



Gatha with Commentary

## Naqshibandi: Symbology

Series I

*of*

Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan

*by*

Murshid Samuel L. Lewis  
(Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti)

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SRI Secretariat  
PO Box 51118  
Eugene OR 97405  
USA

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

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Series I: Number 1

### **An Ocean in a Drop**

GATHA: The wise have given lessons to the world in different forms suited to the evolution of the people at a particular time. And the first and most original form of education that the wise gave to the world has been symbolical.

TASAWWUF: It is said that the first Sufi was Adam, the first man, that he was not only the first man but also the Guide to the original persons whose descendants constitute humanity. We can see this in the history of writing, that before there were letters there were pictographs and these pictographs were sometimes direct forms of art-representations and sometimes symbolical.

The first written languages also seem to have been derived from pictographs or from nature, and by modifying the forms we have glyphs, alphabets and monographic writings. This subject has been discussed by Fabre D'Olivet in his *Origins of the Hebrew Alphabet*. There he shows that written forms sometimes became more and more contracted in meaning, sometimes more and more expansive; or sometimes, after the construction of alphabets, words were created with diverse meanings.

The basic writings of the Chinese and the Egyptians particularly had to be understood intuitively. Indeed before the intellect was developed the intuitional side of man's nature was not covered, so communication was comparatively easy. Pictographs were easily understood, ideographs were in a sense esoteric, and finally when alphabets were substituted the intellectual or manasic side of man's nature was developed.

GATHA: This method of teaching has been valued in all ages and will always have its importance. That is not beauty, which is not veiled. In the veiling and unveiling of beauty is the purpose of life.

TASAWWUF: *Gayan* teaches: "In beauty is the secret of divinity." It must not be supposed that the intellectual development is the goal of mankind. True, the word man means mental or thinking being.

There is a story in Qur'an that Iblis would not bow before mankind, because man is full of sinfulness. But man was able to demonstrate knowledge of names and forms, i.e., of God's creation. And the myth is that God created the world and produced man so He could know and understand His own creation.

All peoples have not developed equally in mind, but some retain an understanding of the language of nature, so to speak. This is called instinct when it operates subconsciously, and insight or intuition when it operates consciously or superconsciously.

Much of the earlier art works which have been preserved for centuries show a high development in the understanding of nature and depicting it through human creations, not only in written forms, but in art, in architecture, in music, poetry, and other forms.

GATHA: Beauty is that which is always out of reach. You see it and you do not see it, you touch it, and you cannot touch it. It is seen and yet veiled, it is known and yet unknown. And therefore words are often inadequate to express the beauty of truth. Therefore symbolism is adopted by the wise.

TASAWWUF: If we look at the oldest art works in existence, as the cave-paintings of southern France, we can see appreciations of point, line and curve and their use in recording what is seen or felt. But if we visit even less developed people we find that they do not always think analytically, that analysis is either beyond their understanding or useless. Yet such people have feeling and could communicate this feeling.

GATHA: The religions of the old Egyptians, of the ancient Greeks, of the Hindus and of the Parsis all have symbols which express the essential truth hidden under a religion.

TASAWWUF: We find this especially in Egypt which seems to have the oldest records. We are now finding these records are very ancient. Whenever a principle was discovered and understood it was deified. Egyptians believed in a single Universal God Who however manifested under a multitude of names and forms and abstract principles which not being easily understood, were presented as gods and goddesses to be worshipped in rituals rather than explained. Or they could be centers of concentration and by concentrating on the deity one would develop in oneself the characteristics corresponding thereto. In this way man took on divine attributes because all attributes and faculties were ascribed to some god or goddess.

Sitting before an idol, keeping quiet, one assimilated divinity; this might be called the esoteric aspect of religion. The exoteric aspect of religion was represented through rituals, through celebrations, through ceremonies.

The development of religion came into forms akin to Astrology where the gods and goddesses were assimilated to the days of the week, each with particularizing functions and purposes. This subject is also studied by mureeds. Each day has qualities and the perfection in these qualities came from the meditations performed on these days as such; or in worship dedicated to a divinity thereon.

But now mankind has developed to the worship of the One Supreme God Who is all-in-all and any day, or hour, or minute can be used to the same supreme purpose.

GATHA: There is symbolism in Christianity and in all the ancient religions of the world.

TASAWWUF: Symbolism appears in Christianity which originally used the Fish and later the Cross. Buddhism originally used the Lotus and then the human figure. The Christian symbols are presented in The Unity of Religious Ideals and several of these have been made into special studies.

Sufism has preserved many elements of the ancient times and it may present them differently because Sufism is not only based on monotheism, but says, "God Alone exists."

GATHA: Man has often rebelled against symbolism. But this is natural, man has always revolted against things he cannot understand. There has been a wave of opposition to symbolism in both parts of the world, East and the West. It came to the East in the period of Islam, and in the West it echoed in the Reformation.

TASAWWUF: No doubt Islam began as a heart-movement. We can learn this from the life and institutions of the Prophet and can feel it while studying Qur'an. It was necessary to purge superstition, idolatry and low morality. For often symbolism, degenerating into ritual, has culminated in the degrading of morality. Ritualists only too often substitute ceremonies for proper human behavior. Thus it is said that in Europe and America man sins against man and goes to God for repentance; and in the Pacific Islands man may sin against God and go to man for repentance. There is a difference between deficiency in observance of rituals and in behavior toward one's fellows.

The Protestant Reformation came after the revival of learning. Rites and ceremonies had become less effective in communication. Traditions had lost their meanings or importance.

The Kabbalistic interpretation of the Scriptures come in consideration of four grades of interpretation. First the literal is concerned, that words mean what they propose and writing is considered as valid. But then comes the poetical expression that words have a broad meaning. And at the next stage everything is seen symbolically.

All of these may be regarded as various grades of exotericism. But then the Scriptures become human experience and so we find a stage or state beyond symbolism. But because there is such a stage, and it is felt intuitively, the ignorant wish to abolish the symbols as of no value; while the wise see their values but also the limitations therein. When man has the inner experiences he may create his own symbols, for the moment or for the age. This is what is done in Zen Buddhism.

GATHA: No doubt when the sacred symbols are made as patents by the religious people who wish to monopolize the whole truth, then it gives rise to that tendency in human nature which is always ready to accept things or reject them.

TASAWWUF: We find this both in the East and in the West. Often the holiness is taken and given to the symbol. Thus the psychologist Carl Jung has overemphasized the importance of the swastika and the mandala far more than one finds them in human institutions. And the whole purport of this approach is that the symbol becomes a divinized end, and practically useless. People who look askance at sun worship or moon worship accept without question created myths of this kind; or else they give values to certain sacred phrases without any idea of how and why these phrases were originally used. It is like worshipping a key instead of the palace which can be opened by the use of the key.

GATHA: However, one can say without exaggeration that symbology has always served to keep the ancient wisdom intact for ages. It is symbology that can prove today the saying of Solomon, "There is nothing new under the sun."

TASAWWUF: There are some schools which seem to have penetrated symbols and their meaning. The controversial Thor Heyerdahl has claimed that by understanding symbols he has restored meaning to the pictographs, or writing of Easter Island. Whether this is actually so in this particular case, many other writers have made similar claims; and by a study of symbols we can often determine the meanings or intents of ancient peoples. For the symbols are universal in their meaning and people with the same ideals will tend to use the same symbols.

GATHA: There are many thoughts relating to human nature, to the nature of life, relating to God and His many attributes, and relating to the path toward the goal, that are expressed in symbolism.

TASAWWUF: We have this in several forms. In the use of the symbols in Murakkabah or Concentration one is first concerned with the bare form; later with the meaning but often the form conveys the meaning. Or one can find the form as a symbol or idol which is supposed to awaken in the devotee some quality, usually a divine quality, hidden in his soul but not yet brought to the surface.

Such practices eliminate the use (or misuse) of mind and intellect which are the stumbling blocks to inner awakening.

GATHA: To a person who sees only the surface of life the symbols mean nothing; the secret of symbols is revealed to souls who see through life; whose glance penetrates through objects.

TASAWWUF: The development of Glance is also a discipline on the spiritual path. The meditative attunement also makes the consciousness receptive to all things. We say: “Thy Light is in all forms,” and by meditative concentration we become attuned to this Light and the meaning becomes unveiled.

The term “souls who see through life” is to be distinguished from the sense-organ or mind. Sufi students learn from the beginning that “it is the soul that sees.” Therefore a concentration is not only a discipline and exercise, it is also a devotion by which the soul, freed from the veils of form, functions outwardly. The real Spiritual Clairvoyance comes when one sees the divine light everywhere and in every thing.

GATHA: Verily, before the seer the things of the world open themselves; and it is in the uncovering of things in which is hidden beauty. There is a great joy in understanding, especially things that express nothing to everybody. It requires intuition, and even something deeper than intuition—insight—to read symbols.

TASAWWUF: The development of Insight (Kashf) is one of the subjects for spiritual development. Actually all of us have this faculty in childhood but it becomes covered by culture, by social institutions, by education, by customs. The practice of meditative devotion enables man to free himself of these covers. This is the negative side. The positive side is developed by the use of the awakened faculties.

GATHA: To the one to whom the symbols speak of their nature and of their secret, each symbol is a living manuscript in itself. Symbolism is the best way of learning the mystery of life and the best way of leaving behind ideas which will keep for ages after the teacher has passed.

TASAWWUF: Each of these is exemplified in the Symbols presented in the lessons. No doubt these are restricted in number but once the understanding is awakened and the Insight used, one may apply this method to all the symbols of all faiths.

No doubt some of these are no longer in use, but whether we turn to the Egyptians, Hindus, Greeks, Tibetans or any people the same science-art is needed. Otherwise there will be the piling up of intellect which is unable to comprehend inferred meanings.

We may say that the Cross represents Christianity and the Crescent Islam, but there is much more in each than that.

GATHA: It is speaking without speaking, it is writing without writing. The symbol may be said to be an ocean in a drop.

TASAWWUF: It is with this spirit that Symbology is to be studied. The symbols which include the most simple geometric lines and forms have connotations of depth. Also by use of the lines and forms the psychic faculties are awakened in man, and then the magnetic forces—and this without any egocentric endeavor.

In other words, it is vital practice which awakens in man the hidden powers and faculties which are his.

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Series I: Number 2

### **The Symbol of the Sun**

GATHA: Light has the greatest attraction for the human soul.

TASAWWUF: *The Bowl of Saki* says: “There is a light within every soul; it only needs the clouds that overshadow it to be broken for it to shine forth. (July 19)” *Gayān* teaches: “Out of space arose light, and by that light space became illuminated.” Qur’an declares: “O Mankind! Verily there hath come to you a convincing proof from your Lord: for We have sent unto you a light that is manifest.” (Sura IV, 17)

Light is posited in all Scriptures and today many scientists see that light is fundamental. This has not only become evident in the controversies and doctrines associated with the noted Einstein, but also in the various forms of the ultra-microscope light used as a source of measurements. The ancients used to argue whether the universe was made out of water or air or fire, but they came closer when they posited the ether or Akasha.

RYAZAT: The Wazifa, either in the form of “Allah Nuri” or “Ya Nuri” posits the light and enables one to become aware of it. Salat says: “Thy light is in all forms.” In the concentrations on Salat the devotee learns to actualize the words, so they become part of his active consciousness.

There is also the meditation on light so that one becomes aware of the light which is in, and through, and around one’s being.

GATHA: Man loves it in the fire and in things that are bright and shining, and that is why he considers gold and jewels as precious. The cosmos has a greater attraction for him than the earth, because of its light.

TASAWWUF: We can see this in the study of the original words for “fire” and “light” and “gold” and “copper” in many languages. The working of metals was probably first taught to mankind by a Divine Messenger in some prehistoric time, for the working of gold would be revolutionary in a stone age; and the development of copper smelting would be a remarkable achievement in an age where only gold has been worked.

Many of the arguments used for the adoption of a gold standard have no solid logic in the end excepting that yellow and light are attractive and man has placed great value on them. There is nothing wrong, only it is natural rather than logical. There is much beauty in gold and some in copper and also in their derivatives used in various arts.

When we wish to use a symbol to represent Light or the Sun, we use pigments or even gold-foil for this purpose.

GATHA: As man evolves he naturally ceases to look down on the earth, but looks up to the heavens. The most attractive object that he sees is the sun in the heavens, the sun which is without any support and is more luminous than anything else in the heavens. Therefore, as man is attracted to beauty and surrenders to beauty, he bowed to the sun, as being the greatest beauty in heaven, and man took the sun as nature's symbol of God.

TASAWWUF: This is found to be true in the study of many folk-religions, both ancient and persisting. There is something deeper than reason behind it; the heart is also attracted both in the aesthetic and the devotional senses.

RYAZAT: The sun-concentration is used to awaken the Sun-qualities in man such as the development of the positive nature and light, and the destruction of sloth. Persons concentrating on the sun will overcome lethargy and also develop warmth in their hearts.

Thus one obtains the expression of power and response to beauty, as *Gayan* says: "The same light which is fire on earth and the sun in the sky, is God in Heaven." Qur'an teaches: "God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth." ("Sura" XXIV, 35)

GATHA: This symbol he pictured in different forms. In Persia, China, Japan, India, Egypt, whenever God was pictured it was in the form of the sun.

TASAWWUF: The God in ancient Persia was Ahura which meant "manifest light." The Japanese emperors are regarded as descended from a sun-goddess. Sun worship continued as a cult in India and as a religion in the Islands of the Pacific. And when Amen-hotep was King of Egypt he changed his name to "Akhnaton" and attempted to introduce a monotheistic sun-worship. The same root was found in Phoenicia as "Adonis" which also meant Love-god. And the Hebrew prayers call God "Adonai," which really means solar-lord.

GATHA: In all ages man has pictured his Prophet, Master, Saviour, with a sun around his head.

TASAWWUF: This is both true and symbolic. There is no question but that there are radiations around the head which, in a sense, is the spiritual part of the body. These radiations form an aura for the subtle body and an aureole for the spiritual body. These radiations can be both felt and seen.

It is sometimes true for the Messengers of God, and also for advanced souls, that the body becomes a vehicle of pure light. Of Mohammed it has been said that his body cast no shadow in the noon-day sun. And after everybody saw Jesus on Palm Sunday nobody could see him a few days later for he was emanating Light and one had to penetrate that Light to see the physical body.

RYAZAT:

- A. **Concentration** on the Head as a vehicle of pure light. This can be done from the Ajna center in the forehead; it can also be done by the center at the top of the head called the "Thousand-Petalled Lotus." This is harder; besides this Center is often opened by divine Grace.
- B. The concentrations of Salat, or from Salat can use each of the Messengers or God, and either picture them with light-radiations from the head; or if the concentrations are successful the devotee will see this light without any difficulty. Indeed that is one way to distinguish the true Prophets and Messengers, and one sees them in light and with light; whereas the false presentations give forms but not light. Even the eyes of the false presentations do not emanate light.

GATHA: In ancient Persia there used to be a gold disk behind the head of the king, picturing him as the sun, and they used to call this disk **Zardash**. The name Zarathustra has the same origin; the word simply meant the gold disk.

TASAWWUF: In ancient times there was some uncertainty about distinguishing God-ship from King-ship. We can still find it in the prayers of the Hebrew religion. Besides there were what have been called “initiate kinds” that either spiritual men became rulers or the rulers were compelled to undergo spiritual disciplines and purifications. The disk might be a symbol of orthodoxy and authority, but when realized souls became rulers, it was a reality.

This seems to have been particularly true of Egypt, ancient Egypt.

GATHA: In Hindu temples and Buddhist temples around the image of different Avatars there is this sign of the sun, and this symbol was used both in the East and in the West in turbans and hats. There are now people in India who put on their turbans a brass band which represents the sun.

TASAWWUF: The head, like the sun, has the shape of a sphere. Each, in its way, represents light. From this we have the divine name Ahura Mazda, the Light Infinite. The same came into Buddhism as the Amida or Amitabha, the measureless, or as Vairochana. All these represent Universal Light.

RYAZAT: We may use a brass circle or a painted circle in the Sun-concentration. When there is feeling, this develops positiveness and light and energy.

GATHA: A deeper study of the sun suggests the four directions of lines that are formed around the sun. It is this sign that is the origin of the symbol of the cross. The ancient traditions prove that the idea of the cross existed in the East long before the coming of Christ, especially among the Brahmins. It is from this sign that the two sacred arms were made, **Chakra** and **Trishul**.

TASAWWUF: We see something like this in the Crux Ansata, the sacred symbol of ancient Egypt, which also depicted immortality and godliness. In Sufism it is not necessary to use this symbol, as with the acceptance of the Universal God with all attributes, the devotee can develop or awaken this part of his hidden personality.

The swastika of India is another form. When we attach too much emotionalism to such symbols we are limited to the symbol itself; when we practice the concentrations we awaken in ourselves those qualities. But while the Sun is a symbol of self-expression, the Cross is a symbol of self-renunciation.

GATHA: Islam, the religion which allows no symbolism, has in the building of the mosque the same symbolism of the sun. Whether the name of the sun be written in Persian or in Arabic, it makes the form of the mosque.

TASAWWUF: Islam has, however, used the crescent moon which stands for reception and receptivity. Unfortunately adherence to empty symbolism does not always bring about the realization which is necessary for fulfillment. The empty mind may be filled, and as we say in Salat: “The light filleth the crescent moon.” The concentrations of Salat help one toward the fulfillment of self and thus to realization.

Even the idea of the mosque-formation was impressed on devotees through their practices and the inspirations which followed.

GATHA: Man, as is his nature, has blamed the sun worshippers and mocked at them, but he has never been able to uproot the charm, the attraction for human souls held by the sun.

TASAWWUF: Every faith seems a compendium of superstitions to followers of other faiths. However, contemporary science, in the area of Anthropology, recognized that each people derives its religion from its environment. Pastoral and agricultural people, especially, recognize their dependence upon the sun. No doubt Arab nomads of the desert felt otherwise, and when idolatry was displaced, sought a unity beyond name and form.

RYAZAT: What has to be learned is that only by actual experience does one really comprehend the symbol. Therefore the Sun symbol is used to develop creativity, positiveness, magnetism, self-expression and all such qualities. Those who are negative, timid, fearful should practice this form of Murakkabah (Concentration) until the heart is awakened, and thus the mind. Artists require it whenever inspiration falters. Also men who are deficient in masculinity.

It is never necessary to correct people dualistically. It is wise to awaken hidden qualities and faculties which are buried deep within them.

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Series I: Number 3

### **The Symbol of the Cross**

GATHA: The symbol of the Cross has many significations. It is said in the Bible, first was the word and then came light and then the world was created; and as the light is expressed in the form of the cross so every form shows in it the original sign.

TASAWWUF: This subject is continued in Gatha 8, on the “Symbology of Lines.” Here we consider the Vertical and Horizontal Line. This subject was also presented in the previous lesson.

RYAZAT: First concentration is on the Cross as form, to look at it, hold the image, close the eyes and hold the image. But a symbol is not dead, it is living and the more proficiency in Concentration the more will the Light manifest, and as the Light manifests, so the devotee benefits.

GATHA: Every artist knows the value of the vertical line and the horizontal line ...

TASAWWUF: We see how these lines are used in the measurement of space, and also as we approach Art from a scientific point of view, in the applications of different forms of perspective. This subject is also discussed in “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.”

RYAZAT: Those who are artists should practice drawing of vertical lines, up-down and later down-up and thus learn the differentiations in psychic forms involved. This may be done, may have to be done. Also in the drawing of lines from the left to the right and from the right to the left many times.

This can be done with a head motion. Visualize the line being drawn up-down with a movement of the head; then down-up with a movement of the heart; then left-right and then also right-left. This should be done with careful devotion. And if one can feel the neck-vein, also to use it in these movements.

GATHA: ... which form the skeleton of every form. This is proved by the teaching of the Qur’an, where it is said that God created the world from His own light. The cross is the figure that fits to every form everywhere. Morally the cross signifies pain or torture. That means that in every activity of life, which may be pictured as a perpendicular line, there come hindrances, which the horizontal line represents. This shows the picture of life, and that, as it is said, man proposes and God disposes.

TASAWWUF: We can see this in the lines of the hands, that there are horizontal lines which are called “obstacle lines.” Also in the forehead, we see the horizontal lines which show the afflictions which life has brought us from the outside; but the vertical lines, whether in the frown or otherwise, are the obstacles which we produce out of our own egos.

RYAZAT: Concentrate on the Cross and place it in the center of the Heart, or concentrate on the Heart and identify it with the Cross. No doubt this will arouse sensitivity to suffering. Then as one eases one’s breath with Fikr or other practices one can heal one’s own self, and after that help others.

GATHA: Somebody asked the great Master Ali what made him believe in God, Who is beyond human comprehension. Ali said, "I believe in God, therefore that I see that when I alone wish, things are not accomplished." According to the metaphysical point of view this show the picture of limitation in life.

TASAWWUF: There are many people who pray often and yet their prayers are not granted. Sometimes multitudes pray and there are great official gatherings and still they do not attain. This is because man has separated himself from God. When man effaces himself, this separation disappears; he removes the obstacle from the granting of prayers, this means fana, self-effacement or effacement. That is what Ali meant, that by himself he could accomplish nothing. To him life was "inshallah," if it be the will of God. If we offered our prayers with inshallah we should find many are granted because it would no longer be a self-request. God may refuse anybody, God does not refuse Himself.

RYAZAT: The prayers of Mohammed and also those of Sufis generally are concerned with the Praise of Deity, not with the seeking. There are prayers called **Dowa** in which requests are made, but there must be surrender, the feeling of inshallah. With devotion and humility, holding fast to inshallah, one will find many prayers will be granted; or better, one will get the satisfaction even without praying.

GATHA: The symbol of the cross in its connection with the life of Christ not only relates to the crucifixion of the Master but signifies the crucifixion that one has to meet with by possessing the truth.

TASAWWUF: The mystic sees crucifixion as an eternal, ever-recurrent act or fact, not something unique. Mohammed has taught that Jesus was not actually placed on the cross until death. They said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the Apostle of God' —but they killed him not, nor crucified him." In explaining this A. Yusuf Ali says (note 663, on Sura IV, verse 157): "Some of the early Christian sects did not believe that Christ was killed on the Cross. The Basilideans believed that someone else was substituted for him. The Docetae held that Christ never had a real physical or natural body, and that his crucifixion was only apparent, not real. The Marcionite Gospel (about 138 A.D.) denied that Jesus was born, and merely said that he appeared in human form. The Gospel of St. Barnabus supported the theory of substitution on the cross. The Qur'anic teaching is that Christ was not crucified nor killed by the Jews, notwithstanding certain apparent circumstances which produced that illusion in the minds of some of his enemies." There is no real evidence to the contrary of Holy Qur'an and this commentary.

Every great soul passes through the states and stages of fana, effacement, of which fana-fi-Sheikh, fana-fi-Rassoul and fana-fi-Lillah are most noted.

RYAZAT: There is a practice of apprentices to certain churches that they must not merely meditate upon but go into real concentration on Crucifixion until it is like a realization. This may be a practice and it may also be a Grace, for after the crucifixion (fana) comes the resurrection (baqa).

GATHA: The idea of the Hindu philosophy is that the life in the world is an illusion and therefore every experience in this life and knowledge in this life are also illusions. The Sanskrit word for this illusion is **Maya**; it is also called **Mithya** from which the word Myth comes.

TASAWWUF: It is not that this life is non-existent, only we do not see it clearly. Reason cannot touch it. Maya means that which is measurable; in other words, finite, transitory. It does not mean unreal.

By the concentration on the Cross we begin to distinguish the abiding, the real, from that which is transitory.

GATHA: When the soul begins to see the truth it is, so to say, born again, and to this soul all that appears true to an average person appears false, and what seems truth to this soul is nothing to an average person. All that seems to an average person important and precious in life has no value nor importance for this soul, and what seems to this soul important and valuable has no importance nor value for an average person. Therefore such a one naturally hides himself in a crowd which lives in a world quite different from that in which he lives.

TASAWWUF: The spiritual rebirth or resurrection or *baqa* comes after the self-effacement. When the *nufs* is trampled upon, God manifests. But this is not words; words have nothing to do with it; it consists of processes, experiences. One then gets what is called “the mountain view.” One sees universally; one also sees from the point of view of another. One who calls himself a Sufi and does not see from the point of view of others as well as of himself is deluded.

GATHA: Imagine living in a world where nobody uses your language. Yet he can live in the world for he knows its language. And yet to him the life in the world is as unprofitable as to a grown-up person the world of children playing with their toys.

TASAWWUF: This is the difference between the universal outlook and the particular outlook. It is the substance of the Bayat ceremony and the whole book, *The Way of Illumination*. No doubt this book has some value as literature and philosophy but its essence is to awaken the reality in man and awaken man to reality. The same applies even more to *The Inner Life*. False pretenders can not avow that they have experienced the stages presented in this work.

GATHA: A human being who has realized the truth is subject to all pains and torture in the same way as all other persons, except that he is capable of bearing them better than the others.

TASAWWUF: A. Yusuf Ali translates Sura XCIV: “Have We not expanded thee thy breast? And removed from thee thy burden which did gall thy back? And raised high the esteem in which thou art held? So, verily with every difficulty there is relief. Therefore when thou art free (from thine immediate task), still labor hard, and to thy Lord turn (all) thine attention.”

This Sura explains the position of every real devotee. It is truth that will ultimately deliver man and the Divine Grace which is bestowed. And this Grace enables the devotee to bear all burdens.

GATHA: But at the same time when, while in the crowd, everyone hits the other and also receives blows, the knower of truth has to stand alone and receive them only; this is in itself a great torture.

TASAWWUF: Therefore harmlessness is practiced; as one grows, even as one practices, it is as the Grand Sheikh Sohrawardi taught, show fortitude toward enemies and harmlessness toward friends. And the accumulation of power for the self is a danger to the soul. One does not make differences between oneself and the rest of mankind.

GATHA: The life in the world is difficult for every person, rich or poor, strong or weak, but for the knower of truth it is still more difficult than for others, and that in itself is a cross. Therefore for a spiritual Messenger, the cross is a natural emblem, to explain his moral condition.

TASAWWUF: Here Hazrat Inayat Khan was not only speaking of Jesus Christ, but of all prophets and also of his work in the world; for in the end the obstacles proved too great and he was released to function in the unseen. The Cross therefore stands for harmlessness, purgation, selflessness and strength in trial.

RYAZAT: Therefore the Cross is excellent in concentration to enable the disciple to build up inner strength; to feel the Divine Presence in time of trial. It also prepares one for the concentration on the Sufi symbol, which represents baqa, or the Divine Life, whereas the Cross represents fana, or self-effacement.

GATHA: But there is a still higher significance of the cross which is understood by the mystic. This significance is what is called self-denial, and, in order to teach this moral, gentleness, humility and modesty are taught as a first lesson.

TASAWWUF: That is why these qualities are stressed in the early training of the mureeds. Many understand this intellectually; that is not enough. The intellect does not bring in the spiritual deliverance. The more one can remove his sense of self-sufficiency the more he grows in universal-becoming. When the self is mastered, one does not feel the separation from anybody.

GATHA: Self-denial is an effect of which self-effacement is the cause. This is self-denial, that a man says, "I am not, Thou art."

TASAWWUF: This is the supreme theme of all the Sufi poets. And in a sense this is the meaning of Zikr, which is to deny the ego-self and affirm Allah. But as self-effacement does not always succeed, man has to have the beloved, usually in the form of a living Teacher, but even in the form of a loving mother, kind father, innocent child and helpful friend. And after one has realized the self-effacement through love, one is ready, one has been made ready, one has made oneself ready for the higher realizations.

GATHA: O that an artist, looking at his picture says, "It is Thy work, not mine.," or that a musician, hearing his composition says, "It is Thy creation, I do not exist." That soul then is in a way crucified, and through that crucifixion resurrection comes. There is not the slightest doubt that when man has had enough pain in his life he rises to this great consciousness. But it is not necessary that only pain should be the means. It is the readiness on the part of man to efface his part of consciousness and to efface his own personality which lifts the veil that hides the spirit of God from the view of man.

TASAWWUF: Mostly enthusiastic persons and speculative metaphysicians do not experience the depth; they are lost in philosophies and words. Actually we are all the creations of Allah and every thing we do depends on the life-power and life-impetus He has given us. Otherwise we should be mere animals.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 4

### **The Two Forces**

GATHA: The Egyptian symbolism is the most ancient, and for the most part the symbolism of other nations originates from the Egyptian.

TASAWWUF: The Egyptian people collected and preserved the essence of the most ancient symbology. No doubt all people who have developed the use of pictographs have the innate feeling which comes from Insight or Intuition to display symbolically what is within their consciousness. And it is from the pictographs that the hieroglyphics developed. By hieroglyphics we mean the use of simple forms with some esoteric or mystical meaning, the display in form of realization. (This subject is also discussed in "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.")

It is from these symbols that the alphabet developed and especially in the form preserved by the Hebrew peoples from which we have the Tarot, the Kabbalah and other occult traditions and methods. These could be included in ritual or in direct disciplines, and both were available. No doubt there was a connection of these in the Mysteries which spread from Egypt to other lands.

The gods of the Egyptians were, in our sense, archetypes; but the religion of Egypt said that ultimately there was one Supreme Deity. What the Sufis call "Sifat-i-Allah," the divine attributes, were deified in the ancient Egyptian religion. And today we are gaining this knowledge.

GATHA: The Egyptian symbol of wings with a centre of circular shape and at the sides two snakes looking right and left, is known to many as Karobi. The word really means spirit or angel. This symbol represents the spirit and the power of the spirit which differs in the two directions, the right and the left.

TASAWWUF: By "spirit" we mean breath, but more than the physical and physiological operations. This knowledge was known to the ancients, and in the mysteries disciples were trained to enter into higher stages of consciousness by breath-sciences. The wings represent the breath and its power.

In Sufism one learns the significance of the breath moving in the two directions first, and then in all directions. This comes to its fullness in the consideration of the Sufi Symbol of the day.

GATHA: The heads of the two snakes show the direction of life and energy to either side, and the central circular sign represents the light itself, the spirit, and the wings on both sides represent three aspects of the power of the spirit. One aspect of the spirit is sound, another is color, and the third is external action.

TASAWWUF: Breath flows in and out of the right and left nostrils. We can study this movement and flow.

But the right and left sides of man also have significance, the right side representing Jelal and the left side Jemal—or Ida and Pingala in the Indian teachings. This also appears in the caduceus used by Hermes in the ancient Greek religion. Hermes himself was god of both breath and wisdom, and the significance of the caduceus becomes clear to those advancing in ryazat or esotericism.

RYAZAT: This concentration is good for those who need development in clarity and strength of breath; who are lacking in vitality, who show listlessness. The central circle has the same significance as the sun in Sufic symbology. The wings bring life, and those who need to develop either inward or outward sensitivity to sound, to color or to action are assigned this practice in concentration.

GATHA: This symbol suggests that the spirit is not only a light in the center, but a light directed to the right and to the left, and that it shines out according to the degree of illumination. The light of the spirit is in either direction a peculiar force.

RYAZAT: The disciple who has this symbol will find increased capacity and sensitivity to the light. He can also tell the effect by watching the direction. If a disciple needs more gentleness, sensitive response, mercy and tenderness, he is directed to increase to the left side; and if he needs more courage, strength, fortitude and such qualities, to the right side. But in the end all need balance, and out of balance comes the perfection toward illumination.

TASAWWUF: No doubt there are aspects of this concentration which overlap that of the Sun-symbol taught before, and the Sufi-symbol taught after. Before one can advance in Jelal, Jemal and Kemal he must have some understanding and after the understanding he can either direct his own efforts; or he will understand any phenomena, internal or external, better.

Symbology was presented as a subject without much regard for growth in Insight, Wisdom or latent faculties in man. It is by response to the teacher and teachings that these are developed.

GATHA: The symbol also suggests that in either direction the sound, color and activity change, according to the direction.

RYAZAT: Therefore this symbol is important to those who either have undeveloped psychic faculties or whose senses, inner and outer, are dull. No doubt these faculties and senses developed in the ancient mysteries, but now it is response to teacher and teachings, not to ritual, that is important.

While it is not always necessary to develop many faculties, yet dullness and torpor represent the tamasic side of life, which is existing without fully living.

GATHA: In the Hindu Vedas these two different forces are called **Ida** and **Pingala**. The Sufi names these two forces **Jelal** and **Jemal**. The great Yogis have experienced the mystery of life by the study of these forces. The central point is called by the Sufi **Kemal**; in the Vedas this is called **Shushumna**.

TASAWWUF: Hazrat Inayat Khan told of very ancient Indian writings not known to the western world in his time. After that his disciple, Mr. Paul Reps, went to Kashmir and uncovered some of these writings which appear in the Yoga-system included as the last part of *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*. These yoga-practices help to awaken in man all the faculties, qualities and ideals presented by this symbol. They are also excellent for awakening in man those qualities and qualifications supposed to

be aroused by what the ancients called “the Lesser Mysteries” — which are also part of the Sufi teachings today.

Sufis have many techniques for the awakening and developing of these latent faculties. The Prophet Mohammed presented as moral culture, also the perfection of Jemal, Jelal and Kemal. These can be done by separate exercise, or also in the all-inclusive symbol as is presented here. What is needed is prowess in Concentration (Murakkabah). As one succeeds in what we might regard as outer concentration, at the same time the inner faculties awaken in him.

The caduceus was used by the ancient Greeks and has been preserved by the modern medical profession but they do not know its significance. Besides it is not important to know in this sense as to develop an awakened awareness.

GATHA: It is difficult to picture the finer forms of nature.

TASAWWUF: It is not necessary to picture the finer forces of nature. It is important to awaken them and when they are awakened one will know their significance in his own life. Concentration (Murakkabah) is therefore used by Sufis to bring the inner potentialities to the surface, to awaken what is called “the sleeping giant,” — in other words, the true self.

GATHA: And as it has been the custom to picture the light in the face of the sage as the aura, so these forces are pictured as wings, and not as rays or otherwise. As the body has hands, so the hands of the spirit can only be pictured as wings. Besides this, man, who without illumination is an earthly creature, after illumination becomes a heavenly creature.

TASAWWUF: The purport here is not philosophy or metaphysical, it is spiritual awakening. No doubt there are many ways to spiritual awakening, but man is to avail himself of these ways, not to weigh their particular values.

Disciples who are earth-bound or materialistic in their attitudes are not corrected dualistically. They are given practices which require concentration on their Wings, either as in Karobi here, or the Sufi symbol or the Dove. Each of these helps man towards freedom.

This concentration also increases one’s own capacity to light within himself and to recognizing light in others. It is also very good for artists to increase their sensitivity to life around them, to nature and to their own possibilities. All forces are latent in man and need to be aroused. That is one of the purposes of the Sufi Message of the day.

GATHA: The idea of the mystic about these two forces is expressed in calling one the sun-force and the other the moon-force. The mystic pictures them as seated in the two parts of the body, the right and the left. He names also the two nostrils by the same names. By some, the right direction of this force is pictured as male, the left as the female direction.

RYAZAT: The finer forces in man are connected with the breath. No doubt the man by nature breathes more in the right nostril and the woman in the left. But one can correct many weaknesses merely by breathing exercises. The teacher, observing this, may have the pupil breathe through either the right nostril or the left or both or vary this with the purpose of bringing balance and perfection. Disciples should never try their own breathing practices. Many people have done this and then

condemned the whole science of Breath. But it is no different from any other sciences—we do not learn Chemistry, Biology, Engineering without teacher-guides.

TASAWWUF: In the ancient temple of Solomon there were two pillars at the entrance called Jachin and Boaz. Jachin meaning beauty and Boaz strength. These are identical with Jemal and Jelal in Sufism. The Masons and other symbolologists— who are not to be confounded with mystics and esotericists—have made use of these symbols and have speculated about them.

There are books in the Bible, such as those of the Prophets Ezekiel and Zechariah in the Hebrew Scriptures and Revelation in the Christian Scriptures, which conceal rather than reveal, excepting to illuminated souls, who are illuminating souls. Sufis do not dispense with these symbols, but Sufism has become more universal by recognizing the rituals and symbolisms of all faiths.

GATHA: The serpent has been considered a sacred symbol because it is pictured as representing many secrets of mysticism. The Yogis have learned a great deal from the serpent, as there is a hint in the Bible, “Be ye wise as the serpent and innocent as the dove.”

RYAZAT: The Dove itself is a subject for another Gatha. For those who have difficulty in concentration, in study, in intellectual development, the Serpent is an excellent subject. It teaches stillness, and one-pointedness so essential.

TASAWWUF: There have been many snake-worshippers, in some sense, at all times. Because what we call the “animal world” illustrates the efforts of the Divine Qualities to come into manifestation on earth, and what we call the “human world” illustrates the efforts of the Divine Essence (Zat) to come to manifestation. Inwardly there is first the Essence, then the qualities (Sifat); outwardly there is first the qualities, then the essence and in this sense, as the teachings hold, the heavens are born of the earth.

There are still snake or Naga worshippers in parts of India and Burma. There were the Ophites among the early Christians. And no doubt such of what others call “idolatry” and “polytheism” is what less developed men called “divinity,” picturing the divinity in qualities rather than in essence. It has only been the Divine Messengers who brought the teachings of Oneness and Essence.

In the Hatha Yoga efforts are made to hold to snake postures. In higher forms of Yoga the snake is idealized as a master of concentration (Murakkabah) and by learning from the snake, man acquired the ability to have long slow breaths. The long, slow breaths brought the things of earth, to this must be added refinement. Animals and Hatha-Yogins do not have this refinement. But it comes in the pure spiritual development.

GATHA: This sign shows that man is self-sufficient in his spirit, though incomplete in his body; that in every spirit there is both woman and man. It is the direction of the force of the spirit which makes the male and female aspect.

TASAWWUF: Therefore the Teacher can correct disciples and the generality by the breath, only it is explained to the disciples and not to the generality. One can control the atmosphere by the power, and refinement, of the breath. Before an adept an ordinary person is unable to hold on to common or animal thoughts; he will either run away or change.

In the Bible and again in Rasa Shastra it is explained that both sexes are in mankind (Adam). Adam was created in God's image and man in Adam's image. Man has the expressive and responsive aspects. They appear not only in the generative sex forces but in everything and everyone. In this sense one is bipolar rather than bisexual.

GATHA: The central point represents the spirit, and the spirit represents God. As spirit is both male and female, so it is beyond both. It is limitation that turns one into two, but when man rises above limitation he finds that two become one.

RYAZAT: This is made realizable by the Shiva-Shakti practices found in *Zen Flesh Zen Bones*.

TASAWWUF: When commentaries stimulate the mind they lose their purpose. The development in Murakkabah comes from self-effort.

GATHA: So this symbol reminds man of the power of the spirit, that man may know that he is not only a material body, but that he is a spirit himself, and that man may know that spirit is not an inactive torch of life, but that spirit is full of activity, more than the body is. It also represents that man is not only an earthly creature, but that he also belongs to heaven. This symbol suggests that nothing earthly should frighten or worry man, for he may rise above the earth.

RYAZAT: This is an excellent theme for those of materialistic tendencies. It helps in refining the nature but it also drives away fear. Jemal refines but does not drive away fear; Jelal drives away fear but does not refine. Kemal accomplishes both.

TASAWWUF: Sufism is not a philosophy to be propounded and imposed. It is the Divine Wisdom which is in all the ages, which is in space (Akasha), which is in man. The devotees in ancient Egypt became initiates and the progress of the initiate depended upon his self-realization.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 5

### **The Symbol of the Dove**

GATHA: The bird represents the wayfarer of the sky, and at the same time it represents a being who belongs to the earth and is capable of dwelling in the skies. The former explanation of the bird represents the idea of a soul whose dwelling-place is in heaven, and the latter that of the dweller on earth being capable of moving about in the higher spheres, and both these explanations give the idea that the spiritual man, dwelling on the earth, is from heaven; they explain also that the spiritual man is the inhabitant of the heavens and is dwelling on earth for a while.

TASAWWUF: In ancient times there were sacred birds in many lands. Thus we have the Eagle in the old Olympian religion, sacred to Jupiter and Zeus. The Egyptians revered the Hawk as the sky-bird and the Ibis dwelling below. In India the Goose or Swan was particularly sacred, due in part to the sounds which they gave. They were called hamsa-birds.

Birds were also used as Messengers; the carrier pigeon is a passenger to this day. Both the Dove and Raven are mentioned in the story of Noah. But the sound of the Dove was regarded as specially holy. For the Dove gave off the sound "hu," which is the sound of the Holy Spirit. And in the Jewish writings the phrase, "the sound of the turtle" represented the principle that the Divine Presence was manifest.

GATHA: The pigeon was used as a messenger, to carry a message from one place to another, and therefore the symbol of the Dove is a natural one to represent the Messenger from above.

TASAWWUF: We have it in the Christian teachings that the Holy Spirit descended as a Dove on the shoulders of Jesus, and it is certain that this sound can be heard. This is also taught in the *Mysticism of Sound*. And the wings were portrayed on the Caduceus of the god Hermes, who was the Messenger of the Gods. The same term "Hermes" was given to the spiritual initiators in the Egyptian and Gnostic traditions.

RYAZAT: The concentration on the Dove may be given to anyone who has to travel, to move from place to place, not only in the cause of God, but in all causes. Otherwise there would be a separation, a dualism. All the work of a disciple is holy work, even in most mundane tasks.

GATHA: Spiritual bliss is such an experience that if a bird or animal were to have it, it would never return to its kind. But it is a credit due to man that after touching that point of great happiness and bliss, he comes into the world of sorrows and disappointments and delivers his message.

RYAZAT: Concentration on the Dove helps to arouse ecstasy. This is true of all wings of all symbols. They help to raise one above the denseness of the earth. But the Dove is an emblem of return and it is also given to bring sobriety to those who are too ecstatic, and the same is true for those who take to drugs; it is not necessary to correct them. Right concentration on this symbol helps to restore balance.

TASAWWUF: In this Biblical story of Noah we recognize the Saviour type. Indeed he may be equated in a sense to Vishnu. The flood saga is found in the Matsya Purana and other Indian traditions. The Dove does not suffer from the flood. He rises above it. Also the Bodhisattva is one who faces all the turmoils of life and they do not affect him as they do other people.

GATHA: This quality can be seen in the pigeon also; when the pigeon is sent it goes, but it comes back faithfully to the master who sent it.

RYAZAT: This symbol also helps to promote fidelity, to adherence to duty, and thus to concentration. It also builds up selflessness because the dove only thinks of its errand, its purpose, its mission.

TASAWWUF: The Dove was sacred to all the Mediterranean peoples. It was especially associated with the Goddess Aphrodite. This word means “sea foam” and it refers to the condition of being tossed about and buffeted by storms yet able to live through them.

GATHA: The spiritual man performs this duty doubly: he reaches higher than the human plane, touches the divine plane, and brings the message from the divine to the human plane. In this way instead of remaining on the divine plane, he arrives among his fellowmen, for their welfare, which is no small sacrifice.

TASAWWUF: This is the general mission or Dharma of the Bodhisattva, to live on earth, to dwell among men, to carry on earthly duties as if they were divine, and by not separating himself from human-kind and being able to help others. Making differences is not the way to help others.

The Bodhisattva is able to function on all planes. As one great Sufi teacher, Abu Said ibn Abi'l Khayr put it, the Sufi lives like other people; works and plays, marries and begets children, does everything like everybody else but does not forget Allah for one instant. It is the constant Zikr which makes out of man the superman. He is able to withstand the conditions on all planes.

GATHA: But then again he performs a duty to God, from Whom he brings His message that he delivers to the human beings.

TASAWWUF: It has been a great mistake to attribute this function to one person or even to man. Jesus Christ repeated, “Ye are Gods.” It is our work to restore this sanctity in ourselves and in our fellow-man. The restriction of holiness to a few people is one of the prime reasons for the decay of dharma. It is our attunement to and our union with God which enables us to experience life on all planes and not be pulled down by a troublesome world. If the Message is interpreted to mean that only a few or a single person has this ability, this function, it is no Message. The purpose of the Message is to keep mankind in constant Zikr, and therefore thankfulness.

GATHA: He lives as a human being, subject to love, hate, praise, and blame, passes his life in the world of attachment and the life that binds with a thousand ties from all sides. Yet he does not forget the place from where he has come, and he constantly and eagerly looks forward to reach the place for which he is bound.

TASAWWUF: Therefore on the Sufi path there are only certain periods for retirement, called Khilvat. The Sufi does not follow the Indian tradition of temporary withdrawal or the Buddhist practice of monkery. This makes a distinction and difference among mankind.

No doubt there are periods wherein one seems encompassed by loneliness and there are periods in which one benefits from withdrawal.

RYAZAT: Practices such as Zikr and Fikr maintain for the mureed constant remembrance and awareness of Allah. The concentration on the Dove is helpful when one is pulled down too much by the denseness of the earth, when he feels harassment, sorrow, pain. One can also see it when there is strain in the face or countenance; to stimulate feeling then this concentration is very helpful.

No doubt it is not so valuable as the concentration on the Sufi symbol which is harder to hold but more effective when it can be done. Still it is not always wise to try to skip steps in development, and in periods of seclusion, it is, so to speak, as if the wings were folded, were to be folded.

GATHA: Therefore in both these journeys, from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth, the idea of the Dove proves to be more appropriate than any other idea in the world.

TASAWWUF: The Dove may thus be associated with all aspects of breathing; inhalation, retention, exhalation. When one appears to be too ecstatic or “high” more attention should be given to the exhalation, to bring the consciousness downward. And when one is always too sober, more attention to drawing the energy from space. We do not have to derive from chemicals or vegetables essences which are in the space itself.

RYAZAT: Jesus has said, “Be ye wise as serpents and as harmless as Doves.” Here the serpent represents more of Jemal, no doubt, but both Wisdom and Harmlessness are part of Jemal temperament. If a disciple is too quarrelsome, put on this discipline he will become more peaceful. If a person is too self-centered, giving him this concentration will help to balance his nature and functions.

No one can understand the purport of Ryazat until he has had some experience. No doubt some disciples will accomplish this concentration rapidly because of their evolution. Then they should not be kept at this stage.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 6

### **The Symbol of the Sufi Order**

**GATHA:** The symbol of the Order is a heart with wings. It explains that the heart is between soul and body, a medium between spirit and matter.

**TASAWWUF:** This is reflected in the prayer: “Give sustenance to our bodies, hearts and souls.” The Heart is the one organ that partakes both of spirit and matter; its form is in matter and its essence is in spirit.

**RYAZAT:** The actual symbol holds a heart with Crescent and Star. Crescent may be an object (or subject) of concentration. It is needed to make one responsive. If a person is too outspoken, too expressive, this is very good for concentration. But the Crescent used alone without the Heart would increase response without increasing feeling. By using the Crescent, there is response; by using the Heart, there is feeling; by using the Crescent and Heart, there is response and feeling. But by adding the Star (“May the Star of Divine Light shining in Thy heart be reflected in the hearts of The devotees”) then there is expressiveness also. So disciples are given each or combinations of these symbols to awaken certain faculties or attitudes, and this is much better than imposing any outer discipline.

**GATHA:** When the soul is covered by its love for matter it is naturally attracted to matter. This is the law of gravitation in abstract form, as it is said in the Bible, “Where your Treasure is, there will your heart be also.” When man treasures things of the earth his heart is drawn to the earth. But the heart is subject not only to gravitation, but also to attraction from on high, and as in the Egyptian symbolology wings are considered as the symbol of spiritual progress, the heart with wings expresses that the heart reaches upward towards heaven.

**RYAZAT:** Concentration on Heart develops feeling; adding wings to the Heart takes one above matter, “Raise us above the denseness of the earth.” Heart and Wings in combination take man above materiality. This is a step beyond the concentrations of Karobi and Dove.

**TASAWWUF:** This enables the devotee to be aware of the heart-sphere. This is also of use when the disciple is placed on Zikr which can use the Heart as a drum. When the sensitivity is aroused the life expands, the consciousness expands, the area of awareness expands. The angel-man comes into being.

The Heart with Wings produces transcendence over matter. It increases the faculty of love. It promotes realization. It makes man aware of the hidden treasures within his own being.

**GATHA:** Then the crescent in the Heart suggests the responsiveness of the Heart.

**RYAZAT:** To develop Kashf, the faculty of Insight, disciples are shown the concentration of Heart from inside of it. It is not just to picture a heart, it is to become Heart. This develops feeling in one

direction and insight in another. And as the breathing and heart-beat become synchronized there is the development of the inner personality.

TASAWWUF: Sufis often sit in Crescent formation around the teacher which produces responsiveness, and the Teacher occupies the position of Heart, being expressive. The Heart without the Crescent is light, a light which shines but to no purpose.

GATHA: The crescent represents the responsiveness of the crescent to the light of the sun, for it naturally receives the light, which develops it until it becomes the full moon. The principal teaching of Sufism is that of learning to become a pupil. For it is the pupil who has a chance of becoming a teacher; once a person considers that he is a teacher his responsiveness is gone. The greatest teachers of the world have been the greatest pupils. And it is this principle which is represented by the crescent.

TASAWWUF: It is very unfortunate that the Sufi Message was brought to the West and taken over by people who did not wish to undergo discipleship, all wanted to be teachers, to lead others. *Gayan* says: "Leader is he who is leader of himself; ruler is he who is ruler of himself." Those who self-assume leadership without having been awakened to the state of consciousness suggested by this symbol only bring havoc to themselves and others.

In the Orient there are many great sages who have tried to remain disciples all their lives. It is not unusual for a Sufi Pir to give up his position and work as a peasant or live with the underprivileged and function with them. And when he does that his personality and atmosphere help to awaken the divine life in the simple. And the more one can become attuned to the simple, the more capable he becomes of attuning to others and they to him.

GATHA: The crescent in the Heart represents that the heart responsive to the light of God is illuminated.

RYAZAT: This concentration has already been mentioned, but the end is the awakening of Light. This is done not by concentration alone but by responsiveness and also by preparation to become more aware of Light. Concentration on Light alone sometimes helps but when light and love are united and they are combined with this concentration, it is one of the best means to bring a disciple toward illumination.

TASAWWUF: Responsiveness comes in two forms. In the one form the disciple becomes increasingly aware of the light within. This is a natural process of the devotee. Whether it is prayer, meditation, chanting, all exercises, by them the response to light is increased. This is not symbolic.

There are three forms of light which are reflected in the words body, heart and soul, three ranges of light. All are real, all may be experienced by man, but mostly they come by responsiveness. Responsiveness to the teacher is more important than the teacher himself. In truth God is the only teacher but man cannot achieve God-consciousness until he has accomplished responsiveness. Those who make too much of expressibility return to egoicity (*nufsaniat* or *samsara*).

In the Karma Yoga one becomes concerned with service. When it is called "selfless service" it is often unfortunate. True consideration of selflessness excludes any idea of selflessness; it is derived from response to others. Responsiveness is selflessness, not any thought about "selflessness." So there are

two forms of selflessness, one through response to the teacher; the other through ever greater awareness of the light within.

GATHA: The explanation of the five-pointed star is that it represents the Divine Light. For when the light comes it has five points, when it returns, it has four; the one form suggesting creation, the other annihilation. The five-pointed star also represents the natural figure of man, whereas that with four points represents all forms of the world. But the form with five points is a development of the four-pointed form. For instance if a man is standing with his legs joined and arms extended he makes a four-pointed form, but when man shows activity — dancing, jumping — or he moves one leg, he forms a five-pointed star, which represents a beginning activity, in other words a beginning of life.

TASAWWUF: Thus we pray: “May the star of the Divine Light shining in Thy Heart be reflected in the hearts of Thy devotees.”

RYAZAT: The Star is for self-expressing, the Cross for self-denial. They are both aspects of light-manifestation. The line representing self-consciousness disappears in the Cross. Carried too far the Cross devotee can become a masochist, the Star devotee a sadist. Dull disciples are given the Star for concentration, also those who wish to express creativity. Active devotees are given the Cross to calm them down. But when the Star is placed in the Heart along with the Crescent these are all balanced, even to perfection.

GATHA: It is the divine light which is represented by the five-pointed star, and the star is reflected in the heart which is responsive to the divine light.

TASAWWUF: The purpose of all training in Ryazat is for no other purpose. Centration in the heart awakens the pulse, so to speak, and continued practice makes one aware. Chanting also throbs the heart and helps here.

GATHA: And the heart which has by its response received the light of God is liberated, as the wings show.

TASAWWUF: One may draw a parallel to the caterpillar entering the pupae stage and remaining there until the life-force is great enough to permit the wings to function. As the light-capacity, and thus the light, grows in awareness, one also feels a greater response to and with the universe itself. And while this may be called “expansion of consciousness” it must include expansion of sensitivity in feeling.

GATHA: Therefore this sentence will explain in brief the meaning of the symbol: the heart responsive to the light of God is liberated.

TASAWWUF: This whole principle illustrates that Insight (Kashf) is needed for the understanding of Symbolism on the one hand, and the inner devotions on the other which become awakened. People who are emotionally affected by symbols remain at the symbolic stage. The understanding of each symbol, of the operations of heart, breath and light bring the devotee into full consciousness.

One purpose in Sufi meditation (perhaps more than in some other schools) is this emphasis on devotion and responsiveness. To be able to explain symbols without conscious realization

thereof is a limitation. To achieve the fullness of the inner life, one must rise above this stage, and the concentrations inferred by this Gatha, when practiced, will bring this about.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 7

### **Symbology of the Dot and Circle**

GATHA: The dot is the most important of all figures, for every figure is an extension of the dot and the dot is the source of every figure. You cannot let a pen touch paper without making a dot first of all.

TASAWWUF: The point may be understood by feeling. One may breathe in intensely, concentrating on a center. This center becomes one's point. This is called "Bindu" in Sanskrit and these two words come from the same philological root.

RYAZAT: Gaze at a point preferably in black ink or paint at the level of the eyes. Gaze steadfastly at that point repeating, "Toward the One, etc." Here this One means the point itself. The breath should be in rhythm. One should be relaxed. The point becomes a center of concentration as in archery.

GATHA: It is simply the extension of the dot in two directions which is called a horizontal and a perpendicular line. And again, it is the dot which determines sides; if it were not for the dot the sides, as above, or below, or right, or left, could not be determined.

TASAWWUF: We can conceive space as composed of points. Certain versions of the atomic theory also utilize this approach. The point is the dot statically. As the dot moves it forms lines; but as the dot breathes it forms circles and spheres.

It is not necessary to concentrate on the dot in motion because this also becomes the line in motion. The expanded Dot in this form of symbology becomes the Circle.

GATHA: The origin of all things and beings may be pictured as a dot. This dot is called in Sanskrit "Bindu," the origin and source of the whole being. Since the dot is the source of the perpendicular and the horizontal lines it is the source of all figures and characters of all languages that exist and have existed, as doubtless it is the source of all forms of nature.

TASAWWUF: In the Hebrew alphabet the dot became the letter Yod and it is said that all other letters grew out of the activity of this Yod. It also was a symbol of masculinity—as the circle became a symbol of femininity. This general symbology is found in many lands.

There is an Islamic tradition that the whole of Qur'an could be contained in a single Sura (The Fateha); that this Sura could be condensed into the opening lines, the Bismillah; and that this in turn could be condensed into the word Allah; the word Allah into Alif, the first of letters; and even the essence of that letter into the dot which is placed over it. Therefore, in this sense all creation is an activity of the dot. This would also mean that the dot could stand for God, the Only Being, in Essence.

GATHA: The principal thing in man's figure is his eye, and in the eye the iris, and in the iris the pupil, which signifies the dot.

TASAWWUF: This is one example of the dot and circle being found in nature. Actually all biological cells have been symbolized by the dot and the circle, and not only symbolized because one who studies the biological sciences can observe the dot and circle in operation.

RYAZAT: Use a symbol of an eye for concentration and identify with the eye. This requires more feeling than the concentration on the dot, because the eye is a living entity. It is also the organ of Light.

GATHA: At the same time the dot means zero, meaning nothing. It is nothing and it is everything, and the dot expresses the symbol of nothing being everything and everything being nothing.

RYAZAT: After the concentration on the eye statically one should return to the concentration on the dot dynamically. Inhale becoming the dot, and let that dot expand in and with the exhalation.

TASAWWUF: As one breathes and his breath becomes identified with the dot and as the dot activates into expanding creation, so also does one realize the principle of expanding consciousness. This is used in many practices.

RYAZAT: La Ilaha in this sense although practiced with exhalation stands for the nothingness; and el il Allah although practiced with inhalation stands for the everything. However, in dot-concentration one identifies with the point, and not with the universe. In Sufism nothingness is called fana, and everything consciousness is called baqa (consciousness).

GATHA: Amir, the Indian poet, expresses this idea in his well-known verse. He says, "If thou wilt come to thy senses by becoming selfless, free from life's intoxication, thou wilt realize that what seems to thee non-existent is all-existing, and what seems to thee existent does not exist." How true it is that in ordinary life we look at reality upside-down; what exists seems to us non-existent, what does not exist in reality, but only seems to exist, that alone we consider existent.

TASAWWUF: Selflessness cannot be demonstrated by verbal or intellectual communication. To say "I am not" is still an affirmation of "I am." It is only by affirming other than self that one can obtain selflessness.

There are many myths which illustrate this. Such as the story of the struggle of Hercules with the Hydra and later with the old man of the sea. Both of these symbolize samsaric or egocentric activity. Love emphasizes "thou art." And this is a form of selflessness.

To struggle with the ego must be distinguished from the thought, "struggle with ego." This thought itself is a dangerous trap. When feeling dominates thought it is much easier to attain selflessness. Salat emphasizes "Loving mother, kind father, innocent child, and helpful friend, and inspiring teacher." All of these are positive attitudes which take one from the realm of the ego.

Sufism posits fana or selflessness through stages called fana-fi-Sheikh, fana-fi-Rassoul, and fana-fi-Lillah. All of these remove the ego but not the positive point of activity and life.

GATHA: The dot develops into the circle, which shows the picture of this seemingly non-existent developing into all-existing. The iris of the eye is the development of the dot which is called the pupil.

RYAZAT: Disciples are given the concentration on the Sun, itself a circle concentration. One may now concentrate on painted circles of different colors—the blank circle representing the color of the material or paint. This circle should not have an outline. In other words, concentrate on a circle without an outside outline. That is this circle is an expanded colored dot. After one has understood the concentration on the dot, and the expanded dot as circle, one is ready for a fuller concentration on the Dot and the Circle.

In performing this concentration (Murakkabah) one should feel free and may practice it both shutting out impressions and receiving them.

GATHA: A dot added to one makes one ten, and with two dots the one becomes a hundred, and this shows that man is small when he is unconscious of God; when the knowledge of God, Who is the source of the whole being, although non-existent to the ignorant eye, is added to man, he becomes ten, or a hundred, or a thousand.

TASAWWUF: This was one of the original forms of enumeration out of which first the Arabic and then the modern system arose. In a certain sense this dot and circle mean “all and nothing,” consciousness and unconsciousness—or better—consciousness and ever-growing consciousness.

RYAZAT: Concentrate on the dot in the center of the heart. Make it feel smaller and smaller until it becomes the infinitesimal point; make it feel larger and larger until it becomes the beating heart. Make this beating heart embrace and unfold all things.

This teaching is found in the Upanishads as philosophy. With adepts, Sufis, and true Yogis, this becomes experience rather than philosophy. The talib should try all of these concentrations in turn, and report any success to the Teacher.

TASAWWUF: This heart-centration and concentration can become one of the most valuable ways of spiritual development. But in addition to the concentration in which feeling should always control thought, the feeling-in-love should be expanded; sometimes intense concentration to a point itself expands love-radiation. It is like a tiny candle emanating a tremendous aura. Such principles are found in nature, and are being investigated in the Science called Physics.

GATHA: As the dot enriches the figure so God enriches man; as all figures come from the dot so all things and beings come from God; and as destruction must in time break all things into dots so all things must return to God.

TASAWWUF: The essential difference between what is called “living matter” and “inorganic matter” is that the former sees the Dot in action, developing into the Line and into the Circle. In breathing man inhales into the Bindu or Point and exhales into the expansive sea or Sindhu. This is known as Bindhu-Sindhu in the Hindu teachings, and the Dot-Circle elsewhere.

The dot thus posits the Ego, and the circle posits the assimilation of the Ego in the All. In the All, separate entities as such do not exist. We see this in the chemical solution, in the water of the ocean which holds many chemicals, in the biological processes of cells and bodies, and in all manifestations in the forms of “things” which manifest for a time and then disappear.

RYAZAT: Breathe in, concentrating on inhalation until there is a clear idea of the processes of inhalation. Breathe out, concentrating on exhalation until there is a clear idea of exhalation. Breathe in and out, in and out until there is a clear understanding of Breath as it is. Then breathe in Dots and exhale Circles until this is clear. Then expand the Circles—until the more efficient the inhalation with Dot, the more efficient the exhalation until one finds an Einsteinian universe, so to speak, finite but unbounded. Such is the nature of man.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 8

### **Symbolism of Lines**

**GATHA: The Upright Line:** The upright line suggests the One, therefore also the number one is represented by an upright line. The upright line suggests heaven, or the world above, its extremity being upward. The upright line is perfection.

**TASAWWUF:** The line, in whatever respect we hold it, suggests movement, dynamism whereas the dot or the zero may represent a static state or potentiality. We repeat “Toward the One” which can, in a sense, be a movement in a direction, usually upward, or also a pulling into a point.

The line in a static sense may be considered both as the first number from which all other numbers arise, or the first element in formations, geometric and otherwise. But actually the universe as considered being made up of lines offers a “masculine” explanation, whereas the dot or circle offers a “feminine” explanation.

In the prayers we raise our arms aloft for certain reasons, including the supposition that heaven is above. So also in the representation of certain prayers and Wazifas the arms are raised aloft as if toward heaven. But this is also a “heaven” in contradiction to an “earth” which is below.

**GATHA:** Through all forms life has culminated in the end in the human form, which is upright.

**TASAWWUF:** The Greek word for man is “anthropos” which means “he whose glance is upward.” Psychically this shows a difference between man and animal, even between man and ape. And although man is not the only upright animal, his glance, his tendency is upward.

To have good health the spine should be upward. To have good inner health, the breath also may go up the spine and give a corresponding benefit to our subtle natures.

**RYAZAT:** When a disciple is not upward either in stance or in character, a concentration on the straight line either as the number 1 or as an upright line is beneficial. Also the breathing which helps to keep one standing erect. There is, however, no objection to using a degree of gymnastics or corrective exercises but in the end the proper breathing is most important.

**GATHA:** The upright line also suggests straightforwardness, for it is straight upward.

**RYAZAT:** This concentration is given to people not entirely honest. One does not find fault, for this would weaken them. One must keep the confidence up; say nothing, but offer this as a directive and corrective.

The same is true of people with spine trouble, causing curvature, or anything of that nature. Also one teaches them how to breathe as if up the spine vertically.

GATHA: The upright line also suggests firmness, for it is steady.

RYAZAT: This also helps to correct nervousness although in this case the breathing is different, rhythm being of prime consideration. Also sometimes the repetition of “Allaho Akbar” but more often “Toward the One” is a very good medicine.

GATHA: The upright line also suggests life, for it stands.

RYAZAT: This is good for people who are uncertain, especially the psychological cases; for people who seem weary of life, who have no clear purpose. In this instance, have them repeat: “Ya Hayy! Ya Haqq.” This may be done as a Wazifa. If it be done as a Fikr, either phrase can be used in inhalation and the other in exhalation. This is a very good practice.

GATHA: The upward line also suggests rising, for it goes upward.

TASAWWUF: This is good for people who have difficulties in starting anything, who may talk often and do seldom. This concentration helps them to do, to be active.

GATHA: The upright line also suggests unity, as it shows oneness and the oneness of the whole, all being one.

TASAWWUF: It has already been explained that it may be used in repeating “Toward the One” as Darood or Fikr. But here it means that several people, joining in the same enterprise should have it also as Concentration together, to produce harmony, to overcome disharmony and to achieve a common purpose.

GATHA: The upright line is the form of Alif, the Arabic A, and the name Allah in Arabic writing begins with Alif. The upright line is the first line, and all forms and figures are nothing but the change of direction of that line, and as all is made by God and of God so by the upright line and of the upright line all forms are formed.

TASAWWUF: One aspect of this can be seen in the science of Geometry. Out of this, carpentry and architecture and other sciences and arts have come from the same general basic principles. And out of this also has variety come.

In the Hebrew Genesis the first words are “bara” which means not only that “He created” and “He thinged,” but this was by “ra,” which means a straight line or ray.

**GATHA: The Vertical Line and the Horizontal Line.**

TASAWWUF: These have already been explained in the lesson on the lines of the Cross. For the Vertical line signifies Jelal or Yang and the Horizontal Line Jemal or Yin.

GATHA: The messenger is pictured symbolically as a Cupid. He is meant to guide the longing soul toward its Divine Beloved, and that part of his work is symbolized by the vertical line.

TASAWWUF: This is partly discussed in the symbology of Cupid, but here the straight line, the vertical line indicates the Path. Generally this is an upward line, it takes one up the mountain, or in other esotericism the ladder. These are outcomes of the same principle.

GATHA: He (Cupid) is also used by Providence to bring together two souls in light who are seeking each other through darkness, some knowing and some not knowing what they are seeking after, which is represented by the horizontal line.

The horizontal line and the vertical line together make a complete cross, which is the sign of **Kemal**, perfection.

TASAWWUF: This has also been explained in the studies of the cross, and in the symbology of the meeting of rivers and in general in mystical studies.

RYAZAT: If in concentrating on the cross the disciple has a vision showing any unbalance, as too long a line in either direction, or the place of union of the lines it gives the teacher some insight into his nature. The cross of perfection is not the same as the Orthodox or Catholic crosses which have the horizontal line shorter and the crossing on the upper part of the vertical line. But there are also Christian crosses which are evenly balanced, and to them also the circle has often been added. But this brings in other considerations.

GATHA: The vertical line is the sign of God, and the horizontal line is the world.

TASAWWUF: This is an extension of the same symbology and same meanings as have already been presented and we find it in some form or other in the Chinese, Indian and Near East traditions.

GATHA: The vertical line represents heaven, the horizontal line earth. The horizontal line represents this world, the vertical line that world, the next world.

RYAZAT: So when there are talibs who are too ethereal one may give them the horizontal line for concentration and when they are too worldly the vertical line for concentration.

TASAWWUF: Conversely in the interpretations of dreams or visions, if there are many horizontal lines they may represent obstacles or worldly powers. If there are many vertical lines this is a sign of spiritual ascent.

GATHA: The vertical line conveys the meaning Yes, the horizontal line the meaning No.

TASAWWUF: So it is in walking, dancing, art presentations, we can see whether there are positive or negative forces working.

RYAZAT: If a person be too positive, one may assign the horizontal line in some form for concentration and have him look at flat or wide objects or things or pictures. And if a person is too negative, then vertical concentration and also on tall things as obelisks or such. These practices will change the person psychically and morally also.

GATHA: The vertical line denotes life, the horizontal line death.

TASAWWUF: We can see this that many people shake their heads up and down for affirmation and from side to side in negative. And also that living people stand up while the corpse is stretched out flat. It has also been found that people with long noses and who are capable of taking in long breaths often live much longer than people with flat noses who have little capacity for breathing, for the breath denotes life and longevity depends more upon capacity for breath than on anything else.

GATHA: The vertical line represents strength, the horizontal line powerlessness.

TASAWWUF: This also is another aspect of Jelal and Jemal or even of Jelal and its presence or absence.

GATHA: The vertical line spirit, the horizontal line matter. The vertical line the masculine, the horizontal line the feminine. The vertical line the sun, the horizontal line the moon. The vertical line the day, the horizontal line the night. The vertical line positive, the horizontal line the negative.

TASAWWUF: These also are variants of the same teaching one finds in the Chinese mysticism although there they have short and long horizontal lines for symbols in I Ching. Put otherwise the explanations are very similar. This is very close also to some Hindu explanations of Purusha and Prakrit, which we might also call spirit and matter.

GATHA: The vertical line power, the horizontal line beauty. The vertical line God, the horizontal line man.

TASAWWUF: These are all variants of the same general and perhaps universal teaching. When we express the beauty as in Saum or in the repetition of the suitable attribute of God, there is always a direction horizontally.

Here it might be asked why the horizontal line represents man. It means the humanity as the creation of God and not the individual.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 9

### **Symbolism of the Triangle**

GATHA: The triangle represents the beginning, the continuation and the end. The triangle is the sign of life which has appeared in three forms, of which the idea of the Trinity is symbolical. The idea of these three aspects of life has existed for a very long time among Hindus, who named it Trimurti.

TASAWWUF: It is not only the Hindus but the Egyptians also had this symbol and principle. In India the general explanation is that there is Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer or Assimilator. Taken literally or analytically this does not impress the western people who have especially analytical minds. Analysis does not explain anything mystical nor anything concerned with infinity, either in the sense of eternity or divinity. These are aspects of reality and divinity, not necessarily derivations. For the worshippers of Shiva say that Vishnu is an aspect of Shiva and the worshippers of Vishnu may hold that Shiva also is Avatar.

These things mean little to the devotee and even among the great Vedantists there have been divisions and schools when actually these are means for the simplification of presentations of the Ultimate.

In the Hebrew language the word for truth is “Emeth” and it is a word made of the first, middle and last letters of the alphabet. In the Egyptian mysteries and also in Sufism there are the three aspects of divine effulgence, representing the sunrise, the noon and the sunset and in Sufi terms Urouj, Kemal and Zaval. Each of these terms have many explanations and each represents an aspect of life which can be easily recognized.

GATHA: As in the Christian church, the Trinity consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, so among the Hindus the Trimurti consists of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh; Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Sustainer and Mahesh or Shiva the Destroyer. By the word Destroyer destruction is not meant but change.

TASAWWUF: It is very difficult to explain the Christian Trinity logically and as the inheritors of the teaching of Mohammed it becomes almost false or at least obscure. For certainly in the highest mystical experiences of reports of the Christian saints there is nothing like a Trinity, or three-in-one.

The Clover or Shamrock has been accepted as a symbol of the Christian Trinity and the Trident has been accepted both in Christianity and Hinduism. These assumed a three-in-one as if equals but the idea of equality and inequality can be applied only to finite matters. God is beyond conception and attempts to explain the inexplicable only lead to confusion.

GATHA: The triangle in all its forms is the basic outline of all forms that exist in the world.

TASAWWUF: This subject has been dealt with at length in Plato’s *Timaeus* and in the commentaries on it. No doubt this is rather a mystical explanation. We can also see this in the crystalline structures of which so much of the world has been made.

GATHA: The triangle has a horizontal line in it and a perpendicular line, and two triangles can very well form a square.

TASAWWUF: We certainly see this in the pyramid which makes use of both the triangle and the square. This has been a subject of much discussion. While there is symbology in it, it is also a matter of engineering and the controversies and explanations do not throw much light on the nature of man or the universe. The pyramid is a composite, not a simple symbol.

GATHA: The hand, the head, the leg, the palm, the foot all show in their form the triangle as the principal outline. In the leaf, fruit, tree, or mountain, the triangle is the outline.

TASAWWUF: In the science and art of surveying triangulation has been used. It may be asked, since the world is spherical, how can such methods be of value? It can be answered that in practice they are and life is not determined by any limited system of logic. Especially in the mountain form and volcanic cone this is most evident.

GATHA: The triangle is the riddle which has within it the secret of this life of variety.

RYAZAT: Therefore the Triangle is often assigned to those who are confused, who are caught in life's puzzles or who love enigmas even for themselves. Concentration on it will help straighten the mind.

This concentration also helps one turn from the impractical to the practical.

GATHA: But for these three different aspects which stand opposite each other man would not be able to enjoy life; at the same time it is these three aspects again which are the cause of all the illusion; and if the riddle of the idea of trinity has been solved and out of trinity unity has become manifested, then the purpose of this idea of trinity is fulfilled.

TASAWWUF: There are so many ways of examination here. For instance, reference has been made to the Sufi Urouj, Kemal and Zaval; also that these correspond to the Egyptian Ra, Atum and Kheper. The symbols have the same meaning and are most important not only in mysteries but in the explanation of life itself. Indeed we can present them simply as Growth, Maturity and Senescence (or withdrawal).

Again in the Indian teachings we have the three Gunas which are another way to explain life. These may be termed "life," "activity" and "darkness" or torpor. Both these forms of "trinity" or tri-ness can explain the universe but in a different manner from a different standpoint and none of them detracts in the slightest from the ultimate principle of Unity, which in the end is a basic teaching of all esotericism.

We find this in another way in the German philosopher, Hegel, who gave the idea of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The fault with this is that it itself is a thesis or idea and the followers of this school and its allies have never considered the antithesis to it or the synthesis therefrom. It is only Sufism among the world's philosophies which is particularly concerned with the synthesis or better the integration of all outlooks.

GATHA: One can understand this by realizing the truth that it is not three that are one, but one that is three. The beginning and the end of all things is one, it is the repetition of one which makes two

and it is the division which produces the three. In this riddle of the ideal of Trinity lies the secret of the whole life.

TASAWWUF: The Roman Catholic Church does not encourage intellection concerning the ultimate nature of things. Instead it presents forms of meditation on particular subjects including the Trinity. It may be questioned whether the Trinity is the ultimate or Unity is the ultimate. So long as the mind of man is concerned with such questions and discussions there will be divisions. It is better here to follow the example of Buddha and not waste time or energy on such discussions.

At the same time there is no doubt that meditation, especially profound meditation can help awaken the light within that helps solve this and all such problems. And for this a concentration on the Triangle itself, using it as a key.

GATHA: The three aspects in which life has manifested and of which the triangle is the symbol are the knower, the known and the knowing faculty – the seer, the seen, and the faculty of seeing.

TASAWWUF: We have here still a different presentation of the Triangle and its symbolology. This presentation does not interfere with principles of Unity, Monism and Monotheism. These are aspects of the philosophic dictum, “know thyself” but who is it that is the knower when it is asked, “know thyself”?

The rise of the faculty of insight shows that there is a light and it may be called an inner sight. When this begins to manifest much becomes clear. But this is more than a physical light and upon awakening it will be found that this very light itself is the knower, the known and the knowing; the seer, the seen and the faculty of seeing. But this is only true with the spiritual awakening. It is neither true nor false to those who have reached this stage.

One cannot get a true picture of emptiness, or fullness, until the ego is removed. And for this Concentration is practiced for in the concentrative practices one finds that one’s very nufs produces the shadows which impede true knowledge. In a similar way too much mental consideration of symbols does not bring the desired results.

There are many books on symbolology, some very exact. But the reading, even the memorizing of them does not produce the spontaneous explanation of their significance or throw light upon the problems of oneself or another. When one becomes the Triangle, then one begins to express consciously all the phases of existence and then one can be seer, seen and seeing. A mental picture may help a little; it can also become a great hindrance.

RYAZAT: Therefore the concentration on the Symbol of the Triangle, performed with devotion, can awaken the very knowledge desired.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 10

### **The Mushroom**

GATHA: The Chinese philosopher is symbolically depicted holding a mushroom stem in his hand. The mushroom represents the earth and what comes from it and what is close to it, and keeping it in the hand means spirit handling or controlling matter.

TASAWWUF: We now have the introduction of a living form instead of a static symbol and this very consideration takes one more into life. The earth as prakriti in a certain sense represents death. It is the impregnation of prakriti by purusha which brings forth the living forms. The mushroom is one of the most simple of these forms.

Scientifically the mushroom is a vegetable that has not the faculty of making its own chlorophyll or “liveness” or for that matter soma-juice, which indicates life in the vegetable world.

Another thing to consider is that matter of itself does not produce growth. The mineral world either sustains itself indefinitely like the diamond and other gems or is subject to constant erosion like we find in deserts. It is the impregnation of form by spirit that brings the life, the evolution and the beauty.

GATHA: At the same time it suggests a moral, that the sign of the sage is to be as tender, as refined, as meek, as humble as a mushroom.

TASAWWUF: This brings another factor into the study of symbology and the practice of concentration (Murakkabah), that of keeping in the consciousness of a living being. No doubt here we are closer to Jungian archetypes but even the consideration of an archetype may be the key to attunement to higher beings.

RYAZAT: This concentration is beneficial to those who need the development of refinement, meekness, humility and such qualities, not only as Jemalic qualities, but to bring to consciousness those morals found in the beatitudes of Jesus Christ.

TASAWWUF: It should be recognized that the use of words, of slogans, or phrases even of Scriptures have only a limited value in effecting awakening or even reformation. Mystics regard Concentration as vastly superior and by having an ideal, even if one has to create that ideal, and keeping it constantly in the mind, is much more beneficial, in effect, than any noble phrase. For Concentration can bring about a change in personality where words fail to reach the depths.

GATHA: It teaches the same moral that Christ taught, “If one smite you on one cheek, turn the other cheek.” If one strikes on the rock one’s own hand will be hurt, but one will not have the same experience by striking the mushroom.

TASAWWUF: The introduction of Christ and his teachings also brings in themes for concentration. If one is able to practice the tasawwur, either by walking or devotion, one begins to find in oneself the Christ qualities. And one of the first evident is a form of harmlessness, but this harmlessness is accompanied by great strength, by much greater strength than one has had before going on this line.

The Chinese sages also had this. In their Tai-chi and other mystical arts they underwent the same dictum as that which comes from Jesus: "Be wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove." And as one progresses in this line one will discover that power and harmlessness, or wisdom, may come together.

No doubt there is some advantage in studying holy books and the words of sages. But the real gain when one consciously partakes of these is vastly greater. The world has not benefited much by the repetition of words, even of the wisest. But everybody gains when one strives to exhibit the same wisdom, the same strength, the same divinity himself.

GATHA: It also teaches the philosophy that all the produce of this earth, however precious, is in the spiritual sense no more than a mushroom, which is subject to destruction every moment.

TASAWWUF: Again we must bear in mind it is not the subjective philosophy which benefits but the transformation in and of our own selves. It is not only that destruction is at hand every moment but that change also is at hand and this can come from the devotions or considerations of that aspect of Trimurti known as Shiva. Or as Buddha presented in his anicca, that everything is subject to incessant change.

RYAZAT: This concentration is good for those who are like rocks, who have a rock-like nature. It has often been the most tender plants who have destroyed rocks and cliffs and even mountains. Where the strength of might has failed, there is a power in something almost like harmlessness or non-resistance which in the end may be dominating.

All persons have within themselves infinite potentialities, and it is the duty of the wise to help bring those potentialities to the surface.

GATHA: It also teaches the idea of being in life as free and independent as a mushroom, which needs no special care and demands no great attention from others.

TASAWWUF: In the ten Sufi Thoughts it is stated that there is really no other sacred manuscript than that of nature. But this of itself tells us nothing of nature and the way to fulfill this is to become able to obtain the wisdom from all things. And we can best become aware of this wisdom when we accept that God is in the least as well as in the greatest.

Another aspect of this is in freedom. One will discover, however, that freedom really comes when one feels the Divine Presence within and without and through one. For God is our very life and strength. It is from this that came the idea of "A Sufi Message of Spiritual liberty."

GATHA: If any one will use it, it is ready to be used; if any one will throw it away, ready to be thrown away without causing great loss.

TASAWWUF: The principle of spiritual indifference, presented as a thought or even as a philosophy is often separate from the actual life. If one is fixated, if one is as a rock one will react to the circumstances of life and not be able to withstand sorrows or shocks.

RYAZAT: The Concentration on the Mushroom is not only good for those of stony disposition because of this disposition but of all the related characteristics. It is also good for older people who, while they may attain a sort of firmness also become too fixated, too settled in their habits that they no longer grow. It is only by giving them living things for concentration that they can grow.

GATHA: It also suggests a mystical point: while all other plants and trees respond to the wind and storm and make a noise, the mushroom stands still without uttering one sound. When the body and mind of the mystic are trained to the stillness of the mushroom through all storms and winds of life, then the mystic achieves perfection.

TASAWWUF: It should be clear that philosophies and moralities are confined to the mind. The mind rises and falls and is itself caught in the samsara unless there is the essence of freedom. This comes from mind-training but mind-training itself falters when it tries to control itself of itself and by itself.

Spiritual freedom and discipline go together. The heart can be used to free the mind and the esoteric practices are excellent. But the guidance that comes from a living teacher that sets an example and himself manifests the teaching is the best help. Therefore it is not only the mushroom that is needed but the sage holding the mushroom. It is the sage holding the mushroom that pictures the teacher who has achieved the goal which every one seeks or desires.

So we have in this Gatha, the separate consideration of the subject of the Mushroom as a symbol; the teacher as symbol or reality and the two together which is the ideal which can be of most help to the striver. When he cannot of himself control himself, when he has as yet failed to achieve concentration or mastery of mind, he has before him the picture, the example or the person of the teacher. In his turn the teacher can best help pupils by the exhibition of stolidity, indifference and equalmindedness. This is also of greatest benefit to all disciples.

The metaphysics on this subject is of little benefit until one develops in himself and this comes through the practicing of esotericism and concentration.

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