

The Rhythmic Breath, Hazrat Inayat Khan Readings January 14 2008

If we study ourselves we shall find that the beats of the pulse and of the heart, the inhaling and exhaling of the breath, are all the work of rhythm. Life depends upon the rhythmic working of the whole mechanism of the body

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 irregularity of the beats of the heart or head is lack of rhythm in the breath. As man generally neglects to think of his breath he overlooks the fact that his health entirely depends on rhythmic breath. Rhythm is the central theme of the whole creation. Neatness in man's work and balance in man's actions show rhythm in him.

A person who cannot find an idea beats or taps with his fingers on the table, and the idea comes. Many who cannot get hold of their thoughts, begin to walk about the room. When they have made two or three turns, their thoughts become clear. If this is true, we come to the realization that the human body is a kind of mechanism which must go on regularly. If it is stopped in some way, there is something stopped in the body or in the mind. This brings us to understand that upon the rhythm the mood, health and condition of man's mind depend - not only upon the rhythm which he gets from music, but also upon the rhythm of his own breath.

The words 'thoughtful' and 'thoughtless' signify a rhythmic or unrhythmic state of mind, and balance, which is the only upholding power in life, is kept by 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.

The Life-Power

On breath depends the capability and efficiency with which one thoroughly does one's work. Shortness of breath gives man impatience, lack of endurance; and irregularity of the rhythm of the breath gives man confusion, and makes him inclined to be easily upset. Breath being the life-power, it is the same life-power which gives man strength to endure all things. One always will find that those who easily get cross, quickly upset, instantly annoyed, have something wrong with the breath.

People, not knowing their difficulty, get annoyed with them; they are put aside, and are considered disagreeable people. What they need is the training of breathing. When their body and mind is 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 feels absence of inspiration -- it all is often caused by some disorder in the breath.

Regular and rhythmic breathing gives health to body and mind both. Inspiration comes from above, but as a 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 will not be realized. It is just like the

difference between the gong of metal and the gong of wood. 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 is receptive to the inspiration and the mind which cannot conceive it.

But to every mind inspiration comes; the only difference is that one receives it, the other rejects it.

The Rhythmic Breath

Thought is conveyed without speech through the breath. The true wireless telegraphy is the rightly established current of breath. It is difficult for every man to try it, without practice in concentration and in absence of the development of breath, though unconsciously thoughts are always exchanged through the agency of breath. The scientist is ready to believe that contagious diseases are spread by means of breath, but it is the part of psychology to realize that thoughts and mental states -- such as humor, depression, energy, or sloth -- are conveyed by means of breath.

In the presence of an angry person one feels excited and inclined to anger, the contact of a humorous person spreads around an atmosphere of humor, in the presence of a cold person one becomes cold, the contact of a warm-hearted person warms one; and all this is done by the medium of breath. If an angry person were to close his breath while angry, much less of his feeling would affect another; if a person who is subject to humor 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 the 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 the way of the breath. The one who is conscious of the rhythm of breath and whose breath is pure from grossness, begins to perceive a sense which becomes, in time, a language to him.

Thought-reading is not necessarily intuition, although many confuse thought-reading with intuition. There is not much difference between the working of these two faculties; the difference is like that between the telephone and the telegraph. Thought-reading comes from without, intuition comes 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 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.