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Thursday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [The Adab of the Practices of a Muslim](#)

DVD title: Adab on the Journey: Adab to the Rituals and Practices
and The Alchemical Transformational Effect

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. In the last few *darus*, we have been talking about this process. We have been talking about metaphor, ‘*ālam al mithāl*, and in quite deep terms about *khayāl*, *majāz*, *haqīqah*. I want to continue from where we left of last night where I was speaking about the *adab* of *Tarīqah*. I was quoting to some degree from the treatise. We spoke of *adab* in the *khanāqah*, and *adab* with the *murshīd*, and *adab* of the *murīd* to the *murīd*. We’ve talked about the necessity of this relationship both actually and metaphorically. You’ve listened to me talk about a very deep understanding, hopefully, of Islam from the practical, applied point of view. *Inshā’a-Llāh*, we left with at least a taste, or as I like to say, with wet hands.

At some future date, I’m going to go through the seven different stations, the seven transmissions, and the seven level of each of the *latā’if*. But let me jump ahead to the end, because after all we say “*indirāj an-nihāyah fi’l-bidāyah*,” our beginning is in their ending, so let’s begin in our own ending. Our own ending is when a person completes this journey, or comes near to completing it, and has understood the relationship of the body and the physical world to the non-physical world. [That person] has left behind both the desire for the physical world, and the desire for the Hereafter, and lives in the moment (*waqt*), learning how to seize the moment and be in that Divine Presence. This is what we intend when we make our intentions in our *muraqabah*, our meditation. We have come to a conclusion

by that time, how to be attentive outwardly, which is symbolically attentive in the *suhbat* in the company of the *shaykh*.

All of us have had a long day. We can buy into that tiredness, or we can be motivated by our work in a more superficial way; or we can stay awake, because being awake is being awake in Allah, in the Divine Presence. *Suhbat* is an important expression of that awareness or awakeness, and we have discussed that. I don't like to talk about rules and regulations, because on one level, it seems to be demanding. On another level it seems to be self-serving, when we talk about *adab* to the *shaykh*. I hope and pray to Allah that people understand both the reality of the metaphor and the function. [The function is] the alchemical transformation that takes place when we have an objective that challenges our *nafs ammāra*, and converts the dross of the *nafs ammāra* into the *nafs lawwama*, *nafs mutma'inna*, etc.

Something does take place, and we have historical figures to prove it. Then there are the rest of us, who history will maybe not be so kind to, or will not even remember, *inshā'a-llāh*. Everybody lives at a time when there needs to be guidance and leadership on many levels. If you look at the political levels today, people are saying there were promises made and there's no leadership. What are the signs of that? Are they arrogance and incompetence? People are impetuous, anxious. They don't have much patience and tolerance. When you put all those qualities together, which are non-Islamic, non-Sufic qualities, you find aberrations that take place.

If you were (God forbid) very sick and hospitalized for a period of time, and you had to recover from that sickness, you would want to recover quickly; but you would have to tolerate the fact that you will recover slowly. If you had quadruple

bypass surgery like Musa, you'd have to learn how to breathe again, walk again, take exercise every day, have to be motivated from inside and all these things to do that. You may want things to change right away, but things are not going to change right away. But you see progress every day. Well, people are not satisfied with that. If you look at the financial crisis today, and you know the truth of it, how near we were to total collapse, if we understand on a physical level what it takes to come back from near death, why don't we understand what it takes to come back from near death on a financial level? People are impatient. Impatience is not a sign of piety.

“I am impatient for you Allah, but I will wait forever!” That's what the lover says to the beloved. “I love you. I can't wait to see you, but I'll wait forever if I need to.” Where is that mentality today? Why is it people have to take a gun in their hand to make a point? Why is that? It's not about gun laws or no gun laws. What drives people to that? What makes them crazy? What makes them aberrated, imbalanced, without *mīzān*, totally abandoning the principles of their religion and their belief, for what? A principle? Go look at all the other principles that have not been fulfilled.

[What about] this path we have been talking about for all these decades, as well as in the last few months in these *darus*. We have been talking about the practice, the practice, the practice, and the transformative process the practice takes you through, based on where you are and the experiences you are having. It's very easy to enjoy the weather in Bali, most of the time, or Tahiti. It's very easy to enjoy the view if you are helicoptered to a mountaintop. You'll enjoy it even more if you climb the mountain. And none of us would climb the Himalayas without a guide, preferably a Sherpa guide. You need a guide. We all do. Not only that, you

need a team of people to do that. If for no other reason, you need someone to carry the baggage on the way up: the tents and medical equipment “just in case.”

Why do we expect something else from spirituality, which is the hardest journey and the hardest mountain to climb? Yet people expect something else. You have to have the *adab* to yourself, to the *murshīd*, to your brothers and sisters, the *adab* to the *tarīqah* itself, and to the community of believers. These are all necessities. They may not seem like necessities. “Well, I’m not climbing a mountain, so I don’t need all that.” “I don’t feel like I’m climbing a mountain. I feel like I have everything I need. I’ve lived my life. Whatever happens, happens. It’s the will of Allah.” People say that, and that’s fine, if they really mean it. Yet often those people are making big decisions every day that are not based on the concept of *tadbīr*.

Part of the *adab* that Kashani and others have talked about for centuries among the Naqshbandiyya—and you find it in the Shadhiliyya, and everywhere—is the *adab* regarding the rituals we perform. There is no excuse to say that a person who is on this journey is not on that journey. There is no “that journey” and “this journey.” There is one journey: *siratal mustaqim*. There is one straight path. There is the inner and the outer straight path. The inner straight path and the outer straight path are also joined in the *‘ālam al mithāl*, in the religious spiritual rituals. [You want] to do them well, just like you want a surgeon to do well, or a dentist. You want a pilot to do well, and not get in a discussion and fly 150 miles out of the area.

Part of the *adab* of this journey, of the *siratal mustaqim*, as a Muslim on the *sair ul suluk*—and I understand in the Shadhilī order there is no *sulūk*; but there is. It’s not an outer journey but an inner journey—[is to realize that] there is a reality in

those practices. For example, we should strive never to avoid the *wudu*. Each time we make *wudu*, we should give thanks. This is an opportunity to give thanks. This is what you hear in any kind of a *khutbah*. “Oh, it’s the *khutbah* on *wudu* again. We’ve heard that one. It’s the *khutbah* on *salat* again. We’ve heard that one.” This is more than that, because when one asks for what one wants sincerely, Allah responds. Allah is listening and saying, “Ah, Khaled is making wudu and he is saying thanking. You are welcome, Khaled..” That’s not what it means.

Again, we’re into the system. When you give thanks in the most sincere way, Allah responds. The answer one gets carries with it a lot of answers. If you are fully engaged in the moment of your *wudu*, *salat* or *tahajjud* prayer in the early morning, or in your *du’ā* and your recitations -- you are totally engaged in them -- then there are many answers that come to you, many doorways that are opened to you. Moments of inspiration flow to you at those times. For example, every Muslim is told to go to bed with a *niyyat*, and a prayer to see Rasulallah (sal). In the prayer [you may] say, “My life is in your hands. I may die before I awaken.” Whatever your *du’ā* is, if you go to sleep with that *du’ā*, many doors are opened in your dreams.

If you are sitting in *muraqabah* and you have left the world outside, you breathe, you do the practice, you make your *niyyat* and you settle on the *niyyat* (recites a *niyyat*). For example, [if you are] seeking the accompaniment with love of Allah, and that is what you really want, the accompaniment with love of Allah, certain kinds of realizations will come to you. As they come to you, this is the response to the *niyyat*. This is when we go to the store in the summer time. We always lock the store, but when you do the combination, the door opens.

So what are these *niyyat*? These *niyyats* are combinations. The door opens. What is inside? Cookies and candies and staples and temptations and all kinds of things you are dealing with. All kinds of messages like, “Eat me. Eat me, drink me.” Or “Take me. I’m healthy. I’m a vitamin.” Or “Give me as a gift.” And if you don’t belong in there, and that is not where your temptation lies, you will be like the animal that the other day went in there and took one bite of a rice cake and he ate his way through the floor to get out.”

That is the way we have to be with this world. We have to eat our way out of the world. Eat the floor. Don’t eat the other things. I don’t think it is a bad metaphor. He got locked in the treasure house and didn’t think they were treasures. We have to get to the point where we are locked in this treasure house and don’t think that they are treasures. We know how to use them. We know what they are good for. There might be some things that are worthwhile, like we need the ketchup for the veggie burgers, or whatever.

I am trying to juxtapose these things by going very deep into things and then talking about the obvious. When we sincerely come with an attitude of gratitude/*shukr*, and we sit in *muraqabah* with them; and when we are grateful for what we are doing, how we got it, who gave it to us, where it came from, and how it will fulfill our needs and hopefulness, [then] “messages,” inspirations, creative ideas and thoughts will come to us. Then we are grateful for those. Everything that comes, we put the patina of gratitude on it. Everything that comes, we imprint it with the *naqsh* of gratitude/*shukr*. We say, “Wow! That is amazing!” or “That is really a good idea!” or “Yes, that is something I really have to do.” Or we say something like that, which reminds us that before that moment we didn’t have what we now have, or we didn’t recognize that we had it.

We shouldn't avoid those things that give us those opportunities, because they are given to us by Allah. Allah says, "Oh, these are bad people. I created them and they are going to mess up everything, just like the angels said. I am going to give them hard stuff to do. I will give them 20 prayers to do. Okay, We will negotiate it down. But Sidna Musa (as), I am not going to negotiated because it is not right for Me to negotiate because I am sitting on the throne. You negotiate for Me."

That is not Allah.

There is an empowerment that Allah (swt) gives to us. He says, "We promise to do what you ask us to do but give us the mean do it in a way to better the world, uplift the world, better our own character and better the character of others." If we are taken up in ritual all the time, as many Muslims are and many other people are of other religions, how are we going to fulfill the *amanat*? How are we going to really do that? Let us, for example, use the evening time, the night time. We are done with our day. We have gotten a little sleep—enough sleep. We get a lot of energy from the *muraqabah*. We get a lot of energy from reading Qur'an. We get a lot of energy from *du'ā*.

So in the early hours, when we get up for the *tahajjud* prayer, and giving thanks to Allah (swt), let us make *istighfar* 100 times. 100 is not a magic number. Let us do it more times than we would do it if we didn't want to do it. Let us do it more times than we did it if we just tolerated doing it. Let us do it enough time where we start to like to do it because we have passed that point where we are not resisting anymore. You all know about that? Right? If you are a runner, what is that called when you break through? Hitting the wall. You hit the wall and then break through. What happens. Something physiologically happens. Your brain starts to produce more serotonin and endorphins and you get the feeling of pleasure. Let's call it gratitude.

I told you about the experiment they did with the Buddhist meditators. There was scientific research done with 100 meditating Buddhist. They were doing EKGs and blood levels, and things happened during their meditation. And so, [as was seen in this experiment], you go through the wall. “This is a physiological phenomenon. This has nothing to do with religion.” Excuse me? Really? Are we really going to play that old song about science here and religion there? It is all spiritual. It is all Allah. Whether you call it science or Allah, I don’t care. Something put this all together. Something put these systems in these orders. Something gave us the inspirations to do the things that we do. In the physical world, you can run and hit these endorphins and become a great runner and whatever, whatever, whatever. And spiritually, the analogue is there.

Spiritually, you do the practices. You sit in meditation. You make a hundred of these or 500 of these, without counting, without counting, without counting, without counting. It is metaphorical, but you do enough to go beyond that wall. Why not? Physiologically, something can happen too. It activates a different level of the brain, of consciousness and you see things differently. Is it, “Oh, I’m going to make a rush of this and make a spiritual case out of this. I am going to take credit for this under the name of Allah, or God, or the Buddha.” That is not the point by anyone who really understands. A person who really understands also understands that this is the Truth/Haқиqah. This is what is the Truth. Outwardly and inwardly, there is balance. It is a mirror. That is how we have been created.

So in the early hours of the morning, when you get up and give thanks and ask for forgiveness, and complete your night prayers. Again, that is another thing. In the practices of the Khwajagān and the Naqshbandiyya, you usually do 12 *rak’as* in groups of two, and six *salāms*, and then two others in the *sunnah* after that. Why?

12 is an interesting number. I remember in the book by Lahiri Mahasaya, he compares “*Om na mo ba ga va te Va su de va ya.*” (12 syllables) with “*lā ilāha illa-Llāh Muhammadan Rasūlullāh.*” He was a Yogi and talking about kriya yoga, but he had Muslim students, and he says, “This is the link.” I had that text in my library when we went to San Diego, years ago. I was looking for the justification for all that change in my life, and there it was. I opened this book of Lahiri Mahasaya, and there it was. You move from level to level. Who put that in that book? Oh, that swami did? It doesn’t matter. Allah put it in there for me. I needed it. He put it in that book for me. Somebody else got something from it, *alhamduli-Llāh.*

There is the wonderful winter squash or summer squash that comes out of our garden. You eat it, and you throw out the rest in the compost. Somebody else is eating the same squash next summer. Well, its son or daughter. That is not the only way the seeds are passed. The birds drop seeds in their dropping. Everything has its balance. So if you make 12 *rak’as* at *tahajjud* prayer, in series of six. That is hard, getting up at that time of night. If you get up in the middle of the night and you make these *rak’a*, and you break through, something else happens. It is alchemy. It is spiritual alchemy. It is the exact opposite of spiritual materialism, which we see all over the Muslim world today. We need this inner alchemy. We need it. Isn’t it interesting that it takes place through *muraqabah*. And it also takes place through the outer practices, the outer rituals of prayer, *wudu*, *tahajjud* prayer, and recitation of Qur’an, and du’a. But to become imbalanced in either one is wrong.

In the olden times, they would then read *Sūratu Ta Ha* and *Sūratu Ya Seen* at night. If you read them, you know why. *Ya Seen*, as you know is about health and well being, and life and death. More than that, it is for making transition, for

making change. It is an assisting *sūrah*. I will let you find out what Sūrah Ta Ha is about. These different *adab* have a great deal to do with the life of the Sufi, the life of the *murīd*. Sure, anybody can do it. Many Muslims do it. But you put these together with the Tasawwuf, with the transmissions, with the waking of the *latā'if*, with the *khidma* we talked about, with the trust, with all those challenges that we have as individual human beings, not realizing that we are really on the road to being a pure individual this way, where we go beyond the *shaykh*, beyond the Rasūlallah, into the nearness of Allah (swt). I don't mean beyond "goodbye forever" or "you don't mean anything." Quite the contrary. It is sort of an absorption. [You keep absorbing] until you understand what we talked about two weeks ago: Ahad/Oneness.

You arrive at these spiritual stations/*maqam*. In these *maqam*, you pay attention to your spiritual station. This actually is an allusion to the second of the eleven principles of the Naqshbandi Tariqah (the Rules of the Order) of *nazar bar qadam*: attention of your steps, or watching your steps. Because *qadam* means a step in spiritual progress, not only a physical step. You can make the analogy that as I take a physical step in consciousness, in awareness, in remembrance in dhikrullah, I am making a spiritual step. But the real essential meaning of *qadam* means a spiritual step or progress. *Nazar* is actually reaching that step and standing up on it. See the steps in front of you. Step up on it. My knees hurt me, so I am extremely aware of every other step I take, *alhamdulillah*. If I associate that pain with remembrance and watching *nazar bar qadam*, well, Allah gave me a gift. You have heard me say, "oof!" I have to change that "oof" to "Allah."

But also it corresponds to the degree of *matarba ya huzarah a rayee* which is the degree of attention and presence, that is to say to be aware of the Divine Presence. In that, it sort of reflects the *hadith qudsi* describing the condition of the pious

Muslims. The body, the heart, the speech of the Sufi expresses the presence of Allah (swt). It begins the Sufi path: the fana, the annihilation of human existence. This is what we call the beginning of *sair ul Allah*, the journey toward Allah.

Each one of these steps is authorized. Each one of these steps that one takes is certified. You qualify for it. You make the team. You do the action and it is certified; hence again, the meaning of Naqshbandi. It is impressed. It is identified with the station of the *murshīd*.

The people who are authorized by Allah (swt) and by Rasulallah (sal) are people who are able to witness the many and the one, the multiplicity in unity. I prefer, as you know, to say diversity in unity. It is usually said: Unity in multiplicity. I prefer to turn it around. In other words, as one makes a reality, experiences the Truth of the outer *adab* towards the *murshīd*, and the inner *adab* toward Allah and Rasulallah; the inner *adab* towards the practices and the outer *adab* towards rituals; as one begins to complete that sculpture, that reality, that creation, breathed into what you have created is an eternal life, an eternal awareness. Now you have the metaphor of the clay, and the breath that is being breathed into the clay.

Again, now the human being is being recreated inside of you. It is creation being re-created inside of us, inside of this earth/*kāf*, air/*bād*, fire/*nār*, water/*mā*. Inside of us, something again is happening. That is why it is called a re-birth, a re-awakening, born again. That is the meaning of born again. Inside this physical reality, something non-physical is taking place. Just like inside the physical reality of the clay, something non-physical (the *nafas*) took place and gave it life. We can assume, given all the metaphors and all the analogies, that this goes on and on

and on, and it is true throughout the whole universe. It is a phenomenal thing if you allow yourself to think about it. A phenomenal thing.

We come back from the physical attainments from the temporal world for the purpose of helping others, to guide others. Sometimes you come out of retirement. Sometimes you are forced out of retirement because of the financial state you are in. Sometimes you choose to come out of retirement. Sometimes you never go into retirement. You achieve a time and age, but because you have been at this a long time, it is not the age that matters. You don't buy into that system; you keep working. You keep doing the 'amal/work. So you have left behind the idea of that level of relaxation or self-indulgence. You keep the work, but you do the work from another point of view. You are not career-minded or wanting to make lots of money. You are not trying to impress anyone. You just want to carry things forward. You just want to make a contribution for as long as you live. As long as you are able to. This is *baqa*, returning from *fana* to *baqa*.

The one who reaches that *maqam* is called the *insani kamil*, and that person is further authorized by Allah (swt) to perfect and to educate those who need to be educated or to make perfect that which is imperfect. Herein lies one of the most important legitimacies of the Sufic way—this process. It is not an *imam* standing and teaching something. It is not an 'alim just standing and teaching about something. It is the process of transmutation. It is what the Catholics like to say happens when you take the host and the blood. It becomes something else. Things become transformed by your presence.

At that point, this is why Khwaja Ghujduwānī (ra) moved away from the concept of the 'shaykhi' mentality. Someone who achieves this is not necessarily a *shaykh*. The *shaykh* is somebody who facilitates that, *inshallah* achieves it. But

the person who practices that, achieves that. Just their presence is a guide to others. Their words are enlightening. Their hand is assistance. Their presence is accompaniment. It is all *subhat*. You do not know who you are sitting with, but you can recognize, after a while the pious people. It is not just the people who put their heads on the mat or the people who have memorized Qur'an. That is not what I mean. It is not what they ever meant.

The demands upon the *shaykh*, the one who would guide others are no less than the demands of the one who is a seeker and has to be guided. If you think the demands on you or me as a *murīd* are difficult to fulfill, it is also difficult from the other point of view. There are many levels of seekers or disciples. There are people who just experience mystical experiences, and they are seeking on their own. Then there are the people who are just confused; they heard about this group or that group and they want to identify with this group or that group for a while or that *shaykh* and this *shaykh* for a while. They are going to be Buddhist and Hindus and this and that for a while. Many of us have been among the confused during a period in our lives. Then there are the ones who find the way through those confusions, and find the way through those diaphanes, and sort of settle on the path, and find their way. They can see the path. They know when they have wandered off of it, and they sense where it is.

How many of you have a good sense of direction? I have one. You know when you are off the path, and you have to recalculate, and get back on the path. You know it. There are two very interesting attitudes that we have in life and in human relationships. One is not considered very good and the other is considered impossible, but if we have them internally, it's very good. Kashani calls them by the name of *tanazu*, and *taqadus*. He calls them "indifference," which you shouldn't have if you are just living a worldly life. People would take that as a

very bad attitude. And *taqadus* is like *atazkiya*, purity. It's hard to stay pure in the dirt of the world, so it's almost impossible. But internally, these are very, very good states to be in.

It means to be indifferent to the attractions of the world and understand what they are, and purify yourself by the practices that you do internally and externally. They will purify you. They will bring you face to face with the Divine Presence. This is the *adab* of the rituals of a Muslim, a Sufi. Here, the worlds are very clearly together. If you look at this person doing it and that person doing it, unless you have the *basira*—where you can see the light on this person and not on that person, or the specific light on this person and not on that person—it can look like they are doing exactly the same thing. Therefore, the assumption is, they will have exactly the same results. It's not true.

If you stand next to my mother in law and you cook khoresh, and she cooks khoresh, I guarantee you it will not taste the same. It's not. How much practice did you take to learn to make the cake? And it is getting better every week, *alhamdulillah-Llāh*. There is a time when the Sufi reaches the degree of movement, progress on this path where you are freed from the struggle. You have trained the horse that when you go make the gesture, it backs up; and when you put the rope over its neck, it doesn't shy; and when you turn your back to it, it comes toward you. I like the analogy. When you turn your back to the horse, and put your head down, the horse comes to you. Because you have established yourself with such control, such trust, and such overwhelming control over the herd, that when you turn your back to the herd with your head down, the horses come to you. This is *murad*.

For those people who would enter this brother/ sisterhood, the greatest activity is just to do these practices. Second, is to understand that as they are done in *suhbat*, even if the *suhbat* is not perfect, you can learn a lot about it just from being in the company of the people. You can learn a lot from studying what others have said about *suhbat*. But also, we learn a lot about it from what we are taught and told about it, and we try to hold onto it. Kashani says it's very difficult to systematize a mainly oral technique or tradition. But it happens automatically. You understand the system of it as you participate in the *suhbat*. So, Bismillah, *inshā'a-Llāh*, this is somewhat helpful in our continuing journey. *Asalaamu aleikum*.