

Elements of Mastery:

TOWARD THE ONE

By Murshid Wali Ali Meyer

The Elements of Mastery column explores the art, craft and spiritual practice of Dance leading and mentoring through the reflections and perspectives of individual mentors. Comments and discussion are welcome either on [InTheGarden](#) or on [our Facebook page](#). Ideas for future topics are welcome, as are offers to prepare articles -- please contact the Executive Director.

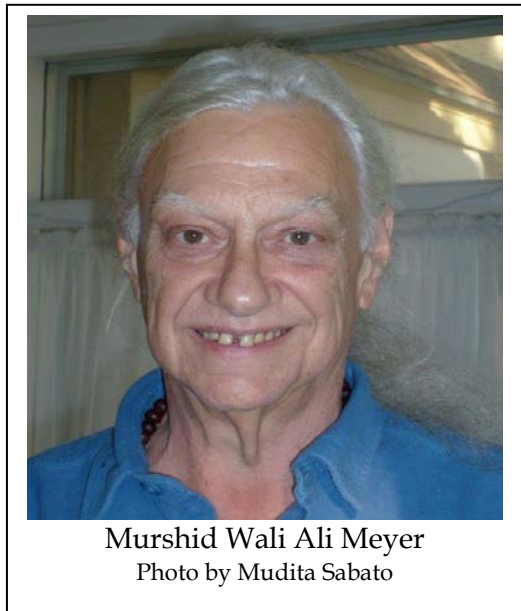
At the beginning of a Dance meeting, we generally repeat the words of the Sufi Invocation. "Toward the One, the perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty, the Only Being, united with all the illuminated souls, who form the embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance." This phrase expresses our orientation, the direction of our inner and outer concentration.

Saying "Toward the One..." is an invitation to remember our essential oneness with the Only Being. You are that. *tat tvam asi*. It is in remembering such oneness that we actually move toward the One. And, since we habitually forget the truth of our being time and again, we need to keep remembering that all-inclusive unity. In that way we address our habit of identifying with a sense of self that is limited and who experiences itself as deficient and isolated from the Source of all.

Remembering our oneness with the Source of all can be a continual movement toward the One on a breath-by-breath basis. So long as we continue to forget our oneness with the Source, we need to continue to move toward that oneness.

Using "Toward the One..." as a concentration on the breath while reclining, sitting, standing, and walking is a foundational practice given by Murshid Samuel Lewis. He called the practice Darood, and it takes many forms. As this article is for the Leaders Guild, I will concentrate on several suggestions for forms that this practice can be used in Dance meetings.

At the very beginning of a meeting when you draw everyone present into a large circle, ask them to breathe "Toward the One" being entirely at one with their body. The first thing for Dance leaders to ask for, and to model, is becoming one-pointed. Bringing your awareness fully into focus is the fundamental stage of the practice. Having become



focused on the breath, continue by breathing naturally and rhythmically. As you do so, carry the reminder "Toward the One" in thought through both inhalation and exhalation. Take it to heart.

Having begun in their own body, it is natural for the awareness of the members of the circle to begin to include others in the circle and then the whole circle. Invite this to happen. And when you feel as one with all who are present, continue to merge with the Oneness including all your relations in the great web of life. This practice might last anywhere from 20 seconds up to a minute or so, depending on the dance circle. When the Dance Leader determines, everyone recites together the full Sufi invocation.

As a practice of walking concentration, breathing "Toward the One" can be done in a variety of ways at a meeting. A basic concentration practice is to place your steps as you walk in a four/four rhythm with the rhythm of your breath. Your goal is to be very present in awareness, aware of each step, letting your body move at ease with the breath. This kind of one-pointedness, whether or not you choose to add the phrase "Toward the One", is necessary. An introductory basic practice, such as this, is a good way to begin to build the atmosphere in the meeting space before the initial circle is even formed.

Breathing "Toward the One" naturally and rhythmically in and out of the heart center is the underlying focus of awareness for the next walk. This walk was a most important practice for Murshid Samuel Lewis. It begins in a solar way but has an equally important lunar aspect. Both aspects ask for the awakening of heart qualities and the completion of our concentration.

We courageously look out onto the path of our life, feeling the sun-like light of our intention shining forth from our heart. It is a movement with confidence toward a destination. The light of our true nature, the soul, is called forth to shine directly out from the globe of the heart onto the path of your life, illuminating your path toward the goal.

At the same time as we are engaged in that forthright solar walk of "Toward the One" bringing our intention forward through the heart, we are blessed by another call to our heart. Through focusing the breath and awareness in the heart, you remember to open up your heart, open your feeling nature, to the breath that is carrying the remembrance of "Toward the One".

Awakening the heart awakens your desire to overcome separation and isolation and to become one with the Beloved. Breathing in the heart you connect your breath with the goal of all and feel the attraction of it like an incomparably great magnet. The attraction of the beloved easily completes your positive intention. You arrive at the realization of Unity by utilizing both positivity and receptivity, sun and moon.

When presenting Walks at meetings it is important not to rush the practice. Let a large portion of the group stand in a big circle and practice the breathing concentration while also bringing their breath awareness into attunement with those who are walking. Directing small groups in and out of the circle and taking time to let people have an uncrowded experience works best.

As a parting thought for Dance leaders, I simply would like to encourage you to do some basic work with breathing together as a group in the dance circle, at times in the dances, and in individual walking practices done with the support of others who are holding the same concentration at the same time. Give the breath a bit of time to settle in.

Love and Blessings,
Wali Ali

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Murshid Wali Ali Meyer became a disciple of Murshid Samuel Lewis' in 1968 and served as his esoteric secretary. He now directs the Esoteric School of the Sufi Ruhaniat International. A co-author of Physicians of the Heart, has edited many of the works of Murshid Sam and presented teachings for many years. He is a senior mentor in the Dances and has taught the Dances and Walking Concentrations in classes, retreats and camps worldwide since the 1970s. More about Murshid Wali Ali at <http://ruhaniat.org>.