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Thursday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [The Energy in Love, Trust and Submission Brings Change in Character](#)

DVD title: Purifying the Heart and Having the Best of Conduct

The globe is angry. The world is angry, and we see all this terrible misery that is going on in the world now. You are only one or two degrees of separation from knowing people, and it may get closer than that. So make your *du'ā* very strong. Be pious people. Do what Allah (swt) has asked you to do; and follow the way of the Prophet (sal). Don't go in deviant ways. Differentiate between custom and the Haqq of Allah. When I say "custom," I mean conditioning also. We think we can get away with this or that, delay this prayer or that prayer, or whatever. There is an *adab* to everything.

This path is also called *at-tazkiyatu-l-qalb*, the purification of the heart—purification from the filth, from the offal of the injustices, from what is unlawful, from what is excessive and immoral, and causes such misery and disharmony in the world. Conversely, it is a path of beautification and illumination of the heart by harmony. It is *hasana* and order, balance and ethic, and good behavior. The people who know, our predecessors, those who have known, say that Tasawwuf/ Sufism is leaving bad manners, bad conduct, bad character, and immoral acts, and entering good character, good manners, and moral and ethical things. It is a journey. Our master, the Prophet Muhammed (sal), whom Allah said of in the Qur'an, "**Truly you are blessed with the best of conduct.**" Allah was addressing his 'aqīda.

*Abu Hurayra said, "Allah does not beautify His servant's character, and consequently his exterior being, to make him taste the hellfire." The Messenger of Allah (sal) himself turned to Abu Hurayra and said, "O Abu Hurayra, what*

*is enough for you is the good conduct.” And he said, “Ya Rasulallah, what is good conduct?” Rasulallah (sal) said, “Not to abandon the one who has abandoned you, to forgive the one who has tyrannized you, and to feed the one who has made you go hungry.”*

This is a very hard lesson to learn. Anas Ibn Malik (ra) reported in a *hadith* that the Prophet (sal) said, **“He who has good character has obtained the best of this world, and the best of the Hereafter.”** And by the same authority, he also reported that Rasulallah (sal) said, **“The good servant with beautiful behavior reaches the highest degrees and the highest honor in the Hereafter. The one who has bad manners falls to the lowest pit of Jahannam.”** There are many, many of these *hadith*. Hazrat Ma'mun reported that the Prophet (sal) said, **“Allah considers no sin worse than bad character and behavior, because the one who behaves badly, before he finishes one sin, he starts another sin.”** Hazrati Aisha (ra) reported that Nebi Muhammed (sal) said, **“Every sin has a corresponding repentance. Not so for bad conduct, because the misbehaving one does a worse sin before he can repent of the previous one.”**

We see how true this is, in the world we live in. Again, Ibn Abbas (ra) reported that the Messenger of Allah (sal) said, **“Good behavior dissolves one’s errors as water melts ice. Bad character spoils good deeds as vinegar spoils honey.”** What is this process we are a part of, this thing we call life? We have been blessed to have a *tarīqah*, a path, teachings that have come for centuries. Though our neighbors have the teachings of the Injīl, those were not passed down one by one, verified. There is no proof. They don’t have the same tradition, but they have some good teachings, as does the Torah. We have something very unique and very special. The point is to cleanse our hearts, and to revive hearts that have nearly died. We have a defibrillator. You defibrillate the dead heart. That’s our most important *amal*/work. It is our most important duty on this path, because the heart is the ruler in the realm of our beingness, our *wudūd*/love.

If our heart is all right, the rest of our being obeys, unconditionally, the orders of the heart, just like a good servant obeys what the king tells him or her to do. The Prophet (sal) said, ***“Be aware that there is a piece of flesh in the body, that when it is proper and in order, your whole being is proper and in order. When it is spoiled, your whole being is spoiled. Know that piece of flesh is your heart.”*** We know that people who have no control over their heart have no heart. They are like zombies, committing heinous acts, like the people in Kyrgyzstan. I think we can say that the first and most important step in reviving the ailing heart is *adab*, because good behavior and character are qualities through which all one’s being manifests its best attributes.

*Alhamdulillah*, it is possible to educate and to change one’s conduct and character. That’s what all the religious rites, practices, canons, teachings, prescriptions and proscriptions are for. They are a means to that purpose of character development. To be successful in everything else in life is according to your ability and effort. If you want to be a successful restauranter, or doctor...it has to be according to your ability and effort. To be successful is the result of ability and effort, talent and nature. Of course, all this is as Allah wills it, because all this is Allah. Perhaps the greatest gift Allah has bestowed upon all humankind is that *irāda*, the will through which we can make choices, where we can choose to do what is right and true, receive the blessing and harmony by Allah’s will, letting Allah’s will guide us.

Choosing to revolt against that would be like cursing your mother who gave you birth. Showing even frustration and angst over that would be an insult. It is like going to someone’s house for dinner, being anxious and saying to them, “When are you going to serve us dinner? When are you going to serve us dinner? I’m hungry!” Everyone else wants to hide under the table, so embarrassed they are by that behavior. The source of real education lies in the adjustment of one’s *adab*, behavior, and character. It is indeed

the force and energy Allah (swt) has bestowed upon each of us, in different quantities, through different aspects and qualities, according to our *qadr*.

There is energy in the gifts Allah has given us. There is energy in compassion and love and trust. We know there is energy in anger and fear. There is energy in love, in trust, in submission. Collect that energy, because that energy will bring about change in character, and deepening of faith. There is also energy in the intellect and understanding. We attribute more to that: "I have to understand this!" The capacity of that energy is much less than the capacity of the energy of love and submission. With love and submission, understanding comes along. Reasoning's energy is capable of dealing with the affairs of the mind. But there is not enough energy or force in that to transform the character. You need the energy of the heart.

Again, the Prophet (sal) said, "***There is good in the middle.***" In the middle of intellectual energy is *hikma*/wisdom. In the middle or median is the ability to discriminate good from bad, right from wrong, and true from false. But if you overindulge the mind, the intellect, then it results in discussion upon discussion, argument upon argument, opinion upon opinion, and confusion. Philosophy might be interesting, but it drains you. For example, to try to interpret the allegoric or symbolic aspects of the Qur'an, or to try to put forward explanations of the secrets of your destiny or the *dhat*/essence: this is outside the realm of the intellect. We can't do it. Yet, so many people put out a lot of energy to understand the essence of Allah. Allah tells us you cannot understand. That capacity for intellect is to be used for something else, not to be used here.

When we misuse the capability of reason to the extreme, then it leads to fantasy. It leads to illusion where a person cannot discriminate between what is real and what is not real anymore. A person cannot discriminate between what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong. It leads us in a diametrically opposed direction from which this

path and all these faculties are meant to take us. It leads us to wrong actions and bad behaviors. It leads us to bad character, and unethical and immoral activity. If you go to a prison with really bad criminals (not political prisoners), every one of them will try to convince you, with reason, what happened and how it happened and why it happened and how they were forced to do this or that. It shows you a misuse of reason. It can be used for that, but love cannot be used for that. Good adab cannot be used for that.

There is no room in good character or good ethical and moral behavior for that. We have to cleanse the heart of those things that would cast a shadow. We also have an emotional capability, *gadhab*. That's a Farsi word meaning emotional faculty or energy. It's the energy that Allah (swt) has bestowed upon every human being to reject and fight and free themselves from what is ugly, scary, repulsive and harmful. The middle or median is taking this emotional energy and using it in a way to subdue or attack what is harmful to us, to do battle with those things that are ugly in us. But again, if you take this capability to resist what is ugly, negative, and repulsive, and you exaggerate it, then it distorts your purpose and your goal. A person who takes the quality of these emotional faculties Allah has bestowed upon us, and we exaggerate our emotions—if when we become angry and we argue, or we can become fearful and cowardly—we fall into this sickness of extremism, over-reaction. That hinders you to reach the goal that Allah has created for you.

Look in the Muslim community today at all the over-reaction to things. Yes, it's terrible to portray the Prophet Muhammed (sal). It's *haram*, and punishable for Muslim to do it. But the overreaction to it destroys Islam itself. It makes people abhor Islam, and think that the Muslims are over sensitive, that they have no sense of irony. It's not that you should accept it, but you should also not threaten to kill people because they drew a cartoon. Do you know why? Listen to the poetry that took place between Kuwait and Iraq in the first war. Listen to the insults and humiliations that are thrown at one another. It's an energy that moves things toward things that are beautiful and pleasing, things that

benefit us and take us to the center, to where the doorway is to goodness and rightness and fulfilling of what is non-excessive, what is balanced.

Any excess robs us of our conscience. It robs us of our sense of humility and shame. When people, as we see in the world around us today, for money or power or just out of anger, become excessive with this energy I'm discussing, the energy that could be used for coming to *mīzān*/balance, then not only do people become shameless and lack humility, but they go to extremes of repulsive behavior. They do only what please their ego. They have no discrimination, no consideration for other people. That one extreme leads to another and another until all desires are gone. There is no way that the person can even find any pleasure in anything because they have lost any sense of their own humanness. They go on continuing to commit heinous crimes against humanity, totally destructive. This is really the razor's edge. We see in the world today many people moving towards this razor's edge. There is no returning from that state. Allah calls that **“those who cannot be guided.”** There can be no guidance for those people.

But if these three faculties I have described are working in harmony, not in excess, not in selfishness, then the character of the human being changes. A human being becomes honest and upright, has good character and good conduct. And automatically, the doorway of their compassion, mercy, love and understanding, their tolerance, patience and perseverance, kindness and justice—all those doorways just open. The character of the human being is seen to be a reflection of the reality that is Allah.

I used to say many years ago: there is physical energy, mental energy, intellectual energy, sexual energy, and they are different. When one starts to steal from another, everything gets unbalanced. We know this is true. If you have argument after argument, all your emotional energy is gone. Now you are angry and upset at something, so you steal from your intellectual energy. You deplete your storehouse of those energies. Then you get physically involved. A person gets upset with someone emotionally, and they reverse it.

They disagree with the person intellectually. Or a person disagrees with them intellectually, and they get emotionally upset. The person still doesn't pay attention to them, so now they get physically upset. You are stealing from these different sources of energy that Allah (swt) has given us to use.

If we learn how to see these different faculties in us, we see how orderly or disorderly we are in confronting things. If we are unable to see it in ourselves, then we should see it in other people. We should take lessons from others. Who of us easily takes criticism? Who among us takes suggestions about our wrong actions or our excesses? Not many. If we can't see it in ourselves or others, how can we change? Even if an enemy accuses you of something, you should take it seriously. Imam al Ghazali tells the story: someone accuses you of something and you know you didn't do it. He says, perhaps the accusation is for something else you did, but that person didn't see. Their accusation is to remind you to think, "I didn't do this, but I did do something else that person didn't know about. I'll take that as the reason for my repentance." Or perhaps, a person is accusing of something you haven't done, and by thinking about it, you won't do an act that would be bad in the future. Or perhaps the person is criticizing you for something you did do, and they are drawing it to your attention.

So, it could be something from the past, something that might happen in the future, or something that actually happened. You have to take criticism seriously. Don't worry about the motive; learn from it. The motive of the person who criticizes you may not be good, but the fact that it came to you might be enough for you to reflect upon something, like *muhasabat*. This is the most important. That's how change comes about. When we make that kind of reflection, we see, "Ah, this was like a sickness in me, an illness that I had. I had the illness of ignorance or arrogance, or being too ambitious. Now I can change that. I have to change my life and myself. It's hard, but if I'm ashamed of something, I shouldn't make any excess about shame either. I don't want make excuses in order to pity myself."

[It is important] to be able to make *muhasabat* in private, as Allah says: “**Weigh your actions before they become a weight upon you.**” What does that mean? It means do it in private before it becomes public. Seize the moment. Every day, weigh your actions. Otherwise, they will accumulate. When they accumulate, they will be seen, because they will break you. What’s the other phrase? “**Account for yourself before you are accounted for.**” That is obvious: if you don’t do it, externally it will be done. It’s not bad to do things your ego dislikes. If you are stingy, go out and spend money on something good.

Among the Darqawī and the Shadhilī, they always talk about abasement, abasing oneself. If you are overly comfortable in the material things of the world, divest yourself of them, and (they would say) “terrorize” your sense of security until you find *mīzān*/harmony, balance. If you are fearful, then maybe you should put yourself in some danger, they would say. But we don’t have to go to such extremes. We can, every day, look at our life, our work, our responsibilities, our duties, and find something that our ego would prefer that we do, and do the opposite. If we are a coward, we don’t have to go seek out a war. If we are rich, we don’t have to make ourselves poor. If we have a crisis in faith, we don’t have to pick up another faith or reject faith. Remember, the sickness is caused by the opposite.

Also from the homeopathic point of view, *similia similibus curenter*, which is really a statement of balance. Cure with the like. That would make sense. Fear would be cured by putting yourself in a fearful circumstance. This is called what? *Mujahada*, struggling with oneself. The principle of *mujahada* is that you go against the wish and the will of your ego, to go against your habits, to force yourself to obey Allah (swt) by pushing yourself to do what you know you are being asked to do, not for its benefit but for the benefit of your soul. Increase your devotion, increase your worship, increase your fasting,

increase your prayer, increase your meditation, increase your *tafakkur*, your contemplation.

This *jihad* with the enemy of the ego is really won by reflection and action—not just action, but reflection, contemplation, *ihsan*. *Ihsan*, the Archangel Jibreel (as) said, is a gift of Allah that allows you to pray to Him as though you see Him. And if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you. Contemplation is something that is active, not passive. That kind of contemplation—the willingness to take the moment and contemplate and change the behavior, to repent, to seek out forgiveness, to change the behavior—that contemplation becomes the fertile ground for good action. It becomes fertile ground for cleansing your heart. It becomes the place upon which you can stand and you can account for yourself; otherwise, you become less and less of a human being.

I will end with a story: there was a rich man. He had a beautiful house and he had lots of land and his most beloved possession was his prize bull. He loved it so much that he had it staked out in the front yard so that he could watch it, and everybody going by could see this beautiful bull. Everyday, he would stake it out in the front yard. He had a wife, who was also beautiful, but she was also very vain. Her favorite possession was a mirror, a full length mirror. She put this mirror just at the entrance of the house so that when she came in and out of the house, she would see herself and see how beautiful she was.

One day the husband had to leave the house and go on business. He had not done this in many, many years, but he was forced to go. He told his wife that he was going to be gone for three or four days, and she should take very good care of the bull. “Watch out. Don’t forget to take care of the bull.” One day, she was in a rush and came into the house and forgot to close the front door. The bull wandering around, staked on the ground, saw himself in the mirror. Thinking that it was another bull, he pulled at the stake in the ground, and pulled at the stake in the ground, and pulled at the stake in the ground. But it was too tight. He could not break it. But he was angry, because of this other bull.

Just then, a hand came out of the ground and loosened the stake. After a little movement, the bull pulled it free, and charged his enemy, crashing through the house and smashing the mirror. The wife, who was upstairs, heard the noise and came running down the stairs. Seeing her beloved mirror in pieces, she got angry, she grabbed her husband's gun, and shot the bull and killed it. Two days later, the husband returns. He sees his bull is missing. He hears from his wife what happened. He becomes so angry that without thinking, he kills his wife. Of course, when the brothers of the wife found out that the wife was killed by the husband, they came and killed the husband. That started a blood feud that lasted for generations.

Eventually, there was a man who was born and raised and had some knowledge. He saw that this feud was a senseless, ridiculous act of escalated bad character and bad behavior. He called the two families together with the intention of patching things up, ending this stupid violence that had been going on for generations. He said, "Don't you know this is the work of Shaytan? This is Shaytan's work. This is Shaytan's hand." No sooner had he uttered these words, then there was a clap of thunder and a puff of smoke and Shaytan appears. Shaytan says, "I am very sorry, but I take offense at these words. Don't blame me. All I did was move the stake. You all did the rest."

All these people do is call on the other people. *Asalaam Aleikum.*