

# The New Year Message

Bismillah ar Rehman ir Rahim

Whenever we start something new we use these words. They translate as “in the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate”. When the new year starts we should begin with the same words. The words, however, should be more than just empty sounds uttered for conventional reasons with no reality to them. Words have a tremendous power but it is only when we reach to the root of the words this power is realised. When they are merely the product of moving lips, they carry little spiritual weight. The Word is a manifestation of the Divine and is the source of the power in words. It’s invisible presence in our lives gives us sobriety, firmness and clarity.

The New Year approaches fast, the old one has almost reached its last breath. We have so much to be grateful to the Almighty for but there are also sadnesses though in truth we should always be grateful for the sadness too.

Let us briefly review the last year.

We continued to recite Zikr on line on Sundays and Fridays and to read the Masnevi in Farsi and English every Wednesday. We are now on volume 4. We are grateful to Maryam for reading the Farsi and translating Jamil’s comments. Until August all of this was mostly done from the UK but in August it moved to Konya. In addition Jamil would visit the Farsi Masnevi group of Shiraz on line most Mondays. Farhana recited the Fatiha of the order on the 5th or 6th of each Islamic month. We continued the reciting of the Fatiha for Hazrat Abdul Qadir Al Jilani on the 11th of each Islamic month. This was carried out by Yahya. The Urs of Hazrat Abdul Qadir were celebrated this year with more vigour than previously with Fatiha, Zikr, Qwaali and reading from the Secret of Secrets. Quran reading was undertaken by murids as for each of the Urs and completed by Jamil reading the final part of the holy book.

Maryam is working on presenting the Masnevi on line. The English version of both the Masnevi and the Quran which was recorded by Jamil is being put on Telegram for phones by Kara. Jamil worked with Mikail on recording his book *The Golden Gate* with musical accompaniment. Hussam provided drumming. It is now on Telegram thanks to Yahya.

[https://t.me/Quran\\_translation\\_in\\_english](https://t.me/Quran_translation_in_english)

[https://t.me/Masnevi\\_in\\_english](https://t.me/Masnevi_in_english)

<https://t.me/TheGoldenGateBook>

The fasting month of Ramadan was a great occasion with the Urs of Saen ji, Hazrat Ali and later Nawob Saheb especially marked in Zahuri Manzil in Southampton. Jamil read the holy Quran every day on line. After Ramadan the Urs of Qazi Saheb was held.

At around this time the restrictions on our daily life due to Covid became less and less until only preventative injections were the norm. Jamil eventually got a mild form of the disease, as did many in the order but these passed quickly thanks to God.

Bahar continues to suffer from long term covid but the effect varies in its intensity. She was able to visit Konya with her family in August. Jamil arrived at more or less the same time. Previously Jamil had visited Bahar and her lovely family and stayed for some nights in Zahuri Manzil in Marple, Stockport. Bahar and her family were such kind hosts. Every week the children, Bettie, William and Evelyn contributed to the Sunday Zikr by reading Quran verses.

Abdullah, our taxi driving friend, was kind enough to fix some leak problems in Zahuri Manzil in Konya during the winter when we were away.

Most memorable was the birth of Raz on Friday May 13th. Jamil was able to see the occasion on line shortly after Fajr in the UK. The birth was by Caesarian of medical necessity. We are grateful to Yasi for providing a private room in her hospital, free of charge and for computer access. Thanks to God that all went well. We are grateful to the medical nursing staff for their expertise. Raz was hugely loved by the relatives and friends and remains so. At the time of writing she and her mother and aunts and Yahya are all in Konya with Jamil. Her grandmother Parivash gave her two sheep and other relatives and murids gave her various gifts too.

*A new baby fills the house with an inward light,  
Yet she appear to do little to the outward sight.  
That infant comes from heaven into our dark night,  
A shining star reminding us Allah's grace is bright.*

She can now crawl, stand with support of furniture and has a smile that captures peoples hearts. In Mevlana she was given tasbihs (rosaries) and a shawl by guards. She has begun to grow her first tooth. She often appears on line in Zikr sessions and seems to enjoy drumming and clapping her hands. She has learned to clap.

Prior to the Seb I Urus, Yahya, with some supervision from Jamil, did a lot of work in adding a room to Nuri Manzil and in improving the balcony, so the flat would ready for Seb I Urus. Nur concentrated on motherhood and is showing huge dedication to the task, which of course is very demanding and very rewarding.

During the summer Yasi visited England and we went to some local places in Southampton. Asif was kind enough to drive us and we visited the Victoria and Albert Museum. Yasi's friend from South America visited.

Following a visit to the house of relatives mourning the passing of Ali's father, Asif drove us to the waterside at Southampton for ice cream. There to our surprise we met some khadims from Ajmer. Later they attended Zahuri Manzil for Zikr on the Sunday. They were the same that are mentioned in the introduction to the Hafiz poems, an event which they remembered.

Bahar and her family visited Southampton and stayed with Tahira and then Riaz and then in a campsite near Victoria Country Park, Southampton. We visited them there and began singing something in praise of Khawaja Saheb which we had originally created collectively in Konya with murids.

The year has two noticeable high points. The Urs of Khawaja Saheb which was held in February and lasts for ten days and the Urs of Mevlana Rumi in December lasting the same length of time.

We celebrated the Urs of Khawaja Saheb both in Southampton and in Kirman. There was some celebration in Shiraz too but Corona remained a real threat at that time. Qwaali was played on cd or phone downloads in both places and the holy Quran was recited by participants. Langer or food was provided by various people. Some people offered money during Qwaali and eventually all that was collected and went to charity for orphans. Many attended in Southampton and Zahuri Manzil got quite full. At the end of Urs there is a celebration of the birthday of Hazrat Ali in which people were invited to present dance, song or poetry. In Kirman they devised a kind of tribute to Indian filmy dancing which they executed brilliantly. All the contributions were good, Maryam from Shiraz played music, others read poems and so on.

Mevlana's birthday is celebrated on 30th of September every year. We joined in these celebrations in Konya in the company of Maryam Teighmorhadam and Hussain her husband and his mother and Jeyran. A surprise visitor was Marjan from Shiraz. It is rather like Seb I Urs in Konya but not so intense.

On 19th October we celebrated the Urs of Nuri Baba by visiting his shrine and offered Zikr. We attended a celebration at his house in Merham. We also visited the shrine of Ali baba for his Urs on 14th November.

Jamil's birthday on the 13th October was celebrated along with Raz's 5 month birthday. Maryam Zahuri and Jeyran were present along with Nazgûl and Ilnaz, Noors sisters. Gifts were given and cakes were eaten.

The Seb i Arus of Mevlana was held in Konya from 7th to 17th of December as usual. Thankfully by then the threat of Corona had been reduced, though many people caught persistent colds. There are many attractions during Seb I Urus in the form of music concerts and so on. Our programme however was restricted to visits to Shems and Mevlana and the Dergah of Nuri baba. This was led by the successor to Ali Baba - Muharram Baba. Unlike previous years when the place became overcrowded the Dergah was busy but not as the previous years. Before attending the Dergah and participating in Zikr we went to a restaurant. As the Urs progressed we kept the last few days with Zikr in Zahuri Manzil in Konya and we ate there also. We are thankful to those who participated in the cooking and we must mention Rabiah and Jamileh in this regard.

There were a lot of people staying - Yasi, Adam, Riaz, Mary, Naz, Eti, Jamileh, and Hussain, Rabiah, Jeyran, Kara, Ali, Samaneh, Anna, Zeynab, and of course Nur and Yahya. Many stayed in Nuri Manzil, just a few yards from Zahuri Manzil. We had a guest from Turkmenistan, of Japanese origin, called Aiko, who participated in the Zikr. Of course the star was, as ever, Raz. Others such as Maryam and Hussain, Marjan, Maryam Khojaste, Sima and Yasna, Roya, Mehboobe, Shayla, Sina, The two Ghazals, Bahar and her family, Farhana, Hussam, Mikail and Asif, Farhan and Tahira, all joined on line. In Konya after the Zikr some people went to other venues in Konya including the square outside Mevlana's shrine and outside of Shems mosque. There was 'turning' and drumming and Zikr. Some watched it on line. We also had a fashion show of the dresses made by Naz and people purchased various items from her. They were beautiful of course and had the fashion label Jamil.

On 17th in the afternoon most joined in the celebration in Mevlana's shrine Jamil could only join on line due to ill health. After the Urs we had a party and everyone performed. Especially we should mention Hussain, Noor's father, who sang a Farsi song.

Christmas and the New Year were both celebrated in Zahuri Manzil by us. Jamil appeared as father Xmas to distribute presents from around the small Christmas tree.

Of course we cannot ignore the sadnesses that came last year. The one that is freshest in our minds is of the brother of Noor and Naz, the son of Jamileh and the grandson of Parivash. His name was Shoja. He passed away in a car accident. Shoja was in his mid thirties and was recently married to Parisa. He was not a murid but so close to many who are. Our condolence to his bride and to all his family and friends and our prayer for the patience for the bereaved. As Shoja's father put it; Allah gives and He takes away.

Other murids lost loved ones during the year, such as Ali who lost his father and Mehboob who lost her mother, and our condolences are for them too. One must have compassion for the bereaved even though the deceased have merely passed from one plane of existence to another. Knowing that helps, but the grief remains.

As mentioned, part of the invocation of God at the beginning of any venture is Ar Rehman, which refers to the mercy of God. It's root linguistically, we are told, is the *womb*. Rahim has the same linguistic root but there is however a subtle distinction. Some say Rehman is a creative breathing out whilst Rahim implies a return, in the same way that the breath is drawn in before being breathed out. This breathing out and in, infuses words with power. Given the root meaning, it is possible to think about the 'breathing out' as giving birth and drawing back in of the breath as dying to this world or in other words as returning to God.

The root of words is important and in Arabic I am told it is relatively easy to find the root of words. In English this is very difficult, in fact I only found one root phrase - which is 'gen'. This can be found in generation, genesis, genuine, generous, genius, genuflexion, genetics etc. Careful examination of these words reveals that they are linked by the root phrase 'gen' in their varied meanings.

Speaking about words Zahurmian said that the *meaning* of words is of no importance. The sound of words has some significance but it is the *implication* of words that really matters. This means that if a religious cleric speaks of Allah or God he is referring to religious texts he has read. When the holy Prophet refers to Allah he is speaking of something he has direct experience of, and his words convey this to the perceptive listener or reader.

One exercise with breathing as mentioned by Zahurmian, is to breathe out 'La Ilaha' and to recite 'ilallah' when breathing in. In English this would be to say, under the breath that is exhaled, 'There is no God' and under the inhaled breath the words 'But God'. A slight pause after inhaling allows the oxygen to transfer to the lungs. Breathing should be gentle and not forced.

In doing this we touch upon another dimension of the divine called the Spirit. The dimension is concerned with the flow of energy which pervades creation. In this dimension the solid individuality of things appear to melt. It is in this dimension that real spiritual 'dance' takes place. It can be symbolically represented as the wind moving for example the leaves on a tree. The wind is not seen but inferred by the moving leaves. Just so the 'dancer' is moved by an unseen force that is generally called the Spirit.

It hardly needs to be mentioned, but *imagining* that one is being moved by the spirit is not at all the same as actually being moved by it. Jinns and such like can play with the imagination and bring about various forms of compulsive movement. Any inclination to this should be avoided by the real spiritual seeker. He or she is in a lifelong quest for transforming their nature in such a way that it is pleasing to God and beneficial to society, in fact to mankind. Each of us is the centre of a web of connections. If we change ourself for the better we change others around us for the better.

Ordinary dancing is not at all like the spiritual dance. The spiritual dance or 'turning' is also not the goal of spirituality, it is a side effect.

We have mentioned the Word and the Spirit but the other dimension of the divine is known as the Essence. We can say little about it except that all creation is embraced by it. It is not contained in any way by time or space or in any other way. Thought or concept or experience that approaches with a view to understanding is destroyed by its Reality. In fact Essence is one translation of the Arabic word Allah. That amazing word, 'Allah', in Arabic implies both the Essence and the Spirit and the Word. The definite article 'Al' represents the Word, the 'La' represent the Essence and the 'H' represents the spirit. They are however not three but one indivisible word all pointing to the one divinity beyond. Emphasis on one or another part of the word may have a different effect on the reciter. Repetition of a word like 'God' does not have the same effect in our view.

## Books

There were two publications brought out this year. The first was 'Onward and Upward' by Jamil. which was a prose work. This was printed in Iran, layout and cover was by Nur and it was edited by Kara. It basically consisted of a number of short essays on a wide range of mystical topics written by Jamil over the last two years.

The second was a long poem, in pairs of couplets, about the spiritual life; along with miscellaneous poems. Cover photos by Nur and edited by Kara. It was also published in Iran. Though it was brought out much earlier, distribution was at the time of Mevlana's Urs. Bahar did a lot of work on it earlier but the cost of printing it in the UK was prohibitive. It is called The Golden Gate.

In addition work was continued on the translation into Farsi of Zahurmian's book *The Culture of The Sufis*. Maryam's book on the Sufis of Shiraz is still in the hands of a publisher but we hope the Iranian work will be out soon. The English version is still in the hands of Jamil Chishti of Beacon Books in the UK.

A book by Jalal of Konya, a murid of Nuri Baba, has been translated into English. It is called *Mystic Liar* and it was gifted generously to Jamil by the author. Also a book on Nuri baba translated into English called *He* was given to Jamil by the son of Muharram. Yolqu wrote it and it is translated by Mehmet Ulu.

We were pleased to hear Marjan and Maryam have a new house and also that Zariah, a murid from India has a new job in England. Nur's family found a good new house for the year.

Etti (Shirin) has done marvellous work in learning the piano and now speaks Turkish very well. She was given a 3d puzzle of Mevlana's shrine which she completed.

Karim has done more work on transferring the web site and it is noticeably improving.

**Much more could be said but this has really been a way of entering the New Year with the words 'In the Name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate'.**

So what will be your aspiration for the New Year?

I do not ask you to make a list of New Year resolutions. These rarely last beyond January. I do however ask you to review your spiritual progress and see if you are on course to reach the goal of self purification.

The holy Quran says that 'He succeeds who purifies himself'. So this process is of high importance for anyone walking the spiritual path.

What exactly is purification?

In Islam purification of the body by means of ritual washing as in ghusl and wuddhu is simple enough. The avoidance of forbidden things like certain foods or certain behaviours etc is included. Some other religions have their own list of things that make a person physically impure. In modern science things like cleaning germs from contaminated surfaces etc. have their place. This however is not our concern here.

It is spiritual purification that concerns us. The basis of this requirement is that the clay from which our physical universe and indeed man himself is made, needs to be transformed. The transformation is from the darkness of the clay to light. This is not the same as our material physical body alone but encompasses things like anger, greed, lust, jealousy, laziness, stupidity, hatred and so on. The root of these is in the nature of our clay. Germs and microbes, chemicals, minerals and so on are the basis of our physical make up. They were, according to mystics like Shah Wali Ullah, the first level of creation. Their actions on one another are not subject to moral judgement.

Subsequent levels of creation were imposed on them. The first of these being the vegetal kingdom and then the animal kingdom. Each of these 'kingdoms' can be found in Man himself. In order to distance man from his animal level, social behaviours are put in place - these are often called manners. The saying in English is that 'Manners make the man' and this is more exact than is often understood. At one level manners and mores encompass things like marriage, burial, eating, care of children, justice, war and so on. Each of them is designed to differentiate man from the lower levels of creation such as the animal. No one blames a lion for jumping on his prey and then eating it. Man covers such bestiality in himself with cooking and the etiquette of meals and by social rules.

For the mystic manners take on an even more refined meaning.

Here is an example: two holy men arrived at the door of a mosque at the same moment. The first showed his manners by inviting the other to enter first. The second refused and insisted the first man enter. The first man accepted to do so. The question is which showed the best manners? The answer of the Sufis is that the first man showed the better manners since his intention in going in first was to make the other feel good in giving him precedence. Making others feel good is important.

'Everyone is better than me' is one of the watchwords of the Sufi. The reason for this is that the mystical adept wishes to relate to the soul of others not to their manifestation in human form. The souls of us all reside in the light of Allah. The real purpose of each soul is to purify their own clay? The swings and roundabouts of life, its ups and downs, result from this process. Many souls are overcome by Nafs and do not succeed in their task, some are so encompassed by their clay they give up the struggle. Others by God's grace do succeed.

Hafiz says that someone accused him of hypocrisy instead of arguing with that person Hafiz congratulates him for identifying his fault so quickly. One of many examples of refined manners. A constant awareness of one's own faults and appreciation of the virtues of others is imperative to the mystic.

There are various ways of purification. Suffering with patience is one of them. Mevlana constantly mentions the importance of patience. Some illness can be expected in life, Zahurmian used to say it's a tax we must pay on our normal good health. Some mystics suffer contentedly from contact with the impurity in others.

Some practices like prayer, fasting, meditation, pilgrimage, Zikr and Sema (spiritual listening to music), reading holy texts etc can help self purification. Guidance for these practices is required.

The avoidance of being in debt: the avoidance of meanness: the performance of quiet acts of generosity: the avoidance of theft and of immoral behaviours in general: are all important. Zahurmian used to speak of giving his murids a sense of perspective. This is incredibly important. If some untoward event occurs it should not take away from us the perspective of what's really meaningful. One day we will all be on the point of death. When we look back on our life we will see what is really important and it won't be these setbacks it will be how well we loved in our life. Setbacks will affect us but if we keep this perspective in mind the effect will be limited.

Keeping good company both physically and inwardly is vital. Good company inwardly means making Salam or respectful mention of the saints or prophets. Service to others is of great help. Examining one's own behaviour to others is important. The Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius was a man of great worldly power yet every night he would review his actions in the day and determine to act better.

One further thing must be mentioned because it has a great impact on our spiritual and material situation. It is part of purification too. This thing is work. It should not be thought of as something separate from spirituality. For many it is imperative for financial reasons but we should engage in work as service to God. He does not need us or our work but it is a gift from Him that we can serve mankind through work. We should not be workaholics. There should be balance with leisure and direct spiritual pursuits, but work should be part of that mix. It may be housework, it may be a job or it may be voluntary work. We should limit our ambitions but work hard to be good at what we do and regard that work as service to God. If we cannot get paid work we must do voluntary work until paid work is made available to us. It is true there may be periods when for a while our work is primarily spiritual. For example time spent with the spiritual guide. After this, however, work allows us to put into practice what we have learned. If you are a Muslim and walk round the Kaaba on Hajj there will be angels with you. One may say this person prays, another that he or she meditates, another that they fast or give charity and so on. One of the most powerful of the angels will say, "This person WORKS".

Domestic worries and work's unceasing demands,  
The boss's uncaring and endless list of commands,  
How then can the spirit love, and rise above all this,  
How then can the seeker hope for an eternal bliss.  
'That's easy for Allah' the angels would surely say,  
So attend to Him when you can and when you pray.  
Somehow in ways you never expected, you will find,  
His merciful breath will ease your overwrought mind.  
Somehow a different time and new place He will give,  
And you will find a way to really love and to really live.

The simplest definition of purification is that everything must be in its appropriate place and perform its proper function. The example I give is of the act of putting manure on roses. This is wonderful for the roses, but if one placed manure on one's dining plate it is highly impure. In the same way every part of the psyche must be performing its own function properly. Shah Wali Ullah gives the example of a horse

a rider and a hunting animal in pursuit of a prey. The horse represents the heart, the rider is the intellect and the hunting animal is the bodily soul. If all three function as a team the prey can be caught but if one part does not function properly then no progress can be made. Shah Saheb gives a lot of details about purification in his book translated as Sacred Knowledge, (Altaf al Quds). As he points out there are various levels of purification. The heart, the body and the intellect are first, then at a higher level the heart and intellect become again purified and are then known as the spirit and rational soul. A further purification of these two occur as they become the Secret and the Deeply Concealed.

The high point of purification inwardly is when Allah inspects the soul, and every point of one's soul is found to be made of light. Then the soul is called Suf, meaning pure.

Now we have reached this point and yet somehow managed to almost avoid the key word - Love. Since love or Ishq are so much misused we cannot be entirely blamed for this but the misuse of words does not rob them of their root meaning. There are many forms of affection or love, for parents for children, for uncles and aunts, husbands and wives, friends, teachers and so on. There is affection for particular work, even for landscapes or sunsets or one's country etc . However the root of all of these forms of love is Love itself. Love has a divine origin it is not a form, it is formless yet found in all forms of love. Divine love cannot be earned nor learned it is in effect a gift from Allah or, as Nawob Saheb puts it, a gift from the guide. Our goal of purification is a preparatory act involving necessary effort but in itself does not automatically bring real divine love to us. For that we hope and long but it is in the Hand of the Beloved to give it to us. The longing for real love motivates us in our struggle to overcome our selfish nature. The overcoming of our lower nature makes us fit to receive love. As Zahurmian puts it: "first deserve then desire".

As always I may have omitted mentioning some event which is important to you. If so I ask your forgiveness.

And now it is time to wish and hope and pray for a prosperous new year for each and everyone of you. May both material and spiritual progress be yours. May the New Year bring new determination to develop your potential and new opportunities to do so. May the blessings of the Almighty be with us all and the help of His Prophets and Saints accompany us all the time.

Amin

Jamiluddin Morris Zahuri  
Konya  
Dec/Jan 2022/23

