

# Introduction to the Knighthood of Purity: A Beginners Guide

with selections by Hazrat Inayat Khan, Pir Zia Inayat Khan, Suhrawardi Gebel, the Nektakht Foundation, Theo van Hoorn, and Jessica Sarfaraz Berger

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## **Welcome!**

A warm welcome to one and all. Thank you for your interest in the Knighthood of Purity. May this undertaking be a blessing to you and answer your heart's true longing for guidance, supporting your highest aspirations towards their ongoing fulfillment. If you have questions about this program, or would like to become a Herald of the Knighthood of Purity, you are encouraged to contact the Chancellor at [knighthood@inayatiyya.org](mailto:knighthood@inayatiyya.org) to begin your journey.

## **Introduction: About this course**

This curriculum introduces the activity of the Knighthood of Purity. While it is a relatively short program, completing the rules of the Knighthood of Purity requires 400 days. All those who complete the 40 vows are eligible to receive the accolade of Knight of Purity during a knighting ceremony. Actualizing the vows is an undertaking of a lifetime.

This course is designed to be useful for individuals or groups. Leaders can transmit the information in a live setting, or an individual can curl up with the booklet at home. The reflections and activities can be adapted for solo practice or for groups, with minor adaptations.

This program differs from the traditional offerings of the Inayatiyya in that it is open to everyone, including those who are not yet familiar with the Sufi teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan. The concept of Knighthood enfolds numerous traditions from around the globe. Historical readings, activities, and reflections specific to the Inayatiyya are provided along with background, assignments and meditations that may be more familiar to those new to the idea of Sufism. The goal is to welcome everyone. There is a place for everyone in the Knighthood of Purity. Hazrat Inayat Khan's message of Love, Harmony, and Beauty unifies our pursuit.

Interestingly, when Hazrat Inayat Khan first founded the Sufi Order International (now the Inayatiyya), "(He) initially defined the Sufi Order he authorized as “the Order of Purity” and, in addition to his deputy initiators and leaders, he went on to appoint “Knights of Purity” and “Heralds.” (Shaikh ul-Mashaik Mahmood Khan, Tabarruk)

The Knighthood of Purity is the modern-day practice of Chivalry (Futuwwa) that was handed down from ancient times through the Profits and the Mystics. The practitioner takes vows that cultivate the qualities of courage and generosity. This curriculum is a sampler of the practice, offering the chance to try on each of the four sets of rules - the iron, copper, silver, and gold. Short, hopefully enjoyable assignments provide time to reflect, from a personal vantage point, scenes from the rich history of the Knighthood of Purity.

Futuwwa or spiritual chivalry is linked to Sufi mysticism as the inner practice manifesting in the outer world through chivalric deeds. Hazrat Inayat Khan (aka Murshid)'s mastery of Futuwwaa is taught in *Character Building, The Art of Personality* and *Moral Culture*.

### Who can become a Knight in the Knighthood of Purity?

Everyone sincerely interested in walking the path of the modern-day Knight can become a Knight of Purity. You do not have to be a Sufi of the Inayatiyya to

"Transcending, however, the prejudices of the political and churchly roots to which it nevertheless stayed closely connected, in chivalry an adversary could become, rather than an unbeliever to be annihilated, a human being of like disposition, to be considered as such." (Shaikh ul-Mashaik Mahmood Khan from the Introduction to *Saracen Chivalry* by Pir Zia Inayat Khan)

don the mantle of the Herald. You do not have to practice a particular religion. So long as the forty sacred rules (aka vows) are undertaken with heartfelt effort for the allotted timeframes, the road towards a Knighthood is open to one and all. In this way, the Knighthood of Purity emblazons one of Murshid's highest values: **the unity of all religious ideals**.

The practice is suitable for all ages, including youth. Everyone embarking upon this journey is encouraged to read the works of its progenitor, Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan, may his memory be blessed. Therein, the spirit of generosity, kindness, and purity flows from the page to the reader, sanctifying all endeavors with love and wisdom.

The program introduces the Knighthood of Purity through the lens of history, role models of the Inayatiyya, spiritual, and pop icons embodying Knighthood, assignments, and reflections. Stories of modern-day role models not affiliated with the Inayatiyya or with Sufism are intentionally included to inspire newcomers.

A Herald is one embarked upon the path towards the Knighthood. To become a herald, one only needs to ask the Chancellor or the Secretariat for the ordination. Contact information can be found on the Knighthood of Purity website. [<https://inayatorder.org/knighthood/>]

A Knight is one who has completed the 40 vows and received the accolade of the Knight of Purity from another Knight, or from Pir Zia Inayat Khan, Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan's grandson.

Murshid is the term used to describe Hazrat Inayat Khan; it is used affectionately, but it also means the one who leads murids, or in this case, those who study Sufism.

The Knighthood of Purity, according to Pir Zia "...Upholds a sacred duty to serve God and humanity and honor the message of all traditions"

## **Overview of The Practice of the Herald**

There are 40 rules divided into 4 parts of 10 rules each, starting with the Iron Rules, then the Copper Rules, followed by the Silver Rules, and completing with the Golden Rules. One begins with the first of the 10 Iron Rules, "My conscientious self, make no false claims," reciting that rule every morning for 40 days, and attempting to actualize truthfulness in one's daily life.

Those who enter the Knighthood of Purity kindle an inner fire that illuminates a high-level perspective of one's responsibility to the world. One's inner and outer development manifests as acts of chivalry. By nature, the rules act as seeds watered by the blood, sweat, and tears of the adherent. These seeds blossom as chivalrous acts of generosity, bravery, and humility, reaching skyward in service of humanity. Inner systems of belief are challenged, grow, change, and support you as you move forward toward a Knighthood.

Becoming a Knight of Purity confers responsibility to intervene for those who are abused, protect those in danger, stand up against injustice, and serve humanity. Stepping into this blessing may catalyze fulfillment of one's life mission. As the training cultivates honor and self respect, it deepens love towards God and community. In the end, we all meet at the One, the perfection of love, harmony, and beauty.

## **Part I - The Iron Rules**

*Group or Individual Activity: Reading the Iron Rules aloud*

My conscientious self:

Make no false claims.

Speak not against others in their absence.

Do not take advantage of a person's ignorance.

Do not boast of your good deeds.

Do not claim that which belongs to another.

Do not reproach others, making them firm in their faults.

Do not spare yourself in the work which you must accomplish.

Render your services faithfully to all who require them.

Seek not profit by putting someone in straits.

Harm no one for your own benefit.

## **History of Chivalry and the Knighthood of Purity**

*Solo or Group Activity:*

Invocation

“Towards the one, the perfection of love, harmony and beauty, the only being, united with all the illuminated souls who form the embodiment of the Messenger, the Spirit of Guidance, Amen.”

Repeat the invocation again, this time with the intention of attuning to the consciousness of a key historical role model of the Knighthood, Hazrat Ali, introduced below by the Honorable Chancellor Emeritus of the Inayatiyya, Suhrawardi Gebel.

Note

If "Attuning to the consciousness" of an historical figure is a foreign concept, think of it like this. Have you ever lost a loved one, and later wondered what they might advise you in a difficult situation? Maybe you've had the experience of remembering what you love about your lost (or even geographically distant but still alive) person. You recall their manner and essence before posing a question to them in your imagination. Then you become still and wait for a feeling about how

they would guide you. Attuning to the consciousness of a spiritual leader is something like that.

### **Historical Sufi Role Model of the Knighthood of Purity:**

"Hazrat Ali, a Model of Futuwwa" by Suhrawardi Gebel

A prime exemplar of futuwwa or chivalry in the Sufi tradition is Ali ibn Abu Talib. Ali was the son of Abu Talib who was the uncle of Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, Ali was a cousin of the Prophet. He came into the custody of Muhammad early in life and was brought up by him like a son. He was the first to embrace Islam when Muhammad asked for the support of his family and clan. He was a witness to the revelation of the Holy Quran. He became the primary protector of the new religion when it was being persecuted. Besides the well-known story that illustrates his courage and faith, in which he slept in the bed of Muhammad to defeat the assassins who wanted to murder the Prophet in his sleep, he faced many famed warriors on the battlefield in one-on-one combat and defeated them all.

He was instrumental in turning around crucial battles and rallying the outnumbered Muslim forces to achieve unlikely victories. His bravery and chivalry on the battlefield won even the praise of his enemies. Though he was a renowned warrior, he always preferred to avoid war if a way out could be found through negotiation. Before the Prophet died, he left many indications that Hazrat Ali was to be his successor. Nevertheless, following Muhammad's death there was a scuffle for power. Ali had no taste for political maneuvering and withdrew from contention to pursue other projects.

Three Caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, succeeded the Prophet. Uthman was assassinated and left behind an administration that was riddled with corruption. The community turned in desperation to Ali who reluctantly accepted the role of the fourth Caliph. During six tumultuous years in that role, he reorganized the army and government. He instituted a fair system of taxation and for the first time, each Muslim was given the same allotment from the revenues, regardless of status. Slaves received the same as their masters. This leveling of status resulted in resentment and rebellion among the privileged.

When a colleague pointed out to Ali that his system was alienating those who had power to help him and helping the poor who had no power, Ali replied, as

for the entitled who rebel, good riddance. He said he was not seeking advantage from any party but doing what he felt was right in the eyes of God.

Ali left behind a large number of sermons and a selection of letters which have been published in English under the title Nahjul Balagha. My impression from reading many sermons and a few letters is that Ali saw the worldly life as filled with temptations to overcome. He saw this life as an opportunity to prepare for the next life when one's fate will be sealed, and change will be much more difficult. If this life is devoted to pleasures, comforts, and self-seeking, one will be ill-prepared for the next life. On the other hand, if one seeks to do good in this life, helping others and behaving in an upright manner, one will be rewarded in the next life. At a time of crisis during his rule, Ali thought he might not survive and wrote a long letter of guidance to his son. I have made selections from that letter which contains much chivalric teaching. I also changed the language to make it gender inclusive which sometimes makes for awkward phrasing. Here are a few samples from a longer list of selections.

Take care to provide well for your future abode. Do not barter away eternal blessing for pleasures of this mortal and fleeting world. Fight, whenever required, to defend the cause of Allah. When you think of defending the cause of Allah do not be afraid that people will laugh at you, censure your action or slander you. Fearlessly and boldly help truth and justice. Bear patiently the sufferings and face bravely the obstacles which come in your way when you follow truth and when you try to uphold it. Adhere to the cause of truth and justice wherever you find it. Develop the habit of patience against sufferings, calamities, and adversities. This virtue of patience is one of the highest values of morality and nobility of character and it is the best habit which one can develop. Trust in Allah and let your mind seek God's protection in every calamity and suffering because you will thus entrust yourself and your affairs to the Best Trustee and to the Mightiest Guardian. The greatest achievement of your character is that the hostility of another against you does not overcome the consideration and friendship you feel towards that one, and his or her ill-treatment of you does not overbalance your kind treatment to him or her. "

**Click the link below for the entire article.**

<https://inayatiyya.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Hazrat-Ali-A-Model-of-Futuwwa.pdf>

### **Reflection on Iron rule 3:**

Speak not against others in their absence.

"In everyday life, 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." - Hazrat Inayat Khan, Self-Control, Character Building

1. Can you think of a time when you slandered someone behind their back, because they had hurt you and you weren't in full control of your speech, or because you wanted to fit in with a group, or for another reason? What would heal that wounded part of yourself that spurred that behavior?
2. Have you ever stood up for and defended someone in their absence, even though that person may have mistreated you in the past? How were you able to do this? What was the effect? On yourself? On the people in the room with you? On the person who you defended?
3. Were you ever in a situation where people were making fun of someone behind their back, and you remained neutral; neither defending the person from ridicule, nor badmouthing them either? What kept you from defending the person?
4. Is there someone you know who gracefully defends others in their absence without belittling the speaker? How do they do it? If you already do this, you have attained success in practicing Iron Rule II, "Speak not against others in their absence."



## **Tim Gunn: A Positive Role Model of Chivalry from Pop Culture**

In the show, Project Runway, leader Tim Gunn regularly provides his expertise, support, and a listening ear to the show's contestants. On occasion, the competing designers fall into squabbles. These rivalries result in sometimes petty and other times vicious acts of sabotage. With equanimity, Tim Gunn serves all parties as a comfort, a voice of reason, and sounding board. He always upheld Iron Rule 1 "Speak not against others in their absence" and at the same time, bore compassionate witness to the pain of the competitors.

His method is gentle and simple. When a contestant complains about another competitor, Mr. Gunn neither interrupts the speaker, nor defends the one being complained about. Instead, he deftly and quickly finds an opening in which to tactfully turn the conversation back to the competitor her/himself, saying something like "I really like how you were able to salvage this material and turn it into a new item with a Wow factor, even though there weren't many resources left. Continue on that path and don't let anything distract you."

"Willpower plays a great part in character building, and willpower becomes feeble when one yields to every little tendency, inclination, and fancy one has...But one forgets that what one calls "me" is not the self. It is what wills that is the self. Therefore, in the Christian prayer it is taught "Thy will be done," which means "Thy will, when it works through me, will be done."

- Hazrat Inayat Khan, Willpower, p 3

## **Activity for Iron Rule number 10**

Iron Rule number 10 teaches us to "Harm no one for your own benefit." Superficially, this seems like an easy undertaking. However, upon closer examination, many everyday consumables were created by slaves. With our supply chains riddled by the scourge of slavery, it may feel impossible to avoid harming others for our own benefit.

Individual Activity: The questions below can spark inquiry into your heart; journal the answers without judging yourself or thinking too hard. Later, you can edit and make time to enact real life solutions.

1. In what ways can you live Iron Rule 10 to the fullest? It does not have to be about modern-day slavery.
2. Is it possible to only purchase items that have not been created by slaves? If you are determined to make this a reality, how will you do it? If this is not realistic for your situation, what change is possible?
3. Do you consider animals to be people? If so, are you able to live as a vegetarian or vegan? What are other ways that the very act of living our comfortable lives is harming others? What can we do to stop or minimize this harm?

## **Part II: The Copper Rules**

Reading the Copper Rules aloud

My conscientious self:

Consider your responsibility sacred.

Be polite to all.

Do nothing which will make your conscience feel guilty.

Extend your help willingly to those in need.

Do not look down upon the one who looks up to you.

Judge not another by your own law.

Bear no malice against your worst enemy.

Influence no one to do wrong.

Be prejudiced against no one.

Prove trustworthy in all your dealings.

## **History of Chivalry and Establishment of the Knighthood of Purity**

Jessica Sarfaraz Berger

In 1926 the honorable Hazrat Inayat Khan, may his memory be blessed, dubbed four women as Knights of Purity, and named eight Heralds of the message, planting the seed for the Knighthood of Purity. This inspired Pir Zia Inayat Khan to establish the Knighthood of Purity in 2010 on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Murshid's journey to the west, called Hejerat Day. As previously mentioned, Pir Zia recently made the Knighthood of Purity one of the Inayatiyya's six activities.

The practice of chivalry (futuwwa) began in ancient times and has continued into the present. The prophet Abraham is considered the father of chivalry. In his origins of futuwwa lecture given at the *Journey of the Soul Retreat* on July 7, 2012, Pir Zia Inayat Khan illustrates how generosity undergirds the foundations of futuwwa through the story of the father of chivalry, Abraham. This tale is paraphrased below:

Because he had grown rich, the angels doubted Abraham. Even though God knew Abraham to be true, God allowed the archangel Gabriel to test Abraham's faith. Gabriel appeared before Abraham dressed as a Bedouin and sang a beautiful ode to God. Abraham was so moved that he asked Gabriel to sing it again, so Gabriel said something like, "OK, but only if you give me half of what you own". Abraham promised to do so, and Gabriel sang again.

In ecstasy after the second song, Abraham implored him to sing it once more. So, Gabriel told him, "Well, OK, but you have to give me the rest of your worldly possessions". Abraham replied, "Yes, yes!" and so Gabriel sang it again.

When it was over, Abraham gave the Bedouin the key to all he owned and Gabriel saw the truth of Abraham's faith, explaining "You don't really need to give me all your stuff", but then Abraham insisted, "No, a promise is a promise, so take it". And this decision affected not just Abraham himself, but his household and his heir, Ishmael. So, what he did was, he took off his scarf and tied it around his son's waist saying, "This is my legacy to you. This is the estate of generosity and praise and truth. This is what I pass down to you and this is what you must pass down to your heirs." (paraphrased from Pir Zia Inayat Khan, 2012).

For those who complete the journey of the Herald and are Knighted, a hand embroidered ceremonial sash made in India by the Hope Project is tied around

one's waist during the Knighting ceremony. This beautiful gesture represents centuries of valor, possibly dating back to the year 3300 BC.

Now we understand more about the prophet Abraham and his role in the Knighthood of Purity. The Jewish Prophet Abraham handed down the legacy of chivalry to Ishmael and Isaac, who bequeathed it to the next generation. From one generation of prophet to the next, Futuwwa predates the lives of Jesus and Moses, who received the practice, and then a monk named Basira transmitted it to Muhammad. Even in ancient times, chivalry bridged several religions, belonged to all, and elevated people of all faiths.

From the line of prophets, after Muhammed, the practice passed through the lineage of saints alongside the Sufi way. (paraphrased from Pir Zia Inayat Khan, 2012)

"Succeeding prophets revived and transmitted the way of chivalry as it had come down from Abraham. From the prophet Muhammad it reached Hazrat 'Ali (k.), who passed it down to his sons Imam Hasan (r.), Imam Husayn (r.), and Muhammad Hanafiya (r.). Hazrat Fatima az-Zahra (r.) became the lodestar for chivalry among women (niswan). Hazrat 'Ali's disciples Salman Farsi (r.), Da'ud Misri (r.), Suhayl Rumi (r.), and Abu'l-Mihjan (r.) carried the tradition to the East, West, North and South." (verbatim, Pir Zia Inayat Khan, 2012)

### **How did Futuwwa continue from Biblical times into the present day?**

Since futuwwa is the inner practice that takes form in the outer world through the chivalric deeds, Sufi mysticism is linked to Futuwwa. As such, Hazrat Inayat Khan "Was also a master of spiritual chivalry, or *Futuwwa*. His teachings on the chivalric virtues are thoroughly expounded in the volumes *Character Building and the Art of Personality* and *Moral Culture*." (The Inayatiyya Order website, 2019). Murshid's immense contributions to futuwwa, and how he evolved into personifying and transmitting the practice will be discussed further in Part III, along with the Silver Rules.

### **Qualities of Futuwwa link Historical Role Model Noor Inayat Khan to the Origins of the Practice**

The lodestar of the Knighthood of Purity of the Inayatiyya is beloved Noor-un-Nisa-Inayat Khan, may her memory be blessed forever. Noor's decision to defy

the Third Reich even after her entire network of peers had been annihilated by the Nazis is the ultimate story of courage. While Abraham, the father of chivalry forsook all his possessions for the sake of honor, Noor gave her life.

"Noor Inayat Khan (1914-1944) was SOE's first woman wireless transmitter in German occupied Paris during World War II. Posthumously awarded the George Cross MBE and Croix de Guerre with Gold Star for her outstanding wartime service and heroism on behalf of the Allied cause, Noor's remarkable and inspiring life have been commemorated in numerous war memorials, WWII histories, and several films" (Jean Overton Fuller, 1971)

While history portrays the Archetype of the Knight as male, Noor's story, and the stories of numerous women rising above the nafs to enact valorous deeds, points towards an all-gender Archetype of the Knight.

Jean Overton Fuller's biography "Madeleine" fully renders the remarkable life of her childhood friend, Noor-un-Nisa Inayat Khan, whose generosity, manners, valor, compassion, and strength epitomize all we aspire towards in the Knighthood of Purity. In the next chapter, we'll learn more about Noor from her esteemed relative, Shaikh ul-Mashaik Mahmood Khan.

Noor's deliberate decision to sacrifice her life to free others exemplifies two pillars of the Knighthood of Purity: generosity and compassion. Pir Zia explains how feelings of gratitude that flow from divine blessings enable us to participate in that cascade- giving of ourselves as we acknowledge the numerous blessings of divine largesse.

Herein there is also the sense of trust or faith in God, which allows us to let go of what we have, knowing we will be provided for. This evokes Murshid's famous saying: "The blessing of life is in the consciousness of the blessing"

### **Reflections on Copper Rule 1: Consider your responsibility sacred.**

1. Which one of your life's responsibilities is the most sacred? How do you ordinarily fulfill this responsibility?
2. How does characterizing this responsibility as a sacred duty change the way you might approach its fulfillment?
3. How does enshrining your responsibility in the pantheon of the divine change your relationship to your responsibility and to the person/people that you serve in its relation?

### **Activity: Reading the Silver Rules Aloud**

My conscientious self:

Consider duty as sacred as religion.

Use tact on all occasions.

Place people rightly in your estimation.

Be no more to anyone than you are expected to be.

Have regard for the feelings of every soul.

Do not challenge anyone who is not your equal.

Do not make a show of your generosity.

Do not ask a favor of those who will not grant it you.

Meet your shortcomings with a sword of self-respect.

Let not your spirit be humbled in adversity

### Part III: Historic Role Models of the Knighthood of Purity



*Knights of Purity from 1926 Ceremony, Miss Angela Alt*

"She encountered Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan in London and was initiated by him. After Murshid's first visit to Italy in 1923, Miss Alt conducted the group of new murids there. Then she was given the charge of the Movement in Italy.

In his speech on Viladat Day 1925 at Suresnes, Pir-o-Murshid spoke about her in the following appreciative words: "The first person who began the work in Italy was Miss Angela Alt, to whom the credit of introducing the Message there will always be due. The delicacy and tact with which the Italian people must be met, were ready in her nature. She has never made them think her an outsider ..."

At the Summer schools at Suresnes, after the interviews, Angela Alt gave a short explanation of the exercises to murids to whom practices or additional exercises had been given at those interviews. She did this on Murshid's request.

Some of the older murids, present at the Summer school at Suresnes in those days, remember her at the piano composing music for the sayings about incense from the Gayan." (*From the archives of the Nekbakht Foundation*).



**Knight of Purity**  
**Mahtab Mevrouw Agathe Baronesse van Hogendorp-van Notten**

From the Biography of Hazrat Inayat Khan

" *She has been a voice in the wilderness.* During August of 1952, a few days before the beginning of the Pilgrimage in Suresnes, we learn from Gawery Voute that Baroness Mahtab van Hogendorp lies seriously ill in Amersfoort. Broken in body and spirit, she greatly desires to see for one last time some of the Sufis who knew Murshid. At once I write to the address that has been provided. The calm and business-like reply is in such an exceptional balanced handwriting that one would never suspect that the sender has already repeatedly been given up by her physicians and has already said her farewells to life. My first visit centers on listening, careful and respectful listening to someone who, during the most critical period of Murshid's prophetic pilgrimage through the West, gave him almost incomparable support that carried through to his departure in 1927 and then continued in her never-diminishing dedication to Murshid's family and in particular to Vilayat, for whom she remained a true guardian angel for the next twenty-five years.

... What I do not yet know is that a week later, in Suresnes, as Vilayat reads from Murshid's biography, the words will come up that illuminate the role that Mahtab van Hogendorp played in Murshid's trials and tribulations: "she has been a voice in the wilderness." For Murshid, on her peregrination around the world, Mahtab van Hogendorp was the voice, the unexpectedly perceived human voice which suddenly, in the only wilderness of modern Western life, sounded out like a voice calling from a better world. It is like the words of Schubert's *An die Musik*, "transported from a better world..."

Source: *Recollections of Inayat Khan and Western Sufism* by Theo van Hoorn





### **Ekbal Dawla van Goens-van Beyma**

“And why do we get to see so little of him (Maheboob Khan)?,” she asks still not completely convinced.

“That is probably one of many reasons (that he is composing songs from Murshid’s sayings),” I reply. “But don’t forget that Maheboob got married recently and that many, even in the East, at first feel less need for the outside world. In addition, Mrs. Ekbal van Goens, one of Murshid's closest devotees and Shadbiy’s mother, lives in with her and Maheboob.”

“Mrs. van Goens,” she replies, “I have already met her. She was the lady who was pouring tea this afternoon at the table near the entrance of the Lecture Hall, where Sufi books and portraits of Murshid are sold. I have already spoken to her repeatedly. She truly understands the art of sensing which book will prove most attractive to any given individual. And, now I suddenly understand why the house is called “Ekbal Dawla.” A number of times I have asked myself how a villa in Suresnes got such a name.” (*From Recollections of Inayat Khan and Western Sufism by Theo van Hoorn*)

### **Commentary by Sarfaraz Berger**

Miss Angela Alt, Mahtab Mevrouw Agathe Baronesse van Hogendorp-van Notten, and Ekbal Dawla van Goens-van Beyma were dubbed as Knights by Hazrat Inayat Khan. Their contributions demonstrate considerable breadth in the human expression of nobility. Unlike Sister Connie Gemme, who prevented slavery in Ghana, unlike Princess Noor Inayat Khan, who gave her life to liberate the world from tyranny, unlike Tim Gunn, whose famous deportment personifies achievement through gentleness, and unlike Hazrat Ali, who upheld a strict code of honor even as a warrior, the Knights in this chapter kept relatively low profiles. But each served in the way that exemplifies the Knighthood - as themselves, with their own unique gifts.

They are included to demonstrate that while it takes commitment and effort to be part of the Knighthood, the way is different for everyone. Your aspirations on your own path are just that, your very own. It is my personal opinion and faithful belief that a task will not be laid before you that is beyond your attainment. So if you are drawn to this activity, you are strongly supported to pursue it. There are many who try, and then stop, and then they try again and succeed in seeing it through. Nothing is ever wasted.

**Reflection on Silver Rule 9:** Meet your shortcomings with a sword of self-respect.

1. Have you ever been so angry at yourself, at something you did "wrong" due to one of your shortcomings that you punished yourself, or sabotaged a project, or did something you knew was even worse than what just happened in order to humiliate yourself?

If so, can you imagine going back to that moment in time, and instead of being hurtful to yourself (\*or maybe you externalized the anger and hurt someone else, it does happen, even to the best of us) view yourself and your shortcoming with compassion?

What would that be like?

2. Can you make a plan to treat yourself with compassion the next time you fall short of your ideal or make a mistake? What would that entail?

3. Do you compare your own deeds to those of great leaders, and feel anger towards yourself, or envy towards the leaders, or some other form of resentment because you are not the same person as the person you admire, or the person you strive to be?

## **Section IV- The Golden Rules**

### *Group Activity*

Reading the Golden Rules aloud

My conscientious self:

Keep to your principles in prosperity as well as in adversity.

Be firm in faith through life's tests and trials.

Guard the secrets of friends as your most sacred trust.

Observe constancy in love.

Break not your word of honor whatever may befall.

Meet the world with smiles in all conditions of life.

When you possess something, think of the one who does not possess it.

Uphold your honor at any cost.

Hold your ideal high in all circumstances.

Do not neglect those who depend upon you.

## **Shadow Qualities the Knighthood of Purity**

**by Jessica Sarfaraz Berger**

When enacting the rules, awareness of the shadow qualities inherent in their application fosters success. Hazrat Inayat Khan underscores this statement, intoning that "No principle must be blindly followed." For instance, it would be foolish to "Uphold your word of honor, whatever may befall" if you were to uphold your word of honor to meet someone at a Comedy Club instead of responding to a concurrent emergency in which a loved one would die unless you intervened. This dire example illustrates the importance of discernment and fluidity in applying the rules.

Murshid says that "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." That is not to say that one ought to get into the habit of standing people up, but there are extreme cases that make it the right choice.

In order to constantly observe the 40 rules, a person would need to maintain immensely high levels of subtlety, depth, devotion, mindfulness, and discernment all of the time. We are all human, and such a goal is likely to be impossible; it is natural that this aspiration is likely to outstrip our abilities, at least on occasion.

It is possible to feel like a failure or charlatan because the rules are impossible to uphold 100% of the time. I would like to encourage you to allow yourself to make mistakes and still let yourself move forward to the next rule after concentrating on the current one for 40 days. The Knighthood of Purity is a lifelong pursuit. The first time around will be different than the third. Being a human means we are imperfect. So long as we learn from our mistakes and keep trying, that is success.

### **Two Remedies for the Shadow Qualities**

One of the most important teachings of Sufism, handed down from Murshid through the lineage of teachers is the following:

"Don't do anything that is illegal, immoral, or against your better judgment, no matter who is telling you to do it, including me."

The other teaching is to "Follow your heart and it will never lead you astray.

Activity:

1. Do you get any uncomfortable feelings when thinking about being part of the Knighthood of Purity?
2. What are they?
3. If you want to pursue this program and also attend to the warnings of you heart, what will you do?

### **More Chalice, Less Blade: An Evolving Symbology for the Knighthood of Purity**

Regardless of social status, creed, religion, ethnicity, age, and every outward manifestation of background, the Knighthood of Purity propels the Herald and Knight forward to enact chivalrous deeds from the heart. Pilgrims of the Knighthood of Purity protect others from abuse, motivated by compassion, generosity, and courage. This defines our essence. If love is our essence, then how does the symbology of violence illustrate our true path towards the one?

### **Reflection on Violence in the Knighthood**

While the Knighthood of Purity evolved from an ancient Knighthood steeped in historic symbols of honor through killing, do these trappings still befit

the delicacy, tact, care, and nobility that now serve as our standards? If so, how? If not, why not? There is no right or wrong answer.

Imagine the following: This is the present moment, today, now. Visualize yourself wriggling into a real metal suit of armor. Although movement is hindered, it won't stop you from carrying your sword. With this item in one hand, you lift yourself up into your horse's saddle, readying yourself to die or kill another for the sake of chivalry, for the ideal. Maybe you are defending an abused group. Maybe a tyrant has already massacred thousands and you are coming to the rescue. As a pilgrim of the Knighthood of Purity called to action, spurred by the memories of honorable knights past, girded by the imagery of shield and sword, can you taste the smell of blood and battle as you meet the enemy on the field?

Imagine that this battlefield is your true calling, to stab, to draw blood, to tally the dead you have killed for the sake of an ideal. This fact is substantiated by the symbols of your mission - the sword, the shield, the warhorse. The way in which you were or will be dubbed a knight all speak to the truth and honor of this moment.

Who will you kill? What will you die for? Who are the people that you are about to slay or be slain for? Are there people now deserving of death by your blade? Where will you sacrifice your life for honor and how? The vow "Uphold your word of honor, whatever may befall" resounds. What is your honor?

There is no right or wrong answer. Some may believe that killing is never honorable. Others may believe that it is childish to believe this because murderous tyrants are not going away if we simply pray for them or chant.

Is there a workaround? Does it make sense to kill the people of a tyrant when it is the tyrant who is causing all the strife? What would you do if you were called to war and did not want to kill, but did want to protect innocent people? How does the vow "Uphold your word of honor, whatever may befall" support your decision?

## **Symbols and Words Impact our Behavior: New Symbols and New Knights**

The vow, "Have regard for the feelings of every soul" answers back. There are actions of chivalry that answer violence not with violence but with decisive, symbolic action. Think of Bree Newsome.

" Early in the morning on June 27, 2015, Newsome got into climbing gear at the South Carolina Capitol. Given word the coast was clear, she received a boost from a fellow activist and began ascending the 30-foot flagpole displaying the Confederate flag. Though police arrived at the scene, she successfully took the flag down, saying, "You come against me with hatred, oppression and violence. I come against you in the name of God. This flag comes down today."

When Bree Newsome climbed the South Carolina Capital grounds flagpole and tore down that Confederate Flag, her act of defiance sent ripples through the nation as her intrepid act dismantled bureaucratic barriers erected by hate. This single courageous moment set the bar high for the coming New Anti-Racism movement, compelling many who had before watched from the sidelines to join the ranks of caring souls - enacting peace towards dismantling centuries old systems of racist hegemony.

Bree Newsome risked her life and freedom. She did not resort to weapons, violence, or intimidation.

"But so long as we have kindness in our heart, instead of hardening the nature of the enemy, it will soften it, since we receive all that we give out." - Murshid

As one of several modern-day heroes, Bree Newsome embodies the new age role model for the Knighthood. While she is not affiliated with the Inayatiyya, we can still learn from her example what it means to enact the rules of the Knighthood of Purity. And since the Knighthood of Purity is open to all people of all backgrounds, she personifies our quest.

"Bree Newsome is an artist and activist who seeks to end structural racism and violence against Black bodies. On June 27, 2015, ten days after a white supremacist shot and killed nine Black parishioners in a church in Charleston, South Carolina, Newsome climbed a flagpole at the South Carolina Capitol grounds to remove a Confederate battle flag; she was arrested for this and became the focus of media attention. A Christian, Newsome finds her faith provides her with both guidance and the strength to do her work." (Biography, 2021)

## **The Knights of the Round Table, Merlin, and Monty Python.**

There are many strenuous, humbling undertakings affiliated with this path. Where we fight slavery is not glamorous. Calling on senators and attorney generals is not like searching with Merlin for the Holy Grail. Nor is handing out flyers to police officers as exciting as fencing. No trumpets ring out for those whose quiet pathway on the knighthood is to care for a loved one during a lengthy illness. Yet, the small and large acts we undertake as Heralds and Knights come together towards the One. As we each have our own role to play, it is a comfort to know that the rules help us, and we help each other to cultivate the grace, compassion, and courage to face the real-world challenges that are our true calling.

Whether your Heraldry and Knighthood will mean serving tea parties to bring together members of the community, or whether you are parachuting out of an airplane to deliver food to the hungry, know that you are not alone. That you have hundreds of Knights and Heralds around the world cheering you on, that you are welcome to the fellowship meetings, no matter where you are on the path, and that beloved Murshid, Noor, and Pir Vilayat smile upon you, even as the remembrance of humor from the Knights that go Nee may make you smile at yourself.

The Knighthood of Purity comes to us as a gift from Pir Zia Inayat Khan, wrapped in the contradistinction of both weight and levity conferred by centuries old myths, legends, games, stories, and yes, even comedies. For it is through love and laughter that we come together as one human family, united towards love, harmony, and beauty. Thank you for being part of this journey.

## **Prayer for the Universel**

O Thou, who art the Maker, Molder,  
and Builder of the Universe,  
Build with Thine own hands  
the Universel,  
our Temple for Thy Divine Message  
of Love, Harmony, and Beauty.  
Amen.

Blessings to you on your path!