



A Sufi Message

The Deeper Side of Life, The Five Elements and Breath

Selected Teachings by Hazrat Inayat Khan

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Five Elements and Breath: There are five elements, earth, water, fire, air, and ether, as spoken of by the mystics, do not only compose germs, but can also destroy them, if one only knew how one could make use of those five elements to purify one's body, also one's mind. As there is need of sun and water for plants to grow, so there is need of the five elements for a person to keep in perfect health. Besides, the sun currents have a greater healing power than anything else. A person who knows how to breathe perfectly, who is attracting sun currents into the body, can keep the body free from every kind of impurity. No microbes of destruction can exist if the sun currents can touch every part of the body, which is within, and that is done by the breath. The lungs, intestines, and veins and tubes of the body all need the sun and the air; and these are taken in by means of perfect breathing; and even the mind derives benefit from this. For the mind too is composed of five elements, the elements in their finer condition. *(Ref. Sufi Message Volume IV - Mental Purification and Healing, Part I: Health, Section V)*

Characteristics of the Elements: The person of the earth character is calm and quiet, harmonious and serviceable, simple and good, also dependable to a great extent. Only, the person of the earth character must be told to do something, they will not do anything by themselves.

The person of the water character is sociable, imaginative, affectionate, and loveable; only they will respond quickly to all influences. By nature, this person will always be desirable; they will show adaptability, response, and fineness of character. The person of water nature is emotional, devotional, generous, but sensitive.

The person of fire nature is useful but dangerous. You do not know what they will do from one minute to another. A fire person cannot hide their character, it takes but one moment to bring it out. A least little excuse will bring the fire up in a moment. This person is destructive by nature, and the trouble such a person causes to all others is much less than the harm brought does to oneself. Their life is as destructive as fire, fire which burns all things and burns itself at the same time. The fire nature is also warm, friendly, fearless, inspirational, and aspirational.

The person of air character is moody and imaginative and visionary. In one moment, they may be your great friend, at the other moment your enemy, as the air a moment before was blowing towards the East and at the other moment it went towards the West. This person will change from time to

time. When you think, "Today they are good," tomorrow they will show themselves different. When you see, "This morning such a person was calm," in the evening you will find them upset. It is the greatest difficulty for such a person to keep in control. It is like controlling the air, which is always difficult. Yes, this person will show wit, quickness in grasping things, capability, efficiency in work. They will act on impulse. They will be adventurous, and, if powerful, will be influential in life.

The character of the ether person shows all the above-said qualities and yet every quality in a subdued form. This person will be serious, calm, quiet, peaceful, subject to sadness, melancholy at times, yet responding to humor, to mirth, rhythmic in action, balanced in life, deep in understanding, brave, bearing at the same time thoughtful and considerate. Ether is the essence of all the elements, and the person who shows ether in their character shows wisdom. Where there is wisdom there is beauty; wisdom is adorned with beauty. This person will have the power of attraction and expression, together with magnetism expressed through their whole personality. (Ref. *Sufi Message, Sangatha I, Metaphysics, Five Characters-Corrected, from Suresnes, July 29, 1922*)

Breath and the Body: 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.

When one aspect of these five elements is not working properly it brings disorder in the whole mechanism of the body.

By the purification, development and control of this breath all five aspects are developed. There are atoms in one'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.

Breath and the Centers/Chakras: 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 student or aspirant are like the winding of a clock. Once in twenty-four hours the clock is wound and after that it goes on without effort. (Ref. *Sufi Message Volume 13, Gathas Breath, 1.4, Five Aspects of Breath, 1: The Air Stream*)

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. (Ref. *The Healing Papers, 2,1: Breath, Nr. 10*)

The Five Centers and Elements

I inhale Divine Light and Life
I exhale Divine Life and Light

1. **Earth/Horizontal-Calm, Grounded, Rooted:** There is a center in the bottom of our body. The base of the spine. *Breath is in nose/Out nose.*
2. **Water/Downward-Creativity, Imagination:** There is a center which is the most important, it is the solar plexus. *Breath is in nose/out mouth.*
3. **Fire/Rising-Illumination, Aspiration:** There is a center in the abdomen, a wonderful center from a physical point of view, because the digestion and the assimilation of food, especially the effect of the food, is all made in the center of the abdomen, near the navel. *Breath is in mouth/Out nose.*
4. **Air/Zigzag-Insight, Intuition:** There is a center between the eyebrows. *Breath is in mouth/Out mouth.*
5. **Ether/Still-Universal Consciousness:** (Rainbow) The highest center, where one feels the highest a state of meditative consciousness, or ecstasy, is in the top of the head. *Breath is very refined in the nose/Out nose. (Ref. Sangatha II, Riyazat, Esotericism)*

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Musical Meditation: <https://youtu.be/l0-6Q0Gbzs>

"Hallelujah" is a song written by Canadian singer Leonard Cohen.
Adapted to the Native American Flute by Carlos Nakai