

اللَّهُ حَيٌّ قَدِيمٌ
وَجَلَّ جَلَالُهُ

ya Hayy

The Seven Leading Names

I would like to focus on one grouping of the 99 names, which have been highlighted by the classical Sufis as being especially important. They are the names which refer to aspects of the consciousness of God; so the Sufis have given them priority and have called them the *al asma al ayima al sabaha*, that is to say the seven leading names. There is a kind of hierarchy within the names in terms of the order of ontological precedence. Within that hierarchy these seven are considered to occupy a special position. At the Abode of the Message, we have been working with these names successively one after another for the last year. And I have composed instructions based on Murshid's teaching and Pir Vilayat's teaching and the teaching of the ancient Sufis for each of the names including practices to do relating to each of the names. I hope you will find these are names you can use in your own work. Most of them I think you will be familiar with.

Zia Inayat Khan

Over the course of the next 280 days you will receive at forty-day intervals, a notice of one of the names. It is suggested that over a forty-day period you work with the practices given for that name. In this way, a majority of the the mureed body will be working with the same practice – the same attunement – at the same time. Mureeds are encouraged to meet regularly for group practices in centers or regionally if possible.

Al-Hayy

Of the Seven Leading Names, the first is Al Hayy – The Living.

We know that the degree of the Living (al-Hayy) is the most tremendous degree among the names, since it is the precondition for the existence of the names.

– Ibn al-'Arabi

This thought experiment was proposed by Avicena. Imagine yourself suspended in the air, suspended in space, in such a way that none of your limbs are touching each other, so you have no tactile sense, and all of your senses are closed so empirical experience does not register. What consciousness would you have? Your consciousness would be reduced to its simplest form. But you would not be without consciousness. Rather you would experience the sheer experience of life itself, of your own livingness – the simple sensation “I exist.” Actually these days there is a mechanism to experience this; it's called a sensory deprivation tank, in which you're suspended in water in the darkness. Perhaps some of you have tried it, but this was an experiment that was suggested centuries ago by Avicena.

The soul is life; it never touches death.

– Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan

The simple experience of the soul is nothing other than life itself. So in reality every fiber of the cosmos pulsates with the life blood of the eternal being and wherever there is circulation there is life. Murshid always reminds us to be conscious of the divine blood circulating through the universe

Although we think that it is nourishment, or food, or outward things which keep us alive, it is really the life of God, which we take in at every moment with each breath.

– Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan

Practices

Pasi nafas

First of all experience the breath in each of its five dimensions as Murshid describes them. So those five dimensions are first of all **depth**, and that means overcoming the simple idea that breath is something that passes merely through our nostrils or fills our lungs, but recognizing the physiological fact that each breath passes through the blood stream and fills the entirety of our physical body. And each cell is revitalized and nourished with each breath. So when we speak about being aware of the depth of the breath, it means being aware of each particle of the body becoming filled with the breath. The second dimension is **reach**, which is the corollary with each outbreath. Feel each cell of the body emptying out, becoming a transparency, like a husk and feel the breath filling the atmosphere and reaching out in a particular direction. Thirdly, there is **volume**, to use our full capacity by expanding first the abdomen and diaphragm and rib cage and then exhaling and contracting first the abdomen and diaphragm and rib cage, to breath fully. Of course that means when we exhale we have to overcome our fear of dissolution which keeps us from evacuating all of the carbon dioxide because there's a moment of *fana* that comes with full exhalation. But this hesitancy is perhaps a hesitancy to avail ourselves of the fullness of our life by inhaling fully. So it is only by exhaling fully that we can experience the *baqa*, the resurrection that comes with the full inhalation. And then to **center** the breath in the appropriate place. There are different practices which will highlight different centers, but as a basis it is suggested to use the *nafs* center, just below the navel, the abdomen, which is the place of equilibrium in the physical body. **Rhythm** is something that comes naturally, although there are practices in which we count the beats of the breath, or count the heartbeats, but you will find that simply by awareness of the breath the breath settles into a natural rhythm. Then one begins to identify with the magnetic field, locating the heartbeat and feeling the action of the heartbeat in the extremities, the echo, and feeling the pulsation throughout the body of the circulation. Then you find that the magnetism of the circulation is not bounded by the skin. You can feel it radiating out beyond the fingertips. The hands are certainly a wonderful barometer for the perception of

magnetism – to feel the magnetism around your fingertips and your palms and then feel the relationship between the magnetism of your body and the magnetism of the planet and the exchange that occurs as you exhale and inhale between the two. These are all practices which will deepen our experience of *Hayy*.

Parsi anfas

One could then extend this by meditating with a living creature. Of course all matter is living, but with organicity comes a special intelligence a special extension of life, so one could sit facing a plant and as you exhale extend your magnetism to encompass the plant and as you inhale, retract it and sense something about the plant, establish an intuitive relationship.

Wazifa

This is from Murshid's own instructions. Inhale fully, then exhale, reciting *ya Hayy* ten times rapidly. Repeat twice. Inhale fully, then exhale, reciting only one single extended *ya Hayy* slowly. Feel your cells tingling.

Wazifa

Kneel. Turn the head skyward and recite, *Hu*. Turn the head toward the ground and again recite, *Hu*. Turn the head forward, turn the consciousness within toward the heart and recite, *Hayy*, causing the name to resonate throughout the whole of the body. Feel your cells tingling.

Walking Zikr

Step forward with your right foot as you silently recite *ya Hayy*, and with your left foot you recite *ya Quyyum*, "oh self-subsisting." I find that walking *zikrs* are very important because so often we confine our spiritual practices to those few moments we have in solitude in the morning. Murshid says that the benefit of meditation will only come when we bring our meditation into our lives, and so to meditate as we walk brings our spiritual practice into our life and into our body. It's extremely useful in that regard, although Murshid did warn mureeds not to do walking *zikrs* in the middle of the city, amongst the cars. Do the practice in the park or in nature.

Muragaba

This is a *muraquaba*, – a visualization practice – which Pir Vilayat often gives: imagine a flower as a bud. As you become more aware of the light which is emitted from your heart center, try to imagine that the petals of that bud are unfurling and becoming a beautiful flower. Through the awakening of light in your heart you cause the petals of the flower to unfold.

Muragaba

Imagine all things and creatures as the cells of a single living being. Perhaps you know the Gaia theory of James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, which posits that all of the species of life on this planet act in concert to produce an environment which is mutually beneficial and which filters out the dangerous rays of the sun and keeps the Earth warmed at the necessary temperature. So it's difficult to isolate ourselves from the point of view of biology because we think of our own bodies as what separates ourselves from others. But on the other hand our body is simply an extension of the body of our parents and we belong to a bloodstream which is proliferating and which unites us with the whole of the human race. Moreover, our own body is constantly breaking down into the environment, cells are dying and new cells are being born. Within the space of five years our body has been entirely recycled. So visualize the whole of life on Earth as one single being of which each is a part, a cell. Each creature is a cell and of course

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul.
– Alexander Pope

Muhasaba

For a practice of *muhasiba*, that is self-analysis, examine each thought and action in your daily life. Which habits give expression to your sense of livingness? In other words, what makes you feel alive? Which suppress it? What makes you feel dead? Look at all the things you do: your thoughts, your patterns. What reinforces your sense of livingness?

Muhasaba

Marvel at the human being. Give thanks for the cosmic dignity with which God has endowed you. Interacting with others, approach each person as a living effigy of the eternal life. Just imagine if you were stranded in a desert. Of course there is truly livingness in nature. But just imagine after years or decades isolated from other people and other creatures, if you were to encounter another human being. Just think of how you would marvel at how the landscape has coalesced in this subtly articulated expression of the divine life. How miraculous each human being really is. This perception becomes lost through the disenchantment of the world.



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