

## TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE WITH ANCIENT SUFI WISDOM

The secrets that both tarot and Sufism set out to uncover are the same. For Sufis, all knowledge is tied into the knowledge of the self. Sufism is called the "path of the heart" because it is a process of consciously moving within to polish the mirror of the heart so that it may reflect the Divine. Similarly, tarot is about getting to the bottom of the mystical truths behind the Major and Minor Arcanas.

This guidebook creatively reenvisions and reinterprets each card through the lens of Sufism, and in doing so, shares the potency of its ancient mystical teachings, practices, and healing techniques.



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THE  
SUFİ TAROT

GUIDE  
BOOK

AYEDA HUSAIN



# THE SUFİ TAROT



## AYEDA HUSAIN

Guidebook

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SUFİ TAROT  
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AYEDA HUSAIN



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*Dedicated to all who have been a part  
of this Fool's journey*

*And to those who will be inspired to  
begin their own.*

*May it be love.*



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# INTRODUCTION

*The Sufi Tarot* is my way of bringing together two traditions that I love, two traditions based in healing and transformation that are often viewed as being distinct. The similarities, however, are endless—the journey, the symbolism, the art, the history, the elements, and the colors merge in a co-mingling dance of joy as wave upon wave of love and healing washes down upon us.

What greater joy for a Sufi than to be able to bridge that which appears dissimilar? For me the process involved meditating on each card and allowing that which came through to create something new. Sufism is the mystical dimension of Islam that is not limited to any one religion. Rather, it embodies the essence of the revelations of all prophets. It teaches us to look beyond the physical with the eyes of the heart, to uncover the hidden and the esoteric on the way to becoming whole versions of ourselves.

Similarly, tarot is a tool for self-development and transformation based on the hidden messages and spiritual lessons of 78 cards. The “arcana,” or secret, of each card pushes us to discover deeper realms of our own being.

It was so clear: the secrets that both tarot and Sufism set out to uncover are the same. For Sufis, all knowledge is tied into the knowledge of the self. Sufism is called the “path of the heart” because it is a process of turning within to the fountainhead of all knowledge. And tarot is about getting to the bottom of the mystical truths behind the Major and Minor Arcanas.

Bringing these two traditions together was for me a way of bridging cultures, of bringing East and West together through a shared history of tarot. Traced back to the Mamluk Sultanate of ancient Egypt in the 1300s (with the first deck ever known still displayed at the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul), tarot was picked up by the Italians in the 1400s and adapted until it took on a very different flavor in the Renaissance. I wanted to honor the oft-overlooked origins of tarot as well as the creative adaptations that came about in Europe.

By reenvisioning and reinterpreting each card through the lens of Sufism, I hope to share the potency of these ancient mystical teachings, practices, and healing techniques. The sacred art of the cards uses the power of colors, elements, and subtle symbols to convey the deep messages that lie

within. For as we move from the outer to the inner, we see that the path of the young soul upon which tarot is based mirrors the path of the Sufi.

The poetry, philosophy, and teachings of two Sufis—13th-century poet Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, known popularly as Rumi, and Hazrat Inayat Khan, the teacher and musician from India who brought Sufism to the West in the early 20th century and to whose spiritual lineage I belong—have been central in my personal journey. Their words will appear throughout the cards, serving as a guide as we discover the meaning of tarot in our lives.

Are you ready to begin the journey into yourself?

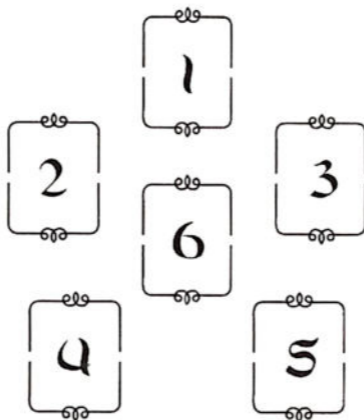
# USING THE DECK

Congratulations! You have chosen a very powerful tool for personal transformation. *The Sufi Tarot* is designed to help you heal by exploring your unconscious self. Please remember that this deck embodies ancient mystical principles and by handling it with love and reverence, we are allowing its energy to unfold. How? Like all things mystical, there is never just one way. Below are three suggestions on how to approach this deck.

*The 600-year-old Persian practice of Fal. Fal-e Hafez* ("guidance of Hafez") is a tradition in which a famous book of poetry by Sufi poet Hafez-e Shirazi is consulted when one is faced with a challenge, difficulty, or has an important question. The first line the eyes of the reader fall on is believed to be the answer. These cards can be used the same way. Shuffle them. With intention and a specific question in your mind, pick one. That is your answer. (And yes, you are allowed follow-up questions!)

*The Three-Card Spread.* This is a spread that traces a horizontal line from left to right. While traditionally read as Past, Present, and Future, *The Sufi Tarot* recommends using the same layout instead to receive guidance for the Mind (*Aql*), Body (*Jism*), and Soul (*Ruh*).

*The Sufi Tarot Five-Pointed Star Spread.* This unique spread is based on the five-pointed star of the Sufis, which symbolizes Divine light, the natural form of the human and the beginning of life.



1. Head: A logical identification of the challenge

2 and 3. Arms: What you need to know or do in the present

4 and 5. Legs: What you need to know or do in the future

6. Heart: The heartfelt answer, solution, or way to proceed forward from your heart-space

# ABOUT THE MAJOR ARCANA

The first 22 cards of the deck, or Major Arcana, introduce us to different archetypes: the carefree Fool, the enigmatic Magician, the mystical High Priestess, the commanding Emperor, the nurturing Empress, and many others.

Yet these characters are more than mere figures; they represent primordial qualities within us, some manifest, but most unmanifest. Our work on the Sufi path is to awaken these qualities, to recognize them in their shadow and their light, and bring them into balance in ourselves. On one level these characters represent attributes waiting to be birthed in our beings. On another, they tell a story of the human journey, the unfolding of the spirit as it traverses different terrains.

The word *arcana*, derived from the Latin *arcanum* (meaning “secret”), is a reference to mystical truths hidden in the cards—the same mystical truths that the wayfarer on the Sufi path seeks. When we learn to see the pictured characters as

underlying lessons and qualities—as opposed to how they appear physically—the mystery contained within the cards begins to reveal itself.

This mystery, however, is not about uncovering, predicting, or foretelling the future; it is about finding answers to meaningful questions: *Where have we come from? Why are we here? What do we need to be doing? Why do we feel the way we feel? Why do we act the way we act? Why do we attract certain repetitive patterns in our lives?*

As we witness the 21-step journey of The Fool, we see how by the time she comes to the 22nd card, The World, her own world has been transformed. And along with her transformation comes ours.

# ABOUT THE MINOR ARCANA

*Air, earth, water, and fire  
are God's servants.*

*To us they seem lifeless,  
but to God, living.<sup>1</sup>*

— RUMI

The four suits of the Minor Arcana are based on the elements of earth, water, fire, and air. For the Sufi, these elements are the basis for understanding human nature. As we learn to balance them, in shadow and in light, we come closer to the state of balance and peace that mystics aim for.

The original suits from Egypt were known as curved scimitars, polo sticks, cups, and coins. It was in Europe in the 15th century that they were changed to swords, wands, cups, and pentacles. The original name for the suit of Coins was *Darahim* (plural of dirham, an ancient Arabic currency); Cups were called *Tuman* (Turkish for multitudes

or, literally, "10,000"); Staffs were *Jawkan* (polo sticks—long and straight with L-shaped ends—eventually changed by the Spanish and Italians into batons and mace-like sticks, since they were unfamiliar with polo); and Swords were known as *Sayuf* (curved scimitars or sabers).

In tarot, the suit of Staffs represents the element of fire, and with it inspiration, intuition, passion, and dynamism. Cups, or water, represent emotions, love, and deep feelings. Swords, or air, represent mental processes, change, and often chaos. And the suit of Coins, or earth, represents the physical: the tangible and the material. Sufis have long recognized and worked with these elements as ways of healing our beings.

*The Sufi Tarot* presents the Court cards (traditionally Page, Knight, Queen, and King) as Daughter, Son, Malika, and Shah. The Daughter represents the young, idealistic, feminine energy associated with the element. The Son embodies its youthful, often raw, male expression. The *Malika*, Arabic for "Queen," represents the mature feminine aspect of that element, while the *Shah*, Persian for "King," stands for its seasoned, masculine manifestation.

How do these elements manifest in your life? As we approach the Minor Arcana, it is important to remember that they can represent actual people, qualities, or messages.

# THE CARDS



# O: SALIK THE FOOL

**Upright:** Signifies new beginnings, spontaneity, innocence, heading into the unknown, infinite possibilities, a go-ahead to take a risk as you are Divinely protected.

**Reversed:** Signifies tendency to be naive, reckless, having lack of direction, being fearful.

*The Salik* is a journeyer, a wayfarer on the spiritual path. Though known as The Fool in traditional tarot, the Salik is anything but. She represents the childlike innocence of the soul in search of truth. Here, we see her taking the first step of her journey, propelling herself forward into the vast expanse of sand that lies in front of her, leaping into the void without knowing what lies ahead while harboring full faith (or perhaps naiveté) that she will be taken care of. The sprawling desert landscape represents unlimited potential and she prances toward it, drawn to the magnetism of that which lies ahead, in total surrender. She is safe. She is protected. And she knows it.

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to your own state of Tawakkul, complete trust in the Divine. There is something unknown before you. You are being asked to be open to new experiences and leave behind any outdated belief systems that keep you from moving forward. Just as the Salik travels lightly with no belongings except her bag of truth, you are being asked to lighten your load, to “unlearn” by going deeper into your heart and excavating beliefs and patterns not aligned with your higher good. When you untie the knots left in your mind and heart by previous experiences, there is a healing of the soul. When you learn to surrender and make yourself vulnerable and open to unexpected outcomes, you are carried forth effortlessly on your journey.*

### **Contemplations**

*What baggage must I shed to move forward?*

*What beliefs and patterns keep me from  
progressing on my path?*

### **Affirmation**

*I move forward toward my life's purpose with joy and ease knowing that I am Divinely guided and protected*

# 1: ALCHEMIST THE MAGICIAN

**Upright:** Strong will, ability to manifest and create, determination, focus, power of single-pointed awareness.

**Reversed:** Manipulation, confusion, losing control, illusions, abuse of power, deceit.

*The Alchemist* transforms and transmutes that which can be seen. From the outside, this process may appear magical, and thus this card has traditionally been known as The Magician. But the Alchemist is not a magician. He is a manifestor. Enigmatic and commanding, he uses his powers of concentration to affect change. He represents motion, not stillness. Yes, outer movement is always preceded by inner movement, but the Alchemist is concerned more with manifesting on the physical level than the spiritual. He has mastered Sufi practices of meditation, mindfulness, gratitude, and surrender, which enable him to take ideas from the ethereal plane and crystallize them into reality.

He represents the *Jalal*, masculine (sometimes egoic) attributes that want to be perceived and recognized. He is active rather than passive, aggressive

more than receptive, and embodies the yang energy more than the yin. Earthly and concerned with the tangible, he is goal-oriented and uses his focus and concentration to produce quantifiable results. In Sufi terminology, he is concerned with the *Zaahir*, the external, rather than the *Baatin*, the inner.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to become aware of your full potential, especially when there is a need to transform something. You are being led to the talents, abilities, and resources you have access to and need to connect with to succeed. This is the card of making things happen, of reaching into your mind and materializing what was previously just a thought. It is alerting you to the potential of your creative energy and your ability to heal yourself, heal others, and actualize your dreams.*

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with power?*

*What am I trying to manifest, and what is holding me back?*

### Affirmation

*I make, mold, and build my own reality*

## 2: MURSHIDA THE HIGH PRIESTESS

**Upright:** Divine guidance, intuition, sacred knowledge, subconscious mind, hidden talents, things yet to be revealed, embracing your Divine inheritance.

**Reversed:** Not paying attention to your inner voice, neglecting your own needs, the need to trust your judgment, disharmony, secrets, an empathetic nature that can take on impressions that don't belong to you, being unable to relate to others.

*The Murshida* is a mystic who has conquered her self through contemplation, meditation, and devotion. Her power is her quietude, her strength, her stillness. Known as The High Priestess in traditional tarot, she represents an energy that is about *being*, not *doing*.

In her tranquility is a quiet growth, and in her placidity a silent manifestation. Through she may appear physically inactive, she is activating that which is dormant. Grounded on earth and connected to the heavens, she embodies the *Jamal* (feminine, receptive) energy, and her *modus operandi* is *Baatin*, quiet and unseen, unlike the Alchemist's

outward, *Zaahir* way of active communication. She guards a secret Divine power. She knows that by turning her heart into an empty cup she will be able to receive all that she needs.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to trust your judgment, your inner voice, to pay more attention to the knowledge of the heart than of the mind. Don't look here and there for answers—they are already within you. You are being encouraged to be spiritually self-sufficient. Ask yourself whether your old methods are leading you toward your desired result. If not, ask yourself whether you are ready for a new approach, ready to go inward and leave outward actions behind. You are being guided to go within to that place of expansion, where you feel connected with the Divine. There you will find the answers you seek and achieve the results you desire. Stillness is not stagnation!*

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with stillness?*

*How do I use contemplation and meditation  
to achieve my goals?*

### Affirmation

*I accept the Divine wisdom that flows through me*

### 3: SHAHBANU THE EMPRESS

**Upright:** Femininity, beauty, abundance, nurturing, something new coming into existence, being in the creative zone, being in sync with nature, mother figure.

**Reversed:** Creative block, dependence, not being comfortable in one's own skin, lack of self-care, need to rest and regroup.

*The Shahbanu*, or Empress, is royalty both within and without. She embodies what Sufis refer to as the aristocracy of the soul, a stately manner that comes from an inner refinement that cannot help but overflow. She sits majestically in a field of pomegranate orchards with a lush forest behind her. Visibly affluent, she has mastered abundance in the physical world without giving up her connection with Mother Earth.

The Shahbanu gives and nurtures others but does not forget to care for herself. She embodies the quality of *Rahma*, unconditional love. It is one of the main qualities of the Divine and comes from the root verb R-H-M, meaning "womb," that nurturing place from which all of existence comes into being.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to turn to the nurturance in your life, whether it is helping others, self-care, receiving support, accepting your limitations, or loving and forgiving yourself. This card is a signal to be kind to yourself. On its most basic level, it refers to a maternal influence and/or pregnancy. But that pregnancy can also represent a new idea, project, art, relationship, or business. The Shahbanu represents the creative power of the feminine, which can be applied to any gender. She is asking you to ground your energy, to be in flow with the earth, and to use its healing power to heal and rejuvenate that which may be out of balance. For it is only by doing so that you will be able to create the love, harmony, and beauty intrinsic to your nature.*

### **Contemplations**

*What is asking to be born through me?*

*How nurturing am I to myself and to others?*

### **Affirmation**

*I allow the creative flow of nature to flow  
and create through me*

## 4: SULTAN THE EMPEROR

**Upright:** Stability, power, protection, a father figure, an authority, the establishment, conviction to stand up for one's beliefs, time to take calculated action, success.

**Reversed:** Domination, excessive control, lack of discipline, inflexibility, obstruction, immaturity, living an ego-driven existence.

*The Sultan*, or Emperor, is he who sets affairs in order. He rules by serving, by taking care of things. While the Shahbanu, or Empress, represents imagination, the Sultan represents reason and logic. He is all about helping, serving, listening to and delivering the needs of people. It is a position of great responsibility, which presents its own challenges, namely being able to balance power with heart. Although his position requires him to rule with grit, strength, and force, he risks becoming dominating and uncompromising, a dilemma well-described by the spiritual psychology of the Sufis, who recognize the two basic kinds of consciousness: the *Qalb* (heart-centeredness) and the *Nafs Al Ammara* (the commanding

self that feeds the ego, aggressive instincts, and the need to be right).

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to examine your relationship with authority, authority figures, or those in leadership positions. If it comes up in relation to yourself, it is suggestive of stability and security in life. It symbolizes law, structure, order, stability, financial viability, and a left-brained approach. You are being pointed to hard work, discipline, and self-control, and shown the importance of setting your own rules and boundaries. The Sultan is about concrete actions and tangible results. Is there an area in your life to which you need to bring the work ethic and dynamism of the Sultan? Are you struggling with an authority figure who has not been able to balance their heart and ego? How do you temper the fiery energy in you?

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with authority?*

*To which area of my life do I need to bring the dynamism of the Sultan?*

### Affirmation

*I accept and embody my leadership qualities, never feeling the need to make myself small for the world*

## 5: PIR

# THE HIEROPHANT

**Upright:** Awakening, enlightenment, spiritual wisdom, tradition, morality, ethics, guidance.

**Reversed:** Old systems that no longer serve you, rebellion, being out of touch with one's inner guidance, subversiveness.

*The Pir* is a spiritual guide, an Elder, a Sufi master whose work is to help you reveal the splendors of your true self. He leads you to the dormant, unmanifest qualities in your being so you can reach your full potential and fulfill your life's purpose. Traditionally referred to as The Hierophant and sometimes the "Pope," this card represents ceremony, connection, and religion. It is related to outer authority and power structures that, historically, have sometimes lent themselves to abuse.

In his true balanced and healed state, the Pir is the gardener who nurses his seedlings, tending to and protecting his disciples, nourishing them and giving them all that they need to grow. He embodies the quality of *Hadi*, the trustworthy guide who brings you to your inherent heart knowledge by becoming a mirror for you to

contemplate yourself in. He teaches you to remove yourself from the center of your Universe and put the Divine there instead.

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to the spiritual teacher within and without. This is the card of the inner guide, the inner voice, and inner hearing. But it also points to outer guidance. Have you been ignoring or suppressing your inner voice? Is guidance coming to you from an outer structure that you are not at ease with? On one level this card is asking you to awaken the voice of your higher self. On another level it is asking you to examine your relationship with outer power structures, especially related to religion. It is pointing to dormant knowledge within you and the potential for you to not only access it but also impart it. Ask yourself: Are you the teacher or the student?*

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with religious power structures?*

*How do traditions and conventions make me feel?*

### Affirmation

*I open myself up to receive spiritual guidance,  
from inside and from outside*

## 6: AASHIQAN THE LOVERS

**Upright:** Love, harmony, unity, balance between heart and mind, healthy boundaries, passion, relationships, inevitable decisions.

**Reversed:** Disharmony, conflict, co-dependency, emotional instability in a relationship, confusion, breach of trust.

*The Aashiqan*, or Lovers, are two complementary halves of the whole. Lying next to each other in the Garden of Paradise, they represent spiritual completion. In the Sufi tradition, love is not seen as a distraction from the Divine but as a ladder that leads to the Divine. Sufi sages tell us that when we love someone, a bridge is created between two hearts. When we extend that bridge, it becomes the path to God. As the Aashiqan empty themselves to mirror each other, we see a physical dissolution of their forms. When love burns away all the appendages that we have, there is an interior marriage, a union of opposing forces that brings the entire being into balance. One aspect of the balance is the feminine (*Jamal*) and the masculine (*Jalal*) qualities within our beings. Another form

of balance that naturally occurs with a higher love is the roles of the lover and the beloved, the seeker and the sought, the capacity to give as well as to receive, within ourselves.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being guided to examine the role of love in your life. This can be human love, Divine love, or love for yourself. This card usually appears in connection with relationships and choices. If you are at a cross-roads, let your heart be your guide. The Aashiqan ask you to choose love over lower, reactive, fear-based emotions, to create conscious connections, and to bring together what may appear to be opposing forces or qualities in yourself or in your partner. Remember, the key to healthy outer love is love for oneself.

### Contemplations

*What do I need to bring into balance to achieve  
the union I desire?*

*Do I make my decisions through my mind or my heart?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace and balance the love, the lover,  
and the beloved within me*

## 7: WAALI THE CHARIOT

**Upright:** Mastery, moving ahead, taking the first step, victory, speed, action, being mentally in control.

**Reversed:** Lack of direction, lack of control, lack of willpower, aggression, inability to overcome obstacles.

Known as The Chariot in traditional tarot, *the Waali* is a master. He is an adept rider who has developed the inner capacity to affect from a position of skillfulness. He is motivated, ambitious, and represents victory, triumph, and movement. We see him balanced atop two horses, galloping across emerald-green waves of the ocean without any reins. He controls them by will alone, honing in on that which lies within his mind to achieve mastery—over form and over himself.

In Sufism, the horse and the rider represent the balance of the body and the soul, with the horse being depicted as the body and the rider as the soul. We must nurture both to win the race, for it is only when both the body and the soul are taken care of that one can reach their final

destination. It is the balance between the body and the soul that leads to mastery.

*When this card appears for you, you are being called to examine the balance between the inner and outer in your life. This card represents victory and mastery over a situation. It is a very positive card, but it indicates that effort is needed to manifest the success it depicts. What do you need to do to achieve triumph? Is there an area in your life that needs to be balanced before you can move forward with ease and speed? What do you need to do to rise and ride above dysfunction? The emerald-green water the Waali glides upon so effortlessly represents the emotions he has mastered. Do you experience any emotions that keep you from success, emotions that you still need to explore and work through?*

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with self-control?*

*What in my life needs to be brought into balance for me to succeed?*

### Affirmation

*My mind, my body, and my soul are in perfect harmony*

## 8: QUIWWAT STRENGTH

**Upright:** Quiet strength, confidence, conquering your fears and anxieties, innocence, purity, self-care, self-acceptance, determination, strength of character.

**Reversed:** Doubting your courage and personal power, having low energy, lack of self-control, weakness, inadequacy, unnecessary and excessive force.

Known as Strength in traditional tarot, the *Quiwwat* card depicts a form of might that comes from softness of spirit. The little girl we see has tamed a grown lion by choosing love over fear, trust over distrust, and open-heartedness over egoic behavior. It is this childlike nature of the untainted soul, a state of pure existence and total trust that existed before learned behaviors and impressions, that mystics aim to rediscover. They know that a soft, feeling, compassionate heart makes them stronger, not weaker.

*When this card appears for you, you are being directed to your inner strength. What circumstances are present in your life that require you*

to display a different type of mettle? What challenges can be overcome by taking a less aggressive approach? Are there any learned behaviors around your perception of courage that do not serve you?

You are being asked to connect with the purity within, leaving all that separates you from your inner essence and stands in the way of you achieving your purpose. As we proceed on our path, we often become hardened, jaded, and world-weary. Our inner state becomes dependent on outer circumstances. Are you able to be successful without taking yourself too seriously? Are you able to laugh at yourself, laugh at life? There are so many lessons the trusting innocence of a child can teach us, no matter our age. What form of Quwwat is being asked to be awakened in you? Remember, your expression of strength is uniquely yours and does not need to be modeled on anyone else's ideal.

### Contemplations

*How do I balance softness and strength?*

*What behavior and patterns give me inner strength?*

### Affirmation

*I accept the gentle strength within and let it  
shine into the world*

## 9: DERVISH THE HERMIT

**Upright:** Solitude, soul-searching, wisdom in quiet introspection, meditation, contemplation, self-reflection, quest for answers, comfort with being unconventional.

**Reversed:** Isolation, loneliness, feeling like an outsider, ignoring your inner voice, disconnection from Divine guidance.

*The Dervish*, or Hermit in traditional tarot, is a sage, a mystic who has removed their ego from the center of the Universe and placed the Divine there instead. Although the word *Dervish* is associated with renunciation, to be a Dervish today does not necessarily mean embracing asceticism in the literal sense. Rather, it refers to a (spiritual) state of being that is connected to something other than our physical lives. The Dervish learns to be in the world but not of the world, connected yet disconnected. Standing at the door between the inner and outer realms, the Dervish (literally, “doorway”) represents a state of oneness with the Divine and simultaneous unity with all of Creation.

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to a place of silence and stillness within yourself. Have you been caught up in the rat race or drama of the world? Do you need to disconnect and take some time out to reflect on what is important to and for you? This card comes with a strong message of the need for introspection and inner reflection, to examine the effect the outer world is having on you and to focus on your own needs.*

There is an ancient tale of a Dervish who would knock on people's doors in the middle of the night saying, "Awaken! Awaken!" If the Dervish arrives at your door, then this is a call to awaken to a new perspective, a new way of being. You are being guided to your inner wisdom, to the light within you that often dulls in the haze of frenzied outer activity.

### **Contemplations**

*What is my relationship with solitude?*

*Do I take time out for myself, away from the noise of the outer world?*

### **Affirmation**

*I honor the guidance that comes from within*

## 10: CHARKHE FALAK THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

**Upright:** Faith, destiny, importance of aligning to your true nature, change, turning point, beginnings and endings, a change in fortune and luck, lessons that have been learned.

**Reversed:** Struggling with change, disappointments, repetitive patterns, recurring life lessons.

*The Charkhe Falak*, Wheel of Fortune in traditional tarot and “Wheel of Fate” in Persian, comes from the words *Charkh* (wheel) and *Falak* (sky). The Charkhe Falak, however, is more than a wheel in the sky; it is the celestial wheel linked to destinies that so many Sufi poets have written about. It has been called a sky wheel, a cup, and a water wheel in the sky, and represents a universal intelligence with a churning and constant motion that brings you closer to that which was meant for you.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being told that what is meant for you will come to you. All you need to do is align yourself with your true nature, do the inner work, trust, and wait. Like the whirling Dervish in the center of the wheel, in perfect surrender as they move in sync with

the Universe, you are being asked to let go of all perceived ideas of how and when things must happen. The Divine timing of the Universe is in action, and it is all in your favor.

An extremely positive card, the Charkhe Falak is all about turning points. It is telling you that change is inevitable and that just as every season and every cell eventually changes, so will circumstances in your life. Accept those changes, as new opportunities and new energy will accompany them. Like the whirling of a Dervish, the Charkhe Falak is the opposite of stagnation. As the wheel spins, old cycles end and new stations, or *maqams*, are reached.

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with change?*

*What lessons does the Universe keep presenting me with that still need to be learned?*

### Affirmation

*Knowing that only good awaits me, I accept change*

## 11: ADAL JUSTICE

**Upright:** Balance, fairness, just outcome, law, legal disputes, actions and consequences, life lessons, patience, righteous actions rewarded.

**Reversed:** Imbalance, injustice, absence of moral values, lack of integrity, dishonesty, not holding oneself accountable.

*Adal*, or Justice in traditional tarot, is a symbol of truth, fairness, and law. An archetype of honesty, it is a majestic energy related to truth prevailing and justice being served. For the Sufis, *Adal* also refers to moral sensitivity, *Muhasaba*, which is a form of retrospection, assessment, and accounting for one's actions. The Sufis differentiate between justice and law, as well as Divine justice (imbued by love and forgiveness) and man's justice (tainted by partiality and error due to the shadow cast by the limited self).

This differentiation is best described by the Sufi sage Hazrat Inayat Khan, "Every day is a Judgment Day, and every hour is the hour of justice. A criminal will escape from the prison bars, but he cannot go from under the sky! There is the judge within

and without. When his eyes are closed, he is being judged within; when they are open, he is being judged without. We are always in a court of justice. If we do not realize it, it is because we are intoxicated by life and we become like a drunken man in the court, who does not see the judge nor justice."<sup>2</sup>

*When this card appears for you, you are being told that karma is on your side and a fair decision will be made. All you need to do is act with integrity, attune to your higher self, and allow Divine wisdom to flow through you. If there is a pending situation, you are being asked to look at it objectively—as opposed to emotionally—before making any decisions. The Adal card calls for a clear, logical response. While it alludes to just resolutions in cases of conflict, it also points to the inescapable consequences of our actions.*

### Contemplations

*What injustice of the past still holds me hostage?*

*What emotions are clouding my judgment at this time, and how can I resolve them?*

### Affirmation

*Life is fair and I accept the bountiful gifts it brings me*

## 12: TASLIM THE HANGED MAN

**Upright:** Suspending old beliefs, surrender, breaking patterns, independence from the flock, spiritual growth.

**Reversed:** Resisting stillness, being consumed by external matters, discomfort in one's own skin, the need to fit in or be part of the crowd.

*Taslim*, or The Hanged Man in traditional tarot, is one of the most perplexing cards of the deck—that is, until we realize it signifies more than mere physical suspension. The word *Taslim* refers not to the outward state of hanging upside down but to the inner state fostered through this spiritual exercise that Sufis have long partaken in, in their *Chila Khanas*, learning surrender and suspending judgments and preconceived notions. This position, along with that of prostration through prayer, is one of the few times that our hearts are physically elevated above our heads, signifying a precedence given to limitless heart knowledge rather than the limited mind. The “hanged man” that we see has sacrificed his physical comfort for spiritual growth. He has

temporarily disconnected from the world and removed the sensory overload of the outer senses to sharpen his inner senses.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to examine any old, calcified beliefs you may have. Do you judge yourself and/or others in a way that is imprisoning your soul? Taslim asks you to create inner peace by connecting to the wisdom that comes from discipline and surrender. You are not being asked to suspend yourself physically but to create a space in your being that will allow you to *be* rather than *do*. This card points you toward retreat, meditation, and mindfulness so that you may accept yourself and widen your perspective when looking at outer circumstances. This may be a good time to suspend any immediate action. Instead, take time to reflect, release rigid ideas, and let go of control.

### Contemplations

*What fixed beliefs am I grasping on to too tightly?*

*Who and what do I judge that disturbs my peace?*

### Affirmation

*As I surrender to the present, I know that  
I am taken care of*

## 13: MAUT DEATH

**Upright:** Transition, transformation, change, ending, rebirth, renewal, letting go of the past.

**Reversed:** Resistance to change, mourning loss, holding on to the past, not being ready for new beginnings.

*Maut*, or Death in traditional tarot, is an oft-misunderstood card. While many view it as a physical death, it actually refers to the end of one phase and the beginning of another. For the Sufis, death is a transition, a natural change in one's state of being. We are energy, and energy never dies; it simply changes form. Similarly, for the Sufis, the physical body is like a garment; when it grows old and torn, we throw it off. That is the relation of the physical body and the soul, the physical body being the garment that gets removed while the soul lives on. Metaphorically, death is a cycle that we move through again and again in our lives as naturally as seasons change. As old leaves yellow and fall, fresh new green ones grow in their place.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to accept change. You are being asked to

surrender, detach, and depend on no one but the One. It is time to embrace the unknown, remove any fear surrounding that which is inevitable, and look forward to it as a continued state of meditation. Remember, the ending of one phase is always the beginning of another, just as death is always followed by rebirth. It is time to let go and stop resisting. Instead, allow yourself to be in the flow and prepare to begin anew. As Rumi says: "I died to the mineral state and became a plant; I died to the vegetable state and reached animality; I died to the animal state and became a man; then what should I fear? I have never become less from dying."<sup>3</sup>

### Contemplations

*What is it in my life that I am unable to accept  
as being over?*

*What is it that I need to appreciate while  
accepting it was in the past?*

### Affirmation

*I let go of that which is ending with ease so I can  
embrace that which is entering with joy*

## 14: SABR TEMPERANCE

**Upright:** Balance, moderation, patience, steadiness, lack of extremes, choosing the middle path.

**Reversed:** Disharmony, imbalance, impulsivity, rash decisions, overindulgence, need for restraint.

*Sabr*, or Temperance in traditional tarot, is a card about balance, patience, and a form of acceptance that connects us to our angelic nature. It points to the benefits of creating equilibrium—not just between the inner and the outer, the *Baatin* and the *Zaahir*, but also between emotion and logic, the spiritual and the physical, and earth and water. The being we see stands half in water and half on land, balancing the material with the ether consciousness connected to the higher realms and bringing the two into perfect harmony until they merge. *Sabr* teaches us to blend dualities and bring together that which may seem disparate. As the Sufis say, God is to be found where opposites meet.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to examine your balance of repose and activity. It is pointing you toward a form of moderation that will bring about love, harmony, and beauty in your life. How do you balance your intellect and your emotions? What circumstances lead you to excess or extremes? Sabr is asking you to be patient with yourself as you contemplate these questions, to shower yourself with the same grace you give to those you care about. This is also a card of self-care and gentleness, of the grace that comes from resisting extreme choices. And, finally, it is about being kind to yourself as you evolve. As Rumi says, "Patience is the key to joy."<sup>4</sup>*

### **Contemplations**

*Are there areas in my life in which I tend toward excess?*

*What do I need to do to be more in balance?*

### **Affirmation**

*I flow patiently and harmoniously toward  
a perfect balance*

## 15: NAFS THE DEVIL

**Upright:** Ego, shadow-self, fears, attachment, unclear thinking, feeling trapped, losing to temptation and addiction.

**Reversed:** Breaking out of self-imposed bondage, freedom from restraint, clearing of the fog, removing chains of negative thinking.

*The Nafs*, known as The Devil in traditional tarot, is not so much an external force. Rather, it is our own lower self, often called the ego. It is the smoke in our minds that keeps us from seeing clearly, our fears that lead us toward destructive behavior, and the *ilah* that Sufis talk about. Literally translated as “god” with a lowercase g, an *ilah* is a construct of our minds we give so much power to that it consumes us. It can be a preoccupation, a desire, a fear, a challenge, anger, or a need for revenge that takes over your life. It is often the last thing you think or worry about before going to sleep. The Sufis describe the *ilahs* as excessive emphasis placed on material success, physical pleasure, and matters related to the ego.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked: What is your ilah? What in your mind and heart is imprisoning you, that one thing that holds you hostage and renders you powerless? Often, despite favorable outer circumstances, we can feel small and helpless. This can cause us to think and act in a way that takes us away from our higher self and Divine purpose. The Nafs card is a reminder that despite experiencing what may seem like abject external situations, there is always a light. When surrounded by what appears to be smoke and darkness, there is always a door waiting for you to break your illusory chains and start walking toward it.*

### **Contemplations**

*What behaviors do I engage in that are harmful to me?*

*What thought patterns hold me down?*

### **Affirmation**

*I depend upon nothing except the One*

## 16: MINAAR THE TOWER

**Upright:** Destruction, unexpected change, paradigm shift, disintegration of old structures, revelation.

**Reversed:** Resisting change, delaying the inevitable, fear of the unknown, difficulty accepting new reality.

*The Minaar*, or Tower in traditional tarot, is often a dreaded card as it can represent chaos, upheaval, and destruction. For the Sufis, however, change and destruction are not something to be feared, as disintegration is necessary for reintegration. In fact, what may appear to be devastation on the surface is often not. The Sufis speak about it in this way: a house must be demolished to discover the treasure hidden beneath it. The old structure gives way as the lightning hits the Minaar, but we can spot a few glints in the resulting rubble—the jewels hidden underneath that are finally recoverable.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being led to the jewels that lie below that which may appear to be crumbling before your physical eyes. You are being asked to see the breaking of old structures

with the eye of the *heart*. What destruction is necessary in your life before reconstruction? Sometimes it is an external power structure coming down, at other times an internal breakdown that catalyzes a destruction of old patterns. What breakdown in your life is leading to a breakthrough? What old forms are you clinging on to? As the lightning strikes the tower, we are reminded of flashes of truth that burn away all that no longer serves us. And note that the inspiration that comes to the mystic often does so in the form of lightning. Look beyond the physical to find the treasures planted in your heart! It is okay, and healthy, to let that which is crumbling go. As Rumi writes, "Tear down this house. A hundred thousand new houses can be built from the transparent yellow gemstone buried underneath it."<sup>5</sup>

### Contemplations

*What is crumbling—within and without—that  
I need to let go of?*

*As I let go of the old, what new treasures are waiting  
to be discovered?*

### Affirmation

*I accept the grace that comes with accepting  
the unexpected*

## 17: SITARA THE STAR

**Upright:** Hope, blessings, healing after trauma, renewed optimism and faith, finding your soul's purpose, connecting with the light within.

**Reversed:** Disappointment, despair, feeling burned out, doubt, disconnection from one's higher self.

*The Sitara*, or Star in traditional tarot, is a light of hope in the dark. It tells us that the chariots of darkness have left the sky, that all will now be well. The Sitara brings with it a message of optimism, renewal, inspiration, and faith. For the Sufis, the five-pointed star signifies Divine light, the natural form of the human (the head, two arms, and two legs), activity, and the beginning of life. The seven small stars in the image portray the seven *Lataif*, subtle centers or chakras, representing balance and alignment in all areas of one's life.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being pointed to the *Nur*, or Divine, transcendent light within. You are being told that despite past challenges, it is now possible to bring the harmony of heaven's stars into your life. You are being led

to draw the light-filled healing waters from the Divine source and to pour for the world from one jug—as in the image—keeping the other for yourself. This is a card of replenishment, self-care, and deep healing. You are being reminded that it is only when you accept the gifts of the Universe that you will have more to share with the world. Remember: You are surrounded by stardust, starlight, magic, and miracles. You are being called to connect with your own radiance, to open your heart and allow it to receive the light of the stars, reflecting it back into the Universe so you are in turn a star among stars.

### Contemplations

*What do I need to do to connect with my  
inherent optimism?*

*How can I open myself up to receive the  
gifts of the Universe?*

### Affirmation

*I accept miracles into my life*

## 18: QAMAR THE MOON

**Upright:** Receptivity, clarity, trust, openness, egolessness, inner wisdom, purity.

**Reversed:** Mystery, secrecy, illusion, fears, dreams, confusion, lack of clarity, dishonesty.

*The Qamar, or The Moon, often represents mystery and illusion in traditional tarot. For Sufis, however, it is a symbol of clarity, receptivity, and a heart responsive to the light of the Divine truth. White with a translucent, dew-like feel, the moon embodies the luminous inner state that mystics aim for. The heart of the one seeking truth is as open and responsive as the moon is to the light of the sun. As the well-known Sufi prayer and song by Hazrat Inayat Khan says, "Let my heart reflect Thy light, Lord, as the moon reflects the light of the sun in love, always in love."<sup>6</sup>*

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to transform your heart into an empty cup. You are being led to the Divine quality of *Mubin*, or clarity, within yourself, and guided to do the inner work required to let go of old impressions and feelings of limitation, emptying yourself of*

the dross of the past. How can you open yourself up to the Universe's light-filled gifts? The heart is receptive and can absorb the impressions around it. As such, it is important to reflect the sublime as opposed to the dense, and to transcend the darkness instead of being drawn into it. If you are an empath, what do you consciously do to protect yourself from negative impressions? The Qamar is guiding you to the mastery within yourself so you may absorb only that which is beneficial to you. You are being asked to see past the illusions, to trust your instincts and tap into the inherent wisdom within.

### Contemplations

*How do I protect myself from others' energies?*

*What inner work must I do to clear my own impressions from the past?*

### Affirmation

*I receive and reflect the light-filled gifts of the Universe*

## 19: SHAMS THE SUN

**Upright:** Optimism, success, joy, being nurtured, having what one needs to flourish, illumination, full awareness.

**Reversed:** Cloudy setbacks, low vitality, lack of success, lack of joy.

*The Shams*, or Sun in traditional tarot, is the brightest card in the deck for more than one reason! Synonymous with sheer joy, positivity, and success, this card brings with it a message that you are being given all that you need to flourish. The symbolism of this card is inspired by the ancient mystical text *The Book of the Fabulous Gryphon* by the 13th-century Spanish Sufi Ibn Arabi. The Sun card of the older Ur-Tarot is supposedly based on Arabi's interpretation of a Quranic parable of two orphan youths who were bequeathed a broken wall underneath which a secret treasure was hidden. As their father had been a righteous man, the treasure was protected until they reached maturity. Ibn Arabi described how the young owners of the incomplete wall embodied the notion of

"becoming," and the sun represented the spirit of holiness that nurtured them. Once grown up, they could discover the hidden treasure, with the wall representing the soul and the treasure symbolizing the Divine truth.

*When this card appears for you, know that you are blessed! You are being nurtured in a manner that may even be considered miraculous. In line with the symbolic imagery of this card, the life force of the sun is beaming down upon you, nourishing you. The Divine truth, or treasure, within you is aglow and ready to be discovered. Know that the sustaining light of the Shams will give you all that you need to grow, evolve, and flourish. Good fortune is on your side. It is time to let that light shine!*

### Contemplations

*What dims my light, and what do I need  
to do to rekindle it?*

*I have been given many gifts. Which do  
I have yet to recognize?*

### Affirmation

*I open my heart to the love and joy and blessings  
being showered down upon me*

## 20: MIZAAN JUDGMENT

**Upright:** Renewal, awakening, resurrection, spiritual metamorphosis, stepping into your higher self.

**Reversed:** Resistance to transformation, lack of self-awareness, blockages, procrastination, not trusting Divine timing.

*Mizaan*, known as Judgment in traditional tarot, has also been called "Liberation" since it refers to rising above and out of one's old life. Although "Mizaan" alludes to the balancing that is believed to happen on the Day of Judgment, for the Sufis every day is a day of judgment and every moment a chance to resurrect. Rebirth takes place each time we are inspired enough to want to transform our old ways of being. In our card, this inspiration is represented by the vibration of music as it stirs the stagnant, tightly wound pods of the cocoons until they transform into butterflies. And the muse is none other than the ethereal Divine feminine, breathing a gentle breath of compassion into the *Ney*, the Turkish reed flute.

*When this card appears for you, you are being told it is never too late! Every breath is a chance to start anew. Self-reflection has brought you to this stage. If something moves your soul, allow it into your heart and let it flow through your being like the waves of the air. Let the reverberations of sound heal and liberate you. Believe in Divine timing; things will be disclosed and happen when they are meant to happen. No one's heart deserves to be closed like a cocoon. It is a time of awakening, a time when the old way of being gives way to the new. It is okay to leave the old and the familiar and venture out of your cocoon. You are ready to transform into that butterfly!*

### **Contemplations**

*What is it that constricts my soul?*

*What is it that sets my soul free?*

### **Affirmation**

*With each breath that I take, I open  
to a new way of being*

## 21: DUNIYA THE WORLD

**Upright:** Completion of a cycle, sense of fulfillment, joy, successful outcome, closure, travel, ecology.

**Reversed:** Stagnation, not being able to close a chapter, slowdown in flow of events.

*Duniya*, The World in traditional tarot, has often been called the “Universe” or “Coming Home” because it signifies a return to one’s true nature, or higher self, after a long journey. The outer experiences of the Salik have allowed her to discover not just the Duniya but the entire Universe within herself. This is a card of completion, accomplishment, lessons learned, and cycles completed. It is a marker of closure, a good ending, of efforts ultimately rewarded. Often described as a bridge between our earthly existence and spirituality, this card celebrates success in having allowed outer circumstances to lead you to a sacred place within yourself. Framed by the symbols for earth, water, fire, and air, the elements that make up our bodies and the Universe, the image points to a balance and healing that has taken place within the

self. As we see a young woman swinging forward above the mountains and valleys she has overcome, we understand that she is moving forward into the world and simultaneously journeying into the inner sanctum of her own heart.

*When this card appears for you, know that it is time to honor yourself and applaud your accomplishments, both inner and outer. Only you know how far you have come and what travails you have endured. On the one hand, a celebration is in order, and on the other, you must experience Shukr, a deep gratitude, for having been able to reach a milestone so successfully. You have crossed a major threshold, and new beginnings are around the corner. Remember, not all journeys and goals are externally quantifiable.*

### Contemplations

*What cycle has ended in my life, and what  
new cycle is beginning?*

*How can I consciously reflect on past hardships?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace success and inner expansiveness  
within my heart and am ready for more!*

# STAFFS

ORIGINAL TAROT NAME:

JAWKAN

ELEMENT:

FIRE

COLOR:

RED, ORANGE, YELLOW

PRIMARY QUALITY:

PASSION



# ACE OF STAFFS

**Upright:** New beginnings, enthusiasm, action, creativity, passion, conviction, breathing life into that which did not exist.

**Reversed:** Lack of passion, lack of energy, fear of the unknown, creative blocks, seeking inspiration.

One of the boldest cards of the suit, *the Ace of Staffs* is a card about dynamism. It represents inspiration, success, and the beginning of something new and exciting. The essence of the fire consciousness that burns within us and allows us to think outside of the box, this card points toward new beginnings. Subtly embossed within the staff is an *Alif*, the first letter of the Arabic script that is the beginning and ending, the *Awwal* and *Akhir*, Alpha and Omega, of all inner and outer realities, representing creation and the Divine creative potential within us.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being directed to your inner creativity. This card is about grand ideas, energetic movement, and manifesting that which may be but a seed in your mind. This is a time of passion and action, of starting

and following through. It is about finding unique expressions of your voice and crystallizing your vision in a way that is yours and nobody else's. The ideas that this card alludes to are inside breakthroughs that align you with a higher calling. It is important that you open your heart up to allow inspiration to flow so that when you do create and manifest, you are doing so in sync with the Divine harmony.

### **Contemplations**

*What blocks my creativity, and what  
do I need to unblock it?*

*What do I need to do to crystallize my vision?*

### **Affirmation**

*I trust the inspiration that flows through me and  
follow it up with action*

## TWO OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Creative tension, hopeful waiting, planning, wise decision-making, new beginnings coming into being.

**Reversed:** Restlessness, indecision, obsessive planning, not being content with your life, thinking grass is always greener on the other side.

*The Two of Staffs* is all about feeling empowered. It is a fiery spirit involved with planning, progression, and charting out a course of action. Like the endless landscape the woman in our card looks out over, the possibilities before her are infinite. There is a sense of pride and authority that she embodies, a confidence that allows her to be an effective leader. She has self-respect and self-control, and is ready to step away from the familiar to explore fresh experiences and new landscapes. In its light form, this card speaks of boldness, and in its shadow an unnecessary aggression.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being reminded of your inner dynamism. You are also being advised against excessive preoccupation with outer achievements. The truth is that inner peace is seldom brought by outer circumstances.

Success ceases to be success the moment it takes you away from the present moment. The Sufis teach us that mindfulness can go hand in hand with progress by reminding us to connect with our *Ilm-e Huzoori*, or knowledge from presence. As 11th-century Sufi saint Hazrat Hujwiri wrote, "The aim of the mystic is to be entirely present, for the soul to be where the body is, the body to be where the soul is, for the soul to be where the foot is, and the foot to be where the soul is."<sup>7</sup>

### Contemplations

*What thought patterns keep me from living  
in the moment?*

*How do I balance being assertive with  
being aggressive?*

### Affirmation

*I remain mindful so that I may move  
forward with peace*

## THREE OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Achievement, fruits of hard work, freedom, overseas connections, happy outcome.

**Reversed:** Clinging on to the past, lack of self-confidence, returning from travels, lack of progress, perceived failure.

*The Three of Staffs* is a card of achievement, established strength, and standing high as you watch your ships come in. It can refer to a period of waiting for the results of prior actions, or of gazing into the distance in hopeful anticipation of the rewards of all your hard work. Usually related to business and commerce, of projects and work-related matters, this card brims with the excitement we feel at the beginning of a manifestation process when we start seeing our ideas take visible form. In the cycle of life described by the Sufis, the Three of Staffs refers to the stage of *Urooj*, which depicts the beginning of a venture, a stage or phase much like the sunrise and the new moon. It is the upward movement of the arc that comes with excitement and forward movement.

*When this card appears for you, know that your efforts are being recognized. You have done your best, and it is time to reap the rewards. As you become aware of your place in the world and your self-worth, it is a time of great inner growth. You are being asked to be especially mindful of your communication skills. It is time to say yes to new opportunities and an auspicious time to act on ideas or desires. As you head into a new phase, know that it is your hard work and vision that have brought you here.*

### **Contemplations**

*What am I doing to move closer to my goals?*

*How do I communicate and connect with others  
as I wait for my vision to take form?*

### **Affirmation**

*I open my heart to new opportunities*

## FOUR OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Celebration, joy, completion of work, projects, or desires, tangible achievements, union.

**Reversed:** Lack of teamwork, feeling unwelcome, inability to embrace joy, being caught in judgment.

*The Four of Staffs* is all about the celebration and festivity associated with joyous unions of love, friendship, and family. It depicts freedom and liberation on all levels. Generally associated with recognition in community, it alludes to stability, peace, and domestic bliss. We witness a form of dancing that is a spiritual expression of love, harmony, and beauty. Surrounded by pillars of light in a luminous pavilion, the women in our image whirl, in jubilation and ecstasy, for they know that as they do so they are in sync with the stars and the galaxies.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being guided to sacred celebration. As joyous occasions present themselves, examine your beliefs surrounding celebration. Sometimes there is guilt involved in accepting joy, and at other times we do so for the world to see. You are being asked to

explore how you accept and express your happiness. There is a manner of rejoicing that is harmonious and attracts abundance, and there is another that spiritually depletes. Which do you choose? Just as you integrate movement, sound, and breath into your spiritual practice, you can learn to celebrate in a way that is conducive to spiritual uplift. There are forms of sacred dance that align you with the movement of the Universe. As the Sufis say, when you rejoice in gratitude, the whole Universe rejoices with you.

### Contemplations

*How do I accept and express my happiness?*

*What core beliefs do I have surrounding celebration?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace joyousness as a spiritual practice*

## FIVE OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Competition, healthy challenges, being motivated by stimulating activity, embracing battles of life, lots of energy.

**Reversed:** Conflict, disagreements, unhealthy competition, cutthroat environment, inharmonious surroundings.

*The Five of Staffs* is pure fire in all its light and all its shadows. In their balanced states, the polo players we see are the paragons of sportsmanship, exemplifying fair play, teamwork, and respect for their fellow competitors. They know that sports etiquette is but a microcosm for their spiritual state. Self-control, respect for rules, and persistence are more than interpersonal skills in a game—they are a reflection of their inner state of harmony in the same way that being aggressive, combative, or at odds with one's opponents is a reflection of inner turmoil and lack of compassion for oneself.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to examine your feelings vis-à-vis competition through the Sufi tool of contemplation called *Muhasaba*, used for clearing thoughts and*

emotions. Do you shy away? Are you unnecessarily aggressive? How do you cope with others' aggression? How do you treat your competitors? On the Sufi path, every environment is an opportunity to display spiritual chivalry, or *Futuwwa*, a code of honorable behavior that teaches the spiritual aspirant detachment from the ego through fairness and rising above competitiveness. What do your feelings and actions, when faced with competition, say about your ego?

### Contemplations

*What does competition bring out in me?*

*How does my sense of self waver with victory or defeat?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace success and victory while treating  
others the way I would like to be treated*

## SIX OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Well-deserved victory, leadership, recognition, praise, healthy pride, accomplishment, reward, being seen.

**Reversed:** Lack of recognition or rewards or achievement, disappointment, needing validation from others, egotism.

*The Six of Staffs* brings with it the fiery spirit of victory. And in the true spirit of fire, which can both singe and give light, triumph brings with it its own dichotomies. As the woman in our card returns victorious on horseback, the cheering and applause is almost audible. She has done more than live up to everyone's expectations. And she has done so honorably. This is a card about embracing one's talents, ability, and worth, and about not being afraid to let one's light shine or having to make oneself small to fit in. Yet the question is, how does so much public adulation affect her inner state? Is she able to take it in stride and continue on to more success, or does she get caught up in her wins and start resting on her laurels?

*When this card appears for you, you are being led to the dual nature of fire: asked to embrace your dynamism unapologetically while receiving a warning not to be blinded by the shine of your medals. It is a tricky balance, for victory and success can lead to egotism and an inflated sense of self-importance. However, as the Sufis say, any inflated image you have of yourself is totally wrong—you are greater than you could ever imagine! How do you reconcile the two in your being?*

### Contemplations

*How does my inner state change when I achieve outward success?*

*How dependent on outward success is my inner joy?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace and embody both victory and humility*

# SEVEN OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Valor, courage, harnessing your will, protecting your energy, victory over your lower self.

**Reversed:** Being affected by outer circumstances, disrupted inner peace, lack of ability to protect oneself, fighting pointless battles.

*The Seven of Staffs* brings to you the fire of a different kind of victory—a triumph over inner turmoil through which you can then overcome outward circumstances. This is a message of letting go, of taking the steps necessary to ensure your well-being, then connecting to a higher source. No matter how hostile the surroundings, this is an energy that shines from within and sets up a layer of impenetrable protection. When you tap into your inner resources and allow the peace within to permeate that which is without, you become the lighthouse in the dark that emits its own light instead of being overpowered by the surrounding darkness.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being guided to a pristine shrine inside your heart, a world of calm and contemplation in the midst of frenzied activity. Finding this space within and

centering yourself there puts you on par with the white lotus that blooms in the mud, a miracle, a symbol of the grace that holds us despite our environment, experiences, and heartbreaks. It is time for you to reclaim this Divine inheritance of yours, to assert your needs and rights and celebrate your power, your light, and your individuality.

### Contemplations

*How do other people's energies affect me?*

*What spiritual practices do I do to ground myself?*

### Affirmation

*I am safe, within and without*

# EIGHT OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Speed, quick developments, travel, speeding through life's lessons, direct messages.

**Reversed:** Overshooting the goal, being in an unhealthy rhythm, speed without groundedness.

*The Eight of Staffs* comes with a very clear message: things are happening, and they are happening swiftly! The staffs that shoot through the galaxies carry with them the fiery energy of comets that soar through the sky at breathtaking speeds. This is a card of movement, progress, and momentum, of taking stock of a situation. Sometimes it represents the mind moving as quickly as arrows flying through the air.

*When this card appears for you*, know that this is the time to act, not to sit and contemplate. All about rapid movement forward, this card brings with it the message that any blockages that may have been in your path are now lifted. At the same time, you are being asked to examine the rhythm of your life. How can you balance such speediness with the slower, more deliberate manner of the mystic? The way of the Sufi is all about rhythm, thus the principle and practice of *Nazar bar*

*Qadam*, putting one's full breath and concentration into every step placed onto the ground. As the Sufi and musician Hazrat Inayat Khan explained, "As rhythm is innate in man and maintains his health, so upon rhythm depend all a man's affairs in life; his success, his failure, his right acts and his wrong acts, all are accounted for in some way or other by a change of rhythm."<sup>8</sup>

### Contemplations

*What is the current rhythm of my life?*

*How do I move through blockages before me?*

### Affirmation

*I move forward with ease and joy in perfect rhythm*

## NINE OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Preparedness, watchfulness, standing guard, resilience, courage, standing your ground.

**Reversed:** Defensiveness, paranoia, suspiciousness, fear leading to constriction, holding on to past hurts.

*The Nine of Staffs* is a card that speaks of fatigue. What happens when the storm is over? Are you able to take a deep breath, or do you continue to keep your defenses up? Sometimes we act strong on the outside but feel weak within, running on empty, in need of fire's positive energy. Sometimes we are unable to live in the moment because we are carrying negative impressions from the past, living in a state of constriction as opposed to expansion. What are you afraid of? What do you feel you need to protect? Being defensive is natural when we do not have *Tawakkul*, full faith that we are safe. What is it that stands in the way of ensuring you are safe so that you can finally rest?

*When this card appears for you, know that the worst is over, and that it is now time to move on. There is no need to dwell in the past or allow it to cast a heavy shadow over the present. However, if*

there are practical steps you need to take to ensure your safety, then do so. The woman in our card is not burning incense as a gentle, spiritual ritual to purify a space—she does it with vengeance and superstition based in fear. She is convinced that the more incense sticks she burns, the more demons she will chase away. Is this a familiar scenario? What are you protecting with a vengeance?

### Contemplations

*What makes me feel safe, and what makes me feel unsafe?*

*How do I act when I am feeling defensive?*

### Affirmation

*I am safe. I am protected.*

## TEN OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Heavy burden, overload, uphill struggle, too much responsibility, too many pressures.

**Reversed:** Unburdening, freeing yourself from others' expectations, giving yourself a break.

*The Ten of Staffs* carries a strong visual message of carrying a burden. Yet it is not a state that has been imposed on anyone. The man in our card lifting the heavy bamboo sticks uphill has chosen to do so of his own will and volition. Did he commit to more than he could deliver? Was he trying to please someone or setting unrealistic goals for himself? In the distance, on top of the hill, is new construction. Yet weighed down by heaviness and caught up in his own condition, he barely notices it. There is a heavy, jaded, and world-weary state that takes over when our ideals turn into a grind. In what way do you associate with this man?

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to examine the way you deal with pressure. Do you learn from such challenges or get crushed by them? Do you get so overwhelmed by the task in front of you that you lose sight of the larger picture? Sufis describe our physical lives on the*

plane of *Nasut* as connected to the angelic plane of *Malakut*, where we can view our lives from a higher perspective. To rise above the denseness of the earth, however, we must learn to empty our minds, our heart, and our lives—declutter, designate, and learn to say no. It is okay to ask for help. It is okay not to please everyone. It is okay to pause and find a way to work that will not deplete your life force.

### Contemplations

*In what ways am I overburdened, overstretched,  
or overwhelmed?*

*What happens when I don't honor my limits?*

### Affirmation

*I accept help—from the Universe and from others*

# DAUGHTER OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Excitement, energy, vitality, explosive enthusiasm, creative ideas, breaking out of the box.

**Reversed:** Lack of ambition, lethargy, impulsive, reckless, immature, rebelling for sake of rebelling, starting projects but not completing them.

*The Daughter of Staffs* is the daughter of fire—the airy part of the fire. She rises unrestrained, like the smoke from incense. And in the swirling upward movement of the smoke, she, too, begins to whirl in a dance of inspiration and creativity. Wild and free, hers is a fiery energy that knows no bounds, in which the world is her oyster and anything is possible. The nonconformist in her revels in her expressions of noncompliant endeavors, projects, and passions. She is bursting with ideas. The question in her light-winged upward flight, however, is how connected to the part of her that can actually manifest these lofty ideas can she be?

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to an analogy used by the Sufi poet and thinker Allama Iqbal who discussed two types of personalities. One can be likened to a planet in*

orbit, following a slow and steady path that keeps it aligned and prevents it from crashing into others. He compares the other type of personality to a comet, so much shinier and more exciting than the planet. It rises with speed, lighting up the sky, but also comes crashing down with the same amount of speed, its flame dwindling.<sup>9</sup> Are you one of these? If so, which one?

### Contemplations

*How do I turn my ideas into reality?*

*What is my relationship with moderation?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace my inner exuberance and use it to  
produce tangible results*

# SON OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Exciting, fearless, energetic, adventurous, risk-taking, not afraid of following one's passions.

**Reversed:** Impatient, reckless, volatile, lack of self-control, aggressive, hasty, exhibitionist behavior.

*The Son of Staffs* is an energetic and rebellious free spirit who tends to leap without thinking. A true representative of the dynamic energy of fire, he is fierce, daring, and passionate. In our card, we see him galloping in a spiral as he circles closer and closer into the heart of the flame, just like the moth in front of him. Will he, too, be singed? While the metaphor of the moth and flame for the Sufis has long connoted attraction to and union with the Divine flame, in our image it suggests an impetuosity. In his thrill-seeking behavior, he does not seem to notice where he is headed, putting himself and those around him in danger. Does this resonate with you? Is this someone in your life, a role that you play, or a message?

*When this card appears for you, you are being pointed to the meaning that lies within these lines written by Hazrat Inayat Khan: "Moth: I gave you my life. Flame: I allowed you to kiss me."<sup>10</sup> Is spiraling into the flame a conscious choice that you make, or a by-product of your behavior? Sufis speak of the importance of deliberation and being aware of the consequences of our actions. Is that contrary to courage and adventure? When was the last time you acted purely on impulse? How did it affect you?*

### **Contemplations**

*What underlying feeling leads me to act impulsively?*

*How do I balance spontaneity and stability?*

### **Affirmation**

*I move toward my goals in perfect balance*

# MALIKA OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Confidence, passion, independence, determination, upbeat, energetic, courageous, taking your power back.

**Reversed:** Hot-tempered, demanding, overbearing, callous words, vengeful, low confidence, insensitive.

*The Malika of Staffs* is the queen of light in every way. Self-assured, upbeat, and unapologetic, she is full of ideas and brings her fire to all that she does. Her joie de vivre is palpable as her starlike being reflects outwards what Sufis call the *Nur al Anwar*, or luminous light. All about success, she is fueled by her inner radiance as she embraces the five-pointed star within representing the outer form of the human being (the head, two arms, and two legs) and the heart in the center that both creates and reflects the Divine light.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being encouraged to embrace your fire as a positive creative force and allow it to give you the power and dynamism you need for your plans and enterprises to become realized without becoming overbearing or destructive. Excessive fire can singe both

us and those around us. How do you transform your extra fire into light? What do you do when you find your words taking on a scalding nature you did not intend? This card brings with it the message of allowing love to be the guiding force behind your fire so that your aura is golden and nourishing as opposed to blistering. The light of the sun can heal or burn. How do you allow it to manifest in your being?

### Contemplations

*What fills my heart and mind with passion?*

*What dims my flame?*

### Affirmation

*I create with love and passion*

# SHAH OF STAFFS

**Upright:** Assertive, bold, motivated, daring, inspiring, powerful, confident, magnetic, intense energy, a leader, a master of one's own life.

**Reversed:** Aggressive, impatient, brash, impulsive, domineering, weak energy, ineffective, powerless.

*The Shah of Staffs* is the king of fire, radiating the warm, vibrant, vital energy of this most dynamic of elements. He embodies the passion and courage of fire, and the luminosity it exudes. He is a natural leader, a visionary, larger than life, and we see that, visually, as the fire from his staff is too large to be contained within the confines of the card. He is the flame that so many moths circle, enamored by its magnetism. Of course, not everyone near the fire will get burned. It takes mastery to learn to fly near enough to imbibe the warm glow without being singed.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being alerted to a very strong, motivated energy. Like all cards, the Shah of Staffs can be a person, a quality, or a message that you need to hear. The message asks that you be patient—with yourself and with

others; the fire in you can scald either. The Sufis use breath work as a spiritual practice (*Hosh dar Dam*, literally meaning "attention to the breath") to slow down overly critical, chattering minds and bring us into alignment with our *Nafs Al Mutmainna*, or our peaceful, contented self. To slow down does not mean to lose our fire. It means we have learned to tame it.

### Contemplations

*What fans my fire? What extinguishes it?*

*What do I need to do to balance the fire in me?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace my fire spirit with loving kindness*

# CUPS

ORIGINAL TAROT NAME:

TUMAN

ELEMENT:

WATER

COLOR:

GREEN, AQUA

PRIMARY QUALITY:

EMOTION



# ACE OF CUPS

**Upright:** New beginnings, love, emotions, intuition, spirituality, compassion, creativity.

**Reversed:** Sadness, repressed emotions, unrequited love, disappointment, living life with a closed heart.

*The Ace of Cups* is a harbinger of emotional fulfillment and an opening of the heart. The Aces mark beginnings, and Cups, the element of water, represent love; it is no wonder our cup overflows with joy and abundance! In Sufi poetry, the cup is the heart that must be emptied before the beloved can pour Divine nectar into it. Just as a cup that is already full cannot be poured into, neither can a heart filled with limiting impressions. The work of the mystic, then, is to clear impressions that clutter and cloud the heart, so that it may be able to receive. As the heart opens, we become aware of new offers and opportunities in both love and spiritual growth.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being guided to your heart center, or *Qalb*, that determines how you experience life. Do you choose joy and openness, or are you closed and fearful? For

the Sufis, the body is a temple and the heart an altar of God. To recognize your heart as a sacred receptacle is to honor and protect it from desecration and denigration—both from others and yourself. This way you allow the Divine crystalline waters to flow to you, through you, and to all that is around you, all as part of the Divine flow.

### Contemplations

*What does it feel like to be aligned with my heart?*

*What do I need to do to connect with my heart quality  
when I lose my alignment?*

### Affirmation

*I open my heart to receive the love and blessings  
being poured into it*

## TWO OF CUPS

**Upright:** Love, cooperation, unity, balance, soul connection, mutual respect, friendship, marriage, sharing.

**Reversed:** Alienation, imbalance, loneliness, strained relations, anguish.

*The Two of Cups* is often called the card of soul connections. It refers to a love that is eternal—not fleeting or ephemeral. What we see in this card is pure compatibility and an understanding that goes beyond physical love and even physical existence. This is a supportive, loving union in which both partners allow themselves to be vulnerable, knowing that it is safe to do so. It is a way of love that has been called an alchemical marriage, an equal sharing and a joining of *Jamal* (feminine) and *Jalal* (masculine) attributes within both partners.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to examine your ability to give and receive love. We often get stuck in the role of a giver or a taker. How do you balance the two? You are also being guided to your ability to open your heart and make yourself vulnerable to another. Is this something that feels natural or something you

struggle with? If so, the Sufi practice of *Muhasaba*, clearing old impressions that keep us from moving forward, might be of use. There is a reason Sufism is called the *Mazhab-e Ishq*, or religion of love: it recognizes love as a central force for healing and transformation so that we may be ready for the ultimate love. Whether in a friendship, a partnership, or a romantic connection, balance mirrors harmony within just as the opposite points to needed healing.

### Contemplations

*How safe do I feel opening my heart?*

*How well do I guard the hearts of those who make  
themselves vulnerable to me?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace my ability to give and receive love*

## THREE OF CUPS

**Upright:** Friendship, celebration, feeling supported, bonds of sisterhood, abundance, connection with one's Divine nature.

**Reversed:** Loneliness, imbalanced social life, inability to experience joy, troubled friendships.

*The Three of Cups* is a testament to the magic that takes place when you find your soul family. There is a lightness of spirit that comes when we know that we are honored and embraced. As the empty cups of the women's arms reach up toward the heavens to be filled with the luminous moonlight, they know that the cups of their hearts are filled by each other's company. Sufi teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan describes the tradition of raising and touching glasses in celebration. Since the cup is the symbol of the heart, "The cup touching the cup means heart united with heart. According to the mystical view, it is two becoming one."<sup>11</sup>

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to examine the role of sacred friendships and connections in your life. There is a healing that takes place when we are supported by our inner circle, when our individuality is celebrated, and when

our community is a caring and safe space. How deep and nourishing are your friendships? How supportive are you of others' life paths? This card comes to you as a reminder of the creativity and abundance that follow when we are given unconditional love to become the best version of ourselves.

### Contemplations

*What is my experience with community?*

*What kind of friendships do I have, and how  
can I improve and sustain them?*

### Affirmation

*I honor and support and, in turn,  
am honored and supported*

## FOUR OF CUPS

**Upright:** Boredom, dissatisfaction, lack of appreciation for what is in front of you, focusing on the negative, ennui.

**Reversed:** Opportunity to appreciate sacred gifts, introspection, reevaluating a situation, realigning oneself.

*The Four of Cups* brings to us the result of lack of gratitude. It shows us the angst that follows when we choose to enumerate our sorrows rather than count our blessings, when we live in the past rather than grounded in the moment. Sufis have been called "*Ibn/bint Waqt*"—the sons/daughters of the moment—because they realize the significance of living in the present, of being at peace with where they are rather than ruminating on the past or worrying about the future. They also know that just as a person who is indifferent to receiving a gift is less likely to be given one again, the Universe, too, is less likely to bestow blessings if you keep rejecting them.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to examine your attitude with gratitude. There is a Sufi story of an angel who finds two

separate men sitting in a park grieving. When asked why, one answers, "I have nothing; I have lost my family, my job, and all my wealth." The other one says, "I have too much: a perfect job, home, and family. And yet nothing excites me anymore." The angel asks the first man to start being grateful, as that gratitude will attract abundance. And he asks the other man to stop being grateful; it will ensure he loses all that he does not appreciate.

### Contemplations

*What am I grateful for?*

*What do I take for granted?*

### Affirmation

*I am grateful for each and every breath that I take*

## FIVE OF CUPS

**Upright:** Loss, regret, self-pity, feeling stuck, wallowing in misery, crying over spilled milk.

**Reversed:** Acceptance, coming to terms with loss, moving past pain, finding peace.

*The Five of Cups* carries with it the energy of bereavement. Yet it is more than loss that affects the woman in this card; it is her inability to accept it. There are three broken cups on the floor, and two intact ones on the table. What do we choose to focus on? Do we dwell on the negative, losing sight of the positive, or do we appreciate that which we do have? Loss is inevitable. Do we get stuck in it or learn to see it as the chance for transformation that it is? As Rumi writes, "Don't grieve. Everything you lose comes round in another form. The child weaned from mother's milk now drinks wine and honey mixed. God's love flows from unmarked box to unmarked box. . . ."12

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to shift your perspective around loss and start seeing it as an opportunity for growth. One way is to focus on what works in your life and what brings you peace. You can take on the Sufi

practice of recalling something that you are familiar with: it can be a person, an animal, an object, or even something like the color of a sunset. Take a few moments to taste it, savor it, and sense it as if it were present, feeling gratitude—not just in your mind but in your very bones—for having the privilege to be able to experience it in your life.

### Contemplations

*Do I dwell on the negative or focus on the positive?*

*How can my loss lead to growth?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace the losses of the past so I can  
move forward with ease*

## SIX OF CUPS

**Upright:** Childhood, innocence, kindness, sentimentality, memories, healing the child within.

**Reversed:** Stuck in the past, unable to forgive, unhealed childhood wounds, disappointment.

*The Six of Cups* invites you to take a walk down memory lane. Or maybe you already are. When you find yourself repeatedly confronted by themes from your childhood, know that it is time to pay gentle attention to them—only then can you move forward. The metaphysical work of the Sufis is the opposite of spiritual bypassing; it is about confronting, healing, and resolving unhealed parts of ourselves. The past is an important place to go to, but not to get stuck in. We go there to recover and restore our innocence, and return more fully present in our lives.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to examine your relationship with the past. Is there something that you have been avoiding facing? Is there someone you have not forgiven? And most importantly, is there a part of yourself from your childhood that needs the care and attention it was not given before? How do you

heal this child within, and how can you connect with your intrinsic, childlike nature? This card is asking you to show yourself loving kindness, or *Rahma*, to take some time off from adulting and reconnect with the pure, uncomplicated mind of a child, your authentic nature.

### Contemplations

*What is it in my past that holds me down?*

*What is it in my past that makes me soar?*

### Affirmation

*I accept my past, embrace the present,  
and look forward to the future*

## SEVEN OF CUPS

**Upright:** Obsession with the worldly, indecision, choices, multiple opportunities, lack of clarity, failure to see the larger picture.

**Reversed:** Being too detached from the world, avoiding responsibilities, daydreaming, unrealistic fantasies.

*The Seven of Cups* is the card of fantasy and imagination, of illusionary success, our desire nature, and temptations. This card shows the angst that follows when we look to the worldly to provide us with our mental peace. When we are concerned only with the physical, we can be dazzled by shiny externals. The mystics are well versed with the theme of appearance versus reality, knowing that all that glitters is not gold. They are able to discern reality from the illusions that appear like mirages in a desert, leaving the traveler who chased them bewildered at the end. What makes us happy lies within.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked: What are you seduced by that looks too good to be true? This card will often be referring to choices you must make and opportunities you*

are presented with. How do you ensure that you are making a choice that is sustainable, not short-sighted? How can you move away from decision-making based on wishful thinking rather than grounded in reality? Sufi philosophy recognizes that our hopes and fears can color reality; hopes cause us to project a rosy picture onto a bleak reality, and fears keep us from embracing the positive. You are being asked to examine the choices before you through the lens of your own hopes and fears.

### Contemplations

*What choices or options before me bewilder me?*

*What do I need to do to bring clarity to my mind?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace reality and make my decisions  
from a place of groundedness*

## EIGHT OF CUPS

**Upright:** Walking away, letting go, leaving behind the toxic, turning your back on negativity, searching for truth, travel.

**Reversed:** Stuck in an unhealthy situation, stagnation, fear of change, staying on to please others, abandonment.

*The Eight of Cups* can be a confusing card. At first glance, it may seem to imply a lack of gratitude and appreciation, and even allude to wastage. A deeper look, however, tells the story of a brave soul walking away from the tangible toward the intangible in full trust, or *Tawakkul*, that he is doing the right thing. The message here is one of dignity, of honoring the self and having the courage to say no to material comforts when they come with a heavy, sinister price. It is about freeing yourself from situations that make you compromise your self-worth, about emptying the cup of the heart by removing the murky waters that cloud it.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked: Can you let go? Are you able to connect to your authentic self by saying no to that which weighs down your soul? Are you brave enough*

to say good-bye? Can you differentiate between abandoned success and self-preservation? The Sufis tell us that the heart is the altar of God. Are you allowing anyone to defile yours? There are many reasons people remain trapped in unhealthy situations. Walking the mystic path often means having the courage to leave behind situations or people that have the ability to trap, entice, or allure you.

### Contemplations

*Is there something in my life that  
I need to leave behind?*

*What does it feel like when I honor myself?*

### Affirmation

*I honor myself and move away from that which  
doesn't honor me, with ease*

## NINE OF CUPS

**Upright:** Joy, wishes being fulfilled, dreams coming true, personal and spiritual completion.

**Reversed:** Underachievement, shattered dreams, getting what you wished for and being disappointed.

*The Nine of Cups* is often called the wish card, as it connotes fulfillment and contentment. It is about being rewarded and enjoying the fruits of our efforts after we have worked hard and placed our desire at the altar of the Divine. In our card we see a Sufi *Sama* circle, sacred music used to open our hearts and connect with the Divine. As the vibrations loosen up calcified emotions around our hearts, our hearts become empty cups, ready to be filled. It is then that the *Saki*, or Divine wine-pourer, fills them up with Divine nectar—spiritual uplift for some and fulfillment of desires for others. The Sufi perspective on wish fulfillment is that as long as we have a desire, we must fulfill it. As Hazrat Inayat Khan explains, “If you let the desire go unfulfilled and you lack the patience needed to accomplish the desire, your (spiritual) progress will be arrested. When you have accomplished

one desire, you will have that something which is needed for the accomplishment of something greater. Every desire you accomplish is one step further toward that final goal which every soul ultimately has to reach."<sup>13</sup>

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to a complete state of embodiment through self-knowledge in which you delve into the depths of who you really are and what you truly wish for. You are being encouraged to focus on the fulfillment of your true self, to unfold your being and unapologetically connect with your heart's desire.*

### Contemplations

*How do I believe desire connects with  
spiritual progress?*

*What associations do I have with wish fulfillment?*

### Affirmation

*I accept, with gratitude, the fulfillment of my desires*

## TEN OF CUPS

**Upright:** Harmony, love, alignment, happiness, family, soul mates, playfulness, creativity, domestic bliss.

**Reversed:** Disharmony, conflict, secrets, difficult familial relationships, separation, isolation.

*The Ten of Cups* is often called the happily ever after card. A quick peek at the image gives us a sense of overflowing joy and abundance: the golden mustard fields represent spring, fertility, and celebration, the rainbow signals hope, and the ten cups in the arc symbolize blessings. When the cup of your heart spilleth over, it is reflected in all of nature around you. This is the card of harmony within and without, or as Hermes Trismegistus, the famous ancient Egyptian alchemist and author of the Emerald Tablet, wrote, "As above, so below, as within, so without, as the universe, so the soul." Could this be the secret of the Universe believed to be ensconced in this ancient text? Could feeling overflowing joy in our beings truly be the path to affecting outer reality?

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to a place of gratitude. For the Sufis, gratitude, or Shukr, is a way of opening Divine flow. When we count our blessings (as few as they may seem at times) rather than enumerating our sorrows, we transform the condition of our soul and the quality of our inner life. It is our mastery and ability to focus on beauty and blessings, rather than the opposite, that creates a healing and reconciling force, which then seeps from the inner to the outer.*

### Contemplations

*How do I use the powerful energy of gratitude to enrich my inner and outer life?*

*What does inner harmony and joy feel like?*

### Affirmations

*I am grateful for all that I receive,  
tangible or intangible*

# DAUGHTER OF CUPS

**Upright:** Idealism, creativity, being a dreamer, intuitive, sensitive, childlike innocence, romantic at heart.

**Reversed:** Immaturity, broken dreams, childhood issues, ignoring inner child, naivete, dramatic.

*The Daughter of Cups* is a true embodiment of the element of water—her flowing and dreamy nature is representative of someone not necessarily young in years but young at heart. An idealist who believes in magic and fairy tales, she is often accused of being aloof and out of touch. Yet she is happiest deep in thought, connecting to the mystical plane, and trying to recreate its beauty in the physical world. Her being is one of spirituality, intuition, feeling, and emotion. Creative, heart- and soul-centered, she needs to be able to dream, even if it is romanticizing an ideal love that may not be reflected in reality.

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to connect with your innocence and childlike nature. The Sufis believe that while the purity and flame of a child is special, it cannot compare*

to the purity and flame of someone who has gone through life and kept it intact. This way the softness of heart, ability to perceive beauty, and appreciation for the ordinary come not from naivete, but from the place of having lived through life's circumstances while nurturing an inner flame that remains intact and strong. How do you connect with your authentic childlike nature? How do you allow it to help you create beauty?

### Contemplations

*What is my experience of innocence?*

*What do I do to nurture, feed, and take care of  
my creativity and imagination?*

### Affirmation

*It is safe to trust. It is safe to dream.*

# SON OF CUPS

**Upright:** Youthful idealism, romantic, sensitive, empathetic, dreamer, charmer, spiritual, in touch with emotions.

**Reversed:** Irresponsible, immature, ungrounded and unrealistic, sensation mongering, player, emotionally unavailable.

*The Son of Cups* refers to a young, idealistic, often masculine spirit that promises to cross oceans for you. He wears his heart on his sleeve, says the right things, and knows how to court you. His water-based emotions have the power to sweep you off your feet. He follows his heart but can lack groundedness and reality. He has been called “the knight in shining armor” of the deck. He is aware of the Sufi belief that when two people love each other, a bridge is formed between their hearts; when you extend that bridge, it becomes the path to God. And he is good at communicating such spiritually romantic ideals. In our card we see him energetically creating that very bridge from his heart to the heart of his beloved. The question is, are these fleeting emotions or plans he can follow through with in the long run?

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to discern between honeyed words and actual intentions. Sometimes that which glitters is gold, and other times there are red flags that need to be paid attention to. We often have a deep desire to believe in an illusion, thinking it to be an ideal. Until that which is before us is indeed a reality, what if we were to take the qualities of the knight in shining armor and bring them to life in our own beings? What if we learned to recognize the love, the lover, and the beloved—Ishq, Ashiq, and Ma'shuq—in our own selves?*

### Contemplations

*What core beliefs do I have about love and trust?*

*How able am I to discern the realistic  
from the unrealistic?*

### Affirmation

*I am ready to accept true love into my life*

# MALIKA OF CUPS

**Upright:** Kindness, femininity, sensitivity, compassion, intuition, openhearted, creative, intuitive, artistic.

**Reversed:** Insecurity, co-dependent tendencies, lack of boundaries, overly empathetic, vulnerable, needy, blocked intuition.

*The Malika of Cups* is the queen of emotions. Sensitive, empathetic, and instinctive, she navigates life through her heart, sensing and intuiting that which the physical senses are unable to discern. Psychic and compassionate, she embodies the element of water in its pure, crystalline nature—her *Qalb-e Salim*, or purified heart, is the chalice Sufi poets have long written about. She knows that the *Qalb*, or heart, is not just a physical organ; it is the core of her being that connects her to the Divine, thus honoring the voice that comes from within. Through the peaks and valleys of her life, the breaking and mending of her heart, she has attuned to a quietude that soothes her and those around her.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to pay attention to the waters that flow within. Are you in control of them, or do they control you? Sufis tell us that mastery is allowing our emotions to soften our hearts, to irrigate the dry, parched landscapes of our souls, even be that with tears, without sacrificing control of how long we allow that to take. This way your feelings can be empowering rather than draining. If you tend to give to others in a way that depletes your own life force, you are receiving a reminder that empathy does not have to be self-sacrifice.*

### **Contemplations**

*Am I able to tune out the noise and listen to the voice that comes from within?*

*How can I embody empathy while maintaining healthy boundaries?*

### **Affirmation**

*I allow my emotions to empower me*

# SHAH OF CUPS

**Upright:** Mature, emotionally balanced, compassion, harmony of heart and mind, spiritually wise, calm.

**Reversed:** Moody, emotionally manipulative, unhealed, overwhelmed by emotions, out of touch with spirituality.

*The Shah of Cups* is the king of water and master of emotions. He is not afraid to listen to his heart. He takes time out to tend to his spiritual needs, as he knows that it is the wisdom of his balanced heart, or *Qalb*, that will make him an effective role model. The epitome of kind leadership, he is a good listener, a nurturer, and the ultimate supporter. Connected to music, art, and nature, he allows the beauty within and without to merge and take new form in his being that he then shares with others. He is drawn to a higher purpose and has learned to succeed in the physical world without being consumed by it.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being led to heart-based living and being reminded that peace internally translates to an external form of healthy power. Like all cards, this can be a person,

a quality, or a message that you need to hear. The message points you toward the posture of the whirling Dervish: the right hand facing upward, signifying reception from the Divine source, and the left hand facing downward, representing sharing with the world what was received. How do you open yourself up to receive from your Divine source? What keeps you from doing so? Is there a part of you that longs for the archetypal Shah of Cups to show up and give you the love and support you could perhaps be giving yourself?

### Contemplations

*How do I translate my connection with my  
higher self into service?*

*What does it feel like to listen to my heart and  
be a messenger of love?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace loving kindness within and without*

# SWORDS

ORIGINAL TAROT NAME:

SAYUF

ELEMENT:

AIR

COLOR:

BLUE

PRIMARY QUALITY:

MENTAL PROCESSES



# ACE OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Fresh start, new ideas, clarity, inspiration, logic, breakthrough, communication, success.

**Reversed:** Confusion, blockages, delays, over-analyzing, mental paralysis, frustration.

*The Ace of Swords* is the card of mental clarity, of using your mental prowess to cut through the clouds of unhealed emotions, of using your intellect to win. Aces represent new beginnings and opportunities, and Swords, being the mental suit, tell us that the way forward is through logic. At the same time, they symbolize the realization of creative potential. Sufis talk about our individual inspiration and inner genius as being connected to the *Aql-e Qul*, or universal intelligence. It is when we clear the fog of our minds with the sword of truth that we can tap into this unlimited source, where real genius and inspiration dwell.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being told that a gift has been extended to you. Are you able to receive it? Is your mind empty and receptive like the crescent moon, or is it full of murky impressions of the past that repel any Divine inspiration that may dare come near? Sufis tell us that there are

two types of knowledge: innate inner knowledge and peripheral outer knowledge. The Ace of Cups is asking you to connect with your inner inspiration, your genius, the gift at your back pushing you toward your life purpose. Is your mind capable of embracing it?

### Contemplations

*What clears my mind, and what fogs it?*

*What new opportunities can I realize  
through creativity?*

### Affirmation

*I accept and allow new ideas to flow  
through my mind*

## TWO OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Indecision, denial, crossroads, avoidance, closing your eyes to the truth, not having full facts.

**Reversed:** Finding clarity, stepping out of indecision, seeing the truth, connecting with vision.

*The Two of Swords* carries a strong energy of indecision. It is about having to make a decision without all the information you need to do so, and feeling lost in the process. Something important has been withheld. The physical senses are absent, as is the inner intuition. Disconnected from her inner guidance and unable to find her way using her outer senses, the woman in our card is truly groping in the dark. The wind around her represents the confusion of her mind, the darkness, her emotions. Why is she still blindfolded if her hands are free to untie herself? Is it a voluntary condition? Does she find comfort in the illusions of her mind?

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to examine your methods of decision-making. Everyone has their own unique way of connecting with their inner guidance. What is*

yours? In the true spirit of the element of air, this is a card of thoughts, conflict, and stress. What are your ways of dealing with mental challenges? How open are you to others' viewpoints? The Sufis tell us that the mystic has two points of view: her own and the other's. Are you able to see the other?

### Contemplations

*What information do I still need before  
I can make a fair decision?*

*What is preventing me from connecting to  
my inner guidance?*

### Affirmation

*I open my eyes and choose to see  
all sides of every picture*

## THREE OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Sadness, pain, loss, betrayal, grief, loneliness, upheaval, feelings of rejection.

**Reversed:** Releasing pain, healing after trauma, end of a long difficult period, overcoming, forgiveness.

There is no sugarcoating this one. *The Three of Swords* is the card of heartache. No matter what the context, this card refers to deep sorrow, grieving, and yearning. For the Sufis, however, pain—though not what one seeks—can be a great catalyst for spiritual transformation. As Rumi explains, there is a quality waiting to be born in us, but until we go through the pangs of childbirth it will not be born. What quality is asking to be born in you? What lesson lies behind your difficulties?

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to a place of healing—but not through spiritual bypassing. You are being asked to confront, feel, and move through your pain. Be gentle to yourself as you do so. This experience is unique to you; no one can prescribe a time limit for your emotions or tell you what to feel. There is a healing*

that takes place when we accept our pain—not to remain stuck in it, but to heal and leave it behind. As Rumi writes, “The wound is where the light enters you.”<sup>14</sup>

### Contemplations

*What is my pain trying to teach me?*

*Do I feel my pain mindfully, or do I get stuck in it?*

### Affirmation

*I allow my pain to heal me*

## FOUR OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Burnout, mental overload, a need to recuperate, deep rest after strife, regrouping, recovery, taking time out for yourself.

**Reversed:** Unhealthy isolation, forced exile, being unable to slow down, challenges healing, lack of self-care.

*The Four of Swords* comes with a very clear message: it is time to tune out the outer noise and retreat into your inner sanctum. The need to shift your focus from the external to the internal has never been clearer, as the physical effects of not doing so become more and more evident. It is time to prioritize rest, recovery, and recuperation. This is the card of stillness, of taking a much-needed pause. If there is guilt around taking a break after hard work, it is time to release it. Work on strengthening your mental well-being while honoring the needs of your physical body.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to examine your balance between activity and repose. The Sufis teach us the importance of rhythm and balance, between the inner and the outer, the heart and the mind, and repose and

activity. There is great wisdom behind knowing when to act and when to rest, as it is repose that eventually strengthens our activity. How do you balance the two? What practices do you use to prevent physical, emotional, and spiritual depletion? Breath work, meditation, and chanting are a few of the practices used by the Sufis. What methods do you use?

### Contemplations

*How do I balance activity and repose?*

*What core beliefs regarding rest keep me  
from slowing down?*

### Affirmation

*I honor myself and allow myself to slow down*

## FIVE OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Feeling unfairly defeated, an unequal fight, blaming oneself, feeling like a victim, judging oneself harshly.

**Reversed:** Taking unfair advantage of others, trickery and deceit, being tired of conflict, being ready to give in.

*The Five of Swords* is, without a doubt, a card of conflicts, arguments, and hostility. It alludes to meanness, and people indulging in callous, hurtful behavior. The Sufis, however, invite us to consider the outer being a reflection of the inner. Without blaming or judging ourselves if we find ourselves consistently wronged, it can be helpful to ask: How do our inner thoughts shape our outer reality? Sometimes there is a harsh voice of slander within. Our uncharitable thoughts about ourselves, then, attract the same from the outside world.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being led to the Sufi practice of *Tafakur*, or reflection, to meet the shadow within: your inharmonious thoughts and impressions about yourself. There are often distortions within our unconscious minds that must be cleared for us to connect with our natural

harmonious state. These distortions come in the form of our self-image, limiting beliefs, and feelings of guilt and inadequacy, which then manifest outward. What negative beliefs about yourself are being mirrored outward? Remember, this is not an exercise in blaming yourself. Rather, it is meant to help you identify and remove the impressions that do not serve you from your mind. As Rumi writes, "The pot drips what is in it."<sup>15</sup>

### Contemplations

*How kind or unkind are my thoughts about myself?*

*How have my inner thoughts shaped my outer reality?*

### Affirmation

*I am kind to myself, and others are kind to me*

## SIX OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Moving from dark to light, healing, accepting help, leaving the past behind, readiness for better times, travel.

**Reversed:** Being stuck in a dark place, stagnation, not willing to do the inner work required for healing, running away, unwelcome movement.

*The Six of Swords* is a positive card that connotes movement away from the dark and murky and toward the light. It is one that comes with a message of overcoming hardships and the relief that results. The inner work has been done; now it's time to reap the rewards. The suit of Swords represents mental processes, and the water we see, turning from dark to light, mirrors the emotions of the person sailing away from the dross of the past. The symbol of the heart and wings (based on the ancient Persian *Fravashi* symbol, representing Divine protection of the guardian angel) shows the freedom of the healed and balanced heart to soar heavenward.

*When this card appears for you*, take it as a message of the efforts of your hard, inner work being rewarded. Sufism, as a verb, is often called the

alchemy of transforming suffering into joy. You are ready to do so and, like the person in the image, sail into the clear blue waters ahead. You have come to this point because of your own conscious efforts to do so, and you have been guided by a Divine presence, symbolized by the heart with wings in our image, protecting you whether you are aware of it or not.

### Contemplations

*What thoughts keep me stuck in the past?*

*Where in my life can I sense Divine protection?*

### Affirmation

*I am ready to heal and move on*

## SEVEN OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Dishonesty, trickery, betrayal, deceit, theft, devious and cunning behavior, not facing the truth.

**Reversed:** Taking responsibility, confessing, making peace with one's conscience, owning up, making amends.

*The Seven of Swords* is a strong indicator that something is wrong, that someone is choosing the path of trickery and deceit and engaging in weaselly behavior. The energy is one of sneakiness. In our card we see a man who has stolen valuable swords and is running away with them. From the Sufi perspective, he has fallen prey to his lowest self, the animalistic part of the ego called *Nafs Al Ammara*, which is basic self-gratification irrespective of the cost to others. Before him are two paths: a straight, light-filled one and a dark, crooked one. As he chooses the dark one, an inward spiraling descent begins within his soul.

*When this card appears for you, please remember you are not being asked to point fingers at others but to examine your own choices. That is the best we can do when encountering corruption*

in others. Of course, we must do what we can to recognize and protect ourselves from such people. But eventually we need to ask ourselves, when faced with a choice, do we choose the straight path or the crooked one? It is natural to have secrets, but when does keeping secrets turn into deviousness? One of the qualities of the Divine is *Al-Basir*, the Seer, the One who knows, perceives, and comprehends all, the eye of the Universe. No one's trickery goes unnoticed.

### Contemplations

*What choices have I made that prick my conscience?*

*When have I made a conscious choice to  
choose light over dark?*

### Affirmation

*Even when no one is watching, I act with integrity*

# EIGHT OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Feeling trapped, helpless, losing hope, caught up in recurring patterns, stuck in a self-created mental prison.

**Reversed:** Breaking free, cutting the ties that bind, seeing through the illusion of limitation, taking your power back.

*The Eight of Swords* is about feeling hopeless and bound when one is not. Yes, the woman in our card stands behind what seem like bars, but is that truly what they are? If there is a way out, she is certainly not looking for it. The blindfold she wears represents her disinterest in looking for ways to leave. Her mental state is her cage. Whether by repeated patterns and cycles in our lives or by outside conditions, there is a complacency and fatalism that can creep into our minds and keep us trapped. The underlying emotion in many cases of this state of paralysis is fear—fear of being alone, of being abandoned, and of failure.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being encouraged to examine your relationship with what Sufis call the *Nafs Al-Lawwama*, your hesitant, self-questioning self. This is the part of you

that puts yourself and your needs last and is overly deferential and a harsh judge of both yourself and others. It is this state of being that makes us feel powerless and blindly accept what we are taught, finding comfort in nonaction. Is there something in the past that keeps you so trapped that the way out is no longer visible?

### Contemplations

*Am I physically stuck somewhere,  
or is it an inner state?*

*What fears keep me from breaking free?*

### Affirmation

*I am free from the patterns of the past*

## NINE OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Fear, anxiety, mental anguish, sleepless nights, nightmares, remorse, being overwhelmed with worry and fear.

**Reversed:** Recovery, breakthrough, light at the end of a tunnel, facing fears, releasing worry, healing trauma.

*The Nine of Swords* shows us the power of the mind. In our card we see a man sitting up in bed in the middle of the night with swords—his thoughts—circling ominously above his head like a tornado. His troubles have not been externally imposed; he suffers under the weight of his own repressed thoughts and emotions. Mystics believe that our unaddressed shadows, unresolved wounds, and outstanding fears manifest themselves in our sleep, or lack of it. Worrying is praying for your worst fears to come true, as the energy we attach to each worrying thought multiplies and attracts more circumstances to reinforce the worry.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked what it is that you sweep under the rug. What is it that pinches your conscience and makes you uneasy? What do you find yourself dismissing*

more and more? The Sufi path is one of unlearning, one in which we learn to let go of limiting thoughts and impressions, unknotting the knots we have tied in our hearts and minds. Whether fear, guilt, or a troubling memory, you do not need to dwell on it or remain in it. The Sufi approach is to feel it, to understand it, and to then move *through* it. As Rumi says, "The balm is in the pain."

### Contemplations

*What suppressed emotions of mine are asking to be  
paid gentle attention to so they can be released?*

*When have I seen my worries turn into real-life  
circumstances?*

### Affirmation

*I breathe in peace and breathe out worry*

# TEN OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Ruin, loss, hardship, painful endings, failure, betrayal, backstabbing, rock bottom, feeling completely broken.

**Reversed:** Survival, escaping ruin, learning from past hardships, closing a tough chapter in your life.

*The Ten of Swords* is the card of ruin. The woman in our card sits, devastated, in front of burning tents. She has lost it all. There is a deep pain in the core of her being. We are told that it is darkest before dawn. It is darkness that surrounds her heart. Will her breakdown lead to a breakthrough, or will she choose to remain trapped in her anguish? The mystics tell us that pain is inevitable, but suffering is unnecessary. Will she be able to feel her pain, then slowly start to move through it?

*When this card appears for you*, you are being pointed to the meaning found within the following lines by Rumi:

A man was breaking up the soil when another man came by, "Why are you ruining this land?"

The first man responded, "Don't be a fool! Nothing can grow until the ground is turned over and crumbled. There can be no roses and no orchard without first this that looks devastating. You must lance an ulcer to heal it. You must tear down parts of an old building to restore it, and so it is with a sensual life that has no spirit in it."<sup>16</sup>

What is being destroyed in your life that you need to accept? What opportunities to evolve do you see in this situation?

### Contemplations

*When something ends, something new is born.  
What is it for me?*

*When has my suffering led to acceptance  
and, in turn, growth?*

### Affirmation

*I love myself through all situations*

# DAUGHTER OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Intellect, curiosity, freedom-loving, unconventionality, action, mental pursuits, acumen.

**Reversed:** Disorganized, lack of focus, muddled thoughts, not following words with actions, inability to access heart knowledge.

An exemplar of the free-flowing element and energy of air, *the Daughter of Swords* has a youthful, questioning mind and is unafraid of life, not at all jaded. The world is exciting and full of mystery, and she has a million questions. She wants to know the whys and the hows and will do whatever it takes to find answers. The ultimate explorer of the mind and always on some sort of quest, we see her in our card with her sword of truth, pushing away layers of fabrics (veils that cloud our hearts and minds) to get to what really lies behind. She simply must know. She will not be subdued. But is it inspired by stubbornness or strength?

*When this card appears for you, you are being gently guided to the difference between intellect and wisdom, or Hikma. The Sufis describe intellect as the door to eventual wisdom; the intellect represents the mind and wisdom represents the*

heart. Both are needed to achieve balance of the inner and outer. In the early developmental stages, it is the analytical mind that carries us forward, introducing the potential to grow (or not) into a more profound type of questioning. The intellect is limited to the exoteric knowledge of the mind, while wisdom, related to the esoteric knowledge of the heart, knows no bounds. To find what lies behind reams of hanging fabric requires intellect. To delve into deeper truths, however, a different type of questioning is needed.

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with my inherent curiosity?*

*In what place do I have intellect but lack wisdom?*

*How can I move toward it?*

### Affirmation

*My questioning mind and believing heart  
work in perfect harmony*

# SON OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Assertive, daring, courageous, brave, risk-taking, ambitious, determined, making quick decisions and taking immediate action.

**Reversed:** Impatient, tactless, impulsive, rebellious, reckless, arrogant, unfocused, inconsistent, emotionally unavailable.

*The Son of Swords* embodies the extremes of air energy—sharp, decisive, and quick in its light, and reckless, tactless, and uncaring in its shadow. His energy is young and exciting, and he dwells in the realm of the mind and intellect. Fierce and determined, he pursues his goals aggressively and unapologetically, charging forward without hesitation. He thinks fast and acts quickly, embodying speed in every sense of the word. This speed is depicted in our card as he is seen galloping so fast that both his body and horse begin to transmute into stardust.

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to look at speed and action from an alternate point of view. While modernity celebrates speed, Sufis believe that most diseases stem from disorder of rhythm and that excessive speed in*

speaking, walking, acting, and thinking causes us to consume ourselves like fire. Hazrat Inayat Khan explains the phenomenon of fire: "The activity is little at the start, but with every moment that it burns its activity increases and culminates in the end in its utmost speed. The speed of the beginning compared with the speed of the end will prove that it is the increase of speed of the fire which has brought about the climax, when it consumes itself. In human nature we see the same tendency."<sup>17</sup> To avoid this burnout, Sufis have long used meditation and breathing practices to slow themselves down. What techniques do you use?

### Contemplations

*How do I balance action and rhythm in my life?*

*Where do I tend to be impulsive,  
and how can I slow down?*

### Affirmation

*I speak my truth while honoring the feelings of others*

# MALIKA OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Independent, objective, truthful, problem solver, self-reliant, open-minded, unpretentious, straightforward.

**Reversed:** Cold, overly critical, lacking empathy, impatient, indifferent, aloof, unfocused, ungrounded.

*The Malika of Swords*, the queen of air, reigns over all that is related to the mind. Like the formless, traceless waves of the air, she is unconstrained by societal conventions. She has been tested through life's trials and finds no reason to conform to or be confined by anyone's expectations. She is all about communication and truth, logic and proof, prioritizing the head-space over the heart-space. Her sword of truth, her moral compass, lights her path. She has experienced what Rumi describes as "spiritual cooking"; she has been burned, dissolved, and transformed into something new like dry, hard chickpeas that must be boiled before they soften and provide nourishment. She has been through the fire and emerged strong, wise, and self-aware.

*When this card appears for you, you are being pointed to a spiritual practice of the Sufis in which they cultivate independence and indifference meant to lift their hearts upward. Indifference here is not a lack of compassion; rather, it indicates the ability to rise above difficult emotions (personal agitation, irritation, anger). And independence refers to removing our unhealthy dependencies and relying solely on the One who sustains us. The two wings of indifference and independence are held together by love in the *Qalb*, the heart center. How do you relate to this practice? Perhaps it's something you need in your life. Excessive independence, which keeps us from making deep connections, is often a defense mechanism. If so, what vulnerability are you trying to protect?*

### Contemplations

*Can I be honest without being callous?*

*Do I allow myself to be vulnerable?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace independence through my heart quality*

# SHAH OF SWORDS

**Upright:** Reason, logic, analytical, detachment, objectivity, preoccupied by the mind, philosophizing, honesty, search for truth.

**Reversed:** Dishonest, evasive, lack of structure and stability, coldhearted, intellect used for ignoble purposes.

*The Shah of Swords* is the king of air, of thoughts, ideas, philosophy, and all that resides in the head-space. He reigns over intellectual power and authority. In the mind-body-spirit model, he is the mind. For him, life is mind over matter and head over heart. A wise judge and mediator, he leads by being fair-minded, and communication is his forte. The Sufis, however, have traditionally favored heart knowledge over mind knowledge (Rumi even referred to logicians as having "a wooden leg"), not because rational thought is useless but because analysis, argumentation, and the need for scientific proof only take you so far in understanding life's secrets and truths. As Hazrat Inayat Khan explains, "The Sufi achieves balance. The head without the heart shows dry intellect. The heart without the head represents an

unbalanced condition. Balance is the use of both these faculties."<sup>18</sup> How do you reconcile the two in your being?

*When this card appears for you, you are being pointed to the importance of critical thinking and making decisions based on facts rather than feelings. At the same time, you are encouraged to find a form of mastery that balances logic and emotions. When does logic turn into a wooden leg for you, keeping you from moving forward smoothly? When do your feelings cloud your judgment and keep you from acting in everyone's best interest? At what point does detachment, valued so much by the mystics, become unhealthy for you?*

### Contemplations

*Are my decisions based on logic or emotions?*

*What happens when I turn solely to logic or emotions to understand life?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace both the rational and the empathic within*

# COINS

ORIGINAL TAROT NAME:

DARAHIM

ELEMENT:

EARTH

COLOR:

GOLD, YELLOW

PRIMARY QUALITY:

PHYSICAL SUSTENANCE



# ACE OF COINS

**Upright:** Manifestation, results, material success, stability, security, feeling held by the Universe.

**Reversed:** Scarcity, missed opportunity, instability, blockage in the material realm, indulging in blind materialism or consumerism.

*The Ace of Coins* is a herald of new beginnings and abundance! The embodiment of earth and all its treasures, this card is a celebration of upcoming harvests. Tied to the physical realm, it reflects the bounties of earth—the body, the home, the natural world—and all that is tangible. In the Sufi tradition, our physical senses are not admonished—if purified and balanced, they are considered pathways to the Divine. Likewise, the body is not a dark or dense unholy prison but a means of experiencing the Divine. The physical and spiritual are both to be honored, as they are, literally, two sides of the same coin.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being pointed to the bountiful gifts of nature and asked to express gratitude for all you have been given and will be given. Let gratitude shine in your heart like the coin in our image, and feel yourself

overflowing with joy and abundance like the flowers and lush green vegetation we see. When you learn to honor your physical body as the Divine temple it is, your energy begins to vibrate at a higher level, which, in turn, attracts more for you to love and honor.

### Contemplations

*How do I view the physical in relation  
to the spiritual?*

*How do I nurture the seeds of abundance in my life?*

### Affirmation

*I honor and accept physical abundance into my life*

## TWO OF COINS

**Upright:** Balance, juggling, unexpected events, flexibility and adaptability in change, equilibrium, harmonizing dualities.

**Reversed:** Lacking balance, juggling too much, overwhelmed by responsibilities, disharmony, difficulties prioritizing.

*The Two of Coins* is the card of balance and moderation. Sometimes we simply find ourselves juggling too much. How sustainable is that in the long run? The Twos in tarot signify dualities—how we bring together that which may seem disparate. Whether we have projects, roles, or responsibilities, whether we are struggling with decision-making or time management, this card tells us to balance the amount of importance we place on the physical. For Sufis, long-term success comes from moderation. As Hazrat Inayat Khan said, “The fulfillment of every activity is in its balance.”<sup>19</sup>

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to place all that you are juggling in its rightful place. What do you give the most importance to? The suit of Coins represents the element of earth, which is all about the worldly. How do you

balance that? Being overcommitted and stretched does not serve anyone. Using the Sufi tool of contemplation called *Muhasaba*, it can be helpful to ask yourself why you take on so much. Is there something you feel you need to prove? Is it for others, or does some part of yourself need it? Why? As the drum player with the perfectly balanced double drums whirls to the vibration of infinity in *Dhamaal*, or whirling Sufi dance, you are being told that there is no limit to how much you can accomplish if you learn to balance your time, energy, and resources.

### Contemplations

*How do I balance my worldly obligations?*

*What is difficult for me to balance?*

### Affirmation

*I embody perfect equilibrium*

## THREE OF COINS

**Upright:** Teamwork, collaboration, shared goals, playing your part, being a team player, positive work dynamics.

**Reversed:** Lack of cooperation, discord in group dynamic, working in isolation, unmotivated.

*The Three of Coins* is a card about playing your part in the symphony of life. As in an orchestra, we each have a note to play. It is our attunement to that note and the integrity in how we play it that determines how aligned we are with our life purpose. Some notes will be more audible than others, and yet each one is needed for the eventual result. Similarly, when we are working with others to create something we are proud of, the ego, or *Nafs*, and our sense of identity merge into a common purpose. When individuals with differing backgrounds, experiences, and age groups come together for a common goal, the result is love, harmony, and beauty.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being pointed to the kind of collaboration that goes into the craft of making handmade tiles. Passed down from one generation to the next, this activity

brings together different age groups, with a sense of joy and pride. There is a humility that binds them as they continue the time-honored methods of creating these tiles, and a love that makes them open to hard work, learning, and apprenticeship. With the wisdom of the elders and energy of the youth, they can create something truly novel. With the synergy of love and mutual support, work becomes a source of joy. As Khalil Gibran said, "Work is love made visible."<sup>20</sup>

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with group dynamics?*

*What does finding my place in a  
community mean to me?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace my inner circle and move forward with  
them in perfect harmony*

## FOUR OF COINS

**Upright:** Work, power, saving money, greed, hoarding, extreme materialism, desire to control.

**Reversed:** Releasing the past, learning to share, loosening control, letting go of numbing material fixes.

*The Four of Coins* shows us the hazards of excessive materialism and control. When we seek happiness through the collection of external things, we cease to live with an open heart; instead, our hearts clamp up out of fear of losing that which we invest with too much value. When we live in this state of fear, suspicion and paranoia replace our peace. We begin to believe everyone wants what we have, which often causes self-inflicted isolation. What leads you to desire more than what is needed? How safe and protected do you feel without your material fixes?

*When this card appears for you, you are being pointed to the words of the great Sufi Hazrat Inayat Khan: "What we value we must attain, but once attained, instead of being crushed under it, we must freely rise above it and take a further step in life. Those who have made progress in life have*

made it with this view; and those who come to a standstill in life are the ones who hold fast to that which they have attained, never being inclined to renounce it; and in that way they have met with failure. Therefore greed, however profitable it may seem, in the end is weakening, and generosity, though at times it may seem unprofitable, in reality is strengthening."<sup>21</sup> Are you able to rise above your object of desire after attaining it?

### Contemplations

*How do I balance worldly success with  
my higher, authentic self?*

*Where in my life can I make room for generosity?*

### Affirmation

*As I succeed in my life's journey, there is a continuous  
opening and expansion of my heart*

## FIVE OF COINS

**Upright:** Material trouble, hard times, being tested, illness, feeling left out in the cold, losing faith.

**Reversed:** Recovery, healing, end to material hardship, spiritual growth from adversity.

*The Five of Coins* is not a card of prosperity. It alludes to adversity, both inner and outer. On the physical level it refers to a lack of material security, and on the spiritual level, a lack of connectedness. In our outer lives it can be a toiling without results, feeling trapped or beaten down by circumstances, or feeling left out in the cold without any help and generally rejected and wronged. Spiritually, however, the Sufis have long looked at physical hardships as opportunities to evolve.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to contemplate the following lines by Rumi: "I do not know who lives here in my chest, or why the smile comes. I am not myself, more the bare green knob of a rose that lost every leaf and petal to the morning wind."<sup>22</sup> What does it mean to be the bare green knob of a rose that has lost its petals to the morning wind? If you based your identity*

on externals, it is indeed negative. But what if you realize you were always the knob and the petals were but superficial, transient appendages for those who could not see the value of the knob? Is it not absolutely liberating to have shed the superficialities you held on to for the world and finally be able to turn to your authentic self?

### Contemplations

*What lesson are my outer circumstances  
trying to teach me?*

*In what way can I shed superficialities that  
keep me from moving forward?*

### Affirmation

*I am abundance and I attract abundance*

## SIX OF COINS

**Upright:** Giving and receiving, generosity, support, being valued, balanced accounts, good fortune, openheartedness.

**Reversed:** Imbalance in giving and receiving, inequality, fake charity, scarcity, selfishness.

*The Six of Coins* is the card of reciprocity. On one level it alludes to our relationship with financial abundance, and on another equally important level it refers to time, presence, and support. How much do you give, and how much do you receive? Sometimes the scales are tipped unnaturally. Only you know what you need to do to regain a balance healthy for you and those around you. A Quranic scripture tells us that when we do give, one hand should not know that the other hand is giving. Do you publicize your charitable works? If so, what does that tell you about your intent?

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to examine your beliefs regarding money. For the mystic, the key to life is balance. Money is energy and thus must be balanced. By itself, money is inert and has no inherent power over you. Hazrat Inayat Khan describes the Sufi*

perspective on money in the following lines:  
“Money, what do you like most? Changing hands.  
Where is your dwelling-place? In the heart of my  
worshipper. Where do you accumulate? Where I  
am warmly welcomed. Where do you stay? Where  
I am adored. Money, whom do you seek? Him who  
seeks me. Money, whom do you obey? Him who  
has risen above me; I become his slave and lie as  
dust at his feet.”<sup>23</sup> Have you been able to rise above  
money, or do you feel enslaved by it?

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with reciprocity?*

*Which is more challenging for me—giving or receiving?*

### Affirmation

*I give and receive naturally and gracefully*

## SEVEN OF COINS

**Upright:** Waiting for plans to bear fruit, pausing, reflection, reevaluating, planning, growth, outcomes.

**Reversed:** Impatience, not seeing or appreciating what is before you, lack of planning, unfulfilled success.

The perfect embodiment of the element of earth, *the Seven of Coins* refers to the physical—money, property, and physical health—and reflects it both in its shadow and its light. It is the card of taking a moment to pause and evaluate the fruits of your labor. You have done the groundwork and are now waiting for the tangible results. Sometimes they are visible, other times not so. In a results-oriented world, how do you handle this time in between? Do you feel gratitude or frustration for that which you cannot see?

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to pause. It is time to evaluate what has been completed and plan what still needs to be done. Sometimes there will be periods where there is no visible progress. It is exactly then that the Sufis describe the wings of patience, Sabr,*

and gratitude, *Shukr*, carrying us forward. It is possible to be surrounded by something without awareness of it, like a fish in the ocean asking another fish what an ocean is. The man in our image is oblivious to the roots of the ancient olive tree just because he cannot see them. As Mahmoud Darwish wrote, "If the olive trees knew the hands that planted them, their oil would become tears."<sup>24</sup> Is there something before you that you are not acknowledging or appreciating?

### Contemplations

*What is my relationship with patience?*

*How do I feel when I cannot discern tangible progress?*

### Affirmation

*I feel the groundedness of earth while*

*I await its harvest*

## EIGHT OF COINS

**Upright:** Mastery, discipline, skill, focus, concentration, hard work, talents, accomplishments, satisfaction.

**Reversed:** Indiscipline, mediocrity, lack of dedication, lack of ambition, unmotivated, slacking off.

*The Eight of Coins* comes with a message of perfecting your craft. Whatever your special skill or work, repetition and hard work pay off. When you approach your craft with total concentration and dedication, when the hours go by without you realizing where they went, know that you are doing more than merely working: you are creating from a place of connectedness with your life purpose. The state of mindfulness, *Ilm-e Huzoori*, or knowledge from presence, that comes from being in the state of flow does more than attract prosperity—it connects you to a space outside time. As the coppersmith focuses on the repetitive movements of his hammer in the physical realm, there is a celebratory whirling in the spiritual realm.

*When this card appears for you, you are being reminded that when you become a master of your craft, when you focus and concentrate on the task in front of you and create from your soul, you do more than create beauty—you inspire and uplift others you may not even be aware of. The image of the coppersmith on our card alludes to the origins of Sufi whirling as we know it today. It is believed that one afternoon, walking through a marketplace, Rumi was so moved by the rhythm of a coppersmith's hammer that he closed his eyes and started whirling. The coppersmith, unaware of how his mundane, repetitive work had inspired someone to create a sacred form of movement, continued with his work quietly, steadily, and humbly.*

### Contemplations

*What is that one skill or activity of mine that  
puts me in the flow?*

*How does my craft inspire or uplift others?*

### Affirmation

*I perfect my work with ease and joy*

## NINE OF COINS

**Upright:** Success, abundance, rewarded efforts, achievement, contentment, rest, enriching the spirit.

**Reversed:** Material instability, lack of integrity regarding finances, overindulgence, lack of self-control.

*The Nine of Coins* is pure positivity. It comes with a message that you have done the hard work and it is now time to receive the benefits. The Coins, of course, represent materialism and this card has long alluded to financial abundance. The Sufis, however, invite us to open our hearts to another form of abundance—that which sustains our spirit. The date palm in our card has been called the Tree of Life not just because of the abundance of nutrients that dates contain but because of its origin in the Garden of Paradise and subsequent ability to nourish a more subtle part of our being.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being asked to consider what enriches your spirit. As you get ready to reap the rewards of your hard effort and self-discipline, it might be worth asking

yourself what enhances your experience of abundance. Richness of the spirit does not come from money. Rather, it often comes from a form of culture that brings color to our quotidian routines—music, poetry, and art. As Hazrat Inayat Khan writes, “Both nature and art are made by the same Artist. Nature is made directly by the Artist. Art is the finishing of that beauty which begins to manifest itself in nature. A person who has not come to this conception of art does not yet know the divinity of art.”<sup>25</sup> How do you allow the divinity of the Artist’s work to enrich your life?

### Contemplations

*What fills my heart with uncontainable joy?*

*Who or what brings color and brightness  
to my everyday life?*

### Affirmation

*I open my heart to gifts that nourish  
my body and my soul*

# TEN OF COINS

**Upright:** Wealth, family, multiple generations, security, community-building, inner and outer abundance, happiness.

**Reversed:** Family feuds, instability, loss, going against traditions, blockages with relationships, blockages with wealth.

*The Ten of Coins* represents absolute personal security. On one level it alludes to outer affluence; on another level, to the wealth that comes from being with one's inner circle, community, and family. It speaks to the importance of fellowship and friendship, the richness we gain by interacting with different generations. The Sufis talk about the importance of living in spiritual friendship with others, of being nurtured and healed by communities of kindred souls, of making our hearts the tent of Abraham so that we may welcome and honor each being. There is a Sufi saying that friendship is honoring each other because God has already honored us.

*When this card appears for you, you are being asked to allow yourself to be healed and nourished by community. Group dynamics can be*

challenging for some. The Sufis talk about the importance of *Husn-e Zann*, thinking well of one another and striving to see the Divine in each other. What does that mean for you? What triggers or blockages come up when you think of doing so? Opening our minds and hearts to different perspectives is the first step in awakening compassion and loving kindness within us. For the Sufis, honoring the horizontal dimension that connects us to others is as important as honoring the vertical dimension—our connection to the Divine. How do you balance the two relationships?

### Contemplations

*When I think of "wealth," what comes to mind?*

*What place do community, family, and friendship  
have in my life?*

### Affirmation

*I embrace and balance inner and outer wealth*

# DAUGHTER OF COINS

**Upright:** Exploration, beginnings, learning, developing skills, consistent, grounded, having realistic goals and manifesting them.

**Reversed:** Irresponsible, noncommittal, inaction, inability to manifest, dreaming but not doing.

*The Daughter of Coins* is the true daughter of earth, in all her glories. Her youthful curiosity is framed by her practical, grounded, and realistic approach to life. She does not just dream about beauty; she creates it. She does not just wish for a healthier environment; she plants trees. She wants to *learn* so she can *do*. She is open-minded, optimistic, and interested in all that the world around her has to offer. Aligned with the Sufi belief that honors the physical world as a reflection of the Divine, she knows that there is nothing fallen, dark, or dismal about matter. Instead, she sees the luminosity in each creation and honors the physical, for she knows that consciousness and matter are but reflections of each other.

*When this card appears for you*, you are being pointed to the seed—in your hand, mind, or heart—and being asked what you need to do to

nurture it. Your personality is an unfurling plant. In the same way that a seed opens, your soul has a latency that begins to stretch toward the light and produce fragrance. The Sufis chant the Divine name, *Muqaddim*, the One who opens the seed, draws out the leaves, draws out the bud, so we can become what we are destined to be. What is this seed for you?

### Contemplations

*How do I honor and nurture the physical?*

*How does my personality continue to  
unfurl and transform?*

### Affirmation

*I look to Divine nature, within and without,  
to balance me*

# SON OF COINS

**Upright:** Patient, practical, consistent, perseverance, commitment to work, accomplishment of duties.

**Reversed:** Stubbornness, slow to progress, perfectionism, complacency, stuck in routine, inability to see larger picture.

Whether or not he lives in agriculture, *the Son of Coins* is a true son of the soil. Connected to the energy of earth and embodying the qualities of that element in its most fundamental form, he is grounded, patient, practical, and hardworking. Not interested in the flashy or the frivolous, he is concentrated on the task in front of him, methodically going through the steps needed to complete it successfully. We see him in our card surrounded by the golden fields of wheat he has worked hard to cultivate. His joy comes from being close to nature, within and without, and he is comforted by the famous maxim from the ancient alchemical text of *Turba Philosophorum* (originally translated from Arabic), "Nature rejoices in nature." As he connects with nature in all its glory, the clay of his body rejoices in being united with earth.

*When this card appears for you, you are being reminded of the importance of adapting to nature and its rhythmic cycles instead of struggling against them. Connection with nature requires surrendering our own rigid expectations. Are you able to do that? The Sufis talk about the awakened heart, the Sahib-e Del, or mastermind, as a means of transcending an overly dense, earthy existence. What do you need to do to connect with the Sahib-e Del within?*

### **Contemplations**

*Do I get so caught up in details that I lose sight of the larger picture?*

*How do I balance having dreams and being practical?*

### **Affirmation**

*I approach my work with an open heart*

# MALIKA OF COINS

**Upright:** Grounded, down-to-earth, healer, nurturer, mature, generous, kind, organized, financial abundance.

**Reversed:** Ungrounded, self-absorbed, materialistic, hoarding, overly ambitious, disorganized, unhealthy, disloyal.

*The Malika of Coins* is the queen of earth, aligned with the beauty and magnificent abundance that the earth gifts us each waking moment. She embodies the best of Mother Earth and exudes an abundance that comes from working with nature, within and without. She values the physical senses and all that they can perceive. Attuned to a scripture in which the Divine says, "I was a hidden treasure and I longed to be known, so I created Creation," she sees all of Creation as the Divine appearing in manifest form for us to love. And as such, she cherishes all around her. She is generous, warmhearted, and caring, receiving from the Divine and sharing with all of Creation.

*When this card appears for you, you are being guided to the abundance in your heart, in your soul, and all around you. It is possible to have a*

spiritual connection with the world if we learn to see it as a reflection of the Divine. The Sufis tell us that one of the first signs of an awakened soul is an appreciation for beauty—in nature, in music, in art, and most importantly, in the mundane. The Sufis also tell us that real riches do not come from an accumulation of worldly goods but from a contented mind and soul, the *Nafs al-Mutmainna*. Is this true in your life?

### Contemplations

*Is there anything in the physical or material realm  
that takes my peace away?*

*How do I relate to nature as Divine Creation?*

### Affirmation

*I wear gratitude like a cloak; it nourishes  
me on every level*

# SHAH OF COINS

**Upright:** Generosity, financial success, groundedness, stability, hardworking, maturity, abundance, leader, manifested dreams.

**Reversed:** Ungrounded, instability, unsuccessful, overindulgence, materialism, excessive emphasis on outer circumstances.

*The Shah of Coins* is the king of earth, the master of worldly and material success who wants for nothing. Solid, steady, and sensuous, his abundance comes from being in tune with nature. Surrounded by wealth—both man-made and natural—he epitomizes generosity. He has no conflict between the inner and the outer, and even though he values material success he knows that nothing the earth can offer is more precious than his soul. In the words of Hazrat Inayat Khan, “From the one who runs after things, those things run away, frightened of his pursuit. But the one who does not go in pursuit of objects will find that they inevitably become his own.”<sup>26</sup> The Shah of Coins has mastered this art.

*When this card appears for you, you are being told that it is possible to build the life of your dreams. Like the Shah of Coins, inner and outer abundance is yours to take. Like all cards, it may be a person, a quality, or a message that you need to hear. The message is one leading you to the quality of generosity as a way of attracting and retaining prosperity. As the Sufis say, when you receive with one hand and give with the other, you are creating an electric conduit that allows more to flow through your being. When you open your heart and give to people as you have been given to in turn, the Universe will give you even more.*

### **Contemplations**

*How much of what I receive do I share with others?*

*How can I be more generous in my life?*

### **Affirmation**

*I manifest abundance with ease and  
generosity of spirit*

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