

# Treasures of Dharga Town



Published by  
Najeeb Hajjar Education Center

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Dharga Town

## **Treasures of Dharga Town**

**(Brief historical information on the Religious, Social and Educational Institutions of Dharga Town)**

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## FOREWORD

'History is a cyclic poem, written by time upon the memories of men.'

The history of a town is always intermingled with the history of the places of worship, educational institutions and the pioneering leaders who had strived to put the name of the town in the physical map of the country in which they lived. They had created indelible landmarks by their services in the long period of time. Therefore they are rightly called the founding fathers of the town.

Al-Haj M. Najeeb Bin Amir Aalim has been taking a genuine interest in developing the religious institutions in our town. His remarkable contribution in the rebuilding and renovation of the Meera Jumma Masjid and the Muayyidul Islam Arabic College is noteworthy in the annals of our town. Besides his personal initiative in establishing the Najeeeb Hajiar Education Center (NEC) in his own land at Lotus Road is a laudable task which will go a long way to inculcate the fundamentals of Islam to the younger generation. The imposing building of the Center is dedicated to the people of this town.

Najeeb Hajiar has made an impeccable arrangement to provide conveyance for the Janazas from the hospitals to their respective homes. To provide physical activities for the young ones, he has put up Children's park at the premises of Al-Hambra Maha Vidyalaya. Najeeb Hajiar played a remarkable role in completing the building work of the Masjid Ar-Rahman in Adikarigoda. His gracious assistance was extended to the Taqwa Mosque at Welipitiya as well.

When Alhaj Safuwath and myself went to Al-Ayn in the United Arab Emirates to convey our gratitude to Ash-Sheikh Ahamed Khalifa Al- Suwaidi and invite the Sheikh for the opening ceremony of the new building of the Meera Masjid, We found

Haji Najeeb had healthy rapport with the sheikh who respected him a sense of brotherhood.

To enumerate Najeeb Hajiar's devoted services to the community it could be mentioned that the Bilal Masjid, at river side in Haji Lane in Dhargha Town, Masjidun Nabawi in Panapitiya in the Galle district, the Zaviya building in Kalutara, Madrasathul Musthafaviyya in Galle and a building for the orphanage in Vavuniya. to our notice. All these are edifices speak a lot about his benevolence.

Al-Haj Najeeb bin Ameer Alim has a patriotic sense of affection to his place of birth. May Almighty Allah shower him and his family with long life, good health, and unending happiness.

Thanking You,

M.M. Nizam Mashoor

## PREFACE

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem.

All praise is due to Allah, the Creator and Nourisher of mankind. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon His final Messenger Rasool Kareem Muhammad (Sal). In many places in the Holy Quran, Allah describes in detail, the histories of Prophet Adam and several other important Prophets and this has been done for the purpose of providing lessons to mankind. Similarly, through the Ahadith, we also learn several lessons and obtain the necessary guidance to lead our lives successfully through the life of our beloved Prophet Rasool Kareem Muhammad (Sal) and that of his loving companions who followed his footsteps.

Likewise, I felt the need to write about Dharga Town wherein I was born and bred - the place that provided me with knowledge and several experiences, regarding the institutions that provided religious and social services, and about the noble people who in the past, strived tirelessly for the town, as well as regarding those who are still striving hard to uplift and improve our lives today. I felt the need for these historical facts to be authentically collected, properly organized and duly published and it is this decision of mine that has taken the form of this book.

Dharga Town comprises several religious and social institutions that are boast-worthy at a National level. However, no data of such institutions has been accurately recorded. Therefore, one of the main purposes of this book is to attempt to rectify this shortcoming. All the information contained within this book has been collected and written in an organized manner by the editor,

Al-Haj Thassim Mohammed Imtiaz who is also an experienced writer who has done his best amidst several hardships. I thank him wholeheartedly for his efforts. There could be omissions, incomplete information or a few other details that may have escaped his attention. If spotted, I kindly request our readers to inform N.E.C. which published the book as it will be beneficial for future efforts of this nature.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Al-Haj M.M. Nizam Mashoor, Al-Haj Moulvi M.R.M. Silmy, Al-Haj Y.I.M. Hafiz and Al-Haj T.M. Safaa for giving me the necessary advice and guidance and for having assisted me in various ways for the production and publication of this book. Allah May ó approve of and accept our good intentions and our deeds, Aameen.

Jazakallah khairan.

Muhammad Najeeb bin Ameer Aalim

## **1. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO DHARGA TOWN**

Dharga Town is a beautiful town, densely populated by Muslims, situated in the Beruwela electorate of the Kalutara district in the Western province of Sri Lanka. 40% of the Muslims of the Beruwela electorate live in Dharga Town. It is located pretty much at the sea level with the Bentota river at its southern boundary. The fascinating hilly areas of Meeripenna, Adigarigoda, and Meenachchikanda are extremely beautiful sights. There are several mosques in Dharga Town that are centuries old and every time we witness the sights of the Grand Mosque, the Seenawatta Mosque, the Meera Mosque, the Wellipitiya Mosque, the Adirigoda Mosque, and the Meeripenna Mosque, we experience nothing but joy.

According to historical records, the Arabs had settled down in the coastal areas of Dharga Town in the 17th and 18th centuries. Although there were only a few families living at Dharga Town back then, it is learnt that many Muslim families had lived alongside the Sinhalese people in the adjoining villages of Aluthgama, Moragalla, and Kottapitiya. It was after the mosques were built that these Muslims began migrating towards the centre of Dharga Town.

Before Sri Lanka gained independence the population of Dharga Town stood at around 5000 people. Their homes were built in the middle of huge gardens with Coconut, Jack, Breadfruit, Mango and Papaya trees which added colour and beauty to the village. The banks of the river were a special place for the people.

The womenfolk made rope and wove Cajan to make a living. Some men engaged in fishing while some others went out to areas where the Sinhalese people lived to conduct their textile businesses. Several families prospered once their men ventured into outstations and opened textile shops. Those who took an interest in educational activities also progressed, producing scholars and doctors as well.

The year 1896 witnessed the founding of the first school in Dharga Town, the present day Alhambra School. Around 125 years ago there were no schools but only Masjids, Zaviyas, and Thakkiyas. History records that despite this inadequacy, there existed several skillful and knowledgeable people who excelled in various fields and spread the fragrance of their knowledge and skills among others.

Times have changed our environment. What the younger generation witness today is a densely populated and congested Dharga Town with big buildings and signs of development all around. This book is an illustration of the generous people and their magnanimity that paved the way for this development that is seen today.

## **2. MUHAIYIDEEN MASJID, THE GRAND MOSQUE OF DHARGA TOWN**

The Muhaiyideen Masjid, commonly referred to as the “Periyapalli”(Grand Mosque) is a revered place that has a captivating effect in the hearts of the Muslims. The rich history of Dharga Town is highlighted by this mosque. For those who travel from Galle and Colombo towards Aluthgama, the sight of this masjid signals the beginning of Dharga Town, and a sense of serenity and beauty is felt in this place.

Although there is no evidence to prove the identity of the founder of the mosque, it is not difficult for anyone to guess its antiquity through its appearance before 1972. Evidence available for the origin of the mosque is based on the information provided by the villagers who gathered it from their ancestors. It is said that an Arab called Jamaldeen who settled down in Beruwela with his family was the first to construct this mosque.

The history of this mosque is also described in the book called "Dharga Town" written by Marhoom Al-Haj I.L.M. Shuaib in 2005. He makes mention of the notes that were in the possession of Khateeb Omar Lebbe of Dharga Town, where he had listed in chronological order the names of all the khatheeb who had delivered Jummah sermons before him. Therefore, the writer states that this mosque has a history longer than what is generally thought to be.

It is learned that Munna Abdul Karnain Baghdadi was the first Khatheeb of Dharga Town which was also popularly known as "Alkaamum". A few others too functioned as Khatheeb during that period with Baghdadi. Baghdadi who was a descendent of Caliph Abu Bakr RA had come to Ceylon in the Hijri year 556 (AD 1188). His son Khatheeb Badurdeen Baghdadi and later, other descendants named Khatheeb Samsudeen Baghdadi, Khatheeb Munna Hassan, Khatheeb Munna Hussain, Khaheeb Koja Mohammed and Khatheeb Hassan Lebbe had delivered Jummah Sermons here. The book Dharga Town mentions that Khatheeb Hassan Lebbe was buried in Galle fort.

He had four sons, and of them it was Meera Hassan Lebbe who followed his father as Khatheeb of the Grand Mosque. Next came Khatheeb Omar Lebbe and Khatheeb Hassan Meera Lebbe. During the time of Khatheeb Omar Lebbe, other members of the "Lebbe" family too started to deliver to Jummah sermons. Among them, Khatheeb Mahallam Muhammad Lebbe's son

Wadood Aalim and later Syed Ahamed Aalim, Abdul Razzak Aalim and Khateeb Omar Lebbe's son Abdul Azeez Lebbe carried out this function in the mosque.

In his book Dharga Town, the writer states that the history of the mosque would have started during the period between the 14th or 15th centuries. But according to some other information provided in this book there is a possibility to believe that it could date back to some 800 years.

As the first mosque of Dharga Town, Muhaiyideen Masjid had the first Madrasah and a burial ground of its own. After the Meera Juma masjid or the "Theruwapalli's" construction its administration too, was taken under the wing of the Grand Mosque. We are happy to note that this practice continues even today.

Around 100 years ago, the right wing of the grand Mosque and its buildings on the left side were built with the help of Marhoom Mohamed Lebbe also known as "Karuwakaatu Mudalali" from Seenawatte. The Muaiyidul Islam Arabic College was conducted in the building on the left side until it was renovated with an upper floor.

The present older generations who are in their sixties and above will be able to remember how old the Grand Mosque appeared before the reconstruction began in 1972. Economic pressures delayed construction work. However, in 1974, the work was completed, and it was a great achievement indeed! Many well-wishers contributed towards the reconstruction of the mosque.

Marhoom A.R. Mohamed, AlHaj M.A. Fatha and Marhoom Jamaldeen Marikkar were the members of the administrative committee back then. The mosque in its storied building up a new and beautiful appearance. One Friday before Jummah prayers in 1974, the mosque was declared open by Marhoom

AlHaj M.I.M. Naleem in in the presence of a large and distinguished gathering.

Major contributions towards the building fund were made by Al-Haj M.I.M. Naleem, Dr. M.Z.M. Shafie and Al-Haj A.H.M. Siddeek. Others who could afford it too had made their contributions.

The practice of reciting Muhiyideen Mowlood and Mihraj Mowlood in the month of Rajab is continued today and feasts are also held here.

After 1974, no changes were made to the building of this mosque. However, some shortcomings in the washroom and ablution areas were observed by Mohammed Najeeb Hajiar and after discussing with the committee members of the mosque, these places were modernized and provided with complete facilities.

### **3. AL-HILRIYA JUMMA MASJID**

Al-Hilriya Jummah Masjid situated at Seenawatte, Aluthgama is closely connected to Dharga Town. It was only after the canal was dug, that this mosque had been separated from Dharga Town. It is among the oldest mosques in Sri Lanka. This is also one of the oldest mosques in the Dharga Town area.

During the month of Sha'ban, Mowlood is recited in the name of Hilr (Alaihissalam). Badr Mowlood is also recited, and feasts are held annually, a practice that has continued for the past 370 years.

This Jummah mosque can accommodate around a thousand people. A burial ground, a Madrasa and a nursery school are also available.

There are an estimated 300 Muslim families living around this mosque. A few decades ago, Mr.s M.L.M. Junaid, M.L.A.

Wadood, Al-Haj A.W.M. Rafeek, A.W.M. Azwar (teacher) and Z.A.M. Ramees functioned as members of the Board of trustees with several others holding this responsibility later. Presently, with Al-Haj M.I.M. Riyas as the head, Mr.s M.S.M. Muhjis, M.A.M. Afrath and Mohamed Zain are members of this Board.

The Al-Hilriya mosque underwent several renovations from time to time. The mosque had been reconstructed as an attractive double-storeyed building recently, with the help of Al-Haj Marjan Faleel of China Fort, Beruwela, Al-Haj Wazeer A.Caffoor, and Al-Haj Riswi A. Caffoor. The then President of Sri Lanka graced the occasion when the new mosque building was declared open in 2012.

#### **4. MEERA JUMMAH MASJID OR 'THERUWUPPALLI'**

'Theruwuppalli' occupies the second place among the mosques in the history of Dharga Town. Situated on Zaviya Road, it is at about half a kilometer from the Grand Mosque. The name 'Meera Jumma Masjid' had been given to the mosque after several centuries of its construction. It is learnt that on the 28th of June 1819 (5th day of Ramadhan), this masjid had been constructed into a permanent building. In 2001, when reconstruction works were in progress, a plank with the above-mentioned dates imprinted upon it was found. This rare find is still preserved in the mosque and will serve as a monumental symbol for future generations.

There are two historical notes regarding the construction of this mosque. While one indicates that it had been constructed 300 years after the construction of the Grand Mosque, the other indicates it to be after 150 years. The location of the mosque too is noteworthy as it is the only mosque which is located close to

the center of Dharga Town while the other mosques that are a several centuries old are situated on the border areas of Dharga Town.

Janazahs of the town were being buried in the burial grounds of the Grand Mosque for several years. Burial rites began to take place in 'Theruwuppalli' after 200 years of its construction while in other places, burials had taken place within the last 100 years only.

According to historical evidence, this mosque had existed for a long time in the form of a Cadjan-thatched structure. Owing to this, Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib, the author of the historical book 'Dharga Town' published in 2005, states that this mosque could be at least 300 years old.

During the lifetime of Marhoom Wadood Aalim, Mowlood was recited in the name of Shahul Hameed Meera Sahib Waliullah in the month of Rabi'ul Aakhir and this practice continued in the mosque.

Although the construction of the mosque had been completed in 1850 with the untiring efforts of the 'Jamaath', it was not without its inadequacies. Therefore, during the period between 1902-1906, the mosque had to be renovated again. Proctor Thaha's father Mr. Ahamed Abdullah and Dr. A.A.M. Naseer's grandfather Mr. Ismail Lebbe had contributed greatly towards the renovation.

With the passage of time, the inadequacy of the mosque to accommodate the growing population was felt, especially during Jummah and Eid prayers due to which, in 1981 after a long interval of time, another extension to the mosque took place. This was implemented in three stages. Both the wings and the rear of the masjid were extended. The Jamaath members also cooperated with the then members of the Board of trustees of both mosques, Mr. A.R. Mohamed, Hajees M.A. Fathah, A.C.M.

Abdul Cader, H. Alavi Ismail, Dr. M.Z.M. Shafie, A.A.M. Thaha and advocate A.M. Hamza, in these construction efforts.

The next extension to the mosque took place in 1991. A young group in the area had highlighted the necessity to extend the main entrance to the mosque. Al-Haj M.A. Fathah, the chief of the Board of trustees at the time accepted this proposal. The group laid the foundation themselves and completed the work within a few months' time. Although the project began with the Rs.25,000 contribution of the group, several others offered their contributions later on. Many small traders too donated from as little as Rs.5 to Rs.10 on a daily basis until the work had been completed.

The year 1996 was an important one in the recent history of 'Theruwuppalli' as it was the year in which the reconstruction of the mosque as a large and storeyed building for the future generations was planned.

It all began one evening when Najeeb hajiar was in the mosque for prayers. He was approached by his brother Haji Faiz and Haji Hareez Issadeen with a special request to facilitate obtaining funds to cover the area of the 'Mimbar' with a ceiling. When highlighted that a ceiling over the 'mimbar' would keep the floor tidy, he agreed immediately stating that he could afford it himself as the cost wouldn't go beyond one hundred thousand rupees. After some time, he put forth the idea that it would be better if the entire building could be reconstructed and this suggestion made everyone overjoyed.

Back in the U.A.E where he works, with prayers and trust in Allah, Hajiar approached the Sheik he had in mind for this purpose. Letters of appeal from the distinguished people of Dharga Town was also handed over.

Although help didn't arrive immediately, Hajiar's trust in Allah's will had him waiting with determination. The much-awaited day did arrive eventually at a function in the house of the said donor in 2001. The 'Theruwuppalli' matter was submitted again for his consideration, and it was then that the generous donor had said 'your request is kabool' (accepted). Najeeb Hajiar says he immediately thanked Allah for the magnanimity of the donor.

When Najeeb Hajiar returned to Sri Lanka, the good news regarding the provision of funds to construct 'theruwuppalli' into a two-storeyed building was given publicity after Jummah prayers on the 19th of October 2001. After Maghrib prayers on the very next day, the 20th of October 2001, the administrative committee members Haji Maza Aalim, haji I.L.M. Shuaib, Haji Dr. A.M.M. Iqbal, Haji Shajahan Fatha, Haji M.M. Nizam and Haji (Engineer) Amjah and some other 11 Jamaathh members held a meeting with Hajiar. At this meeting, Hajis Y.I.M. Hareez, M.M. Safwath and M.S.M. Faslan were elected to the construction committee. The young members of the Mahalla consented to provide their services voluntarily and several other important decisions were made.

The following week i.e. on the 26th of October 2001 after Jummah prayers, the foundation was laid to construct the 'Theruwuppalli' as a two-storeyed new building. On the request of the mosque administration and the Jamaathh, Najeeb Hajiar laid the foundation in the presence of a large gathering of Jamaathh members.

Construction work of the mosque was carried out rapidly with the opening ceremony planned to be held on the 8th of August 2003. Within a short period of 22 months, the spacious two-storeyed building of the mosque with its beautiful architectural displays was completed.

A member of the Board of Trustees, Haji M.M. Nizam and a mosque construction committee member Al-Haj M.M.M. Safwath, went to the U.A.E on 16th of July 2003 to hand over an invitation along with Najeeb Hajiar, to the great philanthropist who funded the construction of the mosque. The opening ceremony of the Theruwuppalli mosque held on the 08th of August 2003 was a memorable event for the people of Dharga Town. The 300-year old masjid while retaining its antiquity, now stood even more majestic in its new appearance with the construction of the upper floor.

A representative of the donor had arrived in Sri Lanka for the opening ceremony. Both Najeeb Hajiar and the special representative of the U.A.E donor declared the new mosque open before Jummah prayers that day. The distinguished guests were received at the entrance to the Grand Mosque and they were taken in a procession to the new mosque building.

The Deputy Ambassador of the U.A.E embassy and the Ambassador of Kuwait Ulamas, scholars, political leaders like Al-Haj Rauf Hakeem, Al-haj A.H.M. Fawzy, Al-haj Imthiaz Bakeer Markar, Al-haj M.S.M.Aslam and thousands of Jamaathh members participated in this ceremony. A grand lunch was provided to all participants after the Jumma preyers. This lunch showed that nearly 8000 people had gathered for the opening ceremony that day.

Al-Haj Maza Aalim gave the welcome address on behalf of the mosque administrative committee while Ash-Sheikh Hairul Bashar (Naleemi) translated the message of the philanthropist into Tamil. Najeeb Hajiar made a speech both in Tamil and Arabic and committee member AlHaj M.M. Nizam gave the vote of thanks on behalf of the Mosque management.

Within a short period of time after the opening of the mosque, the need to build a parapet wall on both sides enclosing the backyard was realized, and more land was required for this purpose. Member of the Board of trustees Al-Haj Shajahan Fathah fulfilled this need by purchasing three perches of the adjoining land and donating it to the mosque. Moreover, he also donated the rent obtained from five of his shops along the Main road to the mosque. Al-Haj I.L.M. Shafie also donated a small portion of his land for erecting the wall.

Later, a high wall encompassing the mosque, the burial ground and the other buildings belonging to the mosque was built with the efforts of Najeeb Hajiar by obtaining additional funds. The convenience of the fifteen families living behind the wall was taken into consideration prior to the construction of the walls. Before the construction of the wall, Najeeb Hajiar and the Board agreed that they could make their private routes to enter the masjid.

On the 16th of August 2013, construction works on the third floor of the mosque commenced. Najeeb Hajiar met the same philanthropist once again and managed to obtain the necessary funds. The work was completed at the beginning of 2014 and befittingly declared open by Najeeb Hajiar.

Certain criticisms were levelled at the construction of the third floor, but it is noteworthy to mention the role played by this very third floor during the 2014 disturbances at Dharga Town. The huge building of the mosque was very useful in accommodating more than 5000 people, especially to the women of the area who were housed on the 3rd floor which not only provided safety and care but also enabled women to perform their religious obligations.

Meera Masjid has almost all the features and facilities a mosque should have. The Mimbar while retaining its antique architecture had been extended using modern building techniques. The original door frames and doors on the two sides are still there without any alterations. The fact that the centuries old doors and doorframes have been preserved within the modern building is quite a sight to behold.

On the ground floor, a separate office room was allocated for the Jamaathh council established by the the administration of the two mosques a few decades ago. Further, the N.E.C has constructed a tent to to be used during the burial of Janazas and also a separate room for bathing and shrouding the Janazah if necessary.

Historical records show that more than half of the land where the mosque stands had been donated by Mr. Yoosuf Lebbe who was also called 'Isnapulla'. Those days the members of the board of trustees were called 'Mathicham. Mr. Sainul Abdeen, also called as 'Zain mama', Al-Haj C.M. Hamid Marikar, Moulavi Zainul Abdeen, Al-Haj I.L.M. Mahmood had been the Mathichams at Dharga Town.

Today, Al-Haj A.F.M. Shajahan and Al-Haj M.Z.M. Ifham function as the members of the administrative committee of both the Grand Mosque and the 'Theruwuppalli'.

## **5. MASJIDUR-RAHMAN AT ADIKARIGODA**

One of the mosques that can speak of having existed for over a century is Masjidur-Rahman at Adikarigoda. It is located on Yatodala Road, also called Marikkar Street, along the boundary of Dharga Town.

It is said that some Muslims from Malabar and Yemen who had settled down in Beruwala had later moved to these areas. A mosque had been built by them on a hill for prayers, which from time to time had undergone several renovations. The Jamaath together with the mosque's Board of Trustees began its reconstruction in 1990 which was completed in 1992.

According to another source of information, the mosque used to be in the old house of Cassim Lebbe Mesthiriyan and Idroos Lebbe Marikkar from 1901 to 1930, further stating that being the fourth oldest mosque in Dharga Town, it has a history of 120 years.

Moreover, it is said that Adikarigoda is the birthplace of the grandfather of Dr. M.C.M.Kaleel who was at the forefront of pre-independence National politics alongside Hon. D.S. Senanayake, Dr. T.B. Jaya and others. Dr. Kaleel's grandfather Thambi Lebbe Marikkar was from Adikarigoda and his father Muhamed Haji Marikkar was made a 'Vidhana' or a Grama Adigari during the British rule due to which the village had derived the name 'Adikarigoda'. This information came from Dr. Kaleel himself when the chief trustee of the mosque Mr. A.H.M. Anas met him to invite him for the opening ceremony in 1992. However, Dr. Kaleel could not attend the function due to unavoidable circumstances.

In 1972, Abdur Rahman Jiffry Mowlana from India laid the foundation stone for the mosque and the first Jummah prayer were conducted by Muhsin Hibshy Mowlana from Makkah. The present Adikarigoda mosque is an attractive two-storeyed building with a beautiful garden at the front. The renovation works of the mosque started by the Jamaath was later joined by Najeeb Hajiar, the son of Amir Aalim. He made an appeal to a donor known to him to complete the work of the two-storeyed structure. The mosque was declared open by Najeeb Hajiar on

Friday, the 9th of November 2018 before Jummah prayers. The ceremony was well attended by the ulamahs, scholars, and Jamaathh members and the mosque had been named as 'Masjidur-Rahman' in memory of Abdur Rahman Jiffry Moulana.

Mr. M.S.M. Munas, a member of the mosque's Board of Trustees who passed away in 2020 was a good friend of Najeeb Hajiar. In 1986, when he was employed in Abu Dhabi, a welfare association for Sri Lankans was functioning in Al-Ayn, Abu Dhabi. When Najeeb Hajiar was its leader, Mr. Munas was also an esteemed member of it, and they had helped in the renovation of the mosques at the time.

The members of the Board of Trustees back then were Al-Haj A.C.M. Hifal and Alhaj M.F.M. Niyas, while Mr. M.T.M. Zulfan, Alhaj M.A.M. Ajmal and Mr. M.S.M. Munas were the administrative members of the construction committee.

The present members of the Board of Trustees are Ash-Sheikh M.S.M. Nifraz (Mufthi), Al-Haj A.C.M.Hifaal, Mr. M.T.M.Zulfan, Mr. M.S.M. Imthiaz and Al-Haj M.A.M. Ajmal. All religious activities of the mosque are conducted according to the principles of 'AhlulSunnah-wal-Jamaath'.

The Masjidur-Rahman mosque can accommodate nearly 1500 people for congregational prayers. Jummah prayers are conducted here and there is also a separate section designated for women. A Quran madrasa for children, a library, Grama-Sevaka office, Public Health Inspector's Office and Samurdhi-Niladari's office are all housed in the adjoining buildings. The mosque also has its own burial ground that serves the area.

## **6. SHEIK MADHAR MASJID, WELIPITIYA**

Welipitiya is the most densely populated area of Dharga Town. When Dharga Town was divided into seven electoral wards, it had the greatest number of voters. The Sheikh Madhar Masjid is situated at the end of the Sheikh Madhar Road.

Being among the oldest mosques along the boundary of Dharga Town, it has evidence to speak of the history of Dharga Town. The mosque is around 200 years old while most other mosques in the border areas have existed for nearly a quarter or half a century only.

The land for this mosque had been donated by Marhoom Sainudeen Lebbe Marikkar and his wife Ismail Lebbe Fathima who are the paternal grandparents of Moulavi M.R.M. Silmy (Noori). The mosque was built in 1830 and renovated in 1915.

Since most people in the area belong to the Shadhuliya Thareeka, importance had been given to that Thareeka's activities. Until 1980, feasts had been held in the name of Sheikh Madhar Walliyullah.

Around fifty years ago, Mr. A.M.Naim Marikkar, Mr. I.L.M.Shamsudeen, and Mr. S.L.M.Mashhood had held the post of trustees. During their period too, the mosque had been expanded with the help of the people in the area.

After the mosque being registered with the Wakf Board in 1959, Mr. A.M. Naim Marikkar, Mr. A.W.M.Saifudeen, Mr. S.L.M. Mashhood , Mr. M.L.M. Thowfeek, and Mr. R.M. Haniffa had functioned as the members of the Board of Trustees.

The mosque was built as a double-storeyed building with the support of the Jamaath members during the trusteeship of Al-Haj M.S.M.Ansar, Mr. M.Naseer, Mr. M.Mahroof and Mr. M.Sally.

Sheikh Madhar Masjid is also a Jumm'ah mosque. There is a Quran madrasah, and they have their own burial grounds for Janazahs.

The present members of the Board of Trustees are Mr. A.B.M. Hasan Nowfal, Mr. M.S.M. Ansar, Mr. M.T.M. Hairul Bashar, Mr. M.S.M. Fouzul Ameer and Mr. M.K.M. Shiraz.

Every Wednesday until 1970, Sheikh Madhar Mowlood was recited at the mosque. Further, during his life time, Mr. Hassan Lebbe had continuously recited Haddad Rathib after Isha prayers.

## **7. MASJIDUL KURBATHUS SAAKIREEN, MEERIPENNE**

This mosque which has a history of more than a century was a Zaviya belonging to the Shadhuliya Thareeqa at the beginning. Similar to Masjidul Bilal on Haji Lane, this mosque too is located along the bank of the same river. There are Sinhala settlements little away from this mosque.

This was the third Zaviya in Dharga Town. Marhoom Moulavi Faleel Aalim's father Marhoom Uzman Lebbe Marikkar had been the Mukaddham of this Zaviya.

He was followed by Moulavi O.L.M. Faleel who belonged to the Shathuliya Thareeqa. When he was the Mukaddham of the Zaviya, Al-Haj A.H.M. Sideeqe and Dr. M.Z.M. Shafie were the trustees. They were followed by Moulavi Faleel, Mr. M.Buhary, Mr. M.Mowjood and Mr. M.Sirajudeen as trustees.

After the passing away of Faleel Aalim who was closely associated with the religious activities of the Meeripenne people for a long time, Haji A.C.M. Iqbal, Haji M.S.M. Rifkan, Haji M.S.M. Fazal Shafie, and Haji M.M.K. Anaam were elected to the Board

of Trustees. It was during their time that the Zaviya was reconstructed as a two-storeyed building and made it a beautiful mosque.

After that Jummah prayers were commenced and Muslims living along the Meeripenne Road, Sobalankanda Road and Military Road have been assembling here for their Jummah prayers. Recently, further extensions to the building have taken place due to the lack of space.

The building adjoining the mosque is being used to conduct Makthab classes and Hifl Quran classes.

When reconstruction works of the mosque was in progress in 1992, an important discovery was made. On the front door of the old mosque, the year 1873 was marked and thus it is clear that the Meeripenne mosque is almost 150 years old.

In 1951, Mr. Zain who was the maternal uncle of Al-Haj M.H.M.Sideek and Dr. M.Z.M. Shafie, along with Mr. Junaid had donated 10 perches of land to the mosque. Later, Dr. Shafie donated 10 perches of his land as well and Al-Haj Sideek also donated 40 perches of his land to this mosque.

As the mosque was originally a Zaviya, Mowlood is recited in the name of Imam Abul Hassan Shathuli and feasts are also held annually.

## **8. MASJIDUL DARUL HUDA**

This masjid is situated close to the Dharga Town Zahira College. It is a splendid double-storeyed building that can accommodate around 1500 people. Before it became a full fledged mosque in 1985, it was in the shape of a shed made of corrugated sheets. However, prayers were conducted regularly, regardless of the

inadequacies. Those who took the steps to reconstruct it can be said to have taken great pains to make the mosque what it is today.

The new building of the mosque was declared open in 1990. Since then, along with Da'wah activities, social services were also carried out. Collection and distribution of Zakath is done here. Further, aids are given through the 'Baithul-Maal' Fund. Combined 'Ulhiya' is also given by the management.

In addition to Jummah prayers, both Eid prayers are conducted on the frontyard of this mosque. Qur'an classes are held for children and weekly Qur'an lectures are held for both adult males and females. Monthly Tharbiya activities are also conducted in this Mosque.

## **9. AL-MASJIDUL FATHAH**

Al-Masjidul Fathah is situated at a place called 'Aanaikulam' on Lotus Road. The weekly Mahallah Gasthu held in the Grand Mosque is for the Jeelani Road and Lotus Road residences. The Jamaathh members went up to the ends of these roads for da'wah activities. at that time the roads were not properly maintained. The rainy season also brought several hardships for the people. It was then that the idea of building a mosque arose and Marhoom A.H.M. Hussain who lived close to the mosque took a keen interest in this matter.

During this time, some Jamaathh members began to look for land to build a mosque. It was found that Marhoom Fassy Sir, who lived on Hajiar Road owned a plot of land at 'Aanaikulam'. He was the father of Ms. M.F.F.Fasliya, the present principal of Al-Hamra Maha Vidyalaya. A three-member group met Fassy sir regarding this matter and upon consulting his family members,

he decided to donate the land to build the mosque. However, the group paid him for half its worth. This incident took place in July 1991 and then began the construction of the AlMasjidul Fathah mosque. Al-Haj A.C.M. Iqbal donated the money for purchasing the land. Marhoom Muhsin Marikkar who lived on the Main Road donated the other plot of land adjoining the former one. As it was a very shallow place, filling and levelling the land was a tedious task. Mr. M.H.M. Nizar carried out a great service levelling the place and he was joined by Marhoom M.M.M. Madhani.

This mosque has a very humble beginning. In 1991, the Jamaah that goes on foot for Da'wah work visited Dharga Town. They put up a tent on 'Aanaikulam' land and conducted all their religious activities for two days and the neighbors helped them in various ways. When they left the place on the third day, Al-Haj M.M.M. Nisfahan (Son Ismail) built a shed there and with the conducting of the Dhuhr prayers, it became the Masjid.

Later, the Jamaah members collected poles, timber and other building materials erecting a temporary masjid out of their enthusiasm. The roof was thatched with Cadjan, the floor was cemented, and a well was dug in the compound. A small fee was collected from the members for maintenance. The contribution made by Al-Haj I.LM. Nawas was tremendous and he worked for the development of this mosque until his last breath. The toilets, Pesh-Imam's room and electricity supply were obtained from the money gained by selling 'Kiduhu'. Marhoom M.A.M. Nizar was one of the people who worked hard to make this dream of building the masjid a reality.

With the increase in population, problems emerged whereby more space for prayers, a Qur'an madrasah for children etc became necessary. An executive committee under the leadership of Al-Haj A.C.M.Iqbal was appointed to look into these matters.

The others in the committee were Al-Haj M.A.M.Fowzer, Alhaj Ahamed Rila, Alhaj M.S.M. Suhair, Marhoom M.A.M. Nizar, Alhaj M.M.M. Misba and Marhoom Alhaj Ansar (Mukthar Master). Alhaj Ansar was also the Pesh-Imam of the mosque for some time.

A foundation of 40'x25' was laid. Until the building was constructed, Mr. M.A.M.Fowzer helped in the conducting of prayers by erecting a temporary shed on the adjacent land that belonged to him. In 1994, when the slab for first floor had been laid, the ground floor of the mosque was used for prayers. At this time, Al-Haj A.C.M.Iqbal and Alhaj M.A.M.Fowzer bought the adjoining land belonging to Mr. Muhsin Marikkar and donated it to the mosque.

The construction of the mosque took place in stages. In 1999, the filling and levelling of the shallow areas of the 'Aanaikulam' was carried out. The land was then used for the mosque. Although the upper floor had been constructed, much had to be done. Gradually, with the help of the Jamaath members most of the work could be done. Al-Haj Faizal Sadique of Lotus Road, Alhaj Shajahan Fathah, Alhaj M.I.R.S.Zailani (Yaseen Hajiar), Alhaj Luthufur Rahman (Colombo), Alhaj Mohammed Jiffry (Mallikas) have contributed greatly towards the construction of this mosque.

Several children are benefited by the Quran Madrasa conducted here. There are around 350 to 400 families living here at present. Religious activities are regularly held in the mosque and 'Kanji' (porridge) is supplied during the month of Ramazan. Al-Haj M.S.M.Zuhair has been carrying out the administration of the masjid since its inception and even today, the board of trustees function under his leadership. May Allah bestow his blessings upon all those who worked for this mosque, in this world and the hereafter.

## 10. MASJIDUN-NOOR

Masjidun-Noor is located close to Masjidur-Rahman on Yatadola Street in Dharga Town. The land on which the mosque is built was originally belonged to the Dharga Town Pradeshiya Sabha Sub-office and was obtained legally with the efforts of some gentlemen. The Jamiyahul Ulamas' assistance was also sought for this purpose.

The mosque's new building with the capacity to accommodate 250 people was declared open on the 05th of May 1988. Muslims and Sinhalese in this area live in close proximity to one other, although most Muslims live in Nasim Mawatha, near the mosque. A Qur'an madrasa is also conducted here for the children of the area.

During the disturbances in June 2014, the mosque was damaged badly, and copies of the Qur'an and many valuable books were burnt. This was an unforgettablely sad day in the lives of the people that left them extremely hurt. The mosque was restored again with the assistance of the SDF Organization of Jamiyahul Ulama and with government funds.

Al-Haj M.S.M. Zarook, the secretary, stated that 'There are more facilities to be provided in the mosque'. The chief trustee is Al-Haj A.C.M. Sahardeen, a retired principal and Al-Haj M.M. Rifkan functions as his deputy. Al-Haj A.L.A. Aroos, also a retired teacher is the treasurer and Al-Haj M.Jiffry is also a member of the Board of Trustees.

Al-Haj M.S.M. Shums, Al-Haj M.F.M. Hussain, Al-Haj M.S.M. Jiffry, Mr. S.M. Kamil Asmy, Mr. M.N.M. Risni, and Mr. A.R.M. Riyas had functioned as members of the Board at the beginning.

On 01.10.2020, an appeal was made to Najeeb Hajiar by the Board of Trustees of the mosque regarding the completion and

restoration of certain areas of the mosque. A prayer room for females, a room for the Qur'an madrasa, the restoration of the toilet and ablution areas and the completion of the incomplete building with a double-storey had been required. Najeeb Hajiar was able to fulfil these needs of the Jamaath with the assistance he obtained from a foreign philanthropist and the task was completed on the 04th of April 2021.

## **11. MASJIDUL BAAKIYATHUS-SAALIHATH**

This mosque is situated close to the intersection of Fathah Hajiar Mawatha (New Road) and Isnapulla Road. There are some settlements close to the mosque and in the eighties, when AlHaj M.A. Bakeer Markar was the speaker of the House of Representatives, some houses were built with the aid of the government. This 30 perches of land was bought for Rs.500 from Al-Haj I.L.M. Mahmood, by the Aluthgama Weediya Muslims Educational and Social Welfare Association in 1940.

Some of the important members of the above Association were Messers Meeran Lebbe Jainudeen Marikkar, Ismail Lebbe Markkar, A.R.Mohamed, and I.L.M. Mashoor. A few years before Sri Lanka gained independence, they attempted to build a government hospital on this land. However, when officials from the Ministry of Health inspected the land, they found that it to be inadequate for a hospital due to which the project was shifted to Kurunduwatta in Kadiyawatta.

After the completion of the housing scheme started by Al-Haj Bakeer Markar in 1982, a generator to supply electricity was fitted in the remaining space of the land. At the same time, some others were interested in building a Zaviya on the land. Marhoom

A.W.M. Munawwar (Japan House) and Marhoom M.I.M. Azhar took the initiative in this matter. After legal approval for the Zaviya was obtained, the generator was removed, and the foundation for the Zavia was laid by Sheikh Fassy in 1982. However, the construction work got delayed. Then, with the assistance of the 'Thablibh Jamaath', a wooden building was put up for conducting prayers. Later a simple mosque was built with bricks in 1985, with the assistance of many other well-wishers of the area.

Due to the untiring efforts of the Jamaathh people, the mosque took the shape of a double-storeyed building that could accommodate 600 people. The building project was funded by Al-Haj M.I.R.S. Zailani (Yaseen Hadji), Al-Haj M.S.M. Fowzan and Mr. M.S.M. Sharik. During the Covid-19 outbreak, Jummah prayers were conducted whilst maintaining sanitary measures and taking necessary precautions. Qur'an classes for children are also conducted.

There is a special office in the mosque for the collection of Zakaat and for the Baithul-Maal fund. Underprivileged people around the area are taken care of through these projects. The present Chief Trustee of the mosque is Al-Haj T.M. Niyas and the other members are Al-Haj M.I.M. Fahim, Al-Haj M.S.M. Fowzan, Al-Haj M.S.M. Nizam, Al-Haj M.J.M. Imtiaz, Mr. Shamil Abbas and Mr. M.A.M. Rifkan (teacher). Mr. M.N.M. Navavi, AlHaj M.I.M. Fahim, and Mr. Thahir Fassy are closely connected with the mosque during its initial stages.

## **12. MASJIDUL FALAH**

Masjidul Falah, popularly known as 'Kannadippalli' due to its front doors being made of glass, is situated at the entrance to Sheikh Fassy Mawatha.

The original land for building this Masjid had been donated by four people, Mr. Nasmin Mowsoon, Mr. Thaji Mafahir's mother Mrs. Mashooda, the mother of Marhoom Shamsul Mackeen brothers Mrs. Ummu Naseema and Mr. Muhsin Lebbe whose house was behind the mosque. Later, Mr. Rizvy Hajiar also bought a plot of land and donated it to the Masjid.

The foundation for the two-storeyed mosque was laid in 1991 and the constructions was completed in 1992. Most of its expenses were met by the Jamaaht people themselves, especially by those who were employed abroad.

According to the constitution of the mosque, all activities of the mosque should strictly adhere to the rules and regulations of the Shafi'e 'Madhab' (School of Thought). Activities by any other groups are not permitted inside the mosque. All the expenses related to the administration of the mosque are met by that Jamaathh people themselves. The mosque can accommodate around 200 people and it also has a Qur'an Madrasa for the children.

Al-Haj M.M. Faiz and Al-Haj Sanoosi Marikkar worked hard towards the development of the masjid at the initial stages. At present, Mr. Silmy Sanoosi, Al-Haj Muheeth, Mr. Nowfer, Mr. Fauz (teacher), Al-Haj Faaris, Mr. Rifky Sanoosi and Mr. Badurdeen Rasmy are the members in the Board of Trustees.

Moulavi Alhaj Mohamed Silmy functioned as the Chief Trustee of the mosque until 2020.

### **13. SOBALANKANDA MASJIDUL FALAH**

This mosque is located at around 25 meters from Ishaathul Islam Child Development Centre. The history of the mosque goes back by a few decades. There was vacant plot of government (crown)

land in this area where fifty families were living. Marhoom Mr. Haneef (teacher) and some others from Meeripenne made an appeal to the Kalutara district M.P. Imtiaz Bakeer Markar back then to distribute it to many landless people living there. In 1990, with the approval of the government the land was distributed to around 20 families.

There was a vacant plot of land next to the nursery school and it was there that Masjidul Falah was built. The people of the area contributed towards the expenses of the building. The plan for the construction was made in 1992. Mr. Ansaf Haji, Mr. M. Riswan, Mr. S.A. Alavi Moulana (poo), Mr. Salman Haji, Mr. Ahamed Hussain, and Mr. O.W.M. Mowthoон contributed to the building efforts.

In 1999, Mr. S.A. Alavi Moulana, Al-Haj A.C.M. Nawas, Mr. M.Anzar, and a few others obtained assistance from a funding institution and were able to complete the building in a beautiful way. It was declared open in 1999.

Five daily prayers are conducted at the Masjid. The management of the mosque depends mainly on the cooperation of its Jamaath members. Although there is no official board of trustees for the mosque, with the cooperation of the Jamaath group, Mr. M.S.M. Saffran, Mr. M.N.M. Safran, Mr. M.T.I.M. Hussain, Mr. M.T.M. Fayas, Mr. M.A.M. Nasry Hassan and Mr. M.F.M. Fayas administer the affairs of the mosque.

## **14. MASJIDUTH THAKWA**

The growing population in Welipitiya, Dharga Town, made it necessary for a mosque to be built on Sheikh Madhar Lane. Several people of the area began to take an interest in this matter, but it was an elderly gentleman called Mr. Musthafa and his family

who took the initiative to build the mosque there. Mr. Musthafa's family purchased 10 perches of land that belonged to Mr. Hashim (Master) who sold it for a small price. Mr. Musthafa's family built a small mosque on their own and named it as Masjiduth Thakwa which was declared open on the 23rd of January 1993.

The founder members of the Board of Trustees were Marhoom Hashim Master, Mr. Gazzali Haji, Mr. Fahim Hadji, Mr. Nawas Hadji, Marhoom Mr. M.M. Naseer and Mr. M.S.M. Naseer.

This mosque was renovated in 1999 during the trusteeship of Al-Haj Gazzali, Al-Haj Hasan Nowfal, Al-Haj Ismath and Al-Haj Subuki. After an interval of four years another renovation took place since more facilities were required with the increase in population. The last renovation of the mosque took place on a larger scale in 2018 and it was Mr. Najeeb Hajiar who once again made it possible by obtaining financial assistance from the philanthropist he knew.

The new spacious and attractive Masjiduth Thakwa with an accommodating capacity of about 500 people was declared open on 26th of May 2018 (9th Ramadhan, Hijri 1439). The ceremony began before Maghrib prayers with Al-Haj Najeeb bin Amir Alim declaring the mosque open in the presence of a great number of people. A grand Iftar had been arranged for the participants.

Gradually, 42 perches of land had been bought for the mosque while the renovation works were in progress. Ismail Haji, Hareez Issadeen Haji, A.B. Hasan Nowfal Haji, M.H.M. Roomi Haji and Thowfeek Haji had helped in the renovation works of the mosque. The present members of the Board of Trustees are Al-Haj M.M. Gazzali, Al-Haj A.B. Hasan Nowfal, Al-Haj N.S.M. Ismath Hassan and Al-Haj S.M. Subuki.

## **15. MASJID ZAKARIYA**

Masjid Zakariya situated on Samsudeen Mawatha in Welipitiya was reconstructed as a beautiful two-storeyed Masjid and was declared open on the 31st of August 2008.

For some time, the people of the area had recognized the necessity to build a new mosque to meet the growing needs of the people. It was at this time that their prayers were answered when eleven perches of land was bought in 2002 for the mosque with the untiring efforts of Marhoom Hashim sir, Al-Haj Naseer, and Al-Haj Sally with the support of the Jamaath members.

In the same year, they built a mosque with wooden planks on the land and named it Masjidul Salam. since then regular prayers were conducted and a Qur'an class for children too had been started. Later, as requested by the Jamaath people of the area, the children of Marhoom A.R.M. Zakariya rebuilt the mosque with two storeys and named it Masjid Zakariya in memory of their father. This masjid is under the administration of the Welipitiya Jummah Masjid.

## **16. HAJI LANE MASJIDUL BILAL**

Haji Lane starts from the Main Street of Dharga Town and lies between the two canals and extends up to the bank of the river. There are around 50 families living in this area.

Around fifty years ago, it was Mr. I.L.M. Jamaldeen, better known as Mohammed Lebbe of Haji Lane who got the idea of building a mosque in the picturesque environment of the riverbank. On the 18th of April 1994, he donated three perches of his land to build a mosque and a few months later he passed away. Firstly, only a madrasa called 'Madrasathul Muhammadiya' had been

started on it. Mr. Jamaldeen was the father of Mr. Shahideen, the present chief trustee of Masjidul Bilal.

With the cooperation of the people, the madrasa was roofed with corrugated sheets and the floor was cemented. Qur'an madrasa for the children was conducted here, and during Ramadhan, tharaweeh prayers were also conducted. Apart from that Thablibh Jamaath activities were also held here.

In 2010, Al-Haj Hareez Issadeen bought 3 pechers of land and donated it for the Mosque. At the same time and his two sons Mr. Insaf and Mr. Ikram bought 4 perches of land and donated them to the mosque. During this time, a Jamaath from Kerala in India and some brothers working in Arab countries helped build a small building for the mosque and named it Masjid-ul Bilal.

For about 8 years, the condition of the mosque remained the same, accommodating only around 100 people. Things began to change with the intervention of Najeeb Hajiar and a large-scale construction work got under way in 2018. This was done under the direct supervision of N.E.C. The mosque was rebuilt as a beautiful double-storeyed mosque and it can accommodate about 700 people today. Assistance for the reconstruction was obtained by Najeeb Hajiar from the philanthropist he is associated with. Within a years' time, the work had been completed.

On the 20th of April 2019 during Asr time, the new mosque was declared open by Najeeb Hajiar. It was Ilyas Hajiar, the father-in-law of Najeeb Hajiar's third son Hidayathullah who had motivated Najeeb Hajiar in this regard.

The site of the mosque is rather popular among the people, and many come there to enjoy the cool breeze of the river bank during their leisure time. The beautiful mosque with its tall minarets is also an attraction to the tourists who come for a boat

ride in the Bentota river. Jummah prayers and weekly Qur'an lectures are held in the mosque and there is also a Qur'an madrasa for the children of the area on week days.

On the request of the Haji Iane Jamaathh, the Jamaathh council which administrates the Grand mosque and the 'Theruwuppalli' has approved Masjidul Bilal as a mosque. The Board of Trustees of the Masjidul Bilal comprises of the President Al-Haj M.J.M. Shahideen, Vice president Al-Haj M.F.M. Faiz, the Secretary Al-Haj M.J.M. Imtiaz, Assistant Secretaery Mr. M.Z.M. Insaaf, the treasurer is Al-Haj Thaj Safaa and the assistant treasurer Al-Haj M. Thasook. Mr. M.J.M. Harees, Alhaj Imran, Alhaj M.M.M. Imran, Alhaj M.H.M. Rizaan and Mr. Mohamed Safwan are also members of the Board.

## **17. MASJIDUL JABAL**

Masjidul Jabal is situated on the Military Road, where there is an intesecction between the Matugama Road and the Meeripenne Road. It is also 300 meters from the Meeripenne mosque and on the other side about 400 meters from Masjidun Noor. There are several Muslim families living on both the sides of the road.

The nineteen perches of the land that belong to the mosque was a donation from Mr. M.H.M. Azahim. The mosque is a two storeyed building that can accommodate about two hundred people. The Jamaath people and some well-wishers gave their fullest cooperation for its construction. It was declared open on the 10th of January 2012 and is of great help to the people of the area.

The mosque has been built on the foot of a hill. Further, there is a big well there which is of great help to the people during times

of drought. Water from this well is supplied through taps. The trustee of the mosque is Mr. M.H.M. Afan and at the beginning Mr. M.H.M. Zarook also joined him in administrative activities.

## **18. MASJIDUL ASHRAFIYA**

This masjid is situated close to the Welipitiya Jummah Mosque. The land for the mosque was donated by Marhoom Al-Haj Sadakathullah who was popularly known through the brand 'Pallaku Lebbe and Sons'.

In 1990s, a small building was constructed on this land and classes were held. In 1995, this building was registered as a mosque and since then, the five-time daily prayers are being held here.

In 2012, a social service organization reconstructed it and at present, it is large enough to accommodate around 600 people. Darul Moominath Ladies Arabic College is very close to the mosque. The mosque's closeness is advantageous to the College as male visitors during functions could be accommodated in the mosque.

Masjidul Ashrafiya is administered by Welipitiya Jummah Masjid.

## **19. MASJID UL ABUBAKR**

This masjid is situated on Central Lane which is an offshoot of the Central Street. There were new settlements in these areas, and it was these people who had demanded to build a mosque. This mosque which was opened in 2016 too was found through such agitation from the Jamaathh.

Before the mosque was built, some social activists rented a house and preached to the young people of the area. Later, they bought a house and continued their missionary activities.

During this time, a generous gentleman and his family came forward to build a mosque in their parents' name. The cost for the ten perches of the land and the total expenditure of building the mosque was borne by this family.

Masjidul Abu Bakr is spacious enough to accommodate 250 people. The present Board of Trustees of the mosque comprises Mr. M.S.M. Noor, Mr. O.D.M. Nalim, Mr. M.H. Najeebdeen, Mr. M.T.M. Marzook, Mr. M.N.M. Nilar, Mr. A.R.M. Faseel and Mr. M.M. Zahir. Although there were many people who worked for the development of the mosque, the contribution made by Marhoom Al-Haj Zubair will be especially remembered.

## **20. AALIM SAHIB THAKKIYA**

This Thakkiya situated on the Main Street of Dharga Town was founded within a period of 200 years. It stands majestically erect with its display of architectural techniques and the clock tower in front of the Thakiya further adds to its elegance. Historical records indicate that the land for the Thakiya was donated by a gentleman called Sheikh Ismail Kumusthar who was the father of Mr. Omar (officer). It is also said that 'Kal Notharis' family too had donated a plot of land for this Thakkiya.

The Five-time daily prayers and Eid prayers are conducted here. A few decades ago, there were also Qur'an classes for those who lived in the neighborhood. The 'Mashaikh Feast' or the annual feast held in this Thakkiya had been initiated by Ash-Sheikh Hassan Ibnu Usmanul Makdhoomi Aalim (Rah),

around 180 years ago and is a much-awaited event not only in Dharga Town but also in the other areas.

On the first day of the month of Dhul'Qa'dah, the flag is hoisted after which religious sermons are held in the nights continuously for eight days with a feast being held on the ninth day for those who come from outstation. Then, on the following day, a feast is held for the people of Dharga Town.

During these days, people come to the Thakkiya in large numbers. Some sports clubs conduct events such as Fancy Bazaar auctions and sales of various goods. In the by-gone days, 'Rafai Raathib' was held by the Fakir Sahib group who used to travel all the way from the Eastern province on the first night of the feast. This was a highly anticipated event in the agenda at the time although we don't see it now.

Ash-Sheikh Hasan Ibn Usmanul Makdhoomi Waliullah's Janazah was buried in this Thakiya. As he conducted Da'wah activities in several parts of the country, some people come to this Thakiya to perform 'Ziyarath' as well. It is said that after 1950, this area which had been called by the names Aluthgama Weediya and Hettiwatte gradually came to be known as Dharga Town to commemorate the Sheikh's Dharga.

It was this Aalim Sahib Appa who started the Alaviyathul Qaadiriya Thareeka as the first Thareeka in Dharga Town. The sheikh was born in 1785 as the only son of Usman Ibn Fareed Kumusthar of Dharga Town and Fathima of Jambugoda, Galle. He received his early education under the supervision of his father and later became a student of Nahvi Aalim Sheiku Lebbe Abdul Qaadir of Kaayalpattanam. He became well-versed in Arabic grammar, Arabic literature, Tafseer, Jurisprudence and Tasawwuf. Whilst being a trader, he also served as the Khatheeb at the Galle Fort Jumma Masjid and the Meera Makaam Mosque in Kandy. He

had also continued his religious missionary work in places like Hambantota, Mawanella, Hingulla, Ganetanne, Colombo, Kalutara, Maggona, and Dharga Town.

When Ash sheikh Hassan Ibn Usmanul Makhtoom passed away, he was 85 years old. When As-Syed Hassanul Aththas paid a visit to Galle, 'Appa' met him and learnt about Thareekas and from what he had gained took 'Bai'yath' and accepted the Qaadiriya Thareeka. The Rathibul Haddadiya recited on Friday nights at this Thakiya was introduced by 'Appa'. When Habeeb As-Syed Ahamed Bafakeeh Mowlana paid a visit from Jeddah, he took his second 'Baiyath' for the four Thareekas in the Hijri year 1245. He followed the Idroosiyathul Qaadiriya Thareeka and introduced it to the Muslims in Ceylon.

Around four decades ago, Mr. Wadood Lebbe, Mr. Mohamed Lebbe, Mr. Buhary Lebbe, and Mr. Sakkaf Lebbe had been very influential in the administration of the Thakkiya. Ash-sheikh Hamza Aalim who was the son of Ash-sheikh Mohamed Abdullah Aalim Hajiar was the caliph for many years. Mr. Abdul Azeez, the son of Wadood Lebbe also performed a great service to the Thakkiya during his life time. Moulavi M.R. Mohamed Silmy (Noori) M.A, while being the Caliph and the Imam of Alaviyathul Qaadiriya for many years presently conducts the Thareeka activities in the Thakkiya.

## **21. ZAVIATHUL FAASIYATHUL IBRAHIMIYYA**

Imam Abul Hassan Shadhuli (Rah) was born in Morocco and the Thareekathul Shathuliya was founded in Tunisia whilst he was living there for his studies. He was born twenty-two years after the demise of Abdul Qadir Jeelani (Rah).

Ash-sheikh Muhammed Ibn Abdur Rahman Al-Fassy who was also born in Morocco after Abul Hassan Shadhuli, made some changes in the Shadhuliya Thareeka and it came to be known as Thareekathul Faasiyathul Shadhuliya. After gaining popularity in the Arabian countries, it began to hold ground in countries like India and Ceylon. This Thareeka was introduced to Ceylon by a gentleman named Muhammed Salih Moulana of Malabar in India and it was after this, that 'Zavias' were founded in Ceylon along its western coastal belt. The meaning of the term 'Zavia' is "a place for seclusion". The Awwal Zavia was the first such Zavia in Colombo.

Thareekathul Faasiyathul Shadhuliya was introduced to Dharga Town in 1850s. After five years, the first Zavia was built opposite Theruwappalli. This proves that this Zavia was established before the Meeripenna and Welipitiya Jumua Mosques were founded. This Zaviya was renovated in 1928 and Ash-sheikh Muhammed Ibrahim Shadhuli declared it open.

This Thareeka does not insist only on the performance of Zikr, but those who promoted it based their teachings on the path of righteousness on the concept of the oneness of Allah. The main methods of Zikr of this Thareeka comprises of Halara, Waleefa, Yaakultha etc. Their Mureedees are called 'Ikhwans'. Half a century ago, the sheikhs had visited Ceylon from Saudi Arabia and it was a habit at the time to pay visits to the houses of their mureedees, This habit is no longer in practice. Further, sometime ago people belonging to this Thareeka gave pride of place for, 'Halara Majlis'. at their wedding houses.

For a long time at the main Zavia in Dharga Town, Halara Majlis and sermons were held for ten days in a year. At the night of the final day, the participants were served with food to be taken to their homes in a 'Kiduhu'. This took place on the grounds of the Theruwappalli. Fifty years ago on such an occasion, Moulavi

Jainulabdeen was made the Caliph of the Thareeka by the visiting Sheikh of the Shadhuliya Thareeka. He was followed by Moulavi Seyed Ahamed Aalim who served for many years in this post. After his passing, his son AlHaj Moulavi Maza Aalim began functioning as the caliph and continues to do so to this day.

## **22. MASJID MUHIYADDEEN QAADIRIYA THAKKIYA (BOKKADI)**

Ash-Sheikh Kanzu Noordeen was the thirty-third descendent of the first caliph of Islam Hazrath Abu Bakr As-Sideek (Rali). He gave up his post of governor of a region in Arabia for the sake of Islamic missionary activities and landed in a place called 'Kottar' in South India. Ash-Sheikh Syed Mohideen Saalihul Yakeenul Qaadiri was the forty-second descendent of Ash-Sheikh Kanzu Noordeen. In the Hijri year 1170, (A.D.1756) he obtained the 'Hijaza' of Gouzul Ahlam Kuthubul Akthab Muhaiyadeen Abdul Quadir Jeelani (Rah) through his 14th descendent Uzman Al-Bagdadi. Until he passed away in the Hijri year 1208 at the age of 63, this great scholar devoted his life to the activities of the Thareeka.

His descendants, one after the other were able to get the Hijaza obtained from 'Kuthub ul Akthab'. They preached and practiced Islam and the Qaadiriya Thareeka according to the Shaf'i school of thought based on the concept of Sunnath-wal-Jamaath.

Ash-Sheikh Muhiyudeenul Qaadiri (Rah) who was involved in the Thareeka activities as per his grandfather's wishes, came to Ceylon in 1840 and stayed at the Grand mosque in Colombo. It was due to his encouragement and efforts that the Masjid Muhiyideen Kottar Thakkiya at No. 27, in Messenger Street, Colombo was built.

His brother Ash-Sheikh Muhammad Rajabu Qaadiri (Rah) introduced this Thareeka to the people of Galle at Hirimbura in 1891 (Hijri year 1308).

His mureeds lovingly called him 'Rajabu Appa'. He took a keen interest in establishing the Qaadiriya Thareeka in different parts of the country and due to his efforts, over a hundred Thakkiyas and more than 50 mosques were founded.

When he visited Dharga Town for Thareeka activities, he stayed at the residence of C.M.Hamid Marikkar's ancestor called Muhammed Cassim Marikkar Mesthiriyan. One night, he had seen 'Kuthub Nayaham' in his dream and he had requested Ash-Sheikh Rajabu Quadiri (Rali) to build a Thakkiya close to where he was residing for prayers to be conducted and for carrying out Thareeka activities.

In 1852, with the help of Kottar Sheikh, the consent of the owner of the land (C.M.Hamid Marikkar's ancestor's) was obtained and a small Thakkiya was built upon it.

As there was a culvert on the canal going through that land towards the river, the Thakkiya came to be known as 'Bokkadi Thakkiya'. The land had been donated by C.M. Hamid Marikkar and by another family member called Mahmood Hajiar.

The chief of the Messenger Street Thakkiya is also the chief of this 'Bokkadi' Thakkiya.

The son of Ash-Sheikh Rajabul Qaadiri, Ash-Sheikh Abdul Qaadiri ul Qaadiri developed and expanded the building of the Thakkiya. Ismail Lebbe Marikkar (Echchan Mudalali), who was the son of C.M. Hajiar's brother and also the grandfather of Al-Haj Hashim Alavi Ismail, had contributed greatly towards the construction and the development of this Thakkiya. Several Sheikhs of the Qaadiriya Thareeka used to come to the Thakiya

one after the ather and conduct more religious and Thareeka activities. In 1920, C.M.Hajiar helped by making a 'Hawdh' for taking ablution.

In 1933, a cousin of C.M. Hajiar, Haji Mahmood Marikkar donated the plot of land located behind the Thakiya. Al-Haj I.L.M. Hamdoon Marikkar and many others have also contributed to the development of this Thakkiya.

Moulavi Abdul Razzak Aalim, Mr. Asana Lebbe, his son Mr. A.L.M. Ismail and Moulavi Al-Haj S.H. Hibbathul Kareem had performed their duties as the caliphs of the Thareeka.

Around two decades ago, Al-Haj Hashim Alavi Ismail and the former Grama Niladari Mr. O.L.M.Ziyard, with the assistance of several others renovated the Thakiya, building it larger and more beautiful using artistic designs.

Presently, the Thakkiya is under the care of Ash-Sheikh Murshid Bawa who is the sheikh of the Qaadiriya Kottar Thakkiya of Colombo and according to the rules of Thareekas, he is the present spiritual leader of this Thareeka in Sri Lanka.

## **23. SHEIKH ABDUL QAADIR QUAZIYAR APPA THAKKIYA**

This Thakkiya is one of the three Thakkiyas within Dharga Town. It is situated around 200 meters away from the Grand Mosque and is close to the 'Theruwuppalli'. Although the Thakkiya has been named after Abdul Qadir Quaziyar Appa, it is popularly called as 'Thesuboodu Thakkiya' i.e Sheikh Yousuf house Thakkiya. The Thakkiya is built on the land that belonged to Quaziyar Appa. It has a history of 130 years, and although small in size, it is beautifully built with ancient architectural designs.

Ash-Sheikhul Kamil Abdul Qaadir is the son of Ash-Sheikh Hasan Ibn Usmanul Mahthoomi's (Rah) (Alim Sahib Appa) sister. He was born in 1824 and expired in 1894.

The manakib called 'Mawahibur Rahman' of Aalim Sahib Appa is recited in this Thakiya. Every year from the 1st to the 7th of the month of Safar, his birth and demise are commemorated. After maghrib prayers on Fridays, Mashaikh Rathib is recited and in the month of Rabiul Awwal for twelve days, the Subhana Mowlood is recited, and a feast is held. Unlike in other Thakiyas, hardly anyone comes here for prayers.

## **24. ZIYAD MARIKKAR THAKKIYA**

This Thakkiya is located at the intersection of the Gem Road of Dharga Town and the Meeripenna Road. Ziyard Marikkar's residence was on that land and the Thakkiya was built by him in 1952. An incident relating to the founding of this Thakkiya is known.

Ziyard Marikkar who was blessed with three children, two sons and a daughter, was very fond of his daughter. This daughter was brought up extremely well and given a good education within a religious environment. However, when she was a teenager, she became ill suddenly and despite their efforts to cure her, she passed away in 1952. This death was an unbearable loss to the father who wished his daughter's Janazah should be buried close to their residence and it was this incident that motivated Ziyard Marikkar to build this small Thakkiya near his home.

He encouraged the children in the neighbourhood to come there for prayers, providing them with the necessary guidance, and having them call out the 'Azan' on their own in the Thakkiya. It is said that he even served them sweets after Fajr and Isha prayers.

Until Ziyard Marikkar passed away in 1969, the administration of the Thakkiya was in his hands. It is noteworthy to state here that Najeeb Hajiar's father Marhoom Amir Aalim had been a close friend of Ziyard Marikkar.

In 1987, his son Marhoom Bakeer Marikkar expanded this Thakkiya and began a Qur'an Madrasah. In 2007, a delegation from the area met Haji Nawas Fathah and discussed about making further expansions to the Thakkiya. When the matter was taken up to Bakeer Marikkar, he agreed and in 2008, the Thakkiya was further expanded. Today, this Thakkiya looks like a Masjid and some people call it the 'small mosque' of Meeripenne. Marhoom Bakeer Marikkar was married to Al-Haj M.A. Fathah's daughter and thus the construction work of the Thakkiya was done under the supervision of his brother-in-law Haji Shajahan Fathah.

## **25. ALAKANDUPITIYA SHEIKH DAWOOD THAKIYA**

The origin of this Thakiya was also based on a dream, that which Mr. Ahamed Lebbe (Katta Lebbe) had in 1961. In the beginning it was only in the form of a hut and later it was made bigger. Half an acre of the land belonging to the Thakiya was a donation from Mr. A.M. Naim, a former chairman of the town council.

In 1976, a further expansion of the building of the Thakkiya took place and now it stands on one acre of land. The other half acre was donated by Mr. Sadique Marikkar, the son of Haniffa Marikkar (Marayan), two daughters of Mr. Ismail (Chekku Veedu) and Mr. Ashroff Marikkar (formerly of Marikkar Brothers).

When the Thakiya was renovated in 1976, Mr. Faleel Hajiar (a former chairman of Beruwala U.C), Mr. Ibrahim Marikkar (Cheelappen) and Mackeen Hajiar assisted with this financially.

The first to take charge of the Thakkiya was Muhammed Lebbe who was followed by Thahir Lebbe, Sally Lebbe, Mohamed Hussain, Shuhood Lebbe, Abbas Lebbe and Cader Lebbe.

When the Thakkiya underwent renovation the last time, Al-Haj A.B.M. Suhair, Mr. B.M. Uwais, M.Z.A. Zarook, M.H.A. Imran, M.H. Nafais, Mr. A.H.A. Mowsoon, and Mr. A.L. Hamza Razeen functioned as the trustees.

During the initial stages, Al-Haj M.A. Fathah had also participated in many of the events of the Thakkiya. Najeeb Hajiar's father Mr. Ameer Aalim had also been a regular participant in the affairs of this Thakkiya. The land for the road leading to Sheikh Dawood Thakkiya was donated by Mr. Abdul Wadood (Japan) and Mr. Muhammed Hashim (father of Hassan Jiffry).

It was Mr. Ashroff Marikkar who took a keen interest in the affairs of the Thakkiya and was responsible for it for a long period of time. The Thakkiya which has a history of sixty years had been served by many in their capacity as members of the board of trustees. They are Mr. O.L.M. Ziyard J.P, Mr. M.M.A. Batcha, Mr. M.Y.B. Lathief, Mr. A.R.M. Mowjood, Mr. M.I.M. Shafie, Mr. Sadique Marikkar. Further, Mr. Saheer (member), Mr. Silmy Sanoosi Marikkar, and Mr. Ansar J.P had also taken part in the affairs of the administration.

In the year 2005, the Nooraniya Madrasa had been initiated in this Thakkiya. Hifdh is conducted here, the annual hoisting of the flag and feasts are also held here. On Thursday evenings, Sheikh Dawood Mowlood is recited.

At present, Al-Haj M.J.M. Thasleem, Al-Haj M.N.M. Fahmy, and Mr. M.U.M. Nafeel are the members of the Board that administer the Thakkiya.

## **26. MUAIYIDUL ISLAM ARABIC COLLEGE**

Even if a person had accumulated a vast amount of knowledge and skills, if he doesn't know his Rabb and the Day of Resurrection, he will be at a loss. Knowledge and wisdom will never be as valuable as the knowledge about Allah. "Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is Aware of what you do." (Al-Quran 58:11)

Those who understood the meaning of the above Quranic verse strived during their lifetimes to find schools that could help develop faith in Allah as knowledge about Allah is the best knowledge one can possess.

The Muaiyidul Islam Arabic College, which has been around for over a century was founded by social activists in 1918. During its early stages, the Madrasa was conducted in the Grand Mosque and thereafter shifted to the second floor of the mosque subsequent to its reconstruction in 1974.

There was quite a spacious plot of land adjoining the Grand Mosque, which belonged to Mr. Mohiyaddeen Lebbe who had lived in the seventies. He was the son of Waapulle Waapachcha. There was a temporary storeroom on that land which had housed the building materials of the Grand Mosque. After the construction work was completed it was abandoned.

The youth of the area showed an interest in starting a Quran Madrasah in it. This request was put forward by the Mihraj Majlis.

this effort was supported by Mr. A.L.M. Ismail, the then president of the Board of Management the Muaiyidul Islam Arabic College.

A meeting was then convened at Zahira College regarding this matter with the participation of Al-Haj A.H.M. Sideek (Former Chairman of the Dharga Town Town council), Mr. A.L.M. Ismail (Former director of Education), Dr. M.Z.M. Shafie, Mr. A.R.M. Badiudeen, Mr. M.L. Abdul Cader (former Principal), Mr. O.L.M. Abdullah (Baba dora), Mr. Sabir Batcha (Adikarigoda) and Mr. Omar Mihlar and a few others.

When a suggestion was made to repair the existing old building to commence the Quran Madrasa, Al-Haj A.H.M. Sideek proposed to rebuild it and donated Rs.20,000 initially. Construction work began within a few days. A further Rs. 20,000 was donated by him when a delegation visited him at the hospital when he was sick. But before the Madrasa was opened, Al-Haj Sideek had passed away. The slab with his name on it is still preserved in the Madrasa building. Najeeb Hajiar and many others wanted this to be a monument. Naleem Hajiar, Dr. M.Z.M. Shafie, Mr. Sabir Batcha, and many others had also donated to the building fund of this Madrasa.

Due to the accommodation problem in the upper floor of the Grand Mosque where the Muaiyidul Islam Arabic College was functioning, a decision was made to bring it down to the Madrasa where the Quran class was being conducted for children and expand the building utilising the adjoining plot of land. This decision was made upon agreeing to the condition that the children's quran class too would be accommodated in the new building of the Arabic College. However, that request was not heeded after the construction. While work was in progress, the children who attended the Quran classes were taught by Ulamas in the evening and further on Sundays, Ahadiya classes were conducted freely by a teacher.

Marhooms I.L.M. Sheikh Abdulla, C.M. Hamid Marikkar, Ahamed Abdullah, and A.K. Hashim made a great contribution to this effort. The 'Mihraj Majlis' was formed and the income received from the annual feast was used for the College fund. Marhooms M.L.M. Abdul Rahman Marikkar (A.R.M. Badiudeen's father), Mr. Uthuman Lebbe and a few others also contributed towards this. Al-Haj C.M. Hamid Marikkar donated two of his shops to the Madrasa.

The list of the principals of the Madrasa begins with Moulavi Mukthar Aalim of Weligama. In 1939, Moulavi Abdul Caffoor Aalim from Badulla assumed duties. Moulavi Abdul Razaak (Ghaffoori) of Dharga Town, Moulavi zainul Abdeen of Akurana, Moulavi Yehya Mohamed Naseem of Colombo, Moulavi Al-Haj Siddeek of Weligama, Moulavi Fairoos of Kalutara, Moulavi Abu Salih Hazrath of Madampe, Moulavi Meera Lebbe of Sammanthurai, Moulavi A.R.M. Thariq of Weligama, Moulavi Jawfer of Mawanella and Moulavi Nowfal Bahji from Dharga Town had served in this College as responsible principals.

In the 1950s, Mr. A.R.Mohamed (the first chairman of the Dharga Town Town Council) assumed duties as the Director of the College and he was followed by Mr. I.LM. Mashoor who was also popularly known as 'the father of teachers' and contributed much towards the development of the College. Due to financial strains, the college was closed in 1955 for a few months. During the construction of the Grand Mosque in 1972, it was once again closed for over two years.

The land for the college was donated by the wealthy people of the Thareeka and was formed based on Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ath.

Due to the untiring efforts of Mr. A.R.Mohamed, Al-Haj Moulavi Seyed Ahamed Aalim, and Al-Haj M.L.A. Wahid, the College

was reopened on the upper floor of the Grand Mosque. The trustees back then, Mr. A.R. Mohamed and Al-Haj M.A. Fathah founded the Jamaathh Council and the Baithul Maal Fund for the development of the Jamaathh and the College.

In 1978, an administrative group was formed under the leadership of Al-Haj M.A. Fathah. The joint secretaries were former principal Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib and Mr. A.A.M. Ibrahim (teacher). Mr. A.L.M. Ismail was the treasurer. This responsibility was also held by Al-Haj A.M. Hussain for some time.

Changes were later made to the Board of Directors. Mr. A.L.M. Ismail was made the chairman after which the post went to Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib. Al-Haj M.I.M. Ansar was the manager, Al-Haj A.C.M. Iqbal the treasurer, Al-Haj M.L.A. Ahla and Mr. M.M. Bishrul Haafi were the joint secretaries. Al-Haj M.M. Nizam and Al-Haj A.R.M. Badiudeen were the members of the Board of Directors.

The then principal Moulavi A.L.M. Abu Thalib requested for a building for the Madrasa with facilities such as more classrooms, a library, hostel, auditorium, dining hall, etc within the same block. The construction of the building began with the Rs. 245,000 obtained from the 'Al Nahyan Trust Fund' of U.A.E for which Al-Haj Alavi Mowlana, the Governor of the Western Province had made his recommendation. Though many well-wishers too contributed, it was insufficient to meet the needs. Hence, an appeal was made to Mr. Najeeb Hajiar regarding the matter. He had attended this madrasa in the evenings to obtain religious education while he was a student at Al-Hambra Maha Vidyalaya in the seventies.

Hajiar was able to convince a philanthropist to obtain a donation and within a years' time in 2004, the work was completed.

The delegation that came from U.A.E to attend the opening ceremony of the Theruwuppalli was hosted to a dinner at the Grand Mosque and they were shown the Madrasa as well. It is through them, the philanthropist learnt the needs of the Madrasah. He had been very happy to hear about the opening ceremony of the mosque and readily agreed to the proposal. Al-Haj M.H. Abdul Haleem, Al-Haj S.A. Maza Aalim, Al-Haj A.L.M. Ismail, Al-Haj I.L.M. Shuaib, Al-Haj A.R.M. Badiudeen, Al-Haj M.M. Afwan, and Al-Haj M.I.M. Ansar had taken a keen interest in this matter.

Though the philanthropist was invited to declare the madrasa open through Najeeb Hajiar, he delegated the opportunity to Najeeb Hajiar on his behalf. Thus, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2004, Al-Haj Najeeb bin Amir Aalim declared the madrasah open in the presence of a large and distinguished gathering. His son Mr. Nihmathullah unveiled the memorial plaque and Governor of the Western Province Alhaj Alavi Mowlana, was the Chief Guest. Aalims, Regional council members members of the public including Al-Haj M.S.M. Aslam, member of the provincial council also participated.

The Madrasa had seen tremendous improvements during the long period of service of Al-Haj I.L.M. Shuaib. He expended his time and efforts for the development of the Madrasa. Similarly, Mr. A.W.M. Ajward who was at Zahira College from 1996-2004 served as the Administrator of the Madrasa in a remarkable way.

It is noteworthy to mention the names of some of the past students of the Madrasa, namely Mr. Amir Aalim (1930), Mowlavi M.M. Abdul Wadood, Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib (Principal), Dr. M.A.M. Shukri, and Mr. A.A.M. Ibrahim (Lecturer).

A scholarship fund for less-privileged students was obtained by Al-Haj M.H. Abdul Haleem who functioned as the deputy manager of the Board of Directors, by contacting the ETA Lanka company.

When Al-Haj I.L.M. Shafie was employed in Saudi Arabia, he along with Al-Haj A.J.M. Zaneer, contributed to the Madrasa by obtaining cash donations from a generous donor called Abdul Karim Al-Aagil. Al-Haj Hussain Ismail, Al-Haj Abdul Baari, and Madani Hajiar (Colombo) have donated books to the library. Mr. A.W.A. Azeez, the trustee of Aalim Sahib Appa Thakiya came forward to fulfil a physical need of the Madrasa.

At present, Mr.s A.J.M. Naseer, M.M.Akram, M.H.M.Hussain (Teacher), M.H.M. Hussain Ismail, M.A.M. Hassan, M.M. Nihar, M.M. Abdul Gaffar, M.J.M. Masoon, M.H. Abdul Haleem and M. B. Waafy are in the Executive committee of the Madrasa. Moulavi M.H.M. Ifhaam functions as the officer in charge. Muaiyidul Isalm Arabic College with a history of 102 years has Al-Haj S.A. Maza Aalim (Bahji) as its president, while Al-Haj A.R.M. Badurdeen, who provided these details of the Madrasa is the present Vice-President of this Arabic College.

## **27. MADRASATHUL ILHARUL ISLAM**

Some parents in the Meeripenna area who developed an interest in making their children ‘Hafidh of the Quran’ felt the need to open a Hifdh Madrasah in Dharga Town.

After discussions, the initiative for this project was taken by Moulavi A.A.M. Nowfer of Meeripenne. The chief trustee of the Kurbathus Sakireen Masjid, Al-Haj A.C.M. Iqbal and a few others extended their co-operation.

The Hifdh Madrasah started on part-time basis in the Qur'an Madrasa in front of the Meeripenne Jumma Masjid, on the 03<sup>rd</sup>

of April 1996 with thirteen students and two uthads. The simple inauguration commenced with a class conducted by Al-Haj O.L.M. Faleel Aalim. Kaleefathus Shaduli. Mr. A.A.M. Nowfer Aalim was appointed as the principal while Al Hafil Nassar and Moulavi Izzath were the Usthads. Al-Haj A.C.M. Iqbal, Al-Haj Moulavi Ubaidullah (Jasooli), and Al-Haj M.S.M. Shums functioned as members of the administrative committee.

The people extended their cooperation in several ways and in a short time the number of students enrolled increased due to which the Masjid too was made use of for its activities. To make further progress, Al-Haj Shahajan Fathah was elected as patron to the administrative committee, with Al-Haj A.C.M. Iqbal elected president. The vice-presidents were Al-Haj M.S.M. Rifkan, Al-Haj M.I.R.S. Sailani (Yaseen), and Moulavi Al-Haj Jasooli Ubaidullah. Other members too were elected to the administrative committee.

The Madrasa was able to witness its convocation ceremony within three years. Out of the 13 students who became Hafils on that day, seven were from Dharga Town. With the idea of developing the contemporary and future education, the Madrasa took the name of Jamiyathul Ilharul Islam and has progressed much. Sharia and Hifdh syllabuses are taught by efficient Ulamahs with sufficient financial aid from its well-wishers.

When it came to the construction of the new building for the Madrasah, Mr. M.S.M. Rifkan, the son of Marhoom Al-Haj A.H.M. Sideek donated 40 perches of land on behalf of his family. Once again when another 14 perches was required, Mr. Rifkan contributed his share and the expenditure for the three-storeyed building too was borne by him. The gentleman who contributed the biggest share towards the building project was the retired principal of the Rahmaniya Arabic College of Akurana, Ash-

Sheikh A.C.M.Jiffry whereby 50% of the expenses was met by his generosity.

There are also several others who extended a helping hand towards the progress of this madrasa. One generous donor had bought a shopping complex and donated its proceeds as a permanent income to the Madrasa. The proprietor of the Aluthgama 'Fashion Centre', Al-Haj M.Z.M. Naseem donated a shop in memory of his brother Marhoom Al-Haj M.Z.M. Mashrook. Al-Haj M.S.M. Fowzan helped to lay the foundation of the second building. Since the day the madrasah started, it was the family of Al-Haj H.A. Munas who lived in front who supplied water to the madrasa. Mr. M.H.M. Ibrahim of Dehiwala who is a grandson of Marhoom O.L.M. Thahir Hajiar of Dharga Town provided tube wells for the madrasa. The cost of electricity supply for the main building was paid for by Al-Haj M.R.S. Sailani (Yaseen) after whose expiry, the service is continued by his wife.

The library building of the madrasa was a donation by Al-Haj M. Nisthar, the owner of Ashfak Hardware in memory of his late wife. Another new building is being built for the madrasah. A well was also dug to supply water with Al-Haj M.S.M. Farsan (Shafie Hardware) and Al-Haj A.C.M. Iqbal having borne the cost of this well. Al-Haj Farsan had also donated a tub for the students to bathe in. Several generous people continue to help the madrasa to fulfill its needs.

At present, there are 90 students enrolled in the Shariah and Hifdh sections. The number of Hafils who have passed out are 74. The number of Ulamahs who have completed the Sharia course are 84. Al Hafil al Aalim M.A. Abdul Aleem participated in the Thajweed competition held at Makkah al-Mukarrama and won the third place, bringing credit to the madrasah, Dharga Town and the country at large. The present principal of the Madrasa is Ash sheikh A.S.M. Jiffry (Deeni).

## **28. DARUL MOOMINATH LADIES ARABIC COLLEGE, DHARGA TOWN**

The long-felt need of a school for girls in Dharga Town to study religion based on the Shariah was fulfilled with the founding of Dharul Moominath on the 06<sup>th</sup> of September 2006.

It was Al-Haj Hashim Amir Sahib, Al-Haj Muhammed Naseer and Al-Haj M.S.M. Siraj who initially took an interest in this matter. Mr. Haniffa, a teacher at As-Sakeena Institute, Puttalam too was interested and had been providing encouragement to open a college of this nature.

This madrasa started in a house that had been rented, with the enrollment of 20 students. There were two guest speakers on the inaugural day, namely the principal of the Weligama Madrasathul Baari Arabic College, Moulavi Abdur Rahman Hafil (Malhari) and Moulavi Sadique (Hashimi) of Eravur. Moulavi Hafiz Faizal (Inaami) was the first principal while the wife of Mr. Meeran Sahib of Colombo was the Mudarris.

For the purpose of the progress of the madrasah, an administrative committee was formed under the leadership of Al-Haj M.I.R.Sailani and this committee had been functioning very efficiently since its inception. The present leader is Al-Haj M.S.M. Kamal Hassan while Al-Haj M.T.M. Shihamdeen is the secretary. The assistant secretaries are Moulavi Hafiz, Mr. M.I.M.Rizvi, and Al-Haj M.B. Hassan Nowfal. The treasurer is Al-Haj M.J.M. Nizar while his assistant is Al-Haj M.N.M. Nizar. The members of the administrative committee are Moulavi M.S.M. Nifal, Al-Haj M.A. Gazalli, Al-Haj M.S.M. Fowzan, Al-Haj M.R.M. Faizer and Al-Haj M.M.M. Rifkan.

The present principal is Ash sheikh Abdul Azeez (Hilri) from Negombo. There are over 10 members on the tutorial staff, 35 students in the Al-Aalima section and another 95 students

following the course at the Hifdh section. Classes are held from 7 o'clock in the morning to 5.30 p.m in the evening. Tea and lunch are supplied by the Madrasa to the students. For the expenses of the Madrasa, Rs.85,000 is obtained from the fees taken from the students, while the rest is borne by the madrasa amidst many hardships.

The duration of the course is five years and so far, 49 Aalimahs have passed out of the madrasah. For eight years, the madrasa had been conducted in a rented-out house. A plot of land was then donated by Al-Haj Hilal Ismail brothers of Dharga Town while another anonymous brother had donated 50 perches to construct a Madrasa of its own. These 50 perches belonged to Al-Haj Sadakathullah of Pallaku Lebbe and Sons and it was his consent that paved the way for the history of this madrasa. The ground floor of the new two-storeyed building of the madrasa was completed with the assistance of the administrators, well-wishers, and the members of the Jamaathh.

There are 4 teachers who teach the government Arts stream syllabus and another teacher to provide training in sewing etc. The students are mainly from Dharga Town while a few of them hail from Beruwela.

The future plans of the madrasa are, to complete the first floor of the madrasa and allocate it for Hifl classes, to teach computer studies, sewing, cookery, etc along with the shariah subjects, to open a fully equipped library, and to make arrangements for individual shariah classes for young girls and married women.

May Allah make our efforts successful and may He help the beauty of Islam reflect on the lives of our women!

## 29. ALHAMBRA MAHA VIDYALAYA

Alhambra Maha Vidyalaya was started in the year 1896 at Mr. Ibrahim Lebbe Marikkar's residence as a verandah school and it gradually developed, standing today with a history of 125 years.

Mr. I.L.M. Sheikh Abdullah Hajiar, Mr. S.I.A. Ahamed Abdullah, Mr. I.L.M. Umar Lebbe Marikkar (Umar officer) and Mr. A.R.M. Ismail Lebbe Marikkar are considered to be the founders of the school. Mr. 'Eechan Mudalali' and Mr. Umar Lebbe Marikkar donated the land to build the school at the current premises. It was a Cadjan building and the verandah school was shifted to this building.

Given below is a list of Principals who served and their period of service.

Mr. Idroos	1924-1925
Mr. Zainudeen Marikkar	1925-1926
Mr. K.S.Rajasingham	1926-1929
Mr. T.A. Paul	1929-1937
Mr. I.L.M. Mashoor	1938-1942
Mr. M.A. Baari	1942-1959
Mr. M.S.M. Harees	1959-1960
Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib	1960-1962
Mr. A.Z. Omardeen	1962-1963
Mr. M.A. Wahid	1963-1964
Mr. Y.L.M. Abul Hassan (Salih)	1965-1966
Mr. M.M.A. Alavi	1966-1984
Mr. M.I.M. Kaleel	1984-1985
Mr. M.S.M. Bishrul Haafi	1985-1986
Mr. M.F.A. Shakoor	1986-1990
Mr. M.Z.M. Naeem	1990-2005
Mrs. A.W.S. Masaya	2005-2009
Mr. M.M.N. Nalri	2009-2020

Mr.a M.F.F. Fasliya has been the principal from 2020 to date.

During Mr. I.L.M. Mashoor's period, he re-admitted some students who had left after passing standard eight and made them sit for the S.S.C Examinations (which was the senior exam at that time). Six students got through these examinations. He was good at following a psychological approach and thus the academic standard of Alhambra was extremely high. He encouraged students to participate in scouting, sports, music, dancing as well as in literary and other activities.

The period that followed under Mr. M.A. Baari as principal marked another milestone in the history of this school. He named the school after the palace of Alhambra in Spain which depicts Islamic architecture and culture. This practice was followed by many other Muslim schools being named with Muslim names.

The interest he took in raising the academic standard of the school resulted in many students from the other parts of the country joining this school and as a result, hostel facilities were made for the outstation students. Students who got through the Grade 5 Scholarship exams from other parts of the country were also admitted to this school. According to the book 'Dharga Town' written by Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib (Principal), Mr. Baari started an English medium stream in the school, and Mr. Shuaib too had followed those classes and got through the S.S.C in the English medium. After eighteen years of efficient service, principal Mr. M.A.Baari passed away while performing his duties. The prayers of our community for him will be there forever.

G.C.E. A/L classes were started during the service period of Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib and two students were selected for a degree in Arts in their first attempt. Mr. A.M.A. Alavi too has done a great service towards the development of the school. He encouraged students to take part in scouting, drama, and music. Mr. M.F.M.

Shakoor too was a devoted principal who functioned in this school.

The next principal Mr. M.Z.M. Naim was a student during Mr. M.A. Baari's period. He was instrumental in raising the school from a junior level to a higher level with advanced level classes. It is sad to recall how Alhambra was kept a junior school for many years due to political reasons. Zahira College, Aluthgama too underwent the same fate for a few years.

Before the founding of Alutgamaweediya Muslim Girls' Central College, both boys and girls studied at Aluthgamweediya government school (Alhambra). But the community was not satisfied with this setup and had ideas for a separate school for girls. The principal of the school Mr. I.L.M. Mashoor too favored the idea. Although a separate school was very useful at the beginning, with time the outlook of the community began to change and even the concept of a female principal for the girls' school and a male principal for the boys' school had given way.

The land for the school playground and the principal's quarters was donated by Mr. I.L.M. Mahmood. Najeeb Hajiar Childrens' Park which was opened in 2019 was a gift from Al-Haj Najeeb bin Amir Aalim. In 1994, a dental clinic was setup within the school premises by Al-Haj A.W.A. Azeez in memory of his father Marhoom Abdul Wadood Lebbe.

It is evident through the history of the school that students from many parts of the country had gained their education from this school, some having assumed high posts in the field of education. Some prominent old boys of the school are Mr. I.L.M. Mashoor (Former principal), Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib (Former principal), Mr. M.Z.M. Naeem (Former principal), Mr. M.T.M. Mujeebudeen (former principal of Zahira College), Mr. A. Mukthar, Mr. A.L.M. Ismail (Former Director of Education), Mr. M.S.M. Nizam (Former

Deputy Inspector General of police), and Mr. M.J.M. Kamal (Dickwella Kamal). They were students at this school during the period of 1920-2000.

It is normally believed that if there are two leading schools in an area, the competition that arises between will have a positive impact in the minds of the students and the community at large. But at present such a condition does not exist.

Before the nationalization of Zahira College, both the schools had classes upto Advanced levels. With the amalgamation of the two schools both the schools were affected in their individual developments. However, at present both Zahira College and Alhambra Maha Vidyalaya are developing towards reaching their goals.

### **30. ALUTGAMAWEDIYA MUSLIM GIRLS' CENTRAL COLLEGE**

Before 1939, both male and female children studied at the Alhambra mixed school, Mr. I.L.M. Mashoor functioned as the principal. The Educational Welfare Society of Dharga Town which was active at that time made efforts to give education separately to girls. With the principal also supporting this cause, the government approval was obtained.

Firstly, a Cadjan thatched building was erected within the premises of Alhambra Vidyalaya and a wall was built to separate the two schools, showing how the society at that time paid attention to religious morals. Mrs. Nansoora was appointed as the Principal and was there for some time. She was followed by Ms. Fathims Khalid who was an English trained teacher, as the principal, and the school saw many rapid developments with her arrival.

In 1945, the house of Mr. A.A.M. Haniffa was taken over by the government and converted into a Girls' school and this was on Marikkar Street (Yatadola Weediya).

According to the social norms of the time, education for females was not encouraged and they did not want their children to go to school. Therefore, it became necessary for the principal and those who were concerned about female education to meet the parents and convince them. The principal with the co-operation of Mr. A.R. Mohamed, Al-Haj I.L.M. Mahmood, Al-Haj M.A. Fathah, Mr. I.L.M. Mashoor, Mr. D.L.M. Jiffry and a few others went from house to house on this mission of educating the parents. It is said that in some houses, they found closed doors and the inmates had refused to meet them. Some had alleged that they had come to disgrace their girls but in some other places they had been received warmly.

On the first day of the school, the number on roll stood below forty, but at the end of the month, it had reached one hundred and fifty.

In 1947, the Minister of Education in the first cabinet of Ceylon, Mr.C.W.W. Kannangara raised the school to the position of a Central College and students from many parts of the country began to seek admission. Hostel facilities were also provided within the school premises for outstation students. A few years later, Al-Haj M.I.M. Naleem, the generous donor, provided a building for the hostel.

With the aim of proceeding towards higher education, the principal Ms. Fathim Khalid succeeded in getting a science laboratory, a home science room, and a storeyed building with many classrooms with the help of the government.

During her period, a large playground was constructed to improve the sports activities of the students, this too being done with the

assistance of the government. Many students who got through the G.C.E. O/L Examinations were selected to the Teacher Training College and passed out as teachers. Most of the teachers in Dharga Town and in many parts of the country were students at this school. Several students entered the universities during her period. The role of Ms. Fathim Khalid in the educational development of the girls of Dharga Town will be remembered forever, May Almighty Allah reward her for all her good deeds.

When Ms. Fathima Khalid's went on retirement there were more than a thousand students including the primary classes and thirty-five teachers on the staff and after her, Mrs. A.B.M. Hussain functioned as principal.

Mrs. C. Weluppilai assumed duties and functioned as the Principal until 1977, being the only Tamil lady to become the principal of this school. Mrs. S.M. Naamis was the principal until 1981. From 1981 to 1982, Mrs. B.M. Anas functioned as principal. From early 1982 to 1988, Mrs. M.L.M. Thaha functioned efficiently for a period of seven years. It was during her period that the 'Fardah' was introduced as part of the uniform at Aluthgama Weediya Muslim Girls Central College.

From early 1988 to 2002, Mrs. Firdous Fassy, who was the daughter of the former principal Ms. Fathima Khalid was the principal. She was a graduate with a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. A two-storeyed building and an auditorium was built during her period. Mr. A.J. Mohammed Aakil from Thunduwa who is married in Dharga Town contributed his services as the Secretary of the S.D.S. towards obtaining many physical resources for the school during her period.

On 6th July 1996, the school was raised to the position of a National School and Mr. Ediriweera Premachandra, the then M.P from the Kalutara district was responsible for this achievement.

Al-Haj A.W.M. Ihsan, Al-Haj Hassan Marikkar and Al-Haj A.M.A. Zulfikar made great efforts to get this through the Member of Parliament. Like her mother, Mrs.F. Fassy too worked hard for the educational development of our society. After her retirement, Mrs. Hasmin took over the school.

From 2012, Mr. M.T.M. Hamza functioned as principal. During Mr. M.T.M. Hamza's period, the school achieved several new heights in academic and sports activities and became a leading school in the Kalutara Education zone. The school received many awards at the Zonal, District and even at National level competitions. The school had the honor of becoming first among the 1AB Tamil medium schools and 5th among all the 1AB schools in the zone by producing 85% passes at the G.C.E.O/L Examination. In the year 2010, based on the results of the G.C.E. A/L Examination 14 students were selected to do medicine, Unani medicine, science, pharmacology, etc. and to enter the Colleges of Education.

With Mr.M.T.M.Hamza's transfer in 2012, Mrs. Fathima Risana functioned as the principal until 2017. During her period too, excellent results were produced at both G.C.E. O/L and A/L Examinations. Then from 2017 to 2019, Mr. M. Jabir functioned as the principal. Finally, on 28th of February 2020, Mr. A.A.M. Faiz assumed duties as the new principal. Very soon a principal's quarters was constructed with the funds allocated by Al-Haj M.S.M. Aslam, member of parliament and it was declared open by him.

Since Mr. A.A.M. Faiz assumed duties, a firm base had been laid for the development and progress of curricular and co-curricular activities, and the administration and structure of the physical resources of the school. He had earned the goodwill of the school community. A speciality of this principal is his efforts to maintain the physical structures and the school environment

with the cooperation of the minor staff, whenever he was free. And even during the school holidays he works for the school. Mr. M.H.M. Farhan (Naleemi) functions as the deputy principal of the school.

Seventy-five years ago, the leaders of Dharga Town along with Ms.F. Khalid as principal dreamt that Muslim Girls' Central School should shine as a beacon of female education in this country. But it is now far from reality, possibly because the female resources are now divided among the three schools whereas earlier all resources had been centered towards this school only.

### **31. ZAHIRA COLLEGE**

With the outbreak of the Second World War, students from the South of Ceylon, found it difficult to continue their studies in Colombo. As a solution to this problem, the Zahira College, Aluthgama was started in the year 1942, as the first branch of Zahira College, Colombo. This was made possible due to the untiring efforts of Marhoom Al-Haj, Dr. T.B. Jayah, then principal of Zahira College, Colombo.

Mr. M.B. Noordeen (B.A. London) was appointed as the first principal of this school. It was initially a mobile school stationed at the promises of Mr. A.A.A. Hameed of Dharga Town. In 1943, Mr. M.S.M. Haddad B.A. was appointed as the Deputy principal and the school had 49 students enrolled, with 5 teachers. Mr. T.B.S. Laxana was the Deputy principal from 1944 to 1948. During this period the school had classes only up to standard Five with 89 students and five teachers.

In the year 1945, a new building was constructed at a cost of Rs 22,499, built on the land near the Teachers College, Aluthgama that was donated by Al-Haj A.L.A. Hameed Marikkar. It was

declared open by the then Minister of Education, Mr. C.W.W. Kannangara on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1949.

In July 1949, the first Inter House Sports meet was held near the school premises and the winning House was awarded the 'Fathah Challenge Shield'.

From 01.06.1947 onwards, Zahira College, Aluthgama began to function as a separate unit from Zahira College, Colombo. It was registered as a Government Assisted Private School and Mr. Laxana continued to be the principal.

In 1948, Mr. S.L.M. Shafie Marikar (B.A) of Beruwela was appointed as principal, which marked a major milestone in the development of the school. Hostel Facilities were initiated in 1949, the principal opened the College Library with his own collection of books, and he also organized extra classes for the Students in the mornings and evenings. In the year 1948, eleven students from the English, Tamil and Sinhala medium classes passed their examinations with distinctions. Scouting was also introduced during this period.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1950, a building Fund committee was formed with the view of constructing a new building for the College. Under the Presidentship of Mr. A.R. Mohamed, the committee functioned with the principal Mr. S.L.M. Shafie Marikar as the secretary and Mr. U.L.M. Magdoom as the treasurer. Around two and a half acres of land for the new building was donated by Mr. A.A.A. Hameed, Mr. I.L.M. Mahmood and Al-Haj M.L. Abdul Jabbar of Thunduwa.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1951, the foundation for the new building was laid by the then Prime Minister, His Excellency D.S. Senanayake. A total of two lakhs had been estimated as the cost for the new building of which a sum of Rs 23,000/= was obtained by selling the old building to the government. Apart

from this, donations from the people of Dharga Town and well-wishers as well as a lottery draw, and drama shows helped complete the fund. Finally, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1954, the new building was ceremoniously declared open on a grand scale by the Prime Minister at that time, Sir John Kotelawela.

The lands close to the new building were donated by Mr. U.L.M. Magdoom, Mr. M.P. Shafie (J.P), Mr. O.L.M. Abdullah, Mr. O.L.M.A. Thahir and Mr. O.L.M.A. Wahid. The Magazine 'Zahirian' was published during the period between 1957 - 1958. H.S.C. classes in the Arts and Science streams were also started during this period.

In 1961, the government took over the school under its realms and this was indeed a sorrowful event for those who took pride in seeing the rapid development of a private school in their midst. With this event, the principal Mr. S.L.M. Shafie Marikar too resigned from his post.

Zahira College Aluthgama excelled academically as well as in the field of sports. It had a fully equipped science laboratory, a big library, and a spacious playground. It was the only Muslim school in the Kalutara district to have facilities to play leather ball cricket. Zahirians also played soccer, volleyball, and Table Tennis. Winning the soccer championship of the Kalutara district in the year 1956 was a crowning moment in the history of sports at Zahira. The then principal Mr. S.L.M. Shafie Marikar did his utmost for the development of education and personality of the Zahirians. He also organized an 800-mile-long tour of the country with 30 students and teachers under his leadership.

During this period, Mr. A.A.A. Jiffry (Dharga Town Akbar Sir's father) functioned as the deputy principal. Later, Mr. S.G. Samuel, a graduate in chemistry functioned as the deputy principal. He

continued as the D.P even after the takeover of the school by the government and even under Mr. Shuaib as the principal.

During Mr. Shafie Marikar's period, many efficient Tamil teachers from the North also served at Zahira College. Ms. Sinnathamby, Ms. Sellaththurai, Ms. Sinnaththurai, Ms. Maanickam, Mr. T. Nadaraja and Mr. Kandiah were some of them. Mr. Mueen Marikar (Ziyard Marikar's son) and Mr. A.V.M. Hussain (Mr. Hussaimath's father) and many others functioned as members of the staff. Moulavi M.I.L. Hasan Lebbe of Mawanella taught Arabic lessons as well as functioned as the Head Master of the College.

The main block of the college with its magnificent appearance reflects Islamic architectural patterns. Several Zahirians of Mr. Shafie Marikar's era occupy important positions in different parts of the country.

With the government taking over the school, Mr. A.Z. Omardeen was appointed as principal. From 01.01.1963, Zahira College was amalgamated with Al-Hambra Maha Vidyalaya. From 1963 to 1965, Zahira College was degraded to a primary school with classes only up to standard five and Mr. M.M. Abdul Hassan (Sally master) functioned as the Head Master of this School.

Once again from 01.01.1966, Zahira College became a senior school having classes from Grade nine to the upper classes with students in all three mediums. Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib functioned as the principal with twenty teachers and two hundred and twenty students enrolled. Al-Haj I.A. Cader and Al-Haj M.A. Bakeer Markar as members of parliament of Beruwela electorate helped in obtaining governmental aid to the School.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 1970, the foundation was laid for building the assembly hall funded by Marhoom M.I.M. Naleem Hajiar. In the year 1970, Grade 6, 7 and 8 were also started. The

government helped with putting up a building consisting of two classrooms. In 1974, with the assistance of the government, the school obtained a Vocational Training center, an agricultural science block and classes for the commerce stream.

In 1987, Zahira College became a Head school under the cluster system and in the same year, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, the principal Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib retired from his service. During his period, he had strived a great deal to bring about success in academic field as well as in sports and also to bring about a disciplined set of students at Zahira College Aluthgama.

After him, Al-Haj A.W.M. Ajward assumed duties as principal. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1989, Mr. M.R. Malik took over and functioned for four months, from 1989 to 1994, Mr. M.L.A. Abdul Ahla from 1994 - 2006, Mr. A.B.M. Alavi, and from 2007 – 2011 and Mr. M.T.M. Mujeebudeen functioned as the principals of the college. This was followed by the deputy principal Mr. M.S.M. Yasmin performing as principal for two months and was followed by Mr. U.L.M. Razik until 04.10.2012. Once again, Mr. Yasmin took over duties as principal and on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2015 Mr. M.T.M. Hamza assumed duties as principal. Upon his retirement Mrs. M.N.F Nizrin took over the school, functioning as the principal from 21.03.2017 up to date.

Mr. M.L.A. Abdul Ahla, while being the principal took several efforts for the development of the school. It was during his period that Zahira College celebrated its Golden jubilee in the year 1993. Further on 28.10.1993, the 172<sup>nd</sup> Mahapola Exhibition was held at the college premises. During the period of Mr. A.B.M. Alavi, with the co-operation and the untiring efforts of the staff, the college set the proud record of sending sixty students to the Universities from the Commerce, Science and Arts streams. In 1997, a temporary building with four classrooms was built with

the co-operation of Mr. Hassana Marikkar, the secretary of the school development society and his committee members.

Mr. M.T.M. Mujeebudeen also contributed greatly towards the development of the college and the progress of the students. On the 26.09.2008, the foundation was laid for the construction of a three-storeyed building with twelve classrooms, funded under the million-rupee financial allocation scheme of Hon. Reginald Cooray, the Chief Minister of the Western Province back then. A wall around the college premises was a long-felt need. A 200-feet long section of the wall was therefore constructed at a cost of rupees three and a half lakhs by the efforts of the school development society and the old Boys Association.

The Zahira College under-13 Soccer team became the champions of the Kalutara District. Muhamed Arafath was selected to the under-15 Inter school Sri Lankan team, that toured Saudi Arabia. Muhamed Rahmath of the under-15 team was selected to represent the Sri Lankan team that toured Iran. During Mr. Mujeebudeen's period, 27 students entered the Universities from all three streams. Foundation was also laid for a three-storey building with the financial assistance of Deshabandu Al-Haj Z.A.M. Refai, proprietor of 'Zam Gems' and a social activist. The principal and the members of the school development society did their utmost to obtain the financial assistance as well as the approval from the Ministry of Education. Finally, Construction began on the 12.02 2012 and the building was declared open on 21.01.2013, when Mr. M.S.M. Yasmin was the principal. Al-Haj Z.A.M. Refai was the Chief Guest at the grand opening ceremony. A large gathering comprising the principal, former principals, teachers, students, past students, religious dignitaries, intellectuals, and the people of Dharga Town graced the occasion.

At present, under Mrs. M.N.F. Nisrin as the Principal, the College has shown progress in the results of examinations of the G.C.E

(A/L) classes. From 2017 to 2019, thirty-six students gained admission to the Universities to follow courses in Science, Arts, Commerce, Agriculture and Islamic studies. A separate primary section with classes from grades 1 - 5 functions, with Mr. M.S.M. Sakwan as the Principal of Zahira Primary school.

## **32. NATIONAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION DHARGA TOWN**

In 1935, the first Muslim Inspector of Schools, Mr. M.P. Mohamed (Packeer Master) from Maradana, Beruwela, felt the need for a Teachers' Training College within the areas between Moratuwa and Tissa Maharama. The timely donation of a five-acre block of land by Al-Haj I.L.M. Mahmood made it possible for the Teachers Training College to be established in Dharga Town.

This educational Institute which functions as the National College of Education today evolved from the Aluthgama Teachers' Training College started on the 01.01.1941. Sir Razik Fareed, Dr. M.C.M. Kaleel and Dr. T.B. Jaya took great efforts along with the government to make it a reality.

From its inception up to 1957, that is for a period of sixteen years, only male Muslim teachers were trained here. Al-Haj I.L.M. Mashoor functioned as the Principal from 01.11.1941 to 30.12.1961. From 1958, it became a Teachers' College for female teachers and continues to shine as a Teachers' College for ladies for more than sixty years.

In 2001, it was raised to the position of Dharga Town National College of Education. The first president of the College, Mrs. M.F. Noorul Haarjiya functioned efficiently until June 2011. The college had 75 teachers and six lecturers. When it was Aluthgama Teachers' Training College, Al-Haj I.L.M. Mashoor, Mr. A.A.A.

Jiffry, Mrs. Jariya Mansoor, Mrs. Haleema Kamaldeen, Mrs Shakoor, Mrs. Azhariya Nifail, Mrs. M.P. Zakariya, Mrs. Subaida Cassim, Mr. A.H.A. Wahid, and Mrs. Fowziya Niyar functioned as principals.

Admissions to this College is allocated as being 90% for Muslims and 10% for Tamils. It is particularly mentioned that Tamil teachers from the Western and Southern provinces should be admitted. Mr. M.B. Rizvi functions as the president of the College at present, Moulavi A.R.M. Silmy as the Vice president (Finance), Mr. Ganeswaram as Vice president (academic) at the college.

There are twenty lecturers on the staff and a total of 526 teacher trainees. A teacher training center also functions here since 1999 and unlike the other Colleges of Education in this Country, this College still functions with its old buildings.

### **33. NAJEEB HAJIAR EDUCATION CENTER**

The Najeeb Hajiar Education Center (NEC) today is at the forefront in performing social service activities which happens to be a timely need. This Institute functions in a two-storeyed building on 25 perches of land, at about 250 meters from the Main Road, along Lotus Road.

The educational center featured three areas at the beginning, namely,

1. Activities regarding religious education
2. A library for educational development
3. A center for planning social service activities

Najeeb Hajiar had engaged in several small-scale social service activities from the day he began to earn by himself and after the year 1999, he received plenty of opportunities to engage in social

service activities further. In the same year, he obtained financial aid for the reconstruction of the Madrasah in Galle where he studied, for the construction work of the three-storeyed building of Theruwuppalli in Dharga Town in 2001, and for the construction of the new building for the Muaiyidul Islam Arabic College in 2004. All these became possible as a result of the generosity of a philanthropist who trusted him completely.

The foundation laying ceremony for the N.E.C took place on 17.06.2013. On the same day a book entitled "Nenjam Niraintha Najeeb Hajiar" was released at the Alif International School Hall. Construction work was completed within a period of one and a half years and was ceremonially opened on 08.03.2015. The Ambassador for Abu Dhabi in Sri Lanka, a Minister Dr. Rajitha Senaratne, Al-Haj M.S.M. Aslam M.P and a large gathering of the people of Dharga Town participated in this ceremony.

In Allah's name, Najeeb Hajiar dedicated the prayer room to his mother, the Quran madrasa to his father and the library to his wife. The Janazah service (2004-2016) was also started and Najeeb Hajiar expanded his personal activities with the combination of his three sons named Nihmathullah, Rahmathullah and Hidayathullah. Using this centre, he was able to perform even more activities with the help of generous persons.

The Quran class for about 100 children is noteworthy among the continuous activities of the N.E.C. Children from the ages 4 to 8 benefit from these evening Quran classes with two Usthads functioning here. 'Ahadiya' classes are also held once a week and the introduction of a knowledge-related book also takes place on one of the days. The library provides daily newspapers in Tamil, Sinhala and English languages. It also contains Tamil, English, Sinhala, and Arabic books. The Library is kept open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day with facilities having been made for both males and females to make use of the place. Books

related to the syllabuses of the students as well as books related to general knowledge based on religious education are found in large numbers.

Further, many services and activities are promoted, centred on the N.E.C. The most important one being the Janazah (Ambulance) service, extended to all Muslim villagers in the Kalutara district. The people of Thunduwa, Panapitiya and Balapitiya of Galle district also benefit from this service. The work of this service is carried out by two people. Within a few months of starting this Janazah service, Najeeb Hajiar was present at a funeral where the Janazah was brought with the help of this service and a person there came forward and said “You’re doing this service now although efforts were taken to begin a service of this nature 15 years ago and I was also invited for the meeting held where many ideas were discussed, but nothing materialized in the end”. Najeeb Hajiar had replied stating that “Today, their efforts have materialized. All praise is due to Allah”.

Once a Dharga Town woman’s Janazah which was brought from the Nagoda hospital had to be stopped on the way at the Maggona Jummah Masjid to bathe the body as her house didn’t have the facilities to carry out that duty. Najeeb Hajiar had been very moved when he heard about this incident due to which within a month or two, he made arrangements to build a room for this purpose at the Theruwuppalli premises through his ‘NEC’ Institute.

Once, as Najeeb Hajiar passed by a cemetery in a car with his wife in Abu Dhabi, she observed a tent like structure and wanted to know what it was. On listening to his answer, she suggested the necessity of such a tent at the Theruwuppalli cemetery at Dharga Town. Accordingly, Najeeb Hajiar constructed similar tents at the cemeteries of the Dharga Town Grand Mosque,

Theruwuppalli, Beruwala, Maradana Masjid, Maggona Masjid and Galle (Thalapitiya) Jummah Masjid at his own expense. Many more requests from the other Masjids in the district too had been forwarded to Najeeb Hajiar who hopes to fulfil their requests in the future, Insha Allah.

With the formation of the Dharga Town N.E.C, the Thaqwa Masjid, Panapitiya Jummah Masjid, Haji Lane Masjid, Adigarigoda Masjid and Noor Masjid were beautifully renovated at a great cost. All these were undertaken with the funds donated by a generous person who placed his trust on Najeeb Hajiar.

Najeeb Hajiar describes the incidents prior to the formation of his N.E.C. The land which was 25 perches in extent near Lotus Road behind Zahira College was purchased by Najeeb Hajiar, thinking of the future of his small children, and in 1996, when he returned from Abu Dhabi with his family, he had to sell the jewelry given to his wife to pay the money for this land. In 2008, while planning to build a house for them, a great thought occurred to him. All his great tasks relating to masjids and madrasas had been done with the help of other generous persons and Allah had only made him a mediator, All praise is due to Allah. It was then that he thought of doing charities of his own and the ones which had not been undertaken so far.

He discussed this matter with his wife and children stating "I wish to donate the land for meritorious deeds in the name of Allah. As my descendants you occupy high positions in life. I did not inherit wealth from my parents or get them from my wife, so you too should try to earn such wealth through hard work" to which his wife and children agreed, extending their cooperation.

All activities of N.E.C. are undertaken with the participation of his children (family). Since 2013 a felicitation ceremony is held every year to honour around 100 students from 25 Muslim

schools who passed the Grade 5 scholarship examinations. At the beginning, a few Sinhala schools were also included in this project, however, their participation decreased gradually. This was a major activity undertaken by the N.E.C. Hajiar describes the keen interest taken by his children in social service activities. When expressing his ideas as to why these activities should be recorded in writing, he says that his vision is to enlighten the coming younger generation about such activities.

In 2016, when Najeeb Hajiar was in Dharga Town, he went to the Grand Mosque for Luhar prayers with his three sons and they found many shortcomings in the washroom areas there. Although it had its beautiful architectural patterns and the elegant greenery of its garden, the condition of the washroom was not satisfactory. Compared to the elegant hygienically well-maintained washrooms of the masjids of the Arab countries, this was a great drawback being the oldest masjid on the Main Street of Dharga Town. Moreover, people who come to Dharga Town from outside too come here and hence to have proper facilities be made was the request of his children. Najeeb Hajiar was able to get the financial assistance and beautifully renovated the washroom and ablution area within a short period of time.

One day in 2017, Najeeb Hajiar felt extremely sad seeing the poor state of the Thaqwa Masjid upon going there with his son Hidayathullah. He discussed the matter with the people of the area and made arrangements with Mr. Hassan Nowfal, a member of the Board of Trustees to undertake the task of the reconstruction of the masjid. Today, the Thaqwa Masjid has a beautiful appearance.

While the Thaqwa Masjid was being reconstructed, a group from the Panapitiya Masjid came to Dharga Town and appealed to

Najeeb Hajiar to reconstruct their masjid too which they had been planning to do for some time. Upon seeing the state of the masjid in person, Najeeb Hajiar decided to reconstruct and extend the masjid with every facility and today this masjid stands majestically in the village of Panapitiya. Further, some renovation work was undertaken at the Al-Ash'ariyya Madrasa in Balapitiya and it was declared open by Najeeb Hajiar on 30/12/2018.

When speaking about the reconstruction of the Masjid Bilal at Haji Lane, Najeeb Hajiar stated that his youngest son Hidayathullah requested him to provide a bigger building in place of its original smaller structure. His son's father-in-law Ilyas Haji also spoke to Najeeb Hajiar about this matter. It also was the wish and aspiration of the people of Haji lane. At this juncture, Najeeb Hajiar took the steps to build a spacious two storeyed building for this mosque. Today this mosque appears very beautiful, on the bank of the river.

The Masjidur Rahman of Adikarigoda was reconstructed at a big cost and opened as a two storeyed building in 2018. Mr. M.S.M. Munas who passed away recently, was a member of its Board of Trustees and a friend of Najeeb Hajiar. He too had his share in this task. He had requested Najeeb Hajiar to take an interest in the reconstruction work many times as both had connections when they were working abroad. In this matter too, he followed the same approach taken for the reconstruction of the other masjids. The construction of this masjid has been completed, giving it a beautiful appearance.

The N.E.C undertook the responsibility of constructing a spacious building for the pre-existing small building of the Children's Orphanage in Vavuniya on 28.03.2021. This new building has classrooms as well as a separate section for prayers.

On 01.02.2021, the N.E.C started the construction of a large well to supply water to around 30 houses in the village of Welippenna. Najeeb Hajiar himself declared open the well for public use on 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2021.

An old Zavia built by a wealthy person from Chinafort existed in an area in Kalutara and about 80 families lived in this area. Najeeb Hajiar came forward to renovate the dilapidated building of this Zavia. On 03.11.2019, foundation was laid. The building cost around Rs.800,000 and now prayers are conducted in the new building. It was declared open officially on 25.12.2021 by Najeeb Hajiar, who was the Chief Guest at the function. On 01.04.2021 A well was also constructed to supply water to a Masjid in Hapugastalawa, the people of the area and the wayfarers. The construction of the second floor of the Fober's Lane Buhari Thakkiya was also undertaken and completed.

Let us make dua to Almighty Allah to lengthen the chain of social service activities of the N.E.C and inspire many more generous people in the future.

### **34. ISHA-ATHUL ISLAM CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

Isha-athul Islam, a religious and social service organization was engaged in many welfare projects for the benefit of the community under the leadership of Marhoom Ash-Sheikh Hamza Aalim bin Abdullah Aalim Hajiar.

Once when an advisory meeting of this organization was held in 1978 at Alhambra Vidyalaya in Dharga Town after Isha prayers, a new project to set up an orphanage was proposed by Al-Haj M.H. Abdul Haleem, former principal Marhoom M.M.A. Alavi and

Marhoom A.M.M. Ziyard (teacher). Accordingly, the president Ash-Sheikh Hamza Aalim agreed to set up a Centre for orphans.

At the inaugural meeting held under the leadership of Ash-Sheikh Hamza Aalim regarding this matter, a committee under the leadership of Marhoom Al-Haj M.A. Fathah was nominated. The other members of the committee were Marhoom M.M.A. Alavi (Principal), Marhoom I.L.M. Shuaib (Principal), Marhoom A.L.M. Ismail (former Education Officer), Al-Haj M.H. Abdul Haleem, Mr. A.R.M. Sameem (teacher), Mr. A.M.M. Ziyard (teacher), Mr. D.L.M. Jiffry, Mr. M.S.A. Ghany (teacher), Marhoom Mr. A.G. Hussain Ismail (the then lecturer at the Teachers College) and Mr. M.L.M. Salman.

The Isha-athul Islam orphanage was established on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1979. The premises belonging to Mr. Salam (teacher) on Main Street Dharga Town was rented out and was declared open by the then deputy speaker Al-Haj M.A. Bakeer Markar, and sixteen orphans were admitted on that day.

In 1987, Al-Haj Uwais Hashim of Dharga Town donated 63 perches of land adjoining his factory building to this orphanage. The buildings were renovated, and the orphans found a new abode. The leader of the movement Al-Haj Ash-Sheik Hamza bin Abdullah Aalim, the then minister Al-Haj M.H. Mohamed and Al-Haj Uwais Hashim graced the opening ceremony. The orphanage thus started has been fostering and nourishing orphans from Dharga Town, Beruwala, Kalutara and many neighboring villages. Today the orphanage along with its physical resources provides many services to those who reside in it.

In the development of this orphanage, contributions in the form of economic and physical resources by individuals and the devoted services of intellectuals must be remembered with gratitude. The co-operation of the intellectuals, entrepreneurs,

business experts as well as the services of the members of the Board of Directors in the progress of this orphanage are noteworthy.

Many schemes have been implemented for the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the orphans. The institution functions with the basic purpose of creating a happy environment for the children to grow up in and lead resourceful lives, giving the required training for their future life, providing vocational training, and guiding them to live as good citizens based on religious teachings. The task of moulding the orphans as multi-faceted individuals and patriots capable of living in communal harmony, to be religious and to make them excellent citizens, is a long journey.

This institution is incorporated through the standing order No 34/1984 of the Parliament of Sri Lanka and has the approval of the Department of Inland Revenue as an approved charity, registered under the Department of Social Services, and registered as a legally approved Children's center under the Department of Child Care and Rehabilitation. Therefore, as this institution comes under the direct control of the relevant governmental departments, it functions as an organized and legally approved institution.

## **35. JAMAATH COUNCIL OF DHARGA TOWN**

The Jamaath council was formed in 1972 by the Board of Trustees of the two prominent mosques in Dharga Town, namely the Grand Mosque and the Theruwuppalli. The purpose of forming this was to attend to the functions of the two mosques and to attend to the social welfare needs of the town.

The efforts taken by Al-Haj M.A. Fathah, Mr. A.R. Mohammed (then chairman of the Dharga Town T.C) and Al-Haj Moulavi Seyyed Ahamed Aalim must be appreciated. The trustees of the mosques back then, Al-Haj M. Fathah and Mr. A.R. Mohammed handled this matter with transparency. They held discussions with the people to obtain ideas of the Jamaath. Thus, this council was formed with the consent of the people. The constitution of the council was prepared by Mr. M.M.A. Alavi, Mr. M.I.M. Haarith, Dr. A.M. Ameez, and Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib within a week's time. Thirty members, to represent all the divisions of the town were selected to form a committee.

Marhoom Al-Haj Hashim Alavi had been the treasurer of the council for several years. The secretaries were Marhooms Mr. A.L.M. Ismail (Director of Education), Mr. I.L.M. Shuaib (former principal of Zahira), Mr. M.S.M. Furkan (teacher), and Mr. Ziyard (teacher) who had been secretary for many years. Moulavi Maza Aalim had been functioning as its president since 1999.

In the recent past, Mr. M.Z.M. Naeem had been the secretary for some time. Later, Al-Haj A.M.M. Mohideen (teacher) was selected to his position and since then has been working devotedly. Al-Haj M.M. Awfan was also treasure of the council. After his passing away, Al-Haj A.H.M. Haneem was selected to that place and he still holds the office, contributing much towards the affairs of the council. In 2017, Al-Haj M.H.M. Affan was elected as the assistant treasurer.

It is appropriate to mention here that when the Kafala Foundation learnt about services rendered by the Jamaath Council, they helped to build houses through the Jamaath Council to 58 underprivileged families. The 'Alif' Institute also gave houses to four families through the Jamaath Council. Further, the Kafala Foundation helped some widows by giving them a monthly allowance through the council. In 2013 or so, 38 perches of land

at Meeripenne was distributed among five families. The Najeeb Educational Centre also contributes to the social services carried out by this council.

The services done by the Jamaath Council are carried out after consulting the Board of trustees of the two mosques. It is involved in many functions such as fulfilling the educational needs that arise in Dharga Town, investigation of appeals or problems submitted to the council by the people, taking an interest in the matters of the Masjid, participating in the welfare activities of the Jamaath and also in the matters of the less privileged people, formation of the Baitul-Maal Fund with the co-operation of the mosques and spending for the expenses of the Masjids and that of social welfare projects. Along with these, Zakath is collected and distributed in an efficient way for those eligible. The committees for education, peace and social health undertake many social activities.

The office of the Jamaath Council is situated on the ground floor of the Theruwuppalli. The service rendered by this council for the past 48 years is very indeed great. Many of those who served in this council are not among the living today. May Allah accepts their deeds and bless them. Many are striving hard according to their capacities in this regard even today. Let us pray for this service to continue and let us remember and pray for those who contributed their services through this Jamaath Council.

## **36. DHARGA TOWN REGIONAL HOSPITAL**

The Dharga Town Hospital began as a rural hospital where only out-patients were treated with medicines. There was no permanent Medical Officer in charge, and it had not functioned regularly, having started as 'Aluthgamweediya Rural Hospital

for women'. A popular donor from Dharga Town, Mr. C.M. Hamid Marikkar had donated the land for this hospital.

On the 29th of January 1949, a grand reception was organized by the Aluthgamweediya Muslim Social welfare and educational organization to the then Prime Minister Hon. D.S. Senanayake. The president of the organization was Marhoom A.R. Mohamed (former chairman) and its secretary was Mr.. I.L.M. Mashoor, the then principal of the Aluthgama Teachers' Training College. This was an important day in the history of Dharga Town that must be recorded in golden letters.

On this occasion, along with the first Prime Minister of the Ceylon, several members of the cabinet had also participated. They were the Minister of Education Mr. C.W.W. Kannangara, Minister of health and local government Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake, Minister of Labour Dr. T.B. Jayah, and Mr. J.R. Jayawardena (former president). Many other politicians, officers from the Department of Education and other renowned persons of the area had also graced the occasion.

The Function was held at the present day Alhambra Maha Vidyalaya premises. A petition was submitted to the Prime Minister's consideration by this organization who had put forth several requests for the future development of Dharga Town, among which was a request to appoint a permanent Medical Officer in Charge to the hospital and to upgrade it so that both men and women would be able to receive treatment there. Further, a request to establish a central Dispensary was made and it was based on these request that the unit for the males was opened in this hospital. In 1975 due to the efforts of Mr.. I.A. Cader, M.P and then deputy speaker a maternity ward was opened.

During the period of Al-Haj. Dr. Badiudeen Mohamed and later Al-Haj Fawzy as Ministers of health, the hospital underwent many developments. A better maternity ward and a dental unit were opened. Ministers of health Mr. Sripala de Silva and Dr. Rajitha Senaratne too have contributed much towards the progress of this hospital. During the period of Dr. Rajitha Senarathna, the hospital was not only upgraded as a Regional hospital, but a three-storeyed building had also been approved, of which the work is still in progress today.

The Dharga Town hospital development Committee takes a keen interest along with the contributions of the people in the area. The committee has helped by the way of providing essential instruments to the hospital. Many donors too have helped by contributing to essential needs of this hospital.

Once the three storeyed building is completed, it is hoped that the O.P.D male and female units, the children's unit, Dental unit, the laboratory, the unit for minor surgeries, unit for non-Communicable diseases and the unit for Emergency treatments will begin to the function efficiently.

## **37. THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF DHARGA TOWN**

For twenty years since 1951, the local administration of Dharga Town was under the authority of the Town Council with the following ten years being administered by a special commissioner of the government. After 1980 and up to date, it is administered by the Beruwela Pradeshiya Sabha, which was formed in place of some former village councils and town councils. Thus, Dharga Town lost the local authority of its own. The Beruwela Pradeshiya Sabha includes the whole area of Beruwela electorate except

the Beruwela Town Council area, due to which Dharga Town has lost its majority representation.

Prior to gaining independence, the administration was directly under the government. When the first Prime Minister Hon D.S. Senanayake visited Dharga Town on the 29th of January 1949, many requests were put forward to him, at the reception which was accorded to him by the Aluthgamweediya Muslim Educational and Social welfare organization. The president and the secretary of this organization were Mr. A.R. Mohamed and Mr. I.L.M. Mashoor respectively. One of these main requests was a local authority of its own to Dharga Town, and as a result Dharga Town got its own Town council in 1951.

During the period between 1970 - 1977, the then M.P. for the Beruwela electorate Mr. I.A. Cader made it clear that in the future, there would be Pradeshiya Sabhas instead of Village Councils and Town Councils. Although he took some effort to make the local government authority an Urban Council, it did not materialize.

There were seven elected members in the town council of Dharga Town. Mr. A.R. Mohamed functioned for a long time as the first chairman of the Dharga Town. T.C. and he was followed by Mr. A.L.A. Sathar, Mr. A.M. Naeem and then by Al-Haj A.H.M. Sideeqe. Dharga Town had benefited much during the tenure of these Chairmen.

The elected members of the Town council were Mr. A.R. Mohamed, Mr. O.L.M. Noordeen, Mr. M.M. Saheer, Al-Haj A.H.M. Sideeqe, Al-Haj Abdul Cader, Al-Haj M.C.A. Wahid, Mr. Thahir Marikar, Mr. U.H.M. Uwais, Mr. A.M. Naeem, Mr. A.L.M. Sathar, Mr. D.LM. Jiffry, Mr. A.M. Ismail, Mr. Shahul Hameed, Mr. A.M. Ismail, Mr. Jubilee Izzadeen, Mr. T.A. Wadood, and Al-Haj M.I.M. Jameel.

Al-Haj A.R.M. Badiudeen was the chairman of the Beruwela Pradeshiya Sabha during the period between 1991-1997 when Dharga Town came under the administration. At present, there are six members from Dharga Town at this Pradeshiya Sabha. Marhoom Al-Haj Abdul Cader (Principal) after his retirement from service contested and became the first member to enter the Provincial Council from Dharga Town to represent the Kalutara District. He also has rendered great services to Dharga Town while he was a member.

Al-Haj M.A. Fathah, Al-Haj I.L.M. Mashoor and Mr. Shahabdeen had held office as Special Commissioners of Dharga Town consecutively. Dharga Town had benefited from the services of Al-Haj Bakeer Marker, Dr. Rajitha Senarathna, and Al-Haj M.S.M. Aslam when they were members of Parliament. Further, the service contributed by members of parliament and Pradeshiya Sabhas of our brother communities cannot be denied.

Dharga Town has benefited greatly from every government that came to power. Politicians, Educationalists, administrators in mosques and individuals have contributed a big share in the development of our town. In this situation where the country is faced with the Covid-19 Pandemic, the political stand taken by our community should be within a united, knowledge-based framework. This is the need of the time.

## **38. NAJEEB HAJIAR CHILDREN'S PARK**

If we look back at the 70-years' history of the post independent Dharga Town, "Najeeb Hajiar Children's Park" which was opened in the year 2019 is a rare accomplishment.

When Najeeb Hajiar spoke about this children's park he said that it was the administrator of 'Voice of Dharga Town' Hisham

Shaheed who had told him about the necessity for a children's park in the town. Najeeb Hajiar had responded by saying "Insha Allah, for that you'll need around 100 perches of land. At least 50 perches must be available".

The same topic was taken up again by the then Principal of Alhambra Maha Vidyalaya Mr. Nalri who had spoken to Hajiar and told him that the school ground would be suitable for such a park. Najeeb Hajiar had then consented without any objection. Principal Mr. Nalri contacted the Kalutara District Education department and obtained their approval to use the school's land for the children's park and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2019, Najeeb Hajiar laid the foundation stone at a ceremony organized for this occasion.

The Najeeb Hajiar's own children had then inquired as to how the money with which he was going to build this park would be obtained as it may involve millions of rupees to complete the work. Hajiar has answered them by saying, "I've worked in Abu Dhabi for 40 years. For 33 years I served in a high position as a government servant. I retired on 01.07.2018 and I've got my pensions. I'm going to spend a part of it for this park". This response of his had made his children extremely happy.

Before implementing this project, the 'Dharga Town Aid Foundation' was consulted regarding the plan of the project. With their co-operation, the park was completed within a period of four months. And on 18.04.2019, Najeeb Hajiar ceremoniously declared open the park amidst a distinguished gathering.

Today we see many families bringing their children and grandchildren to the park in the evenings. They get a chance to make use of the playground equipment installed there and the parents are happy and satisfied when they witness their children thoroughly enjoying themselves. A building has also been

constructed including facilities for prayers, dining room, washroom, and toilets.

The social service activities of Najeeb Hajiar is being carried out in many ways not only in Dharga Town but also in the other areas of the district. Some of these projects are completed with his own money while some others are done by obtaining funds from donors. He is very keen about doing things that have not been done so far in Dharga Town, and this park occupies the second place. The responsibility of maintaining the park has been delegated to AlHambra Maha Vidyalaya.

## **39. SPORTS IN DHARGA TOWN**

Sports in Dharga Town also has a long history. Although there are many sport clubs in Dharga Town, two of them namely, the Zavia Sports Club and the Y.M.S.C withstood the challenges of time having seen half a century of existence.

The Zaviya Sports club was founded in 1973 by Alhaj. M.M. Ismail with the cooperation of some of his friends. The name 'Zavia' has another story to narrate. Around ten years prior to the formation of the Zavia Sports Club, some youth had made use of the land near the Zavia Road and Faasiyathul Shaduliya Zaviya to receive training in football, also playing on this land. Those boys had called themselves the Zavia team.

In 1969, Mr. A.R.M. Badiuddeen formed the Y.M.S.C of Dharga Town. Since then, assuming the responsibility of the leadership, he had guided the club and members very efficiently and had proved to be a talented player during his time. Then, M. Mulaffer of the club was selected for the All-Ceylon National Football team. Similarly, there were good players in the Zavia Sports club. Some of whom were Zahran, Gulshar, Shukri and Zaneer.

Before Y.M.S.C was formed, there was another club called Dharga United. Their play ground was in 'Aanaikkulam' which was larger than the Zahira College grounds those days and had been a popular club in the Kalutara district. Some of its players are still around to narrate their stories, with talented players in the club being Noor, Nowman, Marzook (Badiudeen's brother), Marzook (Ameer Faizal's brother), Shafie, Army Nizar, Thimsar, and A.C.M. Naseer.

Simultaneously, another club called the 'Islamic United' was formed by O.L.M. Ziyard (Village officer) in competition with Dharga United. Later, more clubs like 'Three Stars', 'Black Diamond' were started. In 1967, Al-Haj A.H.M. Sideeqe, the then chairman of the Town Council, formed a club called the 'Blue Crescent'. Although there were many such clubs, only two remain up to date, the Zavia Sports club and the Y.M.S.C.

Throughout the history of Dharga Town, it was football or soccer that had been the most favourite game of the people. In the recent past too clubs like 'Dharga York', 'United', 'Liverpool', 'Superstar', 'Golden Rise', 'Red Star', 'Grade Boys', and 'Mokford' have been formed to play soccer. The teams of these clubs have trained themselves efficiently to compete in first-class matches, being a challenge to the two clubs mentioned earlier too.

While Imtiaz Hussain of Jeelani Road was playing for Y.M.S.C, he was selected for the all-island school team and played for the team at the National level. Further, the club 'Red Star,' brought credit to Dharga Town at National level in soccer. In 2020, they competed at the National level in the soccer tournament conducted by the government and was selected for the final match with Colombo F.C and became runners-up. The match however was a draw, and they came in second due to a penalty goal. The 'Red Star' club happens to be one of the best eighteen teams in Sri Lanka today.

Although we don't see any progress in the growth of cricket, there are quite a number of cricket fans in Dharga Town today. At times they form teams and play soft ball matches. The grandson of Al-Haj M.A. Fathah has played in some test matches for Sri Lanka, and he has been the coach of the under-19 Bangladesh cricket team that won the 50 Over World Championship. Karate training is gaining popularity in Sri Lanka today because of the self-defense skills involved and it's encouraging to see that even our youth have started to take an interest in this art.

We must admit the fact that despite the interest taken in soccer, the youth from Dharga Town have not shone at a National level in any other games or athletic events. This could be attributed to certain short comings in the attitude of our society. Volleyball was played at times, but not continued. In the minds of some people, there is a fear that even the simple games that were played in the home garden and grounds would soon become things of the past. Physical exercise is extremely important to build a healthy community, as a healthy mind could be found only in a healthy body.

## **40. AID FOUNDATION SRI LANKA**

D.T.A.F is an organization formed by some gentlemen in Dharga Town with the idea of carrying out social services. Their aim is to serve not only the community that one belongs to, but to everyone especially to those who need educational, health or other important facilities. The organization doesn't have any political or religious affiliations. Its service is based on the concept that the development of a society and country depends on the educational and economic development of the individual. Since

2016, the organization has been involved in serving people within its ability under the direct supervision of the government. With the idea of extending their services further, the name D.T.A.F has been changed to Aid Foundation, Sri Lanka. Many of the members in this family of multi social organization are from Dharga Town and their office is situated on Market Road, Dharga Town.

To allow it to be known that the change of name had been done with good intentions, they provided educational facilities to many schools within a short period. The health sector too has been helped. During the Covid-19 pandemic, those affected are being helped in many ways. Lands have been distributed to many extremely poor families and further, housing projects too have been carried out.

I think it's appropriate to mention some of the social services rendered by the Aid Foundation here. During the past year, the victims of Covid-19 in the Kalutara district were given food provisions through the donations given to the organization. Five classrooms, a first-aid room, and another room to provide treatment had been given to Alhambra Maha Vidyalaya. The construction of Najeeb Hajiar Childrens' Park was supervised by this organization, and it has now been handed over to the school administration.

The Aid Foundation is also doing its best in the field of sports. They donated sports equipment to Dharga Town Gnanissara Maha Vidyalaya's Leather ball cricket games. In 2019, a Ramadan sports meet was held in Dharga Town. In 2019 and 2020, the organization brought together all the schools in the area to the Bakeer Markar Stadium to celebrate the Independence Day. It is noteworthy to mention that among the schools which participated, Gnanissara Maha Vidyalaya and Pathraajagoda Vidyalaya were present. The students from the

private educational institutes including NEC too participated in this event.

Gnanissara Vidyalaya has been given assistance for its educational development. Similarly, the students of Panapitiya Vidyalaya in Galle district were supplied with equipment and things necessary for their school. During the 21 days of the Covid-19 lockdown in Thunduwa in 2021, the people of the area were given free medical assistance. So far, the Aid Foundation has done 134 assistances to all irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Insha Allah, they hope to extend this service in the future too.

### **Founders:**

- Fathihi Zavahir (Canada)
- Ikram Hafeel (Malaysia)
- Azaam Nazimudeen (Qatar)
- Mohamed Nowfer (Qatar)

### **Founder Members**

- Rizan Zavahir
- Mohamed Munthaj- Secretary and Treasurer
- Imran Mulaffer
- Zayan Zahran
- Hasmath Mohammed
- Fadi Hassan
- Dulfan Razzak
- Mohammed Faik
- Mohammed Nilam
- Current members of Aid Foundation Sri Lanka
- Luthfan Ali-President
- Ahamed- Vice-president
- Mohamed Hisham

- Aslam Naseemudeen
- Mohamed Faraj
- Mohamed Rusli
- Thuwan Mohamed Faisar Haider
- Riskan Anwar
- Mohamed Isthikam
- Mohamed Rislan
- Mohamed Nasam
- Mohamed Lafran

## **41. ALUTHGAMA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (ADF)**

The people of Dharga Town who lived in Colombo and its suburbs realized that it was of paramount important to set up a common relief vehicle to rebuild the lives of each and every member who were affected by the unfortunate communal attack in the village on June 201 and to bring them back to better than the pre incident status. They met at a residence in Colombo on the 17th June 2014 and discussed what we could be done to achieve that noble objective.

The following were the key objectives to set up a common vehicle to execute the relief and rebuilding process;

- It will be a tedious task to get the exact details of the losses assessed and to estimate the required funds for the relief and rebuilding.
- Lots of duplication can take place in the process of relief and rebuilding unless it is well coordinated.

- There will be various national and international bodies which will come forward to do the relief and rebuilding work and will look for a body which will act with credibility, transparency and functions within a well-established structure.
- It is not only the financial resources we need in this whole process but we are also in need of other volunteer aspects such as counseling, business advisory etc. In light of the above,

Late Eng. Rasmy Hashim gave birth to the idea of forming Aluthgama Development Foundation (ADF).

ADF is a non-political, nonsectarian organization and the purpose of ADF is to be a “A common platform to rebuild and uplift our society through collaboration and engagement of diverse strengths of our people”

We had the inauguration of the ADF on 23rd of June 2014 at Marine Grand, Wellawatta and Masha Allah with very short notice we were able to bring more than 300 people which included all the Dharga Town people who live in Colombo, non Dharga Town members of the business community, members of the media and professionals.

Most importantly there were representatives from Dharga Town who came and shared with the audience the horrible experiences they went through in those few nights of the unfortunate incident.

We witnessed the positive side of entire Dharga Town getting aligned under one umbrella for the benefits of its own people irrespective of the differences we may have and Almighty Allah helped us achieve our goals and may almighty Allah keep us united for ever.

**Vision of ADF:** “Dharga Town to be Sri Lanka’s model city by 2030 with educated community in diverse professions enriched with True Sri Lankan values”

**Founder Board of Governors:** Br. Yoosuf Hameez (Chairman)  
Br. Hussain Sadique (Founder Chairman) Br. Ikram Fatha Br.  
Safwath Mowjood Late Br. Faizal Jiffry Br. Dr. Rumie Hashim Br.  
Ilham Zain

## **Status and Activities**

Aluthgama Development Foundation (Guarantee Limited) - ADF is a limited liability company by guarantee established in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The main activity of the Company is Community Development via raising funds from its members and using the same to develop the City of Aluthgama to the next level in all aspects, which will make it as a complete model city by the year 2030. ADF shall act as the apex body in Aluthgama and operate as a Not-for-Profit, Non Political and Non Sectarian organization in coordinating and aligning all the existing institutions towards a common development path.

The Company formation was initiated on 23rd June 2014 at a meeting held at Marine Grand Hotel, Colombo 6, by a gathering of both business and educational professionals from Aluthgama who were in the capacity of giving leadership and coordination to their own home town through their areas of expertise and wealth.

The purpose of the ADF is to be a “A common platform to rebuild and uplift our society through collaboration and engagement of diverse strengths of our own people” Role of ADF during and soon after the crisis Aluthgama Development Foundation (ADF) as a central body in rebuilding and rehabilitating Dharga Town have played the following roles in the past:

a) Assisted in establishing a common database of the damages suffered by the incident for whole of Dharga Town and co-ordinated in managing the resources centrally and ensured

proper and accurate information was passed to the external parties through one reliable body

- b) Established a strong ground co-ordination team and ensured proper distribution of funds.
- c) Involved in bulk purchases of Electronics, Electrical & Kitchen Utensils to reduce cost.
- d) Eliminated fraudulent or unauthorized fund raising
- e) Co-ordinated with other fund sourcing, rebuilding and rehabilitation bodies.
- f) Eliminated duplication in the relief and rebuilding work by recording and maintaining centrally.
- g) Engaged with Serendib Educational Foundation (SEF) in educational reform. h) Engaged with Muslim aid on livelihood development.
- i) Tied up with YMMA in youth development programs
- j) Tied up with Mercy Lanka on micro finance facilities for small home based businesses. k) Engaged with Insight Institute on business counselling
- l) Established the Ladies' & Youth Empowerment Centre in partnership with Amana Takaful and Ayesha Siddeeka Education Centre
- m) Involved and organized co-existence projects in the area.
- n) Installing of CCTV cameras in the city under the city surveillance project.
- o) Supporting students to pursue with cross disciplined higher educational programs.

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