

# Sufism in Islam: An Analytical Study of Rise and Development of Sufism

Name: Nazakit Hussain

## Abstract

Sufism is the means par excellence for attaining Tawhid, as it is the marrow of the bone or the core component of the Islamic revelation. All Muslims believe in unity, which is enshrined in the Shahadah, *la ilaha ill'Allah*. In the broadest extent conceivable, Who knows what this declaration signifies, yet the Sufi has comprehended the intricacies of Tawhid. He is the only one who can see God everywhere. Sufism can also be understood in terms of the three essential religious attitudes described in the Qur'an. These are the attitudes of *Islam*, *Iman* and *Ihsan*. A Hadith of the Prophet (saw) discusses the three attitudes individually as components of *Din* (religion), whereas several other traditions in Sahih Bukhari's Kitab-ul-Iman treat Islam and Iman as separate attitudes with varying religious significance. These are also described as having different levels of intensity and variety. Islam's attitude, which gave rise to the Islamic religion, is one of submission to Allah's will. To be a Muslim, you must meet this minimum requirement. Technically, it denotes a formal embrace of the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet's (Saw) Traditions. In terms of religion, Iman is a more advanced stage than Islam. It denotes a deeper understanding of religion as well as a profound belief in its teachings. The third characteristic, Ihsan, is the pinnacle of spiritual development. At this point, the devotee has such a clear understanding of religious truths that it is almost as if they are seeing them directly. This attribute of Ihsan, which the Sufis later dubbed *Mushahidah* (Direct Seeing), is mentioned by the Prophet in the Tradition.

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## Sources of Sufism

Sufism is a school of Islamic philosophy. Sufism's main source, like that of other branches, is the Qur'an and Hadith, but Western scholars have attempted to trace it back to other sources. Sufism was linked back to Indian Vedantism by Van Kremer and Dozy; it was attributed to Neoplatonism and Christianity by Merse and Nicholson; and Brown sees it as an Aryan reaction to an emotional Semitic religion.

Sufism, Islam's theological philosophy, is defined as "the comprehension of divine truths" in the oldest surviving definition, and Mohammedan mystics refer to themselves as Ahl al- Haqq, or "followers of the Real." Modern scholars, both western and eastern, have embraced the Gnostic interpretation of Sufism. Sufism is translated as Islamic or Muslim Mysticism, and it refers to the endeavour of Muslims to comprehend the secrets of life and the universe. The most distinguished of all western scholars of Sufism, Reynold Nicholson, opens his examination of Sufism by referencing *Ma'ruf's* remarks, which he translates as: "Sufism is the apprehension of Divine Realities." Another famous scholar, Titus Burckhardt, takes it a step further by declaring theory, not just apprehension, as the criterion of true Sufism and the base as well as

the objective of the Sufi *Tariqah*. Sufi scholars have provided a wide range of definitions of Sufism and the Sufi. These differences, however, arose only from the fact that each master was speaking from his own spiritual station to the station and level of understanding of his listeners. These disparities, on the other hand, resulted solely from the fact that each master was speaking to his listeners from his unique spiritual station and level of awareness. As a result, each definition reveals a distinct facet of Sufism, each one true in its own right, and in order to comprehend Sufism as a whole, one must evaluate as many definitions as possible.

### Early Development of Islam

Although some have claimed that the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) possessed no mystic qualities, his early religious activities, as described in the Qur'an, contradict this claim. It is, in essence, the interiorization of the content of the Qur'anic revelation in order to realise the Prophet Muhammad's spiritual revelation (Corbin, 1933, p.187). Duncan B. Macdonald maintains that "Muhammad was a sufi when on his way to be a prophet" (Duncan, 1903, p.227). It also represents the Prophet's ambitions and religious practises, as well as those of his companions and successors, who chose the hard ascetic life over the softer life of the world at a time when most of his contemporaries did not. It used to build a precise spiritual ascetic technique, whose stages, progression, and goals necessitate the creation of an entire metaphysical system known as gnosis. The early figures, almost without exception, appear to be absolutely ascetic. According to Ibn Khaldun:

The sufis came to represent asceticism, retirement from the world and devotion to divine worship. Then, they developed a particular kind of perception which comes about through ecstatic experience (Franz, 1958, p.76).

In his work, Al-Qushayri describes them as follows: "those who were most deeply concerned with matters of religion, objected to all indulgence which could entangle the soul and avoided luxury and ostention," and "whose souls were set on God, and who guarded their heart from the disasters of heedlessness" (Brown, 1902, p.298). At the period, ascetics debated problems such as the merits of celibacy, poverty, and retreat, all of which were encapsulated in the term of "asceticism" (*zuhd*). Fear of God, heedlessness, temptation, sin, and other things characterised their lives. Apart from that, some of them yearned for paradise, while others followed the theology of God's love.

Sufism, in the sense of "mysticism" and "quietism," developed organically from the ascetic tendencies that emerged within Islam throughout the Umayyad period. To comprehend Sufism, we must first grasp mysticism. The Greek root *myein*, which means "to close the eyes," is also the root of "mystery," implying that the mystic's purpose is beyond the mind or normal means. Mysticism is, at its core, a devotion to the Absolute, often known as Truth, Love, or God. The classic definition of Sufism, according to Sarraj, is: "The Sufis are people who prefer God to everything and God prefers them to everything else" (James Fadiman, 2004). "There is no Sufism without Islam because Sufism is the spirituality or Mysticism of the religion of Islam" (Stoddart, 1998). "It is said that science deals with the universe outside us, and spirituality with the universe inside us" (Sopsy, 1976).

As a result, Sufism might be defined as a movement aimed at making humans better Muslims. It is a call to them to internalise the Islamic teachings that they have just theoretically or intellectually embraced as part of their legacy. Sufis give up worldly pleasures, cheap sensations, materialism, and corruptions, but they do not abandon worldly living entirely. He works for himself and is never a parasite or a threat to society. He follows the Shari'at, or Islamic canon law, and the *Tariqat*, or Spiritual Path, to achieve *Abudiat*, or Unity with Allah, his beloved.

### **Nature and Purpose of Sufism**

Sufism's purpose is to become a servant of God, not to have intuitive understanding of reality. There is no step greater than *abadiyat* (servanthood), and there is no truth higher than the *Shariah*. Sufi *Tariqah's* sole purpose is to instil faith in the *Shari'ah's* ideas and to make the *Shari'ah's* laws easier to follow. The objective of *walayat* is to produce conviction through the experience of *fana* and *baqa*. Sufism does not end with visions and auditions; they are only shadows, and God transcends them completely. There are two types of *Walis*: those who remain engaged in God and those who return to the world. The latter is better than the former.

### **Sufi Philosophy**

Reality, according to Sufi philosophy, is the universal desire, real knowledge, eternal light, and sublime beauty, whose nature is self-manifestation, and reflected in the universe's mirror. In comparison to reality, the world is merely an illusion, or non-reality, or not-being. Some Sufis, as well as Indian schools of philosophy, believed in the unity of the universe. Multiplicity was a manner of unification to them. The phenomenal world is the one-outer real's expression. The substance of the Real is beyond human comprehension. It is a material with two accidents, one as creator and the other as creature; one visible and the other unseen, in terms of its attributes. It is attributeless, nameless, inexplicable, and incomprehensible in its essence, but names and attributes are formed when it is veiled with *Avidya* or descends from its absoluteness. The phenomenal world is the aggregate of these names and attributes, which depicts reality as externality. The world, according to the dvaitist Sufi, does not exist as a mere illusion or ignorance, but rather as the self-revelation or other self of reality. Man is a microcosm in whom Divine traits are exhibited in their most rudimentary form. God is eternal beauty, and beauty is defined by self-expression and the desire to be loved. As a result, the Sufis build their philosophy on the principles of love, preferring the Course of Love or Indian *Bhakti* to other paths to God. They believe that love is the source of all religions, as well as the cause of creation and continuation. God is unknowable, but he can be compared to anything concrete. The utmost beauty is reflected in phenomenal diversity. In truth, the attributes are identical to his, yet they are separate in our minds. *Jamal* is the name given to Him in His immaculate beauty, and *Husn* is the name given to Him in His spectacular *Husn*.

Man has three natures: sensuous, which corresponds to the Indian *Tamas*; intellectual, which is similar to the Indian *Rajas*; and spiritual, which is similar to the Indian *Sat*. He becomes virtuous or wicked depending on which of the three attributes he possesses. His intellect must be gradually trained, which

necessitates the use of a guide. The most fundamental obligation of a Sufi is to choose and follow a spiritual guide. A lousy or inept guide could lead him to evil or leave him confused and bewildered. He must use all of his intelligence and human effort to locate the right guide, and once he has done so, he must follow his instructions.

In all seriousness, the essence of Sufi thought is that life is full of sufferings, and that the only way to be free of them is to give up earthly possessions. To attain renunciation, several theories were proposed at various eras. The emphasis in the early period was on beliefs such as man's original habitation is with God, that the world is hostile to God, and that God despises the world. Denial of will to man became popular around the middle of the ninth century AD. The practitioner's goal was to conform his character to God's plan, allowing him to reconcile with life's enemies and calamities. Man was to unite his will with God's. The penetration of foreign philosophies began in the ninth century, and the movement fell victim to religious careerists. The goal of life, according to Abu Yazid, is to merge one's essence with that of God. Now it was the man's religious duty to adore God in order to successfully exercise detachment from the world of pain. Though the difficulties of life drove some persons to the mystic life, from the ninth century onwards, the miseries were no longer the primary motivating reason. The Sufis primarily recognised that God's love is the end of man. God and his existence, according to Ibn Arabi, are one. The seeming separation, he claims, is due to ignorance. As a result, their ideas about knowledge, God, self, and the world are quite diverse. Each Sufi sect, on the other hand, professed its own system and beliefs to be the actual knowledge, and stated that realising this knowledge leads to the goal.

### Conclusion

Sufism is the esoteric and spiritual dimension of Islam, representing the world's biggest religion's innermost characteristics. *Iman* (Faith) is the foundation and beginning of Sufism (*Tasawwuf*), which has six important beliefs and principles, including God's existence and unity, angels, prophets, the day of resurrection, good and evil, and God's predestination. Sufism in Islam has its roots in the life and personality of Islam's Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W. ), who serves as a role model for all those Mystics, Spiritualists, Sufis, Darwishs, Faqirs, Rishis, and Pirs who have dedicated their lives to learning about '*haqiqat* and '*tariqat* in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah in order to achieve the real goal of Islam. Sufism is not a separate or distinct religion from Islam. In addition, mystic spirituality is also dependent on the five basic and fundamental pillars of Islam, namely, the Kalma (*Shahadat*), Prayer (*Salat*), Saum (Fasting during Ramadan), *Zakat* (obligatory gift to the poor), and finally, Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) if the person can afford it.

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