



The Ummah's Luminary

Diya' al-Ummat Justice Shaykh
Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari

*(Allah have mercy upon his soul
and make his life a source of guidance for all, Amin)*

An Introduction

By Bakhtyar Haider Pirzada al-Azhari

“If the flame of knowledge burns out
then human contemplation is incarcerated by superstitions and nonsense.”

- Diya' al-Ummat, Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra)

His life

“Readers! This was the luminous candle in the spiritual chain of the Chishti Shuyukh¹; the intrinsic heir to the knowledge and spiritual treasures of Baha' al-Haq Zakariyya Multani²; the justice of the most powerful court³ in Pakistan; the symbol of the yearning of the Islamic community; the possessor of vision in the flower garden of Iqbal⁴; the central pioneer in the renaissance of the great educational and thoughtful movement of Dar al-'Ulum al-Muhammadiyya al-Ghawthiyya; the founder and chief of the *Diya'i Haram Monthly* magazine in the world of journalism; the author of the unique and extraordinary exegesis of the modern era, *Tafsir Diya' al-Qur'an*; the one who drowned in the ocean of love for the noble Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and then profoundly wrote his biography, *Diya' an-Nabi*; the founder of the leading publishing house, Diya' al-Qur'an Publications; this was Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra) who, during his student years, from morning till midday and from the afternoon prayer to the late afternoon prayer, used to spend his time acquiring the knowledge of Islam from his teachers. During the times in between, he used to seclude himself under the shade of the trees and used to spend this time acquiring the knowledge of the modern sciences of sociology, politics and English.”⁵

Diya' al-Ummat, Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra) was born on 1st July 1918 (21st Ramadan 1336 AH) in the village of Bhera, District Sargodha, Pakistan and died on 7th April 1998 (9th Dhu'l-Hijja 1418 AH) at Islamabad, Pakistan.⁶

Shah in the Indian subcontinent refers to the tribe of *Quraysh* in the Arabian Peninsula. Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's lineage, on this basis, links him to this ancient Arabian tribe, which is the tribe of the Prophet of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's ancestry is traced back to Habbar ibn al-Aswad *al-Qurashi*,⁷ who accepted the religion of Islam, after the conquest of Makka, at the hands of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and thus became a Companion (*Sahabi*).⁸ Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's father is Shaykh Muhammad Shah, who was born in Bhera in the year 1890, and his mother's name is Kaniz Fatima, who is the daughter of Ghulam Muhyuddin Shah.

Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah began his education with the Qur'an and its memorisation in his home village of Bhera. From 1925 to 1929 he was a pupil at Muhammadiyya Ghawthiyya Primary School. He completed matriculation in 1936 at the Government High School Bhera. During these early

¹ Shuyukh is the plural of Shaykh. Among the many orders of Tariqat is the Chishti Nizami Sufi Order.

² He died in 661 AH / 1263 CE and is known today as the grand Shaykh of Multan and his shrine is in Multan, Pakistan. Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah is from his descendents.

³ The Supreme Court of Pakistan.

⁴ The famous Urdu and Persian poet and philosopher of the East, Sir Muhammad Iqbal. This is a reference to Iqbal's words that the plant of narcissus, for thousands of years cries over its darkness, with great difficulty does the flower garden give birth to the possessor of vision.

⁵ Ahmad Bakhsh, *Jamali Karam* (Lahore: Diya' al-Qur'an Publications, 2003), 1, 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1, 21, 165.

⁷ *Al-'Allama Muhammad Karam Shah wa Juhuduhu fi'l-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu'asir* (Cairo, 2004), MA thesis at ad-Duwal al-'Arabiyya University, p. 42.

⁸ Ibn al-Athir (d. 630 AH / 1233 CE), *Asd al-Ghaba fi Ma'rifat as-Sahaba* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 2001), 4, 272.

years, he was gaining the knowledge of Islamic disciplines and Qur'anic teachings from his father. However, between 1936 and 1941 he formally and in much depth studied various Islamic sciences and disciplines with a number of different teachers and scholars. The subjects he studied included; tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis), hadith (science of prophetic traditions), fiqh (religious jurisprudence), sarf (Arabic etymology), nahw (Arabic syntax), mantiq (logic), falsafa (philosophy), balagha (rhetoric), adab (literature), etc. and the Persian language.

In 1941, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah enrolled in the Oriental College Lahore for the Fadil 'Arabi, which is equivalent to the modern day bachelor degree.⁹ He passed this in first division with a score of 512/600 and took the first position in the entire province of Punjab.¹⁰

After gaining an insight into various sciences, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah desired to complete a well-known intensive course called '*Dawra-i Hadith*'. This involves a complete revision of the prophetic traditions that have been collected by various hadith scholars including the six *Sihah*¹¹ and various other sources of hadith. He approached his Shaykh for guidance and upon his advice travelled to Muradabad in India to complete this course at the hands of a renowned Shaykh, Na'im ad-Din al-Muradabadi. The Shaykh was a prominent figure and scholar, but more so he was the disciple and student of one of the greatest Sufi masters and leaders of the Indian subcontinent, Imam Ahmad Rada Khan al-Qadiri.¹² In 1943, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah completed this course with much admiration from his honourable teacher.

Upon returning from Muradabad, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah continued to further his knowledge and thus enrolled in the University of the Punjab. In 1945, he completed his BA degree from the faculty of English Language. This was in a time when the British were in power and seeking anything that even remotely resembled the western way of life and language was deemed wrong by many. However, through his foresight and discernment, this revolutionary step proved crucial in the subsequent service to Islam.

The following years played an important role in Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's life. These were the years when the Pakistan movement led by Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah was at its peak. There were many groups with various affiliations rallying their cry during this time. On the one hand, both the Hindus and Muslims wanted independence from the British. Many Muslims – including Shaykh Muhammad Shah and his son, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah – desired a separate state for the Muslim population, as they did not wish to exchange British rule for a Hindu rule. This was the Pakistan movement championed by the Muslim League. There were other Muslims who did not support a two-state solution and they were known as the Unionist Party. During the years 1946-47, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah actively participated in the Pakistan movement along with his

⁹ MA thesis: 2004, p. 45.

¹⁰ Bakhsh: 2003, 1, 175.

¹¹ Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abi Dawud, Sunan at-Tirmidhi, Sunan an-Nasa'i and Sunan Ibn Maja are called the *Sihah Sitta* (The six sound books on prophetic traditions).

¹² Imam Ahmad Rada Khan al-Qadiri (b. 1856 – d. 1921) is considered one of the great Sufi saints of his time who stood up for the correct beliefs of the Muslims and guided the people in a time of despair and difficulty as their lands were ruled over by non-Muslims. He was an exceptional poet whose poetry reflects his immeasurable love for the beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and also relates the meaning of Qur'anic verses. His memorable works include over fifty books on various theological issues and poetry and odes. He is considered a jurisconsult of Hanafi law and amongst his legal works is his *Fatawa Ridwiyya*, comprising of twelve volumes. His translation of the Qur'an, *Kanz al-Iman*, is prominent in the Indian subcontinent and has now been translated into the English language in South Africa. He was a Shaykh in the Qadiri Sufi Order and was a follower of Sunni Islam (*Ahl as-Sunna wa'l-Jama'a*). Today, many Muslims of the Indian subcontinent have profound admiration, love and reverence for the esteemed Imam due to his Islamic beliefs of love for God, his Prophet and all creation, and the opposition of extremism and radicalism. The great philosopher of the East, Sir Muhammad Iqbal once stated, "The Indian subcontinent has never produced the like of Imam Ahmad Rada al-Qadiri. It is possible for us to say that he can be considered as the Abu Hanifa of our time." Source: Shaykh Muhammad Ahmad Rada al-Qadiri, *Safwat al-Madh fi Madh an-Nabi* (Cairo: Dar al-Hidaya Publishing, 2001), p. 13-22.

father. Shaykh Muhammad Shah – being a known figure and spiritual guide – travelled to many areas throughout Pakistan, accompanied by Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah, calling on every one and especially his disciples and followers to support the Muslim League.¹³ During all these testing times, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah stood side-by-side with his father.¹⁴ Following Pakistan's independence in 1947, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah began teaching at his father's institute at Bhera.

In 1951, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah travelled to Egypt and in September enrolled at the University of Al-Azhar.¹⁵ The following year he also enrolled in the Cairo University. At the University of Al-Azhar, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah studied for his MPhil degree in the faculty of Law and Jurisprudence (department of Judiciary) and the title of his thesis was '*al-Hudud fi'l-Islam*', which was supervised by Dr. Ayyub 'Ali. At Cairo University, he studied Usul al-Fiqh (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) and Arabic Literature.¹⁶ In 1954, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah returned to Pakistan after specialising in Judiciary at the University of Al-Azhar and in Arabic Literature at Cairo University.¹⁷ Whilst still studying at Al-Azhar, the Pakistani students established a society called *al-Ittihad al-Thaqafi li Talabat al-Bakistan* (cultural society of Pakistani students) and Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah was elected as the Secretary of this Society from 1952-1953.¹⁸

Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's teachers and mentors in Egypt included Professor Dr Muhammad Mustafa Shilbi, Dr Ahmad Zaki and the prominent Imam Muhammad Abu Zahra¹⁹. Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah was affected a great deal by these scholars as he enhanced and modernised the existing educational system and introduced necessary contemporary subjects at his institute such as English language, economics and political science.

As a child, Shaykh Muhammad Shah had Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah make the bay'at (spiritual allegiance of complete obedience) to his Shaykh, Shaykh Diya' ad-Din as-Siyalwi in the Chishti Nizami Sufi Order. Later on, the son of Shaykh Diya' ad-Din, Khawaja Shaykh Qamar ad-Din as-Siyalwi became his khalifa (spiritual viceroy). Subsequently, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah renewed his bay'at at the hands of Shaykh Qamar ad-Din as-Siyalwi, who then gave Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah permission to acquire the bay'at of others as his khalifa (spiritual viceroy).²⁰

¹³ In a rally at Lalyani, District Bhulwal, Shaykh Muhammad Shah spoke out, "Muslims! Beware that the present elections are not a battle of mere interests rather this is a war of truth and falsity. On one side there is the *Puthi* (a Hindu scripture) and on the other is the Qur'an. On one side there is disbelief and on the other there is Islam. On one side there is the Congress and its regional branch, the Unionist Party, and on the other there is the Muslim League. I command you to assist the Muslim League, assist the Qur'an, and assist Islam."

¹⁴ Bakhsh: 2003, 1, 105.

¹⁵ MA thesis: 2004, p. 47.

¹⁶ Bakhsh: 2003, 1, 195.

¹⁷ MA thesis: 2004, p. 49.

¹⁸ Bakhsh: 2003, 1, 262-272.

¹⁹ Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's relationship with Imam Abu Zahra deserves special mention. Imam Abu Zahra is a scholar who has authored more than twenty nine books on various subjects that have been listed in Bakhsh's biography. He is considered one of the most learned men of contemporary Egypt as he is referred to as Imam. When Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah left Egypt, Imam Abu Zahra wrote a letter to him dated 19th July 1954. By reading this letter, the unique bond that Imam Abu Zahra had with Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah can be seen. The following is an excerpt from that letter:

"The moment I met you, I felt that you possessed great self-esteem, a valued character, and an inclination towards exalted objectives and a feeling of distance from futile pursuits. O my son! You have made me aware that, as the East is the place of the sun's rising, similarly it is the horizon of the rising of the spirit. As the East is the source of warmth, similarly it is the origin of the dawn of life. Each time I met you, I saw within you Islam luminous and resplendent as the sun and I saw such an Islam within you that is able to stitch together dispersed and broken hearts. I see within you the hope of a bright future. Today as I am saying farewell to you, it seems as though a section of my soul is separating away from me, a part of my spirit is breaking away from me." (Muhammad Abu Zahra)

²⁰ MA thesis: 2004, p. 67.

Upon the death of his father, in 1957, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah formally became the head of his father's institution 'Dar al-'Ulum al-Muhammadiyah al-Ghawthiyya (DMG) Bhera'²¹. Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah modernised the system of this institution, its syllabus and structure. He refined it to such an extent that today he himself is considered to be the founder of the institution and 1957 is referred to as the year of the *Nash'a Thaniyya*, the new beginning.²²

When the majority of traditional scholars and Imams tend to avoid politics, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah was very open and did not hesitate to show his support and express his critique: Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah was involved in the Pakistan independence movement of 1947 led by Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah; the 'finality of prophethood' movement of 1974 (whose objective was to constitutionally recognise the Ahmadi/Qadiyani population as a non-Muslim minority in Pakistan and not to be included as Muslims); and the '*Nizam Mustafa*' movement of 1977 opposing the ideas of Socialism presented by the government of Zulfqar Ali Bhutto of the Pakistan's People Party. In 1970, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah began publishing the *Diya'i Haram Monthly*, which is primarily a journal of Islamic Studies that presents articles and essays related to academia. Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah regularly and with much passion used to write the editorial of this journal providing guidance to the common Muslim in relation to current affairs. This editorial was titled '*Sirre Dilbaran*' (the secret of the leaders). The editorial of this journal is headed with the same title even today.

Due to his views, on many occasions he was heavily criticised by various circles. When he included secular subjects in his curriculum, he was criticised by his contemporaries. When he stood up for fundamental Islamic viewpoints, he was criticised by politicians who wanted scholars to avoid this area and stay within their mosques. He wanted politicians to understand the values and principles of Islam and implement them in Pakistan. Moreover, he wanted Muslim scholars to realise the circumstances and challenges they face in the modern world. On a few occasions, he paid a price for his stance. Due to his strong opposition to Zulfqar Ali Bhutto's government, he was imprisoned for three months and his monthly journal was placed under the regulations of press censorship.²³

Following the events of 1977 and the '*Nizam Mustafa*' movement, General Zia-ul-Haq – Chief of the Pakistani Army – took over the presidency by a military coup and dismissed Bhutto's government. General Zia-ul-Haq seemed to desire the 'Islamisation' of Pakistan. He found the present judicial system inadequate and thus in 1980 founded the Federal Shari'a Court. Some of the decisions made by the judges in this court caused many outcries and criticisms. For example, when the Federal Shari'a Court announced that the punishment for adultery – *Rajm* (stoning to death) – was not an Islamic legal punishment, this verdict was met with immense opposition from the Muslim scholars. It is no surprise that at the forefront of these critics was Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah, who severely criticised this decision in his monthly editorial.²⁴

Due to Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's scholarly ability and understanding manifested during this academic and theological debate, General Zia-ul-Haq approached him and offered him the membership of the Federal Shari'a Court. Hence in June 1981, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah began his judicial career at the Federal Shari'a Court.²⁵ Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah worked at this court for one year and three months. On 7th October 1982, he began serving in the Shari'a Appellant Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah remained at this post till

²¹ At the present moment there are over one hundred branches of DMG Bhera and al-Ghawthiyya Girls College. These branches include DMG in Islamabad, DMG in Lahore, DMG in Faisalabad, DMG in Mandi Bahauddin, Dar al-'Ulum Diya' al-Qur'an in Gujrat, Dar al-'Ulum Gulzari Habib in Azad Kashmir, Dar al-'Ulum Qamar al-Islam in Karachi, Jami'a Islamiyya Ridwiyya in Chaksawari, etc. Approximately 25,000 brothers and sisters are studying in this Islamic educational network.

²² Bakhsh: 2003, 1, 328-330.

²³ Mujib Ahmad, 'The political services and thoughts of Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah', *Diya'i Haram Monthly special edition* (Lahore: Diya' al-Qur'an Publications, April 1999), p. 477.

²⁴ Bakhsh: 2003, 2, 696-701.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2, 702.

his death. In 1980 Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah was awarded the 'Star of Distinction' by General Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan.

In August 1988, upon the request of General Zia-ul-Haq, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah travelled to Geneva and defended the position of the government of Pakistan upon the issue raised by the Pakistani Qadiyanis at the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. The Qadiyanis filed a complaint to the Commission that their human rights were being violated in Pakistan. After three days of continuous deliberations, thirteen out of fifteen judges at the Commission adjudicated in favour of Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah and declared that the rights of the Qadiyanis were in fact not being violated by the Pakistanis or the government of Pakistan. This was a great victory for Islam as the followers of Ghulam Ahmed Qadiyani (who claimed to be a prophet) were declared non-Muslims at the UN Human Rights Commission as a result of Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's compelling, convincing and realistic arguments.

In 1990, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah founded the 'al-Ghawthiyya Girls College' in Bhera to cater for the educational and Islamic needs of the Muslim sisters in that part of the world. Since 1990, over four hundred students have graduated from the college and at present there are over five hundred students at the college in Bhera, excluding its branches in other places.²⁶

On 6th March 1993, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah was awarded the 'Decoration of Honour' by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Eulogies from his contemporaries

His Shaykh, Khawaja Qamar ad-Din as-Siyalwi (ra):

“Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah is the light of my eyes. Moreover, he is like the tomb's minaret of our grand Shaykh of Siyal.”

His teacher from the subcontinent during his graduation ceremony at Muradabad, Sadr al-Afadil Shaykh Na'im ad-Din al-Muradabadi (ra):

“Today I am satisfied that the trust of knowledge and hadith, which I was endowed with has been passed on to the right person.”

His teacher from the Arab land on his departure from Cairo, Imam Abu Zahra (ra):

“The moment I met you, I felt that you possessed great self-esteem, a valued character, and an inclination towards exalted objectives and a feeling of distance from futile pursuits. O my son! You have made me aware that, as the East is the place of the sun's rising, similarly it is the horizon of the rising of the spirit. As the East is the source of warmth, similarly it is the origin of the dawn of life. Each time I met you, I saw within you Islam luminous and resplendent as the sun and I saw such an Islam within you that is able to stitch together dispersed and broken hearts. I see within you the hope of a bright future. Today as I am saying farewell to you, it seems as though a section of my soul is separating away from me, a part of my spirit is breaking away from me.”

Former President of Pakistan, Muhammad Rafiq Tarar:

“The death of Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah Al-Azhari (ra) was a severe blow to the whole Muslim Ummah. His contribution to Islamic Law will not be forgotten for a

²⁶ Ibid., 1, 550.

long time. He embodied true Islamic knowledge and understanding. Studying and teaching was second nature to him and his research and literary skills were of exemplary standards.”

Former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif:

“Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra) is not just the name of an individual, but the name of a universal movement and a unique personality. He was an outstanding scholar and an immaculate religious guide. When he departed from this world, our country lost a great commentator of the Qur’an and a great religious thinker. He was a symbol of unity in a fragmented environment and he was the pride of the whole Islamic nation. He was a true devotee of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), a complete Wali, and a Shari’a-adhering scholar. Individuals like him are seldom born.”

Senator ‘Abd as-Sattar Khan Niyazi:

“Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's unique personality is a radiant lamp for not just the Pakistanis, but the entire Muslim Ummah. I have used the present tense intentionally because personalities such as him live on and give guidance to the people even after their death through their ideas, outstanding and sincere services to Islam, their love for the people and through their sacrifices in the path of Allah (most high). After Imam Ahmad Rada Khan al-Qadiri (ra), Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah is the most outstanding scholar from the Indian Subcontinent.”

His heir, Shaykh Muhammad Amin al-Hasanat Shah al-Qurashi:

“From whichever angle I look towards him - as a father, as a teacher, as a spiritual guide, as a political leader, and as a judge - he was an exemplary person. The amazing thing was that there was no divide between his inner and outer self, and he treated his own children just like he dealt with everyone else.

There is one story that I will never forget; when I was young and my father was studying in Egypt, I asked him for a car in a letter. When he heard this he replied saying that don't ask for cars but pray to Allah (most high) asking for the love of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It was natural for a child of my age to ask for such things, especially since he had been away for so long. But even in such circumstances he still said to his child to ask Allah (most high) for the love of His beloved; something after which a person yearns for nothing else. I have seen all aspects of his flawless character which is a source of guidance.”

Bibliography of the literary works by Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra)

Tafsir Diya' al-Qur'an

'The exegesis; Light of the Qur'an'.

A very academic and detailed exegesis of the Qur'an comprising of five volumes. It took Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah twenty years to complete this particular piece of work.

Diya' an-Nabi

'Light of the Prophet'.

A detailed biography of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) comprising of seven volumes. Volume one discusses various empires and nations at

the time of the advent of Islam. Volumes two to four comprise in depth the Prophet's biography. Volume five looks at the greatness, qualities and character of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Volumes six and seven focus on Orientalism and western scholarship of Islam.

Jamal al-Qur'an

'The beauty of the Qur'an'.

A translation of the complete Qur'an in the Urdu language, which has now been translated into English.

Maqalat

'The essays'.

Two volumes comprising of various essays by Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah that cover a variety of different topics including the following:

- The Prophet of Mercy as a teacher of ethics.
- The moral system of the Sovereign of the Universe.
- Following the Sunna in light of the Qur'an.
- Qur'an; the revolutionary book.
- Justice and equity in light of the Qur'an.
- The Prophet's social revolution.
- Islam's political system.
- Islam and Tasawwuf.
- The poet Iqbal's concept of love.
- The importance of Ijtihad in Islam.
- Muslim contributions to the development of knowledge.
- Islam's punitive law.

Volume two of this work includes Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's *Paymani Sar Firoshi* (covenant of complete obedience), a prominent treatise on Tasawwuf and Tariqat.

Sunnat Khayr al-Anam

'The Sunna of the Best of Creation'.

This is the first book written by Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah and was written whilst he was a student at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. It deals with the legal position, authenticity and legitimacy of the Sunna in Islamic jurisprudence. It includes refutations of the arguments of those who deny the Sunna. The end of the book contains brief sketches of various ancient scholars of the Muslim world.

Sharh Qasida Atyab an-Nigham

'Commentary of the poem; Purest of Poems'.

This is a translation and commentary by Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah of the poem by Shah Wali Allah Muhaddith ad-Dihlawi (d. 1176 AH / 1762 CE), which is a popular poem in the Muslim world.

Majmu'a Waza'if ma'a Dala'il al-Khayrat

'A collection of prayers with the means of goodness'.

In this book Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah has compiled the regular prayers and verses that a Muslim should practice who intends to follow the path of self-purification. He has translated them into the Urdu language. This book also contains the prominent Sufi manual of prayers *Dala'il al-Khayrat* of Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Jazuli (d. 870 AH / 1466 CE), translated by Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah.

Bibliography of the literary works written about Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra)

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2. Muhammad I'jaz Ahmad Gondal, *Makatib Diya' al-Ummat (the letters and correspondence of the Ummah's Luminary)*, Lahore: Tag-o-Taaz Publishers, 2002.
3. Muhammad Munir, *al-'Allama Muhammad Karam Shah wa Juhuduhu fi'l-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu'asir (the learned Muhammad Karam Shah and his strive in contemporary Islamic thought)*, Cairo: MA thesis at ad-Duwal al-'Arabiyya University, 2004.
4. Shahbaz Ahmad, *Dana'i Raz Diya' al-Ummat (knowing the secret of the Ummah's Luminary)*, Lahore: Diya' al-Qur'an Publications, 2002.
5. Imran Husayn, *Ujalon ka Naqib (the herald of illumination)*, Bradford: Sunni Foundation, 1998.
6. Tariq Isma'il Sagir, *Hadrat Diya' al-Ummat ka Husni Tahrir (the literary beauty of the Ummah's Luminary)*, Lahore: Diya' al-Qur'an Publications, 2002.
7. Zahur Ahmad, *Jawahiri Karam (the pearls of Karam)*, Siyalkot: DMG Press, 2000.
8. Muhammad Ilyas, *Diya' al-Ummat; Hamma Jihat Shakhsiyyat (the Ummah's Luminary; an all-encompassing personality)*, Wazirabad: Anjuman Ghulamani Chishtiyya, 2005.
9. Ahmad Bakhsh, *Sihabi Karam (the cloud of mercy)*.
10. Khan Muhammad Qadri, *Karam hi Karam (bounty upon bounty)*.
11. Shahbaz Ahmad, *Diya' al-Ummat awr Tahaffuz 'Aqida Khatmi Nubuwwat (the Ummah's Luminary and the doctrine of finality of prophethood)*.
12. Gul Muhammad Faydi, *Abri Karam (the cloud of bounty)*.
13. *Diya' al-Ummat kay 'Adalati Faysalay (The judicial rulings of the Ummah's Luminary)*.
14. Mukhtar Ahmad Mujahid, *Khutubati Diya' al-Ummat (the lectures of the Ummah's Luminary)*.

Diya' al-Ummat: The Ummah's Luminary

The name *Diya'* (light, luminary) has become an appellation of Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra). His initial Shaykh's name was Diya' ad-Din as-Siyalwi. Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's literary masterpieces are also titled with this, such as, *Diya' al-Qur'an*, *Diya' an-Nabi* and *Diya'i Haram Monthly*. When he was asked about the name of his exegesis in an interview, Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah replied:

I had a spiritual guide, Muhammad Qamar ad-Din, his father's name was Diya' ad-Din. Firstly, this name that I use, *Diya'*, is an indication to him. Secondly, out of the many names I pondered over, this was my favourite.²⁷

Astonishingly, it is a blessing and a sign of acceptance that today and during the latter part of his life Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah has become recognised as *Diya' al-Ummat*, the light or luminary of the Islamic community. When Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah was asked in an interview in Egypt, after receiving the decoration from President Hosni Mubarak in 1993, whether he had been awarded with any other merits, he replied:

²⁷ Interview with Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari, *The Sayyara Digest* (Lahore, March 1994), p. 30.

I was awarded the 'Star of Distinction' in 1980. I have also been given the title *Diya' al-Ummat*; a title I have been awarded with by the people of Pakistan.²⁸

In the Muslim world, certain distinguished personalities are referred to with certain titles due to the excellences and beauties of their unique personalities. Such as, the appellation *al-Ghawth al-A'zam* refers to Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani of Baghdad (d. 560 AH / 1165 CE)²⁹, *Qutb al-Aqtab* refers to Shaykh Bakhtiyar Kaki of India (d. 728 AH / 1328 CE)³⁰, *A'la Hadrat* refers to Imam Ahmad Rada Khan al-Qadiri³¹ and *Sadr al-Afadil* refers to Shaykh Na'im ad-Din al-Muradabadi.³²

Due to Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah's immense dedication and service to Islam, devotion and love for the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), sincerity and purity of intent, modest and humble nature, illumination of the hearts of people through his *Diya' al-Qur'an* and *Diya' an-Nabi*, spirituality and love for prayer; no doubt, Justice Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (ra) is a personification of the truly reflective appellation of *Diya' al-Ummat*. He is the Ummah's luminary.

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²⁸ Interview with Shaykh Muhammad Karam Shah, *an-Nur Magazine* (Cairo, 1993), p. 2.

²⁹ Badr al-Qadri, *Bazm Awliya'* (Mubarakpur: al-Majma' al-Islami, 1995), p. 749.

³⁰ Muhammad Karam Shah, *Majmu'a Waza'if ma'a Dala'il al-Khayrat* (Lahore: Diya' al-Qur'an Publications, 1985), pp. 101-102.

³¹ Sajid Husayn, *Khutubat Mufakkir Islam* (Delhi: Ridwi Press Agency, 2004), p. 447.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 448.