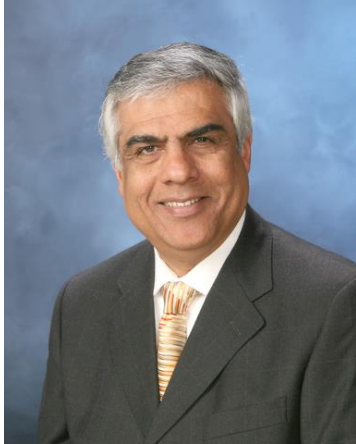


MOHAMED-BAQUIR ALLOO



Provided by Sadik Alloo *April 2021*



Mohamed-Baquir was the ninth child of Kassamali Jaffer Alloo (Bapa Pemba) and Kulsum Hirji Gowhar (Bibi Chachi).

Known simply as Baquir, he was born in Zanzibar in 1928. His grandfather Jaffer Alloo had emigrated from India around the 1870s and established a successful business in Zanzibar trading in dates, copra, cloves and dry grains.

Baquir studied to Grade 12, a rare achievement in those days when most Khoja boys did not aspire to study past Grade 8. He joined the family business after finishing studies but supplemented his education by attending private classes in accounting. At the Jaffer Alloo business, he gradually took on responsibilities such as dealing with foreign suppliers and managing the financial matters of the business.

At a young age of 22, he started voluntary community services and became the President of newly-formed Muslim Students Association of Zanzibar and remained in that role for four years. He enlarged the membership of this multi-faith, multi-ethnic Muslim student organization and organized regular discussions on subjects ranging from new inventions and political thinking in Europe and India. He organized student debate competitions designed to challenge various points of view. The Association was then the only forum of its kind that promoted racial and sectarian interaction in Zanzibar.

Later, he served as Honorary Secretary of the Ithna-Asheri Education Society in Zanzibar for many years. He was one of the founders of the Society whose achievements were phenomenal and exemplary in our cloistered Khoja community. The Society established, built and managed the first Ithna-Asheri Nursery School, a purpose-built facility a few miles outside the Stone Town. The Society later took over the management of Datu-Hemani Girls School and turned it to one of the leading girls' schools with achievement of high results for admission into the secondary school system.

Baquir established a community tutoring classes for Grade 7 and 8 students resulting in a greater percentage of successful students who gained admission for entrance into Government Secondary Schools. He also arranged the use of the Dharamsi Gangji Madressah building to prepare our community students for the UK based 'O' Level Cambridge Examination. This preparation proved to be a catalyst for many going abroad for higher education.

He married Leila Hussein Nazarali (Tabora) in 1956. The couple was blessed with one daughter, Gulzar. In 1959, Baquir unsuccessfully contested for a seat on the Zanzibar Town Council.

In 1967, three years after the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution, Baquir joined the exodus of Asian businessmen who uprooted themselves as a result of unbearable political situation and emigrated to Daressalaam to start the Jaffer Alloo business in that city. In 1968, he was approached by British American Tobacco Company (BAT) to join them as their Office Manager in Daressalaam. A year later BAT asked him to relocate to Mwanza as their representative in a region that was the tobacco growing hub of Tanzania. Baquir fondly talked about the unique experience he acquired in that role and the network he built across the country. He became successful and a year later travelled for Hajj and Ziyarat with Leila.

In 1977 he joined firm of United Stationers, a printing and stationery business in partnership with a local businessman, Mohamed Jetha. Baquir used his acumen and network to steer the business to improved profitability. Eleven years later, in 1988, the business was sold to a Hindu entrepreneur who offered Baquir to stay on as a partner with an attractive package that he could not refuse.

He often said, Mwanza was very kind to him. He served as Honorary Secretary of Mwanza Jamaat for eight years. In that role, he was one of three members who undertook the building of a multi-purpose facility that housed a madressah, a recreation hall with badminton courts, table tennis, darts and other indoor games for community members as well as social and educational functions. It also housed a self-contained apartment for community wedding functions. The facility had four shops, which supplemented Jamaat income.

In Mwanza, he served as Honorary Secretary of a multi-racial Lake Secondary School Board for six years and was a Board Member of Organization of Lake Region Secondary Schools. He Served as Chairman of Mwanza Chamber of Commerce and Industries for four years and also served as Vice-Chairman of the prestigious Tanzania National Chamber of Commerce and Industries for two terms.

He was nominated by the Tanzania Government as a Member of Regional Price Control Board, as well as a Member of the Regional Commissioner`s Advisory Board for two years. He was a Councillor of the Supreme Council of the Africa Federation and frequently participated at the World Federation conferences. While in Mwanza, he and his wife Leila, often hosted numerous African Federation meetings held in the city because of its proximity to the Kenya and Uganda borders. The friendships he developed in community service was sustained throughout his later life.

Baquir and Leila emigrated to Canada in 1992 and he continued his involvement in community service. He served as a Member of the Board of Directors of the Ja`ffari Islamic Housing Corporation, and Chairman of the Tenants Liaison Committee of the Crescent Village, both for almost ten years. He also served as a Councillor at the H.G. Bernard Public School for three years.

He assisted as a representative of the Federation Samachar in Toronto for over 10 years with his popular and regular column of Dateline Toronto. After retirement he was able to devote more time advising in community affairs despite his advancing age and delicate health. His vast experience in various fields of community services and his congenial nature proved a great asset to all those who sought and benefited from his knowledge and wisdom.

Baqir welcomed creeping old age with grace and dispelled the nagging thoughts of putting the long tradition of voluntarism behind him. But it was just natural for him to serve the community albeit at a slower pace. So, with enthusiasm he agreed to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Senior Citizens Group of the Toronto Jamaat.

The world of computers was taking hold of the times. Now in this late 60, Baquir purchased a computer and learnt its meticulous capabilities. Sitting at a desk in his humble home, he started contributing towards tabligh initiatives with various groups and faiths. He took part in interfaith dialogues via email groups in which he took the opportunity to explain and remove misunderstandings regarding Islam and the Madhab of the Ahlul-Bayt. He started connecting online with old acquaintances and joined discussion groups that discussed matters ranging from history of Indian migration to East Africa, the origin of Zanzibar *Khanga*, traditional medicines of India and Zanzibar and challenges faced by new immigrants in the west.

During this time, he was presented with several awards that reflected his selfless dedication to the community and society at large. These awards included the Melvin Jones Fellow Award from the Lions International Foundation for his dedication towards humanitarian services; Muslim Heritage Award from the Association of Progressive Muslims for his dedicated volunteer work in serving the community; and Ontario Volunteer award from the Government of Ontario for his commitment to improving the quality of life for residents of Ontario.

A dedicated family man, he was always supported in his professional and community services by his loving wife Leila. To the Alloo family he was a patriarch whose sage council and wisdom was always sought. He

was a humorous man with a sharp mind until the end of his life. A prolific reader, he could often compare the modern happenings to historical accounts of the past generations and provide reflective lessons on the changing values of modern living.

Baqir passed away peacefully in his sleep at Richmond Hill at the age of 81. He is buried at York Cemetery at Senlac Road in Toronto.

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