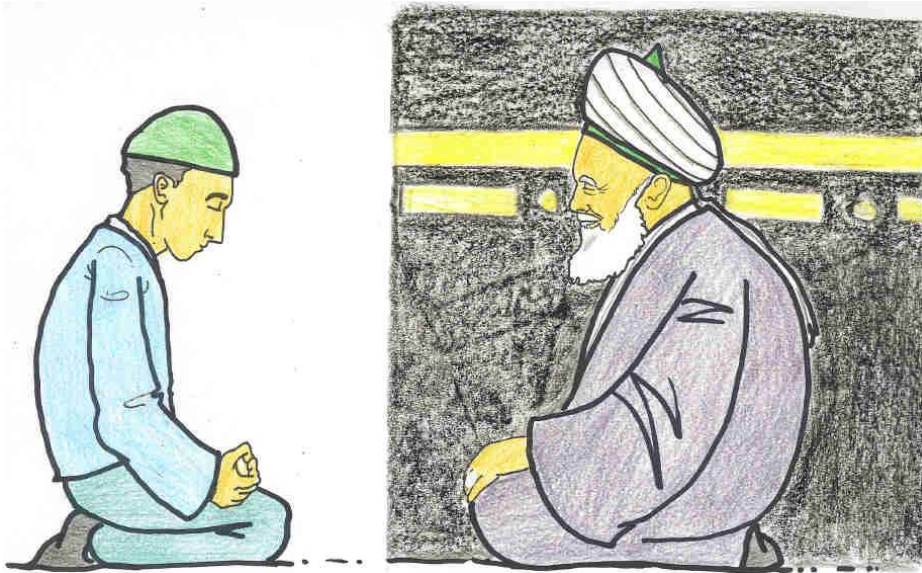


The Levels of Sufi Meditation

Muraqabah/Sufi Meditation Step by Step

Level One: Meeting the Shaykh/Mentor in the Realm of the Spirit



The goal of the first level of *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation* is to imagine yourself in the presence of the Shaykh/Mentor, to give him greetings, to converse with him, and to build a relationship with him on a spiritual level.

After proceeding through the aforementioned preparatory steps, visualize yourself in the presence of the Shaykh/Mentor. The operative word here is “visualize.” Visualizing is not the same as imagining. When we imagine something, we create a fictional illusion in our mind. What we are concerned with here is reality, and you must know that the follower is truly in the continual presence of the Shaykh/Mentor, on the plane of the spirit.

So visualize that reality, projecting it onto the screen of your mind.

- ❖ Keep your eyes closed.
- ❖ See the Shaykh/Mentor through the eye of the heart.
- ❖ Do not look for his face.
- ❖ Instead, concentrate on his aura, his spiritual form.
- ❖ When you begin to perceive the Shaykh/Mentor’s presence, give him greetings. It is important to maintain proper manners with the Shaykh/Mentor during

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muraqabah/Sufi Meditation, behaving exactly as you would if you were in the Shaykh/Mentor's physical presence.

- ❖ Sit still, maintaining a position of respect—if it is not too difficult for you, kneel. If this is too difficult, then sit cross-legged. Remain fully conscious, fully awake, and fully aware of your connection with the Shaykh/Mentor.

At this point, you may allow your soul to converse with the Shaykh/Mentor. In so doing you define, build, and strengthen your relationship with his reality. Follow what the Shaykh/Mentor reveals to your heart about spiritual matters. However, with regard to worldly matters, any inspiration you receive through *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation* should be confirmed with the Shaykh/Mentor before you act on it. Level Two: Connecting Your Heart with the Heart of the Shaykh/Mentor

After mastering the first level of *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*, your next goal is to build a spiritual connection between your heart and the Shaykh/Mentor's.

- ❖ To accomplish this, begin as before and visualize yourself in his presence.
- ❖ After greeting the Shaykh/Mentor, ask permission to connect your heart to his light and his heart to your light.
- ❖ Imagine a ray of light extending from the Shaykh/Mentor's heart to your heart and another extending from your heart to the Shaykh/Mentor's. This creates a powerful spiritual connection.



Once this connection is established, recite your daily *dhikr*, taking care to maintain the connection between your heart and the Shaykh/Mentor's throughout (See the Appendix for details of the daily *awrad* and an explanation of its secrets).



Once a Day :

- **Make fresh wudu and pray 2 raka'.**
- **3x Shahada** [Kalimatu Shahadah (3 times): Ashhadu an la ilaha illa-lah, wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasulu-lah]
- **100-200x Istighfar** [Astaghfirul lahal `Atheem wa atubu ilayh]
- **3x Surah Ikhlas** [Qul huwa Allahu ahadun Allahu alssamadu Lam yalid walam yooladu Walam yakun lahu kufuwan ahadun]
- **Fatiha** (read fatiha)]
- **Minimum 200x** seeking support and presence of Mawlana Shaykh (Q): **“Madad ya Sayyidi, Madadul-Haq Ya Mawlana Shaykh Nazim Haqqani”** Repeating Dhikr

Level Three: Controlling the Breath



The goal of this exercise is to practice conscious breathing.

According to GrandShaykh/Mentor ‘Abdul Khaliq Ghujdawani ق:

The most important mission for the seeker in this Order is to safeguard his breath, and he who cannot safeguard his breath, it would be said of him, “he lost himself.”

The name *Allah*, which encompasses the ninety-nine Names and Attributes, consists of four letters, *alif* (ا), *lam* (ل), *lam* (ل), and *hah* (ه): الله. The people of Sufism say that the absolute unseen Essence of God is expressed by the last letter, *hah* (ه).

Shah Naqshband ق said:

This Order is built on breath. So it is a must for everyone to safeguard his breath in the time of his inhalation and exhalation, and further, to safeguard his breath in the interval between the inhalation and exhalation.

Dhikr is flowing in the body of every single living creature by the necessity of its breath—even without will—as a sign of obedience, which is part of its creation. Through its breathing, the sound of the letter *hah* of the Divine Name *Allah* is made with every exhalation and inhalation, and it is a sign of the Unseen Essence serving to emphasize the Uniqueness of God. Therefore, it is necessary to be present with that breathing in order to realize the Essence of the Creator. Safeguarding your breath from

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heedlessness will lead you to complete Presence, and complete Presence will lead you to complete Vision, and complete Vision will lead you to complete Manifestation of God's ninety-nine Names and Attributes. God

leads you to the Manifestation of His ninety-nine Names and Attributes and all His other Attributes, because it is said, "God's Attributes are as numerous as the breaths of human beings."

It must be known by everyone that securing the breath from heedlessness is difficult for seekers. Therefore, we must safeguard it by seeking forgiveness. Seeking forgiveness will purify it and sanctify our breath and prepare us for the Real Manifestation of God everywhere.



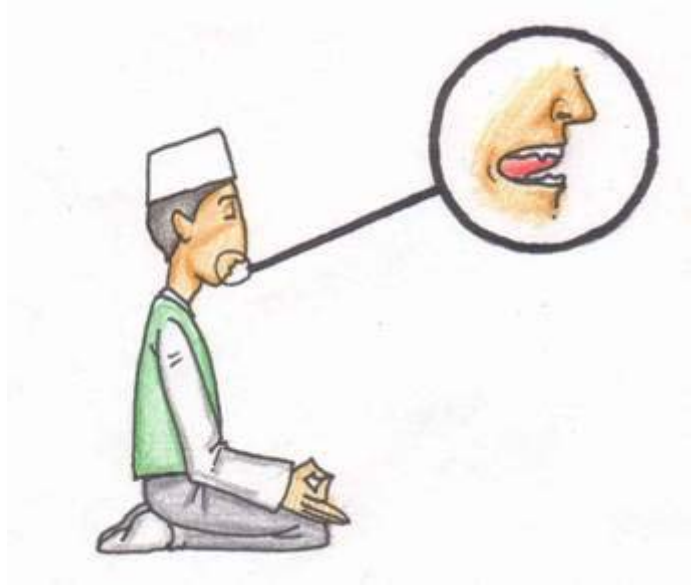
To perform this meditation, prepare as you

would for any other form of *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*.

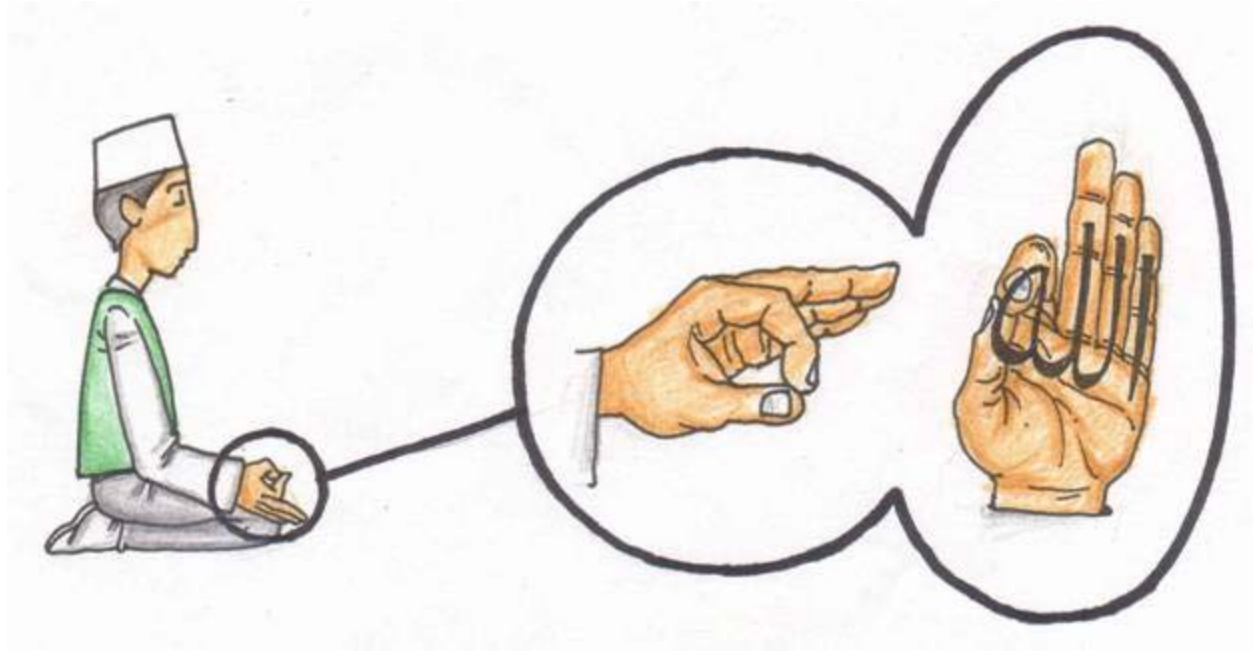
- ❖ Take special care during ablution to ensure that your hands are clean. Make your meditation space as dark as possible.
- ❖ Play a recording of Quranic recitation, prayers on the Prophet ﷺ, *dhikr*, or some other soothing sound.

Take care to perform even the smallest details of this form of *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*, because they are the foundation of your meditation.

- ❖ Assume a kneeling position or sit cross-legged in the "Lotus Position."
- ❖ Close your eyes and mouth.
- ❖ Clench your teeth together—gently, not hard—and keep your tongue pressed firmly against the roof of your mouth.
- ❖ Inhale, then hold your breath to slow your heart rate and breathing.



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The hands carry tremendous secrets, and their position in this exercise is important. You will begin to unlock the secrets of the hands in this meditation. God placed Divine Codes on our hands—these are activated by rubbing them together (See page **Error! Bookmark not defined.** *et seq.*). The hands can also function like satellite dishes, receiving Divine Energies and other emanations. Position your hands so that the tip of the thumb is touching the tip of the index finger, with the other fingers extended straight. This forms the shape of the word *Allah* in Arabic script.



Now pay attention to your breathing. Breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth.

- ❖ When you breathe in through your nose, say, *Hu-Allah*.
- ❖ Exhale through your mouth, saying *Hu*. As you breathe in, imagine white light entering through your heart.
- ❖ When you breathe out, imagine black energy being expelled from your mouth.

When we exhale, the carbon monoxide that leaves our bodies contains negative energy from our bad actions. Therefore the Prophet ﷺ said, "When you drink (water), do not breathe in

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the vessel.”¹ When you visualize this bad energy leaving your body, these bad actions are being purged from your soul.

GrandShaykh/Mentor Abdul Khaliq Ghujdawani ؒ said:

The wise seeker must safeguard his breath from heedlessness, coming in and going out, thereby keeping his heart always in the Divine Presence; and he must revive his breath with worship and servitude and dispatch this worship to His Lord full of life, for every breath which is inhaled and exhaled with Presence is alive and connected with the Divine Presence. Every breath inhaled and exhaled with heedlessness is dead, disconnected from the Divine Presence.

Keep repeating *Ya Sayyidi, Ya Mawlana Shaykh/Mentor, Madad Ya Sahibu'l-waqt* while holding your index finger and thumb together gently and trying to feel your pulse. It is important to feel your own heart beating and make sure it is in tune with your breathing. Hear your heart beating, *Allah, Allah*. Remember that each of us is surrounded by a field of energy. You are receiving emanations of Divine Energy.

Level Four: Dressing Yourself in the Light of the Shaykh/Mentor

Enter the presence of the Shaykh/Mentor, then ask him to dress you in his light; to dress you in the divine dress that God has placed on him.

Imagine the Shaykh/Mentor's heart over your heart, his beard over your face. When you are dressed in the light of the Shaykh/Mentor, it is as though you are wearing a favorite cloak of his. Keep repeating *Madad Ya Sahibu'l-waqt, Madad Ya Sahibu'l-waqt*.

Remember, the Shaykh/Mentor is with the Prophet ﷺ. The Shaykh/Mentor is in the Divine Presence. He is one of those who died before they died. The masters of this Order say we do not truly live until we die. We die by killing our desires. If we do this, then in every waking moment we will find ourselves in the presence of *Sayyidina* Muhammad ﷺ. But we are not yet at that station, and so we must attach ourselves to someone who is. By maintaining the Shaykh/Mentor's light upon us and by continuing to see support by repeating *Madad Ya Sahibu'l-waqt* throughout the day, we can maintain our connection with the Prophet ﷺ and the Divine Presence.

Consider the difference that this can make in our prayers. When we call *Allahu Akbar*, we must recognize that our prayer is of no importance to God. It is only important to us. We have an understanding of God, but we do not know His Reality. Nothing can occupy space with Him. Nothing can occupy that place except God. The only servant who truly understands that is the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.



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We cannot connect directly to Prophet ﷺ. We need a means, even if it is indirect, of connecting with God, and therefore we have to maintain our connection with our Shaykh/Mentor who is connected to the Prophet ﷺ, who is connected with God. With this chain of connection, our prayer may mean something. And the same is true for *dhikr* or any other form of worship.

Visualize yourself being dressed with the light of the Shaykh/Mentor, the light of his form. Imagine that your weak and deficient light bulb is suddenly being filled with his brilliant light. We are full of holes, so we cannot contain the light that enters into us and concentrate it. But the Shaykh/Mentor's light is as bright as a laser. It is focused. And, as such, it is capable of transmitting enormous amounts of information.

Today, God has taught mankind to use lasers to beam data from one place to another. He is revealing this technology in order to show us that information is transmitted by light.

This is the meaning of the term *Naqshbandi*. It refers to the ability to burn information into your heart and soul with light, just as a laser can burn data onto a compact disc.

- ❖ As you visualize yourself being dressed in the light of the Shaykh/Mentor, as you
- ❖ imagine his light filling you, pay attention to your breathing.
- ❖ Breathe in through your nose and, as you do, say *Allah* silently in your heart. Then breathe out through your mouth and, as you do, say *Hu*.
- ❖ As you do this, remain conscious of your heartbeat and maintain your connection with your Shaykh/Mentor, asking him to send more and more light into you.
- ❖ That light will come and cauterize your deficiencies. Doctors used to use hot knives to sear the flesh they cut in order to stop the flow of blood, creating very strong scar tissue.
- ❖ The light of the Shaykh/Mentor has a similar effect upon the spiritual body.



When we sin and fail to ask God for forgiveness, those sins become like barnacles or calluses on our souls. That is why the Prophet ﷺ used to say, "I see the scabs of devils." The Shaykh/Mentor's light can burn away these impurities. The light of the Shaykh/Mentor contains the light of his Shaykh/Mentor, which contains the light of the Prophet ﷺ. That is why it is so powerful.

Of course, our egos resist this purification. That is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to perform *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*. Another is that, in *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*,



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we are forced to examine ourselves and confront our mistakes and bad deeds head on. We are faced with the truth about ourselves.

During *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*, the Shaykh/Mentor may ask you, “Why did you do this?” or “Why did you say that?” He may ask you to explain your actions, to examine your motivations and real intentions. In *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*, there is no hiding from the truth. Truth is coming and falsehood is vanishing. And we are not always happy with what we see.

Indeed, the ego will be very happy with its old station. It has no need to become a slave of the truth or a servant of the Prophet ﷺ. It has no need for such accounting. But we do, if we hope to advance upon the Path of Righteousness. We must practice *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation* each night, reflecting upon our actions, and taking our due of praise or criticism from our Shaykh/Mentor; without such self-examination, we may spend our whole lives heedless of our bad actions.

If you can face such scrutiny, if you can break through the barriers thrown up by your ego to prevent this light from shining in to the dark recesses of your soul, then whole oceans of knowledge and understanding will open up for you.

Level Five: Carrying the Dress of the Shaykh/Mentor

To carry the dress of the Shaykh:

3 levels of continuous struggle

Keep His Love { *Muhabat* } ,

Keep His Presence { *Hudur* }

Execute His Will upon our selves

{ *Annihilation or Fana* }

After we have built a strong connection between our heart and the heart of the Shaykh/Mentor, the goal becomes to maintain that spiritual connection—not just in *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*,



but throughout the day. There are three levels to this struggle: keeping the love for the Shaykh/Mentor, keeping his presence, and making the Shaykh/Mentor’s will our will. This final level is that Station of Annihilation.

To accomplish this, you must wear the light of the Shaykh/Mentor and, from this point forward, imagine that you are always cloaked in that spiritual raiment. You must not eat, drink, pray, perform *dhikr*, or do anything else without imagining the Shaykh/Mentor’s image upon you. Your love for the Shaykh/Mentor will mix with his presence, and this will open the door to annihilation in him. The more you can remain mindful of this spiritual dress, the more that you can remember to visualize it upon yourself throughout the day, the faster your progress towards that station will be and the more complete your annihilation in the Shaykh/Mentor will become.

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Once you have annihilated yourself in the presence of the Shaykh/Mentor, he will annihilate you in the presence of the Holy Messenger of God, *Sayyidina* Muhammad ﷺ. Then you must keep the love of the Prophet ﷺ in your heart, just as you kept your love for the Shaykh/Mentor. You must keep yourself in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ, just as you kept yourself in the presence of the Shaykh/Mentor. And you must make the Prophet's ﷺ will your will, just as you executed the will of the Shaykh/Mentor upon yourself.

This will lead you to the Divine Presence, to a station of being, yet being without existence—a clear vessel for whoever wishes to fill your being from God's Divine Kingdom. In this

state of Oneness with *Sayyidina* Muhammad ﷺ, you gradually assimilate and understand his knowledge through passion, longing, and love.

Duration of *Muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*



Initially, you may begin the practice of *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation* for short intervals of five to fifteen minutes, and gradually work towards longer sessions. With practice, these sessions may extend for hours at a time. What is most important, however, is that you maintain a consistent practice, as this is the only way to gain any lasting benefit. It is better and wiser to perform *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation* for a short time each day without omission than to be sporadic in your discipline and the practice thereof. If one applies a small amount of effort consistently, this will yield tremendous progress over time.

Prophetic Muraqabah/Sufi Meditation

Once the seeker has mastered the basic practice of *muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*, he may move on to more advanced spiritual practices. In Prophetic *Muraqabah/Sufi Meditation*, the seeker tries to build a personal relationship with the Prophet ﷺ.

To perform this exercise, you will need a cassette or compact disc recording of blessings on the Prophet ﷺ. Begin by dressing yourself with the light of the Shaykh/Mentor. That is the first step for all of the more advanced forms of meditation. Close your eyes and visualize yourself in the presence of the Shaykh/Mentor, dressed in his light.

- ❖ Then begin playing the recorded blessings. As you listen to the recorded blessings, you must know that the Prophet ﷺ is within you.
- ❖ We all know that Satan is with us, always trying to ensnare us in his traps and whispering his lies in our ears. But *Sayyidina* Muhammad ﷺ is with us, too, and God gave more power to *Sayyidina* Muhammad ﷺ than He did to Satan.
- ❖ Our sultan is *Sayyidina* Muhammad ﷺ. So, as we believe in the presence of evil, we must believe in the even more powerful presence of his goodness.

In this meditation, you focus on that Prophetic presence within you. You must know it, feel it, see it, and you must say, “I am weak, I am poor, and *Sayyidina* Muhammad ﷺ is everything. Gaze upon me!

- ❖ Accept me to be in front of your Holy Grave!
- ❖ I am asking for your love, for your forgiveness, for your guidance, and for faith.
- ❖ That love you have for God, if you give me one drop of it I will drown!
- ❖ If you do not open your door, they are going to destroy me!
- ❖ They are going to rip apart my faith! They are going to rip apart my family!
- ❖ Please, open your door!” You must pound on that door, the door of the Prophet ﷺ. And, when that door opens, you must place your head on the Prophet’s ﷺ lap.
- ❖ Know that you are in his spiritual presence. Dress yourself in that holy presence and go into that holy heart, the Heart of Muhammad.

Conclusion

To climb the mountain, the seeker must journey from the lower world to the Divine Presence. He or she must travel from the ego's world of sensual reality to the soul's world of Divine reality.

To make progress on this journey, we must bring into our heart the picture of the Shaykh/Mentor, as it is the most powerful means of detaching ourselves from the hold of the senses. The Shaykh/Mentor becomes, in our hearts, the mirror of the Absolute Essence. If we are successful in this, we reach the state of self-effacement—absence from the world of the senses. To the degree that this state increases in us, our attachment to the world of the senses will weaken and disappear, and we will come into the Station of the Absolute Void—not sensing anything other than God.



The highest degree of this station is called Annihilation. Thus, Shah Naqshband ؒ said:

The shortest path to our goal, which is God, Almighty and Exalted, is for God to lift the veil from the Essence of the Face of His Oneness that appears in all creation. He does this with the State of Erasure and Annihilation in His Absolute Oneness, until His Majestic Essence dawns upon and eliminates the consciousness of anything other than Him. This is the end of the Journey of Seeking God and the beginning of another Journey.

At the end of the Journey of Seeking and the State of Attraction comes the State of Self-Effacement and Annihilation. This is the goal of all mankind as, God mentioned in the Quran:

I did not create Jinn and Mankind except to worship Me. (51:56)