

Heart of a Sufi – Review by Malcolm Stewart, M.A.Cantab, author of [Patterns of Eternity](#)

It is truly refreshing to read a book that is actually about something. *Heart of a Sufi* contains the reflections - by some of his "heart Family" - on the work of Pir-o-Murshid Fazal Inayat Khan, who died in 1990 having been for over twenty years a teacher of the Sufi way of transcendence within the Chisti lineage. While that lineage is ancient and revered, there was, as one learns from this book, nothing old fashioned or portentous about Fazal's approach to his task.

In the early twentieth century his grandfather Hazrat Inayat Khan had brought the Sufi tradition to the West in a form accessible to non-Muslims. Fazal, as is clear from the fascinating, and often moving, accounts of the book's twenty-one contributors, did not simply repeat his grandfather's task; he carried it right into mundane Western culture piercing its egoic cultural armouring with shocks and shifts and practises that left his friends and followers deeply changed. Sometimes it was a simple action, word or phrase that worked inside a person for years, sometimes it was the communal environment of the Khankah (the Murshid's household), very often it was through tasks given to someone to reveal what would help them grow - usually, as these writers illustrate, it was all these things - and the magic could operate over many years and at a distance.

The book opens refreshingly with three accounts from people who were children when they met Fazal. From them one immediately senses the fiery, adventurous and uncompromising spirit of the man, and also an attentive inner caution and care for others that keeps showing through throughout the book, despite the many tales of interactions marked by a rare spiritual gusto, quite unlike the mawkishness of lush rainbows that so often characterizes the sentimentality and weirdness, now taken for spirituality in much of the "new age". From one account after another the reader learns how Fazal engaged his followers with remarkable courage, setting them tasks (chillas) that challenged their inner resources, not knowing what the outcome might be but trusting that their souls would work the thing through and grow from it.

One cannot really review a book like this for its content except to say that it is filled with personal experiences that ring true. It is a credit to Murshid Fazal's teaching that while the book is filled with deeply personal impressions it is only rarely that a contributor introduces some subtle and current ego agenda, and when it does happen, the authenticity of the rest of the content makes it stand out very clearly.

This was a tremendous read for this reviewer. I never knew Fazal, though some of his intimates are close friends, and this book reveals what it was that helped form the resilient soul-centredness that is a noticeable quality in them. By his fruits you know him.

The book is beautifully produced, has an informative glossary of Sufi terms and includes short (single paragraph) biographies of its contributors. Congratulations to the editing team that brought it together and to the Arch Ventures project that published it. Its great value is that it provides all the clues necessary for the reader to enter, even now, twenty years after Fazal's death, the transformative aura of his "heart Family".

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