

Gatha with Commentary
Takua Taharat: Everyday Life
Series I
of
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Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
the Only Being, United with All the Illuminated Souls
Who Form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

Gatha with Commentary Series I: Number 1

Everyday Life

GATHA: It is a very necessary thing in the life of an adept for him to adapt his mind and body to the spiritual life, in other words, it is necessary for a man to become his natural self before he begins his journey in a spiritual path.

TASAWWUF: We may understand that the English word “spirit” is an adaptation of the Latin “spiritus” which means breath. We do not ordinarily consider that the rise in spirituality is also a rise in the efficiency in breathing and also the refinement in breathing. When it is explained, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” it means blessed are they who are refined in breath. (*Pearls from An Ocean Unseen.*)

Now breathing is the most important function of the body. It is by breath that the soul enters the body and without breath there would be no life in it at all. So the subjects of breathing, spirituality, and naturalness are closely allied.

Mistakes in the translations of Scriptures, especially by those who have not inner understanding, have obscured even the simplest literal interpretations.

The word “adept” here means both those advanced on the path and also the neophytes in Sufism. When they begin to practice and are assiduous in them they become adepts, so to speak.

GATHA: It is this naturalness which is called by the orthodox purity. For pure water, or pure milk, means water or milk in its own essence; when another element is mixed with it then its purity is lost.

TASAWWUF: Impurities arise from mixtures, as for instance, air in earth causes dust; water in air causes fog; fire and earth in air produce smoke. To become pure the foreign element must be removed, and in one section of Chemistry all attention is paid on purifying the substances required.

Also according to the Food and Drug Laws there must be a purity in products. They fail in their purpose if they are not pure.

GATHA: To become spiritual means to purify one’s spirit from the foreign elements which take away the natural feeling of the spirit. Concentration, meditation all these help to make the spirit its

natural self again, but the vehicles that the spirit uses in order to experience life must help the spirit to become natural.

TASAWWUF: Jesus has said, "Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin." This is a natural condition. It does not mean that man should be entirely free from labor or effort, only if plants become beautiful in their natural condition, why not man also? Why not all creatures?

It may be that purification processes alone bring out the natural spirit and the natural beauty in all of us. Thus one can use the breath. Thus one can use sublime magnetism. Mohammed has taught that life is generally hard, and Allah does not intend to make it harder. Therefore it is a duty of spiritual teachers to do everything possible to bring out the beauty and intelligence in disciples, and they in their turn are able to help the rest of the world.

Meditation and concentration, each in a different way no doubt, but each in a natural way, actually provide the means toward this end. Devotees practicing repose reflect more magnetism and light than do other people.

GATHA: These vehicles are the mind and the body. However great the musician, if the instrument is out of tune he can do nothing with it. To say that only the spirit matters and the body does not count is not right. Therefore it is necessary that first both mind and body be fit vehicles for the spirit to use.

TASAWWUF: Indian philosophy presents the principles of purusha and prakriti, of Shiva and Shakti. The all-pervading spirit, so to speak, impregnates form and produces manifestation. Actually, both the spirit and the form are divine. Every element of the universe is divine. This divinity is covered by ignorance. The mind makes differences. And the mind, making these differences, then produces confusion in itself. The processes of Saffa purify the mind. This enables the devotee to comprehend life both from clear sight and from insight (Kashf).

GATHA: The difference between a pious person and a spiritual person is this, that the pious person makes his mind and body ready for his own spirit to use, and the spiritual person, after making them ready, gives them to God. Piety is the first step and spirituality the next.

TASAWWUF: Piety is necessary no doubt to come to a recognition of the existence of God. The pious person too often sees God and himself as different. He verbalizes God as creator, but does not functionalize God as such. He sees himself as an independent and separate person. In this way, although there have been and are many pious people in the world, they see themselves as separate and independent individuals. Then they tend to condemn one another. They do not realize that when a pious Christian condemns a pious Buddhist, or a pious Muslim condemns a pious Hindu, this causes some people to regard piety as quite unwholesome. And when it is misused in this way, it is, indeed, quite unwholesome.

A spiritual person applies intelligence. A pious person says, "God is good. God is kind. God is

generous. God is forgiving,” etc. A spiritual person asks, “If man is made in God’s image, why shouldn’t I become good? Why shouldn’t I become kind? Why shouldn’t I become generous? Why shouldn’t I become forgiving?” The spiritual person, therefore, tries to manifest the God-qualities in himself, in his body, and in his mind.

GATHA: There is no exaggeration in the saying that cleanliness is next to godliness. The body must be considered as the temple of God, and this sacred house of God must be made pure in every way; then the light of God is reflected in it.

TASAWWUF: That God is pure light has been taught by every religion. But what value pure light, unless it comes to manifestation? The principle of baptism is to purify the outer personality. At the same time, it is important to see that the veins and tubes in the body are clear and clean. When this happens, the light will shine inside the body as well as outside.

Ablutions have been made requisite for praying. Sometimes, people who do not pray do not see the necessity for keeping clean. For many centuries Christians shunned bathing. Unfortunately also, the Jewish people who have many rituals of cleansing also began to disregard them. This is one of the reasons Mohammed proposed cleansing with every act of prayer. To insure cleanliness, he proposed many prayers a day. It may be a question as to whether the cleansing or the devotion was most important; each purifies in its own manner.

Many yoga practices also involve a good deal of purification ceremonies and rituals. At the summit we must come to realize that the human body is the temple of God.

GATHA: Beasts and birds all have a tendency to be clean and pure, and for man it is necessary that he should develop this tendency. It helps, not only on the spiritual path, but also in the development of mind. To the artist in his art, to the scientist in his science, in all aspects of life it gives happiness. When man neglects it, that does not mean he does not like it, it is only out of negligence that he overlooks things that are of the first importance.

TASAWWUF: Instinct is an aspect of divine life which functions through the nervous systems of animals. They seem to know what to do and when to do it. Many animal psychologists have noticed the difference in the behavior of beasts in this respect.

The importance of cleansing has affected many social institutions. Cleansing is inner and outer, although in the steam bath and similar practices there is no doubt an overlapping.

Many parts of the body such as hands, feet, face and eyes give out magnetism. If they are covered with foreign substances, the magnetism is impaired. Water not only removes many impurities, it adds a certain magnetism of its own. Air not only adds the magnetism of air, but it is the conveyor of life. The Japanese people who bathe often have developed much charm, whereas those people who do not bathe or bathe seldom, show lack of such charm.

GATHA: One's body is of all things in the world closest to oneself, and its influence has a great effect, and an immediate effect, upon one's mind and soul.

TASAWWUF: This subject is treated at some length in the small book, *Metaphysics*, included in *The Sufi Message*. The existence of the body, the functioning of the body, and the roles the body plays in one's life create a network of impressions, and it is these impressions which have their effects upon one's mind and soul. Nevertheless in the process of purification one strives to make the consciousness free from both the body and these impressions, yet making full use of this body and these impressions.

GATHA: A great many illnesses are caused by the lack of consideration of the necessary cleanliness of the body, which is a science and an art in itself. On the soul and mind one's own body makes the first impression, all other things come afterwards.

TASAWWUF: This subject is dealt with at length in the book *Health*. We may say that many diseases arise from there being dirt on the body. We may also say that many diseases arise from impurities produced within the body by carelessness in eating, drinking, and breathing. But there are also illnesses arising from impressions. These are discussed in *Health* under the title "The Psychological Cause of Disease."

There are both dietary and aesthetic considerations in eating and drinking. We can also learn about the types of magnetism and purificatory potentials in many aspects of vegetable foods. This is a long and complex subject, and there is a great deal of benefit to be gained by considering it scientifically and aesthetically.

GATHA: Yes, there souls who have arrived at such a plane of spirituality that the condition of the body does not matter to them. But they are not to be followed as examples.

TASAWWUF: Many Scriptures lay down principles of diet. In many cases those on the spiritual path are given even more restricted diets. Of course it is possible for an adept to transmute atoms. Many do this consciously or unconsciously. In the case of the great Vedantic sage of the 19th century, he went to the opposite extreme and died of illness rather than resort to any seemingly magical process of transmutation.

GATHA: It is the normal path which is safe and is for all. The question, "Would this not give one too much the thought of self?" may be answered thus: the thought of oneself exists when the light of God is absent; in the presence of every beautiful thing man forgets himself.

TASAWWUF: There are two aspects of this. 1. The impressions of early childhood produce certain effects on the consciousness and lead to certain forms of identification. But the long established habits of mankind often over-evaluate self-impressions. This is particularly true in civilized societies when habit patterns become fixed and unlearning is important for those who would tread the spiritual path.

While the phrase “Divine beauty” may be used, beauty itself is an aspect of divinity. The ancient Greeks, for example, made beautiful and evil opposites. This is because beauty leads to selflessness and evil leads to the self-centered outlook.

In the spiritual life it is important to become aware of radiance and grandeur. This can never be done so long as man is over-aware of the ego. Not only does appreciation of splendor and grandeur lead to the weakening of the influence of nufs, but the weakening of the influence of nufs leads to increased consciousness of splendor and grandeur.

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Gatha with Commentary Series I: Number 2

The Instrument of Our Body

GATHA: The body is an instrument for experiencing life; both the worlds, that within and without, are reflected in this instrument.

TASAWWUF: Although the Christian Bible teaches that the physical body is the temple of the Divine Spirit and although we can read considerably more on this subject in the Upanishads and other books of wisdom, the substitution of theologies has turned man’s attention away. He becomes more concerned with beliefs than facts and then seeks to justify the beliefs. It is this which caused the controversies between science and religion (actually theology), the dispute over what may be true according to some egocentric subjectivities.

Every cell of the body is a wonder, reflecting the whole of the evolution and when we come to the entire body which is a society or compendium of the multitudes of cells we are lost in wonder, if only we should look. This subject is also dealt with at some length in the little book on *Metaphysics in the Sufi Message*.

GATHA: Therefore purity of the body is the first essential thing, and the most essential, in the path of spiritual attainment. Every civilization has a peculiar method of cleanliness, but the mystic is not satisfied with the customary manner.

TASAWWUF: There have been since earliest times methods for keeping the body clean. We have

seen the examples among the animals. Besides impurities diminish the magnetism and by instinct man, along with the animals, knows that. But when the wise have appeared they have given their instructions. These instructions were based mostly on the needs of the humanity of the time, their culture, their evolution and their customs and habits. Therefore some methods of purification, although they may be very wonderful of themselves, are not always fit for others. Buddhism, born in a tropical climate, had to change somewhat to meet the needs of people in colder climates. Wisdom cannot be bound by forms.

In presenting the Message to the West it was possible to accept the prevailing hygienic customs which often were preferable to some of the traditions of other lands. Form alone does not keep the body pure and clean. Nayaz is for all disciples and it is to keep the body pure and clean within and without.

GATHA: Mystics have two views: one view is that external cleanliness matters nothing to them, and the other is that it is most important. As the work of an astronomer depends upon a telescope, and as it is necessary for him to keep the telescope as clean as possible, so it is necessary in the life of a mystic to keep the body in a fit condition.

TASAWWUF: This is laid down as a principle. It is not laid down as a dictum. Some disciples in their early stages of development become overly concerned with orthodoxy on the one hand, and with heterodoxy on the other. Psychologically they are not very different from the exoteric religionists who adopt forms by tradition. When the mind is so transfixed, there is a danger of fussiness entering in the name of spirituality.

The first thing to be observed in cleanliness is the form of lustrations and baths, and the principle is more important than the form. Cleanliness is most important and yet it is also important, as Jesus Christ has said, that we do not take too much thought about the morrow, or about the body.

Yet there is a certain magnetism gained by cleansing. Mohammed said that when water was not available even sand could be used. Whatever would remove impurity could be used.

GATHA: All the passages in the body are connected with the centers, which are most important in spiritual development, and it is upon the cleanliness and purity of these passages that spiritual development depends.

TASAWWUF: From this point of view there is a physical cleanliness inside the body. We cannot wash it in the ordinary manner but we can cleanse by breathing and also by purifying foods and drinks. Heavy foods are objectionable because they clutter the passages. So we have two things to consider: the lightening of burdens by avoiding heavy foods, and the keeping the passages clean by proper breathing.

Breathing and concentration awaken the centers and bring the vitality to them. These are exercises, not thoughts and there is too much danger and confusion by considering ideas of

oneself or another which are only ideas and not practices. All such ideas move contrary to unlearning; all methods may benefit if they are adopted—that can keep the passages clear. And when the passages are clear the energies brought in from the outerspace can reach the deep centers and benefit them.

GATHA: Besides these nine passages it is also necessary to keep the skin in a proper condition for spiritual purposes. It is from the mystical conception that humanity first learned the idea of clothes. There have been times when certain races painted their skin, and by certain Yogis the body was covered with ashes. In ancient times the body was covered with the bark of trees.

TASAWWUF: We must first consider the passages in the body, that the breath-energies enter the blood-stream and get into the organs and glands. Also that the food-passages are clear. Only here ideas are of no benefit and people who have too many ideas and too few practices are subject to diseases the same as everybody else.

The skin is kept pure by ablutions. Also by a certain amount of exposure, and such things as nude bathing or taking off clothes are helpful—to the person, not to the group. Many poisons are exuded by the skin which has been called the third kidney.

When the skin is covered or painted it prevents both heat and magnetism from escaping. The same is true of ashes although while this benefits the interior of the body, it does not help otherwise. The use of bark, leaves, and plant products for clothing is that they either add a certain magnetism or protect one in this respect. Cotton, jute, ramie, and such substances, coming from the Vegetable world, have, in a certain sense, their virtues, their protective values. This is not so true of synthetics, which, whatever else be true of them, deprive one of a certain magnetism. Synthetics worn on the outside, like minerals used interiorly, take away from the life-force.

It can be of great value to make a more detailed study of the vegetable world and its products. Commercialism here is an obstacle. Whatever is gained in one direction by the use of synthetics is lost in another.

GATHA: But behind all this there was always an inclination to keep the skin in a proper condition. It is upon the cleanliness of the body that sensitiveness depends; therefore people who have no regard to the cleanliness of the body are less sensitive than those who have regard to it.

TASAWWUF: During the days of Czarist Russia they gilded some children for their parts in a drama and the boys died of suffocation. This is a very bad way of finding things out. Our deepest instincts are based [on the fact that] consciously and unconsciously man is being guided.

The Japanese are among the most sensitive of people. They bathe often. They have a great sense of cleanliness and at the same time are not afraid of very hard work. They are among the hardest working people in the whole world. The Indonesian people also have a sense of cleanliness and purification[s] by water.

At the opposite extreme we find the Tibetans. They have to insulate the body to protect it against extreme cold. And so they have lost their sensitivity. And when dangers lurked, they seem not to have been aware nor able to protect themselves. With all the legends going around that they are possessed of unusual psychic abilities, these were not of such a nature as to help them in time of need. They no doubt had psychic powers, but because of their lack of sensitivity, these powers do not seem to have helped much.

GATHA: Besides the cleanliness of the outer part of the body, it is equally important, perhaps more important, to consider the cleanliness of the inner part of the body. Mystics, therefore, take precaution about what they eat and drink, and have methods of cleansing the inner part of the body also. No mystic in the East guides a pupil who has not first prepared his body for spiritual purposes.

TASAWWUF: All the spiritual teachers have given certain dietary and hygienic laws. We do not always realize how much we have depended on them. As the Scriptures have been neglected we do not realize, for instance, how much Zarathustra, the Apostle of purity, gave to the world. We take things for granted and yet it has been Rama, Krishna, Siva, Buddha and all Prophets and Messengers who have given all kinds of teachings and methods.

Behind all the functions of lustrations and baptisms are many customs which are also considered in part in the lessons on "Superstitions, Customs and Beliefs," and elsewhere. But while these things are learned intellectually and non-intellectually, until the disciple is capable of proficiency in unlearning, he may be affected by all sorts of influences, of traditions, customs, or some new school of teachings. All of this inhibits the use of the inner sense which alone is most beneficial.

To help the inner sense one has to cleanse the body inwardly, the physical body. For this fasting, purgation, water and fruit juices are valuable. Some go to an extreme of keeping the passages clear but never using them. They are to be cleansed so they can be used.

When the body is cleansed, one feels a certain elation. While this is most beneficial for the physical magnetism it also helps in the higher lustrations. These come from the breathing exercises and from the concentrations which affect the centers and give life to them and also extract life from them and by them.

GATHA: Cleanliness of the body, besides its importance for spiritual and moral development, also prevents serious disease.

TASAWWUF: Some have declared that all diseases are caused by uncleanness. We can readily appreciate the uncleanness of the skin and body and clothes. A little reflection will show that this also applies to the organs inside the body, that they need a similar care and tenderness although this does not always happen.

It does not benefit too much by putting too much thought on the subject. For thought also helps to bring about impurities. It is not necessarily beneficial. It acts as a weight and then it keeps the

breath heavy. When the breath is heavy it does not do its purificatory functions. One has to be aware of the breath physically as well as super-physically. The purer the thoughts the purer the breath and also the purer the breath the purer the thoughts.

No doubt we must consider the subject from several points of view, how purity of body helps the mind and heart; also how the purity of mind helps the body and heart; and also how the purity of heart helps both mind and body.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 3

The Breath

GATHA: It is necessary for the breath to flow freely through the lungs, tubes and veins of the body, and things that one eats and drinks often block the channels through which the breath passes, invigorating and vivifying every particle of the body.

TASAWWUF: The flow of breath is the most important thing in the earthly life. Indian philosophy teaches that the breath is the most important thing and it is by breath that the external forces, the maya, even the Prakriti, are controlled so they do not dominate the body. If the body were just food, we should be little more than living sculptured animals without much character. It is the breath which brings the life and all the spiritual forces. This is also discussed in the lessons on breath.

Every portion of the body, every organ, every tube is both a vehicle and a constituent of the body-temple. Gases are always accumulating and must be moved. It is chiefly the breath that does that. The caution given to diet is often to prevent the channels and tubes from being blocked. If they are free one can eat considerably more without harm.

GATHA: All skin diseases are caused by want of breath in the skin.

TASAWWUF: The importance in the skin functioning has already been discussed. We need not make a cult of nudism yet it is healthful to dispense with clothes at times. Besides they should be as loose as possible, they should hang freely.

Conventions and customs often stand in the way of our health. Every tight garment, belts, ties, close collars, causes some difficulty. No doubt there will be a whole world attitude some day when people of all lands intermingle and then they can wear the best clothing for each climate.

GATHA: The mystic feels not only the vibrations of music but even the vibrations of another person's breath. The skin of the mystic in time becomes sensitive and feels even the vibrations of the breath of another. Music, so to speak, touches every particle of his being.

TASAWWUF: We can often feel the effects of music both on the skin and on the whole organism. The actual vibrations of hearing and touch often overlap and some people even feel sound as if touch and touch as if sound.

Spiritual training increases all aspects of sensitivity and refinement. After awhile all people may become sensitive to the various gradation[s] of notes in the Indian music. The same sensitivity will pass to all senses. Then we shall be able to use the skin and not only restore the instincts but develop the refinement.

As the intuitive faculty develops so also does the response and the refinement acts as if it were an additional sense.

GATHA: Breathing exercises will not give proper results if the channels of the breath have not been cleared.

TASAWWUF: For the breath operates mostly on the gaseous elements in the body. It brings in pure air and gas and removes the poisonous air and gases. It does not affect much the movement of solids and liquids. They have a different function, use different organs.

It may not be necessary to study physiology or even hygiene on the spiritual path but some knowledge of these sciences may be helpful at times. Besides, the discovery of vitamins and the development of their usages show that there are living forces and vibrations conveyed by food and perhaps mostly in the living foods of plants. It is not necessary, at times it might not even be too helpful to subsist on raw foods alone. There are many other factors involved. Yet growing vegetation operates as the channels for many of the finer forces and vibrations. And, combined with right breathing, the proper diet may work for a maximum of health.

GATHA: The spine, the lungs, the tubes and veins of the body, the intestines should be kept clear. When the channels of the breath are blocked man feels heavy, depressed, lazy, drowsy and confused; the expression becomes dull and the voice harsh; then the movements lose grace and beauty when sitting, or standing, or walking, or moving; in every action one expresses a weakness, a lack of spirit.

TASAWWUF: Every action in life may be purified by the awareness of spirit and in turn spirit helps and purifies every action in life. We need not become over-concerned with diet; we do not lose

much by some concern with breathing for the breath is the channel of spirit. But these two aspects should work together—Prakriti and Purusha, so to speak—even Yang and Yin.

When a person has any of the negative emotions, one may correct them by the proper combination of diet and breathing habits; also by suitable work and exercise. The wise never permit those who are dull and lethargic to indulge in deep meditation.

The customs for meditation are that people would not have entirely empty stomachs; nor be too full. Meditating should not be done immediately after a meal, nor again one should not wait until one is hungry, for then the instincts will interfere.

One can also ascertain the difficulties with oneself or with another by noticing every aspect of dullness or lethargy and also the presence or absence of grace and beauty in manner.

The spine is a column up which energy flows. It is used in meditative and esoteric exercises. One becomes more aware of it and then one becomes aware of the centers and can begin to awaken and use the centers. In that way one provides for an ever-increasing accommodation of exaltation.

GATHA: Feebleness is different from lack of spirit. A person may be strong bodily but may lack spirit, and the teaching of Christ is that it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.

TASAWWUF: This is really not very different from the Indian teachings. We are all of us aware of the body. Even when we repeat a phrase like, "This is not my body, this is the temple of God," it sometimes takes much practice and a long time to realize it. We must become more identified with the breath that flows into the body than with the body itself.

This is a very simple approach to life which at the same time is most difficult. Our psychologies make us more aware of the body and the nervous systems. We become identified with them. Although the Upanishads teach over and over again that a man is Brahman, we do not identify with breath, we identify with things and ego. And we have to fight that false identification. But the easiest way to do this, to become more aware of the breath, is so contrary to custom and education that it is not easy.

We may become aware of the breath in many ways. First there is the column of air that enters the lungs by the respiratory channel. We do not think of it and if we think in such a way that we are not identified with it, the breathing may become heavy instead of light. If we relax and feel the column of air; if we can take another step and feel the life-force, and if we can take still further steps and feel the refinement we can come to appreciate that the Breath is not only a channel of Life, it is God Himself which is involved in it. We do not like to think that way; we do not readily unlearn so it often takes a long time to become aware of some of the greatest teachings in life.

While it is taught that the spirit gives life, we do not readily identify with it. We see the body as an organism with many tubes and channels. We see the circulatory system, the digestive tract, the

nervous systems, the glands and many organs, and we look at them without the spirit of identification. We may not apprehend that these are interdependent and not so separate in spirit as in form. The first animals had all systems together and in the angelic body this is also true, but from another point of view.

If we can realize the value of breathing in God, of identifying the divine spirit and our breath, we can then come to the prayer, "Draw us closer to Thee every moment of our lives." This could also be interpreted, "Draw us closer to Thee every breath of our lives." And some Sufis have taught that the greatest gain in life is to breathe with the awareness of the Divine Presence and also with thankfulness because of it. This also refines the breath and breathing.

No doubt there are two forms of feebleness. One comes from failing to eat in accord with the bodily needs. This can only be corrected by diet. But the other comes from our inability to assimilate the blessing-vibrations from the breath. That is why from the moment of Bayat so many disciples are given Nayaz.

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Gatha with Commentary Series I: Number 4

Outer and Inner Ablutions

GATHA: The vehicle which is made of earth can be cleansed with water and by air.

TASAWWUF: This is a very simple teaching whose very simplicity may cause it to be overlooked. The body, from a certain point of view, is composed of the Prakrit or material and the Purusha or spiritual processes. The spiritual processes are connected with breathing and the breath has both a material and a subtle aspect. That is to say, in one sense it supplies oxygen and other gases to the body; but it is also the vehicle for other sorts of energies. In the Sufic Ryazat and the Indian Yoga, one is trained to benefit from these vibrations, attracting what one needs and getting rid of what is unwholesome.

On the other hand, pure water has benefits. It is not a benefit when too many chemicals are added to the water. If they help on the material side, they do not benefit the subtle side. Every chemical added to food or water blocks the free assimilation of the subtle vibrations whether these come

through breath or with the vitamins and life-giving elements in the food. The synthetics can take away the life.

This subject is discussed from many aspects in the teachings. Water is also a conductor of certain gases and chemicals and they can benefit. Pure rain-water is often more palatable than other potions because it has beneficial bases and solvents in it; and the waters from the ground are not so beneficial.

GATHA: Therefore, besides external ablutions, inner ablutions are necessary to make the body a proper vehicle for the working of the spirit. In many different religions different ways of ablution are taught. They are not only for the cleanliness of the body, but are also helpful in making the body a fitting instrument for the spirit to experience life.

TASAWWUF: The adoption of esotericism does not mean that one need by-pass traditional religion, or its ceremonies and rites. Very often the only way to instruct the ignorant was to make a religious institution out of something. In this way they could be taught cleanliness and purity. But if one tried to give instructions, it did not always work. Therefore God has inspired the prophets to give the teachings which would benefit all the people of their times. And in other times and under other conditions there were different teachings.

There are many aspects to this subject. The Hindus used to bathe in rivers and even till now this custom has been maintained but not so much as in the past. In their Pujas or prayer-ceremonies the purifications by both water and air are stressed. The Hebrews also possessed this knowledge; it was stressed in the Biblical times but has lost its importance. The Christian Scriptures are also full of allusions to water but it also has lost its place. It was not only meant for the ceremonial of Baptism but in many other contexts.

Baptism and water ceremonies belong especially to the Lesser Mysteries. St. John the Baptist referred to the Higher Mysteries as those of Fire and the Holy Spirit.

GATHA: The external organs of the body are used for external activities, but the inner ones are the instruments of the mind.

TASAWWUF: We can readily grasp the importance of the physical body and all its parts. Religious ceremonies sanctify at a certain level, the externals, and the scriptural teachings are that the whole body is sacred.

We do not readily realize the relation of the subtle with the physical. It is not only the centers which may be called "Chakras" which have an intellectual significance. There has been some study, quite incomplete, of the relation of the organs of the body and the operations of the mind. It is still a science to be explored.

From the mystical point of view every part of the inner anatomy has some connection with the

subtle body and has subtle functions as well as physical functions. And if we study the emotions, whether from a physiological, psychological or mystical view we can find that there is a centering and this centering covers more than the mere physical operations.

If we study embryology carefully we can ascertain something about the subtle faculties of animals and also their gradient of evolution. This is even more important for man. And when we use the various centers in different operations we become more fully aware of the importance of these centers in subtle and mental operations. For this body is so constructed that there is a place in it for all the higher faculties and operations. The physical body is not merely a material organ, it is a subtle organ, and as one repeats in the sacred phrase, it is the divine temple. Only this can be discovered by functioning and awakening. It is not empty theory.

GATHA: The factors which are closer to the mind and which are more important for man than his physical organs are the centers which are located in the body, and the cleaner the channels of the breath are the more active the centers become.

TASAWWUF: We can see this in all types of operations. There are some centers which are more important in meditation and repose. If the channels are blocked they do not operate well. We can send vibrations through the blood, and also the blood-stream naturally carries both breath and food to every cell in the body, to all the cells of the muscles and anatomy and to all the organs which constitute the basis of man's physiology. All are dependent in some way on the blood-stream.

For this it is necessary to have pure water enter the body. No doubt different juices, drinks like tea and coffee and even alcohol provide moisture. But this is not enough. Every fluid other than pure water carries something which may be a help or a hindrance.

As to the breath, this is most important. And by the practices of meditation and concentration one learns how to direct the breath-energy. No doubt the first step is the directing of breath and this can only be done satisfactorily if the channels are clear. You have to send this breath-energy first and also the direct effects of the carrying of oxygen by the blood-stream. Any impurities will mar operations.

But there are also the selections. Both the breath and the blood-stream carry thoughts and suggestions and when one repeats sacred phrases a higher kind of vibration is carried along bringing the blessings and energies which are most helpful. The centers are no doubt opened by proper breathing and these subtle vibrations in their turn further energize the centers. Then when the centers open the inner and hidden faculties in man begin to express themselves. There is one aspect of this in activity and another in repose, and each has its benefits.

GATHA: The breath is to these centers as the air is to the plant. Besides inner ablutions, the breathing practice itself cleanses the channels of the body.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, the breath purifies the body and as the oxygen is carried in the blood-

stream this also purifies the body. By meditation one removes the unnecessary hindrances and by repeating the sacred phrases silently or audibly one increases both the capacity of the energies and also draws the livingness out of the sphere, as it is said, "Through the rays of the sun, through the waves of the air, through Thy all-pervading power in space."

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Gatha with Commentary Series I: Number 5

Inner Ablutions

GATHA: Besides making ablutions it is necessary that the channels of the breath be kept clean, and for this consideration is necessary about what one eats and drinks. Food that is raw and indigestible, stale food, old and decayed vegetables, rotten fruits, and meat that has been preserved for a long time, and all such-like things do not only block the channels of the breath, but their influence makes the breath impure.

TASAWWUF: The two aspects of life, of Purusha and Prakriti, of rarefying and solidifying, of spirit and matter (so-called) are always before us. In the materialistic sciences the stress has been on quantity and calories and then there has come a change, with the discovery of vitamins, that quality is also important, maybe more important.

There is also a knowledge inherited from ancient India which has to do with sattvic, rajasic and tamasic foods. But the ego-intervention types regard this as book-knowledge and do not always practice it. There are millions who are suffering from malnutrition and they may go to school and study diet and nutrition and hygiene but such studies do not always lead to their adopting the diet in accord.

In some wars the armies of the so-called educated peoples suffered more than their enemies because of lack of knowledge of basic principles. The Bible says that almost everything on earth is for food. The sacred Scriptures of India have the same teaching. But after it gets codified and falls into the hands of priestcraft, there is a warped outlook. What we may learn is how the life-giving substances and energies get into the plant life first. We have such knowledge and as scientific knowledge grows it also comes closer to the ancient Indian traditions, and we do need the sattvic foods. They both give the energies and vitalities and furnish enough calories that bodies and minds

can live healthfully.

It is only now after many centuries that the use of brown rice is becoming popular. It has the energies of the subtle and the chemicals of the physical which are needed. But there is always the danger of making a cult instead of studying the whole world or production. The same God, the same life that puts the proper chemicals and energies and vibrations into the whole rice puts it also into the other whole grains and in another fashion in many products of the earth.

The most simple derivative food, other than the grains and fruits and nuts, is milk. The cow is able to extract energies through eating grasses and thus the juices of phloem and xylem, the saps which contain the purest energies manufactured in the plant world. Man of himself is not always able to get these energies. The Bible does teach, "All flesh is grass" but the superficial examinations by the orthodox fail to touch the deep wisdom of it, considered either physically or metaphysically.

People who live on full grains and milk and milk products plus some greenery in fruits and vegetables obtain nearly a full balanced diet, a diet of substances which do not clog the channels of breath. At the same time there are other considerations and while the pure vegetarian diet (which will be discussed later) is fine for the subtle energies and thus for the subtle body, in living the full physical life, and in the pursuit of activities, rajasic food is also necessary.

The Chinese yang-yin is of another approach which is more or less dualistic and there is always a danger of adhering to any dualistic approach. In practice, the Sufis also adhere closely to the Indian outlooks without the traditional knowledge of the gunas.

GATHA: The air, which is always pure, becomes dense and impure by the contact with the impurities of the earth, and so is the nature of breath. Naturally when a person cannot digest food or when his lungs are not open and free the breath is not pure.

TASAWWUF: People who engage in physical activities are better able to digest many kinds of food than those who lead a sedentary life. The consumption of energies also makes it possible for the body to digest heavier foods and in greater quantities. Lazy and indolent people or those whose occupations do not require the use of energies are not able to digest properly certain heavier foods, as they are called.

There is another aspect, too, that by keeping the breath pure one is more capable of digesting foods, but also one may care less. All disciples are trained to benefit from the rays of the sun, the waves of the air, and the all-pervading power in space.

GATHA: The Sufi takes great care in his life as to what he should eat and what he should drink. Alcoholic drinks and drinks made from decayed fruits naturally make the breath impure; even smoking tobacco has a bad effect on the breath.

TASAWWUF: No doubt when the breath is strong and refined one is capable of ingesting and digesting what others cannot. But the purpose of the spiritual life is not to be able to perform miracles; the spiritual life is one of balance. There is little gained by having such vitality that one can take in the alcohol. It is not absolutely forbidden, it is relatively forbidden. (There are such things as ill-will, malice, hatred that are absolutely forbidden but permitted by the orthodox.)

There are many non-alcoholic drinks on the market and little attention has been paid to the purity of the water in them or the baneful affects of the products used and especially the effects of the chemical syntheses which destroy the vital life force in plant substances while using their atoms.

Smoking is not a natural process. It was first used by American Indians and others as a variant of meditation and religious, even spiritual ceremonies. It has come to be used for quite different purposes. Mostly these objectives can come from meditation or even from ceremonies. Not that it is always wise to restrict the use of so many items which have become part of the curriculum of men's customs. But at the same time to go more deeply into causes and their removal would mean also that it is not so beneficial to use unnatural processes instead of natural processes.

From both a scientific and mystical aspect the use of vegetable products coming from parts of plants other than the leaves is more natural. Besides that, the leaf has to go through many processes before it becomes fit to be used as smoking tobacco or snuff while there are many vegetatives especially using growing tissues, which may have real beneficial uses both to the physical and subtle bodies.

Man enjoys excitement, exhilaration, intoxication. It is natural, but when he can experience exaltation it is no longer necessary to rely on these lesser things.

GATHA: Those who observe the mystical rules carefully even refrain from all flesh food, even from eggs.

TASAWWUF: These rules have been handed down mostly from the Indian sources and they do not apply quite so much to other traditions. Yet in the retirement as Khilvat, or in strict training, physical energies not being required, the consumption of grains, milk products and some fruits and vegetables is more than sufficient to keep the physical and also the subtle body in good condition.

Nothing is lost by having a scientific knowledge of diet and nutrition but there are some simple principles which it is all that one needs to know. The green vegetables, properly fed (not using night soil) have life-energies which can be assimilated to one's benefit. The diet for seclusion is strictly non-animal.

GATHA: No doubt white meat is preferable to red meat, for red meat has particles which block the channels of the breath. This was the reason why the eating of pork was prohibited by the prophets of Beni Israel.

TASAWWUF: From the scientific point of view the longer and heavier proteins are found in the red meat. The pork especially has complicated proteins which are not easily broken down but this is partly true also of other meats. Poultry is not so harmful, nor fish, and among the animals lamb has long been used, and its cells are more easily assimilated than those of other meats.

One can study this subject scientifically. One can also observe the breath but this is a time-consuming study. We have before ourselves multitudes of examples of persons drawn from history and records. An argument does not assimilate anything. Besides people are more and more experiencing and agreeing that not much heavy meat is needed. Besides the use of pure, unpasteurized milk and its many products can supply enough protein, especially for those leading the spiritual life. And there are many nuts and nut-products which can be used, and also the soybean.

GATHA: No doubt to the pure all things are pure, but in order to become pure it is necessary to observe the rules of purity.

TASAWWUF: These rules of purity include all that is in hygiene and in many traditions, and also in modern sanitation. These provide for the physical body. But we also have the purifications through breath and ceremony, and of proper forms of relaxation and rest, including meditation. All these are means of restoring energy-propensities to the body, benefiting the breath and also helping the processes of digestion and assimilation.

GATHA: One must not judge of another person's spiritual evolution by seeing what he eats or drinks, because this has nothing to do with a man's evolution, for Shiva, the great Lord of Yogis, had fish for his food, and wine was given in the church of Christ as a sacrament. Therefore no one has the power to estimate his fellow-man from what he eats or drinks.

TASAWWUF: Yet this goes on, and not only in the scientific field; there are many who have set themselves up as dieticians and nutritional experts. They attract a number of followers, they often become famous and then they leave this world and soon some new methods become popular. And in all of this the ego and the logic (or reason) born from this ego remain in control. And this is always a one-sided reasoning. The Sufi who learns to see life from the standpoint of another as well as of himself, will not restrict himself by following one-sided methods. Besides it is forbidden in theory (but often happens in practice) for a spiritual teacher to introduce one-sided teachings or methods which have not been accepted by the generality or the scientific world.

In presenting spiritual teaching to the world it is not so important to stress diet and food. Besides, this was so often apart from moral culture. There are people who abstain from flesh foods who do not abstain from temper, envy, malice or human consideration. It often gives scope for ego-activities and of the worst kind.

This has often led to strange extremes. Thus what is called "Buddhism" has been introduced into the western world without any regard to the teachings of Lord Buddha. Some say he prohibited

meat which is absolutely untrue—you find no such teachings in the Scriptures.

There was a Vietnamese Buddhist who traveled through the Buddhist world beyond what is known as the “Iron Curtain.” He found all sorts of Buddhists with different backgrounds, each practicing what he called “dharma.” In many places they would not eat meat at all and in other places, in or near deserts, and far from agricultural lands they ate more meat than he found people anywhere else consuming, and yet they also practiced what they called “Buddhism.” And the people who are egocentric do not like to hear such reports. Besides in neither instance was there evidence of high mystical experience and divine wisdom.

There is no doubt that the great obstacle to vegetarianism has been prevalent egocentrism among its followers. They do not often demonstrate higher humanitarianism. They often do demonstrate more pronounced egocentrism.

GATHA: But everyone who wishes to tread the spiritual path may observe the mystical law, which certainly enables one to progress speedily. It must be remembered that it is the spiritual ideal which is the first thing to be held fast; what to eat and drink, and what not to eat and drink, is a secondary thing. Any dispute about this proves to be unnecessary.

TASAWWUF: Jesus has taught to take no thought of the morrow, what to eat and what to drink. Buddha taught what the modern Sufi would say: “Give all that you have and take all that is given you.” In the profound state there is no analysis. The more thought given to diet, or to any material subject keeps the consciousness weighted. It is important to raise the consciousness and it is not only heavy foods but also heavy thoughts, and disputes over any material subjects, which keep one close to the denseness of the earth.

If people refrain from meats and their minds are covered by the denseness of materialism there is little gained. And if a person even eats heavy foods and the heart and consciousness are in a lofty stage there is much benefit.

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Gatha with Commentary Series I: Number 6

Vegetarian Diet

GATHA: The question of vegetarian diet is often discussed among seekers after philosophical

truth. Some people give no importance to what they eat or drink, and there are some who give more importance to it than necessary.

TASAWWUF: As has been presented, there are benefits from eating the Sattvic foods and the natural foods, and also in the balanced diet. But there is another consideration and that is the mind and when the mind and thoughts are immersed in material subjects, no matter how purposeful or noble, then the consciousness is drawn from the consideration of God. And when one practices the Fikr, keeping the mind on God, then one will not only know either scientifically or intuitively what to eat and drink but also one will have the power to rise above the denseness of earth so that these things are not too important.

And there is another side which comes between occultism and science, and perhaps both will join together some day, and that is to know about the vital energies in the plants and in all foods until we reach a stage as is presented in the Upanishads, that we can fully benefit even from the odors and essences as well as from assimilating the atomic substances.

GATHA: There are two things which speak against flesh-eating: one thing is that meat, as a substance, hinders spiritual progress, and the other is that the unkindness towards the animals is a breach of moral law. Speaking about the first question, it is no doubt true that meat causes two kinds of harm to an adept. One is that it produces in man to a certain extent the animal nature; also it has an influence on the character of man. The nature of the animal he eats certainly has an influence upon a man's character. It was therefore that the prophets of Beni Israel forbade their followers to eat the flesh of certain kinds of animals and birds.

TASAWWUF: When we consider that Sufism teaches God alone exists, and that all things were created by Allah, and when we keep this in mind we have a different outlook. There is a cosmic teaching in Upanishads and a restricted teaching and practice in Indian orthodoxy which is very different. A summary glance will reveal that the Indian people, as a whole, have not benefited much from the literature and traditions which should have been imparted to them and were not. Orthodoxy in every land has crystallized teachings and customs and thus restricted the spreading of wisdom.

If we took the dietary of all the Messengers of God, those mentioned in Salat and others, we would not find much difference in their dietary although they lived in quite different lands with different customs and with different foods available. And if we studied the Scriptures very carefully we should find both teachings and conclusions very different from what is practiced by the various kinds of orthodox in different parts of the world, keeping people in ignorance and humanity divided.

In the Gospel of St. Thomas which was not known when the Christian Scriptures were compiled, Jesus Christ also has the teaching that man would be affected by the flesh of the animals he would consume. But also the cosmic evolution is taught, that the psychic side of the animal benefits by his being consumed in man. Just as man, in a sense, has the purpose of being assimilated into the Divine Spirit, so in another sense the animal benefits by being assimilated into the flesh of

man—man who was created in the Divine Image.

Vegetarians are too often materialists. They do not regard mankind as particularly sacred. They regard man as a glorified animal although in India, too, very often man has been considered as far less important than the cow, or even than the monkey and elephant and other beasts. This is a false teaching. The Divine Breath is assimilable only in the human body. And it would come as a shock to some, that consumption by man is a sort of “nirvana” to certain aspects of animal evolution which benefit therefrom.

From another point of view the Divine Sifat are present in the different animals, and not just the beastly nature alone. So when man consumes an animal, while it may not always be of so much benefit on the material side and while also on the subtle side he is assimilating a certain amount of animality, he is also assimilating the Divine Sifat which appears, in a sense, in an animal. And when they study all the customs and superstitions and also the knowledge of the sciences of Anthropology, we find that behind customs and totemism, there has been an unconscious tradition that man benefits from the animal world and learns from the animal world certain morals like wisdom, harmlessness, courage, fearlessness.

GATHA: Mystically speaking, it clogs the channels of the breath, and the important psychical centers which work in man as the instruments of wireless telegraphy.

TASAWWUF: Now we have other factors to consider. We have to consider man has other bodies. There are multitudes of suggestions about the subtle evolution and development in the printed literature. Also by breathing exercises one is assimilating the vital life-force and subtle virtues whether he is conscious of it or not.

The first thing that has to be learned about the centers is that they are, and then where they are. They may or may not be identical with certain physical and physiological centers, but it is better to treat them as if they were identical, that the ductless glands and other centers operative in the subtle world have their correspondences in the physical world. If they did not have, there would be no need to pay attention to diet or anything physical. But there are so many ways to block the physical passages and also the connecting links between the world, and it is the duty of the devotee to keep these passages free.

But it is not only meat, but heavy foods of all sorts and overeating which also blocks the channels and passages. And the passing from natural to artificial foods to please the appetites and the senses has done considerable harm and has resulted in the prevalency of disease which could easily be cured or prevented if man leads a natural life.

GATHA: Morally, there is no doubt that it has a hardening effect upon the heart of man, which is meant to sympathize, not only with his fellow-man, but with every living creature. There is no doubt that if all the people in the world became vegetarians, there would be no more wars. A person who refrained from killing the lower creatures would surely not be inclined to kill his fellow-man.

TASAWWUF: We can no longer refer to the wars of the distant and not-so-distant past as an example. Cannibals are horrified that so-called civilized people go to war for selfish, non-utilitarian purposes. But sympathy does not come from empty sentiment. Sentiment is no doubt needed for it is the ground-work for sympathy. But we must come to love our fellowmen and there are many who claim to feel tenderness for animals or who are really tender, yet are very careless about their consideration of others. Either of these shows a lopsided condition—lack of consideration for humankind or lack of consideration for all sentient beings.

The building up of peacefulness also comes from refinement and refinement is often the result of refined breathing and the absorption of the Divine Qualities through breath and heart. These are needed and are also needed when we consider plans to terminate wars.

In northwestern Pakistan to this day there is restraint about killing birds. This principle was introduced centuries ago by the Buddhist Emperor Ashoka, and so great was his éclat that people of succeeding generations, no matter what their religion, have shown this restraint and the people there are quite refined.

GATHA: Of course, there is another side to the question: life exists in all aspects of the creation, even in plants; and if one does not see the harm done to the plants, it is because they cannot express themselves. And, looking from this point of view, one can observe that life lives on life.

TASAWWUF: The Indian scientist Jagadish Bose found that plants have psychological mates, experience pleasure and pain and many emotions. And now after many years some western scientists have found it out also. They give it as a new discovery but there are not many new discoveries; it is only that one part of the world has been slow to recognize the achievements of another part of the world.

We might ask a hypothetical question, “Why did God create the Universe?” And in the Upanishads it is stated that the universe was created for food. The whole cosmoverse of Prakriti was made to serve the creation and especially mankind, for mankind has been made in the divine image. All things of the creation are for the service of mankind. He may pick and choose or he may select at random. And in discussing some subjects, other factors are often omitted.

We affirm that God alone exists and then we see all of God’s creatures and make all kinds of differences and distinctions and in the end the goal is lost and man becomes absorbed in phenomena. But we can study life more closely and find that there are hidden purposes and virtues in all creatures and especially in the plant-world. And when we know more about them this will benefit both physical health and subtle and psychic development.

GATHA: At the same time, the creation is a process by which the lower form of life evolves to a higher form, and the life used in this process of evolution is not really lost, on the contrary it is raised to a higher consciousness.

TASAWWUF: That is why we read the words of Jesus in the Gospel of St. Thomas, "Blessed be the lion when the man eateth the lion and the lion becomes a man." Mankind has become absorbed in individuality and separateness and there is always the idea that there is a form of self-satisfaction as the aim of life. Man at one time glorifies God and the next moment he glorifies only himself and forgets God. This is true alike of the orthodox and the heterodox.

There are therefore two ways of looking at life: from the individual point of view and from the mystical or complete point of view. Each has its justifications but the viewpoints are different. Buddha affirmed Samma Dhrishti, the cosmic view, instead of the individualistic view. But few have attained the cosmic view and devotees of all religions have adhered to individualistic points of view and separateness. They do not see the universe as a whole, they do not function universally.

We find there is a grand cosmical evolution taught particularly in Indian Traditions. This covers all the scientific doctrines and much more. Of this "much more" the western scientists are gradually appreciating, and so the east and west come closer together, both in the scientific and mystical outlooks. It is only in the orthodox and separative outlooks that they stand far apart, and this will not be forever.

Then the question arises since mystical experience is inevitable, and cosmic evolution foreordained, is it necessary to do anything? This very question also shows the separative tendency. There is something in the soul of man which urges him in the very direction he should go.

GATHA: It would not be an exaggeration to say that the animal which is used as the food of man has been transformed from the animal kingdom to the human, which is really a natural process of evolution, the human kingdom being the goal of the lower creation. However, this point of view does not help man, morally or physically, in his individual evolution; he has not gained by eating flesh, on the contrary, he has allowed himself to evolve more slowly than he could otherwise have evolved.

TASAWWUF: This subject is hard to settle by argumentation but a slight glance around the world reveals that people who include too much meat in their diets become gross. The inhabitants of the cattle-raising countries are not so refined, so tender, so sensitive as other peoples. One can even see the grossness in their body and many have come to look like animals.

We see another aspect of this in the folk-lore where animals play the role of actors, even as sages showing there is something in the subhuman evolution which must be taken into account.

GATHA: The impression on the consciousness of man of having done harm to another creature which can feel pain as he himself can is not a good one; it blunts the fine, tender, and sympathetic feeling towards all living beings. At the same time not every person who eats meat is capable of considering the subject philosophically, and therefore of giving an answer to his conscience or to another one, as an explanation of having caused harm to a living creature for his enjoyment.

For many thousands of years the human race has lived on flesh food, especially in the cold countries, and the bodies made with that essence for thousands of years are so dependent upon flesh food that they cannot abstain from it without causing some harm to their health. Man feeds on things of which he is made, and it is not, in every case, easy for a man to give up flesh food, even if he realized its disadvantages.

TASAWWUF: There have been a great many arguments, how to find the substitutes for meats and there is also a tendency to regard the proteins as the most important foods. Many people cannot assimilate milk. Whole cultures of Orientals have been raised on other foods than milk. And those who have studied nutrition say the body needs particular proteins. But what man needs more is certain vital energies and no energy is necessarily limited to a certain food-type.

Thus while magnetism was long associated with the metal iron and its cognates, in time mankind found other sources of magnetism. So there are many sources of proteins besides milk and meat. In the Ashram at Kanhangad the followers of Sri Ram Das have a program so that there are always proteins available: cashews, legumes of all sorts, coconuts and other nuts. And there are proteins, too, in many seeds and there are even organisms which can assimilate the nitrogen from the air and thus aid in the manufacture of protein-foods. This art and science has not yet developed and when it has we shall find many sources of proteins and also can establish programs so that they will always be available. And besides all this there is the whole world of soybeans and their products, all sorts of direct and derivative products which could be used.

GATHA: There are countries where there are deserts—no trees to be found for miles—and the inhabitants could not live if they did not live on flesh food.

TASAWWUF: It has already been mentioned that there Buddhist monks in central Asia whose very environment made this inevitable. Lord Buddha taught compassion above all else and the religions of the West teach mankind, above all else, that the world was made for the humanity, not mankind for the world.

Yet it will become possible in time to tame the deserts, to get the fresh water from the sea and from the underground streams. Many deserts will thus be transformed and become agricultural lands. When this takes place there will also be the changes in diet. It will no longer be necessary to subsist on flesh foods alone.

GATHA: For the evolution of humanity in general, uniformity is necessary. If some ate flesh and others lived on vegetables, it would be as if carnivorous and herbivorous animals were living in the same forest. Certainly people living different lives cannot live together harmoniously, and the strong must in every case have the upper hand. Tenderness of heart will not answer the same purpose as strength and power. Therefore it is a question how vegetarian diet can be introduced in the world.

TASAWWUF: As histories and books are generally written from the standpoint of the prevailing classes, it is not realized by readers that many in the world eat little meat. It will not be hard to

transform the masses. Besides the cost is also a factor and as the price of non-meat proteins is less, this will also appeal.

Then there is also the question of cuisine. As the methods of preparing foods are better known and more palatable dishes can be prepared, partly for this reason and partly because of the evolution of kitchen engineering, there will be more to appeal to a selfish side of man; in the end it will be more beneficial.

It is not only that the Indian preparations will be used more, but there will be an international cookery as there is international art and science. And there will be exchanges not only of ideas and methods, but the rise of the aesthetic sense, and perhaps the combinations of colors, odors and all sensations in the preparation and serving of food. And when this is accomplished the need for the animal foods and then the desire for animal foods will diminish stage by stage.

GATHA: There is another side to this question: if the animals were left alone they would multiply and the herbivorous would become a prey to the carnivorous animals. The tigers and lions and bears and wolves would increase and would be in search of man; so the human kingdom would diminish and the animal's increase.

TASAWWUF: It has not turned out that way. There are now many carnivorous animals in danger of extinction. Sometimes due to the increase of human population and sometimes due to the policies that mankind must develop the land and turn from forest to savanna and farm, the biological equilibrium has been changed and changed in such a way that now radical measures have to be taken to preserve certain herbivorous species.

Besides, uses are found for many animals and animal products and this has encouraged certain types of hunting. It is only the imminent danger of a complete break in ecological equilibrium that has aroused the minds and hearts of man. But as these minds and hearts have been aroused, the dangers have been abated.

GATHA: For those who strive in the spiritual path it is most essential to be thoughtful and considerate, and to be kind to the whole creation, and if they can manage to live a vegetarian life, it is no doubt very helpful to them.

TASAWWUF: It will not only be beneficial to them, it will be exemplary for the rest of mankind. Best leadership comes by example rather than precept. And as the knowledge of different kinds of food is known all over the world, and as also the economies might benefit by the production and consumption of non-animal foods, this very appeal to man's cupidity may help bring about both an equilibrium and the diminished consumption of animal foods.

GATHA: It is not right, however, for a vegetarian to look at the flesh-eater with contempt and regard his own harmless attitude with pride. There are many vegetarians who will prove selfish and unkind to their fellow-man, whereas there are many non-vegetarians who will prove to be otherwise.

TASAWWUF: The commentator has been looked upon with contempt for calling attention to the fact that many Banias of India, who are vegetarians, have been guilty of the most inhumanitarian acts whereas the Esquimaux of the far north, who subsist mostly on animal foods, fish and meat, have high moral standards and have maintained them. This demonstrates that something more is needed than diet alone. Nevertheless **other things being equal**, it is not only restraint from flesh foods but the absorption of the vitalities and magnetisms from plants which will benefit humanity.

GATHA: Verily, charity of the heart must begin at home and then expand so that it may reach the very lowest of creation.

TASAWWUF: In giving moral teachings to the West, the Sufis here differ from many Buddhists and Hindus. They hold that the correct diet alone will bring charity of heart, but they do not demonstrate it. The Sufi begins inwardly with the heart, not outwardly. And it is strange to find others claiming an "inner life" paying so much attention, putting so much need, on outer things.

The awakening of love is the one first necessity, beginning with the mother, then the father, then the family, then the relatives and so spreading to and through the community. Any sign of hauteur is an impediment in the spiritual life. We pray: "Raise us above the distinctions and differences which divide men." We lead by example: we do not try to be too different, but we must try to maintain proper health, vitality and balance. Then as the heart grows, the benefits from the food of the "harmless" will manifest.

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Gatha with Commentary Series I: Number 7

The Five Elements of the Body

GATHA: The body is made up of five elements, according to the mystical view: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Yet these terms must not be compared with the scientific terms; these are mystical conceptions and they should be understood in a mystical sense. These five elements form the sustenance of the body, at the same time these elements purify the body.

TASAWWUF: The concept of elements is very ancient and it is found in several parts of the world with the same general principles involved, but sometimes different categories. In general, the Sufis

have continued a tradition found among the Greeks but no doubt derived by them from the Egyptians. This is a very ancient knowledge.

It may be taught from a scientific point of view and again from an occult point of view. And in the mystical studies in Sufism we learn much about earth, water, fire, air and ether, or akasha. In the literature one may study about them from a certain view in "The Mysticism of Sound," and from another in *Metaphysics*, but the principles involved are the same principles and both intellectual and spiritual knowledge take one to the same conclusions.

The elements are also factors in the formation of vitamins and life-giving properties found in water and other liquids, and also, as has been explained, they affect the rays of the sun, the waves of the air and the all-pervading power drawn from space, pure space being identical with akasha or ether.

GATHA: For instance, no ablution with water only is sufficient, earth is required also. In the East Brahmans used pure earth, some used ashes; in the East gram flour is still used in place of soap.

TASAWWUF: Soap, in a sense, utilizes the earth element. For many generations what was called "sand soap" was popular, and it still has many uses and all the chemicals and improvements have not necessarily produced a more effective cleanser.

Soap has often been derived from ashes. The lye used often comes from ashes. Water alone does not remove fats and grease; it has no affinity with them, and they can only be removed by cleansers with some affinity. Even Mohammed urged the use of sand as a cleanser when water was not available and sometimes it is a better cleaning agent.

This subject and the underlying research is far from being exhausted. And sometimes we may be able to study it from a blending of mystical and scientific knowledge.

GATHA: The scientist can never deny the fact that there is no better disinfectant than earth itself. The use of water for every kind of ablution has been taught by all religions in some form or other. That shows that it is not only used for cleanliness, but it helps in spiritual development.

TASAWWUF: It is a strange thing that the Tibetan people who have been highly regarded through widespread myths and even folk-lore and gossip, have not necessarily demonstrated this. They lost their empire which would have been difficult, if not impossible, if they had had the great mystical prowess which others were convinced they had. They do not use water much. They permit their clothing to become marred. Fats and oils insulated their body heat so it was of advantage for them to have smeared clothes. But this very fact, the lack of cleanliness, proved in the end there was more missing than cleanliness alone. There is nothing logical in saying on one hand that cleanliness is next to Godliness and then ascribing Godliness to people who did not have an especially high regard for cleanliness.

There are also Yogis who live in the high Himalayas. They have practices which have been called

“tapas” (meaning heat). And if one does the deep practices and also those of the later and little known Upanishads, much heat is generated. It is not necessary to smear clothes with oils to keep warm, it is not necessary to rely on dirt for protection.

Washing not only removes physical impurities, it brings some psychic energy also. The water element as such helps clear impurities.

GATHA: The scientist today admits that there is no better tonic than pure water; this has always been considered to be so by the mystic, who called the rivers sacred rivers and gave water in healing.

TASAWWUF: There is a whole science called “Hydrotherapy” which has many facets. There have been mineral springs and baths used both internally and externally and at one time it was quite a social custom to frequent such baths. No harm ever came from them.

As technology advanced, many modalities, as they are called, were perfected. There is no doubt if used more public health would benefit. The sauna bath of the Finns has never lost its popularity and there are still streams of traditions from both Roman and Turkish (hamman) baths. In time there may be more than a revival of such institutions.

There will also be known in more detail the benefits from imbibing various types of mineral waters.

GATHA: As the use of earth and water cleanses and purifies the body externally, so it has a purifying influence on the internal part of the body. By eating wholesome food and drinking pure water not only does one receive nourishment, but this cleanses and purifies every particle of the body.

TASAWWUF: The processes of anabolism and catabolism always continue. Although education has advanced in many directions in many parts of the world, too little attention is paid to the simplest matters such as proper eating and drinking. It has been made very esoteric. And the rise of commercialism has turned attention from wholesomeness to delicacies, many of which are quite artificial.

If the instincts were restored, many natural foods would be enjoyed and enjoyed more than the delights prepared by artificial means. No doubt tastes are not always satisfied. As man walks less and indulges less in athletics he does not have so much natural hunger and therefore every attempt has been made to satisfy the taste buds. Then the mineral content of food diminishes, there is resort to vitamin and mineral deficiency pills and while this may maintain the body in a better condition than their neglect, the most wholesome diet is a natural one. The foods, the vegetation, assimilates all the minerals from the soil man needs; and the flowers and fruits give all the vitamins man needs.

GATHA: It is therefore that an adept must avoid eating and drinking anything unwholesome. This

does not mean an absolute restriction to certain food and drink, but just that care in eating and drinking is necessary.

TASAWWUF: It is not a question of morality. It is a question of wisdom. In so-called civilized societies man partakes of questionable combinations and often of tamasic foods. People study books, learn what are tamasic foods, that they should **avoid** certain food and drinks and condiments, and then they go and partake of these very things. And there are all kinds of bottled waters made palatable and at the same time also harmful. And one reads to eat natural foods and drink pure water, and then does the very things that one ought not to do and disease persists.

God has placed in our bodies proper digestive fluids. We may say they are the result of evolution—it makes no difference. We can work with the body or otherwise. But the sciences of bodily care are not taught and the appeals to the desire nature are encouraged. Then there is disease and in the search for some almost imaginary cause, called “viruses,” man overlooks the great factors which bring about his physical and mental downfall.

GATHA: Once a person has advanced in spirituality nothing matters to him, neither what he eats and drinks, for he lives in the spirit the most part of his life; for him the body is a coat and he does not care if it is full of holes or if it is patched.

TASAWWUF: The processes of breath are more important than those of food. As the breath becomes purified there is also more transmutation. Also the body becomes an accommodation for finer vibrations and these finer vibrations select the elements from food and drink better than what occurs in less developed persons. This does not happen to the gross people. But one does not change from gross to fine by an imaginary process; one brings the refinement by breath disciplines and meditation and esotericism. It is not chance.

Also less thought is taken and when less thought is taken this also enables finer vibrations to help purify the body no matter what the intake.

GATHA: But for a person who has yet to develop spiritually and who follows a process consideration is necessary; it is most necessary that the body should be kept pure, outwardly and inwardly, that it may become a suitable vehicle for the manifestation of the spirit.

TASAWWUF: Therefore neither does the talib ignore his body nor does the teacher ignore the health of disciples. Only for this sobriety is needed and one does not take a spiritual path to ignore what can be done more easily by natural methods.

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Gatha with Commentary Series I: Number 8

Purification

GATHA: Man's health and inspiration both depend upon purity of breath, and to preserve this purity the nostrils and all the tubes of the breath must be kept clear.

TASAWWUF: It can be said that there is the Purushic aspect, the spiritual aspect which is taught in the lessons on Breath (Pasi Anfas), and the Prakritic or material aspect which is presented here. They are not totally separate, for spirit needs a vehicle and earth does not provide vehicles unless they are functionable.

In the Islamic ritual, there is a cleansing of the nose and nostrils and in India it is sometimes done in another way. This very simple process is overlooked and soon in the so-called civilized lands the tonsils and adenoids are taken out. They should be kept and would be kept if more attention were paid to simple hygiene. And when any organ is removed this puts a heavier burden on the other organs. It is not always important, but when a protection is removed this increases the load otherwise.

Then later some people have trouble with sinuses and other passages where the breath flows. We cannot always reach these passages with water but we can by forms of heating cause internal perspiration and this is often very beneficial. But besides this there are the breathing and esoteric exercises, and these all help man to keep the passages and tubes free.

GATHA: They can be kept clear by proper breathing and by proper ablutions. If one cleanses the nostrils twice or oftener during twenty-four hours it is not too much, for a Moslem is taught to make this ablution five times, before each prayer.

TASAWWUF: There is a tendency among educated people to neglect the simple matters. Education has not always brought better health. Dust collects in one fashion in the agricultural communities and in another fashion in the cities, but each is harmful and arguments help nobody.

The practice of Nayaz, given to all disciples, is helpful at the beginning. It can also make one more sensitive. And breathing water through the nostrils, or the use of a handkerchief, or paper devices is far better than neglect; nothing is more baneful than neglect.

GATHA: The cleansing, not only of the nostrils, but also of the ears, is necessary, for part of the breath works through the ears, and if the ears are not protected and cleansed sometimes one

hears a sound, which is often that of the breath which does not find its way smoothly through the regions of the ear.

TASAWWUF: Not too much attention has been paid to the ears, and the tubes thereof. We sometimes find people who have exudations of wax. This may come from physical causes. But also when the breathing is not right, when there are any blockages, one hears sounds and there are physicians who can diagnose from those sounds to tell what is the matter.

There are many causes for ringing and they may go all the way from warning sounds, to hearing actually the breath, in its finer aspects, working through the organism. There are physical practices of benefit to those who have physical disturbances and also esoteric exercises which enable man to understand his processes. Sometimes also disciplines which help in the development of clair-audience.

GATHA: The throat and palate are also important factors for the flow of the breath. The palate and throat are kept clean by the adept by gargling.

TASAWWUF: Simple practices have often been habits through the ages. In the East, even from ancient times mystics carried with them a comb, a tooth-pick and a cup. Sometimes these were their only possessions. It shows that dervishes and adepts did not neglect the physical body, they did not regard health as unimportant. They considered the body as the temple of God.

If we drank more and properly we should find the body would remain in good condition. It is not always necessary to wait until one is tired or over-heated. Water has so many uses, so many functions and the natural instincts tell more than can be imparted otherwise in words.

GATHA The adepts drink water at fixed hours for the purpose of cleansing the veins and tubes in the chest, so that the breath may find pure channels for its passage. An adept drinks water before going to bed and after rising from sleep.

TASAWWUF: These simple practices are most beneficial. Often they were put into rituals by the wise. When there is no ritual the suggestions are often neglected; then there is poor health. Besides certain rhythms for drinking as well as for prayer and meditation have many benefits.

In other words, we need water at all times. The body is mostly water. When the proportion of it is low there is a decrease in physical efficiency. We do not have to expose ourselves in the deserts to learn that.

When water is taken into the stomach, it can also enter the blood-stream and tubes and serve as the "sea within us." The blood-stream functions inside the bodies of the higher mammals as the ocean serves the lower animals which dwell in the sea. It both brings the cleansing substances and removes the waste. When there is not enough water in the blood-stream, functions diminish. But if there is too much, then the waste materials may not be removed. There has to be balance.

GATHA: It is necessary that these laws of ablutions should be practiced by the students of thought first, in order that others may follow.

TASAWWUF: Thus we have in the Christian teaching that John came to give the purification of water and then Jesus came afterwards to purify with fire and the holy spirit or breath. In the Lesser Mysteries the neophytes were taken to the sea and also in many parts of the Bible the sea is mentioned mystically and not geographically. Besides, the story of the Beni Israel going through the sea (not the “Red Sea” but the “sea of weeds”) had to precede their entering into the Holy Land. They obtained their initiation by fire going through the desert and then the test of initiation by the spirit to enter the Holy Land.

This is symbolical for everybody. But we cannot neglect the first steps and many, in their eagerness for what they think are “The Greater Mysteries” do not accept the proper preparations and pass their years without much spiritual growth.

GATHA: Hygienic consideration is the first principle which is necessary for the health and happiness of the generality.

TASAWWUF: It may be also that the disciples themselves must give the world the examples. There are too many unsolved diseases. There are too many discomforts and the one-sided efforts to solve them have often produced nothing but complications. Disciples do have the advantage of the science of the breath; they may also benefit from the science of the material matter.

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Gatha with Commentary Series I: Number 9

Sobriety

GATHA: Sobriety is most necessary in the path of spiritual evolution, especially in the first stage, when the body must be made pure for spiritual revelation.

TASAWWUF: In the Candidates' Gathekas the subject of “The Intoxication of Life” is stressed. We do not realize that the very nature of the soul is peace and we are distracted by so many things. No doubt there is a purpose in life and there is development and this does not come

through doing nothing, through torpor, through lassitude, through following tamasic processes. It comes through endeavor. "Therefore fight, Arjuna" is taught by the Gita and a similar lesson is found in all Scriptures.

Then there is another aspect sometimes called "The Middle Path" to avoid extremes. And here one must avoid torpor on the one hand and intoxication on the other. And the first stage of this comes in the purification of the body and the second stage has to do with the purification of mind. Only when we think of it and hold these as ideas only without processes, without experiences, we not only do not benefit but we can even hypnotize ourselves so we cannot benefit at all.

The next thing to consider is that the human body was made to be a vessel of the eternal or holy spirit so that God, so to speak, could directly experience life on the surface. And God, in this sense, does not experience the external life unless there is a pure vehicle for Him to use.

GATHA: Everything intoxicating deadens the nerves more or less, and the centres, which are the factors for spiritual realization, become dead.

TASAWWUF: We have to face on the one hand the intoxicants, the evil effects of which are well known, but this has not prevented people from using them at all times. And there are baneful chemical effects because alcohol is not a living substance as is water and it does not act as a channel for the living vibrations and essences. Then prana does not reach the centers.

Then there is another hazard which comes from all kinds of narcotics and psychedelic agents. They awaken the consciousness to some extent. They show that there is more to life than there is on the surface, but in them there is no sense of direction, there is no will-power, no control. So while they arouse the consciousness this is without direction. One must also have the balance and direction.

GATHA: Although at times they may seem more active, too abnormal an activity is always exhausting. The centers which show sensitiveness during the time of intoxication, after its influence become weary and lifeless.

TASAWWUF: There is a lesson here which is not easily learned. There being no sound basis for much of Psychology as there is for Chemistry and the purer sciences, there being no standard for measuring or understanding mind or consciousness, there thus being no norm, people who feel frustrated take to artificial means. These artificial means may be harmful but at least they show that there is much more to life than there is on the surface. All arguments will not help. Only living experience, the becoming aware of a greater life can help here. This does not come through talk or thought, but through living experiences of expanded consciousness.

GATHA: Fakirs or Yogis who take intoxicants in order to excite the centers become dependent for their spiritual experience on material objects; in the end they find their seeming advancement fatal.

TASAWWUF: A great many people, believing that fakirs and yogis use hashish and other drugs, have been allured by it. They do not examine that the number may be small and the effects unimportant. They do not study that there are many more beneficial means and that many more people take the beneficial and not the harmful ways.

Spirit means breath. Artificial stimulants interfere with breath. Chemicals lower the vital capacity of the flesh. The people once called "Assassins" have no doubt played a big role in history especially from the dramatic aspect, but they are gone. Only the tradition remains.

The rise of the use of psychedelics has resulted in much propaganda not supported by scientific evidence. On the other hand scientific evidence would show that there are many means by which to arouse facets of consciousness. What is wrong spiritually is that there is no balance, no discipline in such awakening. It is real but it is uncontrolled. It does no good to say it is not real. The question remains how to awaken the higher consciousness without harmful effects.

GATHA: Even hard smoking may block, not only the channels of the breath, but even the centers, and thereby intuition is confused. No doubt smoking gives a momentary comfort, because it brings a kind of repose to the smoker, but it is only a passing comfort.

TASAWWUF: This indicates the need for repose. Repose is needed more than anything else for people of civilized communities. They are always encouraged to excitement, never to repose. This is one of the basic causes of illnesses, physical, psychic and mental.

During the years much of the harm of smoking tobacco has been uncovered. This harm is not always as great as the critics claim but still there is harm. There are better ways to repose, to comfort, to ease and peace. And then when smoking diminishes, if there are not proper positive outlets in exercise, in diversions, the stopping of one kind of artificiality may only lead to other types of artificiality.

GATHA: Smoking not only has an effect upon the throat or lungs but by it the two important centers, the heart and brain, upon which the whole spiritual progress depends, will become blocked.

TASAWWUF: This also is not subject to argument. We cannot stop facts by arguments. Disciples learn the different ways of breathing and especially the refinement of breath which is more important than all else. One can practice watching the breath going to the different centers in the body. One can consciously refine the breath and one can also consciously direct the breath. It is by mastery of breath in this and other senses that one really becomes a master.

Now there is plenty of propaganda available on this subject, so it need not be discussed so much. There has been a gain in the problems of the day.

GATHA: The principal thing in spiritual attainment is to be self-sufficient, and the first step to self-

sufficiency is to make one's body independent of all such things upon which its comforts and enjoyment depend.

TASAWWUF: This has been taught also in the Christian Bible which has a lesson "not the body for meats but meats for the body." But the body does not depend on any particular thing. The breath is most important and then food to sustain the breathing apparatus and operations. Putting breath first and food afterwards, one can have a vehicle of enjoyment, one can feel the bliss and the aspiration even in the flesh, or as the Hebrew Bible teaches, "In the flesh thou shalt see God."

There are no doubt many natural stimulators as the sun, the moonlight, the sea, the desert, the great mountains, waterfalls, geographical and vegetative settings of all kinds. Mystics can feel the inner responses to nature just as poets do and perhaps even more than the poets. For in them they find the Presence of the ever-living God.

GATHA: The sages of all times and the mystics of every cult have observed the value of continence and fasting, for the very reason that the body, upon which the experience of the whole life depends, must first be made fit by purity.

TASAWWUF: Otherwise there is a constant battle. There is uneasiness, there is loss of sleep, there is discomfort. For every form of excitement may be followed by lassitude or discomfort. And when one does not have to depend any longer on externals, then there will be less internal insecurity.

In the work of the Sufi Order the method is to raise the consciousness in and through the higher centers, a positive means which promotes continence and fasting of itself because one no longer depends on the lower centers and lower parts of the body for the full appreciation and expression of life.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series I: Number 10

Fasting

GATHA: The reason why fasting is practiced by those who live in retirement is to let the breath

pass through every vein and tube of the body, which can be made possible only when there is no foreign substance, such as food or even drink, in the body to block the channels.

TASAWWUF: Fasting is not particularly practiced for those who live in the world, and have to work. Mohammed said that asceticism and monkery were not essential to Islam, which is to say, surrender to the living God. Yet retirement at times is most beneficial. And if we bear in mind that the body is, or is to be, the temple of the Divine Spirit, which is to say the living and purified breath, this can be achieved only through the proper disciplines; it does not come of itself.

We are taking in not only the oxygen of the air, but subtle and super-subtle vibrations all the time and do not avail ourselves of these benefits. We may find enjoyment in eating sumptuously but this is only one kind of enjoyment and to it there is also a reaction. It is necessary to give every portion of the body repose, thus meditation for the mind and fasting for the digestive tract.

GATHA: When the breath has touched every particle of the body, the body naturally becomes more sensitive and the pores of the skin open, making the centers transparent, so as to feel, outwardly and inwardly, all that is to be felt. This can be understood by seeing the difference between the intelligence and the intuitive faculty of a fine person and of a dense person.

TASAWWUF: Some people benefit by bathing unclad in the sunshine. It is true that the whole skin can become an organ of vitality. Not only that, there are vibrations which penetrate the body better when there is no clothing; or if one is clothed, to have loose garments.

The practice of rhythmical breathing and of long gentle breathing helps very much. But one cannot always maintain long breaths or subtle breaths when there is too much food in the body, when heavy substances have been taken in and when the breath is to be used for digestion rather than for vitality.

There can be a change in attitude making this body of ours a huge pneumatic machine of which the food and water are like the gas and oil for motor cars. The energies of the breath, according to Nayaz, come from the three sources of the air, the sun and space itself. We learn first how to breathe these energies in but if we wish to advance, to make accommodation for the finer vibrations and the qualities which come with them, it is necessary not only to watch the breath but to see that all obstacles to its refinement are removed.

As the breath becomes refined so do the intelligence and intuition increase in scope and effectiveness. We can try all sorts of formulae, but they do not always work. But we can bring about the refinement in ourselves and by ourselves and thus benefit first ourselves and then others.

GATHA: Continence also helps, not only to keep the channels clear, but it conserves all the energy in every particle of the body and especially in the centres where it is most needed.

TASAWWUF: To bring about perfection the blood should be kept flowing smoothly and evenly

throughout the body and at all times. Every form of excitement or intoxication prevents this. Then the energy must be consumed to remove obstacles. But if we do not utilize the vital life force, if we keep the akasha within ourselves and do not consume it this not only helps the blood-stream to function but also vitalizes it further so that it becomes a channel of life and light.

Every form of sex activity utilizes the basic akasha and also drains the vital forces. There is no room for argument and man does not have to try to remain indefinitely in the body. It is important to have basic knowledge and know the helpful or unfavorable effects of every action. No doubt love may take on sexual forms and also may be used or wasted, and mostly it is wasted and then the vitality is drained and this diminishes the resistance to disease on the one hand and the capacity for bliss on the other. We may not be able to have it both ways.

There is always much discussion about sex and it has been separated from the consideration of life as a whole, whether this means the life of the body as a whole or of the spirit as a whole. When one can see the life as a whole he can better evaluate each and all functions.

There are strange traditions in the West about the value of continence in the lives of the Tibetan adepts who are admired, and yet no attempt is made to imitate them. It is more important to understand life as a whole and then all the parts of it will fit into place.

GATHA: Another thing is that continence keeps every outer element away. By this the adept is better able to keep his body and centers free from every foreign element, becoming at the same time a reservoir of energy, which expresses itself as radiating magnetism.

TASAWWUF: For continence preserves the etheric element or akasha. All the other elements spring from it. All sexual activities utilize this akasha and thus diminish the reservoirs of vital life-force in the body and mind. And we can find in some men, as the leaders of the Vedantists, that continence does not diminish their masculinity or intelligence or anything. It uses these forces subtly and intelligently.

There are many people who seek longevity and still want to indulge. There are many people who have lived long and indulged, but this is a very small proportion. By continence the energies flow more easily through the body and reach the centers and when the centers are energized the latent powers of life may be fulfilled.

GATHA: Professed celibacy is an assumption of chastity which must sooner or later break by nature, together with man's profession of the same. The true celibacy, therefore, can be practiced without profession and without any outward appearance or the attributing to it any religious rank, only for a certain time and for a certain purpose.

TASAWWUF: The way of the wise is a way of intelligence. It has been explained how the continence preserves the akashic forces and movements and this is full of benefit. But man has not been created to live on indefinitely to serve no purpose. Even the body has been made to serve the

sexual functions, on one level or on many levels.

The Christian religion has introduced the vows of chastity and many are broken and this has led to hypocrisy. The same has been even more true in Hinduism where Brahmacharya has been variously interpreted.

Continence of itself does not mean kindness, charity, compassion or human consideration. It can even lead to great false pride and to questionable kinds of narcissism. There have been spiritual leaders who have practiced celibacy for a time and then polygamy and no harm has come of it. These men understood the laws of vital life-force. Their purpose has been to seek God and serve God and the customs and restrictions were at best only means toward such an end.

Monkery has no doubt served many useful purposes. It need not be resorted to. But there can be gains from observing some of the rules or disciplines of Brahmacharya especially during formative years when energies may be used in building the body and even more in building the mind. In this way there may be an increase in the intelligence-capacity of all mankind.

Yes, God has created male and female and there are aspects of the sexual life which bring a form of joy but not always exaltation. We must not, however, separate these things entirely and husband and wife can join in exaltation and when this is achieved not only will they both benefit but we shall see more examples of what has been called a "higher race" and the manifestation of the over-mind and super-mind in the human cosmic evolution.

When there is too much excitation, sometimes seclusion or Khilvat is beneficial which also includes restrictions in diet and general habit. But also the concentrations on the higher centers in the body help. They take the psychic load from the lower organs and they also can be stimulated to such a degree that one will not have to place any negative disciplines on the lower centers. For the vital life-force of itself will rise then both in the body and in the consciousness.