

# Volume XIII - The Gathas

## Part V

### Saluk: Morals

#### GATHA III

##### 1. The Manner of Friendliness

The manner of friendliness is considered as the main part in the study of Sufism, for the Sufi in all ages has given great importance to the art of personality. As Sufism is the religious philosophy of love, harmony and beauty, it is most necessary for a Sufi to express the same through his personality. No doubt in the East, manner is given great prominence in life. The courts in the East were schools of good manners, though a great deal of artificiality was combined with it, but in the path of Sufism the same manners which are used at court were learned with sincerity. According to the Sufi idea all beauty comes from God, so a beautiful manner is a divine expression. In these modern times people seem to be against manners because of their agitation against aristocracy, as there are many who are against religion because they are cross with the priests. When man agitates against beauty he cannot be on the right path, and the movement of today against all beauty that exists in the form of culture and manner is a battle with civilization.

The Sufi calls the manner that comes from the knowledge of unity, from the realization of truth, from the love of God, *Akhlaq Allah*, meaning the manner of God; in other words, God expressed in man shows in the action of that man the manner of God.

The following are the different aspects of the manner known by the Sufis as *Ilm-i Adab*:

*adab* = respect

*khatir* = consideration

*tawazu* = hospitality, or welcome

*inkisar* = humility, or selflessness

*khulq* = graciousness

*matanat* = seriousness

*halim* = tenderness of feeling

*salim* = harmoniousness

*wafah* = fidelity, loyalty, constancy

*dilazari* = sympathy

*kotah kalam* = moderation in speech

*kam sukhun* = sparing of words

*motubah* = self-respect, keeping one's word, proving trustworthy in dealings.

*buzurgi* = venerability

*ghairat* = honor, or pride

*haya* = modesty

Also bravery; experience; generosity; forgiveness; large-mindedness; tolerance; to take the side of the weak; to hide the faults of others, as one would one's own, out of sympathy and respect for another.

## 2. The Manner of Friendliness: **Adab** (Respect) (1)

There is no one in the world who does not deserve some respect, and he who respects another, by doing so respects himself, for respect creates respect, disrespect re-echoes in disrespect. The greatest education that can be given to a child is that of respect, not only for his friends, parents and relatives, but also for the servants in the house. Once the Prophet, hearing his grandson call a slave by his name, told him, 'Call him uncle, for he is advanced in years.' If one wishes to respect someone, one can surely find something to respect in him, and if there were nothing at all to be found, then the very fact that he is a human being quite entitles him to respect.

One form of respect is to consider another person better than oneself; even if one did not think him so. Or to regard another person as better than oneself, by reason of humility, or out of graciousness. No person is respected who has no respect for another. There is another form of respect, which is to recognize another person's superiority in age, experience, learning, goodness, birth, rank, position, personality, morality, or spirituality. And if one was mistaken in recognizing another person's superiority it is no loss, for respect given to man in reality is respect given to God. He who deserves respect is entitled to it, but when one does not deserve it and yet you respect him it shows your graciousness. To a fine person it is a great disappointment to lose the opportunity of paying respect when there was an occasion; an unrefined person does not mind. There are many who, out of cleverness, cover their disrespectful attitude in an ironic form of speech and make sarcastic but polite remarks, in order to insult someone. In that way, seemingly they have not shown any disrespect and yet they have satisfied their desire of being disrespectful. In some people there is a spirit of injury, which is fed by hurting another with a disrespectful attitude shown in thought, word or action. If man only knew that, in life, what he gives he receives, only sometimes the return does not come immediately, it takes time.

He is really respectful who gives respect, but he who looks for respect from another is greedy, he will always be disappointed. Even to give respect in order to get respect in return is a kind of business. Those who reach a spiritual realization will only give respect generously, without thinking for one moment of getting it in return. When one sincerely gives respect to anyone, not for show but from the feeling of one's heart, a happiness rises from it, which is the product only of the respectful attitude and which nothing else can give. There are many to whom one is indebted for their help, kindness, protection, support, for their service or assistance, and there is nothing material in the world, neither gold or silver, which can express the gratitude so fully as a real respect can. Remember, therefore, that for something that you cannot pay back in silver or gold you can only make return in one way, and that is by humbly offering respect.

## 3. The Manner of Friendliness: **Adab** (Respect) (2)

A respectful attitude is the first and principal thing in the development of personality, not only respect

toward someone whom one considers superior but respect for everyone one meets in life, in proportion to what is due to him. It is through conceit that man gives less honor where more honor is due, and it is by ignorance that man gives more respect than what is due. Respecting someone does not only require a desire to respect but an art of respecting. One ignorant of this art may express respect wrongly. It is self-respect which makes one inclined to respect another. The one who has no respect for himself cares little if he respects another or if respect is at all necessary in life. To respect means to honor. It is not only bowing and bending, or external action, which expresses respect. A disrespectful person may bow his head before another and strike him on the face by his word. True respect is from the attitude which comes from the sincere feeling of respect. The outward expression of respect has no value without inner feeling. Inspired by a respectful attitude, man expresses his feeling in thought, speech, or action, which is the true expression of respect. A sincere feeling of respect needs no words, even the silence can speak of one's respectful attitude.

There are three different expressions of respect. One is that when the position or rank of a person commands one to respect, whether one is willing or unwilling, and under the situation one cannot help having respect, which is nothing but an outer expression of respect. The second expression of respect is when a person wishes to please another by his respectful manner, to let him feel how respectful he is and what a good manner he has. By this expression one has two objects in view: one, to please another, and the other to please oneself by one's way of pleasing. The third way is the true feeling of respect which rises from one's heart, and if one tried to express it one could not express it enough. If one were not able to express it fully it can always be felt, because it is a living spirit of respect.

The mark of people having tradition behind them, by birth, nation or race, shows in their respectful tendency. To them, disrespect either on their part or on the part of another means absence of beauty. Life has many beautiful things – flowers, jewels, beauty of nature, of form, of line, of color – but beauty of manner excels all, and all good manner is rooted in a respectful tendency. It is a great pity that this subject is not regarded as the most important one to be considered and to be developed – especially today, when the stream of the whole world is running in the direction of commercialism, which tends to the beauty of matter in gold and silver instead of beauty of character and personality.

#### **4. Respect**

The highest expression of love is respect. Respect is not only due to one's superior or elder, but even to a child; one should only know to what extent it should be given and in what form it should be expressed. In loving one's mate, one's friend or relative, one's parents, one's teacher, one's priest, the best expression of love that can be shown is a sincere respectful attitude. No love offering can be more precious than a word or an act of respect.

Very often conflicts between religions have arisen because people who respected their own religion looked with contempt at the religion of another. If one did not respect one's friend's religion, one could at least respect one's friend, and out of respect for the friend, regard his religion respectfully. Very often, with all love and devotion and sincerity, friendship breaks only owing to disregard on the part of the one or the other of the law of respect.

What is worship? Worship is not dancing before God, worship is an act of respect offered to God, to Whom all respect is due. The man who worships God and disrespects man worships in vain, his piety is his mania. A true worshipper of God sees His presence in all forms, and thus in respecting others he respects God. It may even develop to such an extent that the true worshipper of God, the Omnipresent, walks gently on the earth, bowing in his heart even to every tree and plant, and it is then that the worshipper forms a communion with the Divine Beloved at all times, when he is awake and when he is asleep.

## 5. The Manner of Friendliness: *Khatir* (Consideration)

*Khatir* means consideration for someone, which is shown in the form of respect, help or service. Very often it wants a sacrifice, it may even need self-denial. However, consideration is the highest quality that can be found in human nature. Consideration of age, of experience, of knowledge, of position, consideration of some good done by a person, also consideration of somebody's feebleness, weakness, it is all included in the word *khatir*. This spirit of consideration, when developed, extends not only to the person for whom one has consideration, but also, for that person's sake, to another who is related or connected with that person in some way or other. When a king is respected and not his ambassador, that means lack of consideration to the king.

For a Sufi this quality becomes his moral. The Sufi learns consideration beginning with his *murshid*, but this culminates in consideration for God. When one arrives at that tenderness of feeling one considers every person in the world. To the Sufi the missing of an opportunity of considering another is a great disappointment, for he does not consider it to be a fault toward a human being but to God. Verily, he is pious, who considers human feeling. No doubt it needs no end of endurance to consider everybody and to be considerate always, it wants no end of patience. However, by being considerate nothing is lost, if seemingly nothing is gained. The reward of this virtue is always in store. Consideration is the sign of the wise.

## 6. *Tawazu* (Sharing with Others)

*Tawazu* in Sufic terms means something more than hospitality. It is laying before one's friend willingly what one has, in other words sharing with one's friend all the good one has in life, and with it, enjoying life better. When this tendency to *tawazu* is developed, things that give one joy and pleasure become more enjoyable by sharing with another. This tendency comes from the aristocracy of the heart. It is generosity and even more than generosity. For the limit of generosity is to see another pleased in his pleasure, but to share one's own pleasure with another is greater than generosity. It is a quality which is foreign to a selfish person, and the one who shows this quality is on the path of saintliness.

*Tawazu* does not cost; it is the attitude of mind. If by nature man is not hospitable the hospitality he gives is of no use. The one who has experienced the joy of this quality feels a greater satisfaction in sharing his only piece of bread than in eating it by himself. Duality in nature keeps all such beautiful qualities of the soul away from man. The thought of unity is productive of all good qualities in man. It is not only in giving or sharing pleasures that one shows hospitality to another; even in word, manner or action one can show this feeling. A desire to welcome someone, to greet someone, to respect someone, to offer a seat to someone, to treat someone with courtesy, to see someone off with respect, all these show the sign of *tawazu*.

## 7. *Haya* (Modesty)

*Haya* is the finest feeling in human nature, which is called modesty. Modesty is not necessarily meekness, or humility, or selflessness, or pride. Modesty is a beauty in itself, and its action is to veil itself; in that veiling it shows the vanity of its nature, and yet that vanity is a beauty itself. Modesty is the life of the artist, the theme of the poet, and the soul of the musician. In thought, speech, action, in one's manner, in one's movement, modesty stands as the central theme of grace. Without modesty beauty is dead, for modesty is the spirit of beauty. Silence in modesty speaks louder than bold words. The lack of modesty can destroy art, poetry, music, and all that is beautiful.

And if one asked, 'what is modesty,' it is difficult to explain in words. It is a feeling which rises from a living heart; a heart which is dead has not got the taste of it. The modest person compared to the immodest one is like a plant standing by the side of a rock. If the heart of the immodest is like the earth, the heart of the modest one is like the water. Modesty is life itself; a life which is conscious of its

beauty yet inclined to veil it in all its forms is modesty. At the same time modesty is the proof of sincerity and of prudence. The immodest man cries aloud, 'I am the light' and is finished in a moment. The diamond, shining in its light constantly, never says a word about its light.

## 8. Modesty

Modesty is not necessarily timidity or cowardice. The bravest can be modest, and it is modesty which completes bravery. Modesty is the veil over the face of the great; for the most modest is God Himself, Who is not seen by anyone except those intimate with Him. Beauty in all its forms and colors, in all its phases and spheres, doubles itself, enriches itself by modesty. Modesty is not something that is learnt. It is in nature, for it is natural. Modesty does not only cover what is beautiful but amplifies the beauty and covers all that is void of beauty, in this manner fitting it into all that which is beautiful. A noble heart can even rise to such a degree of modesty that he would plead for another person's fault, trying to make out of it no fault, even knowing that it is a fault.

Yes, a modest person very often will not raise his voice, out of dignity; or say things, out of consideration and respect; will not argue and pull his own way when dealing with someone who has no thought of modesty. In this case he may often lose his battle. However, one cannot hope always to ascend and descend at the same time. One should ascend, sacrificing all that those who descend will get, or else one must descend, sacrificing all that those who ascend will achieve. Life always demands sacrifices. In every walk of life there is a battle to be fought; and in that case the one who loves to ascend may just as well ascend rather than wanting to descend. The Prophet has said, '*al haya wal iman*.' 'Verily, modesty is a great piety.'

## 9. Ghairat (honor)

*Ghairat*, protection, or defense of honor, is considered by the wise a great quality, a chivalry which is found as a rule in rare souls. Man regardless of this sense is no better than a domestic animal, a dog or a cat. When their master does not want them he can scold them, drive them away, and they can come again, wagging their tails, for there is no sense of pride to be hurt in them. They only feel the discomfort of having to move from a comfortable place and they could also feel their master's displeasure, but there is no soreness about it. In man the sense of honor is developed; with his evolution it develops more. It is not only necessary that man should be humble, but it is also necessary that man must be proud. Pride is the sign of evolution, honor comes out of pride. If there were no pride nor honor, virtue would not exist.

Very often people confuse *ghairat*, this sense of honor, with conceit, sometimes with jealousy; but even the spirit of jealousy, which stands to defend one's honor, can be no other than virtue. People call it conceit, but they do not know the meaning of honor, that in the sense of honor there is a divine spark hidden; for it is the perfection of honor which is the logos, the ego, whom the Sufis call *Kibriya*.

No doubt when this sense of honor is developed without wisdom a person might become foolishly sensitive, and not only defend his honor but die for nothing, in illusion, just as the story of Othello suggests. For a man whose sense is developed in *ghairat*, his honor is not only in his person, but in his friend, in his beloved, in his mother, sister, or wife, in someone whom he respects, or whom he loves, or with whom he connects himself. This sense of *ghairat* has its lights and shades in dealing with friends, in give and take, and very often people prefer death to dishonor, and from a finer point of view they have reason on their side. Those who are trying to their surroundings in life, who are a burden to their relatives, a trouble to their friends, an annoyance to their acquaintances, a disgust to strangers, are the ones who are lacking in this sense. This shows that the sense of *ghairat* when developed makes one's life more harmonious, for an honorable man minds his own business and keeps himself out of the way, troubles others less, even if he has to suffer more trouble for it.

There is a story which tells that four persons were arrested for the same crime and were taken before a wise king to be judged. He saw the first person and said, 'Hang him.' He saw the next person and sentenced him for the whole life. He saw the third person and said, 'he must be sent out of the country.' He saw the fourth person and said, 'I could never have expected you to do such a crime.' The first three underwent their punishments, but this last one went home and the next morning he was found dead; that one word of the king was worse than death to him.

*Ghairat* is a sign of noble birth, whatever condition man may be in. He may be in rags, yet this spirit of *ghairat* will shine out through all conditions, proving him to be noble. Humility has its place, pride has its place in life. In the place of pride, humility cannot be fitted. Once the *nizam* of Hyderabad was walking in the country, and a knight happened to see a thorn stuck in his shoe. He rushed, before the attendant had seen it, and took out that thorn from the king's shoe. The king looked back and said, 'Were there no attendants present? It was for them, not for you,' said the king, 'and since you have taken this work, you can no longer continue to be my knight. Please retire.' It is the sense of honor expected by his surroundings that makes a king a true king.

For a Sufi the sense of honor is not for his personality, he does not give his person a greater place than dust and the central theme of his life is simplicity and his moral is humility. Yet remember that the Sufi breathes the breath of God, so he is conscious of the honor of God. His pride is greater, therefore, than the pride of every man. It is in the intoxication of this pride that he proves to be God-conscious.

#### 10. *Inkisar* (Selflessness)

*Inkisar*, in the terms of the Sufis, means selflessness. The psychology of human nature is such that man feels inclined to hit every head that is raised. Not only man, but all living creatures have that tendency. To protect themselves from that, many intelligent creatures in the lower creation make holes in the earth, to live there, hiding themselves from the beasts and birds of prey. No sooner do they raise their heads from their holes than they are caught by their enemies, who thirst for their blood. As humankind is evolved, man does not immediately hit the raised head, but he cannot keep from being agitated at the sight of it.

Understanding this mystery of human nature and studying the secret of the whole life, the Sufi has traced that spirit in its essence, belonging to the source of all things. He calls that spirit *kabir*, or *kibriya*, the ego, or egoistic. It has taught the Sufi a moral, that not only man but even God is displeased by self-assertion. And the manner that he adopts in order not to arouse that agitating spirit he calls *inkisar*, meaning selflessness.

In theory it is a small thing, in practice it is a great art. It is an art which wants a great deal of study of human nature, it requires careful observation and constant practice. This art teaches to take precautions before every activity in speech or in actions so as to cause least disturbance to human feeling. It is the thorough study of human susceptibility and practice of delicate manner which teaches man *inkisar*. The further he progresses the more his sense becomes keen; therefore he finds more and more mistakes in his own life as he goes forward in this path. This subject is so delicate that one does not only commit a fault by showing pride or conceit but even in expressing modesty or humility. *Inkisar* wants a great delicacy of sense. One must be able to see the lights and shades produced by every action and word one does or says. And once a person has mastered this art he has mastered the same art which Christ promised to the fishermen, saying 'Come hither, I will make you fishers of men.'

The Sufi gives more importance to this subject than a *yogi*, for the way of the *yogi* is asceticism, the way of the Sufi is the development of humanity in nature. But according to the prophetic point of view the only way of pleasing God is *inkisar*, which is greater than so-called goodness. A good person proud of his goodness turns his pearls into pebbles. A bad person, full of remorse for his faults, may turn his

pebbles into jewels. Selflessness is not only pleasing to man but it is pleasing to God. There is not one moment in life when God is unaware of man's word or action; and beyond his word or action God is aware of man's attitude, which very often man hides in his words or actions. Nothing is hidden before God, Who is a perfect Judge and Forgiver, and upon Whose pleasure or displeasure depends the happiness or unhappiness of man's life. Therefore man has not only the task of considering the pleasure or displeasure of his fellow man, but also a duty to God, of considering what is pleasant to God and what is unpleasant. To Him to Whom all the beauty and riches, glory and greatness belong, man can make no offering which is worth anything, except one thing and that is selflessness.

Life may be pictured as a building in which there are several doors that one has to go through and every door is smaller than one's size. And as man's natural inclination is to rise straight, at every attempt he makes to rise, his head is knocked against the frame of the door. And the only thing that can save him from knocking his head against the doors is to bend. It is this logical lesson which the wise turn into a good manner. Verily, all that leads to happiness is good.