

Vision and Ritual in Sufism

(autobiographical)

by

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(Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti)

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There is also the state of **baqa** which has been translated as “subsistence” but also means resurrection. This has been mentioned by the late Reynold Nicholson in his works on Abu Sa’id ibn Abi’l-Khayr who affirmed he was in that state. This in turn refutes those who contend (without evidence) that those who know never tell. It is also the basis of the poetry of the Persian Shabistari, and is referred to, at least, in other Sufi poetry. But these are outside the experiences of the writer and also outside the subject-matter of **Ritual**, but not of **Vision**.

1923. In June of that year Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan came to San Francisco. On the morning before his arrival this person had this Vision.

He was going toward the San Francisco Station to greet the Murshid. Being of a nervous disposition, he began to run and he saw the train approaching and the head of his Murshid project from the smoke stack. But he was too anxious and his heart-body projected from his subtle-body and at the same time the Murshid’s heart-body projected. The two heart-bodies rushed at each other like two comets and melded and moulded, becoming One, and this One became the **Spirit of the Universe**.

The ritual took place next day and is a simple form, derived from a more complex form used by the Four-School Sufism of Hyderabad, Deccan. This covers the Chisti, Kadri, Sohrawardi and Naqshibandi Schools. There is not much material on them as they are.

II.

The Great Visions took place in 1925 when this person went into the wilderness, presumably to die. Instead he was visited three times by the almost mythical Khwaja Khidr who grants wishes and he was blessed with Poetry, Music and Longevity. The last is obvious and there is no need to go into the others excepting in connection with the materiel below.

On March 21, 1925, at high noon, with open eyes this person arranged his own ritual and saw in turn all the great prophets of all the religions, and was finally blessed by Mohammed and given, in vision, a robe which he now has. There were later visions of this same robe.

In 1926 he was given the ritual of “Sufi” but this had to be kept secret because in America and Europe the disciples did not have the Visions.

III. Hazrat Inayat Khan as Guardian Spirit

Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan died in February, 1927, at New Delhi. One of the last persons to see him, to whom he gave his dying wishes, was the late Hazrat Hasan Nizami, Spiritual Director of the Dargah Nizam-ud-din Auliya in New Delhi. Three years after, the writer went into seclusion or

khilvat in commemoration thereof, and the Murshid appeared to him in what the Sufis call the “jinn body,” the Hindus the sharira sthula or “subtle body” and the Bible calls soma psychichos. From that time on for about fifteen years this function continued and therefrom one learned several occult arts and sciences which proved invaluable when he went to the Orient.

While a detailed record was kept it was destroyed in a fire in 1949, along with the library and nearly all the research efforts covering a long period of time and into at least four of the World's Great Religions. During this period also the writer was a disciple in Zen Buddhism. This must not be confused with what is popularly known as “Zen” but it can be identified with a recent book by one David Kapleau whose records in Zen parallel this contribution.

IV. A. Murad to Ahmed Murad. Fana-fi-Rassoul

Hazrat Inayat Khan continued to act, on and off, as Guardian Spirit until 1946 when he appeared and stated that the writer had one more test. Life was then very hard and a crisis was being reached. The next day as he was brushing his teeth, a tooth fell out, simply and easy. The Pir appeared and laughed and disappeared and then the Prophet Mohammed appeared. Years later he learned that the same tooth was missing in Mohammed's mouth and there is one school of Sufism in which the disciples must extract that tooth.

From that time on either Jesus Christ or Mohammed appeared as Guardian Spirit and this record will appear in poems saved. The Mission of Christ has been **Peace** and at this writing—and it appears very egotistic—the writer is working on a proposal to stop the fighting between India and Pakistan. He has already served on a peace mission between these countries which was rejected by the American Foreign Service.

At that time Mohammed gave him the name of A. Murad. In Sufism a mureed is one who learns under a teacher; a murad is graced by the Divine Spirit.

The Ritual. In 1956 the writer was at Dacca, his host had disappeared and the airline had not placed his reservation. In a strange way he was taken to a courtyard where there were Sufis and a Mr. Wahab asked abruptly, “Who is your Murshid?” “Hazrat Inayat Khan.” “Pir-o-Murshid Sufi Inayat Khan?” “Yes.” “Why it is his writings I am translating into Bengali.” He then introduced the writer and there was an immediate ceremony of Bayat or mutual pledge under Maulana Ghafour of the Chistia Order. He then gave the name “**Ahmed Murad.**”

V. Ahmed Murad to Ahmed Murad Chisti

From Dacca I went to New Delhi and there met for the first time Pir-o-Murshid Hasan Sami Nizami, son of Pir-o-Murshid Hasan Nizami. The tombs of many saints were visited and then I traveled all over India coming at last, in October to Ajmir, where there is the tomb of Moin-ed-din Chisti,

Founder of the Order using his name which uses music for spiritual development.

There had been no letter or communication but when I arrived at the station it was filled with people. The whole crowd followed me to my rooms and told me they were waiting for me at the Dargah.

Ritual A. I was taken to the tomb of the saint, but in a ritual and with one or two exceptions this was the only place where there was a formal ritual. I was the guest at lunch and then they took me back to the tomb when my guide said, "Close your eyes. What do you see?"

Closing my eyes I felt the presence of a man who gave me a robe (it has always been the same robe), but this vision was different from any before and since. For when I closed my eyes it appeared the same, and it was like a solid vision, and I tried opening and closing my eyes many times. Always the same. Then my guide asked me my name and I told him "Ahmed Murad." He said, "From now on it is Ahmed Murad Chisti."

The next day there was a big feast and a great ritual. But on the evening between there was the musical performance. People sat in a square. On the one side the non believers (Hindus); on another side the women, entirely without veils; on two sides the disciples.

I have never heard such uplifting music. There is nothing like it in the whole West. There is some "uplift" from Eastern rites and also from the Sufi ceremonies in the Near East, but they did not have the tremendous effect on the heart and consciousness. It is like being bathed in an infinite ocean of love. Someday I hope to have it recorded, a matter to be considered with the Musicology Department at UCLA. The same music was heard several years later at the tomb of Golra Shereef about nine or ten miles from Rawalpindi. This visit was also preceded by a vision and the Pir there repeated word for word what was seen in the vision, and his predictions for the writer are the only ones which have come out correctly.

VI. The Naqshibandis

When I returned to Lahore after a tour through Pakistan an important or self-important European Ph.D. who was teaching "Islamics" at some of our larger universities called me a liar in public with the peculiar situation arising that the audience all sympathized with me—the exact opposite of what has occurred in this country.

The upshot was that I was invited to a Naqshibandi Khankah or meeting place. All Sufis use a ritual based on the "Zikr," various ways of intoning phrases derived from the Islamic **La Illaha El Il Allah**, which also has numerous interpretations.

I performed the Zikr as instructed at Ajmir by a Murshid (teacher) who appeared suddenly, whispered instructions into my ear and disappeared. It struck a resounding note, but there was

another note, that one of the disciples there came from Oakland and I answered all his questions satisfactorily.

After the ceremony they all lined up to embrace me but after about fifty such embraces I entered the state of ecstasy. One must not compare this with the very vague use of the term by those who have not had this experience. It is as if the whole universe were made of Love and nothing but love. It took at least two hours to get back to "sobriety." This Khankah was dismantled, the teachers died and I could not find them. Then years later, on a Sunday while I was living in the Cantonment of Lahore, a delegation came to call on me.

They were persons who had been at the Khankah in Lahore in 1956 and now lived at a village known as "Sufiabad" near Lahore but towards the Indian border, a district now under military control. I have since attended other Naqshibandi meetings. This is the most conservative school of Sufis, leading toward Orthodoxy and rejecting Music.

VII. Vision and Ritual of the Rifai Order

There are many beautiful Mosques in Cairo and the staff of the American Embassy makes constant tours of all historical places. But after one of these tours I had a guide take me to many mosques in seriatim and when I reached that of Sultan Rifai below the Citadel, I said I would do my prayers. (I pray with all peoples according to their customs, and have been accepted by all religions as being one of them.)

All of a sudden I saw the whole Mosque filled with spirits and the Grand Sheikh acting as Imam. I cried copiously and could only rise with help.

That night the Grand Sheikh appeared to me in vision and gave me detailed instructions. That these are not and were not "imaginary" was soon demonstrated. For I had heard that there was a grand convocation at Sidi Shirani, the tomb of one of the earlier teachers and directors of the celebrated Al-Azhar. I went and as I crossed the threshold, two arms grabbed me. I did not know what would happen for there was no invitation and I was a total stranger. The next thing I was before a microphone and found I was the speaker of the evening at a holy celebration!

After the formalities the ritual began. We stood variously in a circle, a square and a Maltese cross. There was singing with symphonies and antiphonies exactly as I have read about in early Church music. The modes were distinctly "European," nothing like the Arabic or Near East types and decidedly tonal and harmonic in our sense.

It was a very long affair and I did exactly everything right, following what the Sheikh had instructed in the vision the night before. From that time on I was in constant companionship with the Rifai's and can tell a number of quasi-miraculous events which may belong to the "occult" but are outside the "vision" or "ritual."

VII. The Sufi Quest. The Kirquah (Kirkah)

Much of my time in Pakistan was spent in company with one Major M. Sadiq, a seer and spiritual healer. The communists were doing in Pakistan exactly what they were doing in Viet Nam, infiltrating into the Christian and Sufi headquarters and rather successfully. We suddenly found ourselves in their midst and a lot of drama followed which should be accepted seriously by our foreign service, and the neglect thereof is making us pay a terrible price.

Major Sadiq was pursued and transferred at the behest of a “counter-intelligence” and wherever he was sent there was a saint waiting for him. This is a long story but ultimately he met Sufi

Barkat Ali, the former factotum of Field Marshal Auchinlek, head of the British Army during the war. When asked to “opt” he said he would become a Dervish and has so remained.

My meeting with Sufi Barkat Ali exactly duplicated that with the American Christian Mystic, Rufus Moseley. I became his disciple and many events passed before we arranged a peace mission between Pakistan and India and I was the emissary therefor.

I came back to New Delhi to go to the Dargah Nizam-ud-din Auliya. I arrived at 10:30 at night and they were all waiting for me. No attempt will be made here to go into the “psychic,” “telepathic” and other elements which do not belong strictly to “ritual” or “vision.”

On the next day I went with the Pir and his brother and we visited the four tombs of Nizam-ud-din Auliya, Amir Khusrau, Hazrat Hasan Nizami and Hazrat Inayat Khan. There was a vision in each case but here there was at least one living witness also, men who are accepted by the community. For our purposes we shall limit these to one:

When I stood before the tomb of the great Urdu Poet, Amir Khusrau, he appeared with a robe (khirqua) exactly the same as I had seen before. “I initiate you into the school of Jelal-ud-din Rumi as the successor to the late great poet, Mohammed Iqbal.” (My poetry had already been written but I have had 100% rejections in this country.)

When I returned to Pakistan there was an awaiting crowd of some two hundred people, and we had a long ceremony in which the Robe was bestowed. One need not go into the “mystery of the Robe” here. The ceremony was quite long, and there was a big feast too and other factors, including spiritual dancing.

As this was challenged from two sources, one being the active head of the communist infiltrators, there was a succeeding ceremony attended by about five hundred people. I was not only accounted as “**Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti**” being given the full title of “Sufi” but made a full Murshid and given precedence over the other Khalifs or successors to the Pir. This was a very large ceremony in which we sat in a square. I do not know exactly the significance of this Square

but I had seen it especially in Egypt.

VIII. Pir Dewal Shereef. Islamabad University

This Pir is the spiritual teacher of Ayub. He makes exaggerated claims. The Major and I said we would upset him. For as earlier stated I had the Robe in Vision from Khwaja Khizr in 1925 and this Pir claimed also to have the Robe. So we decided on a certain date to get a big crowd and expose him. But before that happened each of us sneaked off along to visit the Pir, embraced him and was received as a disciple.

In 1956 Major, then Captain Sadiq, was Aide to Brigadier (General) Khan who was a disciple of the Pir and said we would come to him. But although he lived at Islamabad it was not for some time that he found his predictions came true.

Pir Dewal Shereef invited me to stay with him at Murree in the Himalayas to be put to test and instruction. There was no ritual, but this Pir acted as Guardian Spirit as above and the function was so easy and automatic he appointed me as Khalif for the United States and representative of Islamabad University.

Many details are omitted and whatever may appear in much read books by certain occultists, the writer finds their stories, even if true, are elementary. Besides all the events above have been annotated, the geography can be given, the persons can be named or indicated and there is no occasion for any sojourn into bizarre-mysterianism.

Omitted above were the western references to Walt Whitman, especially his "The Song of the Answerer," Edward Carpenter and his "Toward Democracy" and Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Renascence."

The writer's Yoga experiences have all been on the side of "Vision" without Ritual and his spiritual teacher, Swami Ram Das, emphasized vision at every step of the way. The writer has also been a long-time disciple in Real Zen which emphasizes "Vision" and was admitted into the Shingi-Shingon Temple on Mount Takao in Japan. This is the "Holy Mountain" of the country and contains the ashes of Sakya Muni (Lord Buddha) This Shingon school emphasizes Ritual above all else. The Ritual on the holy mountain was not so very different from a Vedic ceremony attended some months later in Bombay, India.

The union of "Ritual" and "Vision" in this person's life must not be taken as an argument in any direction. This person introduced Hazrat Inayat Khan to Nyogen Senzaki, the Zen monk, and they immediately merged in Samadhi, togetherness. The same thing occurred at Kamakura in Japan when this person met Roshi Sogen Asahina.

"When the gods arrive, the half-gods go." Whatever the contributions of men like Aldous Huxley

and Reynold Nicholson, sooner or later Anthropologists and other scientists will study the experiences of the expanding as well as of the contracted consciousness. We have not yet looked into the "Heart of Asia," but in the end we shall find that "all God's chillun got wings."