

**Gatha with Commentary**

**Pasi Anfas: Breath**

**Series II**

*of*

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

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**Series II: Number 1**

**Fikr**

GATHA: The breath is like a swing which has a constant motion, and whatever is put in the swing, swings also with the movement of the breath.

TASAWWUF: The Hebrew Bible teaches that Allah created man in His own Image and breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living entity. This is taken too lightly; man has been often considered everything else—as an animal, a fallen angel, a miserable or exalted creature, but hardly as a reflection of Divinity in creation.

Besides this we have become too concerned with theologies, philosophies, metaphysics and in this living facts are overlooked. The nature of breath has been studied from the standpoint of physiology and chemistry. We have whole sciences of electricity and little attention is paid to the materials of batteries, electric cells, motors and devices, at least by the public and elementary students. But we do know that there is energy, whether limited or cosmic of which we can avail ourselves.

Perhaps in similar ways the breath may be studied. And in *The Mysticism of Sound* and other places in the literature which has been given to the public, the key to many of the so-called higher teachings have been given. Still we are warned not to think **of** the breath, to consider our thoughts of breath. These are thoughts. We should learn to swing **with** the breath.

We may build a canoe and we can let the canoe drift down a river or row it upwards. The canoe moves and yet there is movement of the river. This symbology of “river” also appears in many sacred texts and there is also the symbology of “life-stream.” Now we can learn to move with the life stream. We can have the meditation in the Buddhist way or Sufi way utilizing the breath without giving too much thought to it.

The simple (apparently) elements of inhalation, exhalation, retention, and breath in either or both nostrils have within themselves the keys to life. We may learn to distinguish them and then to master them by effort.

GATHA: Fikr, therefore, is not a breathing practice. In Fikr it is not necessary that one should breathe in a certain way, different from one’s usual breathing.

TASAWWUF: In fact, in Fikr the very thought, when non-ego-conscious, takes care of this. In Fikr we remove the sway of ego and when this is done, the Divine Essence, in which we always are, operates as an energy from which resistance has been removed. No doubt there is an electrical parallel, that when resistance is lowered, the power becomes greater.

In Fikr no attempt is made to alter the rhythm of the breath, but a rhythm is established. It may be the result of the movements within the sphere, or the condition of one's ego or the combination of both, or even the response to the emotional condition of the moment. One does not have to change the rhythm. One should retain it as far as possible; of course if the breath can be refined that is even better for one will then benefit from the highest vibrations for which one has capacity.

There is, in a sense, a difference between Darood and Fikr. In Fikr one is concerned with Essence (Zat) and the absorption of Zat insofar as one has capacity. At the same time by the constant performance of Fikr the ego is sublimated and Divinity finds expression in man. This benefits the nerves and emotions and prepares one to meet all conditions in life. In this sense man in Fikr is responsive, has to be responsive and if he becomes expressive, that is a natural result.

But in Darood, man is necessarily expressive and selective. Daroods enable the Divine Faculties, or Sifat, to find their way to the surface in the outer world. This can only be done through man, as it is said in *Gayan*, it is through man that Allah finds His expressiveness on the surface of the earth-plane. In either of these practices, therefore, man becomes the representative of Divinity.

GATHA: Fikr is to become conscious of the natural movement of the breath, and picturing breath as a swing, to put in that swing a certain thought, as a babe in the cradle, to rock it. Only the difference in rocking is an intentional activity on the part of the person who rocks the cradle. In Fikr no effort must be made to change the rhythm of the breath; the breath must be left to its own usual rhythm.

TASAWWUF: When one does not put one's will or ego or thought into it, it is possible to be assimilated into the divine swing, so to speak. It has been said that Zen is everyday life; this is just words. We realize the universal life when we attune to the universal sway. But this sway is not something thought out; it is not something measurable by the mind and thus maya. It is not maya at all. It is the universe expressing itself and so expressing itself through man. So this is a surrender, not a thinking. Just keep the mind concerned, as far as necessary, on the sacred phrase while maintaining rhythm.

There should be no thought, "I am performing Fikr." The consciousness, so far as it is controlled, is concerned only with rhythmical breathing and the sacred phrase. Of course thoughts enter; and indeed if one is able to control Fikr just thoughts that are in harmony with the divine outlook will enter the mind. So then one enters what is also called the Buddha-mind without losing anything.

GATHA: One need not try even to regulate the rhythm of the breath, for the whole mechanism of one's body is already working rhythmically. So the breath is rhythmical by nature and it is the very

breath itself which causes man to distinguish rhythm.

TASAWWUF: The problem is not the lack of ability; the problem is the substitution of the thought for action. People have been thinking and saying, these seem easy; doing seems more difficult. And yet doing is not the ego-doing. As Sri Krishna has taught, the self-action is not action, and the non-activity of the inner person through the self is action.

Many have become fatalists using the phrase, "Leave it to God." But what is God? God is Love, is Light, is Life, is Breath. When we leave things to Love, or Light, or Life, or Breath, this is self-surrender, this can become the mental purification; not some thought or phrase however admirable. And besides this sort of surrender refines the breath and when the breath is refined, the heavens, so to speak, manifest on earth.

GATHA: What is important in Fikr is not the rhythm but the concentration. Fikr is swinging the concentrated thought with the movement of breath, for breath is life and it gives life to the thought which is repeated with the breath.

TASAWWUF: This is a very simple teaching which sometimes takes the whole of life to impress us. That rhythm itself is a principle is often apparent to scientists, to those who are regarded as materialists. They intuitively seek such rhythms. The so-called "laws of nature" are largely man's recording of such rhythms.

Actually the same applies to breath and breathing. The rhythm is the basic principle, though of course there are many rhythms, but still rhythms, not chaos, not chance. And it is not only that man selects rhythm it is also that rhythm selects man. There are high, refined rhythms and the only way they can come to the surface is through the human body, the human psyche, the human ego. **This is the descent of the Holy Spirit**, for as the Bible teaches, the human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The more conscious we become of Allah, the more the changes we may note in our personality. Body, mind and heart become more alive, stronger, more balanced. This cannot be done by thought, it can be done by surrender, but any thought about surrender is a delicate and subtle obstacle to surrender itself. We surrender when we keep the sacred phrase before us, and swing it in rhythm.

GATHA: On the rhythm of the breath the circulation of the blood and the pulsation of the heart and head depend; which means that the whole mechanism of the body, also of the mind, is directed by the rhythm of the breath. When a thought is attached to the breath by concentration, then the effect of that thought reaches every atom of one's mind and body.

TASAWWUF: As man has been intrigued by complexities, it is often hard to either teach or convince others about the importance of breath. It can be demonstrated by illustrations but in these illustrations the spirit of devotion must not be lost. One of the disciples who is also a Yoga teacher

has been going around with the placard: “**God is Breath.**” That is exactly what we also find in the Christian Bible (and no doubt many Hindus will assent). But the real Bible, the real Scripture, is in man. When we place it in some ancient, far away manuscript we keep ourselves from self-realization.

Sometimes it is asked, how can one keep the breath in rhythm. There are so many ways, usually easy ways. Every response to music, and especially drum and percussion music, brings this about. We can learn it by keeping quiet and responding to music, either with sound or silence.

No doubt both head and heart have their own rhythms; no doubt these rhythms are subject to change, as effected by emotions or by the cyclic law. But this is still rhythm and not anarchy. It is only in disease that anarchy comes and in anarchy that disease comes.

GATHA: Plainly speaking, the thought held in Fikr runs with the circulation of the blood through every vein and tube of the body, and the influence of that thought is spread through every faculty of the mind. Therefore the reaction of the Fikr is the resonance of the same thought expressing itself through one's thought, speech and action. So in time the thought one holds in Fikr becomes the reality of one's self.

TASAWWUF: There are many occasions when a disciple will come to a teacher and ask which thought, which way of life, which object of desire, which person, which project, one should accept. And the answer is, that by swinging the thought, objective, desire and person through the rhythm of Fikr, that which is closest to the purpose in life will remain in the swing and those things not in accord with the Divine sway will vanish.

Fikr can often be used, is used, not only with concentration, but to enable one in every object and objective in life. We say, “In unison with the Will of God,” but how can we determine the Will of God? We, in our egocentric capacity, cannot determine it nor is it necessary. But we can feel the sway and rhythm of the universe. By silencing the mind, and be repeating audibly or silently the sacred phrase, we can soon by practice and habit ascertain and follow what is best for us even without resorting to intuitive guidance.

Every thought, whether from within or without, operates in some respect as a living entity. As a living entity it breathes. If its breath is dissonant with one's self, or with one's purpose it can be quickly quenched and die; if it is in accord with what Hindus call their **dharmā**, or what some Sufis call **din**, it will gain in strength and flourish and soon come to objectification, or even if not soon, when it manifests, it will be with blessings and contentment.

GATHA: So he who contemplates on God in time arrives at a state where his self turns into the being of God.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, in Fikr, when we constantly repeatedly mention, “There is no being but God,” it turns into “There is no self but God,” and so to the identification of one's own central

being with God Himself. But this does not have to be metaphysically; it can be practically. By holding on to the breath and breathing that comes in and with Fikr we establish what for us is a basic rhythm. That rhythm becomes ourself and we become that rhythm, although this is not necessarily a limited rhythm that we find outside ourselves.

People have talked about a basic note, or a rhythm of the soul and some real or fanciful condition. The process of changing from self to God is like the alchemical transmutation of lead into gold. But that is mentioned in the very institution of Bayat, in the *Ten Sufi Thoughts*. These are often forgotten; they are basic, and they may control our very lives if we immerse ourselves in them.

Contemplation is not necessarily anything fanciful though it be transcendent. When the devotee becomes an adept, and keeps his heart, his thought, his breath ever in divine attunement, he often naturally passes from meditation or concentration into contemplation. In the contemplation the Great Self, so to speak, takes over, which is a fanciful way of saying that God expresses himself in and through man. This happens when we perform Fikr. It is not a transcendence to make us unaware of the world around us. It makes us even more aware of the world around us, while also making us aware of the universe unseen, and not only of the universe unseen in a metaphysical sense, of the planes beyond our comprehension, but even more of the parts of the physical world, of the persons and thoughts and acts in the physical world not in our immediacy.

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## **Gatha with Commentary**

## **Series II: Number 2**

### **Regularity of Breath**

GATHA: As the mechanism of the body depends upon the breath for its subsistence as well as for its health, so the breath is important in sustaining the mind and keeping its work regular. Mostly confusion, depression, or any other disorder of the mind arises from the disorder of breathing.

TASAWWUF: The oldest Scriptures, which in one sense are the most profound, present this teaching. But it is waved aside. And even those who adhere to what they think is the verbal and simplest meanings do not accept that. If they did they would put much more emphasis on breath. Besides, the term “spiritual” means that which is associated with the breath.

In Sufism and in some other esoteric schools, training begins and ends with breath. The “breath of life” mentioned in the Bible is literally the breath-of-life, and it is most unfortunate that literalists and exotericists have given it hardly a thought. Then metaphysical writers who have some profundity of mind without its latitude, have by multiplicity of words lead others astray. So they have truth without simplicity and there is no room for the child-like minds in their systems.

We cannot over-emphasize that the breath is the channel of life and life is much more than the body or mental consideration of it. So even in the simplest and earliest teachings given out in modern times the Beatitudes of Jesus are mentioned and placed before everybody is the sacred phrase, “Blessed be the poor-in-spirit,” meaning refined in breath. Nor has there been any consistent study or translation, for instance, of the Greek word “pneuma,” so that instead of it having a final and absolute meaning, it has been translated and interpreted variously. And this is one of the chief causes of esotericism, that even the literal meanings are lost when control of religion falls into the hands of the ignorant.

An inquirer might ask: “How can such a simple thing as the breath make me better when I am ill?” But the breath is the life, it is the channel for life. It has to become regular, rhythmic, and then refined, so that one can control his own breath and make himself director first, and then master of it as he advances.

GATHA: All such diseases as hallucinations and delusions are caused by wrong breathing. For instance, if a person comes running or is hurried for a moment, he loses the regularity of his breath for that moment, and at that moment he is incapable of thinking rightly.

TASAWWUF: While this subject is presented in *Health* and now outwardly so everybody can read it, it sometimes takes years for impressions to touch the depths of consciousness. Two simple things: rhythmical breathing and the carrying of sacred phrases in the thought are the basic spiritual medicines. Then, adding to that the refinement of breathing and the various ways to control and direct the breath and man has brought to outer consciousness the great wealth which pours out for the soul of every one of us.

When the breath is kept in rhythm hallucinations and delusions are impossible. For the breath is the conductor of light, as well as of finer vibrations from subtle spheres. And when Wazifa is practiced it keeps afar all unfavorable forces and the possibility of delusion. All these matters are discussed interminably in the Gathas and in sacred writings and also in the printed literature. They cannot be emphasized too much. The mind is ever alert and very difficult to control. But by refining the breathing and singing sacred phrases and finally by Fikr, man can rise on the path to mastery.

When the breath is refined and in rhythm and when it can be retained according to the laws of rhythm, then delusions and hallucinations are impossible.

GATHA: If science and the State knew this, they could surely cause some change to be made in the present law. Many who are put in prison for some crime caused by them during moments of

irregular breathing, the State would send to be cured and taught how to breathe, instead of sending them to prison. For neither does the prison cure them nor does it benefit by their presence there.

TASAWWUF: This whole situation has become worsened, not bettered, by the passing of time. The trend toward power complexities; the strange combination of emotional stresses on democracy and at the same time working for position and prestige wherein one directs the affairs of others, going on simultaneously almost works for madness rather than democracy. Nor is there any clear picture of what is lawful or unlawful, or whether if either lawful or unlawful, criminal or proper.

We can see that in the drunkard there is loss of self-control for he gets out of rhythm, and the effect of alcohol is to so interfere with carbon dioxide actions and reactions that the body first and then the mind loses its balance; that is why Qur'an interdicts such an institution. But it is easy to find fault, to see what is wrong, and merely preventing this sort of wrong-doing is not always effective.

We can start out teaching right breathing through the breath itself, through rhythmic walking or dancing early in life. Once that has been established we help growing children on the right path, the path of health, sanity and ultimately to success.

We have several considerations of crime. For there are different institutions and laws and as time passes also different interpretations on these institutions and laws. Besides there has been confusion as to the various meanings of crime, evil and sin. Crime is a tort against the state; evil against humanity; and sin against the self. They are not always identical and endless confusion has followed from the identification of one with another.

The Christian Lord's Prayer says, "Deliver us from evil" which is to say, from wronging one another. And wronging another is one of the chief teachings both of Jesus Christ and Sufi morality (Saluk).

We are not trying to work on the "right path" through various methods and institutions which also become public.

GATHAS: By this I mean to say that not only a disorder of mind that comes at a certain time is caused by irregular breathing, but also a disorder which comes and goes so often during the day, whenever breathing is not rightly done.

TASAWWUF: But "rightly done" may be interpreted as keeping a rhythm. True, there is what is known as "the revolution of the tattvas" that the earth itself is breathing in a certain sense, and also the atmosphere, that there is a dominant element or influence at various times and man is not always in tune with the immediate nature. This sets up a conflict and this alike leads to disagreement, confusion, and fatigue.

That is why even from the beginning of study after Bayat certain breathing practices are given and also one is encouraged to repeat "Toward the One" as a Darood, and to practice the divine



presence (akhlak Allah) in various ways.

GATHA: People who become impulsive, or show irritability in nature, who become impatient at times, who get fits of anger, passion, or laughter, who get spells of tears, all have an irregularity of breathing as the cause of all this.

TASAWWUF: This is natural and interminable when one is under the sway of nufs, the ego, which is to say Nufsaniat. One is then not in tune with the natural surroundings and perhaps not even with the artificial surroundings. He may be in the market place, in the office, anywhere, and if he does not adjust to the atmosphere he will express his emotions.

Calling upon God does not necessarily suppress all the emotions but it does mollify those which cause disturbances at the time. When a person is trained in mysticism or esotericism he can adjust his breath at will and by so doing, avoid such disturbances. It is that simple but it is not always easy to practice.

Anger, passion, laughter and tears are caused by irregularity of the breath when loss of control of the element is evident. Anger shows lack of control of fire; passion of ether; laughter of air, and tears of water. A devotional attitude is helpful in making a correction lest it all become mechanical and if only mechanical, the same relapse could recur.

GATHA: The physician has no remedy for their ills, modern psychology has not found the link, but the mystics of old have for years believed it—not only believed it, but practiced it—and have found in the end that balance of mind entirely depends upon regularity of breathing.

TASAWWUF: Those physicians who are still under the spell of materialism have precluded the possibilities of proper correction. Even a superficial study of physiology shows that the body, in a sense, consists of two parts: the strictly material part including the digestive tract; and the processes, many of which center in an organ or sac or gland, and which are variously connected with mental and consciousness functions. No doubt the two are connected to make the body alive, but they are in some senses independent. And this has been brought out clearly in the Samkhya philosophy in India and some of its relative teachings in the Hebraic *Kabbalah*—which was made esoteric.

If it were possible to notice at the same time the breath and all its ramifications, and the consciousness and all its ramifications, one could find links. It can be done by deep meditation and intuition, or by observation on the part of another, were that practical. But there is more than the mechanical part of breathing. There are magnetic functions and overtones and undertones which often are outside the realm of measurement, so that mysticism may never be an exact measurement science. Yet it is a science nonetheless with laws and definite patterns.

A mystic can often easily determine the condition of another, even with a glance, and much more through atmosphere tuning. But the purpose is rather to heal them than to analyze. Over-analysis

has done little to further the well-being of man.

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### **Gatha with Commentary      Series II: Number 3**

#### **The Life Power**

GATHA: On breath depends the capability and efficiency with which one thoroughly does one's work.

TASAWWUF: This is emphasized over and over again. We find during the Moghul times the Sufis collected materials concerning various known religions and esotericisms and that many whose outer teachings and practices were very different, nonetheless recognized the importance of breath, that breath was the conveyor of life and life-energy and in this sense also represented God, so to speak, in the outer world.

The term "Holy Spirit" appears again and again in sacred literature without usually being equated to or even related to the Divine Breath. But the Holy Spirit is the Divine Breath which sustains all things.

GATHA: Shortness of breath gives man impatience, lack of endurance.

TASAWWUF: We can therefore work on the moral side of man by teaching him to take slow, slow rather than long breaths and this will bring about some emotional corrections. Besides if we carry God in the breath, by thought, by Wazifa, by a sacred phrase, it will attune man either to the magnetism of the sphere at the moment, or to the divine purpose behind all things.

We can see this in underdeveloped people, that they breathe more rapidly, show more impatience and have not peace of mind. Therefore for peace of mind and also in meditation one cultivates a slower breath and refines it.

GATHA: And irregularity of the rhythm of the breath gives man confusion, and makes him inclined to be easily upset.

TASAWWUF: That is why in disciplinary training so much attention is made to developing rhythm and response to rhythm. This can be done with music or without music. When there is forgetfulness, when there is confusion, all that is needed is to sit quietly and practice the Darood of "Toward the One" or any proper parallel and after a while one will find the confusion subsiding. Besides this rhythmical breathing is needed also in the refinement of breath and for all the various esoteric practices which open up what has been called "occult knowledge."

GATHA: Breath being the life-power, it is the same life-power which gives man strength to endure all things.

TASAWWUF: This subject is often mentioned and there is considerable material in both the literature and sacred studies about the Cobra and how it uses breath in concentration. And there is the ant which has the tracheae or series of tubes within its body and by mechanical effort plus life-force can carry weights far beyond its own and shows remarkable capacities. Indeed we can study the biological evolution along the lines of the development of the respiratory systems in animals and this could throw much light upon the subject.

And again, there is the flying of birds, how they use their lungs and wings in flight which is often remarkable. From this man received his first ideas of serial and space navigation.

GATHA: One always will find that those who easily get cross, quickly upset, instantly annoyed, have something wrong with the breath.

TASAWWUF: There are folklore methods such as sitting down and counting ten. It is not so much the counting but the reestablishment of rhythm which is important. But also then one gets rid of the heavy irregular operations, and with the return of calmness the annoyance will abate.

GATHA: People, not knowing their difficulty, get annoyed with them; they are put aside, and are considered disagreeable people. What they need is the training of breathing.

TASAWWUF: All mental operations, all signs of reacting or sowing samskaras themselves, are just as disruptive as the disagreeable people themselves. For one way to behave is not to react at all. This gives much strength although it is not always easy to operate without reacting.

Many centers of esoteric studies are made calm themselves, mostly by devotion and meditation. These calm atmospheres are beneficial both to those who disturb and those who are disturbed. Besides, out of the calmness itself comes strength and sometimes also wisdom. For with the calming of breath and mind, the inner wisdom in man begins to express itself, as light and beneficial vibrations.

GATHA: When their body and mind is so repaired, one will find no more disagreeableness in their nature.

TASAWWUF: So always there is benefit from meditation and from some esoteric discipline. Modern psychology often fails because of its emphasis on the phenomena and emphasizing phenomena and reacting to it only adds to the karmic upset. But rising above it, which is often taught, leads to peace and tranquility. Peace and tranquility always leads to increased peace and tranquility.

GATHA: Then, the artist who gets tired of his work and feels a lack of enthusiasm to complete his work and feels a lack of interest and feels absence of inspiration—it all is often caused by some disorder in the breath.

TASAWWUF: The subject of fatigue has been discussed both in the literature and sacred papers. The Bible says that the Holy One neither slumbers nor sleeps and the breath, which is the current of life, works on incessantly whether the consciousness is at one level or another. And during that time it is possible that the consciousness is bringing solace and blessings. This, indeed, is one of the benefits from the “mystery of sleep” that it permits God to operate while the ego is subdued.

If one could permit the consciousness of God to work this way also in the waking stages then there would be no ennui and those who rely on inspiration would find themselves operating in a stream of life currents, and be surrounded by all those blessings and benefits which we associate with Divinity. They could come into the outer consciousness.

Therefore the more we realize the dependence on Breath the more we are realizing our dependence on God (tawakul) and the more we depend on God the more benefit we get from every inhalation and exhalation whether we are asleep or awake.

In some Latin countries there are siestas. As commercialism arose this institution was often laid aside, but gradually the more cultured people reintroduced it: first by permitting women certain periods of rest and then by instituting what is called the “coffee break” in America. But the British had long before had their afternoon teas. In the Islamic culture the different hours of prayer provided for this same psychic relief.

GATHA: Regular and rhythmic breathing gives health to body and mind both. Inspiration comes from above, but as a light. It is the work of the mind to receive it.

TASAWWUF: In Sufic esotericism especially, the benefits of each aspect of breathing—inhalation, exhalation, retention in and out—is presented. And in *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* there are the very ancient pre-Yoga practices to the same end. But they have to be performed. Lectures on the subject are not only valueless, they may be deterrents.

But it is also true as the breath is refined and retained it does its work on the inner planes even while one lives in the physical body. That is why it is said that the Sufi does all he can to progress now without waiting for the dissolution of the body. A refined breath, held properly—learned from rhythmic breathing—can not only accomplish much inwardly, but enables man to benefit from the

inner life outwardly.

GATHA: If the mind is not ready to receive it, the inspiration will come but will not be realized. It is just like the difference between the gong of metal and the gong of wood. The former will resound, the latter will not resound. It is not the fault of the one who strikes the gong, it is the gong itself which does not resound. So it is with the mind which is receptive to the inspiration and the mind which cannot conceive it. But to every mind inspiration comes; the only difference is that one receives it, the other rejects it.

TASAWWUF: Sufis pray, "Open our hearts that we may hear Thy Voice which constantly cometh from within." And the Bible says that God breathed into man the breath-of-life, but we have not fully realized or accepted this after many centuries. Minds have been introduced, and then instead of benefiting from each breath, man is entangled in the mind-mesh and there he is stuck.

There are many practices so that man can benefit from every breath and thus find every situation in life a test which can be turned into a benefit. As it is said (*Gayan*), "Pleasure blocks but pain opens the doors to inspiration." And Swami Ramdas has taught and shown that every situation is from God, that God knows how and when He is testing and it man's opportunity to take advantage of the Divine Wisdom in every situation in life, favorable or unfavorable.

GATHA: Right breathing makes the mind vibrate, and vibration is the sign of life.

TASAWWUF: And when we can see into the breath and with the breath we begin to come into the Light. We find all kinds of Light, many grades, many gradients, and the light conveys messages. This should astonish no one. We are using the television which shows this at a certain level. What is proposed in the spiritual life is to realize this at all levels. All levels, all experiences bring us various aspects of the divine light. And just as we now have colors and light and shade and darkness, so all the different experiences of life bringing pleasure and pain are aspects of the same general program.

GATHA: All that vibrates more is more living; what vibrates less is less living. So it is with trees and animals, they show their life in their vibration. India's greatest scientist, Jagadish Chandra Bose, had the other day spoken at a university in England on the subject of trees breathing.

TASAWWUF: He not only taught about the breathing of trees and all plants, but even about the metals. He is the founder of the science of metal-fatigue. While many materialistic people, usually non-scientists, spurned all this, the aeroplane industry soon found it to be true. They became more concerned with metal fatigue and they made tests and checks. This has become a pragmatic art. But some day people will look behind this and find it is true: "Thy light is in **all** forms, Thy love in all beings."

All things have their vibrations, and Jagadish Bose demonstrated this. The science of the psychic side of life in plants has been slower to be investigated because the commercial values in it have

not been uncovered, but some day this will also be true. Those who believe in organic gardening have already made some steps in this direction. There are also traditions from European occultism which support this outlook, and there are especially occult traditions about plants which may someday be validated into a purer science.

GATHA: Among horses, the horse one chooses as the best is the one whose nostrils are fully open and whose breath is fuller, which the horse shows in its expression in the eyes. A good horse shows vibrations by the quivering of its skin when its back is patted. It is not like a stone-like horse which takes one step after ten whips given on its back.

TASAWWUF: The same principles apply to human beings. It is not so openly said. This is a test for all disciples, that when their hearts are open and the Kashf faculty functions, they will be able to apply the teachings. It means also that human beings should become aware of their own full breaths, that breathing be done with the whole body. And it is after one can breathe with the whole body, by the proper use of inhaling and retention, and the refinement of the breath, the mind also can be more fully activated and benefited with every breath.

The eyes of man as well as of the horse express the radiance of the personality. And when one knows how to read breath and eyes in oneself and another, one becomes a possessor of a considerable area of Divine Wisdom.

GATHA: In man in the same way that life can be seen which is termed in Hindustani **pani**, which means water. They say that a horse, or a man, has “a watery nature,” which means a liquid nature, living, pliable; and this life breath gives to body and mind.

TASAWWUF: This is now being transmitted also in lessons on walking and dancing as well as in the esoteric instructions. In these the disciple is compelled to operate; a dialectic, a thought, a speculation is of no avail. Dialectics and speculations do not enable a man to breathe or to walk.

Besides this there is a constant warning about being fixed like a stone. One can see many good people, people who would not be able to do wrong according to their own beliefs, who are very unpliant, who are fixed. And they are quite unable to meet emergencies, whether physical or social or mental. They are constantly being shocked. Nicholas Roerich, who once tried to promote himself as a Master of Oriental

Wisdom, once said: “Astonishment is the sign of ignorance.” Yet when his own troubles came he was most astonished of all!

The use of Wazifas, Zikr, and Fikr bring man to a place where he will not only not be astonished, but will be equal-minded and thus able to help himself and another in all situations.

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Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,  
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**Gatha with Commentary      Series II: Number 4**

**Full Breath**

GATHA: The importance of the breath in the body is like the influence of the weather in the world.

TASAWWUF: We can see this externally and internally. The habit of blowing has been used, both as a modality of the breath and as a means to use both its diathermic and magnetic qualities on the skin and also through the skin. Different means of blowing and breathing have been used both in healing and in blessing in different parts of the world and at different times.

This can be done mechanically and magnetically, also mystically for different purposes. Attempts have been made to introduce traditions of the Orient into the West and also new movements have grown, largely stimulated also from the Orient but mostly by persons who were not really acquainted with all the different facets of breath and breathing so they were not incorporated into the general body of knowledge. But sooner or later the studying of breath will become an objective science.

GATHA: As the body and mind act and react on one another, so the influence of the breath takes the chief place in directing mind and body both.

TASAWWUF: The breath is the connecting nexus. But the breath can be used internally on the body and in the body by directing the energies after inhalation. However when this is done it also effects the mind, for the body effects the mind through inhalation and the mind influences the body through exhalation.

In the science of Irfan, which means Gnosis, one also learns to use the breath and mind as the conveyor of sacred phrases and the corresponding cosmic influences connected by each sacred phrase. And also one learns the value of the sound **Allah** which, by practice, often proves to be the most valuable of all sounds in existence.

GATHA: Every emotion is caused by the breath flowing in a certain direction, also the degree of the force of the breath.

TASAWWUF: This subject is presented, if not discussed, in both the inner and outer literature. It

takes a long time for man to realize this although it is one of the very first teachings which appears in the Hebrew Bible (early parts of the Book of Genesis) and is constantly mentioned or emphasized in many places in the world's sacred literature.

One of the simplest teachings which has failed to impress much of humanity is that the word "spirit" really means breath. Theologians and devotees have failed to realize this. Adepts know it; to know this means one is an adept. It therefore cannot be overemphasized and even can be stated with affirmation that the kingdom of heaven means mastery over the breath.

While this subject is of much concern to the student of the advanced circle, it has also been presented in the literature in several publications. Perhaps the most notable and valuable is the brochure entitled *Metaphysics* which was part of the earliest teachings given by Hazrat Inayat Khan to disciples long before the Sufi Movement was established in Europe. If we look closely we can find in it many keys to spiritual development, and the intellectual interpretations of esoteric and mystical processes.

Force of breath does not mean coarseness of breath. Force of breath connotes power and energy. There are many yoga practices which also make this possible.

When one obtains this knowledge one finds he has not only control over the processes within, but also over the processes without. The body, so to speak, is a modality for breath, as a lantern may be a modality or instrument of light. But the energies, the magnetisms, the forces involved in human breathing cover areas within and without according to the capacity and evolution of the individual. For that reason Sufis consider every single breath as important. And keep the name or attribute of Allah constantly in view.

GATHA: There are three different rhythms of breath which have influence upon the mind. Slow breath gives tranquility to the mind, and all the creative faculties of mind have scope of work given by this rhythm.

TASAWWUF: Since a degree of astrology and occultism has been presented to candidates and neophytes, they learn this from another point of view which is connected mostly with the attributes of the God or Planet Saturn. But this can be taught in a totally different manner. There it is so to speak as if one were worshipping a Deity without. Such devotion is no doubt valuable but it does not involve the development of the human will. The human will is capable of slowing down the breath, and this knowledge can also be acquired through concentration on the proper attributes of God and also on deep meditation and consideration of even the simplest lesson in the Gathas. When the devotee involves himself in the subject matters he acquires, so to speak, a spiritualized slow breath and exhibits the qualities such as patience and perseverance. It may not even be a question of which came first, the breathing or the qualities; perhaps they came together.

This gives us a key for those who are nervous, quick in action, quick in temper. And as the Message grows and we assimilate all teachings, we find that the attributes of perfection come more



easily to outer consciousness.

There is still another way which can be utilized by more advanced disciples in the practice called Tasawwuri. This practice involves the assimilation of the breath and energies of the teacher by the disciple. As spiritual training means breath-training, there is a difference between disciples surrendering to and assimilating the breaths of the master rather than his will or mentality. So much “surrender” has been portrayed as a giving up of thought or will. Perhaps the greatest mistake in exoteric Christianity and exoteric religion in general has been this indoctrination of surrender of thought and of will. But in the Inner School, it is the attunement of breath, the ability to breathe as the teacher breathes that is most valuable.

Tasawwuri Inayat Khan involves the attunement to the rhythm of the Pir-O-Murshid, and by the attunement through breathing and walking, the assimilation into the personality of the virtues and attributes of Hazrat Inayat Khan. This leads to perfection in slow walk. It also leads to the attunement suggested in the Sufi Invocation with “all the illuminated souls.”

Of course there are other illuminated souls who have the slow walk. The commentator used to go to Dargah Mian Mir in the cantonment of Lahore in Pakistan. This Saint had a marvelous slow majestic walk. As the devotee became attuned to the walk, he became attuned to the breath; as he became attuned to the breath, he became attuned to the mind, as he became attuned to the mind he received aspects of the deepest wisdom in Tasawwuf from this Saint.

GATHA: Moderate breath helps the mind to continue its activities. If one wanted to make out a plan of work, or wished to accomplish a certain work, the slow activity of breath spoken of above would not be helpful; though for poetry or music the activity of breath which is slow is more helpful.

TASAWWUF: If a question be asked when slow breathing would be valuable, the teachings indicate here it is excellent for poets and composers, and this would also involve creative artists of any sort.

The moderate breath is also in a sense the mobile breath. It can also be called the breath of Vishnu. It could suggest continuance at a definite pace, or in a more popular sense, “being in gear.” Any change could break the positivity of rhythm. Very often people start some task or enjoin others to let them do some work, and then are drawn away to some other task. This is “interference” whether it is a phenomenon of electricity, or energy, or social relations. All schools of discipline teach that if one embarks on a task it should be continued, but when we examine human behavior this is often very difficult, not to say annoying. If we can learn to accept our tasks as being devoted to God, whether they are done of our own will or to accede to the will of another.

GATHA: But quickness in the rhythm of breath produces confusion, although it gives a force to physical activities. One can run better or swim well when the breath is in fairly quick rhythm. When the rhythm of the breath is too quick, it brings confusion to the mind and exhaustion to the body.

TASAWWUF: This can be a caution to athletes. They learn muscular exercises; they learn all kinds of gymnastics, but the introduction of breathing as exercise and discipline seems to be a slow process. In the coming generations no doubt, children will be taught to breathe properly before they are old enough to participate in vigorous athletics.

In the occult sciences Mercury may be regarded as the god of rapidity—strictly speaking, Hermes. He is generally depicted as a young man, just as Saturn, the slow breather, is often considered as an old man. If we only knew it, we could continue life on indefinitely with proper slow breathing, and that too is beneficial in meditative exercises. But to accomplish the work in the world, this will not do. Therefore disciples repeat or concentrate on some divine phrase which helps establish and continue the proper rhythm for each accomplishment.

In a certain sense the rapid rhythm could be called that of Shiva. Shiva has been called the transformer, the quickener, the life-giver. No doubt also we see something of this in fire-rhythm and fire-ceremony, but these also can become very destructive. To overcome this proper controlled breathing is most important.

GATHA: One who does not breathe fully, in other words freely and deeply, can neither be well physically nor make use of his mental faculties. Very often one finds most learned and intelligent people unable to work as they wish and incapable of finishing a work which they have taken up. Sometimes a person thinks it is from bodily weakness or mental weakness or lack of enthusiasm or loss of memory, not knowing that it is very often a matter of regularizing the breath.

TASAWWUF: All the processes of inner disciplines are directed toward proper breathing, or adopting from proper breathing, proper outlooks on life. We cannot know the values of right breathing until we try them. Here we are given at least a mental picture of slow breathing, moderate breathing, and rapid breathing. But when we surrender to God, when we practice Darood or Wazifa, in this state of surrender the body and mind will breathe correctly without any conscious effort.

GATHA: Most often people think that it is the external senses being tired or exhausted that prevents their thinking, but in reality it is the absence of right breathing, for right breathing can make the mental faculties clearer and the outer organs of the senses more capable of perceiving.

TASAWWUF: We must be very careful here of a phrase such as right breathing, which itself is not a breath, which itself can become a thought, and becoming a thought utilizes energy to no purpose. The repetition of “Ya Hayy, Ya Haqq” is effective in quickening tempo and rhythm at any time. Disciples and even non-disciples are taught to benefit from this phrase. Those who so practice, are not easily exhausted. Those who so practice find it possible to keep awake even under very trying conditions.

From the mystical point of view this knowledge and control of breathing is most important. Many Sufis have drunk large amounts of coffee or tea without harmful effect to the spiritual life. Many

Buddhists have indulged in even more tea and do not seem to have suffered in their inner attainment. No doubt critics of partaking of stimulants and foods are in part correct, but they fail to see the weakness of their position, when, having no knowledge of proper breathing, they are subject to failings they depict in others.

GATHA: This shows that the mind can live a fuller life by what I call full breath. For a Sufi, therefore, breath is a key to concentration.

TASAWWUF: In other words, the fuller breath is the fuller life. One can learn also from the teachings of Lord Buddha the factors involved in slow and rapid breathing, in deep and shallow breathing, in heavy and light breathing, and in all aspects of this function and operation. But this knowledge cannot be obtained until one does the actual breathing, until one learns by experience what each of these is. A philosophy about them, a metaphysics, can be useless and even damaging. Therefore, many so-called esotericists do not really lead one towards wisdom.

GATHA: The Sufi, so to speak, covers his thought under the breath. This expression of Rumi's I would interpret that the Sufi lays his beloved ideal in the swing of the breath.

TASAWWUF: As the Gathas teach, the breath is the beginning and the continuance and the end. One can watch the breath to get its swing or rhythm. Then without changing it, repeat some sacred phrase. When this establishes a definite rhythm, then thought or action may follow and this would be right thought and right action. There is no philosophical right thought and right action; there is only the breath of life, and the wrong breathing which consumes life.

GATHA: I remember my Murshid's saying that every breath which is inhaled with the consciousness of the Divine Beloved is the only gain, and every breath inhaled without this consciousness is the only loss there is.

TASAWWUF: We have already proposed the use of "Ya Hayy, Ya Haqq." It is one example. It is needed for the continuance of activity or to prevent or overcome fatigue. It takes one above the sphere of time and waste.

Then there are phrases like "Ishk Allah Mahbood Lillah." It is not only the thought of love implied with them, it is not only the feeling, but the very sound promotes the manifestation of love in personality. We can see this in the young and particularly in devotees who do not know Arabic, but there is some majestic psychic power in these phrases. It becomes evident that their continual repetition brings about a spiritual birth or renewal.

Spiritual birth or rebirth is not a process from time, although it may manifest through time; it is not effected by psychic law, it is beyond the law without infringing on it.

No doubt there are many sacred phrases, there are many valuable concentrations which help man toward the ultimate attainment. If we keep this in mind in and with our breathing, and do not

separate thinking from breathing, but have the thinking conjoined to the breath, we may benefit infinitely.

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**Gatha with Commentary      Series II: Number 5**

**The Rhythmic Breath**

GATHA: Thought is conveyed without speech through the breath. The true wireless telegraphy is the rightly established current of breath. It is difficult for every man to try it, without practice in concentration and in absence of the development of breath, though unconsciously thoughts are always exchanged through the agency of breath.

TASAWWUF: Thought-transference or telepathy has become increasingly attractive. There must be some underlying intuition which makes this so. All kinds of experiments are being conducted, but these are mostly under the control of certain minds and therefore are limited by the capacities of those minds. The celebrated French physician, Dr. Charles Richet, did much work in parapsychological phenomena of all sorts but materialists, and especially egocentrics, whether materialists or metaphysicians, have disdained to examine his work or the efforts of his successors.

When we look at the animal world as a whole we have to use the term "instinct." But what is "instinct?" Is it a reality, is it real? Or is this just a term to verbalize, "I do not know." There is no room in pure science for words without clear connotations.

The very body shows fundamentally the processes of digestion and breathing. We can say these are the Shakti and Shiva processes. They go on continuously. They are not always so keenly examined. But while some attention has been paid, is being paid to the chemical and other processes, which can be controlled or at least observed, little attention is paid to the energies involved in breathing and that means there is a wide field open for future investigation.

A few simple exercises can clarify a relation between breathing and thinking and even certain sorts of breathing with certain sorts of thinking; or specific effects on the breath itself from different types of thinking. It may not be beneficial to carry to extremes analytical investigations. Analysis has been over-used without results of any kind being obtained.

GATHA: The scientist is ready to believe that contagious diseases are spread by means of breath, but it is the part of psychology to realize that thoughts and mental states—such as humor, depression, energy, or sloth—are conveyed by means of breath.

TASAWWUF: We can easily see it. And sometimes one person yawning may lead to successions of yawning by people in the same audience. And if we follow the trend of the times we can see how this is with hilarity and humor. They are communicated. How are they communicated? Certainly not verbally; there is something in the breath and in the atmosphere that causes a group of people to act and react together. This ought to help demonstrate that breath is more effective than thought or reason.

The spreading of diseases and epidemics indicates there is negative contagion that people do share, even if it be in common pain. The importance of human sharing cannot be over-estimated.

Sharing in pain indicates sharing in breathing. The afflicted may have a common state, but even this common negativity helps to promote communication.

GATHA: In the presence of an angry person one feels excited and inclined to anger, the contact of a humorous person spreads around an atmosphere of humor.

TASAWWUF: No doubt anger seems more negative and hilarity more positive. Anger indicates that the fire forces control the person rather than the person controlling them. But even this effects the atmosphere. It is almost like fire itself operating on the physical plane. The fire on the physical plane can be controlled by water or chemicals. The fire on the subtle sphere can be controlled by water or ether, especially water and ether combined which would produce calmness.

Hilarity can be most enjoyable. The danger is that it can become mere frivolity. Empty frivolity and hilarity have often become escape mechanisms and when society over-indulges in them there is sure to be a karmic reaction. Therefore even the air element should be controlled by ether, either by maintaining calmness or attaining refinement.

GATHA: In the presence of a cold person one becomes cold, the contact of a warm-hearted person warms one; and all this is done by the medium of breath.

TASAWWUF: The self-centered person is negative without always being receptive. He draws from the atmosphere and this sets up negative currents. But whereas a haughty or cold person can chill the atmosphere and the heart, a warm-hearted person can overcome this condition because the warm-hearted person can help objectify spiritualized forces.

GATHA: If an angry person were to close his breath while angry, much less of his feeling would affect another.

TASAWWUF: This suggests that the closing of the breath itself can help man overcome his own

weaknesses. In other words when a certain element is rampant one may stop that element by holding breath. But another and often better way is to calm it by refining breathing. An adept becomes a master of refined breathing, and a master of refined breathing becomes an adept.

GATHA: If a person who is subject to humor would close his breath in the presence of an expert comedian, he could protect himself from being influenced by him.

TASAWWUF: Mostly it is otherwise. Often quite otherwise. Sharing in hilarity is like sharing in intoxicating drinks. Candidates are warned about the intoxication of life. But warning itself is not the corrective. Correctives are given by a teacher skilled in TASAWWUF.

GATHA: Yogis who rise above the thoughts and feelings of those around them, attain power by the control of the breath.

TASAWWUF: Here we must understand what is meant by “Yogi.” Fundamentally there are two definitions: (a) those who perform certain disciplinary exercises; (b) those who seek or attain union-with-God, this last phrase really meaning Yoga. But today there are many definitions, many real or presumable “ways” and the practitioners, devotees or not, do not always attain the state of rising above thought or feeling. They often describe it, they often philosophize it, but the experience may escape them. This is not only the ideal state, the ideal attainment, but it is possible; and real Yogis, as contrasted with self-proclaimers, often reach such states.

GATHA: So the method of the inner cult of Sufism also depends upon the science of breath.

TASAWWUF: This is proclaimed in the literature and at the very beginning of Gatha studies. It is possible. But literati have over-emphasized the importance of breath in Hindu culture and de-emphasized it in the Sufi culture or made all kinds of unsubstantiated claims. And while in the end all mystics develop and use insight, the intellectuals cannot realize that many practices are derived from cosmic attainment—which is beyond their ken.

GATHA: Knowledge of another person’s pleasure or displeasure, the message of affection, the warning of hostility, all are received by the way of the breath.

TASAWWUF: The teachings of Metaphysics, in their higher phrases, were once limited to the classes for disciples, but later published in *A Sufi Message* and elsewhere. There is some doubt whether they can mean anything to those who have not imbibed the spirit of the true Teacher who alone has had such experiences. And therefore it has also become necessary to write commentaries on this subject for disciples so they can understand what is in the literature, what has been published which was originally not intended for everybody but for mureeds. Still no harm can come, only confusions and theory instead of realization.

GATHA: The one who is conscious of the rhythm of breath and whose breath is pure from grossness, begins to perceive a sense which becomes, in time, a language to him.

TASAWWUF: The purification of the breath therefore has become open to non-disciples as well as to disciples, especially by the practice of refinement. Refinement has been suggested in *Pearls from an Ocean Unseen* and elsewhere. It is possible for an adept to commune and communicate so that all who sit before him, disciples and non-disciples alike, may experience this refinement. As the refinement becomes more evident it enters into a person's psyche and then also develops Insight and other hidden faculties.

Although power and refinement have been set as against each other, in the end power is refinement and refinement is power. The radioactive rays, the cosmic vibrations, are at the same time most powerful and penetrating and man is learning more and more of this in the development of the physical sciences.

GATHA: Thought-reading is not necessarily intuition, although many confuse thought-reading with intuition. There is not much difference between the working of these two faculties; the difference is like that between the telephone and the telegraph. Thought-reading comes from without, intuition comes from within; yet for both rhythmic breath and a clear mind are necessary.

TASAWWUF: That is why so much attention is paid to rhythm. People who like theories and complications cannot accept that rhythm alone is so important in spiritual development, in both the basic development and the faculties which may be awakened therefrom. Only in intuition one works as if alone or as if alone with God; and in thought-transference there must be attunement between two persons. This is more likely when there is attainment and refinement on both sides. Fikr and esotericisms in general promote that purity.

GATHA: The rhythmic breath helps the mind to be clear. Breath breaks the congestion which in the head produces confusion and in the heart depression, which covers the thoughts of others from one's perception, even from one's own intuition.

TASAWWUF: That is why so much stress is put on attunement and refinement. The teacher strives to help the disciples and generalities toward this refinement. There are many ways in which this may be done. And sometimes considerable weight is thrown on the solution of a single problem, one which can be removed by the refinement of breath and its control and directive to parts of the body.

The one who can refine the breath and direct it to where he wills or where it is needed is better able than others to remove the afflictions of body, heart and soul. Even Nayaz, which seems too simple and elementary, cannot be over-stressed.

GATHA: A thought is better conveyed to another through breath than by speech, for a feeling put into words becomes half-dead. Feeling, in its own sphere, is fully living, and when conveyed from there through the breath, it reaches the mind to which it is sent.

TASAWWUF: Very few reach the refinement of feeling without a teacher. Indeed, even with a

teacher, love and pain are the most useful adjuncts. But we cannot compel either. It is often necessary to give long lessons in the practical aspects of Concentration (Murakkabah) before attention can be paid to this phase of development. But the growth in Insight is more important.

GATHA: When a person has not developed his mind by concentration and tries to send his thought by breath he is not always successful. He is like a person trying to hit the target without ever having practiced in his life. It is practice which makes man perfect.

TASAWWUF: Duke University and other institutions tried all kinds of experiments in this field. They were not very successful. They were trying to impose from the outside. Such intellectuals often have no idea of the inner constitution of man. Nor have many institutions yet awakened to the almost infinite possibilities of the deeper teachings of the Orient.

The time will no doubt come when there is the same attitude in the metaphysical field as in botany and petrology, that the place of something is of no importance, and that the whole world must be taken into consideration. Radioactivity is not confined to time and space. And neither are psychical, metaphysical and other faculties. Indeed one of the purposes of the Sufi Movement has been to awaken the latent powers in man. These can be done. They can be done by certain processes which have been used and developed, successfully used and developed through the ages.

Some teachers in Zen Buddhism become very angry when they are told about the prowess of others. It is not to be concerned, it is not to be misled because strange persons have unusual faculties. Actually perhaps everything in the universe has some property which is unusual to other types of being, be it rock, vegetable, animal, man or creatures of the unseen. But it is not man's work to make external studies of the prowess of others; or if this is done it should be confined to the exoteric sciences.

Even the early Christians were aware of the high potentialities in man. But when religion falls into the hands of priestcraft and ritual, its development, in the cosmic sense, is stopped at this point. We are to be encouraged not to stop, but to go on to perfection.

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### Be Conscious of Every Breath

GATHA: It is by the power of breath that the animals search for their food, through breath they perceive what they must eat, what they must not eat, through breath the carnivorous animals search for their prey. It is through breath that certain animals receive warning of dangers and again it is through the breath that some animals, when ill, find their remedy.

TASAWWUF: Too often the external scientists have used words like “instinct” and “environment” which tell us nothing excepting, perhaps, for a cover for lack of knowledge. The French philosopher Bergson, who was also a scientist, began a break-through but the age of specialization has become so great that few get the overall pictures. Certainly instinct, if it is real, not a concept, must have some physical vehicle and the breathing apparatus often so serves.

Some biologists have made study of the different organs used for science and hearing and also of the different kinds of nervous systems. They can measure the vibrations which animals are receptive to or not receptive to. But there is a wide field for the study of respiration in all beings. One approach appears in the paper, “Spiritual Circulation through the Veins of Nature.” There is still infinite potentiality for research, internal and external, on this subject.

The Hebrew Bible gives certain keys to distinguish the breathing of animals and humankind. The Hindus have in their holy books other approaches. If we delve deeply we may find that they are not far apart; they may even have been derived from the same sources, internal and external. Indeed there are many items in both the ancient Chinese and Indian cultures which were derived from observation of animals.

There is one way to learn from the animals which can come after Mental Purification, when one can tune in to other creatures, be receptive. Sufism proposes that the true disciple can perceive the Murshid, as it is said, “Thy light is in all forms.” The prayer is no doubt a good directive, but it is only a directive until there is some practice. And it is possible for a human being to tune in all the different animals, at all the different levels and learn therefrom.

GATHA: If the lower creation can do so much by the power of breath how much more can man do, if he only knows the right way of the development of breath!

TASAWWUF: This has been proposed in *In an Eastern Rose Garden* and is developed in some of the commentaries thereon. The purpose of the original lectures was to awaken the potentialities in man. But the people of those times were more keen in observing the distinction and differences which divided mankind than in awakening their latent faculties. Or they proposed that each could do it by himself.

This may seem verbally or philosophically true. But where are the instances, the examples? Man is too often self-deceived. We cannot compel anybody to accept a teacher in the inner sciences, but it is readily seen that few progress in the esoteric sciences without teachers. It may be nothing but

vanity that leads to such conclusions.

GATHA: It is through the breath that birds receive warnings of the changes of the weather, and accordingly they migrate in flocks from one place to another. Through the breath the herds of deer perceive approaching storms or changes of weather or the approach of a lion or a tiger.

TASAWWUF: Once one develops along the path of Mysticism then he can attune to the whole atmosphere, and so can either predetermine the weather or read many signs which abound. It is not strange, and it also belongs to that world which intellectuals call "instinct" when they do not know. But people who live close to nature and especially in lands where there are changes in weather and season know naturally what is coming and can easily prepare therefore.

As to animal enemies. Their very breath sends out vibrations and these vibrations are easily perceived. We may take it for granted, the perception of radio waves through sound and sight, but actually there are multitudes of vibrations of all kinds in the sphere. This subject is considered at length in *Cosmic Language* and the commentary thereon.

GATHA: Man, who is more capable of perceiving by breath still deeper things, warnings and calls from the earth and from heaven, which places are meant for him to dwell in or to settle in, of discriminating between friend and foe and discerning their pleasure and displeasure, owing to his interest in the superficial things of life cannot fully benefit by the power of breath.

TASAWWUF: During the World War II, the commentator was constantly demonstrating or trying to demonstrate it. Nobody else seems to have understood. Instead of trying to learn and absorb, there was great hostility to this peculiar behavior. But strange as it may seem, some of the leading offices in Army Intelligence were aware of the existence of personalities with such faculties and made use of them.

No doubt the Message of God would have spread more rapidly had there been more real humility and curiosity, especially curiosity. The divine wisdom is intended for all and the purposes of the Sufi Movement are not mere metaphysical ideals apart from life.

Self-consciousness, i.e. nufs, is the great obstacle here. It is very difficult to remove the active principle that the personality is a fixed point around which the universe revolves. All the spiritual teachings and disciplines of all schools of esotericism and inner development are for the purpose of breaking this mold. But the refinement of breath, a very simple process, is most important.

Jesus has taught that we should become like little children. We find it impossible to become infantile, but we can learn to breathe like little children. We can learn to attune to the breaths of all beings. And in the commentary on *The Inner Life*, some suggestions are made for the attunement first to the cosmic types discussed in the text, and then to other types. When we attempt such attunements we are already breaking the ego-mold.

That is also one of the purposes of spiritual drama. It cuts into the ego, and shows its insubstantiality. We also see this in some sages that they do not practice identity with any ego-self, quite otherwise. But there are also pretenders who use other pronouns, never “I,” and you will find they are adept in denouncing the egos of others. This is nothing but a facade.

GATHA: Yogis and Sufis, therefore, and all students of the inner cult, believe that breath is the means of receiving all intuitive knowledge from every direction of life. Absorbed in a thousand things of daily life man gives very little thought to breath. Therefore he keeps his heart closed to all the revelation that can be received by the help of breath.

TASAWWUF: The Bible teaches that God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living entity. But this is by-passed, it is not so important in the theologies and explanations given by religionists. It has been degraded into mere words. And therefore when neophytes are given Nayaz they think it is very simple. It may be simple but it is the ABC of mysticism and sometimes after many, many years it is not fully realized.

When one is in difficulty, be it physically or mentally, there is no better escape mechanism than to watch the breath. Once the commentator was trying to chop a tree down and the axe-handle suddenly hit his knee. The pain seemed excruciating, but out of the cosmos came a Voice: “Hold on to your breath, not to your knee.” He did that and immediately ninety-percent of the pain disappeared; it seems that that part of the pain which came from surprise and shock was no more. And it has not taken very long for the physical aspect of the pain also to go.

Actually we can resort to breath control in all circumstances. We need not wait for any shock. We can regard the Breath as the Voice of God. We can identify the Voice of the Silence with the breath. And when we do that we can begin to learn; we can become again as little children and learn from Nature and from the Cosmos.

GATHA: Man as a rule is never conscious of his breath, of its rhythm, of its development, except at the time when he is so tired that he is breathless or when he is so excited that he feels choked up, or when something keeps the breath from flowing.

TASAWWUF: There is a story of a Sufi teacher. He had a new disciple and he began instruction by holding the disciple’s head under the water. The disciple gasped. The teacher asked what the disciple desired most at that moment and the answer, of course, was breath. From this he gave the pupil the idea of the need for God.

But it is also true that God is the very breath. Jesus taught that God was **pneuma** (in the Greek version) which means “breath.” But ignorant people have made a theology of actuality. And the Scriptures also tell of a “spiritual body” which means “breath vehicle.” As the ignorant have not the inner consciousness they are not only unaware of the significance of this but choose to remain unaware.

There are many people all over the world at all times and all states of development who identify “breath” and “soul.” It is an unfortunate superior attitude on the part of the intellectuals that they have not taken this seriously. Indeed they deride it. Yet there is another aspect in the book, *Health*, which if followed closely, could bring man considerably closer to vigor and vitality and end much of what is known as disease!

Therefore in presenting inner teachings the Murshid pays considerable attention to the breath. Often he is able to draw upon the wisdom of many peoples, customs and religions and to amalgamate all in the upliftment of the audience.

GATHA: For a Sufi it is desirable to be conscious of every breath.

TASAWWUF: You may read many books today and they indicate otherwise. There are even books labeled “Sufi” which make few remarks about Allah. Sometimes they consider something they call “Sufi Doctrine” and sometimes they are concerned with the weird, the abstruse, the unfathomable. This is unfortunate because in one sense, as the Sufi Masters themselves have taught, there is no such thing as “Sufism.” There is only Allah and the Divine Wisdom which emanates from Allah and this divine emanation can be called “Sufism,” although the word “Allah” does not appear in the term “Tasawwuf” or Sufism, and this can create dualism and obscurity.

GATHA: In the schools of the Sufis in the East the members of a certain association take up as their duty to remind the whole assembly of the same. So one after another, in turn, takes it up as a duty. They call aloud “**Hosh ba dam**,” meaning “Keep conscious of the breath.” “**Nazar bar kadam**,” this sentence is added when the Sufis are walking, and means, “Look down and see whose feet are these that are walking.”

TASAWWUF: This is especially true of the Naqshibandi school. They live often in fraternities and congregate together in prayer, esoteric exercises and visits to mosques and shrines.

There is the inner science which is called “tasawwuri” where there is an amalgamation of devotion and walk. It induces the attitude of the Sufi Invocation “Toward the One” but now also there is an addition of a sort of practice based on the various sifat-i-Allah as well as those based on attunement to masters and saints. Both are most valuable.

The breath can be used inwardly in meditation and outwardly in the walk and dance. It becomes the channel for blessings, and all the forms of magnetism discussed in the teachings. All is theory until there is living communication. So more attention is paid to the breath, to ways of breathing, and to many inner sciences, too numerous to describe in a single paper, wherein the inner faculties of humankind come to the surface and demonstrate the attainment of the kingdom over the heavens.

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**Gatha with Commentary      Series II: Number 7**

**Direction of The Breath**

GATHA: It is said that the cobras, enormous animals living in dense forests or in the mountains, attract animals or birds by the power of the breath. When the cobra is hungry, which is once in three months or six months, by inhaling the breath it draws its prey near. In its exhaling there is magnetism, power, and influence; in its inhaling there is attraction.

TASAWWUF: Jesus has said, “Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as the dove.” What wisdom is there in this? How do we get the wisdom of the serpent? We certainly do not get any wisdom by mulling over words either of Scriptures or of teachers, spiritual or intellectual. The ancients knew better. They went and observed animals. They learned from the animals. They learned all kinds of things from the animals—sounds, movements, how they attracted their food, how they built their homes, how they rested. And even about their personalities.

We should not be too horrified then when we learn about serpent or naga-worship. Ignorant people, that is illiterate people, still have enough inner guidance that they can learn from the animals. When they see faculties in the animals they do not have, they regard them as superhuman. But besides other aspects of divine attributes in the serpent, we can see how this animal has a sort of magnetism. Even people have been affected by such magnetism.

According to the Sufi teachings, this magnetism is connected with the breath. Every form of breath produces magnetism, and it is from this magnetism that power and influence arise and increase.

When it is said that in inhaling there is attraction, this is covered by the subject known as Urouj. Urouj is a vast subject presented here and there in the volumes of *The Sufi Message* and of particular interest to the disciples of the Advanced Study Circle. It is also implied in the concentrations on the triangle where it represents the arm on the left side from the base to the apex. It also parallels the rising sun which also brings magnetism, power, influence and attraction.

GATHA: The mystics of ancient times have learned much from cobras. Mahadeva, the Lord of Yogis, had the cobra as his necklace. The peace and stillness of this animal, the contentment with which it waits for its sustenance, are wonderful, and most instructive for an adept on the spiritual path.

TASAWWUF: Mahadeva may be more generally known as Lord Shiva. His worshippers are taught about contentment and peace, about equal-mindedness. No doubt his pictures are quite symbolic.

There are two tendencies which are not always wholesome. One is to deride idolatry in all its forms, to see nothing but evil; to ignore the values of symbology to the history of cults and the operation of the Spirit of Guidance in pre-historical times. The other is to over-evaluate what is exotic, to become a blind devotee, and to practice forms of meditation and tapas which do not lead to spiritual liberation.

GATHA: One who masters breath becomes invigorated and strengthened in his mind, becomes quiet and peaceful and achieves self-control.

TASAWWUF: Nayaz is one of the first practices given to the new talibs. It is often regarded as elementary but a better way would be to look at it as fundamental. It is fundamental to learn to breathe rhythmically—the importance of this cannot be over-stressed. Then to realize that one is drawing into his organisms those vibrations which use as vehicles the rays of the sun, the waves of the air and the all-pervading power of space.

In some ways these correspond to the Fire, Air and Ether vibrations. They are all beyond the denseness of earth. They are utilized in the hereafter as well as in the herenow. But it is proper also to concentrate on each of these three aspects, although the breath practice for all may be the same Healing method.

We can also realize through Hatha Yoga and otherwise that the importance of breath is slowly dawning on the consciousness of the peoples of the Western world. This will become more marked as people suffer from what is called “pollution.” So long as this pollution affected only miners and certain other classes of workers, usually in the chemical industries, it was not considered as too important. It may not even be that the atmosphere is more polluted but that the consciousness of this pollution is becoming more wide-spread.

It is not only that technology may be called upon, we can realize that each one of us, by his own purification efforts, is making this a really better world for everybody. For mastery comes from application and practice and never comes from any subjective ideas about them. The ideas are even harmful for they add to the accumulations of the lower mind. Besides this, mystics have many practices and these are imparted as the devotee prepares himself, or as the Divine Grace manifests that he is ready.

GATHA: In the cobra there is a far-reaching breath. So is the breath of the mystic. The mystic's breath is not what is called deep breathing. His is the breath reaching inmost, which touches every plane of his being.

TASAWWUF: In Nayaz the prayer is to purify the body, heart, and soul, and this means becoming aware of the deepest parts of personality and consciousness. And as the breath becomes more

refined, and then becomes lighter, it really makes the devotee stronger. For it is said that this comes not by power, nor by might; it comes with every inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Breath. Thus the mystic's breath in this sense is what might be called "solar," like the sun it radiates until in the Pir it is most powerful and others can feel and benefit therefrom.

We can learn from the physical sciences that there are fine vibrations which penetrate more deeply. The same is true of the breath, or the spiritual vibrations in the true sense of the term.

Those who practice what is called "backbone breathing," or who have their centers, called "chakras" or otherwise, benefit most when they can utilize the fine breath, rather than the deep breath.

To reach every plane of one's being, one can imagine oneself to be a seer; or one may take the diagram which appears in the later pages of *The Soul, Whence and Whither* and feel he is occupying not one body but three. There are students of Yoga and of mysticism who become aware of the magnetic fields surrounding their bodily flesh, and then they operate consciously or unconsciously as if these fields belonged to their immediate vehicle. In this way they both magnetize the immediate atmosphere around them, they also benefit more from the akasha (ether) which is in their immediacy.

This whole subject is taken up in a different way in the studies on Amaliat (which is translated as Psychology) both in the class studies and the literature, especially the literature on Sufi Psychology. It may take some time, and even more effort to become aware of that, and, those who have real humility, learn that without the teacher they neither arouse their finer faculties, nor benefit much from them.

GATHA: Every movement robs one of a great portion of breath, every excitement takes away a great deal of life-force. Therefore those who master breathing first learn control, not only over every passion and emotion, but over every movement. By trying first to make the body still one can practice the breath better.

TASAWWUF: Lord Buddha taught all these things, but did not always give the explanations. He indicated that he could give the methods, but that everybody had to work out his own salvation with diligence. As people began to adhere more and more to his words, rather than his purposes, and the term "upaya" became dis-vitalized, an orthodoxy was established which did not bring the experience of enlightenment. This orthodoxy may be well identified with the Theravadin Buddhism.

Then those who were successful saw that this success brought freedom, and this freedom was more important than the rules or determinatives so carefully preserved in literature, but not so evident in the lives of men.

What all forms of Buddhism teach, even if they do not practice, is self-control and mastering of passion and emotion. Here the danger lies in adherence to the words rather than in operations, and

as a result there has been separatism, which separatism has produced sectarian division without any group manifesting the higher attainment.

In the teaching of the day, we try to show respect for the wisdom of all faiths, but we differ from some schools in a certain detachment from name and form, and so from orthodoxies. It is not that Sufism is concerned, much less overconcerned with either tradition or innovation. What is needed is spiritual attainment, and spiritual attainment means breath attainment, purification, control and knowledge, more than anything else.

In Buddhism especially, lust, greed and anger have been symbolized. This is a very good first step. But Theravadin Buddhism differs from mysticism in its orthodox adherence to negative steps, with the result that what they call Nirvana or Nibbana is much like the Sufi Fana, but devoid of the attainment of Baqa, as has been explained. Still, sitting quiet is most necessary, especially in the early stages, and perhaps in all stages. Then the refinement of breath, leading to mental purification and further progress.

GATHA: Therefore among Yogis different postures are taught. Every posture allows the breath to take a certain direction, for every direction the breath takes has a different result. It is posture and thought, both together, that help to direct the breath in a certain direction.

TASAWWUF: Sufism is neither a science or revelation bound up with a particular individual. We are told at the beginning "God alone was the founder of Sufism." There are many schools; there are a multitude of methods, there are all kinds of wonder.

Within the Sufi Order there are both definite and indefinite Ryazat. Some of these are closed systems, others are open systems. Very roughly it can be said that in Sufism, thought and breathing seem to be more important than postures, while in most Yoga systems, not only is it affirmed that the postures are most important, they are presented in such a way that the devotee learns therefrom by his own experience, discipline and methods, so that there is no vagueness at all. All becomes clear.

There has been a great deal of confusion produced by intellectual writers who have never submitted to disciplines, nor had a spiritual teacher, many claiming that Sufi methods were derived from India. There is little evidence for this, and what evidence there is has little meaning. But there is no question that the Sufi Message of the day offers infinite possibilities for the universal integration of all knowledges. Therefore we do not disregard what is being accomplished in other schools. Some day no doubt there will be a real universal academy with complete tolerance in which many methods of discipline, devotion, and awakening will be offered to students within a single institution, bringing together all the lines of spirituality into one general area with mutual respect for all.

In the past the spiritual schools of India have been divided roughly or not roughly into those using methods called Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, etc. In the past



they were so divided. They may be brought together.

Mystics may not necessarily all be united into a single school any more than Physics, Biology, Psychology, Astronomy, and Geology may be united into a single Science. It is not necessarily so. As Buddha taught, there are many upayas, so Sufism teaches there may be many methods by which spiritual attainment can be accomplished.

GATHA: As breath is a life-power, whatever centre it is directed to it brings to a new life.

TASAWWUF: This seems to be a contradiction, but modern Sufism has never derided Hatha Yoga. It is only a question that attainment, or methodologies, or disciplines, do not deteriorate into mere mechanical processes. True books on Yoga always take into account and consideration the Divinity.

The lesson here is that the breath is the means, the force, and the centers are the feeling, the generators. As these centers are awakened one becomes aware of the hidden forces, the hidden powers within man. No more metaphysical vagaries but actual attainment, attainment which is possible for the whole of humanity.

In Sufism we have roughly speaking the mystical method and the devotional method. The devotional method is for all and may be presented esoterically or exoterically; the mystical method is only given to trusted disciples who are not only trusted, but who have given evidence of their own refinement and awakening.

There are philosophers and seers who have predicted the coming of the humanity with greater potentialities and higher faculties. They have only too often been made into closed cults, thus inhibiting the social accomplishment of the brotherhood of man. It becomes ridiculous when the intellectual and emotional disciples of such persons, not looking into the world around them, do not welcome those human beings who show such prowess.

In the scientific world, those who sought material forms exhibiting radioactivity and cosmic vibration, did this impersonally and objectively. In the metaphysical field, only too often this has been done subjectively and personally. So it would seem that many people of potential or actual spiritual development have like Jesus Christ been shut out from the inn. It is such people who are especially welcome to the Sufi Movement and who belong by their very birthright to the New Order of the New Day.

It can almost be said, "By their breaths we shall know them," or "By their atmosphere we shall know them." So disciples are becoming aware of the potentialities not only of themselves, but of others. Only thus can we find **one single brotherhood in the fatherhood of God.**

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**Gatha with Commentary**

**Series II: Number 8**

**Breath in the Development of Mind**

GATHA: Different conditions and the changes that take place in the world have their effect upon the mind, and the different conditions of the mind have their effect upon the body. As bodily illness makes man irritable, confused and exhausted in mind, so different conditions of the mind cause health or illness in the body.

TASAWWUF: There is now an attempt being made to study seriously the changes that have taken place in the world and their effect on mind. The word ecology, which at one time was concerned with the relation between natural forces, plants and animals, is gradually being adopted also to cover the effects of the environment on the human psyche.

From the mystical point of view this term “environment” has been very unsatisfactory. When the scholars did not know, they blamed everything on this word. They were not necessarily wrong, but the general attitude of American and European civilizations has been not only their willingness, but also their insistence, that other cultures adopt their terminology, but a rather laxity in adopting (sic) the terminology of other cultures when they have no words to explain phenomena. Nevertheless it is a step ahead when there is a serious consideration of the effect of the surroundings on the mind.

In order to protect the mind against any effects of unconscious and uncontrolled forces, Fikr is practiced by devotees. This produces vitality in the mind and certainly invigorates it when the forces of the surroundings would debilitate it. And when the mind is so invigorated, it is better able to help the body and keep the whole personality in states of purity and self-assurance.

The book *Health* offers some suggestions and methods by which a person can both protect himself against illness, and recover from it when it occurs. But basically, all health and soundness of mind and body come with a controlled rhythmicization and refinement of the breath.

GATHA: The link between the body and the mind is the breath, a link through which the influences of the body and the mind are exchanged and work upon one another. By the use of breath in physical culture the health and vigor of the breath is projected, so to speak, upon the mind. By the use of concentration through the breath the light of the mind is thrown upon the body, which takes away from the body all heaviness and stiffness, making it light and exhilarated.

TASAWWUF: No doubt some physical culture is needed. Besides this, if one showed respect for the body there would be a certain amount of natural exercise, such as walking, performed all the time. The great danger is in adopting some intellectual philosophy that has nothing to do with the daily life or personal habits or anything in the external. Man too often becomes a slave of his own subjectivities.

The Sufi Message is now being presented in such a way that one can benefit from all kinds of breaths and walks, but one does not necessarily benefit from any kind of ideas on the subject. The ideas are no good, and the processes of Mental Purification are needed to preserve man from the allurements of the devil operating as one's subjective mentality.

It is the breath itself which can be used to purify and master the rest of the personality. But along with this the practice of Darood or some other esoteric exercise is most valuable.

GATHA: Breath in this way acts like a ball in tennis thrown from one side to the other, and the force of its movement comes from the side from which it is directed. Therefore when it is directed from the body to the mind the mind becomes subject to the influence of the body, but when from the side of the mind it is directed toward the body, in this case the body becomes subject to the mind.

TASAWWUF: We must not be confused here. If a person is in Karma Yoga, if he is on the path of salvation through work, if he is doing physical duties, any intrusion by the mind can be harmful. It is not true that God is only in the Spirit and not in the body. As the Scriptures teach God is the "All in All." Mystics teach the identification of the body with the Divine Temple, not its degradation.

There are enthusiastic disciples who have repeated mantrams by their own self-will while performing physical duties and they have made many mistakes. There their minds are misdirected. In instances of physical endeavor it is right that the mind be influenced by the body; it is right in such instances that the body lead. If you are seated at a table, using a knife and fork, that is hardly the time to be concerned with abstract metaphysics or niceties in devotion. God is in your action, God is your action.

But in many other instances in life the body itself interferes with one's duties. To the devotee, all duties are sacred duties. They lose their sacredness when the ego-mind intrudes and personality justifications then become the worst form of delusion.

Yet it is true that physical fatigue, over indulgences in food, drink, tobacco, and drugs do draw magnetism from the mind and make it difficult for the mind to function most efficiently. And when the body does not make demands upon the mind, the mind becomes freer to rise to higher realms, so to speak, and its spiritualization or refinement is then much more simple.

GATHA: Very often dervishes and fakirs in the East, many of whom live upon alms and go several days without food and spend many nights in sleepless vigil, do things which are difficult for a wrestler, a boxer, or any other muscular person. Some dervishes practice jumping into fire,

standing for hours in the water, sitting or lying on iron pricks, thrashing their bare arms and legs, cutting themselves with knives and swords, and all such things beyond the power of a physically strong man. Often a physically strong man suffers in proportion to his strength when he is exposed to pain or torture.

TASAWWUF: Mystical development involves the mastery of the elements of earth, air, fire and water. European and other occultists also had their disciplinary methods to do this. In the nineteenth century there was a Frenchman named Benjamin Constant who under the name of Eliphas Levy wrote on the science and art of Magic. He described very clearly, very scientifically, very powerfully, and sometimes very uselessly, how to control the elements.

Mysticism is taught both as a science and devotion to the disciples of the inner circle, but it may also be as the Scriptures say, and was also true of the Higher Mysteries, "Few there be that find it." Ego- interpretation makes advancement in the inner sciences very difficult. There has to be a surrender of mind and will and especially to the teacher. No sort of argument has brought this knowledge to the world.

But once clear of the interpretation of human will and ego thought it becomes possible to communicate a considerable segment of the science and art of mysticism to those who do not have inflated egos, to those who are willing to learn, and especially those who will accept their own experiences as well as those of others. Many people, both in the east and west, are intrigued by the phenomena of certain classes of magicians and occultists. The wise man accepts these accomplishments but sometimes—and he is not necessarily wise in it—regards them as the play toys of children.

In the Sufi mysticism one learns about the mastery of both the worlds within and without. It is done by methodology and not by metaphysics. It is achieved more by the exploration than by the explanation of the world around one. In this way man becomes free from ecological factors and also from the whims of samskara.

GATHA: This explains that though the power of breath is the main source of physical development, yet breath is the principal thing in the development of mind, in which the influence of the breath is more valuable.

TASAWWUF: The commentator was blessed by the manifestation of Hazrat Inayat Khan in the progress of fana-fi-Sheikh. He learned therefrom the mastery of the breath over physical things. He was able to lift what even several people could not lift together, but no one around him would accept the method. Each thought that a presumable universal being, by some special intervention, would come to them and awaken them to this achievement. If it did not happen to them, they thought it was diabolic magic. This has prevented progress in learning the control over the physical body by the breath.

When after the disciple learns how to control the physical world and to have muscular

achievements he was also awakened to endless mental possibilities; he became conscious on the inner planes as well as on the outer planes. Then he was trained in the higher sciences known as Mushahida and Mujahida, which can best be achieved through the refinement of breathing and through very high control of the ego in all its forms.

We must therefore not look upon this as theory. Ideas on this subject are almost valueless. The refinement of breath comes from the refinement of breathing, and not from anything else. We may perform Darood, we may do all kinds of practices, we may learn how to meditate. We may learn more than merely meditating. There are infinite potentialities in this. So as we refine the breath, so as we learn how to walk in a multitude of ways; how to meditate to distinct advantage; how to progress in the inner sciences, we learn more and more both about ourselves and the world.

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## Gatha with Commentary      Series II: Number 9

### Contraction and Expansion

GATHA: The breath has a great influence and entire control over two principles which work by the power of the breath: **Kabs**, or contraction, and **Bast**, or expansion. The former absorbs, attracts, and gathers energy from outside, the latter tendency expels energy from within. In this way body and mind are sustained, nourished, enriched, and made light, easy, clear and pure by the power of breath. Inhaling is contraction and exhaling is expansion. It is upon these two principles and their regular working that the health and happiness of man depend.

TASAWWUF: This teaching, presented to members of the Elementary Study Circle, is not easily learned. There are a number of principles involved, or there is a single principle. They were presented first in *A Sufi Message of Spiritual Liberty*. Many people read the book, some admired its symbology, but very few came to his depths.

In the cosmic metaphysics matter is representative as the hardening of spirit and spirit as the refinement of matter. In another sense, these are symbolized by Cain and Abel in the body. If there were only expansion, if there were only refinement, there would be no creation at all. There would only be the endless ocean of Bliss. All come from it and all return to it.

Knowing this, the adept is very considerate both of his inhalation and his exhalation. In inhalation, which is called Urouj, there is Kabs, or contraction, by which spirit becomes more dense. If it were not for this we could draw nothing to ourselves. We could not eat. All the lessons taught about the wisdom of the serpent would be valueless. There would be no form. The teachings of the Prajna Paramita Sutra would be true, excepting that there would be no one to find them to be true. There would only be Void. Therefore, in order to have creation and manifestation, there must be contraction, there must be sensation.

In one sense we eat because of Kabs and we rid ourselves of obnoxious materials, solid, liquid or gaseous, because of Bast. Thus Kabs involves any acquisition and all the processes of Urouj, be they material, subtle, mental or spiritual. Both of these aspects of the power of breath may be developed and when they are developed in balance it promotes health and happiness. Or as the Scripture says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

GATHA: A man who has not gained power over his breath is like a king who has no power over his domain. Once man has gained the power of contraction and expansion then what he needs in life is to know what to attract and what to repel, and this the master of breath intuitively understands.

TASAWWUF: This may be interpreted that man may gain or lose physically and materially without either being beneficial or harmful. No doubt man appears on earth both to benefit the earth and the immediate sphere, as well as to be benefited by them. If this were not so, there would be no spiritual evolution. What we call chance, what we regard as samsara, keep the whole sphere more or less at the same stage of evolution.

Inhalation draws from the outside. If there is something that man does not want to receive from the outside he can use his inhalation as if it were a screen, a filter, a dam or an absolute wall. All of us shut out many of the sounds, many of the noises, and all forms of distraction. We may be doing it by instinct, we may be doing it by will, but it is very necessary.

In the popular forms of Zen Buddhism, and in some other schools of meditation, efforts are made to still the mind without the control of breath. These schools assume, and they do not know that they assume, that causality may be used to rise above causality. If some of them were correct, every practice of meditation, no matter how small, would enable man to shut out all the undesirable noises, all play of light and shadow, all the obnoxious smells and everything from the outer sphere.

Sometimes this is done. It is even done by other methods than the mastery of breath. If we examine the respiration of such adepts we shall find that they have come to a mastery of breath through will power. But the Sufi, believing he can use mastery of breath directly, does not depend upon will power as it is known philosophically.

The same thing is true even more regarding thoughts. No doubt Buddha and many sages of India presented methods by which devotees could shut out not only particular thoughts, but all thinking. In Sufism in general, control of love and control of breath, are the chief methods, although there is

another way, in complete self-surrender to the teacher. In Sufi esotericism the disciple is taught to control thought by feeling. If he persists in that he will ultimately learn to shut out all undesirable thoughts. Mere Fikr and many other esoteric practices are of extreme value.

The power over expansion is also valuable in spreading magnetism, love, and blessing in healing and in overcoming hatred and all undesirable emotions. This tends to produce a broader outlook, to increase toleration and to awaken the depths of feeling.

GATHA: Even the birds and animals know what they must eat and drink and what they must not. By a close study of the lower creation students of nature have learned that animals and birds abstain from food and drink when it becomes necessary for health.

TASAWWUF: What is needed by students is to rise above the empty philosophy and learn to apply it to life. It has been said that all fruits and seeds which birds eat, may also be eaten by humankind to benefit. It is not only the birds from whom we can learn but also such animals as squirrels and even foxes. An extreme case no doubt has been the harvesting of the durian, found mostly in southern Asia, which grows chiefly in the woods and is not cultivated.

We can see that cats often exhibit a fastidiousness. They do not necessarily rush to the advertised brands. They know instinctively what they like, and also what is good for them at any particular time.

Animals also find water by an instinctive sense of attraction. One can see them sniff. This shows Kabs in operation. Man also can learn to find water, even without a dowser if he awakens or reawakens his instincts and develops receptivity to the water element as is taught in "Mysticism."

GATHA: I am often asked the question, why there should be pain in childbirth. And the answer is that our life has been removed far from nature. Man today lives an artificial life to such an extent that he can hardly understand what real life may be. Man considers the accustomed the natural, he does not think how far the natural is removed from the present life we live. The domesticated animals are also beginning to show the birth-pain, through their association with human beings.

TASAWWUF: This problem of pain in childbirth is often overlooked by the medical profession which has established its own orthodoxy. Even today we find the pharmaceuticals complaining that they may not administer medicines without getting sanction of the profession. In their training they have to learn about so many beneficial plants; in their practice they must sell or apply what the privileged profession ordered. They are called "druggists" and perhaps rightly so, for they are compelled to sell or administer many items which have been called "drugs," which drug the personality.

With few exceptions healing medicines are not derived from the mineral or chemical worlds. All of them have some hypnotic or anesthetic effect. It is only in the case of the psychedelics that this effect is evident, but there is no administered drug of any kind which does not effect, and often defect, the subtle as well as the material body. There are many faults and weaknesses among the

young people who have become addicted to psychedelics. But they seem far less impervious to pain at childbirth than those who live a conventional life. They are closer to nature, and often practice exercises derived from Yoga or mysticism.

GATHA: Fikr, practiced for some years, helps to regulate the rhythm of breathing, and it helps in all aspects of life to attract and repel all one wishes.

TASAWWUF: While this subject is presented in the lessons on esotericism and their commentaries, and in many side notes, we have to pass from the verbal philosophy to the practice. Before devotees reach the grade at which they are assigned this practice, they are often told to inhale and exhale sacred phrases; perhaps the Invocation, perhaps the word “Allah,” both as they inhale and exhale; perhaps one of the many exercises given in “Self Protection.”

Once they have established a rhythm, they should feel that this rhythm is a holy thing. Then when they have any thought, idea, suggestion from without, desire from within, anything — they should watch to see if there is a change in breathing. If there is no change in breathing, that adventure is right; but if there is a change, one should be very careful about the next step in life. And the worst thing is to argue or resort to self-justification. Arguments and justifications do not change the vibrations of the sphere.

But there is another aspect to this, and that is the development of fineness in the intuition which also comes when one practices refined breathing.

GATHA: By the help of Fikr not only the digestive faculty and the circulation of the blood and the pulsations of the body are made regular, but the concentration that is developed through the development of breath enables man to repel all disagreeable impressions which cause despair and depression.

TASAWWUF: In its simplest form Fikr is taught breathing out “La Illaha,” breathing in “El il Allah.” But there are other forms of Fikr, also, utilizing a sacred phrase with inhalation and exhalation, starting with either. Thus in healing Fikr, we start with the inhalation on “Ya Shaffee” and the exhalation on “Ya Kaffee.” The basic Fikr is no doubt universal, and taught in most schools of Sufism. Fikr means thought.

We do not realize this, that the continued practice of Fikr is beneficial on both the inner and outer spheres. It is a universal purifier. It soothes the nerves; in the end it produces equal-mindedness. It is a much better method for this than a concentration on equal-mindedness which often involves a battle with both ego and will. When one concentrates all effort in breathing the ego is easily subdued. And when one concentrates on his Fikr practice, the ego-mind is also brought under control.

GATHA: By the power of Fikr one helps the power of memory, also the power of retention of thought.



TASAWWUF: When the commentator re-entered college at a mature age and did not know what else to do, he performed Fikr. He passed very high, so high that the counselor told him it was one of the most remarkable examination papers in the history of the state of California. A month later, he had to face an examination in which he depended upon his ego-mind and his mark was very low indeed. By the last semester of this term, he practiced Fikr so assiduously he obtained high marks, twenty four units of university study when 16 is the norm even for excellence.

GATHA: At the same time one is enabled by the power of breath to forget any thought one wishes to put out of one's mind and to erase from one's heart any impression deeply engraved.

TASAWWUF: How important this is! It is easy to say, "Forgive and forget." How is one going to do that? If one thinks on the subject he will not be forgetting. There is another way, and while we may verbalize this other way as "leave it to God" when we carry this way of Fikr, we are leaving it to God. It is no longer an aphorism, it is an actuality. Modern psychologists say that all impressions are recorded by the subjective mind. They may be so recorded, but by the practice of Fikr, they can be buried so deep, that they do not produce any disturbance.

Fikr illuminates the inner being with light and sometimes the outer being also. This is especially true when it is performed with devotion. In fact, Fikr has so many benefits that the blessing comes with its continued performance and steadfast holy attitude.

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

## **Gatha with Commentary**

## **Series II: Number 10**

### **Communication Through the Breath**

GATHA: Breath is the medium between the outer life and the inner life. By the help of breath the elements necessary for the body can be attracted and by the help of breath thoughts and inspiration can be gained. By the help of breath all that is undesirable in the body and mind can be expelled.

TASAWWUF: In the establishment of the Gatha classes it was thought advisable to read and then re-read the papers. It usually takes much more than that to impress upon the consciousness that breath IS the medium between the inner and outer. It is not enough to know the myth and then the

symbology of such matters as Jacob's ladder. It takes a long time to impress people that when they have undesirable thoughts these can often be expelled by powerful exhalations. One may ask then whether one should choose between Fikr and the powerful exhalations. Here one is taught to use the powerful exhalations. Everyone is not assigned Fikr practices, especially while they are yet disciples of the elementary study circle.

The world is always full of agitation. Many people become so used to them, that without excitement, they feel very uncomfortable. But they feel more uncomfortable with the excitement, because then there is no peace. Peace can be obtained through the refinement of breath coupled with devotional exercises and attitudes. We can also use the breath and especially the spoken word in repeating the sacred phrases. Such repetitions impress not only the mind but the very atoms of the body. Every cell benefits when one performs a Wazifa.

GATHA: The secret of telepathy, of reading the thought, has the science of breath as its mystery.

TASAWWUF: If two people wish to practice telepathy, to begin they should concentrate on each other at the same hour. This concentration is made easier when they breath in consonance. In fact sometimes even a few efforts may produce a result. This is especially true when they can begin with Fikr and concentrate on each other's minds. Or they can have a higher concentration, on the Teacher, or the Spirit of Guidance.

GATHA: When one wishes to draw from within inspiration, breath is the key.

TASAWWUF: This is told over and over again. The refinement of breath seems so simple. The audible or mental repetition of a sacred phrase seems so elementary. Yet these are the means adepts use. So if one is suffering from ennui or intellectual fatigue, attention should be paid to the breath.

Sometimes this is done by diversions—walking, exercising, watching athletic contests, the cinema, reading of all kinds, etc. These diversions do remove uneasiness, but by themselves do not produce inspiration. Inspiration means contacting in some way God, or the universal mind, and for this breath is not only all important, it is **the** means.

GATHA: Breath is a life-current; its value is known to so few! Breath in itself is a phenomenon, but the phenomenon becomes manifest when once the breath is fully mastered.

TASAWWUF: This subject has been presented in many places in the literature and in the lessons. Even when words are presented explicitly as in the last section of *The Soul, Whence and Whither*, there has been a whole culture whose teachings are otherwise. The effect of this culture has been so strong that even when the Bible expresses something in plain language, it has been disregarded. It cannot be repeated too many times, that among nearly all the people we choose to call primitive the soul and breath have been identified. We must integrate this into our psychology, into our philosophy, into our daily life, and into our constant practice, or else we have before us,

merely empty words.

GATHA: The law of transmutation is also the secret of breath. What we give, or gain from another, without seeing or hearing, which we only realize as a result of the contact of someone, that is the effect of breath, for by the medium of breath there is always something given and taken; yet so few are aware of it!

TASAWWUF: This can easily be demonstrated. Hold hands as if one were shaking them, or for any other purpose. Breathe in and out and watch the changes in the magnetic currents. You will soon realize that breath is really the life; when we are talking of breath we are talking of life, and when we are talking of life we are talking of breath. No doubt Sri Aurobindo has carried this to an extreme when he refers to Prana as Life, and not just as breath. One should not say he is wrong, but he does not seem to have given a very complete picture. Besides, in his school, relatively little attention is given to the subject.

In the Dervish dances, we can easily experience the differences of proximity and actual contact. We can know it through experiences, not from any theory. Therefore, we can never exaggerate or over-exaggerate the importance of this subject. As other schools, Yogic, Vedantic, and Sufic, seem to have evaluated this subject, it is very important that we restore the proper emphasis. At the court of King Akbar, who was a Sufi, only disciples were employed as court attendants. They had to practice breathing and attunement and if they failed, they were dismissed. No doubt this is an extreme case, but it is true history.

GATHA: In the presence of one person one feels an inclination to laugh, in the presence of another one has a desire to cry; contact with one makes a person feel cheerful, with another sorrowful.

TASAWWUF: The negative or sensitive person often takes on the conditions of stronger persons around him. If one is weak, he should practice Fikr, or some other protective exercise. But generally, if one performs Fikr or repeats the Invocation, he is protected when protection is needed. Still there is a value if we can promote cheerfulness, either by our expressing it or responding to it.

This principle can be adopted. It can be used consciously. It is most important for those who must be positive in their attitudes to life, such as healers. The Wali may attune himself to an area, and through his breath send out protective blessings. The Teacher often does this in appearing before an audience whether they be disciples or non-disciples. Control of the breath produces control over the atmosphere. Control over the atmosphere makes communication much easier. In fact this is almost like a secret in the hands of Sufis.

GATHA: Sometimes without there being one word spoken between two people thoughts and feelings are transferred, without people knowing it, through the current of breath.

TASAWWUF: This has often been the experience of the commentator, especially when he was in the presence of the Brotherhood of the Spirit, that is to say fellow Sufis. In fact, it occurred so often,

without effort, that it was no longer considered a phenomenon; what was difficult was not any experience in telepathy or spiritual attunement or thought transfer, or non-verbal communication; what has been difficult has been the unwillingness of western people to accept this as fact. Sometimes the phenomenal delights them, but the understanding or demonstration of the same phenomena does not always delight them. The result is that a great deal of what is explicable and demonstrable has become mysterious, and at the same time, a great deal of what is called "mysterious," rightly or wrongly, is being demonstrated now to the world.

There are many schools of esotericism which bring out this universal teaching. Unfortunately, or oddly, each particular religion prides itself that they contain schools which either teach such para-phenomena, or demonstrate them. But within their own ranks, each adheres at the same time to its particular orthodoxy. So while there are numerous incidences of thought-transfer and similar phenomena, it often happens that the religionists and pseudo-esotericists have kept such phenomena hidden. Sometimes only under the pressure of scientific investigations, but sometimes also through the awakening of souls, and the tremendous pressures on communications, these experiences are accepted.

Obscurantists emphasize that it is pride that makes people talk. It is ignorance that objects to others talking. Wisdom can dictate, and if one has developed Kashf he will also know when to speak and when to keep silent.

GATHA: Breath is a link through which one individual is connected with another individual, and space does not make a difference if once connection of breath is established. The communication will be sure and clear, if only the wire is tied to sympathetic hearts.

TASAWWUF: We can be sure that with the rise of advanced souls, and the re-birth of honesty in the world, there will be more and more instance of this. The time may also come when para-psychological phenomena is studied impersonally and objectively as all scientific and quasi-scientific phenomena should be studied, are studied.

In spiritual training of the day, sometimes hands are held in a circle, and the Invocation is repeated. This repetition helps to attune personalities one to the other; it also helps establish magnetic fields which can be used not only for healing, but for a multitude of beneficial purposes.

No doubt the Teacher can best help here. He can attune to the student by breathing, or by the power of his own breath, he can raise the consciousness of the student. He can read the breath of the talib to much greater betterment than by asking questions, and also by this he does not cause any emotional disturbances to the student. In turn, the disciples in Sufism are raised step by step, grade by grade, to attune to the teacher, in the first steps toward attunement with God, i.e., spiritual realization.

While we may regard attunement as a separate process from love, it is surely that in love there is attunement. In the prayer we say we see God in a loving mother, a kind father, etc. Now we have

to make this an actuality, and this is not too difficult.

This is also one of the reasons for introducing dancing into the Inner School. There, attunement is a vital necessity. You cannot have the dancing without the attunement. When there is the attunement, there is often much greater harmonization, and besides harmonization, exaltation, which is one of the grand purposes of spiritual training. In the Chistia School music has been used through the ages. Now we are using it in all its aspects, of singing, dancing, instrumentalization, etc. As it becomes effective more and more people will be drawn, for as it is said in *Gayan*, "Heart speaks to heart, and soul to soul."

GATHA: There is much that is common to the science of electricity and the science of breath. The day is not very far off when science and mysticism both will meet on the same ground in the realization of the electricity which is hidden in the breath.

TASAWWUF: There are two aspects to this at least. One comes in the study of static electricity, and also in dynamic electricity, so far as the propulsion is by battery. One can connect cells in series and parallel—at least that is what is taught. But one can connect cells in all kinds of ways, one can have complex connections and one can also measure the effects of these complex connections. One does this, then one will get some ideas which also can be used in psychology and in human behavior studies in general.

We do not always realize that in folk dances there are different effects accordingly as the straight line, the circle and the square and other formations are used; accordingly as the sexes are separated, joined or mixed. All these have definite effects, pleasant or unpleasant, but certainly definite. And it is not only formations, but the movements that follow that can throw considerable light on life and its phenomena.

Then there is another aspect which comes in power electricity, in the use of transformers, and in the phenomena of stepping up and stepping down, and in other complications. Often these are used in industry or in servicing homes without any psychological or philosophical conclusions being drawn therefrom. Then there is another aspect which has been studied a little bit by bio-physicists. The earlier tests show that a complete movement of breath has generated about 2.6 volts. No doubt there have been further studies here, and in these many parallels to mystical knowledge and unfoldment can be noted.

Then there is still another matter. Dr. Abrams of San Francisco, whom Hazrat Inayat Khan visited, had a whole theory of bio-electrical phenomena, its use in measuring the health and dis-ease of the body. He was very much opposed by the medical profession. What really happened was he opened the door to the study of the subtle body, and its interaction with the annamyakosh, or body of flesh and food.

Again referring to *The Soul, Whence and Whither* where the existence of three vehicles is presented, and keeping in mind that the breath is the connecting nexus between all three, we can

see infinite possibilities here if we wish to use measurements to ascertain the strength or weakness of personality. Indeed there are many schools which now do this, some regarding the subject as secret and esoteric, some regarding it as potential or actual science. And there are other views. Perhaps all of them are right. At the same time, according to Sufi psychology, the mind itself has a strength which can be asserted by suggestion or otherwise, so that every portion of the personality has the potency to influence the lesser portion of the personality more than it can be influenced. So when we pray, "Raise us from the denseness of the earth," it is indicated that spiritual unfoldment consists at least in part of greater influence of higher portions of personality over the lesser, and lesser influences of lower portions of personality over the greater.

All of this is the norm of the adept, who has mastery over breath.