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Esoteric Papers; Gatha 1 Everday life; The breath

Number 4

Five Aspects of Breath

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'an, 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 within 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 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 on 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 is 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 his life, are closed, and man lives an incomplete life. To live a full 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 mureed are like the winding of a clock. Once in twenty-four hours the clock is wound and after that it goes on without effort.