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Thursday



Title: [The Will to Prolong the Goodness that Comes in Ramadān](#)

DVD title: Murīds and Murāds in Ramadān: Putting our Will toward the Goal

As we enter the month of Ramadān, after so many years of fasting, one would hope that we would all want more from ourselves than to do it superficially. One would think that we would be beyond the simplistic attitudes towards fasting. The challenge may be similar to when we first started. Maybe our bodies have become older or tired or ill; or maybe, when we had the physical energy, we did not have the mental discipline yet, or the emotional balance or the spiritual understanding. But I would hope that now we would have the spiritual understanding and have dug our well deep enough so that no matter what the challenges are, and no matter what the difficulties are in the matter of the physical, we would find that there is an understanding that every day we should extract something more subtle, that we have more control over our minds and our hearts, more control over our associations.

When Allah (swt) says in Holy Qur'an, "**Send not away those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face,**" we understand that this period of time that we call Ramadān (or, hopefully, this period of time that we call life) is an opportunity to affirm and seek the guide that is present. The lessons from the trees, the lessons from nature, the lessons from one another, the guidance from a heart that has become pure, from patience that has become deeper, from questions that have become answered, until the answers precede the question. I hope that we understand, more than some people do, that this is not a time for resting, or a time to avoid work and responsibilities. Prophet Muhammed (sal) said, "*When your Lord/Rabb wishes a good thing for His slave, He makes him busy with some affair.*" He was asked what kind of busy affair was he

referring to, and the Prophet (sal) said, ***“It will give him success to do something good prior to his death.”***

Certainly this is a lesson for Ramadān, but it is also a lesson for every day. One of the Alimy girls asked me a question today, in passing. She asked, “If you have missed fast days in previous years for one reason or another, you are supposed to make them up through the year before the next Ramadan. But if I have not made them up, I am told that the flames of hell will consume me.” I said to her, “Every day you say, ‘*Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem,*’ and the first thing you forget is that Allah is compassionate and merciful.” I said, “This is somebody who is telling you lies. What is your intention? Is your intention good? Do you hope that someday you can get to the point where you can do that? Are you sincere?” “Yes, but I have not done it.” These are questions of *fiqh*. Nobody ever taught them about the heart. Then one of the girls said, “What is Sufism?” It was interesting how it led to that question. I told her that I would tell her tomorrow what was Sufism. I said to her, “Feed a poor person.” And she said, “I don’t have any money.” I asked, “Have you ever had a candy bar? Give half to someone else.” She looked at me. I said, “Remove a stone from the path.”

I hope we come to the point where we understand that the success on this path is in doing good. At the root of this is *irāda*. I never know how to translate *irāda*—will, the power to will that Allah has placed in you; to be willing to do anything; to be attuned to the Will of Allah by knowing what you will, and that you are willing to do anything, and you will do it, as much as you can. It is that kind of will. It has a certain kind of attitude toward it. At the very beginning of the journey, when we are very excited about journeying and it is all a big mystery, we have the idea that if I start now, I will get there. We have a lot of energy; we are young and starry-eyed, or whatever. We use our willpower to get on this path. The path is offered to us. We are asked if we are willing. We say, “I will,” and we do. We are on the path and we become a *salik*.

It is interesting that it is the first step on the path, and one that you have to have periodically. As you move from one *maqam* to another, as you go from sixth grade to being a freshman again, and from eighth grade to being a freshman again, and from senior to being a freshman again, one *maqam* to another, that first step on the path is having the will to step on the path. You will with passion and with eagerness and with a sense that you want to do something, something good, probably for yourself at the beginning of the path. You have to evolve to understand that it is much more important to do good for others. Will is sort of the preamble to your constitution. It tells you what you are going to do. Without that will, there will be failure. You won't be successful.

This deliberate *niyyat*, this *irāda*, to pursue this path to being aware of the Divine Presence, to being aware of the Beloved, to being aware of the Truth, to being aware of the overriding power of justice and goodness is the sign of the *murīd*. The *murīd* is someone who, when they call out to Allah, everyone recognizes the call. Like this (To hear the *salawat* that has been playing, the Shaykh turns up the volume.). Can't you feel that, the sincerity of that? That is why we love it. Don't you love it? I love it. What do you love? It is the sincerity. It is the *irāda*. The *murīd* that we are and that we were has a passion to endure and to pursue this path. Our will comes to help us, just like a person who is an 'alim, because that person endured the challenge of learning, gaining knowledge about specifics.

A *murīd* can only be a *murīd* if he or she has the will or the avid desire and the eagerness to know what is beyond their own self, not to know themselves. I understand, "**Know thyself and you know your Lord.**" I understand. But that is not what I am talking about. I am talking about that ego desire of self-realization. First we have to divest ourselves before we can be invested in Allah. There is no way, on the path/*tariqah*, without first emptying ourselves of the primary desire for self-realization. The only way that self-realization can come about, the only way the knowledge of the self can come about is when we turn our attention toward the Divine Essence.

The ancient ones have spoken extensively on *irāda*. Usually, they talk about how you curtail your habits and conquer your desires. It is usually, therefore, linked with months like Ramadān, with circumstances like fasting. It also means to be attentive and not to be negligent, to be trusting and to turn away from the desires that only want to feed the ego, and not feed the neighbor or feed the brother or feed the sister or feed the friend, literally or spiritually. Where others seek for self-realization in their path, we, in a sense, turn away from or forsake the self's desire. We turn our will and our love and our desire towards serving, towards doing something good, being aware that we have a limited amount of time to do that good.

There was a sort of joke being told about a certain person who really didn't understand this service. He was on the path and found himself very lonely—very alone, even though surrounded by others. He called out, “Human beings and spirits talk to me!” And a voice responded, to prove that voices spoke to him. “What do you want?” He said, “I seek the Lord.” The voice asked for how long. He realized that he was still in the sphere of moment-to-moment desire—for how long? We are going through the Ramadān of personal *jihad*. Of course we want endurance, and of course we want to have patience, and of course we want to have control over our distractions. But more than that, I think, we don't want to put ourselves in positions of hardship and suffering and undue challenges. It is a time when we can control our outer movements and our outer encounters, at least to the degree that we can strive to have some inner balance. At the same time, it is also a time when we are the best of servants.

If we see the need of somebody else, our fasting shouldn't stand in the way. If we see someone in pain, or if we see that there is some fear that rises in us, we shouldn't turn away from our duties and our responsibilities, our nature and the nature of being a member of a society or a community. In other words, all the opportunities that come to us during Ramadan, the time when we are turning inward, the time when we are trying

not to be distracted, can be an opportunity and not a distraction. If we have the will that maybe over time, though was once a flame is now only embers, smoldering embers, we can throw some fuel on those embers. It is the fuel of kindness, good words, settling our minds and trusting in Allah, and trusting in this process that we have been a part of, some of us for years and years. I am one of them who finds the *sunnah* and the *nafl* prayers a lot easier during Ramadān than other times of the year. My schedule does not change much. My distractions don't change much.

Again, it is when you hear this sincere *salawat*, and you find yourself more focused on the times of prayer than on the things between the prayer. You get the feeling that you want to do something a little bit more, and the opportunity is provided for us. It certainly is a time when people do more for one another: cooking *iftar* for people, inviting them over, enjoying the company, speaking of good things. We hope for better things for the next year. It comes on us so quickly, this Ramadān. Maybe because we have been so busy, some of us, but it comes on us so quickly that we don't have enough time to think about it, to prepare for it. I advise and I encourage that everybody find some time for solitude, some time to willfully seek the opportunity to help others to do whatever is necessary to get you closer to what you love, and to understand that whatever it is that you love, you love it because it has this quality of sincerity and the Divine Presence. I understand that this is a very simple *dars* tonight.

If we can put our will toward our goal; if our goal is to be more aware of that goodness and the Divine Presence; if we can enjoy our fast half as much as we enjoy our *iftar*; if we can use our will to affirm this journey that we are on, to point to Allah (swt) as the seasons begin to change, as the garden actively keeps producing its food this summer, and as the challenges are brought to us; if we can begin our day with a good intention; and if we can add to it the will to prolong the goodness of that day, then I think we can come out of this, individually and collectively, much better. We are very blessed, because most people go off to a job and go to work (some of you do here, too), and they are with

people who don't fast or are with strangers or with people who are not sharing the same yearnings or the same opportunities that you have. But here, we can socialize with people who are on the same path. We come home to a large family of people who are participating in the same process. We have the opportunity to extend an invitation to others of like hearts and like minds.

If we can keep the conversation going toward the Divine in a world that is filled with evil and filled with terrible circumstances and incredible challenges every day; or if we at least end a conversation, or direct a conversation towards something greater, towards the Divine or towards the Attributes of Allah (swt), we won't be deceiving ourselves. We won't pretend that things are good if they are terrible. Don't feel that you are betraying the Truth. Feel like you are affirming the greater Truth. Sometimes I feel that we think that it is spiritual fantasy to affirm the greater Truth, that we should just talk about the harsh realities, about the miserable things that are going on in the world today. Often, those of us who do that on a fairly regular basis, sometimes realize that our frustration is a form of focusing on a situation so that we might find some solution or hope in it, but let's focus on the hope.

Let's not focus on the specific solution on the war in Afghanistan, or on the oil spill, or whatever is happening, but on the overall solution, which is an affirmation of the will to be aware, to be in service of the goodness, the compassion and the mercy that eventually has to be, either in this life and in this world or in the Hereafter when we pass, the ticket to another state, to another station of harmony and peace. I don't think I am a naïve person. I deal with difficulties every day. I deal with concerns about the world, and I don't live [with a desire] to see some great paradigm shift in the world, and there is peace and everybody is hugging each other and dancing and drinking goblets of light. That is not in my mind. What is in my mind and in my heart, and I can say to you, with a lot of confidence, is the more we affirm the goodness, and the more we are seeking the

solutions to the problems at hand, with a constructive and spiritually based will, the transformations will come.

I think that I am not in bad company. I remember Shaykh Kaftaro (ra) saying, “In the next century, peace will come.” Remember him saying that? Maybe he calculated his age and figured he would not live into the next century so nobody would say, “See. You were wrong.” But he said it with such conviction. In a sense he was commencing his talks, his day, his works, with proper *irāda*. Because if you don’t do that, you prolong the miseries; you prolong the misfortunes and you prolong the losses in the world. If you seek the light of knowledge, then the light of knowledge will come to you. If you open your heart, your heart gets filled, and you will receive benefit that will last you your whole life. So why don’t we busy ourselves with things that do give us profit and do give us results? Because we busy ourselves with so much that doesn’t.

Sometimes we have to realize that the things of the world don’t pan out for us because there is a previous edict sent down from Allah (swt) about us that says, ‘You know you are a *murīd*. Because you are a *murīd*, things will come to you that won’t come to anyone else, that what you consider a failure today is a blessing.’ At the same time, we have to understand where it all comes from. When we read the Qur’an, when we read the stories of Sīrah, when we tell the stories of the *shuyukh* and the great souls, we have to remember that these stories and their lives and their efforts are given to us.

Allah says it in the Qur’an. He says, “Everything that We tell you of, the stories of the prophets and the messengers - with those things We make your heart strong.” The stories of the successes, the stories of these unique souls are given to us, Allah says, to make our own hearts strong. But what can happen in Ramadān is that we enter Ramadān seeking and calling out to Allah for change and, I hope, praying and making *du’ā* sincerely in the late times of the night, or when the hunger gets strong, but you can actually enter Ramadān as a *murīd* and exit as a *murād*. You can enter Ramadān with a great deal of

hopes and desires, and you can exit it knowing that you are desired by Allah. The *murīd* may find difficulty, but the *murād* is one who can stand on the path without any trouble, without any fear. I think a good goal for all of us is to enter Ramadān in the hope that we might be firm on this path when we exit, or when Ramadān leaves us.

Inshā'a-llāh, we should keep this in mind because it is coming to us so quickly. It is not an event. You can treat it as a 'supposed to' if that helps you. I spoke the other day about many people not being able to fast at all, or fully, and I hope you listen to that carefully. I hope you realize that there is a lot left to do if we cannot fast physically. Let us have the right attitude towards Ramadān. I spoke about *adab* the other day. Let us have the good *adab* towards each other and try very, very hard (or not hard at all, depending, I guess, on what your state is) to act in concert, to be willing to act in concert, to be willing to express your love and affection, your care and concern, knowledge to one another, and to be able to receive it as it comes to you, and to enter Ramadān with both hands open and extended, *inshā'a-llāh*, to do good deeds. Each one of us will be tested, I am sure. *Asalaam aleikum*.