
What is Sufism

Its origins

The word 'Sufi' is derived from the Arabic word "soof", meaning wool. This is because of the Sufi habit of wearing woollen coats, as part of their initiation into the Sufi order. Sufism crept into the lands of the Muslims from other religions, such as Hinduism and Christian monasticism. The Tabi'i, Muhammad bin Sireen said: "There are some people that prefer to wear wool claiming that they resemble the Messiah, son of Maryam. However, the guidance of our Prophet (sa) is more beloved to us!" (from Ibn Taymiyyah Al Fataawa 11/7). This indicates that Sufism has a connection to the religion of the Christians. Dr. Saabir Tu'aimah said: "It appears that it came about due to the influence of Christian monasticism in which the monks would wear woollen garments and reside in their monasteries" (As-Sufiyyah: Mu'taqidan wa Maslakan, pg. 17)

As an organised movement, Sufism arose among certain Muslims as a reaction against the worldliness of the early Umayyad period (661-750). In the initial period of Sufism, Sufis were characterised by their particular attachment to thikr and asceticism. Yet even at this very early stage of Sufism, before their involvement in innovated rituals and structured orders, the scholars warned the masses of the extremity of Sufi practices. Imam Al-Shafi' had the opinion that "If a person exercised Sufism at the beginning of the day, he doesn't come at Dhuhur except as an idiot". Imam Malik and Ahmad bin Hanbal also shared similar ideas on this new movement.

Its development

Although it began as a move towards excessive Ibaadah, such practices were doomed to lead to corruption, since they were not based upon the Quran and Sunnah. The establishment of Dar al-Hikmah by the Khalifah Ma'moon, where he invited the scholars of the Romans and Greeks to meet with the Muslims and 'discuss' their respective positions, provided the perfect breeding ground for the synthesis of Islam and pagan theology. Furthermore the translation of Greek philosophical works into Arabic during the third Islamic century resulted in Greek pantheism becoming an integral part of Sufi doctrine.

During the third century, new concepts and practices were introduced. Some became interested in monasticism (living like monks), while others engaged in deliberate poverty, hunger, sleeplessness, seclusion, dancing and innovated forms of thikr. Many Sufis abandoned marriage and the seeking of means of sustenance. Others disassociated themselves from hadith and its knowledge. The sufi masters would claim to possess "special inward knowledge" that takes the person directly to Allah. They referred to this state as Al-'Ilm Al-Baatin (special "inward" knowledge).

By the end of the third century, Sufism adopted new heretical beliefs. These included Hulool (Allah dwelling in His creation) and Ittihaad (union between Allah and the created). Terminologies that were unknown and contradictory to the Shari'ah were introduced. These included: Fanaa' (annihilation of the existence of anything except Allah- i.e. everything you see is Allah), Kashf (perception and witnessing all of the realities of existence as well as those of the unseen), Wajd (ecstasy) and Samaa' (mystic singing and dancing as a means of inspiration).

During the sixth century, a group of mystic Sufis claimed to be descendants of the Prophet (sa) and each one of them established a specific Sufi order with special followers. Ar-Rifaa'i appeared in Iraq, Al-Badawi and Ash-Shaathili in Egypt. These orders branched into other orders. Today the various Sufi orders are infested with beliefs of kufr and shirk, as well as innovated forms of worship. Their beliefs include:

Concept of validity of all religions

The Sufi doctrine of all religions being acceptable before Allah is derived from the mystical beliefs of other religions, and not Islam, for Allah says: "**Truly, the religion in the Sight of Allah is Islam...**" [2: 19]. However the Sufis claim: "Allah does not distinguish between a disbeliever or a hypocrite or between a saint and a Prophet" (The Naqshbandi Way, pp 12-16). Ibn Arabi leaves no doubt as to his conviction in the unity of all religions: "Beware of restricting yourself to one particular religion and disbelieving in everything else, so that great good would be missed by you, indeed you would miss attainment of knowledge of the affair in the form he is following. Rather be ready to accept all forms of belief (al-Fusoos, p.191).

The Aqeedah of Wahdatul Wajood

This belief entails that there is only one existence and that is Allah's existence. Allah is in everything that exists e.g. in trees, stones, animals and humans and hence the creation is a physical manifestation of Allah. This belief is very similar to the Hindi concept of Moksha. However Allah is completely distinct from His Creation. He neither resembles His Creation, nor is He enclosed by it. Sufis however, with their deviant doctrine of Wahdat ul Wujood, believe contrary to this. (See the leaflet: 'Where is Allah'). This belief, which Imaam Abu Hanifa said was kufr (see Sharh Aqeedah At-Tahawiyah of Ibn Abi Al-Izz Al-Hanafi) is held by almost all contemporary sufis. For example the author of Bahishti Zewar said that the highest form of tawheed is to say "nothing exists except Allah" (Shamaaim-e-Imdadiyah, page 42).

Al-Aqtaab

Al-Aqtaab is the plural form of qutb, which means axis or pivot and it is the highest station in the Sufi hierarchy of saints. Sufis believe that the universe has a master pivot, which they call al-Qutb, which is to the universe as the soul is to the body. When the qutb departs, the universe can no longer exist. The secret of the power of the qutb is kept by the one who keeps the greatest name of Allah. The saint reaches the state of "qutbhood" by acquiring the perfection of knowledge which includes witnessing the Divine essence. He who does this is the head of the Sufi leaders of his generation. He is called al-Ghowth, or "the aid", and is alleged to be endowed with holiness and miraculous powers. The identity of al-Ghowth is known only to his agents, unless he chooses to reveal himself. At his death, Sufis believe that his place will be filled with another, saint who becomes the new al-Ghowth.

However such a belief has no basis whatsoever from the Qur'an or the Sunnah, rather it is only found in the literature of the Baatini, or clandestine religions. Secondly if the universe is sustained by the qutb, then what is left for Allah to sustain? And what would be the meaning of the verse: "Allah: there is no true god but He, the Ever Living, the Sustaining."(2.255)

The Prophet Muhammad (sa)

They believe that the Prophet (sa) is the first created being and from him originated rest of creation. Many Sufis claim that the light of Muhammad (sa) is the first being, and for his sake Allah has created the universe. In addition, they claim that the Prophet (sa) is the essence of all knowledge and hence he (sa) knows the unseen and that nothing escapes his knowledge in the heavens and on the earth. Such belief is in direct contradiction to the verse: "**And with Him are the keys of the Ghaib, none knows them but He**" ('Araaf 6:59). They also call upon the Prophet (sa) seeking his aid and help.

Position of the Sheikh and Wali

Sufism involves a strange relationship between the shaikh- the head of the Sufi tareeqah and the mureed, extending throughout their lifetime and continuing after their death. The mureed takes an oath of lifetime loyalty and swears obedience to the shaikh, who in turn promises to solve the mureed's problems and deliver him from every dilemma whenever he calls on his shaikh for help. The mureed must not argue with his shaikh nor ask from him any proof for what he orders him to do. The shaikh promises to intercede for him with Allah so that he may be admitted to Jannah. The extent of the shaikh's hold over the mureed is therefore almost total and it is a relationship based upon deception and manipulation. The unfortunate mureed is fooled into believing that his Shaikh will offer him security in the grave as well as in the Hereafter. The mureed combines the feelings of love, submission and awe in his heart for his Shaikh; such feelings are in fact the essence of worship. In addition, the mureed will call upon his Shaikh after the latter's death. Again this is blatant shirk as Allah said: "**Then do not call anyone besides Allah.**" [72 18]