



Conversation with Murshid Hidayat Inayat-Khan En Route to His 90th Birthday Celebration

In 1992 the following conversation took place, in Dutch. It took place just after Hidayat became the Representative General of the Sufi Movement and Pir-o-Murshid of its Inner School. (This conversation is hardly translatable because in Dutch there are two words for 'you': 'jij' and 'u'. Jij is for one's junior and u is for one's elder or superior.)

Say jij to me

Alright, I shall speak in English to you.

Call me Hidayat.

Ah, I can't do that for you are the Head of the Sufi Movement and to my understanding it is right adab to call the Pir-o-Murshid by his title.

Alright, but if you say that I am so high and mighty, then I can tell you to call me Hidayat.

Yes, of course you can, but you are not a dictator and I am not a slave.

This little story is a typical example of how a conversation with Hidayat can develop, so often with a twinkle. For 15 years he has been the Head of the Sufi Movement, never ever talking down to people, but always on an equal level, in a brotherly way, without, however, losing his sense of dignity or his sense of nobleness.

All leaders of the Sufi Movement have had their own way of inspiration: Maheboob Khan was faced with the difficult task of taking over the leadership of the Sufi Movement after the passing of the Master. His was the deep inner way. Ali Khan was the singer and healer, the leader who united extreme tenderness with an unbending, straight attitude. Musharaff Khan, the youngest of the brothers and called the Wali Allah by his brother Inayat, attracted mureeds by bringing the sun into the Sufi Movement. Faza Inayat-Khan, grandson of Hazrat Inayat Khan, was a (very) young man of his time: he was the builder of the Universel in Katwijk and the Dargah of Hazrat Inayat Khan in the Basti Nizamuddin in New Delhi, India. People living in the Basti in this time still remember him, for he rebuilt the Dargah and maintained good contacts with people from the Basti. Fazal was also the 'builder' of the sister Sufi organization: the Sufi Way.

Hidayat Inayat-Khan, son of Hazrat Inayat Khan, brought the brotherhood and sisterhood within the Sufi Movement, a lion taming himself rather than others. To quote him: *Attunement of the heart to the will of God is developed when the seeker after beauty, annihilating the self for the divine, becomes conscious of harmony.* And another sentence: *I respect your opinion as I respect my own opinion and I hope that you will be able to say the same.*

There are people who have no self, and who think that annihilation means that only the others have a self; for those these two sentences might seem contradictory. However, it is very simple: each heart is the Temple of God, but one can only work on one's own heart, to make it a worthy temple. This is the specific task that every human being has.

What is it that is Hidayat's drive? In 'Once upon a Time'¹ we can read the following: *Ever since those early days of once upon a time, the memory of such a precious example awakened each day anew an untarnishable longing to hear our Father's voice silently saying: "Your Abba's loving presence is always here, hidden in your lonely hearts."*

It is this untarnishable longing that incited Hidayat to continue the work of his Father. Some time ago I found a document in the archives containing lectures on esotericism and mysticism from the then 25 year old Hidayat, in Dieulefit, in the south of France. Hidayat was a violinist in that time

and remembers having played the solo part of Mendelssohn's violin concerto. But this was during the Second World War, when Hidayat was also with the Maquisards, the resistance in the South of France, and his mother and brother and sisters were in England, where Noor and Vilayat joined the English forces.

Hazrat Inayat Khan and Amina Begum had 4 children: Noor (killed in Dachau in 1944), Vilayat (founder of the Sufi Order International, who died in 2004), Hidayat and Claire².

As from the beginning the drive of Hidayat Inayat-Khan has been to continue the work of his Father. It was a drive, however, without any claim whatsoever. Music has always been part of the work; how could it be otherwise? For the children of Inayat Khan received music lessons from their Father from an early age on. In 'Once upon a time' we can read how the 7-year old Hidayat attended a violin concerto for the first time³, knowing from that moment that he wanted to become a violinist of Western music. He played very much, for he also had to take care of his family. After the war Hidayat and family settled in the Netherlands, in Utrecht and then in Haarlem where Hidayat played in the Haarlem orchestra and received conductor lessons from Ton Verhey.

In his youth Hidayat frequented the Paris Ecole de Musique where – as Hidayat has said – all teachers were great souls, with names that are still resonating in the heart of those who heard them: Jacques Thibaud, Pablo Casals, Alfred Cortot, Diran Alexanian, Georges Enesco, Nadia Boulanger. From the Hungarian Lener Quartet Hidayat learned chamber music. When Hidayat talks about them he calls them 'my family'. Nowadays they would have been called 'illegals' as they had secretly traveled to France in cattle cars in order to participate in a music competition, the winners of which would be offered a concert tour through Europe on the condition that they would then play all the quartets of Beethoven. They won and made the Beethoven quartets known throughout Europe. When Hidayat talks about them an extraordinary deep feeling comes through and the last time we could hear him playing the violin, in the Universel Murad Hassil, we felt the influence of them, for Hidayat played like a tzigane.

Violinist he is, a composer of symphonies and other compositions, and a conductor. In the International Biographical Centre in Cambridge, England, we can find a description of his musical education and musical career. His music has been played in all continents. Some highlights: in 1957 the *Zikar Symphony* was played in the Salle Pleyel in Paris; the *Gandhi Symphony* was organized in The Netherlands by Unesco in 1969 and played in Amsterdam in 2003; in *The Voice of America* Carmen Dragon interviewed Hidayat in 1971 on the Virginia Symphonic Poem, played in 1971 in honor of the second centenary of America; the *Message Symphony* in 1977. In 2002 the premiere of the *Suite Symphonique* was played in Munchen, in commemoration of Hidayat's sister Noorunnisa with a standing ovation and in 2003 the *Ballet Rituel*, also in Munchen; Andreas Heinzmann conducted this *Suite* as well as *Ballet Rituel* in 2003, and also *the Royal Legend Symphonic Poem* played in Vancouver, Canada, in the year 2007.

The themes of Hidayat's music are the themes of his ideals: Offers for freedom (*Suite Symphonique*), remembrance of God (*Zikar*), Hazrat Inayat Khan (*Message*), greatness and ahimsa (*Gandhi*), the sweet nature of people in Virginia (*Virginia*), unity of religious ideals represented by Emperor Akbar (*Ballet Rituel*), dauntless courage and social reform in Tipu Sultan (*Royal Legend*).

Hidayat's music could be described as a meeting between eastern non-modulative monotonia and western poly phonic themes structured upon modulative sound patterns. The music is structured along western harmonic lines and at the same time it breathes the perfume of the eastern ragas. This combination may sound strange to ears unaccustomed to music, for the unknown is not easily loved, but this music grows on one, discovering how music and architecture come together in something infinitely great.

Hidayat: *In music I always feel that the melody is the most important thing. Music should always be the result of a combination of melody, harmony and rhythm. There is of course the law of harmony, as we all know, but one can interpret that law differently, and one should not do away with harmony entirely. If a piece of music does not have a melody, and if it does not have a harmonious structure, it is then like a house without a roof and without windows and doors.*

There is music that is inspiring to the soul. I used to play the violin in a symphony orchestra, and one day during a rehearsal a very famous organ player, Marie Claire Alain, all of a sudden said: 'and now we are climbing up a ladder up into heaven'.

Composer, violinist, leader of the Sufi Movement, husband, brother, father, friend, teacher. How can one describe him and doing him justice? We can't. But in this DVD some of his lively humor and depth is shown.

Hamida Verlinden

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¹ Hidayat Inayat-Khan, *Once upon a Time..*, 2014, Sunray edition, ISBN 978-94-91574-12-2

² In 2011 Claire passed on, and September 12th, 2016 Hidayat)

³ Beethoven's Violin Concerto, played by Mischa Elman in the Salle Pleyel in Paris