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Literary contributions, articles, essays, photographs, etc., for publication in the Al-Nahl can be sent to the editor at his e-mail or mailing address below. Textual contributions can be provided in plain text, MS Publisher, or Microsoft Word.

References should include as much of the following information as available: the name of the publication, volume and number, name of the author, the date and place of publication, the name of the publisher, and the page number(s).

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And thy Lord has inspired the bee, saying, ‘Make thou houses in the hills and in the trees and in the trellises which they build, ‘Then eat of every kind of fruit, and then pursue submissively the paths prescribed by your Lord.’ There comes forth from their bellies a drink of varying hues. Therein is a cure for men. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who reflect. (The Holy Qur’ān, 16[Al-Nahl]:69-70)
And who is better in speech than he who invites men to Allah and does good works and says, ‘I am surely of those who submit?’ And good and evil are not alike. Repel evil with that which is best. And lo, he between whom and thyself was enmity will become as though he were a warm friend. But none is granted it save those who are steadfast; and none is granted it save those who possess a large share of good. [41:34-36]

And let there be among you a body of men who should invite to goodness, and enjoin equity and forbid evil. And it is they who shall prosper. [3:105]

And revile not those whom they call upon beside Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus unto every people have We caused their doing to seem fair. Then unto their Lord is their return; and He will inform them of what they used to do. [6:109]

And if you are argumentative, know that Allah is with those who are virtuous. [16:126]

And remember when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, show me how Thou givest life to the dead.’ He said, ‘Hast thou not believed?’ He said, ‘Yes, but I ask this that my heart may be at rest.’ He answered, ‘Take four birds and make them attached to thyself. Then put each of them on a hill; then call them; they will come to thee in haste. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.’ [2:261]
O Prophet, truly We have sent thee as a Witness, and Bearer of glad tidings, and a Warner,
And as a Summoner unto Allah by His command, and as a Lamp that gives brightlight. [33:46-47]

Say, ‘What thing is most weighty as a witness?’ Say, ‘Allah is a Witness between me and you. And this Qur’an has been revealed to me so that with it I may warn you and whomsoever it reaches. What! do you really bear witness that there are other gods beside Allah?’ Say, ‘I bear not witness thereto.’ Say, ‘He is the One God, and certainly I am far removed from that which you associate with Him.’ [6:20]

And when they issued forth to encounter Jalut and his forces, they said: ‘O our Lord, pour forth steadfastness upon us, and make our steps firm, and help us against the disbelieving people.’ [2:251]

O Messenger! convey to the people what has been revealed to thee from thy Lord; and if thou do it not, thou hast not conveyed His Message at all. And Allah will protect thee from men. Surely, Allah guides not the disbelieving people. [5:68]

So declare openly that with which thou art commanded and turn aside from those who ascribe partners to God. [15:95]

Moses said, ‘My Lord, open out for me my breast, ‘And ease for me my task, ‘And loose the knot of my tongue, ‘That they may understand my speech... [20:26-29]

And when they issued forth to encounter Jalut and his forces, they said: ‘O our Lord, pour forth steadfastness upon us, and make our steps firm, and help us against the disbelieving people.’ [2:251]
By the angels who are sent forth with goodness,
And then they push on with a forceful pushing,
And by the forces that spread the truth, a good spreading,
And then they distinguish fully between good and evil.
Then they carry the exhortation far and wide
To excuse some and warn others. [77:2-7]

Slacken not, nor grieve; and you shall certainly have the upper hand, if you are believers. [3:140]

So be not slack and sue not for peace; for you will certainly have the upper hand. And Allah is with you, and He will not deprive you of the reward of your actions. [47:36]

O mankind! there has indeed come to you an exhortation from your Lord and a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts, and a guidance and a mercy to the believers. [10:58]

By the fleeting Time,
Surely, man is in a state of loss,
Except those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to accept truth, and exhort one another to be steadfast. [103:2-4]

So obey not the disbelievers and fight against them by means of it (the Qur’an) a great fight. [25:53]

(Translation by Maulawi Sher Ali from www.alislam.org)
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MIRACLES OF PROPHETS

Correct history is a good teacher. It shows that the miracles of every prophet are related to whatever is very popular in those days. In the days of Moses, magic was considered to be very important and it was very much prevalent and that is why he (Moses) was granted the miracle that could overcome the magic and falsify it. In the days of the Holy Prophet, sallallāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam, high literary standard was greatly appreciated and, therefore, he was given the Holy Qur’an in the form of a miracle. The poets were considered to be most enchanting and their words used to be so effective that they could get anything done through their poetry. Just as the English people have the trumpets these days, they (the Arabs of the days of the Holy Prophet) had their speech which could embolden the people and give them courage. They used their poetry on every occasion and confirmed the truth of the words

في كل واديٍّ يحيمن [fi kulli wādiñyahīmūn, wander distracted in every valley 26:226]. It was vitally important at that time that God should have sent His revelation. And God did send His revelation and made it a miracle. God said to the people

وَأَنَّكُمْ فِي رَبِّي مَسَأَلْتُكُمْ عَلَى عِينٍ فَاَلْقُوا لِسُوىٍّ قَرِينٍ [in kuntum fi raibim mimmā nazzalnā ‘alā ‘abdīnā fa’tū bi sūratim mim mithlihī, And if you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant, then produce a Chapter like it... 2:24]. You who are so proud of your knowledge of language and make tall claims, bring the like of it (what God has revealed) if you dare. Despite the fact that they knew that if they did not bring forth anything of the kind of the revelation (especially when they had been challenged to do so) they would be humiliated, they could not bring forth anything. Had they done that, correct history would have borne witness to it, but there is no proof of that. Thus God showed the kind of miracle that was needed in those days.

(Malfūţāt, Vol. III, p. 172)

BE PATIENT

They (the opponents) abuse me but I do not mind their abuses nor do I express any sorrow for this act of theirs. It is because I know that they have become helpless and cannot oppose me successfully. They express their helplessness through hurling abuses on me, issuing Fatwa of Kufr against me and dragging me to the court with false cases and telling lies. Let them oppose me with all their powers (of all kinds) and let them see whom the decision (of God) favors. If I pay attention to their abuses, I shall not be able to do the work that God has assigned to me. Now just as I do not pay any attention to their abuses, I advise my Community also that they should listen to the abuses and tolerate them and they should never retort with abuses; for, by doing so the blessing will be lost. They should show forbearance and patience and display good morals.

You should remember it well that wisdom and excitement can in no case go together (they are very much opposed to each other). When one is excited and full of anger, wisdom takes leave and goes away. But he who shows patience and forbearance is...
granted a light which brightens up the powers of wisdom and then, this light begets more of light. Since excitement makes the head and heart dark; this darkness produces more of darkness. (Malfūzāt, Vol. III, p. 181)

DEDICATE YOURSELVES

A true Muslim is he who devotes the whole of himself (all aspects of his life) for the pleasure of God and hands himself over to Him. His beliefs and his actions, his target and his ambitions are all directed towards the achievement of His pleasure. All the good deeds that he performs are a matter of pleasure for him and he feels a sort of sweetness by doing them; he finds no difficulty in these good and virtuous deeds. These good deeds of his turn every difficulty into comfort.

A true Muslim loves God the Almighty, taking Him to be his beloved and his Master who is all benevolence.

It is for this reason that he puts down his head at His doorstep. If a true Muslim is told that he would get no reward for these good deeds of his—and also that there is no Paradise and no Hell, nor is there any comfort or pleasure, he would never abandon his good deeds and he would never do away with his love for God, for, he does not worship God nor he obeys Him in the hope of any rewards from Him. He does all these things because he thinks that his very existence is aimed at the recognition of God and His love and obedience, and that there is no other aim of his life than this. When he uses his powers in doing good and appropriate deeds, he sees God before his eyes—he does not mind paradise or hell.

If I am told that I would be severely punished for my love for God and my obedience to Him I would bear all the hardships and I would take the pains of the punishment as a great pleasure and I would never leave loving or obeying Him. Even one step away from obedience to God tantamounts to thousands rather innumerable deaths and collection of all the difficulties and hardships. It is as if a king were to announce that a mother who would give no suck to her baby would be rewarded; no mother would abandon giving suck to her baby in the hope of the reward from the king. Likewise a true Muslim, whatever the promises of reward and comforts for him, would never go even one step away from obedience to God; he would deem it total destruction for himself.

(Malfūzāt, Vol. III, p. 182)

REAL WAY TO PARADISE

In order to become a true Muslim it is very essential that a man should mold his nature in such a way that his love for God and his
obedience to Him should not be based on rewards and punishments, rather it should become a part and parcel of his nature. When that happens, his love for God will produce a Paradise for him and, in fact, this is the real Paradise. None can enter Paradise unless he treads on this path. I should like to advise you—who have joined me—to enter the Paradise passing through this way, for, this way is the real way to paradise.

(Malfūẓāt, Vol. III, p. 183)

AN ADVICE

I tell you the truth that God has afforded an opportunity to the good natured people. Blessed are those who try to be benefited by it. You who have joined me should not exult in the fact that you have attained to all that you had to. Of course, it is a fact that you are better than those who have disbelieved and belittled me and thus attracted the wrath of God. This also is true that you thought well of me and thus saved yourself from the anger of God. But still, this remains a fact that you have only reached the fountain—the spring—which God has now made to flow for eternal life; you have yet to drink from this spring. You should pray to God that He may enable you to drink to your fill; nothing can be obtained without the help of God. I know it for certain that whoever would drink from this spring will not perish, for, this water is life giving and it safeguards against destruction and it protects from the attacks of Satan. How can you drink from this spring to your fill? You can do so by performing the two duties that God has assigned to you: one, your duty towards your God, and two, your duty towards His creatures.

You should take your God to be One and without any partner as you declare through the words: Ash-hadu allā ilāha illallāh, that is, I bear witness that there is none other than Allah who is our beloved and whom we are seeking after and whom we have to obey. It is so lovely a phrase that if the Jews and Christians or other idol worshippers had been taught this thing and if they had understood it properly, they would have never perished. The reason why they have perished is that they did not have this Kalima; that is what made their soul leprous and that is what caused their destruction.

(Malfūẓāt, Vol. III, p. 184)

ONENESS OF GOD

The mere lip-profession of the Oneness of God does not attract the blessings that are connected with this profession coupled with its other essentials, that is, the appropriate deeds.

It is quite true that the belief in the Oneness of God is a strong pillar, to which a true Muslim, and every other person who really and truly fears God, should hold fast but there is another aspect of this belief also and that is the love of God; that is, one should love God.

The main aim of the teachings of the Holy Qur’an is that just as God is One, without any partners, He should also be One without partners in the matter of our love. All the prophets have been teaching the same thing; that has been the main subject of their propagation. Lā ilāha illallāh teaches us to believe God to be One and at the same time it also teaches that one should be perfect in the love of this one God. Lā ilāha illallāh is so beautiful a sentence, and so meaningful, that the like of it is not to be found in any of the Scriptures, be it Torah or the Gospels or any other Book: no other Book contains so comprehensive teachings.

Ilāh means the Beloved who is worshipped. This is the fundamental point of Islam and it denotes complete and perfect love. It should be remembered well that if one believes in the Oneness of God but does not love Him, his belief is faulty and incomplete. (Malfūẓāt, Vol. III, p. 187)
DEDICATE YOURSELVES

What do we mean by saying that one should love God? It means that one should give preference to the Will of God over his parents, wife, children, one’s own self, and, in short, everything. The Holy Qur’an says:

فَذَكُرُوا اللَّهَ ۖ كَذِكرُوا ٱباَءَكُمۡ اوَ أَمْثَلَ ۡكُوَّنِي الْرُّحْبَةِ
fadhkurullāha ka-dhikrikum ābā’akum au ashaddu dhikrā, that is, you should remember God as you remember your fathers rather more than that—and you should remember Him with great love and affection. Here, God has not taught us to call him father lest like the Naṣāra (the Christians) people may be misled to believe Him as a real father. And to say that the verse might mean the kind of love that is lesser than our love for our father is also not correct, for, the words have been added au ashaddu dhikrā, that is, more than that (more than the love for the father). Had these words not been there in the verse then, of course, the objection could be tenable. Those who call God father, they have fallen so low that they have started calling a weak human being as their God.

There are certain words which become a trial for the people, and God wanted to try the Christians. That is why the prophets were given this name in their books. Since God is the Knower of all things and fully aware of everything, He made the word Ab (father) widely used. It was sheer bad luck of the Christians that when it was used by the Messiah they mistook it and took it in the literal form. The Messiah really wanted to tell the people that their Books called them ‘God’ and thus he thought that that would eradicate polytheism. But the ignorant people did not pay attention to this fact and despite this teaching they took him as the Son of God.

The Jews were also tried the same way. They were the people who liked others to be tortured. They asked for Manna and Salwa; and this is the food that produces bubonic plague. God had destined them to be the victims of bubonic plague and therefore they were made to pass through the required circumstances.

I should like to revert to the subject that in order to establish the Oneness of God, it is of utmost importance that one should love God to one’s full capacity. And this love cannot be verified unless it reaches its perfection in a practical form; it cannot be proved with lip profession: You know if somebody just talks of sugar; he cannot find the taste of sweetness in his mouth. Or if somebody expresses the feeling of friendship but does not help his friend in times of need, he cannot be called a true friend. Likewise if somebody just talks of the Oneness of God but does not love Him as he should, it cannot be of any avail.

What I really mean is that practice is very important along with the precept. That is why it is necessary that you should dedicate your lives in the way of God and this is the real Islam for which I have been sent to the world. Thus he who does not come near this fountain that God has made to flow is very unfortunate. (Malfūżāt, Vol. III, p. 188)

DO NOT HALT

So far as the Religious leader and his follower are concerned, they are like a teacher and a disciple (student).

Just as the student benefits from the teacher, so also does the follower from the Religious leader. But if it so happens that despite the fact that the student stays with the teacher, he does not advance in his studies, that cannot be of any avail to him. Same is the case with the follower. That being the situation, it is necessary that after one is linked with a Religious leader, one should try to advance in the knowledge of religion and in God-realization. The seeker after having
reached some length must not stop, otherwise Satan would make him busy in some other kind of things. Just as the static water begins to stink, if the believer does not make effort for his advancement, he falls down. The good-natured people, therefore, must always keep themselves busy in religious affairs.

There never has been a man, in the world more perfect than the Holy Prophet, šallallāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam, but he also was taught by God to be praying

रब्ब缚ा ्ँद््ँिं ्ल््भि (O my God increase me in knowledge 20:115). Who else, then, can trust his knowledge and God-realization and stop moving forward, because he thinks that he has got enough of these things. The more a man advances in knowledge and God-realization the more he begins to feel that he needs to know a lot more. There are certain things which, in the beginning look meaningless (just as a child thinks that the diagrams of Mathematics are meaningless). But having advanced further, they come to know that those very points were real and true.

That is why it is vitally important that with the change of one’s position, one should try to carry his knowledge nearer to completion. You have left a lot of meaningless things and joined this dispensation and if now you do not try to know the whole truth and you do not get insight into all that you have received here; you will not be able to benefit from joining this dispensation and you will not be able to attain to certainty; your doubts will make you stumble at every step.

(Malfūţāt, Vol. III, p. 193)

ASK ME ANOTHER

The God who manifested Himself to Adam and to other prophets is the very God who has manifested Himself to me. God has granted an opportunity and you should avail of it for increasing your knowledge. You should ask me whatever you do not understand. And do so without delay. Those who say that they have understood (any particular point) before they have actually understood it will have a boil on their heart which will ultimately become malignant and begin to flow.

I do not get tired, even if someone continues asking me for a whole year. You should value this opportunity. Listen to me and try to understand and act upon what I tell you. You should become the servant of religion and disseminate the truth. To love God and to be sympathetic towards the human beings—both these things are a part of religion. You should act on them.

(Malfūţāt, Vol. III, p. 198)

NEW LIFE

Having joined this Dispensation you should become altogether different and you should live the life of a new person; you should not remain what you were before. Do not think that the change that you will bring about in your lives for the sake of God will make you mendicants and a lot of people will start opposing you. Do not think in that vein. He who holds the hand of God does not become a needy person; adversity does not overtake him. Whoever is befriended by God, has no need to worry even if the whole world becomes his enemy. But even if the believer passes through difficulties, he does not feel the pinch; it is as if he is in paradise; the angels of God take him in their lap like a kind mother.

In short, God becomes their Protector and Helper; God is ’alā kulli shai’in qadīr, (Powerful over all things 2:21); He is the Knower of the Unseen; He is ever-living and the Sustainer of life.
Who can experience hardships after holding the hand of this kind of God? None. God safeguards His servant in such odd circumstances and does it in a way that the whole world is astonished. Was it not wonderful for the people to see Ḥaḍrat Abraham come out of the fire unhurt; was it a small thing for the people to witness Noah and his people safe in the midst of the terrible deluge? There are countless instances of this kind. In this Age too, God has shown miracles (in granting me His succor on various occasions).

(Malfūẓāt, Vol. III, p. 263)

EXISTENCE OF GOD

A very strong proof of the existence of God is that He effaces and He keeps intact whatever He likes; this also is a great factor for His recognition.

Look at the planets how great they seem to be. There are some people who, because of the grandeur of these planets, bow down to worship them and they believe that these things have divine attributes. The Hindus and some other idol-worshippers and those who worship the fire, worship the sun and they take it to be worthy of worship. Can they say that the sun rises of its own accord or it sets of its own accord? Not at all. But even if they claim that the sun really rises and sets of its own accord, what proof have they got to support this claim. Let them pray to the sun that one day it should not rise or it should set when it is just mid-day; if it does that, then of course it will be proved that it does so of its own accord. The fact that the sun rises and sets at the fixed times (the time at which it should rise or set on any day), shows that it has no power to do things as it wills and it has no intention of its own.

It is only he who accepts the prayer that can be said to possess His own Will, for, He does what He should and does not do what He should not do (all this, of his own Will and Accord).

Had there been no question of the acceptance of prayers, many doubts would have arisen about the existence of God—and in fact the doubts did arise for the people who did not believe that prayers are accepted.

Those who do not believe in the acceptance of prayers have no conclusive proof of the existence of God. I very strongly believe that he who does not believe in the acceptance of prayers will go to the hell; he does not believe in God at all.

The only way to recognize God is that one should continue praying to Him until God grants him certainty and he hears the voice of God: Anal-Haq. Of course it is very difficult to reach this stage but patience solves all the difficulties. (Malfūẓāt, Vol. III, p. 204)

CERTAINTY AND PATIENCE

You should remember that a man can never benefit from prayers (supplications) unless he is extremely patient and prays constantly and with steadfastness. He should never think that may be God does not listen to prayers or He might not listen to his prayer. He should take Him to be the Possessor of all powers and having the Will to do whatever He likes. He should have certainty and patience for his prayers. A time would come when God would listen to his prayers and answer him. Those who adopt this method are never deprived and they definitely achieve the desired success.

God's powers are limitless. It is His law that completion and perfection in human affairs be linked with long patience and He does not alter this law of His. He who wishes the law to be changed, displays impertinence. Moreover this also should be remembered that there are some people who show impatience and want things to be done like a juggler in a jiffy. He who is impatient can do no harm to God; he himself will be the loser.
Let him be patient and see what happens.

I do not believe the false and fabricated stories that such and such Faqīr (a religious mendicant) did such and such things by just blowing on them (in the winking of an eye). This is against the Practice of God and the Holy Qur’an is opposed to it. Such a thing can never happen. (Malfūzāt, Vol. III, p. 205)

TRIALS AND PIETY

There are some people who live beastly lives. When God catches them, He does so to cause them to die. But that is not how God deals with the Believers. When they pass through difficulties, they find that their ultimate end is good. In fact a good end is always the destiny of the Muttaqī as God says:

\[\text{Wal 'akhiratu 'inda Rabbika lil-Muttaqīn} \]
And with your Lord, the end (good end) is for the Muttaqīs [43:36].

The troubles that they have to pass through and the hardships that they have to undergo become a cause of their advancement so that they may gain more experience. The times are changed for them. And this is a fact that whosoever is tightened by God is changed for the better. As if he has been caused to die, and after their God-realization, they do not find any pleasure in what used to be pleasurable in the days of their beastly life. Rather, those things become bitter and hated. The mind is turned towards piety and virtuous deeds. The hardship that they used to feel in doing anything good becomes extinct.

(Malfūzāt, Vol. III, p. 207)

CLEAR SIGNS

According to me the Clear Signs (Āyāt Mubīn) are the signs which the opponent cannot withstand. Whatever those signs might be, whatever the opponent cannot withstand will be considered as a miracle, especially when it has been claimed beforehand that the opponent will not be able to face it. It should be remembered that God has not allowed (His chosen ones) to make claims that one would show such and such Signs. A prophet never dares this kind of things; he does not say: ask for any Signs and you will be given them. The only thing that he says is:

\[\text{innumal-āyātu 'indallāhi} \]

innumal-āyātu ‘indallāhi (verily the signs are in the hands of God. 6:110) and this constitutes a proof of the truth of his claim. The unfortunate opponents take this kind of verses to mean that the miracles are being denied. But they are sightless people and they do not know what really a miracle is; that is why they raise this kind of objections. They do not give God the honor that is due to Him and they do not respect His grandeur. What right do we have to tell God to do something and then expect that He would do accordingly. He who does everything that we tell him to do cannot be God at all. Of course, it is nothing but His grace that He has encouraged us to ask for the fulfillment of our needs:

\[\text{Udūnī astajib lakum, that is, call upon me and I will answer you [40:61]. He does not say that He will give us whatever we ask Him to give.} \]

When the people asked the Holy Prophet, șallallāhu 'alaihi wa sallam, to show them the signs as they wanted them to be, he was made (by God) to say;

\[\text{Qul subḥāna Rabbī hal kuntu illā bashararasūlā} \]

Qul subḥāna Rabbī hal kuntu illā bashararasūlā (Say: Glory be to my Lord; I am only a human being, a Messenger [17:94]) The Messengers of God never claim anything beyond their being a human being. They give due respect to God. All these things are based
on God realization. The more a man knows God, the more he fears Him; the greatest realization of the greatness and grandeur of God is possessed by the prophets, may God’s peace be on them all. That is why whatever they do shows distinctly that they are human beings but supported by God through His signs.

I believe that God shows Signs and Miracles but only when He wishes to do so. He does not want to make the world an example of the Day of Resurrection. Were He to be so open as the sun is, faith in Him would not mean anything and it would not make one deserving of rewards. Who should the unlucky person be to deny Him, in that case.

The Signs are no doubt clear but they are visible only to the people who have insight; others cannot see them. This understanding and ability to see when others cannot, is due to their good nature and their fear of God (righteousness). A hard hearted and an unfortunate person and the one who is an evil-doer cannot see these signs.

Faith is termed as faith if there is an aspect of secrecy; and it does not deserve to be called faith if it is quite open and visible to every eye. If somebody holds something in his closed palm and the other person can name the thing, then, of course, the understanding of this other person will be worthy of appreciation. But when the palm is opened up and the thing that it holds is visible, then, for somebody to say that he could tell what the palm contained, would be meaningless. If somebody can sight the moon on the very first day of its appearance (crescent) we can say that this person has a sharp sight but if somebody tells us on the 14th of the Lunar month that the moon is there and that he has certainly seen it, the people will start calling him a mad man.

In short, the miracles are proved to be miracles only if the others cannot bring the like of them. It is not for the human beings to limit their scope and demand a specific kind of a miracle, for, the miracle must have some hidden aspects. The aim of God in showing miracles is that faith should be strengthened and God-realization should advance. But if these miracles are made quite open, they would not help faith, much less advancement of God-realization. That is why God has prohibited asking for miracles of any specific type; this kind of demands are disrespectful and cause the faith to be uprooted. (Malfūẓāt, Vol. III, p. 208-210)

TIME TO REPENT

(Ḥuzūr was told of the spread of bubonic plague. He said) What a great warning from God. How unfortunate it would be if even now the people do not wake up their hearts and do not make peace with God. It will be very sad if the people do not turn to God and abandon evil deeds and mischief. Were anybody's children or other relatives to be afflicted by distress, he would forget everything else (and think of nothing but this trouble of his.) Why does, then, the man rebel against God. Can he go away from His Kingdom? That being the case, the best security lies in Him alone. He who goes beyond the limits fixed by God is nothing but foolish, if he does so to have peace of mind; he invites trouble and attracts the wrath of God. Now is the time that the followers of the noble religion of God should renew their faith and revive their repentance. This now is the time that God wishes to show Himself and He likes to get His Being admitted.

(Malfūẓāt, Vol. III, p. 212)

The Discourses, Naseem Saifi, Freetown, pp. 141-156.

Editor’s note: Minor edits reflect American style, transliteration compliance to the Royal Asiatic Society transliteration rules and suggestions by the editor and the reviewers. Thanks to Dr BK Aḥmad for providing a copy of the compilation.
Donation of Bicycles from Majlis Ansārullāh, USA, to Burkina Faso Jamā'at

Wajeeh Bajwa, Sadr Majlis Ansārullāh, USA

Bicycles for Africa Project

In 2008 a large number of Aḥmadi Muslim men from Burkina Faso rode more than 600 miles on bicycles to attend the annual Jalsa Salāna in Ghana which was being graced by the presence of Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul-Masīh Al-Khāmis (ayyadahullāhu ta’āla binaṣrihil-‘azīz). It was heartwarming to see the dedication and devotion of these Aḥmadi Muslims to Khilāfat.

Footage of this event showed clearly the condition of the bicycles that these individuals rode and it was not particularly good. On my recent visit to Burkina Faso, Imam Khalid Mahmood Shahid, Amīr Burkina Faso, narrated a story related to this bicycle trip that members of Burkina Faso made to Ghana in 2008. He narrated that during this journey, riders were passing through a hilly area. All the riders obviously expended a great deal of energy going uphill. However, he noticed that when it came to going downhill, a large number of riders got off their bicycles and started walking. He was amazed and curious at this scene since he expected that the riders would have taken advantage of and enjoyed this downhill journey on their bicycles. When he inquired about the reason for walking rather than enjoying cruising downhill, he was told that the bicycles did not have brakes and it would be impossible to control the speed when going downhill!

Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul-Masīh Al-Khāmis (ayyadahullāhu ta’āla binaṣrihil-‘azīz) mentioned efforts of Burkina Faso Ansār, Khuddām and Atfāl in these words in his Friday Sermon of May 9, 2008:

“Khuddām [from Burkina Faso] who had arrived on bicycles had travelled for seven consecutive days, camping in between. The group had a few Ansār of 50-60 age group and two 13 year olds. Prior to travelling when the Amīr of Burkina Faso told these boys that they were too young to make the trip, they were most disheartened and insisted on joining and were delighted at being allowed. Sadr Khuddām Burkina Faso, Abdur Rahman, mentioned that they wished to emulate the tremendous sense of sacrifice of the early Muslims at the occasion of the Khilāfat Centenary and planned the bicycle ride. Initially 1,400 people gave their names to join but due to some administrative matter only 300 were chosen. It is not that they had new, strong bicycles, rather these were old, rickety and dilapidated bikes but their sincerity for Khilāfat which the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) had prophesized was such that they made the journey. A TV correspondent asked one of the bikers from Burkina Faso how he travelled on such a rickety bicycle. The reply was that no doubt the bicycle was rickety but the faith was strong. This response was broadcasted on national television with striking headlines. These are not born-Aḥmadi and are not from the family of any of the companions of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). They live thousands of miles away in places without electricity, without running water, and where there is...
Flag of Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta)
Yellow star: leadership and revolutionary principles.
Red stripe: the revolutionary struggle.
Green stripe: hope and abundance.

Area slightly larger than Colorado
Population: 16,750,000
Life expectancy: 53.7 years
Muslims 61%, Christians 23%

Land use (estimated):
Forest 50%
Pasture 20%
Agriculture 18%

(Graphics courtesy Wiki)
intense poverty. Yet having joined the Community of the true and ardent devotee of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), they are resolute in their resolve.”

The Khalīfatul-Masīḥ V (ayyadahullāhu ta'āla binaṣrihil-'azīz) prayed that may Allah increase them in their sincerity.

In 2009, Abu Bakr Ladd (St. Louis Majlis) proposed that Majlis Ansārullāh, USA collect bicycles from members, especially from those members who own bicycles but do not use them. Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul-Masīḥ Al-Khāmis (ayyadahullāhu ta'āla binaṣrihil-'azīz), granted permission to go ahead with this project on December 25, 2009:

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In early 2010, the Nāẓim of Gulf States Region, Bashiruddin Shams, was appointed as the lead person to manage this project. After looking into the effort that would be required to collect bicycles from various Majālis in the US and the logistics of collecting, storing, and transporting these bicycles to Burkina Faso, it was decided that collecting funds rather than bicycles would be more efficient in the long run. These funds could be used to purchase new bicycles, either from India or China, on condition that the bicycles be delivered to Burkina Faso.

Bashiruddin Shams spent a lot of time evaluating various models and styles of bicycles and held discussions with numerous vendors to accomplish this task. Vendor selection was completed in September of 2010 and an order was placed for 352 bicycles in October 2010. Unfortunately, we were not able to identify a vendor that could provide tricycles. Therefore, a decision was made for Majlis Ansārullāh to purchase 20 tricycles in Burkina Faso itself for donation. The 352 bicycles were shipped from China in the middle of December 2010 and arrived at the port of Tema, Ghana, on March 1, 2011.

The Amīr of Burkina Faso stated that he would like to hold the bicycle distribution ceremony during Jalsa Salāna of Burkina Faso which was scheduled to be held from April 1 - 3, 2011. With permission from Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masīḥ Al-Khāmis (ayyadahullāhu ta'āla binaṣrihil-'azīz), Abu Bakr Ladd and I planned to travel to Burkina Faso in late March in order to attend Jalsa Salāna and also complete the task of bicycles distribution. However, due to a sudden uprising and civil unrest resulting in a deteriorating law and order situation in Burkina Faso, Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul-Masīḥ Al-Khāmis (ayyadahullāhu ta'āla binaṣrihil-'azīz) permitted Burkina Faso Jamā’at to postpone their Jalsa Salāna. The Amīr of Burkina Faso proposed a new date for the distribution of bicycles which was Monday, April 18, 2011. Based on this information I changed my travel plans and decided to travel on April 15. However, Abu Bakr Ladd continued with his original travel plan and left the US on March 28, 2011. He was planning to spend a month travelling in and around Burkina Faso.

To Burkina Faso

My travel to Burkina Faso started on April 15, 2011 at 7:00 AM in Gainesville, FL, with a 2 hour drive to Orlando International Airport. The next stop on my journey was Chicago International Airport. I arrived at Chicago airport at 2:00 PM. While I was waiting for my next flight (at 5:00 PM) from Chicago to Brussels, Belgium, my wife called and asked if I had heard the latest news from Burkina Faso. I replied in the negative. She told me that the army in Burkina Faso had mounted a mutiny and the President of the country had been forced to leave the capital city of Burkina Faso. This was an interesting
dilemma – should I cancel my trip or continue? Putting personal concerns aside, we knew that the correct decision was to put all our trust in Almighty Allah and to continue my journey as planned.

I arrived at Brussels airport around 9:00 AM on Saturday, April 16, 2011. Departure time for the flight from Brussels to Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) was 11:20 AM (local time). However, Brussels airlines stated that they would only fly to Ouagadougou once they were sure that Ouagadougou airport was open.

My flight to Ouagadougou eventually took off at 1:00 PM. As we were boarding, the airline staff handed each passenger a piece of paper which stated that if the situation deteriorated further during the flight, the airplane would not land in Ouagadougou. It would instead, continue straight to its final destination of Cotonou (Benin) and passengers would then be given the option to fly straight back to Brussels or to stay in Cotonou. By the Grace of Almighty Allah, our airplane landed safely in Ouagadougou around 5:30 PM, local time.

At Ouagadougou

Imam Khalid Mahmood Shahid, Amīr Burkina Faso, and Syed Hammad Raza, Muballigh Silsilā (Missionary), Ouagadougou, were waiting at the airport to receive me. I was taken through the immigration very quickly. As soon as we were outside of the airport terminal, a mob of vendors surrounded me. Most of them were selling SIM Cards for cell phones; the scene reminded me of arriving in Pakistan from the US or Europe.

The Amīr Burkina Faso provided the latest update about the riots and protests going on in Ouagadougou. He told me that the usual route from the airport to the mission house went through the center of the city. However, due to the ongoing strife, a curfew had been ordered to go into effect at 7:00 PM. Hence we would not risk going through the downtown area. He instructed the driver to make a circle around the city and take a longer but safer route to the mission house.

We arrived at the mission house complex around 6:30 PM, a few minutes before the curfew time. This complex contains the Amīr’s residence, a mosque, mission house
(offices), a printing press, and the Ahmadiyya Muslim hospital.

The Amir of Burkina Faso informed me that the plan for the next day (Sunday, April 17) was to travel to two regions where the Jama'at has mission houses and very active Jama'at members. The farthest region where he wanted to travel was a few miles past Dori, a town which is 183 miles (295 km) north of Ouagadougou, very close to the border of Niger and Mali. In order for us to go there, spend some time with members, and be back in Ouagadougou before curfew time (7:00 PM), we needed to leave Ouagadougou by 6:00 AM. My host, Ataul Habib Ahmad, another Missionary in Ouagadougou, who lives with his spouse and their three year old son, assured me that breakfast would be ready immediately after Fajr Prayer at 5:00 AM. However, he was not so sure about the water for taking a shower. We decided to fill up a large bucket with water for a morning ‘shower’—just in case the water was shut down, which happens quite frequently and without warning!

It was 9:30 PM and time to go to sleep—exhausted as I was from 24 hours of travel, this was strange for me—we take technology for granted in the US, but here I was with no computer and no TV to check before bed. Falling asleep became a challenge because of the oppressive heat. There were two fans circulating at full speed in my room and I was still sweating profusely—the inside temperature was around 90°F. I imagined that the outside temperature was a little more bearable but I did not want to risk mosquito bites; malaria is quite common in Burkina Faso. After one to two hours of sleep, I was up again for Fajr Prayer. When I returned from the mosque, I was greeted by an abundant spread on the table: paratha, toast, eggs, halwa, and chicken salan (stew)—on that day this was just the first of five meals served by my very attentive hosts.

Along with the the Amir, Abu Bakr Ladd and I were accompanied on this trip by Rizwan Ahmad (a Missionary from Ivory Coast). Most of the Missionaries from Ivory Coast were in Burkina Faso during that time due to the ongoing civil war in that country. We travelled in a five seat Toyota Hilux pick-up truck, mercifully equipped with A/C.

Search for Gas

The first order of business was to find a gas station that was open. The Amir told us that, along with other commercial businesses, almost all gas stations in Ouagadougou were closed. We prayed that we find one open on our route. The Amir of Burkina Faso called Missionaries in the cities en route and asked them to purchase as much gas as they could find.
Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh, we were able to find a gas station in a small town roughly 45 miles outside of the main city. By this time (7:30 AM) the temperature was already hitting around 100°F and I realized that the most comfortable spot was inside the pickup truck with the A/C running at full blast!

Quite often we came across vendors on the side of the main road, in the middle of nowhere, who were selling gasoline in bottles (such as 2 Liter Coke bottles) but obviously their prices were much higher. Vendors were also selling meat, vegetables, and fruit on the side of the road.

Bicycles and small 50-cc motorcycles were a common sight and are used as the main mode of transportation. After traveling on highway N3 for roughly 100 miles, the paved road suddenly disappeared and highway N3 became a dirt road. The secret to driving on this dirt road is that one has to maintain a constant speed between 35 and 45 miles per hour, otherwise small ridges in the road make one’s vehicle jump and slide with the slope on the road; this eventually results in the vehicle going off the road!

Arrival at Dori

We arrived at Dori at 10:00 AM at the house of Missionary Nasir Aḥmad Sidhu. He has been serving this area for the past 11 years and lives with his family. Here we were treated with our second breakfast of the day. As we ate, Nasir Aḥmad Sidhu narrated several interesting events about how Aḥmadiyyat was accepted in this remote part of the world which made us all anxious to meet local Aḥmādi Muslims. The Amīr of Burkina Faso told us that we would be visiting a village that has been recently relocated. A couple of years ago, gold had

Highway N3—that goes from Ouagadougou to the border of Niger and Mali in the North.
been discovered near where these Aḥmadī Muslims lived and a gold mine was established there. The mining company offered to move the entire village to another location. At the advice of the Khalifatul-Masīḥ V (ayyadahullāhu ta’āla binaṣrihil-‘azīz), the location for a new village was selected a few miles south of the existing village near the main road. The Khalifatul-Mash V (a>yadahullāhu ta’āla binaṣrihil-‘azīz) named this new village “Mahdiābād,” (Mahdi’s Community).

**Arrival at Mahdiābād**

We arrived at Mahdiābād around 11:30 AM. The Aḥmadiyya Mosque is visible from the main road. I was surprised to see a satellite dish in this remote village. The Amīr of Burkina Faso told us that the Jamā’at provided electricity and water to the entire village through installation of solar panels. This village also houses a large water tower where water is stored using an electrical pump driven by solar energy.

We were greeted by the elders and children of this community. However, the language barrier did not allow us to communicate freely with members as we would have liked. The situation made me appreciate the value of learning a variety of commonly used languages. In order to ‘converse’ with a local person, we communicated the question to our Missionary, Nasir Aḥmad Sidhu, who then turned to the local Mu'allim (teacher) of this community, and asked our question, translated into Arabic. The Mu'allim spoke Arabic as well as the local language but did not speak French, which is the official language of Burkina Faso. He asked our question in the local language. The response was then relayed back to us via two translators speaking two different languages. Even though it was more time-consuming than any conversation I can recall, it was well worth it and, clearly, nothing was being lost in translation.

The elders and children were sitting in front of the mosque under a canopy that had a thatched roof. The Amīr told us that to
Aḥmadiyya Mosque at Mahdiābād

conserve electricity generated by solar panels, the electric lights in this village remain functional for three hours after sunset and for a couple of hours in the morning. MTA is available to this community for four hours a day via a satellite dish outside the mosque which receives the MTA signal. Although they do not understand any of the languages in which MTA broadcasts its programs, the local members watch the Arabic channel with the Mu'allim translating the broadcast into their local language. The entire community is glued to the television, especially when Friday sermon delivered by the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ (‘alā binașrihil-‘azīz) is broadcast. This happened during our visit and it was heart-warming to see how everyone’s eyes lit up when they saw the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ (‘alā binașrihil-‘azīz) on the TV.

We toured an elementary school in this village which is very close to the Mosque and has only one room. At the time of day we were there, the temperature inside the school building was 100°F. I decided to take the thermometer outside in the sun and within 60 seconds its reading shot up to 121°F. The walk to the water well and tank was roughly 200 yards and I debated about undertaking this walk under direct sunlight. My hesitation about sun exposure was resolved for me when I realized how enthusiastic the Amīr and the villagers were to show us how their water well works and how water is stored. As we started walking towards the water tank, three or four children decided to follow us. I was amazed to see that two of them were not wearing any shoes or ‘flip-flops’ (which are quite common). I asked them to go back to the shade and told them that we would be back in 10-15 minutes but they just smiled.
and kept walking.

All the village elders and children gathered as we were getting ready to leave Mahdiābād around 1:20 PM. As we were saying Salām to the elders, one of them hugged me and said something in his language. His 6 or 7 years old daughter and 3 years old son were with him. I asked our Missionary, Nasir Aḥmad Sidhu, to translate what was said. As before, he asked the local Mu'allim to translate what was said into Arabic, after which he was able to communicate to me what was said. Apparently, this man’s daughter was saying: “Last time when we met the man with a white beard he gave me sweets. Is this man with a white beard going to give me sweets as well?” Since Abu Bakr Ladd and I both have white beards, we were not sure which one of us she was referring to. At that point, the Amīr realized what this little girl was talking about. In 2008 this family had an audience with Ḥaḍrat Khalifatul-Masīḥ Al-Khāmis (ayyadahullāhu ta'āla binaṣrihil-'azīz) during his visit to Burkina Faso. The Khalifatul-Masīḥ gave chocolate to this girl who at that time was around 2 or 3 years old. She had remembered getting sweets from the “man with the white beard!” I looked at the Amīr and Abu Bakr Ladd, wondering and hoping that they might have something for this little girl. Luckily, I also remembered that I had something in my travel bag – my trusty granola bars which I always have on hand! I was able to find 4 bars in my bag. I gave one bar to this little girl which of course made me an instant magnet to the rest of the children of all ages. One elder came to my rescue. He took the granola bars from me and started splitting each bar into smaller pieces to divide them between all the children. So if you have a white beard and go to where the Khalifatul-Masīḥ has been, better take lots of candy bars with you.

**Back to Dori**

We started our travel back to Dori. Getting into the air-conditioned pickup truck was such a welcome escape from the heat. On our way back to Dori, the Amīr stopped in the middle of nowhere and said that we should take a picture of the desert. I remarked that every desert looks similar on its own—we should have people in the photos as well. Although Abu Bakr Ladd had traveled in Burkina Faso in much harsher conditions a few days ago, he was very reluctant to get out of the wonderfully cool pick-up truck. He said he was feeling sick and possibly experiencing sun stroke. Bad as we felt for his condition, we were relentless about the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and persuaded him to join us for the quick photograph.
We arrived at Missionary Nasir Ahmad Sidhu’s house in Dori around 1:45 PM. Another excellent meal (number 3 of the day) was waiting for us. There is an Ahmadî Muslim Mosque (we offered Zuhr and ‘Asr Prayers in the mosque), an Ahmadî Muslim radio station, and a hand pump for water near his house. The hand pump for water was installed by Humanity First through its “Water for Life” Project. I was told that there is usually a long line of women and children around these hand pumps early in the morning. Some of these women walk 5 to 7 miles to get water from one of these hand pumps and carry two to three five-gallon containers (one or two on their heads and one in each hand) for their household needs.

To Kaya
We left Dori around 3:45 PM and now we were racing against time. We still had one

Ahnadiyya Radio Station in Dori, Burkina Faso. Transmission from this radio station covers 45 miles radius and broadcast is in Arabic, French and local language.

Hand pump for water in Dori, Burkina Faso installed by Humanity First under “Water for life” program.

Two views of the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Dori, Burkina Faso
Abu Bakr lad is getting ready to enjoy his fourth meal of the day.

more Jamā'at to visit in Kaya and make it back to Ouagadougou before the curfew time (7:00 PM). We arrived at Missionary Hamid Maqsood Atif's house around 5:20 PM. And yes, a wonderful fourth meal of the day awaited us.

The Amīr gave us a brief history of this Jamā'at. There is a Missionary's residence, Aḥmadiyya Muslim school and an Aḥmadiyya Muslim Mosque in Kaya as well as a large parcel of land adjacent to these buildings that the government of Burkina Faso has given to the Jamā'at for further development. The Aḥmadiyya Muslim School in Kaya is much larger than the school in Mahdīābād and offers classes from first to sixth grades.

Back To Ouagadougou
We started the final stretch of our daylong trip at around 6:10 PM. We had to cover another 60 miles and also stop to get gas. Cows, goats and donkeys do not care about rules of the road. These animals, especially donkeys, behave as if they are alone in even the heaviest traffic—they start crossing the road wherever and whenever they want to. At this time it was a true test of the driving of the Amir of Burkina Faso. It was a real challenge to avoid hitting not only these animals but also the people on bicycles or motorcyckles, and still make it to Ouagadougou before 7:00 PM.

As soon as the pickup truck stopped in the mission house compound in Ouagadougou at 7:10 PM and we alighted, Abu Bakr Ladd said to me, “You must have been scared sitting in the front (seat) – I had my eyes closed all the way here.” I laughed and told him that I have driven in similar circumstances before and was not worried at all. I also told him that my family tells me that they have to keep their eyes closed in the same way sometimes when I am driving, and that is in Florida!

After enjoying our fifth meal of the day we
offered Maghrib and Isha Prayers in the mosque. I headed to my host’s residence which was a 5 minute walk from the mission house complex. Before leaving the mission house complex we made sure that there were no army trucks nearby and constantly watched over our shoulders as we were now in violation of the curfew.

**Bike Distribution Ceremony**

Monday, April 18, 2011 was the day for the distribution of bicycles. My host, Ataul Habib Aḥmad and I went to the mosque at 5:00 AM to offer Fajr Prayer. The mosque was almost full at this time because the annual refresher course for all Mu'allimīn in Burkina Faso was being held during that week. A young Mu'allim who was attending the refresher course gave a Dars of the Holy Qur'ān (in French) after the Fajr Prayer.

I should mention here that the bicycles distribution would not have been possible without the hard work required to complete the assembly of bicycles. Bicycles were shipped from China completely disassembled and were then put together in Burkina Faso.

The bicycle distribution ceremony was scheduled to start at 10:00 AM and two marquees were set up in the mission house complex: a small marquee to accommodate the stage area and a large marquee to accommodate men and women who were taking part in the bicycle distribution ceremony. Some adjustments had to be made in the program because of the recent disturbances in the city. The President of Burkina Faso had removed all his ministers from their offices on the day I had arrived in Burkina Faso. This was done in order to placate demonstrators who were demanding a change in the government. The Minister of Social Services was to have been present at the bicycle distribution ceremony but all government officials were forbidden from attending any function. The majority of the Jamā'at members who were to receive bicycles were also told by the Amīr not to travel due to the unstable situation. The Amīr and I decided to move forward with the abbreviated ceremony and gave bicycles to the heads of each auxiliary (heads of Lajna, Ansārullāh and Khuddām auxiliaries) who in turn would be responsible for distribution of bicycles to their members. It was decided that the bicycles that we were planning to donate to the Minister of Social Services would be kept at the mission house and donated when the situation improved and the government became functional again.

Some guests were delayed due to traffic in the city so the ceremony started at 10:30 AM with the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān followed by recitation of a poem of the Promised Messiah (peace be on him). After some announcements, the Amīr of Burkina Faso invited me to say a few words. I gave the
background of the project, why it was started, and how generously members of Majlis Ansārullāh, USA contributed towards this project which enabled us to complete it within one year, Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh. I spoke in English and Dr. Mahmood Bhunnoo (who manages the Ahmadiyya Muslim hospital in Ouagadougou) translated my address into French. Rachid Traoré, Sadr Majlis Ansārullāh, Burkina Faso, then spoke for a few minutes. He thanked Majlis Ansārullāh USA and said that these bicycles may not seem a big thing to someone living in the West but in Burkina Faso, it is like having a Mercedes Benz car. Moussa Ouattara, the Head of Burkina Faso Red Cross, spoke for a few minutes emphasizing the importance and significance of these kinds of projects. At the end the Amīr of Burkina Faso addressed the gathering. He quoted a verse of the Holy Qur’ān that states that the real believers, even if they are in need themselves, give to the needy without discrimination. He then read the 9th condition of Bai’at which states: “That he/she shall keep himself/herself occupied in the service of God’s creatures for His sake only and shall endeavor towards the beneficence of mankind to the best of his/her God-given abilities and powers.” He said that members of Majlis Ansārullāh USA are truly fulfilling this condition of their Bai’at through their willingness to take on this project that will provide much needed help to the community in Burkina Faso.

Following the address of the Amīr of Burkina Faso, the tricycles and bicycles were presented to Sadr Majlis Khuddāmul-Aḥmadiyya, Sadr Majlis Ansārullāh, and Sadr Lajna Imā’illāh (Aīcha Traoré). The Amīr of Burkina Faso received tricycles and bicycles on behalf of the Ministry of Social Services.

To Leo

At the end of the ceremony, refreshments...
Recitation of the Holy Qur’an

Recitation of poem of the Promised Messiah (‘alaihis-salam)

Dr. Wajeeh Bajwa, Sadr Majlis Ansārullāh, USA addressing the gathering. Dr. Mahmood Bhunnoo (on the right with microphone) doing simultaneous translation.

Rachid Traoré, Sadr Majlis Anṣarullāh, Burkina Faso, addressing the gathering.

Moussa Ouattara, head of Red Cross, Burkina Faso addressing the gathering

Imam Khalid Mahmood Shahid, Amīr Burkina Faso addressing the gathering.
were served. All invited guests, the Missionaries, Abu Bakr Ladd and I had lunch at the Amīr’s residence. During the lunch the Amīr asked if we would like to visit another Jamā'at in the south of the country to which we agreed. The Amīr told us that we would depart after Zuhr/Asr Prayers and travel to Leo, a small town roughly 105 miles south of Ouagadougou, very close to the Ghanaian border. He said that we would stay there overnight. However, for some reason or due to several conversations going on simultaneously, some members did not hear the last part that we will spend the night in Leo, including our host, Missionary Zia ul Rahman Tayyab. Abu Bakr Ladd and I quickly collected our belongings for spending the night at another place. On this trip, we were also joined by Mahmood Nasir Saqib, Missionary from Ivory Coast. We were half way through the journey when both Saqib Sahib and our host-to-be in Leo actually realized that we were intending to spend the night at Leo. Our host immediately called his spouse in Leo to let her know about the five unexpected guests arriving at her doorstep in a couple of hours and staying there for a night. I was uncomfortable about putting the family to this much trouble and suggested that we cancel this trip. However, Zia ul Rahman Tayyab insisted that everything was under control and we should go ahead as planned.

The countryside of this area and the road itself were very different than the road to Dori. This area was green and the road was paved all the way to Leo. We passed through Koboe Tambi National Park and Sissili Forest. There were several signs on the side of the road warning of wild animals crossing the road, including elephants. We saw several small animals but unfortunately, no elephants crossed our path.

We arrived at Zia ul Rahman Tayyab’s residence in Leo around 5:30 PM. Tea and fried fish were waiting for us. It was surprising to see that fish was served at every place we went to because Burkina Faso is a...
Photos showing distribution of tricycles and bicycles
landlocked country and there are no local water reservoirs where fish can live. We were told that it was all imported fish—this meant that our hosts truly went out of their way to take care of our meals. May Almighty Allah reward them abundantly for their hospitality, ʿĀmīn. I also noticed that there were baked potatoes at every meal. Apparently, at some point, Abu Bakr Ladd had mentioned that two things he liked were baked potatoes and tea with lemon. Apparently this information was conveyed instantly to our hosts from the northernmost corner to the southernmost corner of Burkina Faso. Abu Bakr Ladd was served baked potatoes and lemon tea wherever he went. He was in heaven.

The Jamāʿat in Leo has a Missionary’s house, a school, a radio station, and a mosque. We offered Maghrib and Isha, and next morning Fajr Prayer in the mosque. Darsul-Qurʾān after the Fajr Prayer was given by Zia ul Rahman Tayyab. The Amīr advised us that we should leave Leo by 9:00 AM in order to reach Ouagadougou by lunch time. This would allow sufficient time for me to get to the airport in time for my return flight. Originally, my return flight was leaving at 9:30 PM from Ouagadougou but, due to the curfew going into effect at 7:00 PM, the airline changed the departure time to 5:00 PM and also advised that check in time should be by 12:00 noon.

We had a quick breakfast at Zia ul Rahman Tayyab’s house and toured the compound of the mission house. We also visited the Aḥmadiyya Muslim radio station in Leo. Transmission of this radio was very similar to the radio station in Dori and covered a radius of 40 miles or so. The Amīr asked us to give a live interview. We spoke about our experiences in Burkina Faso in English and the Amīr translated our comments in to French.

We left Leo around 9:45 AM and arrived in
La communauté Ahmadiyya des États-Unis a fait un don de 350 bicyclettes et 20 tricycles à la Jama'a Islâmique Ahmadiyya du Burkina Faso. Cette remise de don a été faite le 18 avril 2011 à Ouagadougou par le président de la communauté Ahmadiyya des États-Unis, Wadjid Bajwa Sahib.

Les officiels : Devant, de gauche vers la droite, le donateur Wadjid Bajwa Sahib, le président de la communauté du Burkina, Amir Sahib Kaifil Mahmoud et son vice-président, Amudon Soumana.

Une partie des bicyclettes qui ont fait l'objet de don.

Les témoins de la remise des bicyclettes et des tricycles.

La photo de famille après la remise.

Le 18 avril 2011, a eu lieu, à Ouagadougou, une remise de don de 350 bicyclettes et 20 tricycles. Ce don est l'œuvre de la communauté Ahmadiyya des États-Unis au profit de la Jama'a Islâmique Ahmadiyya du Burkina Faso. D'entrée de jeu, l'assemblée présente à la cérémonie de don a eu droit à la récitation du Saint Coran. Concernant le don, tout a commencé par les jeunes ahmadias qui ont effectué un voyage Burkina-Ghana à vélo en vue de participer à une conférence. Vu la détermination de ces jeunes, le donateur Wadjid Bajwa Sahib, président de la communauté Ahmadiyya des États-Unis, a jugé bon de leur donner un coup de main. Ainsi, il avait été convenu de collecter de véritables vélos aux États-Unis pour ces jeunes. Dieu faisant bien les choses et malgré les difficultés qu'elle rencontre, la communauté Ahmadiyya des États-Unis a pu offrir des bicyclettes et des tricycles tous neufs au Burkina Faso. Il a affirmé que ce don est le premier du genre. Tout compte fait, la communauté Ahmadiyya des États-Unis s'est investi dans la réhabilitation de 10 forages au Burkina Faso. Wadjid Bajwa Sahib, à la fin de ses propos, a demandé à la communauté du Burkina de prier pour les frères des États-Unis et pour la paix dans le monde.

"Donner un vélo à un Burkinabé, c'est lui donner le moyen de s'épanouir."

Amir Sahib Kaifil, président de la Communauté Ahmadiyya du Burkina Faso, a laissé entendre que selon le Saint Coran, les vrais croyants, même s'ils sont dans le besoin, donnent aux nécessiteux sans discrimination. D'où la justification de ce don. De ce fait, il a demandé d'être reconnaisant envers Dieu et les Hommes. Le représentant de la Croix rouge, Moussa Ouattara, a reconnu que la Croix rouge et la Jama'a Islâmique Ahmadiyya œuvrent dans le même domaine, savoir le bien-être de ceux qui sont dans le besoin. Pour cette raison, il souhaite que le bien-être de la population soit toujours au cœur des œuvres qu'elle mène souvent dans des conditions difficiles.

Rachid Traoré, président des Amants (hommes âgés de 40 ans et plus), a salué le geste à sa juste valeur. Pour lui, donner un vélo à un Burkinabé, c'est lui donner le moyen de s'épanouir. Il a souhaité que les bénéficiaires prennent soin de ce matériel afin qu'il puisse en tirer profit.

Par ailleurs, la présidente des femmes Ahmadiyya du Burkina Faso, Aicha Traoré, a dit que cette aide Nord-Sud leur va droit au cœur. Elle va dans le même sens que le président des Amants, Rachid Traoré, en affirmant que le vélo est indispensable. Elle a assuré que les bicyclettes seront reparties dans toutes les communautés Ahmadiyya du pays existant dans les 13 régions. Pour elle, être ahmadi, c'est savoir partager.

De ce fait, Aicha Traoré a souligné que Dieu donne au donateur la force de pouvoir subvenir aux besoins des plus pauvres.

François DEMBELE (Photojournaliste)

Répartition des bicyclettes et des tricycles :
- 150 bicyclettes pour les jeunes;
- 50 bicyclettes pour les vieux;
- 50 bicyclettes pour les femmes;
- 50 bicyclettes pour les nécessiteux;
- 60 bicyclettes et 20 tricycles pour l'initiative de l'Action sociale et de la solidarité nationale.

Local Newspaper "Le Pays" published a full page article about bicycles distribution on April 20, 2011
Mr Wajeeh Bajwa
Sadr Majlis Ansarullah USA
Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at
15000 Good Hope Road
Silver Springs
MD 20905
USA

My Dear Wajeeh Bajwa

Assalamo Alaikum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuhu

I am very pleased to receive your recent report entitled “Donation of Bicycles from Majlis Ansarullah USA to Burkina Faso Jama’at”. Jazakumullah Khairan kum!

You have kindly submitted a detailed 18 page report on how the USA Majlis came to appreciate the needs of some people who had attended the Jalsa Salana Ghana by cycling 600 miles to attend the Jalsa in 2008 on rather dilapidated bicycles, often without brakes! You then took over 350 bicycles and tricycles to deliver to the Burkina Faso Jama’at and to present them to the needy people and Jama’at there.

I appreciate this noble act of the Majlis Ansarullah USA very much. I thank you very much for your and kind efforts and appreciation of the needs of people of African Jama’at very much.

May Allah reward you and all the USA kind contributors from your Majlis for making this possible. May Allah reward you all abundantly.

May Allah bless you

Wassalam

Yours Sincerely

Mirza Masroor Ahmad
KHALIFATUL MASIH V
Ouagadougou around 12:45 PM. Lunch was served immediately upon our arrival after which it was time to say Salām to everyone and head to the airport.

Conclusion

Before we left for the airport I asked the Amīr what he thought would make the biggest difference for Aḥmādi Muslims in Burkina Faso if Majlis Ansārullāh were to take on another project in the future? We had talked previously about donating clothes; helping Aḥmādi Muslims start small businesses; sending medical supplies; installing or restoring water-wells; and a host of other ideas. Without hesitation the Amīr said: “Water Wells”. Where there’s a will (or a well!), there’s a way...

Majlis Ansārullāh, USA is humbled and grateful to Almighty Allah for giving us the ability to take on the bicycle project. We are also deeply obliged to Ḥaḍrat Khalifatul Masīh Al-Khāmis (ayyadahullāhu ta‘āla binaṣrihil-‘azīz) for allowing Majlis Ansārullāh, USA to take on this project. I wish to thank to all the members of Majlis Ansārullāh, USA who generously contributed to this endeavor and without whom the bicycles could not have been acquired. May Almighty Allah reward them all, Āmīn.

On behalf of Abu Baker Ladd and myself, I must express immense gratitude to Khalid Mahmood Shahid, Amīr Burkina Faso, for his hospitality and for making excellent arrangements for every stage of our trip. In addition, our sincere appreciation goes to all Missionaries and their families in Burkina Faso [Ataul Habib (Ouagadougou), Abdul Razzaq (Ouagadougou), Syed Hammad Raza (Ouagadougou), Hamid Maqsood Atif (Kaya), Nasir Aḥmad Sidhu (Dori), Masoor Aḥmad Chandio (Ouahigouya), Wasif Shahzad (Koudougou), Ijaz Aḥmad Shams (Dedougou), Muhammad Amin Baloch, (Banfora), Riaz Khan (Bobo), Nasir Iqbal (Bobo), Zia ul Rahman Tayyab (Leo), and Muhībullah Khalid (Tenkodougou), Zafarullah Salam (Fada) and the Missionaries from Ivory Coast Mahmood Nasir Saqib, Basit Aḥmad, and Rizwan Aḥmad, who were stationed in Ouagadougou temporarily, for their warm welcome and hospitality. May Almighty Allah reward them all abundantly, Āmīn. We were very blessed to make this once-in-a lifetime trip and will remember it for years to come, In Shā’ Allāh.

Live interview at Ahmadiyya radio station at Leo, Burkina Faso

Visitors, host, and workers outside the radio station in Leo
Al-Nahl

Al-Nahl is published quarterly by Majlis Anšarullāh U.S.A. and is sent free to all Anšār in the U.S. Contact local or national officials for your copy if you are not receiving one.

Anšār

Anšār (Anšārullāh News) is published monthly by Majlis Anšarullāh U.S.A. It is sent free to all Anšār in the U.S. Copy available from Qa’id Ishā’at or at http://ansarusa.org/newsletter

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The Gift of Love
Bashiruddin Shams, Nāżim Gulf States Region

Appeal from a Brother
My dear Brother Abu Bakr Ladd from St. Louis, MO had been moved by the passion of those young men from Burkina Faso to meet Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul-Masīḥ al-Khāmis (may Allah be his support), as all those did who came to hear about their immense dedication. It was Brother Abu Bakr who came up with the idea of sending from USA a “Gift of Love” to those kids. He had discussed this idea with many department heads of our Jamā’at and individuals (trust me, he does not spare anyone). They all appreciated and admired the idea of collecting personal bikes from Jamā’at members and others and to ship to Burkina Faso, however, nobody could undertake this assignment for its uncharted logistics and jurisdictions. For example, Humanity First could not do it because it was Ahmadiyya Community exclusive. Brother Abu Bakr mentioned to me about his frustration, just like he had mentioned to all others. I promised that I would at least get a definitive answer if it were feasible for anyone to undertake this project. Right there and then I had realized that if I were asked to do anything with this project, my first challenge would be to channelize Brother Abu Bakr’s “solar powered” bubbling passionate ideas. He is definitely full of them. I realized very early on that his heart was spiritually bright and pure, and was very confident that Allah Ta’ālā would make his plans of this noble gesture possible. Let me share an email from him while we were trying to convince him that a street bike is more practical than a mountain bike in Africa where it is a means of transportation.

“My Dear Brother Bashir Shams,
Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullāh.
I thank you for your last e-mail, I was preparing to sit I’tikāf, which Al-Hamdu Lillāh I was able to do. But throughout Ramadan I was thinking about your message and your advice regarding the type of bikes and I very much appreciate you sharing with me the days of your privation and it makes me admire and respect you all the more.

I can easily relate to your circumstances of having a leaky house and no floor. I still vividly recall as a 3 year old, wandering through the bombed out ruins of Giessen, Germany with my mother trying to find a bombed out building that was not occupied that we could spend the night in.

It is experiences such as yours and mine that give us empathy for those less fortunate than us. I vividly recall the memory of your elder brother late Dr Salahuddin, who was one of the first Aḥmādī doctors I met in USA. He will, in my mind, forever be the Standard Bearer of how a doctor should conduct himself in this country. The love and affection he showed to me and the rest of the brothers still warms my heart.

You raise a valid point about the practicality and utility of the bikes, but as I said before (or maybe not to you yet) that when a Lover gives a gift to the Beloved, he does not go to Walmart or K-Mart or the
cheap bazārs of the Souk. Rather, he seeks out the Specialty Stores, the fine Jewelers, the bazar that caters to the exquisite and unusual. The Lover agonizes over the gifts, wondering if this is truly worthy and representative as a token of my affection and love. Is this that special gift that will always remind my Lover of Me.

Practical I may not be, but I am in love. I am in love with those Burkanese brothers and the spirit and love that they exhibited. So much so, that the Vice President of Ghana, Al-Haj Aliu Mahama was compelled to point to these youths as an example of the love they hold for the Khalīfa!!!

Mere men, cannot conceive of such a love and it is beyond their experience. But I swear by God and I beseech His Succor and Aide for those young men, that in the future they will be the Light of Islam in their part of the world and indeed the whole world. When these boys and men, ride their bikes through the towns and villages of Burkina Faso they will be like warriors riding on spirited steeds, dashing and full of vigor and drawing the admiration of their fellows. Heads held high, humble in spirit, knowing full well that they are beloved of their Khalīfa and that he is well pleased with their sacrifice and ever ready to make even greater sacrifices on his behalf and their Faith.

Please read page 58 of the Book “Aḥmadiyya Mosques Around the World.”

As to spare-parts, etc. those fellows are resourceful and with a little help from us they will keep those bikes going for the next 30 years, just as you and your brothers kept your bikes going. Look in Cuba if you want to see a smooth 1948 Buick Roadmaster with a V8 flathead engine and twin carburetors still going strong!

You will be hit with many others who will hold the same view as yours, that is, practicality, utility, etc., and of course they are correct, from their point of view. But they are not Lovers.

I humbly request your earnest prayers to our Lord, that He may accept this offer from us. I am not claiming to be right, and if the view of those, who are smarter and more experienced in these matters than I am, prevail, so be it. I am a Muslim.

In closing, I will share this with you, which is the reason I sat for I’tikāf.

Two weeks before Ramadan, I was by myself standing for Zuhr in Bait-ul-Hafeez Masjid. With my eyes closed all of a sudden a face appeared about 10 feet in front of me, 2 or 3 feet above my eye level. I was at first startled and as I tried to sort out in my mind whether or not I was having some type of hallucination ... he smiled at me, a smile which I could not possibly describe to you and I was overcome with emotion at the realization at who it was, Hadrat Muḥammad Mustafa ibn Abdullāh, the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets. May Allah grant him all of the things that He has promised and increase it manifold. Āmīn.

Thereafter, I determined to sit I’tikaf and I was blessed with some, for me, important insights into the reality of the Promised Messiah, may Allah be pleased with him, and what my, our duties are in this regard. I pray that the Most Merciful and Forgiving, Ever-Gracious God accept our sacrifice and strengthen or resolve. Āmīn.

Your brother in Islam,
Abu Bakr Ladd”

Approval of the Project

After presenting the idea to various respected officers, I finally spoke to Respected Wajeeh Bajwah, Sadr Majlis Anṣarullāh USA. He, in turn, directed to look into the feasibility of the project and instructed the Gulf South Region, USA to manage it. As Nāẓim of this region, I mentioned the scheme to my Zu’amā. By the Grace of Allah, I found out that they were all overwhelmingly supportive of the project. It was assessed that we should be able to collect
an assigned number of bikes from all regions and raise funds from those regions where collection of bikes was not feasible which would pay for transportation and miscellaneous costs. Regional temporary storage places were assigned, from which Brother Abu Bakr would collect bikes from the Midwest, Northeast and some Eastern states and haul them to Houston in a semi-truck. Khuddām and Anṣār were to conduct the final inspection at a storage facility in Houston offered by Choudhry Munawar Aḥmad. Finally, the bicycles were supposed to be shipped off to Burkina Faso in a container generously provided by Munawar Sahib.

**Intermediate Phase**

I have to mention the intensity of Brother Abu Bakr’s urgency for execution. As a matter of fact, controlling his flood of passion turned out to be the first serious challenge we had to face. We had to convince him that there was a protocol to follow for proper execution. Respected Sadr Majlis wrote a letter to the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ for his approval, which he graciously granted. Next, it was to be presented at the Āmila meeting in Los Angeles. The plan was presented, and we had numerous questions and concerns of all sorts. Some members were very much opposed to the feasibility of the project. Amidst all that hot opposition, I mentioned that the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ had blessed this proposal with his approval. Instantly, all submitted and offered their commitment saying that they had no further reservations. Thanks to the Burkina Faso bike riders, we were enabled the opportunity to observe this exemplary behavior of the followers of the Promised Messiah, may peace be on him. During the Āmila meeting all Majālis were assigned targets of collecting bikes and funds. The initial target was to collect bikes and raise about $5,000 for expenses.

While the bike collection was under way, purchasing new bikes from USA sources and shipping them in a donated container was evaluated. It was discovered that all bicycle merchandise for Burkina Faso came through Tema, Ghana. Ultimately, we decided to pursue purchasing bikes wholesale and having them delivered to Burkina Faso. With China and India being the biggest exporters of bikes in the world, we contacted manufacturers from both countries in addition to an importer of bikes in Ghana. This allowed for quality and specs of bikes to be selected along with customized logos pasted by the manufacturer. The bikes were selected keeping the day-to-day needs of locals in mind. Specs included firm structure, back carrier, Dynamo light, lock, etc. Ms. Madeeha Malik, daughter of Shamim Malik, designed the graphics for the stickers. After evaluating all options, Ghana Importing Company was selected for the deal.

**Purchase of New Bikes**

Once the route of purchasing new bikes had been decided, we needed to focus on a fundraiser. I am so grateful to all Nāẓīmīn for their timely cooperation. May Allah bless all participants. I must mention the names of Nāẓīmīn who helped in this campaign. May Allah bless Naseer Siddique, Naseem Aḥmad, Pervaiz Aslam, Nazir Ahmed, Arshad Janjua, M. Zafar Iqbal, Abid Haq, Nafisur Rahman, Anis Sheikh, Basharat Waddan for their support and dedication. Respected Basharat Wadan helped me coordinate and follow up with all Nāẓīmīn to keep the momentum going. This had to be one of the easiest fundraisers to oversee due to the intense passion of our members’ participation. Respected Sadr announced it to be a major Īthār project for Majlis Anṣarullāh USA for the year. Respected Wajeeh Bajwah is a very detailed and hands-on Sadr and pays personal attention to minute details when providing guidance. I also appreciated precise direction from respected Habeeb Shafeek regarding Īthār department. Before
the announcement of the fundraiser, respected brother Jalaluddin Latif Ahmed had already sent a check to Brother Abu Bakr with more donations to follow by him and his Majlis. Respected Habeeb Shafeek, Qaid Īthār, pledged for five bikes on behalf of his family. Many other members donated and made pledges. After a presentation was made in a general session of the Āmila meeting with local Jamā‘at members in Los Angeles, an overwhelming response resulted with cash, checks, and pledges. Respected Shamshad Nasir, missionary West Coast, asked me how much two bikes would cost and immediately donated two hundred dollars. Another member gave his contact information with a pledge to fulfill any deficiency in our target. One member from Orlando donated $5,000. When I called to thank him, he told me he would donate any deficient amount for this project. These kinds of examples brought many blessings for others to follow. It also proved that the followers of the Promised Messiah have a unique passion and love for their brothers. We were able to collect almost $30,000 for this project which was many times higher than we anticipated. By the grace of Allah Ta’āla, due to the intensity of love shown by all members, the Gift of Love was able to provide more than 350 new bicycles with custom decals showing our appreciation. We are thankful to those children of Aḥmadiyyat for providing us this opportunity to share love.

Note of Gratitude

At the end I am getting an itch to brag about the Gulf South Region for their efforts as organizing region for this project. Zu’amā of this region had started collecting bikes without delay, along with handsome targets of cash donations. They were also preparing for storage, inspection and shipment of the bikes. Zu’amā of this region, namely, Sohail Kauser, Sheikh Iftikhar Ahmed, Dr. Amir Malik, Dr. Tanvir Ahmed, Mohammed Altaf and Dr. Kaiser Qayyum, all did an outstanding job to fulfill their pledges. May Allah Ta’ala bless them all.

Ḥaḍrat Mirza Masroor Aḥmad, Khalīfatul-Masīḥ V had blessed this scheme from the beginning, and it was so gratifying to see his note of personal thanks to Sadr Majlis USA for this gift upon completion of the project. The giving of bicycles was rewarding and a great blessing for us all, along with so many other passionate experiences we encountered throughout this project. This bundle of blessings is all due to “the Gift of Love” we had the honor to present for the love that Burkina Faso had shown us. May we continue to be inspired to share our love with each other. May Allah Ta’ala bless us all and be our Guide and Protector. Āmīn.
Letter to a Dear One
Sir Muḥammad Zafrulla Khan

English translation by Shermeen Butt.

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My Visit to Burkina Faso, Mali and Republic of Benin—May 2011

Abu Bakr Ladd, St. Louis Majlis

Courage of Burkina Faso Khuddām

By the Grace of Allah and the good offices of Majlis Anṣarullāh, I was enabled recently to visit the countries of Burkina Faso, Mali and Benin.

This trip came about because a few years earlier, after reading about the Khuddām from Burkina Faso and their more than 900 kilometer bike ride to meet Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul Masih V (ayyadahullāhu ta'āla binaṣrihil-‘azīz), I was very moved by the spirit and sacrifice of these young men and the idea came to me that we should provide them with new bikes.

I especially noted that the Vice President of Ghana mentioned them in his speech as an example of the love that Aḥmadīs have for their Khalīfa. I do not remember who mentioned this to me, but it was reported that when these young men arrived in the Jalsa Gāh, after a 900 kilometer ride, they did not ask for water, or where they will sleep or any such mundane questions, instead, the Qā'id is reported to have said, “Sir, where do we report for duty!”

I also heard that the condition of these bikes was something to behold! My dear Brother Jalaluddin Latif, who was blessed to be at this historic Jalsa, gave me a description of these bikes, many of them missing pedals, many with no brakes, etc., and either he or someone else reported that when someone saw the condition of these bikes, the person exclaimed, ‘how could you boys ride these dilapidated bikes for 900 kilometers?’ The Qā'id responded, “Sir, our bikes may be dilapidated but our spirits are strong!”

While thinking about these boys, my mind went back to the time that I received my first new bike as a young boy and I can still remember the happiness and joy and surprise at seeing it. Then I realized how happy these young men would be if they received new bikes, but not just the fact of the new bikes, but at the memory of the recognition that their feat stirred the hearts of Aḥmadi around the world.

Encouragement

At the time I was on a tour of the Southwest on behalf of Ansārullāh to remind our Anṣār brothers that our Ansār dues are only a “Penny for the Khalīfa.” So the thought formed in my mind that we should do something and as I mentioned it to one brother in Houston, he said, “that’s a wonderful idea,” and said that he would donate 45 bikes for this cause! I was amazed and so when I told the story on my next stop in Austin, a young Khādim there said, “I’ll donate 25 bikes!” Wow, 70 bikes in two stops and I knew that I was onto something.

These young men of Burkina Faso moved our Ansār brothers and so I proposed the idea to the Amīr USA, Sadr of Khuddāmul Aḥmadiyya, Humanity First and Sadr Ansārullāh. Many months went by and I did not hear anything from anyone. At the National Khuddām Ijtima’ in Milwaukee, everyone was there. I enquired about the
proposal and it turned out that each thought
the other was taking the project on.

I was disappointed, and given my general
lack of discretion, I probably voiced my
disappointment in one form or another. My
dear brother Bashir Shams, interceded and
said, “Brother Abu, this is a good idea and I
will discuss with Sadr Anṣār.” And true to his
word, he took it up, obtained the permission
from our Sadr, Wajeeh Bajwa, and we were
off to the races.

Within a short time, we had collected close
to two hundred bikes scattered around the
country. One brother, again in Houston,
offered to pay for the shipping of the bikes
via container. Another brother, who owned
some trucks, offered to deliver them to any
port. It was amazing and a clear symbol and
example of what Ansārullāh can do when
they are committed and motivated.

**Decision to Buy New Bikes**

Once Ansārullāh took the project on, there
were permissions to be obtained from the
Khalīfatul-Masīḥ (ayyadhullāhu ta’āla
binaṣrihil-‘azīz) and advice from different
sectors. It was decided that instead of giving
our own bikes, it would be more advisable to
provide bikes that have more utilitarian
usage than what I had envisioned as
mountain bikes. And so gradually the
program came together.

Once the decision had been made to
purchase new bikes, there was nothing left
for me to do, except to pray and I moved on
with my life. From time to time, Bashir
Shams would send me an email and tell me
about the progress that was being made.
Finally, we got the news that the bikes had
been ordered, a few days later I was told that
bicycles had been shipped and that they
would be delivered soon.

**The Unexpected Call**

I have to confess that I was a little
melancholy about the situation because I
would have so much enjoyed seeing the
expression on the faces of these young men
when they received their bikes. But, alas,
with the economy as it is, I had no money to
even think about going to Burkina Faso and
even though I had intended to renew my old
expired Passport, it always seemed that just
when I wanted to send off the $95 dollars to
renew, some bill or other circumstance came
up that was more important than a Passport.

Bashir Shams called me one Thursday
evening; I believe on the 3rd of March and
asked me if I could do him a very big favor.
Of course, I told him that anything that I
could do, I would. “Could you go to Burkina
Faso for me?” he asked. Allāhu Akbar! I said,
“Brother Shams, I would love to go but I do
not have money for a ticket and I do not have
a valid Passport.” He told me that Sadr
Majlis, Wajeeh Bajwa, had said to not to
worry about the ticket, Majlis Ansārullāh will
pay for my ticket. He asked me that I should
see how quickly I could get my Passport
renewed. I immediately called the passport
agency in Chicago and made an appointment
for the following Wednesday. On that day I
had my passport renewed in less than four
hours.

**To Burkina Faso**

On the 28th of March, I departed Chicago
for Burkina Faso. I landed in Ouagadougou
in the afternoon of the 29th and as we
landed, the Captain announced that the
temperature was 52 degrees Centigrade! That
is like 120-122 Fahrenheit. To my surprise, it
did not feel as hot as I expected because it is
too dry there. As soon as I stepped out on
the tarmac, the sounds and smells of Africa
came back to me, as I had spent time in
Africa in the early 70s and 80s. Indeed, I
embraced Islam, in the blessed land of
Gambia in 1973, by the sheer Grace and
Mercy of Allah, who found pity upon me and
guided me to Himself. It was in Gambia that
I first met my dear brother, Maulānā Daud
Hanif, who gave me a copy of ‘Invitation to Aḥmadiyyat’ and undoubtedly that book saved my life and started me on this long and wonderful journey that I have been on since then.

**Arrival in Burkina Faso**

I was met at the airport by our Missionary Brother Hamad, who took me through customs and got my visa straightened and by our Brother Suleiman, who was one of our drivers.

Ouagadougou is the capital of Burkina Faso and is clearly undergoing many changes. It is not, by most standards, a very well developed city and the infrastructure is clearly lacking in many regards. With a population close to 2 million, it is a fairly large city and there is an impressive air of hustle and bustle about the place. The majority of the populace seems to move about either on bicycles or mopeds and motorcycles of different makes and types. There are an impressive number of upscale SUVs, Toyota 4-wheel drives, Mercedes cars and other newer model vehicles on the road to indicate a solid middle class that seems to be doing very well and are a manifestation of a 7.5% Annual Growth Rate. In fact, all of the countries that I visited have booming economies when compared to the US.

After about a 20-minute ride we came to the Aḥmadiyya Medical Center, which is the Headquarters of the Jamā’at in Burkina Faso and Mali. The Amīr of Burkina Faso is also the Amīr of Mali. The Jamā’at compound takes up about half of a football field in size and houses a small Mosque, some students and workers’ quarters, the Main office complex, a guest house and the Amīr’s family quarters. There is also a good sized printing press, which prints Jamā’at literature as well as serves the public for commercial printing. The Doctors’ quarters are fronted by a Clinic which I would guess can hold about 30-40 patients.

Here, it would be appropriate to mention one incident that shows the impact of the Jamā’at Medical Center. After my visit to Djenne in Mali, I came back by road to Ouagadougou. I knew that the road was not good, that is, not paved, but I have always been guided by that Robert Frost poem, ‘two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and sorry, I could not travel both, I chose the one less trodden.’

The transport that we took from Mopti, in Mali, only took us to within 30 kilometers of the border of Burkina Faso. So we had to spend the night in a small town.

And here I am using the term “we,” because I know only a little French, so I had asked the President of Mali Jamā’at, Maulānā Omar Moaz, to permit one young man to accompany me as my helper. He graciously agreed and of course the young man was happy for the adventure. His name is Ibrahim Wattara. He spoke reasonably good English and of course could speak French and local languages. Without his help my trip would have been a lot more difficult.

In any event, we slept on some mats under a shed and the next morning, one Toureg brother from Timbuktu, offered me a cup of tea. I accepted and thanked him, but my Arabic is as limited as my French. So other than thank him and exchange a few pleasantries in broken Arabic we could not converse much. He and his older companion also joined our transport van to Burkina Faso. Brother Ibrahim and I left our transport van in a town called Oughayiuua, where there is a Jamā’at Mission House and Masjid. After that six hour ride across some rough and dusty road we needed a shower and some rest. The next day we set out for Ouagadougou. Lo and behold, when we entered the Aḥmadiyya Medical Center compound, who should we see, but our Toureg companion. He had travelled more than 1000 kilometers to see our doctor!

While in Mali, I visited the main Mosque
in Bamako which is more of a housing compound turned into a makeshift mosque. The members pray under some type of canopy and women and men are separated by a curtain. Members watch the Sermon by the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ (a[yadinahullāhu ta’āla binaṣrihil-ʿazīz) before the local Sermon begins.

**Tablīgh Session in Djenne**

I had the honor to accompany Maulānā Omar Moaz to Djenne, which is in the far North of Mali where there is a more than a hundred year old mud Mosque which has been named a World Historic Preservation site. I saw quite a few European tourists along the way.

We set up a few fold-up chairs and a loudspeaker and amplifier powered by the truck battery in front of this ancient masjid. After Isha Prayers, people began to assemble in a circle around our impromptu stage. I would estimate 300-400 people.

Brother Moaz began to speak and for the next hour and fifteen minutes, I witnessed one of the most compelling examples of Tablīgh I have ever witnessed! Although I could only grasp a few of his points, he was speaking in Bambara, interspersed with verses from the Holy Qur’ān. I was nevertheless mesmerized as was the audience, by the power and style of his presentation. I took my queue from watching the crowd and observing their reactions to his words, their looks of surprise, puzzlement, and affirmation.

At the end, an enemy of the Jamā’at tried to start some trouble, but the crowd rushed forward and carried him away. People were rushing forward and shaking Brother Moaz’s hand and congratulating him and requesting that he come back again. That night, I slept on the roof of an ancient mud building in the old city of Djenne under a brilliant star canopy as I reflected on my journey to this ancient place where the message of Aḥmad (‘alaihis-salām) was being spread.

Djenne, Mali, is 480 kilometers from Timbuktu, and although I wanted to go to Timbuktu, I was unable to do so due to the difficulty of travel by road and the time it would take. As I lay under the stars that night I reflected back 34 years before when I visited Mali on my way to Gambia and there was no Jamā’at in Burkina Faso or Mali at that time.

Although I have seen the evidence all around me, it is nevertheless an inspiring feeling to see the reality of the promise that God made someone hundred plus years ago, “I shall cause thy message to reach the corners of the earth.”

The day after I landed in Ouagadougou, I was enabled to join the Amīr and a brother from the UK, Shafqat Sahib, who installed a Solar System in a small village named Mahdiābād. This is an all Aḥmadī village, some 30-40 miles from the Niger border or in the Sahel region of the desert. It is literally “a far corner of the earth.” Yet, these Aḥmadī villagers have a rudimentary light system run by solar power and a water tower (donated by UK Jamā’at) and they are able to watch MTA via their Solar powered electrical system. This village was situated a few miles further north, but gold was discovered in their village and the Canadian mining company built them new concrete houses when the village was relocated.

The missionary in this area, Brother Nasir Aḥmad Saidu, who first came there some 15 years ago, is now a citizen of Burkina Faso. He is stationed in the town of Dori and his mother had a dream many years ago that she was making a “dori” and winding it around a village. Those of you who know Urdu know that a “dori” is a type of string made out of leftover scraps of cloth. Many years later her son was sent to a village named Dori and today that area has more than 60,000 Aḥmadīs, Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh! Oh Allah, Thy promise is surely true and we bear witness.
A few days after my return from Mali, the bikes were presented to the Khuddām and the people of Burkina Faso. Our Amir there, Khalid Mahmood Shahid, is not only an able administrator but he is also a skilled diplomat. He handed over 20 tricycles for handicapped people and approximately 50 bikes to the Ministry for Social Development for distribution to the needy.

Thus, it is no wonder that Jamā’at has four radio stations owned and operated by the Jamā’at and a TV station is coming on stream shortly in Bobo Dialasso. These Stations give local and International news in French and local languages and also have religious programs. There are to my knowledge at least three primary schools also being operated by the Jamā’at. Humanity First operates two Computer Centers. One in Ouagadougou and one in Bamako, Mali.

Further Opportunities

One of the efforts undertaken by the Amir of Burkina Faso is that when he can, he distributes free clothing to the needy, in various towns and villages. Keep in mind that many of the villagers earn less than $100 per year! Thus, I have made it incumbent upon myself to assist him in this effort since I know that many of us here in the US have clothes that no longer fit (as our waistline is expanding), but are still perfectly serviceable. Many of you have children who are off to college and you cannot bear to throw away their old clothes.

I would hope and pray that some of you would assist me in this effort and indeed it would be a blessing for Ansārullāh if they could undertake this effort also. Clothes could be collected at various missions and centers, and once we have a sufficient amount, these will be gathered and shipped to Burkina Faso.

To Benin

After handing over the bikes, I had about 10 days left and so I made a fast run down to Republic of Benin, where I visited Natatingou. This Jamā’at has just purchased a good size plot on a main road for the Jamā’at Headquarters. I also had a chance to visit Ganvie.

Thirty Five years ago, I was present at the inauguration of the Ganvie mosque with the then Amir of Nigeria, Maulānā Muhammad Ajmal Shahid. At that time, there was only one Aḥmadī family in this village of Pagans. This village sits on stilts in the middle of a large lagoon and the Aḥmadī family in question had dumped debris and dirt next to their stilt house to create a small area for a mosque. It was heartwarming to see this mosque which now has more than 140 members. I was given a rousing and inspiring welcome.

I was able to offer Friday Prayers in Porto Novo and after Prayers was able to say a few words to the members there about the importance of sacrifice. We have a beautiful mosque in Cotonou, which was a sleepy fishing town 35 years ago and now is a bustling seaport with traffic on three lanes from before dawn to midnight.

In one of his prophecies, the Promised Messiah (‘alaihis-salām) says, “the days are coming—indeed they are very near, when, all over the world, there shall be only one religion which people will mention with respect.”

Back from Benin

This became manifest for me in the following way. Due to my tight schedule to get back to Burkina Faso, the missionary in Natatingou, Republic of Benin, Muzaffar Aḥmad Zafar, drove me to the Frontier of Republic of Benin/Burkina Faso. The border area is in some dispute, so there is a distance of 30 kilometers between the two countries which is a no man’s land. Muzaffar Zafar had no passport or visa, so he could go only as far as the last police checkpoint in Republic of
Benin. I was waiting for some transport of any kind, which I hoped to get a ride across to the Burkina Faso border so that I could get some public transport. While waiting, I saw Muzaffar Zafar engaged in a conversation with a gentleman in mufti sitting under a shade tree. I could understand that the gentleman said, “Oui, Oui, je cone Aḥmadiyya,” and I knew that he was saying that he knew about Aḥmadiyya Jamā’at. This gentleman then called a sergeant over to him and instructed him to convey me and Muzaffar Zafar over to Burkina Faso and make sure that I would have no problem. I laughed and proclaimed Allahu Akbar and kissed him on the forehead. It turns out that he was the Police Commissioner for that area.

This was small insignificant border post, in a small insignificant country, and yet the message and truth of the Promised Messiah (‘alaihis-salam) have reached here. Those who still doubt his truth are blind, deaf and dumb and there is no help on earth for them.

I reached Fada N’ Gorma late that afternoon, where I had the pleasure of meeting Muhammad Zafarullah Salam, who is the local missionary there. I was able to offer Maghrib and Isha Prayers with the small Jamā’at there and afterwards they asked me many questions about how I came to Islam and about Islam in America.

The next day, we spent about 2 hours preaching to a small group of local people including the Imam from one local mosque. May Allah accept our effort.

African Talent

Upon my return to Ouagadougou, there was a refresher course being taught by the Amīr to the local missionaries, of which there were about 30-34 of them. The Amīr asked me to say a few words to them.

I asked them, ‘how many of you speak and write English?’, they all raised their hands. I said, ‘how many of you read and speak French?’, they all raised their hands. How many of you can read and write Arabic, I asked. They all raised their hands. How many of you can speak at least one local language, I asked. They all raised their hands. How many of you can speak at least two local languages, I asked and only half of them raised their hands!

I told them, America is a nation of more than 360 million people. You could not find ½ of ½% of Americans that can speak more than one language. You are not just the brightest people in Burkina Faso, or in Africa, indeed you are among the brightest people of the world! Your destiny is to be the future leaders of the world.

I found the people of Burkina Faso, Mali and Benin to be friendly and courteous. I would encourage all of our members who have the means to visit these countries. Ḥaḍrat Khalīfatul-Masīh (ayyadahullāhu ta‘āla binaṣrihil-‘azīz) is putting a lot of effort into those countries and our efforts are bearing good fruit.

Conclusion

I would conclude by saying that a missionary’s life is hard and our missionaries and their families make do in often difficult and tedious circumstances. Some of the missionaries have families in the US and I would encourage those family members to stay in contact with their relatives and remember them in their prayers. Indeed all of us, to one degree or another, are the fruit of missionary efforts and should remember all missionaries and Jamā’at volunteers in our prayers.

May Allah have mercy upon us and grant us guidance.
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(I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, He is One, without partner, and Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger.)

I solemnly promise that I shall endeavor, till the end of my life, for the consolidation and propagation of Islām and Aḥmadiyyat, and for upholding the institution of Khilāfat. I shall also be prepared to offer the greatest sacrifice for this cause. Moreover, I shall urge all my children to remain true to Khilāfat-i-Aḥmadiyya. In-Shā’-Allāh.

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