



EID UL ADHĀ KHUTBAH

27 November 2009 * 10 DHUL HIJJA 1430

THE REWARD OF SELF-LESSNESS AND SACRIFICE

(Sura al Fatihah. Takbir.)

Qul ‘innani hadani Rabbi ‘ila siratim mustaqim:

dinan qiyamam millata ‘Ibarahima hanifa: wa ma kana mina l mushrikin.

Qul ‘inna salati wa nusuki wa mahyaya wa mamati li’llahi Rabbi l ‘alamin

La sharika lah: wa bi’dhalika ‘umirtu wa’ana ‘awwalu l muslimin.

Surely my Lord has guided me to a straight path an upright way of life, the original religion of Ibrahim, the true scrupulous believer. And He was not from those who set up partners with Allah. Say, Truly, my worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of All the Worlds, in Whose Divinity none has a share. This I am commanded and I am the first (among you who) surrender (to HIM)”

(Qur’an 6 Al An’am: 161-163)

ASALAAMU ALAYKUM WA RAHMATULLAHE WA BARAKATU!

Again this year, over 1 billion Muslims around the world will celebrate this Feast of the Sacrifice and the Hajj, if not in Mecca, *inshā’a-LLāh*, in their homes and communities, wherever they may be; and most important, in their life. Ramadān and the Eid ul Adhā should leave us with a renewed inspiration and affirmation and action to carry the meaning of our inner attention and outer selfless sacrifice and service into our daily life. Without this, we are not making our life’s journey in an ultimately successful and

spiritually fulfilling way. Our inner Hajj will be incomplete and our outer manifestation of submission to the truth of Allah (swt) will fall far short of what this short life could afford us.

Most of us understand historically, that the reason for this pilgrimage season is an affirmation of trust and faith as exemplified in the life of the Prophet Ibrahim (*alahis salaam*), his trust in Allah swt, Ismail's (as) trust in both Allah (swt) and his father.

This teaching, from the time of pre-history to the Torah and to the present, is little understood in its applicability to our lives today. It is my firm belief that in our tradition, the tradition of Tasawwuf, we can find both the living meaning and the eternal metaphor for life, conscious decisions, the interface between the inner world and outer world. We can understand more of what we have been discussing of *basīra* and *firāsa*; and the outer actions that require will and willingness, for all of us to develop the trust and trustworthiness, love and self sacrifice.

There are those who see the acts of this time only as pagan carry-overs...sacrifices and pilgrimages, of weak people being misled by religious ritualists who seek only power and control; or at the least outdated metaphors designed to give some comfort to people who live life with a lot of confusion and hopelessness, or hopes never resolved. Others see it all as tools of an amorphous 'evil' God who imposes hardship and afflictions, meaningless tests and trials in a bifurcated world, somehow sufficiently difficult and demanding without the added weight of religion. But evil does exist and we find it in the hearts and minds of human beings. Perhaps, as we have each had the opportunity to personally learn, over our lifetime, the day to day sacrifices and tests are but means of

turning away from that evil and that selfishness toward an inner and even outer life of peace and tranquility.

The Qur'an teaches that Allah *Subhanallah wa' ta'ala* never advocates evil. Allah never commands what is shameful. But the onus of discovery of this truth is on us as individuals. For we have the power to 'see and hear' if we would but use it; moreover, we have the power to make choices.

Like Sidna Ibrahim and Sidna Ismail, we are all afforded the opportunity to have faith. When you read through Qur'an, you see how many opportunities Sidna Ibrahim had. He rebelled against his father's idolatry. Then there was the story of Nimrod, and walking through the fire, all the stories one after the other, which I won't relate today. You should look them up and read them for yourself. And of course there was time when they were walking from where he had settled, which is now in Palestine at the place of the Beir Saba, the Seven Wells at the edge the cultivated land, across the deserts and mountains of Siin. Finally, they reached a patch of desert in the Arabian peninsula, he with his wife and child. They sat in this horribly ugly place at the time, of black basalt. The only thing that was left there in that uncultivated valley that had no trees, no water, and no food of any kind, no sign of life was the ruins of a foundation left from before the flood of Noah (as).

These ruins were the remains of an ancient house founded by Adam and Hawa (may Allah protect their memory). The reason was Allah had decided this was the place for them to settle. After Ibrahim had helped his wife and child to dismount, he left them with a small amount of food, hardly enough for three days. He turned around and walked away, and Hagar ran after him. She said, "Where are you going? Are you leaving us in

this barren valley?” And he didn’t answer her but continued his walking. She repeated what she had said, and he remained silent. Finally, after a few attempts, she understood that he was acting not on his own will, but on the will of Allah (swt). She said, “Did Allah (swt) command you to do this?” And he finally answered, “Yes.” Then she said, “We are not going to be lost, since Allah Who has commanded you is with us.” Ibrahim (as) invoked Allah by saying:

O our Lord! Truly I have settled my offspring in an uncultivated valley near to Your Inviolable House, Our Lord, that they may establish salat. So make the hearts of people to incline to them and provide for them fruits that they may be grateful. Ya Rabb, truly You know what we hide and what we proclaim, nothing is hidden from Allah in the earth or the heavens. (Qur’an 14:37-38)

Who else could have said that? You would have thought that would have been enough. That was the test. Hagar’s faith and his *du’ā* were answered. We know from the Angel Jibreel (as), who revealed the means in the form of the well of ZemZem, and they guaranteed once again that the valley would be settled. He left, and Ismail grew into puberty under the eyes of Hagar among tribes who were attracted to the valley. How? By birds flying over head, because there was water. That should be it; that should be his trial. But we will remember in a while that was not all there was. He was quite old, remember. He had had a life of trials. This was the theoretical end of his life. How many struggles/*jihads* had he had?

Like Sidna Ibrahim (as) and Sidna Ismail (as), we are afforded the opportunity to have faith. To try or to be tried, and to rise above selfish desires to the level of love that

transcends the common. I hope that you do not hear this in any way other than personally, today. I pray to Allah you apply what I say to day to your life today, your decision today and tomorrow. If nothing else, we are in a world of virtual reality, given a view into the actual lives of people who are very distant from us. We are able to see their courage, their sacrifices, and moreover we are able to see and understand more and more, the interrelatedness of our lives with theirs. If that's the only benefit we get from technology today, that's a very big benefit.

Pick up a magazine, go on line to a news site, read the accounts of war, torture, financial ruin, fears, rebellion, rational and totally irrational thinking and acting. Humanity now gathers daily in our tv's and our computer screens. These accounts, these narratives, these tests and trials—here, there, cities, countrysides, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, China, above in the air, and in the seas. Which Ka'ba do we turn toward to worship...to our heart, in Mecca, or to the pundits and the insane people whose voice resounds in the hearts and minds of bigots and fear mongers? Where is Ismail? Where is the care and concern that human beings were given by Allah (swt)? Allah says:

“When he grew enough to work with him, he said, “My son, I see in a dream that I am sacrificing you. What do you think?” He said, “O my father, do what you are commanded to do. You will find me, Allah, willing, patient.” We called him, “O Ibrahim, you believed the dream. We have thus rewarded the righteous. That was an exacting test indeed. (Qur'an 37:102-106)

Let us come to that. Hold that in your mind: yet another test, yet another trial! What is most difficult for us is that we find the Ibrahimic and Ismailic place within

our own self. To do that, we have to understand something which is perhaps a little disconcerting. We must understand life as a series of opportunities to understand submission, sacrifice, and their means—selfless service. We must not only understand, but consciously embrace the reality that at times this brings some level of change and discomfort. If we say we are Muslims, if we act like Muslims, if we pray like Muslims; if some ladies dress like Muslims, then by Allah, we should be true Muslims.

What is most significant is that as a result, these tests and trials are about perpetuity and sustainability of love, faith, trust and humility into our lives. Who doesn't want that to characterize their life? The usual word that is used for this day that commemorates this portion of this Eid ul Adhā is Eid ul Qurban. Qurban is sacrifice; it also implies kinsman. As Muslims we understand that everyone is our brother or sister. We also understand the relationship between ourselves and the Prophet Mohammed (sal). We realize that Ibrahim was taken to the place that Adam and Hawa built. He didn't build his own place and we look back and say, this is what Ibrahim built. Adam and Hawa are the father and mother of everyone.

We understand that the relationship between ourselves and our Lord, ourselves and the Prophet (sal), our selves and the *ambiyā*, ourselves and the *awliyā*, ourselves and the *shuyukh* and our *shaykh* and our spiritual family is another, and over our lifetime, the most profound relationship that we can have.

When we look at nature and the lives of animals, all life is a process of striving for strength, submitting to the elements, putting energy into creating the next generation, and the fruit of life. Why, then, do we find it so difficult to understand our place in this

process of sacrificing our individual selfish nature to the very same objective? Do any of us believe we will not be called upon, [even] if we dodge this sacrifice or this opportunity... that another one is not on its way? The train is on the track, brothers and sisters; it is on the track. Why then do we find it so difficult to understand our place in this process? Certainly the contemplating of the quality of consciousness, that unique, self-centered characteristic of human beings begins to clarify our answer. Yet it does not, however, explain the inner urge in all good and normal human beings to create something better.

Just because we have consciousness does not explain the urge for good or for evil. But it does seem, from life's experience, that good acts and *mīzān*/balance result in better opportunities, better work, better insights, a better physical surrounding for ourselves, for our offspring for future generations to come. Is that not the characterization of Zemzem—to create a better place? The only reasonable explanation lies in accepting the positive and inspiring aspect of sacrifice itself—embracing sacrifice. That is, the love of our kin, our fellow beings in our love for Allah *Subhanallah wa'ta'ala*, and in empowering and preparing others for life and worship of Allah *Subhanallah wa'ta'ala*. It is accepting this immediate and complete relationship with our own destiny, with our Creator that frees us and liberates our minds and hearts from the illusion of selfishness and self-importance.

In other words, our life is about sacrifice—sacrifice for the good, for the good of following generations. Consciousness allows us to improve the circumstances of this world for a more qualified and creative progeny; one that is clearer about their purpose and role than we are or were. But it is only when that consciousness is part of worship,

part of obedience, submission, trust, and selflessness. All of those are hard for most human beings. We can all identify with the difficulty of those characteristics. Our life is about living for the future. It is not about living for ourselves. Our self-interest is valid insofar as we continue striving to maximize our potential and our creativity for the purpose of sustaining life for future generations.

It is difficult for us to de-condition ourselves from our ideas and fantasies about life; thinking in very materialistic, personal, career-oriented ways that somehow [makes us think that] Allah's plan for us is other than perpetuating and striving toward knowledge, other than sustaining of our community, other than focusing on our faith and the worship of Him in our actions and hearts. But, indeed, that is what it is about. That is what we have been told it is about since the beginning of time. Each generation has the opportunity to live in harmony with the creation, to build upon the previous generation's work, to meet the tests that come, that finally, if passed, liberate us from the sense of distance and loneliness from the Creator.

Yet each generation tends to miss that opportunity by transferring the ultimate goal to something worldly and temporary. We are all experts at that. That is not to say Allah *Subhanallah wa'ta'ala* did not provide us with the appreciation of His Creation. That is not to say Allah did not give us the joy of work, or the sweetness of love, or the ability to feel fulfilled. Quite the contrary: all are part of the 'consciousness' that separates human beings from the rest of creation, and which enables us to improve upon the conditions of others, to work to sustain life, and growth, and embrace knowledge and create wisdom, and to pursue nearness to Allah *Subhanallah wa'ta'ala*. After all, trees cannot get up and move because they don't like the place they are at. "There is more sun on the other side

of the stream; I'm going to move over there.” Birds have very regular migration patterns. But we have this ability to make changes. It is our blessing and our curse.

Every one of those benefits, the sweetness of love, the feeling of fulfillment, the joy of work, the joy of just seeing someone on occasion, have tests and trials that come along with them. Small ones. Last night I related that I got an email from someone who wants to see me. I want to see them; I have missed them for two years. But it's a busy week! That person is leaving on Wednesday; I can't get there until Wednesday. Does it matter that it is a four hour drive up and a four hour drive back? It's a small test, a small trial. Do I have to do that every day? If I had to do that every day, just to see someone, just to go to work and earn a few pennies, would it compare to the test and trial of Sidna Ibrahim (as)? Would it compare to any one of those tests?

Can you imagine what it was like for him to talk to his own father and say, “Look, what you are doing is wrong”? It's not like he was an American living in the 21st century who bad-mouthed his parents. Every one of these benefits, the sweetness of love and these opportunities, demand an attitude of submission, of trust, of faith, and of obedience. To live and struggle or to thrive in the conditions and situations we find ourselves in, or which we have chosen apparently for ourselves, is the basis of all our trials and tests. Embrace them, then!

The story of the sacrifice of the Eid ul Qurban has many facets. But today I want to discuss it's relevance to us in a real and necessary way for the world we find ourselves inhabiting, a world that demands our conscious participation, not merely present in the physical sense. [It is necessary] to recognize the relevance of suhbat, a topic we have been diving deeply into in recent months, we first have to accept our physical, emotional,

social and intellectual inter-relatedness. Moreover we must embrace ideas which are, for many of us, anathema; embrace actions which are for many of us burdens; embrace the behavioral *adab*, which are for most people irrelevant and demeaning. We – Muslims, members of this Tariqah, of this family, sitting in this *jamat*—must embrace the greater community, the lesser self, the greater love, the greater courage, the joy of giving and of patience, the pleasure of service and the wisdom and liberating joy of perseverance and self sacrifice.

Remember; this is not theoretical today. We must learn to participate in the greater struggle; we must find the Ishmael and the Ibrahim within ourselves. We must truly understand how to see the life we have been given, and moreover to see the place we have been placed, and to see the service we have been receiving, and the service-fullness we have within us to give—as the greatest means to personal and spiritual, collective and individual fulfillment, maturity, and awakening.

The opportunities that we are afforded by Allah (swt), if seen in our daily life (and that's a big IF), should not be turned away from. Don't avert your eyes from those opportunities. Even in the smallest and seemingly most individual ways, ways that asks of us limited sacrifice, limited discomfort, may very well be the ultimate keys to our happiness and overcoming of our most basic weaknesses. Is there one among us who doesn't have a weakness? Asking ourselves: what discomfort can I tolerate; what difficulty can I bear that will relieve the discomfort of another person or persons whom I work with, or that I live with or help to sustain? Asking ourselves: what act or word of self protection or self discomfort can I abandon in order to create harmony and avoid

discord, create an environment of relief instead of an environment of tension, support instead of abandonment? These are the most subtle and the most profound means of personal transformation. This is what makes Sidna Ibrahim and Sidna Ismail, all the *ambiyā*, all the *awliyā* (all the ones we quote and talk about every day), not just Muslims, not just *mu'min*, but *murād*, called by Allah.

Truly, acts of humaneness, acts of love and appreciation, acts of gratitude to Allah by service and gratitude to a brother, a sister, a friend, a parent, the guide and the fellow guided; realizing that a modicum, even a sustained low level of sacrifice—not like that of Ismail, one of life or death—is a balm for the soul, a staircase to transforming the *nafs ammāra*, a way of preparation for life. From our childhood we should learn this, a preparation for life by bearing and embracing these small sacrifices. For a child, it might be carrying the plate to the sink and washing it off, making the bed, putting the clothes away, deferring. These are preparations not just for having happiness at home so your parents don't jump all over you to clean up your room. This is a teaching for us adults, also. Each one of us has small sacrifices to make, small opportunities. But sometimes we think of them as big, as burdens. They are preparations for work, for marriage, for parenthood, for sustaining friendship, for journeying further and further within...in the *bātin*, for a life here and for those of us older and further along in life, for a life in the hereafter.

Why should we, who have lived this life as Sufis, as Muslims *inshā'a-llāh* as *mu'minūn*, allow ourselves any level of selfishness that can easily be changed by small discomforts, or brief periods of time, or minimum effort of service? This time, today, is an opportunity

for reflection, just as our brothers and sisters on Arafat reflected yesterday and previously on their hajj. This right now is **our** opportunity to strain a bit, and struggle to see our self as part of a larger community—this community, this family, this *tariqah*. [It is our opportunity to reflect] as our brothers and sisters in their *ihram* moved by their own feet and by the push of the crowd, praying their prayers in the comfort of their heart and soul at the Ka’ba, but in the discomfort of their bodies; pressing against one another in the heat of the desert and in the rain this year, with those people around them drowning, and the hardness of the ground; knowing the hajj would end soon but wishing it would not; giving a hand to one who stumbles or a drink to one who is thirsty, or a good word to one who shares the joyful discomfort of life on the march to the final destination that we are all marching toward; meeting Allah (swt), the Prophet (sal) and the *shuyukh*; greeting them in their hearts, where they walked and still walk, spoke and still speak, listened and still listen.

Take a moment. Reflect. Make a list. Don’t say, “If I do this, then I don’t have to do that. If I make this small sacrifice, then I can avoid that small sacrifice. If I can make this small sacrifice, I can avoid that bigger one. If I take this bigger one, I can avoid the small one.” Don’t think like that. Just think about what opportunities are at hand: today, tomorrow, next week, next month, during your life. What can you choose to do to be selfless? A small sacrifice. Allah is not asking you to walk through fire, or speak words apparently disrespectful to your parents. Allah is not asking you to take your child and your wife to the desert and leave them. Just among the many things, by the way, that Sidna Ibrahim had to deal with. Take a moment. Please, make a list.

Just as we need a guide for the *hajj* we need a guide in our life. By destiny, people find themselves in that responsible position...yet who among us truly appreciates their presence, its force and their guidance unless and until the need arises? I know I didn't. I yearned for years for that guidance, and then when I got it, it took me years to appreciate it. Hence we hear only when we choose to hear; the rest is wind through the leaves of the tree. Of course, at times we appreciate their unswerving presence, willingness, self sacrifice toward us. We articulate it, but we do not see what is before our eyes or hear what is said aloud in our ears...yet we hear the whispers of Khannās. How is that? Because the whispers of Khannās come in our own voice: "You should do this. You should do that. You need this, you need that." What was happening? Khannās, Shaytan, was whispering to Sidna Ibrahim (as): "Don't do that. Don't do that." Father and son took stones and threw them at him. This is at Mina, the throwing of stones at Shaytan. What can we throw? We are not standing at Mina. We can choose to make those small sacrifices, those small choices.

If you think they are big, as you choose them, they shrink. But this is one sided; the real issue is greater. For who among us rises to the occasion, sees and seizes the moments when we can perceive the personal need or the opportunity to assist our husband, our wife, our child, our parent, our brother and sister, our friend, our guide, let alone our fellow traveler? Who even looks to see what their need is, under the assumption of what? "Me? I have no way to assist," or "If I am needed, I will be told how, what, when and where [to do something], if it is necessary."

I remember sitting across the road here when Hazrat was here. I had noticed for days, holes in his socks, because I was praying behind him. I was thinking, “Oh, he has holes in his socks.” And he turns to me and says, “If you know anyone going into town, could you ask someone to get me some socks.” I said, “Oh, I saw that and I wanted to get you some socks.” So we get him some socks, and he has money in his hand. “*Astaghfiru-Llāh*, I can’t take it.” “But you have to take it.” “Hazrat, I cannot take your money. I saw you had holes in your socks, and I was going to get you socks anyway.” “But, you didn’t. So if I ask for something, I pay for it. If you give it, it’s something different.” Hmm. For me, [do you know] how much courage it would take to say that? Sometimes I say those things and I get angry, because the anger covers my embarrassment to say it. He calmly, peacefully, says to me, “But you didn’t, and if I ask for something, then I pay for it.” Some of you have experienced that.

Listen carefully, I will tell you what I have learned. Truly service and sacrifice seem to be opposites. But to the Sufi, to the truly humane being, personal spiritual and even worldly recognition and gain comes bountifully from both. Sidna Ibrahim and Sidna Ismail exemplify this. There is a relationship of love and trust, illustrated in the mutual respect and concern, as when Sidna Ibrahim reveals his experience in sleep...some say dream, but the word is *manama*...in the bed, or by extension, rest or sleep. The element of doubt exists since dreams can be deceiving. (The word was not *ru'ya*/vision as some translate it.) He asked his son his advice. Ibrahim is man who gave advice to his father: put it in context. He said, “You are worshiping these idols!” Now he turns to his son and asks him for advice. How old is his son? An adolescent.

Innii ara fi l manami 'annii adhbahuka fa n dhur madha tara?

Oh my son, I have seen in the bed that I must sacrifice you; so look, what is your view?" (37:102)

And the reply:

Qala Yaa abati fa 'al ma tu'mar: Satajidunii in Shaa'a llahu mina s sabirin.

Oh my father, do what you are ordered. By the Will of Allah, you shall find me steadfastly patient" (37:102)

Sabirīn...my friends...Patient. Not willing, [but] patient, persevering; not courageous, not resigned. He could have said all these words: "I'll be courageous. I'll be strong." Here's the key. Certainly this is big patience, but what about us, today when you go home, or go to work? What in our character can we focus on, ask assistance with to change and bring true patience and perseverance in our life, so that the larger trials may be met with ease and trust and faith and patience? Or will we continue to go along the road of hopeful ignorance and arrogance, or fearful avoidance, as some of us do. We don't want to rock the boat too much; so we wait for that test, and HOPE that we will somehow find a cache of patience, selflessness, perseverance in that moment. Not having to prepare for it at all, [will we] wait for the big test to come and say, "Ah, now I'm going to be ready for it"?

THINK: this is the second pause. Please think about this. Don't look around. Just think. Do you have something to practice patience over? Do you have something to practice? Have you seen a need outside of yourself but includes your self, that you could make a small sacrifice for or be patient with? What situation, or for the benefit of what person

(your friend, your co-worker, your brother, sister) can you contribute your heart, your kindness, your consideration, your time, your effort and your means to relieve a weight or support with a small sacrifice? If so, contemplate it. Did you catch it? Did your mind wander, did you actually focus?

This event of Sidna Ibrahim and Ismail has not been forgotten for over 3 milleniums!! Yet we are anxious to not have any discomfort, so within hours, if not minutes – if not seconds – we forget not only the lesson of our forefathers, but of our own experiences or teachings, until our next discomfort or personal disturbance comes, and we look around for help, and pray to Allah (swt) for relief. For a moment we appreciate the *madad* of our *shuyukh*, our *shaykh*, and the kindness of our spiritual family. Then again we forget or separate our needs from the needs of others. We [don't] listen, and we resist or become distracted from what we could do to alleviate for others their burden or concern. No, we must strengthen our faith and trust in Allah (swt), in the Prophet (sal), and in our *shuyukh*, for this is the step by step way to uplift our soul, and awaken our hearts, and see with the eyes that see. “***Beware of the sight of the believer, for he sees...***” with what? Yes.

Fa Lammaa ‘aslama wa tallahu li l jabin.

Then, when they had both surrendered themselves to Allah, he laid him face down... (37:103)

“Wa nadaynahu ‘any “Yaa ibarahim, qada saddaqata ar-ru’ya”; inna kadhalika najazi l muhsinin.

We called out to him, “O Ibrahim, You have faithfully fulfilled the vision.”

Truly in that way We reward those who excel (in goodness). (37:104-105)

Now we know it was a vision from Allah. Allah tells it was a vision/*ru'ya*. Ibrahim didn't know whether it was or not. But Allah says, “Yeah, it was; and you made the right choice. Yeah, it was a test; and you saw it was. Now, here's the grade.” That's very important. Excel in what...goodness, faith, trust? Please. In times like this it is easy to turn our attention only to the large issues...as we do in our daily work, as some of you do in your work in environment, law, and social justice; like Amina does or we do in serving humanity; or in health care, as the nurses do; or in education as our teachers do; big issues like renewable energy, teaching the next generation in college. Realize, understand, that even a small effort at service that comes in the guise of some small self-sacrifice, that Allah (swt) has gifted to you as a minimal, occasional personal discomfort brings lasting comfort and constant rewards. It is not, *alhamdulillah*, like we are being tried and tested every minute.

Those of you who have had some physical ailments that are lasting, you get a sense of what this is like, what this means. What most of us are being tested and tried by are momentary discomforts or short-term discomforts, or momentary difficulties, or time frames that are small. Really, [it is true] when you think about it. No one has been asked to go by horseback, camelback, or by foot from Palestine to the basalt mountains of Arabia. The lasting reward.... “*Salamun 'alaa Ibarahim ...kadhalika najazi l muhsinin*...**In that way We reward those who excel..(in goodness)**” Do you have any doubt about this? If you do, then test it out (and I hope you do). Test out embracing these

small sacrifices. Take a moment again, and think about what you can do, although it brings you some discomfort or occasional strain.

Think how can you seize that opportunity. “Hah! There’s an opportunity. I’m going to seize this one, because it will make me a better person, a stronger person, a better Muslim, better husband/wife/ brother /sister/*murīd*/whatever. This will make me a stronger human being. It will make me understand more about humanity. It will make me sacrifice on a small level while others are making huge sacrifices.” Perhaps it is not one you want to choose. Sometimes things come to us that we wouldn’t choose (people in this room can tell you that)—not a strain you prefer to make a sacrifice or selfless action to ameliorate a situation, but the one that is before you now. If we consider ourselves as a Muslim, a believer; if we are perceived by even one person, if not many, as a Muslim, and in addition as a Sufi, then we *must* embrace the opportunities that come to us—not in visions or dreams, but in day to day life’s challenges. [We must be ready] to engage in small sacrifices that soften our hearts, strengthen our character, reflect our faith and bring comfort to those who we love and love us.

We are all on a journey, like it or not, and now is the time to act, to participate, and to ask ourselves and each other, “My son, my daughter, my brother, what is your view?” [You must ask] the one who is involved in your decisions, in your choices, in your opportunities; because sometimes we don’t see them clearly, or we don’t see them as small tests or trials, or as an opportunity. We just feel discomfort. So we turn to someone, brother, sister, friend, parent, *shaykh*, and ask, “What is your view?”

Serving one another is serving Allah (swt). We remember that serving the guide is serving the Prophet (sal) whose hand is over his hand. *“Inna l ladhina yubayi’unaka ‘innama yubayi’unallah; yadu’llahi fowqa ‘aydihm... Truly, those who swear allegiance to you swear allegiance to Allah; the hand of Allah is over their hands....”*

This is the way that the door to guidance and ultimate success is opened. As strange as it may seem, we are bonded together by our Islam and by our Sufism. We are interrelated by our devotion and our attachment to the Ummah. We are bonded together by being part of humanity, and part and parcel of this community and the larger community of those who serve. It was the first statement of the first revelation that established this bond.

Iqra Bismi Rabbika l ladhi Khalaqa. Khalaqa l ‘insana min ‘alaqa.

Read in the Name of your Lord Who created, created the human being from a clot. (96:1-2)

‘Alaqa uses both the biological reality “to hang, suspend; what is precious,” and the larger metaphor of *ta’aluq* “attachment, bond devotion, relation, affiliation, devotion, affection” to describe both the physical and the subtle reality of our existence and our relationship. Ibrahim (as) [and his] son, of blood and flesh, [are] both united in a bond of trust and submission to Allah (swt), a relationship that, in this example, transcends the blood relationship. We learn from the sacrifice that Allah swt is not interested in the blood and flesh, but the act of personal sacrifice and trust. This has always been the message.

It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah. it is your piety that reaches Him. He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His Guidance to you and proclaim the good news to all who do right (22:37)

This is the message of the Eid ul Adhā. Our Hajj is here and now. We are not in Mecca, so we must take the time to reflect on what we can do to uplift, to submit, to make a small or large sacrifice, to affirm our trust and trustworthiness, to remove a weight or a worry, to uplift a friend or a loved one, to serve our community, brothers, sisters, *shuyukh*. I used to rack my brain and tear my heart apart to find ways to serve Hazrat, materially and spiritually. The material part was easier. The greatest joy I had was to relieve a burden from his heart and mind. Maybe it was to just to listen to him talk about not wanting to pay off the people to get a phone line in India, or how to deal with the neighbor who wanted a gate behind the place, or how to get the workers to come, let alone the *murīds* who abandoned him, and the pain that it caused him, to the point he couldn't write the letters. He asked me to write the letters to these people, because he couldn't utter a criticism easily from his mouth. Unfortunately, he knew I could

This is a critical and essential way to move along this path: at times, in ways mysterious, and at times, difficult; but attested to and affirmed by those who came before and passed their tests, and who live on in our knowledge and hearts in these stories. *Allahu Akbar*. I hope this message has been heard. May Allah forgive me for it being an incomplete and poor one.

Second Khutba (Duas):

O Allah, we invoke Your Blessing on the Prophet Mohammed (sal) and the family of the Prophet, and on the Companions of the Prophet, and on the helpers of the Prophet, and on the wives of the Prophet, and on the descendants of the Prophet (sal). O Allah, send abundant peace on him.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are at the core of the Sufi approach to solving personal and even global issues. Sufism is still today truly founded on a form and level of brotherhood, sisterhood, tolerance, and inclusivity and gratitude that is unparalleled. [It is unparalleled] if for no other reason it is not focused on personal enlightenment to the exception of others; and for this reason it seeks personal and collective healing, and rejects exclusivity and revenge. From a Sufic point of view, it is not appropriate for human beings to consciously or intentionally assume the name (quality) of *Al Muntaqim* (The Avenger). Only Allah (swt) is the final arbiter and human beings must accept limits in expectations, even the expectation of ending all injustice in this world.

Indeed, it is a key element in Islam in both personal and collective efforts to end injustice i.e. *fitnah* (civil discord); to understand that one acts to one's fullest, but in the end it is Divine Justice that prevails. Harmony can come only when all things are in order, and by a force beyond our ability to control but not beyond our mandate to seek. Allah is greater; and that greater-ness is the transformative moment, the paradigm shift, the epiphany within an individual and society that may be over the horizon if we strive within our self, if we assume our responsibility, if we end our selfishness and give just a bit more...just a

bit more today. Embrace those challenges, that selflessness, that sacrifice just a bit more. It may make the world largely more just.

To the Sufi, making an effort to right what is wrong in no way precludes a greater justice. We understand that those who sow bitter fruit will ultimately taste it. It does not mean to abjure effort. [It may mean to provide a] warning or provide something sweeter to taste for someone. The most constructive way for the Sufi to contribute to the manifestation of a better world is to seek personal transformation and promote social harmony within our own friendships, our own family, our own Tariqah, and in the world. Don't be distracted by providing it for the world and not among your own brothers and sisters. Don't be distracted by teaching minions or serving minions, and not taking those few moments to serve, [to help relieve] the little disruptions, the periodic discomforts for those who are near and dear to you, who love you, and who you love, and who are "practice boards" for turning.

In the Mevlevi order, we have practice boards. It's a very important metaphor. The boards are 3 by 3, 1 cubit by 1 cubit. In the middle of the board is a dowel. When you learn to turn, you are transported from the world of feelings and thoughts to the Presence of the Divine. But to learn to turn, you have to put your toe into that dowel. And believe me, it hurts. You keep that dowel against your foot like that when you are turning. You get a blister, if you practice sincerely. I used to have one of those boards; it's in the basement somewhere.

Sufis appreciate that the world community is now threatened by the very mechanisms which, in the past, have served us well. Until recently, the dual standard of morality that operated within and among groups served a positive value. The competition among states and cultural groups formed a frame of reference for a humanity that lived a collective life within fragments of the whole. We must be committed to a world that works for everyone, and that excludes no human group from its moral *khayal*/imagination. We must become committed to the hard work of forgiveness and reconciliation. Tasawwuf reminds us that reconciliation, taught to us as Muslims, begins with our own inner life as we seek to reconcile the disparate aspects of our own personalities, reason and passion, spirit and matter. So, too, do we aspire to reconcile the many voices of truth as they manifest within societies and cultures.

The Sufi approach to politics requires effort to learn the many faces of humanity, and to see the essence unfolded in each person. It enables us to see that the oppressor and oppressed are both human beings experiencing life in all of its vicissitudes. It helps us to perceive that reason and intuition are two faces of truth, and that planning and spontaneity are equally valid and complementary ways of fulfilling our human potential. Rather than seeing civilization and barbarism, we see culture. Perceiving harmony and potential complementarities amid great cultural diversity is an exercise in awareness. This awareness reflects the progression of the individual's search to know humanness, as described by the many wisdom traditions of the world. It comes from our Islam that we can truly understand it, acknowledging and accepting basic differences in a world-view among different peoples.

Today let us begin anew. Where? With ourselves. Each one of us has – don't pick one. If you have ten opportunities, pick all ten. Don't just pick one. Give to someone here that assistance. Make that small sacrifice and maintain it, as it is truly a gift of Allah (swt) to be a reliever of burdens by good deeds.

Allah's Apostle was addressed by Allah, "I have decreed My Obligation and have reduced the burden on My slaves, and I shall reward a single good deed as if it were ten good deeds." (Book #54, Hadith #429)

May Allah enable us all to sacrifice in His Way to the best of our ability, and to remember the depths of the story of Ibrahim and Ismail (peace and blessings be upon them both)! We must redefine in our hearts and minds such terms as sacrifice, submission, and trust until they reflect in some small way the sacrifice, submission and trust of our Father Ibrahim (*alahis salaam*) and our Prophet Mohammed (may the blessings of Peace of Allah be upon them both). *Inshā'a-llāh*, we can reach to that point and wake up and realize that life is not about accumulating; it is about sacrificing, and we can re-define sacrifice without that aura of pain and loss that comes always with it.

Hasbuna l lahu wani'ma-l-wakil. Ni'ma-l-mawla wani'ma-n-nasir. Wa'ufawidu 'amri ila-l-lahi' inna --laha basirun bil-ibad. 'Inna waliyyiya-l-lahu-l-ladi nazzala-l-kitaba wanhuwa yatawalla-s-salihin'.

Allah (Subhanallah wa ta'ala) is our sufficiency, and good is the trustee, the best to protect and the best to help. My own affair I

commit to Allah (Subhanallah wa ta'ala), for Allah (Subhanallah wa ta'ala) ever watches over His Servants. For my Protector is Allah (Subhanallah wa ta'ala), Who revealed the Book , and He will befriend the righteous.

Rabbi 'akmil li dini, wa'atmim 'alayya ni'mataka, wa-j-'alni 'abdan sakuran, abdan karima.

O my Lord, perfect for me my religion, complete Thy favors upon me, and make me a devotee most grateful, a devotee most generous.

Allah (Subhanallah wa ta'ala)u laaa 'ilaaha 'illa Huu.

Al-Hayyul-Qayyum. Laa ta'-khuzuhuu sinatunw-wa laa nawm.

Lahuu maa fis-samaawaati wa maa fil-'arz.

Man-zallazii yashfa-'u 'indahuuu 'illaa bi-'iznih?

Ya'-lamu maa bayna 'aydiihim wa maa khalfahum.

Wa laa yuhiituna bi-shay-'im-min 'ilmihiii 'illaa bimaa shaaaa'.

Wa si-'a Kursiyyu-hus-Samaawaati wal-arz;

wa laa ya-uuduhuu hifzu- humaa

wa Huwal 'Aliyyul-Aziim. (BAQARA)

Eid Mubārak