

Studies in Spiritual Art
from
Art: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
of
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with Commentary
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Table of Contents

[Sculpture 1](#)

[Sculpture 2](#)

[Sculpture 3](#)

[Sculpture 4](#)

[Sculpture 5](#)

[Sculpture 6](#)

[Painting 7](#)

[Painting 8](#)

[Painting 9](#)

[Painting 10](#)

[Art 11](#)

[Art 12](#)

[Editors Note: The text of the Gathekas below that Murshid used for his commentaries is different from the text as published in Volume 10 of The Sufi Message. The meaning of the text appears to be the same; the wording is different.]

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.

[Sculpture 1](#)

GATHEKA: In all periods of history art seems to have played the same prominent part in the life of humanity. With every rise and fall and with all different changes the art has gone through, it has always been the soul of life.

TASAWWUF: People have long discussed the real meaning of civilization, comparing the culture of one period with that of another period and arguing whether one was higher than the other or if there was any way by which standards could be judged. For instance, the Greeks were renowned for their architecture and sculpture, and the Romans for their skill in engineering and for their codes of law. The Chinese have been regarded as greater creative artists and the Japanese have been excellent adopters of the culture of other people.

There may be no actual measuring stick for either art or civilization. In each instance one may see the spirit of the genius coming to the surface of human life. Many of the social philosophers of the day have gone so far as to say that the artistic development may be the only sign of real civilization. Oswald Spengler, who's *The Decline of the West* has been read by people in all parts of the world, has declared that every culture has its periods of rise, growth, maturity and decay, that the student can measure these movements and that today the people of the West are again entering the cycle of decay. He claims to have discovered such cycles in India, Egypt, Greece, Medieval Europe (with its Gothic culture), and that another one came with the Renaissance and is going out with the machine.

Among lovers of art do we not find people who enjoy Michelangelo? And others who delight in Praxiteles? One person is thrilled by the cathedral at Cologne and another enjoys Westminster Abbey. The Taj Mahal has been regarded by many as the most beautiful structure in the world and others admire the Chrysler Building. One sees great genius in Raphael, another applauds Cezanne, and another lauds Goya. One declares the East is superior in art and another upholds the West.

Havelock Ellis has declared that we can measure the development of any race by the dance of the people, that the dance was the real spiritual measuring stick. He studied the dance-forms of many peoples, but while what he said is true it may be that art in general and not the dance alone or music and the dance together are enough. Yet in all art there is the hidden inspiration which springs forth from the soul of man and which cannot forever be secluded in limbo.

GATHEKA: It cannot be different, because art is the improvement on nature. It is said that nature is made by God and art by man, but at the same time nature is made by God and art made by God through man. In other words, art finishes nature.

TASAWWUF: To understand this fully we have to know something of the nature of man, how he is related to God, what produces the creature urge in him, and what is the seat of esthetic appreciation. Man seems to have had the creative faculty first in order to bring forth offspring and so perpetuate the race. This creative activity is but one expression of the soul's natural tendency to be expressive. For there is something in the heart of man which is not present in the animals,

which, when aroused, brings inspiration and under this inspiration man does wondrous things. For really speaking, the inspiration is the impetus man receives from God wherein he responds to God consciously or unconsciously.

Man is not animal and he does not always enjoy the sex-relationship no matter how great its hold upon him. Today we find much discussion about the sublimation of this force but not so much information as to how it can be done without harm. When man becomes a thinker, scientist or inventor his expression rises from the physical plane to the mental plane so that much transmutation of the vital-life force is automatic. The thinker may develop a high forehead and in him the frontal lobe of the pituitary gland is well formed. If the posterior lobe is developed, then he will have a vivid imagination and may blossom as an artist, a poet, an esthete, a craftsman.

Sufis recognize the Jelalis or expressive people and the Jemalis or responsive people. Yet both types may be expressive and both responsive. To be a good teacher one must first be a good pupil and to be responsive only means that one is only half alive. But the Jelali personalities develop the front part of the brain and that portion of the mind that is associated with it, namely thought; while the Jemali personalities have the vivid imaginations and learn to express themselves through art. Yet the great machines and technical instruments mostly show in themselves something of harmony of pattern and beauty of design and in the architecture of the day one sees both elements.

GATHEKA: The artist is, therefore, whatever you may call him, whether evolved or not evolved, indeed the Hand of God; for what is not to be found in nature the artist puts. It is therefore that art has very often proved to be the stepping-stone to God's shrine.

TASAWWUF: And we find that most of the greatest artistic creations have been made under religious or spiritual impulse. This is true in India, Italy, Germany, Java, Siam, Japan, Mexico and in all parts of the world. The artist does his best work when he can draw vitality from the cosmos as if with his very breath. Then he feels something beyond his personality, to which he most naturally responds and he finds great joy in his work.

When we seek the reason for the impulse that causes the artist to work, that takes him away from animal activity for a while, that urges him to produce something—we cannot always explain it. There is something in him which is the very life; it may lead him on blindly as if it were an overmastering power, or it may bring him such inspiration that his whole heart's interest will be in his work. This the Sufi calls the Hand of God.

Beauty is natural to the soul and when the heart of man is free it tends toward esthetic expression. Perhaps if every man were freed from the ordinary burdens of life and did not have to struggle blindly to maintain his social standard, he would probably be a lover of art either through expression or response. Whether it would be beauty of line, symphony of sound, delicacy of form and pattern or rhythm in movement, something within him would find happiness through one or more of these channels.

GATHEKA: The Sufis have seen God in the realm of love, harmony and beauty. The tendency to art shows all three things; for beauty is produced of harmony.

TASAWWUF: Strictly speaking one who responds to these principles, who lives in and for these principles can become a Sufi. There is no intellectual cover over Sufism or over art, for these belong to heart. Man, purified from the denseness of earth longs to express joy and radiate joy. The heart lives for beauty and the artist expresses it through clear insight, which is the key to real inspiration; else he depends upon external things for what he calls his inspiration which in the end may drain him of all his power. For one who does not see beyond the world of matter is in a state of intoxication and ignorance and in these we find the cause for the decadence of art and culture.

GATHEKA: If the arrangement of lines is not harmonious, it cannot be beautiful; if the composition of colors is not harmonious, it cannot be beautiful. Therefore harmony creates beauty; and love of beauty results in art.

TASAWWUF: One can tell by looking at a picture whether the artist is just a showman or whether he has reached a high development. The creation itself reveals what is lacking and what is not lacking. The symbols which form the basic study for Sufic concentration are themselves related to the simplest geometric forms such as line and circle, as well as triangle, star and more complex derivative forms. Whether we see them in nature or in human production the meaning is just the same.

Straight line, vertical line, curved line all have their meaning and the artist always tells what he is by the nature of line, form and pattern. A lopsided picture reveals an artist with unbalanced mind. A picture shows whether the painter is near-sighted or far-sighted, physically and mentally; whether there is balance and order or lack of it and whether the artist is by nature expressive (Jelal) or responsive (Jemal).

The color sense is developed after the response to light. Thus chromatics is a different study from photostatics, but both the color sense and light-response come through the eye and are related. Today they are regarded as two separated senses, while the ancients regarded them as one, the sense of sight.

The mystics have long held that there are four basic colors: blue, red, green and yellow. The color theories of Dr. Ladd-Franklin, who is an eminent scientific investigator are based upon the same conclusion. All color and shade, however produced or blended, can be derived from this fundamental. And in whatever color an artist works, whatever dominates his paintings reveals the natural bent of his character.

Besides, the strong combinations show a strong character and weak combinations a weak character. Weak combinations often resemble weak discords; thus the combinations of pink and yellow or salmon, which are not close enough to blend well and yet are not entirely discordant. Discordant colors are generally repulsive, but sometimes the addition of another hue produces a

harmony where before there has been a dissonance. Harmonious blendings bring out harmony from discord, order from chaos.

Of course different people will react differently when looking at the same work of art, so one cannot always blame the artist. But there are natural norms and standards, based upon fundamental principles. When there is a departure therefrom there is a revolt. Today this revolt has taken on two forms: one among the artists who strive to throw off the shackles of tradition, almost at any cost, and the other on the part of the people who really want to appreciate art but who cannot always comprehend the idiosyncrasies of artists.

GATHEKA: Therefore art is the practice of that philosophy which Sufism teaches, the philosophy of love, harmony and beauty.

TASAWWUF: Really speaking this was the Greek philosophy also. The ancients taught the divinity of Beauty. In the Hellenic language, **kakos**, evil (from which we get the word cacophony), was contrasted with **kalos**, beautiful (from which we get the word calligraphy). The Greeks held that the ugly and inharmonious were really bad, and that the good and beautiful and true were ultimately identical. God to them was a Perfection of these things. So the basic teaching of the ancient Greeks was not different from that of the Sufis of later times. Indeed many scholars have said that Sufism is only a continuance of Neo-Platonism, the last spiritual form of the ancient Greek philosophy.

GATHEKA: Art may be classified in five aspects: painting, sculpture, architecture, music and dancing, in other words, acting.

TASAWWUF: The aesthetic genius in man takes on many avenues of expression. It may be in two dimensions only and from this comes etching, outline drawing and painting of all sorts. It may come out in three dimensional expression such as sculpture, architecture, landscaping and interior decoration. It may be through sound, whence music. It may be through motion, whence dancing and acting. Behind each and all is that faculty of genius which every man has collected when the soul is on the way toward manifestation but which may be buried deep within the personality after the soul has come to earth.

GATHEKA: Today there is from every side an increasing appreciation and love for the art of sculpture.

TASAWWUF: This appreciation may be seen in the increased numbers of visitors to museums and in the constant additions to the statuary in parks and public places as well as in homes. The sculpture is of two forms, that is when it stands out by itself whether in a single statue or group; and when it is connected with other arts such as architecture, masonry and interior decoration or landscape gardening.

Another reason for this interest has been the discovery of new materials which serve as media for

artists. In the past the sculptor might use clay, marble, alabaster, ivory or one of any number of kinds of stone. Of course it might be hard to say just where sculpture ended and where wood-carving, jewelry and metal work and related arts and crafts began. Besides in recent times molding and pattern work took on aspects very much like sculpture although dyes might be used and forms repeated.

The metal-worker and the sculptor have drawn closer together because now many metals and alloys such as pressed steel, copper, bronze and other metals and metallic combinations are used for statuary, and plastics small and large. The work in ceramics, glass, tile and brick and many new compositions derived from coal-tar petroleum, wood-waste and other sources are now offering endless media for artists who seek expression in three-dimensional spatial forms. Thus the old sculpture is passing away in a veritable revolution. And anyone who can visit the various world fairs from year to year can witness this.

GATHEKA: Also a great effort is being made by sculptors of today to produce that art which the soul of the world is seeking after. And yet it seems that the sculptors today are seeking continually for something that is missing, that the day when they will have found it they will be most satisfied. Today, a sculptor looks at Greek art with envy and with anticipation that one day he may produce that which was produced yesterday.

TASAWWUF: Today while there is much attention to technique and while the sculptor has more tools and more media for expression, he does not seem to be able to possess that skill and inspiration which is so evident in ancient masterpieces. This loss of inspiration he feels without knowing how to supply it. As he is beset with financial worries he sometimes thinks that personal security will bring him that inspiration, but even when he is not so troubled he confesses a loss. So he enters upon devious pathways and tries to explain through some philosophy of art that which he lacks in genius.

The artist of the day does not know how to relax, or meditate, or pray. Religion has been divorced from art and nothing as yet has taken its place. On the one hand the artist is too engaged in struggling against material obstacles, and on the other hand the new social philosophies, or what is much worse, the substitution of subservience to the State for religion, has interfered with esthetic development and expression so much that the real freedom of the artist is gone. Without that freedom his inner genius has no scope for pure expression, certainly no opportunity to create marvels.

GATHEKA: The drawback today is the method of development. Before trying to imitate the ancient art, what is first necessary is to open the inner eye, to look at life as it is. The statue is something dead. When you want to imitate it and want to make something like it, it is like imitating something that is dead.

TASAWWUF: Today because of the spell of materialism form is considered most important. Those who are unable to produce beautiful forms substitute therefore some fantastic philosophy to justify

their lack. There have even been lawsuits to determine whether art is what the artist makes or whether it is the expression of innate genius. New media, especially metals, have been offered as excuses for the distortions of the craftsmen of the day. These distortions are likely to be the creations of obsessed minds. The public supposes that artists are naturally queer and lets it go at that.

One cannot put life into form until he has that life. Yes, no doubt the materials used have some life in them. But if the atom has life what has given it that life? Surely the vegetable kingdom has more life than the mineral kingdom and man far more than all. According to the Hindu teachings when the life in man (purusha) is expressed through form (prakriti), and when it works in harmony with the laws of creation perfect art is possible.

Now how can the inner eye be opened? The inner eye can only be opened when man seeks that greater life which is within. This can be done through meditation, contemplation of nature and concentration. Through meditation man tranquilizes his objective mind, through contemplation of nature he feels the universal pulse of life and through concentration he develops and brings out the life and genius which is within himself.

GATHEKA: The first thing to think about in connection with this is to know what has produced it. It is inspiration that has produced it. It is the opening of the inner eye that has produced the art of yesterday. And they now find it hard to produce it.

TASAWWUF: In all ancient and most medieval art there was a close connection between religion and art. However popular religions differed they all inspired a love and devotion in the artist, who filled with the enthusiasm or love for a god, was able to draw to himself something of the spirit supposed to be in that god (or in God Himself) and that gave him a power for which there is no substitute.

Besides the artist often had a training which we would call esoteric. The Silpa Shastra is a semi-sacred book of India, originally devised for the Brahmans who built altars, but its canons were broadened to assist all artists and many craftsmen. In Greece and Egypt the training of the artists was associated with the mysteries and for a long time, especially in Egypt, the initiate-priests were their teachers. Among the Hebrew people the priests and Levites were either the artists or the instructors of artists and the building of the temple of Solomon was a mighty social and spiritual undertaking. There was a similar background also to the temple of Borobudur, this last being a Buddhist creation.

The Message of Sufism has come in these times to teach again this secret of inspiration, developing in man the inner life and opening the doors of the heart. Now, one can learn to sublimate his creative forces without following any special religion or philosophy other than that of love, harmony and beauty. Life is put into these words by its awakening in the heart of the student. This leads to the opening of the inner eye, the eye of life and love.

First man has to know more about his own nature and then he can depict the nature of forms, things and personalities. In all things that he essays he will put himself. He can draw into his being the very spirit of the cosmos and magnetize the tools that he uses and the creations that are the outgrowth of his genius.

GATHEKA: With all the development in sculpture, one finds that fineness is lacking, magnetism is lacking, attraction is lacking, and that lack comes from the method today of following art from a practical point of view.

TASAWWUF: In so doing man gives out energy with every effort and this loss of energy is followed by ennui and outbursts of temperament. The material incentive is often substituted for the innate urge, but no amount of money can bring out the living genius. It may cause one to work more rapidly and superficially; but that produces a change of rhythm which destroys the possibility of doing one's best work. Beauty does not come because of reward, beauty is the outgrowth of deep feeling, even of pain.

GATHEKA: The other day a Sufi philosopher was looking at the statue in the Art Museum in San Francisco; and before the door of the museum there was a statue which one could not help noticing, because it was put forward to welcome the admirers of the art in the museum. Someone told him, "It is Rodin's statue of 'The Thinker,'" and the philosopher stopped and he thought, "Is it a thinker?" Neither his expression, nor his muscular body, nor the way he is sitting, nor his pose has an expression of a thinker. But then this philosopher thought: A Sufi must agree with everyone. "Yes," he said, "he is thinking hard."

TASAWWUF: Sufism has come with the message of beauty and this very message brings encouragement to lovers of art so that they will be drawn to the spiritual life and at the same time that lovers of truth will be drawn toward beauty. True art is an expression of life, and whatever life is in the artist will appear in his compositions.

No doubt the statue of Rodin may be a masterpiece of technique and form but one wonders whether it should be called a thinker. How does a thinker sit? When one starts to think, does one change one's position? What is the expression of the face? What is the posture of the body? Is the body of the thinker different from that of another person? Or are the extra toes of Rodin's form symbolic?

The result of such efforts is that there is a gap between art and life and whatever beauty there may be in such a form, it is still apart from life. The spiritual artist must first of all be a student of life.

How can he depict that which is not a part of himself? It requires a great imagination for an author to write stories, the elements of which are not based upon his own life or the lives of people he has known or directly studied. And the development of imagination itself is something to which the world has not given much attention as yet.

In Sufism one learns how to develop the imagination, how to relate it to other thought-processes and to the heart and intuition on the one hand and to the sensual existence on the other hand. Observation, concentration and the meaning of form, line and color are all component parts of the training every disciple of **tasawwuf** receives whether he is to be called an artist or not.

GATHEKA: When a statue is made like that, that means it is a result of thinking hard, a person has really made an effort. But by effort art cannot be accomplished. Art does not require effort; art comes from inspiration.

TASAWWUF: In the West there is a saying: "Inspiration is nine parts perspiration." Yet it is not so. Anyone who has seen a Japanese artist at work will notice that he may draw a complete figure in half an hour which might take an Occidental hours or days. The Japanese works neither hurriedly nor hesitatingly, maintaining throughout a certain rhythm. It is like music. And until he has the feeling of that rhythm he does not even start to draw. Thereafter it all seems easy and automatic, it seems to come out of his very being and people admire it.

Those who call inspiration perspiration have never known the meaning of inspiration. In inspiration everything flows easily, it is like love. Then one may be more alive, even in a state of ecstasy. One does not have to pause to think, for thoughts flow like rivers or move like fountains, bringing joy and good-will. Even in the western world there have been innumerable examples of it, especially among the poets. One may read about it constantly in Wordsworth or Tennyson. Coleridge received his *Kublai Khan* in a dream, it came forth whole.

Through spiritual training one learns to open up these fountains within himself, so to speak. He learns how to breathe which is one of the secrets of how to live. He learns how to rest and meditate; the importance of repose and the importance of action are both delineated. And when man finds that life within, whatever his trade or occupation he can become an artist.

GATHEKA: The life of the artist must be easy, without an anxiety, without a worry, without a thought to produce something, but passive to make the statue as it comes naturally.

TASAWWUF: No doubt the present social order with its materialistic outlook and dominating commercial influence makes it harder for the artist to become a creative genius. And under a despotic government it may be still worse for then the artist cannot create that for which he has feeling, only that for which those in authority have feeling. No doubt some steady subsidy or stipend would take the worries away from many aspirants, but at the same time unless the artists form guilds with special regulations, it would be too easy for the lazy, the unworthy, the pretenders to benefit and the real geniuses might still suffer.

But the artist also needs to cultivate mental poise and repose and not be compelled to work at his craft without that inner urge. Other employment might keep him occupied or else a disciplinary training such as has been used in many Oriental countries would sift the chaff from the wheat. The idea of doing nothing for hours seems repulsive to a Westerner with his philosophy of action. Yet

one cannot compel a composer to create a symphony every day; it is not done. There are at the most only a handful of symphonic composers at any time and few would think of harassing them or hurrying them. Musicians who have turned out endless productions may be wealthy or noticed in their time, but they pass away like the clouds. There is no art or beauty in that.

Cultivation of repose, right feeling for one's materials, a sense of rapport for the medium one is using, the maintenance of rhythm while at work, and desistance from activity when the urge flags may help to bring out the best in everyone.

GATHEKA: Then the Creator Himself, who is the Lord of Beauty, takes the artist as His pen.

TASAWWUF: This is the secret of inspiration—and of revelation. When man becomes quiet, the life within begins to arouse itself. This life is the very life of the Cosmos—in other words, God. One might not think of it as God or find any religious implication in it. It is only that a surge rises in the heart and covers the whole personality from within, and with that surge comes intelligence so that one seems to know what to do and how to do it. One feels he is being directed and yet he is not being directed. His work is his very self in action. And thus is genius born from man.

GATHEKA: No doubt an agony can bring about a kind of purity in a person and make him more capable of inspiration.

TASAWWUF: The Sufi says: "Pleasure blocks but pain opens up the way for inspiration." Many a person with a life of ease has been unable to do anything great. And another one, through suffering produces a work that will make him famous, if not in his own time, then in a later age. Indeed it is noteworthy that most artists are famous after they have gone. Goethe's *Faust* is said to have been written with his life's blood. Beethoven's "Choral Symphony" is regarded as one of the greatest pieces of Occidental music; it was composed by a deaf genius. Milton's *Paradise Lost* was dictated by a blind man.

But it is not necessary to take this way of pain. No doubt Christ bore the cross and suffered at Gethsemane. Yet he did it that those who followed him would not have to do it. They could find the life within themselves and so escape the burdens of the cross.

GATHEKA: But if a person said, "Oh, I must make a beautiful work of art; I am dying to produce something"—when a person thinks like that, that is destroying; because he hardens himself by straining his will, he does not open himself to the inspiration.

TASAWWUF: For inspiration brings more life and it has nothing to do with death. Neither has it to do with self. To be inspired one must remove the thought of self. One must lose oneself in one's efforts. When an artist depends upon financial reward he is often compelled to rob himself of his innate strength. Then he has temperamental flares, emotional upsets. He overdraws his creative reserve, so to speak, and has to pay it back with interest. And when artists have followed the path of poverty, their minds may have starved even more than their bodies. They get impulse only from

pain and hardship.

The spiritual instructions in art are offered to those who feel the need for inspiration and who will work in accordance with the directions offered to him that their own inner selves may bloom forth in beauty.

Sculpture 2

GATHEKA: In ancient times very often they were inspired owing to their love of subtlety, of beauty. When we study Greek art we find the Greek people were fine and subtle in perception.

TASAWWUF: One can see this by looking at the pillars of their temples. These pillars look as if their sides were straight. The Greeks knew enough about perspective to know that a straight line does not look straight, and that parallel lines seem to meet at a distance. They therefore modified their forms to appeal to the eye and their mathematical knowledge was just enough to make this possible.

Then life was different and outlook was different. Art did not provide a career in the modern sense, although it often did that and more. Civic duty and civic pride nourished the fine arts. Beauty was more than a cult; it was part of life and religion.

GATHEKA: From their statues you can see that they did not put philosophy in rigid, plain words. They made a shrine for wisdom in the form of a legend, in the form of a story. In a beautiful frame they put the words of Truth. This shows to us the subtlety of their nature. It is out of that subtlety that a wonderful art came out.

TASAWWUF: The Greeks deified Wisdom as the Goddess Pallas Athene and they said that she was born whole from the head of her Father, Zeus. Zeus is said to have been the Lord of the Sky, which was the same as Jupiter in Latin and corresponds very much to the Brahma or Brishaspati conception of the Hindus. As the letter Z stands for life in Greek God was called Zeus, instead of Deus, His name in Latin. As one receives wisdom and inspiration as a whole, in a single instant with a change of the state of consciousness so the goddess was said to have been born as a mature woman.

The city of Athens was held sacred to her and there arts and culture flourished. Artists were her devotees, they kept before themselves a constant concentration upon her. This concentration worked almost like Fikr. Thus they felt the inspiration that came from the goddess; their religion and devotion inspired them. Their work was alive.

GATHEKA: The statues of the most ancient times are to be found in India, in China; and by

studying these statues one finds that they have not only made them in every detail, but also put a magnetism in them. Hundreds and thousands of times people have experienced it, that the statue is not only a wonderful statue, but besides there is a magnetism in it.

TASAWWUF: The putting of magnetism into a work of art or into anything is a most wonderful undertaking. It helps hold the atoms and vibrations together and puts life into them. When man has the secret of magnetism his fingers are as the fingers of God. And when he can communicate his breath to his medium or to his painting, he is expressing his very inner being. For all magnetism is an expression of the inner love and life, and whatever a man has he can so express, and when the expression is missing that shows that there is a lack in an artist.

That is why in ancient art the form is not always perfect, if by perfect we mean an imitation of nature, an exact reproduction. But there is a spirit there and the artists of the future can also learn to express that spirit, and when they do so they will again be imparting immortality to their creations.

GATHEKA: And that shows that the artist of that day was not only an artist; his art was magic at the same time, an influence that could last for thousands of years. And whenever you go near it, it has a certain effect. Merely by being in the presence of a certain statue, by looking at it, by sitting before it, you can feel the influence of it as intensely as you would feel the influence of a living being, or even more so.

TASAWWUF: That is why today people of Western countries feel drawn toward the Orient, they think there is certain magic and perhaps the greatest magic is found in the arts of the various countries. Besides it is not always possible to distinguish between art and magic. And in the spiritual creations there is a certain effluvium, a kind of subtle vibration flowing therefrom. Behind this effluvium is life itself and the blessing that is given out is real. Sufis call it **Baraka**.

When a piece of steel is magnetized it retains its power and it may be depended upon over and over again. That is its magic. The same is true of things that have the subtle magnetism. You can tell whether the gongs that have hung in the monasteries were the work of craftsmen who followed the spiritual life or not. There is a livingness in their tone qualities when they have this magnetism. The gong seems to speak as well as resound and to convey its secret to the hearts of devotees and sensitive persons.

People have often condemned idolatry without being able to explain why idolatry has persisted in certain countries and why even the Christians, after getting rid of the statues of the ancient divinities, have made use of icons and forms. There is a deep reason for it. Those forms have in them this same Baraka and they awaken life and hope in the devotee. It is not that they always give something direct, but by attunement they awaken in the heart of the devotee that which has been placed in them.

That is why sometimes peasants, simple people, praying before a statue by the roadside, arise

comforted. That is why in ancient times or even now devotees have been healed after paying obeisance to certain statues. They received a blessing from it. Yes, it may be true that a stick or stone or jewel radiates occult power, but unless man is receptive he cannot benefit by it. The one who has humility may receive blessings everywhere. That is why when idolatry is condemned; it often reappears in another form.

We can see this all over the world, whether we visit Japan or Tibet or Austria or Greece. In all these countries and in others there is a certain reverence paid to forms and people feel a certain spirituality in their atmosphere. Others call it superstition. Superstition or not, behind it is the principle that God Himself is always bestowing blessing and the only thing that prevents man from receiving it is his own attitude.

GATHEKA: It is not therefore a thing to be surprised at that the Hindus for ages have had in their temples the idols of Brahma, Shiva, Mahadeva, Rama and Krishna. With all their great philosophy and comprehension of life, this art has always helped them and inspired them, and has given them that influence which one seeks by going in a temple.

TASAWWUF: The devotee always receives a blessing as from the statue. A holy figure serves as a center of concentration so that his stillness before it awakens something within himself that is not otherwise awakened. A holy figure itself must be made by a sculptor who has felt holiness. A man cannot work and carve or chisel a sacred image without feeling something of beauty or divinity; and if he does not the work will not live. So it does not matter whether the various forms of Christ differ in separate parts of the world so long as there is the spirit in them. And it does not matter to whom the devotee bows if he receives solace and finds life more worth living.

Besides the atmosphere of most temples is magnetized, often by the devotees themselves. When they give they receive and when they receive they give. So a real temple has an accommodation for rarefied vibrations, and the delicacy of the atmosphere makes the place a sacred place.

GATHEKA: Yes, one might say that the statue has been put in a shrine for a very long time and has received worship, and that has magnetized it. Granted; but at the same time the statue must have something to attract first, to make the intelligent people inclined to bow before it. It is like the statue calling out, "Come here with all your intelligence, living man, and bow before me."

TASAWWUF: That is why the artists and craftsmen are called to listen to the Message and feel the spirit of the living God (Al-Hayy), that they too might imbibe the life and give it out with their work. When their breath is purified and made holy, they bestow blessings with every effort.

GATHEKA: There is much told about the sculptor of the most ancient times whose name was Azar. The peculiarity of his art was that those who were antagonistic to the idol-worship of that time no sooner saw the statue of Azar than they followed that religion. Art conquered humanity without words.

TASAWWUF: We can see the same thing today. People stand in silence and awe before statues of Buddha. Even those opposed to his teaching (mostly without having studied it) who call it paganism, cannot help admiring the poise and calm atmosphere of the Blessed One. Buddhism has spread into many parts of the world through its own art and people today are taking an interest in the art and gaining a feeling of good will for the religion therefrom. One cannot but stand in reverence before such a figure as that of the great Buddha, the Daibutsu at Kamakura in Japan.

No doubt tolerance will be spread through the world when there is increasing study of the arts. Hinduism has also suffered from attacks internal and external but its contributions to art have been accepted. Perhaps all religions have failed in the fields of ethics, philosophy, theology and orthodoxy; but all have contributed to art, architecture, sculpture and other branches of culture. May it not be that living sculpture may supersede written manuscripts? According to one tradition the greater part of the lessons in the Egyptian initiations came from concentration upon forms; the Tarot and other sciences were formulated later on.

GATHEKA: And now we come to symbolism. The art of the ancient times was nothing but symbolism. At the time when the art of printing was not in use and was not discovered, the only way how an idea could be left for the coming generation was through the medium of art. And by different symbols they expressed the inspiration and the wisdom that was to be left for humanity. Therefore, very often in the ancient works of art you will find a scripture.

TASAWWUF: It was quite probable that the Egyptians inherited their methods from still more ancient peoples. In recent times Colonel Churchward spent many years investigating available records in all parts of the world. He concluded that there was a universal inner teaching, the records of which have been preserved in symbols (one of his books is called *Signs and Symbols of Primordial Man*), and these symbols concealed metaphysical teachings. They could be understood by the help of intuition.

According to the Sufi teachings, and especially those stressed by the Naqshibandis, every line and form has its meaning. Every symbol conceals a wealth of wisdom. When the ego is controlled, heart-expression naturally takes on symbolic form. The higher inner experiences are often symbolic. That is why we find so much symbolism in the inner experiences of the prophets of the Bible, and the sages of all parts of the world.

Some of the earliest written languages, and perhaps all of them were derived from simple straight lines and circles and forms such as are still preserved in Astrology. After that came the development of ideographs and glyphs. This is revealed in the writings of ancient Egypt and Yucatan, and also in the primitive Chinese. The books of Moses were first written in symbolic form and much of the text has an interior meaning, if not several grades of meaning.

The symbols were also preserved by masons and craftsmen, in mathematics and in legends, and were worked into much of the cathedral building of the middle Ages in Europe. During the 19th Century a French savant, Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, made a special study of these subjects.

GATHEKA: There will come a day when people will not be only curious about the ancient sculpture, but they will begin to read the art of the ancient people as a scripture.

TASAWWUF: Colonel Churchward has already undertaken this. And the Message of Sufism has been offered to the people of the world in order that the hearts of all may awaken and through the faculty of intuition human understanding may increase. Symbology has been made a special study for all disciples and along with that they are given such training in the growth of insight that the sacred manuscript of nature may ultimately become an open book. Then they can understand the logion of Jesus Christ: "Raise the stone and thou shalt find me, cleave the wood and there am I."

GATHEKA: No doubt there is a great curiosity today being aroused to go everywhere and study—in the East, in Egypt, in India and China—the art of the ancient times. But so far there is an appreciation of the skill and the great fineness and the great beauty with which it is produced; but the day when the lovers of beauty will look at it from the spiritual point of view, they will find in the ancient art an expression of divine wisdom, and the art will become a source of divine revelation.

TASAWWUF: Today the people of East and West are drawing ever closer together though sometimes hostility rather than friendship has increased their mutual interest. Yet each is learning from the other. The holding of international expositions brings streams of admirers of the arts and people learn to respect thereby those of whom they have had suspicion. For the spirit that the artist puts into his work is living and the stone Buddhas and Sivas and Christs speak louder than the voice from the minaret or pulpit.

One thing more is needed and that is the cultivation of the same inner spirit that existed in ancient times, the cultivation of that same spirit today. And this will occur when people learn to meditate, to listen to their own hearts and to feel and find the life within.

GATHEKA: To some extent symbology can be learned; but symbology does not come only by learning, symbology comes by intuition, symbology is a language of intuition; it comes by itself; you begin to understand the meaning of different forms.

TASAWWUF: Some of the elements of symbology can be learned in a sort of scientific form like geometry. But these are only the outline symbols. To understand the living symbols that we meet in living personalities and in created forms something more is needed. For the straight line and the circle are only the simplest forms and when there is growth and life both line and curve are altered. Books have been published on this subject, and they are generally complex because the authors have not found that simplicity which is characteristic of the deepest wisdom. One might say that in the angelic world, simplicity and profundity go together. This is true of symbolism.

GATHEKA: When it is said the Twelve Apostles began to know different languages, it only means they knew each person's language.

TASAWWUF: This means that when the heart is open it can read all minds. There is a heart to

heart communication which is deeper than telepathy, and there is also a heart to mind contact which can occur when there is surrender and responsiveness. The higher teachings of Sufism include instructions upon these points, instructions which are useless until one has the capacity for them. The Twelve Apostles experienced ecstasy, an ecstasy produced by their great love for Christ. Sufis would say they had attained to fana-fi-Rassoul. When one touches the heart of Rassoul all things in name and form become clearer. Therefore what was in the mind of one of the apostles was open to the consciousness of another.

The allegory of the tower of Babel conceals the opposite condition. Those people became very selfish and wished to conquer heaven and earth through self-will. Thus they were deprived of the wisdom of the Spirit of Guidance and each was limited by his own understanding. So barriers appeared between heart and heart, and mind and mind. This is the condition of humankind in Nufsaniat.

GATHEKA: And in the same way, suppose there is a book of symbology, and the book explains the meaning of different symbols. But this is only the meaning of the man who has written the book. May be that all he says is wrong. But when symbolism comes by intuition, then the true meaning of the symbol is revealed.

TASAWWUF: It is significant that many such writers cannot see the symbols before their very eyes. They say a triangle has a certain meaning. We see the triangle used as a trademark; it may have its apex up or down or sideways. It may be colored black or red or brown or green. Was it only in the ancient architecture that it had any meaning? Is it not revealing today the same as yesterday? Does it not tell of the morrow? Many of these writers would not be able to say.

When the mystic looks at a trademark he finds the same universal meaning in it as in the symbol he has been studying. Heart is heart and triangle is triangle even though they be applied in strange ways. The Townsend Movement for a pension plan spread into many parts of the United States with a rapidity seldom equaled. The leaders adopted the inverted triangle as their symbol. A mystic saw this and predicted that the movement had fallen into evil hands and would come to grief. Although many denied it subsequent events proved that the mystic was right.

GATHEKA: Therefore, the knowledge of symbolism is not a kind of knowledge of learning. It is therefore that the intuitive faculty must first be opened and then the whole meaning of symbolism is understood.

TASAWWUF: This faculty is latent in all people. To develop it one must rely upon it and use it. Intuition is not based upon opinion. In *Cosmic Language* it has been explained. Through meditation, concentration, devotion and most of all by listening to first impressions one learns to develop it.

Scientists, philosophers, artists and all thinkers rely upon intuition, consciously or unconsciously. It is lesser minds who turn their backs upon it. Poets and mathematicians do not. Unless we accept

intuition we must ascribe many of the greatest scientific discoveries to “chance.” The scientists would not call it “chance,” they do not like the word “chance.” And if it were chance, then chance must be filled with wisdom.

GATHEKA: And it is often quite a different meaning from what the object seems to be. It is quite a different language, it is learning the language of life. Is it always the same meaning to all? Yes, but it is according to the stage of evolution; and according to the direction they are looking, their meaning differs.

TASAWWUF: In other words, awakened hearts, looking at the same symbol, would probably get the same message. Yet statues themselves speak for the sculptor or artist, having a certain idea, or certain feeling, in endeavoring to express it will actually change the form a little. There will be a spirit in the form, and as heart speaks to heart, heart will read it. But when the heart is not fully awake, according to the state of mind and the outlook will man base his interpretation. And then it is too subjective.

For that reason we find various interpretations of scriptures and dream books with different explanations. These interpretations may not conflict, they may all be deduced from the teachings and be in harmony with it but incomplete. The Sufi says that there is One Moral Law and he bases morality upon love. So he says there may not be just one narrow road of right action, there may be many kinds of right action according to circumstances. So there may be many right interpretations however incomplete they be. If life had only one meaning, one unfoldment, there would not be different species, different forms. There would not be different notes, scales and ragas. Harmony comes through the concord of differences, when differences, instead of dividing, adjust themselves one to another.

GATHEKA: But at the same time, when under the same sun we see all things more or less alike, in the same way in the light from within we all see the meaning of symbolism in the same way. Only the difference is the difference of individuals, in other words limitations. It is therefore that very often the wise spoke in symbols; even their jokes were symbols.

TASAWWUF: We find an extreme example of this in the records of Zen Buddhism. The Zen monks really follow a path of mastery. They preferred symbolic or intuitive communication to direct speech. They denounced intellectuality and the use of the ego-mind by refusing to use the ego-mind. Thus they built up a system of what they call Koans, intuitive puzzles. Their teachings have been largely based upon the symbolic use of words.

We may read in the Bible that parables and puzzles were used at certain times and there is much wit behind some of the sayings of Jesus Christ if one were to look for it. But the Sufis were especially adept in the symbolic use of words and many of their great poets and even some of their Murshids were great wits. They also included much symbolism in their writings. While the art of Islam is partly symbolical, the Sufi poetry is much more so. Much of the art of Buddhism is also replete with symbolism; many of their scriptures are intensely symbolic and have been reproduced

in architecture and sculpture as at Sanchi and Arjunta in India and Borobudur in Java.

Sculpture 3

GATHEKA: There are faces of the ancient times in art which are unlike human beings. That only means that the artist has adopted an exaggerated way of picturing humankind in order to relate the characteristics of different features.

TASAWWUF: Yes it has been noticed that some early pictures have a much more faithful representation of the human form than those of later days. The first paintings are often crude, either because the best have been lost, or the artists were not so skilled, or because they were more interested in symbolical reproduction than in "art." The skill reached a degree of perfection in Greece. Although there was a sense of realism there the cult of beauty was not dissociated from religion. Unfortunately the philosophy of Aristotle later came to dominate the civilization of the West, and the importance of inner feeling was lost.

Yet we may agree with the followers of Aristotle in the importance of observation. Without it spiritual concentration is impossible and man cannot be attuned to the forms and forces of nature by any blind, magical or miraculous talisman. One can receive impressions from all forms in the world, but in reproducing them one can add something from one's own spirit. The ancients did that, and every modification of a human form (especially in the case of the gods of Egypt) concealed a lesson or message.

GATHEKA: Besides that, when a man looks at a statue which is not very different from human beings, that is just like looking at one's own kind. There is no difference. And when there is no difference this is not a clear vision. Clear vision comes from a difference.

TASAWWUF: That is to say vision is a faculty which distinguishes because of differences of vibrations as revealed by light through light. An impression can only be made upon the surface of the mind if there are such differences. The statue is a three-dimensional figure and offers opportunities which are not in a painting. When one looks at a photograph one sees that it is a flat representation of something that is not flat. It does not directly depict "outer space" although it gives us ideas about it.

Now a three dimensional figure stands in outer space and if properly constructed may convey something about "inner space." A good artist will look many times at his theme or model before working upon it. A still greater one will also look into his own being. Not only will his hand speak, and his tools speak and the materials speak, his intelligence will also speak and that intelligence will be conveyed through the symbolic use of form. At least that is the way the wise have worked.

GATHEKA: Some artists of the ancient times have adopted this particular method, particularly those of China, not to make exactly as human beings, but to make a little different, and by making a little different to produce that clearness of vision that man may see through it and recognize that which he would not recognize otherwise.

TASAWWUF: There was an extreme development of this style in Egypt where the gods were often depicted in quasi-human form with the heads of animals or birds. This meant that some quality or faculty found in that animal or bird had its perfection in the god. When a person wished to develop that faculty he became a devotee of that god, that through concentration and sacrifice he might receive from that god the Sifat or attribute perfected in the god. The initiates, however, recognized One Supreme Being behind all these forms who was the Perfection of all attributes.

The Chinese had a different view, that life was mobile and that a person was not confined to one place. They had a perspective from above and much of their art was based upon a bird's-eye view rather than a man's-eye view. They regarded such a view as spiritual. Thus a man walking would be shown in two different places in a picture.

As the form of man changes with age, time, temperament, condition, any direct portrait would be to the Chinese inexact. It would be like calling a photograph **the soul**; it is merely a shadow-impression. It might convey an idea of man, depending upon the skill of the artist. So they used exaggeration although not in the way exaggeration is used today. Besides, for the sake of wisdom, they modified the human form to depict the gods and they used the dragon and other forms borrowed from the animal kingdom besides.

When we consider different principles of perspective, based upon different conceptions of **space** and different ways of making forms of people and objects, based upon different concepts of **time**, we can see that the artist of the future, without following cubism, futurism, neo-impressionism or any of the non-realistic schools, may find better means to offer a truer picture or representation in form which will convey something of inner personality, and so of life. Then again we shall have living statues which, without being imitations, will contain meanings expressed or concealed.

This may grow out of the acceptance of relativism which is now the basis of scientific philosophy, based upon the movement of light and an apparently objective view of time-space. It may also come from mysticism which also accepts time-space but regards it as being within man as well as outside of him. It may be the outgrowth of a coalescence of these two formerly diverse streams of thought, or it may also receive inspirations from an outlook beyond the present conception of man.

GATHEKA: In the same way they have made animals of different kinds. Sometimes we see in ancient art animals which are not like the animals we know. And if they were not the same animals which are known to us, that would not bring us to some idea; but making them different helps us to concentrate our mind on some idea; and that object speaks to us louder than an object which we have easily known and of which we easily say: This is a cat, or a tiger. When the mind sees the object keenly, it is ready then to receive the lesson which the object is meant to give. It is therefore

that the ancient statues appear to be strange.

TASAWWUF: In the study of telegraphy one learns the messages are conveyed by breaking the current, the unusual brings the impression. It was impression that the ancient artists wished to convey, something which would not only be remembered but which would have a deep effect upon the character of the people. And as spiritual qualities could not easily be conveyed through the use of ordinary words and forms, modifications of the forms of nature were used. (We see today how ineffective the use of ordinary words have been in trying to change the nature of man.)

Thus we find forms of the lion in the sculpture of countries where there are no lions. Some anthropologists have been misled into supposing that in ancient times those animals appeared in such countries. Yet there do not seem to have been lions or even tigers in Japan, where we find them used in a certain way in their plastic arts. Students of art have learned that either these animals were modified to be used as symbols directly or to convey some idea or some story.

In Babylon the forms of animals were exaggerated and there were combinations of animal forms in ways that are not found in nature. The wise men of those times believed that thereby they were preserving their wisdom for the wise of the future and concealing it from the ignorant. In the book of the Prophet Ezekiel we read about the **hayyoth**, or creatures—usually translated as “animals” which represent the personification of the elements earth, air, fire and water. In Babylon and other countries sometimes a single animal form—called also a **zoon** was used for this purpose. Today where the Sufi uses a word or sometimes a symbol the ancients used forms.

Many animals are used today in modern Astrology and while they are not always the same species as those used by the ancients the meaning is not fundamentally different. Thus for the sign known as Leo the lion is used but in some parts of the world where there have been no lions the tiger or panther has been adopted. Where some use the crab for the sign of Cancer, others have used the turtle. And what is now the sign of Scorpio was in ancient times the sign of the dragon, although the alligator and crocodile have also been used for it.

Now the dragon was not an actual animal and the sign of Sagittarius is a modified man while that of Capricornus is a modified goat. To understand the meanings of these zoa or hayyoth we have to know a little about the elements and whether the particular creature belongs to earth or water or fire or air, and if so, why. And there are at least two ways to find out: the one would be an intellectual study of records, many of which are missing; the other would come through concentration on the form receiving impressions through the intuitive faculty. It is that process which it is hoped will be engendered and encouraged. And if one so sits in silent concentration before ancient art objects he will obtain knowledge which is otherwise concealed. The vibrations of thought and feeling of the artist are still in the work of art.

Thus the artists of the future will depend or may depend more upon the inner sense than they do today. The present day creators feel a protest against the materialistic methods of the past but do not know how to express their protest. So they are led into by-paths. When we say a picture or

statue is living, this shows that there is something in it more than form. It seems to speak, it radiates life. And wherefrom this life? It came from the very soul of its creator.

GATHEKA: At the same time when we think of the development of ancient art, the little nails of the animal, the little lines here and there, it all shows to us that extremely great attention has been given to the work of art, and great skill has been used, and in every detail it has been considered and produced.

TASAWWUF: One aspect of the ancient art is that which was produced long ago. People were not harassed for time, they were more patient by nature. They did not have to complete something on a certain date for a client. They willingly sacrificed luxuries in order that their inner spirit might find expression in form, their spirit entered into the form. They did not work when they did not feel the urge and yet they knew how to meditate and enter into the silence.

Thus we find in ancient India a very high development in art-forms, many of which have never been excelled. The same is true of Egypt for other reasons and in China for still other reasons. In China not only did every line convey a meaning but the empty space also spoke, it was alive. That is why there is the appreciation today.

Some see puerility in the older forms but there are two kinds of puerility. One is due to ineffectiveness, childishness, immaturity; the other arises from lack of balance or mental abnormality. No doubt the earliest artistic creations of Christianity and Islam are childish. Christianity began as a revolt against Greco-Roman culture on the one hand and as a struggle of the mass of humanity including many slaves, against a debased aristocracy on the other hand. It had to produce its own artists and these artists had the inspiration of religion more than the skill of hand. The conditions under which Islam awoke were not entirely different.

Christ had said: "My kingdom is not of this world." So the first Christian art was largely symbolical; much of it no longer exists. The fish or the double fish (such as we see today in the sign of Pisces), rather than the cross, was the holy symbol. The artist tried to depict angels, saints and wise men, and whether he had inner experience or not it was not easy to select suitable forms for them.

Many of the artists of that period were so concerned with imagination that they did not pay strict attention to form. What they needed was imagination and consequently their material forms were often grotesque. Sometimes the grotesque does border upon the beautiful, as in the gargoyles of Notre Dame in Paris. As the Renaissance progressed there was a strong reaction in favor of Grecian realism and Aristotelianism and since then this largely dominated European art until late in the nineteenth century despite evident decadence and several romantic reactions against classicism. These revolts have led to new schools of execution and new philosophies in art, and behind much blind groping there is a movement toward broadness.

The ancients were at one with their art and their joy was in their work. So it is radiant. That is why we see more attention to detail in Greece and India. The forms of flowers and trees and little things

meant much and in working upon them the artist expressed his deep inner feeling. Though there was more realism in Greece still there also the spirit of religion was dominant. Everywhere there was joy in the service of the gods.

GATHEKA: Then, when we see the object in which the sculpture of the ancient times had been made it is still more wonderful. The material they have used—clay; and after the clay, it has been made into different objects. It is therefore that the statues made thousands of years since are to be found today unspoiled, many of them, and they look as fresh as ever.

TASAWWUF: the ancients did not regard the earth as dead. Either it was to them the creation of God or the covering of the goddess of earth. There was a sympathy between man and material and theme, all were alike holy. The spirit of God moulded the materials of God through the hands of man.

It was said that God moulded the clay to bring out the forms of which man is the most perfect. Man, made in God's image, also moulded the clay and breathed into it his life. He not only made an objective image, he also made a subjective image; he created in his mind a thought-form and gave life to it. After that thought-form was clear in his mind's eye he worked upon the physical materials, first clay, then stone, tile, ivory, the metals and other substances.

As the artist obtained power over his impressions he began to work on the inner and outer planes at the same time. When the image was clearly formed on the mental plane, and it expressed life and meaning, there was more life and meaning in its physical representation. This is one of the secrets of immortality in art. That which receives more life from the artist last longer, and its admirers feel the Baraka from it. The finest works include such images as the forms of Shiva as Natarana, the dancing cosmic god.

In these days the Japanese government has become interested in preserving the ancient art objects. There is much wisdom in the theories of earlier Japanese schools, and even when there are no longer any artists working in those styles, the plastics and images of earlier days breathe out such life and blessing that tourists come from all parts of the world to admire them. Even those without much religion or spirit of devotion admire them.

It is hoped that the Message of the day will reawaken something of this spirit in artists first and then in humankind in general. The artists of the future may render the highest service if they can also learn to meditate and concentrate and undergo disciplinary training. Then the love and harmony and beauty of their inner beings will be expressed in one or a thousand ways.

GATHEKA: There is no doubt that the art of sculpture stands out and attracts attention before any other kind of art can attract. And no sooner will the unrest of the world have become less and no sooner will this age of labor have come to a decline than there will be a rise of art.

TASAWWUF: Sculpture is an art in three dimensional form which does not require so much mental

development to be appreciated. For instance, little children are more attracted by statues or plastics than by paintings. One can enjoy sculpture that is lacking in color sense. It is solid, material and spatial and appeals more to common sense.

Sculpture has suffered from economic obstacles. Materials are costly and much time is needed to refashion them. The paint that the artist uses has little “will” of its own. But a piece of stone or marble or brick has its peculiar constitution; it may be very hard in one place, hollow in another and sometimes there are veins of different material in it. Crystalline substances have particular lines of stress which the sculptor must observe or else he will destroy his material. Non-crystalline and plastic substances can be more readily moulded and no doubt will offer many new opportunities for the sculptor of the future. But while his market is limited he must depend upon support from wealthy patrons or museums, or else, as in certain countries, devote himself to political propaganda instead of to beauty.

The creative impulse in man is always seeking release and when the social problem is properly solved, there will be more time and energy for free expression. Besides all materials are not costly. Wood-carving and clay-modeling offer endless opportunities for the amateur. Soap, plastics, wood-waste materials, and other substances are coming to the fore, and plaster, gypsum and similar materials are always usable.

From the spiritual point of view the canons of sculpture may be applied in other fields. In the past silversmiths, goldsmiths, workers in bronze, copper, iron and many metals, while depending more upon the furnace, used the same basic themes and patterns. Glass and tile today offer endless possibilities because in them color as well as form is important. Who knows that from neon signs and neon lighting in general new arts may not spring forth?

GATHEKA: People will appreciate it more, they will value it more, they will appreciate the artist; and that day art will come to a greater prominence.

TASAWWUF: One can see this today, that there is growing art appreciation in many parts of the world. In America it is now part of the general educational curriculum in many States. In Europe art has suffered more as it has come under political influence. Yet art is one of the greatest forces for peace in the world. The aesthetic response is more universal than other responses and the cinema itself has been paving the way for a world-view and world-attitude.

No doubt the interest in museums and in culture of different countries is needed first. When man has the stimulation and the opportunity he will express himself more. The little boy who enjoys whittling or wood-carving and the little girl who cuts out dolls should be given every encouragement, for with their perfection in expression will come their awakening of heart.

GATHEKA: No doubt, as the world evolves, there will come a time when art will reach its pristine glory and will become the means to express the divine wisdom. That day words will not be necessary; art itself will be the source of revelation.

TASAWWUF: This has certainly been true in the past. If we study the folk-lore of China and the texts of Taoism we find the seeds for this. Mahayana Buddhism largely depended upon art-forms and one finds statues of Quan-Yin in many parts of the world, because she gives blessing and repose which the sensitive person feels whatever be his beliefs.

Words alone seldom satisfied the heart. But a form that concealed a deeper meaning often sufficed. Besides, illiterate people gained more by the eye. We can see this in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. Whatever its opponents may say, there is a strong influence of the Mass upon certain classes of devotees and no argument can break down that influence. Besides, as more attention is paid to the heart, its needs and its growth, there will be a new outlook. All love beauty and surrender to beauty; what is needed is to make this become more of a factor in life.

The next step will come when people know how to repose, when there will be more meditation and when concentration will be used to learn from every form and object in the world. After that he may learn to carve the image in his inner being first, and then to make the form afterwards. In that way he can impregnate every form he makes with his very life, and every image will radiate blessing and arouse feeling upon those who look at it.

GATHEKA: Further, whether the artist knows it or does not know it, what he makes has an influence.

TASAWWUF: One of the best examples of this comes in the study of the European Renaissance. At that time we find a number of geniuses appearing in Italy, men who had the characteristics of the jinn stage of evolution. Their presence increased the social response to art and knowledge in general benefited. And out of that interest the scientific spirit arose. Unfortunately this later led to a materialism which has not dealt kindly with artists and art. Despite that even a single individual has been able to effect great social change. Basso in Japan, Verdi in Italy, Wagner in Germany, each in his own way has stood out as a universal artist who was almost a prophet so far as social changes were affected by his creations.

But every hand gives out psychic magnetism, and whether a brush or tool is used, that magnetism is communicated to the creation and speaks louder than the artist's signature. And once in a statue or picture or tapestry, it radiates its influence upon all who look upon it. Therefore Sufis consider the development and wise use of psychic power more important.

GATHEKA: The other day a mystic was visiting Berlin and he saw around the Kaiser's palace statuary; and when he looked at it he said, "It is no wonder that this empire has fallen. It could not have been otherwise." The statues were put as if they were put in order to ruin it.

TASAWWUF: Not only are symbols living and significant but the arrangement of objects in or out of pattern reveals often their relationship to a symbol and is pregnant with meaning to a mystic. Thus if objects are just strewn around a place in chaotic fashion that indicates that the person in charge has an upset mental condition. A triangular, star-shaped, circular or any other arrangement has its

meaning. Pleasing objects on one side or other of the room, unbalancing the details, having forms that signify war, peace, power, idealism, or anything else means that there is a certain mental atmosphere present, and in time that mental atmosphere works its way out to the material world. The harmony and inharmony of supposedly inanimate objects is not without effect in the world of form.

Japanese and Chinese have understood this much more than Western people. They would keep a single **objet d'art** in a room and admire it and get full benefit from it. This shows concentration and that concentration develops the feeling. One cannot concentrate before many figures and forms, nor can one feel so well what the artist may have put into them. There is much more appreciation when heart and eye can work together.

This suggests that in the future there will be less effort to clutter rooms. Interior decorating may depend upon simplicity and harmony. Flower arrangements offer endless possibilities. One should not overfeed the mind any more than the body. There may be intellectual indigestion as well as physical indigestion.

GATHEKA: The symbolism that, either consciously or unconsciously, the artist has put there is nothing but a source of ruination. Whoever lived in the palace would be ruined. It cannot be avoided. Even now or at another time let anyone live there, there will be a downfall; it cannot be helped.

TASAWWUF: The mystic would say that this accounts for the strange actions of the German leaders. Whatever they think, or think they think, they are in a psychic atmosphere which they do not control and which influences them more than they realize. Their strange, inhuman and degrading behavior is largely due to such influence. There is too much concentration upon war and destruction and neglect of constructive accomplishment. The Germany that has contributed so much to the world's culture seems to have passed from the scene for the time amid the general confusion.

GATHEKA: Can it be that a thing is beautiful and yet has a bad influence? It is very difficult to say what is beautiful. It is according to a person's own idea, what he considers beautiful. Sometimes what one person considers beautiful another person thinks is most ugly.

TASAWWUF: Beauty may be considered because of form, in which case everyone may have his own idea. But the Sufi would say that is beautiful which uplifts the heart. If one looks at something and feels an inner upliftment it can be said that he has looked upon beauty. Outside of the joy of appreciation there is no exact standard, or any standard upon which one can rate beauty.

What can be done by artists in the future is to put heart into their work. What the heart says or does will touch heart. Mind will not always be appreciative or responsive to it, but one heart can invigorate many minds. Even though a thousand minds reject what heart has done, as soon as a single heart is quickened, that discounts the lack of feeling in all those minds. So feeling will no

doubt play a greater and greater part in art, and in life, in the future.

This brings the question, how to increase heart-response. Not only is concentration needed by the artist but also by the observer. One who rambles through an art gallery or museum will not gain much. No one can get the full feeling by passing around a dozen or more statues in a short time, statues carved, perhaps, by different persons at different ages, working under different circumstances and with different outlooks.

GATHEKA: But at the same time, if something which appears most beautiful has an effect that is the reverse—suppose a fruit which from outside is beautiful, when you eat it it may be quite bitter—something that is not beautiful in its effect is not really beautiful.

TASAWWUF: Even the Greeks appreciated that. When Paris, the Trojan prince, was called upon to select the most beautiful of the goddesses, he decided upon Venus, the goddess of love who has the most beautiful form. But many preferred Pallas Athene, the goddess of Wisdom, whom we call Minerva (meaning “enlightened mind”). In later times wisdom and beauty were not considered apart and this is brought out by Plato in his dialogues.

If prettiness were beauty the pretty people would be the geniuses and the leaders. Even those who pay most obeisance to beauty and who indulge in estheticism do not always laud the handsome people. The character of Lucretia Borgia has become symbolical, how an apparently beautiful woman became the tool of wickedness. Of course some of the reports about her have been exaggerated but the symbolism is still true, that beauty, to be real, must be inward.

In the future the heart-awakening will no doubt create hidden standards of measurement, that by the joy that comes, so the beauty is revealed. But there will always be individual standards and there is no value in trying to make all judge alike or react alike.

Just as the various sacred books have been interpreted in diverse manners, so art creations may be looked upon differently. And better so. For in that way they can give renewed inspiration and what one does not see at one time, one can learn at a later time. Already we find the enjoyment of hearing the same music over and over again. Besides the intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment, there is that psychic enjoyment which comes from repetition. Each repetition of the music brings out some new inspiration to the hearer. Likewise a real, inspired work of art can again and again bring out some new inspiration in its admirer.

Sculpture 4

GATHEKA: In all art there are three stages, especially in sculpture. The first stage is conception; the next stage is composition; and the third stage is production.

TASAWWUF: When we think of Allah as the Great Artist or Architect, as the Perfection of Love, Harmony and Beauty and study all the traditions that have come down to us of the creation of the world, we find that almost without exception it is stated that He first had a meditation and concentration, and then from the inner state moved out toward activity through speech (or breath), and then the action followed. Man, made in God's image, has been taught also to go through these three stages.

Artists and craftsmen, and indeed all initiates, are urged to practice meditation and concentration before going to work, and after entering into the silence, obtain perhaps an inspiration in the meditation which becomes the conception. The next stage is the concentration upon the conception until the thought-form becomes clear. And the last stage, of course, is the execution. When the ideal is clear in the mind, the last part can become almost automatic.

GATHEKA: If the artist is not capable of conceiving an idea, he cannot go further. He may try hundreds of times, but he will not come to the desired result. The outer world may help to bring about the conception of an idea, but it must spring from within. It depends upon the stage of the artist's evolution. According to his evolution, he is able to catch, to sense the rising stream of inspiration that comes from within.

TASAWWUF: To help in the perfection of conception, therefore, meditation is taught and by it man learns to remove everything from the past from his mind. It then becomes easier to receive and hold on to impressions. These impressions are the first steps toward receiving those inspirations which alone make art worthwhile.

What is needed today is a technique whereby artists learn to sublimate their vital forces, so that they may draw magnetism therefrom to help them in their efforts. Rhythmic breathing is one of the best of helps. Intuitively artists feel they are lost souls today but they do not know which way to turn. As a result their mental forces are wasted and their creations lack beauty, becoming fantastic and inexplicable. As they are not religious, they are not so easily led to the mystical path. But for practical reasons they can see the advantages of meditation and going into the silence. Learning that alone will make their work easier and better.

GATHEKA: The sculptor's work is of very great importance. The reason is that it is an imitation of the art of the Creator, and not always in a miniature form.

TASAWWUF: The sculptor works in space and handles three-dimensional forms. In that he is following in the footsteps of his Creator although he may know it not. Like God, man the sculptor, makes direct use of form, he deals with forms and he has many materials which he may use to fashion his productions although for the most part they may be drawn from the mineral world.

Arts may be divided into the Jemali and Jelali arts although this division is partly arbitrary. The Jemali works for beauty, the Jelali for strength and utility. The Jemali may devote himself to delicate work in ivory, metals, even in flower arrangement.

Lace making may be regarded as a Jemali art and pattern making (in metals) a Jelali art, although again the difference may be relative. But the spiritual principles of sculpture apply to all creative activities which arise from the artistic imagination and so it includes wood-carving, bone, ivory and similar forms of carving, metal work of all kinds, even tree and hedge trimming.

GATHEKA: The sculptor's first idea is to make a life-size statue, or perhaps even larger than created beings, and if it is smaller than life-size, then his work is to put life into life, that it may take the place of a living creature. Therefore sculpture is imitating God.

TASAWWUF: The early sculptors did tend to make large figures, even larger than human forms. Thus the Sphinx, which is most ancient, is a very large figure, and in Babylon the sculptors used to make large forms. There was little attempt to think or work in terms of smallness. The idea was to make something that would be revered by the people. The gods and heroes must therefore occupy bodies larger than the human form to represent their more advanced condition. The icon, or small idol, came later.

These forms might be in human likenesses or they might be quite symbolic, representing in a certain way universal principles which were embodied in the form. The artist was trained in devotion; he learned to feel the presence of the god and to receive inspiration from the god. The resulting love made his work possible. Today we do not always feel the same love and reverence—although we often use the words “love” and “reverence.” So we lack the inspiration and therefore find it difficult to emulate the ancients. Many artists have therefore founded new schools to excuse themselves. They offer a new philosophy, but really speaking it is an excuse.

GATHEKA: Composition comes from another faculty. Conception is the work of intuition. But even if a person has intuition to form an idea, he needs the faculty of composition to express it. A gifted artist is that person who has a gift, a capacity to compose in his mind what he wants to bring out.

TASAWWUF: No doubt every person can become intuitive, and if the heart is made the center of consciousness and the abode of the spirit, imagination and concentration become easier. In right concentration one learns to attract to the mind those impressions which one needs and to remove all the undesirable impressions. Thus, before starting work the artist may hold a vision and keep his mind fixed upon that vision and draw the vibrations and atoms of the mind-world which fit in best with his inspiration. If he keeps his breath in rhythm this becomes easier.

Laziness does not make an artist. Those who take up painting as a way of easy living cannot produce anything beautiful. And today we see many so-called sculptors who make experiments with metals, plastics and stone; there is nothing inspirational about them, they are often repulsive.

The true artist approaches the prophet. We may read the book of Ezekiel of the Hebrew Bible, or the Saddharma-Pundarika Sutra, which is accepted by most schools of Mahayana Buddhism and be inspired to do something lofty. Much of the great sculpture of the Far East came to those who were gifted with deep insight.

GATHEKA: It must be remembered that there are many intuitive artists who, owing to their particular stage of evolution, can perceive an intuition, but that they cannot compose it if they are not gifted. That is another talent. No doubt a lover of nature, a keen observer, an admirer of line and curve, a real artist has in him as a gift of composition that which intuition brings to him as an idea.

TASAWWUF: In other words, there are receptive people who are intuitive or visionary, but they are not necessarily artists. They lack **élan vital**. Now how to bring that to them is the question, and in the spiritual life by learning the laws of breath and of concentration, of emptying and filling the mind as if it were a cup or a crescent, it becomes possible first to fashion the forms inwardly, and second, to reproduce on the objective plane that which one has seen within. There must be inspiration and feeling even for simple things.

Actually every line and curve has a meaning to the mystic and in the study circles of the Sufis the meanings of these are elucidated. Even in the movements of the prayers of the Sufis, these lines and curves are utilized and carried into action. Their perfection and fulfillment might manifest in the dance. But at the same time there can be a cross-section of life in sculpture, which is a cross section of nature and of life.

GATHEKA: And the third stage is the production. If a person is not qualified in producing by his hands, then he may have intuition and he may have the gift of composition, and yet he cannot produce it. That is another work, that is a skill; and that skill is learned by practice.

TASAWWUF: It is that skill which distinguished the various artists. All begin the same, but they differ even in their mental work. For the poet or author or playwright receives the inspiration in words. The musician gets it in sounds. The dancer may also receive the inspiration in sounds but uses her whole body and being to express her inspiration. A delicate hand may result in the artist being a painter, and a skillful hand which feels a sympathy for forms may result in a person molding clay or plaster or stone or any material.

Chiromancers, who claim to tell fortunes by reading the palms of hands, say that there is a distinct type which is known as the artistic type. Lazy people who dabble in the arts, do not always have that kind of hand. And if they have inspiration it is different, but mostly they lack inspiration. No doubt to become perfect there has to be a coordination of heart and head and hand. The esoteric practices are all designed to bring this about and this is especially true of the artists. They feel, then they think, then they act. But it is the light of God which gives them the inspiration and it is the form of God which they are molding, and yet they may mold any form for all forms are His forms.

The same kind of instruction may be offered to children and young people who have in them the mark of the genius. They are more able to receive the inspirations and if they are trained in meditation and concentration, even as a disciplinary exercise—for they are not always devotional—it will help them to succeed in their efforts, and as they grow older they may also become more devotional.

GATHEKA: Human nature is such that it considers everything so easy. If one has intuition, one thinks, "Yes, I can do it;" or if one thinks that one can compose it in one's mind, one says, "I can produce it." But again, for producing that requires another talent.

TASAWWUF: Intuitive people are badly needed and everyone needs intuition and has it, only mostly he is not aware of it. But it requires a certain kind of responsiveness to be intuitive, and one must be both responsive and expressive to compose. But to do something one must be expressive. There are people who are both intuitive and able to compose, yet they do nothing. Often they lose all energy in speech. This shows inability to breathe rightly, they need instruction in breathing. It will often be found that they cannot hold the breath, or if they hold it, they have no control over it. They may even be able to take long, deep breaths, but there is no control. And instead of directing the exhalation, they depend upon the exhalation. That makes controlled activity most difficult, for to control activity one must control the exhalation.

True artist is he who is receptive to the Spirit of Guidance which may pass from feeling to thought to action. Then he can become a master craftsman or artist, and wherever his interests lay, there his best work may be done.

GATHEKA: And now the question comes: which is the most difficult part? It cannot be said, because one artist has talent, but he is without intuition; another artist can compose in his mind, and yet is without the skill of producing; and there is another one who has intuition and who lacks composition and production.

TASAWWUF: These are really characteristics of all people, artists or otherwise. In the West there is a saying that inspiration is nine parts perspiration. This is a fallacy for anyone who has been inspired knows that the whole universe opens up before him, so to speak, and his efforts, be they in expression or response, come easily. In this machine age we find that dyes and stencils are used on a large scale; sometimes necessity impels or compels it and this takes away from man his innate ability to express himself in beauty. But the faculties are there.

All geniuses must have intuition, and all artists must have the ability to compose. A violin player or musician who merely plays the works of others is not regarded as an artist from the spiritual sense. He would be considered a craftsman, no doubt excellent, and he has a skill of production but not of composition. The practical man is often able to produce, but not to compose and he may even be lacking in intuition. The perfect man would be balanced in all three lines.

GATHEKA: In order to have these three things together one must not only be an artist, but one must become art itself. To the one who is absorbed in his work that he forgets his self, then there comes that capacity, that intuition, that skill, by itself. Then he begins to do wonders, his art becomes a perfect expression.

TASAWWUF: It is forgetting oneself in one's work that brings the perfection. All else leads to this. Education, encouragement and ability all help but until one forgets himself he cannot put his whole

life into his work. The spiritual disciplines help in this.

People today often admire the primitives. They find something in them that they are missing, with all the ability and knowledge of the age. Those artists may have been lacking in a certain skill, but they also lacked guile and complexity. There is a purity to their works, a purity which is not imitated or imitable by the complex mind of this age.

Sculpture 5

GATHEKA: When one comes to the peculiarity of art, one finds in the ancient art of Egypt an atmosphere. You may take a simple statue where there seems to be no skill when compared with the art of ancient Greece, and at the same time if you study it from a psychological point of view, you will find something living in it. It is not only an art, but there is a life put into it.

TASAWWUF: In Egypt art was largely esoteric. The artists were initiates and received very special training, totally different from that of the present day. That accounts also for their difference in performance. They were given very special concentrations, based upon universal principles. These principles were concealed in their alphabet and also in the original Hebrew alphabet used by Moses; also in the Phoenician alphabet. The same principles have been transmitted to us through the trumps of the Tarot cards. There were twenty-two such principles with their symbols and the artists were required to learn their meaning through silence and concentration before doing any creative work.

Therefore it was neither imitativeness nor skill that counted so much as intuition and inspiration. The individualistic expression had little meaning. All the great writers subscribed themselves as “Hermes” or wrote under the name of the living Pharaoh. There was real self-denial. And it is therefore no wonder that there is a sort of immortality in their work. When the self was omitted, the mortal gave way to immortality.

We may say that the Egyptian art was Jelalic, being massive, while Greek art was Jemalic, beautiful. The Ionian Greeks are said to have descended from people who worshipped the feminine principle in nature. The Greeks paid some attention to adornment, but in Egypt there was a symbolism to it, and they also used colors and in them was symbolic meaning. It is said that masonry comes from Egypt, and temple building rose out of massive sculpture—the cleavage between sculpture and architecture was not great.

GATHEKA: And that shows that the tendency, in the past, of the ancient artists was to give life to their thought.

TASAWWUF: We see this in many countries. In ancient Iran the priests and Magi had full control

over religion and education and the instruction of all craftsmen was in their hands. Altar building was closely connected with sculpture on the one hand and religion on the other. The Brahmins were first devoted both to the making of altars and the handling of the sacrifices thereupon. In the Books of Moses much attention was given to sacred art and the Masonic tradition has incorporated much that present day religion has excluded.

Now the question arises, can we repeat today what was done in the past? Is it possible to restore the inspiration, the zeal, the ability? Yes, and the Sufis have actually preserved much of the mysteries although in forms not readily recognized. For instance, the circular movements of Zikr and the dance that grows out of Zikr originated in the ancient mysteries.

GATHEKA: It may not show such a great skill, and at the same time it is a phenomenon. If a piece of rock which was cut thousands of years since can produce an atmosphere, it shows that the one who has made it has given life to it. And the more humanity will investigate the ancient history of Egypt, the more it will find that there was an art of putting life into objects.

TASAWWUF: Paul Brunton has discussed this in *A Search in Secret Egypt*. This is a very important work although it is clear to the uninitiated reader how this was possible. When a group of people have learned how to develop magnetism to the extent that they can send the psychic power through their hands, their eyes, their breath, even through their feet and personality, and when they unite in an undertaking, so that they act as an individual, they can send out a stream of psychic power as from a battery. An example of this is to be found in the Sufi Healing Service where a group acts as an individual which may be called an "Integrated Individual" (I-I or "Group Unit" where several people act as one).

Christ has said of this, "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name there am I in their midst." The basis of church (ecclesia) or sangha or minyon is nothing but that, that several people become as one. Their united power becomes a new power, endowed with life. The Egyptians knew this law of life and the life was put into their works of which the Sphinx and Pyramids are great examples. The Pyramids were triangles surmounted on squares, which show the combination of fire and earth which makes for forcefulness in action.

In *The Bestowing of Blessing* it is explained how an individual may magnetize himself and his surroundings, but every Sufi learns that in the course of his evolution. The adepts who live today in Egypt are largely Sufis, said to be under the direction of Khizr and Elijah, those two great "Hidden Masters" in charge of hierarchal activity.

The Egyptians also used this psychic power and life to protect their tombs. When that of Tut-ankh-Amen was opened and the psychic seal removed, the archaeologists and workers were exposed to forces of which they knew not and many of them succumbed. Psychic magnetism had been placed in the objects. Sculptors and craftsmen knew how to magnetize their creations, they developed the psychic power in their hands along with their skillfulness. They used words of power which added to this force and this gave still more life to their productions.

In the so-called Valley of the Kings some of the most interesting discoveries have been made. There the artists carved out the solid rocks, yet they found joy and happiness in their efforts. None of these things were done by slaves; slaves have never created any great works of art although they may have been called upon to carry heavy materials. If some of them were slaves, they were slaves of the Most High. And there were even common workers in those days who knew something of psychic forces, more than is known in these times.

Mr. Brunton has stated that if we would learn the secret of Egyptian art the veil of Isis must be lifted. This is only a veil over man's insight. As the heart faculties are uncovered and man comes to self-understanding he will appreciate more what the Egyptians accomplished.

GATHEKA: Coming to the art of India, the art of sculpture was used to make manuscripts with; so that every work of art in India is a scripture; you can read a certain philosophy in it. All the carving and engraving in the temples, the ideas of gods and goddesses, their several hands, each holding something, it all represents a certain sense. By the study of that sense one gets a realization from it.

TASAWWUF: The Hindus have codified the basis of their art in the Silpa Shastra. This began with the very simple work of constructing altars, but in later times temples and other complex edifices were built. The first artists made altars for the gods and perhaps made forms of the gods. Then they incorporated mythological and Vedic stories in their patterns. And each god or goddess carried those symbols which represented certain forces of nature over which he or she was said to have control, or was the perfection of.

The Hindus used to speak of the way of the Pitris and the way of the Devas. We might say the way of the Genius or Peri and the way of the Angels, or better, the path of those who became perfected in inspiration and the path of those who became perfected in composition. But those on either path were required to concentrate upon the deity in some form and in their inspirations they saw the forces connected with god and goddess symbolized. They put them in their temples and outside of their temples. Their stories were copied as miniature sculpture and people of those times learned from the forms when they could not read.

One can see today the remains of "The Four Faces of Shiva" at Angkor in Cambodia. Those people, the Cambodians, were highly advanced artists, but they did not use reading and writing much. Their religion was expressed in form, their scriptures were carved in the rocks and on the temples. In Borobudur in Java we have another example of a temple being formed out of sculptured pictures from sacred traditions. The people learned from these instead of from books.

The ultimate meaning of all symbols is the same. When we come to the heart plane it is the same. Thus to all who understand symbolism, wherever they find a circle, sword, serpent, tree, it has the same meaning. Even the anthropologists and mythologists have felt this to be true, although they could not discern their inner meanings. But it is not necessary for us to study Hindu art in detail, or to try to remember intellectually each symbol. When we develop feeling, we shall have the right

feeling and attitude. When we can concentrate and be receptive as well as expressive, we can receive the impression and blessing that the artists put into their work. This is a secret of true devotion.

The artist of the future, who will learn the esoteric sciences, will no doubt return in a certain fashion, to the paths of the ancients, combining inspiration, composition and expression. As religion in a certain form disappears and the people desert it, it may return in another manner, and the artist may to a large extent replace the preacher.

GATHEKA: Therefore the ancient temples in India were at the same time scriptures, not only a place where people worshipped, but the place where people were inspired, if they had a keen sight to observe what is behind it. The tourists who go there now and admire the art in India, look at it from the point of view of art, the ancient art of India; but they do not see what is behind it, with what idea it was made.

TASAWWUF: In order to do that one must learn to concentrate also, even to enter into the spirit of devotion before the forms. Sri Ramakrishna obtained the greatest inspirations even from forms of Kali which have been repulsive to Westerners. We need to look at things with the heart's eye, to be silent, to clear out all thoughts from our minds, to lose ourselves in admiration or wonder. Then the spirit of the art will speak to us, we can learn even what the Hindu devotees may not know. It is all there in the form, the emanation from the heart of the artist is in the form, and the more sacred it is the more life it holds.

Therefore the ancient temples of India were at the same time places for worship, meditation, study and development. And though these eyes may be deceived, one can uncover from the silence when one looks into the silence.

Several of the Christian missionaries have unfortunately read sex into these forms. Yes, there is sex in much of the symbology and life can be expressed under a sexual cover. But that is not all of it. Every relationship between man and woman may be expressed in form, and every divine relationship associated with love may have a physical correspondent, but that is only the key to it. We cannot understand it unless we have the point of view of the artist himself.

GATHEKA: All the attention was not given only to the artistic production, but the motive behind it was that a certain philosophy of life was expressed in the form of sculpture. In Bombay there are the Elephanta caves and near Hyderabad there is a place called Ghari Ajanta.

TASAWWUF: The work in these caves is among the wonders of the artistic world. There was a period in which Hindu culture reached a very high development, records of which are preserved that there then ruled the King Vikra Maharajah. Although there was a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism together, both accepted the spirit of arya Dharma and the inspiration under which the artists worked was basically the same. Their work was their life.

The expression in art forms was the perfection of everything; the training of the artist was a spiritual one and what he depicted in form came from the heart. Even nonbelievers admit the great beauty of the works in these caves. The compositions were by different artists, at different times, even with different theologies. But the underlying inspiration was one and the same, that when the ego is sublimated, God Himself speaks and acts through man.

GATHEKA: Besides, near Darjeeling, and in the surroundings of Nepal, and when one goes further into Tibet, one finds the philosophy kept for thousands of years in the form of sculpture, ready to be revealed to souls who were evolved and were ready to read what is written in that form of Scripture.

TASAWWUF: Not only in India, but wherever Mahayana Buddhism has gone there is either an influence which has sprung from India or there is the same kind of inspiration drawn from the heart of the cosmos. We can see it in the use of clouds, sea, lotus, arms, posture and color. The lotus posture itself represented a state of Samadhi and the art of Samadhi is different from realism even when the forms seem perfect. For the artist required much more than an intellectual knowledge of Samadhi. He had to have the experience first, and then only could he express it in his work.

Of course it was important also to have some intellectual knowledge, to understand Dharma, to be acquainted with legends and literature, and to have been diligent at one's devotions. This might be a preparatory stage. But the true artist had to create, not only copy. He might also have the same theme yet he would express it in his own way, as it was revealed to him. So in his work he revealed his inner being, his intuition was the rock-foundation of his work.

One need not be surprised, therefore, to find schools of Buddhism spring up claiming that there have been Buddhas in the very distant past. And in Tibet we find all the mystical symbols, both in form and color and one who has knowledge of symbolism and mysticism can read the art of Tibet as an open book.

GATHEKA: The art of China in the ancient times was considered in the East as the best in artistic skill.

TASAWWUF: And now the people in the West are beginning to feel the same toward Chinese art as they are becoming better acquainted with it. We can see even in some of the earliest miniature pieces which have been properly preserved or recovered by archaeologists that the craftsmen were skilled in their handling of metals, in the shaping of forms, and in endowing them with life. While Buddhism undoubtedly stimulated all the arts and universalized them, there was a tradition much older than Buddhism in China. The oldest teachings stressed the sublimation of the ego, and the impregnation of still form with life.

GATHEKA: What is most to be valued in the art of China is Chinese imagery; the artist of China producing the picture of patience, of greed, of wrath, the image of war, the image of peace. Such abstract ideas they produced in the form of an animal or of man.

TASAWWUF: While the Egyptians began with cosmic ideas which they personalized, the Chinese began with the simplest principles and raised them aloft. They not only expressed life through form, they endowed this living form with qualities and characteristics which are almost self-explanatory and self-revealing. They expressed their moral ideas in art and the ignorant masses who could not read or write were reached by impressing them with the forms, and the message these forms conveyed.

Although many streams of culture have entered into China through the course of centuries—largely from India, yet these same early principles have been preserved. Their miniatures are not just little figures; they all mean something and carry their atmosphere with them. In this way the beauty of goodness, the wisdom of obedience and the horror of evil were taught to all.

GATHEKA: In the first place it is a peculiar talent which is not to be found in every artist. Naturally, man is inclined to picture what he is accustomed to see; but someone who can image something quite different from what one is accustomed to see is quite a different talent. And when you see it from that point of view it is worth admiring.

TASAWWUF: The Chinese have done this in several manners. They have not only used the animals that were generally known to depict characteristics readily recognized (as slyness in the fox, ferocity in the wolf, majesty in the lion), but they have created animal forms with their imagination. The dragon and the unicorn became known all over the world; they originated in China each with its particular symbology.

This ability to draw upon the imagination is very valuable especially as the intuitive faculty is alert. It also brings freedom in the use of colors, alone or in combination. The Chinese developed the color sense which they have expressed in many arts, such as porcelain, tile and metal work.

GATHEKA: With that point of view they are able to make most interesting works of art. All that we are accustomed to see is easy to admire, because our eyes are accustomed to it; but any form that is different from what we are accustomed to see is something odd, something strange to us.

TASAWWUF: It requires artistic skill to make others appreciate a form of which they have not seen the original, or for which there is no original. In esotericism the disciples are impressed through repetition. Artists also would repeat their work over and over again, using the same theme many times and in that way the theme would take on a more significant meaning and the meaning would become better understood. After all, the heart has its special language which it must use in order to appeal to heart.

The Chinese have invented many things and their development in the arts long preceded that of Europe. They made use of the clay of the earth, of the ivory of animals, of the woods of the forest. They discovered and improved many paints and coloring matters and varnishes.

GATHEKA: The Chinese have given beauty to something which was never seen and something

that attracts the eye and the mind at the same time, and the thoughtful will stop to think what is behind it. It has been an attempt made in imagery by the artists in China to bring the abstract in objective form. And the world has admired, more or less, the ancient art in China, and yet not understood the meaning of it.

TASAWWUF: Students of Sufism have given some attention to the symbology in Chinese art. The Chinese used the fruits and flowers and simplest forms of nature to depict universal symbols and principles and thus they became a sort of esoteric scripture. Doctrines connected with health, longevity, immortality, devotion, filiality, happiness and good will are thus preserved in form, and often based upon or supplemented by story and legend which have been passed by word of mouth. In that way the Chinese have cherished their traditions and made it easier for others to understand them.

GATHEKA: Now Columbia University of New York has sent for an expert to come from China to explain the meaning of Chinese art. That seems to be the first step. But at the same time it is not the art expert who can explain the art of China. It was psychological explanation, the mystical touch; because it has come from a mind which is deep, the mind of the thoughtful, the mind of someone who has suffered for thousands of years and has been in the Quest of Truth.

TASAWWUF: This gives the idea that we may express truth in art. In that respect the artist supplements the prophet and sage. As a people the Chinese have suffered for thousands of years from storm and flood and pestilence and invasion and famine. This has created in them the deepest of feelings and made them appear as an old race, wiser in many respects than others. They have become self-reflexive and their minds can become mirrors of truth. The philosophy of Taoism as well as the religion of Buddha and the culture of Confucius all encourage this attitude.

Miss Katherine Ball of San Francisco has written a work on the art of the Far East, based mostly upon a psychological interpretation of it. No doubt there is much to be learned about the handling of materials, the technique and the education of artists which would be helpful to the West, but the supreme need is to learn to unfold the meaning. This requires intuitive development, heart insight. Those who see only the form never get to the foundation of Chinese art, while those who seek only the esoteric may also be misled, for there is real beauty in it, beauty which stands outside of meaning. The eternity and immortality are often found in the art itself, not in the explanation of it.

GATHEKA: But when we come to beauty, there is no other art that can be compared to that of Greece. The ancient Greek art stands foremost in its beauty, in its finesse.

TASAWWUF: It may be asked, how was it possible for the Greeks to do such fine work? And should we emulate them? No, it is not necessary to emulate them in the sense of copying them. Each person has his own spirit to express. We can all learn from the past, study the methods and the theories, even the technique. That may be preliminary, but in time each one is called upon to express that divine spirit which is in himself, which is himself.

During the Renaissance, especially in Italy was there emulation of ancient Greek art; only Christian motifs naturally supplemented those of the ancient Olympian religion. By that time, however, there was a division between sacred and secular art such as had not existed in Hellas. The Greeks were devoted to their gods and goddesses and that spirit of devotion inspired them in their work and enabled them to express love, harmony and beauty.

Today Sufism is also spoken of as the religion of love, harmony and beauty. A question may then arise how far does Sufism preserve the Hellenic heritage? So far as form is concerned, this is not necessary. Sufis have paid their due respects to Plato, to Aristotle, to the Neo-Platonic philosophers and mystics. The Christians received some of the artistic spirit of ancient Greece, the Moslems more of the philosophical tradition, but the esthetical influence which combines them both was felt by the Sufis.

If we study the works of Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus and others, we can learn how close the quest for beauty is to the quest for God. And those mystics taught almost the same metaphysics as was accepted by the Sufis at a later date. For Truth is one.

GATHEKA: But the peculiarity of ancient Greek art is the movement in it. It seems as if a movement is put into the statue: the statue is moving for thousands of years.

TASAWWUF: An excellent example that has been preserved is that of "The Discus Thrower," but one can see it in nearly all the statues. The physiological measurements may not be exact, for the representations were as of a person living, in motion. An exact statue would only show a cross section and would be static. There is a difference in the perspective of persons at rest and persons in motion if the light is to be brought out.

The influence of Greek art has spread both to the East and to the West. Some say that the conquests of Alexander the Great (or "Two-horned") led to an influx of artists into central Asia, where their influence was felt by the Buddhist sculptors. The Bactrian art is endowed with life and this influence spread over central Asia, China, ultimately coming to Japan. Even the masques used in the Greek drama, although grotesque to some, were endowed with life. For it was held that strict imitateness was not art, was not beauty. To bring out beauty something living had to be added; even the eye was not perfect, more than the eye was needed.

GATHEKA: The gracefulness, the fineness and at the same time the mysticism of ancient Greek art is simply wonderful. It reveals some meaning in every action that you can see in ancient Greek statuary. Besides, Greek imagery has been most wonderful.

TASAWWUF: To understand this we must know something about Greek mythology. Like with the Mohammedans of later times the divine Gods were sometimes endowed with many qualities, and especially Zeus, the universal Father, in later times, was received in places with almost a cosmic reverence. The stories of the gods are not always different in principle from those of India although some of them seem very vulgar. Every name of a god had a meaning and the attributes also were

significant. Most of the stories of the heroes were esoteric and mystical, especially those associated with

Hercules. There was hidden symbology and in those times, too, the people accepted the principles of the elements, which knowledge was later lost.

Unfortunately Aristotle later exerted an influence which, while on one hand it tended to purify religion of much dross and superstition, led on the other hand to the view now called “realistic” which relies more upon the senses, less upon deep feeling.

For instance, the ancient Greek goddess of Love and Beauty was Aphrodite, which means “from the foam” or perhaps “from the dew” or “from the waves.” The esoteric idea is that to understand true love, true beauty, one must rise above the world of sensual delight. The gods and goddesses as well as the Bodhisattvas of the East are always “above the waves.” At a later time Aphrodite was identified with Venus, the Roman goddess, whose original conception was much lower.

The Greeks had their gods and demi-gods who were like their parallels in India. They had their heroes—and this word really means “creatures of light.” Their centaurs were the same as the gandharvas of India. The half man, half horse indicates a being endowed with human qualities, having complete control over both body and mind. In recent years Mr. James Pryse has endeavored to uncover the Greek symbology, and a study of his works is very helpful.

Sculpture 6

GATHEKA: When we come to the art of sculpture today it seems as if the artist is trying; he is trying to reach something, to get to something, to touch something which he finds absent. The soul of the sculptor is today seeking for something which, it seems to him, is lost.

TASAWWUF: This is only natural. The scientific knowledge, especially of the bodies of humans and animals; the ability to copy in exactitude; the availability of many media; the possession of handy tools and facilities—these do not make the artist although they can lead to the appearance of excellent imitators.

GATHEKA: First of all, by the lack of appreciation the artist is discouraged, and next, the artist is put in the midst of the business world and that relief which must be given to the heart of the artist, that he may think of art and of nothing else, is not to be found today.

TASAWWUF: Thus we see that joy is lacking. Often the artist has to face poverty, and sometimes he does this deliberately. No doubt hardship does bring out the inspiration in some but hardship alone does not promote skillfulness. In some countries, it is true, encouragement is given to art but

often this means that the artists are required to work at certain motives. Then they rebel for their spirits do not find full scope for expression.

No doubt the plight of the artist is the same as the plight of every man only exaggerated. It is exaggerated because the artist is in a sense a jinn, there are qualities in him not to be found in the average person. His glandular structure is a little different, he does not always think in the same way. If he could be relieved from certain burdens, if he could find joy, he could do great things. For the spirit has never been taken away from humanity.

GATHEKA: There was not such a thought of competition in the ancient times; there was not a fixed price of art. Art was invaluable. The admirers of ancient art never considered a work of art as of a fixed price. They always thought, "We can never give enough for real art." In that way art progressed, it was admired.

TASAWWUF: In these days it is true of the cinema. The cinema is the art of today which flourishes, which is most greatly admired, and the artists receive ample remuneration. But this brings up a question, should music, painting, sculpture, architecture and other arts suffer? Can they be restored to a high place?

The question of subsidizing these people is delicate for how can one distinguish between geniuses and imitators or pretenders? When the State has employed sculptors, there has often been a protest that these sculptors and their assistants are unworthy, that their works are not beautiful and that they are given bonuses, even receiving more than they ever earned for their unlovely efforts.

While this may be an extreme view, though founded on fact, when we study the conditions of China, Hindustan, Iran in other days and see what great respect was paid to artists and craftsman, one may wonder how far we have really advanced in civilization. There are parts of India, backward as they are, which have given more encouragement to the artists than the most advanced and cultured nations of the West.

GATHEKA: Besides that, the direction of art today is not of the same nature as in ancient art. The direction of ancient art was towards spiritual realization.

TASAWWUF: This was true even in Greece. One recognizes it more readily in Hindu and Buddhist art. In those days to make a proper statue for a divine being, one had to have the blessing of that divine personality. This blessing did not come through a priest or intermediate (although they could confirm it, they could not give it). There were many kinds of meditations and concentrations, as well as forms of devotions. The artist cleared his mind of all conceptions and sat in silence until he felt the presence of the god. Then he received the inspiration of the god. In Greece there was a greater tendency toward ecstasy, in India and China the discipline was strict, but everywhere this inner rapport between heavenly being and earth-born was fundamental.

GATHEKA: Love, harmony and beauty the artist saw in its highest aspect. And when the artist

loses that direction, then he goes quite on the earth; instead of going upward he goes downwards.

TASAWWUF: That is the fundamental reason why people do not enjoy all the arts today. They do not receive anything from them, there is too much mystery, too much pseudo-intellectualism, not enough free spirit. The public either turns to the unworthy or else loses all interest in art.

Oswald Spengler, the great Bavarian philosopher, has written *The Decline of the West* and in it he explains the cyclic law which seems to dominate all civilizations. He found in art the measurement of the growth, maturity and decay of all cultures. When the creative movement had completed its upswing, one might be sure that slowly there would be a contrary movement until the cycle was finished. So he predicted the end of the materialistic civilization of the West.

In his time Plutarch foresaw the destruction of the Empire following the disappearance of the ancient Greek culture. The musicians of his time were all interested in technique and superficiality, the soul had gone from their art. And generally speaking this is true, that when the deep feeling is lost, the hour of decadence has arrived. When man is attracted to the complex, he loses his hold on life—unless he be very great indeed.

GATHEKA: There is no doubt that humanity is less religious now. Every step that we think that we are taking in a new direction, it seems that we are much further removed from what is called religion. Life shows us in every form that humanity is forgetting what is meant by religion. The educated and the intellectual people wish to avoid every conversation on that subject.

TASAWWUF: No doubt there is a great reason for it; we cannot justly condemn a mass of people and perhaps every individual has his own justification. Religion has fallen into the hands of the selfish and ignorant, or else it has become entangled with form and institution so that even the sincere leaders do not know how to realize what they are teaching. Then the Oxford movement appears and starts to swing in the other direction, making the realization of God the cornerstone of religion—which, according to the Sufi, is as it should be.

There was a time in India when no one could function in a religious ceremony who had not proven his worth. There was a time in Egypt when the priest had to pass many tests: physical, moral, intellectual and occult. When the leaders compromised for fame or wealth or political gain, the spirit was lost. And in these times it is more lost. Yet there is hope and as there is a seeking for truth in the silence, there will be a return to religion but not to orthodoxy.

GATHEKA: Many feel to say the word “God” is a great burden on them; they think it is too heavy. And when a conversation comes, they say “higher forces,” “higher powers,” or sometimes they say “gods,” with great difficulty; because they think, “To say ‘God’ is so simple; it is like everybody else; even the peasants think such a thing. We are much more evolved than to say ‘God’; we must say ‘gods.’”

TASAWWUF: It is not knowledge, it is ignorance which produces such behavior; if people really

knew, they could say “God” straightforwardly, without shame. Ignorance and the thought of self are the root-causes of all the trouble in the world. By adhering to them and by not wishing to rise above them, all mankind is caught and maintained in the whirlpool of Samsara. Thus the world continues to suffer as people prefer puzzles and perplexities to simple happiness.

East and West have reacted upon each other in such a way that many old customs are disappearing. But in place of the old superstitions come new superstitions and people are always delighted with the new superstitions. They consider themselves higher and better, although in what way they are higher and better it is not always so clear. And the same thing is liable to happen as before the fall of the Roman Empire; there was a mixture of old beliefs and a rise of new cults, but little added to human culture.

The Sufi likes to maintain the spirit of harmony. Yet harmony is not emptiness and harmony does not permit assenting to wickedness for the sake of peace. Instead of using the word “God” less, he pronounces it more. He knows there is an influence in the word itself. Whereas others may have used it without meaning, he employs it and puts meaning into it. The ancients may not have known about the Ultimate God, yet their spirit of devotion carried them forward. Today with our knowledge of science and general culture we can go much further than the ancients, when our hearts open.

GATHEKA: Besides this, the wrong conception of democracy has also brought this about, when great writers of modern times have written against the ideal of God which was pictured and beautified by the great prophets of Beni Israel and saints and sages of ancient times.

TASAWWUF: Democracy proclaims that the will of the people should establish legal and social rights and precedents. Nevertheless the idea of “will of the people” was first presented in the field of religion at the time of the Protestant Reformation. Then the principle of human freedom was presented in such a way as to favor individual interpretations of scriptures. Yet the very Reformers also persecuted those who did not agree with them.

This produced a conflict because once the freedom of expression was advocated, everybody had his own interpretation. From the standpoint of Mohammed this was correct, for every person has his particular relationship to God and thus his own religion. But there has to be some harmonization between persons, so the Prophet ordained prayer—not theology—but common prayer, to produce harmony. Thus he established a spiritual democracy, that all were alike before God. Mohammed did not offer scientific doctrines or philosophies which would divide people.

The actual views of the ancient Beni Israel have long been lost. People read translations, often quite poor in nature and made by the uninitiated who lacked the inner spirit of religion, who were not themselves prophets, who knew little of the prophetic spirit. It is an excellent thing to glorify the human spirit, but Truth is not what the people think or admire, they can be mistaken. Each generation supposes the former generation had certain shortcomings, which had to be corrected, and in this each generation may be right.

GATHEKA: That ideal was the stepping-stone. By the word the “wrath of God” they said that God was pictured in a cruel form. The intelligent of this day would have made it better, in a more beautiful form. Instead of giving it a more beautiful form they have destroyed the ideal and made mankind poorer.

TASAWWUF: In ancient times a certain discipline was used to keep the people prosperous, to guide them on the right path. Therefore a certain conception of God was presented. The prophets knew right well that God is not man’s conception of Him. The Psalmists proclaimed the Truth in a certain poetic fashion while the prophets used prose-language also. And it has to be admitted, looking at the history of the world, that man has suffered from human selfishness. We can talk and dispute about God and the “wrath of God;” we can plainly see that as humanity has departed from Dharma suffering has increased.

And today we even see in the rise of anti-Semitism a justification of all that is contrary to all spiritual teachings. The Hebrew prophets gave out the Divine Wisdom, and so did others. And the heart of man will remain unsatisfied until it receives its food.

GATHEKA: With the ideal lost, there was nothing to hold onto except the objects which the senses can perceive and touch. And it is not true that the world is less religious: once they had a religion, and today they have none.

TASAWWUF: Yes, there are forms and there are orthodoxies, but daily we perceive this departure from religion. The educated do not wish it and the ignorant often accept a vague emotionalism. This further repels the cultured people. Fortunately the scientists themselves are recognizing their own short-comings, realizing that through the senses the ultimate truth is not reached. Science does not deny God although many ignorant (themselves not scientists), deny Him in the name of that science.

A real religious leader would communicate life and blessing. What is needed today is more life and in the presentation of the Message to the artists, the development of psychic power and the cultivation of magnetism, physical, mental, moral and spiritual, which are part of the esoteric training of the Sufis, would enable the representative of art to restore the seeds of pure religion without recourse to word, theology or institution.

GATHEKA: By this it is not meant to say that after the renaissance modern art has not developed. Yes, at every step it has evolved. But still it seems there is something lacking, and what is needed to be added to the art of the present time is not there.

TASAWWUF: There is no doubt that art has developed since the time of the Renaissance. There is more skill in the use of line and color, man has more knowledge of perspective, of anatomy, of proportion. He has better materials to work with and more kinds of media for expression. He is in all ways better equipped. And besides art has in several respects become humanized. The poor as well as the rich have been glorified; the earth has been accepted as a place of grandeur as well as

of sorrow.

Besides art has been used to foster ideals and to awaken in man the sense of injustice. Of course this aspect of art has often been overdone and it does make an automaton out of the genius, and may crush as well as liberate his inner spirit. For the advance of art in general does not always bring solace to the artist in particular.

GATHEKA: Modern art needs so much to make it perfect, and no one can feel it so deeply as an artist feels it today. The scientist is most contented with what little he discovers, but the artist, the better the work of art he makes, the more he feels there is something still missing, his heart is longing all through life to produce something more than that.

TASAWWUF: And thus we find so much instability among artists. They are temperamental and subject to emotional storms. We find more insanity, suicide, divorces, social misbehavior among them. The very work of the scientist compels his concentration and a certain spirit of devotion; that inner spirit feeds him, he does not always need external encouragement. But the artist who is something of a genius is more sensitive, and his very intuitions stir up in him this spirit of dissatisfaction, but he knows not what it is.

In 1915 there was a certain respect paid to the artists then engaged at the World's Fair in San Francisco. Mysticism and symbolism were used, and everywhere there was the spirit of reconciliation between East and West. In murals, sculpture and engineering there was this same universal spirit, and a certain satisfaction. This shows that when there is an effort to reach and satisfy the inner spirit of the artist, it brings enjoyment to all.

GATHEKA: Consciously or unconsciously, every artist is craving to find out something which is missing. And if this goes on, no doubt the artists will find it. And that day when the mystery is found, art will become a language.

TASAWWUF: This craving will no doubt be satisfied when the artist finds the seat of life within himself and this, the Sufi says, will be possible, when the heart is awakened and living and one feels the surge of the inner life. All nature shows the presence of evolution, and as we trace this course of evolution we find an incessant urge of the life force for expression. The artist and the refined person have a more delicate feeling of this expression, they are sensitive to it but do not know how to use it.

Because this living expression has manifested in times past, it must still exist within man and there is always the possibility that it will again manifest. Therefore the Message has been offered to the artistic and cultured that they may combine their intellectual knowledge with the wisdom of mysticism and reawaken their inner forces without having to lay aside anything they have received from the world. The Message was first brought to the West through music; it could have been equally well presented through art for art is in many respects a universal language.

GATHEKA: Furthermore, look at the modern statues today in large cities and hear what they tell you. They all say, "Yes, we stand here and are looked at by some, criticized by some, and admired by some, and yet we could have been better."

TASAWWUF: These statues have not always been made according to the wishes of their creators. Some have been made to special order, the themes have been selected and even the materials selected. That turns the artist into a craftsman and the craftsman into a laborer and the spirit of the genius becomes perverted. He is compelled to satisfy others, yet he is not satisfied. It is not that he does not want to satisfy the world, only when his heart does not speak and express itself there is something lacking.

Perhaps every artist wishes to create something that may be admired by future generations who will say, "This is art." The future generations may equally want to say, "This is art," yet they may have a different feeling. If the artist were to imitate Botticelli or Raphael or Goya, he might feel the deep inspiration within himself. Then he would be happy. Perhaps when he is in love he is also happy. But there are constant changes going on in our life and culture. Ideas change, yet there is an underlying feeling and one who touches that feeling touches Eternity itself.

GATHEKA: The meditative quality must be developed in art, the exercise of concentration must be developed, the higher ideal must be developed; and to all these developments this material world becomes a hindrance.

TASAWWUF: Most of the people of the world act without even knowing how to act. They do not know how to rest and they do not understand rest as a form of action. They may assent logically that winding and rewinding are needed to make the machinery of life go properly but this does not mean that they themselves know how to rewind their machinery. The purpose of meditation and inspiration is to put man's inner being in order that he may coordinate impression, composition and activity.

Those artists who have had some spiritual training or who are even the least bit versed in Yoga discover the source of power within themselves and are enabled to draw upon that power and the inspiration which rises from the same source. There are exercises in esotericism which enable one to overcome lethargy, ennui, emotional or mental exhaustion and all those things that disturb the creative genius. We do not see the same outbursts in Japanese artists who have had some direct knowledge of meditation. They have learned to work steadily, unhesitatingly and diligently.

GATHEKA: It stands in the way of the artist's progress. For in reality it never is so that there is a real artist and at the same time not spiritually inclined. It never is so; only he is hindered by the world.

TASAWWUF: The very impulse to artistic endeavor proves that there is within man something living which would raise him above the denseness of the material world. Some have called it an escape mechanism; just what is an escape mechanism and from what is man escaping? No one

would condemn him who flees from a plague. And if there is a cure for disease, who is to be blamed for taking that medicine? It is not selfishness which impels a man to seek happiness; his very being seeks it for happiness is man's nature itself.

The same impulse which pulls us toward happiness also draws us to beauty and all respond to beauty willingly. All artists do not want to waste their energies in purely material efforts. The life which passes through their frame they wish to embody in their art. They feel, consciously or unconsciously that they are the vehicles of the cosmos. The prophet is different only that he is conscious of what is going on within him.

GATHEKA: It is possible that tomorrow the art of sculpture will evolve; it will evolve in its fineness, in its beauty, and the artist will develop imagery. It will also culminate in that great skill where the artist will really be able to produce a living statue.

TASAWWUF: No doubt he will feel the life of his materials also. He will feel the clay, the marble, the granite, the steel, the aluminum; he will understand the spirit of the metal, of the rock, of the earth, of the wood, of the fabrics, of the compositions made by man or derived from various sources. He will find expression in them and through them. He will develop magnetism and psychic power in his fingers and discover a wisdom in them of which he had not been aware.

There are several lines of activity which may bring about this event. One will come through self-education which includes a certain amount of discipline. Also as one learns how to meditate and concentrate, to feel his unity with his work and with his materials (for all is God) he will draw nearer to that state. He will gain by a study of the great works of the past, not only through observing them—in common with the generality—but through feeling them for which concentration and devotion are needed. He will have before himself the many examples from all nations of the world and this will free his spirit and enable the artist to adapt himself to many methods. The freedom with regard to method, the choice of so many media and self-understanding will bring a new age to the world of art.

GATHEKA: The motive behind the whole creation is to put life into everything; that is the object of the whole manifestation.

TASAWWUF: That may be the very purpose of Creation. It is said that God made the World and saw its beauty and then sought to make a form in which he could realize it. So He created in turn the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human kingdoms and only in the last did He come to appreciate His own handiwork.

With the knowledge of psychic power, with the feeling of oneness, with control over breath and heart-attunement everything that the artist does will help to put life into his acts.

GATHEKA: In other words every rock is longing for the day when it will burst out as a volcano, and that all the property that is there in it will come out. Sulphur, and diamond, and gold, and silver, and

everything that is in its heart must come out in one day; that is its purpose.

TASAWWUF: We do not usually consider the earth as living, but according to the mystic all that has form has life and wants to express its life. No form may be eternally stable, but there is a course of change whereby the primordial substance between the various chemical elements changes forming the rocks and stones which later disintegrated into earth. From the earth the vegetable kingdom appeared and then the higher kingdoms. Today scientists proclaim the second law of thermodynamics which states that heat passes from a warmer body to a colder one and that the reverse is untrue. The study of this law, together with the discovery of many new phenomena since radium was first discovered has led to a new age in science.

While the sculptor need be neither scientist nor metaphysician he gains when he considers his materials as living. He may, so to speak, seek the life (or the “god”) in the rock or wood, he may feel the life there, and attuning himself to it he will find that it also becomes attuned to him and becomes his servant.

GATHEKA: Every tree is longing for the day to bear fruit.

TASAWWUF: For there is life in the tree and life gives rise to life. The tree gives its life to its parts and the fruit obtains the germ of this life which in turn gives rise to other trees through the seed.

And if one takes up flower arrangement or landscape gardening he feels a difference in the materials he handles. And flower arrangement itself is a mighty art, the handling of living materials in three dimensions, in space, space that is not fixed as in the art of the sculptor but space itself that is moving, is alive.

GATHEKA: Love is expressing itself through every channel, and it comes to manifest outwardly that God may see Himself face to face.

TASAWWUF: The Sufis have said that the reason for the universe is that God wished to see Himself. He made a mirror which we call the world. When He looked into this mirror, so to speak, He fell in love with the image. Then arose the great ecstasy that the love permeated the universe and in order to know Himself out of His creation God made man who could realize the God in Himself and look back upon God as God.

GATHEKA: And so it is the work of art. People think that it is the artist who has made it; in reality, it is the God Who has finished it. As it is God's great pleasure to create this world and to look at it, so it is God's great pleasure also to create through the pen and brush, and to give life to the lifeless.

TASAWWUF: In *Gayan* one reads: “The creation is not only the Nature of God, but also His Art.” Sura XCVI, one of the oldest of the Suras of Qur'an states, “Who hath taught the use of the pen” (line 4). This means that God has given to man the faculty of recreating on the earth-plane within

his limited sphere as Allah creates in the Universe in His Illimitability (or Infinity). This creative spirit is thus a divine spirit, used or misused.

God has placed all things before man's feet and when he learns the law of the universe and comes to understand himself—and the mystic says that the very universe is **within man**—the artist becomes an emancipated being.

GATHEKA: If there is life, it is God. And what is God? God is love. And so it is the desire of that love to manifest in the form of beauty in the realm of art.

TASAWWUF: Many people may be only partly conscious of this. Women adorn themselves, impelled largely, it would seem, by selfish motives. Yet behind the selfishness there is the yearning for beauty and for adoration which is natural. Beauty is attracting, it attracts others and it attracts one's very self. The difference between man and woman in this has largely been that woman has been concerned rather with that which is herself and that man has been concerned with that which is regarded as other than self—thus, man excels in sculpture, woman in facial make-up.

Beauty culture is now becoming an art and there may be a time when even men will pay more attention to it. But man or woman, the artist's duty is to unify himself or herself with what is being done. This is just as true in cutting stones as in personal adornment. Therefore meditation is a valuable aid as it breaks down the barrier between self and not-self. Then we come to a realization of the inner life and light and find that it is nothing but love.

Then the demarcation between selfishness and unselfishness will disappear. There may be selfish persons moved unconsciously by divine motives; there are people who seek the beautiful without knowing why. People respond to art, music, poetry, dancing, many Arts old and new, and nothing can take away the delight to their inner being. And to the mystic this proves that deep within man there is the seed of life and whatever is in harmony with that seed of life brings him joy, brings him satisfaction. Therefore art again may become a door to spiritual realization, and if the artist has this realization while he is at work, then his images, his figures, his statuary will be endowed with life and blessing and radiate that life and blessing to all who admire them.

Painting 7

GATHEKA: The art of painting is as ancient as humanity. In all ages it has existed, not in the same form as it exists now.

TASAWWUF: Painting consists of two arts, that of sketching line and form, and that of coloring what one has sketched. For many centuries there has been painting which did not depend upon color and in recent years there have grown color arts which do not depend upon outline

drawings—thus the use of colored lamps in the theatre, etc.

Painting may depend upon imitation or “realism” or upon one’s imagination. There have been different ideas about it at different times as to the instruments to be used, the materials upon which the work was to be done, the dye-stuffs employed as pigments, the fit subjects for themes, and the purpose for which the work was to be done.

GATHEKA: There was a time when Tibetan and Chinese had their paintings, the most wonderful of their own time. In those paintings the principal motive was to bring the abstract thought in form; and therefore, very often, in Chinese paintings especially, there are forms of which we do not know what they are.

TASAWWUF: This genius in Chinese art goes back very far, and perhaps further back than the available historical records. There have been at least two periods in which the emperors, establishing new dynasties, strove to obliterate ancient records. But some of the oldest treasures have been preserved and even long before Buddhism was introduced art had reached a very high development.

GATHEKA: But they were meant to be the personification of power, of compassion, of joy, of sorrow, of something. They made an animal out of joy, out of sorrow.

TASAWWUF: Sufis say that God has two aspects, Zat and Sifat. By Zat is meant the ultimate Essence, which is beyond our power of conception, the ineffable. Sifat means the qualities which are associated with Deity of which realized souls find are part of His living nature, emanate from Him. Sufis have given names to cover the most evident attributes, and there are ninety-nine beautiful names of God in Qur’an, which have an inner significance. Nevertheless these Sifat are not apart from each other or from Zat. Zat and Sifat must be taken together.

This attitude was taken from the earliest times and the initiates used to cover the attributes of the One God under the names of many deities, each with special faculties or qualities. The Chinese religion was hardly ever polytheistic in the sense that one finds it in Egypt or Greece or India. The Sifat were recognized and clothed with living qualities. Instead of seeing their perfection in some god or goddess—which they also did at sundry times—they took a realistic view, that the qualities were on earth and made symbols of animals. But they also took a transcendental view and created animals out of their imagination to embody certain qualities.

The Chinese have always been a practical people, connected with earth and soil. They beheld divinity in the world about, and they felt this divinity came from one life. They expressed this in forms that could be readily understood by the illiterate.

GATHEKA: The imagery of the Chinese artists went even so far as to create a new creature in form to represent a certain idea. The Chinese dragon represents power, and at the same time the almighty conception.

TASAWWUF: The ancient Chinese religion was based upon the supposed dualism of Yin and Yang. Yin represented the female principle, which is also called Yoni in India, and the symbol of which has been the dove, Yonah or Jonah. It stood for night, darkness, negativity, softness, Jemal. Yang corresponds to the Lingam in India, also to activity, power, creative faculty, Jelal. Yang also corresponds to Purusha, Yin to Prakriti. The Chinese dragon represented thus Jelal, but it also had the same significance as the snake, symbol of wisdom, power and ego.

GATHEKA: And sometimes the Chinese dragon is a symbol of unity, because it has the tail of the fish, the wings of the bird, the teeth of the lion, and the face of the animal, at the same time the eyes of man. This shows that all different aspects of living beings are as one being; they make one being; and that one being is the oneness of the whole manifestation. It is a lesson of unity which is taught in the Chinese dragon.

TASAWWUF: This custom of using strange, imaginary creatures was not confined to China. One may read about the hayyoth or zoa, the strange creatures of the Bible, first mentioned in the book of Ezekiel, which combined the bull, the lion, the eagle and man. You can see parallels in the art-forms of Babylon and Egypt, but it reached the highest development in China where there evolved a lofty imagery.

The ancient Taoist religion, elements of which still persist, not only had the teachings of Yin and Yang, but also developed a high metaphysics about five elements, the origin of which was mysticism, but the key to which was lost when the priests turned to speculation and magic. Nevertheless they were aware of the universal and natural forces, and depicted them in living form.

All the animals in China are mentioned in the folk-lore to explain moral principles or metaphysical teachings. And when there is a symbolical form, such as the dragon, each part of it symbolized a certain characteristic. The phoenix was also used symbolically and all animals were endowed with human characteristics. This led in certain quarters to a belief in metempsychosis, that after death people entered animal bodies. This, however, was not taught by the sages, although sometimes they did give symbolic warnings.

GATHEKA: In India they used to put the mouth of the dragon at the end of their sacred instrument, the vina. The reason of that was that when a person played music and the people heard it they should not think that it was the artist who was playing, and that it was only a vina, but they should think that it was the music of the whole being, of the Divine Being, that music might not be a kind of past time, but a source of elevation.

TASAWWUF: When music was used in this manner it had the profound effect. The words of the Vedas were chanted, and so memorized, and at the same time the chanting produced something of that state of ecstasy or mystical realization when one came into the direct knowledge of the teaching by his own expansion of consciousness. Unfortunately the less developed found a certain delight in the music itself, and made the music the object of their worship. For in another sense the dragon stands for the etheric element, which is not a clear form, and the music of which can only

be given through the human body. The vina itself was patterned after the human body and its sound approached a little that of the etheric sound through the human personality.

Art and music were originally associated with the religion, and their principles were zealously guarded by the priests and initiates. (One may read about this in *La Musique* of Fabre D'Olivet). There was either a Muse or a god (or goddess) or **The God** who presided over the arts or over all knowledge. The people either could not conceive any separation between divinity and art or they did not want to make such a separation. It was also felt that if the arts could be kept holy, the religion would be preserved and the people properly pacified.

GATHEKA: And the most wonderful part of Chinese art has always been in its lines. The more you study Chinese art, the more you will admire the fineness of the line. The greatest artists in China with only five lines would give an impression of the sky. It is a wonderful art, a suggestive art.

TASAWWUF: The Chinese had in the most ancient times an occult science based upon lines. This is supposed to be preserved in "**I-Ching**" (or **King**) and other sacred tablets. They regarded the universe as composed of lines and their written characters attest to it. They not only made use of the lines, however, they also made use of the spaces and had a conception of numbers and of **zero**, long before the Western World had any clear idea of these things. Unfortunately the priests became ignorant and superstitious and devoted their knowledge to divination and fortune-telling so that much of the sacredness and even the keys of the ancient wisdom became lost.

The Chinese artists would paint by strokes, one line at a time. They worked almost like musicians, keeping in rhythm. And the direction of each line was significant and brought with it the psychic power which is associated with it and that power would go into the paintings. They also knew how to concentrate and keep in attunement with nature herself.

The painters of the future could learn much from the Chinese. They feel today that something is missing in art and are looking for that which will bring them inspiration and yet help them practically. If they only knew that every line, horizontal or vertical or slanting, has a meaning. A heavy line, a light line, an outline—each has its significance and is connected with a certain kind of psychic or mystical force.

GATHEKA: And what a great effect to make something beautiful, just in a few lines inspirationally, intelligently made, suggesting a certain form, as the artist has touched the detail.

TASAWWUF: These principles became embodied in the teachings of the **Chan** or Meditative school of Buddhism, called **Zen** in Japan. This school has preserved the hierarchal lines of patriarchs from Buddha himself, and also included mystical and esoteric techniques of Taoism and Confucianism, and perhaps also from Vedanta and other sources (which stands in its favor). Although the Zen school relies chiefly upon meditation, the object is always to bring that realization which breaks down the barriers between self and not-self and lays the universe at one's feet.

Practical use of this has been made in the arts and has given the Chinese arts especially a lofty and mighty background, together with harmony in form and detail. From this aspect of art and life have arisen many other arts such as tea-ceremony, flower arrangement, and the Japanese poetry called **Hokku**. All are based upon cosmic principles, first of the value of sound and silence, expression through form, non-expression through form and expression without form.

GATHEKA: The Tibetans have the same art, but not so developed as in China. The reason was that in China there was an empire, there was luxury, appreciation, there was a higher ideal; in Tibet there was only religious thought.

TASAWWUF: The Tibetans have been a religious people from the earliest times, no doubt because their very environment encourages it. The people have been under the guidance of endless arrays of monks and magicians. The Chinese have been much more practical, and engaged in agriculture, commerce, industry. They built a state originally based upon Malakut, which Confucius refers to as the land of the ancients. Their caste-system was not rigid and intellectuals and artists could always advance.

The Chinese made elaborate use of colors, based in part upon mysticism, in part upon practical invention and discovery and these the Tibetans adopted. In Tibet, however, there was little room for free display of genius unaccompanied by occult knowledge, psychic power and devotion. This meant that secular art was largely undeveloped.

GATHEKA: And in all periods and in all countries, if religious thought alone is the central theme, then it hampers the progress of art.

TASAWWUF: This is universally so and is largely admitted today. When the Christian religion first spread out there was a tendency to destroy all works of ancient art. The church itself encouraged it, and at the same time tried to direct all genius, especially artistic and engineering genius along lines of use to itself. Therefore church buildings and furnishings, vestments and ornaments were the objectives of the skilled and they had little room for free creative genius. The same took place in Islam also, and that period of history has always been called "The Dark Ages." It was not the wars that made the period dark, it was the blight upon education and human expression that made it so. Many arts and crafts became hopelessly lost.

Sufism has come today with the spirit of religion but without its institutionalism. To encourage the feeling of beauty the human heart, not the mind, is to be awakened. If the heart has the aesthetic response it needs no orthodoxy and it can be brought to see and feel the spirit of true religion and the true spirit of religion. It is part of the mission of the Message of the day to bring out the beautiful in all souls. The Renaissance did this in Europe to a small extent, the future will no doubt see a much greater awakening.

The European Renaissance was abetted because kings and nobles patronized the artists who were no longer dependent upon the church. This protected and promoted the secular movements

and made civic beautification possible. Islam passed through a corresponding period earlier because Islam was not so hampered by priestcraft. In Tibet, although their priests encourage the arts or are themselves artists, they leave few fields open for new talent.

GATHEKA: Nevertheless, the Tibetan art has always had the same depth as the Tibetans have in their character. Any Tibetan picture you may take, you will always find a magic hidden behind it.

TASAWWUF: This magic comes because the artist uses psychic power. He develops that power in himself, and it goes into his work. He makes use of Dharani, mantrams, and may be trained in Yantra Yoga which consists of making full use of lines, curves and figures to bring out cosmic power so it can reach humanity. In Tibet this magic is supposedly used to protect the masses against the demons that bring them storms, floods and bitter cold. The very forces of nature require their giving attention to these things.

GATHEKA: At the same time the use of color of the Tibetans is a magic in itself. It is not only the fancy of the artist; it is the attempt of the artist to express the mystery of the object by the color. You will always find in ancient paintings, however primitive, from Tibet, that the color, or the form is expressive of a certain mystery of life.

TASAWWUF: Students of mysticism will recognize at once that the stupas which are found all over Tibet represent the five elements. There is a cube at the base, standing for earth. There is a cone reversed, pointing down and above it, symbolizing the water element. There is a fire pyramid (mostly) above that, for the fire element. On top of that is a small crescent representing air, holding a little sphere or ball which signifies ether. And it is quite likely that the Tibetans had this knowledge long before the introduction of Buddhism in the form it now exists. Indeed they have traditions of Buddhas or Messengers who lived on earth many centuries prior to the historical Gautama Siddhartha.

The same knowledge of mysticism displayed in architecture and sculpture also appears in the paintings. They make great banners and also statues out of butter and they color them. And these colors represent the elements and also thought-forms. They have knowledge of the colors of the thought-forms—which some clairvoyants also claim to see. Every form that is held in the mind, every imaginative image, every impression not only draws light, it may also draw color. While the mystics may not try to build the colors around the thoughts, the occultists of Tibet have found that every basic emotion and basic thought, if held in concentrations, draws certain colors to it.

Thus if we say that rage is red, it may be a certain kind of red, not necessarily bright, but a repulsive earthy or brownish red. If envy is greenish, it is not a pleasant, it is a tarnished green. Some have gone so far as to say that spirituality may be expressed by green; if so it is a very different green. Some have said that blue is the color of enlightenment; this would probably be a sky blue. The blue of a crooked nature would be different; it might be a slate blue. So all the characteristics which have been derived from the colors of the elements are expressed in Tibetan drawings.

Just as we find that music is written in certain keys with corresponding leading notes, so the Tibetan paintings are based upon certain colors. And if the basis of the theme is a repulsive red, they add other colors to make that red still more repulsive, they produce harsh combinations and clashes of tone-colors. And if they want to bring out a beautiful green they add harmonious colors and make a picturesque, harmonious combination representing bright thought-forms. The thought-form and the objective picture are thus always related.

GATHEKA: Ancient Egyptian art is dead to us. It is developed in its own way, and according to its character it had reached a great height.

TASAWWUF: Ancient Egyptian art has various characteristics and they are discussed in the various sections under the different sub-topics of this work. Although the people lived upon the earth, were close to the earth, they were also interested in eternal life, they felt that the real home of man was beyond the manifestation. One finds the Egyptians expressive where the Hindus have been more responsive. This expressive attitude is seen in their large pillars, temples, pyramids. The Egyptians would be called Jelalis by Sufis.

The basis of art was as in many other lands the Scriptures, one of the chief of them being known to us as *The Book of the Dead*. The hieroglyphics supplied the patterns and the colors were based upon their knowledge of mysticism. They also were advanced in astrology and symbolism and made use of symbol and flower forms—one might say to perfection.

GATHEKA: No doubt as the people of that time were more psychical, more mystical, they did not give the attention to detail and to things pertaining to the earth, which we give at this time.

TASAWWUF: The Egyptians made use of the psychic power and it is as the basis of their architecture and masonry, as well as in all arts. Archaeologists have experienced these psychic forces, as when the tomb of King Tut-ankh-amen was opened. Mr. Paul Brunton had a more direct experience with them when he was enclosed in the Great Pyramid although it is doubtful whether his experience is unique. One can feel those psychic forces and some adepts still live in the land.

The use of colors was based upon mysticism and they had some knowledge of chemistry and alchemy—both of these words are derived from **Khem**, the ancient name for part of Egypt. One does not find the clash of color there so much. They based everything on the four elements, colors in painting, basic notes in music and musical instruments, forms in geometry and architecture, patterns in dress, etc.

The pillar always represents an effort to get above earth. The spiral pillar in Babylon represented all the planes but the two vertical pillars, side by side, at the entrance to temples, represent Jemal and Jelal, the breath in the left and right nostrils, which is elevating. The mass of people were in a sense close to earth or nature in their daily toil, but the religion was elevating, and the people were not blind to material needs. At their feasts and pleasures they would introduce a mummy to remind them of the transiency of earthly joy.

GATHEKA: Nevertheless, the coloring of the ancient Egyptian objects is simply exquisite. Color to the ancient people meant a great deal. They chose color to become as a medium of expression of the nature and character of the picture, which is not to be seen today.

TASAWWUF: For today we employ colors without regard to the theme or subject matter, as if colors had no meaning and were to be used to imitate nature or to express our imaginations in any way we might fancy. The Egyptians displayed their colors in many ways, in their paintings, surface decorations, tiles, glass, beads, dye-stuffs and tapestries. And almost always they used the four basic colors: red, yellow, blue and green; purple had a different significance and came later.

One can tell something of the value of colors by the feelings one has in response to them. If a little child is left in a room with colored objects he will be attracted by some of the objects and pay little attention to, or be repelled by others. This shows the psychic reaction, and one can read character by the reactions to colors.

Color was used in ancient times much as sound is today. If a person were given a form to concentrate upon and were to take a group of triangles, alike in shape and form but different in color, let us say blue, green, red, slate-blue, purple, yellow, do you suppose the emotional reaction will be the same? Or that there will be the same ease in the concentration? One who has tried it will discover that there would be differences. Today we are rediscovering a science of color and we are learning about the various effects of color. This knowledge was not new to the Egyptians.

People who have the psychic faculty and sensitive persons are apt to respond more readily than other people, insensitive and materialistic. The modern education, based upon reading, writing and use of the senses changes man's nature and character and often robs him of instincts and natural faculties. This has brought growth in some directions and also brought artificiality. Then we look upon people who lead natural lives as debased or less civilized.

GATHEKA: No doubt their art cannot be compared with the ideas we have of art today. If we compare it, then it naturally will appear to be primitive. In other words, in order to appreciate the art of the ancient people we must take their point of view.

TASAWWUF: We can gain that point of view by a knowledge of mysticism and symbolism and by a practice of concentration. This will change our attitude in life and make us appreciate others more who lived in past ages or who are found in different parts of the world, with quite different traditions. And even today there is a strong feeling that we have lost something which manifested in Europe in the pre-Renaissance days. A certain strength, a certain spirit, is absent.

Man has come to love complexities. He enjoys a symphony that employs many instruments playing together, making different combinations of sound, harmonious or inharmonious. A good picture is one with many details. A good story should have secondary and minor plots. Sometimes it is just a series of small plots with no great major thread held together by the writer's art. We live in cities, we use massive machinery. Everything shows complexity and this is called civilization. Yet there is

little moral growth to balance it.

We do not necessarily have to decry modern art to appreciate that of the past. It is not even necessary to compare or contrast. What we need is greater understanding, and to learn the significance of form, color, line, outline, combinations and patterns.

GATHEKA: The Indians did not develop the art of painting in the same way as the Chinese or the ancient Egyptians. They were drawn to the other side of art more, to music and poetry.

TASAWWUF: We may divide arts into two classes, those of which depended more upon the eye and light, and those which have been related to the ear and hearing. The former includes sculpture, painting, fine arts, ceramics, textiles; the latter is composed of music, vocal and instrumental, dancing, poetry and drama. No doubt there are many degrees in both and all depend upon a deeper feeling than can be expressed directly in words although the drama and poetry and literature generally depend upon words.

The Hindus derived their music and poetry from their Vedas and other great, holy scriptures. The early arts were associated with religion such as altar and temple building. The written letters were also involved in some art although calligraphy was never so advanced with them as with the Arabs. The Hindus were great philosophers and thinkers, so much so that philology and grammar were included among their arts. Their literature is very old, and all of it has not been uncovered. Their first painting was often used to include symbols and myths of sacred teachings and traditions and was not even separated from poetry and music. The ragas, or modes which formed the basis of music, were preserved in picture form.

GATHEKA: Nevertheless there are to be found ancient Indian paintings where the colors are expressive of the five elements, and everything those pictures express; any idea and color, has something to do with the five elements, and those five elements are the colors used for expressive pictures. Yellow represents the earth element; green represents the water element; red represents the fire element; blue represents the air element; and grey represents the ether element.

TASAWWUF: Whereas the Tibetans have symbolized the elements in form, the people of India have expressed them in color. The knowledge of the five elements was at one time universal and the caste system and society in general was based upon such knowledge. Thus the earth people were peasants and agriculturists, who supplied the food-stuffs and lived in a world in which the color yellow predominated. Warriors were inclined to red, merchants to green, scholars to blue—that is, in general, although there were noted exceptions.

The word for caste in India is **varna**, meaning color. The color was associated with occupation and line of life. It was felt that people could best express themselves if they kept to their color. Mixtures of colors were often regarded as impurities and caste confusion was regarded as dangerous to the state. The mystical side of the elements was discussed in the writings known as Upanishads and the social side in the law—books known as shastras.

Today we believe that to have beauty there must be more than one color and that mixtures are not necessarily harmful; they may be strong or harmonious. Yet we are beginning to learn that sitting in atmospheres of different colors there are different psychological and sundry effects. Both the mystics and scientists are growing to realize that the common truth will bring them closer together in this and other respects. Dr. Ladd-Franklin, the celebrated scientist, has proclaimed that there are four primary colors: red, green, blue and yellow, agreeing with the mystics.

The Hindus made a detailed study of the science of breath and observed its movements in man and in nature. Thus they conceived their cosmogony and elaborated their systems of Yoga science. Their different gods and goddesses represented divine or cosmic forces. To say that Indra was green or Agni red has an esoteric significance. With that point of view the study of the Vedas takes on a different aspect.

GATHEKA: Art in Persia was more developed in its fineness, in its beauty, than in India; and when the Persian art was brought to India it became richer in colors.

TASAWWUF: One may say that the Persians paid more attention to form and had a variety of themes which they used. They used more embellishments and their technique was marvelous. One can see this in their engravings and ornamentation of books. The Shah-Nameh of Firdausi, the great epic of Persia, has been amply illustrated and its stories and portions supply endless themes which have been adapted to all the fine arts (e.g. rugs and tapestry). The Persian people are fine by nature, polished and cultured and have always been masters of etiquette.

One can see a great change in the arts of India as the Persian influence was added. There was more external beauty and less mysticism in the art thereafter. The Hindus supplied their colors, the Persians their finesse and mixed schools of art arose, often lumped as Moghul art.

GATHEKA: The pictures of the Moghul emperors, sometimes made on ivory, and of the families of the emperors, are today to be seen also in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, that show to what extent they were particular about producing every little detail. Even in the smallest picture you will see that every detail is produced.

TASAWWUF: This shows a certain attitude of mind, which is very different, for instance, from that found in China. The Chinese suggested, the Persians elaborated. The Persians made the greatest use of form and embellishment and one can see the corresponding effects upon other arts such as architecture and landscape gardening. Yet the Persians were lacking in perspective and this perhaps might apply to their life in general as well as to their arts.

There was a question debated in Islam for a long time about reproducing the human form. The Orthodox Sunnis did not even countenance using the forms of animals. The Persian Shiah generally employed plant and tree themes, but after the Shah Nameh was famous, they drew upon it for endless pattern-ideas. When the Mongols conquered their country, not being Moslems, they encouraged the reproduction of the human form and the later histories were often marked by

illustrations. We even have paintings of Hafiz and Saadi and other men of renown. The Mongols and their successors and descendents, the Moghuls, helped to blend the arts of various countries and to carry influences from one to another.

GATHEKA: Today an artist would never think it necessary to give so much time and work to the smallest thing, to the eyelids, to the eyebrows, to the ears.

TASAWWUF: This may not always be the fault of the artist. For one thing, the patrons may not always regard such details. Often they have to work against time and without inspiration. They do not meditate and they do not always feel the unity between themselves and their work. Without proper concentration it is difficult to bring the impetus that would cause the artist to show every detail. A person with a fine character and developed nature might do it naturally.

GATHEKA: This combination of Persian and Indian art brought about a most wonderful art. And today there exists a school in Calcutta under the direction of Abindranath Tagore; they call it the ancient Moghul school, and the director of that school tries to keep the same style.

TASAWWUF: This combination of Persian and Indian art took place during the time of the Moghul Empire and there was a considerable Sufi influence in it. When the Sufis entered India they found there many holy men who knew nothing about Islam and who attained high mystical states. The Chistias especially noticed this and established friendly relations with the homeless sannyasins. These friendships were a source of wonder to the Orthodox and many artists have recorded it in painting.

The great Sufi Emperor Akbar took especial pains to encourage the arts and crafts of his day, to reform them if necessary, and to bring closer relations between followers of different schools, Hindu and Moslem (both divided among themselves). There is a section of the Ain-i-Akbari (Institutes of Akbar) devoted to this. This was the first great conscious effort to bring the world's religions and cultures together under spiritual influence.

GATHEKA: But at the same time the modern style that has come from this school cannot be compared for one moment with the ancient pictures. No doubt when you compare it with the modern idea of pictures you will find many things quite different and not fitting with the modern idea.

TASAWWUF: For the mere outer attempt to reproduce an older school may mean a superficial copying of technique. It does not always bring the same inspiration, the same heart-background. So it stands between the ancient and modern and is in many respects a new school.

One does not need to reject the modern and find beauty only in works of earlier times. No doubt there is a materialistic spirit today. Yet there have been advances in technique, and there is increased skill in the making and use of brush, paints, canvas and other materials. Also there is knowledge of perspective today which was missing in ancient times although both the Greeks and

Chinese had their own form of perspective. Thus the Chinese had a perspective as from above, a bird's eye view.

The cinema has come to reproduce the three dimensional view in art and with color pictures we advanced to a new phase. Also there are new teachings about space and light since Professor Einstein has discovered and demonstrated about relativity. Yet old themes and techniques are not out worn either. We can return to meditation and concentration, and make use of the silence without dispensing any of our other knowledge.

GATHEKA: Nevertheless there is an extreme fineness about the pictures, delicacy of colors, and a great deal of attention has been given to the line; and there seems to be an attempt to reach perfection through delicacy. A picture at that time was a luxury, and their pictures are luxuries.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, this school pays much attention to right effort and right results, overlooking nothing. Yet today we also have the art and science of photography so that we can get reproductions in a very short time which may have required months in times past. The camera makes it possible for all to take pictures and there is not the same social need for delicate paintings today. Besides it is very easy to supply reproductions, so that people can enjoy works of art who are too poor to possess originals.

What is still lacking in the West is the right creative spirit, for real art cannot be turned out by machines or with machine-like rapidity. Fineness of character aids in the production of fine works of heart and a delicate attitude to one's work also helps to promote fineness of character. Students of Sufism are trained to fine breathing and this makes it easier for them to produce fine works. As the students of art turn toward spiritual training, they will find it easier to create finer works.

[Painting 8](#)

GATHEKA: In the Western world the great improvement that has been made upon the ancient is the idea of light and shade, which was overlooked by the ancient artists; and this has brought in the world of art a new life and made art more natural.

TASAWWUF: There has been, perhaps, an exception in Japan, which is now going through a period of transition. In France in particular, this aspect of art has been studied and elevated. There the artists have not been unaware of the scientific knowledge of light and shade and perspective. In the West science has aided art whereas in the East mysticism has aided art. The Orientals have, no doubt, felt the spirit of nature more whereas the people of the West have been confused by the dualistic philosophy. Yet from dualism comes the idea of light and shade, light being at first symbolic of righteousness and goodness, and darkness being aligned with sin and ignorance.

The Sufi is a Monist who does not reject Dualism because it all depends upon the point of view. The philosophy of the West has encouraged the scenic and graphic arts and more attention has been paid to anatomy and general form. This has lead to an open realism which seeks to produce things as they appear to and appeal to the senses. While such art may not be metaphysically lofty, it can be refined and pleasing.

GATHEKA: It seems that there was a secret of color in the hands of the artists in the West, the example of which you can find in the frescoes in Italy, but now it seems that that art of color is lost. Today the color that artists use is neither lasting nor is it very beautiful.

TASAWWUF: Of course there are notable exceptions. Yet it is also true that what is popular in one generation may not appeal to succeeding generations. There is a certain magnetism in a work, and it arouses the people of the time. But there is no deep life, and no eternity in it. Besides, the artist may select his colors as they come, with no need to mix them or experiment with them. Then they are like machine-products which are not a part of himself, they lack his magnetism and he does not transfer his power to his product. That is why when one enters a gallery and looks at contemporary figures, if one is very sensitive, he will not “feel” them in the sense he “feels” the work of earlier Italians and some other Europeans (e.g. Spaniards).

Having many colors at his disposal and brushes and other instruments does not make an artist any more than a good dictionary and thesaurus makes one a poet or writer. These things may be helpful in the formation of expression, they do not add to the spirit behind the expression. Coal-tar products do not have the living magnetism of plant dyes and colors. Besides exactitude does not convey beauty and colors fade in the light and from weather and other effects. The flute which gives a song symbolic of the bird-note may convey great feeling while an imitation bird giving a more exact tone will possess far less life or beauty. Imitation is not art.

GATHEKA: Sometimes it is striking, and sometimes there comes an artist who has the idea of blending colors well. But at the same time it seems that the life of the color has gone, the color has no life, the color does not live.

TASAWWUF: It has been explained that the products of the mineral kingdom are less vital than those of the vegetable kingdom. Besides, what is manufactured through some complex process is not a direct derivative of life. Those who are under spiritual training may learn how to magnetize their paints and also to feel the livingness of their tempera. Oils especially convey a life, for which there may be no substitute.

Reverence and feeling also increase the magnetism in a work. To regard a screen or canvas as sacred soil upon which a holy task is to be performed, produces a different attitude and may result almost in a form of magic. The artist who regards his colors even as tones of sacred music, will be able to produce results which another artist may never effect. Besides the secret of color is in the heart and the living heart will feel whether one is doing well or not.

GATHEKA: And when you come to modern art, one might say it gives a great facility to the primitive artist to count himself among the great ones.

TASAWWUF: Today there is a feeling for the primitive and some artists imitate the ancients except that they use various paints and oils unknown at previous times and have knowledge of light and shade and perspective—which they do not always apply. They do not always seek for exactitude. They know there is a lack but there are also lazy people who take refuge in primitivism, although there is an awareness that we do not possess today the power of the pre-Renaissance artists.

The question then arises, how to develop feeling and power. It is not easy if one does not devote himself to meditation, concentration and psychology. There is no magic by which one can suddenly blossom forth as a wise man or genius. The awakening of the heart, however, may bring these things about.

GATHEKA: He has only to take one thing or another: he has to say that his art is cubist or impressionist or something. Anyone who wants to draw something has only to say that this is cubist, or impressionist, or something. There is a platform open for him. He has only to call it by some name, a new name. If not, the work would not be accepted by the exhibition to occupy so much space; but by this name he can do so.

TASAWWUF: It can become a habit to follow a certain school and to excuse oneself as being a follower of a certain school or a founder of a new school. There is supposed to be some deep and hidden philosophy behind art and the more mysterious and the more complex one makes it, the more profound some people take the artist to be, and consider him both great and inexplicable. If he is inexplicable he is said to be great.

This shows decadence and decrepitude, and whole absence of direct inspiration. While it is true that there may be a philosophy behind art and that artists depend upon philosophy, when it becomes an excuse for bad work or ineffective style, that is not art. The artist becomes an advocate who instead of bringing out what is beautiful, seeks only to make people react. He may shock them or please their vanity or allow himself to be paid for expressing in his art some particular social view. There is no longer a heart appeal. Yes, there is an emotional appeal, often an appeal to the baser emotions and to hate rather than to love. This shows nufs, and reveals how much the world is still under Nufsaniat, the sway of ego or Samsara.

Then one school fails, not having a true foundation and it is followed by another school with perhaps still more startling principles. Thus we have the school of Surrealism which has tried to outdo all its predecessors. They rely upon an imagination untrained. And the result is often a form of obsession. They do not call it obsession, yet one can see the mental suffering among artists, the lack of poise and balance and the general acceptance of “queerness.” If you are “queer” then you may be an artist. This shows how far man is from truth.

GATHEKA: Now, when we come to the psychology of what they call cubism; it is a kind of

impression of light. The light strikes straight lines and angles. All the different pictures of the planes are in angles, because the light strikes in the eyes in this way. Unconsciously taking that impression, the artist thinks the whole world is like that, everything in angles, and that he can make it in angles.

TASAWWUF: It has been stated that artists of earlier times did not pay much attention to light and shade; perhaps they did not know much about it. They regarded the object they were painting as real, and the light and shade only as means to an end. They painted things, not spaces. Judging from the three views of seer, seen and sight, they concentrated upon the seen, the sight being an excuse.

But with the cubists it is different in that the faculty of sight is considered important, and what is seen not so important. Undoubtedly there is an excuse that if we should take pictures in white light, infra-red light, ultra-violet light, they would be different. So the cubist has a justification. Yet the universe is made of lines and curves and perhaps more curves than lines. When one omits the curves he omits the feminine aspect of nature, he deals only with forces, with powers that act on straight lines. He invokes these powers without knowing the nature of power, and there is no balance of fineness, of beauty. It is no wonder then that many artists fail to fulfill their sexual obligations, suffering whether married or unmarried and often living in strange fashion.

If we study space, we may consider it as composed of straight lines or planes or points or spheres or breathing spheres and the whole geometry and philosophy of life will be different. If we accept the point of view of relativity it will be still different. And it is not necessarily wrong for an artist to understand or express fourth dimensional space. But it is different to go contrary to nature or omit an aspect of life. What one does in his art will be reflected in himself. And the generation that accepts such art will suffer. No doubt Cubism is related to the changing attitude in science and mathematics, as well as in philosophy, but it is an attempt to evade, not to settle problems.

GATHEKA: To imagine a portrait in angles is one thing, but to paint it in angles is simply frightening: the head is square, the shoulders are square, and the whole form of the person is square and in angles. It is true that there are angles, but it is not true that everything is an angle.

TASAWWUF: It is right to make use of the imagination. Indeed there is a great field for opportunity in the cultivation of the imagination, which subject is explained in *Cosmic Language*. If one holds a subject (or object) in the imagination, and keeps it before himself he brings life to it, his inspiration begins to flow forth. There would be nothing contrary to geometry or knowledge or truth. Perspective may require a different representation of something from a camera-view and sometimes emphasis would suggest certain alterations—for art is not nature, art is the completion of nature. We see curves in life, in the tree, bush, flower, bodies of animals. Only in the mineral kingdom is the angle predominant. The Cubist could be at home if he worked in the mineral kingdom, but what he does is untrue of higher forms. A tombstone in the cubist style might not be out of place. Even a mountain so drawn might not be so awful. But living creatures would only be monsters. And it is not known that a picture is a thought-form and it gives rise to thought-forms.

The artist who concentrates upon the weird becomes weird, his admirers become weird.

GATHEKA: And what does it mean? It only means that when a person takes one idea, he thinks that this is the only idea and that there is nothing besides. He does not think that that idea is a part of ideas, and many ideas taken together will make a whole. But he takes a part of one idea, and he says that it is the only idea.

TASAWWUF: No idea of itself may be regarded as wrong. When it is used as an all-sufficient philosophy of art and life it is making false claims. Art is more than a display of color and light, it is more than expression of some philosophy or idea. One might say that myopia or astigmatism were forms of clear sight, yet they reveal defects of vision. There are also defects of mental vision. They do not offer substantial bases for art or life.

GATHEKA: The other day a philosopher was very amused, visiting the exhibition in Paris where there was a show of modern art, where the lamp, the chair, the table were made with angles. And if one would stop and think, "What beauty does it give?," it has no beauty except an idea. It is not beauty, it is only an idea.

TASAWWUF: It is not wrong to picture an idea. We have mechanical drawing for that and blue prints are used by inventors, mechanics, architects and engineers. They are pictures of ideas; they are not considered as art. They are right in their place and they are needed in their place. However, they are not based upon beauty or the beautiful, they are not basically art.

Art depends upon beauty and where there is no beauty there is no art. Art is living, it is something more than mechanical. No doubt a beautiful idea may offer a beautiful picture. Isadora Duncan tried to base the dance upon ideas and philosophy; many people admired them, but for the thought in them, not for their beauty. Dancers and artists are not much inspired by subjective philosophy. They cannot express themselves within the limit of the thought-forms of somebody else.

GATHEKA: It is a kind of persistence on the part of the artist to keep to his principle and not move from it. It is stubbornness, obstinacy. You can see it in the objects. It means, "Now, God, You have made people be beautiful; I want to make them ugly."

TASAWWUF: So the Sufi says, "God makes and man mars." To turn back to straight lines and angles is a retrogression, it is opposite to the movements that we find in evolution, in nature. The whole course of evolution moves out of the straight line to the curved forms, and in the higher evolution the mystic says the sphere plays still a larger part.

The straight line attitude reveals a mind like the mineral, stubborn, fixed, unevolved, strong but not responsive. The artist is revealing his own mind. His pictures are his thought-forms; they exist only in his mind. His philosophy is an excuse. He shows his heaven or hell; it is his mind-world, his private world. Children will revolt at it and so will the pure in heart.

The lowest hell of the Buddhists is that of Naraka, which is a stage of darkness, of fixedness like the stones. There is no apparent light or movement. Everything is as if paralyzed. And the artist who deals with straight lines shows a tendency downward toward Naraka; he is closing his own heart, he stands before his own growth. He is not explaining the world, he is only excusing himself.

GATHEKA: There is another part in modern art, which they call impressionism. What the impressionist wants to say is that the color must be, not the form, that the color must make the form. But it is unnatural also. However beautiful the color may be, the picture cannot be beautiful.

TASAWWUF: Now let us examine this type of mind. It is different. Color is vibration and form is atomic. The person who adheres to the forms may be a materialist, he may be a dualist or an Aristotelian or realist, as they say. But the impressionist lives in a world of vibrations, only he assumes that vibrations must give rise to atoms. Yes, some vibrations do give rise to atoms, more vibrations just give rise to vibrations. Every student of light, electro-magnetism, sound knows this. It is not every kind of vibration which makes the form and there are certain laws by which the vibrations give rise to form.

This shows that the impressionist does not face the world. He also lives in the realm of the untrained imagination. He may accept or seem to accept a philosophy like that of Plato, Hegel, Berkeley, Spinoza, Bradley. Yet it is incomplete. He does not know the nature of color. He is depending upon his eye. There are many light-rays which are not color rays. There are many other vibrations in the universe which go to make up form. And even the making of form does not produce the beautiful. That is beautiful which awakens the feelings of beauty in someone's heart.

The materialist sees forms, atoms, things. The vibrational outlook often brings one the feeling of form and life. And the sense of color brings out the sense of character. But it is not character that makes man. Character is not something self-existing or self-subsisting. One can see the play of colors in the soap bubble; they do not form anything, they are only passing panorama of phenomena.

GATHEKA: In the first place, it is again a stubbornness, an obstinacy on the part of the artist. He wants to impress upon you that there is something which will strike you. No doubt color will strike you. But art is not only for striking, art is for giving some beautiful impression, for uplifting your soul; for inspiring you, not for striking you.

TASAWWUF: This is very much like the attitude found in some medical circles, that in order to avoid a disease you must have it. If you have not had small-pox you must let the physician give it to you and afterwards he says you will be immune to it. The attitude is that only by being warned you are safe. It grows out of fear, out of ignorance.

It seems strange that as people are beginning to control fears and emotions a school of art emphasizes them. It is not only the artist, however, who is to blame. It is part of a reaction against the materialistic spirit of a former time. Heart feels that something is wrong, and yet the ignorant

man does not know what it is. The people of the time want something unusual, exciting; they delight in action, in change, in fantasy, wonder. The artist gives it to them. He feeds upon this delight in the unusual, and makes himself as a leader of men.

GATHEKA: The object of art is not to give a blow to a person; the object of art is to lift the person up. There must be fineness, harmony and delicacy. Instead of that it strikes you. As soon as you look at it, it is just like knives going through you.

TASAWWUF: What is needed today is more beauty and more avenues to beauty. Whatever else has been failing in the art of former times there was not absence of beauty. It was something of life that was missing, art was too imitative, but it did not run off into the unreal or fantastic. Even in the nineteenth century there were many fine artists, beautiful paintings. They did not dwell long upon some particular philosophy, or excuse, they created and worked, even if they lacked genius.

What is needed is more genius, not less. By a cultivation of one's own self, through development of fineness (and this can be learned through the breath) one can learn to draw fine lines with life and with development of power (and this also can be learned through the breath) one can put more feeling and magnetism into his work. One can learn to make each line display inner thought and feeling and to avoid useless effort. And every picture will then be self-justified.

GATHEKA: The theory is that the color must take the form, that the color must strike you. It is not the color which is important. The color is the addition to the form. It is not the color that makes the form, it is the form that shows out the color. And when you compare it with the ancient art of the Persians and of India, it is a great contrast with it.

TASAWWUF: For the ancients used color with meaning, they had the knowledge of the elements and they also had some knowledge which psychologists and students of color are again learning but which is foreign to this school of art, the impressionist.

No doubt there are several bases for color. There is the color that is formed out of light. For instance a prism will refract light and reveal the colors as they appear in the rainbow. These run from red to violet and obey certain laws which have been studied by both physicists and psychologists as well as by physiologists, to ascertain their relation to the eye and eye-response. There is another kind of color which appears in pigments; when we mix pigments we get certain results and these results are not the same as those obtained in blending light rays. Light rays, according to mystics and some physiologists, are based upon four primaries blue, red, green and yellow. The physicists say the primaries are red, green and violet—but they work objectively. And students of pigments find blue, yellow and red their primaries, out of which all hues can be blended.

Now in nature we find many colors and when we blend them as in the cross-breeding of flowers and animals, we do not always get a mixed result. Blend yellow and red flowers and the resulting blossoms may be some in red, some in yellow and none necessarily in orange. The laws of color in living matter were studied by Friar Mendel, and their mixtures are different from those of light rays

or pigments.

Therefore it is the eye in the end which determines the color response, whatever be the field we are working in. The artist does not know this. He assumes, if he is an impressionist, that the pigment, which he calls color, really represents the colors of the rainbow or the objective world. Or he believes—and he has reached this conclusion without investigation—that what is needed after all is a psychological, not an esthetic reaction. He forgets that there are many kinds of psychological reaction and these include those that are morbid, pathological, dangerous.

GATHEKA: There the color is the least thing, there the feature is the thing: how the eyes are, how the nose, how the ears, how the cheeks, how the chin is, how natural it can be and what it signifies.

TASAWWUF: When we look at Persian and Hindu paintings we can see that though they may have known little of perspective they did know how to express character and psychology. They knew that the face expresses the mood or the character. The Greeks may have given us history and the Arabians also been excellent historians, but the Persians knew how to draw portraits of their rulers and what a writer could not or would not say, the portrait tells. It is all there.

Sufis have preserved a science which covers the meanings of all lines of form, face, feature. One can learn what is behind them in thought, how the thought makes the impression upon the body, how the body conceals and yet reveals the hidden thought. Every thought affects us and we know that one can blush or change in color without there being a change of feature. Therefore spiritual artists are more than cameras, they bring out a true impression, based upon the laws which connect the inner and outer personality. This is very different from the strange ways of some modern artists.

GATHEKA: For instance, take a most ancient picture in your hand and see the feature which expresses to you something, and then take a picture that they call impressionist and see from the color what you get. There is no idea of physiognomy at all. No doubt it touches the emotional part to see color, but that is a different thing, that is very material. That is not the mission of art, to bring a person down to earth.

TASAWWUF: The emotional reaction is not always the same as the aesthetic reaction. The emotional reaction no doubt comes from the heart also, but then there is no intellectual content nor is any intelligence needed. What is wanted is some reaction and this is called a “kick” and if one can get many “kicks” life is supposed to be worthwhile. Now there is also something which may be called a “kick” in the aesthetic reaction, only it comes from within. It makes one feel beauty, that life is worthwhile, that there are ideals.

People get these emotional reactions from the cinema, from stories, from adventure. That is the place for them; art is not the place for them. And when there are no arts and artists the whole world falls down. This was the theme of Marie Corelli’s famous novel *Ardath*. She pictured scenes of the distant past to illustrate principles that hold today, or any day. Plutarch wrote on the same

principles in his time and feared the destruction of civilization because of the conditions of art in his age.

What the Message hopes to instill is the training of the hearts of artists and of all. When there is heart inspiration and heart response art becomes living, impressions instill inspiration and the beautiful becomes the normal and natural. Then painting and all arts will take on a new aspect, and people will be elevated. Art will become religion.

GATHEKA: What does it show? To show that the world of art today is in a great confusion. The souls of the artists want to bring something new to the world, and at the same time they are looking for that something new somewhere else.

TASAWWUF: The Sufi regards this as one of the proofs that God is in all and that all come from God, that all seek beauty, long for beauty, whether they know they have that longing or not, whether they have any idea as to the reason, or as to the nature of beauty.

The artist being more sensitive than the average persons feels it more than others. His intuitive faculty is not so dead, although following the world, he seeks an appeal to the intellect, he also wants an excuse. He does not know how to cultivate heart. When heart is uncultivated the emotions go unrestrained. Therefore many philosophers have set reason over against the emotions, and they have lauded reason, magnified it, often also condemning emotions. They do not know the nature of reason, or of emotion, as Count Korzybski has pointed out.

GATHEKA: It is just like looking for the moon on the ground, where it will never be found. They are eager, they are striving, they are earnest; and at the same time they are looking for it in a wrong direction.

TASAWWUF: This is so evident that little proof is needed. Today people still go to the galleries, and perhaps in larger numbers than they have before because there is no doubt that the growth of democracy and the development of education has encouraged it. They feel a certain indescribable something and this something often comes to life in the presence of art. It reaches a certain pitch and stops. And the assumption is that there is some mystery in art, or in artists which the average person cannot understand.

Yes, there is a mystery. Artists invariably have a deep yearning for life, for expression. They desire to create and they prefer poverty with self-expression to riches and dormancy. Yet even as they work they remain unsatisfied. They may receive wealth and honors and still be unsatisfied. Something is lacking, something which they do not know. Yet is it not lacking so much in the Orient, in Japanese art for instance. There is life there and this same life can become the possession of every man with the cultivation of the heart.

GATHEKA: And if they worked for one hundred years in the same way, you can be sure that every step taken forward will take them backward. Any judge of art, a lover of beauty, a man of thought

and knowledge can go and see and study what is called modern art, and he will say that it is a step backward rather than forward.

TASAWWUF: Instead of there being more expression, there is less. Instead of there being the fulfillment of humanity, it seems incomplete. The sage can tell whether the artist is in the asura stage or animal stage of evolution, what his degree of ego is. The artist tells it all the time. What his pictures resemble that is he in his heart.

Today one sees much of what is called propaganda in art. There are teachers who proclaim that all art is propaganda—this only proves how devoid of beauty they are themselves. The cartoonist is not necessarily an artist. He may be a humorist, he may do fine work, but when he devotes himself to political or partisan ideals, his head dominates his work. And while he may appeal to man's deepest emotions, his use of caricatures (or contortions) shows that he is departing from the norm of beauty.

The statement is often made that we cannot change human nature. Yes, this may be so and yet everything is subject to change; it is only that we cannot fixate change. And if art can degrade, it can uplift. And it is still possible to reverse the general direction of culture and appeal to the hearts of men as was done in the past, only to do it in a modern way, making use of all the discoveries, skill and education that have come to mankind.

GATHEKA: Are they wrong in their idea? No, they are not wrong; it is limited. They limit themselves in their idea. They have got one idea; it is a very good idea, but at the same time they have pinned themselves to their idea. They will not go forward, because it is their idea. If people like it or if people do not like it, it does not matter.

TASAWWUF: Instead of art following philosophy, being smaller than philosophy, it should be greater, even as the heart is greater than the head. One inspiration may burst forth into many ideas. If one idea or only a few ideas are followed, then there is no scope for inspiration. To limit inspiration is to crush inspiration. And thus the artist of the day never comes to realize the treasure that is in himself. He secludes himself in ideas, he makes excuses, and when he cannot prove his worth he always proclaims that the future generations will accept him, his ideas and his works. Yet the future cannot accept all the various conflicting ideas.

It is much the same as in religion or partisanship. People are right in what they proclaim, what they advocate. They are wrong, however, in their efforts to destroy or even oppose the principles of others. It shows fixity, immobility, and this indicates lack of general evolution.

GATHEKA: Besides, art is a most charming, but at the same time a most deluding thing. If there is an artist with strong mind and most convinced of his own art, he only draws some line and some color, and brings people to look at it, and says, "Now look here, how wonderful it is!" Another person says, "It is strong!" Another person says, "There is something very mysterious about it, I feel it." And another person says, "Well, this is futurist; this is something that people who will come

in the future will understand.” All those three or four persons who are standing there say he is a great artist.

TASAWWUF: No doubt every line, every outline, form and color have a meaning or reveal something. It is almost as if all art were symbolic even though the artists knew little about symbols. And people are naturally drawn to artists, they look to them for leadership.

The trouble is today that the attraction is associated with ignorance instead of knowledge. People go to hear the symphony concert or to see the pictures because it is a polite and proper thing to do. It is socially valuable. They may understand neither art nor music but these things form pleasant subjects for conversation. And they blame themselves if they do not understand or they pretend to understand and say, “Oh, you cannot understand? I am sorry.” “Oh, yes, I am very stupid.” Yet it is not stupidity, neither is it understanding, it is confusion.

When beauty is not a leading motive the whole world suffers. Hearts long for the beautiful, the uplifting and there is a feeling that painting can become a great art. Yes, painters can put in their works the messages of the heart. Men like Suralian and Roerich have even in this day done that; they can bring form out of cosmic inspiration.

GATHEKA: Another person says, “How wonderful it is, how mysterious it is! It is a new art.” But where does this new art lead us? What is the mission of art? Is the mission of art to delude us, to produce confusion? If there is no beauty, if there is no harmony, no deep feeling, then what is it? If it only strikes our emotions, our passions, if it only strikes our eyes, then it has nothing to do with art.

TASAWWUF: For that is true art which evokes the inner response and which makes us greater in some respect after study or enjoyment. To gaze upon, to concentrate upon a real work of art means to bring to life, to the surface, something which has been latent in us; it teaches us through its very silence.

And today what do we find? Some say that art is whatever the artists create. There was a protest on the part of the custom agents of the United States government against a piece of metal supposedly moulded by a famous sculptor. The officials could find no beauty or meaning in it, just empty meaningless form. Then art leaders protested and said that the artist determines art. If so, is not every little infant that daubs an artist? Is not the child who cuts furniture or splatters walls a budding genius? No sensible person would say so. And this shows that the world is waiting for a renovation, for a renaissance.

Painting 9

GATHEKA: No doubt there will come a time when the modern artist will be frightened at his own pictures, and he will wake to the fact that he must find something else, it is not the idea he must follow.

TASAWWUF: To follow an idea is to follow a thought and in adhering slavishly to a thought one becomes the prey to thought-forms; in other words one is open to obsession. Many times people actually suffer from obsession through the possession of paintings or because of the horrible design of wall-paper or pattern or coloring. It may be because of the colors, more often it is because of the figures and themes. Whatever has been placed before a person has a psychic import and that is impressed upon the atmosphere regardless of personal knowledge or intent, or moral character. The psychic principles operate as naturally and as truly as the natural forces; they are indeed natural forces, however occult.

When there is appeal to the heart it brings joy, elation, uplift, one feels different and better. If one considers what pieces appeal to children one will learn a little, and if one considers what repels children one will learn more; their hearts are purer than those of their elders, however uncultivated they be. And the same attraction and repulsion is ultimately felt by sensitive souls. It is no wonder that after making something the artist will later disregard his own works, not always remain proud of them.

GATHEKA: The greatest example that we can follow is before us night and day, and that is the work of God. What can be better to imitate than God's creation itself? And the artist who will bear this in mind, that he must imitate the creation of God, he is the one who will produce beautiful things. That means that if God's creation seems to be going to the north and the artist goes to the south, he thinks he creates new things. But it is not new, it is wrong; it is something which is not right.

TASAWWUF: And what is the result today? Instead of there being an advance in painting, there is retrogression. And along with this retrogression there are new arts coming into view which are closer to nature, and thus to God. For instance landscape gardening and flower arrangement. And both of these arts in turn are affecting other arts, such as architecture and decoration. But the change in painting is coming slow, it has been lagging.

If the artist should follow nature, what would be his first step? It is suggested that he follow the traditions about the work of God, the Master Artist and Architect Who first went into the silence and meditated, and after meditation He entered concentration and kept one idea before Himself. As He became surer of it, He received the inspiration and power to create something which might be called perfect; then the world was made. So if the artist practiced the meditation and then the concentration he would feel the power and inspiration, his work and he would be as one.

Ultimately the artist might learn what the mystic already knows, that the universe is within himself. He will find the secret to all things within himself, within his heart. And verily, when he follows his heart's yearnings, will the Kingdom of Heaven manifest. He will find all life and force from within.

He will know how to develop and use his imagination, and all faculties.

GATHEKA: Suppose there came another wave of musicians, and they said, "We are not going to take the seven notes as they are, but we are going to make other notes." And perhaps they will have some following. They will say, "Yes, it is something new." And yet it will not be beautiful, it will not be exalting, it will not help humanity.

TASAWWUF: For instance, one might adopt the Hindu modes or the Chinese scale and work with them. He will compose pieces and people will listen to them with awe, perhaps with delight, perhaps with horror. There will be reaction, there may be appreciation, the understanding may be lacking. And all this shows the effort of human will and desire. People may experiment with different tones and tunes; it may not mean that something fine is created, it will be like scientific experimentation rather than art. Anyone who listens to the contemporary music will know this—and one who follows contemporary art may feel the same.

Newness of itself does not mean inspiration. And if musicians selected new notes after a while people might become accustomed to them although it has been difficult for the Europeans and Chinese to fully appreciate the principles of harmony which delight the others. There have been apparently many new things brought into the world; they have not always added to human happiness. Even the new education, with all its ideals and humanitarianism has not produced many revolutionary changes.

GATHEKA: The special condition existing now in the world is due to spiritual poverty. This is what causes restlessness and all confusion.

TASAWWUF: Spiritual poverty indicates that the heart is not fully alive, doing that for which it was made. Modern education, with its overpowering appeal to the intellect, does not take into consideration every aspect of life and character. Perhaps it should not. But with the disappearance of religion and nothing to take its place we find more mass hysteria and listlessness. Either there are no leaders or the leaders themselves are in confusion. Even that knowledge of psychology which the ancients possessed is lost or ignored, and the materialists cannot, do not explain everything.

GATHEKA: Cubism is the result of lack of balance. It is a soul's wish to express something; and if the soul does not express that which it wishes, then there is no contentment, there is always suffering.

TASAWWUF: Although many reasons may be given today for the cause of suffering, the same principles which Buddha found to be true in his time are as true today. Time does not alter the laws of nature or the constitution of humanity. Yet when we consider the history of the world from the dark ages to now we can see some growth, more room for freedom of expression, a widening out. Externally there has been a broadening spirit, it is well. Internally man has not yet awakened to his possibilities.

Suffering tends to bring delusion and confusion. Man seeks his way out, feeling sure in his heart there must be an escape, not knowing in his mind what that escape may be. The mystic suggests that the faculty of human insight, which is latent in all, might be developed and then every man will find his path to freedom.

GATHEKA: The more a person works, the more he suffers. He suffers because the soul wants to express something. And it is therefore that the lives of the artists are always a kind of suffering, because their soul has borne some ideal in it, and that has made them artists; and when they cannot produce it before their eyes, then the soul goes through tortures.

TASAWWUF: What is the soul? Sufis say that the soul is an activity of God, God in action. How does God act in the world? He tries to accomplish His purpose through the hand of man. When the divine power does not express itself through man it seeks other outlets, and may move through destructive channels. Man has been created in God's image and when he does not find expression in constructive manners he also may move through destructive or perverse channels.

Instead of being able to employ his spiritual magnetism and find the right outlet for his psychic power and creative genius, the artist follows some by-path, becoming thereby emotional and unstable. His hands do not do their best work, coordination becomes difficult especially as the zest of youth wears off, and he does not find that happiness which he craves, even in his work he does not find it. He lacks rhythm in life and balance. But if he is stubborn, he will not learn and he passes from error to error, from misery to misery. Indeed the artist finds life harder in the world than almost anybody else.

GATHEKA: Until they come to that stage when they can produce their art to the satisfaction of their own spirit they will always do wrong things.

TASAWWUF: Thus we find Bohemianism among artists; there is the tendency, the desire to live free from the conventions of society, even contrary to the standards of society. They live promiscuously, they have irregular habits. They may consider libertarianism as freedom and often they run off even to perversion. This is because the artist does not know the source of his psychic or creative power. Instead of being the controller of it, he is led by it, he is its slave. How many the slaves of beauty, how very few the masters!

GATHEKA: The mission of the artist in the world is great. The artist is not to be compared with every human being, because the artist is the instrument of God. His mission in life is to create something that will inspire people and will elevate humanity; his work is an education for the world.

TASAWWUF: The artist is often a jinn-soul though he may not know it. He is an instrument for the inner things of the universe, and so for God, even though he be quite unaware of it. In the Orient we still find artists who are sane and normal, who have applied the principle of rhythm, who embody rhythm, who are attuned to their work and their work to them.

The spiritual training of esotericism will correct many of the psychological abnormalities of the day. When one knows how to make use of silence and rest as well as of work and effort; when one knows how to use the mind and how to restrain it; when one knows how to draw the life-energy from the center of his being, he is on the way to becoming a master mind. And the devotional attitude will also help him because if nothing else it aids in concentration. And if the artist has known real love he will become a still greater artist.

GATHEKA: It seems that the general trend of the artist's mind is to become fanciful. No doubt it is natural, but at the same time it would be well if this principle were remembered, that nature is perfect in itself and the best that an artist could do is to come as near to nature as possible.

TASAWWUF: There are several places in the Sufi literature where the nature of the artist is discussed. While one could not say that every artist is in the jinn-stage of evolution or that everyone who might be classified as a jinn manifests as an artist, nevertheless in the artist there is the budding genius and in order for him to succeed that genius-life in him must manifest. He should use his imagination without making any excuses for a "flight from reality." No doubt he finds the world very harsh and does not delight in materialism, but his case is not hopeless.

If one only knew it, whatever he concentrates upon gives him its own magnetism and psychic power. This is true whether one is concentrating for the purpose, so to speak, of spiritual attainment, or has a concentration in the practical life. By silence and concentration one may even commune with nature. What one gets from nature is her secret. It is not only to look and paint trees and flowers; there is nothing to indicate that that kind of art is the best. Yet the tree has its secret, the flower has its secret, and the more one opens his heart to them, the more he will receive from them. So whether one copies from one aspect of nature or another, as he works, he will gain the respect of nature.

GATHEKA: You will all agree with me in this, that the greater art is, the more natural it is; the best art is the most simple.

TASAWWUF: Yes, and this is true even when one paints portraits, still life, interior or exterior scenes. One can see it in the art of Japan, Norway, wherever the materialism of the day has not swept all other aspects of life aside. The one who communes with nature learns a secret which cannot be told in another way, because it is a secret of the heart and of silence. Yet it appears in many pictures, and shows that the artist is one with his art.

GATHEKA: One may say, "Ancient Egypt has symbols and seems not at all natural; have those artists not followed nature?" There are three points to think of in connection with this question. The first point is that ancient Egyptian civilization was existing at the time when we can say the world was in its most primitive condition, and therefore you cannot compare the art of that time with the art of this time, which is expected to be much more evolved.

TASAWWUF: While the Egyptians expressed the truth as they understood it in form and symbol

and color, they did not imitate nature. If you study the art of little children, if you watch to see what they like in art, drawing, pictures, it is not always that which we call nature. Little children do not understand the scientific method. They have to develop their minds first.

The people of Egypt did not receive a general education. They learned that which was necessary for their trade or occupation. There were many races and peoples of all stages of evolution in Egypt. They did not all think in the same terms or forms. If you want to make a universal language, you have to start with simplicity, and at the same time if you want to reach people's hearts you have to have instruments which will really reach hearts.

In the Islamic world in later times there are some parallels because at first Islam appealed to the uneducated and their art made use of geometric forms and stencils, and even when patterns were based upon nature, they were quite altered. But they were effective and art, to be useful, must be effective.

GATHEKA: Another thing is that ancient Egyptian art was, again, one-sided. It is not meant by this that ancient art was superior to modern art, only to say what was good in it.

TASAWWUF: Egyptian art was closely knitted to religion. There were few brilliant examples of laic art, unless we include the decorations of palace and tomb of royalty and nobility. Even the folk-crafts were more or less associated with the accepted religion, and changes seldom took place in the arts before there was a change in the cult. So while there was a certain depth of inspiration, there was a certain lack of freedom and one does not find the grace of expression as in Greece, India, China, only majesty.

GATHEKA: To give a little example, you may have seen the pictures of Sarasvati and Lakshmi, the two goddesses. They have four hands, and it is quite unnatural. But at the same time, when you look at it there are no angles, and there is no attempt made to show that it is not at all natural; there is every attempt made to show that, with the four hands, they are natural beings.

TASAWWUF: We must not suppose that what we have not seen is unnatural. A picture of a whale might seem mythological to inhabitants of the Sahara and an Eskimo would not understand the elephant (it has been very hard to translate portions of the Bible for the Eskimos on account of the different animals mentioned in parts of it). Yet these forms express lines and curves not basically different from what is known to be in nature. And with that there is the feeling of life.

When there is expression through feeling and form together, the form may not be entirely objective, that is, based upon what actually belongs to the outer world. Neither do gods and goddesses appear in such forms. They are either cosmic beings or personifications of cosmic forces. In order to bring the teachings to the multitudes, especially those who cannot read and write, a form is needed. Forms must be clothed with attributes if they are to convey impressions and these forms may be drawn from nature therefore and have been drawn from nature. Only instead of using the animals as did the Chinese and Egyptians, the Hindus felt that it was a delicate matter to rely upon

sub-human species too much. Ganesh, it is true, has the head of an elephant and Hanuman is like a monkey, but otherwise the gods and holy beings had a form we can call human or superhuman.

GATHEKA: But in modern art it is the contrary. Even the man with two arms seems to be more unnatural.

TASAWWUF: This seems inexcusable today because we have the knowledge of anatomy and perspective. Instead of using them the artists wish to convey impressions, wish to stir up feelings. The feelings are already too much stirred up. Everything in life is agitating, disturbing, even destructive. What is needed is something to calm the nerves, to bring peace, solace, quietude, inspiration. If we combine our knowledge of form and our ability to draw in form, the technique and selection of numerous colors and other elements of modern art, especially where art has been aided by technology, with the heart feeling and the inner sense of the ancients, then we may be finding a true, and a natural art, beneficial, wholesome and elevating. And what is more, enjoyable.

[Painting 10](#)

GATHEKA: Symbolism is the aged aspect of art, or the ripened aspect of art.

TASAWWUF: Symbolism may be called a short-hand; symbolism puts the ocean in a cup. A whole idea or chain of ideas may be expressed through a single form. And every repetition of such expression makes a mark in the akasha. These marks have continued through the ages strengthened by these repetitions so that there is apparently a universal language, which may even be called the language of the heart, or a language of the heart.

Not only Sufis but many students of symbolism have discovered and made use of this universal language. Thus a triangle has its meaning, and its color, too, has a meaning. The lotus is found in many places, associated with the opening of the heart, and with the lesson that the weak and lowly as well as the wise and honored may be blessed before God. Also, that illumination may come suddenly. Also that heaven and hell are closer to each other and to us than we suppose. And so with all symbols, which can be read by the illuminated heart.

GATHEKA: And if at the time when art is beginning to develop symbolism is used, it is a drawback; the art will not flourish. When it is beginning it must not touch symbolism, because symbolism comes as a natural development.

TASAWWUF: Life is expressed in growth and art is no exception. That is why we find artists constantly battling against conventions because conventions hamper growth. There is a search for greater and greater freedom, only the nature of freedom is not known and very often that which is acquired itself becomes a new bond, sets up a new convention.

Symbolism in one sense restricts expression, yet one might also say that the laws of mechanics make it inadvisable or impossible to build a house like an inverted cone or pyramid; the top storey of a building is often of much less area than the bottom, and if, under certain conditions it is larger, it is not much larger. There are laws of stress and strain, of equilibrium and balance, and we do not say they restrict freedom; they make anarchy impossible. So it is with symbolism. Symbolism indicates law and harmony, and points out the way, or the many ways.

Symbolism may begin as a revolt against convention or orthodoxy. But until a thought is repeated many times it does not make any impression in the mental akasha.

That is why even today it is against the law to teach evolution, although evolution has been demonstrated in countless ways. Yet the forms these repetitions take go contrary to other forms of repetitions, it is supposed.

GATHEKA: It is an inspiration; it becomes natural when the artist becomes natural; then everything he does has some symbolism in it.

TASAWWUF: For the heart gives rise to a multitude of forms, and yet these forms would seem rather geometric or dynamic. The teachings about dynamic symmetry show, from another view, the closeness of relationship between mathematics, mechanics, art and life. It is like working from a higher dimension. The intuitive faculty is not space-limited or time-limited although it gives rise to time-and-space phenomena and manifestations. Nor can the heart-knowledge be readily expressed in intellectual forms any more than fourth dimensional thought can be explicit in the language and thoughts of the average person. Yet those who lack power of conception may appreciate through feeling and this response of feeling is what every heart is seeking, consciously or unconsciously. So the heart speaks in symbols and the heart reads these symbols also.

GATHEKA: But when the artist in the beginning thinks, "I must begin with some symbolism," then he destroys the art. When you take symbolism as the first thing it destroys the art. Symbolism must come by itself. It is not something that you can study, it is not something that you can learn.

TASAWWUF: What an individual thinks out is only his own thought-forms. There have been mathematicians who have created a geometry or a branch of their science and often it has been nothing but a speculation, a mental gymnastic, it is not truth, yet it is not impossible from a certain standpoint. The whole universe is based upon laws and harmonies and every line or form, physical, mental, psychic, or astral, follows the universal principles, thought man may know it not. And if a certain artist draws even a line or a curve and he gives a meaning to it, that only indicates that it has that meaning to him, there is no indication that it has a meaning to another.

For instance take the number "1" which is like a straight line. An artist might want to start his own symbolism and instead of taking the straight line he might put down a circle, thus "O," and say that means "one" to him, that is his symbolism; it is mysterious, other people do not understand it. But the mystic would say, "Yes it is true others may not understand it. But this person has not a strong

creative nature, he is trying to make creativeness out of response. Very likely, too, he will not be balanced, his whole nature is becoming topsy-turvy. He may be concealing it from the generality, he does not conceal it from the wise.”

It takes a long time to impress the symbols just as it takes a long time to teach any science, only the symbols represent the cosmic forces and they do not come through one man. Even the wise have said, “There is nothing new under the sun,” they do not try to bring out new symbols or offer something new and say, “This is the symbol for the future.” For the lines of thought of the ages are definite and whatever is thought that is in harmony with them will take the same form in the mind-world and bring the same psychic power back to the physical plane.

GATHEKA: It is nature’s language, it is a spiritual inspiration, it is a revelation in itself, and when a person who has spent his life and thought and feeling, it naturally comes, it naturally springs just like a divine spring of beauty. Then alone the artist is entitled to produce in his art symbolism.

TASAWWUF: Those who take the path to God are given special training in Concentration. When they learn to keep quiet and control the thought by the feelings, and keep before themselves steadfastly the ideal or idea which they have, the lines of force in the mind-world go along certain patterns. These patterns may be reproduced in the physical world, and all that we see in manifestation on this plane is the outcome of what goes on in the mental plane. Therefore the occultists have always said: “As above, so below; as within, so without.” There is not one set of principles for earth, another for heaven. Christ prayed: “Thy will be done on earth as in the heavens.”

All the letters of the common alphabet were derived from symbols which grew out of nature and from man’s experience of nature. Each indicated something more than could be expressed in speech. From them came the elements and fundamentals of the graphic arts on the one hand and the aesthetic arts on the other hand. We do not think much about it now, nor consider the straight lines and circles and crosses which we see before ourselves all the time. We do not consider how long it took to impress the race with their meanings and values. Nor do we realize that the Western world did not readily accept zero (0), which to them, meaning nothing—meant nothing, had no meaning.

Now the living heart was not created with the body, it has existed before the body was formed and it responds naturally to form, it feels form and finds force as well as beauty (or lack of it) in form. Inspiration is not sterile, inspiration is an increase of life’s feeling when one feels that life and truth and self are in some way associated. And when the mind is quiet, the heart’s voice may be speaking and tell us what we think we do not know. The intellect does not know it; the heart may always have known it.

GATHEKA: Japan followed China. The Japanese are artistic people, and they are trying to produce things better and better; and what is good about their art is that they are lovers of daintiness, fineness, and everything that comes from there is so dainty and fine-looking.

TASAWWUF: There have been so many false remarks about the Japanese, based upon vague personal experiences or political attitudes. It is claimed that they received their art and culture and civilization from China. No doubt this is true in the same sense that America received its art and culture from Europe. All peoples are related and all may gain or learn from others. Perhaps this is really to be considered as a compliment. And unfortunately the Chinese have not always revered their ancient arts as much as the Japanese have. To study much in Chinese art one has to go to Japan.

The Japanese have still a strong feeling for the arts despite the wave of materialism which has spread over their country. We find among them the delicacy of the Jemali, the attention to detail and the use of meditation, even as a practical aid to art and life. The Japanese have had to work in a limited space and they have made more use of space. They have ikebana, flower and tree arrangement; they have miniature landscapes; they developed small plastics, they have done excellent work. They really love trees and the appearance of blossoms is to them sacred. They make practical use of the sacred, the natural, and their attitude toward their great mountain, Fujiyama, is marveled all over the world.

GATHEKA: But even that will last for some time. The present condition of Japan, which shows their greater interest in the things of the world will increase, and what little art there is just now, even that art will disappear.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, the Japanese are by nature refined, but there is a tendency to remove the old, to take on something new, they have lost much of their conservatism. They wear Western clothing and have come into the machine age. Although it is foreign to their nature, they have been adopting so many western methods, finally turning to warfare to preserve, in theory, their national ideals, and dispensing with those ideals in order to excuse the war and be successful in the war. And there is a danger that if they are successful they will also become commercial while if they fail their whole civilization may disappear.

GATHEKA: It is one thing to be an artist, and it is another thing to be avaricious; these are two different things.

TASAWWUF: This shows the difference between the false self and the true self. Nufs, the false self, lacks consideration for others, and tries to draw around itself and unto itself all power and possession. Thus it may dispense with beauty and wisdom; it seeks even greater and greater power until there is no more equilibrium or harmony. And this will-to-power is like a disease. Even if victory comes, what does it bring? Only a sense of intoxication; it brings blindness instead of justice, passion instead of compassion.

Thus with all the morality in the traditional Japanese codes and with the wealth of Buddhistic knowledge, now that the world is before them, they are trying to conquer the world. They feel that they have contributions for the world. Instead of offering them in love and friendship, they are trying to force them upon others. One cannot build civilization thereby; Rome tried it and failed; Persia

tried it and failed. Only destruction and demoralization can result from constant warfare and the will-to-power.

GATHEKA: When coming to the process of painting, we see now that from oil-painting it has come to what they call water-color.

TASAWWUF: There are two classes of oils, those which come from the animal and vegetable worlds, and those which are derived from the mineral world. The former have more life in them, the latter have less life, while those which are synthesized in the laboratory not only do not bring life, they take it away from one. While water is in a sense a carrier of life, it has not the essence of organic oils. And although it is wonderful to watch man's achievements and to make use of the things of the earth, there are also psychic and occult laws which are not yet understood, which were understood a little in the past, and which it is hoped, man will know more about, in the future.

GATHEKA: And now in water-color, which is not so rich and more lasting, they are producing what they call futurism and that is the idea of a movement; a person is walking, so he is in the movement of walking, and his hand is in a certain direction, that shows he is walking. But it is exaggerated so much that no person would ever walk like this, however ill he might be. What does it take a person to? It takes a person to craziness; that which is not natural is suggested by the art.

TASAWWUF: Yes, there is a certain view that the soul is not existent and that man's character results largely if not entirely from the play and interplay of natural forces. Indeed this is the teaching of most of the Southern and some of the Northern Buddhists. This view makes the forces real, and as has been explained, it leans toward the vibrational and vital aspects of reality. But this futurism goes even beyond that and it accepts forces without any conscious recognition of the essence behind them. It both assumes and ignores the existence of a human soul and all that is associated with it.

There is in this not only an attempted escape from reality on the part of the artist, there is also an effort to escape from thought. Sensitive persons suffer in the material world and some, who are refined, have difficulty in holding on to thought. So they seek an escape from both matter and thought. This is also based upon the heart-intuition, which sees the delusions of both mind and matter. However the futurist assumes that in no-thought there is thought and that if the present will not accept what is offered, the future necessarily will. Man seeks freedom in order to tyrannize over the future. And this reveals the artist's inner character. It proves there is lack of clarity there and that lack of clarity is revealed in his work.

GATHEKA: Besides the furniture, on the background—suppose the trees, the branches of the trees are spreading their arms. Instead of being natural trees they are unnatural trees, which were never created by God; only in that picture you can see the trees just like a person's arms stretched out.

TASAWWUF: This shows the appeal to sensation. Today sensation is important, people crave excitement and find it in the cinema, and radio, **thrill** stories, often quite unnatural. So the artists

suppose that there is success in the creation of that which will produce thrill, sensationalism. And they depart from realism and naturalism because such departures are sure to cause excitement and attention. It is often called “advertising” and it does advertise, but it has the most unwholesome after-effects.

Some artists just make cut-outs and do fanciful things. It is considered art, it is legitimate, it may be widely admired. There may be no unity, no coherence, no theme, but it may be popular. It only shows absence of mental equipment and a deplorable spirit of the times.

GATHEKA: There is a color, and you can try and feel that they are trees; but they are not trees. And one might think that they want to try and educate humanity by trying to give humanity something to think about, so that by thinking they can find out that it is so and so, that it is a tree; but it makes a person think. But there is so much in life to make us think that we do not need to go near a picture to be able to think. No, the subtlety of art sometimes makes a person think, but it is not the ugliness of art.

TASAWWUF: When we think of art we are drawn toward the feeling side of life and personality. We naturally long for beauty and if the past has failed to give it to us, we seek for it in every direction and in every aspect of life. The world needs beauty, it also needs solace. We have enough thought, we have thought upon thought and the clashing of many thoughts—or “isms” as they are sometimes called. There is little peace or rest for the mind, the avenues of escape for the heart seem blocked and nowhere are they more blocked than where one looks for them most, in religion or in art.

One might equally say that scrambled words constitute literature or that a child with building blocks creates inspiring things. What is not understood is called subtle, it is a puzzle, and there is a delight in creating puzzles. One might call it idiocy equal with art. In the mad house they could produce such things and the psychiatrists would see in them examples of diseases of the mind. But when the world does not understand, the world is led astray, and the queer and lazy and undeveloped dominate the esthetic field.

It is no wonder, then, that the world rushes on toward destruction. Beauty would save it, if there were the earnestness toward the expression of beauty. Thought might save it if man really knew how and what to think. If there were real inspiration, and if the cosmos spoke through man—which will become possible when man offers himself to be the instrument of the cosmos instead of the ego—the world could be saved from chaos.

GATHEKA: Symbolism is a different thing, expressing an idea which is complex, and you have to think about it; but it is not deformity that should bring you a higher thought.

TASAWWUF: One who has training in symbolism or in concentration can test this. A real symbol will produce inspirations and give rise to deep thought. It will bring a feeling of strength or surety, the heart will feel its own response. There is nothing queer about it, and it may produce

compassion, consideration. The acceptance of true symbology leads mankind onward, upward. But calling things symbols and regarding them as such without understanding can only bring and increase obsession. Thus the whole world suffers.

GATHEKA: No doubt, a continual striving after producing something new will bring about a result sooner or later, and will elevate art. From this, something new will come out, and perhaps that will be a step forward in evolution. But it will not come very soon.

TASAWWUF: The Message has brought with it not so much new knowledge as a new approach to life. As man finds the source and secret of life within himself he will produce beautiful things. There is a growing interest in art, only it is made secondary to the good of the social order or to some propaganda or idea. If instead the social order sought fine art it would take care of itself, it would be self-justified.

Little children are encouraged to look at pictures, they study art appreciation. Do you not suppose that their thoughts will be effected thereby? The futurists are not entirely wrong about the influence of art. They do not see that there can be elevating art. So instead of man benefiting there is a conflict between different forms, different norms, different ideas and interpretation, and without the heart-intuition, the average person is unable to get much out of it.

According to the mystical tradition the intuitive faculty is normal to the state of genius and the person with the faculties of the genius will naturally have more insight, unless he turns his back upon it as being opposed to common sense. Even then the artist reflects something from the mind-world and every painting and creation establishes lines of mental force and psychic power in this world. There is magic in all art whether it is recognized or not. What we need then, is more art education, true education that will enable man to understand what he is doing while he is doing it.

GATHEKA: Evolution sometimes takes a wrong way and sometimes a right way, but in the end it reaches the destination. But at the same time it can be better, and the artist can take a better way of bringing about that result sooner, if only he thinks in the spiritual realm.

TASAWWUF: Now, how can one think in the spiritual realm? One does not regard the spiritual realm as that of thinking. And yet the spiritual life can give rise to thought. The heart is the very depth of mind and the awakening of heart makes of the mind a willing instrument, an instrument which will equally show the way of life and the way to light as it now shows the way—if it can be called “way”—to darkness and confusion. All the methods that have been used in the past to explain or display the higher stages, states and grades of human consciousness and development can be shown through art, and have been revealed through painting when all other ways of depicting them have failed, being insufficient. What was true in the past, can be just as true in the present, and in the future.

Art 11

GATHEKA: When we look at the art of the middle Ages and find out the psychology behind it, it seems that the attempts of the artist in the middle Ages was to produce an object of worship. Restricted within the laws of conventionality, having deep belief in the sacred task the artist had, he kept his art as an expression of his deepest devotion.

TASAWWUF: Every time the Message is delivered, whenever there is a change in the form of religion, there may be an uprooting of old culture. It is not that any Messenger of God has attacked the civilization of the previous age. It is that the followers see the decadence and the wickedness and wish to remove it. Jesus, for instance, desired to reform Judaism. There is nothing in his teachings to indicate that he was opposed to art, culture, science, or even customs. But free expression has been found contrary to the exercise of priestcraft. The leaders of Christianity took it upon themselves to uproot ancient knowledge with all its blessings. This did not occur so much in India because Buddha did not accept the traditional priestcraft and established monkery instead, but expected higher behavior from the monks than from the devotees, and higher behavior from the devotees than from others. This is the norm of true morality.

We need not blame the Christian church either. For there was a social revolt attendant upon the spread of Christianity and when later the Roman Empire was invaded, the invaders were often Christians who were shocked at what they considered the survivals of paganism. The wiser church leaders then sought to direct the genius of artists to devotional ends, and this was easy because it is natural. The human heart longs for God and when it is directed thereunto, inspiration is easy and natural.

Devotion always produces a fervent spirit in the artist and this spiritual feeling manifests in his whole being: heart, mind, eyes, hands, atmosphere. The Christian spirit thus gave rise to much that is marvelous and beautiful even though its canons or norms were different (and rightfully so) from those of earlier days. And we can learn thereby that devotion is valuable. Those who have tried to imitate the work of the Pre-Renaissance or Renaissance artists, lacking this spirit, have failed. Imitation does not produce wisdom or beauty.

GATHEKA: And however much one may criticize the art of the middle Ages, comparing it with the art afterwards, yet a deep thinker will certainly feel that there is an atmosphere about it, a feeling in it, a magnetism put into it that grows day after day. And it seems that any form of art of the middle Ages can be appreciated only if one does not compare it with the art of today.

TASAWWUF: It is not necessary to go over all the criticisms made of medieval art. No doubt the restrictions upon the study of anatomy placed many obstacles in the artist's path, and when we compare the productions of the Europe of that time with those of most of Asia, it is evident that then the East was far ahead of the West. Even the monstrosities of India were far superior, and there is a certain feeling one obtains by the study of them, which is psychological rather than esthetic.

Even at that the atmosphere of the “primitives” of Europe is tremendous and however unbeautiful they may appear they do uplift man’s inner being. And when, at a later time, there was much catering to taste, it was often at the loss of spirit, which was not replaced. And when, on top of that, nicety is no longer regarded as so important, one wonders what really is this which we call art, is there anything to it at all?

GATHEKA: As Majnun said: “To see Leila you must borrow my eyes;” we borrow the eyes of the people of the middle Ages, the feeling of the people who lived at that time, and then look at it. For, in its primitive development, there is something hidden in it; and if the same art was produced today, it would have no effect, because it has not got that magnetism, that life, that mystery hidden in it.

TASAWWUF: As Spengler has well declared, one has to obtain the spirit of the middle Ages and think as they did, to get the full feeling of their productions. Outwardly the world has improved, but at what price? Beniamino Bufano, one of the best known sculptors of the day has seen in this departure from early Medievalism a great loss and he looks to science and to the Orient to re-invigorate art in general. He may not call it magnetism, he may only vaguely recognize that a certain life is now missing but he feels it can be restored and all mankind benefit thereby.

Today, no matter how well-done pictures do not speak, and if so, only to the few. Often there is no meaning, or there is only a sort of social message, or some hidden or expressed humor, and more often, what is called art may be what is produced by someone called an artist.

GATHEKA: There is a story told in Arabia, that God made the statue of the first man and asked the soul to enter into it, and the soul refused to enter into the body of clay, saying that it was a prison. “I do not want to lose my liberty,” said the soul. God forced the soul again by saying, “Enter, I command you.” The soul refused. It said, “No, not in this captivity.” God commanded the angels to bring their harps and sing before the soul. And when they began to sing the soul got into ecstasy and it entered the body. When we think about the middle Ages and the Renaissance it is that difference: that first God made the statue of clay, and then the angels forced the soul into it.

TASAWWUF: How did the angels force the soul? First there was life and then there was beauty, and when the soul came under the spell of beauty it was intoxicated. And so it was with Medieval Art. During the first period there was life, and then came the Renaissance, and with it beauty and under the spell of beauty mankind became intoxicated, until the degree was reached that only beauty was desired and the hold over the life behind it was relaxed.

The sculptors of those days were very devout, and they used to make little idols. Christianity was opposed to the use of idols so they did not call them idols, they called them icons, and they were images of Christ and his mother and many saints. They made these forms as if engaged in prayer, and they brought to them all the blessings of spiritual and holy magnetism. Thus there was life in them and even to this day people who look at them feel that life.

At a later time the painters improved in their art and they made more and more ornate pictures, and all the arts progressed together, but through the Renaissance period, often under the guidance of the popes, the religious element was dominant. After that the kings and nobles became the patrons and there was a tendency to the picturesque, and this tendency grew and grew until outer form alone dominated and there was a decadence.

It will be possible to counteract this decadent spirit by restoring life and power to the artist and this can be done when he resumes the practices of meditation and concentration, and better, if he can re-attain the devout spirit. But as the spirit of religion and especially as the spirit of orthodoxy is weak today and weak more among the intelligent types, it may be that the spirit of devotion will only accompany or follow the practice of concentration because the heart is not open, and man will have to be shown.

GATHEKA: The wave coming from ancient Greece to Italy brought that new life; but at the same time the art which was once made for worship, was made for admiration. Art arose towards a great height, bringing the spirit of ancient Greece into a new realm of expression.

TASAWWUF: In ancient Greece it was considered worthy to make something beautiful for the gods; beauty and goodness and devotion were all one. Among the Christians these were not identical, devotion coming first and beauty often having little part in the common life. Besides, the ancient Greek spirit was outside the realm of religion in the modern sense and when it re-invigorated the art of Western Europe, it was not always in harmony with the religious tendencies of the times. It came more in the spirit of human will.

The Renaissance, however, did bring the revival of the cult of Beauty and this beauty was not entirely divorced from religion. One can see it in Michelangelo, Titian, Raphael, Da Vinci and many others. Their work was most beautiful and they used all the known mediums and influenced all arts and crafts and reawakened humanity to the love for beauty.

This opened up a new cycle for artists. When they are protected against the exigencies of life and do not have to worry they are able to relax and work at ease. This makes it much easier for them to produce fine works. But if they lose the devotional spirit and attend themselves entirely to secular art, the beauty devoid of life may lapse into prettiness. There is no inspiration in mere imitativeness.

GATHEKA: Nevertheless, one can say about it that in the middle Ages art was towards God, with the Renaissance art became with God, and afterwards it was produced with no God.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, before the Renaissance God was not depicted in art. The ancients used to meditate, concentrate, pray and receive impressions. They were inspired even though the subject matter was not directly religious. And in the middle Ages, which was a period when the Christian Church influenced everything, controlled everything, if there was less meditation in the older sense, there was more prayer, there was a striving upwards.

There is what has been called the Faustian spirit; it is the striving of man toward an ever higher and higher ideal. This spirit is seen in the Gothic architecture, in the organ and its music, in the celebration of the Mass and in the general attitude and spirit of the middle Ages. Even journeys and pilgrimages were conducted in that same spirit, the outcome of which was the Crusade. Such religion is transcendental, God is above man and beyond man, and although it is possible for man to attain to the beatific vision, still God is God and man is man. This Faustian spirit reached one of its supreme developments in Dante's sublime poetry.

Then there is the Dionysian spirit which is different and which sees God imminent in man; God is within man and God is with man. Then instead of striving after a distant God one feels God immediately at hand. And this spirit one finds in the Renaissance. Anyone who has seen Michelangelo's "Moses" might say, "Yes, God was with him as he worked." This brings out the spirit of the genius in man and one might also say that Leonardo da Vinci was most jinn-like in all his characteristics. This Dionysian spirit was dominant among the ancient Greeks; it animated their art and at a later time inspired the artists of Europe during that period we call the Renaissance.

But after the genius was fully developed in man, there was a tendency toward display, ornateness, prettiness and the spirit was lost. Music, poetry, painting were adopted to man's pleasure so a period of decadence set in which was not complete until the Industrial and French revolutions.

GATHEKA: The gap that you find between today and that day when art was in its great glory, is because of art being without God. And the artist of the Renaissance had not given up God; but then God was forgotten.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, although the artist did not immediately become an agnostic or atheist, for practical purposes he no longer relied upon God or religion. He said his prayers in the church; he left his religion at home. Different ethics or no ethics were adopted in business and profession. Then the Divine Spirit which is in every man became silent and found no outlet.

GATHEKA: Be the art painting, or sculpture, or any form of art, when it is not directed towards a higher ideal it must go down; it cannot rise, because the ladder is not there. It is the ideal which helps everything to go upward, and without the ideal everything goes downward.

TASAWWUF: First there is lack of reverence among the artists and then there is such lack toward the artists. The genius is naturally a leader of man and the atmosphere he has is conveyed to others. He can readily win the respect of the generality. His attitude toward his art therefore often becomes the public attitude toward him. And if one finds today a man of feeling, he will be respected even though he may have difficulty earning his livelihood.

The spirit of art spread into many countries during and after the Renaissance. It did not carry the religious spirit with it and the Protestants felt that much in art was "pagan" so they divorced religion and art to a great extent. So there were many masters in the Netherlands, many great geniuses flourished there; their work was in all detail finer than that of the early Italians. Yet

something was missing, the spirit was beginning to disappear and it disappeared more and more during the next centuries.

Each political revolution has in a sense brought back something of the spirit to action. The French and Russian revolutions each in its time and in its way sought to rescue art and life from the decadence which had set in. Both were anti-clerical, but the French Revolution established the principle of human freedom, which did not close every door, and which made it possible for many artists to find their way through life, and also for many to introduce the most fantastic ideas and works and call them art.

One reason for the success of fantasy and experimentation in art has been that as soon as artists could not emulate their predecessors they gave out some philosophy as an excuse, they sheltered themselves behind ideas which were not understood and took advantage of this lack of understanding to give to the world much that has no value in eternity.

GATHEKA: One can see the reason, that people become more materialistic; and naturally the beauty belongs to Heaven—on earth it is only reflected—and when the connection with Heaven is broken, when the back is turned to Heaven, then the eyes are focused on the earth; and slowly and gradually beauty begins to disappear.

TASAWWUF: This, of course, is quite evident, and although there have been many fine works produced in all countries of Europe, and there are galleries and museums in Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain, except where some inspiration has been drawn from the unseen, there is a certain strength, a certain spirit missing and all know it. The defense mechanisms and philosophies do not satisfy the human heart.

GATHEKA: Therefore in one way the gap between the Renaissance and now has been a gap caused by materialism, by commercialism, by the lack of heavenly inspiration.

TASAWWUF: What is necessary, therefore, is a return to the spirit, that the artist may find in himself or may discover elsewhere the means by which he can again reproduce or produce that which is both beautiful and inspiring, that which will make an appeal to human hearts and have the germ of immortality in it. For most artists are either vain enough or far-sighted enough to wish or plan that the future will enjoy their works. They are seldom so commercially minded that all they care for is the reward of the moment. Besides, to offer something to eternity one must feel that eternity.

In this day the line between the artist and craftsman is not so great as heretofore. The craftsmen used to have guilds and they had their tests and preparations. The physicians yet have their periods of probation or internment before they go into public practice. The musicians have their union instead of their craft-guild, the effect of which is not the same for the guild was concerned with the welfare of the art as well as that of the artist.

Nevertheless the artist should be protected, provided he is an artist—for which some standard needs to be set. We have in modern times all sorts of beautification: public planning, parks, mountain sculpture, interior decoration, flower arrangement, many new metals and media and paints to use. Attention has been given to the musician, but the musician merely repeats what others have created or composed. The lot of the artist from the beginning is therefore harder for he must be a creator also, and when he lacks the genius to create or the incentive to work and society ignores him he has to struggle very hard.

The Message of Sufism of this day comes to suggest to the artist that if he will develop himself, bring out his latent genius, become an inspired of mankind, his lot in the world may be made much easier. It is chiefly the solution of his own problem which comes first. When he knows how to make use of the silence, to connect his inspiration, imagination, breath and action, he will again be able to reproduce that spirit of life found in the Old Masters. He may become one of an endless chain of “New Masters.”

GATHEKA: No doubt the need that has been felt in the hearts of lovers of beauty has been working in the inner planes, and now today it is beginning to show itself. But what has showed itself? Not beauty, nor art. But the absence is now being felt.

TASAWWUF: For the heart of every person feels the lack and this is a demonstration of the immortality of the soul. The soul has lived before and collected impressions of its experiences; it is a storehouse of feelings for which there is no intellectual explanation. Yet there is response before beauty and before nature and that is why cultured people in particular long for a more beautiful world.

There is a strong protest against the spirit of the age, but the protest itself is as leaderless and selfless as the age and so it has started many times but not advanced. And instead, every effort has to be made to preserve the folk arts which are in danger of disappearing before the attendant commercialism and materialism. And if they go, it will show that the very spirit in man is dead.

GATHEKA: And what is the outcome of it? The outcome of it is that the artist thinks that there must be a new start in the world of art, there must be a new beauty, there must be found a new beauty, a new expression; but when he tries to find it, most often he loses the mark, because when inspiration is lacking and effect is forcing itself, what is produced by it is mechanical.

TASAWWUF: And this mechanical aspect can be seen in the works of many schools—the straight line, circle, geometric curve, lines of shadows, philosophies of cubism and futurism have all substituted something for the direct approach of the artist and his subject. And it is no wonder that artists have been called “escapists” by their contemporaries. Or else they are rewarded to follow certain lines, often political. And although we see some very fine cartoons and in dressmaking, designing and other fields there is room for expression, there is constant change—which would be impossible if there was spirit there. This shows man is still searching.

GATHEKA: One thinks, "No, everything must be in angles; that is a new beauty created;" and the other one says, "No, everything must be in colors, everything must show out by itself;" another person says, "Everything must be just the line without a detail; everyone must find out for himself what it is;" another person says, "Everything must be in an unfinished state, because that seems very artistic." In this way it is just like many horses trying to take different directions in order to reach to something.

TASAWWUF: And this shows that the artists cannot lead, do not lead because they themselves do not any longer know what art is. When they leave the interpretation to the viewer, they put little thought in it and when thought is absent one of the elements of beauty is gone, thought being an avenue between feeling and action. Besides, this shows that the artists do not know the significance of color, line and form. They have no idea of eternal values. And they do not know that that which touches not the heart of the observer is not, cannot be beautiful, should not be called beauty.

The German philosopher Hegel was one of the first to write on art from this view. He studied art and artists and wrote his opinions of their social value. He has greatly influenced the subsequent thought in Europe and his books reveal his profundity of thought. But Hegel was not an artist himself and he did not try to circumscribe art or offer special techniques. After him philosophers and psychologists studied art and artist and the artists in their turn began to offer their philosophies to the world.

The trouble about this is that wisdom comes from the heart, not from the head and when intellect leads one does not become inspired. The generality do not follow the philosopher and psychologist and regard them as weird. Besides when one cannot clearly explain imagination, intuition, beauty, inspiration, he confuses himself and others in his efforts. And what the artist really needs is more heart-development. When there is education of the heart to correspond to that of the intellect the genius in man will come to the surface. Then art may ultimately become religion itself.

GATHEKA: And yet the ideal seems to be absent yet. The day when the ideal will come in the hand of the artist art will progress more rapidly, and that promise of the future art will then come.

TASAWWUF: To bring this about the Message of the Day has come with teachings and techniques designed to awaken the inner faculties of everybody beginning even with the little infant. Man can delve into himself and as the *Gayan* teaches, there is nothing which cannot be found in man. Heart-research, therefore, is most necessary, and along with that will come the recognition of the genius in man. Otherwise any study or investigation of the pituitary body with the expectation of producing great artists, or pursuance of some unverified psychology will end in vain. The age will be little better than the one which preceded it.

GATHEKA: Today we hear the word futurist; futurism is not yet born. On the contrary the name of the futurist is beginning to frighten. People are beginning to be frightened at the futurist, because the futurist has not yet appeared. That something which is beginning with a promise of reaching the

heights, of manifesting in perfection, that has another voice, that has another soul and another expression.

TASAWWUF: Very often we find that people who have been rejected try to console themselves that the future will accept them and follow them. Of course there is always a possibility in it. A materialistic age does not accept a spiritual person and some intuition says the future will be different. But this is not a matter of self-will. No egoism, no self-conceit, vanity, can predetermine the behavior or the reaction of those to come. Like us they have the unsatisfied heart and if we cannot satisfy ourselves we shall not be able to satisfy them. It is on this point that the futurists fail.

Of course youth is always yearning and searching, and if it were not for that even the scientific spirit would be impossible. And there still stands in the heart of man that Spirit of Guidance which calls to everyone, which will not be forever silent although it may make its impressions known in strange ways. But humanity is beginning to respond to the religion and art of Asia despite a thousand arguments here and there; in it is the universal spirit, the Voice of the Cosmos.

GATHEKA: Today the artist is striving for it, his soul is longing for it, but he has not found it yet. And the very reason that he has not found it is that he is thinking hard. Art does not require thinking hard, neither poetry nor music.

TASAWWUF: For thought is not the key to inspiration and inspiration may be the key to thought. It is not hard, tense endeavor which produces results but relaxation. It is not a philosophy which helps most beforehand, but rather that a piece of art be self-expressive and its interpretation be one of feeling rather than of intellectualism.

It is no wonder that today paintings are overburdened with thought. One looks at the works of Diego Rivera and calls him a genius. No doubt the genius is there, one can feel something, yet there is also something lacking; there is too much thought and too little feeling. The thought covers the feeling and the figures are monstrosities or symbols. The result is that while on one hand some people are roused against the unjust conditions against which Rivera believes he is fighting, others are equally indignant against the license Rivera has taken. And if the propagandist only knew it, for each convert he makes he may be making two enemies.

GATHEKA: It always comes with comfort, with ease, with relaxation; and it comes naturally. The day when the artist takes a thing and says "Oh, I wish to create it, I want to bring it out," he is fighting with beauty, he is struggling with inspiration.

TASAWWUF: Inspiration is a natural impulse from the heart and if man only knew it, by attunement with God, he could receive it steadily; or, if one does not like the word "God," he can learn that the very silence of space is living and if one can become tuned to that he can receive in himself that power and that urge and even that ability which will carry this creative genius out in action.

Of the Europeans the poets have felt this much more than the artists and have even expressed

themselves so. But what is needed today is the means whereby artists and geniuses first and then all mankind may learn how to restrain passion and egotism, and to enter into the stillness from which comes all blessings. All the esotericism of the inner schools is for no other purposes than that.

GATHEKA: The great pity of this day is an unconscious and yet predominant commercial influence hovering like clouds on the art of today. This inclination, which is generally felt, that every month there must come a new fashion and there must be a new fashion in everything, that inclination itself, saturated with avariciousness, destroys the root of natural, beautiful art.

TASAWWUF: There may be two or more aspects to it. In the realm of clothing where there is constant establishment of new fashions there may be a yearning for the beautiful also. People want to see and wear fine clothes, and this love for the beautiful is natural; it may be called vanity yet it is natural. The strange thing is that today on the one hand men are restrained from esthetic expression and if they want it they must join some club or lodge and there wear costumes or put on pageants or parties.

The spirit of vanity in man also can be attracted by change and under the guise that it is progress the commercial spirit constantly encourages new fashions so that more money will be spent. The result is that style becomes important and beauty, comfort and price less important and style itself is a form of egoism, it clearly reveals the status which Sufis call **Nufsaniat**, that condition in the world which reveals no sound thinking, no picture of a purpose in life, just movement and tension, even chaos.

The spiritual philosophy does not demand conventions and does not oppose conventions. There are patterns of behavior, courtesy, etiquette, which surely ought not to be restrained and when they are regarded as outmoded, it often means that the generation is excusing itself for its faults. But a convention has come in clothing and even in art of no convention; that is to say, freedom has been used as an excuse to become, so to speak, another form of slavery. So there is constant pandering to ego, to avarice, to passion, and the chief purpose of it is that someone makes money therefrom.

GATHEKA: As Solomon has said, there is nothing new under the sun. Why strive for something new? Life is always new and always old. It is the same thing and yet it is new.

TASAWWUF: If we keep the same clothing, we can increase the magnetism in the clothes. We are constantly putting psychic energy into everything we wear. That is why sometimes an old coat or one's room or bed is marvelously comforting; our own atmosphere is in it. Yet it also true that perspiration, tobacco smoke and even the effluvia of past thought becomes connected with garments and in getting new ones there is often a feeling as if one has taken a bath. Then there is something new and refreshing. So there is a psychic aspect to the subject.

And if one were to ask, what should the spiritual person wear, there can be no fixed answer because there can be no restrictions of this nature in the spiritual life. There is, however, an

advantage in knowing something of the psychic laws, and outside of that comfort and beauty should be given much consideration and vanity avoided.

The same applies to art objects. The Japanese and Chinese display perhaps but one picture in a room, and then after a month or longer, they may store it away and take out another picture. Thus a few objects serve families for years and give out ever renewed inspiration.

GATHEKA: To think that we must forget, overlook, that we must destroy all the thought of the old, that itself is a greater error. And when they start with this error, wanting to make something new, then they make, they create ordinary things, things which are far from beauty.

TASAWWUF: This has happened in China several times and also in the Roman Empire when the Christian leaders dispossessed the ancient art, and in another way it is unfortunately happening in parts of Europe. Under the feeling for new ideals, the stress has been the destruction of the old rather than the creation of the new. And it is a different spirit, one does not get the inspiration from destruction. And those who destroy the old will come to destroy the new also if they find it unworthy, so there will be too much destruction and not enough creation.

People do not hesitate to overthrow governments, to start revolutions, and they destroy books, paintings, habits of thoughts, and the next thing a war becomes imminent, because that spirit of war has been there. And to stop that or to help the world to recover, there is needed a complete renovation—which must begin within, in the heart of man first.

GATHEKA: And those admirers of art, and the customers of it, and those who go to buy something they do not mind what it is as long as it is new. Most of them only take a thing because it is the fashion, but not because it is beautiful. Just to be in the fashion of the day they must buy it.

TASAWWUF: And this tendency passes from one art to another until there is no norm and no ideal. One sees it also in literature, in the drama and most of all in the cinema. The result is that the cinema in particular has become the object of sharp attacks and no doubt in some respects it is indefensible. Still everywhere there is an admiration for something new and behind this is a hidden, unrestrained emotionalism which cannot be stopped by logic, argument, philosophy, even by education. These means have failed, and all bow before egotism and commercialism in the end.

GATHEKA: Therefore the great load of responsibility and work is thrown on the head of the artist, as well as on them who bring before the world something new. And it is this pressure which is spoiling the work of the artistic souls, who must have time to think about beauty and who must have the leisure to feel deeply.

TASAWWUF: That is why there is still much admiration for Japanese and Chinese artists. They work very rapidly. What is not observed is that beforehand there is long preparation, meditation, calm and much practice before attempting anything. Then they are very slow to create something new. They prefer old themes, that on every attempt they make some improvement, some

embellishment, which is sufficient for them; that gives them satisfaction. The theme and their own purpose of life become identical. They and their art are not separate.

Today if artists work rapidly, especially when painting portraits, their clients do not care much. People have not the time or patience to sit quietly for long periods. Then if the artist produces something which is more like a caricature there is an excuse that he is a member of a certain school which works in that manner. So his production is admired and beauty languishes.

Besides in a mechanical age the machine is working very rapidly and many things that used to be produced by hand are turned out in great number by machines. Color printing, pattern making, stencil copying and other tasks are now done by machinery. It is cheaper, it takes less time and it is superficially better and indeed it often is very much better than some of the devitalized and devitalizing work of the day.

GATHEKA: Instead of that an anxiety is thrown around them, a responsibility is forced upon them to bring out something new. And that day when the world or art will forget the word "new," a new life will come into the world of art.

TASAWWUF: For when there is no relaxation or repose all that can be new is a certain form. Artists are not always responsible people, they are not business men. When they have too many cares they cannot obtain that repose necessary for fine work. It is necessary to release the pressure upon them, and then, in their calmness they will feel more of the life and of the surge of the day. Then the heart within them will speak and they will begin to express something which will appear new because there will be so much more life in it.

So many of the new things have apparently no relation to the world, except that relation which consists of not being related. There is the habit of being different even if one is thereby ineffective. And thus the life departs out of work, it is stale, it is dead. No amount of polite commendation by critics can atone for this departure from the way of life and truth.

GATHEKA: It seems that, with every attempt that is being made to further art, there is a great necessity of that one aspect of art, the making of frescoes, which is so little done. And what little is being done seems to be on the modern ideas of producing something new.

TASAWWUF: There are so many methods used to be different as if differentiation and modernism is new. Yet there are also so many themes which can be displayed that one may return to old methods, or even use the Buddhist style upon Christian themes or the Oriental approach to Christian themes. That would be new and old and refreshing and inspiring. And besides, when one sees what is being done with cartoons, especially by Walt Disney who has returned to folklore and legend and myth, there is still a great world unconquered by the artist.

GATHEKA: There is a hope that the art of fresco making will develop one day and will have a much greater value and scope for art, and will take a more prominent place in the world of art.

TASAWWUF: Perhaps there is a certain approach to this in murals and out-door work especially that done in America by some of the unemployed who have been organized with the aid of the government. Only again there is not the complete liberty which brings inspiration. Work is done under orders. And often school children have to look upon themes not to their liking, or work which is quite unbeautiful. Then they turn from art and beauty, there seem to be so many finer things in life.

GATHEKA: It seems that fresco painting must be as finished as any other picture; and so it was. In the frescoes which you see in Italy, by the great masters, they have not left anything undone, they have put everything possible in, in order to finish it.

TASAWWUF: For the artist should complete his art. Art is not something to be completed by the admiration or imagination of the onlooker. If one has to develop the imagination there are other and better ways of doing it than by looking at an incomplete picture or model, and especially than by looking at distortions. Besides there is again the lack of patience, and without some psychological training the artist will not obtain that patience. He has to develop that which will make him and his art one, and when the art is incomplete, then there is something lacking in the artist.

GATHEKA: Besides—it may be any art—there must be a desire on the part of the artist to finish it, not to keep it unfinished. And that wish to keep it unfinished is against perfection. Our desire must be to finish it. If there is not this desire of finishing, it is laziness, lethargy, negligence.

TASAWWUF: What first must be done is to set the artist on the right path. Meditation is of such great value that it can hardly be overestimated. When one feels the correspondence between himself and his work, he will want to go and complete his work because he will be completing himself. Besides, his very breath and thought will urge him to go ahead. And this union between artist and art itself will point the way to further progress.

No one would call it sensible if the architect left his house incomplete or the carpenter and plumber went away without finishing their tasks. The same applies to art, and it is not so mysterious or inhuman that a philosophy of art can cover it up.

GATHEKA: We all, human beings, have our limitations. It is very easy to say, "It is something unfinished. Just look at it, it is beautiful." But it is not a right thing.

TASAWWUF: Yes, there is an attitude that if something cannot be understood it is marvelous. Then the public comes to the decision that art is valuable only as it cannot be understood. And the result would be that the younger generations would turn away from art; or else be so influenced as to leave tasks undone, because if there is merit in incomplete art, then there is merit in other forms of incompleteness.

GATHEKA: In everything we do we must have the desire to finish it to our utmost. And still it will always remain unfinished when we look at it from the beauty point of view. We do not need to keep

it unfinished. It remains unfinished just the same without our trying it.

TASAWWUF: For in nature, in life, there is growth and change and art can at best give a cross section of it although in that cross-section one may be able to express more than a photograph or dead copy would tell. And the Japanese artists who have remained closer to the spiritual traditions have known this. They do not regard anything as complete and perfect no matter how many times they try it. And they will go over a work again and again in the hopes that their hearts may be satisfied.

In their Chanoya or tea-ceremony they have an art which is based upon the doctrine of incompleteness. Yet nothing is left out, nothing is omitted. They recognize or claim to recognize that man is not, cannot be perfect. The gospel of imperfection is kept before them in the hope that they will approach as near as possible to beauty, to perfection. The result is charming and if the Japanese are not destroyed by materialism this and other of their arts as well as something of the spirit of their art, may spread to other countries.

Today the sense of incompleteness is universal and the constant change in styles of all sorts, the experimentation done in the name of beauty or art, the blind groping after new arts and with it also a certain broadness, a willingness to learn reveal that man is in a period of transition. The question remains whether this will mean growth or decay for both are possible. Only the mystic would say that there is still the mistake of looking for perfection without.

The artist has within himself something of the spirit of the genius, and when he succeeds many succeed, when he fails, many fail. One who visits the expositions can see the direction in which art and life are tending. There is no feeling of assurance and there seems to be a departure from all canons. Beauty may be without laws, but it does have certain canons, feelings of nicety and good taste. No person should appear in public partly dressed though he may be only slightly clad or even totally unclad. No room should be furnished on one side, and not on the other. The feeling for these things remains.

To the mystic the feeling and thought which precede action or which should precede action contain within themselves all elements of starting, continuing and completing activity. When these are all first established in germ it is easier to carry out the material part. Therefore the mystic says that the life of the artist has to be made complete on the inner plane, then it will find satisfaction on the outer plane. And then, after that, all the world will benefit and civilization may go forward along lines on which it has hitherto made little progress.

Art 12

GATHEKA: Now coming to decorative art. What they call decorative art today seems to be a new

step in the unknown sphere. Very often the tendency is, and ought to be, to make a painting so as to produce an impression without going into detail. No doubt that is decorative art, and that should be.

TASAWWUF: This would seem to conflict with the other teachings, especially those in the line of completion. Yet a work may be complete, even regarded as perfect which does not tell us everything. It may be difficult, impossible or unwise to paint all the details of the wings of birds or to put on every leaf and every bit of foliage that one sees. It is not necessary and it does not always add to beauty. The Chinese have learned to express much with a few lines and the Western artists with many lines, and after one has put in all that one can, there may still be more room for improvement. For a good work of art is one that will delight, even inspire onlookers over and over again.

In decorative art there is often a search for atmosphere and to bring that atmosphere out there should not be too much expression, there should be empty space in a room, and even in a painting too many details are not needed. There should be the feeling of harmony in color, and when someone says he seeks the subtle harmonies, and excuses himself thereby for clashing tones, that is almost always the sign of lack of harmony no matter what is said.

Interior decoration has almost the same relation to simple art as orchestration has to music. In the orchestra some of the solo instruments lose a little of their importance and effect, yet their colors stand out at times and people enjoy such colorings. The same is true in this art which makes use of painting, upholstering, designing, weaving and many other arts, uniting them to produce a whole.

No doubt this new art is offering opportunities for women which they lacked in previous generations. Unfortunately they are too often apt to imitate the ways of men. Yet in a certain sense woman's place is in the home and in this art she may find ample room for self-expression.

GATHEKA: But at the same time it must be first reproduced in the deepest of one's heart; then the thought-power must be put in the lines that one draws. And if a person is only making an effect by his thought externally, by making something different, to look beautiful, it will never look beautiful and it will never suggest what one wants it to suggest.

TASAWWUF: People do not know the meaning of thought and how it expresses itself. It may express itself through melody in music, and through design in art. Every design reveals something of the mind of the one who draws it. If there is an incomplete design, then there is lack of thought behind it and no philosophy about it will satisfy, something is missing in the mind of the artist.

Thought, then, brings out design. And what brings out the beauty? This comes through feeling; when there is deep feeling there is beauty and when that feeling is lacking life is lacking, and then not even careful design and color will satisfy. The lack in the artist's heart will be felt by a sensitive person.

Today one sees attempts to restore feeling and instead of appealing always to emotion there is some appeal to fancy. Thus tales from folk-lore and legends are used upon walls and perhaps there are pictures of animals or characters drawn from cartoons of the day. The supposition is that they will delight the children; more often they delight the parents and the colors are selected without any idea of their effects. But do not suppose that they will be without effect upon the character of the children who use such rooms; do not believe that a child is not influenced by the atmosphere in which he is kept.

People enjoy the cartoons at the cinema and though they may not know it is an attempt to escape from materialism and that aspect of delusion miscalled "reality." The adults often enjoy these cartoons more than the children do. Skeptics scoff and point to the childish mind of the adults; actually it is not so. Lewis Carroll wrote the Alice stories and made the cartoons which accompany them and he was a great mathematician. Mental magnetism is not always buried in obscure and complex thought; the enjoyment that people obtain through these things is often a sign of buried genius. It may be childlike, it is not childish.

The establishment of an atmosphere in any room, whether used by child or adult is most important. The careful selection of subject materials, of furnishings and colorings will make it easier to obtain harmony. And if one cannot always study these things, yet the cultivation of feeling is possible for all, one may have feeling even when one is comparatively unlearned, unintellectual.

GATHEKA: The difference is that today, mostly, in decorative art a person has an idea to express, but at the same time he wants to avoid details and he wants to bring it out by lines. But at the same time those lines have not yet sprung from the depth of his heart, not come from inspiration; and therefore those lines do not become a universal language. They are just what is drawn; they are not a language, so that another person can at once feel that this is an idea which the artist intended to produce.

TASAWWUF: If one knew the meaning of symbols, he would find that the symbol always has the same inner effect, especially when used with the same colors. There is a language of symbol and color and it appeals to the heart. It is a language sometimes revealed in dreams, sometimes awakened through evolution, sometimes felt almost instinctively. But always there is a similar effect, for lines properly used are passages for psychic power, and once drawn remain as the same type of passages for the same kind of power.

It is all too easy for an artist to sketch something which is purchased with the idea that it is art and placed in a home. The picture is not only a scene—or an idea—it also carries a psychic atmosphere with it and this psychic atmosphere has an effect upon the immediate surroundings which may even be hypnotic without anyone knowing it or thinking much about it. And persons who sit in such an atmosphere are affected without knowing it. And if the artist has had no clear idea of his work, if he has not put thought and feeling into it, then instead of it giving out life it will deplete the atmosphere and have a weakening effect.

Thus the same mistake is made in art as in religion and public lecturing. For a long time the orthodox drew people to worship and instead of feeding them with life, the preacher would draw life from his congregation; they would return from worship weakened instead of being inspired. Of course there are many examples to the contrary and no one need be blamed; besides this the ministers and clergy tried to bless in the manner they knew the blessing.

As religion receded and people went more to public lectures, they thought they were improving their minds. And with regard to the universities and academies and learned men this was no doubt so. But many have gone to hear the metaphysicians and then they are misled by that which seems to be new. It thrills them and yet tires them.

The duty of spiritual persons is to restore magnetism and blessing to humanity and to do that through every avenue. That of art and decoration is marvelous, because the blessing that is put into a beautiful pattern can speak again and again; it can say much more than a lecturer who talks but once and then many of his words and some of his thoughts are not absorbed. A living art-object is as a blessing from heaven.

GATHEKA: It must be given an extra thought, so that he does not only make a line, that the line is not only a line, but the line expresses something, it is suggestive, it is living, and it produces in the mind of another person who looks at it the meaning of the artist in a moment.

TASAWWUF: Every line, curve and figure has a psychic and symbolic significance. The horizontal line has a meaning, the vertical line has a meaning. The triangle, circle, and many forms used in art and geometry have been so long associated with thoughts that they can hardly be called devoid of meaning although in nature, on account of the movements of life they are quite concealed. The direction of every line has its effect if not meaning.

Also the use of heavy and light outlines, of rugged, smooth, detailed or general forms at least reveal the condition of the artist, and whether he has impressed himself before he has tried to impress others.

The Oriental peoples have learned more about the effect of line and the intensity of impression which comes from having only one beautiful object in each room, or at least upon each wall. When the mind is overcrowded it does not receive any impression fully. The less it sees the more effective the impression of each object in sight. And the opposite condition occurs in the homes of people where the rooms are cluttered with furniture and **objets d'art**. The restless mind soon produces a state of nervousness.

GATHEKA: If you can take an object in decorative art which is not made with this inspiration, it is not finished, it has no detail in it, then it does not suggest anything to you; it is bewildering, it will confuse many. And at this time, if art also is confusion, then where must one go? There is nothing else. Art must be revealing, inspiring, instead of confusing.

TASAWWUF: What a protest there would be if edifices were left unfinished! What havoc would result if pieces of music had no endings! Indeed in the cinema there is often the opposite state of affairs, where they produce nice endings. But in the arts too much has been made to appear mysterious.

Now it is necessary to bring a new state of affairs and there is no better way to do this than through the various arts, not only poetry and music, but through painting, sculpture, architecture and many newer or lesser arts. When the source of beauty is discovered within, when it is fed and encouraged, when students are skilled in meditation and concentration, and when they absorb more of the life of the universe and space within their beings, they can radiate blessings to all in everything they do.

GATHEKA: There was a time when decorative art was very much developed. For instance, Chinese decorative art has touched its zenith.

TASAWWUF: Decorative arts may take on many forms. China has produced the most marvelous porcelain and pottery, and works of teak and other hard woods. The Chinese have made many objects from different metals and have been most successful in coloring them. They have been adept in the use of lacquer and various other decorative materials. They have carved works out of bone, ivory, wood, stone and almost every kind of material at hand. And they have advanced far in the use of silk, bamboo, in weaving colors together from threads, in fashioning screens, wall patterns and many other beautiful objects.

Indeed it might be advocated that all students of art in the future should study the methods of the Chinese. They invariably entered into attunement with the silence and out of the silence they derived their inspiration. They did not put in any details that were not impressive and at the same time they did not neglect anything which belonged to a picture or a story, although they had their own kind of perspective and different theories.

GATHEKA: You can see when the Chinese artist wished to produce the idea of the sky; he has produced it with a line; and you can feel it. Where does it come from? Does it come from a mental effort? It comes from inspiration.

TASAWWUF: From the earliest days the Chinese had the wisdom-teachings which have been known to us under the name of Taoism. One can read about them in the Tao-Teh-King, the teachings of which are very different from the philosophies studied in Europe. For it was held that real expression came in non-expression and that non-expression might be the best form of expression. Space, silence, movement and stillness all found their way into art. The emptiness was not empty, and the world about which seems so full of things was really void. Art and beauty belonged to the eternity rather than to the sensible world. And every picture was a scripture in its own way, bringing a lesson from eternity or from Tao—which word corresponds well to God as the Sufis conceive Him.

The Sufi has also said that the nature of God is Silence. In the silence one finds the pleroma or fullness of life—which is mentioned in the first chapter of *The Mysticism of Sound*. And when one has learned that lesson, every line and figure that he draws will be full of meaning, and the feeling of his heart will send out its magnetism which will be recorded in everything he does—or says.

GATHEKA: It is one thing to think about an idea, and another thing to feel the idea. And once the person begins to feel the idea, he is able to put it on the canvas.

TASAWWUF: Feeling it is that has been crushed more than anything else in our lives. Feeling is closely akin to love; when love is crushed there is less life and so less feeling. Besides the education of this day is too much concerned with intellectual things and man is taught chiefly of things that lay outside of himself. And really when he fails to understand himself there is little he can understand.

The mystic learns to feel first, whether this lesson comes through pain or through willing surrender or through grace or in any other manner. The development of this feeling brings with it the deep sense of life. Then man is what man does, and in every act, especially those of creative genius, he puts himself, and the blessings he receives become human records.

GATHEKA: And even if it is not finished, it is finished in the feeling of the person and that completeness in the lines. And those who will see, they will see the truth of it. They will be able to read it; they will know the object with which the picture was made.

TASAWWUF: This has been especially recognized in Chinese art, and also in much of the Japanese art which drew its inspiration from China. And Western people who have seen examples of Oriental art have enjoyed it without always being able to explain why. And the result is that Chinese art is becoming more popular because it gives people something they lack and feel they need intuitively.

GATHEKA: Furthermore, there is coming about now an aspect of art and they call it clairvoyant, or mediumistic, or spiritualistic. One may speak of the bewildering effect of art, but this is most bewildering.

TASAWWUF: This art has been encouraged by those who wish to rise out of the miasma of materialism. Yet it is a step backward and not forward when one depends upon spirits which are of low evolution. But when one becomes the slave of psychic entities and thought-forms, although this seems helpful to some engaged in certain arts, at the same time it is at the expense of balance and intellectual development.

People have found automatic writing comes easy and then they write what they suppose comes from the spirit world. They allow themselves to be directed by the forces to which they become sensitive, then responsive. Then they call this inspiration and they produce weird poetry, music, pictures. Instead of being true artists they are more like pencils, brushes or tools, not the

instruments of God, but the instruments of these strange forces.

These forces take on various forms. They are often entities formed of human thought, or they are shadow beings of the mind world. There is a karmic field of force around every person and negative people attract obsessing forces against which they have no protection. Often they welcome these forces, and when they become their tools, in art what they produce lacks what some have called "soul." There is no real feeling or power in such things, only strangeness.

GATHEKA: A person made something of different colors on a paper, and brought it before a mystic and showed it to him and said, "People cannot understand this deep idea, but you will understand it. It is very deep; it has come from some clairvoyant sources." The mystic looked into it. There were many colors, that was all he could see, and they were also not blending harmoniously with one another; they were only striking; and some red streaks going here and there in that picture. The person looked at the mystic and was waiting for his opinion. He said, "What do you think of it." So the mystic said, "It is the picture of the end of the world." The person felt very glad about it, for that is the last picture.

TASAWWUF: The way of the mystic is not to get angry at these unfortunate tendencies nor to scold the backward. Even the one who is obsessed, especially the one who has placed himself as a slave to psychic forces needs much help. He cannot be helped by any strong criticism. The mystic could see that there was no thought in this picture and when there is no thought form cannot abide, so in this sense it was the end of the world.

So long as there is no clear idea of what art is or should be such tendencies will persist. Some say that art is whatever an artist produces. What, then, is an artist? You can give a little child crayons and paper and he will make various streaks. But that is not art, and until the child's mind has developed he cannot be called an artist.

Everything one does is revealing. This person who thought she had made a clairvoyant picture no doubt had certain faculties and some ability. But when she removed her own mind as an accommodation, and deprived it of the purpose for which it was made, she could not portray the good, the beautiful, or the true. When life is missing, then beauty also is missing.

GATHEKA: But can the clairvoyant not paint the picture of the other side? If the clairvoyant paints the other side, he must bring the paint and canvas from the other side too. The clairvoyant cannot paint the other side with the brush of this world. If he did, it would be his mistake.

TASAWWUF: It is even difficult to paint the picture of this side. We cannot actually paint it, we do not make a photographic reproduction. Life is movement and all things change, but we can draw an inspiration from nature and record that inspiration. That is art. And if there are any paintings based upon the life of the other world these can only be drawn from inspired dreams and vision.

There is a science and art of right impression. Students of Sufism are given detailed instruction in

this regard. Yet it is one thing to receive and direct impressions and it is another thing to become obsessed. The former is the master of life, the latter its slave. Besides the way of art does not come through such obsession, for art springs from the living heart. One must live in light and not in shadow and must be dependent upon nothing outside of himself, finding himself and the universe to be as one.

GATHEKA: Very often in decorative art people also produce confusing patterns. Maybe that in that pattern there is a flower, and perhaps that flower is looking like a man's face; and if you look at that flower from another angle, it is the face of a monkey, or perhaps the face of a tiger, and if it is not confusing, what is it?

TASAWWUF: When the artist is swayed by egotism he wants to do something different and something better, if he can, than his predecessors. And as the normal way seems to have been so well elaborated, he seeks some other way. He thus creates a sensation without departing from the norms of art, but the impression he leaves is not natural, its effects are not beneficial.

The making of artificial flowers has of itself become a great art and it is possible now to add the fragrance to make them smell like the real flowers. Thus there is an advance in the field of decoration which can bring us closer to nature. It is not necessary to become outlandish. Besides in stencils, wall-paper, upholstery, it is possible to add the proper odors through paint or chemicals, producing a delicate, delightful result.

This shows that it is possible for art to imitate nature more instead of less. Instead of turning aside and becoming weird or fantastic, we can return to new sources. There are now more and more ways in which to express ourselves esthetically, and this leaves less excuse for those who enter strange pastures.

GATHEKA: And now today very often such patterns are taken by what they call business, and are used for wall-paper. And many are very glad to get such patterns in which from any angle you can see a different face. Now what idea can you think about it? From one side you think this, and from another side this. If it is not confusing, what is it? It is the confusion of the artist's mind which commerce has taken and has made use of.

TASAWWUF: This has been especially true in the field of advertising. What attracts people whether from beauty or strangeness, whether from high motive or low is valuable. If it will only draw the attention of the public to the advertisement and so to the wares, it is called good. And sometimes there is an appeal to the basest in man for no other reason than that thereby they can draw attention; the manner does not matter, all that matters is that the attention is drawn. And this is called good.

When inspiration is lost it is often necessary to substitute material reward or fame for the inner urge to keep the artist at his work. Instead of following nature any ideas are regarded as important that will draw public notice. Thus there is a universal appeal to egotism and this accounts for much of

the decadence in the world today, a decadence which can only be cured by a spiritual awakening.

What we might do in the future is to work in another direction, to restore again the sacred atmosphere by encouraging artists to return to nature, to learn the secret of repose and silence, to find the light within their own beings. This does not shut them out from practical endeavor nor does it mean that commercial art must not continue as a profession. It only means that there will be better commerce and better advertising when there is better art. Many advertisers have gained and will continue to gain by appealing to the knowledge or idealism or love in man. It is not necessary to pander too much to the commercial spirit nor to the vices.

GATHEKA: The combination of inharmonious colors has very often an inharmonious effect on the nerves, on the thought, on the mind.

TASAWWUF: This has now become scientific knowledge also. Every color has a most distinctive effect upon the body, the emotions and the mind. When the wrong colors are used, and more often, when wrong combinations of colors and complex mixtures are employed, the effect is anything but satisfactory. The colors that we find in nature are living and offer enough example without there being any need to seek or express the bizarre.

GATHEKA: And this gives scope to those imaginative ones without beauty, without art, without the knowledge of life, without any psychological conception of it. It makes their art popular; because they cannot do any better than they can do, and by saying: "This is something quite different from anything else," they can sell their art better.

TASAWWUF: When salesmanship dominates, then art is secondary. The whole tendency of the age has been contrary to the finest needs of art and artists. No wonder, then that Ruskin in his day was a sort of revolutionist, who felt that beauty was not being given proper recognition.

Today there are so many new arts and crafts that even with the passing of the old ones there can be more opportunities. And if mankind should be so fortunate as to preserve all the folk-arts then it is even possible that the artist of the future will have a tremendous sway and ample opportunity. The field of decoration, interior and exterior, is developing. The advance of technology, while no doubt offering machine substitutes for art in certain fields, is also supplying new or better materials and aiding the artist in other ways. And the various world's fairs and gigantic expositions have encouraged new departures and have reawakened man to the many methods used by ancients in all parts of the world.

As religion has failed to unite all mankind, there still is left the world of beauty, and through beauty all hearts can be attuned. The artist then may become the prophet of the future, as he has been in certain nations in the past. But his manuscript may be the sacred book of nature, he will no longer have to be limited by any special revelation or teaching. And as he lives closer to nature, nature will become his teacher.

GATHEKA: Art must be simple; it must be expressive; it must be inspiring and revealing at the same time.

TASAWWUF: Without simplicity there is little beauty; gaudiness and ostentation are not beauty. And just as a man may overeat or undereat or find the right mean as to food and livelihood, so the artist can find the golden path between incompleteness and overornateness and too much detail. And for this no philosophy or rule will be needed when the heart is followed. When the wisdom awakens in the heart and the faculty of intuition is developed, each man, each artist will become as a law unto himself and then being ruler of himself, over himself, he can become the leader and inspirer of others.