

December 3, 2008

Wednesday

Title: [Remembrance: A Command of Allah](#)

DVD title: The Tariqah and Silsila are Proofs
of The Evolutionary Aspect of Sunnah

Dinner blessing: O Allah, in times of challenges and difficulties like we are in, we ask You to give us a deepening of faith and a strengthening of our will, a clarity of our minds and openness of our hearts; and creativity in our work so we can hope to usher in a time of more peace and understanding. O Allah, it's important to us that there is justice in this world, and that justice should be given equally to all people; that there is equity in this world, and that the provisions You provide for us, the financial ones, are such that they bring health and well-being to humanity. We ask You to give us clarity and a means to help in that effort; that all those who are ill find means for their health, and those who are poor and have no food find sustenance, and those who are in need of Your mercy find mercy, and those who are in need of Your justice find Your justice. And we are grateful for the people who traveled here to be with us. *Amin.*

Sohbet: Just the mere existence of Tariqah, and the line of the *silsila*, in its own way proves that Sunnah is evolutionary and dynamic. It's not correct to think of the Sunnah as being monolithic and unchangeable. The reason for that is that Sufic practices from the time of their origin have always been based in the Sunnah of Prophet Mohammed (sal) as well as the Shar'iah. The details and explanations of the *mahashaykh* or the *shuyukh* subsequently become part of the Sunnah for the simple reason that the means and the methodologies that are used in what is almost exclusively *tafsir* of Qur'an, *tafsir* of Shar'iah, and *tafsir* of Hadith, as it relates to the time, place, and circumstances one is

living in, are considered as extensions of the intention and the transmission, the example and the teachings of Prophet Mohammed (sal).

This relationship of the Sufi to Islam as a religion in terms of form is always only part of the reality. The other part is the relationship of the Sufi with the Prophet Mohammed (sal). In that reality, it is an affirmation of the complete *shahadah*. You may find some people in an unnamed country somewhere to the east of here who would like to, if they could, somehow erase the Prophet (sal) out of the equation. They do that by erasing his former houses or his wife's houses and so forth. Just to take that simple reason I have given you, and understand that in the system, the reality of Islam, we have to see the line of the affirmation of the *shahadah* always in two perspectives. One is, "*La illaha il Allah,*" and the other is "*Mohammedan Rasulallah.*"

To understand the "*ashadu anna Mohammedan Rasulallah,*" the *ashadu*, the witnessing or testifying to that, lies in understanding that it is dynamic; it is alive; it is evolutionary. That's reasonable because you are talking about the Seerah of Prophet Mohammed, the Ahadith. You are talking about a real person having real responses to real things in real life, on the basis of "*ashadu enla illaha il Allah.*" That's not frozen in time 1430 years ago. It's dynamic, it's alive; it's evolutionary. How is that so? How is it kept alive? It is kept alive because there is a constant exegesis of it, *tafsir* of it. There is a constant interpretation, a constant example of it before us in the *shuyukh*. That's why we can say with reasonable authority, accepted by most people and rejected by some who shall remain anonymous, that it becomes part of the Sunnah.

We also have to understand that the *ta'alluq bi Allah* (the relationship with Allah Swt), the *nisbat fi Allah* (the connection or relatedness with Allah) and the *tawajjuh Allah* (the paying attention toward Allah) are part of the *'alam al amr*, the world of command. They

are a result of Allah's command to us. From a systems point of view, we can say that these three aspects evoke from us certain attentiveness and relationship and connection are achieved through different dimensions. The lowest dimension is called the dimension of *mandub* or appreciable. The highest dimension is that of the *fard*, the obligatory. There are so many 'āyāt in Qur'an and Ahadith that tell us what has been commanded by Allah. When we follow those commands, we see that they are totally in line with other things in nature, like things that are measurable in time, things that are cyclical, like if we talk about prayer, things that are measurable in time but not necessarily restricted by time.

You can pray a prayer, but no one knows if you will recite a long or short 'āyat. There is a time frame, but it is not restricted. It is measurable in time, and repeatable, and standardized. So absolutely everything we choose are commanded by Allah, like *wudu*, has its analogical realities in other things, like cleanliness, protecting yourself against disease, being refreshed, and on even a deeper level, changing the electromagnetic field in your body. [*Wudu* has] many, many aspects to it. Allah commands us to worship Him. That has an analog to paying attention in life; having good *adab*, understanding that there are people worthy of respect. There are many analogical aspects. The essence of the Shar'īah is that we have a concern, or we have a connection or a relationship, or we pay attention to the Provider of knowledge, the Provider of wealth and safety, the Provider of security, the Provider of beauty, of majesty. We pay attention to it.

It's as simple as going to a store, and [observing that] the clerk is really not nice. We pay attention to *adab*. It was icy this morning, and I paid attention to drive because there was ice on the road. There is nothing that doesn't have a relationship to something greater. If you really contemplate this, if you really contemplate Qur'an and the Ahadith of the Prophet (sal), there are hundreds and hundreds of 'āyāt and statements that enjoin us to be aware of our relatedness and our connections and our relationships. They also tell us that

anything other than that consciousness is *haram*, forbidden. *Maruf* and *munkar*. It's not just saying, "Do good things and I forbid you from doing bad things," which is a normal kind of concept of *maruf* and *munkar*. It's the fact that if you contemplate anything in Qur'an and Hadith, or anything in life, we are clearly enjoined to look at the relationships between ourselves and those things. Whatever distracts us from that, we should prohibit ourselves from doing.

Then we have to remember that what are normally called the commands of Allah Swt and the content of those commands are the real objectives. Whatever means we use to accomplish that awareness is to be considered also part of His command. That's how we can say that certain *latā'if* (*qalb, ruh, sirr, khafee, akhfar*) are part of the *'ālam al amr*. When we pay attention to the *latā'if*, we are seeing that paying attention is also by His command, part of the world of command. On a much simpler level, if Allah tells us we should be clean before we make prayer, then using water is part of His command. If men and women are to be dressed in a certain way to pray, then we can say that the procurement of that suitable dress is part of the command of Allah. We can say that the knowledge of what to procure is part of the command of Allah, and the motivation to procure that dress is part of the command of Allah, not just the understanding of the modesty.

It takes it out of the realm of supposed to and puts it in a very logical framework. So too, the methodologies we are taught by our *shuyukh*. In order to attain to a station or state of *ta'alluq bī Allah, nisbat Allah, or tawajjuh Allah* are also by the will of Allah and part of the command of Allah. So, the methods used for a person to remember Allah cannot be *bida*, for that reason. If the Shaykh determines to use *dhikr jahri*, and the Salafis say this is *bida*, it can't be *bida*, because it is by the command of Allah that we remember Allah. So whatever the means are, they can't be *bida*. If we note our faults, and it reminds us of

Allah, then it can't be *bida*. If a person commits some *fitna*, but comes to the point where it reminds them of Allah, is the *fitna* still *fitna*? Or is it *dhikr*? If it sincerely reminds them of Allah and makes them repent, then what is it?

This also explains why Allah Swt has to, by His own design, forgive. If you get to the point where the *fitna* reminds you of Allah and you repent, then virtually by definition there has to be forgiveness. That's the system. The whole point is for you to be pure, to repent, and to do what is good. If a doctor prescribes a new remedy or medicine according to the age of the person, or because she feels that under certain circumstances, this one won't work as well, the real objective is to heal the patient. In the same way, the objective of *adhkar* (the plural of *dhikr*) is *ta'alluq ma'Allah*. It is a concern for our relationship with Allah Swt, or *tawajjuh* Allah. That's the real objective—whatever method is used to achieve this, as long as the method itself is not *haram*.

If you feed someone pig so they get so upset because they are a Muslim, and then say, “See? You are remembering you are a Muslim because I'm feeding you pig,” this is *haram*. As long as what is being used is acceptable, encouraging, and enjoining for the good, then if you adopt that method and use it again and again and again, it becomes part of the Sunnah, because it's enjoined by Prophet Mohammed. The Prophet (sal) enjoined us to make *dhikr*, to remember Allah. He didn't outline every single method by which that can be done from now until the end of time. He *did* tell under what conditions it should be done, what it means to do that, and the benefits of doing that, and gave examples of doing it. This conforms with the systems talk that I never gave you, and a kind of open-ended universe, a universe that the scientists are telling us is always expanding, always more possibilities to be discovered in the endless search for knowledge. This is what characterizes the life of a Sufi.

If, for example, the objective of life, the purpose of Allah for human beings is to affirm the will of Allah Swt, and that striving/*jihad* is a means to the end of achieving that, then whatever you use is obligatory. Even if you take it to the point of war, *astaghfirullah*, and you find it is absolutely necessary to defend (because Muslims can only defend), and someone attacks your country, it's obligatory that you have the means to fight back. In today's world, that means tanks and automatic weapons and drone airplanes and whatever. It doesn't mean swords, just because the Prophet Mohammed (sal) lived at a time then they used swords. It becomes obligatory in order to fulfill the will of Allah to defend yourself against an aggressor, for the very few reasons a Muslim can fight: if your religion is not allowed to be practiced, and if a person tries to take your life. You know what they are. It becomes obligatory to have the means. You can't consider it *bida*.

The real objective is striving. Whatever the means are to allow a person to strive, they become part of the Sunnah, as long as they are not *haram* and do not create *fitna*. And as long as they are not *shirk*, and make you think you are equal to Allah. All this lies within the framework also of *ihsan*, which is not only part of the *dīn*, but really the core of the *dīn*. Without *ihsan*, there is no real essence. It's imperfect. The reality we call *ihsan* we know from the Hadith of Jibreel, which is to worship Allah as if you see Allah; and if you don't, know that He is seeing you. In that Hadith of Jibreel, it talks about *iman*, which is the basis of that root word, and actions, which are like the branches of the tree. If *iman*/faith is the root, *amal* are the branches of the tree, and *ihsan* is the fruit. If you don't have the fruit, you cannot have the seed. You cannot have the continuation of the tree. The fruit, which is the tastiest part, either has to be consumed or rot away for the seed to work.

The seed is nothing like the fruit, unless you know what the fruit is. Who would know that a tiny little apple seed would make such a big fruit, or a tiny little watermelon seed would make a big watermelon? If you leave out any part of this, it abrogates the whole

thing. If, at Maghrib you pray two *rakas*, but you don't pray the third, did you pray Maghrib? No. You may say, "But I did 2/3. Don't I get 2/3 of the reward?" Or, "I'm a traveler." But that doesn't apply to Maghrib prayer. "I don't understand; it's not logical. I'm still traveling." We don't do that. We don't make that kind of argument. If any one of these parts is missing, you are missing a vital aspect of the *dīn*, which makes everything incomplete. In the same way, we have to do everything to remind us of Allah, everything to make us understand the unity of this system, everything to make us understand the interdependency of our perceptions, our relationships, our submission to Allah—everything. Consequently, this becomes now an affirmation of the constant search for knowledge, which is a core teaching of Sufism.

You are always looking for more knowledge, for what you are missing. To do that, you realize you have to develop your intuition. You cannot just read it in a book. Reading it may tell you something that's really important, but you forget it the moment after you read it. It has to be internalized. So the way of the Sufi is internalization, not just praying, doing *wudu*, reading Qur'an, making *du'ā*, and doing all the ritualistic things you can do just by following a book. But [the way of the Sufi is] by internalizing. Then, the other thing we have to remember is that at the time of Prophet Mohammed, a large aspect of achieving this level of *ihsan* was because people were in the company of the Prophet (sal). They were having *suhbat* with him. Everybody fulfilled their basic religious duties and did what they were supposed to do or commanded to do; but in addition to that, they were in his company.

If keeping the company of certain types of people reminds you of Allah Swt, the same logic and the same reasoning applies. That's why we have a *silsila*. I am 32nd or 33rd, depending on which line. We are all thus in the company of Prophet Mohammed (sal). We are in the company of the *sahabah*, the *taba'ain*, the *taba-taba'ain*, etc. In the same

way I was speaking when I began, it becomes part of the reality of the Divine presence. The Prophet Mohammed (sal) is present through our relatedness to him, through our connection with him, our *tawajjuh*, our contemplation of him, our attraction to him. If we find ourselves attracted to our Shaykh or members of the *shuyukh*, it's because it is that attraction to the Prophet Mohammed (sal). When people became further and further removed from the direct contact with Prophet Mohammed (sal), then it became necessary for there to be very concentrated, deliberate, and attentive effort to be made (i.e., Sufic practices) for a person to acquire that aspect of the *dīn*, that aspect of the reality, the essence of the *dīn* of Islam, which is that connection.

It becomes clear also why Sufis look at that as love, and see that as an element of love. When we feel love, the attraction is attenuated and enhanced. When we feel love, then we are focused. We are super-focused. We watch every little thing; every little nuance, every little change. The more you submit to that love, to Allah Swt, the more you realize that any change has a profound effect. When an unenlightened lover says to an unenlightened beloved, "Don't you love me as much as you used to?" or "You are not the same way you used to be," it's because you are very attentive to that person's behavior. You are noting something different. You might be wrong, or plain old paranoid. Something may be distracting you. It may be at a higher level, but you are not recognizing it. Well, we are not going to talk about people and their relationships, but it's the same thing with Prophet Mohammed (sal).

As you attain that relationship, you become very attuned to it and very sensitive to any changes in it, which is why some people don't want to develop that relationship. It's also the reason why some political-religion type people don't want people to have that kind of relationship, because it supercedes their power. It's like a jealous husband or wife telling their spouse, "You can't have any friends." It challenges their influence and power. In

the system, you see it's reflected on every level. Trust, patience, love have a much broader scope. Then you can even take the concept of *maruf* and *munkar* and either say, "That's a good thing to do," and spread your love, care, and concern wherever you can. Or you will say, "No, no, you are forbidden from doing that. I am prohibiting you from doing that." Even the concept of *maruf* and *munkar* can be twisted. Then we look at our practices. Oh, we've very busy. I know we supposed to do some practices at Fajr and at Maghrib. This is just what is suggested by the *shuyukh*, and it's good for us; and two is better than one. Obviously, if you do something twice as often you get twice the results; and it's the best thing to do—but no. It is part of the Shar'iah. It's part of the Sunnah.

Allah Swt says in Qur'an, **"It is We that made the hills declare in unison with him our praise as eventide and the break of day, and the birds gather."** There is the instruction, right there—twice a day to praise Allah. If the teaching is given and the order is given, then it becomes part of the Sunnah to do that. We know of course just from our inner insight, our *kashf*, that when we are making *dhikr*, like in the *masjid* on Saturday night, in the light of that *dhikr* if one person is feeling a great deal of ecstasy, it's reflected on others in the group. It lifts everyone else. We know that from our own experience. We also know that the atmosphere becomes very pure. You can't imagine *shaytanic* impulses coming into that very pure atmosphere. As a result, you come out of it rejuvenated and revived. Your heart is invigorated, and the effects of the *dhikr* are something you can't really describe. "That was a great *dhikr*, wasn't it? Did you see some angels?" "Yes, I did." You don't know anything more about that *dhikr* in that kind of conversation than if you talked about stones in the pond. "Are there stones in the pond? Yes, there are." If you drained the pond you would find stones, and probably a lot of muck. You don't know until you drain the pond. But you do know, inside yourself. You saw with your eyes and heard with your ears. You participated with your tongue and moved with your feet. You created a barrier to negativity, 99.9% of the time.

So you think, “Okay, that’s the result of something people feel.” But Allah tells us about that also in Qur’an, **“Bring your Rabb to remembrance in your very soul with humility and with awe, without loudness and words, morning and evening. Be not those who are heedless.”** There’s an example of your meditation, morning and evening—*khafee*, silent. If you do it every day, and these instructions from 1430 some years ago, it’s part of the Sunnah. If it’s part of the Sunnah and in the Qur’an, how come we need a *shaykh*? Why is the *suhbat* so important? The world teaches us every day, time and again, that you can’t do the things you do without having someone to teach you how to do them, or encourage you do them, or give you examples of how to do them, no matter what your job is. Everyone sitting in this room learned something from somebody, maybe many somebodies.

So the whole process from the very beginning of time is still being played out today. The proper understanding of what is in Qur’an and in the Sunnah, and the Seerah of the Prophet (sal) depends on a person who has had the experience and knowledge also. We can study the books, and read about mysteries, but the book is not a mystery. All the books on Tasawwuf you can read will tell you what the goal is, but it can’t show you the path. It can’t tell you whether you are on it or off, near or not, doing it in the right order, whether you are doing it if it is commensurate with your personality and character, if you are doing it in a way that is commensurate with your *qadr* (destiny), or with or without the attitude of *tadbīr*. “Why are you planning? Trust in Allah.” “Oh, but I have this and that happening, I have to do this and that.” Trust in Allah. You can tell yourself a hundred times to trust in Allah, but unless you have the authority to tell yourself, based on the experience of others who have trusted in Allah, and you see that, probably you are not going to trust in Allah.

Then there is the parallel we talked about at the very beginning. To develop true friendship is not only a means of affirming the relationship between Prophet Mohammed (sal) and the Sahabah, it is a way of experiencing it. It is living today; it is happening today, that Divine friendship. For anyone who has not experienced that, meaning the Divine presence in one's life, that person cannot attain to the stage of *waliyat*. That's why Allah Swt placed in the heart of certain people a strong, magnetic heart that attracts the spirit of others and illuminates them. It is just like sending electricity through the air, like coming within range of the Tesla coil. The electricity goes through the air and lights the bulb which is not attached to anything. Our *ruh* is attached: there is an unseen wire there.

Practically, this becomes another affirmation, another iteration of what I have said so many times: we have to discipline ourselves and force ourselves at the beginning to do the things that will automatically reveal to us the interrelatedness of things. The minute we do see that, we will be remembering Allah. Only in that constant state of remembrance is a person in the state of *insana kamil*. When you are permanently in that station, nothing can take you out of it. One's character, demeanor, words, attitudes, feelings, actions toward themselves and others are not only acceptable but lauded. They are exemplary. Who wouldn't want to be in that place? Nothing rots in that world. You can leave fruit out all the time, and no fruit flies will come to it. You won't find one day that the bottom was soft and rotted. It stays fresh. If you are fresh in that sense, wherever you turn your face, there is the face of Allah.

What does that mean? In this sense, it means if you turn this way, automatically because that's where your sight needs to be, there you will see the Compassionate, and you draw compassion. In the next moment, your feet move you to this place because that's where you need to be, and that's where your destiny takes you, and from that place, you take the quality of justice, patience, or mercy, or whatever. Each place you face, each

circumstance you face has a response from Allah in an attribute of Allah, or the value of Allah, or the philosophy of Qur'an. You are not just spouting the Qur'an or speaking just in spiritual terminology, but everything is infused with that spiritual wisdom or knowledge. But you have to work very hard at it. It will not come without hard work.

We take it for granted, but our body works very hard just to process the air in this room. It's a pretty complicated system. While we are digesting, yet another system is operating, which is in a greater system called myself, which is in a greater system called myself and the world, or myself as a Muslim, in a community of Muslims, my self as a *mu'min*, and myself as a Sufi. If you are actively what you really are, then you can look around and see things. You get into a conversation, and pretty soon, the person is sitting with us. "Wow, I don't know how so and so met me on that day. I really needed to talk to someone, and that person changed my life." It's not far-fetched. Doesn't it happen every day? So why do we forget?

If we learn from living people, and if we are in the *suhbat* of good people, and we kept ourselves only surrounded by good people, we would think this way ourselves. I'd be reminding you of something else, maybe a flat tire or windows that need to be washed in your house. I wouldn't have any heavy duty stuff to do, because you would be doing it all yourself. Somehow, I don't feel my job is in too much threat right now. But I would like to feel that. *Asalaam aleikum*.