

July 15, 2010

Thursday



Title: [The Month of Shaban: Continuous Muraqabah](#)

DVD title: Continuous Muraqabah: Defined in the Hadith of Jibreel
Enduring the Travel toward Allah

I want to go back to the subject of *muraqabah* again, *inshā'a-llāh*. Of course, we understand that *muraqabah* is knowing that Allah is watching over us. In Suratu-l-Baqarah, Allah says, “**Know that Allah knows what is in your mind, so fear Him.** And, **Know that Allah knows what is within yourself, so beware. And know that Allah is Ever-Forgiving and Forbearing.**” (2:235) In this case, we should use the English words ‘be aware.’ ‘Be aware of Allah,’ not ‘fear Allah,’ – the [meaning] is to be aware. Know that Allah knows what is in your mind, so be aware. Of course, you understand why this is a subject of *muraqabah*. Act as if you are seeing Allah, and if you are not seeing Allah, know that Allah is seeing you, says the Hadith of Jibreel—be aware, know.

Something else is told to us about *muraqabah* here. In Suratu-l-Ahzab, it says, “**And Allah is the watcher over all things.**” (33:52) One time? Continuously. *Raqib, muraqabah. Muraqabah* is not something you do at night, or in the morning after *fajr*. We say meditation for *muraqabah*, but this is our shortspeak. Just like we say Allah, but we don’t say all the 99 Names of Allah. But we mean ‘Allahu Akbar, Allah is greater’ than that; or there are the thousand Names of Allah, which Shaykh Nooruddeen is working on. When we think of *muraqabah*, we have to think of continuous *muraqabah, raqiba*. “**He is the watcher over all things**”—continuously, constantly. Again, there is another indication in Suratu-l-Hadid, where He is talking about the authority of Allah (swt) and reveals, “**He is with you wherever you are, and Allah is the Seer over everything.**”

In the sense, Allah is static and present and we are always moving in that Divine Presence: *hādirī, nādirī, shāhidī*. In the Hadith Jibreel, when he asked the Prophet about *ihsan*, what is he asking about? Sometimes *ihsan* is translated as Tasawwuf. Why? He's asking about goodness and excellence. The Prophet (sal) says, "***Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him. But since we do not see Him, we should know that He sees us***" all the time. The meaning of this *hadith* is, in itself, a definition of *muraqabah*. *Muraqabah* is dynamic. That's the message I want to give you tonight: *muraqabah* is not a practice only; it is dynamic. *Muraqabah* is something one inspires to all the time. I'm going into this because it is Sha'bān and Ramadān.

What is it about, then? We know to do anything all the time, if I said "run all the time," what would you have to have? If I say, "Swim the length of the Atlantic ocean," what would you have to have? If I said, "Keep eating," like 'Man vs. Food' on the television, what would you have to have (other than you would be crazy)? You'd have to have incredible endurance and stamina. You say, "Sit and listen to Shaykh Rashid for 35 years." You have to have endurance. You live in this community – you have to have endurance. What is endurance? You have to endure something. Allah says says, "**I do not place any burden on you that you cannot carry.**" It implies that we can endure.

So there is the endurance of the knowledge/'ilm of the *abdallah* and the conviction the *abdallah* has, and certainty that Allah (swt) is watching over both our internal and external affairs, because Allah is present. It is watching, not like with binoculars or a detective staked out, trying to find something wrong, but like how an astronomer watches the sky. They don't know exactly what they are looking for, but they are watching, seeing what is happening. To have the knowledge and the *yaqin* (certainty) that Allah is present, watching is *muraqabah*. We say, "I'm going to sit in *muraqabah* and do my practices." It is to develop the certainty, the knowledge, the *basira* (insight), the sureness that you are in the presence of the Divine.

It's not like Allah has a thousand or a million eyes that are watching—there are 4 billion people on the earth, so Allah has 4 billion eyes. Every time one is born He gets another eye, and every time someone dies He loses an eye. There are people who believe silly things like that. It's what I have said so many times over the years. You are sitting here, and everything is fine, but if one little hair on your arm, or your beard (for the men), or your eyelash (for the ladies) gets out of place, your whole body knows it. Your body is watching itself all the time, but you don't know it until it sees something. You don't know it. To have that certainty, that's *muraqabah*. We say we are going to sit in *muraqabah*, or I want to teach you about *muraqabah*. But always, if you go over these teachings for the last 40 years of my talking, you'll find if we talk about a practice it is always circled by meaning and explanation. The fruit of the knowledge of the servant/*abdallah* is that Allah is his or her Watcher, overseeing him or her, hearing what is being said, observing the deeds at all times.

Why this word 'abd? Why servant? Why slave? Just think how we use the word servant in English or in your own language. The servant is someone who is supposed to be watching what the needs of the master or mistress are. The cup is empty; fill it. There are no more grapes in the bowl; put some other fruit in it. There are no napkins, put them out. Then you are watching. You are cooking in the kitchen, and you make your dish. What are they saying about it? You are sitting at the table with your own family, "Mmmm, Mommy, that's really good. Oh, I love that!" And you feel good—*hasana*/beautiful. It's wonderful. The servant is happy—the servant is the mother in this role. The mother cooks the meal; the husband and family eat it. "Mmmm, Mama, this is really good." You feel good, because this is a *alam*/symbol of how Allah feels, if we want to use terminology like that. Or [it is a symbol of] what is beautiful. That's why we call that person a servant.

The servant wants to know the master or mistress is happy. The mother is a servant of the children. She wants to know if her children are happy, if her husband is happy. If the husband is the cook, he wants to know his wife likes the food. Or “Do you like the paint job?” “It’s very nice.” “Do you like what I did in the garden?” “Beautiful!” In other words, all the time we are doing something. When we say Allah is present, we mean the Attributes of Allah are always present. Those values, those Attributes of Allah are always present. When we see and note them, when we notice the Jemal and Jelal of Allah (swt), when we notice the Rahman and Rahīm, when we notice the Adl, these attributes are present. You won’t notice things that are not there. Sitting in this room, I don’t see Canis Major, the constellation. I am looking up to the sky but there is a roof over my head. I know it is there, but I can’t see it. I go outside, I can see it.

These attributes and qualities are here with us all the time. That’s why we endure in our search for knowledge and our life. It is not endurance like swimming the ocean, but we sustain. Just like you are watching – do they like the food? You are overseeing the cooking in the kitchen, and you hearing what they are saying, that’s one thing. Then you are watching the children, how are they acting? They are acting very well. They helped a lady across the street. They helped a neighbor do something. You are observing the deeds. Why? Because you are present. You cannot observe something you cannot see.

Al-Junayd said, *The one firm in muraqabah fears the waste of even one moment for other than his Rabb (Lord)*. Dhul Nun said, *“The sign of muraqabah is to favor what Allah (swt) has sent down (the Qur’an); to glorify what Allah has glorified, and to despise what Allah (swt) despises.”* There is a formula. That’s a recipe for a very tasty spiritual dish. Ibrahim al-Khawwas (ra) said, *“Muraqabah is the sincerity of both the internal and the external to Allah.”* It has been said that *the best man can cling to on the road to Allah is muhasabat (reckoning of the self); muraqabah, and consciousness of one’s character*” – watching over one’s character; consciousness of your character, *akhlaq*.

I think that most scholars and most *shaykhs* unanimously agree that having *muraqabah* for Allah (swt) in one's hidden thoughts, deep inside of you is the means through which it manifests in your actions, your behavior and your *iman*, your trust, your certainty, your knowledge. Whoever has *muraqabah* for Allah in secret, internally, Allah will preserve that person, their actions and behavior, internally and externally. There is a wonderful definition in *muraqabah* that I came across, "*Muraqabah of Allah is being on the way to Him at all times with overwhelming glorification, inciting nearness, and urging joy.*" It is attributing the beauty to Allah, attributing your consciousness to Allah. Not, "I don't have time to do this or that. I was rushed today. I'm very tired today. I did too much today." Or we say, "Allah made me angry. Allah made me this or that." Where does that come from? You don't say that. You say, "Don't worry; yes, I have time to do that." Or "It will work out." "Yes, it was a busy day." I got three phone calls in a row saying, "Ya Shaykh, I'm sorry to bother you, do you have a couple of minutes." I said, "Well, I have at least 30 seconds." Do you know how long that 30 seconds lasted? Five minutes. I said 30 seconds as a signal that I didn't have a lot of time, but I listened for at least 5 minutes.

An old student came by today. She said, "I'm so busy with the children, school, and work and all this." I said, "Don't cheat yourself. I have told people for 40 years, you can create time, just have the intention." Don't let the *muraqabah* go. Don't think you can sit and open Qur'an and recite it, and somehow you will get the maximum points for doing that. You have to study. Allah (swt) doesn't care how many times you put your head down on the ground. It's the attitude with which you put your head down on the ground. Anybody can bend over and put their head on the ground. This overwhelming glorification means to have your heart filled with remembrance. When you achieve even a little bit of that state, when it becomes a gift to you by Allah, just a moment of a hal—not a *maqam*—do you know what happens? You become disinclined to glorify or be attached to anything other, or pay attention to anything other than what reflects the Divine to you.

That's a state we should aspire to, to remember Allah. To remember or be with Allah means to be aware that Allah is with you, around you in a very intimate, loving relationship. Any love that is not associated with the source of that love distances you from the source of that love. You look at a beautiful baby, or a mother who has the baby in her arms for the first time, or even a father, [and you see the love]. I've never either delivered a baby (and I've delivered 5-6 babies) or had one of my babies in my arms when I didn't weep and thank Allah for it. I didn't have to think about it. Tears came to my eyes every time, because of the beauty and miracle of it all. There is no way you can forget; it's right there in front of you. That's the overwhelming glorification.

But we say it comes in different forms, or different components or aspects, walking toward Allah. 'Constantly walking toward Allah' means in Naqshbandi terms that you are watching your steps, knowing that you are always walking toward Allah (swt), being in the Presence in your heart with Allah. Even though you are walking toward Allah in your moment to moment life, you are present with Allah. You glorify Allah by saying, "*Allah hu akbar*, what a beautiful life, what a beautiful face, what a beautiful child." When the children come to the noon prayer today, like Hoda and Yehya and Ahmed came today, you want to say something nice to them, "What a beautiful dress. How cute you are. Come here, I want to pinch your face and eat you up." This is glorification of Allah (swt).

You don't just have to say, "*Alhamdulillah, subhāna-Llāh.*" You may say, "*Alhamdulillah, Llāh*, it's so wonderful to have you here for prayer today." It's like spiritual ideography: you associate the beauty with the name. So every time you say something beautiful, you are associating with Allah. It's analogical. Every time you see something beautiful, if you say it enough, [you think of Allah]. You see this in many cultures: Arab, Persian, Indonesian. You are always associating. When you see something beautiful,

automatically you think Allah. We do it ourselves when we say, “My God, what a beautiful sunset.”

Also, the other part of it is to be concerned with others. To see the beauty in someone is to be concerned about them. To affirm the beauty is to be concerned about them. This incites a nearness and closeness to Allah to have these components, these aspects. This closeness makes one glorify Allah in a manner and a way that you pay little attention to yourself—or no attention to yourself or some other circumstance. The closer one becomes to the awareness of that Presence, the more you glorify that Presence, and the less your mind will be filled with other things. The urge within us to do this is because we are created to be happy. We are created to be affirmative, positive. We are not created to be negative. We are not born in sin; we are born in *fitrah*. It’s our nature to want things to be good.

When I speak to these young children in the programs, what do I urge them to do? I urge them to be a good person or citizen, because it’s your natural inclination to be good.

When someone you love comes to you, like this old student, I felt very good to see that old student—just the nearness, proximity. There is absolutely nothing in this world that is comparable in any way to the joy and happiness in your heart, and the delight that you have in your eye, when you are aware of that Divine Presence. In fact, that’s described as a state in Jannah. One of our *shuyukh* said, *There are times when I would say, if the people of paradise could be in a state like this, they are living the hayati tayyibah (the good life).*

In other words, the words I’m speaking and what I’m quoting to you from Qur’an, let it urge you to be constant in walking toward Allah, or being aware that Allah is present and near, and your faith will deepen. There is a certain kind of subtlety to *iman*. There is a certain kind of grace, *dhawq*, and taste to it. If you haven’t tasted it, you have to go back and practice being aware, being affirmative, saying those good things. The Prophet (sal)

spoke of the sweetness of *iman* in many *hadith*. ***“Taste of the taste of faith. Those who take Allah as their Lord, Islam as their religion, and Muhammed as their Messenger is one who has tasted the taste of faith.”*** He also said, ***“Whoever possesses the following three qualities attains the sweetness of iman: to have Allah and his Messenger dearer to him than anything else, to love a person only for the sake of Allah, and to hate to return to disbelief (kufr) after Allah has rescued him from it as much as you hate the idea of being thrown into the fire.”*** This is a Sahih Hadith.

One of our predecessors said, *“If you don’t find sweetness and joy in the deed you perform, then doubt its sincerity, because Allah is Shakūr.”* What does he mean? He means Allah will certainly reward the servant for their deeds in this world, as long as the servant is delighted and happy with those deeds. But if he doesn’t find the delight and joy in his heart, then the deed is imperfect. But it’s not for the reward that you do it. You do it because you feel it’s right. What helps us? This is the month of Sha’bān. There are many things to be done: fasting to be done, *du’ā* to be recited. There are other things to be done. We should realize that these are good deeds.

A good deed may be opening a door for someone, or running an errand for someone, or telling someone something right to do; but these practices, the fasting itself is a good deed. Reciting Qur’an and making *du’ā* are all good deeds, and they have their effects and their consequences, just like everything does. If you are angry, it returns to you. If you are fearful of something, that fear affects you. In the same way, if you do good things, they affect you. If you realize you have been distracted for the last two hours, and you stand up and make two *rak’as*, you wouldn’t be distracted anymore. One of the consequences of fasting is it stimulates your mind, and makes you think about yourself and your preferences. It makes you think about your desires. There is opportunity in that for the *nafs lawwama*, self-reproach. What does that do? It shows you the straighter path.

In the negative form, it is telling you that you are off the path, so to speak. The result is what Allah has said, **“For those who have done good is best.”** *Inshā'a-Llāh*, we look at this time that is coming to us, and I remember last year for some reason we spent a lot of time talking in Rajāb, but somehow, Shabān got away from us. Now we have to not let Shabān get away from us this year. Every year is different. Some people obsess with rituals and forms, obsess whether a person is Sunni or Shi'a or whatever. But we need to be obsessed with Allah and submitted to that beauty that surrounds us. We shouldn't be in opposition to the *asmā' al-husna*, and not be in opposition to the message of Allah or the commands from the *'ālam al-amr*.

People can vary. People can think about things differently. Different *madad* do things in different ways, but we are not concerned with that. What we are concerned about is doing what we can do in the best way we can do it, and not allow our mind, our doubts and fears to get the best of us. That means to affirm the beauty. Isn't it wonderful that now we are in this period of time when Ramadan is coming in the summertime. Next year, it starts the first of August. This year it starts the 11th probably. It means the gardens are in full bloom; the fruit and tomatoes are coming. The peppers are ripe. The cucumbers are growing. You can go out to the garden and pick and eat them right off the ground. The flowers are blossoming. The deer are eating all of our plants. The raccoons are at the garbage when we leave here tonight. All the wonderful animals are everywhere. We take a fresh onion and take a piece of tomato and some of Salma's or Isa's fresh bread, and put a little salt or hot sauce and eat it fresh from the garden, *alhamdulillah*. The absolute beauty of it! What else do you need to remind you?

In the winter time, it's cold and barren, and there is snow (though snow looks beautiful!) and it's wet—wet and cold. Then you have to say, “I remember what it was like in the spring. I hope for the spring and the fruits.” In Indonesia, you have flowers and fruits all the time; you're spoiled. But of course then you have tsunamis and earthquakes, too. When you live in paradise, it's very hard to imagine paradise. When you live in paradise

on earth, how much more beautiful might Jannah be? You have the blue ocean, the big fish, the beautiful fruits in the market. That is paradise—and it's harder. Allah gives a challenge to all of us, whether we live in paradise on earth or hell on earth. Allah has placed us in a beautiful place here. We get both the winter and the summer, the spring and the fall to remind us. Here we are in the summer time, and we shouldn't oppose the law of Allah (swt). There are rules and guidelines, and we should stick with them.

In other words, we should see where we are in opposition to the attributes, or to the guidance of the *shaykh* and the *shuyukh*, or to the guidance of the Qur'an, or where we make exceptions to the law and rules. That's where we should look and ask ourselves, why are we in opposition to this? Like the story I told the other day: *He asked the man, "How old are you?" And the man said, "Sixty years old." And he said to him, "Did you know that you have been traveling toward Allah for 60 years, and you have almost arrived?"* How old are you? You have been traveling toward Allah for all these years, and that's what makes you Allah's slave, *inshā'a-LLāh. Asalaamu aleikum.*