



Gatha with Commentary

Saluk: Morals

Series III

*of*

Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan

*by*

Murshid Samuel L. Lewis  
(Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti)

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SRI Secretariat  
PO Box 51118  
Eugene OR 97405  
USA

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

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 III: Number 1

### The Manner of Friendliness

GATHA: The manner of friendliness is considered as the main part in the study of Sufism, for the Sufi in all ages has given great importance to the art of personality.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Over time, Murshid Samuel Lewis developed two sets of commentary for this first paper in the Saluk III series. We have included both.*

TASAWWUF A: The first step in the development of personality is unlearning in order to clear out any impurity; the next step is the performance of the spiritual practices which increase the inner capacity of divine light which includes all the virtues as well as all faculties and capabilities. Finally comes the stage of expression, for if one stopped with the second step asceticism might suffice. But that is not all of life and whenever the purified personality expresses itself, it makes scope for the Divine Will in the world.

TASAWWUF B: Sufis have been called sahib-i-dil, or gentlemen-of-heart, in all ages. When we look deep into the constitution of man, when we find the truth of his nature as depicted in *The Soul: Whence and Whither*, the heart is the innermost part of personality, wherein are the depths and really speaking the power which manifests outwardly in diverse forms. But these are originally based on the divine love which is the very essence of soul.

GATHA: As Sufism is the religious philosophy of love, harmony, and beauty, it is most necessary for a Sufi to express the same through his personality.

TASAWWUF A: Very often much emphasis is given on these qualities love, harmony and beauty, and this is not wrong. But there is a better way: that is dependence upon God and trust in God. If one is firmly attached to the Divine Principle and in love and surrender bows to the Divine Will, then one will surely express love, harmony and beauty through his personality as God, the One and **Only Being**, is the very Perfection and the Pleroma or Ocean of these qualities.

Yes, it is possible for a concentration upon these qualities, or by assimilation in spirit with one who has developed these qualities in his personality, to widen the scope for them within oneself; all this is good. But the final step comes by loving surrender to God and when He speaks man will surely act in accordance with these principles.

TASAWWUF B: The commentator found this constantly while living among Sufis, meeting them on the railroad train, or in public places such as mosques and banks, as well as socially. The presence of such people also elevates the behavior of the generality in such lands and societies where there are many on the paths of tarikat.

We are encouraged to see God in all forms and being. Once we get into that habit, not only do we radiate the divine qualities, but help awaken them in others for they are latent in all peoples.

This whole subject is presented in the various teachings on *Moral Culture*, in the lessons and literature and also in the aphorisms which can be used as the base for behavior in the daily life.

GATHA: No doubt in the East, manner is given great prominence in life. The courts in the East were schools of good manners, though a great deal of artificiality was combined with it, but in the path of Sufism the same manners which are used at court were learned with sincerity.

TASAWWUF A: The *Dabistan*, or *School of Manners*, is a very important book written by Sufis under the influence of the great Mogul Emperor, Akbar. While no doubt there was considerable show and ritualism with such conventions, there is no doubt that they were based on psychic and spiritual law. Akbar, with all his attention and devotion to administrative matters, never permitted anything to interfere with the work of the spiritual leaders of his day whom he placed even above the emperor. This gave a strong foundation to his work which continued so long as his authority was revered, even after his death.

This is no doubt why when one keeps in the proper rhythm, the voice will become gentle and the manners impersonal. If one is watching God and sees Allah in humanity, the behavior will surely change so that his every action becomes an action and an attitude before God.

TASAWWUF B: The book, *Dabistan*, or *School of Manners* is a detailed record of what went on in the court of the Moghul Emperor, Akbar, who was a Sufi. It is also the first book on “comparative religion.” But it is short in contrast with the *Akbar Nama* and *Ain-i-Akbari* which detail not only the life but also the doctrines and theories which dominated for some time while much of India was controlled by spiritual Muslims.

Akbar was interested in many aspects of life, and he tried to be exemplary for the future generations. His interest covered nearly every aspect of human interest. It is not necessary to study these things intellectually. But there is an aspect of his court-life which did penetrate deeply into the hearts and consciousness of others.

Some of the institutions and behavior patterns continued long afterwards, even when the Moghul Empire ceased to be. And one can meet the most refined people who are under these influences, and whose hospitality is supreme.

GATHA: According to the Sufi idea all beauty comes from God, so a beautiful manner is a divine expression.

TASAWWUF A: It has been said that the spiritual journey was one of God from God to God. Man can make this so by expressing the divine manner and also by showing proper consideration—that is to say, appeal to the divinity within another even though the other be at a low stage of evolution. But one may say that the undeveloped person may be rude and unappreciative. To this it need be answered that some bow to beauty, some to power, some to intelligence, and some in other manners; some are moved by love and some by fear, some by example and some by courtesy. Now behind all these qualities is one force, one essence, one reality, which is God, and while it is quite true that a boor may not respect kindness, he may bend before power. And what is power? Power is also an aspect of Divinity.

The spiritual phrases which the Sufi repeats mentally or audibly are all divine expressions and they contain all the qualities and attributes which may be used, and one will always suffice, for

while it is right to act differently with people of different grades, these should be different manners of divine expression and not different kinds of personal attitudes to the different classes of people. In that way some help can be given to every one according to his evolution.

TASAWWUF B: Hazrat Inayat Khan came to the west with this type of behavior-pattern. There is no doubt that his personality affected and benefited those close to him more than his teachings reached them. But perhaps this exemplification was and remains more important than the institutions he established. For in the end he asked that human consideration be considered supreme and that there was really no Message, just a call for people to recognize and praise God and show consideration to one another.

This was also the final lesson of Jesus Christ, a lesson smothered in adulation of his personality. Personality adulation has not done so much to improve human character, but the practice of the presence of God, **Akhlak Allah**, has and no doubt will. When we feel the Divine Presence, the divine expression becomes natural.

GATHA: In these modern times people seem to be against manners because of their agitation against aristocracy, as there are many who are against religion because they are cross with the priests.

TASAWWUF A: Some persons do not like the aristocrats and the rich because of snobbishness and convention. That is very well, but when the high-born or wealthy man acts thus he is really behaving contrary to his social position. The real aristocrat shows it in his manners and it is possible for everybody to behave in that way, if some attention is paid to it.

There is a form of self-respect which even when born of selfishness is not wrong. For much of what we call morality, hygiene, sanitation, comfort and cleanliness arose from this self-respect. Instead of considering that wrong, one should see that if there is any wrong in it, it is in not extending the self-respect. When self-respect is made universal, when it becomes identical with God-respect, then one has the divine manner. Everybody can be a spiritual aristocrat; for that neither birth nor wealth is necessary. Refinement is a sign of the living heart.

TASAWWUF B: At the same time there is a feeling or sentiment that there must be harmony and order, and if not conventional, then a new type of harmony and order, for this is reflected in nature itself.

What is needed is not the abolition of aristocracy but its extension to include more and more of mankind. We may begin by saying, "Beloved Ones of God." That should be a beginning; then we can extend this attitude especially as we come to mean it sincerely and see in all others the actual beloved ones of Allah.

GATHA: When man agitates against beauty he cannot be on the right path, and the movement of today against all beauty that exists in the form of culture and manner is a battle with civilization.

TASAWWUF: No doubt some people may be mistaken in their endeavor and yet have a conscientious motive. What is lacking is a certain balance in the individual character. Beauty balances power and power balances beauty—each without the other is incomplete. There are sincere persons who oppose the use of force and from the rational point of view it may be argued that all

use of force is wrong. The weakness in this attitude is that it sometimes is carried to the extreme of depriving man of his virility. There is something noble and sterling in what we call manly characteristics; we must preserve these characteristics from all criminal tendencies and use them in accordance with the holy laws of the masters. This is very different from eradicating them.

It is likewise true that some people do not seem to respond to beauty, or else limit it to personal concepts. Yes, there is a marvelous beauty in holiness, but what is holiness? Holiness includes wholeness, for there is no quality of Allah which is exclusive. Appreciation of beauty is a sign of the presence of love and this is very natural to the soul. Man has been made to respond to beauty.

The beauty-ideal of the day seems limited and therefore some oppose it and desire more rigorous standards. From the spiritual point of view, the opposite course would be preferable—to realize how many methods may be employed for aesthetic and artistic expression, to make a more complete study of the forms and norms of different cultures, and to learn the close agreement between the spiritual ideals in art and those of mystical attainment. Of course this is the goal, but if those who are on the path of initiation strive in this direction, they will surely be able to help all the world on the right path.

TASAWWUF B: We can see it in the arts, the disappearance of harmony in music, of form in the painting and plastic arts, and the rise of a kind of anarchy in the name of freedom. But arts that do not communicate cannot persist. As one reads in *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, there may be a form of excitement but it will not persist because this is contrary to the nature of the human soul.

According to the Sufis, the nufs is the spirit of agitation. It works contrary to the inner peace. Without it there might not be any interest in life. It is certain that many people think it is spiritual to withdraw from the world and persist on without any special purpose until death removes the consciousness from the body. But the Sufi does all he can to progress here and now and it is effort, not torpor, which brings this about.

We can see the different aspects of aesthetics and how they are related to culture and civilization. There is the aspect of expression and the aspect of response. Both are needed, and both may become important with the rise of the new aesthetics.

GATHA: The Sufi calls the manner that comes from the knowledge of unity, from the realization of truth, from the love of God, **Akhlak Allah**, meaning, the manner of God; in other words, God expressed in man shows in the action of that man the manner of God.

TASAWWUF A: The secret of this is the annihilation of the ego, absorption of nufs into the universal self. This makes it possible for God to express Himself through man. For example, if one has performed Zikr firmly and gotten into the spirit of Zikr, in completing it, self-examination is impossible for the state of mind has changed so much during the chant that it acts in a universal sense, and yet this larger attitude seems more natural, more real, more living than the contracted, limited aspect of mind dominated by ego.

If this state of consciousness is maintained one will find his outlook considerably altered. There will not be any strong sense of ego and there will be an increased sense of justice, equanimity and love. All this comes naturally in the hal or mystical state induced by Zikr.

The reason for this is partly because in the Kalama or sacred phrase of Zikr, one makes accommodation for the Divine Spirit and the Divine Word through which all light and virtues descend upon the personality. One advanced in hal appreciates this but it is always possible for the Zakir to take note of his attitude upon completion of Zikr, and he will soon discover it to be different from his state at ordinary times. And this is one way by which the Divine Manner is cultivated.

This can even be called the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the mystical experiences attendant upon Zikr are without limit in their number, scope, and potentiality, and all of them carry blessings.

TASAWWUF B: It is not only Sufism but other deep spiritual philosophies that give us this same teaching. Buddhism flourished to its highest degree of perfection under that form of Mahayana called **Avatamsaka**, or “Flower Arrangement” or “Garland” school. In this school one is taught that the divine light (and all its attributes) flourish in everything and especially in the humanity that inhabit this world. In their literature it is the humanity that expresses as well as responds to absolute perfections and spiritual attainment.

No doubt there are schools which see compassion in the way animals are treated and some which paradoxically extend mercy and compassion to all things and beings. But in this they often fail to keep in mind that man is the acme of perfection.

This cosmic approach is presented even from the first words of *Gayan*. It is man who was made in the Divine Image and it is man who can best express Akhlak Allah, both in his activities and in his response. Man can be sentimental (which is not wrong) in his attitude towards plants and animals, but in this he is expressive. And no matter how the lower creation responds, it does not manifest the perfection.

In Buddha’s lifetime many sentient beings became perfect. It was man who especially benefited and then denizens of the creation; it manifests in the humanity. We pray that the whole of humanity become one single brotherhood in the fatherhood of God. We do not pray that all creation joins in this perfection. If the lower creation could become suddenly perfect it would be destroyed, the universe would no longer persist.

The occult sciences of the world, both of the East and West, picture “God” (or heaven), man, and creation, as three aspects of existence. Sentimentalists become concerned with creation, and such philosophies as **Sankhya** want to get away from creation entirely. But our work is to express God to man, and in man and with man.

The light is mostly in man. When we express Akhlak Allah, we can also bring out the light in and from humanity.

GATHA: The following are the different aspects of the manner known by the Sufis as **Ilmi Adab**:

- Adab = Respect
- Khatir = Consideration
- Tawazeh = Hospitality, or welcome
- Enkessar = Humility, or selflessness
- Khulk = Graciousness
- Matanat = Seriousness

Halim = Tenderness of feeling  
Salim = Harmoniousness  
Wafah = Fidelity, loyalty, constancy  
Dilazari = Sympathy  
Kotah Kalam = Moderation in speech  
Kam Sukhun = Sparing of words  
Motubah = Self-respect, keeping one's word, proving trustworthy in dealings  
Buzurgi = Venerability  
Gheirat = Honour, or pride  
Haya = Modesty

Also bravery; experience; generosity; forgiveness; large-mindedness; tolerance; to take the side of the weak; to hide the faults of others, as one would one's own, out of sympathy and respect for another.

TASAWWUF A: All these qualities mentioned in the Gatha are aspects of Akhlak Allah, the Divine Manner. Ilmi Adab means the knowledge or experience of these qualities, most important of which is Adab, respect. While they are many terms and seem to symbolize various virtues and qualities, this is not entirely so. The Divine Manner brings these qualities and some of them are more evident than others.

The moral training of the Sufis is not a learning or a philosophy. It is the result of the awakening of the soul and of the opening of the heart. As man grows in consciousness and advances in his evolution these come naturally. All the inner teachings in Sufism have this purpose, for in the search for God man passes through and accumulates all the blessings of all Divine Qualities, and these things purify and perfect his own character and bring him to the realization of his own being.

TASAWWUF B: These qualities are aspects of Akhlak Allah, the Divine manner. **Ilmi Adab** means the knowledge or experience or the **knowledge from experience**. That is to say the true exemplar of Adab has the heart-qualities and the divine manner in his expression and behavior. By so doing he sets up the examples for others. Also in the lessons on Concentration one learns from Tasawwur and its practice how to make of himself an example for his own benefit and that of the whole humanity, i.e. attain the Bodhisattvic state.

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Series III: Number 2

### **The Manner of Friendliness: Adab (Respect) 1**

GATHA: There is no one in this world who does not deserve some respect, and he who respects another, by doing so respects himself, for respect creates respect, disrespect re-echoes in disrespect.

TASAWWUF: We see this quality in the life of the Hindu saint and mystic Ramakrishna, that he had deep respect for all persons. Within everybody he saw the soul of his beloved Kali, and consequently there was no one for whom he did not have respect. This is the spiritual attitude for none exists except God and in respecting another one is showing respect to God.

The Roman Catholics and some others show respect by bowing to priests and uncovering before churches. This has some value as a reminder. The Sufi who sees God everywhere does not have to limit himself to buildings or institutions; no doubt they have their value, but for the omnipresent God there is no place which may not be sanctified, no person who may not be considered holy.

Besides this there is a value, for it becomes a concentration. In respecting another one is holding a concentration upon **Adab**, and this creates a capacity in the heart. The more this concentration and attitude are kept, the more life comes to the heart of the moral person so in holding respect or keeping good thoughts one is really holding a concentration for his own enlightenment.

GATHA: The greatest education that can be given to a child is that of respect, not only for his friends, parents, and relatives, but also for the servants in the house. Once the Prophet, hearing his grandson call a slave by his name, told him, "Call him Uncle, for he is advanced in years."

TASAWWUF: This attitude leads also to humility. It has been explained that there is no philosophical moral which can teach humility, it is something living and has to be practiced. It is example and not precept which helps. According to Hierarchical Law there are distinctions of grades, as the light of God appears shining more brightly in some persons, and this suggests to the devotee the example of respect through self-abnegation before the one who is closer to God. But silence actually brings one even closer to God, and when a respectful attitude impels one to silence before another, it is also bringing the person closer to God. This is one of the ways by which the moral evolution can aid in the spiritual development.

GATHA: If one wishes to respect some one, one can surely find something to respect in him, and if there were nothing at all to be found, then the very fact that he is a human being quite entitles him to respect.

TASAWWUF: This shows that at the bottom it is the will to respect which is needed. One may employ reason but if one is fully honest he will find the seed of respect in his heart—and if he does not respect, that also comes from his heart, his will.

It is the attunement of will which is most valuable. When a person holds on to his individual prejudices he is not always able to move his will in every direction and he finds fault with people and then reason comes to his rescue and points out why it is so, and once will and reason unite in this way one can hypnotize himself to such a degree as to maintain unnatural aversions.

While it is not necessary to hold kind feelings about everyone, this is because it is not necessary to hold any feelings. If the heart is kept fixed upon God and one views creation as the handiwork of God, respect becomes a natural attitude. In this the moral development follows the spiritual development.

GATHA: One form of respect is to consider another person as better than oneself; even if one did not think him so. Or to regard another person as better than oneself, by reason of humility, or out of graciousness. No person is respected who has no respect for another.

TASAWWUF: Factors of karma and attunement enter here. Karma says whatsoever we sow, we reap, and whatever we do unto others, that will be done to us, which is true mentally and psychologically as well as physically and psychically. Besides that there is the attunement to Adab, which belongs to the Sifat or divine qualities; by cultivating any divine quality we gain that quality for ourselves.

If one finds it difficult to observe another as his superior, it is not hard to look at another and ask: This person excels me in some particular—what is it? And how can I emulate him in that respect in which he is my superior? This is the real humility which means making an accommodation for improvement. It is not humility which keeps one below another, it is humility which enables one to learn from another and it is greatest humility when one can learn from all the aspects and beings of creation.

GATHA: There is another form of respect, which is to recognize another person's superiority in age, experience, learning, goodness, birth, rank, position, personality, morality, or spirituality. And if one was mistaken in recognizing another person's superiority it is no loss, for respect given to man in reality is respect given to God.

TASAWWUF: The first consideration here is our attitude of humility before God. Allah is the only teacher, how can we learn from Him? It is not everybody who is able to contact God in His Essence, but all are able to touch Him somehow, somewhere. This is a great lesson for some of God's attributes appear in every man and every creature. In the spiritual study of nature we can examine plant, animal, and even rock and discern what qualities as well as what elements, chemical and mystical, have been united to form such a creature. Then we can ask ourselves, what is there to learn from this and how can I benefit by taking on some of the best qualities which appear in that being?

In the spiritual practice called fana-fi-lillah it is part of one's life to recognize God in all things. This comes as recognition and it follows after the recognition that one actually shows respect. But there is another way to approach this, and one wonders whether it is not also true that if recognition will bring respect, will not respect also bring recognition?

Yes, this is also true. If one looks at a person or animal or anything and retains Fikr or repeats Kalama mentally or Darood, it will bring an inner attunement and harmony and this will help

one to feel the presence of the Lord of Harmony, the perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty. No doubt this seems like a slow process and perhaps by itself it may mean a very long way to God. But if this is done along with the other spiritual practices which the Sufis use to keep a steady yet balanced development, even the moral training will benefit and respect will aid in drawing recognition.

GATHA: He who deserves respect is entitled to it, but when one does not deserve it and yet you respect him it shows your graciousness. To a fine person it is a great disappointment to lose the opportunity of paying respect when there was an occasion; an unrefined person does not mind.

TASAWWUF: There are several advantages in cultivating the respectful attitude. It enables one to develop wit, magnetism, cleverness, social courtesies, polish and refinement, so it is entirely for the benefit of the respecer. It is also valuable in hiding the condition of mind so another cannot readily read the thoughts, and it throws the enemy off his guard. More important than this, especially for the spiritual traveler, is that each time he expresses respect he may bring another soul a step nearer to God and righteousness. That is why there is a great advantage in revealing this side of one's nature, or in cultivating it.

It can even be said that one does not know how to insult another until one has learned to respect. This is not for the practice of the average mureed, but there have been murshids who have protected themselves by assuming a guise quite different from what they are by nature. The talib who travels along such a road, even if he wishes to appear rude and shameless, cannot be so until he has developed graciousness within his heart.

Why is this so? Because the undeveloped, by his insult, builds a shadow but does not shape it. The spiritual and moral person, through courtesy, kindness and respect, builds a light and that light shapes affairs. But the murshid who does not always express respect has the light and its knowledge and as the message is not to awaken everyone but to put the false to sleep, through his light he shapes the shadows of those in darkness; he leaves them in the darkness but even his unfavorable appearance is for their benefit.

GATHA: There are many who, out of cleverness, cover their disrespectful attitude in an ironical form of speech and make sarcastic but polite remarks, in order to insult someone. In that way, seemingly they have not shown any disrespect and yet they have satisfied their desire of being disrespectful.

TASAWWUF: There is a line which we can trace in thought as well as in speech. It is true we regard thought as related to light and speech is, of course, composed of sounds, and the direction of sound makes it harder to trace in lines. Nevertheless when there is a crooked thought behind speech it has a crooked character and it is also true that when speech does not seem straightforward neither is the thought directing it straightforward.

This is nothing but nufs and vanity. Sometimes it is due to a kind of self-pity, and when a person has a strong nature and yet has suffered defeat in life and does not understand why, instead of continuing the battle, so to speak, life becomes a series of skirmishes. So the speech of such a one has been compared rightly to a series of darts which torment without killing. And yet in the face of a strong or sincere person whose speech and thought is straight it is often that the sarcastic person appears in a different light showing that the manner is assumed and is not at the bottom of the personality; it is one of the many guides of nufs.

GATHA: In some people there is a spirit of injury, which is fed by hurting by hurting another with a disrespectful attitude shown in thought, word, or action. If man only knew that, in life, what he gives he receives; only sometimes the return does not come immediately, it takes time.

TASAWWUF: Why? There may be several reasons. If a person is sarcastic and the injuries he does are slight but many, it takes a while for all that thought-force to come together and reach him. The spirit of God always tends toward mercy and many persons are given every opportunity.

Again, wickedness slowly produces poisons which finally strike the heart, mind and body of the evildoer. If the state of health of that one has been good, if he has had a strong mind or been clever, there is enough vitality to combat the slow rising tide which will finally engulf him. Not everybody recognizes that every thought produces a change in the blood, and that all evil thought, out of harmony with life, can only produce disease and death. Thus the wicked often commit a kind of suicide.

It may be objected that not every one is punished in this life, while in the body. True. In that case, where the mind has been affected, on leaving the body the mind is face to face with a body of its own creation, totally incapable of meeting the situations that come before it in Malakut. Thus man makes his own Hell.

GATHA: He is really respectful who gives respect, but he who looks for respect from another is greedy, he will always be disappointed. Even to give respect in order to get respect in return is a kind of business.

TASAWWUF: Giving of respect shows broadness of heart, and magnitude of heart shows capacity of love which is of itself the source of all respect and good qualities. Trafficking in what is spiritual shows the hiding of goodness under a bushel; it is not real, and yet underneath it is real. Only if there is no sincerity, the virtue is not sustained and never finds a place within the heart. It is by losing sight of the ego that one cultivates the respect.

GATHA: Those who reach a spiritual realization will only give respect generously, without thinking for one moment of receiving it in return. When one sincerely gives respect to anyone, not for show but from the feeling of one's heart, a happiness rises from it, which is the product only of the respectful attitude and which nothing else can give.

TASAWWUF: What is meant by friendliness is the removal of that discriminating portion of the mind which holds the thought of differences and distinctions. If one concentrates on the idea that only God exists, one is showing respect to God by his proper attitude toward another. At the same time, even if one has not had realization, the respectful attitude is an excellent discipline of nufs, which restrains it and controls it. Therefore the moral attitude through this true culture of the ego can be very valuable in keeping one on the right path.

GATHA: There are many to whom one is indebted for their help, kindness, protection, support, for their service or assistance, and there is nothing material in the world, neither gold nor silver, which can express the gratitude so fully as a real respect can. Remember, therefore, that for something that you cannot pay back in silver or gold you can only make return in one way, and that is by humbly offering respect.

TASAWWUF: What is the attitude of the Sufi toward God? It is thus: I am not, Thou art. This is respect before God. Now how can one show respect toward man? It is by listening to another, keeping oneself in restraint before another, and without having to follow the course that another points out, remember that there is a certain life behind the words, actions and thoughts of another.

Now this life is nothing but God and even if so many people do not know it, it is by respect towards this life-force within all creatures that one aids them to rise in the scale of evolution. Thus, there is a great deal of difference between assenting to the opinions of another, which are his thoughts, and expressing willingness to listen to another, which is a matter of attunement of will. So many try to harmonize thought without bringing the wills together and this only leads to disharmony. When the wills are attuned then even from disharmony can harmony be brought. And if the mystic who is attuned to God secures the attunement of the will of another that is helpful to both, then the minds will adjust themselves in proper relation. By this, respect to God and respect to humanity become one.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 3

### **The Manner of Friendliness: Adab (Respect) 2**

GATHA: A respectful attitude is the first and principal thing in the development of personality, not only respect toward someone whom one considers superior but respect for everyone one meets in life, in proportion to what is due to him.

TASAWWUF: There are two points to examine: what the individual man thinks of another; what is true when we consider life as a whole. Our thoughts of another may be determined by our own ideas, feelings, or even caprices, and again they may harmonize or express dissent with the public opinion about someone. Now either of these attitudes may or may not be in harmony with reality but it is better always to assume a more respectful attitude toward another even when there is no doubt.

For example, one is dealing with a successful but dishonest person. If one shows disrespect, one is not turning one's back on the dishonesty alone, one is also avoiding the success. This is not right. Life, which is the emanation of God, finds its different avenues of expression in different people and not all of them have cultivated the moral virtues. If the more advanced soul does not keep the right attitude toward the ungodly, then how will they ever become godly? And again, it is surely an absence of humility as well as ignorance when one cannot learn something from another, no matter where the other stands in the scale of evolution.

From the standpoint of reality, that is of God, while there are all grades of persons, it is a sign of progress when one is able to stand before another in humility. Consequently while one may know that all the honours of the world are vain, nevertheless it is vanity to sneer at them, and it is better to veil one's knowledge than to reveal one's vanity in any form.

GATHA: It is through conceit that man gives less honour where more honour is due, and it is by ignorance that man gives more respect than what is due. Respecting someone does not only require a desire to respect but an art of respecting. One ignorant of this art may express respect wrongly.

TASAWWUF: We see, therefore, two forms of respect, at least. One is to follow the generality or avoid it, and this because one is bound by ignorance or vanity in the general relations. Then the vain person, who will not show respect along this line, will in his private relations express a form of humility which is vanity, because he is like a sycophant, lacking sincerity, desiring honours for himself and grumbling because he has not received them from the world. All this is vanity.

GATHA: It is self-respect which makes one inclined to respect another. The one who has no respect for himself cares little if he respects another or if respect is at all necessary in life.

TASAWWUF: In the courtship of animals, and also in man, we see some attention to personal admiration, grace and loveliness. This is all a step in the proper direction. As life offers so many

more opportunities for the expression of love, outside of the bare sex relations, it is also true that each one of these offers a chance for the expression of beauty, or vanity. In this it does not matter for while self-respect may rise from vanity, if vanity were not the source of good also, it is probably true that there should be no such quality.

Many social conventions and certainly cleanliness in habit, dress, speech and behavior come from this source, and from them spring graciousness, courtesy, and all the social virtues.

GATHA: To respect means to honour. It is not only bowing and bending, or external action, which expresses respect. A disrespectful person may bow his head before a person and strike him on the face by his word. True respect is from the attitude which comes from the sincere feeling of respect.

TASAWWUF: There is a form and there is feeling. Formality has been held in high status among the aristocratic peoples of the world and therefore those who have been democratic have not always accepted it. Feeling, however, is universal and comes naturally from the awakened heart. But how is feeling going to express itself? When it employs music, dancing, ceremony, dress functions, pageantry and all forms of aesthetic expressions it gives rise to formality again.

The spiritual life unites these two, the aristocratic and the democratic, by basing social behavior upon feeling and by stressing the cultivation of heart qualities. And how are the heart qualities cultivated? They come naturally by the awakening of the heart; when the sun of the heart shines it brightens the qualities that are already latent in the personality, and this brings personal development, and for the generality that custom of universal self-respect which may be expressed both formally and informally.

GATHA: The outward expression of respect has no value without inner feeling. Inspired by a respectful attitude, man expresses his feeling in thought, speech, or action, which is the true expression of respect. A sincere feeling of respect needs no words, even the silence can speak of one's respectful attitude.

TASAWWUF: This respect is a manifestation of life. Where there is life, there is God. That is why Sufis practice Zikr which always awakens the spirit in the heart, and even those who have not had the complete self-realization, in every practice of Zikr they feel a little of this awakening in heart. As the inner life manifests, the Message of God increases in power, so that in all the talib does, both inwardly and outwardly he can work to the end of giving God greater scope for His wisdom in this world.

GATHA: There are three different expressions of respect. One is that when the position or rank of a person commands one to respect, whether one be willing or unwilling, and under the situation one cannot help having respect, which is nothing but an outer expression of respect.

TASAWWUF: The Apostle Paul of the Christians advocated this and many have condemned him for blind allegiance to authority. Yet there is another way of looking at it: All powers of this world are only set up for a time, and yet in that time they have a certain usefulness. There would be little human cooperation or government without this and while the mystic may see the childishness of so many human institutions, he also sees the wisdom and therefore unless there is some spiritual reason for it there is no use going off in the opposite direction.

Sufis themselves have been divided in this and are still divided between those who accept the spiritual traditions of Islam, and those who do not accept them all literally. The first group keeps the people along a certain path until they reach the stage of realization, when they will know the truth for themselves. The second group are free-thinkers and they attract those who are not bound by tradition or the tenets of a single religion. When there is inner realization, these two schools of thought unite.

GATHA: The second expression of respect is when a person wishes to please another by his respectful manner, to let him feel how respectful he is and what a good manner he has. By this expression one has two objects in view: one, to please another, and the other to please oneself by one's way of pleasing.

TASAWWUF: This has already been discussed in part, and it is very common. It is often a part of the character of people who do not show great respect to authorities, that they will be very humble before the wealthy or religious leaders or their ideals in science, philosophy, art. Each will defend his own position in the matter, but when we look at all humankind, there are probably very few who do not reveal this side of the nature sometime. Those very few are mostly diseased mentally and psychologically and hold the rest of humanity in disdain.

GATHA: The third way is the true feeling of respect which rises from one's heart, and if one tried to express it one could not express it enough. If one were not able to express it fully it can always be felt, because it is a living spirit of respect.

TASAWWUF: In the philosophy of Fabre D'Olivet, these three forms of respect are shown to be characteristic of three types of people: those who follow form and fate or destiny; those who depend upon their personal will; those who attune themselves to the divine, who are called providential. It is in this last class that the Sufis and all initiates belong, who develop the heart and from that point strengthen the mind and body, keeping all these in balance, and knowing the part life itself plays in life. This is a sign of morality, and often of spiritual realization.

GATHA: The mark of people having tradition behind them, by birth, nation, or race, shows in their respectful tendency. To them disrespect either on their part or on the part of another means absence of beauty. Life has many beautiful things—flowers, jewels, beauty of nature, of form, of line, of color—but beauty of manner excels all, and all good manner is rooted in a respectful tendency.

TASAWWUF: Those who object to formalism see in it a deadness, but formalism does not have to be dead. Great empires like those of China, Persia and India revealed the great life and innate beauty by the great ceremonials of court and temple. It was only when the spiritual leaders went astray that the life went out of the customs. So one may distinguish by saying: it is formalism when there are ceremonies and customs; it is formalism when the life has gone out of them and they degrade into a superstition.

It is better to have respect as surely there will come a time when one will either desire to show respect or perhaps, assuming he is selfish, demand it. Or again, the spiritual leader will see the need for this quality in society and by adopting the proper manner he may be able to inculcate this spirit in others.

If we could see beyond the veil of death, look into the higher spheres, we should see this, and that much of what are regarded as barbarous superstitions on earth find their perfection in the higher worlds. Finally the manner of the angels is nothing but respect; they do not know anything else. To them it is most natural.

GATHA: It is a great pity that this subject is not regarded as the most important one to be considered and to be developed, specially today, when the stream of the whole world is running in the direction of commercialism, which tends to the beauty of matter in gold and silver instead of beauty of character and personality.

TASAWWUF: Social changes will surely occur and they will recur until the life becomes more beautiful. Even Japan, where the social life for centuries was based upon respect, courtesy and beauty has altered very much.

Now, there is a lesson in this, and it is in the search for beauty and the expression of beauty more than anything else that life makes its fulfillment. Even though we regard wisdom as something far apart from beauty, the two unite in the science and art of music. No doubt, as the Message spreads to all parts of the earth, it will reawaken that spirit in man which earlier gave rise to so much that is fine in religious art and ceremony, only in the future we may expect this to permeate into every class of society and even to all races of mankind.

This might be called the coming of the kingdom of God on earth—it will be the kingdom of beauty and it can even be said that as beauty increases so civilization advances; the two terms are interchangeable.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 4

### **Respect**

**GATHA:** The highest expression of love is respect. Respect is not only due to one's superior or elder, but even to a child; one should only know to what extent it should be given and in what form it should be expressed.

**TASAWWUF:** The principle involved is selflessness. This selflessness is not of the quality of zero, to abase oneself to the degree that one is lifeless. On the contrariwise this selflessness is the removal of the ego, that shadow which keeps life and love—in other words God—from appearing within one's personality. So in assuming this attitude one is benefiting oneself more than anyone else.

And in consideration of the form of respect, it is to be recognized that Divine Love and Divine Wisdom are not two. The proof that love is divine is that it includes wisdom and the sign that wisdom is divine is that its very nature is love. Therefore with respect there is always the Sifat called consideration.

**GATHA:** In loving one's mate, one's friend or relative, one's parents, one's teacher, one's priest, the best expression of love that can be shown is a sincere, respectful attitude. No love-offering can be more precious than a word or an act of respect.

**TASAWWUF:** The idea of sacrifice culminates in self-sacrifice, which is restraint of nufs. Love is something which flows out naturally, and one cannot hold on to it. In other words, it is not love when there is no surrender. The true feeling gives rise to a sympathy which enables one to behold life from the point of view of another, which enables one to feel the heart and mind of another. It is not everybody who can see life from the outlook of another, and the one who succeeds in this has become a master of life.

**GATHA:** Very often conflicts between religions have arisen because people who respected their own religion looked with contempt at the religion of another. If one did not respect one's friend's religion, one could at least respect one's friend, and out of respect for the friend, regard his religion respectfully.

**TASAWWUF:** Now this must be examined broadly. A man's religion is his personal relationship to the Deity which may be different for every person. No matter how close the agreement, as every one has his own compact with God, so to speak, it becomes from this point of view a private, almost a secret, agreement. So even if one wishes to state his ideas openly, they are only his ideas, they cannot control another who is not willing.

The Sufi who has cultivated the divine manner and divine outlook can object to no person's religion because each is the attempt of the individual to approach his God. As God would see it, so many want to reach Him, be near and dear to Him; so the Sufi, not only as the servant or slave of Allah, but as the very being of Allah in human form, wants that everybody come close

to Allah, so he is not only tolerant of the opinions of others, he encourages them in everybody to help them along the way of life.

GATHA: Very often, with all love and devotion and sincerity, friendship breaks only owing to disregard on the part of the one or the other of the law of respect.

TASAWWUF: Man was created so that his consciousness tends toward the mental sphere and this is reflected in the grade of nufs. One in the ammara stage would hardly have a religion, but no man, no matter how lowly, has ever been so entirely in the ammara stage that he did not reflect a little about himself or the universe. Often pain, disease, difficulty, catastrophe, storm and evil require him to do this, else his own fear and his fear of fear.

GATHA: What is worship? Worship is not dancing before God, worship is an act of respect offered to God, to Whom all respect is due. The man who worships God and disrespects man worships in vain, his piety is his mania.

TASAWWUF: There is a vast difference between thought and realization. Until we have actually come into the presence of God, we do not know God, we have not found Him. While prayer is always acceptable when it proceeds from a humble heart, it is not to be supposed that a mere spending of time in devotion to the God which is the thought of God is sufficient.

Not only is there physical idolatry, worshipping before idols of clay and stone and iron, there is also mental idolatry which is sometimes most insidious. Why? Because the physical idol before which man may bow may be the work of the hands of another, and in bowing before it he is acquiescing in the good deeds of that other one, and also harmonizing with all who bow before the idol. But the one whose God is in his thought, he is worshipping his own thought.

This has led to two complications. The pious ones, not finding others who agree exactly as to the nature of God, often quarrel with each other and divide and argue and break all the religious rules each in order to prove his religion is right. And those who are not pious then say that God is nothing but the creature of man's mind, that in prayer man is only praying to himself and that there is no value in religion.

Neither of these parties ever considers the possibility of a real God, far beyond man, Who can be realized, Whose nearness and farness are the same, Who is ever-present; only that man by his selfish attitude, wrapt in his personal thoughts, can never rise above them. And it can be said that when man prides himself upon his worship, that is not worship, that is not surrender, that is egotism and it continues beyond the grave where it brings nothing but suffering to the worshipper who will even deny the reality of God Whom he discovers does not agree with his ideal.

Now God is the Creator of all, the Fashioner of all, the Father and Mother of all—all are His children. To offer insult to any man is to offend the Parent of that one, and consequently whatever harm we do to another, whatever offense is committed, it can be said to be felt by God; in that we are disrespecting God.

GATHA: A true worshipper of God sees His presence in all forms, and thus in respecting others he respects God. It may even develop to such an extent that the true worshipper of God, the Omnipresent, walks gently on the earth, bowing in his heart even to every tree and plant, and it

is then that the worshipper forms a communion with the Divine Beloved at all times, when he is awake and when he is asleep.

TASAWWUF: There are three considerations here: the contact with God in name and form; the experience of the reality of God—both of these which may take place during waking hours; and the spiritual experience when asleep. The source of all these is the creation of capacity within oneself by the subjugation of nufs.

How is this done? One way is suggested here, that not knowing God, although believing in God, one can bow before the God that is in everyone and in everything. Some educated people, not understanding the value of this, have called persons fetishists and idolators who have carried this worship to the extreme. And there is the story of Moses and the shepherd boy, that Moses denounced the boy for desiring to worship God by offering material things to Him, only in turn to be admonished by God.

This shows that selfless worship is most important, and it is attitude and not belief which avails. Even if one has a fine philosophy and excellent conception of God and does not behave correctly in this world, who is conceited and proud, with all his knowledge he is far from truth, and the savage who knows how to set aside his ego in the presence of the awefull is much closer to realization—and reality.

The one who sees God in everything, even if he begins it as an exercise or habit, will surely come into the presence of God. The Sufis have made a science of this, by cultivating respectful attitudes toward Sheikhs in whom they have visualized the perfection of some divine quality in human form. By that the Sheikh becomes a mirror, so to speak, who reflects the divine light so that the talib can appreciate it and this is the first step toward the higher inner realization.

Finally it may be affirmed that when one has reached a degree of self-control, that is ego-control, there is such a capacity for the spiritual light that even in the dreams of night he is receptive to the Spirit of Guidance and is blessed by visions and dreams which show him the way to travel in life.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 5

### **Gheirat (Honour)**

GATHA: Gheirat, protection, or defense of honour, is considered by the wise a great quality, a chivalry which is found as a rule in rare souls.

TASAWWUF: It is said that in Japan, especially, in their code of chivalry, called Bushido, there was the inculcation of a very similar idea which was basically spiritual. No doubt much of the stability of the society of that country resulted from the moral standard. Judged socially, honour was the tendency to preserve institutions and promote respect.

From the moral point of view as well as observed philosophically, the body of man is the home or temple of the divine spirit and the mind of man even more so. One who has this realization will therefore act in his dealings toward another to bring out these fundamental truths. Similarly, one who is traveling toward the supreme goal will keep this before himself so as to be guided to right action in all situations.

GATHA: Man regardless of this sense is no better than a domestic animal, a dog or a cat. When their master does not want them he can scold them, drive them away, and they can come again, wagging their tails, for there is no sense of pride to be hurt in them. They only feel the discomfort of having to move from a comfortable place and they could also feel their master's displeasure, but there is no soreness about it.

TASAWWUF: On its worst side feudalism encouraged such attitudes, giving certain classes all kinds of privileges even over the body and mind of the generality. In the tales of King Arthur and his knights as well as in much of the literature dealing with chivalry, there was a conflict between these two ideas of privilege and chivalry, and the latter was always considered as being in harmony with the teaching of religion.

Gheirat as an institution seems to have had its home in Arabia. Although the period before the coming of Mohammed has been called the age of ignorance, we can see in the life of Abraham, the early prophet, that this principle was a very important one, and out of it came the hospitality for which the Arabs are most renowned. The Knights of Purity, who were especially organized by Mohammed, instructed all the warriors of Islam in Gheirat and it was they who introduced it into Europe through Spain, Italy, and in all places where they contacted the Christians either through war, peace or commerce.

GATHA: In man the sense of honour is developed; with his evolution it develops more. It is not only necessary that man should be humble, but it is also necessary that man must be proud. Pride is the sign of evolution, honour comes out of pride. If there were no pride nor honour, virtue would not exist.

TASAWWUF: We see something of this even among the savage peoples, that they consider themselves superior to the animal, and among races of low culture, as it is usually conceived, there are

those who have a high sense of physical cleanliness and systems of social and sexual relations which reduce immorality. It is this pride which comes first, and even in the matter of personal cleanliness it may be doubted whether this idea of washing would have been accepted by humanity unless it had been preceded by pride. It is there that man is vastly superior to the ape.

Where we do not find written moral codes we most always discover some system of taboos or rules governing social relations, and often we can find more wisdom in them than in the exact rules and laws of more cultured persons. There is no doubt that God has given wisdom to all peoples, each as they could receive it.

GATHA: Very often people confuse Gheirat, this sense of honour, with conceit, sometimes with jealousy; but even the spirit of jealousy, which stands to defend one's honour, can be no other than virtue.

TASAWWUF: To understand this it is well to ask oneself, why is one ever jealous? Why is it not better to assume a careless attitude? This last shows that personality is lacking in life and in character. There is an absence of a feeling of unity and pride, and therefore a tendency to amorality, if not immorality. Amorality is the sign of absence of life and love, rather than of their abuse.

Virtue in its radical sense means the presence of life. Now this life is something more than the biologists conceive it, who study only the forms which life assumes in the material world and know little of its essence. The essence of life is nothing but love and it includes all divine and moral qualities.

GATHA: People call it conceit, but they do not know the meaning of honour, that in the sense of honour there is a divine spark hidden; for it is the perfection of honour which is the Logos, the Ego, Whom the Sufis call **Kibria**.

TASAWWUF: What is this Kibria? It is the perfection of personality, the highest self or soul if one wishes to regard it as such. It is the very principle which works first for unity, then for development. It is through concentration that one gets this spirit of unity and when it is directed by feeling, progress is sure to follow.

It is the very God within man Which has created this urge, and that is why, when the heart is awakened, there is always a tendency toward kindness, protection of the weak, valor and helpfulness. In other words, the virtue in man is the divine spirit in man.

GATHA: No doubt when this sense of honour is developed without wisdom a person might become foolishly sensitive, and not only defend his honour but die for nothing, in illusion, just as the story of Othello suggests.

TASAWWUF: The same is undoubtedly true of the Japanese hari-kari, which was first a voluntary sacrifice for an ideal which was lost; afterwards it became an institution, and lost all its beauty, and even became a weapon of tyranny. This is due to the fact that many idealists do not see deep into life. The spirit of Bushido in Japan was derived from the highest lessons in Buddhism; this level was not sustained and gradually degenerated until any type of loss was regarded as a proper suggestion for suicide. Defeat itself became regarded as worse than any other kind of dishonor.

GATHA: For a man whose sense is developed in Gheirat, his honour is not only in his person, but in his friend, in his beloved, in his mother, sister, or wife, in someone whom he respects or whom he loves, or with whom he connects himself.

TASAWWUF: No doubt this same spirit is found in the Bible where it says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is an ideal basis for morality when the nufs is under control and it is also a means whereby one may practice self-restraint. Only it is most difficult as man, in his intellectual existence, tends to identify his ego and his thought, and so long as this continues it is hard for him to identify his consciousness with morality, as the ego-thought is always in the way.

There are some people who are naturally selfless and there are others who, because of suffering, or else through spiritual development, have reached a degree of sympathy whereby they can feel the heart of another and will always try to assist that one, at any cost. No doubt much of mother-love also falls under this classification.

GATHA: This sense of Gheirat has its lights and shades in dealing with friends, in give and take, and very often people prefer death to dishonor, and from a finer point of view they have reason on their side.

TASAWWUF: As has been explained, not only is the body the abode of the divine spirit, the mind also is the abode, so the real personality is in every sense nothing but God. Perhaps one can regard himself as responsible for his own body and mind, and another has the strength to increase this responsibility so that he regards the affairs of the bodies and minds of some others as his special care. Once the law has been broken, it seems to them that life is broken, that the successful fulfillment of the career is impossible upon the earth, so they determine to abandon this plane.

No doubt this is an extreme view, yet not only in Japan, as has been explained, but especially among the Rajputs of India this has always been the ideal to this day and it is this attitude which makes for nobility in its truest sense.

GATHA: Those who are trying to their surroundings in life, who are a burden to their relations, a trouble to their friends, an annoyance to their acquaintances, a disgust to strangers, are the ones who are lacking in this sense. This shows that the sense of Gheirat when developed makes one's life more harmonious, for an honourable man minds his own business and keeps himself out of the way, troubles others less, even if he has to suffer more trouble for it.

TASAWWUF: We have to remember that it is often vanity that prompts us to do good. Sometimes social or economic responsibility induces a feeling of a client to look out for his dependents, and in the spiritual path there is the hierarchical law which results in a different relation between person and person than in the ordinary life. That is to say, the Sheikh or the Murshid has an inner responsibility for the welfare of the mureeds in charge and his solicitude produces a relation under which it is no longer possible to say, I am different and you are different. Some persons believe that kindness consists of benevolence towards others; to others it includes the latter, only it may be asked: What is benevolence? From the Sufi point of view there is neither kindness nor benevolence without wisdom; in other words, kindness is love which includes wisdom. This has regard not only for the moment but for the future, and the wider the

outlook the further removed is one from sentimentality, which always loses sight of the future in the midst of the present.

The spiritual attitude is to have full regard for God, and this includes the divinity within humanity. By keeping this idea as an ideal it is less likely that mistakes will be made in our dealings with others.

GATHA: There is a story which tells that four persons were arrested for the same crime and were taken before a wise king to be judged. He saw the first person and said, "Hang him." He saw the next person and sentenced him for the whole life. He saw the third person and said, "He must be sent out of the country." He saw the fourth person and said "I could never have expected you to do such a crime." The first three underwent their punishments, but the last one went home and next morning he was found dead; that one word of the king was worse than death to him.

TASAWWUF: This last person had developed the sense of shame and that is always the sign of a cultured and conscientious person. It was weakness that led him to his crime, while it may have been ignorance with regard to the others. The king here was wise, urging death where it was evident that if that person lived he would continue in crime, giving other sentences to two who would repent, the one at an early date, the other at a more remote time; and finally, knowing that repentance was far better than punishment, he touched the heart of the man who knew better and that man, weakened by his inability to avoid crime, could no longer face himself and left this plane. This was a sign of shame.

GATHA: Gheirat is a sign of noble birth, whatever condition man may be in. He may be in rags, yet this spirit of Gheirat will shine out through all conditions, proving him to be noble.

TASAWWUF: It is said that this was a mark of Mohammed, who is reported never to have used a harsh word. It surely was true of Jesus, who would not let the people stone a wayward woman; and it has been true of many other wise men. The Rajputs of India have specially developed this quality and maintained a high standard in all respects. They believed that the twice-born had to prove their status by their nobility in life.

GATHA: Humility has its place, pride has its place in life. In the place of pride, humility cannot be fitted.

TASAWWUF: This is hard to understand, for both humility and pride have to be cultivated and at the same time man is instructed to become slave to neither. What does this mean? The initiate has to humble his nufs, but when he is considering God, he should see that his body, mind, and all external and internal surroundings and conditions be fit for God. This is pride. Even humility before one's teacher is a form of pride, a pride accompanied by due respect. It is to tame the nufs that humility is practiced and not as an end in itself, although often one will find the sage most humble and most self-effacing.

GATHA: Once the Nizam of Hyderabad was walking in the country, and a knight happened to see a thorn stuck in his shoe. He rushed, before the attendant had seen it, and took out that thorn from the king's shoe. The king looked back and said, "Were there no attendants present? It was for them, not for you," said the king, "and since you have taken this work, you can no lon-

ger continue to be my knight. Please retire.” It is the sense of honour expected by his surroundings that makes a king a true king.

TASAWWUF: Now for the Sufis God alone is King and it is by the sense of honour of the initiate that one is giving God due respect. The prayer says, “Raise us from the denseness of the earth,” and at the same time one is told to see God in all forms. Yet this sight is the true rise from the denseness of the earth, for beholding spirit, one is no longer captivated by matter.

The Sufi Order has been so constituted that the leaders in the various esoteric posts and positions act as vice-gerents for God, each according to his capacity and degree of development. The pride one may hold is not, therefore, a personal sentiment; it is a realization of responsibility and the need of performing duty in the best manner. By this the organization is continued with strength and power, and operated with wisdom.

GATHA: For a Sufi the sense of honour is not for his personality, he does not give his person a greater place than dust and the central theme of his life is simplicity and his moral is humility. Yet remember that the Sufi breathes the breath of God, so he is conscious of the honour of God.

TASAWWUF: What does it mean, breathe the breath of God? It can be affirmed that during those spiritual practices wherein one calls upon God, then it is God Who for the instant becomes the breather. As this is continued, becoming a regular habit, one grows into the realization that this is so and in the light of that realization it is impossible to hold any other attitude. It is then that the ego has passed away and the outlook is no longer personal, but universal.

GATHA: His pride is greater, therefore, than the pride of every man. It is in the intoxication of this pride that he proves to be God-conscious.

TASAWWUF: And as he becomes God-conscious he also grows in that intoxication which increases his pride, so the two are simultaneous. For when one feels God in the heart, one can no longer think or act in the term of “I,” the personal ego, which is, by its very nature, different from all the other egos.

Egolessness, far from interfering with thought, speech, or action, perfects them. It gives them a quality and a life full of beauty and wonder and produces marvels. It is of itself a miracle, and more fundamental than the phenomena that the sages and occultists sometimes produce.

It is this sense of honour of God which gives so much strength to the Murshids and holy ones who have been called upon to bear the Message of God and to inspire and elevate men. It surely elevates men first. The very nature of the breath of God is to move upward and from that there can only be a pride, in other words, an upward attitude, and when pride becomes impersonal, when there is no vanity in it, that which before may have been a vice or a deterrent becomes a virtue of virtues. That is the perfection of Gheirat.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 6

**The Manner of Friendliness: Khatir (Consideration)**

**GATHA:** **Khatir** means consideration for someone, which is shown in the form of respect, help, or service. Very often it wants a sacrifice, it may even need self-denial.

**TASAWWUF:** That is to say, the one who has reached the grade when he realizes and feels the unity and wholeness of life will feel it and hear it through another. Not only can the soul touch life through its own body and mind, it can only come to the surface through the body and mind of another. This is the real self-denial and it is expressed through acts and facts.

**GATHA:** However, consideration is the highest quality that can be found in human nature. Consideration of age, of experience, of knowledge, of position, consideration of some good done by a person, also consideration of somebody's feebleness, weakness, it is all included in the word **Khatir**.

**TASAWWUF:** The term expresses the relation between metaphysics and morality, between knowledge and goodness. There is the aspect of consideration which encourages kindness and benevolence. This is very good, but it does not become **Khatir** until it springs forth from a willing heart. **Khatir** is a natural outflow of good-will, and this reaches the culmination of its development when the will has become attuned to the will of God.

Why is this? Because in that state one looks upon life more as God looks upon it. The mercy and beneficence of Allah and all the virtues which we ascribe to Deity become characteristics latent in one's heart. This is not a compulsion and it is not even an instruction of behavior; it is not a commandment. It is life itself reaching its fullness, for that life is Allah and the divine life can only express itself in this manner.

**GATHA:** This spirit of consideration, when developed, extends not only to the person for whom one has consideration, but as also, for that person's sake, to another who is related or connected with that person in some way or other. When a king is respected and not his ambassador, that means lack of consideration to the king.

**TASAWWUF:** This principle is very important in Hierarchical Law, or as the Buddhists call it, **Saddharma**. Consideration can only be shown to a person when it touches the complete range of his being. And what is this range? It is not only his body, or even his mind and thoughts—it must touch everything his heart touches. Indeed, it would not be wrong to say that in **Djabrut**, where **Khatir** is a natural characteristic, as soon as one feels for another, one feels for all that the other feels for, and one even feels all that the other feels.

If there is anything that can be called Divine Manner it is this, which holds all the relations, seeing into the heart of the friend or beloved, and grasping the full content thereof. No doubt this is a hard condition to explain. While attunement of minds can produce telepathy, or thinking together, attunement of hearts brings not only feeling together on a particular idea, or intuition,

it produces a union, a harmony, a merging that covers all feelings, thoughts, and all that belongs to the heart, so that during that period the two are as one in consciousness. This is very different from the brotherhood of minds, and the mind can grasp it with difficulty, but the lover needs no explanation as he knows it to be true.

GATHA: For a Sufi this quality becomes his moral. The Sufi learns consideration beginning with his Murshid, but this culminates in consideration for God.

TASAWWUF: Spiritual practices in concentration produce morality without a word being said. When a symbol is held in the heart and mind it brings its qualities within, and when a personality is kept in the heart, the hearts draw closer and closer together so that the heart-contents merge. And what are these heart-contents? They are the grades of the divine qualities or Sifat, and it is through experiencing these Sifat in and through a personality that one finally comes to their essence—in other words to Zat or the Supreme Being.

In Sufism this has been made into a veritable science, although it concerns the heart most of all.

GATHA: When one arrives at that tenderness of feeling one considers every person in the world. To the Sufi the missing of an opportunity of considering another is a great disappointment, for he does not consider it to be a fault toward a human being but to God.

TASAWWUF: This is the only way of realizing outwardly that God is the Only Being. Through Prayer we repeat our salutations to the Only Being. That does not bring the realization although it often impresses so much that we feel the idea deeply; then when we learn through concentration and all the practices and experiences that awaken the heart, we begin to feel that and that feeling is Sufism.

Hakikat is a stage in development when the heart-knowledge or wisdom becomes one's own. And how does one achieve it? It is a marvel—one gains it by expressing it. The more the heart gives, the more it has; what it throws away it owns, and what it keeps it has lost. This is a mystery of the knowledge of the pure heart, which is without ego, or rather, which is the condition of Nufs Salima.

GATHA: Verily, he is pious, who considers human feeling.

TASAWWUF: Now we are coming to an understanding of what this feeling is. It is the attunement of hearts, so that what is of the heart of one is also of the heart of another. This is the pure love of the mystics which is also identical with the pure knowledge. Heart does not know these as separate.

GATHA: No doubt it needs no end of endurance to consider everybody and to be considerate always, it wants no end of patience.

TASAWWUF: That is why the mureed is instructed in this regard, and although he thinks he understands these qualities, if he understood them he would already be a teacher, for they are most difficult to understand. From the point of view of the wise, knowledge and morality are certainly not separate. So in showing one's consideration, while it may be said that this is a sign of kindness, it is just as true that this is a sign of knowledge of truth, or as the Sufis call it, attainment of Hakikat.

GATHA: However, by being considerate nothing is lost, if seemingly nothing is gained.

TASAWWUF: This is to be repeated until learned: What the heart gives it has, what the heart keeps it loses. This is the opposite movement from nufs, this is the dispelling of Urouj and all that makes the ego stand out. And yet it is this which brings to the realization of the true ego, that Kibria or Lost Word, the Divine Light which is in the very being, or soul.

GATHA: The reward of this virtue is always in store. Consideration is the sign of the wise.

TASAWWUF: This makes it appear that **pure** selfishness is the same as **pure** unselfishness. If one wants to have everything for oneself, one has to share everything with everybody. Why? Because that is the very nature of self, that it includes, so to speak, all selves. Verily the soul is all that is. Consequently while one is instructed to show consideration and kindness, verily it is for the sake of the self, that Atman as the Upanishads teach; that it is not for love of the friends that kindness is due, but for the sake of Atman that kindness is shown, for the sake of God, for the sake of truth.

This understanding of ego is bewildering to the mind, the mind cannot and will not grasp it, yet every loving mother and kind father has known it to some extent—through the heart. It is this point of view carried to completion which is the ideal of the wise.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 7

### **Tawazeh (Sharing with Others)**

GATHA: **Tawazeh** in Sufic terms means something more than hospitality. It is the laying before one's friend willingly what one has, in other words sharing with one's friends all the good one has in life, and with it, enjoying life better.

TASAWWUF: What is this enjoyment of life? Even if one is a recluse or hermit, who runs away from man and finds solace in the forest and in the solitude, he may be said to be enjoying life with the trees and flowers. One does not enjoy alone. Even God created this world for the sake of enjoyment and if we study the Sufi poets, such as Jami, we find always this teaching.

Love and happiness come together; love has many forms of expression and happiness is as far beyond pleasure as the heaven of heavens is above the earth. That is to say, that the natural condition of Djabrut presents a picture—if one can call it that—to which nothing can be compared upon earth.

Life that is not shared, is not life. We cannot restrain others from breathing the same atmosphere, and even man could not live on earth if there were no plants and animals and rocks. The whole course of universal metabolism, as the scientists have noticed it, shows the interdependence of creatures in a material way. This is much more so on the mental plane and when it comes to the sphere of the heart, the heart that has been made lonely because of nufs has created its own hell.

GATHA: When this tendency to Tawazeh is developed, things that give one joy and pleasure become more enjoyable by sharing with another. This tendency comes from the aristocracy of the heart.

TASAWWUF: We find this characteristic generally in all Islamic countries and most of all in Arabia. No doubt it is true to some extent of many peoples, races and religions, but it has been among the Muslims that it has been perfected to the extent that inhospitality is regarded as a crime. If one man should starve because another has turned him from the door, that is thought to be a very low type of murder. Better to kill a man with a sword without cause than let him starve, seems to be their idea.

And there is no doubt when we study the laws of Moses that he thought and taught that even though it might be necessary to kill people in war, during times of peace there was one law, one rule, one habit for Hebrew and stranger alike. That is certainly true of the biblical teaching and no doubt the Arabs as a whole, and Mohammed in particular drank wisdom from this same source.

This may reveal to the student that behind law there is something which bears the same relation to heart as law does to mind. This is called Hakikat by the Sufis, which may be translated, The Way, or the Principle of Truth.

GATHA: It is generosity and even more than generosity. For the limit of generosity is to see another pleased in his pleasure, but to share one's own pleasure with another is greater than generosity. It is a quality which is foreign to a selfish person, and the one who shows this quality is on the path of saintliness.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, this is the road of the open heart. But when the heart opens for another, it also expands. The more room it makes for others, the more room it has made for itself, for the expansion of accommodation is the expansion of growth. This is the only growth.

From the ordinary point of view no thought should be given to this subject if it makes one feel "I." This is an I-less, an egoless state where there is sharing because the ego which has divided person from person no longer manifests its shadow. The sympathy which is the natural attribute of the heart urges one to maintain fraternal relations with everybody. That is why the Sufi prays for "one single brotherhood in the Fatherhood of God," and this he can realize within his own heart.

GATHA: Tawazeh does not cost, it is the attitude of mind. If by nature man is not hospitable the hospitality he gives is of no use.

TASAWWUF: There is a magnetism as well as a joy in this kind of service. The graciousness will be expressed by every gesture and manner. They will be open, signs of an open heart, and the tongue will even express this in speech, for the words will flow from the heart. When this becomes a burden or a tiresome duty, there will be no magnetism, there will not be that psychic power and that beauty and whatever one may receive then from his guest, it will not be the sharing of life. Such customs as toasts are indications of the sharing of life and among some people, eating of bread together seals the bond of brotherhood between them forever.

GATHA: The one who has experienced the joy of this quality feels a greater satisfaction in sharing his only piece of bread than in eating it by himself.

TASAWWUF: Bread feeds only the stomach, while life feeds the whole personality. The communion service of Jesus Christ consisted not so much in the taking of bread and wine, which no doubt symbolize it, as in the sharing of life itself, and this can extend far beyond the physical plane. And it is always with the hardening of the heart that we turn another away.

As has been said it has been chiefly among Islamic peoples, with all their short-comings, that such customs have been continued for many centuries and they actually feel this, and an injury to a guest is the greatest of crimes. Some say the model for this was the entertainment of the angels by Abraham; this was certainly an excellent example for all humanity.

GATHA: Duality in nature keeps all such beautiful qualities of the soul away from man. The thought of unity is productive of all good qualities in man.

TASAWWUF: Harmony is born out of variety by keeping the consciousness centered upon some goal, some ideal, some purpose. Variety is necessary as otherwise there could be no beauty, which is born from form. When love fashions beauty, harmony appears, although it was always latent in substance for the creation itself was in accordance with harmony.

In unity all relations are included and if they can be controlled and fashioned, beauty, harmony and goodness result. The attitude of difference and discrimination sends minds traveling in different directions, each fashioning its own world of thought, and this causes all the trouble in the world. This is the condition of duality or dualism.

GATHA: It is not only in giving or sharing pleasures that one shows hospitality to another; even in word, manner or action one can show this feeling. A desire to welcome someone, to greet someone, to respect someone, to offer a seat to someone, to treat someone with courtesy, to see someone off with respect, all these things show the sign of Tawazeh.

TASAWWUF: In other words, the perfection of hospitality is to maintain this attitude of heart-unity at all times, in all relations, with all people. Not only before the beggar and stranger, not only at mealtimes and in social gatherings, but in our everyday life, in each affair, this attitude of unity can be continued.

And how can it be continued? It cannot be continued if we think of it; it will be continued if we lose sight of ourselves in the Ocean of Life and Love called God. Then it comes naturally. All the virtues come naturally with the opening of the heart, and it is with this that Sufism is most concerned.

In other words, one does not even say: I shall be good, I shall strive to do better, I will gladly be hospitable. No, that is not the way, that is vanity, that is building up personal merit which in the end proves to be no merit. The right path is the path of absorption of self in God. These morals, these characteristics result therefrom and when one sees them, one recognizes them in another as signs of the presence of Allah.

Consequently although the lessons are in a certain sense taught, explained and examined, the completion of the lesson is the realization of its teaching within oneself, and this can only be completed by self-surrender to God. It is to this end that all the training and discipline of Sufism is directed.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 8

### Haya (Modesty)

GATHA: **Haya** is the finest feeling in human nature, which is called modesty. Modesty is not necessarily meekness, or humility, or selflessness, or pride.

TASAWWUF: Modesty is the sign of the presence of God and it may appear in the self-realized soul as well as in the young. The reason for it being in the young and innocent is that life itself is intelligence and this intelligence includes the moral qualities, for otherwise it could hardly be called intelligence which did not know the right way.

It is possible for the ignorant to be meek, humble, selfless or proud; it is also possible for the sage to have these qualities but it is only the one who has reached a high grade of **becoming**, so to speak, who has both knowledge and Haya. These together form intelligence.

GATHA: Modesty is a beauty in itself, and its action is to veil itself; in that veiling it shows the vanity of its nature, and yet that vanity is a beauty itself.

TASAWWUF: Haya may be termed as expression without nufs, or ego. How, then, can this be a vanity? It is in the sense that by carefully avoiding all reference to the ego one reveals one's high state, that one has mastered the lower nature. Yet this is much better than the ordinary expression of self, for the selfless person will surely show kindness, sympathy and love, and the actions of such a one are bound to be both beautiful and impressive. The surest sign of Haya is that it increases the response in another and brings him elation.

GATHA: Modesty is the life of the artist, the theme of the poet, and the soul of the musician.

TASAWWUF: The secret is this: that around one there are many vibrations of all sorts, and the selfless person can appreciate them, and what he sees or feels or cognizes becomes his inspiration, only it is something which is more subtle than name and form, it is the very life which he senses. It is when the artist makes himself the vehicle of life rather than when he uses life as his instrument that he senses Haya, that he finally becomes the manifestation of Haya.

GATHA: In thought, speech, action, in one's manner, in one's movement, modesty stands as the central theme of grace. Without modesty beauty is dead, for modesty is the spirit of beauty.

TASAWWUF: We are all seeking guidance, we want God, we desire illumination. We seek perfection. Now all this comes when the **we** part of the being is removed. Fana-fi-lillah is a state of consciousness in which one beholds nothing but God, but one is beholder. Now **baqa** is the Divine Expression in us. This is completed in the state of perfection baqa-i-fana, which is God-expression with the sublimation of ego. Nevertheless it is possible even without reaching absolute perfection to experience **baqa**.

**Baqa** comes whenever God speaks through us in inspiration, intuition, dream, revelation, and when He expresses through us, at that time our condition is Haya, it is modesty, it is selflessness, it is **knowing** meekness and humility before God. It is this which enables God to complete His work. While man's purpose is to lose himself in God, God's purpose becomes completed when man is His willing instrument of expression.

GATHA: Silence in modesty speaks louder than bold words. The lack of modesty can destroy art, poetry, music, and all that is beautiful.

TASAWWUF: Egotism can be expressed in painting by bold outlines, in poetry by the constant repetition of pronouns or what might be called explosive words, in music by loudness and dissonance, and in general such forms of creative effort show a lack of true spirit. The right inspiration is such that in the creation the artist loses himself; and it is then that he is himself and does his best work. In that sense worker and work are one.

GATHA: And if one asked, "What is modesty?" it is difficult to explain it in words. It is a feeling which rises from a living heart; the heart which is dead has not got the taste of it. The modest person compared to the immodest one is like a plant standing by the side of a rock.

TASAWWUF: This would mean that modesty is living and it is so. Haya is life itself, which comes to the awakening heart. The fine qualities are of God and they are found in the personality as God is in the personality. There is no goodness apart from God-ness. It is God that makes for life and growth. Sufis, by their practices and especially through the awakening of love in the heart, come to this state. The Bhaktis among the Hindus are ever revealing the state of the heart, until for them all life seems a wonder. The Sufis do not differ from the Bhaktis, only they see the value of progress in development and think it is not enough to lose oneself in God—that must be completed, according to this teaching, by God finding himself in man.

GATHA: If the heart of the immodest is like the earth, the heart of the modest one is like the water. Modesty is life itself; a life which is conscious of its beauty yet inclined to veil it in all its forms is modesty.

TASAWWUF: The earth presents a picture of God working under the veil of modesty. There is no doubt that in silence one can do the best work, as all one's energy and will-power is then concentrated upon deed and need. There is something in the manner of one who lives thus that attracts others, and besides, when in that mood or state one naturally reflects the higher qualities. So many people know how to lose themselves in their tasks; this is always an inspiration and a blessing.

GATHA: At the same time modesty is the proof of sincerity and of prudence. The cracker cries aloud: "I am the light," and is finished in a moment. The diamond, shining in its light constantly, never says a word about its light.

TASAWWUF: It may even be affirmed that every expression of the tongue brings with it a loss. No matter what one is doing, by talking about it some life is taken away from the duty and used up in speech. It is the breath which brings the life and magnetism. By silence all this is concentrated upon one's purpose and there is no waste.

Besides this, so soon as one escapes the control of nufs, then one does not wish to talk much. His tendency is toward silence and this is not an assumption or effort. One does not try to be sincere in this respect. Haya is a state of heart, it is not a grade in evolution of nufs and so long as the ego is predominant one cannot have much of this quality.

In other words, what man needs is heart culture and heart culture comes through spiritual awakening. Morals have never been learned through text book or precept; by example many have learned and more have been impressed by a great personality. The final stage is reached when one is impressed by God, and this impression is it which brings such changes in habits that one, because of his attunement to God, reveals the various aspects of divine manner. This is the way by which Haya comes to the mureed and by which the mureed learns and obtains Haya.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series III: Number 9

### **Modesty**

GATHA: Modesty is not necessarily timidity or cowardice. The bravest can be modest, and it is modesty which completes bravery. Modesty is the veil over the face of the great; for the most modest is God Himself, Who is not seen by anyone except those intimate with Him.

TASAWWUF: We find that many courageous people are modest and it is also true that silence preserves the magnetism. There is also a kind of moral magnetism which flows from the heart and is uninterrupted except when the ego controls the breath. Nevertheless it happens that a considerable proportion of man's speech is an expression of the ego and this hides his inner feelings and drives back this influx of moral magnetism.

Many people do not know that morality is strength and yet morality is also beauty. That is because all emanations from the heart sphere are replete with the Divine attributes and although man may conceive of these attributes as different and may discuss them, they are all as one within the heart.

Modesty is a form of heart control which gives it courage and ability, and besides making it attractive enables it to pour its own love and light first upon the mind and body which serve it, and which also in a certain sense it serves.

GATHA: Beauty in all its forms and colors, in all its phases and spheres, doubles itself, enriches itself by modesty. Modesty is not something that is learnt. It is in nature, for it is natural.

TASAWWUF: Yes, it is natural in Malakut and Djabrut as well as on earth and when one touches the sphere of the heart everywhere one will find this beauty, unless one has heedlessly covered the heart with ego. This produces nothing but emotion, and this rises and falls, producing opposite conditions and blending joy with sorrow. When the ego does not interfere, one is naturally modest, one feels the life of the heart, and it is in that direction that the science of Sufism leads one.

GATHA: Modesty does not only cover what is beautiful but amplifies the beauty and covers all that is void of beauty, in this matter fitting it into all that which is beautiful.

TASAWWUF: There is this tendency of the heart which protects the weak and defends those who need help. There is also the truth that when modesty appears, there comes a power and a magnetism and one may feel it, and when there is a sign of egotism it brings a blush for this is like a scar upon the heart. And when sometimes one is pulled away from this state of modesty it has a jarring effect upon the life, causing in the end grief and even driving people to suicide. And when they, on the contrary, do not fall into the snares of the world, even unknowingly they become as God's creatures for the light that they reflect is truly divine.

GATHA: A noble heart can even rise to such a degree of modesty that he would plead for another person's fault, trying to make out of it no fault, even knowing that it is a fault.

TASAWWUF: This observation, which can easily be proven true, needs some consideration. For there is the law of suggestion, that when a person has a fault, by repeating it, one increases the possibility for its recurrence. Yet it is also true that one should not condone it.

The right attitude is not to condone the fault but to determine that the personality is not that fault. Such a one has failed to conquer a weakness and sometimes a strong mind may by suggestion aid that one to overcome that weakness. One way to do this is to refrain from condemning the weak person, which has the effect that it distinguishes the true personality of the sinner from his bad characteristics.

Another point is that every time the that mind of anyone dwells upon evil, it encourages evil on the mental plane and either that person or some one close to him will be influenced by evil. This does not mean that one makes the mistake of blindly calling everything good; even to speak of good in this sense is to separate a good from an evil and thus admit the possibility of evil. But the better way seems to be to refuse to allow the mind to make any reference to the evil and this shuts out wickedness from the world, by overwhelming it on the mental plane.

GATHA: Yes, a modest person very often will not raise his voice, out of dignity; or say things, out of consideration and respect; will not argue and pull his own way when dealing with someone who has no thought of modesty.

TASAWWUF: In other words no attempt is made to correct another who has a strong ego. But this is often the true way of correction. If you oppose an argumentative person that increases his self-opinion; if you agree with him verbally he sometimes will allow himself to be influenced by you. The devil is one who is put to sleep when not roused to opposition and it is often better to give verbal assent which does not commit the mind and heart.

In all this it is better to look at life with the divine attitude and pay as little attention as possible to one's own opinions and outlook. This makes it difficult to stand opposed to anybody and likewise to have anybody oppose oneself. This in turn opens the way to peace and often by that one is very helpful and yet it is not condoning evil. It is only the way to influence certain classes of individuals.

GATHA: In this case he may often lose his battle. However, one cannot hope always to ascend and descend at the same time. One should ascend, sacrificing all that those who descend will get, or else one must descend, sacrificing all that those who ascend will achieve.

TASAWWUF: The self that ascends is the self that does not express itself, the self that is controlled, the self that makes room for God. How is this done? By calling upon God in every speech, thought, and action. Yet it is also true that there is no real sacrifice except that of ego, for the gains are so immeasurably great. In fact there is no real gain in life except this self-sacrifice. All gain comes at the expense of ego. Even if one wishes to be wealthy, this is done through the exercise of a certain discipline in order to feel one's way alone and to achieve success.

The poverty of the Fakir is that of the avoidance of reference to ego. This results in that condition wherein it is said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Yet it is also true that earthly achieve-

ment which is accomplished selfishly, as we understand it, is bound by time, it is subject to corruption and decay. Consequently, it cannot be called wealth which one does not possess or keep.

The spiritual achievement is so different for of this it may be affirmed that the very achievement controls the ego, and yet spiritual wealth is the only riches that exist, that of realizing the Divine Being and the Divine Blessings.

GATHA: Life always demands sacrifices. In every walk of life there is a battle to be fought; and in that case the one who loves to ascend may just as well ascend rather than want to descend. The Prophet has said, **“Al haya wal iman,”** “Verily modesty is a great piety.”

TASAWWUF: The silence of the sage can be a conversation with God. It is not always necessary to present one’s riches to man. There is a different standard of values for the inner life and the worldly life and it is well to understand this. By keeping the lips sealed, it is easier to keep the heart open.

Life of the heart is such that as soon as the heart thinks in terms of egos, it contracts, it becomes small and hard and unfit. It is then not living, it is sleeping, dormant, not realizing its powers. Open heart is so different, that it can swell to cover the universe and then whatever it thinks about, that is itself. This is a great mystery of heart.

This makes it impossible to be drawn into certain discussions. Why? Because one envelops all points of view. Now the difference between the spiritual envelopment and the negative assent is this: That the spiritual person agrees, knowing the truth, and by his assent he helps draw another closer to truth; his “Yes,” although pronounced before man, is really an affirmation to God. The negative person may assent for the sake of harmony and this is sometimes good. It is good when one has no opinion or idea and there is only one expressed and no argument, and then it is well to assent and keep peace. But when there is a discussion going on and one has not knowledge, silence is best with no expression because all attempts at harmony lead only to disharmony. On the other hand, when one has knowledge, his silence and assent alike work for harmony and truth.

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Gatha with Commentary Series III: Number 10

**Enkessar (Selflessness)**

GATHA: **Enkessar**, in the terms of the Sufis, means selflessness. The psychology of human nature is such that man feels inclined to hit every head that is raised. Not only man, but all living creatures have that tendency.

TASAWWUF: No doubt this is to a certain extent derived from an instinctive feeling of unity. Only the unity conception of the ignorant and the learned is different. The ignorant conceive it as one dominating many and they think that God is King and Ruler, which is right. But the limitation of mind causes a strange conception of kingship and leadership and the thought covers the principle so much that ego emphasizes the ruler-and-subject idea by trying to rule others in some manner.

GATHA: To protect themselves from that, many intelligent creatures in the lower creation make holes in the earth, to live there, hiding themselves from the beasts and birds of prey. No sooner do they raise their heads from their holes than they are caught by their enemies, who thirst for their blood. As humankind is evolved, man does not immediately hit the raised head, but he cannot keep from being agitated at the sight of it.

TASAWWUF: There is an erroneous conception of democracy which sees that in principle and essence there is a unity but fails to see that when essence—which the Sufis call “Zat”—is projected onto variety, there are differences in qualities and attributes. One does not necessarily call a piece of cotton equal to a wire of copper, and no one thinks that a pound of mud is equal in value to a pound of gold.

So there is also a conception of aristocracy in man’s thought and there is a confusion of the idea of aristocracy and democracy, especially when man sets the one up against the other. For even the democrat will consider himself better than another in some respects and in politics and society and statecraft we constantly observe the agitation against the ego and if one observes closely, it will be found permeating every branch of life.

GATHA: Understanding this mystery of human nature and studying the secret of the whole life, the Sufi has traced that spirit in its essence, belonging to the source of all things. He calls that spirit **Kabir**, or **Kibria**, the Ego, or Egoistic.

TASAWWUF: Now this spirit is essentially oneness, also allness. The mind can conceive a kind of oneness which is not universality, and it is this limited one, which stands before the realization of complete unity. The heart, on the contrary, when it is alive and fulfilling its duties, only sees a kind of oneness and if it has any faults, it is that of its failure to recognize variety.

GATHA: It has taught the Sufi a moral, that not only man but even God is displeased by self-assertion. And the manner that he adopts in order not to arouse that agitating spirit he calls **Enkessar**, meaning selflessness.

TASAWWUF: There are two kinds of expression which might be called self-assertion and inspiration. Now in the ordinary sense it is said that man is inspired whenever he does something great and it is not wrong to say this, only in the egotistical person the spirit of Guidance is hidden under a cover, and in the truly inspired person there is little mark of ego.

The result is that the assertive person is likely to fall into the sins of pride and conceit, and besides that also suffer from relapses. His inspiration does not always bring him great joy, and the more self-ish he is, the more difficult he finds it to sustain inspiration and have any happiness. While the self-less man is really the expressive one, for he sometimes lets his whole being, and not only his limited ego, come into his experience and he is the one rightly led by the spirit of Guidance.

GATHA: In theory it is a small thing, in practice it is a great art. It is an art which wants a great deal of study of human nature, it requires careful observation and constant practice.

TASAWWUF: This is especially true of enthusiastic souls on the path to God. They think that God is all in all and therefore that the spirit of justice in every man, being planted there by a righteous God, will surely come to the rescue and lead them aright. Now this is good theory but man has been permitted to be covered by ego, and as egos in a certain sense have the same polarity, mutually repulsive, even in discussing spiritual things one has to be careful to remove the ego of one's self in it. There is always a way to do this by talking of the virtues of others or of speaking with reference to any personality. This always makes one's conversation more interesting to others, for people are jarred more by self-expression than they are by opposing opinions of a meek person.

GATHA: This art teaches to take precautions before every activity in speech or in actions so as to cause least disturbance to human feeling. It is the thorough study of human susceptibility and practice of delicate manner which teaches man Enkessar.

TASAWWUF: There are spiritual practices which always help; it is the practices which bring one into Sufism. Darood is marvelous, Fikr is always profitable, there are many names of God, so man is privileged to call for help in so many ways. Besides this, the natural attunement of heart to God will always be helpful, thinking of God, considering Him as in our midst whenever two or three are gathered together—this Christ-like attitude will help everybody and you do not have to teach any morality when you know, you live, morality.

GATHA: The further he progresses the more his sense becomes keen; therefore he finds more and more mistakes in his own life as he goes forward in this path. This subject is so delicate that one does not only commit a fault by showing pride or conceit but even in expressing modesty or humility.

TASAWWUF: The Buddhists have an admirable way of expressing the spiritual stages: first man expresses his ego, and then through meditation he suppresses the ego, and finally he begins to realize his true self. No doubt everybody who journeys on the path experiences this to a certain extent. Some persons talk about modesty and even make a certain show of it, and it is evident that this is not modesty.

Others think that humility is a state of emptiness, but ignorance is also a state of emptiness. That is not enough. In fact from the Sufic point of view, morality without spirituality is insufficient, and piety as a private virtue is not necessarily merit in the sight of God. One may keep quiet much of the

time, but there is an hour when there is a call for help and one whose personal humility instills in him a fear to act is really wicked.

GATHA: Enkessar wants a great delicacy of sense. One must be able to see the lights and shades produced by every action and word one does or says. And once a person has mastered this art he has mastered the same art which Christ promised to the fishermen, saying, “Come hither, I will make you Fishers of Men.”

TASAWWUF: In other words, it is selfless action, selfless speech and divine thought which are the only merits—if such terms can be employed at all—which exist. This makes it possible for God to appear in the flesh. The divinity does not come in unique fashion; while it is true that blessings are the manifestations of Grace, yet it is also true that Grace, being of God, is for all, only some accept it and others are blind to it.

GATHA: The Sufi gives more importance to this subject than a yogi, for the way of the yogi is asceticism, the way of the Sufi is the development of humanity in nature.

TASAWWUF: This indicates that the sage considers himself in unity with all mankind. One may call this fana-fi-Adam, unity with all humanity; spiritually one finds this both in the stage of fana-fi-Rassoul, wherein through unity with the world teacher one comes to a cosmic consciousness, or in fana-fi-Lillah, where during the hal one surpasses name and form. It is after such beautiful experiences that one feels this unity and carries it into action. This is different from practical Yogism which looks for a sort of private salvation, no doubt beneficial but not so far-reaching.

GATHA: But according to the prophetic point of view the only way of pleasing God is Enkessar, which is greater than so-called goodness. A good person proud of his goodness turns his pearls into pebbles. A bad person, full of remorse for his faults, may turn his pebbles into jewels.

TASAWWUF: The great weakness in popular morality is that one can never be sure that God is pleased unless one knows God. Now we are considering the one who knows God, who has come close to fana-fi-lillah and who puts into practice **baqa**, the exemplary eternal life, even while in the physical body. Then one transcends all the limitations as we know them.

Man in **baqa** readily notices his shortcomings because he has found perfection, it is not strange to him and having come to this perfection he is naturally quick to notice all the imperfections in himself. One does not have to impress it on another, after the hal one is sure to impress it upon himself. That is why the sage is quick to perceive his own shortcomings and is interested in correcting them. He himself has awakened to what others may have seen in part—his own faults. Then, by his own ability he rises to the higher degrees. This is the true spiritual resurrection. One does not have to wait for the future or go to any heaven for this.

GATHA: Selflessness is not only pleasing to man but it is pleasing to God. There is not one moment in life when God is unaware of man’s word and action; and beyond his word or action God is aware of man’s attitude, which very often man hides in his words or actions.

TASAWWUF: Baqa is God’s pleasure; nothing can give Him so much happiness. It is then that the lover and Beloved, the Creator and Creation come into union. This is the joy of the Lord. It is not

the same as the egotism of man who is selfish and it is very different also from the state of man who makes his own rules for modesty and humility. This is self-surrender to God wherein man does not keep any ideas, he lets God do the thinking and that is attractive to everybody for all souls are naturally drawn to God, and to the divine power they may feel in man.

GATHA: Nothing is hidden before God, Who is a perfect Judge and Forgiver, and upon whose pleasure or displeasure depends the happiness or unhappiness of man's life.

TASAWWUF: While we call God "Judge," this is man's concept, for it is difficult for man in the ordinary sense to conceive or perceive this justice. In the first place he sees the ordinary laws of nature and then he has made his own laws, and there are certain principles operating in both of these spheres, which are not the same. Body is subject to the laws of nature and mind to the laws of man, but heart is not subject to law as we understand it, because such law is based upon duality while for the heart there is a principle which can be termed "relative Unity" which covers all actions pertaining to the heart, and for God Himself Who rules alone above the heart-spheres, there is the principle of Absolute Unity. So we have four different principles upon which to base justice: Duality of nature; duality of man; relative unity of heart; absolute unity; and these correspond to body, mind, heart, and soul.

This matter merits much consideration and profound contemplation for it belongs to the mysteries in their truest sense.

GATHA: Therefore man has not only the task of considering the pleasure or displeasure of his fellowman, but also a duty to God, of considering what is pleasant to God and what is unpleasant.

TASAWWUF: Suppose we look at the triangle as a symbol of justice, and we see the two sides at the base, which may be regarded as the standpoint of the two opposing forces—opposite in a polar sense, not always necessarily inimical. Now it is pretty hard to find a just milieu which would satisfy both sides, and yet it is also possible for rising above the distinctions and differences which divide them, to bring justice which will certainly be helpful to all concerned.

The ideal of the Sufi is to see all these points of view at once, which permits taking sides and not taking sides, which enables one to see not only the situation of the moment, but the progression of that into the future so that the decision is rendered which takes into effect the welfare of the parties and not only the matter at hand.

GATHA: To Him to Whom all the beauty and riches, glory and greatness belong, man can make no offering which is worth anything, except one thing and that is selflessness.

TASAWWUF: In the spiritual journey as well as the eternal life there are states and stations and stages. State means a particular kind of consciousness in which man finds himself; station is his degree of advanced development to which he should belong and while sometimes he falls below it, that is his norm; stages indicate the various grades of the journey considered both morally and metaphysically. States are metaphysical, and stations each have their own moral.

Yet there comes a time when man has to be superbly detached from these, although this is of itself both a station and a stage. This comes from ability to cease thinking entirely and removing all forms of love and hate and affection from the heart until it is attuned to supreme Oneness. This is the sur-

render of self, which produces fana-fi-baqa, the completion of spiritual life—subsistence in God.

GATHA: Life may be pictured as a building in which there are several doors that one has to go through and every door is smaller than one's size. And as man's natural inclination is to rise straight, at every attempt he makes to rise, his head is knocked against the frame of the door.

TASAWWUF: Therefore we have the words of Jesus Christ that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Some have said this should read: It is easier for a ship's cable to go through the eye of a needle, and this pictures exactly the condition in the spiritual evolution as man advances from stage to stage.

Pride is the most difficult of all the qualities to put in its proper place, for there is a pride which is disguised as morality and another as egotism and another as humility, and there are many forms. And pride can always rely upon reason to defend it, and almost everybody will see the rationality of pride. But there is a point in life where one needs to rise above this reason if one is to surrender. In other words, there comes a point where both self-defense and self-surrender are impossible and man must make his choice.

GATHA: And the only thing that can save him from knocking his head against the doors is to bend. It is this logical lesson which the wise turn into a good manner.

TASAWWUF: This is the logic of life and the lesson of life, and when the consciousness of the small stream enters into the consciousness of the river, it becomes the river. Consciousness is not thought and consciousness can hold thought and many thoughts and one does not have to identify oneself with these thoughts.

When one can reach the point where all thoughts are as so many things outside the self, he is close to his destination. Now we see the world of matter outside but we do not see the sphere of thought in that manner and so we identify ego with the thoughts and there is no control in it and the will is covered.

Contemplation of the heart enables man to rise above all thought and come closer to reality. This is truly a blessing.

GATHA: Verily all that leads to happiness is good.

TASAWWUF: And it is the "All" which gives happiness, while the part can only continue the longing of the unsatisfied heart. To reach the "All" one must throw the parts away, and they will come together again within the whole which controls them. Verily happiness is not to be sought, but when one ceases to look for happiness in his love for God, then will happiness be his slave.

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