



Gatha with Commentary

Etehad, Rasm U Ravaj:
Superstitions, Customs, and Beliefs

Series III

of

Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan

by

Murshid Samuel L. Lewis
(Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti)

This paper is not to be transferred or duplicated without the expressed written permission of the Sufi Ruhaniat International.

It is intended only for private circulation among initiated Sufi mureeds, and this printing does not constitute publication.

Our goal is to support the work of the Ruhaniat Living Stream Project.

If you wish to print a copy for yourself or a friend, please make a donation to the Sufi Ruhaniat International.

Your receipt acknowledges our permission.

©1978 Sufi Ruhaniat International

SRI Secretariat
PO Box 51118
Eugene OR 97405
USA

telephone: (541) 345-5223
e-mail: ruhaniat@mail.com

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 1

Toasts

GATHA: There is a custom prevalent everywhere in the Western world of proposing toasts, which is significant of a psychological truth behind it, which is to wish for a certain thing to happen at a time when one's own wish is being granted, in a smaller or greater form. This shows that the moment when one's wish is granted is that moment when one is satisfied.

TASAWWUF: Every wish is in a sense a force; it may rise out of self-will or it may stand before us as a goal toward which to strive. There is a saying, "If wishes were horses beggars would ride." This indicates that a wish to be vital it must be accompanied by action. To wish idly is to waste one's vitality; to wish and then to act to bring about the accomplishment of that wish is to fulfill a purpose in life.

Some have said that wishing is selfish and indeed it is selfish. There was originally a purpose for this selfishness because there are souls who are so little attached to matter that they do not even seem attached to life. There must be some driving urge within us and indeed God has implanted it there. And when we accomplish something toward which we have been striving we also may wish the good luck for others. And every such wish for the welfare of others acts as a suggestive force bringing encouragement.

Now our own life has movements like that of the worm which is laid out straight and becomes crooked or humped in order to move and then is straight again. We set a goal before ourselves and we are often unhappy until we reach that goal; our life's ambitions are centered on it. Then, perhaps, after striving we obtain it and are momentarily satisfied and then we become dissatisfied again and seek a new goal and repeat the process. And this goes on and on perhaps until one enters the spiritual path and even afterwards.

GATHA: We should not, therefore, wonder why people go to spiritual souls for their blessing. Those who are spiritually blessed, their innermost wish has been satisfied, and a wish made by them acts as a quick blessing in the life of everyone.

TASAWWUF: The spiritual people are those who have succeeded in their strivings until they reach a stage in which there is no more wishing. For when one gets a glimpse of the Will of God as through the perceptive intuition, and one's heart has been softened and refined, he will want to accomplish only that which becomes impressed upon his heart and toward all else he will be indifferent. And in this indifference his strength may be found.

And his strength and devotion made him a vehicle for the transmission of blessings either in the orthodox form or in a more magnetic form as Baraka, that some actual energy goes into the personalities of those who seek him so that they are encouraged or healed or benefited in some way. Their minds are calmed and their hearts are soothed and they are thus better able to continue their exertions.

GATHA: But this also teaches one to catch the opportunity of getting the good wish of every person at the moment when his wish is being granted.

TASAWWUF: This may be called the Kemalic moment in someone's life. These moments come seldom because there may be useless exertion or the direct pursuit in Jemal or Jelal or conflict or lack of exertion. There are not many moments when a culmination or success is reached and those are the moments of the greatest opportunities when we may choose whether to be selfish or unselfish, and also whether to be wise or foolish in either our selfishness or unselfishness.

GATHA: Having known this psychological law, the people in the East look for such an opportunity of offering food to the hungry or a gift to the one who needed it, for the wish that naturally rises from the heart of a person while accepting it will certainly be granted.

TASAWWUF: It has been most unfortunate, that in Christianity those who say "It is more blessed to give than to receive" are the ones who want to receive, not the ones who want to give. In India and other parts of the Orient where the religion is considered most seriously, there is a deep feeling that giving itself is actually a blessing. In Burma, the wealthy are expected to look after the needs of others and actually find some joy in it. And on the other hand those who thus receive give out thanks and the Baraka of their feeling of the moment extends to those who have given through the karmic law. This may be called the sowing of good karma. Besides this, the heart has power over all things.

GATHA: Very few in the world know what great power is hidden in the wish of a person whose heart is in the state of dancing, so to speak—full of joy. We read in the legends of old of sages calling upon their friends, pupils or followers at a certain time and asking them to make a wish, for they knew the moment when the wish could be granted.

TASAWWUF: There are two aspects of this. One is Kemalic, that there are certain times in our lives where the opposite currents we call Jemal and Jelal come together in harmony and at such moments we can draw anything to ourselves. We feel for the time supreme and it is as if no one could oppose us nor any obstacle hinder us. Then we can accomplish things for ourselves or others.

The other is that in the state of expansion we seem to attune ourselves to more aspects of the universe than in the state of contraction. When there is heart ecstasy we find ourselves momentarily masters of all of which we are conscious, we can draw anything to ourselves for we are at least temporarily masters of the kingdom of Heaven. And when we are in such a state no force outside can harm us. Thus when Bayazid entered hal, and when he declared Ani Haqq which was supposedly against the canons of Islam and his disciples attacked him therefore, their knives were turned upon themselves and the Murshid went unharmed because he was in the state of the dancing soul. And when the soul dances everything in the universe seems to harmonize or synchronize with it for one's very being seems then identified with the Being of Allah.

GATHA: There is a story of Hafiz, that near the home of the Sheikh there were eleven pupils whose name was Hafiz, but among them there was only one who used to engage himself in his night vigils, and the others used to rest all night. One evening the Sheikh called "Hafiz!" There was only one Hafiz awake, all others asleep. The Sheikh was holding the bowl with the thought of the wish to be granted. With his eyes closed he gave it to Hafiz. But then as he knew there were ten more, he again called "Hafiz!" And as all others were asleep, the same Hafiz came again and received the bowl. Eleven times the teacher called, and the same Hafiz went again and again. In the morning ten were

disappointed, and that one Hafiz was found blessed with elevenfold blessings.

TASAWWUF: All these persons called “Hafiz” meant the prize scholars who had memorized Qur’an. But while they knew all the words of it, the spirit of revelation had not penetrated their inner being and they had not gotten really beyond Shariat, the outer law. The one Hafiz must have felt the deep love and devotion for Rassoul for he practiced Ryazat and did not need much sleep. His love for Allah was great, and he enjoyed this love far beyond sleep. So he was ready for Baraka, because he had made the accommodation for it. It was not that he was seeking Baraka, or anything; it was that he was seeking God and his love and zeal opened the door of his heart and personality for blessing and thus he received the blessing. The teacher here was in Kemal, which is more normal for the teacher than for the ordinary man.

GATHA: It would not be an exaggeration if one said that even God has a time when He grants wishes. And if one knows that time one certainly becomes benefited and blessed. Since Sufism teaches, look for God in the heart of man, the wise mureeds therefore see the pleasure and displeasure of God in everyone they meet, and they carefully regard the pleasure and displeasure of those they come in contact with, knowing that in doing so they regard the pleasure and displeasure of God.

TASAWWUF: According to the mystical teachings the period between midnight and dawn is the time when there is the greatest strength of attraction so that if one desires anything and concentrates and prays regularly with unselfishness and devotion, those hours and particularly the hour before dawn is the best. The old Hebrew mystics always did their esoteric studies and practices during those hours, and the first prayers of Islam are often given then. Sufis have followed along this line by considering that the very early morning is the best time for practices and devotions and more particularly the time to ask God for the recognition of a wish. What is more, those who have applied themselves accordingly have found that the spirit is much more alert then, that the mind is either quieter or can be soothed more easily and that there is less agitation so that the insight is greater.

It often happens that when one asks God a question then an answer is given which requires exertion on the part of the devotee. This should be considered as the greatest blessing, for the gift which appears to come as the result of exertion is always more highly valued and treasured and kept longer.

Now we should not see anybody as other than the creature of God or the beloved ones of God. Too many people have regarded God as an idealized-thought-being. So they cannot readily discover the pleasure of God. There is one tradition of Jesus Christ that he said “I am found in children up to seven years of age,” and in Salat we pray “Thy light is ... in an innocent child.” But it is more than that, the divine light is in all people only it is less covered and defiled in some than in others.

Nevertheless even those most veiled express some spirituality in their lives because wherever there is life there is spirituality. One may think on a certain subject and look elsewhere and the first thing he sees or hears may have a most important bearing on his thought or wish. If we can accept such a superstition as considering the black cat crossing one’s trail bad luck and finding a rabbit’s foot or horseshoe good luck, how much more effective and important are the signs from man, who is so much closer to God than the animals!

GATHA: Besides having one’s wish granted, the joy of giving another happiness, that itself is greater than a wish granted, if one has risen to that plane of human evolution when one can enjoy pleasure with the pleasure of another, when one can feel satisfaction in the satisfaction of another, when one

can be happy in bringing happiness to another. No one will give another happiness and not have the same come to him a thousandfold.

TASAWWUF: There is a deep current which runs from heart to heart and connects all the sentient beings of the universe thereby. We feel it mostly when we are in love no matter what form the love takes, whether for parent or child or mate or close friend and most of all for a spiritual teacher. But also whenever the heart expands we feel that surge of life which is also a surge of love. It penetrates the whole universe, it is the sign of the presence of God, it can even be called God.

Some have said that happiness comes from doing good to others. Yes, in a certain sense it is true although from the standpoint of the sage the word “good” is rather indefinite. If by it one means to relieve another from sorrows, to bring comfort, joy, happiness, yes, that is the ideal condition of every heart. Besides, from the occult view, the heart of the seer can touch the hearts and minds of others and feel the life there and extend Baraka and ishk to all souls. Then one cannot keep the happiness to oneself.

Indeed on this point there have been certain religious differences between those who seek salvation and happiness for themselves and consider that they have completed their evolution thereby and those who cannot see the full salvation or happiness unless it is shared with all, or with as many as one can reach. It is this last which is the Sufic ideal.

GATHA: There comes a stage of evolution in the life of man when he feels more satisfied by seeing another person satisfied with food than by his having eaten it himself, when he feels comfortable in seeing another person comfortable, when he feels richly adorned by seeing another person clothed nicely; for this stage is a stepping-stone to the realization of God.

TASAWWUF: Yes, when the heart is open and one touches all hearts, this is natural. For one feels alike the suffering of another and the joy of another and one is not happy when another starves, is in want, and one is not dependent upon things and he gets his enjoyment vicariously, so to speak. For it is nothing but the evidence of the living currents of ishk, and especially when one is in love one feels this. Though for some the state passes or is very limited, in others the state is not evanescent and not so limited. The holy man—and anybody can become holy—is not just an orthodox or pious person, he may not and need not be orthodox or pious. The real holy man is the one who has apparently (not actually) surrendered pleasure for the sake of bringing happiness to all.

Such a person is on the way to partaking of the real holy communion.

Questions and Answers (August 10, 1923)

Q: Would we receive the curses of people as well as the blessings?

A: Yes. One should always think that life is an opportunity. Every moment is an opportunity. Sometimes one can do good by not troubling much oneself; it is just by seizing the opportunity. If one is attentive and brings some pleasure and happiness, it is not always that it costs. What it costs is attention. If one keeps one's attention fixed upon that idea, and is constantly seeking where one can do some little good to another. By giving one's place in a bus or tram-car; by just having a little consideration for the aged, a little consideration for someone who is perhaps not honored or respected, if one can offer what a person is lacking in his life without him knowing, that is always a great [*words missing*]. To do good is the work of the sage. Sometimes people become over-enthusiastic, which does harm. It is a spell, a fit of goodness. That does no good. The real

goodness is that which comes spontaneously. A thief is always on the look-out to rob something; so a good person is always looking for an opportunity to do good; he will always find it.

Q: Can you tell something more of the time that God grants wishes?

A: God grants wishes at two times. One time is when your heart is free from every thought, or feeling, or emotion; in the most peaceful and tranquil condition; at that time every wish that is sown is just like a seed sown in fertile soil. If one had the patience to wait in the great power of God, whatever be the wish, it will certainly be granted. The other time when the wish is granted is when somebody is satisfied, has been made happy by you, and naturally, out of his heart, springs a kind of fountain which pours upon you a kind of blessing. It will be just like rain from above, which in time will bring its fruits and flowers.

Q: Has one the right to wish for oneself?

A: Yes, as long as the conscience says that the wish is right. But there is another stage, when a person has so advanced spiritually that he thinks, "God's wish is my wish. God knows better than me. I may wish something wrong." The one who gives his life in that way in the hands of God is greater still.

Q: When a man is poor, but can just live with the means he has, is it then good when he gives away material things, and so makes himself dependent upon others?

A: You see, the question what is good is a very difficult question to decide. Good is peculiar to a person. It all depends upon what that person thinks. When he thinks it is right, it is good. That is the only question.

The story of Saint Elias, he was an ascetic, and for his food only a loaf of bread was enough every day. He would not keep anything for tomorrow. If he was given four people's food in one day he would distribute it. If he had still more, he shared it all. Next day he was without. If one said, why did he make himself dependent upon people for the next day? he would say that, "We live in this life interdependent. As long as I do not go to anybody, do not force upon anybody—only people brought it—what does it matter? It is from Him. It is not depending upon others. It all comes from God. It all goes to the creatures of God. What does it matter?" It all depends upon the person and how the person looks at it.

Q: The great creative spirits, which at this moment are so necessary for working in the world, if they have in their soul a longing for spirituality, how can they keep balance between their busy life and the concentration which is a necessity for the spiritual path? What must they sacrifice?

A: In the first place I should say that if one object is the seeking of one's soul, and the other object is life's necessity, and if one object is to be sacrificed, it is better the one which is necessary, but keep to the soul's seeking.

There is another point of view; in order to become spiritual, we should not become unworldly. We can just as well be in the world and yet not be of the world. We can be active in our everyday life, and yet be concentrative. A person who can concentrate well can manage the affairs of the world better. Those who have attained success in business, in worldly affairs, they had their concentration better. Therefore concentration is in no way a hindrance. A success gained through the power of spirituality is more secure and has a stronger foundation. Furthermore, there is one rule of life, which must be understood. That the success is gained by two ways; by the right way and by the wrong way. Wrong way means that which is against the spiritual idea. And when a person has started by one path, he must keep to that path, in order to be successful. And if he finds that perhaps the other path will be better for the success, he will lose. A person who is going the wrong way, if he thinks that the right way will be better, he will lose. The person who

is going the right way, he will not lose. His success will perhaps be slow, but it is secure, and he will all through be successful. The other had no danger, but his greatest danger is going into the right path; that is his loss.

Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978

*These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 2

Wedding Customs

GATHA: There are superstitions and customs connected with the wedding observed in Europe, such as throwing an old shoe after the newly married couple as they go away, and throwing rice. The rice signifies flourishing, multiplication, prosperity, and Providence, whereas old shoes are the old times passed in life and a new life begun.

TASAWWUF: As has been taught, superstitions are chiefly the shadows of psychic instructions or institutions founded upon psychic law after the meaning of them has gone out and after the intellectual element has disappeared. By application of intuitive ability and insight and a knowledge of practical symbolism one can see the meaning of things from every movement as well as from the content or objects used.

The new age does not intend to revivify old customs nor to ignore them either, only it has been that because none of them have been universal and therefore probably unacceptable to others—here the people not of Europe, using the same psychic principles the Universal Worship had, adopted a suitable variant which may come to be accepted by all. Thus toward the end of the Wedding Ceremony when a Cherag officiates he gives the bride and bridegroom each a handful of corn, saying, “Pour the seed of the Divine Message upon the world.”

Here the prayer acts as a preservative, and it means that in whatever the wedded ones do they might prosper with the aid of God. For the Message is not only the words and studies and practices, it is the everyday life, that every act of the marriage might be sanctified, including the welfare of the couple, the spiritual coming of children and all other acts.

The Jewish people drink wine at their weddings and the groom crushes the wine-glass thereafter. The crushing of the wine-glass beneath his heel also means that the old life is over. It also indicates that the intoxication of the romance is terminated and the couple are to be devoted to the serious things, but that the joy that comes in holy striving may continue.

GATHA: The rings that bridegroom and bride put on each other’s fingers is the sign of bond, which is the real meaning of marriage. The hands of the two joined by the priest is the possession of one another, suggesting that each holds the other.

TASAWWUF: To the initiate the holiness of marriage is something beyond the mere joining of hands. It means that there should be the harmonization of personalities. Some religions use garlands which they twine around both bride and groom. These mean that there should be one life between them and that they should share in all things. A common concentration, such as on the heart, is most helpful during the last stages of romance preparatory to the wedding, but afterwards, in accordance with the prayer, “Pour the seed of the Divine Message upon the world,” the concentration upon the Sufi Symbol of the message is itself better. It will bring bride and groom closer together and restore peace and harmony whenever there are any differences or dissonances arising between them.

The wedding ceremony of the Universal Worship also requires the use of rings which is explained in the prayer of the worship itself. Instead of the bride and groom always facing the altar, they stand before the Cherag but face each other, and this brings the compensation of love and magnetism of all planes between them. After repeating the Invocation the Cherag says: "I unite you both in marriage one to another, that this link (Cherag puts on the rings) may be an everlasting bond, asking for your good health, long life, prosperity, happiness, and the Blessing of God to be with you forever and evermore. Amen."

The exchanging of rings between bride and groom or the donning of them by both brings a balance which is sometimes lacking when only one party has the ring or amulet, for in this sense, with the blessing, the ring does become an amulet. And rings with symbols may become most powerful if worn with love, humility and reverence. By glancing at the ring and remembering the words of the blessing, Baraka may come to either party when in need, and thus also they may more easily commune at a distance.

GATHA: The custom of the Greek church, where wreaths are put on the head of the bride and bridegroom, is the exchange of thoughts and feelings, and walking three times round the altar is suggestive of God between them, uniting them both with the other in divine link, the link which is everlasting as God Himself.

TASAWWUF: Walking around an altar, or a sacred shrine, always indicates the possibility of a link with God. This is usually an outer act. The initiates strive to find the reality behind this action. In the Universal Worship the outer action is now performed, but the bride and bridegroom kneel down facing the altar and the Cherag gives them the blessing which is contained in the Worship. This blessing is so worded that the words take the place of the ceremony, and thus carry to the thought plane the same suggestions which are psychically impressed through the movements of the rites of the Greek church and other churches which have adopted ceremonials.

GATHA: And the custom of the bride's kissing the hand of the bridegroom, which is still continued at the time when the rhythm of the world is quite changed, only explains the response from the side of the bride, in which is the secret of nature's harmony, although what generally happens later is just the opposite, but that brings about the happy medium.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, originally women were held more or less in contempt, or else inferior and they were expected to be responsive, and indeed they are responsive by nature. But the husband also should be responsive to the wife and be stimulated by her, and if she is more intuitive and he more intellectual he should not refuse to follow her advice which can, if trusted, grow into wisdom.

The same acts which began out of courtship and which can degrade into mere physical endeavors, can also, if properly pursued, take on a deeper meaning. For the more the husband sees in the wife the more he will be uncovering in himself and the more gracious the wife is before the husband, the more beauty she will be revealing from her inner being. And it is this constant mutual growth which enables husband and wife to harmonize progressively using the marriage as a means toward a greater life.

The Universal Worship has in its wedding custom or ceremony most important elements. In the beginning it is arranged that the bridegroom sit on the right, the bride to the left. This is because the groom represents Jelal, the positive, and the bride the Jemal, the responsive force of the universe.

The best men are on the right of the groom, representing the potential Jelal capacity and the bridesmaids on the left of the bride representing the potential Jemal capacity. That is to say, out of the marriage can come more strength and ability on the one hand and more beauty and response on the other. The Cherag in the service symbolizes Kemal in which Jemal and Jelal meet, harmonize and ultimately unite.

The Cherag asks the bridegroom if he desires the hand of the maiden in exchange for love, which is to say that the bride represents prakriti, or form, symbolized by hand and the groom purusha or energy which culminates in love. The union of these two brings heaven and earth together.

Then the Cherag asks the bridegroom also if he will keep true to her, serve her and sympathize with her under all conditions throughout life. These words have a deep significance. The love which is on the surface passes in time. It is not only in a physical sense that trueness is meant—and sometimes this is over-exaggerated—but that the man will really be tender and sympathetic under all conditions and forbear to be harsh or critical even when apparently she is wrong and he is right. Silence or agreement on his part will do more to correct her if she is a true woman, than anything else.

Then the bridegroom is asked to consider marriage as a most sacred act. The early Christian church looked upon divorce with horror because at that time they knew the sanctity of the union of bodies, hearts and souls. This was lost afterwards, only the form remaining and that without much vitality because when feudalism was introduced the place of woman in society became very low.

The best men for the bridegroom and the bridesmaids for the bride are the witnesses and they represent angelic forces also who are the witnesses of all things.

The bride is asked similar questions and her response is most important. It is not that she must consider her husband as a divine being but the more she can come to this point of view the more the marriage does both for the parties thereto and for the whole humanity. Children born of such a union will be blessed, the Baraka being gathered for them from the very beginning. And in this sense marriage can be continued as a sacrament, and dharma restored to earth.

*Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978
These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 3

Funeral Customs

GATHA: The human body represents the five elements, and nature's law is that every element returns to its own origin. Naturally therefore the being which is the air part turns into air, the heat is absorbed by the heat—the fire-element has left already. The body belongs either to earth or to water. But the body, which is born on earth, not in the water, and has sought its comfort on earth, not in water, and has also been afraid of the water, an element foreign to it, had better be saved from it and had better be buried.

TASAWWUF: No doubt all races and peoples following all the different religions have their funeral customs and there may have been deep reasons for them. The study of the elements is considered of greatest importance by the Sufis and both the breath as the vehicle of spirit and the body as the vehicle of form-matter are studied as to their elemental constitution. The scientists and physiologists have not yet given much thought to the subject but there are increasing signs that in the future they will do so.

When transition comes, and even before, the fire element departs. The ancients knew this and said that as age came on the fire element lessened and the earth element, in proportion, increased. This would indicate that if one knew how to control the fire element and the physical heat, the body might continue to exist a much longer time. However, if one has not complete mystical and occult knowledge any efforts along these lines might become very dangerous and destructive. Besides, there must be the etheric element to bring balance, and the fire and ether together may properly energize the blood which carries the life force and even the food to every tube, vein and cell of the body.

The air element is connected with the breath and feeds mostly the mind of mind, and when this element is withdrawn the mind cannot function so well in the body, and forgetfulness occurs, and this is one of the reasons why elderly people sometimes do not remember their earlier experiences and acquaintances. The water element also disappears in some people who appear as dry and wizened.

Some people have buried bodies in the water. This causes pollution and is a source of disease. No doubt at sea this is necessary, and if bodies have been cremated and the ashes thrown into the water there is not so much harm. But both the processes of air and cremation are necessarily destructive and life-depriving so that cannot be so energizing.

In the western religions which accept the Bible the idea is that the earth goes back to the earth and soul to God Who made it. This is a safe, practicable belief, for when the bodies are placed in the earth and properly covered they feed the earth and they serve as foods for plants and animals, and as the human vibrations are finer than those of other kingdoms the plants and animals, which derive from the corpses naturally—through the earth—become more refined. But animals which eat corpses like the vultures among the Parsis and dogs among the Tibetans are not so refined.

Nevertheless for them that was the best method because the soil in Tibet is often hard to dig, especially when it is cold and there is ice, or when the wind storms blow about, and it is certain that this method prevents the accumulation of noxious gases and greatly diminishes the chances for fever and epidemic, so we need not condemn such customs.

The prayers and ceremonies connected with the Universal Worship follow the principles of the esoteric teachers although they may not be so explicitly stated. The body is placed in the earth, that the earth element which is the densest may be properly restored, the other elements being not so heavy and they have less difficulty in returning to their source. After all, the element becomes purified when it returns to its own and the easier the method the better it is.

GATHA: Another point of view is that every living being, whether man or animal, has a fear of fire. A powerful animal like the lion is afraid of the fire; the elephant with all its large body and strength runs away from fire. If that is the nature of all living beings, to be afraid of fire, then imagine for a person who is not yet dead to know that as soon as he is dead his body will be put in the fire. Although his mind is separate from the body, yet his mind will have a shock just the same.

TASAWWUF: Therefore Sufis do not favor and have not practiced cremation. The finer bodies do not leave all at once. There have been certain measurements like watching the last breath or the last beat of the heart or the last normal function of the organs. These do not occur together and sometimes the mind ceases to function in the body long before, and sometimes it is quite attached to the body.

Those who have studied corpses right after death have noticed and even seen something arise from the form, like a cloud or light. This shows very definitely that there is a finer body or more than one finer body interlinked with the flesh which need not be released just because someone has pronounced the death moment. There is no exact death moment, it is gradual, and even delicate. And it is sad that persons who are cremated too soon, or rather the spirits of such bodies, suffer as long as there is any connection therewith.

Some of the psychic influences in graveyards are there because there is still attachment between body and spirit, and in persons of low evolution or gross materiality this may be greater than is supposed. We want to extend all love, mercy and compassion, and this requires wisdom. Besides this is not a fire-body. The custom of India was due to many reasons, some of which have been lost. It is said originally that they sought to bring fire down from heaven, and in the most ancient times the adepts could do that. But they lost the power and found it easier to use the man-made fire. This was never intended. But it did save much trouble of burying and establishing graveyards, and so supposed to hasten the elevation of the departed into the higher spheres. So first it was permitted and finally it became a universal custom, and especially along the Ganges River.

This river was originally so sacred that it was respected and not polluted. It also represented a heavenly stream of life. The myths were later materialized and a physical process adopted and so from stage to stage until even gross superstition resulted.

GATHA: The reason of mummies is to suggest that if the body which is dead can be kept along, then the life, which is real life, is eternal. Besides among the ancient Egyptians there was a custom (the same tendency exists in the East) that at every banquet or feast a mummy was brought in. It was brought for a moment and taken away, in order to waken man in the midst of his great joy and enthusiasm and pleasure to the consciousness that there is such a thing as death, that there is some-

thing awaiting him and that he must not keep ignorant of that truth, absorbed in all the pleasures of the world. But at the same time they put the mummies also in the grave.

TASAWWUF: It is not that we should not have joy, it is that we must not have the wrong kind of joy. The physical body is a vehicle of experiences and action; we also have a body of bliss, and this interpenetrates the coarser bodies and there is an impulse or constant impulse from it even when we are veiled from truth, to experience joy. Then we seek it, but we do not realize the relation of joy to life as a whole.

Now the introduction of the mummy is not for the sake of killing the joy, but to bring balance and seriousness and to make us see, if we can, beyond illusion. Pleasure is intoxication and matter is intoxication, and human relations may be very intoxicating. When we get a glimpse of eternity we are driven for the moment to seriousness. We can learn, however, that because there is a grave, it is not all sorrow there. The Masons apparently teach that death is sorrow and yet they are very persistent in holding on to immortality. There is no real sorrow in death, it is only those who remain who have the sorrow, but if they adhere to it strongly then there will be sorrow for the departed one also.

In the Universal Worship there are burial suras. The first is that “Death takes away the weariness of life; and the soul begins life anew.” There is no need for sorrow, there is rebirth so to speak, and opportunity. We find upon leaving earth that many obstacles are born of dense matter and others out of the dense minds we have fashioned ourselves. But the planes do not make it so, it is not normal to the spheres, it is we who stand before ourselves.

The next Sura is that “Death is the crucifixion, after which follows the resurrection.” And it is mostly that we make our own crucifixion because besides all the difficulties from the outside, without a proper understanding of the life processes and our place in the universe, we do not have the realization, and only when we are deluded, so to speak, by the sloughing of the body, do we come to a better understanding.

“Death is the night after which the day begins.” This is self-explanatory. “It is death which dies, not life.” For the living currents never diminish, the soul is there, it is only that we do not function through the dense body of matter.

“The life everlasting is hidden in the heart of death.” And it is possible to die in this sense any time. The spiritual life enables the talib to uncover his heart and understand—which is much more than a belief—the continuance of the life herenow and hereafter.

*Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978
These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 4

The Swan Song

GATHA: They say the swan sings once, just before it dies.

TASAWWUF: It is so to speak, that in this is the fulfillment of life, that the swan has a certain objective in life and that that objective is in some way connected with its breath, that it had a deeper breath which covered the cycle of its whole life and the ordinary breath which it takes momentarily. And in this we also see the idea of a purpose which may be found in the human life, and with the fulfillment of this purpose the life on earth may be completed, although one does not necessarily retire into the afterlife immediately upon the fulfillment of such purpose.

GATHA: The meaning of this is that a fuller expression given to one's joy puts an end to life, for in the fullest expression lies life's purpose. In the life of an artist one finished work of art, and in the life of a musician his best piece of music, brings to him the warning of his departure.

TASAWWUF: We can see that illustrated in the lives of many musicians. The classic example is that of Beethoven, having completed his Ninth Symphony, he lost his sense of hearing and with that loss the life energy began to ebb. He lived just long enough to witness the triumph of his greatest work. And now when we study his compositions we can see the genius in him expressing itself more and more in his later years until it seems that he surpassed the whole world, he seemed to surpass even himself.

When Wagner completed his most sacred opera, "Parsifal," his world work was accomplished. Rafael sojourned just long enough to produce his masterpieces, and Keats and Chatterton were given only a short span of years. And yet everyone does not withdraw upon the completion of his master work. Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci stayed on earth many years and it is said that Fariduddin Attar lived a very long time.

GATHA: Saadi says, "Every soul is born with a purpose, and the light of that purpose is kindled in his heart." It applies not only to the soul of every person but to the soul of every person but to every living creature, however small and insignificant; even to every object this rule can be applied.

TASAWWUF: In man it works out that when he performs that which is in accord with his purpose he gains in magnetism and vitality, he is open to inspiration, he gains in vigor, he exhibits more life and light in his being. And whenever we do that which is contrary to our dharma we lose vitality and magnetism and vigor. We may even obtain earthly power, but at a price; we may gain fame, but at a price and no matter what we gain, if it is not in accordance with our dharma, with our purpose of life we do not obtain happiness, and happiness is really the lot of every soul.

Each one of us has a definite purpose. It is not true that some are fated to be successful and some cannot obtain spiritual release while on earth. The very structure of the human body shows that the members of it are only partly under the control of fate, that many parts of the body can be controlled

by will and that as man grows he can exert his will-power over other members of the body. And the same is true with his mind and with his career, he always has the choice before him, and he may grow and grow.

The ordinary belief is that every creature has two instincts, that of self-preservation and that of perpetuation of the species. The mystics do not disagree with this view, only there may come a question as to what is meant by "self-preservation." The mystic does not agree with the view that self-preservation is identical with persistence of life in the body. All creatures do try to prolong their physical existence—unless that instinct goes contrary to the other instinct of perpetuation of the species, but the body is not necessarily the "self." Besides if there were only these two basic instincts, there would be a more terrific struggle for life than even some biologists claim. They may be correct so far as they go but they fail to take into account any general purpose.

The great Swedish philosopher and clairvoyant, Emanuel Swedenborg, wrote at length on this subject and tried to show that each kingdom in creation had a certain place and that all fitted into a cosmic harmony, which meant that nothing was out of place with respect to God and that God perfected all the plans for creation and that nothing was there without a purpose. And when we study the functions of the bees and butterflies, how they fertilize the fruits and grains and flowers, when we learn what functions various bugs carry on, and what damage follows when certain animals are slaughtered or insects destroyed or even some so-called weeds uprooted, we begin to see that everything has its place and until we have wisdom and keen sight, the selfish attitude in the end proves to be the most destructive. We see this in America and China today, that the short-sighted policies with regard to forest and agricultural lands, producing a little more prosperity and revenue at one time has only led to a greater loss at some other time.

GATHA: There is a saying in the East that the elephant dies at the sight of fever. This explains that death robs one of that which one has made oneself. If this be explained in other words, one makes one's death while making oneself.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, all our ego-creative-activity, no matter how valuable it may be for the while, has only a limited purpose. Christ told his disciples to lay up the treasures in heaven where dust and corruption and decay do not set in. Sufis practice Murakkabah which is called concentration but which is much more than is ordinarily included in the meaning of that word. For by mastery in Murakkabah one may not only achieve success in this world, but one builds for himself a faculty which he can continue to use in the hereafter. It is the faculty, however, which persists, and not the particular gains which come as a result of the use of the faculty.

While on earth we can accumulate property and enjoy pleasure and these things we can not take. Whatever their value be, it is a limited value. And it is these things which die at death. We do not die; we leave the body behind and we leave the properties and wealth behind, and we may be leaving certain pleasures and inclinations behind and that is all. We continue in the hereafter and carry with us all that is in accord with the general purpose of our existence.

GATHA: The heavy flesh that the elephant gathers around itself naturally gives power to the fever that becomes the cause of its death. The same is to be seen in the life of man. Every difficulty, even death, man makes with the making of himself. It is to suggest this idea that Christ has said, "The spirit quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing."

TASAWWUF: If we take these words of Christ literally it is that the spirit or breath is the source of our gain, the body is not the source of gain. We should live for the development of Purusha, not for the perfection and development of Prakriti. This does not mean that the body need be neglected nor that most of all we should ever lose sight of that supreme principle, Beauty. The body may be given to us to adorn and we should take care of the body and preserve its health, vitality, luster and magnetism. But there is more in life than that. The body is the servant, not the purpose of our being here.

The elephant is an animal which has a tremendous body and it requires a very tranquil breath to maintain the life in that body. The elephant is not an emotional animal. Big people are less emotional than small people; their bodies cannot stand stress and strain, they are more subject to heart-disease and the elephant also is more subject to heart-disease.

Then coming to the other side of the subject that everything we do is the cause of death. Yes, what we make must be unmade, what we attach ourselves to we must detach ourselves from. This is the sway of the universe, and there is the sway of creation and the sway of emancipation. If we continue on in the swing of creation we may become too attached to things and then with all the idealism and moral qualities we shall find ourselves beneath the sway of nufs. And if we are all emancipation, we can become attached to the idea of freedom, that we shall not understand our nature nor our relationship to others and this will bring us pain and travail instead of emancipation. Therefore the right course is to act and continue to act, but to be indifferent as to the results of action, to leave the fruits to God, so to speak.

GATHA: The soul was born to be immortal, but mortality it usually earns for itself.

TASAWWUF: The soul is immortal, but by identifying itself with the body and taking on, so to speak, a bodily consciousness a mortality is created. It is not a reality. Nothing of life is lost by the life being released from the body. It is the form which is lost, not the life. The life continues and we can learn for ourselves that it continues, we can find that freedom from bodily consciousness, we can abandon the self through self-sacrifice and love, and ultimately come to the Perfection of Love in which resides the true immortality.

GATHA: There is nothing that man would have been afraid of if he did not possess something which he is afraid of being robbed of. When the hermit Manchandra said to Gaurakha on their journey through the wilderness, "Gaurakha, I feel afraid." Gaurakha answered, "Throw away the fear." Manchandra answered, "How can fear be thrown away?" Gaurakha said, "Throw away that which causes you fear." Manchandra took out from his wallet two bricks of gold and said, "These bricks of gold, must I throw them away?" "Yes," said Gaurakha, "What are they?"

TASAWWUF: There is nothing in ourselves which is the source of fear. Some scientists have said that fear is an instinct. Perhaps so. But the instinct is either only the undeveloped intuition or it is repulsion at work when the force of attraction is weak. When there is insight there can be no such fear, that fear is born of ignorance.

The other aspect of fear comes from attachment. We are attached to something and we are not strong enough to control the thing; instead of owning it, it owns us. That is the condition of many people today. The spiritual philosophy is not that one should not have possessions; God has placed the whole earth at man's feet. The spiritual philosophy is that man may possess or control but not be under the emotional sway of anything. If wealth produces fear, hatred, selfishness, attachment, then the

wealth is the cause of disease, and should be uprooted. But if man has such self-control that he can manage his affairs and properties and even use them for the good of others, there can be no harm in it, even though sooner or later he may have to abandon all.

GATHA: Manchandra threw them away, and as he went on his face turned pale. Gaurakha looked at him and said, "Why are you sad?" Manchandra said, "Now we have nothing." Gaurakha said, "We have everything. Look before you, what do you behold?" And he beheld mountains of gold. Gaurakha said, "Take as much as you can, if that is your soul's striving." Manchandra's soul awoke, and he said, "Nothing will I take for I know the riches of possessing nothing."

TASAWWUF: This life of non-possession has been followed by many spiritual teachers and their disciples and it is not easy to impress upon the worldly the advantage of it. Of course there is an extreme that some people who are spiritual and many people who claim to be spiritual, live upon the bounty of others and the others have to struggle to support them and thus they become parasites upon society. This is the wrong view. Christ told his disciples to provide nothing for themselves but they lived in a society which followed the laws of Moses, making it possible to live that way. Buddha gave similar instructions to his followers, but they lived in India which then accepted the dharma sastras and it was the duty of people to give to holy men. Besides in those days there was more prosperity, the needs were more simple and the people knew the laws by which the fertility of the soil could be increased and there was a greater return. Also in the absence of war there was prosperity.

When there is a totally different social order we have to work differently, but the idea of self-possession becomes a dangerous one to the soul, which becomes attached to things and thoughts and besides the theoretical spiritual loss there is more liability to disease and difficulty. No doubt there is a sort of middle way between the extreme of attachment and the extreme of detachment and society will move in that direction when the spiritual principles are better known. If we could only realize that in the heavens which do exist, there is much less of attachment to property and there is also much greater prosperity, if we want to apply earthly terms to it.

*Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978
These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 5

Customs at the Birth of a Child in India

GATHA: For three days from the time that the child is born, and sometimes for six days, no friends are allowed to enter the room where the child is, only some relations who are most esteemed in the family. The meaning in this custom is that the mind of the newborn child is like a photographic plate and the first impression that it receives goes deeper in it and other impressions have less effect. Therefore the impressions of early childhood make the foundation for the whole life.

TASAWWUF: This ought to give us a suggestion for the spiritual people of the future that they see beyond the superstition or the custom of it, and put into practice again the psychic and occult laws. We have paid much attention to hygiene and sometimes mistakes are made. Thus the infant is often bathed right after birth and it has been discovered that with all precaution, instead of this being a protection to the child it deprives it of protection. During any period of puerperal fever, when the child is dependent upon the mother, and the mother is ill, the child that has been bathed is deprived of a protection. The covering over the child at birth is like a protection and this is absorbed often by the body of the infant itself after a short time.

Even before birth the atmosphere may be prepared for the coming of a new soul to earth, and most of all in the attention given to the mother by the prospective father and other near relatives. Birth need not be too solemn or serious and yet birth can be a very sacred event, and it is not wrong even to hold that the birth of every infant is the birth of the Lord Himself.

All the teachings of Sufism in this regard are proven in fact in the life of the infant. Not only does the first breath which it takes in bring to it the keynote of the life-force which will come to it thereafter, but the first thing it sees and the first person who sees it exert a more important influence than may be supposed. If there are any non-relatives who see the child in the first few days, it should only be a god-father and a god-mother and they to bring the blessings. There may be either or both, and a relative may be a god-father or god-mother, only other than giving a blessing they should not linger too long. For every thought held in the presence of an infant, and especially while gazing upon it, exerts a strong influence; the child has no protection against the impressions it receives then.

Many parents, without knowing it, become so interested in the child that they rid themselves of unwholesome thoughts while in its presence. This is an excellent attitude. It nourishes the child and when the heart and mind of the mother are kept free and pure more psychic power is transmitted through the milk.

The period of the days need not follow the custom of India but six days at least is best. We can learn a great deal from the ancient customs of the Hebrews and Persians and Hindus, and we can again put them into practice. The neglect of the bodies of man and woman from the psychic view has been tragic. Hygiene is excellent in its way but it is no substitute for anything else.

GATHA: The mother does not appear before friends for the first six days, even some relations are kept away. The meaning of this custom is that in the negative state in which a mother is at that time, she is too sensitive to be exposed to inharmonious and coarse vibrations.

TASAWWUF: This same attitude can be maintained before birth also. The husband may be harmonious then to the wife and should be willing to set aside his own desires and pleasures to accommodate her. If she is selfish or willful or makes too many demands it will not only be bad for her, the karma of it will appear in an unwillful child. The mother who can be devout and made to feel that she is giving birth to a winged messenger from heaven and not a possession called “child” will be most fortunate.

In the spiritual life much use is made of the eye for conveying deep thoughts and impressions. This may be more unconscious or subconscious than man realizes. When one comes before an expectant mother one should be careful about one’s speech. After birth also it is advisable to keep the mother in purdah. For the talibs Khilvat may be practiced at that time to advantage, not necessarily in the form used for spiritual advancement but in a form of purdah, which can be a great protection. The mother should not read papers and magazines which produce shock or surprise. There would be unwholesome reactions within herself and if her milk is affected the child also would suffer.

We should not be too anxious to see new-born infants and then only with the feeling of blessings—not too much talk, not even of admiration. By doing that we help the child most. It is not an occasion for ego-expression, it is the time of helpfulness.

GATHA: In the case of the child it is not only that his mind is affected, but the first impression even influences the construction of his face and form.

TASAWWUF: We sometimes see children with the faces born of pleasant looking people and children with happy faces, who have happy dispositions when the parents’ characteristics are otherwise. This is because at the moment of birth, or beforehand, those qualities were impressed upon the incoming soul. The child has no protection against them, the child receives them and especially while the child is in the mother’s womb and receiving the breath and blood-supply through the mother, it is entirely negative.

The effect of the first impression at birth can be seen that children may be born looking like one parent or the other parent or like a grandparent or brother or sister and within a short time they may change considerably and look like the other parent or another relative. There is nothing wrong in it, only it shows how sensitive the child is before impressions, and the impressions of these parents and relations can markedly affect the body as well as the mind of the child.

As the mind of the child is, practically speaking, a blank, it picks up the impressions of the atmosphere and these impressions enter the mind, then the brain, then the nerve structure. Lines of nerve force carry the mental impressions and these mould the features of form and face, so that especially as the child grows the lines of the features follow the lines of force in the mind caused by impression.

GATHA: At the birth of a son the occasion is celebrated by the beating of drums and gunfire. This custom no doubt comes from the ancient Rajputs, whose **Dharma**, or sacred duty, was warfare. This first noise of drums and gunfire was meant as the child’s first experience, or as a first lesson in warfare.

TASAWWUF: There are many customs of many people and there has been the tendency in the past to regard the birth of a son as very important, the birth of a daughter as comparatively unimportant. These tendencies and customs will no longer hold sway, especially as we come to see that so far as the soul itself is concerned, there is no sex. Unfortunately we live in a period where even women are not exempt from warfare and the thoughts of warfare and the principles which the ancients regarded as basic to sex (outside the physical functions) are no longer observed.

We can observe the principles of Jemal and Jelal without destroying or harming anything or anyone. We can free women without turning them into men. So long as women wish to ape men they cannot be entirely liberated for they will fail mostly to surpass men in the arts and trades and professions which have belonged to the men in the past. Women will no doubt have many new duties and opportunities. So there will be no need to rejoice more over the birth of a son than over the birth of a daughter nor to weep more over the birth of a son than over the birth of a daughter. We can rejoice over the coming of a soul to earth and do all we can to make it prosper.

GATHA: An entertainment is given in celebration of the birth of a child, at which there is singing, playing and dancing. It is meant by this that a joyous atmosphere works as a push given to a swing in the life of a child on earth at its commencement.

TASAWWUF: There may be such an entertainment in the house or it may wait until the seventh day at which time the mother may be received back into society and given a proper welcome. There may be more cause for rejoicing at such a time than at a wedding. People have made much fuss over the weddings and paid little attention to the birth of the first child which may be regarded in a certain sense as the culmination of the wedding. People who marry may be adults who have been properly guarded through life; the child has no protection at first. We can give it all protection and blessing.

There is no need to disregard pleasure at such a period. We do not have to be solemn. There are periods of rejoicing in the religious ceremonies, and there are racial festivals, but the birth of a soul on earth is really a cause for universal rejoicing as well as for the rejoicing in the successful duty of parents (for this is one duty of mated peoples). By keeping before the child the note of optimism and joy it often happens that that will remain the child's keynote and it will in its turn become a source of blessing to the parents.

*Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978
These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 6

The Superstitions of the Days Existing in the East

GATHA: In the East the influence of the days of the week is considered by all, learned or illiterate. Every time has its peculiar influence and particular purpose. The mechanism of the cosmos has a certain action and again its reaction on the part of the planets, producing a certain effect in every hour of the day, in every day of the week, in every week of the month, in every month of the year, and in every year of a cycle.

TASAWWUF: There has been a great misunderstanding about astrology. Some say that astronomy is a science and astrology is not. Yet this statement of itself needs proof. In the other material sciences man handles what he observes and he can control the conditions; in astronomy he is just an observer, he depends more on observation than on anything else. In some sciences like anatomy and archaeology he is also an observer or describer, but he can use his sense of touch and also his sense of smell. In the study of astronomy he uses mostly sight and then reason and if it should happen that a certain premise is wrong, he may have to discard many conclusions.

Now astrology may be called a science in another respect because while it begins with the study of the stars it sees or claims to see a certain relationship between human behaviorism and the cycles of the planets. In astrology man is not left out of account. Of course there are many superstitions parading as astrology which have no validity whatever and which have thrown the study into disrepute.

To understand astrology we must in the first place accept the principle that the universe is composed of vibrations and atoms, these vibrations and atoms have certain qualities and properties and the vibrations all have their rhythms or periods. These vibrations, rhythms and periods apply to all things on all planes, although with respect to astrology it is mostly the configurations of the world of thought which have to be taken into account together with the correspondence to physical movements and physical events.

It may be that there are certain thought-rhythms, and thought-movements and atoms have been attracted into those cycles, and thus we see the stars and planets. We think of them mostly as material bodies, we do not know that their courses may be fixed by events of the mental world. They may be measuring mental or spiritual events and indicating the probable material results of those influences; not that it is so, not that there are not other considerations, but there is no question that the affairs of the world without, personal and impersonal, are dependent upon the affairs of the unseen.

There are many cycles from the swing of a single breath to the swing of the most distant stars. Most of these have no particular relationship to our earthly life, but some do, and some can be measured and after being measured, their qualities and characteristics noted. Then the magnetic effects of their positions upon people's lives can be noted and measured, and this constitutes the basis of astrology.

GATHA: The characteristic of Sunday is godliness. Anything spiritual can alone be successful. Anything else, besides a spiritual thing, something of a worldly nature, begun on Sunday, or continued on that day, must come to naught.

TASAWWUF: This is perhaps behind the Christian practice of abolishing so much business on Sunday. This is the day of the sun and it is a sign of expansion and growth, therefore of inclusion. Business in the ordinary sense is a personal undertaking and what is personal belongs in one category and what is godly belongs in another category, not being directly personal. And by this one means that which is all-inclusive, which does not relate to the earth alone or to the mind, but which first is all-inclusive regarding the self, covering every aspect of one's life, and also that it extends outward, so to speak, to enfold the affairs of others.

In this sense even picnics, parties and other cooperative endeavors are not out of place on Sunday. They are not of a commercial nature, they do not transgress the principle of the day.

GATHA: Monday is a negative day, a day for things of a passive character. To receive teaching, to obtain information, to search for anything, this is the auspicious day.

TASAWWUF: Even the civilized people who do not like the superstitions, speak of "Blue Monday." This day is under the influence of the moon and is in all respects negative. People at work wait for the mail to come in, they wait for something to happen, they do not feel like starting enterprises even though in a certain sense it is the time to start the serious affairs, yet it is not always done, it requires a certain winding, and there is the absence of momentum because of the negativity. And all disclaiming of superstitious belief does not seem enough to enable man to overcome his lethargy because there is the universal magnetic condition which he feels even when he denounces it.

GATHA: Tuesday is a day of enjoyment, for amusement, joy and pleasure, for picnic, feast and wedding, for music and dancing, and for sports this is a fitting day.

TASAWWUF: In the West this has been the day of Mars, the God of War, but in the East there is no desire for war and the same tendencies which operate negatively in the West are used on their constructive side in the East. Thus this can be a day of complete relaxation. Of course as the West has adopted the principle of rhythm in other respects, and followed the lines of commercialism, it will be very hard to put such principles into practice. They are entirely out of line with customs and it is not necessary to interfere with any customs, although we can study to advantage the customs of others.

GATHA: Wednesday is a day for business. It is a day for taking an initiative, and undertaking. All that is done on this day must bear fruit.

TASAWWUF: In the West this day was dedicated to Mercury, the God of the Market, of exchange, of business, movement, enterprise and travel. People in ancient times used to pray in the temple of Mercury before going on business enterprises, and in ancient Persia where these things were practiced, much was done to pursue the line of successful effort in accordance with occult principles.

GATHA: Thursday is a central day, to make a determination, to decide things, to settle in a new place. It is a day of inspiration, of revelation, because the influence of this day touches the summit.

TASAWWUF: This is the day when Jupiter, so to speak, dominates, which word really means “Sky-Father.” This stands for the principle of utmost expansion and elevation. The principle of Jupiter includes justice, determination, will, and decision. It is erect and elevating, and it carries one on and above one’s surroundings.

GATHA: Friday is a day of power and a day of aspiration. On this day prayer is granted and wishes are fulfilled, thoughts are materialized and dreams become realized. However, this is not the day of sowing; it is the day of reaping. Friday is a day of exaltation.

TASAWWUF: The influence of Venus or Aphrodite is also elevating. It may be regarded as a continuation of the influence of Thursday but it is different, because it is in a sense negative, only it is the spiritually negative day, whereas Monday is the materially and externally negative day. The followers of Islam pray on Friday more than on other days because of this influence.

GATHA: Saturday is a winding day. If loss is wound it continues for days and days; if the mechanism of gain is wound it continues for weeks. It is a day of upliftment to those who raise their soul to a higher pitch, so that the machinery of the spirit may be wound and continued for a long, long time. Every planetary influence that begins on Saturday must always continue its effect upon one’s life.

TASAWWUF: For that reason the Hebrew people and more especially the mystics used to pay much attention to Sabbath. It was considered to be one of God’s greatest gifts to man. That day was sacred in a sense no longer used. For sacredness has come to mean solemn, whereas it should come to mean that which is living, and vital. The Sabbath should be reserved from work because on that day the people would receive the gifts of the spirit and they could not receive the gifts of the spirit if they were busy with mundane affairs. At the time of Christ the Hebrew mystics in Palestine and in Egypt used to spend part of the time in meditation and the rest of the time feasting and rejoicing. It was not particularly a season of solemnity; God was felt to be near.

And in those meditations they would prepare for the future. They received out of the silence the key to the next cycle. And as a result they had a form of knowledge which no longer exists among them. This knowledge formed the basis of their Kabbala.

GATHA: The influence of the day is unavoidable upon every mortal, except upon the souls to whom day and night is the same, those who are beyond the laws of this mortal world.

TASAWWUF: The word for day is Yom in Hebrew and Yaum in Arabic and it meant originally a cycle, a period. The Yom was the masculine letter and the Mem the feminine letter and together they formed a cycle. This cycle might be of any length but it came later on to be identified with the 24-hour period which has its day and night. This was a little different from other cycles which had length and rhythm but not the dual polarity of darkness and light. Of course there are periods of rising and falling influence of planets and of favorable and unfavorable aspects, but these take other things into consideration and are of a little different nature than the day-night cycle.

While the average man is under cyclic law, the initiate is not so bound. He can make his cycles, he can establish his Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, all days, at his own will when he has the knowledge. For with each day there is a specific breath. The breaths of Sunday and Tuesday are in the right nostril, the sun breath being positive, upward, inhalation, and the Tuesday breath being

downward, negative in a sense and an exhalation, it being the negative of the positive and the Sunday or the sun breath being the positive of the positive.

The moon current is on the left side and downward being the negative of the negative, and the Venus or Friday breath is upward on the left side being the positive of the negative. The breath for Thursday or the Jupiter breath may come in either nostril or both, is a strong inhaled breath and has the tendency toward contraction. The breath for Saturday, the Saturn breath, is outward, the breath leaving the body which can then rest for a moment, or else the breath stops, for this is either the best or the worst of the breaths and in the spiritual person the etheric element has its greatest influence then.

The breath for Wednesday is in either nostril and has the tendency to cross over, in this way resembling the air breath but being more balanced, and differing from the air breath in that its inhalative and exhalative forces are balanced. Nevertheless the master of Kasab will have less difficulty in controlling this breath than another. Thus the mystic has the power to create his inner days, so to speak, to suit himself and if he finds himself in conflict with the outer world he can adjust himself through control of breath or through resignation of heart.

*Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978
These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 7

Unlucky Numbers

GATHA: According to the Orientals, 3, 13, 9 and 18 are numbers which must be avoided in beginning some profitable act. There are some psychological reasons which prove these numbers to be best avoided.

TASAWWUF: There are many people who believe there is a science of numerology, that numbers have significance. They even go so far as to consult number charts and to observe numbers in all sorts of ventures. There are at least two sorts of these people, the one claiming to be interested in occult things, the other more interested in gambling and adventure.

There is no doubt that the ancients put a great stock in numbers. The Pythagoreans had a science of numbers and in the books of Moses and Abraham, considerable use is made of numbers. For instance the years of the life of Adam and of all patriarchs originally had some significance. Bible says, "Even the hairs of your head are numbered." Thus under karma, numbers are supposed to have significance. And some people become very superstitious and will do little or nothing contrary to their faith in numbers. The gamblers may be even more superstitious without showing any interest in occult matters.

Then there are practical people who put no stock in these things. Yet if we start the study of sciences we shall find that numbers play an important role, though apparently in a quite different way. The music of most nations is based upon the numerical relation of sound vibrations. You cannot ignore the numbers in the pitch of the notes of scales and in the science of harmony, only those people who study harmony within a limited range of sound do not think that the same principles can apply elsewhere. They ignore the possibility.

Recently the chemists have learned that each material chemical element has its number as well as its atomic weight and other properties. Numbers play a most important role in this science. For a long time it was considered an accident, but when Professor Moseley made this discovery instead of being called a superstition it was regarded as one of the greatest triumphs of science. Thus all depends upon a point of view.

GATHA: 3 denotes all. All means everything, and everything means nothing in particular. Things of the world, which are profitable, are something in particular. 3 therefore annuls the distinction. For 3 resolves into 1. One is 3, and 3 is 1.

TASAWWUF: Thus 3 is not 1 in an ordinary sense. The three sides of a triangle form the simplest figure, by three lines you can enclose an area. Thus 3 is the simplest form although there are endless varieties of the triangle. By profit is meant there must be some gain. The number 2 has polarity and the number two constitutes the basis of dualism. The number 1 and the number 3 lack the polarity, and therefore they do not bring us anything. The 1 may start and the 3 may complete, but the 2 brings something.

Tarot is a science which is supposed to be derived from ancient Egypt, and which is the basis of the theosophical study of numbers. In Tarot one learns the meaning of each number, what principle it stands for, how it operates, what are its advantages and disadvantages. The Hebrew people carried this Tarot science further into Gematria (literally "Geometry") which is a complex science of numbers related to the words of the Hebrew alphabet. The *Sepher Yetzira* is an ancient mystical book of the Hebrews which contains the basis of numerical and occult science derived even from the time of Abraham and which can be studied to profit by an awakened person but which will bring confusion to the ignorant.

It is not necessary for Sufi students to pay much attention to these matters but neither are they enjoined to avoid them. For the enlightened can perceive even more in the number than can the ignorant, only they have other ways of ascertaining suitable action, other than the numbers themselves. But if they know the number they do not spend their time and effort overcoming the difficulty of an unfavorable number.

GATHA: Thirteen destroys balance by unbalancing the rhythm, as it cannot be evenly divided. Besides, 12 hours of the day and 12 hours of the night complete the day and the night. So the thirteenth has no place either in the day or in the night. Besides, after 12 o'clock comes 1, and it marks 13. Thirteen is a number which has no accommodation.

TASAWWUF: We can find both in the occult and religious sciences that all the numbers of 1 to 12 have a most important place, and after that number 22 also and number 32 are most important. The Kabbalistic interpretation of the first words of Genesis is "In the arcane principle made He six, made he of the combination of the realms of the vibrations of light and of the atoms of contraction." The number six was of extreme importance and in the first book of Genesis we can see the importance of all the numbers.

In *The Morals and Dogma of Masonry* Albert Pike was one of the first ones to perceive and collect all the data on the numbers from the different religions. Madame Blavatsky came after him and did a similar work with a little different outlook, but all of these can be best studied in Tarot because there they are regarded as within man as well as without man. Sufis also have a science which corresponds to Tarot the difference between that the Tarot is associated with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet whereas that of the Sufis has its parallels in the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet. But both show the relationship between what is within and what is without.

GATHA: Among Western people there is a superstition that the thirteenth person at table must die within the year. This also explains that the number 13 has no accommodation. That a person dies, means that the earth accommodates him no longer.

TASAWWUF: In Tarot the 13th card is called "The Hanged Man" and it represents death, also self-sacrifice, also the change from one condition to another. It marks the end or the beginning of a cycle, it does not mean continued action within any cycle. It has a supreme value, however, in its meaning as self-sacrifice.

GATHA: Nine falls short of perfection. Besides it is 3 times 3.

TASAWWUF: 9 has been called the mystic number. It has been associated with all that is above the denseness of earth, with all that pertains to spiritual evolution when this evolution is regarded as

something entirely different from material prowess and gain. This is perhaps a mistaken idea of the spiritual. For the spiritual is not the opposite to the material, the spiritual really contains both the material and the non-material.

Sufis show that there are the principles of Urouj and Nasoul, also contraction and expansion and there are movements up and down. The number 9 is an expansive number which is excellent for the imagination but not in accord with practical action. All that expands, elevates, raises, may be associated with the number 9, but it does not seem to harmonize with action and success in worldly endeavor.

GATHA: And so is 18, for 8 and 1 are 9. It has the same effect as 3.

TASAWWUF: In the theosophical arithmetic one adds the digits together and keeps on adding them until they resolve themselves down into a single number which is always of the cycle of 9, 9 being the largest number because 10 is 1 and 0 and when you add them together you get the 1 again. This shows that there are cycles and epicycles and supercycles, with certain relationships the same as there are overtones and undertones in music and in vibrations generally. The number 18 is thus an overtone of the number 9 and it only repeats the 9. The 9 is an overtone of 3 and repeats the 3.

GATHA: All numbers besides 3, 13, 9, and 18 are considered in the East fit to be used.

TASAWWUF: Perhaps there will come a day when people will make use of the numbers again. In the West there has been an influx of faith in numbers through the combined interests in gambling and occultism. But all numbers like the days of the week and such influences really belong in the karmic realm. The master-mind does not depend upon numbers. When we perform Darood we strive to get back to the 1 which includes the all. But we might say that the 1 and the 3 which include all bring the success. No, they do not bring the success unless they are pointed.

In Darood we strive to unite with God and the Illuminated Souls. We do not strive to unite directly with the ignorant, with the weak, with the failures. We do not make ourselves negative to anything or anyone on the earth below, or even in the heavens above. We seek to lay aside our personal will, and in doing that we avoid or transcend the effects of the particular numbers.

*Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978
These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 8

The Mysteries of Omens

GATHA: The secret of what we call omen is to be found in the law of impressions.

TASAWWUF: We can take one of several attitudes toward impressions. We can ignore them and this may be most unfortunate because we live and move and have our being in a world of divine wisdom. God is always trying to help us, but we cannot hear the Voice of God by the ordinary means. If the heart is awake we hear or feel it there. Thus we can gain from the spirit of Guidance, but we can also not listen. Then we may be successful or not according as we are in rhythm with the conditions.

But one way of proving that one is in rhythm with the conditions is to observe the signs. Qur'an teaches that God has given us innumerable signs. In the desert the Arab can tell with a nicety that is a marvel to others who has passed, his track and when and what they have been doing, wherefrom they came and whither they go. Some Arabian trackers have been used by the governments as detectives, yet with them it has been power of observation largely.

GATHA: For instance there is a belief that if you are going to do something, if a cat crosses your way you meet with ill luck. It is easy to understand. In the first place the swift action of the cat makes a great impression upon a person; it forms a line before you, a line of action, and that line impressed upon you gives you the thought of a cross. You are intending to go straight, and your line is crossed by a horizontal action against your vertical action, which means in action one's hands nailed and feet tied. It gives the picture of the idea.

TASAWWUF: One may carry this a step further, that whether in waking life or in dreams, objects pass in front of our path, they carry lines of force in front of us against which we must struggle. A sensitive person can feel these lines. Sometimes in dreams railroad trains or motor cars or other obstacles will swiftly cross our paths; they mean that we have some obstacles to struggle against, the source of which may be in our own weaknesses or may be because of external opposition. We may meet the occasion by the repetition of the proper Wazifas. It is more important to repeat the Wazifas than to give thought to the opposition.

The color black of itself signifies the opposite of life, it indicates non-success in action, it is a color of quietude, and even if it does not cross our path, it indicates slowing down of rhythm. The cat also has been associated with darkness. And whether one believes or not, sometimes when one sees a black cat and holds a Wazifa the animal will not cross the track. It is even possible that the animal will walk by one's side and accompany one and not cross his path. This shows a turning of the forces of opposition into friendly forces.

Horizontal lines on the hands, face or features always show that one has obstacles, either that one has had to face obstacles in life which one has overcome or that there are forces standing in one's path.

GATHA: The whole mystery of omens which used to be believed by the ancient people and are now considered to be superstitions, has behind it this mystery of impression.

TASAWWUF: While we are inclined to say that the ancient people were superstitious it is also true that there are multitudes today who believe in omens. They feel there must be something in the impressions. The difference is that the ancient governments gave cognizance to these things. In ancient Rome omens were considered of greatest importance and there were men called augurs who used to make special study of them. It is said that Rome itself was once saved by its sacred geese. The Hindu people and the Chinese also had their systems, the latter of which still persists and it is used to this day and many Western people are becoming interested in it, only the government no longer pays much attention to it. The ancient Greeks had their oracles and the men who interpreted them were called “prophets.” The Japanese government is the only one which has maintained omens through the centuries.

GATHA: Naturally when a person is starting to accomplish a certain work and he happens to see beautiful flowers or fruits, that gives a promise of his desire being fulfilled, of its bearing flowers for him—the sign of success.

TASAWWUF: In the sixteenth century in Europe there were many men, now usually called Rosicrucians, who made a detailed study of the signs of nature, of the movements of birds and insects and of the significance of the various flowers. And it may be true also, that when one has been concentrating and looks up, the first thing that he spies brings a partial answer. If one can control the direction of his thoughts, well and good, but if he is successful only in the inner concentration and has abandoned the fruits of action he regards all signs as coming from God. That which is beautiful is always inspiring.

GATHA: A person going forward with this impression will certainly meet with success.

TASAWWUF: And the same is true if one hears the songs of certain birds and more than that if one gets the inspiration from them. The Hebrew mystics used to say that much depends on one’s interpretation. If one has a vision or a sign or omen and interprets it unfavorably the result will be unfavorable, but if he interprets it favorably he draws to himself the divine blessing and thus makes the success for himself.

GATHA: Whereas if a person sees burning wood, or a sack of coal, which all shows destruction—fire which burns up—a person going to do something impressed by this certainly loses.

TASAWWUF: In that case, if he be impressed, it is best to abandon that line of action, to do something else, to surrender his will in the matter. And this holds so for the dreams. We do not have to distinguish between what is seen within and what is beheld without; the significance is the same, we do not have to make any distinction. And when we have the dreams we should bear them to heart whether the signs are good or unfavorable, for many people, even with the best intentions, are intoxicated at times through self-will and liable to overlook the guidance which is ever at hand.

GATHA: There used to be a custom that when someone in a family was going out to accomplish something, no one must say any word that would hinder his success. They did not even ask the person, “Where are you going?” because even asking raises a question. The question stands before one, Why? Where? A person would become discouraged even in answering. The strength of will with

which he is going may be exhausted in answering Why and Where, and then he may not find the energy and power to accomplish what he is going to accomplish.

TASAWWUF: Every word we speak except the words of power and blessing, casts a shadow of some kind. A question shows in a sense a depression in the mental atmosphere while an affirmation shows an elevation in an atmosphere, but either depression or elevation creates an interference with the free flow of magnetism. If man is silent he might hear from God, he might be receiving the intuition and guidance which will help him most. He may be having a concentration or even his imagination may be leading him onward. Then when a question is asked it produces the sense of self and other and from that sense of self and other, doubt may arise.

Many parents unconsciously put obstacles in the paths of their children, many wives unfortunately prove to be sources of hindrances to their husbands by unwanted and unwelcome questions. Of course there are times to ask, and if one's heart feels a question should be asked, then it should be asked. But at the same time silence and faith help one with a blessing. Also if one has a plan and it has touched his heart deeply he should not mention it to anyone who might discourage him. Another person will dampen his ardor and yet not take away the desire.

God sends all of us impressions and we have a basic duty to fulfill in life. The will-power is increased in silent concentration. If we can keep in Darood we may be successful in a thousand ventures which would otherwise have proven to be failures.

GATHA: This is the inner psychology of mind, the knowledge of which makes things easy. One must not become impressed by holding different beliefs, but one must know the science, the mystery which is hidden behind all such things, which may seem small and little, but their result sometimes is most important.

TASAWWUF: This does not mean that one should become superstitious. One does not have to remember at every moment the significance of every omen or the hindrance caused by walking this way or that. If we walk as do many of the Sufis, keeping the mind thinking upon the presence of Allah and feeling the breath under the feet, we overcome all small things. All the small things are under the breath and when we ourselves are over the breath we can overcome the small things. Also when we do that we can come to learn through the breath which way to turn, which way not to turn, which way to go and what to do and also where not to go and what to avoid. We do not have to think about it at all, we can feel our way and this is the way of guidance to the small, and to the great.

*Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978
These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 9

The Influence of Time

GATHA: It has been a custom among the people in the East to start every enterprise with the waxing of the moon, in order to follow the course of nature and to join forces with the increasing power and light of the moon.

TASAWWUF: In ancient times this was a universal custom. People saw in the moon more than a symbol and they made a study of the acts which were in harmony with the waxing movement of the moon and also with the waning movement of the moon. Until recent times and even now we can read in some of the almanacs of the West when to plant certain things, also when to reap. The almanac was originally an idea from the Arabs which was connected with an occult science and when people did not have the modern equipment and did not possess the guidance. And it is significant that even now wine and cheese makers depend upon the movements of the moon and many farmers also, without knowing the reason, and when they act contrary to it there is loss yet they do not want to be called superstitious.

GATHA: The sun represents divine light, the moon represents the human heart. To join forces with the waxing of the moon is like drawing divine light and power in one's own heart to accomplish a certain thing.

TASAWWUF: Sufis know the state of expansion of heart as *bast* and the state of contraction of heart as *kabz*. The heart is always in one of these two states, like a tremendous balloon, so to speak, which inflates a little and deflates a little. The light of every heart comes from the one source and although every heart is in a certain sense different, the light through all hearts is one, and it is the light of life.

The physical sun which we see before us and which is regarded as a tremendous ball of fire may not be where it is supposed to be, or contain what some say it contains. Few ask what causes the sun to stay where it stays, move as it moves and do what it does. The present conception of the world makes life dependent upon not-life, upon death even. The mystic cannot agree with that, he says that life is derived from life, and that death is death. Therefore either the sun is a living body or it is the result of living processes, there is life behind it.

And really if we study the nature of the rays of light they may be much more than is now understood. The scientific conclusions of one day prove to be incomplete in another day. There is even a group called the Fortean Society which spends its time studying the fallacies of the scientists and they have found more in those who are astronomers or concerned with the mysteries of space than with all others. A robe of awe has covered them and there is a certain danger toward priestcraft, that they hide what disconcerts them or what would disprove their conclusions and then they utter diatribes against the astrologers and occultists only, perhaps, to discover later some correspondences between the forces of sun and moon and planet with human life.

Now the heart within the body may have something of that same force which is behind the sun, which is not the sun itself, but which is behind the sun and which the Sufis call *Ishk*, which is the universal love, gravitation, attraction, which operates on all planes.

GATHA: It is also considered lucky to rise with the sunrise, and better to begin an enterprise with the rising of the sun. This is again an indication to follow nature's tides. The sun represents divine power; therefore any spiritual action, a prayer-offering or a meditation, a devotional worship, it is more desirable to perform with the sunrise.

TASAWWUF: One can feel this who rises with the sun. Those who get up at dawn can feel the cosmic currents and they get a certain exhilaration and inspiration from them. They can feel that surge of life and one way to increase magnetism is to arise and perform the breathing exercises at some early hour. For then the atmosphere is different and one gets a greater benefit than at a later time, although no doubt one can exaggerate this also.

It has always been a Sufi custom to concentrate at an early hour especially when one is seeking a favor from God. The performance of *Sadhana* has proven more successful when one is willing to abandon sleep in order to attain the satisfaction of his desire or his ideal. The sun brings power which comes from no other source. Those who have meditated early in the morning often feel the correspondence between heart and sun, that something seems to awaken in the heart, and when that awakens it makes thought and action ever so much easier. When one feels the life and knows that it is part of the universal life, then no one can stand in the way because all must partake of that same universal life.

GATHA: However, the night vigils are performed by the seers and the knowers of truth in the midst of the night, when the old day ends and the new day begins; for that is a time of *Kemal* which offers to the soul a perfect stillness.

TASAWWUF: There is a difference in these two kinds of vigils. In the former one is concerned more with getting, and in the latter kind of vigil one may not be concerned with anything. The period of *Kemal* belongs to God and it is only a successful time for things concerned with God, it can prove destructive to mankind. The saint, the sage, the seer, the master, the prophet, who perform some hierarchical duty or assume some greater responsibility, to help humanity, to serve God, must have the mind serene. These are they who have passed the stages of concentration (*Murakkabah*) and entered contemplation (*mushahida*).

In *mushahida* one is not concerned with things at all and yet one may be even more receptive than in *Murakkabah*. There are so many people in the world anxious to get something for themselves or others, there are too few who can reach the stage when not only will they say, "Not my will but Thy will be done" but that will make the inner preparation possible to receive all from Allah, and devote all energy to Allah. Thus one might say that in the morning contemplation, one should have the concentration, one should be toward the point, in other words, go from *bast* to *kabz*, and in the nightly vigils one should shake off all the vestiges of ego, go from *kabz* to *bast*. The one who can master the stillness and the harmony both is of course the master mind, and yet the one who can become totally tranquil may receive so easily day or night that he will not have to perfect special concentrations any longer, he will be the master of the science.

GATHA: When the sun is at the zenith that is Kemal also, but it has not the quiet at midnight; and therefore it is considered by those who know things inauspicious for taking up any enterprise.

TASAWWUF: You will hardly find any religious references to the noonday sun. When Christ was in the Garden at Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives, he prayed at night. Mohammed used to go up on Mount Hira at night, and he had his most famous journey to the heavens in the night. Moses always went up onto the mountain after sundown. When the dawn came the prophet would give his blessing to the people, but the day was for work, the night for prayer.

All through the Hebrew Kabbalah we find reference to the use of the period between midnight and dawn as the most auspicious for spiritual things. Those people might sleep between sundown and midnight or even in the day, but the quiet of the night was considered as the time, the only suitable time, for the most serious spiritual studies.

This does not mean that we should all of a sudden change all our customs and habits to those people of yesterday, but we would be very foolish if we could not take advantage of their knowledge and wisdom. We have many duties to do and Sufism is not monasticism or asceticism. But we can learn to make the best use of each part of the day and night, avoiding the physical activity during the night and reserving the period of meditation so that we shall have no excuse to become lazy.

GATHA: As time has influence upon weather, upon the sea, upon trees and plants, so it has a subtle influence upon living creatures.

TASAWWUF: We know the value of time in soothing certain ailments, and that with its passing the unfavorable impressions may be wiped away. But here time is considered in a rhythmic sense, in the sense of days and weeks and seasons and periods and cycles. Of course time is always open, there is no closed cycle, it does not return to itself. But we can watch and mark the rhythms and we can take full advantage of them for every purpose of life. And all that is included in the term "Astrology" is based upon these principles.

GATHA: Man appears to be most independent of the influences and yet man is most under the influence of time; not only his body and mind, but with all his affairs of life.

TASAWWUF: Man has the will-power which enables him to avoid the pressure of circumstance. Animals have no way of escaping the seasons and the storms, but must adjust themselves as well as they may. Man has invented many means of avoiding disaster, and yet he has to be on guard—floods, earthquakes, tidal waves, and storms and all things peril him. And besides that in both his internal and external life he can harmonize or conflict with the rhythms of the conditions.

GATHA: Verily the one who knows the influence of time knows the secret of life.

TASAWWUF: Rassoul King Solomon said, "There is a time for all things," meaning there is a rhythm for all things and when we have that rhythm time can overcome all opposition.

*Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978
These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*

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.

Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 10

Planetary Influences

GATHA: Belief in planetary influences has been maintained in all ages by man. However many times a person may have been disappointed in finding truth in the horoscope, yet no one can be thoughtful and deny the fact of the influence that the planets have upon people's lives.

TASAWWUF: In the first place the very persistence of belief in the influence despite the constant use of logic that is all superstition shows that there must be a deep intuition within men's hearts that there is some connection between the planets and their career—in other words between the life without and the life within. We do not really know what the planets are. We see certain specks of light in the sky and we say that they are planets and that they are drawn by the sun through the force of gravitation yet strictly speaking we do not know what this gravitation is.

Sufis say that the gravitation is the same as *Ishk*, the universal attraction which is also life, that life and love and attraction are not so different, although in the sphere of thought they are different and we use different words for them. There is an esoteric view that there are three aspects of light and each aspect of light appears on a different plane, and the mind world is derived in a certain way from the heart world, also from the interplay of the heart world and the physical world, and that the physical world is derived from the mental world, through the outer projection of this world. But the physical plane is composed of the densest particles in the cosmos, and there is no plane more dense than the physical plane.

Now thought to be complete must have action and yet there is a central power behind thought which is the sun of intelligence, and this also has its correspondence in the world of action. Thus this sun of intelligence becomes objectified as the physical sun. This physical sun not only derives its power and light from within, it draws back to itself some of the force manifested in the physical world. In other words not only does sun feed earth in a certain sense, but earth feeds sun.

Those who study concentration learn that through constant effort and repetition certain lines, certain rhythms are set up in the mind world and the atoms of the mind world are drawn along those tracks. The deeper the tracks and the stronger the atomic activity, the more probable the physical result of the mental effort. But there are certain rhythms in the mind world which are based upon universal principles and these rhythms are reflected outwardly into the physical sphere. These are the lines or forces of attraction, and under the influence of gravitation those bodies which we call planets are drawn thereto. The rhythms of these planets are based upon mental rhythms but they can be measured in relation to earthly time. The same principles also affect the life of man and in the planetary movements we have measures of influence, and by watching the stars we can discover not so much the influences of the objective stars upon man as the influence of the inner being of those stars upon the life of man.

GATHA: It is possible that every method is not a correct method of making a horoscope, every book on astrology is not the right book, and every astrologer is not a prophet.

TASAWWUF: There is no question that many people venture into the field of astrology, some of them being frauds or charlatans. They see an easy opportunity for making money by duping people. They seek fame or fantasy and they love complexity, they attract the people who like the complex and mysterious and the more they draw some people into the complex and mysterious the greater the enjoyment on both sides. The intellectual people see this and some of them are repelled although we can see year by year, even month by month and week by week, despite all attacks that more people are becoming interested in astrology because somehow they feel that there is something there behind the false coverings.

GATHA: Nevertheless there is as much truth in the influence of the planets upon the lives of men as there is truth in the effects of drugs upon one's physical body.

TASAWWUF: Of course we can measure the effects of drugs more readily. But even there the direct effect of the drug is largely upon the mind, and through the mind the influence is exerted over the body. So the influence of the planetary rhythms is basically mental and the principles involved in the various planets and in the twelve houses of the zodiac are the vibrational and atomic influences from the mind-world. And if we study astronomy closely we find occasions where even the material scientists, beginning with the weather, are finding some correspondences, some human relationships in their almost transcendental science.

GATHA: The whole cosmic system is based upon a certain rhythm, a rhythm which relates planets, multitudes and individuals, and manifests as a hidden law governing the action of the whole creation and yet silent and covered.

TASAWWUF: We can study this from two views. One is that there have been and there still are astrologers who have been able, by casting horoscopes, to tell much of the basic character of man, his past, present and future and the influences in his life. Despite all attacks upon astrology this is still done and the astrologers have been far more successful in delineating human nature than have the astronomers. This point is always overlooked by those who oppose astrology. And strictly speaking they can no more stop astrology than they can stop the planets themselves.

It therefore happens that so long as even a few persons are successful in this, the fair-minded will be attracted, those without prejudice will have to assent there must something there even though they do not know what it is. Science does not explain everything. There are physicians who are called scientists, who use methods based on custom and tradition, who want to puncture the skin on every occasion and introduce strange serums and antitoxins into the body, who insist upon all sorts of drugs, who delight in cutting out organs which to them have no use, and these people are accepted by those in authority despite endless failures. But in the end the truth will win, and before many generations have passed it may be that the people will regard medicine as superstition and astrology as science.

Both scientists and philosophers have given much thought upon the relationship between mind and matter. Whether they accept the dualistic or monistic view of the cosmos, they have failed to establish the process which tells how sensation is turned into thought, how the mind and imagination work, what they are, where they are and all about them. A keen observer would continue his studies by investigating all human knowledge which might throw any light upon this subject of the relationship between mind and matter and try to discover if there was anything in the material world which could measure the mental tendencies.

The astrologers find objectively in the heavens the movements of planets as being based upon mental rhythms and the signs of the zodiac as establishment of certain aspects of mental magnetism, forces which pull the mind this way and that, accordingly as the will of man operates in one or the other of them. There are, however, two aspects of it, that the ordinary man cannot control either his houses or his planets and must accept the rhythms of the conditions as they are and be under their influence. The wise man does not avoid these rhythms so much as control them. He can control them by observation, following the dictum of Rassoul King Solomon, "There is time (rhythm) for all things," or he can by mastery of breath establish the zodiacal background which he needs, within his own being.

But whether he is subject to the law or whether he controls the law, the same persists, that the forces move in regular channels and exert certain influences from the world within upon the world without.

GATHA: There are two aspects that constitute an individual: spiritual and material. The spiritual aspect remains untouched, while the material aspect is moved and turned by conditions brought about by planetary influences.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, the ordinary man is under Nufsaniat or Karma, cannot avoid the external influences even though he denies their existence. Denial of their existence has no more effect than denial of the rain will keep him dry during a storm, or denial of the winter will keep him from getting cold. But the spiritual man has within his possession the ability to refine his breath and his consciousness to the degree that he can rise above the grades where these influences determine his career. He can make the wisest use of them to determine his course and his time, or he can reach the plane of the absolute—and this is possible for the advanced souls—where neither will there be any planetary influences nor will any external influences affect him much.

GATHA: The spiritual aspect, which remains untouched in every man, is as a witness in his life, a soul from within who knows not what it itself is, who identifies itself with this other aspect and therefore takes as a reality that which it witnesses, that which goes on before it as a course of life.

TASAWWUF: We can call this the Zat of man, Zat-i-Adam, or we can speak of it as ruh, of soul, being a ray, so to speak, of the Universal God. This ruh has covered itself with garments, taken on certain tunings, placed itself under certain rhythms. Then it watches the result of what it has done and comes to identify itself with what goes on. It is as if the foreman of a factory who had complete charge over all the electricity and machinery, over the power operations and over the manufacturing and assembling operations, became so interested in what was going on that he would not leave the factory, he would identify the life of the factory with his own life and so come to lose all sense of freedom or individuality.

There have been souls on earth who have done that. There have been people who have been so wound up with their work that when they are retired or discharged later in life, they die, they cannot reestablish themselves and they have never learned the meaning of repose. In a certain sense this is true of every soul that has identified itself with the covers it has put on.

GATHA: When once this real aspect of man's being is awakened, then it begins to see that it has a voice in the matter too, and then it sees that it must fight for its rights, in order to gain liberty. It therefore fights with its own kingdom, which is the other aspect of man's being which it so long wit-

nessed; and so it gains that strength which enables it in the long run to battle with outer conditions caused by planetary influences.

TASAWWUF: Thus the whole of man's life is not under the zodiacal influence. The very word zodiac means the animal aspect of things; it is only the karma of man which is under these influences. No intelligent astrologer has ever said that the influence was inexorable, no awakened occultist has ever declared that man is bound upon the wheel, that everything he does may be measured. The very word "Maya" means that which is measurable.

There are in man three principles, one of which is the effect of nature, and another his self-will and the third and highest, the divine being within himself which is his real being. Sufis call these principles Jadar, Kadar, and Kaza. Spiritual training enables the last to manifest and dominate the other two, Jadar and Kadar which are waged in all but eternal conflict, and which dominate the lives of nearly everybody. But the manifestation of Kaza destroys them only in the sense that light destroys shadow, they are evident only in the absence of greater light.

When man comes to the realization of his true being it will then be even as the Bible teaches, that he can cause the sun and the moon to stand still because the sun and the moon within himself are more real than the sun and moon in the heavens, and the one that can control that sun and that moon need never fear any more from the external influences, he can avoid all the undesirable tendencies and at the same time he can take full advantage of all the favorable aspects. This is mastery.

GATHA: It might take one a lifetime to combat, and yet it would be short to gain the mastery which belongs to the soul.

TASAWWUF: Yes, even if we started early in life, it may require all of the life to awaken the heart to that degree that we can feel within ourselves those basic influences which are themselves behind the movements of the planets and the magnetism of the zodiac. All those other forces are essentially mental and individual. When one is no longer caught by individuality, when one is no longer restrained in mental efforts, when the faculty of insight is awakened, then there is a new heavens and a new earth, the product of one's very being. Thus comes resurrection through self-sacrifice without even dissolution of the body of flesh.

*Copyright Sufi Ruhaniat International 1978
These materials are given for individual study by mureeds
and are not intended to be shared outside the circle except by permission.*