

Naqshibandi: Symbology—Gatha with Commentary Series I

**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 I: Number 7

Symbology of the Dot and Circle

GATHA: The dot is the most important of all figures, for every figure is an extension of the dot and the dot is the source of every figure. You cannot let a pen touch paper without making a dot first of all.

TASAWWUF: The point may be understood by feeling. We may breathe in intensely, concentrating on a center. This center becomes our point. This is called “Bindu” in Sanskrit and these two words come from the same philological root.

RYAZAT: Gaze at a point preferably in black ink or paint at the level of the eyes. Gaze steadfastly at that point repeating, “Toward the One, etc.” Here this One means the point itself. The breath should be in rhythm. We should be relaxed. The point becomes a center of concentration as in archery.

GATHA: It is simply the extension of the dot in two directions which is called a horizontal and a perpendicular line. And again, it is the dot which determines sides; if it were not for the dot the sides, as above, or below, or right, or left, could not be determined.

TASAWWUF: We can conceive space as composed of points. Certain versions of the atomic theory also utilize this approach. The point is the dot statically. As the dot moves it forms lines; but as the dot breathes it forms circles and spheres.

It is not necessary to concentrate on the dot in motion because this also becomes the line in motion. The expanded Dot in this form of symbology becomes the Circle.

GATHA: The origin of all things and beings may be pictured as a dot. This dot is called in Sanskrit “Bindu,” the origin and source of the whole being. Since the dot is the source of the perpendicular and the horizontal lines it is the source of all figures and characters of all languages that exist and have existed, as doubtless it is the source of all forms of nature.

TASAWWUF: In the Hebrew alphabet the dot became the letter Yod and it is said that all other letters grew out of the activity of this Yod. It also was a symbol of masculinity—as the circle became a symbol of femininity. This general symbology is found in many lands.

There is an Islamic tradition that the whole of Qur’an could be contained in a single Sura (The Fateha); that this Sura could be condensed into the opening lines, the Bismillah; and that this in turn could be condensed into the word Allah; the word Allah into Alif, the first of letters; and even the essence of that letter into the dot which is placed over it. Therefore, in this sense all creation is an activity of the dot. This would also mean that the dot could stand for God, the Only Being, in Essence.

GATHA: The principal thing in the human figure is the eye, and in the eye the iris, and in the iris the pupil, which signifies the dot.

TASAWWUF: This is one example of the dot and circle being found in nature. Actually all biological cells have been symbolized by the dot and the circle, and not only symbolized because one who studies the biological sciences can observe the dot and circle in operation.

RYAZAT: Use a symbol of an eye for concentration and identify with the eye. This requires more feeling than the concentration on the dot, because the eye is a living entity. It is also the organ of Light.

GATHA: At the same time the dot means zero, meaning nothing. It is nothing and it is everything, and the dot expresses the symbol of nothing being everything and everything being nothing.

RYAZAT: After the concentration on the eye statically we should return to the concentration on the dot dynamically. Inhale becoming the dot, and let that dot expand in and with the exhalation.

TASAWWUF: As we breathe and our breath becomes identified with the dot and as the dot activates into expanding creation, so also do we realize the principle of expanding consciousness. This is used in many practices.

RYAZAT: La Ilaha in this sense although practiced with exhalation stands for the nothingness; and el il Allah although practiced with inhalation stands for the everything. However, in dot-concentration we identify with the point, and not with the universe. In Sufism nothingness is called fana, and everything consciousness is called baqa (consciousness).

GATHA: Amir, the Indian poet, expresses this idea in his well-known verse. He says, "If thou wilt come to thy senses by becoming selfless, free from life's intoxication, thou wilt realize that what seems to thee non-existent is all-existing, and what seems to thee existent does not exist." How true it is that in ordinary life we look at reality upside-down; what exists seems to us non-existent, what does not exist in reality, but only seems to exist, that alone we consider existent.

TASAWWUF: Selflessness cannot be demonstrated by verbal or intellectual communication. To say "I am not" is still an affirmation of "I am." It is only by affirming other than self that we can obtain selflessness.

There are many myths which illustrate this. Such as the story of the struggle of Hercules with the Hydra and later with the old man of the sea. Both of these symbolize samsaric or egocentric activity. Love emphasizes "thou art." And this is a form of selflessness.

To struggle with the ego must be distinguished from the thought, "struggle with ego." This thought itself is a dangerous trap. When feeling dominates thought it is much easier to attain selflessness. Salat emphasizes "Loving mother, kind father, innocent child, and helpful friend, and inspiring teacher." All of these are positive attitudes which take one from the realm of the ego.

Sufism posits fana or selflessness through stages called fana-fi-Sheikh, fana-fi-Rassoul, and fana-fi-Lillah. All of these remove the ego but not the positive point of activity and life.

GATHA: The dot develops into the circle, which shows the picture of this seemingly non-existent developing into all-existing. The iris of the eye is the development of the dot which is called the pupil.

RYAZAT: Disciples are given the concentration on the Sun, itself a circle concentration. We may now concentrate on painted circles of different colors—the blank circle representing the color of the material or paint. This circle should not have an outline. In other words, concentrate on a circle without an outside outline. That is this circle is an expanded colored dot. After we have understood the concentration on the dot, and the expanded dot as circle, we are ready for a fuller concentration on the Dot and the Circle.

In performing this concentration (Murakkabah) we should feel free and may practice it both shutting out impressions and receiving them.

GATHA: A dot added to one makes one ten, and with two dots the one becomes a hundred, and this

shows that we are small when we are unconscious of God; when the knowledge of God, Who is the source of the whole being, although non-existent to the ignorant eye, is added to us, we become ten, or a hundred, or a thousand.

TASAWWUF: This was one of the original forms of enumeration out of which first the Arabic and then the modern system arose. In a certain sense this dot and circle mean “all and nothing,” consciousness and unconsciousness—or better—consciousness and ever-growing consciousness.

RYAZAT: Concentrate on the dot in the center of the heart. Make it feel smaller and smaller until it becomes the infinitesimal point; make it feel larger and larger until it becomes the beating heart. Make this beating heart embrace and unfold all things.

This teaching is found in the Upanishads as philosophy. With adepts, Sufis, and true Yogis, this becomes experience rather than philosophy. The talib should try all of these concentrations in turn, and report any success to the Teacher.

TASAWWUF: This heart-centration and concentration can become one of the most valuable ways of spiritual development. But in addition to the concentration in which feeling should always control thought, the feeling-in-love should be expanded; sometimes intense concentration to a point itself expands love-radiation. It is like a tiny candle emanating a tremendous aura. Such principles are found in nature, and are being investigated in the Science called Physics.

GATHA: As the dot enriches the figure so God enriches us; as all figures come from the dot so all things and beings come from God; and as destruction must in time break all things into dots so all things must return to God.

TASAWWUF: The essential difference between what is called “living matter” and “inorganic matter” is that the former sees the Dot in action, developing into the Line and into the Circle. In breathing we inhale into the Bindu or Point and exhale into the expansive sea or Sindhu. This is known as Bindhu-Sindhu in the Hindu teachings, and the Dot-Circle elsewhere.

The dot thus posits the Ego, and the circle posits the assimilation of the Ego in the All. In the All, separate entities as such do not exist. We see this in the chemical solution, in the water of the ocean which holds many chemicals, in the biological processes of cells and bodies, and in all manifestations in the forms of “things” which manifest for a time and then disappear.

RYAZAT: Breathe in, concentrating on inhalation until there is a clear idea of the processes of inhalation.

Breathe out, concentrating on exhalation until there is a clear idea of exhalation. Breathe in and out, in and out until there is a clear understanding of Breath as it is. Then breathe in Dots and exhale Circles until this is clear. Then expand the Circles—until the more efficient the inhalation with Dot, the more efficient the exhalation until one finds an Einsteinian universe, so to speak, finite but unbounded. Such is our nature.