

A New Year Message

Rebirth is a phenomenon we are aware of in nature. Just as this year of 2023 reaches its final few days the New Year is waiting in the wings to take over. When winter passes spring arrives and when spring fulfils its promise summer takes over and so the seasons roll on. Most of us in our life experience a kind of spring summer, autumn and winter. Some of you will be in spring whilst for others autumn and even winter are the present reality. For some this cycle is tragically cut short and though it was more than a year ago we remember Shoja, the son and brother of murids, who died in an accident. Our prayers are with those who grieve.

The new year with its potential cannot happen until the old year is put behind us, so we normally review the last year and look at its achievements and its difficulties. For both we offer thanks to God. For the fulfilment of the potential the new year holds we can only rely on the Mercy of the Creator and offer our prayers for the same.

The Urs of Khawaja Saheb was the first big event of the year. Of course it's home is in Ajmer in Rajasthan, India, but we did our best to follow the timetable set there, both in England, in Iran and in Konya where the Urs was celebrated. In Konya Naz, Jeyran, Yahya, Kia, Kara, Parisa, Nur and Raz. Bahar, Kay, and their children Evelyn, William and Betty came for some days. We had the flag ceremony singing praise to Khawaja Saheb and putting up the flag in the corner of Zahuri Manzil which was decorated for the occasion.



The programme started with Zikr and then in the tradition of Ajmer had Qwaali. Money collected was later sent to Iran for an orphanage. At one point Jamil read a speech and the holy Qur'an was completed. Hazrat Ali's birthday was celebrated mostly online with good performances.



Later Raz started walking. We attended Dergah when we could for Zikr. Raz made her mark there and was later called 'Dergah' by Muharram Baba.

On 9th March Nur Jamil and Raz left so Nur and Raz could celebrate Nourouz in Iran. Jamil returned to the UK to offer the annual fast of Ramadan. There were some Urus' also celebrated.

The Urus of Zahurmian presented some difficulties personally because it involved a stroke and respiratory illness that could have been fatal. Memories of many things prior to the stroke are not always clear.

I did however, with help, make a written account of the stay in hospital and I include this for completeness on the website but will only include a small amount of it for publication in this New Years message.

Briefly, during the Urs of Zahurmian I fell ill with a stroke and was taken to hospital where they also discovered Pneumonia. It was not a pleasant experience but the support from the murids in Southampton and the murids in Iran enabled me to get through the worst of it. In particular I am indebted to Yasi and Bahar who sacrificed much to help me, but to so many others too. Nur was exceptionally strong in insisting I should leave hospital and the presence of Raz on line was inspirational. I eventually discharged myself with much support from murids. I had already reserved a flight before being taken ill. I was able to use this and flew with Yasi as companion until Istanbul and then to Konya with Raz, Nur, and Naz. During the first weeks after arrival I was very dependent on them.

Konya after the stroke.



Bahar made the long trip from England to be with us for a few days in Konya. She is a very devoted murid. Later she brought her family for a few days more.



We did not neglect to take a short holiday by the sea. Etti, Yasi, Naz, Jeyran, Laila, and Kara all joined us and we had a very nice holiday near the sea in Alanya. Fistik (Etti) found a piano in a seaside restaurant and entertained us and other diners with beautiful music. The management even wanted to offer her a job.



The girls took Raz swimming but the summer was very hot and I stayed in the air conditioned flat we had rented. In the evenings we played ludo or cards. We also gave Zikr online. We travelled to Alanya and back by bus.



On return Naz took a second bayit at her request. This implies renewed commitment.

Later, back in Konya, Nur invested in a very nice car purchased from the local shopkeeper. This was very helpful for visiting, Shems, Mevlana and Nuri Baba as well as playgrounds. Up to then we had mostly used the bus. We often went Dergah for Zikr

and one day Raz walked without prompting down the middle of Dergah between all the serious men there and started conducting the musicians! Sometimes she would recite Zikr on the bus journey.

In early September Yahya joined us once he was free from commitment. He undertook some hard labour to turn the overgrown garden of Nuri Manzil into a playground for Raz. He put in some excellent steps to access the garden and made a sandpit as well as erecting a swing, slide and trampoline. He has been with us for a long time now and has been indispensable and so hard working. He is very devoted murid.

The usual on-line Zikr and also the Masnevi readings continued weekly from Konya and folks from England and Iran joined in. I commenced treatment of my teeth which is still not concluded.

Before the Urs of Mevlana came his birthday celebrations which lasted for several days. Maryam and her husband came. We attended one or two concerts in Mevlana's honour. One was given by an Irani group from Kirman. We met a relative of Nurs who was performing in the musical ensemble. There was some wild 'turning on stage.



During Maryam stay we made a visit to karaman to the Shrine of Mevlana's Mother and also to the shrine of Unus emre.



On October the 13th we celebrated the birthday of Jamil in Konya.



It was with great happiness that we participated online in the marriage of Nazanin and Sena. They were married in Kirman on 2nd November. We had a cake and decorations in Konya. We wish them every happiness. May Allah bless their union.



Six people -Yasi, Naz, Yahya, Kara, Jeyran, and Ghazal Sirius began a project for recording the Masnevi in Farsi with emphasis on the meaning rather than just the rhyme and rhythm. Maryam Teimoori Moghadam undertook to record all six books herself with emphasis on the rhyme and rhythm and the beauty of the Farsi language.

Nur commenced work on recording Shah Wali Ullah's translation of the holy Qur'an into Farsi - which is a very important piece of work.

New year of 2023 began with festivities and is ending with festivities as the celebration of Mevlana Rumi's Urs concluded. During the Urs several people developed coughs and other symptoms of flu or something like it. We took Raz to the local paediatric services. By the grace of Allah she is now much better.



None of this however prevented the Urs of Mevlana being a very fine time indeed with many blessings. For the first three nights we went to Dergah for the Zikr. This year food is not given as previously and with the increased prices in Konya this was no surprise. We went to local restaurants after visiting Shems and Mevlana. After three days that we had our own Zikr at Zahuri Manzil. These were very enthusiastic and enjoyed by all the people attending. There was on line participation too. On the 17th December we went to Mevlana's shrine. The atmosphere was marvellous. Later we had a meal at a very busy restaurant and then went to the Dergah of Nuri Baba for Zikr.



In the Shrine of Aflaki next to Mevlana Jamil gave a short speech.

Present physically with us for Seb I Urus of Mevlana were Hussain and Jamileh, Rabi-ah and her husband, Shirin and Jeyran, Kara, Naz, Yahya, Laila ,Kia, Anna, Samaneh, Adam, Maryam Isfahani, Yasi, Prisa, ILnaz, Nur and Raz. We must make special mention of Yasi donating the generous gift of a dishwasher to Zahuri Manzil.



There was a visit and short zikr at the grave of Nuri baba.

There were many gifts exchanged during this period. Too many to mention individually but they included shirts, shoes and scarves and so on and many fine clothes and toys for Raz. Formal prayer took place every morning.

On one evening Raz gave hats to everyone who did not have one including Hussain. She gave memorable performances of spinning and swinging on the 'jumpy jumpy' device in the lounge.



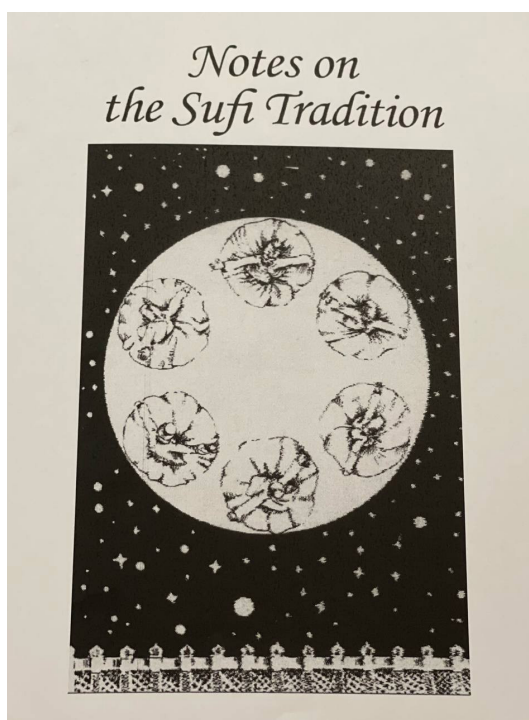
The Irani custom of Yalda, marking the longest night of the year, arrived and we read some Hafiz verses.



Christmas we celebrated with a lit up Christmas tree and Father Xmas duly arrived to give out the presents. Raz however was not fooled and immediately pointed to him and said 'daddy'. The western new year is almost upon us. In addition it is just a couple of weeks before the Urs of Khawaja Muinuddin is celebrated for ten days in Ajmer to be concluded with the birthday of Hazrat Ali.



We should mention the publication of a small booklet called “Notes on the Sufi Tradition”. Written by Jamil and edited by Kara fouladi. It is hoped this will be the first booklet of many inshallah. This booklet was distributed at the Urs of Mevlana as was a group photo which was partly real but also had a number of persons pasted in. Maryam Shirazi has made really important strides with publishing works on the Sufi saints of Shiraz and on other work. We understand the English translation of the Sufi saints of Shiraz is awaiting publication with Jamil Chishti in England. In Konya, Yahya, Nur, Yasi and Maryam are working on the translation of Zahurmian’s *Culture of the Sufis* with Jamil.



Now we have completed our brief summary of the past year. It is time to turn to the future and leave the past. The theme I chose for this New Year Message was 'Rebirth'. Rebirth is a word pregnant with hope. It is true that some religions and cultures believe in a literal rebirth of an individual in some other form such as an animal but that is their belief which we do not share. As the Quran says 'you to your religion and me to mine'.

We take rebirth in the sense that something in us dies and something new and better arises. Mevlana Rumi puts it like this:

I was a mineral and then I died and became a vegetable then I died as a vegetable and became an animal. Once again I died and became human. Then I died as a human and became Angelic.

He asks 'What did I ever lose by dying?' That is to say that there is progression in the individual who may mount higher and higher towards God but only by dying to the preceding state. The holy Prophet said "Die before you die".

The Christians have a view that one should be spiritually born again, so they talk about being reborn and the baptism of dipping the person under water symbolises this. Shah Wali Ullah the Muslim mystic of Delhi talks about the cycle of souls. In this a soul reaches various stages such as becoming one of the holy fold, but the end of which journey is re-uniting with Allah the source of all creation?

Theological discussion is not our purpose so we limit ourselves to the sense of rebirth that may follow illness as this pertinent to our own situation this last year.

Serious illness may cause us to review our priorities in life. To decide what is really important. Sometimes this may happen without physical illness but result from a depressive state. Whatever the apparent cause there is a kind of dying in the mind in which the life of the past loses its attraction. We determine to set our life on a new and better course. We must keep in view what is eternal at the same time as attending to the present. Our sincerity may be tested.

In fact the period after an illness or at least the recovery from it, can be very illuminating. Being reborn however means taking advantage of the new perspective rather than just enjoying the feeling of the moment. It must be more profound than merely making a new year wish or determination to eat less chocolate although the custom of making a new year vow probably originates from a similar source.

It is our hope that you will find in the difficulties as well as the many blessings that Allah sends a reminder of Him. Thus the difficulty becomes a step towards Him. When difficulties become the cause of remembering Him they take on a positive aspect.

We must dive deep into our nature whether by formal meditation or Zikr or introspection of a less structured kind. We seek the invaluable pearl of sincerity. Rebirth to a higher state requires sincerity.

Our lower nature is full trickery and deception it does not like sincerity and does its best to hide it from us, which reason enough to seek it out. Examine your life and behaviours and thought processes critically. In fact with the kind of criticism you may once have used for others. Lord Jesus said “do not look at the mote in the eye of another but at the beam in your own eye”.

Consider whether you are in fact telling lies to yourself! To lie to others is not good generally but to lie to oneself is real foolishness. If what you say to yourself is a deception of some kind when you examine it - then reject it. Once you are in sincerity then you are in a deep place inside yourself. There is a great power in sincerity. If you sincerely determine on a course of action then you can change your life from inside. The outward things will follow in due time.

Do not rely on everything becoming whatever you wish for with regard to outer events. Some things will be good and others not. Rely instead on spiritual growth and that the inner life may become richer and richer. When things do go your way offer the prayer of gratitude.

Prophet Musa (Moses) prayed after leaving Egypt as a wanted murderer. He asked not for any particular thing but said to Allah he was in need of any good Allah would give. Shortly

after that prayer he got accommodation, employment, a wife and children.

Illness then can become a means for changing your life for the better. It is our prayer that the life of each and everyone of you will change for the better in the year to come (preferably without needing illness) and in each year thereafter. Changing for the better does not mean just the outer things of life but means that you inside become more than you have been and draw closer to fulfilling your potential.

To do this requires both effort and the grace of Allah. Make the steps towards the effort to change yourself and it maybe that Allahs grace and love will flow towards you and that the effort will become a rewarded prayer. Then the home of Peace will be yours. Then the mansion of Love will be your eternal abode. Allah bestowed the gift of inward peace on the companions of the holy Prophet Muhammed after they became disappointed about invading Mecca.

Do not seek to compare your self with others your concern is with your own relation with God. Think of it like this; you are a beautiful flower in the divine garden. Some of those flowers are roses others are daffodils or primroses or tulips. There is no way that a tulip will become a rose or a hyacinth a daffodil. Each has their own beauty and grandeur. Concentrate on being what you are not on trying to be something else.

So now is the time again to sincerely wish you Happy New Year, and even more than that a New Year full of precious moments of love and joy. We pray Allah may facilitate your individual spiritual growth and that He may draw us collectively together more and more. May the blessings of Zahurmian and Nuri baba be with each of you.

Love when it arises among good company,
Gives to everyday life the glow of eternity,
It is not a 'thing' but it pervades everything,
We can say it's the heart generously smiling.

Salam Aleikum - Amin

Jamiluddin Morris Zahuri,

Zahuri Manzil, Meram, Konya

December 2023 and January 2024.