

Githa Numbers 1–5 with Commentary

Ryazat: Esotericism

Series III

of

Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan

by

Murshid Samuel L. Lewis

(Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti)

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.

Githa with Commentary

Series III: Number 1

Shagal (1)

GITHA: The object that the Sufi has in life is not necessarily the attainment of power or the achievement of inspiration.

TASAWWUF: In theory at least power is the supreme goal of the expressive people who are called Jelalis and inspiration is the supreme goal of the responsive people who are called Jemalis. And from another point of view inspiration is a characteristic of the jinns, and is a component part of the jinn evolution, while Djabrut itself means the sphere of power, and those who develop in their evolution until they have some of the consciousness of Djabrut no doubt touch the realm of power.

This very fact may cause one to consider that the search for power and the expression of power are not the same, and the search for inspiration and the expression of inspiration are not the same. The infant repeats or reflects something of the angelic state but he does not show power and the child reveals something of the jinn state, and though there may be wisdom in what he says or does it is not inspiration because he is not awake to it.

Actually real power cannot be obtained without inspiration. The person who can develop physical might or mental prowess wears himself or others down. There is always a limit to his ability and he, not knowing how to draw the strength from this sphere either borrows it from his own reserve or forces it from others—the last method often ending consciously or unconsciously in black magic or diabolatry. The spiritual student, on the other hand, who has received the grace of God often finds himself powerful after inspiration. Pain brings inspiration and inspiration power.

Likewise receptivity or response alone do not bring inspiration. If that were so, weak and timid souls might be easily inspired. They follow anybody or everybody, they do not reach the source of inspiration. They can become inspired as they develop strength of will or character. For them love also is needed, or determination, else mere responsiveness will bring them nowhere.

GITHA: It is to touch the depth of life—that plane of existence whence springs every activity manifesting through different channels.

TASAWWUF: In other words, man's goal on the spiritual path is to reach and touch the source of his being. When his life is self-determined it reaches nowhere; when it is God-determined it has no limitations. It is a great mistake on the part of any mureed, no matter how evident be his character

and inclination, to declare of and by himself that he is on the path of the Jemali or Jelali, that his life-work is to become a saint, a master, a prophet, a teacher, a pir. No doubt he is correct in his thoughts and feelings but the prayer says: "Use me for the purpose that **Thy** wisdom chooseth."

GITHA: The physician who gets to the heart of the patient can know more and better about the general condition of his health than he who looks for the pain in the affected part.

TASAWWUF: In other words the teacher is there as an interpreter of the spiritual practices of the talib. There have been many mistakes made about the attitude of the pupil toward the teacher. A real teacher is one who has gone on the path before the pupil and because of his inner revelations is able to explain certain things to the pupil, who, without this explanation, would be led into confusion. Man may say he will live with or without a teacher, but all his saying will in nowise affect his dreams, inspirations and inner experiences, which may come because of Divine Grace (Hariat).

GITHA: In the same way the Sufi by the practice of Shagal gets to the heart of things, where he can see the seedling of the successes and failures, where he can see the signs of forthcoming joy or pain.

TASAWWUF: Because Shagal is a practice which enables the talib to function as if without mind. To a certain extent, he reaches therein the angelic condition; but it might better be said that Shagal is a soul practice rather than a heart practice for it makes every form of dualism impossible. Then there is no self or other. Besides, the longer one can hold his breath, the finer the particles and vibrations which he can assimilate. This develops the faculty of insight. And a great mistake is made by pupils who, from lack of faith, do not trust the one who has the insight.

GITHA: The question why he must know it and what it is that tells him can be answered thus: that by Shagal the Sufi learns to see by his sight independently of the eyes, and he learns to hear by his hearing independently of the ears, and as soon as his senses get this independence from their limited instrument of experience, they begin to see and hear beyond the limitations of these physical instruments, and the area of vision becomes widened.

TASAWWUF: It is taught from the earliest stages and is emphasized in the Gathas and elsewhere that the soul really sees. The eye is formed in the body out of nerve terminals because already there is a faculty, and the study of biological evolution reveals that where there is a faculty there is a tendency toward specialization which has as object and motive the establishment of a certain organ wherein that faculty can operate. In the highest realms all faculties are more-or-less interlinked; it is only below what may be called the mind-mesh that they manifest as separate or separated faculties, and these faculties locate in specialized organs there to receive certain vibrations.

The material scientists admit that all rays of light are not received directly by the average eye. The eye in the Western countries, at least where they are instruments of precision, does not respond to all the different vibrations from the extreme infra-red rays to the extreme ultra-violet rays. Yet the

body often responds and the skin may be sensitive thereto. Besides, some blind people and others also may develop a sense of sight or a sense of space through the fingertips. This is because the whole body is the temple of the divine spirit and the soul itself is without limitations. Psychic power can easily be accumulated around the fingers and from that and by it there may be a response to light and other vibrations.

But because the mind and body can not, or rather do not, respond to all grades of vibrations does not mean that man is thereby shut out from certain knowledge and experience. It is only while he is limited by his ego that this is so. So when one makes use of the breath which is the real light, one develops the faculty of sight, carrying it beyond ordinary sense or sensation. Thus Shagal permits experiences without any intervention of nufs.

GITHA: The sight which can only be seen by the limited instrument of the eyes up to a limited horizon, now sees independently of that much further than before.

TASAWWUF: Jesus Christ says of this experience, "Then thy whole body shall be full of light." There are innumerable examples in the Kabbalah where this light manifested to the Hebrew sages and it is a great pity that so much difference has been made between traditional Hebrew mysticism and the life and experience as well as the teachings of Jesus Christ, because the inner cult of both was the same and the study of either throws much light upon the other.

By this light also Moses revealed the glory of God toward the Beni Israel, and Mohammed would appear in Medina in midday without any shadow because he physically was like a lamp. What he speaks of in the Sura called "Nur" he revealed in his own makeup. Call it Nirmanakaya body, Solar body, body of Resurrection, or regard it just as a transmuted physical body, there is a change when the spirit is absorbed more directly into matter through the breath.

With the coming of this light one can feel the light in others, and the faculty of insight develops more and more. Then no longer will one be understood by everybody, although he will increase greatly in his wisdom and foresight.

GITHA: So the hearing that could hear by the help of the ears so much and no more, now hears, after mastering Shagal, much more than ever before.

TASAWWUF: There are two aspects at least of this hearing. One is that of Saute Surmad, the divine, all-pervading sound, which might be called the Very Voice of God. This does not come in any particular mental or spiritual fashion so much as through the ten vehicles or sounds, which are described in *The Mysticism of Sound*, and to which there are references in some sacred and mystical books of the Hindus. These are the very sounds of nature and many mureeds hear them, although they are sometimes confused by both initiates and the generality with "ringing of the ears," this ringing of itself not having much significance, if regarded as a mere wording. Each particular sound, however, has its own meaning.

Another result is that one hears in words what may be said to come from the Spirit of Guidance. The sounds take form within one's own mind. The mind is responsive to the light of God and in the mind-world the light becomes sound and the sound becomes words and the words convey an intelligent meaning. So without seeming to contact anybody or anything one may receive the answers to his own problems or those of another, and also receive what are like prophetic utterances, although the responsiveness alone does not make of man a prophet.

There is another result also that hearing in general may become so refined that one develops a kind of clairaudience by which he can hear, so to speak, the voices or thoughts or feelings of beings of the unseen worlds. It is not that they speak to him so much as that he receives impressions from them in the form of sounds, with meanings.

GITHA: The seeing and hearing are on the abstract plane, and are called clairvoyance and clairaudience. It is this divine faculty which is often mentioned in the Qur'an as Sami-un-Basir.

TASAWWUF: Which is to say, "light and sound." The Hebrew word **Shem** also applies to this universal energy and it is interesting to note that from this same root came the Hebrew word for hearing and the Arabic and Hebrew words for sun. We do not think much of hearing the sun or seeing sound, but there is a Buddhist saying that when man sees with his ears and hears with his eyes he is near unto salvation.

The abstract plane has been called Lahut and it penetrates the other planes. It has not "knowledge" in the ordinary sense; it gives man faculties, for all the faculties of God are lodged in that plane, and when man awakens to consciousness on that plane he becomes endowed with the divine faculties.

GITHA: But the opening of hearing and sight is not sufficient for the purpose, because it is simply an opening; illumination is something else.

TASAWWUF: Because, while man has the right to action, to God belong the fruits of action, and although on the lower planes man may seem to arrogate to himself the possession of things and faculties, when it comes to the highest spheres, this is not so. There all he can do is to be responsive to the divine light. Yet by that divine light he becomes illumined and blessed.

GITHA: With the development of those two faculties by Shagal the necessity for illumination remains nevertheless.

TASAWWUF: For so long as one is receptive and responsive it can not be said that his self and the Self of God are identical. When one receives the knowledge from God or is led by the Spirit of Guidance or has communication with spirits and beings, no matter on what plane or what the purpose of their messages and directions are, that shows that he is still an instrument, perhaps a very blessed instrument, but that he has not reached the goal.

Yet if he has not had or made this capacity for sound and light, if he has not prepared himself in some way, the blessed experience might end in intoxication or might throw him off balance. When we study the lives of all mystics in all parts of the world we find that many of them had great experiences which were useless, had many marvels and phenomena in their lives, yet it meant little to the people of their time. With all their visions and voices they could not always help other people and had few disciples or followers so that they were like great comets or blazing stars that shot across the sky to disappear in the darkness of the empyrean from whence they came, leaving few marks of their coming and going.

GITHA: You must know the language of the voice that speaks from within, and you must recognize the letters that you find written on the record within. The mystics heard it and read it and kept quiet.

TASAWWUF: This language and this record come in different ways. In the Bible one reads of the coming of the thunder and the wind to Elisha the prophet and then the still small voice, and that God was only in the still small voice. This means that while there are many aspects to the cosmic sound, it is only when all these sounds are blended and stilled that one may be sure it is the ultimate voice of God.

GITHA: The prophets on hearing and reading this gave it out but little; and this that was given is the only Scripture there is, call it Bible, Kabbalah, Vedanta or Qur'an.

TASAWWUF: No one can simulate a scripture; scripture is the formulation into words of that which comes out of the cosmos or Saute Surmad. There are times when the prophet receives it clearly, and times when it is not so clear. Isaiah refers to it as where the sun shines not by day nor the moon by night. Ezekiel speaks of being taken up into the spirit, and many other prophets mention the same. Other prophets do not tell of their experiences, but one may feel it in their utterances, in the magnetism and power and inspiration and wisdom of their words.

A study of the experience of Saute Surmad through the records of the Bible would be of itself a great undertaking. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that at a certain time God ceased to make His will known to humankind. In the Kabbalah, among much that is of little value, even detrimental to wisdom-religion, there are veritable pearls of great price. In the Vedanta in general we can find words that refer to Saute Surmad and records and discussions of it. In the Qur'an there is less because the people of the time were not ready for any such dissertations, but in the sacred names of God and in one or two references, as to the Night-Journey, the unrolling of the heavens, etc., one can through meditation and devotion, learn more about the mystical state of the prophet when he received such revelation, and find the key to that revelation in its own words.

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Githa with Commentary

Series III: Number 2

Shagal (2)

GITHA: Shagal is a process that is contrary to the process that life has taken for its expression towards manifestation.

TASAWWUF: In all the movements toward manifestation and in manifestation there is an accumulation, whether this takes place in the form of words, knowledge, wealth, fame, power, there is a borrowing of something from the planes in which one dwells, and what is borrowed forms a cover over the personality. This cover has two aspects, one of which is connected with the purpose for which one has come to the world, and the other which is related to the ego which produces the delusion that it is the real self.

Shagal is at the very foundation of unlearning for it reveals that there can be light and breath without thought, feeling or motion. Although life may manifest in and through these processes, it itself is not identical with them nor can it be limited by them.

GITHA: There is no possibility of touching the inner world, of seeing or realizing the self within without the help of Shagal.

TASAWWUF: By this inner world we mean the unmanifest or Tanzih, which is not so much unmanifest as that there is no differentiation and all things are together. As a manifestation of God it is called Wahdaniat. Man cannot be conscious of such a plane while he thinks in terms of things or differences; actually while he thinks at all. When he immerses himself in the light of his soul he touches that inner world and Shagal is the practice which makes this possible.

GITHA: It is the tendency of the breath to proceed outward, which is the main source of all creation in thought, speech, word, and deed, and all experience of the external world that one perceives through the senses and by the mind. When the process is reversed, then the breath, instead of proceeding forward, withdraws backward.

TASAWWUF: This is done through the retention of breath. It is not only the result of inhalation but of inhalation and retention. Every inhalation carries life from the manifest to the unmanifest and every exhalation carries life from the unmanifest to the manifest. The easier man can retain the breath within his body, the easier also is it for him to retain the breath and life within his mind and within his heart.

The purification of the physical body is attained through Nimaz, Zikr and Nayaz. Therefore these practices are given to the mureed first. He does not hold his breath very long, for that is not necessary in the purification of the physical vehicle. Nevertheless as this practice is continued it becomes easier and easier for him to retain the breath and send the light and power of it to the mind.

The purification of the mind comes through Fikr and Kasab, and then one regulates the breath and also learns to hold it a much longer time. By that, although one has for his immediate purpose the purification of mind, he directs the energy further within and the light of the soul becomes more manifest. In Shagal the talib, who may then be called a Sufi, having reached that degree of initiation, consciously directs his breath inwardly and develops his capacity for inward function.

GITHA: The breath is likened to a snake that has two mouths. When it withdraws backward, its face is backward too.

TASAWWUF: One sometimes sees the symbol of a snake swallowing his tail, or of two or more snakes swallowing their tails, and while it has been explained as meaning “eternity” one may wonder just what meaning there is to that “eternity.” Gerald Massey offers the explanation that the root of “eternity” is an Egyptian word “ter” which is also the root or related to the roots of the words “Torah” and “Tarot.” It means like facing one way and then the other. The soul faces a certain direction, and that is called involution, and then it collects experiences—this depending upon exhalation. Then there is another period in which it draws the power within by inhalation and retention; this is called evolution. This has been illustrated in *The Sufi Message of Spiritual Liberty*.

GITHA: In other words, as the consciousness that, so to speak, rides upon the breath, which is its Burrak, its vehicle, experiences the external world, and the breath is the mystery of both. The breath may be called a bridge which connects the external world and the world within.

TASAWWUF: The subject of breath is given in study to mureeds even from their beginning of taking up the path and living the life on the path. Although many have some idea from traditions that have come to the west directly or indirectly from India—and mostly indirectly through the hands of the half-learned—that there is some great mystery and power in breath. Yes, there is this mystery and power but it is simple, the principles are quite simple and depend far more upon practice and application than upon metaphysics. One can learn all there is to be learned about breath without knowing much metaphysics. The metaphysics, if anything, is derived from the knowledge of breath, not the knowledge of breath from metaphysics.

So many things are said about the breath, that one’s life, health and knowledge depend upon it. That one receives all spiritual help therefrom. That one can know about his own past, present or future, or the past, present or future of another therefrom. Finally by the knowledge of breath one learns that the whole universe is really within oneself.

These teachings, which are often astounding to the mureed, are continued in the courses upon

mysticism. But few get very far. The knowledge of mysticism does not depend upon any book or upon one's attitude toward any personality. It depends almost entirely upon one's own ability to learn from oneself and chiefly through one's breath. This is the foundation stone of all mysticism, Sufic or non-Sufic. When the world learns that, especially when those initiated upon the path really learn that, it will make it much easier for the kingdom of God to manifest upon earth.

All dreams, visions and inner experiences, especially those touching the more subtle planes depend upon the breath. The study, purification, refinement and expansion of breath measure the spiritual evolution of every one.

GITHA: But as the general tendency is to walk forward, and as it seems strange to take steps backward, and as one fears that he might tumble down and fall on something, or something might fall on him, so one feels in the practice of Shagal.

TASAWWUF: One of the first teachings offered to talibs is that of unlearning. Yet unlearning is a most difficult process. The traditions of the world impress themselves upon every soul, and knowledge comes to mean getting information about everything that manifests in name and form. One feels or fears that unlearning includes the loss of such knowledge. Perhaps it does. But perhaps there is much in so-called knowledge that is of little use to anyone. When we want to remember what happened in our own lives years before and can think only of the color of the sign on the grocery store or of the number of the house where we reside, or the pain that someone caused us last week, we can see that certain aspects of this knowledge interfere with other aspects of it.

In Ziraat, the mystic masonry of Sufism, the idea is presented that all things must be taken up from the field, flowers and crops together with weeds, in order that it may be properly planted. It is a great mistake to assume or suppose that because the self-will is to be removed that one ceases to function. Of the physical things that are taken into the body, there is a limit and there are times, through compulsion, choice or wisdom, when one refrains from eating. Then the body can be purified.

The fasting or purification (Saum) of the mind one does not so readily accept. One does not always like to eliminate poisons from the mind. Yet one's health depends upon this more than upon anything else. And when one can remove thoughts and ideas from the mind like one can eliminate digestive wastes, he attains to spiritual health.

That this does not mean the ending of thought can be seen through great mystical poetry. It is difficult, not to say impossible, to write such poetry as that of Rumi, Saadi and Jami without first cleansing the mind thoroughly, making it as an empty cup before God. Then the inspirations can come because there is no self-thought in the way.

GITHA: The consciousness, which has never taken a ride on a path which seems so strange to it, feels confused, and even the breath, the tendency of which is to go forward, feels it difficult to step

backward.

TASAWWUF: That is why students, when first practicing Shagal, may have a tendency to faint, or suppose they will faint. Yet overdoing does not bring spiritual development. One has to remember that this body of flesh is itself the divine temple and must be treated as such, and that the kingdom of Heaven is not attained through any violence. It is of no avail to try to speak, act or think while inhaling, for what is gained through Shagal is a cosmic point of view, God's view, and what is lost is a personal point of view, man's view—if really it is lost.

GITHA: It is this mystery that is spoken in the story of Aladdin, who went to find the magic lantern. The magic lantern is the light within, and to get it there is only one process.

TASAWWUF: This magic lantern is also the pearl of great price spoken of by Jesus Christ. It is also the Holy Grail. The obtaining of the Holy Grail required great sacrifice. The knights of the Court of King Arthur (who represents the Pir-O-Murshid) were themselves initiated and they willingly passed through the processes of fana, self-sacrifice, in order to reach the supreme goal of their soul's desire.

The same allegory is contained in the story *The Thief of Bagdad* and in the Persian mystical allegory, *The Treasure Chest of Oromanes*. They represent this supreme achievement and the initiation by which it is attained is sometimes called the initiation of the ether because then one rises beyond the point where the elements manifest, the breath becomes one single undifferentiated stream of light.

GITHA: And the confusion of Aladdin, after entering the cave where he found nothing but darkness, is the picture of the confusion of Shagal.

TASAWWUF: The Christian mystics have referred to this as the dark night of the soul. One has to go through the darkness to find the light. The same story is found in all these allegories. In the Bible it is symbolized as Jonah in the belly of the whale or leviathan, the great fish, which is really a covering over the body of light.

GITHA: But the prize of courage that Aladdin received is a prize that every courageous Shaghil gets, for he receives by Shagal the root of all power and inspiration.

TASAWWUF: Shaghil is the Arabic for the one who practices Shagal. This practice is to enable mankind to contact the abstract, and happily thereby finding in the abstract the key to power and inspiration. This is because this practice takes one beyond the realm of Nufsaniat with its limitations. It is not that from the beginning one becomes an adept, it is that one becomes conscious of a greater and apparently new life which is the very life of the universe and which is the seeking of every soul, although mostly man does not know it.

All the allegories such as those concerning the Holy Grail and the Court of King Arthur in general,

of Jonah, and many in the Arabian nights and in the folk lore of all parts of the world refer to this supreme light. It is also the main subject matter of the texts of most scriptures.

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Githa with Commentary

Series III: Number 3

Shagal (3)

GITHA: Man's soul is always inclined to look outward for its experience, and therefore it remains unaware of the inner being; so to speak, it turns its back on the inner life, absorbed in the vision of the external through the five senses.

TASAWWUF: The soul, on its way toward manifestation, developed the habit of looking outward. Its search for the manifestation was an outer search. It looked upon the planes through which it journeyed and it borrowed materials from those planes. After a while, through continued effort, it began to identify itself with the vehicle it had wrapped around itself.

After the soul is born on earth and learns to speak it says "I," and by "I" it usually means the thought it has of itself, or the body which is its mantle. It lives in the body and experiences life through the five senses. It forgets that there is another way to life so that the whole world is built upon an educational system which depends mostly upon sensation. And people do not even think that there is another way in which to learn or that it is possible to stop the body from being.

The immediate result of this is human suffering. Buddha traced the cause of human suffering to **tanha** or **trishna**, which means clinging to the accumulations one has received. While there is such clinging there is confusion and delusion and suffering, and when man can cast off all that is foreign to his true nature he discovers his own deliverance.

GITHA: In Shagal the Sufi closes the door through which the soul is accustomed to look out, and as it finds the doors of its experience closed, a time comes when it turns its back to the external world on finding the doors closed for its experience.

TASAWWUF: This change of state is not reached through blind obedience to any words. Not even surrender to the teacher suffices if the pupil does not make some effort of his own self. For while

the development of Shagal is accumulative, which is to say, as one persists in it one becomes more and more aware of the light, it is not easy to adopt new habits. Besides, the everyday life tends to throw the consciousness outward again.

Because of this there have been ascetics and recluses who fled from the world, thinking that thereby they were endearing themselves to God and assuring themselves of spiritual deliverance. No doubt this does remove a certain incrustation of earth but it may bind man as close to heaven as he has been to earth, and thus be veiled from God by his thoughts and his ideals as much as he has been veiled by his desires and appetites. This path has therefore been frowned upon by the true esotericists.

The Inner Life teaches that the real spiritual life is a balanced one, and while it includes looking in a new and central direction, it does not exclude anything. There can be no gain in strength by fleeing the world in some outward manner. The real refuge from the world comes when one of his own will withdraws, and this is accomplished by the withdrawal or indrawing of the breath.

GITHA: It is just like changing place for the soul. It sees before it a different sphere altogether, a sphere that has been within it.

TASAWWUF: The soul may be regarded as a sort of disk which is like a mirror in some respect having one reflecting surface only. This reflecting surface may be turned toward the manifestation or away from it. If it is turned toward the manifestation the soul will want to identify itself with the manifestation, and if it is turned away from the manifestation the soul will perceive at once that that with which it had identified itself was only an illusion which had grown out of itself.

It will also learn that there is nothing separate from itself, and although one speaks of a world within and a world without, it may be learned that the external world is also “within” in a certain sense.

GITHA: This sphere is abstract; in this sphere the individual soul is raised to a cosmic spirit.

TASAWWUF: There has been much confusion about the meaning of “cosmic spirit” Some believe they will become conscious of a greater area of space and greater extension of time. No doubt they are right in that, but that alone does not characterize the cosmic spirit. The ego can extend its sway indefinitely and still not be cosmic. Man has a greater degree of consciousness and a greater capacity for time and space than has the ant. And no doubt there are supermen in the jinn-world who are far beyond man in many respects—some say that there are dwellers in other planets who are far beyond man. But this does not mean deliverance from nufs; giganticism or giantism is not spirituality.

In the cosmic state all is as within oneself. One does not become blind or deaf through cosmic experience, or lose his manhood. Mohammed always referred to himself as a plain man. The Bible says of Jacob, “He was a plain man, dwelling in tents.” No one is robbed of his humanity by his cosmic evolution. Only as in love, the veil between self and not-self is broken. One is raised above

the distinctions and differences which divide.

GITHA: Here the soul has a wonderful and interesting vision, a vision both visible and audible, and the light and power of this vision lasts with the soul even after it has had this vision ...

TASAWWUF: The Christian book of Revelations is largely based upon this experience. John, who was the great mystic of the original Christianity attained Risalat, or the cosmic experience, to which he refers in the tenth verse of the first chapter of the Apocalypse: "I was in the spirit in the day of the Lord, and I heard a voice behind me as loud as a trumpet." Now this refers to his being taken up in Shagal and there he heard the Saute Surmad in one of its manifestations which is very much like the sound of a conch. The "day" refers to the light, and the light of the Lord is the same as that of Rassoul, so this experience may be called Risalat. The experience of John came in, found sound and vision, and it brought light and power.

He beheld the light as through seven stars and seven candlestands. He heard the sounds of the elders. Finally in the 21st chapter he says: "And I saw a new heaven and new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were gone, and the sea no longer exists." For that sea refers to Samsara or Nufsaniat, which is below one in the cosmic state. This is symbolized in Hindu and Buddhist art with the deities and saints seated upon the lotus which is itself above the waves; and in the Hebrew Bible it is allegorized as Noah, who is the same as Vishnu, in the ark. But the fact that the sea of Samsara is not and the flood has disappeared does not mean the end of manifestation. Only as one reads in the third and fourth verses: "Behold, the tabernacle (Spirit of Guidance) is within men and will be stationed with them, and they shall be His people and God Himself will be with them, and will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no longer; neither mourning nor crying nor pain shall be any longer because the first things have passed away."

GITHA: ... and illuminates the mental and physical planes for the soul, to see and understand more keen and clear knowledge that the soul then perceives by the same things it had seen before.

TASAWWUF: That is what is referred to by the new heaven and the new earth. The new earth is the purified physical body and its experience, whether one has what may be called a Nirmanakaya body or not. The new heaven refers to the purified mental vehicle whether one has what is called a Sambhogakaya body or not. And the rest of the book of Apocalypse or Revelation refers to the experiences of John in the cosmic state of hal, which is a worthy study for all the mystics.

Mr. James Pryse has given an interpretation of it which is no doubt correct in principle but shows that his development, while above that of the generality, was not sufficient to convey a full meaning of the original experiences.

If one studies the Parinirvana Sutra and corresponding books of the Mahayana Sutras one will find like records by men who had, each in his own way, this experience. And to each it came in the way God had intended it, for the record of Fariduddin Attar, in the Mantik-ut-Tair is still different, and the

Miraj of the Prophet is again different because there are many more ways of attaining the cosmic experience than the daily experience. The varieties are really infinite.

GITHA: It is like coming to the same room in the daytime which the soul had once visited in the darkness of night.

TASAWWUF: This was the teaching and experience of the Prophet. After he attained his illumination he did not stand before the world as a cosmic being. He preached more of the manhood of himself than of his prowess and capacity as a prophet. That he called himself prophet or "Rassoul" was inescapable because in the cosmic state and under inspiration one does not have full control of one's words, one speaks the word that is put into one's mouth, as the light fills the crescent moon. It was when not under inspiration that the Prophet emphasized his humanity.

But Jesus Christ also says, "He that believeth me, the things that I do shall ye do, and greater things shall He do." The Christian religion has never fully understood these words or accepted them, seeing in Jesus Christ a special manifestation for the whole universe, to which there is not nor ever can be a parallel. The result is that though Christ himself taught different and spoke of himself as being within man and man being within himself, his words have not touched the hearts of the orthodox and still need much study and meditation.

Buddha also said that he saw all mankind had the seed of illumination but did not know it, that he would teach it to them. And in the Bhagavad Gita, we have the revelation of Krishna to Arjuna which is another form-expression of the experience of Revelations, for this experience may truly be called revelation, and gives meaning to the word revelation.

GITHA: Everything in life becomes clear to perception, to conception, and questions that once confused the soul are now solved by it without any difficulty.

TASAWWUF: For the light of all planes manifests then through the personality, and whether the consciousness is thrown outward through perception or inward through conception, whether there is question or no, the solution to all problems appears before the Sufi who has attained this degree of illumination.

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

Githa with Commentary

Series III: Number 4

The Mystery of the Phenomena in Shagal

GITHA: The Sufi by the practice of Shagal withdraws the breath from one direction and sends the breath to another direction, meaning instead of allowing the breath to work outwardly he directs the breath in Shagal so as to let the breath work inwardly.

TASAWWUF: As has been explained, all ordinary thought, speech and action depends upon the exhalation of the breath. It is only while the breath is being exhaled that activity can be carried on. Thus in some respect the ego depends upon the exhalation, and yet the inhalation of the average man is drawn around the ego which thus forms a shadow across the sky, so to speak, beclouding the consciousness. When the breath is held it becomes like a ray of light piercing the clouds.

To put it another way, the ego forms a line of clouds which has been called the mind-mesh. The inhaled breath which is held rises in accordance with the fineness of its vibrations and the length of time which it is held. If it is held longer, that means that the coarser vibrations are held, but the life current continues to rise until the moment of exhalation. When the exhalation begins, the life current is again drawn outward. The finer the vibrations the higher it rises, piercing the mind-mesh and drawing the consciousness toward an area of pure light.

GITHA: Breath is life and light and sound in itself, therefore in the Vedantas breath is called Suram or Suara, meaning sound.

TASAWWUF: The word Svara in Sanskrit is identical with the syllable Shem in Hebrew. This Shem is one of the most mystical words in the Hebraic language and is composed of three letters, Shin, Aleph, Mem. Shin represents Fire or upward movement, Aleph represents Air or cross or equilibrating movement, and Mem represents water or the downward movement. The mysticism of the Sepher Yetzirah is based upon the mystery of these letters, and this is the foundation of all Hebraic mysticism which has been transmitted to humankind since the time of Abraham.

In the Zohar, which is the main book of the Hebrew Kabbalah, the mystery of the Shema is discussed. This in Hebrew reads **Shema Yisroel Yehuvah Elohenu Jehuvah Echod**, which reads in English, "Hear, O Israel, the Eternal Our God, the Eternal is One." The Jewish people in the synagogue read **Adonai**, Lord, instead of Jehuvah and this is transliterated as Jehovah, but the mystic knows that the Eternal Sound which is heard by the real Beni Israel (the children of eternal light, the initiates) is **Hu**, the all-sound, Ismi Azam.

The Vedantists and Kabbalists agree upon the teaching that Sound is God, and a great mistake has been made by some intellectual apologists for Islam in their attempted confutations of the supreme doctrines of these religions. Because the one who has the divine, inner experience recognizes the inner sound and understands its meaning.

GITHA: The breath, therefore, in the practice of Shagal produces its vibrations within, and the sense within, which may be called the root of all senses, which in reality is the spirit of all five senses, begins to hear; and as its hearing develops, so the breath becomes more audible.

TASAWWUF: As one hears the universal sound within, one also begins to hear the column of breath as it goes through the body and in and out of the nostrils. Then one is better able to perceive which elements are present in the breath, body and even through the space. By that means he becomes master of the breath.

In the pictures of the Tibetan mystic and master Milarepa, you will usually find him with his hand to the ear, listening for this sound. Many people do not understand why, but those who practice Shagal will recognize that after its practice one may continue to listen for the sound, and on hearing the sound, one recognizes and feels the Presence of God. And it is interesting to know that however else they differ, the Vedantists, Hebrews and followers of the mystic Mantra-Yoga school of Buddhists (known as Shingon in Japan) agree that everything came from the sound "Ah" which is contained in the letter A. They call that the first of sounds, of which Salat says: "I am Alpha and Omega, the First (Cause) and the Last (Effect)."

The development of this inner root-sense brings wisdom to all the senses of the body and thenceforth they do not act independently of the other, and if perchance one is hampered in its functions there will be a compensation through at least one of the other senses.

GITHA: Also the clashing of the vibrations of the breath produces the light which is seen by the innermost sense, and so the inner vision becomes clear to the inner sense, even clearer than things are to the perception of the outer senses.

TASAWWUF: One result of this is clearer dreams. One does not see visions in Shagal, and one may practice Shagal a long time and even have fewer dreams or visions than had been his experience before. Yet he is increasing the capacity for light and the power for light. So if the Grace of God bestows upon him clear vision (kashf) he can receive more easily than another person and will not be intoxicated or led astray by what he sees.

Besides that, the inner light conveys meaning. When we see things in this world the mere sight does not produce a meaning; if there is any meaning it comes through the impression we get in the mind after the sight or vision. But as the inner sense develops in Shagal, then the impression comes together with the sight. Abu Bakr said, "I see Allah and Shay together," and on this point he was acclaimed as more advanced than the other Khalifs. Omar said he saw God first and then Shay, showing subjective perfection; Osman said he saw Shay first, then God, showing objective perfection; Ali said he only saw God, not Shay, showing that while he had advanced in Shagal he was too much in ecstasy to lead the people of the world, so Abu Bakr was chosen as first khalif to the Prophet.

GITHA: There is no scripture of the ancient Teachers that does not speak in some way or other of

this mysterious vision of the mystic.

TASAWWUF: We find these visions in the Puranas and in the Bible. Many people have recognized the great mystical insight behind the vision of Jacob when he saw the angels descending and ascending upon the ladder. That ladder was the breath, his own breath, and his experience was made possible by Shagal. It was because of Shagal that he was called "Israel" which has been interpreted as "The man who sees God." This sight became possible because of his mystical development, which is also a subject discussed at length in the Kabbalah.

The visions of Ezekiel, Zachariah and John are also based upon it, and the many dreams that are explained in the scripture were not ordinary dreams, but cosmic experiences made possible through Shagal. The Hindus speak of a very deep sleep or gate called Turiah, in which the soul is supposed to walk around; this does not mean it is actually so, only then the soul is as if freed from its connection with and dependence upon mind and body.

GITHA: There are many benefits that the Sufi derives from Shagal. Among them one, and the simplest, is that he gains control over all the senses, the senses that are slaves to every external call to them.

TASAWWUF: One aspect of that control is seen in the ability to use them or rest them at will. For instance, beginners in meditation are disturbed by the senses which do not keep quiet, especially the sense of sound. When one is conscious of the inner sound he can concentrate upon it and easily become freed from outer sensation. This also helps him in concentration and at other times. And it brings inspiration, for one has the feeling that God is near, and when there is that feeling, it is so.

Another result is that the senses themselves may become more refined. Such things as poor eyesight, hearing and sensation in general may be due to some defect in breathing. When the breath is able to reach the higher regions of purer light, it can convey health and strength to the senses. And still another benefit is that when man receives the Divine Light directly, all experience brings on meaning. Intelligence means light with meaning, with significance, and things then become revealing, everything becomes revealing, the veil is taken off manifestation.

GITHA: By constant practice of Shagal a Sufi is able to draw a blind over the senses which he may not wish to use for a certain time.

TASAWWUF: This not only makes meditation easier, it makes rest easier. The Sufi Emperor Akbar was able to dispense with much sleep because after indulging in Shagal he could enter into a state of meditation or contemplation and rest his lower vehicles. Even psychologists say that from two to four hours of restful sleep is all that is necessary, only the average man does not know how to rest or relax and so does not get real repose.

GITHA: By this control the senses become keen, more percipient, and every sense becomes a

sight.

TASAWWUF: After one practices Shagal, or after one has withdrawn into Khilvat and hears the internal sound, he perceives outwardly in a different manner. He becomes more aware of shorter periods of time, which are too short to count in the space of seconds or part seconds. He feels the inner light in and through all things, so that even the mountains and trees and birds and animals speak to him. He finds it easier to focus his mind upon the animals because after the breath has pierced all three realms of manifestation the mind becomes like a blank mirror in which everything can be reflected. Thus one fulfills the Message, the symbol of which means: "The soul responsive to the light of God will be illuminated."

Then, even if one does not see, if one hears or touches, the feeling of the heart manifests and brings with it intelligence. Then can be developed a spiritual psychometry, so to speak, and man gains that knowledge of natural science, the real science of nature which is the study of every mystic.

GITHA: By this the body becomes a fitting instrument for a fuller experience of life.

TASAWWUF: So long as the soul living in the body has such experience the flesh of the body becomes purified, so one may say: "Within thy flesh thou shalt see God." For God is not apart from the flesh or from anything. And in the *Oxyrhynchus papyri* there was discovered a logian or saying of Jesus Christ: "Raise the stone and thou shalt find Me, cleave the wood and there am I." Which is to say that the Divine Light **is** in all forms, and if one wishes to have the sight or expression of Rassoul he does not have to look far. After he has had the inner development all the elements and all forms become his servants, reflecting to him the divine wisdom and spiritual guidance.

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Githa with Commentary

Series III: Number 5

The Nature of the Sound Audible in Shagal

GITHA: Man is constituted of three aspects of body. One is the finer aspect of body, which the senses and their organs represent.

TASAWWUF: To begin with, the body of man is made from certain fundamental layers, and as the body develops and organs are formed these are attuned to certain atoms and certain vibrations. But there are parts of the body which are especially tuned to vibrations and these become the avenues of the senses. In the case of the ear there is a specialized organ for hearing, but the eye is a modification of a nerve terminal. The tongue is regarded as the organ of taste although it is primarily an organ of touch, yet being made sensitive and being aided by juices from the glands of the mouth its taste is possible. The sense of smell comes from a delicacy of breathing and manifests in the nose. All these senses, whether regarded as five in the ancient sense or as several more in the modern sense, depend upon the select responsiveness to definite vibrations.

GITHA: There is a gross aspect of the body, which actions and their organs represent.

TASAWWUF: These organs come mostly from the outer germ layer and represent the gross atomic activity of the body. They are more closely associated with the earth element also and are perceived by the sense of touch easily. These actions cannot be distinguished from the actions of animal bodies.

GITHA: There is a gross aspect of the body, which actions and their organs represent; there is yet a third aspect, which is a causal body, or a controlling body, which directs activities, which stands as an impetus or an impulse behind every activity.

TASAWWUF: The theosophists speak of a causal body or higher mental body, which may be regarded as the mind freed from ego. But when we deal with activity on the earth plane, we may say that first there is the physical body or that portion with vibrational functions and responses, and that portion with atomic functions and responses. Besides there is a vital body, or body of breath, which surrounds and permeates the body and which also forms the aura, which may be seen under certain circumstances.

GITHA: The manifestations of the activity of this body are first reflected within and then they manifest without; and the one who has even the least little idea of this knowledge will never believe for one moment that there exists such a thing as chance.

TASAWWUF: For with the development of sensitivity and sensation one has the knowledge of the movement of breath, which is also light and sound, and the elements which spring forth from the breath. And with each activity of breath there is associated a certain color and certain movements and certain emotions and certain thoughts. And when the human will or activity is in harmony with the elements all goes well and when it is not in harmony then life does not go well. It is only "chance" to those who do not see, who must depend upon luck, being otherwise blind.

GITHA: There are suras of the Qur'an in support of this: "Everything is appointed upon a certain time." "Not one single atom moves without the command of God." "God has His dominion over all things." And this part of his being is the divine part in man.

TASAWWUF: The Sufi is taught to keep attuned to the cosmos and in rhythm with the conditions. Shagal is a direct method of keeping in tune with the cosmos, although if the talib assiduously cultivates the science of breath and obtains the knowledge about the breath and then learns how to use the breath to receive more knowledge, this part of his life will be fulfilled.

It is also through the breath that one can sense the rhythm of the conditions because in these conditions there is always a dominating element. No doubt earth and water harmonize and fire and air harmonize so one does not always have to have his nostrils exactly in rhythm with the conditions so long as he is in harmony with them. And while we say that there is blindness in Nature, and God does not move like a super-chess player to interfere with every little thing, nevertheless the knowledge of God aids man to understand the movements and behaviours of all things. For when the heart is attuned to God and the light of God perceived everywhere, it brings one a feeling which cannot otherwise be very well described, so that he knows how to act rightly whenever he has that feeling.

GITHA: The effect of every activity that is started in this part of one's being manifests in the form of light and sound which is audible within.

TASAWWUF: In the practice of Shagal one sees light and this light increases the longer one practices it, and after a while it takes on meaning, and the meaning of it is impressed upon the inner personality and gives rise to inspiration. One also hears sounds and when he hears the sounds in the world without he finds a correspondence between the sounds of the world without and the world within and this gives him the key to understand much of what he hears outwardly.

GITHA: The one who has trained his senses by Shagal is able to turn his senses, and the senses (which in the case of the average person see outward phenomena alone) in the case of the seer can see the external world as well as the inner world.

TASAWWUF: One aspect of this knowledge is the mysticism of sound. Then one may well repeat the words of the philosopher Emerson, for of all people it will sure be true: "What you are speaks louder than what you say." The seer can tell the meaning of the speech of everybody from the sound and quality of the voice, so that if a person says one thing and means something else, the seer perceives it. He perceives sincerity and he perceives pretense. He can distinguish the intended meaning from the real meaning. And yet he can see behind that, for every word, directly or indirectly, is fashioned out of the Divine Ultimate Sound, and if one is desirous of listening to the Voice of God to ascertain the Divine Will, he can hear it in the speech of every man, in the call and cry of every creature, and nature becomes as an open book before him. At all times he will be practicing augury and yet he will not be dependent upon augury. And also from the sounds of words he can tell not only the meaning, but the result of the action connected with them; all that may be conveyed to the seer through his knowledge of breath and response to light.

GITHA: The inner world can be seen to a great depth, even deeper than this world.

TASAWWUF: The outer world may be seen to the depth of the outer senses and the inner world may be perceived to the depth of the inner senses. If we try to study the vibrations which are picked up by the outer senses, we shall find many spaces or loopholes in them. The senses of touch and sound, as ordinarily considered, do not respond to vibrations above 40,000 per second. The sense of taste has not been measured. When the sense of touch responds to vibrations as well as atoms we get the heat sensation, the vibrations of which are very much finer than those of sound. And light is composed of response to still finer vibrations, but there is not as yet an inexact science of sense response except to say that it is discontinuous, that many vibrations are not received or perceived, even those that exist in the material form.

Now the inner sense is not discontinuous, it is continuous and there are no loopholes in it as one develops. Besides all such things as form, sound, meaning and purpose, which appear as different to the outer aspect of life, are unified, made one and the same from the inner aspect of life. Besides that, the outer point of view is essentially personal, but the inner point of view is not necessarily so, and on the inner plane two or three or many people may function as one. Ultimately all humankind is united on the innermost plane, and when the light of Rassoul finds a response in one or a million people, it is the same light and it may bring the same response. So however else people may differ, ultimately they offer the same response to the divine light.

Through the inner senses one receives that knowledge which is for him to receive, which is the light of all wisdom and which may concern himself or another or the world in general, and which may throw light upon his own problems or upon the problems of others. But when one can stay in repose and response he receives that knowledge.

GITHA: This is only an intermediate step to the inner vision.

TASAWWUF: For the ultimate inner vision is not when one perceives anything as apart from himself, when he finds the whole universe as if it were within himself and the study of himself brings him all the knowledge there is to be had.

GITHA: One may say, "Where are the objects of perception for the inner vision?"

One may say, "Where are the objects of perception for the senses within?" The answer is, everything is within, if only one can see it. Light is there, form is there, fragrance is there, sweet, sour, and bitter is there, and the inner world is more interesting than the external. There is a joy of Heaven and the agony of Hell.

TASAWWUF: The inner world may be taken in two senses. First, that which is of thought which we generally associate with Malakut and which does contain a certain Heaven or Hell of which it has been said: "Heaven is the vision of fulfilled desire and Hell the shadow of a soul on fire." Nevertheless there are experiences beyond such thoughts which are made possible when man rises above the sphere of mind through the development of the refined breath.

In one of the stories of Marie Corelli (*A Romance of Two Worlds*), the leading character is made to see life as if man himself were a creator. And perhaps man does reach a point where he can even create, alter and destroy whole worlds. For as man grows nearer to God he also functions more like a god. Some have said that the spiritual evolution does not stop with man, and in the Christian Bible there are references to ten grades above mankind, while in the Buddhist hierarchy several grades of loftier evolution are mentioned.

Nevertheless if one were to put all of this into words for human consumption it might lead mankind astray. Paul, in the Christian Scripture, tells of when he was elevated to the third heaven and heard words which he did not deem it was proper to utter. Today we are not readily elevated and the reason is that the breath is too dense and prevents the elevation. But it is possible through Shagal and the higher practices to develop a breath so keen and fine that one can become, so to speak, the very master of the universe.

Nevertheless one is then tried by God and if he wishes he may be withdrawn from the world; and if he wishes he may remain and function in a hierarchical post—those of saint, master and prophet being most pronounced. Sometimes also he may rise to the height of an adept and remain in the body a very long time—this being possible when the breath is very pure and fine and the atoms of the body have been properly purified and refined.

GITHA: But two senses are the principal ones—sight and hearing. Hearing is still higher, for it appeals to the first manifestation, that is the Word. First was the Word, then came Light, then all was created, as the Bible says.

TASAWWUF: The Christian Bible says that the Word existed at all times and gave rise to the creation, and the Hebrew Bible says that God spoke and that as He spoke the world became. So the Sufi Bible says:

“Let Thy thought become my word, Beloved, (etc.)

And Thy word become my deed.”

The word of God has been the very breath of God and it is said in the Hindu sacred traditions also that the universe has been created by the breath of Brahma and that when He draws in His breath again the world will be destroyed. Yet there is the sound to this breath which constitutes The Word in its ultimate sense.

This has led to the allegory of the Lost Word, that some people suppose that in ancient times the initiates had possession of some mysterious word and when they could repeat that word miracles happened. However it has not been any word that was lost other than that mankind has become blinded to the divine vision, and thus in the sense God has been lost.

The scientists of the day say that the whole world is made of light, that matter is made of light. Yet

they refer all to gravitation also, and they cannot explain gravitation. They can only explain the known in terms of some ultimate unknown which they have to assume is known and yet they cannot **say** it is known. This should make them accept intuition, and by intuition man can perceive more deeply, and then he will know the relation between the sound and the light which has sprung from sound.

GITHA: Therefore everything that happens is first audible to the hearer and then visible to the seer who can see and hear within.

TASAWWUF: In the outer world we see before we hear, the lightning appears and then the thunder, the flash and then the sound. This is because in the manifest world the light travels much more quickly than the sound, but in the inner world it is not so, the intelligence is conveyed in sound first. The soul can not perceive the finest vibrations which are of itself, and it has to create or emanate or use a denser medium in order to see. But the whole universe itself is nothing but sound. Besides, from another view, we distinguish between light and darkness and yet what is dark to a man may not be dark to a cat, and all do not perceive the same light and the same darkness, showing that with respect to light there is a certain duality which is not present in sound. The perception of sound ultimately does not have to depend upon any differentiation as does the perception of light.

GITHA: There are ten sounds recognized by the mystics and vaguely described as the noise of humming bees, and the vina, and of bells ringing at a distance.

TASAWWUF: These sounds are listed in *The Mysticism of Sound* where they are described and their purport outlined. There are also records of them in Hindu literature dealing with music and mysticism. One may hear them separately or together during practices and afterwards, because once the hearing is attuned to them one can hear them in the world without, or in the universe within, and ultimately even without much tuning or focusing of ear.

GITHA: And every sound denotes to a mystic that the activity is in a certain direction of the body. For there are twenty tubes, ten belonging to each side of one's body, through which these sounds manifest. On these tubes the Chinese instrument of ten reeds was made. When doubled they are twenty. Every direction of the activity of the breath suggests a certain cause and a certain effect to the hearer. From this he knows of failures and successes and of things hidden and unknown in their preparatory stage.

TASAWWUF: The Hebrew Sephiroth were also derived from this tenfold manifestation through which the **Shema** or Divine Sound manifests. These are the channels by which the etheric current operates, moving up and down and in and around the body which is thereupon transformed into a Divine Temple. It was this temple into which the ancient seers entered and wandered and heard the divine voice, thus giving rise to the Psalms of David and to many inspirations recorded in scriptures.