

April 24, 2010

Saturday

Title: [Unlimited Tastes of the Divine](#)DVD title: Dhawq: Understanding the Divine through the Heart
Himma: Not Accepting any Spiritual Limitations

Dinner blessing: Thank You, Allah, for the spring rain. Give us Your Protection in our travels tomorrow. We are grateful for our safe return from our travels last week. We are very grateful for Saara's return, and her good experience. We are very grateful Allah for all the blessings of our gardens that You bestow upon us, and give us a deepen appreciation for spiritual life, and quiet our minds, our hearts, and our tongues. Let us dive deeply into the ocean of Your wisdom and knowledge and pearls of wisdom buried there. We ask You, Allah (swt), for the blessings upon those who are ill and recovering, and for those of us who are Your humble servants. *Amin.*

Suhbat Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. There's a practical aspect to this taste, *dhawq*. It's not just a metaphor. In order to understand the importance of *qalb*/heart, one has to understand the basic premises of Tasawwuf. I pointed out to you that it was like Homeopathy, like or cures like. According to this concept, Allah has created us and is trying to "find Himself," kind of mentality. A lot of Sufis say, "Allah created this creation then felt lonely and wanted to find Himself." It's a very unfortunate kind of metaphor, but this is where it comes from: this idea that everything is Allah; the self is not other than the Divine reality. As the creation identifies its own self, it is also simultaneously identifying Allah. "As you know yourself, you know Allah."

But this is not a static situation, and there is a dynamic relationship between the human being who loves Allah and the Divine Beloved, Allah (swt). (or the Divine Lover and the human beloved). You can look at it either way. This is a basic principle in Sufism. Once the power of that love reaches an intense state of yearning or *himma*, the heart

begins to seek out the Divine everywhere, just like the story of Majnun and Leila. It is thirsty for the drink that settles the thirst. This process is very dynamic and creative. It comes about because of a very unique phenomena. That phenomena is described as “the lover’s secret,” the personal, intense desire for Allah. From the other point of view of Allah, there is a unique and special response that results in this *tajalli*, theophany, Divine disclosures. Because the yearning reaches a certain stage, it unlocks the door to this theophany, the light that reveals the Self disclosures. These Self disclosures of Allah, this *tajalli*, takes place because of Allah’s intense and totally specific yearning for His beloved, His ‘*abd*, his slave. That is again why Allah finds only comfort in the heart of the believer. It’s like saying a fish finds comfort in water (*astaghfiru-Llāh*). It’s the place created by Allah for Allah—for that dynamic. Since we are not talking about the physical heart (except by analogy), the heart is as large as what it contains. Something else happens.

You have heard me mention many times over the years the concept that this creativity is constant, and that Allah is dynamic. The creative yearning in the human being is that dynamic placed inside the human being. Just like there are electrical impulses in the outer world, there are electrical impulses in our own self. That human yearning gives rise to another principle, which is that creation is renewed every moment. Every moment is a unique interplay between the Creator and what He has created. Again, the analogy is that everything reminds the lover of the beloved, and everything reminds the beloved of the lover. The love, you could say, is being created every moment. If I’m looking at the flower, it reminds me, “Ah, I picked that flower once for the beloved.” Or, looking at the candle, “Ah, the last time we had a meal together, there was a candle!” Everything reminds you of the beloved, because it is being created every moment. That is an analogy to the fact that the totality of creation is being created every moment. That’s where I got to the other day: Allah (swt) never manifests Himself twice in the same manner.

What is sought is the Divine being, the Divine becoming, the Divine Presence. We begin to understand that the way we see or perceive comes from a spark of light that comes from the Divine Presence within our own self. Did I tell you the story about how they got light into the tombs of Egypt? They found paintings deep inside the tombs, and wondered how they could have painted them because it was dark there and there was no soot on the ceiling. They obviously weren't burning flames. By what light did they paint? They had people standing outside with polished metal, and kept reflecting the light back and back and back. At every turn they had a person with a mirror until the light was reflected to where they wanted it. It's like that.

We are not the sun, but we are somewhere in there with those reflected lights. The seeker is like a spark of that light, lit by the Divine light. That light comes from somewhere else, and is not restricted by our physical being, the pattern our life is, or the cycle of life and death. It is not affected by it. The light is coming regardless of our state, our health, or whatever. In a sense it shows you that the light is different than the one who contains it. It is not restricted by the one who contains it. The person becomes fully aware of that *dhawq* or understanding, and that one is just one little particle of that Divine light. The link is that you come to that understanding through the heart, because the heart is a *latīfa* and one of the organs of perception. The goal of the perception is to strive toward understanding, trying to grasp as much as one can of the ungraspable, the concept of ever recreated truth and reality.

Truth is constantly being recreated. Moments are constantly being recreated as if creation started this moment, this moment, this moment. What is the message of that? We are existing by an infinite reality in an infinite universe, unrestricted. The light, truth, *marifah*, gnosis of that truth is limitless; consequently, one should not accept any limitations. The Sufi has to understand that you don't accept any limitations, whether they are self-imposed or imposed outwardly. How can you accept no limitations? The

same way that the qanun musician accepts certain limitations in a *maqam* in order to be free of those limitations in improvisation. There are rules in the universe, created by Allah, just like our body contains all these organs and they act freely only because they are contained. But the capability of the being within that physical body is not limited by that physical body.

We all travel at night in dreams. We can go out at night and look at the moon (if it is clear), and we have traveled, by our sight, to the moon. We transcend the limitations imposed by the material world, and we become aware of that light, that taste. [In] this perpetual creation, from a mystical point of view, we realize that we come nearer to awareness of that Divine Presence by our own *himma*. Therefore, the responsibility is with us to develop that potential, to reflect that light, to make choices that keep us in good company, good circumstances and work, or encounters that remind us we are in *suhbat*—and to stay in *suhbat* for that purpose. That is what the human is created to do, and to realize that no matter how much knowledge you have, Allah is greater and vaster than all that. *Allahu akbar*.

One lesson is to not accept limitations, and the other lesson is that we should be satisfied with a little of what comes to us from Allah. We should be satisfied with Allah more than we are satisfied with what comes from Allah. Satisfaction and contentment with what comes from Allah is partially dictated by our own desires. We have to realize that we can seek anything from Allah. We can ask from Allah anything, because the potential is there, but we should be satisfied with the least of what we get. When people say they are seeking God, truth, knowledge, or the Divine, we have to realize that seeking the Divine Presence is reflective of the degree to which we try to seek knowledge of our own self. I don't just mean the physical self. I mean knowledge of our place, knowledge of

why we make *muhasabat*, and why we try to refine our own self. I hope that's somewhat clear.

If you indeed are seeking Allah, God, Truth and you come to know yourself, you realize that what you have been seeking has always been with you and within you. That's why Allah says, "**I am as near to you as your jugular vein.**" What Shaykh al-Akbar (ra) is saying is the power of *himma* is the only way through which human beings can strive to embrace and accept the reality of what is infinite, unending. It is by our yearning, submission and trust in Allah. To seek love from the Lord of the Worlds (Rabbi-l-‘Ālamīn) is to seek from the infinitely great, vast, creative Being the ability to accept that there are no spiritual limitations within my own self, and there are no limits to the universe that I am interfacing with.

You have to give up the goal-orientation, because by definition it has an ending. This is where all your process people can say, "Yay! We won!" It's that comfort with the process, and being happy where you are, with what you are doing, increasing your knowledge and wisdom for the specific purpose of knowing the self, knowing Allah better, and for serving Allah. Only for those reasons: not for money, not for fame, not because you like this subject and not that subject, or you like this technology and not that technology, this department or that department, not any of that. It is only for those two things I said: knowing yourself and knowing Allah. The striving toward infinity or the endless universe is sort of an oxymoron, because you are already there. (An oxymoron is a stupid person who can get any stain out.)

To seek love from Allah (swt), from the Prophet (sal), from the *shuyukh* is to seek it from an infinite source that accepts no limitations, no boundaries on that love, that truth, that wisdom or knowledge. So why be surprised that there are no boundaries? I'm not talking about propriety and social boundaries. I'm talking about boundless love. Since each one of us is at a different stage, we can only accept what we are capable of

accepting. Though we are collectively on a journey, each of us is on an individual journey. No one can make that journey for us by definition. Our beliefs that we hold are obviously reflected by our preparation, by our knowledge, our submission, trust, and experience in many, many things. Since, ultimately the object of our belief is really what is within our own self; in our own heart (Allah says He dwells in the heart of the believer), then we have to stop relating to this God as if it is distant, far away, uninvolved in our lives.

Allah is involved in our lives to the degree we are prepared to involve Allah in our lives. We have the switch, the spigot. We control it. Then you have to ask yourself, how am I controlling it? What is it I say I want, and what is it I am acting that I want? My left hand is turning the spigot, and the right hand is saying, “No! Give it to me! It’s my turn!” Remember the story about feeding the hand. The object of our belief is our own selves, in a sense. Yet, at the same time, the God/Truth/Allah is present only to the degree we are able to grasp it and perceive it, despite the fact that everything that keeps us alive to be able to do all this thinking and perception is provided for by Allah. We are all sharing the same air in this room, without which we wouldn’t be having this conversation. What we get from being alive and in the presence and hearing has nothing to do with the air, except for the fact that it empowers us to be here. You could say that this drama, this journey, has nothing to do with Allah. It has to do with us. But without Allah, we wouldn’t be able to make the journey and we wouldn’t have the life to make it. Shaykh al-Akbar clarifies this:

The Real does not return to you except through you, not through Himself. For it is not in the capacity of the creature to endure Him.

We cannot contain Allah. It is by Allah, for Allah, and with the *madad* of Allah, but you have to do it yourself; otherwise, you would be containing Allah. I understand that sounds like “***I am in the heart of My believer,***” but we understand which heart I’m

talking about. There is a power of love, of any kind of love, but we are talking about the Divine Beloved. “*The Real does not return to you except through you, not through Himself.*” You cannot contain. The heart, this yearning is a creative force. The creative power in the heart has influence on *al-khayal*, the imaginal realm of the soul of human beings. Imagination/*khayal* is common to every human being in its most passive modality. When aroused by *himma*, *al-khayal* creates lasting forms. We are made in the image-ination of Allah. Allah yearned to create something, and He imagined it, *khayal*—He imaged it, projected it. Everything is created and it has a lasting effect because it comes from Divine Himma. If you don’t believe it has a lasting effect, go talk to the astrophysicists who will tell you that all these stars, galaxies and universes, though some collide, live and die, the whole process is expanding and endless. Yet there are certain laws that exist within that, but we won’t get into that.

The quality of the *himma* brings out the power of spiritual decisions versus worldly decisions, spiritual concentration versus concentration on worldly, *dunya* things – your work, your job, whatever it is—whatever you put your full attention, imagination, and concentration to. But when that is turned toward Allah, and toward the aspiration to know what is the truth, what is compassion, what is mercy, and you are doing it *fi sabīli-Llāh*, then you see the power of spirituality and of spiritual decisions. You develop a concentration that allows you to see, and you bring the *himma* that is part of you. The decisions that are being made, the meanings that are being made between our self and our Creator, have to be based on the purity of the One Who engenders that expression of creation.

Before there was no expression of creation, the angels and everybody just did what they did. But as soon as you put limits – creation is a limit – the human being wants to break out of the limits. They are walking around the earth, doing things to it, and all of a sudden they want to go to the moon. They have a *himma* to go to the moon or to Mars.

So you create the means, out of the same things you didn't create them from prior to that *himma*, because you didn't have the desire to do it. You didn't put all those little pieces, inventions and tools together. Once you do, you can put them together in a matter of days. In cosmic or universal time, you can switch on and off, if you take the spiritual yearning you have, and turn it in the right way toward Allah. Then that creative Being, that Allah, imagines what you have asked for, imagines what your needs are, and those are fulfilled immediately. Whereas, if you set out in *dunya*, everything you want you have to create yourself. You create it within your own self, because ultimately that's where it is anyway. It's not putting on the garb or going to a certain place; only if it is going to a certain place to meet someone in the right place at the right time.

This is why it is so important to have not only *suhbat*, but, Ibn Araby and everyone makes it clear, we all have to have a spiritual guide; otherwise the person invariably wanders astray. They imagine all different kinds of things that they want, and then they have to go through the painful process of culling out things. Because you are only allowed to carry one piece of baggage on board, and you might have to pay a lot of money for that. You carry with you the sacredness and the secrets, always. The spiritual guide has to be someone who has gone through various tests and stages to reach the level. Let me read something by Ibn Araby (ra) to you.

To differentiate between these two imaginable realms, it is essential to find the right spiritual guide, one who has been through the various spiritual trials and stages to reach the level where he may save the seeker from the pitfalls of their own himma, and the pitfalls of the imaginable realm. Such guides have themselves tasted of the Divine realities through their own himma, and therefore they have the insight into the states of the seeker's heart, and are able to direct the course of their spiritual journey.

Hence, the value of *suhbat* and to be in the company of one who has traversed at least a lot of the path. No matter what is disclosed that seems worldly – other than what is going on in the Catholic Church in Rome today – what is very important is to realize that Allah doesn't deny the sincere request from the sincere believer. Allah says, “**One who is possessed of the heart knows themselves.**” Quite calmly, quite clearly, it is said, if you truly know yourself, you will know your Lord. *Asalaam aleikum.*