

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 6

Be Conscious of Every Breath

GATHA: It is by the power of breath that the animals search for their food, through breath they perceive what they must eat, what they must not eat, through breath the carnivorous animals search for their prey. It is through breath that certain animals receive warning of dangers and again it is through the breath that some animals, when ill, find their remedy.

TASAWWUF: Too often the external scientists have used words like “instinct” and “environment” which tell us nothing excepting, perhaps, for a cover for lack of knowledge. The French philosopher Bergson, who was also a scientist, began a break-through but the age of specialization has become so great that few get the overall pictures. Certainly instinct, if it is real, not a concept, must have some physical vehicle and the breathing apparatus often so serves.

Some biologists have made study of the different organs used for science and hearing and also of the different kinds of nervous systems. They can measure the vibrations which animals are receptive to or not receptive to. But there is a wide field for the study of respiration in all beings. One approach appears in the paper, “Spiritual Circulation through the Veins of Nature.” There is still infinite potentiality for research, internal and external, on this subject.

The Hebrew Bible gives certain keys to distinguish the breathing of animals and humankind. The Hindus have in their holy books other approaches. If we delve deeply we may find that they are not far apart; they may even have been derived from the same sources, internal and external. Indeed there are many items in both the ancient Chinese and Indian cultures which were derived from observation of animals.

There is one way to learn from the animals which can come after Mental Purification, when one can tune in to other creatures, be receptive. Sufism proposes that the true disciple can perceive the Murshid, as it is said, “Thy light is in all forms.” The prayer is no doubt a good directive, but it is only a directive until there is some practice. And it is possible for a human being to tune in all the different animals, at all the different levels and learn therefrom.

GATHA: If the lower creation can do so much by the power of breath how much more can man do, if he only knows the right way of the development of breath!

TASAWWUF: This has been proposed in *In an Eastern Rose Garden* and is developed in some of the commentaries thereon. The purpose of the original lectures was to awaken the potentialities in man. But the people of those times were more keen in observing the distinction and differences which divided mankind than in awakening their latent faculties. Or they proposed that each could do it by himself.

This may seem verbally or philosophically true. But where are the instances, the examples? Man is too often self-deceived. We cannot compel anybody to accept a teacher in the inner sciences, but it is

readily seen that few progress in the esoteric sciences without teachers. It may be nothing but vanity that leads to such conclusions.

GATHA: It is through the breath that birds receive warnings of the changes of the weather, and accordingly they migrate in flocks from one place to another. Through the breath the herds of deer perceive approaching storms or changes of weather or the approach of a lion or a tiger.

TASAWWUF: Once one develops along the path of Mysticism then he can attune to the whole atmosphere, and so can either predetermine the weather or read many signs which abound. It is not strange, and it also belongs to that world which intellectuals call “instinct” when they do not know. But people who live close to nature and especially in lands where there are changes in weather and season know naturally what is coming and can easily prepare therefore.

As to animal enemies. Their very breath sends out vibrations and these vibrations are easily perceived. We may take it for granted, the perception of radio waves through sound and sight, but actually there are multitudes of vibrations of all kinds in the sphere. This subject is considered at length in *Cosmic Language* and the commentary thereon.

GATHA: Man, who is more capable of perceiving by breath still deeper things, warnings and calls from the earth and from heaven, which places are meant for him to dwell in or to settle in, of discriminating between friend and foe and discerning their pleasure and displeasure, owing to his interest in the superficial things of life cannot fully benefit by the power of breath.

TASAWWUF: During the World War II, the commentator was constantly demonstrating or trying to demonstrate it. Nobody else seems to have understood. Instead of trying to learn and absorb, there was great hostility to this peculiar behavior. But strange as it may seem, some of the leading offices in Army Intelligence were aware of the existence of personalities with such faculties and made use of them.

No doubt the Message of God would have spread more rapidly had there been more real humility and curiosity, especially curiosity. The divine wisdom is intended for all and the purposes of the Sufi Movement are not mere metaphysical ideals apart from life.

Self-consciousness, i.e. nufs, is the great obstacle here. It is very difficult to remove the active principle that the personality is a fixed point around which the universe revolves. All the spiritual teachings and disciplines of all schools of esotericism and inner development are for the purpose of breaking this mold. But the refinement of breath, a very simple process, is most important.

Jesus has taught that we should become like little children. We find it impossible to become infantile, but we can learn to breathe like little children. We can learn to attune to the breaths of all beings. And in the commentary on *The Inner Life*, some suggestions are made for the attunement first to the cosmic types discussed in the text, and then to other types. When we attempt such attunements we are already breaking the ego-mold.

That is also one of the purposes of spiritual drama. It cuts into the ego, and shows its insubstantiality. We also see this in some sages that they do not practice identity with any ego-self, quite otherwise. But there are also pretenders who use other pronouns, never “I,” and you will find they are adept in denouncing the egos of others. This is nothing but a facade.

GATHA: Yogis and Sufis, therefore, and all students of the inner cult, believe that breath is the means of receiving all intuitive knowledge from every direction of life. Absorbed in a thousand things of daily life man gives very little thought to breath. Therefore he keeps his heart closed to all the revelation that can be received by the help of breath.

TASAWWUF: The Bible teaches that God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living entity. But this is by-passed, it is not so important in the theologies and explanations given by religionists. It has been degraded into mere words. And therefore when neophytes are given Nayaz they think it is very simple. It may be simple but it is the ABC of mysticism and sometimes after many, many years it is not fully realized.

When one is in difficulty, be it physically or mentally, there is no better escape mechanism than to watch the breath. Once the commentator was trying to chop a tree down and the axe-handle suddenly hit his knee. The pain seemed excruciating, but out of the cosmos came a Voice: "Hold on to your breath, not to your knee." He did that and immediately ninety-percent of the pain disappeared; it seems that that part of the pain which came from surprise and shock was no more. And it has not taken very long for the physical aspect of the pain also to go.

Actually we can resort to breath control in all circumstances. We need not wait for any shock. We can regard the Breath as the Voice of God. We can identify the Voice of the Silence with the breath. And when we do that we can begin to learn; we can become again as little children and learn from Nature and from the Cosmos.

GATHA: Man as a rule is never conscious of his breath, of its rhythm, of its development, except at the time when he is so tired that he is breathless or when he is so excited that he feels choked up, or when something keeps the breath from flowing.

TASAWWUF: There is a story of a Sufi teacher. He had a new disciple and he began instruction by holding the disciple's head under the water. The disciple gasped. The teacher asked what the disciple desired most at that moment and the answer, of course, was breath. From this he gave the pupil the idea of the need for God.

But it is also true that God is the very breath. Jesus taught that God was **pneuma** (in the Greek version) which means "breath." But ignorant people have made a theology of actuality. And the Scriptures also tell of a "spiritual body" which means "breath vehicle." As the ignorant have not the inner consciousness they are not only unaware of the significance of this but choose to remain unaware.

There are many people all over the world at all times and all states of development who identify "breath" and "soul." It is an unfortunate superior attitude on the part of the intellectuals that they have not taken this seriously. Indeed they deride it. Yet there is another aspect in the book, *Health*, which if followed closely, could bring man considerably closer to vigor and vitality and end much of what is known as disease!

Therefore in presenting inner teachings the Murshid pays considerable attention to the breath. Often he is able to draw upon the wisdom of many peoples, customs and religions and to amalgamate all in the upliftment of the audience.

GATHA: For a Sufi it is desirable to be conscious of every breath.

TASAWWUF: You may read many books today and they indicate otherwise. There are even books labeled “Sufi” which make few remarks about Allah. Sometimes they consider something they call “Sufi Doctrine” and sometimes they are concerned with the weird, the abstruse, the unfathomable. This is unfortunate because in one sense, as the Sufi Masters themselves have taught, there is no such thing as “Sufism.” There is only Allah and the Divine Wisdom which emanates from Allah and this divine emanation can be called “Sufism,” although the word “Allah” does not appear in the term “Tasawwuf” or Sufism, and this can create dualism and obscurity.

GATHA: In the schools of the Sufis in the East the members of a certain association take up as their duty to remind the whole assembly of the same. So one after another, in turn, takes it up as a duty. They call aloud “**Hosh ba dam,**” meaning “Keep conscious of the breath.” “**Nazar bar kadam;**” this sentence is added when the Sufis are walking, and means, “Look down and see whose feet are these that are walking.”

TASAWWUF: This is especially true of the Naqshibandi school. They live often in fraternities and congregate together in prayer, esoteric exercises and visits to mosques and shrines.

There is the inner science which is called “tasawwuri” where there is an amalgamation of devotion and walk. It induces the attitude of the Sufi Invocation “Toward the One” but now also there is an addition of a sort of practice based on the various sifat-i-Allah as well as those based on attunement to masters and saints. Both are most valuable.

The breath can be used inwardly in meditation and outwardly in the walk and dance. It becomes the channel for blessings, and all the forms of magnetism discussed in the teachings. All is theory until there is living communication. So more attention is paid to the breath, to ways of breathing, and to many inner sciences, too numerous to describe in a single paper, wherein the inner faculties of humankind come to the surface and demonstrate the attainment of the kingdom over the heavens.

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