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Thursday



Title: Tarbiya: A Special Kind of Education for the Sufi

DVD title: Tarbiya: A Special Kind of Education for the Sufi
Murīd and Murād

So the question comes: what is a person to be educated to? Most often, Islamically, you hear the word *tarbiya* to mean the education of young people, to gain an education. Also, the word used is “*talib*,” as in Taliban. But there is a special education for special people, people with special needs. That’s us, because we want to retard the growth of our *nafs*. People are challenged to do that. The question comes about *tarbiya*. To a Sufi, there is a special kind of education, sort of like a *rab’* – school, Ya Rabbana. What’s a Sufi supposed to know? Just practices: breathe this number of times, recite that number of times, do the *wazifa* that way? It is not just to know things, facts, but it is to know, to be an ‘*arif*. This is the same root where you get the word *marifah*/gnosis.

What is it to be an ‘*arif*, to really know something? You know the sun comes up in the east and sets in the west. You know it. You don’t have to practice it. You don’t have to read about it or remember it. You can observe it every day, and it’s reaffirmed every day. It is to know the Names of Allah (swt), to know those Attributes. But there are other things, too. Remember it means breeding: well mannered, well bred—not just to know about. What are the other things? They are big secrets, too. Why are they big secrets? Because some of the things are not easily understood. We hesitate to even say them in public. I have so many of them right here (Shaykh picks up his writings). Some of them are a little repetitious.

We established the fact that the person who is aware of *suhbat*, who is traveling on this path, who is a *murīd* on the way of being a *murād*, who is a *talib*, a learner or student has

to know very special things. Some of them are not easily understood by the common person. Some of them are not easily accepted even by a person who calls themselves a *murīd*, a person who gives *baī'at*, a person who is guided. They are not really known and accepted easily. You might remember that.

Even 25, 30 years later I don't talk about those things much. Why? Because they are controversial? No. It is because they are true. They have been followed by the greatest people: Imam al-Ghazālī (ra), Ibn Araby (ra), Suh'rawardi (ra), Shāh Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra), Shaykh Ghujduwānī (ra), by Shaykh Rāmatani (ra), followed by others. They knew, understood, taught, lived, and passed on these Rules of the Order, the Conduct of the Murid, the 15 Rules of Discipleship, the Eleven Rights that allow this *fayyād*, this overflowing of knowledge to come and to be absorbed, because it's very hard. Just one sentence of it causes great disturbance, resistance.

Some Muslims don't like the Sufis, not because the Sufis are weird and practice some weird form of Islam, but because they know this truth and they cannot live up to it themselves, because their *nafs* won't allow them to live up to it. It's the truth I am telling you. You know it's true, if you really take the time to think about it. Listen to one sentence:

The seeker must submit to the will of the shaykh and obey him in all his orders and advice, because the shaykh has more knowledge in Haqiqah and Shariah, and Tariqah. As a sick person gives himself to the doctor in order to be healed, so to does the murid, sick in his conduct and behavior, submit to the shaykh's experience in order to be healed.

That's one sentence. Do you want a list? You know the list. This is from *Al Fatwa Al Hadithia*:

The seeker must not object to the way the shaykh instructs and controls the murīds. Each shaykh has his own way which he has been permitted by his shaykh to use.

Imam Ibn Hagar al Athami said, “*Whoever opens the door of criticism against shaykhs and their actions with their murids will be punished and isolated from receiving spiritual knowledge. Whoever says to his shaykh ‘why?’ will never succeed.*”

Oho. That’s the kind of knowledge a person not only hears about, but has to struggle with. If you follow that one, you cannot even say to the *shaykh*, “Why is that?” Before you have success in that, you would say why. It’s not that you cannot ask question; this is my caveat. That’s why it’s not for the weak person, for the person who has no mind. It’s for the person who struggles with this until they understand that “*I am a friend of the friend of the Order and the enemy of the enemy of the same.*” “*Do not pander to the desires of the immature, giving them what they want instead of what they need.*”

Remember all those?

The seeker must know that the shaykh will make some mistakes, but that this will not prevent him from lifting up the murīd to the Divine Presence. The murīd must excuse the shaykh, as the shaykh is not the Prophet. Only prophets are free from error, though it is rare. Just as a doctor might make a mistake in treating the patient, so too, the shaykh might make a mistake in treating the murīd’s spiritual illness, and this must be excused. The seeker must respect and honor the Shaykh in his presence and in his absence, if only because the shaykh can see with the eye of the heart.

You have no idea what I am pushing through just to read this. NO IDEA. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (ra) said:

It is said that whoever is not happy with the orders of the shaykh and does not keep good conduct and adab with him will never keep good conduct with the Qur'an and with the Sunnah of the Prophet (sal). Whoever criticizes a saint, Allah will cause his heart to wither.

This is the content of *tarbiya*. It is not just to read them or memorize them, but to come to understand them, to educate oneself to these secrets. This is the *quddisa sirruh* of the *rūh*. These are the secrets. You can call them the eleven secrets or whatever you want. Why? They have to be secrets.

He must not look to any other shaykh other than his shaykh, though he just keep respect for all the shaykhs. He must agree with his shaykh as the patient agrees with the physician. Or he must hire an ombudsman! He should avoid laughing, yawning, raising the voice, talking without authorization, extending the feet, and always sit in a respectful manner.

I'm not here to teach that tonight. I'm perfectly happy to entertain at the right time questions like "why." What are the secrets? Please go like this (touch the tip of the index finger and thumb together in each hand and raise the remaining fingers.) Turn your hands (palms) toward you and look. Keep your left hand with the palm toward you, and turn your right hand with the palm away from you. What does it say? It says Allah, Allah. Allah made in your hands, with your five fingers, which represent the five Pillars and the five Principles. Allah, Allah. Didn't He? One (the right hand) you see to yourself and it faces the world, and one (the left hand) the world sees and it faces you. Allah, Allah. Do you see it? Do you know enough Arabic to read that?

Turn your hands like this (look at the palms of your hands). There are two prominent lines in each hand. One goes like this (a curve beneath the fingers), and the other like a triangle. What Arabic number does it look like? Eighteen in your right hand. And the

number eighty-one in the left hand. Can you all read Arabic numbers? One is like a one, and the eight is like an upside down V. What is 18 and 81? 99. What is 99? Allah wrote in every human being's hands that there are 99 Names of Allah. This is *tarbiya*. It's not just mystical knowledge. It is to understand that Allah has left His Imprint everywhere and to believe it, and to be qualified to absorb that knowledge. You don't have to believe all these things, or accept them, yet.

Oh, this one you will have no trouble with: *He must serve his shaykh and make himself as useful as possible.* If the *murīd* becomes like this, then all this (the secret of the numbers in the palms) becomes real and obvious and activated—all that is in the hands. Allah says you try to stop the wrong [done by] your hands. What is in your hands? The Name of Allah and the Ninety-Nine Names. The name Allah (Shaykh makes his hands spell out Allah as he illustrated above) contains the ninety-nine (indicated by the palm lines). That's why also we should shake hands with each other.

There are the Rules of the Order, and the relationship of the *murīd* to the *murīds*.

Keep respect for them in their presence or their absence. He must think only good of his brothers and sisters and not search out their bad habits. He should advise them when they have need with the intention of strengthening them. His advice to them must be in private, and with leniency and free of arrogance. One advised must accept the advice and be thankful, and practice that advice. They must accept their apology if they apologize, and must make peace between them. He must support them when they are attacked.

What does it take to do that? It's not that these things tell you something. What does it take for that to come naturally, and not just say, "Oh, I have to do this checklist. I must not ask to lead them but ask to be brothers. Now, how am I going to do that, because I

know I should lead them. Oh, I must show humbleness. I have to practice humbleness.”
Tarbiya is the environment and the means that make this come out naturally.

Even though a person has harmed or wronged him or her, the murīd or murīda must not pray for harm to come to him or her, or curse him or her. Even if the murid is wrong, he or she should not damn anyone, whether by word or action. The murīd should put up with this and be patient for Allah’s sake. This virtue takes the owner to high stations in this world and the hereafter. Such a person will be loved by far and near ones. The murīd should not blame other believers with attributing partners to Allah or with disbelief, and cause trouble between them. The attitude is close to mercy and assists the murīd to reach high spiritual levels. The murīd should not sit inwardly in the heart or outwardly... and avoid eating things that are not halal... etc. etc.

Don’t you get a sense of the type of person when you hear that, of something deeper than rules and regulations? This is the education of the Sufi. Yet, it is the way of life of all those great Muslims who are known for their “Islam,” and not for their Sufism, like Imam al-Ghazālī or Ibn Araby. We know them for their Sufic writings and sayings, but the world at the time did not, except among their own, except among the muridīn. They knew. Shaykh Kaftaro, Samahtul Shaykh, was just like that. He kept a very, very low Sufic profile because of the political situation, but he was like that. He was a tower among Muslims. Hazrat was like that. He didn’t have to keep as low a profile, but his profile was kept low around the school. Why? This was the education he received.

Yes, we are on the search to be aware of that Divine Presence. Yes, we are trying to discipline ourselves and trying to do those practices. It is as if we are thinking, “If I just did them twice a day, everything would be all right.” No, if you just did them twice a day you would transform yourself; and your essential, good character would come forth and be revealed. Yes, of course everything would be all right, but not because you were just

doing those practices. It's like saying that just because my children have a vocabulary list they have to study, that's going to make them intelligent. No, it's going to give them tools for intelligence and understanding. The vocabulary is not going to make the intelligent. It's part of the road toward taking their intelligence and making it useful. You give them better words to use so they can express themselves better, or have more subtle concepts.

It's like telling them that by learning geography, it will help them understand international relations. No, that's not necessarily true unless geography is being taught that way. But it will make their knowledge of what is happening in the international arena more understandable if they understand geography. Geography means what? It meant a map when I was a kid. It means culture, demographics, population demographics, geological realities, resource management and all kinds of things. A map may be a tool for that, or a vocabulary list may be a tool for this. Qualities like patience, love, compassion and mercy are expressions—at the right time and place, under the right circumstances—of a true education, of a truly well-bred, highly educated individual who has exceeded what the average person has.

We went through a lot of morphology yesterday. Now, it becomes – ah, “*Know yourself and you will know your Lord.*” Allah is as near to you as the lines on your hands, as your fingers held in the right way. You seek the face of Allah, but you don't find it unless somehow you project onto yourselves that which you are seeking. And understand that what you are seeking is assisting you in your seeking. Who is the seeker? The *murīd*. Who is the one who is sought? The *murād*. In the core of the heart of the *murīd* is the passion, the will, the *ibāda*, the worshipfulness, the *khidma*, the servicefulness. Who performs that *tawajjuh*? Who pays attention? Who turns their face toward Allah? Whose *adab* is consistent with the Sharī'ah and the Sunnah? Who transforms themselves in the presence of others? Who deals with the *nafs*? Who watches the *nafs*? Who works with it, who works against it, who struggles? Who is available to others for their needs?

Who is available to give good advice? Who holds private discourse in their heart with Allah? Who is always working for the good of humanity? Who is always working for the good of the service of Allah (swt)? Who is happy with anonymity? Who practices their sunnah and their nafle? Who acts out of sincerity? The well-mannered, the well-educated, the acceded and exceeded—acceded to Allah and exceeded in their knowledge. That's who. That's Hu.

Having attained that, realizing that one can only learn it in the company of the believer, in the awareness in the company of Allah (swt), the person in *suhbat*, the Sufi, the *murād*, the *murād* never backs out of sight, but is always in full sight, always in the light. In that person, their speech becomes knowledge and wisdom, and the secrets of Allah become revealed because they follow these rules, these guidelines, these rites: the *adab* to the *shaykh*, the *adab* to the brothers and sisters. The one who understands that if they had *adab* to the *shaykh*, they have the *adab* of the *shaykh* to his *shaykh*. It's not about *shaykhs*; that's just an example I'm giving. The Prophet (sal) said that Allah said:

My believing servant continues to draw near to Me through superogatory acts until I love him. When I love him, I become his hearing, his sight, his tongue, and his hand, and his foot and his ear. Through Me he hears and through Me he sees, through Me he speaks and through Me he understands, and through Me he strikes.

Allah said it, but it was revealed through Prophet Mohammed (sal).

There is a *murād* inside of us also, not just a *murād*. Allah says, “**Ask of your Lord and He will provide.**” We have to look at this *suluk*, this journey in the world, this journey in the inner world of meditation; this journey in the realm of knowledge. What is required is that passion, that sincerity, that *adab*, that willingness, that humility, that trustworthiness and trustfulness. That means we have to free ourselves from our fears,

our worries, and our prejudices. We have to free ourselves at the core of our being, and realize *lā ilāha illa-llāh*, there is no reality but the one reality. There is no truth but the one truth. There is no essential; there is no God without Allah. Shaykh Junayd (ra) said, when asked about *murīd* and *murād*, “*The murīd is governed by the management of knowledge (What are we talking about? Tarbiya.), where the murād is governed by the protective custody of the truth. Because the murīd travels on the surface of the earth, while the murād flies through the air. When will the traveler catch up with the flier?*”

That is also manifest metaphorically in the diaspora, and in the escape from Firown (Pharaoh), who represents the nafs. And Sidna Musa (as) traveled for 40 years in the desert. I talked about manna yesterday. He was on this earthly, physical journey for 40 years in the desert. Where did he end up? He ended up on Jabal al-Siin, the mountain of Siin (Sinai). He climbed up the mountain, and he’s called by Allah and becomes *murād* again. He brings down these laws, etched in tablets (which is very important because it means they won’t disappear, because they are etched in stone.) They are not in cyberspace. They are not on a thumb drive or a hard drive. The only things that will last are the things carved in stone, or maybe carved in the hearts of people.

Then there is the person who walks on the earth as the *murīd*, and he is gaining knowledge. Allah (swt) is speaking to him, revealing to him, teaching him. Then all of a sudden, he makes him airborne, Isra Miraj. He calls him to His Throne. (In the lives of the prophets, we have also the analogical... let’s call it a reality just for the sake of pretending that we believe it. I believe it.) And all of a sudden he becomes airborne and he is called back to Allah. He was called to the mountain and sat in meditation. Allah gave him this knowledge, *tarbiya*. He is a good *talib* and learns and passes it on. His *adab* is so good and so perfect, that he rises up in the air, and Allah takes him in this quantum leap that lasts just a nanosecond, less than a second as the pitcher falls over. There is a whole other space and time reality. He is *murād*.

We have an environment. That environment is called the *khanaqah*, the *zāwiya*, the *tekkia*. This is the environment, symbolically. It only is the environment if learning is happening, if faith is being developed, if piety is being developed. And if people apply themselves, then it gives life to the place, but the place is established. Always the places are established. Allah places someone or people in the places. We are privileged to have this place, because what happens in it is very, very important—this community, this khanaqah. You don't go out and get an office, and then decide what you are going to do in it. We decided what we were going to do, and then the place came. We didn't know exactly, but we knew specifically enough: a spiritual center. A true spiritual center. Now, what are the metrics? How are we measuring it?

Musa and I were having a conversation the other day: we need to make communal muhasabah. Abu Bai'den said, *“The primary requirement for the aspirant is companionship with a practicing spiritual master who is knowledgeable, who fears Allah, who is conversant with both the exoteric and esoteric spiritual sciences, and is aware of the transcendent truth and reality.* We talked about *qasd* last night. Anybody remember what it is? The aim. There is a correctness of *qasd* and of *ikhlas* that elevates our sincerity and our worldly action, our aim and our sincerity. Conversely, if there is corruption in our hearts, we are degraded, regardless of our prayers. In our effort to construct a better life and a better world, we are the recipients of constant eternal rewards. The Prophet (sal) said:

Anyone who, without subjecting another person to cruelty or aggression, builds a magnificent building or plants saplings without indulging in cruelty or rancor will get a reward for the fullness of time in which Allah's creatures are benefited by these things.

Maybe that's the only reason in the world to build cathedrals and huge *masājid* and temples that have been used for the last 3,000 years. Maybe that's the reason to plant

beautiful gardens. I mean not just to get the reward but to understand that there is this reciprocity. He said, ***“If a Muslim lays a garden or does farming, and a bird or a man eats something grown by him, then he will gain virtue in its place. Whatever you feed your father is a charity from you. Whatever you feed a child is a means of reward for you. Whatever you feed your servant is a charity from you.”***

This information is available to all Muslims; but it is only understood by the one who can be truly educated to the secret behind it. As long as we are obedient to Allah, our intentions are pure and sincere, the acts that we perform, even our sleep, are considered *sadaqa*. This is how Allah knows the secrets of our hearts. It’s in the times of difficulty, like in Haiti, for the poor Haitian people, in scarcity for the people in Africa, in Darfur, that the light of sincerity comes on with all of its power.

There is no better way to spend your life. If you happen to have a few other blessings with it, like a good brother and sister, a good husband or wife, a good child, a job in which you are a *talib* to others, where you are teaching; you are growing a beautiful garden, you are feeding your brothers and sisters, you are contributing to the well-being of humanity—that is fantastic. Contemplate that sincerity, how we perform our actions; the sincerity of our *niyyat* and our intentions. If what we do is for Allah, and we are free of rancor and dislike and of regret and judgment, don’t worry about what anyone else does. You might have responsibility for what someone else does; you might benefit from what someone else does; but don’t worry about what anyone else does, if what you do is for Allah.

If you are free of rancor, free of dislike, free of regret, free of judgment, free of preference, free of negative opinions and ideas (I’d like to be free of all those; wouldn’t you?), then we don’t lose our *adab*. We don’t lose our *irāda*. Our work is in, our work is by Allah (swt). Now, that’s *suluk*. That is the journey of learning, of knowledge, of *tarbiya*. Again, we can tell stories about sincerity, and tell stories about, about, about.

Stories are very, very important. It gives an example, perhaps, of a type of person who has learned, gained. *Wa'alahi*, that's it. Maybe you can read the Rules of the Order, the conduct of the *murīd* to the *murshid*, and you understand how they come. You understand why they are important. You understand that this, too, is a very important part of *tarbiya*. Very important, *alhamdulillah-Llāh. Asalaamu aleikum*.