

STRAIGHT PATH

Don't fear Islam and Muslims – says al-Sudais at Masjid-e-Tauheedul Islam in Blackburn

“We want to tell the world: Don't fear Islam and Muslims,” says Dr.

Dr. Mozammel Haque

you are travelling all the way from Makkah to open the mosque, “simply to be

with us. It is a source of immense happiness for us all.”
The Muslims of Blackburn were celebrating this occasion to mark the opening of the new Masjid, the Central Mosque of Blackburn, Masjid-e-Tauheedul Islam. They celebrated the opening of the Mosque a week earlier which Lord Patel coined as “our community” opening. While introducing the Imam of the Masjid al-Haram, Lord Patel said, “Here we have before us a unique opportunity for everyone to gain the spiritual light that is nearly extinguished in our lives, to strengthen the bond with our Creator and to re-establish the Masjid as the centre of our community and our lives.” Lord Patel said, “In 21st century Britain, the role of the Masjid is as important as it was in

“We want to tell the world: Don't fear Islam and Muslims,” emphasized the Imam of the Masjid al-Haram and added, “Islam came to protect the interests of humanity, prevent evils and build bridges with all communities. It offers a great message of mercy and tolerance.” Sheikh al-Sudais asked Muslims to learn from the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who used to visit his Jewish neighbour. “When the Prophet died his armour was kept with a Jew as a security,” he said, urging Muslims to establish good relations with non-Muslims. “This is the best way to attract them to Islam.”

Dr. Al-Sudais urged Muslims to cooperate with each other and to maintain good relations with non-Muslims. “We want to tell the world: Don't fear Islam and Muslims and don't get worried about the presence of Mosques because they advocate peace and tolerance even with non-Muslims,” he said. Sheikh Al-Sudais also told the Muslims living in the West to serve as ambassadors of their religion. “My advice to Muslims living in the West is to remain good models and good ambassadors of their religion, nation and values,” Sheikh Al-Sudais added.

The Imam of the Masjid-ul-Haram, Sheikh Al-Sudais said: “You should uphold the great Islamic values while dealing with Muslims as well as non-Muslims and should not engage in any corrupt or unjust practices.” He urged Muslims to be advocates of virtues, peace, safety and respect of law and order as well as to behave as constructive members of society and to refrain from any act that undermines stability. “You should be a positive and constructive factor in the community you live in and should not involve yourselves in activities that would undermine its security and stability,” the Saudi Press Agency quoted Al-Sudais as saying.

Dr. Al-Sudais reiterated that Islam advocates co-existence and establishing contacts with other civilisations and said Islam does not tolerate isolation, but it urges Muslims to become influential persons in society.

Dr. Al-Sudais also said that Islam does not advocate terrorism. Reciting the verses of the Qur'an, Sheikh Al-Sudais said that you must read Qur'an and practice it so that you would be better citizens automatically.

Lord Adam Patel of Blackburn
While welcoming and thanking the Imam of the Masjid al-Haram, Lord Adam Patel of Blackburn, the President of the Masjid-e-Tauheedul Islam, who has led the project, said,

“The time of our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).” Lord Patel also said, “At Masjid-e-Tauheedul Islam our purpose is to advance the Islamic faith through the provision of a wide range of spiritual, educational and social services enriched with Islamic values that fulfil the needs of our members and the wider community.”

“Our vision is to become a centre of excellence for Islamic learning and practice providing a beacon for both Muslims and other faith communities who wish to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of Islam – a place where one can experience and embrace the genuine beauty of our faith,” said Lord Patel. Addressing the Imam of the Masjid al-Haram, Lord Patel said, “Your voice is a calling of immense beauty and artistic excellence, guiding all of us towards the true Word of Allah and depicting the elevated majesty of the Haram. Your voice and Tilawat is an icon to hundreds of millions of Muslims across the globe; it is an oratory ambassador calling the whole of humanity towards the righteous path.”

Lord Patel also mentioned that the elegance and beauty of the recitation of the Qur'an by Sheikh Al-Sudais “has inspired a love of our

Holy Book in hundreds and millions of Muslims, young and old, around the world.”

“Millions of children have been introduced to the correct recitation of the Qur'an through the inspirational act of listening to your voice on cassettes and CDs,” mentioned Lord Patel. Speaking about his spiritual and moral leadership to the Ummah, Lord Patel mentioned, “At times of crises and despair for Muslims across the globe, you have provided the spiritual and moral leadership to the Ummah through the emotive Duaas from the Masjid al-Haram.”

“You have shown a love for the persecuted and oppressed, whether they are in Palestine or Iraq or Afghanistan... and this love has endeared you to the Ummah and provided great strength and comfort to all of our brothers and sisters who suffer today,” mentioned Lord Patel. Lord Patel also said, “Your moving voice and the verses of the Holy Qur'an soften the most hardened of hearts, stir the most resolute of souls and bring tears to the most barren of eyes; your recitation of the Word of the Almighty Allah illuminates the darkest of atmospheres, shatters the arrogance of the most pretentious and inspires divine blessings to the most undeserving of people.”

“We simply cannot repay our debt of gratitude to you,” saying this Lord Patel prayed to Almighty Allah to “reward your generous spirit, showers you with countless Mercies and elevates your status to the highest of levels on the Day of Judgement. Ameen.”

Background of the Masjid-e-



Tauheedul Islam

I have the privilege to interview Lord Patel about the background of the establishment of the Masjid-e-Tauheedul Islam in Blackburn. The Tauheedul Islam Mosque - five-storey building - is the biggest and largest Mosque in the whole of Lancashire and “most beautiful Mosque in the whole country,” said Lord Patel in an interview with me. The total cost for the building of the Mosque was 3.5 million pounds. Qatar's Royal family provided an initial 1.5 million donation for the basic construction of the Mosque, with the remainder of the funds generated from the Blackburn community.

The community had outgrown the much smaller mosque which was established at the same site in the 1960s. As well as being the largest in Lancashire, the new building is one of the biggest in the UK.

The total Muslim population of Blackburn at present is 35,000. There are more than 35, probably 40 Mosques and Madrasahs in Blackburn. But the Muslim community in the 60's was few in number, had little or no funds to feed and clothe their families. They could not think of establishing a centre for prayer for the community. But those days there are some very dedicated leaders and founders in the

Muslim community of Blackburn who had a sincere conscience and concern for the spiritual future of their own co-religionists. They struggled to establish their families and their homes.

Lord Patel told me, “People from the districts Barooj and Surat, Gujarat of India, started coming to UK in the 1956 and settled in Blackburn. It was a problem for them; they could not find a job; they could not speak English language. They had no money at all; so they were struggling for survival.”

“But after couple of years, they thought we had to have our families and they started bringing their families. In two areas, they bought terrace houses very cheaply. Wherever the Muslims go, Alhamdo lillah, by the Grace of Almighty, the first need is the Masjid and Madrasah. So they established Masjid and Madrasah for their children to learn religious education. They bought only one house and that was a Terrace house. In those days, there were not many families arrived from India or Pakistan or elsewhere. That was sufficient,” Lord Patel mentioned.

Lord Patel also said, “But when people kept coming they bought another adjoining house and converted into the mosque. Blackburn politicians were very kind; they kept giving permission to the terrace houses converted into mosque. We also bought another house in another area where some more people settled. But slowly and gradually the population became very very large.”

“In 1976 then John's School, it was a primary school, they had a big premises in our area. We negotiated with the Churches and Town people supported us converting it into a big mosque. We bought it in 1977 only in 19,000 pound sterling in those days. Even to raise those 19,000 pounds it was very very difficult,” said Lord Patel.

“The Founders of our community had the vision and forbearance to endeavour to establish a Masjid at the heart of our community,” said Lord Patel to me in an interview.

Lord Patel also added, “By the grace of Almighty Allah, and the prayers of many distinguished scholars and well-wishers, presently within the Masjid-e-Tauheedul Islam campus, we also manage one of the largest Madrasahs in the UK, and the only government funded Islamic Girls High School in the North West of England.”

Tauheedul Islam Girls School

The Masjid al-Tauheedul Islam campus has facilities for the Islamic education of children and it is next to Tauheedul Islam Girls High School.

The Head Imam of Masjidul Haram, Sheikh Al-Sudais, later visited the Tauheedul Islam Girls High School, which was recently awarded Voluntary Aided status and became the first government-funded Islamic school in the region. Imam Al-Sudais urged Muslim men to take care of their women and commended the school authorities for their efforts to provide proper Islamic education to their children.

Speaking about this school, Lord Patel told me, “Tauheedul Islam Girls School is the second best school in the country. In Lancashire it is the best. It is grant-aided public school, not only that, there are no admission criteria, there is no test whatsoever. Our parents, our teachers, our head-teachers and students are very very eager to acquire knowledge. If some girls are weak and shy in science, they used to come to teachers in the evenings or weekends. If girls are weak in English language, they used to come to learn English language in the Evenings and weekends and the teachers were giving them free coaching. That's why it is one of the best in the whole country. Even the Ofstead Inspectors recognised it, wrote it in their report and they gave the excellent report about it.”

A female student described Sheikh Al-Sudais as a model for hundreds of millions of people by virtue of leading prayers at Masjid al-Haram and reciting the Holy Qur'an as well as serving charitable societies.