

September 30, 2009

Wednesday



Title: [How Our Practices Came to Be. Tajalli.](#)

DVD title: How Our Practices Came to Be:
Understanding Tajalli

Dinner blessing: O Allah, we are grateful for all the blessings You shower upon us and all the challenges You bring before us. We ask You to deepen our faith/*iman*, and help us to remember that You are present in our lives. Help us to remember that how we live our life is a prelude to our eternity with You. We ask You, Allah, especially today to send Your Blessings upon the soul of Neelam's mother, who joined you in the accompaniment of your angels, *inshā'a-Llāh*, last evening, when You released her from the bonds of the body and brought her before You, and before her Lord, the Prophet Isa/Jesus (as). We ask You, Allah, to give strength to the family and understanding and *sabr*/patience and perseverance in their loss. We ask You for the protection of those among us who are ill, and those who are traveling, and those who are struggling and striving in their *akhlaq*.
Amin.

Suhbat: *Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem.* As I've told you many times, because of the world in which we live in today, our predecessors came to the understanding that in the material world, where we have a lot of challenges and a lot of day-to-day demands, it's hard to fulfill your inner yearning and desire. Of course, in every age, people feel they have a lot of demands on them. But as you move from an agrarian economy to a more materialistic economy like we have today, you are out of the rhythm of nature. Because of that, Naqshbandī teachers adjusted the ways in which a person could receive the

transmission to lead a life in this world within the context of a more comprehensive spiritual philosophy: to be in the world and not of it, and to be able to fulfill your day-to-day responsibilities. Hence, over a period of time, they came to ways in which these *latā'if* could be awakened and could be utilized. They were able to see that things were changing. The teachings still had to benefit and be available to people who want them and seek them, and who had the unique capacity and capability (like you all have, theoretically) to be in the world and not of the world, to be able to benefit and awaken the *latā'if*.

The elders or early *awliyā* of our Tariqah realized through their *kashf* (their intuitive insight) that there were ten *latā'if*. They divided them into the '*ālam al-amr* and the '*ālam al-khalq*. Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī (ra) who was from the Mujaddidī line said that first came the '*ālam al-amr*, the world of command, which instantly existed when Allah said, "**Kun faya kun. Be and it became**"—the moment of "Boom" when the universe was created. Then Allah created the '*ālam al-khalq*, the world of creation, through a process of evolution that lasted millions of earth years. We have no problem with creationism and evolution, because we understand that there is the '*ālam al-amr* which is the moment of explosion of the universe, and the '*ālam al-khalq* which takes place by evolution. After Allah (swt) created the '*ālam al-khalq*, He created human beings. That's how we use the word "he" and say [things] were created in linear time, but human beings appeared during this evolutionary process.

Human beings have certain capabilities and faculties, which are looked at as points of awareness or *latā'if*. Five of these: *nafs*, *bād*, *nār*, *ma'*, *khāk* (self, air, fire, water, and earth) are part of the '*ālam al-khalq*. Then *qalb*, *rūh*, *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā* are part of the world of command. We are told that these *latā'if* were initially illuminated, luminous. When Allah (swt) connected them to the body, the light was filtered through the

influences of the physical world. So the light is being filtered through the earth, air, fire, water, and self. Think of it that way. It is like very dark sunglasses that are non-polarized. As a result, the human being identified more with the *'ālam al-khalq*, and with materiality. We can make the metaphor that our natural insight and inner radiance was dimmed, like a light bulb in a heavy light fixture which dims the light. This was reflected in Qur'an:

Surely we created the human being of the best stature. Then we reduce him to the lowest of the low, except those who believe and do good works, for they shall have a reward unailing. (95:4-6)

Though this is the case for human beings, certain practices were developed that involved unveiling these *latā'if*, and concentrating on the *latā'if*. So that you are able now to use the *latā'if* as a means to greater awareness of the Divine Perception, or in a sense, recollecting, as Bahaudin Naqshbandi (ra) said. This is the cornerstone of Islam: to recollect and remember/*dhikr*. The more a person develops this ability to see the Divine Presence, the less the light of knowledge is hidden from them. That light is a revelatory light. Like memory, the *latā'if* are faculties we sense and experience. But we cannot explain it very easily and we cannot find it anywhere. It's just evidenced.

If I said, "Define memory for me," how would you do it? You'd have to use the word "remember," recollecting acts or circumstances. Recollecting means re-collecting. Things were disseminated, and now they are recollected. You have to use some dynamic verb that describes a process called memory. You could say, "My memory is in my brain." Maybe you could do an MRI and see when people are remembering. When they remember familiar things it's one way, and when they learn something new, it's another way. You can see the process, but you don't know what it is. Sometimes, as you know,

a person loses their memory as a result of an injury. I did, once, for over 24 hours. You become more aware of the importance of memory at that point. Yet, even under those circumstances you can't explain it. You can explain the loss, but not really what it is. In the same way, you cannot describe easily what the *latā'if* are and what they do.

But a person who brings them to light understands them. When you connect with the *latā'if*, you understand it by the perceptions you have, by the faculties that are developed in this process of opening the *latā'if*. Different Tarīqah and Sufi orders associate *latā'if* with different locations in the body. We place these five centers as you know in the chest (*qalb*, *rūh*, *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā*) and *nafs* is placed in the forehead. Earth, air, fire, and water are described as throughout the body. The idea is that a *shaykh* of our Tarīqahs guides a person to enlighten, re-ignite or reveal the light that is in those *latā'if* by removing those things that cover the light; and through *muraqabah*/meditation, mostly; by making a *niyyat* to pay attention to a particular center/*latīfah*, focusing first on *qalb* and then the other *latā'if*: *rūh*, *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā*. When those are uncovered, you turn your attention to the '*ālam al-khalq*, the world of creation.

Of the subtle centers connected with the world of creation, only the *nafs* is regarded as corresponding to a particular point in the body. In the Mujaddidī line, it's here (Shaykh points to the middle of the forehead); and in Chishtiyya, it's here on the *arsh* (Shaykh points to the top of the head). The first of the *latā'if* of the '*ālam al-khalq* that we look at is the *nafs*. It is considered to be the sum total of all of the others. After you concentrate on the self for some time, then we try to guide the seeker to focus on the gross elements of air, fire, water, and earth. When these are infused with the light you now have from the other *latā'if* that you have opened up, we say that every pore of your body, every hair on your body, becomes illuminated and starts to remember Allah. You remember the story I tell about being in a cab with a man in Karachi.

All of these practices are based on the phrase, “*Indirāj an-nihāyah fi’l-bidāyah. Where others end, there marks our beginning.*” We use it in the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī line and other orders. This concept describes a sequencing of spiritual practices, and it was introduced by Bahaudin Naqshband (ra) in the 14th century. It is a technique designed to overcome obstacles that keep human beings from drawing near to God. Human beings forget our Creator for two basic reasons: the first is we are drawn to the external world. The other reason is because of our ego, and what is contained in our ego. So to obtain this proximity or *ma’īyat*/nearness to Allah, it’s necessary for us to free ourselves from the kind of bondage we find ourselves bound to in the external world. The ability to come near to Allah means we have to separate ourselves from our “I-ness” or selfishness.

Most of the *shaykhs* focus on freeing the seeker from the external world. We don’t do that, necessarily. It happens automatically. We focus on awakening the *latā’if*, seeing through the *latā’if*, and realizing that to be from the external world doesn’t mean to be free of the external world. But free from the external world means free from the distractions, the clutches, the temptations of it. We give our focus to the purification of the *latā’if*, and the purification that comes from the awareness of the physical qualities of earth, air, fire, and water and *nafs*. This journey is accomplished through very, very refined, very serious spiritual practices which you know very well—and it takes a long time.

If you follow this path, and something goes wrong in the long period of time it takes to complete it, the seeker may not be able to reach the goal but for the *nai’ma*/grace of Allah (swt). If you are sincere; if you are vibrating in the right key, the system responds to you. You may not receive all the transmissions. You may make some error or you may have become somewhat distracted, but your *niyyat* is very pure. The great teachers have told

us this: if you do a wrong act and repent, you are forgiven. If you make a good intention and don't fulfill it, you get the rewards of the intention. If you do a good intention and do fulfill it, you get the reward of the intention. If the intention is bad, to do something wrong, and you stop yourself, you get the benefit of the intention. But it's only when you make a bad intention and do the bad act, there is punishment for that.

So we have to keep up our dedication, our passion, our courage, and intention even though we may be finding ourselves in desperate situations, [whether it be] a personal situation, an emotional situation, physical illnesses, work challenges, or family difficulties. We have to keep up our devotion and dedication. In fact, we should see that those difficulties and challenges intensify and deepen our *īmān*. At some point, you will realize that is the whole purpose of life. And if you realize that after you have rejected all the tests and trials, and escaped them, then what is it that will develop you? You say, "Oh, my God. I'm at the end of my life, and I see if I had made this and that decision, it would have been very difficult at the time, but I would have deepened my *īmān*." After all, that's the point, to deepen your *īmān*. You can make decisions that are not pleasant, that are difficult, that even allow people to take advantage of you. But the worst thing is the hypocrisy, or the lack of making those decisions.

In the news tonight is a Senator who was a Congressman. He got caught up in a prostitution scandal in Washington. Nobody brought any action against him; nor did he lose his license in the state of Louisiana, where such things are crimes. Then he got elected to the Senate. When an ethics group tried to get him censured in the Senate, they said they couldn't do it because he wasn't in the Senate at the time. They went to the Congress, and they said they couldn't do it because he was no longer in House of Representatives. That was a few years ago, and now the ACORN story is in the news. They were set up to look like they started a prostitution ring, so the right-wingers could

shut them down. So who's taking the lead in talking about why ACORN is bad? This guy! who has evidence against him for taking advantage of the services of prostitution rings in three different occasions. This hypocrisy is the kind of thing where there can't be any light. They are living in darkness.

The point of this is to say there is no light in these people's lives. They live in darkness; therefore, earth, air, fire and water (which we are all made up of) are all dark matter. Khwaja Bahaudin Naqshband (ra) was aware of the risks that seekers face when they take up the journey. He felt that as the distance from the period of Prophethood increased, away from the time of the *salaf* and the *taba'ain*, and the *taba taba'ain*, the capacity and ability of a seeker to walk on the spiritual path became more difficult. Seekers had no longer the same dedication, passion, courage, and yearning. You think you have yearning, passion, and desire to gain knowledge. Maybe you spend a lot of time saying, "Do I really? I was born into this," or "I married into it."

Bahaudin Naqshbandi saw that people didn't have the same desire and yearning, and that entropy had set it. With the help of Allah (swt), he discovered a shorter, easier way which was really the inverse of the method that was practiced at the time. He focused on the purification of the heart. Then he went through the activating of the other subtle centers of consciousness of the world of command: *qalb*, *rūh*, *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā*. Only then did he deal with the subtle centers of the world of creation, the *'ālam al-khalq*. Why? This method, which is known as "*where others end there marks our beginning*," or "*our beginning is in their ending*," is based on the fact that the seeker is given a taste of the final destination and the early stages of the journey, but fully understanding the reality will come at the end.

Hazrat Khwaja Bahaudin Naqshband (ra) said this method was quick, and didn't involve

any austerity or hardship, but allowed people a sufficient view or survey of the path (like Google Earth), and the details are left for later. Every effort is made to reach the state of *insani kamil* as quickly as possible, but first you get an overview. It's like you get an overview of the mountain, and then the clouds set. When you are climbing the mountain, you don't see the peak anymore. You fly in and "Ah, there is Kilimanjaro." You see the whole mountain. But when you start climbing the mountain, you don't see anything except the footpath in front of you. You have to be very, very careful, because there's snow that might be melting. There are chasms and all kinds of things to worry about. You have to sleep out in the cold weather. You think this path is hard, go try to climb Kilimanjaro or Mount Everest.

Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī (ra), the *mujaddid al-alf ath-thānī*, made this path easier and illuminated the world with the light of his knowledge. He described the detail of the *'ālam al-amr*, and systemized the teachings. He said that if the seekers are engaged profoundly and in detail with the Names and Attributes of Allah (swt), the *Asmā' al-Husna*, their path is obstructed because there is no end to the names and attributes, if you only practice that method. If you practice the method we have, you can come more quickly to the end of the journey. In other words, if you are going to contemplate the Ninety-Nine Names of Allah as a means of coming to the end of the path, there is no end to the Ninety-Nine Names of Allah. It's like counting the stars. There is nothing wrong with contemplating the Names of Allah (swt), but there are certain names that go along with certain practices that will allow you to cut through it.

If you go out and look at the heavens, and you are an astronomer, how many of those stars have names? How many do you know? What does the average person know? The average person loves the sky. "I wonder what that one is?" "That's Jupiter! Ah!" Even though it doesn't mean anything, it adds to your knowledge. You identify things. There

are billions of stars out there that you can't name. Sometimes people think these Naqshbandī-Mujaddidīs of this line don't like the Names of God; that's not it. It you want to understand and traverse the path, those things are endless. You have to be able to grasp endlessness, and then those Names will mean something to you. In light of this, and in the light of the *hadith* of the Prophet (sal), we realize that human beings have to be treated with love, and that things should be made easier rather than difficult.

The Prophet (sal) said, “***Make things easy for people. Speak to them in a language they understand. Allah loves ease.***” So comes this man, Hazrat ‘Abdul Bāri Shah (ra), who also made changes in the practices, just like Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī (ra) made changes in the practices. Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī (ra) made changes to the teachings of Bahaudin Naqshband (ra), and ‘Abdul Bāri Shah (ra) over a hundred years ago made changes to the teachings of Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī (ra). We consider him a *qutb al-irshād*, one of the axis of the time. He was a hundred-year-*mujaddid*. One comes every hundred years. So, now, around this time, there is another *mujaddid*.

This principle of “*where others end, there marks our beginning*,” was introduced again. But now it was introduced by Shaykh ‘Abdul Bāri Shah (ra) to the rest of the Orders, in addition to the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī Order. Shaykhs of other Orders wanted to introduce this principle to their teachings, but they weren't in a position to make those changes very easily. As a consequence, you find it in other Orders, but I've never seen it really focused on. You find the concept of *muraqabah* there, but it's not focused on. They weren't given that special *idhn* to do it as ‘Abdul Bāri Shah (ra) was given in his journeys in the *ghaib*, or in his *kashf*. The qualities, the spiritual status, and the miracles of this *mujaddid*/renewer (*mujaddid* comes from *tajdīd*, *ijtihad* and all are related), ‘Abdul Bāri Shah (ra) with the *madad*/assistance and *ma'iyat*/nearness of Allah (swt) opened up some new paths.

This was really an historical revival for those who received it. This came through *tawajjuh*, spiritual transmission. Many scholars considered the Angel Jibreel (as) to be the deliverer of this transmission. We can make certain conclusions that the knowledge Jibreel (as) brought from Allah (swt) began with transmission. The Prophet (sal) was in the cave of Hira when Jibreel (as) came and asked him to recite. **“Iqra bismi rabbika. Recite in the name of your Lord.”** (96:1) What does “*name of your Lord*” mean? It means in the Reality of your Lord. Allah has the name Allah, which contains all the names. Muhammad (sal) replies, “I can’t recite.” Jibreel embraces the Prophet (sal) and again presses him to recite. The Prophet (sal) says, “I cannot.” The third time he says it, Jibreel (as) seizes the Prophet (sal) and the Prophet recites the Message of Allah (swt).

(Reads Sūratu-l-Alaq vs. 1-7, and then begins Sūratu-l-Tīn).

“I swear by the fig and the olive, and Mount Sinai.” (95:1-2) What happened on Mount Sinai? The revelation to Sidna Musa (as) comes in the same overwhelming way. A bush catches on fire, a stone is etched, and Musa (as) is overwhelmed by it. **“And by the city that is made secure. Surely We have created man in the best way, and then render him to the lowest of the low. Except those who believe and do good, so that they shall have a reward never to be cut off.”** Then He says, **“Who can give you a lie after this about Judgment? Is not Allah the Best of Judges?”** (95:3-8)

According to *hadith*:

One day the Prophet was holding the hand of Umar (ra). Umar said to him, “O Allah’s Apostle, you are dearer to me than everything except my own self.” And the Prophet (sal) said, “No, by Him in Whose Hand my soul is, you will not have

complete faith until I am dearer to you than your own self.” Then Hazrat Umar said, “However, now, by Allah, you are dearer to me than my own self.” And the Prophet (sal) said, “Now O Umar, you are a believer.

How does that come about? What does it mean: Allah is dearer to you than your own self? It means you have lost your selfishness and ego-centeredness. What you hold most dear is what is surrounding you, what you are in the presence of. You are in a state of supplication, admiration, of awareness.

Hazrat Umar bin Khattab (ra) said, ***“When I was in the mosque, a man came and started to say his prayers. He recited Qur’an in a manner that seemed incorrect. Then another man came in and recited it in another way. The Prophet (sal) was asked about it, and he asked both men to recite Qur’an. They did, and he (sal) said that both were right.***

(Al-Bukhari 6.561)

“My heart was filled with evil doubt that was even stronger than the period of the Jahiliyya. When the Prophet (sal) saw my state, he struck my breast with his hand, and I start perspiring profusely. My state of fear and awe was such that I thought I was seeing Allah.”

There are many, many examples of this, but how do you arrive? You don’t just guide the people you want to guide. We have all learned the unfortunate truth that only Allah guides those whom He will guide. The attainment of the final goal is impossible without the *Nai’ma* and the *Fadl* of Allah. It’s impossible. It’s like understanding there are great treasures and pearls in the ocean, but without the assistance of air, you cannot dive into the ocean to get them. So you have to have air. What is necessary is *nisbat*. This is where it all starts to come together. The word in Arabic means affinity or connection

between two people. *Munasabat* is -- I like to call it cordiality. It is a very pleasant - most of the time – comfortable, trusting connection between the *shaykh* and the *murīd/a*. More than that, it is the affinity you develop for Allah and Allah’s creation and other human beings.

This is why *suhbat* is so important. *Suhbat* is very, very important. The essence of Sufism I think one can say in one way is that a person develops that quality or virtue to such a degree that it should permeate their being entirely. When that quality becomes an essential part of your own being, you cannot live, you cannot identify yourself, you cannot act without certain qualities you have developed through *nisbat*. You can’t live without this kind of devotion, or depth of love and sacrifice, concern and attentiveness. It’s not that you don’t get angry or upset or frustrated every once in a while, but you can’t live without that refined quality of love or sacrifice, or concern or care for other human beings, and you know that it comes from Allah. When that quality becomes an essential part of your being, then you can say that is *nisbat*. You can’t live without the love of the *shaykh*, the *shuyukh*, without the *madad*.

It doesn’t mean you are going to die. It means you lose yourself. You have no virtue, you have no character without that. You can then say in those terms that the objective of the journey in the *sayr ul-sulūk* of the Sufi is the attainment of this kind of *nisbah*, *munasabat*, spiritual affinity. There are many different kinds of affinity: the affinity of doing what’s beautiful, the affinity of purity, and of intense love, the affinity of spiritual ecstasy, the affinity of sense of unity, the affinity of peace and remembrance. This is circles upon circles that go out. You realize that everything you feel that is positive is a circle. It encircles something. Remembrance encircles your relationship with Allah. Love encircles your relationship with other human beings. Trust encircles your relationship with rules of law and ethic. Each of these encircles the purity of the value

All the exercises we do are done to develop, allow, and attain these affinities, *nisbah*. They are means of achieving this. These are the gifts of Allah (swt) that were willed, without any consideration of anything, other than the fact that this is the Mercy of Allah. In the systems way of looking at it, when you come into resonance with the system, the system gives back to you. Allah says, if you take one step toward Me, I'll come running toward you. Allah said, **“Be, and it became.”** Khwaja Bahaudin Naqshband (ra) spoke about this in a very refined way. Someone once asked him about the saints and the lineage and he replied, *“I didn't reach Allah through the saints of my lineage. An attraction to Allah was bestowed upon me, and that's what took me to Allah.”* That is why we say [in *durūd sharīf*]: *wasila a tiyalaik*: the Prophet (sal) is the means.

The companions and followers of the Prophet who came later used to obtain this *nisbah*, this spiritual affinity, through different means: through consistency, through regularity in the performance of their prayers, through *nafle* prayers, through constant praises of Allah, through *du'ā*, through recitation of Qur'an. These are the ways most people attain these states: through *rābita*, the remembrance of death, through fear of the Day of Judgment. These all led to the quality of nearness to Allah. But for the rest of us, these things of course are there, and these are the ways of the Prophet (sal); and we practice them.

Over centuries, our experience has shown that our *muraqabah* leads to all these stages of perfection. For this reason, though all the *shaykhs* of the Order do *dhikr*, *durūd*, and recite Qur'an, *muraqabah* is the most important aspect of the work. *Muraqabah* allows us to open up the *latā'if* and therefore understand what we are doing, and drink the nectar from the Names. Many people fly around the rosebud that is closed, but we open up the rose so we can drink the nectar. The origin of *muraqabah* we know. That's as far as I'm

going to go on that tonight, but I do want to say something else.

We talk a lot about *tajalli*. There are many different *tajallis*. There is *tajalli ghaib*, *tajalli shahadah*, and *tajalli bari ta'Llah*. There are many different types. To understand what *tajalli* is will help you to understand what I talked about today. *Tajalli* means that Allah unveils himself. It means self-disclosure. *Tajalli bari ta'Llah* is Allah's self-disclosure of Himself to His Creatures. What does it mean? We are back to the old thing again: back to the moment when Adam (as) was taught the names of things. You say, "Look at that." "What's that?" You say, "I don't know." "Look at that!" "Fantastic. What is it?" "I don't know." Before that stage, there was "Ah, ah, ah, Bismillah, Allah, Allah." You didn't need a name because you knew it was an expression of Allah. When darkness came over the mind for Hazrat Adam and Hawa (as), they had to be given the names of things and told what the relationships were to each of those things. Then they had to experience a relationship between themselves and their children.

Remember the story I told many years ago about Kanas?

Hazrat Adam (as) came back from gathering food in the Garden, and found a little child with Hawa. He said, "Who is this child? Where does it come from?" They had no children; this was before they ate of the fruit. She said, "I don't know. He just came here. He's really cute." Hazrat Adam sent him away. The next day he came back from gathering the food and the child was back again. Adam said, "No, no," and sent him further away. The next day, he comes back again. Hawa was getting attached to the child. Hazrat Adam killed the child. The next day he came home and the child was there again. He drew and quartered the child, and threw the pieces to the four corners. He came home the next day, and the child was there again. This time he incinerated the child, and blew the ashes to the

wind. The next day, he was back again. This time, he killed him and ate him.

Then inside himself, he heard a voice that said, “Ah, now I have gotten to where I wanted to be. Now I am part of you. I am Shaytan, wiswisu.”

It’s another version of the creation story. You eat of the evil, and now it becomes part of you. It all comes from inside of you. This is the fruit they ate. It’s a metaphor for the fruit that was eaten in the garden. Now, do you remember the story?

This *tajalli* is Allah’s means of unveiling Himself to His creatures. These Divine self-disclosures are never-ending. It is never, ever the same. It is ever-new. If Allah shows you mercy today, the mercy He shows you tomorrow is different. If you see compassion in this form today, tomorrow compassion’s is different—never-ending, never repeated, endless. Why is it endless? Because Allah (swt) is endless. You go out, out, out to the ever expanding universes, and there are billions and billions of stars. Are any two of them the same? No. Even in the universes within us, there are subtle changes and subtle differences. These are the lights of the unseen, which are unveiled in the hearts of people. They are the ‘*āyāt*, the signs, which Allah (swt) has placed within ourselves in order that we can see the Truth. Allah places within us signs that allow us to see the Truth. Each *tajalli* pours more and more light upon whoever it falls, and that goes on for eternity.

The mountain of the *nafs* is like blown to pieces in the *Tajalli* of Allah (swt). The differences that occur within the different Orders don’t disagree with any of this. Each human being is unique; each *tajalli* is totally unique, and no two human beings ever experience exactly the same *tajalli*. But those who have tasted, know, and those who have not tasted do not know. *Tajalli* is beyond words. It is a bedazzlement, bewilderment. As you get to the fourth circle, *tajalli bari ta’Llah*, you should understand that the light that is coming to you is light that is coming to YOU. Even though

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everybody does the same transmission, it is unique to you. It has a unique effect on you.

Asalāmu aleikum.