

ISMAILI SETTLEMENT IN BRAMPTON

By: Alauddin Hemraj

The need for Jamatkhanas in Canada arose as soon as migration from the then turbulent East African States started in 1972. In Brampton Ismaili settlement started in 1974. The notes below give details of Ismaili Jamatkhana locations indicating the deep interest the Jamat and the Jamati Leaders took in their spiritual and material enhancements, through constant search on appropriate sites for regular prayers.

1. From January 1974 to December 1974 the Jamat congregated at the Residence of Kasmani family at Clarence Street, Brampton on Fridays only. According to Jamati statistics there were 29 members as on April 1974 in Brampton.
2. From January 1975 to May 1977 Brampton Jamat congregated at Century Gardens (Top Floor), Vodden Street Brampton on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. From March 1975 to March 1980 further facilities were obtained at the residence of Mr. Shamshudin Jinah and family located at Juliette Square, Brampton for congregation on Monday to Thursday evenings and for Friday mornings. (Ismaili Population as in December 1975 was still a mere 68).
3. From May 1977 to April 1978 Brampton Jamat congregated at Sir Winston Churchill Primary School at Ardglen Drive, Brampton on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. Total Jamati members around that time were 101 as on June 1977.
4. From November 1979 to March 1980 further facilities were obtained at Kingswood Drive Primary School Brampton for congregation on Fridays, Saturday and Sunday evenings. The Ismaili population in March 1980 was still 148 members only.
5. Between March 1980 and December 1989, for the first time in 6 years a semi-permanent place for both morning and evening prayers was obtained at Selby Road, Brampton and this was followed, happily, by the construction of permanent Brampton Jamatkhana on North Park Drive. This new permanent Jamatkhana was officially opened on 29th December 1989. So the Jamat after using various temporary Jamatkhanas, with the Blessings of the Imam of the Time, finally had their own purpose built Jamatkhana.

According to Jamati statistics the Ismaili population rose from 29 in 1974 to 371 in October 1988. Today it stands at 989 members.

In the invitation sent out to guests near to the time of official opening of the new Jamatkhana in December 1989, it inter alia, read as follows:

“ABOUT THE JAMATKHANA

The Jamatkhana is the Prayer House of the Brampton Ismaili Community. A place of peace and sanctity, the Brampton Jamatkhana is one of a number of such facilities located in Toronto and the surrounding area. The Brampton Jamatkhana is special in the eyes of the Ontario Ismailis as it is the first built-to-suit facility for their private use.....

ABOUT THE ISMAILI MUSLIMS

The Ismaili Muslims, generally known as the Ismailis, live in over 25 different countries including India, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, East Africa, the United Kingdom, Canada, United States, and also in parts of China and Soviet Union.

His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan is the 49th Imam, Spiritual Leader of the Ismailis, in direct lineal descent from Prophet Muhammed through Imam Ali and his wife Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. As Imam he is concerned not only with the spiritual welfare of his community but also with their material well-being."



THE FRONTAL VIEW OF BRAMPTON JAMATKHANA

The lower floor houses the Social Hall, where meetings and seminars are held, also the Religious Training Centre-which we term as Bait-ul-Ilm. The upper floor is for regular prayers.

The notes of Ismaili settlement in Brampton Jamatkhana will not be complete without mention of the wise thoughts of Brampton's High School Students who started in March 1991 the Concept of Lipsync and Comedy Nites in order to entertain the Jamat and themselves. Initially the Lipsync and Comedy Nites were held separately, the first in Spring and the second one during Fall. In March 1993, however these two events were merged and what we have since then is the present Lipsync & Comedy Nite. The most pleasing and noteworthy point in regard to the High School students' initiatives is that the participants for the event range from very young children to aged members of the Jamat. The young children sing beautiful songs, the youths perform praiseworthy dances and comedy plays whilst the adults and aged entertain the Jamat by Garbas, Songs, and Qawalis, beautifully choreographed by talented members of the Jamat.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alauddin Hemraj is an active Social Worker. He was the Honorary Secretary of Career Development Society, established by His Highness Prince Agakhan Shia Imami Council for Karimabad, Karachi in 1989 and along with Chairman Late Alijah SherAli Valiani, was instrumental in establishing two separate airconditioned study rooms at Salimahabad, for boys and girls, distanced from noisy homes and outside atmospheres.

In 1993 he moved to Canada and now actively communicates with our Institutions to ensure the Community's progress here and in marginalised countries of Asia and Africa.
