

Haji Ebrahimhai Patel

Haji Ebrahimhai Patel was born in 1923 in Dabhel, a village near Surat, Gujerat, India. His mother passed away when he was 2 yrs old. He was then adopted by his pious neighbour, Khatijabai Cassim. At the age of 12 years, Haji Ebrahimhai migrated to Johannesburg to join his father, Moulana Ismail Patel who had been teaching in the local Madressah since 1929.

In 1947, he married Rukyabai in India, and returned to live in Roodepoort, Transvaal, where he lived until he left for Australia in 1981. He had worked mainly as a sales assistant and completed part-time studies in bookkeeping. In the meanwhile, together with his wife Rukyabai, they started a home Madressah in the 1950s. Their earliest savings, Al-hamdu-lillah, took them for their first Haj in 1962. On his return, he joined and subsequently became Principal of the Roodepoort Community Madressah, a position he held for the next 14 years. During this time, he worked intensively with learned brothers at the Waterval Islamic Institute (based at Mia's Farm) to develop the Transvaal Madressah curriculum. He was also an examiner for the affiliated Madressahs in the Transvaal . Together with his wife Rukyaa, they taught the Quran & Islamic Studies to hundreds of children over 3 generations for over 50 years, some of whom now live in Australia.

He migrated to Australia in 1981, and immediately joined the late Imam Rahimulla in a voluntary capacity to teach children at the Holland Park Madressah, and also occasionally, to lead Salah and Juma Khutba. He was a close friend of Imam Rane. Over the next few years, he worked with Muslim brothers and sisters to establish the Lutwyche Masjid, and became its first Imam, and taught Madressah for both adults and children. In the late 80's he moved to the Gold Coast where he worked with local Muslim friends and the community to help build the first Gold Coast Masjid (now the residence of the current Imam), and to start the local Madressah for children and adults. In 1999 he moved to Eight Mile Plains, Brisbane

Haji Ebrahimhai was a dedicated and active member of the local community wherever he lived, and had many passions, both for Islam, as well as for understanding other faiths. He urged and supported friends and acquaintances to read and get a deeper understanding of the meanings and significance of the Holy Quran, of the Hadith and other teachings of Islam. He debated, reflected and talked tirelessly about ways in which we could live a meaningful life as individuals, as a neighbour, as members of the community, and more broadly, for a common humanity. He argued fervently for parents to support their daughters as well as sons acquire higher levels of learning of Islam, of orientalism as well as of modern western cultures. He advocated relentlessly for brothers and sisters in Islam to strengthen social interactions and bonds across the diverse Muslim communities, to integrate respectfully and live harmoniously with all other members of our communities.

Haji Ebrahimhai passed away peacefully around Maghrib time on Tuesday 13th May at his home. He is survived by his wife Rukyaa and children Mohammed Said, Abdulkhalek, and Sakina.

To honour his passion for acquiring and sharing knowledge, Haji Ebrahimhai's family and friends are formulating plans to establish a Trust Fund to be used for supporting deserving young Muslim women in South Africa in University-based studies, Insha-Allah. We invite and welcome sisters and brothers to share innovative ideas and thoughts that will help towards this objective.