

## The Rules and Manners of Meditation

In meditation, the sufi should:

1. Have performed ablution (*wudu*).
2. Wear soft and light clothes, with buttons undone so as to keep the body completely comfortable.
3. Sit on the floor or ground.
4. Keep the body free from motion. (Shibli one saw Nuri meditating in such a state of stillness that even the hair of his body was motionless. He asked Nuri from whom had he had learned such meditation. Nuri replied, "From a cat I saw sitting at a mouse hole. In waiting for the mouse, the cat was even more still than I am now.")
5. Keep the eyes shut.
6. Close the window of thought and imagination, and forget everything but God, especially when starting to meditate.
7. Concentrate upon God and witnessing the writing on the heart. (In this, it is necessary to be instructed orally by the master or shaikh.)
8. Lose any sense of individual will to the extent of forgetting even one's identity as the one meditating.
9. Abandon all desires. (In the state of meditation, various desires, wishes and fantasies will appear in one's memory and thought, causing one to be distracted from the direct path. Therefore, these obstacles must be demolished. To accomplish this, there are special orders that have been handed down by the masters of the path which must be received orally from the master or shaikh.)
10. Face the *qibla*, the direction of Islamic prayer. (Although it is certainly correct as stated in the Koran that "...wherever you turn, you find the face of God" (2:1150), by facing the qibla the meditator's outward attention is directed towards the outer Ka'ba, the house of God in Mecca, and this is in harmony with his or her inward attention, which should be directed towards the inner Ka'ba, namely, the heart or Throne of God.)
11. Develop the habit of meditating at least fifteen minutes in each 24-hour cycle, preferably during the hours of darkness.

## The Positions of Meditation

The sufi may choose among three positions in meditation:

1. Sitting erect on knees with the legs folded under, placing the palm of the right hand on the left thigh and grasping the wrist with the left hand (Fig. 1). In this manner, the legs together form the Arabic word *la*, which means 'no' or 'not'. The arms also form the same word. As previously stated in the chapter on *dhikr*, this position stresses the sufi's nothingness and the negation of the sense of 'I-ness'.
2. Sitting in the same position as figure one, except with the legs crossed. Here, both the arms and legs form the word '*la*' (Fig. 2).
3. Sitting cross-legged, with knees raised and arms folded around the legs, with the left hand grasping the right wrist and head bowed slightly towards the heart. (Fig. 3). In this position, the same '*la*' shape is formed. In the past, sufis often tied a *rishta* (a belt made of threads loosely tied together at intervals) around the legs in order to maintain this position for a long period of time without tiring.

For extended periods of meditation, the sufi may sit in the same position as figure three and rest the head, at the left eyebrow, on the left knee. Sa'di, in the *Gulistan*, tells the story of a sufi who, while meditating in this position, became totally drowned in the ocean of discovery. When the sufi returned from this state, a companion asked him what gift he had brought back to his brethren from the garden. The sufi replied, "I had in my mind that when I reached a rosebush, I would fill up the skirt of my robe with roses. But when I finally approached the rosebush, I became so drunk with with the aroma of the roses that I lost my hold on my garment."

In the case of physical disability, the sufi may also sit on a chair with legs bent and parallel, head held upright, and hands in the same position as figure one.

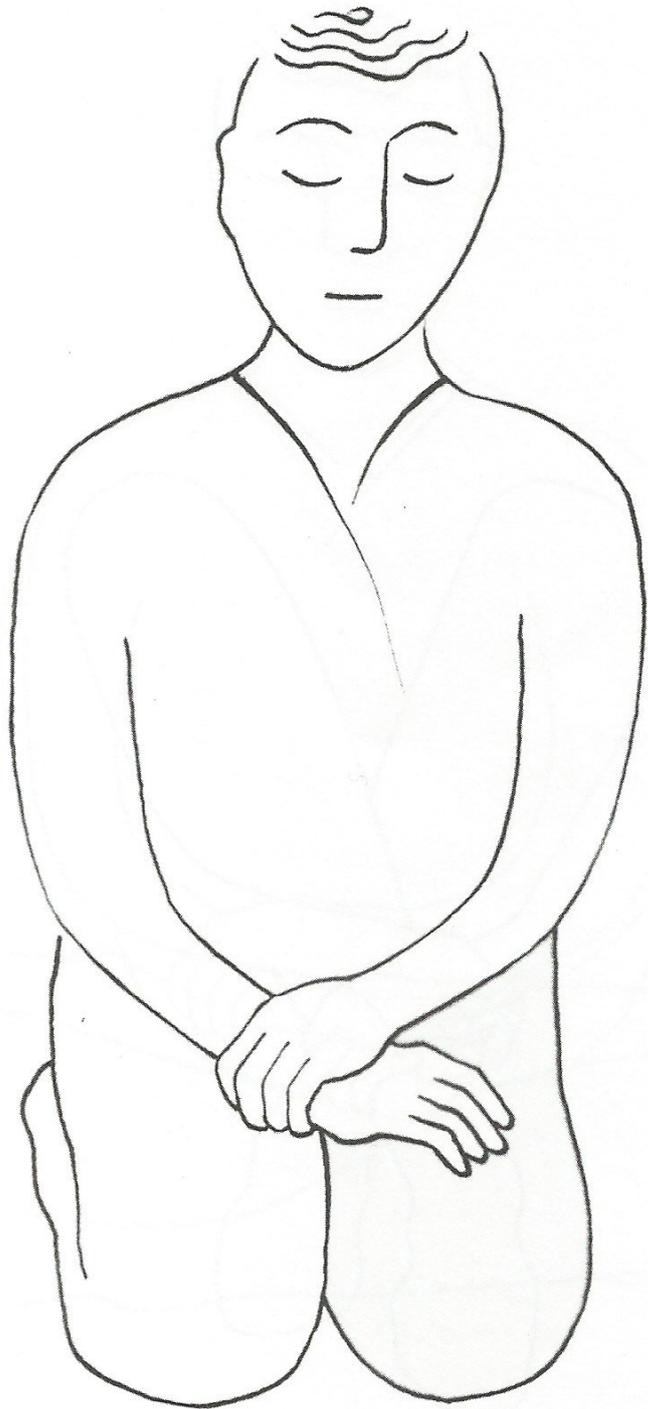


Figure 1

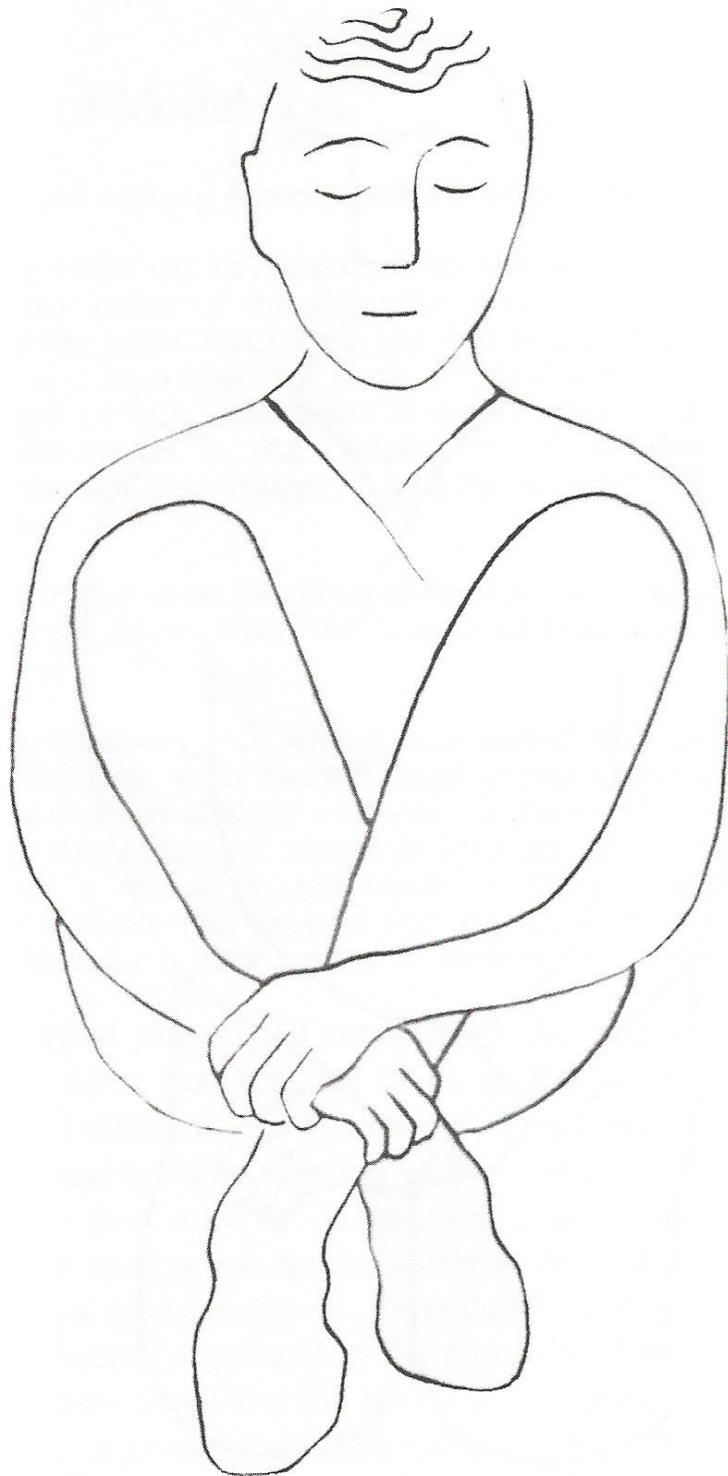


Figure 2

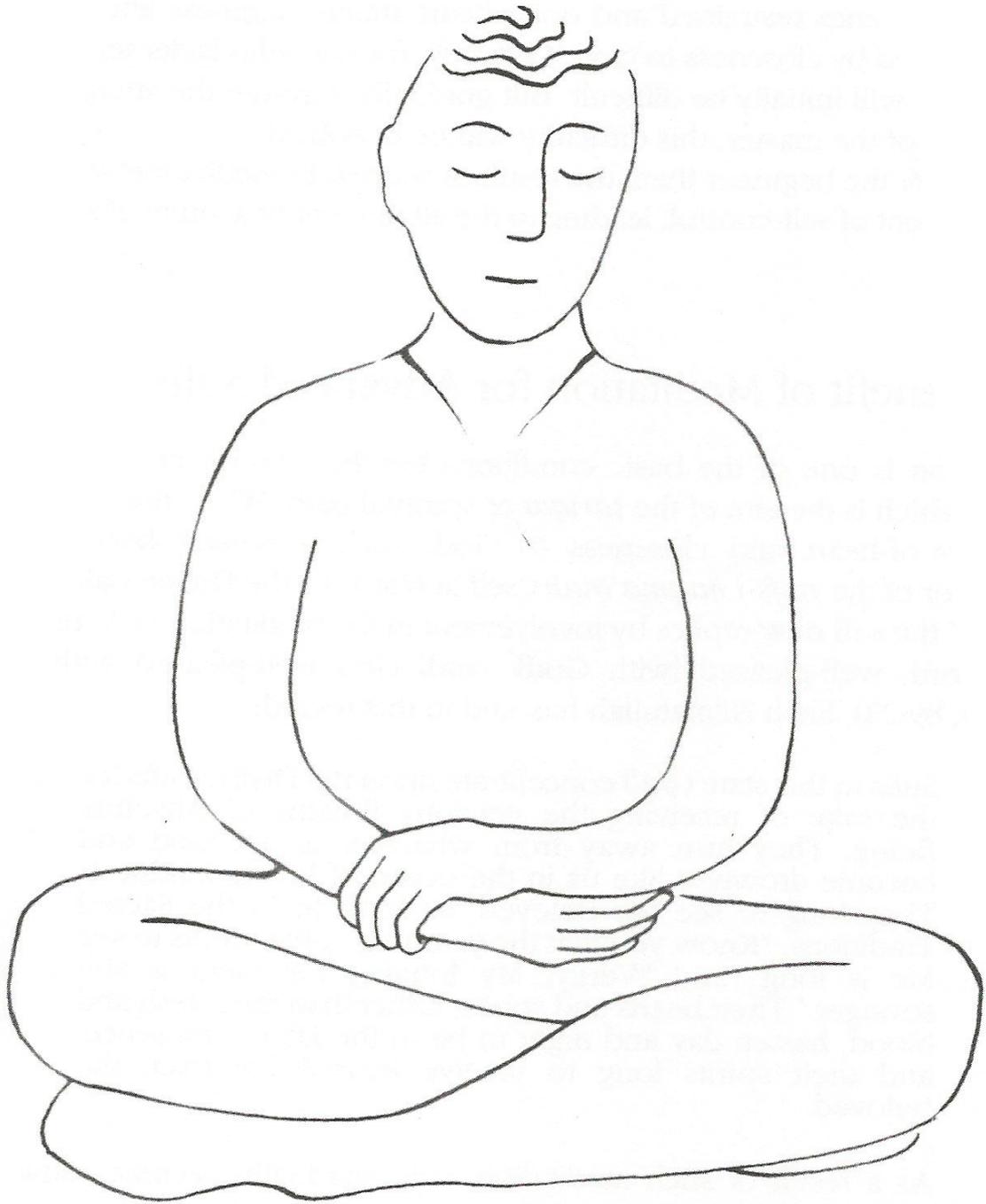


Figure 3