

May 26, 2010

Wednesday



Title: [How to Have the Honesty to Fulfill Your Promise to Allah](#)

DVD title: Describing the Voyaging of the Salik to the Ocean of Knowledge
and the Need for the Will of the Murīd to Progress on the Path

Dinner blessing: Ya Allah, thank You for the blessings of the day, and the opportunities and challenges You bring us. Give us strength in the days ahead to continue our service to You, to appreciate the beauties of nature, to make our gardens grow beautifully, to feed our bellies, to feed our hearts and souls; to embrace the changes You send upon us.
Amin.

Suhbat: In describing the *sair ul suluk*, there are what are called the minor realms and the major realms, the minor journey and the major journey, as reflected in the transmissions and the *latā'if*. We will go into that part of it later, but in describing the nature of the *suluk* (literally the voyage), and the intentions of the *sālik* on this voyage, our predecessors (especially Sulami and Shaykh Kashani) spoke about this journey in the following ways. It is said that the *suluk* means to travel in the sense of releasing and liberating oneself in an absolute and unrestricted manner; meaning, the *sālik* can move in both the realms of the *dhāhir* and the *bātin*. In this case, the *dhāhir* means the outer manifest. The *bātin* does not only mean the inner, but it means to be aware through introspection, of what is intrinsic in the nature of the human being.

This travel takes place *sair-illah*, *sair-ft-Allah*, *sair-ma-Allah*, *adaniyya*: towards Allah, near to Allah, and within Allah, and in the intention or in the accompaniment of Allah. [We say] toward Allah, because we are all moving toward Allah. We all move from life toward death. Near the company of Allah is to become more aware of one's infinite

place in space. To be near to Allah would imply something. If Allah is infinite, it implies a journeyer has to have some awareness of their own infiniteness. Otherwise, you could be near to Allah, but couldn't go any further. This is also reflected in the Isra Miraj. There was a *hadith* that Aisha reported. When asked if the Prophet saw Allah, she said, "No, he did not see Allah." No prophet has seen Allah. When Sidna Musa asked to see Allah, Allah said, "No, you cannot see Me." This is not nearness that we understand through the normal ways of perception or sight.

All this can be said in another way, however. This voyage or this journey of a Sufi can be looked at as voyaging or traveling from bad words to good words, from evil deeds to good deeds, from bad behavior to good behavior, from bad attitude to good attitude. None of these things are restricted in space. Words have no form. Attitude has no form. Subsisting upon one's own existence to subsisting upon the Divine existence, releasing yourself from the restrictions of your own limitations to the limitlessness of Allah, this is how we achieve infiniteness. It means that once the *sālik* travels from bad words to good words, or from evil deeds to good deeds, or from bad behavior to good behavior—voyages that we can all relate to, because we are alive in the physical world—it is said that the rays of *marifah* shine upon that individual. We make these changes in how we speak and act, and what our character is, etc. As we do that, the rays of *marifah*, gnosis, knowledge shine upon us.

He will be cognizant of everything in the true way they were created, and He (Allah) will behold everything the true way they look like.

Once that begins to happen, and we begin to see with the eye of knowledge, a person eventually attains the state of *kamil* (perfection) and understands and sees the way things are. You are no longer fooled by self deception. Self deception was a very important concept for our predecessors, as well as for us, because self deception was the thing that gave us the idea that we existed independently of Allah. In fact, self deception lets us

think that we exist in time and space, when there is a pretty good argument that we don't. It's all a means of self-identification. For the *'ārif*, the person who has some knowledge of the truth of the way things are is a person, part of that person dies, if you will, as they learn to subsist and exist more and more on the Divine Presence. This is what is called "dying before you die." You are biologically still alive, but you die to the distractions and the attractions or magnetism of this world. Sulami then says something very interesting: *Truly the salik never existed; he just thought he was.* We can do deeper into that, because I like the subject. I like a person who doesn't exist talking about non-existing while they were existing.

To reach this state of awareness is the core objective and desire of every *sālik*. You could say that perfection of humanity is what happens when there are good words, good deeds and good behavior, and when that light of knowledge shines on an individual. That should give us all a pretty good idea, relatively, where we are in the universe, and where human society is or isn't. To make us feel better, he said, "*The people who attain these four stages are only one in a hundred thousand. The rest will fail at it.*" The only ones who will achieve it will gather and live together in a community in Bedford, Virginia. That was a footnote to his ancient text, written in a very strange dialect that only I was able to translate.

This process is preceded by *irāda*. "**Send not those away who call upon the Lord morning and evening and who seek His face.**" Prophet Muhammed (sal) said in a *hadith*, "**When Allah wishes a good thing for His slave, He makes him busy with some affair. People asked the Prophet (sal), "What kind of an affair is he busied with?" And the Prophet (sal) said, "It will give him success to do something good prior to his death."** *Ilān* or *irāda* is the beginning of that journey. The root of the word *ilān* means to move toward. If we look at the things we are passionate about, that we are willful about, that we have very strong eagerness to do, we realize those feelings,

those desires are the beginning of all major affairs in our lives. Without it, we wouldn't have the extra strength that is necessary to be successful.

Even when in the most selfish ways we operate in our lives, it starts with this moving toward, with the passion and eagerness of a strong will, to accomplish something. We could say, "actions follow intentions." But think about the things you really, really wanted to do in life, that you have succeeded at, and you will see that this is true. There was a certain passion or desire for it, an eagerness to have it, and you got fixated on it or focused on it in some way, and you made a deliberate intention for it. That deliberate intention is *irāda*. If we don't have that will in the pursuing of this path, toward seeking the face of Allah, toward the Beloved, then the *murīd*, who by definition should be a very sincere and avid seeker, won't have that necessary passion to gain the knowledge and to persevere, to endure the challenges, the pain and suffering (at times), the gains and losses and distractions.

It is said that if the *murīd* has [no] *ilān*, *irāda*, eagerness, and passion for oneself, there is no way they are going to make any progress on the *tarīqah*. You have to have the passion to see the face of Allah. Sometimes that comes about by looking at circumstances: why did this happen? Did I deserve this? Why is this circumstance the way it is? We may say, "I want to make the best of the circumstance. It must mean something. It's the Divine Will." But we have to have that kind of strong feeling that what has transpired perhaps is for the best. Or for the challenge set before us, [we have to think], "I really must bring my full attention and passion to it." To do that, sometimes Allah puts us in those positions to overcome our bad habits, the habits we have developed over the years that are determining our choices. They are not being determined by what Allah (swt) has told us to determine those elements of our lives. They are not being determined by our deeper understanding of *tadbir*; by our deeper surrender to our *taqdir*; by our natural inclination to sacrifice for others, or by our restraint of our negative

qualities, our bad words or wrong deeds. Only when that happens can we be broken away from those habits.

Sulami said, *“Day and night, the murīd’s appearance is a person who is in the state of jihad (struggle).”* In this case, appearance does not mean physical appearance, but what the person appears to be when you look at them. *“And in his inner attribute of endurance and restlessness, sleeplessness, throwing himself into all types of hardships and suffering, that person doesn’t turn their back on their circumstances, afflictions or their journey no matter what happens to them.”* What happens is Allah creates us in these forms in society, where normally we would flee. It’s the old story of flight or fight. Normally we would flee, but we create these boundaries around ourselves that make it hard for us to flee. If your society supports that, making it unacceptable to fight and difficult to flee, then the person naturally has to turn inside themselves for something else, or get the support of others around them.

Allah created us tribes and communities and said, I could have made you one community but I didn’t. There are two meanings in that statement: one is the meaning of unity, and the other is it is very important that we gather together in some kind of community or *jamat*. The more we have integrated the aspects of our life in very practical ways with other human beings on the path, in societal forms, the less chance we have to flee. We look at society today, and see such a breakdown in this kind of community. We are extremely rare, extremely unique: people of diverse backgrounds coming together for spiritual goals. There was a time in different parts of the world where it was not so unusual. There are, of course, cultural aspects that still exist.

I was talking to the people from Oman about this subject of tribal identities today. But even at the time of the Prophet (sal) there were all these questions about who would succeed him. It was said the person had to come from the Qureysh, but among the Qureysh there were all these tribes, arguing among themselves about who would follow

the Prophet (sal). It is not unusual that there are these forces that try to break down the boundary that allows the *murīd* to be free to do the things that frees that individual from the limitations of their physical life, and allows the person on the Sufic path to have the eagerness, desire and will to move forward or develop themselves no matter what. If our desires that we feel every day are so limited to just the physical, the *dhāhir*; and we don't give ourselves the time or opportunity for those desires to have a sincere eagerness, longing, or yearning for a greater truth, service, and understanding of that Divine Presence, then we cannot hope to be among that 100,000.

Setting that aside, we won't overcome our bad words, our bad deeds, our bad actions; we won't be compassionate and kind people at the moments we need to be. We will become more and more self absorbed. We may go through the rituals, but we will become more and more self absorbed. One of the hardest things for the *murīd* is this balance between the outer and the inner. How do we find the right balance that allows us to have our subsistence in Allah, but at the same time, doing the things in the world that we have to do? In other times, what happened in Islam is what happened in other religions: people left their families and the world, because there was no way. It was impossible for them to live with the attachments to the world, and at the same time be in *tarīqah*. Of course, there was a reaction to that, which came in many different schools, but especially from Mujaddid al-alf ath-thānī Shaykh Ahmad Farūqī Sirhindī (ra) .

The major response we are concerned with came at the time of Abdul Bari Shāh (ra). You can say that maybe it came because he saw the capacity of human beings was becoming less and less. The argument the Hindus would say is that we are in the Iron Age; and in the Iron Age, nobody can do anything but remember the name of God. You can't expect anything else because people are in a state of ignorance. It's sort of like that; but it isn't it. Abdul Bari Shāh (ra) gave us a means. He was saying, in the world you will be living in (because he was very prescient about what was happening in the world), you are going to have to put a lot of your will power and intention on other things, not just the simple

things in life. It was the time of the industrial revolution, and he was able to see that life was changing very drastically in the world. People no longer had the same amount of time for their practices. That was only one part of it.

The other part was he saw that people also were developing more creativity, and more strength and power in their will than they had before. They had to learn new things; society was changing. Why not take that new capability and turn it within also? If you do that, you don't have to spend tremendous amounts of time. You just have to have the honesty and courtesy (*adab*) toward Allah to fulfill your promise toward Allah. What promise? I didn't make any promise. If you are a *murīd*, you made a promise. As a human being, you did make a promise to Allah, because you inherited a promise made by those who came before you. Of course, we never have any trouble calling out to Allah when we need help; but we don't necessarily go running toward Allah saying, "It's my time to volunteer."

One of the messages Abdul Bari Shāh (ra) was talking about in terms of *irāda* was to take the will and creativity you are now showing in this time of very drastic change. It was at the turn of the century, and technology was becoming very powerful in the world, even in India. Take this creativity and willpower for success in the *dhāhir*, and turn a very concentrated amount of it toward yourself, for the sake of seeking the face of Allah. I'm paraphrasing, but that's basically all he was asking. And that is all the *shaykhs* have asked from that point on. That's all Hamid Hasan al-Alawī (ra) asked; it's all Muhammed Sayed Khan (ra) asked; it's all Hazrat Azad Rasool (ra) asked, and it's all I ask.

To be an active seeker, you have to find the right way to work with yourself no matter what is happening, whether something has been given to you or taken from you, whether there is ease or hardship, whether there is illness or wellness. A person who is ill may not have the strength they had before they got ill. But before they got ill, if they had trained themselves to put that extra will and effort into their practice, then when they are ill, they

will know how to do that. For example, the maximum distance a person could walk when they were well was five miles. Now they are ill, and can only walk a half a mile. Then why be happy with a quarter mile? It's the same thing when a physical therapist works with a patient. You want the patient to do the maximum in the therapy, not the minimum. The body will respond to the maximum. In therapy, I am getting help to stretch my legs. There is good pain and bad pain. The bad pain is when I push; the good pain is when I cooperate and just do it.

Why don't we cooperate? You know the story. The Prophet Musa (as) was a *murīd*. He asked, **“O my Lord, expand for me my breast.”** The Prophet (sal) was a *murād*, and he spoke the words of Allah when he said, **“Have we not expanded thy breast, and lifted a heavy burden from off of thy chest?”** See the difference? Junayd was asked about *murīd* and *murād*. He said that the average seeker (*murīd*) is subject to politics and the influences of knowledge; whereas, the *murād*—the one who is desired by Allah, within the sanctuary of Allah, and cared for by Allah—is like a bird who can fly. The *murīd* is like a runner. A runner cannot keep up with the bird. The only way the *murīd* can become *murād* is to realize the *irāda* means to be willed by Allah. It's not your will. It's being open to the will of Allah. You have the willpower because Allah gives you that willpower.

If you love someone, it seems that the love is coming from you. But that love is the *muhabbat*, the love of Allah. Therefore, you have to respect the source of that love, and you don't use it improperly. You don't minimize its effect or quality. You don't minimize its effect on someone else. You don't try to dilute the quality of it for your own selfish desires. It flows perfectly toward the object of the love. When people fall in love, that is very easy; but when there are tests and trials in their relationship in love [it is another thing]. You have to remember that you might be closing the doorway of love, but that love is still there from the source. It is the same thing with the will we have. “I'm lazy; I

can't do it. I don't have the will power." No, you are not open to the will power. It's not yours – it's Allah's. It's in the universe.

That will power is the power that created these worlds. It's the illusion of physical reality. If we don't think the physical reality is an illusion, all we have to realize is, it comes and it goes. So where's the person that inhabited the body when the body dies? The life was an illusion, and every body else was interacting with it. I'm not going to go back to my dream analogy. But you know how real those dreams can be. I don't want to sit here and say that we're not really here; this isn't really real, and all that. That very well may be true; and it's sort of interesting to speculate. Why we are apparently here, the idea is – and I don't think I've gotten it across very well tonight – is to depend on the source of desires, the source of ignorance, the source of our will, of our yearning that allows us to travel and sail on this ocean of life to a destination, and stop thinking that it's coming from us.

If we keep thinking that "it's coming from me," we cannot make great progress on this path. We have to do everything we can to remember that it is coming not from me but through me, from Allah, from the Divine Source, from the Source of universes. Then we cannot allow ourselves easily to divert that force or that power, because it is a tremendously disrespectful thing to do. We all know what it is like when our child is disrespectful to us. It's very clear. "Oh! I heard what you said to your mother. You should never talk like that to your mother! Don't ever talk back!" We know what disrespect is; it has a force or power to it. "Whoa! Did I hear you say that?" We all recognize it. "Can you believe what so and so said to their husband, wife, father, brother, mother, friend, even to a stranger?" It has a force to it. You feel like your head is being pushed to the ground when you are embarrassed when someone is disrespectful.

How can we be so disrespectful to Allah and not feel that? We need to ask ourselves these questions. If we don't, we are like in this physical state of *ghunūgi*. We are drifting,

and we don't know where we are. I say to you, "That's okay." Hazrat said, "That's okay." But you have to come to *adraq*. There is also *adraq* in the physical, non-meditative understanding. *Adraq* means to comprehend, to grasp, to understand, to perceive and attain to something. In Sufic terminology, it's called prehension, not apprehension. If you sit in meditation, all of a sudden, you start to grasp something. You start to understand. It starts to make sense to you. You come out of the state of drifting, a very pleasant state, and you start understanding and perceiving.

I think that is something that is worth remembering and striving for; not to say, "I'm too old. There is too much water under the dam. I haven't been doing my meditation for years, or I don't do my prayers on time." You don't know what is going to open that door to yearning and understanding. You could have missed your Asr prayer for 15 years, and you don't know what's going to open it up. Then, that is followed by maybe some fear, *khawf*, worry; and you start to understand what is counted and what determines your state in the Hereafter, and where the light and darkness comes in your life. You start to feel... "O my God, everything I did and everything I didn't do really meant something."
Asalaam aleikum.