

# Adab Curriculum Gender Neutral

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## Introduction

*Character Building and the Art of Personality* in Volume III of *The Sufi Message* is the basis of Hazrat Inayat Khan's teachings about futuwwa or spiritual chivalry. Knights have worked with a practical introduction to the tradition of futuwwa by incorporating the Iron, Copper, Silver, and Golden Rules into their lives. For those who have completed all 40 Rules, the Adab curriculum is a further training based on the core teachings. This curriculum was taken from talks Hazrat Inayat Khan gave at summer schools in 1922 and 1923. Some of the teachings can be found in *The Sufi Message*, Vol XIII, Suluk: Morals Gatha III.

The material has been organized into six groups, each group with a similar theme. Names of the qualities in these groups have been updated to contemporary transliterations from advice given by Pir Zia Inayat Khan and appear in a different form in the published literature.

1 **Respect, Honor, Fidelity** *Adab* (respect), *Mu'tabari* (keeping one's word and proving trustworthy), *Wafa'* (fidelity and loyalty), *Ghairat* (honor)

2 **Hospitality** *Tawazu'* (sharing with others), *Muruwat* (graciousness), *Dil-asar'i* (sympathy), Tact

3 **Gentleness** *Hilm* (tenderness of feeling), *Salamat* (harmoniousness), *Khatir* (consideration), *Dar-guzar* (overlooking), *Ittifaq* (reconciliation)

4 **Humility** *Haya'* (modesty), *Inkisar* (selflessness)

5 **Silence** *Kotah Kalam* (moderation of speech), *Kam Sukhun* (sparing of words)

6 **Serenity** *Matanat* (dignity), *Buzurgi* (venerability), *Vairagya* (indifference)

For each quality one or more reflections have been chosen from the *Gayan, Vadan, Nirtan* of Hazrat Inayat Khan. These reflections are meant to be used as a practice similar to the way the Rules are used by heralds. As knights have at least four years experience working in this way, this curriculum can be adopted as a self-study program. Those who wish to use the structure offered for heralds may contact the Chancellor of the Knighthood to receive ordination for each stage of the work. As with the herald practice, one can repeat a reflection in the morning and during the day observe one's behavior in the light of that reflection. For each reflection it is recommended to repeat this practice for 40 days as this is alleged to be the time needed to change a habit. There are 38 reflections altogether. If you spend 40 days on each, the time required will be just over 4 years. When you have completed all of the reflections in one of the groups, if the structure is helpful to you, you may

contact the Chancellor for the next ordination. Please contact the Chancellor, in any case, when you complete the entire curriculum.

**Introduction to ‘ilm-i-Adab**  
**Moral Culture, The Manner of Friendliness**  
**Suresnes, June 26, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

The manner of friendliness (*‘ilm-i-Adab*) is considered as the main part in the study of Sufism, for the Sufi in all ages has given a 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 the personality.

No doubt, in the East manner is given great prominence in life. The courts in the East were the Sufi Schools of good manner, though a great deal of artificiality was combined with them. But in the path of Sufism the same manners, which are used in the court, were learned with sincerity. According to the Sufi idea all beauty comes from God. So a beautiful manner is a divine expression. At these modern times people appear to be against manner, because of their agitation against aristocracy, as there are many who are against religion, because they are cross with the priests. When one agitates against beauty, one cannot be on the right way, and the movement of today against all beauty that exists in the form of culture and manner, is a battle with civilization. Sufism 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 the person shows in the action of that person the manner of God.

Following are the different aspects of the manner known by the Sufis as

*‘ilm-i-Adab*:

respect (*Adab*)

consideration, hiding the faults of others (*Khatir*)

hospitality, welcome, generosity (*Tawazu* ’)

honor, pride, chivalry, defending of the weak, bravery (*Ghairat*)

modesty (*Haya* ’)

humbleness, selflessness (*Inkisar*)

graciousness (*Muruwat*)

seriousness (*Matanat*)

tenderness of feeling (*Hilm*)

harmony (*Salamat*)

fidelity (*Wafa'*)

sympathy (*Dil-asar'i*)

moderation in speech (*Kotah Kalam*)

sparing of words (*Kam Sukhun*)

self-respect, keeping one's word, proving trustworthy in dealings (*Mu'tabari*)

venerability (*Buzurgi*)

## **Group 1: Respect, Honor, Fidelity**

**Adab Reflection 1:** My thoughtful self! Reproach no one, hold a grudge against no one, bear malice against no one; be wise, tolerant, considerate, polite and kind to all.

### **Rules that pertain to Adab**

My conscientious self,

Do not look down upon the one who looks up to you. (Copper Rule 5)

Bear no malice against your worst enemy. (Copper Rules 7)

Be prejudiced against no one. (Copper Rule 9)

Have regard for the feelings of every soul. (Silver Rule 5)

### **Moral Culture, Respect (Adab)**

**Suresnes, June 29, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

There is no one in the world who does not deserve some respect, in the one who gives respect to another, by doing so, one respects oneself. For respect creates respect, disrespect re-echoes in disrespect.

The greatest education that can be given to a child is to respect; not only their friends, parents or relatives, but also the servants in the house.

Once the Prophet told his grandson, on hearing him call a slave by his name, "call him uncle, for he is elder in years."

If one wished to respect anyone, one can surely find something to respect in a person, and if there was nothing at all to be found, then the very fact that the person is a human being quite entitles that person to respect. One form of respect is considering another better than oneself, even if one did not consider it so, to regard another better than oneself for the reason of humbleness, also out of graciousness. No person is respected who has no respect for another. There is another form of respect, which is to recognize the superiority of another in age, in experience, in learning, in goodness, in birth, in rank, in position, in personality, in morality, or in spirituality. And if one was mistaken in recognizing the superiority of another, it is no loss, for respect given to a person in reality is a respect given to God. The one

who deserves respect, that one is entitled to it, but when one does not deserve, still you respect that person, it shows your graciousness.

To a fine person it is a great disappointment to lose the opportunity of not having paid a respect when there was an occasion. The unrefined person does not mind. There are many who out of cleverness cover their disrespectful attitude in an ironic form of speech, and use sarcastic remarks, but polite, 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 on hurting another by a disrespectful attitude, shown in thought, word or action. If one only knew that in life what one gives, one takes, only sometimes it does not come immediately; it takes time.

One is really respectful, who gives respect to another, but one who looks for respect from others is a greedy one. That one will always be disappointed in life. Even to give respect in order to get respect back is a kind of business.

Those who reach to a spiritual realization will only give respect generously, without thinking for one moment of getting it in return. When one gives respect sincerely to anyone, not for show, but from the feeling of one's heart, a happiness rises together with that, which is only the product of respectful attitude, and nothing else in life can give it.

There are many in life to whom one owes for their help, kindness, protection, support, for their service or assistance, and there is nothing material in the form of gold or silver which can express the gratitude so fully as a real respectful attitude can. Remember, therefore, that for something that you cannot pay in silver or gold back, you can only return by one way which is by offering humble respect.

### **Commentary by Alia**

To be able to follow these rules of conduct, the principal quality one needs to develop in oneself is respect, respect for oneself and a respectful attitude towards all living beings.

What is respect, and how do we cultivate this quality in ourselves? The word respect comes from Latin word *respectus* and literally means to look back or to

mirror something; it is seeing from within with the eyes of the soul — reaching the soul of another.

A respectful attitude is the first and principal thing in the development of our personality, says Murshid. And often the lack of a natural respectful manner comes from the lack of self-respect.

The Sufi path is a continuous struggle with ego or the false self. It is our false self that separates us from others and from God, the most Compassionate and Merciful. When we act against our conscience, when we are hurt by others, a natural tendency is to close our heart and our ability to look with the eyes of our soul. Then we lose our natural connection with the source and do not recognize the beauty that is always hidden in creation.

*Wherever you turn there is the face of God*

When we are able to conquer our false self, we will reach into the depths of our heart where pure love and beauty abide. When love and compassion are awakened in us, the natural tendency is to respect anyone we meet, and the tendency to react to others with reproach or arrogance is diminished and may gradually fade away. We no longer want to hurt others with our words, thoughts or actions.

We love them as we love God and the Beloved within.

Do you remember the first time you fell in love? I do! He was the most beautiful boy I had ever seen – because I looked at him with the eyes of the lover – I was in love with a beloved. Respect came easily.

*Unity of being*

Signs of respect vary in different cultures and may sometimes bring great confusion and conflict, but Murshid brings us to the core and purpose of what it means to be respectful. He says that all life requires of us a respectful attitude, because behind all life there is one source – God is the Creator, the created and creation. To pay respect to another living being is to pay respect to God. The highest expression of love is respect and true worship, because wherever we are, whoever we are with, and in whatever setting we are in, we form a communion with the Beloved.



*The highest expression of love is respect...the true worshippers of God, the Omnipresent, walk gently on the earth, bowing in their hearts even to every tree and plant, and it is then that the worshippers form a communion with the Divine Beloved at all times, when they are awake and when they are asleep.*

**Adab Reflection 2:** I consider my action towards every person as my action towards God; and the action of every person towards me I take as an action of God.

**Moral Culture, Respect (Adab) 2**  
**Suresnes, June 30, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

Respectful attitude is the first and principal thing in the development of personality. Not only respect towards someone whom one considers superior, but respect for everyone one meets in life, in proportion to what is due. It is conceit by which one gives less honor where more honor is due, and it is by ignorance that one 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. But it is the self-respect which makes one inclined to respect another. The one who has no self-respect cares little if one 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 express respect. Disrespectful people may bow their heads and strike the other person on the face by their words. True respect is from the attitude which comes from the sincere feeling of respect; for outward expression of respect has no value without inner feeling. Inspired by a respectful attitude, one expresses one's feeling in thought, speech or word, 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 the position or rank of a person commands one to respect from the willing or unwilling, and under the situation one cannot have but respect, which is nothing but an outer expression of respect. Second, expression of respect is when a person wishes to please another by a respectful manner, to let one feel how respectful one is, and what a good manner one knows. 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 was not able to express it fully, it can always be felt, because it is a living spirit of respect.

The sign of the people who have tradition at their back 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 respectful tendency. It is a great pity that this subject is not regarded as the most important subject, to be considered and be developed 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.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

There is a reason that parents teach their children to have a respectful manner. It is not just to make the life of the parents easier or for the sake of a harmonious home life. It is the lubrication that allows society to function with some degree of harmony. Reminding children to behave with respect is not enough. If children see parents treating each other or others disrespectfully they will get the message.

By nature, we want to see the best in others. However, living in an atmosphere of disrespect, we unconsciously learn to protect ourselves and to see the worst in others. By becoming aware of our reactions, we can learn to overcome them. If one is surrounded by an atmosphere that is cold or disrespectful, by modeling respect for others, one can quietly teach respect and influence the atmosphere. When others feel respected, they can begin to relax. Feeling respected, they can more easily respect others.

If we have grown up without the respect of others, it is difficult to have respect for ourselves. Without self-respect, we feel irritable, antagonized, resentful, jealous. The first challenge in the path of adab is to find genuine self-respect. We see more clearly and readily our limitations and our virtues tend to remain hidden. If others give us positive feedback, we tend to question it.

Where can we go to feel truly seen and appreciated? First we need to establish an atmosphere of sacred communion with our ideal. Murshid has described five stages of prayer. The first stage begins to open the heart by reminding ourselves of all that we have to be thankful for. That spirit of thankfulness can become a prayer when we feel that all that is given to us is a gift from a generous hand. When that feeling has become established by the practice of remembrance, we are ready to go on to the next stage.

When our hearts have become softened, we can lay before God our limitations, our faults, our mistakes, and ask for forgiveness. This requires a willingness to be honest, to face the ways we have felt unworthy and to bring these painful feelings before God. If we open our heart fully, we can discover the response of the Beloved who forgives and loves us unconditionally. Then it doesn't matter that we are limited. Every one is limited. We are loved by God for the unique being that we are. This is the foundation of self-respect. We don't have to prove ourself to anyone.

Once we have self-respect and feel the presence of the Beloved, it becomes easier to find in the action of another, the action of God. What is the divine desire behind the desire that is motivating the other? We may notice how the divine desire has become distorted in the action of another. By noticing we can discriminate what kind of respect is due to the other. Knowing that the action of the other veils the action of God, we can have true respect for the essence of the other but we won't necessarily have respect for their outward action. By our awareness of the presence of God in everyone we meet, true respect becomes easier. That respect is not the same as accepting or approving their action. One can reject or disapprove of the action of another without losing respect for that person.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that respect is due by every Muslim to fellow Muslims. Someone asked, "What if the other Muslim is a tyrant?" Muhammad answered, "Opposing his tyranny is the way to respect him."

**Adab Reflection 3:** By respecting every person I meet I worship God, and in loving every soul on earth I feel my devotion for God.

**Adab Reflection 4:** The Sufi's tendency is to look at everything from two points of view: from one's own and that of another.

**Moral Culture, Respect (Adab) 3**  
**Suresnes, July 1, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

The highest expression of love is respect. Respect is not only due to one's superior or to the one elder in age, but it is due 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 in a sincere respectful attitude. No love offering can be more precious than a word or act of respect.

Very often conflicts in religions have risen between people who respected their own religion, while looking with contempt at the religion of another. If one did not respect the religion of one's friend, one could at least respect one's friend, and out of one's respect for one's friend, one would regard one's friend's religion respectfully. Very often, with all love and devotion and sincerity, friendship breaks only owing to the disregard from 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. One who worships God and disrespects a person, worships in vain. One's piety is one's mania. A true worshipper of God sees God's presence in all forms and in respecting others, one respects God. It may even develop to such an extent, that the true worshipper of God Who is Omnipresent, walks gently on the earth bowing in one's 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 one is wakeful and when one is asleep.

**Commentary by Alia**

There is a story about Moses and his deep longing to meet God in person, which describes how easily one may become entangled in love, challenged by emotions like jealousy and the lust to possess.

It shows how wanting to keep the Beloved for oneself, eventually will lead to loss and solitude.

For a long time, Moses had developed the deep wish to host God as his much honorable guest at his home. Finally, God accepted his invitation and told him He would come the following night for supper. The whole day Moses cleaned and beautified his home and prepared all kinds of delicious dishes to serve his very special guest. And early in the evening there was a knock on the door. Moses ran to open it, but outside was only a poor and ragged beggar asking for some food. Moses politely asked the man to go away, but to return in the morning. He explained that he was expecting a very special guest, but assured the beggar there would be plenty of leftovers for him later. So the ragged guest went his way, and Moses went back to waiting for his very special guest to arrive. But he waited in vain for the rest of that evening – there were no more visitors knocking at his door. The next morning God called him and made him understand that He had been the beggar coming to visit him as promised.

The story tells us that true respect must come from an open heart — with no discrimination, regardless of person, position or situation. If one's heart is open, one will recognize the Beloved in whatever form the Beloved chooses to appear before one. When we are in love, we see our beloved with the eyes of our soul, because the soul is love, and love is endless, timeless and without discrimination.

Devotion is the highest expression of love, and worship is an act of respect, says Murshid. When we offer sincere respect to each other, we show our devotion to God.

But he also advises us in this text to examine to what extent our respect should be given and in what form it should be expressed. This is an important advice, because this world is a world of opposites; a playground for love and hate – light and shadow – friends and foes. To meet and treat everyone in accord with their level of understanding and being is an art of living that can be cultivated throughout our whole life. And by learning the art of discrimination, we learn to rise above all duality and realize the cause behind the cause. Lifting gradually the 70,000 veils of light and darkness that cover and protect our hearts.

**Mu'tabari (Keeping One's Word) Reflection 1:** Being able to trust others apart, if you have learned to trust yourself, you have accomplished something.

### **Rules that pertain to Mu'tabari**

My conscientious self,

Make no false claims. (Iron Rule 1)

Consider your responsibility sacred. (Copper Rule 1)

Prove trustworthy in all your dealings. (Copper Rule 10)

Break not your word of honor whatever may befall. (Golden Rule 5)

Uphold your honor at any cost. (Golden Rule 8)

### **The Art of Personality, Keeping One's Word (Mu'tabari)**

**Suresnes, September 7, 1923**

*From The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan, 1923-II, July —  
December*

Noble-minded people show as something natural in their character an esteem of their word, which is called the word of honor. For those people their word is their self. And it could increase to such an extent that even their life could be sacrificed for their word. A person who has reached this stage is not very far from God, for it is often mentioned in the scriptures: 'If you wish to see Us, see Us in Our Words.' If God can be seen in God's Words, true souls can be seen in their words. Pleasure, displeasure, sweetness, bitterness, honesty, dishonesty, all these are to be discerned in the words one speaks. For the word is the expression of the thought, and thought is the expression of the feeling. And what is a person? A person is a person's thought and feeling. So what is the word? The word is one's expression, the expression of one's soul. The one on whose words you can rely, that person is dependable. No wealth of this world can be compared with one word of honor. Those who say what they mean prove in this virtue a spirituality.

To a real person to go back on one's word is worse than death, for it is going backward instead of going forward. Every soul is going onward towards its goal. And the people who are really going onward show it in their word. At the present time when it has been necessary to have so many courts, and so many lawyers, which has necessitated the keeping of so many prisons which are flourishing every day, this all shows the lack of that virtue which has been valued by the noble-minded ever since the beginning of civilization. For in this quality one shows one's human virtue, a quality which neither belongs to the animals, nor is

attributed to the angels. What is religion? Religion in the true sense of the word is beyond explanation. It is a delicate thread, delicate to be touched, for it is too sacred to be touched. It is the ideal which can be polluted if it was touched, and that can be found in that sensitiveness which in other words may be called spirituality.

In regard for the word, many in this world have gone through sacrifices, sufferings and pains have been inflicted on them, but it was only to put their virtue to the test. For every virtue has to prove itself by going through a fire of test. When it has passed its trial, it becomes a solid virtue. This can be practiced in every little thing one does in one's daily life. People who say one moment one thing, another moment another thing, even their own heart begins to disbelieve them. The great ones who have come on the earth from time to time and who have shown us virtues, among them this virtue has been the most pronounced. Muhammed, before having come before the world as a prophet, was called 'Amin' by his comrades, which means 'trustworthy'. The story of Harish Chandra is known to the Hindus down the ages, the example that he has set is engraved upon the mind of the whole race. The story of Hatim, a Sufi among Zoroastrians, has been a great inspiration to the people of Persia. In whatever part of the world, and in whatever period, by the thoughtful and those with ideal the word of honor will be valued the most.

There is a man of history: it may be the name was Chava. He was a rajput, a maharaja. There was a battle between that Maharaja and the Mogul emperor of Delhi, and this battle continued for a very long time. And while the emperor of Delhi made many other maharajas come to his court and bow, it was only this one Maharaja, he had said that as long as he lives he will never bow, and therefore a great many sacrifices he had gone through. His power was decreasing, but his mind power was increasing. But he was of a very fine nature, and a very high ideal, and he was very fond of poetry. When this emperor became very disheartened after a long battle, he then asked the brave men of his court in confidence that there would be a very big prize given to the one who will bring the head of this Maharaja, for this Maharaja had caused a very great trouble and great expense. No one in the court seemed to take a vow readily that 'I will do it,' except a poet. He was a great poet of the court of the emperor. Everybody laughed at him, all the big warriors, they said they could not deal with his army. This poet said: "I will do [it]." This poet went to the court of the Rajput; and his great talent made such an impression upon the Rajput; and perhaps this was a moment of some planetary influence working, that he happened to say "Ask, O poet, I really do not know what to give



you. There seems to be nothing in my treasure that is equal to your knowledge. Ask what do you want me to give you? What can please you?"

"No, king," he said, "do not promise that." "No, once promised is promised," said the king. The poet said: "Will you keep it?" The king said: "You do not need to ask, a promise is a promise." The poet said: "I feel very embarrassed to ask you, but it is your head that I want." The king at once unsheathed his sword, gave it in the hand of the poet and said: "Here it is, a very small thing you have asked; it is not greater than the word I have given." His people, his children, his family, they were all upset. Ministers became very upset. He was not upset at all. He was in good spirit. He said: "I have promised, it must be given; here it is." The poet said: "Now as you have promised me your head, what are you to do with your body? Why not the body also? Come along with me." The king said: "Yes." He walked behind the poet, the poet first, he after.

The poet brought him alive to the court of the emperor, and there was a great excitement in the whole court, thinking that for years and years they have had to battle, no one could bring him; here the poet brings him. In order to satisfy his vanity the emperor asked to bring him to the court. He should be brought as a prisoner. He was no prisoner, still he went where the poet brought him.

And the emperor looked at him, at that enemy with whom there was a war for so many, many years. And he said: "You have come after all. But still it does not seem that your pride has gone, for you do not even think of bowing now that you have come to the court." The king said: "Who must bow, a dead person? A dead person never bows. As long as he was living he never bowed. Now this is the dead body, let anything be done with it. It is nothing."

No doubt the iron-hearted emperor overlooked that beauty which was brought by this Maharaja and he was beheaded. But the poet said: "No emperor, if he is to be beheaded, I am the first to be killed." The emperor said: "Not this!" "No," the poet said, "I also, for I will never find another soul who will appreciate my merit as he has done. He has given his life." So the poet died with this Rajput. And the son of this poet, the whole family came, they were all so gifted and inspired, they were just like the salt of the soil. Everyone of them said one poem and died. The whole family of the poet was sacrificed for the sake of this Maharaja, in his appreciation of that merit and that great virtue that he had shown. And though he had passed through that suffering, yet there was no suffering, his ideal went through the test;

he died the death of honor which has made the record of his merit. It is not one case. In many cases you will find the noble souls who have proved themselves to be in the path of God and spirituality have shown it in the esteem of the word. Once the word was given, if the world was upset, the sky above and the earth below, they will keep to it just the same.

### **Commentary by Alia**

To learn to keep one's word is to become true to one's innermost ideals and to one's own pure self. Murshid says that noble people are their word. And when one's word becomes one's life, one becomes God-like.

How can we become our word? The esoteric and the chivalric paths are both working towards the aim of acquiring a deep wisdom and knowledge of our true self.

Our life's journey starts by taking in impressions and learning from our surroundings. As small children we adopt our parent's ideals with an innocent trust and we may fully believe them to be our own ideals. But already in our teenage years, or even before, we may start questioning these ideals. Life becomes eventually our primary teacher, and by testing our beliefs through encounters, challenges and experiences, we recognize gradually that our human life is a life of constant change, within and without. In the same way our ideals will change.

When we start examining our conscience, our values and our ideals, we have started the task of finding and creating our own word — our own expression. We are born as individuals, and our task is to become personalities, says Murshid. And each one of us can create a beautiful piece of art as our own personality.

When body, mind and soul seek alignment with each other, we may live and experience life as whole beings. This is our purpose for incarnating, and it requires a lifetime to fulfill it, and even then, most of us will still have not finished our sacred task.

There are very few among us who only utter words that come directly from the soul, but if we know our purpose, we will learn to be watchful and thoughtful and try our best to keep to our word and restrain ourselves from uttering those words that are not in alignment with our ideals. In this way, we will encounter fewer challenges in keeping our word than the ordinary person who sometimes manages and sometimes not.

If we are watchful, we will learn to perceive more and more when our promises can be kept, but also will know when words that we cannot keep, slip from our mouth. And that is also a learning.

**Wafa' (Fidelity) Reflection 1:** Blessed are the unselfish friends and they whose motto in life is constancy.

### **Rules that pertain to Wafa'**

My conscientious self,

Do not look down upon the one who looks up to you. (Copper Rule 5)

Prove trustworthy in all your dealings. (Copper Rule 10)

Guard the secrets of friends as your most sacred trust. (Golden Rule 3)

Observe constancy in love. (Golden Rule 4)

Do not neglect those who depend upon you. (Golden Rule 10)

### **Character Building, Fidelity (Wafa')**

**Suresnes, August 17, 1923**

*From The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan, 1923-II, July —  
December*

It is a most important thing in character building to become conscious of one's relation, obligation and duty to each person in the world and not to mix that link and connection which is established between oneself and another with a third person. One must think everything that is trusted to one by every person in life is one's trust and one must know that to prove true to the confidence of every person in the world is one's sacred obligation. In this manner, harmonious connection is established with every person and it is the harmony established with every person which tunes the soul with the Infinite. It requires a great study of human nature together with tact to keep on harmonious terms with every person in life. If one has admiration for someone or a grudge against someone, it is better to express it directly instead of mixing it up with many connections and relations in the world. Friends apart, even in an acquaintance this consideration is necessary to guard carefully that thin thread that connects two souls in whatever relation or capacity. Dharma in the language of the Hindus means religion but the verbal meaning of this word is duty. It suggests that one's relation to every person in the world is one's religion and the more conscientiously one follows it, the more keen one proves in following one's religion.

To keep the secret of our friend, our acquaintance, even of someone with whom for a time being one has been vexed, is the most sacred obligation. The one who thus

realizes one's religion, would one ever consider it right to tell another of any harm or hurt one has received from one's friend? Never.

It is in this, self-denial is learned; not always by fasting and retirement in the wilderness. People, conscientious of their duty, of their obligations to their friends, are more pious than someone sitting alone in a solitude. Those in the solitude do not serve God; they only help themselves by enjoying the pleasure of solitude. But the one who proves to be trustworthy to every soul one meets, and considers one's relation and connection, small or great, as something sacred, certainly observes the spiritual law of that religion which is the religion of religions.

Faults, everyone has faults, one's self, one's friend and one's enemy, all are subject to faults. Those who wish that their own faults may not be disclosed, must necessarily consider the same for the others they meet. If one only knew what the relation of friendship is between one soul and another, the tenderness of this connection, its delicacy, its beauty and its sacredness, one can enjoy life to its fullness, for one is living and one in this manner must someday communicate with God. It is the same bridge which connects two souls in the world, when once stretched, becomes the path to God. There is no greater virtue in this world than proving kind and trustworthy to one's friends, worthy of their confidence. The difference between the old soul and the young soul is to be found in this particular principle. Young souls only know themselves and what they want, absorbed in their own pleasures and displeasures and obsessed by their ever-changing moods. Old souls regard their relation to every soul, they keenly observe their obligations towards everyone they know in the world. They cover their wounds if they happened to have them, from the sight of the others and endures all things in order to fulfill their duty as best they can towards everyone in the world.

There is a story in *The Arabian Nights*, which in some way is incomprehensible, yet it explains in an exaggerated form the subject I have spoken on.

Once a king was on a tour in the woods. He was camping, and there lived some robbers nearby. And a robber happened to go in the tent, where the king was asleep, and tried to get from under his pillow a ring. And when he was taking away that ring, the king got up and he looked at the thief and said: "Who are you?" He said: "I am a robber." "Why have you come here?" "To find if I can get something from you." "What did you find?" "I found your ring; here it is, shall I give it back

to you?” The king said: “No, take it.” The robber-said: “Then do not tell it to anyone.” “Certainly not,” said the king.

“Beloved is all in all; lover only veils the Beloved;

Love all that lives; lover a dead thing.”

### **Commentary by Alia**

Many of the challenges our world is facing today are due to our own selfishness and lack of respect for the unity that is created.

We exploit the earth’s resources for our own wellbeing, we use our elbows to rise in the hierarchies at work, and our economic system is based on growth and exploitation of both man and earth.

If we were truly selfless, we would, for example, stop buying all the things we do not need. We would start examining how the food we eat is cultivated, how our clothes are being manufactured, where our banks are investing our savings. To be unselfish is to think, act and speak from a perspective of unity — wanting and wishing for the wellbeing of all life’s creatures and Mother Earth who sustains us.

The earth was given to us by our Creator as an act of love. We were given a paradise which was finely tuned in equilibrium, an earth where every plant, insect, animal and man has its place, its function and its purpose. Our purpose is to tend the earth — protect and cultivate the home we were given. We have a great task to accomplish, and the only way we can succeed is to act unselfishly and observe the only law that was given to us — the law of nature.

Duty towards others is the religion of religions.

*If one only knew what the relation of friendship is between one soul and another, the tenderness of this connection, its delicacy, its beauty and its sacredness, he can enjoy life to its fullness, for he is living and he in this manner must someday communicate with God. It is the same bridge which connects two souls in the world, when once stretched, becomes the path to God.*

**Ghairat (Honor) Reflection 1:** In the sense of honor there is a divine spark hidden.

**Ghairat Reflection 2:** Who else but a noble soul would bear all and say nothing?

### **Rules that pertain to Ghairat**

My conscientious self,

Consider your responsibility sacred. (Copper Rule 1)

Do nothing which will make your conscience feel guilty. (Copper Rule 3)

Prove trustworthy in all your dealings. (Copper Rule 10)

Consider duty as sacred as religion. (Silver Rule 1)

Meet your shortcomings with a sword of self-respect. (Silver Rule 9)

Let not your spirit be humbled in adversity. (Silver Rule 10)

Break not your word of honor whatever may befall. (Golden Rule 5)

Uphold your honor at any cost. (Golden Rule 8)

Hold your ideal high in all circumstances. (Golden Rule 9)

### **Moral Culture, Honor (Ghairat)**

**Suresnes, July 3, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

*Ghairat*, protection or defense of honor, is considered by the wise a great quality, a chivalry that is found as a rule in rare souls. A person, regardless of this sense, is no better than a domestic animal, a dog or a cat. When their master does not want them, the master can scold them, drive them away, and they can come again, wagging their tail, for there is no sense of pride to be hurt, only they feel the discomfort of having to move from a comfortable place; then they could also feel the displeasure of their master, but there is no soreness about it. In a person the sense of honor is developed; with evolution it develops more. It is not only necessary that one must be humble, but it is also necessary that one must be proud. Pride is the sign of evolution, honor comes out of pride. If there were neither pride nor honor, there would not exist virtue. 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 called *Kibria* (the grandeur and glory of God).

No doubt, when this sense of honor is developed without wisdom, one could become foolishly sensitive and not only defend one's honor, but die for nothing, in illusion, just like the story of Othello suggests. For people whose sense is developed in *Ghairat*, their honor is not only in their person, but also in their friend, their beloved, in their mother, sister, husband, in someone whom they respect or whom they love, or with whom they connect their self. This sense of *Ghairat* has its lights and shades in the dealing with friends, in the give-and-take, and very often people prefer death to dishonor, and according to a refined point of view, they have their reason. 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 the strangers, are the ones who are lacking in this sense. This shows that the sense of *Ghairat* developed, makes one's life more harmonious, for honorable people mind their own business and keep themselves out of the way, trouble anybody less, even if they had to suffer mortally.

There is a story that four men were arrested for the same crime and were taken to be judged before the wise king. 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 from the country." He saw the fourth person and said, "I could never have expected you to have done such a crime." The first three went through their punishments, but this last one went home, and next morning was found dead; that one word was worse than death to him.

*Ghairat* is the sign of noble birth, whatever condition a person may be. One may be in one's rags, but this spirit of *Ghairat* will shine out through all conditions, proving one to be noble. Humility has its place; pride has its place in life. In the place of pride humility cannot befit. Once the Nizam (king) of Hyderabad was walking in the forest, and a knight happened to see a thorn stuck on his shoe. He rushed quickly, before the attendant had seen, and took out that thorn from the shoe of the king. The king looked back and said, "Were there not any attendants present?" "It was for them, not for you," said the king, "and since you have taken this work, no longer can you continue to be my knight. Please retire." It is not by the humbleness of surroundings that the king is exalted, it is the sense of honor, which is expressed by his surroundings, makes a king a true king.



For Sufis the sense of honor is not for the personality, who do not give their person a greater place than dust, and whose central theme of life is simplicity, and whose moral is humility. Yet remember that Sufis breath the breath of God, so they are conscious of the honor of God. Their pride is greater, therefore, than the pride of every person. It is in the intoxication of this pride that one proves to be God-conscious.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

My thoughtful self,  
Bear all and do nothing,  
Hear all and say nothing,  
Give all and take nothing,  
Serve all and be nothing.

The saying above is a purification practice Pir Zia has suggested for those who are preparing themselves for the accolade of the knight. It seems at first reading to be counter to what is expected of a knight. A knight is supposed to defend those in need, to act against injustice, and to speak up to those who abuse their power.

As a personal code of honor, however, these are words a knight can live by. There is a pride that insists on independence and self-reliance. By depending entirely on God, one is freed of any obligation to another. One can freely give to those who depend on one. Because one can be nothing, one can serve without exposing oneself to humiliation.

One can bear every insult or mistreatment without doing anything in return. This is the teaching of Jesus, “Resist not evil” or “Turn the other cheek.” But when it comes to mistreatment of those one is called to protect, then one’s action is not personal. One feels a duty to speak up and to act.

The Sufi first learns to walk in the footsteps of the teacher, *Tasawwuri* Murshid. By getting into the consciousness of the teacher and thinking what would the teacher do, one begins to take on the manner of the teacher. Having learned that lesson, the student absorbs the broader influence of the prophet. Ultimately the Sufi learns the manner of God, *aklak Allah*. This is a manner that demonstrates the greatest pride together with the greatest humility. Personal pride turns into humility before God. Discovery of divinity inherent in one’s own being gives the Sufi the greatest pride in the Self. From this source of pride, the sense of honor emerges.

## Group 2: Hospitality

**Tawazu' (Sharing with Others) Reflection 1:** Blessed are they who make willing sacrifices in kindness.

**Tawazu' Reflection 2:** Happy is the one who does good to others, and miserable is the one who expects good from others.

### Rules that pertain to Tawazu'

My conscientious self,

Render your services faithfully to all who require them. (Iron Rule 8)

Extend your help willingly to those in need. (Copper Rule 4)

### Moral Culture, Sharing with Others (Tawazu')

Suresnes, July 6, 1922

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

*Tawazu'* in the Sufi terms means something more than hospitality. It is laying before one's friend willingly what one has got, in other words, sharing with one's friend all 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 others pleased in their pleasure, but to share one's own pleasure with another is greater than generosity. It is a quality that 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 one is not hospitable the hospitality one gives is of no use. Those who have experiences of this quality, feel a greater satisfaction in sharing a part of their only piece of bread than by eating it by themselves.

Duality in nature keeps all such beautiful qualities of the soul away from a person. The thought of unity is productive of all good qualities in a person. It is not only in giving or sharing pleasures one shows hospitality to another, it is even in word, manner or action by which one can show this feeling. A desire to welcome someone, a desire to greet someone, to respect someone, to offer a seat to someone, to

treat someone with courtesy, to see someone off with respect, all this shows the sign of *Tawazu*'.

### **Commentary by Alia**

The path of the knight is a path of friendship. By becoming a friend with all life, we become a friend with God, says Murshid. And the joy of friendship is truly what is most precious in life.

Then why is it so difficult to be a friend? It is because of our ego or our primitive nafs — the part of our self that wants for itself without caring or notice that this may be hurtful or damaging. But we are given a free will and thereby opportunities to sacrifice our own wants and needs when they are unbalanced or may hurt other living beings.

By reflecting on our choices, we learn to discriminate and create a better balance between serving others through self-sacrifice and taking care of ourselves. Throughout life we can cultivate this ability to examine ourselves and our motives; and thereby become more honest and compassionate in our wishes for the wellbeing of all life.

The Golden Rule is the universal advice to treat others as you yourself want to be treated. In the Universal Worship service, we light a candle for the Divine Self-sacrifice. It may seem like a paradox, that to be able to love another as oneself, one must be able to let go of one's self. The Christ who gives up his life is the symbol of renunciation. Only through selflessness may we become one with the stream of Divine Love, and only then are we guided by this endless, all-pervading, all-penetrating source of all life — the one undivided soul.

Duality is our nature, and Murshid advises us to cultivate in our spirit the nobleness of our soul. This is true aristocracy and has nothing to do with those outer noble manners used in society. And it is through the cultivation of our innate nobleness that we may rise to what Murshid calls true democracy; the democracy that teaches us to be kind and good and respectful, tolerant and forgiving and friendly to the saint and sinner both.

**Muruwat (Graciousness) Reflection 1:** In bringing happiness to others I feel the pleasure of God, and for my negligence I feel myself blameworthy before God.

**Muruwat Reflection 2:** As soon as a person begins to regard the pleasure and displeasure of God in the feelings of every person one meets, one can only be refined, whatever one's position in life.

### **Rules that pertain to Muruwat**

My conscientious self,

Be polite to all. (Copper Rule 2)

Do not look down upon the one who looks up to you. (Copper Rule 5)

Use tact on all occasions. (Silver Rule 2)

Have regard for the feelings of every soul. (Silver Rule 5)

*Murawwat* is an Urdu word for graciousness and the Arabic word is *Khulq*.

### **Moral Culture, Graciousness (Muruwat)**

**Suresnes, July 15, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

*Muruwat* is a virtue most delicate to express in words. It is refraining from any action in respect from another, be it in consideration for someone's age or position or knowledge, goodness or piety.

Those who practice this virtue, they do not need to have that respect only for someone with position or piety, but one develops this quality, which manifests in one's dealings with all. *Muruwat* is contrary to what one calls in England bluntness.

*Muruwat* is not necessarily respect, it is something more delicate than respect; it is consideration and respect both together. This virtue in its full development may even rise to such an extent that a person out of consideration and respect may try and sustain the lack of the same coming from another. But when one arrives to this stage, there human manner finishes and saintly manner begins.

A person in this world is not born only to eat, drink and make merry, one is born to arrive to the fullness of humane character, and one realizes that by great thought-

fulness and consideration. If not, with power, position, wealth, learning and all good things in the world, one remains poor, without these riches of the soul, which is good manner. All beauty around one is something which is outside one, and the only beauty which is dependable is to be found and developed in one's own character. A person may show lack of *Muruwat*, if not in words, in the glance.

One does not need to speak in order to be rude. In one's look, in one's turn or twist, in one's standing up or walking, in closing the door after leaving the room, one can show one's feeling. If one does not speak, one makes the door speak. It is not an easy matter to manage oneself when one's mind escapes the hands.

It is such delicate ideas which are most difficult to learn and practice in life. Many today may wonder if it cannot be a weakness, but nothing in this world can prove to be a weakness which can only be practiced by mastering oneself. There is no loss if a thought or consideration was given to someone who did not deserve it, for if such an action did not bring any profit, still it was a practice, for it is practice which makes one perfect.

**Further Teaching by Hazrat Inayat Khan**  
**Graciousness - Khulq**  
**Suresnes, July 14, 1923**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan* - Lectures on Sufism; 1923-II, July – December

No sooner the soul has touched the inner kingdom, which is the divine kingdom, the true nobility of the soul becomes manifest from that soul in the form of graciousness. The kings and those belonging to the aristocratic families were trained in the manner of graciousness. But it is born in the human heart. This means, every soul shows the aristocratic manner from the moment it touches the inner kingdom. This shows that the true aristocracy is the nobility of the soul, when the soul begins to express in every feeling, thought, word and action that graciousness which belongs to God's own self.

Graciousness is quite different from that wrong manner which is termed in English patronizing. Gracious ones, before expressing that noble attribute, tries to hide themselves even from their own eyes. The reason why the great ones are gracious, the truly noble people, is because they are more sensitive to all the hurt or harm

that comes to them by the unripe. And therefore out of their kindness they try to keep themselves back from doing it to another, however small in position.

There is a story of a dervish who was standing in the royal road at the moment when the procession of the king was passing. Happy in his rags as he was, he did not at all mind who was coming. He did not move an inch on the warnings of the people who were running before the procession, till they pushed him away. Yet he did not move very far, only said: "That is why." There came the bodyguards on the horseback; they did not push him but said: 'Away, away, dervish, do you not see the procession coming?' The dervish did not move an inch, but only answered: "That is why." Then followed the noblemen. They saw the dervish standing. They did not like to tell him to move; they moved their own horses instead. The dervish seeing that said: "That is why." Then arrived the chariot of the king. His eyes fell on the dervish standing in rags boldly in the middle of the road. Instead of waiting for his bow, the king bowed himself, and the dervish answered: "That is why." There was a young man standing by his side. He could not understand the meaning of that word: "That is why" for every treatment. And when he asked the dervish to kindly explain what he meant by the word: "That is why," he said: "It explains all I mean."

There is a great truth in what Christ has said in the Sermon on the Mount, that "Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the kingdom of the earth." This will always prove true whatever be the time and evolution of the world. Be it the time of aristocracy, be it the period of democracy, the value of that nobility of nature which is expressed in graciousness, will always command its price. It is easy to know this word but most difficult to practice it through life, for there is no end to the thought that needs be given to every action in life. It wants judgment and the fair sense of weighing and measuring all one does. Besides that it needs the fine sense of art and beauty, for in making the personality finished, one attains to the highest degree of art. Verily, making of the personality is the highest art there is. Sufis whose life's object is to cultivate humane attributes and in which lies the fulfillment of the purpose of their life, consider this as their religion.

A young man one day showed a little impatience to his aged father, who at his age could not hear very clearly, and had asked him three times to tell him again. Seeing the disturbed expression in his face, the father said: "My son, do you remember that there was a day when you were a little child and asked me what the bird was? And I said to you: 'The sparrow.' You perhaps asked me fifty times and I had the

patience to repeat it to you again and again, without being hurt or troubled about it. Only I was pleased to tell you all I knew. Now, when I cannot hear you clearly, you can at least have patience with me if I did not hear you once, to explain to me twice.”

It seems that in order to learn that noble manner of life, what is mostly needed is patience, sometimes in the form of endurance, sometimes in the form of consideration and sometimes in the form of forgiveness.

### **Commentary by Alia**

All beauty we see in the world is something which is constantly changing, and the only beauty which is dependable is to be found and developed in one's own character, says Murshid.

To cultivate inner beauty is the journey towards God — we move from imperfection towards perfection. Through practicing thoughtfulness and consideration and by purifying our mind, we can develop the gracious manner more and more. We will discover how judging others, feeling better or worse than them, or trying to achieve or win something in the world at any cost, makes us unhappy and separated — separated from man and God both.

We can learn to hide our crude self behind polished manners, but our whole atmosphere will reveal what our heart contains. If it is pure and aligned with love, our whole being will show it, in our movements, our glance and in our smile. And our actions will be gracious and bring grace to others.

God will only reveal God's beauty to us, when we learn to see with the eyes of God. When you look for God, God is in your eyes, say the Sufis. This happens when we start looking for opportunities to create love and beauty around us and stop wanting it for our self.

True aristocracy is the inborn nobility of our soul, and soul has always and will always belong to God. God's purity and beauty will come alive through our own being when we cultivate patience, humility, thoughtfulness, consideration and watchfulness. Life offers constantly both opportunities and trials, and they are all given to us by the grace of God Herself.

**Dil-asar'i (Sympathy) Reflection 1:** Make your heart as soft as wax to sympathize with others; but make it hard as rock to bear the blows that fall upon it from without.

**Dil-asar'i Reflection 2:** In sympathizing with everyone, I offer my love to Thee, my Beloved.

### **Rules that pertain to Dil-asar'i**

My conscientious self,

Be polite to all. (Copper Rule 2)

Be prejudiced against no one. (Copper Rule 9)

Use tact on all occasions. (Silver Rule 2)

Have regard for the feelings of every soul. (Silver Rule 5)

### **Sympathy (Dil-asar'i) Suresnes, August 1, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan, 1922-I, January*  
— August

Sympathy is an awakening of the love element, which comes on seeing another in the same situation as one has been some time in one's life. A person who has never experienced pain cannot sympathize with those suffering. In the same way a person sympathizes with someone whose respect or reputation became harmed. The ones who have no respect or reputation themselves, would not mind, for they do not know what it is, and what it is to lose it. Rich people who have lost their money may be laughed at by someone who has never had it. One can sympathize with the one who has wealth, and still more can one sympathize, who had wealth and lost it. Very often youths imagine they love their mother, and they think they sympathize with their parents, but the youth cannot come to a full realization of their love, until they reach to that situation. Very often people think it cruel and unkind of their friends and relatives when they do not receive sympathy from them, but they do not know that to have sympathy does not mean having a warm heart only, but it means having that experience which reminds them of it, making them sympathetic. Sympathy is something more than love and affection, for it is the knowledge of a certain suffering which moves the living heart to sympathy. That person is living whose heart is living, and that heart is living which has wakened to sympathy. The heart void of sympathy is worse than a rock, for the rock becomes useful, but the



heart void of sympathy produces antipathy. People are most active physically and mentally, and when their hearts are not tuned to sympathy, their mental and physical activity take quite a contrary direction, which leads to inharmony and destruction.

No doubt, love, affection or sympathy, all, without wisdom may seem profitless. For instance a woman was crying from pain and her sympathetic friend, on hearing her cry, began to weep with her, making her pain twice more. Sympathy can only be useful when one does not make the condition of the person with whom one sympathizes worse, but makes things better. The feeling of sympathy must be within, it need not manifest purely as sympathy, but as an action to better the condition of the one with whom one has sympathy. There are many attributes found in the human heart which are called divine, but among them there is no greater and better attribute than sympathy, by which one shows in human form God manifested.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

Sympathy that is only a show of good manners may still be socially appropriate. When one has no tie with the other, then superficial sympathy can at least be kind. With someone you care about, handholding may be no better than pity. Does that kind of sympathy encourage self-pity in the other? Self-pity is the worst poverty. Pity is, however, better than dismissal or disdain.

Does one need to have walked in the other's shoes to be able to feel real sympathy? Certainly if one has had a similar experience, one can better appreciate the degree of pain the other suffers. But does the lack of painful experience disqualify one for having genuine sympathy for another? In my experience, if I listen sympathetically to the story of another, that action by itself can be helpful. We all wish to be understood. If I can convey my pain to you and you understand, I feel less lonely. Something in me needed expression and needed to be received. I can endure the pain better when it is not secret suffering.

Sometimes with good intentions, we hear of another's problems and we wish to "fix" the situation. Perhaps we want to talk the person out of their problem. We may want to rid ourselves of the burden of carrying the problem we have sympathetically taken on. So we try to control the situation to bring about our own relief. Though we wish for relief for the other person, we are really motivated to find relief for ourself. The other person, who was looking for a sympathetic ear and wished to be understood, now is under pressure to find a solution for the sake of

the helper. Typically the one seeking sympathy resents the pressure and rejects the sympathy offered. For the one with good intentions, this rejection seems ungrateful and the situation is made worse.

Sympathy that is constructive happens when the listener has respect for the capability of the one who suffers. One can then reflect back to the other their strength and their ability to handle the situation no matter how difficult. One needs to be careful not to do something to help that would undermine the self-confidence of the other. Whatever one can do to encourage the resourcefulness and resilience that one has seen in the other will help the other to overcome their difficulties and gain confidence.

**Tact Reflection 1:** Wisdom is different from justice: while justice is expressed in fairness, wisdom is shown by tact.

**Volume VIII The Art of Being  
The Privilege of Being Human (Tact)**

Tact is a thread which connects heaven and earth making them one. Tact, therefore, is not learned by worldly cleverness. Earthly qualifications do not make a person really tactful; one may imitate a tactful person, but polish is different from gentleness. Where does tact come from? Tact comes from the profound depth of the human heart, for it is a sense which is developed by human sympathy. A selfish person, therefore, cannot prove to be tactful to the end. One will perhaps begin by being tactful but will end in losing that spirit, because false tact will not endure. It is the real alone – object or person – that can endure.

Tactfulness comes from our consideration for one another, and that consideration comes from our feeling, our sympathy for one another. What is consideration? Consideration is feeling “all that is displeasing, distasteful, disagreeable to me – I must not cause it to another.” From this sense tact develops as wisdom. A person may be most learned, most capable, most influential, and yet not be tactful. Tactfulness is the sign of the great ones; great states persons, sovereigns, leaders, heroes, the most learned, the great servers of humanity were tactful. They won their enemies, their worst adversaries, by their tact; they accomplished the most difficult things in life by the power of tact.

One never can say, “I have enough tact.” It is never enough. Real tactful persons, having proved not to be tactful enough in their everyday lives, find more faults with themselves than tactless persons. As one becomes more tactful so one finds more fault with oneself, because there are so many shortcomings: actions manifest themselves automatically, words slip off from the tongue, and then the tactful ones think and see that they did not do right. But as Sadi says, “Once it is done then you, thoughtful one, repent of it. This is not the time to repent, you ought to have controlled yourself first.”

One becomes tactful through self-discipline, one develops tact by self-control. A tactful person is subtle, fine, poetic; one shows real learning and fine intelligence. Many say, 'How can we be tactful and at the same time truthful?' Many look at the fineness of the tactful person saying, 'Hypocritical!' But what is the use of that truth which is thrown at a person's head as a big stone, breaking the head. A truth

which has no beauty – what kind of truth is it? The (Hadith) says, 'God is beautiful,' therefore truth must be beautiful. If it were not beautiful then beauty-seeking souls and intelligent beings would not have sought after truth.

It is not always necessary to say things which could just as well have not been said. Very often it is weakness on the part of a person to drop a word which could have been avoided. It is the tactful soul who becomes large, because that soul does not always express herself outwardly. So the heart, accommodating wisdom, becomes larger; it becomes a reservoir of wisdom, of thoughtfulness. It is the tactful person who becomes popular, who is loved; it is the tactful person whom people listen to. Besides, it is by tact that we maintain the harmony of our lives. If not, life turns into a stormy sea. The influences coming from all around in our everyday life are enough to disturb the peace of our lives, and if we were tactless in addition to it what would then become of us? There would be one continual storm in our lives and there could never be peace. It is by tact that we make a balance against all in-harmonious influences which have a jarring effect upon our spirit. When inharmony comes from all sides and we are creative of harmony, we counterbalance it, and this makes life easy for us to bear.

What is goodness, piety, or orthodoxy without wisdom, without tact? What will a good person accomplish by goodness, if one is not able to give pleasure and happiness by what one says or does? Of what use one's piety or spirituality will be, if one is not creative of happiness for those who come in contact with one? It is, therefore, with tact that we begin our work of healing ourselves and others.

The Sufis of all ages have been known for their beautiful personality. It does not mean that among them there have not been people with great powers, wonderful powers and wisdom. But beyond all that, what is most known of the Sufis is the human side of their nature: that tact which attuned them to wise and foolish, to poor and rich, to strong and weak – to all. They met everyone on their own plane, they spoke to everyone in their own language. What did Jesus teach when he said to the fishermen, 'Come hither, I will make you fishers of men?' It did not mean, 'I will teach you ways by which you get the best of man.' It only meant: your tact, your sympathy will spread its arms before every soul who comes, as mother's arms are spread out for her little ones.

The Sufis say, 'Neither are we here to become angels nor to live as the animals do. We are here to sympathize with one another and to bring to others the happiness

which we always seek.' Yes, there are many thorns on the path of life, but looking at ourselves we see the same faults, if not more, as those of others which prick like stings, like thorns. Therefore if we spare others the thorn that comes out of us, we will give that much help to our fellows – and that is no small help! It is by being tactful that we accomplish our sacred duty, that we perform our religion. For how do we please God? We please God by trying to please humankind.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

What is it that stands in the way of being tactful with others? It may be that we are gifted with clarity of mind and wish to be helpful. We readily see the mistakes or shortcomings of others and hope that by pointing them out the other will benefit. Our intention may be sincere, yet we may feel a need to control a situation. It may be hard for us to let a situation go uncorrected when we see clearly what is wrong. What is it that prompts us to intervene? In any situation where we feel a need to control, there is an opportunity to explore our intolerance for disorder. Does it make us anxious? How can we find peace within ourselves so that we can trust others to learn and grow from their mistakes without our intervention?

Another reason for lack of tactfulness may be impulsiveness. We speak before we think about how the other might take it. We are impelled by what we see and speak innocently and spontaneously. Perhaps it is difficult to keep a secret. We feel more comfortable by being transparent. Then taking a moment to imagine how we would feel if our words were directed to ourself by another can give one pause. We don't intend to hurt another's feelings and at the moment of speaking, there is no expectation that another could be hurt by our words. It simply hasn't registered. Taking that extra moment to imagine receiving it could make all the difference.

To go further, we could think about what we admire in the other person. With this thought of respect, then our comments would adjust themselves to the context of appreciation. Any fault or flaw in the other person we might speak of would be rooted in a positive framework and the other person would be more likely to receive the comment constructively.

Are we tactful toward ourself? Do we hold a vision of ourself that is respectful and accepting? Do we take the insights we have about our shortcomings constructively? We can practice tact with ourself. When we are relaxed and confident, then we are more likely to be tactful with others.

### **Group 3: Gentleness**

**Hilm (Gentleness) Reflection 1:** My bare feet! Step gently on life's path, lest the thorns lying on the way should murmur at being trampled upon by you.

#### **Rules that pertain to Hilm**

My conscientious self,

Do nothing which will make your conscience feel guilty. (Copper Rule 3)

Be prejudiced against no one. (Copper Rule 9)

Use tact on all occasions. (Silver Rule 2)

Have regard for the feelings of every soul. (Silver Rule 5)

#### **The Art of Personality, Gentleness (Hilm)**

**Suresnes, September 1, 1923**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan, 1923-II, July — December*

Every impulse has its influence upon the word and upon the action; and therefore naturally every impulse exerts its full power through words and deeds, unless it is checked. There are two types of persons: those who have acquired the power of checking their word and action, when it exerts its full power and expresses itself in abruptness and those who mechanically allow this natural course of impulse to show itself in their word and deed, without giving any thought to it. The former therefore is gentle, and the latter is human.

Gentleness is the principal thing in the art of personality. One can see how gentleness works as the principal thing in every art: in painting, in drawing, in line and color, it is gentleness which appeals most to the soul. The same we shall see in music. A musician may be qualified enough to play rapidly and may know all the technique, but what produces beauty is the gentle touch. It is gentleness mainly which is all refinement. But where does it come from? It comes from consideration, and it is practiced by self-control. There is a saying in the East: 'the weaker the person, the more ready to be angry.' The reason is that one has no control over one's nerves. It is often lack of control over oneself which is the cause of all lack of gentleness. No doubt, one learns gentleness by consideration. One must learn to think before saying or doing. Besides, while saying or doing one must not forget the idea of beauty; one must know that it is not enough to say or do, but it is necessary to say or do everything beautifully. It is the development of the nations and

ances which is expressed in gentleness; also it is the advancement of the soul's evolution which expresses itself in gentleness. Nations, races as well as individuals will show backwardness in their evolution if they show lack in gentleness. At this time of the world's condition it seems that the art of personality has been much neglected. People intoxicated with the life of avariciousness and the competitive spirit that exists, helped by commercialism of the day, keeps one busy in the acquirement of the needs of one's everyday life; and the beauty which is the need of the soul is lost to view. People's interest in all things of life, science, art, philosophy, remains unfinished in the absence of the art of personality. How rightly this distinction has been made in the English language: man and gentleman, woman and lady.

### **Commentary by Alia**

In the practice Saum Wird we invoke al Halim to discover and honor God's grace that penetrates all life and our whole being.

Life is a constant battle – with others and with our self, but our life is given to us out of an act of pure unconditional love. We live, move and have our being in God's grace. The Sufi says that only God exists, and God is love. If we can look at our self from this perspective, all our errors, our mischiefs and our struggles with the ego can be seen as helpers to polish our hearts and clear our minds. In this process, we may start seeing them as distortions of Love, that will be cleared away to give space to pure love which is hidden in us.

When one is on the spiritual path, we may forget that we also need to treat ourselves with gentleness. We have faults and we fail, but if we are sincere and watchful, we will fail less and fail "better" each time. And our faults may become like torches on our path towards becoming who we really are meant to be, fulfilling our life's purpose.

When we are willing to train and master our inborn impulses and learn to become considerate and compassionate towards ourselves and towards others, we may become like a gentle breeze upon bare skin or a warm embrace to each other.

In Murshid's Sufi Invocation we invoke love, harmony and beauty. Beauty is the expression of soul and the soul's beauty is both unveiled and perceived through our gentleness.

Harmony is born from gentleness and by cultivating harmony, the human being, a country or even a whole civilization may be beautified.

Love is the source and goal of all life, and lovers of the divine walk gently on earth, speak gently and think gently of each other.



**Salamat (Harmoniousness) Reflection 1:** Leave all that unsaid which, by being said, creates inharmony.

**Salamat Reflection 2:** The more one regards the feelings of others, the more harmony one can create.

### **Rules that pertain to Salamat**

My conscientious self,

Judge not another by your own law. (Copper Rule 6)

Have regard for the feelings of every soul. (Silver Rule 5)

Meet the world with smiles in all conditions of life. (Golden Rule 6)

### **Harmoniousness (Salamat)**

**Suresnes, August 7, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan, 1922-I, January*  
— *August*

Wherever a person goes, there one takes one's influence, thereby creating harmony or inharmony in the atmosphere. As a person who is drunken feels most delighted to see another person who is drunken, as one enjoys that company, and so one offers that person another drink, so the inharmonious person creates inharmony, and so the harmonious person spreads the vibrations of harmony, tuning the whole atmosphere to the pitch of the soul. The tendency of the inharmonious person is to create inharmony, in the quarrel of two people one enjoys every moment of inharmony, for it becomes one's gain, one's occupation in life. There is nothing dearer to one than to see others in the same inharmonious state as one oneself is in, partly because one takes pleasure in disharmony, and partly it is jealousy that comes to one seeing other people harmonious with themselves, or with their surroundings. Or even one becomes proud to feel that one is not alone the inharmonious one, but that there are others also traveling in the same boat. In time a person gets accustomed to inharmony, just as some sailors on the sea during a storm do not feel it, so to that person life becomes dull if it is quiet and peaceful. An association where there is not some friction, some conflict, some warm discussions, some hot arguments, becomes to that one most uninteresting. However, whatever be one's stage of evolution, one's innate yearning is for quiet, for peace. No one in the world from the depths of the heart desires inharmony. For the Sufi to make every effort to bring about harmony in one's own life, and in the lives of others is the principal moral.

*Murshid then stopped the dictation and made a most touching appeal to his murids as to the deep need for harmony in our lives. He told us a little of what the burden of the work was to him, how overwhelming the vastness of all that he held in his heart. How great was the need of the suffering world for harmony and peace and unity. And that this great task could only be fulfilled when every worker in the great Cause realized and carried into effect that harmony of soul in their own immediate surroundings. That no bearing of the Message in teaching, in words could spread it, but only the example of a life lived in union with God, and therefore in harmony with all the world.*

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

Where does inharmony come from? It comes from agitation. And agitation comes from the dissatisfaction of the nafs. The nafs has a thousand reasons to feel dissatisfied. It may feel neglected or dismissed, unloved or unlovable, thwarted or criticized, flawed or unworthy, or many other moods stemming from limitation and isolation. Life seems unfair and jarring to the agitated nafs. Why should an effort be made for harmony to spread an artificial cover over a nasty or uncaring world?

How different when the nafs feels the presence of a larger reality of love, harmony, and beauty. When one has awakened to the reality of God as the Beloved or the Friend, the worries of the world that agitate the nafs are dissipated. Being harmonious is then like striking the note from inside, the note of the awakened soul. By striking that note one shares the music that has brought relief and peace. And as peace is the longing of every soul, even in those who have developed the habit of provoking inharmony, one may plant the seeds of peace. One may feel the satisfaction of resonance. This is a subtle way to spread the Message. As Murshid says, living the Message in everyday life means sounding the note of peace. When that music is living in you, then it may stimulate the same sound in another.

The Message of love, harmony, and peace is meant to awaken souls to a larger reality in which the nafs can relax and enjoy making harmony with others.

**Khatir (Consideration) Reflection 1:** Behind us all is one spirit and one life; how then can we be happy if our neighbor is sad?

**Khatir Reflection 2:** Consideration is born in the heart and developed in the head.

### **Rules that pertain to Khatir**

My conscientious self,

Extend your help willingly to those in need. (Copper Rule 3)

Use tact on all occasions. (Silver Rule 2)

Guard the secrets of friends as your most sacred trust. (Golden Rule 3)

When you possess something, think of the one who does not possess it. (Golden Rule 7)

Do not neglect those who depend upon you. (Golden Rule 10)

### **Moral Culture, Consideration (Khatir) Suresnes, July 6, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

*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 a 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 all includes in the word *Khatir*. This spirit of consideration, when developed, extends not only to the person for whom one has consideration, but as far as for that person having consideration for another who is related or connected with the person in some way or the other. When a king is respected, and not his ambassador, that means lack of consideration to the king.

For Sufis this quality becomes their moral. Sufis learn consideration beginning it with their Murshid, but this culminates in the consideration for God.

When one arrives to that tenderness of feeling, every person in the world one considers. To the Sufi the missing of an opportunity of considering another is a great disappointment, for the Sufi does not consider it to be a fault towards a human being, but to God. Verily, one 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.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

When the teacher enters, one wishes to show one's respect and appreciation by standing up. It is easy to give consideration willingly for a person one admires. For a person with a certain public status, one is expected to show consideration as a practice of good manners though one may do it out of duty rather than willingly. In polite society one may act with consideration for strangers such as offering one's seat or stepping aside. On the other hand, one might deliberately ignore or avoid a person sitting or lying on a sidewalk. Consideration is an aspect of respect or adab. A laborer working at a project on the street remembered Murshid as the Grande Seigneur who stopped on a walk through the neighborhood of Suresnes, doffed his hat, and gave the him a grand bow. The workman never forgot the consideration that Murshid showed him.

Consideration begins at home. For those with whom we are closest, we may take them for granted or harbor resentments. Preoccupied with our own feelings and reactions, we might overlook many opportunities for consideration. We might squash our impulses for consideration because we feel hurt. Consideration is a form of love. When love is freely given, it tends to be returned. But even if it is not returned, the act of opening our heart and giving willingly is, by itself, refreshing and uplifting. And when we have cleared the air in our closest relationships, it becomes easier to be more generous with strangers of all classes.

Wariness or fear of those who are at the edge of society can be warranted. One needs to consult one's intuition before opening oneself too much with strangers. However, finding the sun within and letting it shine before others can polish one's personality and bring more sunshine into the world. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) was feeling overwhelmed by the first revelations of the Message and was shy about sharing it with others, he was visited by Jibrail (Gabriel) who told him, "The Divine Message is not just for you!"

**Dar-guzar (Overlooking) Reflection 1:** Overlook the greatest fault of another, but do not partake of it in the smallest degree.

**Dar-guzar Reflection 2:** It is wise to see all things, and yet to turn our eyes from all that should be overlooked.

**Overlooking (Dar-guzar)**  
**Summer School, Suresnes, July 15, 1923**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1923-II, July – December*

There is a tendency which growingly manifests in a person advancing spiritually, and that tendency is overlooking. At times the same tendency might appear as negligence but in reality negligence is not necessarily overlooking. Nevertheless negligence most often is not looking. Overlooking in other words may be said: rising beyond things. One has to rise in order to overlook. The one who stands beneath life cannot overlook even if one wanted to. Overlooking is a manner of graciousness; it is looking and at the same time not looking. It is to see and not to take notice of seeing. It is to be hurt or harmed or disturbed by something and yet not mind it. It is an attitude of nobleness of nature. It is the sign of souls who are tuned to a higher key.

One may ask: Is it practical? I may not always be able to say that it is practical but I mean it all the same. For in the end the one who overlooks will also realize the practicality of it. Maybe that one will realize in the long run, before one has met with great many disadvantages of it. Nevertheless, that is well which ends well. Very often by overlooking it costs less than by taking notice of something that could well be overlooked. In life there are things which matter and there are things which do not matter, and as one advances through life one finds that there are many things that do not matter, that one could just as well overlook them. The one who will take notice of everything that came one's way, will waste time on a journey which will take all one's life to accomplish. While climbing this mountain of life, the purpose of which is to reach its top, if a person will trouble about everything that comes along, one will perhaps never be able to reach the top. One will always be troubling at everything at the bottom of it. No soul after realizing that life is only four days on this earth, will trouble about little things. One will trouble about things which really matter. In the strife of little things a person loses the opportunity of accomplishing great things in life. The one who troubles about small

things, is small, the soul who thinks of great things is great. Overlooking is the first lesson of forgiveness. This tendency comes out of love and sympathy; for whom one hates, one takes notice of that one's every little fault, but whom one loves one naturally overlooks that one's faults and very often tries to turn the faults of the one a person loves into merits.

Life has endless things which suggest beauty and numberless things which suggest ugliness. There is no end of merits and no end of faults. And it is according to one's evolution in life that one's outlook on life is. The higher one has risen, the wider the horizon before one's sight. It is the tendency to sympathize which brings in a person the desire to overlook, and it is the analytical tendency which weighs and measures and takes good notice of everything. 'Judge ye not,' said Christ, 'lest ye be judged.' The more one thinks of this lesson, the deeper it goes in one's heart. And all one learns from it is to try and overlook all that does not fit in with one's own ideas as things ought to be in life, till one comes to a stage of realization where the whole life becomes one sublime vision of the immanence of God.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

We all have a tendency to judge others. Overlooking is rising above that tendency. How can we get past our judgmental inclination? We can try to look at things from the other person's point of view. Why did they act that way? Perhaps if we had their perspective and disposition and their history, we would have acted in the same way.

Elie Wiesel tells the story of a Hasidic rebbe, Levi-Yitzhak of Berdichev. When the rebbe encountered someone who was behaving badly, he would turn to God and plead on that person's behalf. For example, Wiesel tells of a Jew who was smoking a pipe on the Sabbath in defiance of Jewish law. The Rebbe reminds him of the prohibition about smoking on the Sabbath. But the young man impudently replies that he knows the laws. The Rebbe turns to God and points out, "Yes, he is violating one of your commandments, but no matter what, he refuses to lie about it."

If we can understand the other person, we are more liable to forgive them for their transgression. We are less likely to take offense. We have a better chance of being freed from the contraction of making a judgment and distancing ourselves from the other person. We are all limited. We all make mistakes. The world is a friendlier place when we can forgive others and appreciate their humanness.

Of course, we need to be careful not to overlook others behavior as a way of avoiding responsibility. We wouldn't want to overlook harsh or abusive behavior of one person toward another in our presence. Sometimes bad behavior needs to be confronted, not only for the sake of the abused one but also for the abuser. Discriminating when to speak up and when to overlook is a matter for intuition and our innate ethical sense.

**Ittifaq (Reconciliation) Reflection 1:** The only way to live in the midst of inharmonious influences is to strengthen the willpower and endure all things, yet keeping fineness of character and nobility of manner, together with an everlasting heart full of love.

**Ittifaq Reflection 2:** No sooner do you begin to see the bad side of a person's character than you automatically throw a cover over the good side of that person's nature.

**Ittifaq Reflection 3:** As one evolves spiritually one rises above the tendency to intolerance, for the reason that one begins to see God besides seeing oneself and another person, and so one unites oneself with the other person in God.

**Reconciliation (Ittifaq)  
Suresnes, July 16, 1923**

*From The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1923-II, July – December*

Any efforts made in developing the personality or character building, must be not for the sake of proving oneself superior to others but in order to become more agreeable to those around one and to those with whom we come in contact.

Reconciliation is not only the moral of the Sufi, but is the sign of the Sufi. This virtue is not only learned and practiced easily, for it needs not only goodwill, but wisdom. The great talent of the diplomat is to bring about such results as are desirable, with agreement. Disagreement is easy. Among the lower creation one sees it so often. What is difficult is agreement, for it wants a wider outlook, which is the true sign of spirituality. Narrowness of outlook makes the horizon of one's vision small. That person cannot easily agree with another. There is always a meeting ground for two people, however much they differ in their thought. But the meeting ground may be far off and one is not always willing to take the trouble of going far enough, if it was required in order to make an agreement.

Very often one's patience does not allow one to go far enough, where one can meet with another. In an ordinary case what happens is that everyone wants another to meet in the same place where one is standing. There is no desire on one's part to move from the place one stands. I do not mean that people, in order to become real Sufis, must give up their idea in order to meet in agreement with another. And there is no benefit in always being lenient to every thought that comes from another and



there is no benefit in always erasing one's own idea from our own heart. But that is not reconciliation. The one who is able to listen to another, is the one who will make another listen to her. It is the one who easily agrees with another, who will have the power of making another easily agree with her. Therefore in doing so one gains in spite of apparent loss which might occur sometimes. When one is able to see from one's own point of view as well as from the point of view of another, one has a complete vision and a clear insight. One so to speak sees with both eyes. No doubt friction produces light but light is the agreement of the atoms. For the stimulation to the thought, if two people have their own ideas and argue upon their different ideas, it does not matter so much. But when people argue for the sake of argument, the argument becomes their game. One has no satisfaction in reconciliation. Words provide the means of disagreement. Reasons become the fuel for that fire. But wisdom is when the intelligence is pliable, it understands all things, the wrong of the right and the right of the wrong.

The soul who arrives to the perfect knowledge, has risen above right and wrong. One knows them and yet knows not. One can say much and yet, what can one say? Then it becomes easy for one to reconcile with each and all.

There is a story that two Sufis met after many years, having traveled along their own lines. They were glad to meet each other after many years separation, and for the reason that they were both murids of the same murshid. One said to the other: "Tell me please your life's experience." "After all this time's study and practice of Sufism, I have learned one thing: how to reconcile with another, and I can do it very well now. Will you please tell me what you have learned?" The other one said: "After all this time's study and practice of Sufism, I have learned to know how to master life, and all that is there in this world is for me and I am the master. All that happens, happens by my will." Then came the murshid whose murids they were both and both spoke of their experience during this journey. The murshid said: "Both of you are right. In the case of the first, it was self-denial in the right sense of the word which enabled him to reconcile with others. In the case of the other there was no more of his will left, if there was any, it was the will of God."

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

The first thing that is needed in order to reconcile is the desire to reconcile and the faith that reconciliation can be found. There was a time when the Inayati Order (then the Sufi Order) and the Sufi Movement were in conflict with hard feelings on

both sides. An agreement was made to seek reconciliation by meeting together and listening to each other. At first this was difficult because each side had its story and each distrusted the other's motives. Each side blamed the other for past deeds and attitudes. When each side had fully aired its feelings, it became apparent that the effort to reconcile was stuck. The process had hit a wall. All retired and prayed for a breakthrough. The next day, the air was cleared. Old grudges were gone and goodwill prevailed. The very practice of speaking what had been held in secret resentment and turning to prayer to affirm the desire for resolution led to a change of heart. Seemingly intractable conflicts can be resolved when the parties are able to be open to each other. Reconciliation is typically a process of heart attunement. Rationally working things out can follow when hearts have had a chance to release held feelings.

Often reconciliation is blocked when each side feels the other has acted or spoken unfairly. Each side feels it must protect its position because giving in would be accepting injustice. The other side must pay for its transgression at least by admitting it and asking forgiveness. In the heat of the conflict, one may turn a blind eye to one's own unfairness. Listening to the other's complaints is hard to do without defensiveness. Can one see from the point of view of the other side? If one can admit to one's own mistakes and ask for forgiveness, even if one feels the unfairness of the other side is much worse, one can pave the way for the other side to do the same. One can create an atmosphere of goodwill. However, it can't be a tit-for-tat bargain, an expectation that the other side will bend if I do. If it is done in that spirit, the other side will detect the strategy and doubt the sincerity of one's own contrition. It has to be done openheartedly and sincerely. Only this spirit has the potential to melt the antagonism of the other side.

What Pir Vilayat said about forgiveness applies here. If one has been abused by another, it is wrong to "should" oneself into forgiving. Sincere forgiveness can only happen when one is ready and not being ready is not to be judged. The process of healing the heart must go through needs to be respected. Reconciliation in such a case is only possible if one has reached a point where one is ready to forgive and the other party is ready to ask forgiveness.

## Group 4: Humility

**Haya' (Modesty) Reflection 1:** My modesty! Thou art the veil over my vanity.

### Rules that pertain to Haya'

My conscientious self,

Do not look down upon the one who looks up to you. (Copper Rule 4)

Be no more to anyone than you are expected to be. (Silver Rule 4)

### Moral Culture, Modesty (Haya')

Suresnes, July 7 1922

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

*Haya'* is the finest feeling in human nature, which is called modesty.

Modesty is not necessarily meekness, or humbleness, or selflessness, or pride. Modesty is a beauty in itself and its action is to veil itself, and 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 gracefulness. Without modesty, beauty is dead, for the modesty is the spirit of beauty.

Silence and modesty speak louder than cold words. The lack of modesty can destroy the 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 that rises from a living heart; a heart, which is dead, has not got the taste of it. A modest person in comparison 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 that is conscious of its beauty, inclined to veil it in all its forms, is modest. At the same time modesty is the proof of sincerity and of prudence. The cracker 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 beauty.

## Commentary by Suhrawardi

One might easily confuse modesty with meekness, humbleness, or selflessness. What is the difference? Meekness and humbleness suggest a tendency to diminish oneself, to compare oneself unfavorably with others. In comparison with bragging or self-aggrandizement, the earthy qualities of meekness and humbleness may seem endearing. Yet to the degree that they signify a preoccupation with self-worth, they feed the nafs and block unfoldment and so are not a virtue. When the nafs is subdued, true selflessness emerges and shines as a virtue. However, modesty as Murshid describes it is something more.

What is it about modesty that produces the scent of gracefulness and beauty? It is subtlety, fineness of feeling. If an artist sets out to produce something beautiful, if a poet seeks to express something deep, if a musician wishes to impress, the result may not be subtle. What moves and inspires an artist, a poet, or a musician is beyond expression. By veiling it, a modest creative person avoids spoiling it, avoids injecting too much self into it.

Murshid said, “To explain God is to dethrone God.” Modesty veils rather than displaying. In bowing before beauty, one doesn’t diminish oneself. One carries within oneself a realm of beauty and perfection and protects it from the roughness of the world. One carries it and veils it, yet its beauty comes through for those who have eyes to see.

**Haya' Reflection 2:** Without modesty beauty is dead, for modesty is the spirit of beauty.

**Moral Culture, Modesty (Haya') 2**  
**Suresnes, July 8, 1922**

*From The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

Modesty is not necessarily timidity or cowardliness. The most brave can be modest; it is modesty that completes. Modesty is the veil of the face of the great, for the most modest is God alone. God is not seen by anyone except those intimate with God.

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 cover only what is beautiful and amplify beauty, but covers all that is void of beauty, and in this manner fitting it into all that which is beautiful. A noble heart can even rise to such a degree of modesty, that one would plead for another person's fault, trying to make out of it no fault, even knowing that it is a fault.

Yes, modest people very often will not raise their voice out of dignity, or say things out of consideration and respectfulness, will not argue and pull their own weight when dealing with someone who has no thought of modesty. In this case one may often lose one's 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, for the one who loves to ascend, one may just as well ascend rather than wanting to descend. The Prophet has said, "Verily, modesty is a great piety."

**Commentary by Alia**

Modesty is born from a pure heart. To become truly modest, we can be inspired by that modesty which is the soul of creation. And to work on that self who believes that one is the center of attention and separate from Nature, one's fellow human beings or God – one's Creator.

Life requires of us that we cultivate an independent and strong self; and we need both language and discrimination to fulfill our life's purpose as grown-ups. But the self we become can be like a tangled ball of yarn. Our personal vanity tangled up with our Creator's, our self-image tangled up in a ball of encounters throughout life, where we play different roles and put on different masks according to life's demands. Some of these roles require the contrary of being modest – we need to assert ourselves – for example, when we apply for a new job, or we discover the need of our whole strength in dealing with difficult situations.

To rediscover our inborn modesty, we need a return to the time before we could understand language; before we could grasp duality. All that is beautiful and pure must be protected from the gross vibrations of this physical world, says Murshid. And this is difficult, when we are no longer a baby held in love by the parents and experiencing the unconditional love and unity that pervades our pure being.

Still life is full of beautiful discoveries, when we witness and act from an open heart. The heart that is open to people, animal or plant will be open to God. As human beings born on this earth, we are blessed with a journey of joyful discoveries. And as we refine our manners more and more, we learn to silently witness nature's beauty in all its splendor, The all-pervading, ever-evolving creation will reveal itself and inspire us by its beautiful perfection.

*When one closes one's lips, God begins to speak. (Gayan)*

**Inkisar (Selflessness) Reflection 1:** Humility in love is the humility of the master, and humility in surrender is the humility of the slave.

### **Rules that pertain to Inkisar**

My conscientious self,

Do not boast of your good deeds. (Iron Rule 4)

Be polite to all. (Copper Rule 2)

Do not look down upon the one who looks up to you. (Copper Rule 5)

Meet the world with smiles in all conditions of life. (Golden Rule 6)

### **Moral Culture, Selflessness (Inkisar) Suresnes, July 11, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

*Inkisar* in the terms of the Sufis means self-assertion. The psychology of human nature is such that one feels inclined to hit at every head that is raised. Not only humans, but also all the living creatures have that tendency. To protect oneself from that, many intelligent creatures from the lower creation make holes in the earth, to live there, hiding themselves from the hunting animals. No sooner they raise their head from their hole, their enemy who thirsts for their blood catches them. As humankind is evolved, one does not immediately hit the raised head, but one 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. The Sufi calls that spirit "*Kabir*" or "*Kibrian*", the Ego or Egoistic. It has taught the Sufi a moral, that not only the human being but even God is displeased by self-assertion. And the manner that one adopts in order not to arouse that agitating spirit, one calls it *Inkisar*, meaning selflessness.

In theory it is a small thing, in practice it is a great art. It is an art that 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 action, as to cause least disturbance to human feeling. It is the study of human susceptibility, and practice of delicate manner, which teaches one in *Inkisar*. The further one progresses, the more one's sense becomes keen. Therefore one finds more and more mistakes in one's own life as one goes forward in this path. This subject

is so delicate that one does not commit a fault only by showing pride or conceit, but even in expressing modesty or humility. It wants a great delicacy of sense. One must be able to see the lights and shades produced by every action and word one says or does. And once a person has mastered this art, one has mastered the same art which Christ promised to the fishermen, saying, "Come hither, I will make you the fishers of men."

The Sufi gives more importance to this subject than a Yogi, for the way of the Yogis 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. Good people, proud of their goodness, turns their pearls into pebbles. Bad people, full of remorse for their faults, may make jewels of their pebbles. Selflessness is not only pleasing to humans, but it is pleasing to God. There is not one moment in life when God is unaware of one's word or action, and beyond one's word or action God is aware of one's attitude, which very often one hides in one's word or action. Nothing is hidden before God, Who is a perfect Judge and a Forgiver, and upon Whose pleasure and displeasure depends the happiness or unhappiness of life. Therefore one has not only the task of considering the pleasure or displeasure of one's fellows, but also a duty to God of considering what is pleasant to God and what is unpleasant. To God Whom all the beauty and riches, glory and greatness belong, one takes no offering which is worth anything except one thing, and that is selflessness.

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

### **Commentary by Alia**

The word self-assertion in our daily language is often used to describe a strengthening of the self or putting oneself forwards. Murshid explains in this passage on *Inkisar* how self-assertion can reveal to us the path of selflessness. Assertion comes from the Latin word *asserere* which means to join together. When we look at assertion in this sense, we understand that when we work on that part of our self which always is in need of admiration and praise from the outside world, we clear the



path towards uniting with our true self, which can never be cut off from that which is the source and goal of all praise and devotion.

What is this self which is so difficult to understand and cultivate? It is our very being, says Murshid. If we did not have a self, we would not exist.

*Vanity is something which is the hardest thing to suppress and to control. For adepts the struggle in life is not so great with the passions and emotions, which sooner or later by more or less effort can be controlled; but vanity, it is always growing. If one cuts down its stem then one cannot live, for it is the very self, it is the I, the ego, the soul, or God within; it cannot be denied its existence. But struggling with it beautifies it more and more, and makes more and more tolerable that which in its crude form is intolerable.*

It is our vanity which both leads us to God and keeps us away from uniting with that source of beauty which runs through the whole creation. We need to cultivate a delicate balance between creating a beautiful personality and losing the self, that demanding primitive self which constantly needs to assert itself out of a false sense of vanity, and which will always separate us from both man and God.

Not only in words and actions, but in one's being one is selfless or selfish. When we cultivate our personality and beautify it more and more, our personal vanity will align with God's and we will understand the saying in the Quran, "God is beauty and loves beauty."

**Inkisar Reflection 2:** My bare feet! Step gently on life's path, lest the thorns lying on the way should murmur at being trampled upon by you.

### **Moral Culture, Selflessness (Inkisar) 2**

**Suresnes, July 12, 1922**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan - Lectures on Sufism; 1922-I, January – August*

Selflessness does not only beautify one's personality, giving grace to one's word and manner, but it also gives a dignity and a power with a spirit of independence, which is the real sign of a sage. It is selflessness, which often produces humiliation in one's spirit, taking away the intoxication, which enriches the soul. Independence and indifference, which are as two wings that enable the soul to fly, spring from the spirit of selflessness. The moment the spirit of selflessness has begun to sparkle in the one's heart, one shows in one's word and action a nobility which no earthly power or wealth can give. There are many ideas that intoxicate one. Many feelings there are which act upon the soul as wine, but there is no stronger wine than the wine of selflessness. It is a might and it is a pride that no rank of the world can give. To become something is a limitation, whatever one may be; even if a person were to be called the sovereign of the world, still one is not the emperor of the universe. If one is the master of the earth, one is still the slave of Heaven. It is the one who is no one, and yet all.

The Sufi therefore takes the path of being nothing instead of being something. It is this feeling of nothingness, which turns out of the human heart an empty cup, in which the wine of immortality is poured out. It is this state of bliss which every truth-seeking soul yearns to attain. It is easy to be learned, and it is not difficult to be wise, and it is within one's reach to become good, and it is not an impossible achievement to be pious or spiritual. But if there is an attainment that is greater and higher than all these things, it is to be nothing. It may seem frightening to many, the idea of becoming nothing, for human nature is such that it is eager to hold on to something, and the most one holds on to, is one's own person, one's individuality. Once one has risen above this, one has climbed the Mount Everest, one has arrived to the spot where earth ends and Heaven begins.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

As long as you are someone, a sage, a mentor, a mother or father, a lover, a leader, a caregiver, you have a reputation to protect. You have an investment in being seen

a certain way. Whether consciously or unconsciously, there is a calculation in how you act, in what you say. Will others be disappointed in me, will I lose the regard of others, will I lose the role I have been playing which I retain only with the sanction of others? Perhaps one has achieved a role as the result of a gift one has been given. Without any effort on one's own part, one has received the gift of wise insight, or one has been inspired to surrender one's own interest to care for another. However, having been graced with such a gift once or twice and having been appreciated, one may feel the need to keep proving oneself. If one doesn't have sufficient confidence in the gift, one may feel under pressure to continue to be wise or caring. As soon as one tries to do it, the gift seems to be cut off. And so the pleasure of being regarded in a positive way as "someone" can lead to stress and self-doubt.

Selflessness comes when one trusts in the Source to guide one in every action. One doesn't need attention or approval from the outer world because one feels unconditional love from within. Without a stake in being somebody, the pressure is off to prove oneself. It doesn't matter how others regard you. Your concern is to please God who has become a living presence for you. When you feel the pleasure of God, it doesn't matter if the whole world is against you. Of course, this attitude can be distorted in the case of a deluded or inflated personality. If you are truly nothing and the whole world is against you, then there is no opposition to the world, no antagonism. Only indifference.

When you surrender your self and trust in inner guidance from moment to moment, you are not limited by worldly judgments. You may appear to be wise one moment and foolish the next. Rumi's story of Moses and Khidr illustrates the hidden wisdom of one who is always guided from within. Khidr doesn't need to be somebody, he doesn't seek approval from the crowd or even from a prophet. His actions are selfless because they don't serve his personal interests.

We are all in different stages of surrendering our self-interest. Whatever stage you may be in, you have a choice to make with every action. It may be that your will and the Divine Will coincide and the choice of self-interest is the right one, the one that pleases God. Or it may be that the voice of your conscience tells you to do what feels right even though it goes against your self-interest.

## Group 5: Silence

**Kotah Kalam (Moderation in Speech) Reflection 1:** To express an impulse gives relief, but to control it gives strength.

**Kotah Kalam Reflection 2:** The moment one realizes when to speak, and when to keep silence, one takes one's first step in the path of wisdom.

### Rules that pertain to Kotah Kalam

My conscientious self,

Make no false claims. (Iron Rule 1)

Speak not against others in their absence. (Iron Rule 2)

Do not boast of your good deeds. (Iron Rule 4)

Do not reproach others, making them firm in their faults. (Iron Rule 6)

Use tact on all occasions. (Silver Rule 2)

Have regard for the feelings of every soul. (Silver Rule 5)

### Character Building, Moderation in Speech (Kotah Kalam)

Suresnes, August 14, 1923

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan, 1923-II, July —  
December*

In everyday life during speech and action what is most necessary is to have control of speech and action, for one automatically gives way to a word prompted by an inner impulse. Afterwards one finds that one should not have said it or perhaps one would have said it differently. The same thing is with action. One feels "I should not have done so" after having done something, or one thinks "I should have done differently," but once it is done it is too late to do it otherwise. In human nature there is an inner urge to express oneself, and that urge so to speak pushes a word out of oneself before one has thought over it. And this all shows the sign of lack of control over oneself. It also is a sign of nervousness. Very often a person tries to answer somebody who has not yet finished speaking. Before a sentence is completed the answer is given. Such an answer given to an incomplete idea is often not right. What generally happens in such cases is that one takes all things that come from outside in life too much to heart and allows the outer things and influences to go into oneself deeper than is due. In this way one becomes sensitive and out of it rises nervousness.

In order to practice self-control in everything one does in everyday life, the best thing is to develop in one's nature a certain amount of indifference. Every word that is said to one need not be taken to be so important that it should upset one's whole being, disturb one's balance and rob one of one's will power. There are things that matter but there are many things in one's everyday life which do not matter much and one often is apt to put an undue stress upon them.

Independence is achieved by indifference. It does not mean that one should take no heed of what another does or says. It only means to discriminate between important and unimportant things of everyday life, that every necessary and unnecessary thing must not demand so much of one's attention, thought and feeling.

Political economy has become a subject of education but spiritual economy is the main thing in religion. All one says and does and all that one thinks and feels, makes a certain strain upon one's spirit. It is wise to avoid every chance of losing one's equilibrium. One must stand peacefully but firmly against all influences that disturb one's life. The natural inclination is to answer in defense to every offense that comes from outside; by that one loses one's equilibrium. Self-control therefore is the key to all success and happiness. Besides this there are many who feel urged and obliged to say or do because someone asks of them, and in this way get weaker and weaker. There are others who roughly fight against it; and in this way both are in error. Those who is able to keep their equilibrium without being annoyed, without being troubled about it, gain that mastery which is needed in the evolution of life. No principle must be blindly followed. Spiritual economy is not always a virtue if that disturbs harmony, if that in any way keeps one back from progress, if that puts one in a worse condition. However, it is most necessary to know the science of spiritual economy, how to guard against all influences in our everyday life which come to disturb our tranquillity, the peace of our soul.

### **Commentary by Alia**

It is our human nature to react to impressions coming from outside and to express impulses coming from within. Outer impressions first reach our body through the senses, and they are perceived by our mind where they are assimilated or rejected. Ultimately the impressions reach the core of our being — our psyche or soul. In the same way, our soul's expressions are directed outwards — perceived first by our mind; where they again can be analyzed or controlled, before they are expressed through our physical being — as thoughts, words or actions.

This is how we are created, says Murshid. But what distinguishes us from animals is our free will and ability to say yes or no and to learn to rise above any impression coming from without or to control any impulse coming from within. We have a mind that is able to examine our thought patterns, impulses or desires, and which gives us opportunities to create harmony and beauty within ourselves and in our surroundings.

So how can we withstand the jarring influences from the outer world or the strong impulses to react from within? Murshid advises us to cultivate the faculties of indifference and independence through observing self-control. This is necessary both for building a beautiful and strong personality and for reaching deep within our heart and soul.

Spiritual chivalry and the esoteric path have always complemented each other in the Sufi tradition, because the Sufi wishes to live a life of serving humanity. The cultivation of indifference and independence will help us to balance the two paths that we may fulfill our life's purpose. Lightened from the burdens of unconscious emotions, thought patterns, conditionings and greed, we can cultivate the faculty of indifference. This will help us to recognize how we are all united and share our human resources, challenges, desires and evolution. Protected from the jarring impressions from the world, we may live a life of independence from all that is other than God, our Beloved.

*Indifference and independence are the two wings that enable the soul to fly.*

**Kam Sukhun (Power of Silence) Reflection 1:** Words are valuable, but silence is precious.

**Kam Sukhun Reflection 2:** Speech is the sign of living, but silence is life itself.

### **Rules that pertain to Kam Sukhun**

My conscientious self,

Be firm in faith through life's tests and trials. (Golden Rule 2)

Hold your ideal high in all circumstances. (Golden Rule 9)

#### **The Power of Silence (Kam Sukhun)**

**Belgium, second half of January, 1922**

*From The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan 1922-I, January*

*— July*

It has been known by sages of all ages that silence is the secret of all mysticism. In the first place silence proves control of oneself, which means the ruling of one's own domain. And it is the lack of ruling power when a person lacks silence. In everyday life a person says things which one ought not to say; and afterwards one reflects. It is, of course, a lack of self-control that makes one say what one does not wish to say. Besides, there are many things secret, which one does not like to tell everybody. But, when one has no control, one tells them. In many circumstances it is under the influence of emotion that one says what one should not say. Sometimes a person says yes or no, submitting to the will of another; at that moment one does not know what one says. Sometimes one says yes or no to something one does not know, and people who are a little powerful can, in that way, turn a friend into an enemy, or an enemy into a friend. There are many people in the world who are just like machines in human form; they can be turned that this way and that way; that shows, that, to be a real human being, one must have power. Consideration is necessary at every moment of life; at one time something must be spoken — the next, not; one must know the proper time when to say something, or not. There are moments when you can say something ten times in vain; there are other moments when it is fruitful; one must judge of the moment. Very often one sees that a mistress is cross with her servants, and all that is fruitless; just as a son may be scolded in vain. The reason is that in the words, there is no power; the secret is silence.

A well-known prophet of the East told me the following story: a mother once complained to a philosopher that her son did not listen to her; that all he had he spent in sweets, and that she was too poor to afford it. The philosopher said, "Come back in forty days"; but the disciple did not understand his meaning. After forty days the mother came back with her son, and the philosopher told him that he should be more considerate, and ought to think of all that his mother had done for him. No doubt this made a great impression on the lad; for, from that day, he respected his mother. But the disciple asked the philosopher why he had told her to come back after forty days. His reply was that he had "to reflect forty days, in order to put it into the best words." How very few people think forty days about a small thing like that! Very, very often they speak immediately.

Why are these mournings, and divorces, and troubles in the world? They all show the lack of self-control and consideration, and the consequences can be reckoned by the past war. There are now less troubles; from a physical point of view they seem to have diminished, but not from a moral point of view. As long as one does not consider, it is impossible for the world to become better. For peace at home, and order in the community, self-control and consideration are necessary. There are three homes — the house, the nation, and the world; and the natures of the three homes are the same. The same laws are applicable to the three.

There is a well-known story in the East, of a woman who went to a physician saying that she had troubles at home always. She said, "Every day there is a quarrel, and I have now come to the conclusion that I must finish with my life." But the physician, who was a great master of human nature, said — "I shall give you some sweets which you will keep every evening in your mouth, and you must not open your mouth during that time." She followed his advice, and her husband, who was in a mood to disagree, did not get any reply. Therefore, after a little time, he ceased, and there was no fight. It never went further, and soon both the husband and wife were very glad to see there were no more troubles. She went back to the healer with a present, asking him to give her some more sweets. But he answered — "It is not the sweets which have helped you — it is the principle. Your husband has no control of himself, but, if you have it, you give it." That shows that, if you are strong, you give others strength, but if you are weak you give others weakness.

The school of the Sufi has a method to strengthen oneself, to control the body, the mind and its vibrations; and nothing is so precious as being the ruler of one's own domain. Those who cannot control themselves are dependent upon others and act



as machines; but those having control are engineers. According to the ancient scriptures we learn that God created humans to understand all the mechanism of the mind; God has made the human sovereign of all creation. Now the intercourse of East and West is augmenting, every day they are coming closer together in music, science, and philosophy; and it is easy to understand that it should be so. Two eyes and ears are complete; so East and West are complete. Misunderstandings are the root of all evil. The unity between East and West cannot come before they understand each other. Many people say that the East has particular religions. This is childish talk! Where did Christ come from? His language was Oriental. Truth is the heritage of the human soul — not the property of the East. As soon as one rises from the physical plane into the spiritual, one sees there is one God, one Life, one Religion. And on account of these childish talks we have fought too many years. It is too late now. Those stupid quarrels are a thousand years behind time; the duty of everybody is to increase the happiness of everybody, as the happiness of anyone depends upon the happiness of all the others. The aim of Sufism is to awaken that feeling; it respects all religions and all scriptures and brings about a unity between the human soul and the spirit divine.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

There are many reasons for speaking. One may be full of enthusiasm and wish to share one's thoughts or feelings. Speaking breaks the ice. Mundane comments about the weather or about one's health establish a friendly connection putting oneself and others at ease. Socially silence can be awkward or uncomfortable as one feels a pressure to fill the empty space. When the needs of the nafs come into speech, the trouble and conflict Murshid speaks of often arise. For most, the nafs is very sensitive and takes offense easily. Often the reaction is hidden. It doesn't come out into the open but it can be felt as background tension.

When one remains silent, one can produce an atmosphere of tension or peace. Alone in silence and in tune with the inner life, one can put aside worries and distracted thoughts. When one is quiet inside, one may notice the underlying current of spirit. Spirit is always flowing. Sometimes it brings peace and inner comfort. Sometimes it brings insight or joy. If that inner flow is nurturing to one's soul, then enjoying it produces an atmosphere. This is an atmosphere that one can bring to a social situation without needing to say anything.

Those who knew Murshid said that the best transmission of his teachings came when he asked for a silence. One can only imagine the power and beauty of his presence.

We can develop greater magnetism and offer it in silence to others by mastering the impulse to speak. Rather than speaking from impulse, one can speak more deliberately when speaking contributes something worthwhile and hold back reactions that may trigger conflict. Pondering on such decisions could be awkward and burdensome. Instead one can rely on intuition to make quick choices. Discipline is required to pay attention to what one intends to say before speaking. Combining mastery with intuition develops the ability to keep silence or to speak wisely.

## **Group 6: Serenity**

**Matanat (Dignity) Reflection 1:** Reserve gives dignity to the personality; to be serious and yet gracious is the way of the wise.

### **Commentary on Gayan Boula above by Murshid Samuel Lewis**

Reserve conserves magnetism and if this magnetism is used for the spreading of Baraka it is excellent, but if it becomes a source of vanity it is false. Generally if effort is needed to maintain the reserve it is impure and if it is natural it is true and then there is graciousness and a relaxation of ego. This dignity never separates one from another, except for the purpose of seriously helping the other.

### **Rules that pertain to Matanat**

My conscientious self,

Consider your responsibility sacred. (Copper Rule 1)

Do nothing which will make your conscience feel guilty. (Copper Rule 3)

Consider duty as sacred as religion. (Silver Rule 1)

Meet your shortcomings with a sword of self-respect. (Silver Rule 9)

Be firm in faith through life's tests and trials. (Golden Rule 2)

### **The Art of Personality, Dignity (Matanat)**

**Suresnes, September 6th, 1923**

From *The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan, 1923-II, July — December*

The consideration of dignity, which in other words may be called self-respect, is not something which can be left out when considering the art of personality. But what it is and how this principle may be practiced, may be answered that all manner of lightheartedness and tendency to frivolity must be rooted out from the nature in order to hold that dignity which is precious to one. The one who does not care for it does not need to take trouble about it; it is only for the one who sees something valuable in self-respect.

People with self-respect will be respected by others, even regardless of their power, position, possession or rank. In every position and situation of life those people will command respect.

There arises a question: Has lightheartedness then any place in life, or is it not necessary in life at all? All is necessary, but everything has its time. Dignity is not in making a long face; respect is not in making cross brows. In frowning or stiffening of the body one does not get honor.

Dignity is not in being sad or depressed. It is only dividing one's activities to their proper time. There are times for the laughter, there are times for seriousness. People who are laughing all the time, their laughter loses its power. The person who is always lighthearted does not command that weight in society which is necessary. Besides, lightheartedness often makes one offend others, without meaning it to do so. The one who has no respect for oneself has no respect for the others. One may think for the moment that one is regardless of conventionalities and free in one's expression and feeling, but one does not know that it makes one as light as a scrap of paper moving hither and thither in the space, taken by the winds. Life is as a sea, and as further into the sea one travels, the heavier a ship one needs. So in this sea of life for a wise person to make life, there is a certain amount of weight required which gives balance to personality. Wisdom gives that weight; its absence is the mark of foolishness. The pitcher full of water is heavy. It is the absence of water in the pitcher which makes it light, as one without wisdom is lighthearted. The more one studies and understands the art of personality, the more one finds that it is the ennobling of the character which is going forward towards the purpose of creation. All the different virtues, beautiful manners and beautiful qualities, they are all the outcome of the nobleness of the character. But what is the nobleness of the character? It is a wide outlook.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

Weightiness and seriousness don't by themselves lend dignity to a person. One can imagine a serious and thoughtful person who spoils a sense of dignity by meanness or eccentricity. We can respect a person who is strict or severe if that person is fair-minded and just. In a dignified person we expect to find sincerity, honesty, wisdom, courtesy, and restraint or self-control.

Self-control is learned by mastery over the impulses of the nafs. Untamed, the nafs wishes to justify and promote itself. A dominant person may satisfy for the moment the needs of the nafs and a retiring or shy person may feel defeated. As long as the concern of the nafs is in the forefront, dignity will be lacking. Dignity only appears when there is self-respect. One learns self-respect by making the nafs take a back

seat. When one shows restraint, not defending oneself or pushing oneself forward, the nafs may suffer. But then one discovers that the momentary defeats suffered by the nafs mean nothing. And freeing oneself from the petty battles that often go unnoticed adds a gravitas to one's personality in the form of peace. One can then survey what is happening with more objectivity. This is the wider outlook Murshid mentions. With a wider outlook, one can bring seriousness to a situation where lightheartedness might have been a strategy of avoidance.

When one has restrained the nafs and has seen how the nafs suffers, one gains more compassion for others. One can see how others are caught up in needless battle. With the peace of foregoing the battle comes a feeling of graciousness towards others. True dignity arises from a sense of inner freedom and compassion.

**Buzurgi (Venerability) Reflection 1:** The essence of spirituality and mysticism is readiness to serve the person next to us.

**Buzurgi Reflection 2:** The person conscious of her duties and obligations to her friends is more righteous than one who sits alone in solitude.

### **Rules that pertain to Buzurgi**

My conscientious self,

Be polite to all. (Copper Rule 2)

Place people rightly in your estimation. (Silver Rule 3)

Do not neglect those who depend upon you. (Golden Rule 10)

### **Nature's Religion, Venerability (Buzurgi)**

*The Sufi Message*, Volume VII, *In an Eastern Rose Garden*, "Nature's Religion"

When one studies nature, one finds that nature cannot create itself without expressing its religion. The origin of all religion is love and beauty. If there were no love or beauty religion would never have existed, because beauty is the beginning of worship and prayer. The beginning of prayer and the first step of worship is admiration.

A child knows nothing about religion, and yet from the very first it is attracted to something that is beautiful, something that it can like. As it grows older it is only the form of its desires that changes; it still seeks to acquire the object of beauty. As it grows older still, it comes to recognize beauty in intellectual things. It is beauty that one bows down to. When a person gives honor and respect and reverence to another it is still because of the beauty which one perceives in some form or other in a person, and one has a natural inclination to bow before this beautiful living thing. Prayer and worship are acts of bowing to beauty, acts necessary to satisfy the predisposition with which every soul is born, the predisposition which is called love. And it is the innate desire of love to satisfy itself by admiring and bowing before someone, to respect someone, to have veneration for someone, to worship someone.

One goes step-by-step from simple worship to the worship of the Most High, as one realizes a higher and higher ideal. We can see this when we study the history of religions. It is the desire to pay respect, the desire to idealize that has made people worship idols or trees. Some people consider a certain tree sacred. And even in bowing before trees the desire of love is satisfied, its desire to humble itself, its de-

sire to pay respect and reverence; and by this means the love of the heart has its outlet. Such people are not evolved enough to know where God is. God is not before their eyes as this idol is. How can God Who is not seen be known? Therefore people bow before beautiful flowers, beautiful herbs, beautiful trees in the forest. Others bow before rocks that have a certain form which attracts them and produces in them the desire to pay homage to this particular rock, thus bringing satisfaction to the soul's desire to bow and pay respect.

*The Sufi Message*, Volume VI, The Alchemy of Happiness, Acknowledgment

There is another thing that one should acknowledge. One should acknowledge in one's friend, in one's companion, in those one wishes to help, the good part in their character. By acknowledging it, by noticing it one will fortify it; it will become greater. And do not think that it is against humility to acknowledge even one's own merits; for if one is unconscious of one's merits the plant is suffering there without water. It does not mean that by acknowledging one's merit, one's virtue, one becomes proud or conceited. If one wants to, one can keep oneself free from pride or conceit. But by recognizing one's merit one certainly waters the plant which is worth rearing.

### **Commentary by Suhrawardi**

Veneration for another happens when one appreciates the special gifts that make the person unique. One may start to develop one's capacity to appreciate by thinking of a revered family member or an inspiring person in life or a spiritual teacher. As the feeling of appreciation grows, one develops a faculty for appreciation. One can also develop this capacity through the first stage of prayer, gratefulness, as described by Murshid. Noticing all the little things that one has taken for granted, one begins to see that one is showered continually with most valuable but under-appreciated gifts. Prayer in this way can open one's eyes and open up a perspective that one had missed. In a similar way, cultivating the feeling of appreciating others by noticing what is special about them softens one's heart and develops a sense of veneration.

By developing the capacity to notice the virtues or gifts of others, one may begin to notice one's own gifts. Perhaps one begins to see oneself through the eyes of a friend or teacher. One can retain one's humility while at the same time appreciating one's good points. Having a healthy and balanced ego helps one to be free of envy,

of competitiveness, and of perfectionism. It becomes easier to take joy in the gifts one observes in others and in their successes and accomplishments.

Veneration of one's teacher, of one's family, of one's friends and community leads to veneration of the presence of God everywhere one turns. The capacity for veneration helps one to make God a reality.



**Vairagya (Indifference) Reflection 1:** Indifference is the key to the whole secret of life.

**Vairagya Reflection 2:** The greatest love in life is often that which is covered under indifference.

### **Volume VIII The Art of Being The Privilege of Being Human, Indifference (Vairagya)**

The word *vairagya* comes from the Sanskrit and means indifference. By Sufis it is called *fana*, and it is shown in the cross, the symbol of the Christian religion.

This indifference comes to every being and is the first step to one's annihilation, because not one atom can have its evolution without annihilation. The lower beings, the mineral, vegetable and animal, evolve towards the higher beings, and as the human is the highest creation, there is nothing for one to evolve to but this indifference, when it comes, opens a way for one to God from Whom one came.

This indifference comes to children when they realize that their doll is not so interesting as they had thought and that it would be more interesting to play with other children who at least are alive. So first children take the doll and love it. They carry it about and if the dolly's hand is hurt children want some remedy; a bed is needed to put the dolly in and a carriage is needed to take the dolly out. But when the nature of the doll is understood it is thrown away, and children realize that to play with children of their own age is better than to play with dolls which never speak.

So it is with us, the children of the world. Our likes and infatuations have a certain limit; when their time has expired the period of indifference commences. When the water of indifference is drunk, then there is no more wish for anything in the world. The nature of the water one drinks in this world is that one's thirst is quenched for a certain time, and then comes again. When the water of divine knowledge is drunk, then thirst never comes again.

This indifference comes when the nature of the world is understood; it is the higher knowledge. Then it is understood that all those objects to which one attached so much importance, which one strove to attain, to achieve, are not important. Before reaching that stage people attach too much importance to their joys, to their sorrows. If one is sad the whole world is full of sadness. If one is a little joyful the whole world is full of joy — as if the sun would rise and set according to one's joy and sadness.

Indifference, however, must be reached after interest has taken its course; before that moment it is a fault. A person without an interest in life becomes exclusive, one becomes disagreeable. Indifference must come after all experience — interest must end in indifference. One must not take the endless path of interest: the taste of everything in the world becomes flat. One must realize that all one seeks in the objects one runs after, that all beauty and strength, are in oneself, and one must be content to feel them all in oneself. This may be called the kiss of the cross: then one's only principle is love.

*Vairagya* means satisfaction, the feeling that no desire is to be satisfied any more, that nothing on earth is desired. This is a great moment, and then comes that which is the kingdom of God.

Why is God satisfied with the world whereas even humans, when they reach a certain grade of intelligence, are not satisfied? Or is God not satisfied? There are two sorts of dissatisfaction. The first is felt when a person has so much given in to the external self that the world can give one no more satisfaction. The other comes when the desire for more experience, for more enjoyment ceases. This is called *Vairagya*, this is indifference. Such a person is not unhappy. That person is happier than others. One has only lost one's intense interest in the world.

There is a story of a comedian who every day disguised himself in order to fool the king, the Badishah, at whose court he lived. But the king recognized him in all his disguises. The comedian then thought that he would disguise himself as an ascetic. He went to a cave in the mountains and lived there with two disciples, also comedians. He fasted for long periods thinking that in this way he disguised himself well. After forty days people, seeing his disciples, began to speak of the sage living in the mountain. They brought him presents: one hundred, two hundred dirhams. But he refused all saying, "Take it away. The sage does not want money or presents."

His fame spread more and more. The king heard of him and became anxious to see him. So he went to the cave, but for a long time the disciples would not let him enter. At last he was allowed to come into the presence of the "sage." The king said, "I have been kept waiting very long before I could see you." The sage replied, "The dogs of this world are not allowed to enter the house." The king was very much insulted. He thought, "This must be a very great person." He gave him a paper saying, "This is a *parwana* for the support of your disciples." A *parwana*

means a grant of land, but the word has two meanings, it also means moth. The “sage” said, “If it is a *parwana* its place is in the fire.” And he put the paper in the fire which was burning before him.

The king went away and the comedian got up thinking, “Now I must tell the king how well I have fooled him.” Then a voice came saying, “Your feigned indifference has brought the king before you. If it had been real indifference, We Ourselves would have come before you.”

### Commentary by Suhrawardi

We may think of *sanyasins* (those in India who practice *vairagya*) as ascetics who have made the sacrifice of leaving life behind in order to pursue the spiritual path. Their life may seem like deprivation. I like Murshid’s description of renunciation as the kiss of the cross, when one’s only principle has become love. For the renunciate, the rewards of the world have lost their attraction. Until that time, Pir Vilayat used to say, enjoy the world’s chocolate! One doesn’t need to become an ascetic before one is ready to enjoy it. The treasures of the world deserve to be enjoyed. Only when they are fully enjoyed is one ready to move on. The world holds out the illusion that its pleasures will bring satisfaction. But as soon as we acquire what we thought we longed for, our longing turns to something else.

As a youth, Murshid’s great ambition was to become a musician at the court of the Nizam, the greatest patron of the arts in India at the time. His friends discouraged him since he was only beginning his career in music. They felt that the court of the Nizam was the place for the culmination of one’s musical career. But Murshid would not listen to them. He held firmly to his goal and continued to practice his music for months though there was no sign that his wish might be granted. Then a friend invited him to dine with the Prime Minister. At that time the Prime Minister was out of favor with the Nizam and thought he might be able to gain favor by introducing him to a young and gifted musician. That very night a message arrived announcing an imminent visit by the Nizam. He was introduced to Murshid and asked Murshid to perform. Soon after Murshid began, the Nizam stood in appreciation of Murshid’s skill and after hours of performance, the Nizam gave Murshid his ring and honored him with the title, the Tansen of India (Tansen was a legendary musician). At that moment, Murshid had fully realized his ambition. But he thought, “This honor means nothing in comparison to the discovery that my ardent wish and dependence on God has brought me such fulfillment.” This is the kiss of

the cross. Setting aside the pleasures of the world, even the more exalted pleasures, leads to discovery of satisfaction in a living heart, a heart in which the residence of God has been confirmed.

The sanyasins in India willingly take on the hardships of wandering in the wilderness because they have found an enduring feeling of happiness. God is everywhere they look. What more could one ask for?