HASHIM BOGHA
(1863-1912)



Master Hashim Bogha was born in Porebandar, India in 1863. He was intelligent and thus eager to get educated, but his poverty fated a hitch in his life. He however continued by hook and crook. He studied till late hours at night. Sometimes he stood several hours below a street-light to study when he had not a single penny to purchase kerosene for the lamp. Despite his down-trodden condition, he had his schooling upto matriculation.

In 1881, his fortune brought him in Bombay at the age of 18 years and joined Khan Muhammad Habib School as an assistant teacher in the English section.

Master Hashim Bogha was one of the most well read persons of his period and acquired adequate knowledge of Arabic, Persian, English, Gujrati, Sanskrit, Marathi and Sindhi. He was well skilled in the allegorical interpretations of the Holy Koran and Hadiths.

He was a devoted Ismaili and cemented his close contact with Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj (1842-1930) and Nainsibhai Pirbhai Muhammad Ruwala (1852-1924). The Imam had formed an education committee of these three persons to propagate the importance of education within the community. In 1901, they established a school in the compound of the Darkhana Jamatkhana in Bombay, where the students were given secular and religious education. Master Hashim taught religious education in the mornings and evenings for two hours. Another school also started in Kandi Mola, Bombay on January 16, 1909, where Master Hashim exhorted religious education.

During the course of his presidential speech at the 15th annual session of the All India Muhammaden Educational Conference held in 1902 at Delhi, the Imam said that there was no hard and fast injunction in Holy Koran regarding the practice of veil in Muslim society. Unfortunately, the Imam's speech was criticized negatively in the orthodox arena through newspapers. As a response to this criticism, Master Hashim Bogha girded his loins and justified the Imam's views with trenchant arguments in the local newspapers. Justice Badruddin Tayyib (1844-1909) was much touched with his rational arguments, and discarded the system of veil in his family. Nay, he also visited the house of Master Hashim Bogha and tendered his special congratulations.

In 1903, the Ismaili Literature Society also came into existence to enhance the notion of religious education. Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj became President with Wazir Virji Premji Parpiya (1881-1946) as Honorary Secretary. Master Hashim Bogha was appointed Supervisor. This small institution played a vital role in publishing religious literature.

The derogatory propaganda, defiling Ismailism was in vogue in those days, and a heap of articles poured down in periodicals. On that juncture, Master Hashim was alone to encounter the diabolic propaganda. When the rival camp did not desist, he produced a bulk of books with his meagre resources as a true *fidai*. Once his opponents filed a suit against him when he had no support to oppose it. He was not disheartened and succeeded to overcome it.

He was deeply engaged in his religious services and heeded nothing to accelerate his economical condition. He formed an Ismaili Book Agency, the only mean provided him bread and butter.

He however continued his study of Arabic and Persian, and issued several leaflets on different topics. He compiled the "**Ismaili Darpan**" in 1906. It was the first book ever written on Ismaili history by any author in India. Hence, he merited himself the title of the first pioneer to publish Ismaili literature. He had a good collection of the Imam's *farmans* which he published in 1906, namely **"Bahr-i Rehmat"** containing the *farmans* from 1903 to 1905, and was updated in 1911.

It exhausted his 15 precious years to translate the commentary of the old prayers into Gujrati. During the Haji Bibi Case in 1908, the need of the translation of an old prayer arose in court. He forwarded its copy to Justice Louis Pitman Russell in the court through Missionary Juma Bhagat Ismail (1868-1935) on August 5, 1908. The scholars in Arabic examined it and declared it a genuine translation. Thus, he published it in 1908 entitled, **"Tafsir- Dua."**

With the help of his colleagues, he carried the torch of learning to distant parts of India, and when the Ismaili schools on the same pattern started everywhere in India, the need of a syllabus arose for religious education. Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj formed a Text Book Committee with the inclusion of Master Hashim and Manji Ghulam Hussain. Master Hashim had a broad knowledge, he was confided to prepare a syllabus into four volumes, entitled "**Sindhi Chopadi**".

Despite his several engagements, he always stood steadfast in the literary deliberations. In 1907, Edlji Dhanji Kaba published a book, **"Hasan bin Sabbah"** against the Ismailis. Master Hashim was confined to bed due to illness, but he compiled his **"Qatelal Hasad"** within four hours, refuting the charges branded against Hasan bin Sabbah.

In 1908, when Ibrahim Jusab Varteji had not yet espoused Ismailism, Ahmed Devji, a veteran Ismaili leader was awarded the title of **J.P.** by British India. The Khoja Panjibhai Club hosted a reception for Ahmed Devji. Varteji was also invited, who took a chance to meet Master Hashim Bogha, whose immense knowledge deeply impressed him.

It is to be noted that the first girls school in Kandi Mola, Bombay established on January 16, 1909 amidst a rousing function attended by 200 guests. Master Hashim Bogha delivered an impressive speech on the importance of education.

According to the report of May 21, 1909, which splashed in the daily **"Bombay Samachar"**, the Twelvers hosted a grand honour to Jaffer Haji Mohammad Sharif in Jamnagar on May

15, 1909 for the building of "**Makam-i Jafferi**"for their community. On that occasion, Ibrahim Jusab Varteji (who did yet not embraced Ismailism) lyrically expressed few verses before the audience. Unfortunately, the Ismaili faith was discredited in their programme. When Master Hashim Bogha mastered the philosophy of the Ismaili faith, he took his pen and bodly refuted the irrational allegations charged against Ismailism through the local newspaper. His arguments were endowed with potent reasons.

In 1911, a member of the Ismaili Council for Bombay told him to publish the approved rules and regulations of the Council into English and Gujrati and offered him a remuneration of Rs. 25/- Master Hashim laughed at him and said, "How much will you earn while submitting the published copy to the Imam?" To this, the member surprisingly said, "It is not a matter to astonish. I am doing it voluntarily for the community beyond any doubt." Master Hashim said, "The work you intend to assign me will cost no less than a hundred rupees. Since you work voluntarily, I also wish to share you, and will not claim a single penny for it."

Master Hashim Bogha always received cooperation from Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj in the literary field, whom he respected as a father. He remained indebted to him for getting encouragement.

He died at the end of 1912 in Bombay. He had no child, therefore, his wife sustained on a small grocery shop at home. Upon his death, the members of the Ismaili Religious Library called an urgent meeting to pay tribute to his inestimable services, and passed a resolution that his photo should be kept in the library. Dr. Rajab Ali Ramji Lakhdhir, the President was assigned to send a copy of the minutes of the meeting to the Imam. Below his photo in the library, it was written into Gujrati that: ***"The first Ismaili religious author in Gujrati."***

While returning from Europe in 1912, the Imam himself visited the library to perform the unveiling ceremony of his photo, and said: "**He was a very nice person, and rendered services with a true sense of spirit in the promulgation of religious education."** After a short while, the Imam became serious and said, **"Had there been five (persons like) Hashim Bogha, the entire world would have been enlightened with Ismailism. Alas! He was alone."**

He was a prolific and trenchant writer and compiled many books under the registration with British India as per the 25th Act of 1867. He began to publish the following books under the "Shia Imami Ismaili Dharam Vardhak Gujrati Book Agency."

"Ismaili Darpan" (1906), "Ismaili Prakash" Part I & II (1906-1907), "Tafsir-i Dua" (1908), "Ninda-i Haq" (1908), "Qatelul Hasad" (1908), "Taleem-i Dua" (1909), "Tarbiat-i Dua" (1909), "Nur-i Vahedaniat" Part I, II, & III (1909), "**Bahr-i Rehmat**" **(1911)**, etc. Nay, he also wrote **"Maqsad-i Haqiqat", "Haqiqi Aino", "Bostan-i Ali", "Hu'n Konn Chhu'n?"** etc.

He also published the following books under the "Ismaili Book Agency".

"Jauhar-i Haqiqat" (1910), "Asliat-i Khoja" (1912), etc. Besides, he also brought out **"Zahoor-i Ali", "Didar-i Ali", "Bostan-i Marifat", "Daniya Bhagaya Ismaili tara","Mazhar-i Ali", "Hukka"**, etc.

His book **Asliat-i Khoja** (Origin of the Khojas) published few months before his death in 1912. It was in response to the **"Khoja Kom'ni Tawarikh"** (1912) by Edlji Dhanji Kaba.



On the occasion of my Silver Jubilee, I wanted to have a special *mulaqat* with those who, for years and years and years, have been rendering special service to the *jamat* and to the Imam of the time and I wanted to tell you that on the occasion of my Jubilee, I remember, specially clearly, the fantastic work which you have been doing for years and years and years, and I give you each one of you individually, my best special blessings. Your example is wonderful, and my deepest wish is that you should continue to serve as strongly, courageously and as well as you have done for so long. I congratulate you, and you are examples of service, and I give you my best, best, special blessings. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Dacca, January 6, 1983)

That voluntary work, working together for the pleasure of serving and without seeking recognition in a material or in a social sense but for the pleasure of serving, that is a pillar of strength. And I hope that in the years ahead this spirit of service will remain a permanent, strong pillar on which to build in the future. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Gilgit, May 14, 1983)

And I look to the future with confidence because I know that my spiritual children in Pakistan believe in honorary work and that this foundation has existed for centuries. *Inshallah*, it will continue to exist for centuries in all the countries where the *jamat* is living. And I want you to know that the Imam of the time considers this very excellent work, very excellent work. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Karachi, March 25, 1983)



MEGJI MULJI
(1861-1932)

He was born in Badresar, Kutchh, in 1861. His father died when he was 3 years old. Dressed in rags, he arrived in Bombay in 1878 at the age of 17 years. He started to work in a shop, where the grams were baked in the oven, thus earning two rupees per month. He was honest and a hard worker, therefore, his monthly pay was raised to five rupees.

He was regular in attendance to the Jamatkhana with an unwavering faith in Ismailism. In those days, he purchased eight mangoes for one rupee and presented them in a *mehmani* to Imam Hasan Ali Shah in Bandra. The Imam accepted his humble offering and told a certain Sonbai, "Give him one of the eight mangoes, and also one bread with sweet rice." Sonbai gave him these three items, which he ate with his boss outside the premises. Both went to Dandi to have a *didar* of the Imam with the *jamat*.

He worked hard for three years. He passed his whole day working with others and baked grams at night to sell for buying bread. His will of iron and determination helped him in surmounting the hurdles and put his petty business on the line of steady progress. In 1880, he erected his own shop at old Hammam Street, Bombay, and made further progress very soon.

He got married at the end of 1881 and got all favours from his wife. In 1900, he opened his office of estate agency and became a broker of houses, buildings and plots in Bombay. In sum, he was able to earn Rs. 50,000/- during the last 20 years.

In 1901, he also purchased the Master Flour Mill in a partnership. His partner severed from him after six months. He was now a sole owner of the mill, named, Prince Flour Mill. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah visited the mill and graced him much blessings for more progress.

In 1913, he was appointed the Mukhi of Bombay Darkhana Jamatkhana. He is also reputed to have constructed the new building of the Jamatkhana and generated a fund of Rs. 89,500/- including his own contribution of forty thousands rupees. The Imam took a visit of the new premises on Friday, January 22, 1915 in the presence of 6000 Ismailis and performed its opening ceremony, and returned after 20 minutes.

The Imam also visited the Jamatkhana on Saturday, February 13, 1915 at 10.30 a.m., and had a group photograph with the members of the Bombay Council. He then graciously presented a *shawl* to Mukhi Megji and others by saying, "**You have performed the best services to great extent for the Jamatkhana.**" Dr. Rajab Ali Ramji Lakhdhir, the Hon.

Secretary of the Council read the account of the new Jamatkhana, and showed that the income of the donation was Rs. 89,500/- in which Mukhi Megji contributed Rs. 40,000/-

On behalf of the Bombay *jamat*, he routed an urgent telegram with services on February 5, 1918 to Europe to the Imam as under:-

His Highness Aga Khan
Care King
London

Remitted pounds 700 to King through National Bank with telegram and earnestly pray for accepting humble *mehmani* from young and old, males and females of Bombay *jamat*.

We all are unsurmountably thirsty for holy *didar*, and anxiously solicit Your August Highness mercy and favour to place holy feet in Bombay and bestow Your August Highness holy *didar* most anxiously awaited since last three years; soliciting Your gracious Highness benedictions.

The Imam sent the following reply on February 12, 1918 from Nice:-

Mooki Megji,

Many thank your telegram. I too most anxious to see all dear children but you know travelling long and difficult. Still will come soon. Now all thoughts with you.

He was never close-fisted, but open-handed. He donated Rs. 10,000/- for the building of Jamatkhana in Bandra. He also shared a handsome amount for the new Jamatkhana and *musafarkhana* of Ahmedabad, whose opening ceremony was performed by his hands on June 10, 1919. The Jamatkhana of Kurala was built under his supervision, and he also contributed a massive amount for the Jamatkhanas of Mahim and Badresar, Kutchh. He built a sanatorium at Lonowali, near Poona, known as Ajbai Sanatorium. He is also said to have laid the foundation of the Karimabad Jamatkhana in Bombay. He generously donated huge amounts to the boardings of Rajkot, Poona, Botad, Vancaner and Andheri. He also built a Marriage Hall for Rs. 5,000/- in Nigar, Kutchh.

In 1922, he unfortunately submitted his resignation from the office of Mukhi to the Imam, because he found certain obstacles. The Imam said, "**Do you have troubles from those persons? You must tolerate it while serving me.**" To this, he spoke not a single word. The Imam said, "**All come to me with their complaints, but there was only one to realize my pain and problem, and he was Wazir Ismail Gangji of Junagadh. Listen, I considered the potential affinity of Wazir Ismail in you, but not....**" Before the Imam completed his last sentence, the tears streamed in the eyes of Mukhi Megji, and said submissively to the Imam, "Mawla, forgive me as I forgot. Forgive me as I committed an error. I will never complain, never about anybody." He withdrew his resignation and bore the hurdles and hitches till his last breath without uttering a word.

On April 29, 1913, the Bombay Council excommunicated Rahmatullah Ismail Tijoriwala due to his violating the rules of the community and harassing the *jamat*. He continued his malicious activities publicly. Dr. Rajab Ali Ramji Lakhdhir, the President of the Council filed a suit against him, known as the "Lakhdhir Defamation Case" (case no. 450/B, dated Sep. 13, 1924). Justice Frank Olivera examined the hearings and gave his verdict in favour of the Ismailis on September 27, 1924. Mukhi Megji Mulji played a prominent role in the case as a witness and remained in touch till the ruling of the court.



Wazir Mukhi Megji had 4 sons and 8 daughters, but all died except one son. When his fourth son, Hasan Ali died on April 15, 1925 he was aggrieved beyond measure. The Imam sent the following telegraphic message: -

Nice: April 29, 1925

Children,

Paternal love and blessings feast occasion and thanks message from self and son. Convey my deep sympathy blessings Mukhi on his loss. Hope work for good will makes him forget this very sad loss.

In the loving memory of his son, Hasan Ali, he built the H.H. The Aga Khan's Maternity Home at Sandhurst Road, Bombay, at the cost of two lacs of rupees.

He cherished a desire to decorate the new Jamatkhana with a clock tower. He did not decipher his plan to anyone, even to the Imam, and built it in 1925 at the cost of Rs. 26,000/-. The Imam visited the Jamatkhana on January 25, 1928 and said, "**You have been serving heartily and loyally ever since you came to the office of the Mukhi. You have excellently served with your heart and body. The Jamatkhana is built under your supervision and you contributed a handsome amount. Without indication or suggestion of others, you have built this tower and offered it to me with love and dedication. You did not inform me till the tower became ready. I am much delighted and give you my best blessings.**" The Imam also said to the *jamat*, "**The photo of Mukhi Megji must be placed in the tower and if the Mukhiani consents, her photo will also be placed, and I will be highly happy. This is the first occasion that I place the photo of a woman.**"

On November 2, 1926, the Bombay *jamat* celebrated the birthday of the Imam during the *didar* programme. While looking at the cheerful Ismailis in jubilation, the eyes of Mukhi Megji moisted with tears. So choked was he with the smoke of anguish and pain that his throat could not fetch so much as a sigh. To this, the Imam asked for a reason, and he said, "Mawla, I remember my late son on this auspicious occasion. I am thinking that who will be with me when confined to bed during last hour of my life." The Imam soothed and quieted him and assured, "**Mukhi, don't you be worried. My son Prince Aly Khan will be present at your bed at that moment.**"

In view of his meritorious services, he merited the title of **Wazir** in 1932.

Prince Aly Khan came in India from Europe on December 5, 1932 and Mukhi Megji accompanied him during his tour in India.

He arrived in Karachi on December 23, 1932 when Prince Aly Khan was on a flying visit of Karachi. He was present in all the Jamatkhanas wherever Prince Aly Khan visited. In the Garden Jamatkhana, he sat on a chair due to his impairing health, therefore, Prince Aly Khan advised him for rest. His condition seriously shattered on the next day and was hospitalized. Prince Aly Khan went to see him and put strips of cologne water with his hands on his forehead and remained 15 minutes at his bed. No recovery was gained and at last he died on the third day.

His dead body was brought to Bombay in a grand procession, and buried with great honor on December 31, 1932. The Ismailis closed their businesses on that day. His photographs were placed in the halls of the Jamatkhanas in Bombay and Karachi according to the guidance of the Imam, who also sent the following message during his sad demise:-

"My thought and paternal loving memory are with beloved Wazir Mukhi, whose picture remains before my eyes at all moments."

Prince Aly Khan also sent a message to his wife, Mukhiani Ajbai that, **"Late Mukhi Megji was a great person and his loss will be felt amongst the Ismailis."**

Prince Aly Khan visited the H.H. The Aga Khan's Maternity Home, lying at Sandhurst Road, Bombay on December 15, 1933 at 10.35 a.m. Alijah Ghulam Hussain Bandali Somji, the Managing Trustee, Ghulam Ali G. Merchant, the Trustee of late Mukhi Megji and Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad R. Macklai warmly welcomed him. He inspected the overall work and supervision. He entered into the main hall, where Mukhiani Ajbai and her two daughters submitted their humble presents to him.

The Imam had also taken a flying visit of the H.H. The Aga Khan's Maternity Home on January 10, 1934 and blessed Mukhiani Ajbai and her two daughters.

The Imam visited Khadak Jamatkhana, Bombay on January 15, 1934 and said in the *mehmani* presented by Mukhiani Ajbai, that, **"Late Wazir had served me too much, and offered me his life with his whole heart. His photograph must be kept in the Jamatkhana, so that the believers look at it and learn the exhortations of his services. I have also made the same *farman* in Karachi."**

The Imam presented the *pachhedi* to Mukhiani Ajbai and her two daughters. The Imam also blessed the trustees and the staff of late Mukhi.

Prince Aly S. Khan was also present on that occasion paid glowing tribute to late Mukhi. He also recollected his last meeting with the late Mukhi in Karachi. Mukhi Megji Mulji left behind 8 daughters and 4 sons. Six of his daughters predeceased him. His first son, Rahim was born, in 1884, who died at the age of 12 years in 1896. His another son, Somji was born in 1886, who also died at the age of 2 years in 1888. In 1891, his third son, Abdullah was born, who also unfortunately died at the age of 25 years in 1916. His fourth son, Hasan Ali also died in 1925.



MOLEDINA MEGJI, VARAS
(1854-1926)

Varas Moledina Megji, also known as Varas Moloo or Moloo Kamadia, was born in Mundra, Kutchh in 1854. His forefathers were the renowned merchants, conducting the businesses of grains, ghee and wool in the name of Vali Parpiya, and extended their mercantile influence as far as Karachi and Jamnagar. His father ran a business with two brothers, then severed and started his own business in the name of Megji Vali. When he died, his son Varas Moledina continued it. His business involved collecting wool in Kutchh. For shearing the annual wool crop, it was necessitated to confine the sheep flock in close quarters for clipping. The accumulated wool packed in big bundles, which were transported to their agent Allana Manji in Bombay for sale. The grains and foodstuffs were purchased from the proceeds of wool to be sold in Kutchh. It was a hard work indeed, because the whole wool was not collected in one place. He and his brothers had to travel on camels in different villages with provisions to procure wool. When his business extended, he sent his elder son and younger brother to Bombay and opened an office. He had a mathematical mind and could perform surprising feats of mental arithmetic. He had a thorough grasp of counting orally the rates of wool for five to ten years old without referring to old books. He was the biggest merchant of wool in Kutchh and none competed him.

Sind lies in the north of Kutchh, Kathiawar in south, and there is a desert in the east and the Arabian Sea in the west. Apart from the infertile area, the region of Kutchh is spread in 6500 sq. miles. Kutchh is divided into eight divisions, each consisting of different villages. During the period of Varas Moledina, the State of Kutchh was governed by Maharao Desal (1836-1860), Maharao Pragmall II (1860-1874) and Maharao Khengar III (1874-1942).

It appears that his neck was hanging to his right side. It is said that once he visited his godown with clients and they sat near the heap of sugar bags to examine a specimen of wool. Suddenly, few weighty bags fell upon his neck, causing the breakdown of his neck-bone. He remained unconscious for three days. When he recovered, he found his neck hanging. The injury became so old that the doctors in Bombay could not treat it.

Courage, truthfulness, patience, religious spirit, and services emerged in his personality since childhood. He had not taken high education, but could impress the audience with his oratory fills. He mastered his mother tongue and could present touching examples in his speeches. He delivered several speeches in Bombay on different occasions.

He formed a Panjibhai Group in 1868 at the age of 14 years and was its first Kamadia. He continued to serve during the period of Imam Hasan Ali Shah through the Panjibhai

Group. In 1883, Imam Aga Ali Shah had taken a visit of Kutchh, and Varas Moledina was consigned arrangement of the lodging the *jamats* coming from outside. He worked hard day and night for the service he had been assigned. The tents were pitched outside the village in the gardens in Mundra for the Imam and his family. Suddenly, a terrible storm blew with heavy rain. The Imam and his family were shifted quickly in the bungalow of Seth Lakhamidas Ladha, and the horses were tied in the compound of the mausoleum of Hasan Pir. Varas Moledina and his colleagues rendered yeoman services beyond measure.

Soon after the departure of the Imam, he continued his services under Varas Harji Fakirani and acquired much proficiency. When Varas Harji expired in 1900, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah enjoined upon him the charge of Mundra and some other villages of Kutchh. It is to be noted that he erected the Khoja Panjibhai Club in Jamnagar on August 16, 1904 with Kamadia Haji Nazar Ali as President and Ghulam Hussain Alibhai as Hon. Secretary. This institution paved a virtual way to the betterment of his service career.

Varas Moledina visited Bombay on several occasions to submit the latest reports of Kutchh. In 1903, the Imam launched a historical visit of Kutchh for 15 days. He stayed in Mundra for six days between November 16, 1903 and November 22, 1903. The Imam proceeded to Badresar on November 23, 1903, in Nagalpur between November 25, 1903 and November 29, 1903, in Kera between December 1, 1903 and December 2, 1903. The Imam also paid a visit to Sinugara, Anjar, Madavpur, Bhuj, Bharapur, Baladia, etc. Varas Moledina remained with the Imam during those 15 days and made excellent arrangements for the *didar* programme.

While leaving for Jamnagar, the Imam told him, "**Moloo Kamadia, you have served me tremendously. I give you much blessings. You always continue to serve the *jamat* and me. I wish to make you my Wazir.**" To this, he said, "Mawla, I do not deserve for the high post. You may consign me some other petty post." The Imam said, "**Well, you form a committee and I make you its Chairman.**" Varas Moledina became the Chairman of the 18 Council Committees in Kutchh on April 5, 1905. He appointed Muhammad Amarsi as his Secretary, who had come from Kathiawar and served as a teacher in Kutchh. According to the census report, the Ismailis mostly resided in 23 different villages in Kutchh, having a registered population of 4245 persons. In Mundra, there were 1317 Ismailis in the time of Mukhi Laljibhai Raisi and Kamadia Alarakhia Murji.

Varas occasionally held meetings, during the year, in different villages to eliminate the rubbles and bubbles of problems. He also founded a Volunteer Corps in some places in Kutchh.

The average Ismailis in Kutchh earned their bread and butter by the sweats of their brows, and were deplorably lagged behind in education. There was a lingering prejudice against educating the women among most of the conservative people. Education was said to contribute to the plea that led to materialism. Educating the girls mainly became the target of attack and even an object of ridicule. He was not well-educated, but promoted the notion of education in the *jamat*. It must be known that the first official school in Kutchh started in 1850 in the time of Maharao Desal (1836-1860) for the teaching of English and Gujrati. There were hardly 43 schools in Kutchh during the period of Maharao Pragmall II (1860-1874), and about 130 schools during the rule of Maharao Khengar III

(1874-1942) in Kutchh. In sum, in the 1000 villages of Kutchh, the rulers funded only 85 schools. Nay, there were only seven small libraries in Kutchh. In the milieu, the Imam emphasized to promote education among the Ismailis during his visit in 1903. The Imam had told him, "**Moloo Kamadia, you establish schools in the villages of Kutchh wherever is required, and also erect libraries wherever is possible. You write me for its expenses. I will sanction its grant.**"

With this mandate, Varas Moledina's services entered into another phase. He visited different villages and established the first school in Mundra on April 5, 1905 with 150 boys and 50 girls. Badresar, Nagalpur and Sinugara followed it where the Ismailis resided thickly. Later on, he also opened schools in other villages. In sum, he established 17 schools and 13 libraries during his lifetime. It must be noted that he gave the literary life to the pens of Missionary Alibhai Nanji and Master Muhammad Amarsi. He, himself, supervised the management and visited the schools from time to time.

In 1906, a case was under hearing in the Kutchh Court regarding the mausoleum of Sayed Ghulam Ali Shah. It continued for six years and resulted in an uncertain condition of the Ismailis in Kutchh. In 1912, the Imam visited Bombay, where Varas Moledina submitted a report of the case. The Imam said, "**And from today, I appoint you my Wazir for Kutchh. You take over the whole affairs of Kutchh and prosecute the case.**" This time he could not refuse, but said, "Mawla, I will continue to serve your house till my last breath. And if a pride flares up in my heart because of this high post, it will hitch in my earning for hereafter." The Imam assured him and said,"**Nothing will happen. You choose one capable man, and I will make him *Kul Kamadia* for Kutchh. You also arrange one competent secretary for you.**" This *farman* was officially announced next day in Darkhana Jamatkhana, Bombay.

The news of his appointment as a **Wazir** spread speedily through out Kutchh, where he was warmly hailed in Mundra. In his reply to the *jamat*, he said, "I have been granted this honor with the grace of the Imam, but all this is your honor with your well sympathies. The burden of this duty is increased upon me, which will be carried out with your cooperation."

After assuming the office, Varas Moledina made a long journey in the villages of Kutchh by bullock cart, and made minute inspection of the *jamati* activities. The community was cast down with ageworn customs and habits. He realized that the old tendencies must be replaced by the latest traditions. On those days, the Ismailis were spending massive amounts in the fairs of the mausoleums of different saints. For instance, the village of Nigar was famous for having the footprints of Hazrat Ali, where the Ismailis went to pay homage. The Ismailis venerated the shrine of Sayed Ghulam Ali Shah in Kera, the mausoleum of Hasan Shah in Mundra and the staying place (*a'astana*) of Pir Tajuddin in Barapur. In replacement, Varas Moledina arranged the holding of annual *majalis* for the first time in Kutchh to divert the attention of those who visited the shrines and practicing the old customs. The first *majalis* was reported to have been held on March 10, 1907 in Nigar. It became discontinued for a year, but with the efforts of Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj, it was re-started on April 4, 1909.

The average condition of the Ismailis was economically crippled and socially pitiable. They were petty shopkeepers, untrained servants, illiterate and neglected group of persons destitute of any aim in life. Financially they were worn out and socially no status worthy of any consideration. Cradled under the shadows of new thinking, Varas Moledina necessitated to create donation in Kutchh and Bombay for the lodging and fooding of the *jamats*. He also built a big hall for the *majalis*, and invited missionaries from Bombay on that occasion. He however faced innumerable obstacles and hitches, but the Ismailis readily responded to his every call.

On February 20, 1910, the Imam visited Rajkot, where thousand of Ismailis from Kutchh also arrived for *didar*. Varas Moledina arranged the bungalow of Karim Jivan in Rajkot for lodging the Kutchh *jamats*. He hired a steamboat and brought the Kutchh *jamats* in Mundra. The travellers were more in numbers than expected, the ladies and children were given priority in the steamboat and other boats were arranged for the gents. They reached Jamanagar, where the Imam graced them *didar* on the next day.

Meanwhile, Varas Moledina received a message of the Imam on the evening to see him in the next morning. When he arrived, he saw four to five persons of Kutchh sitting out of the Imam's bungalow, including those two persons from Bombay who had misguided the *jamat* in Kera against Varas during the Kera Case of 1906. They complained against Varas, and the Imam summoned all of them for reconciliation. When he entered into the bungalow, the Imam asked, **"Wazir! Is there any enemy in Kutchh?"** He answered, "Mawla! since the time you vested me the office of Wazirate, I have been considering all young and old as my own children." The Imam pointing his hand towards those persons and said, **"Do you have any enmity with them?"** He said, "All the affairs are being done with your blessings and the assistance of these persons." The Imam laughed and said, **"Wazir, you have conquered the whole Kutchh with your sweet tongue."**

It is recounted that in 1906, some rich persons from Bombay, belonging to Kera, Kutchh brought a gold *kalsh* (a water pot put on the top of the minaret of the shrine) to place in the shrine of Sayed Ghulam Ali Shah. The local Ismailis prevented them to perform the ceremony. They returned to Bombay and complained before the Imam. The Imam deputed two persons in Kutchh to make an investigation and report him. They arrived in Mundra to hold a talk with Varas Moledina, who was not yet designated as a **Varas**. Before their arrival in Mundra, two persons contacted them at the distance of four miles from Mundra. They misled the Imam's representatives and spoke against Varas Moledina that he had nothing to do with this matter.

Trusting on the report, these two persons changed their route and went to Kera instead of Mundra. They held several meetings with the concerned people and excommunicated 12 persons in the *jamat*. It ensued after a short while that they had taken a hasty action, which resulted two divisions in the *jamat*. The oppression thickened and grievances multiplied very soon. The persons who were outcast gained support of the local people on that night and took possession of not only the shrine of Sayed Ghulam Ali Shah, but also the Jamatkhana. The Ismailis divided into two rivals, i.e., the Agakhanis and the Masjidia. The case was filed against the Masjidia in the court in Bhuj on the next day. The court declared its verdict in favour of the Ismailis on November 9, 1909. The Masjidia however referred the case in Civil Court, which took about six years. In the meantime,

the Imam invested Varas Moledina the title of **Varas** at Bombay in 1912 with the charge of the affairs of Kutchh.

Equipped with copious stamina and fresh vitality, Varas Moledina studied and prosecuted the case. He confided his business to his younger brother, Bhanji and hired a room in Bhuj for his office. He also took services of *Kul Kamadia* Ratansi Ibrahim of Madapur, and engaged himself with the lawyers in the office, about 33 miles from his residence. In short, the verdict of the court declared itself in favour of the Ismailis. The opponents made an appeal in the ruler's court, which processed under the Maharao of Kutchh. Varas Moledina was not nerveless and continued his endeavours. The final ruling in favour of the Ismailis however declared when Varas Moledina was no longer alive.

In 1914, Varas Moledina went to Calcutta to raise donation for the first Boarding in Kutchh. On that occasion, the Imam returned from Rangoon for Calcutta by sea on February 20, 1914. The governor of Calcutta was also in the steamer. The *jamat* arranged a steamboat to bring the Imam, the governor and his wife at the port from the steamer, therefore, three chairs were placed in the steamboat. The Imam and the governor dismounted from the steamer and got into the steamboat. The governor's wife did not come for some reasons. The Ismaili leaders stood before the Imam in a line, including Varas Moledina who was standing at the end of the line. When the Imam saw him, he called for him and asked the reason of his coming in Calcutta. He told all about the scheme of the Boarding. The Imam said, "Well, this is a noble work. You have grown old and tired. You sit on this chair." Varas thought it indecency to sit with the Imam in presence of the leaders, he tried to sit down at the feet of the Imam. But, the Imam held his arm and offered him to sit on the empty chair of the governor's wife.

In 1918, a terrible famine in Kutchh caused heavy rack and ruin to the local Ismailis. With generous and benevolent aids, he served the affected ones within limited resources.

Paying a well-deserved tribute to Varas Moledina's meritorious services, Missionary Alibhai Nanji writes in **"Ismaili Satpanth Prakash"** (Bombay, February 2, 1919, p. 183) that, "Varas Moledina holds complete authority to run the schools in Kutchh as a Supervisor, and looks after the schools excellently. He regularly visits the schools on a six month basis and makes necessary changes. He is eager, all the times, to enhance their standard, which is apparent from his commitment. It is his desire to improve the schools and bring them on top levels during the visit of the Imam, and also to establish a Boarding school on a firm foundation."

The old Jamatkhana in Nagalpur was too small to accommodate the Ismailis. He was requested to build another new Jamatkhana. He started a campaign for funds. Seth Kassim Lalji remitted Rs. 25000/- from Zanzibar through the Bombay Council. The President of the Council asked for kind permission and the Imam approved it through a telegraphic message from Europe on July 28, 1918. Soon after the gracious approval, Seth Kassim Lalji also came in Nagalpur to lay the foundation stone. A dispute arose among the local Ismailis to decide the location of the new Jamatkhana. In the meantime, the Imam arrived in Bombay in March, 1920. A deputation from Kutchh arrived as well in Bombay with Seth Kassim Lalji and humbly implored the Imam to lay the foundation stone. The Imam blessed them and said, "It is now the hot climate in Kutchh. I will not

come this year. You get it performed by Varas Moledina. You will consider it as if I have performed it."

Varas Moledina came in Nagalpur and eliminated the local dispute at first and selected another location for the new Jamatkhana. He started its construction and when completed, he performed its opening ceremony on Monday, April 18, 1921 in presence of the Revenue Commissioner of Kutchh, the Justice of Anjar, administrators and dignitaries. The Ismailis of Nagalpur, Sinugara and Anjar, including the Muslims and Hindus of Nagalpur were repasted twice.

The Jamatkhana of Mundra, which was about 150 years old, was also worn out. He was also requested to be in charge of the new one. He assured the *jamat* that it would be built, but the first priority would be given to the Boarding in Mundra. He raised a donation for Rs. 37000/- in which Seth Ibrahim of Bombay shared for Rs. 20000/- and established the first Ismaili Boarding in Kutchh. It must be known that Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1947) had taken a visit of this Boarding and remarked, "Moloo! I like the Ismaili community too much. It has made excellent progress with the mercy of the Aga Khan. Besides, the Ismailis are the chain between the Hindus and the Muslims."

It had taken a long time to the Imam to visit Kutchh. Varas submitted humble requests several times to the Imam in Bombay, but the Imam delayed his visit due to an overload of work. The Imam visited the Bombay Jamatkhana on March 3, 1920 when Varas submitted a fresh humble request for a *didar* programme. The Imam said, "Well, I will talk to you later on." The Imam asked for the *mehmani* on behalf of Kutchh. To this, he answered, "Mawla, we will present the *mehmani* when you order." It was decided to present the *mehmani* on Tuesday, March 9, 1920 in the big hall of the bungalow of Mazgon.

On March 9, 1920 during the *mehmani* ceremony, the Imam blessed the ten individual *jamati* members of Kutchh, and said to Varas Moledina, "You come to my bungalow in Valkesar on Friday, March 12, 1920 with five to seven persons, where I will talk to you in private."

Meanwhile, the Imam asked Varas Moledina for the *mehmanis* of the villages of Kutchh. He said, "Mawla, our foremost humble request is for you to make a visit in Kutchh." The Imam said that, "I will come soon after the occasion of *dewali*. You know that it is the hot climate now in Kutchh. My lodging is made out of a tent, not in a bungalow. It is not advisable to visit Kutchh during the hot season." Varas said, "Mawla, you have to go Karachi, and it is possible to proceed to Karachi from Kutchh. You make a junction only in one place for eight days, where the people of all villages will gather to accomplish their desires." The Imam said, "Making a gathering of all villages in one place will cause hardships to them. I have to visit all the villages to see the *jamats*. I will visit Kutchh via Jamnagar after *dewali*, and will stay for twenty days." The Imam further said, "Is there a motorway in Kutchh?" Varas said, "There is a road for cars, and there are the motors of Maharao. When Patel Manji of Madhapur visited the court of Maharao, he also emphasized to bring the Aga Khan in Kutchh." The Imam said, "Maharao shares a good friendship with me." Then, the Imam graciously accepted the *mehmanis* of Nagalpur, Sinugara, Badresar, Mundra, Madhapur, etc.

When Varas came to the bungalow on March 12, 1920, he said reverently that, "Mawla, our Pirs have imparted in the *ginans* that no salvation will be destined to the one who has not taken the *bayt* of the Imam. Most of the Ismailis in Kutchh are so destitute that they cannot afford to visit Bombay for *didar*. What will happen to them if you will not grace them your mercy?" The Imam became serious and said, "Varas, I am too busy this year. I will come next year."

Varas arrived in Bombay on the following year with the *jamat* and went to the bungalow of the Imam during the evening. He was informed that the Imam would go to Poona on the next morning for few days to take rest. He returned and came back on that evening and found the Imam busy with some persons. Later on, the Imam summoned the members of the Kutchh *jamat* in his room and heard the report. The Imam said, "I do not want to bother the *jamat*. You bring all of the *mehmanis* of the Kutchh *jamats* tomorrow in early morning at Wadi."

Varas informed his *jamat* to assemble at Wadi on the next morning. The *jamat* brought fruits and reached Wadi. It was a cool morning and the Imam was in a pleasant mood. The Imam pointed with his finger at the south of the lawn, where now exists the garden of the hospital and said, "Varas, you bring all of your *mehmanis* over there." The chair for the Imam was placed under the tree and he accepted the *mehmanis* of the Kutchh *jamats* and blessed them. Varas Moledina submissively reminded the Imam for a *didar* in Kutchh. The Imam showed his inability once again and made a promise for next year. Varas worried emotionally, but spoke nothing. The Imam looked at him and said, **"Varas, do you think that there is a snag in my affection for you?"** The tears burst out of his eyes and could not speak a single word. The Imam said, **"Listen Varas, do you know how much I love you? The father having one son will love him by taking him in his lap. But, I have so many children and cannot take them in my lap, otherwise, I will love to have them all in my lap."** The Imam turned towards Missionary Alibhai Nanji and said, **"Tell to all the missionaries and my followers to convey my *farman* to all the *jamats* in Kutchh."**

The Imam again said after a short while, "i Inshallah, I will come next year." Varas said this time, "i Amen Mawla."

In 1922, he built the new Jamatkhana in Badresar with Rs. 20,000/- from the Imam and Rs. 23,000/-, which he had collected through donation. Seth Ladha Aloo Trikmani donated a piece of land adjacent to the newly built Jamatkhana. During its opening ceremony, Missionary Hamir Lakha recited his admirable *gazal* before the *jamat*. The Recreation Club had appointed him the President of the Provincial Committee of Mission for Kutchh in 1922.

The Imam visited India and graced *didar* to the *jamat* in Bombay on March 1, 1923. With a tendency to look upon this bright opportunity, Varas Moledina rushed to Bombay and earnestly implored the Imam, "Mawla, you have promised last year to come in Kutchh. Now you graciously accede to our humble request." The Imam said, **"Varas, I have some important affairs this year. I will come next year."** The moment was absolutely unbearable for him and said emotionally with tears moisting in eyes that, "Whenever I make request, you give me false promises!" The people around were astonished, but it

was an inner voice of his humble longing and love. The Imam laughed and put his hand on his shoulder and said, **"This time I am making a true promise. You take a paper and pen, I will sign on the undertaking."**

On next year in 1924, Varas came in Bombay and sat far from Imam's chair. The Imam at once called for him and said, "Varas, how many days it will take you for the preparation of *didar* in Kutchh? I will come this time and make my stay at one place." The gravity of happiness, which gushed out in his face to the hearing of the good tidings of the didar, was inexpressible. He sent telegrams from Bombay to all the *jamats* in Kutchh, inviting a fleet of energetic social workers to assemble in Bhuj before eight days for making necessary preparations. The hill of Bhujia was a historical place in Kutchh, having a British military camp. The lodging of the *jamats* was made on the foot of the hill. There was also a residence of political agents at a little distance, where a bungalow for the Imam was reserved. The weather was pleasant, therefore, most of the Ismailis also came from Bombay. The bungalow was renovated and decorated with latest items with the help of his Parsi friend, called Seth Fardhunji Pestanji. Necessary items for the bungalow were imported urgently from Bombay. In sum, the bungalow was transformed into a royal palace within few days.

Two special steamboats of the Jam Saheb of Kutchh were reserved, and when the Imam arrived at the port of Tuna with the deputation of Jamnagar, the Varas with other leaders came with a special train to welcome the Imam in the presence of the bands, scouts and volunteers at the Bhuj station. At length, the Imam graced his *didar* to the *jamats* on the next day and said, "This is a beautiful place. Its weather is akin to Europe." The Imam stayed for six days and performed all the works with the *jamats*. Varas came at the bungalow with some leaders during the departure of the Imam and said, "Mawla, the journey of Kutchh is very difficult due to the lack of facilities. We seek apology for any snag in our hospitality." The Imam said, "Varas, you have served me too much. I am much happy and bless you and the *jamat*. Wherever I went, everyone served me. But I have seen that you served my *jamat* excellently, and I am much happy. Keep protecting the *jamat* all times in this very same manner."

Varas Moledina is reported to have launched a scheme of the Poor Fund in Mundra. During the marriages, he levied small amount on each family and deposited in the Poor Fund. It was used for the welfare of the destitute. It certainly played a vital role to reduce poverty in Kutchh.

He was regular in his nocturnal worship. He recited the *ginans* in the Jamatkhana with his sweet voice. Sometimes he also delivered *waez* with rich quotations of the verses of Shah Abdul Latif and other Sindhi Sufi poets. Sayed Abdullah Shah was his close relative in Mundra, who was well versed in the Sindhi literature. Varas invited him on several occasions and organized the gatherings.

Varas Moledina was also a member of the Municipal Corporation in Mundra and served it till death. There was hardly any association where he had not served as a member. He had procured close relation also with Maharao Khengar of Kutchh.

Missionary Abdul Hussain Bachal published his letter in the weekly **"Ismaili"** on September 7, 1924 and wrote the latest progress of Kutchh he had seen under the able leadership of Varas Moledina. He wrote that, "I give the latest reports whatever noteworthy points attracted my attention during my visit to Kutchh. Our religious schools exist everywhere in Kutchh. The Ismaili libraries exist in Mundra, Baladia, Bharapur, etc. The religious activities are seen in all villages. The girl's school in Mundra runs on sound foundation, where embroidery and knitting works are being taught in proper manner. Besides, the Ibrahim Pradhan Ismaili Boarding runs excellently with 30 to 35 children under well administration. I was emphatically satisfied to visit the graveyard in Mundra, where the required arrangements are available. Its outlook and management excelled with other graveyards. The services of Master Muhammad Amarshi, the Inspector are admirable, who takes parts in the *jamati* services with enthusiasm. The services of Mukhi Manji, Kamadia Kalyan Hasham and Noor Muhammad are laudable. The services of Varas Saheb Moledina Megji are well known. The *jamat* is united, the reforms are being implemented quickly."

The Imam started the *didar* on January 22, 1926 in Bombay. The *jamats* of Kutchh also arrived in Bombay and returned after performing religious ceremonies. Varas Moledina prolonged his stay for a few more days for business purposes. The Imam also bequeathed him an errand in the morning. He discharged it and went to the Imam's bungalow at a late hour on an evening on February 6, 1926. The Imam was busy with two leaders of Kathiawar that took some time. The Imam then came out of his room to see Varas, who reported the Imam about the progress of the work. The Imam said, "Well, you come to see me tomorrow in the evening."

He left the bungalow and came to his office at 9.00 p.m. and discussed his business with his sons, Muhammad and Ghulam Hussain. He returned to the house at 9.30 p.m. His daughter had also come from Calcutta and he talked with her and slept at 10.30 p.m. His son Ghulam Hussain knocked the door at 11.00 p.m., he stood up to open it and slept. It was his usual habit to wake up in early mornings, but he didn't this time. His son found him lying on the bed in the same posture as he slept during the night. He also found his father's cold body. The doctor was called, who declared that he had passed away three to four hours ago due to heart attack. It implies that he expired on February 7, 1926 in Bombay.

Someone informed the death of Varas Moledina at Hasanabad. The Imam called for Wazir Ghulam Ali Vakil and said, "I have just received a news of the death of Varas Moloo, but there used to be any enemy of the great man. You probe narrowly and let me know in the Jamatkhana." Wazir Ghulam Ali investigated and reported the Imam in the Jamatkhana. The Imam stopped the *mehmani* nimbly and asked the *jamat* to sit down. The Imam told the *jamat* that, **"I have received today a sad news and you will also become sad to hear it. My beloved Varas Moloo has expired today. He has served me excellently during his whole life."**

When the news of his death reached to Kutchh, the Ismailis closed their business for three days. The other communities also followed and it appeared a sort of strike in Mundra. The Ismailis poured down at his residence in multitude to participate in the last ceremonies.

The family members presented the *Ruhani Mehmani* on the third day. The Imam asked Alidina, the younger brother of Varas Moledina that, "Is it the *mehmani* of the late Varas?" He replied affirmatively with tears in eyes and said, "The head of our family has gone away." The Imam said, **"Yes, the head of your family has gone, but actually the head of my whole *jamat* of Kutchh has gone. You should not mourn for him. He has returned to my presence. He has served me too much."**

In a *mehmani* at Khadak Jamatkhana in Bombay on January 3, 1934 presented by Varas Ghulam Hussain Moledina, the Imam admired the services of his father, Varas Moledina and emphasized him to continue the services in Kutchh like his father.

During a long span of 73 years, he had served the *jamats* of Kutchh for 58 years. Upto the moment of his last breath, he placed his heart and soul in the services of the Imam and the *jamats*. The credit goes to him to orient the Ismailis in Kutchh, in whose hearts his name shall be ever dominated. The one and the only way in which we have to record his towering greatness, he had all along been a true leader and zealous servant of the Imam. We are nonetheless, forced to conclude that without the unstinted services of Varas Moledina, the Ismailis in Kutchh would have been like a rudderless ship sadly at the mercy of mountainous waves threatening to engulf it from all sides.

His son Varas Ghulam Hussain continued his services on the footprints of his father. He was appointed the Chairman of Council Committee for Kutchh after his father's death. On the occasion of the annual *majalis* of Bharapur, Kutchh, Wazir Ghulam Hussain Moledina performed an opening ceremony of the new Majalis Hall on October 20, 1926. Mukhi Alidina Bandali of Jinja, Uganda, built it. He sent its report to the Imam, and received following message:-

Vazir Ghulamhusein Moledina,
Mundra, Kutchh.

Warmest thanks and blessings for the entertainment and the presentation of the Hall on such a good occasion.

He encouraged religious education in Kutchh and arranged to publish textbooks for religious schools in 1936 with the help of Master Mohammed Amarsi. He made a business trip in East Africa in 1946, where he also continued his *jamati* services. He returned to India and became the Hon. Treasurer of the Ismailia Association for India. He had been again in East Africa, and the Imam specially invited him to attend the Avian Conference in Paris in 1952. Later on, he came in Karachi and served as the Vice-President of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan. He died on January 24, 1973.

Muhammad Ali G. Fazalbhoy, Wazir
(1916-1981)



He was born on August 12, 1916 and educated in the English High School, Bombay. His father, Alijah Ghulam Ali Fazalbhoy was a dealer of estates and properties. His son, Muhammad Ali also took up the estate business after his schooling.

He was an Honorary Secretary of the Religious Educational Department of the Ismailia Association for India in 1950. The Imam appointed him the President of the Ismailia Association between 1952 and 1958.

In June, 1956, the Imam also appointed him as his Special Commissioner for Sidhpur for some important *jamati* works. He also presided the All Malaya Ismailia Conference in Singapore in 1956, which created for the first time the All Malaya Ismailia Council.

He left Bombay for Europe on June 25, 1957 and stayed three days in Geneva, where he had an audience with the Imam. He then proceeded to Paris and London and returned back to Geneva on July 9, 1957. He went to Barkat Villa on July 10, 1957. He once again went to Barkat Villa on next day at 11.30 a.m. The Private Secretary of the Imam arranged to bring him inside the bungalow and said with tears in eyes that, "The condition of His Highness has become much serious. The eminent doctors are on the duty, but frustrated. Only disappointment is seen today and nothing else." He could not talk any more and wept like a child. He became motionless like a body without soul. He returned to his hotel, but was anxious to go back to Barkat Villa once again. Meanwhile, the news spread in the city at about 1.30 p.m. that Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah was expired at 12.30 p.m.

He was exceedingly shocked with sudden nervous tension. He hired a taxi and reached Barkat Villa, where he found a heavy rush of press reporters outside the Villa. He arranged to enter into the bungalow and found Prince Aly Khan with tears in eyes. After few minutes, Prince Aly Khan told him, "The holy body is in that room. Go for its *didar*." He entered the room and paid solemn homage.

He returned and came back on July 12, 1957, where other leaders were also gathered. Mata Salamat (1906-2000) told them that, "The declaration of 49th Hazar Imam will be made on tomorrow before you." On that night at 8.30 p.m., he was in Hotel Buerevej, where the official copies of the Will of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah were distributed among the press reporters. The news spread within 45 minutes in the world press that Prince Karim was designated as the next Imam.

On Saturday, July 13, 1957, he came to Barkat Villa at morning. The Ismaili leaders gathered in the room where Imam breathed last, and a chair was placed. Mata Salamat entered the room with Prince Amyn Muhammad in first appearance. Prince Karim as the next Imam followed them with a radiant face at 10.30 a.m. and sat on the chair. The leaders recited "i Amen." Imam Prince Karim Aga Khan said, "**According to the Will of my beloved grandfather, I am your Hazar Imam from today. I am your 49th Mawla *Mushkil Kusha.***" The room echoed with the utterances of "i Amen! Amen!"

The leaders took the *bayt* from Hazar Imam, then came out for a group photograph. They returned back into the room and performed the *dastboshi*. The Imam gave them paternal maternal loving blessings and it was followed by the recitation of the *munajat*, ***Ya Ali Khub Majalis***.

Wazir Muhammad Ali Fazalbhoy once again had the last glimpse of the mortal remains on July 16, 1957, which was taken to Aswan on July 17, 1957. He also accompanied the leaders in the chartered plane and reached Cairo on next day. The burial ceremony of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah was performed on Friday, July 20, 1957. Mawlana Hazar Imam led the funeral prayers.

Hazar Imam also gave the *didar* to the leaders on the same day in Semirames Hotel in Cairo at 11.30 p.m. The Imam told them that it touched him deeply for the love, devotion and loyalty demonstrated for his beloved grandfather. The Imam also said that he would go to Geneva on the next day and after offering the memorial services of his grandfather in London on August 21, 1957 and in Paris on August 22, 1957, he would come to see the *jamats*. The Imam also gave best loving blessings to all the *jamats*.

Wazir Muhammad Ali G. Fazalbhoy also became **J.P.** on January 1, 1958. The Imam appointed him the member of the Federal Council on September 30, 1958

Besides, he was the Hon. Secretary of Masalawala Cooperative Bank Ltd., the member of the Diamond Jubilee Trust, Education Committee, Al-Ismailia Helping Society, Aga Khan Health Centre, Diamond Jubilee Celebration Committee, Platinum Jubilee Investment Ltd., District School Board Bombay Suburban District for four years, Ex-Officio member of the Panjibhai Committee, etc.

He was the President of the Ismaili Society, Cosmopolitan Consumers Cooperative Society Ltd., Parle-Andheri Vepari Maha Mandal and the founder President of Andheri Market People's Cooperative Credit Society. He was also the Chairman of Market and Garden Committee of Andheri in 1950, Flag Day Committee for Andheri District and was awarded a trophy for two consecutive years. He was also the Councilor of Parle-Andheri Borough Municipality (1949-1950).

He also served as the President of the Housing Colony Committee of the Federal Council, and the President of the Fidai Girls Educational Institute, Andheri Residence Association, the Hon. Secretary of the Bombay Bihar Relief Fund Committee and the Rotarian of Bombay West Rotary Club, etc. He was also the Chairman of the Housing Colony Sub-Committee.

As is evident from the list of the institutions with which he was associated, his activities as a social worker are not confined to the narrow circle of the community. With his modesty, genial temperament, cosmopolitan outlook, he had made himself universally popular. He had also travelled in England, Japan, France, Switzerland, Germany, Egypt, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, Beirut, Pakistan, etc. He also launched several trips in all parts of India. He also served as the Honorary Presidency Magistrate for five years.

He merited the title of **Alijah** in 1950 and **Wazir** on April 15, 1956 in a message of the Imam through the Supreme Council for India as under:-

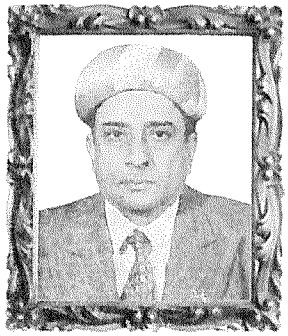
Cannes : 15th April, 1956

My dear President and Members,

With pleasure I have given the title of Wazir to the President of Ismailia Association Mahomedali Fazulbhoy for his devoted services and I give him my best loving blessings.

On June, 1968, he became the member of the Society of the Justice of Peace & Honorary Presidency Magistrate. He died on December 3, 1981 in Bombay.

MUHAMMAD HASAN A. FAZALBHOY, WAZIR
(d. 1963)



He belonged to well-known Fazalbhoy family, whose all members have been closely connected with the community services. He graduated in 1924 and passed LL.B. in 1926 from Bombay University. He passed the Solicitor's examination in 1928, and became the Partner of Perera Fazalbhoy & Co., the famous Solicitors and Notary Public since 1929. He practiced in Bombay and earned a highest respect in all quarters in the legal circles, in public life and within the community. He was well respected by the Bench and the Bar. In youth, he was the Joint Secretary of Historical Society with K.T. Desai. He also as an Ismaili Solicitor served in the Federal Council for many years.

He was the member of the Bombay Council in 1934. He was also appointed the Hon. Chief Secretary of the Supreme Council for India between 1941 and 1949. He also became the Vice-President of the Federal Council for India in 1958 for 5 years, and the President on March 21, 1963

He was also the President of the Aga Khan Legion and Diamond Jubilee Celebration Committee and collected the donation of 80 lacs in India. He was the Trustee of Diamond Jubilee Trust from its existence in 1946 and served for 17 years.

When Platinum Jubilee Investment Ltd. was established, its Chairman was Wazir Abdul Hamid Hasan Ali and he was its Director. When the Chairman had gone out of India, he was elected the Chairman till his death.

He was an ardent believer in honesty, sincerity and dedication to duty in all walks of life. He was gifted with aptitude, tact, and hard work organizing capacity. In sum, he rendered 30 years services to the community.

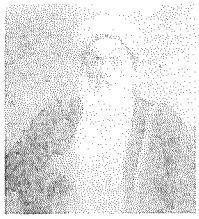
He died on Thursday, June 13, 1963 at Bombay. The Imam sent the following message upon his death:-

Much grieved to hear the sad demise of President Vazir Mohamed Hasan Fazalbhoy. Best loving blessings for the soul of late President Fazalbhoy and I pray eternal peace and rest his soul. Best blessings for the family for courage and fortitude in their great loss.



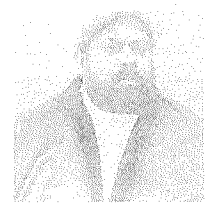
MUHAMMAD IBRAHIM M. RAWJEE, DEWAN
(1900-1965)

Muhammad Rawjee, the grandfather of Muhammad Ibrahim Muhammad Rawjee was born in Bombay on 1830. He got married at the age of 16 years in 1846. It is said that he was the first amongst the Indian Ismailis to have visited China at an early age in 1853, where



he opened his branch. Initially, his business ran on partnership, but he alone conducted it after some time. He was noted for initiating many welfare institutions in 1883 and donated free houses to over fifty Ismaili families without charging rent, which was named after his father-in-law, Dhanji Karmali. In 1890, he established the first Khoja Orphanage, known as the "Khoja Ashram", and on September 27, 1894 he established a sanitarium at Poona, where clothes and foods were provided to the poor Ismailis, which was opened by the Imam. He also funded the needy couples in their marriages. The Ismailis accorded him warm honor in view of his invaluable services in 1893. When his father-in-law expired, the Imam presented him a *khilat* and a title of **Varas** to his son, Ibrahim. Muhammad Rawjee died on May 20, 1898.

Varas Ibrahim, the son of Muhammad Rawjee was born in 1862. Soon after his education, he continued to tread on the footprints of his father. He served many years in the *justi*, the traditional council as a member under Mukhi Ladakbhai Haji (1827-1907). He was credited to become the first President of the first Ismaili Council in Bombay with Alijah Ahmed Devji (1859-1925) as an Honorary Secretary on April 9, 1906. Varas Ibrahim Muhammad Rawjee had an honour to ordain the Constitution of the Council for the first time on March 4, 1910, whose draft was a splendid testimonial to his scholarly mind. He had also served as Honorary Secretary of Panjibhai Club. He also continued to nourish the benevolent works instituted by his father. He merited the title of **Varas** and died in 1911. His son, Muhammad, known as Muhammad Ibrahim Muhammad Rawjee continued to serve the *jamat* with great deal of enthusiasm and zeal.



Muhammad Ibrahim Muhammad Rawjee was born in Bombay in 1900 and was hardly 11 years during the death of his father. He faced many hitches ahead in childhood, therefore, the Imam said, **"He is my son."** Since then his problems melted away. The Imam also looked after his education personally.

Muhammad Ibrahim Muhammad Rawjee began his services in the community in the year 1921 at the age of 21 years when he became the member of the Ismaili Council, its Hon. Secretary and then the Vice-President. The Imam appointed him as the President of the Supreme Council of Bombay Presidency. Soon afterwards, he was appointed the President

of the newly formed H.H. The Aga Khan's Federal Council for India in 1934. The Imam said to him, **"You are the true pillar of Ismaili faith."** He remained on the office till 1958.





On December 29, 1933, the Imam graciously visited his bungalow, Manohar Mahel at Band Garden, Poona; where about 50 other Ismaili leaders were invited. The Imam inspected every room in the bungalow and remarked that it was the first class bungalow in Poona. The Imam graced him compliments and said, **"You are serving me too much. Bravo! you are a true pillar. Your father had also served me too much. You are the second Muhammadbhai. You have been serving me since childhood."**

The Imam appointed him as the Legal Advisor of all the existing Ismaili Councils in India with the honorable title of **Wazir** on January 31, 1935. In his one telegraphic message on the occasions of Eid al-Azha and Navroz, the Imam called him his **Chief Minister**. The message reads:-

Cannes : 20.3.1935
Properties, Bombay
(M.I.M. Rowji)

I ask you as my Chief Minister. Convey my blessings to all *jamats* India two feasts.

He was a keen and enthusiastic worker and munificent. He built a sanitarium in Poona and Matehran for the Ismailis, where he also erected a small Jamatkhana for the Ismaili tourists.

He was also elected as a Corporator in 1932 for Bombay Municipal Corporation and served till 1948. During his association of 16 years in the Municipal Corporation, he also gave his services for 11 years in its Standing Committee. The British India also made him **J.P.** in 1934. The Bombay government made him the **Sheriff** of Bombay in 1937. He became as well a Mayor of Bombay in 1946, and remained on the office for one year. He was also the Managing Trustee of the Dhanji Karamali Boarding, Bombay for several years. Being an architect, he had made the design of the Sanitarium of Panchgani.

The worth of his meritorious services in the community can be measured from the fact that the Imam invested him the grand title of **Dewan** in 1946 and became the first Ismaili to be graced with this unique title.

He retired from the office of H.H. The Aga Khan's Federal Council for India with his Chief Secretary, Itmadi Hussain Ali M. Visram on March 21, 1958. The Imam sent the following message on May 6, 1958 for him:-

My dear Dewan Saheb,

I send you my best paternal maternal blessings for your life long devoted services. I am sure you will continue to do your utmost for the uplift of the community.

The Federal Council for India honored him with his Chief Secretary in a princely reception on April 19, 1958 in Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay.

Dewan Muhammad Varas Ibrahim Muhammad Rawjee died on July 1, 1965. He left behind two sons and three daughters. The Imam sent the following message on July 20, 1965: -

My dear President and Members,

I have received your letter of 8th of July, and I was much grieved to hear of the sad demise of Dewan Muhammadbhai I.M. Rawjee.

I send my best paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late Dewan Muhammadbhai Rawjee, and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. Late Dewan Muhammadbhai's services will always be remembered by my *jamats* of India and myself.

I send my best loving blessings to the family of late Dewan Muhammadbhai Rawjee, for courage and fortitude in their great loss.

MUHAMMAD JAMAL KHAN, MIR
(1912-1976)



Mir Ghazanfar Ali Khan (d. 1864), the ruler of Hunza State in the northern area of Pakistan, was succeeded by his son, Mir Muhammad Ghazan Khan I, whose successor Mir Safdar Ali Khan had taken refuge in Shagnan during the British invasion in 1891. The British commissioned his half-brother, Mir Muhammad Nazim Khan as the ruler of Hunza. Mir Muhammad Ghazan Khan II and then Mir Muhammad Jamal Khan followed him.

The entire area including Gilgit, Hunza and Baltistan was known as the Gilgit Agency till October, 1947. Sandwiched between the high peaks of Hindukush and Karakorum on the north and those of western Himalaya on the south, is now called as the **Northern Areas** of Pakistan, which should also be called the **Trans-Himalaya Districts** of Pakistan, covering an expanse of about 27,188 square miles, thickly populated by the Ismailis.

Major General, Hilal-e-Pakistan, Hilal-e-Juraet, Ghazi-e-Millat, the President and Personal Representative of the Imam in Central Asia, Muhammad Jamal Khan was the prominent Ismaili ruler of an enchanting valley of Hunza, situated in the remotest northern corner of Pakistan bordering with China and Russia. The high fascinating mountains surround the valley.

Muhammad Jamal, the ruler or the Mir of Hunza was born on September 23, 1912. He was educated in Gilgit and mostly at home and succeeded his father, Mir Ghazanfar Khan, C.B.E. in April, 1945 at the age of 33 years. His grandfather, Sir Mir Muhammad Nazim Khan. K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., who ruled in Hunza for 79 years, was a prolific writer and wrote the history of Hunza. It was in his days that Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of British India, visited Hunza and described it as "the ultimate manifestation of mountain grandeur."

In 1947, he visited Kashmir to convince the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir to join the dominion of Pakistan. In October, 1947, he and his Ismaili subjects of Hunza state declared their accession to Pakistan and rendered meritorious services in the struggle of the liberation of Jammu and Kashmir, and crowned with the title of **Ghazi-e-Millat**.

In 1951, the Imam formed 64 local councils in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, and the Mir of Hunza executed as the President of H.R.H. Prince Aga Khan Ismailia Supreme Council for Hunza State, Gilgit Agency, Chitral State and Central Asia and also acted as the Personal Representative of the Imam in Central Asia.

The Italian Government awarded him the **"Order of the Grand Official"** for his valuable help to the Italian mountaineering expedition to K-2 peak in 1962. This award was meant

for persons assisting the Italian Government in cultural field.

In recognition of his yeoman services to his people, Mir Jamal Khan was also awarded high civil and military titles, viz. **Hilal-e-Pakistan** and **Hilal-e-Juraet** by the President of Pakistan. In December, 1964, the Government of Pakistan promoted him to the rank of **Honorary Major General.**

It is to be noted that the Ismailis from 20 countries gathered at Aswan to pay their last tribute to the 48th Imam, whose official resting of body was to take place in a mausoleum on Friday, February 20, 1959. There was a distance of 1600 feet between the Imam's bungalow, called Nur al-Salam and the mausoleum on a hill. According to the expressed will of the 48th Imam, the bier was lifted from the front left side by Mawlana Hazar Imam and Prince Sadruddin on front right side. Prince Amyn Muhammad was on back side from left and Mir of Hunza on back from right side. It was lifted and carried from Nur al-Salam to the mausoleum in 45 minutes.

The Ismailis of Gilgit and Hunza were submerged in the ocean of immense mirth and joy when they had seen Hazar Imam for first time in their territory on October, 1960. During the grand *darbar* held on October 24, 1960 at the Polo Ground of Baltit in Hunza, the Mir of Hunza presented a welcome address and said that, **"Mawlana Hazar Imam is the first Ismaili Imam, who visited Hunza."**

He also was invited in Paris with his wife to attend the marriage ceremony of the Imam with Begum Salimah on October 28, 1969. Soon after the ceremony, his wife showered down 49 pearls at the feet of the Imam in reverence.



In May, 1973, he represented a delegation of 12 members from Hunza, Gilgit and Chitral and had an audience with the Imam in Paris. They held discussion with the Imam on the socio-economic development programmes for the *jamats*. It was a historic occasion for the Ismailis of northern area of Pakistan, as no such delegation ever travelled abroad and was first ever international conference.

The Mir of Hunza lived in a newly built modern styled two-storied palatial castle, known as the "Jamal Palace" situated on a 8000 ft. high mountain peak in the village of Karimabad, the state capital. The Jamal Palace overlooks the whole of settled valley for several miles in each direction. The Palace is built and furnished in a European style, but is embellished

with an assortment of oriental carpets, ornaments and paintings. There are life-size portraits of previous rulers on the walls of the lounge, and remarkably enough, a piano stands in the Palace. The Mir proposed to make a small museum in the castle and to house the big collection of old arms and munitions, manuscripts and photographs.

Mir Jamal Khan was extremely hospitable. He entertained his guests with the music of a band and male dancers. The band, consisted of a *tudak* (flute), *sutar* (banjo) and drums, beat out a penetrating rhythm, which seemed to fit so well into the mountain setting. The ensuing performances in the castle ground were watched from comfortable lounge chairs on the balcony.

Short by Hunza standards, sturdy and squarely built with fair complexion, Mir Muhammad Jamal Khan was a benevolent ruler. He was like a likeable man, self-educated to a high standard. He travelled widely to Europe and the United States. He loved his people. Each morning, he met his Council of Elders, none under 65 years old, and his grand vizir to decide the day to day problems of his mountainous state. Each matter was put to votes. By his own decree, the Mir's vote normally counted no more than any other did. In an emergency, he could veto his Council, for he was an absolute monarch. But in fact, he ruled entirely as a wise and respected mediator. He travelled the length and breadth of his land at least once a year, accompanied by his wife. Each winter, he was called upon to perform a mass wedding ceremony in Hunza.

The Mir of Hunza expired on March 18, 1976 at his residence in Hunza. He married to a princess of Nagar State in 1934 and had 2 sons and 3 daughters.



Muhammad Murad Ali Juma, Bapu, Missionary
(1878-1966)



Missionary Muhammad Murad Ali Juma, known as Bapu, a term of respect for an elderly man; was born in Bombay in 1878. His mother expired when he was hardly a year old. His father did not marry a second time for the sake of his son.

Nothing is known of his formal education. It however infers from his literary output that he must have acquired higher education. He was in the service of Imam Aga Ali Shah during his small age with his father. His father frequently took him on hunting excursions of the Imam. One day he took the rifle of the Imam and knocked its trigger accidentally, resulting his all ten fingers blown up.

He loved songs and himself was a good singer, and also played harmonium with songs. He won the hearts of multitudes with the virtue of his sweet and polite tongue. He was very cool-minded, soft by nature with a high moral character. None had ever heard him shouting or talking aloud. He was very simple in attire and food. He loved having people over for meals. He would pick up any friend or person from another town, and take him to his house for lunch or dinner.

He joined the Recreation Club Institute as a regular missionary and served the *jamat* for about 50 years. His attractive eloquence in preaching would move many listeners to tears. He also visited all parts of India, East Africa and Burma. During his African visit, he had a privilege to perform the first hoisting ceremony of the Ismaili Flag in Kindu Bay Jamatkhana on May 25, 1934. He rendered his valuable services to the Ismailia Association, which started the training of the volunteer waezeens in 1950. He was also the Principle of the Mission Centre in Bombay. The Imam invested him the title of **Alijah** in appreciation of his inestimable services.

He was also a trenchant writer and compiled many useful books. He also wrote many articles for different periodicals.

He was generous, unsparing, humane and charitable to the destitute and infirm. There are so many examples of his philanthropy. One day he was on a tour of *waez* when an old woman approached, asking him to help her in the wedding of her daughter. She needed some money, which he could not afford. He however did not frustrated her and removed the gold chain around his neck and gave her.

His health shattered for few days before the shadows of death closed upon him. He expired in Bombay on February 4, 1966 after bridging a long span of 88 years. The Imam paid

glorious and well-deserved tribute in following message on February 14, 1966 through President Ghulam Ali S. Morani of Ismailia Association for India that: -

I have received your letter of 11th February, and was much grieved to hear of the sad demise of missionary Mohamed Muradali Bapu.

I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of late missionary Mohamed, and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. Late missionary Mohamed's long devoted services to my *jamats* of India will always be remembered.

Kindly convey my most affectionate loving blessings to the family of late missionary Mohamed for courage and fortitude in their great loss.

I grieve greatly the loss of one of my most devoted spiritual children. His services were above reproach and he was a Candle of Light and example to my *jamats*. He has my deepest and most loving thoughts and blessings.

Missionary Alijah Muhammad Murad Ali Juma left behind a widow, Rehmatbai. He had three sons, Ramzan, Jaffer and Shamsuddin and a daughter, called Taj Bibi who married to the famous Missionary Abu Aly A. Aziz.

His wife Huzur Mukhiani Rehmatbai extended her full cooperation in the mission of Missionary Muhammad Murad Ali. She also served for several years in the Ladies Volunteer Corps in Darkhana, Bombay as a member, Secretary and the member of the Managing Committee. In appreciation of her meritorious services, she was invested the title of **Huzur Mukhiani**. She was an active, sincere and zealous worker, and died on Friday, October 4, 1968 at the age of 80 years.

MUHAMMAD REMU, VARAS
(1860-1924)



His forefathers hailed from Lakhpat, Kutchh, and hence they migrated towards Gwadar. His father Bhagat Remu Mawji was a trader of cotton, wool, fish, rice and ghee, and also dealt the business of shark fins and fish maws with the Chinese merchants. Remu Mawji sprang from a family well known for their piety. He visited Bombay several times. He was the Kamadia of Gwadar Jamatkhana since 1892. He and Merali, the father of Alijah Datoo Meru laboured in the construction of the Jamatkhana. When the next stage of the construction was completed in 1894, his name was engraved on the wall as a Kamadia. In the period of Mukhi Muhammad Pirwani and Kamadia Remu Mawji, the Imam made his first visit to Gwadar on December 10, 1894.

Gwadar is an open-roadstead and port in Makran, about 290 nautical miles west of Karachi. It was ruled by the Khans of Kalat and was handed over by Nasir Khan I to Sultan Saeed, the brother of the ruler of Muscat. It had since remained with about 300 square miles of the adjoining region, in the hands of Muscat. The only industry in Gwadar was fishing, on which the bulk of population subsisted.

Remu Mawji had seven sons, but none survived. He reverently requested to Imam Hasan Ali Shah in Bombay for having a son in his house. The Imam gave him a sacred thread to tie on the hand of his wife and said, "**You will be endowed with a son, whom you name Muhammad. He will be talent and enough fortunate.**" He was certainly blessed with a son in 1860, who was named Muhammad, and became known as Muhammad Rehamtullah or Muhammad Remu. Remu Mawji had a daughter, who died before her puberty. In the meantime, his wife expired. He married second time with a woman, named Daulat, who begot a daughter, Kaisar and a son, Khimji. When Daulat expired, Remu Mawji married for a third time to Ratan, who begot two sons, viz. Ali and Ibrahim.

It implies that Varas Muhammad Remu had three foster-brothers and a foster-sister, whose marriage was solemnized with Alijah Datoo Meru (1868-1939), the right hand of Varas Muhammad Remu in all affairs.

He played a key role in the building of Gwadar Jamatkhana. On January 6, 1912, the Imam graciously presented the *shawls* in Karachi to those persons who assisted in the construction of the Gwadar Jamatkhana, viz. Varas Muhammad Remu, Kamadia Datoo Meru, Mukhi Muhammad Abdullah and Bandali Hamirani.

He had intimate terms with Mahomed Jaffer (1874-1918), the elder brother of Pir Sabzali (1884-1938). Mahomed Jaffer sent Pir Sabzali in Gwadar for his necessary training.

Gwadar was the actual nursery for Pir Sabzali, where he learnt religious education and proficiency in business in the company of Varas Muhammad Remu. Later on, he made Pir Sabzali his agent in Pasani, then in Ormada to supervise his business. Pir Sabzali passed 20 years in Gwadar, Pasani and Ormada, where he served the *jamats* and conducted the business of Varas Muhammad Remu. The credit to make him a great missionary, social and devoted worker undoubtedly goes to Varas Muhammad Remu.

When the Imam visited the Panjibhai Club in Karachi on February 17, 1912, he showered his compliments with blessings to Varas Muhammad Remu and other donors, who donated in the construction of the new premises of the *Baitul Khiyal* for Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi.

He also took prominent role in his father's business and accelerated it to a steady progress. He was first the trader in Gwadar to export tin packed dried fish on large scale to Colombo, which became a leading market of Gwadar.

In those days, the British India Steam Navigation (**BISN**) dominated the marine lines from Persian Gulf to Colombo via Muscat, Gwadar, Pasani, Ormada, Karachi and Bombay. Its agent in Gwadar was a certain Dwat. Varas Muhammad Remu merited the agency of **BISN** after Dwat. On the other hand, Taymur bin Sayed Faisal (1913-1932), the Sultan of Muscat and Oman appointed him as a Custom Collector in Gwadar in place of a certain Bashu and Rehmat Ali, who were hired on contract basis. The British empire put pressure on Varas Muhammad Remu to withdraw his mercantile terms with the Sultan of Muscat and Oman. It was not possible for him to take a haste decision since he had lent three lac rupees to the Sultan of Muscat and Oman.

It is to be noted that after the death of Sultan Turki of Muscat and Oman in 1883, his son, Taymur, succeeded his son Sayed Faisal, who died in October 3, 1913. He inherited the indebtedness that his father had let accrue. The economical condition of his government marred due to the loans of the merchants of Oman, Muscat, Gwadar and Pasani.

In 1916, Varas Muhammad Remu enjoyed the control of the custom of Muscat, and became a Director General Customs, where he employed many Ismailis.

His Highness Taymur bin Sayed Faisal, the Sultan of Muscat and Oman presented him a gold crescent on Friday, the 1st March, 1918 in a special function to appreciate his valuable services at the B.I. Office in Gwadar.

When the British pressure thickened, he came to Bombay in 1919 and submissively referred to the matter to the Imam for guidance. The Imam told him to follow the British, because he held British citizenship. Soon afterwards, he requested to the Sultan of Muscat to relieve him from his services due to the strain of works. Thus, he quitted his mercantile transactions with Muscat and also retired from the post of Custom Collector of Gwadar in 1920, and obtained the British agency.

In the meantime, the Sultan Taymur realized that it would be appropriate to negotiate one major loan to enable him to liquidate the old debts of the merchants. The only body able to respond to his request was the British India, which agreed to lend him the required

amount to free himself from his debts provided it would be repaid in 10 years. Taymur received a colossal loan and refunded the debts of all the merchants in 1920, including Varas Muhammad Remu.

Varas Muhammad Remu retained the agency of British India Steam Navigation Company and British India Dominance Insurance Company. He also extended his mercantile influence in Iranian coast, Pasani and Ormada.

Varas Muhammad Remu had great proclivity towards Ismailism since childhood. He daily spread carpets in Gwadar Jamatkhana and burnt the *loban* (benzoin). He also became the Mukhi of Khoja Panjibhai Club in Gwadar.

Varas Muhammad Remu led a pious and saintly life and was regular in his nocturnal worship since 1893. In 1894, the Imam is said to have told him to promote the notion of midnight worship in Gwadar *jamat*. In pursuit, he introduced 15-16 members in 1898, and the first *Brotherhood* of *Baitual Khiyal* started in Gwadar, and he was appointed its first Mukhi (1898-1920).

He raised a fund of Rs. 3000/- for the first school in Gwadar in 1904. He visited Bombay with some leaders and revealed his plan to the Imam, who said that it was insufficient for a school and assured that he would approve necessary grant on next year. In 1905, the Imam sent a telegraphic message to Gwadar *jamat* not to come in Bombay from Gwadar. Varas Muhammad Remu sent the telegram to Pir Sabzali in Pasani, requesting him to visit Bombay on behalf of Pasani *jamat* and make a humble request for a *didar*. Pir Sabzali travelled for Bombay, where the Imam told him at Valkesar Palace that, "Sabzali, you inform the Gwadar *jamat* of my arrival." The Imam visited Gwadar on April 1, 1905 and formed a School Board with Varas Muhammad Remu as President, Mukhi Mohammad Piru as Vice-President, Kamadia Datoo Meru as Hon. Secretary and Danidina Vali as a member. The services of Ali Mohammad Ladha of Bombay had been acquired as a teacher. The Imam also sanctioned a handsome grant for the school.

Varas Muhammad Remu destined to be the first President of the Ismaili Council for Gwadar in January, 1905, where he served for 19 years.

During the visit of Gwadar on April 1, 1905, the Imam said in the *mehmani* of Varas Muhammad Remu on April 15, 1905 that, "**God shall grant you benedictions. You have been serving me at all times. You must always serve in this manner. One who is deceived by the *shaitan* in the *jamat*, you must redeem him from deception.**" The Imam also blessed him and graciously gifted him a *shawl* and a gold-watch in double case and said, "**Keep it in the pocket and remember me when you looked it.**"

"The Imperial Gazetteer of India" (Calcutta, 1908, p. 186) writes that Gwadar was an open roadstead and port in Makran, about 290 miles from Karachi, with a population of 4350 persons in 1903. It is also learnt from the Ismaili journals of Bombay that the population of the Ismailis in Gwadar was about 500 around 1905.

In 1909, a certain Abdullah Paroo, resided in Garden, Karachi arrived in Gwadar, pretending to be a missionary. He procured considerable confidence in the *jamat* and formed his own

group. Later on, he claimed to have been enlightened and elevated to a high spiritual stage. He eventually equated his status with Pir Sadruddin. It resulted two groups in the *jamat*. It was soon reported to the Imam in Bombay, who displeased with Abdullah Paroo and sent message through Varas Muhammad Remu in unequivocal words to hold not a little intercourse with him. Varas convinced the group of Abdullah Paroo, who sought forgiveness from the Mukhi. Abdullah Paroo fled from Gwadar, and nothing was heard of him.

On January 4, 1912, the Imam said to the Muscat *jamat* in Karachi that, "**I have appointed Muhammad Remu of Gwadar as a high leader. You follow what he commands.**"

Soon afterwards, the Imam declared him as his **Varas** for Gwadar, Makran coast and Muscat on January 18, 1912 in Karachi.

He visited Chahbar with Alijah Datoo Meru in August, 1918 from Karachi, and then returned to Gwadar on camels. He suffered with diabetes, and a pain on his back-side caused him to reach Gwadar after two days. Dr. Sharif Hussain of Punjab diagnosed a tumor in his upper backside. The doctor advised for an operation. Unfortunately, its surgery was not possible due to the shortage of chloroform in the clinic. He forced the doctor to perform his operation without chloroform. He also told his brother, Khimji to inform him two minutes before the operation. When informed, he engrossed in deep meditation, and the doctor operated in such state. The doctor marvelled beyond measure and said that he found not a little movement of his body as he was quite immovable like a stone. "He was like an angel", said the doctor.

The inflation was at its worst during the first world war. He opened for the first time in Gwadar a department on September 2, 1918 to supply the grains, domestic and other commodities in the Jamatkhana at reasonable rates. Mukhi Tajar, Mukhi Muhammad Peru and Missionary Abdul Hussain Talib were consigned its control. This scheme aimed to provide the necessary items to the Ismailis on no profit motive. On October 21, 1918, the epidemic of influenza raged with greater violence in Gwadar, resulting 13 casualties in the *jamat* within 15 days. It badly shook the economy of the Ismailis. To stem the tide of this dreadful scourge, Varas Muhammad Remu hurled into the field as a warrior to the rescue of the stricken humanity with no distinction of cast and creed. He once again restarted the supply of the necessities of life for six months on non-profit motive for giving some relief to the down-trodden people. He entrusted the work to Mukhi Tajar Mukhi Muhammad Peru. He also imported large quantity of medicines and other items from Karachi with the co-operation of Wazir Col. Ghulam Hussain Khalfan (1887-1967).

His business also extended in Karachi, where he had to stay several times, therefore, he built his building in 1917 at Rampart Raw, Karachi, known as Mohamedbai Reimoo Mawji Building on plot no. J.T. 1/21/1. He was also the director of the newly formed The Khoja Ismaili Trading Co., Karachi in 1918.

Varas Muhammad Remu was a munificent donor for numerous causes. When the f Ismaili Religious Library was established in Bombay, he contributed a handsome don which was spoken in the speech of the President, Ali Muhammad Nassurbhoy in p of the Imam on March 24, 1905. On October, 1918, he donated Rs. 15,000

construction of the Jamatkhana in Chahbar, a seaport on the coast of Gulf of Oman, on the south-east of Iran; but the Imam did not permit for any Jamatkhana in the region of Iran, where Murad Mirza had rebelled against the Ismailis.

In the Persian Gulf, the oldest Jamatkhana situated in Makran was worn out. Varas Muhammad Remu renovated it at the cost of Rs. 10,000/-. He also made a donation to the newly formed The Young Ismaili Vidhiya Vinod Club, Bombay on April 1, 1918. On April 21, 1919, he donated a handsome amount to the newly formed The Young Khoja Ismailia Kathiawadi Mitr Mandal, Kharadhar, Karachi.

The religious night school was closed for over three months in Gwadar due to influenza. Varas Muhammad Remu propagated in the *jamat* and re-started it on February 16, 1919. Mukhi Tajar conducted the class.

In the meantime, his younger daughter, Manni expired in Gwadar on April 14, 1919, who was 14 years old.

During his visit, the Imam said on May 6, 1920 in Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi that, **"Wazir Muhammad Remu has served me exceedingly well. Wazir Muhammad, I am much happy with you, and give you more and more blessings."**

Varas Muhammad Remu presided several functions in Karachi and Bombay and made impressive speeches. He was not a missionary; but is reported to have performed a *waez* in the newly built Jamatkhana at Amir Pir, Sind on December 17, 1920. With his efforts, the Panjibhai Club of Gwadar gained a new lease of life, and was named as the H.H. The Ismailia Volunteer Corps in 1920, whose first President was Mukhi Tajar. He also started a library in Gwadar in 1921, which also issued a hand-written journal, called **Gohar-i Gwadar** and a Gwadar Pani Company in 1922.

In the end of 1921, the cholera raged with greater violence in Gwadar, whose population at that time was hardly 12,000 persons. Four Ismaili children became the victims of a catastrophe. Varas Muhammad Remu arranged specific medicines from Karachi and Bombay and distributed free of cost to the stricken humanity irrespective of cast and creed.

On March 27, 1922, the Imam said in the gathering of the Recreation Club at Bombay to Varas Muhammad Remu, **"You work among the Zikris (in Baluchistan). You have nothing to do there, no other work. The Zikris, who are perfect, you may give them secret solemn word. If you (the Varas or Wazir) are absent, vest its authority in other."**

On April 15, 1922, Varas Muhammad Remu presented 75 new converted Zikris before the Imam on the upper floor of the Garden Jamatkhana, Karachi. The Imam said, **"*Mashallah*! I am much happy to see you and bless you. I am delighted that you had surmounted the hurdles and embraced. You remain steadfast on the faith and become like angels. *Alhamdulillah*! Keep up high courage. Ismailism is a reality in Islam. Islam is a foundation and Ismailism stands seventh in rank of its reality."**

Imam graciously gave sugar to five to six persons among them. The Imam also blessed

Varas Muhammad Remu and Ghulam Hussain Datoo for their noble mission.

In April, 1923, he was in Bombay when his two close associates, Pir Sabzali and Alijah Datoo Meru were on the eve of the departure for their special missions. This was certainly a matter of pride for him. Pir Sabzali departed on April 7, 1923 for Central Asia and Alijah Datoo Meru left for Iran on April 19, 1923 by sea. On both occasions, Varas Muhammad Remu was present to see them off. He also sent urgent telegrams to Karachi and Gwadar Councils to accord befitting honour to Alijah Datoo Meru.

The health of Varas Muhammad Remu Mawji was impaired in October, 1924. He was taken to Karachi for treatment with Alijah Datoo Meru on November 2, 1924, where he expired on November 5, 1924 at the age of 65 years. The Ismailis in Gwadar closed their business when heard the news of his sad demise.

The news of his sad demise was urgently routed to the Imam in Paris, who also sent following telegraphic message on November 6, 1924:-

"Paternal blessing Sind Coast good spiritual children. Very sorry Coast President after life of service gone heaven. All honor his memory and family."

In another message, the Imam said:- "**Regret Mohomed Remoo expired. Ask Karachi and Coast give full honors his memory. Appoint after full consultation Karachi Council and Coast new President in his place till I come India."**

Lady Ali Shah in those days had been in Iran for seven months and returned to Karachi on November 15, 1924. When she was reported the sad demise of Varas Mohammad Remu, she was highly shocked and blessed his soul for eternal peace. She then proceeded to Bombay on February 6, 1925.

On January 26, 1938, the Imam said in Karachi during the marriage ceremonies of Rahim and Issa, the grandsons of Varas Muhammad Remu that, "**I am much delightful to attend the marriages of the children of late Wazir Muhammad Remu. Varas Muhammad Remu had served me too much. He is like a member of *Ahl al-Bayt* just as Wazir Basaria and Wazir Rahim had become (members of) *Ahl al-Bayt*. If their children will follow the religion and truth, they will lead good (prosperity) in their lives, and will be prosperous in the world."**

Varas Muhammad Remu left behind two sons, Hussain and Karim; and five daughters. Hussain was the father of Ruknuddin and Nuruddin, while Karim had three sons, Rahim, Issa and Tajuddin. Varasiani Mukhiani Tharabai, the wife of Varas Muhammad Remu expired on July 3, 1934 at the age of 55 years due to paralyse. She served as a Mukhiani for 4 years.

MULJI NAZAR ALI, COUNT
(1901-1968)

Count Mulji Nazar Ali was born most probably in 1901 in Moshi, Kenya. Nothing is known of his early life. He was however one of the generous, humane and eminent persons in Kenya. His outstanding services in Moshi seem to have begun with the construction of a new Jamatkhana in 1925, which he built with his own expenses of 40,000/- shillings. During his visit in Moshi on February 28, 1926, the Imam graced him with best loving blessings and said, **"You have built a beautiful Jamatkhana, and I will reward you a bungalow better than it in hereafter. You have done extremely a righteous work."** He also donated 1,50,000/- shillings in building the primary school in Moshi. He had also contributed handsome amount in the establishment of Guest-House, library, the Aga Khan Club and Nursery School in Moshi.

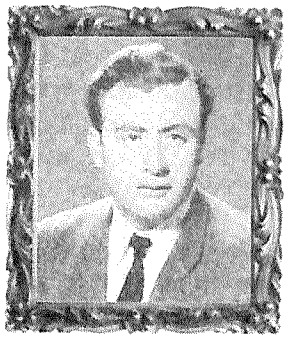
Count Mulji Nazar Ali was appointed the Kamadia of Moshi Jamatkhana in 1926. He was once again made the Kamadia between 1929 and 1930. He became at length the Mukhi between 1933 and 1934. He was also a member of the Moshi Provincial Council (1937-1941), the Director of the Ismailia Cooperative Society from1937 until his death, Honorary Secretary of the Moshi Council (1942-1946) and finally the President of the Moshi Council (1946-1954). He also served as a member of the Moshi Building Company, the School Committee, the Economic Committee and other institutions.

In recognition of his outstanding services, the Imam invested him the title of **Huzur Mukhi** in 1926 and **Count** in 1954. Hazar Imam also stayed two times at his bungalow during the visit of Moshi.

Unfortunately, he was raided by the local brigands and was seriously taken to the Platinum Jubilee Hospital in Nairobi, where he died on Wednesday, April 10, 1968. The Imam sent the following urgent telegraphic message during his sad demise: -

LT Supreme
Nairobi

Deeply grieved to hear tragic death Count Nazarali. I send my most affectionate paternal loving blessings for the soul of late Count Nazarali and pray for eternal peace rest his soul. Kindly convey my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings to Countess Nazarali and his son, daughter in law and family for courage and fortitude in their great loss. Best blessings to Countess Nazarali, son and daughter in law for recovery of their health. *Jamat* and self will greatly miss Count Mulji



MUSTAPHA GHALEB
(1916-1979)

Mustapha Amir Ghaleb was born in 1916 in Salamia, Syria. He came from a family well known for their piety in Syria. The leadership of the Ismailis in Syria was hereditary in the family of Amir Ismail bin Muhammad (d. 1896), the first estate agent of the Imam, whose grandson was the uncle of Mustapha Ghaleb.

He got educated in Roman Catholic College and Lloyd Franans College at Beirut and had an aptitude for journalism. He acquired considerable proficiency and obtained a diploma in journalism from Egyptian College of Journalists in 1952.

He completed his high school studies in Homs, Syria. In 1953, he also started his working as a correspondent and editor of the first Ismaili periodical in the Arab countries, entitled, **"al-Ghadir"** in 1956.

He was elected for the membership of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain in 1957. He obtained his Honorary Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Malmo, Sweden in 1968, and in the following year he got his Ph.D. in History and Literature from the National University of Canada.

He was elected as an Honorary Member for the Institute International de Recherche Scientifique in Zurich and Dusseldurf in 1970.

He made his visit to Pakistan and India on October, 1968 and delivered lectures, and since then he became a famous figure in the Ismaili world as one of the renowned scholars. He died in 1979.

Dr. Mustapha Ghaleb published the following books:-

Tarikh-i ad-Dawa al-Ismailia (Damascus, 1953), **Al-Haraka al-Batinia fi al-Islam** (Beirut, 1961), **Alam al-Ismailia** (Damascus, 1964), **Hasan as-Sabbah** (Beirut, 1964), **Falasafa min Ash-Sharq wa al-Gharb** (Beirut, 1968), **Sinan Rashid ad-Din** (Beirut, 1968), **Fi Rihab Ikhwan as-Saffa** (Beirut, 1969), **Haqiqat al-Ismailia** (Beirut, 1970), **Al-Bsysn** (Damascus, 1955), **Al-Haft al-Sharif** (Beirut, 1968), **Al-Yanabi** (Beirut, 1967), **Ikhtilaf-e-Usul al-Mazaib** (Beirut, 1968), **Al-Aqwal al-Zahabiah** (Beirut, 1970), **Al-Durare al-Chamia** (Beirut, 1970), **Doctrine of Ismailis** (English), Beirut, 1970, **The Ismailis in Syria** (Beirut, 1970), **History of Ismaili Dawa** (Damascus, 1953), **Aga Khan in Syria** (Damascus, 1951), **Message of Aga Khan to Islamic World** (Damascus, 1951), **Batini Movement in Islam** (Beirut, 1966), **Philosophers from East and West** (Beirut, 1968), etc.

He also edited and published the following historical works:-

Rahat al-Aql by Hamiduddin Kirman (Beirut, 1964), **Ithbat al-Imama** by an-Nisaburi (Beirut, 1966), **Tafsir al-Koran** by Ibn Arabi (Beirut, 1967), **Iftitah ad-Dawa** by Qadi Noman (Beirut, 1969), **Al-Masabih al-Imama** by al-Karimi (Beirut, 1969), **Ikhtilaf Usul al-Madhahib** by Qadi Noman (Beirut, 1969), **Kanz al-Walad** by al-Karimi (Gottingen, 1970), **Al-Iftikar** by as-Sijistani (Beirut, 1970), etc.

Nay, he was a contributor of many articles for different journals and periodicals of the Western and Arabian countries. His articles appeared in the Ismaili periodicals were "**My 25 years in Journalism**" (**Africa Ismaili**, Nairobi, 26/5/1972), "**Five Short Biographies**" (Ibid., 26/5/1972), "**Ismailism and Allegorical Interpretation of the Quran**" (Ibid., 18/2/1972)



For 1300 years our *jamat* have not made the mistake of putting worldly matters before their faith and this is not time to begin. I would like my spiritual children to understand that those of you who are regular in your duties, those of you who come to *jamat* regularly, those of you who are in Baitul Khayal, who come regularly to Baitul Khayal, are much, much more important than those spiritual children who have titles. It is what you have in your heart which counts, not what you put in front of your name. And I want my spiritual children to remember this. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Kampala, October 7, 1962.)



PIR MUHAMMAD HOODBHOY, DR., WAZIR
(1905-1956)

The Ismailis of Sheikh Raj, a village between Bela and Uthal in Baluchistan migrated towards Karachi in 1852. The Ismaili caravan travelled on camels mostly comprised of the famous families of Shalu and Hashu. The sons of Shalu were Hood, Kassim, Khatau, Vali, etc. The name Shalu is the corrupt form of Saleh, who professed the business of wool and goat-hairs and his flourishing business was continued by his elder son, Hood or Hoodbhoy.

Itmadi Hoodbhoy Shaluani was appointed Kamadia for the Lassi Jamatkhana, Karachi on January 16, 1912 with Mukhi Hussain. In 1920, the Imam appointed him the Mukhi. Itmadi Mukhi Hoodbhoy was also made the member of the Karachi Council on April 28, 1920. During his *mehmani*, the Imam said on April 28, 1920 in Karachi that, **"I give much blessings to all of your family members. You have been consigned recently the post of the Mukhi, which you carry on excellently with care; and when you go to the Council (as a member), you do not favour anybody. Do not favour even your own brother and serve the Imam, the *jamat* and act justifiably. You may favour the verdict faithfully in the way of God and do not commit partiality, *Khanavadan*. I give you much blessings. The office of the Mukhi is vested in you, therefore, you attend the Jamatkhana daily and serve excellently, *Khanavadan*."**

The Imam also said on May 6, 1920 that, "**You Mukhi Hood Shalu have served beyond measure, and keep serving the Imam excellently. I give you much blessings."**

Mukhi Itmadi Hoodbhoy is also noted for constructing the new Jamatkhana in Lassi, Karachi and donated a sum of Rs. 35000/- Its official declaration was made before the Imam on April 11, 1920. The new Jamatkhana was opened on December 25, 1924, when he was still on the post of the Mukhi with Abdullah Mukhi Hashu as the Kamadia. He also served as the President of the Supreme Council for Karachi between September 1, 1926 and August 31, 1927.

Mukhi Itmadi Hoodbhoy died on January 13, 1937 and left behind seven sons, Mukhi Hussain, Wazir Suleman, Hasan, Kamadia Hashim, Ismail, Amir Ali, Pir Muhammad, and two daughters, Kulsoom and Khatu. The most prominent among them was Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy.

Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy was born in Karachi in 1905. He acquired his religious education at Lassi, Karachi from Itmadi Karam Ali Bachal and Alijah Taki Muhammad Pirdina, where he also acted as honorary teacher. He was admitted in Sind Madressa-tul-Islam for secular

education. He joined the Ferguson College in Poona after matriculation and graduated from Grant Medical College, Bombay. He practiced in Sir Jamshedji Jeejibhoy Hospital, Bombay.

He continued his social activities in Bombay. In 1930, he became the Captain of the cricket team of the Aga Khan Gymkhana, Bombay. He returned to Karachi after becoming M.B.B.S. and started his own clinic in Kharadhar, Karachi.

He married to Mariam, the daughter of Dr. Rajab Ali Ramji Lakhdhir, the President of the Ismaili Council for Bombay on December 25, 1932. His marriage was performed in Lassi Jamatkhana, Karachi in presence of Prince Aly Khan in the period of Mukhi Hoodbhoy Shaluani and Kamadia Murad Ali. Prince Aly Khan said through Pir Sabzali that, "I know Dr. Lakhdhir since childhood. I am well known to him. My father would admire him several times. He discharged his duty justifiably as a President in Bombay. I pray that a son akin to Dr. Lakhdhir may take birth in the new union. I also pray for their long lives and prosperity." Sayed Mustaq Ali Didar Ali recited the *nikah.*

He was appointed a member of the Aga Khan School Board, where he served between 1935 and 1937.

His services in Karachi Health Board and Health Center since 1938 are written in letters of gold and will remain unique in the history of child welfare. The infant mortality rate in the community was 179 per 1000 live births in 1936, which was reduced to 40 per 1000 live births in 1955 with his untiring efforts. The upkeep and working in these institutions, whose President he remained for 18 years, had impressed the delegations of U.N. and W.H.O., which in their remarks in the visitors' book, have admired the Child Welfare Center and Maternity Home in glowing terms. Thus, a separate **"Dr. Hoodbhoy Children Ward"** was erected in Janbai Maternity Home as per Imam's advice. In appreciation of his best services in the medical field, the Imam appointed him the President of the Central Health Board, which he served from 1932 to 1956. He was an architect of introducing nursing profession and mother-craft training among the Ismaili girls. It was his significant labour that the Ismaili nurses could go abroad for higher training. During his period as the President of the Health Board, he introduced First-Aid, Home Nursing and Domestic Science.

Once Rehmatullah Alidad Sayani of Karachi, the patient of depression, humbly asked the Imam the remedy of his disease. The Imam recommended him for Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy or Dr. Alidina. He came in the clinic of Dr. Hoodbhoy, where he revealed to have been sent by the Imam. He took his medicine, but it proved incurable. He once again asked the Imam for treatment. The Imam once again recommended him for these two doctors. Hence, he continued his treatment with Dr. Hoodbhoy, but in vain once again. Dr. Hoodbhoy asked him, "Do you perform nocturnal worship?" To this, he said, "Not at all." Dr. Hoodbhoy said, "How my medicine will bring effectual result when you do not perform midnight worship?"

He was not only an eminent physician, but also the helper of the destitute and infirm. Sometimes, his patients could not afford the prescribed foods or fruits, therefore, he not only gave free medicines but also helped them with funds till recovery of health. Once he

recommended his patient to take orange juice. The patient said, "How can I afford buying fruit when I have hardly some money to pay your fees?" He was so much moved that he gave him free medicine and some cash to buy fruits.

He had a distinction of being the first Indian to be appointed as Chief Medical Officer in Karachi Port Trust, including Tatta Airlines and Mackinon Mackenzie & Co. He was also the consulting physician to the government of Kenya, Railways and Harbors and Niyasiland Railways Ltd., Africa. He was also a member of the Sind University Senate. The British India also granted him the title of **J.P.** His talent for social welfare work was recognized by the Government of Pakistan, and was made an honorary physician of Government Remand Homes. He was also a Government's nominated member of All Pakistan Maternity and Child Welfare Committee. He was also a member of the Karachi University Syndicate.

In 1939, he was appointed the Vice-President of the Scouts Association. The Aga Khan Gymkhana came into existence at Karachi in 1940, and he was appointed its first Convenor. The Imam also appointed him the Vice-President of the Diamond Jubilee Celebration Committee in 1946. During the campaign of the Diamond Jubilee, he strained every nerve and travelled in India on horseback, in bullock carts and by air to make this momentous occasion successful, and procured the donation of 5,25000 rupees. It was indeed his outstanding services that he sent many poor Ismailis from Karachi to Bombay to witness the Diamond Jubilee of the Imam in 1946. In appreciation of his invaluable services, he merited the title of **Wazir** in 1946.

The Ismailia Association for India existed in 1944 in place of the Recreation Club Institute. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai (1894-1971) was appointed its President with Alijah Rajab Ali Mohammad Dandawala as the Vice-President and Itmadi Rehmatullah Virji as Hon. Secretary. The Ismailia Association for India inaugurated a Mission Training Class at Karachi in 1944 to train the new missionaries for one year. Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy was appointed as its Chairman, and Missionary Ghulam Ali Shah was deputed from Bombay to conduct the class. In its formative stage, the class was arranged in the *musafarkhana* in Kharadhar, Karachi.

During the grand *didar* at Dar-es-Salaam on August 25, 1948, the Imam announced an introduction of the Constitution of the Ismailia Association for Africa, and emphasized to enforce it in India, Pakistan and other parts of the world. The Imam also vested in Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai the office of the **World Head** of all the Ismailia Associations. The Imam is reported to have asked him whether he found an efficient President for the new Ismailia Association for Pakistan. He said that he failed to find a capable person for the post. The Imam proposed him the name of Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy. To this, Huzur Wazir Macklai said, "He is a busy physician and will hardly spare time for it." The Imam said, "Well, you offer him, and if he does not accept, you ask him to recommend, whom he finds capable." When Dr. Pir Muhammad was afforded its offer, he willingly accepted it. Hence, the Imam sent a telegraphic message through the Council on March 21, 1948 that, **"I appoint Vazir Dr. Peermahomed Hoodbhoy first President Ismailia Association Pakistan with blessings."**

Soon after above announcement, he appointed Wazir Sher Ali Alidina as the Honorary Secretary, Wazir Kassim Jinnah as the Treasurer, with Chief Mukhi Chagla Vali Muhammad,

Wazir Ali Muhammad Jan Muhammad Chunara, Wazir Rajab Ali Rehmani, Hussaini Piru and Itmadi Nazar Ali Abdullah as the executive members.

It must be known that after being sprung of the Ismailia Association for India from the Recreation Club Institute in 1944, the All Africa Ismailia Association came into existence as one unit in 1946 with Count Mohammad Ali Dhalla as a President and Wazir Ramzan Ali H.M. Dossa as Hon. Secretary. With its headquarters at Nairobi, the All Africa Ismailia Association supervised the Boards and Advisory Committees originated in Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. For carrying out the activities of the Association efficiently with maximum benefit to the African *jamat*, the Imam decentralized the All Africa Ismailia Association in 1951 and established separate and independent Associations in Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. It implies that the Ismailia Association for Pakistan was the second independent Association founded in 1948.

He was not only appointed the first President of Ismailia Association for Pakistan, but also the President of the Pakistan Grant Committee. On February 18, 1950, the Imam declared him not only an Ex-Officio of the Supreme Council for Pakistan, but also for all other Councils and Institutions in Pakistan. This is a unique example for a leader, having such a grand status.

On January 20, 1951, the Imam told him in the Garden Jamatkhana, Karachi that his works were more important than all others, and that he must watch the canteen as a supervisor and guide the *jamat* and workers the method of cooking the food hygienically and that the vitamins should not be wasted while cooking.

In 1951, the Imam consigned him to transform the Honeymoon Lodge into the Mahdi Convalescent Home in loving memory of the meritorious services of Mukhi Mahdi, the son of Alijah Hasan Ali Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj of Bombay. It was a mammoth project, asking princely amount in its construction. He faced many odds and travelled far and wide to generate fund for this project. He raised funds from door to door and deputed his wife, Varasiani Mariambai in different cities of Pakistan and succeeded in this noble cause. This time the building of Honeymoon Lodge underwent major changes. The gabled roof was replaced by a R.C.C. slab, retaining the load bearing stone walls. On its rear side, rooms were added including two kitchens, bathrooms and extension of the veranda. A porch was added on the front side. Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy operated its supervision on behalf of the Aga Khan Health Board. It was a unique health centre in Pakistan and a boon for the patients.

The Imam gave an audience to the donors of Mahdi Convalescent Home at the bungalow of Wazir Ibrahim Manji on January 26, 1951, and blessed the donors. On that occasion, Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy submitted a brief report of the progress, especially the facility of water supply and electricity. The Imam told him to complete the project before the Platinum Jubilee. The project of Mahdi Convalescent Home at length completed and inaugurated on September 14, 1953 by Muhammad Ali Bogra, the Prime Minister of Pakistan. In his welcome speech, Dr. Pir Muhammad said, "This Convalescent Home is an additional gift of Aga Khan, which provides the recovery and energy to the patients of old diseases, or who have undergone major operations, on important location far from the dense population of the city."

He also organized the Waez Assemblies in Sind and Punjab. In November, 1950, referring to his great work for the Association, the Imam was pleased to remark, "**Excellent work, Dr. Hoodbhoy, in same ways best of Ismailia Associations.**" It procured steady progress rapidly because of constant efforts, personal attention and long hours that he spent in the Ismailia Association at the cost of his medical practice. He brought a sizable books and manuscripts from the University of Cairo, published in Europe, libraries of Paris and from the villages of Syria. In order to boost the activities of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan, the Imam having seated himself in the Kharadhar pendol for *didar* on February 9, 1951, wrote a unique message for the *jamat* that, **"Ismailia Association is the chief successor today of former Ismaili *dais* and missions. It is the duty of every Ismaili to help by goodwill and respect. If criticism is made, it should to help and not oppose."**

The Imam summoned a conference of the Ismaili delegates in Cairo to review the momentous occasion of the Platinum Jubilee upon the completion of 70 years of his Imamate. Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy represented the *jamats* of Pakistan with Wazir Ibrahim Manji, Rai Rajab Ali Hirji, Wazir Ghulam Hussain Khalfan and Varas Ghulam Hyder Bandali. The delegates discussed mutually in the morning and met the Imam at evening on March 15, 1951 in Hotel Semiramese. The Imam emphasized that the programme should be worked out on the pattern of Golden and Diamond Jubilees to improve the social and economical conditions of the Ismailis. The Imam, Mata Salamat and Prince Aly Khan invited them on next day for a lunch at Mohamedali Club and graced them with a photograph.

When Missionary Sultan Ali Nazarali Walji of East Africa wished to proceed to Cairo for having Islamic studies in Al-Azhar University, the Imam directed him at Ritz Hotel, London on September 13, 1949 to proceed to Karachi, and wrote a letter to Wazir Dr. Hoodbhoy. Missionary Sultan Ali stayed in his house during studies at the Ismailia Association for Pakistan with other African students. The Executive Board of Ismailia Association and Karachi Mission Teaching Staff gave a reception to the African Students on the eve of their departure on July 2, 1952.

He worked veritably like a hero in the community. So much so, even the Imam himself became anxious about his health and even cautioned him to go slow, lest he suffer a breakdown. But he continued to work ceaselessly and ungrudgingly. Ultimately the foreseen happened. He left for Europe with his wife for two months' rest and the treatment of heart trouble on June 2, 1955. Prince Aly Khan, who took his suitcase on the instructions of the Imam, received him at the airport. The Imam was close to him in referring to well-known physicians. He returned to Karachi in August 5, 1955.

Let us pause for a moment to cite a momentous event. When he was about to return from Europe with his wife, Prince Aly Khan promised to see them at the airport of Nice. Wazir Dr. Hoodbhoy waited for a long time, but Prince Aly Khan was too late. There were few minutes in taking off of the plane, he issued the boarding cards and started to move into the lounge. He saw at once the arrival of Prince Aly Khan, who regretted for his late coming, and presented a perfume bottle to Varasiani Mariambai and a small box to Wazir Dr. Hoodbhoy. Both of them thanked and quickly got into the plane. Wazir Dr. Hoodbhoy opened the small box in the plane and found his favorite cufflink in it, for which he

wandered in Europe but could not get it.

He played a key role during the celebration of the Platinum Jubilee in Karachi on 3rd February, 1954. He was the Vice-President of the Platinum Jubilee Association in Pakistan, and had a unique opportunity to read the welcome address of 2000 words.

He cemented intimate terms with African Associations in the field of mission and its training. On those days, the Ismailia Association for Kenya deputed four waezeens for Mission Teacher Training in Karachi, viz. Shams Tabriz G. Dhirani (Dar-es-Salaam), Amir Ali G. Jinnah (Dar-es-Salaam), Hasan Ali H. Nazar Ali (Nairobi) and Ismail H.J. Khan (Nairobi). The Imam sent the following message to Wazir Dr. Hoodbhoy on January 3, 1956:-

My dear Dr. Hoodbhoy,

Regarding the four mission students from Africa recently arrived in Karachi, will you please convey to them my blessings and my wishes for their great success.

It is to be noted that Ali Mahomed Mukhi Alidina Khoja Ismailia Girls School in Kharadhar, Karachi was built and inaugurated on May 11, 1926. It was taken over by the British Government in 1941. With the efforts of H.R.H. Prince Karim Aga Khan's City Education Board, it was recovered in 1956 from the Government of Sind. This school was renovated once again. Its opening ceremony was performed on January 8, 1956 with the hands of Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy, who presided the function.

To paint his epic life, the brush must dip deeper as his picture becomes rosier. He rendered magnitude of the services for 40 years, from the Lassi Religious Night School as a teacher to the President of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan. The progress of the Ismailia Association in a short span of 7 years was an eloquent testimony of his genius and great working capacity. He organized the gathering of the missionaries and other social workers on every Wednesday and lectured them on the *farmans* of the Imam, relating to health. It may be known that in his clinic at Kharadhar, Karachi, he was often seen going through the books on lives of great Ismaili missionaries of the Fatimid period during leisure time. Whenever the patients entered his room, he begged them to allow him to complete that page or chapter. He was also careful in the *jamati* activities. Once on an important occasion, both Kharadhar and Garden *jamats* requested to have a *waez* of a same senior missionary. He deemed it fit to make suitable arrangement and wrote a note to that senior missionary, saying, "After your *waez* at Garden, my car will be waiting to take you to Kharadhar, where you also deliver *waez*."

It was his oft-repeated words that, **" Serve him and for him. Do not expect any reward. Work selflessly. No one can give you reward, but he alone. Look to your Imam only"** and once he said, **"We are void of wealth of our forebears to make charities. We have only our personal aptitude, which we must not delay to offer in life."**

His health shattered few days before the shadows of death closed him. He was recommended to take complete rest, but he said, "The world is not a place to take rest. Still much has to be done and there is rest only after death." He worked and worked without respite or

relaxation till the very last. Even with the last-flicker of life, on Wednesday, February 1, 1956, he worked upto 10.00 pm. in the premises of Ismailia Association, giving a final shape to the programme of the second anniversary of Platinum Jubilee to be celebrated at the Aga Khan Ghymkhana on February 3, 1956. He drafted the complimentary telegrams on behalf of the Ismailia Association to the Imam to be dispatched on next day.

Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy unfortunately expired on Thursday, February 2, 1956 at 9.30 a.m. due to severe attack of heart in Karachi. Thus ended the valiant devotee's missionary life full of honors hacked out of years.

An important incident stands to his credit that Wazir Muhammad Ali Fazalbhoy (1916-1981), the President of the Ismailia Association for India had left Bombay on January 31, 1956 for Cairo to see the Imam in Aswan. He returned to India via Karachi and visited the Hoodbhoy Villa to condole Varasiani Mariambai. On that occasion, he told that he had been with the Imam in Aswan when the news of the death of Wazir Dr. Hoodbhoy reached. The Imam became very serious and shut his eyes for ten minutes. Then, the Imam told to Mata Salamat (1906-2000) with regret that Wazir Hoodbhoy was expired. When the Imam sent his telegraphic reply to the Ismailia Association for Pakistan on February 2, 1956, he was boating in the Nile river with tears bursting out of his eyes.

The Radio Pakistan reported his death on that night at 8.00 p.m. in the News Bulletin. The multitude of crowd flocked to his funeral, notably Habib Rahimtullah, Government officers, the Chairman of Karachi Port Trust, Presidents of the Supreme, Kharadhar and Garden Councils, Estate Agent of the Imam, title holders, Mukhis and Kamadias, doctors and nurses, etc.

On the sad and untimely demise of Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy, the Imam paid him tribute in the following message to his family:-

Aswan: February 2, 1956:

Deepest sympathies and condolence in your great loss. My most loving paternal maternal blessings for the peace of the soul of doctor Hoodbhoy who meritoriously rendered great service all his life for the cause of Ismaili faith.

The Imam also sent the following telegraphic messages from Aswan:-

Shahali, Karachi

Aswan: February 2, 1956

I hope the community at this moment will show due honor to the memory and service of the beloved Vazir Hoodbhoy. I sincerely hope men will rise soon to offer their services in the same unselfish and single desire of services, which the beloved Vazir Hoodbhoy showed to me. First of all we want a man to come forward to take up service for health of Ismailis all along the line. Name of volunteers should come to me for that and for Ismailia Association and religious education. I will remember him always with the same love and affection, which he gave to me.

The Imam also routed another following message for him: -

Shahali, Karachi

Aswan: February 3, 1956

In beloved memory President Hoodbhoy, I abolish name missionary throughout Pakistan and replaced by vaezin. I approve Vazir Ghulam Hyder as President All Pakistan Ismailia Association. For health affairs, you will send me names for Health Board, Maternity and Tekri convalescent Home. Consult all Ismaili doctors, nurses practicing in Karachi and then send full report (of) new board administrators for me to choose beloved Vazir's successors on different boards. Important not too much weight on one man. Avoid overwork as I warned late beloved Hoodbhoy. In his beloved memory photo of Vazir Hoodbhoy be kept with other photos (in) Supreme and Garden *jamats* and one in all institutions of which he was supervisor.

He was known all over the Ismaili world for his devotion and sacrifice. The Ismailis of East Africa, India, South East Asia, Middle East, Europe and South America, etc. will also remember him for his meritorious services.

Col. Jalal M. Shah, the Director General of Government of Pakistan, while addressing a condolence meeting on February 5, 1956 in Karachi, said that, "Though Dr. Hoodbhoy was my pupil, I am not ashamed to say that I learnt from him how to treat poor patients."

When Prince Aly Khan took a visit of the Ismailia Association, he had very kindly consented to accede to the request of the Association on performing the unveiling ceremony of the photograph of late Dr. Wazir Hoodbhoy in the hall of the Ismailia Association on February 28, 1956 at 6.15 p.m. Wazir Ghulam Hyder Bandali, the President summed up the services of late Wazir Dr. Hoodbhoy to pay glowing and well-deserved tribute. Prince Aly Khan remarked that he had turned night into day and worked very hard for the Association, and added in the remarks that the good library and important Ismaili manuscripts possessed by the Association were due to the efforts of late Wazir, who personally amassed this wealth of books from the university of Cairo, bookstalls of London, libraries of Paris and villages of Syria.

Prince Aly Khan lastly said, **"By profession, he was a doctor of human body, but in fact he was a doctor of human spirit, soul and mind."**

After the ceremony of unveiling the photo, Prince Aly Khan stood silent for two minutes before it. When he returned, he observed the photos on the notice board and demanded one for his records.

Prince Aly Khan also visited his house on Tuesday, February 28, 1956, where he stayed for 45 minutes. He also told to cover his grave with a *chadar* on his behalf. Prince Aly Khan also said that late doctor was an exceptional soul who sought no reward for his great services, and that he looked upon the departed leader always as one of the intimates and inmates of his royal house. With his departure has ended an epoch.

Prince Aly Khan visited the Ismailia Association for Kenya, and in its headquarters in Mombasa on April 8, 1956, where he remembered Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy and said, **"The death of Dr. Hoodbhoy is a great loss for the Ismailis of Pakistan, and the Ismaili world and generally for the Ismailism too. I wished that he would live longer. This is irreparable loss."**

It may be noted that when the health of Rai A.M. Sadruddin (1906-1980) marred in March, 1956, he asked the Imam to recommend for any European doctor. The Imam said, **"I have no faith yet in European doctors, who could not save Dr. Hoodbhoy."**

He was also a writer and published some interesting articles, viz. "**Advancement of Learning under Fatimid Khalifs**" ("**Ismaili**", Bombay, 16/3/1931), "**Ismailis of the Pamirs**" and "**Ismaili Cultural Advancement under the Fatimids**" in **The Diamond Jubilee Souvenir** of 1946 in Nairobi. His another article, "**Nursery Schools**" appeared in **Al-Islah** (Bombay, March 10, 1946). In the monthly **Aina** (Bombay), his one article, "**Development of the Child**" also appeared in January, 1950. In weekly **Ismaili**, Bombay, his write-up, "**Physical Exercises As a Means of Preserving Health**" covered on January 31, 1935.

He was survived by his wife, three sons, Noor Ali, Abdullah, Abdur Rehman and three daughters, Shah Sultan, Farida and Malekzadi.

PIR MUHAMMAD V. MADHANI, LT. COL
(1896-1959)



He was born most probably in 1896. Nothing is known about his early life, except that he was known as Pir Muhammad Virji Hajiani in the prime of life. His appearance in the arena of the community services began in 1910, when he dwelt in Kandi Mola, Bombay, and found there not a single religious school. Master Ghulam Hussain Muhammad came forward and prepared a scheme for imparting religious education to the wandering children. But his scheme could not be materialized. It was Pir Muhammad V. Madhani to shake hand with this noble cause and started the school. He served it as a Head Master for a period of 18 months.

This was the humble commencement and his feelings roused him to achieve further success. In 1915, an ideal association of enthusiastic young persons, known as The Young Ismaili Vidhiya Vinod Club came into existence, which offered him its membership, which he accepted in 1916. During the three subsequent years from 1916 to 1919, he was elected the President of V.V. Club with Abdullah Jaffer Lakhpati as an Honorary Secretary. He arranged lecture programme on every Saturday on different topics, and encouraged the promising scholars.

With the co-operation of the members of the V.V.Club, he succeeded to erect the first Ismaili Volunteer Corps in Bombay, a well organized disciplined institution of heroic social workers. Attired in uniforms for the first time on November 19, 1919, they made their first appearance on duty. They however performed their first official duty when the Imam graciously arrived in Bombay from Europe on March 2, 1920. Pir Muhammad V. Madhani acted as its Vice-Captain, and became a Captain in 1920. In their *mehmani*, the Imam blessed them and accepted the coveted post of colonelship for himself. The volunteers also prepared a costly military dress of a colonel and humbly presented to the Imam. The Imam and Prince Aly Khan became the patrons of the newly formed corps. The Imam also gave them in Yervada Palace the Coat-of-Arms (the royal monogram) to be worn in the caps.

In a general meeting held on July 8, 1920, the rules and regulations of the Volunteer Corps were ordained for the first time. On that juncture, about 81 youths enrolled themselves as the volunteers.

In 1920, the Imam landed on the shore of Kutchh. Unfortunately, a steamboat carrying the ornaments and important documents began to sink. It was a cool weather at about 3.00 a.m. Lt. Col. Pir Muhammad Madhani risked his life and brought the steamboat ashore safely. When it was reported to the Imam, he said, **"It was a trial for him."**

In 1922, he became one of the members of the Supreme Council for Kathiawar. In 1926, the Imam awarded him **"Good Service Gold Medal"** for his efficient services. In 1927, heavy floods with the worst inundation devastated Kathiawar and Gujrat. He girded up his loins and visited the affected areas with his officers. He studied the situation first hand on the spot and collected funds for the relief of the Ismailis. The Imam granted him **Gold Medal** for his meritorious services.

He was also one of the eight promoters in whose name the Ismailia Cooperative Bank Ltd was registered. In its preliminary general meeting, Pir Muhammad was elected one of the members of the Managing Board. For 15 long years he was elected a director of the Board. During his period, twice he was elected its Hon. Secretary and for 5 years he was the Chairman of the Loan Committee. Besides, he represented the bank at the Girgaum Cooperative Bank, the mother of all cooperative banking movements. He retired from the Co-operative Bank in 1944 because of the strain of works in other walks of life.

Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy and governor-general of India arrived at Bombay in 1930. The Police Commissioner of Bombay sought the good offices of the volunteer Corps through him for a dozen selfless volunteers to act as C.I.D. officers. He fulfilled the call of duty unhesitatingly and willingly.

In 1931, Prince Aly Khan visited India. Lt. Col. Pir Muhammad supervised the management of crowd control, keeping order and discipline. He visited other parts of India with Prince Aly Khan. Pleased with his dedicated services, Prince Aly Khan awarded him the **Prince Aly Shah God Medal**. In the same year, he became the Chief Captain. On the occasion of a special visit of Prince Aly Khan with Lt. Col. Pir Muhammad with his family at Darkhana, Prince Aly Khan announced, **"Captain is nearer and dearer to us than our bosom."** On another occasion, Prince Aly Khan presented him a lovely tiny box of gold with an autograph engraved thereon the words: "**For faithful and good service**". In this year, Prince Aly Khan promoted him to the Chief Captainship and announced that, "We shall promote you to the designation of Commander-in-Chief in future."

The Imam appointed him the Major of Bombay Volunteer Corps, Bombay Momana Volunteer Corps and Thana Volunteer Corps on February 29, 1936. The Ismaili Council also enjoined upon all the scout troops of Bombay and Suburbs to perform duty under the control of Lt. Col. Pir Muhammad. The Ladies and Gents volunteers, Divisions and Sections, Scout troops and Girls Guides were also brought to his control. He was awarded **Golden Jubilee Gold Medal** by the Imam for his efficient services during the Golden Jubilee in 1936.

He was also a member of H.H. The Aga Khan's Bombay Gymkhana and Industrial Home for three years. In 1939, the latter gave him "At Home" - an honor in appreciation of his services.

In 1939, the Ladies Volunteer Corps of the Darkhana, Kandi Mola and Hasanabad *jamats* performed separate services of keeping crowd control at their local *jamats* only and so, at times, it would be difficult to manage the functions efficiently. He chalked out a scheme for the amalgamation of these separate organizations into one compact body and forwarded it for the kind approval of the Imam. His scheme was sanctioned and the three separate corps' were united under one unit. He formed an Advisory Board of three members

including himself to guide and manage the affairs of the Ladies Volunteer Corps.

In 1939, the world war broke out, and it engulfed the whole world into a vortex of death and destruction, therefore, the Air Raid Precautions were necessary in India. Lt.Col. Pir Muhammad Madhani also raised an Ismaili A.R.P. from among the volunteers and scouts in Bombay and arranged its training by himself.

In 1940, the Bombay Police Department appointed him as the Deputy Divisional Warden of Chinch Bunder North Area and Mandavi North Area. He held the post till the end of the world war in 1945.

In 1940, a terrible famine hit the country. The scepter of famine raised its devilish head in many parts of India. In this catastrophe many Ismailis also suffered. The Ismaili Famine Relief Fund was erected at Bombay, where he also took an active role as its member.

In 1941, the communal riots broke out, he was appointed Street Warden by the Police Department to assist in restoring peace.

Two years before the Diamond Jubilee of the Imam in Bombay, Lt. Col. Itmadi Pir Muhammad Madhani worked out a scheme of having a Reserve Force, which met an approval of Prince Aly Khan. It was raised in 1944, and in the same year, he became the Lt. Col. of the Bombay Volunteers Corps.

The Aga Khan Legion Executive Committee formed the Khadak Provincial Committee in 1940 and appointed him its member. Later on, he became its President. On March 28, 1944, he was elected its executive member.

In 1944, he obtained permission of Prince Aly Khan for establishing the Volunteer Welfare Grant Fund to give relief to the needy volunteers. It proved a veritable boon to the poor volunteers to great extent.

During the Diamond Jubilee in 1946, the Aga Khan Legion Executive Committee had a gigantic task to receive and accommodate the Ismailis with efficiency and coordination. He was made the President of the General Arrangement Committee. He worked out the outlines of the arrangement about eight months before the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee. He organized a conference of representatives of the volunteer corps and scouts of all over India to discuss the major issues of the administration. He got the momentous results of this conference. He also published a booklet, **"The All India Gents and Ladies' Volunteer Corps, Scout Troops and Girl Guides General Orders"** and sent its copies to the members of the representative organizations all over India. The Diamond Jubilee was celebrated at the Brabourne Stadium with wonderful arrangement of the Volunteers, Scouts and Guides. Few days later, Prince Aly Khan wished him and Major A.J. Lakhpati to be present at the Land's End Bungalow to decorate them with the Diamond Jubilee Gold Medals. Prince Aly Khan awarded them the Medals and said,**"You are the pillars of the volunteer corps."**

In 1946, Prince Aly Khan created a Rover Scout Crew under his leadership, which was soon named the Vigilant Rover Scout Crew. In 1947, he re-organized the Volunteer Corps

and all its divisions into a club, named The Vigilant Sports Club. In 1952, he enforced further reforms and re-organized the Volunteer Corps, known as The Vigilant Sports Club Volunteer Corps.

Soon after the partition of India in 1947, the Ismailis fell a prey to the fury of wrath and communal prejudices at Kathiawar. The Ismailis needed assistance and the news of their trouble reached the ears of Lt. Col. Pir Muhammad Madhani. The call of duty beckoned him for action. He urgently called a meeting of the officers of various associations and established the Refugee Aid Society, which was accommodated in the office of the volunteer corps. He became its Vice-President and rendered assistance to the Ismailis in Kathiawar. The affected Ismailis, who assembled mostly in Bombay were rehabilitated and settled down in Deccan Hyderabad, Birar and Central Provinces.

In 1949, he turned his attention to bring the volunteers and scouts to one platform, since the field work of both organizations were equally same. He started the Ismaili Volunteers' and Scouts' Brotherhood and brought them close to each other. He became its President and procured excellent results.

In 1950, the Imam conferred upon him the title of **Rai** and **Itmadi** in 1951, as well as **Honorary Chief Colonel**.

In appreciation of his valuable services, he was awarded gold coat-of-arms studded with diamonds by Mata Salamat on behalf of the Gents and Ladies Volunteer Corps, Scouts and Guides of Bombay in 1951.

He started his work as an insurance agent in Bombay. He was recommended as Insurance Agent of Prince Aly Khan on March, 1952, to which Prince Aly Khan issued a letter, stating that, "Mr. Pirmahomed Madhani is known to me for many years as a sincere, faithful and hard-working Ismaili. He has been in the insurance business for many years and since the new Indian Insurance Act, he is appointed as an Insurance Agent. I recommend him as Insurance Advisor. I wish him every success in his business."

In the annual general meeting of East Bombay Bharat Scouts' and Girl Guides Local Association, held on June 28, 1954, he was elected its member. In its next meeting, the Executive Committee elected him as a member of the Badge Committee.

On the occasion of Platinum Jubilee, he was made a member of the Jubilee Mohotsav Committee in Bombay. In 1954, he published **"Ismaili Volunteers, Scouts and Guides Souvenir"** in Bombay in commemoration of the Platinum Jubilee of the Imam and the completion of 35 years of H.H. The Aga Khan's Bombay Volunteer Corps. In a message of June 4, 1954, the Imam said, **"Lt. Col. Pirmahomed has served brilliantly for a lifetime for the volunteer corps and I do hope that all will have their names inscribed as volunteers and will take him as an example and give same devoted services as he always did."** In another message from Cannes on September 30, 1954, the Imam also said, **".....And I send you and all those who helped in the publication of the souvenir my best loving blessings."** This souvenir sought to bring within the compass of its pages the inspiring story of the honorary services rendered to the Imam and the *jamats* by various volunteer organizations and brief sketches of the lives of many important personalities

behind those organizations.

In sum, he was a born soldier and through out his long selfless services, he has endangered his life on several times, and cast his thoughts, reflections and precious times for these services. Being a seasoned soldier, he weathered many storms, which shall be ever remembered.

He was once again elected as a member of the Executive Committee of East Bombay Indian Scouts and Guides Local Association on July 9, 1956 as well as the Convenor of General Arrangement Committee of Platinum Celebration Committee on March 24, 1957.

The Vigilant Sports Club Volunteer Corps, Bombay, formerly known as H.H. The Aga Khan Volunteer Corps was honoured by the Imam and graciously acceded to become its **Colonel** in September 24, 1957. The three units (Headquarters, Hasanabad and Andheri) of the corps came under the worthy leadership of Lt. Col. Itmadi Pir Muhammad Madhani. He sent a cable message to the Hazar Imam on the occasion of the *Takhat Nashini* ceremony, and the Imam sent following message to them:-

Masaka : 28th October, 1957

My dear Colonel,

I send your three units my best blessings for your cable of congratulation and service.

In appreciation of his life long services, his portrait of oil paint photograph was unveiled at the headquarters by Itmadi Suleman J. Rahimtullah on November 10, 1957. The function was attended by Wazir Muhammad Ali G. Fazalbhoy, the President of the Ismailia Association for India, Itmadi Ismail Tar Muhammad Madhani, the President of the Supreme Council for India, Itmadi Ghulam Hussain Haji Ahmad Devaji, the President of the Sidhpur Council, Wazir Akbar H. Merchant, the President of the Bombay Council, etc.

How difficult was the task at the commencement of the Volunteer Corps! How many hurdles and obstacles it had to surmount! With dogged perseverance and enthusiasm, he kept on marching towards the goal undaunted. In sum, Lt. Col. Itmadi Pir Muhammad Madhani was the **Vice-Captain** of the Volunteer Corps in its inauguration in 1919, **Captain** in 1920, **Chief Captain** in 1931 and **Major** in 1936 and reached his position of **Lt. Colonelship** in 1944.

Lt. Col. Itmadi Pir Muhammad Madhani died on July 1, 1959. The Imam sent following telegraphic message:-

Geneva: 10/7/1959
Agafederal Bombay:

Best paternal maternal blessings late Lt. Colonel Pirmahomed Madhani. I pray for eternal peace rest his soul.

Prince Aly Khan also sent the following message:-

New York : 27/8/1959
LT
Children Bombay

Please convey to the family of Colonel Pirmahomed Madhani and all officers and members of our Corps all my most affectionate and loving thoughts and my sense of deep sorrow for the loss which we have all sustained. Colonel Pirmahomed was a tower of strength and vigilance in our midst.

Prince Aly Khan also sent following message to Major Ibrahim Patel:-

New York : 27/8/1959
LT
Surething Bombay

As your Colonel-in-Chief, I wish to convey to you and through you to all officers and members of the Corps my sympathy and constant and affectionate thoughts. We have suffered an irreplaceable loss in the death of Colonel Pirmahomed. His memory will always be with us.



RAHIM BASARIA, WAZIR
(1885-1927)

Wazir Rahim Basaria traced his lineage from Basaria I, who was a devoted person in Bhuj, Kutchh. The son of Basaria I was Fadhu, who had travelled on foot to see Imam Khalilullah in Iran, where he died. Fadhu left behind three sons, Ghulam Ali, Basaria II and Jaffer. Basaria II (1848-1918) was the third Estate Agent of the Imam for Karachi and Sind and was invested the title of **Varas**. He married to Rani (d. 1927) in 1883, who gave a birth of a son, Rahim.

Wazir Rahim Basaria was born in Karachi in January, 1885. His parent reverently asked his name in a *mehmani* in Karachi before Imam Aga Ali Shah, who said, **"You both have served me with whole hearts, and as a reward, God has endowed you with a son, representing a symbol of the *divine boon* in your family. I give his name, Rahim."**

His father arranged all facilities in his education, but he studied upto 7th class. He joined his father's business as well as the services of the community. Upon the death of his father, Basaria II in 1918, the Imam appointed Varas Ibrahim Varas Vali (1869-1924) as the fourth Estate Agent.

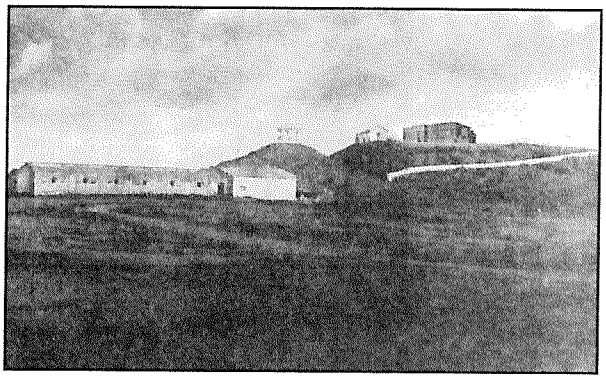
Wazir Rahim Basaria was a leading importer of sugar in Karachi, and was known in the market as a "**Lion of Sugar**." He was also the director of the Karachi Khoja Ismaili Trading Co. in 1919.

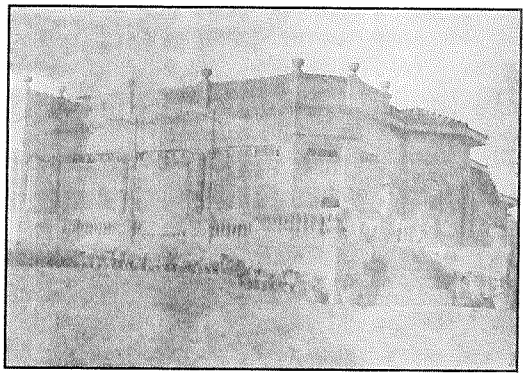
The British India invested him the title of **First Class Honorary Magistrate** through a Gazette issued on March, 1919. In this year, he was also appointed as an **Honorary Second Class Magistrate** in Karachi. The Imam made a tour of Karachi for 27 days from April 10, 1920 and performed the opening ceremony of the *musafarkhana*, adjoining the old Kharadhar Jamatkhana, which was built by Varas Basaria Fadhu in 1918 and completed by his son, Wazir Rahim at the cost of Rs. 70,000/-

During the visit of the Imam, Varas Ibrahim Varas Vali retired from his post, the Imam appointed Rahim Basaria as his fifth Estate Agent for Karachi, Lasbela, Tando Muhammad Khan, Mirpur Sakaro and some other parts of Sind at Wadi, Bombay on March 3, 1920. Varas Ibrahim Varas Vali however expired in Karachi on April 23, 1924.

On March 31, 1920, the Khoja Panjibhai Club, Karachi, feted a princely reception to honour Wazir Rahim Basaria in Garden area. Merali Sachu and Alarakhia Abdullah gave him a warm welcome. It was attended by 200 guests, notably Mukhi Muhammad, Mukhi Pir Punja, Varas Bandali Kassim, Pir Sabzali, Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad, Bandali

Mukhi Muhammad Ladha, etc. On behalf of the Panjibhai Club, Bandali Mukhi Muhammad Ladha presented a welcome address and Wazir Rahim Basaria was gifted a diamond ring by the hands of Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad.





The Honeymoon Lodge is situated on the eastern outskirts of the city of Karachi. It is an old fashioned, but spacious house, perilously perched on the top of a hillock. It is the birth place of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah. Wazir Rahim Basaria renovated the Honeymoon Lodge with his own expenses of Rs. 50,000/= Its new furniture was prepared in Calcutta by Bana Bhula and Suleman Mukhi Ghulam Hussain Parpiya of Calcutta. The Imam visited for the first time after renovation on April 10, 1920 and named it as **Highland**. He also acted as the Private Secretary of the Imam during the Imam's visit for 27 days in Karachi from April 10, 1920.

On Sunday, April 11, 1920, the Imam said in Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi that, **"Varas Rahim Basaria has constructed the bungalow of Tekari (Honeymoon Lodge) for the Imam, costing about Rs. 40,000/- to Rs. 50,000/- I give him much blessings."**

The Imam enjoined upon him in Karachi to make an extensive tour into the interior Sind and make a survey of the latest condition of education in the villages. The Imam also accorded him permission to open the schools wherever required and promote notion of education in the female circle. The Imam also told to open new Jamatkhanas in those villages where the Ismailis resided thickly. Wazir Rahim Basaria launched a tour of Sind, including Varas Fadhu Piru Khalikdina and Allana Khalfan on October, 1920. They visited different villages and assured the Ismailis that they would build new schools and Jamatkhanas with their own expenses. They also encouraged the students and awarded them prizes. They returned to Karachi after nine days and sent its report to the Imam in Europe through the Council. The Imam was delighted in their field report and sent a reply through a message from Paris on November 18, 1920 that, **"Give paternal blessings to all beloved spiritual children. Thank to the beloved children who agreed to build Jamatkhanas in other villages. Open the schools where are necessary in the villages."**

He also performed an opening ceremony of the new Jamatkhana in Amir Pir, near Jimpir in Sind on December 17, 1920.

He was accorded a befitting honour in a reception of the Panjibhai Club, Bombay on September 18, 1921, presided by Mukhi Megji Mulji for his valuable services.

He designed a master plan in 1921 to build the "Aga Khan Market" in Karachi or Bombay for the benefit of the petty merchants, but the strain of the community works fastened him so tight that it could not be materialized.

He also rendered his valuable services as the President of the Supreme Council for Karachi between September 1, 1921 and February 28, 1922, and again between May 21, 1922 and August 31, 1922.

He was also made the Chief Estate Manager of the Imam in 1922 at Bombay after the death of Juma Kamu. Henceforward, he concentrated in the community affairs and traveled in different villages of India, and helped the needy Ismailis by his own resources. He is reputed to have built three Boardings in Kathiawar and one in Sind.

Wazir Rahim Basaria was one of the greatest commercial magnates, but took special pride in calling himself a servant of the Imam and the *jamats*. He was a millionaire, but his life was a saga of selfless service to the Imam, to the exclusion of any other thought, consideration or benefit. He passed his life in simplicity and dressed ordinarily. On February 10, 1923 in Rajkot, the Imam attended the *mehmani* in a specially pitched tent of *khaddar*. Wazir Rahim also accompanied, where the Imam said,**"I have put on *khaddar*** (hand-woven cloth made of hand-spun yarn)." The Imam continued to say while looking at Wazir Rahim Basaria that, **"You see him. It's good to see such great person dressed in *khaddar*. It will be a frugally act provided the poor class also follow it."**

In April, 1924, Lady Ali Shah deputed him for Chitral as his Commissioner, where the local Ismailis were facing certain persecutions. He went to Chitral and discussed with H.H. Sir Shuja al-Mulk Bahadur K.C.I.E. (d. 1956), the Mehtar of Chitral and restored peace. Lady Ali Shah left Bombay for Iran and Iraq at the end of April, 1924 and returned after seven months on November 15, 1924. She was informed that the Mehtar of Chitral was also in Karachi, whom she sent a telegram, asking the condition of the Ismailis in Chitral. In his reply, the Mehtar also sent his telegram on November 16, 1924. The text of the telegram was published in the weekly **"Ismaili"** (Bombay, Dec., 14, 1924, p. 7), which reads:-

Her Ladyship Lady Alishah,

Most hearty thanks for your kind telegram and I reciprocate your good wishes on your safe return from Iraq. Am sorry false reports have made your Ladyship express regret on so called trouble of followers of your most worthy son whose personal friendship I am proud to earn. I assure you of my sincere sympathy with them as my loyal subjects. I candidly request you to rely on my ever-ready help in rendering possible facilities to them. Will you kindly ask Vazir Saheb Rahim Basaria or yourself would kindly communicate to me in detail their actual grievances. Will leave no stone unturned in allowing them to enjoy every privilege they had hitherto enjoyed. Believe me to be your most dutiful son.

His Highness Mehtar Sahib
Chitral

The schools of Kharadhar and Garden, Karachi established in 1908, and affiliated with the School Board. He was appointed a member of the School Board in Karachi on July 1, 1925.

He proceeded on a trip of East Africa during the visit of the Imam in 1925. He left Bombay on January 7, 1925 with Pir Sabzali, Hussaini Pir Muhammad and Hamir Lakha. The Imam landed at Zanzibar on February 9, 1925. During the period of his visit, the Imam made him as his Private Secretary, and the head of the African Estate Agents. He accompanied the Imam over a month and visited Mombasa, Moshi, Nairobi etc. He worked 18 hours per day as a Chief Wazir and the Private Secretary of the Imam. He was also made the head of the Ismaili Councils for East Africa, and all the reports of the Councils were sent through him.

It is related that the Imam asked him to purchase a precious gold ring. He wandered in the markets and purchased a precious gold ring embedded with diamonds, costing five hundred shillings, and handed over to the Imam. When the Imam concluded his tour in Africa, and left Mombasa for London by sea, he presented that gold ring to Wazir Rahim Basaria with best loving blessings. He prolonged his stay in East Africa and collected details of the *jamats* and prepared a report, and went to London to submit it to the Imam.

He travelled with the Imam on several occasions in Kutchh, Kathiawar, Sind, Burma, Africa, etc. and carried a retinue of servants and workers on his own expenses. His staff worked 12 hours in a day, while he worked 18 hours with no respite. Indeed, he was a shinning example of wise administration and hard working.

He was to stay in Bombay for four to six months to complete few important works consigned by the Imam. He stayed in the bungalow at the Aga Hall with his mother and family members. His health shattered by the heavy strain of works till late hour at night, and became a victim of malaria. He was confined to bed, but his work remained restless till he fell into an inflammation of the lungs, or pneumonia. The best medical aid was called in, thank to the maternal care of Lady Aly Shah. His illness increased and the famous doctors of Bombay were treating him, but appeared no sign of recovery. The doctors eventually left all hopes of his survival.

Wazir Rahim Basaria thus, died at the age of 42 years on Monday, February 15, 1927 at 12.30 a.m. at the Aga Hall, Nesbit Road, Bombay. The Ismailis in India, Burma and Africa closed their business on that day. He was buried at the underground chamber of the mausoleum of Imam Hasan Ali Shah at Hasanabad, where no Ismaili had been ever buried. The last to be buried here was Aga Majid Khan, who expired on October 7, 1956.

Wazir Rahim Basaria, also known as the **Wealthy Dini Asectic** of Karachi died like a *shahid* with no sign of fear of death. He embraced his death with smile, and the word "*Ya Hazar Imam*" was constantly gushing out from his lips till last hours.

The Imam sent urgent telegraphic message in Bombay as under:-

Marseills: February 16, 1927 (3.25 pm.)

Children. Bombay

Very sorry my beloved and good minister gave his earthly life in my service. His memory nearest my heart. Convey condolence his family. Honor his memory all over India.

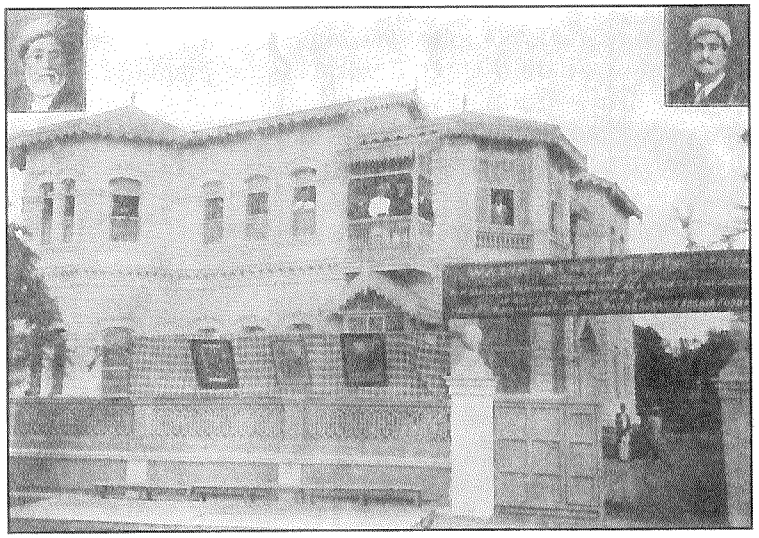
The Imam sent another message in Karachi as under:-

Marseills: February 16, 1927

Shahali. Karachi

Very sorry most unhappy my beloved good minister gave his life to me. His memory should be honored. Photos placed in all Karachi Sind Khanas. Convey my deepest sympathy all his family.

Imam visited Bombay on December 9, 1927. His mother, aged 85 years died two days after it on December 11, 1927. On December 15, 1927, the Imam said, "**Varas Basaria, Varas Rahim and the mother of Varas Rahim have served my house too much. Varas Rahim has served me with love, dedication and whole-heartedly, for which I give best blessings. These three will remain alive in my thought, and I remember (them) all the times. Although, they have left this undurable world, but are alive in my heart.**"



In his memory, Imam proposed to build two Boardings in Karachi as well as in Vancaner, Kathiawar for the benefits of the orphans. Accordingly, the Supreme Council for Kathiawar passed a resolution on April 7, 1927 to build a Boarding. Alijah Ali Kunwarji proposed the name of the Boarding, "**Wazir Rahim Ismailia Boarding**" which was unanimously accepted. Necessary funds were raised through out Kathiawar. Captain Amarshinh Bahadur, the head of the state offered free plot in Vancaner for the project.

On March 13, 1927, the Supreme Council sent following telegraphic message to the Imam:-

The council regrets for the demise of Wazir Rahim. The Council has passed a resolution to start a boarding in Vancaner in loving memory of late Wazir. Please convey our condolence and this news to the family of the desceased.

The Council also sent another following message to the Karachi Council on March 13, 1927:-

This council declares its regret for the demise of Wazir Rahim and council passed a resolution to start a boarding in his loving memory. Amarshinh Bahadur, the ruler of Vancaner has generously offered a free plot for the boarding. We are anxious for His Highness's gracious blessings.

The similar resolution was also passed in Karachi for the Boarding as well as a garden with a bungalow, called **Wazir Rahim Bagh.** The Boarding in Karachi, called **Wazir Rahim Boarding School**, was built and inaugurated on Sunday, October 7, 1928 by Mukhi Megji Mulji of Darkhana Jamatkhana of Bombay, while Chief Wazir Kassim Ali Hasan Ali Javeri made an inauguration speech on that occasion.

It is to be noted that the whole *jamats* in Kathiawar recited a *tasbih* on the *Chand Raat* and prayed for the soul of Wazir Rahim Basaria on April 13, 1927 according to the *farman* of the Imam.

On May 8, 1927, a grand *majalis* was arranged in Kharadhar Jamatkhana, Karachi. Pir Sabzali and Missionary Abdul Hussain Bachal delivered *waez.* The *majalis* was followed by the unveiling of the photo of Wazir Rahim Basaria in the hall of the Jamatkhana. The Chief Mukhi Muhammad Rehmatullah Lutf Ali performed the ceremony. On the same day, the unveiling ceremony of the photo was also performed in Garden, Lassi and Ranchhorline Jamatkhanas in Karachi.

It is said that he left behind movable and immovable properties, amounting to sixty lacs rupees, which was presented to the Imam as per his will. His wife, Varasiani Gulshakar however received a monthly grant from the Imam till her death in November 4, 1991 at Karachi.

The Imam said in Bombay Jamatkhana on January 15, 1928 to the *jamats* of Mazgon Wadi and *Chand Raat Panjibhai* that,"**Keep the photograph of Wazir Rahim in the Jamatkhana.**"

On January 26, 1938, the Imam said in Karachi during the marriages of the grandsons of Varas Muhammad Remu of Gwadar that, **"He (Varas Muhammad Remu) is like a member of *Ahl al-Bayt* just as Wazir Basaria and Wazir Rahim had become (the members of) *Ahl al-Bayt.*"**

Wazir Rahim Basaria! what does picture the blessed name brings before the mind? A mighty landlord was he; born with a silver spoon in his mouth, we may say that he was rolling in a sea of money all his life, yet fortunately free from the evils that attend the possession of heaps of money generally. Pride he had none: he was a simple, unassuming, kind hearted man whom were embodied all the qualities of a prudent gentleman the type of whom it would be a luck to find now-a-days. It would require volumes to do full justice to analyse his qualities. In sum, he was the very model of a really selfless, hardworking hero who defied labour, flaunted fatigue, and worked zealously with a heart truly devoted to the noble office of his leadership.



RAHIMTULLAH A.C., WAZIR
(1902-1963)

Among the predecessors of Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah, Piru Dewani deserves special attention. He was a devout Ismaili in Kutchh in the period of Imam Abul Hasan Ali (1730-1792). His son was Fadhu who followed the footprint of his father. His son Mukhi Rai Rahimtullah was a famous social worker in Kutchh in the time of Imam Shah Khalilullah II and Imam Hasan Ali Shah. In 1825, he immigrated to Muscat when plague epidemics broke out fiercely in Kutchh followed by a severe famine. He started his small business in Muscat. Captain W.F.W. Owen visited Muscat in 1825, and described in **"Narrative of Voyages to Explore the Shores of Africa, Arabia and Madagascar"** (London, 1833, 1st vol., pp. 336-340) that the town "inhabited by every caste of Indian merchants." He made steady progress and generated his intimate terms with Sultan Sayed Sa'id (d. 1856) of Muscat. He was an influential personage in the Sultan's court. In memory of his meritorious services in Oman, a marble plate in his name was placed in the palace of the Sultan of Oman. He visited Mahallat from Muscat in 1840, where he was invested the title of **Rai**. He came with the Imam in India in 1841. Mukhi Rai Rahimtullah visited Kathiawar with the Imam and died in the village of Darafa, near Ganod. The Ismaili wished his interment in Bombay, but the Imam chose Ganod as his resting place, near the shrine of Hasan Pir. The Imam himself offered his funeral ceremony and burnt a lamp and put it on his grave.

The son of Rai Rahimtullah was Zain al-Abidin (d. 1876), and whose son was Rahim. Currim was the son of Rahim, and the son of Currim was Abdul Hussain, better known as Abdul Hussain Currim Rahimtullah or A.C. Rahimtullah. It must be added that the maternal grandfather of Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah was Mukhi Kassim Musa, who was the Estate Agent of Imam Hasan Ali Shah, Imam Aga Ali Shah and Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah.

Abdul Hussain Currim, was born on January 12, 1902 at Bombay. He passed B.A., and was well steeped in English, Arabic and Persian. He then joined his father's business. Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah related the incidents of his youth on several occasions when he had no proclivity towards Ismailism. Once he told to Missionary Pir Muhammad Haji in Khulna that he had given permission to his wife, Jenabai to go Jamatkhana, but he never attended. During the Diamond Jubilee in Bombay on March 10, 1946, the Ismailis between 3rd March and 10th March celebrated a diamond jubilee week, and the Imam also attended the *mehmanis* in the Jamatkhanas. His wife urged him to join in the *mehmani*, which he refused. When she insisted severely, he acceded to her request.

In the *mehmani* at Wadi, the Imam was sitting on a chair and asked during his turn the name of the person presenting the *mehmani*. To this, the Imam was told that it was a

mehmani of Abdul Hussain Currim. Imam nimbly staired at him. His wife brought her husband near the chair. The Imam removed his glass and gazed at him, and said, "**I know the names of his forefathers.**" Then, the Imam counted few names of his forefathers on the fingertip and said, "**The grandfather of this Abdul Hussain was Rahim, his father was Zain al-Abidin, his father was Rai Rahimtullah, his father was Fadhu and his father was Piru Dewani. All of them had served my house whole-heartedly. Abdul Hussain stands in the seventh generation of Piru Dewani, and he too will serve my house with full heart and loyalty. Best blessings, Khana Abad, Khana Abad.**"

The Imam called him near his chair and put his blessed hand on his shoulder. Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah related the moment in his words that, "I felt a heavy weight as if a mountain on my shoulder. My head lowered down the ground, which was erect so far. The tears streamed out of my eyes, and drenched in perspiration. I remembered nothing what happened in twinkle of eyes."

He came back to his house and asked his grandmother, who was virtually blind. He said, "The age of the Aga Khan is about 68 years and my grandfather expired before 70 years. He had never seen him, how he knew him and his forefathers?" She replied that all the Imams were the bearers of the very light of Ali. She continued to say that when she betrothed, his grandfather was alive, and his one old box still subsisted beneath the cupboard. She asked him to bring it. He brought the box, having the boundary of leather and wood. It contained an old robe, with countless patches on it, and a stick. She said, "These are the blessed relics touched by Imam Shah Khalilullah Ali, belonging to your grandfather, whom I have seen. He visited village to village in India and collected tithe. When the accumulated funds reached upto Rs. 5000/-, he purchased gold coins and hid in the robe with rough stitches. The excess gold coins were inserted in its hollow and sealed on both ends. He then rode away on an ass towards Kirman. After an appalling itinerary of six to seven months, he reached Kirman and presented the gold coins to the Imam. Thus, he served Imam Abul Hasan Shah and Imam Shah Khalilullah Ali."

The above incident was a new phase, which transformed him all of a sudden into a religious awakening, and resolved with full determination to serve the *jamat* like his ancestors. He soon entered into the services of the Ismaili community in different fields. He became an Hon. Joint Secretary of Diamond Jubilee Trust, Honorary Treasurer of Ismailia Home and Helping Society, Honorary Joint Secretary of Ismailia General Hospital, President of Ismailia Co-operative Bank, Joint Managing Director of National Land and Building Co., Honorary General Secretary of the Ismailia Association for India (1948-1953), Honorary Secretary of Platinum Jubilee Celebrations Committee, Honorary Managing Director of Platinum Jubilee Investments Ltd., Hon. Secretary of The Ismailia Corporation Housing Society Ltd., Vadala. He also fought legally to recover the plot of Vadala.

During his services in Ismailia Association for India with the President Varas Ghulam Hussain Thavar Pir Muhammad, he is noted for promoting *waez* activities in India among the young students, and started *waez* training centers and assemblies in different quarters. He was also a journalist and became an editor of **Platinum Jubilee Bulletin** in 1951. He had also compiled many articles, most of them appeared in the monthly **Aina.** It was his untiring efforts that the Ismailia Association published the first and second volumes of the "**Kalam-i Imam-i Moobin**" - a collection of the *farmans* of Imam

Sultan Muhammad Shah.

The Imam summoned a conference of the Ismaili delegates in Cairo to review the momentous occasion of the Platinum Jubilee upon the completion of 70 years of his Imamate. Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah represented India. The delegates discussed mutually in the morning and met the Imam at evening on March 15, 1951 in Hotel Semiramese. The Imam emphasized that the programme should be worked out on the pattern of Golden and Diamond Jubilees to improve the social and economical conditions of the Ismailis. The Imam, Mata Salamat and Prince Aly Khan invited them on next day for a lunch at Mohamedali Club and graced them with a photograph. He also sought kind approval from the Imam for the foundation of Platinum Jubilee Investment Ltd.

During the Platinum Jubilee in Karachi on February 3, 1954, the Imam did not like mammoth influx of the Ismailis of India and Africa, and told to Wazir Ibrahim Manji, the President of the Platinum Jubilee Association to issue a circular. In January, 1954, a circular was issued, stating, "**Delegates have instructions that no Ismaili from Bharat or Africa is to come for the Platinum Jubilee celebration at Karachi except those who will be invited officially by the Association.**" Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah, the Hon. Secretary of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration Committee for India came officially with his wife alongwith other Indian delegates and had an audience of the Imam.

He also accompanied Prince Aly S. Khan in 1954 to visit about 13 centres in India.

Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah was the Managing Director of Bharat Shipping Agency Ltd. in Bombay. After discussing with the delegates of Pakistan in Paris in 1955, the Imam ordered him to go in Khulna to take charge of the Crescent Jute Mill. He said, "Mawla, I am not proficient in the field. How can I discharge a big responsibility? The Mill went to rack and ruin loss due to mis-management and has a debt of millions of rupees. It is like a sinking ship." The Imam said, "I have decided to deliver you this sinking ship. You don't worry. I will remain with you and guide you from time to time with my best blessings."

He migrated to Khulna, Bangladesh in 1956 and joined the Crescent Jute Mill Co. Ltd. and became its Managing Director in September, 1957. With his aptitude and wise administrative skills, he changed the fate of the Mill in a short period. Its loss was recovered and loans were adjusted. He also won the hearts of a fleet of 7000 workers and accepted their demands, and got their strikes ended. He built a mosque for them in the Mill, and offered Friday prayers with them, and sometimes he delivered the sermons. He decorated the mosque with Chinese hanging lights and carpeted it. He sent three workers on pilgrimage each year. He also built a maternity home for them and also spent massive amount for the education of their children. He also became the treasurer of Self-Help Center to provide bread and butter to the destitute, and for its maintenance, he collected funds from Jute Mills and Jute Presses.

He was also a member of the governing body of Daulatpur College and took major role in promoting education. Being the President of Rotary Club in Khulna, he suggested to start a Book-Bank Scheme to lend text-books to the deserving students. He was also a member of the Regional Committee of the Banking Publicity Board of the State Bank of Pakistan to enhance notion of saving among the people.

Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah was also the President of the District Council in Khulna for three years, and the President of the Area Committee of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan till death. He also established the Karimabad Co-operative Society and arranged its plot in Khulna.

When he was on a trip of Europe, he suddenly heard the sad demise of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah on July 11, 1957. He rushed to Geneva and conveyed his condolence to Prince Aly Khan and Mata Salamat in Barkat Villa. He also participated in the ascension ceremony of Hazar Imam in Barkat Villa and took *bayt* with other leaders. He also attended the burial ceremony in Aswan.

After assuming the Imamate, the Imam came in Pakistan and took a visit of the Crescent Jute Mill in Khulna. The Imam also went to his house. On those days, a galaxy of leaping worries revolved in his mind and fastened him all around. The Imam advised him not to whirl in worries and work with courage and assured to be with him all the times.

He was bestowed the title of **Alijah** in 1950 and **Rai** in 1955 in India and **Wazir** in 1960 in Pakistan. He rendered magnitude of the services in India and Pakistan for 15 years with the impulse of his illustrated ancestors.

He died on April 1, 1963 and was buried in the compound of the mill in deference of the wish of the workers, who said that he was their benefactor and sympathizer and had made them gold out of dust.

In a message to the Supreme Council for Dacca on April 8, 1963, the Imam said, **"Much grieved to hear the sad demise of Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah. Best loving blessings for the soul of late Wazir and I pray eternal peace rest his soul."**

The Imam came in Pakistan on November 21, 1964 and visited Khulna on December 1, 1964. On next day, the Imam made a flying visit of the Crescent Jute Mill and offered *fatiha* on his grave and also paid tribute at his grave when withdrew from the Mill.

His family presented a *mehmani* during this visit before the Imam in Karachi. When his wife Jenabai mourned, the Imam said, **"Do not grieve. Late Wazir is in eternal peace. I give my best blessings for his soul."**

It may be recorded that three eminent personages passed away in Pakistan in 17 days, who were attached with the Ismailia Association for Pakistan, viz. Missionary Hamir Lakha died on March 16, 1963, Missionary Jaffer Ali Sufi died on March 18, 1963 and Wazir A.C. Rahimtullah, the Chairman of Khulna branch of the Ismailia Association expired on April 1, 1963. The Ismailia Association organized a grand *majalis* on April 7, 1963 for the departed souls in Garden Jamatkhana. Wazir Ghulam Hyder Bandali (1905-1986), the President sent a humble service with a report to the Imam on April 9, 1963. In reply, the Imam sent following message:-

April 20, 1963

My dear President

I have received your letter of April 9th.

Kindly convey to the office bearers and members of the Ismailia Association, waezeens and religious teachers my best loving paternal maternal blessings for service, with best blessings for the souls of the late:

Rai Hamir Lakha
Alijah Jafarali Sufi
Vazir A.C. Rahamtola of Khulna

I pray that their souls may rest in eternal peace. My three spiritual children had rendered truly excellent services to myself and my *jamats*. They lived fine lives of hard work and service and were exemplary spiritual children.

His first wife, Shireen (d. 1926) begot two sons, Sultan and Mehboob. His second wife, Jenabai also served as a member of the Fidai Academy, Bombay (1948-1952). She was appointed the member of the Khulna Council in 1961, the President of Khulna Health Centre (1962-1963). She was also the founder of Prince Aly Canteen in Khulna, the sponsour and advisor of Khulna Industrial Home & Economic Society, the advisor of Ladies Volunteer Corps, Khulna, etc. She was also the Managing Director of Crescent Jute Mills. In appreciation of her meritorious services, the Imam invested her the title of **Varasiani** on August 10, 1963. Shed died on May 27, 1987, leaving behind a daughter, called Abida.



RAHIMTULLAH MUHAMMAD SAYANI
(1847-1902)

He was born in Bombay on April 5, 1847. His grandfather Sayani was a respectable merchant in Kutchh and came to Bombay. His father, Muhammad Sayani admitted his son, Rahimtullah in Elphinstone School, where he matriculated at the age of 16 years. He passed his B.A. examination in 1866 and M. A. in 1868. He was not only the first Muslim who had obtained this honorable degree, but also no Muslim obtained it during the next 25 years.

During his college career, Rahimtullah Muhammad Sayani was the recipient of many prizes and awards, and was eventually appointed a fellow of the college. He was the favorite pupil of Sir Alexander Grant (1826-1884), the vice-chancellor of the Bombay University.

Rahimtullah Sayani passed his LL.B. examination in 1870, and was the **Justice of Peace**, and a **Fellow** of the Bombay University in the same year. He was not only one of the foremost members of the Senate in 1870, but also held various offices. He was a member of Syndicate (1891-1895), the member of the Board of Account of the University, and the trustee of the Elephinstone College.

In 1874, a Commission was appointed in order to recommend proposals with a view to amend the law relating to the Ismailis. Justice Sir Maxwell Melville (1834-1887), Justice Spencer and Rahimtullah Sayani were appointed members of this Commission. Afterwards at his suggestion, Imam Aga Ali Shah and three other prominent Ismaili leaders were co-opted as members.

His professional career began in 1878 when he passed his Solicitor's examination through the firm of Leath & Leath, which was represented by M/S Crawford & Co. He became a partner of Cumbroodin Tyab Ali, the elder brother of Justice Badruddin Tayyib Ali (1844-1906), who was the only Muslim Solicitor at that time.

During the first 15 years of his professional career, he was largely practicing as a pleader. Had he wished he might have obtained a seat on the High Court Bench. His professional and public career was dearer to him and prevented him from desiring so.

He was elected to the Bombay Municipal Corporation in 1876. He was subsequently elected a member of its Standing Committee (1879-1888). To mark their appreciations of his invaluable services to the city, his colleagues elected him President of the Corporation in 1888. It may be pointed out that he was the first Muslim who obtained the high honor of the civic chair.

He was one of that small band of cultured Muslim leaders who brought into existence that very useful body, known as the Anjuman-e-Islam, with its accessories of schools, hostels, gymkhana and club. He was for many years its Honorary Secretary and Vice-President.

In 1885, he became the first Muslim **Sheriff** of Bombay. He was also appointed a member of the Bombay Legislative Council in 1888, and was the first Ismaili to obtain this high honor.

In 1896, he was unanimously chosen the President of the National Congress at Calcutta; and was the second Muslim selected for this unique honor, the first being Justice Badruddin Tayyib Ali.

At the end of 1896, Sir Pherozshah Mehta resigned his seat on the Supreme Legislative Council; the unanimous choice of non-official members then fell on him. During the course of his two years term of office, several important matters came before that august body for disposal, notably the Epidemic Diseases Act, Amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code and Seditious Meetings Act.

The Khoja Ismaili Library in Bombay reached its prosperous condition due to the zealous assistance of Rahimtullah Sayani. From its foundation to the date of his death, he was the President and a zealous supporter of this useful institution. He was also a solicitor of the Imam.

It may be said without exaggeration that almost all the institutions of organized philanthropy among the Ismailis were either directly or indirectly due to his efforts. Urged by his shinning example, many generous Ismailis appeared in the field to establish charitable and educational institutions.

His simplicity of heart and piety occasionally made him liable to be the prey of unscrupulous people in spite of his great abilities. One of his greatest titles to the gratitude of the Ismaili community consisted in the fatherly encouragement he always used to give to poor but deserving brethren. Several Ismaili gentlemen who afterwards rose to eminence and a fair amount of material prosperity, owed largely to the constant encouragement and pecuniary assistance in the nick of time rendered to them by Rahimtullah Sayani.

Rahimtullah Sayani died on June 4, 1902 at Bombay. There was a spontaneous outburst of grief in numerous Ismaili homes and many a person felt that he had lost a sincere friend who was, as it were, a parent to them. Dr. Mackichan, the vice-chancellor of the Bombay University, during his convocation address, paid a glowing tribute to him that, "This is not the place to speak of the late Mr. Sayani's services to the public life of the city. I would only observe that he combined in a manner that is not common, the civic and the academic spirit. The latter lent refinement to his public life, while his experience as a public spiritual citizen contributed in no small measure to the effectiveness of his services in the various offices which he filled in this University."

RAJAB ALI MEGJI, VARAS
(1908-1970)

He was born on February 9, 1908 in India. He also made his footing in East Africa for better prospect. After working for two years in the firm of Varas Alidina Visram, he proceeded to Kilosa. In 1938, he joined his father in agriculture enterprise, procuring sisal, sugar cane, maize and sorghum. Since then the whole family of Rajab Ali Megji had been in agricultural activities. It can be said that the family's undertaking in planting sugar in Kilombero helped to open up the Kilombero area where today the Kilombero Sugar scheme is yielding massive benefits. With foresight of the prospects in the planting of sugarcane, he at one time sponsored a sugar scheme with small holders, each having 500 acres, with a central processing factory. Unfortunately, conditions existing in those past years were not favourable and the scheme did not materialize.

Services in various institutions of the community were a lifelong event for him. He was a member of the Volunteer Corps (1932-1937), and acted as the Mukhi and Kamadia of various Brotherhoods and of the *jamat* at Kilosa (1932-1937, 1939-1946 and 1949-1966). He also served as an Honorary Secretary of the Aga Khan School in Kilosa (1939-1948), and as a Supervisor of the school in Kilosa and Ulanga districts (1944-1960), and also as a member representing Kilosa and Ulanga districts on the Aga Khan Provincial Council in Dar-es-Salaam. In appreciation of his services, he merited the title of **Varas**.

Besides, his charity was a well-known and his numerous donations included generous contributions for the Jamatkhana built at Chanjuru in 1956, and another in Mkamba.

It is worthy of note that it was entirely due to his efforts that the Ismaili participation in the Magole Agricultural Scheme became possible and today most of the farms at Magole have been allocated to the Ismailis. As a Chairman of the Central Agricultural Committee, Rajab Ali Megji was responsible for arranging Prince Amyn Muhammad's visit to Magole.

He promoted the Kilosa and Ulanga Traders Corporation, and the Kilosa and Ulanga Industrial Corporation, and in both Corporations he acted as the Chairman on various occasions. He also served on the Regional Labour Tribunal and District and Regional Development Committees for a very long time.

He passed away in the month of April, 1970 after suffering an attack of cerebral hemorrhage. To many the demise of this pioneer, Varas Rajab Ali Megji of Kilosa marked an end of the trail of an unselfish and dedicated philanthropy who served not only the *jamat* all his life, but others outside the community as well; a pioneer who has left indelible footprints in the path of history that he walked.



RAJAN LALJI, COUNT
(1887-1956)

He was born in Jamnagar, India in 1887. In search of better prospect, he came in Zanzibar in 1900 and then went to live in Kisumu in 1903, and Nairobi in 1905.

His family concern in Nairobi was known as Jiwan Lalji & Co., dealing mostly with hardware and beads, which was after the name of his brother, Itmadi Jiwan Lalji, the first to have come in Nairobi in 1885, who managed the family concern in Zanzibar. The third partner of the Jiwan & Co. was his another brother, Merali Lalji, who looked after their Mombasa branch, and is reported to have come in Africa in 1890. In 1910, this family concern started their fourth branch in Mwanza.

Rajan Lalji arrived in India, where he married and returned to Zanzibar in 1905. He is reputed to have served the *jamat* in different fields. He was the Mukhi of Nairobi Jamatkhana (1920-1921). He once again became the Mukhi (1932-1933). He was appointed a member of the Ismailia Council, Nairobi and also became its Honorary Secretary in 1926, and thus served in the Ismailia Council for 18 years. He was also the Honorary Treasurer of the Aga Khan Legion in 1937, and also acted as its Chairman.

He was also a generous and contributed huge amount to the primary school. His charities and donations were mostly secret and inestimable.

He was also an honorary missionary, and an active member of the Mission Society, the fore-runner of the Ismailia Association. In appreciation of his services, the Imam conferred upon him the title of **Huzur Mukhi** in 1926. He was also invested the titles of **Alijah, Rai, Wazir** and lastly **Count** in 1954.

He died on Friday, March 16, 1956 unfortunately due to the car accident.

Services to the community of the family of Lalji were numerous. Itmadi Jiwan Lalji, the brother of Count Rajan Lalji was attached to the Itmadi Department in Zanzibar. He was one of the members of the Ismailia Council when it was first established in Africa in Zanzibar in 1905. Count Rajan Lalji's third brother, Mukhi Merali Lalji was the member of Mombasa Ismailia Council and once the Mukhi of that *jamat*. Mukhi Merali Lalji's son, Count Lutf Ali Merali towered his name in the printing business. He was on the editorial of the **Kenya Daily Mail**, then he started his own press, called Merali Limited, which printed the **Ismaili Prakash** for many years. Count Lutf Ali was the President of Ismailia Association for Kenya for one term. His outstanding services were however in the field of Building Society activities. He was first to organize and complete a project of Cooperative

Building Society at Mombasa on a most economical basis in accordance with the guidance of the Imam.

Besides, Alijah Muhammad Ali, the son of Count Rajan Lalji was also a great social worker. He started his career as a school teacher. He was the first local Ismaili young man to join the Teachers' Training College after doing his matriculation in 1933. He had served in a Government School as a teacher for two years before joining his family concern. For about ten years, he was a religious teacher in the Religious Night School and for the same period, a Club Master and then a Scout Master. He was also in the Nairobi Education Board as a member and then as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. He also served in the Nairobi Provincial Council for two terms, and also the Mukhi of Nairobi Jamatkhana for two years (1962-1963), the member of the Territorial Council for Kenya (1966-1969), the President of the Nairobi Provincial Council (1969-1971) and the President of the Executive Council.

Count Hasan Ali, the son of Count Rajan Lalji was the President of Rwanda and Burundi Council, and another son, Count Ghulam Ali was the President of the same Council. Another three sons of Count Rajan Lalji were Kassim Ali, Abdul Ali and Sultan Ali, who were the Mukhis of Nyanza, Gesenyi and Kigale, all in Rwanda respectively. Rai Hyder Ali was the eldest son of Count Rajan Lalji, who managed the family business in Nairobi, and his son Ramzan Ali was the President of the Ismailia Association for Rwanda and Burundi.

Gulbanu, the daughter of Count Rajan Lalji is also worth noting. She was also a prominent social worker, and was one of the first Ismaili trained female teachers, and served several years in the Aga Khan Girls' School, Nairobi. She was also the Honorary Secretary of the Ismailia Students' Union and was the moving spirit of the Girl Guides movement. After her marriage with Wazir Sher Ali Bandali Jaffer, M.P. (Uganda), when she went to Kampala in 1948, she became heavily engaged in the community services. She was also a senior official in the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Uganda Government. She had been twice to the U.K. and the United States on Government short training courses concerned with her ministry.

In sum, the Lalji family had made significant unconditioned gifts in the name of Jiwan Lalji & Co., the family made contribution to the Nairobi Jamatkhana Building and the Nairobi Primary School was built with a donation from Count Rajan Lalji, who also gave substantial contribution in the hospital fund.



SABOOR CHATOOR, WAZIR
(1899-1967)

Kanji, a certain Ismaili was an origin of Limadi, Kathiawar. His son, Visram was a prominent person. Punja, the son of Visram was a famous merchant in Limadi, and his son Amarsi had three sons, Nur Muhammad, Pirbhai, Saboor and two daughters, Mannibai and Satbai. Among them, Saboor or Saboor Chatoor was most prominent in the Ismaili world.

Wazir Saboor Chatoor, also known as Chabur Chatoor was born on March 13, 1899 in Limadi, Kathiawar. His family moved towards Bombay in 1908, where he acquired his formal education. Accompanied by his elder brother, Nur Muhammad, he proceeded to Java in search of green pasture, but failed. The sudden illness of his elder brother forced him to return to Bombay. In 1915, he betrothed with Fatima and left Bombay alone and proceeded to Colombo, Sri Lanka. He started his labour work in a shop to procure his bread and butter. After being well settled, he called for his wife from Bombay.

Wazir Saboor Chatoor gained much experience in local business and ventured into the field. He established an export house in 1918 under the name of **Saboor Chatoor & Co.** at 72, Old Moor Street, Colombo, which was incorporated in 1957 and exists today. He was a leading exporter of rubber and sole crepe rubber, tea, cinnamon, copra, coconut oil, desiccated coconuts, citronella oil, kapok, cardamoms, cardamom seeds, cincona bark, mattress fibre, cocobeans, agecanuts, black pepper and other products of Sri Lanka He also was an importer of all kinds of manure, bone meal, oilcakes, blood manure. Besides, he also supervised dry fish consignments on commission basis.

In Colombo, no adequate facility subsisted for the Jamatkhana. He parted a big portion of his residence voluntarily for the purpose of the Jamatkhana from 1933 to 1952. In 1934, he came in Bombay for Imam's *didar* and got the first chance in the *mehmani*. The Imam asked much about his business activities. Then, the Imam attended the next *mehmani*. His wife was much anxious to invite the Imam in Colombo, but she forgot. When the Imam turned to the third *mehmani*, his wife recollected and uttered loudly, saying, "Please make a holy visit of Colombo." The Imam said, "**Colombo is too far. *Khanavadan.***" Soon after 15 days, they returned to Colombo, where they surprisingly received a telegram of the Imam that he would visit Colombo very soon. The Imam arrived in Colombo on March 20, 1934. Looking the wife of Wazir Saboor Chatoor at a little distance, the Imam said, **"You invited me with heart and I came."** The Imam graced them an audience on next day at his residence, and said to his wife, "Did you bring *kanak*?" She didn't understand it. The Imam said, "Did you bring wheat?" She replied affirmatively and brought wheat in a plate. The Imam took the plate and gave it to Wazir Saboor Chatoor, and said, "I appoint you the Mukhi for my Colombo *jamat*." The Imam also said, "Today is a Navroz. I give you the *rozi* for world and religion. You will be prosperous in both worlds. *Khanavadan*." The Imam also graced them with a group photograph. Hence, he was appointed the Mukhi with Ibrahim Ismail Virji Madhani as a Kamadia.

During the visit of the Imam in Colombo, he asked the Imam in a *mehmani* on March 21, 1934 whether the Indian Ismailis should be encouraged to arrive in Colombo for business purpose. The Imam acceded to his plan and said that he would also guide the incoming Ismailis in the business field. Mukhi Saboor Chatoor, therefore, published an advertisement in the weekly **"Ismaili"** on April 29, 1934, inviting the interested Ismailis to venture into the business of tea, rubber and coconut in Colombo.

He was also included as a member on behalf of Colombo in the H.H. The Aga Khan Golden Jubilee All India Committee. He attended its first meeting at Bombay on October 12, 1935.

In view of his outstanding services and princely donations, he was awarded a gold medal during the Diamond Jubilee occasion in 1946.

When the influx of the Ismailis drifted towards Colombo, a colossal amount was raised for the new Jamatkhana, in which he contributed handsome amount. He humbly submitted a report of the construction to the Imam in May 27, 1952. The Imam graciously sent his message on June 1, 1952 and blessed all the donors. The Imam also stated that Prince Aly Khan would visit a week in Colombo to attend the opening ceremony of the Jamatkhana. Sir Oliver Gontal, the Minister of Foods & Agriculture, performed the opening ceremony of the new Jamatkhana on November 30, 1952. On that occasion, Kamadia Ibrahim Datoo Meru (1901-1982) delivered a touching speech. The *jamat* was repasted on that day by Mukhi and Kamadia.

Wazir Mukhi Saboor Chatoor was a zealous worker and devoted his life in the services of the Ismailis in Colombo. The Imam had given him a general power of attorney, authorizing him to deal all the legal matters of the *jamat* in Sri Lanka. He was invested the title of **Alijah** in 1940, **Rai** in 1950 and **Wazir** in 1953.

He also made a tour of Europe with his wife Varasiani Fatimabai and had an audience of the Imam and Mata Salamat. He returned from Europe and arrived in Karachi before reaching to Colombo. On November 11, 1953, Varas Abdul Aziz Ramzan Vali hosted him a warm reception in Hotel Metropole, Karachi in presence of the galaxy of the leaders. His inestimable and meritorious services were splashed before the audience.

In response to his letter of November 11, 1959, the Imam mailed him a reply on November 14, 1959 at 128, Old Moor Street, Colombo, advising him to continue his work in the way he had performed in past. The Imam also graced him with best loving blessings on October 22, 1959 and November 13, 1959.

The last few years of his life were marred by physical affliction, which he bore with tranquility and peace of mind. He submitted his humble services to the Imam for his retirement from the post of the Mukhi on March 1, 1966. The Imam sent following message on April 16, 1966 that:-

My dear spiritual child,

I have received your letter of 1st March, and I give you my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for service with best loving blessings for the recovery of

your health.

You may submit new names for the appointment of Mukhi, Kamadia, Mukhiani and Kamadiani of Colombo *jamat*.

I would like you to write to Vazir Amirali Currim in Karachi and you should submit your recommendation to me jointly.

After receiving your recommendations, I will make the new appointment on the occasion of Imamate Day.

I am very sad that it has become necessary for you to resign after 32 years of uninterrupted and exceptional service. You have my warmest and most very loving blessings and I pray for your continued happiness and good health.

In sum, he retired on July 11, 1966 after serving for 32 years as a Mukhi.

He made his business trips twice in Japan, thrice in Europe and once in United States. He was noted for his piety and philanthropy and donated princely funds to the Indian Ismailis on many occasions in different fields.

Wazir Mukhi Saboor Chatoor expired in Colombo on July 11, 1967 at the age of 68 years. In the *Ruhani Mehmani* in Bombay in 1967, Hazar Imam told to his son, Alijah Ghulam Hussain that, **"Your late father was like the rock of Gibraltar, and I now expect you to carry on his good work."** The Imam also prayed for eternal peace to the soul of Wazir Mukhi Saboor Chatoor.

Benignity in manner and speech, a bent of kindness and compassion, which made him a person worthy of utmost respect, characterized Wazir Mukhi Saboor Chatoor. The Ismailis were able to scale the height of progress in Colombo under his mercantile guidance. His fame loomed large inside and outside the community. His personality was clothed in his transparent sincerity. He had a rare ability to keep his mind fixed steadily on the distance horizon and at the same time concentrated his whole effort on what was practically possible. He was firm as a mountain in his faith. Force of character, prodigious gift for hard work and firm and patient adherence to the religion distinguished him from his contemporaries. He was a man of quiet and unassuming disposition. In short, he was a generous, humane and charitable to the destitute.

Wazir Mukhi Saboor Chatoor left behind his wife, two sons and three daughters. His son Alijah Ali Muhammad Saboor Chatoor (1920-1971) had served as the Kamadia of the Jamatkhana (1966-1971). His another son, Alijah Ghulam Hussain was the Kamadia of Colombo Jamatkhana (1971-1980). It is to be noted that Anwar Ali, the son of Alijah Ali Muhammd also served as the Mukhi (1987-1993). Tasneem Akbar Musa, the daughter of Alijah Ghulam Hussain was the Kamadiani of *Baitul Khiyal Brotherhod* in Toronto, the member of the religious education management team and also served as the principle of Baitul Ilm (1997-1999).

Shireen, the daughter of Wazir Saboor Chatoor married to Rajab Ali Jinnah, who died on December 30, 1994. Shireenbhai also served in different fields, notably in the Aga Khan Hospital, Karachi for 7 years. She also served as the Kamadiani for Life Dedication Brotherhood, then the Kamadiani and Mukhiani for Chand Raat Brotherhood. She also gave services to the Mohammadi Girls Academy and the Aga Khan Health Board. She drove car and brought the ladies in Jamatkhana at morning. Her daughter, Kamadinani Anar continued the tradition of service in different field. She joined the Garden East Girl Guides in 1964, and was one of the founding members and the first Captain of Garden West Girl Guides (1972-1977). Kamadiani Anar was a member of the Libraries & Co-ordinating Department of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan (1974) and also its Hon. Secretary (1975). She was also a volunteer in Socio-Economic Survey (1983-84) and in the Aga Khan Hospital (1988-1994). She also served as a worker in the Life Dedication Brotherhood (1972-74), and the Mukhiani for the Chand Raat Brotherhood in Clifton Jamatkhana (1992). She was also a member of the Kharadhar Local Health Board (1992), the member of the Kharadhar Education Board (1993), worker of the Saf Safai Committee in Clifton Jamatkhana (2000-01), where she also rendered her services in the Nandi-Reza Committee, etc. She is the Kamadiani for *Baitul Khiyal Brotherhood* for Clifton Jamatkhana (2001-2002). She also worked as a volunteer during the Convocation programme in 2000.

His second daughter, Malekbai Noor Ali Jaffer was also the Kamadiani in Islamabad Jamatkhana in 1980. His third daughter, Noorbanubai Faizullah Hooda resides in Dallas, Texas. She has served as the Mukhiani of Andheri Jamatkhana in Bombay (1966-1970).

SABZALI RAMZAN ALI, PIR
(1884-1938)



The predecessors of Pir Sabzali hailed from Mundra, Kutchh. In his ancestry we find a certain Sabzali Hansraj, the grandfather of Pir Sabzali, a small trader in Kutchh. He was a dedicated social worker. His son Ramzan Ali (d. 1886) had three sons, Mahomed Jaffer (1874-1918), Rahim (1880-1929), Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) and three daughters, Fatimabai, Jainabai and Sonbai. Ramzan Ali had come to Bombay, where he started his own business and was also a social worker in the community.

Different dates of the birth of Pir Sabzali sound in written and oral traditions, such as 1871 or 1873. It ensues from a legal document of Bombay Court (1915) that he was born in 1884. He was two years old when his father died in Bombay. His mother, Maghbai (1850-1945) brought up her children and instilled in them the impulse of services to the Imam and *jamat*. She was a frequent visitor to Lady Aly Shah at Wadi, Bombay. Lady Aly Shah liked the bread of millet, which she got prepared from Maghbai.

It appears that Pir Sabzali took no interest in his formal education. He would wend his unwilling way to school. He would often play truant in company with others of same frame of mind. This slipshod schooling continued for about couple of years mainly under the pressure of his elder brother. When Mahomed Jaffer was convinced that his younger brother was not literary genius and the futility of forcing him to continue his schooling, he thought out plans for him. And it dawned upon him that Pir Sabzali had wasted the most precious period of his early life in vain wandering.

Varas Muhammad Remu (1860-1924), the most versatile genius in Gwadar was a frequent visitor to Lady Ali Shah and the Imam in Bombay. Close intimacy and friendship subsisted between him and the family of Maghbai, who always arranged his lodging in Hasanabad. In 1897, Maghbai and Mahomed Jaffer, the elder brother of Pir Sabzali invited Varas Muhammad Remu at a dinner, where they expressed their worries for young Pir Sabzali. Varas Muhammad Remu offered them to send him in Gwadar, assuring to look after him. Another view sounds that the Imam told to Maghbai to send Pir Sabzali in Gwadar under Varas Muhammad Remu. In sum, he was sent to Gwadar in 1898 when he was 14 years old. By this time he had scarcely finished four books of Gujrati and only two of English. He came in Karachi with an Ismaili trader, and thence proceeded to Gwadar in a dhow.

Gwadar faced scanty of water and was to be procured in the well lying outside the town. The Ismaili workers brought water in water-skins for the Jamatkhana on every morning, and an old blind woman, called Sonabai washed the utensils and swept the Jamatkhana. Once Pir Sabzali entered the Jamatkhana in the morning for drinking water. Sonabai

heard the noise and asked, to which he identified himself. She said, "Sabu! you have made the glass impure. I will have to wash it again." Being asked, how the glass polluted, she said, "I have heard that you smoke and your impure lips have touched the glass." Her words struck him deeply. To quote him, "These words absolutely touched my heart. I began to hate myself and resolved to abstain from smoking ever since." This was the first stage of change in his life, which transformed him in religious awakening.

He imbibed religious training by sitting almost daily at the feet of Varas Muhammad Remu. Simultaneously, he also learnt the mechanism of fish business. This was the second stage of the changes in his life and the latent tendencies emerged very soon in his personality.

When Varas Muhammad Remu satisfied with his aptitude, sincerity and sense of responsibility, he posted him in Pasani to look after his firm. He also appointed him the Kamadia of the Pasani Jamatkhana in 1904 with Khuda Baksh Rahmatullah as a Mukhi. In the absence of the missionary in Pasani, he himself performed *waez* on many occasions. When Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah visited Gwadar for the second time on April 1, 1905, he graciously presented him a *shawl* in Gwadar on April 15, 1905 and told him, "You live like the *jamat* of Gwadar." In 1907, he was appointed the Mukhi of Pasani Jamatkhana with Muhammad Meruani as Kamadia.

The Gwadar Council deputed him in Ormada from Pasani in January 6, 1909 to propagate the importance of education. He delivered his speech in Ormada Jamatkhana and moved the listeners. The leaders of Ormada soon launched a scheme of a school and wrote the Gwadar Council for its permission. Thus, the first school in Ormada inaugurated in February, 1909 with 40 students in a grand function presided by Mukhi Ghulam Ali Mohammadi. On that juncture, Pir Sabzali recollected his early days he passed in wandering in Bombay, and wept profusely as the wheel now ran on reverse side that he was propagating for it.

He conducted the business of Varas Muhammad Remu as his agent in Pasani and served the *jamat* as a Mukhi till 1912. In 1912, Varas Muhammad Remu promoted him as his agent as well as the Mukhi of Ormada *jamat*. Ormada is located at the shore of Arabian sea, 140 nautical miles west of Karachi and at the same distance east of Gwadar. This was the third stage of change in his life, making him quite a responsible person. He became an expert merchant, a missionary and a devoted social worker. He is noted for organizing functions, inviting the parents and distributed sweets and prizes to the students. The last function held on August 5, 1918 was a historic for the Ormada *jamat*. It appears from different versions that he would take flying visits of Karachi from Ormada several times and cemented contacts with the leaders of Karachi.

He passed about 20 years in Gwadar, Pasani and Ormada. He was an ordinary worker in the firm of Varas Muhammad Remu, and then became his agent, earning Rs. 700/= per month. He had so deep respect for Varas Muhammad Remu that in speaking of him, he always called him "**my father**" and authorized him to take the initiative in every affair and bring to a conclusion. He referred to him in terms of admiration and gratitude and acknowledged his debt for the initiation he had received from him.

He reached the stage when he could carve out his own career, and resolved to start his own business in Karachi. In the meantime, his elder brother, Mahomed Jaffer expired in Bombay on October 27, 1918, who lived in Valkesar, Bombay. He was a trader and generous and made a will to build a sanatorium in Panchgani at the cost of one lac rupees. He went to Bombay for few months. He took an opportunity to perform his *waez* in Bombay and Kathiawar for the first time and impressed the *jamat*. He returned to Karachi and started his business of fish in 1919. Very soon, he also became an exporter of cotton yarn of Sind to Bombay.

In Karachi, he was also the director of the newly formed the Khoja Ismaili Trading Co. in 1918. He was a generous and provided furniture and fixture to the Ismaili institutions. He also shared his donation to The Young Ismaili Vidhiya Vinod Club since its existence on April 1, 1915.

He was appointed the President of The Ismailia Library of Kharadhar, Karachi between 1919 and 1921 with Ghulam Hussain Rahmatullah as Hon. Secretary. He was once again appointed its President on April 1, 1927.

In 1919, a fierce storm raged among the Ismailis in Karachi whether mixed public meetings of men and women were not mischievous innovation in the community, fraught with immense possible social harm. Pir Sabzali came forward to shake the stronghold of orthodoxy, for he had organized one such meeting for the first time in Kharadhar Boy's School in Karachi. He invited an eminent accomplished Ismaili lady to preside over the joint gathering. Something seemed to be on the verge of happening. But the only thing that happened was that the oppositionists were loudly clapping, and the sceptics were converted the wonderful oration that Pir Sabzali delivered at the beginning of the meeting. The house gave it its unstinted support.

He also encouraged the newly formed The Young Khoja Ismailia Kathiawadi Mitr Mandal, Kharadhar, Karachi on April 21, 1919 with handsome donation.

The Imam visited Zanzibar between July 15, 1914 and August 6, 1914 and made some strict *farmans* to abstain from alcohol and smoking, and emphasized to lead simple life within the resources. Pir Sabzali published the selected *farmans* in March, 1920 in Karachi, entitled **"Nasiat-i Imam"** and distributed its ten thousand copies in India and Africa.

Pir Sabzali had close ties with N.M. Budhwani, the editor of the **Ismaili Aftab** of Dhoraji, Kathiawar. On March 21, 1923, he went to Dhoraji and visited the Girls School with Budhwani. In a prize distribution function on March 28, 1923, he gave away cash prizes to 106 students, and declared that he would award gold watch to the winner who would deliver good lecture in the Jamatkhana during the 43rd *Salgirah* of the Imam. On that occasion, N.M. Budhwani called him in his speech, the "***Champion of Religion***" vide **"Ismaili Aftab"** (Dhoraji, July, 1927, p. 37) During his visit, he delivered penetrative *waez* that the people of Dhoraji remembered it for a long time.

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah arrived in Karachi on April 10, 1920 for 27 days. On April 29, 1920, Chief Mukhi Rahmatullah Lutf Ali (1914-1928) said to the Imam, "**Mawla, we gained much with the advent of Bhagat Sabzali over here.**" The Imam became happy

and said smilingly that, "**I know all this. Not only in Karachi, but he had worked hard in Bombay, Kathiawar and Makran.**"

Pir Sabzali also presented his *mehmani* on the same day. The Imam said to him, **"You are working hard. You are living in Kharadhar, therefore you perform here *waez* and exhort the spiritual meaning of becoming *fana fi'lillah*, and also go to Garden among the Kutchhi brethren and deliver *waez*, *Khanavadan*. I give you much blessings."** Varas Bandali Kassim, Varas Rahim Basaria and Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad were also present, who reported the Imam that Missionary Sabzali had worked excellently.

The Imam put his blessed hand on his shoulder, and tendered his congratulations. Dr. Suleman Ghulam Hussain Haji (d. 1924) submitted a humble service that, "I have invested a title of ***Tuti-i Sind*** to Missionary Sabzali." The Imam said, "**But I give him a title of *Tuti-i Bagh-i Bahisht* instead of *Tuti-i Sind*.**" The Imam again graced his compliment to him. Sonibai, the wife of Pir Sabzali stood with a gold chain in hands. The Imam blessed her and took the gold chain from her hand and put it on his own neck and blessed her.

On May 6, 1920, the Imam said to him, **"Sabzali, you continue to perform *waez* in the Jamatkhanas of Karachi and Sind as usual. You have been appointed a member of the Council for Makran, but the *jamat* of Karachi insists that you reside in Karachi."**

It is learnt that when the Imam arrived in Bombay on March 2, 1920, the Panjibhai Club had arranged a grand assembly at Hasanabad with the help of Sahitiya Utejak Mandal, Vidhiya Vinod Club and other institutions. The Mukhis, Kamadias and the leaders, including Pir Sabzali, attended it. Alijah Alidina Ali Muhammad of Karachi presided the assembly. The house resolved to summon the All India Khoja Ismailia Conference for the welfare of the Ismailis. When the Imam was in Karachi and graced a group photograph with the members of the library on Thursday, May 6, 1920, Pir Sabzali as the President of the library sat on the right side of the Imam. He took an opportunity and revealed the plan of above conference. The Imam said, **"Well, you arrange the first meeting of All India Khoja Ismailia Conference in Karachi, because Karachi is my birth-place, it should be instituted from here. Pir Sadruddin also arrived from Uchh Sharif and operated proselytizing mission from Karachi at first. You inaugurate the conference in Karachi. The conference is necessary."** When Pir Sabzali asked to propose the date of its inauguration, the Imam said, **"Navroz is an ideal occasion. You arrange its first meeting on next Navroz. Then the conference should be held in Bombay, Kathiawar, Rangoon and other places."**

It appears that the Imam bequeathed much responsibilities to Pir Sabzali between 1920 and 1924 and had to make extensive tours, therefore, the plan of the conference could not be materialized.

During the auspicious visit of the Imam in Karachi in 1920, Alijah Shahban Mohib declared his donation of a house of Rs. 5000/- for the school in Ormada. The Imam accepted it graciously and blessed him. On that occasion, Pir Sabzali also gave donation of Rs. 1000/- and a plot of Ormada of equal cost. He also collected a fund of Rs. 1000/- from different individuals for the school.

The tug of the first World War (1914-1919) had badly shaken the business in India for many years. In 1920, the British reserved the railway wagons for the military even after an end of war. Thus, a huge bales of cotton of Pir Sabzali was lying in the railway godowns, and worried for its transportation. On that day, Wazir Rahim Basaria (1885-1927) informed him the gracious wish of the Imam to go on the trip of Punjab and the Northwest Frontier as a **Special Commissioner** of the Imam. Pir Sabzali did not speak his business worries and obeyed it servilely. He girded up his loins when the call of duty beckoned him for action. He left his merchandise at railway yards on the mercy of the Imam and left Karachi on next morning at 7.30 a.m. by Quetta Mail on October 6, 1920.

Soon after the visit of Lahore and Multan in 1911, the Imam seems to have determined that the *gupti* Ismailis in Punjab should expose and subscribe to the Ismaili faith openly. He wished that his *gupti* followers should purge non-Islamic elements, which had quietly crept in their social milieu. He sent several messages and prepared them mentally for the action. The extreme orthodox class among them however delayed to shed off the old tendencies embodied in their society. On January 14, 1920, the Imam summoned some eight prominent leaders of the *gupti* in Poona and ordered them to cut down the old girdle of Hindu tendencies to immerse in Islamic traditions, and come up palpably without fear. The Imam also gave an audience to 300 *gupti* Ismailis on January 23, 1920, and commissioned them the promulgation Imam's message in the villages of Punjab. When the news spread among the Hindus, their leaders came into the action. Seth Bhawani Das Narayan Das Motiwala and Dr. Kalyan Das J. Dessai sent a telegram to the Imam, appealing to withdraw his orders for the interest of the Hinduism. Later on, Zaver Chand Amatha Chand, the Vice-President of Arya Samaj and Manilal Bakor Viyas with Damodar Das Chunilal Dalal hatched widespread propaganda against the exposition of the *gupti* Ismailis. Sri Radha Krishna, the leader of the Arya Samaj, had a vein of animosity in his character for the Ismailis, and put many hurdles and hitches. It resulted the chaotic condition of the Ismailis. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah sent Pir Sabzali in Punjab to cope with the situation. In order to thwart the bitter opposition of Arya Samaj, Pir Sabzali deliberated with indomitable talent along with other learned Ismailis, who were vigorous in their cogent arguments. Missionary Varasiani Ghulam Fatima of Gujranwala also operated proselytizing mission with Pir Sabzali in Punjab. She was the first Ismaili lady to deliberate with trenchant arguments in public with the propagandists of the Arya Samaj. He weathered the storms and returned to Karachi and submitted his report to Wazir Rahim Basaria. On January 6, 1921, the Imam sent a telegraphic message from Canes that, **"Happy congratulations to all. Inform Sabzali happy upon receipt of good report of Panjab. Coming India soon."**

On February 8, 1921, the Imam told to the members of the Recreation Club in Bombay that,**"You now operate the proselytizing mission in Punjab."** The Imam also told to Pir Sabzali to make another trip in Punjab during the *majalis*, and inspect a suitable location for the Orphanage and School.

In 1922, the Recreation Club branch of Karachi sent him to Gwadar for *waez*, and by now onwards, he also began to reside in Bombay.

During the meeting of the Recreation Club in Bombay on March 2, 1923, the Imam formed a committee for Punjab and appointed Pir Sabzali as its President with Karam Hussain as Hon. Secretary. On March 27, 1923, the Imam told to Hussain Sherif, Merali Pirbhai, Gangji Kurji and Pir Sabzali that, "When I passed through the Deccan state, I have seen many destitute people with no clothes. You give them looms and watch them on every six months and report to the Central Board."

We now arrive to the part which can be claimed the crowning glory of his service career in the community, and that is his historical itinerary in Central Asia. On March 7, 1923, the Imam graced *didar* to the Ismailis of Badakhshan in Poona. Pir Sabzali was also summoned on that occasion. The Imam said to him, "**I shall be very happy if you prepare to go on a journey to Central Asia.**" To this, he bowed his head in reverence, exhibiting his palpable acceptance. The Imam said, "**Well, you go to that region, and I will give you my *talika*.**"

Pir Sabzali rejoiced beyond all bounds and measures in his selection for an adventurous service, and began to pass his days as if years. The news of his journey spread rapidly in public. He was however told that the region of Central Asia was mountainous with dangerous routes and too appalling to travel. He also heard that not a single Indian language was spoken there except the Persian. Hearkening the dreadful informations, he was engulfed in deep thinking, the most striking feature of his worries was the language problem. He did not know Persian, and never heard or read about the Central Asia. In sum, the people from all walk of life set before him the most awful image of Central Asia. The galaxy of leaping thoughts revolved in his mind and fastened him all around. For the happiness of the Imam, he determined tenaciously to venture in awesome regions, why not it cost him his life.

On those days, some Ismailis of Badakhshan had arrived in Bombay from Poona after taking the *didar* and lodged at Hasanabad. Pir Sabzali started to see them at every night, and tried to converse with them in Persian. Sometimes he slept with them due to late night hours. He chatted in Persian, and collected latest news of the Central Asia. The frightful picture of Central Asia however continued to wander in his thoughts. His heart beat more than normal motion and passed sleepless nights, and ate little. He however did not show a little sign of his inner worries on his face, and procured assurance in the words of the Imam. He now refrained from hearing anything to cause heart breaking, and centered his attention in the preparations of the journey.

During his stay at Bombay, the Imam summoned him several times and gave necessary instructions. The Imam also asked one of his entourages to prepare necessary papers of his journey. It seems that there was a certain amount of inertia in preparations of papers. When the Imam tended to ask for it, he was told that Sabzali was nerveless. The Imam called for Pir Sabzali and asked, "**Are you really frightened to this journey? Don't be fearful and bound for it**" Gently but firmly he answered, "Not at all! I am ready. The late preparation of the papers is the main reason of my delay."

The Imam told to Aga Rukh Shah, the son of Imam's uncle Akbar Shah to execute the documents and papers of Pir Sabzali. The papers were made ready on very next day.

The Imam said to him, "**Are you appalled Sabzali?**" He replied negatively. To this, the Imam said, "**Listen, I had deputed three *dais* in that part of the world, i.e. Nasir Khusaro, Pir Shams and Pir Sadruddin. They were also human beings like you, but I represented their tongues. Don't be afraid and bound for it.**"

Pir Sabzali had come in Bombay from Karachi since December, 1922. He made a programme to go to Karachi first to see his family and consign his business to someone, and then start for his journey. Meanwhile, the annual *majalis* in Sialkot was about to be organized, the Imam told him on April 5, 1923 while delivering him his special *talika* into Persian for the *jamats* of Central Asia that, "**You go from here to Sialkot to attend the *majalis*, and thence you proceed for your journey.**" He dropped his programme of Karachi, and resolved to go Sialkot from Bombay.

On April 6, 1923, the Imam visited the Jamatkhana in Bombay before leaving for Europe. While the Imam was getting out from the elevator, he turned to Pir Sabzali and said, "**Are you frightened to go alone? Listen, one has nothing to care who goes on my behalf.**" Pir Sabzali received much potency afresh and his worries disappeared and gained a natural vigour and courage. The Imam also told to the Ismailis of Badakhshan who accompanied him that, **"Listen, I consign you Sabzali. Bring him here in the same state as you took him with you."**

On April 7, 1923, the Recreation Club Institute accorded him a party at late evening. The President, members, the leaders of Bombay Council and the officers of the *jamat* attended the farewell party. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai, the President made a speech and wished his success and garlanded him. With the termination of the party, almost all of them joined with Pir Sabzali at the Bori Bunder Station to bid him farewell. The party of Pir Sabzali departed by Delhi Express at 9.00 p.m. for Lahore. Alijah Ramzan Ali Alibhai, Huzur Mukhi Ghulam Ali Arab (1906-1983), Sayed Murad Ali, who sat in the car of the Imam, Gulu Kurban and other four to five Ismailis of Badakhshan accompanied him. There were also seven Badakhshani Ismaili passengers going to Peshawar. The Imam had given them a *talika* into Persian, and Gulu Kurban was assigned to read it before the *jamats* of the Central Asia. The Imam authorized Pir Sabzali to accept the tithes and offerings of the *jamats* and the *dastboshi* on behalf of the Imam. They also took with them a box containing sugar cubes to be given to the *jamats*. He had prepared a red robe and a turban of filigree as per Imam's instructions. It is related that Nasir Khusaro had foretold to the people of Central Asia that an ambassador of the Imam would arrive, attired in red robe and a turban of filigree.

The historical caravan departed from Bombay on April 7, 1923 by Delhi Express and on that day, the Imam also left for Europe. Pir Sabzali reached Lahore and then in Rawalpindi and finally proceeded to Sialkot. The members of Sialkot *jamat* and volunteers received him at the station. He attended the *majalis* for three days and delivered *waez*. The Arya Samaj had created some troubles in Pind Dad Khan, therefore, Pir Sabzali left Sialkot on April 14, 1923 and arrived in Pind Dad Khan, where he stayed for two days and restored peace.

He arrived in Rawalpindi with his colleagues on April 17, 1923 for a day. Missionary Hakim Ali also joined him till Peshawar, where they arrived on April 18, 1923. This marked with

exactitude the date of commencing his journey.

He also sent a message to Ahmad, the son of the Kamadia of Garhi Kapura in district Mardan to buy few necessary items and reach at Dir, where he would collect them.

To have dared the dangers of rushing torrents in the impenetrable hilly tracks, the freezing cold of merciless winters of Central Asia, the steep and snow-covered mountains, etc. is no mean a great achievement. His historical journey wrought a miracle in the Central Asia. Within a short time since he set foot on that region, where he had never been before, the territory of Central Asia was breathing and pulsating with life and spirit. It procured a close link between the followers of that region with the Imam. He had also executed some *jamati* organizational works in Central Asia and established Council Committees and built Jamatkhanas. Later on, the Imam appointed Mir Muhammad Jamal Khan, the ruler of Hunza, as the President of Central Asian Ismaili *jamats.* After an end of their journey, they returned in Peshawar on December 12, 1923, which suggests that the span of his itinerary was for 8 months and 5 days.

He went to Karachi on December 12, 1923 from Punjab to see his relatives, while Ramzan Ali and others reached Bombay on December 12, 1923. When he reached at Karachi, he was warmly greeted at the station. The Council of Karachi accorded him a reception at the Wadi in Garden area and presented him the befitting welcome address written on a hand-woven cloth in a silver casket. The Young Khoja Ismaili Volunteer Corps, The Saddar Bazar Khoja Panjibhai and the Recreation Club's branch in Karachi feted a dinner party in his honour.

Pir Sabzali reached Bombay on December 29, 1923 by a Mail Steamer, where he was well received by the leaders. Seth Abdullah Kassim Mevawala and Seth Navroz Ali Hirji jointly honoured Pir Sabzali and Alijah Ramzan Ali, a grand party in the hall of the Recreation Club, presided by Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj (1842-1930). The Recreation Club also honored them on January 6, 1924 in presence of 150 guests. He conceived highest respect for Varas Muhammad Remu. No sooner did he see him in the gathering than he bowed down his head servilely and earned his blessings.

In the meantime, the Imam arrived at Bombay from Europe on Sunday, January 13, 1924. Pir Sabzali presented the report of his journey. The Imam was delighted for this noble venture and blessed him. The Imam crowned him with the title of **Alijah** at Poona on January 29, 1924 with an award of a gold medal and silver medals to his associates. Upon receipt of the title, the Recreation Club hosted him a warm reception on February 18, 1924, which was presided by Varas Muhammad Remu.

The accounts of his journey to Central Asia appeared in the weekly "**Ismaili**" (Bombay) between February 17, 1924 and October 12, 1924. The "**Platinum Jubilee Bulletin**" (Bombay) also published the accounts of his journey from July 15, 1953 to October 1, 1953. The weekly "**Ismaili**" once again published it on March 21, 1967 to October 6, 1967. The weekly "**Ismaili Crescent**" (Dar-es-Salaam) published it between January 8, 1967 and April 21, 1968. It was reproduced in the fortnightly "**Paigham**" (Karachi) between February 15, 1967 and April 15, 1970. In the meantime, Alijah Sultan V. Nur Muhammad compiled the accounts of Pir Sabzali's journey to Central Asia through Ismailia Association

for India, Bombay on 1968, entitled "**Pir Sabzali'ni Madhiya Asia'ni Musafari**", whose materials are not reliable and contrary to the original version. For its full detail, vide **"Voyage of Pir Sabzali in Central Asia"** (Karachi, 2001)

Pir Sabzali gained considerable informations of the Ismailis in different centers, he was consigned the Foreign Department of the Recreation Club on April 1, 1924.

It sounds that he had become an adventurerous itinerant. He made a personal tour of Europe and Middle East with Varas Chhotubhai, Habib Rawjee, Abdullah Kassim Mevawala and Hasan Ali Mukhi Megji. Huzur Wazir Muhammad Macklai honoured them a farewell party in Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay on May 23, 1924. They sailed from Bombay by Mail Steamer, **Caledonia** of P & Co., and visited England, Italy, France, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Germany, Syria and Egypt.

When he arrived in Syria, he was warmly hailed in Salamia and was accorded the Guard of Honour in presence of Mir Mirza Haji Kamadia Mustapha and Haji Musa bin Jiraf. Varas Mir Suleman, Mir Mirza Haji Kamadia Mustapha and Ali Jindi made excellent lodging arrangements for Pir Sabzali and his associates.

After having a successful tour, they returned to Bombay on Wednesday, November 5, 1924. The Recreation Club Institute arranged a grand party, presided by Kadar Hussain Mehr Ali Manji, who in his opening speech paid rich tribute to late Varas Muhammad Remu of Gwadar, and expressed brief account of the tour of Pir Sabzali. On November 9, 1924 and November 16, 1924, the weekly "**Ismaili**" covered a brief report of his journey and his interview of 21 questions.

He also delivered a long lecture on his historical journey to Central Asia, Europe and Syria in the hall of the Recreation Club Institute on November 9, 1924. It was attended by huge crowd of the Ismailis and the leaders and earned their appreciations for getting rare informations of the Ismailis living in other parts of the world.

He left Bombay for Karachi on November 10, 1924 and offered *fatiha* at the grave of Varas Muhammad Remu, who expired on November 5, 1924. He also made a flying visit of Gwadar to see the family members of Varas Muhammad Remu.

He made his first East African visit with Wazir Rahim Basaria (1885-1927), Missionary Hamir Lakha (1881-1963) and Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad (1878-1951), and sailed from Bombay on January 7, 1925. The Imam arrived in Zanzibar for *didar* on February 9, 1925. Kamadia Mulji Nazar Ali had built a new Jamatkhana in Moshi for 35,000/- shillings. The *jamat* humbly invited the Imam to perform its opening ceremony, but the Imam could not go and asked Pir Sabzali to represent him. Pir Sabzali performed the opening ceremony of Moshi Jamatkhana on March 24, 1925. The *jamat* presented a *shawl* and gold ring to Kamadia Mulji Nazar Ali. Pir Sabzali also gifted him a gold watch. Missionary Hamir Lakha and Itmadi Jivan delivered *waez*. Pir Sabzali left Moshi for Nairobi on March 25, 1925, where he also delivered *waez*. He returned to Bombay with Hamir Lakha on April 18, 1925.

He played a key role during the incident of the Patadi Murder Case. On July 10, 1925, a son of the Kori in the village of Patadi, Gujrat disappeared. The enemies of the Ismailis propagated that the Ismailis had killed the child. The dead body of the child however was found on July 12, 1925, but the stimulated gang harassed the local Ismailis. They damaged the Jamatkhana and destroyed the religious books. The enemies charged that Magan Alibhai and Somji Kassim were responsible and prepared fictitious witnesses against them. On October 28, 1925, the hearing of the case began in Fatehwadi, near Ahmedabad. Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the pleader of the Ismailis. The next hearing began on December 7, 1925 and lasted for six days. In its verdict, the court acquitted the accused ones. Between July 10, 1925 and December 7, 1925, Pir Sabzali was in Patadi and adroitly tackled the situation and restored peace within the *jamat*.

The power of creating permanent and indelible impressions upon the people was one of the striking feature in the personality of Pir Sabzali. We find in his life a person who had not only an immense capacity for constructive work and service to the community, but also that spark of greatness, which every one recognized, which evades description. He was a brilliant speaker. Those who heard him on the platform in his vigor and hey-day are conscious of the brilliance of his unmatched oratory. He was truly an ambassador of peace, unity and love for the Ismailis of the world. He brought light and love where previously darkness and hatred subsisted. Whenever he intervened, the breach was easily healed. None could perish in fractional quarrels, when confronted by his sincere intermediary.

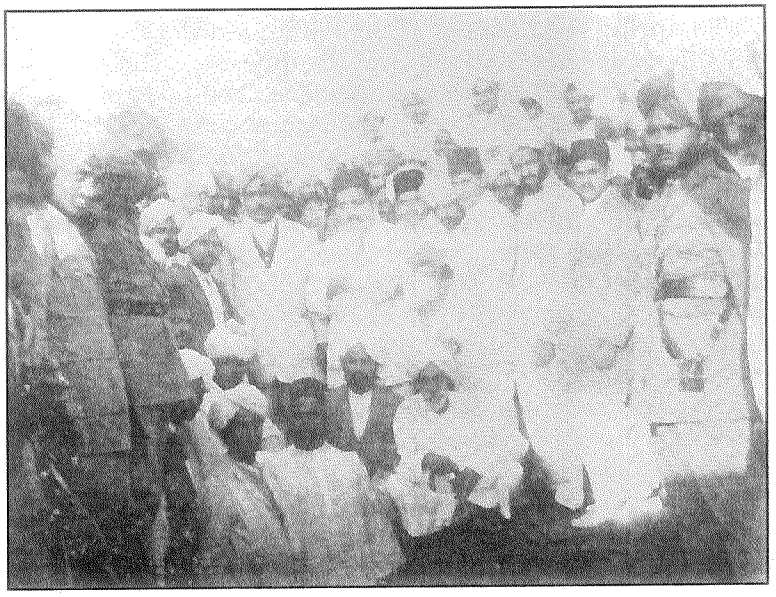
He was not only an accomplished and fluent orator, but also rendered many other services in the community. Sometimes, he offered *nikah* of the Ismaili couples in presence of the Imam. He acted also an interpreter between the Imam and the followers during the *mehmanis*. He could also speak Persian and the dialects of the Central Asia, and served as an interpreter when the Ismailis from Central Asia visited Bombay.

To listen to him, when he opened the treasure-box of his varied personal experiences culled from an eventful life and travels in scores of land, was to lose count of time. For, from his inexhaustible storehouse he would pick out treasures one after another, garb them in moving and vivid language and keep his listeners reverted to their seats for hours on end. Sometimes, he became so engrossed in his delivery that he rose emotionally on the bending fingers of his legs.

He was famous for having a loud and sweet voice. The Imam joined him in the *didar* programs in different areas for reciting his *farman* loudly before the *jamat*. He was also commissioned to convey the written messages of the Imam for the *didar* programs in different parts of India.

He also won the hearts of the Ismailis of Kutchh, whom he showed and exhorted the rules, regulation and constitution of the Ismaili community. Once he told to Missionary Hamir Lakha that, "Kutchh is the land of our forefathers. We must work for those who are misguided".

He laboured hard to collect donations (amount of Rs. 4000/-) in October, 1924 for the construction of a new Jamatkhana in Sialkot. It was built under the supervision of Karam Hussain of Multan, and upon completion in 1926, Pir Sabzali performed its opening



ceremony. On that occasion, he also formed H.H. The Aga Khan Ismailia Volunteer Corps for Sialkot.

Pir Sabzali submitted his papers to contest the election of the Municipal Corporation on April 9, 1927 in Karachi. He was suggested to withdraw in ward no. 2. His withdrawal paved a way for Alidina Ali Muhammad and Walji Alarakhia to become successful.

To test his talent out of the community circle, Dr. G.Allana, the Secretary of the Seerat Committee of Karachi, offered him to speak on the life of the Prophet Muhammad in the year 1927. It was just a few hours before the function was to commence in Hindu Gymkhana. Pir Sabzali readily accepted with no sign of fear. About ten thousand Muslims, squatting on the ground, strained their necks to catch a glimpse of the speakers as they came on the stage one after the other. All were hushed in silence, for one speaker just finished. The President announced the name "Janab Sabzali Saheb" as the next speaker. He appeared on the stage and spoke so forcefully and lucidly on the life of the Prophet that, as he sat down, all else for a full few minutes was drowned in a crescendo of full-throated cries of "*Allah-o-Akbar*." In sum, the gymkhana shook with the cries that thundered from Muslim throats.

The credit to start the annual *majalis* in Sialkot goes to Pir Sabzali. It instituted in 1921 with a view to unite the scattered Ismaili *jamats* of Punjab. Gradually, the annual *majalis* began to be organized on the pattern of the *majalis* of other parts of India. Pir Sabzali cordially invited Varas Dayabhai Velji of Ahmednagar, the President of All India Majalis Committee, and Alijah Hasan Ali Devraj to attend the *majalis* on 6th, 7th and 8th May, 1928 and make their observations on the management. On May 13, 1928, the weekly **"Ismaili"** (pp. 13-14) published its report and the noble services of Pir Sabzali that, "The Ismaili *jamats* in Punjab were absolutely isolated from one another. Alijah Sabzali united them with his genuine efforts. He put his business aside and worked for the *jamats*. He spent thousand of rupees for it. He passed sleepless nights to reconcile the diverse

communal matters, making arrangements for food and delivering *waez*. The leaders of Bombay appreciated his services."

In 1929, Sind experienced a flood due to heavy rain of 30 inches. The Ismailis became homeless and their cattles were swept into water. At once, he wrote abroad, appealing the donors to share in the noble cause. He collected massive funds for the welfare of Ismailis.

Essa Ragat, one of the notorious persons had a vein of animosity in his character for the Ismailis in Gwadar. On March 24, 1929, he killed Khimji Remu, the elder foster brother of Varas Muhammad Remu on the account of baseless rumours against Ismailis. The Ismailis closed their business and harbored in the Jamatkhana for about two weeks, and were threatened with fatal attacks on their lives. The Imam was sent a report of the tragic incident in Bombay, who contacted the Viceroy of India about it. The Viceroy ordered Taymur bin Faisal, the Sultan of Muscat to prevent further casualties, insisting to establish peace in Gwadar. The Sultan neglected in his measures. Meanwhile, he abandoned the throne in favour of his son, Sultan Saeed on February 11, 1930.

The dismay yet prevailed in town, where the Ismailis were yet insecure. Essa Ragat once again attacked on an Ismaili, called Bana Ibrahim on January 5, 1930 and cut down his shoulder with a sword. The nerveless Ismailis once again sent a report to the Imam in Bombay. The Imam deputed Maulana Shaukat Ali (1872-1938), Mukhi Itmadi Hoodbhoy Shaluani (d. 1937) and Pir Sabzali in Gwadar on January, 1930 to cope with the situation, which was going from bad to worse. They held a grand gathering of about 2000 people from all walk of life, and made effective speeches on the Muslim brotherhood and unity. The principal speakers were Maulana Shaukat Ali, Muhammad Irfan, Mir Muhammad Baloch, Maulvi Uthman and Pir Sabzali. Their mission created salutary effect upon people, and appeased the flames of animosity kindled against the Ismailis.

When a dispute arose in the *jamat* of Agra in 1930, Pir Sabzali went there and brought an amicable reconciliation in the *jamat*. With his piercing personality and aptitude, he also dispelled differences in Calcutta.

On February 13, 1931, a conference of the Ismaili officers of the Punjab *jamat* held in Sialkot under the presidentship of Pir Sabzali to discuss the measures for accelerating the economical and social conditions of the Ismailis in Punjab and Frontier Provinces. The draft of the proposals was submitted to the Imam for approval. After a thorough study, the Imam approved it. In Raiwand, the Imam said to the Ismailis of Punjab *jamat* on January 24, 1938 that, "I have given approval of the laws and regulations, the constitutions of the local and supreme councils for your progress."

The second session of the historical Round Table Conference of the Indian political leaders was held on September 7, 1931 in the Picture Gallery at Buckingham Palace in London. On those days, the Imam had summoned Pir Sabzali in London, where he stayed for a week. He was also present when the Imam and Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1947) held a historical meeting in Ritz Hotel.

The Masalawala Co-operative Bank Ltd. formerly known as The Ismaili Masalawala Sahakari Mandal Ltd. came into existence in 1929 by a handful grocers of Bombay, and

registered it on September 3, 1930. On November 13, 1931, a grand gathering was held in the hall of the Recreation Club under the presidentship of Ahmad Fazalbhoy Karimbhoy. Pir Sabzali was invited in special case to deliver an impressive lecture on the importance of the Ismaili Co-operative Bank. He vehemently appealed to the audience to become its members. It infused an impulse in the Ismailis and evinced keen interest in this venture.

Prince Aly S. Khan visited India on November 21, 1931. Pir Sabzali made excellent arrangements with other leaders to accord warm welcome in Bombay. He remained with Prince Aly Khan during the visit.

In 1932, he had been appointed the Mission Secretary of Recreation Club Institute for the year 1932 and 1933.

On April 5, 1905, the Imam established a Committee for 18 councils in Kutchh with Varas Moledina Megji (1854-1926) as its Chairman, who was followed by his son, Varas Ghulam Hussain (d. 1973). The Committee was void of a comprehensive constitution, and executed its working on old rules and customs. On the other hand, Varas Ghulam Hussain was occupied in his business in Bombay since 1929, and could not regularly attend the community affairs in Kutchh. He referred his problems to the Imam in Bombay and proposed Pir Sabzali to make constant visits in Kutchh for about two years to deal with the affairs. The Imam commissioned Pir Sabzali to visit the villages of Kutchh from time to time. It deemed desirable that the affairs of the *jamats* in Kutchh be managed and conducted regularly and systematically. On October 22, 1932, Pir Sabzali held a meeting in Nigar, attended by 150 leaders representing different villages. It was broadly discussed for two days to ordain a constitution of the Council, a resolution was passed to this effect. The next meeting was held in Bharapur after two months under Pir Sabzali, where further amendments were included in the resolution of the first meeting. Finally, they unanimously approved a resolution regarding the constitution of the Council to be enforced in Kutchh, and it was forwarded to the Imam for final approval in the beginning of 1933. When it was approved, the President published the rules and regulations of the Council in February, 1934. Accordingly, the Council Committee was divided into two parts i.e., the District Committee and the General Committee. The District Committees were set up in six places, i.e., Mundra, Bharapur, Bhuj, Anjar, Wagad and Abdasa. Alijah Hasan Ali Devraj was appointed the President of the Council Committee with Mukhi Hashim Bhimji as Honorary Secretary, both belonged to Bombay.

On February 15, 1933, Prince Aly Khan left Bombay for Gwadar, accompanied by Pir Sabzali and Hashim Hood. The airplane landed at Gwadar airport at 11.30 a.m., where the Ismailis accorded a rousing welcome to him. He stayed for one hour only, and returned to Europe. Pir Sabzali returned to Bombay via Karachi.

The Gwadar *jamat* sent a humble letter to the Imam in London on September 12, 1933 for making a gracious visit of Gwadar. The Imam sent his message on September 21, 1933 as follows:-

Ismaili Council,
Gwadar

Best loving blessings for your letter of 12th Sep. and entertainment. Make Gujrati as a second language in Persian regions and teach only Persian and Urdu in future under your supervision.

Nay, in the *mehmani* of Gwadar *jamat* in Bombay on December 19, 1933, the Imam said, "Make friendship with the Baluchis. Don't teach Gujrati in your school and teach Persian and Urdu. Baluchistan will now liberate. Teach Urdu to the children"

With the above guidance, the Imam also asked Pir Sabzali in December, 1933 to propagate the notion of Urdu in Gwadar in place of Gujrati in the school. The Imam also advised Pir Sabzali to arrange talented Urdu teachers from Punjab. Pir Sabzali was an influential figure in Punjab and recruited few teachers, viz. Muhammad Uthman, Shamsuddin Mukhi Ali Muhammad and his wife, Asghar Ali and his wife, Hussain, Fazal Illahi, Muhammad Yaqub, etc. He also fixed their stipends with free accommodations in Gwadar.

The Imam was in Delhi in 1934. Pir Sabzali also arrived on February 20, 1934. The enemies waged propaganda in Delhi against the Imam and the Ismailis. Pir Sabzali was certainly sensitive to the baseless charges of irreligiously levelled against the Ismailis by some extremists. He broached the doctrines of the Ismailis in a press conference with Wafi Ahmad, the President of the Sialkot Council, Karam Hussain and few other African missionaries. He clarified that the Ismailis followed the principles of Islam and there was no distinction between Ismailis and Muslims. Nay, it was a Muslim community, exhorting to revere all religions and Islamic sects, and was therefore tolerant towards all and inimical to none.

Pir Sabzali toured in Burma between March 7, 1934 and March 16, 1934 with the Imam. He also made his second visit to Burma in 1935 for raising funds for the Golden Jubilee celebrations.

He had gone to Punjab to attend the first meeting of the Imami Ismaili Supreme Council for Punjab on April 7, 1934, whose first President was Wafi Ahmad of Jamu, K. Nazar Ali of Multan as Vice-President and Barkat Ali of Talwandi as Hon. Secretary. The President forwarded the report of the meeting to the Imam, and received the following telegraphic message:

Cannes : April 13, 1934

Wafi Ahmad
Ismailia Council, Sialkot

Best blessing all Punjab spiritual children inaugural occasion Council.

He also arrived in Gwadar by air on April 19, 1934 and was well received by Major Bramner, the present political agent and the consul of Muscat. He stayed at the bungalow of Mr.

Thomson and left for Karachi by the steamer "**Baroda**" on April 22, 1934 and delivered *waez* in his three days visit. In the same year, he made a trip to Europe with his wife, Sonibai and Varasiani Ghulshakarbai, the wife of Wazir Rahim Basaria.

He had been commissioned a campaign in East African countries as a Special Commissioner of the Imam, which was his second visit. In his telegraphic message released from Paris on May 17, 1934, the Imam stated: "**Most paternal affectionate thoughts for all in Africa. I have sent Alijah as special commissioner on my behalf to bring message of my paternal constant thoughts and my particular desire of careful useful cooperation in worldly and religious matters amongst all Ismailis during these hard times of crisis of world depression.**"

Accordingly, he landed at Tanganyika and started his activities emphatically. Shafique Literary Society gave him a reception on September 18, 1934 at H.H. The Aga Khan Girls School in Dar-es-Salaam. Varas Abdullah Sharif, the President of the Supreme Council, attended it with the members of the local council, the members of Educational Board, Mukhi Zaver Karshan, Kamadia Abbas Moledina, Ramzan Ali and Vali Virani, the barristors, Mr. Habib Jamal, Alijah Moloo Alarakhia, and the members and patrons of Shafique Literary Society.

He was on his flying visit of Dodoma and presided over the general function of the local library on October 2, 1934 at the Girls School.

In October, 1934, he gave an interview to "**Tanganyika Herald**" in Dar-es-Salaam and said that, "The principal topics of my *waez* are to exhort the importance of improving economical condition, competition in business and education. I have visited almost in all the countries in the world. I was also present during the meeting of the Aga Khan and Gandhi (1869-1947) in London on the issues of the community. The objective of both leaders was to create unity between Muslims and Hindus. But some impudants laid hindrance in it. It is natural that the Aga Khan is a leader of the Muslims, the Islamic spirit emanates in his personality. But I will say with great confidence that he has an equal regard for all the communities. The status of Banaras Hindu University in his list of charity and his recommendation for the sacrifice of the cow in the Muslim Conference in Delhi, are the unique examples for it."

He arrived at Tanga on October 17, 1934 by **Mira** Steamer. He was feted warm welcome by the *jamat* at the port, and was brought to the city in a procession. He lodged at the residence of the President Ismail Jetha. He delivered *waez* and raised a yearly donation scheme on monthly payment of one hundred shillings for the welfare of the poor Ismailis. He also emphasized to establish a volunteer corps in Tanga *jamat*, and as a result, about 40 men and 38 women offered their services in this context.

He arrived at Mombasa on October 21, 1934 from Tanga by car. Alijah Kassim Khimji, the President of the Council arranged his stay at his bungalow at Niyalina Bridge. He stayed 15 days in Mombasa and delivered an impressive *waez* thrice every day. With the efforts of Ghulam Hussain and Missionary Megji Merali, a Mission Center was planned to be set up by the Council in Mombasa, to train about a hundred young students. Pir Sabzali gave important advices and suggestions for the Mission Center. The Council

honored him in a reception on October 27, 1934. The volunteers, ladies committee, ladies volunteer corps and other institutions also gave him parties. The Recreation Club Institute honoured him at a reception on October 28, 1934 in the Assembly Hall of the H.H. The Aga Khan High School, Mombasa. President Jaffer Ali Mohammad and Honorary Secretary Noorudin Ali Merali gave him a warm honour with other leaders.

He left Mombasa on November 5, 1934 for Moshi. He was escorted at Voy, about 100 miles from Mombasa by the Council's President, Alijah Kassim Khimji, Honorary Secretary Hussain Vellani, Kassim Suleman Damji, etc. He performed *waez* at Voy and Matati for one day and then arrived at Moshi and Taweta. He then proceeded to Kisumu in November 22, 1934, where he reorganized the ladies and gents volunteer corps. He had an honour to lay the foundation of the building of Rehmatullah Punja in the new market of Kisumu. The local leaders gave him a grand reception in presence of 500 guests. On behalf of the Council, Seth Mohammad Kassim Lakha made a speech to admire his exceptional services in the Ismaili world for last 29 years. He visited Uganda on November 29, 1934, where he delivered *waez* in the Jamatkhana of Kampala and visited the Ismaili institutions. He then proceeded towards Masaka and Mwanza.

In sum, he returned to Bombay on December 29, 1934 and was greeted at Belardpier by Haji Mohammad Juma Jan Mohammad, Alijah Ismail Mohammad Jaffer, Hasan Datoo, Kamadia Chatoor Bhanji, Missionary Hamir Lakha, Missionary Alidina Mukhi Mamu, etc. In his productive campaign, he collected five lac shillings in East Africa as a Special Commissioner of the Imam. The Imam arrived in Bombay on January 3, 1935 from Europe. Pir Sabzali submitted his report of East African tour to the Imam.

On October 16, 1935, a meeting was held in Poona, presided by Lady Ali Shah, for the formation of **All India Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee** with its President Sir Ibrahim Rahmatullah (1862-1942) and the Vice-President as Ghulam Ali Merchant. To make a concerted drive for the collection of funds in India, a Working Committee was launched under Pir Sabzali's wing. Accordingly, he started his noble campaign on October 23, 1935 from Kathiawar and delivered his very impressive *waez* first in Dhoraji. He then proceeded to Junagadh, Manawadar, Rajkot, Jamanagar, Viraval, Una, Majewadi, Jetpur, Virpur, Supedi, Vadwan, Chotila, etc. In other words, he made his trip in 17 villages and collected 85,000 rupees in Kathiawar, Gujrat and Kutchh. The local jubilee committee of Dhoraji Division, in the meantime, sent a report to the Imam. The Imam sent them a telegraphic message from London on December 13, 1935 as under:-

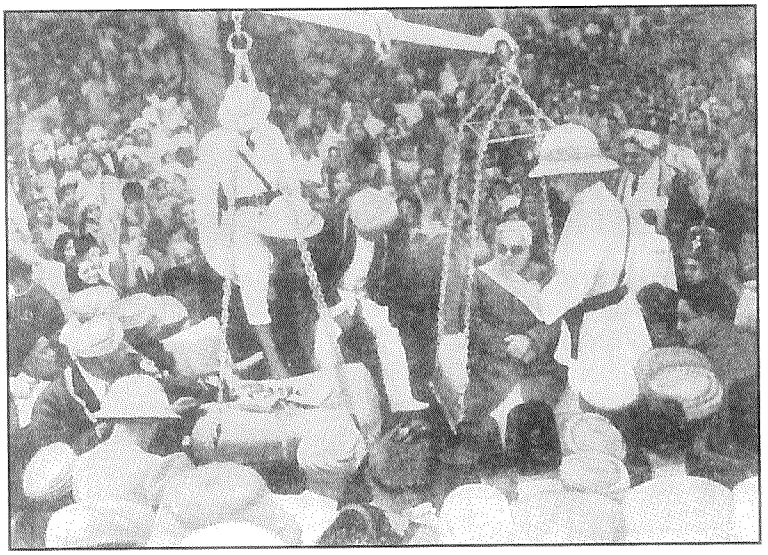
Give most paternal loving blessings for the service. I am much happy to know the detail of the funds collected by the committee for the celebration of my jubilee. I give my blessings to each donor."

He then proceeded to Sind and Punjab and other parts of India and collected a colossal fund for the Golden Jubilee celebration. His mode of collection can safely be compared with that of the Imam, who collected three million rupees for the Aligadh University.

It may be noted that all the preparations were given a final shape for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Imam during the completion of 50 years of Imamate. For this celebration, Pir Sabzali received much response from the *jamats* more than expected, who

flooded money and ornaments before him. When the collection reached upto five lac of rupees, a special meeting of the Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee was held on December 8, 1935 at the premises of the Central Board. President Ghulam Ali Merchant read the telegraphic message of the Imam and also announced the collection of five lac rupees. The members hailed the report in jubilation. On that occasion, Pir Sabzali put a proposal not only to celebrate the occasion of the golden jubilee, but the Imam should be weighed against the gold. N.M. Budhwani supported his proposal and it was unanimously resolved also in the meeting. The Ismailis gaped with wonder with the news that the occasion of the Golden Jubilee hit would weigh the Imam in gold for the first time the headlights of newspapers.

It cannot be disputed that the credit for raising a massive fund for the Golden jubilee within a short period of three months from all over India goes to Pir Sabzali. The scaptics who were diffident of success began to rub their eyes in wonder. He paved the way and the impossible had been made possible. They did not know what unfathomable depths of dynamic and infectious energy Pir Sabzali possessed.



In appreciation of his unstinted services, the Imam awarded him Gold Medal with "**Straight Bar**" in 1936 during the historical occasion of Golden Jubilee.

He launched his third and last itinerary to the African countries from January 5, 1937 as a Special Commissioner of the Imam, where he exhausted six months to remove off the old customs of the community. He prepared a report and published duly approved by the Imam.

He also attended the Golden Jubilee of the Imam in Nairobi on March 1, 1937. He is credited to have put the gold bars into his hands and addressed to the audience on microphone and spoke the importance of the occasion.



On that occasion, he had been invested the title of **Itmadi** by the Imam, and was also awarded the gold medal with **"Chevron"** and **"Straight Bar."**

During the Golden Jubilee at Nairobi, the Economic Conference in accordance with the guidance of the Imam drew up the plans for the economic welfare of the community. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad R. Macklai was appointed its Chairman. Pir Sabzali however presided the Economic Conference in Nairobi as an Acting Chairman.

During his visit, he established four Co-operative Societies and most important was the establishment of an Insurance Company. It was his last visit to East Africa and is reported to have said to the *jamat* in his *waez* that, "**When the Diamond Jubilee of the Imam will be celebrated, the Africa will be so prosperous that the Ismailis will easily weigh the Imam in diamonds without any hurdle.**"

The year 1937 was revolutionary for East African Ismailis, as it was then that the target or first stage of their progress in economic fields was set. Among them was Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd., which took its birth from the historic occasion of the Golden Jubilee. The growth and success of the company are to be attributed to the keen interest, hard work and foresight of the stalwarts like Dewan Ghulam Hussain Jindani (1891-1983), Count Paroo, Count Fateh Ali Dhala, Dewan Sir Eboo Pirbhai, Count Hasan K. Lakha, Count A.G. Abdul Hussain and other directors. The initial honor however must go to Pir Sabzali who, at the command of the Imam, took upon himself the onerous task of enlisting the new company's shareholders as well as business, and travelled widely through the length and breadth of Africa. He arranged to raise a capital of 2 million shillings and also brought the insurance business for about 20 million shillings. He deserved an official privilege of the commission for shillings 40,000, but he did not claim for it. It will be not exaggerated to write that Lord Michel, the governor of Kenya performed an opening ceremony of the modern edifice of the Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd. at Mombasa on September 10, 1951. The occasion marked an important milestone in the progress of the Company. Count Paroo (1906-1998), the Managing Director spoke in his address that, "The Aga Khan, the Spiritual Leader of the Ismailis had stressed before 15 years to venture in the insurance business for sharing in the economic building of the country which they had accepted as their motherland. This is the best outcome of his guidance. This Insurance Company came into existence with the constant efforts of late Pir Sabzali. In 1937, its capital was 25000/- pounds, and now it reached to 8 million pounds."

On June 21, 1937, he had also attended the first session of the Ismailia Supreme Council for Africa in Zanzibar. It was presided by Count Abdullah Sharif.

He stayed in Africa for 23 months. He visited Pemba-Wete on May 10, 1938 and delivered *waez* for five days. With the help of Wazir Ghulam Hussain Dharas, the President of the Provincial Council, he sold 2000 shares of the Jubilee Insurance Company. In Tanga, he made an opening ceremony of the Ismailia Cooperative Society. The Aga Khan's Ismaili Ladies Committee organized a fair in Tanga to entertain the children on June 16, 1938, which was presided by him. He also was destined to open the newly built Jamatkhana of Masuka. Kisumu was destitute of an Ismaili dispensary since long. During his visit, he tenaciously made an appeal to the donors to come forward for this noble project. A certain Motibai Kurji Vali was deeply touched with it. She donated 5000 shillings for the dispensary to the Aga Khan Provincial Council, which she had saved for many years.

When Nuruddin, the son of Alijah Datoo Meru was leaving Bombay for Nairobi, Sonibai, the wife of Pir Sabzali gave him a message for Pir Sabzali that it had taken much time to him in Africa, so he should return to Bombay. When Nuruddin delivered her message to Pir Sabzali in Nairobi, he said, "Are you not the son of Alijah Datoo Meru? You must know how one can curtail his services. The community's service is my life-blood, which I cannot put aside uncompleted." It is also related that once he told to the Imam, "Mawla! you pray that I succeed in the work whatever you consigned me." The Imam is reported to have blessed him.

His health became none of the best and shattered by the heavy strain of work and ceaseless tours from one to another village. He bound for Bombay for treatment in November, 1938. He left behind word to the African *jamats* to come back within three months. He hardly breathed a sigh of relief in three days when the Imam's telegram received, informing his gracious arrival in Bombay from London. He rejoiced beyond all bounds and came into the action and delivered an impressive speech in the Kandi Mola Jamatkhana, Bombay for ten minutes. This was fated to be his last public oratory. He visited the room of Recreation Club Institute, where after 30 minutes, he felt acute chest pain and fainted nimbly. He was taken to the bungalow of his close relative, Wazir Muhammad Ibrahim Muhammad Rawjee (1900-1965) for treatment.

The Imam visited Bombay and when he heard of the health condition of Pir Sabzali impaired, he went to see him on December 10, 1938. The Imam caught his hand for ten minutes while standing, then put his blessed hand on his forehead and gave him a *chhanta*. The tears streamed from his eyes. The Imam said, "Sabzali, do you feel pain?" "Mawla! not at all," he answered, "rather feel happiness. Alas! you came to my house, but I cannot set myself erect to welcome you. This is the only reason of tears bursting in my eyes." The Imam soothed him, quieted him, and cast his merciful eyes upon him. Who can know what bounty was then conferred on him? If the words which the Imam in that moment addressed to him should fall upon the ears of night, night would cease to be night, night would become day radiant as dawn.

After two days, he passed away on December 12, 1938 at 8.25 a.m. His sudden demise occasioned deep grief among all classes and communities. The fifty-five years of his life was packed with accomplishments, which shall always remain a source of pride to the Ismailis. He strove to advance the interest of the community at every available opportunity. He piloted the ship with skill and courage and brought it safely ashore. He left behind an enviable record of services.

On December 14, 1938, the Imam said to the Bombay *jamat* that, "**Itmadi Sabzali has reached God's mercy. I give my blessings for him. His name will always remain immortalized in history. He was a chief *dai* of the present *jamat* like the *dais* of the past, and glorified the Ismaili faith in Africa, Sind, Punjab, Gwadar and India.**

Itmadi Sabzali has revealed his spiritual power to the thousands of people and also to other sister communities. He has exhorted the *tariqah* of our religion to other communities. During the occasion of Golden jubilee, he had visited one to another city and imparted our *jamat* and other communities.

Itmadi Sabzali was the standard bearer of the *haqiqi momins*. He departed from the world, putting the world in great loss. He has gone into the real bliss. It is a matter of happiness that he has no worldly problem till last breath of his life."

On December 15, 1938, the Imam said, "**The photo of late Itmadi Sabzali be placed in the Jamatkhana. His photos also be kept in the Jamatkhanas of Karachi, Punjab and Sialkot."**

On the occasion of the unveiling ceremony of his photo in the Recreation Club Institute on January 18, 1939, the Imam made the following historical announcement: -

"**Itmadi Sabzali has served me in such a manner that after his death, I honor him the title of a Pir. If others would render such services, they too shall secure a like status. During the stretch of 54 years of my Imamate, to only one Pir Sabzali, I honor such a status.**" This marked an unprecedented and well-deserved tribute to his inestimable, invaluable and meritorious services.

Sonibai (d. 1946), the daughter of Jaffer Bhanji was the wife of Pir Sabzali, having no child. In 1927, they had adopted Fatima (1925-1950), the daughter of Mukhi Muhammad Ali, when she was hardly three years old. The marriage of Fatima was solemnized with Alijah Hussain Ghulam (1918-1981) in Karachi. Pir Sabzali also adopted another girl, called Nurbanu Hussain Nanji.

SADRUDDIN A.M., RAI
(1906-1980)



Bhagat Hira was a devoted Ismaili goldsmith in Punjab. His son, Ghulam Sadruddin had a strong proclivity towards Ismailism and conducted the religious school at his own residence in Multan. He translated "**Si-Harafi**" of Sayed Ahmad Shah into Urdu. He and his forefathers were the *gupti* Ismailis, who subscribed to the Ismaili faith openly in 1912 in accordance with the instructions of the Imam. Ghulam Sadruddin served as a Mukhi of Multan Jamatkhana and a member of the district Council for Multan. He had four sons and three daughters. Hyder Ali who died young. Rehmat Ali and Mubarak Ali dwelt in Karachi as well known jewellers and bullion merchants. Mubarak Ali was the President of Ismaili Council, Multan Cantt, and was also the President of All Pakistan Shroff (bullion merchants) Association. The fourth son Aziz, known as Aziz Mukhi Sadruddin, or Rai A.M. Sadruddin was most famous among them. His two of three daughters were the first to qualify as trained teachers in the community.

Mukhiani Mariambai, the wife of Mukhi Ghulam Sadruddin (.d. 1926) died in Karachi on September 9, 1951 at the age of 71 years, who served as a Mukhiani in Multan Jamatkhana for over 25 years. The Imam in a cable message to Rai A.M. Sadruddin, conferred upon her a posthumous title of **Lady Mariam.**

Rai A.M. Sadruddin was born on June 19, 1906. He did his matriculation from the Government High School and joined the Government College, Multan. He was interested to study Ismailism since childhood.

Rai A.M. Sadruddin possessed poetical faculty. He versified his first poem at the age of 10 years, namely "**Haqq**" without proper metres. It was meant to be published from Lahore, supporting the Allied cause in the First World War in 1916. He then compiled "**Shajra**" (genealogy) of the Imam in Urdu in 200 pages in 1922 at the age of 16 years. He also compiled,"**Gur'ki Pichhan**" at the end of 1922. He also wrote several important articles, notably in the papers, **"Zamindar", "Inkilab", "Ismaili"**, etc.

On those days, Pir Sabzali had come from Karachi to Punjab in 1920 as a Special Commissioner of the Imam. His father took him to Pir Sabzali and asked to accept him as his pupil, and a small traditional ceremony was performed and sweetmeats distributed in the *jamat*. He acquired adequate religious education from Pir Sabzali, who was his real religious tutor. In 1921, he was invited in Bombay for a lecture. It was his first lecture when he was 15 years old before the grand gathering, presided by Pir Sabzali. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai awarded him a gold medal. He also lectured in the Recreation Club on December 28, 1922 on the "**Need of the Imamate**" for two hours, which was

advertised in the foremost Bombay daily **"Sanj Vartman."**

In Bombay, he gave a public lecture on July 21, 1923. On July 29, 1923, Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai appointed him as a member of Recreation Club Institute by a special circular. In 1923, he also became an Hon. Secretary of Punjab Ismailia Mission Club in Multan, whose President was his maternal uncle, Karam Hussain. His booklet **"Qandil-i Rah-i Rast"** Part I was written at the end of 1923, which he dedicated to Pir Sabzali. Its second volume appeared in 1924, which he dedicated to Manji Ghulam Hussain Padamsi.

The **"Shajra"** was the first book he had compiled in Urdu, covering 200 pages of school copies. Pir Sabzali managed to show his book to the Imam at Bombay in 1922 with his father. He could not go to Bombay due to a matric examination. The Imam asked, "Where is the boy who wrote this book? Will he translate the *ginans* in Urdu?" The Imam also told to get it printed at his own expenses. His father returned to Punjab. He overjoyed when heard the Imam's remarks on his book. So, he set on his writing career. He printed several books, including two *ginans* translated in Urdu with the help of his family members. His book **"Shajra"** remained yet unpublished. Pir Sabzali told him in 1923 to see Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai, while he himself proceeded on his tour of Central Asia. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai subsequently directed him to see A.J. Chunara, who was in Poona. He went to Poona and showed him his book. Later on, the Press and Publicity Department of the Recreation Club translated it into Gujrati. Meanwhile, he returned to Punjab and his historical book faded out. It however was well studied by Hasan Ali Rahim Nathani (d. 1962), who derived its materials for the **"Nurun Mubin"** of A.J. Chunara. Rai A.M. Sadruddin justifiably has always proudly claimed that the "**Nurun Mubin"** was born out of his unpublished **"Shajra."**

He was under-graduate when his father expired in 1926. He left his studies and joined the teaching line. He married to Rabia, the daughter of Mukhi Mubarak Ali.

On June 14, 1927, he gave a lecture on "**Ismailism and Historians**" in the grand assembly of the Recreation Club, Bombay, presided by Missionary Mohammad Abdullah. He quoted rich historical evidences in his lecture. In course of which he read out a bibliography of over 250 books and articles of Arabic, Persian, English and Urdu. This probably was the first scholarly bibliography of Ismailism ever to be compiled. He scholarly examined the works published from Leiden, London and Paris. He spoke on the Ismailis and its origin, the need of the Imam, the Fatimid Imams, and the Nizari Imams down to the Aga Khan period. He also discussed the Fatimid genealogy and the peerless personality of Hasan bin Sabbah.

On the occasion of the unfurling ceremony of the Ismaili banner, My-Flag for the first time in the Thana Jamatkhana on June 19, 1927, he was fortunate to attend it.

In 1929, Rai Sadruddin came in East Africa, and became the Headmaster of the Tanga Ismailia School and the member of the Mombasa Religious School. In July, 1931, when he was on holiday from Africa, as a Chairman of the Punjab Ismailia Protest Committee, he addressed to the Viceroy of India and the Governor of Punjab, the resolutions passed by the *jamats* of Punjab against the Arya Samaj newspaper, defiling Ismailism in hyperbolic

terms. In 1932, he became the Headmaster of Dar-es-Salaam Religious School, and also started the first religious periodical, known as **Shafiq** from Dar-es-Salaam in 1934. He sent its copy to the Imam in India and received a gracious message, ending with the words, **"Nothing can help more than writing."** Soon afterwards, he started the first bilingual weekly, namely **Ismaili Voice** from Dar-es-Salaam in 1936.

Rai Sadruddin then moved to Nairobi in 1937, where he published a quarterly periodical, **Zahur** in 1939. It was hailed in the community and continued for several years. He also attended as a delegate of Dar-es-Salaam Mission Society in the first Mission Conference held in Mombasa on December, 1945 and was elected its General Secretary. He was also appointed the Chairman of Nairobi Ismailia Mission Society (1941-1943). In 1946, he published **The Diamond Jubilee Souvenir**. The Imam sent him a personal message by his own hand-writing in 1946 that, **"Mr. Sadruddin is of particular interest to me as he is one whose family was converted by me personally. I am glad to see the good work he has done for our faith. I have followed his work and career with great interest. I give him my blessings and best wish for a life of success. "**

He was the Chief Publicity Officer of the Grand Victory War Fete (1944), publicized the Prince Aly Khan War Fund and the Palestine Relief Fund, and also the Publicity Officer of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in Africa in 1946, also the Chief Publicity Officer of Victory War Fete. He also became the Chief Organizer of the Ismailia Education Week and Students' Rally. He was also appointed the Chairman of The Aga Khan's Public Affairs Committee in 1947.

He was a member and an officer-in-charge of libraries, mission, religious education and publicity at various times in the Ismailia Association for Kenya, first appointed in 1948 to 1950, re-appointed in 1951 to 1953 and 1968 to 1971.

In 1953, he was appointed Chairman of the Provincial Committee of the Ismailia Association for Kenya, and became the General Secretary of the Ismailia Political Committee for Kenya in the same year. He was also a member of H.H. The Aga Khan's Provincial Council (1954-1962). He was the founder Convenor of Nairobi Ismailia Study Group in 1955. He also became the Honorary Secretary of Platinum Jubilee Hospital Interim Management Board in 1957, and the Chairman of the Economic Committee in 1961.

Rai Sadruddin was also appointed by the colonial government as an Information Officer of the Indian Section of the Kenya Information Office and was responsible for two weekly wartime official **News Bulletin** in Urdu and Gujrati. As well, he founded the Hindustani Radio Programme Services of 7LO Nairobi after the end of War. Being an Information Officer, he was able to remain in touch with the editors of East African newspapers and journals, and gained rich experience. It must be known that the journalism had been his first love, it had never been his profession or means of livelihood.

He was a member of the Government India High School Committee (1943-1946), and also of the Advisory Council & Standing Committee of the Asian Education in Kenya. Her Majesty the Queen of England awarded him the Coronation Medal for his education services in 1953. He was also a member of the Government Nairobi Area Schools' Committee (1946-1951), and became Chairman of this committee (1951- 1955 & 1957-1959). He was

also the Chairman of Government High School Committee, Eastleigh (1960- 1964), and the member of the Kenya Advisory Council on Asian Education (1945-1948 & 1951- 1963).

For 23 years he had been a member of the Important City Education Body, the Nairobi Evening Continuation Classes Management Committee (1947-1970). He also became the Chairman of the Government Indian School Scholarship Committee (1945-1950), the member of Asian Overseas Bursary Committee (1952-1956), Multi-Racial Bursary Selection Board (1957-1959), Central Bursary Committee (1960-1963). He was also a member of the Joint-Committee of the Legislative Asian Elected Members and the Asian Advisory Council on Education (1957-1958), Government Adult Education Committee (1952), University College Extra Mural Studies (1957-1958), Approved School Board (1958-1961), Joint-Committee on Religious Studies University of East African (1967-1970), University Departmental Committee of Philosophy and Religious Studies (1970), etc.

He also took keen interest in the field of libraries, and became the President of Asian Library in Kenya and of Desai Memorial (1951-1953 & 1963-1967). He also became a member of Government Central Reference Library Committee in 1952 and Development of the Public Libraries Committee (1959-1963).

He also got involved in political bodies. For instance, he became City Councilor and Member of the Building Control Board (1946), Senior Vice-President of the Anjuman Himayat Islam of East Africa (1949-1950), Vice-President of Sayed Abdullah Shah Memorial Fund (1950), President of the Muslim Parents' Association (1952), Honorary Secretary of the Kenya Muslim League (1954-1956), etc.

The Imam appointed him as a member of the Publicity and Research in the Advisory Board of the Ismailia Association for Kenya through a message on September 19, 1968. The Imam said, **"I give you my best paternal maternal loving blessings to the newly appointed members of the Advisory Board."** The inaugural meeting of the Research Section of the Ismailia Association was held on August, 1970, which came to be known as the Friday Forum.

Rai Sadruddin was invited to attend the 28th International Congress of Orientalists held in Canberra, Australia between 6th and 12 January, 1971.

He was appointed as an Estate Secretary with H.H. The Aga Khan Estate Department for Africa in 1952, and after serving for 20 years, he retired in 1972.

In 1972, he became the Honorary General Secretary of the Ismailia Association for Kenya and continued to serve as an honorary editor of the "**Africa Ismaili**"

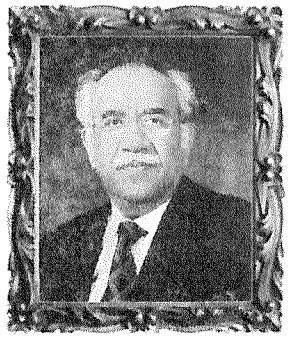
He proceeded to Canada in 1974 with his family and settled in Vancouver. The Imam appointed him the member of the Review Committee for the Ismaili Research Centre in London. He attended the meeting of the Review Committee in London, where his death occurred by heart failure on July 9, 1980 at the age of 74 years. The Imam sent a message to the family of Rai A.M. Sadruddin and bestowed blessings to the departed soul.

Raid Sadruddin had three sons, viz. Mumtaz Ali, Sarfraz Hussain and Ejaz Hussain; and three daughters, Mehrunissa, Firdaus Ara and Dr. Zubeda.

"**The happiest week of my life was in 1957 when I travelled with the Aga Khan IV as his Secretary during his first tour as an Imam in East Africa**" was an oft-repeated word of pride of Rai Sadruddin.



When I nominated new councils, when I gave a certain number of titles, there were some very foolish spiritual children, some spiritual children who have seemed to have got in their minds all their values the wrong way around. These spiritual children thought that it was important for them to get titles. They thought that it was important for them to become council members. But my spiritual children, I must warn you that this is the biggest mistake you can make. If you start running after worldly goods, if you start putting money before everything else, if you start wanting to be called Vazir or Count or Itmadi, this is a very big mistake. We are not going to become the type of worldly-minded people who are known to Muslims as Kafiroon. We are never going to become this. And it is most important that My spiritual children should remember that it is absolutely irrelevant whether you have a title or not, whether you are a Count or not. What is important is the Light that you have in your hearts which you get from prayer. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Nairobi, October 5, 1962.)



SADRUDDIN HASHWANI, VARAS
(b. 1940...)

Varas Sadruddin Hashwani traces his descent from Mukhi Hashu Tharuani (1820-1915) of Lassi Jamatkhana, Karachi. It must be known that Mukhi Hashu married twice and had four sons, viz. Baledina, Jaffer, Ghulam Hussain, Muhammad and two daughters, Hira and Bhanari from his first wife, called Ha'ansi. His other children from his second wife, called Thari were Abdullah, Kassim, Bana, Hussain, Nazar Ali, Ali Muhammad and Ismail; and four daughters, viz. Sharafi, Jena, Chhati and Marium. The community services have always been a quintessential component of the family of Mukhi Hashu.

Abdullah, the son of Mukhi Hashu was born in Uthal in 1847 and arrived in Karachi with the family at the age of 5 years. He joined his father's business after formal education. After his father's death, he retained the agency of the Ralli Bros. Ltd. In 1920, he took key role in raising the first religious night school in Lassi with Mukhi Itmadi Hoodbhoy Shaluani. He also awarded cash prizes to the students, who attended the Jamatkhana in the morning. He also took important part in the mission of the conversion with the Recreation Club Institute, and is reported to have converted more than 85 persons from the depressed class in Sind and Baluchistan, and adopted few boys at his residence. To appreciate his outstanding contribution in the Ismaili mission, the Imam awarded him a gold medal in 1927.

On Thursday, May 6, 1920, the Imam appointed Abdullah as the Kamadia with Hoodbhoy Shalu as the Mukhi for Lassi Jamatkhana and said (to the *jamat*), **"I appoint Abdullah, the son of Mukhi Hashu as the Kamadia of the *jamat*."** (Then told to him that,) **"Kamadia Abdullah, your late father Mukhi Hashu had served the Imam and the *jamat* exceedingly well, and you also must serve the Imam and the *jamat* whole heartedly. Presently, I do not appoint you as the member of the Council. Your service in the *jamati* affairs is more important at present. I bless you too much."** Later on, he was however appointed the member of the Supreme Council (1921-29).

It must be known that Mukhi Hoodbhoy Shaluani had declared a donation of Rs. 35,000/- in Imam's presence on April 11, 1920 for a new Lassi Jamatkhana. Kamadia Abdullah shared his outstanding contribution in the construction work. The opening ceremony of the Jamatkhana was performed on December 25, 1924. He was also appointed the President (1924-25) of the Khoja Panjibhai Library, Kharadhar, Karachi.

Kamadia Abdullah was a man of principle with strict leaning towards religion. He liked to host the poor and helped them with food and clothes. Sometimes, he would wash the utensils with others in the Jamatkhana. When asked, why he was doing so, he would

answer, **"Like my father, I am also the custodian (*munjaver*) of the house of Mawla Ali."** It is to be noted that he died on October 30, 1929 at the age of 82 years, and when his *ruhani mehmani* was presented before the Imam on January 24, 1938, the Imam graciously blessed the soul and said, **"I know him and his father as well. Both were the custodians (*munjaver*) of my house."**

Kamadia Abdullah married to Zainab, the sister of Missionary Hussaini Pir Muhammad (1878-1951), who had no child; therefore, he adopted a converted boy, called Hyderali. He had however three sons from his second wife, viz. Mukhi Varas Hussain, Hussain Ali and Noor Muhammad.

Mukhi Varas Hussain was born in 1897 at Karachi. He also joined his father's business soon after his formal education. He inherited the agency of the Ralli Bros. Ltd. in 1929, which he retained till 1968. It implies that the Hashwani family enjoyed the agency for about 90 years (1878-1968), dealing with hides and skins, bones and cotton. He was the Chairman of the Hashwani Hotels Ltd. incorporated in 1971 with a paid-up capital of Rs. 60 million. It was converted into a Public Limited Co. in 1974. He was also the Promoter of Holiday Inn Hotels at Karachi and Islamabad, the Director of M/S Hasanali & Co. Ltd., the Senior Director of Quetta Textile Mills Ltd., etc.

In order to stem the rapid growth of illiteracy in the community, the leaders embarked upon a plan in 1940 to start an organization, called the Khoja Ismailia Lassi Students Union when the monetary plight of the people was deplorable. On that juncture, Mukhi Varas Hussain helped the Students Union and donated handsome amount. He was also the member of the Executive Committee of Golden (1936) and Diamond (1946) Jubilee Celebration Committees. He also served as the Mukhi and Kamadia of various Brotherhoods of Lassi Jamatkhana. He served as the Nandi Incharge for several years. He was also appointed the member of the Supreme Council for Karachi (1930-46) and the Local Council.

Mukhi Varas Hussain was appointed the Kamadia for the Lassi Jamatkhana (1930-1937), and ultimately the Mukhi (1942-1946) in place of Mukhi Hoodbhoy Shaluani. He rendered meritorious services as a Mukhi and followed by Mukhi Jaffer Nur Mohammad. He passed a saintly life, and was crowned with the title of **Alijah** in 1938, **Itmadi** in 1956 and **Wazir** in 1960.

It must be known that a deputation from Pakistan comprised of 20 leaders visited Aswan including Mukhi Varas Hussain, where the mortal remains of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah were laid to rest on Friday, July 20, 1957. Thousand of Ismailis from all over the world attended this ceremony. In addition, the Ismailis from 20 countries gathered once again at Aswan, including Mukhi Varas Hussain to pay last tribute to the 48th Imam, whose bier was lifted and carried from Nur al-Salam to the newly built mausoleum on Friday, February 20, 1959.

Mukhi Varas Hussain died at the age of 80 years due to cardiac failure on Saturday, May 14, 1977 at 8.45 p.m. The Imam sent the following telegraphic message on May 20, 1977 to his sons:-

Have received your cable and have learnt with greatest sorrow passing away of your beloved father Vazir Hussain Abdullah Hashwani. I send my most affectionate paternal maternal special loving blessings for the soul of late Vazir Hussain Abdullah Hashwani and I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace. I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for services with my most affectionate loving blessings to all the members of your family for courage and fortitude in your great loss, which is also a true loss to the *jamat* and the Imam.

Mukhi Varas Hussain married to Varasiani Zaverbai, the daughter of Kassim Shalu. She rendered her invaluable services as the Kamadiani (1929-1937) and Mukhiani (1937-1946) in the Lassi Jamatkhana. She extended her inestimable services to Janbai Maternity Home for over 40 years and the Aga Khan Health Board for several years. Varasiani Zaverbai was also the member of the Supreme Council, Kharadhar Local Council and the Regional Council (1960-63). She was also the member of the Ladies Committee and the Young Ladies Volunteer Corps in Lassi *jamat*. She genersouly helped the poor in their treatment, marriages, education, etc. The Imam visited the Janbai Maternity Home on November 14, 1985 to attend its 60th anniversary. On that occasion, the Imam graciously presented her a memento for her longest services. In his speech, the Imam said, "**The role of our volunteers in keeping that spirit of service alive and in materially enabling our institutions to maintain their fabric and improve their facilities is beyond praise. Without their efforts, and the efforts of their predecessors, the institution would not be a thriving one it is today, nor would it be financially able to offer to families of the poor, facilities they could never otherwise afford."**

Varasiani Zaverbai expired on December 22, 1989 at the age of 72 years. The Imam sent following telex message to her sons:-

28th December, 1989

My dear spiritual children,

I have received your telex of 22nd December, and have learnt with very great pain and sorrow of the passing away of your beloved mother Vazir Saheba Zaverbai. I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings for the soul of the late Vazir Saheba Zaverbai, and I pray that her soul may rest in eternal peace.

The late Vazir Saheba Zaverbai's long and devoted services to my jamat of Pakistan will always be remembered by my *jamat* and by me, and she will be greatly missed by all. In addition to her outstanding services, however, she will also be remembered for her personal example of leadership, and her complete integrity and rigour in every aspect of her life and family to which she addressed her attention.

I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings to the family of the late Vazir Hussain and the late Vazir Saheba Zaverbai Hashwani for courage and fortitude in their great loss. You are all constantly in my heart and thoughts and prayers in this painful time of bereavement.

In his another message addressed to the Ismaili Council for Pakistan on December 28, 1989, the Imam also said, **"The late Vazir Saheba's outstanding and long devoted services to my Pakistani *jamat* in numerous *jamati* institutions, and particularly in the field of health care will always be remembered by my *jamat* and by me and she will be greatly missed by all."**

In her loving memory, his son Varas Sadruddin incorporated a project after her name, viz. Zaver Patroleum Corp. Ltd. in 1994.

Mukhi Varas Hussain had three sons and four daughters, viz. Akbar Ali, Hasan Ali, Sadruddin; and Malek Shamsuddin M. Dhanani, Amina Alijah Noor Ali Itmadi Kassim Jaffer, Nurbanu Ghul Mohammad Lakhani and Nazali Sultan Habib Shalwani.

Akbar Ali, the elder son of Mukhi Varas Hussain was born on June 6, 1932. Soon after his matriculation in 1949 at St. Patrick's School, he joined his father's business for a long period. He also launched the Hashwani Group of Companies in 1984, which included Hasan Ali Cotton Export Ltd., Hasan Ali Rice Exports, Syndicate Trading Co., Syndicate Mining, Regent Textile Mill, Landmark Spinning Mill, etc. In sum, he is now the Chairman of the Hashwani Group of Companies.

The record of his community services reveals that he was appointed the member of the Ismailia Federal Council (1980-87). He served as the Convenor of the Economic Development of the Aga Khan Hospital & Medical College (1984-87), the Director the Aga Khan Rural Support Program. He was also a member of the Governing Body of the Aga Khan Hospital and Medical College Foundation and the President of Economic & Planning Board for Pakistan (1980-87).

During the grand *darbar* on March 15, 1976, the Imam graciously announced the titles of five leaders, including Akbar Ali, who was granted the title of **Itmadi**. He was also invested the title of **Varas** in 1994. He virtually retired from the community services in 1987.

Varas Akbar Ali married on November 5, 1957 to Sultana, the daughter of Huzur Varas Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana (1906-1985). Varas Akbar Ali has three sons, Nizam, Abdullah, Amin and a daughter, Sherezad.

Hasan Ali, the second son of Mukhi Varas Hussain was born in 1933. After completing his Inter-Science, he joined the family brokerage firm. On December 29, 1960, he married to Dr. Laila. In 1961, he went to England with his wife and returned in 1963. On his return he established his firm, Hasan Ali & Co. Ltd. and went into cotton export business, where he earned the reputation of the "King of Cotton." He also established the Pak-Sri Lanka Friendship Association and was its 1st President. He was also the Vice-President of North Korea-Pak Friendship Association, and an active member of the Pak-China Friendship Association. He travelled worldwide in connection with his business and social activities.

Unfortunately, he underwent three major operations in January, 1974 and recovered his health. He proceeded to London after few months for his medical check-up in Kings College

Hospital. On November 19, 1974, he sent a telex message to the Imam through the Mukhi of London Jamatkhana, reporting reverently that he was progressing well and arrived at London for medical check-up. In the meantime, the doctors examined him twice and certified that he was in good health. On November 27, 1974, he developed severe pain below his spinal cod. The doctors beffled and failed to diagonise its cause. The fatal disease was pronounced as Retroperiotoneal Haematoma, and he expired on December 2, 1974 at the age of 41 years. His body was brought to Karachi for interment on December 5, 1974.

Three sons, Arif, Altaf, Hussain and a daughter, Muneera, survived Hasan Ali Hashwani. In his loving memory, his family raised a Hasan Ai Hashwani Charitable Dispensary and Laboratory at Kharadhar, Karachi. The Ismailia Association for Pakistan launched a Manpower Training Scheme in 1975. The Hashwani family generously donated Rs. four lacs for the period of two years for 30 students of the first batch in loving memory of his late son Hasan Ali Hashwani. In his reply, the Imam sent following message:

28th April, 1975

My dear President and Members,

I have received your letter of 5th April and am very happy to know that the family of late Hasanali Hashwani and Vazir Husain Abdullah Hashwani have given a generous donation to the Ismailia Association for Pakistan for the Waezeen Training Scheme.

I send my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings to Vazir Husain A. Hashwani and family for their wonderful gift with best loving blessings for the soul of late Hasanali Hashwani. I pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace.

The gift of the Hashwani family is in the true spirit of Islam and deserves applause and emunation.

The Imam performed the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Aga Khan Maternity Home at Karimabad on March 17, 1976. Its construction began in November, 1977. The Imam performed its opening ceremony on March 24, 1979. In his speech, the Imam complimented the Hashwani family, who donated one million rupees to the Aga Khan Maternity Home, Karimabad in loving memory of late Hasan Ali. The name of the Outpatient Wing had been named after "**Late Hasan Ali Hashwani**."

Sadruddin, the third son of Mukhi Varas Hussain was born in Karachi on February 19, 1940. He spent the whole of his childhood, boyhood and youth in Lassi at Lea Market, Karachi. He did his matric in 1956 from N.J.V. High School. A self-made man, he has built his business empire in the last 17 years, seemingly stepping from success to success. But it has been a rocky road to the top. He had no ready-made business to step into and no family fortune to fall back on. After failing his Inter Science exam, he joined his brother-in-law in a small grain transporting company in 1958, travelling to the Makran coast and Kalat, often in temperatures below freezing. In trading, he worked 18 hours a day without caring for his health.

His next venture was small-time steel trading with his elder brother Hasan Ali in 1960, who set up a firm called, Hasan Ali & Co. In 1965, he began his career in cotton trading with a small order of 2900 bales. The cotton kings in the market reacted to the newcomer with disgust. But in three years, he was the number one exporter in cotton. His business flourished and he surfaced as an important business magnate in 1970. In the same decade, the Hashwani family was acknowledged as the "Cotton Kings" for being front ranking exporter of cotton besides rice and other commodities. In 1973, came a setback: nationalization of the cotton trade in Pakistan. He turned to industry, and never looked back since. He made a bold decision to stay in Pakistan and bought a textile mill from the Fancys, but after five years, he sold it off in 1978. He diverted his resources towards other business avenues like the hotel industry, real estate, trading, property development and industrial ventures. In less than a decade, Sadruddin acquired the reputation of a highly successful hotelier and an eminent businessman. In 1973, he also ventured into the field of five-star hotel business with the beginning of Holiday Inn Hotel in Islamabad in 1978 and another at Karachi in 1981. In 1985, he made a successful bid for the majority shares of Pakistan Services Ltd., which at that time owned four Intercontinental Hotels in Pakistan. Soon after the takeover of the Company, Sadruddin changed the name of the Hotels to Pearl Continental Hotels. To upgrade the standards of Holiday Inn Hotels, his foresight and vision once again came into action, when he resolved to convert the Holiday Inns into Marriott Hotels - a wise decision that has procured sizable dividends. In 1995, he acquired 100% stocks of the US based Corporation, Occidental of Pakistan Inc. (now the Orient Petroleum Inc.), which is actively engaged in exploration and production of oil and gas in the country with a fleet of over 200 trained staff. This business is one of the major divisions of his business empire, called Hashoo Group. The Hashoo Group is a major shareholder of New Jubilee Insurance Co. Ltd, the fourth largest insurance company in Pakistan. Varas Sadruddin continues to be on the Board of Director of New Jubilee Insurance for many years. He also served as the Director of Al-Shifa Foundation. In sum, he is one of the most leading business magnates in Pakistan.

In recognition of his noble share in economic building of Pakistan, the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi honoured him an **"Outstanding Professional Contribution Award"** in 1988. He was also awarded a **Gold Medal** at the Tourism Convention in 1993 in view of his outstanding services to the tourism industry of Pakistan.

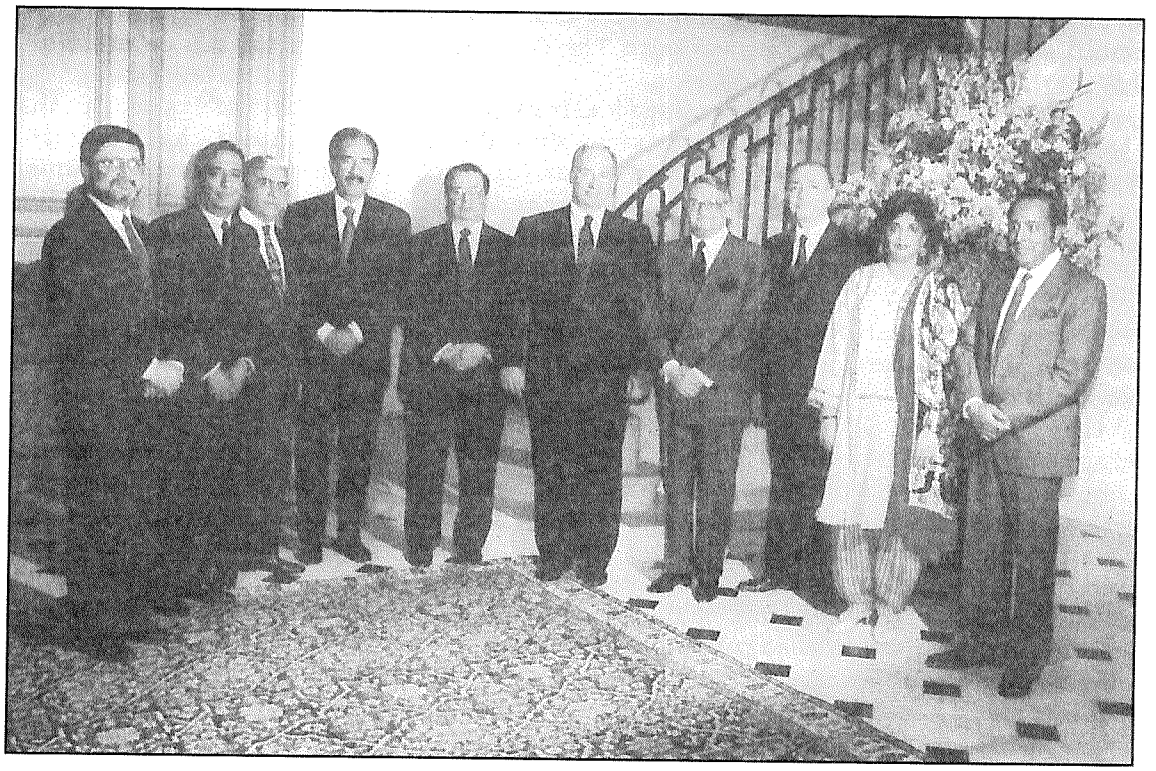
The Hashoo Group has also made its mark in property development, construction and real estate business, such as Nadia Square, Hashoo Apartments, Hashoo Garden, Prince Apartments, Hashoo Terrace, Hashoo Centre, Bagh-e-Malir Housing Project, Millat Garden, Gulshan-e-Millat, Highway Housing Project, Bagh-e-Landhi, etc.

Despite his preoccupation in monitoring his vast business empire, Varas Sadruddin has maintained his family tradition of keeping the welfare of the people irrespective of cast and creed. He is equally known for his generous philanthropic activities and ameliorating the living condition of the destitute, both inside and outside the community. He shared a colossal amount to the institutions outside the community, such as he donated Rs. 25 lacs to the Asif Nawaz Memorial Hospital, Islamabad, Rs. 10 lacs to the Al-Shifa Eye Hospital, Rawalpindi, Rs. 10 lacs to the Shaukat Khannam Cancer Hospital, Lahore, Rs. 10 lacs to the Ibrar al-Haq Sahara Foundation, Lahore, etc.

The Hashoo Group has also floated its own philanthropic institution in 1985, called the Hashoo Foundation. He is also funding the Hasan Ali Hashwani Charitable Dispensary, Kharadhar, Karachi. He is the director of the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan Chapter, and a highly reputed NGO with international recognition. He is also an Honorary Consul General of Belgium.

He has deep leaning towards Ismailism since childhood. He served in the Scout Group and Volunteer Corps in the Lassi Jamatkhana, Karachi for several years. He also rendered his services as a Mukhi for a Brotherhood in Darkhana Jamatkhana (1977-85). He also served as the founder Chairman of the Silver Jubilee Development Agency, the member of the Aga Khan Foundation, the member of the Aga Khan Gymkhana Managing Committee, etc. He also employed a galaxy of the Ismaili workers belonging to the northern areas and Afghanistan. He also sponsors the cricket and gold tournaments in loving memory of his late parents.

It may also be noted that the Imam established the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) in 1967 to promote social development, primarily in the low income countries of Asia and Africa by funding innovative programmes of broad value in health, education and rural development. To celebrate its silver jubilee, the Imam invited members of all nations committee to a dinner at Aiglemont on February 25, 1992. As a member of AKF, Varas Sadruddin Hashwani was also invited. On behalf of the Foundation units and Geneva staff, Wazir Ramzan Merchant, the Chairman of the AKF, Pakistan humbly presented a small clock as a gift to the Imam.



Soon after the celebration of the silver jubilee, the Imam graciously sent the following message to the Chairman of AKF, Pakistan on May 1, 1992:-

Vazir Ramzan Merchant,
Chairman,
Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan),
Karachi

My dear Ramzan,

Since the 25th of February, work pressure has been unrelenting, and it is only after my return from visits to Uganda and Kenya, where important accords and protocols were signed between the Governments of Uganda and Kenya on the one hand, and the Aga Khan Development Network on the other, and thanks to the long weekend of the 1st of May, that I am now able to write to you to tell you, and through you everyone at AKF, how deeply touched I was by the words you spoke at the dinner I gave for AKF on Tuesday, the 25th February, and for this most magnificent gift which you offered me.

The time-piece and parchment are deeply happy memory of an occasion which celebrated the first twenty-five years of the life of the Aga Khan Foundation, and Apex Imamat Institution which has made an outstanding name for itself, and which is the first to have completed a quarter century of service to the benefit of the Ismaili community and others, in both Third World and industrialized countries.

As an institution, AKF has premiated attention to the quality of its work: this attention to style, taste and detail is strongly reflected in the choice that you made of your gift to me of an exceptionally beautiful clock. Its shape, colour and finish are sober and look at it. I was also most touched by the inscription and the wording on the parchment, and that the National Committee and staff of AKF should have taken such trouble to add their signatures.

I would be most grateful if you would share this letter with everyone at AKF who contributed to offering me such a unique memory of a particularly happy and meaningful event.

Varas Sadruddin Hashwani is a munificent donor for several causes, and his generosity is like an unfathomable ocean that cannot be measured in words. In view of his meritorious services, the Imam graciously invested him the title of **Alijah** in 1971, **Itmadi** in 1976 and **Varas** in 1994. While granting him the title of **Varas**, the Imam said in his message to the National Council for Pakistan on July 11, 1994 that, **"I want my *jamat* to know that the conferment of a title is one of the many ways by which the unconditional service rendered by a *murid* is recognized by the Imam of the Time. Giving selflessly and volunteraily of one's time, energy, intellect and material resources for the benefit of others, is in the finest tradition of our *tariqah*, and one which I would like to see always upheld in my *jamat*. I would like to emphasize that the Imam is always aware of the silent services of the innumerable *murids* who have served, and continuing**

to serve in various capacities, and I send them all my warmest and most affectionate loving blessings for their services to the *jamat* and the Imam of the Time."

Varas Sadruddin married to Noor Sultan on July 7, 1968 and blessed with two sons, Murtaza, Hasan Ali and three daughters, Nadia, Shahzia and Sarah.



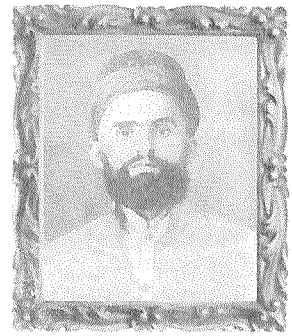


The family members of Sadruddin Hashwani are also devoted social workers. In 1996, his wife, Varasiani Noori Hashwani created a non-profit organization, called "**Umeed-e-Noor**" (Ray of Hope). It nurses the disabled and supportless children with their education, nourishment and treatment. Varasiani Noori Hashwani executes as the Chairperson of the "**Umeed-e-Noor.**" The readers can visit their website (www.umeed-e-noor.com.pk) for details of their invaluable social activities. Varasiani Noori Hashwani is also serving as the Mukhiani of a Brotherhood in Aabpara Jamatkhana for several years. Her silent and secret charitable activities are beyond praise.

Sadruddin Hashwani also established a philanthropic organization, known as the "**HOAP** (Helping Oppressed and Powerless) **Foundation"** in 1999. It is a non-government and non-profitable organization to help develop human resources of the infirm community of the society, especially the war stricken Afghan refugees, and the youth from the Northern Areas and Chitral. HOAP Foundation is a registered NGO based in Rawalpindi. Sadruddin Hashwani is its Patron In-chief with Murtaza Hashwani as the Chairman Board of Directors, Mrs. Noori Hashwani, Miss Sarah Hashwani and Hasan Ali Hashwani as the members. HOAP Foundation has been also visited by distinguished visitors, viz. The United Nations Women Association led by Marianne De Mule, the American Women Club led by Mary, Yoko Kondo, the head of NGO from the embassy of Japan, Mohammad Manji and Salimah Samji of FOCUS International Humanitarian Assistance, Canada, Aziz Vellani and Sadruddin from the Aga Khan's Secretariat, Aiglemont, France, etc.

His elder son, Murtaza was born on January 2, 1974. He joined the Karachi American School (1983-87) and proceeded to London at the age of 13 years and took his formal education in the Boarding School (1987-91). He went to the United States in 1992 for doing the Bachelor of Science. He returned to Pakistan and joined his father's business in 1993. He is also an enthusiastic social worker and served as a member of the Regional Council (1993-94). He was also appointed the Kamadia (1994-5) and then the Mukhi (1995-97) of a Brotherhood in Aabpara Jamatkhana, Islamabad. Hasan Ali, another son of Varas Sadruddin Hashwani was born on October 5, 1977. He is also devoted and a promising social worker in United States.

SAYED MUNIR, MISSIONARY
(1882-1957)



He was born in the village of Shagnan, Badakhshan in 1882. His name was Muniruddin, better known as Sayed Munir. His father Sayed Muhammad bin Kassim descended from Sayed Sohrab Wali Badakhshani and was an educated man in his village. Nothing is known about the brothers of Sayed Munir. It must however be known that Pir Sabzali had seen his one brother in Rushan, Tajikistan who was the Mukhi on October 31, 1923.

Sayed Munir learnt Arabic, Persian as well as religious education from his grandfather at home. He passed his early age for few years in Iran, and came into contact with Fidai Khorasani (d. 1925). He arrived in Bombay with his father at the age of 16 years in 1899 and beheld the Imam for the first time at Wadi. The Imam told him, "You give your services as my missionary." He came into the contact of eminent missionaries and visited Hunza, Chitral, Gilgit and Kashmir. The Imam also deputed him in Egypt, Iraq and Yamen to study the old manuscripts on Ismailism and also brought some historical documents with him in India. In 1912, he joined the Central Board of Mission for Bombay, which became known as the Recreation Club, and taught Persian to the new missionaries. Sayed Munir was a brilliant orator and with his jolly nature he won the hearts of masses.

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah arrived in Karachi for 27 days on April 10, 1920. Before departure, the Imam deputed him in Sind, Baluchistan and Makran coast to operate proselytizing mission among the Zikri sect. In this context, the Imam issued the following letter:-

I, His Highness Sir Aga Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan, G.C.S.I., do hereby certify that the bearer Sayyad Munir, son of Sayyad Mahomed Cassim of Badakhshan, aged about 37 years, is under my service as a missionary to work in Sind, Baluchistan and Makran.

A photograph of Sayyad Munir is hereto affixed for easy identification.

Karachi:
th May, 1920

It was an appalling mission he had been assigned. He faced many troubles, which he surmounted with courage and unwavering faith. He continued his mission in Turbat, Lasbela, Makran, Gwadar, Muscat, Pasani and Ormada. He converted Karimdad, a leading learned man in Ormada, who was followed by many Zikri families, notably the families of Alijah Dilmurad Sanjar, Ali Baloch, Saleh Muhammad Jawwad and Alijah Nuruddin,

who came to live in Karachi.

He was one of the famous missionaries of the Recreation Club Institute and was sent in East Africa in May-June, 1925. In 1936, he once again went to East Africa with Alijah Alibhai Nanji. He also assisted Pir Sabzali in Karachi and Bombay in the mission works. He also visited Badakhshan, Chitral and Afghanistan on his mission works.

Sayed Munir was a dedicated missionary and preacher. He made himself so busy in whole life that never permitted him to get marriage. In appreciation of his outstanding services, the Imam conferred upon him the title of **Honorary Missionary** in 1954. He died in Karachi on Thursday, October 8, 1957.

He was not a regular writer. He however compiled a book, "**Guldasta-e-Falsafa**" which was posthumously published in 1958 at Karachi.



Sewa Haji Paroo
(1851-1891)



Haji Paroo Pradhan migrated from Bhuj, Kutchh to Zanzibar with his brother Jaffer Paroo in 1850, where he established a small general store in 1852. He made a little but steady progress and opened a branch store at Bagamoyo in 1860. One of the four children of Haji Paroo Pradhan was Sewa Haji Paroo, who was born in 1851, and received his initial exposure to the business world while working for his father.

Sewa's apprenticed came to an unexpected, abrupt and when his two brothers died in 1869, he was consigned the charge of Haji Kanji & Co. During the sixties the firm began supplying caravans with trade goods, such as cloth, beads, copper wire and brass pots and was in turn purchasing ivory, rhino horns and hippo teeth.

The increment in the strength of caravans utilizing Bagamoyo in 1870 induced Sewa Haji to include the recruitment of Wapagazi among the services offered. Financing caravans led by Arabs or Swahilis completed his involvement in virtually every phase of long distance trade and successful management brought him both profits and notoriety. Some Europeans who dealt with him had rather acrimonious comments about this style of operating. But even those who deprecated him spoke of his energy and ability to get the job done. In 1871, he encountered Henry Stanley who made some disparaging remarks about him. Yet a few years later, when Henry Stanley was launching an expedition to Congo, he recommended that an advance man "should be sent to Bagamoyo to arrange with the Hindi Saywa (Haji Sewa) respecting the Wanyamweiz and a house as soon as possible."

Sewa Haji had also established a branch of his caravan business at Zanzibar. He was involved in the arms trade. In those days, Bagamoyo served as a major coastal funnel for guns, powder and ammunition into the interior. He estimated that ten thousand guns were transported annually from Bagamoyo to Unanyemble. He, either operating alone or in partnership with Europeans, began to control a large percentage of this trade. Even after competing the German firms had established branches in Bagamoyo, Sewa Haji continued to be a major arms importer. He was the first Asian to receive a honorific title from the German Government.

He never did think in narrow, limited business terms. His association with Sultan Sayed Hamid bin Thwain for whom he was "chief Indian creditor" in 1896 exemplified his outlook. On May 6, 1896, the two signed a contract of ten years, "....by which His Highness agrees that Siva Haji is to sell all the crops, consisting of coconuts, cloves and clove-stems, grown on the Government shambas situated both in Zanzibar and Pemba, Siva Haji shall try his best to obtain the best prices current in the town, or more, and he is to receive a commission

on everything he sells of 5 percent.....Siva Haji has the sole monopoly to sell the said Government product, and no one else can do so until the expiration of said period...." This contract however remained in force for nine months.

From the beginning of his career, he had been a religious man and a leader. He was also noted for his philanthropy. In his will, he had expressed that all the houses located in Dar-es-Salaam and Bagamoyo should go to the German government with the stipulation that the income was to be used in providing food to the lepers. Its income must also be paid to the Bagamoyo hospital. In the early 1880, he purchased few stone houses. It was his expressed desire that a hospital for the destitute and infirm should be erected on the site.

He had a deep concern and respect for education. In October, 1892 he donated a multi-storied building as a school for Indian and African children. It remained in operation until October, 1895, when the government took it over, hired a German instructor and organized a broader curriculum. The "Shiva Haji Hospital" in Dar-es-Salaam stands as a monument to his philanthropy and invaluable services. Later on, the hospital was annexed to Princess Margaret Hospital.

He died in February, 1891 in Zanzibar. The mission journal recorded that, "He had been in extraordinary good humor." The Christian missionaries at Bagamoyo used to call him "our generous friend". Eight days after his death, an entry was placed in the mission journal that, "This devoted friend of the mission will not forget (us) in his last wishes."

SHAIKH AHMAD AL-MUHAMMAD
(1835-1905)



He was originally from Salamia, Syria where he was born most probably in 1835. He was the second Mukhi for Salamia Jamatkhana in Syria, appointed by Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in 1895. He had acquired deep religious education during his stay in India. The Imam ordered him to introduce some ceremonies in Syria. He had to face hurdles and hitches from his rivals, notably Himadi Umar, the head of the Momin Shahis, who secretly misguided the Ottoman authorities to arrest the Ismailis.

Mukhi Shaikh Ahmad and 12 leading Ismailis were arrested in 1901 in Salamia. Their houses were sealed and the records of correspondence with the Imam were seized. They were detained in Hamma, and were shifted to the prison of Damascus a few weeks later. After the preliminary hearings in 1901-2, they were put in trial before the Court of Appeal in 1903. They were charged with murder, attempted murder, use of violence in collecting religious dues to be sent to the Imam. They however withstood firmly in their commitments that they owned religious allegiance to the Imam, and denied the spiritual power of the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid. They denied all these charges, pointing out that the accusations that they had committed crimes of violence had been brought by their enemies, were based on hearsay and on the unsubstantiated evidence of hostile witnesses, and were, in fact, falsehoods. They also insisted that they were law-abiding subjects of His Majesty, Sultan Abdul Hamid and reiterated that the power of their Imam were exclusively religions and he had no earthy ambitious. The same line of argument was pursued during the numerous sessions of the Appeals court. They accused and their counsel continued to protest their innocence, but the court would not listen to their pleading and convicted them for a treasonable procedure. The British Consul W.S. Richards, reporting on the trial in 1903, commented that the real guilt of the accused was in their denial of the Sultan's claim to the Imamate or caliphate, which of course, was not a crime recognized by the Penal Code.

In the late summer of 1903, Mukhi Shaikh Ahmad was sentenced to death. The decision of the court was forwarded to the Court of Cassation in Istanbul in 1904 for final confirmation. In May, 1905, the Damascus Court reconsidered the case and issued a new verdict, repudiating all the accused to life imprisonment in a fortress.

On May 19, 1905, Mukhi Shaikh Ahmad routed an urgent telegram to the Court of Cassation, wherein he boldly wrote of his faith on Ismailism, stating that the verdict was unfair and unjust. He also denied that his companions intended any harm to the state and concluded with the words, "My weapons are divine knowledge and good works, and my task is the rejection of untruth and of false belief." The Court of Cassation made no

response to his appeal. He and his two companions however died shortly afterwards in prison. Soon after his death at the end of 1905, the Imam appointed his brother, Shaikh Nasr al-Muhammad as the next third Mukhi for Salamia Jamatkhana, who was also arrested with other 30 Ismailis in 1907 and was released on July 24, 1908, following the Constitutional Revolution in Turkey, proclaiming an amnesty. Mukhi Shaikh Nasr was however summoned in Istanbul to face a hearing, where he boldly defended himself. The court took a lenient attitude and he was exiled to Bursa in Turkey and was allowed to return to Syria after only six months.

It must be known that the Imam has summed up the above tragedy in "**The Memoirs of Aga Khan"** (London, 1954, pp. 186-7) that, "Under the Ottoman Empire, in the reign of Abdul Hamid, there was a considerable degree of persecution. Like several other minorities in his empire, they (Ismailis) suffered hardship, and many of their leaders endured imprisonment in the latter years of his despotic rule. With the Young Turk revolution, however, the period of persecution ended."





SHAIKH SULEMAN AL-HAJJ
(1828-1895)

He was born possibly in 1828, and was the first Mukhi for the Salamia Jamatkhana in Syria. It is related that a Syrian Ismaili delegation visited India in 1887 in search of the Imam of the time, finally reached Bombay and recognized the Imam. Mukhi Shaikh Suleman was also one of the members of the delegation. When he returned to Syria, he called a grand meeting at which all the leading Syrian Ismaili Shaikhs were present. He announced that their quest had been successful and that the Imam of the time had been found. Amid a general upsurge of enthusiasm, many of those present declared themselves ready to believe that Sultan Muhammad Shah was the true Imam. He had to face hurdles from those who had proclivity towards the Momin Shahis. He however remained steadfast and succeeded.

In an official letter of 1890, which was the first for the Syrian Ismailis, the Imam had declared his appointment to the office of Mukhi. The Imam also designated Amir Ismail bin Muhammad as his Estate Agent in Salamia. Mukhi Shaikh Suleman was a devoted person and helped the Ismailis with his own means and materials. In about 1892, the Imam also invested him with the title of **Varas**, the first among the Syrian Ismailis to be honored with this title. He died in 1895 while his visit to Bombay. His companion, Shaikh Ahmed al-Muhammad al-Hajj (1835-1905), was appointed the new Mukhi. Before returning to Syria, he was exhorted the doctrines and rituals of the Ismailis to be introduced in Syria.



SHIVJI HAJI, VARAS
(1868-1942)

The Agra Division comprises of the districts of Aligadh, Etah, Manipuri, Mathura and Agra city, covering an area of 8662 sq.miles. It is situated in Uttar Pradesh, India on the Jumna River. The Mughal emperor Akbar built the city of Agra in 1566, called Akbarabad, and it was a Mughal capital until 1658. Agra was one of those Indian cities, where the Ismaili settlers arrived in later period of British rule. It was famous for having a great deal of hustle and bustle, and the credit to form a small *jamat* in Agra for the first time goes to Varas Shivji Haji.

Varas Shivji traced his lineage from a certain Ismaili, called Essa in Kathiawar. Jetha was the son of Essa, and the son of the former in succession was Haji, the father of Shivji. Varas Shivji was born in the village of Tanna in Kathiawar in 1868. He had strong leaning towards Ismailism since childhood, and acquired religious education from his father. He left his native place and visited different cities in search of business opportunities. In 1898, he arrived in Agra at the age of 30 years when there were hardly two Ismaili families. He started his business on a small scale. He centered his attention to accelerate his business expansion and became one of the largest importers, exporters and stockists of patent, suedes, glucekid, calf, sambhur, morroccos, chrome, newbak and all kinds of fancy leathers. He was also a largest stockist of sole leathers, kattaies, buffallo- cutting, sheep skins and all kinds of other leathers. His Oriental Boot House in Agra had a branch in Calcutta and supplied military shoes to British India during the first world war. He built his beautiful building at Mantola Street, Agra.

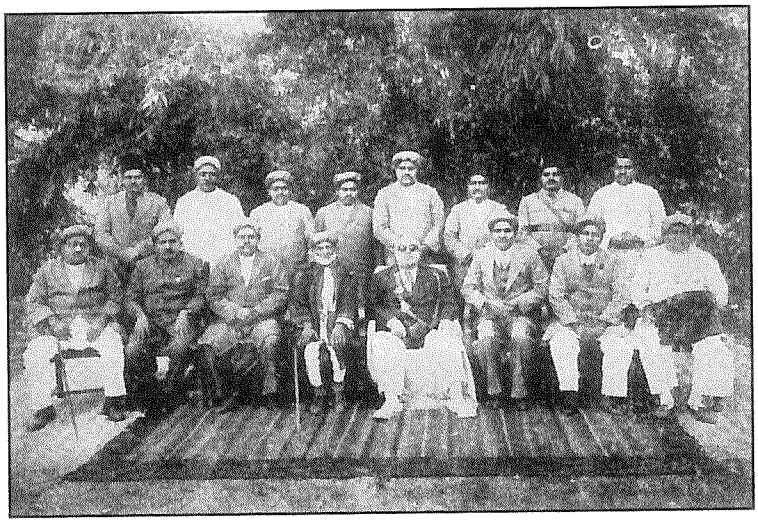
He found insignificant population of the Ismailis in Agra, and it urged him to flourish a *jamat* in the city. He invited several people, but failed in initial attempts. He was not disheartened and continued his efforts as his mission as best as he possibly could. Gradually, few families from Kathiawar began to drift in Agra, and formed a small *jamat.*

He had an honour to build the first Jamatkhana in Agra. When it was being built, he looked after its construction from dawn to dust, but the local Muslims constantly demolished it at night. He showed no sign of nervelessness and braced himself to mess the situation as he had a natural knack to tide over the problems. He surmounted the hindrances with singular courage after a few teething problems. Eventually, he raised the Jamatkhana in 1901. Besides, the religious sentiments of the Ismailis had often been rudely shaken by the onslaught of anti-Ismailis, who were making best of their opportunities. Varas Shivji Haji therefore, procured fraternal relations with the Muslims before their hatred developed into a chronic disease. He indeed adroitly weathered the storms. He was the first Mukhi of the Agra Jamatkhana with Kamadia Suleman Ghulam Hussain. The new Jamatkhana

attracted the business class to flock in multitude in Agra in search of green pasture.

His untiring and phenomenal services rightly earned for him the coveted title of **Varas** with best loving blessings when the Imam made a short stay in Agra. The Imam said, **"This location will become like a Kandi Mola (of Bombay)."**

He also took few more resolute measure, especially in raising the Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismaili Sindhi & Gujrati School. He shared princely amount in its construction. It was inaugurated on October 1, 1918. Master Mohanlal Devji Jivan Babarawala was employed to teach 20 to 25 students.



In 1920, the Ismaili Council Committee for Agra Division came into existence, and he was appointed its first President. In sum, he served the *jamat* for 28 years between 1901 and 1929 as a Mukhi and President of the Council. The Imam appointed him as his Estate Agent, whose legal power of attorney was registered on February 3, 1921. This was the only office he executed till his last breath.

Varas Shivji Haji's gentility, loving kindness, desire to share, shoulder the burdens of others and restless work marked him out from the beginning of his career quite apart from others. He would never let a poor feel that he was poor. Indeed, the lowly would be given extra consideration. Kindness to others was like a mission of life to him. He would visit the houses of the Ismailis and impart to attend the Jamatkhana daily. He also visited the shops of the Ismailis and guided them to ward off their problems. He was a pioneer in education and encouraged secular and religious education. He always made surprise visit in the Ismaili school. He brought sweets for the students and gave cash awards to the teachers.

Varas Shivji Haji was famous for his dedication. Once he went to Bombay to invite the Imam in Agra. The Imam assured to come in future. His true love can be measured from the fact that he caught the hand of the Imam and said, "Mawla! You will have to come in Agra." The Imam laughed to see his zeal and ardent love and promised to visit Agra

very soon.

On February 2, 1934, the Imam visited the Agra Jamatkhana and admired the excellent services of Varas Shivji Haji with best loving blessings.

On February 6, 1935, the Imam visited Delhi, where about 700 Ismailis from Agra, Kanpur, Ajmer, Lucknow, Kashi, Mirath and Banaras assembled to behold the Imam. The *jamat* was lodged in a big bungalow at Civil Lines area. Alijah Jivabhai Ismail, the President of Agra Council, Alijah Chhaganbhai Shamji and Huzur Mukhi Ahmed Punja had made an excellent arrangement for the *jamat*. The venue of the *didar* however was known as the Agra District Camp. The Imam made his gracious arrival in a decorated tent with Pir Sabzali and Alijah Varas Ibrahim. The Imam said, "You have taken much pain to come here. I am much happy to see you. You got me here invited, which is a sign of your love and affection." On that juncture, Varas Shivji Haji humbly presented a *mehmani*. The Imam said, "The Council works calmly. You all are happy. How many villages exist in the Agra Division?" The President said that there were 18 villages. The Imam also extended the duration of the office of Mukhi Ismail and Kamadia Alauddin Shamji, and graciously presented the *shawl* to Varas Shivji Haji and other leaders. The Imam also graced the *didar* on 7th and 8th February, 1935 and departed for Delhi on next day.

Varas Shivji Haji died on June 12, 1942 at the age of 74 years. He left behind three sons, viz. Varas Mukhi Ismail (1888-1942), Dhanji and Devji.

Varas Mukhi Ismail followed the footsteps of his father by performing services. He was a prominent merchant in Bombay with branches in Calcutta and Madras. He rendered invaluable services at all the three centres of his business in various spheres of life. He founded the first library in Agra and became its founder President on June 25, 1927. He was the President of the Education Board in Madras, and the Mukhi (1929-1942). He was also the Hon. Secretary of the Council, and its President (1930-1942). He was the President of Ismailia Welfare and Domestic Science Class and Ismailia Cooperative Credit Society in Calcutta. He was a director of the Ismailia Cooperative Bank and the Chairman of the Diamond Jubilee Education Trust Committee in Bombay. In view of his outstanding services, the Imam conferred upon his the title of **Varas** in 1936.

Prince Aly Khan arrived in India on November 21, 1930. He started his flying visit of upper India on December 7, 1930. He travelled by Punjab Mail for Gwalior on December 8, 1930 and arrived in Agra for the first time in the period of Varas Mukhi Ismail on December 10, 1930. Prince Aly Khan graced an audience to the *jamat*. During his next historical visit of India on December 14, 1933, Prince Aly Khan launched his another flying visit in some places by airplane, including Agra. On behalf of the *jamat*, Varas Mukhi Ismail accorded a warm ovation to Prince Aly Khan.

Varas Mukhi Ismail expired on October 18, 1942. He was survived by two sons, Alijah Yusuf Ali (1915-1998) and Kassim Ali; and a daughter, Huzur Mukhiani Daulat (d. 1989). Alijah Yusuf Ali migrated towards Karachi in 1949, where he was appointed as the Mukhi for Ranchhoreline Jamatkhana (1964-1972). He was also the President of West Pakistan Mubarak Society (1970-1990), the B.D. Chairman, etc.



SULTANALI NAZARALI WALJI, MISSIONARY
(b. 1929.....)

Missionary Sultanali Nazarali Walji traces his lineage from a certain dedicated person, called Uka, an origin of Badin, Sind. He migrated with his family in Kathiawar and adopted profession of cultivation. Uka had five sons, Savji, Vali, Abram, Jiva and Alibhai. It is related that once Imam Aga Ali Shah had gone to Kathiawar on a hunting excursion. The Imam stayed in the farm of Abram Uka in the village of Tithwa when he was tired, thirsty and hungry. The traditional curry as well as vegetable curry and rice with lassi and onions were served to the Imam and his entourage. Clean beds under the shade of trees with cool air blowing made the Imam and his retinue very restful and fresh. Upon departure, Uka and his son Abram made an offering. The Imam was much touched with their devoted hospitality and asked them to make a wish and blessed them.

Walji, the son of Abram Uka was an ordinary farmer, a man who worked, toiled and laboured on the small farm, a few acres with a few bullocks and cows. He was helped by his only son, Nazarali, who walked, sometimes rode on horseback with his father to school, a Gamthi School. Nazarali then joined Middle School in Vancaner.

Walji had also four daughters, Amarbai, Sakinabai, Manibai, Jenabai. Walji sent his son Nazarali in Moshi in Tanganyika, while himself went to Moshi in 1926 for a year. Nazarali had three daughters, Rabana, Mariam, Amina and six sons, Pyarali, Ramzan, Rajabali, Sultanali, Mohammad Ali and Sabzali.

Nazarali Walji travelled to Tanga by a sailing ship from Jamanagar and settled for a short time in Korogwe as a 24-hour worker with Seth Abdullah Nathoo. He was honest and active worker. Being a religious man, he would spend a lot of money in various religious causes from his monthly stipend of Rs. 30/- He left the job and went to Moshi and joined the school as a teacher, earning Rs. 60/- per month in 1918, where he became known as **Master Nazarali.** His hobby was reading and was steeped in mathematical calculations. He died in March, 1951. His wife Khatija Megji was an origin of district Than, near Chotila in Rajkot. She knew some 500 *ginans* by heart. She expired in March, 1953.

Sultanali, the son of Nazarali Walji was born on June 13, 1929 in Moshi, Tanzania. He was handsome and tiny in infancy. He was very sentimental, shy and timid, but raised to be a religious boy. He however did not like to go school and escaped several times from class. It sounds that the teaching of Master Ramzan influenced him a lot, who was a strict disciplinarian, highly devoted, moral and ethical person. Of the several teachers who visited Moshi from time to time, the visit of Pir Sabzali (1884-1938) left an indelible impact in the life of Sultanali Nazarali. He used to listen to him attentively and remained with

him all the time. He still proudly claims that there was one person who had a total influence on his career in the community services who was beyond doubt Pir Sabzali. His parents however taught him most of the values and ethics at home.

Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah visited Moshi in 1937 when he was 8 years old. In 1945, he intended to study at a high school in Dar-es-Salaam in the Aga Khan Boarding House. He managed to obtain admission despite his economical hardship and stayed there for about 1000 days. In August 3, 1945, he presented a *mehmani* in Dar-es-Salaam with his mates, Sadruddin, Akbar and Mohammad. Each implored blessings for pursuing a career in the fields of medicine, engineering and architecture after completion of high school diploma. Sultanali however mentioned in his memorandum that he would like to become an honorary missionary. The Imam nerved him with immense support, blessings and guidance; and approved for him to become an honorary missionary. This was certainly an early brick of the foundation of his life-long itinerary of service and a search for the Truth.

In the meantime, the Mission Conference held at Dar-es-Salaam on July 20, 1945 in the auditorium of the Aga Khan High School, presided over by Count Nimji Zaver. The Imam addressed in its last session. Sultanali attended it as a scout, serving water and tea to the delegates. It was at this conference that he came into the contact of Maji Bachbai Tejpar, who inspired him a great deal when she learnt that he had candidated for becoming a missionary.

During the Diamond Jubilee in August, 1946, he served as a volunteer in the camp for a month and also participated to decorate the Upanga section of the city of Dar-es-Salaam. There were occasions when the Imam spoke to individual families. His family members received best blessings in their turn of *mehmani*. His father presented him to the Imam, saying that he wanted to give his child in service to the Imam and would train him as an al-waez, who would work for the Imam. The Imam blessed them too much for the enthusiasm being shown in the field of mission work. It will be interesting to learn that the Imam regretted for not visiting Moshi during the visit of 1946 due to a tight schedule. The Imam promised Nazarali that he would send his son, Prince Aly Khan in the near future in Moshi, who would lay foundation of their residential building. In 1950, Prince Aly Khan visited East Africa and when he visited Moshi on a hunting expedition, Nazarali approached the Council and reminded the words of the Imam given to him in 1946 in Dar-es-Salaam. After some discussion, the Council finally agreed to leave the matter for the Prince to decide. Prince Aly Khan readily accepted the proposal, and came to their plot and laid the foundation stone of their building in Moshi downtown.

In 1947, he completed his high school and joined the Religious Centre, whose Incharge was Missionary Abu Aly Aziz. When the Imam made a gracious visit of Nairobi in 1948, he sought an opportunity to recite a *ginan* in the presence of the Imam in the Jamatkhana. He also earned a chance to read a few verses he had just composed. The Imam and Mata Salamat were much touched and said, "**Who composed the poem in English?**" He said, "With your blessings, I have composed it." The Imam said, "**Bravo! You are a poet of my house.**" In Nairobi, he wrote to the Imam about his ambition of becoming an honorary missionary. He received a prompt reply from the Imam, who directed him to go back to Dar-es-Salaam and rejoin the Centre. He went Dar-es-Salaam in August, 1948.

He arrived in Lindi in 1948 with 30 shillings in his pocket. He approached the office of OFC, the groundnut scheme, which was hiring people. He got a job as a clearing and forwarding departmental clerk. He also became the Secretary of the Muslim Association and created a scout group in Lindi, where he stayed for a year and saved enough money to make a trip of England.

In August, 1949, his engagement took place with Gulie Bhatia, and then proceeded alone in London. Before boarding a ship for Dar-es-Salaam, he went to Moshi to bid farewell to his parents. His mother cried, "Sultan, I allow you to go, but when you come back, I may be not alive. So this is our last meeting, but my blessings and prayers will always be with you."

He sailed for London and reached Marseilles via Genoa, and finally arrived to Villa Yakimour in Cannes. The house-keeper phoned Mata Salamat for permission to show him the Villa. He saw it and left some non-perishable food items and dry fruits for the Imam and Mata Salamat with his London address, and a humble request for an appointment. He received a letter from the office of the Imam through his Secretary, Miss Blaine, confirming his appointment with the Imam at the Ritz Hotel on September 13, 1949. The Imam graciously gave him an audience at the Ritz Hotel. The Imam recognized him, accepted his offerings and gave blessings. He submitted his plan of qualifying himself as a lawyer or something as well as qualifying himself as an honorary al-waez. The Imam asked why did he come to England for becoming al-waez? He explained that he had no chance but to pursue his studies in England after he met and consulted with his Imam. The Imam said that becoming a lawyer was good, but why not become an honorary lawyer and an al-waez of the house of Hazrat Ali. He replied that he could go to al-Azhar University in Cairo. But the Imam said that he should go to Pakistan and he would give him a letter addressed to Wazir Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy (1905-1956), the President of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan.

Accordingly, he wrote to Dr. Hoodbhoy in Karachi, reporting his arrival with Imam's letter. Varas Sherali Alidina received him at the seaport in Karachi. He stayed in the Kashmir Hotel in Saddar and went to Kharadhar on the same evening and met Dr. Hoodbhoy, whom he delivered the Imam's letter. Dr. Hoodbhoy read it five to six times and said, "Sultanali, welcome to Pakistan, welcome to Karachi, welcome to the Ismailia Association, welcome to our family. We are honoured by the Imam to have you as our guest. We will look after you as a guest from the Imam."

In sum, he came to live in a room at Hoodbhoy Villa in Garden area like a family member of Dr. Hoodbhoy. He had been given an office in the premises of the Ismailia Association. He began his study with great deal of interest and came into the contact of Prof. Jawad Muscati, Prof. A.M. Molvi and Hafiz Abdul Ghafoor. Missionary Alibhai Nanji and Jafferali K. Lalani helped him too much in his study in the *farmans* and *ginans*. He finally obtained a senior certification of an al-waez.

The Imam visited Pakistan for the first time after independence on February 4, 1950. The Imam wished to train 500 waezeens. Soon after Imam's departure, a programme of recruiting young boys and girls started. Dr. Hoodbhoy signed him up as a Waezeen Instructor. Thus, Sultanali exhorted to the students the important Islamic aspects and

Ismaili history.

During his visit to Pakistan, the Imam also told the Ismailia Association to open a branch in Dacca. Dr. Pir Muhammad Hoodbhoy told him to go to Dacca. He arrived in Dacca and started his working by opening a branch of the Ismailia Association. With the help of his colleagues, he started the first religious centre in Dacca with a library. He also started the first Co-operative Society and launched a successful campaign of the Platinum Jubilee Fund collection. He used to send the report of his activities to the Ismailia Association in Karachi from time to time. He also travelled in Sylhet, Memonsingh, Barisal, Bogra, Chittagong, Khulna, etc., where he also availed an opportunity of doing some very pioneering works..

In 1951, he had gone to Rangoon, Burma as a representative of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan from Dacca. He started his assignments and worked round the clock. There were two points he submitted in his report to the Imam. One related to the artificial jewellery, on which the ladies used to spend a fortune. The Imam sent a message to this effect to the Burmese *jamats*, forbidding them not to waste money on artificial jewellery. The second point was to place a plaque on the loggia of Jamatkhana in Rangoon, commemorating the Ismaili martyrs who had been killed during the 2nd world war due to the bombardment, which also damaged the premises of Jamatkhana. On October 27, 1954, the Imam sent a message to the Council that he used to think for those bold persons who were martyred during the war. The Imam also advised to place a memorial plaque of their names outside the wall of the Jamatkhana or in the library.

U Ban Tin, U Chit Shwe, Rai Hussain Khan Mohammad, Hasanali Jasraj and Ko Khin Maung helped him tremendously in his assignments. He also established religious classes, a kindergarten school and a cooperative society for the needy persons. His sojourn was very productive for Rangoon *jamat*. Itmadi U Ba Maung also took him to see the Prime Minister, Thankin Nu for tea on two occasions.

He then visited Singapore from Rangoon, and was the first missionary to have gone as far as Singapore and Malaysia. Soon after his short visit, he returned to Rangoon. After completion of his assignments with great deal of dedication, he came back to Dacca and ultimately returned to Karachi.

The Imam visited Karachi and stayed at the Metropole Hotel, where he met with the Imam. He reported details of his visits and received best blessings on February 7, 1951. The Imam told him to go to Bombay, Poona and Hyderabad in India and see him in Delhi. He visited Bombay and delivered his *waez* and lectures before the concourse of the *jamats*. He then proceeded to Poona and Hyderabad. Khan Bahadhur Aladdin arranged his meeting with the Nizam of Hyderabad. At length, he came in Delhi and met the Imam at Imperial Hotel. On that occasion, the leaders of Agra and Kanpur *jamats* insisted him to pay visit among their *jamats*. Thus, he went to Agra and Kanpur and delivered *waez*.

He returned to Karachi via Delhi and resumed his services with the Ismailia Association for Pakistan. He also continued to work in refugee areas with the Hunza, Gilgit and Chitral people. The refugee rehabilitation work soon began to show results. The sewing machines, the larries and the small shop cabins were provided to the families.

On December 23, 1951, the 28th Mission Assembly organized by the Ismailia Association for Pakistan in Ranchhorline Jamatkhana, Karachi. He presided the function and said in his address that, "We were the porters in the period of Imam Hasan Ali Shah, but now prospered beyond measure in the world. It is the need of the time to kill our great enemy, i.e., slander and enmity among us, the main weapons of disunity."

His significant activities in the field of *waez* training program continued till the Association reached the target of 500 waezeens. Wazir Dr. Hoodbhoy wrote to the Imam that he had satisfied all requirements of Sultanali Nazarali alongwith a report of his services in Pakistan, India, Burma, Singapore and Malaysia; and also showed his readiness for any further assignments. He also wrote that he could return to East Africa via Syria, where he would get an intense course in Arabic. Within a few weeks followed a reply from the Imam that, **"Let him return to East Africa and continue his good work there. The knowledge of Arabic can be pursued later on."**

On the eve of his departure from Karachi to East Africa on July 2, 1952, al-waez Sultanali Nazarali was accorded a farewell party with four other African waezeens. He arrived in Bombay, where he was also given a warm reception. He left Bombay with his grandfather. Huzur Wazir Ali Muhammad Macklai (1894-1971) came to see him at seaport. He arrived at Mombasa after an absence of 1000 days from East Africa. He stayed with Count Kassam Jivraj. Soon afterwards, he came in Moshi where the *jamat* hailed him in a princely reception.

He flew to Dar-es-Salaam very soon and stayed with H.A. Dhalla family in Upanga in the house, called Rustam Mahal. Finally, he got married with Gulie in a simple ceremony on September 19, 1952 and returned to Moshi with his wife. He decided to settle in Mombasa, where an apartment was rented for him in the Makupa Ismaili Building Society. His honorary services remained continued in Mombasa. He and Missionary Jaffer Ali Sufi (1908-1963), Ghulam Ali Shah (1910-1968), Ghulam Hussain Juma and Dr. H.A. Walji made significant services in Mombasa.

In the meantime, he got a part-time job at the East African Muslim Welfare Society. Soon after the birth of his first child, his wife also found a job with Guntzel and Schumaker, a Dutch firm in Mombasa.

He also worked tremendously in the campaign to generate funds for the Platinum Jubile of the Imam and collected a princely sum. He worked closely with Count Kassim Ali Paroo (1906-1998) in mission field. Once Count Paroo offered him an agency of the Jubilee Insurance Company. He accepted it, which was crucial in changing his destiny. He visited Kampala for three months, where he also sold a large quantity of the life insurance policies, and broke all records in Jubilee's life portfolio - 5.5 million shillings, and procured 250,000 shillings as the commission. He returned to Mombasa and wrote the Imam about his record life insurance business with a merit certificate of the Company. In reply, the Imam granted him gracious compliments. He continued to sell life insurance policies in daytime and serve the *jamat* at evening till late night hour.

He opened his office, namely "**African Continent Assurance**" in Mombasa and employed three persons. He also became an honorary General Secretary of the Muslim Welfare

Society in Mombasa. It will be interesting to note an example of a donor, who wanted Sultanali to erect a clock tower in Mombasa to be called "**Aga Khan Tower**" and offered a massive amount for it. When Sultanali wrote to the Imam, he declined the offer and said not to the clock tower, but the money be used for education purpose.

In 1957, the first visit of Hazar Imam took place in East Africa after assuming the Imamate. The Imam arrived in Nairobi at first, where Sultanali Nazarali and Jaffer Ali Sufi were active in their assignments. Both have also rendered valuable services in Nairobi during the *bayt* ceremony in 1958. He was bequeathed the duty in Dar-es-Salaam on October 19, 1957 during the occasion of the *Takhat Nashini*.

About 2700 Ismailis from 20 countries were gathered at Aswan to pay last tribute to the 48th Imam, whose official resting of body took place in a mausoleum on February 20, 1959. Sultanali Nazarali was also in Aswan with his wife. Soon after the ceremony, Mata Salamat summoned some members of the international *jamats* in her lounge. She went into a room and brought some clothes for the guests to be distributed. She gave him a silk shirt with an initial AK on the front left side and said, "**Make this to your size and wear it with pride. It will bring you lot of luck.**"

In 1963, he got an offer by a business group in Zaire (Congo) to work with them in partnership to develop industries in Zaire. In the meantime, he visited Gastaad, Switzerland, where he got the company of Wazir Mukhi Mohammad Ali Pirbhai of Paris and his wife, Fatimabai. The Mukhi received a phone call from the office of the Imam for their appointment on next day on February 9, 1963. The Imam told him at the meeting to move to Zaire for good, and accept the offer of the business group. Hence, he went to Geneva and then to Zaire, Bujumbura and then drove back to Mombasa. He sold his business and left Mombasa by car for Kampala and boarded the plane to Zaire from Entebbe and settled there. He used to make trips to Brussels, Belgium, Milan and Stuttgart to study industries and earn for his livelihood in the money exchange business.

In 1974, he moved to North America and arrived in Vancouver, Canada. He came into the contact of Amin Dossani in Seattle, who spoke to him about the Travel Lodge in Pullman, Washington. He accepted the deal and purchased it. Soon afterwards, he also bought a motel from Richard Hanna in December, 1974, whose final deal executed in February, 1975. He came to Pullman and took possession of the Travel Lodge. His new enterprise however did not effect his religious activities both in United State and Canada.

He made a flying visit in Dacca in 1977 with his family during the *didar* programme of the Imam. He reached Dacca, where he was invited to go to airport with the leaders to receive the Imam. The Imam came ahead of the crowd towards the car and extended his hand to him and his wife and said, **"Missionary, I am glad you are here**." The Imam's visit in Dacca lasted for five days, and he got a chance to see the Imam during one of the ceremonies, where the Imam held his right hand and gave blessings.

Soon after his return from Dacca, he acquired another property of WIL-RU, i.e. Wilma-Ruth and William Rusty, the initial names of two principal owners of the property, where he shifted with his family. In sum, he had a real estate sale license and a unique exposure to motels, apartment complexes and business for sale.

In November, 1978, the Imam launched a historical visit of Canada. He worked hard in the *jamat*, and was deputed in Calgary on November 16, 1978, Edmonton and Winnipeg on November 18, 1978 for organizing and inspiring the *jamats*. He had an occasion to talk with the Imam. He took his two sons, Shafiq and Maqbool to the Imam to bless them to follow on his footsteps and become missionaries, just as his father had offered him to Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in 1946. The Imam said, "**Missionary, let them make their own decisions.**" So saying, the Imam blessed his sons. He had a point wandering in his mind to be clarified and said, "Mawla, are you displeased with me?" The Imam said, "**Not at all.**" So saying, he blessed him and said, **"I am with you all the time, every hour, every minute, every second of life. You are doing some very good work for me and my *jamats*. I am fully conscious of your work. Continue your work."**

During the historic Silver Jubilee of the Imam, two major fund collection drives took place, where he played significant role. He helped to raise donation for the Khadak Jamatkhana, Bombay as well as the silver jubilee fund. He pledged his resources and collected funds from Canada, United States and other *jamats*.

In 1985, the Imam made an opening ceremony of the Darkhana Jamatkhana in Vancouver at the hands of the Prime Minister Brian Malroney. He shared a large amount for the new Jamatkhana in Vancouver. With President Bahadhur M.M. Karim and his team, including Wazir Malick Lakha and others, they all became instrumental in raising of the colossal amount for the project.

There was a luncheon party in West Vancouver at the house of President Itmadi Farouk Verjee. He was standing with other persons when the Imam entered the small decorated tent. The Imam came before the standing persons and all of a sudden asked him, "**Missionary, what do you think of the Burnaby Darkhana?**" He was flabbergasted and was taken by surprise and words gushed out from his lips that, "Mawla, Pir Sadr al-Din said some 600 years ago in the *ginan*, "i Utar Khand mahe'n Shah'ni Jiyot jagewa" (the Light of the Imam will shine from the North)." The Imam laughed and said, "**You are right, Shahbash Missionary**." The Imam patted him on his back and said, "**But don't forget from the West also**."

Henceforward, it was a time of his intense travels, speeches, seminars and meetings. He was also appointed a Waezeen Coordinator for the United States.

In 1986, the Imam visited United States. He worked hard and travelled all over the United States. He had a moment with the Imam in his residence in Chicago. The Imam stayed at President Dr. Zul Ismail's antique heritage mansion.

In 1990, he visited India and delivered touching lectures and *waez*. In 1992, he secured a chance to visit Salamia and Damascus, Syria. He delivered *waez* in English, which was translated into Arabic by Ahmed Yaghi. He also made flying visit of the historical places in Syria, notably the fort of Masiyaf. He had been in New Zealand and Australia in 1998, where he prepared 13 new waezeens during his short stay.

His *waez* activities and multiple roles in welfare arena continued unaffected. He is a nominated Paul Harris Fellow, a benefactor of the Rotary Foundation. He also gives to

the Salvation Army and United Way. His support also goes to Partnership Walk, the Aga Khan Foundation, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London and Focus Canada for various charities. He is a regular donor of Vancouver Hospital, UBC and Royal Colombian Hospitals. He, along with others, became also involved in helping Boarding Houses in India and almost 40 years later, founded two Boarding Houses in Bhuj, Kutchh, Gujrat in India, one for boys and another for girls.

Recently, his family donated large resources to the Aga Khan University and Focus in Pakistan. To respond to the increasing number of outpatients and provide them with greater access to various medical services, the Aga Khan Hospital, Karachi approved the design and construction of a 24000 sq.ft. building, as a first phase of new Ambulatory Care Services at AKU. It will comprise of 31 consulting rooms for Cardiology, Medicine and Executive Clinics, and will have a blood specimen collection station, a basic radiology room and a pharmacy. Missionary Sultan Nazarali Walji and his family have very graciously pledged US 3 millions towards the total cost of $. 4.3 million for the Nazarali Walji Building. During his visit to Pakistan, the Imam and Begum Inara laid foundation stone of the building on October 20, 2000 at Karachi.

On the following day, the Imam said in his speech during the Annual Convocation that three new buildings were inaugurated on yesterday, bringing much needed facilities to the campus, the Juma Building, Ibn Ridwan Building and Nazarali Walji Building. The Imam said for the Nazarali Walji Building that, **"The foundation stone for the new Nazarali Walji Building was also laid yesterday. It is the first phase of new ambulatory care services at AKU in response to the increasing number of outpatients and give them greater access to various medical services. Those at AKU responsible for supervising their construction deserve our thanks."**

Al-waez Rai Sultanali Nazarali Walji is a born fund-generator and ever ready volunteer. He is a kind-hearted, articulate, witty and a humble man with great sense of humour. He rolled in a sea of generosity all his life almost in all parts of the world in knowledge and resources are credible. Pride he has none - he is a simple man in whom are embodied all the qualities of a prudent gentleman. His role as an al-waez has held first priority in his life, a sacred function he considers.

During last 50 years he has travelled over 55 countries with his wife, and delivered *waez*, lectures and trained new waezeens. He had delivered over 15000 lectures, spoke for hours in over 2000 different places, emphasizing the practice of Ismaili faith. He had a rare collection of 1000 tapes of *waez* he delivered during last 25 years.

Missionary Sultanali Nazarali had three sons, Maqbool, Shafiq and Altaf. He confesses without a shadow of doubt that his sons gave him happiness, comfort and satisfaction. They too share with his father in all virtuous works to leave a legacy that has been a tradition in the Ukani family. May Hazar Imam grant him long life, health and courage to serve the Ismaili world more and more till his last breath, *Amen.*

THARIA TOPAN, SIR
(1823-1891)



Maharao Khengar I (1510-1585), the ruler of Kutchh is credited to have flourished Mandavi in Kutchh with a port during 16th century. The Bhatia caste of Hindus in Thatta, Sind was a famous merchant class. For promoting trade in Kutchh, Maharao Khengar I invited a certain Bhatia Seth Topan in Bhuj and sought his advice. With the suggestions of Seth Topan, the city of Mandavi with a port was built with massive sum. Seth Topan employed expert carpenters of Sind to build ships. He imported wood from Malbar and formed the firnances in Bhachao to prepare iron-nails. He was thus responsible to lay foundation of trade and ship building in Kutchh. He also built many temples in Mandavi. In those days, the Ismaili *vakil*, Sayed Pir Dadu (1474-1596) had come in Kutchh from Sind in 1587 and converted a large number of the Hindus, including Seth Topan in the time of Rao Bharmal I (1585-1631). The descendant of Seth Topan continued the business in Kutchh for about two centuries, but the later generations began to reduce in extreme poverty.

Among the greatest Ismaili heroes of East Africa was Varas Sir Tharia Topan, one of the descendants of Seth Topan, who coming from India as a small boy and working for the firm, M/S Jairam Shivji for 6 shillings per month, rose to be known as The King of the Ivory Trade.

He was born on Wednesday, September 21, 1823 in Lakhpat, Kutchh and was a son of a small vegetable seller. No facility of the formal educational subsisted in Lakhpat, which made him unlettered. He worked with his father as a helper. When he was 12 years old, he noticed one evening a playmate stealing money from a shop. He caught the boy in the street, recovered money and as he went to the shop to return it, the owner who, without hearing anything, raised a hue and cry himself accused him of the theft. Poor Tharia was severely belabored by the crowd, which had gathered around him. Fearing the worst and not daring to face his parents, he fled and jumped into the sea, got into the nearest vessel he saw, and took refuge amidst the cargo. The fear of the thrashing he received, sent him to sleep and when he woke up he found that the vessel was on high seas and himself a stowaway. Compelled by hunger and thirst he revealed himself to the crew, and the Tandel, who took compassion on him when he related incidents leading to his refuge in the vessel, tended to his needs as there was no chance of being restored to his parents. This vessel landed him in Zanzibar, where an accountant, who was working with the prominent Indian firm of Jairam Shivji of Mundra, Kutchh and knew his father, befriended him and got him the job of a garden sweeper in the house of Ladha Damji, the owner of the firm. It is an admitted fact that most of the Indian Ismailis came in Africa with industry in their blood, business in their brains and immense calibre to labour in their muscles, but with empty pockets. This illustration richly emanated in the personage of Tharia Topan.

It is also recounted that he had borrowed a small loan from the government and purchased a donkey-cart. He drove his cart in the villages and purchased cloves and coconuts and brought them in the city of Zanzibar for sale. This was however a short-run business but he procured considerable profit from it and repaid the loan. His job with Jairam Shivji however continued.

Coming here at the age of 12 years, illiterate and penniless, Tharia Topan learnt for the first time to sign his name at the age of 13 years, and became a scribe very soon with elegant handwriting in the firm of Jairam Shivji at the age of 18 years, and rising rapidly, he was put in charge of the credit department at the age of 22 years because of his honesty. Thus, he won the heart of his boss, who gave him quick promotions one after another.

He made progress for period of 10 years; and got permission to see his parents in India, who became extremely delightful to find their son was not only alive but also rich. His parents arranged his marriage with a good match. He returned to Zanzibar with his wife.

In the meantime, his wife expired in 1847. His relatives forced him to come back to Kutchh for the second wedlock. In 1848, he went to his native land once again and got married. During his visit he prepared a large number of Ismailis to migrate to Zanzibar and brought many of them with his own expenses and employed them.

It must be known that he was regular in his attendance in the Jamatkhana of Zanzibar, which was built in 1838. He was appointed the 15th Mukhi of Zanzibar Jamatkhana for one year in 1852 with Daud Tejiani as a Kamadia.

In 1698, the Umani Arabs drove the Portuguese from Pemba and in 1710 garrisoned their troops on Zanzibar. From that time until the late 19th century the Arabs held firm foothold in Zanzibar. In 1832, Sultan Sayed Sa'id of Oman moved his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar. Soon after the death of Sultan Sayed Sa'id in 1856, one of his sons, Sayed Majid, acceded to power with British support, while the second son, Bargash was sent into exile to Bombay, where he became acquainted with the opulence and sophistication of the British rule.

Ladha Damji appointed him the Assistant Customs Master, which provided him several opportunities to come into contact with Sultan Sayed Majid of Zanzibar and the European consular officials.

With the death of Sultan Sayed Majid in 1870, Sayed Bargash returned to Zanzibar and, together with Tharia Topan, whom he appointed as honorary prime minister, was largely responsible for Zanzibar's urban and architectural development. When Sultan Sayed Bargash (1870-1888) of Zanzibar succeeded Sultan Sayed Majid, on account of his dissatisfaction with Ladha Damji and the firm of Jairam Shivji, he took away from him the custom monopoly and commissioned it to Tharia Topan, who became the Chief of Customs in 1876, and held the post for about three years. The customs being the principal source of revenue, he was now the chief confidential and right-hand of the Sultan.

Henceforth, he came into daily contact with the European officials, who also sought his interview on business and consular matters. The place where he used to sit and attend

these guests has been preserved, known as the Barza Tharia.

Tharia Topan was now well set on the high road to fame and fortune. Stanley described him in **"Through the Dark Continent"** (London, 1878, p. 63) as "one of the richest merchants in town." He also opened his office in Bombay, operating his business and also appointed his agents almost in all the European ports.

His second wife died in 1863 having no child. He married for the third time in 1864 to Lady Janbai, who was the mother of six children.

His services for the community were also invaluable. He secured some privileges for the Indian Ismaili settlers from the Sultan of Zanzibar and employed them in Africa. He also financed the local and the European merchants as a banker.

He played a key role in the Aga Khan Case of 1866 in Bombay. Imam Hasan Ali Shah invested him the title of **Varas**. According to the statement of Lady Ali Shah before the court during the Haji Bibi Case on July 4, 1908, Tharia Topan was also the religious tutor of his son, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah like Gulu Haji, Mukhi Ladak and Kamadia Ismail. It must be known that as an official of the *jamat*, he was also present on the occasion of accession of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in 1885 at Bombay.

He had a distinction of entertaining Dr. Charles Livingstone (1821-1873) as a personal guest at his home, which is named Livingstone House. Dr. Livingstone was a Christian missionary and a traveler. On July 20, 1871, he started for Ujiji and was attacked in the forest, and for five hours he ran the gauntlet of the spears of his invisible enemies. He writes, "I felt as if I was dying on my feet, at almost every step I was in pain, in my appetite failed, and little bit of meat caused violent diarrhea, whilst the mind, sorely depressed, reacted with the body." He reached Ujiji on October 23, 1871, a living skeleton. Sir Tharia Topan happened to meet him, brought him at his residence, and entertained him.

In this desperate moment, H.M. Stanley who had been sent by James Gordon Bennett, the proprietor of the "**New York Herald**" to find out Dr. Livingstone dead or alive. Stanley reached Zanzibar on January 6, 1872. He too met with difficulties and was captured by a savage native tribe, and it was Sir Tharia Topan who sent help to him in the form of Tipu Tib, his faithful Arab partner. Stanely also stayed at Sir Tharia's home. H.M. Stanley writes for Tharia Topan in his book, "**How I found Livingstone**" (London, 1872, p. 8) that, "One of the most honest man among all individuals , white or black, red or yellow, is a Mahometan Hindi called Tarya Topan. Among the Europeans at Zanzibar he had become a proverb for honesty and strict business integrity. He is enormously wealthy, owns several ships and dhows, and is a prominent man in the councils of Seyyid Burgash."

Zanzibar was the great slave market, importing ten to fifteen thousand slaves annually, most of them re-exported to the Arab and Indian world. In 1861, Zanzibar became independent of Oman. Pressure from the British gradually strangled the slave trade, and in 1873, the Sultan ordered the closure of markets closed. Tharia Topan took severe measures to wipe out slave trade in Zanzibar. It was indeed by Tharia Topan's efforts that Sultan Bargash was able to ink an accord in 1873 for the suppression of the slave trade with Sir John Kirk, a British consular representative at Zanzibar from 1866 to 1887. His

inestimable services in connection with the abolition of the slave trade were highly recognized by the Queen of England. He visited England in 1875 with Sultan Sayed Bargash, where the Queen Victoria conferred on him a Knigthood and again in 1890 in India, and became the first Indian to have been knighted both in Africa and India.

H.B.E. Frere writes in "**The Khojas: The Disciples of the Old Man of the Mountain**" (MacMillian Magazine, vol. 34, 1876, p. 342) that, "A leading member of the community of Khojas accompanied Seyyid Burgash of Zanzibar in his late visit to England, and attracted much notice wherever the Seyyid went. He was a tall, stout, good-humored, elderly man, whose fair complexion, red-dyed beard, and light-blue dress handsomely embroidered, were in strange contrast to the spare, wiry figures, bronzed features, grave expression, and plain somber garments of the rest of the Sultan's Arab suite. He spoke Hinustani fluently, and a little English, and made friends wherever he went. Nor was the interest he incited lessened when it became known that he was Tara Topun, the Khoja merchant of Zanzibar."

He had generated close relation with Sir John Kirk, the British Consul and H.M. Stanley. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah writes in his **"India in Transition"** (London, 1918, p. 117) that, "Commerce in every branch, the development of agriculture, the supervision of works of public utility, the higher forms of skilled labour, the exercise of no insignificant share of political influence amongst the chieftains - all these were in Indian hands for many a decades before Europeans began to work of thorough and scientific exploration of the East African mainland. And the pioneers of this great enterprise, Stanley, Kirk and others, were indebted to Indians, such as late Sir Tharia Topan, for the organization of their expeditions into the interior."

He was a munificent donor for numerous causes. In 1881, Sir John Kirk established an English school in Zanzibar, in which Sir Tharia Topan donated Rs. 200,000/- In 1887, he built the Sir Tharia Topan Jubilee Hospital at a cost of 30,000 British pounds. The foundation stone of the Jubilee Hospital was laid on July 8, 1887 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign. Prof. Abdul Shariff writes in "**Zanzibar Stone Town**" (Singapore, 1998, p. 38) that, "Indian architectural influence reached its apogee in the old dispensary, built on a ground scale by Tharia Topan, an ostentatious merchant prince, as a hospital on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. It was built at a time when Sultan Barghash was building his palaces. The front of the building consists of an ornately carved two-story balcony in which the fretwork and fascia boards run wild. The door entrances and windows as well as many parts of the interior walls are copiously decorated with moulded plaster, and the large dinning room on the second floor has a hook in the ceiling to hang a chandelier. Topan died before the building could be completed, and it was bought by the trustees of Haji Nasser Nurmohamed, another prominent Indian merchant."

In 1885, at the age of 62 years and already ailing, he travelled to Bombay to make the necessary arrangements for the construction of the Jubilee Hospital, but was never returned to Zanzibar. The foundation was laid by his nephew, Hashim Virji Patel. During this time, the gostling established a firm based in Bombay, Morris completed the design of the Jubilee Hospital, and supervised production of all the joinery, which Patel brought to Zanzibar in 1885. After a dispute between Tharia Topan and Patel, a new foreman, Haji

Mistry was appointed, and he travelled to Zanzibar in 1890 with a crew of Indian craftsmen and masons from Kutchh to complete the project. Meanwhile, Sir Tharia Topan was seriously ill and had an eye operation in Bombay.

When the shadows of death were gradually closing upon him, he wrote in his will that, "If there arises any dispute among my heirs after my death, the advices of my best friend Sir John Kirk must be sought, and his decision should be considered final."

In sum, the runaway Tharia Topan of Kutchh became Varas Sir Tharia Topan of Zanzibar died on Wednesday, February 9, 1891 at the age of 68 years at Bombay. The Tharia Street in Zanzibar was named after him in his memory.

During his visit to East Africa, the Imam quoted him in Zanzibar on January 27, 1937 that, **"I don't understand why your youth class does not go in the villages of Tanganyika, Congo and Western Regions? Tharia Topan had migrated from a farthest place of Kathiawar and settled here, why you don't go as far as Atlanic regions?"**

In his welcome speech during the opening session of the World Ismaili Socio-Economic Conference at Karachi on December 15, 1964, Varas Amir Aly Fancy, the President of the Federal Council for Pakistan, recalled the invaluable services of some of the great Ismaili leaders of East Africa in presence of Hazar Imam. He paid rich tribute to Sir Tharia Topan for his great role in trade, industry and the *jamat*.

His third wife, Lady Janbai was a very influential lady with a close business relation with the Consols, Sultans and other leading merchants. She expired on Monday, February 12, 1934 at Zanzibar. The street called "Lady Janbai Seth" was named after her in Zanzibar.

It must be known that the death of Sir Tharia Topan resulted in further interruption of the construction of the Jubilee Hospital. Haji Mistry sent his crew home to India pending the outcome of a dispute over the terms of Topan's will. Due to the personal initiative of Sir Gerald Portal, the new British consul, Tharia's widow, Lady Janbai decided to resume the works, and in 1892, Haji Mistry was again sent out to Zanzibar with his crew of craftsmen. The budget set aside by Lady Janbai was exhausted in 1893, before completion of the building. After Portal's death in 1895, it seems that furnishing and staffing of the completed building became a problem, and the hospital could not open. Lady Janbai, living in Bombay, eventually decided to sell the building. It was bought in 1900 by the estate of another rich merchant, Haji Nasser Nur Mahomed, with the intention to use it as a charitable institution. Henceforth, it became known as "The Khoja Haji Nasser Nur Mahomed Charitable Dispensary." Haji Nur Mahomed's trustees set up a dispensary on the ground floor of the building, and subdivided the upper two floors into apartments. This mixed use of the building continued until the revolution in 1964, when the occupants fled the island and the dispensary fell into disuse. Thus, it passed into government control. A change in government policy in 1985 paved the way for a more liberal economic development policy. In October, 1990, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture leased this old dispensary from the government in order to restore this major landmark to its former splendour. In 1993, when the architect first spent time investigating the building, it appeared to be in a dreadful condition. After an initial phase of research, the construction contract for the restoration of the building was signed in April, 1994, exactly one hundred

years after its first completion.

The old dispensary restoration was supervised by Cameron Rashti, the Project Manager of the Historic Cities Support Programme. This is the second major historic building following the restoration of Baltit Fort in Hunza. Zanzibar has now become an attractive tourists destination, and the Stone Town is subject to increasing pressure as a result of modern development. Since its inauguration about one hundred years ago, the old dispensary has been hailed as a symbol of multi-cultured Zanzibari architecture. Its design, its rich decoration, and its construction techniques were exceptional quality.



My spiritual children should understand that if they are given a title - all well and good. But this does not mean that they come to Jamatkhana more or less than other people. If you come regularly, if you have been admitted to Baitul Khayal and if you have been regular in attendance, if you have done your religious duties regularly, this is much more important than any title that can be given and I want all my spiritual children to always remember this. Those of you who are working for the goods of *jamat* and who are working for Imam, you cannot all receive titles. But I want you to understand that if you take an example of those spiritual children who, on every occasion when I come to East Africa, decorate the Jamatkhanas, these spiritual children do not all get titles and yet they have done a great deal of work. And I do not want spiritual children to start trying to think this is the time that I must get a title of Vazir, Alijah, Itmadi, Count. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Nairobi, October 4, 1962.)



U KAN GYI, WAZIR
(1870-1960)

Rai Hirji was a famous for collecting religious dues in Indian villages during the period of Imam Hasan Ali Shah and visited Mahallat to deliver it. His son Varind was also a devoted and became the Mukhi of Kandi Mola Jamatkhana, Bombay and served in the period of three Imams. His devotion can be measured from the saying of Imam Hasan Ali Shah at Wadi, Bombay that, " **My son Aly Shah is my one eye, while Varind Mukhi represents my second eye.**"

Varind Mukhi had three sons, Nanji, Ghulam Ali and Pir Muhammad. His elder son, Nanji was also the Mukhi, while his younger son Ghulam Ali was a scribe, who visited with the Imam in all places and noted down the *farmans*. The *farmans* that were published into the Khojki script in Bombay, were the original collection of Ghulam Ali. Nothing is known about the third son, Pir Muhammad.

Nanji (d. 1916), the elder son of Varind Mukhi, was a well-known personage. He left behind seven sons, viz. Kanji, Ramzan Ali (d. 1956), Hyder Ali (d. 1938), Rai Ghulam Hussain (d. 1960), Alijah Faizullah (d. 1937), Jaffer (d. 1938) and Rai Muhammad (d. 1968).

Kanji assumed the Burmese name, **U Kan Gyi** soon after the *farman* of the Imam in 1938. In Burma, a man above 25 years is called *maung*, from 25 to 40 years as *ko* and from 40 years and above as *u*, means **the elder one**. Thus, **Kanji** came to be known as **U Kan Gyi**.

Wazir U Kan Gyi was born in Kandi Mola, Bombay in 1870. In 1947, Wazir U Kan Gyi visited Paris for 40 days to see the Imam in the hospital. During his visit, the Imam asked him, "Do you remember that once your grandfather (Varind Mukhi) had taken you in presence of my grandfather in Wadi, Bombay. My grandfather took you in his lap and fed you with his own hand." Wazir U Kan Gyi engulfed into thoughts to recollect and said, "Mawla, I remember that Imam Hasan Ali Shah took me in his lap and fed me one mouthful." The Imam said, "Not one, but two mouthfuls."

He got his formal education in Bombay. He has related several times to his friends that Pir Shihabuddin Shah had taught him the old daily prayer at Wadi, Bombay. His relatives resided mostly in Porebandar, therefore, he had to visit it several times. His wedlock was solemnized with Varasiani Domia Sonbai on March 6, 1892 in Bombay. She was born in September 13, 1877 in the village of Jamrawal in Saurashtra. Soon after the marriage, both came in Rangoon in 1893 for business purpose. In those days, a handful Ismailis resided in Burma and most of them were the merchants of glassware, cutlery, grocery,

etc. He started his own store in 1894, located at 559, Dalhousie Street in Rangoon, dealing in high power lamp, lanterns with spare parts, all kinds of glassware, aluminum ware, enamel ware, Ever-ready & Hong Kong torches, batteries, etc. He also ventured in dealing the real estates and imports. With his buying power, he could excel in importing large quantities at substantially lower price. He was also a landlord of prime properties - 68 of them in his portfolio in Rangoon - free and clear in outright ownership. He also owned several shops of lampware, patromax and glassware and procured rapid progress within few years.

He was an ordinary social worker and a missionary during the first visit of the Imam in Rangoon on June 6, 1900. When the Imam made his second visit on February 7, 1914, the Rangoon *jamat* humbly presented a sum of Rs. 10,000/- to the Imam for his motor car on February 8, 1914, in which Wazir U Kan Gyi also made his contribution. He also shared in the Memorial Funds for the annual *majalis*, which was also presented to the Imam. In appreciation of his inestimable services, the Imam graciously presented him a *shawl* and *khilat* on February 17, 1914.

Wazir U Kan Gyi was a devoted person and inherited the tradition of the service of his illustrated ancestors. He had also a tremendous potential for performing *waez*, and became an honorary missionary of the Recreation Club. He was a sparkling conversationalist and a brilliant orator. Besides, he was also appointed the member of the newly formed H.H. The Aga Khan Ismaili Council for Burma on January 8, 1910. In 1920, he became the managing member of the Ismaili Girls School in Rangoon, where the young girls were given training of embroidery, sewing and knitting.

Alijah Ali Muhammad, the member of the Ismaili Council once arranged a dinner party at his bungalow, called Noorani Bagh on March 27, 1921. He invited the prominent Burmese leaders, viz. Wazir Mukhi Jivabhai Bhanji, Alijah Alibhai Hakimji, Baghwan Mukhi Merali, Walji Ahmad, Fajula Mukhi Nanji, Ismail of Goa & Sons and Wazir U Kan Gyi, etc. Alijah Ali Muhammad made a speech soon after the dinner and spoke different measures to be taken for the progress of the Ismailis in Burma. Wazir Jivabhai Bhanji seconded his proposal and it was resolved to establish **The Burma Ismaili Trading Company** to help the petty dealers and poor Ismailis. On that occasion, a sum of Rs. 4,00,000/- was recorded as an initial capital for the project, in which Wazir U Kan Gyi contributed Rs. 5000/-

The Imam visited Bombay from Europe with Mata Salamat and Prince Aly S. Khan on December 14, 1933, where an elephantine concourse of the Ismailis flocked for having the *didar*. Wazir U Kan Gyi also arrived in Bombay with his family. He got the chance to participate in the *mehmani* ceremony at the Aga Hall, Nesbit Road on Wednesday, December 21, 1933. With his *mehmani*, the Imam also accepted the *mehmani* of Mukhi Jaffer Nanji of Merqui *jamat* and Alijah Faizullah Nanji of Mandalay *jamat*. Both Wazir U Kan Gyi and Mukhi Jaffer Nanji reverently submitted the accounts of the Merqui *jamat* and earned best loving blessings.

On that occasion, the Imam asked few questions to Wazir U Kan Gyi. The Imam said, "What is your business and from where do you import the items?" He said, "I import them from Germany and Japan." The Imam asked, "Which items are more cheap, Germany or

Japan?" To this, he said, "Japan is more cheaper than Germany" The Imam made the third question, "Is the glassware of Japan durable?" He answered affirmatively. The Imam conferred on him with best loving blessings.

On that occasion, Mrs. Rehmatbai Mukhi Jaffer Nanji, Varasiani Domia Sonbai U Kan Gyi Nanji and Mrs. Mongibai Alijah Faizullah Nanji submissively presented the Imam the gold chains. The Imam graciously accepted, and returned a gold ring as a token of his own gift to Alijah Faizullah Nanji.

The Imam resumed his conversation with Wazir U Kan Gyi and asked, "What is your opinion about the separation of Burma from India?" He said, "I think that the separation will be far better." The Imam said, "Will the Burmese *jamats* get benefit of the separation?" He said, "Of course!" The Imam blessed them with paternal maternal best loving blessings.

On January 1, 1939, Wazir U Kan Gyi humbly presented a *mehmani* to the Imam in Bombay. The Imam said, **"You are rendering much services and I tender you my compliments."** The Imam added, **"I want to make a *farman* for the people of Rangoon and will explain it now."** In his *farman*, the Imam said, **"Learn Burmese language and skills. Attract their hearts towards you. Live amicably with them. You have passed many years in prosperity and procured profit. It is the land of these (Burmese) people. Make your hearts big, not narrow. Tolerate the remaining few hardships. You always respect to your officers and behave in a manner they advised you to. Time is very critical. Maintain discipline. You must obey your officers instructions. If you find injustice, you write to me through the Council as per rule. Hooks and cooks subsisted in past, but the condition of Burma is not so ideal at present. It is necessary to maintain discipline and respect the officers while following their advices."**

On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee in 1946, the Imam appointed him his Estate Agent for Burma in place of Rai Mukhi Hussain Ali Ibrahim Virji (1938-1946), and conferred upon him the title of **Rai**.

The British had launched heavy bombardment on Rangoon during the second world war, resulting a heavy devastation of the Jamatkhana, situated at Mughal Street with the innocent casualties of 31 Ismailis on April 19, 1943. The Imam crowned the martyrs with the title of ***Shahids.*** When the war ended, Wazir U Kan Gyi renovated the Jamatkhana in 1949 with his own expenses. When it was under renovation, the Ismailis offered the prayers at the residence of Mukhi Rai Muhammad Nanji, the younger brother of Wazir U Kan Gyi. On December 22, 1949, the Imam sent a message from Cairo, addressing to the Supreme Council, Rangoon, showing his happiness upon the completion of the Jamatkhana, and blessed Wazir U Kan Gyi for his great services. The Imam also told to get its opening ceremony by the hands of the President or Prime Minister of the Republic.

When the new Jamatkhana built up, Wazir U Kan Gyi and the Supreme Council for Burma humbly implored the Imam to visit Rangoon to perform its opening ceremony. The Imam sent his message on December 14, 1949 and told him, while conveying best blessings, that he would visit Burma soon after visiting Pakistan and India. Hence, the opening ceremony of the new Jamatkhana was performed on January 5, 1950 by Thakin Nun, the

Prime Minister of Burma. The Prime Minister invited the Imam in his speech as a state guest. The Imam also sent a message on October 27, 1954 to the Council of Burma that he used to think for those bold persons who were martyred during the war. The Imam also advised to place a memorial plate, bearing their names outside the wall of the Jamatkhana or in the library.

In July, 1947, the health of the Imam impaired in Paris and was hospitalized. Wazir U Kan Gyi immediately left Burma and reached Paris. He stayed in Paris, for 40 days. The Imam summoned him daily and talked with him while being at the hospital. He is reported to have asked about 70 questions during his stay, which he related several times in his *waez.* Some of the questions are given below:-

He asked, "Pir Sadruddin imparts in the *ginan* that the believers shall earn *nav nand* (nine boons) when the Imam is pleased upon them. Mawla, what are these nine boons?" The Imam said, "Each *nand* contains one-fourth of the daily prosperity of the world. Pir Sadruddin had yet curtailed in his commitment. When I become happy, I shower upon the believers all *nand*, not nine."

He again asked, "What is an ideal diet to be healthy?" The Imam said, "Do you have curd, milk and rice in Burma?" He said, "These are plenty in our land." The Imam said, "Eat curd and rice and drink milk in your daily meal. You will conquer the world."

He questioned, "What measures should be followed to modernize the *waez*?" The Imam said, "When you deliver *waez*, you must exhort to the *jamat* the importance of the health for few minutes."

He asked, "When we sip the holy water, we pray for ourselves, our relatives and the *jamats*. Each person in the line has a long list of prayer, resulting other persons behind the line to wait for their turns. What measure should be followed?" The Imam said, "You must curtail and pray that, Ya Mawla, you may have mercy and become happy upon us and the Ismailis, because all the blessings of religion and world are contained in my mercy and happiness."

When the health recovered, the Imam summoned him at his residence and invested him with the title of **Wazir**.

The Imam is reported to have said on one occasion that, **"Most of the Ismailis come to me and ask for their worldly problems, and none of them asked on religion matters or on spiritual progress. Whenever my one servant, my follower and my missionary come to me from Burma, he always inquires on religious matters only and takes away a heap of pearls. He is Wazir U Kan Gyi Nanji."**

The Imam visited Burma between January 20, 1951 and January 26, 1951. This was the last visit of the Imam in Burma during his Imamate period. Wazir U Kan Gyi humbly offered the Imam to let him bear his whole expenses from Europe to Burma with return expenses. The Imam said, "Well, I allow you only to bear my expenses with return from Bombay to Burma. I will count it being the expenses from Europe to Burma and return too."

The Imam summoned a conference of the Ismaili delegates in Cairo to review the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee upon the completion of 70 years of his Imamate. Wazir U Kan Gyi represented the Burmese *jamats* with his wife. They left Rangoon and arrived at Bombay and left for Cairo with the Indian leaders, Wazir Abdul Hamir Hasan Ali, Alijah A.C. Rahimtullah and Itmadi Mukhi Kassim Ali Giga. They reached Cairo on March 13, 1951.The delegates discussed mutually in the morning and met the Imam at evening on March 15, 1951 in Hotel Semiramese. The Imam emphasized that the program should be worked out on the pattern of Golden and Diamond Jubilees to improve the social and economical conditions of the Ismailis. The Imam, Mata Salamat and Prince Aly Khan invited them on next day for a lunch at Mohamedali Club and graced them with a photograph. He also obtained permission from the Imam to celebrate the token ceremony of the Platinum Jubilee in Rangoon, which was festivated on February 25, 1954. During his visit in Cairo, he also went to see Al-Azhar University, museum and other historical places of the Fatimid period with other leaders. The delegates also met Dr. Kamil Hussain, who showed them the historical places

The Imam left Cairo for France with Mata Salamat on March 17, 1951. Prince Aly Khan offered the Ismaili delegates to join him on his visit to Syria on March 18, 1851. Wazir U Kan Gyi accepted it with other 11 leaders and arrived in Salamia, where he learnt much about the Syrian Ismailis.

He also submitted a humble request to the Imam on behalf of the *jamat* to accord permission to raise funds for Platinum Jubilee in Burma. The Imam said in laughter, "Why do you need Platinum Jubilee? I do not see a poor Ismaili in Burma. What will you do for such funds? I have never seen a single woman void of gold bangles in Burma." It is also said that he made a request to fix a target of Rs. 20,00,000/- for Burma, in which he alone would its half. The Imam however reduced it and made the target of collecting Rs. 14,00,000/- and told him to contribute not more than Rs. 6,00,000/- and let the Burmese *jamats* to participate in it.

It is also to be noted that Huzur Mukhi Hashim Kassim Bhanji, the Hon. Secretary of The Aga Khan Legion Committee for Burma, attended the meeting of The Platinum Jubilee Celebration Committee at Bombay on February 25, 1954. He declared in the meeting the program of the jubilee celebration and the collection of the funds in Burma. He said, "The Imam fixed a target of Rs. 14,00,000/- to be collected in Burma, which almost have been declared by the donors. One magnificent donor has alone contributed Rs. 6,00,000/- We have received so far Rs. 10,00,000/- out of Rs. 14,00,000/- For the welfare of about one thousand Ismailis residing in Burma, as per Imam's *farman*, the plan for establishing the cooperative societies has been made. One like society has been registered. Besides, the movement of erecting the societies for the scouts and the *jamat* is in operation." (**"Platinum Jubilee Bulletin"**, Bombay, March 15, 1954, p. 35)

With the kind permission of the Imam, he celebrated a Diamond Wedding Function upon completion of 60 years of his marriage. On that occasion, a grand *majalis* was organized at the Rangoon Jamatkhana on Sunday, March 22, 1953. Missionary Aziz Habib delivered a *waez* on the obedience of the Imam's guidance.

He had a scheme in his mind to organize a lunch party on the first Sunday of every month in Rangoon with a view to discuss the progress of the *jamat*. He worked out his scheme and sent his report to the Imam for approval. The Imam was highly delighted in his scheme and approved it through a message from Canes on March 30, 1953.

Wazir U Kan Gyi was also the Principal of the Mission Class in Rangoon and nerved the promising waezeens to serve the *jamat*. He also arranged Mission Assemblies in Rangoon and the last one on August 30, 1953. He presided the assembly, wherein 26 young waezeens of Rangoon and Thingangyun *jamats* had participated. He formed an examination committee of three persons, viz. Alijah M.K. Jamal, Ghulam Ali and Varas Sadruddin Faizullah.

The Platinum Jubilee of the Imam was celebrated with great pomp on Wednesday, February 3, 1954 at Karachi. Wazir U Kan Gyi attended the jubilee with his wife and returned to Rangoon on February 23, 1954. He submitted his services to the Imam through the Supreme Council for Burma on that day, reporting to have returned safely to Rangoon after attending the jubilee. The Imam sent his message from Canes on March 4, 1954 and gave best loving blessings for his safe return and the service.

In March, 1954, the health of his wife, Varasiani Domia Sonbai shattered. She was given necessary treatment in Rangoon. Meanwhile, Wazir U Kan Gyi sent her medical report to the Imam for gracious guidance. The Imam sent him the following message from Canes on March 27, 1954: -

My dear Vizir,

I send you and Varasiani my best paternal maternal blessings for Samar Chanta on her behalf. Also best loving blessings to you, Varasiani and your family for service on Norooz occasion.

I was very sorry to hear of the sad news about Varasiani's health and I pray for the restoration of her health. She should seriously follow the doctor's advice - only eat what he says and very little food at a time; not drink too much water during meals and drink at least one hour before.

My best loving blessings to you all and to all Burma beloved spiritual children; you are ever near my heart and thoughts.

With the gracious blessings of the Imam, Varasiani Domia Sonbai recovered within few days. Wazir U Kan Gyi sent her latest medical report to the Imam through the Supreme Council for Burma. The Imam sent his message from Canes on April 6, 1954, informing the Supreme Council to convey his best blessings to Wazir U Kan Gyi and his family for the services of the restoration of the health of Varasiani Domia Sonbai.

Unfortunately, Varasiani Domia Sonbai expired on April 24, 1954 in Rangoon at the age of 77 years. The Imam sent an urgent telegraphic message of blessing to the departed soul from Canes on April 27, 1954. She was a dedicated social worker and served as a Lieutenant for three years and a Captain for one year in H.H. The Aga Khan's Young

Ladies Volunteer Corps for Burma. She was a patron of Bombay Volunteer Corps and was awarded a gold medal by the Imam for her valuable service. She had witnessed with her husband the Golden, Diamond and Platinum jubilees.

Wazir U Kan Gyi was destined twice to visit Europe with his wife, including East African countries in 1947 and 1954, and had the audience of the Imam, Mata Salamat and Prince Aly S. Khan and his two beloved sons.

He was also invited in Cairo to attend the token ceremony of the Platinum Jubilee on February 20, 1955. The ceremony was held in the Cleopatra Hall of Hotel Semiramese, attended by 62 delegates. It was a solemn spectacle of 20 minutes. The Ismaili leaders most humbly presented 70 gold ginnies to the Imam, which was graciously accepted. The Imam presented the same gold ginnies to the delegates.

He intended to visit Cairo to see the Imam and wrote an urgent letter, asking for kind appointment of the meeting. The Imam sent him a reply from Cairo on February 7, 1956 that, **"You may come when you like, but I am going to leave Cairo on 14th for Europe, and meanwhile I am very very engaged for the works of the African and Syrian *murids* and time is short for others."** He postponed his trip to Cairo and attended the first Ismailia Conference of Burma held on 18th, 19th and 20th February, 1956 at Rangoon. It was organized by the Council and attended by 45 delegates, including 6 ladies, who represented 17 villages of Burma

Prince Aly S. Khan visited Pakistan on February 22, 1956 and then in India on February 29, 1956. He proceeded to Colombo on March 3, 1956 and to Dacca on March 6, 1956. Rangoon was not included in his programme. Wazir U Kan Gyi wrote a letter to the Imam on January 20, 1956 and made a humble request to make programme of Prince Aly Khan in Rangoon. The Imam sent him a reply from Aswan on January 30, 1956 that,**"I have received your letter of 20th January. Prince Aly has to do much work and it is not advisable that he may go to Burma. I send you my blessings."**

Mukhi Alijah Ali Muhammad Ibrahim Virji donated a sum of Rs. 60,000/- in 1928 for the plot of the Jamatkhana in Rangoon. The Imam made a *farman* to place his photo with a marble plate in the Jamatkhana. The Imam allowed to place the photo of Mukhi Alijah Ali Muhammad in the Jamatkhana when he visited Rangoon in 1951. During the *Ruhani Majalis* of Mukhi Alijah Ali Muhammad on July 29, 1956, his photo was placed and unveiled with the hands of Wazir U Kan Gyi in a ceremony.

He also went to Aswan to attend the burial ceremony of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah on July 18, 1957. He was present with other leaders to receive the coffin box. He left Cairo on July 21, 1957 and again visited Aswan with his son Alijah Zulfikar to attend the official resting of the body of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah in a mausoleum on February 20, 1959. This time he was confined to the wheel chair due to weakness.

The Burmese delegation left Rangoon on January 19, 1958 and arrived in Karachi to attend the *Takhat Nashini* of Hazar Imam on January 23, 1958. The Delegation comprised of five leading persons, viz. Varas Sadruddin Faizullah, the President of the Council, Wazir U Kan Gyi, Mukhi Ghulam Hussain Alibhai, Dr. Mrs. Jenuma, Alijah Zulfikar Ali U Kan

Gyi. The Imam graced them an audience, whom they humbly requested to visit Burma with his family.

Prince Sadruddin had been on a trip of Rangoon in October, 1959 and took a visit of the store of Wazir U Kan Gyi. Soon afterwards, Wazir U Kan Gyi wrote a letter to Hazar Imam on October 9, 1959 alongwith a beautiful album of the photos of the visit of Prince Sadruddin. The Imam graciously sent him a letter on October 22, 1959 and expressed his paternal maternal best loving blessings for the service and also delighted to get the above album.

Wazir U Kan Gyi Nanji wrote a letter in the beginning of 1960 to the Imam, requesting reverently to make a gracious arrival in Burma. In his message, the Imam said, **"I am free from March 16 to March 24. Is my *jamat* ready for my *didar mubarak*?"** Upon receipt of the message, the leaders held a meeting at his residence to work out the programme. The Council made its reply to the Imam that the *jamat* would be very pleased for Hazar Imam's *didar mubarak*. Unfortunately, he lived no longer to behold the Imam in Rangoon.

Wazir U Kan Gyi Nanji died on February 26, 1960 in Rangoon at the age of 90 years. The Imam sent the following telegraphic message to the family members:-

L.T. Noorani
Rangoon

Gustaad : March 2, 1960

Learnt with deepest sorrow passing away of beloved Vazir U Kan Gyi. Late Vazir had served greatly to my grandfather and myself. Late Vazir will be missed by all my spiritual children of Burma. Pray for his eternal peace. Affectionate loving blessings to all his family members for devoted services.

The Imam also sent another telegraphic message to the President of H.H. The Aga Khan Supreme Council for Burma from Gustaad on March 2, 1960 and conferred paternal maternal best loving blessings and prayed for the eternal peace of the soul of Wazir U Kan Gyi. The Imam also sent one more message to the family members from Marseilles on May 19, 1960.

It should be known that the Imam made his first gracious visit to Rangoon very soon and gave the *didar* to the *jamat* on March 21, 1960 and March 24, 1960. On Monday, March 21, 1960, the Imam said at the conclusion of his *farman* that, **"Today, I want also to remind you of the many years of service, which the late Vazir U Kan Gyi has done for this *jamat* and take him also as an example, for he did many years of fine services."**

During his visit in Burma, the Imam used the old Humber car of late Wazir U Kan Gyi. It was of great sentimental value for his family.

Later on, the family members of late Wazir U Kan Gyi humbly sent an album, containing the photos of the Imam's visit to Rangoon. The Imam acknowledged receipt of the album and sent his message on June 27, 1960 from Gustaad and expressed his immense pleasure, and said,**"This album is like a wonderful souvenir."**

Wazir U Kan Gyi had six sons, viz. Hussain (d. 1918), Alijah Suleman (d. 1972), Mukhi Ghulam Ali of Rangoon Jamatkhana (1945-1951) and a member of the Council (1946-1965), who died in 1988, Abdul Rasul (d. 1947), who had gone to London and became Bar-at-Law and was the President of the Supreme Council for Burma (1945-1947), Alijah Zulfikar (d. 1980) and Rai Manji, who is now an Estate Agent of the Imam in Rangoon. He had also a daughter, called Shireen, who died in 1998.

Those spiritual children who have sought after titles, should also understand that titles are worldly matters and if you have done good service, so then you will get your titles. And if you do not get your titles now, you will get them on some other occasion. But do not chase after them. Do not make this an aim of your everyday lives. Your lives you should think of in two ways - your religious duties and your worldly matters. Your religious duties come first. And those spiritual children who have done service to the *jamat* without thinking of titles, without thinking of councils, and who have done this service privately in a discreet manner, without thinking any compensation whatsoever in a worldly manner, these spiritual children have my very, very affectionate blessings. (Mawlana Hazar Imam : Nairobi, October 4, 1962).



VIRJI PREMJI PARPIYA, WAZIR
(1881-1946)

Virji Premji Parpiya traced his lineage from his ancestor, called Khoja Bhalo (d. 1607), who lived around 1154 at Lohgadh in Punjab, belonging to the Lohana class in the Rajput stock. He embraced Ismailism by Pir Dadu (d. 1596) and with the request of Rao Bharmal (1585-1631), the ruler of Kutchh, Pir Dadu left Sind and arrived in Kutchh with Khoja Bhalo in 1587. Bhalo was employed to a high post in the state administration. He was followed by his son Lakho (d. 1629), Khetasi (d. 1687) and Banno, who died in Delhi in 1715. His son was Jivo (d. 1752), whose son was Ebhalo (d. 1784) and henceforward, the whole family became known as the Ebhlani family. Ebhalo had five sons, viz. Chagalo, Tejasi, Bijal, Hamir and Punjo. The elder son Chagalo (d. 1814) had two sons, Kamadia Mannek and Aloo. Kamadia Mannek (d. 1880) had a son, called Mukhi Dhalla (d. 1889), who had three sons, Rahim, Hirji and Jaffer. On the other hand, Tejasi, the second son of Ebhalo, had a son called Alarakhia and whose son was Kamadia Bharmal (d. 1888). Kamadia Bharmal Alarakhia had two sons, Nur Muhammad (d. 1890) and Alauddin (d. 1914). Alauddin had two wives, Kajbai and Sakinabai. Kajbai had 14 children, in which 12 children were died in infancy and two daughters were survived, namely Mariambai and Sakinabai. Mariambai was the mother of Virji Premji Parpiya.

Virji Premji Parpiya was born in a rich and reknowned family on May 12, 1881 at Baroda, India. His mother, Mariambai died when he was hardly six months old, therefore, his upbringing came in the hands of the ignorant house-keepers and servants. Being a son of a wealthy father, his early life passed in luxury. His father was a leading trader of charcoal powder in Baroda, who got his son married in the early age of 14 years in 1895.

He was mostly interested to study the Vedic and Sufic literature. When Missionary Ibrahim Jusab Varteji had not yet embraced Ismailism and was studying the Sufism, he had a productive meeting with Premji Parpiya in Bombay in 1905 and was highly impressed with his knowledge. In memory of this meeting, Missionary Varteji advertised in his book, **"Hyder Hullas"** that he would soon publish verses on Sufic thoughts with the penname, **Prem Wali**. When Missionary Varteji came in the fold of Ismailism at the end of 1914, he was encouraged by the Ismaili writers, including Virji Premji Parpiya.

He passed his life in the affluent class till he reached the age of 39 years, and during this period, he had become an addict of wine. On December 20, 1920, he abstained from wine all of a sudden and also abandoned smoking on March 21, 1921. He even left tea in 1923 and passed a sober life.

Later on, the family members of late Wazir U Kan Gyi humbly sent an album, containing the photos of the Imam's visit to Rangoon. The Imam acknowledged receipt of the album and sent his message on June 27, 1960 from Gustaad and expressed his immense pleasure, and said,**"This album is like a wonderful souvenir."**

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His public service began when he built a boarding, called Virashram, near the race-course ground in Baroda on August 21, 1921, where all people were allowed irrespective of cast and creed. It was supervised by the President Krashanrao Vinaik Sarangpani. This noble project made him eminent among the masses. Sayed Aminuddin Hussain Khan, the Collector of Kolaba district once wrote a letter on November 10, 1934, which reads: **"Mr. Virji Premji Parpiya is known to me for decades and the work he has been doing in his private institution, "Virashram" has had the approval of all classes and creeds. Mr. Parpiya is desirous of continuing the educational philanthropic work, social economical and industrial development of rural population in the villages, which no doubt is the crying need of India. I have my hearty support in his selfless and sincere endeavours for the good of ignorant uneducated and superstitious masses. I am sure all those with whom he comes in contact will give him their best cooperation and assist him in achieving success in his mission."**

It is interesting to note that the government of Baroda had sought his services to exhort the prisoners once a month in Baroda Jail in 1924. He continued it for few months till another arrangement.

His appearance in the arena of community service began when he played a key role in establishing the "Ismaili Literature Society" in 1911. He commanded good knowledge in Arabic, Persian, English and Gujrati. He encouraged the promising Ismaili writers to demonstrate their religious feelings through literature for the benefit of the community. He managed to compile some religious books through the Ismaili writers and got them published, such as **"Maqsad-i Haqiqat", "Zauhar-i Haqiqat", "Niband Prakash"** (Part I & II), **"Silsila-i Imamate", "Jasann Case"**, etc.

He was appointed the Hon. Secretary of the "Ismaili Dharmik Library" in 1913 and also for the monthly **"Ismaili Sitaro"** in 1914. In 1914, the library presented a humble *mehmani* before the Imam alongwith its progress report. The Imam said, **"Struggle with much patience, how the infirm people in India be prospered."** The guidance of the Imam inspired a new spirit in the members.

There were three groups of the Khojas in India, viz. the Khoja Ismailis, the Khoja Ithna Asharis and the Khoja Sunnis. Virji Premji Parpiya had a plan to bring these three groups on a platform on certain matters and established the "Khoja Social Service League" in 1923. He also succeeded to bring the eminent persons of the three groups in this institution,

but his plan could not be materialized.

In the month of Ramzan in 1925, he kept fast and past a whole month speechless. He studied the Holy Koran day and night, including the study of the world religions, Islam and Ismailism. He also published a monthly **"Khoja Social Reformer"** in 1925, but discontinued after seven issues.

He was also appointed the Mukhi of Baroda Jamatkhana. On November 24, 1933, he sent a telegram to the Imam that, "The *jamat* will rejoice for Your Highness's holy visit to India. Waiting anxiously for the *didar*." The Imam arrived in India in December, 1933 and visited Baroda by Frontier Mail on January 28, 1934, where the Imam was accorded a rousing welcome at the station by Wazir Premji Parpiya, Murad Ali Hasan Ali, the deputy station master, Ratansi Kara of Indore, Mukhi Ibrahim Wali of Dabhoi *jamat*, etc. On that occasion, the Imam invested him the title of **Wazir** at the station for his meritorious services. Later on, the *jamat* hosted him a garden party to honour him, which was presided by Kamadia Merali Jivan on April 28, 1934.

The Imam had taken a visit of his bungalow in Baroda in 1913 and also in 1935. On February 3, 1935, the Imam graciously presented him a *shawl* and said, "You wear it as my souvenir." It is to be noted that Virji Premji Parpiya had no child and when a son was born at his nephew's house in 1926 and the mother of the child died after three days, he and his wife happily adopted the newly born child, named Mehboob Hussain. When the Imam visited his bungalow lastly in 1935, he told to the Imam how he adopted a son. The Imam said to the child, "You will also serve in the same fashion as your father did."

Wazir Mukhi Virji Premji Parpiya died on July 31, 1946.

He was a dedicated social worker, fluent orator, trenchant writer and journalist. He compiled and published several books, such as **"Kaba Timir Bhaskar"** (1917), **"Tambaku Samvad"** (1922), **"Pita'ni Putr pratiy'e faraj"** (1924) **"Abhiyas ane Rahdaymanthan"** (1936), **"Dua'ma samaili Namaz", "Aam Varg'ne Appeal", "Me'n Nisho sha mat'e chhodio", Dhan-Dharam'no hakdar kon?"** (1940), etc.

He was also a posthumous writer of **"Illahi Sandesh"** (Bombay, 1953), which he had completed a day before his death, but it could not be published. It was however published by his son, Mehboob Hussain.

The End

Glossary

(frequently used entries in the text)

Ahl al-Bayt	the people of the house, the immediate family of the Prophet which includes beside the Prophet, Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Hussain.
Alijah	one who holds eminence in the *jamat*, a title
Allah-o-Akbar	God is Great
Amaldari	an officer holding any rank or title
Amen	so be it, an expression uttered after asking each prayer
Amir	nobleman, chief
Baitul Khiyal	house of concentration
Barbhahiya	twelve brethren, who filed suit against Imam during the Aga Khan Case-1866
Batin	inner, an esoteric aspect
Bayt	the convenant entered into with an Imam by every follower.
Chadar	cover of cloth worn on head or shoulder
Chand Raat	full moon
Chhanta	sprinkling of water, a ceremony for forgiveness
Count	nobleman equal in rank of an English earl, a highest title introduced in Africa
Dai	one who summons, a missionary
Darbar	court, also the audience held by native princes of high-ranking British officials.
Darkhana	headquarters
Dastboshi	kissing the hand, a ceremony to kiss Imam's hand
Dawat	mission's work
Dewali	Indian festival of lights on the last day of the dark-half of the month of Aswin
Dewan	prime minister, a highest title
Didar	beholding
Fana fil li'llah	annihilation in divinity
Farman	words or guidance of the Imam
Fatiha	opening chapter of Holy Koran, prayer during burial ceremony
Fidai	one who sacrifice for a cause
Gazal	a Persian tune or mode of song
Ginan	a sacred corpus of devotional and didactic hymn composed by the Indian Pirs.
Gupti	the secretive who professed Ismailism in secret
Hadith	the sayings of the Holy Prophet
Hakim	head, ruler
Haqiqi Momin	believer in reality
Hazar Imam	Imam of the time, evidently refers in this text for the Aga Khan IV, the present Ismaili Imam
Hujjat	proof, a high rank representing the Imam
Huzur Kamadia	assistant officer in Imam's staff, a title
Huzur Mukhi	officer attached to Imam's staff, a title

Ibadat	worship
Imam	a living spiritual guide and successor of the Holy Prophet.
Imamate	the office of the Imam.
Iman	a faith
Inshallah	If God so wills
Itmadi	trustworthy, a title
J.P.	Justice of Peace, a title introduced by British India.
Jamat	an assembly
Jamatkhana	community centre, congregation place with prayer hall
Justi	an old traditional council.
Kamadia	assistant of the *mukhi.*
Khana Abad	may your house flourish, a special blessing for followers
Khanavadan	multiplication of prosperity, a special blessing
Khilat	robe of officer or a special dress gifted as a mark of respect.
Koran	the last Divine Book revealed on Holy Prophet.
Kul Kamadia	the provincial or district treasurer collecting the tithe
Lac	one hundred thousand
Majalis	assembly, brotherhood
Mata Salamat	mother of peace, title of Um-e-Habiba, the wife of 48th Imam
Mawla	title used by the followers for the Imam.
Mazhar	epiphany of God.
Mehmani	hospitalization, an offering to be presented to the Imam.
Momin	one who believes, the faithful
Mu'allim	teacher, head of the mission in a particular region
Mukhi	foremost, the headman of Jamatkhana
Munajat	connotation of conveying reverence to a sanctified person
Murid	follower
Musafarkhana	inn
Mushkil Asaan	warding off trouble
Navroz	new day, a spring festival falls on 21st March
Nikah	nuptial ceremony
Noor	light
Pachhedi	a long piece of clothe to be wrapped round the shoulder and head
Pajibhai Club	an association of brotherhood
Pandit	a man rooted in Hindu literature
Panjibhai	brotherhood
Rai	a roving officer, a title
Salgirah	birthday anniversary
Shah'jo Didar	beholding of the Lord, an act of shaking hands in prayer.
Shah	king, lord or prince of noble lineage
Shaitan	devil
Shawl	precious woolen blanket to be wrapped on shoulder
Siratul Mustaqim	true path
Tabara	an act of reviling
Takhat Nashini	enthronement ceremony
Talika	communique, an official letter of the Imam
Tasbih	rosary
Ulema (sig. **alim**)	scholars
Vakil	representative
Varas	high officer, the title equal to Wazir
Waez	sermon, discourse.
Wazir	high officer, the title corresponds to Varas
Zahir	outer, the exhoteric aspect

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Interested persons are invited to contact the author (P.O. Box 5315, Karachi) for inserting important biographies of leading persons of our community in the volume.

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