

Journal of Peace, Development and Communication



Volume 06, Issue 03, September 2022
 pISSN: 2663-7898, eISSN: 2663-7901
 Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V06-I03-15>
 Homepage: <https://pdfpk.net/pdf/>
 Email: se.jpdc@pdfpk.net

Article:	Understanding Sufism: A Multi-Dimensional Phenomenon
Author(s):	Hassan Murtaza Ph.D. Scholar, Institute of Social Sciences, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan
	Dr. Omer Farooq Zain Professor, Chairman and HOD, Department of International Relations, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan
	M.Shahzad Fareed Associate Professor Federal Govt. Public Sector Organization
	Asima Sarwat Associate Professor Federal Govt. Public Sector Organization
Published:	30 th September 2022
Publisher Information:	Journal of Peace, Development and Communication (JPDC)
To Cite this Article:	Murtaza, H., Zain, O. F., Fareed, M. S., & Sarwat, A. S. (2022). Understanding Sufism: A Multi-Dimensional Phenomenon. <i>Journal of Peace, Development and Communication</i> , 06(03), 195–203. https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V06-I03-15
Authors Details:	Hassan Murtaza is a Ph.D. Scholar at Institute of Social Sciences, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan Corresponding Author's Email: hmlabar@gmail.com
	Dr. Omer Farooq Zain is serving as a Professor, Chairman and HOD at Department of International Relations, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan
	M.Shahzad Fareed is serving as an Associate Professor at Federal Govt. Public Sector Organization
	Asima Sarwat is serving as an Associate Professor at Federal Govt. Public Sector Organization

ABSTRACT

This article is about Muslim Sufism which is practical form of Islam. Sufism is always under severe attack. It is reality that illiteracy has shadowed the real face of Islam and started some un-Islamic rituals which supported the stance of hard liners. In this article with the help of Quranic verses and sayings of Prophet ﷺ, I have tried to prove that Sufism is not out of Islam. When worldly minded people over took the control of Muslim world, some high ranked pious people appeared on the scene to purify the religion. This article gives a brief history and sayings of notable Muslim scholars about Sufism. I also try to highlight the different dimensions of Sufism. It is an important part of Islam and the Muslim society is well aware of its presence in their religion. The references from the Holy Book show that this term is in favour of Islam and can't go against the religion. The sayings of Holy Prophet ﷺ declare ways towards Allah Almighty is the real way. Muslim Sufis always preached Islam and obeyed the sayings and deeds of the Messenger of Allah.

Keywords: Definitions, Etymology, History, methodology, Origin, Sufism

Introduction

The word Sufism is so fascinating and attractive that I cannot resist diving into its fathomless depths to explore its true essence. Sufism has faced a great deal of criticism from fundamentalist community of Muslims on the basis of their own conventions having no rational reason. This article tries to prove Sufism as a part of Islam. Sufis are always there in all the ages of Islam and are given due importance and respect by the Muslim communities. Ummayyad's era is the first age where Sufi tendencies emerged (Nasr, 2000). Initials of Mysticism are traced back to the Greeks where mystics believed that obscurity stands on the philosophy of 'closed eyes' and spiritual objectives cannot be deduced through intellectual or any ordinary means. Fundamentally, spirituality means the love of Allah Almighty who possesses real supremacy (Shimmel, 1975). Sufis are believed to be those who "prefer Allah to everything and Allah prefers them to all in response" (Arberry, 1992). This definition is deduced from a verse of Sura Bayyana in Quran that states "Allah agrees with them and they agree with Allah (Quran, 98:8). Sufism may be compared to the heart of Islam and have the same importance as it has in a human body.

Spirituality and Islam are inseparable as every spiritual philosophy finds its origin in the final Divine religion of Islam. Mysticism is contrary to Science as it explores the inner world of human beings while science deals with outer world. Hence, it can be safely assumed that Sufism is a movement of cultivating goodness in human beings and making them the best creatures on earth (ibid, p. 44). The basic purpose of this movement is to grant practical observational skills to common people and enlighten them to accept all the obligations of Islam. A Sufi lives normal life like other human beings earning his livelihood but gives up despicable feeling, worldly relaxations, dishonesty, lust and greed. He does not depend on others for his expenses but earns his own livelihood and support his family as well. He declares Islam as a true and right way of life and acts on it in a practical way. He wants to gain unity and harmony with the real one creator and considers spirituality as the only way to achieve this goal (James, Robert, 2004).

Etymology of word Sufi:

There are different views about the etymology of word Sufi. Some says that Sufi is derived from the word "suf" which means wool, early Sufis wore the clothes made by wool and they were called Sufis. Some says that a Sufi is free from all worldly absurdities and this clarity made him Sufi. It was a movement which started from the early days of Islam. It was an attempt to purify the true religion from the worldly absurdities. Imam-Al-Qushairi said, "The companions of the Rasool Allah ﷺ were the luckiest people and the offspring after the departure of Holy Prophet ﷺ, acted like true followers and spent their days only in reciting Holy Quran and earned good name in Muslim society. After this golden era of Islam, some great pious people appear on the scene who earned the good name due to their piety. In this time a new class of pious people appeared on the horizon of Islam who was named Sufis. By the end of 200 A.H. the word Sufi was very common in Islamic society. (Lings, Martin, 2011).

Origin of Sufism

The origin of Sufism came from Quran, first it meant to make Islam internal and personal. This thing comes after the continuous reading the Holy Book of Islam, meditating and self experience. Sufism is to copy the life and works of Rasool ﷺ to get closer to Allah Almighty. In the early days of Islam, the conquest of Christian domains resulted many of them

to accept Islam. The religious figures like priests and monks who converted to Islam easily became Sufis and started Sufi practices. They were highly mystical and spiritual practitioners and have involved in these practices practically. These practices were introduced in written form from some highly spiritual personalities like Owais Qarni, Hassan Basri and Sayyed Ibn Al- Muss'ib. These are considered the first generation of Sufis. Harith Al- Muhasbi wrote about moral psychology for the first time. Very famous Sufi woman Rabia Basri expressed his love to Allah Almighty through her poetry. Ba Yazid Bustami, a great Sufi Saint is known as early theorists of Sufism (Stoddart, William and Nicholson, 1998).

Definitions of Sufism

Sufism is the philosophy of Islam and is described as 'The trepidation of heavenly realities'. Muslim Saints felt happy to be called themselves as *Ahl-Haq* means the group of the genuine. Sufism is a popular tendency which is popular in Asia and Europe similarly. The western renowned writer Nicholson introduced Sufism with these words that Sufism is the anxiety of Heavenly realities. Another popular scholar, Titus Burckhardt describes Sufism as a principle which is the standard of real Sufism, the foundation as well as the purpose of the Mystic way (Sopsy, 1976).

Some prominent Sufi Masters described Sufism and Sufis in their own way but one thing is similar and that is everyone has their own connection with Allah Pak. They explained their stance according to their will and understanding. To understand true Sufism, we have to study different definitions regarding to this topic.

- Abul Husain Nuri said, "Rejection of all the segment of the carnal spirit." Abu-Sahal-Saluki declares Sufism, "Obtaining from objections."
- Junaid of Baghdad said, "The cleansing of the heart from associating with produced beings, disconnection from expected uniqueness, and control of human behavior"(Faruqi,1984).
- Abu Ali said, "Sufism is a reward of Allah which He blessed to His men to free them from worldly things." (Tazkaratul-Aolya)
- Hazrat Sari Saqti said, " Sufism refers three attributes: Sufi's light of Gnosis never quenches the candle of his piousness; he does not speak of mysterious knowledge which challenges the unusual meaning of the Holy Quran and customs; and he never unveil the secrets of people through his unbelievable deeds."(Begg,1972)
- Abul-Hussain Nuri said, "Sufism is the name of virtue and ethical behavior and is not any science and proper performance."(Nur Bakhsh and Jawad,1981)
- Abu-Muhammad Murta'ish said, "Sufism is a gorgeousness of character and is gloom, obstacle and suppression."(Nafahat al-ons)
- Abu Muhammad Jorayri said, "Sufism is state of meditation and to maintain good manners to adopt a religious path. It is to imagine all dignified qualities and to leave all dispositions at the back." (al-Loma')

Sufism and Quran;

Some people says that Sufism is anti-Islam but they ignored many things from the base of Islam. Now I will try to give some references from Holy Quran about Sufism which is also known as *Hikmain* Arabic and covers the words of philosophy and wisdom equally (Browne, Edward,1997). Many Quranic verses have approved the authenticity of Mysticism in Islam in a comprehensive way. Allah is the light for everything of this world whose light is as placed

in as a lamp; this lamp is transparent as a glass and sparkling like a kindling star on a blessed tree and bright green light which is neither to East nor to West, Whose oil well-night would shine, without any touch of any fire, light upon lights, Allah guides to His light whom He will. And Allah strikes resemblances for man, and Allah knows everything (Quran 24:35). These lines of Divine book inspired many Muslims Gnostics like Mulla Sadra and Sheikh-ul-Ishraq and they have worked on the topic of light. In Surah Shams Allah declares success for purified people.

Translation: “He who purifies succeeds”(Quran 91:9). Here purify means free from worldly absurdities. In Surah Abbasa Allah says Translation: “Yet for all you don’t know,[O Muhammad ﷺ], he might have grown in purity,” (Quran 80:3).

All these verses tell only one thing that purity of heart is essential for eternal success on the Day of Judgment and the people of such heart are called Sufis. In Muslim society, Sufism can be understood in the light of Islamic perspective under Quranic order. These perspective can be divided into three parts which are Islam, Iman and Ihsan. Allah speaks to His prophet in Quran, “When my servants ask you about Me, I am very close to them without any doubt. When they called Me, I listen to the prayers of every person.” (Al-Baqrah-186)

Allah tells about his servants in Surah Maidah, “Shortly Allah will send people who will love Him and He will love them.” (Al-Maidah-54)

In Surah Kahf Allah tells about the meeting of a pious people in these words, “So, they meet one of My men who was blessed with My mercy and he was taught with the knowledge of Divine presence.” (Kahf-65)

Sufism and Hadith:

A saying of Holy Prophet ﷺ describes the above three aspects one by one. First we discuss Islam under the light of Kitabul Iman of Sahih Bukhari who has declared Islam and Iman as discrete attitude differing in religious implication. These aspects also have different levels of concentration and varieties in themselves. Islam is a religion of obedience and its meanings are total surrender to the force of Allah Almighty and this surrender is the least qualification of being a Muslim. Actually, it is an acceptance of the teachings of Holy Quran and the customs of The Rasool of Allah ﷺ. Iman is a next step in Islam and is more advanced the first step of Islam. It designates an additional access into the spirit of belief and a stiff reliance in its wisdom. Ihsan is the last and the most important step in Islam. It is the highest degree of any believer to practice Ihsan in religious innovation. In this condition follower realized the religious truth which amounts approximately to their straight visualization. Ihsan was renamed with direct observing by Sufis was explained by Prophet ﷺ himself. He ﷺ said, “Ihsan is to worship Allah as you are seeing Him but if you can’t see Him, He however sees you.” According to above three steps of religiosity, Sufism may be explained as the religious advancement of a believer from the basic stage of Islam to the last stage of Ihsan (Nicholson, Reynold, 1963).

Macdonald wrote about Sufism in his book “The Religious Attitude” that from the early days in Muslim religious building which was repelled by rational calculation and traditional teachings. It suggested the centre of religion and its tools are found in heart and soul. With the passage of time this idea of Islam permeated in different designs and concepts. Islam got the possession of Mystical belief more than Christianity. We can say that Sufism is the blend of quietism and spirituality and its development can be traced in reign of Umayyads Caliphs. The

Prophet of Allah ﷺ in his sayings stressed upon the purity of hearts for religion and religious practices. Ibn Abbas reported, once the Rasoolﷺ addressed to his companions of al-Suffah and said, “Be glad, O people of Suffah! Whosoever of my people remains in the state you are in, satisfied with it, will be among my companions on the Day of Restoration. “Another occasion The Prophet of Allah ﷺ said, “My cistern spans the distance between Aden and Amman. Its liquid is sweeter than honey and whiter than milk. The person who takes a single draught of it will never feel thirsty. The poor emigrants will arrive here at first. We asked, “O Rasool Allah ﷺ, Who are they?” He said, “Those of dirty and dusty raiment, uncombed hair, for whom gates are not opened and those are not indulged in marriage, they fulfill their duties and do not get their due. Then people will come to say, ‘I am sp and so, son of so and so’, and I will say, ‘You have distorted matters after me.’”(Ansari, 2004)

Imran bin Hussain reported that Rasol Allahﷺ pulled my turban and said, “O Imran! Verily Allah loves spending and hates miserliness, so eat, feed and do not store it greedily lest its possession become hard for you. And remember Allah loves incisive vision at the arrival of questionable matters and perfected mind at the decline of lusts. He loves charity even if through some dates, and loves bravery even killing a serpent.”(Nur Bakhsh, Jawad, op.cit.p. 16)

Hazrat Anas reported that Holy Prophet said, “Faith is not through wishes and adornment. Rather it is that which settles in heart and is approved by action. Hazrat Aisha reported that Holy Prophet said, “If you want to keep close to me, and then let the terms of a rider be enough to you and be careful of mingling with the rich.” Hazrat Ibn Umar reported that Rasoolﷺ said, “O son of Adam, what you have is sufficient to you, but if you desire more it corrupts you. You will never satisfied lot of things if you don’t contented on little things. If you have a safe life, property in the morning and you have enough food to spend the day then you must forget the worldly leisure.” (Khan, Sharif and Saleem, 1994). Hazrat Harith reported that Rasool of Allah ﷺ once passed by me and asked, “How are you today?” He answered, “I woke up as true believer. “Rasoolﷺ warned him and asked the reality about his words. He answered, “I have become reluctant to this world. I observe the people of paradise and people of hell.” Prophet said, O Harith, you have known so hold on it.” In another saying is reported as, “The person who is famous as good but in reality he is not good must be punished at the day of Judgement.” Abu Saeed Khudri reported that Rasool Allahﷺ said, “O Allah provide me with life in destitution, give me death as needy, and mingle me with crowds of needy. “ Ibn Umar said that Rasoolﷺ said, “In fact, concealing adversity is one of the resources of faithfulness.”(NurBakhsh and Jawad. Op, cit., pp 16-33)

Sufism and Companions of Holy Prophetﷺ

Hazrat Abu Bakr said that more knowledge creates more fear to Allah. Knowledge leads to useful actions in religion and without knowledge any action is useless. Knowledge made a person humble while illiteracy leads to pride and if knowledge is limited then it leads to stupidity. If knowledge exceeds a certain limit then exploitation occurs. Hazrat Umar said that protect the words of those people who are unresponsive to the world. They obey the orders of their Creator to say what He wants from His creation. Hazrat Usman said that the consideration of the religious world sheds light on the soul, but the thinking of the global world casts gloom thereon. Hazrat Ali said that awareness leads to intelligence; similarly the literate man is wise man. Wealth is diminished by disbursement while knowledge multiplied by

distribution. A wise man daily needs an hour to sit to one side lonely to scrutinize his sense of right and wrong and to check what he has achieved or loose (Valiuddin, Mir, 1959).

The Start of Sufism:

We know that obedience toward Allah Almighty is the lesson taught by Holy Prophet ﷺ. The main idea of Islam is to be in agreement with The Creator, to adjust the will of a person under the will of Allah Almighty. Quran has described Islam as the determination of a monotheistic practice depict in steady chain to Prophets like Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Hazrat Muhammad ﷺ said, "Islam is not a new religion, rather it is the continuation of early Divine religions." The solid base of Sufism depends on the rules of charity, honesty, services and other virtues which are the basic principles of Islam. (Nur Bakhsh, Javad, op. cit., pp 33-41). Sufis were focusing on this point that all the important religious leaders were appointed by Allah Almighty. They compelled the people to obey the rules of Islamic Jurisdiction and avoid all the doubtful activities. They were the pioneers of different Sufi orders. In Sufism, the role of a religious leader is very important because one cannot achieve the real goal of Divine love and piety without the guidance of a master. The chain of these masters is started from Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam and cousin and son-in-law of the last Rasool Maqbool ﷺ (Shustery, 1999)

The Early Sufis:

The list of pious people who worked on purity of inner sense of a common man are Imam Bukhari, Imam tarimdhī, Imam Abu Haneefa, Imam Shafi, Imam Malik, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, Ibn Tamiya and many more who not only interpret Islamic Jurisdiction. Even those who were against this movement, the leader of anti-Sufism Abdul Wahab and his family also practice Tasawwuf which shows that Sufism is not against Islam. We can say that it may be difference of opinion and are not basic differences in laws of Islam (Sharda, 1998). As we know Islam is a complete code of life and works as the nature of man. Imam Shafa'i said that an enlighten heart manages to avoid the disobedience of Allah Almighty and un-wanting things in religion. He advised us to retreat and to eat less food and be careful from mixing with fools and avoid to those who tease you and do not give you true justice (Browne, Adward, 1997). Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani, Sheikh Shahab-ud-Din Suhrawardi, Hassan Basri, Abu Hashim Kufi, Ibrahim bin Adhem, Shafiq Balkhi, Zunnun Misri, Junaid Baghdadi and Mansoor Hallaj were some important names in Islamic Mysticism (Sharda, 1997).

Research methodology

I used qualitative research methodology for this project. All data was collected by group discussion of a selected group. Participants were from various walks of life. Through a semi structured interview pattern, the participants put their valuable views about the topic. In this selected group, people were from religious factor, visitors of various shrines, teachers, students and successors of Sufis of Multan. Questions were asked in an interactive group and information was found in the light of self-experiences of the people of this meeting. Data was analyzed through Grounded Theory (GT). This theory is mostly used in social sciences as a tool to analyze the collected data.

Conclusion

A group of hardliner always opposed Sufism and called it an un-Islamic practice, in this article; I have tried to give them answers of their questions with the help of Quranic verses and

the sayings of Holy Prophet ﷺ. The religious figures like Ghazali, Ibn-e-Khuldoon, Usman Ali Hijveri and many others have discussed Sufism as the part of Islam. Ali Hajvery declared Hazrat Abu Bakr as the true example of Sufi in his book “Kashfulmahjoob”. From all above discussion, we can say that Sufism is a part of Islam. In subcontinent as a large part of society, Hindus were impressed by these Saints and according to their religion; they paid tribute to these Sufis. In this way many illiterate people thought that Hindu rituals are also the part of Sufism which is totally wrong notion. Some hard liner Muslims did not differentiate Hindus and Muslims Sufis and their rituals and declared Sufism as un-Islamic. The history tells us the facts that this movement was started by the high rank religious persons to purify the religion from worldly absurdities. Hazrat Ali who had a special position and was trained by Holy Prophet ﷺ was the pioneer of Sufism. Only this reference is enough to declare that Sufism is an essential part of Islam. Unfortunately illiterate population of Sub-continent was easily trapped by nexus of some profiteers and anti-Islam forces. Another factor was the impression of Hindu rituals which trapped uneducated population in its colourful celebrations of different days of religious activities. Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi said, “All those things which interrupted human’s mind and made him insane is un-Islamic.” So, we can say that those activities which are against Islamic Law are indulged in Muslim community in the name of Sufism are not Islam. The Purity of heart and the search of the ways to win the love and obedience of our Creator is a real Islamic Sufism.

References

- Arberry, Arthur J., *An Introduction to the History of Sufism: The Sir Abdullah Suhrawardy lectures for 1942*, Orient Longman Limited, New Delhi, 1992
- Ansari, Dr. Muhammad Abdul Haq, *Sufism and Shariah: A Study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Effort to Reform Sufism*, Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, New Delhi, 2004.
- Begg, Mirza Wahiduddin, *The Big Five Sufis of India-Pakistan*, Millat Book Centre, New Delhi, 1972.
- Browne, Edward. G. *A Literary History of Persia*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1997
- Essential Sufism: Selections from the Saints and Sages*, ed. James Fadiman and Robert Frager, Suhail Academy Lahore, Pakistan, 2004.
- Faruqi, I. H. Azad, *Sufism and Bhakti: Maulana- Rum and Sri Rama Krishna*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1984.
- Khan, Mohammad Sharief and Saleem, Mohammad Anwar, *Muslim Philosophy and Philosophers*, Ashish Publishing House, Delhi, 1994.
- Lings, Martin, *What is Sufism?*, Gulshan Books, Kashmir 2011.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Living Sufism*, Suhail Academy Lahore, Pakistan, 2000.
- Nicholson, Reynold A., *the Mystics of Islam*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.
- Nurbaksh, Dr. Javad, *Sufism: Meaning Knowledge and Unity*, Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, New York, 198 Nurbaksh, Dr. Javad, *op.cit.*, pp.16-33.
- Renard, John, *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims*, University of California Press, London, 1944.
- Schimmel, Annemarie, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975, p.9.
- Sharda, S.R., *Sufi Thought: Its Development in Panjab and its Impact on Panjabi* 23
- Shustery, Prof. A.M.A., *Early Sufis and their Sufism*, Adam Publishers and Distributors,
- Sopsy, S.K., *Glimpses of Kashmir*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1976.
- Stoddart, William and Nicholson, R.A., *Sufism: The Mystical Doctrines and Idea of Personality*, Adam Publishers and Distributors Delhi, 1998.
- Valiuddin, Mir, *The Qur'anic Sufism*, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 1959.