

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Qabd and Bast: Contraction and Expansion

Seeing Parallels between Daily Life and the Stations of Tasawwuf

I wanted to take a little diversion again tonight, before getting back to what Hazrat and I were talking about on the circles, because one of the things that you need to realize about this process of study is that it takes place in your life. Did you know that? Did you know that you are not doing your meditation, your *tasawwuf* in a vacuum. Did you know that? Not even a Dyson vacuum. A Dyson vacuum is a good example because it goes around like a tornado and sucks up all that stuff. So, is that a clue as to what I am going to say next?

What I am going to say next is this: life is about contraction and expansion: *qabd* and *bast*. So when I use the example that I use of throwing a stone in the pond, that is one thing, but there is another thing. This concept of *qabd* and *bast* describes your day to day life. Doesn't it? Your life is about contraction and expansion. When you experience these things, the question is where are you centered? Where is your center? From where is it coming and where is it going? So when you understand that your life is very much characterized by contraction and expansion, then you understand that this is a natural phenomena. It is God-given; Allah, gives this to us for a reason.

Now you have heard me say many metaphorical things about this before. Your heart: it contracts and expands and that is how you stay alive. You know when you go to sleep at night, your body, in a sense, contracts; but your dreams expand you to other dimensions and you are no longer constricted. But these things are given by Allah (swt) for a reason. I gave the analogy before of Imam Ghazali. Many times I have given this analogy when he was asked, and he replied that people are afraid to lose what they have, and when they lose it, they are afraid they won't get it back; and when they get it back, they are afraid they will lose it." This is contraction and expansion. It is not easy to define the various

states or stages of the path of Tasawwuf, and there is no one agreed upon explanation because it is very personal. But we know that we are headed towards this moment of *fana*, of self-annihilation or absorption in Allah.

There again is contraction from the world, expansion into Allah. Just like knowledge/*marifa* is expansion, as you gain knowledge, there are various dimensions and stages in which we pass—for example, when you start in the other Orders, what you find in the first transmission of *nasut*, the natural human state where one lives following the rules of Shari'ah, the world. Then there is *malakut*, which is the nature of the angels. To get to that stage, you have to tread the path of *tariqah*, purification/*taskiyah*, and *jabarut*, which is the world of power. To attain to that, you follow the way of *marifa* until one enters into *fana*. These are different stages of development. So to, when we think of *qabd* and *bast*, we have to understand that adversity, difficulty, and loss and grief, discomfort and depression and discouragement are all brought about through a deliberate intention of Allah (Swt) called *qabd*, and that happiness and prosperity and joy and circumstances like that come from *bast*.

What the Sufi has to do, with humility and gratitude, is to resign himself or herself to both of these stages, and to see that this is a dynamic pattern, that it is a rhythm of life that is metaphorically and actually reflected in our heart beat. One has to resign oneself with that humility to try not to be affected by circumstances, but to put your devotion fully and completely, stage by stage, step by step on Allah (Swt). In Qur'an, the justification for these contrasting acts of Allah (Swt), and the willingness of the Sufi to abide by them is to submit oneself to Allah, Who says, "*Allah contracts and expands.*" (2: 245). So whether we get contraction or we get expansion, we have to know that what we desire is the Will of Allah (Swt).

There is gathering, *jamat*, where we turn away from the state of separation in work and we come together in prayer. There is also *jam*, which is gathering turning away from

separation from Allah. There is *tafriq*, which is dispersion. And we gather ourselves towards Allah. So there are many different stages. So I want to talk about that before I get back to the circles, because when you see the circle, you don't see these circles as static. They are dynamic. When you are sitting in a *latifa*, which is an organ of perception, and you know, as we have said many times, that these organs of perceptions really have their foundation in parts of the heart, they are dynamic. These *latifas* are acting, just like relationships are dynamic, just like discussions are dynamic, just like day to day life is dynamic. The point is always, where is your center? Where is your focus? Where are you anchored? So that no matter how far out you draw the line from the center, you can make a circle, a complete circle. As you expand your knowledge and as you realize that these circles are within each other, you see this dynamic movement of the *lat'āif*, of the circles. Each circle, each *latifa* has its position and each circle has its purpose.

So for example, you know that when you are sitting in the second circle, you may have the names *Ya Rahman* or *Ya Raheem*, something like that. *Ya Hayyu-l-Qayyum*. These are not static things. Is compassion static? Is mercy static? Is living static? Ever living? It has an -ing at the end of it, so it is not static, even in English, right? We have to understand that it is natural to be concerned during constiuations of *qabd*/constriction, like if you allow yourself to be mentally upset, even after something tries to calm you and console you and comfort you. If you become upset, you contact me, who is the *shaykh*, who is qualified to give you knowledge and information, assistance and *du'ā*, and other things. If you don't try to resonate with that guidance, then that is a very unfortunate situation, because you have the means to console yourself or to come to calmness or center, to understand the meaning of that constriction and contraction. The blessing and the comfort of the *shaykh* is based on the benefits, which are given their power and capacity to help you by the condition of constriction.

You cannot translate or you cannot interpret *qabd* as negation of any form of perfection, *kamal*. *Qabd* is not a negation of purity or perfection or clarity or knowledge or

understanding. It is just a state of contraction. That is what it is, and it is there for a reason. Let us not talk about us for a minute. Let's talk about Rasūlu-Llāh (sal). On the first experience of his *wahy*, he was overwhelmed by the weight of that revelation/*wahy*, by the magnificence, the *jamal* and *jelal* of it, by the splendor and the glory of Allah (SwT). So much was that the case that he started to shiver and shake. He started to shiver and he started to shake, and in that *khawf*, that *taqwa*, Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) comes home from the Cave of Hira and he wraps himself in a blanket and he goes to sleep. After he rested, Hazrata Khadija (ra) went with Rasūlu-Llāh to Waraqah, who is a great *alim*, knowledgeable of the Torah and the Injīl. After listening to what happened to rasullah Rasūlu-Llāh, at the incidence of the *wahy*, Waraqah gives Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) the *bushra*/ glad tidings of *nubuwat*. He says, "Alas, one day your community will expel you from Mecca. If I am alive, I will aid you wholeheartedly."

After this incident of this experience of *wahy*, the revelation stopped for three years. He didn't get any revelations at all. It caused him a lot of grief. He was very upset and the sadness and the grief got worse to such an extent that Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) climbed the mountain and decided to throw himself from it. He is going to end his misery, because he has gotten this experience of expansion. Not just expansion, but he saw so much. Now it is gone. What was the state of that grief and that sorrow? It was *qabd*. This condition is not a contraction of law, of rules and regulations and guidelines of the Shari'ah. If it was that, than Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) would not have experienced that, because it was the love for that experience that brought about this condition of loss and sorrow and grief in him, and a state of restlessness.

He was very restless. Why? He gives me this and then takes it away. Is it real? What happened? He was afraid and shaking. Jibreel (as) appears to him, and comforts him and consoles him, and he would say to him, "Oh, Muhammed. You are the *nebi* of this *ummah*. Allah (SwT) has raised you as the *nebi*. Don't fear. Don't grieve." Rasūlu-Llāh wouldn't turn to him and say something like, "Easy for you to say. Your wings go from

one end of the universe to another.” He didn’t say that. Even Rasūlu-Llāh, if this was even his state, who in this world is not going to be overtaken by loss and grief and sorrow in their life? Who in this world is not going to experience contraction? If you are conscious of the benefits of *qabd*, then what happens is that the heart begins to experience pleasure, to a certain degree. At times, then, you have awareness of these beneficial effects – briefly, briefly – but in this regard, Jelaludin Rumi (ra) says, “*O Salik, when qabd alights upon you, then do not be overwhelmed by grief, for it is the medium of your reformation.*”

Now you could take reformation as reformation or as re-form-ation. Thus, you see, we have to understand that *qabd* has its benefits and it is not a negative state and those of us who are journeying on this path, we shouldn’t consider that we somehow did something wrong or there is something to blame when this overtakes us. When this *qabd* comes to us, then we should contemplate the *bast*, which is the opposite. In other words, when it comes to us, we should try and be cheerful; we should try and be happy. We should try not to show grief or sorrow. So Maluana Jelaludin Rumi (ra) tells us here that there is a long likelihood that *bast* will follow *qabd*. So we need to prepare ourselves for the *bast* in *qabd*. What do we say? **“Fa inna ma’al usri yusra. With hardship goeth ease. With hardship goeth ease.”**

So after *qabd*, there is *bast*. Sometimes we get knowledge of the benefit of that. In the case of those of us who are in *tariqah*, we need to understand that the guidance that we are getting from Allah (SwT) from Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) as an example, and from the guidance that we are getting from our Shaykh, is to console and comfort us. In other words, you persevere with this. After this extreme contraction, sorrow, grief, loss (we have all experienced), something will expand. Sometimes the purpose of this *qabd* is to eliminate the destructive forces of arrogance or ostentation/*riya* or *kibr*/pride that develops in us during our state of *bast*. Because when everything is fine, that is when those states come about. Sometimes during the state of *qabd*, a new condition of spiritual

awareness, spiritual elevation is given to us, and sometimes even pride comes with that. Even in *qabd*, when you are lifted up and you have a moment of clarity, then even then there can be some *kibr*. That leads us to consider ourselves very pious, very wise, very knowledgeable, very powerful. If, when we are at that nexus, the protection of Allah (swt) is not forthcoming, then we will be destroyed by our own pride and our own vanity.

So Allah (Swt) protects us in various ways from these destructive forces. Sometimes Allah (Swt) makes the state of *qabd* and He eliminates the joys and pleasures of *bast*, which had produced the harmful effects. Maybe Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) was being prepared for so many revelations that any last vestige of human frailties were taken away from him in those years, through his anxiety and his worry and his grief and his concern over all of this. Allah (Swt) sends Jibreel (as) to him, so you see, the model is there.

If the *salik*, instead of thinking of himself and herself as superior and blessed, considers themselves instead to be the lowest of the low, the most contemptible of human beings, this is, in itself, a practice. It is not a practice that is just limited to Sufis. It was practice Yogis did, Buddhists did, many Christian monks did it. They put on hair shirts and considered themselves the lowest of the low. Because they realized that when they were in a state of blissful union or in the sense of the Divine Presence, pride came to them. Some of them decided to stay in a permanent state of *qabd*, but not in Islam. Because in Islam, these are dynamic heartbeats, contractions and expansions, through different *lat'āif*.

In that condition of *qabd*, the seeker sees no one, no one on this earth as worse than they are, no one more contemptible, more arrogant, more unworthy than themselves. We can extrapolate from that, that the real purpose of this *tariqah* and of Tasawwuf is we consider ourselves always to ourselves unworthy, blessed if something happens, and fearful that in the next moment our unworthiness will come back. Now we don't have to consider ourselves the most despicable persons on earth—others did that. Like the

*kalandars* and *masts* and others who would do really do despicable deeds so that some people would keep away from them. It is not the way we do it.

The way we do it is to ourselves. We tell the truth to ourselves. No matter who you think you are, you are not. Whatever you are is by the grace of Allah (Swt). Sitting here, teaching you is only because of the Will of Allah (swt). I do not exclude myself from the listenership either. So traversing this *sayr ul suluk* is necessary to understand what is taught to us by the *awliyā*, what is taught to us by Rasūlu-Llāh (sal), and to understand them, as we contract and expand in our day to day life. They are only going to be understood if they are experienced. Until we experience certain things, the words of the *ahli al-qalb* (the people of the heart), we strive to understand. You cannot really understand until you have experienced it, but trying to understand, and learning and practicing create the framework. If there is a framework, there is a center.

We are sitting in a room. This room happens to be round; there is a center, because it is framed. We call it framing the house, which Abu Bakr does all the time. He builds the boundaries in which life is going to take place in a certain form. Things will unravel and those walls, later on, that he has nothing to do with – good things, bad things, losses, births, deaths. All sorts of things are going to happen in those walls, framed for living in this world, surviving in this environment. But that is nothing compared to the framework of life itself, of *qabd* and *bast*.

Mujaddid al-alf ath-thānī Shaykh Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī (ra) said, “*One cannot be an arif/knower, until one considers themselves more contemptuous than a kafir.*” If you contemplate life and the end of life, you may ask, “What may be my end?” You think, “Perhaps the end of a *kafir* may be better” because you may possess *iman* today, but at death, *kafir* may manifest itself; or just before death, a *kafir* may be blessed with the wealth of *iman*. Every person should always think along the lines of the final result and school, teach, guide our *nafs* with this lesson. When I am not aware of my own end what

right do I possess to consider myself superior or nobler or better or more intelligent than anyone else. What right do I have to regard any human being or living thing as inferior to me, when I don't even have the capacity to understand how I am going to be at the end of my own life?

Now there is no proof that I am the worst of the worst of the worst, or that you are. There is no proof that you are worse than a *kafir*, because the proof is the opposite. If you look at any of you, you know that you are not *kafirs*. I hope. Or you are good actors. But the possibility exists that you could lose your faith. The possibility is that you could be distracted. The possibility is that you could think that something of this world or someone in this world is more important than Allah (Swt). We go through those periods in our lives—when we are in love, when we have babies, and things like that. At the end of the day, you do not know the beginning of your life or the end of your life, the beginning of your spouse's life or the end, the beginning of your child's life or the end. You don't know anything; we don't know anything. But we do know that we need to try and make a life worthwhile.

So the safest thing for us to do is to consider ourselves to be less. We should be careful that our feelings don't degenerate to the point where we lose hope and forget about Allah; because in that condition, you truly are in a state of *kufr*. Don't fear the loss of the Mercy of Allah (Swt), because in those times when we are drowned by our contraction, we should know that the natural rhythm of the universe is to expand. Now it becomes a question of perception. Because, if you understand that the universe is expanding, as science now has proven, we know that that expanding universe is not just filled with black holes, but with dark matter. The question now that the scientists are trying to figure out is whether the dark matter is expanding faster than the universe—not whether the universe is expanding or not. Isn't that interesting? Because if you consider that the dark matter is expanding faster than the universe, it would consume the universe and the universe would shrink. It would be gone. So the *qabd* is within the *bast*. Got it?

During this state of *bast*, there is kind of manifestation of spiritual awakening, spiritual experiences (*hal*, *maqamat*). It is a condition similar to when *kibr*/pride comes, except at that stage, Allah produces this condition of *qabd* so that the *salik* sees himself or herself in this state of *abda-Llāh*, servitude. The *salik* sees themselves as insignificant, but realizes that in this state you are worshipping. ‘*Abd* is submission, and ‘*abd* is a slave, and ‘*abd* is contained. ‘*Ibada* is a form of worship and you are in a state of worshipping. Even though you yourself are regarding yourself in the lowest of nature, it is only so that your worship can be very pure. This is a great state of *rahmat*, because your *qabd* becomes a medium for incredible blessings/*baraka*.

If this state of *qabd* didn't descend upon us, like *nu'as* in Hizb ‘ul Bahr or in Qur'an, if it didn't settle down over us, we would be destroyed by the *bast*. So it is as if there is a force pulling on the expansion, but the expansion is greater. Aside from that, another advantage of this state of *qabd* is that the *hujūb*/veils are lifted. The veils are lifted, which we refer to as a result of the *anwar*/lights, and the *tajaliyat* (the manifestation, the effulgence) of Allah (Swt). So this illumination, you see, you hear, has this retraction.

Remember what we have been talking about: remembering of Allah (Swt). Wherever you turn is Allah. You remember Me, and I will remember you. Everything is reminding you of Allah. While you are going through these natural contractions and expansions, you are practicing something, *inshā'a-Llāh*. In that practice, you are refining your *dhikru-Llāh*. As you are refining your *dhikru-Llāh* through your *latā'if*, your *muraqabah*, and your *tafakkur*, what happens is that you get the *tajalliyat-e-bāri ta'la*. The heart, which is contracting and expanding, has this *bism riqai*. It has this little place on the upper part of your heart, which is like a little finger, a little bulge that is a place where all spiritual illumination enters your heart, because you made *dhikr*, because you are doing these practices. While life is contracting/expanding, contracting/expanding (for you, for everybody), you are doing practices. Because you are doing these practices, and as a

result of your *dhikru-Llāh*, which is the purpose of those practices, obviously – it is not just saying *dhikr*, but remembering Allah: **“Wheresoever you turn, there is the face of Allah”** – everything reminds you of Allah, even your fears, even your doubts. You begin to realize that you, periodically, become lost in a state of *bast*/expansion, of ecstasy, as a result of this *tajalliya*. Your attention turns from Allah (Swt), Who is the purpose and motive for this striving on this path, to the striving itself. In other words, you are not just saying, “Allah, Allah, Allah,” but you become absorbed in that striving. You are not just remembering Allah; you are becoming absorbed in the journey itself.

Some of the veils that stand between you and understanding the state *qabd* and *bast*, some of the veils that keep you from doing the practices are impediments along the way, are *lumani*, veils of darkness. The ones that are lifted and reveal the truth to you, they are veils of *nurani*/light. This veil of darkness is the *waswisa*/whispering of Shaytan, the doubts, and the suspicions, and the distractions/*ghafla*. They enter the heart at the time of *dhikr* sometimes, and they make you turn your attention to your day to day activities. “I can’t concentrate. There are these noises, these faces, there are all these thoughts going through my mind.” This is *waswisa*. These are distractions that come to you. They turn our attention to the day to day, mundane things of life.

The veils of light – the revelations of the *tajalliyat*, and the *anwar* of Allah (Swt), the *‘alam al malakut* (the realm of the angels) – are the things that turn you towards *tariqat*/path. Attention on anything other than Allah Swt is a diversion, and so we want to pay attention to our heart, to the Divine Light and the Divine Presence, and to observe the beauty and peace, the love and spiritual perfection around us. This keeps us always moving toward the *bast* / expansion. Yes, our hearts contract and expand, but you have these practices. These practices are cleansing, *at-tazkiyat*, to the point where those whisperings go away. Those practices make us think of, and become aware of, and become absorbed in the journey itself, *sayr-i-Llah* (the journey toward Allah). When this happens, eventually one enters *fana*.

But *fana* is a state. Though it is a state of ecstasy, it is in a way, a state of contraction. I shouldn't put it in that way. Let me put it in another way. When you are in a state of absorption of Allah, in a perfection state of expansion, contraction come and brings you back to this world, *baqa*. But you never forget and you never lose the benefit of the state of absorption. Now you come back to this world, pleased and well-pleasing. You come back as one who Allah called to Himself, and then sent you back for the benefit of others. The more you do the practice, the more you are absorbed in *dhikr*; the more you allow the things of this world, whether in *qabd* or in *bast*, to remind you of Allah Swt; the more you are in this kind of resonance between your practice and day to day life, then the more you are able when you say, "*lā ilāha*," there is contraction, and "*illa-Llāh*" there is expansion.

You see your heart contracting and expanding. Your whole body contracts and expands; and your whole presence contracts and expands. Beyond that, it's like a bubble. It's all happening within the peace, calmness, and serenity of Allah Swt, wherein there is no contraction or expansion. There is just peace. Just like outside of here, we hear the crickets. It's quiet, and it's nighttime. In here, I'm speaking in a very dynamic way. If you put your attention on the sound outside... (pause to do so), immediately you expand. If I speak in a very agitated or loud or dynamic way, your attention goes in toward me. This bubble of contraction and expansion is always taking place against the backdrop of the outside. That's where you have to put your attention, through the *latā'if*. I pay attention to my heart, and my heart turns and pays attention toward the horizon, *per ser a'faq*. Am I making sense to you?

The average person will just feel depression and grief and sorrow and worry, etc., like Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) felt at the beginning, until he was so totally purified over those three years that he never felt that again total abandonment again. There were times the revelation didn't come. Just like that, when you do the practice, you are no longer in that

state where you fear there is no purpose to the condition of *qabd*. You begin to realize that the contraction of moments, the days, the periods of time are the blessings of the *Rahmat* of Allah. You discover wisdom in that state / *hal*. You discover more about yourself, and you are more conscious of the benefits and advantages of *qabd*. As you do, you become more peaceful and consoled, and that results in pleasure. You can't think of *qabd* as being comfortable or consoling. You can't give those kinds of adjectival concepts to it. We know when we contract, it's more from worry, grief, loss, and sorrow; but the consolation and peace comes from being aware of the advantage of that state and what will come, what will ensue.

Worldly losses and grief and sorrow are all painful, and they disturb us. But the more good acts you perform, the more you apply your Sufism to day to day life, the more you apply your Islam to your day to day life, the more you understand that in the *akhirat* all of that *thawab* is going to accompany you. All those blessings will accompany you. You never like the losses; you never get used to the losses. You never get over fully your grief or sorrow. You never will find a time when everything is just perfect around you, but you can be in the center. The center of the wheel doesn't get any of the vibration. When you are in a state of *bast*, these are states of happiness and peace and comfort. There is an inspiring of the heart, and spiritual light comes. The refined self of the *batin* progresses, and becomes more and more aware internally of the light, illumination of the truth. And yet it has to get translated outwardly.

That brings me to the last point of tonight which is beware of living a life of only comfort, where you can decide to do what you want to do, when you want to do it; have what you want, whenever you [want to] have it; go where you want, whenever you want to go; do what you want whenever you want to do it, and then think you are a blessed human being. "See? I'm free. I can go on a cruise tomorrow and do this or that." Beware of that. It makes you blind to the needs around you. It makes you blind to your responsibilities. You think you are only responsible to yourself, and that's not true. We

are not only responsible just to ourselves. We have a responsibility for others. That's the model that eventually informs us that we have a responsibility to Allah.

It's harder to love your neighbor than it is to love a stranger. In the Injil or the Qur'an, we are told to want for your brother what you want for yourself, or be kind to the people next to you in the village. The teaching in the Injil is to love thy neighbor as you love yourself. It's much harder than to love a stranger. If it says, love humanity, that would be a lot easier; but sometimes, it's not so easy to love your neighbor.

*Question:* You talked about pride as a destructive influence. I wonder if you could speak on the difference between pride and self-confidence?

*Shaykh:* There really isn't much difference. The concept that self-confidence is somehow a wonderful thing is a little over-rated. If what you do that would give you what you would normally consider self-confidence is really good, it would create humility, which is a lot better than self-confidence. You'd be grateful. If what you mean by self-confidence is you are confident that your skills are sufficient to do something, okay. That's fine. But if your self-confidence means you don't listen to someone, or you think everything's going to be okay because you think it will be; maybe it is okay for you. But maybe you don't have any idea of what your "okay" is doing to other people, and how it is affecting someone else. You have this attitude of self-confidence: everything's going to be okay. I can handle that, and I can take care of that. But then you are oblivious to its effect on others. Why? Unless that self-confidence is built on humility and gratitude, it becomes arrogance and ego.

If you have a skill, like you have many skills, you follow a plan, build a house, and are confident you can get it done. On top of it, you are confident in your faith and generosity. A guy calls you up and says, "I thought it was in the contract that you are going to do X, Y, and Z." This has happened to you many times, as I know. You then

say, “Well, I’ll do that.” To your own detriment. You don’t want the customer to be unhappy, because you know that you have a generous heart. What’s another five thousand dollars if you have a happy customer? That’s fine, but where that can lead is to an excuse for not looking at how you estimate something, how you write a contract, or how you communicate. It becomes a way of covering, a way of using your good qualities to cover something you should be making *muhasabat* about. Nobody is going to make *muhasabat* seriously unless they have humility, the willingness to see where their faults are, and the acceptance that there is weakness in all of us. It doesn’t mean you are a bad person. It doesn’t mean you are not generous, kind, intelligent, or that you don’t have wisdom. But if Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) could make *tawbah*, we should not construct our lives to where we don’t make *tawbah*.

A poor person might say, “What did I do wrong to deserve this?” because their poverty is in their face. But a rich person will rarely say, “What did I do wrong to get all this wealth?” They would rather say something like, “Look how this wealth proves how right I am.” Wealth doesn’t prove you are right; it doesn’t mean anything. It can be an indicator of arrogance. Self-confidence, to be very, very specific, [these are some examples]: I am confident that I can do this to the standard that it needs to be done; however, maybe there is a higher standard I don’t even see. The epitome of what I do that is good, I should think is at the absolute bottom of what can possibly be done. If I have confidence to finish this job, do this task, teach this class, or to fix the plumbing, or get a Ph.d [means], ok, I’m confident I can do that. But beyond that, I should not steal from this confidence, and just live my life only with this confidence, and have no humility. If I do, I’m cutting off my path for learning and change. I’m stopping it. I’m saying, “Okay, I’m content where I am. I have all the money I need. I have the house I need. I have the family I have. I have my health. Everything is fine. I don’t need anything else.” It’s not about what you need, until you need it. Or I should say, it’s not what you have; it’s what you really need.

If you are in *tariqah*, you have to continue to make *dhikr* and practices. If you do that, you will see doorways open for more knowledge, more capacity, more service, more worship, more understanding of the Qur'an, more understanding of Rasūlu-Llāh (sal). If you don't do that, you're lazy; there is torpor. You are content, and slowly the *waswisu* will come into your ear. Since your ego is so built up under those circumstances, you will not have made a mistake yourself. You will blame someone else. You will blame the *shaykh*, your wife, your husband, the world, the Martians who landed and took you away last night, but you will never take responsibility yourself. Does that answer your question?

Question: When you were talking about expansion and contraction, I started thinking of everything in the universe that has that quality, in our bodies and breathing, scientifically and mathematically. I'm trying to understand what Allah..

Shaykh: You are trying to figure out why Allah created what He created, and what His purpose was in all this?

Question: Does expansion and contraction exist in the *akhirat*?

Shaykh: No, not really. It's part of creation. Not in the same way the rivers flow, the light comes, and everything is pleasant and beautiful. If you have access to Jannah, you have no ego and there is no Shaytan there. So it is not in the same way. There is no *qabd* and *bast*, because for *qabd* there has to be grief, sorrow and loss, contraction and constriction. It's like a bad case of varicose veins. The veins expand, because the little valves are not allowing the blood to flow, so they become engorged. It's the result of contraction, but the veins expand. [In the *akhirat*] you don't have the contraction, so there's no need for expansion. Everything just expanded and it's there; that's the way it is. *Asalaam aleikum.*

