

Usul-e-Saba as a Spiritual Response to Materialism : A Study of Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari

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Abstract

Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Mawlana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari was one of the greatest saints, who established Maizbhandari Tariqa, based on the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), emphasizing spiritual purification, stands as a spiritual refuge amidst the pervasive influence of materialism. Materialism, emphasizing material possessions over spiritual values, erodes ethics, societal well-being, and individual contentment. This paper explores the concept of Usul-e-Saba within the Maizbhandari Tariqa, focusing on its role as an antidote to materialism within the biography of Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari. Usul-e-Saba, or the Seven Principles, form the foundational teachings of this spiritual tradition, emphasizing detachment from worldly possessions and a deep connection with the Divine. Through an analysis of Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari's life and teachings, this paper aims to elucidate the method and implications of Usul-e-Saba in countering materialism and fostering spiritual growth. Through a combination of historical analysis and contemporary relevance, this study offers insights into the enduring relevance of Usul-e-Saba as a spiritual framework for navigating the challenges posed by materialistic ideologies, fostering inner peace, and cultivating a deeper connection with the divine. Previous research might have explored either Usul-e-Saba or Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari's biography separately, without integrating both to examine how his life embodies these principles as an antidote to materialism. Ultimately, this research aims to illuminate how the teachings embedded in the Usul-e-

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Saba of Maizbhandari Tariqa, as exemplified by Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari's life, offer a pathway towards spiritual fulfillment and resilience against the allure of materialism in the modern world.

Keywords : Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari, Maizbhandari Tariqa, *Usul-e-Saba*, Materialism, Spiritual Purification, Human life

Introduction

“The attention of the world will be turned into Chittagong if we could promote the message of Maizbhandari Tariqa.”- Stated Hazrat Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari (1893-1982) ²

The Maizbhandari Tariqa stands out as a prominent and influential Sufi order in modern-day Bangladesh. Since its establishment, it swiftly drew in a diverse array of devoted followers from various corners of the globe, largely through the migration of Bangladeshis. Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari (1826-1906) was the initiator of this tariqa. This is the only tariqa that originated in Bangladesh. Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari is highly regarded for his spiritual teachings, purity, and humanitarian efforts. He played a significant role in reviving and propagating the principles of Sufism, particularly within the Maizbhandari Tariqa, emphasizing the importance of love, service to humanity, and spiritual devotion.

According to Md. Akhir (2015),

“Materialism as we know is an ideology which is as well as belief (faith). Materialism is a worldview that emphasizes sensory experience and material possessions concerns to the exclusion of spiritual and religious considerations. In

² Hazrat Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari was Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari's spiritual heir and trustee. As Bertocci observes, Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari emerged as a central intellectual and spiritual leader of the Maizbhandari Tariqa (qtd. in Mejbaul Alam Bhuiyan 138).

materialism's belief, there are no Special Creator and creations and this universe is created by itself through naturalistic laws. The majority of the materialists are atheists because they do not believe God is the creator" (Akhir).

So it is clear that materialism is the antithesis of aestheticism, spirituality, and idealism (in its every sense). The relentless pursuit of materialism has ensnared humanity in an endless quest for insatiable desires, leading to a regrettable existence marked by tragedies such as homicide, genocide, substance abuse, and various forms of mistreatment including towards children, women, and within families and society. This fixation on material wealth detrimentally impacts relationships, heightens the risk of depression and anxiety, and diminishes personal contentment and self-worth.

On the other hand, the *Usul-e-Saba*, also known as the Seven Steps (*sapta paddati*), within the Maizbhandari tariqa was formulated by Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari as a pathway toward achieving spiritual purification (Hoque et al. 21). The principles of *Usul-e-Saba* within the Maizbhandari Tariqa draw their essence from the Quran and Hadith. Adhering to these principles paves the way toward moral development, guiding individuals toward achieving a state of perfected humanity. This research paper explores the negative effects of materialism on human life. This research paper aims to emphasize the exploration of how Maizbhandari's adherence to *Usul-e-Saba* offers a potential antidote to the pervasive influence of materialism.

Problem Statement

In today's world, the grip of materialism affects everyone's existence, emphasizing tangible and physical aspects in all aspects of life. This doctrine undermines the intrinsic values and moral principles of human life, neglecting spiritual and intellectual pursuits, and gradually influencing human thoughts and behaviors.

Materialism tends to breed a competitive, manipulative, and self-centered approach toward others, diminishing empathy. Furthermore, it correlates with reduced well-being, decreased altruism, environmentally harmful actions, and poorer academic achievements. The study aims to explore how *Usul-e-Saba* within the Maizbhandari tariqa offers an alternative worldview that can mitigate the adverse effects of materialism in contemporary life. It is a qualitative paper with a thorough literature review where the qualitative data is collected and analyzed, and a discussion is generated with facts to support the conclusions.

Research Objectives :

1. Deepen understanding of *Usul-e-Saba* in Maizbhandari Tariqa.
2. Analyze the facets and consequences of materialism.
3. Explore Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari's life and teachings embodying *Usul-e-Saba*.
4. Identify teachings countering materialistic ideologies within *Usul-e-Saba*.

Research Questions :

1. What are materialism's negative impacts on human life?
2. What are the foundational principles of *Usul-e-Saba* within Maizbhandari Tariqa?
3. How does Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari's biography exemplify *Usul-e-Saba* against materialistic ideologies?

Literature Review

Humans are regarded as Allah's most intelligent creation, residing in society with the ability to think, communicate, and behave accordingly. Individuals must understand the essence of treating others with respect to their societal interactions. Allah's creation of humanity stems from a foundation of love, meant for the sharing and expression of love between individuals and the love of Allah. Moreover, when Allah brought people into existence, he entrusted

them with meaningful endeavors, allowing them to witness and embody Allah's benevolence through their stewardship of the world and their care for one another. Allah didn't make humans just to eat, drink, or else we'd be like animals. Humans are special to Allah, given higher status than many other creations. But some people ignore this truth or don't believe it, missing the real reason they were made. Instead, they only chase after worldly pleasures. Living like this is like living as animals, and they're losing their way even more. Allah says -

"Those who reject Allah enjoy the life of this world and eat as cattle eat; and the Fire shall be their abode." [Qur'an 47:12]

"Leave them alone, to enjoy (the good things of this life) and to please themselves: let (false) hope amuse them: soon will knowledge (undeceive them)." [Qur'an 15:3]

"Many are the Jinns and men We have made for Hell: They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle -nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning). " [Qur'an 7:179]

Everyone knows their body parts have specific purposes - eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, and more. If these parts have reasons for being, wouldn't it seem strange if a person exists without a purpose? Shouldn't we listen when the one who made us tells us why we're here? From above the discussion, we can say that, there are two basic ways to view the universe-the spiritual and the materialistic. A spiritual person sees that a divine consciousness creates the world, while the materialistic feels matter is the fundamental reality.

Allah Almighty warned against materialism.

According to Quran:

“O ye who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of God. If any act thus, the loss is their own.” [63:9]

“What is the life of this world but amusement and play? But verily the Home in the Hereafter—that is life indeed, if they but knew.” [29:64]

“Let not then this present life deceives you, nor let the Chief Deceiver deceive you about Allah.” [31:33]

According to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) we should always prefer relationship with Almighty Allah to materialism as it is obvious from some quotes:

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (RA) said: “I heard the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) saying: “This world is cursed and cursed is what is in it, except the remembrance of Allah and what is conducive to it, and the scholar or the seeker of knowledge.” (Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2347). The belief that we are only material and do not have a spiritual (immaterial) ride. The Quran does address this in many ways- “And verily he is violent in the love of wealth.” [100:8]

In this verse, Allah criticizes those of mankind who love wealth so much that it distracts them from their true goal. On the authority of Thawban (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said: The people will summon one another to attack you as people when eating invite others to share their dish. Someone asked: will that be because of our small numbers at that time? He replied: No, you will be numerous at that time. But you will be scum and rubbish like that carried down by a torrent, and Allah will remove the fear of you from the hearts of your enemies and will throw wahn into your hearts. Someone asked: What is wahn? Messenger of Allah (PBUH): He replied: Love of the world and dislike of death (Sunan Abi Dawud Hadith 4297).

Narrated by Uqbah bin Aami (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) said: “I do not fear for you associating anything with Allah after me, but I fear for you that you will compete with one another for (the

pleasures of) the world and be destroyed as those before you were destroyed” (Sahih Muslim Hadith 2963).

Ka'b ibn Malik (RA) reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: Two hungry wolves sent against a flock of sheep do not cause more damage to them than a man's eagerness for wealth and fame does to his religion” (Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2376). Allah said about Man's obsession and attachment to this life at surah Al-Takathur, 102:1-8

- 1.The mutual rivalry for piling up (the good things Of this world) diverts you (From the more serious things),
2. Until ye visit the graves
3. But nay, ye soon shall know (the reality).
4. Again, ye soon shall know!
5. Nay, were ye to know with certainty of mind, (Ye would beware!)
6. Ye shall certainly see Hell-fire!
7. Again, ye shall see it with certainty of sight!
8. Then, shall ye be questioned that day about the joy (Ye indulged in!)

This surah stands out as a potent and prophetic segment within the Qur'an, shedding light on the pervasive avarice inherent in humanity. Specifically, it addresses prevailing inclinations that have permeated societies worldwide in our modern technological era. The verse underscores mankind's relentless pursuit of enhanced benefits, whether they be tangible or intangible, real or illusory. It signifies humanity's insatiable drive for increased comforts, greater material wealth, heightened dominance over fellow humans and nature, and continuous advancement in technology. Materialism is defined as an orientation or worldview characterized by the prioritization of material possessions, wealth, and sensory experiences over spiritual or metaphysical values (Richins & Dawson 304). It entails a strong focus on acquiring and

consuming tangible goods, often at the expense of non-material aspects of life such as relationships, personal growth, and community well-being. Materialism is conceptualized as a set of attitudes and beliefs characterized by the prioritization of material possessions and wealth accumulation as sources of personal fulfillment and well-being, often accompanied by a devaluation of non-materialistic values such as altruism, spirituality, and community engagement (Kasser 22). Tim Kasser Ph.D., and professor of psychology, in his interview with the American Psychological Association (APA), Kasser shared that materialism is associated with:

1. lower levels of well-being
2. less pro-social interpersonal behavior
3. ecologically destructive behavior
4. poor academic outcomes
5. more spending and debt
6. increased rates of depression and anxiety
7. physical health problems (Marissa)

Materialism is sometimes seen as a cultural trend or lifestyle focused on consumerism, wealth accumulation, and the pursuit of economic success. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary-

“A way of life, opinion, or tendency based entirely upon material interests, with a disregard for spiritual or intellectual values” (“Materialism”).

Critique of Materialism

Materialism, as both a philosophical and socio-cultural orientation, has been widely critiqued for its detrimental impact on human well-being, morality, and social cohesion. Some discussions are described below:

1. Philosophical Critique: Loss of Meaning and Depth

Materialism is often criticized for reducing human experience to physical and measurable phenomena, ignoring consciousness, emotions, and spirituality. According to Scruton (2012) “materialism fails to account for the richness of human experience, particularly consciousness, love, and the search for meaning” (Scruton 18).

2. Psychological Critique: Link to Unhappiness

Research shows that materialistic values are negatively associated with well-being, life satisfaction, and mental health. Research shows that when people make material success a top priority, their overall happiness and psychological health decline (Kasser 42). Kasser's work shows that focusing on material success often leads to anxiety, depression, and lower-quality relationships.

3. Sociological Critique: Social Inequality and Consumerism

Materialism fuels consumerism and contributes to growing social inequality, environmental harm, and a culture of competition that often sidelines values such as compassion and cooperation. In the sociological domain, Robert Bellah et al. (1985) argue that a materialistic culture emphasizes individual success and wealth, often at the cost of moral and communal values. This shift contributes to alienation and a sense of purposelessness in modern societies (Bellah et al. 291).

4. Spiritual Critique: Alienation from the Divine

From a Sufi perspective, materialism is seen as a veil that separates the soul from divine truth. It leads to *ghaflah* (heedlessness), which distracts the seeker from spiritual realization. As Nasr explains, excessive attachment to material goods blinds the soul from perceiving divine realities and deepens spiritual ignorance (*ghaflah*) (Nasr 109). Similarly, Chittick notes that the Sufi path requires transcending worldly attachments in order to realize the unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*) and return to God (Chittick 71).

5. Ethical Critique: Decline in Moral Values

Materialism is associated with the decline of moral and communal values, such as generosity, humility, and spiritual devotion. The tendency to focus on possession stems from the greed and selfishness prevalent in modern society, leading to feelings of alienation, social isolation, and the erosion of spiritual and moral values" (Fromm 117). The pursuit of wealth and material success has increasingly replaced the cultivation of virtues such as humility and generosity, resulting in the erosion of communal bonds" (Madsen 169).

By promoting spiritual over material values, the Maizbhandari path contributes to the development of moral character and the fostering of social harmony—offering a compelling alternative to the individualism and moral decay associated with modern materialism.

The succeeding pages will make a concerted attempt to understand, explore, analyze, and introduce the biography of Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari and his concepts of *Usul-e-Saba* or Sevenfold principles. Attempt will also be made to show how his concepts of *Usul-e-Saba* principles counter materialistic ideologies within the context of his biography.

Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Maulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari

Hazrat Maulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari came into the world on January 15, 1826 (1244 Hijri), a Wednesday, in the village of Maizbhandar located under Fatikchari police station in Chattogram, Bangladesh. As a lineage bearer of the revered prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), he lived a life dedicated to spiritual pursuits. His earthly journey concluded on January 24, 1906, Monday, at the age of seventy-nine (Hoque et al. 23). In 636 Hijri, a prominent Sufi theologian Hazrat Muhiuddin Ibn Arabi, a unique disciple of Hazrat Ghawthul Azam Abdul Qader Jilani (R.)

predicted that the setting sun belonging to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would arise again in Eastern Asia (Bhuiya,18). He made a prophecy 586 years before the birth of Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari in his book entitled '*Fusus al-hikam*' as follows-

“The last child to be born in this species of Man will be in the line of Seth. He will bear his secrets, and after him there shall be none born of this species; he is the Seal of Progency. With him there will be born a sister who shall come out before him, and he shall come out after her such that his head shall be adjacent to her feet. His birth shall be in China, and his language will be that of his land. Sterility will be spread amongst men and women. There will be much marriage but no birth. He will call them to God, but will receive no reply. When God most high takes him and takes the believers of his time, those who remain shall do so as beasts, failing to consider lawful things as lawful and forbidden things as forbidden. They shall behave as commanded by their passional nature, bereft of intellect and rule of law, and thus shall the Hour overtake him (Arabi 40).”

The prophecy of Ibn Arabi found complete fulfillment in the life of Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Maulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari. Syed Delawor Hossain Maizbhandari provides a clear concept by discussing Ibn al Arabi's prophecy of Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari in “*Wilayat Mutlaqa*”, contributing to the ongoing discussions surrounding the topic. Renowned by the titles *Ghawthul Azam* (the Greatest Saviour) and *Khatemul Awliya* (the Seal of Sainthood), his stature in spirituality and saintly endeavors became widely recognized (Hossain 51,71).

While serving as an educator in Kolkata, India, Khatemul Awliya, Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Maulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari received the spiritual succession known as *Khilafat-e-Uluhiyat* (Spiritual Succession) from Hazrat Sheikh Syed Abu

Shahama Muhammad Saleh al-Quadery Lahuri (R.). Hazrat Sheikh Syed Abu Shahama Muhammad Saleh al-Quadery Lahuri (R.) was a direct descendant of Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Abdul Quader Jilani (R.). Upon attaining *Khilafah*, Hazrat Maulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari returned to Maizbhandar village. Through *muraqaba* (omniscience) and *mushahada* (witnessing), he ascended to the highest rank of *Wilayat* and was honored with the title of *Ghawthul Azam*. (Md. Faizullah Bhuiyan 39).

His teachings were centered on the principles of *Usul-e-Saba* (Seven Principles) that form the foundation of the Maizbhandari Tariqa. Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari attracted followers from various walks of life due to his inclusive approach and teachings that emphasized the unity of all religions and the universal nature of spiritual truths.

Even after his passing, Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari's legacy continued through his grandson Syed Delowar Hossain Maizbhandari, now Hazrat Mawlana Shah Sufi Syed Emdadul Hoque Maizbhandari was selected by his father Syed Delowar Hossain Maizbhandari and the Maizbhandari Sufi Tariqa, which remains an influential spiritual institution in Bangladesh and beyond, promoting peace, love, and service to humanity based on the teachings of their revered leader. His shrine in Maizbhandar, Chittagong, continues to be a site of pilgrimage and reverence for his followers.

The concepts of *Usul-e-Saba* in Maizbhandari Tariqa embedded by Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari's biography countering materialism

Ghawthul Azam Hazrat Mawlana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari did not leave behind any written books or explicit instructions. The undeniable proof of his spiritual authority lies in his sacred pronouncements and miraculous deeds (Hossain,120). But His teachings, and principles (*Usul-e-Saba*) were formalized by Syed Delowar Hossain Maizbhandari's writings and publishing

works. Hazrat Mawlana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmad Ullah Maizbhandari was the introducer of the era of *Wilayat-e-Mutlaqa*³ or free Sufism. So he opened the practice of Sufism to all without leaving it in the hands of the pir. He realized that not all the people of the world would accept the Maizbhandari Tariqa and those who would, could not always come to the Maizbhandari Darbar Sharif and engage in concentrated Spiritual Purification due to their busy schedules. Therefore, he prescribed the Maizbhandari Tariqa, a universal method of *Tasawwuf* for the people of the whole world, irrespective of caste, or religion, and caste, which by practicing it, a person of any religion residing in any country becomes *Insane Kamel* or a humanitarian who is benevolent to all. This universal method of *Tasawwuf* is known as *Usul-e-Saba* (*sapta paddati*) or the Sevenfold principles in the world. These principles are an effective answer to the ethical threats posed by polytheism, atheism, religious radicalism and materialism. It has two levels '*Fana-e-Thalatha*' (three annihilations) and '*Mawt-e-Arba*' (four deaths). This research paper might address the societal impact of materialism, such as fostering individualism, consumerism, and a disconnection from spiritual fulfillment. This could lead to an inquiry into whether the teachings of Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari, rooted in *Usul-e-Saba*, provide a viable solution or antidote to counteract these materialistic tendencies.

***Usul-e-Saba* or The Sevenfold Principles**

***Fana-e-Thalatha* or three annihilations**

1. ***Fana Anil Khalq***- It refers to the renunciation of all earthly aid and the seeking of refuge only in Allah (Hoque et al. 24). Not to desire or want anything from the creation. This practice makes a person independent and self-reliant. According to Smart (2023), "Materialism, in philosophy is the view that all facts (including facts about the human mind

³ *Wilayat-e-Mutlaqa* is an era which is replaced after an era of weak and lifeless *shariah* governance. It is more centered round religious morality (Hossain, 60).

and will and the course of human history) are causally dependent upon physical processes, or even reducible to them” (Smart). So it is clear that those who believe in materialism theory or materialist are not self-reliant. According to Jo-Ann Tsang, Thomas P. Carpenter, James A. Roberts, Michael B. Frisch, and Robert D. Carlisle, “Gap theory posits that materialists have unrealistically high expectations for the satisfaction that material goods will bring them”. Before buying an item, materialistic individuals will have higher expectations and anticipation than their non-materialistic counterparts (“An Essay of the Negative Effects of Materialism”). As the joy derived from material possessions is fleeting, individuals find themselves in a perpetual cycle of entering and exiting their moments of contentment. As a result, they may suffer from anxiety and depression. Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari was an extraordinary example of self-reliance. He consistently emphasized that human beings are regarded as the most honored of Allah’s creations, which necessitates complete submission to the Divine will. This submission entails abstaining from sin, adhering to Allah’s commandments, and striving to attain His mercy and pleasure. He advocated for the patient observance of all divine injunctions and precedents, affirming that ultimately Allah resolves all difficulties. Hazrat remained unwavering in his spiritual commitment; no external appeal could deter him. His sole concern was to fulfill the commands and implicit directives of his Lord with sincerity and devotion. (Md. Faizullah Bhuiya 43).

2. ***Fana Anil Hawa-*** annihilation from one’s ego; The term refers to the extinction of all earthly desires (Hoque et al. 25). Refraining from unnecessary talks or actions. It makes life easy and trouble-free (Hossain 126). Materialism and

consumerism share a close association. For individuals embracing a materialistic mindset, shopping becomes a means of managing negative emotions. When faced with a low mood, they tend to seek solace in purchasing items to uplift their spirits. This inclination often results in acquiring unnecessary possessions, contributing significantly to wastefulness. The pursuit of excessive material belongings frequently plunges them into debt, and gradually, material possessions start to dominate their lives. It's essential to recognize that life's purpose extends beyond mere ownership of things; there's more to one's existence than the accumulation of material possessions (Marissa). Due to excessive demands, individuals inadvertently engage in unnecessary embellishments, representing a symbol of uncultivated practices. An illustration of this is their willingness to endure the pain of piercing or tattooing as a result of their fixation on ornamentation. The contemporary endorsement of immodest attire, deleterious indulgence, unethical revelry, and detrimental drinking behaviors is deemed a curse. The irrational fixation on religious rituals and participation in unclean and unhealthy traditions contaminate the essence of human spirituality. Consequently, pride and arrogance insidiously infiltrate both judgment and actions. This leads to the erosion of humane qualities, resulting in a cruel transformation of human nature, adopting an animalistic, barbaric, and uncivilized culture. Hence, adherence to a guiding religious framework becomes imperative (Hossain 183-184). The biography of Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari reveals a notable trait: a distinct disinterest in unnecessary conversations or actions. This disposition fostered harmonious relationships, devoid of quarrels, animosity, or ill will toward anyone. Avoiding excessive gossip and loud laughter, he directed his early years towards acquiring knowledge, consistently earning the

top position in studies and outperforming competitors. As time progressed, he immersed himself in contemplation, ascetic practices, and other religious endeavors, aspiring to attain a higher spiritual rank of *Wilayat* (Md. Faizullah Bhuiya 30-31).

3. ***Fana Anil Erada***- annihilation from own desire: To prefer Allah's will and to diminish own desires into His will, as a result, 'submission' and 'contentment' will be achieved (Hossain 126). Materialism shares a connection with atheism, as individuals subscribing to materialistic beliefs consistently seek to amass additional wealth and possessions. Their conviction lies in the notion that accumulating more financial resources and material belongings will lead to increased happiness and fulfillment in life (Marissa). However material possessions are never able to meet their high expectation or sustain their emotions. So they become highly depressed. Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari was completely dependent on the Merciful Allah. In the initial phase of his married life, he faced financial challenges and struggled to provide for his family. This led to discontent among his brothers, who eventually ceased their support, forcing Hazrat to independently sustain his household. Despite being younger siblings, Hazrat accepted this separation positively, attributing it to the divine will of Allah. This circumstance highlights his unwavering faith, as he firmly believed that whatever unfolded was for the greater good, and true welfare emanated solely from Allah (Md. Faizullah Bhuiya 43).

Mawt-e-Arba'a or Four deaths

1. ***Mawt-e-Abyad or white death***: It is achieved through fasting and frugality. It enlightens the human soul (Hossain 126), Materialism, commonly defined as a strong desire to acquire and possess material goods, appears inherently incompatible with a frugal lifestyle. Consistent with this reasoning,

Lastovicka et al. (1999) and Goldsmith et al. (2014) found significant negative correlations between materialism and frugality. Materialism, in this context, encompasses the pursuit of goods as a method to attain life objectives and influences people's decisions and behavior in various situations, encompassing, but not confined to, consumption settings (Richins and Dawson 307). Consequently, frugality is positively associated with voluntary simplicity and anti-consumption, while bearing a negative correlation with materialism. The famous saying of Hazrat is “My boys always fast.” Here the essence of fasting is to abstain from sinning (Hossain 239).

2. ***Mawt-e-Aswad* or black death:** Attaining this state involves practicing patience in the face of hostility and criticism. When an individual encounters criticism, it provides an opportunity for introspection. If the criticism is valid, the person takes steps to address and correct the issue, seeking forgiveness from Allah. Conversely, if the individual finds no fault within themselves and becomes confident that they are not to blame, they express gratitude to Allah (Hossain 127). As materialism is associated with low self-esteem, materialistic people find it difficult to take criticism. According to Carrie Heinze-Musgrove in ‘Help in self-esteem issues’, “People with low self-esteem see criticism as an attack on their person. Rather than seeing criticism as free consultation on ways they can improve and do better, they often take criticism negatively and interpret it as a failure and not good enough” (Heinze-Musgrove). Ghawhul Azam Maizbhandari faced many criticisms in his life. Many Islamic Scholars and religious workers criticized him. But Hazrat won their criticism by his spiritual influence. Thus, they came to him and attained faith in his spirituality (Bhuiya 65).

3. ***Mawt-e-Ahmar or red death:*** To bear the pain of death to become free from sexual desires (Hoque et al. 26). Attaining this state is accomplished by liberating oneself from the allure of sexual desires. The suppression of immoral and illicit instincts, such as sexual cravings and greed, leads to the demise of these human impulses. This transformative process elevates an individual to the status of a perfected saint, endowed with the spiritual authority known as *Wilayat* (Hossain 127). A proverb asserts that greed gives rise to sin, and sin ultimately leads to death. Greed and materialism are closely intertwined, posing challenges for individuals consumed by an unquenchable thirst for possessions, believing it to be the path to happiness. Conversely, those who prioritize values over material wealth often exhibit a greater commitment to sustainability and environmental awareness. Such individuals are also more inclined to contribute resources, whether in the form of money or time, to charitable causes (Marissa). Upon witnessing the miraculous occurrences associated with Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari, numerous individuals with diverse wishes and requirements approached him, bearing gifts and offerings. Consequently, a plethora of fruits, rice, milk, chicken, fish, and other edibles amassed within his residence. Hazrat, known for his generosity and benevolence, would set aside a small portion of these offerings for himself and graciously share the remainder with his neighbors and others. On certain occasions, he would altruistically distribute everything among the impoverished and distressed individuals (Md. Faizullah Bhuiya 47-48).
4. ***Mawt-e-Akhdar or Green death:*** All else is excluded from the heart, which is reserved solely for the love of God (Hoque et al. 26). The suppression of human instinct of this nature is attained by renouncing a life of luxury. This

sacrifice fosters a profound love for God within the human mind (Hossain 127). Individuals driven by materialism exhibit a heightened susceptibility to branding, often driven by a desire to acquire items that enhance their outward appearance. Such individuals demonstrate a willingness to invest more in a product solely based on its associated label. For them, brands serve as a means to establish identity and social standing, fostering a belief that aligning with specific brands contributes to an elevated, elite-class image (Marissa). According to Syed Delowar Hossain Maizbhandari about Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari in “*Wilayat-e-Mutlaqa*”, “He never liked splendorous celebration. If anyone asked him for permission for marriage by saying the ‘*shadi*’, he would answer, ‘The prophet (PBUH) said this world is a house of sorrow and you came here to give me the news of happiness!’” (Hossain 182).

Conclusion

Embracing materialism proves to be a treacherous path, leading individuals towards apathy, hopelessness, anxiety, and depression, thereby negatively impacting their well-being, relationships, and overall quality of life. Hazrat Shah Sufi Mawlana Syed Ahmad Ullah, recognized as the universal saint Ghawthul Azam of the last era, introduces the Sevenfold principle as an antidote to materialistic tendencies. In the current age of overwhelming desires and resulting hardships, rigorous ascetic rituals have become impractical for the common people. The Sevenfold principles, however, serve to simplify the complexities of life, ensuring a joyful afterlife. Individuals following these principles transform into supportive companions rather than sources of sorrow and hardship for others. Unlike other Islamic Sufi methods of self-purification, these principles are pragmatic, offering a remedy for the world crisis and symbolizing salvation. They stand as the seal of Divine love principles, effectively amalgamating past

and future salvation methods. The study concludes that *Usul-e-Saba* principles serve as a potent antidote to the pervasive materialistic culture, promoting spiritual elevation, societal harmony, and individual well-being. Ghawthul Azam Maizbhandari's teachings stand as a beacon of spiritual enlightenment in the face of materialism's detrimental effects. These Sevenfold spiritual principles of Hazrat are an extraordinary symbol of his *ghawthiyyat*. In the words of Hafez Siraji,

"Your eyelashes grow to become a conquering sword.

It is enough to kill the living hearts that fell on each other."(Hossain 128)

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