

HOLD FAST TO THE ROPE OF ALLAH:
A Journey in the Caravan of Love



Allahu Akbar kabira! Wa-l hamdu li'llahi kathira!
Wa subhana'llahi bukratan wa asila.

Allah is Supremely Great, immensely so! And praise be to Allah, abundantly!
And Glory be to Allah, both early and late.

Asalaam Aleikum wa Rahmatullahe wa Barakatuh! Again I am humbled and honored that Allah Swt have given me permission to stand before you at the Eid ul Fitr and to discuss our Ramadan, our time together, the opportunities of this path that Allah Swt continues to place before us, and to think of the future, the challenges and the blessings of the month just passed. [It was] to strive for knowledge in studying the essence of the Qur'an, which I hope we did this month, and for repenting before Allah Swt, which is a great and unending journey. I pray Allah allows us to gather again, not just for the Eid al Adha, but for the Eid al Fitr, all together again, year after year in this community, with our children, and our grandchildren, and new friends, *inshā'a-Llāh*. I pray Allah at the beginning that there be peace in this world.

The search for understanding and meaning in life, especially at this time, utilizes the special *madad* of Allah Swt. The Eid, indeed the previous month of Ramadan, is a great gift and blessing of Allah Swt. Another year in our lives has passed in worship, striving, in service, and in

submission to His Will. I pray that it has been a more conscious and aware year. Whether or not we were or we are today aware of the Divine Presence in each moment of our lives, we are none the less alive and working by Divine Mercy. I would like to speak to you today on a very special subject , a subject that affects every human being, not only the members of this Khanaqah and Community, but all of the students of Tariqa and to the larger Ummah, especially those who are misguided and led astray.

Because we have had the opportunity to fast, to retreat into the inner recesses of our hearts, minds, and bodies, perhaps we have been blessed even for a few moments, to have glimpses of the dimensions of the meaning of life and its challenges, to see clearer our abilities and our disabilities, and to reaffirm our commitment to Allah Swt and to ourselves and to each other. Perhaps, just perhaps, our insight has been sharpened and the view of Islam today, our life and our mission has become clearer. For those of us living in this community it has been and continues to be a year of many personal challenges: the loss of a dear brother Musa, the illnesses of our sisters, and one of our aged mothers, and the ongoing services and sacrifices these demand of us, especially the care-givers. Every human being, I believe, was created with a purpose. Some have found it and pursued it, and others have not, either because of lack of guidance and *subhat* (company of good persons), or the corruptive forces of inequity, inequality, greed, violence, selfishness and ignorance that are present; indeed rampant in the world today, in our country.

Inequities and inequality, racism, hate and prejudice, once thought to be under control or even suppressed, have raised their ugly heads again. Wanton violence against minorities and innocents, destruction of private property, and laws that limit the participation in our democracy in order to guarantee power to a few is the fare of the day. The community of nations that we all belong to as members of the human community created by the Will, Mercy and Compassion of Allah is under great pressure; and that pressure has created breeches throughout the world in the form of wars, oppression, environmental degradation, oppression of women, exploitation of others, greed and increased poverty and ill health. Our Syrian brothers and sisters are only the most recent group of oppressed, along with the Iranian victims of not only a devastating earthquake, but an

insensitive and irresponsible and irresponsive government. The community of nations is being torn asunder by the will of man, but not by the Will of Allah – a will, a trait that Allah Swt bestowed upon us and admonished us to use well, but to never forget by Who's Will we receive our freedom to choose:

And had Allāh willed, He could have made you (all) one nation, but He sends astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. But you shall certainly be called to account for what you used to do. [Qur'an 16:93]

But the month of Ramadan is a salvation for us. *Al-Tirmidhi Hadith 1963 Narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr:*

Allah's Messenger (saws) said, "Fasting and the Qur'an will intercede for man [on the Day of Judgment]. Fasting says, 'O my Lord, I have kept him away from his food and his passions by day, so accept my intercession for him.' The Qur'an says, 'I have kept him away from sleep by night, so accept my intercession for him.' Then their intercession is accepted."

Now, the pattern of daily life's demands, and the possibility of subordinating all of our experiences and our spiritually-oriented schedules to other influences comes back to us. The days will come upon us very quickly, accompanied by forgetfulness and personal desires/needs. Insh'Allah we will remember to remember. Allah says: **"Remember Me and I will Remember you."** During the month of Ramadan, we know that the angels have been among us. They walked here beside us in our procession. They watched over our prayer, and they are listening to our *khutbah*, probably sleeping since it is so long, and will be enjoying the joy of our Eid meal.

Ramadan tested us, many of us physically, this year with our colds and sore throats, hospitalizations, concerns about the future of some of our beloved friends. Whatever other complaints we might have, or that our body has, we, *inshā'a-Llāh* deepened our *iman*. The successful among us kept our focus and our intention, and even when sleep was lost, fasting not

possible, it all reminded us of our *dīn*, our path, and our life/purpose *inshā'a-Llāh*. During this month, new lives were planned and new souls announced their presence to us; loved ones returned home with new skills and greater strength; over a hundred lives of young people from all over the world were changed, and hope rose in the hearts of some who only have known war and loss their whole life; plans were made and implemented to bring health care to thousands in North Africa. Eyes, hearts and minds were open to new ways of looking at Islam in and through universal values among teen age women who will be leaders in the future in places like Palestine, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt...and there is more.

Here we had ample time and opportunity to repent (probably not enough) and were forgiven always, even pardoned. We held our tongues from speaking wrongly as best we could (though it took a few days at the beginning), and we remembered our promises to Allah (swt). The month of fasting has passed, and our challenge now becomes one of finding ways to maintain that focus, and to remain in contact with His Mercy and His Compassion. Our effectiveness as serviceful, contributing members of the human community, of the Muslim community, and of this community depends on how we can resist tendencies to undermine our gains by falling back to old patterns and distractions, reducing our life to forms without conscious content. To me this year, as many of you know, I have been emphasizing the Reality of the need for gratitude/*shukr* and humility, *ubudiyya, kashaa'a, ta'da*.

Successful indeed are the believers, those who humble themselves in their prayers...

(Al-Mu'minūn 23:1-2)

Has not the time arrived for the believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the Truth which has been revealed to them. (Al-Hadid 57:16)

Call on your Lord with humility and in private, for Allah loves not those who transgress beyond bounds. Do not mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing in your hearts, for the Mercy of Allah is always near to those who do good. (Al-Araf 7:55-56)

We must affirm and renew our reliance on Allah Swt throughout our days and throughout our nights. Identify the subtleties of our ego, nafs and our arrogance (*takkabur*).

But to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, He will give their (due) rewards - and more, out of His bounty. But those who are disdainful and arrogant, He will punish with a grievous penalty, nor will they find, besides Allah, any to protect or help them. (4:173)

...moving from repentance to gratitude/*shukr*, from arrogance to humility/*tawadu*, Allah tells us:

And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's goodness to you, how you were enemies and He united your hearts so that you became brothers. And how you were on the brink of an abyss of fire and He rescued you from it. Thus Allah makes clear His revelations to you, in order that you may be rightly guided.

And remember We said: "Enter this town, and eat of the plenty therein as ye wish; but enter the gate with humility, in posture and in words, and We shall forgive you your faults and increase (the portion of) those who do good."

O you who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah with the care which is due to Him, and do not die without submitting to Him utterly.

Allah Swt Reveals in the Holy Qur'an:

To Allah belongs the unseen, the secrets of the heavens and of the earth. And to Him goes back every affair for decision. And worship Him, and put thy trust in Him, and thy Lord is not unmindful of aught that you do.

And know that all mankind were once but a single community, and only later did they begin to hold divergent views. Had it not been for a decree that had already gone forth by thy Sustainer, all their differences would indeed have been settled from the outset. (10:19)

In these few *'āyāt* the commands of Allah Swt (or shall I say the enjoinders and promises), the warning and the hope, the reality of difference, and the humility of realizing one's ability and one's limitations are all discussed. Story:

Recently I was in the hospital visiting someone most of you have known for many years, a woman of great submission, faith, and trust in Allah Swt. As I left, we made Surah al-Fatihah, and I said to her: "I know I probably tired you with all the conversation for the past 30 minutes." She smiled and said that yes she was tired, and of course grateful that I had come....and then I said: " You know why I spoke so much?" "Why?" she asked. I replied: "Because you put out so much light and faith and health of your soul. Even though there is a sick body before me, all I see is the health of your heart and soul." Then she said: "My body is ill, but my heart and my soul are perfectly healthy. It's all about gratitude," she said humbly. *Subhāna-Llāh*. Here is someone, not a perfect being (I am sure she would agree), but someone who has submitted utterly to Allah Swt. In fact we discussed that just before I said the above statement. I said to her, "Your faith and trust are strong, and belief is what turns your illness around each time, even for just a small amount of time. Your example is necessary for others."

Well there is more to this story, which I can tell you another time, but this is what the *'āyat* above refers to—this kind of person, attitude, faith that bears the tests of illness, loss, challenges of life. This is the meaning of "holding fast to the rope...." Over the years I have offered what I have to all of my students—those who listen to me from a distance, or now on YouTube, or other sources.

What that is, is far beyond forms and rules and bereft of threats (yes, there are warnings); but it is also attributed to Allah Swt, the Prophet (sal), the *awliya-Llāh*, and *shuyukh*, whose promise is the promise above and more. These teachings are offered with Love and with Affection and with Trust in the Source of all Love, without much expectation but with abundant Hope.

What does it really mean to hold fast to the rope, cable of Allah? Who is the person that needs to be reminded or warned or encouraged to rely on other than themselves? What does this rope look like...i.e. how is it recognized and accepted as a life-line? Perhaps, we need to remind ourselves of the ties that bind us together, the common good, and the unfortunate evil that surrounds us and interfaces with this life we call our own. We need to contemplate the idea of choice, and the reality and illusion of choice in life. What can we really choose? Our friend in the hospital could not choose a healthy body, but could and has chosen a healthy heart and soul and mind. Contemplate the evanescence of this world, the *'ālam al-khalq* and all that is comprised of the elements of the physical world, as contrasted with the essential and unfaltering, endless constituents of the *'ālam al-amr*—the world of “*Kun faya kun*. Be and it became”—the world of command.

What seems inextricably linked are actually quite independent, and only linked in the apparency of time. What compels us outwardly is distinct from what compels us inwardly. Yet most people are only cognizant of the outer, and assume that it reflects the inner reality, the inner urge to completion, perfection, tranquility. Yet, to reflect upon our inner state, and then turn our attention outward to our actions, words, intentions in the physical world is the revelation that enables us to make *niyyah* for change, and to traverse the *sayr ul suluk*. This capacity to reflect is not a pastime, as life is not a pastime.

We did not create this heaven and earth and all that lies between them in vain. That is the fancy of those who denied the Truth, so woe from the Fire to all who deny the Truth. Shall We then treat alike those that believe and act righteously and those that create mischief on earth, or treat alike the God-fearing and the wicked? (38:27-28)

Allah created the heavens and the earth in Truth that each person may be requited for his deeds. They shall not be wronged. Did you ever consider the case of him who took his desire as his god, and then Allah caused him to go astray despite knowledge, and sealed his hearing and his heart, and cast a veil over his sight? Who, after Allah, can direct him to the Right Way? Will you not take heed?

They say: "There is no life other than our present worldly life: herein we live and we die, and it is only (the passage of) time that destroys us." Yet the fact is that they know nothing about this and are only conjecturing. And when Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, their only contention is: "Bring back to us our fathers if you are truthful."

Tell them, (O Prophet): "It is Allah Who gives you life and then causes you to die,³⁷ and He it is Who will then bring all of you together on the Day of Resurrection, a Day regarding which there can be no doubt. Yet most people do not know. (45:22-26)

What is 'the rope of Allah,' and why the choice to hold fast to it or not?

There is no compulsion in religion. The Right Direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who discards vain superstitions and believes in Allah has grasped a firm handhold which will not give way.

Everything else gives way and fails us except this tie that binds humanity by duty to Allah, by the intrinsic and eternal qualities of Compassion and Love, Justice and Mercy, Tolerance and Concern for the well-being of self and other. In that rope joining us to Allah Swt is the one certain and unflinching hope of human progress, and the one means to Peace, and the one sure way of human brother/sister-hood. It is the only way to success that lies at the core of human purpose, ultimate attitude of trust and surrender and freedom of the soul...the transition in our life/ a life, in that

which previously has been a failure. The means to such *iman*/faith, *tawwakul*/trust, *marifat*/gnosis, *basira*, *firasa*, *tasleem*, which enables the progress of mankind as a whole to peace and happiness, lies in the means of *tariqa*, in the humility of service, and in ever deepening faith – a perspective that is real about what is apparently real and apparent reality.

We delude ourselves by what is pleasurable and evanescent. We delude ourselves that life is about getting, and owning, and possessing; and we neglect to see the continuum beyond the physical world, as well as being blind to the blessings of giving, of self-sacrifice. Just listen to the word ‘self-sacrifice.’ It is not ‘soul sacrifice’ or ‘moral sacrifice’ or ‘ethical sacrifice,’ but the sacrifice or offering of the self upon the altar of an eternal Reality called Allah Swt. Indeed, if life is about turning, returning, remembering (*tawujjuh*, *dhikr*, *muraqabah*), then we must begin somewhere, sometime to embrace the sublimation of our self to a greater Good called Allah Swt, or Truth, or God, or Reality. [We must] then protect the mechanism, the venue for change the body, mind and spirit.

If religion or *dīn* is about conscious returning to a Source of all Beauty, Love, Compassion, Peace from a state of forgetfulness and selfishness, then it is imperative to understand self-sacrifice, a subject I will deal with more at the Eid al-Adha. But let me mention here: self-sacrifice is the proof of true religion. Some people when they speak of self-sacrifice mean the sacrifice of one human being for another, or a painful experience, or having to ‘do without’ something that one feels entitled to have, thereby forgetting that Allah Swt is the final Arbiter, Determiner, Designer of our life. Surrender is a necessity. I have spoken many times on the subject of surrender, the subjects of *qadr* and of choice, but let it suffice to say, here on this day of Eid, that certain attributes—foremost being Compassion and Love for Allah and Allah’s creatures—are the best guarantee of protection and safety on the path.

Our insurance is whole-life, and it for a longer life than this earthly one. The road to success lies in how we live and love in this life. The loving sacrifice of Ishmael and the Mercy that follows is the testimony of the essence of sacrifice, which is surrender, trust and LOVE. There are many

objects of love; and what seems to be ultimate and enduring has its limitations, unless grounded in commonality in faith and practice. There is the love of children, friends, relations, and the desire to serve them; there is love of country, of culture, love of belief and religion. All are admirable in their way, but without the thought of Allah's presence, and a higher purpose, they can become detrimental to one-self, and to humanity as a whole.

Do not turn away a poor man, even if all you can give is half a date. If you love the poor and bring them near you., .God will bring you near Him on the Day of Resurrection."
(al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 1376)

Lest we forget, many around us these days conveniently either forget or live in ignorance of this truth: Allah is the Creator and Sustainer alike of all mankind, no matter what their race, or creed, or color. His Mercy and His Purpose are for all alike. If we serve our friends, or our relations, or our country, or our religious community without that personal adherence to and respect for Allah Swt (which is the duty of every one of us), without the thought of Allah's universal purpose, we exalt our relations, or our country, at the expense of other men's relations, other people's countries, and we are really doing harm instead of good. We are harming our soul.

And make not your own hands contribute to your destruction, but do good, for Allah loves those who do good." (Quran, 2:195)

Balance, harmony, and seeking out throughout life that which is at the core of life and the reflection of the intention of Life by Allah Swt:

Seek the life to come by means of what Allah granted you, but do not neglect your rightful share in this world. Do good to others as Allah has done good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for Allah does not love those who do this.
(Quran, 28:77)

Yet we look around and see varying degrees of self-destruction, forgetting that we are the *khalifa's*, that we are the guarantors of this earth and all that it contains and supports.

Nor kill or destroy yourselves: for verily Allah has been to you Most Merciful! (Quran, 4:29)

Self hatred results from low self esteem in reaction to feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, or guilt. A Muslim must be a dignified person, honored because the Creator bestowed upon him special privileges.

We have honored the children of Adam and carried them by land and sea. We have provided good sustenance for them and favored them specially above many of those We have created. (Quran, 17:70)

And even if you've committed the worst sins, you always have hope of God's mercy:

And never give up hope of Allah's soothing Mercy. Truly, no one despairs of Allah's soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith. (Quran, 12:87)

There is no place for despair because you have confidence in knowing that it is Allah Swt Who is in charge of everything, the All Seeing, All Knowing, and All Fair and Wise.

And for those who fear Allah, He always prepares a way out, and He provides for him from sources he never could imagine. And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is Allah for him. For Allah will surely accomplish His purpose: verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion. (Quran, 65: 2-3)

You're certain there is no impossible situation which has no solution:

So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief; verily, with every difficulty there is relief. (Quran, 94: 5-6)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

No person suffers any anxiety or grief, and says (this supplication) but Allah will take away his sorrow and grief, and give him in their stead joy:

O Allah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your female slave. My forelock is in Your hand. Your command over me is forever executed, and Your decree over me is just. I ask You by every Name belonging to You, which You named Yourself with, or revealed in Your Book, or You taught to any of Your creation, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the Unseen with You, that You make the Qur'an the life of my heart, the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety.

Intimacy is a great gift of Allah Swt, but it is and must be understood as a gift for a purpose. It is *isharat*, pointing us to a direction of what is eternal. When we rise in love, instead of fall in love, our love is a stepping stone to the Infinite Love, the most perfect intimacy that is present and perfect, not periodic and conditioned; that is the subject of life, not the objectification of our desires. Yet Allah Swt has made us in pairs:

And all things We made in pairs, so that you may give thought. (51:49)

What the verse is telling us to reflect on is how everything on Earth comes in pairs, and they rely on each other for completeness and success in order to be better. Even the structures of animals consist of pairs, for example having two feet to be able to walk, and two eyes to see. In contrast, Allah is One and Alone; there is no one associated with Him. Everything He has created relies on something else to make up a pair. If you want to look at it cellular-wise, it still applies. An amoeba cannot survive, or pass on its genetics to keep its species alive if it did not divide and

produce a PAIR of daughter cells. Then these two daughter cells will each produce a pair, and so on. This is what its population depends on for survival. Of everything Allah has created for us in this world – negative and positive energy, attraction and repulsion, day and night – all work as a pair to fulfill a purpose, but Allah does not need that to fulfill His purpose. In this way we are able to reflect on the Oneness of Allah and His power to work alone.

In light of this pairing in the *dunya*, it is analogical to a greater unity where two is resolved into one. Being of this world, made up of elements that are finite and limited in life, we need to understand that even our closest intimacy with a fellow-creature is not perfect intimacy. No human being really comprehends another. We touch each other only externally at certain points, and the attempts to have complete unification in human spheres can only be successful, truly successful if here there is consistent respect, effort, support, spiritual mutuality in faith, and accompaniment in the journey where the souls are near to each other, the self is humbled, and the hearts are united in *ibada*, humility and gratitude. Note who will be shaded on the Yawmi Qiyama:

There will be extreme heat and no shelter on the Day of Judgment, except that of the Throne of Allah. Everybody will be raised in the face of his or her deeds, and Allah will shade seven kinds of people under His Throne.

1. A just ruler.

2. A youth who grew up worshipping Allah.

3. A man whom a woman tries to seduce but he says that he is scared of Allah.

4. A man whose heart is attached to the mosque.

5. Two men (or women) who love each other solely for the love of Allah.

6. A man (or woman) who gives in charity and hides it, such that the left hand does not know what the right hand has done.

7. A man (or woman) who remembered Allah in private so that the eyes shed tears.

Our Allah is so merciful that He will shade us and forgive our sins just for shedding a few tears, this can only happen if we keep the Hereafter in perspective. Only then we will stop chasing the illusions of this world, and keep thinking of ways in which to please Allah.

But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is gardens, beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are fed with fruits there from, they say: "Why, this is what we were fed with before", for they are given things in similitude; and they have therein companions pure (and holy); and they abide therein (forever). (al-Qur'an 2:25)

There is in every one of us an inner self, which was old when we first woke to consciousness, and will be young when all our faculties are old and decayed. The relationships, the accompaniment, the love that affirms the Divine Presence that is the guide, the fellow travelers on the journey toward Allah Swt (*sayr-i-Llah*) are the only reliable relationships. It is only in and with Allah that all our various personalities find fulfillment and really reach communion with each other. There is no such thing as a perfect communion of two human souls. But two human souls can share a commitment and journey toward Allah Swt, that is, in inner practices and affirmative life that places the path, the journey, the principles, and the relationship of Allah first and foremost. Let's not forget that the soul of every man and woman is solitary from the cradle to the grave, unless and until it surrenders to Allah, and then it is never solitary any more. It is at one with Allah's purpose in the universe, in harmony, resonance, reflective of, and reflecting upon the Divine Presence. It is reconciled to the conditions of existence, content with life and death, happy to strive in the way which Allah has appointed, leaving the results to Him. It comes to recognize that there is only Allah Swt.

All power all knowledge all justice all Compassion come from Allah Swt : *Lā haulā wa lā quwwata illā billahi-l-adhim*. That is Islam. It is not, as some suppose, either a state of ecstatic withdrawal or a state of empirical ultra orthodoxy and intolerance; but it is a state of ecstatic energy, of glad

fulfillment of the guidance of God. The laws of Allah in the Qur-án are not negative; they are positive. Do this, and this will transpire; act in this way, speak in this way, serve in this way....

At the time of the coming of Muhammad, religion was a thing apart from daily life. It was bound up with vain ideas of the miraculous. A phenomenon to be regarded as Divine had to transgress the natural order in a glaring way. The men of Mecca said: "What is the matter with this Prophet? He eats food and walks in the streets. Why has not an angel been sent down to support him in his admonitions? Why has not a heavenly treasure been bestowed on him? Why has he not a paradise from which to eat?" They had such legends of the former prophets. The Qur'án informs them of the truth: **"We have not sent any messengers before you but they did assuredly eat food and walk in the streets."** In other words the former prophets, whom they deified, were only men.

Islam brought back religion to the light of every day. It proclaimed the phenomena of every day to be signs of Allah, bearing testimony to His power and majesty more truly than any miracle that ever was related. It placed a goal of true religion in this world. Allah is the king of this world. We are all in His hands, helpless against laws we never made – the laws of nature, which are laws of God. Man is His *khalifah* (viceroys) in this world. But Allah is not an absent king. **"Allah is the protecting friend of those who believe. He leads them out of darkness into light."** His evidences are around us. He is here. **"And do not die without submitting to Him utterly."** Do not die without becoming Muslims in the inward sense, Yusef Ali (ra) said over a hundred years ago, in his *khutbah* on this day.

Ramadan was a month of repentance and submission, breaking old habits, turning our attention away from our self toward Allah Swt and others. *Inshā'a-Llāh* we mostly succeeded. This submission this "Islam" became for most, *inshā'a-Llāh*, a source of physical and spiritual freedom, reflection, direction, piety and also generosity. This submission in Ramadan is not the end of spiritual life, a magic time that has no ongoing demands or expectations and rewards. It is a state

of being, and a very active state of being in obedience to the law of God – a law above the laws which men have made – and that law is the service of humanity as a whole. It covers not only personal conduct, but social relations, commerce and finance, politics and international relations. *“Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you.”* The laws of Allah, as revealed in the Qur-án, are simply that maxim extended to collective as well as individual human conduct, codified and reasoned out in detail in such a way that the ignorant and the intelligent, the nation and the individual alike can know for certain what their duty is in given circumstances.

Look at our world and the customs and behaviors that are contrary to the guidelines of Qur’an and the Prophet (sal). Look at the imbalance monetarily and in opportunity—not just the obvious thing like usury and gambling, both anti-social, as is drunkenness and drugs. Look at violence against minorities, against women, against innocent bystanders. The idea of property as belonging absolutely to the individual to do exactly what he/she likes with it, leaving it in his will to whom he likes, is contrary to real logic. We don’t know who will go or be left after us. All we have is on loan. We have fiduciary responsibly, even toward what appears to be our own property. What we seek is a way to either ennoble our hearts and souls, or is it to have power and influence over others based on money and power. All property is a trust from Allah, and held upon conditions clearly laid down in the sacred law. A certain portion of the income must be given to the poor, a certain portion to the community every year. When a man dies his property must be divided among certain relatives, women as well as men, in fixed proportions.

Are we living in a world filled with Muslims and little Islam, or vice versa? It seems so, with all the excuses, the rationalizations, the finesse to avoid confronting the *naifs*, repenting and forgiving. All the alienation of others for being other, and the degrading of love through fear or deceptive social norms appear acceptable because they are the norm of society today. Where are the repentant Muslims? Aggressive nationalism is a crime in the eyes of Allah. Patriotism, as it is generally understood, is linked with threat and wars – my country right or wrong – and is against humanity, unless it is based on the painstaking principles of equality, equity, freedom, generosity, responsibility and mutual respect. These are qualities of Allah Swt, even if they are written and

put forward in secular terms. Jefferson and Franklin were no strangers to Islam, or to principles espoused in the Qur'an. The wrong actions, words, incendiary attitudes, hostilities of today are an anathema to the soul of this country and the supposed enlightened European mentality. But greed and partisanship, hate and anti-Muslim, and anti-other mentality has main-streamed. It is no long the words of the fringe, but the words of the elected and formerly elected officials (even certain military leaders) that stoke the flames of domestic terror and fear. Make no mistake. Muslims have no business with such lies and prejudice. Yusef Ali wrote almost 100 years ago:

Obedience to the law of Allah as revealed in the Qur-án is, in my belief, the only way to reconcile the claims of rich and poor, of governors and governed, of slave and free. When once the law of Allah is accepted, all those troubles disappear. I believe it is the only way out of the dilemma in which civilization is now placed. It is interesting for a Muslim to note how nearly the most enlightened European thinkers approach to it in their suggested remedies. They little guess that what they deem the latest thing in human thought was first propounded by an unlettered Arab thirteen hundred years ago as part of the Divine law governing all human progress. When you hear the muezzin calling, "Come to success! Come to success!" what do you suppose is meant? Not selfish success. Spiritual success! Yes, for only through the service of humanity can we attain the sense of Allah's protecting friendship in this world, and to attain that is the purpose of our being. For thirteen hundred years that cry has been going forth from every mosque in the world by night and day. "Come to success! Come to success!"

Success must be seen in terms of the progress of humankind as a whole! Success within the Muslim world is hard to measure, especially since the Arab Spring—no longer a story of nationalism, but one of human rights and freedom. Where is the spirit of brother/sisterhood, the multicultural, multi-ethnicism of Islam where black and white and brown and yellow people mix? It is yet to be a living example of the complete equality that is enjoined upon us. The holding fast, all of them together, to the rope of Allah with mutual respect, tolerance, humility, has yet to manifest as Muslims kill Muslims and other People of the Book, as well as being harassed, killed, and threatened across the world even here in the USA. As if Allah Swt needed the policing of the

people, the assistance from religious authorities and wanted the suppression of freedom among His believers. Who reads and reflects upon and lives with love and fervor:

You were enemies but I made you as friends. (3:103)

Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend. (41:34)

I have spent the majority of my life seeking better and better ways to apply Islam/Sufism in ways to better this world, [addressing] the plight of those in need, educating and uplifting the hearts and minds of people of diverse backgrounds—not just Muslims but everyone. The harsh reality is that many, if not most Muslims, are isolated and ghettoized, or at the best living in such monocultural situations that they are oblivious to the rest of the world, and [oblivious to] the people of that world's ideas, perceptions and values. And lest I forget, politicized in the name of brother-sisterhood are the true victims of patronizing manipulative self-appointed caretakers of others hearts and minds. Those who would deny the personal experience of Allah Swt in one's life, or the magnanimity of the Divine's purpose for us are themselves deceivers and the true spreaders of innovation/ *bida*. Those who are fearful of *bida hasana* are forgetful of the Divine Presence and the reality of *ijtihad*. Caring [only] for the Muslim Community, and not the world community as a whole, is isolationist and creates not only fear but disharmony.

What have we learned about ourselves this month? What will we bring from this month, if anything, to change our perspective, our words, our actions and indeed our capacities? So much poverty amidst plenty; so much ignorance where there is the opportunity for real knowledge and understanding; so much anger and resentment where there should be repentance and forgiveness; so much arrogance and bigotry based on a history of oppression and oppressing in return, without any analysis that surely would reveal the futility of force and imposition of ideas and actions on other human beings. Where once the oppressed, conquered and subjugated came to power, they continue to oppress or at least exert biased and intolerant force over others. They

know no law of Allah Swt (despite their words and demand), nor even any law of man where conquered peoples are concerned. Secular and religious authorities have lost their way.

But is that their fault? Is it not the fault of Muslims in the past? It is over 1433 years since the Divine laws regulating conquest and governance for the welfare of mankind were revealed. How is it that the rulers of the world today have never even heard of them? Who speaks for Islam? No one. Who speaks for Sufism? Those who live both are the face and the words and the examples. This too must be part of the Divine Plan. The merciful needs an object of mercy; the compassionate, of compassion; the care-giver, someone to care for. Here in this community such a world exists. To some of you perhaps, you only see age and the past; but to me I see and pray for the future. This is a training ground for so many from so many nations, regardless of their race, religion, culture, nationality. Here is Living Islam.

Ramadan lived in your house (your body) and/or the house of your brother/sister for a month. Now He/She/It has departed with a promise to return. Each of you who live here made an intention, and I admonish you to re-read your *niyyah*, and then repent of your forgetfulness. Celebrate your good intention, and make intention to strive harder, spend more time in understanding what it means to be in *tariqah*, to sit in *muraqabah*, *ibada*, study of Qur'an and service.

The Muslims have become distracted; the Christians are being misled; the Jews are threatened and threatening, and the average person is fearful. The question comes, who is holding fast, all together, to the rope of Allah? 100 years ago people like Yousf Ali talked about a revival of Muslims, as if it had succeeded. He was wrong; that revival must be based on tolerance, justice for all, service and sacrifice for the greater good. There is no Muslim World; there is a world with Muslims in it, but who are these Muslims? The neo-salafi, the reactionaries? Who are the real Christians? The Bachmans, Gingriches, Peter Kings of this world, the politicians who would sacrifice the principles of this country for a temporary position of power and lots of money and fame? This is a time for renewal, for *tajdid*. I have been speaking on this, and you have to

contemplate, "What is the higher road?" This community of believers, this group of pioneers has not yet achieved the security and sustainability that is necessary to be a stronger light for others. Our work has gained accolades; our lives have been full and our bodies tested. We are calling out an invitation for the courageous and the visionary and the selfless to join the caravan.

Come, come, whoever you are.

Wanderer, worshipper, lover of living, it doesn't matter

Ours is not a caravan of despair.

Come even if you have broken your vow a thousand times,

Come, yet again, come, come. (Rumi)

This is the path of Sufic Islam, if we mean what the Prophet and the Qur-án meant by Islam: not our fantasy or construct, but the great principles of our religion, acknowledgement of Allah's Lordship over earth, and acceptance of that law of universal brotherhood and tolerance, which Muhammad (may God bless and keep him) preached to men. It is nothing to be feared, nothing to impose on others. It is what the hearts of people and nations of the world are longing for, and what can be found in their own hearts and minds if they practice tolerance, compassion, love, mercy, forgiveness, justice.

So out of Ramadan, have we created in our self more of that one thing needed in this world and the foundation to go forward? Can I be a good example? Will I strive to do good to everyone with whom I come in contact with; avoid all evil and degrading habits; stand up for good, wherever I perceive it, not only among Muslims but in all the world; oppose evil wherever it appears; call upon everyone who believes in a higher law than that of men, and look for a higher judgment than that of men? [Will I be one] who believes in abstract right and wrong according to the measure of Allah, whether he calls himself a follower of Jesus (on whom be peace), or of Moses (on whom be peace). or of any prophet or of no prophet, to join with us in a great effort after righteousness. Let us hold fast, all of us together, to the rope of Allah, and never separate!

Everyone has been made for some particular work, and the desire for that work has been put in every heart. (Rumi)

Indeed all praise belongs to Allah, and may His peace and blessings be upon His final Messenger Muhammad ibn Abdullah, the best in character and manners, to whom we are commanded to follow and emulate. And may Allah's Mercy and Forgiveness be upon the Prophet's beloved family and noble companions.

My beloved brothers and sisters, Ramadan every year is a great reminder for us. It reminds us the obligations that we have toward our Lord. It is a big bell that rings in the ears of those part-time Muslims, and reminds them about their duties that they have towards their Creator. It also reminds all of us who run so fast after this world that is time to stop and breathe. Give some time to your soul too. Get involved and remain involved with righteous deeds.

What is with you will perish and what is with Allah will always remain.

In Surah Kahf He says:

Wealth and children are an ornament of the life of the world. But the good deeds which endure are better in thy Lord's sight for reward, and better in respect of hope.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, keep the lessons of Ramadan with you throughout the year.

This blessed day is called Eid al-Fitr. 'Eid' means festivity, and 'fitr' means breaking the fast.

Scholars say, *"Expressing happiness and joy on the days of Eid is a religious ritual"*

Aisha (ra) reported "The Prophet (sal) entered her house once while two of her servants were singing with drums (or daff). He lied down on His bed, facing the wall and covered his face with his gown. Abu Bakr (ra) then entered and rebuked the

servants, “The flute of the devil (i.e. music) is playing in the Prophet’s household?” And so the Prophet (sal) uncovered his face and went to Abu Bakr and said, “Leave them, for every people there is a day of joy, and today is our Eid.”

For some Muslims this day is only a day of sweets parties and socializing; but for the true believers, this day is a day which makes them think, “Did we please our Lord through Ramadan? Did we feed our souls with the sacred nourishment?” If the answer is yes, then they celebrate happily the blessings of God that He has bestowed on them. If the answer is no, then they take lessons from it and improve themselves in the next Ramadan. So make the Eid a festivity that you deserve. It was on the Eid that a man once entered the presence of Ali (ra) and found him eating coarse bread.

“Today is the day of the Eid,” the man said, “yet you are here eating coarse brown bread!” Imam Ali (ra) replied, “Today is the day of the Eid for someone whose fast has been accepted, whose effort is deemed worthy, and whose sin has been forgiven. Today is an Eid for us, and tomorrow is an Eid for us. Every day in which we do not disobey Allah is a festival for us.”

If we want to really understand this day, then we have to understand that it is like a time pause when we can move to moments of awareness and acceptance of our daily efforts and intention, to stop, to stop focus on the *dhahir*, and to return to the *batin*. We should remember and regard that this day is comparable to Yawmi Qiyama, the Day of Judgment. So let us look at each other’s faces this day, and invite the angels to walk with us as we leave the *masjid*. Let us have an intention to be a friend with every one, and look at each other and be happy, not guilty and depressed. Let us work together in this community for the common good of humanity—for us, if we work continuously and are worshipful. If some guilt remains in our heart because we have been somewhat disobedient or indolent, well, we should remember the story of Ali. Maybe it is good to eat a little piece of coarse bread today. For the *zahid*, the one who abstains, the one with

direct intuition, the *arif*, the *khalifa* (deputy), each will be in a state of comfort and affluence in the Presence of their Lord.

Fitr, also means natural. It reminds the Muslims that is natural to celebrate after they have been pleasing their Lord through their acts of worship and this resembles the day when Almighty Allah will reward the believers and the doers of good with His Paradises. He says in Surah az-Zumar:

And those who kept their duty to their Lord will be led to Paradise in groups, till, when they reach it, and its gates will be opened (before their arrival for their reception) and its keepers will say: "Salāmun 'Alaikum (peace be upon you)! You have done well, so enter here to abide therein."

My dear brother and sister, this day is a day of unity. Show that unity in your family, and community, and remember that our blessed Prophet Peace be up on him said,

"The hand of God is with the Community."

Through unity and community we can achieve much, because Allah will bestow His Mercy on us, and it will evoke the Mercy He created within us. When Muslims are united, even in small groups/ communities, all people – muslim and non muslim – benefit, even the animals benefit. When we are united, the poor can benefit more. One of the duties upon the wealthy Muslims using their financial help is to make the poor Muslims feel this festivity too. This day is also the day of *musamah*, forgiving others. Forgive those who have offended you, mistreated you, and talked bad about you. Remember that Allah is with those who forgive. When you forgive, you show that bounty of Allah that is within you. On the Day of Judgment, Allah the Almighty will forgive two people when one of them forgives the other.

In the name of Allah, we pray at the beginning and the end of 'Eid. We ask You Allah, to accept our Ramadan prayers and fasting for Your face. Give us from Your blessings and keep

us on the straight path. Use us to carry Your message and Your religion, the religion of Unity, the message of Love, Peace, Mercy, and Justice.

Where does this journey begin and where does it lead? There are a lot of answers in Ramadan. One thing is clear: Allah Swt has created us as a community (*ummah*), and charged us to live as a community, to work, serve, love, and worship together. For those who do not understand it, perhaps they see it as a threat to them. It may seem suspicious to them. But really, if they would only think back a hundred years in this country, they would see how important community was. It is imperative that we begin where we are, and who we are, with sincerity, and do the best we can for the short period of time Allah has placed us here. Plead with Allah that we have the courage in dark and difficult times.

This is a time for reaching out, for showing that Islam is a tolerant and peaceful religion. We must reach out to all who believe.

Believers, Jews, Christians and Sabeans Bwhoever believes in God and the Last Day and does what is right shall be rewarded by their Lord; they have nothing to fear or to regret. (2:62)

So let us all find ways every day to reach outward and to reach inward, especially in these very trying times, *fī sabīli-Llāh* (for the sake of Allah).

No soul know what comfort is laid up for them secretly, as a reward for what they used to do.

With that reminder, we should make *du'ā*.

Rabbi – inni-lima-anzalta-ilayya – min –Khayrin-Faqeer

O my Lord; Truly I am in desperate need of any good that You send me!

Oh Allah; Lift from us the burden of our ignorance and provide insight, courage and submission so that we may serve You in our lives and our work as You Will. Forgive our errors and extend Your Bounty and Trust to us as individuals and as a community.

Wa-r-zqana biha kulli 'ilminw-wa hikmatim mil-ladunk.

*Provide us by those blessings and peace
all knowledge and wisdom from Your Direct Presence.*

Anta waliyyi fi'd-dunya wa-l-akhirah tawaffani Musliman wa-l-hiqani bi-s-salihin.

*You are my 'Friend' in this world and the last;
make me to die as one of the self-surrendered, and join me to the wholly righteous. (12:101)*

Eid Mubarak / Eid u Shoma Mubarak