



Mindfulness, Spiritual Connection, and Timeless Guidance: Three Things Universal Sufi Meditation Offers Your Soul

A message from Sufi al-Hajj Daud (David D. Peck, Ph.D.)

Sufism is among the most ancient spiritual traditions in the world, tracing its origins back thousands for years through a golden chain of individually guided meditation and mystical practice. The modern stream of the Sufi tradition—called Universal Sufism—is growing globally, especially in the West. The benefits of Sufi meditation in the Universal tradition not only produce many of the desired results of mindfulness mediation, but also deepen spiritual connection and provide timeless guidance from ancient sources. If you are interested in these results, read on.

Sufism

The essential elements of the Sufi tradition are as old as humanity. Sufism, as this tradition is now called, has throughout history been associated with numerous religions and has been known by many names. Most recently, Sufism came under the protection of Islam, but Sufism is not limited to or dependent upon Islam—or any religion. In fact, Sufis in the Islamic world are persecuted by the strictest Islamic institutions and ideologies, including Wahhabism, Salafism, al-Qaeda, ISIS, and many more. Why are Sufis persecuted? In part because they are universalists. They accept anyone interested in spiritual guidance, no matter their tradition.

Universal Sufism

Toward the beginning of the 20th century a number of Sufi masters, mostly located in and around India, moved West and created a form of Sufism that, for the first time, was not linked to any particular religious tradition. Their efforts and teachings evolved into the Universal Sufi Movement. One of these founders, an Indian mystic and Sufi named Hazrat Inayat Khan, travelled to Europe and the United States between 1911 and his death in 1927. He defined Universal Sufism:

“The purpose of the [Universal] Sufi Movement is to work towards unity. Its main object is to bring humanity, divided as it is into so many different sections, closer together in the deeper understanding of life.”

The first principle of universal Sufism is to unite, not divide the human family. The movement seeks to help its followers to develop a deeper understanding of life, including the life of the soul.

Relationship to Religion

Do I need to belong to any particular religion to practice Universal Sufism? The answer is an emphatic “no.” Universal Sufism is not a religion: there are no creeds, no required scriptural texts, no priesthood, no required ritual. Those who engage in Universal Sufism need no religion at all, or, if they want, they can be affiliated with any religion or faith tradition. In fact, followers of Universal Sufism don’t know if their fellow-travelers are religious or not. Hazrat Inayat Khan said,

“The [Universal] Sufi Movement has members belonging to many different faiths and who have not given up on their own religion. On the contrary, they are firmer in their own faith through understanding the faith of others.”

Additionally, many followers feel more grounded in their secular values and traditions.

Meditation

Like many mystical and meditative traditions, Universal Sufism encourages a short daily practice. This includes meditation with a focus on the breath. I say “breath” rather than “breathing” because Sufis regard breath as a vital essence necessary to human life, and energy that permeates body, mind, and soul, enlivening persons who cultivate breath-consciousness, or breath-awareness. Universal Sufi meditation and breath-consciousness are beneficial to body, mind, and soul.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation helps the body by removing you from the demands and stresses of daily life for a few minutes each day, inducing physical relaxation and calm. Mindfulness also helps your mind, leads to clarity of thought, inspirational insights, and improved memory. Mindfulness meditation is good for the soul, and allows your innermost voice to speak and guide your thoughts. But meditation in the universal Sufi tradition is much more.

Your Soul

What does “soul” mean in Universal Sufism, if the movement has no religious affiliation? For many Christians the soul is comprised of two parts, “spirit” and “body.” In other faith traditions the soul is a fragment of a universal being that is convinced it is an individual entity but requires religion to correct this mistake so it can be reabsorbed back into the universal being.

In Universal Sufism your Soul is your essence, that uncreated part of you that is YOU. Your soul has always existed and always will exist. It was first awakened by that True Essence which creates all that we know and live in. The soul longs for reunion with that True Essence, and Sufi meditation helps the soul connect ever deepen to its origin. Because anything in its essence is unknowable in its essence, Universal Sufism refuses to define the soul much beyond “your ever-existing individual self.” How does one know that they have a soul? They know by their life experiences and inner promptings. There are no words, no definitions, no creeds that can really describe this soul-awareness.

Your Ego

In Universal Sufism, your soul’s full self-realization is not impeded by anything external to it, but is instead limited by ego. When the soul manifests itself into this realm of existence, it develops two narcissistic wounds. The first is the sense of disconnection with the True Essence—which can be called by any name, like The Real, The True, The Eternal, The Totality, or as Brahma, Ram, or Jehovah, or God, or Allah—or by no name at all. Because our soul’s origins predate our birth, we are unfamiliar with having bodies, senses, pleasure, or pain, sickness or health, which are all new and powerful sensations. We sense these disconnections, and come to believe that we are isolated, alone. That is not true, but we come to believe it is. Second, we feel that we have let others down, most commonly, that we have let family down. To protect our soul from more wounds or from touching the deep wounds we may have, we develop the ego, the outward persona, that feels no wounds, that needs to be, that is self-existing and self-sufficient, that projects our wounded feelings onto others. But only the soul can heal its own wounds. As long as the ego is strong the soul is less empowered to find healing. Fortunately, meditation within the universal Sufi movement is directed at the soul, at penetrating the ego to reach the soul, and to give our soul a “voice” that helps us move toward ego-annihilation and toward spiritual healing, joy, happiness, and spiritual health. Meditation in the Universal Sufi tradition is aimed at weakening the ego by strengthening the soul.

Sufi Meditation

Your soul is comprised of the same strengths, virtues, characteristics and qualities as is the True Essence. Those qualities include love, kindness, generosity, fairness, and compassion, as well as many others. The balance of these qualities, which are in reality infinite in number, is unique to you. It’s what makes you and individual in essence. Universal Sufism believes that you are good. You are not depraved, fallen, or evil. Soul meditation seeks to find and strengthen those qualities and characteristic within your soul by awakening and enlivening your soul as taught by the True Essence. As your soul grows in strength and voice, your true, good individual nature asserts itself through increased love and light. Instead of focusing on traumatic wounds and the negativity of the ego, Sufi meditation focuses on virtue, character, and essential goodness.

Guidance

Universal Sufism shares characteristics common to ancient spiritual traditions. Just as in Yoga one must have a Guru, so in Sufism one must have a Murshid or Murshida (pronounced MOOR-sheed, or MOOR-sheeda). The Murshid is a person who is further along in Sufi practice who through initiation is bound to you and the welfare of your soul. A murshid is a person who helps, but does not command or coerce, in finding your soul’s unique qualities and realizing

them in your life. Anyone or anything that tells you that they have power or authority over your soul risks inflicting spiritual violence. Only by compassion and love can your soul be guided. You are the only authority over your soul. And your soul already possesses everything it needs to realize its full potential.

Find Out More

If you want to know more about universal Sufism, please contact me on this website:
www.saintsandsufis.com.

Welcome: May Peace, Health, Happiness, and Joy to you and yours,
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Universal Sufism

<https://www.ramdass.org/hazrat-inayat-khan/>

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<https://www.chishtyfoundation.org/>