

Climate Change as a knightly challenge

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January 29, 2015 marks the 1600th day since the announcement by Pir Zia of the Knighthood of Purity of the Hazrati Order. That means that those who started the task of the Herald soon after the announcement will soon be finishing with the Golden Rules. They will soon become eligible for the accolade of the knight. I am expecting that Pir Zia will be performing the first knighting ceremonies at the summer camps in 2015. What will it mean to have a cadre of knights in our Order? What will it mean for a knight who has spent the past four years daily assimilating Murshid's formulation of futuwah in the form of the Iron, Copper, Silver, and Golden Rules? What comes next after the task of the Herald?

Leon Gauthier, a scholar deeply immersed in the customs and lore of medieval chivalry, summarized its essence in the form of ten principles. Pir Zia reformulated those principles to cast them in a spiritual light and to bring them up to date for our time.

1. Thou shalt honor the revelation of all of the prophets.
2. Thou shalt defend what is sacred.
3. Thou shalt respect interdependence and shalt constitute thyself the defender of all in need.
4. Thou shalt love the earth on which thou was born.
5. Thou shalt not recoil before intimidation.
6. Thou shalt challenge tyranny without cessation.
7. Thou shalt perform scrupulously thy duties toward all if they be not contrary to divine wisdom.
8. Thou shalt never lie and shalt remain faithful to thy pledged word.
9. Thou shalt be generous and give largess to everyone.
10. Thou shalt be everywhere and always the champion of the right and the good against injustice and evil.

The tradition of futuwah differs from our picture of knights with spears and shields. Its code is more concerned with hospitality and generosity. Here are some examples of a typical code from *The Way of Sufi Chivalry* by Ibn al-Husayn al-Sulamī. Do these principles remind you of the Rules?

Be honest, loyal, and dependable.

Be generous.

Keep a beautiful character.

Be satisfied with little.
Do not make fun of your friends and live with them in harmony.
Do not listen to slander.
Wish to do good.
Be a good neighbor.
Speak well and be loyal to your word.
Treat your household and those who are dependent on you well.

Returning to the 10 principles of knighthood, I want to underscore two of them:

Thou shalt love the earth on which thou was born, and
Thou shalt be everywhere and always the champion of the right and the good
against injustice and evil.

Clearly these are related to the looming threat of dramatic climate change. Our Hazrati knight might feel a duty to take up lance and sword, so to speak, and confront the corporate exploitation that is ruining the fragile ecosystem of the earth we love. Is this in line with the particular gift the Message brings to humanity? Murshid says, "O peace-maker, before trying to make peace throughout the world, first make peace within thyself!" The dilemma of the reformer is that often he or she is entering a cycle where each new reformer corrects the reform of the previous reformer. There may be progress in this cycle but often the new regime falls pray to the faults of the previous regime. One could say that it is not enough to be against. By making peace within oneself, one brings this peace to a new way of life. The knight brings not only the courage to stand up against injustice and evil but also the fine qualities of futuwah.

The Message reminds us that the divine is to be found in all, regardless of their behavior. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said that a muslim should treat all other muslims with love. Someone asked, what if a muslim should be a tyrant? The Prophet answered that the best way to love a tyrant is to oppose him. Is it possible for a knight of futuwah to simultaneously love and oppose those who do wrong and are destructive?

A recent Christian Science Monitor article profiled UN climate change chief Christiana Figueres. The story goes that when she was attending a climate change meeting in Warsaw in November 2013, the World Coal Association at the same time was holding its own summit also in Warsaw. She was invited to address the Coal Association. Her friends advised her not to attend, expecting a hostile audience. She went anyway and challenged the coal executives to wake up to a potential cat-

astrophic risk if they didn't begin to diversify by developing green alternatives. Subsequently she was contacted by some of the leaders asking for further advice. Another story is the influence in the late 1980s of Alisa Gravitz of Coop America (now Green America) in convincing McDonald's to abandon styrofoam clamshells. The switch to paperboard containers gave a big boost to the recycling industry. Ten years ago there was unresolved tension and suspicion between the Sufi Order International and two other Hazrati Orders: the Sufi Ruhaniat International and the International Sufi Movement. Intensive and difficult reconciliation processes took up painful issues and worked through them. The result is an enduring cordial and harmonious relationship. This work was necessary for an organization with a high ideal to demonstrate its integrity.

Taking Murshid's words to heart, first make peace within thyself, it seems to me that our first task is to make a thorough inventory of the contribution of our organization to the climate crisis and to take painful steps if necessary to minimize our impact on the environment. This same kind of analysis can be made available to all members so that we can all participate to the degree we choose in lowering the impact profile in our daily lives.

I asked the question earlier, what is the next step for those who receive the accolade of knight? A popular slogan says "Think globally and act locally." There is so much in the world today that weighs on our hearts and calls to our spirits. It is a time that calls for action. Each knight has to listen to his or her guidance and decide how best to act. There is plenty of room for individual action. It may also be that some with common concerns may want to join together. There are many issues that could be taken up.