

Gatha with Commentary

Naqshibandi: Symbology

Series II

*of*

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

**Gatha with Commentary**

**Series II: Number 1**

**“Die Before Death”**

GATHA: There is a symbolical picture ...

TASAWWUF: A symbolic picture is one that has a symbolic meaning. In Gathas I, different elements of cosmic or archetypal symbology are presented, expounded and used in concentration (Murakkabah). In Gathas II, there are pictures and these pictures also in a similar sense, but in a higher dimension, offer us keys to understanding, and also to dreams. The subject of dreams itself is discussed elsewhere.

GATHA: ... known in the philosophical world of China ...

TASAWWUF: That is to say, “known by sages.” No doubt sages of all countries have used symbology, but in China we have the most perfect records. These records have been preserved for us in the simplest forms in the hexagrams. While the I Ching is not a part of Sufi studies, it undoubtedly belongs to universal occultism. In the new age, the wisdom of all peoples can be utilized, expounded and coalesced in the integrational fashion with other wisdoms and symbologies.

The next stage in China was to pass from the more or less static or linear symbology of the hexagrams into forms first of the mineral world, and then of the vegetable and animal world. Perhaps if we go deeply the same ranges of consciousness will express themselves in the same or similar symbols. We can certainly see this in astrological records in all parts of the world.

GATHA: ... that represents a sage with one shoe in his hand and one on his foot. It signifies the hereafter, that the change that death brings is to a wise man only the taking off of one shoe.

TASAWWUF: To the wise, death and change both mean coming into a new condition. The shoe is a covering over a part of the physical body; its removal represents in this case the dispensing with the body itself. This also appears in other symbolical pictures as the removal of a coat or cloak or any covering. In ancient times there was the “Dance of the Seven Veils.” The dancer was supposed to remove those veils or garments, one by one, symbolizing the removal of the vehicles of the soul until it stood bare before God or the Universe.

GATHA: The body of the philosopher in the picture represents his soul, or his person; the one shoe

still on his foot represents his mind, which exists after death; and the withdrawal of the soul from the body is like taking one foot out of the shoe.

TASAWWUF: There is a symbology in which all the parts of the human body have a symbolic meaning beyond their actual physiological function. Thus the arm might stand for power or action or forcefulness. The heart for love or wisdom or compassion or tenderness. The mind for thought, sagacity, etc.

Beyond this also there are the functional aspects of each part of the body which are found mentioned in the brochure on *Metaphysics*, found in *the Sufi Message*. This work explains the outer and inner significance of both the parts and systems within the body, functioning on the inner as well as the outer planes.

If we carry this further, we have such a sacred work as the Dhammapada, wherein the foot and the walk are regarded not only as elements of spiritual progression but the very progression itself. It is from this source we get the word and idea of "the path," which has a multifold signification.

GATHA: For the mystic, therefore, the physical body is something he can easily dispense with, and to arrive at this realization is the object of wisdom.

TASAWWUF: No doubt there are philosophical schools which consider the body as the vehicle of evil, and that as soon as man is freed from the body he is free from sin. But the Scriptures also teach that the human body is the temple of the divine spirit. It is to be used and perfected. Therefore, freedom from the body means freedom from control by the body.

In what is called the nufs ammara state, one is led by the body. In higher states of development one leads the body. No doubt there are angelic souls that act as if the body were unimportant and they do not care about it. The point of view of the mystic is slightly different: he does care about it; he lives as if the body were a family pet or servant. He is most meticulous about it, but he does not let it control him. Indeed, to arrive at the state "Thy body shall be full of light," one retains consciousness of the body, perfects the body, but also always leads the body and is not led by it.

GATHA: When, by philosophical understanding of life, he begins to realize his soul, then he begins to stand, so to speak, on his feet; he is then himself and the body is to him only a cover.

TASAWWUF: We can see something of this in the above explanation.

There are three stages of effacement according to Sufi teachings: 1) fana-fi-Sheikh, 2) fana-fi-Rassoul, and 3) fana-fi-Lillah. In the first stage, one has before him some ideal in name and form, upon whose behavior patterns he can build his own ideas and actions; it is someone living, it is someone he knows.

In the second stage, one knows the name of the ideal and may have some vague idea of the form,

but it is not any form he may be contacting through the senses. In this stage however, Rassoul may be manifest if he desires before the devotee. In fana-fi-Lillah, one is seeking effacement in that which is beyond name and form. It depends on functioning in Kashf and Mushahida. In the literature we encounter the word “shahud.” All Muslims pray, “Ash-hadu Laillah el il Allah.” If only they knew what it meant! If they only knew what it meant, they would have the keys to heaven and earth alike.

GATHA: The teaching of the Prophet is to die before death, which means to realize in one’s lifetime what death means. This realization takes away all the fear there is.

TASAWWUF: There are many items in the Hadiths to support this general teaching. The Prophet thought man should always be aware both of Allah and of death to avoid being caught by the intoxication of the moment. Actually, the real death is this being caught by momentary intoxication, which is nothing but delusion and vanity.

Fear can be one of the greatest obstacles in life. Those who have had to die before death, whether by loss of consciousness, or transformation after facing great obstacles or extremes and recovery or by any other type of experience, find that thereafter they are no longer subject to fear. They may not be able to explain it. Evidently there is a transformation and transmutation of nervous energy, so that this part of man’s being seems to have risen above all negativity.

Of course there are ways of facing fear and of overcoming it, such as repetitions of “Allaho Akbar.” But this transformatory experience is something else. It takes us out of the bonds of limitation, it frees us, and it brings us into new vistas without necessarily involving a clear understanding of the renewed life.

GATHA: By the symbol of the shoe is shown also the nothingness of the material existence, or the smallness of the physical being, in comparison with the greatness of the soul, or the spirit.

TASAWWUF: This realization may come in part through designed practices in esotericism, such as the concentration upon the **dot and the circle**. Yet the shoe may be a symbol of itself. In the Hebraic Bible it is related that God appeared before Moses saying, “Take off thy shoes for thou art on holy ground.” It would appear that Moses physically took off his shoes, and this institution has been preserved in many religions, strangely least of all in the Hebraic and Christian religions, which in theory revere Moses the most.

There is another meaning to it. We pray, “Raise us from the denseness of the earth.” God wished Moses to remove all the defilements of earth. But this also involves the even greater defilement of the ego. It might be interpreted, “Remove thy ego for thou art in the presence of the Lord.” But in all stages of fana, as explained above, the ego is removed. And one functions through the spirit consciously, unconsciously, or superconsciously.

GATHA: Hafiz says in Persian verse, “Those who realize Thee are kings of life,” which means that

the true kingdom of life is in the realization of the soul.

TASAWWUF: There is the parallel story that when dervishes meet they greet each other as kings. Yes, those who have this realization are no longer hampered by smallness or by the vicissitudes of samsara or nufsaniat.

GATHA: The idea that one must wait until one's turn will come after many incarnations keeps one away from the desired goal.

TASAWWUF: Jesus Christ has said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." He said, "Come," and the people came. He did not say, "Come tomorrow." He also said, "I come quickly," "The son of man cometh like a thief in the night," etc.

This doctrine of suddenness is also found in Buddhism. There is an unfortunate dialectical teaching that man must pass through many incarnations before he can hope for deliverance. While there may be a certain truth in it, it is based upon a false assumption that man is and that God may be, rather than that God is and man may be.

No doubt there is a cosmic evolution, just as there is a biological evolution. We can see this in the oldest Upanishads and beyond them even into the Vedas. We find this in the traditions and teachings of many peoples, literate and illiterate. But man is not a creature of chance; he is not so bound that he must stand in line awaiting his turn.

GATHA: The man who is impatient to arrive at spiritual realization is to be envied.

TASAWWUF: Those who are fatalists, those who give all power to chance, are in effect either atheists or have conceived a mechanical God. The soul is ever desirous of freedom, and the efflux of the soul manifests in those who desire to become free forever from samsara.

GATHA: As Omar Khayyam says, "Tomorrow? Why, tomorrow I may be myself with yesterday's seven thousand years." He means by this, "Don't bother about the past, don't trouble about the future, but accomplish all you can just now."

TASAWWUF: Paul has said, "I die daily." We might even expand this to mean, we die hourly; we die with every breath. Indeed there is a way of dying and of being reborn with every breath and this can arise also when one becomes a master of Fikr.

GATHA: Life has taken time enough to develop gradually from mineral to vegetable, from vegetable to animal, and from animal to man, and after becoming man delay is not necessary.

TASAWWUF: Biological evolution has only made its imprint since the time of Darwin. Cosmic evolution has been known or felt for many centuries. Both forms of evolution are now being offered to the world. Actually, every time one practices a meditation, a jnana, a silence, one is somewhat

transformed. He may not be aware of it, but he is changing.

All schools of theoretical spiritual development present aspects of this cosmic evolution. Chance or design or purpose works more or less unconsciously until the human stage of evolution is reached. Then self-will begins to express itself. Self-will is really divine will channeled through personality and, therefore, disjunct. The power behind this will is one power; it has one aim. But if freedom is both a means and an end, the universal energy operates as if every drop, every energy-faculty were separate. This continues until man becomes free and discovers such separateness was illusory.

GATHA: It is true that the whole lifetime is not sufficient for one to become what one wishes to be. Still nothing is impossible, since the soul of man is from the spirit of God; and if God can do all things, why cannot man do something?

TASAWWUF: We must not forget that we have begun here with a symbol. In the study of the Gathas, Series I, Symbology, geometric and archetypal symbols were presented and explained. Their intellectual aspect was but one of many. They were and ought to be used as keys, keys which open doors, doors which open into the rooms of palaces. The same is also true of picture symbols, only picture symbols usually have deeper connotations than the archetypal, elementary ones.

Besides that, every word may be used as the basis of meditation (and concentration). Here we must consider too the words as well as the form. Here we must picture the symbols and then use them as a scaffolding on which to improve. We have to learn to become one with the symbol. When we have become one with the symbol, we may be realizing and no longer needing any explanation.

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### **Gatha with Commentary**

### **Series II: Number 2**

### **Fruitfulness**

GATHA: There is a Chinese symbol of philosophers carrying on their shoulders peaches, which means that the object of life is to be fruitful.

TASAWWUF: As has been explained, there has always been considerable symbology in Chinese art. When an artist controls his thoughts by feelings, and especially when his inner eyes are open, even when unconsciously and especially perhaps when unconsciously, there will be considerable symbology in his works. Even Zen Buddhists do not deny symbology so much as instrumentalize it.

RYAZAT: The peach may be used in concentration first as a material object on which to gaze. That is the first phase. The second phase is to use the peach—or for that matter any object in concentration—as if it were a crystal ball, and so an instrument of mental purification. But the peach is not dead, it is a living thing, and like all living things it will have a message, its own message.

There is a book called *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, full of symbology and wisdom and a valuable adjunct to a library, especially for devotees along this path.

GATHA: However good or spiritual a person may be, yet, if his life is not fruit-giving, he has not fulfilled the purpose of life. A person whose life becomes fruitful does not only bear fruit to others, but every aspect of life bears fruit to him as well; for him life becomes a fruit.

TASAWWUF: There are two branches of murakkabah for talibs. The first is for individual development, what a person needs on the path of perfection and attainment, to awaken in himself what is important for the fulfillment of the purpose of his life. In the second class a living flower or fruit is used to keep before the devotee life in some form. In the end it should be true of him as Christ has said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

The spiritual life is not one of lassitude. Indeed the spiritual life far transcends persons of tamasic outlook. Action itself is a principle as Sri Krishna has said in the Gita. All things in life may be used to help one on the path toward the goal.

GATHA: If life were only for what people call goodness, life would be very uninteresting. For goodness is dependent for its beauty on badness. As a form cannot exist without a shadow so goodness cannot be without badness.

TASAWWUF: What is goodness? And what is badness? Many wish to enjoy life and seek pleasures and avoid annoyances. They are very pleased when somebody offers them nice words, flattering emotions. They are very annoyed with anything else. And one result has been that it is most difficult to warn people about coming dangers. They will accept warnings that please them, and they will reject warnings that do not please them. When it comes out different, they are often annoyed but do not learn any lesson.

GATHA: If life were for spirituality alone, the soul had better not have been born on earth, for the soul in its nature is spiritual. The whole creation is purposed for something greater than goodness or even spirituality, and that is fruitfulness.

TASAWWUF: The true spirituality is that which is absolutely all-inclusive. The spiritual may include

every facet of life. The lives of the greatest spiritual teachers are full of tests, hardships, and symbolical or physical crucifixions. Alchemy is a science of purification, often through fire, often through the most trying processes. It is only so that pure gold can be created—whether in the laboratory, whether in nature, whether otherwise.

GATHA: Goodness and spirituality are the means, not the goal. If there is any goal, it is fruitfulness. Therefore it is the object of life which the symbol of peaches represents.

TASAWWUF: We find something of the same kind in the Indian teachings which differentiate between the sattvic guna and the transcendental state beyond all gunas. As it is said here, sattva provides the means, not the goal.

The angelic life is not the completion of human life. No doubt angelic qualities do appear in highly developed persons. But the sage has what the angelic soul does not have: balance and wisdom.

GATHA: Fruitfulness has three aspects. The first aspect is when man benefits from his own life.

TASAWWUF: The first view of life is that of the self. Then man is involved in the struggle between self-will and the forces of nature or the karmic condition of the sphere. Sometimes the latter is known as “the world.” That is exactly what is connoted in the Tarot, for instance. One has to live in, with, and through the world. It may control him, or he may be able to master it, but not obliterate it.

GATHA: The next aspect is when man benefits from the life outside himself.

TASAWWUF: If we could not benefit from the external life, we might all be resembling each other very much. This would make the spiritual life patterned. No doubt the angelic life is patterned; no doubt angels do resemble each other in attributes and even in a sense which resembles form. But we can see that sages, saints, and devotees do not necessarily resemble each other. *The Inner Life* tells us of many types of souls. These advanced personalities are both affected by the world outside and yet are able to effect the external world more than others. This is not to be confused by good karma. Good karma indicates some benefit that has accrued to man for any reason whatever. It is benefit without being control. Buddhists call this “punya” (merit).

GATHA: And the third aspect is when man is a benefit to himself and to the life outside, and the life outside is a benefit to him. That is the moment of the fruitfulness of life.

TASAWWUF: Ordinarily man must pay back sooner or later for all his gains. Or he may have suffered losses, or pain, or punishment, or tribulation, and following the principle of Reciprocity, the universe produces an adjustment from which he benefits.

But the life of the sage is different. Devotees on the path of sadhana operate as if they were always evolving in externals as well as internals. They do not measure their accumulations; they keep their



eyes and hearts on the goal. It is these personalities which bring benefit to the world itself and help in the cosmic evolution.

GATHA: It takes all the patience one has to arrive at this realization, but it is for this realization that God created the world, that man may enjoy fruitfulness therein.

TASAWWUF: We may bear in mind here that patience as well as other virtues are carefully explored in the early Gatha studies. It is not so difficult to regard the spiritual path as one up a mountain or a range of mountains. Intellectualizing a view which one has not experienced is of no value. But when one enters the path of fana-fi-Sheikh and has before him a living teacher, and also studies the lives of saints and sages, not only of the distant past but also of the recent past and also of his own day, he can take full advantage of both their accumulations and their wisdom.

GATHA: It is the absence of faith and lack of patience which deprive man of this bliss; if not, every soul is purposed for this.

TASAWWUF: One of the most difficult problems with disciples in the earlier stages was their claiming to know the subject matter of lessons. It is not a question of any intellectual knowledge. Ethics has failed as a science because only too often it has not been concerned with the moral standard and behavior patterns of speakers, teachers, audiences, and pupils. Words obtain a value when they mean something to us in our daily life.

Because of intellectual and ego intervention, the bliss which is the natural stage of the soul is covered. It has to be uncovered. Mental Purification no doubt removes all obstacles, hindrances, faults, weaknesses, "sins," etc. But there is no content here. The content has to be supplied. This often comes through concentration and spiritual exercises, along with internal and external study.

GATHA: For instance, when a musician begins to enjoy his own music, that is the first stage; when he enjoys the music of others, that is the second stage of realization; but when man enjoys his own music and makes others enjoy too, then his life has become fruitful.

TASAWWUF: There are many who enjoy their own music, who have their own pleasures. They may be called primitive, no matter how complex their lives are otherwise. Complexity is not the same as advancement.

Of course, the more kinds of music, the more kinds of art, the more kinds of diversions we enjoy may indicate a certain advancement. But if we want to find out whether we are spiritual, this can be determined by effects on others, especially when we see others enjoy what we do or communicate. And this has been especially borne out by the study of the Sufi Message through the music and the dance.

GATHA: There is a great treasure of blessing within oneself and there is a vast treasure of blessing outside oneself.

TASAWWUF: The treasure of blessing within oneself may be determined or measured by the functions of our own creative nature. We can see this in our own art, in the way we may cook foods or arrange our rooms and personal possessions, in our gardening, in our speech which others enjoy, and in a thousand or more ways. When the heart is awakened, there is no ending to this.

And we can determine the treasure of blessings outside ourselves by our own versatility which enables us to enjoy the works of many arts, all kinds of music, the beauties and blessings of nature, scenery and sights, whether through the telescope, the microscope or with the ordinary eye. The less bored we are, the more things and types of things we find interesting, indicate our coming into the vast arena of blessings.

GATHA: And when one has become able to find out the treasure one has within oneself and to exploit the treasure which is outside oneself, and when there is an exchange between his own treasure, and the treasure outside, then his life has become the fruit for which the soul was born.

TASAWWUF: This is both a quantitative and qualitative development. No doubt it may indicate “riza,” which is to say, contentment. But the real contentment comes along with God-realization, or even from an unconscious awareness of being in the midst of divine blessings.

There may be some indication of whether he is a spiritual man whose music, whose art, whose teachings, whose influence spreads far and wide; or whether he is spiritual applies to a man who is most appreciative of the works of others; who is influenced by others, etc; we might call these sun-realization and moon-realization. To a lesser extent we might find either or both of these in Jelalic or Jemalic personalities. They are balanced in the Kemalic type which are most perfect.

No doubt there are those whose work is to influence others; and there are those who are also influenced by others, or if not influenced, respond. We can see these forms in the saints themselves who may respond according to type, but who should never be judged.

GATHA: There comes a time in the life of the fruitful souls when every moment of their life bears a new fruit, just like a plant which bears fruit at all times of the year.

TASAWWUF: This teaching is also presented in the lessons on Githa for the Advanced Study Circle. But as one grows, one may be able to sense, even to feel, both his own effectiveness and the influence of others and of the life without. This can mean an end to loneliness, boredom, lassitude, etc. This can also mean the fulfillment of our invocation: *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.*

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**Gatha with Commentary**

**Series II: Number 3**

**Symbol of the Dragon**

GATHA: The best known symbolical figure of China is the dragon.

TASAWWUF: There is a principle in the lectures on Naqshibandi that in Series I we consider the basic symbols. Thus there has been an Australian named Bliss who made a special study of symbols and suggested they might be a basis of a cosmic language. With this the mystic might agree. Also, in the first lessons it is taught that the symbol might be an ocean in a drop, but this lesson is not easily learned until intuitive language is learned.

In Series II it may be said we are considering a basic art form. We see some of these art forms even in ancient cave drawings and in pictographs. The Chinese may have developed their writing from pictographs, and not a few of their letters, if they can be so called, are indeed modified pictographs. But some are also modified symbols of which the dragon is one. These symbols may have been drawn from dreams, from fantasy, from the subtle world or even from the actual physical world. It is certain after many centuries a form of actual dragon has been found still living on one of the islands of Indonesia.

GATHA: The dragon represents life and death both; life in the sense of eternal life, death in the sense of a change from mortality to eternity.

TASAWWUF: The Chinese still use the dragon in parades and ceremonies. The dragon is something like a serpent and yet not a serpent. It seems to have a form yet subject to constant change. It certainly differs from the serpent in its restlessness and its presumed ability to swallow beings and even processes.

It is interesting to find out that other cultures have mythological entities often resembling the dragon, but whose symbolical meaning is most similar. This would indicate something like a basic symbology also in the subtle world. Madam Blavatsky, the renovator of theosophy, pointed out that there are hidden meanings in myths, legends and folklore. But it has been the scientists rather than the theosophists who have taken steps forward in this direction. It was Sir James Frazier who

opened many doors, but Charles Lamb, although having quite different outlooks, also opened several. It has been found silly to ignore these interpretations—even their misinterpretations.

GATHA: Very often a Chinese dragon has an appearance of a tiger, of a seal, its body that of a snake, together with wings of the birds and the paws of the carnivorous animals, also some appearance of man—which means that life is one but it is manifest in many forms, that life lives on life and so hungers for life.

TASAWWUF: We find something like this in the Bible in the animals depicted especially in the Hebrew books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zachariah and continued in the Christian book of Revelation.

Their symbology has been worked out on many levels. But ordinarily man does not go beyond these levels into cosmic language for which they are keys.

There has been a complete commentary on the lessons in cosmic language. These represent in a sense the highest stage of certain esoteric sciences. Symbols with all their seeming profundity actually represent one grade lower, for they are often both abstruse and subject to change as in the dreams (in contrast to visions) where everything is subject to change.

The principle that life is one and embraces all forms appears in the earliest religion of China. Many very ancient doctrines and symbols were later incorporated into and preserved by what **we** call Taoism and Confucianism, but it is the western world that is the most concerned with the analysis and differentiations.

Universal truth has been preserved both by the word “tao” and “dharma.” In China each has used the same archetypal symbology and therefrom the same canons of art. No doubt these canons are universal, but we can use the Chinese forms often to most excellent advantage.

When it is said that “life feeds upon life,” we may consider both form and spirit. The spirit of man is fed by breath; the spirits of all creatures depend upon the breath and the breath vibrations they assimilate. For instance, the dragon is generally depicted by its inhalation and exhalation of the fire breath. But its powers and faculties being multifarious, it has the wings of a bird—indicates its power over spaces; the paws of beasts—indicating its power over earth; the appearance of a man—indicating its power over mind. Therefore a concentration on the dragon enables the adept to develop power over earth, over space, and over mind.

GATHA: The dragon suggests mortality standing by one’s side, awaiting its hour every moment of our life, and yet man is unaware of it, building castles in the air, depending upon the life of this mortal world.

TASAWWUF: In some sense the dragon looks like the animalization of the breath as if the breath (or spirit) were the reality and the form unimportant. According to Sufi teachings, according to mystical doctrines everywhere, the spirit is life, but to say the spirit is life without giving it a form

makes communication very difficult.

GATHA: The dragon also suggests that there is an obstacle on the way to eternity and that obstacle is death, and that can be avoided by conquering the dragon. The dragon is also a picture of man's selfish ego, which is not only the enemy of others, but which makes man his own enemy. The dragon signifies the lower nature, and the conquering of the lower nature is the killing of the dragon, of which St. George is also the symbol.

TASAWWUF: In the first book of Moses in the Hebrew Bible, the word "nachash" is mentioned and it is translated as serpent. Indeed this word may be etymologically connected with the Sanskrit naga and the English snake. But it also means covetousness, and the lower nature in man has often been depicted as a snake or serpent. Indeed all religions and mythologies either have a reptile or dragon as the genius of evil.

We can find many myths on this subject in all parts of the world. St. George, who has been included in the Christian pantheon, is actually a deification of Horus. In the Egyptian tradition Sut-Typhoeon is said to have killed his brother Osiris, and in turn was later dispatched by Horus. That is to say, the ego or desire nature in man covers and smothers the divine nature. This happens to all of us born pure, born aware, but soon distracted by the denseness of earth. Then there is a long struggle for the soul to free itself and in the end it must always be that the soul frees itself.

We find stories of the same kind as the slaying of the python by Apollo, of snakes by Hercules, and of Fafner by Sigfried among the Nordic peoples. But perhaps the most interesting is the tale of Sri-Krishna, because in the Krishna myths not only the stories are well preserved but the explanations and higher teachings.

In Sufism the struggle is against the nafs, the ego. No doubt there are many schools of spiritual development which touch upon these principles, but in Sufism it has been made most important in *Moral Culture* and *Mental Purification*. (In fact there are books with these titles in *The Sufi Message*.) We may, if we wish, go deeply into symbology or astrology here, but the main purpose is to eradicate the evil dragon in us.

GATHA: The dragon is a sign of material power, which has its transitory reign over things and beings; and often power can govern or cause difficulty even to spiritual beings, for the reason that even spiritual beings have matter which makes their being and which is dependent for its life and comfort on things of this earth.

TASAWWUF: There is a negative aspect here, and this also involves the problems of bad dreams and of obsessions. Certain wazifas are taught, to be repeated for inner protection. There is something in sacred words which has a tremendous power over evil. No doubt the word "demon," which originally meant a protective entity, has become a term of almost exactly the opposite meaning in the Christian world. But there are protective entities as well as wicked spirits. Generally, the "good" live in the light; the "evil" in the shadow.

GATHA: But all stories of dragons prove the dragon to be a failure in the end and the spirit alone conqueror over it.

TASAWWUF: There are several considerations here. While we are considering symbols, one of the hidden values in Naqshibandi, Series II, is the key to the interpretation of dreams. Dreams in the larger sense include fantasies, phantasmagorias, visions, and any impressions in forms where there are shadows of any kind. As Holy Qur'an teaches, "In Allah there is no darkness." Mohammed has taught, "Dreams are from Iblis, and visions are from Allah." While this may not be exactly so, it does indicate something like a war between light and darkness.

In the religion of Zarathustra, this has become a fundamental principle, and the spirit of darkness or dragon is called Ariman, which can also be interpreted as "shadowed mind." The shadowed mind necessarily disappears when light enters. Shadow really has no substance. Modern scientists join the mystics in proclaiming Light as most fundamental in the universe. All founders of all religions have proclaimed the majesty of Light.

This also indicates how we can deal with dreams, how we can purify those who are subject to shadowy forces, etc. The repetition of wazifas can become both a science and art in moral, psychic and mental purification.

GATHA: In Chinese art this symbol is kept to the fore, for this one symbol suggests and touches many things.

TASAWWUF: The ancient Greeks and Egyptians also had their good spirits. The Greek word "agathadaemon" has been preserved. Socrates used to say that he had such a spirit, but today we proclaim "the spirit of guidance." The spirit of guidance may manifest in many forms human, superhuman, and divine; personal, impersonal and cosmic. Yes, whenever we use words a form is suggested.

It is said here, "Symbols suggest and teach many things." Unless we validate it by having actually "many things," we are left in shadowy metaphysics. When a disciple reaches a grade of advancement where he can be instructed in the higher Concentration, he will find it is sometimes most difficult to hold a form in mind and keep it there. This is one aspect of it. Sometimes he holds the form, sometimes the form changes—in fact, often it changes—and sometimes the form disappears.

All of these are correct proceedings. Nothing is wrong, but each aspect of manifestation offers an interpretation, and the dream interpretation not only helps in the comprehension of the dream (not important) but in the interpretation of the dreamer (most important).

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**Gatha with Commentary**

**Series II: Number 4**

**Water**

GATHA: In the old Scriptures such as the Vedanta and the Old Testament, spirit is symbolized as water. One wonders why something which is near to the earth, as water is, should be considered symbolically as spirit.

TASAWWUF: There is strong evidence to indicate that some material of the Vedanta and the Old Testament came from the same source. We find there are many myths and symbols common to the Mahabharata and to Jewish literature. According to the Hebrew tradition Jithro, who was both father-in-law and Murshid of Moses, was a Hindu. In the Hebrew Bible he is called a Midian, which is to say, a Mittaini, which is to say, a branch of the Indian peoples. There are many parallels also in the teachings of the Vedas and again between certain of the prophetic books, e.g., Jonah and Ezekiel and the Puranas.

The Sepher-ha-Zohar is a diverse commentary on the Hebraic Pentateuch. All of it is presumed to be esoteric and some is quite mystical. One also finds some of the explanations totally in accord with Indian traditions, and there are also explanations given by the actual transmitters of the Kabbalah which are far more in accord with both exoteric and esoteric Hinduism than with the religions of the West.

Even on the surface the Hindu word “mayam,” meaning waters, looks like a plural of maya. If we interpret maya as meaning measurable, coming from the root “ma,” meaning the feminine principle, it is no longer a coincidence. And when we go further and look into passages in which the word water appears, the teachings become very similar, if not entirely identical.

GATHA: The nature of water is to give life to the earth, and so the nature of the spirit is to give life to the body. Without water the earth is dead, so is the body without soul.

TASAWWUF: The ancients taught that the cosmos has resulted from the interplay of two forces which we may regard as positive and negative, although this is a parallel rather than an exact explanation. The Hindus call them purusha and prakrit. The Hebrews mention “mi” literally meaning “who” and symbolically meaning personality, even cosmic personality, and so purusha. They refer to “Mah” literally, “what,” as representing formation, which is to say, nature or prakrit, which is to say, the feminine or responsive side of existence.

Body without breath is corpse. Breath makes it alive as the Scriptures teach. Food and water do not suffice. Water is necessary for plants, for animals, for food. The first organisms were in the ocean. They were adapted to the land where there was much rainfall. As the rainfall diminished, the plants and animals established their own ocean within, as sap, as blood, as lymph, etc.

The Bible distinguishes between the waters above and the waters on earth and the waters under the earth. Each has its function in the cosmos, and each has its special meaning esoterically. Part of this esotericism is known to deep students of astrology and others.

GATHA: Water and earth both mix together, so the spirit mixes with matter and revivifies it, and yet spirit stands above matter, as water in time lets the earth sink to the bottom and stands itself above the earth.

TASAWWUF: According to the Sufi teachings—contrary to those of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy—there is some spirit in all matter. It is found in adhesion, cohesion, gravitation and other natural forces. Without the spirit there would only be amorphous matter at best; there would be confusion.

The late Jagadish Bose demonstrated in the laboratory that even metals suffered from strain and stress and fatigue. In other words, they had their psychological behavior patterns. He discovered much more about plants which after all are living organisms. Some knowledge of mineral and metal psychology became necessary for the airplane industry. The pragmatic acceptance of plant psychology has been much slower, partly due to the fact that industry has not found much benefit from it.

Earth and water are both considered by mystics as basic elements. Something of the kind is held by occultists in all parts of the world.

GATHA: But one may ask, “Is the spirit hidden under matter as the soul in the body?” I will answer, “So the water stays beneath the earth.” There is no place where water does not exist, there are places where earth is not to be found. So there is nowhere in space where spirit is absent; only the absence of matter is possible.

TASAWWUF: It may be the absence of matter which produces the phenomena we call space. At one time not so long ago it was believed that space was filled with ether, but nobody knew what the ether was. It was supposed to have been a vehicle for light. Closer study by physicists and especially by the late Dr. Einstein revealed much more about nature and the behavior of light than had been known. This led to radical changes in the beliefs of many.

But no one has been able to prove the absence of spirit. It may be that the spirit itself has been the means energies utilize both in and out of manifestation, both above and below.

No doubt a huge commentary could be written covering the passages in the Bible, both the Christian and Hebraic sections on this subject. The very fact it has been ignored is one of the basic



reasons why the divine message had to be re-presented in the modern age. The truth does not change, but the word truth standing alone has been devitalized. Even theoretical discussions do not help much. There are many books. They do not often transform human nature. They do not help very much toward realization.

GATHA: The symbolic way of expressing high ideas does not come from the brain, it is an outcome of intuition.

TASAWWUF: Intuition is a natural function which belongs to all of us, covered by the intoxication of life. The universe itself is replete with intelligence. The intelligence is there but it is not always perceived. Vast subjects such as cosmic language and mental purification need more than simple reading. They need application and very often reading and application become roadblocks instead of guides. Yes, we do use cookbooks, cookbooks are very valuable. It is only a skilled chef that can dispense with them. It is very true therefore that many are deluded by reading and external study.

All the words of the brain do not awaken the mind to its fullness; only to the level at which it stands. To go further, something more is needed.

Today we see that some of the keen intellectual people have gone much further than those who call themselves occultists, metaphysicians, and so on. This very attitude may close the door to heart development and the function usage of intuition. Therefore, Kashf is an important study to disciples of the elementary study circle. It becomes more important when it functions. It functions when it is used, especially when it is trusted.

GATHA: The beginning intuition is to understand the symbolical meaning of different things, and the next step is to express things symbolically.

TASAWWUF: At the one extreme we find brilliant minds like that of Manley P. Hall who can describe everything. They describe as if they knew, but they only know the outer signs. If we study the art of the world, beginning with the earliest archaeological remains, we can see that man innately may be expressing himself in symbols; also it may be that he does so consciously. Even the basic themes of early weaving, basketry, pottery embellishment, etc., indicate that the soul of man is always expressing itself through the usage of the creative talents. The same psychological states invariably, perhaps always, produce the same symbols with the same meanings.

Thus, we can find similar feelings utilizing the same or similar symbols. It may be difficult to trace the early forms of astrology in different parts of the world. There are remarkable correspondences among people and cultures who outwardly seem to have had no connection. That is to say, their languages are totally dissimilar; sometimes their cultures and social usages are mutually unintelligible, yet the similarity of their symbolic expressions is most remarkable.

GATHA: It is a divine art in itself, and the best proof of it is to be found in the symbol of water, which is so fitting to express the meaning of spirit.

TASAWWUF: There are so many aspects of it that we can be amazed. Water may be used internally and externally for many purposes. The Christian Bible teaches, “There are three witnesses on earth, water and breath and blood, and these three are as one.” This is one of many Biblical passages which for practical purposes have been bypassed by the clerical institutions through the ages. It has received almost no attention at all. It is this devitalization of religious wisdom by the church leaders themselves that has ultimately produced the downfall of theologies and orthodoxies; this rather than the presumable logical criticisms and oppositions to traditional theologies and orthodoxies.

If we take up such studies as the Tarot, which is a short, symbolical series of keys, we can note that the items and elements presented on and by the different cards must be related to each other like the letters of the alphabet are related to each other in words. There as in the Bible and all Scriptures, water is of fundamental importance, as represented by the four elements, and also as represented by itself standing alone.

If we consider such subjects as the Creation, the Deluge, Baptism, etc., each of these may produce monuments of study and consideration. But the first stage should be consideration. We have in the Sufi esotericism both the consideration of the science of consideration and the science of mysticism, although there are many other aspects to this subject. One can become water by a concentration on water, whether we use a glass filled with it or a pond or a stream or the ocean—all can become effective especially if the concentration is devotional. Then we have another aspect in the consideration of the water element. Here we must learn to use the breath, to use the voice, the walk, etc. Mysticism is such a vast subject that we can only refer to it here. It becomes even more vast when we perform the requisite esoteric practices.

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### **Gatha with Commentary**

### **Series II: Number 5**

#### **Wine**

GATHA: Wine is considered sacred, not only in the Christian faith, but also in many other religions. In the ancient religion of the Zoroastrians, **Yima Jamshed**, the bowl of wine “from which Jamshed drank deep,” is a historical event.

TASAWWUF: Wine is used in the communion service of the Christians. There it symbolizes the blood of Christ. In the Gospel of St. Thomas and in various Logia—that is, sayings of Jesus not found in the official Bible—Jesus is recorded as having said that wine meant his blood. It could hardly mean blood in the ordinary sense, because very little of his blood was actually shed. Esoterically, this is a very important subject.

Zoroastrians have always used wine as the essence of the living earth, derived from the fruits of the trees planted in the ground. In early times it is said they partook of the homa plant, homa also signifying universal life. Wine which was produced by transformatory processes also symbolized transformation in any form, but more especially those transformations which were not destructive.

Wine has always been important in the Jewish religion, but most especially at the Seder service. The ritual of this service is filled with symbols which have esoteric import. The meanings are largely lost, although some of them are preserved in a certain sense in the encyclopedic Talmud.

GATHA: Among Hindus, Shiva considered wine sacred. And in Islam, though wine is prohibited when on earth, yet in heaven it is allowed.

TASAWWUF: No doubt intoxication is blinding. According to Sufi teachings, there are many forms of intoxication. Indeed candidates for Bayat are usually taught that life itself is intoxicating. These intoxications are usually subtle, whereas alcoholic intoxications are quite evident. Still many people caught by the denseness of earth, cheated by exploitations of all sorts, have found a certain comfort in imbibition. It is very easy to condemn. Officially Islam has condemned wine, in which the Prophet said it is two parts evil to one part good; and they have permitted ignorance, displays of temper, and all forms of inhumanity which were entirely condemned by Mohammed. It would seem his lesser injunctions have been more scrupulously obeyed than his more important ones.

There is the story in the Bible that after the flood Noah (Nuh) partook of the grape and became intoxicated. The Hebrew word is “shikor,” which corresponds to the Sufi sukr. Esotericists know that Noah entered into a state of divine ecstasy. Indeed the very word “Noah” means “the repose of nature,” or the attainment of nufs salima which is the highest state possible under risalat itself. When we study Scriptures exoterically; when we perceive cosmic experiences as belonging to heroes of other ages or to archetypes, we miss entirely their import. All the great Scriptures rerecord cosmic potentialities and actualities, no doubt reflected in history but signifying very much more. If this were not so, the study of symbology would be useless.

GATHA: **Hauzu 'I-Kausar**, the sacred fountain of heaven, about which there is so much spoken in Islam, is a fountain of wine. Although the bowl that was given to the Prophet in the Meraj, the authorities of Islam say, was filled with milk, yet I doubt it. I should not be surprised if it were not the invention of the authorities, to keep the faithful followers away from wine. For it is natural that the followers should like to begin drinking the wine on earth, which the Prophet drank in heaven.

TASAWWUF: Milk is nourishing, but wine is intoxicating. When Jesus is said to have turned water

into wine, it also signifies that the very life which seems to attach us to the denseness of earth can be transmuted and transformed. The Bible has said, "Ye are gods." The Indian cosmic metaphysics shows that life has many grades of consciousness, evolution and being, but that all of these may manifest under human form.

The mysteries from most ancient times have ceremonialized such processes as awakening, rebirth and transformation mostly through agricultural symbols. Indeed, there have been scholars such as Robert Graves who have spent years in research in agricultural and particularly tree symbology.

The Meraj experience of Mohammed was one of complete changes of consciousness. He experienced the various grades of being. But he also said that he was a man not a superman. This would indicate that his experiences were not peculiar. Jesus is supposed to have come to make it possible for human beings to realize they are children of God. Hazrat Inayat Khan taught, "What I give to you, you should give to others." In *The Unity of Religious Ideals* it is proposed not only that all living faiths have value but also the religions of the ancients were means of having higher realizations. Thus, "The Golden Ass" of Apuleius and other myths and legends which have come to us from many centuries back.

A question may arise, why should wine be used as a symbol at all? There are many factors to be considered. The changing of the sugar contents to alcohol enabled the ancients and the undeveloped people to have foods and drinks which could remain in such a state without further contamination. The addition of wine to water also purified it from certain germs and chemicals which undoubtedly harmed man. Also it removed sometimes obnoxious tastes and odors.

The main factor was that of transformation, and it was as if the purification came first, and then the transformation.

GATHA: Wine is symbolical of the soul's evolution. Wine comes from the annihilation of grapes, immortality comes from the annihilation of self.

TASAWWUF: When the ego is purified and transmuted it passes from the mortality to the immortality. It is never life that dies, it is death that dies. The life in us is from God, and it goes on ever and always yet ultimately returns to Him.

In the Christian Bible there is the story of the transmutation of water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. There is something in love and marriage which also transforms the ego, which leads it into and through union with what seemed to have been separateness. Such experience also brings an ecstasy, an upliftment. And in the Catholic Church in particular we have the ceremony of the spiritual marriage, that the aspirant is united to Christ and so to God through Christ. But in a real sanctified marriage also both the bride and groom can be led to God through the other.

GATHA: The bowl of poison which is known in many mystical cults suggests also the idea of wine, but not a sweet wine, a bitter wine.

TASAWWUF: There are many traditions about tests which are given and also the teachings of the Scriptures (not usually taught by the sects of various religions) of bitterness turning to sweetness and sweetness to bitterness. And in the almost universal striving for outer satisfaction the wisdoms of the ages have been lost.

All sages agree that the spiritual awakening comes with a transformation and this requires a change of consciousness involving the ego of man. While many condemn psychedelic drugs and with some rationale, usually the condemnations come from those who are utterly attached to ego, who are afraid of any form of transformation and transcendency. They are beguiled by words but fear such experiences even more than they fear death or danger, for such experiences compel a transformation of ego.

What is poison is poison to the ego, not to life. Many fear any change to the ego far more than they fear death. But real spiritual aspirants are adventurers, willing to face death, willing to face hazard, willing to face anything for the sake of the Beloved.

GATHA: When the self turns into something different from what it was before, it is like the soul being born again. This is seen in the grape turning into wine. The grape, by turning into wine, lives; as a grape it would have vanished in time. Only, by turning into wine, the grape loses its individuality, and yet not its life. The self-same grape lives as wine, and the longer it lives the better the wine becomes.

TASAWWUF: There is a teaching in Buddhism concerning **Nirmanakaya**. This has been translated as "transformation body." It simply means a body or vehicle with no permanent ego mind. This is not a teaching peculiar to Buddhism. It is found in all the mysticism of the world. It is part of the experience of all advanced souls. We can see it in the physical world as in cloud formations. The same amount of water and its adhering materials form clouds which exhibit the phenomena of constant change. But this is true of everything; Buddha taught this. If Buddhists had been able to apply it to their own ego-self instead of to doctrines, there would not have been the desecration and decadence which has set in.

From the very beginning of instructions on the Sufi path, the neophyte is told about fana, which is translated as annihilation, but this annihilation applies only to form not to essence. Life cannot die; only death dies. Or as we read in *Gayan*, "The world is what it is, you cannot change it, but you can change yourself." Actually we are always changing. We are given the choice of whether we change ourselves voluntarily or permit externals to change us.

When the grape turns to wine it attains a comparative immortality while also increasing its usefulness. When the soul of man, so to speak, becomes assimilated variously, it increases its usefulness, its faculties become enhanced, it attains and functions in a greater appreciation and manifestation of life.

GATHA: For a Sufi, therefore, the true sacrament is the turning of one's own grape-like

personality, which has a limited time to live, into wine, that nothing of one's self may be lost but, on the contrary, amplified, even perfected. This is the essence of all philosophy and the secret of mysticism.

TASAWWUF: The effacement of self brings to man realization and knowledge. This state is called *baqa*. Philosophers and writers on mystical processes which they themselves have not realized tend to identify the Sufi *fana* with the Buddhist Nirvana. They are right, but they are not absolutely right. There is another aspect to it.

You can see this also in mathematics. Even schoolboys learn that the negative infinity and the positive infinity are identical. But philosophers, even those remarkably skilled in mathematics without having some deep internal experience, do not see much value in it. The mathematician George Cantor, who had done such excellent work on the transfinite, has been criticized on the grounds that his work is useless. But mathematicians of all ages have given us oppositions, theorems, and doctrines which were considered worthless in their time and later were found to be most valuable. Indeed some mathematicians have expressed pride in what they have called a pragmatic uselessness of their inventions. But this is nonsense. Applied mathematics has not only become a vast subject, but a most valuable one in the complexities of the day.

The heart life is one which penetrates the spheres of mind and matter. The deeper we go into universal consciousness, the more we find ourselves in realities of love and grandeur, of compassion and mercy, of tenderness and power. We can either self-benefit from them or we can give the fruits of our actions to Allah or Krishna. The new age wise are no longer constricted by words. They want essences and rightly so.

One can go over the Ten Sufi Thoughts; one can go over "The Way of Illumination" and all the commentaries thereon and one will still seem to be at the beginning. Actually in infinity there is no "beginning" or "end"; there is only ceaseless ongoing. Or as is said in *Gayan*, "Life is motion and stillness is death."

Nirvana is not this stillness. Nirvana is more than the negations of the *Prajna Paramita Sutra*. One might ask if this Sutra is true, does anything exist? Does anyone exist? Is anything at all? To the Sufis, while the Zen Buddhists and other Mahayanists are also correct, there is also a positive side to things. They recognize the *Zat-i-Allah* which is the uttermost essence, but they do not separate it from the *Sifat-i-Allah* which is the compilation of presentable attributes of God and existence.

According to the Sufis therefore, when there is the complete realization, it is both inclusive and exclusive. This means that the inclusion is the exclusion and the exclusion is the inclusion. This is not anti-logical; this is superlogical. If one goes into it deeply, therefore, the logistics of infinity whether presented in mathematics or psychology or mysticism or anything else is essentially the same logistics.

We can therefore look upon wine as symbolic of all transformations. We can see it in the "Eureka!"

of Archimedes, and in the joyous explosions of mathematicians as well as other non-mystics. With the mystics it is warm and warming, joyful and contagious, heart-touching and heart-expanding.

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### **Gatha with Commentary**

### **Series II: Number 6**

#### **The Curl of the Beloved**

GATHA: In the Sufi literature, which is known to the world as the Persian literature, there is much talk about the curls of the Beloved, and many have often wondered what it means. The curl is a symbol of something which is curved and round. The curve denotes the twist in the thought of wisdom.

TASAWWUF: Persian literature and poetry are filled with figures of speech. This is part of the genius of the Persian language itself, coupled with the heart attitude of the people of this land. In many respects the Iranians are what we might call Jemali types. Besides this, the language is of such a nature that there is ample room for rhymes, alliterations, puns, and symbology in general.

When we add to this the appearance of so many poets of the highest caliber in Iran and the use of the Persian language itself by people of Iranian ancestry and education, there is a vast field here for both personal expression and devout inspiration.

In concentration one is taught first to look at the linear symbols such as straight line, cross, circle, dot, etc. Then later, one is taught to make improvements. When one has behind him the theme (and it is not necessarily so different from the Zen koan) of the curved line (in contrast to the straight line), out of this curved line various forms may appear such as heart, smoke curve, and further on, cloud formations.

GATHA: Very often a straight word of truth hits upon the head harder than a hammer. That shows that truth alone is not sufficient, the truth must be made into wisdom. And what is wisdom? Wisdom

is twisted truth.

TASAWWUF: We may even compare the corpse to an immobile line. The living body moves and functions curvilinearly. No one has said we must be absolutely honest—that is in no commandment of no great religion; even less in the behavior of people of high or low evolution. Indeed, when the heart and feelings are awakened and everything moves despite Newton, nothing seems to move in a straight line.

If one has to communicate with a little child, one often does this softly to be effective. It is only when discipline is needed that one should be otherwise. We want to make impressions, but if we wish to impress, we do not necessarily do it by hammering. Then we may be repelled.

The Rahmat is often used in our work. A higher step is not only to be compassionate, but to regard another an aspect of oneself. In dealing with one's ego self, with one's real self, or with one's self as reflected in and through another, bluntness often prevents communication.

GATHA: As raw food cannot be digested, and therefore it is cooked, although raw food is more natural than cooked food, so the straight line is more natural, but it is not digestible, it needs to be made into wisdom.

RYAZAT: The straight line is often used in concentration to help start disciples on the spiritual path. There may be a vertical line, a horizontal line, a perpendicular line. When the devotee starts using them, he may find some difficulty in keeping the line before him straight. Actually both his failures and his successes are of spiritual importance because they reveal his state of evolution.

When there is some success in this concentration or when constant effort shows the devotee can only hold on to curved lines, then the curved line is substituted in the concentration. But the curved line may take on two forms, one as on a flat plane and the other as a helix, a smoke curve, or a gradually widening course into three or more dimensions.

TASAWWUF: When we consider Holy Qur'an from a certain point of view, it is a very simple Scripture. Verbally it was given to comparatively illiterate people. Yet Mohammed himself said, "Qur'an was revealed in seven dialects, each with a hidden and outer meaning." He gave the straight line to the multitudes; he left room for the curvilinear formations. The Brethren of the Heart, the sahib-i-dil of his time (who were called "People of the veranda") found it easy to come to the depths of meaning. There were exudations and emanations of his personality which were superverbally. Perhaps it was these even more than the written word of Qur'an that became the basis for the transmission of the divine teachings.

GATHA: And why is it called the Beloved's curl? Because truth is of God, the Divine Beloved, and truth is God; and that twist given to His Own Being, which is truth, amplifies the divine beauty, as the curl is considered to be the sign of beauty.



TASAWWUF: We have the phrase, "Ishk Allah Mahbood Lillah," in which God is presented as Love, Lover and Beloved. No doubt an intellectualized love might be rectilinear, but there would be no feeling in it. Therefore it would not be love. We can verbally separate love from beauty, that is easy. But in function, can we? And if any of us have experienced love in any way and were called upon to symbolize it, we know very well it would be expressed curvilinearly and not rectilinearly. The straight line seems to symbolize law, the curved line love and wisdom.

GATHA: Then what is not straight is a puzzle. So wisdom is a puzzle to the ordinary mind.

TASAWWUF: Logicians who have gone deep into their study find that they are in danger of merely complicating tautology. It has not always been the logicians who praise logic, but the egocentrics, the dialecticians, the mentally minded.

Wisdom is always spontaneous. It may not consume time as we understand it. It is never a dualistic communication. A straight line has a beginning and an end. But it is also true, while we are in limitation, while we function in time and space, we are in the world of form.

GATHA: Besides, the curl hangs low down; so the heavenly beauty which is wisdom is manifested on earth. In other words, if someone wishes to see the beauty of the heavenly Beloved he may see it in wisdom.

TASAWWUF: There is a universal symbology here. There may be something like the masculine and feminine aspects of truth. In the Greek language, in the wisdom of the pre-Christians and Christians the word was Sophia. Sophia has been symbolic of divine wisdom and also of the heavenly mother.

Strictly speaking, it means understanding and understanding is often regarded as a feminine attribute of divinity, of life, and of human functions.

So womankind has been regarded as the beloved and mankind as the lover. The woman is pictured as being subject to moods which even allure and tantalize the lover. But without them, there may not seem to be any love at all. And what is beauty? It is very indefinable but it is easily felt. It becomes so fundamental also that it is often bypassed by the intellect.

GATHA: Wisdom is traced not only in the human being, but even in the beasts and birds, in their affection, in their instinct. Very often it is most difficult for man to imitate fully the work which birds do in weaving their nests. Even the insects do wonderful work in preparing a little abode for themselves which is beyond man's art and skill.

TASAWWUF: From this we can see that instinct is unconscious wisdom. What causes instinct to manifest? What is its origin? There are so many terms used by the learned and often in the sciences that are quite devoid of meaning. In fact they may cover as well as reveal. But there is no doubt that there is a spirit of guidance and that many animals are subconsciously or not so much

subconsciously aware of it that they follow certain patterns as if these were rules of life, and mostly these patterns show an innate wisdom. It is not only “swallows returning to Capistrano,” but all the aspects of migrations of birds and animals and insects; all the facets of lovemaking and home building, of methods of obtaining food, hiding from enemies, etc. In all of these there is evidence of a spirit of guidance.

We cannot say that the lower creation is consciously aware of divine guidance, but we can become aware that there is such a guidance.

GATHA: Besides this, if one studies nature, after keen observation and some contemplation upon it one will find that there is perfect wisdom behind it. Once man has thought on the subject, he can never, however materialistic he may be, deny the existence of God.

TASAWWUF: We must be very careful here not to fall into the confusion from words. Egocentric philosophers, of which the so-called existentialists are the clearest type, use the word “nature” in such a way that no biologist or geographer could understand it. When the word “nature” is used without any reference to the biological and geological habitats, it is most misleading.

The mystic has another approach; he may meditate or concentrate on objects or things from the mineral, vegetable or animal worlds. If he progresses in these arts, he may be able to enter into an attunement with them which can be called a yogic condition. In this attunement, he may be able to learn more than he can from external observation of them. This has always been the practice of the spiritually minded. We must be careful here and the only way to avoid confusion is actually practicing meditation on the stone, the tree, the flower, the family cat, the wild bird, etc. Without such practice there can be little wisdom or understanding.

And then comes a wonder. The mystic finds the existence of the same divine life, as it is said in the prayer, “Thy light is in all forms.” But now the same thing has been discovered by the scientist in his studies of cosmic rays, the ultra microscope and various other peregrinations into the depths of the real creatures, the real elements of the world about us.

We can philosophize and comment endlessly on this subject, but the wisdom is gained by the meditative attunement. This is part of the higher training of disciples of all schools of mysticism and wisdom.

GATHA: Man’s individuality is proved by his wisdom and distinguished by comparison. The wisdom of God, being perfect, is unintelligible to man. The glass of water cannot imagine how much water there is in the sea. If man would realize his limitation he would never dare question the existence of God.

RYAZAT: In Mushahida and in the deeper stages of yoga, the devotee practices **Tat Tvam Asi**. Literally this means, “that Thou art.” Or, “subject and object are one.” Therefore, one must feel that everything upon which his mind focuses is nothing but part of himself. If it is not already part of

himself, he should sit in posture and feel it so. If it is an old experience, the devotee practices union with it. If it is a new experience, the devotee becomes as a mother giving birth. As one progresses, either by way of attunement or they way of giving birth, he begins to understand his own divinity. When by experience he begins to realize his own divinity, then he would never more question the existence of God.

GATHA: The symbol of the curl also signifies something which is there, attractive, and yet a puzzle, a riddle. One loves it, admires it, and yet one cannot fathom its length and breadth. It is that which is wisdom.

TASAWWUF: Millions repeat the Prajna Paramita Sutra, which is translated, "Scripture of the perfect wisdom." Prajna means the immediate comprehension of whatever is about one of which one is conscious. In other words, this word is associated with actual yogic attunement and **attainment**. Many fail to appreciate this. Wisdom is not something apart from man. Wisdom is a function and attribute of man. It has been divinized as a woman, in Tibet as a goddess, because man must be in the state of receptivity in order for it to function. So also in another form it has been divinized as Isis, as Ishtar, as Sarasvati.

The greatest obstacle to this is the continued function of intellection. But mental disturbances are not overcome by mind. They may be overcome by breath; they may also be overcome by heart. As feelings are used, they become more alive; as they become more alive, they establish a new normalcy or pattern. Prajna is the same as the Sufi Kashf. We can study about this in the Gathas on the subject, and also in the commentaries thereon.

GATHA: Its surface is human, but its depth is divine.

TASAWWUF: That is to say, on the surface there is individualistic function, and in the depth there is collective function. On the unconscious level we find this in the behaviors of flocks of birds, hives of bees, herds of cattle, many functioning as one. On the superconscious level, it is the reciprocally opposite—one functioning as many. Superman is not an individual human with more outstanding faculties or abilities; superman or supermind is the activity of the spirit of guidance, vehicling an individual to influence a multitude.

GATHA: It could be hell or heaven, and the knowledge of it can enable man always to keep in touch with his heaven, instead of waiting for it till the hereafter.

TASAWWUF: The first step no doubt would be to affirm that heaven is here and now. As the adept develops through prowess in breathing, in concentration, in self-effacement, he finds it very easy to obliterate all influences from without and to experience more and more the influences from within. It is then that the heavens are at his feet. In the Sufi esotericism in particular, the various inner and outer sciences are taught which bring this about.

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**Gatha with Commentary**

**Series II: Number 7**

**The Glance**

GATHA: The Persian poets, in the Sufi literature, very often speak of the glance. And their symbolical expression for the glance is, very often, a sword, and it is called a sword for various reasons.

TASAWWUF: The sword has always been a symbol of power, and sometimes it is also considered as a symbol of masculinity, of positivity. Thus in the Tarot, which is concerned chiefly with occult symbology, there is a whole suit of cards called swords. Each one of these cards has a particular meaning and the whole suit reflects the activity of positivity.

The eye has been called the window of the soul. It is really the soul that sees. No doubt if a greater portion of the nervous structure were exposed to the surface there could be a very different and vastly operative type of seeing. This subject has not yet been fully dealt with by biologists and psychologists. Suggestions by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, who was also in some respects a scientist, have been left, so to speak, in mid-air. No doubt future research will bring us more knowledge.

Jesus Christ has said, "The light of the body is in the eye." The eye has been given great consideration by mystics of all times, and also some Islamic scientists who were also disciples in Sufism have added greatly to the science of optics.

There is also the symbol of the three monkeys, and one of them is depicted with his hands over his eyes, interpreted as, "With my eye I shall see no evil." But this has another interpretation also, that one resists being upset by anything unfavorable or agitating which comes through his seeing.

RYAZAT: People who are lacking in willpower may be given the sword for concentration. It has one effect with the eyes open and another with the eyes closed. With the eyes open willpower is strengthened; and with the eyes closed magnetism is strengthened.

GATHA: In the first place the glance has a projecting effect. An intelligent glance has a crossways movement, like that of a sword. But besides this, from a psychological point of view a keen glance sees through an object, as though a thing had been cut open by the sword and manifested to view.

TASAWWUF: We have to consider this from two points of view, the exoteric and esoteric. Human beings seem to know instinctively many aspects in the function of the glance for varied purposes. It is not only the lovers, it is every type of person who sometimes may be using the glance or the eyes for various purposes of nonverbal communication.

Tawajjeh is a practice whereby the teacher uses the glance both for the purpose of communication and also for arousing latent potentialities in disciples. It is a mistake to conclude this is used for mind-reading. When a person uses the glance for any private reason the magnetism involved may be only that which he as an individual has stored. But when he uses the glance, acting as an instrument for the whole, that is “United with all the illuminated souls who form the embodiment of the master, the spirit of guidance,” it brings to the surface what is said in Saum, “Pour upon us Thy love and Thy light,” it is then that the divine love and light use the seer as an instrument. So strictly speaking a seer is not a superior magician who has obtained some miraculous power; a seer is one so profound in emptiness that he has become an instrument of power.

GATHA: The glance is a power; very little is known about it. The power of the glance can hold lions at bay. Therefore it is also symbolized as a sword.

TASAWWUF: When the commentator was first trained in fana-fi-sheikh, he went out walking one morning and was halted by a huge beast, half-dog, half-wolf. He did not know what to do. He used the glance, repeated internally “Allaho Akbar” and growled at the animal. It suddenly took fright and ran away. It does not matter here whether the glance at the moment was from the personality or from the universe using the person as its instrument.

Animal trainers and others, consciously or unconsciously, have been using the power of glance in all times. It has been used endlessly but somehow or other has not been given proper, serious consideration.

Tawajjeh is the use of the glance for a particular purpose and could be said to be the norm of the Pir who may be working to help people, both disciples and non-disciples. Such is the particularization of the glance for some specific purpose as in healing or soothing the hot-tempered, etc.

Darshan has been translated as meaning “view,” “outlook,” “idea,” (the word “idea” itself seems etymologically connected with the use of the eye)—in fact darshan has been used to mean everything from simple glance to total philosophy. At the same time, the term darshan has been applied in a particular sense to a person using his eyes for purposes of communication and magnetism and blessing to one or more people, either in a matter-of-fact way or in ceremony.

In the highest instances, the glance has been used by teachers to help elevate pupils and audiences. No doubt it has been degraded, it has been ceremonialized, it has even become mere theatrical play. In such instances the receptive persons have merely had their own magnetism involved and aroused as in drinking intoxicants. Then there is no real benefit.

GATHA: The glance of a brave person is very often more powerful than a sword, for the willpower works through the glance.

TASAWWUF: It is said that Mohammed had a glance which was more powerful than the sword. He used it at the battle of Vadr and then later realized that although he had been victorious by the glance and the use of the wazifa "Allaho Akbar," it was his mission in life to win hearts and not merely battle; to lead all the Arabs and not just certain factions. By this experience and especially after being defeated at the battle of Chad, he was thereafter entirely successful in all his endeavors. People became charmed by his glance and his mannerisms.

In the case of Lord Buddha, it has been said that multitudes became enlightened just by his glance. If one visits the caves at Arjunta, there are wall paintings which exhibit in a marvelous manner the Tathagata and his glance and even these seemingly flat-surfaced figures have a majestic and magical effect.

GATHA: Besides its precious work, which makes the eye superior to every other organ of the body, it is the expression of the beauty of body, mind and soul.

TASAWWUF: It is not our purpose here to present mere intellectual philosophy. We have to learn from our own experiences and growth inwardly and outwardly. In Series I Gathas, the dot and circle are offered as subjects in symbology and therefore as themes for concentration. The dot and circle are elements of flat surfaces; the eye is roughly spherical and cannot be used in the same kind of concentration. That is to say to begin with, the eye would be transcendental to the dot and circle.

In the next place the eye is a vehicle of light. It is because it is a vehicle of light it may express the beauty of body, mind and soul. According to Sufi teachings there are three aspects of light which may be called physical, mental, and spiritual. Although physical light has been studied for many centuries, it has properties which have remained unknown, such as electrical and magnetic aspects. It is also a subject in the study of plants as in photo-intensity and photo-periodicity. It has been proposed that if plants respond to varying exposures of light in time and in intensity, and these have been well marked, the same might also be true of exposures of animals to light in time and intensity. While these subjects have been confined chiefly to specialists, they realize that light even on the physical plane plays roles not always known to the generality.

When it comes to light on the mental plane there are many aspects of it too profound to discuss here. Besides such considerations without corresponding inner awakening would be confusing and useless. Therefore it is most useful as well as inwardly beneficial to develop in accordance with the three purposes of the Sufi Order.

GATHA: Sufis, therefore, symbolize the eye by a cup of wine; through the eyes the secret hidden in man's heart is reflected into the heart of another.

TASAWWUF: Realization comes from experience and not from any discussion. When the

commentator was first ushered into Hazrat Inayat Khan's presence a glance penetrated deep into the personality. This seemed also to have been true of the others who became disciples at the same time. The difference between the lover and the Sufi is that whereas the lover often recognizes the heart language from his beloved, the Sufi may see it in all mankind. And the more the devotee can realize it the better he is.

The commentator was present when Hazrat Inayat Khan and Nyogen Senzaki the Zen monk met and a single common glance brought them both into Samadhi. The same experience occurred years later when the commentator was ushered into the presence of the Zen Roshi Soen Asahina at Kamakura Japan. After that, the experience was repeated at the same and different levels in meeting realized souls of different faiths.

The picture of a teacher or saint may be used in concentration and devotion. Mohammed's interdiction of the use of form was needed in his time when people were gross idolaters. At a higher state of general evolution, the situation is very different. The same medicine is not used for all diseases, nor can the same prohibitions be applied to all peoples.

The ancient Greeks had a legend of three old women called "grai." It is said they had only a single eye. The hero Perseus came and snatched it from them. This eye was symbolic of light operating on the physical, mental and spiritual planes. The term "grai" literally means "gray one." We can understand this if we regard human beings as creatures of mixed light and darkness. Greek legends are full of myths and symbols which have cosmic meanings. Although Madame Blavatsky and some of her co-workers realized this, they did not go very far in succinct interpretations and so have left this work to others.

The symbology of wine has been presented in other places. But as in the Christian mysticism, especially, it always means transmutation from a state of pseudo sobriety or ignorance into bliss and exaltation.

GATHA: However much a person may try to conceal his secret, yet the reader can read it in his eyes, and can read there his pleasure, his displeasure, his joy, his sorrow.

TASAWWUF: One of the follies of commercial advertising is the assumption that concealment is easily accomplished, and that over-accentuated and over-emotionalized words can have a successful effect. Sometimes there is an effect but often it is largely hypnotic. And there is a reaction to this because the eye of the soul and the ear of the heart are often repelled rather than charmed.

It is an almost cosmic tragedy that when we look into the lives of actual persons resorting to such methods, they ultimately face cosmic retribution. They are easily replaced, and the same pattern is repeated to no benefit to anybody.

GATHA: A seer can see still farther. The seer can see the actual condition of man's soul through

his eyes, his grade of evolution, his attitude in life, his outlook on life, and his condition, both hidden and manifest.

TASAWWUF: There are two ways by which this may be accomplished: the path of purgation and the path of attainment. Much of the path of purgation is presented in *Mental Purification* and its commentaries.

There are several ways toward attainment: one is a particular path of the development of sight, supersight and insight by special practices for this purpose. Another is the general evolution which awakens and utilizes Kashf as is explained in the Gathas on the subject and the commentaries. But besides both the seemingly negative and positive way towards seership, the ultimate comes when one realizes "This is not my body, this is the temple of God." So the true seer is one who is the instrument of the universe on the outer plane.

GATHA: Besides, to the passive soul of a disciple, knowledge, ecstasy, spiritual joy, and divine peace, all are given through the glance.

TASAWWUF: We have these words in the prayers. We have these teachings in the literature. But we do not always have accomplishments. There is a procession of spiritual vitality, passed from soul to soul, so to speak, in what may be called dharma transmission on one hand and procession of Baraka on the other. Ultimately, these become the same, and in the future ages the various schools of spiritual endeavor and mystical training will recognize this and each other.

As Sufism is now presented we can use the darshan of Buddha without necessarily emphasizing the personality of Buddha. We can use the teachings of Buddha to promote knowledge, ecstasy, spiritual joy, and divine peace. For this only glance and meditation are needed, thus perhaps the accomplishment may follow, does follow. It would seem we are imparting these things as experiences and not as intellectual considerations. And these are done through various ranges of magnetic communication on various levels as is presented in the teachings on Sufi psychology, both those offered to the disciples and to the generality.

GATHA: One sees in everyday life that a person who is laughing in his mind with his lips closed can express his laughter through his glance, and the one who receives the glance at once catches the infectious mirth. Often the same happens through looking in the eyes of the sorrowful, in a moment one becomes filled with depression.

TASAWWUF: We are today promoting this infectious mirth by spiritual means. This does not mean that illness, sorrow, misfortune, etc., are overlooked; it means the eradication of self-pity and the ability to face the rest of life from another point of view. It is remarkable to behold the growing use of exaltation by scholars who realize the limitations of intellect and the infinite potentialities of heart and higher consciousness.

What are they using? They are using the glance, they are using the atmosphere, they are using



spiritual phrases, they are practicing the presence of Allah and His praise. They are finding these things more effective than all else. Yet there is no blind optimism, no superficiality, no disregard for others.

GATHA: And those whose secret is God, whose contemplation is the perfection of beauty, whose joy is endless in the realization of everlasting life, from whose heart the spring of love is ever flowing, it is most appropriate that their glance should be called, symbolically, the “Bowl of Saki, the Bowl of the Wine-Giver.”

TASAWWUF: The deeper one goes into the recesses of the heart, the greater will be his capacity for exaltation and cosmic enjoyment. The wise teacher will not hold back his glance, his blessing, his fervor. He can and does arouse the dormant life of devotees and disciples by the glance, and this symbolically becomes wine.

Fana-fi-sheikh, or self-effacement before the teacher, is a normal practice of Sufis of all schools. So long as the teacher makes no effort to build up personal following, aggrandizement and fame, the more he is capable of arousing and awakening the dormant, latent possibilities in disciples and all humankind.

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## **Gatha with Commentary**

## **Series II: Number 8**

### **The Myth of Balder**

GATHA: The Scandinavian myth tells that Balder, the god of youth, beauty, kindness, and gentleness, was pursued by enemies who wanted to kill him. For his protection a spell had been cast upon all the trees of the forest and every plant that has a root in the ground and grows upward to heaven, that no weapon wrought from any of them should have power to harm him.

TASAWWUF: In the nineteenth century there were independent efforts to collect and evaluate folklore myth. Such men as Andrew Lange and Sir James Frazer have become focus in historical and scientific annals. Madame Blavatsky who was the reviver of theosophy even saw divine wisdom in myths and legends. She was no doubt correct, but the statement of itself does not give us any divine wisdom. It is not enough to collect stories and sagas and märchen and compare

them and note their migrations to different parts of the world. This of itself offers little explanation, but we might learn or infer that that which is deep, that that which is based on truth however presented, will tend to find a way into men's conscious heart.

Balder may be regarded as the higher self in man, as the superman, as the ideal man. It is this man which is called hu-man in the *Sufi Message*, who can be wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove. Balder was such a figure. He was called the god of youth and beauty because the soul is ageless. He was god of kindness and gentleness, qualities which emanate from the purified heart.

Mohammed taught that God has sent a prophet to all people. This statement is also accepted by man any without content. The Sufi goes further, he seeks the content. A Sufi may study folklore, mythology, comparative religion and all related subjects, but he does so with the inner belief that these are vestiges of the revelations given to those prophets which Salat says, "All known and unknown to the world."

GATHA: But in this charm, the mistletoe had been forgotten, which has no root in the ground, and from its wood an arrow was made, with which Balder was hit and wounded to death.

TASAWWUF: The mistletoe has neither root in the ground no does it grow toward heaven. The life in samsara is very much like this. The various social order, industrial systems or more especially certain institutions theoretically based on them are not doubt parasitic. It is these parasitic institutions and person with such outlooks that have often been the causes of the defeat of righteousness in the world. And we can see also in the *Mahabharata* that the kuruvras represented such outlooks.

GATHA: Its interpretation is an answer to the question which often arises in an intelligent mind, "Why were godlike people treated cruelly, continually, through all periods of the world's history, and how could any person in the world think of causing harm to those who attracted the sympathy of almost every soul they met on the earth?"

TASAWWUF: The same idea is found in the Bible where it is stated that the Roman soldiers taunted Jesus Christ asking if he were the son of God why did he not get down from the cross. Here we have a simile no doubt that Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross or tree and that Balder was killed by something derived from a tree.

The well known poet-scientist Robert Graves has done years of research on tree symbology and the attendant myths. He claims that there is much of prehistory in them but he also has seen something far more deep. In the Jewish religion we hear the Torah referred to as "the tree of life." If we could have a macroscopic view we could understand it, but with a microscopic and analytical view we are lost. We do not see the whole.

Thus we have a very strange interpretation, that the processes of narrow views and analysis make it difficult not to say impossible to have overall pervading views. This means that darkness is

overcoming light, for the narrow view, being mutually exclusive, preclude each other and also hinder the wide views. Thus the mass of humanity although sympathetic and even devout towards Balder and Jesus and Krishna have, because of the ego, precluded themselves from the universal outlook, and thus also stood in the way of their own enlightenment.

The whole struggle on the spiritual path is to rise above and beyond ego and narrowness. All truth, beauty, wonder and perfection are found within the depths and can be brought to light.

GATHA: Their adherents spread their teachings and the beauty of their life and character among all, wise and foolish, kind and cruel. They all became more or less impressed by what they learned of the godly souls, even those whose soul had not yet risen to human evolution, who only live like trees and plants, living and yet dreaming, unaware of life, except their own activity.

TASAWWUF: This would indicate that also we have within us a type of godliness. This is also a teaching in *The Inner Life* and the commentaries on it. In Sufism, as well as in similar teachings derived from other sources, we reach the conclusion that the universe is in man. It is not only to say, "The kingdom of God is within you." Many do that; it is to make a reality of it. No doubt it is comforting to enjoy Balder and Christ, but what is necessary is to awaken the Balder and Christ within ourselves.

GATHA: But the one who could not be impressed by this spell, whom, even had the spell been cast upon him, it could not have reached, and had it reached only with great difficulty, is the godless, who is like the mistletoe, living without any root.

TASAWWUF: There is a sort of parallel in the Greek legends that Thetis placed the infant Achilles into a magic potion holding him by the heel and that this portion of his body alone was vulnerable. It would seem that there may be a weak spot in all of us, and not only in persons but in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. They all have their weak spots. Jesus Christ has said, "In the hour ye think least the son of man cometh." It happens therefore that great spiritual personalities may manifest without being recognized, even being ignored. It also happens that dangers lurk without being recognized, often ignored.

This has given the pseudo-prophets the opportunity to give false warnings. These warnings disturb all who do not accept that there is a spirit of guidance within. Words may disturb us but vision can save us. We have a true root within us; the tree of life has often been symbolized as representing both the human being and all of humanity.

Mohammed himself was well aware of the godless of his time. Sura CXI reads, "Let the hands of Abu Lahab perish, and let himself perish! His wealth and his gains shall avail him not. Burned shall he be at the fiery flame and his wife laden with firewood—on her neck a rope of palm fiber."

Now Abu Lahab itself means "father of the flame." Symbolically this is the nufs of man which can lead him even to hellfire. Actually this also refers to human beings, in-laws of the prophets who led

the opposition to him. This also appears in *Gayan* where it says, "Our greatest enemies are those near and dear to us." Balder was killed by a blind brother.

When the intuitive faculty begins to operate we can understand symbology in action. If we apply the intellect which has no place here, we tend to restrict parables. Mohammed over and over again said that Holy Qur'an was offered in parabolic form. In Hadiths he said, "Holy Qur'an was revealed in seven dialects, and each with an inner and outer aspect." History shows and orthodoxy supports the tendency toward a single interpretation, or rather many conflicting single interpretations instead of rising to an overall view.

Parables, legends, myths, and symbolic representations can only be properly understood and applied when the intuitive faculty Kashf or insight is properly awake and functioning. If we look upon the story of Balder as a single incident it is of no importance whatsoever.

GATHA: The mourning for this is continued, in memory of the death of that god. In reality it is celebrating the birth of what was born from him, it was divine knowledge.

TASAWWUF: "The Dying God" was also a theme of Sir James Frazier in the monumental *The Golden Bough*. It has been offered time and again to all sorts of people in all parts of the world. Sometimes a god is killed or dies without there being any resurrection. In those cases he is usually avenged.

There are mourning festivals among many people for different outward reasons though inwardly it is the same thing. It is applied in agriculture, and it is also applied in ceremonies sometimes connected with agricultural societies and sometimes not so. You can write volumes on this, and it has become an important theme in anthropology and folklore.

No doubt in esoteric practices such as meditation and concentration the cross as a symbol either connected with Jesus Christ or otherwise is often sufficient to awaken mankind to the motifs involved.

Stories of the dying god often present ideas of rebirth, youth and virility. The ancients often had a particular god for one or more of these virtues. Now we have the one ever-living God. But as this God cannot be seen and is difficult to realize, different aspects of the universal life are presented to devotees in devotion and concentration and in study. Thus we may be able to resurrect the Balder which is within ourselves. The mistletoe does not represent anything substantial. It is symbolic of the ego which tends to kill all aspects of divinity as they come to manifestation. On the other hand, especially in Sufism there are all the methodologies which make us aware of the divine life which is within us.

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**Gatha with Commentary**

**Series II: Number 9**

**The Tree of Wishes**

GATHA: There is an old Hindu belief, found in the ancient myths of India, that there is a tree which they call **Kamana Kalpa Vriksha**, a tree that bears all fruits that one can imagine, and if a person is under that tree he has but to wish for what he would like, and in the same moment all fruits, all flowers, everything he can imagine, he will find brought forth by the tree as its fruits; he has but to wish and it will fall into his hands.

TASAWWUF: In Symbology the tree and the cross are related. Suppose one were given the symbol of the cross for concentration. Its significance is self-surrender. But suppose something happened as in the story of Tannhauser, that the wood began to turn into a tree? This is self-fulfillment; in Sufism we have fana, self-effacement; we also have baqa, self-fulfillment. And what is self-fulfillment?

It is the coming into manifestation of the divine life which is in all forms. In other forms this may be unconscious. There is a Sufi saying that every leaf of the tree testifies to Allah. But in the adept the effacement brings the fulfillment, is the fulfillment. Supposing it was necessary for the disciple to have the ego under control; then the teacher might assign the cross as his concentration. But suppose the disciple were a self-debasing type, or really in need, or in the process of growth, then the teacher might give the tree as the subject.

In the studies in Murakkabah, concentration, one is given a theme. Then one may be given a theme in which the devotee might have to use his own devices. He might be assigned a bare tree, like a deciduous one in winter. He would use his inner faculties to bring that tree into bud, into leaf, into fruiting and fulfillment. Thus the Garden of Eden represents the picture of Jabrut or the spiritual world. There is Paradise Lost and there is Paradise Regained. Only man regains by his own effort. It is not true as orthodoxy may proclaim that a human sacrifice or a divine sacrifice returns man to his original state without effort, without trial, without suffering.

Line 57 of Sura XXXVI (36) says, "Therein shall they have fruits, and shall have whatever they require." This is usually regarded as a heavenly condition. It comes in the heavens of rewards and punishments; in Hindu terminology, Indra Loka. But is this the fulfillment of man's destiny? To the mystic rewards and punishments belong to the children and perhaps they are necessary in some stages of development. Yes, Jesus has said, "Seek and ye shall find, ask and it shall be added unto you." But what are we seeking? Is it self-fulfillment?

Man may become one with the Cross or with Jesus on the Cross. He also may become one with the tree with all its leaves, branches, flowers and fruits.

GATHA: If it is within one's reach one has to raise one's hand to pluck the flower or fruit of that tree; if it is beyond one's reach one has only to wish and the branch will reach one's hand, that one may pick it without any effort.

TASAWWUF: No doubt symbology is very valuable in helping man conceal, also in helping man reveal. This is a teaching of masonry. But this teaching does not help one much until he fulfills **Tat Tvam Asi**; literally "That Thou Art." According to Sufism, everything on the heavens and earth belongs to man. Man achieves his Godhead when he realizes his allness. If he looks at the tree, if he sees the tree, if he can paint the tree correctly, he is an artist. But if he can become the tree, he is a yogi or adept. Then it is no longer symbology, it is self-fulfillment.

There is a Hebrew tradition that the manna described in the Books of Moses could take on any taste. It represents an aspect of the fulfillment of wishes. Yes, every wish can be fulfilled, but it will bring about with it its karma also. The wise, therefore, are very cautious about wishing.

GATHA: And there is a story about that tree, that a wanderer, while journeying in deserts, by chance happened to sleep under that tree. And when, after a good sleep, he opened his eyes and looked up at that tree, he thought, "I suppose it must be a pear tree." No sooner had he thought that than two good ripe pears dropped near him. While lying there he picked them up. "Oh," he said, "what a wonderful tree! If it were a grape tree, what a splendid thing it would be!" As soon as he said it, the tree seemed full of grapes, and before he raised his hands, the branches bent low and, without any effort, he was able to pick the grapes.

TASAWWUF: This is a similar allegory to that of the manna and its fulfillment. But we must consider the desert also. This means that man is striving toward fulfillment. It also signifies samsara. But it also means that even in samsara there is the Divine Grace.

GATHA: But when he thought, "What a wonderful tree!" he wondered if the tree would yield some roses. And no sooner had he given a thought to it than the whole tree seemed to blossom into roses. This man became so surprised, so amazed and perplexed at this magical tree that he wondered if it was true or if it was only a dream. As soon as he thought of a dream and he looked up at the tree, the tree vanished in a moment.

TASAWWUF: This actually occurs in our daily life. But the processes on earth are slow, in heaven they are rapid. They are slow on earth because man is intoxicated by the denseness of the earth. In fact the divine grace is such that it wishes the self-fulfillment in man. The desire nature wants everything, but wanting and gaining everything does not bring the self-fulfillment. Rather the intoxications of life bring only temporary pleasures and joys.

There was one time an American actor named Douglas Fairbanks who filled the role called "The

Thief of Baghdad.” This was an allegoric story written by an Afghan named Achmed Abdallah. It was really a Sufi story. It had to do with the initiations of the five elements. The hero began as a thief; then he was caught and punished; then he underwent the initiations and all sorts of trials. When he passed these tests he gained power over the universe.

This is really the allegoric story of every person, especially all persons who go on the spiritual path toward self-fulfillment. The Persians had variations of the same theme in “The Treasure Chest of Oromades.” Even the Holy Grail is a variant of this theme.

GATHA: There cannot be a better example to demonstrate the idea behind the symbolical tree than this story. For this tree is the whole universe, the miniature of which is one’s own self, and there is nothing that you ask that this universe will not answer, for it is the nature of the universe to answer your soul’s call.

TASAWWUF: We have this symbolic tree in another form in the Jewish *Kabbalah*. For a similar reason also Sir James Frazier called his monumental work *The Golden Bough*. In all parts of the world we have variants of the same theme. We can even find it in the human body, both in constructive and destructive senses.

What the devotee needs is the self-realization. The Jewish traditions, both mystical and non-mystical, speak of the Tree of Life. What is this tree? Where is it? Of what use is it if it is merely regarded as a symbol?

Repeating the attributes of God in Wazifas and other sacred phrases man draws from the infinite Godhead all that is required for his fulfillment and perfection. It is the God that fulfills. As we cannot know God in His fullness we can nonetheless attune to and assimilate His various attributes. Then we draw the blessings and these blessings may come to us both in form and in formless ways.

GATHA: Only, if you ask for pears, there are pears, if one asked for a cactus, there is a cactus, if you ask for the rose there will be the rose and its thorns together. And it is the lack of knowledge of this great secret hidden in the heart of the universe which is the only tragedy in life.

TASAWWUF: The great American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, was right when he said we must be careful about what we wish for, for we shall surely obtain it. All wishes may come true sooner or later. The wise therefore add the phrase “inshallah” whenever they wish or predict or tell. In this way they avoid any disagreeable karma, even if it means avoiding all karma. There are several aspects to this.

After the devotees are taught Fikr they are asked to observe this sway of breath as if keeping in this breath one was attuned to God. Any change from it would mean lack of attunement. So by Fikr man sooner or later arrives to mastery.

GATHA: When a person seeks for something in the universe and he cannot find it, it is not true that

it is not there, the fact is that he does not see it. Besides, he sees something within his reach, he sees something which he desires, and yet he thinks whether it is possible for him to get it or whether it is beyond the reach of his effort and power.

TASAWWUF: Years ago there was a child's story written in the school books by which reading was taught all over America. It was called the "Wishing Tree." It had this theme, but very few ever found it. The Bible may say, "Few there be that find it;" or "In the hour ye think least the son of man cometh!" If we wish, we cannot demand also that our wishes be granted by some particular method. If a person has to travel a short distance or a long distance, he knows that he cannot self-select the roads and arrive at his destination also; he must give up something. Either he must abandon his wish or be thankful if it be fulfilled in any manner, for the fulfillment belongs to God alone.

GATHA: And at the same time the end of the story solves the whole question of life, and that is, it is all there and nothing is there. If we think it is everything, it is everything, but if we realize that it is nothing, it is nothing. It is something of which you may say that it is and it is not.

TASAWWUF: Pictures of the universe are offered in many places in *The Sufi Message* and in all mystic literature. In Buddhism in particular it has been taught that everything may be determined by mind, but a single thought "all may be determined by mind" itself does not determine. Mind is not one of its myriad of thoughts nor can it be a thought of itself. This is a trap into which many fall.

The Psalmist said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." People repeat this phrase and go on wanting. Gayan says, "When a glimpse of Our Image is caught in man, when heaven and earth are sought in man, then what is there in the world that is not in man? If one only explores him, there is a lot in man." But it takes much more than the repetition of formulae, then the quoting of a maxim or slogan, to bring about self-fulfillment.

We must learn to hold an optimist view, that all things are possible with us and through us. The depths of concentration are in the depths of the heart. With awakening of the heart all may be fulfilled.

GATHA: However, beyond all things of this universe, above all things that this life can offer, there is only one thing and that is God. And what is God? God is truth.

TASAWWUF: Although this teaching has been expressed many times in both esoteric and exoteric literature, it requires the depths of contemplation. Contemplation or Mushahida is an advanced practice among adepts. Lessons about shahud appear in *The Sufi Message of Spiritual Liberty* and also in studies on Azan, the call to prayer. No doubt these are proper introductions, but the real practice of Mushahida comes when man delves deeply into his whole heart, sees the universe as within his own heart and identifies himself with the Divine Mother, so to speak, feeling the whole creation as if within himself.



The sacred phrase, “Ya Hayy, Ya Haqq” verbalizes this. It is only after one has advanced in concentration and meditation, then one can sense and feel the whole universe, the Garden of Eden with all its trees and blessings within himself and begin the work of Bodhisattva or Spirit of Guidance.

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

### **Gatha with Commentary      Series II: Number 10**

#### **The Hindu Symbolical Form of Worship**

GATHA: Puja is the name of the Hindu form of worship, which is, from the beginning to the end a symbolical expression of what the seeker has to perform in the path of spiritual attainment.

TASAWWUF: No doubt every form of worship is symbolic, in other words, it has its overtones, it derives from the worlds unseen as well as the seen. It may also be true that many of the principles and elements of Indian Puja have been copied and so influenced other religions. But there is another side to it also. In Series I Gathas on Naqshibandi, many basic elements are introduced. They are like geometry; they also are like the mineral world.

But then the element of activity is introduced. This represents an evolution like the vegetable world out of the mineral world. The elements of the vegetable world have breath and life which is to say movement. So as we advance in evolution, be it material, be it spiritual, be it of the worlds below, be it of the worlds above, we find the same universal principles in operation. And when we pass from the study of one religion to another, we find certain elements in common: the straight line remains a straight line, the curve a curve, sound is sound, silence is silence, bowing has a certain purpose and effect, standing up has a certain purpose and effect, walking has the same meaning, and circumambulation and all basic elements do not change, although they are used in various combinations by the different faiths.

GATHA: After bathing in the running stream of water, which the Hindu calls the Ganges (whatever be the name of the river he at that time believes that it is the Ganges, the sacred river) he proceeds with flowers to the shrine of the deity.

TASAWWUF: Purification comes first in every faith. This is a remarkable fact which analytical

minds seeking differences tend to overlook. Islam which was originally religion in the desert could hardly propose bathing in streams, but wazu is regarded as most important. Indeed, Muslims often regarded themselves as superior over Christians because they demanded both wazu and the hamman or bath. Still we can find several forms of water-purification in the ancient Hebrew religion and baptism in Christianity.

The commentator who has partaken of the baptism in both the Christian and Hindu rituals found they were remarkably alike in form but with different words. The commentator himself had this baptism in the Godavari River which was once most sacred in India and in some ways still is. He had this baptism in the very region mentioned in the Ramayana, in the life of the avatar Rama.

In the Hebrew Bible the Jordan River sometimes functions similarly to the Ganges in Hindu mythology. Looking at it from the esoteric point of view, in the art of mythology we find many similarities. And when we look into the blood stream which is within man, we find complete evidences behind such mythologies, a unity from which varieties have been derived. In the Christian Epistle of St. John we may also read that there are three witnesses on earth: water and breath and blood.

The flowers also are emblems of the vegetable world and of life, of sacrifice, of beauty and of purity. Both water and flowers are used in the modern Sufi healing service.

GATHA: He puts on to the deity the flowers, and repeats the mantrams, and stands greeting the deity with folded hands, and prostrates himself before the deity. Then he rings the bell and repeats the sacred word.

TASAWWUF: The mantram corresponds to both prayer and sound. In this Hindu ceremony man is not seeking, man is not asking. He is offering veneration. When the devotee prostrates, he is inferring: I am not, Thou art all. We have the same ideas in other forms of worship by other people.

The ringing of the bell indicates nada brahma, or sabha, that is to say, sound. Sound may reach the deity and also sound may come from the deity if only we know how to listen.

The sacred word is repeated. This removes all mundane words and thoughts. It means a mental purification, just as the water connotes a physical purification.

GATHA: Then he takes rice in his hands and puts it at the feet of the deity.

TASAWWUF: Rice is an offering of the produce of the field. In this respect also it represents the vegetable world. Hebrew people say, "Praise be to Thee O Lord, our God, King of the Universe Who has produced bread from the ground." We can see in all parts of the world a relation between the products of the earth and particularly the grains. Not only in the old world but even in the new. It would appear that God has sent messages to the world from time to time to instruct humanity how to grow these grains and thus place food in the hands of God's creatures.

In Java to this day where the people have become Muslims and in Bali where they have retained their ancient forms of worship, rice is offered in worship but then is eaten afterwards. And if we make a deep study of this externally, we can find principles and ceremonies like this among cultured people everywhere.

GATHA: Then the red powder, Kumkum, he touches with the tip of his finger and makes a mark with it on the shrine of the deity and then on his own forehead.

TASAWWUF: This is for mental purification. The mind is used as well as the body and not only symbolically but actually when this can be done. The place where the mark is made is just over the third eye, which has become asleep in most people.

GATHA: Then he touches the ointment with the tip of his finger and, after touching the deity, he touches his forehead with the ointment.

TASAWWUF: The signification of oils and ointments is explained in the lessons on “Superstitions, Customs and Beliefs” and the commentaries thereon. Briefly, this symbolizes the softening of the ego.

There may be a question here why this subject is introduced in the lessons on Naqshibandi and the reason is that the purpose is to instill action rather than thought. It is here not only to understand forms of worship but to be able to partake of them. We have instances in the literature where Sufi saints have gone so far as to worship before idols which seems very contrary to the religion of Mohammed. In his time the idols represented presumably different deities. The Arabs before the time of Mohammed were ignorant and illiterate. Other peoples were not so ignorant and illiterate and saw in their gods and goddesses aspects of the one all pervading deity.

GATHA: He then prostrates himself and makes three circles around the shrine.

TASAWWUF: Here we see the straight line, the dot and the circle—all used in worship. We pass from the static to the dynamic. Prostration and circumambulation are found in the rituals of all faiths with the same meanings. Prostration is like fana, self-effacement. Circumambulation is like baqa, the coming into manifestation of the divine life. We find these also in evidence in the ritual before the Kaaba in Mecca. Wherever they are used they have the same psychic import.

Indeed, one of the purposes of the Sufi Message of the day is to uncover common meanings and to resurrect the psychic aspects of religion and of life. Both prostrations and circumambulations are used, must be used, in our devotions.

GATHA: Then he rings the bell, and thus the service is finished.

TASAWWUF: This ringing of the bell has also passed into Buddhism. In some sects it is an important part of the ceremony. Sometimes it has been elaborated and gongs are used, and

occasionally, a wooden block or hollow wooded instrument is used. It can even be practiced so that the devotee identifies himself with sound, and from this also he can begin to understand more of life.

GATHA: Afterwards he goes and stands before the sun and does his breathing exercises while adhering to the sun, and that completes the next part of his worship.

TASAWWUF: The salutation to the sun is very ancient. It seems to have come from the time when the Aryans lived in the north before the separation of the Iranians and Hindus (Aryans). This is also considered in the discussions of the sun in the commentaries on Series I. But we also can internalize all these elements.

As soon as one becomes a disciple in Sufism he practices Nayaz, so that he can avail himself of the rays of the sun, of the waves of the air, and of the all-pervading power in space. From these three sources he can derive endless vitality, even a form of immortality.

GATHA: However primitive this form of worship, at the back of it there seems to be a great meaning. The meaning of the bath in the Ganges is to become purified before one makes any effort of journeying on the spiritual path.

TASAWWUF: There is some question as to what is primitive and what is not. We see the rise of new cults of new sects and they introduce rituals and ceremonies. But they cannot introduce into the human mind what has not already been the mental atmosphere. In this sense as Solomon has said, "There is nothing new under the sun."

It is very curious that while attacks are being made on religion and much is made of the word "superstition," many anthropologists who are not particularly religious are finding much significance. And while much has been made about differences between science and religion, why not? There is difference between sleeping and eating and working and playing; there are many differences in life, different activities, but this does not mean that they must be at war with each other. Science refers to activities in certain aspects of life, and religion to other aspects of the one common life.

GATHA: The purification of the body and of the mind both are necessary before one takes the first step towards the God-ideal. One must not approach deity before such purification, the outer purification as well as the inner purification, for then alone, when once a person is pure, he will find it easy to attain the desired presence.

TASAWWUF: This whole subject is dealt with at some length in *Mental Purification* and its commentaries. It is indeed a vast subject and it is indeed a most difficult series of processes.

GATHA: The meaning of the flowers which he takes is that God is pleased with the offerings which are delicate, beautiful and fragrant. Delicate means tenderness of heart, beautiful in color is

fineness of character, fragrance is the virtue of the soul. This is the offering with which God is pleased.

TASAWWUF: We speak of God as the perfection of Love, Harmony and Beauty. These are outlines, skeleton words. There may be some question as to how beauty has found a place in this life. We can conceive of a world without the loveliness of flowers and trees and fruits. But the fact is that they are, and when we look into it deeply there is not only some beauty but also some wisdom in it.

This introduces the heart element into worship, the feelings. So a pure worship will be one which is operative on all planes of being.

GATHA: He stands with the thought that his self is devoted in perfect discipline to the supreme will of God. His hands folded express no action on the part of himself, but complete surrender. The meaning of prostration is self-denial in the right sense of the word, which means: "I am not, Thou art."

TASAWWUF: This is the whole spirit of devotion. It is not that religion is going out of existence, it is that true devotion is returning. The *Gita* says, "When dharma decays, I come." We find the same principle in the Hebrew *Kabbalah*. But the thought of self has been so emphasized even by those who belong to faiths which deny the existence of self that ceremonies have become empty and the psychological values behind faiths have been buried.

In the Message of the Day there are many esoteric and some exoteric practices which are used to restore the purity and value behind worship itself. There has been too much emphasis upon a particular form rather than the overt or hidden significance. True devotion means the abasement of the ego-self, that is the nufs, without any hindrance to personality, which is the hidden sun within all of us.

GATHA: Whispering the words and ringing the bell is that the same word is rung in the bell of one's heart.

TASAWWUF: We are beginning to understand through actual experience what Al-Ghazali said, that "Sufism is based on experience and not on syllogisms." The practice of Zikr as an esoteric methodology; the continuance of it on and on will evince that as man is calling on Allah, so Allah is expressing Himself to and through man. It is not a one-way operation. It is not some dualistic device called monistic. In the end it will be found that God is worshipping God through man.

GATHA: His touching the red powder means touching the eternal life and when he touches the deity with that powder it means that from this source he is to gain eternal life. When he touches his forehead with it, it means he has gained it for himself. And the ointment means wisdom, and the touching of his own head with it means that he has gained it.

TASAWWUF: This is really part of concentration. We are not always told, but the practice of Murakkabah either in the disciplinary form or the devotional form helps to awaken the hidden part of our being. It comes to life. The so-called "Third Eye" begins to function and often it awakens faculties of which we have not been aware; and it opens up the unseen worlds which are not always in accord with our conceptions.

GATHA: Then making three circles around the shrine is the sign that life is a journey and that journey is made to attain his goal which is God, that "Every step I take in my life," the Brahman thinks, "will be in His direction, in the search of God."

TASAWWUF: Pilgrimage belongs to all faiths. It often takes considerable selflessness to realize that the same principles which Mohammed proclaimed as "The Pillars of Islam" are found in all faiths, and that he came as the "Seal of the Messengers," not as the destroyer of previous revelations.

The reason that Islam has failed as a final religion is that in the hands of the ignorant it has become destructive. The message of Mohammed was even more than that of Jesus Christ, "I have not come to destroy but to fulfill," which means to finalize and perfect.

GATHA: In the second part of the service when he stands before the sun, by that he means that God is to be sought in the light. And by the breathing exercises he welds that link of inner communication between God and himself.

TASAWWUF: We can begin to realize that all the Gathas, though presented as separate subjects, have their one common purpose. And the over-emphasis on breath is not an over-emphasis at all. It is because man, in his ignorance, has created a difference between spirit and breath, between life and breath, and between God and breath. When we bring these all together, though it may not necessarily advance us, it means the end of stasis, it means the beginning of the awakening or reawakening of life's currents in it and the transformation which transforms and is not a mere mental operation. It culminates in the rebirth spiritually of every devotee.