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Foreword

Fazal Inayat-Khan would have liked this paradox. The sincerity of so many heartfelt writings all remembering a man who died 20 years ago imputes to this book a reality which belies a caveat he often shared – that everything is always changing, even the very moments we seek most to understand.

So perhaps it is appropriate to approach this volume as a prism of reflections, each facet representing an individual's experience – the refractions together mirroring a holographic sense of this remarkable man, what he stood for and the influence he continues to generate.

What is important to Arch Ventures in compiling this work is, firstly to honour and commemorate the man Fazal Inayat-Khan two decades after his passing, and secondly to create a conduit for his thinking and affect to reach further and more deeply into the world, where it is now even more sorely needed.

For those of us who already knew him or of him, perhaps reading this work will spark memories, re-energise and reconnect us with powerful experiences and processes he elicited within us. For those who come to this book fresh and wondering, we trust that you may find a resonance, a numinous response that will guide you in your own heart journey into becoming.

When asked the question, 'What would your chosen epitaph be?' Fazal replied simply: *He Loved.*

This book is a contribution to giving further flight to that love.

Introduction

The experience you have within yourself of your separate identity, to allow right and wrong to be re-defined by you, your singular contribution, is where evolution really happens. You, by becoming yourself, can open a new wavelength. What you reflect immediately influences your environment, people close and far away.

Fazal Inayat-Khan, notes from an attended lecture, 1989

What remains true beyond the endless ribbons of time? What is imagined? What is real? To feel love we follow a need. To be acknowledged we follow a need. To see and understand deeper we follow a need. What spiritual chemistry is at work, and by what chance or karmic accord do people gather around an inspiring teacher with the forgotten question: *what is my soul's purpose?*

Heart of a Sufi is neither a biography of Fazal Inayat-Khan nor an analysis of his work. It is a spontaneous response by his friends to a scent of truth that lingers wherever they turn, and the seed of longing for the *ontowards* he placed in the hearts of all he met, a wavelength travelling on.

Fazal was a mystic whose very presence shocked one awake. He had access to extraordinary intuition and inspired with his interest in everything. When asked about his Sufi teaching, he would describe it as: *experiential, inclusive and non-definitive*.

He embraced the methods and findings of natural sciences and saw relevance in all psychological maps since Freud, including Jung, Maslow, Grof and the emerging discipline of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). In his vision towards an integrative transpersonal theory and practice, he fearlessly encouraged original thinking and created new cosmologies, although never prescribing paths. He valued the fluidity of questioning.

If you are curious to enquire beneath the layers of personality towards a deeper, authentic Self and the future of our collective human and spiritual identity, this collection of poignant and humorous testimonies will give you a flavour of the process.

Fazal taught through a glance, through music, through silence, through breath-taking observations, wit, provocations with untruths, and indirectly. Like when he addressed a person before him with words meant for a person standing close. His words reached deep – empowered by pure, heart-felt intent.

Those receptive to his glance saw into the depth of their own existence. Those heeding his insights courageously explored their attitudes and reactions to life, their subtle self-deception. Fazal was incapable of not living his truth, which changed often and unfolded faster than the truth of the most innovative scientists. In this manner, some negative reactions he evoked in people were reconciled by the release of debilitating personality complexes, his own included.

He believed we have the power to transform suffering by taking on the wounds that repeat in our families and our ethnic histories. And by releasing our pain through compassion, we also redeem the collective psyche. The result is a more liberating perception and a deeper understanding of life. To this end, Fazal offered his total presence. He proceeded in showing us how to distance ourselves from the objects of our attachments, as well as healing and balancing our thoughts and feelings.

He would give his mureeds (students) individualised tasks such as write a love letter to yourself or compose your own obituary. Some tasks were chillas, a Sufi term for voluntarily-undertaken actions that expose unhelpful attitudes and perceptions, but also touch on deeper

levels of a person's spiritual unfolding. These short or long-term assignments were endlessly creative, and never arbitrary. 'Every form,' Fazal reminded, 'has beauty. And all forms are relics of eternal potential.'

This paradox included him, and us, his spiritual family. Truth fossilises fast, especially in groups and organisations. Fazal practised alertness against this decay. If there was a dictum to keep himself and his students awake, it might have been: *answers are dead, questions are alive*.

Fazal posed challenges. In some men, and women, he roused competition and a wish to emulate, live up to, or battle with his free spirit and intelligence, yet beneath such projections, so necessary for learning and un-learning, there was a deep respect for the man and the genius that animated his role.

During a typical summer, winter or spring school, participants created a micro universe by engaging in mystical games. Fazal encouraged *as if* play, emphasising clarity of intention. Acting *as if* evokes a super-real experience while preventing identification with its affect, since our watcher stands apart, aware. Play-acting brought deep insight and recognition, laughter and tears. Like a magician, Fazal set the tone most conducive for the event, often assigning opposing chillas so players were pitched against each other in their game-objectives. 'Raise your opponent,' he would encourage. What we faced and brought to consciousness were, of course, always our inner opponents.

He could have been a world-famous dramatist, musician or author, something his partners and children might have wished for at times. Instead he devoted his short and intense life to the expansion of consciousness, deeply inspired by his grandfather, Hazrat Inayat Khan, who brought Sufi ideas to the West in 1910.

Fazal's innovative style challenged his mureeds to engage with the complexity of life in the twentieth century, balance faith with doubt, analyse, unlearn, concentrate, contemplate, meditate and develop a symbolical understanding of life.

Practising and teaching mastery towards spiritual independence and liberty was his soul's purpose, and the most true and powerful expression of his love.

Heart of a Sufi contains poignant and delightful stories. For the places mentioned – among them the Katwijk Centre in Holland and the Universel set in the dunes nearby, there are contact details at the end of the book. Fazal's home in the UK, Four Winds, also called Khankah Abadan Abad, was put up for sale in 2005 to raise funds for Sufi Way, which moved its headquarters to France and America. Also sold was Roughwood, the former home of Murshida Sitara, Pir after Fazal.

Most quotes in these pages come from Fazal's lectures, of which some early ones were published in 1978 under the title *Old Thinking, New Thinking – The Sufi Prism*.

Heart of a Sufi gives thanks to a brilliant teacher and offers a flavour of a contemporary Sufi approach to life combining love, intensity, concord, discord, innovation and a strong inner Zikr – remembrance of the divine in us – to guide onwards, within, to the Real.

Ashen Venema
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