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Wednesday

Title: [Systems and Latā'if: The Structure and Function of Sufism](#)

DVD title: [Approaching Latā'if from A Systems Point of View:](#)

- The Consistency of Sufism as A System
 - Unexplainable Phenomena
 - and Awakening the Latā'if

Dinner blessing: O Allah, You have taken us almost a quarter of the way through Ramadān already, and we are just remembering that we are forgetting our *niyyat*. And we are forgetting to remember to dive deeply into our practices. We hope and pray Allah that You give us more encouragement to remember, and more depth in our practice. We ask that you send your special blessings upon the soul of Senator Ted Kennedy, without whom many of the leftover freedoms we still have in this country would not be with us, and without whom there would be no real statesmanship and leadership. We ask that You replace him with good souls and good people, and end this parliamentary nihilism that has infected our country. We ask You, Allah Swt, to reward those who are fasting with Your choicest blessings and to prepare us to serve one another better, and to uplift the community and to fulfill our personal responsibilities to this *jamat* and the *ummah* here. We ask You, Allah Swt, to make us gather in the spirit of Ramadān, the spirit of justice, and the spirit of truth, and the spirit of love. *Amin*.

Sohbet: *Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem*. For many years now, many of you have been doing very, very profound practices; and I suspect, not understanding much about what you are doing. From a rationalist point of view, that can be very disturbing, because most of us grew up with the very strong influence of functionalist, structuralist theory. There is often a disconnect between what is observable in a Sufi *khanaqah* and Tariqah, or

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anywhere one sees ecstatic experiences, and an expected functionalist, structuralist way of thinking. A lot of what has been written about Sufism has been a structuralist, functionalist reaction to what is observable phenomena. The assumptions are that they fall within certain principles of structuralism and functionalism. I don't want to make this academic, but at the same time, I think it is important to understand what we are talking about. What I am proposing is a blend.

When I speak to you about “interfaces with systems,” that in and of itself is a functionalist and structuralist approach. However, it takes into consideration phenomenological realities (I will call them realities, though someone else may not). This, of necessity, argues against a structuralist, functional point of view. But I pose to you that it doesn't do that. I pose to you that experiential reality is often different than what is predicted. If you study this subject, you would understand that there are structural linguistics and there is structural anthropology, and all kinds of things that are very academic. I'm not going to give you a big lesson on that. It is similar to critical inquiry, which started in literature, then other people saw the capability of using it as a basis for other things. We are using it in sociological terms in our work. So too, this kind of structuralism and functionalism came from mostly literary theory. It then entered into the areas of philosophy, science, anthropology, and sociology.

There are four basic ideas that you can keep in mind when I talk about Sufism. First, the structure determines the position of every element in the whole very, which sounds very systemic to you. Second, structuralists believe that every system has a structure. Third, structuralists are interested (and here I'm quoting) in structural laws that deal with co-existence rather than changes. That's very important. Finally, structures are the real things that lie beneath the surface of appearance and meaning, and that's the most important.

I'm saying that when one looks from a systems point of view, on one level this is all very

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true, but there is something else that is transpiring that is more real, that's discussed in Qur'an and told to us, and we are guided so that we can experience through our *latā'if*.

This is the beginning of a long series of talks that will speak about *latā'if* and transmission, *tawajjuh*, and things like this – [things that make] Sufism and what you practice very unique. Nonetheless, it can be looked at from a systems point of view. What is most significant is that “nonetheless, it can be looked at from a systems point of view.” But it is totally consistent as a systems point of view, and totally consistent as what we might call a more esoterica, experiential, spiritual point of view. They are not mutually exclusive. But all the structuralists and functionalists would say that they are. If you are looking at structural functionalism in a sociological kind of form, it describes the elements of a social system and how they act in regard to the whole system.

As I approach Islam and Sufism from a systems point of view, I am not denying nor putting forth a structuralist functionalist point of view. I am saying what I always say: they have to be internally and externally consistent. What is experienced spiritually when one approaches the practices in the form and structure we approach it, is different as a personal experience; nonetheless, it fits into a systems form or structure that is also consistent. If it wasn't so, then most of the things in the Qur'an wouldn't be true. I think that many, many people – most people – don't see it. Religion remains religion with its mysteries and hermeneutical elements, and social and political forms and philosophy remain what they are. People don't see that these two things are really expressions of the same *tawhid*/unity. What you find in the structuralist functionalist point of view is the application of the scientific method to the objective social world, and use of an analogy between the individual organism and society.

There is an analogy between the individual organism and society, and the systems within

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the individual and society. I use that all the time, but it is not exclusive. It does not exclude the mystical experience. It gives a context where the mystical experience transforms the individual to be able to, in my humble opinion, refine social structures and human interactions, to uplift the character of human beings. When you are talking about human character, you are talking about a system of some kind of rules and guidelines, of social mores and ethics. How else would you define character? At the same time, what's transformative in a human being is never going to be anything that is merely a structural change. I can't change the form of this community, and automatically everybody's character gets uplifted. That's a really gross example. You can't do it. In the political forum, people think they can change what's happening in a society with political action, and all of a sudden, people will change. You will see that the greatest resistance to that comes from people, because people have to change.

The Prophet Isa (as) said, "*Change me, O Lord, not my circumstance.*" The "Change me, O Lord" is this more mystical response. When the *latā'if* are opened, human beings change. It's pretty much of a no-brainer to say that if human beings change, then their structures are going to change. Their forms of interaction will change. Their language will change. The sound of the language will change, and the meaning of the language will change, which you will find is a cornerstone in structural linguistics. That's also the reason why when we do practices, some are articulated and some are not. As you articulate the *Asmā' al Husna*, transformative things happen within the individual. You use these names if you are doing the circles in our transmissions. By meditating on and reciting those names, certain apparent structural things happen; but they are happening to your *latā'if*, which are subtle organs of perception. It's like training your olfactory sense so that you can be an attarine; or by playing certain musical instruments, you can tune your ear to hear certain things. The *latā'if* become awakened in the same sense.

In an external point of view, the emphasis on the scientific methods leads to an assertion that one can study the social world in the same way one studies the physical world. From a spiritual, systems point of view, that's true. You can. You can study it; but without the guidance of the Qur'an, you don't know what you are looking at. In other words, I can study and I can describe to you a car engine, but I wouldn't be telling you how it works, and I wouldn't necessarily be able to replicate it. I can study it and use the scientific method to break down its parts. But if I didn't know it was a car engine, I wouldn't know what it was, for example. Even if I could replicate it, I wouldn't know how to use it. We say, **“Wheresoever you look, there is the countenance of Allah.”** Muslims all over the world repeat that over and over again. They don't know what they are looking at. “We are looking at Allah.” Okay. How is it changing you? How is it transforming you? You need something to stimulate you to open the eyes of the *latā'if*, to see it with the eyes of the *latā'if*, these subtle organs of perception.

A functionalist will see the social world as objectively real and observable. They do it sociologically with interviews and all kinds of things. You start to believe that the rules and regulations help organize the relationships between members of society. Of course. Every religion has rules and regulations, and the whole idea is to organize the relationships between people in the society and make it consistent. That's the external aspect of it. That's what we call the Ummah. It operates on certain basic principles. Certain values provide certain guidelines for behavior in terms of what your role is, and what the normative behavior of society is. Family, religion, economy, education, political institutions are examples of such systems or structures. They are interconnected. Again, we are in the same situation. You can see they are interconnected, but you don't understand what the true function of them could be. You only see what the external

function of it might be.

As a result of that, a functionalist might say you can compare society to a living organism (which I'm saying in Islamic systems theory), because you have interdependent working parts that when they work together; they create a greater whole. That's just the beginning point from an Islamic or spiritual point of view. Where you go from there is to understand why those systems are analogical, why those systems are related. What can emerge from a social - biological relationship has an analogical reality: what can emerge from a spiritual- social living organism. When you add the elements of practices to them, the emergence that comes about is a transformed human being—not just a cultural entity or society that functions according to certain rules, not just different parts of a society working together to form a social system, in the same way an organism's parts form a cohesively functioning physical entity. Is that somewhat clear? Then let me get on to the Naqshbandī teaching.

When people started observing outside of the *khanaqahs* (mostly Europeans, traveling to India, the Middle East or Central Asia), the things that were going on among the Sufis, for example seeing people being *majdhub*, they looked at it from a structuralist functionalist point of view. They explained things in those terms. The assumption was *that* was the way in which things should be observed and seen. A lot of their studies coming out of the West were based on that point of view. Also, they would make certain summations about social consequences of holy people and their followers, and the charismatic effect, and didn't take it as real—it wasn't real; it was a social, phenomenological situation. They didn't see organically. They didn't have the tools in those days to look for quantum experiences that were outside of the rational, functional realm. They didn't know anything about the possibility of quantum occurrences in the brain, or things that were outside of the normative realm of thinking. Charismatic

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authority, which was irrational and non-structural, could only be explained as being some kind of a mimetic behavior.

I touch you during the *sema*, and someone falls over. Then someone mimes that falling, and it becomes part of the whole thing. They would go into some *khanaqah* in Central Asia, India, or Pakistan and the *shaykh* would walk into the room. Someone would go into ecstasy and fall on the floor. The observers would just assume this was some kind of cultural, mimetic behavior. Since that charisma chiefly functioned in full view in the social structure, when people tried to explain the nature of the attributes or qualities of the *shaykh*, the observers would find it difficult. So they came to a kind of circular mentality: the charisma of the personality of the person creates the people to follow him, and then the following creates more of the charisma. That's a structural mentality. Virtually no one tried to explain how to acquire that charisma. Ted Kennedy is a charismatic person. What is it about the Kennedy family that creates charisma? Where does it come from? Do you buy it at the store? Do you get it if you are wealthy? Do you trade in green stamps, or get a coupon at Best Buy?

Nobody tried to explain that. I'm not talking in the 1800's, but even twenty, thirty years ago. Then they see that these people support the *khanaqah* and the *shaykh*, and built buildings for them. So they made a connection between the necessity to have this kind of charisma in order to have a functioning institution with money and funds that go along with it, but there were exceptions. One person reported that a person who picked up Faisal Rahman's book went into ecstasy, some German person who had never read anything like it before in their life. Then he traveled to some other place in Pakistan, and after he arrived there, the *shaykh* walked into the room and (that person) started writhing on the floor and ripping off his clothing, going into the *majdhub* experience. He'd never met the *shaykh* before. You can't explain this in a normal structuralist way. Except that it

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is part of a phenomenological system that is happening all the time, non-linear experiences that transcend space and time that are unexplainable by the scientific method.

Within a period of a few weeks staying there, that young man's *latā'if* were all awakened, and he was made a *khalifa*. It wasn't only the *shaykh* who was affected. But the advanced students and other *khalifas* of the *shaykh* were able to transmit *tawajjuh* to other people, these transmissions that would awaken the *latā'if*. It wasn't just something from the *shaykh*, but something was awakened within the individual. The traditional writers had to try to explain it in terms they understood and they used. They would look at things like personal or social crises would awaken a person's receptivity, or financial need, or whatever. They had to put it within that form and structure. Nobody really can understand *bāraka*. They would hear, "This is the *bāraka* of the *shaykh*." We know that *bāraka* means blessing in the sense of Divine Favor that is bestowed upon someone.

There are a whole lot of other ideas that are linked with the concept of *bāraka*, with your *bāraka*: prosperity or physical well-being, asking the *shaykh* for a blessing since you haven't been well. Some people use it like "luck" in English, or plenitude, overflowing *fayyād*. *Bāraka* is not a kind of spiritual electricity. It is part of a very deep philosophy or doctrine that one finds within Qur'an. The Blessings of Allah Swt are part of a larger spiritual system that translates into physical realities and can be directed. But these people couldn't understand that. How is this directed? When one starts to study, outside of the limitations of the Western ethno-centric structuralist functionalist mentality, when one starts to really study this, you can't study it just with your mind. You have to study it with something else. Every human being has the capability of it, but most people don't understand how much they are controlled by their cultural, ethnic, social structures and how much their thinking is conditioned.

You may say, “I’ve been doing these practices for years and I don’t feel or see anything. I don’t really understand what I’m saying or doing.” And I will say something like, “You don’t have to understand. Do it sincerely. Trust it.” What is Allah telling you in the Qur’an all the time? Sincerity/*ikhlas*, trust/*tawakkul*, surrender, submission—the name Islam means that. It is so alien to the way we are brought up that we resist it. It’s like denying that you need glasses when you are half blind. You just keep re-defining the world as blurry. We are so committed to the forms we were raised within the Westernized world, which is everywhere. You can’t draw a line in the Middle East and say everyone on the left hand side is structuralist and functionalist. Look at Wahabism. It’s extremely narrow structural functionalist. The system is interrelated, and there is structure and form, but to understand it, you have to go deeper; otherwise, you are just mimicking and miming things. They may be beautiful and profound. You may be *hafez* of Qur’an, but you have no idea of the meaning outside of the definitions of the words, even if you happen to understand Arabic. You have no idea how that can transform you.

It’s like saying, “I’ve got a great thing called an xray, and I will shine it on you. But first I will wrap you in lead.” The xray is the capability of the *latā’if*, the ability to see in another way. But I keep myself wrapped up in a form I can’t penetrate. What makes the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī teaching so unique is that there are correctives in these practices that adjust or tune the distortions of this kind of historical, anthropological mentality. Someone should be saying to me right now, “How long has functional structuralist thinking existed? What was happening a thousand years ago?” Society has shifted. There were people in every age from the time of Prophet Daoud (as), Prophet Isa (as), and Prophet Mohammed (sal) who were just drawn toward the inner experience, drawn toward awakening the *latā’if*. There were others who were not drawn toward it. When you institutionalize a way of thinking that spreads all over the world, and that becomes the foundation of analysis and education, now you are spreading a wide net over people.

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The ones who have the capability, like you and me – because you wouldn't be sitting here unless you had the capability – have a further burden. We have been trained to think in the wrong way. Even though you have the strength or the destiny to be in the company of such teachings and capability, it doesn't mean you will be able to access them. If it were 500 years ago or even a hundred, and something inside you made you wander in the mountains of Central Asia or India, like I wandered 40 years ago, and you trusted your intuition and didn't fight it even though you had all the reasons to do that, you would find a teacher and you would find a way. But that doesn't mean you would practice correctly or wouldn't be overly influenced by this kind of structural functionalist point of view. You wouldn't see the spiritual systems. You would find, as you do find, resistance inside your own self to the teachings, even though you don't want to resist them. Still you might say, "I don't know what I'm experiencing. I'm not feeling anything. I'm not one of those people who fall over and go into ecstasy." That's not the criteria. It's just an example of what happens.

In reality (in my reality which I am presenting to you), you cannot fully explain or understand the processes of life within the context of just an external view of human nature and human development. You have to have the *madad* of the *awliyā*. You have to achieve a state of trust and submission to something that is not just logical, rational, physically and philosophically related. It has to be beyond that. In Naqshbandī Tariqah, which spread throughout the whole Islamic world in a fairly short period of time, it's very important to understand where we come from. We trace our origins to Prophet Mohammed (sal), who is not only Rasulallah, but who conveyed both an exoteric and esoteric reality, both a normative social behavior and a mystical practice, and was himself *insan i kamil*. He was an example of an ideal man who Sufis seek to emulate, and who was a channel for the *bāraka*.

As you know, there are two chains of transmission in the Naqshbandi line. One goes through Imam Ali (as), and the other is through Abu Bakr ni Sadiq (ra). We come through the chain of Abu Bakr in the Naqshbandī line. The fact that we come from five Orders, and the other four come through Ali (ra), is again another example of the interface, of the completion of the systems. These two chains have a symbolism. They seem to reflect the two aspects of Naqshbandī practice: the Ali (ra) chain that represents the esoteric practices, and the Bakri chain which is adherence to the Shar'īah, to the behavior of the Prophet Mohammed (sal). That comes down to us through our *silsila*, an unbroken chain of teachers from Prophet Mohammed (sal) and Abu Bakr (ra) down to today to me. I'm not saying "to me" as "ah, look at me," but just that there is an unbroken line. The esoteric reality of that is that the *bāraka* therefore comes directly from Prophet Mohammed (sal). You may find some resistance in your brain just as I say those words. That resistance in your brain comes from your training. But you may find no resistance in your heart to that.

Then you get to a person like Ahmed Farooqi Sirhindi (ra) who died around 1640 of the Christian era. He was a mystic and scholar, and his job as a *mujaddid* was to keep Islam from being absorbed by Hinduism in India. He was known as the renewer of the second millennium, the Alif Thani Shaykh. He comes at the end of a cycle of spiritual decline. With the advent of the 21st century, that period of time has ended, though some would calculate that slightly differently. He was not only a renewer of that circumstance, he was to be seen in stature as a *qutb*, an axial point, a personality who was at the axis of change. That, too, has an analogical reality. Each Sufi (and each Muslim should) strives to find that axial point within their own self, the renewer within their own self. As you know, I have been talking about renewal in Islam recently as *tajdīd*.

We live at a time now when there has to be not just a renewal of Islam, but of Islamic

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reality, a renewal of compassion, justice, mercy, understanding, tolerance, patience. Then you look at the world we live in: we are not living in a world where people are pursuing renewal. We are looking at a world of partisanship, a political world. The eulogies of Ted Kennedy say, “He’s the end of an era where people reached across the aisle and worked together for principles and changes in society.” We don’t see that today. We come to the area of signs. One of the definitions of structuralism is that it is a study of signs in society. There are signs, ‘*āyāt*. There are ‘*āyāt* to deal with the ‘*āyāt* of the social world. The ‘*āyāt* of the Qur’an deal with the signs in the world and in the individual: the psychological, social, emotional, physical, and intellectual signs. You look around and say, “How could these people be so stupid as to buy into these theories of death panels and whatever?” Those are signs: “signs of the times.”

They come from people who know how to manipulate the institutional structures and functions of those structures in order to control people’s minds; therefore, if you extend that you can see why a point of view would look at charismatic people as manipulative, whether they are *shaykhs*, or teachers, or Jesus, or evangelicals. The assumption is there is manipulation taking place; and there may very well be. We certainly see it in the political realm. But it is not necessarily manipulative. When the intentions are not based on ego but on awakened *latā’if*, they are just means through which a person can have a spiritual transformational change that would make them harmonious and resonant with everybody’s soul—not divided and sectarian.

If you have this experience and you are a Christian, and as a result of this experience you think that Muslims and Jews are all going to go to hell, that’s not what happens. If you are a Muslim, and you have some kind of experience with a *munāfiq* like Osama Bin Laden, then we say in shortspeak, “that person’s not a real Muslim.” There is no resonance, or sense of spiritual coherence that transcends the limitations and definitions

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of “religion.” There is nothing that brings human hearts together. There is nothing that brings the human soul to peace. Peace is antithetical to what they are using religion for. It’s very important to understand that you can’t just look at the phenomenological expression of it. You can’t just take the theory of charisma. You can look at the phenomenological experience and see what the result of it is, and it can tell you a lot.

The teachings of Ahmed Farooqi Sirhindi (ra) were so important that he dispatched thousands of *khalifas* to different parts of the world to bring those practices. This was at a time prior to this structuralist functionalist wave of thinking. A person comes into a city—maybe Khorasan or Nishapur, Hyderabad or in Yemen or anywhere—and they see him. This person has this kind of charisma, and there is no inherent resistance to the message. The ones it resonates with are attracted/*jedhb*. There is an attraction. There is no inherent resistance to it. “I’m happy the way I am, I’m a Muslim, everything’s fine.” There is no reaction to it, because there has been no civilizational cultural overlay of another philosophy.

Then the third son of Ahmed Farooqi Sirhindi, Shaykh Masoom, who died maybe 25 years after his father, sent 7,000 *khalifas* around the known world. Many of them were from Afghanistan and Central Asia, and implanted the Mujaddidī teachings in many, many places. That’s why you find the Mujaddidī teachings of Shaykh Masoom (ra) in Syria , like Shaykh Ahmed Kuftaro (ra); or in Iraq or Iran and Turkey, like Shaykh Osman Sirajjudin an-Naqshband (ra), and in Egypt and other places. It’s not the kind of thing that is some intellectual teaching, but a transmission.

At the foundation of that was his principle of *wahadat shuhūd*, which is: even though Allah Swt created the world, there is no relationship between creation and His formless essence. That formless essence gave rise to four different levels of manifestation, via the

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traditional realm called the *sha'ana jami*, the quality of wholeness. It acted as a bridge between the uncreated and the created realms. In effect, it protects the uniqueness of Allah Swt, but at the same time, it comprises a level of qualities from Allah Swt that give rise toward the material existence: these *latā'if*. These organs of perception give rise to the physical reality, which begins with the Oneness of Allah Swt, and then the *dhat*, the Essence of Allah, and then the *wahadat*, the unity of essence, out of which this creation unfolds. You can read about this philosophy and that's fine.

What is most important for our purposes is to understand that there are different levels of these Divine Attributes as this world becomes manifest and created by Allah Swt. These reflect what we are told in Qur'an: that Allah Swt is near to us and present. Allah Swt is surrounding us and is within us. The circles of contingent reality or contingent existence are these levels that we automatically go through as our *latā'if* are awakened. Perhaps I will give you one of the traditional graphs of this so you can see it. [In] the upper circle [is] the *'ālam al amr* (world of Divine Command), and the manifestation, and how it represents certain things in the macrocosm and in the microcosm. It's probably better that I give you things to read about these levels, [such as] the *'ālam al mithal* (the realm of consciousnesses, the realm of visions), [that is] the many different worlds which Allah Swt speaks about in the Qur'an, for example, the realm of the *malakut* (angels).

What I want to focus on in the days to come is the *'ālam al mithal*, where the spirit, the mind and the body are. That's where we are right now. Does everybody here have a body, a mind? Do you feel perhaps you may have some *ruh/spirit*? Yes. That's where we are. It stands between the *'ālam al amr*/the world of command and the *'ālam al khalq*. All these practices that you do, and all the ones that have been given from the Prophet Mohammed (sal) on—and I don't mean just in this lifetime, because the Prophet (sal) said, "I existed before Adam"—all these practices are to make sense of the fact that we stand at this

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crossroad between the world command and the world of creation. We have to learn how to move between those two, consciously and purposefully, unencumbered by a structuralist point of view. But at the same time, we have to understand that there are structures and forms that are analogically correct and that they are very important for us to understand the coherence within the system.

Each level, each ontological domain, has its own perceptions. Each *latīfa* has its own perceptions. The interaction between these two worlds, the *‘ālam al amr* (the world of command) and the *‘ālam al khalq* (the world of creation) helps us to understand these things that happen, like birth and death, growth and decay, how the senses are deployed in the material world, because the mind functions to interpret or attach meaning to what one sees, tastes, smells and feels in the temporal world. We have these five senses, but there are also other senses. We take our five senses for granted unless one is missing, like Abdun Nasr cannot smell. He has no olfactory sense, and some loss of hearing in one ear. There are other senses, and those *latā’if* are responsible for a depth of knowledge and intelligence, a depth of perception that can’t be found through any other means than the awakening of those senses.

Those inner senses have a kind of analog in the network of subtle centers within the human being. We call them *latā’if*. We say, within our physical being, there are these organs of perception, these *latā’if*. They collectively form a morphological basis for the Naqshbandī spiritual transformation. I call it Naqshbandī because we are predominantly Naqshbandī, but we are also Shadhilī, Qadriyya and Chistiyya. These subtle centers of perception are also sometimes depicted as coverings or sheaths. If you know Hindu philosophy, or any of you who were with me 30 years ago, know that we used to talk about the sheaths. All mystical teachings talk about these coverings, or fields of energy. Sometimes we talk about different bodies. The *latā’if* have no real fixed location. They

can be experienced anywhere. We look at them in fixed locations such as *qalb*, *ruh*, *sirr*, *khafee*, *akhfah*, and *nafs*, because those who came before us had certain experiences in those centers at those places. As a result, they sent their transmissions to their students to those centers at those places. If we said they were absolutely fixed, we would be saying the temporal world, the physical world, controls these subtle senses and that's not true.

Next time, I want to talk to you about the subtle organs of perception and the *latā'if*. We will talk about each of the *latā'if*, and how certain of the *awliyā* looked at them, like Junayd and Jami and others, but not just in an historical point of view. I want you to try to remember where we stand in this systems mentality of Islam that has a functional reality. But at the same time, it has a much more transcendent personal reality. I may say to you - and I've said this before, but maybe in this context it will make more sense - we are all walking around with a long chain on. Some of us have a longer chain than others. Some of us have a chain made out of gold. The yogis will say that a golden chain is just as much a chain as an iron chain. When we say "golden chain" in Sufism, we mean the chain of the *silsila*. But I say to you, we are all walking around desensitized, and we make certain assumptions. In our desensitized state, they make sense. We look around, and some of us a little more educated or intelligent or observant than others.

We see the people go to town meetings and scream about death panels, "I don't want the government running my health program, and don't take away my Medicare." And we laugh, like you just did about that and think, "These people are idiots. The government runs Medicare!" This is an example of people who are not just ignorant, but desensitized. They are on a short chain, a short leash. Anybody can jerk them around. If someone is going to pick up your chain, they will have to pick up a very heavy chain and pull very hard on it. You are more educated and sensible for whatever reason, *insh'allah*. We are all walking around dazed and unclear among other dazed and unclear people. Among

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those dazed and unclear people are people of relative clarity and undazed state. When you come into contact with someone who is at a lesser level of dazed than you are, they seem clear to you or me. Then something happens, and you all of a sudden realize that person is not clear at all; they are charismatic. It's not the same as spiritual insight or knowledge.

They are not in the line of someone like Nebi Mohammed (sal). They are not in the line of some of these great mystics and Sufis who were seeing through a lens. "I thought everybody saw people in this way." Then someone says, "Oh, by the way, there is someone called an optometrist." Then the optometrist puts glasses on you and says, "Do you see any better?" "Oh, I didn't know people had distinct eyes. I thought everyone had blurry eyes." It's not just about seeing the outer world with clear eyes. It's the whole process of turning inward and seeing clearly, seeing with eyes that see, and hearing with ears that hear. Allah Swt says this in Qur'an and tells us, "**O man, you do not understand.**" This is extremely profound. So next time we will talk about the *latā'if*.

I'm hoping it gives you some more understanding of what you are doing. That hope, in itself, may be a very structuralist hope! My Shaykh would probably never do this. He'd just say, "You tell people that you get the practices, and you do them sincerely. And you'll understand this." I would say, "Hazrat, how do you get people to do them sincerely?" He'd say, "You give them to as many people as you can, and the sincere ones will fall out." I always had a hard time with that, but then he was living in India where the people were self-selected. If they had a feeling in their hearts and souls, they gravitated toward the *shaykh*. They weren't reacting to Colonialism, so they weren't buying into all the Western philosophy. They didn't like it, even though they were being indoctrinated to it in their schools. They were still in a *madrasas* and had their family beliefs. In Egypt, North Africa, and Morocco, you still find that. The overlay wasn't so strong.

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In the West, that's not what happened. We're indoctrinated from the time we were born. I would always present to him, "I think it's good if we explain it to people, even though we are buying into the system." At least you are telling them, here's the system I am explaining it through. Do you dare to walk outside of the system and create the trust and faith that is necessary? This is why it is so difficult to talk about trusting the *shaykh*, or why do you kiss the hand of the *shaykh*, and all this stuff. It makes no sense. Of course, it makes no sense, until your heart commands you to do it. You can stop your heart from commanding you to do it by getting into your rational mind. Your rational mind says, "I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to trust anyone like that." That's why some people go astray, because they don't pay attention to the social mores, the rules and regulations. Or they don't pay attention to them in the way society expects them to. What you have is a strange kind of situation where people will honestly do things that are anti-social, compared to people who dishonestly do things that are anti-social, like Congressmen in Washington who are hypocrites. They'll pretend to be something, but they're doing it for a self-aggrandizing reason.

Once you are into the realm, you have to understand what realm you are in. You are into this formalistic, social structural kind of realm. Once you stay in the realm of the spiritual, you have to understand how to accommodate the outer world, but at the same time be able to move into the inner world. How do you develop yourself in the inner world, but still accommodate the outer world? It takes a lot of responsibility, and it's dangerous and difficult. But everything that is worthwhile is difficult. It's part of the whole reality of the system. We want to travel to the far reaches of space, expanding our knowledge of space and time. There is a possibility we can go faster than the speed of light, but we don't have the structures to do that. Theoretically, we can do it.

Theoretically, we can go through a quantum tunnel and enter some other universe in some

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other time. But we don't have the materiality to do that. So you have to go into the non-material realm to do that. How do you make the non-material travel as real as the material travel? That's the realm of spirituality. Not only, necessarily, the realm of spirituality, it's the realm of science, too. But spiritually we can do it.

I remember living in Pennsylvania many, many years ago. We used to have to carry our water from the next door neighbor's house to our house, because our water was polluted. We carried 20, 30 gallons a week to the house for drinking water and cooking. One time her daughter was visiting there from Kansas or Ohio somewhere. Please don't see this as bragging about myself; you'll understand from my response to her. I walked into the house and this woman recognized me. She said, "I saw you in my house last week before I came. How did you do that? I didn't know you then." This was a person with no knowledge of yoga or mysticism, nothing. I said, "I have no idea. I have no knowledge of it, and I have no idea." It's possible to gain knowledge of these things, but you can't totally deny that these things can happen. If you understand quantum mechanics, you know that non-locality is something very profound that philosophers study. It can happen, scientifically.

Because of the practices I was doing, something happened. She resonated with me on another level. I didn't know anything about it, so it can't be from my ego that I'm telling the story. I had no idea about it. But when we met, there was a connection. She stayed in contact for a while, and then got scared, as many people do, by the phenomenological aspect of it. That's scary. But those things are possible. The realm we are living in is the realm of possibilities. That's the realm we practice in. The possibilities exist because we have these capabilities within our own self, these *latā'if*. I hope this encourages you to take your practices seriously; because if it doesn't, it's just a very boring academic kind of talk. I don't like to give academic talks, but talk about inspirational things like *tajdīd*

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and things like that. *Asalaamu aleikum.*