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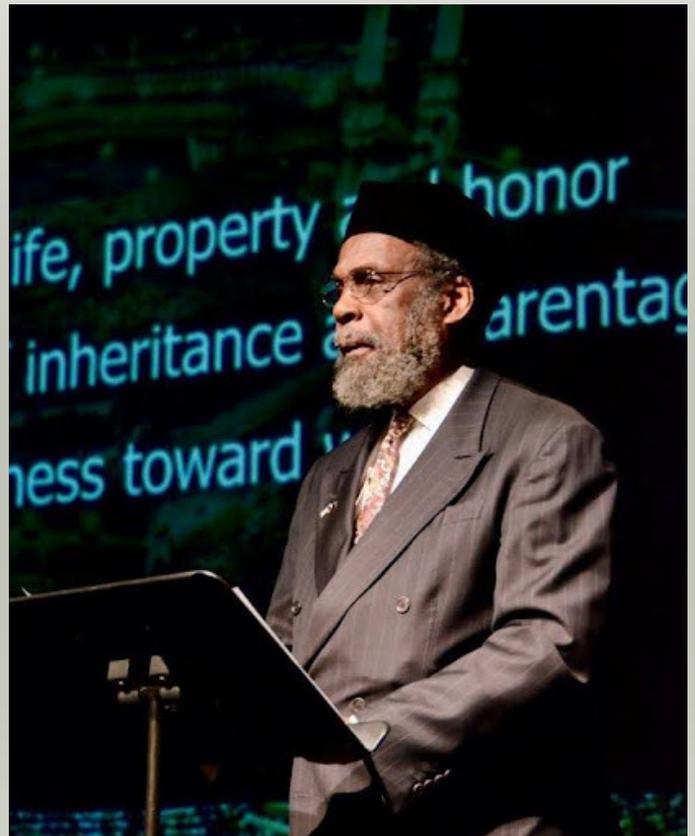


## **“A Life of Service”: A Tribute to Al-Haj Abdur Raqeeb Wali Sahib A Pioneer of Ahmadiyyat in the USA**



Editor’s Note: This tribute is based on conversations and interviews conducted with the late Al-Haj Abdur Raqeeb Wali Sahib, as well as reflections from those who knew and served alongside him. His words, stories, and spirit continue to inspire generations.

This special issue of Ansar Connection honors the memory of Raqeeb Wali Sahib, a beloved member of our US Jamaat who passed away on April 26, 2025.



“It all started over a cup of coffee and some cookies,” Wali Sahib recalled with a warm smile, describing the moment that changed his life. Born in Philadelphia in 1932, he encountered Islam Ahmadiyyat in 1959 through the efforts of Respected Khalil Mahmood Sahib. “His sincerity struck a chord,” Wali Sahib said. That simple conversation laid the foundation for a lifetime of unwavering service to faith and humanity.

Wali Sahib pursued higher education with determination, earning a B.A. in Mediterranean Studies and Arabic from Brandeis University. During our conversations, he often spoke about his early days in the Boston Jama’at, where he served as President before relocating to Pittsburg, California, in 1977. “At that time, the Bay Area had only one Jama’at,” he said, referring to the regional community led by the late Syed Sharif Ahmad Sahib. Soon after, Wali Sahib took on the responsibility of leading the newly formed San Francisco Jama’at.

A pivotal moment in his journey came in 1987, when Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) visited California and reorganized the region into five

distinct local Jamaats. “That visit was transformative,” he reflected. “I was appointed Regional President and later served Merced Jama’at as President for 35 years.” His tenure continued until 2019, marking decades of steadfast leadership.

As an educator, Wali Sahib left his mark both locally and internationally. He taught at Merced Community College for 25 years. “But some of my most rewarding experiences,” he noted, “came while teaching Islamic Studies at Basawa Teacher’s College in Nigeria and English at the Saudi Arabian Naval Academy.”

Wali Sahib’s impact extended beyond classrooms. For over 23 years, he served as a Muslim Chaplain across four California prisons, including the world’s largest women’s prison in Chowchilla. “I met thousands behind bars, but each interaction was a door to faith,” he shared. His influence led to over 100,000 inmates learning about Islam and Ahmadiyyat. Many came to see him as a spiritual father figure.

One of the most moving stories he shared was about his Nikah in Masjid

Mubarak, Qadian. “It was 1976. I became the first African American Ahmadi to marry in Qadian,” he said with quiet pride. His marriage, officiated by the revered companion of the Promised Messiah (as), Abdur Rahman Sahib (ra), became a historic symbol of interracial unity within the Jamaat.

In an era without the internet or direct access to the Khilafat, Wali Sahib remained deeply connected to the spiritual center of the community. “We relied on letters, occasional audio recordings—anything we could get.” In the 1970s, he brought back to the U.S. a recorded message from Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III (rh), which many members heard for the first time. “That tape brought tears to people’s eyes,” he remembered.

Tabligh, he emphasized, was his life’s mission. “Wherever I was, grocery store, park, classroom, I never missed a chance to introduce someone to the truth.” Among those he guided was Br. Fazal Ahmad of Boston, who would later go on to serve as Sadr Majlis Ansarullah USA.

In recognition of his lifelong service,

he received the Lifelong Service Award from Majlis Ansarullah USA and the Mufti Muhammad Sadiq Lifetime Commitment Award from Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya USA.

On April 26, 2025, Respected Wali Sahib passed away in Merced, California, at the age of 93. He is laid to rest in the city he served with distinction for decades. His life was a living expression of the Hadith:

“The best of you in Islam are those with the best character, if they have religious understanding.” – Musnad Ahmad 9880

Indeed, this Hadith encapsulates the grace, humility, and devotion of Al-Haj Abdur Raqeeb Wali Sahib, a true pioneer of Islam Ahmadiyyat in America.



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