In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

The HOPE Bulletin

Health, Ongoing Projects, Education

UK Family Day

1 July 2012
On Sunday 1st of July 2012, the Annual Family Day at Wembley, UK Lahore Ahmadiyya Centre, was held. Every year this day is a chance for the youth to make a contribution or speech and deliver it in front of the Jama’at. This year seven youngsters; Inshaal Ahmad, Faizaan Ahmad, Irfan Ahmad, Shayaan Ahmad, Juhi Wasim, Adeeiba Ali and Simrah Khayam Zafar delivered speeches. Bushra Ahmed also delivered the closing speech and conducted the programme. (Pictured to the right)

The first speech was delivered by Juhi Wasim (12) who talked about her own experience of Family Day and the Jama’at.

Juhi Waseem

I anxiously wait for the Family Day because I feel that it is a special day when all the boys and girls share their thoughts with their elders and express their views on subjects of their choice. This day gives the youth a feeling of belonging to a family whom we generally call Jama’at. It means a gathering with one objective – all working collectively to achieve an objective and in the process generate a feeling that as brothers and sisters we belong to a family. The Holy Qur’an has time and again emphasised that Muslims should be “compassionate among themselves”. It says: “Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the disbelievers, and compassionate among themselves” (48:29). Promoting and practicing “compassion” is the main theme of Islamic teachings and this is the very objective of our Jama’at. You can see behind me our motto hanging on the wall: “Allah is with us” and Islam stands for: “I Shall Love All Mankind.” This is the most important objective of Islam and of our Jama’at which urges each one of us to visit Darul Islam (Abode of Peace) in Wembley, every First Sunday of a month, and also during the month of Ramadan to Iftaaris, and the two Eid celebrations. Our worthy president, Aunty Jameela Khan, is so cordial and affectionate especially with children that it is always a pleasure to meet her and experience that elderly compassion from her. It was on her suggestion that now on every first Sunday along with an elder a brief talk by a young member is a regular feature of the meetings.
On this occasion I would like to suggest that we should have some more programmes for youths like cooking competitions, story-writing and word competitions and other possible competitions in which all boys and girls can take part and develop feelings of togetherness and at the same time learn things which are useful and increase their knowledge and skill. I am sure some of the elders who have experience of this kind can make useful contributions in this regard. I always enjoy the prayer, which is often recited especially during the month of Ramadan: “Our Lord! Grant to us wives and children who will be the comfort of our eyes, and grant us the grace to be righteous and lead others to righteousness” (25:74).

May Allah bless us all. Increase our knowledge and make our hearts filled with respect and compassion for the elders and to be kind and courteous towards each other.

Simra Khayam Zafar

Simrah Khayam Zafar (15) was the next speaker, as she talked about the importance of “Good Manners” in a society.

These days usually people greet each other with: Hi, morning, afternoon, evening and night instead of Hello, Good Morning, Good afternoon, Good evening and Good night. To me it shows gradual decrease of warmth in our relationships and respect for each other. Consequently it affects over-all behaviour of our society. The Holy Qur’an and the practices of the Holy Prophet (sas) have laid much stress on this social aspect of individuals and the society. Let me quote just one small verse of the Holy Qur’an which in few words draws our attention to a very important aspect of cordial communication with each other.

(Mr. Shahid Aziz, General Secretary, encouraged the young speakers)

The Qur’an says: “Speak good words” (2:82). This verse seems to be very simple. But if you think over its implications in everyday life, it actually plays a very important role in cementing smooth running of working relationship. The English phrase is “Think before you speak”. And there is a popular couplet of a well-known Punjabi saint and poet, Baabaa Bulle Shaah, which when translated reads as; “Don’t break someone’s heart as God lives in it”. There is another Urdu saying: “Never break someone’s heart. It is like a glass when a crack occurs in it, it is never joined.”

Islam teaches a believer always to be courteous and to be positive in thinking as well as in actions. That is why when a Muslim is asked: how are you, he will always say: Al-Ham-du lil-laah. That is by glorifying Allah he expresses his thanks.

Beliefs and practices of Islam groom believers in maintaining good manners and urge them to do charitable acts and greet each other with pleasant greetings. In fact, that is the essence of the religion of Islam. The Holy Qur’an says: “Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you.” (49:13)
The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) was very affectionate to people around him especially women and children. It is mentioned that during the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) when in a battle a lady belonging to the a Christian tribe, Tai, whose name was Saffaana bint Haatim, was taken as a prisoner. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) came to know that she was the daughter of the proverbial generous and kind Christian sage Haatim Tai, he immediately ordered for her release. But she refused to be set free unless all her companions were also set free. The Holy Prophet (sas) released all the captives of that tribe. Saffaana’s brother, Adi ibn-i Haatim was so impressed by this unusual generosity and large-heartedness, that he accepted Islam. It is also narrated that Holy Prophet (sas) was extremely courteous and while greeting people he would never withdraw his hand first. The Holy Prophet (sas) said: “The best of you are those who have the most excellent morals.” The Arabic word for ethics is adab. It is used for good manners. It signifies discipline of the mind, or every praiseworthy discipline by which a man is trained in any excellence. Good morals and good manners are the real test of a man’s excellence. I would like to mention some more sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) which show that he was a highly noble and affectionate person. The Holy Prophet (sas) said: “The most perfect of the believers in faith is the best of them in moral excellence, and the best of you are the kindest of you to your wives.”

The Holy Prophet (sas) said: “He is not of us who does not show mercy to our little ones and respect to our elder ones.” The Holy Prophet (sas) said: “The younger one should offer salutation to the older one, and the one who is going along to the one who is sitting, and the smaller group to the larger group.”

A man asked the Messenger of Allah (sas): What Islam is the best one?
He said: “Feed the poor and offer salutation to whom you know and whom you do not know.”

The Holy Qur’an starts with the word: Al-ham-du lil-laah. Literally it means: All praise be to Allah”. But it is, according to Muslim belief, the best way of offering thanks to Allah for all that He has bestowed on us. A Muslim believes that every blessing comes from Allah and so even what we have achieved due to our own efforts, it is ultimately granted by Allah. Offering thanks to Allah is in fact earning blessings of Allah. The Qur’an says: And whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for his own soul” (27:40).

It is an Islamic tradition that on finishing eating or completing any job or on achieving any success, a Muslim will always say :Al-ham-du lil-laah. This is not just offering of thanks but is a supplication to earn further blessings of Allah as He says in the Qur’an: “If you are grateful, I will give you more” (14:7).

Here in England or anywhere in the West when someone asks: How are you? His reply will always be: Not bad, or not too bad. But a Muslim will always say Al-ham-du lil-laah and expresses thanks to Allah in whatever condition or circumstances he is. This form of greeting conveys to others a message of hope and good feelings. Islamic
greeting of Peace is a regular practice which a Muslim not only observes from morning till going to bed at home, in meeting people at work or at other places, but even during five daily prayers. The form of greetings used in prayers is in plural form even when one is wishing it to a single person. This collective approach of a Muslim is the unit from which grows the unique brotherhood of Muslim Ummah.

Now just consider the beautiful and meaningful Islamic greeting: As-sa-laa-mo ‘a-lai-kum, that is; may peace be on you all. It is not a greeting just for the morning, or evening or night. It is a prayer of peace that may Allah, the Lord of the Universe, bestow peace on you in every manner throughout the day. The word “peace” in the greeting is so comprehensive and fascinating that ‘thanks a lot’ or ‘many thanks’ or ‘cheers’ does not convey feelings of humility and thankfulness which besides conveying good wishes to the addressee also earns divine blessings.

So my request will be that at home or among our own circle of relations and friends we should try to express our thanks with the words: Al-ham-du lil-Ilah, (praise be to Allah) Ja-zaa-kal-laah (May Allah reward you) or sub-haa-nal laah (Glory be to Allah) at witnessing something beautiful or expressing appreciation at someone’s achieving excellence in any field. May Allah bless us all and grant us the understanding and wisdom to adopt beautiful ways of ethics prescribed by the Holy Qur’an and practised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas).

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Adeeba Ali—My Thoughts on Family Day...
Adeeba Ali (15) shared her thoughts on family and the memories of her granddad.

Today is a Family Day in our Jama’at. Back in Trinidad a special day is usually where the young members participate in Qur’anic recitation, poetry reading and declamation contest etc. How about the mums in our Jama’at, what about sporting activities or cooking competition?

We live in an era where the definition of family has changed from what we have known and come to accept. The recent speech by President Obama will change the law books for all time to come. But as a Muslim and a part of this Jama’at you are all part of my family and the Masjid is like a second home. So today I will like to share my thoughts with you on family in a Jama’at. Here is what some people say about family. “I don’t care how poor a man is; if he has family, he’s rich” by Dan Wilcox. Albert Einstein says: “Rejoice with your family in the beautiful land of life!” I think family is the basis of society. Families are always there for you. They are there to help you, to encourage you, to lend you a shoulder to cry on, they are there to share your achievements and to pick you up when you fall. Families are there to laugh with you, they stretch out a hand to guide you, they teach you things that will remain with you for the rest of your life and lastly families are there to love you.

A family consists of a father, a mother, children or a child and in an extended family there are aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. Each and everyone have their individual roles and they are all important in a family. But to me there is one part of the family that are really imperative and should
be cherished. That is our grandparents. They are the ones that raised our parents, they taught them moral values, discipline, true religion and good manners. Here is a lovely quote about grandparents:

“Grandparents bring about a side that you probably wish that’s how your parents dealt with you while you were a child — abundance of patience, selfless sacrifice and un-wavering love”. (Author unknown).

On this note I have fond memories of my grandad, Fazloodeen Ali. We had a lot of fun together, we travelled a lot, he was a noble and a very charitable person. I would watch my grandfather cooking roti in the kitchen and he would teach us how to do it. We would sit down and sing qasidas together; go for walks in the park and dance together. But my favourite memory was when we used to tickle each other in the bed.

In return for all that love and affection we can only offer prayers for him and try to do what he did for us and carry those beautiful traditions which he wished us to do. And similarly we should remember all those who were dear and near ones and have returned to Allah.

The well-known Lebanese-American poet, artist and writer, Khalil Gibran, attached much importance to the role of an individual in the society. He writes: “In one atom are found all the elements of the earth; in one motion of the mind are found the motions of all the laws of existence; in one drop of water are found the secrets of all endless oceans; in one aspect of you are found all the aspects of existence”. (The Wisdom of Khalil Gibran, p. 55).

More than 100 years ago, a simple man was that one atom, who exploded on the scene to tell the world that prophet Jesus (as) was dead and will no longer return to this earth. This is Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. He is the rock on which this Jama’at is built. In his mind was found the beautiful concept of the true God and how to earn His love and blessings and because of him today we share one identity and exist as an extension of the family he started. To spread the message of Islam

In my introduction I said that this Jama’at is my family and therefore this quote clearly sums up, that if we think in one direction, if we have the same objectives, then we truly exist as one and this is a real family.

I end with a verse of the Qur’an chapter 2 verse 21: “O men, serve your Lord Who created you and those before you, so that you may guard against evil”.

Irfaan Ahmad: My Trip to the Berlin Mosque
Another young speaker was 12 year-old Irfaan Ahmad. He made a speech in which he described his family trip to Berlin Mosque in the half-term holidays.

Today I will be sharing my experiences of my visit to the Berlin Mosque; but before I begin, I would like to give you an overview and a brief history regarding the monument.
The Berlin Mosque is Berlin’s oldest Mosque. It was built between 1923 and 1925. During the 2nd World War, the two minarets were badly damaged and then rebuilt in 1991. The Mosque was built by K. A. Hermann and was commissioned by Imam Maulana Sadr-ud-Din.
We first visited the Mosque on the 6th of June, which was the Tuesday of our visit. I was amazed at the symmetry of the Mosque and the way that it was precisely built allowing the sound to resonate. When my father was leading the prayers, it seemed like I was reading Namaz at Mecca as his recitation resembles the recitation done at the Ka’bah Mosque.

The outside of the Mosque is beautifully decorated and, at night, the green lights glow and give a warm feeling to the monument. At the entrance to the Mosque, there is a patterned carpet and a tiled floor. The inside of the Mosque is spacious, and the three pillars, located at different levels on the wall, make the Mosque seem larger than the actual size.

On Wednesday the 7th, I was given the opportunity to lead the ‘Isha prayers. As I walked up to the Mehrab of the Masjid, I felt nervous and read the beginning of the prayer too fast and the echoes were overlapping each other and my voice was becoming lost in the reverberations. I realised that if I read slowly and loudly, then the echoes would not collide with each other and people would be able to hear me clearly. Also, when I was reading ‘Isha prayer loudly, the resonance made the prayer sound melodious. It felt wonderful to know that I was leading the prayer in a historical monument.

The floor of the Masjid is clean and there are many different patterned prayer mats all containing bright, colourful swirls and replicating the beauty and serenity of Mecca. The echo leaves the listener in a trance and when I was following the prayer, I closed my eyes and imbibed the words of the prayers. The sound is so harmonious that there are two sides to the prayer: the side where the listener follows the Imam with actions, and the side which is pleasing to the ear and allows the listener to follow and understand the words of the prayer.

There were booklets of literature which were lined on the right side of wall of the Masjid which which were available for use, and many of were free.

On the last day of our holiday, we attended the Friday Khutba (sermon) which was delivered by uncle Ahmed Saadat. He delivers a different speech on various topics for each Friday Khutba. The Khutba was delivered beautifully and intently listened to by the attendants. I was surprised at the diversity of people who attended the congregation and was happy to learn that the local Germans showed interest in the Islamic teachings and some of them had adopted the Islamic religion. Overall, the Mosque lived up to my expectations and I strongly recommend visiting Germany and entering the great Mosque in Wilmersdorf, Berlin.

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Shayaan Ahmad

Irfaan’s younger brother Shayaan Ahmad(9) also shared his thoughts about his trip to Berlin and the Masjid.

As you may all know, my family and I have recently visited Berlin which is the capital city of Germany. Since we were staying right next to the Masjid, we decided to pay it a visit. Furthermore, my elder brother Irfaan Ahmad and I were also given the opportunity to lead some of the prayers. For those following the prayer behind, the sound was pleasant because of the echoing effect of the Masjid. While reciting I could not hear the beauty of the echoing because the person leading cannot hear the excellence of the voice. But I was lucky that when my father and my elder brother led the prayers, which allowed me to hear beautiful echoing of the recitation in the Mosque.

6th June 2012

It was the first day when we visited the Masjid. When I first entered, colours of its various portions
seeped into my eyes and the smallest of whispers echoed several times. After this, I looked towards the Mehrab and saw beautiful prayer-mat where the Imam would stand and lead the prayers and deliver sermons - which are speeches on Fridays and other occasions. After that, everyone lined up alongside me and keenly waited for the prayer to begin. This was very exciting.

The prayers began soothingly passing through the air, and could be heard at the back of the Masjid. The voice became more soothing because of the dome at the top of the Masjid which echoed back the voice almost turning it in to a musical chant.

7th June 2012
Today was another day to look forward to because we were going to visit the Berlin Masjid again! An interesting fact that I learnt was that when people come over to visit, there is another room for them on the left side which provides Tea and drink; also, outside the Masjid, there is an interesting plaque giving details about who and when it was built. It is the first thing which attracts a visitor.

8th June 2012
This was the last time we were visiting the Berlin Masjid; however, uncle Ahmed Saadat who looks after the Masjid, gave an outstanding Friday khutba to finish off our delightful holiday! He was making eye contact which showed that he was really engrossed in what he was delivering. Also, to convince us of his arguments; he also kept on asking rhetorical questions.

Another interesting fact about the Masjid was that at the rostrum there was no microphone and it only had a light so you could see what you were reading! You do not need a loudspeaker because the big dome projects your voice so everyone can hear! Therefore, this made the last day of our holiday a very memorable one!

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Faizaan Ahmad: Importance of Religion for the Youth

Faizaan Ahmad (15) explained the importance of religion for youths in his speech.

Today on Family Day, we all gather to meet each other, pray and present speeches. We all travel to Wembley, children and adults, and our strong religious community brings us together. All the young members of the Jama’at enjoy writing and presenting speeches, which is very good as we all learnt about Islam from a young age and are proud to be Muslim. Islam gives us the guidance we need, so today I am going to talk about the importance of religion for youths.

In the 21st Century, in some areas of the world religion is slowly diminishing and along with it are the well mannered youths of yesterday. In my life personally religion plays a major role. I think being a Muslim is great. You have the Holy Quran and the stories of the prophets guiding you and telling you how to live your life. There is a strong community within Islam, and there are lots of positive obligations which groom you such as Salaah and Fasting. From a young age I have been taught how to be a good Muslim and a good
human being by my parents and by the teachings of Allah. I can’t stress how important it is to have guidance in your life. There have been surveys conducted in America showing that people who follow the guidance of religion from a young age and throughout their lives, are more likely to live happier and achieve their goals. Whether they are Muslims or Christians or Jews, the point is that they have been given guidance and have been told about how to live their lives. We know that if we do good in this life than Allah shall grant us a good life in the hereafter. This makes us strive to do good and gives us a target.

The term “chav” is often used these days to depict the typical hooded hooligans standing around street corners listening to loud music and being a general nuisance. The word actually stands for Council-housed and violent youths. This isn’t to say everyone who lives in a council house is a chav. These are the kind of people who waste their lives doing the wrong things because they have never had the guidance and the feeling of someone looking after them. If they had had a strong family bonding and had been religious from a young age, if they had been encouraged to read the guidelines of life, to listen to the stories of the prophets, and if they had been told to work hard, do good deeds and to respect and care. Then the annoying stereotype of today’s youth would have never been created.

The Quran is Allah’s unaltered speech. Allah revealed the Qur’an so that human beings could read and understand it; acquire accurate knowledge of our Lord, Who created the universe from nothing; learn how to worship Him, and how to abide by His commands in order to earn His good pleasure. Allah explained benefits of a good life in the sacred of scriptures through examples and stories. As He makes clear in the Quaran: “We have not neglected anything in the Book”. He clearly shows that this book is the guideline for life, and Allah has included everything people need to know. The Qur’an comprises everything. Numerous details pertaining to this world and the next are explained in the most intelligible way, for as Allah informs us: “We have sent down the Book to you making all things clear and as guidance and mercy and good news for the Muslims”(16:89) This is why religion is so important, every time we read namaaz we say “guide us on the right path” (1:5); we read the Quran and it shows us how to act. We have been given so much guidance from Allah which is also echoed by our parents that the only hard thing is to actually follow the guidance (90:11:17). Everyone makes mistakes but it just shows how religion not only gives you the guidelines to life but also tells you how to correct yourselves and gives you a sense of belonging and a meaning to life. But none of this can be achieved if the parents aren’t there to echo Allah’s words to their children, and to teach them. So kids next time when your parents tell you to clean your room or read you namaaz, listen to them because they are trying their hardest, to make you the best human beings you can be, the best Muslims you can be, and of course to make your generation of youths into the youths we can be proud of.

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Inshaal Ahmad: Interpretation of the Holy Qur’an

Faizaan’s older brother inshaal Ahmad (17) delivered a speech on the “Interpretation of the Holy Quran”.

The topic of my speech today is the interpretation of the Quran. The Holy Quran is the true and final word of God. The Quran is written not only in prose (which is another word for normal spoken language) but also in poetry. As you know spoken language can be taken literally e.g. If someone said: “That man has only one eye,” they are simply telling you that the man has one eye.
On the other hand if in a poem it was written that “That man has only one eye”, it is unlikely to have a simple literal meaning, and instead it may imply that the man only looks at things from one angle. In actual fact, the man may have two perfectly functioning eyes, but if interpreted in the wrong sense the meaning of the original message is distorted. So Quranic verses have to be looked at in context of whether they are written in prose or poetry. So more often than not, in poetry, the words do not portray a literal meaning and this is one area where differences can occur in interpreting the Quran.

Such a problem has been occurring with Quranic interpretations for centuries. The Holy Quran is a simple book which uses imagery and figurative language to explain the final message of Allah. The use of figurative language and imagery is supposed to make the Quran clearer but instead people over the centuries have taken the figurative language literally and misinterpreted it, complicating the message that is intended to be simple. For example the following verse of the Holy Quran talks about punishment for thieves: “As for the thief, both male and female, cut off their hands. It is the reward of their own deeds, an exemplary punishment from Allah, the Mighty, Wise”(5:38). While this can be taken literally, that thieves’ hands should be severed, on the other hand it is a message that illustrates that stealing is totally unacceptable in Islam, no matter what. The “cutting of the hands” simply symbolizes the need to stop thieves repeating their actions. Sometimes we need to explain something which has not been openly expressed as it’s called “read between the lines” to capture the true message someone is trying to convey.

Another example where the Quran is interpreted wrongly by not only non-Muslims but also Islamic terrorists is the verse about fighting non-Muslims. It goes: "Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection" (The Quran 9:29). This is interpreted by many critics of Islam as a violent verse which they claim clearly shows that Islam preaches terrorism against non-Muslims.

On the other hand it is quite the opposite. When we talk of the word “fight” although it may have violent connotations of punching and kicking, it can actually be used in many peaceful scenarios. For example the fight against racism which is actually a peace-promoting campaign. A fight doesn’t have to be a violent exchange. Views can be fought through discussion and debate. In many ways a debate is a fight. In this case in the Quran, it is simply asking Muslims to fight the ignorance and to lead people to the right path. We are not being asked to literally put guns to non-Muslim heads and demand them to say the Shahaadah. We are being told to talk, debate and explain to the non-believers so that they realise the truth. Such verses are used by militant groups to justify their acts of violence such as bombing, when they are clearly interpreting it to suit their own will. This therefore highlights the significance of interpretation, because without interpreting the Quran in the correct
sense, we cannot learn the true message of Islam. These two verses are just a few examples in the Quran that have been interpreted differently.

So why is the Quran interpreted in so many different ways? There are many reasons such as people interpreting the Quran to suit their own motifs and also the fact that it is originally written in Arabic. This means that certain words cannot be translated word for word, as vocabulary differs between different languages which can result in the loss of the true meaning of words. Sometimes just using a bit of common sense helps to understand the messages of the Quran, because at the end of the day the Holy Quran is a simple set of instructions, so let’s keep it simple.

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**Bushra Ahmed**

The closing speech of the day was by Bushra Ahmed who talked about her family experience of her sisters and how important family guidance was for her.

My eldest sister Shazia Baji reminded me of the arrival of Annual Family Day. Once again I got my thinking cap on and contemplated as to the contents of my talk.

Every time someone sees us three sisters they never fail to comment on how I appear the eldest. This is due to obvious physical reasons. However at their astonishment I announce the truth; yes me, I am the baby chick of the family!

Every time I hark back to our childhood I remember us three jumping on sofas screaming, throwing tennis balls against the wall and inevitably falling and bruises galore.

Sometimes guests would come and they would be sleeping upstairs only to be woken at the sound of our high pitched shrills. Many a times we have been reprimanded.

Besides these few lapses in behaviour there were serious episodes in our lives too. Shazia Baji would take me into a quiet room and try to teach me basic mathematical concepts. I hate to admit it but I was a playing junky and had zero interest in education. This was noticed by Baji and she would attempt to drive me into learning. And after a few stern looks from her, my quick mind grasped the concepts and at one point I became top of the class. Hats off to Shazia Baji!

Samia Baji’s approach to teaching me was softer and more gentle, however due to her leniency, in the middle of one of our lessons, I would start my antics and climb under the table or some such feat. Soon we grew from The Little Women and made the quantum leap to adulthood..

I fondly remember during my teenage era, Shazia Baji tutored mathematical books into me and that she had Mashaallah managed to perform this sisterly service without a
moment’s hesitation. Every morning she would call me and chapter-wise explain ideas that really aided me in my struggles. She is definitely academically inclined, in fact even now she takes out a DVD of Professor Ibrahim Surti from the well-known Peace TV and we are learning Arabic words and grammar, all the way from Ami Jan down to Irfan, Shayaan and Hamad Bhai. She sits in front of the computer screen and leads us into the world of the Quran!

Samia Baji is also intelligent in her favourite subject physics and her door I knocked for my physics torments. Her big contribution in my life was that we both took swimming lessons. It controls my weight with other added benefits. Before she was married she would take her little Nissan Micra and drive us both to swimming (after we had mastered the skill) and she would encourage me to increase my lengths.

At times we would go together on Thursday evenings to Qigong lessons in Chiswick Town Hall where we mastered many moves and it gave us insight into the Chinese theory of the chi or energy. Is there any doubt that I miss her now she is in Cambridge!

Besides the academic push and other various kindnesses shown by both which they injected into my life, I learnt many other character traits from them. I learnt how to be loyal to near, dear and loved ones’. I learnt to be strong in the face of adversity. I learnt that you must fight for your principles. I learnt to be firm when I am sure I am in the right. I learnt how to sacrifice part of you so as to ease another’s life. And what’s more to work hard in day out. I learnt to build my character on experiences from my childhood, so whatever I am today I stand up and salute my two big sisters! Once a friend of mine gave me a fridge magnet, which read: “You can’t choose your sisters but you can choose your friends.” This had a profound effect on me as I pondered over its meaning. I soon figured out that Allah has chosen our siblings for us and there is no better planner than the Almighty! Our choice cannot be compared with His! Surely He is more Supreme Decider!

I pray that today and forever my big sisters pass on their good influence to their own children and teach them the highest principles and that is in the form of the Quran!

I hasten to add that both my sisters have taught their kids salaah and the Quran reading and they have learnt by heart many surahs of the Quran! By the grace of Allah their young minds have easily absorbed all the demands made on them so quickly and smoothly and I hope and pray that they will come up bright and well-groomed boys.

Teaching your children overall righteousness is the foundation of a good society. Civilisations have been built and destroyed depending on one’s beliefs and that which they pass onto the next generation.

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Overall, Family Day 2012 was a success. Thanks to the efforts of all the young speakers and the organisers. The President of the UK Jama’at, Mrs. Jameela Khan, was sorely missed, however, it was nonetheless an enjoyable day. Special thanks to Hamad Ahmad and Khayam Zafar for providing the photographs for the production of this Supplement.

The young speakers showed great promise this year and we hope this continues to be the case in years to come. Insha’allah.

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“ISLAM” stands for “I SHALL LOVE ALL MANKIND”