

Gatha with Commentary
Tasawwuf: Metaphysics
Series II
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 II: Number 1

Forgiveness

GATHA: They say, “Forgive and forget,” which is very expressive of the process of forgiveness. It is impossible to forgive unless you can forget.

TASAWWUF: Forgiving by itself is an egocentric activity. The teachings are that one cannot offer forgiveness by oneself. He can do so only when asked by another. There are self-proud people who **say** they forgive but if they remember the incident or the person they are not forgiving actually. Only when episodes are entirely removed from the mind can forgiveness be automatic and then no negative samskaras remain in the mind.

The danger is not in receiving or not receiving a grievance; the danger is in the unconscious assumption of the ego-self. Every grievance either produces or assumes a duality, and separateness. We may repeat “Toward the One” and “United with All,” but until this reaches deep into our consciousness, separateness remains. When it is surmounted there is no longer scope for offenses, grievances, pains, and so for forgiveness.

GATHA: What keeps man from forgiving his fellow-man is that he holds the fault of another constantly before his view. It is just like sticking a little thorn in one’s own heart and keeping it there and suffering the pain. It may also be pictured as putting a drop of poison in one’s own heart and retaining it until the whole heart becomes poisoned.

TASAWWUF: The veil of nufs tends to hold the faults of others before the view. It throws a shadow on sight and Insight alike. Then the faults of others seem realities and whatever virtues they have may seem unimportant.

This is exactly the opposite as with the wise. The wise may reach a state where differences and distinctions vanish; where faults and virtues are of no special accord. They see the unlimited possibilities of unity and brotherhood and the relative unimportance of short-comings, that these will inevitably pass away because all people have in them the seeds of perfection, of perfectibility.

All ill-will, envy, jealousy, and such negative emotions and attitudes are poisons and not only in the symbolical sense but actually. When we hold on to one of them we produce poisons in our body, in our system. That is the source of many virulent diseases. The free heart is the best prophylactic against discomfort and disease.

GATHA: Verily, blessed are the innocent, who do not notice anybody's fault, and the greater credit is to the mature souls, who, recognizing a fault, forget it and so forgive.

TASAWWUF: We can refer here to the life of Rabia, the great Sufi lady saint of Basra, in Iraq. She held to the view that those concerned with Allah would not notice pleasure or pain, good or ill in themselves or others. This is really the standpoint of the innocent, very far from that of the ignorant. "Riza," satisfaction, Sufis claim, was with Allah, in Allah.

Gayan teaches that one need not blame others but this does not mean overlooking faults, but overlooking blame for faults. Judgment is in the hands of God, not of mankind.

GATHA: How true are the words of Christ, "Let those throw a stone who have not sinned." The limitations of human life make man subject to faults; some have more faults, some have less, but there is no soul without faults. As Christ says, "Call me not good."

TASAWWUF: Call not the ego (**me**) good. Goodness and ego do not go together. Goodness belongs to God (Allah) along with all other attributes of perfection. To find goodness we must get away from ego. The Islamic prayer "Praise be to Allah" suggests that all praise belongs to Allah. Mankind has assumed not only the arrogance to judge and condemn others, but also to praise and both of these are contrary to holy writ and both accord with the habits of ego (nufs).

The statement, "There is no soul without faults" really means there is no ego without faults. The soul itself is pure and unstained, a point on which many Scriptures agree. And this is also the standpoint of the Prajna Paramita Sutras of the Mahayana Buddhists.

GATHA: Forgiveness is a stream of love which washes away all impurities wherever it flows.

TASAWWUF: The principle of the stream-of-love is basic to Sufism. It is fundamental to the principle of God as the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty. It is the operation of Life in action. Life in action not only produces Love, it is love itself.

GATHA: By keeping this spring of love, which is in the heart of man, running, man is able to forgive, however great the fault of his fellow-man may seem. One who cannot forgive closes his heart.

TASAWWUF: There is a concentration on Heart and it may be either in the form of looking at a picture or symbol of Heart or it may be by identifying oneself with the innermost recesses of one's heart or by combining them. When this takes place there is an outbreak of Light and Baraka. When there is this outbreak there is a transformation of personality and character. One feels full of **Rahmat**, which is to say both Compassion and Mercy, Rahman and Rahim.

We may say here that Ilm, the true knowledge, leads to Ishk, selfless love. But it is also true that Ishk leads to Ilm. As Rabia, the lady saint, said, "In the presence of Allah there is no sense of

pleasure or pain, of rebuke or rejoicing.” And when the Heart-love streams forth, as is declared in the principles of Sufism, ancient and modern, one will naturally forgive, one will be unable to receive insults as insults.

GATHA: The sign of spirituality is that there is nothing you cannot forgive, there is no fault you cannot forget.

TASAWWUF: For when nufs is no longer dominant, there is no focus to receive praise or blame personally. There is no sense of being other than Allah and as Allah has created everyone, one cannot blame the creations of the creator. No doubt there are persons at many states and stages of evolution. But this very knowledge makes one feel compassion to all the race.

GATHA: Do not think that he who has committed a fault yesterday must do the same today, for life is constantly teaching and it is possible in one moment a sinner may turn into a saint.

TASAWWUF: Buddha taught incessant change and it is well to accept such a view. Indeed modern scientists are coming to the same view. For the soul is full of light and the heart of compassion. Every experience tends to unshackle the veils, although pain, distress and opposition do this much more quickly than pleasure and self-satisfaction. We are changed by every experience.

GATHA: At times it is hard to forgive, as it is hard to take away the thorn that has gone deep into one's heart. But the pain that one feels in taking away the thorn deep-set in the heart is preferable to keeping the thorn in the heart constantly.

TASAWWUF: So long as one feels pleasure and pain, elation or depression, this shows the dominance of nufs. When one performs the Heart-concentration as above; or when one learns to live in the Heart-vibrations, the tendency toward elation or depression will weaken. One will achieve a kind of bravery (not bravado) to stand up against all vicissitudes of life and extract them naturally, as belonging to life. Then one can hold no ill-will against anybody in particular.

But suppose someone harms you, or makes it a point to harm others? That is the time to test one's faith and even one's own spirituality. For all such persons are subject to karma, they fall at best under the Law of Reciprocity. Evil never dominates for long; it is subject to time-processes and the wheel-of-the-law.

GATHA: The greater pain of a moment is better than the mild pricking going on constantly. Ask him who forgives what relief there is in forgiveness.

TASAWWUF: For this is a lightening of one's own tensions and depressions. The lightening of tension and depression frees one from illness; the retention thereof is a cause of many sicknesses. Besides if one practices Akhlak Allah, the Presence of God; or learns to inhale and exhale the light breath (opposite of heavy), the whole personality will feel a freedom and relief.

GATHA: Words can never explain the feeling of the heart when one has cast out the bitter feeling from one's heart by forgiving and when love spreads all over within oneself, circulating like warm blood through one's whole being.

TASAWWUF: Thought of wrong keeps the heart spotted; even the attitude of the existence of "right" and "wrong" is not very helpful in promoting understanding. And feeling itself tends to keep alive the sense-of-self and to limit the feeling of the Divine Presence.

There is a story of Mohammed purging himself or being purged of a drop of blood which is in *The Unity of Religious Ideals*. This was to give the example that all of us may go through a similar process; Mohammed never arrogated special qualities for and to himself and constantly said he was like everyone else. So we can all purge ourselves of the poison in the heart. Then we have the warm blood circulating through our veins; then we have the Love (Ishk) penetrating our personality.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series II: Number 2

Endurance (Part I)

GATHA: The human being is, physically and mentally, so constructed that he can endure only a certain degree of vibrations, audible or visible. Therefore noise distracts his mind and strong colors also make an uncomfortable effect.

TASAWWUF: If we observe the history of the world, and in particular modern times when the inventions of cannon, steamboat, railway trains, telephone, radio, and one device after another have permeated the atmosphere with sounds strange in earlier times, we can see that there is a need for people to constantly readjust. We can also see that in many cases peoples' senses themselves change.

If we look back before the time of the piano, we see that there were only a few octaves of sound which could be received without disturbance. We can also note that as the receptivity to sound increases in dimension, so also the mind of man grew. The sensorium developed and with it, the minds of mankind.

There was also a revolution in art in France in the nineteenth century which led to new uses of color and all kinds of variations. And at first everybody felt uncomfortable. But when by degrees certain people became adjusted, it did not mean that the whole world followed immediately.

GATHA: All that is called noise is beyond the range of his power of endurance. Generally soft colours appeal to him more, for the vibrations of soft colors are soothing and do not demand endurance on the part of man.

TASAWWUF: We can make use of these principles in art, in interior decoration, and also in adjusting psychological disturbances; even in character-building we can make use of sound and color. The Chisti school of Sufis did just that and developed a refinement in music that has seldom been equaled. And we can also take advantage of these principles and adapt music and dancing to fulfill both needs and wishes.

But we have to be careful not to increase loudness (amplitude) too much for that is not only disturbing to the physical organism but also to the mind.

And as principles are better known we can adjust to all conditions and disturbances, but for this both knowledge and application are needed.

GATHA: But atmosphere demands the greatest strength of endurance. One can endure color or sound, but it is difficult to endure atmosphere which is not congenial. Man prefers to endure a color or a sound which is difficult to endure rather than the personality of another person. Because human activity has a more jarring effect than color or sound.

TASAWWUF: This subject is discussed in the various lessons on **nufs**, in “The Mysticism of Sound”, “Character Building”, and elsewhere. But as man grows in the control of his breath, when he learns to breathe heavily or lightly as the occasion warrants, he can also build up a superior atmosphere, that he will not be affected so much and in turn can protect himself and others whatever the circumstances be.

There are many people with strong personalities and with auras that can be felt. But when a person is in control of his ego, when he has the refined breath, he also has the most penetrating and at the same time the most protective breath. Sometimes a wise person or an adept, by his very presence will have a deterring effect on those who are given to dominance, to despotic action, etc. These persons will not always know why but in the presence of the more advanced, they will feel different and will not act so selfishly.

GATHA: Man does not need to speak or act in order to create a jarring effect upon another. If his mind is in that state, he has a jarring effect upon others without having to speak or act.

TASAWWUF: This can be noticed from two points of view: (a) the breath; (b) the atmosphere, largely as a result of thought. When two breaths jar the more evolved person can easily dominate

though he may not choose to do so. But when atmospheres jar, the more dominant persons will always seek to control the situation. It is not always wise to oppose them either. They may have some influence for awhile but then when their magnetism ebbs, they will lose control.

GATHA: If there is a thing most difficult to endure, it is man. And yet the soul most longs for the association of mankind. If a person were in a forest where he did not see a human being, after a few months, when his fancy were satisfied to some extent, he would long to see the face of a human being; trees and plants and animals and birds are not sufficient.

TASAWWUF: Man was made gregarious. All humanity constitutes the kingdom of man (Adam). There is a certain range of vibrations, and many of these arise in the unseen and they are different from all other vibrations; they are common to man alone. And this is particularly true of those which emanate from heart. Men's hearts are different.

GATHA: This shows that it is not only that like attracts like, but like needs like.

TASAWWUF: We do not have love unless there is a beloved. Love must particularize in order to universalize. Some proclaim universal love but it must manifest towards those nearest at hand or it is imaginary or conceptual; it is not real.

GATHA: The position of man is a strange position in life; man is uncomfortable with his kind and unhappy without his kind, and he does not know what course is best to take.

TASAWWUF: Actually the refinement of breath and the calming of mind by esoteric disciplines changes that. The Sufi not only learns the lesson of endurance, the endurance comes with lessons naturally.

GATHA: The Sufi, therefore, learns the lesson of endurance, to take the right course. For if one does not endure a devil one cannot endure an angel, if man is not happy on earth he cannot be happy in heaven.

TASAWWUF: The happiness has to be earned, and learned. In the story of *The Thief of Bagdad* by Afghan Achmed Abdullah, the whole allegory of the earning of happiness is presented in fictional form. It has a deep lesson as well as a symbolic one.

There have been those who conceived a brotherhood of men and angels. It was just a concept. There are many ranges of beings in the unseen and perhaps those below and above man in certain scales of evolution. Or again, those who have to manifest in refinement and others in coarseness. But all these creatures are of the one God. And it is not easy to adjust to strangeness.

The heart-life brings about the capacity and also the experience of greater Joy. Much is done in the spiritual path to promote both the capacity and direct experience. Then one builds up the heaven on earth and if one can endure that, then the heavens will become for him veritably the heavens.

He will no longer be annoyed by strangeness.

GATHA: A person who has no endurance, his need will not even be answered in paradise. Although it is difficult, at time, to endure, yet if one will not make an effort to endure he will have to endure, then, at all times. The world is what it is, it cannot be changed. If we want it to be different, we must change ourselves.

TASAWWUF: It is endurance itself which brings the Jinnat, the world of Bliss. Endurance and Bliss are one, not two. Bliss does not mean to be in a state of intoxication; it means to be in a state beyond and above intoxication. Then one does not have to depend on it, one is master of Bliss.

GATHA: If we become susceptible to jarring effects, jarring influences, not only human activities around us but even the moving of the leaves will make us uncomfortable. To a miserable person the midsummer day is worse than a dark night; all seems gloomy, everything seems wretched, and he himself melancholy.

TASAWWUF: If we take the melancholy as an example which may grow out of earth dominance and absence of fire and air, we can correct in part by knowledge of Breath and the science of elements. The Teacher is most important. And also Love is most important for as soon as one's heart is concerned with another rather than oneself, one will not so suffer from this affliction.

GATHA: This tendency is developed by not making an effort to endure but by avoiding situations which ask for one's endurance. In all walks of life success is assured for an enduring man, and with the lack of this quality, whatever be man's qualification, he is kept back from success.

TASAWWUF: Sensitivity is not a fault and refinement may be a great virtue. It is therefore by giving constant attention to breath and keeping the sacred phrases in the mind that one builds up positiveness. If one can become sensitive and positive, he may go a long way. He will cease to be afraid, and by feeling the Divine Presence endurances become natural.

GATHA: By endurance I do not mean loving and admiring all things and beings whom one likes or dislikes. Endurance means to be able to stand, to tolerate, to overlook all that is not in accordance with one's own way of thinking.

TASAWWUF: We have many examples of this in philosophy in slogans and moral maxims. They do not seem to have penetrated deep into the heart of man. The Sufi follows practices that do penetrate deep, whether by way of breath or meditation or attunement or otherwise. Then there is more to words than their body; there is meaning to them, there is some practice and in the end some experience.

GATHA: All the troubles among friends, families, nations, are the result of lack of endurance. And if this spirit of endurance would spread from individuals, in time it would become the spirit of the multitude, and the conditions would become much better than they are at present.

TASAWWUF: Everywhere in the teachings the lesson is that one must begin with oneself. We have no right to expect perfection from others. That is not one's duty in life. But as one eases one's attitude and also builds a tower of strength within himself, and then expresses himself so towards his fellow-men they can absorb this from him, they can follow his example. Without examples there is no possibility of bringing about better conditions.

A single saint patiently moving through a crowd may bring peace. All the words and announcements of people powerful and not powerful will be of no avail without the living examples. The teaching of Mohammed is an illustration, that by his own example he modified the history and outlook of a whole Nation of people. His very atmosphere caused them to change their ways and in this we have a model for the whole world to follow.

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Series II: Number 3

Endurance (Part II)

GATHA: It is endurance that makes things valuable and men great. Gold and silver are not necessarily more beautiful than the delicate and fragrant flowers, which are much superior in their color, fragrance and delicacy to gold and silver. Why are the flowers the slaves of gold and silver coins? Because gold and silver are durable, and flowers have not that quality.

TASAWWUF: The lesson is not different from that of Patience. It is the binding of Time and Atmosphere by the consciousness of man. Even the binding of time gives man a great power which does not appear among the lower creation. And those who study evolution superficially do not realize its importance. Speech, words and time-binding are three manifestations among mankind, and these are presented in Qur'an as well as in modern semantics.

GATHA: In this ever-changing world, full of sensitiveness, endurance is very rarely to be found. A person without endurance is night and day in torture. For life can be pictured as the waves of the sea, always slapping and knocking against what is standing firm. One who is susceptible of being moved by this continual motion of life has no rest for a single moment.

TASAWWUF: If we look into the political sphere we can find that it is not necessarily what may be

called “right” or “wrong” that dominates, that people of endurance, no matter what their views, even no matter what their character, generally come to the seats of power. For an enduring man is a powerful man, and if not in evidence, then in potentiality and in the end he will come to power.

No doubt prayer and meditation are refuges and there may be other spiritual refuges. But to come to victory there must be endurance. That is why sometimes teachers give long practices to disciples in order to bring out this quality in them.

GATHA: It is said, “There is no peace for the wicked”—it is really not “for the wicked” but “for the weak,” because wickedness is the extension of weakness.

TASAWWUF: It is almost obvious that such persons are caught in samsara. Whosoever is caught in samsara cannot experience the peace. He cannot find peace for himself, he cannot bring it to others. He is trapped in turmoil.

Both the weak and the wicked are subject to karma. They are unable not only to avoid the results of their deeds, they do not even have the ability to select their own paths.

GATHA: Endurance is an exercise of strengthening the will-power.

TASAWWUF: We can only strengthen the will-power by endeavor. It does not come by wish, it does not come by selecting a philosophy. It comes by one’s own effort, to adhere to whatever one is doing, not to permit the mind to wander, to complete whatsoever one is attempting to do.

We have something like it in the concentration on the Symbol, “The Dot and the Circle.” Here one not only uses the will-power but the breath. Many who have not strength of will attain it by the exercise of breath. The two go together. And then one’s mind does not wander and this helps the will-power even more.

GATHA: The nature of life will always remain the same, it is man who can change himself. But generally people wish life to become still, because they are disturbed.

TASAWWUF: Spiritual development occurs when one is not disturbed. It is not only that every impression, every reaction, keeps one in the turmoil, it is that man has from the very beginning been given faculties by which he can surmount such obstacles. Only these faculties must be aroused and used.

One can, by breath or will-power, get into a state when he will not react—when he can stand firm—and this makes him stronger still and more able to withstand the vicissitudes of life.

GATHA: It is just like traveling on the sea: man wants the sea to stay calm instead of building his boat so that it may travel on the waves and stand all storms.

TASAWWUF: The ocean of life is different in that vibrations come from many directions and at different rates, different sizes and with different attributes and qualities. Wherever there is life in the universe there are vibrations, movement and counter-movement and so peacefulness is absent without some other factor being involved which is all-pervading, even for a short interval.

It is the practice of Meditation which enables one to stand up. Merely entering the silence is of no avail if, after the practice, or even during it, one cannot hold the mind really still. Stillness must become a source of power, not of negativity nor weakness.

GATHA: All the great persons of the world, whatever their mission in life, proved their greatness by this one quality of endurance. The enduring personality is like a ship that can stand storms and winds under all conditions, and saves itself and others.

TASAWWUF: There is a classical example in the West of Robert Bruce who delivered Scotland from the English. But there is a parallel career in Babar, the Moghul invader of India whose life was even more complex and yet showed every evidence of endurance.

We see this particularly in scientists, many of whom have endeavored over and over again to get some clarity into their work and to find harmonies in Nature which are called “laws” as well as determining particular behavior patterns in the mineral, vegetable, animal, and human worlds. The one characteristic common has been endurance.

The same thing is true of soldiers under fire and sailors during storms at sea. In many aspects of life we see examples. But it is a mistake to consider such careers apart or strange. This is the norm of life, not ease and comfort.

GATHA: Such blessed personalities, showing the strength of God, have been called the saviours of humanity.

TASAWWUF: We have here in consideration mostly the great religious leaders. But the word “saviour” always had a broader context; it should not be limited to religion. Thus Joan of Arc has been regarded as a Saviour of France; Abraham Lincoln in America has been called a saviour. And there are many examples in the political history, sometimes based on events and sterling character, sometimes merely on the bloated reports of writers who seek publicity for themselves and their heroes. But even these must recognize the endurance; without endurance there can be no heroism. There is no question that John F. Kennedy also showed this himself in “Profiles of Courage.” He led by example and this is wonderful; but those who lead by pointing out to others the heroisms of third parties do not add much luster to the world. Heroism is great when presented directly; it is egotism when inferred indirectly.

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Series II: Number 4

Will-power

GATHA: Will-power is not mental power, but it appears in the form of mental power: the mind, as a globe, gives out the light of the will. Will-power, plainly speaking, is soul-power.

TASAWWUF: Power comes from God. We repeat “Allaho Akbar” and this is superficially interpreted as “God is Great.” People repeat that God is great and then they attribute greatness to some political institution or person, to some social institution or person. Actually all power comes from God, and manifests as kinetic energy manifests from potential energy.

It may not be easy to realize that the closer we feel to God and with God, His Power and all His faculties begin to manifest to us and through us. In the Healing Service it is said, “In unison with the Will-of-God we **will** to have Peace.” Actually this is a key; we can have the same directive toward Union with the Will-of-God in many affairs and that helps more than anything else to build up human will, which is derived from Divine Will.

This subject is also considered in *In an Eastern Rose Garden* and other essays in the printed literature.

GATHA: Therefore the more one realizes its source, the more one develops the power of will.

TASAWWUF: If one concentrates in and with the heart it is like opening a door through which many blessings may come. Or turning on a spigot for an unobstructed flow of liquid. It is not our own forcefulness that does that. Many people become tense and think this is the use of will-power. It is on the contrary a misuse of will-power. It can fatigue one without obtaining the end desired.

GATHA: No doubt the mind is an instrument, also the senses are instruments of the will-power, and if these instruments are not sound and well-developed, the will-power cannot work properly. It is just like a blunted sword in the hand of a skillful warrior.

TASAWWUF: The mind is an instrument of will and the senses are instruments both of mind and will. If not controlled and directed they tire out, and so we seem to tire out. The practice of the Presence of God, the keeping the heart alive, the following of esoteric disciplines brings even more the real Life, than a **new** Life. Man has all abilities.

GATHA: It is therefore that in the Sufi cult practices are given to make the mind as well as the senses proper tools for the will-power to use. As the plant is sprung from the earth, but is nourished by the rain falling from the sky, so the will-power springs from within, but is developed by external activities.

TASAWWUF: Ishk is a mighty power. It is called "Love" and it means love in many aspects. It is not only the attraction between person and person it includes all forms of attraction from physical gravity and magnetism up. It shows that the universe was built according to law and will and harmony. There is some will-power in bringing anything together with anything else, from atom to soul.

It is attunement that brings out the brightest picture in the television and the finest music in the orchestra. And as the person becomes attuned with God either in the cosmic sense or in the sense nearest to hand then he comes closer to the exercise of will and the attunement of his ambition.

GATHA: It must be remembered that the inner life reflects on the outer life and the outer life reflects on the inner life; both parts of life are interdependent.

TASAWWUF: This is an old occult teaching. We can see this reflected everywhere. Every creative artist is exposing his inner personality in some way. And in turn the inner being marks the body, the frowns and smiles, the smirks and composes, these all reflect what is going on within.

Even headaches and disease reveal something of what is occurring in the inner personality. And we can correct our minds and so correct our bodies through Meditation, Concentration and the practice of the Divine Presence.

GATHA: Will-power is like a battery of life, and as difficult as it is to deal with a strong mechanism, and as dangerous as it is to work with a battery of enormous power, so difficult and dangerous it is to develop and to work with the will-power.

TASAWWUF: We can find the same thing with rays, like the X-ray, the Laser and other beams. The battery is the most important thing and a properly attuned beam or ray is more valuable than mere mechanical or quantitative power. The difference is that as the rays come from the most subtle spheres they also have more subtle characteristics.

GATHA: In the first place, power is blinding, beauty is revealing. Wrong and unjust and unreasonable tendencies may rise from power, and one may destroy oneself in its expression.

TASAWWUF: In the Sufi terminology there is balance and also opposition between Jelal (power) and Jemal (beauty). If we look at the great engineering works of the day they are not only mighty structures, they are often beautiful ones. And the ones that are built and overlook consciously or unconsciously the principles of rhythm and balance will also show some mechanical defect.

The military people and sometimes the political people stress the power. It was not only the Great War of 1939-1945 but other wars and especially since then that power has been stressed and in politics it is also stressed. Then problems are not solved, although sometimes problems are subjective and then disappear. But there is a sort of struggle between the exercise of power and the exercise of authority which comes from the masses and may be called "democratic." But this very struggle still leaves some things unresolved. There may be no room for either virtue or the following of divine intervention.

Divine intervention does not mean the appearance of a God-man as some would have it, but the acceptance of the Spirit of Guidance which is in every one of us. When we become awake to it we can help solve the problems of ourselves and others.

GATHA: Christ has given a hint on this subject where he says, "He who taketh the sword shall perish by the sword." But by this it is not meant that one must not develop will-power. It only means that one prepares, before developing will-power, knowledge and strength to control it when it is once developed, and the knowledge and the clearness of vision to utilize it rightfully.

TASAWWUF: It is the last which must be given consideration. Sufism is not passivism and there is a wrong interpretation of Gandhian philosophy when it is turned into passivism. Gandhi distinctly taught **Satyagraha** which means the Divine Wisdom in every one of us, which manifests in the Prajna called **Kashf** by Sufis, so that we both develop power and direct it. Sri Krishna did not tell Arjuna not to fight; on the contrary. But he made it very clear that power and wisdom must go together, that either without the other would fall short of the goal.

Mankind has been caught in a deluge of mottoes and maxims and is beguiled into a torpor thereof. Words are of no value if kept apart from attitude and action. Even people who trifle with the Taoist teaching, instead of following the unspoken principles tend to no principles and no action which is not the basis of this teaching at all.

GATHA: Will-power in man is the secret of God, and in this secret the mighty power of God is hidden.

TASAWWUF: There have been innumerable discussions in philosophy concerning will-power and destiny and much confusion has arisen therefrom. This is because there is an unconscious assumption that man is really real and God is a sort of after-thought, or epi-phenomenon. Not so real. Even when the existence of God is posited, even when it is made a dogma, it seems to be apart from life, experience, and even philosophy.

The Arabian Nights has well put it, "There is no Power nor Might save in Allah." And when we go more deeply we find this to be true.

GATHA: Therefore in the East, where mystical ideas are generally known, people always say, we do not know, behind this limited human form what is hidden. This makes them respect and

consider what is hidden in every person they meet.

TASAWWUF: In the West there are doctrines of democracy, humanism, humanitarianism, etc. Then while there is consideration of man as a whole, the individual is dropped from sight even by those who advocate individualism, by which they mostly mean **nufs** and not the real dignity of the individual. The Catholic Church has taken this stand in its opposition to certain extreme social philosophies that they lose sight of the dignity of man and there is some truth in it.

The final moral teaching of the Sufi Message is for human consideration. This is a phrase very easy to word and very easy to hold in the tongue. When it touches the heart it sets the heart on fire and then the real love-power and real will-power manifest.

GATHA: Hafiz says, "Do not let yourself be fooled by the patched sleeve of the dervish, you do not know if under this patched sleeve a mighty arm is not hidden."

TASAWWUF: In the West this is taken mostly as an aphorism. The words are repeated, but if they meet an unkempt or not so well dressed man, they shun him, they criticize him. While in the East advantage is sometimes taken of credulity to dress in accord with the tradition of outcasts, for even the socially unacceptable sometimes have conventions which become fixed and advantage is taken of the masses in this.

GATHA: What we call miracle is the outcome of the same power, except that what is above human limitation cannot be called natural, it is supernatural. Therefore the miracles are not done by man, but by the superman, who in the religious term is called the divine man.

TASAWWUF: When the commentator was living in the city of Lahore in West Pakistan, the lights went out. People present said, "You are a Sufi, can't you perform a miracle (karamat)?" "No, I am quite unable to perform a miracle, I have no such power." "But if you were called upon, what would you do, if life depended on it?" "I would recite, ALLAH NURI". No sooner was "Allah Nuri" pronounced when the lights went on. Nobody was amazed but the commentator.

But the same circumstances came again and with the same response. And after the third time the people were convinced that one could perform miracles. But that was the last occasion when the lights went out. Still legends about people rise in this way.

One's life is filled with such circumstances, which is very annoying to people who are eager to judge.

GATHA: Man is inferior in his selfishness; when he rises above self, he is superior. Therefore the right to develop will-power is the right of the superior man.

TASAWWUF: It can be questioned whether this is will-power or attunement with Divine Power. The more one attunes, the more one is aware of Allah and His faculties, the greater he becomes as a

vehicle for Divine Power and all other faculties. And it may be asked whether the attunement and selflessness makes him superior or whether his superiority makes his attunement and the results thereof more natural.

GATHA: The differences between what they call white magic and black magic lies only in the use made by the inferior man or by the superior man of the same will-power. It is just as by the strength of arm you can take man's life or you can save man's life; both things are accomplished by the same power.

TASAWWUF: Black magic shows a direction and it comes from identifying power with ego. There are many people who have great power of concentration, who can collect all their forcefulness in a single direction. Then they can accomplish. When they seek power for themselves, it may be called Black Magic and when they do not accumulate it, it may become Divine Magic.

There are classes of disciples whose work it is to accumulate and use Power, but they are aware that all Power is essentially divine. And with the subtle forces as with the physical ones, it is attunement which is the key.

GATHA: No better use of will-power can be made than for self-control, for control of the body, and control of the mind. One who controls his body will control his mind; the one who controls his mind will control his body.

TASAWWUF: Mind and body both belong to ego. Control of ego brings about control over both mind and body and yet efforts to control either mind or body help to control ego. One can learn to say "no" to oneself. The "black magician" in one sense is he who says "No!" to others, the servant of God learns to say "No" to himself.

GATHA: The best use one can make of will-power is to use this power for self-discipline, on passion, on anger, on all things which abide in man's nature as his great enemies. In other words, by will-power one must build up a force to fight with oneself, with that part of oneself which offends us.

TASAWWUF: Much of this is discussed in "Moral Culture" and also in the Gathas on Saluk. But it is also true that as one refines the breath, by keeping the breath pure and light one can still have a penetrating but not an agitating breath. It is the agitating breath which brings the disturbances. By keeping the breath calm, smooth and rhythmical one can prevent the rise of unwanted emotions. And also by the repetition of the Names of God.

GATHA: It is rarely that a man lives on earth who thinks, speaks and acts as he wishes to. If any man does so, he is no doubt a Master. Doing a miracle apart, if one can make oneself obey one's own will one will surely rise to a greater exaltation.

TASAWWUF: It is mostly with consideration of others, to gain their good-will. There has been a

school of Sufis called “Malamatiya”, which means blame-worthy ones. They never acted with the aim of getting the support of the generation. Sometimes they even tried to offend the generality. Such an action as applause would have disturbed them. They know this would have pleased nufs, the ego. It would not necessarily mean God was with one or one with God.

Besides this would bring self-satisfaction, not exaltation. And now mankind is beginning to find there is exaltation and there are ways to it. It can become his experience; it is quite apart from the approval or disapproval of others.

GATHA: In the spiritual path the development of will-power is the college education; the moral education is the school education, which comes before.

TASAWWUF: People ride simply over the moral education. They think they have heard it before. Yes, they have heard it before. The world is full not only of Scriptures and their teachings but multitudes of philosophers and writers have given slogans, maxims, mottoes. These words come by the millions and coming from the surface of the mind, they do not reach the heart. The one who utters such words presumes that by the mere utterance he has done something good. It may shock him to learn on his day of judgment he will be found guilty of hypocrisy and worse. People do not need maxims, mottoes, slogans, they need living examples.

And when one takes the Moral Culture seriously and begins to exemplify it, at the same time he is building up power, his will power and his attunement. This is also productive of Moral Magnetism. It is not mere words nor unapplied thought. When the pattern is manifested it becomes real.

GATHA: But after finishing the development of the will-power, then there comes a work, a duty that one has to perform toward God and toward humanity, by expending the thus-developed power of will.

TASAWWUF: This is the function of Bodhisattva, which is to say the Spirit of Guidance in action. There is much disturbance because of the naive assumption that verbal or mental acceptance of a high moral standard is itself noble and worthy. It is not noble, it is not worthy for it assumes the preeminence of self. A Moral is empty until it is applied to life. A Moral is everything when it is applied and the application of Morality is of itself a great adjunct to will-power.

And to that should be added Concentration power which is obtained by one's own application of the esoteric teachings.

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Gatha with Commentary Series II: Number 5

Keeping a Secret

GATHA: The power of keeping a secret is the digestive power of the mind, and one who cannot keep a secret is like a person who cannot digest his food. As indigestion is a malady of the body so giving out of a secret is a disease of the mind.

TASAWWUF: In the picture of the three monkeys, one has his fingers over his lips and it is interpreted as “With my mouth I shall speak no evil.” But a deeper meaning would be that with my mouth I shall speak only when necessary. If one speaks only when necessary he will speak no evil.

Besides there is a gain when one does not talk. Perhaps more psychic magnetism is lost by speech than by any other way. Sometimes a person can speak for two hours and be very tired and the same person could work physically for eight hours and not be so tired. And there are devotees who recite the name of God all day long without fatigue while doing hard work.

Also when one is in Khilvat, seclusion, one does not talk and this is an excellent way toward revivification and the restoration of health. There are Christian monks who talk little or not at all and they build up extensive reserves of both energy and spirituality.

GATHA: Mind is a fertile ground, and it is the product of the mind, all this that we see before us, created and produced.

TASAWWUF: This was a fundamental teaching of Buddha and also when Buddhism was introduced into the West the first teaching given out was that all we see before us is nothing but the product of the mind. So students were cautioned both to conserve mental energy and be very careful of the direction of their thoughts. They were unconscious masters but the allurements of the world have been too much and the revived Buddhism like earlier Buddhism went into the pastures of speculation and no deep results followed.

But the same is true of all spiritual teachings—they all agree that the world before us and its activities are the result of human thought, individually and collectively.

GATHA: Therefore the mind which conceives a secret will prove to be a fertile land, and the mind which cannot assimilate a secret is like a barren desert.

TASAWWUF: The wars, particularly World War II, brought out the need for secrecy and not useless or senseless talk. It was a good discipline for everybody and to some extent this discipline

has persisted. Besides all speech which does not enable the speaker to act upon what he is considering adds to the storehouse of karma. Every word adds to karma and therefore the Scripture says, "For every idle word ye shall suffer in the day of judgment." This, like many other injunctions that came to the mouths of Messengers of God has been set aside. And the doom of religion has come because people have worshipped the Teacher and ignored the Teachings. It is now that this trend must be reversed.

GATHA: Those who have accomplished something in life have accomplished it by this power, the power of keeping a secret.

TASAWWUF: We see this among scientists and inventors. Sometimes their very concentration produces this silence naturally. Sometimes they realize that if they reveal what they are doing others may steal their secret. For all thoughts are in the Sphere and sometimes several scientists or inventors have picked up the same thought-vibrations at the same time, not realizing they are in the sphere.

And there have been men in politics who have reached high places. Sometimes these men have been benefactors and sometimes they have been despots and sometimes there have been mixed opinions, but in all cases they have followed this dictum of keeping silent. And this adds to their strength. They build up mental magnetism and to such an extent it becomes a great power in the outer as well as in the inner world.

GATHA: Those who have wasted their lives have wasted them by the lack of this power; with all the intelligence, learning and goodness they might have, they have proved to be shallow.

TASAWWUF: It should be evident that the "good people" as they have been called, do not reach the heights of power, of control, even of social acceptance. For they are not unified within their own beings. They permit forces to be scattered and they are negative to others. They set up standards which have no precedence in spiritual teachings, and they by their negativities lose what magnetism they have, as the Scripture says, "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

GATHA: The more one knows the secret of the world the more one feels inclined to keep it secret. And the more one keeps secret what one knows the more life unfolds its secrets to one.

TASAWWUF: This can be proved practically and pragmatically. Any one who seems tired, by keeping the mouth closed, by keeping himself silent or by being put on silence by others, will remark how much he has recovered magnetism and health. And not only that, the Insight will develop and if he practices what might be called "listening within" he will be surprised how he will advance.

As Khatum teaches, the Voice of God is constantly coming from within. But if we are uttering our own voice or listening to others, we cannot hear that Voice so well.

GATHA: One naturally keeps secret all that is bad, ugly and undesirable, and one feels naturally inclined to expose all that is good, valuable and beautiful.

TASAWWUF: One can easily ascertain that by gossiping and keeping in mind the evils of others he himself will become weak. Besides one naturally wishes his own faults to be covered and so he also keeps the faults of others covered. And by keeping such silence, he also lessens the evils of the world for the mind is elsewhere.

GATHA: Yet even that, if kept secret, will show in time the phenomenon of a seed hidden in the ground, which will spring up, when the hour comes, with its leaves, fruits and flowers.

TASAWWUF: Jesus Christ has said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Evil gives rise to evil and when silenced it cannot continue long. Besides if there are unfortunate persons in one's midst, by not calling attention to their faults, by not giving consideration to them, one prepares a new mental field for them, so to speak, in which a better character can grow.

GATHA: Therefore sometimes Sufis have taken a contrary way: to keep secret all the good one does and to let one's faults be known. There exists in Persia a sect of Sufis who are called **Rind**, who still practice this principle. There is a saying of a Rind: be a lover from within and become indifferent outwardly; this is a becoming manner, rarely seen in the world.

TASAWWUF: This is also a great defense against hypocrisy. Some mystics have held that hypocrisy is the only sin, and when we get rid of it, the whole world will benefit. It is certain that Shams-Tabriz led such a life that all his faults were most evident and very few knew his merits. Many times efforts were made to martyr him. And though the teachings of all ages say that the saints must face opprobrium and hostility, still the generality goes that way, the religious people most of all. The religious people most of all have become critical and this has led to opposition both to a particular religion and to all faiths.

GATHA: When a person arrives at a stage of spiritual advancement, when he regards the fault or weakness of another as his own fault, when he sees himself standing in the position of another, when he sees in another his own self, then he feels inclined to cover the fault of another as he would his own.

TASAWWUF: It is on this that all mystics agree and therefore in the studies on "Mysticism" in *The Sufi Message* it is stated that a mystic is above religion and differentiations, for in truth there can be no such thing as a "Christian Mystic," a "Hindu Mystic," etc. For all have partaken of the same waters from the fountains of life. And all can see themselves reflected in everybody else.

There is no hypocrisy in this in seeing or saying good of another. Even if one did not mean it at first there is a certain gain in the world of thought and this will become strengthened and lead to the manifestation of goodness in people.

GATHA: In all ages there has been talk about the sacred word, and it has always been considered a great secret: that secret is the tendency of keeping a secret. It is not in everybody's power to keep a secret. For the secret is heavier than an elephant to lift, the weak-minded is weighed down by the heavy weight of a secret. The person who has not developed this power feels as it were a congestion of the heart, from which relief can only come when he has given out the secret; till then he is in pain.

TASAWWUF: This shows a condition of nufs and one way to overcome this is to have the afflicted person practice breathing tenuously, taking in and giving out thin or light breaths, and becoming used to it. This changed condition of breathing will benefit the mind.

Besides this there is the all-compelling teaching, "Love thy neighbor as thy self." This is very ancient and very hard to follow. But one who achieves it really achieves.

GATHA: Also, it must be remembered that the power of the body is nothing in comparison with the power of the mind. And the power of the one who keeps a secret is greater than the power of the giant who lifts a mountain.

TASAWWUF: Supposing there were a test and this test included breathing and the glance to see where the power really is. And it will be found that no matter how important a person is, how much physical strength or world authority he has, he has not "collected the treasures of heaven," if he has not the power of the breath; he has not collected the light which is the vehicle of all power. And for this a person may be of no importance or of all importance and by keeping secrets he adds to the luster of both breath and glance.

If it be necessary to move mountains, actually and not symbolically, it may be mostly from these two sources that power will manifest although heart also is power.

GATHA: All that one holds is preserved; all that one lets go is dispersed.

TASAWWUF: This also appears among the aphorisms. But it is a natural law. And those who go on the path of Mushahida, which is to say, Contemplation, must hold to keep forms and names in a proper condition; if they let go erosion and decay set in. And sometimes by driving a thought from the mind they can produce desired results on the earth-plane. But this is all part of the science of secrecy.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series II: Number 6

Mind

GATHA: Mind develops to its fullness in man, although it exists in its primitive stage in all the different aspects of creation.

TASAWWUF: In the Qur'an there is the teaching that man alone could name the things of creation and in a sense man alone is in God's image. There are beings who manifest on higher planes and presumably higher states of consciousness, but they are incomplete. Man alone can hold the higher and lower together, and it is man who can become the perfect being; it is man alone who can become perfect "as the Father in Heaven is perfect."

In the first year's training certain principles are set forth. In the second year's training it is requisite to absorb these principles in the consciousness.

GATHA: Man, therefore, is so called from **Manas**, which in Sanskrit means mind. Many psychologists have thought that mind is the possession of man only, that the animal has no mind, but it is not so, even the plants have a mind. Where there is feeling there is mind.

TASAWWUF: In the time since these teachings were given science has moved in the general direction of absorbing them. Already years back Jagadish Bose found that both plants and metals had a psychological and psychic counterpart. This has also been given out by several schools of Oriental teaching, both ancient and modern.

The rise of the aviation industry compelled recognition of metal fatigue and if metals which belong to the mineral kingdom, which is the lowest, showed psychological response, it would be natural to presume that plants also have natural responses. This was also known to the wise of the past, as for instance the philosopher Ibn Khaldun, one of the greatest minds of Islam. In his day he made many observations and conclusions which did not become part of general knowledge until centuries later.

GATHA: There is no difference between heart and mind, although "heart" expresses more than "mind." The heart is the depth, and the surface is called mind. Plainly speaking, the depth of mind is heart, and the surface of heart is mind. Mind is a receptacle of all to which it is exposed.

TASAWWUF: There is a Chinese word "Shin" which well connotes this, for it means both heart and mind as well as internal consciousness. In another sense Mind refers to the Mental Plane or Malakut and Heart to the Astral or Spiritual Plane, Djabrut, the abode of angels. (What is sometimes called "Astral plane" is a mislabel, and has nothing to do with the distant stars.)

We find there is surface thinking and there is deep thinking and we also use the word “heart of the matter” meaning depth of the matter, coming to the essence of something.

GATHA: It is like the photographic plate; and therefore all conditions, happy or unhappy, all actions, good or bad, all that is beautiful or void of beauty, become impressed upon the mind.

TASAWWUF: The Sanskrit word for “impressions” is **samskara**. If we talk in Western language that impressions have a life of their own we may not be taken seriously and if we say that **samskaras** have a life of their own many will take us seriously. But every impression makes a mark, and these marks live.

We see something of the kind in the lines of the hand which reflect the inner conditions. If one took photographic plates or pictures of the hands at various times they would see many changes. These reflect what is going on inside; these are the results of the nervous activities as they come to the surface.

GATHA: Its first impression is on the surface, and as the impression is retained in the mind so it reaches the depth of the heart. It is like a photographic plate; once it is developed, the impression becomes clear and deeply engraved.

TASAWWUF: This lesson is also presented in the teachings on KASHF and elsewhere. The first step is to accept it, presumably as true. This does not make it true; this is only superficial acceptance. The next stage is to meditate on its possibilities and during that time it is stored away deeply or slightly as the will operates. It becomes important or unimportant as wished. This is what is called “freedom of the will”. The will cannot select the basic facts of experience but it can be impressed at any level it chooses.

GATHA: But the photographic plate is not creative and the heart is creative. Therefore every impression which once reaches the heart becomes as a seed in a fertile ground. The heart reproduces all it has received.

TASAWWUF: The analysis of life is not living; a map is not a territory, as has been written. There is so much confusion here and the age long failure to entangle from manas (mind) and ahankara (ego) will persist until one realizes this and disentangles. Yet this is not difficult if one has the living heart. Therefore the prayer KHATUM has been offered, not just a jumble of words, but a deep devotion in the hopes that it can become a reality. And in order for it to become a reality it must become part of life and not just words, which are empty.

It takes a long time, even after repeating that words are empty, to realize this. And to realize beyond this that this is the way to freedom.

GATHA: Therefore it is to the great disadvantage of the fault-finding man that he wishes to find fault with all he sees, for if he is not able to throw away immediately the undesirable impression

received, which is not always so easy, he begins in due time to reproduce what he has received.

TASAWWUF: It has been most unfortunate that the subjectivities of people have been substituted as being “Buddhism” for the life and teachings of Gautama Siddhartha. He was very emphatic on this point, that to entertain anything unfavorable was poisonous to the system. It was bad when there was some basis for complaint and terrible when there was not. For there are persons so steeped in negativity that they think of nothing else. And so after a while they repeat the negativity themselves; they have no longer anything to offer but complaints.

It is not that mystics wish any superficial optimism such as what has been called “Pollyannaism” but that we can adhere to truth and find our own direct path. Every time one finds fault there is an acid reaction in the system and this always points toward disease. If we wish to become healthy we must stop such a habit. It is more than just relying on “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

GATHA: Human nature is such that all the bad things man sees in another seem to him worse than they are, but when he himself does the same, he always has a reason to defend his fault. It is like partaking of all that one dislikes in another only by the habit of fault-finding.

TASAWWUF: There may be a change of direction, without hypocrisy, to see the good in others and in the world. When this is done affairs on the surface of the earth will improve. For the thoughts of people affect not only themselves individually but also those around them and even the generality. A little poison may often go a long way; a sweet perfume may be smelt for miles.

GATHA: For the wise, who have risen above the ordinary faults of human life, it matters little if they find fault, but they are the ones who do not criticize. They, as a rule, overlook all that seems undesirable, and that action of overlooking itself prevents all the undesirable impressions from penetrating through their hearts.

TASAWWUF: Often one runs into the people who say everything is suggestion and perhaps suggestion plays a great role in life. But if so, you may ask, why do they not suggest improvements; why do they not perceive the good in others; why do they not suggest brotherhood and kindheartedness? So we see the empty words. But at the same time it is possible to find some kindness in every heart. The heart without kindness is dead and this is also a persistent factor in heart-failure which the materially-minded physicians do not perceive. For the open heart invites life and the closed heart shuts it out.

GATHA: There is a natural tendency in man as in the animal to protect his heart from all hurt or harm, but that is the external heart. If man only knew what harm is brought to one's being by letting any undesirable impression enter the heart, he also would adopt the above-mentioned policy of the wise, to overlook.

TASAWWUF: The key here is perception. And when one adds feeling to perception one can either see or awaken the light in another. It is there, and our emphasis on wickedness and sin itself, has

been a cause for travail in the world. If we want the light of the sun, we ourselves must act as the light of the sun. And seeing the grandeur and goodness in others does not shut out their faults, or one's perception of faults. Only it is by the awakening and emphasis on this light, which is the divine light, which enables people, no matter how ignorant or wicked to change themselves, or be changed.

Besides every impression we receive and accept itself adds to the storehouse of karma. Every such impression maintains the samsara and if we wish to decrease the flow of samsara, if we wish to spread loving-kindness, we ourselves must exude it.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series II: Number 7

Thought

GATHA: Thought is a wave of the mind. The difference between thought and imagination is that the former is an activity of the mind directed with intention, and imagination is an activity which is not directed intentionally but rises mechanically, like the waves of the sea. Therefore imagination has less power than thought.

TASAWWUF: There has been an age-old controversy concerning free-will and destiny. To the analytical mind these things are opposed; to the GATHA: Mind is a fertile ground, and it is the product of the mind, all this that we see before us, created and produced.

Vijnanavada they both belong in a larger universe and while they act as if in perpetual opposition or counterpose, this is not so. They both belong, let us say, in Divine Mind.

The human being differs from animals in that he is not controlled by instinct, that he has choice of the paths he may take in life. This covers both behavior (on which there has been considerable discussion and controversy) and direction (in which there has not). It is not necessary to think; the mind may be held in abeyance, and also the mind may wander, or may go on the crest of the waves of events. Then one would be subject to circumstances and what is called "environment", "environment" often being nothing but a cultural term for samsara.

GATHA: No doubt the imagination of a man with a powerful mind also will have an influence and an outcome; but thought, intentionally directed, has strength of will with it, and therefore its power is great.

TASAWWUF: Nearly all the artistic people, certainly all the Jinn-souls have powerful imaginations. They are not limited by time and space but they are limited in choice, that they do not have the same will-power. If they did their consciousness would be closer bound to earth without losing its place in the heavens. For it takes force and will-power to keep the mind down to earth, unless one is engrossed in low materialism. Then one can do nothing else.

GATHA: A clear mind can have a clear thought, and therefore clearness of thought depends upon the cleanliness and awakening of the centers.

TASAWWUF: The principle of having centers and keeping them clear is presented both in the Gathas and also in the esoteric practices both those of traditional Sufism and those which belong to universal mysticism and esotericism. But this principle is of little value until one adopts it oneself, one subjects his personality to disciplines and exercises, and then has a certain degree of attainment.

The first stages of this attainment may be in awareness and also in “Zen Flesh, Zen Bones” one has the Shiva-Shakti practices which are excellent means, both as alternatives to the directives of some schools and in and by themselves. No doubt the Sufis have the same teachings but they were kept as part of the secret methods. There are other books presumably on the subject, very incomplete and not accompanied by the spirit of devotion. When practices are done with devotion, there is little danger; when they are done as ego-exercises, they are fraught with dangers.

GATHA: When the organs of the body, and especially the centers, are not in a clean and normal condition, then one’s own thought is unclear to oneself, and the thought of others still less clear.

TASAWWUF: This has been presented in the lessons both on “Breath” and “Everyday Life.” It is part of the early training of mureeds that the passages of the body be cleared, cleansed, and then adapted for higher purposes. No doubt fasting and part fasting helps; also the use of natural foods which help to keep one clear and healthy. The advantage of the natural foods is that though they might not always be as good—certainly not better—than many mineral drugs or vegetable derivatives, they do not devitalize a person psychically so that in the long run they are much better.

GATHA: Man in reality is by nature a mind-reader, and the state of body and mind is abnormal when he cannot read thought.

TASAWWUF: We find this true in many cultures. This particularly so in non-literate but advanced societies like the peoples of Southwestern United States and parts of Mexico; also in South America and Africa. They have this natural faculty. It is there, it is used, and it is a source of mystery to cultured but self-centered people.

Those who resort to khilvat, seclusion, will find that their minds pick up many vibrations. It becomes so they know what is going on close to hand; and also if the affair is very great far away. They do not need books, radio, anything. For the vibrations are in the sphere. Just as the radio and television select vibrations in their accommodations akasha so the mind can do this. When the body is cleansed it is easy; when the mind is purified it is still easier.

GATHA: To one to whom his own thought is clear, the thought of another person will be clear also. It is he who does not know himself, who does not know others.

TASAWWUF: It is of no value to accept this verbally. One may parrot or parody it, but that is of no avail. One must come to know one's own thought. The Zen meditation is not always beneficial to the attainment of the spiritual consciousness but the practices always help one to understand his own self, his own mind. And once this is achieved, one is able to read the minds of others. This may or may not be telepathically, but one can then easily tell when others tell the truth, when they are lying, when they are sincere, how much they are to be believed, how much they are not to be believed.

GATHA: Man's thought may be likened to a rubber ball. It can be directed to any point one wishes to hit, but there is also a likelihood that the thought so directed will rebound and hit oneself.

TASAWWUF: That is why, with all the superficial knowledge about karma, there has not been much advance in the world. One takes the knowledge subjectively; one does not apply it. That is a difference between the sage and the metaphysician, the metaphysician knows superficially, while the sage applies his knowledge for himself and then for others.

If we could realize that every word, every thought, every act has its karma, we should become very careful. But it is also true by the practice of esotericism one naturally becomes careful.

GATHA: A thought of love sent to another must rebound and bring love to oneself, and likewise the thought of hate.

TASAWWUF: While the thought-of-love is not love and sometimes is very far from being love, it can lead the way to the flooding of the mind with the heart-vibrations. And this helps to keep poisons away. And if feeling is added to thought-of-love, not only the mind but the whole personality benefits.

GATHA: Thought depends upon mind, as the plants depend upon the soil in which they are sown. Fruits and flowers grown in one kind of soil are sweet and fragrant, in another kind of soil they may lack that sweetness and fragrance. Therefore the wise know the mentality of a person by his thought, they know from which soil that thought comes.

TASAWWUF: If one asks how this is possible, it is possible from Kashf, Insight, which enables man to attune not only to the world of mind, but to vibrations of intelligence of all kinds. Our deepest

personality has the divine wisdom; it is a matter of making it conscious. Potentially we know everything.

Then there is a question of quality. The purer the personality, the clearer the vision, the less scope for negative vibrations. And as the fountain of love awakens and functions, the sweetness of the inner life pervades all one's actions and efforts. This is the water and the fertilizer and the care of the ground-work of mind.

GATHA: As water is found in the depths of the earth so love is hidden beneath every heart, only the difference is that in one part of the earth the water is far down below the earth, in another part of the earth it can be found quite near. And it is that water that makes the earth flourish; and so it is the love element which makes the ground which we call the mind a fertile ground.

TASAWWUF: In Sufism especially this emphasis upon the love-element comes foremost. And it is not only as a philosophy, a direction but even more a directive. And those who become teachers in Sufism do not necessarily know all the metaphysics or history or intellectual background; they are the ones whose hearts are open and who are able to open the hearts of others.

GATHA: Every thought coming from a fertile and flourishing ground must bear some fruit. A loving person's life itself is a garden.

TASAWWUF: That is why in the Sufi mysteries, and also in some other mysteries both gardening and agricultures have been used as symbolical parallels for spiritual development. The ordinary person sees only ideas here and sometimes he is won by those ideas. The keen person sees processes and especially processes within his own self. He begins to use love both inwardly and outwardly, to persons, to dreams, ideals, animals, plants, everybody and everything. This is the way of Eternal Life.

GATHA: But otherwise, if it is a barren soil, from there you expect nothing but volcanic eruptions, the volcano that destroys itself and its surroundings. Every element in the form of a thing or being, which is destructive, must of necessity destroy itself first.

TASAWWUF: There is much ignorant sentimentalism that passes for philosophy. Jesus has said not to give pearls before swine. And while Sufism emphasizes the potential perfection of every one it is not necessary, it is not even wise to give out too many instructions.

Besides that, breathing practices and meditations will cause the unworthy to be uneasy. This is better than involving them in useless discussions. They betray by their breaths and so their thoughts. Even the manner of speaking tells much about them. It is useless to waste time calming and correcting; besides this sort of person wishes to agitate, upset. We can see from the history of World War II and much that has happened since, that the destructive forces always lead to destruction. But those who have the seeds of destructibility, the asuras personalities, so to speak, are not always changed thus. The only thing that will help them is their own self-destruction. They

cannot be reached, they cannot be taught and it is useless to waste time and effort.

GATHA: In order to make thought fruitful mental culture is necessary; first the digging of the ground. The inner culture of the Sufis begins with the digging of this ground. What is meant by Zikr is this digging process. But it is not only the exercise, it is living the life.

RYAZAT: It is first necessary to repeat the sounds—call them words, even call them mantras. They have some effect which comes from the very sounds. Then they are suggestive; they emphasize the reality of God. It is by emphasizing the reality of God that one overcomes the ego. It is not by limiting the ego, the ego is strengthened by all references to it; it is shackled by all emphasis upon God (Allah).

GATHA: Digging the ground is what may be called consideration. It is constant consideration which cultivates the mental ground.

TASAWWUF: This teaching of consideration was emphasized by Hazrat Inayat Khan above all else. It does not come easily. It comes with difficulty because people are beguiled by the suggestion that there is some such thing as “consideration” and yet are not considerate themselves. Grand Sheikh Suhrawardi taught: “Consideration consists of showing consideration to others and not expecting consideration from others.”

GATHA: Then one must water this ground, and this water is the love element, to give and to receive love. Give more and take little is the principle. And when in a ground so cultivated and so watered the thought-plants will spring, they must necessarily bring forth sweet fruits and fragrant flowers.

TASAWWUF: From this came the idea of “The Garden of Inayat”, that one should treat plants and human beings (and even animals) by parallel processes. The consideration of the humanity comes first, to build up an atmosphere of love and consideration that all who come feel that. And when this love and consideration are given to the humanity, then the plants will feel it and benefit, and so the animals.

There are many good people who think the world will become better if we show more consideration to animals and they are undoubtedly right. But what is the basis for consideration? It must be in heart-feeling. “Open Thou our hearts that we may hear Thy Voice which cometh constantly from within.” We repeat the prayers and do not always realize that every line, every word, is full of significance.

By the awakening of heart the love-stream will flow and it is full of life and vitality. Some have begun with plants. They show much love for the plants and a certain atmosphere is built up. They make the plants more fragrant. Plants that grow in a garden of love are always more fragrant. But the real fragrance includes something more. The heart-fragrance is greater than anything, and everything. And if there are loving hearts and they have gardens and farms and fields, one can see

it more and more. There is an inner fertilization process that is even more rewarding than the outer fertilization process.

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Gatha with Commentary Series II: Number 8

Tawakul: Dependence on God

GATHA: Dependence is nature and independence is the spirit. The independent spirit becomes dependent through manifestation.

TASAWWUF: Mohammed has well put it when he said that everybody is born a Muslim, but the parents misdirect it. For the soul is pure and it is contamination with the earth-element that begins to change operation and function, character and behavior.

GATHA: When One becomes many, then each part of the One, being limited, strives to be helped by the other part, for each part finds itself imperfect. Therefore we human beings, however rich with the treasures of heaven and earth, are poor in reality, because of our dependence upon others.

TASAWWUF: There is nothing wrong there. This is the nature of our existence. Man being mind is not yet functioning in the depths. When he functions on the surface he see the differences and when he functions in the depths the differences disappear.

If we study nature, both the lives of plants and animals, we can see in the development of organisms and bodies, and the types of functions of cells and systems and the whole, a gradual evolution, and the parts that both dependence and independence play. But the same is true of man, in the family and in society and even in his own self.

GATHA: The spiritual view makes one conscious of this, and the material view blinds man, who then shows independence and indifference to his fellow-man. Pride, conceit and vanity are the outcome of this ignorance.

TASAWWUF: What has been called "individualism" has resulted from this. Much merit has been attached to it and the idea of "soul" which has risen in society and religion is very different from the

fundamental teachings of the Prophets and Messengers of God. They have all emphasized unity and brotherhood. And if we examine some of the early social systems, the principle of individualism as it came to grow later on was not only nonexistent but even unthinkable.

So long as the principle of individualism is held we cannot remove pride, conceit and vanity. They do not disappear as the result of sermons and scoldings. They can only go when there is transmutation of personality and the removal of the outlooks of separateness. Therefore music and dancing and many arts which promote harmony are of more value than psychological and ethical efforts based on separateness.

GATHA: There come moments when even the king has to depend upon a most insignificant person. Often one needs the help of someone before whom one has always been proud and upon whom one has always looked with contempt.

TASAWWUF: The Sufi attitude of beholding human beings as “Beloved Ones of God” is most helpful. Even the most unworthy are beloved by God. We cannot remember too often the words of Mohammed: “Allah loves His creation more than a mother loves her children.” It is not easy to come up but the more one holds it in view, then consideration comes more naturally and one begins to see the place of everybody in society and life. Jesus said, “Whatsoever ye do to the **least** of these my creatures, ye do it unto me.”

GATHA: As individuals depend upon individuals so the nations and races depend upon one another. As no individual can say, “I can get on without another person”, so no nation can say, “We can be happy while another nation is unhappy.”

TASAWWUF: This teaching was not accepted seriously with dire results. It takes a long time to accept it seriously. People who are in distant lands with different cultures and outlooks do not impress us. Their sufferings and longings are of no account to us. And this holding of differences and differentiation is one of the factors in war. We can pray forever, and if the prayer is not part of our daily life it is not so much of no avail, but of evil avail. We do not see the karma and hypocrisy in it, to have a sort of prayer to a God Who is far away and substitute this for good will toward man who is in our midst. This is an important part of Scriptures; it has often been of no part of so-called religion at all.

GATHA: But an individual or a multitude depends most upon God, in Whom we all unite. Those who depend upon the things of the earth certainly depend upon things that are transitory and they must some day or other lose them. Therefore there remains only one object of dependence, that is God ...

TASAWWUF: This is taught by Sufis under the title of **Wakkul**, dependence, and they have long emphasized it. But even the religious people make a separateness with God; they put Him far away. They do not recognize He is in our midst and we live and move and have our being in Him. Religion is often the greatest obstacle to following the teachings of the founders of religion—by this

we mean religion in practice.

GATHA: ... Who is not transitory, and Who always is and will be. Saadi has said, "He who depends upon Thee will never be disappointed."

TASAWWUF: There are several points to consider. Words are but indicators. We do not have to spend all our time in prayer if we can keep the atmosphere of remembrances (Zikr). Even Buddha taught the existence of the eternally-abiding. He may not have called it "God". He tried to show that all the names and forms the Indian people and the Indian religion advocated could not be the ultimate in which and into which all must unite. No doubt piety is needed as a first step or even beyond the first steps; but when piety is substituted for actuality and self-realization, its benefits are not too great.

GATHA: No doubt it is the most difficult thing to depend upon God. For an average person, who has not known or seen, who never had any idea of such a personality existing as God, but has only heard in church that there exists someone in the Heavens Who is called God and has believed it, it is difficult to depend entirely upon Him.

TASAWWUF: This has led to all kinds of reactions, including skepticism which has existed at all times; and humanism which came first after the height of the Renaissance and which has persisted in various forms since then. The pious religious people maintain the separateness of man and work for what they call individual salvation. The humanists stress the hope of man here and now without waiting for the hereafter or for any salvation outside the individual and community. Not finding such a God, they tend to ignore the possibilities of His existence.

In both cases, not finding the stream of life there is a limitation to their happiness and exaltation. There is even much pessimism, for which they are not entirely to blame. But when God becomes living experience, the whole outlook and the whole attitude is changed.

GATHA: A person can hope that there is a God, that by depending upon Him he will have his desire fulfilled, a person can imagine that there can be Someone Whom people call God, but for him also it is difficult to depend entirely upon God.

TASAWWUF: There are several ways to approach this situation. For example there is the rise of dependability. We have it in Salat that one looks to a loving mother, kind father, and on to a spiritual teacher in turn. This is one sort of dependence.

Then one may work on the theme as Swami Ram Das has well placed it "Guru is God". This does not mean that the Guru is actually God but that by love for the Guru, dependence on the Guru, trust in the Guru, one learns that love, that reliance, that trust which comes to fulfillment in God-realization. But this can come only by experience and those that argue are in ignorance. And those who have this sort of skepticism would carry it over into scientific matters. They may say they believe in "science" but a skeptic is a skeptic above all else.

GATHA: It is for them that the Prophet has said, "Tie your camel and trust in God." It was not said to Daniel, "Take your sword and go among the lions."

TASAWWUF: The same attitude was found in Oliver Cromwell who said "Trust in God but keep your powder dry." The conceptual God is the one separated by man's thought from the realities of the world and life. The God that can be conceived is never the reality, or as has been said, "To describe God is to dethrone God."

GATHA: One imagines God, another realizes God; there is a difference between these two persons. The one who imagines can hope, but he cannot be certain. The one who realizes God, he is face to face with his Lord, and it is he who depends upon God with certainty.

TASAWWUF: There has been much confusion in the world because certain classes of metaphysicians use the same phrases as do the mystics. But the meanings are quite different; the metaphysician conceives and the mystic experiences. Even when the vocabularies seem identical their meanings are often far apart.

The whole trend of the spiritual life is toward realization, and also with the rise of scientific influence the importance of experience impresses the cultured world as a whole and this of itself brings hope.

GATHA: It is a matter of struggling along on the surface of the water, or courageously diving deep, touching the bottom of the sea.

TASAWWUF: The traditional religions falter because they each stress some particular ritual, some particular ceremonies. These do retain a sort of memory of some spiritual event but seldom depict the actual event, only its surface covering. The true devotee is one who can face all the vicissitudes of life as did his human ideal.

GATHA: There is no greater trial for a person than dependence upon God. What patience it needs, besides the amount of faith it requires, to be in the midst of the world of illusion and yet to be conscious of the existence of God!

TASAWWUF: If we look at the names of those whom we recognize as Messengers of God we see a greater and greater movement to their functioning in the midst of society, with mankind. Rama, although a king, lived in the forest with his wife and brother for a long time, performing austerities.

Buddha left his throne for a similar reason but then made a compromise between withdrawal and participation.

The Beni Israel began as nomads and shepherds, becoming in turn farmers and city dwellers. When we come to Jesus we find a city dweller, and also Mohammed. And Mohammed fulfilled the entire life of a householder and yet was able to be conscious of the existence of God, every

moment. This can even be called “the perfection of perfection.” It has shown the various paths for humanity and in the end we find one can live in the midst of society and his fellows and still it is possible for him to be conscious of God Who is everywhere, and in and through everything.

GATHA: To do this man must be able to turn all what is called life into death, and to realize in what is generally called death—in that death, the true life. This solves the problem of false and real.

TASAWWUF: Otherwise we make divisions. Even those who believe they are ardent non-dualists and monists sometimes fall into this delusion. And in counter-distinction Zen Buddhism teaches that salvation and illumination come with immediacy and at any moment everywhere. This is the true fulfillment.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series II: Number 9

Piety

GATHA: People very often mean by piety, orthodoxy, a religious appearance, or a great goodness. Really speaking piety means purity. Piety is the healthy state of mind, the person of healthy mind is really pious.

TASAWWUF: What is meant by healthy mind? A healthy mind is one who does not make distinctions into good and bad, pure and impure with every reaction to the affairs of life. There have been certain standards of piety and they are often connected with rituals and patterns which are called Dharma in the Indian faiths and Din for Muslims. These involve the whole of life and not merely the minutes or hours given to worship. But these standards are external; they do not necessarily involve a high-minded or good-hearted person.

GATHA: That mind is pious which fears not, which is beyond life's anxieties and worries, which is above reproaches, which by its innermost joy makes even the body feel light.

TASAWWUF: The Western faiths say that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. This rendition can be questioned. It is not fear that brings the positive faith but rather this is a negative outlook. And such persons instead of being beyond fear often regard it as a virtue or a necessity.

And when these people are pious there is no joy; there is seriousness, there is even austerity but not the heart full of joy and light.

GATHA: The pious feels exalted, for piety is purity from all things and conditions of earthly life which pull man down to the earth.

TASAWWUF: It is the false piety that does not bring this about. Mere religiosity has often kept man down-cast, more concerned with death than with life; with solemnity than with joy and so there is a picture of God which is placed as a veil over the existence of God. And this has led to a marked pessimism which characterizes so much of mankind. And when we add the actual sufferings there is so much gloom that many have ceased to believe in God and others blame Him. And it is all mankind's folly and ignorance.

GATHA: When man feels light in his body and joyful in his heart his soul becomes exalted, and that is the sign of piety. If there is not this feeling in man, however much good there be in him, it is of no use, his learning is of no value, his religion, his prayer, all in vain.

TASAWWUF: So long as egocentricity (nufs) continues, there is a barrier between man and God. It has been said that prayers or words without thoughts do not go to heaven. But more is needed than that.

The first step toward becoming light is embodied in the phrase, "Blessed are the poor in spirit (light in breath)." When man can perfect the light breath, one that is not heavy, and feel it go through his organism, it brings buoyancy of spirit. This is a first step toward exaltation. And this has caused a revulsion against the religion because it has been so confused by heaviness that the exaltation cannot come.

GATHA: Religion, prayer, or meditation, are all methods by which the joy which is within man, which is man's divine heritage, may be brought to the surface.

TASAWWUF: Those on the esoteric path use both the Gayatri prayers (as they are called) and the mantrams and wazifas. As disciples feel the spirit of these holy repetitions they also feel a release from heaviness, they begin to expand in their assimilation of the joyous spirit. This is real; this also is the result of practices.

Sufic meditations have the element of keeping the attributes of God before them and also joy and love. The more these principles are kept before one, the more one assimilates them, the more one grows spiritually. And then it follows as is taught by the Upanishads, that one's accumulation of Ananda expands tremendously.

GATHA: Sufis have used different words from those of the orthodox in expressing their spiritual ideas. Therefore instead of calling man pious they call him **Khuanda Pishani**, the smiling forehead. It means that, if his lips do not smile, his forehead smiles.

TASAWWUF: This has become an important part of spiritual development. The Chisti and some other schools have used singing; in the Arabian and Turkish worlds some used dancing. Now we employ both and have the advantage of drawing from the different religions of the world, and always keeping the joy in the heart foremost in repeating names of God. And it also follows that repeating names of God also increases the joy in and from the heart.

GATHA: How true it is that before man cries or laughs his eyebrows give warning of what is coming. That is what is meant by the word “expression” in the English language.

TASAWWUF: Just as it is said that Palmistry results from thoughts controlling nerves controlling the nerve terminals in the hands, so it is that heart controls all the expressions of personality. No doubt this reaches its climax as has been said: “The eyes are the windows of the soul” but it is also in “the smiling forehead” and all aspects of the countenance that give rise to expressions. And Sufism teaches that the head is the spiritual part of the body.

GATHA: There is an inner joy, a divine feeling, which rises up as water from a fountain and shows itself in many forms, in smiles, in tears, in words, in silence. Man expresses it in dancing, in singing; his voice, his word, his gesture, all express piety.

TASAWWUF: This is also presented in the poems which form part of *Nirtan*. But the only way to recognize it is in manifestations. Sufi poetry and music have been based on it and now we use gestures and dancing to exemplify it. By these and other means the innermost depths of the personality find expression on the surface. Then it is no more just words, it is something greatly beyond words.

GATHA: Hafiz has said in sarcasm to the long-faced pious, who have become so out of orthodoxy and who look at singing or dancing with contempt, “If the heads of the pious would hear my words sung, they would get up and begin to dance.”

TASAWWUF: So in this day the words of Scriptures, or rituals, of holy messengers and prophets and poets are finding expression in dance and movement. And one can see in the smiling faces of the participants something very real, very vital, very powerful. God is manifesting through the faces of His lovers.

True we have the example of King David. It has been hypocrisy on the part of the pious that they have accepted the earlier prophets and seers and messengers. If they did they would perform as the beloved ones of God have performed. And now we must express this innermost being. There is discipline but it is very different from frustration. Discipline is to curb the nufs; frustration is to curb the heart of man longing for expression and freedom.

GATHA: Then he goes on, saying, “Hafiz says things sometimes through drunkenness which he ought not to have said. O pious one, I pray you will overlook it all.”

TASAWWUF: It has not been an easy thing to present the Message of God in the West. Sober and intellectual people will assent to the words and then dissent when they are put to manifestation. To know indirectly about drunkenness is sometimes worse than ignorance.

When one enters into drunkenness, or into Hal, the ecstatical state when the ego no longer is in control, he will say and do things that even the best of good people may be horrified thereby. Spiritual drunkenness, **sukr**, is simply not subject to human logic and sober behavior. It has no respect for crystallized traditions. It does not respect persons because of their social or official positions. It does not recognize anything of the earth alone which does not also belong to the heavens.

GATHA: The Sufi's piety is the divine joy which is the soul's real treasure, and it does not matter in what way it is achieved, religiously or irreligious, as long as it is achieved; it is the thing the Sufi values most.

TASAWWUF: So today we go to exaltation and divine joy. We no longer heed the traditions that bear no fruit. Until man has experienced a transcendental state, until he has come out of his ego-mold, he is not really in a state of Grace, though he may be using the words. And these words kill as the Scripture says. The Scriptures teach that the letter kills and the spirit of breath gives life. The words are reported and are useless, they are confusing. To have the breath is to have the life and when the breath becomes refined one more easily enters states of joy. And also when one enters states of joy the breath will become more refined.

From refinement of breath, which is spirit, we come to the refinement of the whole personality. Joy is the fountain-head of more moral achievements than the multitudes of maxims and quotations which literature has preserved. It is not literature, not even sacred literature by which the world can be saved—if it could this would have already been achieved—it is the tuning of heart and the rising to the surface of the results of that heart's tuning.

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Gatha with Commentary

Series II: Number 10

Spirituality

GATHA: It is amusing how many different meanings people attach to the word spiritual. Some call spirituality great goodness, some mean by it melancholy, some mean by it a miserable life, some think spirituality lies in communion with spirits, some consider wonder-working and the art of the conjuror a kind of spirituality.

TASAWWUF: The very word “spirituality” means that which is connected with breath and breath essence. As people have not studied breath and breathing and as they have all kinds of verbal answers to all kinds of questions this seems so unreasonable it is not even investigated.

If we look at these interpretations, so variant, so different, we must conclude there is confusion. And many of these supposed definitions bring no joy. And yet in the Vedas joy and spirituality were coalesced in the word **Ananda**, and bliss has been stressed by the holy messengers of all times.

GATHA: Every good or bad power, so long as it is a power, people often imagine to be a spiritual power, many connect the idea of spirituality with a religious authority. Whereas it is the simplest idea, if one cares to understand it by rising above complexity.

TASAWWUF: Yes, all power from a certain view would be spiritual for in essence all power comes from God. But as soon as one introduces “idea of spirituality” one introduces idea. And there are so many kinds of ideas. They are operations of the ego-mind and the ego-mind is the part of man which does not accept spirituality, which is far from being spiritual.

From the Sufic point of view also the teachings lead to spiritual liberty. Organizations, rituals, traditions, dogmas, and every method of dividing mankind into camps keeps this from coming to manifestation. And if one accepts a power or organization, he places a veil between himself and God.

GATHA: Spirituality is contrary to materiality. One who is conscious of matter alone is material, one who becomes conscious of spirit also is spiritual. He who thinks, “I am my body” and sees no further, is material. He may as well say “I am my coat,” and when the coat is worn out he may say, “I am dead.”

TASAWWUF: The principles of **kasif** and **latif** are early introduced into the teachings. The first is the tendency toward hardness and the second toward what might be called ethereality. The same is in regard to crystallization; it is a hardening process. Therefore there is the prayer, “Raise us from the denseness of the earth.” This applies more to the earth, the ground, than to the mystical element “earth” although the mystical element earth also is the hardest and heaviest of the elements.

But materialism actually discountenances itself. If it is held in thought it deadens thought. And in the scientific processes discoveries have been made in exactly the opposite direction. Every year man is learning more about the fineness, about the subtle realities beyond and behind matter.

GATHA: The one who is conscious of the spirit, to him his body is a coat, and as by taking off one's coat one does not die, so even by the death of this body the spirit-realized soul does not die.

TASAWWUF: What is death? It means the changing of consciousness but in particular the changing of consciousness due to the doffing of one's garments. Once a person has a sense of spirituality, he feels the life which extends far beyond this world and the immediacy. This sense of continuity is what some Sufis call "death before death (of the body)."

Part of the work on the spiritual path is to get into the universal consciousness and then one will no longer be limited by the sphere in which he is operating. Indeed as one grows in spirituality he may be in contact with the spiritual Masters both of the seen and unseen. And for this spiritual growth is needed and one is not limited by the body in which he seems to be functioning.

GATHA: It is the spiritual person who will attain in time immortality. He does not need to study much to prove to himself that he is spirit, for study will never convince him. It is the spirit itself which must realize itself. The soul is its own evidence, nothing else will make the soul realize its own being.

TASAWWUF: The whole training in Tasawwuf is from grossness and denseness to fineness; from narrowness of vision to broadness of perspective; from one's immediacy until the whole universe is encompassed. Therefore there are practices in Ryazat which enable one to grow continually as if only an eternal life mattered, that time itself was of no concern.

The first great step toward fineness comes when the subtle body or any of its functions becomes part of the conscious life. We have a sort of clairvoyance and clairaudience and perhaps other faculties when asleep. When we awaken we are often limited by the earth-sphere. But as fineness in response is developed, the whole outlook may change and also faculties, and, of course, the sense of perception as a whole.

GATHA: The whole work of the Sufi, which he calls inner cult, is toward soul-realization. It is realized by rising above matter, and yet the condition is that one can only realize it by getting through matter.

TASAWWUF: The hardest and most subtle obstacle is to confuse one's intellectual acceptance of this possibility with the actual occurrence. We can sit by and say "Yes" forever and there may be no change in ourselves or circumstances. It is only by accepting actual change. And the first steps are to change the breath. Only this seems so simple and elementary that it is not taken seriously. So some people pass from exoteric religion to esoteric discipline without much change in outlook because of the adherence to nufs, the ego. So long as this persists there cannot be a great change.

But if one starts realizing that even by simple refinement of breath changes are taking place, he will be able to notice these changes. This will give him faith in himself and the teachings and this faith

is the greatest aid one can have for the higher development.

GATHA: As a fountain is necessary for the water to rise, so the material body is necessary for the soul to realize itself. The water which remains still in the depth of the fountain sees itself rising and falling within itself, and there lies its joy.

TASAWWUF: So although materiality is set against spirituality it is really egotism that is opposed to spirituality. One is given a practice, "This is not my body, this is the temple of God." He may come to see that spirit is embedded in matter. It is not as some have said, that there is no spirit in matter and no matter in spirit. This is only relatively true. There is spirit in everything: without spirit there could be no form at all, only chaos.

The various devices of the Sufis, esoteric and otherwise, help to bring the devotee to exaltation without losing one's faculty of material achievement.

GATHA: The same picture illustrates the condition of spirit and soul. The spirit which rises upward is the soul, it falls again in its own being, and the realization of the spirit of this joy can alone be called spirituality.

TASAWWUF: That is why exaltation is constantly presented as a theme in the writings. But exaltation as a theme is of little value and exaltation as experience is of unlimited value. Also one reads in earlier writings that the state of intoxication is most valuable in helping young people in the journey to God. It takes them above the denseness of earth. It makes them feel the bliss of the heavens and without leaving the flesh. Or as is said in the Hebrew Bible, "In thy flesh thou shalt see God." For the Sufi does everything possible to achieve advancement here and now.