

Sufism is not different from the mysticism of all religions. Mysticism comes from Adam (God's Peace upon him). It has assumed different shapes and forms over many centuries, for example, the mysticism of Jesus (God's Peace upon him), of monks, of hermits, and of Muhammad (God's peace and Blessings upon him). A river passes through many countries and each claims it for its own. But there is only one river.

Truth does not change. People change. People try to possess truth and keep it for themselves, keep it from others. But you cannot own the truth. The path of sufism is the elimination of any intermediaries between the individual and God. The goal is to act as an extension, not to be a barrier.

To be a dervish is to serve and to help others, not just to sit and pray. To be a real dervish is to lift up those who have fallen, to wipe the tears of the suffering, to caress the friendless and the orphaned.

Different people have different capacities. Some can help with their hands, others with their tongue, others with their prayers, and others with their wealth.

You can get there by yourself, but that is the hard way. Our personal goals all lead to the same end. There is only one truth. But why deny the thousands of years of experience found in religion? There is real wisdom available from so many years of seeking and trial and error.

A great mistake is to have only half a religion. That keeps you from real faith. It is a terrible mistake. Seeing someone who is only half a doctor is terribly dangerous. Someone who is half a ruler is a tyrant.

Many struggle in the maze of religion and religious differences. They are like dogs fighting over a bone, seeking their own selfish interests. The solution is to remember that there is only one Creator, who provides for all of us. The more we remember the One, the less the fighting....

God has said, *"I, who cannot be contained in all the universes upon universes, fit into the heart of the believer."* Now God does not actually fit into human hearts. God cannot be limited to a place. God's expressions fit into all people's hearts. We are not "part" of God, because God is indivisible. Humanity is God's creation. God's expression in our hearts is that we are God's regents, God's representatives. We are the expression, the visible example of God. And so, God's Mercy is expressed through the thoughts and actions of one person, God's Compassion through another, God's Generosity through another.

There is the essence of God and there are the attributes of God. The essence is impossible for us to understand. We can begin to understand the attributes. In fact, part of a Sufi education is to understand those attributes in yourself.

God has said, *"My servants will find Me as they see Me."* This does not mean if you think of God as a tree or as a mountain that God will be that tree or mountain. If you think of God as merciful, or loving, or as angry or vengeful, that is how you will find God.

It is permissible in Sufism to talk about all of God's attributes. Finally, the Sufi reaches the stage of submission, and then ceases to ask questions.

There is electricity everywhere, but if you have only three light bulbs, all you will see is those three bulbs. You have to be conscious of yourself. That is the beginning and the extent of it. Only by knowledge of yourself will you understand certain attributes. The connection to the attributes is through self-understanding. Outwardly you will find nothing.

All of creation is God's manifestation. But, as some parts of the earth receive more light than others, some people receive more light. The prophets received the most Divine light. Besides quantity there is quality. There is the question of what attributes are being manifested. Some people are manifestations of different Divine attributes.

The prophets manifest all of the Divine attributes. The moon reflects the light of the sun. The sun is Truth; the moon is each prophet.

Excerpt from 'Love is the Wine' by Sh. Muzaffer Effendi.