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Wednesday



Title: [Seizing the Insight: Basīra, Firāsa, and Kashf](#)

DVD title: How Insights Interface with the Stations of the Latā'if:  
Basīra, Firāsa and Kashf: Insight, The Place of Insight and the Act of Seizing It

*Dinner blessing:* O Allah, thank You for all the blessings and the wonderful rain that keeps us aware of the blessings You shower upon us all the time. And the rapidness of the stream, like life that carries us so briskly on. Allah, we are asking You for healing for the members of our community who are ill, and especially healing for the daughter of Shaykh Nooruddeen, Fatima, in her surgery today. We ask You, Allah, to give us the means to increase our means to serve You and to do our work. Safety in traveling for those who are traveling. Health and well being for those who are sick, and depth of yearning for knowledge for those of us who are still children in the school of life.

*Suhbat:* Do you want to know about the different levels of the *nafs*? I think I will talk about the seven stages of the heart. The reason is so I can plug it back into the process of how to get there. To move from the stations of *nafs ammāra* all the way to *insani kamil*.... well, the reason I want to talk about *firāsa* is because I want people to understand that there are certain things that come about from this process. I'll just go there for a second, then I'll come back to this. Think about this. Instead of memorizing the different stages of development, you get to the point where certain things start to transpire but you don't know exactly what they are, and how and why. So you don't use them well.

I'll make the wild assumption that people do practices. A person diligently does their practices; they do *dhikrullah*; they study Qur'an; they are very sincere about what they do. They don't do it just out of cultural familiarity, or because they are supposed to, but a person actually takes their commitment seriously. That means that a person who walks out of the room after being with the *shaykh*, or walks out of the *masjid* after praying, or a person who goes to work and engages with other people remembers that they made a very serious commitment to them self. In addition to that, a person who has given *bai'at* understands that your word is your bond and this is a contract. You have leased yourself, if not sold yourself. Having said that, for a person who has embarked on this journey for 1 year, 5 years, 20 years, 30 or 40 years, certain things transpire. You may or may not see them clearly. The process by which the heart, the soul (*qalb, rūh, sirr, khafī, and akhfā*) becomes refined is part and parcel of the process of moving through what Hazrat defines as the *sair ul sulūk*, the seven stages of *nafs*, within which there are seven stages of the *latā'if*. We'll get to that.

One of the most important things to understand is when Allah (swt) says, “**Surely there are signs for those who discern,**” as it implies ‘those who have spiritual insight.’ Sulami reported that the Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, “***Beware of the firasa (insight or basira, the light in the sight) of the mu'min (the person of faith), because he sees with the light of Allah.***” One of the things that is important about that statement is the insight is a reality that descends into the heart of a person. Because it's there, it expels everything that's in the heart of the person that opposes that insight, and so this insight takes possession of the heart.

We know the word *firāsa* comes from the word *farisa*, which means prey (like a wild animal's prey). You see the relationship. The heart cannot oppose this insight, no matter what. It may oppose it, but it cannot expel it. The strength of

that insight is directly related to the person's faith and their character, *akhlaq* (it's very important to realize this); and their faith and *akhlaq* are directly related to their practice. When you do the practice with sincerity; insight comes to you, although in the heart there may be some opposition to it because of habitual patterns. But you can't oppose it; the insight comes.

The stronger your faith, the less opposition there can be. It was said by one of the Companions: *"The person who sees with the light of insight, sees with the light of Allah. The substance of his knowledge comes from Allah, unmixed with either negligence or forgetfulness. And the degree of Allah's presence flows freely from the tongue of the faithful servant."* These insights will pass undetected unless you learn how to trust them. If you learn how to trust them, you just naturally act. You don't say, "Ah, here's the flash of an insight. Should I or shouldn't I act on this?" You naturally act on it, because that insight has a quality of illuminating your heart. Let's say you have an insight to do something.

Let me give you a silly example. I was driving on the 460 bypass and I thought of Sadashiva Godbole. So I immediately called him. He said, "Ah, Guruji, Shailaja and I were just talking about you!" He always calls me Guruji because he's Hindu. I said, "That's very nice." But I wasn't surprised. I said, "How's everything?" He said, "Everything's fine, but one small problem." So, he described a small medical problem; and within an hour and a half, Nadia had dropped off medicine to him. On my way home, I stopped at his house. I didn't think twice about calling him. I just called him. That's a silly little example, but when we say a "flash of insight," we don't mean an epiphany. It means you learn to pay attention to what's passing through your mind, and you learn to act on that, and you gain confidence with that.

If we go back to the levels of the heart, you will find that when we talk about the seven stations of the heart, of those stations one is *taslim*, surrender to Allah. Another station is *tawbah*. Another station is recognizing the truth/*haqiqah*. When you talk about the different stations of the *sirr* or the *rūh*, you find that there are certain stations that when you achieve them, it helps you understand why you become comfortable with your insights, with that sight. When you practice certain things, and you understand repentance and *tafakkur*; when you understand *itlāq*, the station of freedom; or the station of *marifah*, these things now become natural to you and you act on them.

When you act on them, you find that often you are acting on things that are very common, like that example I gave. In the greater scheme of things, how important is it that they were thinking of me, and I thought of them, and I trusted that, and I called, and I sent them some medicine, and we've been in contact for the last few days, etc. How important is that in the greater scheme of things, spiritually? How world-changing is that? It's not. But it is important on the level of learning how to see the signs and develop the trust in one's own state, one's own station. These are signs to the believer. These are the signs to the person who is on this journey that they are making, what Hazrat liked to call, progress.

Moreover, it has a practical application. It functions to serve you in your day to day life. It served a purpose, though not an earth-shattering purpose. His condition wasn't that terrible. I didn't save a life. But it becomes natural, even just to serve as an example in a *suhbat*. You might say to yourself, "When I act on something like that, and it's correct, it affirms my state and station." This insight is a way of lifting the veil, what is called "unveiling a certainty/*yaqin*." It lifts the veil and shows you something that is true. What is that? It means you are having direct vision to a whole other realm of communication, love, trust, and friendship and

need. The veils that cover it were lifted for a second and you caught it, you saw it. You weren't so distracted by whatever else was on your mind, or by the radio that was on or by the phone call you were on at the moment. I can tell you exactly where I was when I did it. Of course, I was proximate to where his house is, but I wasn't thinking about him. I did not think, "Since I haven't seen Sadashiva in a long time, I think I'll give him a call." I thought about Sadashiva, and I noted where I was. I attributed the thought to being near his house, but that's not what happened.

I acted on it, and I was picking up something from love. How many times a week do I go by there? Three or four times a week at least. I have called him from town probably twice in 15 years. These things come quite naturally, but you have to learn how to accept them. That's the point: to learn how to accept them. There is another point in this: when you have a history with someone, a familiarity with something, when you have love for one another and *suhbat*, then you are going to have more of this experience. I may have some deep important insight for President Obama, but I can't call him up and say, "Barack, listen – I'm in town, and I was just driving by your house on Pennsylvania Ave. No kidding? You were thinking about me, too? Yo, bro, what a great thing . We'll have to shoot some hoops sometime."

As you expand your identity, your circle in *suhbat*, you can expand it to the ummah, to humanity. You really can. There will be certain things that one sees through this *firāsa* or *basīra*, this kind of light of insight, that you don't want to see. If you could choose not to see, you wouldn't see it. But you see anyway, because you see with the eyes of a believer. What is a believer? In this case, a *mu'min*. This is a person who has faith, who is a servant, who has love in their heart, who has *tawbah*. If you start to read through a list like that, "*Nafs ammāra*

is this, *nafs lawwama* is that,” you don’t identify with it. It’s like another thing to put in your brain. But you can tell from how you see, where you are.

There is that story about Mohammed Hussein (ra) and Imam Shafi (ra). *They were sitting together, and they looked at a man who had just come into the masjid.*

*Hussein (ra) turns to Imam Shafi (ra) and said, “My kashf tells me that man is a blacksmith.” And Imam Shafi (ra) said, “My insight tells me that person is a carpenter.” So they walked over to him and asked him, “What is your profession?” And he said, “I was a blacksmith, but now I’m a carpenter.”*

Neither one of them said, “My insight tells me that once he was a blacksmith but now he is a carpenter.” Both are right, but nobody was completely right. What do you do with that kind of insight? If you have it, know that when you are sitting making *tafakkur* – contemplating something – and when you are in *muraqabah*, a person of this degree of insight is eventually constantly contemplating what is not seen. What does that mean?

It means no matter what you are doing, you are seeing inside of whatever it is you are seeing. It is called insight. Whatever you are contemplating, whatever your mind is on, it becomes a process where you are looking behind the obvious. You are becoming what some people call intuitive, but it is true insight. This is an extremely valuable tool, as you can imagine, for a scientist. It is an extremely valuable tool for us, seekers. You have this experience all the time. Someone says to you, “Oh, I never thought of that. I never looked at it in that way.”

Just think about that capability directed toward the unseen world, toward Allah. [You are] always contemplating, not forgetting at all, understanding that if you turn your sight toward anything, it lifts its veil. Nothing is concealed. And you become the person who Allah said, “**Those of them who seek hidden realities**

**will know the truth.”** If you turn and put your attention on something, you see the essential truth in it. Sometimes you really know you are making progress when what you see may be contrary to what you thought you would see, what you prefer to see, or what you like to see, or whatever your normal veils are: your prejudices, envies, jealousies, doubts. They are not there. They are like veils, and you are seeing through them—that is, they are lifted. You are seeing something you would normally have a judgment about or you would react to. But you are not, because you know you are seeing what is true, because you are seeing with the light of insight, not the light of prejudice or arrogance or fear, doubt, jealousy, or envy. Now you see why it is related to the stage of *nafs ammāra*.

The next stage is you see that you could be looking with those prejudices, but you are not. That's *nafs lawwama*. When you see those things, you don't have any reaction to it other than you act: *nafs mut'mainna*. You are serene, tranquil. It's not gaga tranquility, but you are not disturbed by what you are seeing. When you are in this state, when this is happening to you, it transforms you. For example: you can remember a story like the one I told you, but it is just an affirmation of a similar experience you might yourself have. It's like a metaphor, an affirmation. But when it happens to you, you notice that you are not being affected in the same way you would normally be affected by the circumstances or the content. I don't know how you feel about that, but it's a pretty big thing. A person who sees the signs, the one who has this kind of discernment, now knows he is seeing with the eye of *khafī*, the hidden. That person is able to see what is hidden.

The person who sees these *mutawasim*/signs sees with the eye of *khafī*, sees what is hidden in the core, in the recesses and chambers of the heart. If you are looking outward, the example I gave you happens. If you are looking inward, if I am driving along in my meditation instead of driving along in my car, and something

occurs to me like that, and I act on it, and I put my attention on it, and I call up my inner self, I'm not sitting in meditation drifting. I'm not in *ghunūgi*. I'm in *adraq*. I'm attentive. Something has come up; and I pay attention to it. There are signs in that. You act on those and Allah says in Qur'an, "**Surely in that are signs for those who discern**" ...for the one who knows the signs that Allah manifests through His Friends, and His Enemies.

The person who has this insight, we say, is "seeing by the light of Allah." Again, I've been giving these examples. What's on the outside is on the inside. I'm driving along and I call up Sadashiva Godbole. Note that it doesn't matter if he's a Muslim. There's a bond of love and friendship, and immediately there is care and concern. I'll give you another example. This is not to elevate me, this is to tell you what happened. I never met her cousin before last Wednesday night, but within 5 minutes of meeting him, I offered to help him with something. Why? Because I'm just a good guy? Because it develops in you a sense. It doesn't mean that all of a sudden you are a magician. If he sends me his resume, all of a sudden I can get him a job at Booze Allen. The point is, it opens up possibilities. You are who you are. You now become more and more an outer conduit for what is happening inwardly.

You sit in meditation, and pay attention to what is going on internally. I pay attention to my heart/*qalb*, *rūh*, *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā*, my *nafs*. I pay attention to my *nafs*, my *nafs* turns to Allah, and that opens up that transmission. Then you say: I pay attention to my *qalb*, may my *qalb* be filled with the Bounties/*Faiz* (*Fayyād*) of ... etc., the Rahmat of Allah, the Assistance of Allah, the Love of Allah. Each one of these things trains you automatically. You do this that happens. It's called "on the job learning." This is what you do. During the day, I

work as a whatever: itinerant professor, driving back and forth to Blacksburg. But when I turn to my meditation, I am working on something else.

Now you begin to understand that things that are normally hidden become seen, revealed. It can be this great epiphany, but normally it is that what you see now becomes obvious to you. You see what is there. In seeing, you have new tools and new capabilities to act and think in the outer. But also, as you see that how you act in the outer changes, you must accept that something in the inner has changed. When you sit in your meditation, you try now to see what in the inner has changed. Those moments, just like the flash of inspiration to call him on the phone came, you get a flash of inspiration; and that light shines in your heart. By means of these flashes of light, things become more meaningful. It's like Archimedes. He was sitting in the bathtub and he says, "Eureka! I have found it!" A flash of light, and out of that came some very practical things.

There are these flashes of insight that take place in the heart, in the *latā'if*, which not only attest to the fact that there *lataa'if* do exist and do reveal things to you. But what is revealed lifts your self up, up, up through these stages of *nafs ammāra*, *nafs lawwama*, *nafs mutma'inna*, *nafs radiyya*, etc. You are lifted up, station by station, automatically. As you go to higher and higher levels, that refined sight enables and empowers you -- I'll use a metaphor -- to be used by Allah for a purpose, which you, yourself may not know exactly what it is. But it reflects your character and personality. "Oh, when I come to Shaykh Rashid, he's always going to have food on the table and give me coffee and tea. Let's not eat too much lunch, we'll get there just in time to see the Shaykh and he'll have all this food there." The person learns your character and personality and *adab*. Your *adab*, therefore, changes. It affects your behavior.

“We’re driving down to Bedford, and there will be a dinner. Let’s just have a snack and not eat too much.” People say things like that. It forces *adab*. Just your own presence, your existence in that person’s life changes their *adab* to you, and yours to them. That’s why one of the early Sufis, al-Hussein ibn Mansūr, said this: “*When Allah takes possession of a man’s heart, he bestows upon it Divine Secrets, which it contemplates and communicates to others.*” It means that as you become refined, although it’s your tongue that’s talking, it’s your heart that is talking coming off your tongue. You might be talking to a patient. Ten years ago you were talking from your head and knowledge. Now you are really talking from your insight in your heart. It has a different effect. What is this insight? One Shaykh said, in a beautiful metaphor (you might even take it as real):

*It is when spirits circulate in the spheres of Divine Majesty (in the malakut), where they observe the meanings hidden in the unseen. Then they speak about the secrets of the created world on the basis of mushahadah (direct seeing), not on the basis of any guesses or supposition.*

There are those who would tell you that at this moment of insight, the truth you are seeing is being spoken to you by the angels, by the people or dwellers in the *malakut*. It means on a higher level of thinking, the truth is not hidden from you. It can’t be hidden from you, because you are resonating with it. Because you are resonating with it, it doesn’t exist in the world of all those other accretions, all those other aspects of *dunya* that would block you from operating with it, seeing it, and living by that. It uplifts your character. You can practice some degree of *adab*, and you can practice *akhlaq* in a certain way. You can know what it is and try to change your character. But when you do these kinds of practices, and when you are very sincere, then that character comes to you and that *adab* comes to you. The meanings that are hidden are revealed.

I should say that it is not the same, exactly for everybody, which is why each one of these stations are characterized by a certain prophet. When a person reaches this stage of capability, because of their inclination and *qadr*, they feel very influenced by one prophet, and someone else by another prophet. Or, each stage or *latīfa* is influenced by a certain prophet. If you would read the stories of those prophets, you would see that each one has distinctive characteristics. Yet they are all *ambiyā*. If you read the story of Yusuf (as), his external characteristic is beauty. His internal characteristic is also very much involved with beauty and love, yet there is also a painful familial story here. So you reach the stage of Sidna Yusuf (as), or the stage of Sidna Musa (as).

QUESTIONS Is there a question?

Student #1: What is the difference between insight and intuition?

Shaykh: Intuition is a collection of impressions from which you draw conclusions. Insight in this sense is direct seeing. That's what I meant.

Student #2: Is that the same thing as your *kashf*?

Shaykh: Your *kashf* is when you say, "In my *kashf* I see something... in this place from which I am seeing." *Firāsa* is the actual unveiling. You are capturing with your *kashf*. How do you say it?

Student #2: Is it like a station?

Shaykh: It's more like a capability. You say, "In my *kashf*, I see something." The seeing is *basīra*. *Firāsa* is the seizing of what that light is revealing. *Firāsa* is a

very active verb. You are seizing what is being seen by your insight, your *basīra*. You seize it, like prey. If *basīra* is the insight, and *firāsa* is the seizing of that insight, or the acting upon the insight, then *kashf* is the process. Process? Hmm. Hujwiri (ra), in his writing, “*Kashful Mahjub/Unveiling the Veiled*,” says it is the process of unveiling what you are seeing, and you are seizing what you are seeing in that moment. Unveiling the insight is *basīra*, and when you are acting on it, that is *firāsa*.

Student #3: presents a related question.

Shaykh: I think the question is, where does the *basīra* reside? If *kashf* is a process, and *firāsa* is the seizing or acting on something, then where is the *basīra*? It all takes place in the heart, because the heart has the ability to communicate to us. But each *latīfa* gives you more... in each *latīfa* there are different unveilings, different things to be seen. For example, I gave you the example of *khafi*. You see what is hidden. In *sirr*, you see what is secret. What is the difference between these things? It’s very hard to describe. It’s not like you say, “I’m in *sirr*, so I understand your secret.” It’s dimensions.

I think I should just talk on this. I should take each one of these *latā’if* and talk about it so we can clarify the differences. You have two dynamics happening. You have the *latā’if* and what their potential is, and then you have you, yourself, and what process you have to go through to perceive through these different *latā’if*. You have the *latā’if*, and then you have you. Where you put your attention, truly put your attention, each *latīfa* unveils something to you and enables you to see with your *kashf* and to act. I guess you could make an analogy; maybe we use Hazrat’s analogy. It’s doing your post-graduate work, and in that you have even further specialization. I don’t know if that’s a good example.

Each *latīfa* has its own capability and potential. That’s why you have to travel in all of them, but they reveal them automatically. It’s not like you are supposed to memorize something. Look at the transmissions you do in the circles, in meditation. You are repeating them in every *latīfa*, and it takes a long time. At each stage, in each *latīfa*, it is refining another level of capability in you. You can stop anywhere along the line, and you are who you are, of course. But the more you study and practice anything, the better you become at it, and the more your capabilities increase exponentially. It’s based on *maqam*/stations you have achieved. Under most circumstances, you will never lose your station. I guess you could lose it if something biological happened to you and affected your cognitive process. But generally you don’t lose your station, so you are building on it.

Every time you come around to this *latīfa*: “Now I’m on the second circle in *khafi* in Rahmat.” How is that going to be different? You may not know how it will be different, but it is different. And your level of compassion will become more subtle and change. Because of that, another level of realization has come to you as you reflect upon it, because you are paying attention to it. If you seriously are paying attention, and you are not in a state of *ghunūgi* but in a conscious state, you see that your level of compassion is different, or your level of mercy is different, or your capabilities of love are different, or you sense companionship in a different way, or you, yourself, are a companion of others in a different way. The things that used to affect you, disturb or confuse, or distract you are not there anymore. The weight of the secret has displaced those characteristics in your heart that would block them, veil them—because the heart cannot reject this *firāsa*. It cannot. Your sense of desire, your sense of what is good and bad, right and wrong, and all that, becomes changed.

Someone might say, “It’s wrong for me to interfere on this situation.” What they are really saying is that they don’t want to be blamed for anything, so they don’t want to speak. But a person who has real insight, and tremendous commitment, and who has the right *adab*, and who has a sense of duty and responsibility will say something, but will say it in the right way, in a good way, and will help clarify something. As opposed to thinking about themselves and saying, “I don’t want to say anything under these circumstances because it will come back at me.” You may hear me say that at times. I will say that because I know who I’m talking to. I know that it will come back and cause a problem. If you know that, it is also from your insight, but you are not avoiding out of ego, out of fear. You are not saying something out of backbiting. You are not saying something out of gossip. Each time you go to each *latīfa*, each transmission gives you another level of compassion, of accompaniment, of love, another capability of insight. Another burst of *tajalli*/irradiation comes to you. This is the original radiation therapy: it kills all the cancers in your heart and *latā’if*. You get a burst at the end: *tajalliyat barita’ala*. Now you move to the next *latīfa*, and then the next. You clean it all out [with your *niyyat*]. Does that make sense?

Student #4. Asks a question.

Shaykh: It’s not important that he was a blacksmith or carpenter; it’s important that the capability to see was there. (Comment). I wasn’t there, but I assume these two men were not in competition. He said, “Through my *kashf*, I see this man is a carpenter.” And the other said, “I saw that he is a blacksmith.” There is no emotion in that, no ego in that. It’s just, that’s what they saw. It’s like we are sitting into the same room, but you are seeing it from a different perspective than I

am seeing it from. But we're seeing the same room. If I were to describe the room and not turn around, I'd be describing everything you are seeing except what's behind you. And you'd describe everything I'm seeing, except what's behind me. But we'd be describing the same thing, and we know that we were. What's missing is not as important as what is being seen. (Comment)

You don't think like that. You only think like that before that happens. Of course you know that. Only Allah sees everything. Only Allah is the Seer of all things. He's the Overseer of everything. You don't think like that. You see what you see, and you act. Now you are getting into the realm of *qadr*. You see what you are allowed to see. You see the maximum of what you can see. That's the journey. You will not see everything. You are moving along. You are not talking about the end, but a process. The end is not important. You are in an open-ended universe. There is no end to it. There is only Allah. But you are seeing more and more—that's what is important. You are integrating your insights more and more; therefore, you are correct more and more. Your insights are supported. You see. The point of that story is both saw the truth. You can say they saw it from a different perspective or different moment, or they expressed it in a slightly different way. But they both recognized it as the truth.

I don't think Imam Shafi (ra) turned to Hussein (ra) and said, "See? I was right!" "No, I was right." "Well, I was right first!" I don't think that's what happened. You see them, you accept it, and you act on it. That's why it is important to move from the *nafs ammāra* to the *nafs lawwama*, etc, because if your ego is involved in it, you get stopped. Don't you see how you get stopped, if your ego is involved in it? Your pride, your this, your that, your jealousies, your envies, all this will stop you. That's why you have to get through *nafs ammāra*, *nafs lawwama*, and *nafs mutma'inna*. As you move through the *latā'if*, if you are really paying attention,

then you will find yourself dissatisfied with your lower nature, and reproaching yourself. That will happen automatically, too. But if you don't feel that dissatisfaction, then not only will you not have the insights, but you are going to think that the whole Sufic path is something that it is not. You are not sincerely participating.

Shaykh Noorudeen and I were having a conversation today about *bai'at*, about how Sidi Mohammed Jamal accepts *bai'at* from people. He made an interesting comment. He said Sidi Jamal will give these very, very strong lectures on *bai'at* to people. He'll say to them, "You made this contract. I'm only here once or twice a year at the most, but when you walk out of this room, you have to live by this contract." Here's the contract: you are saying you are a Muslim and a Sufi. You have to act like a Muslim and a Sufi. Here's what you have to do. You can't do this and that and this and that (like the rules I don't like to talk about). You'll be like a corpse in the hands of the bodywasher, and so forth. He goes laboriously through this with everybody, and he faces them with it. He says, "If you are not willing to live by those rules, you are not a Muslim and a Sufi." What is this *bai'at* you gave me? It's like any other contract, you have to honor it. If you don't honor it, you are a dishonorable person.

Now, the interesting thing is, he receives their *bai'at* and then he tells them. That's the impression I got; maybe it's not true. I said, "That's very interesting." It's not a subject I like to talk about very much. I talk about *adab* and I hope people understand, and every once in a while we study these rules. He said, "Well, when you do the long version of your *dhikr*, you go through all the rules of the order and the other stuff. That's your way of doing the same thing he is doing." I had never thought of it in that way. Once a week, that is what you are doing, if you are paying attention. I always liked the last recitation a lot. "Let us

pray for the blessings of God and the Prophet upon...” If you would really contemplate that every day, that’s a tremendous guideline. He said the person who is saying that is really affirming what their commitment is. And I had never thought of it in that way. It’s good.