



Muraqabah in the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Order

The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation/Niyyat

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. I am returning, if you want, to the subject I have been talking about, *muraqabah*. As the *murīd* / student makes progress through contemplations / *fikr*, the inner mystical practice includes three processes. One is concentration. We say, “*Concentration of the mind upon the infinite.*” [Another is] meditation / *muraqabah*, and [another,] contemplation / *fikr*. In the first stage, concentration of the mind, the metaphor used is like the sharpening of a pencil. The second stage is like learning how to form letters, and the third stage is like writing words and sentences.

In the original Khwaja Khwajagan teaching of the Naqshbandiyya, these stages correspond to *dhikr qalbi* (remembering Allah in your heart), *nafi wa-ithbat*, and *muraqabah*. The difference between meditation and contemplation in this sense is a kind of dynamic motion of contemplation. We call them *niyyat*; others call them contemplations. So you do not to get confused between the idea of contemplating and contemplation, the original 26 different *niyyat* which have been replaced in our line by the 23 (I guess you could say 26, if you talk about the station of repentance and the contemplation of all the 10 *latā’if*) are called the contemplations. Each of what we call a *niyyat* is a contemplation. As you move through the different stages of transmission, these are called the contemplations in the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi system.

We use the term “*muraqabah*” as the general term. What we mean by *muraqabah* in descriptive terminology is waiting, waiting for the *latā’if—qalb, rūh, sirr, khafī, akhfā* and *nafs; mā, nār, bād, and khak* (air, fire, water, and earth)— to attract Divine

energy. Hazrat Khwaja Hurd, who was the son of Baqi Billah, said “*Muraqabah is leaving behind one’s power and strength and turning from all states and attributes, and waiting in expectation for the encounter while longing for its beauty, and being immersed in its desire and love.*” Briefly said, and what I tell people when they begin meditation, is it is sitting as if you are waiting for the Beloved to come. Because it’s the Beloved, you are anxious for the Beloved to come. And because it’s the Beloved, you would wait forever. Hazrat Shaykh Saiuddin Kashkari (ra) described how Junayd Baghdadi (ra) was taught how to perform *muraqabah* by a cat. One should wait with undivided attention, like a cat ready to pounce on a mouse. And I, as you know, had that personal experience.

All those years, sitting with Hazrat, I was hearing the crickets... whirr...whirr... whirr, and feeling, “Oh, how beautiful. I’m sitting with all these beautiful crickets. How come I never see any of these crickets?” Then one day, after a few years, WHIRRRRR it was right in front of me. I took my chador off my head. I was sitting with my shawl over my head, mostly to keep the mosquitoes away. And I looked, and there was a rat, this big, standing up like this, going, WHIRRRRR. And all along, I thought it was crickets. I had two choices to make. I could get up and run away, which I really wanted to do. Or I could put the chador over my head again, tuck it under my feet, and go deep. And the rat taught me how to go deep into meditation. Like the mosquitoes taught me earlier, sitting outside.

It’s a very true story, my friends. A rat taught me how to go deep in meditation. In our world view, or cosmological view, we see that this process of going through the different contemplations or *niyyats* is represented by intersecting circles of a geographical map, if you will, of the worlds between the essence/*dhat* and the physical world, between the world of creation / *khalq* and the world of the unseen, *‘alam al-amr*/ the world of command. These different intentions and various

contemplations are sort of a road map in a spiritual journey or continuum. And like a road map, if you understand it, you know where you are going. The road map in this case is a topographical one. It shows the different terrain; sometimes we call it the seven valleys one goes through. These manifestations between the essence and the physical world include the path to navigate this topography of meditation, realizing that all of it is climbing the mountain. All of it is uphill. Even when you are climbing a mountain, sometimes you go down to climb up.

In these 26 stages of *muraqabah*, if you look at them carefully, you get a description of what you are passing through, what the different stages are in the climb. To the horizons, *a'faq*; journeying within oneself, *per ser anfus*; journeying within the names of Allah within one's own self, *asma al sifat*; with the accompaniment of Allah, with the accompaniment of love, etc. It's always described from the physical world through the Divine Essence as "*uruj*" an ascent. It is [from] the same word as "*miraj*" as in the Isra Miraj of the Prophet Mohammed (sal) when he ascends to the Seven Heavens on the back of Buraq. Before embarking on this sojourn through *muraqabah*, we have to remember (and this is what Bahā'uddīn Naqshband called 'recollection') the heart, which created a vehicle. [Then there are] the recitations and breathing that are given to us that sort of rev up the engine. And [then there is] learning, under the supervision of our guides, how to breathe and how to turn one's attention away from the physical world and into the inner world.

When a person is ready to begin, in the original teaching, the first contemplation focused on *ahadiyat*, the unity of Allah Swt before going into the 5 contemplations of what they called the "*muraqabah masharib*," the meditation on the wellsprings. Contemplation of the *latā'if hamsa*, which is [contemplation of] the five subtle centers. Each meditation is an attempt to guide us in the effusive light, the *fayd*, from the Essence / Divine, from the moment of breaking through barriers, from the

moment when the light breaks through the darkness. There is some moment when the light breaks through the darkness. You can think of it in astronomical terms of the universe being made mostly of dark energy and black holes. But there is light also that breaks out of that, which are the worlds we see. Allah said, “**Kun faya kun. Be and it became.**”

Each meditation is an attempt to guide that effusive ocean of light, from the essence, to a very specific *latifa*: from the essence to the *qalb*, to the *rūh*, to the *sirr*, *khafī*, *akhfā* and *nafs*. There is this ocean of *fiyd*, effulgent light, and we are trying to direct it through our meditation into each *latifa*, until each *latifa* is illuminated. We do that by the means of the Nur-i-Muhammad, the blessings of the Prophet Mohammed (sal) through our Mujadeddi *shaykhs* and *awliya-Llāh*. This is the journey through the Attributes of Allah before proceeding to the Essence. That is the third transmission of the first circle through the *asma al sifat*, through the Attributes of Allah that precede us going into the Divine Essence, through the second circles. For those of you who have done this, you understand this. For others, it’s all gibberish.

The Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi teaching, which is also passed on to the Shadhuli, Qadriyya, and Chishtiyya in our line, emphasizes that the goal for the seeker is to travel in that essence, not in the attributes. This is why Hazrat was so strong with me about being careful about teaching too much about the attributes. He said to me in London when I told him I was teaching the *sifat*, and helping people to understand this journey by understanding that Allah Swt is everywhere. I still teach it: compassion, mercy, tolerance, patience. You hear me say it all the time. But he gave me a warning. He said that the goal is to travel in the *dhat*, not in the *sifat*—in the essence, not in the attributes. This means traveling in the first manifestation of

creation, instead of the lower manifestations of creation. Not what they call the “undifferentiated essence.”

The five basic prophetic contemplations emulate the model of the relationship between the Prophet Mohammed (sal) and his Sahaba / Companions, spiritual companionship. This is why we say that as you travel in this journey, you travel with good people, like the Prophet (sal) traveled with Abu Bakr (ra). He traveled with Umar, and with Uthman, and then he travels with Sidna Ali. The five – Prophet Muhammad, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Sidna Ali – comprises the first *suhbat*, spiritual companionship. This is where we are back to *rābita*, where the seeker visualizes himself in front of the Prophet (sal), receiving the Divine Energy through the connecting chain of the Naqshbandi *shaykhs* or the different Ahl al Bayt, depending on which Order. Or, you can look at the first, Abu Bakr, and then the line from Abu Bakr.

Eventually, some of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidiyya concentrated on the prophets, and in these different contemplations, there were differences of opinion. Some said that it was unacceptable for anyone to concentrate on other prophets, though the faith and the certainty can be attained by them. After all, we accepted the people of the Book, Ahl al Kitab. Other people recommended that you should focus on the Prophet Mohammed (sal), and upon Allah Swt, using the *shaykhs* as mirrors. If you are looking at them, you are looking at the Prophet (sal) through their hearts, through their *rūh*, and through their *sirr*. It was never a controversy, just sort of a preference. If you look into the heart of the *shaykh*, you should know he is reflecting the heart of his *shaykh*, who is reflecting the heart of his *shaykh*, all the way back to the Prophet Mohammd (sal).

As each of these different subtle centers, *qalb*, *rūh*, *sirr*, *khafī*, *akhfā* and *nafs*, earth, air, fire, and water receives the Divine Grace, if you will, from its origins, from that moment when the light emerges from the unseen world and creates life and all existence, the goal for each *latifa* is to go to its origin and becomes annihilated, totally absorbed (*fana*) in its origin. Truly, very few travelers on this journey can annihilate the five *latā'if* (*qalb*, *rūh*, *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā*). At least, rarely does it occur in very short periods of time. So what happens is, as you awaken these different *latā'if*, you naturally are inclined to certain ones. Many of you have said to me, and I said to my own Shaykh, “Do I really have to go on to *rūh*? I’m really enjoying being in *qalb*. I really feel very comfortable in *qalb*, and don’t want to move on.” Each of these *latā'if* is under the foot of a certain prophet until it is annihilated, then you progress to the next *latifa*.

You develop, in a sense, familiar relationships with the Prophet Adam (as), or Prophet Ibrahim (as), or Prophet Nūh (as), and Prophet Musa (as), and Prophet Isa (as), and Prophet Mohammad (sal). The minimum requirement for progress in this journey is to return the heart, *latifa qalb*, to its origin. That is to say, when the heart becomes annihilated in its origin, in Allah Swt, or in that Divine Effulgent Light; when the heart becomes so absorbed that each beat reminds you of the *dhikr*, when the blood is a metaphor for life itself, because it is life itself; when the all the emotions of feelings of the heart are directed toward the origin of all emotions and peace, then we say the seeker can move out of the circle ‘*dayra imkan*’ of contingent existence, and proceed onto the next stage—the realm of names and attributes.

Hazrat Adam (as) as you know is the prophet that governed the first contemplations of the five ways, and the active attributes are concentrated in him. Since he knew the names of everything in creation, Allah asked him to teach the names of all things to the angels, who were very suspect of him. They asked Allah, “Why are you creating

this being other than us, who is imperfect, who is going to bring *fitna* and difficulty to creation?" Allah said, "I know that which you do not know." I have spoken many times on the names and why the names. Because Allah Swt has placed all those active attributes (compassion, mercy, tolerance, love, understanding, patience, perseverance, beauty, knowledge) within Hazrat Adam. Because they were placed in Hazrat Adam, they were placed in all of us who are derivatives of Hazrat Adam (as). Since he knew the names of everything, we are described as spiritual travelers who at the station of the heart, in the presence of remembrance, *lā ilāha illa-Llāh*, we observe Allah's creation. We say "under the feet of" Hazrat Adam (as).

As you begin to annihilate yourself in the heart, you realize that everything in this creation, every name, every attribute is a doorway back to its origin. For the person who contemplates Rahman / Compassion and Mercy; Salaam / Peace and 'Adl / Justice, you are actually contemplating a doorway back to the moment when Hazrat Adam (as) was given the knowledge of all the names of things. The names and attributes are in this creation as doorways / *bab*. In contrast to that, the station of *rūh*/ spirit involves looking at Allah and negating Allah's creation by returning the *rūh* to its origin in immutable Divine Attributes, and these are associated as you know in Hazrat Ibrahim (as) and Hazrat Nuh (as), who manifest a special level where they transcended the physical realms.

The limitations were manifest as being transcended in Sidna Ibrahim walking through the fire, or the lamb replacing his son in the sacrifice; in Hazrat Nuh, seeing that all things in this contingent world being destroyed by the flood, including his own son. He is warned by Allah Swt not to ask what happens to his son, but rather just surrender, after spending 950 years trying to convince his wife and his people to turn their attention back to their Creator. They represent this annihilation, if you will, in spirit. The *latif sirr* is under Hazrat Musa (as), who was the first prophet to

speak to Allah Swt, who had a direct communication with Allah. Then the other prophets like Prophet Isa (as), all of whom are associated with different circles on this journey, different levels on the topographical map. We say in a linear sense that a person ascends in their journey toward Allah/ Truth/essence, but really it is awakening to that divine presence. It is not going from here to there (outwardly), but going from here to here, within one's own self.

When all of these qualities are aggregated, when all of these challenges are absorbed and put into one dynamic story of a personal journey, as if you are traveling with Adam (as), Nuh (as), Ibrahim (as), Musa (as), and Jesus (as), you realize Allah has aggregated these in the light of the Prophet Mohammed (sal), who said, **"I existed before Adam."** Now in aggregation you have it in this man, Prophet Mohammed (sal). He is not, as the Christians claim Jesus to be, the "son of God," rather, he (Prophet Muhammad) is the "sun," the light which aggregates all of those previous prophets into one teaching, one journey, one track. That is called the *waliyat kubra*, or the greater intimacy with Allah, where the seeker travels in the final stage in *nafs*, in the self. Since this is the only center that goes from the spiritual heights to the world, the bridge between the unseen world and the seen world is your own self.

The ego of the lower self has been transcended. Because we began with the heart, not with the ego, we didn't begin with trying to "kill" the ego like the yogis do. We don't begin as others do, trying to deal with the issues of the self. We begin with the heart. Because of that, by the time you arrive at the *nafs*, you have much less to do. You are on the bridge between this world and the next world, between the unseen and the seen, between the spiritual heights and the world of creation. This is called the realm of the *waliyat ambiyā*, or the intimacy of the prophets. To return from the highest heights, from enlightenment, annihilation, *nirvana*, *vaikunta*, whatever any religion or path calls it, the goal of every spiritual path is this.

The truth is you return back to this world to convey the message to humanity that there is a way to die before you die, which is found in the Injil / New Testament and in the teachings of Tasawwuf and Qur'an. This is also a *maqam* / station. A *maqam* is not an experience; it is a station. A *maqam* is some place that once you achieve it, you don't fall from it. This is called the station of "*sayra sadr*," the expanded breast. Allah said, "**Have I not lifted from off your chest a heavy burden?**" This whole journey, Allah tells us in the same *surah*, is "**With hardship goeth ease.**" All the journeying and the difficulty, all the difficulties and vicissitudes of life, all the problems, and everything was annihilated at some point in the fire, if you will, of your meditations and contemplations. All the burdens were lifted.

Then in the *akhfā*, the subtle center of the most hidden self, that light expands. It expands in the chest and forms one single light that Allah mention in the Holy Qur'an: "**Those whom Allah in His plan wills to guide, He opens their breast to Islam...** (meaning not the religion, but the *dīn*, meaning to submission, to a world of complete safety and complete security, *taslim*) **...Those whom He wills to leave straying, He makes their breast closed and constricted as if they had to climb up to the skies. So does Allah heap the penalty on those who refuse to believe.**" What is the penalty? The penalty is ignorance. It is wandering without any destination. The penalty is not knowing. If you know that some know, and you could know but you don't know because you don't make the effort, that is a great penalty. There is no vindictiveness; it's your own choice.

Musa (as) said, "**O my Lord, expand for me my breast.**" In those people's hearts, who have been opened to this submission... and this is where people become very confused. Muslims just want everybody to be Muslims, just like Christians want people to become Christians. They just don't get it. They don't understand what it

means. The problem is, Muslims have a word called “*islam*” that has a morphological, linguistic trait you can track. The word “Christianity” doesn’t have any morphology to it. It’s the title of a person. But *islam* means *taslim* (submission, safety, security). When Allah says that people should become Muslims, what does it mean? Wear a *topi*, put your head on the ground, and sit in a mosque like we are doing right now? I don’t think so, unless that’s the place where you find the means and the truth. Of course, that’s fine. When those people’s hearts are open to this kind of Islam, they receive this kind of enlightenment from Allah Swt. He said,

Is one whose heart has opened to Islam so that he has received enlightenment from his Lord no better than one who is hard-hearted? Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against celebrating the praises of Allah. They are manifestly wandering in error.

“Celebrating the praises of Allah” doesn’t just mean saying “*subhāna-Llāh*” or “*alhamduli-Llāh.*” It means, celebrating all those attributes and qualities of compassion, mercy, love, tolerance, patience, understanding, etc. What is the emphasis on? The emphasis is on this *fyd*, the effusion of light going to the *nafs* in the contemplations. Beyond that point, everything is consolidated and forms one single track to go to the highest realm. It is the track through the prophets. It is the track the Prophet Mohammed (sal) took in the Night Journey, where he meets each prophet one by one, goes to different levels and different stations, until he finally comes within two bows’ length of the throne. This is the inner journey, through the qualities and attributes of the prophets, through the qualities and attributes of the human being, resonating. Those things that are placed in us from the time of Adam (as), that they begin to resonate, with each prophet that resonates predominately on that level or that *latifa*, until we are in such resonance that everything else falls away, and we are “within two bows’ lengths of the throne.”

Some Muslims take that literally and believe that Allah is sitting on a throne. But that throne is your heart. Allah says, **“You will find me in the heart of the believer.”** So if you are looking for the throne, you have to look into your own heart. At that stage, the 10 *latā'if* (including the *nafs mut'mainna*) have become so purified and so content that the circle now expands. It is called the greater intimacy. It is represented by the previous circles: the first, second, and third circle. Then it transitions between them through the *barzakh*, the isthmus that reaches from this world to the next, into the nearness of Allah Swt, first through His Names and Attributes, and then directly through your meditation.

Words obviously fail to explain these things. It is very, very difficult to talk about, because words cannot express them. They become like difficult concepts to utter. But you know that in these circles, there are little circles. There is the circle of love, of accompaniment, and *maiyyat* and *maiyyat al hubbi*. There are attributes of negation when you make *lā ilāha illa-Llāh*. There are attributes of unity and coming together, and then there are contemplations of the outer and the inner, the *dhahir* and the *batin*. All of these you can try to understand intellectually; but the truth is the only way you can understand them is to do it. When you are doing something, it's nice to have a name to associate with it. Because it's quite natural for a human being to ask, “Where am I?” “Oh, you're in Venezuela. Belize. Dubai.” You don't say, “You're somewhere.” Nobody's happy with “somewhere.” You're in Bedford. Nobody's even happy in Bedford...

We ask for a name to go along with places, and we identify with places. We associate what we see with a name. That's why we have these names. It's a simplistic way of explaining it. Having gone through these initial stages of awakening the *latā'if*, there is the stage of the elements. Then we contemplate from

the inward or the *batin* to the different manifestations and the teachings of the *muraqabah* / meditation. That's a very detailed and hard to follow understanding in words of something that one should really only try to understand, first having taken permission, and sitting and getting the transmissions in these different contemplative exercises and stages. Then one realizes there are even things beyond that: *sayr-i-Llah*, *sayr-fī-Llah*, *sayr-ma'-Llah*, *adaniyyat*. Those are really not explainable; I'm sorry. You are hardly able to experience them, let alone explain them.

Why is it important? I don't know. I don't talk about it a lot. Perhaps it gives you a sense of a map. Perhaps it lets you know that others have traveled on that journey before and they have mapped it out. You don't have a map unless someone has traveled on that journey. The fact that someone has traveled on the journey and mapped it out in words and concepts means it's possible you can travel on that journey, too. As we understand, that journey is in the companionship of good people like yourselves. It's also in the companionship of the messengers and the prophets, and the consolidation of those *latā'if* that has become perfected in an individual. We call that individual Hazrat Mohammed Rasūlu-Llāh (sal). He has a name. Was he just a man? Yes. A prophet? Yes. But he has a name. He is the consolidation of all those Attributes and all that Light we call the Nur-i-Muhammad, the Light of Muhammad.

We know that it existed before the physical body of the man, because it is mentioned in the Torah, and that was a long time before Islam. These messengers of Allah who have come bring some kind of teaching, some kind of scripture – the Torah, the Psalms, the New Testament, the Qur'an. Among our teachers, you will find different inclinations to different ones of those prophets and their teachings. Why? We don't know – perhaps in the unseen world when our souls were all gathered, perhaps you

were standing near Musa (as). What's important is you have that companionship in the unseen world, just like you have this companionship in *suhbat* in this world.

There is always more that can be said. Normally what I would do now in a more advanced process is to talk about the intentions and each contemplation. Let me give you one example of an intention you are familiar with, but in the ways of the original Naqshbandi teachings gave it, then perhaps you will understand a little better. For the first intention of the first circle, *ahadiyyat*, in the original teaching it went like this:

Divine Grace comes from the Eternal Essence that comprehensively encompasses the divine attributes and the Divine perfections. It is free from all imperfections and defects, and is incomparable to anything created. This Divine Grace comes to my heart by means of great Mahashaykh Pir Bahaudin Naqshbandi Mujaddidi in the heart of my own Shaykh.

That's what you would be saying in the original teaching. It's a lot different than what you say, right? But do you see the parallel? Or, in the *muraqabah of tajalli itiqalb*, with the internal voice you make this intention:

Ya Allah, my heart faces the Prophet Mohammed's (sal) heart, and the Divine Energy emanating from the active attributes, which you have sent from the Prophet Mohammed to the Prophet Adam's heart. Convey it to my heart by means of the great Mahashaykh Pir (and then you name your shaykh.).

You see the parallel between these two? It goes like that. These are the original translations of the original transmissions. Now you can see what Abdul Bari Shah (ra) did when he abbreviated these intentions. The intention of the contemplation of

“being together with Allah” (*muraqabah maiyyat*) and the accompaniment in the circle of *waliyat shukra*, contemplate the meaning of the blessed saying: “*Wa huwa ma’akum aina ma kuntum. He is with you wherever you are.*” And with an internal voice, you make this intention:

Let the Divine Energy, Fayd, come from the eternal essence that is with me and with all creation, just as each atom of creation is with the Divine is understood in the blessed verse that He is the only and ultimate purpose. The Divine Energy comes to my heart from the small dimension of sainthood (the lower dimension) which is the sainthood of the great saints in the shadows of the Divine Names and Attributes. O Allah, by means of the great Maha Shaykh... (etc).

Those are the original intentions as they were given, in translation. They’ve all been abbreviated for you and for me; and with that abbreviation, they have been infused with all of that meaning by Abdul Bari Shah (ra). It’s too difficult a time. People are too busy. The world is changing. They have not got time to sit and contemplate in this way; therefore, he has compressed it all so you can send it over the broadband faster. But it has everything in it. You can see why it’s very hard for me to go on. For each one of these transmissions, i.e., “he loves them and they love him,” all the things you say... this is the long version of it. I have had these in my records for so many years, and have finally digitized them. I thought, well, I should talk about it. But I think that’s enough talking about them. Any questions?

Question: Isa: You always speak of we begin where others leave off.

Shaykh: I’m quoting the Naqshbandi order when I say that.

Isa: I was wondering how the progression of the niyyats we move through came to be.. the different circles. Was it as the *shaykhs* experienced these *latā’if* as they went

through them? It seems we have to go through them in a linear progression, but I was wondering how that progression came about?

Shaykh: Everything in the world is circles. We even wear circular hats. Everything is circles. Eyes are like circles. We love rainbows because they are circles in the sky. If you started off traveling in the air and didn't stop, you'd wind up in the same place. We live on a circular planet, spinning in circles in the universe. So unveiling a truth is just the way Allah created it. When you see that, and you dive into that, you realize these circles have meaning. It's like a topographical map. Poets have used it as a metaphor. It's natural for us – the cycle of life and death – so many, many different ways. It's just a realization of a manifestation and it's therefore a projection of that manifestation into another dimension. Does that make sense?
Asalaam aleikum.