

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

[Tanzil, Ta'wil, and Tajalli – Part 2](#)
 Talking about What is Actually Happening

I want to start where I left off, but at the same time, I want to review for those who were not able to be here. Let me do the first and then I will do the second since one of the concepts of Naqshbandi Tariqah is *indirāj an-nihāyah fi'l-bidāya* (we begin where others end, or our beginning is in their ending). I tend to start at the end and go back to the beginning at times. I was speaking last night about *tanzil*, *ta'wil* and *tajalli*; and I will continue to talk about that in different perspectives. So it is a bit recursive, but think of it in terms of being a spiral. We are going to come back to each one of those subjects again and again, but perhaps in a different level, *inshā'a-Llāh*. The other thing is, even though we are talking about something that could be thought of by the mind a lot, try to set your mind aside as much as you can, even though it is challenging.

Imagine you are one of the Sahaba, and you are asking about the revelations of the Prophet (sal) from Sidni Ali, Imam Ali (ar). Think about that is who you are for a moment. And he is teaching us or teaching you or teaching us about the inner, the mystical, the esoteric relationship between the Qur'an, and *nubūwa* / prophethood, and *walilyat*, and the universe we are a part of and our own *rūh*, our own journey and he says in his *diwan*:

You think that you are just this insignificant speck, but within you is encapsulated the greatest universe. So you are the manifest Book (referring to Al-Qur'an). You who by the letters of the Book, which make up the substance of your own soul and your own heart, you make manifest what is hidden. So you disclose by virtue of this universe, which you contain within yourself, all that remains concealed in

existence. You disclose it just as the outer cosmos discloses the total reality of Allah (swt).

And later, in one of his *khutbas*, he says: “*Allah is the One Who manifests Himself to His creatures through His creatures or through creation. He is the One Who manifests Himself to His creation through His creation.*” Every one of us, as a creation of Allah (swt), manifests something of the Divine to each other. If the entire cosmos is a mode of *tajalli*, of Allah (swt), we are manifesting that universe to each other. Is this a metaphor, or an analogy, or is it just a simple truth? This Holy Book, the Holy Qur’an, which contains all of the cosmos that is awakened and part of our own *rūh* / soul manifests all the modes by which Allah (swt) manifests Himself (if we can use that masculine concept) to Himself and through His creation. We are faced with the ‘*āyat*, “**We will show them our Signs on the Horizon and in our souls and it will become clear to them that Allah (swt) is the Truth.**”

By approaching it this way, we begin to disclose the *ta’wil*. We begin our whole system, if we are attuned, begins to resonate with the *khutbah*, with the *waz*, with the band of Sidni Ali, as he is responding to you as the Sahaba, as he is responding to each one of us as though we were in the Presence. The words are endless; they are timeless. Don’t you get a feeling of meaningfulness when it is approached this way? Don’t you get a sense of thinking in a new way or experiencing something from another perspective? So it is more than just saying that we are a microcosm of the universe or of creation. We are co-authors of this Creation. Why? Well, we have to get rid of the “we,” then we can understand a little bit better that it is all Allah reflecting Allah, as if you have two mirrors reflecting against each other. What do you find? You have all tried to do it as children, I am sure. You try to count how many mirrors you can see before it curves away, right? Have you ever done that? So you go seven mirrors and that is it. That is as far as you can get. That mystical seven comes up again.

Allah is reflecting Allah through Allah's creation because He creates the mirror, just as when you stand in front of the mirror, there are three things that are happening. You are looking at yourself, the physical self. Then you are looking at yourself in the mirror, and you note that you are looking at your reflection in the mirror. You have this choice. Or you are just looking at the mirror, and you are not even seeing yourself in front of the mirror. In a way that is what is dynamically going on with us in creation and in our reflections upon Allah (swt) and the meaning of life, to which we say in English, "Reflect upon something." It must mean that the origin is also inside of you, the seer, if you are reflecting upon it. So who are you seeing? Yes indeed. That is Hu we are seeing.

When Imam Ali is talking about the world in which we see this smaller universe, there is that analogical reality, if you will, where there is this correspondence between something other than meaning and words. We call it the resonance or the harmonic between our soul, what is stated in the words of Qur'an, and the whole of the cosmos. The whole of the universe is singing its way through the universe, each having its tone, its meaning. Everything is spinning in the universe and having its own frequency, tone—the music of the spheres, the celestial sounds. In this harmonic resonance, there is a creation of a response or a statement and a response between our heart and that reality, the Qur'an, the prophethood / *nubūwa* that suffuses the whole of creation. This is why last night I drew your attention to what he had said, in a sense, that each one of us is being created in the prophethood, but we don't attain to that state of prophethood.

It is extremely necessary for us in our sojourn in this life to engage in this process of *at-taskiyat*, of purification, refinement, coming closer to Allah (swt), through what we often accept as being kind of ritualistic behavior instead of seeking to come closer to Allah (swt). That is to be aware and be conscious of the Divine Presence, striving to do it through symbolic behavior, perfunctory behavior and ritual, but really only succeeding with that if you know the sacredness of that form, if you unlock the secrets within it. The recitations, the beautiful recitations that we have been hearing of Qur'an, I am sure

Ahmed is not satisfied with [his own recitation], right? Is that true? None of us would be satisfied with [our own recitations], *alhamdulillah*. Why can you not be satisfied with something like that? It is not just because you were taught not to be satisfied, or because you were told not to be satisfied. It is because you have not achieved something that you don't know what it would be like to achieve, but you know you have not achieved it. So it is a process.

The whole of this universe is an ongoing process. Indeed we can say, or I say, somewhat heretically, I guess, that Allah is a process. Allah (swt) is a dynamic process, not a person sitting on a throne, with a long thobe or a short thobe, or a certain length of beard, and not male, only. But It is a dynamic reality that is manifest every moment in our life as attentiveness right now, discourse, the beauty of nature, symbols, direction, time, all that we are in the midst of right in this moment, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. The 'what' that I am talking about is less important than the tone or resonance that it creates. "Oh, I heard this wonderful *dars* by (I won't say me) Shaykh so-and-so today." What made it wonderful—the content, the tone of voice, or something that resonated within you as Haqq, as Truth, on a journey of opening up more and more to the Truth?

This is the *ta'wil* of Qur'an. The light by which you see that, originating from the light that Allah (swt) creates Rasūlu-Llāh (swt) and all the *rasūls*, is the light that is in our souls. One of the key principles of the teachings of our Master today, as we sit as if we are the Sahaba in front of Imam Ali, was his love for the 'āyat in Qur'an, which states "*The Qur'an is that means by which you see, you speak and you hear. Parts of it speak through other parts and some parts bear witness to other parts.*" This is the basis of understanding the process of this resonance, where one part bears witness to other parts. I gave the example last night where all the information in a hologram is the total of the hologram, and each element of the hologram having all the total information of the hologram in it. We have re-created that in the Universe. How could we possibly do it

unless it was created by Allah (swt)? I don't say that as a matter of religious dogma. It is just the fact.

You can go outside, you can find in the woods here *bellis perennis*. What is *bellis perennis*? Do you know what *bellis perennis* is? [It is a daisy], a white flower where the leaves are in the same relationship as in the Fibonacci Series (the next number is found by adding up the two numbers before it: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 13, etc.), and the same thing you find in the chamber nautilus. What does it mean? *Bellis perennis* is a good herb, actually, for bruises. A very bitter tea, I wouldn't drink it. It means that Allah has placed this truth everywhere. If you want to remind yourself, not just of the Fibonacci Series, but if you want to go back to the Creator, here is a route. Each of these '*āyat*' of Qur'an, each word – in fact, as we know, each letter, let's say Ba – has the whole of the Qur'an in it, just like the hologram. For you, you unlock it one way; for you, another way. [He] will understand it in another way. You will understand it another way, but your understanding is of the same Haqq, the same Truth. There is a sign / *alam* for everyone.

If we look at the Qur'an, by which we understand how we speak and how we hear, we begin to look at some of the prophetic statements of the *awliya-Llāh*. In the Hadith al-Nawaser, we are told, ***“The prophet of Allah (swt) has established nothing which he loves more than the obligatory duties by means which we come closer to Him.”*** By just doing the obligatory duties, everyone who does them comes closer to Allah (swt), or *has the opportunity* to come closer to Allah (swt)? Are we talking about the al-Qaeda people? Are we talking about the Taliban who are killing each other or killing other Muslims and killing people? Are we talking about the people who blow themselves up, who put their heads to the ground five times a day and do all their obligatory duties and have a nice bump on their head? How could that be? If Allah gave us reason, then we need to use it. How could that be? It can't be, can it? Correct me if I am wrong. Feel free. There must be something else in that statement. If you are obliged from within, it is

different from being coerced from outside, or convinced from outside. We are again back to *tanzil* and *ta'wil*.

If we are only going to have the esoteric understanding, that is one thing. If we have the exoteric understanding but don't have the esoteric understanding of it, well then, I am obliged from within. Why do you pray five times day? I have to. Is someone forcing you to? No. I have to. Why do you need a Shaykh on the path? I have to. Does everyone need a Shaykh on the path? No. You only have to when you have to. You only have to when you know you have to. Not because someone else said it, or because it is written in a book somewhere. Then in *hadith qudsi*, He says, ***“My slave does not cease to draw closer to Me through superogatory devotion and nafle, until I love him; and when I love him, I become or I am the hearing by which he hears, the sight by which he sees, the hand by which he smites, and the foot upon which he walks.”*** Understand the context of this. This is preceded by a declaration of war against the Mu'awiyya. It is specifically a description of the ones who are the friends and who are the *awliya-Llāh* (swt), the ones who have performed the obligatory devotions but go further than that.

So again, we have a symbolic meaning as well as an actual meaning. You actually do the *fard*, the *sunnah* and the *nafl*, fine—but it is symbolic. It means that you extend yourself. You find the time. You find the inclination, and you are motivated from within to extend yourself. That is why this Divine reflection, these words, these commentaries – not *tafsir* commentaries, *ta'wil* – that is why those reflections penetrate into the core of our being in such a way that we don't necessarily see it, or feel it, or hear it penetrating. It just does. It is radiation—*tajalli*—irradiation, illumination. In this case, it is the radiation that causes you to live instead of to die. Irradiation. How many of us are aware of this? Not many. How many of us can hear it and remember it? Not many. But at least if you hear it and it is implanted in you, then as it comes to you, you (we) begin to feel some kind of harmonic resonance.

We can go back to the Greeks, Pythagoras, who said that if you pluck the C string on the piano up at the community center, and if you put your finger over every C string (not the D and not the B, but the C), you will feel it vibrating—harmonic resonance. Just because you cannot feel it anymore, does not mean that it is not happening. Indeed, every word I speak, every word you speak, every string that is plucked is vibrating eternally. Why eternally? Don't think of *zaman*, from now until the end of time; think of it as *waqt*, vertical time. Think of it immediately, like in a quantum moment. Here and there in a moment, simultaneously. So the beginning of time and the end of time are exactly the same. Paradise is not later; it is only perceived as later. How do we know that? Because we are told by Allah (swt) that babies who die go directly to Paradise. So if there is no Paradise until the Yawmi Qiyama, how is it possible? No? Why are they not in the *barzakh* until the end of time? If it is perceived in linear time, *zaman*, then that is what it is.

You are dreaming at night, you are sleeping at night, and you perceive that you are running away from something, or you are driving a car. One of my dreams is that the brakes fail. You are scared. You wake up in a cold sweat. It is as if it happened—as if. You are very happy it did not happen. But while you were in the middle of it, you were not happy at all, unless you are in the state of *adrak*, where you know you were dreaming. It is like *ghunoodgi*. You are drifting in the dream. You don't know it. You think you are asleep, but you are drifting in meditation, *ghunoodgi* in Urdu. But when you know you are dreaming, *adrāk*, well, okay, “I have got to get out of this dream. This dream is driving me crazy.” And we get up, jump out of bed and say, maybe something you shouldn't say, “Darn it!”

Then there is *warūd*. You are dreaming. You know you are dreaming and you can affect the dream. You can change it and stay in that state. You realize that you are flying in a dream, and now you are going to try flying up and down and go this way and go there. Have you ever had that experience in a dream? Keep meditating. You will. How we

are aware of the presence of the Divine is not a question of whether the Divine is present. It is how we are aware of the presence of the Divine. That is why we call it, when we translate it, the Divine Presence, Divine Essence. We exchange those two meanings. That is a whole other *dars* as to why you can exchange presence and essence. Many of us are not aware until we become aware. Allah reveals to the *awliya-Llāh* that not only is He present, but Allah (swt) is our very essence, is our very being. In return for that awareness, we understand. We begin to understand what it means that He sees through our eyes, and hears through our ears, and strikes through our hands, and walks with our feet—not mine as I own it, but me as I try to understand myself.

There are many examples of this like when Allah says, “You did not slay them when you slew them in battle. Allah slew them.” Oh great! I can kill people because it is Allah doing it. We see that people actually believe that. “I didn’t do that. Allah did that.” Allah needs us as a representative? What does that mean? You didn’t throw the dust, Allah threw the dust? That is only an indication of a way to perceive. Not an excuse. It is not even an explanation, really. It is a moment seized to tell the Prophet Mohammed (sal) something extremely important. Don’t get off the track thinking about yourself. Don’t get distracted by yourself. It is the same message that he gave the Prophet Nūh (as) when Nūh said to him. “My son has died. What has happened to my son?” and Allah says, “Don’t ask that question. If you ask that question, the same thing is going to happen to you that happened to everybody else because you will be of the people who are doubting, and questioning, and asking.” Isn’t that what He said? Don’t ask that question. If you believe in Me, what has happened to your son has happened to your son and everything is the way it is supposed to be. He didn’t say, “Alright. Everything is good. I will only kill him for a little while and then bring him back.” None of that kind of exoteric, physical, mental machination has to do with trust.

I won’t get into trust today, but just to say that trust is something that you feel until it is betrayed, and then it becomes a thing. You feel trust for somebody, and then they say

something or do something, and then you lose your trust for them. Many things in life are like that. But for a Sufi, you have to learn how to trust until the trust bears fruit, not trust until something difficult happens, or trust until something better happens, but trust until the trust bears fruit. That is a big step. When we say trust in the Qur'an or trust in Rasūlu-Llāh (sal), it is like the story of Nūh (as)—again, another analogical reality.

Well, I said that I would go back to the beginning in the middle, didn't I. By the way, there is a name for this among the Khwajagan, and it is called scatter. The reason why we use scatter – that is, a non-linear way of speaking or teaching – is so that we don't fall into the pattern of expectation of what is coming next, and so we remain open to the sense of what is happening, as opposed to just the intellectual meaning of it.

There are two aspects of revelation of a fairly profound, I think, Sufic point of view, that are reflected in the *shar'īah* and the *haqiqah*, which we said last night, *tanzil* (revelation) and *ta'wil* (where we recall a kind of exegesis, but an experiential exegesis). The *tanzil* is the actual exactness in the letter of the revelation, which is embodied in the descent. We talked about the descent of values vis a vis Qur'an and Hadith, what then later becomes manifest in this world as the *shar'īah*. The *ta'wil* is a kind of analysis of this revelation but it is not a mental analysis; it is what I have just been describing to you, almost a spontaneous essential resonance. If you use the word just to mean interpretation, it is not correct. Even the concept of *tafsīr* in the common usage of exegesis is not correct. The intention and the capacity of *ta'wil* is to enable a believer, a seeker who is motivated from within to know more – not an orientalist, not an academic, not an analyst – to understand that there is an element of the mystical in the process of life. That element of the mystical is pointed out to us, is guiding us to al-Qur'an.

If you understand this, if you really enter into this seeking, you begin to understand certain things. For example, you almost have to negate your mind, and then negate the negation of your mind, in order to be receptive and then we understand it to be *iman*,

faith. If you understand it in the normal way that people use faith, then it makes perfect sense. We say in English, “blind faith.” Blind faith means no mind, no thinking. The process of negating the mind, and not being involved in the idea of negating the mind (therefore the negation of the negation of the mind) is called *iman*. Some people it just comes up inside of them and they don’t have to hear anything or do anything, and they just resonate with the love of Allah’s Creation. Now this is not what normally a person calls faith, but it is a state of such good *niyyat*, and such good focus and intention that you ... and I am using that word again; why am I using penetration again? Because it is an inner meaning of *dhikr*. You penetrate the exactness of that revelation and you go back to the intention of the text itself.

Those who have frequently visited my office know that my office is downstairs from the Community Center. When you went upstairs to the Community Center, you saw a piano. It is my grandmother’s piano, actually, that my mother practiced on. She was a concert pianist. The children here learn on that piano. So that piano has been around for, well, my mother would have been 107, so that piano has been around for about 120 years, 110 years. Sometimes I go upstairs while they are practicing and I stick my head in and I say to them, “You have to give it color. You have to give it color. Don’t just play, give it color. Do you want to know how to do that?” And the kids look at me and they say, “How do you do that?” I say, “Sing it while you play it.” Sound familiar?

So you have a text and you are singing it, or reciting it, or reading it. Then I give them the second part of the lesson. Sometime later, after they have played for a while, they are working on a difficult piece and they want to get it right. Their teacher might be saying, “That is piano pianissimo. That is forte fortissimo.” Or, “The accent is here, not there.” What do I say to them? “If you try to play exactly as he wrote it, you will arrive at the moment when it was written.” Did I say that to you, Hameed? (Yes). In some moment, while you are playing that piece, you will grasp the moment when Beethoven or Chopin or Haydn or whoever it is, wrote it. You will be there the moment it came out of it. So

what would you call that Islamically? *Ta'wil*. Got it? Because it was written in a certain way for a reason.

“Ah! Shaykh Rashid said that Beethoven was a Sufi.” I didn’t say that. He was a Muslim, because everyone is born a Muslim. Please don’t drive me crazy. What I am saying that Allah (swt) is telling us the same message in piano lessons, in art, in nature, everywhere if you have the eyes to see. What I am doing right now is partially reflecting on that Truth, but it is also happening right now. So what I am saying to you, if it has meaning to you, and you are feeling pleasantness or joy with it or some understanding of it, then what I am talking about is happening. Actually, that is my philosophy of life. It is not easy to do. We do our work all around the world with Legacy International. I want what we tell to be what we do. I want to see the result of what we tell the young people, or the young professionals, or the women in Kyrgystan, I want it to manifest what we tell them.

So when I tell them about how the Qur’an interfaces with your daily work when you are writing code for a game for young girls in Yemen, when they are writing it, I want them to remember, if not the *‘āyat* of Qur’an, that it is in Qur’an. I am not giving a religious lesson. I tell the children that are Christian about the Injīl. Why? Am I trying to give a religious lesson because I am a Sufi *shaykh*? No. It is this analogy. It is always there. So if you are drawing from the Haqq / Truth, then what you do is going to be true. If anything else motivates you, it is going to be tainted. We are all tainted. That is why we have to take a shower... every Saturday. Everything we do is tainted to some degree. Everything oxidizes. Because the world that Allah made us to live is a world of oxygen and as it gives us life, it also oxidizes things, doesn’t it? What is that a story about? That is an exegetical, hermeneutical (if you want the big words), that is *ta’wil* on life itself.

We are all living and we are all dying. Dying—moving on, transitioning, changing, transforming. So is the Qur’an—moving on, moving us on. It is the same trip. Before, I

tell those kids, “Before you improvise, before you transpose to another key, whether you are playing the piano or singing, for example, because you are going to have to transpose when you are singing, often, some kind of interpretation of the piece, you should play it exactly the way it is.” If you can’t play it exactly like it is, what do I tell them, ladies? “Listen to it.” It is a very interesting when you think of *ta’wil* in the sense of interpretation. It is almost the exact opposite of what we normally think of as *tafsir* or exegesis. It is not someone’s interpretation of something, which is useful. If you want a useful *tafsir* of Qur’an, read Tabatabaei, one of the best ones you can find. Read Mohammed Asad – very good. You have to understand, however, that it is not somebody’s interpretation. You will never get to the essence that way.

It is like I used to tell the yogis, when I was a yogi. You do *hatha yoga*. You stand on your head, you breathe and do all this stuff. It’s great. I used to do *hatha yoga*. Arifa knows a system of *hatha yoga* that I taught many years ago. It’s great. How did the original yogis arrive at those positions, do you know? Two ways. One is, they got a tremendous influx of what they call *shakti*, energy in their spine. It made their bodies move in certain ways. Go to any Jehovah witness church, or something like that, and you can see people get the Shakti and contort their bodies. Come to *dhikr* tonight, I’ll demonstrate it for you. There is another way they did it. They watched the animals. They watched how a cat got up and stretched. They watched nature, how the trees bent, under what pressures, how the wind was blowing, and under what intensity it would bend, and at what speed. Each one of those had a sound to it. They recited those *bija* mantras, or seed sounds. Every one of those sounds was what they call *kriya yoga*. It’s what I practiced. So there I was, a yogi.

Then I go to my Shaykh, and I find Tasawwuf, and I’m conflicted. Some of you have heard this story. What do I do? Leave my guru? My guru has passed. Something is calling me. Well, it’s a long story, but Allah Swt put a book in my hand under very strange circumstances. It had my name in it, and the explanation of the *kriya yoga* in

Arabic. The explanation was numerical (12) – twelve syllables, *lā ‘ilaha illa-Llāh Muhammadan Rasūlu-Llāh* (demonstrates reciting with breath). *Kriya, sahaja yoga* is (demonstrates very similar breathing). So Allah put it together. I felt fine. The answer came, *indirāj an-nihāyah fi’l-bidāya*. That’s where I ended with the yoga, and that’s where I began with Tasawwuf. The highest form of yoga, *sahaja yoga*, not standing on your head, but meditation with breathing and sound is where I ended, and that’s where I began. Our beginning is in their ending. I met my Shaykh, Hazrat Azad Rasool (ar), and he said to me that day, “You’re a yogi. You will begin from there.” He didn’t say, “*Indirāj an-nihāyah fi’l-bidāya*,” he just did it. That’s what I’m trying to tell you.

We are talking about all this, but something in this talking is doing something. “**Iqra bismi rabbika** – isn’t that what we are doing – **reading in the name of the Lord.**” It’s very interesting that you are not going to get to the essence in the outer way. It’s not just what is coming through *tanzil*, the revelation for the expression or for the intention of an evocation of *shar’īah*, the path, in the world – a broad boulevard, a well-trodden path. The path from where to where? From this world to the throne. What is the throne, the ‘*arsh*? Does ‘*arsh* mean throne only? What does it mean? It is the place where the water comes out, the wellspring. The person who controls the water controls everything below the water. The person who controls the water has to distribute the water equally to all the farmers, and all the herdsmen, and everybody else with equity and equality; otherwise, he’s a tyrant. It’s not just for the *shar’īah*, which is the contextual reality in which all this takes place. What is this (indicates the book of the Qur’an)? *Shar’īah*. And what is this (indicates what is in the pages of the Qur’an)? *Tariqah, marifah, and haqiqah*. Can you buy this (indicates what is in the pages of the Qur’an)? No. You can only buy the cover.

It’s the tradition in Islam. You cannot buy the Qur’an, only the cover. The Qur’an is not for sale; it’s a gift. But you have to have it in some contextual form to use it. The Prophet Mohammed (sal) started the collection of it himself, and by the time we get to Sidna Uthman, we have the Qur’an. Pieces here and there; but it has to be put in context. This

is the world (just the cover of the Book), and this is the essence (what is in the pages).

When you start treating this (what is in the pages) like it is the world only, you have a problem. Then anybody can “interpret” it the way they want to interpret it. You have to qualify to interpret it. That’s why it makes more sense that there would be 5,000 Muslims in the world, instead of 1.3 billion.

Shariah has its own interpretation by the *alim*, the *fatwas*, the *ijtihad*. The Prophet’s permission to Mu’az when he went to Yemen to interpret the Shariah—he was concerned that he would not be able to check with Rasūlu-Llāh whether the advice he was giving was right or not. Rasūlu-Llāh (sal) said, “When you come back, if anything’s wrong, we will adjust it.” In modern talk, that’s what he said. Don’t worry about it. If you have the spirit of it, if you keep the light /*nur* with you, everything will be all right. And if it’s not, it is adjustable. Very pragmatic—not what you would think the Prophet would do. You’d think he would have to get it exactly right. But think of all the *ruhas* / exceptions there are allowed in Islam. How about Ramadan? How about Hajj? How about *wudu*? There are all these things of *shar’iah*. Why? Because it’s very pragmatic. Why? It’s very dynamic. Why? That’s the way Allah Swt created it? Why? For the specific reason that we can be sitting here and asking why: so we can keep ourselves resonant.

At the same time, there is this *ta’wil*. You have to go back to the original meaning, which is in a way an *isharat*, a hint, a pointer. It’s a word you hear me use a lot—an interpretive function; the capacity to interpret something. It is not the interpretation; it is the capacity to interpret it. The goal of *ta’wil* is to empower and enable the believer to penetrate beyond what is the literal meaning of the text, and in so doing, to create a kind of *yaqin* / certainty. “Are you sure?” “Yes.” “Are you sure?” “Yes, but if you ask me once again, I’m going to think I’m not sure.” It is a certainty regarding the ultimate relevance, the ultimate meaning that is given in a specific passage in the Qur’an. What is the ultimate meaning of that passage? What is its relevance to me? It is not an interpretive meaning, not necessarily what you think in the moment when you read it.

What's the broad avenue, the well-trodden road you can travel on? That's one thing, but what instead is that HOV lane? To travel in the HOV lane, you get the choice of HOV 2 and HOV 3. Is it going somewhere else? No, it is exactly the same direction everybody who is not in the HOV lane is going, but you have to qualify for the HOV lane. What is the qualification? You have to have somebody with you.

“Okay, now I know what he's getting at.” You're getting ahead of me! Who said, “Oh, he's going to talk about the *shaykh* next?” Yes, but really we are talking about the Nur-i-Mohammed. You have to have *maiyyat*, and it's better if you have *maiyyat al hubb*, accompaniment with love. You don't want to drive in the HOV lane with someone you are fighting and arguing with, and someone you don't like, just because you're carpooling in Washington, DC. “Hey, look at all that traffic! Hey, there are two of us. We can get in the HOV lane! Great, let's go!” We have to have the accompaniment. We can't do this ourselves; we just can't. Why? Ask Allah. He'll tell you in the Qur'an. My hand is over his hand.

What is the ultimate meaning? Not the interpretive meaning, not necessarily what you think it is. Better yet, maybe the interpretation assumes a kind of exegetical basis, but it leads step by step, level by level, to meanings. Some people call it a higher truth, a superior, more refined truth: *haqiqah*. So you have *shar'īah*, now you have this HOV lane called *tariqah*. We have to have accompaniment, the door that opens through the *marifah*, but you can't stop at just what you think is knowledge. As tempting as it is, as engaging as it is, as exciting as it is to have a new idea, or read something that is interesting, you have to get to another level. Some people reverse those. Some people say, *haqiqah* and *marifah*. But I was not taught that way, so that's why you will hear me say it the way I do.

What happens? You transcend doubt. You move to an area of receptivity to the truth. You begin to see that truth, like you will be able to interface with that truth. The validity

of what is obvious in the *dhahir*, in this case meaning not just the outward but the literal, is not in any way lost, eclipsed, or denied. What's relevant in the *dhahir* still remains in the *dhahir* (what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!). It's not eclipsed. What you see in the Qur'an and the Hadith, and what is obvious is not in any way eclipsed by an inner understanding of it. It's deepened. It's broadened. Now there are people who think they understand who don't understand. We are not going to deal with those people today. Allah deals with those people. He says in Qur'an, **"You have eyes but you don't see. You have ears but you don't hear. O man, you do not understand."** Misguided—those who can't be guided.

The average person doesn't understand, because they haven't had the opportunity to understand. *"He who knows not, and knows not he knows not, is asleep; wake him."* *"He who knows not, and knows he knows not, is a child; teach him."* It's along recitation. Would you like to have it? I'll bring it to you. All that I've just talked about, and all the time I just spent, is only one aspect of the overall meaning. We have to understand the *batini*, not just the *dhahir*. You have to have the inner aspect. For example, it may be defined in an instructive way of *salat*. There is a *batini* aspect of *salat*, of *namaz*—very, very deep. I'll try to get to that this weekend. There is a very profound inner aspect of *salat*, not just symbolic. It's not that this position means that, and that position means this, and when you are in *ruku* it spells Allah. It's not that. We have all read that in books.

Tasawwuf falls into the tradition of learning how to extract, like the bee extracts the essence of the flower, and creates something totally different from within themselves. While doing that, something else happens with the bee. The bee sups the nectar, takes it inside, regurgitates it, creates something else. What else happens? He has pollen on his legs, fertilizes other things, while that process is going on inside. He has a *dhahir* role, and a *batini* role. We know it in Sufic terms analogically as *fana* and *baqa*. He loses himself in the nectar, and something else comes about. He builds a six-sided comb.

Whatever happens internally in the *batin*, that mystical process, comes out again in the physical world and has a whole other role to fill: a healing role, a nutritional role. In the meantime, in the *dhahir*, the fruit trees are being pollinated, and the flowers are being pollinated, and other life forms are being fed, and it goes on and on and on. And then, on top of it all, he creates something better than himself: a *khalifa* called the queen. Why do I say “better than himself”? Because every *shaykh* hopes the *khalifa* will be better than him. He creates a very special thing called royal jelly. He creates a *shah* / royalty. Isn't that what happens? Just the presence of that gathers everyone. If there's a problem with it, they swarm and move somewhere else.

That's why the bee and the bee hive is a symbol of the Naqshbandi order. It is also a crown that the pope wears. Did you know that? Every pope is crowned with the beehive crown. One crown stands for the outer world, that he is the leader of the outer church and the beehive crown symbolizes the inner teaching of the church. Where do you think they got that from? St. Francis, who was a Sufi, obviously.

So that's where we are. We have *shar'iah*, we have *tariqah*, which is the door that opens to the *marifah*. You have *marifah*, which is the knowledge the seeker becomes aware of. Like the dream, you become aware of in the *adrak*. Then there's the *haqiqah*. The seeker has transcended the doubt and moved into the area of receptivity to the truth, and begins to see the truth and the validity of what is obvious in the *dhahir*. It is not literal, but the validity of it is not in any way lost or eclipsed. Now there are people who think they understand, but who don't understand. Where are we with that? We are in the *warud*. You now can use what you know in every moment of your existence, in every life, which of course 99.9 % of us don't do. That's why we have the Prophet (sal). But the fact that we know that we are not doing it is *dhikr*. It causes us to remember, because we are now at a stage where I know that I don't know fully yet.

We can all sit here and say, “Yeah, we all know we don’t know.” I can go to my neighbor and ask, “Do you know everything?” And the neighbor will say, “No, of course I don’t!” But when you get to the point where you are purified through your *muraqabah*, your meditation, your recitation, your reading, your study, your *maiyyat al hubb*, your companionship with the guide, your presence in *suhbat*, then you get to the point where the knowing you don’t know is such a subtle knowing that immediately it acts as *dhikr*. It’s not *lā ilāha illa-Llāh* anymore. You are not saying, “Allah, Allah.” You are not saying “*as-salaam*” or whatever. It is just everything inside of you is *dhikr*. Outside of you, people are still calling you a fool. They are still blaming you. They are still criticizing you. They are still whatever they are doing to you, and one day you get past the frustration of it all, and you understand and you forgive.

So this *ta’wil*, if we understand how to apply it, this Tasawwuf falls into the tradition of learning how to do that, how to make *ta’wil*, how to receive the *ta’wil* of the Qur’an and the Hadith, and the inner dimension of ‘*adl* / justice. It’s a kind of *mu’assis*, a kind of organization process that takes place within us. As I said the other day, *mu’assis* is usually used just to mean an organization in Arabic, but to the Sufi, it’s the self-organizing principle. We call it self-organizing management in business, organizational management. That’s what’s happening to you when you sit. That’s why it’s important to be in *tariqah*. That’s why it’s important to be on this journey. We should all strive for that, but unfortunately in the world we live in, people are very content with form and appearances, and they are very arrogant.

Question: Aren’t the teachings of the yogi, Hinduism, and Sufism quite similar in the realm of meditation?

Shaykh: Everything is similar to everything, that’s the whole point of this retreat—so, of course. One of the points I’m trying to make is, if you spend your life looking for similarities, it’s really exciting, but you don’t get very far, because everything IS similar.

Everything is analogical. Sure, it's fun. And it helps you in transitions. It helped me in a transition from being a yogi to Sufism. But you have to let it go, because if you don't let it go, you just get so involved in the intellecting process about that with all the books that are written, and all the things that are about how this is similar to that. I can take one of the Puranas down from the shelf, and sit there with the book open, and read it to you in Sufic terms. It's a no-brainer if you understand Tasawwuf. So what? Can I extract something from a Purana that maybe I haven't thought of before? Sure. I can also get that from a tree. Am I saying that's not important? No. I can open up Moses Maimonides' book, and find something from Judaic teaching, or something from Jewish mysticism, Zohar or something, and make a Sufic analogy to it. Maybe it will make me think about something else I never thought of before, sure, but so will reading Qur'an, so will reading Ibn Atala Iskandari (ra), or something from Imam al Ghazali (ra) or Ibn Araby (ra), or my own teachings from the Khwaja Khwajagan.

The answer is sure, of course. There is a lot that is the same. Why you see that it is the same is because it is put into practices, and they talk about breath, and seed thoughts, and they speak in the same terminology. It's obvious. You can also find it in other teachings, too. But at the end of the day, what does it get you? Your head is full. You have read some interesting books. Now you know what any Sufi who really stays on the path knows, who has little education, who is making brass tables in Cairo and making noise all day but is a Sufi, like my friend who works all day in the marketplace and has boys weaving "lā ilāha illa-Llāh." He has no formal education other than high school maybe. You'll find out what he found out, without the books. Are books bad? No. Go to my library. See how many books I have.

Yes, it's exciting to find those linkages. It was important for me to find that linkage in a book that allowed me to accept that I moved from my guru to my *shaykh*. But you have to know when to let go of it also. In some cultures, you shake hands and hold the hand a long time. In other cultures, you shake hands and let go right away. In other cultures,

you shake hands, and you walk hand in hand down the street. You have to know when to let go. What culture are you in?

Question: Thank you very much for this beautiful discourse. When you talked about *maiyyat al hubb*, it was right after being in the HOV lane, and then you talked about the inner aspect, and the whole story of the bee, and the *dhahir* and the *batin* and the work all circled around...

Shaykh: Ah, stop. You know, because you are a student of mine, the transmission of *maiyyat* and *maiyyat al hubb*, is in the second circle /*dayra*. I had said when I was talking about these things, I wanted to reflect what it really is. So obviously, you got that, because you said it circled around. Are you with me? (Yes). Each of those *niyyats*, after the first 10 transmissions, you get into the circles. When the circles are seen like this in front of you, you see only one point. As you raise yourself up, you see more of the circle. As you stand above it, you see the whole circle. In the case of what we are talking about, it's really a spiral. Again, we are back to our *bellis perennis*. You see this much of the leaves, but it extends for eternity, doesn't it? So you want me to talk more about *maiyyat al hubbi*? I'll think about it. What can I say, other than you are the luckiest person in the world because you have all these friends, and are accompanied by other friends.
Asalaam aleikum.