

September 24, 2009

Thursday



Title: The Unique Yearning to Know More

DVD title: Sufism from the Point of View of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Tariqah:
The Unique Yearning of Wanting to Know More

Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem. I thought I'd talk about Sufism a little, since there are some new students around. I'd like to talk about Tasawwuf from the point of view of our Tariqah, from my conversations with Hazrat, and from my contributions to the lessons that we created together many years ago to clarify the things which should be clarified.

The yearning to know more is unique to a few people—to know more about creation, to know more about Allah, to know more about their own life. The desire to return consciously to the essence, called *dhat*, is even among fewer people. It's not something that a person necessarily tends to walk around with in those terms. Many people don't know that what they are yearning for is to understand their own existence, until they come into contact with someone or some thing that makes it clear. This is like a person I described to you last night, who received a great deal from the transmission I gave over the weekend and had a number of experiences with it. Or the young man who said, "Oh, I found what I have been looking for all my life." His life hasn't been very long so far, 20 some years; but *alhamdulillah-Llāh*, that's very nice. You might know or might not know you are looking for something, until you find something and think, "Oh, that's what I was looking for."

Because people are all different, sometimes it's realized intellectually and sometimes emotionally, because the spiritual, mystical path takes you through all kinds of forests, rivers, and valleys. But it is inherent in every person, to different levels and degrees, to have curiosity and a sense that there is more. Some of it is in terms of quantity; and some of it is a small amount, but a very intense feeling. Some people have a chance to develop it. Those are the people who come into contact with, in our case, Tasawwuf. If Tasawwuf is defined or referred to as a mystical path, as it is, then the way of the mystics should address everyone, not just the followers of Islam or Hinduism or whatever it may be. Wherever there is Divine Revelation, you find mystics who have developed under that umbrella.

The other reality we have been talking about is that the body is not only this muscle, flesh and blood that we are familiar with. There is another aspect contained within our body that is subtly different, which we call "myself" or "I". That self tends to be defined as "*nafs*" in Sufism, and has a number of dimensions to it. The mystical path and practices activates a level of the "I" of the *nafs*. It sets it into motion, climbing the ladder, if you will, rung by rung of different levels of development based on different levels of perception that come through the *latā'if*. Some people have experienced this awakening of the *nafs* like an electrical current. The Hindus talk about *shakti*. One person who was here in the *khanaqah* recently described it similarly. Some of you have experienced that during the *hadra* or *sema*. Some people experience it as a shutting down, so the body can't hold itself up. Those mystical experiences aren't very important, other than the fact they point to something different, beyond the norm.

With the activation of these new levels of the *nafs*, which some Sufis also refer to as the unveiling of the *rūh*/soul, comes different levels of awareness, consciousness, or insight

(*basīr*). As one proceeds in *muraqabah*, *tafakkur*, and *dhikr*, we begin to realize that there is this “I” we are familiar with, but it is also a reflection of another “I”, a greater self. Just like everything in this world is a reflection of something greater, we can’t just assume that what the “I” or ego experiences is outside of that. It is the lesser expression of something greater. It is the reflection of the “I” which might be called the Divine Presence, Allah or the Supreme Reality. What begins to happen is a human being becomes conscious that Allah (swt) is acting in and through this creation, and is reflected in and through this creation. As I’ve said many times, when you look at how systems operate and interact, the dynamics of the creation, what exists in the *dhāhir* and what is beyond it in the *bātin* (off or over the horizon), we realize that this Truth/Reality/Allah is acting in and through creation as a reflection of something greater.

Many people get glimpses of this in their life—some moment of realization, some momentary insight. Some people can replicate it over and over, time and again to some degree. That’s why they go on vision quests or retreats, or whatever. You get a glimpse into a greater relationship between yourself and nature, between yourself and characteristics or qualities of Allah. These encounters, moments, or realizations open you to a greater reality about yourself, or greater than yourself. For most, these glimpses and the little proofs one has of something beyond themselves is sufficient. Nothing else is needed. But other people desire something more to contact that Divine Presence, to see it, to experience that truth. Because seeing just a part of it is an enticement; it’s not sufficient. That grows in the hearts of some people if they allow it, because the potential is there. Love grows.

The desire to annihilate oneself in the whole, to lose oneself in the greater reality, to have a taste of the eternity becomes very strong. What is realized that is needed is your *iman*. It is not something cultivated or proved by the form that you practice, but it is something

that you want to have as your default, that comes spontaneously to you, unending. One of the greatest realizations you have as you stand at Niagara Falls is that it just doesn't stop. It's amazing. Then you begin to yearn for some way that is near to you, available to you, a path you can see and walk on to make yourself aware of that Divine Reality. That's when Allah says, "**I am as near to you as your jugular vein.**"

Then the question is how do you fulfill that yearning? How does something so gross as the human being interface with something so subtle and so sublime as Allah? Understand that we can only see and experience very poor reflections and expressions, as beautiful as they may be, of that Divine Presence or Reality through those senses. There must be another way, a way that we can remember what it was like to be part of the whole before we became separate from it in consciousness.

Throughout the history of humanity, people have been trying to understand that yearning and that urge. It gets very covered up by a lot of cultural things and time, putting the means into the same context as the means in the physical world. You have to work hard it. You have to struggle. It's a sacrifice. It's difficult. It takes time. You put the means of realizing the essence of the truth of your existence in the same box that you put everything else, so it gets mixed up in that box. When you make a choice to sit in *muraqabah* and meditation, or you choose to sit at the computer, they are equal. They become equal under the word "choice." In terms of distractions, there are things a person cannot be distracted from at periods in their life. If you fall madly in love with someone, you can't be distracted from it. It's always on your mind. Later on, after you've been married a while, then you can be distracted more easily. Things entropy. Your love may deepen, but the distraction is not so obvious. You integrate things and relationships.

The path to experiencing that Reality or Divine Presence begins inside of us, but it is very

much dependent on how we reflect upon what is outside of us. We know the saying,

“*Know yourself and know your Lord.*” The essence of it is Allah (swt) is present.

Though we can't see Allah because of the veils over our eyes, we have a means for it.

We have a means that is an example, the Prophet (sal). We have a means that are practices and *dhikr*/remembrance. Since most of us are pretty centered on our own ego, we have to go through a process of trusting and surrendering, submitting and practicing something that we are not really fully in control of, unless we choose to regulate our practice so that we can stay in control of it. By regulate, I mean justify changes in it, or justify means you prefer as opposed to things that are difficult, or experiences that you like to have as opposed to ones you don't particularly like to have. Nonetheless, if a person focuses and makes the effort, there is this approach we have, which is a very repeatable phenomena by Newtonian or linear terms. It's a scientific approach to achieving levels of refinement.

Refinement comes through these centers of consciousness, the *latā'if*, that are the inner faculties for attaining knowledge and insight. The most important of these centers is where we begin, the heart. With serious, sincere, diligent practice, our predecessors developed methods and techniques that activate the heart and that cultivate the beginnings of intuition and awareness, the heart being a bridge between the outer and the inner. Sufis over the centuries have referred to this process as “polishing the heart.” The mirror of the heart is represented as being able to catch the light of truth as it is reflected through our consciousness. With this light (which Hazrat liked to talk about a lot) comes the understanding that beyond this material reality exists a truth, a being so bright and so vast that everything in the created universe some how reflects it.

You can imagine a light so bright that not even a black stone will be unable to reflect it.

[If you would] go to the opening of a car dealership [some years ago], they would have

those big lights that go in the sky. If you stood in front of it, you'd be blinded by it. Yet, it's so bright that anything reflects it. We have to assume that our bodies and our own reality, our own beingness reflects that higher being, too. We are given the ability to look at all the aspects of the created universe and to reflect upon them. It's no mistake we have that word in English: reflect. When our heart is polished, everything we put our eyes upon, our consciousness toward is reflected in our heart. It's like saying, we are like that world-wide net, and everything is contained within us if you search for it. But it's not really within us, we are just a means to access it. We are like a cosmic browser.

We have been given the capacity by Allah to reflect things. That's because we can name them. They have a reality because they are named. They can be organized, described, and contextualized because they have names, just like we have names. Those names are not the things that distinguish us, but they identify us more easily than me having to describe you and hope that someone can visualize everything I'm describing. "He's got a nose that's x cm long, and his hair is gray, and has hazel eyes." You still don't have a picture of someone. "He has a goatee beard and a narrow face." You still don't have a picture of someone. You need more than that. You need some identifier that makes it easier for us. So, Allah (swt) has given us this capacity.

When we discover and fulfill these capacities or potentials, ultimately we find that we have also deepened our *iman* significantly, and our *yaqīn al haqq*, the certainty of truth. When we achieve a level of insight where we realize we are in submission to Allah; and that we act only according to the Divine Will; that we exist separate but completely part of that ocean of truth, just like a drop of rain gets absorbed in the ocean; if our will is in resonance and consonance with the Will of Allah, then all the actions that we perform are *fī sabīli-Llāh*.. Realizing this is a liberating state. You can turn your intent, your mirror anywhere and reflect on anything. As you put your sight, so you are reflecting on that

from the depths of your being. It is easy then to understand what is obedience and submission. You are submitting to the qualities. You are obeying the moment. You are obeying the Divine Laws.

You are being in consonance with the laws of the universe, just like your body is automatically in consonance with the law of gravity. You don't have to tell yourself, "There is gravity; therefore I'm not floating." That's why we have an autonomic nervous system. There are things that just happen; then there are things that you have to choose to happen. But if the things that just happen didn't happen, you wouldn't be able to choose anything to happen. That's just the truth of the physical, biological reality, which is a reflection of a greater truth. Selfless obedience, recognizing the Divine Presence, being conscious of Allah—these are results. You don't set out to be conscious of Allah in those terms. In fact, you set out to be conscious of yourself. That's saying, "I'm studying a microcosm of the whole universe. If I really understand this, everywhere I look, I will see it. I'm the template."

All that I've said reflects space, but it's also true in terms of time. In this sense, when one does these practices, one not only loses a sense of time, but one learns to live in the moment. In other words, one learns to live in any time, all the time. One learns to be aware any time, all the time. That's what's happening. When you are in that state of obedience and submission, in time and timelessness, you can say that person is '*abd* Allah. That person is a servant of Allah.

The best of the servants sees that the tea glass is empty, and is quick to grab it and fill it with tea. The best servant sees what is beneficial for the king or not, or what is in consonance with what the ruler wants, or not in consonance. A person comes and says he wants to talk to the ruler. The *wazir* or the servant at the door says, "What is it you want

to talk about?” “Well, I want to talk about such and such.” He knows it is not of interest to the king, so he doesn’t let him come into the court. Or he says to him, “Go and look at it in this way, and then if you still have a question, come back.”

The foundation of that is *ikhlas*/sincerity. The foundation of the search and of the guidance, the acceptance and the rejection, is sincerity. In fact, Tasawwuf is nothing other than inner and outer sincerity. Why this path doesn’t focus only on the purification of the individual is because if you are striving to be selfless, in submission, and obedient, then the traveler, the *sālik*, realizes they have to devote their insights into improving the world, improving the community, the nation, this community, humanity as a whole. Allah gives us many intimations of it. He tells us about the believing men and women, what happens to them. If you take the life of one human being, you are taking the life of all humanity. If you save the life of one, it is like saving the life of all. There is an inextricable link. As long as you don’t think about it, or as long as you don’t get to the point where you have thought about it and embraced it, and now it is part of your being to care about this person or that person or to try to effectuate positive change in individuals or groups of individuals, you just can’t travel the path or go very far in this journey. You can’t get very far in life, truth be known.

The commitment to service makes an individual, a Sufi, very much involved in the dynamic, creative ebb and flow of what is happening in their society and their community, which is why (and therefore no surprise if we are sincere Sufis) we get to see what’s coming down the road in a sense. You have *basīr*/insight. You have *khasf*. You have eyes that see and ears that hear and [you can easily] say, “That’s a trend. That’s what is going to happen” or “This could be taken care of this way.” Long before others see it, you have this insight. It’s frustrating at times, because it is long before others see it! Others could be seeing it and working on something. Musa is working on renewable

energy. Dr. Hassouna has been working for 50 years on his product. It's obvious what it does, that it is good, and could help end poverty and hunger. But that doesn't mean that others see it and it's going to be snapped up, and automatically that effort is going to be a success. Sometimes it's frustrating to have that sight. Allah bestows the blessings upon those people. We have that sight. His father bestowed his 50 years plus of work on us.

The dynamic, transformative forces that are available to us as Sufis have to interface with the world. You have to put not only the effort into your *muraqabah*, *dhikr*, and study, but (as you well know) you have to put effort into the world—to get a job, to keep a job, to keep your boss happy, to write a proposal, to create an idea for someone, to try to talk the university into a program, or to try to talk a client into hiring, or make institutional change takes a lot of effort; but it, too is symbolic. All too often, we are willing to make that effort in the outer and not in the inner. We make the effort between 8 and 5, and we should rest in the evenings. But Allah (swt) didn't design us just to rest. He designed us to give us things to do in that rest and turn inward. If going to sleep isn't turning inward, what is? EDIT 34:18

You are turning inward to the world of sleep because you had a long day. It's natural. The physical body gets tired. But there is a revivification that can take place also, spiritually. This is a very, very real path. It's a very real path that is beautifully linked to a text and to the life of a man that allows you to find the answer to any question. And [it is linked to] a language that gives you pause to think and contemplate. Needless to say, you can Google Sufism and find all the *shaykhs* out there. You can look through the history of humanity, and find that there are many people who have come under the influence of people who don't really have the proper training, the proper *ijāzah*, or the proper insight. They are institution builders, or *bāraka* collectors, or Nigerian con men. EDIT 35:56 There are lesser and greater proponents of it and teachers of it.

As you know in the early years of your study, I gave you books like Idries Shah's book and others to read. Why? Because I wanted you to know what it wasn't, as much as what it was. I'm not saying Idries Shah wasn't a Sufi. He was a master of showing you what is and what isn't Tasawwuf. What passes for it, and what it really is. The greatest example of what it is, is the manifestation of such things as a community that despite all reason, logic, and laws of the universe, survives, with less and less income and fewer and fewer participants.

There are signs of success, just like the Qur'an is filled with signs. Why are they not called verses? They are called 'āyāt/signs, indicators, direction. What is a sign? Every verse. What does it say on the sign? "Route 29. Exit ½ mile." No, it doesn't. It tells you something deep and profound. Signs tell you something. We have to learn how to read the signs and navigate this path. Every once in a while, someone like Abdul Bari Shah (ra) comes along, and becomes a cosmic GPS. You have to learn how to use a GPS, and trust it – which is a big, big step. EDIT 38:55 Someone comes along and gives you tools that make it easier. And as human beings are, when you have a tool that makes it easier, you get lazy. A tool that makes it easier makes only part of it easier. EDIT 39:30 When she's weedeating, it makes cutting the weeds easier. Do you ever try to service a weedeater on a regular basis? That's not so easy. If you don't do it on a regular basis, the gas gets old, the carburetor gets screwed up. You have to have another kind of knowledge in order to do something that makes something easier. It's like the practices. You have to learn how to do it. Edit 40:17 You need people like Abdul Bari Shah (ra), but you have to work for the ease. Whatever Tasawwuf is, it is good psychotherapy. It is good preparation for a job. It is good decision-making. It is good for developing some intuition. But it is not designed to provide just a good living for you. It is not designed to provide a living for people who can't do anything else, like me, or for *shaykhs* or

Many of these people, like Gurdjieff, kept people in a state of disequilibrium and mystification, as Hazrat used to call it. Because we are from the West, we like to be part of the East. People who are Westerners, tend to reduce things to their essential, basic statement like: “I want to be a Sufi because Sufis unite all beliefs and religions. I love everybody, so I want to be a Sufi.” It’s true that if you understand Islam and become a Sufi, you will be able to see the truth in everything. You are not blocked by color or gender or religion or any of those limitations. It’s not that you don’t see them; just you are not blocked by them. That’s not the real focus of it, though. The real focus is to develop the spiritual potential in the human being that will, of course, diminish a person’s bigotry and prejudices, intolerances and fanaticism, and keep them more out of conflict, but these are all secondary results.

The primary purpose goes far beyond these dilutions. It is to promote balance between your inner and outer life, between the *dhāhir* and the *bātin*. [Its purpose is] to allow you to sit at that crossroad, the nexus in the ‘*ālam al mithal*, moment to moment spontaneously, and correctly choose to go this way or that way. [Its purpose is] to look into the depth of something in the inner realms, to leave the outer world completely and be in the Divine Light of Allah. Sufism is also called *tarbiya*/education. A person who studies is called a *talib*, not Taliban. We are all *talib*/students, in that sense. What is developed in us is not a better resumè, or a deeper understanding of physics, biology, chemistry, human resource management, organization development or whatever. What’s developed in us is a heart that is well-educated, that has gotten an advanced degree, because the heart has the capability to plumb the depths and vastness of the universes and of consciousness. We gain insights through our heart, and gain light in our heart that serves our lives as a vehicle. It serves the passengers, getting them to their destination.

It has been said, in sort of simplistic terms, that those who pursue this path can only pursue it if their heart is awake, because the mind can't pursue it. So you learn to stimulate the heart and trust the heart, and attach it to those things that are not evanescent and transient, like the Prophet Mohammed (sal). ***“The earth and the heavens contain Me not, but the heart of My faithful believer contains Me.”*** We're familiar with that. How do you do that? How you do that is with the unique and very special practices of Tasawwuf, especially the practices that create virtue and good character in an individual. The name of which is what? What's the word for virtue? *Akhlaq*. The person who has this virtue we say also has *aqīda*. I find it hard to translate *aqīda*. It's the character of the person of *akhlaq*. Edit 47:34 It's the essence in the individual of *akhlaq*. It manifests in how you speak to one another, how you work with one another, how you serve one another. It manifests in your friendships, in your love. It manifests in your honesty and truthfulness, in your concerns. And it is consistent.

If it is missing, you have no center and you are adrift in the universe. Like a twig in a stream, it floats along and gets stuck for a while. Then it gets unstuck and floats along. If you can imagine getting stuck in very bad places, then you know the advantages of *aqīda*. Purifying the heart, purifying the self, purifying one's *adab*, doing what is *ihsan*, what is beautiful (*hasana*) develops a nearness to Allah, develops knowledge/marifah, and moments of *fana*/annihilation, moments of awakening and realizing that you are part of something that is essential, subsistence, *baqa*. The real purpose, the primary purpose of Tasawwuf is the transformation and creation of a very humane human being, of ethics and morality, and of building the character through certain methodologies and training. In the world we live in today, that's very difficult, especially when you have people who can twist the truth and words around.

A large number of vocal people in the world who control a lot of the media, who control a lot of the message are people who are not balanced, who don't have those inner yearnings, and who do not respect knowledge, ethic, or morality. EDIT 50:43 When you listen to these people, most of them sound reasonable, even when articulating something that is completely the opposite of the other person. Very confusing! EDIT - 52:09 You get caught up in the very ugly untruths that people use to try to convince others it is the truth. How do you get out of this cycle in a world that challenges and demands us to balance our life with the fulfillment of inner yearnings? "Ah, Shaykh, I really don't have those inner yearnings." Then you shouldn't be sitting here—goodbye. But if you do have them (and you do because we are sitting here doing this Thursday night dance), we know there are choices available to us.

Among these choices are these transmissions that come from what we call the Golden Chain of authorized teachers. They offer a way to be in the world and not of the world. They offer a way to be awakened to a larger contextual framework we call truth or reality.

They allow us to see the internal and external consistency in all the forms and expressions of the Divine, especially the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī line of teachers. We were given very practical, practicable techniques that don't or shouldn't disturb our work, our family relationships, and our social responsibility. EDIT 53:52- 55:35 I always go back to the Ramakrishna story. Naren, who later became Vivekananda, came to him and said, "O Master, you always talk about yearning for the Mother Divine. What if I don't yearn? What should I do?" Some of you are thinking that: "I don't yearn like he's talking about." What was his answer? He said, "Yearn to yearn."

As many superhighways as we have, they are all like the beltway. They go in a circle. There is only one road off of that: the road of yearning to yearn. Then you get to go on a

journey. To do that, you have to realize that these teachings benefit everyone on some level. You can be extremely intelligent like... or extremely ignorant like... EDIT 56:57

The fact is, as many of you know, you come into these teachings wherever they are.

Nobody resents the fact that the young people come into the teachings now, and you spent 20, 25 years in them. They get all the *bāraka*; they get all the explanations. They hear it in a slightly different way, though some have said the Shaykh talks about the same thing all the time. I do, but that doesn't mean it's the same thing, really. It means these teachings, these methods, stay the same for the most part. But these teachings benefit people of different aptitudes, different natures—today; therefore, what's said today, even on the same subject a year from now, will be heard differently and will have a different effect on you.

One person who said that, among the many people who have, was a person who did repetitive work over and over again. I think that's interesting. It's only by the blessings of our *shaykh* and our *shuyukh* over this millennia and a half that these teachings could survive. How else can they survive? We have history books filled with the names of people, but those books are pretty small compared to the number of people who have passed through this world. Is it 100 thousandth of one percent of the people in the universe? How can it compare? You can fill up 200 GB of space of names of people, and still wouldn't touch the number of people who have lived. Well, many 10 GB.

That takes us back to where we should begin again anew, which is the practices and the *latā'if*. Next time, I want to go a little more into a discussion of each *latīfa*, beginning with reminding you what they are. I'd like to go into each *latīfa* to some degree, so you can see and measure how you are doing. The secret of it is the sincerity with which you sit in meditation in those transmissions, and in the yearning you have; and secondarily, in the amount of time you spend at it. It is important. The amount of time does count, also.

It is not superfluous. If you get something tonight, or the next time I speak, that you never got in 25 years, don't think you wasted 25 years. It's not the way it works. But you will be catapulted ahead 25 years, just like you might think you have lost 25 years.

You haven't lost anything. Whatever it took to get you to that moment, that's what it took.

Once you have that moment, you unknowingly are being catapulted over many years of effort. You don't even see it. You see the past. Then you get to this point and say, "Ah!" Where are you when you come down from the, "Ah"? You are light-years away from the place where you started the "Ah". It's true. That's a *maqam*. You can't come down from it. You may think, "How will I get through all the Orders and the transmissions? I don't have time for it now. I wasn't doing it before, and I don't want to be humiliated by the Shaykh in public when I come up to get a transmission, blah, blah, blah..." That's baloney, because you get catapulted, rocketed. Once you capture that sincerity and are in control of that humility, and in control of your *himma*, and you are honest, you realize that even if it laid dormant for 10, 20, 30 years, there is a way to stimulate it. When it's stimulated—Boom! Wow! "Why did I waste time for 30 years?" That may be true, but not spiritually true, if you develop the *himma*. *Asalaamu aleikum*.