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Thursday

Title: [Systems and Latā'if: The Values That Make Society Resonant](#)

DVD title: Approaching Latā'if from A Systems Point of View:
The Latā'if as Analogs to a Higher Realm

Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem. I am not trying to bend your minds into a pretzel, but then, you know, this might be a good form of brain therapy. Let me go to the end and then periodically, let me try to prove it to you. The end is that if you looked at Islam and especially the way the Prophet (sal) ran his life, his relationships on the tribal level, familial level and on the institutional, Median level, you will find that it is a combination of both functionalism and structuralism.

You would find that there is an emphasis on form and structure vis a vis the Shar'īah, for example; and you could begin to put forward a thesis that because of the forms, people develop values. Or you can look at it from a functional point of view and reverse that statement. You could say that because of the values and emphasis on certain things like family and consensus/*ijma*, religion and belief and the way they function in society, a form of the society takes place, a structure comes about. You derive an understanding of the value of why Islam focuses on the *umma*. You see how the *umma* derives and you see the importance of *jamat*. At the same time you see the independence and importance of the individual. In a systems point of view, each individual or each individual organ, or [each] system within organs operates in certain independent ways, but the whole is derived from the independent operations of those systems—like your body, like your life.

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It is the same thing if you look at the politics of the time, and you come at it from the point of view that the values derive from the tribes or the tribes derive from the values. You could make the premise that the function (what is the result of the structure and how they function) is the most important thing. The function is the most important thing, from a functionalism point of view. You say that the best behavior from a human being comes about because of the interdependence and the interrelationships between the elements and the structures in the system. However, while saying that, and while showing that, and while proving that, still you have essential statements of esoteric, mystical value. For example, [there are the] statements such as “I existed before Adam,” or “I came to uplift the character of human beings.” Or, you have an emphasis on the personal. You have statements like, “No one can carry anyone else’s burden.” Or, you have concepts of *tadbīr*, planning not to plan, or destiny/*taqdīr*, which are non structural realities. How do you put destiny in a structure?

What you find in Islam and discuss in Islam by certain philosophers, and what you experience in Islam by Sufis is this hybrid, which compels certain individuals towards an understanding of both the system and the inner related systems of the universe. If you understand one set of systems, you understand all systems, even the ones yet discovered or defined by terminology semiotically. There are things to be discovered in astrophysics, for example, that have no terms yet applied to them. Where was the concept of “black holes” sixty years ago? There wasn’t any. You had an observable phenomena that wasn’t labeled yet. Then when it was labeled, did the label give it form? No. It did not give it a form; it gave it a focal point. So you have certain things that are discoverable and are yet to be defined.

If you come at these things from a formalistic, structural point of view, you are always

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trying to fit it into the existing structure, which takes me back to the *latā'if* and the spiritual practices. If you come at it from a functional point of view, you [may] define the function in sociological terms, in the relationships of individuals and societies and institutions in society, the way they function in society and the values upon which they function, the values by which those institutions are determined to be successful or not successful or constructive or destructive. If it functions in x way, it is constructive because people are in harmony. There is resonance and there is balance and the society moves towards harmony. If it does not function that way, the society moves towards disharmony and destruction. It is the same thing with your body, if the organs are functioning properly, in a certain way [there is balance and harmony]. Only sociologically or politically or spiritually do you talk about it in terms of values.

So what are the values that make a society resonant? How much of that is real and how much of it is constructed (structural) in order for there to be selfish, non-balanced ends? In other words, [how much of it is constructed] so that the society is not an *umma*, and the people who gather together are not gathered together in *jamah*? So for example (I am being very topical), Ted Kennedy dies. They are going to pass health care resolutions. They are going to try and pass it in his name. How much of it is going to reflect his philosophy of what health care is, or is it just going to be passed in his name? Or what level of guilt is there? Or how many people are going to politicize his life and his death in order to get their way. Those are destructive ways, or deconstructive ways, or destructive structural ways of operating things. On the other hand, if certain things motivate an individual to come out of their selfishness, out of some kind of guilt, which usually comes out of some kind of value system, which usually comes out of some kind of belief system or religious system, sometimes these things bring people back to their center, to the potential of resonance.

Something as terrible and as fearful and as unfortunate as death could serve a good purpose, but not the kind of death where you commit suicide. That is *haram*. It is not the kind of death where you kill somebody; that's *haram*. But in the natural cycle of things, in the natural system of things, Allah Swt determines that this man dies at this time, at a time when the most important thing in his life is being discussed. How is it going to be used by people? He is now not in control of it, physically, but still in control of it in terms of its essence, and in terms of an expressed belief system to the people—people know that. If there is a modicum of—what can I call it—humility? Honesty? If there is a modicum of Truth left in the world, a person will not stand up the day a man dies and vilify him. [If that happened,] would that alienate society, or would it galvanize the society? Will it alienate people in society and cause further split or will it galvanize people who will say, “Look you are way out there, you are a Kadjarite. You are not a Muslim. You are a crazy person. You are an extremist.”

Every day we see this interplay between structure and function, but do we see it from a hybrid point of view, a Sufic, spiritual mystical point of view, but a practice-able and practicable applied point of view. How do you apply Tasawwuf to this and bring a higher realization, a higher understanding [to the meaning of structure and function]. Not only that, [how do you bring] the *bāraka*/blessing, with the implication that there is power (*quwwat qahhar*) to it? How do you bring the power of transformative energy?

There is so much that could be said on this subject. I was doing a little research today. When I read it, I am putting it in spiritual terminology. Structure versus behavior and values influences how the structures are created, on the one hand. On the other hand, you see that Allah (Swt) creates a certain ersatz structure within our own selves called the *latā'if*. As one learns to operate this kind of structural functionalism (as it is called in sociology), the interface of that structure and function is the *'ālam al-mithal*. That

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interface is this place of between, or what I tend to call the nexus between the inner and the outer, the *bātin* and the *dhāhir*. We are supposed to live in that place. In a sense it is kind of *barzakh* for the physical world. It is a place where you dwell. If you consciously learn how to move to the outer or the inner, or you spend part of every moment in the inner and part of every moment in the outer, you are making choices all the time based on values. But those values are not things which derive from the structure and the form of society. Those values come directly from Allah Swt and our placed inside of us. They are the *fitrah*.

You have always heard me associate them with *fitrah*; therefore, this dynamic Divine Presence really is at the root of all the structures and is directing the emergence of behavior out of those structures or functionality. We are not functioning at our top capability. Most of us are somewhat dysfunctional. We see a dysfunctional society. When you look at what makes a person dysfunctional, it is because they are not set in their values. They are not firm in their values. They are not seeing, perhaps, what somebody else sees. For example, he sees something his son doesn't see yet. I see something my daughters cannot see yet. He sees something that maybe his brothers or sisters don't see because of his experiences, etc. It goes like that. You see but there is more to see. If you contact yourself, focus yourself on this process of seeing, it is very attractive. It is very engaging, if you allow yourself to see; but the tendency is to see yourself within a structure (that is fine), or to see how you are functioning within the structure of society, or to see how you are dysfunctioning in that society. If you trace it back, it is going to come back to the strength or weakness of your values system, of your belief system.

What matters then is to create an awakening to that potential. [What matters is] to see and to be able to understand that all these sociologists, political scientists, religionists and

theologians—in their different positions (or in their relatively same positions) as they look at their own fields—are for the most part missing something. They are missing the purpose of their institutions as those institutions relate to the interactions of human beings to the creation by the Will of Allah Swt. In other words, [they are missing] how human beings accept the responsibility and effectuality disperse, effectually fulfill their responsibility while they are gaining knowledge of their own self—the *amanat*.

If you go back from where I started, if you go back and you look at Islam, you see that Islam has created the foundation for all this thought to be resonant and converged.[I am not talking about] the Islam that 90 percent of the people you hear talk about Islam are talking about. That is pretty structuralist. [I am talking about] the Islam of the Prophet Mohammed (sal), the Islam of the people of Tasawwuf is the Islam that creates or comments on, that gives the means and the form, and the non-structural, physically non-functional, but the spiritually functional means to communicate beyond the material level, and to accept that is real. That is where I started yesterday. This stuff is real, more real than most people imagine. What you really get from practices, from awakening the *latā'if*, from rending the veil of separation that comes from this kind of structuralist, formalistic mentality, what you get is a whole other dimension of insight.

Each aspect of that dimension has an analogy. For what you see, you have *kashf*, for example. For what you feel in the physical world, you have *eshq*. There is a parallel. For what you hear in the physical world, you hear in another way in your heart, in your heart and soul. In the physical world, you have *basīra*, an insight. For what you feel emotionally as a human being, outflowing of emotions, you receive the *fayyād* of Allah Swt, the Divine Effulgence. There is always this parallel. You choose which universe you are living in, but you try to get to the point where you understand that it is all connected. It is all connected. That is why it is systems theory. It is all connected. It is

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not just, “Wow. This is all connected! That’s it, fine! Now I know that it is all connected. Everyone is one. Everybody believes in the same thing. It is all the same God. We all love everybody in the hearts. We are all true believers, so let us hold hands and sing Kumbaya.” No not that kind of connection. We are all connected and I am part of that connection. In fact, I am an integral part of that connection. If I go to Europe taking a 110w razor with me, and I plug it in Europe, I will burn it out because in Europe it is 220w, and I only have one leg of that 220 watt. I am going to burn it out.

So the human being is like a transformer, or the other way around. If I bring a 220 “thing” and I have to drop it down to 110, I have to have a step-down transformer to make it work. I have to make it work. I have to make it resonate. What is the benefit of talking about systems and functionality and all of this? Maybe there isn’t any. But maybe it is to give you an understanding of how conditioned we are, how unaware we are, how we are so conditioned to see everything in the physical, material realm, while we are pursuing something that is metaphysical, mystical and transformative. How does change come about in system? That is a whole other thing, which I should write about rather than talk about. But how does change come about in systems? Isn’t the pursuit for spiritual knowledge and understanding about change? Is it not about transforming one’s own self and changing one’s own self? It would be good to know.

It would be good to know if everything is analogical and everything has its reciprocal, and I know how to make permanent change in a political system, for example, I also have a template for changing myself. Better yet, if I know how to make change in myself, I can make changes in the material systems of the world—the political, social systems of the world. It is not just because you are charismatic and everyone loves you. The question is what do you really know about creating change? What have you really learned? This is a case for why wise leaders always had wise people next to them. You would learn how to

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surrender to that advice, and you would know that person's advice was coming for the benefit of everybody. You would never question that; therefore, you would not have to have the whole system. You would just have to have the trust and the faith in the person. For that to happen, that person had to have a very reduced *nafs ammāra*. Their ego had to be almost nil. They had to meet certain criteria. Those are the criteria set up by Nebi Mohammed (sal), and by the *ambiyā*, like Sidna 'Isa (as). But who met that criteria of Sidna 'Isa (as). No one. No one. How do you know that?

Take as truth (which is questionable, highly questionable) the whole story about his crucifixion and the Last Supper. Take it as truth for a minute. So what happened after that when he is dragged through the streets? Who speaks about justice? Who stands up to the Roman Empire? Nobody. Why? The message is a strong message, but it does not have the infrastructure that the Shar'iah has. It does not have the infrastructure that the Sunnah has. It does not have the essential goals. That is why Allah Swt says, "I sent another prophet by the name of Ahmed. He is going to come and he is going to tell you this all over again, but in another way." Here now, I have the institution. I have the institution of *ijma*, and I have the institution of *shura*, and I have the institution of *ijtihad* and *tajdīd*, and I have the concept of *umma* and the concept of *jamat*—all of that for the world, the *'ālam al-khalq*. [Then for the *'ālam al-amr*], I have *tajalli*. I have this whole concept, this whole reality of *fayyād*, etc.

There is something else that is going to happen. So you are going to come into contact and you are going to, symbolically, fall over. You are going to go into ecstasy, *majdhub*. You are going to become lost to this world into something else. Now, there is a structural way of dealing with that, a functional way of dealing with that. But it is a structural and functional way on another level. That is you do certain practices; you open up certain *latā'if*. You see from there. You listen from there. You see yourself. You

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refine your *nafs ammāra*. As you do that, it does not matter whether you complete that process in the outer form of judging whether you completed it, but you are completing it inwardly. That is why we say, for example, “Don’t count when I say 1500 of something.” Lose yourself in the process. Allah is counting for you. What does that mean, “Allah is counting for you.”? Does that mean that Allah is sitting on a throne going, “Allah, Allah, Allah...” No. It means that you are in the flow of that process.

This does not make sense, [you might say]. Why do you say to do five hundred and then say, “Don’t count.” It is because we are using the language of the world, but we are using the reality of the experience, or the potential reality of the experience. It is another form of surrender. It is another form of trusting. It is finding comfort in something that is not your normal structure, your normal function, your normal form. How do you do that? You learn to see differently. One has to transcend the physical and transcend time, so we say, “Sit in meditation. Make your intention. Go into *ghunūgi* and drift.” “But I am sleeping.” No. You are in a trans-temporal state. You are transcending time, but you focused your intention. Your intention/*niyyat* is a bridge between this world and the next world. So you are actually in another state (other than Virginia), and in that state something else is happening. There are rules in that state. And we know this because Allah Swt gives us a metaphor for it, or a reality! I will take it as a reality. I will say a metaphor for those of you who are not willing to accept it or embrace it totally.

Supposedly, according to Allah Swt, which means it is true, there is a parallel universe. Parallel universes are very quantum mechanics. What is this parallel universe called? The world of the *jinn*. There are *jinn* in this room right now living in their parallel universe. That is the proof. Do you understand what I mean when I say, “That is the proof”? There are things that you don’t see, but there is a parallel universe. That is how we know that when you are in a state of meditation, you can possibly be in another universe, another

space, as we say, operating in another space not with the rules of this space, not with the markers of this space, not with the ‘*āyāh* of this space—[but with] different signs. What are those signs? They are in the Qur’an. They tell you what the signs are. What is this space? There is a space of *nafs ammāra*. There is the space of *nafs lawwama*; there is the space of *nafs mutma’inna*; there is the space of *nafs radiyya*, etc. There are these different spaces, and you are in these different spaces.

So I go back and I tell you again, if I had this magic wand and I can remove one leg and one arm, you could still live. But it is hard to operate in this world with just one leg and one arm. It is hard. You have to create prostheses. You have to create other means of getting around. You can live if you are born with one leg and one arm. If from the very beginning you learn how to live with one leg and one arm, it is much different than if you go to war and lose a leg and an arm. So we are born with the potential to be complete, but we are incomplete. We are born with eyes that see, but don’t have the inner eyes that see. It is okay to go through your whole life that way, because 99.9% of the people in the world do, so why not me? The answer to “Why not me?” is that you happen to be sitting here. In other words, you have to reject something in order to be that; whereas, the other person just was born into that and they don’t know that there is anything. You have to actually reject something.

We have seen people from here who have done that. They rejected things. You may not know what the price is for rejecting things. It might not matter to you, because you are getting something of this structure and this form and this world, and you have quieted down your *latā’if*. You are not trying anymore to look through this *latīfa* or that *latīfa*. You are not trying, so you are not missing it. The way memory operates is that things become a memory, like a thing, but they lack the emotion to go along with it. Dense matter is subject to time and space, and the *latā’if* are subject only to the laws of space.

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So you go into *ghunūgi* and you go into *idraq* and you become aware of a timeless state or space in which you are in. You are in space, but you are out of time. How many times do you sit in meditation, you drift, time comes, and it is over. Where did the time go? The time ran, but where did it go? Where you went is most important—learning to see, to observe. So in that sense, you enter this realm of no-locality. You could be anywhere as in the story I told you yesterday.

The *latā'if* themselves are analogical; they are local. One writer called them local manifestations. *Qalb, ruh, sirr, khafee, akhfah*: we will call them local manifestations of identically the same parts of a higher realm, a higher structure, a higher consciousness. Each *latifa* (*qalb, ruh, sirr, khafee, akhfah, nafs*) [has an identical manifestation]. Take *ruh* for example, because it is the easiest to think about. The *ruh*, your soul, your spirit is an identical manifestation but less than the essence of all *ruh* in Allah Swt. So in the higher realms, there is like a higher body of *latā'if*. So when you come into resonance with that, when you become attentive to that, when you focus on it, when you pay attention (*tawajjuh*) to that, (and we will get into that in days to come) you come into resonance with that higher value, that higher manifestation. So that is how Allah Swt says: **“I will see with your eyes and I will walk through your feet and I will work through your hands and I will speak through your tongue.”**

It is because you are in resonance with the higher being, just like the world of the *jinn* are in a different vibratory form than we are, so we don't see them. Every once in a while, they cross over and come close. You see them out of the corner of your eye. Have you ever sat in meditation where you are deep in meditation, you are out of this worldly state and you open your eyes and you see something dart? If you didn't, that is okay. Because there is this resonance, the *latā'if* allow the *murīd* to receive the *nai'ma*/grace by coming into resonance with the higher quality of heart, the higher quality of spirit, the higher

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quality of consciousness, the secret sacredness of Allah Swt. If you come into resonance with that, you receive the grace of that higher state. The state descends to you. We say that it descends into the human body, and we maintain in our tradition that these *latā'if* are the basis for Sufism that you find in every Tariqah, in every Order, without which there cannot be any Sufism.

Again, you see they manifest, they function, and they have a form, but it is not the manifestation, the function and the form of this world. They are just another analogy, something that is higher, something that we experience in our Sufic practices on the Divine Level. With that, we can enter into the realm of the '*ālam al-amr*.

Asalām aleikum.