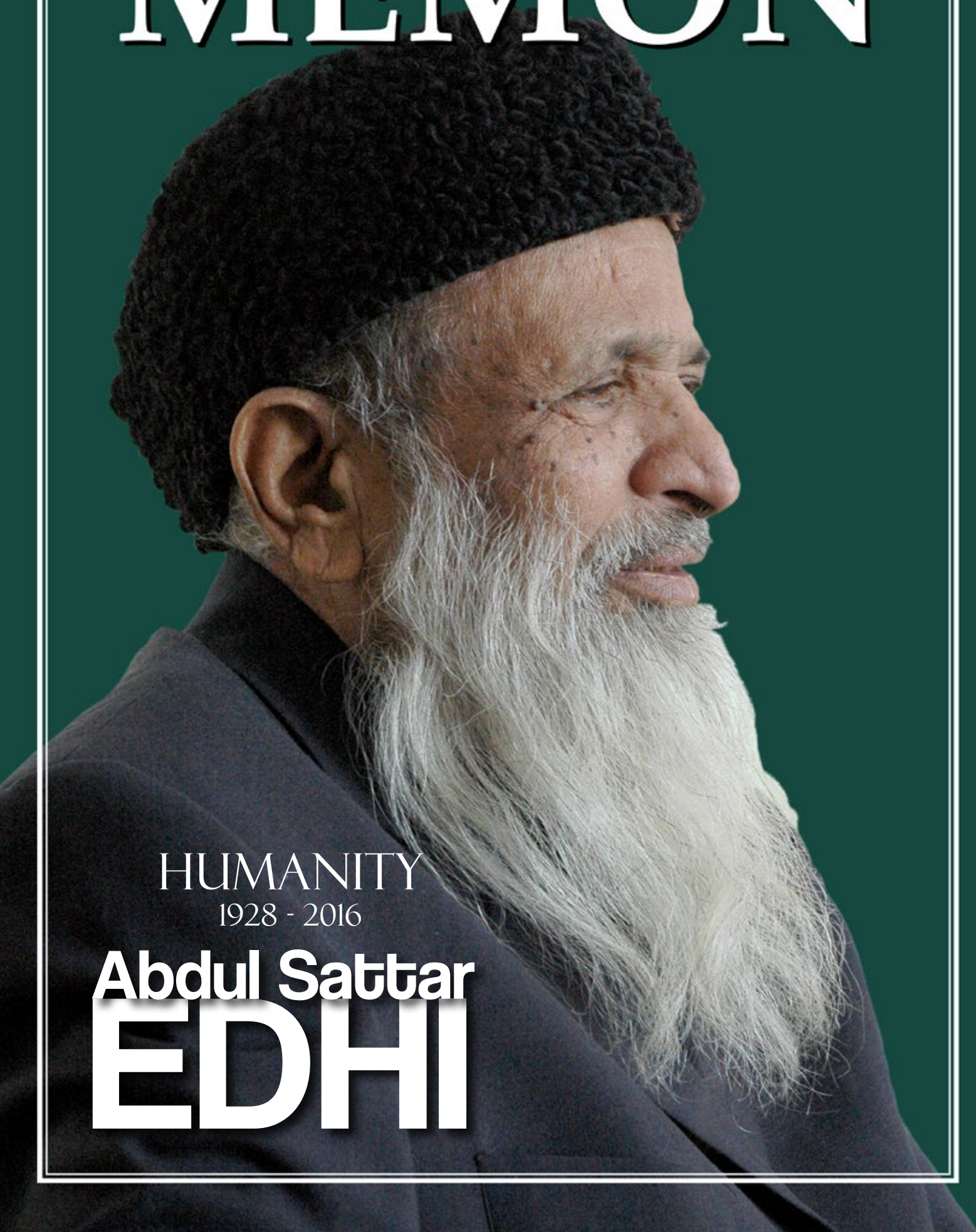


THE MEMON



HUMANITY
1928 - 2016

Abdul Sattar
EDHI

THE MEMON

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ABDUL SATTAR EDHI
1928 - 2016

As the world mourns the death of perhaps the greatest humanitarian of our time, let's take a few moments to reflect on Abdul Sattar Edhi's life, imbibe his values of simplicity and hard work, and carry forward his legacy of Serving Mankind.

Education activist Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Prize Laureate who had launched a campaign to nominate Edhi for the Nobel Peace Prize stated, *"If we wish to pay tribute to Edhi, it is our responsibility to leave a legacy of service to humanity and if we want to pay tribute to him, it is our responsibility to follow in his footsteps."*

We couldn't agree more.

Edhi Sahib, the world remains indebted to you for your six decades of ceaseless service to Humanity. For the millions of precious lives that have been saved by the prompt action of your vast and vigilant ambulance service network. For your extensive aid to the innocent victims of unforeseen calamities across the globe. For all the helpless souls, that have received refuge in your countless shelters, spread across the length and breadth of Pakistan.

Thank You!

May your kind heart be rewarded by the Most Merciful and Most Compassionate, may your gentle soul rest in eternal peace, may He grant you the highest place in Jannah.

Ameen.



The idea of **Nelson Mandela Day** was inspired by our Late Nelson Mandela himself - on the eve of his 90th birthday celebrations in London's Hyde Park in 2008, he said ***"It is time for new hands to lift the burdens. It is in your hands now."***

The message behind this was simple - each individual has the ability and the responsibility to change the world for better. ***"What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is the difference we have made to the lives of others that determine the significance of the life we lead"*** - Nelson Mandela

How do we instil the art of giving in our children THROUGH UNDERSTANDING.. The words of Khalil Gibran ring in my head - ***"you give but little when u give of your possessions - it is when you give of yourself that you truly give"***

During the month of Ramadaan, amongst other events, I had the privilege of taking my kids to a township called Dunoon in Cape Town. Here the majority of households live in informal settlements and unemployment and crime are high...

We can only understand if we actually experience it .

The day before my little kids were tasked with preparing little goodie bags of sweets, treats and a little toy to hand out to the children of Dunoon.

Throughout the day they kept on asking if they too would get a goodie bag ...

The morning arrived and as the children of Dunoon engulfed us my little one became a little overwhelmed which is normal but within a few moments happily settled down to assist with the task at hand . She happily gave her choice of goodie bag to the girl of her choice with her brother reminding her that all bags were all the same.

The older ones were given the task of handing out blankets and food parcels to the adults

The journey home was silent and i took the opportunity to ask my kids as to what was on their minds. My oldest son responded first, "I feel a sense of peace at the moment."

My youngest lamented - ***"we should have brought more ...It finished very quickly "***



A few weeks later in keeping with Nelson Mandela Month - my kids once again assisted with the painting of classrooms at a school in Mitchells Plein I was asked - how does this act fit into the definition of charity ?

A child that sits in a well painted classroom with decent desks and chairs is provided the opportunity to feel a sense of pride and dignity. Never ever underestimate the power that an environment can make to the well being of an innocent child.



I quote our beloved Prophet Mubammed SAW (may peace be upon him) - ***"None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself "*** - Bukhari and Muslim

Mr. Yusuf Kamdar, continuing with the Kamdar Group's annual sponsorship of wheelchairs donated 39 this year. He personally handed over 12 wheelchairs to children suffering from Cerebral Palsy, most of whom were physically handicapped and had intellectual disabilities. The rest will be given to the elderly.

"It was a very sad morning for me as I was moved by the plight of these innocent children, hopelessly abandoned by their families in their rapidly debilitating condition. The Kamdar group will order custom made wheelchairs next for these little angels to allow them to move around with much more freedom. May Allah Swt accept our humble efforts and ease their sufferings."

Mrs Fazila Kamdar, along with Mr. Solly Suleman, accompanied her husband and also spent time with the children.

All of them thanked the caretakers, nurses and volunteers for doing a splendid job to make the young ones feel comfortable.

[illegible]



MY RELIGION IS HUMANITY

Abdul Sattar Edhi remained a staunch Humanitarian, serving Humanity till the very end. Perhaps, the greatest humanitarian of our time, the passing of Edhi marks the end of an Era for Pakistan and creates a huge void that can never be filled.

In a country where religious intolerance and sectarian extremism are rife, Abdul Sattar Edhi was the embodiment of humane and secular values. He devoted his entire life to the welfare of his countrymen, rising above religious prejudices and the dogmas of ethnicity. Serving Mankind was Edhi's priority and he proved it by working relentlessly for people of all faiths, including the religious minorities and the downtrodden.

Long before the Edhi Foundation received pride of place in the Guinness book of Records for deploying the World's largest voluntary ambulance service, a generous donation from a fellow member of the Memon community, enabled Edhi to buy his first ambulance. He drove "*The People's Van*" as he fondly called it, around the city and was often asked why he was prepared to help Christians and Hindus alike, Edhi replied, "Because my ambulance is more Muslim than you!"

The holy Quran mentions humanity, in essence, "a single ummah" (Chapter 2 Verse 213). Allah Swt is Rabul Alimeen, the Lord of all humanity. There are no religious divisions. What divides humanity is our choices and behaviour. Do we choose to elevate humanity or exploit it? Edhi chose to elevate it.

Perhaps that is why, he was known as Maulana — a religious scholar, for Edhi truly understood Islam in its universal form.

A ROLE MODEL FOR THE WORLD

- EDHI'S BODY OF WORK WILL TRANSCEND THE AGES

Maulana Abdul Sattar Edhi conceptualized, created and sustained a welfare network that covered the length and breadth of a nation.

He led by example and always took the bull by the horns.

The omnipresent Maulana emerged in the most difficult and devastating of places. He picked up mutilated bodies from the killing fields of Karachi, washed and buried victims of ethnic violence and rampant epidemics — he is said to have given the last ghusal (wash) to as many as 58,000 people. He was found scaling mountains when earthquakes struck Northern Pakistan or wading in neck deep waters, after floods displaced people in Sindh. He surfaced in Bosnia, the Middle East, in different parts of Africa; wherever a humanitarian crisis occurred, the Saint miraculously appeared and went on to save the day.

The title - Rehmaton ka Farishta or Angel of Mercy was truly well deserved.

As he recalls his early years in Karachi, after the Partition. "I listened to my heart and felt compelled to do something about the sight of the bodies floating in Karachi harbour. I would jump into the sea, retrieve the dead. Drape them in

IMAGE REMOVED

clean clothes and provide them a decent burial."

Thus began the Edhi Graveyard Service, perhaps the only one of its kind in the world that ensures dignified burial to the dead, absolutely free of cost.



MY MOTHER, MY INSPIRATION

"It was entirely my mother who planted the seeds of social welfare and charitable work in me. She nurtured it and taught me how to control my desires for material things and do away with personal greed."

Edhi's mother would always distribute cashew nuts, pistachios, ginger and other food items that her husband used to send from Bombay, amongst the poorer families in her neighbourhood. She would ask young Edhi to distribute these packets to families who were less fortunate than them. Edhi fondly recalls: "When I was in school my mother used to give me two paise and ask me to buy lunch with one. Then purchase the same food with the other, for a poor boy who couldn't afford to buy it for himself."

According to Sattar Edhi, he has learnt love and care from his mother.

Unfortunately she soon became grievously ill, mentally unstable and suffered a fall which completely paralysed her. Edhi stopped attending school and devoted his entire time to look after his mother. He took her for treatments, bathed and cleaned her, washed her clothes, cooked for her and did everything possible to make his mother comfortable. During these early years of caring for his mother, Edhi truly imbibed the lessons that have guided his life's work: to value life, no matter how frail or vanquished, to offer people dignity, both in life and in death, to care for those whom society has discarded.

The state's failure to provide low cost treatment and effective care for his suffering mother was the decisive turning point in Edhi's life which prompted him to embark on his lifelong mission to serve mankind.

Edhi's mother passed away when he was still in his teens, he paid homage to her by saying, "She gave birth to me and was my most precious teacher. She taught me humanitarian values and how to appreciate other human beings. My mother's life was a perfect example of personal sacrifices and modesty. Her entire life was a struggle, yet she remained positive and kind to others till the end. Even when she was critically ill, she remained committed to her high moral standards. She taught me charity when I was a child, she taught me love for humanity, and after her death I decided that my whole life should be dedicated in the service to humanity."

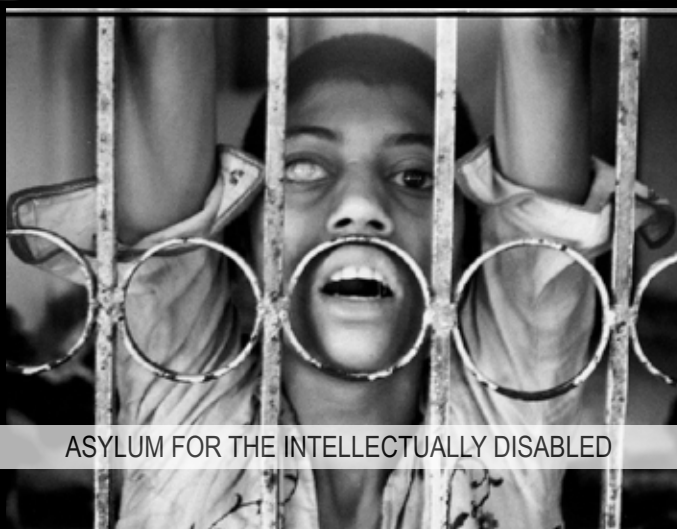
CHARITABLE WORK



ORPHANAGES



WOMEN'S SHELTER



ASYLUM FOR THE INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED

Edhi resolved to dedicate his life to aiding the poor, and over the next sixty years, he single handedly changed the face of welfare in Pakistan. Edhi established the Edhi Foundation and also set up the Edhi Trust with an initial sum of just five thousand rupees.

Regarded as a guardian for the poor, Edhi began receiving numerous donations, which allowed him to expand his services. To this day, the Edhi Foundation continues to grow in both size and service, and is currently the largest welfare organisation in Pakistan. Since its inception, the Edhi Foundation has rescued over 20,000 abandoned infants courtesy the jhoola (cradle) project, rehabilitated over 50,000 orphans and has trained over 40,000 nurses. It also runs more than 330 welfare centres in rural and urban Pakistan which operate as food kitchens, rehabilitation homes, shelters for abandoned women and children as well as clinics for the mentally handicapped.

The Edhi Foundation runs the world's largest ambulance service, operating 1800 vans, helicopters, planes and several life boats ensuring 24-hour emergency services. Edhi's ambulances are often the first to reach ground zero in a natural disaster, making the difference between life and death. His ambulance service has become a lifeline with the rise of terror attacks in Pakistan.

The foundation also operates free nursing homes, maternity clinics, orphanages, morgues, animal hostels and rehabilitation centres for drug addicts and mentally challenged individuals.

Edhi ran relief operations in Africa, Middle East, the Caucasus region, Afghanistan, Nepal, Russia, Japan, eastern Europe, Haiti and the United States where the foundation provided aid, following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. His son Faisal Edhi, wife Bilquis Edhi and daughters managed the daily operations of the organization during his ill health.



A SIMPLE & HUMBLE PERSONALITY

Edhi came from humble origins and remained a quiet, accessible and modest man all his life, which in part was what inspired the nationwide love for him in Pakistan. Edhi was known for his ascetic lifestyle, owning only two pairs of clothes, never taking a salary from his organisation and living in a small, sparse, windowless room next to his organization's office.

In 2014 he quoted that simplicity, honesty, hard work and punctuality were the cornerstones of his work. He further stated in the BBC interview that "It is everyone's responsibility to take care of others, that's what, being human means."



THE MEMON CONNECTION

Edhi was born around 1928 in Bantva, a small town in Gujarat, British India. He belonged to a middle class bantva Memon family. The partition of India led Edhi and his family to migrate to Pakistan in 1947.

In 1951, he established his first free dispensary in Mithidar, Karachi with help from his community, aptly naming it "Memon voluntary corps". This was the corner stone of his lifelong humanitarian mission. Not only did it serve as the headquarters of his future Charitable Empire but he also met his wife, Bilquis Edhi at the same establishment.



Edhi with Sir Iqbal Sacranie, stalwart of WMO and other distinguished members of the Memon Association UK at the Memon Centre in London.

BILQUIS EDHI

Abdul Sattar Edhi was married in 1965 to Bilquis, a nurse who worked at the Edhi dispensary. The couple have four children, two daughters and two sons. Bilquis runs the free maternity home in Karachi and organizes the adoption of abandoned babies. The husband-wife team has come to share the common vision of single minded devotion to the cause of alleviation of human sufferings. They both share a sense of personal responsibility to respond to every call for help, regardless of race, religion, creed or ethnicity.



GEETA

Edhi stood above and beyond caste, creed, religion, belief, gender or denomination.

After spending 13 involuntary years in Pakistan, it was eventually through the help of the Edhi Foundation that Geeta, the Indian girl with speaking and hearing disabilities was united with her family across the border in 2015. Geeta had the freedom to practise her faith and was allowed to build a private temple in the Edhi Foundation shelter where she was housed. She plastered the walls with pictures of Hindu gods: Lord Krishna, Lord Rama and Sita, goddess Durga, Shiva and Parvati along with a small statue of Lord Ganesha resting on the centre table.

YOURS RESPECTFULLY, EDHI.

Edhi was so widely respected that armed groups and bandits were known to spare his ambulances. In Karachi, rival gangs have been known to call temporary ceasefires to their gun battles to allow Edhi's minimally trained ambulance staff to collect the dead and wounded.

Among the stories Edhi shared, one was of the time when he was in interior Sindh for rescue work. Bandits stopped his van, but upon recognising Edhi sahib, immediately let all the passengers leave without looting anything. Edhi said he had such encounters with bandits and insurgents in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa too.

Another time, he was picking up dead bodies in the city of Karachi, when two groups started exchanging intense gunfire at the scene. One of the gunmen happened to recognise him and shouted from far away:

"Edhi Sahib please step aside or you'll get shot!"

Edhi replied, "I will not move. Do your work, and let me do mine."

PARADISE LOST

Edhi's determination to ignore considerations of creed, cast or sect earned him the hatred of some of the country's religious right, who accused him of being an atheist. Hardliners branded him an infidel and his work un-Islamic. His response was more hard work. Edhi didn't believe in debating, he believed in doing.

"Empty words and long praises do not impress God. Show Him your faith by your deeds."

Mrs. Edhi recalls a young boy, asking her opinion on a religious figure who declared that the husband and wife pair would be locked out of heaven for taking care of "illegitimate" children. Her unflappable reply was, "Give my regards to the maulvi saheb and tell him, don't worry ... we won't go to your heaven. We will go to the heaven where the poor and miserable live."

IN EDHI WE TRUST

"One time there was a student at Punjab University in Lahore who came down with cancer and his friend came to me for help. I stood outside on the street in Lahore and asked the people in that city for help. Within four or five hours, I received more than 40 million rupees (around US \$670,000)"

Edhi continues, "I'm a beggar. I'm happy to stand on the road and ask for alms,"

"He is an international beggar," his wife, Bilquis, chimes in, laughing.

Even in old age, he could still be seen on the streets stopping passers-by and cars for cash donations, with no one asking for receipts. The bulk of his donations came from the common people of Pakistan who had forged a bond with Edhi. They completely trusted him and blindly donated towards his umpteen causes, often when Edhi himself took to the streets with a bowl in hand.

THE MARATHON MAN

Mr. Edhi is a man who had not taken a single day's vacation in his entire lifetime. In the Edhi system there was no concept of holidays. The nature of an emergency is such, that it strikes unannounced, thus Edhi services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Just like the man, himself!

Edhi was a man who, without education, affluence and power, labored ceaselessly to convert a third-world country into a welfare state. He was not formally educated but he himself became an institution for a generation of followers.

He often lamented, "People have become educated, but have yet to become human."

Edhi was extremely intelligent and practical, he focused on the basics, had no patience for intellectualization, was a strategic thinker, took quick decisions and had a hands-on approach. Much sought after qualities needed for presiding over a multi million dollar charity empire.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

Abdul Sattar Edhi was referred as Pakistan's version of Mother Teresa and the BBC wrote that he was considered "Pakistan's most respected figure and was seen by some as almost a saint."

Edhi was not a big fan of awards and often said that his work was greater than any accolade.

Together with his wife, Bilquis Edhi, he received the 1986 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service. He was also the recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize and the Balzan Prize. In 2006, the Institute of Business Administration Pakistan conferred an honoris causa degree of Doctor of Social Service Management for his services. In September 2010, Edhi was also awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Bedfordshire. In 1989, Edhi received the Nishan-e-Imtiaz from the Government of Pakistan. On 1 January 2014, Edhi was voted the 2013 Person of the Year by the readers of The Express Tribune. He was also recommended for a Nobel Peace prize by the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

WORLD MEMON ORGANISATION



The World Memon Organisation bestowed a Lifetime Achievement Award to Mr. Abdul Sattar Edhi and his wife, Mrs. Bilquis Edhi at its 5th Annual General Meeting held at Karachi on 14th April 2007.

The Honourable Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr. Shaukat Aziz gave away the awards in a glittering ceremony attended personally by the distinguished couple.

EDHI BURIED WITH FULL STATE HONOURS



When Abdul Sattar Edhi passed away on the 8th of July, the whole Nation came to a standstill to pay its respects to perhaps, the greatest humanitarian that ever lived. Shops and business establishments remain closed. The Government declared a day of mourning.

Leaders, politicians, the armed forces, businessmen, industrialists, the elite, the poor and people from all walks of life lined up to offer Namaz-e-Janaza.

Edhi was given a state funeral with a 19 gun salute. The Pakistan Army carried his coffin, wrapped in the national flag, escorting it from Kharadar to the National Stadium. Pakistan's top civilian and army leadership were in attendance and offered funeral prayers at the venue. Only two other distinguished personalities received this honour in Pakistan - Quaid-e-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and former President, General Zia ul Haq.

Perhaps, the pomp and military ceremony of his funeral was in stark contrast to the famously humble style of the man. In terrorism-inflicted Pakistan, with these very important people attending, security was at the highest level imaginable, which basically meant that the aam awam, the common people to whom Abdul Sattar Edhi had devoted his life, were not able to participate as effectively as they may have wished. Just a few hours after his death, looking from above, Sattar Edhi would have abhorred this usurpation and the creation of this divide.

Edhi was buried at Edhi Village (45 km from Karachi) where he (Edhi), himself had prepared his final resting place, a good twenty five years ago.



“Never take anyone’s death to heart Bilquis. Remember God by the equality with which He implements it. Nobody is different, the richest to the poorest, from here to the end of the globe, have to face it. What an example of equality!”

Today, the world has become a poorer place as it grieves the loss of one of its most compassionate and benevolent benefactors. However, I worry that this grief is too large for all of us — it is the kind of grief that none of us can carry.....but Edhi.

The World Memon Organisation will strive to carry forward his legacy of Serving Mankind as we continue to be inspired by the larger than life
- Abdul Sattar Edhi.

SOUTH AFRICA

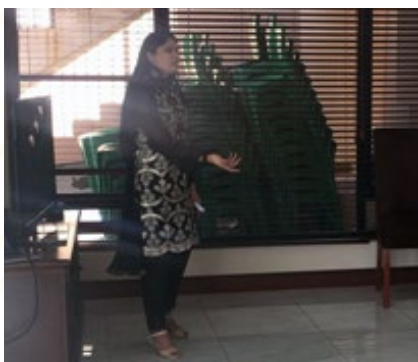
Youth Symposium

"Youth and white paper take any impression", so runs an old adage. Understanding that the youthful exuberance can make or mar the very fabric of society, WMO has always given immense importance to its young members; thus ensuring that their endeavors and thought-process are channeled in the right direction. An episode enlarging upon the same values took place at the residence of Mr. Sayed Mia in Johannesburg on 23rd April 2016.

The symposium was attended by many youth wing members as well as board members of WMO Africa Chapter, including Mr Haroun Jossab and Mr Haroun Gutta. Mr. Yunus Suleman did the inaugural honors as he discoursed upon the various WMO Projects, such as The MPL, the Wheel-Chair Drive and the Women Empowerment campaign. Mr. Yunus emphasized that the clarion call of time demanded that the youngsters of Africa Chapter rise to the occasion and serve the community in an unprecedented manner; so that it can go shoulder to shoulder with the other youth wings across the world. All these activities were also destined to strengthen Memon Solidarity and uphold Memon Culture.



The inspiring oration was ensued by Ms. Dania Hanif; who flew from Pakistan with her parents Mr. Hanif Ahmed and Mrs. Samina Hanif to be a part of this iconic conference. She articulated about her active involvement in the marketing and educational facets of The WMO youth world-wide. She also endeavored to cajole the youth to dedicate time, energy and devotion to the community. She also offered a very workable possibility of assembling 5 teams trusted with organizing 5 different events. She motivated the youth by quoting religious examples and by emphasizing the fact that community service is a selfless act done with the prime purpose of pleasing Allah.



The penultimate remarks came from the dynamic persona of Mr. Azim Omar. He highlighted the importance of

promoting the idea that the WMO is not exclusively for the Memons only, and that this party should reach-out to all components of the society. He also tried subsiding the misgivings regarding The WMO, reinstating that it is not a club for the elite only. He reassured that The WMO would open its arms to anyone who would want to be part of it.

The concluding speech came from Mr. Ridwan Mia, who is aspiration in person. He cited that since the youth these days is more powerful than ever it should exploit its potential to the fullest, allowing them to contribute to society with respect to their strengths.



A road-map was drafted for addressing issues mentioned by the veterans of WMO in their speeches. Working with a sense of responsibility and renewed enthusiasm, the youth proposed plans in galore; out of which the most suited were finalized.

Amongst the two projects short-listed, one Women Empowerment program scheduled on 17th July and a debate championship which is aligned on the 23rd July. It is worthy of a mention that the organization of the imminent oratory competition is done after much rumination and cerebration. Teenagers today might well be way ahead in terms of technology and social networking, but their inter-personnel prowess seem to have taken a serious toll with the advent of all the modern day inroads. The idea, therefore, is more than likely to preen their communication skills; which will come in handy in eradicating all forms of diffidence.

The stimulus provided by the senior members of The WMO motivated the youngsters; wherein everybody wanted to do more than what was expected of him. Taking the lead from the youthful resolutions, Mr. Azim claimed full responsibility for ensuring that the WMO South African chapter would be at par, if not above, amongst its contemporaries in the time to come. With so much positivity, productivity and proclivity coming forth from one, single event, it is quite certain that the future reigns of WMO South Africa Chapter are now in capable hands.

STRONG WOMEN EMPOWER OTHER WOMEN

“Give me an empowered woman, I shall promise you the birth of a civilized, educated nation”, so observed the great, Napoleon Bonaparte. Practicing what it has always preached, the WMO fulfilled its onus with remarkable formidability this time around as well. The World Memon Organization [Africa Chapter] Ladies Wing, together with the active collaboration of the Youth Wing put on display, a one-of-its-kind event; aimed at enlightening and enhancing women’s capabilities.



The venue was the Memon Foundation Centre. Women from all walks of life attended the occasion. The ambience was further accentuated by the presence of special guests; young girls who had dedicated their time and energy for the cause of humanity and had rendered indispensable services to Muslim Aids Program Orphanage, Itireleng and the Ihya Ulum Ud Deen in Ennerdale.

WOW (Wonder of Women) is the brainchild of Sana Shakoor. WOW has provided a launch-pad to umpteen individuals since its inception last year.

WOW aspires to bridge the gap between successful working women and the under-privileged, enabling the former to assist the latter, allowing them to pursue a credible career. With the social networking system in place, steadfast support is offered and a woman is guided to secure the future she envisions for herself and her family.

Proceedings went under-way with a rejuvenating and refreshing Yoga session, which served as a fitting overture for the remainder of the program. This was ensued by the opening address of Ms. Zafreen Ayob, who also introduced Ms. Raeesa Gutta. The latter discoursed on the exploits and endeavors of the WMO and apprised the attendees with the progress of the manifold ongoing projects. Dr. Taheera Hassim captivated the audience and took them through the hardships that led her

to become a specialist surgeon. This inspiring journey was followed by an equally stunning success-story of Kareemah Maphasa, who had grown-up as an orphan. She mastered the art of film-making at AFDA and later worked at ITV Networks as a news anchor. She urged the young girls that adversities in life are intended to making us better, not bitter. She also advised the listeners not to lose faith in themselves and to seek opportunity in every challenge.

The final honors were carried-out by Zafreen; in which she expressed gratitude to the ladies committee who had left no stone unturned in making the event a block-buster success. She also praised the discipline and spirit in which the event was organized. She thanked the WMO Board of Management for providing unwavering support; without which the event would not have been possible.

The participants were also inspired and motivated. They acknowledged that meetings of such source and substance should be held more often, as they provide the necessary impetus to working women. The audience in turn, offered their most sincere support to alleviate the sufferings of the less fortunate. Honey Accessories, Shzen and Herbalife Consultants, who had sponsored the event, showed more magnanimity by providing gift-hampers to the young girls.

Self-done is well-done and that is exactly what Mrs Khashiefa Martin has accomplished. She has put her own shoulder to the wheel to orchestrate the event. Following suit, Ms. Zafreen Ayob has always been an indispensable asset of the WMO. She has always gone beyond the call of duty to put things into place and her contributions to Africa Chapter Ladies Wing are noteworthy.



In conclusion, the reciprocation and appreciation of the audience speaks volumes of the success of the program. WMO knows there are two ways of spreading light- to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it. And it will continue to impart its role in either position until the world becomes a better place for Mankind, especially women.



LEICESTER MEMON YOUTH ASSOCIATION SERVES UP ANOTHER WINNER - THE MEMON FESTIVAL COOKS UP A REAL STORM.

The Memon Festival was celebrated in Leicester on Sunday, the 10th of July, showcasing a heady mix of topnotch food and drinks, deft football and cricketing skills, along with everything the community had to offer. A couple of thousands enjoyed the fantastic feast of food, fun and sports, all part of the extremely entertaining one-day Festival, straight after EID.



Organised by the Leicester Memon Youth Association, supported by the MemonCentre and a wide variety of local individuals, groups, businesses and organisations, the Memon Festival was once again a resounding success and it continues to grow from strength to strength with each passing year.

Onto the gastronomic delights, the stalls were packed with delicious and tantalising treats with a team of men serving lip-smacking BBQ, the ladies provided drinks, chana batata and the pièce de résistance, the famous Memon Akni which once again, was totally sold out! Other community stalls took part in selling



ing toys, perfumes, clothing, slush and Bhel Puri. Charity stalls were on-site to raise awareness, including in-

formation about the humanitarian work done by the World Memon Organisation (WMO). To ensure the elderly were comfortable, a spacious marquee with seating was provided by WMO, a gesture which was much appreciated by the community.

The festival also offered extensive entertainment for kids, including a bouncy castle, giant slide, fun football and face painting. One of the highlights was to



introduce the children to animals by experiencing a pony ride or a horse ride in a safe environment, for the daring.

A 20/20 cricket match was played between 4 local Leicester teams - MYA 11, Global 11, Dream team 11 and Leicester 11. The first semi-final between MYA 11 and Global was a nail biter, only separated by 4 runs with Global going forward to the final against Leicester 11, who eventually won by 75 runs. It was unfortunate that the London Cricket Team were unable to return to the tournament this year and lay hands on the brand new, glittering trophy sponsored by Xquisite Blinds.



The children's under 12 football tournament was a big hit with the organisers. The event witnessed record participation with over 48 keen, young footballers taking part. The community football Academy, better known as CFA hosted the tournament. There were 8 teams that took part with four teams from CFA, one from Neba Club and three teams from children attending the festival. All children received a medal and an opportunity to interact with the CFA team who were recruiting new players. Currently, many Memon Children play for CFA, across all ages and the organisation's achievements of a wide array of trophies were proudly on display.



Ashraf Okhai; Chair of Memon Youth Association said: "I am absolutely delighted with how our second festival has gone – it has exceeded expectations and there was a real buzz on the day. It has helped raise awareness in our community which is exactly what it was designed to do. Please get in touch with us if you want to get involved or put forward a cricket team.

He continued: "The Memon Youth Association would like to thank our generous sponsors, volunteers and organisations for making this event possible.

Sikander Sattar, Vice President, WMO Europe Chapter said: "A big thank you to all those who bring the Memon Festival to life and make it extra special - something we all should be proud of within our community, I would also like to remind everyone of the good work WMO does in assisting the poor around the world and encourage everyone to contribute Zakat to the WMO"



African Spelling Champion



FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD ZAMEER DADA,
THE FIRST EVER AFRICAN SPELLING BEE CHAMP

Zameer Dada has won the first ever African Spelling Bee championship, hosted by South Africa in Johannesburg this July. There was a tie for second place. Alma Wanjiku from Kenya and Bethlehem Kidane Tedla from Ethiopia shared the runner-up spot.

He beat 26 other finalists from Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The competition is meant to encourage reading amongst children.

Zameer says he was very nervous going into the competition as he knew he would be up against the best spellers from the African continent. "They were all very good! Thanks to Allah, I was the last speller standing."

Zameer is a two-time national senior champion of the Mzansi Spelling Bee, taking home the coveted trophy in 2014 and 2015. Spelling seems to run in the family - his cousin Faizaan Gani is the national junior Mzansi Spelling Bee champion.

Zameer is the eldest son of Ashraf Dada and Dr Kuraysha Ismail.



ZAMEER WITH HIS PARENTS AND SIBLINGS.

Zameer sees himself as a global citizen rather than a Johannesburger. He was born in Polokwane a city some 300km north of Johannesburg. He loves Durban, the top

holiday city on East coast of South Africa. He has a close attachment to Kuwait having lived there for 4 years.

Zameer is an avid reader, a love that has been passed down from both sets of grandparents Dr Ismail and Mrs Aysha Dada of Durban and Dr Khalid and Mrs Khadija Ismail of Polokwane.

His younger brother Faez says that Zameer always has a book in one hand and a rubiks cube in the other. Besides reading, Zameer is also a competitive speed cuber. He also enjoys playing soccer with his 3 brothers and doting on his baby sister.

Zameer's mum, Dr Kuraysha Ismail, a medical doctor, said that in preparing for the spelling competitions Zameer focuses on learning the origin of words which helps with his spelling. She encourages her children to read.

Ashraf said Zameer became very determined to win the spelling bee when he first entered 3 years ago and did not win.

"I am also proud of the fact that Zameer has learnt the importance of giving his time to the community. He has over the last year spent time reading to little children at Johannesburg Hospital and at an orphanage. His mum says, "Zameer has learned a valuable lesson - passion, focus, strong family support and faith in Allah are key ingredients for success."



Indeed!

We couldn't agree more.

Congratulations to Zameer and the Dada family. May Allah Swt grant him even greater success in the future.

Ameen.



The Q&A

DR. TAHEERA HASSIM

“verily, with every difficulty there is relief” - Surah Al-Inshirah [94:5]

When and where were you born?

I was born on the 7th of August in the year 1980, in Johannesburg.

Your family history and your hometown...

My family was a typical middleclass muslim orthodox family. My father was the breadwinner and my mother played the role of housewife. We lived in a small close knit community in Louis Trichardt – South Africa. It was during apartheid and times were difficult.

I was the eldest of six siblings. My father was the pioneer of our family run business. He ensured that everyone in the extended family was provided for and served as a mentor for both the adults and the youth in the family. My father completed his tertiary education at a technical college but was unable to study further and attain a



degree due to the political circumstances of the country. He had a keen interest in the mechanical and electrical world but never had the opportunity to become an engineer.

My mother was the younger of two daughters and was only a toddler when my grandfather was shot and paralysed in an armed robbery on his brother's farm. My grandmother was forced to seek employment to support the family – she worked long hours in a clothing factory as a seamstress. Although my grandfather was paralysed from his waist downwards, he

sold buttons, zips and ribbons to try and help financially.

My mother studied nursing specialising in the field of midwifery. She always told us that she chose this profession because she wanted to help and nurse the ill, and at the same time whilst training, she earned an income to assist her family.

My father faced a similar tragedy by losing his dad early on in his life. He was the second youngest of nine children. His mother and siblings ran a café to support the family financially – it was here where the seeds of his busi-

ness skills were planted and nurtured.

As a child, I always felt fortunate for what I had, watching my parents together at the dinner table talking to me about the years gone by.

Your growing up years and hardships faced by the family.

It was my love for reading and my craving for knowledge that afforded me the opportunity to volunteer in the school library. My curiosity grew and my weekends were often spent at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) helping and loving abandoned animals.

The limitations of being brought up in an islamic orthodox family was that girls were not allowed to gain further education. You were married young (possibly as soon as primary school was completed) and the thought

of females being breadwinners was taboo.

Family was very important; the principles of humility and togetherness were always imbibed in our home. We always sat together, ate together and shared everything.



My father sold frozen foods in his business. He bought old trucks and it was his interest in the mechanical world that allowed him to repair these trucks and use them to transport his supplies. Due to the need of cold storage for his stock he built his own cold storage room. Long hours were spent installing these massive cold storage panels into his buildings so that he could freeze the products and supply local supermarkets in the area.

Dad had a congenital heart condition and would often tell me that he didn't think he would live to see us grow. However, his illness never showed and those precious family moments of warmth and love will always be treasured...

It was during Hajj pilgrimage in 1993 that he fell ill and the doctors informed him that he had irreversible damage of the heart and would not live much longer. During that same year, in December his condition worsened and went into cardiac failure.

Dad was admitted to the Polokwane Provincial Hospital which was an hour away from our home town. Mum had to accompany him and being the oldest I had to stay home and support my siblings. It was an agonising time and when we did get to see him in hospital it was only for a few minutes. I fondly remember his last embrace and those words "always look after your brothers and sisters". My brothers had been instructed to "take care of our mother and always respect her".

I had never been so scared or confused in my life. My mother was distraught and inconsolable. I was 13 years old and my youngest sister was still being nursed by my mum.

Financially our situation worsened as the family business was separated and each family were given their share. My mum had no business skills and tenants that rented our buildings took advantage of a widow – she was forced to stand and wait for hours for rentals. Tenants paid at leisure or simply disappeared, my mum was humiliated on many occasions and I kept asking myself "what were we going to do". I spent long hours after school assisting her in the store.

We battled with daily expenses – as children we relied on second hand clothing and shoes. I remember placing a piece of sellotape over a hole in my shoe – I painted it with a black marker so that nobody would notice it. We shared everything – even a simple chocolate would be broken into 7 pieces. My brothers Muhammed and Ahmed were often bullied teased at school because of their dilapidated school wear

and cheaper stationery. A simple sandwich for lunch was a subject of trauma... My brothers used to have to hide and eat their frugal lunch to prevent humiliation.

High school was around the corner and due to apartheid we had to travel to the closest city that was an hour away to further our studies. Our family was orthodox and I became disheartened knowing that I would not be allowed to leave to further my education but my mum's words echoed – "Knowledge is power, get educated"

We were nine students that were unable to travel out – I managed to persuade my teacher in assisting us to create a high school. We would be the inaugural class ... we ran different collection drives and fundraisers and were fortunate to have dedicated teachers that provided us with support and assistance. Besides the need for basic desks and chairs we did not have access to textbooks or properly qualified teachers. We could not afford private tuition fees and I would spend time sitting outside close to the classroom door trying to hear what the kids were being taught in their tuition classes. I borrowed their textbooks and notes

It was not long before, that I was faced with my greatest challenge – tertiary education. I applied to study medicine at the University of Witwatersrand (WITS) in Johannesburg which was 5 hours away from home. I had applied for student finance but was unsuccessful. I had heard about the Memon Association of South Africa that provided student bursaries and coincidentally their emblem was "Knowl-

edge is Power “ – those very words echoed once more. Allah SWT had once again opened another door.

My first day at university was filled with fear and apprehension. As usual due to shortage of funds I had not received a confirmation for boarding and lodging and I remember sitting on the steps at the doors of the university residence - waving to my mum, assuring her that all would be well but not knowing where I would spend the night. It was through the generosity of a senior student that I was provided with shelter for the next few nights until accommodation became available. I can only imagine the fear in my mums heart as she was forced to leave me – we could not afford a car and she had to find alternate transport to get her home to take care of my younger siblings. She was unable to stay with me, protect me and support me as she had always done

Our close family friends – Dr’s Ayob from Louis Trichardt assisted me with funds for residence and a lot of emotional support during my time at medical school. They became family. My paternal cousin and his wife were also pillars of support during the difficult times. We are always grateful and treasure all the help they gave to us.

What do you see as your greatest strengths?

My greatest strength is that I don’t consider myself a survivor but rather a warrior!



Mum always says, “every opportunity you get to attain knowledge, go for it, you can never have enough !” And so I did.

The most defining moment for me was completing my undergraduate medical degree. This paved the way for not only myself but opened pathways for my siblings to follow and make a life for themselves. It afforded me the opportunity to fund my family and to further my studies. I qualified as a Medical Doctor in 2005. It was during that time that I was working in a rural hospital in Limpopo where I found the need to advance my studies into Gynaecology and Obstetrics. The ward was severely neglected - this was due to the fact that most of the doctors were male and disliked the gynaecology discipline. I took a keen interest in that field and mastered basic surgical skills and eventually ran that ward. It was here that I applied for my training position

Within 4 years, I qualified as a specialist and started working as a consultant at Charlotte Maxeke Academic Hospital for Wits University in Johannesburg - I was involved in the training of medical students, interns and registrars in the specialised field of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. During my time there, I pursued my education further and completed a masters degree. I now have my own private practice.

I have travelled internationally to learn the art of key hole surgery. My thirst for knowledge has led me to once again enroll at Wits University for an MBA.

Advice and personal values that you would pass on to the youth of today

Remain loyal to yourself and never give up on your beliefs and dreams. Love and appreciate those that support you – they are the important ones. Value your family and be a pillar of strength to one another – my family taught me the true meaning of the word patience, strength, tolerance and determination.

My mum taught us at a young age about honour, honesty and self respect – Do the right thing no matter what. Believe in yourself. The journey is never easy but remember our Almighty Allah SWT has promised us in the quran, Surah 94, verse 5 and 6 – “Verily, with every difficulty , there is relief..”

There are no short cuts to success. It takes hard work and sacrifices to be successful. Success and failure are part of life. Both can be short lived. To maintain success, you always need to work at it.

The only real failure in life is not trying. Don’t be afraid to take on new challenges and risks. I never know what good will come from my focused efforts, but I do know what will come from not trying.

Don’t let opportunities pass you by. There are going to be any number of times when you have a chance to make something of yourself. Those brief moments will come rarely. Jump on them and wrestle them to the ground. Life has an expiration date. Make it count and never give up. There are so many opportunities in this day and age and you can be anything you want. The world is your oyster.

What does a perfect day look like to you?

Waking up to the beautiful rays of sunshine streaming in through my window and hearing the waves of the ocean gently touch the sand... and nothing except peace and quiet going through my mind.....with no rush in the world, having a lovely breakfast, thereafter strolling along the beach with no care in the world. Meeting the mid-day with the gathering of my siblings, their spouses and my mum then sitting down to a delicious home cooked lunch, just talking about our journeys and happy times....and laughing until our bellies ache. The rest of the day will be spent relaxing on the balcony in the warm sun penning down my thoughts. I would close of this perfect day with a cup of coffee with three of my closest friends, Desh, Gabi and Seri reminiscing our funny antics during our training days and planning how we are going to take over the world....a perfect day would have infinite time.

Explain what you are doing now to create a legacy worthy of remembering.

Leaving a legacy means leaving footprints that will motivate women to be successful in whatever they aspire to be and to be able to live their dream. My participation in many associations i.e The World Memon Organisation, Gift of Givers, Islamic Medical Association allows me the platform to reach out to more of our sisters and inspire them to succeed irrespective of their circumstances.

I try to create meaningful conversations about what

it means to be a women in a professional space and use my journey to empower other women to soar to new heights. I want to make deeper inroads into the system of society and advance our women because they remain unequally represented



Everyday seeing female patients in my practice I also try to motivate them positively and ensure they do take care of their health and always remain relevant by making a difference in society - Not only to their families but on an academic level as well

Who is your role model - the person you admire the most?

My inspiration, motivation and role model is my mother. She is my everything. Her gentle way inspired me to achieve the impossible. She is my mentor, confidante, counselor, teacher and best friend. My mother grew up poor and through difficult circumstances. She taught me that money doesn't determine a person's value and I could be as good as anybody else. She has shown me the importance of grace, hard work, and embracing the triumphs and challenges that life presents to you.

She has led our family and guided my siblings by instill-

ing her values and making sure we live on our own terms, yet treat everyone we meet with respect.

Throughout my entire life her wisdom, guidance and unconditional love has moulded me into the butterfly that I am today. Someday, when I am a mother, I will look to the lessons that she has taught me and aspire to be as wonderful as she has been to me. I can only hope that I will have the same stamina that she still has at her age.

Mum has managed to educate all 6 of us. Our youngest sister, Fayyaadhah, is studying Dentistry and the 2nd youngest, Raeesah has just completed her Mechanical Engineering degree. My sister Faheema graduated from Medical School, brother Mohammed went to study Engineering at Wits and eventually completed a BSc In Informatics from the University of South Africa (UNISA)- he is currently pursuing an MBA at the University of Stellenbosch. Ahmed is currently completing an Engineering degree.

Now I truly understand why it is often said "Educate a Woman, Educate a nation".

If you could go back in time and do things over again, what would you change?

I wouldn't change a thing.....

The past is what made me who I am, without those scars I would not be me. All the lessons I have learnt so far has shaped the foundations of my beliefs, made me stronger!