

June 26, 2010

Saturday



Title: The Power of Good Behavior and Adab

DVD title: Principles of Good Behavior (Akhlaq, Adab and Character)
Given to us at Birth, Taught by the Prophet (saws)

Dinner blessing: O Allah, thank You for the blessings of the work and for the wonderful company. We ask You, Allah (swt), to send Your Shifat to all the members of our community who are ill, and for those around the world who are suffering. We ask You, Allah, to bring humility into the hearts and minds of people as they look at this earth and work on it. O Allah, lift the burden off the poor people who are suffering from the greed of the oil companies. O Allah, renew us, renew our energy as individuals, and give us renewable energy in the future. O Allah (swt), there are many young people coming. We ask You to give them health, safety, and security while they are here and to open their hearts and minds to their capability, creativity, and possibilities. *Amin, Amin, Amin.*

Suhbat: Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. I'm going to continue with the talk on *akhlaq* and *adab*. In a *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammed (sal), it says, **“On the Day of Reckoning, good morals, behavior and character are the first qualities that will be put on the scale of judgment. Good behavior will weigh more than any of your deeds, and certainly the ones who have the best deeds will enter Paradise.”** Those who came before us have said that *“those whose lives are filled with good behavior, when they are meeting their Lord after having been placed in the tomb, will find their tomb lighted, and inhabited by beings with beautiful faces, smiling and speaking softly, and smelling of misk. The deceased will ask them who they are, and they will answer, ‘We are your kindness, your gentleness, your compassion, and your generosity. You made us a part of*

you when you lived, and we were sent here to keep you company until the Day of Judgment, when we will be your witness and accompany you to Paradise.’’

So our good behavior and *adab* is commended by Allah in Qur’an, and given to us in the example of Prophet Muhammed (sal), who said himself was blessed with the best of character. Not only will this open the gates of Paradise in the Hereafter, but will turn the world of trial into a garden of peace and bliss. Good *akhlaq*, good behavior and character, is not something new you have to learn and apply to your life. It is given to us at birth. Allah (swt) created us in the best of His creation, and in the image of His Beneficence and Mercy. Allah (swt) taught the Prophet Muhammed, who was the most perfect of all this in all His Attributes, how to manifest those attributes. So it’s just a matter of remembering them in ourselves and bringing them to the surface. It’s not that one has to learn them or acquire them somewhere else.

It doesn’t harm us to go over what the fundamentals of good behavior and good *adab* are according to Islam and Sufic teachers. The first one that is usually mentioned is not to harm any created being, nor wish that they are harmed to the extent of suffering, or oppressing anyone or being tyrannical. It is still not wishing revenge or punishment on a person who is oppressing you. That’s usually the first. The second principle is not to look at the faults of anyone or wish to know their secrets. If by chance you come to know the secret or the fault of someone, it is important not to divulge it to anyone. One of the best signs and indicators of good character is of course conscience. To have shame in front of Allah (swt), and indeed in front of other human beings, is an indication of good conscience. It has been said that *“the one who is without shame has neither faith nor do they have scruples (values). Therefore they are able to do the worst, and worse still, keep repeating it over and over again.”*

Another principle of good *adab* and *akhlaq* is to keep one’s tongue in control. The tongue is also the remedy for most spiritual illnesses. You make *du’ā* or someone gives

you a kind word. You are feeling down and depressed, and someone speaks to you kindly and lovingly or encouragingly. Therefore, the tongue should be safe for those kinds of words. We know the tongue can also spread the worst poison, too. We have seen historically in the world we live in that the poison that comes off a person's tongue can destroy millions of people. It can cause great catastrophe in this world. Meaningless words have no value, and only make a lot of noise. So this is also an important principle. By the same token, we shouldn't listen to things that are negative, either, and should not engage in meaningless listening.

When we speak, we should speak clearly and not ambiguously, because ambiguity causes confusion and misunderstanding. We should speak the truth, but if we know it will not be understood and hurt someone, we have to understand the difference between honesty and the truth. But we cannot deny what the truth is. One of the greatest attributes of Allah is al-Haqq, the Truthful. Even when the truth is told, if it is told harshly, will hurt someone. All these attributes are connected. Sometimes the truth is bitter, so you have to coat it with sugar by saying it with a sweet tongue. Whatever we say, we should say for the sake of Allah (swt) and not for our own benefit.

Again, along with that, is *suhbat*, an example we have so many times a week, because we should have our friends for the sake of Allah. It is like journeying on a ship. This life is a voyage. You are going to be on the ship hopefully a long time with the same people. Interestingly enough, it is a round trip journey from Allah to Allah. This journey is not an easy journey. It is full of changes in weather and difficulty, if it's a ship—high waves, icebergs and cyclones. It's dangerous. Not only that, it's a big ship, so we can't take this journey alone. It is also not a journey you can take just to give yourself pleasure, or to profit from it. Because on this path, you realize that all the clever things you've said will fade, and even your good looks will go away. (Though some of us will stay young and beautiful forever, of course!)

As we get older, we get more and more tired, so our friendship and love for one another has to be based on something more than superficial. Our friendship is dependent on all of these things I have just mentioned, but when you are traveling on this road, you need to have companionship and good friends. The journey needs to be *fi sabīli-Llāh*. On this path of life, on this journey, you will make promises, especially if you are a Sufi. You will give *bai'at*, and you must keep those promises; your word is your bond. Of course, we have to eat and drink, earn a living and put clothes on our backs. We have to build a house, and hopefully do it all in a lawful way. There will be enemies, and temptations along the way. We have to protect ourselves.

Some of us believe, myself included for many years, that you could protect yourself through anger, or being aggressive, or being ultimately defensive. But the only way to really protect yourself on this journey is to be a kind, gentle, and reasonable human being. This is also the *adab* of the journey. Remember, if you or I follow this path as described, the only ones who will consider you an enemy are your enemies. You won't consider anyone an enemy. That I can guarantee you is very difficult. Most important, I think, more important than protecting your property or your physical body, is to protect your nobility, your dignity, and your honor against temptations, against trials and against enemies. If that means you lose what you own, or you suffer some pain or make some sacrifice, so be it. That's the price.

Our predecessors in the Naqshband line used to say that one of the clearest signs of good ethic and character is you don't sell your religion or your faith for the sake of the benefits of this world. Don't expect anything. Don't expect any payment for teaching, working, expending time or any kind of effort for the sake of Allah. Instead of expecting payment (payment meaning reward) for teaching, praying or reciting Qur'an, it is better for you to do worldly things than to expect payment for the spiritual things. Allah says, "**Do not exchange My words for the benefits of this world.**" There are many *imams* and pseudo-*shaykhs*, many members of the so-called *ulema* who exchange his words for the

benefits of the world. So much of the whole hierarchy of *mullahs* in Iran do that. We can look anywhere and see in this country too that it is true.

It's good to show respect for your elders. For those who are old, show love and compassion and mercy to them. Care for the elderly and care for the young. Help the needy; feed the hungry; clothe those who are naked, and offer good advice to those who are misguided or misled. Respect and care for those who are poor and in need, for the children and mothers, and for those who are deprived of a complete and full physical normality. The Prophet Muhammed (sal) used to say, "***O Lord, make me live humbly, and make me die humbly, and make me rise on the last Day of Judgment among those who are humble.***" These and other similar axioms about *adab* are not just suggestions; they are obligations. They are a means for one who loves Allah or who fears Allah, who seeks His approval or fears His disapproval. The life in this world is not for human beings to move through, as if you were an animal wearing camouflage to make you look human. It is for us to be human.

In the Qur'an, Allah says, "**O the ones who believe! Follow the ordinances of Allah and save yourselves and your family by running away from what Allah forbids, and forbidding the ones whom you love from that.**" For those of us who consider ourselves of Tasawwuf or Sufis, then there is more *adab* we have to follow; especially when it comes to our relationship with one another and our relationship with our *shaykh*. There are many statements on that which I don't like to talk about; you can read about them. When you should sit and when you shouldn't sit. What you should wear and not wear. How you emulate and don't emulate. There are many, many guidelines. But always seek the blessings of one's *shaykh*, ask the blessings with sincerity, not just out of form. After you've made up your mind, do you question the *shaykh*. Ask the question as if you didn't make up your mind yet. It's better not to make up your mind until you take guidance.

There was once an old woman at the time of Ghaus Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani (ra). Her livelihood was to spin thread. Every day she would take her thread to the market place, and live on the money she made from it. One day, she met the Shaykh on the way to the market. He said, "Let me sell your thread for you today, for a better price than you normally get." So she respected the Shaykh, and gave him the bundle of thread. He took it and threw it up in the air, and a bird grabbed it and flew off with it. The woman demanded from the Shaykh her money. "That's my livelihood!" He said he couldn't pay immediately, because the thread hadn't reached its client yet. Desperate, the woman left.

Miles away from the city, a very bad storm was raging at sea. The wind had torn the sails of a ship, which was heading for a reef. The captain said, "If we had strong thread, we could repair the sails and save ourselves!" But the ship had very little cargo and no thread. There was a Qadri dervish on board, a mureed of Abdul Qadir Jilani, who remembered to take refuge in his Shaykh. He made du'ā and asked his Shaykh for help. Of course in a moment, the bird came and dropped the bundle of thread, which they used to repair the sails. It allowed them to return to the port. The merchants promised to reward Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani with a hundred pieces of gold for this madad. The Shaykh took the money and sent it to the woman. Of course the money was a thousand times what she would have made from selling the thread.

So we say the reward is a thousand times. We have to remember. The Shaykh's motive was very good. We have to remember that the heart of the *shaykh* is like the Ka'ba. But they don't own it. The owner of the Ka'ba owns the heart that is like the Ka'ba. Some people call it the Ka'ba *Halili*, because it is built of stone and mortar. The Ka'ba of the heart is called the Ka'ba *Jalali*, because it contains love. Allah tells people, if you visit the Ka'ba your body is safe from the fires of hell. But the people who enter the Ka'ba of the heart save both their bodies and their souls from the fire. The Ka'ba of the heart is a

lot closer than the Ka'ba of Mecca for us. It doesn't cost as much to go there. It's not as hot! There is not as big a crowd. In your heart, there is only you and Allah. Allah (swt) says, "When My servants ask [about] Me, tell them I am very close to them." You find Allah in the heart of the believer.

The love and respect we have for our *shaykh*, our *shuyukh*, and for the Prophet Muhammed (sal) is much better than concern and love for your own salvation, or your own mental peace, or your own progress and mental advancement—much better. That love and respect is what will lift the barrier between us and Allah. It will rend the veil that makes us blind to what is near us, within us, and around us. It is also the love of the Ahl al Bayt, not just love of the Prophet Muhammed (sal). It is the love of his wives, his children, his grandchildren. It's the same mentality. If the Prophet had a cat, you should love the Prophet's cat. If he had a dog, you'd love the Prophet's dog. If he had a frog, you should love his frog.

Remember in the story of the people of the cave, there was a dog with them. There was the ram of Hazrat Ishmael (as), the ant of Hazrat Suleyman (as), the whale of Hazrat Yunus (as), the calf of Hazrat Musa (as), and the camel of Prophet Muhammed (sal). The people who know say that Allah (swt) is going to place all these animals in paradise also. Thank God there was no prophet who had as his animal a tick or a chigger, because we don't want to be in Paradise with them. If we love one another, and our *shuyukh*, and allow ourselves to love who they love, then we are safe. Because our character and our behavior, and our love will all come together within our own self. But if we don't care for our teacher, that's our ego. If we don't care for our brothers and sisters, that's our ego, our *nafs ammāra*.

At the same time, we shouldn't expect anything in return. Whatever comes toward us, we should offer it back to Allah, to the *awliya*. If we follow these simple guidelines, not only will we be more at peace, but we will have *hikma*. We will have wisdom. We will

have known the pathway, and be able to redirect it, construct it, and help others along the way. There are many people who don't practice hardly anything. There are many people who call themselves by name, but they have no knowledge of what that name means. There is an arrogance that most people have when they think they can change the rules and prescriptions given by Allah, because "it's uncomfortable for me to follow it this way or that way." There is always provision/*rizq*. Allah will always provide provision for us. If we follow these guidelines and receive the wisdom that comes from them, then, *alhamdulillah*, I guess you could say we have matured on the path. Then we all of a sudden one day wake up and realize what this path is about.

I guarantee you, when you come to that conclusion, one aspect you will realize is it is not what you expected. This relationship we have as student and teacher, the relationship you have to your brothers and sisters as confidantes and friends, is the deepest relationship. It takes a contract and it takes real sincerity. It's like a spiritual marriage. It comes through the heart of the *shaykh* and the *awliya*, and is transmitted as all teachings are, through the tongue, through the transmission, through the heart to the heart, and through the thoughts. When your heart becomes mature, you will find that then it has an ear that listens only to the channel called "dervish channel." It tunes in only to the satellite tv program "dervish tv."

The children who are born of the people of Tasawwuf (the sincere believers whether they call themselves Sufis or not), their hearts are already predisposed toward Tasawwuf, toward Islam. It will be harder for their heart to become diseased with egotism, arrogance, and lack of humility. Or if they become slightly arrogant when they are growing up, they are nearer to saving themselves. They will come to the conclusion much more easily of what they have lost. It is the same for any of us on the path if we persevere and stand back. Allah (swt) will answer every question we have and provide for every need we have. To engage in that dialogue with the *awliya* is very important. It can be in dialogue with the tongue, in patience, or dialogue with the heart. We should

learn not to resist the heart that is filling up, and not to fear the heart that thinks in terms of such high spiritual character and value, *alhamdulillah*.

Pray that Allah has mercy on us (which we know He has), is compassionate toward us, (which we know Allah is). But also know that Allah is not limited by any kind of container we have. Therefore we pray to Allah that our hearts remain open, our tongues follow what is good, that we listen closely to what is being said to us, that we serve and sacrifice, and give of ourselves—whatever we have, more and more—until we become totally free of the temptations of the world. I don't mean absolutely and totally, but virtually free. You will know that because certain qualities come forward in such a person—qualities of generosity, faith, friendship, encouragement. This is the company you find yourself in, like you find yourself in the company of one another.

How did we get here, with all the mistakes and things we could have done better? I would say at least 80% of you like each other. We won't mention any names. How do you get to that point? How does it come about? You know the answer; I gave it today. You see the power of *suhbat* and *adab*, of love and self sacrifice, of the power of not being greedy, the power of being frugal and planning things out well. You see it all, right in front of you. But do you see it? This is all *adab*. *This is akhlaq*. How do we pass it on to our children, so they are not immunized to it from the world? *Inshā'a-llāh*, we get better at it. *Asalaamu aleikum*.