

# BREATH

## Lesson 1

It is difficult to define breath in a few words. Breath is the very life in beings, and what holds all the particles of the body together is the power of the breath, and when this power becomes less, then the will loses its control over the body. As the power of the sun holds all the planets, so the power of the breath holds every organ.

Besides this, the breath purifies the body by taking in new and fresh life and by giving out all gasses that should be put out. It nourishes the body by absorbing from the space the spirit and substance that are necessary, and more necessary than all that man eats and drinks. The whole mechanism of the body works by the power of the breath, and every disorder in the working of the mechanism is caused by some irregularity in the breath. Therefore physicians feel disorder in the health of a patient by feeling his pulse or the beats of his heart. The physician will say that it is the physical illness of the body which has caused the change in the pulsation and in the beats of the heart, but the mystic knows that it is caused by the breath.

The breath in its different aspects acts differently; in every direction the breath does a special work. The breath has a special work with every organ of the body, and it has its particular influence upon every element of which the physical body consists. Every movement that one makes is directed by the power of the breath; at the same time, the breath alone has the power to stop any motion. For instance, walking, running, sitting and standing are actions done by the power of the breath; and trembling, shivering, or waving the hands or feet without control show lack of power in the breath.

Diseases — especially such diseases as nervousness, palpitation of the heart, and paralysis — come from lack of power of the breath. All lung diseases are caused by unclearness of the breath. Troubles in the brain and troubles in the intestines are also caused by lack of regularity of the breath. This shows that breath is the key to health, which is all happiness in life.

## Lesson 2

The air taken in and sent out that one feels through the nostrils or lungs is what we ordinarily call breath. In reality, however, that is as the stem of a tree whose branches are many. A mystic sees the whole body as a plant of the breath. According to the physician the lungs are the channel of the breath, but to the mystic the lungs are the branches of the tree, and other branches reach all parts of the body.

The mystics call all the branches by different names. This tree has a root in the body, and has centers where the branches meet the stem. There are five such centers in the body of man. The breath has its particular work in every center. By the study of mysticism one finds that man's life depends upon the

working of the centers. Generally the centers are blocked up on the inner side of the body. Therefore they give but a dim light, if the breath be pictured as a gas and the centers as lanterns.

When the centers are not in a fit condition they are wasted; not only this, but man is deprived of the full experience of life. Powers that are considered supernatural become natural when man leads a natural life. The first lesson of a natural life is right breathing. Many people breathe a half, many a quarter, and (many) still less.

It is a certain direction that the breath takes that brings about sleep, and it is the direction of the breath that brings vigor or fatigue. A man may, by the help of the breath, become stronger by doing physical exercises, and another by physical labor may become exhausted and worn out. The laborers in India who have to lift heavy weights have a certain way of breathing, and work a great deal and yet feel little fatigue.

According to the point of view of the mystic, a natural, full breath gives perfect health; and to a mystic's view, in a hundred people not one breathes rightly. Every Brahman teaches his child the way of breathing when he is nine years old. As it is a common thing that everyone breathes incorrectly, it rarely occurs to the mind that one's breath is incorrect. There are many reasons why people in general do not breathe rightly, but one among them is the lack of education in this. As health is more important than anything else on earth, and as health depends entirely on breath, which is the very life, it is necessary that the culture of the breath should be considered as of the highest importance.

### Lesson 3

Breath in the Sufic term is called *Nafs*; in Sanskrit it is called *Prana*, which means the very life. It spreads life and magnetism in all parts of the body, for breath in itself is life and is magnetism. Deformity of form and feature is often caused by disorder of the breath. Lack of proportion of the body, in form and strength, is also caused by lack of order in the breath.

By exercises for physical culture and exercises of voice production breath can be developed in different parts of the body. It can especially be noticed in the fingers of the violinist that by constant practice on the violin he puts a sort of magnetism, of life, into the strings his fingers touch. This example is the plain proof that it is not the fingers that play nor the violin that sounds, but that they are instruments of life.

The importance of breath is now becoming known to the scientific world, and there is much of this mystical subject which is unexplored. But mysticism has been founded on the science of breath. There is no mystic, whether Buddhist, Vedantic, or Sufi, who makes use of another process than that of breath. Breath is the first lesson and it is also the last.

A mystic becomes capable of sending breath to any part of his body; thus he is able to send life, radiance and magnetism to any particle of his body. The question, "Does he send the breath by his power of will?" can be simply answered by "Yes," and yet that is not enough. If there are no strings on the violin, you cannot play it by willpower. So long as the adept has not balanced his breath, and controlled it, and mastered it, it cannot bring about the proper result. Therefore it is of no use to try

to make use of breath for physical or occult attainments until one has caused the breath to be in such a condition that it can work properly in the body.

Many, therefore, are not successful in spiritual attainments because before making use of the breath in the body, they want to produce psychical phenomena.

The body is the instrument for every experience, worldly or spiritual. By a deep study of breath a seeker after truth will find that, as every particle of his body is formed and nourished by breath, so from that and according to that his character is formed.

## Lesson 4

The mechanism of the body is dependent in its work upon five different aspects of breath, and these aspects are the five different directions of breath. In the Qur'ân, and also in the Hebrew scriptures, these five breaths are known as the five angels. These aspects are thus pictured in their finer work in human life. Often their direction is spoken of by the prophets in symbolical terms, as it is said: one stands on the left side of man, one on the right, one before, one behind, one with him. When one aspect of these five is not working properly it brings disorder in the whole mechanism of the body. In eating and drinking, yawning and stretching, and in all the actions of everyday life these five aspects of breath have to take the lead.

Among these five aspects the first is the breath, which is like the stem in the tree and which one feels through the nostrils. By the purification, development and control of this breath all five aspects are developed. There are atoms in man's body which form a certain organ, which are more or less active in different rhythms according as the breath reaches them. The atoms which do not receive the proper breath remain undeveloped, and therefore are inactive.

As the centers of the body are situated in the center of the whole mechanism, it is natural that in the average person the breath does not reach their innermost part as it ought to. The question, "If it is natural that it should reach them, why does it not?" may be answered by saying that it is because man leads an artificial life. If man led a natural life it would not be necessary for him to develop by certain meditation processes the qualities that are latent in him.

A horse, a dog or a cat knows intuitively of death, disease or distress in the house in which it lives. The animals are considered by modern psychology to be without mind, and man, who is far superior to the lower creation and the ideal of all beings, has not that intuitive power. The reason is that the animals lead a more natural life than man, although even that is spoiled by contact with man. The cobra can attract its food from a mile's distance, but man must toil with his hands for his daily bread. In short, there are faculties in man which, by the artificiality of life, are closed, and man lives an incomplete life. To live a fuller life the wise in all religions have taken the breath in hand and awakened atoms and centers which are instruments for those faculties. As soon as breath touches those centers it makes them vibrate and then they do their work. Therefore breathing exercises given to a murid are like the winding of a clock. Once in twenty-four hours the clock is wound and after that it goes on without effort.

## Lesson 5

Breath is the channel through which all the expression of the innermost life can be given. Breath is an electrical current that runs between the everlasting life and the mortal frame. Those who have attained any intuition, or miraculous power, or any power have achieved it by the help of the breath.

But the first essential thing is a pure channel for the breath, and that channel is the human body. If the channel is blocked, there is no possibility for the breath to pass freely. Air in itself is not bad, but when it touches the earth, it partakes of the influence of the earth, and therefore becomes polluted. So it is with the breath: breath in itself is pure, but if the channel through which it works is not right, it becomes impure.

The breath makes a circuit through the body, and the channel through which it makes the circuit is the spine. The mystics give this channel great importance; they call it the serpent. They picture it as a serpent holding its tail in its mouth. In almost all symbols the serpent represents the channel of the breath. In the terms of the Yogis it is called *Kundalini*.

When this channel is made clear by the method of breathing, then this is not only a help to the physical health, but it also opens up the faculties of intuition, and the doors that are within, where lies the real happiness of man. In order to clear this channel of all that blocks the way, one must follow the rules of mystical ablutions and of rhythmic breathing. People who cannot understand the subject and who hear and read things by halves, say that some chakras &mdash; centers &mdash; are opened by breathing exercises, and that many kinds of distress may be the consequence.

But looking at it from another point of view, one might as well say that the eyes of a child should never be opened, because he will thereby be exposed to temptations of all sorts. All virtue is in self-control; there is no virtue in being dead. Life is worthwhile only when a person leads it fully. People look for phenomena, but there is no better phenomenon than breath itself, because breath is life and light, and in the breath is the source of life and light. In the mastery of the breath the secret of both worlds is hidden.

## Lesson 6

Rhythm is the principal thing to be considered in breath, as it is on the rhythm of the breath that the working of the whole mechanism depends, and the chief reason of the irregularity of the beats of the heart or head is lack of rhythm in the breath.

As man generally neglects to think of this breath, he overlooks the fact that his health entirely depends on rhythmic breath. Rhythm is the central theme of the whole creation. Therefore the infant moves his hands and legs by turns, forming a rhythm. This shows that nobody teaches anyone rhythm; it is natural to all beings. It is rhythmic movement which enables the fish to swim and the serpent to climb trees. If rhythm were not an instinct the animal would never have known how to walk, nor the bird how to fly.

The life of man is so pulled from all sides, so divided that he often forgets things that are most essential to his life, which the lower creatures seem to keep more correctly in their lives. Neatness in

man's work and balance in man's actions show rhythm in him. When man shows lack of balance in his life and when his life is disturbed and all things seem to go wrong, it is most often that the rhythm of his breath has become wrong. Irregularity of activity and repose in the habits of life causes disorder of rhythm in the breath.

Very often the Eastern mystical exercises are wrongly understood by many. When a teacher gives a breathing exercise to his pupil, often he does not mean the breathing itself but rhythm. Thought given to the breath becomes a weight upon it and naturally holds it longer in its movement, altering it from what it would otherwise naturally be. It is the following of the rhythm of the breath, and the keeping of the rhythm regular which brings about the best results.

## Lesson 7

Breath is termed by Sufis *Kasif* and *Latif*. *Kasif* means dense and *Latif* means fine.

Dense breath is that which is noisy and labored, which strains the nerves and lungs. The exercises of dense breathing are useful for developing the muscles and for gaining control over the nerves; they are helpful also to the lungs and useful to the physical health. But in spiritual development, unless the breath be made fine it cannot penetrate through the important centers in the body and it cannot reach far enough into the innermost parts of one's life.

Breath, to a Sufi, is a bridge between himself and God. It is a rope for him, hanging down to earth, attached to Heaven. The Sufi climbs up by help of this rope. In the Quranic language it is called *Buraq*, a steed which was sent to the Prophet for his journey to the Heavens. Hindus call it

*Prana*, which means life, but they picture it symbolically as a bird which is named in Sanskrit Garuda, on which rode *Narayana*, the godhead.

There is no mystical cult in which the breath is not given the greatest importance in spiritual progress. Once man has touched the depths of his own being by the help of the breath, then it becomes easy for him to become one with all that exists on earth and in Heaven.

## Lesson 8

Breath is the mystery; in it is hidden the secret of life. Breath proves the existence of the life unseen.

Breath is audible, at the same time inaudible. Breath is visible and at the same time invisible.

It is a certain degree of the activity of the breath and capacity through which it is acting which makes the breath audible. This shows that there exists something of which we are conscious, the source of which no one knows, which is active every moment of the day, on the model of which the mechanism of nature and art is made.

No one can explain when it came into this mortal body, and no one can say whither it goes when it leaves this body of clay. One can only say that something living came and kept this mortal body alive and left it, proving that the same body, which was once thought to be alive, was not really alive, but itself was the life. This proves to the intellect, even to that void of faith, that there is some source whence life comes and that it returns again to the same source,

Man's true self is the part of his being which knows itself to exist, which is conscious of itself. When that self takes breath as its vehicle instead of the body, then it soars up and toward the utmost heights, toward the goal which is the source and origin of all beings.

## Lesson 9

Breath is audible and visible, and when a spiritual person, by spiritual exercises, strengthens and purifies the breath it becomes more intelligible, as a light and as a sound. Life and light, in truth, are one; the breath is the life, and it is the same breath which is light. Breath in fact is the light of all senses; the senses of sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch perceive all things by the light of the breath. When the breath is absent from the body, the body with all its perfect mechanism becomes useless. It is natural, therefore, that every sense must become powerful and keen if the breath be developed and purified.

The reason why the ill and weak and people physically delicate generally see visions is that by the lack of flesh, fat, and blood the veins and tubes of the body and all the organs of all the senses are free and not blocked as they are in a muscular person. Therefore, naturally, the senses become keen and man perceives more than what is within the ordinary range of perception. Also such a person, when asleep, perceives the impressions from the inner world, because during sleep the inner sense, which may be called the root of the senses, turns its back, so to speak, on the external world and so begins to see the world within.

The mystic, by help of exercises, develops and purifies the breath. Therefore to him, after a certain time, all things become clear in the inner and outer world. There are some who see light before them, there are some who notice colors before their view, also there are some who see forms before their sight. When they talk about it to others who cannot observe the phenomena, they are considered imaginative; people often laugh at them.

The Sufi, therefore, does not speak of any such experience to others. He thinks it is not their world and they will not be able to understand unless they also rise to that sphere. There is no motive for speaking about one's experience to others except pride, and if someone does this out of vanity his next step will be exaggeration. If something makes anyone feel himself above others it is natural for him to feel inclined to make it still more impressive. Besides, it is in human nature to wish to interest one's friends in one's pleasures, and if someone is pleased with something he sees he will surely try to make it more interesting by a little added exaggeration. Therefore there are two dangers on the spiritual path of which the adept must be aware before making the journey. It is for this reason that mysticism has been made a secret cult, that it may not be for everybody to play with.

## Lesson 10

Breath in reality is light, but when it shoots forth its rays, then according to the direction of the rays and the capacity that receives the light, colors manifest. Both form and color depend upon the direction that the light takes and upon the degree of light.

Nothing on earth is meaningless; every occurrence has its meaning and every event has its purpose.

Even the colors that manifest in the light of breath have their meaning, which pertains to the moment and the conditions of the moment. Attempts are being made to photograph thoughts and feelings, and some people have even attempted to photograph spirits. It is difficult to say how far these attempts can be successful; no doubt, in this, great scope is given to falsehood.

If there is any means of seeing a spirit, a form from the inner world, it is only the breath. For in the light of the breath a form from the inner world can manifest as a picture from the magic lantern. The picture is actually in the lantern and it is the reflection of that picture which we see. Those who see the form of the dead see the reflection before them, manifested in the light of their own breath the real forms being in the inner world. For it is the breath which connects the inner world with the outer world, just as the light thrown from the magic lantern falls upon the curtain.

Many people believe that there is a color or note which belongs to a particular person, and this question offers a wide scope for confusion and puzzle. Many people are anxious to know what note belongs to them and what color is their special color. In fact this belief can be looked at from two different points of view, from the symbolical point of view and from the metaphysical. From the symbolical point of view every person is, so to speak, tuned to a certain pitch in his individual evolution, and he stands with respect to another person just as C on the piano stands with respect to G, or E to F. This shows why a person can get on harmoniously with a certain person, but is inharmonious with another. It is not the fault of the F or G on the piano if they sound inharmonious together, it is the combination of the notes that causes the disharmony. It is not always the note that is inharmonious; it is a wrong combination that makes it inharmonious. Spiritual perfection makes man the keynote which is in harmony with all notes, and even that perfection shown to the world by Christ caused his crucifixion.

Metaphysically this question can be explained thus: There is a certain degree of life in a person, which can be distinguished by his breath, and that degree shows itself to the seer as a color and sound. Those who have not attained the power which perceives the tone and color of the breath can perceive it by a man's voice and expression.

## Lesson 11

The breath is like a swing which has a continual motion, and whatever is put into the swing, swings also, with the movement of the breath.

Fikr, therefore, is not a breathing practice. In fikr it is not necessary that one should breathe in a certain way, different from one's usual breathing.. Fikr is becoming conscious of the natural movement of the breath, and picturing breath as a swing, putting in that swing a certain thought, as a babe in the cradle, to rock it. Only the difference in the rocking is that it is an intentional activity on the part of the person who rocks the cradle, and in fikr no effort must be made to change the rhythm of the breath; the breath must be left to its own usual rhythm. One need not try even to regulate the rhythm of the breath, for the whole mechanism of one's body is already working rhythmically; so breath is rhythmical by nature and it is the very breath itself which causes man to distinguish rhythm.

What is important in fikr is not the rhythm, but the concentration. Fikr is swinging the concentrated thought with the movement of the breath, for breath is life and it gives life to the thought which is

repeated with the breath. On the rhythm of the breath the circulation of the blood and the pulsation of the heart and head depend, which means that the whole mechanism of the body, also of the mind, is directed by the rhythm of the breath. When a thought is attached to the breath by concentration, then the effect of that thought reaches every atom of one's mind and body. Plainly speaking, the thought held in fikr runs with the circulation of the blood through

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every vein and tube of the body, and the influence of that thought is spread through every faculty of the mind. Therefore the reaction of the fikr is the resonance of the same thought expressing itself through one's thought, speech and action. So in time the thought one holds in fikr becomes the reality of one's self. So he who contemplates on God in time arrives at a state where his self turns into the being of God.

## Lesson 12

As the mechanism of the body depends upon the breath for its subsistence as well as for its health, so the breath is important in sustaining the mind and keeping its work regular. Mostly, confusion, depression, or any other disorders of the mind arise from the disorder of breathing. All such diseases as hallucinations and delusions are caused by wrong breathing. For instance, if a person comes running or is hurried for a moment, he loses the regularity of his breath for that moment and at that moment he is incapable of thinking rightly. If science and the state knew this, they could surely cause some change to be made in the present law. Many who are put in prison for some crime caused by them during moments of irregular breathing, the state would send to be cured and taught how to breathe instead of sending them to prison, for neither does the prison cure them nor does it benefit by their presence there. By this I mean to say that not only a disorder of the mind that comes at a certain time is caused by irregular breathing, but also a disorder which comes so many times during the day, whenever the breathing is not rightly done. People who become impulsive, or show irritability in nature, who become impatient at times, who get fits of anger, passion, or laughter, who get spells of tears &mdash; all have an irregularity of breathing, which is the cause of all this. The physician has no remedy for their ills; modern psychology has not found the link; but the mystics from of old have for years believed &mdash; and not only believed but practiced &mdash; and have found in the end that balance of mind entirely depends upon regularity of breathing.

## Lesson 13

On breath depends the capability and efficiency with which one does one's work thoroughly. Shortness of breath causes impatience in man, and lack of endurance and irregularity of the rhythm of the breath cause confusion in man and incline him to be easily upset. Breath being the life power, it is the same life power which gives man strength to endure all things. One will always find that those who easily get cross, who quickly get upset and get annoyed instantly, have something wrong with the breath. People not knowing their difficulty are annoyed with them; they are put aside and are considered disagreeable people. What they need is the training of the breathing. When their body and mind have been so repaired one will find no more disagreeableness in their nature. Then, the

artist who gets tired of his work and feels a lack of enthusiasm to complete his work, and feels a lack of interest and absence of inspiration, often it is all caused by some disorder in the breath.

Regular and rhythmic breathing gives health to both body and mind. Inspiration comes from above, but it comes as light. It is the work of the mind to receive it; if the mind is not ready to receive it the inspiration will come but it will not be realized. This is like the difference between the metal gong and the wooden gong; the former will resound, the latter will not resound. It is not the fault of the one who strikes the gong, it is the gong itself which does not resound. So it is with the mind which receives the inspiration and the mind which cannot conceive it. Yet to every mind inspiration comes. The only difference is that one receives it, the other rejects it.

Right breathing makes the mind vibrate, and vibration is the sign of life. All that vibrates more is more living; what vibrates less is less living. So it is with trees and animals; they show their life in their vibration.

The greatest man of science in India, Jagadish Chandra, spoke the other day in an English university on the subject of the breathing of trees.

The horse one chooses as the best is that horse whose nostrils are fully open and whose breath is full, which it shows by the expression of the eyes. A good horse shows vibrations by the quivering of its skin when its back is patted. It is not like a stone-like horse, which takes one step after ten lashes have been laid on its back. In man, the life can be seen in the same way. It is termed in Hindustani *pani*, which means "water".

They say that a horse, or a man, has a "watery nature", which means a fluid nature, living, pliable. And this life, breath gives to body and mind.

## Lesson 14

The influence of the breath on the body is like the influence of the weather on the world. As body and mind act and react upon one another, so the influence of the breath takes the chief place in directing both mind and body. Every emotion is caused by the breath flowing in a certain direction, also by the degree of force of the breath.

There are three different rhythms of breath which have influence upon the mind. Slow breath gives tranquility to the mind; and to all the creative faculties of mind, scope is given by this rhythm. Moderate breath helps the mind to continue its activities. If one wanted to make out a plan of work or wished to accomplish a certain work, the slow activity of breath spoken of above would not be helpful; although for poetry or music the slow activity of the breath is more helpful. But quickness in the rhythm of the breath produces confusion, though it gives force to physical activities. One can run well or swim well when the breath is in a fairly quick rhythm. When the rhythm of the breath is too quick it brings confusion to the mind and exhaustion to the body.

One who does not breathe fully &mdash; in other words freely and deeply &mdash; can neither be well physically nor make use of his mental faculties. Very often one finds most learned and intelligent people unable to work as they wish to and incapable of finishing a work which they have

taken up. Sometimes a person thinks it is from bodily weakness, or mental weakness, or lack of enthusiasm, or loss of memory, not knowing that it is very often a matter of regularizing the breath. Most often people think that it is the tired or exhausted condition of the external senses that prevents their thinking, but in reality it is the lack of right breathing, for right breathing can make the mental faculties clearer and the organs of the senses more capable of perceiving. This shows that the mind can live a fuller life by what I call full breath.

For the Sufi, therefore, breath is a key to concentration. The Sufi, so to speak, puts his thoughts under the cover of the breath. This expression of Rumi's I would interpret as meaning that the Sufi lays his beloved ideal in the swing of the breath. I remember my murshid's saying that every breath one inhales conscious of the Divine Beloved is the only gain there is, and every breath inhaled without this consciousness, the only loss.

## Lesson 15

Thought is conveyed without speech through the breath. The true wireless telegraphy is the rightly established current of breath. It is difficult for any man to try it, without practice in concentration and lacking development of breath, though unconsciously thoughts are always exchanged through the agency of the breath.. The scientist is ready to believe that contagious diseases are spread by means of the breath, but it is the providence of psychology to realize that thoughts and mental states, such as hilarity, depression, energy, or sloth, are conveyed by means of the breath. In the presence of a cold person one becomes cold, the contact of a warm-hearted person warms one; and all this is done through the breath as the medium. If an angry person were to close his breath while angry much less of his feeling would affect another. If a person who is prone to hilarity would close his breath in the presence of an expert comedian he could protect himself from being influenced by him.

Yogis who rise above the thoughts and feelings of those around them attain power by control of the breath. So the method of the inner cult of Sufis also depends upon the science of breath. Knowledge of another person's pleasure or displeasure, the message of affection, the warning of hostility, all are received by way of the breath. The one who is conscious of the rhythm of the breath and whose breath is pure from grossness begins to perceive a sense which in time. becomes a language to him. Thought-reading is not necessarily intuition, although many people confound thought-reading and intuition. There is not much difference between the action of these two faculties; the difference is like that between the telephone and the telegraph. Thought- reading comes from without, intuition come from within; yet for both rhythmic breath and a clear mind are necessary. The rhythmic breath helps the mind to be clear. Breath breaks the congestion which in the head produces confusion, and in the heart depression, which covers the thoughts of others from one's perception, even from one's own intuition. A thought is better conveyed to another through breath than by speech, for a feeling put into words becomes half dead. Feeling in its own sphere is fully living and when conveyed from there through the breath it reaches the mind to which it is sent. When a person has not developed his mind by concentration and tries to send his thought by the breath he is not always successful. He is like a person trying to hit the target without ever having practiced in his life. It is practice which makes man perfect.

## Lesson 16

It is by the power of breath that the animals search for their food; through breath they perceive what they must eat, what they must not eat, and through breath the carnivorous animals search for their prey. It is through breath that certain animals receive warning of dangers and again it is through breath that some animals when ill find their remedy. If the lower creation can do so much by the power of breath how much more can man do, if he only knows the right way of the development of breath. It is through the breath that the birds receive warnings of the changes of the weather, and accordingly they migrate in flocks from one place to another. Through the breath the herds of deer perceive approaching storms or changes of weather or the approach of a lion or a tiger. Man, who is more capable of perceiving by breath still deeper things, warnings and calls from the earth and from Heaven, which places are meant for him to dwell in or to settle in, discriminating between friend and foe and discerning their pleasure and displeasure - owing to his interest in the superficial things of life, cannot fully benefit by the power of breath.

Yogis and Sufis, therefore, and all students of the inner cult, believe that breath is the means of receiving all intuitive knowledge from every direction of life. Absorbed in a thousand things of daily life man gives very little thought to breath. Therefore he keeps his heart closed to all the revelation that can be received by the help of the breath. Man as a rule is never conscious of his breath, of its rhythm, of its development, except at the time when he is so tired that he is breathless or when he is so excited that he feels choked up, or when something keeps the breath from flowing. For a Sufi it is desirable to be conscious of every breath. In the schools of the Sufi in the East the members of a certain association take up as their duty to remind the whole assembly of the same. So one after another, in turn, takes it up as a duty. They call aloud "*Hush ba dam*," meaning, "Keep conscious of the breath." "*Nazr ba kadam*" &mdash; this sentence is added when the Sufis are walking, which means, "Look down and see whose feet are these that are walking."

## Lesson 17

It is said that the cobras, enormous animals living in dense forests or in the mountains, attract animals or birds by the power of the breath. When the cobra is hungry, which is once in three months or six months, by inhaling the breath it draws its prey near. In its exhaling there is magnetism, power and influence; in its inhaling there is attraction. The mystics of ancient times have learned much from cobras. Mahadeva, the Lord of Yogis, had the cobra as his necklace. The peace and stillness of this animal, the contentment with which it waits for its sustenance are wonderful, and most instructive for an adept on the spiritual path.

One who masters breath becomes invigorated and strengthened in his mind, becomes quiet and peaceful and achieves self-control. In the cobra there is the far-reaching breath. So is the breath of the mystic. The mystic's breath is not what is called deep breathing. His is the breath reaching inmost, which touches every plane of his being. Every movement robs one of a great portion of breath, every excitement takes away a great deal of life-force. Therefore those who master breathing first, learn control, not only over every passion and emotion, but over every movement. By trying first to make the body still, one can practice the breath better. Therefore among Yogis different postures are taught.

Every posture allows the breath to take a certain direction, for every direction the breath takes has a different result. It is posture and thought, both together, that help to direct the breath in a certain direction. As breath is a life-power, whatever center it is directed to, it brings to a new life.

## Lesson 18

Different conditions and the changes that take place in the world have their effect upon the mind, and the different conditions of the mind have their effect upon the body. As bodily illness makes man irritable, confused and exhausted in mind, so different conditions of the mind cause health or illness in the body. The link between the body and the mind is the breath, a link through which the influences of the body and the mind are exchanged and work upon one another. By the use of breath in physical culture the health and vigor of the breath is projected, so to speak, upon the mind. By the use of concentration through the breath the light of the mind is thrown upon the body, which takes away from the body all heaviness and stiffness, making it light and exhilarated.

Breath in this way acts like a ball in tennis thrown from one side to the other, and the force of its movement comes from the side from which it is directed. Therefore when it is directed from the body to the mind, the mind becomes subject to the influence of the body, but when from the side of the mind it is directed toward the body, in this case the body becomes subject to the mind.

Very often dervishes and fakirs in the East, many of whom live upon alms and go several days without food and spend many nights in sleepless vigil, do things which are difficult for a wrestler, a boxer, or any other muscular person. Some dervishes practice jumping into fire, standing for hours in the water, sitting or lying on iron pricks, thrashing their bare arms and legs, cutting themselves with knives and swords, and all such things, beyond the power of a physically strong man. Often a physically strong man suffers in proportion to his strength when he is exposed to pain or torture. This explains that through the power of breath is the main source of physical development, yet breath is the principal thing in the development of mind, in which the influence of the breath is more valuable.

## Lesson 19

The breath has a great influence and entire control over two principles which work by the power of breath: *Kabs*, or contraction, and *Bast*, or expansion. The former absorbs, attracts and gathers energy from outside, the latter tendency repels energy from within. In this way body and mind are sustained, nourished, enriched, and made light, easy, clear and pure by the power of breath. Inhaling is contraction and exhaling is expansion. It is upon these two principles and their regular working that the health and happiness of man depend.

A man who has not gained power over his breath is like a king who has no power over his domain. Once man has gained the power of contraction and expansion, then what he needs in life is to know what to attract and what to repel, and this the master of breath intuitively understands. Even the

birds and animals know what they must eat and drink and what they must not. By a close study of the lower creation, students of nature have learned that animals and birds abstain from food and drink when it becomes necessary for health.

I am often asked the question, why there should be pain in childbirth. And the answer is that our life has been removed far from nature. Man today lives an artificial life to such an extent that he can hardly understand what real life may be. Man considers the accustomed to be the natural, he does not think how far the natural is removed from the present life we live. The domesticated animals are also beginning to show the birth pain, through their association with human beings.

*Fikr* practiced for some years helps to regulate the rhythm of breathing, and it helps in all aspects of life to attract and repel all one wishes. By the help of *fikr* not only the digestive faculty and the circulation of the blood and the pulsations of the body are made regular, but the concentration that is developed through the development of breath enables man to repel all disagreeable impressions which cause despair and depression. By the power of *fikr* one helps the power of memory, also the power of retention of thought. At the same time one is enabled by the power of breath to forget any thought one wishes to put out of one's mind and to erase from one's heart any impression deeply engraved.

## Lesson 20

Breath is the medium between the outer life and the inner life. By the help of breath the elements necessary for the body can be attracted and by the help of the breath thought and inspiration can be gained. By the help of the breath all that is undesirable in the body and mind can be expelled. The secret of telepathy, of reading the thought has the science of breath as its mystery. When one wishes to draw from within inspiration, breath is the key. Breath is a life current, its value is known to so few. Breath in itself is a phenomenon, but the phenomenon becomes manifest when once the breath is fully mastered.

The law of transmutation is also the secret of breath. What we give or gain from another, without seeing or hearing, which we only realize as a result of the contact of someone, that is the effect of breath; for by the medium of breath there is always something given and taken. So few are aware of it! In the presence of one person one feels an inclination to laugh, in the presence of another one has a desire to cry, contact with one makes a person feel cheerful, with another sorrowful. Sometimes without there being one word spoken between two people thoughts and feelings are transferred, without people knowing it, through the current of breath. Breath is a link through which one individual is connected with another individual, and space does not make a difference if once connection of breath is established. The communication will be sure and clear, if only the wire is tied to the sympathetic hearts. There is much that is common to the science of electricity and the science of breath. The day is not very far off when science and mysticism both will meet on the same ground in the realization of the electricity which is hidden in the breath.

## Lesson 21

Mind is creative and thought is living, but out of what does mind create a thought? Out of the atoms of the mental sphere? But the current which attracts the desired atoms to complete a thought is the breath, not that breath which is outwardly manifest, but that part of breath the action of which is not felt by every man. The more length and breadth the breath has the more scope it gives for the creation of thought. It is therefore that the thoughts of the sages and mystics who have gained mastery over breath are more substantial and complete in themselves; and besides, they prove to be more expressive and impressive.

The breadth of the breath is in its volume. This comes by the facility one has of breathing through wide nostrils and open lungs. The secret of the power of voice is also to be found in this.

The voice of a commander of an army which carries through the army and impresses the soldiers, thus encouraging them to fight, has breath as its secret behind it. Ali, by his invocation of the sacred word, which he sometimes used to cry aloud on the battlefield, used to cause the enemies to tremble. The length of the breath shows the length of life; lengthy breath is the sign of long life. This comes not only by wide nostrils and open lungs, but also by the accommodation that the body has for the breath, not only the nose and the chest but also the head and the abdomen.

There are some whose breath has volume, or breadth, but not much length, and there are others who have length and no breadth. But it is the balance of the length and breadth of the breath which gives balance to the mind.

## Lesson 22

Inspiration comes from the light thrown upon a certain idea. This comes from the radiance of the breath falling upon the mind. There are two shadows, one that is projected upon the sky, and another which falls upon the ground; the former known to the mystic and the latter to everyone. When the breath which is developed is thrown outward its radiance produces light, and it is the different shades and grades of this light which manifest in various colors, suggesting to the mystic the different elements which the particular colors denote. The same breath has a different action when it is thrown within. It falls upon the mind like a searchlight and shows to the intelligence the object of its search as things seen in daylight. Thus man knows without any effort on the part of the brain all he wishes to know and expresses in the way each individual is qualified to express.

Inspiration, therefore, is one thing, qualification another thing. The inspiration is perfect when expressed by the qualified souls. Nevertheless, inspiration is independent of qualification. The light that the breath throws upon the mind is in every case different in its radiance. When far reaching it illuminates the deepest corners of the heart, where the light has never reached, and if breath reaches further the light is thrown upon the mind of God, the store of all knowledge there is.

## Lesson 23

It is the vibration caused by the breath which becomes thought waves which carry the thought from one mind to the other. It is therefore that thought-reading much depends upon the position in which two people sit with regard to each other, for a certain position makes it easier for the breath to reach than another, although it is not always necessary that a person must be facing one in order to receive thought waves through breath. If the thought power is strong and the breath is sound enough to carry the thought waves, a person, whether facing or having his back turned, must receive thought.

The mystics do not only project their own breath and see the condition of their being manifest before themselves, but also they can make themselves responsive to receive the thoughtwaves of another carried by his breath. This receptivity does not only enable an adept to read other's thoughts, but also to a mystic the condition of another becomes revealed by the projection of another person's breath upon his heart.

Plainly speaking, souls are likened to mirrors, and two mirrors facing one another become projected on one another, one manifesting the reflection of the other. The mirror which has no reflection is capable of manifesting the reflection of the other mirror. In this way breath enables a Sufi not only to know and see his own condition of life but also to know and understand the condition of those he comes in contact with.

## Lesson 24

The breath of one person may, so to speak, overpower the breath of another. It is as a little stream can be washed away by a large stream of water. In this is the secret of knowing the condition of another person. A Sufi whose breath is lively, which is called in the Sufic terms *Nafsi garm*, has the influence of scattering the thoughts, feelings, the vibrations of the atmosphere of another. In this way he is able to convey his thought or feeling, and create his vibrations as the atmosphere for another who needs it for his own betterment. In this way a Sufi brings a life and health to another person; he can have an influence on the character of another person.

There is a great difference between a developed breath and an undeveloped one. There is as vast a difference, or even a vaster, between the breath of two persons as in two voices. A specially produced singing voice is quite different from the uncultivated speaking voice. It is a psychological fact that the voice and word of a person whose voice is cultivated makes a greater impression than the voice and word of an ordinary person. How much more then must the influence of breath work silently. It is in this that is the mystery of the mystic's magnetism, which is healing, harmonizing, exalting, at the same time invigorating.

## Lesson 25

The breath is a light in itself, and it becomes projected like the beam from a searchlight thrown upon an object. When the breath is coarse, undeveloped, it is full of material atoms which dim its light; but a developed breath is sometimes not different from the light of the sun but even brighter than

that. Breath being a light from another dimension, which is unknown to science today, it cannot be visible to the ordinary physical eyes. The glance of the physical eyes must be cleansed and purified first by *Pasi Anfas* before the eyes can see the light of breath.

What people call the aura is the light of breath, but it is not everyone who sees it. A radiant countenance is a proof of an aura which lightens it, and the lack of it is the lack of light in the breath. A seer sees the sign of a death more clearly and longer beforehand than a physician can. The reason is that the seer sees in the aura of a person whereas the physician sees only the condition of the body.

There is a belief in India that there are some cobras that have light in their head, the light by which they find their way through the dark. They make a hole in the earth miles long and illuminate the hole by their own light, which is centered in their head. As two wires, positive and negative, cause the electric light to manifest, so the two currents of breath, *Jelal* and *Jemal*, when connected in a head in the way they ought to be, cause the light to manifest.

Many experience the phenomena of the light of breath, and yet doubt if it can be true, for they think it is perhaps an imagination. Others, who are incapable of seeing that light, confirm their doubt. The Sufi by the development of breath experiences this light, which becomes for him a proof of the existence of that dimension which is unknown to the ordinary world.

## Lesson 26

Why is breath called *Prana* by the Hindus? It is because it brings on the surface the essence from within. It is a current which is running from the outer spheres to the inner spirit. What it brings from the outer spheres to the inner spirit is not nearly so great as that which it brings from the inner spheres of life.

This being the condition, breath is vitalizing. Naturally, therefore, the breath of man in sound health must give health to another in his presence. The breath of a mastermind must vitalize the thought of another, and the breath of a spiritual person must illuminate those in his presence. By breath a spiritually developed person can impart his physical energy, his thought-power and his spiritual influence to the others with whom he may come in contact.

It is natural, no doubt, that if the one who wishes to impart has not sufficient power to impart, he becomes broken if there is a greater demand on his power and if there is little left with him. Sufis, therefore, consider breathing connected with meditation much more important than anything else in the world, their food, sleep, or comfort.

## Lesson 27

Breath is likened to water. The flowing of the breath is like the flowing of a stream. Inhalation and exhalation show ebb and flow. Parts of the earth which water does not touch remain barren; so the centers in the body, with all their intuitive, innate capacities, remain unproductive if the breath does

not reach them. Besides, various diseases, in spite of all their apparent causes, often have one principal cause, and that is the lack of free flow of the breath. Many operations could be avoided and several diseases could be cured by the knowledge of the phenomena of breath.

The Hindu sacred rivers, Ganga and Jumma, are outward symbols of *Jelal* and *Jemal*, the two directions of the flow of the breath. And the place where they meet is called Sangam, the meeting or unity, which is considered most sacred by the Hindus. That Sangam is the meeting of these two opposite flows. It is like the meeting of the two directions in the center, which is called *Kemal* by the Sufis.

The water rises, passes, falls, and runs zigzag, and stands if held. So is breath. Every above said action of breath has a meaning and has a peculiar effect, as even water varies in its power and magnetism while going through the above said directions. Water is a tonic, and breath is life itself. No tonic can be greater and better than breath. A spiritually evolved person's presence, therefore, brings about a cure in cases where all remedies fail. Water is the necessity of life, and breath the only condition for living. Without it life is impossible. Water falls as a rain from above; so breath is from above also, though from another dimension. Water rises as vapors. So breath rises with gasses, also with joys or depressions. Pure water is health-giving, pure breath gives life. Water partakes of all things mixing with it; so does breath.

## Lesson 28

The mechanism of the human body shows the nervous system as its principal battery, in which magnetism is prepared by the action of breath. It is when the nervous system cannot function that this battery gets out of order and does not work properly. Many, in order to make this battery of the nervous system work properly, take drugs and other medicines which stimulate the nervous system. But instead of giving power to it they take away power from it, and in the end the nervous system becomes accustomed to all such medicines one takes.

The nourishment of the nervous system is what breath attracts from the space. As far as science goes, it says one gets into one's system oxygen. The mystic goes further in saying, not only does one get oxygen, but also that life and intelligence, that power and radiance which makes the nervous system in perfect order. The result of which is not only good health but ever-increasing magnetism, which comes forth from the person in his thought, speech, movement and action, charging his atmosphere with magnetism which surrounds him as a fortification and protection against all influences, physical and mental; thus making man live a fuller life.

## Lesson 29

Inhaling shows the power of absorption which is manifest in all living beings and in all objects. Little germs, worms, trees and plants all absorb, and in that way they breathe. Also in all living beings and in all things there is a tendency to put out an element which their system will not assimilate. It is not only the inhaling and exhaling by the nostrils which accomplishes these two functions, absorption and rejection; but there are minute waves of the breath working in different directions of the body,

which perform the above said two acts in their own way and in their own rhythm of speed; for instance, the tendency of stretching and contracting, the tendency of blinking the eyes, of expelling water and refuse from the body. When any of these subtle waves of the breath working in any direction of the body get out of order, then an illness originates in that particular part of the body, spreading its influence gradually to other parts.

Balance in man's life and being is maintained by the evenness of inhaling and exhaling. The compass of man's being is as large as the reaching point of his breath. One lives a fuller life, another does not live a fuller life, because the former breathes fully, the latter does not breathe fully. Very often the reason why a child is a dwarf is that his breathing capacity does not allow him to breathe fully; and often the reason why a youth does not develop fully is that he does not breathe properly. A person ages sooner, also, because his breathing is not right. Very often people who have no particular illness feel tired and lifeless because their breathing is not as it ought to be.

The spirit produces this physical body out of itself, so the body, in spite of all the physical nourishment, entirely depends upon the spirit to live. One can live for some time without food and water, but one cannot live without breathing. The reason is that as the physical body is made of the spirit, it needs to breathe spirit in, in order to exist. Breath, therefore, does not only nourish the physical body, but it gives subsistence to all the planes of man's existence.

### **Lesson 30**

Breath penetrates, breath permeates, breath strikes, breath absorbs, breath invigorates, and breath heals. It is therefore that souls with great powers make their thought and feeling penetrate into the minds and the hearts of others. As breath creates an atmosphere it permeates the bodies of others, also the sphere, charging the whole atmosphere with its particular magnetism.

The hearts of men are likened to gongs in the temple. Every spoken word strikes them, but by the power of breath one strikes them without a word. It is by the breath that one contracts illnesses, but also one absorbs defects and the depression of others, as well as joy and happiness. The breath of personalities healthy in mind and body is vitalizing. The breath of the spiritual beings, whose love and sympathy goes out to others, is naturally healing.

It is no exaggeration that the whole phenomenon of life has breath as its mystery, and once the knowledge of breath is attained and breath is mastered by practice, one beholds a most wonderful phenomenon within and without. There are many who remain skeptical until they have fathomed the mystery of breath. Once they know it, they call it, as Hindus have called it for ages, Breath- Life.

**Inner Life Hazrat Inayat Khan**