“The Imamat’s is a holistic vision of development, as is prescribed by the faith of Islam. It is about investing in people, in their pluralism, in their intellectual pursuit, and search for new and useful knowledge, just as much as in material resources. But it is also about investing with a social conscience inspired by the ethics of Islam.”

His Highness the Aga Khan
Opening of Alltex EPZ Limited at Athi River, Kenya, December 19, 2003

His Highness the Aga Khan became Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims on 11 July 1957 at the age of 20, succeeding his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan. He is the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims and a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) through his cousin and son-in-law, Ali, the first Imam, and his wife Fatima, the Prophet’s daughter.

The Aga Khan has emphasised the view of Islam as a thinking, spiritual faith: one that teaches compassion and tolerance and that upholds the dignity of man, Allah’s noblest creation. In the Shia tradition of Islam, it is the mandate of the Imam of the time to safeguard the individual’s right to personal intellectual search and to give practical expression to the ethical vision of society that the Islamic message inspires.
THE ISMAILI CENTRES

“These new buildings and the spaces within and around them, are in rich symbolism; drawing on the plurality of cultures which characterise Ismailis here, and around the world. The array of facilities included is a reflection of the core values of the Ismaili community, its organisation, its discipline, its social conscience, the importance of its community organisations, and its attitude toward the society in which it exists.”

His Highness the Aga Khan
Opening Ceremony of the Ismaili Centre, Lisbon, 11 July 1998

The Ismaili Centre, London is part of a family of Ismaili Centres located in Vancouver, Lisbon, Dubai, Dushanbe, and most recently in Toronto.

Architecturally unique, each Ismaili Centre incorporates spaces for social and cultural gatherings, intellectual engagement and reflection, as well as places for contemplation and the search for spiritual enlightenment.

Embodying a positive attitude towards the societies in which the community resides, Ismaili Centres serve not only as a place of gathering for Ismailis, but also as active participants in local society, sponsoring a variety of cultural initiatives such as exhibitions, lectures and other public events. During his Diamond Jubilee visit to the United States of America, His Highness announced plans to establish an Ismaili Centre in Houston, Texas.
THE ISMAILI CENTRE, LONDON

“It is probably true to say that eventually Ismailis, like other groups which have settled in the United Kingdom permanently, may lose touch with their original languages and adopt many aspects of British life. But they are certain to seek to maintain their faith and their traditions, whilst accepting what seems best and most appropriate from Western civilisation. This building is more than simply a place of congregation. Through the quality of its design and workmanship, it will be a bridge between the culture of the community’s roots and that of its future as well as a symbol of the hopes of people who have lived through change and turbulence and have ultimately found security here in Britain.”

His Highness the Aga Khan
Opening Ceremony of the Ismaili Centre, London, 24 April 1985

Many Muslim communities have established a wide range of spaces of worship, in addition to the mosque. The Ismaili Jamatkhana is part of this diversity. The best known and largest Jamatkhana in the UK is housed within the Ismaili Centre, London. Here we congregate for prayers, meditation, and ritual practices that are specific to Ismailis; hence access to the prayer hall is restricted to members of the community during such times.

The Centre is not only a place of gathering for prayer, but also a space for cultural, educational, and social activities, many of which are open to the public. Events at the Ismaili Centre encourage knowledge sharing, cultural interaction, artistic expression, and civil society engagement.

Based in London’s Cultural Quarter, the Ismaili Centre, London reflects the commitment of His Highness the Aga Khan, as spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims, to encouraging dialogue and celebrating diversity in London and the United Kingdom.
"I am fortunate to lead an international community with a strong social conscience. Bridging North and South, East and West, the Ismailis have a long tradition of philanthropy, self-reliance and voluntary service. Wherever they live, they faithfully abide by the Quranic ethic of a common humanity and the dignity of man. They willingly pool knowledge and resources with all those who share our social ethic to help improve the quality of life of less fortunate men, women and children."

His Highness the Aga Khan
Remarks upon receiving Die Quadriga 2005 Prize Berlin, Germany, October 3, 2005

Ismailis have had a well-established presence in the UK since the 1970’s. The community in the UK and Europe represents diverse cultural backgrounds; predominantly from East Africa, the Indian sub-continent and increasingly from Central Asia and the Middle East.

A large number of Ismaili Muslims contribute their time, knowledge and material resources within the community as well as to wider society, on a voluntary basis to improve the lives of those less fortunate.

Over 20% of Ismailis in the UK actively volunteer within the community in teams concerned with social welfare, health, economic status, well-being and education.