

The Movements
For the Prayers
Saum
and
Salat



from the original instructions of
Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan

with commentary by
Pir Zia Inayat-Khan

Five Dimensions of Prayer

Pir Zia Inayat Khan

Murshid gives two practices as foundational – as fundamental – for all Mureeds, from the beginning most to the most experienced. These are the elemental purification breaths, which I think we all know and practice daily, and prayer. The prayers Saum and Salat are given special emphasis by Murshid. He advised all Mureeds to say these two prayers everyday. When Murshid was first teaching in the west, he instructed his mureeds in the Islamic prayers. He said that prayer was foundational for all further practices, and the form he gave was his own traditional form, the namaz of Islam. His intention was not to change the religion of anyone, but that each should be offered entry into the *tariqa*, into the esoteric path, in a manner that could be consistent with his or her own religion, that did not require conversion unless one felt called to do so. He said that the Sufi order has its segments, its communities, which include Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Zoroastrians, each invited to follow his or her faith, but each given instruction in the mystical way.

Eventually Murshid received the inspiration that resulted in the prayers of the confraternity. Pir Vilayat has described the moment in which some of these prayers descended on his consciousness. He describes seeing Murshid in a state of transfiguration. So these were not man made prayers, but inspired prayers. Murshid said that these prayers could fulfill a foundation for one's spiritual need in prayer. He invited all mureeds to say the prayer of his or her own tradition, and/or these prayers, which he has given.

Saum is the prayer which invokes the divine being, God, Allah. Murshid says it is the sun force, the jela force. Salat is the prayer which invokes the Rasul, the messenger, so it is the moon prayer, the jema prayer. He said that neither should be done alone, in fact to say Saum alone would be dangerous because of the intense power which it involves. He said always to unite Saum with Salat as a daily practice.

Saum and Salat are words from Arabic. Saum is a word, which you find in Islam, commonly used to mean fasting. But it has a more

essential meaning. Fasting is a secondary meaning; the essential meaning is to be at ease. It is used in reference to fasting, because it means that one's metabolism is at ease, one is not extracting anything from the environment, one is self sufficient. Perhaps you've heard the saying of the Sufis: "to be a Sufi is to be at ease with God."

Salat means benediction. It is the word commonly used for the five times prayer in Islam. But it has a more general meaning in Arabic as benediction. You find in the *Qu'ran Sharif* the verse that means, truly God and the Archangels do Salat to the Nabi or Rasul, O you who believe, give your benediction and salutation. Even the divine presence is performing Salat toward the Rasul. It is a benediction upon the messenger, who is the *insani kamil*, the complete human being, the perfection of humanity. The perfection of humanity represents the Divine manifestation, in which the longing of pre-eternity is fulfilled, so it can be said that even the Divine Being, and the angels, are turning with benediction toward the Rasul.

These are the two primary prayers. In addition came Khatum and then the prayers Pir, Nabi and Rasul. But the most primary are Saum and Salat.

Murshid has given a brilliant exposition of the dimensions of prayer, and why prayer is essential to our spiritual life. There is a distinction to be made between informal prayer and formal prayer. When I speak of prayer I don't mean only the formal ritual prayer as in the practice of Saum and Salat. Prayer potentially is limitless and can transpire in any moment. It is simply a quality of consciousness and often the most beautiful expressions of prayer are spontaneous. *Munajat*, that is to say intimate conversations with God, can occur at any time.

Murshid has described five dimensions of prayer. The first is thanksgiving which means to count one's blessings instead of counting one's miseries, as one is wont to do. It is what the Sufis describe as *Muhasaba*, making an inventory instead of taking things for granted. Perhaps the most basic thing to be thankful for is the very fact of being itself – the fact of existing – and of our awareness of our existence and then to occupy this vast and mysterious and awesome cosmos which is an epiphany of the Divine Being itself, to walk on the surface of this incredibly varied living planet with all of its abundance, to be warmed by the sun and to fill our cells with oxygen,

to enjoy civil liberties, to be fed and clothed according to our need. One thinks of the loved ones that surround one, the senses and the use of one's limbs, the function of one's organs.

The second dimension of prayer is repentance. We are creatures of limitation and we all make mistakes but perhaps our greatest mistake is that we do not accept responsibility for our mistakes and seek forgiveness. Rather we have a tendency to deny, to repress and to project outward that which we cannot admit within ourselves. We see limitless faults in others and refuse to see our own. That is why Murshid said "there are many sins but the greatest sin is to recognize sin." The tendency of our little self, our ego, is always to claim perfection, meanwhile repressing the impression of sin, so that it becomes a cloud which covers the soul, which is in truth sinless. Our false self rejects its responsibility and the soul, which is pristine, becomes clouded with the impression of wrong. Just the reverse is necessary, that the small self should take responsibility and grow, and seek forgiveness, while the soul reclaims its purity. Murshid gave a practice for this, the repetition of the phrase "I am blameless," to recover the truth of the soul. The corollary of this is the small self's recognition of its errors, its transgressions and the seeking of forgiveness. There's something extremely beautiful in this act, because forgiveness is essential to the Divine nature. Yet in the absence of our limitation the Divine compassion and forgiveness has no scope for activity. So something essential in reality is actualized through our limitation, through our error when we seek forgiveness and open ourselves to the grace of God.

Let us offer forth in the light of consciousness that which we have denied and repressed, that in us which requires the healing presence of the Divine forgiveness. To ask for forgiveness, one must be prepared to make a pledge – to learn from the past and to resonate more truly with one's own ideal.

The third dimension is supplication, asking for the fulfillment of one's own need. It was Shams of Tabriz who asked "What do you bring to the courts of the sovereign of the universe? " What can you offer to the one who has everything, who is the source of all qualities and all things? What is missing there? What do you have that God does not have which you can offer? He answered his own question saying, "the one thing you have that God does not is your need. "

You can offer your need. Very often we feel an impulse, a desire, a hope. These experiences are extended and fulfilled when developed as a prayer of supplication. For example, if you're walking along the road and you see an ambulance roaring by, you may feel a hope that the person inside is going to be all right. That same impulse is reinforced and perfected if you consciously develop this thought as a prayer and silently pray to God for the safety of the person.

Murshid was asked 'since God is omniscient, and knows our desires, why should we formulate our desires as prayers? God already knows what's in our heart.' He answered, 'In our prayer our desire is crystallized. Our desire becomes articulate and resounds throughout our being, and in this way, its fulfillment is assured. We make our desire known to ourselves through our prayer.'

Invoke within ourselves our need, knowing that God hears our prayers and answers, even if the answer is not always in the form that we expect.

The fourth dimension is invocation, which is like painting a portrait of the ideal. Murshid's play *Una* describes the path of the ideal in which Una sculpts our vision of beauty and becomes disinterested in all the vanities of life, but lives for her ideal alone. Ultimately her ideal comes to life as a living being and offers her a bowl of poison which she drinks, and the idol itself is broken and she is annihilated and resurrected as the ideal. You might counter that God is infinite and ineffable, and thus beyond our power of comprehension, which is of course true. Yet to enter into a relationship with that incomprehensible being there's a need to accept an epiphany, a manifestation, which will not be a complete representation, but nonetheless does represent a dispensation from the source, which accrues to our heart within the mould of the heart, so is received to the degree of our receptivity. If the heart is rigid, hardened, then that which is able to come through is limited. But as the heart expands and softens it can accept further and further dispensations. This is what Ibn al-'Arabi called the God which is created in our belief. One might say that the palette of colors with which one creates this portrait comes from the God awakened beings. Murshid said, "Where will you see God if you cannot see God in the God realized?" The Divine manifests in the perfection of humanity, in which the Divine qualities reach fruition. Our image of God is inspired by the image of the masters, saints and prophets who bring not only a verbal message, but a living presence.

Let us highlight in our awareness the qualities of being that we most reverence, not merely as random platonic ideas, but as the facets of a being who is singular, and who is endowed with a personality more intense and perfect than any personality we can imagine.

The fifth dimension is communion. The difference between invocation and communion is just like the difference between tasawwuri sheikh and tawwajuh. In invocation one visualizes, idealizes, the Divine presence, just as in tasawwuri sheikh. You would visualize the form of Murshid and you find yourself confronted with the countenance of Murshid. If you have experience of looking closely into the eyes of another being, you find that a moment comes when you lose your sense of separateness. You are no longer sure if you are looking into the eyes of the other or if you are looking out through the eyes of the other toward yourself. That is the beginning of what is called communion, in which the notions of self and other break down and all is overwhelmed with the Divine presence.

Rabia said " Oh Lord, I love you with two loves; one which is unworthy and one which is worthy of you, in the first I turn away from all but you and in the second you enfold the universe with your glory."

This is a rather cursory review of the five stages of prayer. I hope you will, or perhaps already have, had an opportunity to explore each of these more deeply. This can be a wonderful basis for daily meditation.

Instructions from the Notes of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan

Prayers with feeling, thought, and movement makes the prayer perfect. The movements must be supple, that the influence of the prayer can go through every atom of the body. Prayer is not to please God, but to raise our consciousness. Keep straight, that the breath circulates through every atom of the body, the head straight-forward, and the glance downwards before you. The eyes must also be praying. Head must not be upraised, God being on Earth also.

1st movement: I raise the God Ideal to the highest comprehension

2nd movement: Hands down = I bow myself before my ideal.

3rd movement: Hands upon Knees = Surrender to the will of God

4th movement: Raise again = to be raised by God

The hands outside, "Thy beauty do we worship" - means exaltation.

Hands together means surrender to the Divine Law.

Right hand over heart is the heart recognizing that the heart is the temple of God. I surrender with my heart.

Left hand is the soul recognizing that the soul comes from the Divine Source - surrender of the soul.

The sign of the cross - left to right means from imperfection to perfection. From the forehead to the solar plexus. The whole means, "This is not myself, it is the temple of God." and through the perfection is asking for the blessing from above.

To join hands as a cup towards myself means: "I wish communication and unity with God." The one hand represents God, the other man. In this cup the offering is consecrated, and with the word "Amen," it flows into my whole being.

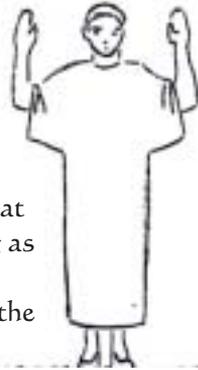
Saum

1. Praise be to thee most supreme God
2. Omnipotent, omnipresent, all-pervading
3. The only Being
4. Take us in Thy parental arms
5. Raise us from the denseness of the Earth
6. Thy beauty do we worship
7. And to thee do we give willing surrender.
8. Most merciful and compassionate God
9. The idealized Lord of the whole humanity
10. Thee only do we worship and towards Thee alone do we aspire
11. Open our hearts towards Thy beauty
12. Illuminate our souls with Divine light
13. O Thou, the perfection of love, harmony and beauty
14. All-powerful Creator, Sustainer, Judge
and forgiver of our shortcomings
15. Lord God of the East and West, of the worlds above and below
16. And of the seen and unseen beings.
17. Pour upon us Thy love and Thy light
18. Give Sustenance to our bodies, hearts and souls
19. Use us for the purpose that Thy wisdom chooseth
20. And guide us on the path of Thine own goodness
21. Draw us closer to Thee every moment of our life
22. Until in us be reflected Thy Grace, Thy Glory
23. Thy Wisdom, Thy Joy, and Thy Peace

Amen

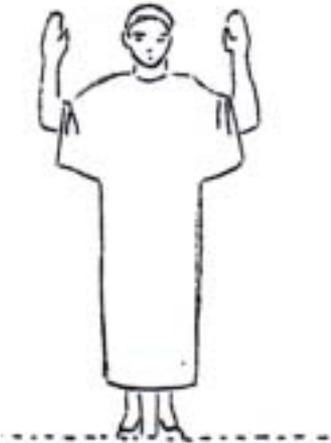
Saum and Salat.

Most often when these prayers were done in Murshid's time they were done simply standing, but Murshid also gave a form of the prayers with postures and these postures are quite effective because it brings the prayer into the body so that, as Murshid says "every cell of the body participates in the prayer." Of course for some these postures may be too difficult or uncomfortable and it is quite acceptable to simply say the prayers without performing the postures, but for those who wish to do it, there's real benefit in it. For some time now I have been investigating the postures based on oral traditions and I found that a number of forms had developed. I was trying to trace back to the original, and fortunately a manuscript emerged, thanks to Sharif Graham and the Nekhbat archives. It is a document which contains the original instructions in the postures of the prayers, including illustrations. This is the definitive form.



1. With the back erect, it means finding one's stand in life. How do you take your stand? What is your posture? It's wonderful to take standing as a practice of meditation and feel the surge of magnetism from the earth through the soles of the feet, and the descent of the cosmic radiance through the crown center. You feel like just the vertical axis which connects the earth and heaven – like a tree which has its roots deeply in the earth and its branches and leaves reaching up to receive the sunlight from heaven. That is the first position. To begin the prayer you raise the arms. That is very important motion, because as you lift your hands, something occurs physiologically and that is the breast opens, and the weight on one's shoulders and backs is lifted off. So very often we feel ourselves weighed down by the circumstances of life. This tends to be experienced as a weight upon the shoulders. If you do this position at least once a day with the consciousness of lifting off and putting behind you all that is weighing you down so that you can enter authentically into the

Divine presence, that is an important opening. It alludes to an important miracle in the life of the prophet Mohammed in which something was removed from his breast. The sura says 'have we not removed that which weighed down your back and expanded your breast?' Those are the two things: lifting off that which was weighing you down, and opening out from the center. When you lift your hand you feel this impulse of opening expansion, and then you find that the body is no longer a vertical line but rather a five pointed star. Murshid says, "the human being is like a miniature sun god. The form of the human being is the form of the sun." You can think of the heart as the center of the star, and the two hands and the two feet and the head as the five points of the star. Then experience the flow of magnetism from the center to the tips of the star, so you're radiating outward. It begins with the star movement and it ends with the crescent movement; it begins with *jelal* and ends with *jemal*.



1. Praise be to thee most supreme God

Then kneeling, standing on the knees with the hands now slightly coming in



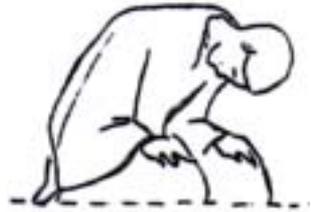
2. Omnipotent, omnipresent, all-pervading

When you say, "the only being," you sit down on your knees, and your palms are on your knees. (The eyes are open throughout the prayer.)



3. The only Being

Then there is a half, not a full prostration; the forehead does not yet touch the ground.



4. Take us in Thy parental arms



5 Raise us from the denseness of the Earth

Then a full prostration



6. Thy beauty do we worship



7. And to thee do we give willing surrender.

and then folding the hands at the waist

Then again a half prostration



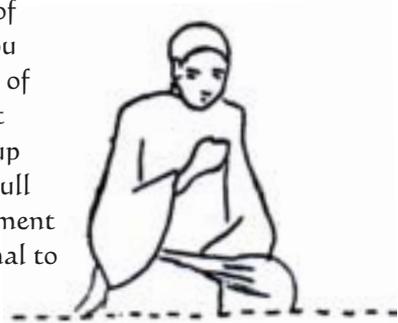
8. Most merciful and compassionate God

9. The idealized Lord of the whole humanity

10. Thee only do we worship and

towards Thee alone do we aspire

There are a number of things happening here not all of which we may be fully conscious. Prostration of course is an extremely significant act which brings the highest center to the lowest place, and simultaneously elevating the heart above the head. There is a moment of dissolution. In fact you should experience each posture in its fullness before proceeding. Do not rush from one posture to the next but be sure you've tasted the experience fully before moving on. When you prostrate, then there's a sense of vertigo in which the center of balance has been shifted and as if you feel yourself falling. It brings a state of annihilation, but in the midst of that annihilation one feels oneself lifted up again, buoyed up. It's not that you pull yourself up; it's that at a certain moment you feel yourself lifted up as the signal to rise up then. Then you say



Right hand on the heart, the left breast

II. Open our hearts towards Thy beauty

Left hand on right breast

These are two important centers the *Qalb*, the heart and *Ruh*, the soul. As you lay your hands upon each breast, you're conscious of activating and stimulating the subtle center within each of the breasts. Then you make the gesture of the cross from the left shoulder to the right, then from the forehead to the solar plexus. Be conscious of all the subtle centers that are involved as you make these motions.



12. Illuminate our souls with Divine light

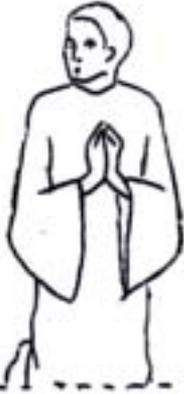


13. O Thou, the perfection of love, harmony and beauty

Joining of the palms which is the position of greeting in the Hindu tradition, is symbolic of *coincidentia oppisatorum*, the uniting of the opposite energies within ourselves. This is a wonderful mudra to work with also for the cultivation of magnetism. Using the breath to animate magnetism in the fingertips and in the palms of the hands, then work with the hands to feel the field of energy between them. When you've done that, when you unite the hands you can feel the powerful surge of energy that comes when you unite these two poles of energy.



14. All-powerful Creator, Sustainer, Judge and forgiver of our shortcomings



If you are facing toward the north pole then if you turn to the right you'll be facing the east and to the left the west



15. Lord God of the East and the West,



of the worlds above and below

Closing your eyes then opening once again



16. And of the seen and unseen beings.



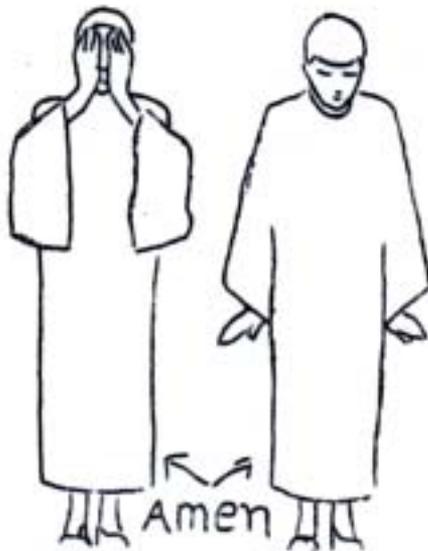
17. Pour upon us Thy love and Thy light
18. Give Sustenance to our bodies, hearts and souls
19. Use us for the purpose that Thy wisdom chooseth
20. And guide us on the path of Thine own goodness



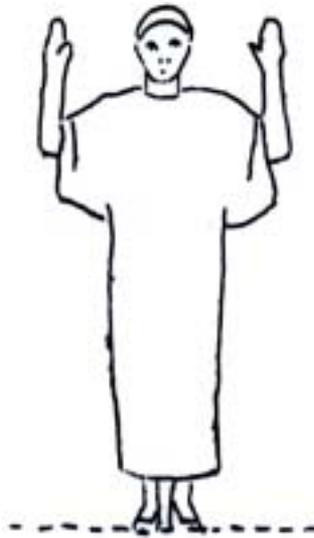
21. Draw us closer to Thee every moment of our life
22. Until in us be reflected Thy Grace, Thy Glory
- 23 Thy Wisdom, Thy Joy, and Thy Peace

As you're washing over your body with the final benediction then you say **Amen**.

Amen it is a word that is common to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It comes from *Amana* which means the trust or the covenant, which is the covenant made between the soul and its source – its creator – in pre-eternity, and which is the impulse which has drawn us forth into manifestation to fulfill our purpose. That purpose is restored and fulfilled through the act of prayer, and so when we complete the prayer we say amen which is to say, "it is fulfilled." The covenant is reaffirmed. Murshid advises a practice which is called in the Sufi Order unification. After saying one's prayers, for just a moment be present to the being of one's Murshid to feel the presence of the one through whom these prayers have come to us. I generally close my eyes to do this.



Salat



- i. *Most gracious Lord, Master, Messiah, and Savior of humanity, We greet Thee with all humility.*



2. Thou art the First Cause and the Last Effect, the Divine Light and the Spirit of Guidance, Alpha and Omega.

Thy Light is in all forms, Thy Love in all beings: in a loving mother, in a kind father, in an innocent child, in a helpful friend, in an inspiring teacher.

Allow us to recognize Thee in all Thy holy names and forms; as Rama, as Krishna, as Shiva, as Buddha.

Let us know Thee as Abraham, as Solomon, as Zarathushtra, as Moses, as Jesus, as Mohammed, and in many other names and forms, known and unknown to the world.

We adore Thy past; Thy presence deeply enlightens our being, and we look for Thy blessing in the future.

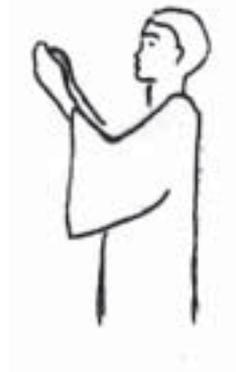
O Messenger, Christ, Nabi, the Rasul of God!
Thou Whose heart constantly reacheth upward,
Thou comest on earth with a message, as a dove
from above when Dharma decays, and speakest
the Word that is put into

Thy mouth, as the light filleth the crescent moon.
Let the star of the Divine Light shining in Thy
heart be reflected in the hearts of Thy devotees.



3 *May the Message of God reach far and wide, illuminating and*

4 *making the whole humanity as one single Family*



5 *in the Parenthood of God.*

