

THE GREAT THINKER OF KARMANA. WITHOUT HISTORICAL MEMORY, THERE IS NO FUTURE

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The architectural complex of Qosim Shaykh, rising in ancient Karmana, is a rare monument of the 16th century. It was commissioned by Abdullah Khan II, the ruler of Bukhara from the Shaybanid dynasty, in honor of his spiritual mentor (pir) and the successor of the Yasaviya order, Qosim Shaykh Azizon.

Hazrat Nizamiddin Qosim Shaykh Azizon was born in the land of ancient Karmana, in the village of Marjonkhotun near the right bank of the Zarafshan River. This location corresponds to the present-day territory of Metan village in Navbahor district.

Qosim Shaykh Azizon first studied in Karmana and later traveled to Bukhara, where he received instruction from Shaykh Abdulatif, one of the representatives of the Kubrawiya (Khojagon) order. After spending some time in the khanqah of Shaykh Abdulatif, he obtained a fatwa declaring that the authorization granted in the Kubrawiya order also applied to him.

Thereafter, in pursuit of knowledge, he set out for Aliabad in Samarkand (now near Chelak Fortress in the Payariq district) to the spiritual lodge of Hazrat Shaykh Mawlono Vali.

There, he served his teacher Shaykh Mawlono Vali for ten years and received spiritual education and authorization (ijazah) not only from him but also from the shaykhs of the Kubrawiya, Qadiriyya, Yasaviya, and Naqshbandiyya orders.

In the 16th century, Qosim Shaykh became a leading spiritual guide of Mawarannahr, a distinguished representative of knowledge and enlightenment, and a religious figure who attained the rank of pir. He was a renowned successor in the lineage of Khoja Ahmad Yasavi, following Shaykh Khudoydod Vali and Hazrat Mawlono Vali, and became a prominent continuation of its thirteen spiritual chains.

This blessed man left an unparalleled mark on history by resolving the socio-political problems of his time, establishing peace in the country, preventing wars and conflicts, and promoting enlightenment. The initiative to re-centralize the state founded by the great Sahibqiran Amir Temur—whose later fate had become complicated—was also the result of his efforts.

It is known from the history of Central Asia that every ruler had several religious teachers and spiritual mentors. Likewise, in the second half of the 16th century, Qosim Shaykh served as the pir of Iskandar ibn Jonibek Sultan, who ruled in Bukhara, and of his son Abdullah Khan II ibn Iskandar Khan. Indeed, in every society and every era, rulers have needed spiritual support.

For this reason, out of deep respect for his pir and adviser Qosim Shaykh, Abdullah Khan II commissioned this complex in his honor during his lifetime (in 1558).

Qosim Shaykh was a mature saint of the Zarafshan oasis who devoted his entire life to spreading enlightenment, fostering compassion among people, opposing the oppression of the

population by tax collectors, and calling revenue officials to act justly for the prosperity of the country.

His remarkable qualities included uniting the Muslim community, encouraging people of different social strata to live in harmony, fighting against injustice, and striving for the development and good administration of the land.

The shaykhs of his time described Qosim Shaykh as “the Sultan of the Gnostics, the Proof of the Great Ones, the Pole of the Age, the Helper of Saints, the Unique One of his Era, the Refuge of both the elite and the common people, the Source and Foundation of Sainthood, the Revealer of the Divine Treasures of the world’s seekers, the Support of saints, the Hope of the poor, a person beyond the need for description.”

According to sources, after the death of the Bukhara ruler Abdulaziz Khan (1550), Abdulatif Khan, the governor of Samarkand, and Navruz Ahmad Khan (Baroq Khan), the governor of Turkestan and Tashkent—who sought to seize the throne—sembled a large army and advanced to capture Afarikent and Miyankol. Upon hearing this, the governors of Afarikent and Miyankol fled in different directions.

At that time, Qosim Shaykh gathered his disciples and came forward, advising the future ruler, the 17-year-old Abdullah Khan. With his support, they defended the Karmana fortress. As a result, although Navruz Ahmad Khan besieged Karmana for twelve days, he was unable to capture the fortress. Upon hearing that Qosim Shaykh himself was inside, he was compelled to conclude a peace agreement. Thereafter, Abdulatif Khan and Navruz Ahmad Khan were forced to return to their provinces.

For nearly thirty years, Qosim Shaykh devoted his activity to reconciling those struggling for the throne and power, preventing bloody battles, and protecting the peace and prosperity of the people.

Indeed, because of his great status in cultural and spiritual life, Abdullah Khan II bestowed upon Qosim Shaykh the title “Azizon.” The word “Azizon” means “one of the revered,” “one of the great,” or “among the honored masters.”

As the most prominent religious thinker of Central Asia and a mature saint, Qosim Shaykh lived in a time in the second half of the 16th century when various Sufi orders and socio-political forces were not united in purpose or ideology, and struggles for power were leading to fragmentation. Through his wisdom and intellect, he attained the rank of a spiritual leader and became the moral guide of the people.

Whenever Abdullah Khan II encountered difficulties in resolving socio-political issues of the state, he would turn to Qosim Shaykh for guidance. Despite the considerable distance between Bukhara and Karmana, the Khan frequently visited the Shaykh in person to seek his counsel.

Sources also record that in 1576–1577, Qosim Shaykh succeeded in reconciling three rulers who were in conflict with one another—Haji Muhammad Khan, the ruler of Khorezm; Eshim Khan, the Kazakh ruler of the Kipchak steppe; and Abdullah Khan—by seating them together on a single felt mat in Karmana and bringing them to a peace agreement. This event is noted in Hafiz Tanish al-Bukhari’s work “Abdullanama.” Such instances occurred many times throughout Qosim Shaykh’s life.

Qosim Shaykh was also regarded as a venerable figure possessing extraordinary qualities and the ability to perform miracles (karamat).

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