

Allama Azmi in the Middle East: My Personal Experiences

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When you are writing an article on someone who is so well known and a great personality, such as Allama Qamaruzzaman Azmi Sahib, it poses a great challenge and dilemma as to what facet of the person should be presented to the world. A difficult task indeed - for it is very difficult to gauge his greatness - for even if I do try to exaggerate or embellish my words, it would actually not be an exaggeration - and it would still not do justice to the real praise that he deserves!

His relentless efforts for Islam are very well known - whether on a personal basis, speeches, establishment of institutions or through the World Islamic Mission & other organizations. So I need not dwell on these.

I, therefore, wish to write about my personal experiences during his lecture tours of the Middle East.

His tour of United Arab Emirates:

I first saw Allama Sahib in Dubai, at the residence of the Darvesh family. His appearance was not what I expected it to be. Dressed in an Achkan with a Jinnah Cap, he looked a simple man. But I knew that beneath this simple appearance was a man of exemplary qualities, yet for me to discover.

I got my first opportunity to speak to him alone at length whilst we drove to Abu Dhabi - a 90 minutes drive, during which he spoke little, and heard me much. I soon realized that he was definitely of different mettle than others who have so much to say just about themselves. Here was a 'listener' - the distinctive quality of a true scholar that comes only with humility.

His first lecture was arranged in Abu Dhabi at my residence, which could accommodate 200 persons in the hall. I had managed to get hold of

Allama Sahib's resume - about his religious activities, and circulated them to my friends. Since many knew of similar programmes being held at my home before this, the response was positive.

Alhamdolillah, the hall was full. When he started his speech we immediately knew that he was not just an excellent orator - his words were not simply embellishments to what he wanted to convey. His depth of knowledge and the amount of information that he was conveying to the listeners, was simply immense.

The message he conveyed regarding the love of the Holy Prophet, and his concern for the Muslim Ummah was heart moving to say the least. He delivered it with great passion and yearning - we could gauge from his style and tone that he was completely drowned in it - his heart was with his tongue. When we cried, his heart too was crying. He wanted us to understand not just to listen. He wanted us to believe and act upon it, not to raise slogans or shower him with praise.

And his words! Simply magic. The effect of those words will have an everlasting effect on the minds of the listeners. They were like pearls - nay rubies and emeralds - strung into a beautiful necklace; for the choice and variety of words he had at his disposal was tremendous. He spoke for more than a hour, not repeating anything what he had said earlier - with the audience spellbound, trying to absorb his eloquence; for many, I am sure, were not used to such vocabulary. It seemed that words were standing in front of him, wanting to be picked up by his grace, to be part of the oratory.

I recall the feelings expressed on the faces of the audience when the programme concluded. Each one of them was in awe, some in tears - some simply unable to express their joy and thanks for the wonderful evening. In particular, I remember the comments made by my friend, Abdul Majeed. He said that he had been the Secretary-General of the Urdu Literary Society whilst in College in Karachi, some 2 decades before, and that he prided himself on him being a poet of some sort. When he heard Allama Sahib, he said "This man is a genius - no he is God gifted: I have never met or known any person in my life who can combine such eloquence, with speed and sense of fervor, all at the same time : and yet deliver a speech that has no embellishments, just the truth from the Holy Quran and Hadith. He has made me realize what I am in

Urdu literature - just a layman."

Allama Sahib stayed with me for another 2 days, all the while increasing my knowledge in Islam and talking about the ventures that the World Islamic Mission undertakes throughout the world. He hardly ever mentioned his own role but always gave credit to the persons in charge of affairs in each of its branches.

I took the opportunity to ask him to check and verify the translation of the Holy Qur'an that I was doing from Kanzul-Imaan (Urdu) to English. He was thrilled to know that Imam Ahmed Raza's (Allah be pleased with him) masterpiece had been translated and thanked me for asking him to verify the translation. The verification had earlier been sought from various universities and scholars in Pakistan, but it had already been delayed by 2 years. He took the translation on a CD from me and gave it to his panel of learned companions in the United Kingdom. Within a few months time, I received the certificate, signed by Allama Sahib himself, stating that the translation had been checked and found true to the original text and meaning. I cannot thank him enough for this favour.

He visited the United Arab Emirates more often, and graced our home three more times with his presence and filled our hearts with the love of Allah and His Noble Prophet, with his speeches always having a different subject, topics unrepeated and the same fantastic style of delivery.

Many of my friends who considered themselves 'professionals' or 'highly educated' but had a negative image about the Ahle-Sunnah beliefs, quickly succumbed to the truth, and wanted to become his disciples (Mureeds), but he never took on the role of a Shaykh (Peer), modestly saying, "I am not fit for it" : although, I knew that he had been blessed with the Khilaafah and Ijazah from none other than his Shaykh His Holiness Huzoor Mufti-e-Azam-e-Hind Maulana Mustafa Raza Khan (May Allah be pleased with him).

His love for his Shaykh is immense, as many a times I saw tears welling up in his eyes when speaking about him. He also mentioned to me that his guidance and his eloquence is not but due to the prayers of his illustrious Shaykh.

During his stay at my home (I wish it had been more), his most

striking traits were his humility, steadfastness in beliefs and the love of knowledge. He never wished good food, never the best seat in the gathering, never more attention to himself, never his clothes to be ironed, never to ask for any favour - trying to attend to his personal needs all by himself. In his spare time, I saw him picking up books from my shelf, going through them with passion. When I took him to the library in Cultural Center in Abu Dhabi, he promptly made his way to the Arabic Islamic books section, searching for any rare books he could find. At Fajr, he would be on the prayer mat much before me, engrossed in reading the Holy Qur'an or with his head bowed and hands raised in prayer.

Several programmes were arranged for him in the UAE in Mosques, in people's homes, auditoriums and within the gatherings of the World Memon Organization. As expected, people from all walks of life, the poor and the rich, from whichever corner of the world they had come from used to gather around him, eager for his attention.

His Visits to the Haramain

Allama Azmi came to the Haramain with his family in Ramadan 1431 (in 2010), and I made a point to meet them in Medina Munawwarah. It was my good fortune to show them some rare places of Ziyarah (visit) which are blessed by the presence and usage of the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings Be Upon Him). I would offer some historical data of these places, while he would promptly quote from the Hadith about its importance. He thanked me profusely for the visits, while I could not thank him enough for his companionship. We spent some wonderful moments together in the Haram and in Masjid-e-Quba, and paid our respects to the Holy Prophet (Peace and Blessings Be Upon Him). His modesty had reached new heights: he used to ask me to pray so that he could say Ameen!

We met for a brief period in Mina when he came for Hajj (1431 - November 2010). He was again his normal self, totally unassuming, modest and humble. I listened to one more of his impromptu lectures on 8th ZilHajj to be enthralled once more.

We met again in Medina Munawwarah on the 10th of Muharram 1431 (December 2010). He had been giving speeches, guiding Muslims

all day long and was tired. But when I asked him to attend one more gathering, he immediately agreed, although he had to walk back half a mile late at night towards his hotel.

In all my meetings I requested him to pray for me and out of sheer modesty, this great man would always accede my request and in turn ask me to pray for him. I am sure his prayers for me will soon be granted by the Most Generous.

May Allah keep him healthy and active and grant him a long life. May Allah grant him success in all his endeavors and immensely reward him for his persevering efforts and personal sacrifices for Islam. May Allah also guide us to learn from him. Ameen.

