

January 20, 2010

Wednesday



Title: [The Rules of the Order: History of Naqshbandi Order and the Eight Rules](#)
Wuqufi Qalbi

DVD title: The Rules of the Order: History of the Eight Rules that Define Sufism
Shāh Naqshband: Three Wuqufs and Dhikr Khaḥfī

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. I want to finish up the series on the Rules of the Order, the secrets of the secrets of the well of knowledge. Let me go back in history for a little, because I've been getting questions about history. The aggregating force of the Khwajā Khwajāgān came with Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra), and along with that was his adoption of the *dhikr khaḥfī*. That came from the spiritual impetus of Abdul Khaliq Ghujduwānī (ra). As I told you, he refused to take part in the sessions of *dhikr jahri* performed by his own teacher, Amīr Kulāl (ra). That led to his establishing a separate group of individuals. This *dhikr jahri*, or *dhikr* of the tongue, was and remains today a very common practice of the Sufi Turūq. In addition, you find drumming, music and sometimes *hadra*, movement.

By the time Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra) comes on the scene, it was prevalent among the Khwājagān. Despite what Khwāja Ghujduwānī had said, they were still doing it. The re-introduction of the *dhikr jahri* was attributed to Mahmūd Anjīr Faghawī (ra) who was the link that preceded Alī Azīzān Rāmitanī (ra) in the *silsila* (line of transmission) Because it was controversial to some degree, Shaykh Faghawī affirmed that 'Ārif Rīwgarī (ra), who was a direct disciple of Khwāja Ghujduwānī, had condoned this practice before he died. He said it was okay because it was to call people to Allah. That was the explanation he gave when he was challenged as to why he was doing it. Other disciples of Khwāja Ghujduwānī (ra) had challenged that too, under the mantle of one of

the other *shaykhs* of the *awliyā* in a controversy that had a lot of social implications to it at the time.

Those social implications had to do with the followers who were living in Bukhara. These events were not taking place in a vacuum. They were living in Bukhara where most of the disciples were; but Shaykh Fagnawī was living in the country side. So there was this controversy between the followers in the city and the followers in the country. It kept going on until the time of Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra). Some people were fully permitting the *dhikr jahri*, and some were performing *dhikr khafī*. When Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra) came on the scene, he talked about *dhikr khafī* or the hidden recollection. We shouldn't call it "silent" because it is *khafī*, and like the *latīfa khafī*, a hidden recollection. You are re-calling. It is whispered in the heart and also known as *dhikr qalbi*. (You can see that we are getting to *wuqufī qalbi*). It became the practice of the majority of the Naqshbandiyya; consequently, it became a very distinguishing characteristic of the Naqshbandī Order as it spread.

These people were capable of doing *dhikr khafī* and had a level of sobriety. I talked to you about sobriety a few weeks back and gave an assignment. **ASSIGNMENT: Go back over the last talks and note how spiritual anonymity and sobriety manifest from an experiential point of view.**

This didn't prevent disagreements from the Naqshbandiyya Awliyā, especially about the attitude to be taken during vocal *dhikr*. It is not just doing the *dhikr*, but what is your attitude? What is your *niyyat*? What is the characteristic of it? That discussion or argument started with Shaykh Mohammed Parsa (ra) and Ya'qūb Charkhī (ra), who were followers of Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra). Shaykh Parsa was sort of in line with what some people considered a more ecumenical way of doing things, and he allowed vocal *dhikr* as well as the silent one, though he considered the silent *dhikr* to be higher than the vocal one. He described vocal *dhikr* as good for beginners, who then should learn how to

internalize it as they made progress. On the other hand, he stressed that vocal *dhikr* should not be performed as a means of gaining fame or recognition or material benefit, which was often the case. People were attracted to the *shaykhs* who were doing performances. We see it still today.

The point being, at least for me to try to give to you, is that even if you are doing vocal *dhikr*, it takes the same kind of focus and discipline as doing *dhikr khafī*, perhaps more. On the one hand, if you are doing it silently, people don't know what you are doing, and you feel like you are doing it out of the mainstream. If you are doing it vocally, but you are doing it without name and fame, you have to struggle to fend off the people who want to come and join it for those reasons. It's the same thing today. Shaykh Ya'qūb Charkhī (ra) was much more radical. He said, no vocal *dhikr*. Both of these are in our line. He said Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra) forbade it, and that there was no basis in Qur'an for it, and no basis in the *Sunnah* for it; which is questionable. Because Allah says, **“Remember Me and I will remember you,”** but He doesn't say, “Remember Me silently.” That's one of a number of examples. His position was accepted by his most famous *murīd*, 'Ubaydullāh Ahrār (ra), who was a very influential person.

Along with *dhikr khafī*, Al Shāh (Bahā'uddīn Naqshband) (ra), accepted Shaykh Ghujduwāni's eight principles that defined this path of Khwāja Khwājagān. The Khwājagān path was very clear from those eight rules to those people at that time. As I have told you, they are difficult to understand. They require not the normal way of understanding, which I'll talk about in a few minutes. But he added three principles to them, the three *wuqūfīs*. They became the *kalamati qudsiyya*, the repetition of these sacred words that refer to very specific practices. At the time, some of them were also used for developing and applying correct social and political perspectives—applying like a template.

Those principles are *yad kard* (recollection); *baz gasht* (he defined as returning); *nigar dasht* (watchfulness); *yad dasht* (remembrance); *hosht dar dam* (awareness of the breath, watching the breath), *nazar ba qadam* (watching your steps), and *safar da watan* (traveling in the homeland); and *khilwat anjuman* (solitude amidst the crowd.) That left three: *wuqufi zamani*, *wuqufi adadi*, and *wuqufi qalbi*: time awareness or pause, awareness of numbers, which is better known as awareness of anything more than one, multiplicity; and *wuqufi qalbi*, awareness of the heart. These principles represented a kind of hierarchical formation of the philosophy of the Naqshbandiyya. The first four of them refer to the foundations for *dhikr*. In some ways, we can say they all refer to *dhikr*, remembrance of Allah. Everything refers to ways to remember Allah.

Those of you in the Student's Group remember the teachings of Mohammed al Khani who is the shaykh from Damascus. They include recollection of the unitary statement, "*Ash-hadu an lā 'ilaha wa-ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasūlullāh,*" and returning to consciousness by saying such things as "*Anta maksudi, wa ridiqa maglubi. You are my goal, and your satisfaction is my aim, my desire,*" and watching over the heart from things that distract the thoughts, and remembering what it is that identifies the presence of the heart with Allah, what identifies awareness of the heart with Allah. Then there were two other principles: one was awareness of the breath, and watching over the steps.

Of course, watching over the breath has many implications. At the time this was happening, many people thought this was a yogic influence on the Sufis. It might have been, to some degree. Only because watching the breath is a very basic process that comes out of the theology and philosophy of all mysticism. Allah breathes into the clay, so breath becomes very important. Al Khani looks at this as a way to keep the heart from being distracted. He says that when the breath enters the body, the eyes begin to see the world. Before that, in the womb, the breath has not entered the body, and the eyes are only seeing Allah. It's literal and it's metaphorical.

The other principles, traveling in the homeland and solitude amidst the crowd, have a lot of importance because they contribute outwardly to the social and political commitment that the Naqshbandī have to creating, not an Islamic society, but a society of awakened individuals. Remember, this is coming from the Khwājagān mentality. It's not to gain political power or have a social influence; but it is just a realistic, pragmatic statement that we live in a political and social environment. Our spirituality has to have some effect on it. There is a kind of subtext to that, which is mysticism can affect society and the well-being of individuals, even in the social-political sphere. Some of us on occasions, maybe for a few minutes a day, believe that. But there is a kind of paradox in that.

If you really trace back the Khwāja Khwājagān, you find yourself sitting with the *malamati* mentality. First you have *malamati*, blameworthy. You go back to Abū Yazīd Bistāmī (ra) and those people. Now move forward, with more of a Sufi mentality, which has a sense of responsibility for the world. *Malamati* (blameworthy) is outside the world, basically. There is a kind of paradox where something happens where there becomes a more of an awareness of social responsibility, and how the path interfaces, and how a person's progress interfaces with day to day life. I don't want to paint the *malami* as being outside the world, but they keep their spirituality out of sight of the world. In the Rashat, Khwāja Naqshband was asked, "*On what is your way founded?*" And he replied, "*On this phrase: solitude in the crowd, which outwardly means to be with the creatures and inwardly be with the Creator.*" He explained that being with the Creator was being with the word of Allah in the Qur'an. He went further and said, "*To be among people where neither commerce nor trafficking diverts them from the remembrance of Allah as an indication of their state.*"

It is such that your daily life and work does not divert you. He's very pragmatic. This was in opposition to certain Sufic practices at the time, like *khilwa*/seclusion. The second thing was, there were people who just spent their whole lives struggling with the *nafs*

ammāra. We see that today also. Only now you see it in such perverted and distorted way. Like the Taliban: they will struggle with your *nafs ammāra*; they just won't struggle with their own *nafs ammāra*. There was a controversy, and it is still one we deal with today. That is, are you going to pay attention to the bad student, or to the good student? Will you formulate everything around the weakness in a person's soul, or around the potential strength in an individual?

There are two schools of thought. People who struggle with their *nafs* are struggling with their weaknesses without necessarily affirming their strengths. The difference is by affirming your strengths by doing your practices, praying, fasting, etc., by being like a corpse in the hands of the bodywasher with the *shaykh*, by being in the *tariqah*, then naturally the *nafs* is going to be transformed. That is one school of thought, and it happens to be more of my school of thought. It's more realistic, because it builds strengths and doesn't focus on weaknesses. So, there are these two ways of looking at it that still exists today.

“Seclusion in the crowd” had a social and political aspect to it. It meant you could have your trade, your shop, you could do what anybody does, and it was up to you to follow this path. If you want to follow this path, you should have the maturity to follow it, and do the practice, and be serious about it. You shouldn't look at it as a burden or as something you are supposed to do. “Solitude amidst the crowd” means no matter what you are doing, building a house, at the university, doing whatever you do in your business, it's building your strength and allowing you to participate in human society. Of course, one of the characteristics of the Naqshbandī Tariqah was you could be a part of the *tariqah* and did not have to give up your occupation. This became a characteristic in other schools, but some of the other schools lost their practices and made them only something you did on Thursday night, or on Sunday, or after the *khutbah* on Friday.

Finally, the principles of *safar dar watan* and *khilwa dar anjuman* were practices that could be looked at as encouraging the Naqshbandiyya to be part of the world, as the world is part of your mystical journey. You are not on a mystical journey, and then you will be part of the world. The world has to be part of your mystical journey. That was a very unique perspective. People might have been doing it for hundreds of years, but this was now stated and articulated in these Rules. Then the final three principles which were attributed to Bahā'uddīn Naqshband, which I was going to talk about tonight, were designed specifically to increase or magnify the *dhaiker's* (the person who was performing *dhikr*) awareness of their own self and the world around them, and of the Divine Presence. Here's the reality of the world; here's a way to look at the other eight; now here are three that are going to increase your understanding of the value of those other eight principles, specifically by increasing your awareness of your self, of the world around you, and the awareness that Allah is present (*ihsan*).

It came to define Sufism, basically. Still today, no matter what the Order, people talk of *ihsan* as the defining term for Sufism, which is, basically, to act as if you are seeing Allah everywhere; and if not, to know that Allah is seeing you. So it's remembrance, and everywhere means the world, and you. You reflect on that, so it's those three points. From a practical point of view, these three require certain things. One is *muhasabah*. I believe it was Junayd who said the path of Sufism is *muhasabah*. The self-examination, accounting of one's own self, one's own ethic, one's own actions, and one's own morality emphasizes the Sharī'ah. It has to be against what? What's the standard? The Sharī'ah and Sunnah are the standards against which you make that examination. Then keeping account of the number of repetitions of *lā ilāha illa-Llāh*, when it is done literally (as many of the people among the Naqshbandiyya do it), like 120,000 *lā ilāha illa-Llāh* or something like that, the idea of that was to help control the breath and the focus. More important than that was the concentration of the movement of your heart, watching the beating of your heart to ensure that it is attentive to Allah.

Wuqufi qalbi has two meanings. One is that remembering with the heart is being present with Allah. In a sense, it is like *yad dasht*, remembrance. Secondly, it's the process of remembering or re-collecting one's thoughts and attention in order to be aware of the heart during the *dhikr*, so that the *dhikr* is directed not just toward that piece of flesh in your chest called the heart, but it is telling us, it has been revealed to us that the rhythm of the beating of the heart is a constant recollection. For example, if you were saying, "*lā ilāha illa-Llāh*," and I was outside the door and I hear you are saying it, I can then say, "Khaled is saying *lā ilāha illa-Llāh*." If you can listen to your heart and you hear your heart saying "*lā ilāha illa-Llāh*," it's like walking into the room when someone is saying it and you are hearing them. You are paying attention. You are hearing your body, your heart, calling out to Allah. If I'm outside the door, I don't hear you. If I open the door, I hear you. "Ah, Khaled's making *dhikr*." I open the door and listen to my heart. "Ah, my heart is making *dhikr*." What's the importance of that?

You could say it's saying "ba-boom, ba-boom." But "ba-boom, ba-boom" doesn't have any meaning to it. If you are going to be part of the system, that's not the place to start questioning how important is it to know your heart is saying *lā ilāha illa-Llāh*. You should have questioned it a long time ago, when you decided to become a Sufi or a Muslim, or when you stood up and made *dhikr*. I could say to you that if you make *dhikr* aloud every Saturday night, you will have certain experiences with it, or it has a transformative effect on you, or if you are making *dhikr khafī* privately in your meditation and you feel it causes some calming or whatever, magnify that, and that's the importance of it. It has an effect. Thoughts have an effect, emotions have an effect. Circumstances have an effect.

"Traveling in the homeland" and "solitude amidst the crowd" are very important, and characterize the Naqshbandī order. This is where *suhbat* comes in. The Naqshbandī and the Khwāja Khwājagān prefer this whole concept of *suhbat* because it is fully within the principle of "traveling in one's homeland" and "solitude amidst the crowd."

Accompanying the teacher and through companionship, the teacher teaches the *murīdīn*, but also conveys directly to them through transmission, *tajalli*, this light. *Suhbat* is described by the Naqshbandiyya as the most elevated and the most effective method to reach Allah. You are traveling with the teacher. The transmission is going on. The teacher says, “Look here. Do that.” He is not telling you everything to do; but if the question is asked, the answer will come or the guidance will be given. It’s still the student’s responsibility to do it. Along with that, the early Naqshbandiyya introduced another method which we know as *rābita*. *Rābita* now is not followed by every *tarīqah*. We don’t focus on *rābita*, because we felt it comes naturally.

The word really means to bind. Traditionally, you keep the image of the *shaykh* in your heart whether the *shaykh* is present or not. It is part of *tawajjuh*, paying attention. The teacher directs his heart or *latā’if* toward you, and that forms a bond of love. You, in return, pay attention to the *latā’if* of the *shaykh*—not just to receive it, but to maintain it. The image is like a mirror. You see the image of the *shaykh* in the heart; it is like a mirror reflecting the teachings of the Prophet (sal). It becomes a conduit from *shaykh* to the Prophet to Allah (swt). Practically, I think that there are certain things that took place because of this philosophy. One is, if you had a very charismatic kind of *shaykh*, and people rushed to him, people from this village and that village, this nation and that nation, etc. You see it in the world today. It extends the authority and reach of the *shaykh*. That’s how the links of the golden chain of the Naqshbandiyya have spread so far.

Along with this practicable process, there was another thing that was happening at the time. That was a kind of awakening to the intellectual knowledge, the wisdom. Mohammed Parsa wrote many things and introduced into the tradition of the Khwājagān a lot of different Sufi authors, like Imam al Ghazālī (ra) and Kushari (ra) and Hujwiri (ra) into the thought of the Naqshbandiyya. It wasn’t just practice but also rigorous intellectual questioning and hearing what these great *shaykhs* had said.

Imam al Ghazālī addressed so many subjects. He turned out to be a follower of Shaykh al Akbar (Ibn Araby), whose school was *wahadat wujud*. Because there was a lot of argument at the time about *wahadat wujud* and Ibn Araby's teaching, he didn't talk about it. He studied the works of Ibn Araby. Parsa wrote a commentary on one of the books in my library written by Ibn Araby, *The Bezel of Wisdom*. He, like I and others, don't see that there is a contradiction between *wahadat wujud* and what later was called *wahadat shuhud* by Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī . There is no conflict between that and the Sharī'ah and the Sunnah.

Then another thing happened. We tend to look at these things are monolithic. Khwāja Parsa (ra) very much like the poetry of Attar. Ghujduwāni (ra) liked the poetry and teachings of Rumi. 'Ubaydullāh Ahrār (ra), who was aware of all these teachings, felt that they had so many secrets in them that the uninitiated people shouldn't be exposed to them. He felt that people would become distracted and off the path. Jami, another Naqshbandī *shaykh*, very famous, was a great follower of Ibn Araby. He was very active in defending the teachings of Ibn Araby. So all these things were going on. It's not just the times we are living now when there is controversy among philosophies. It's all happening. That's the background for these practices. It's characterized by this question of silent versus vocal, by the use of the Rules of the Order, and the relationship between the *shaykh* and the *murīdīn* based on *suhbat* and *rābita*.

The last thing I might want to say on the subject is it is traditional among the Naqshbandiyya that we take things apart and put them back together again. It is totally within the purview of a Naqshbandi *shaykh* to dismantle and rebuild the path according to the needs of the person, place and time. That, I guess, is another reason why the relationship between the *shaykh* and the *murīd* is very important. You will always be a part of a process of dismantling and rebuilding. If you are not, there is something to really question about it. Indeed, even in our time, there are some young Naqshbandī *shaykhs* who are more concerned about keeping exactly the tradition of the way things were done.

There are some who care very little about tradition, and just like the idea of making what they want. You have all these different forces going on.

In light of this understanding, I want to leave you with, not just the fact that Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra) added these three pauses, *wuqūfis*, to the teachings, but they were the means to allow an individual to live in the world, to have solitude amidst the crowd, to be in a state of remembrance, to be in a state of *khilwa* (withdrawal), to be traveling in their own homeland, and at the same time, not to draw attention to one's self, but to make progress by magnifying the previous principles and by giving us tools we use every day in meditation, if we sit in meditation. We use the tools of these three *wuqūfis* every single day.

They account for the fact that a successful person on this path will develop *basīra*, will develop *firāsa*, will not only understand but seek out *suhbat*. It's like the salmon seeking out their spawning grounds. Nothing will stop them. You get into the flow of this practice, and nothing will stop you from being in that refreshing cool water where your insight develops. Where you begin to feel that your purpose of life not some outer social-political thing, but is being fulfilled inwardly. This *tarīqah* gives you the path for this to be in resonance. *Asalaam aleikum*.