

New Year Message for 2025

The New Year is fast approaching and I find myself sitting in 'Enteppe' a shopping mall in Konya. With me are several murids. We are here so that Raz can enjoy the playground for children and the murids or some of them are doing a bit of shopping. The atmosphere of love and good feeling generated by the murids is really wonderful. Thanks are due of course to Mevlana for that good feeling but I am also reminded of the marvellous work of Zahurmian in taking me personally from a state of confusion and misery to such warmth and love. No words can express adequately our appreciation of his untiring efforts. By the grace of Allah it is as if the potential we once had is at last being realised. There is a flower of love unfolding within and it is sharing its scent with so many.

Life can be like this if we have the good fortune to be guided to make the most of it. In fact we should entitle this new year message as "Making the Most of it".

It is true the current situation in the world is far from being good. The persecutions by military force of Palestinians is mind numbing in its extent even if its initial trigger was dreadful. The war in Ukraine continues to disrupt peaceful life for large parts of the population. In so many places the rule of Might is Right is followed by those in power. Corruption remains rife around the world. The rule of live and let live is ignored by so many. The message that the All-mighty sent through his Prophets and saints is often ignored or distorted by those who seek personal power. Of course this is not surprising for the human soul has to continually struggle against the forces that would pull it down.

It is natural that there are difficulties in any life. The holy Prophet Muhammed faced amazing difficulties, first in accepting the reality of his Prophethood, and then of following the instructions given to him in what became the holy Quran. Hazrat Khadija supported him alone in the early days and later Hazrat Ali and others. In some respects the holy Quran is a book of encouragement to Prophet Muhammed. Even in his last days when he was weak and sick it is said he asked if he owed anything to anybody. Someone came forward eventually and pointed out that inadvertently the holy Prophet had caught his back with a sword when mounting a horse. He called for the same sword and insisted he receive the same blow. The holy Prophet's legacy at the end of his life in this world changed the course of human history. We can say that he made the most of the gift of life that Allah gave him.

A life begins to truly flower at last if the life has been dedicated to the service of others. This could be witnessed by the end of the life in this world of both Zahurmian and Nuri Baba. Its true that illness and such like marred their physical condition but the power and love in their heart expanded beyond measure. They had made the most of the life they had been given by Allah. They had succeeded in the sense that the holy Quran means when it says that "He succeeds who purifies himself". Their success however was not limited to their own purity but to the effect they had on those that followed them and therefore of course on a wider society.

On the night journey made by the holy Prophet known as Miraj he came to “within two bows length of Allah, or even nearer”. This was a personal triumph that could be shared by no one not even Angel Gabriel who accompanied him but it is not the end of the story because after this extraordinary event he returned to this world. It seems that written into the very structure of the DNA of every man and women is sympathy for and a desire to help suffering and struggling humanity. Thus not only is there a flowering of the individual by the grace of Allah but there arises from that flowering an intoxicating perfume that spreads throughout the whole garden. It reaches those who struggle to succeed themselves.

Before saying more let remember a little of the events of the last year which passed so quickly.

2024

In January I was in Konya for the Urs of Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti. Of course it is not celebrated in Konya generally but amongst us for the third time it was celebrated here and I believe our celebrations were acceptable to Khawaja Saheb and to Mevlana. We had a flag ceremony in which we marched around Zahuri Manzil beating drums behind the flag we made and which was carried by Raz with help. We sang “Ya Khawaja” a song we collectively invented previously.

Yahya found recordings of qwaali and every night of Urs we listened to the Holy Quran and qwaali in Zahuri Manzil in Konya as well as those listening in Southampton and Marple and elsewhere. We were joined on line by many murids from Iran and the UK. Money collected at that time went to an orphanage thanks to Naz. Those physically present, as well as Nur and Raz of course, included Naz, Kara, Jeyran, Yahya and Adam. The Holy Quran was read by various murids in the UK, Konya and Iran and Jamil completed the reading of Juz Amma at the end of the Urs. In fact there were also celebrations in the UK as well as Ajmer of course. As much as possible we offered Urs according to the Ajmer timetable.

Amongst those participating in the UK were, Mikail Ali Clarke, Husamuddin Dyson, Ali, Abbas and Humaira, Baby, and several others. Bahar and her family joined on line.

In March Ramadan arrived and we celebrated it in Konya with appropriate fasting. In Ramadan there are several Urs. These include Saeenji Saheb’s urs, Hazrat Ali’s Urs which lasts four days, then there is the urs of Nawob Saheb on 28th and 29th. A few days later we celebrated the Urs of Qazi Saheb. Several people were here, including Fistik, Jeyran, Rabia and her husband, Kara and Yahya and of course Nur and Raz.

Each of these Urs involved recitation of the Holy Quran and in addition Jamil read the entire Quran in Arabic for Ramadan and sipara 30 for each urs.

The same people were here for Nourouz. (the spring equinox). They left at 1st of April except Yahya who left after Eid in the middle of April.

In the summer Bahar and her family visited and we had a good time visiting places. Then they went on to enjoy a more traditional seaside holiday. We played a game called Rummikoop which involves making groups of numbers. It is an old Turkish game. I received a phone call from a doctor in the UK advising me I might have a serious illness and that I should return to the UK for tests. Hearing this Yasi who was in Iran said she wanted to accompany me. I flew to Istanbul with Naz while Jeyran and others stayed an extra week or so with Nur and Raz. Yasi met me in Istanbul airport and we flew to the UK together. We were met by Riaz and his brother Arshad who drove us across country late at night to Southampton.

I had tests done in Southampton General Hospital) and it was confirmed I have something called Cytothemia Vera which basically means my bone marrow produces too many red blood cells and this was probably behind the two strokes I had previously had. I was given medicine for this although it is said not to be curable but it is treatable. Later I saw a doctor in Konya who took over my treatment.

Yasi stayed with me in Southampton and was most helpful we played cards with Farhana who was there providing her usual delicious food. We also met with other murids such as Riaz, Arshad, Ali, Hussam, Mikail, Abbas and Humaira and Adam and Nili. Baby and Dr Talat also visited. Bahar visited with her family. We had some good sessions in Zahuri Manzil.

Less positive was the attempts by a developer to buy 4 Polygon Court and all the surrounding properties. This has still not been resolved but it seems likely that we may have to move from there. Negotiations continue.

I returned to Konya as soon as possible especially as I had to be in Turkey for visa and other things. Yasi accompanied me on the flight from Gatwick. We parted at Istanbul Airport and she went back to Iran while I flew to Konya. Nur and Raz with Yahya joined me a few days later. It was so good to have their company. Raz had grown in a short time and now spoke English very well indeed as well as knowing a lot of Farsi.

Later we enrolled her in a kindergarten where she has started learning Turkish and making friends. The teachers think she is very intelligent but I think she more than that. She has a spiritual presence which is felt by many. The husband of Essin Chelibi of the Mevlevi order found his heart moved when seeing her. There can be no doubt Allah has made some souls special to help mankind. She is also very popular in Dergah and goes with us for Zikr.

Yahya, visited in Konya and was most helpful. He purchased a bed for Raz. We had some plumbing problems in Nuri Manzil but a number of murids contributed towards the cost of putting it right and we really appreciated that. Now there are two toilets there and the shower works better thanks to Allah. We have put in extra bedding too. Anna and her brother visited for some time. Of course we did Ziarat to Shems, Mevlana, Nuri Baba and Ali Baba and later to Sadeedudin, Atashbaz Vali, Tavus Baba, Jamel Ali Ali Dede and Bibi Fakhr Nisa. We also visited the shrine of Ohaduddin Kirmani who had been in the company of Khawaja Saheb. We used to go to Dergah most Saturdays for Zikr. Our own on-line programmes continued with 2 hour Sunday sessions

and Wednesday Masnevi sessions. On Friday evenings we had a shorter Zikr with Qwaali as well. On Mondays Jamil joined Maryam's group in Shiraz for the last half hour to answer questions.

On a much sadder note Ruby Siddiqi, the niece of Farhana and mother of Zariah passed away. May Allah bless her. She was a murid of Zahurmian. Fortunately Farhana had already booked to fly there and she was joined by Zariah and Asma and others. May Allah help the family in their grief.

My birthday in October was celebrated on line mostly.

Mevlana's birthday celebrations lasted about a week and we attended along with Yahya. There was turning in the grounds of Mevlana and of course we attended zikr in Dergah.

We are currently busy with preparation for the Urs of Khawaja Gharib Nawaz in Konya but this is due to start actually in January so we should include it in next years message inshallah. There were some technical difficulties with renewing our Visa and we are still waiting a solution on that.

Books

With regard to work on books we published the 99 Names of the Holy Prophet by Zahurmian in English. The main work was done by Kara and finance of it was mostly by Siraj.

Very good news is that finally the Quranic Pearls was published. The publication was done in Iran and was mostly paid for by Siraj Elschott. If we had stuck to the format of the previous Quran commentaries of Zahurmian it would have required 3 volumes but we decided to use a different format which was more condensed but retained all the text. Siraj was kind enough to help with correcting various errors, though any remaining errors are ours. Most of the work on the manuscript was done by Kara in Iran. Laila helped with the cover which used a design by Jamil. Others murids worked on correcting errors in the text. It was the last book of Zahurmian.

Work is still going on with regard to publishing Maryam's book on the saints of Shiraz. The English version is still in the hands of Jamil Chishti.

Yahya and Yasi are still working on the translation into Farsi of the Culture of the Sufis by Zahurmian. This is an important book and there are very few English copies left. One possibility is to republish the English version in Iran. The printer in England went out of business and the original manuscript is no longer available.

Three new booklets by Jamil were published this year. 'The Many Facets of Love' (March), 'Beyond' (July), and 'Words of Wisdom' (December). We are grateful to Kara in particular for her work in this respect.

Many of Jamil's pictures were put on line by Naz and many copies sold. The income from this goes into the Zahuri account managed by Yasi and Naz.

Making the Most of It

Now we should speak a little more about making the the most of things. It is perfectly true that not everything goes the way we would like. In this we must see the hidden will of Allah at work instead of blaming others or ourself or the stars we should learn to accept what comes our way. If we can change things for the better by effort well and good we should not be found wanting of making that effort, but if our effort does not bring about what we think we want then we should accept that our desires were not in accord with Allah's Will.

It might be worth adding here that the idea that our fates are tied up with the stars is mentioned by Shah Wali Ullah who says that this is not the case now. He talks about how things are determined in the Unseen by souls there and by angels expanding or contracting causes, not by the stars. This a true description and can be witnessed by the knowing ones.

We should be very wary of relying on on our own effort as it can lead to pride, and equally of making no effort but justifying laziness by calling it the 'will of Allah'. The truth lies between these two and in our thinking we must aspire to find that narrow way between these two.

The holy Quran says that 'Man has nothing but that which he has made effort for'. The effort we must make requires an inner and outer dimension. Suppose you find yourself at a crossroads in your life. Which way to go? Deep meditation can help but it requires sincerity and honesty. One must seek within by reviewing whatever you have done in the past. Asking inwardly the help of the saints is important. Seeking like this can yield life changing results, of that there is no doubt, but if our sincerity and earnestness is not complete problems arise. Nawob Saheb has written that there is something each person loves to do. We must seek this and use it as the basis for building our future life. Performing this meditation in the shrine of a saint can be very helpful.

The outer effort may follow the inward effort. The thing which we have been inspired to seek may take time outwardly to realise but if it has been given to us inwardly it will surely arrive along with the inspiration to make the necessary effort as long as our seeking is sincere.

During the last year we saw the series of films on the life of Yunus Emre. He began as a well educated academically capable Judge. A meeting with Tapduk Emre a Sufi Sheykh was to have an important effect. Bit by bit with no apparent outward effort by his Sheykh he realised the errors in his legal judgements. He undertook the life of a dervish but his real inward calling was as a mystical poet. Eventually after much spiritual effort he became perhaps the most influential and respected mystical poet in Turkish. This was preceded by much humble work such as carrying firewood to the Dervish Lodge. If your inward calling requires humble labours do not shrink from this if your spiritual aspiration is genuine.

The narrow way between effort, involving free will, and determinism or the acceptance of everything as coming from God, is not easy to find but is incredibly important. It is very much at the heart of the Masnevi. The most obvious example being the story about the animals and the lion in book one. The arguments on both sides are convincing but the real message is that one

must find the truth between the two. They represent duality whereas the truth is one. Faced with any dilemma our thinking about a solution should be based on that path between opposites. There is no opposite to Allah the One. Some people think that because Zahurmian quoted many sources in his writings that he was advocating a form of belief that is known as The Perennial Philosophy. I think this is false though understandable. I wrote a poem to clarify this.

The Perennial Philosophy

*It seems to me that as attractive as perennial philosophy can be,
There is a flaw in the thinking of it that many simply fail to see.
It may well be that it avoids the pitfall of narrow minded bigotries.
It finds good thoughts in all religions and all sorts of philosophies,
And says that those who claim a monopoly on truth are not wise,
With this I must agree but there is a rule which to this idea applies,
It is this: that verbal expressions of truth are not the truth's reality,
Nor can one speak of 'his truth' or 'her truth' as having distinct validity.
Truth must be universal in its essence the rest is expression or opinion,
Whose value depends on just how close to the truth is that expression.*

*The concept of the gold standard may help to clarify what I am saying,
Currencies required a point of reference to which everyone is agreeing,
Gold was designated and currency values were linked to its possession,
In the same way Truth in its essence gives value to many an expression.
One may hear it said 'that is your truth and this truth belongs to me only'.
Not so, this avoids absolutism and temptations to impose views arbitrarily.
But 'Unto you your religion unto me mine' is enough, to avoid absolutism,
The truth however remain ineffable yet essential and denies every kind ism.*

*Zahurmian in his writings and in his little lectures especially we see,
Quotes from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and secular kinds of poetry,
'Is this not the same as the perennial philosophy?' a person might say,
The writers of these words, different world views have tried to portray,
But with knowledge of truth, gold in many sources Zahurmian found,
His message could be that various expressions of truth may be sound,
Wherever found, but, only if you know what gold is and can recognise it,
Its value is the same into whatever currency you happen to convert it.
So enjoy the expressions that great minds and holy person have found,
But seek within those words, the shining gold of truth, if your heart is sound.*

The New Year

Now we must apply ourselves to the future. Not merely in the sense of planning this or that event but of working on our inner development. In part we will be reaping what we have already sown but by sowing much better thoughts we will be creating a better future. When negative thoughts enter our mind we should follow the Quranic advice and seek out the opposite thought. So if on inspection the thought turns out to be about greed for example then we should replace it with a thought that is generous. Above all we try to fill our hearts with love. If in the process of thinking about this or that we realise love has not entered our minds for sometime then we should actively seek it out. Having the thought of love uppermost in our minds is not just a nice thing to do it is preparation for the time when we will be examined. The habit of focussing on love is not liked by our Nafs Al amirah but the day will come when it will be a lifeline taking us to the divinity.

Love is sometimes spoken of as the destination but it also spoken of as the way to reach that destination. Mevlana calls it the astrolabe of the mysteries of Allah. An astrolabe is an instrument for measuring the activities of the physical heavens. It is not the heavens itself. Therefore whilst it is the goal of spirituality to reach the path of love, that love itself has a purpose of taking us into the mysteries of Allah's creation.

Maybe we should ask ourselves what point there is in concerning ourselves with this or that matter or this or that problem when the only real point is ensuring that we are on the path of love. That is true but finding the path of love within the outer issues of everyday life is the real challenge. In the days of the desert fathers or the early Muslim mystics isolation from others by living alone had the great purpose of concentrating on the love of God and on training the soul to overcome the vicious lower nature. The human soul however as Shah Wali Ullah puts it is not static it is a developing thing. Modern Sufis being aware of this to some extent try to find that path of love while participating in the activities of life.

Take love to be the ocean and thoughts as just waves. The waves return to the sea which is not disturbed by them. They rise and fall but the sea remains. Just so with the distractions of modern life, they affect us at one level but the mystic remains aware of the vast ocean beneath.

Here is one final thought before the New Year wishes. Piety is often thought about in a negative way. It has become associated with hypocrisy but one of the titles of Hazrat Abdul Qadir Al Jilani is the Head of the pious of the earth and the Seas. True piety is not the show presented by some, it is purity of heart that manifests in inner kindness and love. Zahurmian makes reference in the Culture of the Sufis to the Abrar which are seven pure souls who help mankind in so many hidden ways. Our New Year message must be that the blessings of the Abrar may be felt in our lives during the next a year and thereafter. Our prayer is that each and everyone of us may find our life enriched by effort that is rewarded by the bounty of Allah.

No doubt outwardly the New Year will be filled by some things we think of as good and some we don't like but if we make the most of it inwardly by hoping and praying for the best for our

spiritual life and for our inward and outward prosperity then it can be a New and better year and a new and better life.

May All-mighty Allah, the Merciful and Compassionate, the Lord of all the worlds hear our prayer and all those reading or hearing this be blessed with spiritual progress and with prosperity.

Jamiluddin Morris Zahuri

Konya

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