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Saturday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [The Rules of the Order: Retaining the Memory \(Yad Dasht\)](#)

DVD title: The Rules of the Order: Retaining the Memory (Yad Dasht)  
Holding Memories that Create our Spiritual History

*Dinner blessing:* O Allah, many of our people are traveling or ill. We ask You, Allah, to protect those who are traveling, and keep them safe; and heal with Your Love and Compassion and Mercy, those who are ill. We are grateful for those who were traveling who returned safely, and we ask for those who will be traveling to have safety in their journeys, both our visitors who are coming and members of our community who are traveling this week. We ask You, Allah, to help us remember at times like this when everything is dormant, and the beauty of Your Nature seems to elude us at times. The biting winds bite at us, and we remember what these biting winds could represent to us: an eternity of difficulties if we do not humble ourselves and be grateful, and dive deeply into Your Ocean of Love and Mercy and into the practices You have given us to be better human beings, better servants. We ask You, Allah, for the awareness to overcome any vicissitude or ego that joins us in our day-to-day life. *Amin.*

*Suhbat:* If someone were to ask you what is the point or what is one of the primary purposes of all these Rules of the Order, what would you say? (Various students give answers): “To connect understanding to action.” “The rules make you more conscious of who you are, and you remember. To me the rules are like a *dhikr*.” “We are supposed to be living like Sufis, in the moment, and the rules give guidance to or define each moment.” “Remembrance.” Wonderful, *ma’shā’a-Llāh* No need for me to talk tonight! Good.

Let me tell you about the Naqshbandī teaching from the *hikma* of Ibn At'ala Iskandari (ra). I'll quote to you one of his axioms. He said, "*When two matters seem confusing to you, see which is heavier on the ego and follow it through. For indeed, nothing weighs on the ego but that which is true.*" Later, he says, "*He laid down specific times for acts of obedience...*" For example, prayer.

*...so that procrastination does not divert you from them. And He made each time span ample so that you would have a share in making the choice. Whoever finds it astonishing that Allah should save him from his passion or yank him out of his forgetfulness has deemed the Divine Power to be weak. Allah has power over everything. Sometimes darkness comes over you in order that He makes you aware of the value of His Blessings on you.*

Obviously, every one of those we can talk about. I brought that up because unless we allow ourselves to understand some of the deeper aspects of these Rules of the Order, we are going to maintain them to be just rules. What Allah (swt) is guiding us to understand through these *awliyā* and *ambiyā* and the Prophet (sal), among many things, is there is something more in *dhikr*, or in recitation and *du'ā*, or in other practices that are obligatory or *sunnah*. There is something more that happens when you do them, than merely fulfilling the requirement or the admonishment or the rule itself to do them.

If we look at *salat*, for example, as a rule, we know from years and years of practicing it that not only does it become natural to do it, and perhaps you even look forward to doing it, *inshā'a-llāh*; but you realize in doing it, it identifies you with people in a different way. It has an effect on you that is virtually automatic. You stop thinking about why you are doing it. It's available to you. You see that any of these things that can be looked at as rules can also be looked at as secrets of the Path; secrets that are revealed to the person who does them. And why do you do them? Maybe sometimes because you

are supposed to, but you do them because you sense there is a benefit, or because you have submitted.

Yesterday, I talked about history. I gave an assignment. You realize that these things become part of your reality, and part of the history of your journey. You don't think of *salat* as part of the history of your journey, but it is. You don't think of *wudu* as part of the history of your journey, but it is. You probably don't think of the meditation as part of the history of your journey, but it is. There are other reasons.

*Yad dasht* literally means to retain, or to hold the memory. Rabia is in the right field: she's in the field of *yad dashtan*, helping us to hold our memory. Khalil will tell a story when he comes back about his father's short-term memory versus his long-term memory. He's forgetting every few minutes that his wife had passed. So every time someone came up to him in the hall to give their condolences, he turned to Khalil and said, "Did something happen to Eloise?" Then he would take him aside and remind him. Don't shake your head; it's a beautiful story actually. It has a beautiful ending.

Retaining the memory is very important. It is part of human existence. The memory of your origins, of your homeland, of your lineage, of your spiritual shejre, the memory of your experience with people is part of your history. You do not want to create a history that is inconsistent. You don't know that, especially when you are young. You don't want to create a history that is inconsistent with your *qadr*/destiny. You depend on Allah's History Book. Do you know what that's called? The Qur'an. The Qur'an is not just a history book of histories; though it has models of history in it, but it is a textbook on how to keep a history. Part of the Torah is that, also. "So and so the son of so and so the son of so and so..." page after page after page of that. That's one kind of history. But for the Sufi, all that is *majāz*, a metaphor.

As a Sufi, you want to be very careful with every decision you make. Every decision you make is based on something you have already learned or are being guided to. Keeping the memory, *yad dashtan*, is both an exercise and a rule by which you remind yourself – remembrance – that you exist, that you exist within a context—not just a bloodline context, or a national context, but a spiritual context with Allah. You exist, and your being and experiences are critical to the end of your journey. This is why, often, you find elderly people with dementia have long-term memory but not short-term memory. When a person is sensitive to their beingness—Allah said, “**kun faya kun, be and it became**”— when you are sensitive to what your being-ness means (what you are became who you are), when you are sensitive to what you are today and from where you came to be (just to note, I said that in two different ways), your mind and your body reminds you.

For example, there is a form of therapy that is physical called the Alexander technique, and the Feldenkrais method. I studied Alexander technique for a while. You stand someone up and adjust them. At first you feel not quite right. I make you stand straight and put your head in a certain way, and your arm, and it feels totally wrong to you. But you are standing up straight. The person comes day after day. and you keep doing it until the body remembers—physical memory, cellular memory. Here we have again the metaphor that is consistent in the system. When we set ourselves aright mentally, emotionally and spiritually, eventually you remember it. It becomes the way you stand, the way you walk, the way you speak, think and act. But you have to practice that remembering. Someone has to put you in alignment. If you stand before the mirror and try to do it, you can't do it because you are looking into the mirror. You are not looking at yourself. You have to submit.

The body reminds us. Just so, something inside of us reminds us when we are in a positive situation, a constructive situation, a pleasant situation, a spiritual situation, versus a strictly physical situation. I played some jazz music earlier, and I asked my

brothers and sisters here, who could identify it. Oh, that's Miles Davis or that is whoever. This is long-term, pleasant memories. Then I told the story of when I used to go up to the hill district in Pittsburgh when I was at the university, and go to the jazz clubs there and stay up all night listening to John Coltrane and Art Farmer and Benny Golson and Miles Davis and Dave Brubeck and all those guys. Pleasant memories, but they did nothing for my spiritual life. You have that kind of memory that evokes these things. I can still smell the odor of the barbequed ribs coming from the place next door that was owned by an ex-convict. He used to tell us to park our cars in front of his place. We'd call him and tell him we were coming, and he'd make sure there was a parking space for us and he'd watch our cars. It was not a great part of town, especially at 2:00 in the morning. Then we'd go into his place and have some ribs; of course they were vegetarian tofu ribs! These are all pleasant memories and very nice. But it didn't do anything for my spiritual life.

We have spiritual memories also; and emotional memories. When you can put those things together—your physical memories and emotional memories and spiritual memories—you have a history of your journey. You have a history of your *sair ul suluk* through the seven levels. You have a history of your spiritual journey. Your spiritual journey is not always the same as your physical journey. Your spiritual journey comes in and out of your other journey. But you want it to be your major journey. If it is your major journey, you will find the right people to journey with. If you are going to go to Chicago on the train, and someone else is going to New York on the train, you will probably be on different trains. Maybe someone is going to Boston on the train, but you know you will pass through New York on that train. Of course, the analogy now falls totally apart, because who cares who you are on the train with? But you know what I mean.

If you are traveling on a spiritual journey, you will probably be with spiritual people, which means you are going to get some kind of support, and familiarity, and share certain

experiences. It becomes part of your spiritual history. *Yad dashtan* means you are retaining the memory of these events for a very specific spiritual purpose. You feel the positive input, the positive energy, *mīzān*, the harmony and balance that comes to you. You maintain the relationship with your *murshid* and with the *ambiyā*, because this is part of the journey. These are the people who accompany you on the journey. This is the *madad*/assistance you have, and the *ma'īat*, the accompaniment that you have. *Ma'īat* means accompaniment, *ma'īat* with *hubb*/love. *Ma'īat*: with everybody. *Ma'īat hubbi*: with your *murshid*, and with your brothers and sisters on the path who love you. This enables you to pass to one another this positive, constructive, supportive energy and to receive it. You store what has been given to you in your memory. You remember it and access it throughout your whole life.

You understand the importance of the assignment I gave you to write your history. You write it with this in mind. It is your spiritual history. I don't want your autobiography, "I was born in New Jersey and this and that..." Your spiritual history. When did you first hear about a journey? What first interested you? How did you come to it: were you married into it, born into it; you discovered it on your own? [Write about] how Allah brought you toward remembering, how Allah brought you toward *dhikr*/remembrance. Then you examine your memory, and you remember your positive experiences and how you looked at those positive experiences and how you used them for the benefit of your journey.

It's different than *yad kardan*. It's not the same. *Yad* means memory, or knowing. *Kardan* is to make the memory, and *dashtan* is to hold the memory. *Kardan* is how you make these memories, spiritually. How do you make memories of anything? You do acts. You say things. You have encounters. But what you hold in your memory is different, because it's reminding yourself in a very positive way physically, mentally, emotionally. You say, "Oh, I don't want to forget that. That was very important to me, what the Shaykh said tonight." "The time I spent with Shaykh Osman Sirajjudin was

very important to me. I don't want to forget that." You plant it very deep in your memory, so when the brain cells start to turn to mush, and you shake your head and it starts sounding like there's water in there, these things are still there. If any of us are walking around bumping into trees later on, but we are calling the trees, "Shaykh Osman... Samad i Shaykh..." you will know we are deep in our memory. When you put it deep into your memory, you are reinforcing and recharging, so to speak. You are consciously storing these elements.

I took out a rechargeable battery today, and in the instructions it says, "These batteries have no memory." So you can charge them anytime; they are not like the other batteries that you have to let them run down or they lose their "memory" or battery life. I thought, that's interesting. It's sort of good. But in a way it's sort of bad. I didn't want to be like that. There are things you don't want to forget.

The idea is, you remember specific things, put them deep in your memory and reinforce and charge them consciously. You store elements of them in such a way that you are now carrying a history of your own journey, which is linked to the tradition of the journey of everyone who has come before you. It is where you meet them in your history: where you met Hazrat, where you met Samad i Shaykh, where Hazrat met Mohammed Sayed Khan (ra), where he met Hamid Hasan al Alawi, etc. all the way to the Prophet (sal). We have a memory of the Prophet Mohammed (sal). You have to find it and access it, but it is there. It is there, because our memories are linked with our history. If that wasn't so, why would Mitra feel very strongly about what is going on in Iran? Why would Khaled care about what is going on in Egypt? Why would Dedeh care what's going on in Indonesia? Why would Asiye care about what is going on in Ethiopia, if you weren't linked to the history in some way?

You could say it's because you all actually physically lived in those countries, but it's not only that. Part of my spiritual history is in India. I care what goes on in India. It's not the

same thing, I admit. When you really absorb it and understand what it means to be a Muslim, you care what goes on among Muslims. Don't you care what's going on among Muslims in the United States? Why do you care, just because you might be profiled? I recommend you read the article Musa sent to me from the Jerusalem Post, written by an Israeli, about how they should feel about what's going on in Gaza. Why should he care? That's the "enemy." Because you care on a higher level. You are remembering something on a higher level. What's that level? It's the level of human compassion and love and mercy and understanding—far beyond the political. This is a spiritual caring.

If you have the courage and honesty to really say the unmentionable: to talk about the 8,000 pound elephant in the room; if you really care about what's right, you talk about these things, because it's part of your history. I was at a meeting the other day in Washington. We talked about history. I told you the other night, because my friend Dr. Sulayman Nyang was there and is a historian, we were talking about how your history frees you to move forward. This is a big subject, and I will talk about this more than one day, probably. If you have a particular history -- does anyone here not have one? -- if you have a spiritual history -- does anyone here not have one?— [you can access it]. Even the little ones have one, and they are building it. Their parents are building the framework and putting the roof and walls on the house. They are going to put the electrical in and all the systems, and at some point, the kids will decorate their own room. But all the rest of it is their history.

At some point, you begin to understand that what you have acquired, *yad kardan*, and what you have held on to and kept, *yad dashtan*, can be accessed at will. I should even say, beyond will, willingly without resistance, automatically. If you have no fear of your history, or fear or judgment about your religion, or bias about your community, your friends, your parents, your relationships; if you have no doubt about your values, then you are an enlightened human being. What would enlightenment be, other than that?

It would be total acceptance and transparency; access to that history, to the remembrance, to the results of the practice; access to the *latā'if*, to the subtleties, to those Qualities of Allah, of the *Sifāt*/Attributes, without hesitation, without editing, without avoidance.

Some people figured it out that it is a lot easier to do that by yourself living in a cave, than it is even living with one other person, let alone a whole group of people called society. But of course, Muslims being Muslims and Sufis being Sufis, they wanted to do it the harder way. They want to do this amidst the crowd. You realize if you can do it in day to day life, then you really have achieved separation from the ego—back to the original quotation from the Hikam. If you confront and see your ego, you realize when the ego rises up about something, it's rising up about something that's very true. If your ego is telling you, "I'm just as good as so and so," it's telling you that you have envy. That's the truth in that. It's pointing you to something. If your ego is telling you, "I knew that, and that stupid so and so didn't know it," it's telling you that you have pride.

You bring these things out at a very specific time. As you develop this capability of *yad dashtan*, as it becomes automatic to you, then, automatically, these memories come forward. The right memory comes forward at the right time. But there are things we have to do that don't come forward so easily, and we have to consciously work on them. That means we have potential we have to develop. We have these *latā'if* and we have to develop them and polish them. We have to develop certain elements of our beingness so that our memory can operate properly or optimally, I should say. You have to familiarize yourself with that whole process: it's called doing the practices. It is just like you familiarize yourself with prayer, with the *dhikr*, with service. The more familiar you are with these rules, the less they become "rules" and the more they become expressions of yourself.

At first deliberately, then automatically; grossly, then sensitively, you'll apply them. It will be not in some kind of a helter-skelter way, but something internally will speak to you.

Something internally will tell you that this situation demands this rule, but it's all happening internally. You are not thinking, "Is this *yad dasht*? It this *yad kardan*?" You are not thinking in that way, but you recognize situations. You may be in the middle of a situation and realize, "Aha. This comes from deep inside my memory." You might remember that, but you don't get there by trying to remember that. You get there automatically. This means we could say that "selective memory" is a very different kind of a phrase. Also understand that *yad dashtan* is sensing not just your memory, but your beingness and physical reality every once in a while. You examine yourself to see how you are. "I'm feeling terrible today. I have this pain. I have a cold. Better call the Shaykh for a remedy." That's one way of examining yourself. Another way is to stand back and look at yourself and say, "I'm getting awfully wrapped up in how my physical state is." "I'm getting very wrapped up in my mental and emotional state."

You sense there is something to look at. It's better to take account of it, like a *muhasabat*. If you don't, you are going to be in this rolling ball down the hill. "I'm sick with this. I'm sick about that. I'm sick with this and that and it affects my mental state." You get tired. Without moving, you think about where you came from and how you got to where you are. Without getting emotionally involved, you look at your physical state and your mental state. You examine them. You see whether or not your systems are in balance. If they are not in balance, all your energy is going to go to the one that's out of balance. That takes us to a whole other thing, which I'm not going to talk about, but which you all know: sometimes your physical symptoms are an indication of your mental and emotional state. Also you can say that they tell you something about your spiritual journey, and what the barriers are that are being thrown up on your spiritual journey.

The funny part of the whole thing is (and I don't know that it's so funny) is when you are young and perfectly well—and you don't have a pain in the ankle, like I have right now from when I fell, or my back, or whatever, or you have this cough and cold or an ongoing lacto intolerance, whatever it is—the problem is you don't think about those things. You think everything is just fine and dandy. You are not seeing the conditions building up. You are not seeing the subtleties of the mental and emotional situations building up until they come to some kind of crescendo. You think, “It's just this situation.” But you haven't been looking at your history. You haven't seen where you have been choosing.

You decided to get on a tour bus. The selling point of the tour bus is what? You can get on and off where you want! You have so many hours to get on and get off. That's fine when you are on a tour; it's lousy when it's life. But all of us, most of us, got on it and got off of it, and some of us were on it and had to stay on, even though we tried to jump off every once in a while. I'm the person who gets off the tour bus in London and catches the next one. I'm goal oriented, and I have to get done with the tour. I guess the tour bus operator hopes you will get so involved you have to buy another ticket.

Memory. One of the reasons why we say this path is not one of psychotherapy, though there are certain psychological aspects to it, is because we find it is not productive, not necessary, and certainly not healing to go into long psychological explanations of things. What we understand is if we absorb what is given, if we allow ourselves to be transformed, if it's true *tarbiya* (education), the capabilities and potentialities within your own self and within the methodology will come forward at the right time. You will be in such a state of *taslim*/submission, because you practice your *islam* and your submission to the Shaykh and trust in the way that the proper response will come. The alternatives will be before you, and you will know which ones to choose and which ones not to choose. If you don't, you have someone there to help you do that.

You have the support in the *suhbat* of the brotherhood and sisterhood, of those around you to make a change or a choice that will be supported because you are a spiritual person on the *sair ul suluk*. You are not going to be criticized and judged, and all that stuff. You rid yourself of that psychological fear; you come to at least that state of enlightenment so that you can move freely. That's why it's useless to go into long psychological explanations of things, if you are a Sufi, if you take your Sufism seriously, if you are a Muslim and you take your Islam seriously. Not if you have the label Sufi, or the label Muslim, or you happen to be thrust into the company of Sufis for whatever reason: you married into it; or you are born into the community, or whatever. But as it becomes you, then you don't need those long psychological examinations. One relaxes into who they are and what their responsibilities are.

The irony is if you come out of the *dhikr* like we had tonight, and notice that sometimes we are a little crabby after that, it's because the view of this world from that state is pretty bizarre. There is virtually not one sentence that can be uttered that doesn't seem to be filled with a lot of contradiction, conflict, selfishness, ego-centeredness, narcissism, stupidity, ignorance, and sincere desire to whatever it is. Immediately, you know whether the person got it or didn't get it, by the next word they utter when they walk out of the *dhikr*. "That was a great *dhikr* tonight, let's go get a drink!" You know they didn't get the *dhikr*, let alone the Islam, even if they say, let's go get a bialy or a bagel. That's not to say you cannot make a joke. I made a joke after *dhikr* tonight, I said, "Is dinner going to be ready in 5 minutes?" Not many people watching this on YouTube will think it's a big joke. But I did that purposefully, just to start to bring myself back to reality from the *dhikr*.

Part of us is always here, and part of us can always be there. Remember? '*Ālam al-mithāl*: quantum tunneling. You can be here and there at the same time. When you look at something and the ego is bothering you, you can look at what the truth is in that. When you are feeling tension and upset, you should look at what the truth is in that

tension and upset. I know we all want to help each other do that; but sometimes that causes a little more tension. But if you, yourself, are not doing it, then invite someone else to help you do it. Then on the other hand, we can also understand there are times to be tense. The ego is there for a reason. It is to point things out to you. The tension is there for a reason: it is the point where you have to put your attention. Tension tells you where you need to put your attention. Did you ever think about that?

When you put your attention on your tension, you will understand. Is that tension necessary? Is it beneficial or not beneficial? You don't want to be really laid back if you are flying with zero ceiling in a sleet storm trying to land your plane that has 450 people on it. Tension is good under those circumstances. You don't want to be so laid back that you say, "Ah, well, what the heck. We'll either make it or we won't, right?" There are times when tension is good.

Hazrat liked to say we project our thoughts. There are times when it is very normal to project our thoughts backwards to our history, and then use that and project our thoughts forward into the future. We have to understand what the present moment is. If the present moment is disrupting or disturbing us to such a degree that it prevents us from using the short period we have to do our practices, to do your prayers, then we have to make a different decision. The only way you are going to do that is if you are inside yourself asking yourself those questions. *Asalaamu aleikum.*