GUIDE · SUFISM

A guide for Sufis and Muslims who value the mystical path of Islam (tasawwuf).

Sufism is the mystical tradition within Islam, centered on purifying the heart and drawing near to God through love, humility, and service. Its own teachers speak of a path of inner discipline in which sincerity, mercy, and kindness toward people are signs of a purified heart, and Sufi literature honors quiet, hidden goodness. Sufi teachers inherit the Qur'anic language of trial (ibtila) and speak of it as refining the heart. Traditions and teachers differ, so ask yours.



In your own tradition

> “The only true mosque is that in the hearts of saints. The mosque that is built in the hearts of the saints Is the place of worship of all, for God dwells there.”
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> "THE TRUE MOSQUE", JALALU'D-DIN RUMI · F. HADLAND DAVIS, THE PERSIAN MYSTICS: JALALU'D-DIN RUMI, WISDOM OF THE EAST SERIES, 1907 · READ IT IN CONTEXT

> “Mankind, like waterfowl, are sprung from the sea--the Sea of Soul; Risen from that Sea, why should the bird make here his home? Nay, we are pearls in that Sea, therein we all abide;”
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> "THE SEA OF LOVE", JALALU'D-DIN RUMI · F. HADLAND DAVIS, THE PERSIAN MYSTICS: JALALU'D-DIN RUMI, WISDOM OF THE EAST SERIES, 1907 · READ IT IN CONTEXT

Five things to do this week

- [ ] **Give in secret this week**
  Hand someone help, money, or food without being seen and without telling anyone. Sufi teaching prizes sincerity, a deed done for God alone.

- [ ] **Serve someone who cannot repay you**
  Spend an hour helping a neighbor, an elder, or a stranger with a real need. Service to others is a common form of training the self (nafs).

- [ ] **Keep a nightly reckoning of the heart**
  Before sleep, review the day for pride, impatience, or a hard word, and ask forgiveness. Self-examination (muhasaba) is a classic Sufi practice.

- [ ] **Remember God before you speak**
  Pause with a short remembrance (dhikr) before a hard conversation, then speak gently. The aim is a heart that treats people with mercy.

- [ ] **Sit with a person you avoid**
  Share tea or a conversation with someone you usually pass by, and listen without correcting them.

Questions to bring to your own teacher

- How do our teachers understand the difference between a deed done to be seen and a deed done sincerely for God?
- What do our elders say about serving strangers and guests, and about the saints who were known for it?
- How does our path connect the refining of the heart with the way I treat people when no one is watching?

What this guide is not claiming. Sufi orders and scholars differ on practice, on how Sufism relates to Islamic law, and on how to read its poetry, and some Muslims reject Sufi practices. The Rumi lines here are an early English rendering, and this guide does not claim Sufism agrees with the website. I am not a scholar of your tradition, and no tradition or its leaders have endorsed this site. Ask your own teachers and community what these passages mean to them.

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A free message about how we treat each other. Nothing to buy, nothing to join. One person’s hypothesis, not advice. Woodcut images were made with AI tools; the words are Keith Adler’s. Share freely.