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Thursday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [The Rules of the Order: Watchfulness](#)

DVD title: The Rules of the Order: Watchfulness
Developing Special Faculties to be Alert and Heedful

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. Negar dashtan means to be heedful, to watch, to heed what you watch. Heedful means to be alert. Alert for what? Remember that we started this whole thing by saying these Rules of the Order are things you become so familiar with that you apply the appropriate one at the appropriate time, and sometimes more than one. You don't try to set up circumstances. You don't need to sit and ponder, hopefully, for any length of time.

Before you took a driving test, you had to study a manual. You are supposed to remember when to yield from the left lane, etc., etc. If you only studied that, took your test and didn't drive, you might forget. By the fact that you are driving every day, in a way you are being tested every time you come to a stop sign or a light, or you are in the left lane, or whatever. The laws, the rules become second nature to you. You don't think about them. When you combine the driving test with the driving itself, you are at least theoretically part of a system that if everyone follows it, there will be relative safety, security, and ease. It is reasonable and logical, and everyone can grasp it.

Part of that is to know that if you break the law, at some point you will get caught. If you don't have an accident, a policeman will pull you over and fine you. Then you will have to go before the judge. Someone will speak up for you at that time, or you will speak up for yourself. The judge will say, you have a pretty good record. You seem to have been careful. So I'm going to reduce it to just going 35 in a 25 zone, and you will have to pay \$60 plus court costs, which are \$90. Allah tells us, if you watch yourself and you follow

the rules and regulations, and you don't deviate too much, and you have a good record, everything will be pretty much okay.

These rules are things that, when you are driving, you don't think about. Very rarely do you say, "I'm in the left lane. Does this lane yield to the person coming...." Maybe you said it for a week. You're heeding, you're watching, you're on the alert. If you understand this rule, it's about a capacity, a capability. It is just like you have the capability to read the manual, drive the car, and create a synthesis between these two things. You don't have to think much about them. They just happen at the right time and right place. Why shouldn't it be true in other systems? Why do we separate, build walls?

Watchfulness is the use of special faculties to see, to be watchful. It is to be on the alert and watchful for many things: for people and places and things that create *khair*/goodness; to be in the company of good people; to be on the alert for good people; to be watchful for places that are conducive to good behavior; for music that is uplifting, like this; to be watchful for opportunities to do good work and to serve; and to be able to be flexible in that work and service, so that whatever your skill is and whatever your knowledge is, they can be used even in ways you didn't necessarily think or plan to use them. This heedfulness or watchfulness is all about trying to do good, or respond to good, or be in the company of good in which you find yourself safe and secure. The system works, and you can get from one place to another, from one day to another, from one aspect of your life to another. You integrate [into] different aspects of your capabilities and your character these rules.

I don't like the word "rules." [They are] guidelines. You are open to good things, and good people, and good messages. The process of exercising this capability of watching is almost always developed in the company of someone like a *murshid* or a *shaykh*, a prophet or *wali*. The *wali* is not supposed to be the policeman who stops you when you break a rule. Because these rules or guidelines, what's given in *dars* or conversation or

just in transmission create a capability to watch and recognize who is good company and what is a good situation, etc. By obeying those instructions or these rules, you know what you can and should do. Sometimes you hope for something different. Sometimes you think you are going to do something different, but you are flexible for the good. The special capability, the special faculty that allows us to be alert or open, to be able to see as we scan the room, scan the I-pod, scan the society, scan the opportunity, the proposals, whatever they may be comes not from the rule but from the development of the person, our self, through al-Qur'an, through the Hadith, through the *dars*, through the practices, through the *dhikr*. All of these are about some form of remembering: remembering on time, remembering in the heart, remembering in the movement within your homeland, etc.

Also, when you are driving, it's a bad idea to be tense and uptight. You see someone like that driving in front of you, you either drop back or zoom past them. By the same measure, it's not good to be screaming and yelling at someone, or freaked out while you are driving by some internal state, because you will be heedless instead of heedful. You will not be watching for what is good, but for other things. We will get to that in *yad dasht*, recollecting or keeping your memory. That is very serious, very important stuff. [You are] being alert and being open and watching as you are scanning, just like when you are driving you should be scanning the road ahead of you. Some of us men tend to look up the road while we are driving, and not just what's happening in front of our car. When you are driving and scanning, especially out here in the boondocks wilderness, you are looking for deer. You are traveling with your high beams on and scanning left and right while driving. That you are doing very consciously and purposefully. That is like doing the practices.

There are other things you are looking at that you don't even know, but you are scanning the road while you are driving. Not only that, but you are looking at your speedometer, hopefully. You're scanning all the time and don't know it. In the case of driving, you

are scanning for safety reasons, or for police, which is a different form of safety. The point is, we might be scanning for the police but hopefully we are staying relatively within the 10% margin. I always stay within it, and have never gotten a ticket for going being within 10% of the speed limit. In that case, from a spiritual point of view, it's like if you make 10% errors and are 10% not observant, you are probably not going to get a big bad mark and too many days in hell for that. But if you get a DUI or get your license taken away, and you can't drive, not only is it difficult to earn a living, it's like not paying any attention to all of this and when you die you get a lot of punishment. You can't earn a living when you are dead, so to speak.

Not to belabor the metaphor, but basically *negar dashtan* is to be alert in the positive way; just in a way that is natural so you don't have to think about it. If you stay within the boundaries, if you stay within the guidelines and practices, and within the teaching and good *adab*, you don't have to pay much attention, because everything seems to be harmonious, because you are paying attention. You don't have to pay a false kind of attention. You are making *tawajjuh*. It also means to be ready to receive those contacts. If you are going to be open and alert to the good people, that doesn't necessarily mean you are ready to receive that good individual. If you are watching or listening for the message, you also have to be open to receive it, too. That openness may come in ways that are not expected—not only predictable ways, but sometimes unpredictable ways.

It is just like opportunities sometimes come from unpredictable ways. That happens sometimes from people because they see something in you that you don't see yourself. Someone may ask you to do something you wouldn't normally do, or ask your advice when they normally wouldn't. Someone sees something in you that you wouldn't have predicted or expected. These special capabilities and faculties we know sometimes as the *latā'if* or what is developed through the *laā'if*, such as *basīra* or *firāsa* or *hikma* or *sabr*, or any number of things that are developed through the practices and trust and submission. These special faculties are developed usually in the context of a *murshid*

with *murīdīn*. Why? That's the way the system works. [There] may be one, or maybe 12, like Jesus supposedly had. Or it might be a *khanqah*, a community of individuals. What defines a community? That's a whole other talk that is controversial. Geography is not it, necessarily. It is only part of it.

If we use these special capabilities and faculties as they are developed, we can determine to some degree, by ourselves, how we are doing and where we are, what our progress is. But the *shaykh* knows. I met a very nice young man the other night. He was asking me a question about marriage. He said, "If I was sitting here with a lady, and we were talking to you for a while, would you be able to tell me whether you thought it was a good match?" I said, "Well, it depends on how long you were sitting here, and what we were talking about. Maybe after one time; but certainly after two or three times I think I could tell you." He said, "Really?" I said, "Yeah. But that's not the issue. The issue is, by the time you bring a young girl here to meet me, you've already made up your mind. And you're asking me to go against your desires and wants, maybe, which I would be very reluctant to do." He said, "I see what you mean."

That's the problem. Often, you don't want the guidance and advice, really; or you want it to match up with what you want. That's why it is such a blessing and honor to be on the path, and to really learn about the relationship between the *murshid* and the *murīd*, and the brothers and the sisters. The fact is, these different capabilities and faculties can be merged and put together, and all of these "rules" or guidelines are operating just like you operate a car. Life itself gives you the practice for each one of them. Driving gives you the practice immediately to support what you studied in a manual. When they are put together, deeper faculties and capabilities emerge within the *latā'if*, within you, and within your mind. That enables you to make more progress, be more efficient, more positive, more constructive, more contributive to life, your own and others.

This process has that element of being prepared to obey those rules or guidelines, or to follow the guidance and instruction without hesitation, without too much examination of it, without too much questioning of those instructions, and making sure you are following them within the context of the tradition of the Order, the tradition of Tasawwuf and Islam. An instruction or guidance that we receive can be one that is easily, reasonably put in effect, or the instruction might be one that evokes a response or even provokes a reaction. You will have to analyze that in the moment by using the capabilities and faculties that you have.

You will have to make a decision, just like if you were driving on the back roads behind some old fogey or person distracted on their cell phone, who is driving very, very slowly. Of course, it is a time when you need to be somewhere quickly. You know 811 is several miles long, and you will have to stay behind this person. You are in a hurry. You are not doing the math (how much distance do you really gain, by increasing your speed in the time that you are traveling), but you are provoked by the unreasonableness of the way this person is driving 35mph in a 55mph zone. They should get a ticket, too! You are provoked. You have to make a decision. Everything was fine until the provocation came along. Then you had to make a decision and use your faculties of discrimination and of the rules and laws. You realize you are on a double line, but nobody is coming. You can see down the road... there's nobody coming! You are a very rational person and you know the rule and the law, but nobody is watching and nobody is coming. So you break the law and cross the double line and pass the person. You feel good. They feel good because you are not on their tail anymore.

Everything was going without thought, and all of a sudden, something provoked you to think, and you had to make a decision. Of course, there may be a place where the police aren't watching – although fewer and fewer because there are cameras everywhere – but there is no place where Allah is not watching. Sometimes a reaction is provoked, and

you have to analyze it. “I think I can do this. It is safe.” And maybe it is okay. Allah knows what we can and should do, and so does our *murshid*, and, by extension, what we can do and shouldn’t do. We have to be in a state of awareness and watchfulness; look for the feedback from the person, place, or circumstance; be able to realize that the more alert and heedful we are, the more we are going to see; and the more the faculties we have within us can be used, the more they will be enhanced by our relationship with one another, with good people, with our *shaykh*, and with Allah. *Asalaamu aleikum.*