

*In the Name of Allah,
Most Gracious, Most Merciful*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



All Praise is for Almighty Allah and His Peace and Blessings be upon His servant and messenger Muhammad (s).

This e-magazine commemorates 70 years of Jama Masjid Jamaat.

The story of Islam and Muslims in Barbados can be told in various ways. The 70 year presence of Jama Masjid allows its history to be written and showcased in pictures so that interested persons, our younger generation especially, and future generations would be enlightened to our Islamic heritage and the sacrifices of our fore-parents.

All Muslims are encouraged to be aware of their heritage and share it so that the history of Muslims in Barbados will not be lost or forgotten.

The information in this magazine was gathered over several years from numerous interviews. Many of those persons are now deceased, may Allah have mercy on them and grant them the highest abode in Paradise (Jannat-ul-Firdaus).

Apologies for errors or omissions. Please feel free to correct any mistakes.

Special thanks to all those who have made this publication possible. Please see list under Acknowledgements.



HISTORY OF FIRST MASJID

Prior to the construction of the Jama Masjid Muslims prayed at various homes around the city of Bridgetown. They had a deep yearning for a permanent place of worship (Masjid) on the island.

Before 1950 there were two main places where Muslims performed their Jummah prayers.



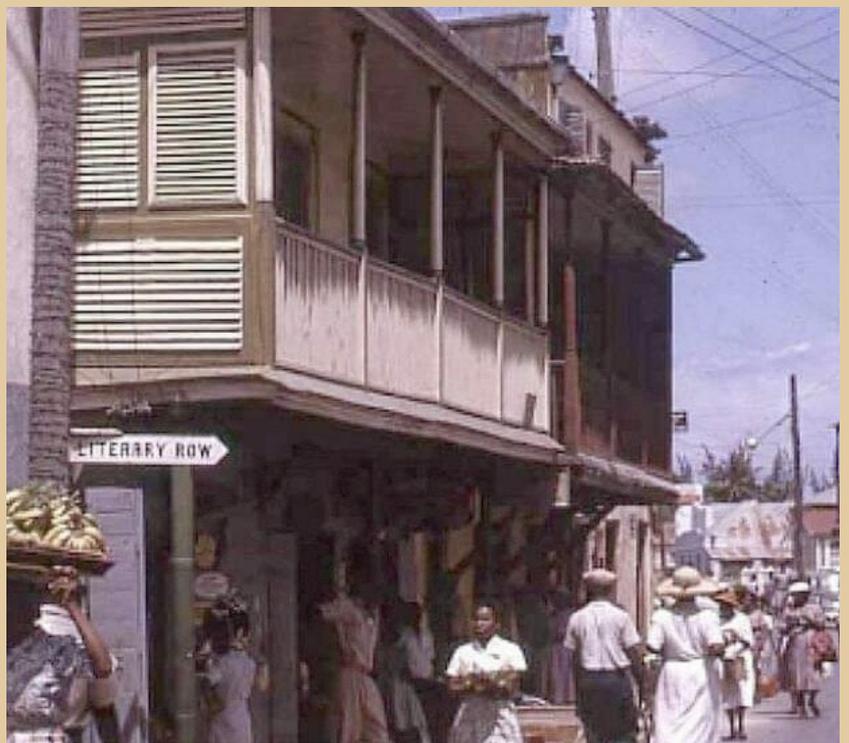
Both of these places were located at Cheapside, Bridgetown (2nd picture). One at the 3-storey home of the Pandor family (3rd picture, third building from left, partially hidden). The other at the home of Molvi Yusuf Sacha (4th picture, present day Caribsupply).

Maulana Dawood Pandor led the Jummah prayers at his home, while Molvi Sacha led the prayers at his residence. Persons attending prayers at Maulana Dawood usually discussed getting a place for a Masjid.

The main persons behind this effort were Maulana Dawood Pandor (His actual name is Ahmad, Dawood was his father's name), Saied Piprawala, Mohammad Yusuf Degia and Haji Mohammad Patel, both from Passage Road. (Some present in 4th picture)



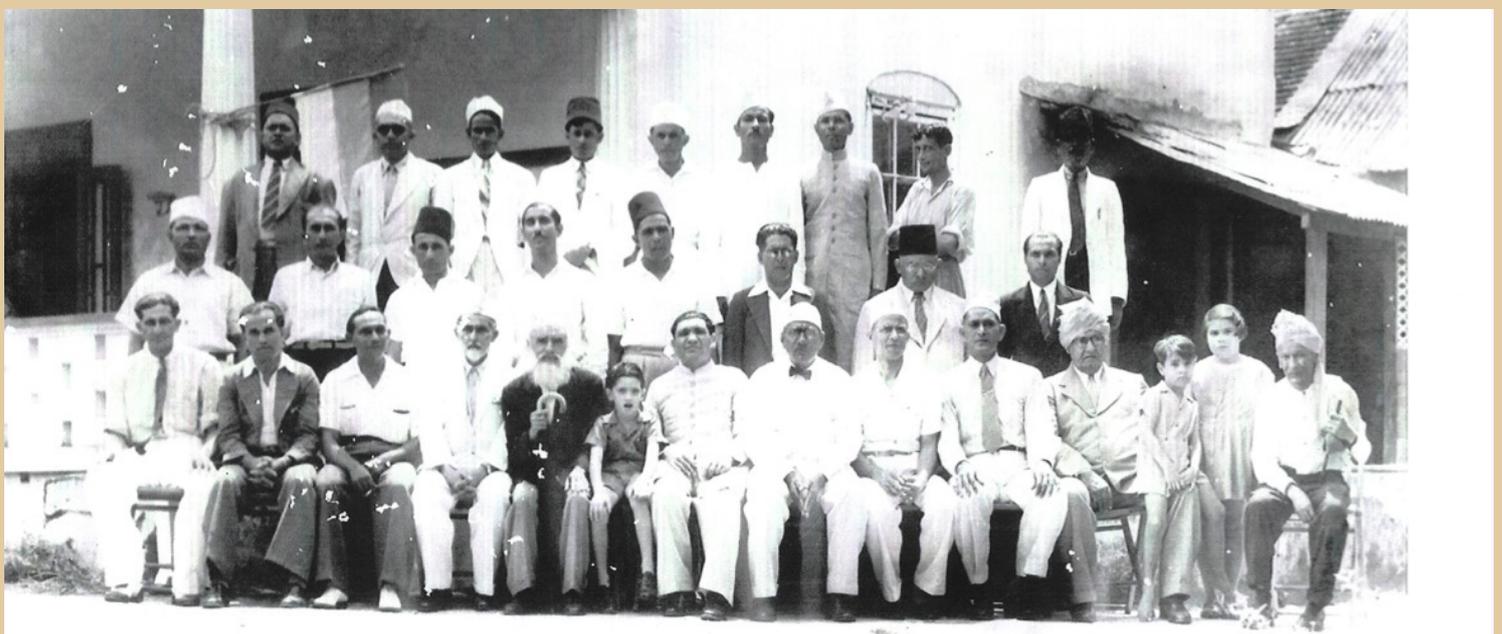
Eventually a meeting was held at the home of Maulana Dawood to discuss the Masjid. Members of that Jamaat (congregation) attended the meeting and made pledges to donate toward the Masjid in various ways. Some pledged to donate their entire week's earnings from their itinerant trading business, others their weekend earnings while others pledged according to their financial capacity.



Mohammad Yusuf Patel, popularly known as 'gold teeth chacha' had a large metal box which was very heavy with the shillings and other coins he saved. He donated the entire box of coins toward the Masjid project. An estimated \$7,000 BDS equivalent was raised that night.

A 6700 sq.ft plot of land at Kensington New Road, at that time a cart road, was purchased from a Mr. Duguid for £413, 8 shillings and 4 pence on June 14th, 1949. It was purchased under the names of Ahmad Dawood Pandor and Ahmed Saied Mohamed Piprawala.

Plans for the construction of the Masjid began immediately and deep holes in some parts of the land were filled before the start of the construction.

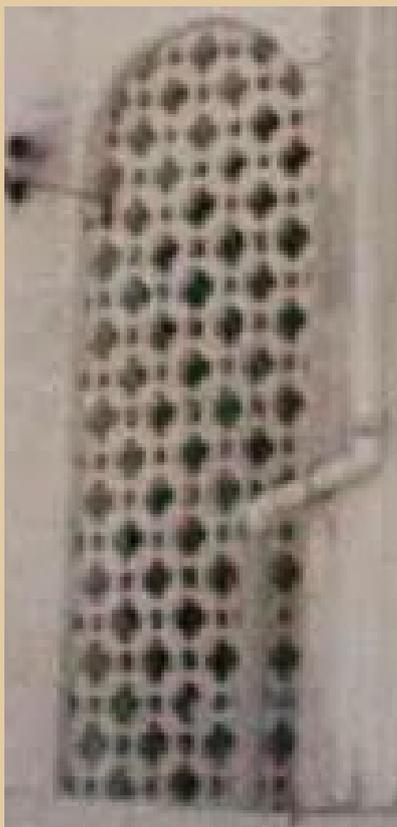


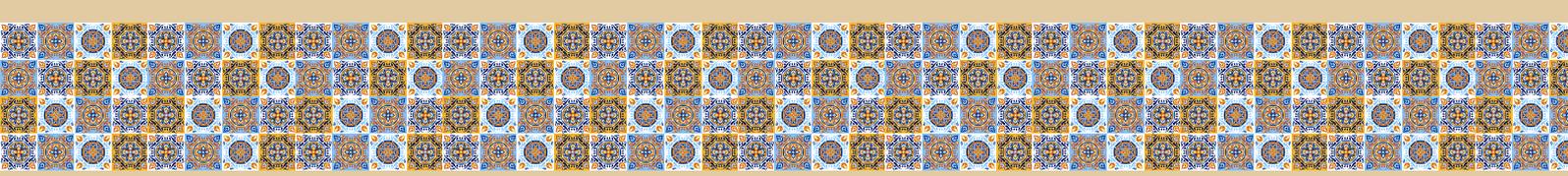


Mohammad Yusuf Degia of Passage Road was a builder. He owned a machine making blocks and tiles of various designs and colours. He was the chief builder of the Masjid and would be present at the construction site to oversee the work. At times, Maulana Dawood and Saied Piprawala would take turns supervising the construction. (Some of the actual Degia's Unique Tiles used)

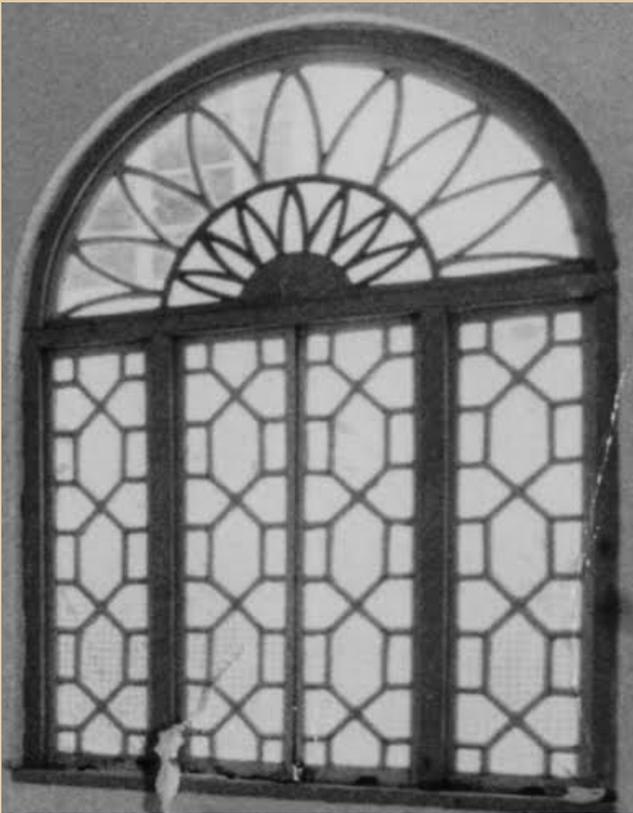


Jama Masjid was built with local coral stones. The decoration blocks were hand made with star-like designs by Mohammad Degia. He was also responsible for building the mimbar (pulpit) and tiling the Masjid with different coloured tiles (see picture from the Masjid floor)

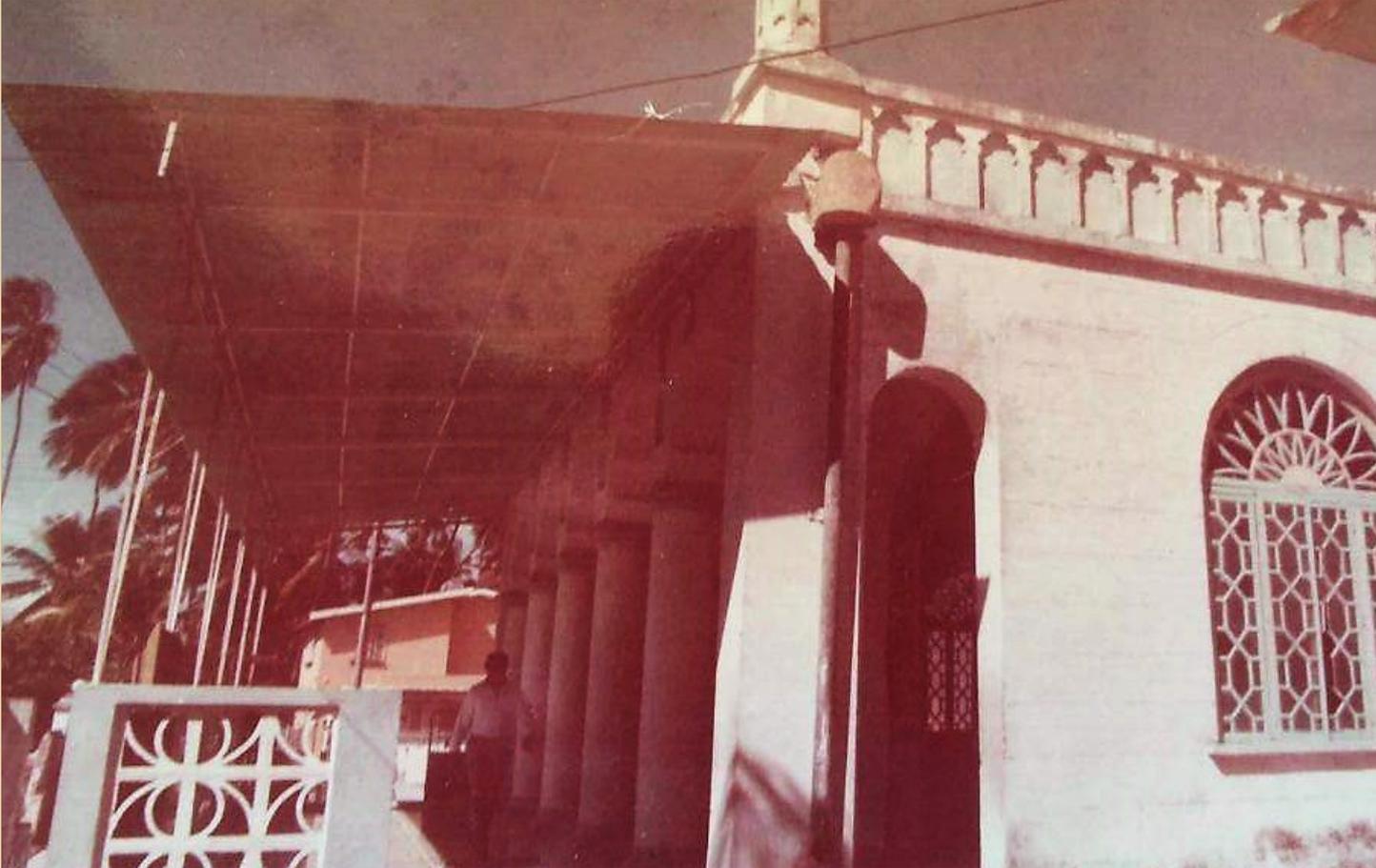




While the Masjid was under construction, Maulana Dawood Pandor and Saied Piprawala visited the homes of Jamaat members to collect funds. Some of the members would keep enough money to pay their creditors and purchase food, and donate the remainder to the Masjid project. Others would give according to their financial capability while others were so committed to the construction of the first Masjid they gave most of their wealth placing themselves on the verge of bankruptcy. Some assisted with labour work or any other manual work needed during their off-days.



Initially, most of the Masjid collection was from the Jama Masjid group but later Maulana Dawood and Saied Piprawala went to Trinidad for collection. Among the donors from Trinidad was S. M Jaleel, who donated substantial sums of money.



BARBADOS' FIRST MASJID

*The first Masjid in Barbados
was opened on
Friday, 26th January, 1951
(18th Rabi-al-Thani, 1370 A.H)*

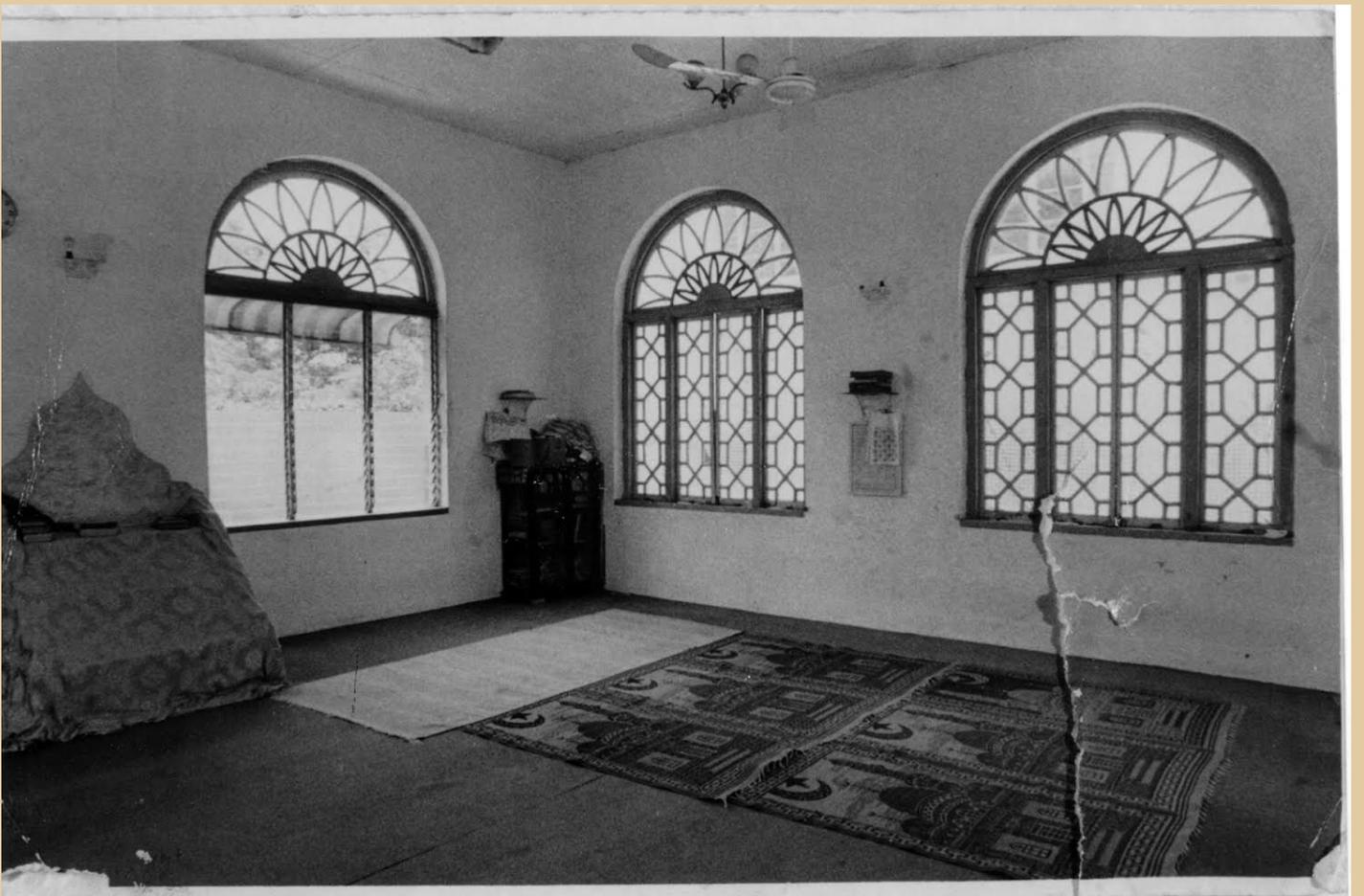
*Built at the equivalent cost of
between
\$17,000 and \$18,000 BDS.*



Maulana Ismail Adam delivered the first Jumma khutba (sermon) and Hafiz Ishmael Kothdiwala led the first Jumma prayer. Approx. 45 Muslims attended.

The first Imam was Hafiz Ismail Hafejee (Qari Saab) from Baleshwar. Hafiz Hashim Bham assisted him on many occasions and was the substitute Imam. Akram Ali from Hooghly District in West Bengal was the first Muezzin and caretaker of the Jama Masjid. He lived on the Masjid property in a small room and made great sacrifices while serving the community.

The five daily salat started immediately with Saied Piprawala, Hashim Bodhania, Hafiz Ahmed (Mia) Pandor and Ebrahim Mehter, who lived near the Masjid. They frequently attended along with other Muslims who lived nearby. However, at times during weekends the Masjid was closed for Zuhr and sometimes Asr as Muslims were out doing their itinerant trading from early morning until late evening.



MADRASAH QUVVATUL ISLAM

Maulana Dawood Pandor was the first Motawalli (person in charge) of the Masjid and responsible for running the first Madrasah (religious school), which started soon after the Masjid opened. Maulana Dawood was the main driving force in establishing the Madrasah and it may be him who gave it the name 'Madrasah Quvvatul Islam'.



In the beginning Madrasah classes were conducted in the Masjid, Maulana Dawood and Hafiz Ahmad Patel were the first teachers (Ustadhs). Hafiz Ahmad was the paid Ustadh while Maulana Dawood taught voluntarily and would also substitute. Maulana Dawood prepared the syllabus for the Madrasah. Learning how to read the Quran in Arabic was a priority along with basic aspects of Islam, how to pray salat etc. which were translated from Talimul Islam in Urdu to English by Maulana Dawood. He also translated some parts of Bahishti Zewar for the benefit of the children. Everything was taught in English and sometimes explained in a 'Bajan way'. The Madrasah classes were from Asr to Maghrib with students from the ages of 5-12.

At that time, almost all the students were children from 'mixed marriages'. Some of first students were Yusuf Ebrahim (Ebree) and Amina Ukadia, Hafsa Pandor, Sarifa and Juliekha Maji Patel (now Bulbulia), Moosa, Ebrahim and Suleman Patel from Passage Road and Morgina Khatun (daughter of Anwar Ali of West Bengal). Around a year later a separate structure was built and designated as the Madrasah (left side of picture) to increase the spaces for more students such as Hadjra and Rabiya Dokrat, Abdulhai Pandor, Hashim and Hamid Degia, Muhammad Shafee Nagdee, Abdulhai Patel (Reed Street), Sarah Piprawala (Bhikoo), Ismail Suleiman Samrodia and several others.

The other Jamaat that prayed Jumma at the resident of Molvi Sacha had purchased a wooden house in Sobers Lane in 1950 and started praying their salat there. Although there were two Jamaats everyone saw the importance of their children receiving an Islamic education, so they sent their children to the Madrasah at Jama Masjid. This continued until the arrival of Maulana Ahmad Kara as Imam of City Masjid in 1961 and the start of the Madrasa there.



Maulana Dawood had a driver, a well-known Barbadian character nicknamed 'Gearbox' who he sent to pick up some of the children from the nearby area for Madrasah. When he arrived at their homes he would rev the engine such that it was louder than beeping the horn, indicating 'Gearbox' was there.

In the 1950's the Indian cricket team, touring the West Indies for the first time, was invited to the Masjid and the Madrasah. The children of the Madrasah recited the Ghazal style of Urdu poetry written by poet Muhammad Iqbal, known as 'Anthem of Hindustan'. The first few lines in Urdu and English translation:

**“ Sara Jahan se acche, Hidostan hamaraHam
bulbulen hain is ki, yih gulsitan hamara-
Better than the entire world, is our Hind, We are
its nightingales, and it (is) our garden abode. ”**



Children attended Madrasah until they finished learning how to read the Quran and a few other basics. Children's education was very important to Maulana Dawood Pandor and he made every effort to impart it to them.

On the special nights of Isra and Miraj, two students, Mohammad Shafee Yusuf Nagdee and Abdulhai Pandor would talk about the significance of Isra and Miraj after Esha salat.

Collection of funds for the running of the Masjid and Madrasah was done by the strenuous efforts of Maulana Dawood Pandor, Saied Piprawala and Mohammad Maji Patel. They would go in the blazing afternoon sun to the homes of Muslims every week, usually on a Thursday.

Some of the income was also supplemented from the sale of coconuts from the two coconut trees (see picture) and banana trees that were planted along the area between Hafiz Ahmed (Mia) Pandor's galvanised barrier and the Masjid.

Many times the income was not sufficient to meet their obligations, so the three men would assist financially, while some others also assisted occasionally. They later introduced a weekly fee of \$2.00 per child, who brought the fee with them to Madrasah.



JAMA MASJID EARLY YEARS

On Jummah, Maulana Dawood Pandor gave the Khutba, led the Jummah salat and delivered a Bayaan (lecture) after the salat. Maulana Saied Piprawala and Hafiz Ismail Kothdiwala also led the Jummah salat.

Muslims came in their numbers to pray Taraweeh during the month of Ramadan and especially on special occasions such as the 27th night of Ramadan, 10th of Muharram and Shab-e-Barat.

During the month of the Ramadan, Taraweeh was performed, reading from the last surahs (chapters) of the Holy Quran. There is reported one occasion when Hafiz Ismail Hafejee (Qari Saab) from Baleshwar recited the entire Quran in Taraweeh.

Moosa Kothdiwala and Maulana Saied Piprawala also gave Bayaan on special occasions while Maulana Dawood Pandor would sit in Itikaaf (seclusion) for the last 10 days of Ramadan every year.



On auspicious nights, like the 27th night of Ramadan, special foods were served. Ali 'chacha' from Guyana, who was a family friend of Mohammad Patel's family (opposite Masjid), would send sacks full of channa. Mariam khala Piprawala would fry the channa and distribute after Taraweeh salat. Sakinah khala Kothdiwala would send 'fluffy bhajiya' to go along with the fried channa.

1965 ARRIVAL OF ML YUSUF

There was no established/permanent Imam so knowledgeable persons like Hafiz Ismail Dana Patel, Hafiz Ismail Kothdiwala, Yusuf Patel from Reed Street and others would lead the salat. As the jamaat grew there was a need for a permanent Imam for the Masjid and an Ustadh (teacher) for the Madrasah. Through the effort of Saied Piprawala, it was arranged for his brother Maulana Yusuf Piprawala, who taught in Kaphleta Madrasah and at Darul Uloom Dabhel, to come to Barbados.

In March 1965, Maulana Yusuf arrived in Barbados to take up his job at Jama Masjid. Apart from performing his duties as an Imam and Ustadh, he introduced the work of Tabligh Jamaat to the Muslims of Barbados who had no previous knowledge of it.

Jama Masjid became the hub of activities for the Tabligh Jamaat. He started Gusht programmes. After Maulana Yusuf finished his Madrasah duty at 7PM he conducted the program up to Esha salat, followed by a long lecture by him.

The planning of the Tabligh Jamaat activities was done at the Jama Masjid, including the first 'Jor' (spending 24 hours inside the Masjid). All of the Jamaats from overseas came first to Jama Masjid. It can be considered the Markaz of the Tabligh Jamaat in Barbados and it was also from this Masjid that the work of Tabligh spread to various Caribbean and South American countries.

Reading the entire Quran in Taraweeh was resumed by Maulana Dawood Pandor in 1968 and continues to this day.

Maulana Yusuf was Imam of Jama Masjid up to 1983 and teacher at the Madressa until 2005. His 40 years of service to Jama Masjid Jamaat produced many learned persons in the Deen and many huffaz. May Almighty Allah reward Maulana Yusuf in this life and the highest abode in Jannat-ul-Firdause.

As the Muslim community grew and with more being influenced by the Tabligh Jamaat, there was a need to expand the Masjid and Madrasah.

In the early 1970s, Saied Piprawala filled in the steps, extended the patio to increase the space for worshippers and later added a covering over the space.

GROWTH

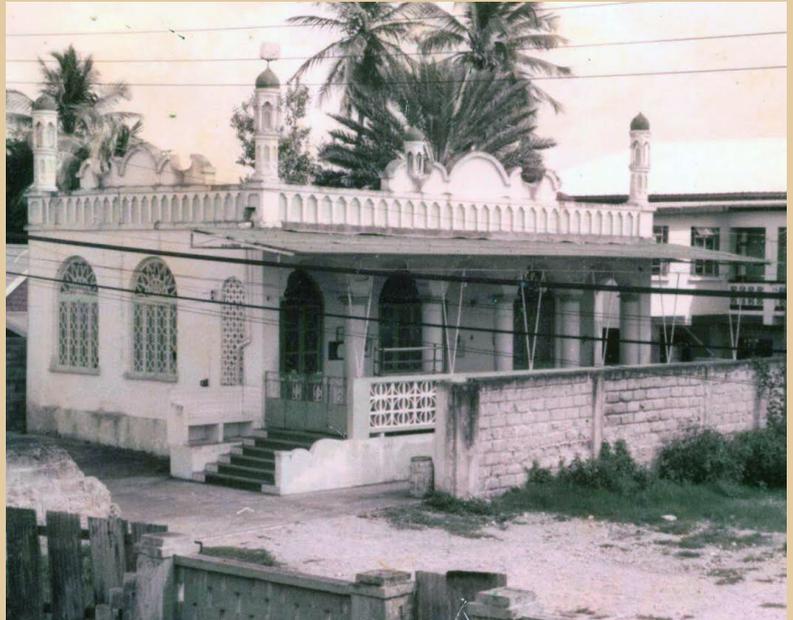
As enrolment at the Madrasah increased, expansion took place. A second level for the Madrasah was added in the late 1970s.

Also in the late 1970s a significant amount of money was donated by a Shaykh visiting Barbados from Kuwait. This money was used to purchase two wooden houses to generate income. Madrasah fees were reintroduced and an endowment (waqf) of two additional wooden houses were made to Jama Masjid.

Jama Masjid was registered in 1981 and Madrasah Quvvatul Islam the following year.

On September 30th 1981 the property owned by Hashim Bodhania, adjacent to the Masjid on its western side, was purchased for \$110,000 to expand the Masjid.

A few years after the purchase of the property next to the Masjid, Maulana Mohammad Kholwadia, Mohammad Daya, Suleman Chothia and Mahmood Khalil Patel sought permission from the Jama Masjid committee to open an Islamic Library. Permission was granted on condition that it would be temporary as expansion of the Masjid was planned.



The library was opened along with an office for Jamiat-ul-Ulama. Money and books were donated by Muslims in Barbados. There was the view by some that rather than opening a library, these individuals should go for 40 days in Jamaat.

Harvey Juman paid for the windows and refurbishment was done by the group.



Books were purchased from overseas from the donation, and several overseas organizations donated books and Islamic magazines. Some coming from China and Russia. The library was closed three years later as the Jama Masjid was preparing for expansion. The money and books left were distributed to Jama and City Masjid.

EXPANSION

The expansion of Jama Masjid began around 1984/1985 and was completed around 1988-1989.

Abdulhai Pandor of Professional Engineering Services was the contractor on the project and did so free of charge, with the exception of the workers' wages and cost of materials.

Abdulhai Pandor employed Abdulhai Piprawala as the accountant and Suleman Chothia as the supervisor of the project.

These brothers worked tirelessly to make the Masjid expansion a success.

Dr. Nagdee was a visionary and saw the need for expansion of the Masjid. In spite of fierce criticism he forged ahead with his vision. Both himself and Abdulhai Pandor faced many obstacles but persevered.

A Saudi Prince visited Barbados in 1986. He visited Jama Masjid and was shown the plans for the expansion. He donated a considerable sum to the project.



AN EXPANDED JAMA MASJID



The original Masjid, completed in 1951, accommodated around 95 worshippers, while the refurbished Masjid, done at a cost of almost \$500,000 accommodates approximately 528 worshippers

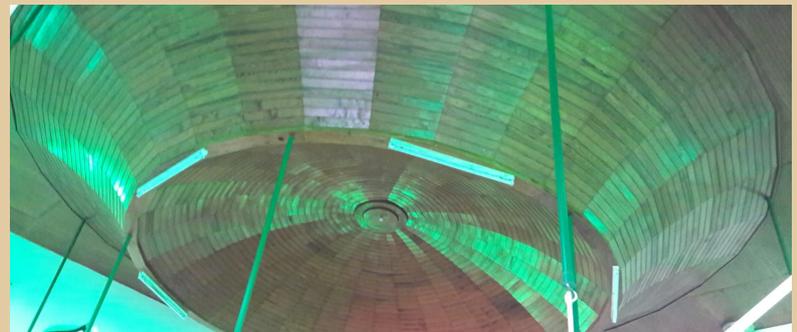
The walls of the original Masjid built from local coral-stones, remained the same up to the 2 half columns at either end



The original Mehrib & Mimbar remained from the original structure



The special green glass windows were brought in from Germany. The green colour has not faded due to its good quality



The internal wooden dome was the idea of Abdulhai Pandor and Suleman Chothia. It was done to fill the void above the original space of the Masjid. It was made by a professional joiner (Mr. Harper)

MADRASAH-TUT-TAYYEBAAAT

After the expansion of Jama Masjid, a wooden house to the east of the Masjid, owned by Hafiz Ahmed (Mia) Pandor, was purchased for \$68,000 in 1993 to be used as a carpark. And in 1996 a wall house to the east of that carpark, owned by the same Hafiz Pandor, was purchased for \$165,000.



On February 11th 1997 (3rd Shawwal, 1417) the Madressah for girls over the age of 9 was opened in that wall house. The duah at the opening of Madrasah-tut-Tayyibaat was done by Maulana Fazul Rahman of South Africa.



Classes started on 17th February 1997 with 49 students and Alima Fatima Gangat in charge. Quran, Tajweed, Hifz, Fiqh, Aqeeda, Akhlaq, Adab and Islamic history are taught there. Over the years many Muslimahs have benefitted from classes.

May all the alimahs/appas/teachers (past and present) of this Madressah receive Almighty Allah's Blessings and Mercy for their dedication and sacrifice in imparting Islamic knowledge.

Dr. Nagdee was the main driving force behind the Madressa and was solely responsible for financing its operations. No fees are charged to the young ladies who attend. The Madressa moved upstairs in 2005.

The first Muslim Girls Secondary School (Al Huda School) was also housed in the building. It started in early 2000s and was merged with the Al Falah School a few years later.

IMAMS & USTADHS

Full Time Imams & Ustadhs

Hafiz Ismail (Qari Saab) Hafejee
(Imam only) (Baleshwar)
Maulana Yusuf Piprawala (Kaphleta)
Maulana Yusuf Patel (Baleshwar)
Maulana Asad Bemat (Tadkeshwar)
Hafiz Abdurrahman Memi (Simlak)
Maulana Rafiq Musajee (Kaphleta)
Maulana Aakil Bhula (Barbados)

Part Time Imams

Maulana Dawood Pandor (& Ustadh)
Maulana Saied Piprawala
Hafiz Ismail Dana-Patel
Hafiz Ismail Kothdiwala
Hafiz Hashim Bham (& Ustadh)
Yusuf Patel (Reed Street)
Moosa Kothdiwala

Ustadhs

Hafiz Ahmed Patel
Hafiz Hashim Nagdee
Maulana Musajee Patel
Hafiz Yusuf Samrodia
Hafiz Yusuf Nagdee
Maulana Abdulhai Kaji
Hafiz Issa Kothdiwala
Hafiz Ibrahim Bhamjee
Hafiz Ashraf Piprawala
Maulana Ibrahim Bhana
Mufti Mahmood Dana-Patel
Maulana Aziz Nana
Maulana Ismail Bhana
Maulana Muhammad Lakhi
Maulana Ismail (AK) Patel
Maulana Idreece Bholat
Maulana Mohamed Mamadh
Maulana Abbass Mangera
Maulana Idris Piprawala
Maulana Anas Pandor

Maulana Imran Piprawala
Hafiz Ayub Gangat
Maulana Shoaib Bodiya
Maulana Muhammad Ali Bholat

Part Time Ustadhs

Hafiz Nazir Motala
Hafiz Iqbal Lunat
Hafiz Shoaib Lunat
Hafiz Azaz Kariya
Maulana Ebrahim Hans
Maulana Rashid Raja
Dr. M S Y Nagdee
Abdulhai 'Chota' Patel (taught Gujarati)
Mohammad 'Maji' Patel (taught Gujarati)
Ibrahim 'Mota' Bulbulia (taught Gujarati)



JAMA MASJID JAMAAT

In November 1992 Jama Masjid Jamaat amalgamated the Masjid and Madressa committees and elected its first President, Dr. Mohammad Shafee Yusuf Nagdee. Dr. Nagdee served the Jama Masjid on its committee from 1975 to 1981, then from 1981 to 1992 as Secretary and from 1992 to 2017 as President. 42 years of continuous service. He passed away on 28th August 2017. May Almighty Allah reward him with Jannatul Firdause.



Since the establishment of the Jama Masjid on January 26th, 1951, progress has been made in several areas including the Hifz programme. Many persons have become Hafiz (memorizer of the Holy Quran) at Jama Masjid Jamaat.



The current President of Jama Masjid Jamaat, Hafiz Abdul-Hai Kothdiwala, was the first person to complete memorizing the Holy Quran in Barbados. He became Hafiz in 1975 under the direction of Maulana Yusuf Pipriwala.



He led taraweeh during Ramadan that year at Jama Masjid along with Hafiz Ashraf Pipriwala. The first for someone who completed hifz locally. He was also the first Hafiz taught in Barbados to lead taraweeh overseas. He led taraweeh in 1977 in Trinidad.

Since then many huffaz from Jama Masjid have led Taraweeh prayers in Barbados, the Caribbean and other parts of the world.

BRIDGETOWN'S MAIN MOSQUE

Jama Masjid is the first and largest Mosque on the island, easily accessible in the capital city of Barbados, Bridgetown. Since its inception in 1951 many Muslim families have taken up residence in Kensington New Road and surrounding areas to be able to attend prayers daily.

It is an iconic structure that most Barbadians are aware of and visitors to the island would come to see. Muslim tourists arriving on cruise liners which dock in the Bridgetown Harbour, in walking distance, or long-stay Muslim visitors will be directed here to pray their Jumma and other prayers.

It is located in close proximity to the famous Kensington Oval where many local, regional and international cricket matches are played. It would not be surprising to see well-known Muslim cricketers praying at the Jama Masjid while they are in Barbados.

The Azan (call to prayer) has been sounded from loudspeakers since the 1980's for four out of the five daily prayers (the early morning (Fajr) Azan is not given over the loudspeaker). As the Azan echoes across the neighborhood it attracts attention. Muslims respond to the call to attend prayers while others have been drawn to the Masjid on hearing its melodic sound.

Over the years besides being a place of worship and learning for Muslims Jama Masjid has served as the venue for several events of national importance, visits, tours and programs related to the Muslim community of Barbados. The following pages give a glimpse into some of those occasions.





President and members of Jama Masjid prepare hampers for distribution to neighborhood during Covid pandemic.



BMA presentation of water-coolers to several schools at Jama Masjid in 2020. Minister of Health & Wellness and MP for Bridgetown delivered the address



High Comissioner of New Zealand Anton Ojala at Jama Masjid following the terrorists attacks on Mosques in New Zealand in 2019



Imam Aakil facilitates school visits to Jama Masjid

December 31, 2008, explosive device thrown into Jama Masjid. No injuries and slight damage to carpet.





50th Anniversary of Barbados Independence 2016, celebratory Trident comes to Jama Masjid and banner displayed



From left, Senator Reverend Dr David Durant, Bishop John Holder in conversation with Dr M.S. Nagdee, President of the Juma Mosque, Kensington New Road.

Bishop of Barbados John Holder with President of Jama Masjid Dr Nagdee in 2015 at meeting of Christian leaders and Muslim community.



Prime Minister Fruendel Stuart visits Jama Masjid in lead up to General Elections in 2013 to meet members of the Muslim community



Prime Minister Mia Mottley visits Jama Masjid ahead of General Elections in 2018 to meet members of the Muslim community



Commissioner of Police and BDF Chief of Staff meet members of the Muslim community at Jama Masjid in 2007 for Cricket World Cup



THE MEHRAB & THE TWO MYSTERIOUS OVAL-SHAPED HANGING OBJECTS

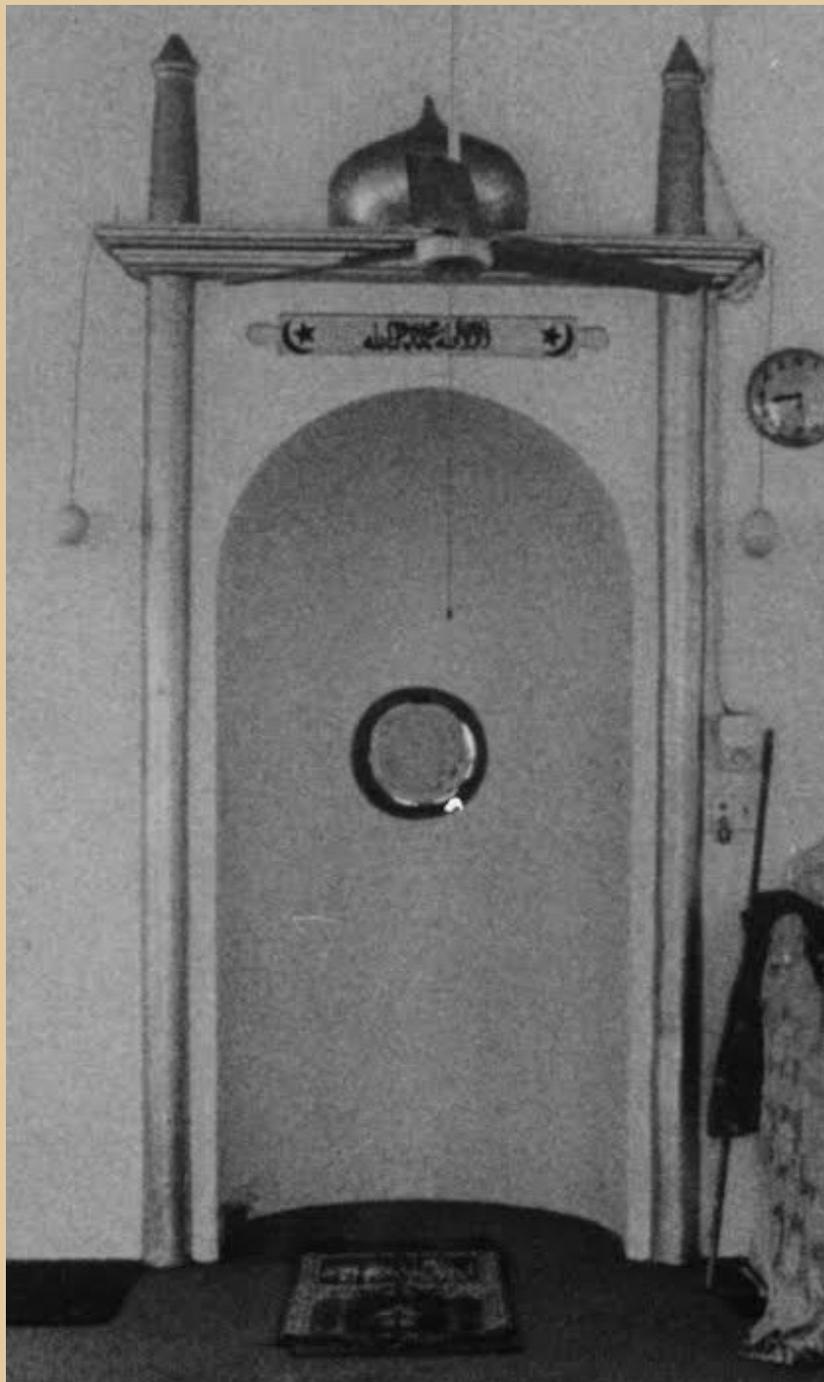
Have you ever noticed the two metal studs at either end of the ledge on the Mehrab at Jama Masjid?

Why are they there?

The earliest picture of the Mehrab shows two oval-shaped objects hanging from those metal studs. Hashim Degia confirms that when he was attending Madressa at Jama Masjid in the 1950's he saw them and was fascinated so he asked his ustadh what they were. He was told they were ostrich eggs. He observed that Arabic writing was painted on them with saffron. Others recall similarly.

Why they were hung there is not certain but research shows that it was a common practice in Turkish mosques to hang ostrich eggs to keep spiders, spiderwebs and other insects away. They were used in India as insect repellents and found in various parts of the Islamic world in mosques. The practice was also common across the eastern Mediterranean - where they can be found in churches and synagogues.

Where these two eggs came from and when and why they were removed is a mystery as no one alive today can say. They are not present in subsequent pictures of the Mehrab.



Acknowledgments

In conclusion, let me state that most of the early information relating to Jama Masjid was obtained from my interviews which I conducted with those elders who are now deceased. These persons are as follows: Musaji Daya, Hafiz Yusuf Samrodia, Suleman Degia, Mohammad Dokrat, Hafiz Ismail Kothdiwala, Sakina Kothdiwala, Dr. Shafee Nagdee, Mariam khala Piprawala and Mrs. Mariam Pandor. May Allah reward them with the highest abode in Paradise.

Let me also express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the following persons: Mrs. Sara Bhikoo, Mrs. Juleikha Bulbulia, Suleman Chothia, Hashim Degia, Ebrahim Mehter, Anwar Nana, Abdulhai Pandor, Abdul Samad Pandor, Hafiz Mohammad A.K Patel, Ebrahim Maji Patel, Ayub Piprawala, Suleman Piprawala, Maulana Yusuf Piprawala, Alima Fatima Gangat, Ismael Nakhuda, Suleiman Bulbulia, Firhaana Bulbulia and Haania Bulbulia.

This e-magazine is compiled from oral interviews, readers are invited to provide additional information that may have been overlooked for the benefit of our community.

May Allah reward everyone for their kindness. May Allah bless all brothers and sisters who have sacrificed and contributed to Jama Masjid Jamaat from 1951 to now.

I pray that Allah will forgive my shortcomings and accept this humble work.

Sabir Nakhuda 2021
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