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Thursday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: Khayāl: The World of Imagination

DVD title: The Component of Muraqabah in The Work of the Sufi and
The Actualization of the Archetype through the Realm of Imagination/Khayāl

Whether you look at the experience of more contemporary people or of ancient people, of Muslims or non-Muslim mystics, you'll hear their conclusion: which is that *muraqabah* leads ultimately to various stages of refinement and perfection. For this reason, although the *shuyukh* of our Orders make *dhikr*, *durūd*, recitation of *Qur'an* and *khidmat*, the most important thing is *muraqabah*. It's the most important inner component of the work that we do. It's the guarantee of the bridge between the inner and the outer that links the two worlds.

We know that the origin of *muraqabah* lies in the Hadith of Jibrīl, and literally comes from *raqib*. A couple of its meanings are very important to us. One meaning is to wait, or to guarantee, or to protect. When used, at least in Sufic technical terms, the meaning of *muraqabah* is to detach ourselves for a period of time from our worldly pursuits with a very specific intention to develop or become receptive to the spiritual guidance that the seeker receives from the *shaykh*. Another way of saying it is, in our innermost being, there are these subtle centers of consciousness, the *latā'if*. After you receive the guidance and get the transmission to awaken the *latā'if*, you have to take the time away from your worldly life to focus on these centers for a period of time every day. We call

Meditation leads to a level of knowledge that paves the way to an easy or felicitous way to come near to Allah. “Near to Allah” means to travel along a road that is clearly in a land of contentment, beauty and fulfillment. When we do make that detachment from our worldly pursuits and sit and wait for the blessing, sooner or later the seeker begins to feel some kind of awakening, some kind of activity in the heart, or some form of awareness of movement, heat, or a tingling sensation, whatever it may be. Hazrat (ra) used to say, “Sit and wait for the blessing.” Sometimes he’d make the analogy about going fishing.

What you enjoy about it is sitting there looking at the water and throwing the line in, and watching the float bob up and down. It’s not so much about catching the fish as it is the mentality you develop for sitting there patiently. Every once in a while you get a nibble, a bite, or something on the hook. Then you have these moments of excitement and reel it in. Your calmness is disturbed by the reward, and then you catch the fish, see that it’s beautiful, and throw it back. Then you sit there and enjoy the quietness. You don’t focus on the experiences because your attention has to be directed toward Allah (swt), toward the Divine Essence, which is beyond the nibbles and bites. It’s seeing the haze over the lake, the seasons changing, things like that.

You have to sit at least 30-45 minutes. At the beginning sometimes thoughts are rushing in the mind. Hazrat (ra) used to say that we are not trying to concentrate on the thoughts. Like in the practice of yoga, you concentrate on something like “so-hum, hum-so” or “Ram, Ram, Ram.” What we’re trying to do is allow the atmosphere or environment to be such that the heart awakens. Once the *qalb*/heart is awakened, then the thoughts gradually subside in the mind and eventually the seeker experiences a drifting sensation. That *ghunūgi* is not like sleep. Drifting is called “the shadow of *fana*/annihilation.”

Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī *al-alf ath-thānī shaykh* (ra) said, “He (Allah) comes and takes you away.” In sleep, the soul is inclined toward the lower realms, and takes refuge in the heart. In drifting, the soul is inclined toward the higher realms and takes refuge in the self and the *rūh*.

When the seeker is in the state of drifting, the person is not aware of their own individual state or being. When you are sleeping or in a dream, you are often aware of your own individual being. You see yourself in a circumstance or whatever. When you are in a state of *ghunūgi* or drifting, the seeker also experiences certain insights/*kashf* or vision/*ru'ya*. It is very possible for you to have what Hazrat (ra) used to call “thought projections.” Thought projections are like awareness of what’s going to happen, intuitive mind-reading, or seeing the future. We are told to not attach any importance to these experiences. Hazrat Shaykh Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī (ra) said, “*These experiences are there simply to please the seeker’s heart. The final destination is beyond that.*” Hazrat Allaudin Attar (ra), who died in the 15th century C.E., said that meditation is better than the practice of *dhikr* (remembrance), because through meditation it becomes possible to attain to a station of *khalifat*/vice-regency in the dominion of the physical world and in the world of *rūh*/spirit. Though the *dhikr* removes you from the world, meditation gives you the place of a *wazir* or *amir* in the world, and in the *akhirat*.

At the same time, *dhikr* is very important, because in remembering Allah, it grounds you in your *imān*. It grounds you in knowledge by focusing your attention on Allah, outwardly and inwardly. One of the most basic commands from the ‘*ālam al-amr* of Allah is “**Remember Me and I’ll remember you,**” and to remember Allah as often as you can: *wuqufi qalbi* in your heart. To do *dhikr* often, until there is a continual awareness of the Divine Presence, was revealed by Allah to Prophet Musa (as). “**Verily I, I alone am Allah. There is no deity save Me; hence, worship Me alone, and be**

constant in prayer so as to remember Me.” (20:14) This command for *dhikr* comes from that moment down to this moment. There are different forms, times, and places where *dhikr* is done as you know, but it is a very important aspect of our practices.

The *sahabah* of Prophet Mohammed (sal) didn't perform a formal *dhikr* technique. All they had to do was look at the Prophet (sal) and that would elevate their consciousness to such a level that they were in remembrance of Allah (swt). You just looked at him and you knew. When the teachings were compiled after the death of Rasulallah (sal), people who sought the state of remembrance similar to those achieved by the *sahabah* and the *taba'ain* found the actual process of doing *dhikr* critical to coming to that state. *Dhikr* became a very essential practice of Tasawwuf. Then people set out to find most efficacious ways of doing it; hence, you get all these forms of *dhikr* done by different groups of individuals. The purpose was to recapture that state when the *sahabah* would look at Prophet Mohammed (sal) and find themselves totally awake in the *dhikr*.

As we know, *dhikr* is done in two ways: *jahri* (aloud) or *khafti* (silent) in the heart. Some Orders stress the aloud, Shadhilī, Chishtī, Qadirī, as well as the derivative Orders like Raf'ai, Halavatī, Mevlevī and others. Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī stress silent *dhikr*. Both types of *dhikr* give the same benefit as the end result, though the techniques are different. Both approaches find their justification in Prophet Mohammed (sal). Some Orders do *dhikr* while standing. We take that in our way of doing the Shadhilī teachings. Others do it sitting, in certain postures or with movements. These variations are designed to intensify the *dhikr*. I have added certain things at certain times in order for it to fit your character and personality and the time and place we live in. That was done with the permission of my Shaykh.

Through the *dhikr*, the *shuyukh* have trained the *muridīn* to purify their hearts and souls.

The guide is a guide to this process, to this original remembrance, to the empowerment of the individual to become more continuously and more spontaneously aware of the Divine Presence in the physical world, in the mental realms, in the realms of the emotions and all the aspects of life. To remember Allah (swt) throughout the day in your life, I speak about all the time, about looking around and being in the Divine Presence. That's why I don't want to spend too much time on technique. I'll explain it one time and wait another 20 years to go back and explain it again, *inshā'a-llāh*.

To remember Allah (swt) throughout the day is very valuable, more valuable than to every once in a while remember Allah. It's very valuable to practice it until you are making *wuqufi qalbi* and *dhikr* throughout the day. It is said that the person who remembers Allah finds happiness, and realizes the very objective of life is to remember that Divine Presence. The person who forgets finds only desolation. Desolation means there was something there once, but now it is empty; or it is a place where nothing will grow. Forgetfulness is the thing that anesthetizes and paralyzes people, petrifies: turns the tree into stone. Once we found a beautiful piece of petrified wood here. It's beautiful, but it's stone; not wood anymore.

Dhikr, in contrast to forgetfulness, is remembrance. The aspirant aspires and inspires and breathes in such a way to achieve [spiritually in life]. When we talk about aspiration and inspiration in medical terms, we talk about living. When you inspire, it has to do with taking a breath. The person who aspires receives the Rahmat of Allah and the angels. Their spirit becomes purified by this breathing, this remembrance, this inspiration, this breathing of the Name of Allah (swt). It is said it "ornamentally adorns the soul." Hazrat (ra) used to say, in this way you make progress. Your progress becomes easy and you draw near to Allah (swt). Allah says, "**Remember Me and I remember you.**" It's active. It is not, "You remembered Me and I remembered you." It is "You remember Me,

and I remember you.” It is active. Those who have traveled this path of Tasawwuf realize that this is a very personal, practical, individual and collective journey. It is not theoretical. The realizations one has become so continuous that you cannot articulate them. They become the way you think and see, the force by which you act. The way you make *muhasabat* becomes the template against which you measure yourself. The standards by which you measure yourself are discovered through *muraqabah* and *dhikr*.

One of the first realizations is the awareness that there are things that transcend what you see. You have all had that realization. You know that there is more than what you see. I speak about it all the time in great detail, this transcendental aspect of life. What happens is you sit and you become aware of the transcendental aspects of life, and you glimpse aspects of the universe that are not accessible to the intellect. When you hear me speaking, you may get these “Aha!” moments, especially if I am speaking on things I really like to speak on! You get a taste of things beyond material phenomena: “I never saw that before. I never heard it that way.” The fact that you see it is a result of *subhat* and *muraqabah*, the glimpses into the transcendental realms, realms that transcend the limitations of the physical or the dimensions you are used to being in. You get a taste of something beyond the material phenomena, which proves there is something beyond material phenomena. That will help you in life realize there is something beyond the physical life.

Though death is a very fearful thing, a new vision of reality begins to influence your life and thought. You now see into other realms. You are getting glimpses of other things. You see how beautiful the new infant is, and it means something else. It is sufficient in one realm, but it is also a doorway to something else. You look in your child’s face. You see something, hear something, or I say something, and you get a glimpse into another dimension. That reality influences something else that you do or think, some other

decision you make, the way you hear things, see things, or think about someone. The more you do it, the more you are in that realm of seeing beyond, understanding what has not yet been understood by many people. You can take it as being lonely, you can take it as an exclusive club, but that's where you wind up.

You awaken the heart and the other *latā'if*, and your understanding further deepens.

What deepens is your understanding of your own self. This is a *daif hadith*, but we take it as real: "***If you know yourself, you will know your Lord.***" Your rational mind expands.

If you are a sincere seeker, you gain a level of illumination because Allah discloses "Himself" to you. I told you about *tajalli* last time: self-disclosure. There are different *tajalli*. There is the *tajalli ghaib*, the illumination or self-manifestation in the unseen world. This is called the self-manifestation of the Essence within Its own self. This is where the Absolute reveals Himself to Himself. Prior to that, there wasn't any revelation of the self to the self, even to Allah. Why would Allah have to reveal Himself to Himself? It's a process that's starting. This is the first appearance of the self or the consciousness of the self within the Absolute. It has to eventually wind up where we are conscious of our self, so it has to start somewhere. This is the first appearance of self-consciousness, and it is called *al-fayyād al-aqdas*, the most holy emanation.

Then there is the *tajalli shahadah*. *Shahadah* means to witness. This is the self-manifestation in the visible, the witness. This is the unfoldment or unveiling of Allah in the visible world, everywhere. But you have to learn how to see It, see Him, or the Truth. This refers to the phenomena of permanent archetypes coming out of the world of potential. As in physics, there is potential energy, and then it becomes kinetic energy. In this archetype, there is potentiality coming out into the outward, visible form. You have a seed. In the seed is the potential for the peppers. Under the right circumstances, it comes out. It becomes manifest into the visible realm. This is the actualization of the archetype

It's also called *al-fayyād al-muqadas*, holy emanation—the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is this manifestation of the Divine in the physical world. You remember this is all taking place in the *‘ālam al-mithāl*, the realm of imagining. This place between the two worlds is where this dynamic is taking place, in the *barzakh*. Just as we become embodied, our spirit becomes embodied in our physical form by the Divine Command of the *‘ālam al-amr*, which is a combination of all these elements, earth, air, fire, and water. In this embodiment or corporealization of this energy (called *tajassud*), within the realm of *majāz* (imagination, analogy or metaphor), sometimes you actually see this process taking place. Some of the friends of Allah (swt), who are near to Allah (swt), who are pure in their heart, actually see the embodiment of an angel or a prophet, or even reflections of Allah as Divinely present. This consists of the embodiment of spirit.

Now, we can understand what the mystics of Christianity saw and how they described the embodiment of spirit. The Prophet Isa (as) is the embodiment of spirit. The Prophet Mohammed (sal) is the embodiment of spirit. “I existed before Adam,” he says. How is that possible? He was Light, Nūr-i-Mohammed. He existed before Adam, and became corporealized. The spirit becomes him and is embodied in him. *Tajassud al-arwāh* also exists, the embodiment of the *rūhas* which takes place within the realm of *khayāl*, the realm of imagination. Remember, imagination is not what you think it is, but it is what you think it is. Imagination is the image of Allah. To be able to imagine something is to contain it within your consciousness, your mind. What is imaginary is not unreal; you are conceiving of it. It just has a different kind of reality. It doesn't have a physical reality. You can imagine flying to the moon in your imagination, but it can take place in the physical world because we've seen it happen.

Before 1960-something, it was only in the realm of imagination. Then we saw it happen. Many people accompanied the people who flew to the moon, in their imagination. Then you could learn all flying to the moon, about rocket ships and watch NASA every day on their channel. You can imagine what it is. It becomes more and more real to you, except for the fact that your physical body isn't really there. We have no problem imagining flying to the moon now; it's just that your physical body isn't there. In the same way, this process of imaging and imagining is very real to us today in a virtual reality. How about Second Life on the web? You have an avatar and dress it as you want, and make the body the way you want. There are people on Second Life who are totally crippled and can't do anything, but have a living, breathing avatar that has a life, relationships, and does all kinds of things. What's real and what's not real to them. Imagine that. Why not?

There's something more in this. You may remember many years ago I wrote a book on guided imagery. I used to guide you through meditations. Guided imagery is a means for coming near to Allah. You are using these characteristics and quality that some feel is the most important quality Allah (swt) has given to us—not breath, but imagination. When you link that with *majāz*/metaphor, you are realizing that everything is a metaphor for Allah (swt). Everything is a metaphor for truth, justice, reality, love, peace, understanding, creation, avenging, renewing, patience; all these things. You can't say that patience is like Allah, but is a metaphor for Allah. You can imagine to some degree what Allah is by this capability of imagination. Now, how do you help with that? You can imagine flying to the moon easier because you have seen it done. You can see the Prophet Mohammed (sal). You can imagine.

The Prophet himself is a metaphor. As Rasulallah, he is the messenger. As Khalilallah, he is the dearest friend. What is Mustāfa? Chosen. All these names of Prophet Mohammed are, in and of themselves, facets of Allah (swt). You can imagine to some

degree Allah (swt) by looking at Rasulallah (sal). Why is it important that he is not “lettered,” *nābi ummi*? It means it is not of the mind or intellect. For this reason, it’s very important that you develop a relationship with Prophet Mohammed (sal). What does it mean? Imagine it. You have an image, which is not a mirage. It is an image, and it is a person. It is corporealized; it is physicalized attributed qualities of Allah in this being. He is also a human, a person. So are you. So am I. All those elements (earth, air, fire, and water), moved by the commands of Allah, physicalize; and these qualities become us. But we are more than that.

In the imaginal realm, in what you can conceive of, you can only imagine something that has some reality to it. Can you imagine something that is not real? I’ll give you 30 seconds to do that. How can you? You can’t. What are you indexing to? You can imagine a werewolf. You’ve seen a picture of one. You can imagine weird people living on funny planets. What can you imagine it with? You can’t. Remember Le Petite Prince. There was a character in that story who moved the sun and moon back and forth, and one who archived everything on a planet. What can you imagine that you don’t already know? Understand what this word *khayāl* means. It indicates a reality that becomes manifest in different places, indeed, in three different places.

First, the *khayāl* is manifest within the cosmos where existence is exactly the same as imagination. Existence IS imagination. Secondly, *khayāl* is manifest in the macrocosm, in that *barzakh*, in the isthmus between the spiritual world and the physical world. That’s imaginal—of image. What a minute! I remember something from my Jewish-Christian teaching. Man was made in the image of God (the *Khayāl* of Allah (swt)), made out of clay (earth, air, fire and water) in the image of God. Where? In the *barzakh*, in the place of passage, the corridor. I want to speak about the corridor/*majāz*.

Third, the *khayāl* is manifest within the microcosm of the human self, the *nafs*, where the *nafs* is the reality between your body and your *rūh*, between your physical reality and your spirit. What's the link between your physical reality and your spirit? Your breath, life, self—*nafas*. *Khayāl* is synonymous with *mithāl*, almost. The real of *khayāl* is the *barzakh* between the world of the unseen and the world of the seen, between the *dhāhir* and the *bātin*. It's within this place, this *barzakh*, that human beings are given the clearest understanding of “*Huwa la huwa. He, not he.*” “This, not that.” Our capacity for imagination/*khayāl* is purely passive with regard at least to the illusion of conjecture/*wahm* with regards to our *rūh*/spirit, which you can imprint images on. You can imagine things, but those things are only real because they come from something real. There are many, many examples of that.

One of the greatest examples you are familiar with of this process is called the Hizb-ul Bahr, the Orison of the Sea. Read the Hizb-ul Bahr, and see what it is about. Read about the place wherein there is absolutely no movement, and there the wind comes and blows the ship from one place to the other place in the *barzakh*. It happened between Egypt and Saudi. No surprises that they built the Suez Canal there. When you continue to do these practices, and you awaken the heart and other *latā'if*, your understanding of yourself gets deeper, your rational mind expands, and you acquire the illumination that is necessary for the possibility of seeing all the aspects of existence in their proper perspective, not hyperbolized by desires, not reduced by fear, not affected by your psychological aberrations and physical experiences, not affect by someone else and their effects on you. You become healed of those aberrations, and you begin to see yourself clearly. If you continue to do these practices, and you are diligent in these practices, you will gain a very personal experience of certain things.

I will end [identifying those certain things]:

- The phenomenal world of matter and your own individual consciousness are only partial realities.
- Another thing you realize is the human being has a self other than the “I” that you know. That is the eternal self, not the limited self.
- The other thing you slowly come to realize is that you can have direct experience of the Divine Presence through a very carefully developed inner process which transcends reason and intellect. There is another realm you can experience things through.
- The last thing we will talk about tonight is if you are sincere and faithful and disciplined, and you are involved, and following someone who is authorized to guide you, then you can identify this limited self with your greater, true, unlimited delimited self.

The beauty of this all is, eventually, beyond a certain point, you achieve these *maqam* where these realizations are totally inseparable from your way of being. There is no longer “me, who is realizing that.” There’s “me, realizing that.” It becomes your default. It becomes clear that human beings are not necessarily slaves to their desires and instincts, but they have an urge to express a much higher level of understanding, and have the capability and will to control their actions and direct their energy. As a seeker or as a group of seekers, you begin to see the Divine Presence everywhere, and become much more able to grasp the meaning of life—your physical personal life, and the collective destiny of all human beings. The narrow, ego-centered points of view give way to a much broader perspective; therefore, we are encouraged collectively and individually to make every thought, word, and act a form of *ibāda*/worship and of *khidma*/service. You approach this state of consciously desiring good, even in situations that involve no personal advantage to your own self. *Asalāmu aleikum.*