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Saturday

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Taqlid, Nadhar and Dhawq](#)

Dvd Title: Three Corresponding Stages of Sufism: Three Ways to Enter Ramadān  
Islam/Taqlid/Shar'ah Iman/Nadhar/Tariqah and Ihsan/Dhawq/Haqiqah

*Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm*. I wish I would have had more time with the (Alimy) girls, because one of the girls asked me, “What is Sufism?” I told them it is not Sunni, Shi’a, and Sufism. I was getting to the point of telling this girl that the path of the Sufi is one that doesn’t lead to some kind of paradise. It leads to Divine Presence, the essence of everything. That may seem to be a subtle difference, but it is a very profound one. Many Muslims are castigated, or fear is instilled in them, and there is no subtlety to their path. So I will present a slightly different breakdown of *iman*, *islam*, and *ihsan*, and perhaps address some people’s reactions to religion or to Islam. Certainly, I think it is correct in the interpretations we get of the words of *islam*, *ihsan*, and *iman*. These are the three corresponding stages of Islam, or of development. But within them, there are three other stages that are not often talked about. One is *taqlid*. The other is *nazar*. The third one is *dhawq*.

When we talk about *taqlid* in the sense of paralleling *islam*, *iman*, and *ihsan*, *taqlid* is behavior in the sense of imitation: imitating for example the Prophet (sal). *Nadhar* is comprehension of the principles of Islam. It means to see. *Dhawq* of course you know means to taste. In this case it means to experience, to feel, to absorb, to assimilate, to become in a sense one with the Divine Reality or Presence. But that’s not the end of it, because each one is made up of three things. *Taqlid* is made up of repentance. So we go through the station of repentance/*tawbah*. It is made up of *istiqama*, uprightness, straightness; and of course *taqwa*. In this case, it means reverence or piety, reverential anxiety. All of these are under *islam*, *taqlid* and then these things.

Then *nadhar* is under *iman*/faith; *ikhlas*/sincerity, in the sense of discernment; and *sidduq* (sincerity), truthfulness based on a kind of knowledge, the power of truth—*‘āmina*, peacefulness or serenity, like *mutamainna*. *Dhawq* is under *ihsan*. Again we come back to the Hadith of Jibreel. *Ihsan* parallels with *dhawq*, the tasting of the inner experience and assimilation. That, too, has three stages: a kind of seeing */basīra*, but through perceptive meditation, perceiving through *muraqabah* or *tafakkur*. It is not just sitting in meditation, but perceiving through it. Then there is the sense of being face to face with Allah, being aware of being in the Divine Presence. The last thing is achieving this knowledge to such a degree that you are overcome by love.

These three things [with their three respective stages], *islam* and *taqlid*, *iman* and *nadahr*, *ihsan* and *dhawq* represent also the stages of *shar’īah*, *tarīqah*, and *haqiqah*. The first stage deals with the tangible things of this world, the appearances of this world. That’s why it involves a great deal of rules and laws for addressing the *nafs*, the distractions and the lower nature of the individual that is attracted to the material world. If a person doesn’t have *taqwa*, for example, or is too arrogant to make *tawbah*, for example, they cannot convert their knowledge or energy, whatever they may have, into anything that is worthwhile, that is lasting.

Of course, *iman* is associated with *tarīqah*. If you don’t have faith in the path, you have to develop it. If you don’t have faith in the way, your knowledge is going to be very limited, because you don’t have the comprehension of what’s behind the *shar’īah*, the principles behind it, the spirit, if you will. As a result, you don’t have the ability to discern the continuum or successive degrees or dimensions of this creation. When one is in *tarīqah* and has embraced it, over that period of time we become nourished by something that is not rules and regulations, and not just personal accomplishments or personal pleasure. We become revived, nourished by the fact (which is something that has become a fact) that “I am now seeing these principles I have been contemplating

manifest in action,” and in places where one would never expect to see them. So our sincerity increases. Our *ikhlas* deepens. We say in English, “I mean this sincerely,” meaning it is not just words, but comes from a deeper place. This is what happens in *tariqah*.

You could say *dhawq* leads to certainty/*yaqīn*. What you have seen and participated in, and what has transformed you, you are now certain of. It is not ‘certain of the path,’ or ‘certain of the *shaykh*.’ You are certain of what you see and what you know. It’s not the certainty that a person’s *nafs ammāra* has with arrogance, but it’s a certainty with humility. If it’s adjusted or tweaked in some form or another, it will still be within the context of your certainty – not outside of it. Nothing will come to disprove the dimensions of your piety, but only to deepen it. These three plus [their three respective states] (nine states) you may notice are acquired successively (and I hope successfully).

As we go into Ramadan, I think if one affirms what they really know, you’ll find that you have a profound knowledge of the Divine Presence, that you act (most of the time at least, when you are not just at your job) aware of where you are, aware of the principles of our life, of the process, and with certain expectations of ourselves and others. There are lots and lots of stages to this process. Some are reserved for only those who have achieved a pretty consistent and sustained state or station of awareness. But the journey from that initial *tawbah* to being aware of that Divine Presence is a phenomenal, mystical, exciting and adventuresome journey.

The girls wrote to me tonight on a piece of paper, like they do at Legacy. My daughter said “Thank you for starting this camp and beginning me on my adventure.” But it’s like that. When you allow yourself to move from that first stage to the stage of *tariqah*, really you are on an adventure. The outward symbol of that adventure of course is the Hajj. The inward symbol of it is *khilwa* (for us). Everyone should do both, *inshā’a-llāh*. There are certain conclusions we can make that can be clarified during Ramadan and

contemplated. One is, to the Sufi, submission in the sense of *islam*, and in the case of the first step, *shar'īah*, which corresponds to or provides a faith that is based on accepting something that Allah has decreed. The first step is an acceptance: you accept *shar'īah*, you accept the five pillars of Islam. You accept the six principles. You are in a state of enough submission (Islam) that you accept things that are being presented to you.

*Iman*, which corresponds to *tarīqah* (the way) brings about faith in not just accepting what one is told, but based on knowledge/*marifah*. You study, you have *suhbat* and you ask questions, all with *ikhlas* and *sidduq*, sincerity. Then the faith that was based on *shar'īah*, on what has been presented to you that you accepted, now becomes your faith based on your knowledge, which in effect gives rise to the *shar'īah*. The third, *ihsan*, which corresponds to *haqiqah*, means (in this case) good character or good behavior. It corresponds to the truth, which allows a person to reach something not because they accepted something that was given, and not because they have studied and have knowledge, but they have made *fikr* (contemplation, *muraqabah*) and have direct knowledge of it. Their faith is now based on a certainty that comes from inner seeing, experience. *Yā Latīf*.

Each one of these levels is built upon the others, so it's not like you get rid of any of it, but you build upon the foundation of it. There is a kind of esotericism – let's call it a mystery – in these three ways. The great prophets, the true *awliyā*, the true *muridīn* and initiates know that this life is a progression from rules and regulations (don't do that, don't touch that, don't pick that up) in the *shar'īah* of the home life to this path (I'm interested in this and this and this; *alhamdulillah*, look at all of this). Google the Sufi world; everything's available. [The progression] leads to the next stage where you are sitting in *muraqabah* and meditation, and become overwhelmed by the interconnectedness, when you come to the state of certitude with, **“Wheresoever you look, there is the Face of Allah.”** If someone else doesn't see it, it doesn't matter.

Think about it as a curtain. Why do you put a curtain in a room? You put a curtain over windows in order to block light, to keep people from seeing into the window, and for privacy. You can choose to open up that curtain. The light comes in, and also you look out. You can see what's happening. The curtains are removed, others can see in, and you can see out. The mystery of it all is [in] the prayers of those people who have achieved that dimension of sight beyond their own self, beyond the gathering of knowledge, beyond even the mystical practices into the realm of nearness.

The Prophet (sal) said, ***“For one who is aware of the limits of his own knowledge, Allah will facilitate the acquisition of another knowledge, one even more profound and divine.”*** This process of humility means you are aware of the limitations of your own knowledge, and you won't be caught in arrogance. Because of the boundaries of your knowledge, Allah then gives you a greater knowledge. The great African mystic (Tirnom Sufi) said, *“The neophyte (initiate) will discover these riches like one who successfully discovers the peel, then the flesh, then the seed of the fruit.”* It will sustain us for a longer period of time, and deepen our *iman* and our *ihsan* if we accept that we are on this journey, and if we treat this journey as an adventure, to quote my own daughter. There is something new around every corner.

There is something new to be discovered from every fast, from every prayer, about our self in every situation. That very basic idea, which of course is not owned by Sufis, but when applied by Sufis toward the essence of the revelations of Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Prophet's (sal) example, what is unique to the Sufis under those circumstances is really liberating. It cannot feed the ego. I encourage us all to be more open during this Ramadān, and to be more aware of how we are watching, how we are measuring, how we identify our self in relationship to the path. We have bitten into the fruit, having identified it, and tasted its sweetness. We love it so much that we are diving for the seed so that we can replicate that fruit. I hope that we seek out beyond the *nafs* some inspiration, some *ilham*, every day. Using the seed analogy, I hope that we realize what

Allah said in Suratu-l-Baqarah where He would multiply the good actions of people by seven and then by a hundred, just like one seed multiplies into hundreds of seeds.

I hope, *inshā'a-llāh*, that we can abandon our will for a month to the will of Allah. You'll know if you are successful, and how successful you are, as the month goes forward. But be patient. Allah says, **“Inallaha ma'a saberīn.”** He is with those who are patient. As I've been working on my talk for a week from Sunday, I've been spending a lot of time on what's called representation. We are really blessed with the summer and the gardens; with the trees that are out and the flowers that are in bloom; with the work that we do here, with the joy that it brings to people, and with the strain that is put upon us. Just think about how all that is done here is purposeful— how much time we spend in preparing this facility, giving the programs and dealing with the problems. Then along with it are our prayers and meditation and the *suhbat*.

How blessed Allah has made us so that we have little distraction. We are kept very busy, with little time for distraction. The average person has a tremendous amount of time available for distraction. They may be just working on something for their own benefit, and has no benefit to anyone else. We really have a great blessing here. I think it is a kind of self-chosen, grateful, renouncing of a lot of the worldliness so that we can focus on the goodness in people and on Allah (swt). That's what I think. Many of us sit around and think about how much time we've wasted, and what we could have done over the last 20, 30 years: “What have I really gotten from all of this?” But if you just look around, you see how much blessing there is. I use the word blessing in a general term: it means we are in the sway of goodness. Aren't we? We really are. If you don't see that, you are really missing something.

We are in the sway of goodness. Every chair you move, every time you set up a bed, every time you fix the screens, every time you cook and serve a meal, every time you sit with someone, every time you do planning, it's all such an incredible blessing. Just to be

near it is to be blessed by it. We are in the company of good things and good people doing good work. In other words, there is goodness in this world. It may just be on 120 some acres in Bedford County – I doubt it – but there is definitely goodness here. In the month of Ramadān, we repent and turn, and ask forgiveness from those hopefully nearest and dearest to us as well, as even strangers we may know. Please don't forget that part of Ramadān. If you cannot ask forgiveness, ain't nothing going to save you. I think we can enter this Ramadān humbly and grateful, with a good kind of pride that says, "Thank You, Allah. I am proud to be Your servant."

There are three ways to live this life, three ways to enter Ramadān, three ways to understand the world. It's like there are three ways to know a river: you can have heard about it, read about it in a book, talked to someone who has seen it, or you can go to the river and sit and watch it, and contemplate it and meditate on it. Or you can jump in it. Look at Ramadān as jumping in. Let's try to become as the New Agers would say, "one with Ramadān," *inshā'a-Llāh*. I hope that you understand where you are on this path with *tariqah*, in the realm of *iman*, and it's a wonderful place to be.

Although we forget it many times a day, let Ramadān be your anchor so that at least you know that once a day you are going to remember it. There is *iftar* and *tarawīh* and *suhbat*. How can I miss it? Establish that certainty during Ramadān, because certainty is not like a *hal*. It's a *maqam*. You don't fall away from it once you have it. You can do the psychological analysis of yourself about "why don't I feel this and that" and all that stuff, but leave it at the door. It's just baggage. Bring your sincere, ardent self through the doorway. Then it will be more meaningful, *inshā'a-Llāh*.