

# Sufi News

2012

from Europe



BGM

*“..As the source and goal of creation is one,  
so the source and goal of religion is one”.*

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The Universal Worship represents an ideal put forth by Hazrat Inayat Khan in 1921 to bring all of the world's religions together; in order to promote tolerance, understanding and spiritual awakening for humanity. Honouring and protecting the holy scriptures of every faith without judgment or prejudice is a foundation of the Universal Worship. There are ordained ministers called Cherags ("lamps"), women and men, who facilitate the Universal Worship service and who are empowered to perform weddings, receiving infants, funerals and many other duties. The Universal Worship is also a catalyst to bring together clergy and people of all religions in interfaith events.

This edition of SufiNews is dedicated to Universal Worship – a service that is so much needed and longed for to-day, where different religious groupings look at each other with mistrust and even enmity. But perhaps it is specially important for women – who often constitute a large part of the different traditional segregations? In the 1970'ies, we fought for equal rights for all women. We discovered then how powerful our language is in forming attitudes and feelings. I believe that many of us – both men and women - have met the male dominance in the religious liturgies with resistance and a feeling of separateness; asking "Where are our female heritage"? Pir Zia, has met our discomforts by using both the female and male denotations for the holy. It is also good to know that the word Lord in Arabic comes from the word Rabb, which means a loving provider and caregiver. What a relief to let go of the association with the tyrant and despotic "Lords" from our history books!

God is She God is He God is One

We wish to express our gratitude to all the contributors in this edition of SufiNews – with a special thanks to Haydar for collecting so many articles; Marit, our gifted designer and photographer, and Din Ilahi who has provided us with her inspired paintings of the angels and holy beings that surround us. May our prayers too be filled with light and blessings throughout the world !

In loving service, Alia



## *The First Universal Worship Service*

The first Universal Worship Service was held at 35 Tregunter Road, London, England, the home of Mrs. Gladys I. Lloyd<sup>1</sup> on May 7, 1921. Miss Sophia Saintsbury Green<sup>2</sup> shared the house with Mrs. Lloyd, and she was ordained the first Cheraga<sup>3</sup> on that day. Thus May 7 is a date of considerable significance for the Universal Worship.

Extensive preparations took place before the service, including an intensive period in Southampton, a port on the southern coast of England, where Nargis Dowland, the National Representative for England, ran a hotel. Southampton borders the New Forest, a place where Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan had walked, played music, and done personal retreats for many years. On this particular occasion, we have an account of the preparations from an anonymous writer who was evidently there.

"The changes and innovations and for the work of the message were effected by Pir-o-Murshid in the spring of 1921. Faithful disciples had made their efforts previously but the time was ripe for a more definite organization, one that would move onwards (the "Sufi Movement"<sup>4</sup> became now the title). Time was short and a form was essential for the diffusion and protection of the message.

"At Southampton Pir-o-Murshid found those who were to be true support and strength of the message and channels for its furtherance. It is believed that the master had hoped that a certain celebrated esoteric society<sup>5</sup> would be ready to receive him, but it only offered a platform for some lectures, so a fresh organization had to be started to launch the message with its activities. Pir-o-Murshid appointed Miss Dow-

land of Southampton the national Representative of England and ordained Miss Sainsbury-Green the first Cheraga. She was the first to help Pir-o-Murshid in founding the Church of All (the Universal Worship), the religious activity of the movement, and the details of the service were thought out and settled upon in Miss Dowland's sitting room (in Southampton) before the London inaugural ceremony, which took place during a three weeks visit to London in May 1921.

"Vividly are those days recalled: the interviews, the Gatha classes, talks, during the three weeks at a mureed's house, especially the preparations for the ceremony of the Church of All. Miss Sainsbury-Green was ordained one day Cheraga by Pir-o-Murshid (after a fast and prolonged silence in her room). In his presence she kindled the candles for the first time and recited the prayers<sup>6</sup>, while selections from the world's religions were read by chosen mureeds. And after the service all mureeds present were blessed one by one by the Master."

Some time during the day of May 7, Murshid gave the following address; the actual ordination and Universal Worship took place in the evening.

"The Sufi order has so far existed in its, so to speak, negative form. Now out of this comes its positive form. No doubt, even the name Sufi Order is a shield over the truth. The truth that is behind it is inexplicable, and the truth speaks itself to the hearts, and the hearts that can see and hear may see and hear, and nothing can be said. The Sufi Order was preparing minds in understanding spiritual truth, and by understanding to learn the unity of all races and humanity, that they may become tolerant, broad, forgiving to all, to understand and be ready. The body of the movement is formed today, and since the understanding is for a few, the body is for all. (But only mureeds will attend just now.)

"You will ask, what is the body? You must have noticed that though the truth of the essence of religion has been given to you in study, exercises, meditation, one thing has always been necessarily absent, and that is the form of worship which is necessary for the soul of every level in life. It is not only for the ordinary soul, but for every soul, whatever its stage of evolution.

"Of course everyone has his peculiar ideas about what is necessary in worship, but what is necessary is that sincere devotion and offering of prayer to God. Form does not matter, whatever church, creed, denomination, and now if the form is given, it is according to the principles already taught. All forms are represented in it. Therefore, it is in accordance with the idea of the message of bringing about unity of religions because it constitutes all forms in one.

"However intelligent and wise and contemplative man may be, if there is love of art in his nature, he always would feel at home with a form of worship. And form means not only words but actions. Worship can be complete by thought, word and action. The whole being engaged in prayer means that all are praying, one's whole being is in prayer.

"At the same time, the idea is that we do not think and we shall never think that this is the only form, or the best form. All forms are the best forms. Never think only one form can save you. Forms have always quarrelled. Sufism teaches toleration. Therefore we are believers in all forms, and in our form we unite all, but it is not the only form.

"We must never make the form we take for our prayer and worship to be imposed on everyone as the only form. At the same time, remember that in every age, when the message is given, a particular form suited to the age was given. Therefore the form is not given by man, but by God, and it is to be taken as a lesson from God, and given not only to mureeds but to the world at large.

"In order to conduct the prayers weekly or fortnightly, Miss Green will be ordained as Cheraga (one who conducts prayers) and this evening a ceremony is taking place to ordain her, as well as to have our first worship, which will take place after her ordination."

For the event itself, we are very fortunate to have an excellent account written by Shabaz Mitchell, a professional journalist from Southampton who was a mureed and had been present at many of Murshid's teachings, even taking some down in shorthand. Here is his full account:

"It is not easy to write one's impressions of the ceremony which took place at No. 35 Tregunter Road, London, on the evening of Saturday, May 7th 1921.

"From the world of hurrying crowds, motor busses and taxi cabs, of violent activity, noise and confusion, one passes into a tall Georgian house. Here, by comparison, the atmosphere seems at first to be one of profound peace; people move about quietly and speak in subdued tones; but it is a peace full of expectancy, for an event is awaited.

"One is invited upstairs into a room on the first floor. As the door is opened one's eyes first catch a glimpse



of a lighted candle, and the smoke of burning incense upon an improvised altar. On both sides of the room, facing one another, are to be seen double rows of chairs occupied by one's fellow Mureeds, some of them well-known friends, others strangers. Music is being played on an American organ, the scene resembles that of a chancel in a private chapel.

"During a wait of half an hour one notices many small things, the contagion of the crowds, the effect of hurry, the impression of the score of small irritating incidents cling about one. One also becomes aware that others too, have their disturbing thoughts and emotions, for although there is little sound in this room, the atmosphere is as an unquiet sea.

"It seems that we have waited a long time, when the music ceases, the door opens and Murshid enters. His presence alters everything, all rise as he comes in and he passes between the double rows of standing Mureeds, to a seat near the altar, then we sit down once more.

"Presently Murshid, who is wearing his black robe, rises and begins to speak. He explains the value of devotion, the importance of prayer, how none, even the most intellectual can afford to dispense with their aid. How ritual, though not a necessity to spiritual progress,

may yet be a help. The hour, he says, has come when it is desirable that a firmer prayer shall be used in connection with the Sufi Order.<sup>7</sup>

"By now beautiful influences have filled the little room, and the sea of thoughts and feelings is, at last, so it seems, at peace. Then, for the first time the Mureeds hear the form of prayer which in future is to be used at such Sufi services, the form in which essential ideas behind the Sufi teaching are embodied.

"Murshid stands facing his mureeds and Miss Dowland the National Representative, on his left hand begins to read the prayers in a calm, strong voice. As she reads Murshid, with closed eyes makes gently and with deliberation, the appropriate gestures, his movements being watched by all with indescribable emotion. The prayers themselves are the most comprehensive we have ever listened to, they lift the thoughts to things above and turn them on things beneath. They speak of the greatness, the power, the beauty, the all-pervadingness of God, also of His Messengers, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Abraham, Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed and "those whose names are unknown".

"In the accompanying gestures are represented signs which have come down through the Ages, and especially associated with

each of the great world religions, the upraised palms characteristic of Islam, the downward sweeping gesture of Hinduism, the sign of the cross of Christianity, and many others.

"As one looks, one's heart melts with desire to experience some reflection of that realization which lends such meaning to the deep inclination before the vision of irresistible beauty, the face covered by the hands at the thought of peace.

"The prayers finished, Murshid leaves us. He is gone what seems to be a very long time. When he returns he is preceded by Miss Sophia E.M. Green, who carries in her hand an unlighted candle, she walks with concentrated thoughts, towards the altar, and kneels on a cushion at Murshid's feet. Bending towards her, Murshid with his finger inscribes invisible characters upon her forehead, then sets a seal upon her forehead with the palm of his hand, lays his hands on the crown of her head, declaring her to be ordained in the Church of All, with power to illuminate herself and others. We hold our breath, realizing it is a moment of profound significance. He next lights a taper at the tall candle burning on the altar, and with this sets light to the candle which Miss Green is holding, then he helps her to rise and invests her with the black silk robe of her office. Thus is the first Cheraga ordained in the Church of All.

"During this part of the ceremonial, feelings of love and sympathy flow out from many of the mureeds towards Miss Green, whose great honour and great responsibility they appreciate.

"Then comes the reception into the Church of All of six of the mureeds present.<sup>8</sup> They file out of the room, returning each holding an unlit candle, they in turn kneel before the newly ordained Cheraga, who, by writing upon their foreheads, by laying her hand upon the crown of their head, by repeating the sentences previously spoken by Murshid, and by lighting each candle from her candle, receives each in turn. Reception into the Church of All, not the same as ordination.

"In this ritual to the onlooker there is something profoundly touching, for are not these the first seven? They file up to Murshid, receive his blessing with bowed heads, and place their candles upon the altar, so that now the number of lighted candles, including the tallest of which Murshid has made use, is eight.

"The other mureeds, who up to the present have been merely spectators, now fall in behind their received brethren and each in turn receives the blessing of Murshid.

"The final scene consists of a recital by the Cheraga in Murshid's absence of the prayers with the accompanying gestures. She faces the altar for the purpose, and the whole company also face the altar, the Mureeds repeating the gestures in silence.

"And when the little company disperses to pass into the London night, the thought in one's mind is that there has just been planted a tiny seed, which shall one day spring up into a great tree whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nation."

This wonderfully evocative account offers many insights into Murshid's intentions for the Universal Worship.

The fact that Murshid himself performed the gestures as Nargis Dowland recited the prayers shows that he felt the movements were most important. Later, the instruction was given not to use the gestures to accompany the prayers in the Universal Worship, perhaps at the point that the Universal Worship went public, so to speak, and was no longer only for mureeds.

That Murshid chose a deeply devotional woman to be the first ordained is of course highly significant and a bold step in his day. Sophia Saintsbury Green later became the first Siraj(a) and also a Murshida, one of only four (all women) elevated by Murshid to that rank. She was also named by Murshid as Warden of the Confraternity of the Message<sup>9</sup>, to hold that concentration until his son Vilayat was old enough to take it over. She was an extraordinary public speaker, as well as a warm and very approachable person. She no doubt had a strong role in helping Murshid form the ceremony as he worked with the small group in Southampton to prepare it.

When Murshid says that "the body of the movement is formed today", it shows the high hopes he attached to the Universal Worship in spreading the Sufi message. For him, this was the means by which large numbers of people could be reached. When he went to New York in 1923, he held a Universal Worship at which 50 people were present. When he returned in 1926, there were 500. It was after this experience that Murshid said there could be 50 Universal Worships each week in New York alone.

It is perhaps only now that Murshid's vision for the Universal Worship can begin to be fulfilled. Pir Vilayat created the form of the Universal Worship he called the Cosmic Celebration to reach larger numbers, but his productions were so elaborate that they required weeks of preparatory work. Now, under the able leadership of Shahabuddin Less, the ways in which the Universal Worship can be celebrated in meaningful ways in widely different cultures is being explored. One day, Murshid asserts, this simple ceremony will become the religion of humanity. It is our privilege to contribute whatever can to seeing this happen. Perhaps the clear picture we now have of the seed which was planted on May 7, 1921, will inspire our efforts.

Siraj Sharif Munawwir  
Donald Avery Graham  
Suresnes, 18 August 2006

*B*eloved ones of God,  
Last night it rained and this morning the world awoke refreshed. Rain at night has a special mystique. The rain-drops pitter-pattering on the window send sound waves into the bedroom, into the ears, into the sleeping mind. In the reverie of our dream, the atmosphere enters, and the outer and inner worlds intermingle.

Within the earth of this body, the breath is like rain. When we breathe deeply, with subtlety, with awareness, the breath falls over us like rain falling on the parched earth of the desert. The desiccated dried-up inner centers of the body spring to life as the earth springs to life under the influence of the life-giving rains of spring. The arid landscape suddenly comes alive with the verdant color of fresh blossoms.

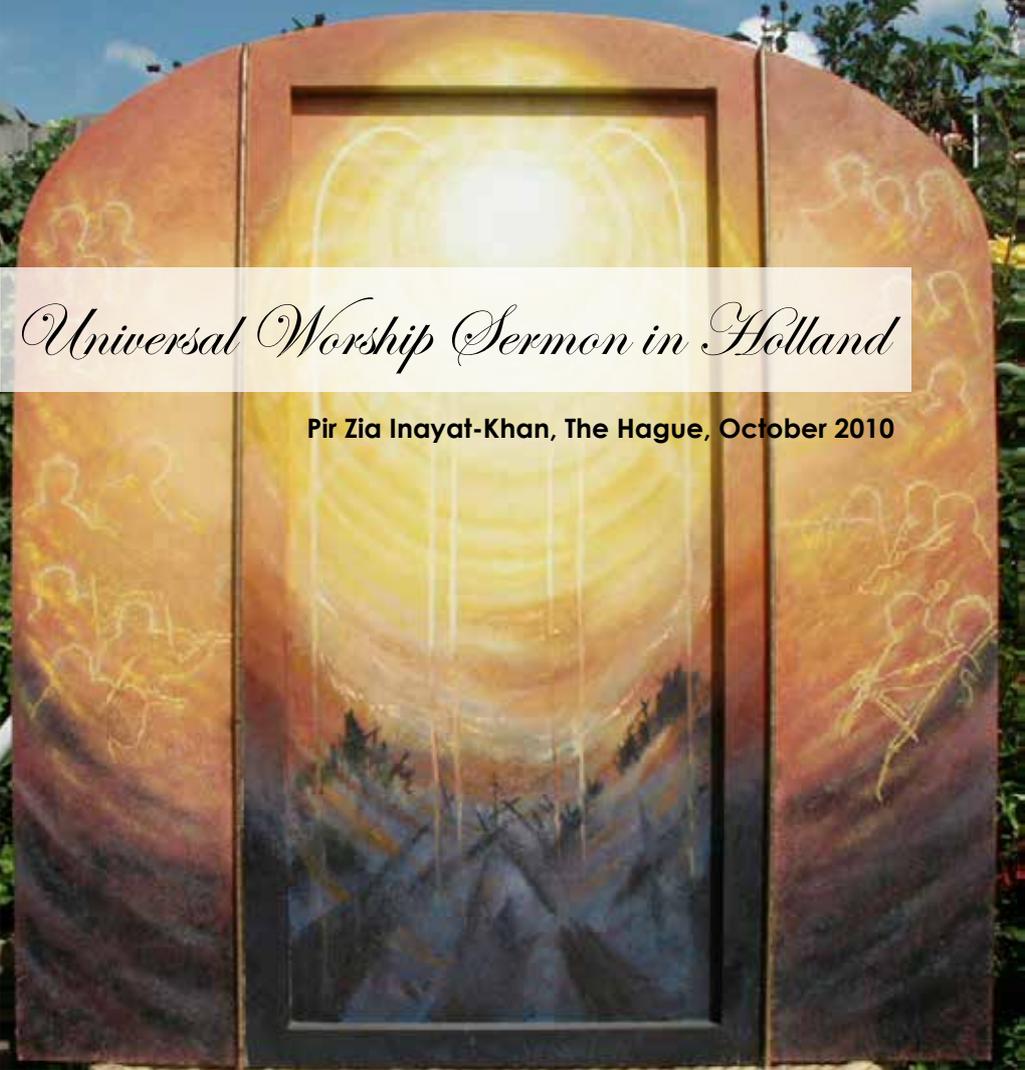
In the world in which we live, revelation is like rain. Revelation descends from above, quenching the thirst of human beings when all seems lost. Through history revelation has come at moments of great need, when the world is changing, when the old forms are breaking down. The old idols no longer command credence. Society is decaying, and something is struggling to be born, out of the ashes, phoenix-like, and yet it needs a prophet, it needs a voice. That voice is revelation, and the soul of the prophet is the soul that has so emptied itself of personal ambitions, attachments, and expectations, as to become a vessel to receive that which is to be given by Providence, that which emanates out from the very fount of Creation, continuously descending upon the world. The prophet's soul is tuned to the pitch of the cry of humanity. When the fabric of society is frayed, when souls are lost and discord prevails, a deep sigh rises up and the prophet gives

voice to that sigh. The rain that falls from the heavens arises first from the earth. Water evaporates, billowing up in the sky and forming clouds. Likewise our prayers—our ardent needs, our deep questions, our crises of faith, our hearts' cries—rise up. And an answer comes; we are not forgotten. The Source, the eternal life from which we have sprung, does not ignore us. The answer comes. The voice of the prophet resounds. It speaks, as it must speak, in words that are recognizable. It must convey its message in the idiom of the time and place. And so every dispensation of the Message is different. It responds to the need of the time. And yet, in its essence, the Message is always one Message. It is always the answer of the One to the many, reminding us that we belong to the One, we are of the One. Even as we live here on Earth in manyness, yet together, we form a whole. All of the expres-

sions of revelation heard down the ages are sounds of the same voice calling us toward unity.

We receive blessing not only of the words that have come down to us in scripture, but also in the personalities of the prophets themselves. The prophets were the embodiments of the Message that they bore. Their glance, their manner, their gait, their quality of heart, their way of being, represented the fullness of what is possible for a human being to realize on Earth, the fullness of the Divine Heritage that is the birthright of each one of us.

Through history, humans have, again and again, responded to the call, sought to follow in the footsteps of the prophets, sought to put into practice their guidance, and in doing so, formed communities, one group following this prophet, another group following another prophet, creating institutions, hierarchies, rituals, traditions.



## *Universal Worship Sermon in Holland*

**Pir Zia Inayat-Khan, The Hague, October 2010**

*Universal Wo*

And forgetting over time, that the Message is one Message.

And so we live, today, in a world of forgetfulness, a world of conflict. The stakes are now higher than ever before: as technology advances, weapons become deadlier and the effects of our short-sighted exploitation of the planet's living systems more pervasive. In fact, we have reached the critical juncture where it is now in our power as human beings to obliterate our own species, not only ourselves, but to bring down the whole living biosphere with us.

In our zealous attachment to the distinctions and differences that we have created in our forgetfulness, the true Message of the prophets—a Message of unity, a Message of peace, a Message of wholeness—has been largely forgotten. And yet, though we live in dangerous times, we also live in extraordinarily miraculous times, when the world is coming together in new ways, when we know more about each other than ever before, when more and more it is clear that humanity is one race, and that we ourselves belong to the whole web of life.

All of this convinces us now that we must see the prophets as a single lineage of grace, see them as so many faces of the Face of Guidance, the loving-kindness that is always flooding over the Earth from the Divine Source. And further that we may be guided by this prophet and that one, that we may hear all voices of revelation, we may seek to follow all divinely guided footsteps, that we may endeavor to inculcate in our being the qualities of grace that we find in all of these illuminated personalities.

The Message has always come in moments of great change and uncertainty, when the human heart cries out. Now the world is changing at an unprecedented pace. The whole society is transforming, year-by-year, before our eyes. Conditions are ripe for the infusion of the guidance that must carry us into the destined future. And yet, it is not a new and different religion that is needed. The revelation of the Divine guidance, when it comes, comes differently now. It comes in the realization that all of the revelations of wisdom that we have received belong to one whole. And the prophetic impulse now is in the drawing together of all of these channels of guidance, seeing the whole in the parts.

Each revelation has sounded a note, and each note is a true note. It is now our privilege to hear the sound of all notes played together in the form of a symphony, a symphony expressive of the highest reaches of human discovery

throughout history, across the globe, in all times and places: the full breadth and depth of the human experience, touching upon the eternal. When we realize this, our spiritual path is no longer something merely personal. Yes, we each begin as seekers, wounded perhaps by life experiences, wanting something more, needing something for our own peace of mind, and so we go forward, seeking what we miss. But, as we proceed further and further, more and more we realize we are not alone on this path. Everyone whom we meet is another seeker and the quest is the same quest. It is one Being questing within us. Our path is not our own. The whole world has embarked on a journey. We are travelling together, and it is not our personal salvation, we realize now, that is of the essence. Our fulfillment is inextricably linked to that of everyone else. Our peace must be one peace. We must find it together.

*Our peace must be  
one peace. We must  
find it together.*

And so, one is lifted out of one's personal spiritual ambition into the conviction that one must be of service; that one has on Earth a number of days and none of us knows how many. Any day may be our last. But we have been given this privilege: we have been brought forth, plucked out of the void, and sent here, given bodies woven out of the fabric of the

cosmos, given a voice with which to speak. We have come from the Court of the Divine Intimacy, sent forth with a mandate to testify to unity amidst multiplicity, to be separate and yet, in our separateness, to remember the One and in that remembrance, foster harmony.

We have a number of days. The world is changing before our eyes. The future is not certain. And yet we are remembering our duty. We are remembering that when we leave this Earth, our legacy will not be the possessions that we have accumulated, or the power that we have exercised or the fame that we have attained.

Our legacy will be our service, the love that we have given. The time is now. The future is ours to make whole. The world is sundered in parts, dismembered. And the voice of the heart is crying out. Now the heart of the world is calling to us: Remember, remember: become members once again of that one Whole to which you and I and all beings belong. That this one Whole may awaken within us, amongst us, that the whole Earth may awaken to its communion with the Everlasting. May we be among those who are to bring about the transfiguration of the Earth.

Amen

*Worship Sermon in Holland*



O Goddess,  
In my deeds, In my words,  
In my wishes, In my reason,  
And in the fulfilling of my desires,  
In my sleep, In my dreams,  
In my repose, In my thoughts,  
In my heart and spirit always,  
May the blessed Maiden

And the Silver Bough of Faerie dwell,  
Oh, in my heart and spirit always,  
May the loving Maiden  
And the tinkling Silver Bough of Faerie dwell.

*camina gadelica - ancient celtic oral tradition*

## *Enlightened Women of the World's Religions Their Contribution to Unity*



The sacred message of unity has been living in the heart of women in all ages. No matter how their condition was in the civilization they lived in, if they were recognized by society or not, known or unknown, in their heart they cared for all the people in the world beyond the boundaries of nationality, race, or religion, recognizing that "unity is the inner nature of every soul and the only purpose of life" and that "the secret of God is hidden in the knowledge of unity." (Hazrat Inayat Khan)

In every world religion we find women, who lived their life in this world of limitations and who tuned their heart so fine that they became sympathetic with all beings on this earth. The heart does not separate, it connects. The heart does not judge, it loves. The heart is the place of unity. Murshid tells us that the Nizam of Hyderabad once wrote, "If one only knew how large the heart is! It accommodates heaven and earth, all the sea and all the land."

When we look more closely at the gifts these women left us, we find that the source of their consciousness of being one with all people, is their consciousness of unity with the Divine Being. Feeling one with

God in their hearts completely changed their perspective towards other people. They regarded them as unique expressions of the One Being, just as themselves; and they felt that everything they did to them they did to God, and everything they received from them they received from God.

Meera is considered a great saint and mystic in the Hindu tradition. She was a North Indian princess of the 16th century. Her love of Krishna was so deep that she used to dance and sing to him on the streets. Wonderful poetry, songs about her longing for Krishna, of love, and ecstasy sprang from her heart which are still sung in India today. When her husband died she was expected to become a sati, i.e. to be burnt with his corpse in the fire. But she refused. She did not consider herself as a widow, because she felt that she was married to God Krishna alone. So her family expelled her from her home, and she went to Mathura, Krishna's birth place, where her worship and service in the temple of Krishna attracted many devotees. When the priest told her that only men were allowed to enter the temple she said, "I thought that there is only one man on earth, the Lord Krishna, and as his beloved

we are all women." The priest fell to his knees and answered, "I am very grateful to you, because you taught me that all people on earth, men or women, are united in the love of God."

Here is a song of Meera pointing out that the divine presence of God Krishna heals and unites all suffering souls so that it becomes natural to "join hands":

***My Lord Krishna  
takes in all stained souls.  
In the river of his love,  
with the soap of his peace  
glowing iridescent in the sun  
he washes every one.  
No envious smear returns.  
It's time, says Meera,  
sing, join hands  
and welcome him.***

Rengetsu was a renowned nun in the Buddhist tradition of Zen. The story of her enlightenment has been kept alive for future generations because she preserved it in the form of poetry. One day on her pilgrimage through the country at dusk she came to a village and asked for shelter for the night, but the inhabitants, traditional Buddhists who considered Zen as heresy, refused to let her in. It was a dark and cold night in early spring, and the old woman was hungry. Finally Rengetsu found a place to rest under a cherry tree. At midnight she woke up from the cold, and when she opened her eyes she saw the moon veiled by the blossoms of the cherry tree. She was overwhelmed by the beauty of this sight. This was the moment of enlightenment. Full of joy she got up, bowed in the direction of the village and started to sing:

***By their goodness  
to close their doors in front of me  
I found myself  
under the full blossoms  
of the cherry tree  
in the night of the veiled moon.***

Instead of becoming angry with the narrow-minded villagers, she accepted the situation and even welcomed it with gratitude. The whisper of the cherry blossoms told her of the immense beauty and goodness behind all creation and taught her the secret of giving up all judgements, all differences and distinctions and accepting everybody and everything in life with thankfulness.

We don't know much about holy women in the Zoroastrian tradition, however it is known that after Zarathustra's death it was his son Spitama and his youngest daughter Pourutshista who kept his teachings alive, so that they could become a universal message that developed a high ethics and spirituality within the great Persian empire of the 6th century BCE – a message of religious toler-



ance according to Zarathustra's words: "We honour and love all good thoughts, words, and deeds which here or at other places in the world will be brought to realization now or in future times, for we stand on the side of goodness and virtue." And: "All paths, if they are good, lead to God. May everyone walk along his own path, and may God give him power and steadfastness."

In the Jewish tradition the history of the Israelites tells us about Ruth and Naomi, two women whose love was more powerful than their fear. Because there was a great famine in Israel at that time, Naomi left Israel with her husband and her two sons and settled in the land of Moab. The sons got married to two women from Moab, one of whom was Ruth. After several years Naomi's husband died and later on her two sons also. Since there was nobody from her direct family left, she decided to go back to Israel. Out of love for her two daughters-in-law, who were still young, she advised them to go home to their families so they could get married again. Marriage was the only way for women to be protected at that time. She did not think of herself and her own protection which she needed so badly as an old woman who felt that "the hand of the Lord is gone out against me". One of the daughters-in-law followed her ad-

vice, but Ruth "clave unto her" and said:

*Entreat me not to leave thee,  
for whither thou goest, I will go,  
and where thou lodgest, I will lodge:  
thy people shall be my people,  
and thy God my God.  
Where thy diest, will I die,  
and there will I be buried.  
The Lord do so to me, and more also,  
if aught but death part thee  
and me.*

Of course there was fear in Ruth to leave her country and go to a foreign country with foreign customs and a foreign religion, and she had no idea how to care for her own and her mother-in-law's survival. But deep in her heart she trusted in the oneness of God in whatever form He might appear and in His love and caring support for all people in the world, no matter what religion they followed. And this trust was rewarded, because in Israel – through the love and help of Naomi – she found a good husband who loved and cared for both of them, and there she gave birth to a son who was the grandfather of King David.

A Christian female saint of our time who embodied the message of unity in her life and work was Mother Teresa of Calcutta. At the age of nineteen she left her home for India. Her life's motto was "to care for the poorest of the poor wherever they are found on this earth". The universality of her call is described by her with the following words: "By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus."

She received the call for her mission on earth when she started to work in the slums of Calcutta. One day when she was on her way home she saw a woman lying in the gutter. She was very sick, mere skin and bone, and rats were gnawing at her body. She was so shocked at the sight that she instinctively started running away. "But then", she tells, "a sudden enlightenment made me come to a halt. I did not see the rat-bitten body of a woman any more. I saw that it was Jesus himself lying on the street and suffering. I carried the sick woman to the next hospital, but she was refused. That was the moment when I decided to take her to my own room and care for her myself. From this day on my life changed. I knew the purpose of my life."

For over 45 years she ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned, and dying. The Order of the "Missionaries of Charity" that she founded is now spread over more than one hundred countries and offers help to the sick and the poor regardless of their nationality and religion. One of her prayers is addressed to the Moslems and Hindus:

*and all my beloved friends among them.  
Whenever each one of us meets you in  
prayer,  
you'll make us better Christians,  
better Moslems,  
and better Hindus.  
Give us all the mercy of faith,  
so that we may recognize you.  
Amen*

People who are brought to her "Homes for the Dying" receive medical attention and are afforded the opportunity to die with dignity, according to the rituals of their faith. Muslims are read the Qur'an, Hindus receive water from the Ganges and Catholics are given the Last Rites. Mother Teresa said, "A beautiful death is for people who lived like animals to die like angels – loved and wanted."

When asked where she found the strength and perseverance to place herself completely at the service of others, she replied, "In prayer and in the silent contemplation of Jesus Christ."

In the religion of Islam, Fatima plays an important role, not just because she was the daughter of Mohammed. Among the many wives and children of Mohammed she was the one who was closest to the Prophet. Mohammed said, "Fatima is a part of my body; whoever hurts her, has hurt me, and whoever hurts me has hurt God." She understood in a deep way his message of unity which is summed up in the words of the Dhikr: "Nothing exists but God." She is even said to have stated, "Everything that Mohammed is and has said, am I, only I could not say it."

She was not only the witness and upholder of Mohammed's spiritual message of unity, but also its co-creator in the hidden dimension of al-Batin (the Veiled One). In this context she is sometimes called the "mother of her father" (umm abiha) – mother in the spiritual realm. Her name contains the wazifa al-Fatir, (Divine Creator) and as such she is also called "the creator of the spirit of the faithful, the spirit of Islam." As "Al-Zahra", the Radiant One, she is seen as the one who brought the light of the divine message of unity to the world – through the mouth of the Prophet and the Qur'an.

Fatima embodied a life of dedication and compassion. She did not get involved in the political affairs and religious warfare of her time; instead she is said to have tended to the wounded on the battlefields and visited the graves of the dead soldiers, where she prayed for them. As "The Red Cow" she is believed to nourish and care for all the people in the world on the physical and spiritual plane.

Rabi'a Al-Adawiyya, a Sufi saint of the 8th century, taught humankind that the highest form of unity is unity with God. It is the source

of all unity of religions, race, and nationality. From childhood on she used to spend most of her day and night time in prayer. After the early death of both of her parents she was sold into slavery. One night her master heard her praying, "O God, You are aware that the sole longing of my heart is to be totally surrendered to Your command. The very light of my eyes is service to Your court. If it were up to me, I would never cease serving You, even for an hour. Yet You have caused me to be subject to a creature. For this, I come late to Your service." After hearing this, her master set her free.

She then made a vow that she would never be dependent on any person or object of this worldly life. When she was offered the opportunity to marry she replied, "Were you to bequeath me all your wealth, it would be impossible for me to turn from God to you even for the blink of an eye. I do not belong to myself. I am God's possession." When somebody suggested to her to ask for help from her neighbours, she said, "Forty years now have passed since I vowed to God, never to request anything from anyone but Him. Truly by God, I swear it causes me shame to desire the world from the One who owns it. How then should I desire it from one who doesn't even own it?"

All her aspiration was concentrated on God alone; therefore she would not share her love and veneration even with Mohammed and the Kaaba. "Once I beheld the Prophet in a dream", Rabi'a has related. "He asked if I loved him. 'Who doesn't love you', I told him, 'but my heart is so totally transported with God's love that no place for love of another remains.' " When Rabi'a was performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, she saw the Kaaba itself coming out to receive her. "I want the Lord of the house", she cried. "I pay no attention to the Kaaba and enjoy not its beauty. My only desire is to encounter Him who said, 'Whosoever approaches me by a span, I will approach him by a cubit.' "

Her religion was not shaped by rituals and formal prayers, but by her yearning to become one with God. She was utterly dedicated to the religion of the heart. "Deep within my breast lies the reason for my bereavement and pain. This malady no doctor can remedy. The sole cure of this pain is union with the Friend. The lover of God will cry and weep until he finds rest in the Beloved's embrace." Her heart was so full of love for God that she could include the whole world in this union. "Were the rapture of divine love ever to be bestowed upon humankind, no one would remain unaffected by this love."

*„As the source and goal of creation is one, so the  
source and goal of religion is one“*

*Murshid said that our personal prayers were important. Perhaps because they come from the depths of our hearts? Here we have gathered quotes from Murshid, and prayers from different traditions. You will may find many more by looking into the web pages listed on the Events and Links page.*

*„What is real prayer? Praise to God. And the meaning of praise? Appreciating; thus opening the heart more and more to the divine beauty one sees in manifestation. One can never be too grateful.“*

*„Man is perfectly justified and right in praying for all his desires, and there is nothing that God is not able and willing to grant; but man should distinguish between what is transitory and what is lasting, what is worth while for his own benefit, and what is worthless. There are some people who have reached the stage at which they are beyond all desires, both earthly and heavenly, but they still continue to pray, because prayer brings them still closer to God in their limitation, and they expand from the state of limitation to the state of unlimited being. This is the highest meaning of prayer.“*

*„Before praying for the mercy of God, man must first learn to recognize God in all around him, in the care and protection he receives from all; God's mercy shows its hands and eyes everywhere in nature“*

*... „The idea, therefore, friends, is that prayer becomes living if it is offered from a living heart. From a dead heart, prayer has no meaning and is dead“ ...*

*„If the depth of one's heart has heard the prayer, God has heard it, because God hears through the ears of man. When man prays, through his own ears God hears it“.*

*„The Sufi realizes the truth of his being, and his whole life becomes an attitude of prayer, in spite of his free thought and his rising above good and bad, right and wrong.“*

*.. „Then also men should unite in prayer, for the blessing which can be received through prayer becomes a thousand fold greater when received even by a few who are united in the same desire and are praying together.“*

*„One can pray silently; but sensation is psychological, and saying words aloud penetrates the akashas of the body and reaches to the inner plane of our being. So prayer repeated aloud has a greater effect on the soul than silent prayer“*

*„Rosebud, what didst Thou do all night? --With folded hands I was praying to heaven to open my heart“.*

**american indian – Navajo**

With your feet I walk - I walk with your limbs  
I carry forth your body  
For me your mind thinks - Your voice speaks for me  
Beauty is before me and beauty is behind me  
Above and below me hovers the beautiful  
I am surrounded by it - I am immersed in it  
In my youth I am aware of it  
And in old age I shall walk quietly  
The beautiful trail.



#### *african – pygmy*

In the beginning was God,  
Today is God,  
Tomorrow will be God.  
Who can make an image of God?  
He has no body.  
He is the word which comes out of your mouth.  
That word! It is no more,  
It is past, and still it lives!  
So is God.

#### *the poetic edda - lay of sigdrifa - 6th century*

Hail to thee day! Hail, ye day's sons!  
Hail, night and daughter of night!  
With blithe eyes look on both of us:  
send to those sitting here speed!  
Hail to you, Gods! Hail, Goddesses!  
Hail, earth that givest to all!  
Goodly spells and speech bespeak we from you,  
and healing hands, in this life.  
traditional hindu blessing  
This ritual is One.  
The food is One.  
We who offer the food are One.  
The fire of hunger is also One.  
All action is One.  
We who understand this are One.

#### *from the rig veda*

Let us be united;  
Let us speak in harmony;  
Let our minds apprehend alike.  
Common be our prayer,  
Common be the end of our assembly;  
Common be our resolution;  
Common be our deliberations.  
Alike be our feelings;  
Unified be our hearts;  
Common be our intentions;  
Perfect be our unity.

#### *Buddhist*

With every breath I take today, I vow to be awake;  
And every step I take, I vow to take with a grateful heart—  
So I may see with eyes of love into the hearts of all I meet,  
To ease their burden when I can And touch them with a  
smile of peace.



*jewish mystical hymn 516 b.c.e. - 70 c.e.*

The earth is full of your goodness,  
your greatness and understanding,  
your wisdom and harmony.  
How wonderful are the lights that you created.  
You formed them with strength and power  
and they shine very wonderfully on the world,  
magnificent in their splendor.  
They arise in radiance and go down in joy.  
Reverently they fulfill your divine will.  
They are tributes to your name  
as they exalt your sovereign rule in song.

*-from Lao Tzu*

If there is to be peace in the world,  
There must be peace in the nations.  
If there is to be peace in the nations,  
There must be peace in the cities.  
If there is to be peace in the cities,  
There must be peace between neighbors.  
If there is to be peace between neighbors,  
There must be peace in the home.  
If there is to be peace in the home,  
There must be peace in the heart.

**Theresa von Avila**

My God

I don't have to climb up to heaven to talk with you  
I don't need to raise my voice, so You may hear me  
Even if I whisper silently  
You already hear, because You are in me  
I carry You in my heart  
There I can find You

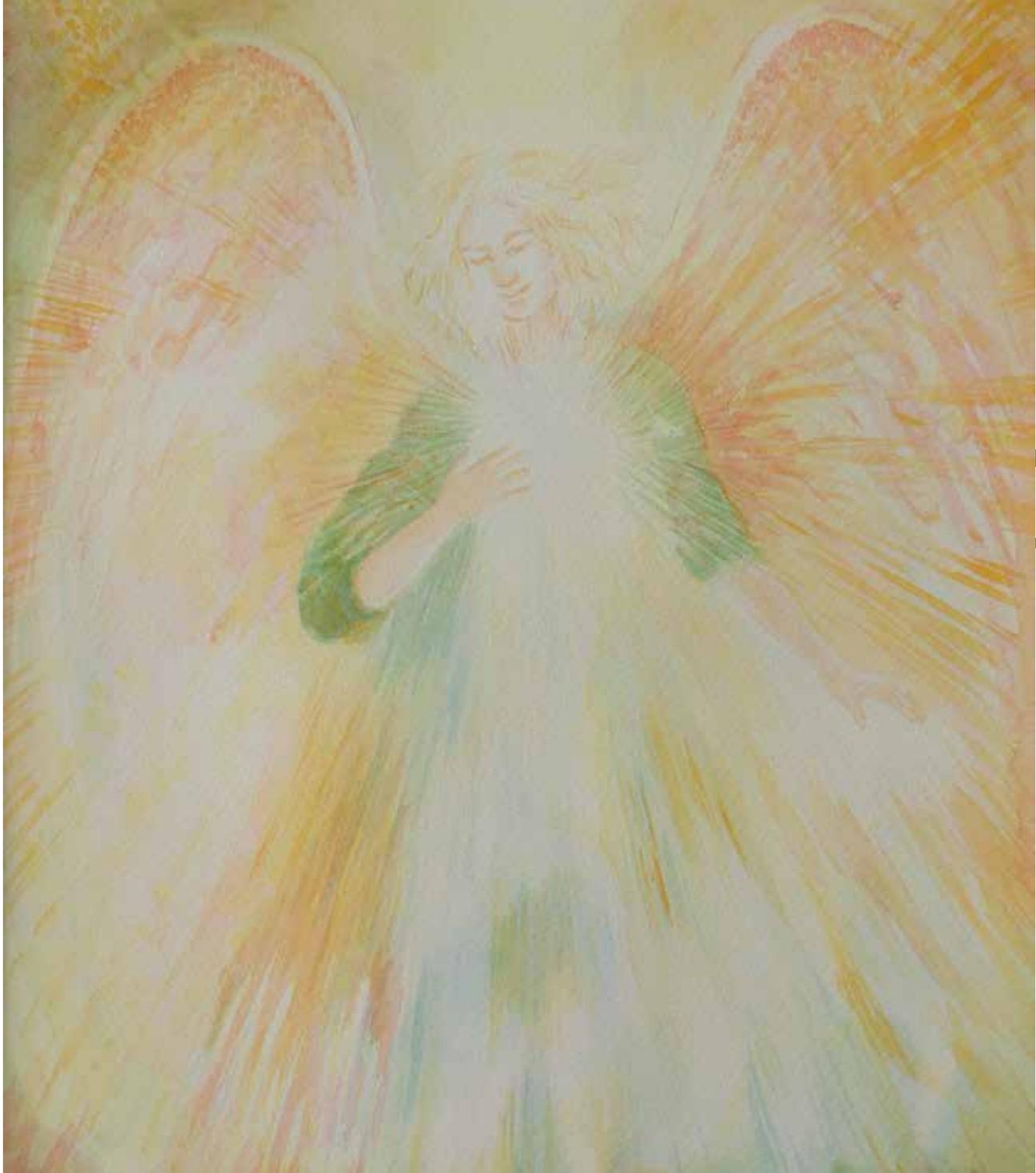
**Muhammed's prayer for light**

O, God, Give me Light in my heart,  
And Light in my soul. Light on my tongue,  
Light in my eyes And Light in my ears.  
Give me Light on my right side, Light on my left side,  
Light behind me and Light before me,  
Light above me and Light beneath me.  
Give me Light in my nerves, And Light in my flesh,  
Light in my blood, Light in my hair And Light in my skin.  
Give me Light, make my Light stronger,  
Turn me into Light!

**Sufi**

Send Thy peace - oh Lord - that our souls may radiate peace  
Send Thy peace - oh Lord -that we may think, act and speak harmoniously  
Send Thy peace - oh Lord - that we may be contented and thankful for Thy beautiful gifts  
Send Thy peace - oh Lord - that amidst our worldly strife, we may enjoy Thy bliss  
Send Thy peace - oh Lord - that we may endure all, tolerate all in the thought of Thy grace and mercy  
Send Thy peace - oh Lord - that our lives may become a divine vision, and all darkness may vanish  
Send Thy peace - oh Lord - that we Thy children of earth may all unite in one family

*O, God, Give me Light in my heart,  
And Light in my soul. Light on my tongue,  
Light in my eyes And Light in my ears.  
Give me Light on my right side, Light on my left side,  
Light behind me and Light before me,  
Light above me and Light beneath me.  
Give me Light in my nerves, And Light in my flesh,  
Light in my blood, Light in my hair And Light in*



## *Universal Worship and Universal Celebrations in Berlin*

In 2007 I heard a voice from within: „Now the time has come to do your work on an independent level, go and do so in Berlin!“. I then lived in Westfalia, and as a second job I offered courses and individual sessions in the field of spiritual body work . After moving to Berlin in 2008 – faithful to the inner call, many things were on my list of priorities, and only on the last place were the Universal Worship

and Cherag-Work.

“Man thinks, God guides! “(Man proposes, God disposes!) This saying of my mother soon proved to be true. On my way to my new apartment to do some renovation, I passed a sign that attracted my attention: „Monastery Meister Eckhart, interreligious monastery“ I discovered that the very same evening there were to

be joint prayers. After painting a room in my apartment ,I went to join the prayers .

Soon a friendship developed with the head of the monastery, Brother Johannes. He was a former catholic priest and was in contact with my teacher of contemplation at that time, Willigis Jaeger. When I told him about the Sufis and the Universal Worship, he said: „Will you hold an interreligious inspired

worship in our monastery?" I had just started my cherag training in 2006 and talked to Christoph Seydel, a cherag candidate from Berlin, about this request. He said that he had had an eye on this monastery for a long time; with the intention of asking if the Universal Worship could find its place there. Moved by all these coincidences, we asked our leader of the cherag training, Ishtar Dvorak for her opinion. Ishtar's answer basically was: „The two of you have been on the spiritual path for so long, start revivifying the Universal Worship in Berlin!“ The cherag who was in charge of Universal Worship for SOI in Berlin was unfortunately no longer able to do the work. So in this way the last of my priorities in Berlin became the first.

In May 2008 we began celebrating the Universal Worship once a month in the monastery „Meister Eckhart (ME)“ in Berlin-Schoeneberg. Here we got to know the Sufi-Pop-musician Sumeya, who is from Syria, and who offered samples of her musical proficiency in a very heart touching manner (listen under: [www.sumeya.de](http://www.sumeya.de)). As she is very close to Sufism, she soon felt connected with the Universal Worship and became the creative force in the musical part; A real treasure and a great gift to our worship! Unfortunately the monastery had to close down a year later for financial reasons, and we found a new place for our celebrations: the „Hanuman Move“. This wonderful Yoga-Studio with pictures of Hanuman, the hinduistic deity, and old Yoga masters, has old glass windows from a time when the room used to belong to an orthodox Christian community, and it became our new „home“. Up till the early 60s - the chapel of „Hanumans Move“ used to be the domicile of the catholic sisterhood of the Holy Elisabeth, the so called „Grey Nuns“ in Berlin-Kreuzberg. In this way - East and West met in a wonderful formation like it was meant to be for our Universal Worship. A year later the owner of the place unexpectedly became a father and moved to Spain, and we had to look for a new place. We found a spiritual orientated protestant woman pastor who was very much aligned with the female God qualities. In her Martha-Church in Berlin-Kreuzberg, interreligious celebrations had already traditionally taken place on the second of advent! Also the Ruhaniat order offered the Dances of Universal Peace there on a monthly basis. Along with a few women who did the dances and a cherag of the Sufi Movement, we had already celebrated a big cosmic celebration in 2010. About 150 people came to attend, and we asked the priest if we could celebrate the Universal Worship there in future. The priest told us she had to ask the consistory first, and their answer made us very happy: With one exception our request was not only answered positively, but the parish felt they would be enriched by our celebration. We were asked to call it „Universal Celebration“ - due to an agreement with the diocese. „Worships“ in terms of „Services“ were to take place only within a protestant setting. Since May 1st 2011, the „Universal Celebration“ has taken place every first Sunday of the month at 6 p.m. in this beautiful old protestant church in Glogauer Strasse 22 – right in the middle of Berlin. For a multicultural metropolis as Berlin, it is wonderful to be able to offer a Worship for so

many people with different religious backgrounds. Berlin-Kreuzberg is just the right place, as here many cultures and nationalities live together.

Inspired by the Spirit of Guidance we have performed the Universal Celebration in a slightly altered manner since January 2012. We start with the Invocation and the Light Ceremony, and then each month one religion is central to our contemplation - deepened by music, dances (enriched by our dance therapist in training Regine Gartmann) and spiritual practices. We sometimes invite active members of other religions to join us .

In March we chose the Buddhist religion as a main focus, and we had representatives of a Buddhist monastery in Berlin who shared their spiritual practices with us.

In May - the Jewish religion will be emphasized, and the celebration will be co-performed with a rabbi and cantor in training.

The part of the celebration when we read from the holy scriptures, is confined to whichever religion is in the focus of contemplation. This again is followed by ritually honoring the particular quality that came into life by this religion. The three central prayers are being integrated in the usual manner.

To us that are in charge of the celebration, this re-organization that we now offer (for one cycle as an experiment), really feels coherent. With us is also the cherag candidate and soprano singer Gesa Hoppe who delighted us in January 2012 with a wonderfully held celebration including a sermon on the emphasized theme of the „Female Countenance of God“. She is right now an expectant mother.

According to my information Berlin is one of two German cities in which all 3 Inayati families are present. If one should feel the need for a traditional Universal Worship with readings from all the holy scriptures of the world religions, we would suggest going to the Universal Workshops of the Sufi Movement. They are usually being held in Berlin-Gruenewald on every last Sunday of a month. At every Universal Celebration that we do, we lay out a leaflet informing about all the Sufi activities of the different branches inspired by Hazrat Inayat Khan. By request we'll be happy to send it out per email. Arif, who was ordained as leader by Pir Zia at Easter 2012, has moved from Dresden to Berlin, and we feel very enriched by his activities. We are currently planning to celebrate a Universal Worship in Dresden in June ; so from Berlin we enlarge our circle. A heartfelt Thank You for these new suggestions to Arif! Christoph Seydel was ordained cherag at Easter 2009; my ordination followed a year later. We are happy and grateful that we can hold and lead this celebration with each other in Berlin.

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**Translation: Haydar Schneider**

# Universal Worship Celebrations

*We were about 80 people,  
for more than half of them it  
was the first contact with the  
U.W.*



When I was initiated, for several years there had been no Universal Worship (U.W.) in Munich. We had just a family meditation room, but that was not spacious enough to invite a many people. So we celebrated our U.W. mainly as guests in different places, such as therapy-rooms, belly-dancing studios and healing-centres.

As my voice is not so fantastic, I started to work with members of the Ruhaniat, who took care of the music and dances. We chose music and dances together, but the performance part, I very gratefully left to them. And I found their way of celebrating the UW very interesting.

This was in the beginning of Pir Zia's time as Pir, when the official reconciliation between the different branches of the Inayati-family had not yet taken place, but the dawn in this direction was already in the air, so I was quite happy, when the cooperation with the other branches became official.

Celebrating the inauguration of a homoeopathic practice of a Sufi-friend with a U.W. about 4 years ago I met a mentor and official teacher of the Dances of Universal Peace from Ruhaniat, whom I knew already from Sannyas-times in the early eighties, where I for the first time came in contact with Sufi-danc-

ing and whirling.

(Seven years later I met Pir Vilayat and took initiation as mureed in 1989) As celebrating the U.W. together with this Ruhanyat-Lady was so easy flowing and uncomplicated, we became a good team and friends, and from this time on it became easier to offer U.W., as I knew that she would wonderfully take care of the music and we could rely on each other.

A next opening and widening happened, when we were celebrating our U.W. in a great centre for healing by sound, in a very beautiful, large room who offered space for about hundred people dancing. I had come to this centre for years as a member of a weekly meeting chanting-group, chanting songs and mantras from different traditions, religions and cultures - including African, Hawaiian, Indian, American natives - and sometimes Sufi-dances; a work which I felt was close to the intention of our U.W. But we didn't get this wonderful room for our U.W. until I had the idea to invite and include the leader of the centre as a musician, even though he had never participated in a U.W. But I decided to try the experiment, knowing that in this way many new people might come in contact with our U.W. (he used to chant weekly with 60-80 persons, now he is filling big churches).

# *tions in Munich, Germany*



So we became a team of three persons, plus the different text-readers and prayer speakers. I took care of the altar, the candles, the texts, the speech, the prayers and invited the Sufis. I was functioning as the celebration-mistress and the other two took care of the music and invited their people. It was a full success. We were about 80 people, for more than half of them it was the first contact with the U.W. We were a good team; two woman from the Sufi-side, and the male leader of the healing centre. He contributed his precious experience in handling big groups, had great appreciation for Murshid as a musician and a good feeling for the atmosphere, also experience in professional advertising; about 30% of the participants were "his" people who trusted him and loved to sing with him, and they easily and with open hearts dived into our U.W. and loved it.

After this "premiere" we had a reflection together, and he mentioned an interesting point, that though we light a candle for all those, who whether known or unknown to the world hold up the light of truth, he had the impression that many cultures and traditions, especially the native traditions of whole Africa, Hawaii and the Native Red Indians, are not sufficiently honoured and represented in this beautiful ceremony, whereas for example the small

and in our culture quite unknown Zoroastrian Religion, who for most participants may be somehow exotic, gets much more space. This seemed strange to him and others and not quite adequate for our part of the world and for our time.

So I took this intelligible and legitimate argument for a while in my meditation and asked, how Murshid might handle this aspect in our time. In the next U.W. together with the same team in the same place I especially explained in the introduction to the U.W. - which I always give when there are new people -, why the Zoroastrian Religion is part of our U.W. I mentioned its influence on our Western religions and that this tradition suffered in the orient, where H.I.K. had his origin, the similar fate of being prosecuted and nearly extinguished as for example the Red Indians and other traditions have been in the West. I mentioned what a wonderful and high developed relationship with nature the Zoroastrians already had, worshipping female archangels as protectors for the four elements.

So I suggested that with this tradition we include and honour all the Nature Religions and Traditions of the earth, especially those who have suffered a similar fate of prosecution through Western religions and civilizations. Sometimes in this part we use a text and dances from the Red Indian tradition, like earth am I, water am I, air and fire and spirit am I, mentioning that the element-breath is also one of our basic Sufi-practices.

And I hope and trust, that H.I.K. - being so respectful towards the uniqueness of every way and culture - will accept, appreciate and give his blessings to this form of our U.W.

On April 21st we celebrated the inauguration of our new Munich Sufi-Centre with a wonderful cosmic celebration. For about 30-40 of the participants it was the first U.W.

Usually after each celebration some persons come and share how touching the ceremony is, and what a great relief it is for them to see on the altar candles for all religions and also for the Tradition of the Great Goddess, the Divine Mother. This reminds me of my first U.W. in 1989 at the Camp, when I was so touched to see all religions honoured, and when the first candle was lighted for the female aspect of the Divine, I was bursting out in tears of relief and joy.

Maria Magdalena Straub has been a Cherag for seven years and live in Munich, Bavaria.

**"The benefit of the Universal Worship is according to the point of view of the person, how he or she looks at it. If a person were never initiated in the esoteric school, if he or she only followed the Universal Worship with an open heart, I am certain he/she could attain to a higher and greater bliss without going through definite studies, because if one sincerely seeks God, even only in the Universal Worship, one certainly arrives."**

Hazrat Inayat Khan



## *The Universal Worship within the Dutch Sufi Order*

### **"Beloved ones of God"**

In the Netherlands the Dutch branch of the Sufi Order International is organizing Universal Worships monthly (except in July and August) in Amersfoort and in Hengelo Ov. In Amersfoort, not so far away from Amsterdam, Hayo Huizinga, who was initiated as a Cherag last year, has organized Universal Worships now for about 2 years. In Hengelo Ov, in the east of our country, my wife Din Ilahi and I, Siddiq, are leading the services. More than 30 years we now have organized Universal Worships. We find music very important, because as Murshid says, it is the shortest way to God. Therefore between the kindling of the lights we are singing a song of every religion. Two or three of them are Dances of Universal Peace. For many years I was in charge of the dances, but now Arif Otten, who followed the training for becoming a dance leader, is leading one of them. We are also very lucky to have two skilful musicians who are accompanying the songs and the dances: Hans Notermans voice and guitar and Franny van Wijngaarden, flute, who are doing it in an inspiring and wonderful way. Two CD's were produced and the money we gain by selling them goes to the Hope Project.

Recently there was a wonderful creative process taking place between the musicians and our son Jonathan who wrote a composition on words of Hazrat Inayat Khan. Our son Immanuel combined the music with illustrations of Din Ilahi in a videoclip, which you can see on You Tube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\\_pa5n-iF3qc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_pa5n-iF3qc)

For several years Simone Wils has organized Cosmic Celebrations in Amsterdam. She did it in a form created by herself in which she was also using wazaïf and poems written by herself. Coming June she will stop doing it in order to focus more on Dances of Universal Peace. Sometimes Rahima van Hattem is taking over the Cosmic Celebrations from Simone. In Deventer (in the middle of the country) Hayat Westenberg is monthly organizing a Universal Worship in the Sufi centre of the Sufi Movement.

In the years from 2000 till 2010 Din Ilahi and I gave three times a year a one day course called "The Inner Path of the Universal Worship".

In 2011 I started training candidates to become a Cherag or Cheraga. Because there didn't exist a manual or course for Cherag(a)s in the Dutch language, I made one. When contemplating and meditating on what is important for a Cherag(a) I came to the point of view, that to be connected with that what Pir Vilayat called "the prophetic line" and to know the vision of Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan upon the different religions is essential. So the manual is based on that. Each candidate is given a personal training for one year. Every month attention is paid to one religion and by meditating together and giving them meditations on the prophets of each religion the candidates become connected with the prophet of each religion. Besides that they get specific sayings of Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan about the different religions. The last month is used for practical instructions. Last year I initiated one man and one woman as a Cherag(a). In June of this year another woman will be initiated as a cheraga, and one more woman has started the training now. For me it is very deepening and inspiring too.

The Cherag(a)s who monthly are organizing Universal Worships or a Cosmic Celebration in the Netherlands are Din Ilahi and Siddiq Geesing, Hayat Westenberg, Hayo Huizinga and Simone Wils. Active on invitation are Latifa Vandevenne and Akbar Appels, Louis Sicking, Magdalith Blok and Ezra Janssen, Myra van Leer, Noor and Akbar Helweg, Rahima van Hattem and Saki Lee.

In June Aeoliah Mol will be initiated and Ameneh Khanji Sonius is in training.

May the Message of God reach far and wide.

In Love, Harmony and Beauty,

Siddiq Geesing

E-mail address: [scsofia@kpnplanet.nl](mailto:scsofia@kpnplanet.nl)

# *Universal Worship in the UK*

## UNITED KINGDOM

There are 19 Cherags in the UK and services are led regularly in the London Sufi Centre, by volunteers from the whole group. They are always held around the Urs and Murshid's Birthday and also on other occasions. Individual Cherags offer services from time to time in their own areas.

The activities of the group were organised until recently by Jamila Lilian Clesham and I took over in the middle of last year. The UK Siraj is Aziz Dikeulias,

We also have 11 Cherags in training currently. I am guiding them and we meet in my home in the English midlands. We began in October last year, meet once a month and shall continue for at least two years. I shall then recommend those who wish and are competent to become Cherags to for ordination.

The UK Cherag group and those in training are currently considering ways to get the Universal Worship known to and experienced by a wider public and would welcome ideas from other countries.

Hadia Vivienne Little hadia@uwclub.net

# Do We All Worship the Same God?

Ishtar Dvorak

Some time ago I celebrated a so-called "Interreligious Service" in a beautiful old church from the early middle ages, together with some cherags and musicians, with representatives of the different religions, and the local clergywoman of the parochial community. Our theme was "Unity in the Diversity of the World Religions" using the image of light that is broken by a lens into the whole spectrum of different colours. Each text from the Holy Scriptures pinpointed a central aspect of the teachings of each religion. By playing or singing their original music and songs, and using the symbol for each tradition it was possible to give a lively impression of the special gifts and blessings that each religion has given to mankind and to further the development of understanding and respect for people of different faith.

The service was very well received. Many people came and told us afterwards, how interesting they found this inclusive way of worship. They were especially touched by the rich and deep wisdom that the texts of the Holy Scriptures mirrored and by the insight that we are basically all driven by the same longing of our soul for the identical goal, the Divine Presence. But this service had an unpleasant aftermath: The next day the superintendent called up the clergywoman of the church, who had done a beautiful presentation of the Christian religion within our service. The superintendent – i.e. the senior minister, who is the leading authority of all the churches of an area – disapproved of the fact that candles had been lit for foreign religions on the Christian altar and that non-Christian scriptures had been read and placed on the altar. But her main complaint was that we had called the event "Gottesdienst", which is the German word for any kind of religious service and means, literally translated, "service for God". When the clergywoman asked her, why she considered this as an offence she answered, "Because it was

not our God that was worshipped."

## One Divine Reality and Many God Images

This incident was a great teaching for me. In the first place I learned how sensitive and careful cherags have to be when they celebrate a Universal Worship within the field of worship of other faiths, and – even more important – how necessary it is to differentiate between God, the Highest Reality, and the images of God, of which we as human beings conceive. Humanity would have suffered much less from enmity and wars if people would have been aware of that distinction. Throughout history until today the adherents of one religion have been fighting against the adherents of another religion, because they were convinced that only their own God was "the true God" and the other's God was "the wrong God" which had to be abolished. In Afghanistan the huge Buddha statues that had been formed out of the rocks were blown up by the Taliban; the early Christians beheaded the beautiful statues of Greek Gods and Goddesses in Greece and Minor Asia; after the conquest of Constantinople the Moslems destroyed many of the mosaics and wall paintings depicting scenes from the New Testament or Christian Saints; and the followers of Luther removed representations of Mary and the Saints from the Catholic churches. Many more examples of fighting against foreign God images could be named. If the adherents of different religions would have realized that their God image and the God image of the others were only different expressions of the same Divine Reality, of the One and Only Being, the Ultimate Reality or however one might call that Being which we name "God", there would not have been any reason for discord and wars.

The Universal Sufism of Hazrat Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan earmarks very clearly this important difference between the One Di-

vine Reality and the many God images. This teaching is manifested in the ceremony of the Universal Worship in which the One Divine Being is worshipped in its many names and forms, which have developed at different times and in different cultures in the various religious traditions. In the Universal Worship we celebrate the richness of the many God images that have been created in order to reach some kind of under-

the Divine Reality. But inherent in the human soul there is a deep longing for our divine origin and for reuniting with this origin. So the soul reaches out "toward the One" – as we say in the Invocation. The longing of our soul moves us to try and grasp the ground of Being which – like the horizon – recedes further away from us the closer we get to it. But in the attempt to get closer to what we call God we create a God

be surprised at the Chinese, the ancient Greeks, and the Egyptians who had thousands of Gods. I should say that is few; there should be millions of Gods, for one cannot have a God without a personal conception. But the source is the same, the source is one, and therefore God is One. So God, who exists independently of our conception of Him, must be conceived by us for our own comprehension. To make God intelligible, man must first make his own God. The God of each is the God of all, but in order to comprehend that God we each have to make our own God." (The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, vol. IX, p. 78-79, 82)

There are as many God images as there are men. Strictly speaking, there are even more, because our God image is not static. It unfolds and changes with every step in our development. The German poet Rilke says, "With my ripening Thy Kingdom ripens." In our early childhood our conception of God is mostly shaped by our parents and important family members. In school age the influence of teachers, ministers, priests, and friends is added. As adults our process of maturation consists mainly of the attempt to become independent of the ideas about God taught to us by outer authorities, and to develop our own God image, always in accordance with our self image and our view of others, of life and of the world, and corresponding with our inner needs and life experience. We endow our God image with qualities that at each given phase of our life correspond to the deepest desires of our soul. In times when we feel left alone and lonely, our God image shows traits of a friend, whom we can trust and feel close to. When we suffer from feelings of guilt, we need a God who is compassionate and forgiving. In times,



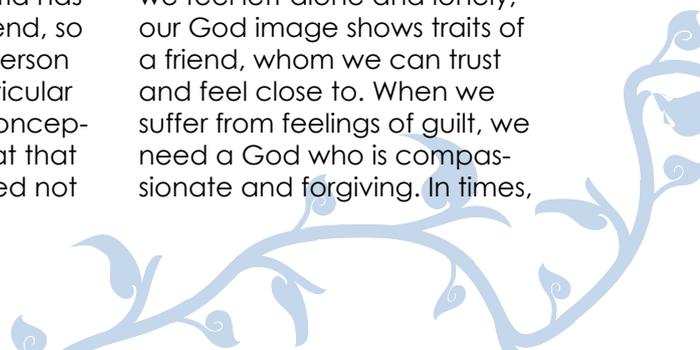
standing of the Divine Reality, and of the One Divine Truth which has found an expression in the various Holy Scriptures. Viewing the Universal Worship from this perspective it appears as a very effective way of working for peace in the world.

### The Individual God Image

Murshid teaches that the development of a God image is a necessary and unavoidable step in the spiritual unfoldment of a person. Man is not ever able to understand or grasp

image. Murshid says:

"And what is God? God is a conception; and we each make a conception according to our capacity, according to what we have heard and what we think. Everyone imagines God in his own way and as not everyone in the world has the same idea of his friend, so it is natural that every person in the world has his particular idea of God, his own conception of what is his God at that time. Therefore one need not



when we feel disoriented, confused, and weak, we imagine God as a loving father or mother, who takes our hand and guides us on our way.

### The God Ideal as a Path to Perfection

By developing our own concept of God, which changes and unfolds in the course of our spiritual growth, we move in the direction of divine perfection. Murshid describes this process with the following words:

"The idea of God is a means for the Sufi to rise from imperfection to perfection, as is suggested in the Bible, 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.' There is a vast gulf between the state of imperfection and the state of perfection; and God is the boat in which one sails from the port of imperfection to perfection." (The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, vol. IX, p. 113)

Murshid mostly uses the word "God ideal" for the word "God image". It is our highest ideal. To this ideal we ascribe all the wonderful qualities that we have experienced in our life and in dealing with other people whom we loved and admired, and we trace these qualities beyond the limits of our imagination in the direction of perfection. For instance, we have experienced beauty in our life, and our hearts were filled with awe and reverence towards it, but at the same time we know that the divine beauty is a thousand times more beautiful than we have ever experienced it or can even imagine it. This way we gradually widen our mind and our heart to include higher and higher forms of beauty. Once we have established our God ideal by endowing it with the utmost qualities, we deal with it as if it were a living being. By praying to it, worshipping and celebrating it, it becomes alive in us, for the human mind has the ability to create whatever we focus on with full concentration and an open heart.

"And how is man to come to perfection? Only in one way, and that is first to make a conception by worshipping God, by trying to know about God, by attributing all that there is of beauty and power and justice to that perfect conception in himself. By doing this a man will come nearer and nearer to the truth; and by the time he has come closer to God he will have lost the idea of his false self which stood between himself and perfection." (The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, vol. IX, p. 91)

This is the "secret of the God ideal", the "stepping-stone to self-realization", as Murshid puts it. It leads us step by step towards our real self, towards our truth, to that what we truly are. In

the process of the unfoldment of our own God image we make God a reality and become the truth ourselves. This developmental process is described in Murshid's statement "Make God a reality, and God will make you the truth."

### The God Images of the Religions

Besides the individual God images there are collective God images which are formed within a culture on the basis of common experiences and needs of a people or nation. They mirror the developmental level and the specific assets of a culture. Also these collective God images are subject to change, although the change process covers a much longer time span than the life of an individual person. We see, for instance, how in many ancient cultures – under the influence of the growing structures of the patriarchal society – the originally feminine God images have been replaced by male ones. Or the Asuras, ancient Vedic Gods and Goddesses, who were originally regarded as being independent of the priests' offerings and rituals, later lost their significance with the growing influence of the caste of the Brahmins, and some even came to be considered as demons.

On the other hand, we see the tendency to counteract these processes of change. In all times there has been the attempt in religious traditions to try to pin down the established God images – in the Holy Scriptures, in dogmas, prayers and sacred songs. This attempt to fixate them against the natural tendency of change seems necessary for upholding the identity of a religion and supporting the coherence among its followers. Priests, Ministers, Rabbis, Imams, religious teachers of all traditions consider it their task to preserve the traditional God images. On the other hand, the cultural values, the social and political structures of a society as well as the world view and the outlook on human nature and life within a culture are subject to constant change. The consequence is that people of later generations see themselves confronted with God images that no longer correspond to their contemporary way of thinking and experiencing life. Their personal God image is in conflict with the concept of God propagated by clerical authorities.

For this reason it becomes more and more difficult for Western people of our time to maintain the Christian concept of man as an essentially sinful being who for his/her redemption is solely dependent upon the mercy of a judging God. Furthermore, the separation between a "God in the heavens", the "totally Other", and man here on earth, i.e. in the broadest sense the separation between God and His/Her creation,



no longer makes any sense, since modern physics suggests that all matter is pervaded by (divine) spirit, respectively all matter is seen as condensed or crystallized spirit. Also the anthropomorphic God image, as depicted in medieval art or of the Baroque and Renaissance age, appears to people of our time at best as a possibility to make the Divine Being intelligible to children. And since the development of feminism in the last century, when women started to struggle for a reevaluation of their self-image and better opportunities to play a role in society, they react against the one-sided male God image which has been established in patriarchal societies of earlier centuries.

### Spiritual Freedom

The discrepancy between the traditional God image of clerical authorities and each individual's own concept of God can cause deep conflicts, especially for those who sincerely follow a spiritual path based on their own experience and inner truth. For this reason mystics – seen from the perspective of established religions – have always been regarded and persecuted as heretics. The freedom to create one's own God image that arises out of one's own maturation process and one's own experience is what Hazrat Inayat Khan calls "spiritual freedom". It is an essential part of our Sufi path. This freedom requires courage and authenticity. It is based on our respect for our own truth, which in turn enables us to

respect the truth of other people. Sufis who cannot find their orientation in traditional and fixed God images, because they have realized the value of forming their own God image for their spiritual development, will also value the God images of others. Only out of the practice of this kind of freedom can tolerance grow. Murshid says:

"The Sufi path is a path to freedom, and to start on this path to freedom man must free himself." (The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, vol. I, The Inner Life, The Preparation for the Journey, p. 66)

"Every Sufi is free to believe whatever he feels is right and whatever he is able to understand. He is not nailed to any particular belief. Instead of troubling about these beliefs the Sufi wants to go straight to the central idea; and when he stands there he sees the truth of all things. Therefore Sufism gives freedom to everyone to believe for himself and to find out things for himself." (The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, vol. VIIIa 2, 14)

The Sufi in his tolerance allows every one to have his own path, and does not compare the principles of others with his own, but allows freedom of thought to everyone, since he himself is a freethinker. (The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, vol. I, The Way of Illumination, Sufi-Thoughts, p. 16)

"Freethinkers" – this is what the Sufis of all ages have always been. And this is what we need

in our time of rapid change and transition, with humanity striving towards more humane values of tolerance, mutual understanding, cooperation, and unity. And this is what we observe in all the democratic movements, conflicts, and uprisings in the Near East, in Spain, Russia, China and many other countries. We see "free-thinkers", mostly young people who are fighting against the oppressive political and religious authorities, upholding their own ethical values and religious ideals – even at the risk of their life. To shake off the chains of conditioning and fear and dare to stand up for what one believes to be true, this is the path of spiritual liberty that the Sufis choose. It has always placed them at the leading edge of developmental processes towards the goal of freedom – and it still does. But these processes are based on the constant challenge to become aware of our own inner captivity of our minds, hearts, and souls and make an effort towards inner freedom. In one of his messages to his mureeds Pir Vilayat said:

"There is just that step we need to make. It means letting go of self-image, mental assumptions, of wallowing in whatever assets have been secured, then freewheeling on the strength of a sheer, anticipated vision of how things could be if we would be what we could be – if we allowed the universe to fall into place in a novel pattern in us." (Keeping-in-Touch Nr. 19)



# *My approach to the Universal worship : a development report.*

## **The first contact**

My first contact with the Universal Worship was also my first encounter with Sufis in the Sufi Order International. It was in 2002 in Bad Überkingen at the Christmas seminar. The free, open form of celebrating the liturgy, certainly fascinated me: No rigid rules, a tangible joy of the people involved, the unity of all religions, the beautiful, almost heavenly music of the choir. Music that was familiar to me. All this resulted in my return a year later, where I participated for a whole day. It was a good day, but I felt a resistance as well as enthusiasm – a resistance I had also felt the previous year. Something reminded me of my catholic upbringing; The barrier between the podium, the local actors and myself, the public. Neither were the prayers meaningful to me - they reminded me strongly of my own experience with prayer: the more or less uninvolved reciting of words. Only the songs, the music managed to give me joy, but the whole ceremony was far too long for me. At the time I just noticed what happened in me, but didn't reflect any further.

## **Distance**

In the summer of 2004 I visited the camp in Ticino for the first time. It was the last camp week with a Universal Worship. After joining the Celebration for a short while I didn't feel any desire at all to continue participating. I felt that the people there were in a closed circle and celebrated themselves. I left the crowd.

Although from then on intensively on the Sufi path, I tried to avoid the Universal Worship as much as possible. Whenever I did attend it, I was frankly rather dull and uninvolved. Only the Worship at the Easter Seminar 2011 had a certain power that touched me, at least partially, inside. It was about sustaining the creation. Maybe that was what appealed to me - the environmental manager of Caritas Bavaria. The serious and substantial search of the Cherags, the struggle for answers that was really transmitted. And yet there was duality. Yes, I will describe it like that; Duality in two different aspects: duality between man and God, but also between actors and audience. And - it all took endless of time...

### **Approach**

In the summer of 2011 my mentor of the leaders training asked if I wanted to join the Cherag training. I said no, arguing that this was not my thing; The shape, the way, the procedure, the prayers, everything. My mentor remained steadfast, said that it is not just about the Worship as a ritual, but about giving an example of interreligiousness in the whole realm of life. The forms of the Universal Worship also require an adaptation and renewal again and again. I finally promised to think about it and to read Murshids speeches to Cherags. Well. Already at that time in my heart there was an attentive listening, a slight interest; this my head did not like at all. The reading did the rest, and so I decided to actually take part in a training and see what would happen.

### **Training**

A small circle of people, a pleasant setting, people on the path, most of them "old hands", and two Cherag presentations that at first didn't fascinate me at all: the archetypes Mary and Inanna. In the course of the weekend my inner self responded in this way: Understanding - enthusiasm - but also confusion, confrontation, and the question is: What do I want? Is this the wrong movie? At the closing worship - which consciously allowed individual scope and spontaneity (which suited me very much) - all of my resistance was completely gone; in my inner depth I felt what Murshid meant with "spirit of unity." I signed up for the entire training.

### **Practical experiences**

I already had an active part in the Worship at the end of a retreat (lightening the candles as a symbol of the various religions), and I felt it was a very fine service. Then the Easter Seminar 2012 with the Universal Worship followed. A high official of a special kind? A grand final? For whom? I'll try to express my impressions in more detail.

This time I switch sides. I sit in the front - as a candidate among the Cherags. I have been present at the textual and organizational preparation for the worship. It is an enormous amount of work - circumspection, organization and structure are necessary, and mindfulness as well. Everything is done behind the scenes before a worship can take place. High amount of respect. Heavy candlesticks out of an equipment suitcase are being set up, someone out of the ranks of the Cherags has to carry them again and again to the worships. One woman can't carry this suitcase. I wonder why the candlesticks have to be so heavy when they are to be carried each time. Of course there is no time to ask questions...

I sense that which makes the separation also here in front where I am now. The Cherags in their space, the audience in theirs. The altar is turned away from the people, the candles as symbols of the religions, are being kindled towards the front, and the speaking is towards the front - Where to? I remember the changes after the Second Vatican Council in the 60s. And I remember the current trends of placing the altar turned away from the audience. Why is this happening here? Last year, the altar was in the middle of the people. Of course I noticed: It has something to do with the room plan.

While the worship is progressing, I'm surprised that I'm getting tired. About half of the time has passed - approximately 1,15 h. Soon I also notice that the music, although really beautiful, is too much for me. For every religion there is an appropriate song. The idea is nice, the practice is hard. And again the prayers, which are just part of the worship. They are spoken by different Cherags with great sincerity and depth. Nevertheless, my heart is often unaffected by them. My eyes are wandering around the room, the audience seems to be involved, but also expectant.

At the end of the worship - I've deliberately left out some parts - is the personal contact of each individual with Pir Zia. The gift of a flower or a piece of cloth from his hand and a blessing with it. For a long eye-sight, a divine, deep space rose up. For me the "spirit of unity" became most noticeable here. "The spiritual magic, that building up the worship" according to Murshid, is unfolding exactly in these precious minutes. I look around at the people and at myself, and this makes me smile. We have changed in these minutes, just like we're holding a hidden treasure in our hands. Meanwhile, 2,5 hours have passed. The choir starts to sing again. I can't go on any longer and leave the room.

## Reflection

In the retrospective and analysis of my experiences, I see that right from the beginning of the sufi path, the unity of religious ideals appealed to me, without that I would have named it this way for myself. The form of worship, however, was more of a hindrance to me because it brought up separation. The form fascinates and irritates. Maybe the art is to always again include the "freedom of the form". What is being achieved by this form is what I read by Murshid: ..."that the universal worship,"the church for all", is also a school where we learn the lesson of tolerance – towards all teachers and all holy writings". I have actually been able to recognize this as something profoundly unifying. And this is an incredibly valuable achievement of the Universal Worship. Despite this unity there is for me yet, a separateness. Because I could only see the divine in rare moments. Perhaps this is a goal too large for the entire worship, but I don't think so. I follow the thought of Murshid, when he says, it is "the true purpose of the worship to let God become reality" Perhaps I haven't understood it right yet. Perhaps this is also to be seen dramatically. My attention is in any case on the question of whether the divine light in the worship is mainly visible through the contact with the Pir, or whether by "whatever shines through what appears, the divine truth can be seen", as Pir Vilayat would put it. This attitude, this quality would then have to be aspired for - not only for the worship ritual, but also for the entire everyday life, called the "Universel".

As a conclusion I would like to note that I am in the learning process; that the theme really inspires me, and my view of things is expanding. It makes me continue to ask questions and not to stop to look for - and find answers.

***Uta Maria Baur, Polling, Germany***



# An "interview" with Murshid

Dear friends, This "interview" is made of original quotes from Hazrat Inayat Khan. In putting it together I mainly relied on the transcriptions of his words in the "Addresses to the Cherags". Everything in italics is from me, everything else from Murshid. I may take this opportunity to also draw your attention to the "First Universal Worship treasure hunt" in Vienna at the end of September. A hint: reading this interview may help you solve the riddles and find the treasure ... Details about the treasure hunt, Universal Worship activities at various places in Europe, and other information and inspiring articles will be published on the European website of the Universal Worship, which will be launched on September 13th: [www.universalworship.eu](http://www.universalworship.eu)

Now I wish you an inspiring time with Murshid's words.

**With love and blessings, Zumurrud**

**Question:** Murshid, thank you very much for speaking to us about the Universal Worship. Could you, at the beginning, say a few words about your vision of the Universal Worship?

Answer: The Universal Worship was the hope of all prophets. The prayer and the desire of all great souls was that the light given in all the different forms such as the Buddhist scriptures, the Quran, the Bible or the teachings of Krishna or Zarathustra, should be known by everyone. The work of the Sufi message is to spread the unity of religion. It is a work to unite the followers of different religions and faiths in wisdom, so that without having to give up their own religion they may strengthen their own faith and focus the true light upon it. 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. The Universal Worship is not another Church to be included among the variety of existing Churches. It is a Church which gives an opportunity to those belonging to different religions to worship together. Also it gives practice in paying respect to the great ones who have come from time to time to serve humanity.

If it is a religious movement, it is not a movement to make propaganda for a particular creed. It is a religious movement in this sense that this movement is meant to bring about peace between the followers of all religions. It is a religious movement in this sense that we all may learn, whatever be our belief or faith, whatever be the faith of our ancestors, that we may learn to respect the religion of another. That eventually by doing so we may rise to that state of understanding, when to our mind comes one religion as the sum total of all religions. At that moment we rise above the differences and distinctions which come from the narrow outlook of man, from his limitation, and we begin to understand that this religion or that religion, its name and its form, was only a cover. A cover over that religion which

always was and which always is and which always will be.

The Universal Worship in the first place offers a wider point of view, and a larger altar for worship. But what is the meaning of the worship? It means, the opening of the doors, to bring one into communication with one's God, and what does one want more?

**Murshid, you said, "The Universal Worship is the religion of the future". Can you explain what you mean by that?**

A: In ancient times it has been the ideal of the Great Prophets to bring the whole humanity in one religion. But as humanity has variety of conception, it has not always been easy. No one with any sense who observes keenly the present condition of humanity, will deny the fact that the world today needs the religion. Why I say the religion and not a religion is because there are many religions in existence which might be called a religion; but what is needed is something else; it is the religion. Must this be a new religion? If it were to be a new religion it could not be called the religion; then it would be like many other religions. What I call the religion is that which one can see by rising above the sects and differences that divide men; and by understanding the religion one will understand all religions. I do not mean that all the religions are not religion; they are the notes; but there is the music, and that music is the religion.

**"The religion" does not mean that the Universal Worship is a new religion replacing all other religions?**

To say that the whole world must belong to one Church, one religion, is as absurd as for all people to wear one kind of dress. The world would become uninteresting. The forms of worship of all the different religions are necessarily different. It depends upon what one is accustomed to, what is akin to one's nature. One cannot make a common rule and say that this form is wrong and that form is right. One person will perhaps feel more exaltation in a form of wor-

ship which includes some art. It stimulates his emotional nature. Music, pictures, perfumes, colors, and light, all these have an effect upon such a person. Another can concentrate better if there is nothing in the place of worship to catch his attention. It is all a matter of temperament.

It is not the purpose of the Universal Worship that people should leave their own church. The purpose is that they should unite together to worship the God-of-All. That need not stop them from going to their own worship.

The Message that the Sufi Movement has to accomplish in the world is not in the form of a new religion, it is not a new religion, it is a new form - and the necessity of a new form is so great that even nature in the springtime gives a new form to every plant and science says that in seven years the skin changes. The Message is the revival of the same one religion. It might seem just now strange that the idea is put into the Universal form to which people are not accustomed. They know religion only as one form, not as many. But this is the fulfillment of the prayer of Moses, the aspiration of Jesus Christ, the desire of Mohammed, the dream of Abraham. They all desired that one day there would come a time when humanity would no longer be divided into different sections. The mission of the Sufi Message is that, instead of giving a new form of worship it collects all forms in one, so that no one may say my form of worship is left out.



#### ***So the Universal Worship is not a “new” religion?***

No, it is to bring together the different organs of one body as they are meant to be united. 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 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.

Are the workers of this Message priests? No, they are the soldiers of the army of peace, the army which is working to bring about the peace in the diverse religions of this world.

#### ***In which way can the Universal Worship contribute to making the world more peaceful?***

The Universal Worship brings to humanity the ideal of the unification of religion; the ideal of getting above the sectarianism and limited outlook of communities and groups. And we





must remember that no political or social efforts will be completed without holding fast the ideal of truth, of uniting in God. This is the only source in which ultimately humanity must unite.

Can that be religion for one moment which can separate the children of God from one another by the name of faith, by the name of religion? Where lies true happiness? In the understanding of one another, in our unity with one another, in our harmony with one another. Imagine the troubles that the humanity has gone through the past few years, do these troubles seem to end? Not at all. If the troubles seem to end in one form they arise. It seems if a wound is healed, at its outlet. And how can rise above this difficulty? Social activities. No, the religious world of humanity. And religion or that religion. The religion, which Muslim, of Christian, and For we all, whatever be religion, or religion, can only that one God and in truth, in this unity which unites The mission of the Universal Mankind. It exists in order to avoid greater catastrophes, and to gather together the followers of different religions in the understanding of the one truth behind them, so that they may hold in respect all the teachers of humanity who have given their lives in the service of truth. One should look behind all religions to see where they unite, to find out how the followers of all the different religions can be friends, how they can come to that one truth.

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end? Not at all. If the troubles seem to end in one form they arise. It seems if a wound is healed, at its outlet. And how can rise above this difficulty? Social activities. No, the religious world of humanity. And religion or that religion. The religion, which Muslim, of Christian, and For we all, whatever be religion, or religion, can only that one God and in truth, in this unity which unites The mission of the Universal Mankind. It exists in order to avoid greater catastrophes, and to gather together the followers of different religions in the understanding of the one truth behind them, so that they may hold in respect all the teachers of humanity who have given their lives in the service of truth. One should look behind all religions to see where they unite, to find out how the followers of all the different religions can be friends, how they can come to that one truth.

#### **What can we do to promote, to encourage friendship between the religions?**

I would like to say on this point that our mission in the world is to bring about the understanding of one religion to the followers of other religions. Therefore it is necessary for us to become acquainted with the different religions. But at the same time we should not become acquainted with different religions in the same way as a student of theology would be in the university. The other day I happened to see a professor in Switzerland, a professor who has been studying at the university specially theology. And he came to see me and said, he would like to know very much the difference between the Hindu and Buddhist idea and where do you differ from this. I said: Our work is to find out where we unite, not where we differ. Because that which divides is not true, and that which unites is ultimate truth. When we are seeking for Truth we should not be looking for things that divide, but for things which unite us. He said: We have a different point of view at the university. We are told not to study these religions with interest, but we must be neutral in studying these religions. I said: If you are neutral to your friend, to your neighbor, you will never understand him all your life. You may live together for years, you will never understand. As long as you are neutral there is a wall between you and the other person. It is only sympathy that will make you understand your friend. And it is by sympathy that you will understand the religion of the other. Therefore very often it proves to be futile to study religion with neutral point of view.

Our motive is to bring to the minds of those, who will study comparative religions the idea that all different Scriptures have come from one Mind and were given to the world by various lips. That the difference among the prophets has been of the different lips, but there has been one Spirit from which the wisdom has come.

#### **What would you recommend to us regarding our relationship with other religions?**

What position shall we take towards other religions? We shall remove the wall that the word "other" creates. For as there is no religion that is the other religion, it is by our own example that we shall show for us there is no other religion. Every religion is our religion, and in this way ours is the religion. In your dealings with others, with people of different religions, faiths, and beliefs, and with the people of different ideals, you will hold the Sufi ideal, the ideal of tolerance, of overlooking, of forgiving, of having friendly inclinations, you will not lose your poise, your balance, if you are insulted or persecuted, you will maintain your tranquility and will stand firm on your feet and will show in your thoughts, speech and deeds, that Sufi spirit that will win all in the end.

The success of our religious work is in unpretentious working, to keep our knowledge in humble guise, and to make use of it in establishing friendship. There is only one way of teaching spiritual things and that is the way of sympathy. Build a bridge of sympathy with

every person you come in contact with, then a channel is established through which your ships may pass, loaded with the treasure of spiritual Ideas. As soon as friendly conversation takes place then there is established a way between two hearts.

Just the other day I heard from a cherag how he built such a bridge from heart to heart with a representative from a religion. I told you about it. But I am also aware of difficulties one faces in trying to spread the Message.

I have no doubt that you have many difficulties in your work, and yet I am thankful that we are in times that there is not that difficulty which the people who have gone before us had. They were exposed to wars, and disasters. Their life was always in risk. Our time is a much better time, only the difference of that time and time those who followed, this time is that at that who came with the Message they were strong, they stuck to it. Now the time is very different, they wanted to fight, but Those who opposed those who came with us they wanted to defend it. Now today the time is such that they come with indifference, they stay in indifference, and they go away, sometimes, they easily come and they easily go. But they don't stand before you with a sword and saying: do not touch my belief, do not have to do anything with my faith. They are easily attracted. In one way it is a very good time and in another way it is a very bad time. Sometimes the indifference has a deadening effect upon the work. In that time when they opposed it had a life-giving effect, the opposition gave a life, enthusiasm, it gave new spirit to the Cause. And now there is no opposition, there is indifference, which has a deadening effect upon the work. Nevertheless, every time has its own beauty, this time has its beauty also. For it is a wonderful time for intellectual spreading of the philosophy of Truth. It is a wonderful time to expose the mysteries which were guarded once from the ignorant; at this time they can appreciate it, they can understand it. We have much to thank in our lives and in working for the Sufi Cause. If we are going slowly, still we are going forward, and we certainly shall reach the goal; only, if we keep ourselves united together, and because we are small in number so more united and devoted to one another, helping one another in every way possible in order to further the Cause of God.

*Our Sufi Message is a  
friendship, grouped together  
in the seal of God and  
Truth.*

Message they were strong, they wanted to fight, but us they wanted to defend in indifference, and they indifferently. And therefore they easily go. But they don't a sword and saying: do not

**Being aware that we are small in number, how shall we proceed?**

***(Zumurrud to the readers: I tried to render what I heard and put in italics where what I heard differs from other transcripts.)***

What we need today most is the collaborators, workers in the Universal Worship. It is that worker only who will prove to be all-sided worker, in other words, who will prove to give himself, herself in every capacity. And it will be most appreciated.

And he must know, she must know that she is, he is the pioneer of the work. Therefore her responsibility is great, his responsibility is great, his, her difficulties are great. But at the same time his work, her work is great too.

The members of this particular Movement may be limited, but the members of our ideal are not limited in this world. We have millions and millions and millions of members in the world. When we go with our hearts open, with the thought of brotherhood, when we open our arms and welcome without asking: what nationality, what race, what faith, what religion have you? - then certainly we become the brothers and sisters of humanity and humanity becomes our brothers and sisters.

***Murshid, please accept my most heartfelt thanks for your enlightening words. There are so many more questions I would like to ask you, and I hope we will have many more opportunities to listen to you. For now, let me ask you for a closing address to our readers, before I quickly email this interview to Alia, our dear Sufi friend from Norway, who is preparing another wonderful issue of our European "Sufinews".***

I have much to thank God as I have always said to my friends, that in my difficult work I have one great blessing, and that is sincere friends. And I shall never be discouraged no matter what difficulty comes, because I am sure of their friendship.

Our Sufi Message is a friendship, grouped together in the seal of God and Truth.

*And he must know, she must know that she is, he is the pioneer of the work. Therefore her responsibility is great, his responsibility is great, his, her difficulties are great. But at the same time his work, her work is great too.*

# Events and Links

## Our One Voice

Our One Voice is a book about a game of language. It is a very simple game, with only one rule, and that rule is to avoid using the words 'I' and 'you' when you engage in a conversation. Now this rule often brings up all sorts of questions. Questions like: 'Is such a thing at all possible?' And: 'Why should I even want to try that?' 'What purpose does it have?' These questions and others are all carefully addressed in this brand new book, which is currently being completed. The book itself is an open invitation to join the conscious exploration of what it means to be part of 'us' – in whatever form we may happen to discover ourselves.

By speaking in terms of 'us' and 'our' (instead of 'me', 'mine', 'you', and 'yours') with somebody else, we actively bring our connectedness to the centre of our attention. The one rule of the game can help us to focus. When we overcome the simple yet profound challenge of keeping our connection alive, it greatly deepens our sense of 'sharing the moment'. The experiences gained this way can then be added to the equally valuable experiences that we many of us have already gained by taking the opposing, individualistic approach to life.

Our One Voice will be published in the Dutch language first. The English version is scheduled for release in 2013. Pre-ordering is possible, but please note that the book is supposed to reach its readers as a gift. This is because both the act of giving and the act of receiving will greatly add to the value of each individual copy. Therefore please only pre-order if you intend to give it away to somebody else, and otherwise please just tell somebody close to you that the book is on your wish-list.

For more details go to: [www.our1voice.org](http://www.our1voice.org)



# EVENTS

**July 23** – Aug 18. Meditation camp in the Alps [www.zenithinstitute.com](http://www.zenithinstitute.com)

## **Pir Zia:**

July 30 to August 4: Alps Camp presentation with other leaders  
August 5 to 11: Alps Camp Silent Retreat with Aziza [mail@zenithinstitute.com](mailto:mail@zenithinstitute.com)  
August 25-26: Seminar in Katwijk . [SOEFIORDEINFO@GMAIL.COM](mailto:SOEFIORDEINFO@GMAIL.COM)  
October 19-21: London Seminar [info@sufiorderuk.org](mailto:info@sufiorderuk.org)  
March 29-April 1: Easter Retreat in Gersfeld <http://www.sufiorden.de>

## **Aziza Scott:**

October 26-28: Copenhagen [nini.leick@image.dk](mailto:nini.leick@image.dk)  
Nov. 29-Dec.2: LONDON, UK [info@sufiorderuk.org](mailto:info@sufiorderuk.org)  
Jan. 28-29: Suresnes, France [secretariat@sufiorder.org](mailto:secretariat@sufiorder.org)  
March 15-17: Vienna, Austria [Franz.Krejs@aon.at](mailto:Franz.Krejs@aon.at)  
April 12-14: Oslo, Norway [ki.a@online.no](mailto:ki.a@online.no)  
April 19-21: Copenhagen, Denmark [nini.leick@image.dk](mailto:nini.leick@image.dk)  
May 16-19 :Rennes, France [jhervot@aliceadsl.fr](mailto:jhervot@aliceadsl.fr)

## **Sarida Brown:**

July 7-10: "The Path Towards Wholeness". Retreat in UK. Group and individual retreats. [www.sufi-healingorderuk.info/Regional Events](http://www.sufi-healingorderuk.info/Regional%20Events). [sufi@caduceus.info](mailto:sufi@caduceus.info)  
September 8-9: "Opening Our Capacity to Heal" London, non-residential retreat. [info@sufihealingorderuk.org](mailto:info@sufihealingorderuk.org) and (0)1926 422388.  
November 10-11: Healing seminar in Norway. [www.sufi.no](http://www.sufi.no) [ki.a@online.no](mailto:ki.a@online.no)  
November 17: Healing seminar in Geneva in French. Contact: Ariane Bourgoz: [bourgoz@orange.fr](mailto:bourgoz@orange.fr)  
Tel: 0033 4 50 94 89 67.

## **See also the national websites for further events and information:**

Austria: <http://www.sufiorden.at/index.htm>  
Belgium: [www.universel.be](http://www.universel.be)  
Denmark: <http://www.sufi-danmark.dk/>  
France: <http://www.ordre-soufi-international-france.org/>  
Germany: <http://www.sufiorden.de>  
Holland: <http://www.lightsong.info/>  
Norway: <http://www.sufi.no>  
Switzerland: <http://www.sufismus.ch/>  
United Kingdom: <http://www.sufiorderuk.org>  
<http://www.sufiorder.org>  
<http://www.nekbakhtfoundation.org>  
<http://www.sulukacademy.org>

[www.universalworship.eu](http://www.universalworship.eu) online from 13.09.12  
<http://cheraglibrary.org/>  
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>  
[www.worldprayers.org](http://www.worldprayers.org)  
<http://www.interfaith.org>

## **Contacts for the Universal Worship:**

Europe: Zumurrud Butta [zamrada@chello.at](mailto:zamrada@chello.at)  
Germany: Khadiym [Khadiym@online.de](mailto:Khadiym@online.de)  
Austria: Zumurrud Butta [zamrada@chello.at](mailto:zamrada@chello.at)  
Holland: Siddiq Geesing [scsofia@kpnplanet.nl](mailto:scsofia@kpnplanet.nl)  
United Kingdom: Hadia Vivienne Little [hadia@uwclub.net](mailto:hadia@uwclub.net)  
Denmark: Nini Leick. [nini.leick@image.dk](mailto:nini.leick@image.dk)  
Universal Worship international: Shahabuddin Less  
<http://www.risingtideinternational.org/shahabuddin-david-less/>

# Prayer to the Sublime Creator

## Prayer to the Sublime Creator

O You to whom we belong,  
you have created us of your own being;  
you have fashioned us on your own form,  
so that there is nothing within us  
that is apart from you,  
that is different from your nature.

We are made by you and of you.  
This body is your matter.  
In our minds are your thoughts.  
In our hearts, your feelings;  
In our souls, your light.

All of these are yours,  
these borrowed robes that we wear.  
And who are we underneath these robes?  
The robes are yours,  
and underneath  
who could there be but you?

Let us wear these robes in remembrance.  
Let us never forget that we belong to you;  
that we live for you and in you.  
Let us be true to your colours.  
Let us fulfil the purity of the names  
with which you have invested us.

Sublime Creator, when we look out on the horizon  
may we see you in all colours, in all shapes.  
May we know you as the one light  
of whom all forms are the reflections  
and all colours the refractions:  
the one, pure, eternal light  
that has always been, will always be, and is  
right now shining before our eyes and through our eyes,  
as we live, move and have our being in you.

Amin

