

Breath as a Path to Inner Guidance

All the quotations below are selected from HIK's lectures but not in the order that I have printed them.

It is said in the Bible, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you'. Knocking at the door is asking within one's own self, 'What will become of this particular business, or aim, or object that I am thinking of?' As soon as one knocks at the gate of God, which is one's heart, from there the answer comes, and it is a truer answer than any other person can give. There is no one who can know as much about our life, affairs, objects, motives as we do ourselves. And therefore nobody can advise us better than ourselves.

The Sufis in all ages have tried their best to train their consciousness. How did they train it? The first training is analysis. The analytical striving is to analyze and examine one's own consciousness, in other words one's own conscience; to ask one's conscience, addressing it, 'My friend, all my happiness depends on you, and my unhappiness also. If you are pleased, I am happy. Now tell me truly if what I like and what I do not is in accordance with your approval.' One should speak to one's conscience as a man going to the priest to make his confession, 'Look what I have done. Maybe it is wrong, maybe it is right; but you know it, you have your share of it; its influence on you and your condition is my condition, your realization is my realization. If you are happy, only then can I be happy. Now I want to make you happy; how can I do it?' At once a voice of guidance will come from the conscience, 'You should do this, and not that; say this and not that. In this way you should act, and not in that way.' And conscience can give you better guidance than any teacher or book. It is a living teacher awakened in oneself, one's own conscience. The teachers, the Gurus, the Murshids, their way is to awaken the conscience in the pupil; to make clear what has become unclear, confined.

How does the mystic proceed to experience self-knowledge? By the mystical process of turning the eyes within, by shutting out the outside world for a moment and going into meditation, and by realizing, 'I do not exist only as a physical body, which I always see myself to be, but I also exist as a life, as a magnetism, as an energy.' Meditation which lifts him, in other words the consciousness, from the physical body, helps to make it clear to the mystic that he is not only a physical body, but that he is a being of energy, of magnetism, of breath, by the touch of which the physical body lives, being attached to it. As he goes further in the meditative life, he then begins to see that the faculty of thinking, of imagining, of feeling, is independent of the first two aspects; that he himself is a thought, that he himself is a feeling, and that he himself is the creator of thought, even a creator of feeling. And as he goes still higher, he sees that he is happiness himself as well as the creator of happiness.

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, is one thing, qualification another thing. The inspiration is perfect when expressed by the qualified soul. 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 the knowledge there is.

All those who begin to receive inspiration receive it first from outer life. Man is created in such a way that he first looks outward; and then, when he is disappointed, when he cannot find all he wants in the outer life, he turns within. He wants to see if he can find it in the inner life, and thus he becomes connected with the source of inspiration, which is the Spirit of Guidance. And he who has once found the Spirit of Guidance will always be able to find it again if he keeps close to it; but when he goes astray, when the way of his life takes another direction, then he wanders away from the Spirit of Guidance.

There are some who are more intuitive, and there are others who are less so; and if we study the nature of their character, we shall know the nature of their intuition. Those who are confused, who are constantly hurried, who are changeable in their nature, who are afraid of death, of disease, of their own actions, of their enemies, of their surroundings; those who have constant doubt, wondering whether they can trust this person or that, whether a friend may or may not prove worthy, and so on---it is all these who have less possibility of intuition. Those who can trust without troubling themselves, those who have few doubts, are usually clearer in their perception. Those who trust in the inner guidance, who understand the secret of the instinct that works through animals and all creatures, those who are pious, those who wish to walk in the light, who always prefer the right way of thinking and speaking and acting, it is these who often experience intuition.

Intuition is the first step, inspiration is the second, and revelation is the third. When revelation begins, it has arisen from intuition for intuition is the first stage.

Breathing Practice for Inner Guidance

1. In a quiet room, lie on your back on the floor, Hold this position for a minute with your eyes closed, Slowly begin to inhale, inflating the lower abdomen and diaphragm first, then expanding the rib area and finally filling the upper chest. As you inhale, slowly lift your arms so that they rise up and form an arc over you, then keep moving them up and back until they come to rest on the floor behind you, While forming

this arc, let your outstretched fingers guide your arms, which should more or less be in line with your outstretched legs, Let the breath enter in a line straight up into your forehead, Check your inhalation, making sure that the breath is silent. If you are making a wheezing noise or a sniffing noise you are breathing in too much too soon, Refine your breath so that it enters the nostrils as if it were a long silken thread, not a gush of wind, Concentrate on the quality of the air you are inhaling. As you inhale, visualize in your mind's eye that this air is a gentle white mist entering your body.

2. Now, with your arms fully extended over your head and your lungs filled with air, hold your breath for as long as comfortably possible, While you are holding your breath you will feel gently rhythmic waves passing over your body, Simultaneously your body will feel as if it is sinking deeper and deeper into the floor. Just let yourself go, You will feel lighter and lighter as the exercise continues.

3. When you feel that it is time to begin the exhalation, keep your eyes closed and slowly begin to raise your outstretched hands off the floor, bringing them up over your head, keeping the fingers pointed straight out the entire time, until the hands come to rest at your sides as you finish the exhalation, Again, let your fingers guide the hands. Visualize the breath you are exhaling as a white mist. Let it slowly envelop you like a cloud of vapors from dry ice. The cloud will begin at your toes and, as you continue to exhale slowly, work its way up until it has surrounded your entire body, At this point just let yourself go and continue to breathe deeply, slowly and normally for another minute or two, Your body will feel incredibly relaxed and almost invisible, Even with your eyes closed you will feel calmly alert. The body may feel as if it is slightly floating an inch or two above the floor in this white mist. Let yourself become more and more absorbed into the cloud, Repeat the entire exercise three or four more times, After the last exhalation just keep your eyes closed until you are ready to open them. During this time you may find yourself dreaming or "sleeping," with a profusion of images floating before your eyes, Upon awakening, you may wonder where you are or where you've been, The relaxation here is deeper than most forms of meditation.

You can use this form of breathing to gain insight into a difficulty or a question you might be considering, As you start the exercise, ask the question in the simplest form possible, The answer that will come to you may appear as an image or from a voice you have never heard before, With the second inhalation, ask the question once again and continue the exercise two more times, At the end of the last exhalation just let your arms rest by your sides as usual. Oftentimes the answer will come during this rest period, The breathing cycle helps clear away much of the mental clutter and confusion that often blocks us from making clear, definitive decisions, and it allows us to become more in touch with our intuitive selves.

Thank you Philip Smith for the basic form of this practice.