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Initiation: Information and quotations
from Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan

Initiation

Note: These quotations have been selected from the works of Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan, the founder of the Sufi Order International.

Initiation in the Sufi Order

What is our object in taking this path of initiation? Our object in this is to become human, to find the way how to become human, how to live a human being's life to its fullness, how to live a life of love, harmony and beauty. – *Hazrat Inayat Khan*

One may be initiated into the Sufi Order by one of its Representatives, individuals who are authorized to initiate and who are appointed by the head of the Sufi Order. Those interested in initiation are encouraged to select a Representative with whom they feel a deep trust and respect, for these qualities are necessary to facilitate the training offered. The initiate receives, from her/his initiator, spiritual practices which are designed to promote spiritual realization, facilitate the unfoldment of their being and assist them in meeting life's challenges and demands. These practices are not compulsory but are given as a gift.

The only regulation which members are asked to observe is a restriction on the use of non-medical drugs. It is Pir Vilayat's belief that drugs can interfere with the practices and spiritual training offered to a member.

Here's a bit more information regarding initiation. I've included some quotes from Hazrat Inayat Khan, the founder of the Sufi Order, to help explain. If you want more information, I've included two more pages of information: one page contains more quotations relating to initiation while the other page contains the official stuff from the Sufi Order secretariat. And if you want more information, you can contact either the Sufi Order International or Khusrau.

What is initiation?

Initiation only means a step forward, a step which should be taken with hope and courage, for without courage and hope it would be most difficult to take any forward step.

When does one get initiated?

Initiation in the real sense of the word, as it is used on the spiritual path, takes place when a person, in spite of having a religion and belief, an opinion and ideas about spiritual things, feels that he should take a step in a direction which he does not know; when he takes the first step, that is an initiation.



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In addition to this natural initiation, some individuals who feel attuned to this spiritual path, choose to deepen their connection by being initiated into the Sufi Order and connecting with a personal guide.

Why get initiated?

The aim is to find God within ourselves, to dive deep into ourselves, so that we may touch the unity of the whole being. It is toward this end that we are working by the power of initiation, in order that we may receive inspiration and blessing in our life from within.

When a person is initiated, from that hour, one is linked with the chain of Murshids and Prophets, and so enabled to receive the light running through this current, through the chain of Masters.

The decision

Initiation is a very sacred step and should not be entered into lightly. Once an individual has explored this path and feels that this is truly their spiritual path, it is their responsibility to request initiation. Ideally, the Representative at their local centre will be the initiator, since this is the person whom the candidate will see most often; however, any individual appointed by the Pir can perform the initiation ceremony. If the initiator feels that the individual is ready for initiation, they will initiate the individual. They may, however, ask the person to wait for a period of time.

Information on Initiation

Note: The following information has been excerpted from an information package on the Sufi Order.

Requirements for initiation

What is asked by the Order of someone requesting initiation is first of all, sincerity of intention. There must also be the attitude of an open heart and mind toward the teachings, although complete acceptance is never required and there is no dogma. While the prospective initiate may not understand the full ramification of this act, there must be an awareness of the significance of such a step. Initiation signifies a serious commitment to deeply participate in a process of spiritual training. It is especially important that one not be unrealistic in his/her expectations, desire fantastic experiences or occult powers, attempt to use spiritual practices as a means of escape from the world, or evade personal issues through the misuse of spirituality. A person interested in initiation is usually asked to attend some classes and seminars on the teachings. During this period he/she may be viewed as a candidate for initiation.



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Objectives of the Training

Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan, has enumerated a series of objectives that he associated with initiation into the Sufi Order. These objectives are offered here with brief commentary.

Self Realization

The first objective is to realize the Self within and without. The Self is the divine aspect of each human being and is often referred to as our divine inheritance. The Sufi Order also places a strong emphasis on the initiate creating a meaningful life in the world, since doing this can be the means to actualize potential qualities, gifts and archetypes, thereby manifesting the Self without.

Training the Ego

The path of initiation is the training of the ego, and it is self discipline which is learned on the path. An important element of the above quote is the word training for it conveys an image of the ego with a positive and significant role within the human structure when properly disciplined. It is not destroyed but worked with creatively. The practice of mastery is taught in the Order as a means to transform the ego into a suitable instrument for serving the divine within.

The Art of Personality

The soul is veiled by covers, one cover over the others, and the rending of these covers allows the soul to emerge and rise high. This image of lifting the veils is found throughout Sufi poetry and refers to the process of awakening to one's natural state of being. The veils are our distorted identification with past conditioning and personal dramas. The art of personality is in the creation of a personality which incorporates, manifests, and actualizes the soul's potential.

Expansion of Consciousness

To see into the world unseen is the exploration of transpersonal states of consciousness. This means not reducing reality to the narrow perception of ordinary human consciousness but reaching beyond these parameters in a quest for direct experience of union with the Absolute.



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Awakening Divine Love

To kindle the fire of divine love. The awakening of the divine in the human being is the igniting of the love element in the heart. One of the essential criteria for recognizing a realized being is captured in the observation that the Holy Ones are living streams of love. There is much emphasis placed upon the kindling of the love element in this training, which sometimes is described as the Religion of the Heart.

To Know the Divine

To know and communicate with God. The various practices used in the training of initiates facilitate different modes of relating with that ultimate reality which many call God. Part of this path explores different relationships between God and the human being and the understanding that arises from each. The archetypal relationship of particular significance to the Sufi is that of the lover and the Beloved.

Communication With Life

To be able to read into nature's manuscript represents the mystic's capacity to communicate with all of life, experiencing a world composed of beings rather than things. Learning to read means, in this case, developing the capacity to see within the mineral, plant, animal, and human kingdoms, patterns which illuminate the nature of reality and reveal an underlying unity permeating the micro-macrocosms. Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, the present head of the Order, describes this phenomena as discovering that which transpires through that which appears.

Service to Humanity

If we ask what profit we derive from initiation, the answer is that religion, mysticism or philosophy – all that we gain – would help us to achieve one result, and that is to be best fitted for serving other human beings.

The Sufi Order is concerned that its spiritual training not be distorted into a narcissistic self-involvement but enables one to become more sensitive to the human condition throughout the world and better able to respond in a positive and creative manner. The expanding of individual into planetary consciousness, is the ideal which the Sufi Order seeks to serve.



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Other Traditions

The Sufi Order has an inter-faith orientation based upon respect for all authentic spiritual disciplines. Members are welcomed to participate in the religious traditions of their choice. If you have been initiated into another path and are presently doing a daily practice please inform your Sufi Order guide. This is to insure that the various practices are in harmony or are not repetitive.

Drug Policy

The only rule of the Sufi Order is that initiates are asked to refrain from using non-prescription drugs. This policy stems from the concern that combining spiritual practices and drugs may create an unbalanced condition in some individuals.

Financial Aspects

There are no financial obligations for those who take initiation. Both initiation and on-going personal guidance are provided free of charge. In addition, study circle classes are free for all initiates. Other programs may cost a reasonable fee.

Membership in the Sufi Order is different from initiation. Membership is achieved when one voluntarily chooses to pay dues to support the work of the organization.

Quotes from Inayat Khan on Initiation

The Sufi Message does not call a person away from a belief or church; it calls one to live it.

Initiation in the real sense of the word, as it is used on the spiritual path, takes place when a person, in spite of having a religion and belief, an opinion and ideas about spiritual things, feels that he should take a step in a direction which he does not know; when he takes the first step, that is an initiation. Ghazali, a great Sufi writer of Persia, has said that entering the spiritual path is just like shooting an arrow at a point one cannot see, so that one does not know what the arrow is going to hit; one only knows one's own action, and one does not see the point aimed at. This is why the path of initiation is difficult for a worldly man. Human nature is such that a man born into this world, who has become acquainted with the life of names and forms, wants to know everything by name and form; he wants to touch something in order to be sure that it exists. It must make an appeal to his physical senses before he thinks that it exists; without this he does not believe that anything can exist. Therefore it is difficult for him to undergo an initiation on a path which does not touch any of his senses. He does not know where he is going.



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Initiation, or in Sufi terms Bayat, first of all has to do with the relationship between the pupil and the Murshid. The Murshid is understood to be the counsellor on the spiritual path. He does not give anything to or teach the pupil, the mureed, for he cannot give what the latter already has; he cannot teach what his soul has always known. What he does in the life of the mureed is to show him how he can clear his path towards the light within by his own self. This is the only purpose of man's life on earth. One may attain the purpose of life without a personal guide, but to try to do so is to be like a ship traversing the ocean without a compass. To take initiation, then, means entrusting oneself in regard to spiritual matters to a spiritual guide.

There are different kinds of initiation that souls experience. One is natural initiation. A kind of natural unfoldment for which the soul cannot give any cause or reason, comes to a soul, although no effort or attempt has been made by that soul to experience it. Sometimes this initiation comes after great illness, pain, or suffering. It comes as an opening up of the horizon, it comes as a flash of light, and in a moment the world seems transformed. It is not that the world has changed; it is that that person has become tuned to a different pitch. He begins to think differently, feel differently, see and act differently; his whole condition begins to change. One might say of him that from that moment he begins to live. It may come as a vision, as a dream, as a phenomenon – in any of these forms; one cannot determine the manner in which it will manifest.

It is most essential for my mureeds to think what motive, what object they have in their working with the teaching and meditations given in the Sufi Order. Is it that they wish to develop occult powers? Then such powers are not promised. Is it that they wish to learn very much? But there is not much study given here. Is it that they want to be good? No special principles of goodness are taught here. If they want to be spiritual, we have not yet made solitudes and seclusions as they have on the top of the Himalayas and in the caves of the mountains, that we may give up our life in the world and retire there, nor do we wish for it. Then what is the motive which keeps us busy in the Sufi Order, what is our object in taking this path of initiation? Our object in this is to become human, to find the way how to become human, how to live a human being's life to its fullness, how to live a life of love, harmony and beauty.

To my mureeds, therefore, a word of advice that I have to give is to waken to the subtleties of human nature, cultivate and make your perceptions keen so as to get an insight into human nature. It is by this that you will probe the depths of life's secret, and it is in understanding this secret that all the mystery is revealed, a mystery which is mysticism. It is to find this mystery that we take the path of initiation; it is in this revelation that the purpose of our spiritual pursuit is accomplished.

Some people affirm that they have been initiated by a teacher on the other side. Well, perhaps they have; but are they not then in two worlds, the teacher in one and the initiate in the other? The initiate neither belongs to the teacher's world, nor does the teacher belong to his. This surely gives one less trouble than having to regard the pleasure of a living being; it is easier to feel that one has someone at one's back who is always whispering in one's ear and who speaks to one in dream or vision. It is not wrong and in some cases it is even true; there are souls, there are teachers who have perhaps not given on earth what they had to give, what they had to impart to others. But that is not the normal process. If it were a normal



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process then all the teachings would have been sent from the other side, but neither Buddha nor Jesus Christ nor Mohammed gave their teachings from there.

The path of initiation is also a path of tests: tests from the initiator, tests from God, tests from the self, and tests from the world; and to go through these tests is the sign of real progress in the mureed, while the one who does not undertake these tests will be wasting his time.

The important thing is this, that the one who is life's student, the one who is really initiated, studies himself before studying others. Does an initiator teach the truth? No man has the power to teach another the truth; man must discover it himself.

What is it that the initiator teaches the initiated one? He tells the initiated one the truth of his own being. He does not tell him something new or something different. He tells him something which his soul already knows but which his mind has forgotten.

The path of initiation is not a path of study. I have seen people who have not only read fifty volumes, but have written fifty volumes and published them, and not yet fit for initiation. It is not an act of brain, it is a process of the spiritual melting, going from that hard, metal aspect to the form of liquid; the ice turning into water. Therefore the mureed must guard himself against any disturbing influence that would interfere in this process, knowing that it is his responsibility. The teacher would have guarded him against it if the mureeds were children; the mureeds, who are grown-up, must feel responsible for themselves.

On the path of initiation two things are necessary: contemplation, and the living of a life such as a Sufi ought to live; and they depend upon each other. Contemplation helps one to live the life of a Sufi, and the life of a Sufi helps contemplation. In the West, where life is so busy and where there is no end to one's responsibilities, one wonders if to undertake contemplation, even for only ten minutes in the evening, is not too much when one is tired. But for that very reason contemplation is required more in the West than in the East where everything, even the surroundings, is helpful to contemplation. Besides a beginning must be made on the path.

The Great Ones are initiated by God Himself, and they prove their initiations not by their claims, but in their works.

To discover the heart is the greatest initiation.