

Mansur Ibrahim Popat Charania

The good samaritan|mandhan

Born: Kaliro, Uganda, 1940. **Distinction:** Mukhi, Ottawa Jamat; Ismailia Voluntary Highwayman, Ottawa. **Present location:** Ottawa, Canada; interviewed at Aga Khan Mosque, Kampala, during a visit for the Aga Khan's Golden Jubilee visit, August 2007 visit. He remembers a significant date for Ismailis and 1972. Notice the wordplay on Samari|TanManDhan. Tan-mandhan = body mind and treasure (a person who gives = a Samaritan.)

1957

How lucky we were to witness the Imam's coronation ceremony! To me as I saw all those leaders in the congregation I truly felt our Imam was "the *badshah* of the whole world." I came over from Kaliro a week before the date to help with the construction of the stage. The final SS VI exams were just months away, yet we came. The stage had to be redone on the jamatkhana compound as the Baganda said only their Kabaka could be crowned openly in Buganda Province. Pakistan band were certainly a highlight on the day. At one point that evening they struck up *Awjo Awjo Pyara Karim Shah* and the whole jamat joined in. I think that's the best *garba* song. I was standing near BKS Verjee. Suddenly there was a commotion as a car entered the jamatkhana compound. Om Habibah had come! Specially to witness the ongoing joyous *dandia*. The Volunteer Corps did a great job. Almost every hour there was an announcement that a certain child had been found. It was their duty to reunite them with their parents. Amongst the 16,000 people present were jamat members from Mozambique, South Africa, Rwanda-Burundi, Congo, and Zambia.

[Ed: *Badshah* - exalted King; the 5 in italics - a *garba* in praise of the Aga Khan, Karim Shah; *garba* - an Indian traditional dance.]

1972

I was working for Rhino Safaris as the maintenance manager of their fleet of 55 vehicles. The owner sent me to the Western border to retrieve a stricken jeep right in the middle of the expulsion notice. He didn't even tell me that actually the vehicle was across the border in Zaire! As I made to cross back into Uganda the army arrested me. They kept me three days and nights under a tree. A police officer came on the scene all of a sudden. He recognized me from the time I had run a taxi service in Kaliro. He said I had been so kind to common people - and now this? He brought me food and negotiated my release.

I ended up in Montreal, but not knowing French I crossed over into Ottawa. I found a job as a mechanic with a German company, but five years later I managed to establish a gear-box workshop with my younger brother. I ran it until 1992. I heard a *firman* where Hazar Imam had exhorted his jamat to not only serve the Ismailia community but also others. I thought hard how I could do that. I hit upon a novel scheme: I would help cars in distress on the main commute road in and out of Ottawa. So come hail and high water I am there on that freeway pulling cars out of trouble. Yes, 13 years later I am still at it. People know me by now that I am a volunteer but even then they offer me money. I have been on the TV several times.

Yes, I see Senator Mobina Jaffer often at jamatkhana - evening and *parodhiye*."

[Ed: *Firman* - a directive of the Imam; *Hazar Imam* - the manifest Imam; *parodhiye* - dawn prayers.]



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