

Al-Sheikh Muhammad ibn Muhammad Awwamah

(Hafidhahullah)

All praises are due to Allah Ta'ala who has blessed South Africa with the regular advent of great luminaries of Islam from time to time. Many years back, our Darul Uloom was honoured by the auspicious visit of Sheikh Abdul Fattah Abdul Ghudah (RA), when he graced our shores for our first Bukhari Graduation in 1992. Alhamdulillah we now have the honour of welcoming his outstanding student, al-Sheikh Muhammad Awwamah at our modest alma--mater for our 22th Bukhari Graduation.

Sheikh Muhammad Awwamah was born in Aleppo (Halab) in Syria on the first of January 1940 corresponding to the 14 of Dhul Hijjah - 1358. He hails from the blessed family of Rasulullah Sallallahu Allahi Wasallam through the medium of Hadhrat Hussein Ibn Ali Radhiyallahu Ta'ala Anhu. He began his quest for knowledge in 1953 when he regularly attended the lessons conducted by Sheikh Muhammad al-Salqni (RA). In his early days as a student, he studied under Sheikh 'Abdullah Sirajudeen (RA). From 1958, he began studying under Sheikh 'Abdul Fattah Abdul Ghuddah (RA). Eventually he became known for his affiliation to these two illustrious scholars and is regarded as their foremost student.

In 1962 he enrolled at the Faculty of Shariah (Islamic studies) and during this very year Sheikh 'Abdullah Sirajudeen (RA) appointed him as a lecturer at his institute, Madrasa al-Sha'baniyya. He served there until 1980. He also served as general secretary and presided as chief-administrator at the institute for numerous years. In 1959 he travelled to Egypt where he met a number of senior scholars such as Sheikh Ahmad al-Ghumari (RA), Sheikh 'Abdullah al-Ghumari (RA), Sheikh 'Abdul Wahhab 'Abdul Latif (RA) and Sheikh Muhammad Abdul Zahra (RA). His academic contribution and inherent vigour brought an outstanding Islamic-revival and renaissance to the great city of Aleppo (Halab), where he was honoured and revered just as his teachers were honoured and revered, which eventually resulted in his nomination as a lecturer at the Islamic center of Masjid al-Rawda at a very young age. Sheikh 'Abdul Fattah Abdul Ghuddah (RA) described him as: "Yesterday's student and today's colleague" and "The great scholar and researcher".

In 1980 he settled at Madinah Munawwarah where he joined the Islamic University (Jamiah

Islamiyah) and established the Islamic Center of Research which later became known as the Center for Serving the Sunnah and the Sirah. Here he began researching the book, Ithaf al-Maharah. In 1986 he established the academic department for research of Islamic Heritage which is still functional. The respected Sheikh has also taught for numerous years at the two prestigious universities of:

1. Jamiah Imam Muhammad Bin Sa'ud (Riyadh)
2. Jamiah Malik Abdul Aziz (Madinah Munawwarah).

Sheikh 'Awwamah may be described as a person of illuminated thoughts and methodology. This is apparent in his writings; particularly in Athar al-Hadith ai-Sharif and his book Adab al-Ikhtilaf Fi Masa'il ai-lim Wal Deen. Sheikh Muhammad Sa'eed Tantawi who is a famous scholar said: "I am not aware of anyone alive who is more knowledgeable than Sheikh Awwamah in Ilmul-Tahqiq (Academic Research)." He bears great love and affiliation with the Ulama of Deoband. A few years ago he was honoured with the HASSAN ALI NADWI AWARD at Lucknow.

The great linguist, Sheikh Abdul Maqsum Khajah (RA) described his personality in the following words:

"Sheikh Awwamah is a great scholar of exceptional merits, by nature he is serene but when he speaks, his words are refined and captivating. He does not seek public attention or elevated platforms. If asceticism was permissible in Islam I would have labelled him as an ascetic. His academic prowess and personality manifests mostly at scholarly junctures."

Sheikh 'Awwamah has numerous academic contributions other than the three books mentioned above (which have been translated in various languages already). Some of his works are:

- Musnad 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Aziz. He elucidated and provided sources to the Ahadith and wrote an extensive conclusion on its narrations.

- Al-Ansab of Sam'aani (RA). He researched and expounded a portion of it.
- Taqrib al-Tahdhib, Sheikh researched this great work on Hadith by Hafidh Ibn Hajar (RA) and its famous footnotes by Abdullah Basari (RA) and his famous student al-Marghini (RA) whilst comparing the original manuscripts.
- Al-Kashif by Imam al-Dhahabi. Sheikh 'Awwamah wrote an extensive introduction to it.
- Majalis Ibn Nasirudeen al-Dimashqi...
- Min Sihah al-Ahadith al-Qudsiyyah .A compilation of 100 Hadith Qudsi with explanation.
- Al-Mukhtar min Fara'id al-Nuqul wal-Akhbar. Educational and inspirational anecdotes for students of Deen.
- Al-Qawl al-Badi' fi al-salat 'ala ai-habib al-Shaft'i by al-Sakhawi. (An encyclopedia on Salutations upon Rasulullah Sallallahu Allahi Wasallam
- Al-Sunan by Imam Abdul Dawud. Sheikh did extensive research and compared it with Ibn Hajar's version and seven other copies.
- Al-Shama'il al-Muhammadiyah by Imam al-Tirmidhi.
- Al-Musannaf by Ibn Abi Shayba. He edited it and compared it with various manuscripts and he provided references for the Hadith. He was involved with this work for 16 years and it as finally published in 28 volumes.

- A comparative Hadith study of Nasb al-Rayah with the original manuscripts during which he was able to identify more than 1000 printing errors.

Sheikh always tries to obtain original copies of the books he is researching or editing. As a result he has been blessed with the opportunity of researching various original manuscripts. He is well known for his excellent and informative introductions to many books. We beseech almighty Allah that he blesses sheikh with good health and prosperity and may his advent be a means of great blessings to the South African community.

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