

Takua Taharat: Everyday Life—Gatha with Commentary Series II

**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 5

Purification of the Mind

GATHA: The principal thing to attain happiness, is to purify our minds from all things that disturb it and create inharmony.

TASAWWUF: This is the principal subject of Mental Purification and disciples are benefited by studying it. The mystic does not necessarily recommend books as books. A great deal has been made of the sacred Scriptures as if reading them would bring us closer to salvation and to God. There are multitudes of people who have read Scriptures and they are not always good people and there are multitudes who have been illiterates and they have not always been bad people; indeed the ignorant are often very good people.

Then there is the problem, of deciding what disturbs the mind and causes inharmony. The metaphysical people, the cultists, come up with many answers but **hardly the answer**. Just as we can practice the presence of God outwardly we can do this inwardly with Fikr, to keep the mind constantly concerned with God, if not concentrated entirely on God; or else to repeat sacred phrases at all times and then disharmony is impossible and disturbances seldom occur.

GATHA: There are not only bad impressions which disturb the tranquility of the mind, but there are many feelings of resentment and resistance against things which do not agree with our own ideas which disturb our minds.

TASAWWUF: We can correct this by knowledge of Metaphysics. Also by feeling the part of the body which is affected; every emotion affects some part of the body. Then by right breathing, or feeling "Allah" as we breathe in and out and placing this breath and this thought upon the part affected, or sensitive, we will gradually alleviate the disturbance. This is part of the process of Irfan which means gnosis, and by it we can get rid of unfavourable impressions.

But there are also means of getting rid of all impressions, good and bad. By meditation or Divine awareness, we do not even have to determine what is "good" or "bad." What is "good" becomes good only in the sight of God, and thus our minds are free and our egos neither disturb nor are disturbed.

GATHA: The person who has some business to carry out, some profession to attend to, requires a tranquil mind, but especially the one who journeys on the spiritual path needs tranquility of mind most. Prayers, concentrations, meditations make no effect when the mind is not purified from all disturbances. Therefore, for an adept, no cost and no sacrifice is great enough to keep the sense of inner harmony.

TASAWWUF: If the prayers, devotions and meditations could help us reach the goal by such processes, there would be many enlightened people. The world would be full of seers and those of high moral development. And it is not the rituals which help entirely though they are of value.

In this respect esotericism may be said to be the science of correction by correcting ourselves, not demanding from the world outside what we have not obtained or attained ourselves. And again it is like a puzzle because prayer, concentration and meditation all help in this attainment. Only it is

not the philosophy, certainly not the theology, that helps but the performance. The world is filled with words that have been called “words of wisdom” but one can doubt if there is any such thing as “words of wisdom.” Wisdom is beyond words, but wisdom is not beyond attainment. We all have it.

There have been some questions about the different types of Zen meditation. And those who do not study the Scriptures but sit quietly seldom report attainment. They blame themselves, not the method. But Lord Buddha did not blame people, he blamed methods which did not bring success; and also in Sufism we are concerned with attainments, not with methods which do not always help achieve the attainment.

GATHA: As Sufis we try to keep harmony in our surroundings, the harmony which demands many sacrifices. It makes us endure what we are not willing to endure, it makes us overlook what we are not inclined to overlook, it makes us tolerate what we are not accustomed to tolerate, and it makes us forgive and forget what we would never have forgotten if it were not for the sake of harmony.

TASAWWUF: This was particularly true when the Sufi Message was introduced into the western world. The western world had philosophy, had culture, even had cleanliness; but the western world's civilizations were all based on the ego, upon emphasizing the ego and anything else was actually unthinkable. True, there were all the words, the Scriptures, the commandments but these did not mean very much in the everyday life. It was necessary to find that which could be used in the everyday life.

It took some time to introduce a moral teaching that could affect every type of person and every walk of life. But even when the teachings were given verbally, it did not affect the psyche very much. It was a new way to many people and it took them a long time to get the views expressed variously under Reciprocity, Beneficence and Renunciation. But as time passed and younger people came into the teachings, sometimes even automatically, they understood the general principles and for them the ego was readily seen as the enemy.

GATHA: But at whatever cost harmony is attained, it is a good bargain. For harmony is the secret of happiness, and in absence of this a person living in palaces and rolling in gold can be most unhappy.

TASAWWUF: We see that there is unhappiness in the world and as wars continue and there seems no way out of it, there is a total loss. For harmony has not become a way of life. Only there are those who are influenced by music and dancing and for them harmony is most important. Therefore it is not surprising to see that many of those most opposed to war are also those most concerned with these and other arts. For they intuitively understand that harmony is needed in life and also they get along better with each other than their forbears who are not only competitive but most unhappy.

For this reason Sufis often say “yes” to prevent disturbances although they may as people or even from a moral standpoint, know better. But we should not awaken people before their time and we must treat children as children.

GATHA: Harmony is brought about by attuning ourselves to all beings, to all things, to all conditions, to all situations. And those who cannot tune themselves try to tune others, and while trying to tune others they break the strings.

TASAWWUF: Adepts are able by concentrating their breath, to get the general feeling of breathing of their immediate atmosphere, of those around them and even the atmosphere of the places about which they are thinking. We repeat Ya Kaffee, unaware that it means “All-Pervader” and that the breath, in a sense, can attune to everything and anything in the space. Therefore, it is more important to watch the breath, to understand the breath and by that means, and never by thought, to get the general tone of persons, places and situations.

GATHA: It is like someone who has a violin in their hands wishing to tune the cello. If they wish to be in tune with the cellist, they must tune their violin to the cellist's pitch.

TASAWWUF: We have the same general teachings of the tuning of Indian instruments, that they also take the space, the akasha, into consideration. It is not merely the pitch of the instrument, but the feeling-pitch of the space as to how effective the music will be under different conditions.

True, there is a general system of tuning. In the western orchestra, the oboe is like a strong-willed person, a very obstinate person who cannot easily be changed. So the other instruments tune to the oboe. And in a similar way spiritual people who can more easily change themselves do this with others without always letting them know. Besides, it becomes more natural, and also more effective.

GATHA: Every soul, as is its nature, constantly seeks harmony, but rarely is there to be found a soul who really knows how to create it.

TASAWWUF: We can explain the Gathas: we can build up a way of life. But the question is, how can we create harmony unless we develop a strong pull on life itself. Adepts, through their breath and heart, know how to adapt to various conditions and it is adaptation and adoption, and not a philosophy, which brings about this change. But the Masters, having strength, are much more able to get the keynote of a situation and attune to that keynote.

GATHA: If we say, "This noise that goes on always next to my ears drives me mad," we cannot stop the noise. We must know how to close ourselves to that noise; if we cannot, to accustom ourselves to that noise so as to be able to bear it and eventually to rise above it, that it may no more create inharmony. Very often, at the sight of inharmony, we try to escape it. But inharmony has such a wonderful magic that if we avoid it in the East we meet it in the West. It never leaves us; whom it loves it follows. And the best way to meet with inharmony is to try and harmonize with it. Knowing that the source and goal of all things is the perfection of harmony, and bearing that idea in mind, if we meet with inharmony, which has no existence in reality, which is like a shadow, it must certainly disappear as the shadow disappears at the sight of the sun.

TASAWWUF: As Gayan teaches, "The world is what it is, you cannot change it. But you can change yourself." So the wise adjust and readjust and the more they adjust and readjust the easier they find it even to direct the tendencies of the time, that the world to which they have attuned themselves will begin to follow them, consciously or unconsciously.

GATHA: It is very difficult to evolve ourselves and at the same time to keep in tune with the unevolved ones through life. It is like being drawn from above and at the same time being pulled from below. And if there is anything that can save us from being torn to pieces in life, there is only one way, and that is to resound, to respond to all that is asked of us.

TASAWWUF: It is a comparatively easy thing to write; it is a comparatively easy thing to read or study. But applying it is something else. The way of the Sufis is to break the ego, and if this is necessary to work with people and clarify situations, we do not always demand a standard from them. We try to attune to their conditions, to their evolution. Once attuned, we can by breath and mastery begin to change the conditions and persons, but the attunement and adjustment must first come from us, not from others.

No doubt it is most difficult to respond to all of life's demands. But we can hear the divine voice as well as human voices, and also the divinity in human voices. When we are able to discern voices, we can more easily adjust and so help ourselves and others in whatever situation we find ourselves.

GATHA: It is this principle which is taught by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount may seem to teach a willing surrender to all, but that is not the way to look at it. The real

lesson that we can learn from it is to harmonize ourselves with all notes instead of with one note.

TASAWWUF: If one were a harp, with many strings, each of these strings has to harmonize. It is not easy. But once the strings are harmonized, then the harpist is more capable than other musicians to affect the atmosphere and the audience. This attuning is an art in itself.

We have to do this every time when we deal with children. They have not the same understanding and if we tried to enforce on children the disciplines or the methods we use with older people, there would be no communication. We would fail. We have to attune to their level. And so it is with the more advanced person. As we advance spiritually we have the power to attune to others and they have not the power to attune to us or to each other. If they had that capacity there would be no inharmony.

Of course, common prayers, common concentrations and devotions help. But most disharmonies come in everyday life outside the spheres of devotion and that is the test for the sage, to be able to affect harmony then and there.

GATHA: Every note is fixed in its place, so is every person fixed in their ideas and ways. But the one who treads the spiritual path, is all notes and is no note in particular. Therefore one may rightly be called the key note, the note which makes a consonant chord with every note that is played with it.

TASAWWUF: One will then determine that a Master has no particular note or place and is very pliable. It is just the opposite. Those who are not fixed by particular notes and keynotes are greater and more capable than others. They are not limited by their ego, they can adjust to conditions. They do not endlessly create samskaras and then explain and justify themselves, for there is no self to justify.

Once we know the secret of breath, we can get the general imprint of an audience or place or circumstances and, knowing that, behave accordingly not introducing dissonances except when it is necessary for the teaching.

GATHA: There is no beauty where there is no harmony; harmony is the fruit of love. Therefore by attaining harmony in life we reach the perfection of all three: love, harmony and beauty.

TASAWWUF: We can see in the changes of the arts and beauty, the rise and fall, the fall and rise, of the place of harmony in each. And when harmony is lessened, the whole social order suffers, not only wars but all kinds of disturbances.

The wise, by working with harmony, in each of the arts can affect the whole social order, bring peace and blessing and unity and harmony. And if the artists do that they become the master-minds; and often the master-minds to do that, become artists.