



## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

'It's again the time to remind ourselves of one of the great spiritual benefactors of mankind. I mean of course that it is the Urs or death anniversary of the spiritual Emperor of India, Khawaja Gharib Nawaz often referred to just as '*Khawaja Saheb*'.

This year it comes at a time of darkness for the Muslim community as so many men women and children are being slaughtered in Palestine. At the same time war continues in Ukraine leading to more misery for the people there. The Corona epidemic is no longer the kind of threat to the world community it was, but it remains the source of ill health for many. The climate is a continuing problem with global warming affecting many people. Of course, there are other specific issues affecting different countries and peoples. One may say it was 'Ever-Thus' but that merely makes the point that the world is in a dire state. There are massacres sometimes in the name of religion sometimes in the name of politics and sometimes due to mental ill health. If we add to this mix of man's inhumanity to man, natural disasters as well, the picture grows gloomier and gloomier.

In this darkness we seek a light that will lead us to spiritual higher ground or even better a kind of modern ark like that of Prophet Noah that enables us to survive the storm of the world around us.

The prophets and saints provide the shelter we need. They are the ones who are truly alive as Hafiz Saheb says; 'The one whose heart is alive with love does not die - ever'. This shows us the importance of love in our life. As Mevlana Rumi says; 'Love whether it be from this side or that side leads us yonder'. Love is not a nice additional thing it is the very heart of our existence. Only when we love, do we really live. Khawaja Usman Harooni, the guide of Khawaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti had a simple philosophy and that was "Live". By live he did not mean just to eat and drink and defecate or satisfy our lust. He meant that the heart should be alive with real love. Divine Love.

Divine Love is the best way of self-purification and it was practised and preached by Khawaja Saheb and many other great mystics. Mevlana Rumi wrote "Sine Khaham sharhe sharhe az feragh" ( I want a heart shredded by separation"). The emptiness of deep sorrow at our separation from the divine beloved is the entrance to Real love. We may waste our life trying to avoid this void. We may try to fill the void with distractions such as desirable things but these things are no more than toys, in the end there remains that void that is the pain of longing for the one true beloved.

Love of this kind cannot be defined. The one who has received it as a gift knows it and the one who has not can never understand it. There is a pop song I heard the other day it says. "If you want to know if he loves you so, it's in his kiss, that's where it is". Of course the meaning of the song relates to an ordinary human kiss but if we take Him as referring to the Beloved (God) we understand that it is Divine intimacy we seek beneath all the toys and distractions of this world.

In this harsh world the negative forces that thrive on mischief and mayhem appear to always have the upper hand. There is however a way out individually but also for society. The mystics, the real mystics, are not only concerned with their own salvation but strive to improve society too. They do this not by political means not by bullet and bomb but by transforming those around them. The question is how do you change those around you? Not by intellectual argument nor words that have no real content. The transformation is achieved

by the individual actively seeking their own purification. Zahurmian wrote "Criticism of others is a misuse of time". Our business is with our own purification and by working on this we change those in contact with us without trying to do so. As the holy Quran says "He succeeds who purifies himself".

Next the question arises as to how do we purify ourselves? For the answer to this we turn to those people, Allah in his infinite mercy, sent to us as guides.

These are the Holy Prophets. They may seem like people who lived long ago but they knew human nature and their stories tell us about things which matter today to us. Their stories are related in the holy books. When the time of the holy Prophets had passed; Allah did not leave humanity without help. The Saints were inspired to help. They taught suitable individuals how to purify themselves both by example and the power in their words.

Self-purification then is not something selfish, it serves humanity and service to all humanity is the way of the Sufi. It is in fact Service to Allah. God has no needs but humanity's needs are very great. We should aspire to make our life a prayer in which the essential element is service to others. We should not look at others as if they belong to another religion or class or profession or colour but as needy human beings first and foremost. It is the state of a persons' heart that tells us whether they are good or not, it is not his or her avowed religion which is often just a chance of being born into a particular culture. Khawaja Saheb opened his door to all irrespective of religion, caste or colour or sect.

Now we have mentioned again the name of Khawaja Saheb it is incumbent on us to speak more of this great Saint for whom Love was of paramount importance. What we say will not be new to many of you, but these are important things so bear with us.

Khawaja Saheb was born in Isfahan. His father, Ghiyasuddin was a pious man and his mother a pious woman. There were blood relations with the great, Saint Ghaus Pak who he encountered on two occasions and who predicted Khawaja Sahebs' future importance.

As a child Khawaja Saheb showed signs of a spiritual nature. On one occasion he gave his new Eid clothes to a beggar boy. He became orphaned in his teens and was left with a grinding stone and garden as inheritance. A wandering mystic, Ibrahim Qandoozi, entered the garden and was impressed by the young boys' hospitality. He gave Khawaja Saheb something that he himself had chewed on. On eating this Khawaja Saheb experience a deep spiritual state. He sold the garden and grinding stone gave the proceeds to the poor and commenced a wandering life in search for truth.

He acquired conventional Muslim knowledge of Quran, hadiths and jurisprudence from some well-known scholars but his thirst for deeper knowledge continued.

He took to the Sufi life and became a disciple of the great saint Khawaja Uthman Harooni. In fact Khawaja Saheb on the first occasion was with him for two and a half years after initiation. Then he was given permission to enlist his own disciples and named as sajjadanashin. He visited many places travelling as far as; Damascus, Baghdad, Ray, Kerman, Mahan, Isfahan, Mashad, Kharaqan, Bastam, and to Lahore. He visited many shrines on these travels and encountered many holy men.

He met with Khawaja Uthman Harooni a second time in Baghdad and again took initiation. Let us hear from Khwaja Saheb himself;

'*Ḥ*, Muinuddin Hasan of Sanjar - well wisher of all the faithful, had the honour of meeting Hazrat Khwaja Uthman Harooni in the mosque of Khwaja Junaid of Baghdad (ra). His holiness was surrounded by inspired Dervishes.....(he).. asked me to offer two genuflexions...Then he asked me to sit with my face towards Kaaba – he asked me to recite sura Baqara – which I did.

Further he commanded me to recite benedictions on the holy Prophet Muhammed (pbhu). I obeyed. Khwaja Uthman Harooni stood up and holding my hands lifted his face towards the sky and said --'Come let me cause thee to reach Allah.'

After placing the four-edged cap and bestowing a robe on Khwaja Saheb they sat down. There followed a day and night of asceticism. The four-edged cap symbolises renunciation of this world, renunciation of the next world, renunciation of all but God, and finally renunciation of renunciation.

Khwaja Saheb continues.

'The next day, when I attended upon him he asked me to sit down and recite Sura Ikhlas 4000 times. I did. He asked me to look towards the sky. I did. He asked me 'How far do you see'.

I replied 'up to the Great Throne'. Next he asked me to look towards the ground. I did. He asked me, 'How far do you see?' 'I replied – to the furthest reaches of the earth'.

Next he asked me to recite Sura Ikhlas again a thousand times. I did. He asked me to look towards the sky again. I did. He asked me 'How far do you see now?' I replied, 'Up to the Great Hidden'.

Next he asked me to close my eyes. I did. He asked me to open my eyes. I did. Then showing me two fingers, he asked me what I saw there. I replied 18000 worlds.'

After that Khwaja Saheb was instructed to look under a certain brick where he found some dinars. He was told to distribute them amongst the poor.

Later the following account is given of events in Mecca on pilgrimage.

Khwaja Saheb says: 'After going round the Kaaba, Khwaja Uthman Harooni took my hand and entrusted me to Allah. He prayed in Kaaba for my humble self. A voice was heard - 'We have accepted Muinuddin'.

On reaching Medina they presented themselves at the court of the holy Prophet (pbuh). Khwaja Saheb was instructed to offer his reverential salaams. A voice came out saying:

*'Peace be on you also, O head of the Pious of the Earth and the Sea.'*

On hearing this Khwaja Uthman said - *'Now, indeed, you have reached perfection'*.

One day when Khwaja Saheb was absorbed in prayer in Kaaba he heard a voice saying:

*'O Muinuddin! We are greatly pleased with thee. Thou art given salvation. Ask for anything thou may like so that We may grant it to thee.'*

Khwaja Saheb prayed, not for himself but for the salvation for his followers and disciples, and the reply came:

*'O Muinuddin thou art our accepted one. I will give salvation to thy followers and disciples, and also to those who may enter thy fold till the Day of Resurrection.'*

After reaching Medina he received from the holy Prophet (pbuh) in the Quba Mosque, a mandate to the effect that:

*'O Muinuddin! Thou art a helper of my religion. I entrust to thee the country of Hindustan. There prevails darkness. Proceed on to Ajmer and spread there the gospel of Truth'.*

Khwaja Saheb became drowsy and was blessed with seeing in vision, the city of Ajmer. He was bidden farewell and given the gift of a pomegranate from heaven.

Now he began that mission which was to consume the rest of his life. To bring the teaching of Truth to the dark, divided, sub-continent of India by the Holy Prophet's command.

Khwaja Saheb also made a prophecy whilst in Baghdad. The prophecy was that Sultan II Tut Mish, who was then 12 years old, would become Emperor of India. This actually happened.

Eventually Khwaja Saheb settled in Ajmer and on occasions would go to Delhi where Qutub Saheb lived.

Eventually when his time came and his work in this mortal body was complete and the message of the overpowering importance of Love of Allah was established as a doctrine that should be available to all whatever their background or religion, he was finally united with his Beloved forever.

I will give you the description in the book of my own Sheikh Dr Zahurul Hasan Sharib:

*On Monday the 6th of Rajab 627 AH – the 21st May 1229 Gharib Nawaz after night prayers went into his room and closed the door. He did not permit anyone to enter. All night long the people outside heard a mystic sound coming from the room....*

*At the approach of dawn the sound was not to be heard. When the door remained closed at the time of the morning prayers his devotees thought there was something unusual. In short, when the door was opened they found him dead and on his forehead was written these words:*

**Haza habeeb Allahi  
Mata fii hub Allahi**

*'He was a beloved of Allah, He died in the love of Allah'.*

*That night in dream some saints saw the holy Prophet Muhammed saying: "Muinuddin is a friend of Allah. Today I have come to welcome him".*

Qutub Saheb his successor wrote this:

*'.. I felt a little drowsy whilst sitting on my prayer carpet. I saw that he (Gharib Nawaz) I was standing underneath the throne of God. I put my head upon his feet and inquired his condition. He replied: 'God has been merciful enough to shower His blessings upon me. He has allotted me a place near the angels and thus underneath His Throne. I live here'.*

Listen to some of the titles he was given.

- ❖ Ata-i-Rasul, (gift of the holy Prophet)
- ❖ Khwaja i Ajmer,
- ❖ Khwaja i Bazurg (great Khwaja)
- ❖ Hind ul Wali (Saint of India)
- ❖ Gharib Nawaz (Patron of the Poor)
- ❖ Sultan-ul Hind
- ❖ Naib-i-Rasul-fil Hind (Deputy of the holy Prophet in India).
- ❖ Other names include: Taj-ul-Ashiqeen, Aftab-i-Jehan. Paneh-e-Bekasen (shelter of the helpless).

## Song

Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.  
Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

Ya Gharib Nawaz, ya Gharib Nawaz,  
No sweeter name there ever was,  
Many miracles from Allah came and went  
The message of Love remained – heaven sent.

Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.  
Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

Ya Gharib Nawaz, ya Gharib Nawaz,  
No sweeter name there ever was,  
When the time to meet his Beloved came  
The angels were surely singing this name

Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.  
Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

Ya Gharib Nawaz, ya Gharib Nawaz,  
No sweeter name there ever was,  
Now beneath Allah's throne he lives  
And to all the sincere, blessings he gives.

Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.  
Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

Ya Gharib Nawaz, ya Gharib Nawaz,  
No sweeter name there ever was,  
He does not judge by what they say  
But how in their heart they pray.

Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.  
Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

Ya Gharib Nawaz, ya Gharib Nawaz,  
No sweeter name there ever was,  
Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Christian, or Jew,  
He never refuses those who are true.

Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.  
Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

Ya Gharib Nawaz, ya Gharib Nawaz,  
No sweeter name there ever was,  
To his 'Urs they come from everywhere  
Presidents and paupers to say their prayer

Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.  
Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

Ya Gharib Nawaz, ya Gharib Nawaz,  
No sweeter name there ever was,  
Now we hear this refrain everywhere  
Even from those who only in spirit are there.

Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.  
Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

Ya Gharib Nawaz, Ya Gharib Nawaz,  
No sweeter name there ever was.

O Gharib Nawaz hear this, our heartfelt plea,  
Cleanse the mirror of our heart that we may be  
In wonder at the love that Allah has for thee,  
And from ignorance and doubt ever be free.

Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.  
Ya Sanjari, Ya Ajmeri, Ya Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

In Ajmer from every walk of life people gather for the Urs. The rich and the poor, the humble and the proud, the city dwellers and the villagers, the teachers and the students, the sophisticated and the simple, fashion designers and models, taxi drivers and rickshaw wallahs, cooks, artists, poets, workers, refuse collectors, shopkeepers and shop assistants, scientists and politicians, soldiers, policemen, dancers, actors, mothers and children, and so on and on. They will belong to different classes and speak different languages and come from different countries and belong to different religions and castes and have different customs but they all want blessings from Khawaja Saheb, and no doubt they will get it.

## **A poem**

In Ajmer the entrance to the endless energy of ecstasy can be found,  
Where the presence of the Emperor of Love is everywhere, all around.  
Where the capacity to purify in the celestial fire of Love has its centre,  
Where the sincere seeker is bidden by the unsleeping sentry to enter.  
Where the words of Allah take on a life not suspected by the foolish,  
Where passion for truth is a vehicle carrying us beyond a mere wish,  
Where the spirits of saintly souls impregnate the soil with their purity,  
Where the world despairs and at last departs, leaving just His infinity.

O Khwaja there is in me that which would ask for a thousand favours,  
But you know best where to pour divine Love, with its myriad flavours.

May Allah cover the faults and shortcomings in our praise of Khwaja Saheb and in our gratitude to Allah for his life. May Khawaja Sahebs infinite capacity for love be the touchstone for love in our own life. Even if that love is not expressed in words may it transform both us and the society we live in.

Amin