



Sufism

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Sufism



- Sufism (Arabic: الصُّوفِيَّةُ aṣ-ṣūfiyya), also known as Tasawwuf (التَّصَوُّفُ at-taṣawwuf), is a mystic body of religious practice found within Islam which is characterized by a focus on Islamic purification, spirituality, ritualism, asceticism, and esotericism.
- It has been variously defined as "Islamic mysticism", "the mystical expression of Islamic faith", "the inward dimension of Islam", "the phenomenon of mysticism within Islam", the "main manifestation and the most important and central crystallization" of mystical practice in Islam, and "the interiorization and intensification of Islamic faith and practice".
- Despite a relative decline of Sufi orders in the modern era and attacks from revivalist Islamic movement (such as the Salafis and Wahhabis), Sufism has continued to play an important role in the Islamic world, especially in the neo-traditionalist strand of Sunni Islam. It has also influenced various forms of spirituality in the West and generated significant academic interest.

Sufism



- Practitioners of Sufism are referred to as "Sufis" (from سُوفِيّ, *ṣūfīy*), and historically typically belonged to "orders" known as *tariqa* (pl. *ṭuruq*) – congregations formed around a grand wali who would be the last in a chain of successive teachers linking back to Muhammad, with the goal of undergoing *Tazkiah* (self purification) and the hope of reaching *Ihsan*. The ultimate aim of Sufis is to seek the pleasure of God by endeavoring to return to their original state of purity and natural disposition, known as *fitra*.
- Sufism emerged early on in Islamic history, partly as a reaction against the worldliness of the early Umayyad Caliphate (661–750) and mainly under the tutelage of Hasan Al-Basri. Although Sufis were opposed to dry legalism, they strictly observed Islamic law and belonged to various schools of Islamic jurisprudence and theology. Although the overwhelming majority of Sufis, both pre-modern and modern, remain adherents of Sunni Islam, certain strands of Sufi thought transferred over to the ambits of Shia Islam during the late medieval period. This particularly happened after the Safavid conversion of Iran under the concept of *Irfan*. Important focuses of Sufi worship include *dhikr*, the practice of remembrance of God. Sufis also played an important role in spreading Islam through their missionary and educational activities.

Definitions



- The Arabic word *tasawwuf* (lit. 'being or becoming a Sufi'), generally translated as Sufism, is commonly defined by Western authors as Islamic mysticism. The Arabic term Sufi has been used in Islamic literature with a wide range of meanings, by both proponents and opponents of Sufism.
- Classical Sufi texts, which stressed certain teachings and practices of the Quran and the sunnah (exemplary teachings and practices of the Islamic prophet Muhammad), gave definitions of *tasawwuf* that described ethical and spiritual goals and functioned as teaching tools for their attainment. Many other terms that described particular spiritual qualities and roles were used instead in more practical contexts.
- Some modern scholars have used other definitions of Sufism such as "intensification of Islamic faith and practice" and "process of realizing ethical and spiritual ideals"

Definitions



- Some modern scholars have used other definitions of Sufism such as "intensification of Islamic faith and practice" and "process of realizing ethical and spiritual ideals".
- The term Sufism was originally introduced into European languages in the 18th century by Orientalist scholars, who viewed it mainly as an intellectual doctrine and literary tradition at variance with what they saw as sterile monotheism of Islam.
- It was often mistaken as a universal mysticism in contrast to legalistic orthodox Islam. In recent times, Historian Nile Green has argued against such distinctions, stating, in the Medieval period Sufism and Islam were more or less the same. In modern scholarly usage, the term serves to describe a wide range of social, cultural, political and religious phenomena associated with Sufis.

Etymology



- The original meaning of sufi seems to have been "one who wears wool (şūf)", and the Encyclopaedia of Islam calls other etymological hypotheses "untenable". Woolen clothes were traditionally associated with ascetics and mystics. Al-Qushayri and Ibn Khaldun both rejected all possibilities other than şūf on linguistic grounds.
- Another explanation traces the lexical root of the word to şafā (صفاء), which in Arabic means "purity", and in this context another similar idea of tasawwuf as considered in Islam is tazkiyah (تزكية), meaning: self-purification), which is also widely used in Sufism. These two explanations were combined by the Sufi al-Rudhabari (d. 322 AH), who said, "The Sufi is the one who wears wool on top of purity."
- Others have suggested that the word comes from the term Ahl al-Şuffa ("the people of the suffah or the bench"), who were a group of impoverished companions of Muhammad who held regular gatherings of dhikr, one of the most prominent companion among them was Abu Huraira. These men and women who sat at al-Masjid an-Nabawi are considered by some to be the first Sufis.

Origins



- The current consensus is that Sufism emerged in the Hejaz, and that it has existed as a practice of Muslims from the earliest days of Islam, even predating some sectarian divides.
- Sufi orders are based on the bayah (Arabic: *بَيْعَة*, lit. 'pledge') that was given to Muhammad by his Ṣahabah. By pledging allegiance to Muhammad, the Sahabah had committed themselves to the service of God.
- Verily, those who give Bay'âh (pledge) to you (O Muhammad) they are giving Bay'âh (pledge) to God. The Hand of God is over their hands. Then whosoever breaks his pledge, breaks it only to his own harm, and whosoever fulfils what he has covenanted with God, He will bestow on him a great reward. — [Translation of Quran 48:10]
- Sufis believe that by giving bay'ah (pledging allegiance) to a legitimate Sufi Shaykh, one is pledging allegiance to Muhammad; therefore, a spiritual connection between the seeker and Muhammad is established. It is through Muhammad that Sufis aim to learn about, understand and connect with God. Ali is regarded as one of the major figures amongst the Sahaba who have directly pledged allegiance to Muhammad, and Sufis maintain that through Ali, knowledge about Muhammad and a connection with Muhammad may be attained. Such a concept may be understood by the hadith, which Sufis regard to be authentic, in which Muhammad said, "I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its gate." Eminent Sufis such as Ali Hujwiri refer to Ali as having a very high ranking in Tasawwuf. Furthermore, Junayd of Baghdad regarded Ali as Sheikh of the principals and practices of Tasawwuf.

Origins



- Historian Jonathan A.C. Brown notes that during the lifetime of Muhammad, some companions were more inclined than others to "intensive devotion, pious abstemiousness and pondering the divine mysteries" more than Islam required, such as Abu Dharr al-Ghifari. Hasan al-Basri, a tabi', is considered a "founding figure" in the "science of purifying the heart".
- Practitioners of Sufism hold that in its early stages of development Sufism effectively referred to nothing more than the internalization of Islam. According to one perspective, it is directly from the Qur'an, constantly recited, meditated, and experienced, that Sufism proceeded, in its origin and its development. Other practitioners have held that Sufism is the strict emulation of the way of Muhammad, through which the heart's connection to the Divine is strengthened.
- Later developments of Sufism occurred from people like Dawud Tai and Bayazid Bastami.[50] Early on Sufism was known for its strict adherence to the sunnah, for example it was reported Bastami refused to eat a watermelon because he did not find any proof that Muhammad ever ate it. According to the late medieval mystic, the Persian poet Jami, Abd-Allah ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah (died c. 716) was the first person to be called a "Sufi". The term also had a strong connection with Kufa, with three of the earliest scholars to be called by the term being Abu Hashim al-Kufi[54], Jabir ibn Hayyan and Abdak al-Sufi. Later individuals included Hatim al-Attar, from Basra, and Al-Junayd al-Baghdadi. Others, such as Al-Harith al-Muhasibi and Sari al-Saqati, were not known as Sufis during their lifetimes, but later came to be identified as such due to their focus on tazkiah (purification)

Sufi Orders



- Historically, Sufis have often belonged to "orders" known as tariqa (pl. ṭuruq) – congregations formed around a grand master wali who will trace their teaching through a chain of successive teachers back to the Islamic prophet Muhammad.
- Within the Sufi tradition, the formation of the orders did not immediately produce lineages of master and disciple. There are few examples before the eleventh century of complete lineages going back to the Prophet Muhammad. Yet the symbolic importance of these lineages was immense: they provided a channel to divine authority through master-disciple chains. It was through such chains of masters and disciples that spiritual power and blessings were transmitted to both general and special devotees.
- These orders meet for spiritual sessions (majalis) in meeting places known as zawiyas, khanqahs or tekke.
- They strive for ihsan (perfection of worship), as detailed in a hadith: "Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him; if you can't see Him, surely He sees you." Sufis regard Muhammad as al-Insān al-Kāmil, the complete human who personifies the attributes of Absolute Reality,[62] and view him as their ultimate spiritual guide.
- Sufi orders trace most of their original precepts from Muhammad through Ali ibn Abi Talib, with the notable exception of the Naqshbandi order, who trace their original precepts to Muhammad through Abu Bakr. However, it was not necessary to formally belong to a tariqa. In the Medieval period, Sufism almost equal to Islam in general and not limited to specific orders.

Sufi Orders



- Sufism had a long history already before the subsequent institutionalization of Sufi teachings into devotional orders (tariqa, pl. tarîqât) in the early Middle Ages.[68] The term tariqa is used for a school or order of Sufism, or especially for the mystical teaching and spiritual practices of such an order with the aim of seeking ḥaqīqah (ultimate truth). A tariqa has a murshid (guide) who plays the role of leader or spiritual director. The members or followers of a tariqa are known as murīdīn (singular murīd), meaning "desirous", viz. "desiring the knowledge of knowing God and loving God".
- Over the years, Sufi orders have influenced and been adopted by various Shi'i movements, especially Isma'ilism, which led to the Safaviyya order's conversion to Shia Islam from Sunni Islam and the spread of Twelverism throughout Iran.
- Prominent tariqa include the Ba 'Alawiyya, Badawiyya, Bektashi, Burhaniyya, Chishti, Khalwati, Kubrawiyya, Madariyya, Mevlevi, Muridiyya, Naqshbandi, Nimatullahi, Qadiriyya, Qalandariyya, Rahmaniyya, Rifa'i, Safavid, Senussi, Shadhili, Suhrawardiyya, Tijaniyyah, Uwaisi and Zahabiya orders.

Sufism and Islam



- Existing in both Sunni and Shia Islam, Sufism is not a distinct sect, as is sometimes erroneously assumed, but a method of approaching or a way of understanding the religion, which strives to take the regular practice of the religion to the "supererogatory level" through simultaneously "fulfilling ... [the obligatory] religious duties" and finding a "way and a means of striking a root through the 'narrow gate' in the depth of the soul out into the domain of the pure arid unimprisonable Spirit which itself opens out on to the Divinity." Academic studies of Sufism confirm that Sufism, as a separate tradition from Islam apart from so-called pure Islam, is frequently a product of Western orientalism and modern Islamic fundamentalists.
- As a mystic and ascetic aspect of Islam, it is considered as the part of Islamic teaching that deals with the purification of the inner self. By focusing on the more spiritual aspects of religion, Sufis strive to obtain direct experience of God by making use of "intuitive and emotional faculties" that one must be trained to use. Tasawwuf is regarded as a science of the soul that has always been an integral part of Orthodox Islam. In his *Al-Risala al-Safadiyya*, ibn Taymiyyah describes the Sufis as those who belong to the path of the Sunna and represent it in their teachings and writings.

Sufism and Islam



- Ibn Taymiyya's Sufi inclinations and his reverence for Sufis like Abdul-Qadir Gilani can also be seen in his hundred-page commentary on *Futuh al-ghayb*, covering only five of the seventy-eight sermons of the book, but showing that he considered *tasawwuf* essential within the life of the Islamic community.
- In his commentary, Ibn Taymiyya stresses that the primacy of the sharia forms the soundest tradition in *tasawwuf*, and to argue this point he lists over a dozen early masters, as well as more contemporary shaykhs like his fellow Hanbalis, al-Ansari al-Harawi and Abdul-Qadir, and the latter's own shaykh, Hammad al-Dabbas the upright. He cites the early shaykhs (*shuyukh al-salaf*) such as Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ, Ibrahim ibn Adham, Ma`ruf al-Karkhi, Sirri Saqti, Junayd of Baghdad, and others of the early teachers, as well as Abdul-Qadir Gilani, Hammad, Abu al-Bayan and others of the later masters— that they do not permit the followers of the Sufi path to depart from the divinely legislated command and prohibition

Formalization of Doctrine



- In the eleventh-century, Sufism, which had previously been a less "codified" trend in Islamic piety, began to be "ordered and crystallized" into orders which have continued until the present day. All these orders were founded by a major Islamic scholar, and some of the largest and most widespread included the Suhrawardiyya (after Abu al-Najib Suhrawardi [d. 1168]), Qadiriyya (after Abdul-Qadir Gilani [d. 1166]), the Rifa'iyya (after Ahmed al-Rifa'i [d. 1182]), the Chishtiyya (after Moinuddin Chishti [d. 1236]), the Shadiliyya (after Abul Hasan ash-Shadhili [d. 1258]), the Hamadaniyyah (after Sayyid Ali Hamadani [d. 1384]), the Naqshbandiyya (after Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari [d. 1389]).
- Contrary to popular perception in the West, however, neither the founders of these orders nor their followers ever considered themselves to be anything other than orthodox Sunni Muslims, and in fact all of these orders were attached to one of the four orthodox legal schools of Sunni Islam. Thus, the Qadiriyya order was Hanbali, with its founder, Abdul-Qadir Gilani, being a renowned jurist; the Chishtiyya was Hanafi; the Shadiliyya order was Maliki; and the Naqshbandiyya order was Hanafi. Thus, it is precisely because it is historically proven that "many of the most eminent defenders of Islamic orthodoxy, such as Abdul-Qadir Gilani, Ghazali, and the Sultan Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn (Saladin) were connected with Sufism" that the popular studies of writers like Idries Shah are continuously disregarded by scholars as conveying the fallacious image that "Sufism" is somehow distinct from "Islam". Nile Green has observed that, in the Middle Ages, Sufism more or less was Islam.

Growth of Sufism



- Historically, Sufism became "an incredibly important part of Islam" and "one of the most widespread and omnipresent aspects of Muslim life" in Islamic civilization from the early medieval period onwards, when it began to permeate nearly all major aspects of Sunni Islamic life in regions stretching from India and Iraq to the Balkans and Senegal.
- The rise of Islamic civilization coincides strongly with the spread of Sufi philosophy in Islam. The spread of Sufism has been considered a definitive factor in the spread of Islam, and in the creation of integrally Islamic cultures, especially in Africa and Asia. The Senussi tribes of Libya and the Sudan are one of the strongest adherents of Sufism. Sufi poets and philosophers such as Khoja Akhmet Yassawi, Rumi, and Attar of Nishapur (c. 1145 – c. 1221) greatly enhanced the spread of Islamic culture in Anatolia, Central Asia, and South Asia.[84][85] Sufism also played a role in creating and propagating the culture of the Ottoman world, and in resisting European imperialism in North Africa and South Asia.

Growth of Sufism



- Between the 13th and 16th centuries, Sufism produced a flourishing intellectual culture throughout the Islamic world, a "Renaissance" whose physical artifacts survive.
- In many places a person or group would endow a waqf to maintain a lodge (known variously as a zawiya, khanqah, or tekke) to provide a gathering place for Sufi adepts, as well as lodging for itinerant seekers of knowledge.
- The same system of endowments could also pay for a complex of buildings, such as that surrounding the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, including a lodge for Sufi seekers, a hospice with kitchens where these seekers could serve the poor and/or complete a period of initiation, a library, and other structures. No important domain in the civilization of Islam remained unaffected by Sufism in this period.

Growth of Sufism: Today



- Opposition to Sufi teachers and orders from more literalist and legalist strains of Islam existed in various forms throughout Islamic history. It took on a particularly violent form in the 18th century with the emergence of the Wahhabi movement.
- Around the turn of the 20th century, Sufi rituals and doctrines also came under sustained criticism from modernist Islamic reformers, liberal nationalists, and, some decades later, socialist movements in the Muslim world. Sufi orders were accused of fostering popular superstitions, resisting modern intellectual attitudes, and standing in the way of progressive reforms. Ideological attacks on Sufism were reinforced by agrarian and educational reforms, as well as new forms of taxation, which were instituted by Westernizing national governments, undermining the economic foundations of Sufi orders. The extent to which Sufi orders declined in the first half of the 20th century varied from country to country, but by the middle of the century the very survival of the orders and traditional Sufi lifestyle appeared doubtful to many observers.
- However, defying these predictions, Sufism and Sufi orders have continued to play a major role in the Muslim world, also expanding into Muslim-minority countries. Its ability to articulate an inclusive Islamic identity with greater emphasis on personal and small-group piety has made Sufism especially well-suited for contexts characterized by religious pluralism and secularist perspectives.

Modern Sufism



- In the modern world, the classical interpretation of Sunni orthodoxy, which sees in Sufism an essential dimension of Islam alongside the disciplines of jurisprudence and theology, is represented by institutions such as Egypt's Al-Azhar University and Zaytuna College, with Al-Azhar's current Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb recently defining "Sunni orthodoxy" as being a follower "of any of the four schools of [legal] thought (Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki or Hanbali) and ... [also] of the Sufism of Imam Junayd of Baghdad in doctrines, manners and [spiritual] purification."
- Current Sufi orders include Madariyya Order, Alians, Bektashi Order, Mevlevi Order, Ba 'Alawiyya, Chishti Order, Jerrahi, Naqshbandi, Mujaddidi, Ni'matullāhī, Qadiriyya, Qalandariyya, Sarwari Qadiriyya, Shadhiliyya, Suhrawardiyya, Saifiah (Naqshbandiah), and Uwaisi.
- Turkey and Persia together have been a center for many Sufi lineages and orders. The Bektashi were closely affiliated with the Ottoman Janissaries and are the heart of Turkey's large and mostly liberal Alevi population. They have spread westwards to Cyprus, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and, more recently, to the United States, via Albania. Sufism is popular in such African countries as Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Morocco, and Senegal, where it is seen as a mystical expression of Islam. Sufism is traditional in Morocco, but has seen a growing revival with the renewal of Sufism under contemporary spiritual teachers such as Hamza al Qadiri al Boutchichi. Mbacke suggests that one reason Sufism has taken hold in Senegal is because it can accommodate local beliefs and customs, which tend toward the mystical.

Aims and Objectives of Sufism



- While all Muslims believe that they are on the pathway to Allah and hope to become close to God in Paradise—after death and after the Last Judgment—Sufis also believe that it is possible to draw closer to God and to more fully embrace the divine presence in this life.[citation needed] The chief aim of all Sufis is to seek the pleasure of God by working to restore within themselves the primordial state of fitra.
- To Sufis, the outer law consists of rules pertaining to worship, transactions, marriage, judicial rulings, and criminal law—what is often referred to, broadly, as "qanun". The inner law of Sufism consists of rules about repentance from sin, the purging of contemptible qualities and evil traits of character, and adornment with virtues and good character.

Sufi Teachings



- To the Sufi, it is the transmission of divine light from the teacher's heart to the heart of the student, rather than worldly knowledge, that allows the adept to progress. They further believe that the teacher should attempt inerrantly to follow the Divine Law.
- According to Moojan Momen "one of the most important doctrines of Sufism is the concept of al-Insan al-Kamil ("the Perfect Man"). This doctrine states that there will always exist upon the earth a "Qutb" (Pole or Axis of the Universe)—a man who is the perfect channel of grace from God to man and in a state of wilayah (sanctity, being under the protection of Allah). The concept of the Sufi Qutb is similar to that of the Shi'i Imam. However, this belief puts Sufism in "direct conflict" with Shia Islam, since both the Qutb (who for most Sufi orders is the head of the order) and the Imam fulfill the role of "the purveyor of spiritual guidance and of Allah's grace to mankind". The vow of obedience to the Shaykh or Qutb which is taken by Sufis is considered incompatible with devotion to the Imam".

Sufi Teachings



- As a further example, the prospective adherent of the Mevlevi Order would have been ordered to serve in the kitchens of a hospice for the poor for 1001 days prior to being accepted for spiritual instruction, and a further 1,001 days in solitary retreat as a precondition of completing that instruction.
- Some teachers, especially when addressing more general audiences, or mixed groups of Muslims and non-Muslims, make extensive use of parable, allegory, and metaphor. Although approaches to teaching vary among different Sufi orders, Sufism as a whole is primarily concerned with direct personal experience, and as such has sometimes been compared to other, non-Islamic forms of mysticism (e.g., as in the books of Seyyed Hossein Nasr).
- Many Sufi believe that to reach the highest levels of success in Sufism typically requires that the disciple live with and serve the teacher for a long period of time.[105] An example is the folk story about Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari, who gave his name to the Naqshbandi Order. He is believed to have served his first teacher, Sayyid Muhammad Baba As-Samasi, for 20 years, until as-Samasi died. He is said to then have served several other teachers for lengthy periods of time. He is said to have helped the poorer members of the community for many years, and after this concluded his teacher directed him to care for animals cleaning their wounds, and assisting them.

Mohammed and Sufism



- Devotion to Muhammad is the strongest practice within Sufism. Sufis have historically revered Muhammad as the prime personality of spiritual greatness. The Sufi poet Saadi Shirazi stated, "He who chooses a path contrary to that of the prophet shall never reach the destination. O Saadi, do not think that one can treat that way of purity except in the wake of the chosen one." Rumi attributes his self-control and abstinence from worldly desires as qualities attained by him through the guidance of Muhammad. Rumi states, "I 'sewed' my two eyes shut from [desires for] this world and the next – this I learned from Muhammad."
- Ibn Arabi regards Muhammad as the greatest man and states, "Muhammad's wisdom is uniqueness (fardiya) because he is the most perfect existent creature of this human species. For this reason, the command began with him and was sealed with him. He was a Prophet while Adam was between water and clay, and his elemental structure is the Seal of the Prophets." Attar of Nishapur claimed that he praised Muhammad in such a manner that was not done before by any poet, in his book the Ilahi-nama.
- Fariduddin Attar stated, "Muhammad is the exemplar to both worlds, the guide of the descendants of Adam. He is the sun of creation, the moon of the celestial spheres, the all-seeing eye...The seven heavens and the eight gardens of paradise were created for him; he is both the eye and the light in the light of our eyes."
- Sufis have historically stressed the importance of Muhammad's perfection and his ability to intercede. The persona of Muhammad has historically been and remains an integral and critical aspect of Sufi belief and practice. Bayazid Bastami is recorded to have been so devoted to the sunnah of Muhammad that he refused to eat a watermelon because he could not establish that Muhammad ever ate one. [

Sufis and Mohammed



- According to Ibn Arabi, Islam is the best religion because of Muhammad. Ibn Arabi regards that the first entity that was brought into existence is the reality or essence of Muhammad (al-ḥaqīqa al-Muhammadiyya). Ibn Arabi regards Muhammad as the supreme human being and master of all creatures. Muhammad is therefore the primary role model for human beings to aspire to emulate.
- Ibn Arabi believes that God's attributes and names are manifested in this world and that the most complete and perfect display of these divine attributes and names are seen in Muhammad. Ibn Arabi believes that one may see God in the mirror of Muhammad, meaning that the divine attributes of God are manifested through Muhammad.
- Ibn Arabi maintains that Muhammad is the best proof of God, and by knowing Muhammad one knows God. Ibn Arabi also maintains that Muhammad is the master of all of humanity in both this world and the afterlife. In this view, Islam is the best religion because Muhammad is Islam

Sufism and Islamic Law



- Sufis believe the sharia (exoteric "canon"), tariqa ("order") and haqiqa ("truth") are mutually interdependent. Sufism leads the adept, called salik or "wayfarer", in his sulûk or "road" through different stations (maqāmāt) until he reaches his goal, the perfect tawhid, the existential confession that God is One.
- Ibn Arabi says, "When we see someone in this Community who claims to be able to guide others to God, but is remiss in but one rule of the Sacred Law—even if he manifests miracles that stagger the mind—asserting that his shortcoming is a special dispensation for him, we do not even turn to look at him, for such a person is not a sheikh, nor is he speaking the truth, for no one is entrusted with the secrets of God Most High save one in whom the ordinances of the Sacred Law are preserved. (Jami' karamat al-awliya')".

Sufism and Islamic Law



- It is related, moreover, that Malik, one of the founders of the four schools of Sunni law, was a strong proponent of combining the "inward science" ('ilm al-bātin) of mystical knowledge with the "outward science" of jurisprudence.
- For example, the famous twelfth-century Maliki jurist and judge Qadi Iyad, later venerated as a saint throughout the Iberian Peninsula, narrated a tradition in which a man asked Malik "about something in the inward science", to which Malik replied: "Truly none knows the inward science except those who know the outward science! When he knows the outward science and puts it into practice, God shall open for him the inward science – and that will not take place except by the opening of his heart and its enlightenment." In other similar traditions, it is related that Malik said: "He who practices Sufism (tasawwuf) without learning Sacred Law corrupts his faith (tazandaqa), while he who learns Sacred Law without practicing Sufism corrupts himself (tafassaqa). Only he who combines the two proves true (tahaqqaqa)".
- The Amman Message, a detailed statement issued by 200 leading Islamic scholars in 2005 in Amman, specifically recognized the validity of Sufism as a part of Islam. This was adopted by the Islamic world's political and temporal leaderships at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit at Mecca in December 2005, and by six other international Islamic scholarly assemblies including the International Islamic Fiqh Academy of Jeddah, in July 2006. The definition of Sufism can vary drastically between different traditions (what may be intended is simple tazkiah as opposed to the various manifestations of Sufism around the Islamic world)

Sufism Devotional Practice



- The devotional practices of Sufis vary widely. Prerequisites to practice include rigorous adherence to Islamic norms (ritual prayer in its five prescribed times each day, the fast of Ramadan, and so forth). Additionally, the seeker ought to be firmly grounded in supererogatory practices known from the life of Muhammad (such as the "sunnah prayers"). This is in accordance with the words, attributed to God, of the following, a famous Hadith Qudsi:
 - My servant draws near to Me through nothing I love more than that which I have made obligatory for him. My servant never ceases drawing near to Me through supererogatory works until I love him. Then, when I love him, I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand through which he grasps, and his foot through which he walks.

Sufism Devotional Practice



- It is also necessary for the seeker to have a correct creed (aqidah), and to embrace with certainty its tenets. The seeker must also, of necessity, turn away from sins, love of this world, the love of company and renown, obedience to satanic impulse, and the promptings of the lower self. (The way in which this purification of the heart is achieved is outlined in certain books, but must be prescribed in detail by a Sufi master.) The seeker must also be trained to prevent the corruption of those good deeds which have accrued to his or her credit by overcoming the traps of ostentation, pride, arrogance, envy, and long hopes (meaning the hope for a long life allowing us to mend our ways later, rather than immediately, here and now).
- Sufi practices, while attractive to some, are not a means for gaining knowledge. The traditional scholars of Sufism hold it as absolutely axiomatic that knowledge of God is not a psychological state generated through breath control. Thus, practice of "techniques" is not the cause, but instead the occasion for such knowledge to be obtained (if at all), given proper prerequisites and proper guidance by a master of the way. Furthermore, the emphasis on practices may obscure a far more important fact: The seeker is, in a sense, to become a broken person, stripped of all habits through the practice of (in the words of Imam Al-Ghazali) solitude, silence, sleeplessness, and hunger

Dhikr



- Dhikr is the remembrance of Allah commanded in the Quran for all Muslims through a specific devotional act, such as the repetition of divine names, supplications and aphorisms from hadith literature and the Quran. More generally, dhikr takes a wide range and various layers of meaning.[128] This includes dhikr as any activity in which the Muslim maintains awareness of Allah. To engage in dhikr is to practice consciousness of the Divine Presence and love, or "to seek a state of godwariness". The Quran refers to Muhammad as the very embodiment of dhikr of Allah (65:10–11). Some types of dhikr are prescribed for all Muslims and do not require Sufi initiation or the prescription of a Sufi master because they are deemed to be good for every seeker under every circumstance.
- The dhikr may slightly vary among each order. Some Sufi orders engage in ritualized dhikr ceremonies, or sema. Sema includes various forms of worship such as recitation, singing (the most well known being the Qawwali music of the Indian subcontinent), instrumental music, dance (most famousl

Muraqaba



- The practice of muraqaba can be likened to the practices of meditation attested in many faith communities. While variation exists, one description of the practice within a Naqshbandi lineage reads as follows:
- He is to collect all of his bodily senses in concentration, and to cut himself off from all preoccupation and notions that inflict themselves upon the heart. And thus he is to turn his full consciousness towards God Most High while saying three times: "Ilahî anta maqsûdî wa-ridâka matlûbî—my God, you are my Goal and Your good pleasure is what I seek". Then he brings to his heart the Name of the Essence—Allâh—and as it courses through his heart he remains attentive to its meaning, which is "Essence without likeness". The seeker remains aware that He is Present, Watchful, Encompassing of all, thereby exemplifying the meaning of his saying (may God bless him and grant him peace): "Worship God as though you see Him, for if you do not see Him, He sees you". And likewise the prophetic tradition: "The most favored level of faith is to know that God is witness over you, wherever you may be".

Sufi Whirling



- Sufi whirling (or Sufi spinning) is a form of Sama or physically active meditation which originated among some Sufis, and practised by the Sufi Dervishes of the Mevlevi order.
- It is a customary dance performed within the sema, through which dervishes (also called semazens, from Persian (سماعزن) aim to reach the source of all perfection, or kemal. This is sought through abandoning one's nafs, egos or personal desires, by listening to the music, focusing on God, and spinning one's body in repetitive circles, which has been seen as a symbolic imitation of planets in the Solar System orbiting the Sun

Sufi Whirling



- In the symbolism of the Sema ritual, the semazen's camel's hair hat (sikke) represents the tombstone of the ego; his wide, white skirt (tennure) represents the ego's shroud. By removing his black cloak (hırka), he is spiritually reborn to the truth. At the beginning of the Sema, by holding his arms crosswise, the semazen appears to represent the number one, thus testifying to God's unity.
- While whirling, his arms are open: his right arm is directed to the sky, ready to receive God's beneficence; his left hand, upon which his eyes are fastened, is turned toward the earth. The semazen conveys God's spiritual gift to those who are witnessing the Sema. Revolving from right to left around the heart, the semazen embraces all humanity with love. The human being has been created with love in order to love. Mevlâna Jalâluddîn Rumi says, "All loves are a bridge to Divine love. Yet, those who have not had a taste of it do not know!"

Two Branches of Sufism



- Traditional Islamic scholars have recognized two major branches within the practice of Sufism and use this as one key to differentiating among the approaches of different masters and devotional lineages.
- On the one hand there is the order from the signs to the Signifier (or from the arts to the Artisan). In this branch, the seeker begins by purifying the lower self of every corrupting influence that stands in the way of recognizing all of creation as the work of God, as God's active self-disclosure or theophany. This is the way of Imam Al-Ghazali and of the majority of the Sufi orders.
- On the other hand, there is the order from the Signifier to his signs, from the Artisan to his works. In this branch the seeker experiences divine attraction (jadhba), and is able to enter the order with a glimpse of its endpoint, of direct apprehension of the Divine Presence towards which all spiritual striving is directed. This does not replace the striving to purify the heart, as in the other branch; it simply stems from a different point of entry into the path. This is the way primarily of the masters of the Naqshbandi and Shadhili orders

Third Branch of Sufism



- Contemporary scholars may also recognize a third branch, attributed to the late Ottoman scholar Said Nursi and explicated in his vast Qur'an commentary called the Risale-i Nur.
- This approach entails strict adherence to the way of Muhammad, in the understanding that this wont, or sunnah, proposes a complete devotional spirituality adequate to those without access to a master of the Sufi way

Other Sufi Contributions



- Sufism has contributed significantly to the elaboration of theoretical perspectives in many domains of intellectual endeavor. For instance, the doctrine of "subtle centers" or centers of subtle cognition (known as Lataif-e-sitta) addresses the matter of the awakening of spiritual intuition. In general, these subtle centers or latâ'if are thought of as faculties that are to be purified sequentially in order to bring the seeker's wayfaring to completion. A concise and useful summary of this system from a living exponent of this tradition has been published by Muhammad Emin Er.
- Sufi psychology has influenced many areas of thinking both within and outside of Islam, drawing primarily upon three concepts. Ja'far al-Sadiq (both an imam in the Shia tradition and a respected scholar and link in chains of Sufi transmission in all Islamic sects) held that human beings are dominated by a lower self called the nafs (self, ego, person), a faculty of spiritual intuition called the qalb (heart), and ruh (soul). These interact in various ways, producing the spiritual types of the tyrant (dominated by nafs), the person of faith and moderation (dominated by the spiritual heart), and the person lost in love for God (dominated by the ruh).
- Of note with regard to the spread of Sufi psychology in the West is Robert Frager, a Sufi teacher authorized in the Khalwati Jerrahi order. Frager was a trained psychologist, born in the United States, who converted to Islam in the course of his practice of Sufism and wrote extensively on Sufism and psychology.
- Sufi cosmology and Sufi metaphysics are also noteworthy areas of intellectual accomplishment.

Sufism and Eastern Religions



- Numerous comparisons have been made between Sufism and the mystic components of some Eastern religions.
- The tenth-century Persian polymath Al-Biruni in his book *Tahaqeeq Ma Lilhind Min Makulat Makulat Fi Aliaqbal Am Marzula* (Critical Study of Indian Speech: Rationally Acceptable or Rejected) discusses the similarity of some Sufism concepts with aspects of Hinduism, such as: Atma with ruh, tanasukh with reincarnation, Moksha with Fanafillah, Ittihad with Nirvana: union between Paramatma in Jivatma, Avatar or Incarnation with Hulul, Vedanta with Wahdatul Ujud, Mujahadah with Sadhana.[
- Other scholars have likewise compared the Sufi concept of Wahdat al-Wujūd to Advaita Vedanta, Fanaa to Samadhi, Muraqaba to Dhyana, and tariqa to the Noble Eightfold Path.
- The ninth-century Iranian mystic Bayazid Bostami is alleged to have imported certain concepts from Hinduisim into his version of Sufism under the conceptual umbrella of baqaa, meaning perfection. Ibn al-Arabi and Mansur al-Hallaj both referred to Muhammad as having attained perfection and titled him as Al-Insān al-Kāmil. Inayat Khan believed that the God worshipped by Sufis is not specific to any particular religion or creed, but is the same God worshipped by people of all beliefs. This God is not limited by any name, whether it be Allah, God, Gott, Dieu, Khuda, Brahma, or Bhagwan.

Sufism and Judaism



- There is evidence that Sufism influenced the development of some schools of Jewish philosophy and ethics. In the first writing of this kind, we see *Kitab al-Hidayah ila Fara'id al-Kulub*, *Duties of the Heart*, of Bahya ibn Paquda. This book was translated by Judah ibn Tibbon into Hebrew under the title *Chovot HaLevavot*.
- In the ethical writings of the Sufis Al-Kusajri and Al-Harawi there are sections which treat of the same subjects as those treated in the *Chovot ha-Lebabot* and which bear the same titles: e.g., "Bab al-Tawakkul"; "Bab al-Taubah"; "Bab al-Muḥasabah"; "Bab al-Tawaḍu"; "Bab al-Zuhd". In the ninth gate, Bahya directly quotes sayings of the Sufis, whom he calls *Perushim*. However, the author of the *Chovot HaLevavot* did not go so far as to approve of the asceticism of the Sufis, although he showed a marked predilection for their ethical principles.
- Abraham Maimonides, the son of the Jewish philosopher Maimonides, believed that Sufi practices and doctrines continue the tradition of the biblical prophets.
- Abraham Maimonides' principal work was originally composed in Judeo-Arabic and entitled " כתאב כפאיה " *Kitāb Kifāyah al-'Ābidīn* (*A Comprehensive Guide for the Servants of God*). From the extant surviving portion it is conjectured that the treatise was three times as long as his father's *Guide for the Perplexed*. In the book, he evidences a great appreciation for, and affinity to, Sufism. Followers of his path continued to foster a Jewish-Sufi form of pietism for at least a century, and he is rightly considered the founder of this pietistic school, which was centered in Egypt.
- The followers of this path, which they called *Hasidism* (not to be confused with the [later] Jewish Hasidic movement) or *Sufism* (*Tasawwuf*), practiced spiritual retreats, solitude, fasting and sleep deprivation. The Jewish Sufis maintained their own brotherhood, guided by a religious leader like a Sufi sheikh.