

The Inayati Order, Sufism & Islam

What is Sufism?

Sufism is not a religion nor a philosophy, it is neither deism nor atheism, nor is it a moral, nor a special kind of mysticism, being free from the usual religious sectarianism. If ever it could be called a religion, it would only be as a religion of love, harmony, and beauty. (Gathekas for Candidates by Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan, Gatheka 3)

Sufism has existed from time immemorial. It is the awakening of the heart to the Divine beauty, a personal search for answers through a practice of prayer, meditation and spiritual inquiry. It is a tradition anchored in the act of remembrance: remembering on the breath the divinity inherent in all life.

The word “Sufism” comes from the Arabic word “tasawwuf” which has been explained by the great Sufi master Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir Jilani through the four consonants that comprise it. “T” stands for *tawba* or the repentance that allows us to return to the Divine basis of our nature. “S” represents *safa* or the peace and joy that arises from the process of purification of the body, mind, heart and soul. “W” is for *wilaya* or the state of sanctity of the lovers and friends of the One which comes from inner purity and leads the seeker to a point in which all he/she experiences is through the seeing and hearing of the Beloved. And “F” represents *fana* or annihilation, an effacement of the separate self and state of at-one-ment with the Divine which is the pinnacle of meditation.

What is the connection between Sufism and Islam?

As a historical tradition that takes the form of tariqas (orders), organized and dedicated to a particular mode of spiritual practice, Sufism has its formative context in Islamic history. In this sense, Sufism is an extension of the Islamic revelation and the integration of its essential guidance by adepts who delved into the inner heart of the faith.

The search for mystical depth, however, is a perennial one and has been the search of human beings throughout history. As a search for deeper meaning and a truer engagement with the purpose of life, Sufism is universal and is the essence of the revelations of all prophets – the prophets of the Bible, the prophets of all the world’s great religious traditions, as well as visionary sages known and unknown to us today.

Can I belong to any religion and be welcomed into Inayati Sufism?

With its universal vision embracing the totality of revelations, the Inayati Order accepts and honors all of the great religions of the world. There is no compulsion or expectation of conversion, but instead an aim to bring together all religions, and those with no religion, to awaken the spirituality that exists in all traditions, and ultimately transcends all traditions. “God is the religion of the Sufi.”

*Amazing! A garden in the midst of the flames,
My heart takes on the form of what it entertains:
A meadow for gazelles, a Christian hermitage
A pagan pagoda and the Hajj pilgrimage,
It's the writ of the Torah and the Holy Qur'an;
Love's faith is the path I'm bent to travel on.
Down whichever path love's dromedaries speed,
There's my religion: I profess that blessed creed.*

Shaykh al-Akbar Muhyi ad-Din ibn al-'Arabi

How does the Inayati Order support my path as a Muslim?

The Inayati Order strives to provide an accommodating environment for those who visit us, of any religion or no religion. For initiates of the Inayati Order who practice Islam, we have a special email list for discussion related to Sufism and Islam. If you have a specific need related to faith, or diet, please always ask and we will aim to be as accommodating as possible. Please contact our relevant Inayati Center Leaders and/or Event Organizers if you plan to visit and would like to request support related to space for prayer. If a gathering or class has been planned during a mealtime, please inform us of your needs if it is Ramadan or if there are requirements for a Halal meal.