

November 4, 2009

Wednesday

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Title: [The Adab of Nearness to Allah](#)

DVD title: The Teachings of the Khwajagān
Wasīla: The Means for Coming Near to Allah

Dinner blessing: O Allah, immortal God, You will bestow upon us all the blessings, all the love, all the opportunity and all the challenges in our lives. We ask You to shower Your Blessings upon those who are gathered here, those who are the loved ones of those who are gathered here, and especially those who have passed recently. Lift them close to You and embrace them with Your Love. We ask You, Allah (swt), to bring peace and understanding to this world, compassion and mercy to the leaders of this world, and a humility that will far outweigh their arrogance. We ask You for humility for us and for a better way to serve all Your people, all Your creation; and to accept our gratitude for the amazing provisions You have given us this year, in our gardens and in our work. Protect those who are traveling, and who will be traveling, and help us to remember You in all we are doing. *Amin.*

Suhbat: *Bismi-llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm.* This is in the long series I have been talking about. I will continue tonight with the teachings of the Khwaja Khwajagān as related by Shaykh Kashani in the treatise of his. One way of saying the purpose of our life, as people of *tarīqah*, is *wasīla*, nearness to Allah. Of course, everyone feels that is their purpose as a Muslim, and that's good, *alhamdulillah*. Every Muslim should think that. The question is, who really has the means? We all have the Qur'an; the Qur'an is a means. We all have Hadith; the Hadith are a means, but memorizing them is not sufficient. [They are a means] only when the means are in resonance with your *latā'if*, when you can see, hear and understand.

Remember also that *wasīla* is the name of the highest place in paradise: nearness to Allah. It is also the means through which a human being, man or woman, can come close to Allah. *Allahumma sale ala Sayyidina Mohammed, wasila tialaik wa ale wa salam:* that affirmation we use as our *durūd sharīf* is so incredibly powerful. It is to give us ease on our journey. Of course, we understand that the only means to Allah is through the Prophet (sal). What that means is, not through a man. Just like the way to knowledge about Sufism is not just through your Shaykh, me, as a human being; but we are in a line. You could say that line is the rope Allah (swt) threw out, if you will, to the drowning person. **“Hold firmly to the rope of Allah.”**

There is no other means to ascend from the physical realm to the Divine Presence but that the *murīd* traverses these stages of the journey vis a vis the *murshīd*, through the Prophet Mohammed (sal), and then eventually we say that you are in a state of remembrance, which means you are in that Divine Presence, and you are aware of it. There are stages of this spiritual *mujahadah*, this spiritual striving or struggle. Through the mercy, the *fadl*, and the *nai'ma* of Allah (swt) a *murīd* attains to *fana*, the annihilation of oneself through the *murshīd* and through the Prophet (sal). We talk about the *majāz*/metaphor as a tunnel. Or you can look in terms of quantum tunneling, which I'll talk about another time. It's like there is a mountain, and there is an electrical charge on both sides of the mountain simultaneously. That would be like your quantum tunnel. You can see it as stations along the way, passing 42nd street then down to 23rd street and then 14th street on the A train.

To come to awareness of that Divine Presence, one travels with *wasīla*. One reaches that nearness from Mohammed Mustafa (sal), who is the beloved of Allah, not just because we are using these terms. But because it becomes the love of

Allah, the attraction (*jedhbah*), that you realize is the reality in your day to day life.

What Kashani and the other Khwaja Khwajagān taught was that there was an *adab* to all of this. There is the *adab* to the *murshīd*, the *adab* to Rasulallah (sal), the *adab* to Allah, the *adab* of the *murīd* to the *murshīd*, and the *adab* of the *murīd* to the *murīd*. The *adab* of the *murīd* to Rasulallah (sal) and to Allah (swt), eventually, is automatic. Yet, a lot of *shaykhs* won't talk about this, because it then seems like one is supposed to [do these things, as opposed to arriving at them, such as:] don't sit or rise without *mutawajjuh* (being concentrated on the *murshīd*); don't ask any questions to the *murshīd* for any reason at all, unless the *murshīd* gives you indication you can ask questions. It's your responsibility, and if you ask the question improperly, he says you are being unruly. Things like that.

Don't bow your head. Don't look down during the *suhbat*. Keep your eyes between the eyebrows of the *shaykh*, because the eyebrows of the *shaykh* remind you of the two bows length that Prophet Mohammed (sal) [traveled to] come that near to Allah. Meaning, Allah resides in that concentration between the two eyebrows. He is that near to you, so you keep your eyes there. Don't raise your voice when the *murshīd* asks you a question. Don't get up from the *majlis* during *suhbat*, even if you have to relieve yourself, because that's a diabolical trick of Khannās/Shaytan to distract you from what is being said, and you will leave at the time when something you needed to hear was being said.

Or he says, be attentive to the *murshīd*, and focus on the third eye, as we used to say during the yogi days. Don't fall asleep during the *suhbat*. Again, this is *ta'if* for the *suhbat*, because *suhbat* is a place of attention. These are all kinds of *adab* for *suhbat*. These teachers of Khwaja Khwajagān also taught us that whoever

shows up at these *suhbat* will be given a seat. He says, “If you show up at a meeting of the community,”—just like when we have a community meeting and look around and say, “There’s a seat over there.” That literally: you will be given a seat. Every person has a seat beside the other person that is; shoulder to shoulder and knee to knee, just as in *jamat* in prayer. All this *adab* is a way of saying, here is the wasīla. Here is the teacher. Here you are, and you say you want to be here. It’s more than just understanding that there’s *bāraka* in the *suhbat* and all this other stuff, that it’s good to be in the company of other good Muslims. Those are the remnants of what is left of all of this.

What we see in the *masajid* and in many of the *turūq* (pl. for *tariqah*) are the shell from the wheat, the chaff. But there is a deeper, deeper meaning to this. When you think of the more advanced stages of spiritual progress, there is a higher *adab*. The *adab* says: “Do make *tariq*.” What does that mean? Servitude. It means modesty. It means need. Allow yourself to have the need. It means humility, and it means treat this journey as if it were a craft; hence, the name Naqshbandiyya: the potter, the crafts person, the builder. This path understood to be like a craft, is based on the lifestyle of the whole Sufi community. The person who is a participant in this journey has to be deeply involved in the life in the organization, in the needs and service through humility in the life of the organization, in the life of the *khanqah*, in the life of the *zāwiya*.

What that teaching is telling us is, when you are deeply involved in the life of the organization of this community, then you have to behave and shape your life on the model of the Sufi, of the *fuqara*, that is: in *khidma* (service), and without discrimination toward anybody, and in practices, and in how you deal with your ego and how you communicate with the community of brothers and sisters and believers. This is a higher level of *suhbat*. Look around where you live. People

living here have been living in that community. Some of you began your Sufic life in that environment. Others who live in the outside have to come in and enjoy that presence. *Inshā'a-Llāh*, most people do enjoy it when they come. They find it to be unique. Even *shaykhs* who come find it to be important.

Then there is of course what happens inside. There is a need to practice sincerely and at length, in order to turn this opportunity, this means, this yearning, this effort into something that bears fruit – the transformation of the ego, the *nafs ammāra*. Whenever the person who is practicing removes a negative attribute, it is filled immediately with a positive one. One of the major steps is *khidma*. It's a *maqam*. There is a station of unity, of annihilation, of love, but the higher station is to become a servant. The servant is someone who serves, who is not any longer serving for their own ego's state, to get something. They are serving to give. Everybody can say that's what they are doing, and maybe you can convince people that are what you are doing, but when you do it in the right way, you are receiving tremendous amounts of blessings, of *madad*.

Becoming a servant/'*abd*, you reach a degree where even your breath makes you achieve a higher level of accomplishment. Every breath lifts you. Think about it. If you say the right thing to the person you love, every word you utter gives you higher esteem in their eyes. You say, "Hello, my darling!" "Oh, I love to hear you say that!" "How are you?" "Oh, I love to hear you care about me." Every phrase you speak lifts you higher. It's the poetry of love, spoken from the heart. Every breath of the true '*abd* lifts them up, metaphorically, in the eyes of Allah. That means, it makes you more and more aware of that relationship. When you say, "How beautiful you look, my dear," before the "my dear" replies back, you see the gratitude in their eyes. Immediately, when you act in this way, Allah responds to

you. This is the *mayat-i hubbi*/accompaniment with love: second circle, third transmission. These are actual states, and the results of practice, of service.

It used to be that it would take 40, 50, or 60 years to attain some of these states. In those days, it used to be said there were only four teachers who had attained to that accomplishment, which was Sayyitaifa Junayd (ra), Abul Hasan an-Nūri (ra), Shaykh Bahalu (ra) and Shaykh Shibli (ra). But since then, means have been given to us so that many human beings have attained to this state. And the teachings have been given to us to pass on. What happens is, as a servant of Allah, the Sufi realizes that what is being done is not being done by them, *tadbīr*, but is being done by Allah. That means they are totally in the sway of that Divine Presence, and the Divine Presence is guiding. You could say, “I am on my ship (like in Hizb ul Bahr), and the sails carry me over the horizon.” (We will use *majāz*/metaphor). Are the sails carrying you over the horizon? No. The wind in the sails is carrying you. We put up the sails, but Allah (swt) is the unseen wind. That’s what carries us over the horizon. In Hizb ul Bahr, the wind was prayed for by Abul Hasan ash-Shadhilī (ra).

This is the *sair fil-Allah*, this journey to Allah through these different stages. And we will talk about the seven stages of *nafs*, *qalb*, *rūh*, *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā*. Each one has seven stages through this journey toward Allah, in Allah, with Allah, and by Allah. This is the higher level. Beyond the circles, you will be given the transmissions, if you ever get there, of *sair Allah*, *sair fi Allah*, and *sair ma Allah*. This journey is endless. Everything in *dunya* tells us it has a beginning, middle, and end. I’m going to college, I graduate. I get a job. I get promoted. I get fired! I’m born. I live, and I die. In *dunya*, we are not used to anything that is endless. But in the *‘ālam al amr*, we are. In the inner world, the *bātin*, we are. That’s why

we have to connect to the *bātin*, because in the *bātin* we can conceive of endlessness.

The teachings, by necessity, take us from the outer world to the inner world. All around us is apparent endlessness. The leaves are falling off the trees. The end of the summer and the fall has come. The winter is soon upon us, but the spring will come again. We might not be here, but the spring will come again. The sun rises every day, and the moon follows it in its course. The universe is endless, and the universe is expanding endlessly. The Qur'an tells us that Allah is Ever-Living and Ever-Lasting: Al Hayyu Al Qayyum. We are being told there is an eternal reality.

We have to understand that this path is endless, so there is not a big rush to get to the end of something. [There is] not an end of the transmissions, not an end of the Orders, not an end to the *ijāzah* when you become a *shaykh*, not an end to the *shaykh* becoming an *anwar* or *abdal*. No, it's a continuum. To be content with that continuum is exactly what you want when you hope for love—the love that never ends. The human being believes in ever lasting endlessness; hopes and prays for it. “Will you love me forever?” “I’ll love you forever.” I don’t like to say, “Till death do us part,” because in Islam we say, you are in eternity with your beloved. But it means a physical parting. Even though we struggle for a beginning, middle and end in everything, and we see it (this cycle) all around us, love itself, which is of the *qalb*/heart, is endless. At least, that’s what we hope.

It is the difference between *mahabbat* and *ishq*, the kind of love that is unending and constantly growing. That’s what you strive for. “Oh, darling, you don’t love me the way you used to. “Ah, no. It’s just deepened, my dear.” “I love you forever. Do you love me as much as you used to love me?” “Of course!” You

know something? You also have to work on the subtleties of that, because familiarity may not breed contempt, but it may breed familiarity. You can never become too familiar with Allah, because everything is changing, in its non-changingness. The fall goes to winter, winter to spring, and spring to summer, but each one is slightly different. “This fall was exceptionally beautiful, not like last fall!” “This spring is exceptionally beautiful, not like last spring, which went directly to summer.” Whatever. We are always surprised. We know it’s coming, but we don’t know exactly what is coming. We like that. And that’s how love should be, also.

This is a journey without an end. In addition to this esoteric way of explaining it, there is also a more exoteric way. It’s not like many people think that you practice being pious. Piety and devotion, *ibāda*, are obligations. We are obliged to do it. We have to follow certain practices our whole life: our prayers, all the Islamic practices. The *adab* of being a Sufi, a *murīd*, a brother and sister to one another, of the *khanaqah*, of *suhbat*, all the things we have been talking about, spiritual travel, includes those ritual practices. They are very important. It is very typical of the Naqshbandiyya, the Shadhiliyya, and the Qadiriyya and Mujaddidiyya that these practices are not to be set aside. There are no exceptions to this.

But from our perspective, it also means something else. The *sālik* not only should not neglect their spiritual practices, but also [should not neglect] the principles and conduct that make worldly life fulfilling. In other words, we have worldly responsibility, and there is a philosophy about living your life and what that is. If you follow the Sufic path, you don’t forget the Sufi order. Now we use the word “order” with a small “o.” You don’t forget the order the Sufi must live with. I told my daughters tonight, everything in the universe is orderly until human beings get in touch with them. I took their clothing, which was lying on the floor

(because they had to put their room together) and said, “Look at the stitching. You see how orderly the stitching is on this shirt?” I pointed out something else in the room. “You see how orderly it is?” Allah made the whole universe orderly, until you come along and take what is orderly and you throw it around. It’s still orderly in and of itself, but you mess it up. So when you walk into the room, all you see is disorder because you don’t see the order that is inherent in the things you are looking at. This is what human beings do. The Sufi must not do this. We are responsible to help keep order. We are cosmic law enforcers. We must keep order. That is the *amanat*, the trust. Allah gave us the trust over the mountains. Are you going to tell the mountains, go move, stop eroding? We can’t do that, but we can keep order on the mountain. We can not cut the mountain down or strip all the trees so it erodes. We can not pollute the rivers.

Now the Sufi is ordered by Allah to keep things orderly in their outer life. Whenever we don’t keep things orderly, we know what happens. We squander our money. We trust in people who are not trustworthy. We indulge ourselves in things too much. We lose our health and emotional stability, and our security. We lose all the time. So Allah says, “**Surely you are at a loss.**” Who is at a loss? The person who is not in sync. The person who is disorderly. What happens? Even the law mentions “disorderly conduct.” It’s a misdemeanor. It means you are disturbing the order of society. Society has a certain order, even unwritten laws. It’s one of the most ambiguous charges in law, “disorderly conduct.” Who says what? X number decibels are allowed, and you are blowing your horn too loudly, so someone complains about you. This is similar, because it is *majāz*. It is a metaphor for something greater.

Also, there is another rule to the institution of Tarīqah. If, for any purpose, (*maslaha* is a specific purpose or benefit), the *murshīd* rejects or even at times

humiliates the *murīd*, there shouldn't be any doubts about the intention of the *shaykh*. The decision of the *murshīd* is in the interest of the *murīd*. Sometimes that's hard to believe. This *adab* coincides with something else. It coincides with a *maqam*, a spiritual station. That's the station called the *maqam himmat*, the station of willingness. Until we are completely willing to travel the path no matter what, we will not get the full benefit of it. This is like the training in the kitchen in the Mevlevi Order. They used to put you in the kitchen when you first came in to the khanaqah. You'd go with the kitchen master and trained in the kitchen. In the greater metaphor, being with the *shaykh* is like being in the kitchen. Being with the Prophet (sal) is like being with the master of the house. Being with Allah is like being on the design team of the architects.

This is why, as one is in this station, the Sufi has to obey the *shaykh* and stay confident and attached. So Kashani says, "*Do not leave your master, otherwise, you will be psychologically demolished. As long as he is alive, do not lose the way of servitude, and do not take the way of mastership. It is the sunnah of our Order.*" This rule is a kind of minaret. You stand on the minaret, and whatever reason you might have to try to convince you to doubt and turn away, this is Khannās whispering in your ear. What is the purpose? One is to keep the cohesion of the Sufi Order. The other is access to your own state eventually of being a guide, because no one can achieve guidance to be a guide without a guide. Therefore, there has to be succession. I'm 33rd and 34th in an unbroken line from Prophet Mohammed (sal) in five orders. Why, I don't know; but that's the truth. All of this implicitly requires *adab* and the very institution itself of Tarīqah.

He tells a story in his treatise. *At the time of the death of Khwaja Abdul Khaliq Ghujduwānī, there remained only three legitimate successors (khalifas)*. Those were Khwaja Ahmed Siddiq, Khwaja 'Arif Rīwgari and Khwaja Awliyya Khalan.

We come from Rīwgari. He also extended his story with an anecdote concerning Bahaudin Naqshbandi (ra).

I wished to become a disciple of Shaykh Amir Kuhlāl, so I rode to Kushaka Arifan near Bukhara (the valley of the Arif) to the house of Amir Kuhlāl to attend his suhbat. But when he saw me, he got angry and pulled me out of his majlis. I disobeyed and tried to find another door. Then Amir Kuhlāl told me, “You dog! The door is right here!” And he closed it. I put my head on the door’s threshold and I spent the night in that position, in spite of the fact that snow was falling. In the morning, Amir Kuhlāl came out of his house and collided with my head. He finally took me into his house and took care of me. He said, “At present, there is no inquirer. There is only one required. I have never seen a head at my door.”

Beyond the emphasis on the difficulty of this path, and the exceptional abilities of Bahaudin Naqshband, the meaning of the anecdote he says is this: “*Discipleship is a different thing than mastership.*” Mastership, according to the Khwajagān Order, is not the aim of discipleship. Bahaudin was not a disciple, not an inquirer, not a student, but someone already on the way to mastership required, *matlub*. He was not a *tālib*, but already a *matlub*, required by Allah to lead the *tarīqah*.

Contemplate that story. Contrary to the Khwajagān, Kashani tells us, “*In another Sufi order, there is no master and disciple as among the Turkic masters (meaning the Naqshbandiyya), who after a few days grant permission to someone and make him a master. Such is the agreement that they conclude between themselves.*”

He is referring to the Qur’an. Allah says, “**So they found one of Our servants on whom We had bestowed mercy from Ourselves, and to whom we had taught knowledge from Our Own Presence.**”(18:65) This is the Divine election of the

shaykh. He attributes it to Abdul Khaliq Ghujduwānī, who had “*closed and opened two doors. He closed the door of mastership and opened the door of khidma.*” The greatest master is the greatest servant in our Order. The greatest *shaykh* is the greatest ‘*abd*’ in our Order. That is the separation between mastership and discipleship. The separation is the distinction between solitude and the community, between arrogance and humility, between love of the office and love of Allah, between service to the *murīd*, through the *adab* of the *murīd* toward the *murshīd*. That *adab* toward the *murshīd* opens a door for the *murshīd* to be able to serve the *murīd*.

If that door isn’t open, all you find is knocking or resistance at that door. Or the door is partially opened, and the *shaykh* tries to open it and you get resistance. Like when one child is trying to open the door, and another child is trying to hold it shut. There is resistance. If the *shaykh* cannot follow the Sufic path but by the constant and direct support of Allah (swt), how can the talib follow the Sufic path except within a Sufi order able to guide him toward Allah? How is it possible? It doesn’t mean the mureed is not allowed to become a *shaykh*, quite the contrary. It’s just that the exoteric interests cannot be confused with the esoteric ones, the outer with the inner. They don’t contradict each other. A *tālib* in this sense can reach the stage of having the capacity to guide someone, to get the authorization.

In the old days, you could be a *khalifa*, but you couldn’t guide anyone while the *shaykh* was still alive. But in our times, this is not so. Hazrat was guiding people while his Shaykh was alive; and I was guiding people while he was alive. His *shaykh* guided people while his *shaykh* was alive. But at the time of the Khwaja Khwajagān, it wasn’t allowed. And of course to pretend to be a *shaykh* is biadabi. I’ll end with this story.

On the eve of the death of Bahaudin Naqshband (ra), his companions were waiting to know who would be his khalifa. On his deathbed, he opened his eyes and said, “Why do you disturb me now? The person will be revealed dhāhir kawaj shuhūd ... after I’m dead.”

Tomorrow I’ll talk to you about another aspect of this. *Alhamdulillah*, we were be able to continue this talk. May Allah reward us all for our efforts. *Asalaamu aleikum*.