

CONFERENCE 2004

United Reformist Dawoodi Bohras



Conference Report

30th July to 1st August 2004 • Daventry, England



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Conference introduction

By Kubra Kapasi-Khandwalla from Canada

For those members who were not present at the Dawoodi Bohra Reformist UK 2004 conference and missed an incredible three day event, the following is a brief highlight of the conference.

What a conference! Incredible turn out, approximately 400 or more members were present, out of which I was told 120 were youth in full force. It was very encouraging and a sight to see all youngsters taking part in all events and performing voluntary work for organizing and executing the conference.

There were reformist Bohras from many different countries around the world - Canada, India (including Bombay, Surat, Udiapur), Mauritius, Kuwait, Kenya, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, U.A.E, United States and of course England which had the largest participation. The interesting part was that the participation of International contingent was the bigger than the last conference in 2001. There was one participant who just happened to be on the Dawoodi-Bohra.com website, read about the conference and decided to attend.



Workshop leaders get together

The highlight of the conference was not just a big get together and good food and time, but the main outcome was an overwhelming boost and support for the Regional Committee (RC) that was formed 3 years ago in Canada. The RC has a lot of challenging tasks and will be addressing the needs of reformist Bohras worldwide. You will be hearing details on how this RC will play an important role in uniting the reformist Bohras globally and how each individual reformist jamat around the world

would benefit from it. The second highlight of the conference was the formation of the World Youth committee - an independent initiative of the Youth present at the conference who were completely charged up and ready to contribute to the Reform movement. It was very heartening to see such enthusiasm from the youth around the world.



Delegates register at the conference

The workshops that were presented in this conference were very successful and addressed most of the reformist Bohras concerns, issues and needs. The outcome of these workshops is what RC will be addressing. Approximately 114,000.00 pounds sterling was pledged by those present at the conference (and more to come) for the RC to carry out their work. This will allow RC to take on tasks that will be assigned from different jamats around the world.



Delegates at a workshop

Conference programme

Friday 30th July

- 7.30pm Tilawat.
- Introduction of Regional Committee members and foreign guests.
- Ice breaker game.
- The Reform Movement in the context of Islam globally: Professor Ismailbhai Poonawalla.
- 20.45 Announcements.
- Namaaz.
- Dinner.
- Mini Youth Conference.

Saturday 31st July

- 7-9am Breakfast and registration.
- 09.40 Tilawat.
- Welcomes.
- Regional Committee report.
- Reports from the RC regions.
- Reports from Reformist organisations worldwide.
- 11.15 Break.
- 11.45 Context for Reformism: Mr. Fazlehusein Kapasi.
- Official welcome: Rt. Hon. Tim Boswell MP. for Daventry.
- Workshop introductions.
- More overseas reports.
- 13.15 Namaz and Lunch.
- 14.30 Workshop sessions.
- 16.15 Break.
- 16.35 Panel discussion.
- 18.00 Free time.
- 19.30 Gala Dinner.

Sunday 1st August

- 8-9.30am Breakfast.
- 10.00 Tilawat.
- Welcomes.
- Overseas reports.
- Feedback from workshops.
- 11.30 Break.
- 11.45 Questions and answers on the workshop feedback.
- 12.15 Action plan; order of priority
- 13.15 Namaz and lunch
- 14.50 Making it all happen- FUNDRAISING.
- Presentations.
- Closing speeches and Dua
- Barbeque.

Regional Committee report

Presented by Hatim Rajabali, UK RC member

Assalam Aliekum

Honourable Tim Boswell Member of Parliament, respected Elders, distinguished guests from abroad, ladies, gentleman, the conference organising team and the youth, I have pleasure in presenting this report for as one of Regional Committee members. The RC are grateful to the Dawoodi Bohra Welfare Society in GB for hosting this conference and to all those who have worked so hard and given up their precious time patiently and who will carry on working to bring this conference to a successful conclusion.

Overview

The Regional Committee (RC) was formed during the 2001 conference in Canada to initially fulfil some of the resolutions of the conference and then to look beyond to investigate and further analyse the needs of the Reformist Jumaat's in the regions of the World not encompassing India.

The Regional Jumaat's presently encompass Canada, Kenya, Kuwait, UK and USA and we hope that other Jumaat's will join in the future.

In our first meeting we drew a formal documents, which encompassed on how we were going to work together. Some of these are:

- The committee will not handle any finances or funds but will work closely with Regional Jumaat's to support our endeavours.
- The Committee members will personally expense their trips for meetings.
- At least one meeting per year.
- Each Jumaat to have 2-3 representatives on the RC.

To say the least the task has been a tough one as we try and meet the challenges of Unitedly working together. Since the 2002 conference we have met once in Connecticut (USA) and have had many teleconference meetings.

Youth Identity

A number of young people at the Canada conference talked about understanding and exploring their identity and this was one of the key points brought forward during the conference. The RC felt the following points were seen as appropriate measure to meets this challenge

- Udaipur Trip - which was organised in December 2002 and was a great success.
- Uniform Jumaat Names - this will be discussed at this conference.

At this conference we will also be discussing a number of issues that will

strengthen our movement, namely:

- Literature & Translation
 - a) Compile list of literature written by Reformists
 - b) Undertake task to translate/restore books important to Dawood Bohra's
- A roving Mullasaheb and how to train up our members to deliver religious duties
- Globalisation so that we can form a truly international identity
- Synchronisation and how to establish uniformity in our practices and so strengthen our global identity.

Future actions

Our future actions are:

- Regular Conferences at least every two years on a rotating basis to discuss and plan practical measures to move all Jumaats forward in one direction.
- World Database of Members - this project has started but needs to be finalised.
- To oversee the projects from this conference
- To identify other aspects to take all Jumaat's forward.
- To formalise the RC's rules and regulations. The following will be discussed.
 - a) Aim and Objectives of the Regional Committee
 - b) Its constitution and rules.
 - c) How will you carry out the conference resolutions?
 - d) What are the mechanisms for electing/appointing RC members?
 - e) How long is an RC members term in office?
 - f) Funding requirements for the RC to function.
 - g) How will the RC build relationships with the Central Board and Jamaats in India?

We hope to meet your needs, so it is important that we work together and integrate through the Regional Jumaat's.



The Regional Committee joined by friends at the Conference

A round up of Reformist news around the World

The Progressive Dawoodi Bohra website

This website is now into its 7th Year and Mashallah is going strong. It was launched in 1997, and within three months, after a period of many trials and tribulations, the 20-page website was created. Its primary objective is to create awareness about the reform movement. It has now achieved much more than that with up-to-date literature and knowledge for those wanting to know more about the movement, Bohra history and Islam in general. The website also contains a message board and a matrimonial column. It regularly publishes online editions of The Bohra Chronicle (India) and Azad (England). The website still has much to accomplish as the possibilities are endless. With careful planning and a creative approach much more can be achieved. **Shaukat Ajmeri**

The Dawoodi Bohra Welfare Society (DBWS) UK

The DBWS GB is a registered charity composed of a Main Body and three branches: Birmingham, Leicester and London. Each branch has a working committee who are all volunteers and are elected every 2 years. Regular activities that take place are Majlis' including Moharram, and annual Eid function, youth events, Misaaq's, Nikaah, and Burials. Some branches also have Madrasa classes and youth activities. There is also a youth organisation within the DBWS. DBWS also has a self-financing newsletter AZAD which is circulated worldwide. It caters for all Bohra needs including religious, sports and health issues. With literally no Reformist Bohras in the 1970's and with no infrastructure of a society, the DBWS stands proud of its healthy and dynamic membership with complimentary amenities and a solid infrastructure. The DBWS still has many more goals to accomplish which will hopefully happen in the near future. **Fazal Kinkhabwalla (below)**



The Kuwait Dawoodi Bohra Jumaat (The Reformist Group)

Bohra Youth Association Kuwait (BYAK) is essentially an extension of the Reformist community in Udaipur. BYAK regularly gives financial assistance to Udaipur for some of their ongoing charitable institutions. The community in Kuwait is managed by an elected Bohra Youth Committee and elections are held every 2 years. Religious ceremonies and events, particularly during Moharram are the most important activities. For the future the Kuwait Jumaat hopes to acquire a full running, suitable "Markaz" or a centre so that activities within

the community can become more frequent. The Jumaat also aims to employ a dedicated Mullasaheb with formal training. **Aziz Mamujee**

The Bohra Chronicle

The Bohra Chronicle was introduced after the formation of the Central Board in India. The paper voices the policies and the functioning of the Central Board and it also acts as a mirror of the happenings in the Orthodox community through the writings of the silent sufferers throughout the world. The importance of papers such as the Bohra Chronicle is indescribable. Although the Orthodox Community has attempted to crush the Reform Movement several times, papers such as the Bohra Chronicle have prevented such from happening by exposing their strategies. For the future the Bohra Chronicle hopes to publish the paper in English. **Saifuddin Insaf**

The Bohra Youth Association Of North America (BYANA)

BYANA started in the mid 1990's when numerous families migrated from Udaipur to America. This organisation is a registered charity. After the success of the Canada conference, enthusiasm is on the rise as more families are migrating and settling in the Tri-State region. Thus the goals of BYANA have somewhat shifted. They now hope to acquire a property to fulfil the religious as well as the social needs of the community. This young community have both long-term and short-term goals. Having elected a committee their short term goal is to at least meet 12-14 times a year for important nights during the Islamic year. Their long term goal is to raise funds for the new property. **Asrar Ahmed (below)**



Conference Trivia

A website to bring our younger members together (for friendship and marriage) was launched at the conference. Join the campaign to make a friend. Log on to: www.dawoodi-bohras.org.uk/friends

The 1986 Bohra Reformist Trust

The Trust was created at the International Reformist Bohra Conference in 1986 held in UK. The Trustees were elected at this conference by the 500 delegates present. They remain committed to furthering the Trusts aims and objectives, by providing support and facilitation for religious education and furtherance of the Reformist cause. The Trust continues to support religious and Reformist publications by way of funding newsletters, books, journals and translations of religious literature into modern languages. The Trust has also pledged support for many conferences including the Canada world conference and the UK International conference this year. The Trust regularly promotes religious education including Din-e-Taleem which are religious education classes for adults and children. For the future the Trustees are eager to support Reformist organisations who can carry out its aims and objectives. The Trustees also wish to publish a regular report of its activities. **Fakhru Kadarbhai**

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The Aurangabad Jumaat, India

This Jumaat is very active and is currently trying to attract families belonging to the weaker section of the Orthodox Community. They recently did a study in Marathwada of families belonging to the Orthodox side who are below the poverty line. They found that their conditions were pitiful, with no proper education, most of them working as labourers, and no proper houses to live in. As immediate relief a dini madrasa was started which is now running successfully. The Jumaat also provided some of the families with financial assistance to start a small business. Gas connections were provided to all the families, and scholarships awarded to children so no child is left without education just because they have no money. For the future this Jumaat wishes to do another survey on a larger scale of families on the Orthodox side living below the poverty line. The Syedna claims that there is no Bohra person that is poor or living in such pitiful conditions. This survey will not only enable us to help these families but also prove that the Syedna is wrong.

Zulfeqar Husain

Azad

Azad began as a local newsletter in the UK after the 1986 UK International conference. From its early days to the present Azad has gone through rocky times with issues not coming regularly, to a complete makeover. With the help of technology Azad is now professionally designed and goes out world wide. With the creation of the Dawoodi Bohra Website Azad is now available online. The vision of Azad is that it represents the Reform Movement internationally, it helps to build an international community of Reformists, and it can be used as another arm to our propaganda.

Haki Kapasi



Hatim Rajabali welcomes delegates on behalf of the RC

The Central Board of Dawoodi Bohra Community

The Central Board of Dawoodi Bohra Community (CBDDBC) was established by the Reformist Bohras in Udaipur in 1977. It meets every three years and elections are held at the triennial conference. However the executive committee meets every six months to review the activities of the Central Board and plan future activities. The CBDDBC was formed to provide a co-ordinating body for the Reformist movement. The CBDDBC was involved in the Nathwani Commission, helping with the collection of evidence etc. The CBDDBC carries a media campaign which is The Bohra Chronicle. It organises mass marriages and has also created a website of its own which has helped to spread its message. The CBDDBC provides a forum for discussion and its future aim is to continue to do that.

Asgarali Engineer

Conference Trivia

A moving PowerPoint presentation about the aims and objectives of the conference set the three days in context.

The Malegaon Jumaat

This Jumaat has been working independently for the last 80 years. The Jumaat takes pride in the fact that the some of the earliest reformists either belonged to Malegaon or they had a connection with this Jumaat. A board of eleven elected trustees looks after the Jumaat's affairs. The Jumaat presently has about 250 members. The Jumaat owns a two-story Jumaat Khana, and plots in a burial ground. The Jumaat also runs a very successful Madrasa. From Malegaon we receive the Urdu publication; "Jurat".

The paper brings news of the tyranny of the Orthodox side to the community. For the future the Jumaat aims to acquire a training centre where youth's can be guided to perform all religious duties.

Dr Mehdi Husain

The Mauritius Jumaat

The Bohra Community of Mauritius dates from the second half of the 19th century. The community has had a massive divide throughout the last 25 years with the interference of Amils from the Orthodox side. Due to the small numbers it has been difficult to have a permanent Mullasaheb and also to invite one for Ramzan or

Conference Trivia

It didn't rain!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We had one of the best weekends in August weather-wise.

Moharram. The Jumaat's Masjid, Jamaat khana and the Bohra Cemetery are managed by a Waqf through appointed Trustees. The Waqf is financially independent with its own rental income to cover its current expenses.

Currim Currimjee

The Dawoodi Bohra Jumaat Bombay

The Dawoodi Bohra Jumaat Bombay was established in 1976. Every year the Jumaat distributes food grains and clothes to 400 families of poor Bohras. The Jumaat gives 350 students scholarships and medical help to the needy. Of all these people 98% are Orthodox Bohras. The Jumaat publishes and distributes religious books in English and Gujarati to community members.

The Mumbai Jumaat also hosts the Hussein Marriage Information Bureau which has done good work in finding partners for young boys and girls.

Yunus Baloowalla

The Surat Jumaat

Surat is one of the oldest cities from which the Reform Movement began. Orthodox activities to try and break the community have been the strongest here, with several attempts to disturb meetings, conference, homes and people. However The Surat Jumaat has been strong and have not submitted to pressure exerted by the Orthodox. Other Jumaats within India have held meetings within Surat and have been very successful. From 1987 Zehraben Cyclewalla has been in the limelight of the Surat Jumaat. She has been involved in numerous court cases. The Surat Jumaat has been and will continue to be in support of her.

Ali Asgar Kinkhabwalla

The Udaipur Jumaat

The activities of the Udaipur Jumaat are known worldwide. They are one of the most active Reformist Bohra communities in the world. They run Madrasa's, schools, banks, a vast Jumaat Khana and an ambulance service. With around 5000 Reformists, the Udaipur Jumaat is the largest Reformist community we have. In addition the community controls a maternity home, several other Masjid's and Jamaat Khana's, Qabrستان and other properties such as shops and homes belonging to the Bohra community. For the future the Udaipur Jumaat wants to maintain unity amongst its members. They wish to maintain and successfully win the current court cases

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that have been filed against the Syedna. They also wish to counter the vicious propaganda that the Orthodox side have been publishing against them and their families.

Mustumsir Raj

The Kenya Jumaat

The Kenya Jumaat is split into two; Nairobi and Mobassa. Both are run independently and both Jumaats own buildings in their name. Here the Jumaats are run successfully with majlis' on all important nights in the Islamic year. Although numbers are decreasing both Jumaats have a managing committee and they are trying to encourage younger members to join the committee. The Jumaat is still very young and their youngest members are now coming of the age where Madrasa is essential, thus both Jumaats are trying to establish Madrasa's for the younger members of the community.

Zainab Talibhusein (below)



Canadian Senate Bill S-13:

The Bill was designed to establish Syedna as the Sole Corporate in Canada. This would mean that he was to be the sole person to own and administer all assets, funds, and properties of Dawoodi Bohras in Canada.

One can write a book on this subject particularly the manner in which Khotar introduced this Bill in the Canadian Senate.

The timing was perfect. Khotar made sure the Senator who introduced this Bill was with the Progressive Conservative Political party of Canada. The irony of the timing coincided with the fact that the PC party was in a Majority in the Canadian Parliament. The Upper House of Canada and the Senate also had Majority PC Senators.

When this Bill came to the attention of the Reformist Bohras in Ontario, the Bill had already passed the First reading and was in the critical stage of passing the Second reading. In the Canadian Senate, if a Bill passes the second reading it has the potential of becoming the Law, as the Third reading is a formality.

The Reformist members of the Association of Progressive Dawoodi Bohras of Ontario (APDBO) called an emergency meeting. The APDBO launched a sophisticated attack on this Bill.

Our unified and cohesive attack made sure this Bill never passed the Second reading and was terminated when the Canadian Parliament was dissolved.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of APDBO; Reformists from all over the world, The 1986 Reformist Trust of UK, especially Mr. Fazlehusein Kapasi and Mr. Murtaza Jivanjee who gave me unfettered support in defeating this lethal Bill.

Hatim Hamdani.

Conference Trivia

The gala dinner hosted many of our community members talents and skills from trumpet playing to beautiful singing.

Comprehensive Genealogy of Islamic Societies

The September 11th, 2001 bombardment of NY Twin Towers prompted me to write this book. The initial statement by Bush that "Muslim Terrorists" did the damage irritated me. Why "Muslim" terrorists? In Ulster nobody says Christians terrorists but "Ulster" terrorists. Why paint every Muslim with terrorism? That statement kept bothering me.

Conference Trivia

Delegates received a bumper conference pack with conference papers, blank headed paper with the conference logo and pens. Worth coming to the conference just for that!

So I thought of educating the readers where we come from and what Islam is all about. Before initiating the book, I came across one snag and that was the sectarian division of Sunnis and Shias. That prompted me to write about our genealogy, Imamats, Khalifates, dynasties and so on. Just to let the readers be aware, especially Muslim readers, that we come from one trunk. Our downfall and defeat is due to disunity within ourselves, which enable people like Bush to say what they want to say with impunity.

We cannot raise a finger at him or at his likes, simply because we are not united and do not have a unilateral powerful voice. To have that, we need unity. To have unity, we need Sunnis and Shia to understand that we are one. We have failed to think that way and the results are defeat after defeat for Muslims.

We defeated Crusaders in the 11th century unitedly and recaptured Jerusalem. We lost Spain in the 15th century when we were disunited. These two historical episodes were enough to teach us a lesson. Unfortunately, we have not learned. The book hopefully will throw some light that it is to our advantage to be united, InshAllah.

Abdullah Hamdani ■

Conference Trivia

Approximately 400 delegates attended the conference. Countries represented at the conferences were:

Canada, France, India, Kenya, Kuwait, Mauritius, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, UK, USA

Approximately 25% of the delegates were from outside the UK, making this a truly international conference!

Conference Trivia

Rapper Murtaza Rajabali brought the house down with his rap on the Reform Movement. What a performance!

Setting the scene

By Fazlehusein Kapasi

Rt. Hon. Tim Boswell, distinguished guests, ladies, gentlemen, and dear youth. Assalamu-alaikum.

Thank you all for your presence. Many of you have come from distant countries, you have all made time for this conference and I whole-heartedly welcome you all. Ahead of us we have two days of hard work, some fun, some food, lots of thinking, and serious discussions. Our discussions and thoughts will need direction and Vision. Before we talk of Vision, we need to examine our history and understand the reasons why we need to look for new horizons.

The Reform movement as we know it, is composed of various Reformist centres, world-wide, doing their bit to counter the atrocities and injustices of our priest class and to bring about changes in our community. These Reformist groups have come into being over a variety of reasons. In East Africa they came about to prevent our priest class from usurping our welfare institutions and properties, and to preserve our democratic governance. In India it was over our education in English Medium schools, over our Dia's insistence on growing beards, over Waqf properties, over Kothars twisting our religious scriptures, over our charitable funds; which our priest class have taken control of and are misusing; and even over the issue of Nas (legitimacy of the Dais). In UK it was over expulsion of Ugandan Bohra refugees on Ashura day and their removal from prayers. In Pakistan it was over freedom of expression and humiliation of leading community members. In Canada, USA and some other countries migrants have brought in Reformism. The reasons are many and diverse.

During the course of the Reformist struggle our people have made a lot of sacrifices. The experiences have been very painful. To curb our struggle our priest class have stopped at nothing. Many of the elderly in



this audience know a lot about this through their personal experiences. Most of the youth though have no idea of what we have gone through. For their benefit I must mention some of the atrocities. Our Dai has forced employers to sack Reformists. Livelihoods have been lost. Divorces have been forced on our couples. Loving and caring families have been split up and innocent babies and children have been deprived of love and care of their parents. The Chronicle recently published a list of over 40 families whose marriages have been shattered by our Dai. Physical assaults using chains, stones, knives and batons have been endured by us. I have seen this happening in Mumbai.

A number of our people were hospitalised. One of our leaders Dr Asgarali Engineer has been stabbed once and been beaten up on several occasions. Ladies in Udaipur were beaten by chains and attacked by knives. In Galiyakot, India our Dai was enjoying the spectacle and was smiling from his balcony when his mob was beating up our women and stripping off their clothes. The graves of our dead have been dug up and bodies thrown out. The body of the daughter of Late Sir Adamjee Peerbhai; the greatest philanthropist known in India was given

this treatment. Some of our leaders like Mr. Husseinibhai Sanchawalla, Mr. Zainudin Vali and few others have been subjected to blackmail and have been manipulated into surrender. Our priest class have bribed police, made false accusations and have made our people go through the indignity and humiliation of imprisonment. Mr. Dosaji Ahmadbhai now in London, late Mr. Rasalbhai Mullah Sulemanji and Mr. Tayabali Isaji now in USA are amongst many who have gone through this. Lengthy court cases have been instituted against us in many parts of the world. Some are still going on, causing a lot of stress and costing us heavily in terms of our human and financial resources. The list of these cases is very long. We are all familiar with Baraat (social boycott).

I dare say each one of you know some of your family with whom you are not able to speak or have any sort of relationship. The mental torture that our priest class have exerted on us is not measureable. When I say the priest class stop at nothing, I mean it. First they threw acid on writer and journalist Mullah Abbas Aurangabadi, it did not kill him, and so they burnt him alive. When Nomanbhai contractor was visiting Mr. Saifuddin Pawaghadwalla in Godhra,

India, they set fire to the host's house. It was non-Bohries who prevented certain deaths. Today we have a young lady whose life is threatened by our Dai. She is here with us. She is Zehraaben Cyclewalla.

The courts in India have ordered 24 hour armed protection for her. She has had no privacy or security for the last 10 years. Every time our Dai visits Surat, her native place, the number of guards is increased from 2 to 5. Her only crime is that she refused to resign from her job when the Dai ordered her to do so. I can go on and on with many more painful narrations. Instead, I take pride that we have not endured all this in vain. Today we are more united, stronger than ever and totally committed to our cause. The priest class has got the message, in no uncertain terms, we will not be beaten.

We now need to move closer to the Vision. To define our Vision we need to identify what we need to change.

First let us look internally. The Reform Movement, as it exists now, is composed of many small organisations, spread across the globe. The one major organisation we have is The Central Board in India, which works well within India and is instrumental in keeping Reformism alive. The smaller organisations outside India have a committee called "The Regional Committee". This Regional Committee was set-up at the Canada Conference in 2001. You have heard their report. We now need to have a formal structure for the Regional Committee and to strengthen ties between the RC and the Central Board. One of the workshops will be dealing with this.

Externally we need to look at Bohrism today and Bohrism in its "glory days". In the glory days it was a way of life in which Islamic, traditional, and cultural values played a dominant part. Community welfare, hospitality, generosity, religious education, emphasis on self-sacrifice, honesty, respect for others, respect for the priest class, funding and managing of communal facilities like Madrasa, Musafir Khana, Masjid, Halls, Kabrastan, Housing for Poor, Sports facilities, etc were part and parcel of Bohraism. Democratic administration, accountability, and local management were the corner stones of our success. The glory

days have seen a community that was rich in tradition, devout in worship, and were a source of inspiration to other communities. We were very caring and very helpful to each other. I want to take the liberty to give you an example from our past to demonstrate what we had.

In Kampala Uganda, during the court cases (and there were many cases), the priest class applied to the courts for an injunction to transfer the management of the Jamaat properties from our (Reformist Control) to an administrator, who would be appointed by the court. They accused us of mis-management of funds and of making some twelve unsecured loans to friends and families of management committee members. In response we produced five years of accounts, with the graphs of the growth, both in asset values and in welfare expenditure. We told the court that not 12 but 22 loans had been made. All were interest free. All were to establish our members into their own businesses. All were secured. We produced evidence of this. In his judgement, the judge said that in his 60 years he had not come across any organisation that was better run than our Reformist Jamaat. He left the management in our hands.

When Idi Amin expelled Asians from Uganda there were 21 Asian organisations like ours which included the Aga Khanis the Ithnasharies, the Goans, the Patels, the Sunni Muslims, the Parsis, etc. We were the only ones that met all the costs of all the needy in our community in the way of air tickets, cost of making travel documents, winter clothing, even transport to the airports. Over and above this we provided cash to non-Bohri needy for the same purposes.

Further evidence of our qualities and activities have already been illustrated to you by reports from Canada, Kenya, Kuwait, UK, and USA. You have also heard reports from Central Board, and the Dawoodi Bohra Jamaat Mumbai, the Mauritius Jamaat and the Surat Jamaat. Here I would like to touch on the Reformist activities in Udaipur. Our friends in Udaipur fill our hearts with joy. The work they do for our community and non-Bohri is remarkable. They are looking after the needs of over 6,000 Reformists. They maintain several Mosques, Jamaat

Khanas and burial grounds. They run several schools, both religious and secular. The 1986 Bohra Reformist Trust and Fatemi Trust work closely with them. They run ambulance services and a medical centre, which is open to all regardless of cast or creed. They are running a Co-operative Bank, which recently declared 50% dividend -perhaps an international record. Poorer students have access to the 2 libraries they run. Their Moharrams, Ramazans, and other celebrations are done in the traditional Bohri ways. Their hospitality is just superb and overwhelming. In your folder you will find a detailed report from Udaipur.

Our friends in Aurangabad are actively engaged in recruiting poor and neglected Bohri families into the Reformist Jamaat. They are heavily involved in providing assistance to the weaker section of the community. They also provide religious education. The 1986 BRT works closely with them. More details can be found in your packs.

Malegaon in India is one of the older centres. From there we get the Urdu publication "Jurat" which The 1986 BRT supports. Fatemi Trust also works closely with the Jamaat. Malegaon is known for its services especially to the bereaved, by providing burial and other facilities. There is a library in Malegaon, which has some rare and important religious literature. In your folder you will find more details on the Jamaat.

Late Nomanbhai Contractor, established the Ikhwanus-safa trust, in India. It was hoped that it would finance our newsletters and promote our activities. We do not have any report from trust but I am glad to announce that it has made a very generous donation of £593.89 towards the expenses of this conference.

Tomorrow you will be hearing reports on Azad, Chronicle, The 1986 Bohra Reformist Trust, and the Reformist Website.

The root to all these achievements, lie in the conduct of our forefathers. I have heard stories of how communities in villages in India trusted Bohri families with their jewellery when they had to travel out of

continued on next page

their towns. The courts in India trusted Bohris. In cases where witnesses gave contradicting statements, the Bohri witness was more likely to be believed by the Court. In my own experience in Uganda it was enough to simply be a Bohra for a business account to be opened for you by non-Bohri traders.

To me this is the true spirit of Bohrism.

Let us now look at what is left of our Bohrism. Our Dai has taken control of all our assets across the world. To this end he has used every conceivable dirty means including abuse of the law like in Bill S-13 in the senate in Canada. He has even resorted to smuggling. His priests have been apprehended with diamonds in their turbans and exorbitantly expensive watches strapped on arms from wrists to armpits. He was expelled by the government of Tanzania for violating its exchange control rules. Among all who pay taxes to their high priests, Bohris under his control, pay the highest taxes in the world. In UK this averages over £2500.00 per family per year. Even those on state benefits are not spared. Ironically, at our cost, our Dai reaches influential people like the senators in Canada, Neil Kinnock and even Prince Charles.

There are no welfare organisations left. There is no democracy at any level. All affairs are run by Farmans (dictates from the Dai). Our Dai wants to crush the little we are trying to do for our community. He wants to crush the orphanage in Dhrol in India He wants to shut down our publications.

He wants to close our mosques in Udaipur. He wants to hear nothing against his greed for communal assets, or against his curbing of our human, Islamic and civil rights. He has even made himself and his late father the centre of worship, which is abhorrent to Islam. He is shifting recognition from our saints and martyrs, to his father who in fact had a jolly good life. On the other hand in his quest for absolute power and control over the minds, beliefs and assets of the Bohris he has gone as far as to denounce him, accusing him of not knowing the tenants of the Fatemi Faith, which is principally the Bohri belief. Our Dai is confiscating all literature pertaining to our doctrines and religion and is suppressing it. This is to ensure that Bohri ignorance becomes his bliss. Surely a time must come, soon, when our Bohri brethren will realise that they are worshipping earthly gods and that Bohrism is now nothing more than a CULT. They will want to know the true Bohrism. There will be no place for them to find it, unless, we the Reformists, uphold it. This I believe should be our Vision and mission.

If we are to be the guardians of true Bohrism and a means for its revival then we have to be, and be seen to be, practising it. To this end this conference is tabling topics based on religious needs, communal practices and religious literature. You will be hearing more about these soon. During our discussions on the topics we have to be mindful of the fact that we are now spread all over the globe and live in multicultural, multilingual and multifaith environments. Our generation is influenced by Western, Arabic, Indian and African

cultures. Hence, for example, when we discuss burial, we have to accommodate for countries or towns where use of a coffin is mandatory, although traditionally we do not use it. Whatever rituals and practices we observe, we have to be in harmony with our local codes. We must certainly refrain from any abuse, such as our Dai and our Priests proclaim in their sermons. We must distance ourselves from what is not acceptable in our adopted countries and maintain our Bohri Culture at the same time.

After our discussions and once we have established the order of priorities for action we will need a lot of support at the implementation stage. We will need finances as well. Your overwhelming attendance here speaks loud and clear of your commitment to our cause. I would like to add an optimistic note that we will utilise the two days we have fruitfully and constructively. Insha-allah we will ensure the success of this conference for the sake of all our brethren and the future of our young ones.

Before I end I would like to address our chief guest Mr. Tim Boswell. Thank you for your support and presence. Thank you for your help with the immigration department. Sir, In the United Kingdom we are denied access to our communal institutions. Our relatives are denied contact with us. Our priests refuse to perform our religious ceremonies. Our brethren are heavily taxed. I urge you to bring our plight to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

Once again, thank you all. ■

Some thoughts on being a roving Mullahsaheb

When I was doing my BSc. Degree Course, from Hislop College in Nagpur, India, some arguments on religion prompted me to do a diploma course in Theology. This increased the thirst to study and analyse our Ismailia Dawath and the religious study on Shia religion. Slowly I accumulated hundred of cassettes and some books on our religion.

The shortage of Mullahs and our big occasions of Muharrum without viases or calling non-Bohras to recite prompted me to volunteer. Our children and youths in

Western Countries do not understand Urdu or Gujarati nor can they grasp the meaning in Surti Gujaratti. I started orating in Gujarati mixed with English and changed the style of lectures.

This immediately caught on with the youths, but sad to say the Orthodox members of the Society did not like it. They interrupted my lectures and it soon started to become an orator's worst nightmare. It soon became clear that it was not what you know but what they think you know that mattered. This led to anger and frustration

and I stopped orating. My parents encouraged me to write or they said the youths of our community who are interested will be at a loss. So, an inspiration to write Karbala was born. When my book Karbala was introduced, I received a great response. Thanks to the people who had faith in me. The youth are key to our future and the answer to our struggle, may the knowledge of Karbala bring new hope in their beliefs in our religion.

May Allah guide us all to the straight path.
Zulfikar Budhabhai, UK

Workshop: Bohra traditions at the community level

Presented by Mrs. Amina Ahmed, USA

As Reformist Bohras, who have adopted countries in the western hemisphere and who are therefore growing up on the "outer fringes of the Bohra communities" we have felt a need for "belonging" more than other Bohras.

This natural situation has caused an identity crisis, especially for our next generation and the crisis will continue to be more intense as the future unfolds. It is time that we address this problem head-on and put a plan together to create this identity in which all Reformist Bohras can partake and hope to alleviate some of these concerns.

To cultivate this identity, it is suggested that we look at our past customs and actively inject some of these values back into our community-level activities. If these standards create identity, unity and a sense of belonging for all Bohras, then the efforts will be rewarded by the atmosphere we create. It can only strengthen our jamaats.

Over the past decades, the mainstream organization has created a strong sense of community by adhering to traditions and customs and we should learn at least this from them. It is not to say that we do a copy-cat identity and introduce everything that "they" do. Far from it, we should choose and practice the customs and traditions that strengthen our organization in the spirit of freedom that we have come to appreciate.



We also need to be "seen" by our mainstream brothers and sisters as Bohras! Let us create a face for the Reformist Bohras that is recognized all over the world as the same face. We can dream a little in saying, that, while achieving this unity & identity, perhaps we can become a true viable option for Orthodox Bohras.

So, in this spirit, it is suggested that we look at the following customs (and some others) that are practiced at the community level and arrive at some consensus to implement them as standards.

Feedback from the workshop

The purpose of this proposal is to find uniformity at the community level for all progressive jamaats worldwide.

1) General:

A uniform name for all the jamaats. The name should be brief and lean towards 'progressive' rather than 'reformist'.

2) Namaaz/Mithak/Nikaah

Namaaz: At the present time, the various arkans (actions) of our Bohra namaaz should be consistent with The Diamul Islam and should be compiled in a video/CD/DVD format with sound (for the benefit of the youngsters)

Mithak

The R.C should compile a simplified standard text that incorporates the rules of shariah to be followed by the 'baligh' (the child coming of age of maturity). The child should be coached prior to undertaking the Mithak.

The ceremony of mithak serves as reminder to the rest of community of their own obligations.

Nikaah

The conditions of Nikaah are laid out in the Saifa and should be familiar to the mullah performing the ceremony.



Workshop discussions

3) Zakat/Sadaqa/Sila-fitra:

In order for members to meet their Islamic obligations, each jamaat should actively engage in collecting/ distributing sadaqa/Sila-fitra. Sila-fitra should be collected before Eid-ul-fitre and members should be reminded of it during the month of Ramadhan. The various arkans of breaking fast during the month of Ramadhan should also be consistent with The Diamul Islam.

4) Madjlises:

- a) Madjlises should start on time with Tilawat Koran.
- b) Members should dress modestly to show respect for the occasion.
- c) English translated marishias and waezes should be available on the internet.
- d) All madjlises should have niyaz to increase participation. Bismillah should be announced in the beginning followed by nimak (salt) and if possible sit in a thaal/circle to keep up the Bohra tradition.
- e) During Moharam, all jamaats should consistently recite three standard marishias and copies (including English translations) should be made available for each jamaat.

Other:

Communities should be encouraged to celebrate Quran khatam/Hafiz at Eid and Sehra ceremony during wedding celebrations. ■

Workshop: Education training program

Presented by Naseem Jivanjee, Canada

The need

As the first generation of Reformist Dawoodi Bohras in Western countries is aging, along with our religious elders, the need for a training program to provide continuity in religious and community services is becoming more evident.

Being a minority among a minority, our existence depends on our own members taking responsibility for looking after our various community needs.

The plan

It is proposed that, through the medium of the Regional Committee, training workshops be held in four locations, to include especially the under 40 age group, over the course of the next three years. Ontario, Canada; Connecticut, U.S.A.; Leicester/Birmingham; and London, U.K. would be appropriate centers for this program.

Sessions would be divided into manageable units and held overnight during long weekends and holidays, preferably at residential facilities like colleges and conference centres.

The goal of the program is to involve a wide cross section of Reformists as both students and assistant trainers. The aim is not to create "Mullahs", but to train lay people and have them on reserve to meet our basic needs. The trainers will be carefully selected to impart knowledge in a meaningful way and to inspire. The Regional Committee will be looking at a cross section of "Experts" for this purpose.

The program is a golden opportunity for many Reformists to learn valuable skills. The plan will work if there is willingness and commitment. The challenge is to create a sense of community through such initiatives.

The program units

The Program consists of 5 training workshop units, and a detailed description will be provided in the P.M. workshop. A summary is given here for general information.

Unit 1

NAMAAZ or Salaat, will help men who would like to learn to say the five daily prayers and is also for those who would like

to lead daily prayers and namaaz for all special occasions.

Twelve men and two trainers for each area would be a good number.



Unit 2

Religious services

This training will be divided into 3 parts, and members can choose their preferences.

- YAASEEN and SADAQALLAH will be taught to both men and women through intensive training and the use of taped recitations. (Approx twelve men and women, two trainers and some assistant trainers would be a good number to work with.)
- MAYYAT GHUSALS or preparing a body for burial will be demonstrated and practised by the use of mannequins to groups of six to eight men and women by two trainers.
- BURIAL RITES at the cemetery, NIKKAH and MISAAK ceremonies will be taught in Arabic and English to about six men.

Unit 3

MARSIYA and NAATS for men and women will look at techniques and material for all occasions of the Islamic calendar, including recitations in English. The Internet and cassettes will be used as aids. (Approx twelve men and women with two trainers and assistant trainers helping would be the optimum.)

Unit 4

INTENSIVE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION - This very specialized program is aimed at 3 to 6 men in each area who will over the course of 3 years be taught Mohurram sermons and Islamic topics of interest from experts all over the world. It will involve study, travel and the use of material.

Unit 5

SIGNIFICANCE OF SPECIAL OCCASIONS / PEOPLE - This unit does not involve workshop sessions but provides for the building up of a file folder in each area containing descriptions and life stories in English which can be read out on special days by young people. The Regional Committee could have an essay competition for this purpose.

Implementation

If this program is approved, it is proposed that Units 1 to 3 be offered starting Xmas 2004 and continue to Xmas 2005. Unit 4 will be customized and thus, ongoing.

The cost

The estimated cost of each unit is \$ 3000 cdn or a total of \$12,000 cdn for the four units in each of the locations. Thus for the 4 locations, the grand total would be \$48,000 cdn. An additional \$10,000 cdn for travel costs for unit 4 may be needed.

It is suggested that the participants, the local association and the 1986 Reformist Trust divide the cost by each paying one third of the expenses.

Responsibility

It is hoped that by the end of the conference, we will gather names of interested participants, trainers and assistant trainers in each locality.

Each area will need to appoint a training workshop leader for each of training workshop 1 to 3, who will be responsible for setting up the program with a helper.

The Regional Committee member in the area will get a report and updates from each leader at the start and completion of the training, and will assist in the setting up of the program.

Conclusion

Let us encourage as many people as possible in this venture. A good voice,

a commanding presence, an interest in Arabic, a willingness to learn or serve, are all signs of a future trainee.

We are all laypersons with no formal training, and certainly do not profess to be "experts".

Feedback from workshop

Workshop led by Aftab Fidaali (Canada) and Fatema Dungarwalla (UK)

The workshop was started by asking the audience some deep routed questions namely:

- Are each community able to perform the religious and cultural programs
- Are the programs satisfactory
- Do they have a resident Mullahsaheb and if no, would they like one.

These questions invited very rigorous debate and set the tone for the presentation.

The presentation was followed by discussions on the five modules proposed:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Unit 1 | Namaaz |
| Unit 2 | Religious study - Mayat, Ghusal |
| Unit 3 | Marsiya and Naats |
| Unit 4 | Intensive religious instructions |
| Unit 5 | Significance of special occasions / people |

We discussed implementation, cost, responsibility.

After the presentation, the group was divided into seven sub-groups and given half an hour to discuss the workshop. Each of the seven groups then presented their findings and the following is a summary of the seven groups:

- All groups agreed that this program is very important and all funds and resources should be presented to make it happen.
- Two groups suggested the RC to handle this and a sub-committee is not required
- A few groups had concerns regarding the

selection of trainers. The roles and criteria of the trainers should be well defined.

- The program should not be a one shot deal but should evolve into a continuous learning program.
 - Yasin should be taught to everybody
 - Madarassa teachers, not necessarily a mullahsaheb
 - Trainers need not be out of pocket. Local Jamaat and significant others should take care of funds.
 - Ladies to be included in leading Namaaz, provide it is allowed.
 - Parents to be taught Islamic traditions so that it can be imparted to the children.
- For Unit 4., intense Religious Instructions. It should be a condition that a commitment for 3 years. The Trainers should then undertake to train more trainers after the three years..
- Cost - The workshop agreed for the \$58,000 to be budgeted for this cause, and the timetable looks reasonable. ■

Workshop: Issues Facing the Youth of Today

Presented by Fatema Patwa, UK at the youth seminar

I really began to think about the future when I attended the Canadian World Conference. They had on the agenda a debate on whether Reformism had any future. I spoke in that debate and in accordance with the brief given to me, I vigorously argued that there was a healthy future for Bohra Reformists. I argued against defeatism and against any idea that it was pointless to continue the fight against Kothar.

However, as the debate progressed, it became clear that the real problem was not the defeatist attitudes but that youngsters did not relate to the Reformist Movement, they did not understand what it was about, its history and most of them thought that it was irrelevant to their lives. I remember one girl, dressed in western clothes, strong Canadian accent and save for her skin colour, not a trace of "Indianess" or "Boharism" about her. She stood up and said that she did not know what Reformism was about, she had Canadian friends and as far as she was concerned, they were more relevant to her than the Reformist Movement. After all, she saw them and mixed with on a daily basis whereas she saw people from the community only occasionally. Of course she was not the only who felt like that. Many others did and

I am positive that many here feel the same. This divorce of the Reformist movement from the lives of our youth is to me the biggest threat to the future of the Reform Movement.

I see the youth slowly moving away from the true values of Boharism and Reformism. I see mixed marriage after mixed marriage and consequently moving away from the community. I see more and more youngsters deciding that being involved in the community is not for them. I see them only concerned about their own lives, about how much money they are making, whether they have friends to spend Saturday night with and New Year's eve with and whether they look good. I also see us losing our traditions values. We can no longer speak to each other frankly and we must appear to be clever and sophisticated. We no longer talk with admiration of those who are most honest, most charitable, most generous, most caring. Instead, we applaud and envy those earning large amounts of money. We no longer about tolerance, duty and respect. The young only talk of what is their right to have.

In short, our traditional values are not just being lost, but replaced with values which

centre on individualism, money and appearances. I hope we can agree that what is replacing our traditional values is not good and is destructive. Well what is "true Reformism". The word "Reformism" is to me a misnomer. What we really want is a return to our traditional Bohra values, values which are still respected throughout the World, values which give us our identity and our self-respect, which, if we embrace, keep our heads, hearts and spirit high. Many will have heard of how there was once a time when Bohras were the most honest people. Many will have heard of a time when people trusted Bohras to look after their entire fortune because Bohras would look after property in their trust better than their own. Many of you will have heard of how people knew that their loved ones would be safe and looked after during a long journey because they had entrusted in the care of a Bohri, and how the word of a Bohri witness counted for more than evidence given by three others. Such was the honour and respect enjoyed by Bohras.

More recently, some of us went to Udaipur. The activities of the Reformist Bohras and their youth made me truly proud to be a Dawoodi Bohra. Let me take just a few
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moments to describe my observations in Udaipur. We arrived there and we were collected by Reformist friends who we had never met before. After a few introductions, I did not feel alien. I did not feel that I was in a strange country. I would have felt strange in Hindu company, or in the company of other Moslems. However, with these people, I felt totally at home. When we went to the majlise, I did not have to think about how I would eat, how I should sit or how I should behave. I felt completely at home. The most remarkable thing was, my children were also at ease. How incredible is that? My great-grandfather was born in Gujerat, not Udaipur Rajasthan. My father and I were born in Uganda and my children in the UK. Yet we knew just how to behave and we felt that we were with people of our own culture. Imagine how powerful that tradition is, that you can go anywhere in World and find somewhere where you can be comfortable. That is the first and foremost tradition of Bohras, hospitality.

How many youngsters invite other Bohras to their houses now, how many feel that a visit from someone abroad is an honour for them, how many feel it their duty to look after a stranger in town? Imagine what the youth are missing out on just because they value their own time and space above hospitality.

The second thing that I noticed was the incredible respect Reformist Bohras had. Two examples stick in my mind. The first was the hospitality we were given by the owner of the most incredible hotel in Rajasthan. This owner arranged for us to spend an afternoon of Christmas day at his hotel. He provided us with snacks, dinner and entertainment. We were free to roam around his hotel, he even arranged a tour of it. All this because he had been helped by our Reformist Bank. The second was, some of us lost our main group. We knew that they were visiting Haidri Saheb, but we did not know where Haidri Saheb lived. We came out of our hotel, we walked a bit and we asked someone. We were immediately directed and then escorted to his house. Those directing and escorting us were proud to be helping Haidri Saheb's guests. Let me tell you where this respect comes from. It comes as a result of a life time dedicated to charitable work. It comes as a result of a community which provides school not for itself, but for everyone, which runs hospitals and doctor's clinics and provides free books to poor students. Contrast them with what faces our youngsters... a life time of activities for their own selfish enjoyment.

The third thing I noticed was a community that was proud, upright and yet totally unassuming. Most of our meetings with

them were in the jamaat khana and in the facilities they managed. Not once did we think whether we were met by poor people or by rich people. They all dressed similarly, they all respected each other and the only comments we heard of people were that so and so had a Phd or so and so was involved some charitable organisation. Can we say that we try hard to distinguish ourselves not by our material wealth, but by our deeds? We need only look at the fancy cars parked outside.

Finally, I want to tell you about the comment that has stuck in my mind most - it was when we entered the jamaat khana and saw thousands congregated to welcome us and join us in dinner (eating is of course a Bohra tradition), it was from



Fatema Patwa

someone from East Africa.. with tears brimming in his eyes, he said, "we had this and we let it go". I feel we are letting it go. The observations I have made about Udaipur could have been made about our jamaats in Uganda, in Kenya, in Saverkundla, in Bombay, in Sri Lanka, anywhere in the World. There were values which bound us all and which we are now losing.

Why are we losing them? In my eyes, the single most important reason is that we no longer have a Da'i who is interested in guiding the moral and spiritual well-being of the community. We are really lucky to have in our conference three of the Worlds most respected Islamic scholars and they will be able to tell you about the fantastic scholarly traditions in our faith, traditionally led by our Da'i. Our Da'is were great intellectuals of their time, well versed in theology, philosophy, other religions, sciences... in fact they had to meet 100 rigorous conditions to qualify as a Da'i. A Da'i was not appointed by birthright, but was appointed by the intellectual and

spiritual elite of our community.

I do not have the intellectual and academic qualifications of many within our community. But I can, from a common sense point of view, appreciate just how great the community of Dawoodi Bohras must have been if it was guided by such a fantastic person. You can imagine the kind of debates he would have encouraged in schools and madrasas under his guidance, the kind of sermons he would have encouraged in our majlises and the kind of moral and welfare guidance we would have received. When our Da'i of today was appointed, he deprived us of that kind of guidance. When he chooses his successor, he will again deprive us of that kind of guidance.

However, the damage he has caused to our community does not stop there. He is thwarting us from doing charitable deeds. He has usurped all our community assets, such as schools, medical facilities, community centre and jamaat khanaas. He has also taken away from Bohras democratic structures, committees who can co-ordinate activities, charitable institutions and deeds. He has taken away from Bohras their self-respect. Bohras can no longer decide anything for themselves. From the moment they are born to the time they die, they must do exactly as they are told. They must have permission for every aspect of their lives, for holding akika to mark the birth of a baby, for mishaq, to mark a child coming of age, for marriage and even for burial. He is taking away from us our identity as a Bohra and all that is good in being a Bohra.

As I see it, the Reformist youth have two choices: fight back for the identity which should have been theirs and for the community which should have been theirs, or succumb to the Western values centred around individualism. I see the Reformist struggle as a struggle to get back our identity and our community. It is not about the other side and our side. It is not about whether they are subjugated and we are free, it is about reclaiming our community, our traditions and our rights. It is also about re-building a community that will again be the envy of all other communities in the World.

I endorse wholeheartedly Shaukat Ajmeri's goals for the Reformist movement. Doing away with Baraat, Raza, a right to govern locally and manage our community assets and our right to respect are all fundamental to rebuilding our community and to our upholding our traditional Bohra values. They are the infrastructure of our community. But we must understand that attaining those things are only to attain an infrastructure to re-build the great traditions of Bohras. There is more, much more to Reformism. ■

Workshop: Literature - the life and soul of the party?

Presented by Moiz Rajabali, UK

Literature is our heritage in respect of our cultural, religious and social environment. The literature of a community is the record of the nature of that community's understanding, at the time. It matters because it allows for experiences to be shared for the enrichment and satisfaction of our lives, which cannot be fulfilled to the same degree through culture alone; and we owe it to past and future members of the community to keep such texts alive in our cultural traditions.

Our most important written work, the Qur'an with its guiding principles, has inspired many people with its message of monotheism (belief in one God), human dignity, righteous living, individual responsibility, and social justice.

In the field of literature, Imam Ahmed Al-Mastur, the ninth Imam produced 52 Risalas on modern sciences, philosophy and Islamic Teachings, which are popularly known as 'Rasail-Ikhwan As-Safaa'. It is due to this unique encyclopaedic work that great thinkers, poets and eminent Sufis were inspired by "Ismaili Teaching". In this regard the names of Ibn-Sina (Avicenna), the great philosopher; Mutanabbi the famous Arabic poet; and Abul Ala Mawardi, the renowned thinker are especially mentionable.

Perhaps, it is not widely known that Fatemi Imams, were great patrons of art, literature and learning, besides being ardent promoters of architecture and the Kufi Script now known to the world as the Fatemi Heritage. They founded the world famous city of "Cairo" (Alqahira) in the year 969 A.D., more than one thousand years ago. They also started, the oldest institution of its kind in the world, the renowned centre of learning Al-Azhar University.

Recently, the Da'a'im al-Islam, became available as 'the Pillars of Islam', which is an English translation revised and edited by Professor Ismail Poonawalla. Those who have started using the Da'a'im al-Islam appreciate the invaluable aid it is, enabling us to learn freely about our sect. The original Da'a'im al-Islam in Arabic by Qadi-al-Nu'man written a thousand years ago, preserved through the times, and

translated into Gujarati, Urdu and English, gives us a direct connection to our glorious past right up to the Prophet (SAW).

The success of, 'The book of Namaz', 'Kitaabus Salaat,' and 'Our Way Of Life' are prime examples of how translation aids learning and understanding, thus allowing us to progress to the next level.

And so, it should be noted that the written word is not the property of the author or that of a particular community but rather for the use of all humanity. The conference gives us an opportunity to embark upon a worldwide program of acquisition and preservation. The workshop will help us identify literature that needs to be translated in a common language in a defined order.

Workshop feedback

Literature: The Life and Soul of the Party? Acquisition, Presentation and Translation The group discussed the first two points and felt that this is reasonably taken care of through the collection being in private hands or being part of an Institute in London, with whom we share a common heritage, at least in the early period. Collection such as in Malegan, India should be catalogued, copied electronically with a synopsis of the subject matter. This would best be done via a special sub-committee composing of at least one scholar, able to read the language and understand the subject matter. Synopsis of the document should be made available, priority list drawn up for the next stage, translation.

There may be other collections in private hands we may be aware of and this should be pursued vigorously and we should all become scouts for this endeavour. Why do this and to What Purpose?



The obvious answer is it is our heritage and it is our duty. Glance at the slides we have been provided with by the Ismaili Institute and we can see the reality of continuity of our glorious past. However, it was felt that translations by themselves was not enough. The purpose of getting the literature was most challenging and far-sighted.

- 1) Grass-roots level education to further inspire the person to go into deeper study/understanding.
- 2) Web-site for virtual madrasa
- 3) Question and Answer chatroom
- 4) Prepared lectures and further reading list of majaalis
- 5) Hand-outs of the entire content of a majaalis for attendees
- 6) Preservation Fund - the amount is difficult to ascertain.
- 7) Scholarship for study of Islam, Shi'ism and Ismaili faith.
- 8) Translation Fund for devotional literature, such a marasiyas.
- 9) Out-reach, a camp during Moharram! The group discussions about languages were whether we should adopt Gujarati or Diaspora. We started with Arabic in Egypt/Yemen, Gujarati in India and now English in the West. ■

Workshop: Globalization of the Reform Movement

Presented by Aziz Mamjui, Kuwait

A Synopsis

This Forum believes that there is a need for fostering better cooperation between reformist Dawoodi Bohra Centres worldwide; and our global organization needs to be strengthened under the auspices of an internationally structured representative body. Furthermore, if we are to make the Reformist Movement a more effective platform, it is essential that efforts must be made for promoting solidarity amongst ourselves. A well-constituted central organization with properly defined objectives, responsibilities and operational mandate would ensure that issues of concern to reformists worldwide can receive due and prompt attention.

This Conference presents a timely opportunity for deliberating on channels that may be pursued towards meeting these objectives. Perhaps there is a need for a stronger central body to oversee our main population centres that today function as autonomous and self sufficient Jamaats. The subject is understandably wide-ranging, but two relevant matters are being proposed for discussion and debate at this Workshop.

A) Global Organisation

There is an expressed concern that our Jamaats in different parts of the world, particularly those outside India, are currently operating as independent units without a responsive international body serving as a frame of reference for all reformist issues. Presently there are two organisations that represent the interest of reformist Bohras:

- The Central Board of Dawoodi Bohra, based in Mumbai, is a legally constituted and registered body that essentially oversees the community and its affairs in India: and
- The Regional Committee, constituted by appointment and operating without any formal mandate, which represents five countries excluding India.

This Forum seeks to debate how these two representative organisations can co-exist, complement each other and address international concerns more effectively. There is general agreement that our worldwide communal development needs to be better guided and directed. We will discuss cooperation between the CBDDBC, the community in India and other

reformist centers worldwide; and we shall ask how the existing Regional Committee can be strengthened and legitimized, with a clearly defined mandate.

B) Pilgrimage and Ziarat Support

Solidarity and cooperation can also be promoted if the Central Board and Regional Committee can assist, working jointly on a global scale, on matters that concern the practice of our faith.

Pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia and other Ziarats are of particular interest to Dawoodi Bohras. The Forum will discuss whether a well-coordinated and easily accessible system can, and should, be set-up for Reformists worldwide to facilitate visits to important pilgrimage sites in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and other areas.

Discussions will focus on the practicalities of implementing and managing any scheme that delegates recommend for further consideration.

Workshop: Discussion Guidelines

A) Global Structure

In focusing on our global community we have to first ask the question:

"Would our cause be helped by an active, more responsive, internationally represented body overseeing and guiding all things reformist?"

Relevant issues that may be addressed in our discussions would include:

- 1) Assessing whether there is a genuine need for a strong representative body, other than the CBDDBC, to focus on the affairs of the Reformists outside India.
- 2) At present the Regional Committee does not have a formalized structure and its responsibilities have been defined in non-binding general terms only. In order to evaluate its relevance, therefore, we should consider:
 - The effectiveness of the current status;
 - Whether it responds to the aspirations of Reformist Centres worldwide;
 - Its adaptability to the changing needs of Reformists today; and
 - Whether it has the capacity and authority to meaningfully guide and advise on matters affecting the reformist Jamaats that it represents.
- 3) The role of the Regional Committee

would have to be reviewed with particular attention to how, in the interest of global progress, it can co-exist and cooperate with the CBDDBC.

- 4) The Forum proposes that in spite of not having a legalized framework, the concept of the Regional Committee has worked well. To be more effective, however, it should be given a very clearly defined mandate. Towards this objective, the Workshop shall discuss:

- How the Regional Committee can represent Reformist Bohras worldwide and speak with authority and a unified voice?
- Promoting coordination between the various Jamaats, and with the community in India.
- Defining a clear basis for cooperation with the CBDDBC.
- Providing direction and guidance on religious matters.
- Initiating and organising international events to enhance global solidarity.
- Planning for the continued growth of the reformist community.
- Arbitrating on matters of differences between various Jamaats and advising on affairs and issues emanating from within the independent member centers.

- 5) Our deliberations should also focus on how the expanded remit of the Regional Committee can be implemented; how it should be strengthened; and whether its membership should be increased. This mandate can perhaps be achieved by legalizing its structure. In this regard, the Forum should discuss:

- The aims and objective of this redefined Regional Committee.
- The formulation of its constitution and rules of function.
- Legalisation of its status as a representative body.
- Funding issues and financial sustainability.

Finally, the Forum should recommend how we should move forward on the issues addressed and suggest a work programme and timeline for the existing Regional Committee to pursue.

B) Pilgrimage and Ziarat Support

Currently there are no special arrangements in place for facilitating pilgrimages (Umra and Haj) to Saudi Arabia, Ziarats in Iraq or

visits to other parts of the world which are of specific interest to Dawoodi Bohras. This Forum believes that an important aspect of international cooperation would be our ability to make better arrangements for performing pilgrimages and Ziarats.

Matters that may be deliberated upon are:

- 1) Understanding problems associated with making separate arrangements in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world for Reformists only; and how these are limited by the options that available to us.
- 2) We shall identify the most desirable, yet achievable, arrangements that should be considered further. These may include:
 - Setting up some kind of base in Mecca and Medina, to which reformists from all over the world would have unhindered access.
 - Appointing our own Mulla-saheb whose main responsibility would be to facilitate arrangements in Saudi Arabia and provide guidance as necessary.
 - Forming an association with established agencies that have already been officially sanctioned by the Saudi government, so that exclusive facilities can be provided for all our pilgrims.
- 2) The practicalities of implementing the Forum's recommendations would be discussed and terms of reference shall be defined for the Regional Committee or any other appointed body to pursue further.

Feedback from the workshop Global organisation

- 1) The regional committee is a valid and viable frame of reference for reformists outside India. However to become more effective and responsive to the aspirations of the various jamaats it must:
 - Define its aims and objectives
 - Be adaptable to the changing needs of reformists today, and
 - Have the authority to meaningfully guide and advise the jamaat it represents.
- 2) The RC cannot be considered in international representative body in the true sense. It must be recognised that to become an effective and worldwide reformist movement there is a definite need for an international legally constituted and registered world body serving as an umbrella organisation, to which the various jamaats, countries or regions based committees would be affiliated. Whereas in the interim the existing RC should consolidate itself.



This proposal should be studied and an action plan should be developed to ultimately lead to the establishment of the world body.

- 3) The RC's relationship with the Central Board Dawoodi Bohra Community (CBDDBC) should be strengthened. There must be better cooperation between the two bodies so that they complement each other and as they work towards global progress of the reformist community.
- 4) The existing mandate and responsibilities of the RC should be reviewed and strengthened, but the focus should be on matters that concern Reformist Bohras worldwide rather than those that are particular to the various respective jamaats.
- 5) The RC should not become a legally constituted body. However its organisation framework and rules of function have to be more defined so that it can become a more effective representative body.
- 6) The existence of the large community in India and their experience in the reformist struggle should be noted. As such the RC should consider granting one representative from a seat as an informal observer. This RC should seek reciprocal involvement in the CBDDBC.
- 7) The current membership of the RC is adequately representative of the reformist community outside India at present although an increase in the number if nominees should not be considered. Ensure that the needs of smaller jamaats are not ignored more

dialogues between the RC and the regions it represents should be encouraged.

- 8) The RC must communicate more frequently with the various jamaats and publicise its activities, progress and achievement through better reporting.
- 9) As it would not be a legally constituted body, the RC should not be a direct recipient of funds. The RC should address funding issues and make proposals on its financial sustainability for the respective regions to consider.
- 10) The RC should establish its own timeline and action plan for implementing the recommendations and suggestions emanating from the discussions

Pilgrimage support

- 1) An association should be formed with a well-established organisation or company in Saudi Arabia in must of the reformist centres worldwide, to facilitate travel and other necessary arrangements for our community
- 2) The RC should investigate the possibility of making suitable accommodation arrangements for our pilgrims especially during Hajj
- 3) Efforts must be made to explain Hajj/Umra rites mainly through publications to our potential pilgrims.
- 4) The appointment of a Mulla-saheb, permanently based in Saudi Arabia to assist our pilgrims with the performance of Haj and Umra should be investigated and implemented if viable. ■

The Reform movement in the context of Islam globally

By Professor Ismailbhai Poonawalla

Before I talk about our reform movement, its failures and achievements, and a future plan of action that I would like to propose for your consideration, let me digress a little from the main topic and try to situate our movement in the context of the wider Islamic world in order to get a better perspective of what we are engaged in and to find out where we stand.

We should not forget that as far as our religious affiliation is concerned we are part and parcel of a larger Muslim community, often called the umma. The world in which we live today is quite different than before. Because of modern technology and transportation the world has shrunk to such an extent that it is aptly described as "a global village." This new situation requires of us all better understanding of each other.

Since the tragic events of 9/11 we are passing through a time of great international unrest in which the issue of faith has risen to a high position on the agenda for all of us. The notion of absolute truth in matters of religion sounds hopelessly out of date, however it was and still is central to all religions. Understanding and acceptance of the "other" is not only a requisite for peaceful co-existence but also an essential ingredient for a vibrant and meaningful democracy and pluralistic society. Study of another religion or culture gives us a wider angle of vision and understanding. It enlarges one's own understanding and provides us with a better awareness of the great variety in human life and culture.

I assume that most of you have had little or no exposure as to how Islam developed historically over the past fourteen centuries and how its doctrines were formulated. Similarly, most of you might not be well acquainted with our own Bohra history and doctrines. Therefore, I will ask for your indulgence.

Let me begin with Islam. In relation to other

major religious traditions of the world, Islam is the youngest of world's major religions. One of the important reasons for its rapid success is that Islam stresses equality of men, social justice, and tolerance between races and nations. Within a short span of time Islam evolved and developed into a rich culture and civilization. During the Golden Age of Islam, i.e. roughly until the times of the Crusades and the Mongol sack of Baghdad, Arabic literature flourished, the great codes of Islamic law were formulated, trade and commerce extended halfway around the world, the philosophy, mathematics, and medicine of the ancients were assimilated, developed further and given fresh contents. The great cultural achievements of Islamic societies were passed on to the European Renaissance and to the modern world.

The encounter of the world of Islam with the growing military and economic power of European colonialism from the 17th to the 20th centuries disrupted Muslim patterns of life. Their lives came to be influenced or governed by the policies of the respective colonial power. Much of recent Muslim history reflects the desire on the part of the different Muslim countries to free themselves from this Western hegemony or to defend their freedom and gain greater control over their affairs. The pressures generated by global politics and nation building have not always made that task easy. Hence, the efforts to create modes of life that would reflect past values and provide a sense of continuity with the past



Islamic heritage is still fraught with tension. Now, let me turn to the crux of the matter. After the dreadful events of 9/11, especially in the American mass media, Americans are bombarded with the menacing headlines and slogans, such as "Islam: belligerent religion," "Militant revival of Islam," "What has gone wrong with Islam?" and "Why do they hate us?" Unfortunately, this is not the avenue to pursue this issue. However, in light of all the negative criticism it is quite relevant to pose the question: Is Islam monolithic as painted by the American mews media? The answer is, definitely no. Like any other religion Islam is neither monolithic nor inflexible.

Leaving aside the classical period of Islam, in modern times Islam has gone through numerous revivalist and modernist movements. Modern reformist movements go back at least two centuries. It is the authoritarian political regimes throughout

the Arab and Islamic world that bare major responsibility for the present Muslim dilemma. Suffice it to say that Islam has witnessed challenge upon challenge, from colonial subjugation to revivalism to reform movements to, most recently, struggle with fundamentalism or Islamism. During each phase, Muslims have had to address internal tensions as well as external threats.

Contemporary Islamic movements and major activist intellectuals represent a wide range of intellectual efforts all the way from Morocco to Indonesia. Their efforts are directed towards creating an effective synthesis of modernity and Islamic tradition. Major discourses across the Islamic world cover a wide range of topics, from gender issues, to Islam and democracy, Islam and human rights, to the question of Islamic heritage. The Quran, the sunna, the sira, and the shari'a are key elements in Islam. The study of the origins and development of these elements is therefore essential for the understanding of the genesis of Islamic history and civilization. In recent years Islamic scholarship in those areas has progressed in leaps and bounds.

Legal reform is another central issue in most Muslim societies. Notwithstanding the traditional concept of shari'a as immutable, far-reaching modifications have been implemented in recent times. Very few Muslim countries still regard the shari'a as the fundamental law. Some have abandoned it and substituted secular law, while others have reached a compromise between the two positions. Family law, i.e., the law of marriage and divorce and the law of inheritance, considered the very heart of the shari'a, has undergone modifications. Of course, there was a battle between the forces of conservatism and of progress.

In short, the Islamic world has made progress. We the Bohras, on the other hand, have lagged far behind. In the past our spiritual ancestors were in the forefront. The Ismaili movement achieved spectacular political success by founding the Fatimid dynasty that ruled North Africa, Egypt, and parts of greater Syria for over two centuries. Some of the great d'is, such as Nasafi, Razi, Sijistani, Qadi Nu'm'n, Kirm'ni, and Muvayyad Shir'zi have enriched Arabic literature, philosophy, law, theology, and history. Ismaili literature of the Fatimid period reflects the general concern of

Muslims and of Islamic theology and law that were being developed and debated among the various Muslim schools of thought. The major Ismaili contribution to Islamic thought is their formulation of a new synthesis of reason and revelation based on Neo-platonic cosmology and Shi'i doctrine. Thus, they offered a new world order under the aegis of the Im'm who resembles Plato's philosopher-king. The classic formulation of this synthesis is found in the Ras'vil Ikhw'n al-'af'v, a well-known encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences. It was compiled by Ismaili authors and occupies a unique position in the history of Islamic thought and exercised a great influence on the Muslim elite.

Without dwelling too much on the past, let us inquire about the causes of stagnation. One of the main reasons in my opinion was the precarious nature of the existence of our community after the fall of the Fatimid dynasty, first in Yemen for four centuries, and then in India. Especially in Yemen, it was the question of its very survival under extremely adverse circumstances that have molded the attitudes of the religious establishment in order to keep the community together. Intellectually the community was more or less isolated from the main stream of Islamic thought. The situation in India somewhat fluctuated depending on the political rule in Gujarat, but then the linguistic and cultural environments had completely changed.

I am not concerned here as to when, where, and how the Bohra reform movement originated. For convenience and personal familiarity, I will begin with the first conference, known as the Bagasra Sammelan, held in the late fifties of the last century. At one time, under the leadership of the late Nomanbahi Contractor when several thousand copies of the weekly Bulletin were sold, the movement looked like a mass movement that was about to yield some fruits. Unfortunately, the religious establishment outmaneuvered the reformists. The movement was also narrowly focused on the democratization of community institutions and their financial accountability. Looking back at half a century of struggle one has to ask, what have we achieved? Since I left India in 1960 I do not claim to have first hand information as to what happened on the ground. However, watching it from a distance I have to conclude that the

achievements of the movement appear disappointing. Please do not get me wrong, besides blind faith and lack of moral courage on the part of the people, the Mull'ji's use of the weapon of excommunication and refusal to perform religious rites of marriage as well as the funeral rites of a member of the reformist family created enormous hardships to those families in the closely-knit Bohra society of the Indian sub-continent.

During the last several decades the religious establishment, on the other hand, has thrived. All of the community waqf property has been taken over. Driven by consummate greed the establishment has devised numerous ways to squeeze more and more money from the naïve and blind followers. Many old mosques and mausoleums were razed to the ground, millions of rupees collected to rebuild them under the pretext of revival of the Fatimid art and architecture. Codes of personal appearance and dress, both for men and women, were mandated to delineate members of the community from non-members and to fortify group solidarity. Like the neo-revivalists, such as the Ikhw'n al-Muslimin, and Jam'at-e Isl'mi groups, some of the pet themes of the establishment are: bank interest is unlawful; the unveiling of women is a cardinal sin; and that intellectualism is dangerous.

I would like to propose the following. The scope of reform needs to be broadened to include religious issues. The two main fundamental sources of Islam, namely the Quran and the sunna/hadith, need to be re-examined in light of recent research and development. The principle of ijti'h'd, rejected by our forefathers due to special circumstances and the very nature of the theory of the Imamate, need to be reconsidered. I further propose that certain un-Islamic practices, such as female circumcision, mith'q ceremony, very cruel practice of imprisoning a widow following her husband's death in a room or a house for four months and ten days under the pretext of observing the mandatory ordinance of 'idda must be abandoned. Religious education is in dire need of drastic reform. As a modest beginning towards achieving our goals we need to organize ourselves by setting up local, regional, national, and international councils within an appropriate constitutional framework. ■

The rights and responsibilities of a Dai

By Professor Abbas Hamdani

A brief presentation at the United Reformist World Conference 2004 by Abbas Hamdani Professor Emeritus, Middle Eastern History, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, U.S.A.

At the moment I am working on an important text entitled *Kitab Tuhfat al-qulub* by the third Dai Mutlaq, Hatim b. Ibrahim a-Hamidi (d. 596 H./1199 C.E.) which was cited in the important cases for our community - the Chandabhai Gulla case and the Burhanpur Durga case. It contains the full text of an earlier book *Al-Risalat al-Mujaza* by a Da'i of the time of the Fatimid Caliphs al-Aziz and al-Hakim, namely the Da'i Ahmad b. Ibrahim al-Naysaburi of the late 4th/10th century, specifically on the qualifications of the Da'i. The work of these two Da'is show a continuation of the Da'wa tradition from the Fatimid times when Ismailism ruled as an imperial religion to the later Yamani period in which the Tayyibi faith was born as an independent community without statehood in Yaman to be followed by the Da'wa in India.

In Fatimid times, the Da'wa had a dual role - one to help the Fatimid Administration openly and two, to act under cover against the Abbasid Administration. Although the tradition of Ahd and Mithaq has been a continuous one, its importance is only when the Da'wa operates secretly; for it is expressly meant for *Kitman asrar awliya*

Allah - i.e. for hiding the secrets of the faithful followers of God. The Tayyibi Da'wa came increasingly under enemy administration in Yaman, so its need for secrecy and the ahd and mithaq became pronounced. In India, it was so in the beginning, but since the establishment of the British administration, it really lost its significance. However, since the time of Tahir Sayf al-din, it was revived in its crassest form, not for the protection of the community but for tyrannizing over it and for extortion. In any case the mithaq was the Da'i's right only to bind a mustajib, a candidate member, to the Imam of the time, manifest or hidden, and to make him abide by the Sharia; yet in our time it has become an instrument of exploitation. The Da'i has no right to demand a mithaq, repeatedly and year after year. It should only be administered to a child reaching adulthood or an adult converting to the teachings of the Da'wa. That is all. Before the administration of the oath, its meanings have to be explained. There is no tradition of accompanying customs of *rada* (rada) or of *Ruq a Chitthi*.

Another right of the Da'i was to represent the hidden Imam. Every rank of the Da'wa hierarchy had an order of precedence - each lower rank was actually that rank and potentially a higher rank, in the latter's absence. Hence a da'i mutlaq is actually a da'i mutlaq and potentially the Imam in the

absence of intermediary ranks of bab, hujja and da'i balagh. This demanded tremendous obedience - only if that da'i was a) truly a dai and not just a nazim (organizer) and b) if he was a valid da'i but did not possess the qualifications listed by the Da'i al-Naysaburi. These qualifications are his responsibilities.

There are many among the reformists who hold that in 1256 H (ie. 1840 C.E.) on the sudden death of the 46th Da'i - Muhammad Badr al-din b. Abd Ali Sayf al-din, the required nass (or designation) was broken and that the next Da'i Abd al-Qadir Najm al-din should be accepted only as a Nazim and not as a da'i and that all the claimants after that are only nazims not da'is.

But even if we accept that they are da'is proper with valid nass, they have to fulfill the qualifications listed by the Da'i al-Naysaburi, which are as follows:

There are three basic conditions for a da'i: ilm (knowledge), taqwa (piety) and siyasa (policy). In zahir (outward) and batin (inward), the da'i should combine in himself the leadership qualities of the faqih, a qadi, an amir, a muezzin, a syndic (amin), a mujahid, a physician, an astronomer, an agriculturist, a shepherd, a merchant, a craftsman, a sailor and a highway guide. A Da'i must have a strong belief in God, the Prophets, and Imams. He must be disciplined, constrained, chaste, godly and concerned (*mushfiq*) for the believers. He must be intelligent, modest and generous. He must be truthful and possessor of *muruwwa* (virtue) and *haya*. He must be kind, good natured, of sweet discourse, patient, cultured, courageous, of good manners and morals, experienced, diplomatic and knowledgeable about the people's conditions under his jurisdiction. He must know the religions prevalent in his area of work. He must seek the company of the ulama, the ascetics and worshippers. He should not be greedy, corrupt, hypocritical and gluttonous. He should not accuse a mu'min of false motives; should not lose his temper or use bad words. He must have an imposing personality. He must know a candidate's deficiencies and try to remove them before administering an oath to him. He must attribute all knowledge to the Imam. An oath without educating a mustajib about its meaning is no good. The da'i



should satisfy the curiosity of a mu'min. He should train the lower ranks so that they could be promoted to his rank. A da'i should keep an open door to his followers. His door keeper should be gentle, soft-spoken and not greedy. He holds the reputation of the da'i in his hands. A Da'i should be above reproach as far as women are concerned. He should avoid fisq and fasad. In his sermons, he should be modest and not bragging about his family and friends. He should be able to adjudicate the disputes of his followers. He should do Imam's work in his sector of operation. He should not choose his companions for profit. A Da'i is responsible for spending the monies allotted by the Imam for improving the conditions of the Da'wa. The Da'i should seek the obedience of his people for the Imam and not just for himself. If the officers under him are dishonest, he should pronounce bara'a (disassociation) and replace them. (This does not involve ex-communication of any member of the community or even of that officer.) If the da'i is weak in this respect, his followers would lose faith and loyalty to the Imam. The greatest responsibility of the da'i is to bring about the ta'lif al-qulub (the bonding of the hearts of the faithful). These conditions are binding on all ranks from the Bab to the Mukasir. These conditions are summed up in the three basics of ilm (knowledge), taqwa (piety) and siyasa (policy).

We only have to look at the Da'wa that exists today and see if it fulfills these conditions. Of course the qualities of a da'i enumerated here picture for us an ideal, difficult to achieve; but then there have been many da'is in the past who strived to fulfill these conditions and who were pious and God fearing and they loved their community and there was a bond of mutual respect between them. This has not been the case since the time of the 47th da'i Yusuf Najmuddin and more particularly during the time of the last two da'is, Tahir Sayf al-din and Muhammad Burhan al-din. The Kothar under them is rampant with corruption and exploitation, and it is the duty of the reform movement to bring this to light and to save our faith community from such leaders. ■

A List of friends sending their best wishes for the conference

- **Kurban Kirefu, New Zealand**
The organisers received a telephone call from Mr Kurban Kirefu sending his best wishes
 - **A.T Hasanali, Thailand**
 - **Hakim & Anar Kapasi, USA**
 - **Mauiyyed, Pakistan**
I am very happy about this conference being organised, as it will help define a better understanding for future generations. I am happy and sure that these gatherings will strengthen the resolve, educate the young ones, give hope that the Bohra creed will survive for the uplift and betterment of the Ismaili Tayyebi Dawa and the community in general.
 - **Moiez Tapia, USA**
Sends his best wishes in educating and serving the community through this conference.
 - **Bishop Sentamu (Bishop of Birmingham)**
He sends a good will message saying that he hopes we have a very stimulating conference
 - **Iqbal Karimjee, Jersey**
 - **The Dawoodi Bohra Jamaat, Bombay**
They congratulate the Dawoodi Bohra Welfare Society in Great Britain and other friends for arranging the world conference in U.K. They are sorry that due to unforeseen circumstances they cannot attend this conference personally.
 - **Abdultayeb Mulla, Cambridge Massachusetts**
He hopes that we have a successful gathering and that our discussions and deliberations will be fruitful.
 - **Elyas and Nargis Sardharwala, UK**
Both wish the organisers and the participants all the best and the most successful conference to you all. They extend their special thanks to the organisers, as they know that plenty of effort, dedication and time are required to organise a large international event such as this.
 - **Nazim Karimjee, UK**
Sends his regards and hopes the Conference goes well and that we achieve our goals and ambitions.
 - **Dr Yusufi Saherwala, Godhra India**
Please accept my best wishes for the conference and its implementation program.
 - **Ikhwanus Safa Trust**
Huseinibhai Rangwala on behalf of the Ikhwanus Safa Trust has sent a cheque of £593.89 as a donation towards this conference expenditure. He writes "It is a small contribution our trust is sending to you in the name of Dawoodi Bohra Welfare Society in Great Britain. Our mind is there and our sincere prayers for all good outcome for this conference. Our good wishes and regards to all"
 - **Udaipur Jumaat**
We wish the conference a resounding success. Having keenly seen your programmes, topics of discussions /deliberations and arrangements I am sure you will not allow this conference to pass as a mere chat shop.
- Announcements and Resolutions will definitely be accompanied with a road map for the future course of action for the reformists. The members of the DBWS-GB have been working very hard for the last so many months and we pray Allah, The Almighty, to Bless them with a grand success. Ameen!
- **Dr F.H. Arustu, UK**
It is my sincere wish for the conference to be a great success. I congratulate the management committee for organising this world conference of the DBWS. I am sure this conference will give great importance to promote all round education for the community and this is the only way to win our goal. My heart is with you all.
 - **Ibrahim Jasdanwalla, UK**
 - **Sarfraz H. Raj (President Bohra Youth Medical Relief Forum) Udaipur, India**
It's matter of great pride for Bohra all around the world that such a high level conference is being organized at such a vital period of our reform movement. It surely going to be a milestone in our struggle for the betterment of the community.
- We extend our warmth felicitations to all associates of the conference and wish the conference all the success.

Stars in our community

Special awards presented to some special people

The award ceremony was hosted by Huma Vanat and Bushra Vanat.

Awards for publication of religious literature were presented by Mumtaz Vamat (UK)

Mr Zulfikar Budhabhai (below)

For his easy to read, accessible account of the Muharrum events.



Dr Abbas Hamdani (below)

For writing several accounts of Bohra and Islamic traditions



Mr Abdullah Hamdani (below)

For his publication "Comprehensive Genealogy of Islamic Studies" providing fascinating family trees of various Muslim sects.



Professor Ismail Poonawalla

for the translation the Daymul Islam into English and so making it available to many more people.

Sheikh Ahmadali Raj Sarangpoorwalla

He has written a number of books including the Tafsil of Quran and thus generating knowledge in the community.

Mr Mohamadhusein Sajjad Sarangpoorwalla

His "Book of Namaaz" was the first translation of Namaaz and invaluable resource for people learning to read namaaz.

Awards for literary and lifetime contributions were presented by Currim Currimjee (Mauritius)

Dr Asgarali Engineer (below)

Dr Asgarali Engineer contribution to our movement, the cause of Islam and to communalism is world-renowned. He has published abundant literature, some of which is used as reference books in Universities. We can proudly say that in the Muslim and academic world he is better known than our Syedna. He is classed as one of the finest intellectuals of India. For our cause he has risked his life. He has been stabbed, beaten and his house and office have been ran-sacked. This token is in recognition of your contribution to the religious awareness and your dedication to the Reform Movement.



Mr Ahmed Luqmani

Luqmani uncle is a founder member and a life member of the Dawoodi Bohra Welfare Society and has served it as president and as an auditor for many years. He is a Trustee of the 1986 Bohra Reformist Trust and is also its treasurer. He has always been available for performances of Niqaah, Burials and Mishaq. His books "Our Way of Life" and "Kitabus Salaat" are now household's books. Besides serving the Reformist community in the UK he has been actively engaged with many other Muslim Organisations. He and his wife Gulbanoo Ben have fostered many disadvantaged children. Mr Luqmani has been a source of solace and strength to the sick in

hospital. This token is in recognition of your contribution to the religious awareness and your dedication to the Reform Movement.



Mr Luqmani receives his award after taking a taxi from London to Daventry so that he wouldn't miss the conference. Unfortunately his ill health meant he could only stay for a couple of hours. He makes a moving tribute to all the conference delegates and organisers.

Awards for lifetime commitments to the Reform Movement were presented by Khatija Kapasi (UK)

Mr. Zulfikar Abdulla (below)

Zulfi uncle hails from Kenya where he was an active member of the community. A quiet spoken, extremely hardworking and selfless individual, Zulfi uncle has been instrumental in the acquisition and maintaining of our Centre in Hamilton. Canadian Reformists know that they can count on his loyalty and generosity in all circumstances. His enthusiasm for our cause is well demonstrated by his participation in fighting Bill S-13, his participation in the Canada Conference, the Udaipur trip and his presence in this conference. This token is in recognition of a long-term service and commitment to the Reform Movement.



Mr. Abbasbhai Bagasrawalla

Abbas uncle has one of the most difficult tasks one can handle. Orphans of a very young age are put into his care. He sees

them, through their elementary education right through to college. He has the task of moulding children from deprived families into self-respecting and educated adults.

He has done this successfully for well over forty years now. His handling of the Yatim Khana has been impeccable. Visitors to the Yatim Khana have been amazed at his even-handedness, at the reverence with which the orphans look up to him, and at the efficient and economical way in which the orphanage is run. Unfortunately because of his ill health he is not able to be here with us. This token is in recognition of his lifetime services and dedication to the well being of the orphans in the community.

Miss Zehraben Cyclewalla (below)

Zehra aunty is the people's princess. The first lady in our communal history to take up the mammoth challenges of facing up to the wrath and wickedness of the mighty Kothar. She has won the hearts and minds of all who have heard her name. Though she is on her own, living in the middle of fanatic Orthodox Bohras, close to 10,000 people turned up for her mother's funeral. She is making the heaviest sacrifice one can imagine. She remains surrounded twenty-four hours a day by armed police for protection against Syedna's whims. She is single-handedly pursuing court cases against Syedna's henchmen. To date she has financed these by many extra hours of hard work. She has rejected massive financial inducements offered for her silence. This token is in recognition of your determination and endurance in upholding the ideals of the Reform Movement.



Mr. Hussein Hamdani

Had Hamdani Uncle been here today you would have all felt his presence even with your eyes shut. A towering figure with great demeanour, he would have enchanted us all. Master in speaking different languages and not being able to write in any, he is a self-taught successful wheeler and dealer. A one time fanatical believer he quickly turned into a staunch and unyielding reformist

continued on next page

once the truth dawned on him. Ugandans fondly remember his contribution to their fight in saving the community assets from falling into Syedna's hands. 30 years on despite his age he continued the fight and has successfully stopped the properties slipping into the Kothar's grip. Like his late father Abdalla Hamdani he has always kept the communities interest before his personal interest. His generosity has no bounds. His contribution to the 1986 BRT has been the largest. He has handsomely contributed to our centre in Canada and has built a splendid mosque and other facilities in St Catherine in Canada, which are enjoyed by all Muslims in the region. This token is in recognition of his unyielding determination to secure our communal heritage throughout life, with zeal and resilience.

Mr Fazlehusein Kapasi (below)

There are two words to describe this man: vivacious and a visionary. He is a warm-hearted, generous man, an eternal optimist, who prefers to see the good in others and who cares deeply about our community. Whatever life throws at him he bounces back and keeps on fighting. Despite 50 years of experience he remains approachable and down-to-earth, and he always looks ahead, never back, using history as a learning tool. He is a gifted communicator and storyteller. He brings stories alive and after hearing them we find ourselves embracing them. From organising this conference we have had personal experience of him. Although a generation apart he has welcomed our opinions and our thoughts, and given us the confidence to make this conference our own, and we thank him for that. This token is in recognition of a lifetime of outstanding loyalty, support and passion for the Reform Movement.



Mr Masarrat Quaisar

Masarrat Quaisar was instrumental in reinvigorating the in-active "Abab-E-Watan" Organisation with a new Bohra Youth Association of North America (BYANA). He along with Shamim Husain obtained a tax-exempt status for BYANA. Since the inception of BYANA, Masarrat along with his wife Naheed has worked tirelessly in collecting membership dues, donations, imbursement of funds and organising various functions and get together. Through his relentless efforts, BYANA has made substantial contributions in the past to the Medicare centre in Udaipur. Masarrat persuaded a lot of Bohras in the tri-state area to attend the Canada conference. The conference gave a moral boost to the participants and awakened the need for community platform in the USA. Masarrat lives with his



Johar Quaisar accepts award on behalf of Masarrat Quaisar

wife Naheed and son Faaiz in New Fairfield, Connecticut. An electronics engineer by profession, he works as a marketing and sales engineer for home health pavilion in New Milford. Currently he is one of the five founder trustees of DBRJNA and actively participates in all areas of the community.

Miss Haki Kapasi (below)

A vibrant lady in the way she communicates. Although not technically part of the youth, she will never be considered outside the youth group no matter how old she gets. For the youth she is a good listener, with whom we can express our thoughts freely to, and more then anything she is like an older sister. We admire her because she has always grounded the community and made us remember why we're all here. She does this through the publication of Azad. One of the reasons she is receiving this award is for her tremendous effort over such a long period of time as the editor of Azad. Due to this continuous and dedicated effort, Azad is now read across the globe and every issue has a lot to offer for a diverse audience.

This token is in recognition of your efforts to inspire and guide our youth and for making Azad the global voice of the reform movement. ■



What a note to end it all!

The conference was about ACTION, not just talking. The workshops came out with a number of points for the Regional Committee to take forward. To make the action into a reality, the conference ended with the good old tradition of fund-raising. Each and everyone in that room knew where they were going and what needed to be done. We were now talking global solidarity.

The conference raised approximately **£114,000** sterling. Funds came from delegates in all the different parts of

the world - India, Mauritius, England, Sweden, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and so on and on.

With unanimous agreement, a conference resolution was passed that the funds should be held in the 1986 Bohra Reformist Trust and should be used to further the actions arising from the conference.

Some countries such as the USA will look at the most cost effective way of collecting the money so that we can maximise the funds.



Conference Video and CD

The team in the UK is working on producing a short video (hopefully available in DVD) and a CD of conference photos. We will let you know when all this is available.

Post conference messages

What a grand, fruitful time was had by all! And just to prove it, here are some messages sent in by those who attended the conference.

It was nice meeting you all at the conference. It was well-organized and attended by a few hundreds. All of you deserve to be congratulated once again for its success. After the conference I was in Europe and Lebanon and have returned a few days ago.
Ismail Poonawalla, USA

I'm just back in Toronto from my holiday in India. Just wanted to tell you what a great success the conference was. Thank you all for your hard work, dedication and commitment. At a general meeting in Udaipur I gave details of the conference and informed them of its success. I informed them how Udaipur holds out a great hope for reformists around the world. Though nobody from Udaipur could attend, they realise the importance of such events especially when they are held at such international venues. I told them how the England conference was one more milestone in bringing reformists together and how it helped strengthening our unity. The people in Udaipur were very happy to hear about the four workshops and its outcome. They are willing to help in any way possible in the roving mullah saab project.

Shaukat Ajmeri, Canada

We have just returned from our trip to England and Shamoun and I would like to congratulate the Conference organising

committee for a very well organised and action packed conference. A lot of hard work went into making it a success and our appreciation to especially the ladies who cooked and the young volunteers for a superb job.

Shamoun and Naseem Jivanji, Canada

Heartiest congratulations for organising a successful world conference. This could only help to enrich the solidarity within the reformist movement globally aspired by one and all. Let us pray for cooperation in virtue. Although the Jivanjee families could not attend we were there in spirit.

Zeenat, Murtaza uncle, Riyaz and Farrah Jivanjee

On behalf of the Managing Committee and members of Association of Progressive Dawoodi Bohras of Ontario (APDBO), I would like to thank and congratulate the organizing committee and all volunteers who put the Dawoodi Bohra Reformist, UK 2004 conference together. What a Conference it was! The venue was great, the accommodations were excellent, and the food was incredible. But the high point of the conference was the outcome. The overwhelming boost and support for the Regional committee and role it should or will play globally for reformist Bohras.

The workshops that were presented in this conference were very successful and addressed most of the reformist Bohras concerns, issues and needs. This will allow RC to take on these issues/needs and help the jamats around the world.

The other highlight of the conference was the formation of the World Youth committee - an independent initiative of the Youth present at the conference who were completely charged up and ready to contribute to the Reform movement. It was very heartening to see such enthusiasm from the Youth around the world.

Saif Rajabali (President) Association of Progressive Dawoodi Bohras of Ontario

I feel more inspired to work towards our goal of progression within our jamaat. I can only pray that the almighty gives us more strength to work towards this challenge - best wishes and well done for a wonderful job.

Nabil Adamjee, Kenya

We wish to thank each and everyone one you for the tremendous effort in staging the conference which we believe was a great success. There was a wonderful sense of "belonging" and being part of the "community" which one does not always feel. It was great to meet so many people and make new friends within our community both on a national and international level and hope that the new generations have felt the same and will endeavour to keep the community spirit alive.

Mustan and Safia Ebrahimjee, UK

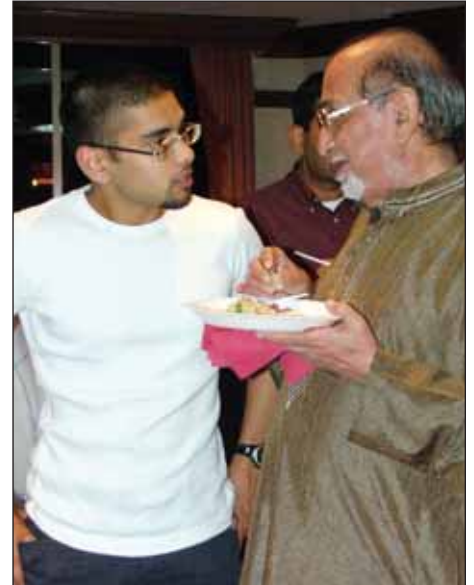
Congratulations to the whole committee on, from all accounts, a very successful conference. I have heard rave reviews so far and was delighted to hear that not only did you have a huge turnout, but that the workshops and discussions were of the highest quality. It takes enormous amount of drive, commitment and hard work for such an accomplishment.

Luby Fidaali, Canada

Pictures from the conference



The stage is set for action!



Different generations in debate



Trustees (clockwise from top left):
Fakhru Kadarbhai, Kutub Najmuddin, Saifu
Tayabali, Fazal Kapasi and Ahmed Luqumani



Fatema Huseinbhai



Delegates look through the books on sale at the conference



Relaxing after a busy conference



Sabera and Mustafa help to
provide some delicious food



Zehraaben Cyclewalla launches her autobiography at the
conference and presents a copy to Tim Boswell, Member of
Parliament for Daventry, who attended the conference as
a special guest



Bushra Vanat and Huma Vanat host the Awards night



Enjoying a day out in the Welsh Countryside



Maryam Patwa entertains the delegates



Faeem Kirefu at the Gala Dinner



Munira Sulemanji translated from English to Gujarati - well done!



(above) Bushra Vanat, finally exhausted from helping to organise the conference!



What do you mean burnt?



Youth meeting



All dressed up for the Gala night



Khatija Kapasi and Mumtaz Vanat - in charge of the food committee.



CONFERENCE 2004

United Reformist Dawoodi Bohras

