

Sirat-i Inayat Ethical Guidelines

Background

Ordained cherags, shaikhs, and mu'alims (leaders) are expected to carry a strong personal moral code and shape their behaviors according to their highest integrity and ethical ideals. Upon ordination, initiation and/or appointment, all Sirat-i Inayat leaders agree to adhere to individual and collective ethical agreements. All leaders are expected to be familiar with the following guidelines and to behave accordingly. All leaders sign an agreement, which is kept on file with the secretary, indicating their understanding and dedication to these guidelines.

These Ethical Guidelines serve to inform the public of what behavior and values can be expected from Sirat-i Inayat leaders.

Spiritual leadership in any faith tradition is an endowment of responsibility, privilege and power that must be held with care, integrity, and conscientious awareness. Leaders are called to nurture their own personal health, body, mind, and spirit, and to be consistent in their personal and professional conduct. Leaders strive to embody their ideals as representatives of Sirat-i Inayat with the highest values of Love, Harmony, and Beauty.

Sirat-i Inayat leaders respect an individual's right to one's own beliefs and values. Leaders affirm the dignity and value of each person.

The following statement of agreements indicates:

1. Understanding of respect and responsibility as spiritual leaders in community
2. Process for tending to ethical concerns should they arise
3. Statement of ethical expectations for ordained, initiated, and appointed leaders

Definitions

Cherags: ordained ministers representing Sirat-i Inayat Interfaith Sufi Path, trained, qualified, and empowered to function as ministers providing spiritual/religious services to the community and to individuals.

Siraj: ordained senior minister, which oversees the activities of ordained cherags, shapes guidelines for training and ordaining cherags, and functions as supervisory resource for cherags in the Sirat-i Inayat.

Shaikh: initiated teacher, empowered to give initiations to mureeds, and to provide direct spiritual guidance to students.

Mu'alim: appointed leader responsible for the activities and processes of one or more of the "Rays" in Sirat-i Inayat (Healing Collective, Ziraat, Temple of the Divine Feminine, Kinship, Esoteric School, Mysticism of Music, Universal Worship).

Siraj Advisor or Shaikh Advisor: every mu'alim, cherag, siraj, and shaikh in the Sirat-i Inayat is required to have an active connection with an Advisor. Advisors are either sirajs or shaikhs who agree to function as supervisor, mentor, and accountability resource for other leaders.

Ethics Committee: the Sirat-i Inayat Ethics Committee includes three or more objective, knowledgeable, trained and dedicated individuals who serve as facilitators and consultants providing recommendations and insights on ethical considerations in the organization. The Committee will include at least one member of Sirat-i Inayat leadership and at least one member who is not directly affiliated with Sirat-i Inayat.

Contact information for ethical issues is included at the end of this document.

Ethics Goal

Leaders of Sirat-i Inayat are dedicated to respecting and caring for all. We strive to be considerate and compassionate toward all races, ethnicities, religions, genders, identities, sexual orientations, ages, abilities, national origins, and cultures.

We strive to ensure that all leaders are dedicated to creating and maintaining physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological safety within their communities (Sirat-i Inayat membership and community at large). As part of this dedication, leaders tend to the safety and well-being of adults of all capacities, and minors (children and under-age community members), complying with local laws regarding prevention and reporting of suspected abuse or neglect by and toward any members of the community.

In order to protect community members, leaders are required to report cases of physical and/or sexual abuse to local authorities. If there is knowledge of physical danger, a community member threatening, planning and/or engaging in physical harm to self or others, leaders must contact local authorities. If there is suspected abuse, leaders are expected to consult with one's Advisor and/or the Pir-o-Murshida to determine whether reporting is appropriate.

Please check local governance for mandatory reporting guidelines.

Agreements

1. **The work of a cherag:** cherags understand their ministerial function to provide spiritual support services to individuals and groups in their communities. Cherags represent the Sirat-i Inayat and their behavior reflects directly on the organization.

2. **The work of a shaikh:** shaikhs understand their work with mureeds to be a spiritual service, and a personal connection. Shaikhs are a link to a spiritual lineage, and function within the parameters of Sirat-i Inayat as the outer organization.

3. **The work of a mu'alim:** mu'alims understand their function as instructors, community leaders, facilitators, and resources for the spiritual community. Mu'alims work under the supervision and within the structure of Sirat-i Inayat as an organization.

4. **Dignity and safety:** leaders speak and act in ways that honor the dignity and value of each individual. Leaders are committed to keeping relationships with all community members free from any form of harassment, coercion, intimidation, abusive words or actions.

5. **Respect diversity:** leaders demonstrate respect for cultural and religious values of those they serve. Leaders do not impose spiritual, religious or cultural values on others.

6. **Power dynamics:** leaders are mindful that their role includes a power imbalance between the leader and community members, and mureeds. All behaviors and communications strive to honor and carry this role with sensitivity and honor free from exploitation or abuse.

7. **Avoid exploitation:** leaders are committed to keeping relationships within their communities clear of sexual, emotional, psychological or financial exploitation and/or abuse. Ordained individuals must refrain from any form of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, assault or inappropriate engagement.

8. **Sexual responsibility for all leaders:** leaders acknowledge that their role in the community and in each individual relationship is a sacred trust. Romantic/sexual relationships with members of the community are generally discouraged as they are often unethical and can cause damage to individuals and communities. Romantic/sexual involvement between leaders and members of a community can include complex and/or ambiguous issues of power, privilege, manipulation, predatory dynamics, etc. Romantic/sexual relations can create confusion, pain, and divisions in a community.

If a cherag, mu'alim or other Sirat-i Inayat leader wishes to start romantic/sexual relations with a member of the community, both the leader and the community member should consult with the Advisor and/or Pir-o-Murshida.

Consultations about romantic/sexual issues will be documented by the Advisor and/or Pir-o-Murshida, dated and filed with secretary and/or Ethics Committee.

9. **Sexual responsibility for shaikhs:** It is sweepingly unacceptable for shaikhs to be romantically/sexually involved with their mureeds/students. Sirat-i Inayat never condones or endorses romantic/sexual relations between shaikhs and mureeds. Romantic and sexual behaviors and dynamics between spiritual teachers and their students cause deep pain, dysfunction, and destruction in spiritual organizations. The confusion and pain that arises when spiritual teachers engage in romantic/sexual relations with students causes indescribable damage. Lives and communities can be irreparably destroyed when sacred agreements between teachers and students develop sexual and/or romantic behaviors and energies.

If a shaikh and his/her/their mureed wish to start a romantic/sexual relationship, both shaikh and mureed must consult with the Pir-o-Murshida and direct Advisor.

If shaikh and mureed choose to pursue romantic/sexual involvement, a consultation will take the form of advising shaikh and mureed how to dissolve the initiatic relationship.

Consultations about romantic/sexual issues will be documented by the Advisor and/or Pir-o-Murshida, dated and filed with secretary and/or Ethics Committee.

10. **Dual relationships:** a “dual relationship” is one in which a leader has another form of personal or professional connection with an individual in the community (for example: a student is also one’s accountant). Dual relationships are common and are usually acceptable. At the same time, dual relationships can lead to misunderstandings, exploitation, lack of objectivity,

compromised ability to serve effectively. There is nothing inherently unethical or negative about them, but they require a heightened awareness and sensitivity about how one aspect of relationship can affect the other aspects. Where dual relationships occur, all parties should use caution, seek guidance from a third party, and make every effort to keep agreements ethically sound. Any conflicts of interest should be resolved with the help of an objective third party.

11. Make referrals as needed: leaders are expected to be self-aware, honest and responsible about their limited expertise. Self-assessment and genuine discernment about one's capacity should be an ongoing process. Leaders should examine their motivations around being helpful. Consultation with mentors, colleagues and Advisors is encouraged. Leaders should be prepared to make referrals to other professionals when appropriate to adequately support the needs of individuals, family members, and groups in the community.

12. Honor confidentiality: leaders in all functions of Sirat-i Inayat respect and hold confidential private communications between themselves and community members, participants and mureeds. Appropriate discretion will be used if confidentiality must be broken for the sake of safety for community members or others.

13. Relationship with the Sirat-i Inayat: all leaders are expected to maintain good standing in the Sirat-i Inayat: understanding and being in resonance with the intentions and activities of Sirat-i Inayat as an organization and maintaining an active communication with one's shaikh and Advisor.

14. Legal rights and responsibilities: legal regulations for ordained ministers vary country to country and state to state. Ordained cherags are responsible for understanding and abiding by legal standards and regulations in their area.

Mu'alims and shaikhs are not overseen by government entities. The Sirat-i Inayat Jamiat Khas and ultimately the Pir-o-Murshida are the authorities within Sirat-i Inayat.

Contact information for ethical issues is included at the end of this document.

Resolution Process

Any community members or leaders may bring forth an ethical complaint.

Before a complaint is submitted, it is expected that an individual attempts to work out any conflict with the designee (the person whom the complaint is about). A mediator and/or advocate is available to support these attempts toward resolution.

Contact information and resources at the bottom of this document.

If a complaint is criminal in nature, appropriate authorities should be notified. Ethical processes do not take the place of criminal investigation.

An ethical complaint should refer to specific items in these Ethical Guidelines that have allegedly been violated. A complaint must include specific references to these Ethical

Guidelines, include a narrative summary and evidence to support allegations, to the extent possible.

Ethics Complaint Process

After every reasonable effort has been made to resolve the conflict directly with the designee, and if no resolution is possible:

1. Put your ethical complaint in writing. Make sure the complaint meets the following requirements:
 - a. Refer specifically to the items in the Ethical Guidelines that have been allegedly violated.
 - b. Include narrative summary and specific examples to support the allegation.
 - c. Include specific names, dates, venue, and details of the issue in question.
 - d. Try to be as factual and objective as possible. Personal interpretation and reactivity are difficult or impossible for an Ethics Committee to assess.
2. Submit your complaint to the Ethics Committee Liaison:
 - a. The Ethics Committee Liaison will make sure the complaint meets the above listed criteria and forward to the entire Ethics Committee.
- OR -
 - b. If the complaint is not in compliance with these guidelines, the Liaison will contact the person with the complaint for further clarification before sending it to the Committee.
3. The Ethics Committee will review all complaints that the Liaison forwards to them. The Ethics Committee will make further inquiries for each complaint that may include conversation with the designee (the person the complaint is about), the person who submitted the complaint, and/or other involved parties.
4. The Ethics Committee will make determination and send recommendations to the Pir-o-Murshida for implementation, review, consideration, and potential further action. (Pir-o-Murshida will update Ethics Committee about final decisions and actions).
5. Ethics Committee Liaison will contact the individual with the complaint to close the process.

Ethics Committee members function as a collective and do not assert individual, personal authority in any ethical considerations.

The role of the Liaison is a welcoming, supportive, communication assistant to help facilitate the process of ethical considerations.

These guidelines endeavor to outline fundamental ethical expectations for leaders along with a process for complaints. Even with best intentions and diligent effort, some issues may be irreconcilable, intended processes may prove limited and/or inadequate. In these cases, the highest intentions focus on compassion, healing, due diligence on the part of each empowered individual and an effort toward greatest integrity.

Decisions on ethical matters ultimately reside with the Pir-o-Murshida.

Acknowledgement and Agreement

All Sirat-i Inayat leaders review and agree to abide by these Ethical Guidelines. By signing this document, each leader indicates understanding and a binding agreement with the values and processes described.

Leader (Shaikh/Mu'alim/Cherag) _____
Name *Date*

Pir-o-Murshida _____
Name *Date*

If you need assistance with ethical concerns, you may contact:

Secretary of the Sirat-i Inayat – rahima@siratiinayat.org

Sára Rain (Pir-o-Murshida) – sara@siratiinayat.org

For advocacy, mediation and support with communication processes:

Halim – halim@siratiinayat.org

Jesse – drjmorgaina@gmail.com

Ethics Committee Liaison: drjmorgaina@gmail.com