

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR MUREEDS

The Beginning of an Outline

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**TOWARD THE ONE, THE PERFECTION OF LOVE, HARMONY, AND BEAUTY,
THE ONLY BEING, UNITED WITH ALL THE ILLUMINATED SOULS
WHO FORM THE EMBODIMENT OF THE MASTER, THE SPIRIT OF GUIDANCE.**

The purpose of this outline is to start a process of examination on each mureed's part of where gaps may exist in his or her study and mastery of the materials within the esoteric school. By this, I mean in particular the teachings brought by the lineage of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan and Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti. By taking a systematic look at our relationship with the study program, practices, and stages of realization on this path we can better assess where focused effort is needed. So our first goal would be to make a reasonable assessment of where we stand and then formulate a plan of development specifically focused on addressing the gaps in our study and practice. Teachers may also work with their mureeds to actively shape an ongoing plan in relationship to their needs, while also taking into account their interests in choosing which of the many options to concentrate upon.

Since the body of material contained within this transmission is vast it seems appropriate to approach it at several levels of magnification. The first outline is consequently quite general. Each of the subject headings would be properly followed up in much more detail and depth. As head of the esoteric school concentration for the Ruhaniat, it is my commitment to follow this up with interested persons and study circles.

1. Study and mastery of the Gathas/ Githas/ Sangathas/ Sangithas and published materials of Hazrat Inayat Khan, and commentaries on these materials by Murshid SAM. Also study and mastery of other writings of Murshid SAM specifically for mureeds.

There are several levels at which we can assess ourselves here--how much of this material have we read and re-read? How have we received it? In what sense have we assimilated it and manifested the realization of it? Murshid SAM's practice of continually applying himself to these texts for inspiration is an example for us. Our goal would be the mastery of this material with particular emphasis on applying teachings directly to oneself and one's life. To do this we need to systematically find the practices specifically given and implied in the texts and put them into use.

What follows is just suggestive and there are many important texts not mentioned in this outline.

Gathas:

- **Breath (pasi anfas)** The gathas and commentaries on Breath are simply the beginning of this subject which is of the greatest importance in Sufi development.
- **Insight (kashf)** The attainment of Insight, which Murshid SAM equates with Prajna development is one of the principle realizations of the path.

- Moral Teachings (saluk) A small amount of practice outweighs a wealth of ideas here. These texts give us the opportunity to apply these teachings to the various conditions and relationships in our lives.
- Everyday Life (takua taharat) This deals with the purification of body, mind, and heart.
- Metaphysics (tassawuf) This is again an introduction to a vast subject matter. Murshid SAM also emphasized the importance of studying the text Metaphysics published in Volume V of the Sufi Message volumes.
- Superstitions Customs and Beliefs – A beginning for appreciating what is behind culture. This invites the application of these principles to the current international cultural and political stew.
- Symbology (naqshibandi) – To begin to appreciate the mystery in symbols which can best be uncovered ultimately in concentration.

In the **Githas**, the teachings give much more explicit emphasis to spiritual practices. This should give us all the more reason to mine the rich resources of the Gathas for practices and applications to our lives. Murshid SAM's commentaries are invaluable in this regard.

Githa topics include: Esotericism (ryazat), Mastery (sadhana), Health (shafayat), Concentration (murakkaba), Mysticism (asrar-ul-ansar), Psychology (amaliyat), and Occultism.

A deeply dedicated study and practice of these texts offers the greatest reward to a mureed. I would hazard to say that all of us would benefit profoundly from a renewed study and application of the principles presented in the Githas. Very briefly...

- Concentration (murakkaba) presents a rigorous program of concentration practice. This can be discouraging to people because most have not progressed beyond the most elementary stages. We need to take up this practice afresh accepting our present state simply for what it is, and seeking to systematically improve our abilities, without judgement and without comparison with others. As love is the key to concentration, the practices presented in the Githas need to be augmented with other types of concentration to sweeten the interest and attract the heart of the mureed. We need to find the key to open the door of interest in actually practicing concentration, and if we are teachers, we need to find the key to inspiring others to actively pursue this practice. One of the principal places where Murshid Samuel Lewis taught concentration was in the astrological Walks and Spins, centering walks, tassawuri walks, etc
- Health (shafayat). Deep dedication to this subject may be the special calling of those in the Dervish Healing Order, but each of us obviously needs to see how deeply these teachings are translated into our lives.
- The githas on Mysticism and Esotericism offer a whole world of understanding to explore within the breath and using one's insight. It should be specially emphasized that these texts give the dedicated mureed great opportunities for development with proper attunement and practice.

- Mastery (sadhana), “Word spoken, action done.” The keys to the path of self-mastery are described and we are invited to live in this manner.
- The githas on Psychology, Occultism, and Spirit Phenomena offer guidance in the psychic world, including dreams.

The purpose of listing all these texts with a few brief comments, is only by way of inviting each mureed to sincerely investigate for himself or herself the degree to which they have mastered not only the teachings in the gathas and githas and commentaries but their actual realization and practice.

The **Sangathas** and **Sangithas** offer advice to teachers in this lineage, a deep look into the heart and vision of Pir o Murshid Inayat Khan, and a depth of practices and teachings. Many of the items included into the next unit of this outline are found in these texts as well.

2. **Conscientious application and realization of the spiritual practices recommended by Hazrat Inayat Khan and Murshid SAM (note: those on the path of the Teacher will need to undertake a broader and more varied program of practices in order to prescribe remedies for different types of mureeds). These practices would include: prayer, darood, purification breaths, wazifa, fikr of the wazifa, zikr, fikr of the zikr, kasab, shaghal, concentration, contemplation and meditation, mushahida, walking attunements and amal.**

No attempt will be made in this outline to describe how to do these or other related practices. I will make a few comments though, just to point to the ways of approaching a given subject or in order to draw attention to certain areas that may have been overlooked. This again is simply the briefest beginning to a deeper focus of each element.

- Prayer

The prayers Saum, Salat, and Khatum express the essence of the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan. These teachings are offered as a prayer. We join him in this prayer. To do this we need to learn to pray, to understand what prayer is, to manifest a clear intention to pray so that it becomes a prayer of our whole being, and not just a speech we are reciting. An excellent approach for anyone, but also one which is particularly useful for a person who is philosophically minded, is to take up the prayers of Inayat Khan line by line as a contemplation until the meaning fully opens to one. Other areas to note include: the movements to these prayers and their effects ; our participation with inner appreciation of the prayers of different religions.
- Darood

We know this as “Toward the One” on the breath. It is a fundamental walking practice and a fundamental practice of self-protection in all atmospheres. At one with the breath that rises and falls in us, we are constantly merging with the One in and about us. It leads us further into a full investigation and assimilation of The Sufi Invocation.
- Wazifa
 - rhythmical daily practice
 - address all inner specific needs with specific wazifas
 - realize meaning in depth

- practice with visualization and inner attunement
- practice a wide range of wazifas as prescribed by a teacher in a cyclic manner
- study instructions on wazifa in sangathas, sangithas, and Murshid Sam's esoteric writings such as "*On the Performance of Zikr*"
 - in walking practice
 - in a retreat setting

- Zikr

- as daily practice
- as extended daily practice
- sung and spoken
- along with specific concentrations as in Murshid SAM above.
- practice with the four forms given: la illaha el allahu, el allahu, allahu, and hu. Extended periods and on retreat.

- Fikr

The wazifa in thought on the breath and the zikr in thought on the breath are practices of paramount importance. This is an area that deserves much more time and attention than it has received from many mureeds. For example, Hazrat Inayat Khan has said that the silent repetition on the breath of the wazifa or zikr is more important for the depth of realization than the oral repetition. The time periods he prescribed in his various programs as presented to Murshida Martin and others gave more time to this practice. To do fikr for any extended time does take development in concentration. It is easier to initially get the mind's attention in vocal repetition. People are always given fikr to do on retreat, but its inclusion in the ordinary regimen of practice is essential. Those that are trying to do extended fikr practice for the first time will find that initial vocal repetition to begin to focus the mind before beginning the extended fikr will be helpful.

- Kasab

- performed daily up to 10 times
- teachers to experience both alternate nostril method and separate nostril method; also to do with shafee/kafee or with rassoul/makboul
- examination of the affect on ones breath by this practice.

- Shaghal

- complete program systematically done sense by sense, and then with all senses as one as given in the Sangathas and Sangithas.
- additional shaghals from the Instructions to the Murshid and early instructions to Murshida Rabia Martin
- thorough examination of the state of consciousness one enters through this practice: Light, Sound.

- Amal

- Systematic practice
- -extended period of absorption

3. Practice and realization of fana-fi-Sheikh, fana-fi-Pir, fana-fi-Rassoul, fana-fi-Lillah, fana-i-baka.

Naturally we cannot assess ourselves in relation to having passed through these stages of the path. God alone knows to what extent we have been empty of self in the radiance of that Being, but there are some questions that we can ask ourselves that can help us learn more about our own inner attractions and openings. The category of fana-fi-Pir is not ordinary in these lists but Murshid SAM said that he would be known for this ability to continue to manifest fully into the consciousness of beings after his passing. His last written work entitled "Fana-fi-Sheikh" is an invaluable text in approaching the whole subject of all these states of fana. It also seems appropriate to characterize the concentration of effacement in the being of Hazrat Inayat Khan as fana-fi-Pir as well. He can rightly be called the Pir of the West. The inner secrets of beings are to be discovered not proclaimed. This doorway through fana-fi-Pir may open into effacement in Rassoul and in God.

What we can easily do is see where our heart is attracted. Also, where is our mind attracted? Our soul? Where do we find our inspiration and connection with the sacred? One could start for example, with inwardly examining one's relationship with the Rassouls mentioned in the prayer Salat. We ask to know God, as Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Buddha, Abraham, Solomon, Zarathustra, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed. As a step in that direction we can make the effort in contemplation to adopt the point of view of that teacher. The Holy Mother in all Her forms, such as Devi, Mary and Qwannon is open to our attunement in the same way. We have a great opportunity within this lineage to fulfill fana-fi-Rassoul in more than one human being Who has fully manifested divine perfection and Who has offered a teaching for all of humanity.

4. Life in the world as a Sufi/Bodhisattva.

What we do in our lives is done in relation to all. Spiritual development and realization can never be fully accomplished in isolation from the whole. Thus we are led to manifest in the world for the benefit of all sentient beings and in the living presence of the One and Only Being. This can be called being a Sufi or being a Bodhisattva. Murshid SAM said the realization was the same. The six paramitas which are cultivated by a Bodhisattva are also cultivated by a Sufi. Briefly, the six paramita (perfections) are called Dana – the Gift of Interest; Sila – The Stream of Purity; Ksanti – Patience with the Pragmatic Reality; Viriya – The Thrust of Awakening; Dhyana – The Creative Absorption; Prajna – Knowing Grace.

This is just another way of saying that actual states of realization cut across all the apparent demarcations of different esoteric schools. May all beings be well. May all beings be happy. May all beings be peaceful.