

Sufism

General traditional view

"Sufism, or *Taṣawwuf*^[1] (Arabic: التَّصَوُّف), variously defined as "Islamic mysticism",^[2] "the inward dimension of Islam"^{[3][4]} or "the phenomenon of mysticism within Islam",^{[5][6]} is mysticism in Islam, "characterized ... [by particular] values, ritual practices, doctrines and institutions"^[7] which began very early in Islamic history^[5] and represents "the main manifestation and the most important and central crystallization of" mystical practice in Islam.^{[8][9]} Practitioners of Sufism have been referred to as "Sufis" (from *ṣūfīyy* / *صُوفِيّ*).^[5]

Historically, Sufis have often belonged to different *turuq* or "orders" – congregations formed around a grand master referred to as a *wali* who traces a direct *chain of successive teachers* back to the Islamic prophet, Muhammad.^[10] These orders meet for spiritual sessions (*majalis*) in meeting places known as *zawiyas*, *khanqahs* or *tekke*.^[11] 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."^[12] Sufis regard Muhammad as *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, the primary perfect man who exemplifies the morality of God,^[13] and see him as their leader and prime spiritual guide." (Source Wikipedia)

Sufism requires reformulation

"Sufism is a way of life in which a deeper identity is discovered and lived. This deeper identity, beyond the already known personality, is in harmony with all that exists. This deeper identity, or essential self, has abilities of awareness, action, creativity and love that are far beyond the abilities of the superficial personality. Eventually it is understood that these abilities belong to a greater life and being which we individualize in our own unique way while never being separate from it.

Sufism is less a doctrine or a belief system than an experience and way of life. It is a tradition of enlightenment that carries the essential truth forward through time. Tradition, however, must be conceived in a vital and dynamic sense. Its expression must not remain limited to the religious and cultural forms of the past. The truth of Sufism requires reformulation and fresh expression in every age.

Reformulation does not mean that Sufism will compromise its challenge to a stubbornly materialistic society. It is and will remain a critic of "worldliness" — by which it is meant everything that causes us to be forgetful of the Divine reality. It is and must be a way out of the labyrinth of a secular, commercial culture. Most importantly, however, it is an invitation to meaningfulness and well-being." (Source *Threshold Society*)

Recent history

"Current Sufi orders include *Ba 'Alawiyya*, *Chishti*, *Khalwati*, *Naqshbandi*, *Nimatullahi*, *Oveyssi*, *Qadria Noshahia*, *Qadiriya Boutshishia*, *Qadiriyyah*, *Qalandariyya*, *Sarwari Qadiri*, *Shadhliyya* and *Suhrwardiyya*.^[14]

Sufism is popular in such African countries as *Morocco* and *Senegal*, where it is seen as a mystical expression of Islam.^[15] Sufism is traditional in Morocco but has seen a growing revival with the renewal of Sufism around contemporary spiritual teachers such as *Sidi Hamza al Qadiri al Boutshishi*. 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.^[16]

Sufism suffered setbacks in North Africa during the colonial period; the life of the Algerian Sufi master Emir *Abd al-Qadir* is instructive in this regard.^{<17>} Notable as well are the lives of *Amadou Bamba* and *Haji Umar Tall* in sub-Saharan Africa, and *Sheikh Mansur Ushurma* and *Imam Shamil* in the Caucasus region.

In the 20th century some more modernist Muslims have called Sufism a superstitious religion that holds back Islamic achievement in the fields of science and technology.^[18]

Sufism in the West

A number of western *converts to Islam* have also embraced Sufism, sometimes resulting in considerable *syncretism* or generic spiritualism detached from Islam, as in the case of "*Universal Sufism*" or the writings of *René Guénon* or *G. I. Gurdjieff* and *JJ. Bennett*.

Other Sufi teachers who were active in the West include *Bawa Muhaiyaddeen*, *Inayat Khan*, *Nazim Al-Haqqani*, *Javad Nurbakhsh*, *Bulent Rauf*, *Irina Tweedie*, *Idries Shah* and *Muzaffer Ozak*." (Edited Source Wikipedia)

References

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2. Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2005; first imp. 1983, second imp. 1999), p.15
3. Titus Burckhardt, *Art of Islam: Language and Meaning* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2009), p. 223
4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. William C. Chittick (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2007), p. 74
5. Massington, L., Radtke, B., Chittick, W. C., Jong, F. de, Lewisohn, L., Zarccone, Th., Ernst, C., Aubin, Françoise and J.O. Hunwick, "Taawwuf", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs.
6. Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2005; first imp. 1983, second imp. 1999), p.12: "Mystics on the other hand-and Sufism is a kind of mysticism-are by definition concerned above all with 'the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven'".
7. Knysh, Alexander D., "ufism and the Qur'an", in: *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, General Editor: Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Georgetown University, Washington DC.
8. Compare: *Nasr, Seyyed Hossein* (2007). *Chittick, William C. (ed.). The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr. The perennial philosophy series. Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, Inc. p. 74. ISBN 9781933316383*. Retrieved 2017-06-24. *Sufism is the esoteric or inward dimension of Islam [...] Islamic esotericism is, however [...] not exhausted by Sufism [...] but the main manifestation and the most important and central crystallization of Islamic esotericism is to be found in Sufism.*
9. *Shah, Idries* (1964–2014). *The Sufis. ISF Publishing. p. 30. ISBN 978-1784790035*. According to Idries Shah, Sufism is as old as Adam and is the essence of all religions, monotheistic or not. See *Perennial philosophy*
10. Editors, *The* (2014-02-04). "*tariqa | Islam*". *Britannica.com*. Retrieved 29 May 2015.
11. *Glassé 2008*, p. 499.
12. *Bin Jamil Zeno, Muhammad* (1996). *The Pillars of Islam & Iman. Darussalam. pp. 19–. ISBN 978-9960-897-12-7*.
13. *Fitzpatrick & Walker 2014*, p. 446.
14. *The Jamaat Tableegh and the Deobandis* by Sajid Abdul Kayum, Chapter 1: Overview and Background.
15. "Sufism and Religious Brotherhoods in Senegal," Babou, Cheikh Anta, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, v. 40 no1 (2007) p. 184-6
16. *Sufism and Religious Brotherhoods in Senegal*, Khadim Mbacke, translated from the French by Eric Ross and edited by John Hunwick. Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener, 2005.
17. See in particular the biographical introduction to *Michel Chodkiewicz, The Spiritual Writings of Amir Abd Al-Kader. ISBN 978-0-7914-2446-9*.
18. [From the article on Sufism in Oxford Islamic Studies Online](#)