

Khalid A Wasi

Sufism
For Today

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Khalid A. Wasi

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this book to all the prophets known and unknown whose light and travails have nourished and enriched the human experience by connecting to the source of our beings. Also to the numerous men and women who as luminaries have lit a path and are living proof of higher realms of consciousness. I also dedicate this book to all the souls who have sacrificed for the cause of making a better world who are the true known and unknown saints whose charity and benevolence has kept the momentum of life moving towards the good.

I think of my grandchildren whom I have not had the role to raise but whose love is so innocent and inspiring. All the many persons who are searching for truth and a higher meaning to life. This book is eternally yours.

To Thee

I sit a gaze at night looking at the little lights from the windows of the houses on a hill far away amidst the forest. The lights like eyes look back at me but for their inhabitants I am too far and too small to see.

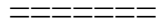
It's a beautiful scene between they and me a silhouette by night and by day bush and vine cover the paths whose trail long abandoned can still be seen swaggering through each tree.

I sing to them each night and I know even they cannot hear though silence fills the air. By day the noise of the birds and hum of the highway obfuscates even my loudest scream. I have learned to love the distance even though as a youth loved filled beds of bodies was never enough to fill every inch of space.

It was the warmth I felt just as now learning the comfort of the cold. But there is warmth even in the cold just as there is light in the darkness still leaves its trace.

One more night and I send my kisses to the houses on the hill. Behind those lights there are souls living a life unknown to me. Nevertheless, I send my kisses and all the love that flows as my portrait to thee.

Table of Contents



Introduction

Chapter One.....	What is Sufism
Chapter Two.....	The West is now ready for Sufism
Chapter Three.....	Step beyond custom and culture
Chapter Four.....	The new hope for the ages
Chapter Five.....	One world one truth
Chapter Six.....	The brother/sisterhood of humanity
Chapter seven.....	Let go and let life begin

Foreword

Sufisum today needed this book "Sufisum For Today", here in 2017. The author and I started the first sunni Muslim group in Bermuda in 1977.

God almighty chose the author to be the founder and first leader, the first Amir, to introduce group practice of the sunnah of Islam in Bermuda. Therefore, the Author has a right to address the outer perimeters of universal inward reflection of communication between your mind and your soul which by its very nature exists and occurs irrespective of your religion.

I see this book not as one propagating any particular religion but rather providing a reminder that "all the prophets are connected to the Force, the Essence, or the more common term, God, which in Arabic is described by the word, Allah".

In Islam we refer to Muslims who develop their inward reflection of communication between their mind and soul until there is no difference between stones and coins, as Sufi. Every religion has people who develop their inward reflection of communication between their mind and soul until there is no difference between stones and coins.

The Quran tells us to respect all the prophets, those we know about as well as those not named in the Quran.

The Quran also tells us in this well known chapter (Translation to English by Abdullah Yusuf Ali)

- 1.Say : O ye that reject Faith!
- 2.I worship not that which ye worship,
- 3.Nor will ye worship that which I worship.
- 4.Nor will I worship those whom you have worshipped;,
- 5.Nor will ye worship that which I worship.
- 6.To you be your Way, and to me mine.

I see the author's book as one establishing a brother sister bond between all people of all religions, and that it is possible for humanity to live in peace through mutual respect of culture and human rights and for people of one country to have a societal practice, a different Faith, a different Way, as a whole country compared to a different societal practice in another country irrespective if each feels that the other has a different religion, faith, or belief or Way.

Countries must respect each other's differences and live in mutual respect and peace. Likewise, persons of different religions can pass each other in the street, each wearing his particular religious clothing, and say to one another in any language they speak, Assalaamu Alaikum.

AL Haj Waheed Abdurrahman

Introduction to Sufism for Today

Growing up in Bermuda and seeking truth during my era was an interesting journey. Socially Bermuda was a very structured society and Christianity was not just predominant but the only religion up until the early 1970's. Life style was codified by the church, which was part of ritual participation by a substantial portion of the population. Attending church on Sunday morning joining a youth choir and youth organization was for many part of rite of passage.

Notwithstanding para normal events, which I learned later as spiritual or mystical phenomenon was very much part of my experience from as early as 9 or ten years old. Later during my late teens while a freshman in university, my math teacher, professor Briggs introduced me to the subject of meta physics. He was very philosophical and would excite his students to think and question how we perceived reality.

I recall a day after one such lecture from Professor Briggs, traveling to New Jersey with the intent of finding one of my older brothers named Alan. I used to go New Jersey most weekends to visit a female school friend attending the Berkeley School of Business. So I had decided to visit her first, besides I had no idea where my brother lived. When I arrived at her school dormitory she and a group of young friends were all leaving to visit another dormitory and graciously invited me to come along with them. I declined the offer and told her that I had come over to see my brother and therefor continued onward. I walked less than a quarter of a mile and made an occasioned glance at a shop window and saw the back of the head of a man. I looked closer and it was my brother sitting in this restaurant. Here is the point, there are millions of people living in Newark New Jersey, even had I known his address, I would have had great difficulty finding him, so what are the odds of me randomly bumping into him? Still what are the odds of telling someone I am leaving New York City (Manhattan) to find my brother who lives somewhere in Newark New Jersey?

I had throughout my life, experiences of various kinds that mirrored that type of odd happening and considered it a normal possibility however unique it appeared. What these exposures did was make me more aware of possibilities and therefore any religious, philosophical or spiritual discussions would not rise to the bar of being a real truth worthy of debate unless it answered or satisfied this dimension. While paranormal activities were totally familiar to me for the better portion of my life, at the age of 23 I had the ultimate of experiences, which opened my being indelibly to a whole realm of knowing and perception, which took me far beyond my intellect.

I reached a station of knowing that during this period I never questioned. I would know whenever someone was coming to visit, it was not a hunch or a thought, it was knowing to an extent that I would go out to meet them. Even if it was a person whom I knew, but

just traveling past in a car, I would viscerally be waiting for the car to come insight, or similarly go to answer a telephone call before it rang. My mother called me excitedly one day to look at some ants, I looked at them and immediately ran inside after watching what they did. Through observing the ants, I saw what people had been planning 12 miles away. I could go on and write a book on those experiences alone, suffice to say it was knowing what was going to happen before it happened as though it was actually happening. I knew this was not my doing but rather what I experienced. There was an awesome power which I did not create but ran through my being and was part of my being which communicated with everything not as an alien but as though I was in those entities and objects including animals. This was not sensing were there can be a little doubt, there was no doubt and no contemplation just knowing.

There was no literature available to help me understand what I experienced. I was alone in that state and developed my own metaphors to describe it. Fortunately, it was as though I lived in two worlds but was able to fully function in my mundane task of living and working on my job as a carpenter, while simultaneously experiencing another reality. It was through this state I was able to collaborate with others to purchase Sufi books and other books dealing with mysticism. The books served to help translate my metaphors into the experiences, which were universal to Sufi and Hindu thought.

Reading Sufi literature helped me understand myself. I had embraced Islam but needed a meaning for it and the practices. Aside from the idea of oneness of God and prophets like Muhammad as an archetypes or examples for humanity, there was little I could adapt as a practice that had any meaning other than its cultural importance, for which I had no real fascination. My own experience gave me all the realization I needed, however it was the written works of Shayk Abdul Qidr As Sufi, Hazrat Inyat Khan and Al Ghazali, which justified the Islamic practices for me. Other than that, I had no affinity for what we can call fundamentalism.

Over the years fundamentalism grew and as it seemed Sufism went into retreat, for a lack of better terms. Perhaps due to my age and what possibly happens when persons become senior citizens, the issue of one's own mortality naturally becomes real, I developed the sense of telling it all and leaving my experience in the world rather than allowing my story to be buried in a grave. There is an old saying "When a man dies his knowledge goes with him". I fully realize that premise and therefore put forward thoughts that I have carried rather than let them disappear. My experience may prove to only be important to me, in which case is still important enough to share and publish. However, I believe my experience in the Bermudian environment where it happened, is an important declaration of universality. I am not Arabic or Persian or Hindi my language and experience is English. Yet my experiences are very familiar with those depicted in oriental languages and cultures.

Either the experiences of Western persons are to be counted as valid comparable experiences to those of antiquity, or they are discounted simply because of geographic bigotry. Just as spirituality has no religion, spirituality has no geography either. In today's world when the ravages of fundamentalism is a daily news occurrence, an ideology that fosters peace should be welcomed and if not, is certainly needed. There is an old axiom as a phenomenon, wherever there is intense darkness, there is also the possibility of immense light. Sufism was brought to the West by persons like Hazrat Inyat Khan early in the twentieth century but now at the beginning of the twenty first century, it's due metamorphosis is happening. This book is dedicated to its liberty.

Chapter one

WHAT IS SUFISM?

If Sufism is not a religious sect, then what is it? The origin of the term Sufi has some discrepancy as to its etymology, one popular meaning, coming from the Arabic word Suf, meaning wool. That description is generally understood to refer to a group of devout first century followers of the prophet that were inclined towards the spiritual aspect of Islam and not worldly pursuits and whose life style was simple, living as ascetics that wore clothing made of wool. However, Ahl al Suffa or people of the veranda, is a label attached to a specific group of some highly revered men and devotees of the prophet, whom he allowed to sit outside the Masjid in Medina to be near to him, also rivals for the origin of the word Sufi.

Many historians will say, most of the men of the veranda, died in battles defending the prophet, and there are many Sufis today who trace the lineage of their teachings to a few of them that survived. Sufism as a group phenomenon took greater form after the light of the prophet had begun to diminish a generation or so later after his death during the Umayyad period. The characteristics of that Sufi movement was led by men who had rejected displays of opulence and dressed humbly, more often wearing clothing of course wool. Yet it was not wearing wool alone that distinguish them as Sufi, rather it was their proclivity towards spiritual development and their mystical affair with life that differentiated them as individuals and as a group from those who at that time had lost their way and became preoccupied with worldliness due in part to political success and conquest and at best were more fundamentalist in their observation and approach to religion. There are many Sufi groups who trace their lineage of teachers back to the early companions and Ali the cousin and son-in law of the prophet as patriarchs.

Over the millenniums many groups called tereqahs like the Chasti order or Nashabandi, have formed and provided some level of orthodoxy to the modality of Sufism. However, the term Sufism is in reality just a branding. The branding is on a phenomenon of a life style and practice that predates the first century of Islam and any recoverable recorded history, but can be evidenced under the guise of almost every religion and culture. The way of life called Sufism is associated with a form of Asceticism which wasn't derived from any specific culture, but is in fact a culture of its own. This particular form of asceticism is not a state of poverty or a style of simply of looking poor, rather it is the state of mental detachment from a form of mental slavery and a true freedom from materialism and worldly attachments, including from things such as desire for fame, or power over others. In that regards Sufism is not a particular sect or a religious format, but like water and sunlight is to a plant, it nourishes and helps the plant to experience the

fullness of its specific DNA. Sufism does that for the religious practitioner and that is the role it has played under various names from antiquity.

Spiritual asceticism called tasawuf in Sufism, moreover is a particular practice aimed at connecting to love and attraction to the source of life and engendering a state of absolute reliance through immersion with that higher power. If we take the Judaic people's experience and history as a sample, we will uncover a group called Essene, who practiced this form of asceticism. The Essene believed in the brotherhood of man and lived communal. For them giving to the poor and sharing what they had was a basic function of a member of a true human society and the "Beatitudes", described in the sermon on the mount, was essentially their code. Personages like Jesus, John the Baptist and James the Just, were persons whose spirituality was highly evolved and who came from the Essene community. If we were to examine the life of the founder of Hinduism, as with every other major religions or cults, invariably it originates from the inspiration of personages whose life style similarly was that of an ascetic. So, we will see this life style in case after case, branded under various names or no name throughout human history.

Given the nature of man and society the outward display of character, mindset and morality, has been filled with examples of baser pursuits, such as for power and dominance of one form or another. Seeking power and fame became a glorified goal because it was honored as the ultimate of success. As society evolved norms developed, which codified what is deemed to be acceptable behaviors. In fact, rigid codes even of what is deemed knowable became attached to religious thoughts in particular. Most societies dating back to antiquity were led by their religious beliefs. Hence social order and the idea of heresy classified expressions of unapproved thought that were deemed as disruptive to society and even blasphemous.

The disparity that lay between religious orthodoxy, which some may refer to as fundamentalism and Sufism or ascetic thought, is their separate understanding of what is knowable or what becomes the bases of their knowledge. To the genuine Sufi real knowledge is direct communication or enlightenment, which is laid upon the soul (heart) of a person not derived through reason or philosophical rationalization, but by direct witnessing as an observer. The fundamentalist of all faiths, believe in direct interpretation of written word/scriptures, often subjective reasoning or at best in a few cases, deductive reasoning. To the Sufi experiential living and responding to living situations with flexibility, is more important than ritual behavior or responses made out of observance to canon law or tradition. The Sufi practices reasoning, but considers it to be limited.

Over the years among the disparity, numerous persons have intellectually understood the discrepancy between Sufic thought and fundamentalism and have loaned their

intellectual weight to Sufism or the esoteric spiritual teaching of many religions. It is possible to realize the difference in modality of thought without a direct taste of knowledge but rather through and appreciation or love of the art and luminosity from the presence and even writings of benefactors, who have bathed in the presence of direct knowledge, which we may refer to as Gnosticism.

The world is filled with teachers who have no real exposure to Gnosticism but have been recipients of information from sources who have had live contact with such venerated souls, at times the source is many, many generations past. However, what remains is the civility, it's practices and even aura, which in themselves have a warmth that can permeate the environment and atmosphere wherever the keepers of the practices exist. Love and civility between persons is in any event, one of the basic principles of Sufism and to them represents the greatest evidence of love for God.

One of the unavoidable consequences of any ideology or practice is the tendency towards a form of canonization or orthodoxy, where there is the loss of its originality. Even though innocent, what begins from a burst of spontaneous inspiration, morphs into a definition or ideology and becomes bereft of the dynamics and magical potency of the original act and inspiration. Although the potency is eternal and forever remains, the dynamic remains in the moment and the spiritual quality during the state when initiating the transaction.

It is nearly impossible to stop this process of empty canonization; therefore, vigilance or more importantly, dynamic living, to keep the momentum fresh and prevent the process of ossification. Many of the schools or terequahs have survived for generations and have kept their practices alive and intact but too often the followers and adherents have mistaken the road as the destination, believing in the road, rather than the road is only a pathway and not the destination. The difficulty with that misconception is there are many roads, but there is only one destination. Making a mistake similar to fundamentalist adaptation to sectarianism, who have the belief their religion is the only true way, or that mere belief or disbelief in their sectarian view, connotes whether or not one is on the right path towards God. Too often even some lay Sufi adherents are as given to their distinctive practice thinking that their Sufi practice alone, without the activity of the heart, differentiates them as Sufi. In such cases even the Sufi practice becomes no different in essence to any other ritualized religious practice.

It is the movement of the heart that has yet to abandon the ego, which remains susceptible to fear and grief, however when in a purified state (annihilation of ego), receives enlightenment and bliss. There is no rank or difference between the true mystic, Brahman or Saint or what is termed Waliullah (friend of God) an enlightened soul is an enlightened soul and because they are called by different names due to language and metaphor is no indicator of a different essence or destination for each road they are on.

There is no Sufi heaven, Christian/Judaic Heaven or Buddhist heaven or nirvana. There is no enlightenment or God consciousness or awakening of the Bhuddist type, or the Christian type, there is just enlightenment or awakening. The characteristic of a person may assume the way of a monk a Sidi or motor mechanic, once enlightenment occurs, it's from the same source. There are no language requirements as a prerequisite that facilitates the path towards enlightenment. The true language, while the lips can express any language, is an affair where the heart speaks and knowable only to the lord of the universe.

After the crucifixion of Jesus his followers were commanded to wait until the “Holy Spirit” guided them, they were to stand still and not venture out with their new gospel until they were led by the holy spirit. When we study the philosophy or meaning of the word used for Holy spirit, we will uncover that what was being referenced was essentially the same awareness or direct communion called Gnosticism. They were essentially told not to lean on their own reasoning, but rather the inwardly guided communion, laid upon them through direct immersion with the ultimate source of life, which in the early days of the new Christian faith that was evolving out of Judaism, was termed in Greek, as the logos. Being conscious through the logos stated otherwise, is no different from cosmic consciousness, divine consciousness. Nirvana or Gnosis.

The ultimate aim of living or worship, is to be consciously connected to the ultimate source that we refer to as God. Concomitant to God realization is cosmic union and love for all life, which results in a connection beyond empathy and connotes the at-oneness with the universe. The outflow from that unison is, as a process, a manifestation of universal communication and perfect atonement to the will of life. Inside that state is all the genius emanating from unbounded knowledge.

Over the years there have been many great and well known Sufi luminaries such as Jalal Udin Rumi and Al Ghazalli, then there are personages like Hazrat Inyat Khan who is acclaimed to have introduced Sufism to the West and is the originator of the International Sufi organization. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad the founder of the Ahmadia was Sufi and elements of his wave of influence stirred movements in the West during the early 20th century also. However there have been countless Sufi masters, teachers, and luminaries that have kept the practice alive. The literary world is very aware of Sufi contribution to literature, philosophy and art. History also records periods when Sufism was persecuted and faced extermination by fundamentalist Islamist. Also, there have been luminaries who were deemed as heretics in every era of time and similar to the fate of Jesus were executed by death squads or beheaded. Due to that type of persecution, precaution and a form of secrecy and trust went hand in hand in some teaching methods.

Sufism as a movement among the Muslim community was a reaction to the ostentatious display of wealth, use and abuse of power, which had developed in the first century after

the prophet, were unlike during his days, even after he succeeded over his enemies, the community was essentially poor. Much of the treasury would have been distributed and used to ensure everyone had food and cloth to cover their bodies and the wanton displays of wealth was frowned upon by even the prophet. However, a generation or so later when the Muslims had conquered other lands and empires, wealth was very evidently an outcome and had become a detraction from the humility and austere life style of the prophet and his companions.

Along with wealth came power, might and conquest with associated political control. Leaders wanted to legitimize their rule by corrupting religious teachings to corroborate with their rulings. There were also the major splits between what became known as the Ahl al Sunna the Khadjarite and the Ahl al Bait or Shia, which provided another major distraction and division through which believers of the faith had to determine. Sufism was a path that went to the meaning of Islam and meaning of faith and belief in the oneness or tauhid. Sufis in that regard could escape the sectarianism and embrace the broader ideals, hence they could have come from any side of the ongoing ideological conflicts occurring then in the emerging new Islamic world. In that regard Sufism was not a religion but rather an interpretation of the true way of life as espoused by the religion.

Sufism was not a political message, it was a spiritual message and exemplary display of love and brotherhood, which is a key factor of spiritual development. However, their approach to religion draws the line between ideas of salvation based on dogma and outward ritual behaviors and salvation through self-improvement and personal spiritual illumination and behavior. Those tendencies have played out for millenniums in all the religious communities, including those of the Muslim. The orthodox of all religions promote the idea that the way of a true follower is to learn and study all the tenants and practice of the faiths and have established a set cannon to follow without deviation. The Sufi have taken the meaning of the tenants and in their application, take the position that the tenants are meant as tools and as a means of connection with the source of life and that living connection is paramount, not the tools. One position is based on the notion that enlightenment came through the prophets who are above human character and the source no longer accessible except through the words of those prophets and the other position is based on the idea that while the message of the prophets is essential, notwithstanding, inspiration is an eternal phenomenon and does not die with the messengers.

These two positions do not gently sit side by side, they have been in open conflict for thousands of years, when examine history. Persons who have claimed inspiration have often been labeled as heretics. Just examine this well-known Arab proverb "He who predicts the future lies even when he tells the truth." That proverb is an open intellectual threat against inspiration, but often quoted as wisdom. Even though there is no scriptural