



Gatha with Commentary

Saluk: Morals

Series I

of

Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan

by

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Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
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Who Form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 1

The Development of Personality: Sense of Beauty & Sincerity

GATHA: Personality is the secret of the whole life and in the development of personality it is not necessary that the psychic or occult sides should develop first, the beginning of development is natural.

TASAWWUF: As many people who approach the path are mature in age, their minds are filled with the traditions of all kinds which come from society or their parents or their egos. In *The Inner Life* it is taught that unlearning is needed. But the general tendency is to regard “being as becoming” and an expansion from the small ego into the unlimited God. This is right also. And this subject has been developed in “The Art of Personality” and attendant papers.

There is a part of Indian teaching called “Siddhanta” which is contrasted with Vedanta. In Vedanta the part works toward becoming the whole, as such. In Siddhanta the acquisition of powers and faculties focuses the attention.

GATHA: There are two things needed in the development of personality: the sense of beauty and the preservation of sincerity. The sense of beauty can be defined as the adoption of all that appears beautiful in thought, speech or action. For generally man appreciates all that is beautiful in another person, but he overlooks the lack of that beauty in his own thought, speech and action.

TASAWWUF: In the “Sufi Thoughts” one reads: “There is one object of praise, the beauty which uplifts the heart of the worshipper through all aspects from the Seen to the Unseen.” Now we can develop in this direction through philosophy and we can also develop through self-discipline. But the teacher is one who tries to lead the disciple on without paying too much attention to shortcomings. There may be growth, expansion. Therefore by repetition of the proper qualities found in the *Beautiful Names of God*, man, by combining concentration and devotion, awakens in himself the desired quality.

GATHA: For instance a person would appreciate the respectful, humble, gentle attitude of another towards himself, but he often overlooks his own lack of this attitude towards another.

TASAWWUF: This subject is discussed at length in *Moral Culture*. And besides, by finding the quality to be perfected in Allah, the One Only Being, by repeating the wazifa assigned or by joining in assemblages chanting the praises of God, one awakens in himself that desired quality and also effects changes in attitude toward the desired state.

GATHA: There are two reasons for this. One reason is that a man always looks outward, not inward, and he sees another person before he sees himself. The other reason is that man is selfish by nature; he wants all that is good for himself, and he hardly gives a thought to giving these things to another.

TASAWWUF: On the spiritual path one begins where one is. And to help the disciple, the teacher gives the proper exercises. Besides that it is possible by Zikr exercises and by walks to bring about a change that will improve one's character and also rid oneself of unnatural faults. In both cases also, it is important to learn the right way of breathing. In that way one imbibes both the Divine Energy and Divine Qualities.

GATHA: Man is ignorant of the fact that life is naturally a re-echo: what one gives he must take back sooner or later, and it is ignorance of this fact that makes man inconsiderate.

TASAWWUF: Much has been taught about karma; the Bible teaches that as man sows, that also does he reap. And in Sufism the "law of reciprocity" is taught. But even that is not always enough. Man often makes a subjective philosophy about it. He does not apply it to himself. And in this way there is a failure because man cannot free himself from the consequences of his acts, or his speech or thought. All explanations, even all methods of self-defense do not free him from pain, suffering and obstacles. The only way to become free is also to see that one does not put obstacles in other people's paths.

GATHA: Therefore to a sensitive person life all around seems nothing but thorns. But he does not expect thorns, he expects roses. That shows that his soul is longing for what is good and beautiful.

TASAWWUF: The very nature of man, inwardly, is good and beautiful. The finer sides of his nature are no different. One may read *The Inner Life* and not apply it to himself. If he applied it, it would open many marvelous vistas. And besides as man grows in the exercise of Insight, he also knows how to avoid pitfalls. There is a spirit of guidance operating all the time, whether one is aware or not.

GATHA: And man pities himself, but instead of pitying others, he blames them. If he only knew that others are just as much to be pitied as he! But not everyone thinks of the pain and suffering of another. As soon as man in his life begins trying to forget his troubles and to think of the troubles of others, he has taken his first step in saintliness.

TASAWWUF: The very suffering man has works toward tenderness. As *Gayan* says, "Pleasure blocks but pain opens the door to inspiration." The purpose of suffering is to awaken tenderness. It is only by this that the horizon can deepen. And even if one is at first very selfish, after awhile he will find that others are in the same general circumstances. Thus empathy arises. If man does not stand alone otherwise, he stands with his fellows in common suffering.

The great German Philosopher, Schopenhauer, had this view. From his own suffering, which was very great, he built up a philosophy of suffering. He made it general. But at the same time he studied Oriental wisdom and knew there was a way out. But not having a Guru, he did not find that way out in his lifetime. There was no strong tender heart to help him along.

GATHA: Rose and thorn are the outcome of the same plant and come from the same root. Saint and sinner both come from one source, God, the father of the whole humanity. It is only that the beauty, fragrance and color in the root have expressed themselves in the rose, and have not expressed themselves in the thorn. The difference between the plant and the human being is free will.

TASAWWUF: If one studied botany he would find that both thorn and blossom have function, they are needed for the preservation of the species. And so in the life of man, both pain and pleasure abound until one sees the wholeness, how everything fits into place. But what is to be learned here is that one should refrain from acting as a thorn to others and try to radiate his fragrance. In that way he will grow.

GATHA: A human being cannot make the excuse, I was born a thorn, how can I become a rose? As a human being has his free will, he is responsible if he is a thorn, and it is to his credit if he is a rose. Man must know that as the color, fragrance, and beauty are hidden in the root, so goodness and beauty both spring from the same source.

TASAWWUF: It is of little value to know this intellectually. We have many systems of philosophy and more of ethics, and yet man has grown very slowly in the direction of human consideration. But man can become aware of his fellow-man. It is useless, it is even hypocritical to repeat, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." And the one who repeats it and does not practice may find himself even in a worse state than one who does not repeat it and also does not practice it. The virtue of words is an illusion until one puts them to use, into practice.

Therefore the disciples may go to the teacher for guidance and he will give them more practices than advice, especially the practice of silence and meditation. For as man becomes calm so does his nufs, ego, come into control. As nufs comes into control, the more one sees correctly, behaves correctly.

GATHA: The quality which shone in the life of the Master shines still and will ever shine. What attracts friends is not necessarily power, property and beauty; what really can attract man is personality.

TASAWWUF: When one applies for Bayat and studies the "Sufi Thoughts," he finds the words, he does not always find the thoughts. Therefore the work of the teacher is to make the words real by making the thoughts real. Much of this is done by Esotericism. Yet in the ultimate sense there is only One Master, which is the Spirit of Guidance within as well as without.

Egocentric people think they can find the Master within without outside help. This does not happen. For to find the Master within one must give up the ego. And when one surrenders to another, especially to the Teacher, then he has taken a great step forward. Some have accepted others power, property or beauty and then they find these persons under the domain of lust, greed or anger. Prestige does not rid one of them. One rids them by self-surrender and the easiest way to practice surrender is before another, especially a Teacher who will guide. And if there is a real Teacher he will have a magnetic personality.

GATHA: Now, the other question of personality—sincerity—that is necessary to be considered in the development of personality. There are many people who, in order to behave nicely, polish their manner and speech. But polish is not necessarily effective, or the effective thing in a person.

TASAWWUF: *Gayan* says "Man proves to be genuine by his sincerity." Today there are so many speakers over the radio and television and so many appeals from other sources. They speak in a certain tone which is supposed to be attractive and often is attractive. Mostly it follows that as the Bible tells, in the mouth it is sweet as honey and in the stomach bitter as gall. But selfish people want to have the sweetness, the niceness; they will applaud flattery, they do not want the sincerity. And so

a whole culture is beguiled by nice words with no depth and then people are led into turmoil. They do not realize that the turmoil comes naturally when it is nothing but guile.

GATHA: Beauty is that which penetrates through and through; and the greater the beauty the greater the penetration. What is called manner—which is only manner—is not a deep thing, it is almost a play.

TASAWWUF: The generality has loved this and when a mass of people arises who wants more than this there is always the accusation against them. But man cannot live on manner and guile; the heart is always seeking.

In *The Soul Whence and With* the principle of man having three bodies and functioning through three bodies is presented. But to have a superficial belief in it, or even a mental picture of three bodies does not help much. It is when man has the full conscious heart-function that wisdom comes. And the whole tenor of the teaching is to awaken man toward that end.

And in the *Mysticism of Sound* there is a covered teaching of the places of tone in the mouth and these reveal the dominant emotions. By proper correction under the guidance of a teacher, one can develop sincerity also by voice placement.

GATHA: Every thought, speech or action has in it a psychic power which makes an impression on another, and the psychic power comes from the true divine essence in man.

TASAWWUF: The first lesson is to make man aware of this, but that is only the first step. Then one has to develop the psychic power and that may be done through various means of Esotericism.

The reason why psychic sciences are not always effective is that they are imposed from without. It is also the same about Siddhanta. When one develops to one's fullness it is much easier to acquire psychic power for all power is a reflection of God-power. So in Sufism one seeks the divine essence within oneself, and by grace or guidance this is added to the waking consciousness.

GATHA: No doubt, in the name of sincerity, people often express their lack of the sense of beauty, saying, "I am a frank person; I tell the truth; and I do not mind how you take it." This shows that sincerity void of the sense of beauty is lack of balance, and beauty void of sincerity is lack of balance also. As music depends upon rhythm and tone, so personality depends on the sense of beauty and sincerity.

TASAWWUF: The first lesson is the response to the teachings. The words appear so simple. The lesson seems to be one that "everybody" knows but it is seldom seen in practice. As Lord Buddha taught, all man has perfect Enlightenment but does not know it, so there may be little new, or even nothing new in the teachings. The question is how to make it effective in the everyday life, and also in the aeonic striving.

In the *Bowl of Saki* one reads: "Sincerity is the jewel that forms the shell of the heart." (Jan. 28)

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Series I: Number 2

The Development of Personality: The Jarring Effect of the Ego of Another

GATHA: By a keen outlook on life we find that what disturbs us most in life is the ego of another person; it is the ego that has a jarring effect upon life.

TASAWWUF: There are two aspects of this. One aspect is that whosoever disturbs, howsoever he disturbs, has an uncontrolled ego. The other aspect is that when one is jarred he may also have an uncontrolled ego. We cannot control others so *Gayan* says: "The world is what it is. You cannot change it but you can change yourself."

GATHA: Those who know the right manner of developing personality know that the first lesson in life is to efface that ego as much as possible. Christ says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." That poorness of spirit is the softening of the ego.

TASAWWUF: There are also two aspects of this. One is the negative one of either giving in to the strong ego or fighting it; the other is to soften oneself, not to be impressed, not to react. This subject is dealt with in "Character-Building" and "The Art of Personality". That is for the people not yet disciples.

For disciples there are practices particularly in Esotericism. For instance, one learns to refine the breath and as the breath becomes refined one may also develop in insight so as to understand better the jarring influence. Also one will become refined in such a way that one is not disturbed. Thus disciples repeat "Ya Latif" which means that God is the refined, the omnipotent and also beyond our intellectual comprehension; yet also He is our Guide and Help. When one practices so the jarring influences become less jarring to us and also people will feel our status and not disturb us so much. By refining ourselves we are also helping others.

GATHA: When the ego is softened in a person then in the thought, speech and action of that person there is a charm. Sometimes a person, after going through a disillusionment, suffering, torture, shows in his personality some charm, and that charm comes from the softening of the ego.

TASAWWUF: There is a saying in the West, "When the devil was sick, the devil a saint would be; when the devil was well, the devil a saint was he." *Gayan* also teaches, "Pleasure blocks but pain opens the path to inspiration." When we rise above the mere words and thoughts about them, and begin to exemplify the teachings, then we understand it and for this meditation is most valuable.

The ego may be softened by softening the breath. This softens the speech and attitude without taking any thought about them. If we continue to think, to analyze, we make realities of the very states and qualities we wish to be disburdened from. The mystics of all ages and many schools have made this correction by attention to the breath as is taught in the lessons thereof.

GATHA: But any virtue that develops naturally, forced by life or circumstances, is not a virtue in the same sense as that which has been developed by one's own effort. Every beautiful action, thought or speech is derived from effacing of self, or ego. For instance, every manner or courtesy that comes from holding the reins of the ego. Beauty of speech always depends on the same effacement of the self, and so it is with thought.

TASAWWUF: There is a custom and it is found in most parts of the world, to speak softly and even assume a tender or beautiful attitude. This charms many people. Oratory has been a great art, but it does not depend so much on sincere thought or feeling. It beguiles. One can always notice it comes from the front part of the mouth. There is no depth in it, no trueness.

The one who has trueness may show the same characteristics, and yet there will be a power in him. The superficial person always tires from his efforts; the sincere person gains. For he draws the vitality of the space. He is attuned with reality.

While we can begin by watching the breath and purifying it to effect a better speech, as one continues in this path one will be able to affect better thinking which is of advantage to all.

GATHA: As soon as the ego expresses itself without control it hurts the ego of another person.

TASAWWUF: We can see it also in those who speak without reflection. They not only have a jarring effect on others, they also wear themselves out. *The Arabian Nights* say "There is no power or might, save in Allah." Those who depend on their egos have very little strength. They tire out. They may pretend to have virtues but in times of stress their true character manifests and it is mostly very different.

GATHA: The tendency in the lower creatures to fight is caused only by the ego, and man has this tendency no less than they, but rather more. It is this tendency which brings about disturbances in the life of individuals and in the multitude.

TASAWWUF: Man is always looking for external causes. He blames the environment or some other abstraction. It sounds very plausible, but you cannot put your finger on it, what it actually is and also what it is not. The Sufi looks at the ego of man, touched untouched by the circumstances and then he can see more clearly.

If we study animal psychology we can find different behavior patterns and varying grades of egocentricism (or its absence). All the patterns and structures seem to be found in mankind in some place. But man has the full consciousness of himself and also the potential will-power.

GATHA: The family feuds in ancient times, and now wars, all come from the same source, the ego.

TASAWWUF: We may look at this from two points of view, the analytic and the synthetic. From the analytic point of view, we can see it is so. We can realize that there is no end of disturbances by attributing them to outside factors and verbally striving to correct these factors. Even the social revolutions simply terminate one set of social and psychological illnesses for others. Man does not find the peace and harmony this way.

The other way is to try and stop these feuds. Thus among the Sufis and sometimes among other people, the family is regarded as the unity not the individual. Then one harmonizes with the family as a whole, the outlook is different. For instance, the famous psychiatrist, Freud, attributed many problems to a certain kind of family structure which was the one most prevalent around him. Then anthropologists, visiting other parts of the world, found totally different family structures and totally different kinds of problems. The ego outlooks were very different.

By maintaining the feeling of love and unity and radiating it one establishes a different order. In America it has been said, "The family that prays together stays together." There is little evidence for it but it establishes such ideas as family unity and group harmony. And very gradually the ideal of group harmony especially is making itself known and felt in the world, and so this introduces a different kind of ego with different behavior patterns.

GATHA: The idea of self denial in Christianity, if rightly considered, expressed the idea of effacement rather than that of renunciation.

TASAWWUF: This has resulted in suppressing much of man's nature and man's potentialities. In the Puritan regimes, whole portions of man's being were suppressed. The spiritual method is very different, for it offers scope to full expression but does not necessarily use the expressions. There is a way to present the whole personality to the Supreme Being and by renunciation the spirit of the universe itself manifests through man. This is the absolute opposite of suppression. And it also means man's fulfillment but not through the ego.

GATHA: Those whose contact brings us comfort, ease, peace, always have a softened ego. The greater the person the finer the ego. No example can be better than that of Christ washing the feet of his disciples.

TASAWWUF: There is not much gained in praising Jesus for this, in setting him up as a sort of superman to be venerated. This has been done, it has been done through the ages and very few have followed even in this eternal ritual. The real washing of feet comes when it is done in love and brotherhood. Otherwise it is an almost empty ritual and does not reduce pride very much. It may even increase. As *Gayan* says: "Pride is the ego."

GATHA: What builds man's ego is every kind of gratification of the ego, and what breaks the ego is patience and renunciation.

TASAWWUF: These things have been taught also in *Moral Culture* and in the Gathas on "TASAWWUF." It is not a mere knowing of words and thoughts; it is a transformation that takes place in the heart of man and affects his consciousness.

This is all explained in the teachings on Renunciation. The intellectual study is merely the first step. This does not of itself produce either practice or awakening. When we take the teachings seriously and apply them, then we are fighting our own egos, and as we fight the ego and seem to be going down by restrictions and self-control, we are actually building up our inner personality, though at first not consciously so.

GATHA: The question whether it would be advisable to so destroy the ego that others might take advantage of a refined person is answered by saying that it is not necessary that one should work against the ego, but one must control it.

TASAWWUF: Mere negativity, mere suppression can build up the ego in another direction. Masochism is not virtue; it may be a virulent form of egocentricity. Personality was created so that the Divine Light may shine on earth. It shines on earth only through man, the Vice-Gerent (Khalif) of God Himself. This inner man must be built up and this is done by the mastering of ego, not the smothering of it. When one wishes to break in a horse, he does not cripple it.

GATHA: It would not be exaggerated if I said that man's worst enemy is his ego, his own ego. And when it is not in his control, man's thought, speech and action are bent towards the gratification of his ego, and the more he satisfies his ego the more his ego desires, and it is never satisfied.

TASAWWUF: *Gayan* states: "Your great enemies are those who are near and dear to you; but your still greater enemy is your own self." We might realize that the term *nufs*, which Sufis use to refer to ego, is also derived from the root of breath. This same root is found also in Hebrew. But it has not been studied psychologically. Therefore the generality is unaware that the ego may be controlled by mastery of breath, especially in the control of the inhalation. Therefore a teacher is needed to guide man safely and properly because the ordinary people do not know how to do it.

GATHA: Nobody else has such power in life of enslaving a man as his own ego.

TASAWWUF: We find this referred to in many ancient myths. Thus the labours of Hercules were all struggles against the ego as it might manifest in various forms. In the Ramayana we find the higher self, Rama, struggling against the desire nature, Ravana. And in the Gita we see in the struggles between the Kuravas and the Pandavas the symbolical battle between the desire-nature as it manifests variously and the higher powers in man.

As one does not always see this directly, it was taught through symbols. But behind this symbology was the fact that man has to overcome the desire nature. This is something Buddha taught directly, also.

GATHA: Man is, in fact, from the divine essence, and being so, he has the right to be king in his own life, which is his own kingdom. By the gratification of the ego man falls from kingship to slavery, and in the end his own life becomes a burden to himself.

TASAWWUF: In Buddhistic psychology in particular, this has been worked out, but the followers have taken the teachings subjectively as philosophy, and not applied it to themselves as psychology. The restriction of the desire-nature is wonderful, but it may result that man will begin to desire quite differently and the desire nature manifests through very different disguises. This is symbolized in the story of Hercules and Priapus.

The taking of oaths, the performance of symbols, the wearing of robes, and all such ceremonials do not necessarily change man's nature. Buddha objected to those ceremonies in his time which did not result in man's spiritual liberation. His followers then established another set of robes and symbols but these have not necessarily established man's freedom either. The majority have not been awakened.

One of the most devastating form of ego-expression comes in self-pity. Then no matter how man turns he is trapped by nufs. It is consideration of others that breaks this shackle.

GATHA: And in order to gain his own kingdom he must destroy the illusion that in satisfying his ego he shows his power; he satisfies his enemy in satisfying his ego. A Persian poet says, "Each time that I make peace with my enemy he has the opportunity of preparing again for the struggle."

TASAWWUF: In *Kashf-al-Mahjub*, Al-Hujwiri (Data Gang Buksh) quotes Abu Hamza al Baghdadi Al-Bazzaz: "If thy 'self' (nufs) is safe from thee, thou hast done all that is due to it; and if mankind is safe from thee, thou has paid all that is due to them," i.e., there are two obligations, one which thou owest to thy "self" and one which thou owest to others. If thou refrain thy "self" from sin and seek for it the path of future salvation, thou has fulfilled thy obligations toward it, and if thou make others secure from thy wickedness, and do not wish to injure them, thou hast fulfilled thy obligations towards them. Endeavour that no evil may befall thy "self" or others from thee; then occupy thyself with filling thy obligation to God."

GATHA: The great battle that the Sufis and sages and Yogis fight is the battle with the ego, but the sage battles with his own ego, the ordinary man with other peoples' egos.

TASAWWUF: Thus we read in *The Unity of Religious Ideals*. It has already been explained that each in their own way, the Indian epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabarata* are extensions, historical and mythical, on this theme. And also the *Labours of Hercules*. Mahatma Gandhi also explained the Kurukshetra that way but most people had not agreed with him.

GATHA: And the difference in the result of these two battles is that the victory and failure of the ordinary man are momentary, but the victory of the sage is eternal. The former, when he has finished one battle, must begin another, but the latter, once he has succeeded, is victorious.

TASAWWUF: Therefore Buddha was given the name of "Gina," the lion-taming conqueror. The same principle is found in the Christian Book of Revelation. While this Scripture may say, "The last enemy to be overcome is death," it really means the last enemy to be overcome is the ego, for it is the ego, not the spirit, which dies.

GATHA: All that the former gains, after all, is not his own because his kingdom is not his own; all he gains does not belong to him, but the sage is king of his own kingdom.

TASAWWUF: We learn this as we progress. It is the fulfillment of "The Kingdom of God is within you." One finds this by assiduousness in devotion and esotericism. These bring actual practices which result in actual experiences. We become aware of all planes and all potentialities.

The things of this world are not retained, and the things of the inner worlds may be retained. When one controls his temper, his envy, his lust, his acquisitiveness he actually opens the door to unlimited power, but power in a quite different sense, which goes on into the eternity.

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Series I: Number 3

The Development of Personality: What is the Ego?

GATHA: “Know thyself and thou wilt know God,” said the great Sufi philosopher Ali. To know the self is the most difficult thing in the world, because what man can perceive first is only a part of the self, a limited part.

TASAWWUF: We look outside ourselves but there is also a question as to whether we really see anything but ourselves, whether we look within or without. Who and what is the seer? And when one considers this question often one is thrown back on the very portion of our being which blocks both sight and insight.

There is a confusion owing to the tyranny of words. People repeat words and presume that they are uttering truths. It is hardly so. Truth is that which is not particularized in any forms, verbal or non-verbal. Truth is that which exists beyond the words. Man, looking out, perceives what he calls good and what he calls evil and starts to set up standards, but he does not know the self, either the depths of self or the superficial part which is setting up the standards.

GATHA: When man asks himself, “What is it in me that is I?” he finds his body and his mind, and in both he finds himself limited and apart from others. And it is this conception of his being that makes man realize himself as an individual.

TASAWWUF: This proposes that a supposition is a conception, and it leaves unanswered the question of the validity of concepts. The concept often stands in the way of clear sight; the concept places a shadow over the light. And in this sense there can be no true concept, for concepts are what puts shadows over truth and the light. Therefore to find oneself the devotee repeats the Name of God and uses other purification devices.

GATHA: If man dived deep enough within himself he would reach a point of his ego where it lives an unlimited life. It is that realization which brings man to the real understanding of life, and as long as he has not realized his unlimited self he lives a life of limitation.

TASAWWUF: This delving deep is done by meditation and contemplation. For as one meditates he also realizes that what he has called his “self” is but a small portion of his being and very often that portion which prevents his going further. And it is through exercises and disciplines and not through the setting up of philosophies, which enables man to go deeper in the direction of the freedom of soul.

GATHA: When man in this illusion says, “I”, in reality it is a false claim. Therefore everyone has a false claim of “I” except some who have arrived at a real understanding of truth.

TASAWWUF: There are several ways by which we can recognize this lack of development in others. One is that such persons go around correcting or criticizing. They have only negative remarks. They

are little concerned with achievement. And besides, light will both not be radiating from their bodies and persons. There is always both light and a feeling of strength and peace from those who have the understanding. No emotional domination.

Those who have deep feeling or deep love will always operate from a standard, "Love thy neighbor as thy self."

GATHA: This false claim is called in Sufi terms **Nufs**, and the annihilation of this false self is the aim of the sage.

TASAWWUF: But one of the hardest obstacles to overcome is to recognize that this nufs represents the most active part of oneself, the one who is proclaiming, doing, saying, thinking, and looking, upon life with himself as a sort of center.

One reads in *Gayan*: "The false ego is a false god; when the false god is destroyed, the true God arrives." It may even be said that in Sufism the whole battle is one against this false self. This is not a dualistic struggle. One need not be concerned with the evils and short-comings of the world. Indeed as one grows in strength, his very power will help crush the evil in the world and help those in need. But this is not done by looking outward, it does not come when one essays to do good and eschew evil. All the goodness is a pretense, vanity. The real goodness comes when the nufs is so under control that the Spirit of Guidance takes over.

GATHA: But no doubt to annihilate this false ego is more difficult than anything else in the world, and it is this path of annihilation that is the path of the saints and the sages.

TASAWWUF: When Mohammed was totally successful on the battlefield and in politics he said, "The lesser Jihad has been accomplished so now I can go on the Greater Jihad." The lesser Jihad is against external enemies and the Greater Jihad is against the internal enemies: malice, ill-will, jealousy, envy, temper, lust and such weaknesses as beset humankind.

GATHA: One may ask, "Why should one take the trouble to annihilate the ego? Since life is full of pain and suffering why add to this suffering?" The answer is that even if an operation will cause one suffering, it is better to endure it in order to be cured.

TASAWWUF: The question may be asked, who is to do the annihilating? For the very one who asks such a question is the ego itself. And there are many who denounce the ego and castigate it. And this becomes like masochism which also feeds the ego.

Any thought of ego in any respect feeds ego. But also there are forms of meditation which annihilate the mind rather than the ego. For the idiot is not free from egocentricity and mere silence or non-involvement are also forms of ego expression. Besides the purpose of life has been fulfillment, and the removal of ego is like the removal of shadow, but it is not destructive. The ego became so that God could experience life severally through the multitude of His beloved ones. And when one moves into a larger stream of life, as Buddha has taught, there is something vast to be gained which is hard to verbalize. In ancient India it was called Mahat, and it was the dissolving of the ego into the universal life, which enabled the universal life to utilize the ego for its particularizing expressions.

GATHA: The inborn nature of the ego is intolerance, that is its nature because there are other egos that jar it. It is therefore that when two cocks meet they want to fight. The reason is that the ego of one jars the other.

TASAWWUF: We find this in many circumstances among animals and mankind. This subject is presented in the *Mysticism of Sound*. The question is how to rise above such conditions and this comes about through devotion and esotericism. The devotee becomes concerned with God, even in thought; the esotericist becomes aware of God in reality and then he becomes aware of the creation.

In the *Bowl of Saki*, Feb. 18, we read: "He who expects to change the world will be disappointed, he must change his view. When this is done, then tolerance will come, forgiveness will come, and there will be nothing he cannot bear." It also says (March 24): "The first sign of the realization of truth is tolerance." And Sept. 11: "In order to learn forgiveness, man must first learn tolerance."

This subject is also discussed in Gatha 10, Series I, *Metaphysics*.

GATHA: Even a silent life, such as that of a rock, can jar upon another ego, for instance that of a bull, who wants to hurl himself upon it and break it with his horns. It is the nature of the ego to exist alone, and it cannot allow another to exist.

TASAWWUF: This is symbolized in the allegory of Cain who killed his brother Abel in the Hebrew creation myth. Cain represents ego at its most intense development, and so he is expelled from Eden, which is to say Joy and Contentment.

GATHA: No doubt the reason is still deeper. It belongs to the deep side of metaphysics; but the moral aspect can be understood.

TASAWWUF: This subject has been of great concern to Sufis. When the Prophet Mohammed was entirely successful on the battlefield and peace was restored he said, "The lesser Jihad has been won. Now we can turn our attention to the greatest Jihad," which is to say, battle against the ills and weakness within one's own self. But this is not the way of the orthodox. They see the external ills, not the internal ones. But the mystic sees mostly the defects in himself; his battle is to overcome them.

GATHA: The finer an ego becomes the less it jars upon others.

TASAWWUF: That is why in the Sufi training so much attention is given to the softening of breath, to refining it, to keeping it pure. It may take a long time but even non-disciples can be presented the principles involved. And the whole course of esotericism is in the direction of this refinement. And as the ego becomes refined, so there is less interference to the manifestation of divine light and all virtues.

GATHA: In the different degrees of evolution of man one sees this gradual development of the ego. There are people who seem to have no thorns; and yet they have a thorn which makes itself felt in the presence of another; it is their ego. Others are like the rose with its softness, beauty and fragrance. No doubt not every one is a rose, but everyone desires the rose and not the thorn. The best training is to try to turn this thorny ego into a rose. It is very hard.

TASAWWUF: We can begin by the observance of breath, to see it is soft and refined. As we come to master the breath we can send its influence and effluence to all parts of the body; that is the first step and it helps one physically and emotionally.

Then one can send through refined breath through the mind. This is done by the use of esotericism. And the more one attends to his own breath, his own rhythms, his own potentialities and weaknesses the more he is able to overcome the obstacles in life, within and without. Only this is due to action and never by any quiet thought. Thinking about something may even increase resistance to a desired goal. Calling on God is the opposite.

And the next phase is to absorb in oneself the divine faculties. Then one makes of one's whole being a vehicle of God and all spiritual qualities.

GATHA: And the finer and the more evolved the ego the harder life becomes for man. The higher and more refined you are the greater trials you have to go through in life; the more sensitive you become the more you will have to suffer.

TASAWWUF: We may read anywhere, and on this point all mystics are agreed that increased capacity for pain and increased capacity for joy go together. When the capacity is increased it is like a birth; and this new birth, be it of a faculty, or an area of consciousness, or a sensitivity, has to be hardened, and this comes only through life's experiences, and no other way.

GATHA: The thorn cannot hurt another thorn, but the slightest thing can hurt a rose. It is not surprising if an ego that has become a flower does not wish to live among thorns, but that is its destiny, and in spite of all sufferings it is preferable to be a rose than a thorn.

TASAWWUF: For the accommodations the rose makes belong to timelessness, and this type of action has been called "nishkama karma;" it is action without samsaric effects. The one who advances on the path, or indeed any charitable soul will forbear harming another. It will want to protect and this is the way of the Bodhisattva.

There are prayers called Doa and teachings in Self-Protection for disciples which may help them individually. But in the world at large one can see this situation, what happens in the lives of the tough and of the sensitive.

GATHA: To return to the question why one ego jars another, the answer is that one must understand the nature of the other egos. When one dog barks at another and the other wags his tail, it is to let the other understand him and not fight with him. It is this moral that Christ taught from beginning to end. If you wish to experience fully the beauty of life you must make your ego as fine as possible.

TASAWWUF: In the meditative practices this becomes part of the ritual and discipline and when one pursues this path he begins to realize changes in himself and in his outlook to the world. And in turn he will find the world also changing in its attitude toward him.

GATHA: This allows the grosser egos to come into contact. It is from that that good and evil have come. It is always from the grosser ego that what we call evil comes, and it is from the finer ego that that comes which we call good.

TASAWWUF: Therefore, there is no indulgence in dualistic outlooks, making the usual distinctions and differences which divide men. It is by the breath one can know another, and understand and read him. And the more one refines his own breath the more the innate faculties will come to the surface.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 4

The Training of the Ego: The Ego is Trained As a Horse

GATHA: The ego is trained by a Sufi as a horse is trained by man. A bridle is put upon it and man holds the reins in his hand. This training is called by the Hindus **Hatha Yoga**, which means, to gain the control of one's self by means of abstinence.

TASAWWUF: There are many forms of abstinence. We ordinarily think of abstinence of sex-function and food. These are no doubt helpful but they do not deal with the ego as a whole. In the stories of Hercules we have myths showing what happened when Hercules dealt with the Hydra and the Old Man of the Sea; until he cut off the main head of the Hydra, until he tamed the Old Man totally, he was at their mercy.

The Hatha Yoga system does deal with man as a whole, mostly with the body and then with the breath, but also some with the mind. It is a discipline of totality, not of parts.

GATHA: Often, when man does wrong, it is not that he likes to do wrong, but that he is not able to prevent himself from acting in that way.

TASAWWUF: Evil is due to weakness of some sort. Abstinence is one way of controlling the weakness. Prayer is another and that is why Mohammed instituted daily prayers, for the egos of the Arabs of his time were very marked. The teacher is also needed for the disciple can look to the teacher for advice, for guidance, even for wisdom. But the wisdom comes more from the attitude of surrender on the part of the disciple than from any particular thing the teacher may offer.

In Sufism as in Hatha Yoga much attention is paid to breath. But in Hatha Yoga also more attention is paid to postures and many of these postures are of themselves valuable in restraining the appetites.

GATHA: In the first place wrongdoing is almost always the consequence of the appetites and passions, or for the gratification of vanity. Fasting and special postures are often practiced by the mystics for the same reason.

TASAWWUF: Generally it is necessary to raise the center of gravity even on the physical plane. No doubt the breath-energy should be sent to all parts of the body, but when it is maintained in the lower portions, near the centers which are also the centers the appetites, this stimulates the appetites also, it does not restrain them.

Fundamentally the Indian and Sufi systems are not too different but in Sufism there are special methods and special concentrations to raise the magnetism arising from and with the breath and to send it to such portions of the body which take the pressure away from other parts. For instance, if the appetites are strong, the breath energy should be directed to the upper parts of the body. But this also needs guidance; one doing it mechanically may restrain passion for a while but may not be able

to keep the control. Therefore in Sufic esotericism much more than in the Indian systems, the practice of the Presence of God is most fundamental.

The practice of the Presence of God does not destroy any faculty or instinct of the body, but gives it a different role to play in one's life, a secondary role. And as one learns all the facets of directing the breath, and is able to do them, one begins to bridle all his passions in a different way, in a non-dualistic way and this is most helpful.

GATHA: The more man gives way to the appetites and passions the more he is enslaved by them, until he reaches a state where he speaks and acts against his own conscience.

TASAWWUF: In the ammara stage this is often the prevalent condition. One does not correct this by lecturing. One may correct it by breath control (one aspect) and breath-directing (another aspect), and in that way the consciousness and the pressures may be lightened and the whole personality brought more into balance.

Although there are traditions, and especially from the Greeks, which philosophize on this subject, this has not helped much in transforming the person. It is not a matter of words, it is a matter of awakening and tuning heart, and controlling all the agitations which arouse the personality.

GATHA: Such faults as treachery, flattery, falseness, and all others of the kind, come from lack of will-power and from giving way to the passions.

TASAWWUF: The lack of will power can be corrected especially by concentration. The more one practices concentration and the more one performs the esoteric disciplines the easier is it both to build up the will-power and to control the passions. As attention is drawn to the higher centers, then it is withdrawn from the lower centers. When it is withdrawn from the lower centers the passions are stilled. When the passions are still there is less likelihood to give way to the faults mentioned or to others. They can not arise when the consciousness is in the higher centers or when the breath is pure and light.

GATHA: For training the ego it is not absolutely necessary to abstain from all physical desires; the idea is to master the desire instead of allowing it to master one. The complaint of every soul and the remorse of every soul is always the same thing, the enslavement of man through yielding to his desires.

TASAWWUF: Prophet Mohammed declared there is to be no monasticism in Islam. There are even schools of Buddhists who declare that Nirvana is to be found in the midst of Samsara. We cannot make these differentiations and think oneself. Mohammed also said that his three delights were perfumes, prayer and the company of women-kind. But he did not mean this in any lascivious fashion at all; he had complete self-control.

There have been many great souls who lived very liberally and there have been mystics who lead a very different kind of life which did not look like the inner life, but also this is explained in *The Inner Life* and its commentaries.

GATHA: One allows the desire to master one when one identifies oneself with the desire; and one pities oneself, which makes things worse.

TASAWWUF: Passions make for weakness and desires often change. Besides there are changes of direction in life brought about by the ego itself, by circumstances and also when one is under discipline. All of them show that whatever is in the world is subject to change and there can be no lasting attachment to the changeable (See *Buddha's Teachings*).

GATHA: And the desire for the momentary joy becomes an excuse for having given way. For instance, a person who gets up late makes the cold an excuse; he had to, he says, because it was cold. Reason always supplies an excuse for everything. But one cannot escape the consequences, and the remorse that follows proves that a fault has been committed.

TASAWWUF: The part Reason plays is explained in Gatha 7, Series I, *Metaphysics* (TASAWWUF). It is most difficult to learn in the sense of making it part of one's conscience, one's consciousness and one's character. But this false reason is found to be based only on ego and never on standards. There are no solid standards in such behavior.

GATHA: And once a person has accustomed himself to his faults, the sense of his fault become less keen; then he no longer troubles about them. Then he becomes a slave to his faults, he is like a worm, and his faults become his life. That is why in the language of the Hindus the word for Hell means a place of worms (naraka).

TASAWWUF: This is the abnormally "normal" state of nufs ammara. The people of nufs ammara have no particular standard but of excusing themselves and looking after themselves, their delights, their pleasures. When external pleasures are taken from them they are very uncomfortable. In a sense they are child-souls, so to speak.

GATHA: In other words, he feeds on his faults and his faults find their nourishment in him.

TASAWWUF: These faults find gratification on the physical plane. Also they occupy all his mental activities. The mind is not used otherwise than in self-gratification of some kind. Very often he is attached to his instincts and is not necessarily deep in either love or hate.

In extreme cases we can distinguish these people by their diseases. For every disease, especially of the virulent kind, is due to self-gratification of some sort. People blame it on viruses, on small germs, but the real cause of most disease is self-gratification.

GATHA: To a keen sight such cases are not rare. There are some cases that everyone can see, others are hidden.

TASAWWUF: Our first consideration is observation, but many people can see the short-comings of others. Our next consideration is to find a way to save ourselves and others. The ordinary dualistic methods of correction have not always been successful. Certain causes of dissatisfaction are noticed and corrected, but the prime seat of all discomfort, dissatisfaction, the ego-self, has been left alone.

Sometimes whole religions, whole cultures are centered on the ego. So these cultures may provide wants, comforts, things, but they do not bring happiness, they do not rid themselves of ills. The Inner Life has for its goal the removal of all the shortcomings of mankind.

GATHA: Those who know its value consider the training of the ego the most important thing in life. The first lesson in this training is to ask, “Why must I have a certain thing? Why must I not have it? If it is not good for me why should I have it?” When a person has acquired the habit of speaking with his ego in this way about every physical appetite, he will always be able to do what he ought to do.

TASAWWUF: The first step is to appreciate that one must struggle with the ego, and then proceed. But it is the subtle ego itself which proposes an external action, as if the ego were something apart which can be removed by cleansing or an outer battle. It is only when one advances in the science of breath, practicing self-control through the breathing, for the word nufs itself means nothing but hardening of the breath. It is the same word which is called nephesh in Hebrew, usually called “soul.” It is this which must be brought under control and this is done by mastery of breathing and esoteric devotion.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 5

The Training of the Ego: What the Ego Needs and What It Does Not Need

GATHA: In order to train the ego it is necessary that one should distinguish what is the right of the ego and what is not its right. The ego has a tendency to want what it needs and also what it does not need. The first is its natural appetite and the second is greed.

TASAWWUF: It is very hard to train the ego with any dualistic outlook, with any sense of separation from it. We have seen the centuries of blaming the devil, the devil is regarded as an outside tempter. But the more one looks into life, although there are outside temptations, they would be ineffective if there were not something within that could be tempted.

For instance, imagine a devout Burmese going to Paris. That is a city with food and liquor and all sorts of sex-allurements. They would mean very little or nothing to him. And perhaps in another manner a western man going to parts of Asia or Africa would not be so tempted either. He might be bored.

When the child is born and while he is still small, he has not a highly refined self-centered nature. Then his instincts are dominant, when to eat, when to sleep, when to play. Something in him, in his very nervous system does that. As he grows older the conscious nervous system develops and also the sense of ego-self. Then he makes some choices, what he likes, and they are no longer determined by basic instinct. In such a way also the natural instincts are overclouded. There is nothing wrong with them, and often they are needed in man's life, but are covered over.

GATHA: This is like the nature of the dog, that after eating the flesh of the bone still guards the bone against another dog. Besides this the ego has a tendency to want more and more of what it likes, regardless of right and justice, also regardless of the after-effect. For instance a person may eat and drink more and more until this makes him ill. Every kind of gratification of desire or appetite gives a tendency to want more and more.

TASAWWUF: Now the philosophy of this, the moral side can be seen but although it is often clearly seen and understood it does not lead to a change in the behavior pattern. The wise learn the disciplines which come from esoteric training. Thus Mohammed inculcated the institution of five prayers a day and this took man's attention away from mere animal participations. It automatically controlled his wildness. And then when he listened to the voice of the Prophet he was moved to operate in another direction with a more serious attitude toward life.

When a child receives anything, such as food or attention or a toy, this stimulates the inbreath called Urouj by the Sufis, and then when it desires anything this also stimulates Urouj. And when the Urouj is strong the child will cry. Sometimes the parent will give something and this may satisfy but the underlying factor may be instinct or again it may be the Urouj breath.

As one grows older one develops self will and then the instincts are not so dominant. But the habit of wanting, of desiring, or having the breath in Urouj remains. This builds up the desire-nature more and more. Man does not distinguish between basic needs and ego-wants. One can tell by looking at the breath. The breath is in Urouj; one wants. If the Urouj can be controlled then the desire nature also can be controlled.

GATHA: Then there is a desire for change of experience, and when a person gives in to it, it never ends. Excess of desire in appetites or passions always produces an intoxication in man. It increases to such an extent that the limited means that man has become insufficient to gratify his desires. Therefore, naturally, to satisfy his desires he wants more than what is his own, and he wants what belongs to other people.

TASAWWUF: The sermon is not the way to change this. The sermon is an external appeal and this cannot effect the inner person. Suppose a person with a strong Urouj, with a great desire nature were to listen to a sermon. The very subject-matter only increase attention to the very thing that is in his psyche. It has to be removed from the psyche. It is not removed by giving thought to it; it is removed by taking away, by looking in other directions.

Therefore all breathing exercises, especially those that soften the breath and sometimes lengthen the breath; also all practices in meditation, no matter what their nature, take the consciousness away from the objects of desire, even from desiring itself.

One can lecture against desire without effect, but one who practices meditation in any form will be automatically removed from the psychic state in which the desires operate best. The meditation has an immediate psychological effect. One does not have to say, "Desire less;" one merely operates, "meditate more, pray more, look into oneself more." This is not only a positive attitude, it is more effective.

GATHA: When this begins, naturally injustice begins. Then he cannot get what he wants, then there is pain and disappointment.

TASAWWUF: All the wars and injustices arise from this. The long habit of arousing emotions; the long search for external enemies, for seeking compensation at the expense of others has kept the world in turmoil. It ought to be obvious that real peace and real justice must be sought from another point of view, a point of view which one may not ordinarily meet.

The *Bowl of Saki* says: "Justice can never be developed while we judge others. The only way is by constantly judging ourselves." And this lesson is further developed in "The Art of Personality." But what is needed most are the practices, the outlooks which will either control the desire nature, or enable man to reach goals without causing harm to others, without depriving them of anything.

One can read in the *Gita* and elsewhere about being equal-minded in pleasure and pain. But how to attain this? The wise pay attention to the breath. When the breath becomes balanced it is easy to keep the mind in a state of equilibrium. When the breath is refined, when the breath is properly directed to the higher centers, the desire-nature comes under control.

GATHA: When one person gratifies his desires more than other people, the others who see this want to take away the gratification he has. One naturally expects a thinker to understand this and to relieve his ego of all that is unnecessary.

TASAWWUF: Now we have seen the external means tried—some are successful, some not so. In very different societies, such as those of communists and Buddhists and in parts of Africa, for instance, the outlooks are different. And often when we look at these people we do not find so much desire, and breath is not always in Urouj. But in America, which has built a social order for the gratification of desires, the wants are encouraged, the desire-natures are regarded as good, and then the rhythm of breath constantly increases, and especially the inhalation.

Then sometimes and again often, to keep this breath under control and to keep a balance psychically there is resort to stimulants, laxatives, drugs of all sorts, and instability. And then the disturbances touch the finer bodies and people then resort to psychic drugs with more misunderstanding and instability. If attention were paid to the instincts, which are sometimes unfortunately called “animal instincts,” it might be otherwise. For the instincts, growing out of the tropisms of plant life, show nothing but the search for light and for increased capacity for the functions of life.

GATHA: The training of the ego is this, to eat to live, and not to live to eat. And so with all things one desires.

TASAWWUF: The Hebrew Bible teaches that all things in God’s creation are good, were meant to be good. The Samkhya philosophy teaches that man must control the Prakrit and this is only theoretical philosophy. But to put it into practice the various yoga systems came into being. Most are based on efforts to control the desire nature, to subvert Prakrit and thus not give more than necessary attention to sex, food and wants in general. But in philosophies there are just words and thoughts; in Yoga there are methodologies.

GATHA: The nature of desire is such that nothing will satisfy it forever, and sometimes the pleasure of a moment costs more than it is worth. And when one’s eyes are closed to this one takes the momentary pleasure regardless of what will come after.

TASAWWUF: And no matter how much some people know verbally and even mentally of reciprocity and karma, there is not much reflection on these things. And thus we see ourselves tied to the wheel of samsara. And the way out is really simple, only it has to be practiced, to be aware of the breath and to practice the presence of God however one can, wherever one can, whenever one can.

GATHA: The training of the ego is not necessarily a sad life of renunciation, nor is it necessarily the life of a hermit. The training is to be wise in life, and to understand what we desire and why we desire it and what effect will follow, what we can afford and what we cannot afford.

TASAWWUF: This has been called since early times the “middle path.” But in the course of centuries there has been a thought-form, “middle path,” and it sometimes comes to mean anything at all. Certain rules, certain customs become crystallized and remain and the balance between participation and restraint thus becomes lost. If we study the roles of the wise in history we can find them in all capacities and sometimes a God-conscious man may be acting exactly opposite to the ascetic. So we find some who adhere verbally to the words of Mohammed, “no monkery in Islam” and there are others who becoming self-centered repeat over and over again the errors of indulgence and the errors of total restraint.

GATHA: It is also to understand desire from the point of view of justice, to know whether it is right and just.

TASAWWUF: *Gayan* teaches: “Before trying to know the justice of God, one must oneself become just.” And there are several ways in which the justice can be learned. Thus the balance between intake and outtake of breath. The Goddess of Justice used to be pictured with a balance. But the very symbol of Goddess, and the names given to her, will find in the end the Divine Breath and the Divine Justice are one and the same and also this may be called “Holy Mother”.

There is no need for subjective devotion, a concept, when one can practice the Presence and keep the breath refined and in even keel. Therefore Fikr is practiced both to help the mind and breath and when one is in Fikr, by the practice of Fikr one does not have to subject anything to dualistic judgment. When the breath remains as established in the Fikr, this is the right course for the devotee; and when there is a change or disturbance this is the wrong course for that devotee.

GATHA: If the ego is given way to in the very least in the excess of its desires, it becomes master of one's self. Therefore in training the ego, even the slightest thing, must be avoided which may in time master us.

TASAWWUF: The *Bowl of Saki* (May 23) says: “Every man's desire is according to his evolution, that which he is ready for, is the desirable thing for him.” *Gayan* teaches: “Every desire increases the power of man to accomplish his main desire, which is the purpose of every soul.” And “Every desire in life has its answer; if it were not so, creation would not have gone on.”

Self-control is a virtue in the purest sense. It adds to life. It accumulates psychic reserve. It builds inner strength. And it helps one to realize the Divine Presence and this in turn helps to control the desire-nature.

GATHA: The ideal life is the life of balance, not necessarily the life of renunciation. Renunciation must not be practiced for the sake of renunciation, but it must be practiced if it is necessary for balance. Verily balance is the real life.

TASAWWUF: *Gayan* says: “The fulfillment of every activity is in its balance.” And “The secret of life is balance, and the absence of balance is life's destruction.” And *Vadan* says: “Balance is the keynote of spiritual attainment.” Many devotees, reading these words, become attached to them. If they become attached to the words they over-evaluate the words and this also disturbs the balance. But if one attains the balance first, there is no danger. There should be balance between inhalation and exhalation and also some balance in the breath of each nostril. This is fundamental though it is not always easily learned. It's very simplicity causes it to be overlooked.

The next thing is that in the increase of capacity for light and wisdom there is also the balance in growth. And also in the expansion of love-consciousness there should be balance to avoid intoxication and blindness. Therefore in the *Moral Culture* there are lessons for those who accept Reciprocity, Beneficence and Renunciation. The last is more to be desired and the disciples in Sufism are trained along this line.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 6

The Training of the Ego: Training by Not Gratifying Vanity

GATHA: The first form of the ego is that which the body helps to form and the next is that which is formed by the mind.

TASAWWUF: Take the example of the infant. It is not always aware of separateness. But after a while it becomes aware of its own body. It may be thirsty, or hungry or sleepy or anything. Then it begins to see parts of itself, it becomes aware of them. And at first it identifies itself with anything of which it is aware. After awhile it also begins to be aware of its nervous system, of its instincts, it may begin to remember a little, its senses begin to function and there is a single consciousness behind all this. And also the infant begins to identify with this.

GATHA: This aspect of the ego lives for vanity, which causes a person to do good and to do evil. The desire is always the satisfaction of its pride, and when this increases in the end it results in tyranny and cruelty.

TASAWWUF: One becomes more and more aware of the ego-self and in this one becomes less and less aware of the realities of others, they seem separate. At first there is no consideration. Unless controlled and disciplined the child will want everything, and may not even be thankful. Thus there is indulgence which is often miscalled "love." It is not love, for love requires some intelligence also.

In *Gayan* we read "Vanity is the impetus hidden behind every impulse, that brings out both the worst and best in man," and "Vanity is a mask over the hidden object that attracts every soul." And *Vadan* says "What may give vanity to one, may give shame to another." It is not always the same thing that is desired, the same attainment, even the same career. We are fashioned differently so that the Divine Light can uncover itself through various names and forms.

When a child is not controlled, it can easily be spoiled. There have been generations of such persons and they grow in age and authority but not in wisdom. So after a time there is a revolt against them for the nufs has no ability by itself to win the good-will of others. Doing good, as it is called, from a position of authority, does not win hearts.

GATHA: A person expects others to see him as he thinks he is, and often his self-esteem is excessive and it is impossible for others to admire him as much as he wants. One wishes to be admired for his clothes, his jewels, his possessions, his greatness and position, and naturally when this desire increases it makes a person blind and he loses sight of right and justice.

TASAWWUF: This has led to some of the worst miseries in the world. All tyrannies come from this source. Many given to flattery and adulation help, but in the end they, too, must pay the price. For this ego cannot accept that God created all mankind in His Image, and that God may love His creation more than a mother loves her offspring. Even those who are most religious may be among the slowest to accept this teaching.

The recitation of Kalama sets forth the idea of supremacy of God (Allah). And it is taught in *Gayan* that these two cannot exist, God and Nufs. One must choose one or the other. And when the ego says it chooses God and does not change itself, then the God-ideal has not yet been made real.

GATHA: It is natural that the desire for things that gratify vanity should have no end; it increases continually. The tendency to look at others, to view them with hatred and prejudice, to consider them inferior to oneself, and all such tendencies come from this ego.

TASAWWUF: Newton's Laws of Motion declare that all bodies in the universe move with constantly increasing acceleration. There is something like this in emotion too, that there is a natural tendency of Urouj to increase with constant acceleration. This is the desire-nature and it can be controlled by controlling the inhalations of the breath, and this control is best attained by maintaining rhythm. One does not have to restrain the Urouj particularly if a rhythm can be obtained and maintained.

We should realize that the constant battle against the ego is not won by thinking about it. Ego fattens on thought and consideration. The only way to control it at all is not to consider it, and to keep the mind away; this is done severally by maintaining rhythms in breath, in walk, in all aspects of life, and by thinking as much or as often as possible of God. Thus the outer battle is won by thinking about enemies, but the inner battle is won by removing the thought entirely. Indeed many enemies can also be overcome by not giving too much thought to them. Keep the thought on God, maintain rhythm and one will be following the middle path.

GATHA: There are even cases when people spend money in order to be able to insult another. To make some one bow before him, to make him give way, to put him in a position of inferiority, to make him appear contemptible, sometimes a person will spend money.

TASAWWUF: There was an institution called "potlatch" among the natives of British Columbia in Canada, to put on great feast and the purpose of these feasts was not so much to entertain one's friends and one's acquaintances so much as to compel one's rivals to put on still greater feasts. In that way even at the risk of bankruptcy, many actually bankrupted their rivals and enemies. The whole thing became ridiculous but it took a great deal of wise thinking to control it.

Among the peoples in the Far East there are customs of causing their enemies to lose face and sometimes it is done in this way, but more often it is done by doing such a great favor that it cannot be returned. There is no way for the rival or enemy to act and in this way the competition loses face.

GATHA: The desire for satisfaction of vanity reaches such a point that a person would give his life for the satisfaction of vanity. Often some one shows generosity, not for the sake of kindness, but to satisfy his vanity.

TASAWWUF: *Gayan* says: "Keep your goodness apart, that it may not touch your vanity." *Vadan* says: "Some satisfy their vanity by living, others by dying." *Nirtan* reads: "My vanity! It amuses me to see thee dance!" Or elsewhere it is declared, "Pride is the ego." For in all of these, whatever be the motive, it is based on the sense of separateness, it comes because the consciousness of brotherhood and sameness has not yet developed.

GATHA: The more vanity a person has the less sympathy he has for others, for all his attention is given to his own satisfaction, and he is blind towards others. This ego, so to speak, restricts life, because it limits a person.

TASAWWUF: Every expansion of consciousness involves a breakdown of ego. Even when this expansion is not permanent, the break in the ego is permanent. It will never be the same again and this is the nexus of spiritual evolution, to effect a change of status bringing a larger outlook.

It is here that pain can be such a wonderful teacher. But also can self-surrender be a more wonderful teacher if one could only do it, to listen to others, to consider others. And when we see so many claimants to high spirituality, there is hardly one who is able to listen, to give his ear, his heart, his sympathy to others. And this is corrected when one gives his own ear, his own heart, his own sympathies to others.

GATHA: Coldness, pride, jealousy, all come from this ego. There is nothing so displeasing to the surroundings as conceit in whatever form, and what is the use of an opinion that is pleasing to us and displeasing to all our surroundings?

TASAWWUF: *Gayan* says: "Not only man but even God is displeased by self-assertion." In the Pali schools of Buddhism the monk-neophyte is put on practices until he is disgusted with the body and with the lower emotions. But sometimes the training which causes revulsion, also compels the mind to be concerned more with the unpleasant. True Buddha taught that attachment to the unpleasant is painful, but in Sufism we are concerned with the direct positive development and not so much as to resisting evil.

Another thing is that the most virulent diseases come from coldness, pride, and jealousy. It is these and not some ultramicroscopic virus that causes the illnesses and until they are eradicated, man will in vain seek for countermeasures.

GATHA: In reality, a person's true satisfaction comes from the opinions that others have of him, not from his own opinion of himself. There is nothing more repellent than a thorny ego. The outward manner cannot hide an ego that is not soft, even if the manner is very humble. It shows itself suddenly, unconsciously, in a word or an action that jars upon another.

TASAWWUF: In Sufism the struggle is to rise out of this condition. This is called the Greater Jihad. It is the fight against one's faults. It requires attention to heart, to see one is kept pure within. This is also known as *mujahida*, and the person who can follow this path and practice such disciplines may reach great exaltation.

There is clear teaching given in *Character Building and the Art of Personality*. And in the *Bowl of Saki* we read: "Man's pride and satisfaction in what he knows limits the scope of his vision." And all learned people realize that accumulation of knowledge of names and forms only makes a larger boundary between what is known and what is he does not know.

GATHA: The training of this ego requires more care than the training of the other ego, for it is more difficult and a subtler matter to be aware of the desires of the mind and to weigh them than to be aware of and to weigh the desires of the body.

TASAWWUF: That is why it is comparatively easy to control and train the young. They are at first only concerned with the bodily desires. And the same is true of some in the stages of nufs ammara, that they are concerned mostly with the body and its desires. And so often has this aspect of the desire nature been condemned that little attention is paid to the second type, the self-centered and conceited who wish not only to have their physical desires satisfied, but who also wish to extend their domain over others.

Actually it is not difficult to extend domain over others when one has domain over oneself. That is why it is taught over and over that to obtain mastery over the world outside one must first obtain mastery over one's own ego.

GATHA: No doubt vanity is natural to the ego and the ego is natural to every human being. But there are desires of the mind that are necessary and there are desires of the mind that are not necessary. And the more one controls the ego the more one allows the virtues and the merits that are in one's heart to manifest. This ego gives a false idea of greatness, but the effacement of this ego results in the true greatness.

TASAWWUF: Here Sufism differs from some other disciplines which tend to crush out the personality entirely. It is not this. It is to open the doors of heart so that the divine light can shine forth from within, manifest and thus bring about the satisfaction which every one really seeks.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 7

The Training of the Ego: Constant Battle With the Ego

GATHA: For the person who walks in the path of God the only struggle is a constant battle with the ego.

TASAWWUF: Sura IX, verse 73 reads: “O Prophet! strive hard against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell—an evil refuge indeed.” This battling is called Jihad. And later in his life the Prophet said that he had come from winning the lesser Jihad, the wars against external enemies and was going on the greater Jihad, the constant battle against the short-comings in his own person.

Verse 52, Sura XXV reads, “Therefore listen not to the Unbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost seriousness.” And in many other places in Qur’an there are such warnings. But they have been externalized. It was the Prophet to whom Allah spoke. He was not speaking to the average man. The average man thinks of himself as being good and others as wicked or imperfect. This very attitude is a rejection that Allah loves His creation more than a mother loves her offspring. This very attitude shows that there is no battle against one’s own ego, that one is only engaged in battles against the egos of others.

GATHA: It is the ego which forms the cover on the light of the soul, and the light hidden under the ego is the “Light hidden under a bushel.”

RYAZAT: There is a practice which may be given, that until one closes his eyes and sees Light he is not near the kingdom. This would compel everyone to face his own self. You can not pretend to have this light for if you pretend it will not be in the eyes. The one who experiences the Light will manifest it through the eyes. Therefore the concentrations on Light are often given by teachers.

TASAWWUF: When the light is there, it will be as Jesus has said: “Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works.” But the half-educated people take this symbolically; they expect others to manifest light but for themselves it is only symbolic. This is not true. When there is light it will shine through the personality and even more to the senses than symbolically.

GATHA: Man’s sense of justice, his logic, his reason, his intelligence, his affection, all is covered by the ego. If he judged anyone it is from the point of view of his own interest, if he reasons his selfish mind produces the result, in his affection he puts self first, his intelligence is darkened by self; and this is the condition of the average man.

TASAWWUF: Therefore disciples and devotees are given practices in breathing and meditation. All the philosophizing in the world does not help much. Books on morals, sermons, homilies, have not helped much. They touch only the outer surface.

The whole tenor of the literature on Moral Culture is to get people to realize that the ego is a limitation, that we are living in worlds of limitation, and that we cannot get beyond them until we learn to see life from the point of view of another as well as oneself. But memorizing a formula often becomes a still worse form of deceit and conceit.

Sufic instruction is for the purpose of subduing ego. It is done in a direction of self-assimilation into the larger universe, in processes called fana. At the same time it is also done in efforts to bring out the latent faculties in man in processes called baqa. Baqa represents the life itself, it is God in action and God works out His intended purposes in the outer manifestation through man, not through chance, not through imaginary goodness, not through karma, but through the increased manifestation of intelligence.

GATHA: In proportion, as man takes away the covering from the soul so much juster, truer, more sincere, more loving does he become.

TASAWWUF: The practice of Wazifa is not only to become aware of perfections of God. It is also to become aware that these perfections are in oneself. In Sanskrit Buddhism they are called paramitas. Man has these paramitas; man can fulfill as Jesus Christ has said, "Be ye perfect as your father in Heaven is perfect." But the average devotee makes himself apart from the generality and from the stream of life.

Vadan teaches: "My considerate self, seek not pleasure through the pain of another, life through the death of another, gain through the loss of another, nor honor through the humiliation of another." And again, "Let my imperfect self advance towards Thy perfect Being, as the crescent rises to fullness."

There has been an unfortunate invasion of Sufic circles by those who ignore these moral teachings, who say that dependence on a Perfect Master is enough. But no Master is Perfect, indeed no one is a Master who permits in any way an abrogation of these teachings. For it is also written, "Neither can I be broken nor God, but the one who would break me, he is broken."

GATHA: Selfishness develops the sense of self-interest, and very often a person may gain earthly prosperity because of it. But as all things in this world are subject to change, death, and decay, he remains in the end empty-handed, while the unselfish man, who has perhaps been debarred from earthly good by his lack of sense of self-interest, remains possessed of his sense of reason and is rich in the qualities of love, justice, and intelligence.

TASAWWUF: We all live in the eternity though we may not be aware of it. There is always the danger of words being substituted for essences within our selves. It is the awakening of the heart that brings love, justice and intelligence and the constant repetition of words without any manifestation of their essences has been a source of confusion through the ages. The adept is one who seeks to manifest that which is he is and that which is known. With the metaphysician it is different; he has a philosophy and the philosophy is an ideal, not always an exemplification.

GATHA: The whole tragedy of life is in losing sight of one's natural self, and the greatest gain in life is coming into touch with one's real self. The real self is covered by many covers of ego; those which preponderate above all others are hunger and passion, beneath these are pride and vanity.

TASAWWUF: There has been untold confusion by making abstractions of these words and ideas. Until we identify ourselves with our speech and thought, we are in difficulties. The ancient Persian teaching of “Good words, good thoughts, good deeds” did not mean good” in a dualistic sense. It meant being in harmony with Hu, the divine light. Thoughts, words and deeds in harmony with Hu benefit and thoughts, words, and deeds not in harmony with Hu deplete us. So we become subject to old age, decay and death because we have lost the secret of being in attunement with Hu.

Hunger and passion are evident in the Nufs Ammara state. They can be overcome by a number of disciplines such as refinement of breath and keeping the consciousness upon the higher centers, physically and superphysically.

Pride and vanity are more subtle. They also affect the mind, Those who say that reason overcomes hunger and passion have not seen that Reason does not always overcome vanity and pride. For this we need not only careful breathing, careful practice of the Presence of God, but also careful mind-training.

Vadan says: “I would die proud rather than live a long life of humiliation.” And “The mystery of man’s power is his pride.” Thus there is a form of pride also which rises when one develops his power through ever increasing capacity to receive the divine effulgences. Yet this is a purpose of life.

GATHA: One must learn to discriminate between what is natural and what is unnatural, what is necessary and what is not necessary, what brings happiness and what brings sorrow.

TASAWWUF: In the first stage it is to realize this philosophy as philosophy. In the next stage it is to go deeper and when one follows Ryazat or develops in the light of breathing one will know what is in harmony and what is not in harmony with the spirit of the cosmos. Only this is experience which one must learn oneself, not a philosophy from others.

One of the simplest teachings is to learn to breathe normally and naturally and rhythmically through the nose. It seems so simple and yet with every strain, every harsh emotion, there is a change, there is a break and out of these changes and breaks comes the pains and decay that produces old age and ultimately death. As God is the Breath itself, this need not be and as we learn to breathe in an easy and natural fashion, we find more peace and strength in ourselves. It is not outside.

GATHA: No doubt it is difficult for many to discriminate between right and wrong, but by standing face to face with one’s own ego and recognizing it as someone who is ready to make war against us, and by keeping from one’s greatest enemy, which is one’s own ego, and time comes in life when one can say, “My worst enemy has been within myself.”

TASAWWUF: This is a very simple and very difficult teaching. The Arabs have a custom, that whenever one sees a particularly tender morsel, a choice bit, he will carefully reach for it and then put it in one of his neighbors mouths. He will never grab that which he desires most and in this way a sort of self control is practiced.

Another way is to avoid having choice tid-bits, to accept whatever is there as coming from God. Then one need not resort to any kind of denial, for this is the denial of self. And when one can practice the denial of the ego, one does not have to worry about desire-nature or appetite or anything of the kind.

The great advantage of having a spiritual teacher is that one can always deny oneself to let the teacher have his say. This does not help the teacher, but it helps the pupil, the devotee.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 8

Three Stages Through Which the Ego Develops

GATHA: There are three different stages through which the ego develops and reaches the ideal state. The first stage is called **Ammara** by the Sufis, and in this the ego is satisfied by the satisfaction of the passions and the appetites.

TASAWWUF: Five aspects are presented in "A Sufi Message of Spiritual Liberty." In the Islamic world there is also some difference but these outlooks depend upon spiritual development. Besides the intellectual grasping of the picture may even prevent one from realizing the deeper stages.

It is to be noticed that the word "develops" is used. Many have a false idea that there is some objective existence outside themselves that they have to control. The nearest to objectivity is that we can realize the conscious activities of the lower parts of our body and psyche. We can feel them. The process called "Centration" is presented in the latter part of *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* but the principles and methods have persisted for all times. Man was created in the divine image and is something more than an improvement on the animal life.

In the Hindu literature we find about the Asuras which means in simplest terms, creatures of darkness. But it also means that such beings are concerned with the satisfaction, not the development of ego.

GATHA: From this animal stage the ego may rise to a higher stage, which is man's ego, and that stage is the gratification of vanity. The ego is termed by the Sufis **Lauwama**, and this stage in the beginning causes a person to act in every way that is likely to cause harm and to be hurtful and unjust to others.

TASAWWUF: The stage called manusha in Sanskrit refers to the stage where man is no longer limited by his animal propensities. There is a curious attitude held by some savages known as cannibals, that they ate the flesh of their enemies. They do not understand the habits of more advanced peoples that they kill for the sake of killing. That seems to them useless. For it is the people in the Lauwama stage that not only carry on all the wars which they justify, but all the peace conferences which they also justify. This is due to the activity of the mind.

The Gita preaches endlessly against the ego (ahankara) and manas, but the control of education by manushic people means that although words and explanations are offered they do not belong to life; they do not affect life much. In "A Sufi Message" Lauwama is defined as "one who repents for his follies." We find this among the religious people. They repent and they do wrong and this goes on and on. Sometimes it becomes a game, sometimes it becomes an excuse. And often those who have gone wrong will try to over-compensate on the material plane.

For the condition of vanity shows that the ego-mind is in charge and although not necessarily evil, it is still self-centered and often much more self-centered than the animal people. For all those who

have schemed and plotted, those who have sought power in the world, seeing often that power can be obtained without bloodshed, have been able to establish tyrannies and empires.

GATHA: This continues until he learns to understand the true nature of vanity, since all good as well as all evil is born of vanity. When vanity ceases to cause man to do evil he has reached the human stage, **Mutmaina**.

TASAWWUF: In *Gayan* one reads: “Vanity! both saint and sinner drink from thy cup.” and “Vanity! thou are the fountain of wine on the earth, where cometh the King of Heaven to drink.” And in the Buddhist Scriptures even the king of the gods is shown to partake of vanity.

This is a very hard stage to overcome. Self-justification always stands in the way. Logic supports one. Then there is no escape from the karma. One builds castles which prove to be prisons. Although the Founders of religions have taught that it is only goodness when one does not take account of one’s actions, in the Lauwama stage there is such a piling of calculated goodness, of doing what may be called “good” for the sake of fame, publicity, and honors.

It is only when goodness is done for the sake of goodness, that one reaches the human stage. And the self-centering on sattva from the Indian point of view is not a sattvic action at all. It produces no lasting results either upon the ego or upon the world outside.

GATHA: But when vanity causes man to do good the ego becomes human, using this word in the Oriental sense, in which it means more than human, as it is derived from the two words, **Hu**, divine, and **Manas**, mind.

TASAWWUF: In this stage the active, agitated nufs comes to rest. It is called Nufs Mutmaina. In this stage one reaches manhood, mentally and morally. Much has been said about “overmind” and “supermind” but these remain categories of the average mind. They do not help the mind to function on higher levels. They may even block this higher mental functioning. It is the awakening of the mind as is described in *Mental Purification* that is of value here and not any dualistic, intellectual dissertations which are often the greatest road-blocks.

The progress in sciences and arts especially come when there are minds in this stage. For only by this the creative energy does its proper work.

GATHA: The first lesson that the ego must learn in order to develop into the human stage is that of pride in the form of self-respect.

TASAWWUF: *Vadan* says, “The mystery of man’s power is his pride.” And it is taught in general that pride is the ego. It is holding something together in a concentration of consciousness. Both the ordinary consciousness and the supermental consciousness may depend on it. But in sannyas this is supposed to go. Then the question arises as to the value of sannyas or asceticism.

This brings up a complication whether man by himself may escape turmoil and the wheel-of-life-and-death. And there is another outlook that he is willing to bear pains in order to help others. When he reaches this stage which is that of the Bodhisattva, it is a different outlook. It is the Bodhisattvic stage which takes man above all shortcomings. These shortcomings, including any attachments, show that the ego persists just as much as in goodness as in evil.

No doubt it is a higher ego that persists in goodness. Gita teaches that one must rise above the Gunas but in practice dualisms have been made. The so-called attachment to Sattva has meant the rejection of Rajas more than the rejection of Tamas. Rajas is needed for action, even for life itself. The interpretation of “Therefore fight, O Arjuna” is redundant if we eject the Rajas but permit the Tamas to remain. What is this fighting? It is fighting against the lower ego in all its forms and some of these forms are very subtle.

GATHA: As man has the inclination to have good clothes and good ornaments in order to appear in the eyes of others what he considers beautiful, so he must feel the same inclination towards the building of personality by the ornamentation of every action and manner in the way that he considers good and beautiful.

TASAWWUF: There are two aspects of the Mysteries. In the one all that is there is effaced, both good and bad. It can even be called “the flood.” It means the removal of everything. And the other is the perfection or beautification. And this is behind the establishment of Masonry in the West.

If we study the history of the Sufis we find that they encouraged all the arts, not only poetry in which they attained the highest art-form and development, but in all the arts. And in this they ranged from monumental architecture to details in carpet-weaving, embroidery, metal crafts, and all aspects of artisanship.

The principle involved is that of Akhlak Allah, acting as if in the presence of God, doing everything as if for God. And then there is no question of whether the mind is used, abused, misused, or transcended. All are possible when one pursues the path of devotion as unseparate from other aspects of life.

Ordinary people make religion a separate thing for certain days of the week or hours of the day. The mystic does not so divide life. Every moment is a devotion as it is said: “Draw us closer to Thee every moment of our lives.” This can become an actuality.

The way of asceticism is even more a way of denial than of self-denial. Self becomes a delusion, for it substitutes nothing for the self. In Kalama and Zikr, God is affirmed and the stress on God-affirmation is so great there is no scope for ego, neither ego-affirmation nor ego-denial. This is also the great theme of the Buddhist Prajn Paramita Sutra which denies all aspects of ego-expression and when all the aspects of ego-expression are precluded then the universal divine light with all its wonders manifests.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 9

The Animal Side of Man's Ego

GATHA: There is a side of man's ego which may be called the animal side; and yet it is worse than an animal side; for there are tame animals which have a tendency to love and to respond to love, and which are harmless; but there is a part of man's nature which may be likened to a thorn, or the horn of a rhinoceros, and this ego takes pleasure in hurting others and gets joy from giving pain.

TASAWWUF: We read in Sura XXIV, verses 39–40, "But as for the Infidels, their deeds are as it were massed darkness upon some fathomless sea, the which is overwhelmed with billow topped by billow topped by clouds; Darkness on darkness pile! So that when a man putteth forth his hand he well-nigh can see it not. Yes, the man for whom Allah doth not cause light, no light at all hath he."

Jesus has said, "To him that hath shall be given and from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath." And among the psychological types is that of the Sadist who takes his pleasure in the pain of others and if he can not cause pain to others, there is no joy for him. For he is attached to the spirit of agitation. And as man remains attached to the spirit of agitation, in the craving for excitement and the unusual, so he is not moved by the consideration of others.

Sufism differs from the Indian teachings by its awareness of a sort of diabolic side but even in the Indian teachings the rakshasic state is mentioned. The rakshasas appear in the folklore and in the Epics. Sri Aurobindo also saw this in the behavior of certain political elements before and during the World War of 1939–1945. And it is a pity that these people cannot be reached; there is nothing you can do except compel them to submit to discipline.

GATHA: From a scientific point of view this is called a mania or a disease, but psychologically speaking all that is below the human ideal is a defect in man which he could overcome if he knew how.

TASAWWUF: That is why, especially in the beginning, purification (safa) is stressed so much. It underlies the whole Gatha teaching. And along with that the stress on meditation and right breathing. This is not the dualistic efforts of moralists which may work for a time but they are outside the direct consciousness.

GATHA: Often a man is seen taking pleasure in whipping a horse or a dog, and the same thing may be seen in a more pronounced form when a man gets pleasure from hurting or painning another person.

TASAWWUF: The psychologists have dealt a great deal with frustration, that the frustrated people take it out on others, they show less and less consideration of man or beast. And when one looks at it closely we can see that societies not based on human consideration lead to this. When the goal in life is ego-satisfaction a chain of causes-and-effects operates and there is no beginning, end or break in that chain unless a whole new attitude is imposed.

When we come to those with animal tendencies and still worse with demoniac tendencies we can see there are defects in the breath and even in the circulation of the blood. Something is wrong. They do not get the proper nourishment either from within or without. And the way to correct this is a radical change of diet and also the right breathing, to teach them a more refined breath and how to get the breath to reach centers from which it has been blocked. When psychologists know this they can pass from some philosophical view to right action.

GATHA: This defect is shown in its mental aspect when a person shows contempt or antipathy to another, even when he shows disrespect where respect or reverence is due. Man gives pain by irony, sarcasm, or harshness of expression; there are looks that wound and many slight changes of manner by which it is possible to hurt another and get joy from it.

TASAWWUF: Long habits become established. In the teachings on Kashf and elsewhere one learns to deal with these long established lines, how to eradicate them, how to begin afresh. But when one encounters such people one also has to learn to deal with them, to prevent them from harming oneself, to prevent them from harming others, and finally to prevent them from harming even themselves. As this cannot be done by admonition it often requires radical disciplines.

Every disciple is taught to repeat Allah Ho Akbar, that God alone is great; that all power or might is not only in the concept-Allah but also in the sound-Allah so that by making the sound, by keeping the thought, one builds a strong bulwark which even the mightiest of erroneous persons can not break down.

GATHA: When this tendency is developed a man is naturally disliked by those around him; some show their dislike outwardly and others do not, and the man resents it only where it is expressed.

TASAWWUF: This is not an easy type of soul to contend with. It is easy to build samskaras or thought-impressions. They can become burdens on the mind. Often the thoughts held about the Sadiist may keep him in that stage. And if he is very egocentric, which is often true, he even likes being considered, he prefers almost anything to being ignored.

GATHA: Man often puts on others the blame for his own fault. This kind of ego may develop into a monster; and the soul can see this process from within and admits it to itself, though the individual may be too proud to admit it openly.

TASAWWUF: One reason for a momentary success of the Nazi philosophy and its attendant Sadistic behavior was the dualistic attitudes of its critics and victims. The strength exhibited by Zen Masters often destroys the beastliness or monster-character or the obsessions which dominate personalities. Strong measures are most needed.

We may read in *Mishkat Al-Anwar* or "The Niche for Lights" of Al Ghazzali, in explaining Sura XXIV (W. H. T. Gairdners translation):

"II. The Exposition of the Symbolism of the Seventy Thousand Veils

What is the significance of the tradition, 'Allah hath Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: were He to withdraw their curtains, then would the splendors of His

Aspect surely consume everyone who apprehended Him with his sight.’ (Some read “Seven Hundred Veils,” others “Seventy Thousand.”)

I explain it thus. Allah is in, and for himself glorious. A veil is necessarily related to those from whom the glorious object is veiled. Now these among men are of three kinds, according as their veils are pure darkness; mixed darkness and light; or pure light. The sub-divisions of these three are very numerous. That much only is certain. I could no doubt make some far-fetched enumeration of these subdivisions; but I have no confidence in the results of such defining and enumerating, for no one knows whether they were really intended or not. As for fixing of the number at seven hundred, or seventy thousand, this is a matter that only the prophetic power can compass. My clear impression, however, is that these numbers are not mentioned in the way of definite enumeration at all, for numbers are not infrequently mentioned without any intention of limitation, but rather to denote some indefinitely great quantity—God knows best! That point, then, is beyond our competence, and all I can do now is to unfold to you three main divisions and a few of the subdivisions.

I. Those Veiled by Pure Darkness

The first division consists of those who are veiled by pure darkness. These are the atheists ‘who believe not in Allah, nor the Last Day.’ (Sura IV, 37) These are they ‘who love this present life more than that which is to come.’ (Sura XIV, 3) for they do not believe in that which is to come at all. They fall into sub-divisions.

First, there are those who desire to discover a cause to account for the world, and make Nature that cause. But nature is an attribute which inheres in material substance, and is imminent in them, and is moreover a dark one, for it has no knowledge, nor perception, nor self-consciousness, nor consciousness, nor light perceived through the medium of physical sight.

Secondly, there are those whose preoccupation is Self, and who in nowise busy themselves about the quest for causality. Rather, they live the life of the beasts of the field. This veil is, as it were, their self-centered ego, and their lusts of dark impulse and self-love. ‘Hast thou seen,’ saith Allah, ‘the man who makes self-impulse his god?’ (Sura XXV, 43), and the Prophet, ‘Self-impulse is the hatefullest of the gods worshipped instead of Allah.’”

Concerning this last quotation A. Yusuf Ali says: “The man who worships his own passions or impulses is the most hopeless to teach or lead or guide. If it were anything else the matter with him the teacher could argue with him. But Reason cannot prevail over blind passion. It is vain to hope that such a man could be led, until his mad desires are killed. No one could undertake any responsibility for him, for he obeys no law and follows no advice. He is worse than brute beasts, which may not understand, but at least follow the wholesome instincts implanted in them by God. The lawless man has killed his instincts and is unwilling to submit to guidance.” (Fn. 3097, pg 935, Volume II)

On this point Maulvi Muhammed Ali says: “This verse shows how broad is the idea of shirk or polytheism according to the Holy Qur’an. It is not simply worship of idols which is condemned, but

blindly following one's desires is equally condemned. Many men who consider themselves the servants of the One God really bow in submission before the greatest of their idols, i.e. their desires ..."

GATHA: The soul, from within, is often frightened at this monster and dreads the sight of it; and when this monster-ego is so developed that it has created a world of pain and torture the soul finds itself in hell. This is the only hell that exists, either here or in the hereafter, in external conditions.

TASAWWUF: Sura XXV, verses 13–14, reads: "And when they are cast, bound together, into a constricted place therein, they will plead for destruction there and then. 'This day plead not for a single destruction: plead from destruction oft-repeated.'"

This teaching was given long before the rise of Nazism. It was a warning to the world without and also it is a warning to the potential dangers of certain types who take refuge in this attitude being refuted. Good but unwise people mistake ignorance for compassion or separate compassion from wisdom. We may deal with the monster-soul as a sick person and there are ways to isolate him and correct him. But in the cases of obsessions it is often very difficult. And then there are cases where the influences spread into the social order and the whole human tendency is uncovered. And this is not so difficult for many are unconcerned.

The mystic, following Jesus Christ and others, sees in the suffering of anybody, his suffering. He does not excuse harm-doing but he may deal with it from the standpoint of wisdom, not from dualistic condemnation which alone accomplishes almost nothing.

GATHA: Even after creating the ego man can be happy, if he can break it until it becomes his friend and servant.

TASAWWUF: For whatever harm one does reacts in the form of disease and suffering, all kinds of disease and suffering. And one is so attached to cruelty that he wishes to remain cruel even at the cost of his own suffering. Many diseases have arisen because of lack of consideration of the laws of nature as well as behavior contrary to moral laws. And in the end the breakdown comes because of earthquakes, floods, diseases, disasters of all kinds for they make no distinctions of any kind and the cruel man is less able to bear them than others.

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Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
the Only Being, United with All the Illuminated Souls
Who Form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 10

Self-consciousness

GATHA: There is a tendency in man to think a great deal about what others think of him, and in some natures this tendency develops quickly. This develops in him a self-consciousness, which is the root of several defects in man.

TASAWWUF: When there is thought on the breath, or even thought about thought, there is an emphatic inhalation and this reacts on the consciousness, making one more aware of the ego and less aware of the worlds within and without. We can see this in little children who retain a pure breath until they mingle more with companions and elders, and thoughts begin to come, more often from communications than from impressions.

GATHA: It enfeebles man physically and mentally, and makes him dependent upon the opinion of others; so to speak, he lives on the good opinion of others, and he is as dead when they have a bad opinion of him.

TASAWWUF: There is a Sufi tradition and it was also repeated by Moula Bux Khan, grandfather of Hazrat Inayat Khan, that the only gain in life is the breath with the praise of God and the only loss breathing without this praise. For this increases the magnetism from all planes. And when one's attention is drawn from God, then the life-energy is consumed and one loses that vitality which protects him from disease, age and death.

When the attention is externalized this blocks the channels of magnetism. And then one depends upon borrowing the magnetisms of others, and they are quite limited in contrast with the universe itself. And the way to protect oneself-and there is no hypocrisy in it-is to bear in mind the divine presence, however this is done.

GATHA: This tendency makes a person sensitive, often hyper-sensitive. It often reaches such a point that at every word he speaks he looks around for approval and every movement he makes, in the same way, is calculated to produce an effect.

TASAWWUF: While in Sufism we are not directly concerned with the protection from or the cures of psychological diseases, we must not blind ourselves to paranoid disturbances. We are concerned with protecting ourselves and others from these diseases and every Wazifa, every Mantram protects and preserves.

The science of esotericism (Ryazat) have within them all the medicines and preventatives and cures for such behavior. While the ordinary way is to warn against the ego, the Sufi way is to encourage awareness of the Divine presence which is greater than anything else. When one begins to feel this Divine Presence and especially when he appreciates the sayings of Mohammed, he can be assured.

GATHA: This makes his body and mind both heavy and burdensome to his soul.

TASAWWUF: Heaviness of either body or mind causes one to operate contrary to the Sufic interpretation of “Blessed are the poor in spirit” —i.e. mild in breath. The medicine is to make breath mild. This may be done by Akhlak Allah, consciousness of the Divine Presence or the consciousness may produce the refined breath. A way is infinitely better than a dualistic warning.

GATHA: It develops in nature that weakness which in ordinary words is called touchiness, taking offense at every little thing. And the nature of many people is such that they enjoy bringing out any weakness that may be in a person.

TASAWWUF: This goes in two aspects, the aspect of the touchy person and that of those who try to arouse others. What has been called the “persecution complex” was first regarded as a disease of the sensitive who would find that many seemed to be against them. And then it was discovered that there are others, as explained in earlier lessons, who make careers of causing discomfort. And sometimes it is true that those who complain have valid reasons for their complaints.

The compassionate person will always listen even if he finds the touchy one at fault. But his sympathetic understanding can be of great value in correcting unfortunate conditions.

Of course there is the opposite to the Sadist, in the Masochist, who actually enjoys, in a sense, torment of all sorts. It gives him a kind of awareness which he considers life, but he only becomes aware of life as its energy flags.

GATHA: It becomes a pastime and pleasure to such people, and the life of the one who is sensitive is made so difficult that he has no rest at home or abroad. Everyone seems to him to be wicked, everyone’s presence seems to have a jarring effect upon him, and he seeks to be exclusive and to find a seclusion which life does not permit of his finding.

TASAWWUF: Seclusion is not wrong for such people. But the proper seclusion is positive, not negative. It should be used to build up strength and not merely to protect them from others. Wazifas may be repeated to protect one in all circumstances. One benefits from Wazifa and one loses energy from every thought of self. This can even be tested.

GATHA: If he happens to be in a position where he has to speak or sing or perform in any way, he fails to do his best, and when he meets people he cannot stand a criticism or a jest. The presence of others has the effect of a weight upon the soul.

TASAWWUF: It is only nufs, the ego, which permits this and this comes from weighty inhalations. Therefore the adept purifies his inhalations by practicing the Divine Presence and this cannot be repeated too often. For this is a medicine that one can be sure of while dissertations and explanations of the faults of human beings keeps in existence harmful thought-patterns which are like living entities and which may be living entities. To destroy then one must uproot the basic thoughts.

GATHA: The desire of the sensitive person is always to be in hiding, keeping away from people, looking at others with nervousness, dislike, or fear. Such a person, however great his virtue or merits, is always incapable of free expression of his gift.

TASAWWUF: The disciple is taught to love others. As the scope of love increases, so does the magnetism both in scope and in power. One can look upon others with love and compassion. But this does not mean being negative. Being negative to the weak never helps the weak, it may even keep them in their weakness.

Persons who retain a negative view of themselves “leak”, so to speak, in magnetism. They do not retain it. They are like sieves. And especially if they are talkative they lose energy. They lose energy through speech and they lose energy through doubtful, useless mental agitation and cognition to no end. That is why silence both of tongue and mind helps this sort of person.

GATHA: Stiffness in walking, also crookedness, is caused by self-consciousness, and sitting in a rigid position, without any flexibility, is caused by the same thing.

TASAWWUF: No doubt there should be firmness in posture and especially in and with the backbone. Those who take up the disciplines of Zen Buddhism may become slaves of posture and then instead of there being the awakening there comes the numbness of mind. If this were not so millions would be experiencing illumination all the time. Cause and effect can not produce spiritual liberty. This subject is also discussed in the studies on Kashf, Insight, and elsewhere. It is the intuition which is more valuable than anything else both in discerning faults and correcting them.

GATHA: Self-consciousness gives hardness to the expression of the lips, and it stiffens the tongue and makes the voice toneless, preventing a man from saying what he wishes to say.

TASAWWUF: In studying the Gathas, one of the first things a mureed should realize is that the lessons may apply to himself. If he sees only the weakness in others, it will help a certain amount of external understanding but hardly develops wisdom. *Gayan* teaches that we should neither ignore the faults of others nor give emphasis to them. By ourselves alone we may not be able to help others but we help ourselves by not stressing the faults of others.

GATHA: Self-consciousness is like a chain upon every feature and limb of the body, and in the self-conscious person there is nothing of the smoothness that should flow like a fluid through every expression of life. Its only remedy is forgetting self and putting the whole mind into work and each occupation undertaken.

TASAWWUF: Zikr means “remembrance” and it is this remembrance of God, so to speak, that removes attention away from the ego-self. The ego continues but not with centering emphasis. In Zen Buddhism, and perhaps this may cover other forms of Buddhism as well, the action and duty are considered as important and the “small self” is an accident for the purpose of accomplishing the action.

Life should pass through man and find expression in man. If man wishes to increase capacity for life, he has to relax in a certain sense and let the life-energies flow through him. Every thought on self weakens such movements. And there have been great discoveries in the sciences due more to the recognition that the ego-self should be treated as a instrument or accident rather than as a reality making observations.

There is a Buddhist phrase, “in the stream” which comes when the self, the ego, is no longer emphasized and all consciousness is placed in effort itself.

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