

The Sufis

Idries Shah

The Sufis is the first authoritative, responsible book on Sufism, and as such it fills a colossal gap in Western documentation of Eastern subjects. Following a mystical teaching and a way of life that has had an enormous, though largely unrecognized, impact on both the East and West for four thousand years, the Sufis believe that theirs is not a religion, but that it *is* religion. This belief includes *conscious* evolution, whereby through an effort of will man can originate new faculties—the faculties of mental telepathy and prophecy are examples—and Sufis therefore believe ultimately in the limitless perfectability of man. To its followers, Sufism is the secret tradition behind all religious and philosophical systems.

Robert Graves says in his introduction, "the natural Sufi may be as common in the West as in the East, and may come dressed as a general, a merchant, a lawyer, a schoolmaster, a housewife, anything. To be 'in the world, but not of it' free from ambition, greed, intellectual pride, blind obedience to custom, or awe of persons higher in rank: that is the Sufi's ideal."

Idries Shah, whose full name is Nawab-Zada Sayed Idries Shah el-Hashimi, is Grand Sheikh of the Sufis and the eldest son of the Nawab (the Mohammedan equivalent of Maharajah) of Sardana, near Delhi in India. His family originates from the principality of Paghman in the Hindu Khoosh, where his ancestors have reigned since 1221, and claims the senior descent from Mohammed in Islam. Idries Shah was born at Simla in the Himalayas and lives in London. He has published several books on mystical and occult subjects.

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