Sufi Principles of Meditation

Lecture 2: Essential Principles

“The thing we tell of can never be found by seeking, yet only seekers find it.”—Bayazid Bastami
How to Approach Meditation

A clear vision of the fundamentals of religion comes about through the application of their derivative principles, and the derivatives are corrected by comparing them against the original sources. There is no way to the stage of contemplation (mushāhida) of states except by esteeming as great the means and principles that God has esteemed to be great. –Al-Jurayri in Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism by al-Qushayri
Certainty in Meditation

[Qur’anic Verses]
The Knowledge of Certainty [102:5] – 'ilm al-yaqin
The Truth of Certainty [56:95] – haqq al-yaqin
Those who have no knowledge say, ‘Why does not Allah speak to us, or come to us a sign?’ So said those who were before them, [words] similar to what they say. Alike are their hearts. We have certainly made the signs clear for a people who have certainty.

—Al-Baqarah [2:118]

Knowledge does not come about except by the prior fulfillment of its conditions—that is, one must examine things in a pertinent and relevant way. Then when hints of the divine become continuous and clear demonstrative evidence has been obtained, the perceiver, through the succession of lights and his deep reflection upon them, becomes seemingly independent of the consideration of proof. This is the state of certainty.

—Al-Qushayri,

*Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism, ‘On Certainty’*
Essential Principles of Meditation

Concentration + Imagination = Meditation (Gnostic)
Śamatha + Vipassanā = Samadhi (Buddhist)
Silence + Insight = Witnessing (Sufi)
Silence and Insight

The key to success in worship lies in meditative reflection (*fikrat*)...whoever persists in such reflection in the heart will behold the invisible realm in the spirit.

Whoever contemplates God through keeping watch over the thoughts which pass through his heart will be exalted by God in all of his outward deeds.

–Dhū’l-Nūn Miṣrī in ‘Attār: Tadhkirat, 154-155