

Universal Şūfism, the Shah Movement, and Islām



Who We Are Frequently Asked Questions



2. What is

Sufism according to the Sufi Order?

"Sufism has never been owned by any race or religion for differences and distinctions are the very delusions from which Sufis purify themselves. It might appear that Sufism must have been formed of the different elements of various religions which are prominent today, but it is not so, for Sufism itself is the essence of all the religions as well as the spirit of Islam.

Sufism reveals all the shades and colors which represent the various religions of the world, having no particular color itself. All prophets, saints, sages, and mystics are practically owned by their followers, as Christ by the Christians and Moses by the Jews. Yet Christ was not a Christian nor Moses a Jew, all being Sufis, pure from earthly distinctions. The Beloved Ones of God are even as God, impervious to religious dogmas and principles.

Sufism is not a religion or a philosophy, it is neither deism nor atheism, nor is it a moral, nor a special kind of mysticism, being free from the usual religious sectarianism. If ever it could be called a religion, it would only be as a religion of love, harmony, and beauty. If it be called a philosophy it is beyond that because a Sufi, through the study of metaphysics, escapes the selfishness produced by philosophy and kindles the fire of devotion with one's eyes open to reason and logic. The Sufi prays to Allah every moment in one's life, invoking God's Name and realizing at the same time that the self is no other than God. For to a Sufi God is not a personal being but a mighty healer to awaken the soul from its delusion of earthly individuality, and a guide to lead it to self-realization, the only aim in life."

— Hazrat Inayat Khan

To call the Sufi Path an "ism" is a misnomer, since it is not based upon belief or premises to which one is expected to subscribe. It is the path of the awakened human heart, recognizing its unity with the

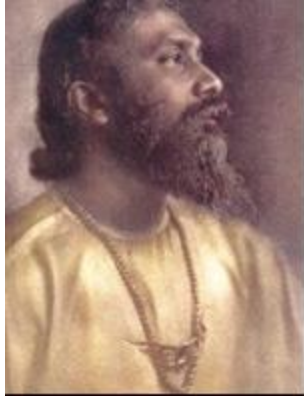
Divine. The Sufi is one who finds that place of freedom where the inner condition is not determined by outer circumstances.

3. Is Sufism a new religion?

Then what is the purpose of the Sufi Movement? To make a new religion? No, it is to bring together the different organs of one body which are meant to be united and not thrown apart. And what is our method, how do we work to bring about such a reconciliation? By realizing for ourselves that the essence of all religions is one, and that that essence is wisdom; by considering that wisdom to be our religion, whatever be our own form. The Sufi Movement has members belonging to many different faiths and who have not given up their own religion. On the contrary, they are firmer in their own faith through understanding the faiths of others. From the narrow point of view people may find fault with them because they do not hate, mistrust, and criticize the religion of others. They have respect for the scriptures which millions of people have held to be sacred, though these scriptures do not belong to their own religion. They desire to study and appreciate other scriptures, and to find confirmation of the fact that all wisdom comes from one source, both the wisdom of the East and of the West. The Sufi Movement, therefore, is not a sect; it can be anything but a sect; and if it ever became one it would be quite contrary to the ideal with which it was begun. For its main ideal is to remove differences and distinctions which divide (hu)mankind, and this ideal is attained by the realization of the one source of all human beings, and also the goal, both of which we call God.

— Hazrat Inayat Khan

From: http://www.sufiorder.org/qa_2.html



Who We Are



History & Tradition : The Sufi Message

The purpose of the Sufi Movement is to work towards unity. Its main object is to bring humanity, divided as it is into so many different sections, closer together in the deeper understanding of life. It is a preparation for a world service, chiefly in three ways. One way is the philosophical understanding of life; another is bringing about brotherhood among races, nations, and creeds; and the third way is the meeting of the world's greatest need...that natural religion which has always been the religion of humanity: to respect one another's belief, scripture, and teacher.

The Sufi message is the echo of the same Divine message which has always come and will always come to enlighten humanity. It is not a new religion; it is the same message that is being given to humanity. It is the continuation of the same ancient religion which has always existed and will always exist, a religion which belongs to all teachers and all the scriptures. It is the continuation of all the great religions which have come at various times; and it is a

unification of them all, which was the desire of all the prophets.

The Sufi Movement is constituted of those who have the same ideals of service to God and to humanity, and who have the ideal of devoting a part or the whole of their life to the service of humanity in the path of truth. This Movement has its groups, the members of which belong to all the different religions, for all are welcome, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis, Muslims. No one's faith or belief is questioned; each can follow his own church, religion, creed; no one need believe in any special creed or dogma. There is freedom of thought. At the same time personal guidance is given on the path, in the problems of both outer life and inner life.

In the service of the Sufi Universal Worship all services — Christian, Muslim, Hebrew, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Hindu — are included. Therefore the blessing of Christ is given from the altar to the seeker for Jesus Christ's blessing. The one who seeks for the blessing of Moses, to him is given the blessing of Moses. For the one who seeks the benediction of Buddha there is the benediction of Buddha; but those who seek the blessing of all these great ones who have come at different times are blessed by all.

We do not interfere with anyone's ideal, nor with his devotion to his teacher; it would be as absurd as to think that a child should love another child's mother more than its own. And who has the right to compare and to place the great teachers or the scriptures? No one; it is in our heart's devotion to the ideal we adore that we can place our ideal; and it is our own concern; no one can interfere with it.

— Hazrat Inayat Khan

From: http://www.sufiorder.org/sufi_message.html

Isn't the Sufi Order International oriented toward Islam?

No. Although there are Sufi roots in Islam, the Sufi Order International aligns itself with no particular religion, but rather honors all religions

as coming from the One Divine Source at different times throughout history, in answer to the call of humanity. We seek the thread of Truth which is woven among all religions. We honor the Divine in all Its Names and Forms.

From: <http://www.towardtheone.com/questions.htm>

+

We view Sufism not as an ideology that molds people to the right way of belief or action, but as an art or science that can exert a beneficial influence on individuals and societies, in accordance with the needs of those individuals and societies ... Sufi study and development gives one capacities one did not have before

—Idries Shah

From: <http://www.sufis.org/> or <http://ishk.net/sufis/whatsufism.html>