

Sufi Ruhaniat International Esoteric Studies Program



God is Breath
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Class 7

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*Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty, the Only Being,
United with All the Illuminated Souls Who Form the Embodiment of the Master,
the Spirit of Guidance.*

Githas of Hazrat Inayat Khan

Shafayat: Healing, Series 1

Number 7a: The Psychological Nature of Diseases 2

In Sanskrit, breath is called prana, which means life. This prana not only gives life to oneself, but it gives life to another person too. Sometimes the presence of someone fills you with life, and sometimes the presence of someone, so to speak, takes away your life from you. One feels tired and depressed and eaten up by the presence of one person, and another's presence gives added strength, life, and vigor. This all is accounted for by the breath. The one who has more life gives life; the one who has less life takes it from the one who has more.

But there is a contrary process, too. Sometimes the stronger one takes away what little life is left in the weaker one, and sometimes the weaker one gives out his life to the stronger one. Who takes away the life in fact absorbs the life from another. In the presence of that person, even flowers fade sooner and plants die.

Many deaths occur and many lives are retained by the phenomena of the breath.

Therefore, for the healer there is no greater source of healing than the means of the breath. He or she can throw their breath upon the affected part of the patient as easily as one can cast his glance upon a painful part. Even eatables and objects that a healer's breath has magnetized carry with them the power of healing. If touch makes a certain mark of the perspiration and fingers upon a thing, why should not the breath, the very essence of life, live in an object and give the object some part of life which could produce in it an effect which may be a greater cure than medicine?

When the breath is developed and purified, it is not necessary for the healer even to make an effort to throw his or her breath upon the patient, but the atmosphere that the breath creates, the very presence of the healer brings about a cure, for the whole atmosphere becomes charged with magnetism.

Amaliat: Psychology, Series II

Number 5: What Should Be Practiced in Everyday Life to Develop Psychic Power

Psychic power, in plain words, may be called power of mind, and power of mind in reality is power of feeling. Feeling is the spirit of thought as speech is the spirit of action. Therefore, concentration is the first essential thing for the development of psychic power. Besides that, strong feeling, void of all bitterness, worries and sorrows, fears and anxieties, is necessary. In order to express psychic power, one must have strength of body. Regular breathing, with rhythm and good circulation of the blood, is necessary....

Sometimes, in people psychically weak, one finds great psychic power, but it is neither useful for them nor for another, because it makes a person weaker when he is already weak in constitution. In the Hindu religion, where harmlessness is the ideal and flesh-eating is prohibited among them,

Shiva, Lord of Yogis, has allowed meat for the psychics, for the very reason that psychic power is power of mind and the body must be so strong as to sustain it. Another thing that is necessary for a psychic is steadiness in his or her habits, and tranquility of mind.

Number 10: Development of the Power of Presence

There are different ways through which the psychic uses his or her power, but the power of presence is most powerful and best of all. By a keen study of life, we shall notice, especially with people who are sensitive or ill, that one person, when he or she comes into the room, brings with them an atmosphere of ease; and there is another person who, when they come, adds to the pain or restlessness of the patient. Also, one experiences that the presence of a person may be such that it may bring illness to the one who is well. This proves that there is a certain power in the presence of human beings that heals or that brings ease, sometimes without an effort. The mystics develop this power.

The whole secret of this power is life. A person with life in the body, in the mind, in the soul gives life to those with whom they come in contact; a person without that, instead of giving life, takes it. The mystic, therefore, by the development of power means the development of life, that they absorb life from within and without, since the space is full of life, if one only knew how to get from it.

Mystical practices, especially those with the breath, are meant to help us to absorb life, which is so ample around and about us. But when we do not know this, we are thirsty on the bank of a river. Water is there and we do not see it. More than drugs or herbs or any kind of tonic, the absorption of energy from the space is beneficial.

Then, use is made of this energy for the purpose of healing, and the person who has developed this power of presence does no other way of healing. His or her presence itself is energy. They can change the atmosphere of a room in which they may be sitting or of a hall in which they may be walking. They can spread the atmosphere round and about themselves that can give ease to anybody in contact with them. This is the secret of the great healing power of sages.

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**Githas of Hazrat Inayat Khan
with commentary by Murshid Samuel Lewis**

(NOTE from Wali Ali: I am choosing this time to include some fairly extensive commentaries by Murshid Samuel Lewis on the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan for our study. Commentaries of this kind were the principal intellectual means that Murshid Sam used to communicate the depth of the inner school. There could well be something here for you that may serve to open up insight into the teachings. Githa: the words of Hazrat Inayat Khan; Tasawwuf the words of Murshid Sam)

Ryazat: Esotericism Series II

Number 1: Fikr

GITHA: The breath is the current that is established between all planes of man's existence. Its current runs from the life unseen to the life on the surface, thus uniting spirit and matter both.

TASAWWUF: If one studies the words for breath in the ancient languages one will find they are mostly identical with soul. Thus atma in Sanskrit means both breath and soul, and nephesh, which is usually translated from the Hebrew language as soul, also means breath. The Greek word psyche has been translated as soul and as breath, really that portion of the breath associated with nufs. The Hebrew word ruach, which is often called spirit or wind, is the same as the Arabic ruh which we call soul.

Now there are various conceptions to soul and also to breath and today there is no tendency to identify them. Yet the Sufi would say that the breath is a current by which the soul gives the life to the body. This current travels with the air element and in its lowest aspect depends upon the gas oxygen, and every movement of breath is accompanied by a chemical process of some oxidation.

The study of breath reveals its relationship to thought, speech and action. All are dependent upon it. One can stop the breath also and lose consciousness; it is then that the consciousness ceases to function in the body and in the mind showing that the breath must pass through both of them. When you develop to a certain point you are able, by means of the refined breath, to reach a state of realization which frees you from dependence upon mind and body and then you can use mind and body as vehicles and tools.

GITHA: When the breath leaves the material being of man, then comes what man calls death, which shows that breath is the sign of life and life itself, and its contact with the body keeps the body alive and its contact with the mind keeps the mind alive.

TASAWWUF: St. Paul has said, "I die daily," and yet in a certain sense ones dies with every exhalation. If you expel all the breath from the body you will find it most difficult to speak or move or think. As soon as the breath is brought back these functions come naturally and simply. And yet it is possible through the exhalation to rid the body of poisons and the mind of

unwholesome thoughts. When this process is properly carried out it is called Safa, or purification, which is needed by all students of mysticism.

It is possible to overcome death while living upon earth by the proper study and control of the breath-current. If one can let go of oneself with each exhalation it becomes easier to receive the divine light with each inhalation.

GITHA: But neither body nor mind is life. If there is any sign of life we can trace on the surface, it is no other than the breath.

TASAWWUF: The proof that the life is not the body or that the life is not the mind can more easily be offered by direct experience and realization than by any logic....

Average persons do not make a study of breath and when they do they want some fancy breathing. They suppose that if they do something strange with the breath that is spiritual, and if they do something ordinary or simple that cannot be of much value. Yet many of the exercises of the mystics are most simple. One has to learn to regulate the breath, keep it in rhythm and refine it. By such means the controlled consciousness penetrates deeper into the personality and awakens many latent powers that are asleep in the generality.

GITHA: Therefore the Sufi takes the breath as the means of getting what he or she wants from the life unseen to the life on the surface.

TASAWWUF: Although even Christ himself has referred to the use of breath in the attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven, because of translations by the ignorant or the interference of the orthodox, this knowledge has been withdrawn from the western world and is only coming back after many centuries....

GITHA: Also they make it a means of sending what they wish from the life external to the life within.

TASAWWUF: The breath is a highway that can bring anything to a person, not only health and strength, but even worldly wealth, if he or she has the concentration and does not merely wish or desire. For the power of the desire nature is limited, while one who has mastery of breath has control over the forces of the lower planes and can exercise it without difficulty. Meditation, concentration and spiritual practices in general help to remove the obstacles from one's path. It's not that one should seek wealth but one should see that nothing outside blocks their path.

By the exhalation one can bestow blessings upon the world, one can draw down that which is in the worlds within, offering your self as a channel for manifestation. This is true of many people who do not know much about breath. Kindness and compassion depend upon our ability to give out, to surrender, and for this purpose one must be able to have a full exhalation, not being attached even to the breath.

GITHA: The breath may be considered as a lift that can take you to any floor up and any floor down. By the help of breath you can send your thought anywhere and to any plane and bring about desired results. In breath abides all the mystery there is.

TASAWWUF:When one practices concentration one develops both force and refinement, which may be called the jelic and jemalic aspects of breath. By force one can draw in power, can attract, and at the same time one can overcome opposition. But by refinement one can penetrate where otherwise one would not have been able to go, and thus exercise wisdom.

Telepathy and telekinesis (use of power at a distance) both depend upon breath. As the breath can penetrate to the higher spheres it can reach the plane where its expanse is greater than the earth itself. Then, through thought and feeling it can touch any part of the earth.

This makes thought-communication possible. But for thought-communication, there must be attunement between hearts, considerable power on the part of the sender and refinement and delicacy on the part of the receiver. The common practice of Fikr is one way by which these faculties can be obtained and utilized.

A further refinement makes it possible to receive and send messages to the worlds unseen. This is especially valuable in establishing rapport between teacher and pupil after the teacher has left the world. The chain (silsila) of Sufis has been maintained in this manner so that for practical purposes it is of little importance whether the teacher is miles away on the same plane or is withdrawn to a subtler plane. Neither time nor space nor vibration will stand between them and their mureed.

If one reads the miracles of the various scriptures and wants to know the reason for it, one may be surprised to learn that it is all in the breath. Breath can establish a rapport between oneself and whatever is outside of oneself. One can, for instance, adjust his breath to take in a block of wood so that that block of wood becomes as a part of one's very being. Then, however heavy it be, one may be able to lift it, the block supplying the needed power. This is impossible when one looks upon the block or a weight as separate, as something outside of oneself.

The healing and miraculous power of Christ and of all prophets, the ability to perceive visions clearly, to control the phenomena around one, even to master the weather depends upon mastery over the breath. A well-developed breath is in tune with the whole earth, and as it becomes still more refined you begin to find the universe within yourself and, although you may continue to look outward through your eyes, you can feel within that which you perceive without.

GITHA: The Sufi's object being self-realization by the ideal of God, he or she works for its attainment by the means of the breath, which is called Fikr, and an ideal so attained becomes one's property, one's kingdom, forever.

TASAWWUF: Through Fikr the breath becomes more and more refined and as it so changes it penetrates more deeply into the inner spheres. Its deep penetration brings to human beings refinement, delicacy and most of all wisdom. Then, whatever one becomes attuned to, that becomes one's property. And one may even attract or attain to material wealth in that manner although mostly the spiritual students have chosen other objects to answer their satisfaction.

The phrase "Be ye wise as serpents" indicates that when you practice concentration and become heart-fixed upon God, on the one hand you will obtain the power of attraction which the serpents have, and on the other hand you will develop along the path of wisdom. So Christ has also said, "Be ye harmless as doves." For it is not necessary to force anything. Whatever you think about with faith, perseverance and patience will be attracted.

If a question is asked, by Fikr can one learn to overcome one's own problems and answer one's own needs, it may be said in reply that often this is true, and that also one can learn thereby to answer questions oneself and receive impressions and inspirations from within.

Number 2: Rhythm in Fikr

GITHA: Rhythm is the nature of motion, and motion is the nature of life. Life is not possible without motion, and motion is not possible without rhythm.

TASAWWUF: "Life" is a term that may not exactly be defined for life gives rise to forms and forces but life itself is not made up of these forms and forces. Life may be called the whole, of which these are parts or aspects of manifestation.

One definite characteristic of life is motion. We see little motion in the mineral kingdom and speak of it as "dead matter." The vegetable kingdom is composed of species that grow, and for growth movement is necessary. The materials that make up the cells and bodies of plants, animals, and mankind we call "living matter" and it has the same general chemical composition.

In the universe there is the tendency toward uniformly accelerated motion in a straight line or steady velocity in a circle. It is this last kind of movement which gives rise to rhythm. Also, no force moves on forever ahead without some effect upon other forces and bodies, so that to every action there is a reaction. When there is accelerated movement it is called the rhythm of Urouj and when there is retarded movement it is called the rhythm of Zaval. Neither of these is uniformly even.

Urouj tends to propel force in a certain direction and Zaval tends to slow down force. Nevertheless their velocities have been spoken of as rhythms for they can be measured in time. The steady, uniform, mobile, rhythm is called Kemal by the Sufis and this characterizes all the even rhythms of every grade and type of vibration.

GITHA: It is rhythmic motion which keeps the whole universe going, and the same motion is the hidden secret of our lives, as we are a miniature universe within ourselves.

TASAWWUF: With regard to the universe, if this were not so the universe would be speeding up or slowing down....But it may happen that there are periods of Urouj and of Zaval in the universe itself and the Hindus speak of the day and night of Brahm, the former giving rise to the manifestation and the latter embracing its dissolution.

Human beings experience an Urouj period in which their bodies grow, and a longer one in which their minds may grow (although this is not always true). There is also later in life the Zaval period. But it is possible through control of breath to continue the steady rhythm throughout life and maintain vigor until the very end. One sees before oneself the universe for practical purposes as eternal, and one can maintain a steady life in the body to the end.

GITHA: Our breath is both the cause and effect of this rhythmic motion. Inhaling and exhaling is just like the pendulum of the clock. When it is regular the clock goes on regularly, when slow the clock goes slow, when quick the clock goes fast.

TASAWWUF: This would indicate that if we breathed rapidly all the time we would be losing our life force. We need that force to promote growth of mind and body, but as each inhalation is followed by exhalation and as the exhalation tends to return to the spheres that which was borrowed, the rapid breath becomes intoxicating and does not enable one to hold anything together.

GITHA: So it is with us. When our breath is rhythmic, all things go well—the mechanism of our body, the working of our mind, and the work of our feelings, all are normal.

TASAWWUF: This knowledge has been preserved by the mystics and has been ignored by the world. Very few have observed the breath, noticed its rhythms, following its course into and out of the body, learned its significance in going in or out of either nostril or of both, paid much attention to the shape of the curve of its direction or the effect upon the emotions therefore.

The Sufi considers rhythm as all-important for he or she learns the value of this rhythm to body and mind and especially when there is attunement to the will of God, any departure from the rhythm once established may mean a departure from that divine will and a loss of attunement.

There are many practices that may be used for self-protection or for success in one's work which depend upon the rhythm of breath. One changes the quality through the change of concentration or else through the use of some other sacred phrase, repeated audibly or visibly. This may make the breath more or less refined or permit more or less air and prana to enter and leave the nostrils during a given period without in any way changing the number of breaths during that period.

One will find that when the channels of the breath are clear and the rhythm is maintained there is health on all planes. When there is any lowness either of thought or feeling or physical condition one will discover that the breath is not flowing freely, easily and smoothly.

GITHA: Therefore, all we think, speak, and do is normal and right.

TASAWWUF: Many people wonder whether at any time they are performing the will of God or "right action." Instead of being troubled in conscience or fearing or wondering about every little item, the Sufi merely watches their breath and if it is rhythmical he or she even does, says or thinks according to their own will. Then their nature is attuned to the wisdom of the cosmos.

Yet often a person who is in that condition will move out of the way to avoid conflict with another, and then he or she will be attracting to themselves the rhythm (or lack of rhythm) of the other and be thrown off-balance by doing so. It may be said that when the condition of the breath is right one should lead and when it is not right one should not try to lead or help another.

GITHA: When the rhythm of our breath is irregular, all illness comes, thoughts wander, feelings are upset, and our life becomes full of confusion. All we feel, speak and do has a bad effect, in other words a wrong effect, upon one's own self and that of others.

TASAWWUF: The question arises how to correct this and it is done by the observation and constant guarding of breath, together with a Divine Thought. Silence is also valuable and then "one should agree with the adversary quickly" for there is a greater adversary at hand, one's own ego, which must be brought under control first.

In Sufism...the secret of the teacher is often found in the refined and rhythmical breath. Meditation and rest also benefit, and watchful control of rhythm is most important. And whenever there is any blockage of the channel of breath the wise refrain from advising others, even from dealing much with them except occasionally to follow them in order to restore their own healthfulness.

GITHA: Therefore, by Fikr the Sufi sets his or her breath to the proper rhythm; and when it becomes a habit, by a practice done every day, the Sufi's whole life becomes orderly and regular because the rhythm in time becomes a habit of the breath.

TASAWWUF: ...If Fikr is practiced constantly it relates one day to another in a certain fashion. For although one can by Fikr purify the mind and make of each day a life or cycle by itself, as there are acts which require many days for their accomplishments and attainments

which require many days for their fulfillment, the continued Fikr unites man to his purposes and aids him in the pursuit thereof.

...Breathing becomes more and more refined. And the more refined the breath, the larger the inner capacity and growth. But it is also true that you can by this method gradually lengthen and deepen your breath without conscious effort and without strain and thus improve your outer manner of expression and character.

GITHA: And while awake or asleep, the breath goes on rhythmically, keeping all pulsations in rhythm, on which the health entirely depends.

TASAWWUF: This is much better than any concentration upon health. There is often a tendency to concentrate upon health when there is sickness and there is another tendency to concentrate upon health when there is weakness and fear of disease. Naturally a person should be sensible, naturally the condition of the body is most important. But it is still more important to know that real health is maintained without giving any thought to it.

One may pray, "Give sustenance to our bodies, hearts and souls," and one may repeat Nayaz. Outside of that one may follow Christ and "take no thought of the body" which does not mean to neglect it. It means that there may be a wiser method for keeping the body in the best condition than by thinking of it too much.

GITHA: The rhythm so produced by the breath keeps the thoughts in order...

TASAWWUF: Once this rhythm is established all thoughts that are consonant to it will remain in the mind and those that are out of harmony with it cannot be retained. Every kind of thought establishes a particular rhythm. You can learn that first through concentrating upon a particular symbol. By doing so you will notice that the breath takes a certain direction, time and degree of refinement and when you change the symbol you are holding in concentration there may be a marked change in the period, direction and quality of breath.

This is even more so when one studies thought, for thought is related to *jelal*, *jemal*, *uruj*, *nasoul* and rhythm, as well as to the mystical elements. The ordinary person who is the slave of thought or who, worse, is obsessed, is unable to control his or her breath and their inability makes it impossible also for them to hold other thoughts. When Fikr becomes one's habit, only those thoughts will remain in the mind that are attuned to or are harmonious with the breath in Fikr.

GITHA: ...the will powerful...

TASAWWUF: This is most important for concentration. While concentration helps in the development of the will, the willpower also helps in concentration and one will ask, what are the other ways of developing willpower. One of the best and easiest is through Fikr. For the words used with Fikr are such that the talib's mind is fixed upon God, and so fixed that all else in time becomes excluded. Thus he or she attains the guidance first, and perhaps the wisdom later.

Fikr is also used by a Shifayat before many of their attempts at healing the sick. This prevents them from taking on the condition of the patient for with Fikr their will is too powerful and they are positive. Sometimes one has to repeat Fikr often, sometimes just a little, but the impression from Fikr is most important.

GITHA: ...the memory in order...

TASAWWUF: Many people have some trouble in memorizing and this is because the channel

of breath is not clear. Fikr both helps to clear the channel and to remove all thoughts. It not only removes the undesirable thoughts, it removes the desirable ones. Then the mind becomes as the empty crescent moon and through concentration and effort recollection is made possible and thus the memory improved.

GITHA: ...the feelings normal...

TASAWWUF: This really means to awaken the intuitive faculty. The abnormal feelings are the emotions that pervade the personality whenever breath is out of control or the willpower is lacking. When the channel of the breath becomes purified one gains in the faculty of insight and along with that one becomes more sensitive, responsive, and sympathetic. In this way one attains right feeling.

GITHA: ...and thereby all one's affairs in life come into perfect and proper order.

TASAWWUF: Therefore, the importance of esotericism is so great humanity needs nothing more--although on all sides we hear that one hasn't got the time. This is our test. Every one is in some respect selfish. There is wise selfishness and foolish selfishness. The wisely selfish learn that they can best accomplish their desires by overcoming their own small weaknesses, and they follow this path.

The swing of the rhythm of breath is the very swing of life, and through that swing one creates one's heaven or hell. What one creates or establishes in the mind-world is reflected outwardly in the daily life. The keynote of the day can be established through Fikr and thereby all success or harmony attained.

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Githa Series II with Commentary

Asrar ul Ansar: Mysticism

Number 3: The Perception of Urouj and Nasoul

Life, in the sense in which we use the word, is the consciousness of existence, and the unconscious existence we call death, not being able to consciously perceive existence. Therefore, according to the word “life” that we have in use, life is caused by activity. The activity of our mind and body depends upon the activity of our breath.

The activity of the breath has two aspects, Urouj, inhaling, and Nasul, exhaling. This goes on in rhythm and upon its regularity depends the health of mind and body. When exhaling, the mind and body expel the refuse, the undesirable vibrations and gases; when inhaling, the mind and body draw from the sphere strength and power.

Of course, those who know how to utilize the undesirable vibrations and gases that come out when exhaling are the alchemists of life—they can turn iron into gold. Their breath becomes the River Ganges; it heals them and all upon whom it falls. It is just like producing electric light from rubbish. The seers make a habit of perceiving instantly their breath and its motion, and from this they perceive the knowledge of past, present, and future of any question that is asked them.

Number 4: The Perception of Jalal, Jamal, and Kamal

The first lesson in the mystery of the breath is to perceive the breath so that we could distinguish whether it is Jalal, Jamal, or Kamal. A person cannot learn it intellectually, for intellectual knowledge will not give perception of these three. This perception can be attained by three achievements: one, the development of the breath; the second, the rhythm of the breath; the third, the clearness of the breath. If the breath is not clear, if its rhythm is not right, if the breath is undeveloped, in other words, insignificant, it is impossible to distinguish it.

By the practice of Fikar and Qasab, in due course of time these three different achievements show their result in the perception of the breath, and when one can perceive the breath, then one can manage to keep healthy in body and mind, and can avoid and even destroy all pains and troubles. Besides this, a great many mysteries are disclosed by the perception of the breath.

The breath distinctly flowing through the right nostril is Jalal, through the left is Jamal, through both, Kamal. Kamal is perceived two ways—the elementary stage and the perfect state. When Jalal begins to turn into Jamal or when Jamal begins to turn into Jalal, it first takes an elementary stage of Kamal in order to become a distinct Jalal or Jamal, but the perfect state of Kamal is when both nostrils inhale and exhale together.

Number 5: The Use of Urouj and Nasul in Action and Thought

The use of Urouj and Nasul in action and thought makes a great difference in man's life. The action that is suitable to be done during the time of Urouj is unsuitable during the time of Nasul. At the interval of one moment, a person can turn a success into a failure and failure to success.

There are certain actions that one can accomplish successfully by the influence of Urouj, such as understanding, receiving knowledge of a secret in another person's heart, winning the affection of another person. All these things, and many others which can be acquired by response, are suitable to be obtained during the time of Urouj.

Then there are such things as teaching, singing, lecturing, giving, scolding, blessing, healing, suggesting, and all actions of expressive nature that are best accomplished during the influence of Nasul. Urouj and Nasul are as a swing of nature, which moves from north to south and south to north, and if one knows the secret of this, one can bring things of the north to the south and things of the south to the north, and may be benefited by both Urouj and Nasul.