



Love, Life
and the
Pursuit of Happiness

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This is the fifth of what it is hoped will be a series of short booklets on the Sufi path. Effectively they will try, with Allah's help to form comments on the writings of the great mystics like Mevlana Rumi, Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti, Shah Wali Ullah, Attar, Abu Said, Bayazid Bistami, Hazrat Kharaqani and of course by my spiritual guide Hazrat Zahurul Hasan Sharib and many others.

In all cases the comments on the Masnevi are based on the well known English translation made over 80 years ago by R. A. Nicholson.

Some quotations from Artificial Intelligence (Chat GPT).

Love, Life and the Pursuit of Happiness	3
Self Purification	7
The limits of 'perennial philosophy'	8
Tawwakul	9
Finding a Guide.	15
Courage.	19
Humility.	20
Purity.	21
Generosity.	21
Justice.	22
Sincerity.	22
Honesty.	23
Tolerance.	24
Affection.	25
Patience.	25
Loyalty.	26
Modesty.	27
Life.	28
The Pursuit of Happiness.	29
Poems	31

Love, Life and the Pursuit of Happiness

The phrase ‘Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness’, appears in the United States Declaration of Independence, written in 1776 and it says:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

AI says about this:

This powerful statement, penned primarily by Thomas Jefferson, reflects Enlightenment ideals, especially those of philosopher John Locke, who wrote about natural rights. Locke originally listed Life, liberty, and property as fundamental human rights, but Jefferson adapted this, replacing property with the pursuit of happiness emphasising a broader vision of personal fulfilment and well-being.

We have taken this famous line but adapted it further to reflect the aspirations of the mystics for what Zahurman described as ‘better living’. So for our title we have spoken of love, life and the pursuit of happiness.

Furthermore we have taken life to mean not simply breathing, eating, procreating and carrying out other bodily functions but to imply that living means a wakeful awareness of the divinity within all that we do or say or experience. How we do that at a practical level we discuss later.

We have taken love to mean more than just affection for this or that person or thing or ideal but something whose source is the

Divinity and which attracts our very soul, albeit that such a love can be from this side (human love) or that side (love of the divine) as Mevlana Rumi puts it.

The pursuit of happiness in our view is not the pursuit of material wealth or ownership or power but the pursuit of a feeling in the heart that removes all doubts and worries from the mind and fills us with joy.

We dislike the word 'truths' (in the plural) used by Jefferson since it can be taken to mean there are different truths whereas we understand Truth to be singular and essentially Ineffable! Expressions of truth may vary and be many but not Truth itself. Imagine a beam of pure light shone on the ocean depths, with rock formations, different kinds of fish, coral reefs etc which may appear in that light but they are not the light they are merely illuminated by the light. The same light shone upon the depths of the human body, its cell, muscles, bones, organs etc will show these bodily functions but they are not the truth itself for it is the light of the truth that reveals them. The pluralisation of the word truth merely hides that it is being used to refer to facts. Facts can be assembled in different ways but the way the facts that are assembled are not truth itself.

The definitions we gave are only words. They will probably mean different things to different persons. It is part of the nature of man to understand differently the meanings of words even though the words themselves stand above the various interpretations given them. Zahurmian wrote that it is not the literal meanings of words that counts but the implications that the words have. Dictionary definitions serve many good functions no doubt but it is what the words point to that counts. The finger points to the moon but it is not the moon.

The holy Prophet Muhammed travelled one night on a journey called Miraj. At the height of that journey he came so close to Allah, the very Essence, that even the Angel Gabriel, the Logos could not follow him. It is written he came to within two bows length 'or even nearer'. Now when the holy Prophet used the word Allah he referred to something which he had personally experienced in a way no one else had done. That is very different from the person who merely reads about Allah for when he or she says that Arabic word they are referring to what they read, to words on a page, not to direct experience.

So for the holy Prophet there is a power and reality to that word, 'Allah', which is not known by others. One supposes that Lord Jesus spoke from a similar awareness as did for example prophet Moses. Definitions of love, life and happiness may have some meaning but it is little compared with the reality they refer to. As we said the definitions are the finger pointing to the moon they are not the moon.

Obscuring and preventing the individual from seeing that moon directly is the clay from which he or she is made, or more accurately it is the dirtiness of the clay from which his body is made.

If you ask why we are prevented by our own material existence from seeing or being aware of the divinity the answer must be, as the scripture says, that the divinity '*desired to be known*', and we take this to mean not only spiritually but also materially. To know Him both materially and spiritually is our purpose. Therefore our real task in life is not to gain possessions or power or wealth which will depart from us at death, but to purify the clay into which our consciousness has been placed at birth, so that even that clay shines with the divine reality that passes beyond death. We could say that even the body becomes one with the light of Truth.

To put it another way our soul is made of pure spiritual light but it has been placed in the filth of clay in order to purify that clay. To purify it means to make it shining and clean just as we might clean an object that had been dropped in manure. Once it is fully cleaned it becomes acceptable to its owner.

Thus the Prophets and saints are those who have succeeded in purifying their own clay by the grace of Allah. The soul that has done this is truly happy. As the holy Qur'an says "*He succeeds who purifies himself*".

It is also why many Sufis prostrate at the shrine of a known saint because even the body of the saint is pure and thus they are actually prostrating to the light of Allah which is hidden from ordinary perception but evident to the wise in that corpse. "*Allah is the light of the heavens **and the earth***".

All this provides the background to the essential task we all have which is to purify ourselves and it is this we now address, for there are various processes involved in such cleaning. Before we speak of it however it is worth pointing out that not every person has the potential for this purity despite the statement in the American Declaration of Independence that all men are born equal, some souls it seems are destined to burn off their dirt in the fire of hell. They serve the Divine purpose anyway but we pray to take another way.

If we take it, however, that the expression of equality of persons is explicitly refuting prejudices in relation to colour, race, caste, culture, gender, nationality and other forms of discrimination then we can only applaud that. The primary reason for opposition to prejudice is that it makes judgements on persons based on externals and not on the inner state of the persons.

Self Purification

The most direct way to self purification is through love but since knowing various definitions of love is not the same as actually loving we must seek to find love as a reality and not as concept.

Therefore there is a great deal of work to be done to prepare ourselves to receive the gift of love. It cannot be gained by effort nor can it be gained by making no effort. It cannot be reached by asceticisms or by study or by talent. We can and should however prepare ourselves to receive it and that may involve asceticisms and study and so on.

Though it is not the full story, to a large extent the process of self purification is preparing ourselves for real love. One way to do this is by means of Service.

Service implies all kind of asceticisms and practices. It means doing good for others without any selfish motive, but it also encompasses things like hearing voices and seeing visions. It is not the monopoly of any particular religion or philosophy but it is directed towards Truth. Zahurman writes - *Truth is indivisible, inalienable and absolute; it has shone and it shines: it is as white as the snow on the Himalayas.*

Truth must be the essence of any religion but the frequently conflicting manifestations of religions and philosophies tend to obscure. Mevlana says in the Masnevi that people hear (the reed flute) *“from their own opinions none seek out the truth from within me”*. Therefore the pursuit of truth is the true religion and philosophy not the various manifestations of religion or philosophy that many may subscribe to. Albeit the following of the practices of a particular religion or philosophy may assist in the journey towards truth if followed wisely.

The limits of ‘perennial philosophy’

This may all sound as if one is advocating ‘perennial philosophy’ but though this philosophy accepts the wisdom found in all religions and philosophies this approach neglects one thing, which is that acknowledging intellectually that there are expressions of truth to be found in all approaches is not the same as tasting the reality of truth. The picture I use is of a mountain at the top of which there is the truth if we walk round the foot of the mountain and acknowledge all the paths leading upwards but do not go up by one of them then although we may avoid narrow mindedness we also do not go to the top of the mountain. We cannot go up by several paths at the same time therefor deciding a path and sticking to it is very important but respecting other religions or philosophies is of value too.

We are discussing Service and you may ask how does hearing voices or seeing visions count as service? It is because when we hear or see such things or have genuine spiritual contact with the unseen then we have to some extent removed our self from between ourself and the Truth.

And yet people who are mentally disturbed hear voices and see things don’t they? So are we saying they are nearer the goal of service than those who don’t?

To answer that question we must understand that the universe is full of voices, just as it is physically full of radio waves we cannot see. Some voices speak lies and half truths or some speak distortions of truth or are destructive, some speak truly. There is a mechanism inside us rather like a radio that can be tuned to receive different channels. Some of those channels are malignant and seek to destroy us in one way or another. Others are benign and inspirational. Our spiritual work is to tune that ‘receiver’ to the higher truth and away from the lower lies or half truths.

Visions also can be misleading and dreams are notoriously difficult to interpret. To give a personal experience of this I can recall sitting on a hill overlooking the house of Zahurmian in Ajmer. I closed my eyes and saw within that I was being carried by some young men down a narrow corridor, laying flat out on some kind of stretcher, and as I thought dead. A few weeks later Zahurmian passed away and his corpse was placed on a large block of ice waiting burial. I went to see him but as I passed from the narrow corridor into the room holding the corpse I was overcome by a mixture of emotion and the very strong smell of camphor used to mask any smell from the body. I instantly fainted. I awoke to find myself being carried by some young men down that same corridor that I had seen in my vision. Death was involved but it was not mine so my interpretation of the vision was incorrect in some way but had strong elements of truth within it.

Tawwakul

In Sufism there is something known as Tawwakul or Trust in God. Too often this is taken to mean the avoidance of personal effort but as when we shrug our shoulders at something we don't like and justify this by saying it is the 'Will of Allah'.

We understand this differently. In our view Trust in God means and implies that humans are between two alternatives, one is direct inspiration from above, from the souls of saints from the angels or directly from the Divinity, whilst the other consists of impulses from our lower or animal nature. If our 'radio receiver' is tuned to our higher nature we get inspiration, if it is tuned to our lower nature we get impulses that tend to be destructive to our aspirations. We could call these animal tendencies.

The 'animal' tendencies of man are part of the evolutionary process that is intrinsic to the creation of man. Do not jump on the word 'evolutionary' to think it implies what materialists mean by it.

The evolution I speak of has been described by mystics like Shah Wali Ullah of Delhi. He tells of the process by which the material universe was created from a divine breath. Beginning with the creation of the mineral/chemical universe that existed without anything else. There followed after a long period of time a second divine afflatus which caused the most perfect of the minerals to assume the qualities of growth. We call this the vegetal state. The rest remained in their mineral chemical state. After a very very long period of time the divine afflatus again caused the most advanced those vegetal elements of growth to transmute and assume the quality of independent movement. Once again those that were not so advanced retained only their quality of growth along with the mineral, chemical quality. The new level of creation was called the animal level. Again this lasted a very long time until a fresh burst of divine afflatus caused the most developed of the animals to gain human qualities including the ability to think and plan and so on. At each level there were some who were on the border between one stage and another, thus there some animals who have human characteristics such as apes and some plants who can move or even eat in a limited way.

Adam it would appear received the divine afflatus directly and became the first true man and from his himmat or intense desire (misunderstood as rib often) Eve (Huwa) was formed and thus man as a species and a distinct level of creation came into being. All of the aforesaid levels of creation such as the mineral etc are within man. It is these earlier levels that still influence man and are in

effect what we call Nafs Al Amarah. They are not alone however as in the non material universe there are forces often called jinns or demons that are also intent on our destruction.

It is these levels of 'Nafs' more properly 'Nafs Al Amarah', that require purification. The qualities of each of these Nafs are pertinent to their proper function of course. From whatever level they originate mineral, vegetal, or animal. In some sense the definition of purity would thus be that each aspect of man is in its proper place and performing its proper function. They are therefore not intrinsically 'evil' but they must be in their proper place for man to acquire his true humanity. If for instance the qualities of animals such as 'survival of the fittest' or 'eat or be eaten' dominate a man then he has been overpowered by those animal tendencies and it is hard indeed to rise to his real human nature. In fact if he surrenders to those animal tendencies completely he could be called evil inasmuch that those Nafs can only be burnt off by hell fire. Generally speaking purity implies that everything is in its proper place and functions as it should. Dung for example would be very impure on one's dinner plate but is very pure and beneficial for growing flowers in the garden.

The Nafs al Amarah as they are known in Islam are not too different from the seven deadly sins in Christian tradition. As indicated their root is not evil in itself as they are functions of man's evolution, as described above, but when they are not working in their proper way their effect on the spiritual development of the individual is seriously detrimental. Perhaps one can liken it to blood cells in the body which, if over or under produced can seriously affect the individual's health, even though blood cells working properly are beneficial and necessary.

The Nafs, include things like jealousy, greed, anger, hatred, lust, miserliness, pride, laziness, arrogance, selfishness and so on. They are connected to thought, though they may be experienced as emotions mixed with thoughts. The holy Qur'an gives splendid advice on countering them. It advises one to think deliberately of the opposite feeling. So if a thought enters our mind which has the nature of being a thought full of hate then instead of struggling with that thought turn the attention deliberately to the opposite. In this case love or affection. If instead of this we oppose the thought by struggling with that thought then we give it the 'oxygen of publicity' so to speak and it grows in power. Sometimes I tell of the myth of Hercules and Anteus. The latter was the son of Mother Earth and received strength from her so when Hercules fought him and threw him to the ground he simply gained renewed strength from Mother Earth. Finally Hercules lifted him up away from the earth and thus triumphed. Direct fighting of Nafs is like this, one can only defeat them by starving them of strength not by giving them more strength through attention. However we should also see the context of the thought. If for instance we hate separation from God or injustice then that is a proper use of hatred even though in other contexts hatred is negative and destructive.

The first requirement for training the Nafs is to be aware of them and to understand that there is the possibility of mastering them. Many people are a slave to their Nafs simply because they do not believe in them or they believe that they can do nothing to master them, or that they act from them without awareness they are doing so. Sometimes this is called heedlessness and it is common in men and women.

Nafs are usually experienced as a combination of emotion and thoughts. Control of thought is a good deal easier than control of

emotions but because two are usually intertwined they often have to be tackled together. The best way is to begin by learning the control of thoughts. That begins by accepting that thought can be controlled. That implies recognising that thought is something entering the mind that can be accepted or rejected. Thus if you find the thought you have is one of greed after looking at it in a detached way as a thought that is not actually yours then you can seek to substitute for it a thought of generosity. Thoughts that you accept through heedlessness or intent will eventually become actions, maybe not immediately but eventually, and your actions define you and must be answered for.

Allah is merciful so if you have an unworthy thought turn to his Mercy. The holy Qur'an says: "*Who despairs of the Mercy of Allah except an unbeliever*". Thought may be related to breathing. If one does something very vigorous breathing becomes agitated and thought too becomes disturbed, so one technique for gaining control over thoughts is exercising breath control. Breath control affects emotion as well as thought. The simplest exercise recommended by Zahur-mian is to slow the breath down leaving a pause after the in-breath to allow transfer of oxygen in the lungs. On the out-breath recite quietly La Ilaha (There is no Allah). Breathing should be done through the nose. On the in-breath recite inwardly Ilallah (other than Allah). Visualising can be used if it helps. Visualise a small wave rolling in on the beach and then withdrawing into the sea. Visualisation as in relaxation techniques can be a valuable way of controlling emotion and thought. There is a relaxation recording in English and in Farsi on the Zahuri website.

Belief does not imply necessarily following the teaching of specific sects. It is an awareness that there is a Reality beyond what can be seen and measured but which nevertheless is always present. Having this as

a sort of vague general feeling however is probably not enough. The awareness you have of the presence of Divinity must help you to gain control over your Nafs. The pursuit of real happiness requires this.

Repeated repetition of good thoughts is a good starting point. The simplest is silent repetition of the name of God. Thus the repetition of the name Allah is most helpful for a Muslim. One drives the name into the heart with the help of imagination. It is said the developed persons recitation of the divine name may reach the point when even their blood itself repeats the Name.

There are many similar practises such as such as repetition of words related to divine qualities such as Mercy and so on.

Mevlana Rumi in the Masnevi speaks of the limitations of these spiritual practices. They are helpful to one on the path who wonders what he should do to progress but their function is to bring that seeker to perfection. Once he has reached that he may leave such practices behind or may use them to encourage younger seekers. But woe to that person who only imagines they have reached this level and even worse imagines they can guide others.

The mystics use of practises is directed by his inner state which he has from first hand knowledge of the Divine. The real answer to the question ‘What should I do?’ which is frequently asked by inexperienced seekers, is ‘do nothing’. To do nothing is very difficult indeed however, so various practices are given.

Mevlana says in the Masnevi:

“...the light itself from within the illumined person bears witness to his light, without any word or act declaring it.”

Masnevi book 5:line 246.

Finding a Guide.

What is really very important for the seeker is to find a guide.

The one who wants overcome their Nafs needs guidance by one who has overcome their own Nafs. The Sufis have a long tradition of guidance. Each guide is themselves guided in a chain that runs back to the holy Prophet himself. Finding a guide is a subject in its own right. Sufficient to say here is that the guide should be one purified by Allah and, so to speak, commissioned by Him to guide and help people genuinely seeking guidance. There are many that claim this distinction of being a guide but few indeed that actually have it. There is no foolproof way of distinguishing a false guide from a true one though if the person claiming to be a guide asks for material reward then one should think twice. There are some Sufis however who do not have an external guide but gain guidance from Prophets inside (malamati) .

The Malamati path is about concealing one's spiritual state and rejecting praise or public displays of piety. Malamatis believe that true sincerity (ikhlas) means not caring about the opinion of others—neither seeking praise nor fearing blame. They deliberately act in ways that might attract blame or avoid admiration to protect themselves from (nafs). (AI).

There are also those who receive internal guidance without being aware of it.

If you want a pointer to finding true guidance the word sincerity is perhaps the most useful word to use. By this is meant that you need to examine yourself with ruthlessness, for Allah Who alone is the True Guide may well respond to this and send you the external guide you need.

In the process of self purification silent repetition of ‘Good Words’ can be a good starting point too. So for instance in English that might be the silent repetition of words like, love, generosity, kindness, satisfaction, patience, humility etc. In Arabic it could be recitation of the names of Allah. The main thing is keeping your attention away from negative thoughts.

To Him rise up all words of purity (Qur’an)

The origins of thought are various. Some thoughts originate from the body and its functions. Some thoughts arise from the physical company you keep for we are affected by the thoughts of others. Some thoughts are from media you have been exposed to including advertisements. Some thoughts come from the many forces of the subconscious or unconscious. These may be termed as Jinns or spirits or devils and some of these are malign whilst others are not. Some thoughts are from angels or from saints who have the power to affect our thoughts. Some thoughts should be directly from our guide. Some thoughts arise from the divinity Himself. The astonishing and permanent miracle of the holy Prophet is the Qur’an and the incredible ability for an apparently illiterate man to hear and record the words of God which enabled the setting up of an entire religion.

In the end we live in our thoughts. As we have indicated thought is closely bound with emotion and with the Nafs.

Mevlana Rumi says in giving advice to his son:

O my son! If you want to be in paradise forever, be friendly to everyone. Don’t keep hatred in your heart! Don’t ask for more and don’t get more.....

If you don't want to get evil from anyone don't be an evil teller, evil teacher, evil thinker. If you mention a man in a friendly manner you will always be happy. This happiness is paradise itself. If you mention a man like an enemy you will always be unhappy. This grief is the very hell....

When you mention your friends in the garden of your heart , flowers burst, everywhere is filled with roses and sweet basils. When you mention your enemies, the garden of your heart is filled up with spikes and snakes, you get bored and withered.

Quoted from Ahmed Efflaki Ariflerin Menkibeleri. II 213-214.

Elsewhere he says “*we are these very thoughts of ours the rest is just bones and flesh*”.

As one becomes used to assessing one's own thought as if they are not from you alone it becomes easier to spot those that are negative and simply reject them. You may find some formula useful in doing this like:

“I take refuge with Allah from that thought”.

Helpful, of course, in one's campaign to gain control over one's thoughts is “keeping good company”. This means not only physical good company, though that too is most helpful, but guarding the input from literature or media that one absorbs. It is best thing however is to be measured and moderate in this since, unless you plan to retire to some desert retreat, in modern life it is virtually impossible to avoid exposure to these things. Nevertheless it is possible to be selective and thus reduce the impact of external inputs. The goal is not to become isolated from the community but as Nawob Sahib says to be ‘in the world but not of the world’. Nawob

Sahib who was the guide of Zahurmian also said in relation to the world that we should think of it as a river and we should float on the surface of the river following the currents but not allow ourselves to be dragged down into it.

This does not mean that some periods of being alone and apart from worldly concerns is not valuable, it is. Especially if your everyday work/life routine keeps you busy. In that case earmarking some time to be alone to meditate or recite Zikr or pray or visit a shrine and so on, is an important balancing tool and gives you the opportunity to recharge the batteries so to speak. What is generally not advisable is to see work and other life routines as inimical to the spiritual life. Of course the work should be morally defensible at least and not involved in doing deliberate harm to others.

Work is very important and gives you the chance to put what you learn from meditation into practice. It throws up challenges such as making decisions based on your thought processes. Meditation makes your thought processes better, work puts those processes into action.

Zahurmian writes that *“as you think so you act, as you act that you become”*.

There was a series of films called The Game of Thrones. One character called Littlefinger wanted to get the throne. He said when it came to considering what action to take he would review it and whichever course of action was likely to get him nearer the throne he would take. If instead of a worldly throne we adopt the same strategy to get closer to ruling ourselves then that is a good strategy. So having in view that the purpose of our life is to purify our self, it is essential to leading a good and therefore happy life.

Thinking that our primary concern is, or should be, the view that others have of us does not lead to happiness. People's opinions about

us are inevitably fickle and they are no concern of ours. All those people who have achieved things in life first freed themselves from dependence on the view of others. *“To thine own self be true and it follows..... you can be false to no man”*.

It is necessary to find an image of ourself which we aspire to live up to. What are the qualities that ideal man or woman must have. No doubt different persons will have different lists but there are some things that will be shared let me offer a few suggestions. I have written about them before but they are important and worth repeating.

Courage.

The ideal of courage for Muslims is surely Hazrat Ali. Who is known as the ‘Lion of Allah’. Mostly what is described about his courage relates this physical courage and valour as in fighting the enemies of Islam.

For example the Battle of Khaybar (628 CE) One of the most famous stories of Hazrat Ali’s (RA) courage comes from this battle. The Muslim army was struggling to capture the fortress of Qamus. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) declared that he would give the banner to a man who loved Allah and His Messenger, and who would not return until victory was achieved. He handed it to Hazrat Ali (RA), who, despite an eye infection at the time, led the charge, broke down the fortress gate, and secured victory. (Ai)

But that physical courage is not the full picture.

There is also his extraordinary moral courage as in the story in the Masnevi of Mevlana Rumi. In this story he refrains from killing a defeated non believer because that man spits on him in the face and as that makes him angry he refuses to kill the man from anger. Hazrat Ali said : *“The bravest person is the one who overcomes his own desires.”*

Humility.

There are, as spoken of by Shah Wali Ullah of Delhi, a circle of souls known as ‘the holy fold’ whose primary concern is humility. They pour down their spiritual blessings on persons who behave with genuine humility. The souls appear made of light and it has been said that they are made up of souls who later pass on to higher level. They are then replaced by another soul.

Humility requires that one thinks that “every one is better than me”. It implies attributing to Allah every act of goodness that one may do.

Sufis..... treat everyone—regardless of religion, status, or background—with kindness and humility. Hazrat Bahauddin Naqshband, a famous Sufi saint, used to say: “The true dervish is one who considers himself lower than all others.” (Ai)

False humility, however, in the Sufi view is a form of arrogance. Charles Dickens the Victorian author shows in the character of Uriah Heep the nature false humility. Despite plotting cunningly to overthrow his master his refrain is always “*I am ever so ‘umble sir*”.

Khawaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishti was widely known for his humility. He was called the patron of the poor. Once he travelled to Delhi from Ajmer (a long journey in those days) to help a farmer with a legal dispute that could have been resolved with a letter.

Mevlana Rumi used to respond to the mock bows of children by bowing to them in return himself.

Purity.

This implies at one level being physically clean. As the English saying goes 'cleanliness is next to Godliness'. This, however, is primarily concerned with the physical state of the body. It is easy enough to clean with water. Some Muslims and some Sufis would remain a state of ritual ablution (wuddhu) at all times.

Amongst the Sufis, however, purity is a spiritual state that means the soul has a purity conferred by Allah. This appears in vision as the spiritual body which is made of light and identical in shape to physical body being literally picked up turned around and inspected closely for any darkness.

There is also a dimension in which the spiritual body is represented as being made all of light. Any negative thoughts or actions result in a dark spot appearing on it. Any good thought or action results in a bright spot of light replacing the darkness. This can be seen by the Muslim mystic at the time of Hazrat Ali's birthday.

Generosity.

AI says: Engaging in acts of generosity has been linked to numerous personal benefits such as:

Enhanced Mood: Giving activates regions of the brain associated with pleasure, leading to feelings of happiness and satisfaction.

Improved Health: Generous behaviours can lower blood pressure and reduce stress, contributing to overall physical health.

Social Connections: Generosity fosters trust and cooperation, strengthening relationships and building a sense of community.

These represent the benefits to the one who gives money or objects but for the Sufi generosity is the attribute of Allah, it is one of his qualities mentioned in the holy Qur'an. Therefore they are merely tools of Allah in giving. To give an encouraging smile or a sympathetic touch is also an act of generosity. Khwaja Saheb says to hear the complaints of people is also an act of generosity.

Justice.

Justice is an attribute of Allah and according to Shah Wali Ullah it is the greatest of the cardinal qualities that are the root of all the qualities of man. Zahurmian in his book on the 99 Names of Allah tells of the qualities of each divine name and says that one must imbibe that quality and make it evident in one's behaviour though of course recitation can be most helpful. The Name of Allah that signifies Justice is Al-adl. The core belief is that as Allah is Just and that therefore when one supports someone who has been treated unjustly, or acts justly without favouritism then one is acting in accord with Allah.

The Qur'an repeatedly commands believers to act justly, even if it goes against personal interests or those of loved ones (Qur'an 4:135). (Ai)

Sincerity.

Sincerity (Ikhlas) is a core value in Islam, meaning to do everything purely for the sake of Allah, without seeking praise, recognition, or worldly gain.

There is no doubt that one can appear to be sincere but also be wrong but this is not the sincerity we are talking about. Sincerity here means overcoming in oneself all the lies and half truths that one's own Nafs throws up. Refusing to accept excuses one may make

for decisions or for particular behaviour. In the Masnevi Mevlana Rumi, talking as Shems Tabrizi, says *'I do not wear a shirt when I am in bed with the beloved'*. By this is meant that he does not hide anything from God.

The ideal model for sincerity is found in the holy Qur'an's description of Judgement Day. One must understand that all the excuses we make are like hills and mountains we normally hide behind. On that Day those hills and mountains will be flattened and we will stand alone before an all seeing Creator and Judge.

Lying to others is not good but lying to one's self is much worse. Sincerity refers to overcoming all the excuses and lies we make to ourself.

Honesty.

The story which tells most about honesty relates to Hz Abdul Qadir Al Jilani. As a young man setting out on a journey he was given some money by his mother and she sewed it in his sleeve. She told him to always be honest. The caravan he was in was captured by bandits. In their search for booty several of them asked the boy if he had any money. He told them he had it sewed in his sleeve. They laughed and did not believe him. At last the bandit chief asked him. He gave the same reply. The bandit searched and found the money. He asked why he had told where the money was hidden. The boy said what his mother had told him about honesty. The bandit chief was so affected by the boys answer that he repented his banditry and asked to take Islam at the boys hand.

Tolerance.

We have spoken of tolerance earlier in relation to religion. Though the Holy Qur'an gave permission for the holy Prophet to make war on unbelievers that were threatening the nascent Muslim community and in that sense it not therefor pacifist, but there are also passages like Sura Kafirun, that express the idea of tolerance

*Say O you that reject faith,
I worship not what you worship,
Nor will you worship that which I worship,
And I will not worship that which you have been wont to worship
Nor will you worship that which I worship
To you be your way and to me mine.*

Hazrat Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti demonstrated tolerance by inviting people in need irrespective of their colour faith nationality and religion. People from different religions and different cultures and different colours flock to Ajmer every year to celebrate his death anniversary.

Hazrat Mevlana Rumi did the same. There is a story that Mevlana Rumi met a Christian monk on the street and said to him that they were both involved in the same business. People from all over the world descend on Konya every year for his death anniversary.

We demonstrate this tolerance by looking at a persons heart not at their social cultural or religious background. Judgement of another person is anyway not good but judgement based on externals that they have no control over is far worse. It is connected with division in society a failure to recognise our common humanity. In many respects the height of spirituality is to become fully human. I recall

after Zahurmian passed away sitting and thinking how one could praise him and in the end the thought that came to me was that he had been a true man. That seemed the height of achievement.

Affection.

Affection is milder form of real love. It generally refers to positive regard for those near and dear like close relatives, spouses, and close friends. It can also relate to other things such as works of art etc. It is the cement that makes bricks into a wall or into a building: it makes individuals into a community, a house into a home and so on. It inspires effort or even sacrifice as when a mothers love for a child cause her to make unrewarded efforts. The root of affection of course is real love for the essence; for the divinity. The manifestation of that love is most commonly experienced in affection. The word contains the word *affect* which literally means feeling or positive emotion. When we turn our attention towards love whether it is from this side or that we have a positive effect on ourselves but also, without perhaps intending it, upon those around us. Those who are near and dear.

Patience.

Patience is referred to frequently in the holy Qur'an and in the Masnevi and many other texts. It is the translation of the Arabic word Sabr. Sabr does not mean just waiting as in a queue. Sabr (صبر) means patience but also perseverance, and steadfastness. It is a powerful quality that helps believers stay strong during difficulties, control emotions, and trust in Allah's wisdom.

The Qur'an emphasises Sabr many times: *"Indeed, Allah is with the patient."* (Qur'an 2:153) Likewise Mevlana refers to patience often

in the Masnevi with sayings like *'Patience is the key to Joy'*. Patience is the opposite of haste but the Qur'an tells us "*man is hasty*". Haste comes from wanting immediate results or satisfaction and is frequently reflected in young children's behaviour but also in many ways in the modern culture. Expressions like "*I want it all and I want it now*" whilst often used humorously reflect an underlying tendency in many societies. It is used usually in connection with material things or passing pleasures. Patience however is used in relation to spiritual matters. Frequently there is a delay experienced between an affair being decided in the Unseen and its material manifestation. For instance a particular problem may be presented to the Sheykh and the solution is found in the Unseen world. The material manifestation of that solution may take weeks or months or even years. Nevertheless it has been solved and that solution will manifest itself.

Loyalty.

For the Sufis loyalty to the Guide is of paramount importance. When one becomes a disciple one makes a promise to Allah to follow the guidance He has sent. This promise must be answered for. Even if the guide appears later not to be sincere or in some other way not to be what one was looking for nevertheless a formal commitment has been made. The guide has made a similar commitment. That is what happens when one takes initiation.

It is true that in some orders the murid can be sent away by the guide but that must be for the benefit of the murids spiritual development. As a matter of fact in the film series about Yunus Emre his guide sends him away at a certain point. Indeed at the end when Yunus has reached a high station he and his wife and child are sent away because it is not possible for two perfected saints to be together. Non of this however is due to lack of loyalty.

When Khawaja Saheb reached a certain level of development his Guide Khawaja Usman Harooni sent him away and told him to go where he liked but always to behave like a perfect man.

The guide may inwardly send the murid to another saint or guide. This happened to the founder of the Gudri Shahi order, Khawaja Saeenji Gudri Shah Baba who was sent by his guide to Ajmer from Baghdad.

The phrase to be remembered in regard to loyalty to the guide is “the guide, right or wrong”.

Modesty.

Do not castrate thyself: . Mevlana Rumi

The wearing of hijab by women, or clothing that covers them entirely, is taken to be proper behaviour by many Muslim women, others are less strict but generally wear modest dress that does not exaggerate their sexuality. Of course there are those that ignore this and wear clothes designed to attract.

Mevlana Rumi superbly discusses this issue. He points out that a woman who wears complete hijab but walks in such a way to attract men by the swinging of her hips for example is not in the spirit of hijab at all. The holy Qur'an tells both men and women to observe modesty and to avert their eyes if attraction arises. Our understanding is that a modest attitude will naturally result in modest dress in both genders. If the emphasis is just on the clothes that misses the point.

There is a story about Bibi Rabia. She used to meet with Khawaja Hasan Basri without wearing a veil. They used to talk together. One day he made some comment about something on her hand. She said that from then on she would have to wear a veil as he had seen her as a woman.

Modesty also refers to avoiding pride about achievements. Things we may achieve are by Allahs grace and anything that obscures that is immodesty.

Life.

Zahurmian wrote a brief account of the mystical philosophy of Khawaja Uthman Harooni in which he sums up that philosophy in one word - '*Live*'.

In this he makes it clear that living implies much more than breathing eating and so on.

Neither is it about thrills, excitement or pleasures which are all passing things. Nowadays many people who may be dissatisfied with a quieter life and thus they seek thrills through various means such as drugs, alcohol, sex or living dangerously or even sometimes just frightening fun fair rides. This is taken to be the meaning of *living life to the full* but it is a deception.

To live truly one must make one's life a service of God : but how should we serve God who has no needs. Nuri Baba and Zahurmian had the same idea. To serve man is to serve God. Man's needs are many.

Zahurmian writes about the mystic, saying; '*He understands his message and he knows his mission; his message is simple - "live for others"*'.

Life implies an awareness of the presence of God in all we do or say or think. It is tempting to say that in remembrance of God is life and in forgetting Him is death but in his lecture called *Live* Zahurmian tells of a dying saint to whom is said that it is known that he never forgets God for a single moment. The dying saint contradicts this and says he wants to be so much in the will of Allah that the if He Wills the saint to forget him he does so.

From these points we must surely understand that the practical thing we can do is to live a life dedicated to the service of others.

The Pursuit of Happiness.

Writing in his lecture entitled Reflections on Mysticism Zahurman says the following:

The pursuit of happiness is not a selfish aim. It is an inward urge born of the desire to be of use to others....Happiness it should be remembered, is a state of mind; it comes from within; it is not a commodity which a person can buy in the market; it cannot be had for any amount of money.

He also says about the mystic;

He refuses to be influenced by external life and external circumstances: he 'stoops to conquer' happiness by his old devices and implements.....which he has been taught to rely upon.

A mystic does not believe in modern tools for modern jobs; he adopts the same technique of hope, belief, faith, contentment, self surrender and trust in God. These are his weapons which win for him the battle of life, and which enable him to overcome the vicissitudes of life.

A mystic holds firmly that he has attained ...the age of majority and he is in a position to exercise his discrimination freely and voluntarily.

Elimination of desires and widening the scope of disinterested service which asks nothing and gives everything confers upon him peace and tranquility leading to the fountain of happiness.

In the story we gave earlier about the Miraj of the holy Prophet it is noted, despite his extraordinary proximity to Allah, That he returns to his duty as a Prophet. It seems to me from this there is something so intrinsic to our humanity that we could say that written in the genes of every human is the desire to help others. To live in accord with this is to be truly happy and to find the joy and peace that passes understanding.

Poems

To and From the Friend

*Is it not time that you and I talked a little about this friendship thing,
In verse too, for if I am not mistaken, it's you who does the rhyming.
Your words appear in our mind most clearly when it is virtually empty,
Then whatever you say cuts through miscellaneous clutter very quietly*

*The best time then for our dialogues is in the early mornings's dawning.
When most minds are tranquil and at rest and selfish desires are sleeping.
Talking to you is not the same as hearing voices is it? It is more and less,
Sometimes you are just silent, even disdainful; I chatter, but you bless.*

*The things you ask me about, if they be trivial or of great significance,
Because they come from you are everything, to me they have importance,
My silence is because I don't feel the need to talk when you don't listen,
So if you want to live life in my company I am the gift you have been given.*

*Of course I know your mind, every time: I know now you are wondering,
If we should discuss the threats that have been made about your housing.
Of course we will but it's not really necessary to write about that in rhyme.
For things like that of course there will be an occasion but not at this time.*

*This is the time whilst the sky is blue. clouds white, and the sun is warm,
While the love child is drawing and putting into painted form her charm,
This is the time, while your smile is radiating across the miles so easily,
To recall how Mevlana's love beyond time too speaks to one directly.*

How Deep

*How deep must we go into the well before we weep, how deep?
How high must we go until above the clouds we fly, how high?
How many times must we wildly dance or sing a crazy love song?
How long must we wait until Sabr itself says 'enough', how long?*

*Until we have climbed out of the pit of self, that's how long,
Until we have witnessed our own submission, that's how long,
Until love has taken the reins of our carriage, that's how long,
Until life itself has become a serene love song, that's how long.*

*Until there is no more talk of you and me that's how long,
Until united in truth and joy we are as one, that's how long,
Until Gabriel says 'Not one step further', that's how long,
Until we have reached up to 'even nearer' that's how long.*

Sometimes

*Sometimes the sun is hidden by a cloud or two,
Sometimes it is revealed and silently speaks of You,
Sometimes I don't notice it at all and I am so sorry,
But I know you will forgive the many sins of me.*