

RUH NEWS

UNIVERSAL WORSHIP RAY TODAY
UNIVERSAL ATTUNEMENT
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As our work expands to relieve suffering and bring awakening, freedom, joy and fulfilment, it is very clear that many of the problems in the world today have come from religious strife. We hear people say: “We believe in one God” with the implied addendum “and our God is the best”, which separates us from large sections of humanity with a sense of pride and superiority from our mistaken beliefs.

Our point of view, really from the point of view of every Messenger; there is only One All-pervading Essence, which is all that is Hidden and all that is Manifest. Only One, no-thing separate. We recite “Toward the One” to aspire to continue our realization of the Oneness of all Being, to make our belief an experienced Reality.

As each of us is extraordinarily unique, no duplication anywhere, we each are our own religion, or said another way, there are as many religions as there are sentient beings. History shows us that we organize ourselves as human beings in large groups of different religions. Essentially re-ligion means that which helps us reconnect with God in our experience. From the Latin: from *religare*: re (again) + *ligare* (bind or connect). It may be fact that there is no-thing separate, but if we are honest about our current condition, then we recognize we aspire to move toward that realization and experience, “Toward the One”!

In the late 1920’s Hazrat Inayat Khan created the ray called the Universal Worship. It has an outer purpose and an inner purpose. Outwardly, to show to the world that all religions have the same source. Inwardly, and much more profound; through Fana (dissolving the adapted notion of a separate self) we can attune to the great messengers of the world. So as Sufis we are trained in Fana-fi-Sheikh, to attune to the One through the rhythm of the heart of the teacher. As we advance, we advance to Fana-fi-Rassoul, where our heart, our mind, our being enters the guidance stream and rhythm of the Prophets, known and unknown.

In the Qur’an it says, “We sent you 140,000 Prophets and we make no distinction among them”. If we follow that guidance, we avoid the trap of thinking our Prophet is the best, superior.

In the Universal Worship Ray, the word Hazrat Inayat Khan used for ‘minister’ or ‘priest’ is Cherag, which mean Lamp! As a Cherag, one of our assignments is to demonstrate the Universality of Religious Ideals. One of the methods that Hazrat Inayat Khan proposed to accomplish this was creating the Universal Worship Service. We in the Ruhaniat sometimes refer to it as the Service of Universal Peace (SOUP), which we adopted to provide flexibility beyond the form other sister Inayati streams may feel strongly about preserving.

Now it’s quite clear that that service imitates a Christian service. Since Hazrat Inayat Khan was speaking mostly to people of the Christian faith and some of the Jewish faith, he created a form of worship that people would be comfortable with. He expanded the form that people knew, so those who he was speaking to could experience the universality of religious ideals.

Our challenge and our freedom here, is to honor the tradition that we find ourselves in and speak to people through the form of their tradition, and then expand it to show the universality through that form. If we were living in a Muslim country, then we would create a ceremony, a universal worship, that looked like the way that Muslim tradition would worship and then expand that to the universal side. And so on and so forth.

So adherence to the form is useful in Christian countries, but not so wise in other religious traditions where the form seems very foreign.

Now to expand the other aspect of the “Universal Worship” the title we have in English. For those of us who practice it from the deeper side, it is a matter of attunement, not worship. I’ll try to give you an example.

When we were with my sufi teacher Murshid Samuel Lewis, he was very clear he didn’t want anyone to worship him. If anyone did worship him, he would act off-putting. On the other hand, he strongly wanted us to attune to his rhythm and breath. Here is another simple example. If we want to study carpentry with a master carpenter; if we worship the carpenter, we don’t learn about carpentry, we learn about worship. But if we attune to the breath of the carpenter, the way they hold the saw, the way they hold the chisel, in the attunement we get the transmission. In that way, our inner path is *Universal Attunement*.

We know that mysticism, our Sufism, is based on experience and not premise. If we take the responsibility as a Cherag to present or share on different religious traditions, we should do our best to have some deep experience in that tradition and attunement with the Prophet/Messenger. In that way, we are not “dilettante”, not just on the surface, and people of that tradition don’t feel offense because of our ignorance or arrogance. This guidance is offered with the understanding that no two people have the same idea of what any religion means in its experience, methods and traditions and we will never be able to please everyone.

One more aspect of being a Cherag in the tradition that Hazrat Inayat Khan gave us, in Christian terms, we could say that we are assigned to minister to peoples’ needs. In the Universal Worship manual, there is guidance in serving births, deaths, weddings, house blessings, casting out bad influence, and so on. In order to be beneficial we need to develop fearlessness and have a calm heart. If an excited, fearful, depressed person comes in our atmosphere they can calm down through our steadiness. Naturally if we lead ceremony for the dead, we should make friends with death. Our work is to make friends with all those things that we wish to give people support in. Certainly, we don’t need “religion” to do any of those things. But in human history, people have the habit of referring to the Priest, the Imam, the Rabbi and so on.

As Sufis we are mystics, we refer to the heart. “Mystic” may not work for all people. So let it be that the mantle of Cherag be a lamp for those who need a person with an authorized role. Sending you deep profound love, blessings, and prayers for success in your service to all beings in all realms.

- Pir Shabda Kahn