



TARBIYYA OR EDUCATION OF THE MURID

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Suratu-l-Fatiha

Allahumma salle 'ala sayeddina Muhammed al fatih oghliq wa-al Hatim limaa-sabaq naser al haqq bil haqq wa-al haadi ila siratiqa-l-mustaqeem, wa ala alehi wa sahbehi haqq qadrihi wa miqdarihi al adheem.

O Allah shower Your blessings upon our master Muhammad, The opener of what has been closed, and the seal of what has passed, the champion of Truth by the Truth, and the guide to Your straight path, and on his family and his companions with the equivalent to the greatness due to his exalted status.

INTRODUCTION

In this series of lectures we've talked about *niyyat*, sincerity, *suhbat*, and the necessity and function of the *shaykh*. I spoke last time on sincerity and how to unlock the door or lift the veils that hide the *Haqq* of Allah; the *Haqq* that is Allah. Today, we are speaking about *tarbiyya*, specifically *tarbiyya* as education of the *murid*.

Education does not occur in a vacuum; it is a system. We even call it a ‘system of education’ or ‘educational system’. The Prophet (sal)’s model of *tarbiyya* exemplifies the importance of education as part of an integrated system. He (sal) created, by Allah’s will, a new culture, a culture intended to be unencumbered by previous tribal and cultural prejudices and animosity. To become part of the Prophet’s (sal) community, people had to surrender, to trust, to find their security in the present and the future, and in the company of like-minded individuals in *suhbat*. (As you will see, *suhbat* is the thread that runs through this series of talks.)

The Prophet’s model, upon which the Sufic model of *tarbiyya* is shaped, lies in the community, in submission, surrender and trust. This model places most of the responsibility on the student, and empowers transformative experiences through *adab*, through trust, through encouraging a vision that transcends the personal mode or desire.

LOOKING AT THE WORD AND ITS ROOT

The meanings in the Arabic word “*tarbiyya*” add depth to our understanding and place the concept of “education” in the context of a larger system. Though usually translated as “education,” according to the classical lexicographer al-Raghib al-Asfahani (d. 402 A.H/1011 C.E.), the word *tarbiyya* means “*to cause something to develop from stage to stage until reaching its completion [full potential].*”

Sufic *tarbiyya* is a progression, a chain of experiences and encounters that, in combination, constitute the educational and developmental refinement of the student. It is an environment, a process where the seeker, the student ripens and becomes a sweet fruit. It is a place of refinement, precisely because one is in the

company of refinement, both as *adab* and as higher thinking, profound seeing, attuned hearing, and pure feeling.

These concepts of increase, elevation, growth, development, nurture and upbringing are all aspects of the word *tarbiyya*. It conveys the cosmological principle of abundance, expansion, emergence, enfoldment, becoming and fulfillment. Like the plant that turns toward the sunlight, *tarbiyya* is a process of unfoldment (coming into being) and returning (*tawbah*) to Allah and our true nature (*fitrah*).¹

The concept of *tarbiyya*, as found in Qur'an, supports this meaning of nurturing and growth. In Suratu-l-Isra, Allah tells us about the correct treatment of parents, saying,

Wa-khfid lahumaa janaaha-dh-dhulli mina-r-rahmati wa qul Rabbi irhamhumaa kamaa Rabbayaanee sagheeraa

And lower to them the wing of humility, out of compassion, and say, “My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small.” (17:24)

In this translation, “**brought me up,**” is translated from the Arabic “**rabiyaanī**” from the same root as *tarbiyya*. Again in Suratu-l-Hajj, the use of the word connotes beauty, growth, and development from potential into reality by the Will of Allah:

...And you see the earth barren and lifeless. But when We send down rain upon it, it stirred to life and grows forth (rabat) every kind of beautiful growth. (22:5)

¹ Daud Tauhidi, “The Tarbiyah Project: A Holistic Vision of Islamic Education.”

Islamically and Sufically, to educate means to return to the source of knowledge, and to understand the links between everything in Allah’s creation. Another way of saying that is to see the Divine Presence in everything, to know that all life, growth and knowledge come from our Lord by His Will and Mercy. Is it not fitting, then, that there is a semantic link between the word *Rabb* (Lord) and *tarbiyya*? The sense being that the *Rabb* provides and nurtures us through each stage of development until reaching our full potential. The word *rabb* (or *rubūbīya*) and *tarbiyya* share similar root letters (r-b-b and r-b-y) and have the same basic meaning of elevation or increase. This is supported by the proximity principle of Arabic philology (*tasaqub*). Classical dictionaries of Arabic corroborate this connection. For example, Ibn Mandhur, author of “Lisan al-Arab,” cites the word *murabbi* (caregiver) as one of the basic meanings of the word *rabb*, and notes that the verbal form of this word (*rabba*, as well as *tarabbaba* and *irtabba*) means to “raise and care for” (i.e. *tarbiyya*).

Thus you can see that when we talk about *tarbiyya*, we mean much more than “education” of the *murīd*. *Tarbiyya* is educating in a way that we can understand, a way that gives a sense of security and wisdom, a sense of belonging, supporting the growth of the individual, as he or she proceeds from stage to stage in his/her development, toward fulfilling his/her fullest potential. *Tarbiyya* is transcending the limitations of cultural assumptions and tribal mentalities, habits and destructive amalgamations by focusing on values and essential characteristics that are unifying. *Tarbiyya* is reflective of being nourished from the source of all nourishment and increased in knowledge. Once gained, it is rarely lost, but rather integrated into life.

SUFIC APPROACH TO TARBIYYA

We are speaking today specifically about the Sufic approach to *tarbiyya*: the education of the *murīd* and *murīda*. First let me say: if it were not for the

tarbiyya of the Sufi, we would not have a model of *tarbiyya* for all of Islam. It begins, of course with the Prophet (sal) and his spiritual methodology, teaching by example and by what we would call today experiential learning.

Tarbiyya, for the Sufi, is the way of developing the potential of the seeker; finding the means for the seeker to attain his or her fullest capacity; directing his or her attention in both formal and informal ways toward the Divine Presence. It means aggregating perceptions, experiences, and guidance from within and without. Guided by the Quran, the Sunnah and Sīrah of Rasūlullah (sal), it is embracing the means provided by Allah (swt), by creation, and by our *fitrah* to become alert and engaged in an all-embracing *ibāda*.

Sufic *tarbiyya* is the training of the *murīd* to access other dimensions of possibilities, linked inexorably to *ikhlas*, *irāda*, *iman*, and Islamic frameworks. As such, it is by its construct and nature, dynamic. And it is an instrument of not only directing change, but describing the route through a life of change and potential development, as a function of the will, the intention and the yearning of the individual seeker. As we know from Qur'an:

*Inna-Llaaha laa yughayyiru maa biqawmin hattaa yughayyiruu maa
bi'añfusihim*

**Truly, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they
change what is in their selves. (13:11)**

The *murīd* is one who has committed and dedicated to making a change in their self, under the direction of their *murshid* (guide). People worry; if I give *baī'at* and become a Sufi, then I will have to change everything in my life. Well, it's the same in any learning situation. The usual ways of living and learning are not disturbed when a new skill is learned, unless it is chosen for that specific reason. Learning to drive a car does not mean having to forget how to walk or ride a horse. The new skills and understandings exist beside the existing behavior

patterns, unless they replace them with better ones by your own choice and agreement.

Of course, one can say that whenever one learns something, they are not the same person they were before they gained that knowledge. But why would one study Sufism or, for that matter, embrace Islam if they did not hope for, expect, and work toward transformative thought and action that would increase their knowledge, understanding and positively influence their actions?

The role of *tarbiyya* for the Sufi is precisely to give one the means to develop and express higher levels of perception and capacities within one's day-to-day normal life. Day-to-day, I remind you, does not mean only outer aspects of life, but also the inner dimensions that interface with *dunya*, and prepare us for the transition from here to the Hereafter. (This is something I will attempt to discuss in in April when we talk about the relationship between the *dhāhir* and the *bātin*).

JOURNEY OF THE MURID

We are speaking today about the education of the *murīd*, so we must spend a few minutes talking about who the *murīd* is. The *murīd* is an aspirant, follower, novice or disciple. The *murīd* is a person who has, within the core of their heart that desire, that passion, and that will to make their life one of *ibāda*. The yearning for true understanding and wisdom (*hikmat*), and the love of seeking provide the discipline and ease, allowing him/her to turn toward or recognize they are in / near/ accompanied by the Divine Presence: ALLAH (swt).

The word *murīd* comes from ra-d-a, to walk about, to look, search to explore. Internally, we seek what is hidden; step by step, *latīfa* by *latīfa* (*sirr*, the secret; *khafī*, the hidden; *akhfā*, the most hidden) through the stages of development. Note carefully, this root also contains the word and concept of *irāda*: will, volition, desire. Again, these are dynamic, interactive concepts. The successful seeker not only seeks, but is receptive to knowledge, has the will

(*irāda*) for patience and perseverance in the journey, and good comportment and good behavior.

If you have these qualities that I have been describing, you are seeking knowledge and you have the framework of *tarbiyya*. You have the potential to be brought near to Allah, by Himself. This journey begins from some place deep inside of us with a yearning to know. Allah provides us the names and the meanings. He gives us the potential and the means to be believers, the type of believers He describes in Surat-l-Anfal:

Innamaa-l-mu'minuuna-lladheena idhaa dhukira-Llaahu wa jilat quluubuhum wa'idhaa tuliyat^u alayhim aayaatuahu zaadat'hum eemaanañw-wa^u alaa Rabbihim yatawakkaluun

They only are believers whose hearts tremble with awe whenever Allah is mentioned, and whose belief is strengthened whenever His signs are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord. (8:2)

When we hear that, a part of us, at least, yearns to be like that. Some of us knew we had the yearning, but something opened or triggered it. We discovered that our lives were moving us away from what other people think is normal, hopefully away from our conditioning, cultural prejudices and bias. The usual approaches to our day-to-day life are not fulfilling, or perhaps not even within our grasp anymore. We find ourselves motivated by our hearts, to the degree even that our hearts cause us conflict in our minds sometimes. This creates passion, longing, and an attraction/*jedhbah* to the truth of what is beautiful.

This yearning is an essential part of *tarbiyya*. It opens us up to knowledge, and not just book knowledge. It fulfills our yearning to explore, to define, and to understand, to really gain *marifah*. It opens the door for us to knowledge that is truly education, where our human and spiritual capabilities and capacities are increased, and we realize the purpose of life. This is the *suluk*; this is the life of a

murīd or *murīda*. This is the foundation of what we want to come out of our *tarbiyya*.

In addition to a yearning, the *murīd* also has the natural inclination and humility to pay attention, to accompany, and be accompanied by the *murshid*. Their *adab* is consistent with the *Sharī'ah* and the *Sunnah*, and when it deviates they have the sincere intention and humility to repent and return. The *murīd* deals with the reality of the *nafs*' machinations, and works with the self in rising, and against it, in falling. A *murīd* learns what the value is in struggling and in submitting. How this is accomplished is at the core of *tarbiyya*.

FIRST LESSON OF TARBIYYA: ADAB

This brings me to the burning question of “how?” and to the importance of *adab*. The first lesson of *tarbiyya* is *adab*. *Tarbiyya* is essentially an education in how to have good behavior (*adab*), good comportment, good attitude; how to move through the difficulties, temptations, and distractions, and the impossibilities of life as if you were threading the eye of the needle.

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, laws to maintain harmony and balance, *mīzān*. Everything (including you and I) is subject to these same laws.

This is the system that Allah has created, and the way we are designed to be in it. Allah says in Suratu-r-Rūm:

Fa-aqim wa j^ahaka li-d-deeni haneefañ fi^arata-Llaahi-llatee fa-tara-n-naasa ^calayhaa laa tab^adeela likhalqi-Llaahi dhaalika-d-deenu-l-qayyimu wa laakinna akthara-n-naasi laa ya^clamuun

So set your face toward a way of life (dīn) as a being true and righteous by nature—the very nature (fitrah) [ordained by] Allah to be the true natural way for people. (30:30)

Despite the fact that a state of *adab* is the natural way for us, as we all know, there is often a struggle to find that wellspring of peace and knowledge and contentment, even when there is a sincere desire to refine oneself.

The integrity and conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (sal) is the ultimate, highest reference point in the struggle for perfected *adab*. As human beings, we need a reference point against which to measure our character and conduct. In Qur'an Allah says:

O you who believe, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor shout when speaking to him as you shout to one another, lest your deeds become worthless without your perceiving it. (49:2)

We need that reference point—in this example the voice of the Prophet (sal)—to be able to see our action. In our case, we are given someone who carries that prophetic light, who has been assigned that prophetic light, to act as our reference point and mirror. We call that person our *shaykh*.

ADAB TO THE MURSHID

Knowing oneself is diametrically different from recognizing one's own impression or image. Just as character can be different from behavior, the Sufi must be able to see the truth and reflect on it. For *tarbiyya*, a reflector is necessary. Attachment to the external aspects of life, elevating the container over

the content is not only the normal human tendency, it is also a barrier on the road to truly knowing oneself/one's Lord.

Our habitual patterns have to be confronted and addressed; and that requires an interchange or reflective environment, not merely form. Without the reality check afforded by the *shaykh*, let alone the content of the study and the interface with one who has developed insight, reduced ego, transcended the major distractions and temptations of *dunya*, acquired a depth of wisdom and faith, and experienced the vicissitudes of love and life, learning within one's self is virtually impossible. The Presence of the Divine will not be seen or felt, nor the love of the Prophet, nor the respect and trust of the *shaykh*, for there will be no real submission (*islam*), no sense of security or safety (*taslīm*). Without real submission there will be no lasting *iman*, hence no reason to persevere. There will be no *ihsan*, hence no effort to see beyond what is already seen, no humility, no *taqwa*.

The *shaykh* can only act as that reference point, can only be useful to the *murīd* when there is correct *adab*. Without that *adab*, there can be no *tajalli*, no transmission from the *shaykh* to the *murīd*. What is that transmission? It is the way that the guidance comes. It's the way the light reaches you; it's the way that information is changed into *tarbiyya* by the carrier of that light, which is the light of the Prophet Muhammad (sal).

`Ali ibn al-Husayn reporte from his father, who heard from his grandfather said that the Prophet said: "I was a light in front of my Lord for fourteen thousand years before He created Adam."

Adab opens the gate. It is a corridor/*majāz* through the *'ālam al-mithāl*, through the barrier between here and there, a corridor between the apparent and the Real that allows us to be both alive in *dunya* and alive in the Eternal Now, the Divine Presence. When the channel is open, 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.

RULES AND GUIDLINES

In the Sufic orders, this *adab* has been formalized through the recording of certain rules of behavior for the *murīd*. Often the idea of rules and guidelines sounds didactic and imperative to the untrained individualist, who tends to define freedom as being totally independent and without need of guidance. Yet, the guidelines are not only true and efficacious, but they have been followed by the greatest *awliyā*: Ibn Araby (ra), Suh'rawardi (ra), Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra), Shaykh Ghujduwānī (ra), Imam al-Ghazālī (ra), Abdul Qādir Jilānī (ra), Abul Hasan ash-Shadhilī (ra), Jalaluddin Rumi (ra), and countless others whose words we study, whose lives are exemplar, and whose piety is unmatched.

These *shuyukh* understood, taught, lived and passed on these principles as the Rules of the Order, the Conduct of the Murīd, the 15 Rules of Discipleship, the Eleven Rights. Following these rules allows the *fayyād* (the overflowing of light, blessing, abundance) to become available to the *murīd*.

It is politically incorrect in modern society; it is intellectually and psychologically difficult to embrace and trust such rules or admonitions, but throughout the history of Islam and Sufism such guidelines emerge as sincere guidance for a reason.

In some ways it is unfortunate that these have been titled in translation as rules. When the proper word could be *dalil*, guidance; this word implies also *dall*: dignified conduct. They express the state, character development, or maturity of the seeker. They indicate what needs to be focused on or adjusted in the *murīd* and even how to accomplish it.

As I share a few excerpts from “The Rules of Discipleship,” I ask you to listen from the point of view I have described, not from the concept of rule that often evokes the ego’s rebellion or mind’s intellectual resistance. Understand why it is imperative for the *murshid/ shaykh* to protect and guide from a position of trust and submission, a quality we all try to have as Muslims. Take these as urging, implorations, not as rules but as pleadings from the heart of the *murshid* to the *murīd*. Think of their practice as signs of true willingness to learn.

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 too does the murīd, sick in his conduct and behavior, submit to the shaykh’s experience in order to be healed.

That’s one. Here’s another: *The seeker must not object to the way the Shaykh instructs and controls the murīds.* This is from *Al Fatwa Al Hadithia*. Each *shaykh* has his own way, which he has been permitted by his *shaykh* to use.

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

I believe we are all intelligent enough to see how such statements have been misused and abused, and how they have been carried, inappropriately into secular and religious educational institutions. Yet, the relevance of the teaching should not and cannot be diminished by such use.

Nonetheless, and let me emphasize this point, this is precisely the kind of *tarbiyya* that a sincere seeker has to struggle with. It is not for the weak person, but it is for the person who struggles with such concepts until they understand. Indeed, at times, our struggle with these teachings can enhance the teaching,

when it brings up reasonable questions and sincere yearning for understanding that may only be satisfied by the deeper and more profound heart-to-heart love between *murshid* and *murīd*.

Is not the ‘syllabus’ that is most important, but the alchemical reaction that takes place between the teacher/*shaykh* and the student / *murīd*. It is a relationship created in the *ghaib*, tuned through the *qalb*, by means of the *rūh*, and manifest in a relationship unparalleled in other human relationships. It is precisely because it incorporates attitudes, *adab*, expectations, challenges, and often involves difficult and reactive subjects that it manages to lift up the seeker to levels beyond the social and cultural norms, into a dimension of insight and submission to Allah (swt). Topics like obedience, absolute forgiveness, nonjudgmentalness, humility, and surrender are not exactly the core curriculum of other educational models.

In Sufic *tarbiyya* one MUST pay attention and not dismiss anything. No laughing off the comment of the *shaykh*, or assuming that there is ‘down time’ from study. Everything... life is the classroom. The voice, tone, direction, even the lighthearted jokes of the *murshid* are relevant, if for nothing other than cementing the relationship, deepening the love, testing the attention and the trust, and enjoying the life of and in the relatedness/relationship. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (ra) said:

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. So 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.

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).

It is also important to note that there are also guidelines for the *murshid*, as well. All education is an exchange; each party has responsibility. Listen:

The shaykh should follow the Prophet (sal), follow the Sharī'ah and act from the Sunnah. He praises Allah and not himself. He has a silsila (lineage) and a license to teach.

With his own murīds the shaykh must act with kindness, love, and compassion. The goal should be only their own good. The teacher's purpose is to help the murīds reach their spiritual goal.

SIGNS OF THE EDUCATED

This is the content of *tarbiyya*; indeed, this is part of the syllabus for the seeker. It is not just to read or memorize, but [it is] to come to understand how one arrives at the manifestation of the character that exemplifies this *adab*. [It is] to educate oneself to these secrets, for they are the secrets to success. This develops 'aqīda, true belief. The word *akhlaq* is the plural for the word *khulq* which means disposition. "Disposition" is that faculty (*malakah*) of the soul which is the source of all those activities that man performs spontaneously without thinking about them. *Malakah* is a property of the soul which comes into existence through exercise and repetitive practice, and is not easily destroyed.

I give these as examples to illustrate the *tarbiyya* of the Sufi. A sincere *murīd* is receptive to the possibility that such *adab*, *akhlaq*, 'aqīda, knowledge, and wisdom, when gained eclipses the ranting and ravings of the ego, the fears and the aggression of selfishness, and the doubts about life's purpose here and Hereafter.

There is a story that a lady brought her son to the tekkia, the zāwiya of ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (ra). She was a very poor lady and she always saw all the students and people attending the suhbat and getting advice and doing dhikr. Whenever she came to the tekkia she saw each one of his students eating a big chicken. When she saw them eating, she said to herself,

“Alhamduli-Llāh, I am poor, but ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (ra) is rich in the dunya and in the akhirat. I will give my son to sit there with those people. At least he will eat morning and evening. He will have a good meal.”

So she went to ‘Abd al-Qādir and said, “I would like my son to be your murīd.”

And he accepted the child. He was a very robust child and ‘Abd al-Qādir told one of his murīd, “Send him to the basement and give him the awrad for seclusion or khilwa. Give him one piece of bread and a couple of olives to eat every day.”

After a month, the mother came to visit her son, thinking she would see him eating chicken. She saw all the murīds with all their adab eating chicken. She asked the Shaykh, “Where is my son?”

He said, “He is in the basement eating special food.”

“Oh!” she thought, “Special food! Since they are eating chicken, he is probably eating beef or lamb. Alhamduli-Llāh, this was the best decision I made.”

So she went down to the basement and she saw her son and he was very, very thin and wasting away. But he was reciting, and light was emanating from his face. She came up to him and she picked up the bread and asked, “What is this?”

He said, “That is what I am eating, a crust of bread.”

She went to ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (ra) and said, “I brought my son to be with you....”

And as she was speaking, the Shaykh ordered his murīds, “Eat!” Each one picked up the chickens in front of them and ate them—not just the pieces only, not the meat only, but the entire chicken, not leaving one bone.

Then he said to her, “If you want your son to reach the level of eating the chicken with the bones, then he has to go through tarbiyya. Tarbiyya is for raising and training the nafs, which is the most difficult thing.”

That is what is needed. Even after the light was on his face, he still had not come to the point where he could eat the chicken.

As one rises to the level of one who has absorbed and who expresses true wisdom and true submission, it brings out the finest qualities in that individual. The signs of an educated and noble person of good upbringing is exemplified in statements such as this one from the tradition of the Khwāja Khwājagān:

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 murīd 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 disbelieving, and cause trouble between them. The attitude is close to mercy and assists the murīd to reach high spiritual levels.

Hearing such words we get a sense of the type of person who is a Sufi, a true mu’min. This is the education of the Sufi. It is the way of life of all those great Muslims who are known for their “Islam,” like Imam al-Ghazālī (ra) or Ibn

Araby (ra), Abul Hasan ash-Shadhilī (ra), Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (ra) and our illustrious *shaykhs*. My *shaykh*, Hazrat Azad Rasool, was like that.

ENDING WITH SUHBAT

In conclusion I will tie this back to where I began, with the importance of *suhbat*. Only when we have the will (*irāda*) to trust and to submit to this path can the *adab* I have described today manifest itself in us. With *tarbiyya*, we learn to submit to what Allah (swt) intended for us in this creation; not what is dictated by our desires or habits.

The way to achieve this is to be in good company, *suhbat*. We begin with *suhbat*, and we remain in *suhbat*. The way to accomplish fulfillment of our potential is to remain in the company of good companionship and remain in the company of a living *shaykh*, who can help you with your discernment, with your *firāsa*, insight, with your discrimination between what is the *hidayat* of Allah and our lower self

It is through that guidance and through the company of the community of believers and practicing people that you can find a transformation that allows you to understand the divine intended purpose of life.

The best *adab* to oneself is to get yourself to understand that and to submit to it. No one can compel us to right *adab* or to submit. As Allah says in Suratu-l-Baqarah:

There is no compulsion in religion—the path of guidance is clear from [that of] error. And whoever rejects idols, and securely believes in Allah has grasped a firm handhold that will never break; and Allah is Hearing – Knowing. (2:256)

Allah also says in Qur'an:

Wa ma khalaqatu-l-jinna wa-l-insa 'illah li-any-yuta'imun.

And I did not create the jinn and the humans except to worship Me.

(51:56)

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 life in all its dimensions. After that meeting, there could only be more and more realizations and openings, more and more protection; more and more opportunities to transcend the illusions and see through new eyes, hear through new ears, speak with a new and confident voice, and love with a heart that knows love more fully . The doorway opened and the transformative process began.

All that is need for this transformation is sincerity, love and submission. The love of life, the love of the *shaykh*, becomes the love of the Prophet (sal), the love of the Prophet finally becomes, in *fana*, the love of Allah (swt). Allah says in a Hadith Qudsi:

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.

Now, I hope, you can see the significant of *tarbiyya*; this is what is possible for us through *tarbiyya*. It is not just educating. It is not just increasing in knowledge. It is the knowledge that comes through *adab* that allows the transmission through the *shaykh* to reach you and to transform you. It varies from order to order, from *shaykh* to *shaykh*, but the essence is always the same.

Tarbiyya is Not, and Never is about Islam or Sufism, it IS Sufism. The way we speak, the topic we choose, and the actions we take or suggest, the guidance we give IS Sufism. It is a transformative, dynamic force that operates in a framework that is analogous to the most advanced science of the day, yet

transcends that through the vision (*basīra*) and ability to see nuance (*firāsa*). It transcends the existent knowledge at any and every point of intersection and in every moment.

CLOSING DU'A

Allaahumma j'al hubbaka ahabba ilayya min nafsee

Wa-sam'ee, wa-basaree, wa-maalee, wa-ahlee,

Wa- min-l-maa 'il-baarade li'l atshan

Oh Allah, make Your love dearer to me than myself, and my hearing and my sight, and my property and my family, and more than cool water for the thirsty.