

February 6, 2010

Saturday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: Tarbiya: The Real Adab

DVD title: Tarbiya: Arrived at through Adab

*Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm.* We have been talking about *tarbiya* as preparation for my talk at the end of the month in Charlottesville on the subject. Let me put it into context again. This path of Islam goes from the *ghaib* to the *ghaib*, from unconsciousness to consciousness, from total submission to conscious submission. The path [moves] through this world of friction like light in space, hits this atmosphere and then engages in atmospheric pressures. This Islam that I am talking about, the [Islam of] Imam al-Ghazālī, Ibn Araby (Shaykh al Akbar), Shāh Bahā’uddīn Naqshband (ra), Khwāja Ghujduwanī (ra), Abul Hasan as Shadhilī (may Allah protect all their secrets, and now you know what the secrets are from previous talks), this Islam contains all answers to all questions. As we travel in what we call the *sair ul suluk*, and some say there is no *suluk* – but of course there is. It may not be called that, though. Everyone [has a] journey in this physical world.

Questions that arise here have answers that are transmitted from and emanate from the *ghaib*, from the unseen worlds. Allah (swt) has placed within us a capability. Allah (swt) is, we should say, the original Capacity Builder. Just like we build capacity in the world, He builds capacity. In this case, it is the capacity of *mushahadah*. Remember: *muhasabah*, *muraqabah*, and *mushahadah*. What are the analogs to that? *Islam*, *iman*, and *ihsan*. Which is which? *Muhasabah* is *islam*, *muraqabah* is *iman*, and *ihsan* is *mushahadah*, witnessing or seeing: “Act as if you are seeing Allah; and if you are not, know that He is seeing you.” Allah has built this capacity of witnessing. Why? If the

information is *islam*, and the coordination (the way of determining) is *iman*, then *ihsan* is the GPS.

When you have these three things operating, you can correct your course. You know where you are by *islam*. You know where you are going by *iman*, and you get there by *mushahadah*, witnessing, watching. You correct your course. You see there is some problem, and you correct it. The commands that come from the ‘*ālam al-amr*, the world of command are to change course. Three seconds of your rocket. Turn right in 300 feet.

The higher self within each one of us is that light that is placed inside of us as the Nūri Muhammad. That light is the closest to the Divine illuminating Fayyād of Allah (swt). *Fayyād* is also overflowing. What Allah (swt) has presented to us as the gift is the *rūh*. This is the connection. It is following us all the time. When I turn on the GPS, it will tell me where I am at any given moment. Allah is following us. That’s the *rūh*. In order for us to receive that transmission, and to transmit back our location to Allah; in order for us to reflect that Divine Light, we need a guiding light. We need a fixed point, and we need a light in order to focus our light on. That is the Nūri Muhammad, the light that never changes. It is the beam we follow. It is just like when you are flying in an airplane and it’s cloudy. You find a VOR transmission and follow it in, and land the plane by a signal. In this case it is a radio signal. You fix on that constant signal that is coming from one place, and it will take you to your destination. That is the light of a prophet.

That light is also exemplified in this world as *adab* / conduct / behavior. The conduct or behavior exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (sal) is the ultimate, highest reference point. We need to refer to that reference point. If your destination is here, you are handed off from place to place as you fly, until you get to your ultimate destination. You switch to this frequency and that frequency. In the case of human beings, we are given someone who carries that prophetic light, who has been assigned that prophetic light to follow to the destination. We call that our *shaykh*. There have been many light bulbs that

have been on that burned out. There are those who believe that light goes on. There was a great saint named Nasīruddīn Chirāg-i-Delhi (the Light of Delhi) (ra). I have sat at his tomb many times. It is said that he went to his tomb carrying the seven secrets, because there was no one to give them to. So you go there to get them; the light still burns in that tomb. We have picture of it in our publications office.

There is, of course, some problem. The problem is, we can be misled by Shaytan. Shaytan is that which is within us that thinks we can guide ourselves. “I have a good sense of direction, so I’ll find my way to .... New York, San Francisco, London. I’ll get in a plane and fly. I know it’s somewhere over there. I don’t know how to calculate the fuel, but I’ll fill up all the tanks and we’ll be okay.” There are a lot of bodies strewn all over by people who thought they could find their way without a map, without a GPS, without a compass, who just thought they “had a good sense of direction,” and they wanted to get there. It is Shaytan within us who tells us that.

So we need to have something that is reliable. We need to have a reliable guide, a reliable reflection of that light; therefore, it is very important that we find that reliable source and have the right understanding, the right relationship with the guide, the teacher. It is a very personal relationship. It is person to person, but it has a kind of uniqueness, intimacy, speciality based on love and service to Allah—love of the guide, love of Rasūlallah, and service to Allah (swt). Who is Allah? We know the answer to that, or we have an approach to it. [When we say] service to Allah, move to the Attributes in your mind. Allah, in creating this creation, put all things in balance and harmony and connected everything.

Just like the molecules in the air connect us all, everyone of us in our lifetime has breathed in molecules that everyone else in the world has breathed. Isn’t that amazing? Each one of us is breathing the molecules in the air that others have breathed. Everything is connected, and everything has its rules and guidance. Everything has *adab*.

Everything has a code of action to it. There is the *adab* of eating, the *adab* of sleeping. The *adab* of speaking, and the *adab* of being silent. There is the *adab* of living and the *adab* of dying. Everything has its *adab*. From the smallest atom to the largest celestial body, from the universe within us to the universe outside of us, everything is subject to the same laws, the laws to maintain harmony and balance, *mīzān*—at least the appearance of harmony and *mīzān*. Everything (including you and I) is subject to these same laws.

We spoke the other night on rules and behavior, and guidelines for the *murīd*. You cannot just memorize those and practice those. If you understand what I just said; if you understand the immovable, irrevocable principles of this creation and of *adab*, the harmony that links everything together, then you will know that these expressions of *adab* that you find in the lists I read from and you have studied [are for fortunate people]. Those practical expressions of *adab*—whether you like them or not, feel comfortable with them or not, feel nervous about them or whatever it is—those points of *adab* are for the fortunate people. They are the ones who want to be in the company of the guide, the ones who want to learn how to fly the plane.

Think about it. These guidelines and *adab*, unless you make yourself comfortable with them, you will not have the benefit of the guidance or the guidance system. You will be flying by yourself. In less metaphoric terms, the guide, the *shaykh*, is only useful where there is correct *adab*. Without that *adab*, there can be no *tajalli*. There is no transmission from the *shaykh* to the *murīd*. What is that transmission? It is the way that the guidance comes. That's how you get the signal. It's how you know where you are going. It's how you set your course. It's the way the light reaches you. It's the way that information is changed into *tarbiya*. That's the *tarbiya*. When that transmission is open, when the channel is open, then information becomes knowledge. Knowledge becomes *marifah*, gnosis. Gnosis becomes *haqiqah*, wisdom/*hikma*. And it's the way of transmission,

communicating *qalbi - qalbi*, heart to heart; otherwise, you just have information. Shaykh Hariri said in one of his books, you just have sentimentality.

Every aspect of that *adab* is a doorway to one's own spiritual evolution, progress. When you make progress, you have to have *adab*. What you hear in these lists is the description of a person of *adab*. The person of *adab* does this and doesn't do that. The person of *adab* sits this way and not that way. The person of *adab* is silent and speaks only in these conditions. It's not that you memorize it. It is that the *adab* gives rise to this, because you have a sincere yearning to know, to be free, to have knowledge, to fulfill whatever brought you to this path. Even though it has become blurred by jobs, children, issues, inter-relationships, poverty or wealth, or desires, or whatever, something brought a person to the path. The way to stay on the path and arrive at the destination we are born to arrive at is through *adab*.

Now, you see *tarbiya*. It's not just educating. It's not just increasing. It's the knowledge that comes through *adab* that allows the transmission to reach you and to transform you. There is no one exact statement of it, that's why you can find so many different ways it is expressed. It varies from order to order, from *shaykh* to *shaykh*, but the essence is always the same. In other words, *tarīqah* is *adab*. That's what it is. If Shar'īah is worship, *tarīqah* is *adab*. If Shar'īah and Sunnah are the rules and the ways to worship Allah, and to practice the religion of Islam, then *adab* is *tarīqah*, the way to knowledge and *marifah*.

Everything has its *adab*: to your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife, your children, to the *shaykh*, and the *shaykh* to the *murīd*. Eventually, you realize that knowing yourself is knowing your Lord is the *adab* to your own self. Think of it this way. Pretend there was a big snow, and you had to walk out to your satellite dish so you could get the Internet so you could exist for the day. A brother came by and brushed it off the first time. He's the Prophet Mohammed (sal). He goes out and does it for you,

because he's the ultimate servant. "I'm here, what can I do for you?" "I was just going to go out and brush off the dish." "I'll do it for you." That characterizes your brother: totally transparent, has no ego, just there to do it for you, not expecting any reward. Then he goes home, where he is now serving his family. But it keeps snowing and sleeting, and the Internet goes down again, along with direct tv. He's got big boots, but I can't bend down to put on my boots, so I go out in my tennis shoes. Where am I going to step? I'm going to step in his footsteps. I'm going to walk in his foot steps. That's what I'm going to do. And if I'm smart, I will walk carefully so none of the snow gets down in my socks.

You arrive by walking in the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad (sal), but you have to see them. Lucky you – lucky me! But it's not just the footsteps of the Prophet (sal); there are the footsteps of the Sahabah and the Ahl al-Bayt. You have all these footsteps you can choose to step it. Then there are the footsteps that stand really out to you, the footsteps of the *shuyukh* and the *shaykh*. *Suhbat*, this cannot be done without *suhbat*, obviously, because you are walking in the footsteps of someone else. Now we will change the metaphor. You are not going out to the dish; you are walking in the woods. You are coming back and you are in the company of others. My daughter wrote a beautiful short story. I hope you all get to hear it or read it. Part of it is about the father and the son who surprisingly comes home in a snowstorm in order to get home when he was not expected home.

If you honor, respect and defer to your brothers and sisters on this path; if you turn your sight away from their faults, whatever fault you see, you see it because you have that fault in your own self. I pointed that out to someone this week. That perhaps they were seeing a fault in someone else because they were extremely sensitive to that; they had the same tendency in their own self. Why would you see this, and not that? You cover their faults in public and in private, and you realize that this person now is acting like a mirror to your own self. You defer and prefer for them to have what you would want for your

own self, and you look at their errors and see that their errors are better than the right actions of others.

Who do you think you are in the company of? You are in the company of the believers, the *shuyukh*, and the *shaykh*. You are in the company of the ones who got that far on the journey. You realize they are acting with good intentions, if not pure; and you can learn from their errors. You can move along on this journey. You can gain knowledge and wisdom from the actions of others. If they make an error, they turn back to Allah in *tawbah* and *istighfar*. They seek the mantle, the covering of Allah for the consequences of their wrong actions. If that is the way you treat your brothers and sisters on this path, then the *adab* to the *shaykh* is ten times that if not more. It is a means of service, a means of patience, a means of perseverance, a means of attentiveness, of listening. It is a means of seeing, until you want what your *shaykh* wants as if it was your desire in the first place.

We were brought into this existence for one purpose, and that is to be aware of our own existence, and the One Who created us, or the means through which we were created. Some like to quote the Hadith Qudsi, “**I was a hidden treasure and I wanted to be known, so I manifested creation in order to be known.**” It’s *daif*, we’re not sure; but it’s a good metaphor anyway. If the purpose of this life is to know the Creator, and to know one’s own self, thereby knowing the Creator, then this knowledge of oneself is the essential *tarbiya*. The increasing of the knowledge of oneself is the essential *tarbiya*. That leads to the knowledge of the creation, the source of our own self. It is reported, again, that the Prophet (sal) said, “**He who knows himself knows his Lord.**” Again, it’s a hard reference to nail down, but it’s been quoted for over a thousand years.

It’s not surprising that Allah (swt) gave us an ability called consciousness—not just of consciousness, but consciousness of self, I, the self-awareness that makes us different than anything else in creation. With this blessing comes the capability to choose, to make

adjustments in the course, using the instrumentation that has been provided, using the GPS signal that has been provided—not just guessing, “London’s over there somewhere”—but choosing based on absolute laws of the universe, which are as perfect as anything in this creation can be. It is being able to choose courses of action when they present themselves to be chosen; to be able to relate to situations in a way that is constructive and positive; to make choices in life that are good, supportable and sustainable; to be able to make choices in relationships that are building, supportive and uplifting; to be able to choose from the innumerable, uncountable possibilities the ways to come nearer to realizing that knowledge of oneself; and to be educated and increase our knowledge of our self and our Lord.

None of this is by chance. None of this is the roll of the dice. It is clear guidance given through revelation and enlightened *ambiyā*, and through enlightened *awliyā* and our *shuyukh*. They represent not only the means but the measurement by which we can move, as we aspire to attain to the highest capability and potential that we have. Allah says in Qur’an: **“I have raised a prophet from amongst yourselves.”** (6:130) In other words, the Prophet Mohammed (sal) is one of us. You cannot say, as a Muslim, “That’s him and there’s me, and he’s a Divine something or other.” No, he is from among us. The light of Rasūlallah was placed into this being, and was intended even before creation came into being. Then his physical appearance, his presence among us, is the manifestation of an intention from pre-creation to manifest at a certain time; but that light has always been present.

That light is in the genome of every human being. It can be seen as a light, this prophetic light. That light represents our true capability, our true nature. What we can reach in our life through following the *adab* of Nebi Muhammad (sal) in his footsteps, what new meaning we can get in life can be garnered from the meaning of his life. The guidance we receive through our *shuyukh*, from Prophet Muhammad light is like a beam of light or a tone that you attune or attach yourself to, which is the expression of the *adab* of the

Prophet Muhammad (sal). Only when we will (*irāda*) to trust and to submit to this path can that *adab* manifest itself in our own self. Eventually, the *adab* to our own self is to submit to what Allah (swt) intended for us in this creation.

Not what is dictated by our desires or habits, or not our inclinations to follow Shaytan. The way to achieve this is to be in the company, good company, *suhbat*. Now we are tying the circle around. We begin with *suhbat*, and we remain in *suhbat*. The way to accomplish this is to remain in the company of good companionship, and be in the company of a living *shaykh* who can help you with your discernment/*firāsa*, and insight/*basīra*, with your discrimination between what is the *hidayat* of Allah and our lower self that reacts to the impulses of Shaytan's static. It is through that guidance and through the company of the community of practicing people – and I underline that, not just because of our community, but because it is the foundation of the Naqshbandiyya Order. A practicing community of people saves us from just wandering in selfishness and self-indulgence.

It is only in the community of believers that you can find a transformation that allows you to understand the Divine intended purpose of life. If you understand that and you submit to it, that is the *adab* to yourself. The best *adab* to yourself is to get yourself to understand that and to submit to it. [The best thing to do is] to not take it for granted, and not think it is a social thing, and not let it dissolve in front of your eyes, but to sustain this community of believers, and every one that can be sustained—no matter what, no matter what the cost, no matter what the tests and trials are. It has to be sustained because that is the essential *adab* to yourself. I want you to contemplate that and understand it. The ultimate *adab* to yourself is to understand and to submit, to increase your knowledge to the point, to educate yourself to the truth of what this *adab* is. All these manners and rules and guidelines and Rules of the Order, the rules of the *murshid* to the *murīd*, and the *murīd* to the *murīd*, and the *murīd* to the *shaykh* are a means to sustain the community of believers.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: **“Those who will prosper are those who purify themselves.”** (87:14) It is a great lesson. It's a unit in this Sufi curricula of *adab*, the Sufi curricula of freedom and liberation—just that phrase. Allah says in Qur'an, **“What good befalls you is from Allah, and whatever evil befalls you is from yourself.”** (4:79) My relationship and your relationship with creation, with our brethren, with our *shuyukh*, our *shaykh* is all for that purpose. It is to realize, to purposefully and with full will (will full) practice this understanding, and to lay the foundation of *adab*. Allah says in Qur'an, **“I did not create jinn or man but to worship Me.”** (51:56) That means you have to be alive, awake, present—physically, mentally, and emotionally. If you are not, change it. Don't wallow in your delusion. Don't indulge yourself in your illnesses. Don't allow yourself to be preferential. Don't commit yourself to your own selfishness.

You have to catch yourself in the moment when things are not right, and adjust your course. Don't fall asleep flying the plane. Don't overfly the airport, like those pilots did a few weeks ago. “Come quickly, right now.” Because if you delay, it's like being out in 20 below zero weather trying to drink water. You'll freeze. Make yourself available to whatever situation comes about, not as a whimpering, weak person; nothing but as a member of the community of believers, as a *mu'min*. Be a person who is a mature, full-grown, totally conscious, fully willing human being with faith, submission and positivity, with the inner light that allows you to dive into the ocean of that Divine Presence, that allows you to see the light of the runway and land the plane. It begins with intention and a yearning and a desire, or an awareness of where Allah has placed you, and your *adab* to your guide.

Shaykh Mohammed ibn Habib (ra) said, *“It is obligatory on every murid who seeks the presence of Allah to take the living shaykh. The proof of this obligation is in the words (may he be exalted), ‘O trusting ones! Fear Allah and be with the truthful ones.’”* You do it willingly, and willfully. That's why you are called a *murīd*. It comes from *irāda*,

will. The one with will is a *murīd*. It depends on (last month's talk in Charlottesville 1/24/09) *ikhlas*/sincerity. Who is the *murīd*? One who has replaced their own will with the will of Allah (swt). Ibn Ata'ala Iskandari (ra), whom we love very much, said in his *hikam*, “Do not accompany one whose state does not change you, and whose speech does not guide you to Allah.” Until one has met a living and teaching *shaykh*, there can only be glimpses of that unity. It can only be focused and reflected wholesomely through the exposure to one who is fully aware, and who, himself, is clear and pure in the reflection of that unity.

Shaytan acts. Allah says, “**Mankind was created neither in vain nor by chance. Does man suppose he will be left in futility?**” We should all know what that means. I know what it means, because I met my *shaykh*. I knew I had come to a means to understand what life was. After that meeting, there could only be more and more realizations and openings, more and more protection, more and more opportunities to avoid the darkness. That doorway was open; the tone was set, and then I had to tune myself to resonate with it. That is a transformative process. What is needed is sincerity, love, submission, and all those little things that help you do that, which you can read about, note, and practice. But they come specifically out of love: the love of life, the love of the *shaykh*, which becomes the love of the Prophet. The love of the Prophet finally becomes in *fana* the love of Allah (swt)—*marifah*.

Allah says in a Hadith Quds, “**My slave draws near to me in worship. When he loves Me, I love him, and then I become the hand by which he grasps, and the eye with which he sees.**” *Asalaamu aleikum*.

#### QUESTION AND ANSWER

Student: I don't know how many teaching *shaykhs* there are, but I was thinking that many people don't have the opportunity to meet them. I was reflecting on how extremely

fortunate we are. I was wondering about the odds of meeting a *shaykh*, if we are just born and that's what happened in our life, or... how many people get this opportunity?

Shaykh: Not many. But then, they don't miss it, do they? There is the argument that you are the scum that was scraped off the pond and put somewhere. There are *shaykhs* who teach and *shaykhs* who don't. You could also think of it this way. You are on a train from Lynchburg to Washington, and the engineer has forty years of experience. He is very meticulous. On his way to the train yard to pick up his train, he was distracted and had a car accident. It was his fault; maybe he ran a red light because he was distracted. He broke the law. We've all broken the law at some point. If you knew that your engineer on your train broke the law and had an accident, would you refuse to get on that train? You wouldn't, would you? You wouldn't link those two things. We've all done that.

If the engineer was drunk, and you knew he was a drunk and irresponsible, then you might think twice before getting on the train. Maybe he swore. Would you refuse to get on the train because he swore? Maybe you are perfect and never uttered a swear word in your life. Does that mean you can drive the train? It doesn't, does it? You get the picture. *Asalaam aleikum*.