

June 9, 2010

Wednesday



Title: [Soft Hearts and Hard Hearts](#)

DVD title: Healing the Heart that is too Soft or too Hard:
Addressing Illnesses Hidden in the Heart

Dinner blessing: O Allah, we thank You for today, for the beauty of nature, for the resources that you give us, and for the choices you give us. O Allah, help us to respect all these blessings and create humility instead of arrogance. Create health where there is sickness, and happiness where there is misery. Create wisdom where there is ignorance, O Allah, beginning with us. *Amin.*

Suhbat: *Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm.* Sometimes in *tarīqah* you find that people's hearts are too soft. If the heart is too soft, one would think that a person would be much better at submission. I remember talking to Hazrat once about the transmissions we give to someone if, for example, you are sitting and feeling pain in your heart. We give the transmission to open the aperture of your heart. Or when you are sitting and feeling nothing, we have a transmission that can close the aperture of the heart. One would think a soft-hearted person, in the way that we use that phrase, would be much better at submission; but in fact they are not. A person with a soft heart moves from here to here to here like this. They give their heart away to anything and feel very emotionally connected.

Again, the idea is we can come into a state of balance or a median state, a state of *mīzān*. If the heart is too soft, then what happens is the person has to spend more time in submission to Allah. If we don't do that, then the caring we have eventually becomes ambivalent, with the heart moving here to here to here. You become more concerned that your heart is all over the place, than what it is all over the place for. You become very

attached to your own compassion, but not the object of your compassion. You become attached to the idea of love, but not the object of love. If that happens, then you can't be attached to the love of Rasulallah (sal) and Allah (swt); it doesn't happen to you. Love is just an emotion, and the intimate relationship with Rasulallah and Allah doesn't mature. We find ourselves procrastinating on the spiritual path.

Another way of saying that is we become ambivalent or we become accepting of where we are. It is not in the sense of accepting what Allah (swt) has given to us, that's a much higher state. It is just accepting where we are; just floating in that state. So, sometimes we have to become more active in our submission. I think you will find that in just about every religion. There are monastics who become active in their submission through practicing penance and austerities. They become involved in their recitations only, or self flagellation. When we see that a person needs that (and there is a supposition here), they are given things they can act on, even though it may be difficult for them to do that. What's the supposition? (That they want to do it.)

At the root of that apathy or lack of submission is a kind of fearfulness that has to be transferred or turned into confidence or trust in the circumstances the person finds themselves in. In other words, submitting to where you are and what is happening in an active spiritual sense is different than becoming ambivalent. Though they might look the same, they are not the same. The person whose heart is too soft is, in effect, is arrogant; just like a hard-hearted person is arrogant in another way. A soft-hearted person's error lies in thinking that as long as they can keep themselves busy with other people and doing things, involving themselves or allowing themselves to be drawn into other people's psychological, spiritual or social needs, they will be okay. In effect, it's like saying, "Allah, don't push me! See, I'm doing all this work! Don't test me. I'm being very kind to people, cleaning toilets, always at the beck and call." But there is an edge to it, a sense of "Don't you see how important what I am doing is? Don't you see the sacrifice I'm

making? How much I've given up for this and that?" It's arrogance. It's all, "Don't test me, don't push me."

A hard hearted person doesn't care. Their kind of arrogance requires you to smack them. They have to be hit by something to realize their state. Not literally smacking them with your hand, but by circumstance. That's a very technical Sufi term, called "as-smackiya." The *shaykh* and the *murīd*, or the doctor and patient (using the analogy of the heart) have to be united in the same intention and desire for harmony and well-being. Any doctor who is not a technician will tell you that half the cure is wanting to be well. In both cases, there has to be a prescription. The diagnosis, if we are going to carry this metaphor on, means the *shaykh* has to think very carefully about the qualities and tendencies of that individual by seeing their *kashf*, to be out there, aware, perceiving under every circumstance. It doesn't have to happen just with a person.

As I was walking into the dentist office this morning, I knew that when I walked in, the receptionist was going to say to me that Denise had an opening right after my dental appointment, and could I stay and have my teeth cleaned, since I had missed it the other day. [When I did walk in], she said, "Can I see you for a minute?" I said, "I'm available, but I do have a meeting." She said, "What?" I said, "You are going to ask me if I can see Denise, because she has an opening." She said, "How'd you know that?" I said, "Sometimes I just know things. Was I right?" "Yes...." That's what happened today. I could have made a big fool of myself, but I just knew it.

I knew it because the universe will do everything it can to be in harmony and be aligned. We're the ones who disturb the alignment and disharmony. In fact, the universe is harmonious around us, but the part we engage in, we screw up. It doesn't matter to the universe if the planet is flooded with oil and we are all swimming in oil in the next few months. It doesn't matter to the greater universe, only to us. There has to be a unity and harmony that comes in light of the *kashf*. The light of *kashf* is partially the light of *iman*.

It's like if you are talking about the spectrum of light with so many frequencies. One of the frequencies is *iman* and one of the frequencies is *hikma*, and the other frequency is *taslim*. You have all these frequencies. The light of your experience in your own *suluk* and meditation is an important aspect of that. Your journey, meditation, and practice are the instruments through which that light shines.

Among the Shādhilī, it is said that the man of the desert knows the condition of two lands. He knows every plant and where it is planted. Every craftsman knows his craft, its advantages, and disadvantages. The implication here might be something like, if you don't care about what you do, then what you do will not benefit you or anyone you do it for. If you don't know where you are, you are nowhere. If you don't know what you need, you will not see what you need in front of you. If you don't turn to what you do in your craft with love and effort, then you are not a real craftsman. You don't have a craft; what you do is incidental. If you are living in the desert and you don't know every plant and where it is planted, you are only going to survive by accident. A person could be seeking, but they have nothing because they don't know why they are seeking or what they are seeking for.

The Prophet (sal) would speak to the people in a way he would understand what he was saying. He would encourage one person in one way, and another in another way; but he would encourage everyone to do what was beneficial to them, uniquely specifically. Sometimes what was beneficial for one was beneficial for another, and sometimes what was beneficial at one moment was not beneficial at the next. For example, you remember the example of those who wanted to go fight, but he asked them to stay behind, because it wasn't beneficial for them or for him to come and fight. In principle, it was beneficial to make the lesser *jihad* for the sake of survival; but in that specific situation, certain people were not included. In the sense of *dawa* and encouraging people to understand him, it was beneficial in general. But specifically he would speak to people in a certain way. In

that sense, one has to be called and one has to listen for the specific message, not just the general message.

I can say it is not sufficient for anyone to say they are Muslim without, in their own mind, knowing what it means to be a Muslim, what kind of a Muslim, and how they can be a better Muslim. Just like it is not sufficient for a mother to say she is a mother, but what kind of mother, and how can she be a better mother. What are the guidelines for being a mother or father? What is it you are working on? Where has Allah placed you? What is it Allah is telling you? If you are the one telling yourself what Allah is telling you, then you have someone telling you something who doesn't know very much. It's like a lawyer who has himself for a client has a fool for a lawyer. This may not be true for a *wali*, but everyone thinks they are a *wali* in their secret inner being. That's the excuse everyone uses: I know what's best for me! That is only partially true.

For those of us who are doctors, we have to know not only how to diagnose the disease but what the medicine is. We also have to have a kind of bedside manner. Well, it used to be so, but now people are so scared and so submissive to doctors that anyone with a white coat and a stethoscope will be believed. The doctor of Tasawwuf has a degree called *ijāzah*. He has to know the states and stages, not only in his own heart, but in the heart of everyone else; otherwise, the illness will not be cured. The heart that has only one ailment is a lot easier to cure than a heart that has many ailments; and a heart that is laden with many problems is very difficult to cure. If you look at yourself, you may remember that I have said to many of you that you probably have only one real problem, a specific problem.

Those who have more than one are more difficult to treat. In fact, I would say to you, that if you come with the right attitude, [the *suhbat* can be healing]. The *suhbat* is so powerful that a person who has many diseases avoids the *suhbat*, because the *suhbat* acts like chemotherapy, and people just don't show up. You could say they were immune to

suhbat; the immune system keeps them away. Some people need the treatment of *ibāda*, and some people need the treatment of *khidma*. Some people need the treatment of *muraqabah* and *tafakkur*. Some people need the treatment of *tawakkul*. We all in some way need the treatment of *suluk*. We all need to have attention to the heart. But whatever the treatment is, it's a reality, like a veil upon veil that is lifted. Often, we are in a certain place at a certain time, in a certain circumstance, and they all coincide, and we realize, this has to be acted on now. We have to treat this illness now. The hardened heart or the sleeping heart becomes awake, and the soft heart has to become more firm.

Someone called me the other day. I had sent them a remedy to them, and they called me up and thanked me. They said, "Do you really think it will help?" What did I say? I said, "I'm sure it can help you if you approach it correctly. Remember that it took you a long time to get ill, and it will take you some time to get better." We've all heard that. When the heart gets better; when your spiritual health improves, other things come along with it. Spiritual health, or the heart being really in a state of refined well-being, means that it is receptive to things that it wasn't receptive to before, just like if you are sick, you are not hungry. Food is there, but eating may be the last thing in the world you want to do. But as soon as you get better, you become receptive to the food, and you need it for your health. You are sick, and you need food, but you are not receptive to it. Something happens to help you get better (probably not food), and you have to catch the moment to accept what is available to you. You have to say, "I have hunger, so I'll eat." That's the easy part.

What about accepting things that you didn't do very well before, like responsibility, accountability, trust? You have to go past certain desires. You have to be in a deeper state of submission. That's different. You have hunger for food. If your heart really becomes healed, you have hunger for those things, too. You have hunger for your prayer and your faith and your service in a different way than before. What it means is many things change. Your schedule changes. There are many things in life that make your

schedule change. If you get a job and you haven't been working, your schedule changes. You have a child, your schedule changes. If you get sick, your schedule changes. If you have to travel, your schedule changes. It's not that we are not used to it. It is that we tend to pick and choose, or we are forced. In this case, your schedule, your attitude, your desires, they all have to change—and your attitude has to change, specifically. Some people actually get enamored of sickness; we talked about it last week. Some people become enamored of the medical establishment. Some people become enamored of academe; they become perpetual students. There are people who can't live outside of jail, too. Some people believe that by remaining static, there is safety and security.

One Sufi said the heart is like the stomach. The stomach is a house of illnesses. If it receives a lot of mixed things, it becomes ill and impaired, so then you need a cleansing diet. The cure is to protect it from mixing too many things in the stomach. So too with the heart: a heart overburdened with preoccupations or worries can't reflect. If the preoccupations are few, then the heart becomes sound and the mirror becomes polished, and one can see what it reflects. The Prophet (sal) said, ***“One who gathers his worries into one worry, Allah removes from him his worry in this world. The one who has many worries, Allah pays no attention to him.”*** That's an incredible *hadith*.

When I have said to some of you, you are getting to the point where you have only one problem, that's a real blessing. Some people keep their problems, and keep having problems and worries. They don't see that it is all one problem. They are addressing all these different things, but not aggregating it and seeing that it is one. Do you really think all the problems, difficulties, and challenges you face are so many? But you are assailed by them and become very defensive and complain to others about your state. In fact, there aren't that many. It is something that reflects you and your character, and the way you look at things. The only way to really realize that is to make *tawajjuh* and pay attention, and turn to face Allah.

When you move toward Allah, Allah comes running toward you. What does it mean to turn toward Allah? Here's the same old prescription again. "Oh, Doc, you gave me that before." Well, it's chronic. You sit in *muraqabah* and make you *niyyat*. You make *dhikrullah*, whatever you are assigned. You align your heart with the *shaykh*, the *shuyukh* and the Prophet (sal). You submit in that moment, and live your life as Allah gave your life to you. Does it mean you don't make any decisions? Of course, we make decisions, but the decisions have to come from the heart.

Shāh Waliyullah, in his description of the *latā'if*, talks of the circles within circles within circles. What happens when you make circle within circles? You come to a point in space. That point is where we have to come to. You verify your state and your circumstance by looking around you and seeing, "What is this common thread that is running through everything that is bothering me and agitating me? What's the common thread in me?" It is not, "Nobody understands me;" not, "People don't trust me." Those aren't common threads. What is the common thread in *me*? Going back to the analogy, we have responsibility for ourselves even if we go to the doctor. (Tells story about observing the deaf man with dementia while at the dentist). They were yelling (so he could hear them), telling him what to do, and he complied, but I couldn't see the dementia. He just looked like an older man with two hearing aids. That was freaky, because I want to see it. I can see if he has one leg, he is different than me. I can see if he is blind or only has one eye. But I couldn't see the dementia. I said to him, "How are you?" He said, "Fine, thank you." I still couldn't see it. Do you understand what I'm saying? I was sitting there wondering what he knew about his state. What does he know? Is he in that *barzakh* where he knows he has that state and can't get out of it?

They say that there is a hell where you see the angels smashing the people's heads, and then heads grow back; and they smash them again, over and over. Sort of like Men in Black II. So why do the angels do that? It's for all the prayers you didn't do that you knew you could do, and you neglected to do them. You had a heavy head, and you

didn't put it on the ground. It's a metaphor... hopefully. You have to have *taqwa*. When you go to a doctor, and the doctor tells you that you have a condition, you have to have *taqwa* and even some *khawf*. You consult the doctor, and the doctor determines what is obvious in the *dhāhir*, but how do you know what is in the *bātin*? I couldn't see the *bātin* of this man, and I couldn't get it to manifest in the *dhāhir*. I didn't purposefully sit down and have a conversation with him. I probably would have found out his dementia very quickly. Then, on the other hand, who knows?

We can understand our state through the *latā'if* of *khafī* and *akhfah*. The lenses of *khafī* and *akhfah* will tell us our state much better. It's like a camera. You have to take the lens cap off if you want to take a picture. In the old days, we all started to take pictures with the lens cover on. The lens cover is our disobedience and our defiance and our immobility, our arrogance and our resistance. They are all illnesses of the outer; yet they have their origin hidden in the heart. Among the illnesses of disobedience that are hidden in the heart are the ones like vanity and pride, love of the self, love of one's reputation, pride of leadership. These are all hidden in the heart, and the cure is to turn toward Allah, trying to be aware of the nearness of Allah (swt), reaching out, holding the hand of the *shuyukh*, sitting in *suhbat*, visiting one another, sharing food, serving, working with one another for the sake of the community and the *tekkia*, working with one another for the sake of the world, for creation.

If a person seeks company without results, then we tell them you have to look at your own self. You have to question your own motives, your own sincerity. Of course, it's much easier to blame someone else: the *shaykh*, everyone else. Someone tells me, "My sickness is because of everyone else. I take on everyone's illness." We talked about this recently. Everybody is sick to some degree, and if you did that, you would be dead. It's not true; that's not what happens. It's that you don't know how to understand and use your own sensitivity and compassion, your own love, your own healing ability, if you

want to say it that way. What you are doing is taking that opportunity and thinking about your own self.

Not a day goes by when I am not called about an illness; usually, it's two or more. Why? Because I have put myself forward as a Homeopath. It is interesting that I am very rarely called about spiritual illnesses. I'm called every day about physical illnesses, but nobody ever calls and says, "Shaykh, I am suffering from exhaustive pride today." "Ya Shaykh, my ego is raging today." "I have a crisis in *tawakkul* today." But I never get that call. I certainly have put myself forward as a *shaykh*. Not only that, but my *ijāzah* as a *shaykh* is better than my *ijāzah* in Homeopathy.

People call and say, "I'm so uptight and tense that I cannot meditate." Perhaps I should say, "Is that a symptom of your spiritual disease that you are sharing with me in the hope of ...?" You should really think about that. But I don't get that kind of call. Do you know why? It's easy to go down to the remedy room and get some Nux 30. It is not so easy to set everything aside, and sit down and meditate for an hour and a half, make dua, go to the mosque, do all your prayers on time, and then come and sit in *muraqabah*, or take *khilwa* for three days. If I said, "You have a little flu. Stay in for three days, and take three doses of this for three days. Drink some hot tea, rest, and put your feet up and relax. You'll be okay in three days." No problem! But for a spiritual disease, "Well, I've got a deadline. I have this and that to do, so..." And then you try to speak Arabic to me, "Mañana!"

The Prophet (sal) said, "***Take actions only of what you can afford. Allah does not tire until you tire.***" He also said, "***Let not one of you be like the one who is cut off, for that one crosses no land.***" What does it mean to take of actions only what you can afford, and that Allah does not tire until you tire? Some of us need to do service; some of us need to make prayer. Some of us have a natural inclination to trust, and some of us don't.

Some of us are cured easily, and some of us have diseases that maybe have no cure yet in the physical sense, but they are given to us to deepen our *iman*. I can make an analogy. If you go to the K- Roger (or if spelled correctly, K- Rog  ), you are not going to buy things you don't have money to buy, unless you use a credit card. Cash only! You only take what you can afford, so you will have to make do with what you can afford. What do you have the means to use, to what degree? You shop for the best; you do the absolute best you can with what capability you have. You don't set yourself up for self-criticism or failure. You know you can only sit for 40 minutes in meditation; so why would you try to meditate for 3 hours? You know you can make Hizb ul Bahr, but why would you try to make 365 Hizb ul Bahrs? You have only the capability to make one, but you make it with sincerity.

If you get to the place where you tire – ***“Allah does not tire until you tire,”*** then you will not be able to receive the *madad* of Allah. Here we are back at the same point of *mizan*, balance and harmony. Some people try to take more so they fail. They have an ego sense of much greater capacity than what they really have. But Allah will increase your capacity when you fill yourself full. So that's what that means and I hope it means something to you.

Allah says in Qur'an, **“Set right your face for the obedience of Allah. Be one devoted to Him only. Establish Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind. No change might there be in this world wrought by God. That is the standard of the d  n, but most among mankind do not understand.”** (30:30)

That's a formula, try to follow it. It's a formula for *at-tazkiya*; it's a formula for *hikma*. It's a formula for *shif  t*, healing. It's a formula for *marifah*, knowledge. ***“Set your face for the obedience of Allah,”*** means turn and be obedient to Allah. Be devoted to Allah only. **“Establish Allah's handiwork according to the pattern”** means use all this for the purpose of which humankind has been created, and follow a means, a standard for the way you live.

This is some of the guidance Allah (swt) gives us in Qur'an. The more selfish you are, the heavier your heart. The less selfish you are, the more pure your heart will be able to guide you. That's the story, and that's the end of this talk, *inshā'a-LLāh. Asalaamu aleikum.*