

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

**Viprit Karnai**

GATHA: In man's speech and in his action the seer sees designs: a straight line, a round, a crooked line, zigzag, oval, square, a triangle.

TASAWWUF: This subject is presented first in the Gathas on *Symbology*, but there are many places in the teachings which throw light on the subject. The psychic sciences may be slow of development but in the future they will be recognized along with the physical sciences.

In a sense all things proceed from the dot. There is also a science behind the Hebrew language based on this, but it became lost when the mere formulae were studied without the corresponding awakening in men's consciousness. Indeed the seer can read from these expressions, both in the movements of man and in his creative arts.

These movements, these symbols, tell the wise both what man has an abundance of and what he is lacking, for several of them are mutually exclusive. By proper exercises in concentration, by suitable breathing practices, and by corrections in postures, the bodies and minds of all people can be turned and tuned aright.

GATHA: For instance there is a person who speaks straight to the face all he feels.

TASAWWUF: Usually this is a straightforward person. If he is not straightforward there will be a dimness in the eyes; they will be shadowy or watery; they will not be full of light. But if one is straightforward and has light and magnetism he will be found to be honest.

GATHA: There is another person who proceeds in a roundabout way.

TASAWWUF: This person may be considerate and tactful, careful not to harm another, and yet not especially intuitive.

GATHA: There is another person who has a crooked way of mentioning a thing.

TASAWWUF: This person is also readily distinguished and his tone of voice is uneven. He may be under the influence of the air element and so he can be reached by correcting his breathing, and refining it. That will often change him without any appealing otherwise. In a similar manner the roundabout person can be helped by repeating "Toward the One" which will bring him to a point.

GATHA: There is a person who will touch two opposite angles before he will arrive at the desired point; there is another person who will go about in a zigzag way, you can't know whether he is going to the south or to the north until he has arrived at a certain point.

TASAWWUF: The person who touches two angles is very likely to be analytical and often skeptical. The zigzag person is never too sure of himself though he may seem fair-minded and kind-hearted. In such cases one must watch one's own breath and if one's breath is strong and refined without a word being spoken he will control the atmosphere. By controlling the atmosphere he will be helpful to another and also subtly dominate any scene.

GATHA: These figures represent the lines on the mind of man. Man does not feel comfortable in acting differently from the lines already engraved upon his mind. Therefore a crooked person enjoys his crookedness as much as a straightforward person enjoys his straightforwardness.

TASAWWUF: The breath takes the direction of the mental lines. Only by correction of breathing can these mental lines be changed, unless another really wants to change; and this is mostly as a result of pain, although sometimes love helps very much. But few are changed by the willpower of another. Indeed there may be strong resistance.

Therefore refinement of breath is most valuable and from **this** refinement of manner. Also in this way without hypocrisy one may more readily harmonize with others and also be helpful to them.

GATHA: A most interesting study of this subject can be made by studying the art of different ages and of different nations. Every nation has its typical lines and typical forms, every period shows the peculiarity of expression of the art of that period.

TASAWWUF: Oswald Spengler has explained this in detail in *The Decline of the West*. It has been presented also in *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Besides this, the European Sufi Scholar, Titus Burckhardt, has had some articles and books published on this subject.

Considerable studies have been made along this line, especially since there has been intermingling of Eastern and Western cultures; this also has led to eclecticism and universal approaches. It is from these that the idea of a universal temple has been offered, and it is possible that such a structure will some day appear, so that there will be a "house of prayer for all peoples." Such a structure will help in the directions of peace and brotherhood.

There have been parallel studies in the history of mathematics, in particular, of geometry and also of the various theories of perspective used by artists in different parts of the world.

GATHA: So one finds in the imagery of poets and in the theme of musicians. If you study one musician and his lifelong work you will find that his whole work is developed on a certain line as the basis of his work.

TASAWWUF: Nowhere is this more clear than in the lives of such European composers as Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, and Tchaikovsky. But it will also be found true if we study poets and musicians in detail. Their themes, methods, ideals, and efforts all teach us something of their personalities, their times, and the surroundings in which they lived.

This being true it is possible for a constructive artist to create, compose, and teach in such a way as to affect the humanity around him. So now the Sufis are teaching more and more in the lines of music and dancing again and also reviving the great poetry which, perhaps, has never been surpassed.

GATHA: Also by studying the biography of great people you will find how one thing has led to the other, different but of similar kind. Therefore it is natural that a thief in time becomes a greater thief; so the righteous after some time may become a saint.

TASAWWUF: This subject has also been discussed in *The Mysticism of Sound* and is found in various places in the literature. However, one should go ahead and make independent studies so that he can know this and not just take it on blind faith. Many people accept on blind faith and this stultifies their Kashf. For this the heart must be always open.

There are untold sciences and unexplored areas which will be considered by scientists as the faculty of Insight is developed. The Japanese Daisetz Suzuki has proclaimed that Zen is really Prajna and enlightenment is really the extension of Prajna which is identical with the Sufi Kashf. But the words are empty without operation. The *Prajna Paramita Sutra* proclaims Prajna and also that words are empty; here is a word—is it empty or not? The use of this type of logic and this application or misapplication of words is very confusing and has caused rifts in the writers on Zen and Buddhism. But rifts are only natural when people write on subjects and have not had the requisite experience.

A scientist writing on butterflies is presumed to have examined butterflies; a chemist telling about some compound such as saturated fats and oils is presumed to have done some laboratory research. But a writer of profundities may easily substitute obtuse language and complexities and have his work accepted as being wisdom and there is no evidence for it. A little child may have Kashf and an aged philosopher may be devoid of it.

GATHA: It is not difficult to slide on the line already made on one's mind, the difficulty is to act contrary to the line which is engraved there, especially in the case when it happens to be an undesirable line.

TASAWWUF: It is taught that a Sufi does everything possible to break his own nufs, ego. There are no doubt undesirable foods, especially those frowned on by the various Divine Messengers. But it is also possible to regard as undesirable those foods, those types of clothing, those personal and social habits which are strange. When strangeness is confused with undesirability, it is wise to alter one's ways. When that which is exotic is regarded as unwelcome, then also one must examine oneself.

GATHA: Shiva, the great Lord of Yogis, has given a special teaching on the subject, which he calls *Viprit Karnai*, "Acting contrary to one's nature," and he gives great importance to this method of working with oneself, that by this method, in the end, one arrives at mastery.

TASAWWUF: This was also used by the commentator in passing from subjectivity to objectivity, from objectivity to subjectivity, from extroversion to introversion, and for the opposite courses. One can only become universal in widening one's own potentialities and outlooks even if one does not indulge in all things.

There is another aspect of this when the teacher by skillful means awakens some latent faculty or broadens the disciple with some new interest. Often the disciple may be unwilling but mostly the teacher tries to encourage the awakening of latent faculties.

This principle lies at the basis of the Sufic practice known as *fana-fi-Sheikh*, which comes from the attunement of one's personality and breath to that of the spiritual teacher. As the disciple takes on

the rhythm of the teacher, by walking, by breathing, and even by imitation, it awakens something in him which has been dormant. This both broadens his life and also helps to bring him into attunement with the spiritual hierarchy, the union of all teachers and masters of all times. It is not done by will and those who attempt it, using their own wills, often fall into error and, instead of progressing, they retrogress.

It is true that God is in every one, that God is the life and the deep reality, that is to say the soul. So also we may talk about the surrender. It is not actually a surrender to another, but using apparently another personality to help to bring the latent life to the surface. For all of us have the potentialities of perfection.

Also among the Sufis there are schools such as the Khalandari and Malamati who emphasized this breaking of ego-habits. They even behaved in direct opposite to social customs. This made them unpopular and sometimes to the degree that they regarded unpopularity as a sign, offhand, of God's favour. While this is not true of itself, those who have the Divine Grace must live independently of any goodwill from humanity.

The real middle path is not to adhere to popularity or unpopularity but to watch for the divine signs which are in us and by listening to the heart with the inner ear, one can find this divine guidance every moment of one's life.

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