

Through Knowledge towards Jannah

Islamic Online Madrasah – IOM



ব্যাচেলর ইন দাওয়াহ এন্ড ইসলামিক স্টাডিজ

রিসার্চের বিষয়ঃ

সুফিজম এবং আধুনিক সমস্যা

তত্ত্বাবধায়নেঃ

মাওঃ আরমান হোসাইন

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ইসলামিক অনলাইন মাদ্রাসা – আইওএম

জমা দিয়েছেনঃ

আয়েশা সিদ্দিকা

রোলঃ 23100121657

৩১ মে, ২০২৬ ইং

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এই রিপোর্ট টি ইসলামিক অনলাইন মাদ্রাসার ব্যাচেলর ইন দাওয়াহ এন্ড ইসলামিক
স্টাডিজের একটি আনুসঙ্গিক রিপোর্ট।

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প্রত্যয়ন পত্র

এই মর্মে প্রত্যয়ন করা যাচ্ছে যে, “ সুফিজম এবং আধুনিক সমস্যা ” বিষয়ক গবেষণাপত্র টি আমার তত্ত্বাবধানে ব্যাচেলর ইন দাওয়াহ এন্ড ইসলামিক স্টাডিজ ডিপার্টমেন্ট থেকে আয়েশা সিদ্দিকা, আইডিঃ 23100121657 বিচক্ষণতার সাথে সম্পন্ন করেছেন।

(স্বাক্ষর)

তত্ত্বাবধানেঃ

মাওঃ আরমান হোসাইন

রিসার্চ ডিপার্টমেন্ট

ইসলামিক অনলাইন মাদ্রাসা – আইওএম

(স্বাক্ষর)

এক্সটারনালঃ

মাওলানা মাহবুবুর রহমান

আকিদাহ ও ফিকহ ডিপার্টমেন্ট

ইসলামিক অনলাইন মাদ্রাসা – আইওএম

ঘোষণাপত্র

আমি নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারী এ মর্মে ঘোষণা করছি যে, “ সুফিজম এবং আধুনিক সমস্যা ” শিরোনামে এই গবেষণাপত্র ইসলামিক অনলাইন মাদ্রাসার (Islamic Online Madrasah – IOM) ব্যাচেলর ইন দাওয়াহ এন্ড ইসলামিক স্টাডিজ বিভাগের মাও: আরমান হোসাইন উস্তাদের প্রত্যক্ষ তত্ত্বাবধানে ও নির্দেশনায় সম্পন্ন করেছি। অন্য কোন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় বা প্রতিষ্ঠানে কোন প্রকার ডিগ্রি/ডিপ্লোমা অর্জনের জন্য বা প্রকাশের জন্য গবেষণাপত্র সম্পূর্ণ কিংবা এর অংশবিশেষ উপস্থাপন করা হয়নি।

আমি ঘোষণা করছি যে, এই গবেষণা কর্মটি আমার নিজস্ব প্রচেষ্টায় প্রস্তুত করা হয়েছে, যেখানে প্রয়োজন অনুসারে বিভিন্ন উৎস থেকে সংগৃহীত তথ্য ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে এবং সেগুলো যথাযথভাবে তথ্যসূত্রে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে।

(স্বাক্ষর)

আয়েশা সিদ্দিকা

তারিখঃ

৩১ মে, ২০২৬ ইং

আইডিঃ 23100121657

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ইসলামিক অনলাইন মাদ্রাসা।

সূচিপত্র

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Chapter 1 : Sufism

Origin of the word 'Sufi'

Until the 2nd century of Hijri, the term Sufism was not very well known. After entering the 3rd century AH, according to Hamzah Ya'qub (1987: 9), this term only became an object of conversation and discussion among ulama.

Regarding the origins of the word Sufism, there are various different opinions. Some argue that the term Sufi for worship experts is just a kind of title, because there is no root for the word in Arabic. Meanwhile, some others are of the opposite opinion, namely that there is a stem in Arabic for the word Sufism. There are four major opinions on the word origin –

1. the origin of the word “al-shafa”, linguistically meaning clean or pure. This can also be justified because the attitude of Sufi people and the phenomenon of Sufism itself always emphasize purity and cleanliness of the soul.

Al-Suhrawardi told, in his book entitled *al-'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, that Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz (d.

268 H) was once asked by someone about “sufis”, and he said:

“Sufis are people whom Allah has cleansed his heart, then his heart is filled with light, and he enters the essence of pleasure by reciting the dhikr of Allah (Jalaluddin Rahmat, *Jurnal al-Hikmah*, Vol 11, Muttahari Foundation, Bandung, 1993: p. 77).

2. Taftazani's research (1985: 21) found that some people believe that the origin of Sufism teachings is attributed to the ahl al-shuffah, the muhajirin group constituting the followers of Prophet who moved from Mecca to Medina, who lived on the porch mosque (shuffat almosjid) of the Prophet, lived a impoverished life for such a period of time for the sake of gaining Ilm (knowledge of Deen) & to purify themselves according to the teachings of the Deen.

3. As stated by M. Syarif (1987: 38), another opinion states that the word Sufism comes from the Greek word, Sophia, meaning wisdom. As they received inner illuminating knowledge & wisdom to purify the soul/Nafs' according to Quran & Sunnah, that's why they are called sufi.

4. Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun (Beirut, n.d: 370) believes that the word Sufism comes from the word "shuf", meaning sheep's wool. Sufis wear clothes made of coarse wool or sheep's fur as a symbol of simplicity and poverty - unlike others in times of prosperity.

Some scholars said it is because they accepted the name Ṣūfī, instead of being called zuhhād—because that could imply self-praise. But wearing wool was an objective description that did not involve self-praise, and the opposite is clothing made mostly of silk as a symbol of luxury usually worn by rich people.

The Concept of Tasawwuf & It's Importance :

Sufism is intimately connected to the religion of Islam. It appeared within the religion of Islam,& it should not be considered as a branch of Islam, meaning another sect like Sunni or Shi'a.

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This is very clear from our history, in Fiqh we have four madhhabs - the Hanafi, Shafii, Maliki and Hanbali, in Aqeedah we have similar schools - al Tahawi, Maturidi and Ahsari, and in Tassawwuf we also have Madhhabs (schools) - the Naqshbandi, Shadhili, Rifai and Qadiri, other principal schools are the Ashrafiyya, Badawiyya, Bektashiyya, Chishtiyya, Darqawiyya, Dasuqiyya, Firdawsiyya, Khalwatiyya, Kubrawiyya, Mawlawiyya, Suhrawardiyya, Tijaniyya, and Yasawiyya, all named after a scholar from the region they were founded in.

Although the practices, appearances and internal structures of different orders may vary from one to another, from region to region, there are no fundamental differences between the tariqas, since the ultimate goal is essentially the same. Just as the differences in schools of law refer to differences in methods, not the essence of religion.

For example, the Ottoman Khalif Muhammad al Fatih, who first conquered Constantinople by Consensus was Hanafi in Fiqh (law), Maturidi in Aqeedah (creed) and Naqshbandi in Tasawwuf (Ihsan). So, what is the concept of Tasawwuf/Sufism then?

In Qur'an Allah says in Sura Ash-Shams -

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فِ السَّمِ وَالْمِ سَوَّاهُ وَنَ

By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;

(8)

وَاِهْوَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ هَاهُنَا فَهَلْ قَفَا

And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;-

(9)

مَنْ زَرَّكَاهُ
حَلَفَ

قَدْ أَوْ

Truly he succeeds that purifies it, (10

8

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ ذَرَّ سَاهَا

And he fails that corrupts it!

In Another verse of the Quran Allah says (26:88-89):

عَمَّا لَوْلَ بَنُو نَلْ يَنْفِي وَيَوْمُ
بَقَلْتِي أَلَلَّ بَلَّ مَنُ نِ
سِ إِلِي

(The Day when neither wealth nor offspring will benefit, except the one who comes to Allah with Qalbun Salim/a sound heart.)

There are many scholarly opinions according to our traditional ulamas & Mashaykhs from the early period of our Islamic history up to today, but in it's simplified meaning, Tasawwuf & Tazkiyah basically means –

the process to arriving at a sound heart as Allah SWT & his Prophet SAW commanded us in Quran & Sunnah, and it is a discipline. It is a science that our deen granted us, or at least granted us the principles for the science, on how to tame the human being and bring him to his most elevated state—to fulfill his potential.

Because, without spiritual training—the human being becomes no different from wild animals. Without tazkiyah, he becomes like wild animals: greedy, aggressive, hasty, envious etc.

How central is Tasawwuf to our religion, and: Where does it fit into Islam as a whole?

Perhaps the best answer is the hadith of Muslim, where ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab said:

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“As we sat one day with the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace), a man in pure white clothing and jet black hair came to us, without a trace of travelling upon him, though none of us knew him.

He sat down before the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) bracing his knees against his, resting his hands on his legs, and said: “Muhammad, tell me about Islam.” The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: “Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and to perform the prayer, give zakat, fast in Ramadan, and perform the pilgrimage to the House if you can find a way.”

He said: “You have spoken the truth,” and we were surprised that he should ask and then confirm the answer. Then he said: “Tell me about true faith (iman),” and the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) answered: “It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His inspired Books, His messengers, the Last Day, and in destiny, its good and evil.”

“You have spoken the truth,” he said, “Now tell me about the perfection of faith (ihsan),” and the Prophet (Allah bless him and

give him peace) answered: “It is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you see Him not, He nevertheless sees you.”

Then the visitor left. I waited a long while, and the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said to me, “Do you know, ‘Umar, who was the questioner?” and I replied, “Allah and His messenger know best.” He said,

“It was Gabriel, who came to you to teach you your religion” “(Sahih Muslim, 1.37: hadith 8).

This is a sahih hadith, described by Imam Nawawi as one of the hadiths upon which the Islamic religion turns. The use of *din* in the last words of it, *Atakum yu'allimukum dinakum*, “came to you to teach you your religion” entails that the religion of Islam is composed of the three fundamentals mentioned in the hadith:

Islam, or external compliance with what Allah asks of us; Iman, or 10

the belief in the unseen that the prophets have informed us of; and Ihsan, or to worship Allah as though one sees Him.

The Quran says, in Surat Maryam :

“Surely We have revealed the Remembrance, and surely We shall preserve it” (Quran 15:9),

and if we reflect how Allah, in His wisdom, has accomplished this, we see that it is by human beings, the traditional scholars He has sent at each level of the religion. The level of Islam has been preserved and conveyed to us by the Imams of Shari‘a or ‘Sacred Law’ and its ancillary disciplines; the level of Iman, by the Imams of ‘Aqida or ‘tenets of faith’; and the level of Ihsan, “to worship Allah as though you see Him,” by the Imams of Tasawwuf.

The hadith’s very words “to worship Allah” show us the interrelation of these three fundamentals, for the how of

“worship” is only known through the external prescriptions of Islam, while the validity of this worship in turn presupposes Iman or faith in Allah and the Islamic revelation, without which worship would be but empty motions; while the words, “as if you see Him,” show that Ihsan implies a human change, for it entails the experience of what, for most of us, is not experienced. So to understand Tasawwuf, we must look at the nature of this change in relation to both Islam and Iman, and this is the main focus of my talk tonight.

At the level of Islam, we said that Tasawwuf requires Islam, through ‘submission to the rules of Sacred Law.’ But Islam, for its part, equally requires Tasawwuf.

Why?

For the very good reason that the sunnah which Muslims have been commanded to follow is not just the words and actions of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), but also his states, states of the heart such as taqwa ‘godfearingness,’ ikhlas ‘sincerity,’ tawakkul ‘reliance on Allah,’ rahma ‘mercy,’ tawadu‘ ‘humility,’ and so on.

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Now, it is characteristic of the Islamic ethics & Islamic Law that human actions are not simply divided into two shades of morality, right or wrong; but rather five, arranged in order of their consequences in the next world. The obligatory (Fard & wajib) is that whose performance is rewarded by Allah in the next life and whose nonperformance is punished.

The Sunnah – Performer would be rewarded, non performer without valid excuses would be punished.

Then the recommended (mandub) is that whose performance is rewarded, but whose nonperformance is not punished.

The permissible (mubah) is indifferent, unconnected with either reward or punishment in its act itself.

The offensive (makruh) is that whose nonperformance is rewarded but whose performance is not punished.

The unlawful (haram) is that whose nonperformance is rewarded and whose performance is punished, if one dies unrepentant.

Human states of the heart, the Quran and sunnah make plain to us, come under each of these headings. Yet they are not dealt with in books of fiqh or 'Islamic jurisprudence,' because unlike the prayer, zakat, or fasting, they are not quantifiable in terms of the specific amount of them that must be done. But though they are not countable, they are of the utmost importance to every Muslim. Let's look at a few examples -

(1) Love of Allah. In Surat al-Baqara of the Quran, Allah blames those who ascribe associates to Allah whom they love as much as they love Allah. Then He says,

"And those who believe are greater in love for Allah" (Quran 2:165), making being a believer conditional upon having greater love for Allah than any other.

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(2) Mercy. Bukhari and Muslim relate that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, "Whomever is not merciful to people, Allah will show no mercy" (Sahih Muslim, 4.1809: hadith 2319), and Tirmidhi relates the well authenticated (hasan) hadith "Mercy is not taken out of anyone except the damned" (al-Jami' al-sahih, 4.323: hadith 1923).

(3) Love of each other. Muslim relates in his Sahih that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “By Him in whose hand is my soul, none of you shall enter paradise until you believe, and none of you shall believe until you love one another . . .” (Sahih Muslim, 1.74: hadith 54).

(4) Presence of mind in the prayer (salat). Abu Dawud relates in his Sunan that ‘Ammar ibn Yasir heard the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) say, “Truly, a man leaves, and none of his prayer has been recorded for him except a tenth of it, a ninth of it, eighth of it, seventh of it, sixth of it, fifth of it, fourth of it, third of it, a half of it” (Sunan Abi Dawud, 1.211: hadith 796)—meaning that none of a person’s prayer counts for him except that in which he is present in his heart with Allah.

(5) Love of the Prophet. Bukhari relates in his Sahih that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “None of you believes until I am more beloved to him than his father, his son, and all people” (Fath al-Bari, 1.58, hadith 15).

It is plain from these texts that none of the states mentioned—whether mercy, love, or presence of heart—are quantifiable, for the Shari‘a cannot specify that one must “do two units of mercy” or “have three units of presence of mind” in the way that the number of rak‘as of prayer can be specified, yet each of them is personally obligatory for the Muslim. Let us complete the picture by looking at a few examples of states that are haram or ‘strictly unlawful’:

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(1) Fear of anyone besides Allah. Allah Most High says in Surat al-Baqara of the Quran,

“And fulfill My covenant: I will fulfill your covenant—And fear Me alone” (Quran 2:40), the last phrase of which, according to Imam Fakhr al-Din al Razi, “establishes that a human being is obliged to fear no one besides Allah Most High” (Tafsir al-Fakhr al-Razi, 3.42).

(2) Despair. Allah Most High says,

“None despairs of Allah’s mercy except the people who disbelieve” (Quran 12:87), indicating the unlawfulness of this inward state by coupling it with the worst human condition possible, that of unbelief.

(3) Arrogance. Muslim relates in his Sahih that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “No one shall enter paradise who has a particle of arrogance in his heart” (Sahih Muslim, 1.93: hadith 91).

(4) Envy, meaning to wish for another to lose the blessings he enjoys. Abu Dawud relates that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “Beware of envy, for envy consumes good works as flames consume firewood” (Sunan Abi Dawud, 4.276: hadith 4903).

(5) Showing off in acts of worship. Al-Hakim relates with a sahih chain of transmission that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “The slightest bit of showing off in good works is as if worshipping others with Allah” (al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-Sahihayn, 1.4).

These and similar haram inward states are not found in books of fiqh or ‘jurisprudence,’ because fiqh can only deal with quantifiable descriptions of rulings. Rather, they are examined in their causes and remedies by the

scholars of the 'inner fiqh' of Tasawwuf, men such as Imam al-Ghazali in his *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* [The reviving of the religious sciences], Imam al-Rabbani in his *Maktubat* [Letters], al-Suhrawardi in his *'Awarif al-Ma'arif* [The knowledges of the illuminates], Abu Talib al-Makki in *Qut al-qulub* [The sustenance of hearts], and similar classic works, which discuss and solve hundreds of ethical questions about the inner life. These are books of Shari'a and their questions are questions of Sacred Law, of how it is lawful or unlawful for a Muslim to be; and they preserve the part of the prophetic sunna dealing with states.

Who needs such information?

All Muslims, for the Qur'anic verses and authenticated hadiths all point to the fact that a Muslim must not only do certain things and say certain things, but also must be something, must attain certain states of the heart and eliminate others. Do we ever fear someone besides Allah? Do we have a particle of arrogance in our hearts? Is our love for the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) greater than our love for any other human being? Is there the slightest bit of showing off in our good works?

Half a minute's reflection will show the Muslim where he stands on these aspects of his din, and why in classical times, helping Muslims to attain these states was not left to amateurs, but rather delegated to 'ulama of the heart, the scholars of Islamic Tasawwuf.

For most people, these are not easy transformations to make, because of the force of habit, because of the subtlety with which we can deceive ourselves, but most of all because each of us has an ego, the self, the Me, which is called in Arabic *al-nafs*, about which Allah testifies in Surat Yusuf:

“Verily the self ever commands to do evil” (Quran 12:53).

Consider the hadith related by Muslim in his Sahih, that:

“The first person judged on Resurrection Day will be a man martyred in battle.

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He will be brought forth, Allah will reacquaint him with His blessings upon him and the man will acknowledge them, whereupon Allah will say, “What have you done with them?” to which the man will respond, “I fought to the death for You.”

Allah will reply, “You lie. You fought in order to be called a hero, and it has already been said.” Then he will be sentenced and dragged away on his face and flung into the fire.

Then a man will be brought forward who learned Sacred Knowledge, taught it to others, and who recited the Koran. Allah will remind him of His gifts to him and the man will acknowledge them, and then Allah will say, “What have you done with them?” The man will answer, “I acquired Sacred Knowledge, taught it, and recited the Koran, for Your sake.”

Allah will say, “You lie. You learned so as to be called a scholar, and read the Koran so as to be called a reciter, and it has already been said.” Then the man will be sentenced and dragged away on his face to be flung into the fire.

Then a man will be brought forward whom Allah generously provided for, giving him various kinds of wealth, and Allah will recall to him the benefits given, and the man will acknowledge them, to which Allah will say, “And what have you done with them?” The man will answer, “I have not left a single kind of expenditure You love to see made, except that I have spent on it for Your sake.”

Allah will say, “You lie. You did it so as to be called generous, and it has already been said.” Then he will be sentenced and dragged away on his face to be flung into the fire.” (Sahih Muslim, 3.1514: hadith 1905).

We should not fool ourselves about this, because our fate depends on it: in our childhood, our parents taught us how to behave through praise or blame,

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and for most of us, this permeated and colored our whole motivation for doing things. But when childhood ends, and we come of age in Islam, the religion makes it clear to us, both by the above hadith and by the words of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) “The slightest bit of showing off in good works is as if worshipping others with Allah” that being motivated by what others think is no longer good enough, and that we must change our motives entirely, and henceforth be motivated by nothing but desire for Allah Himself.

From aforementioned Verses from Quran and hadiths, it’s clear that inner purification or tazkiyah is as important as outer Shari’ah.

Now, The Islamic revelation thus tells the Muslim that it is obligatory to break his habits of thinking and motivation, but it does not tell him how. For that, he must go to the scholars of these states, in accordance with the quranic imperative,

“Ask those who know if you know not” (Qur’an : 16:43),

There is no doubt that bringing about this change, purifying the Muslims by bringing them to spiritual sincerity, was one of the central duties of the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace), for Allah says in the Surat Al ‘Imran of the Quran,

“Allah has truly blessed the believers, for He has sent them a messenger of themselves, who recites His signs to them and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom” (quran 3:164),

which explicitly lists four tasks of the prophetic mission, the second of which, yuzakkihim means precisely to ‘purify them’ and has no other lexical sense. Now, it is plain that this teaching function cannot, as part of an eternal revelation, have ended with the passing of the first generation, a fact that Allah explicitly confirms in His injunction in Surat Luqman,

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“And follow the path of him who turns unto Me” (Quran 31:15).

These verses indicate the teaching and transformative role of those who convey the Islamic revelation to Muslims, and the choice of the word ittiba‘ in the second verse, which is more general, implies both keeping the company of and following the example of a teacher. This is why in the history of Tasawwuf, we find that though there were many methods and schools of thought, these two things never changed: keeping the company of a teacher, and following his example—in exactly the same way that the Sahaba were uplifted and purified by keeping the company of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and following his example.

And this is why the discipline of Tasawwuf has been preserved and transmitted by Tariqas or groups of students under a particular master. First, because this was the sunna of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) in his purifying function described by the Koran. Secondly, Islamic knowledge has never been transmitted by writings alone, but rather from ‘ulama to

students. Thirdly, the nature of the knowledge in question is of hal or 'state of being,' not just knowing, and hence requires it be taken from a succession of living masters back to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), for the sheer range and number of the states of heart required by the revelation effectively make imitation of the personal example of a teacher the only effective means of transmission.

So far we have spoken about Tasawwuf in respect to Islam, as a Shari'a science necessary to fully realize the Sacred Law in one's life, to attain the states of the heart demanded by the Koran and hadith. This close connection between Shari'a and Tasawwuf is expressed by the statement of Imam Malik, founder of the Maliki school, that "he who practices Tasawwuf without learning Sacred Law corrupts his faith, while he who learns Sacred Law without practicing Tasawwuf corrupts himself. Only he who combines the two proves true." This is why Tasawwuf was taught as part of the traditional curriculum in madrasas across the Muslim world from Malaysia to Morocco.

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Historical Origin of Sufism :

Until the 2nd century of Hijri, the term Sufism was not very well known. After entering the 3rd century AH, according to Hamzah Ya'qub (1987: 9), this term only became an object of conversation and discussion among ulama.

In his book entitled “al-Risala al-Qusyairiyah”, al-Qusyairi (1330 H: 7) emphasized that

his friends and subsequent generations (tabi'in) preferred to be called friends (Rasul), because

he considered it as an honor. Thus, according to him, terms such as: abid, nasik, zahid, and sufi

(for worship experts) only became known after this generation.

The origins—historically: when that happened, why that happened, and how that happened.

After the time of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the early khulafa' (caliphs), Islam had such inertia. It was spreading in miraculous ways all over the globe. Within a hundred years, Islam was less than 100 kilometers from Paris.

So there was an eruption of prosperity for the Muslims. The ills of prosperity caused a group of this ummah, within the first century even, to start falling prey to those ills—down to neglecting the obligations of Islam.

And as time progressed, there occurred a similar negligence among others who were outwardly religious—or even more so religious. They started overemphasizing the external acts (Shari'ah) —the exterior—and neglecting the interior: sincerity, certainty, trust in Allah, reliance, seeking.

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So a group of scholars from this ummah became very well known. This happened in a decentralized way, but they became known for committing themselves to resist these trends: the trends of materialism, and also the overemphasis on the exterior while neglecting the acts of the heart.

They insisted on focusing on resisting these negative trends and calling others away from them as well. So effectively, they were telling the ummah that they have forgotten or neglecting some precious and mandatory practices of Islam, & those are - excellence (iḥsān) in one's act, certainty (strong yaqeen), Reliance upon Allah (tawaqquḥ), Zuhd—being disinterested in this world (Which is something beloved to Allah: that you are not captivated, not obsessed with this material or worldly life)....

Sufism appears for the first (in a formalized form) time in the 8th century in places like Baghdad and Basra, and generally across the newly formed Islamic empire or civilization. The so-called Sufis, although they weren't universally called this name at this point, took the Islamic religion and its sources—the Qur'an and Hadith—as their starting point, and then developed ascetical and renunciant practices that were aimed at deepening the person's relationship with God and purifying the soul from worldliness and sin.

And these people eventually became known, historically, by a few names. They were referred to as zuhhād—the ascetics, from zuhd. Sometimes they were called fuqara' (the poor), but this is in reference to Allah—that all creation is impoverished before Allah; we own nothing in reality before Allah subḥānahu wa ta'ālā. But they most famously became known as Ṣūfīs.

But it was the time when Practice of Tasawwuf finally got institutionalized, but The practice of tasawwuf originally has come from the practice of Prophet Muhammad SAW himself, & his companions under the supervision of Prophet Muhammad SAW.

In earlier times, Tasawwuf/Sufism was a reality without a name. The Companions and early Muslims (salaf) did not use the term Tasawwuf (and neither is it a blameworthy Bid'a to do so!), but they

lived its teachings in their day-to-day lives. They did not go overboard with Shaykhs, spiritual

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orders (tariqas') and the like, but worked on their hearts (tazkiya) and strived to rid it from blameworthy character traits such as hatred, enmity, pride, ostentation, evil assumptions, suspicion, judging others, seeking out faults, love of fame, love of wealth, etc. They possessed exemplary hearts, full of spirituality, love for Allah and His Messenger (Allah bless him & give him peace), and love for one another.

Today sadly, Tasawwuf is a name, but few possess its reality. Many people claim to be the proponents of Tasawwuf but then commit every sin that Tasawwuf came to eradicate such as quarrels, divisions, cults, jealousy of others, love of fame, "my Shaykh versus your Shaykh", "my group better than your group." Tasawwuf is more about working on one's heart and less about which group one belongs to! Let us return to the real message of Tasawwuf.

Many orientalists who studied Sufism, want to say – the origin of Islamic Sufism took its inspiration from Christian monasticism.

Some want to say - Sufism actually predates Islam, that Sufism is some kind of ancient spiritual wisdom that was only appropriated/corrected by the Islamic religion.

according to Taftazani, the similarities between Sufism and various forms of foreign mysticism unnecessarily mean that Sufism ideas were drawn from other sources. So what is more accurate, according to him, is that the idea of Sufism emerged from the Muslims themselves, because their knowledge arises from their own intuition and understanding. There are many hadiths & the verses of Quran which say that Sufism emerged from the teachings of Islam itself.

But there can be some similarities in outward and inner practices of Sufism, but there can be some valid reasons for that –

It would be very hard to deny that some aspects of what we call Sufism today did exist in some form before the mission of the Prophet Muhammad.

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Another important aspect to take into consideration here is that the Sufis or Muslims themselves wouldn't necessarily disagree. Indeed, one of the primary tenets of Islamic belief is that the religion existed since before Muhammad. Muslims believe that God has sent the same message to various prophets across history, including prophets like Moses and Jesus, and that any similarity that we find between Islam and other religions can be explained by this fact.

The teachings of Islam, and thus Sufism, existed before Muhammad SAW and all the way back to Adam AS himself. So the argument that Sufism existed before Islam is often countered from within the Islamic tradition itself in this way. Of course, it existed since before Muhammad SAW, because Islam itself did.

Balanced practice of Tasawwuf by Prophet Muhammad

ﷺ & his Companions :

Islam is a medieval religion (wasat). The middle position (wasat) is, according to Ibn Tamiyah, the middle between Judaism which is legalistic and very socially oriented on the one hand, and on the other hand, Christianity which is very spiritualistic, paying great attention to spiritual depth and experience so that it becomes gentle. He said: “The Tourah Sharia is dominated by rigidity, and

the Gospel Sharia is dominated by gentleness, while the Al-Qur'an Sharia mediates and includes both.” (Ibn Taymiyah, n.d.: 240)

So as an intermediary between the two predecessor religions, according to Nurcholish

Madjid (1994: 7), Islam contains legal teachings with an orientation to problems of human

behavior outwardly like Judaism, but also contains deep spiritual teachings like Christianity. In

fact, although differentiable, the two are inseparable.

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If we trace this principle of balance in religious appreciation, it roots strongly in the

traditions of the Prophet and his companions' life, reflecting the the Prophet's spiritual life his

people must emulate . closely observed, the Prophet's form of religious appreciation reflects

moderate religious behavior. A moderate attitude means a life attitude normally meeting natural needs is not far from physical norms and adapts to the environment (Hossein Nasr, 2003, 259).

In other words, the Prophet carried out a unified exoteric and esoteric religious appreciation.

This can be extracted from some of his recommendations for his friends in the practice of their

religious life; that is:

a. The command to appreciate religion in balanced manner

This can be seen from several hadiths regarding a companion named Usman ibn Maz'un,

in which Muhammad asked him to appreciate religions in balanced manner, as follow:

دخلت امرأة عثمان بن مظعون على نساء النبي صلعم. فرأيتها سيئة الهيئة، فقلنا لها: ما لك؟ فما في قریش أغنى من بعلك إقالت: ما لنا منه شيء. أما ليله فقائم. وأما نهاره فصائم. فدخلنا إلى النبي، فذكره ذلك له فلقيه فقال: يا عثمان! أما لك بى أسوة؟ فقال: بابى وأمى وما ذلك إقال: تصوم النهار وتقوم الليل؟ قال: إنى: أأفعل، قال: .
 ال تفعل! إن لعينك عليك حقا، وإن أهلك عليك حقا. فصل ونم وصم وافطر

“Uthman ibn Mazh’un’s wife visited the house of the Prophet’s wives, and they saw her in a

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bad condition. So he asked them: “What happened to you? There is no one among the Quraysh richer than your husband!”. She answered: “We did not get anything from him. Because at night he worships, and during the day he fasts.” They went to the Prophet and told him about this. So the Prophet met him (Ustman ibn Mazh'un), and said: "O ‘Uthman, don’t I have an example for you?" he answered: "By my father and mother, you are like that".

Then the prophet said: “Is it true that you fast every day and do not sleep (worship) every night?”

He replied: “I did.” The Prophet said: “Don’t do it. In fact your eyes have a right over you, and

your family has a right over you. So pray and sleep, fast and eat.”

Carefully observed, it can be seen clearly that the hadith tells the story of how Muhammad advised Maz’un to have balance in appreciating or comprehending and practicing Islamic teachings.

b. The command to practice religion correctly and with ease

This command was also recorded in the Prophet Muhammad’s advice to Usman Ibnu

Maz’un to carry out religious teachings straightly and with ease.

‘Uthman ibn Mazh’un bought a house, then he lived in it (all the time) to worship. The news came to the Prophet s.a.w., so he came to him, then he took him to the exit of the house where he lived, and he said: "O ‘Uthman, indeed Allah did not send me with the teachings of monkhood, and indeed the best din (religion) with Allah is al-hanafiyyat al samhah (the expansive spirit of truth)." (Sunan Al-Darami, n.d.: 179; Nurcholish Madjid 1995 97; Sulaiman: 2015: 305)

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The news reached the Prophet s.a.w. that a group of his friends avoided women and avoided eating meat. They gathered, and we talked about the attitude of avoiding women and eating meat. So the Prophet gave a stern warning, and said: "Indeed, I was not sent with the teachings of monkhood. Indeed, the best deen is al-hanafiyyat al-samhah."

c. To carry out religious teachings without avoiding the secular pleasures

Related to this, Al-Thabbari, in his book of Tafsir (Juz 7: 9), relates the complaints of a

friend's wife who was neglected by her husband, as follows:

It was narrated that Rasulullah visited ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-Ash, and his wife asked

Rasulullah for mercy, so he said: "How are you, O Abdullah's mother?" He answered: "He was

alone, so he did not sleep, did not break his fast, did not want to eat meat, and did not fulfill his obligations to his family.” He asked: “Where is he now?” Replied: “he is out, and is almost home at this time”. He said: “When he comes home, hold him for me.” So the Rasulullah went out, then ‘Abdullah came, and the Rasulullah was almost home. So he said: "O 'Abdullah ibn 'Amar, how about that news having reached me about you? that you do not sleep." He replied: “With that I want to be safe from greater danger.” He said: “And it came to me (news) that you did not break your fast (fast)”. He replied: “With that I want something better in heaven”. He said: ‘And news reached me that you

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have not fulfilled their rights for your family.” He replied: “With that I want a better woman than them.” So the Messenger of Allah said: “O 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, for you there is a good example in the Messenger of Allah. And the Messenger of Allah fasted and broke his fast, ate meat, and fulfilled their family's rights. O ‘Abddullah ibn'Amr, verily Allah has rights over you, indeed your body has rights over you, and indeed your family has rights over you.”

Regarding this, Nurcholish Madjid (1995: 96-97) commented that with his policy

the Messenger of Allah described a healthy and correct lifestyle to us, and explained that

excessive attitudes were reprehensible, even regarding the attitude of a servant in his spiritual

life. Because Allah does not accept it from His servants if His Sunnah is ignored and then that

person thinks that this attitude brings him to Allah's pleasure.

d) Correcting others by Addressing their psychology and motivations

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ motivated the peoples by his practical psychology and motivate them in such a way that brought a sea change in their lives.

Hazrat Anas (RA) reported that:

That I was the butler of the people in the house of Abu Talha, and in those days drinks were prepared from dates. The Rasool (ﷺ) ordered somebody to announce that alcoholic drinks had been prohibited. Abu Talha ordered

me to go out and spill the wine. I went out and spilled it, and it flowed in the streets of Medina.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ made an announcement and told the people that alcohol has been forbidden. When this announcement reached to the people, they stopped where they were and threw away the wine and don't look back to it. [Sahih Muslim,kitabul Ashraba,Hadith:1980]

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Suppose if all the psychologists of the world will get together and try to change the People in such a short period of time that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (did? Can a man who has been addicted to alcohol for a long time, break the wine bottles and never look it again in his entire life? And today ministries have been established the regulatory authorities and spending huge amount of money to prevent people from these bad habits, Of course the answer will be no. But the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (did all this by practical psychology and motivations.

The life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ reveals that He (ﷺ) paid full attention to all instinct and extrinsic motivations that cause mental depression and his treatments.

Mutib bin Abdullah Al-makhzomi narrated: Once a person asked the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) what is backbiting? The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said when you say something about someone in his absence if it done in the presence of that person he would mind so its backbiting. If you say falsehood, then it is slander.

Being as a psychologist the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (addressed in the said Hadith that to avoid both backbiting and slandering because it is a soul disease & our nafs should be purified from those disease.

e) Describing Smile & Forgiveness as virtues:

Smile is a gift of Allah, which have immense power of attraction and motivation removing grief and sadness in seconds and turned the worst enemies a fast-friends.

Therefore, Hazrat Abdullah bin Harith ibn Jaz RA reported:

I have never seen anyone who smiled more than the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

[Sunan Al-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Manaqib, chapter fi Ashashat-al-Nabi, (ﷺ) [3641Hadith]

In fact no one knew human psychology more than the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (that's He (ﷺ) (met everyone with a smiling face.

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Even an enemy or a person who commit sin would come to the court of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (with fear that how to face the angrily face of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

(. Instead of anger and rage, when saw the smiling face the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (with love and affection they inspired and sacrifice his life for the will Of Allah and his Rasool (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

After the Battle of Badr, two persons planned to kill the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) but they failed and were caught. Instead of to show anger and to kill them the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (smiled and forgave them. Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) instructed his Ummah to meet with a smiling face and said: It is a charity to talk to your brother with a smile. [Sunan Al Tirmidhi, Hadith:1956]

In the same way, before the conquest of Makkah the Kuffar who treated the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (and his companions so brutally tortured and tormented them to an extremely great extent that the soil of Makkah trembled. Instead to treat them at the same way the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) granted general amnesty to the entire population of Makkah and forgave even his worst enemies and said :

مالطلاق؛ اذهبوا فأنتم

GO everyone is free. [Sahih Ul Bukhari 1/156,Hadit:397,Sahlul Hadyi Wal Rishad 5/242]

Peace,compassion and dignity were given to the human soul for the first time by the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) by which people get rid of mental anguish, fright, feeling of distress, anxiety & confusion.

Another occasion while returning from a battle, the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (take rest under a shady tree for a while and hung up his sword on a tree and slept. The polytheist

came and pick up the sword and said “who will save you from me?”

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said Allah, to heard the name of Allah the sword fell down from his hand and then the Holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

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took the sword and repeated the same words: “ who will save you from me now?”

Eventually the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) forgave and let him free to go back to his family.

[Sahi ul Bukhari : 413]

Being a Purifier of Nafs, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) knew that forgiveness improves human relationship, and removes rages and angers from soul.

f) Inferiority and superiority Complex from people by removing man-made standards of Respect & Status:

In day to day life it is a common experience when people compare himself to others that I am highly skilled, competent and advanced than other in various fields of life. So this experience develop a sense of superiority complex.

Most people are biased toward themselves and would rate themselves as superior to the average. When we compare ourselves to people that they are highly competent, civilized and more advanced people within our own professions, we may see ourselves as inadequate in comparison. However,

when those feelings of inadequacy become overwhelming and negatively affect our lives, this may cause the essence of an inferiority complex.

Feelings of inadequacy or insecurity in daily life due to a belief that you are physically or mentally inferior to others. Both the two responses badly affect the human character and personality development mentally and physically. As no one in the universe knows better the human personality, character building and personality development more than Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), that's why Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) addressed this in the last sermon of Hujjatul Wida. Hazrat Uqbah ibn 'Amir reported: that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, Verily these lineages of yours give no cause over anyone. All of you are only the children of Adam. No one is better than another except by religion and good deeds. It is enough sin for a man to be obscene, a spreader of gossip, miserly, or cowardly. From the above Hadith it is cleared that no one should

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suffer from the feeling of inferiority that he is inferior nor superior over others because of their race, creed and color. In the eyes of the Almighty Allah, superiority is based only on piety". [Musnad Ahmad: Hadith:17313]

He (ﷺ) said "that the lust of the world causes inferiority and superiority over others."

Because it develops negative implications such as anger, sorrow, hopelessness and selfishness which badly affects human personality development and man suffers mental illness, depression, anxiety, greed, malice, deceit and negative thinking which hampered the human character and personality development.

g) Purifying nafs' from the disease of Anger :

Anger is a human feeling and emotion which badly affects human health and personality. It is an intense feeling and emotion when

there is something went wrong. It is characterized by frustration, irritation, stress and an anxiety. Anger is an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage .It may cause physiological and biological changes in human body that may cause increased in body temperature, muscle tension and raised of blood pressure. Being a nafs purifier, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (described the state of emotion of anger approximately 1445 years ago.

Hazrat Abu Dharr (RA) reported that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (said to us:

That if someone of you is angry while standing so sit down. If you get angry more, then lie down”.

In the said Hadith sitting or lie down is a state that reduces heart rate and blood pressure which is supported by modern psychologists and medical today.

h) Addressing & correcting people with loving and polite words and sometimes ignoring:

Calling or addressing someone with good and loving words and treat them politely make a person to be obedient, long lasting love, affection, create

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positivity and provide a conducive environment. On the other hands, calling a person with rude words gives birth to hate, enmity and disobedience and develop unfavorable conditions.

That’s why the Holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (used to call every person by his good name and addressing everyone with love and affection. Similarly He (ﷺ) (used to call children with the word “Ya Bani” O my son.

According to Islam that all Muslims are brothers that's why the Arab called the children "Yaa Ibne Akhi".

In another hadith Anas b. Malik reported:

While we were in the mosque with the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), a Bedouin came to mosque and start urinate in the mosque. The Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (said: Stop, stop, but the He (ﷺ) (said: Don't interrupt him leave him. When he finished urinating, Prophet (ﷺ) called him and said these mosques are not for urination and filth, but are only for to worship Allah. Then the (the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said to one of the companion who brought a bucket of water and poured it over. [Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal, Hadith: 5065]

Man is to error and every human being make mistakes without knowing something, but if instead of explaining them with gentleness and love, if they are treated harshly this attitude lead to rebellious and unruly situation.

In the same way, if behaves gently it provide an opportunity to avoid committing sins. Gently and politely behavior brought positive impacts on human character and personality development. That's why being as a purifier of the Ummah, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) behave politely and also warned with love and affection if someone doing wrong.

In the said Hadith how the prophet Muhammad behave the villager. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) called him and explained with love and affection that mosque is the house of Allah, and place for worship and it is a great sin to filth here. The villager confessed and admitted his mistake that he would not do it again. Imagine

how he would have reacted if had been teased harshly, and what would be the effects on him.

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i) Talking to People according to their Intellectual Level:

Conversation is the most important part of the human experience. To share our ideas, thoughts, expression, experience and feelings with each other so we talk and conversation face to face. Most people haven't the ability to talk the intellectual level of the person in front of him, which results ambiguity and far beyond the desired goals and targets. Keeping these things in mind the Muhammad (ﷺ) used to talk to people according to their mental level. However, the act and mode of communicating, interacting with people, in fact, can be best deduced from a study of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal narrated on the authority of Abu Tamimiyyah Hajimi that a Bedouin (a man living in the desert) came to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and said: Are you the Messenger of Allah? He (ﷺ) replied, yes.

then asked what do you invite?

He (ﷺ) said I invite to the one God, the Almighty Allah when you call him in distress, He will remove your pain, miseries and hardships. And if you stray or deviate from the right path and call upon Him, He will guide you.

Hearing this the person embrace Islam.

[Sahih ul Bukhari,Hadith:221]

j) Showing compassion to the fellow human & visiting the sick :

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: "It is obligatory for every Muslim to visit his Muslim brother when he is ill" .

Ibn Abbas RA narrated, Allah's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) entered upon sick man to pay him a visit, and said to him, "Don't worry, Allah willing, (your sickness will be) an expiation for your sins."

[Al Sahih ul Bukhari,Hadith:5662]

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Whenever the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) visited an ailing person, He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) would say do not worry, if Allah wills it will be a purification from sin. Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said when you visit a sick person, give him hope and encourage that Almighty Allah bless your health. Allah has created cures for all the diseases and there is no disease without its cure and medications.

This study affirms that the Sufism exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is firmly rooted in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, representing a balanced integration

between the exoteric (sharī'ah) and esoteric (ḥaqīqah) dimensions of Islamic teachings. The

Prophet's model of Sufism offers a moderate form of Islamic spirituality that avoids extremes

and is grounded in the unity of God (tawḥīd).

Practice of Sufism throughout the Islamic history

To fight all the Fitnah (strife and troubles) being caused in the world today we have to know Ilm al Nafs (the science of the self) so we won't become corrupted, because it is through these same sciences of the self that these fitnah's (strife and troubles) are being caused, man self has been studied by the corporations and manipulated against him so they can profit from his weakness's. The Scholars throughout History understood this and acted accordingly, it was for example only after Salah al Deen Ayoubi,

who conquered Jerusalem from the crusaders, repented from his old life and began practicing Tasawwuf did he see a need to fight for that city.

Imam al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110 AH) was a Wali (friend) of Allah and one of the early people who practiced Tasawwuf and developed the science. He (ra)

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was the son of a freedwoman of Umm Salama's (the Prophet's wife) and a freedman of Zayd ibn Thabit's (the Prophet's stepson), this great Imam of Basra (Iraq), was known for his strict and encompassing embodiment of the Sunna of the Prophet. He was also famous for his immense knowledge, his austerity and asceticism. Ibn al-Jawzi wrote a 100-page book on his life and manners entitled *Adab al-Shaykh al-Hasan ibn Abi al-Hasan al-Basri*.

The hadith master Abu Nu`aym al-Isfanahi (d. 430 AH) mentions in his biographies of companions, tabi'in, saints and sufis entitled *Hilyat al-awliya'* (The adornment of the saints) that it is al-Hasan's student `Abd al-Wahid ibn Zayd (d. 177) who was the first person to build a Sufi khaniqa or guest-house and school at Abadan on the present-day border of Iran with Iraq (Abu Nu`aym, *Hilyat al-awliya'* 6:155).

Imam Abu Hanifa (d.150 AH) who founded the Hanafi madhhab said "If it were not for two years, I would have perished." He said, "for two years I accompanied Sayyidina Ja'far as-Sadiq (a great grandson of Imam Ali) and I acquired the spiritual knowledge that made me a gnostic in the Way" (Ad Durr al-Mukhtar, vol 1. p. 43).

Imam Jaffar like Abu Bakr was called al Siddiq, He was a Major Imam of Ahl al Bayt, a descendant of Rasul Allah (saws) his lineage to the prophet (saws) goes back through his father Sayidina Muhammad al-Baqir (r.a), ibn (son of) Zayn al-Abdin (r.a), ibn Husayn (r.a) ibn Imam Ali (r.a).

Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 161 AH) was a Mujtahid Imam, “Commander of the Believers in Hadith” – He achieved the highest level in hadith Mastership from the first days of Islam, he also earned the qualifications (titles) of Shaykh al-Islam, the Imam of hadith Masters, and the leader of all the practicing Ulema in his time (al-Dhahabi). His father was a junior Tabi’i (one of the early generations of muslims) Muhaddith and he thus began his scholarly career at home.

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Abu Nu`aym in his Hilyat al-awliya’, states that Sufyan al-Thawri said: If it were not for Abu Hashim al-Sufi (d. 115 AH) I would have never perceived the presence of the subtlest forms of hypocrisy in the self... Among the best of people is the Sufi learned in jurisprudence (law).

Abu Hashim al-Zahid (the sufi) said: “Allah has stamped alienation upon the world in order that the friendly company of the muridin (seekers) consist solely in being with Him and not with the world, and in order that those who obey Him come to Him by means of avoiding the world. The People of Knowledge of Allah (ahl al-ma`rifa billah) are strangers in the world and long for the hereafter.”(Abu Nu`aym, Hilyat al-awliya)

Imam Malik who founded the Maliki Madhab said:

“He who practices Tasawwuf without learning Sacred Law (Fiqh) corrupts his faith, while he who learns Sacred Law (Fiqh) without practicing Tasawwuf corrupts himself. Only he who combines the two proves true.” (‘Ali al-Adawi , vol. 2, p 195.)

This is because trying to fix the self through Tassawwuf without knowing the Law will distort the mind as it reflects upon itself, while practicing Law without knowing Tassawwuf will harden the heart until it’s rigid and stiff incapable of accepting anything outside it’s now narrow point of view.

Being able to accept and understand what is occurring around us and to us is the essence of what Islam is trying to achieve, Allah for instance will say to the people of Jannah (Heaven) just before they enter it, which is the moment they are about to experience the perfected life of Allah for the first time, “O soul made peaceful, return to your Lord, accepted and accepting” (89:28), because Allah is always revealing more of himself to creation a dead heart will be cut off from that place because they are not fit for it.

Imam Shafi’i (d.204) who founded the Shafii Madhhab said “I accompanied the Sufis for ten years and benefited from them two sayings:

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[and in another report three sayings]: their statement that time is as a sword: if you do not cut it, it cuts you, and their statement that deprivation is immunity.” He is also reported to have said: “their statement: if your soul does not keep busy with truth it will keep you busy with falsehood (batil).” (“Narrated from Muhammad ibn Muh.ammad ibn Idris al-Shafi’i by al Bayhaqi in Manaqib al-Shafi’i (2:208) cf. Ibn al-Qayyim in Madarij al-Salikin (3:128) and al-

Jawab al-Kafi (p. 208-209) and al-Suyuti in Ta'yid al-H.aqiqat al-`Aliyya (p. 15)”)

The Imam also said “I accompanied the Sufi people and I received from them three (types of) knowledge: ...how to speak; how to treat people with leniency and a soft heart, and they guided me in the ways of Sufism (Tassawwuf).” (Kashf al-Khafa, ‘Ajluni, vol. 1, p 341.) And “Three things in this world have been made lovely to me: avoiding affectation, treating people kindly, and following the way of tasawwuf” (al- `Ajluni, Kashf al-khafa wa muzil al-albas 1:341 (#1089).)

Imam Shafii wrote in al Diwan, a work of the Imam’s poetry, as Imam Malik (r.a) himself said, “(Be both) a faqih and a sufi: do not be only one of them, Verily, by Allah’s truth, I am advising you sincerely. [al-Shafii, Diwan, (Beirut and Damascus: Dar al-fikr) p. 47) Imam al-Shafi`i advised: “If a person did NOT exercise Sufism (Tassawwuf) at the beginning of the day, he would not reach Zuhr (noon) except an idiot.” (“Abu Nu`aym narrates this from Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Fadl, from Abu al-Hasan [Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Harith] ibn al Qattat [al-Misri], from the thiqa Muhammad ibn Abi Yahya, from the thiqa Imam Yunus ibn Abdal-A’la, from the Imam.”)

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (d.241AH) who founded the Hanbali Madhhab said “O my son, you have to sit with the People of Sufism (Tassawwuf), because they are like a fountain of knowledge and they keep the Remembrance of Allah in their hearts, they are the ascetics and they have the most spiritual power.” (Tanwir al-Qulub p. 405)

Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Saffarini al-Hanbali (d. 1188 AH) relates from Ibrahim ibn `Abd Allah al-Qalanasi that Imam Ahmad said about the Sufis: “I don’t know people better than them.” (al-Saffarini, Ghidha’ al-albab li-sharh manzumat al-adab (Cairo: Matba`at al-Najah, 1324/1906) 1:120)

Abu Isma`il `Abd Allah al-Harawi al-Ansari (d. 481AH) a Sufi shaykh, hadith master (hafiz), and Qur’anic commentator (mufassir) of the Hanbali school, and a student of Khwaja Abu al-Hasan al-Kharqani (d. 425) the grandshaykh of the early Naqshbandi Sufi path. He was a prolific author of Sufi treatises among them are Kitab `ilal al-maqamat (Book of the pitfalls of spiritual stations), describing the characteristics of spiritual states for the student and the teacher in the Sufi path, and Kitab sad maydan (in Persian, Book of the hundred fields), a commentary on the meanings of love in the verse: “If you love Allah, follow me, and Allah will love you!” (3:31). This book collects al-Harawi’s lectures in the years 447-448 at the Great Mosque of Herat (in present-day Afghanistan) in which he presents his most eloquent exposition of the necessity of following the path of Tassawwuf. (documented by Dhahabi in his Tarikh al-islam and Siyar a`lam al-nubala’, Ibn Rajab in his Dhayl tabaqat al-hanabila, and Jami in his book in Persian Manaqib-i Shaykh al-Islam Ansari.) Fakhr ad-Din ar-Razi (d.606 AH) was a Shafi`i scholar of genius and a mujtahid Imam (one of the highest degrees of scholarship) in tenets of faith (Aqeedah), he was among the foremost figures of his time in mastery of rational and traditional Islamic sciences, and preserved the religion of Ahl al-Sunna from the deviations of the Mu`tazilites (a heretical sect), Shiites, Anthropomorphists (those who say Allah has a body), and other aberrant sects of his era. He said: “The way of Sufis for seeking Knowledge, is to disconnect

themselves from this worldly life, and they keep themselves constantly busy with Dhikrullah, in all their actions and behaviors.” [‘Itiqadaat Furaq al-Muslimeen]

He wrote in his I’tiqadat firaq al-muslimin wa al-mushrikin: The summary of what the people of Tassawwuf say is that the way to the knowledge of Allah is self-purification and renunciation of material attachments, and this is an

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excellent way... The people of Tassawwuf are a folk who work with reflection and the detaching of the self from materialistic trappings. They strive in order that their inner being be solely occupied with the remembrance of Allah in all of their occupations and their actions, and they are characterized by the perfection of their manners in dealing with Allah. Verily these are the best of all the groups of human beings.

Imam Nawawi (d.676 AH) was one of the great Sufi scholars and a Wali of Allah, the strictest hadith master, and the most meticulous of jurists, he was Shaykh al-Islam, along with Imam al-Rafi`i he was the principal reference of the late Shafi`i madhhab. His books remain authoritative in the methodology of the law, in Qur’an commentary, and in hadith. His commentary of Sahih Muslim is second only to Ibn Hajar’s commentary of Sahih Bukhari. Allah gave his famous compilation of Forty Hadiths more circulation and fame than possibly any other book of hadith, large or small, and has allowed Imam Nawawi to be of immense benefit to the Islamic ummah, he was also the author of the famous Riyad al Salihin (Gardens of the Righteous).

He Said: “The specifications of the Way of the Sufis are ... to keep the Presence of Allah in your heart in public and in private; to

follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (s) ... to be happy with what Allah gave you...” (Maqasid at-tawhid).

Imam Tajuddin as-Subki (727 – 771 AH.) a famous Mujtahid Imam said – “May Allah praise them [the Sufis] and greet them and may Allah cause us to be with them in Paradise. Too many things have been said about them and too many ignorant people have said things which are not related to them. And the truth is that those people left the world and were busy with worship. ...They are the People of Allah, whose supplications and prayer Allah accepts and by means of whom Allah supports human beings” [Mu’eed an-Na’am, the chapter entitled Tasawwuf]

Imam Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (d. 790) Was one of the foundational scholars of Usul al-fiqh, or methodology of law whose books, like Imam al-Ghazali’s, are

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required reading in that field, he laid great emphasis on the requirement of complete knowledge and erudition in the Arabic language, not merely correct understanding for those who practice ijtihad (legal reasoning). In his book al-Muwafaqat fi usul al-shari’a (The congruences of the sources of the Divine Law) he held that the language of the Qur’an and the Sunna is the key to the comprehension of such scholars, and that the ijtihad (legal judgment) of anyone (that is) deficient in this respect was unacceptable. Since the opinion of the mujtahid is a hujja or proof for the common person, this degree of authority necessitates direct access to the sources and full competence in Arabic. (al-Shatibi, al-Muwafaqa fi usul al-shari’a (Cairo:al-maktaba al-tijariyya al-kubra, 1975) 4:60)

He writes in his book *al-Itisam*: Many of the ignorant think that the Sufis are lax in conforming to *Shari`a*. Far be it from them to be attributed such a belief! The very first foundation of their path is the Sunna and the avoidance of what contravenes it!

Jalaluddin as-Suyuti (d.911) He was Shaykh al-Islam al-Suyuti, the Renewer (*mujadid*) of the Eighth Islamic century and a Mujtahid Imam, He said in his book on *tasawwuf* entitled *Ta'yid al-haqiqah al-'aliyyah wa-tashyid al-tariqah al-shadhiliyyah* (The upholding of the lofty truth and the buttressing of the Shadhili path): *Tasawwuf* in itself is a most honorable knowledge. It explains how to follow the Sunna of the Prophet and to leave innovation, how to purify the ego... and submit to Allah truly...I have looked at the matters which the Imams of *Shari`a* have criticized in Sufis, and I did not see a single true Sufi holding such positions. Rather, they are held by the people of innovation and the extremists who have claimed for themselves the title of Sufi while in reality they are not...Pursuit of the science of the hearts, knowledge of its diseases such as jealousy, arrogance and pride, and leaving them are an obligation on every Muslim. (al-Suyuti, *Ta'yid al-haqiqah al-'aliyyah wa-tashyid al-tariqah al-shadhiliyyah*, ed. `Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn al-Siddiq al-Ghumari al-Hasani (Cairo: al-matba`a al-islamiyyah, 1934), p. 56-57.)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (d.974) was a student of Zakariyyah al-Ansari, he represents the foremost resource for legal opinion (*fatwa*) in the entire late Shafi`i school. He was once asked about the legal status of those who criticize Sufis: Is there an excuse for such critics? He replies in his *Fatawa hadithiyyah*: "It is incumbent upon every person endowed with mind and religion not to fall into the trap of criticizing these folk (Sufis), for it is a

mortal poison, as has been witnessed of old and recently.” (Ibn Hajar al Haytami, *Fatawa hadithiyya* (Cairo: al-Halabi, 1970) p. 331).

Mulla `Ali al-Qari (d. 1014) Was one of the great Hanafi masters of hadith and Imams of fiqh, Qur’anic commentary, language, history and tasawwuf, he authored several great commentaries such as al-Mirqat on Mishkat al masabih in several volumes, a two-volume commentary on Qadi `Iyad’s al Shifa’, and a two-volume commentary on Ghazali’s abridgment of the Ihya entitled `Ayn al-`ilm wa zayn al-hilm (The spring of knowledge and the adornment of understanding). His book of prophetic invocations, al-Hizb al a`zam (The supreme daily dhikr) forms the basis of Imam al-Jazuli’s celebrated manual of dhikr, Dala’il al-khayrat, which along with the Qur’an is recited daily by many pious Muslims around the world.

The last chapter of Imam Qari’s commentary on Imam al Ghazali, perhaps the most valuable of the entire work, is devoted to Imam Ghazali’s and Imam Qari’s explanations of the verse “If you love Allah, follow me, and Allah will love you!” (3:31) and is reminiscent of al-Harawi’s Kitab sad maydan on the same topic. In it Imam Qari cites al-Hasan al-Basri as saying: “Whoever (truly) knows his Lord loves Him, and whoever (truly) knows the world does without it.” Imam Qari begins the chapter with a warning that the various spiritual states of love for Allah described by the people of Tassawwuf in their terminology all proceed from the same Qur’anic source and that it is not permitted to deny them unless one denies the source itself: Love and the discipline of the path (al-mahabba wa al-suluk) mean the path of love and longing, and whoever does not “scoop his drink from the ocean of gnosticism” (maarifa) does not know the reality of love, even if the genus, examples, and

terminology are different. Love has no other meaning than the exhortation to obedience, and whoever denies love denies familiarity (uns) and passion (shawq) and taste (dhawq) and effacement (mahu) and clarity (sahu) and extinction (fana') and subsistence (baqa') and contraction (qabd) and expansion (bast) and all the rest of the necessary characteristics of love and longing, and the rest of the stations of the People of Gnosis. (al Qari, Sharh 'Ayn al-'ilm wa zayn al-hilm, Ibid. 2:354-355.)

Ibn 'Abidin (d.1252) Nicknamed the Seal of Self-Realized Scholars (khatimat al-muhaqqiqin), the great scholar and faqih of the Hanafi madhhab and the late Ottoman Khalifah said in his fatwa on the permissibility of loud dhikr in assembly – “The Seekers in this Sufi Way don't hear except from the Divine

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Presence and they don't love any but Him. If they remember Him they cry, and if they thank Him they are happy; ... May Allah bless them.” (Risa'il Ibn 'Abidin)

From the first days of Islam, the science of Tasawwuf was developed, understood and practiced by the tabiin and those who came after them. Imam al Shatibi was one of the foundational scholars of Usul al-fiqh or methodology of law, he said regarding tassawwuf:

Their chief spokesman and the master of their ways and group, Abu al Qasim al-Qushayri, declared that they acquired the name of tasawwuf in order to dissociate themselves from the People of Innovation. He mentioned that the most honorable of Muslims after the Prophet did not give themselves, in their time, any other title than Companions, as there is no merit above that of being a Companion — then those who followed them were called the

Successors. After that the people differed and the disparity of level among them became more apparent. The elite among whom prudence in belief was seen to be intense were then called zuhhad and `ubbad, (Zuhad or Zahid translates as Sufi). Subsequently all kinds of innovations made their appearance, and the elite of Ahl al-Sunna who observed their obligations with Allah, and preserved their hearts from heedlessness became unique in their kind under the name of tasawwuf. ( al-Shatibi, al-I`tisam min al-kutub, quoted in al-Muslim: majallat al-`ashira al-muhammadiyya (Dhu al-qi`da 1373).)

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Chapter 2 : Development & Evolution of Sufism

Systematization of Sufism Across different time period of Islamic History (medieval & Post medieval development)

Sufism has been around since the time of the Prophet Muhammad himself, thus being the archetypal Sufi in a sense—the person that all Sufis want to emulate. This connection also becomes clear from the theory about the *Aṣḥāb al-Ṣuffah*.

Historically, it's hard to verify such claims, but what we can be sure about is that the Sufis, as a distinct movement, appear in the historical record very early on—from the 8th century or so. It's after this that people start being referred to as Sufis.

But like we said, Sufis themselves will argue that even though the name didn't exist, the phenomenon itself comes directly from the Prophet and even from before him—an attitude really well exemplified by the Sufi figure Ali al-Hujwiri, who writes in the 11th century that:

“Today tasawwuf is a name without a reality, whereas before it was a reality without a name.”

Some of these earliest Sufis include figures like Bishr al-Hafi (Bishr the Barefoot), the female Rabi‘a al-Basri, Abu Sulayman al-Darani, among others.

The transition from individual mystical practice to organized communities occurred gradually between the 9th and 12th centuries CE. During this formative period, spiritual masters began gathering disciples around them, teaching specific methods of spiritual purification and mystical awareness. These loose gatherings initially

lacked formal organizational structures but centered around the charismatic authority of particular masters. It can be said that there were many parallel mystical movements emerging at the time, not all of which can be called Sufism without further nuance.

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The first wave of systematization of tasawwuf/sufism and the beginnings of its entry into a more mainstream aspect of Islam comes with the first Sufi manuals in the 10th and 11th centuries — textual works of Sufism that cover the basics of its terms, ideas, and practices, as well as containing biographies of its important foundational figures.

These works include -

Risalat al Qushayriyya - “The Epistle on Sufism” by al-Qushayri (d. 1072) Kitab al Luma - “The Book of Flashes on Sufism” by al-Sarraj (d. 988) Kashf al Mahjub - “Unveiling of the Hidden” by al-Hujwiri (d. 1077) and Qut al Qulub - “The Sustenance of Hearts” by Abu Talib al-Makki (d. 996)

These works have served as key sources for Sufi teachings and concepts throughout history, and we still rely on them, along with other biographical accounts, for our knowledge of some of the earliest Sufi figures. They also served as important factors in the wider acceptance of Sufism in the Islamic world. It is true that the Sufis and their practices were considered suspect by some other Muslims, and these Sufi manuals served partly as a way of proving or clarifying that Sufi practices and ideas were in line with the Islamic religion and its law.

And this is precisely what we see — a gradual growth of Sufism and a wider acceptance of its principles into mainstream Islamic practice

and theology, especially in the 11th to 12th centuries, at which point it basically becomes the mainstream and remains the mainstream or majority expression of Islam until essentially the 19th century.

This solidification of Sufism is often associated with the figure Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, a very famous and influential scholar, theologian, and mystic, who, in his masterful work **Ihya Ulum al-Din** (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), creates a grand synthesis of all aspects of Islamic learning and practice, where he also incorporates tasawwuf and the Sufi path as an essential part.

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Ghazali's works became a paradigm for orthodox Sunni Islam and thus were incredibly influential in this regard.

Now, he wasn't fully responsible for this development himself, as we saw — this had been a gradual development involving the other Sufi writers mentioned — but there's no denying that Ghazali and related figures were very important for this solidification of Sufism as a mainstream aspect of at least Sunni Islam.

By the 12th century CE, these informal spiritual communities evolved into more structured organizations with distinct identities, practices, and lineages. This marked the birth of the tariqa system as we understand it today—a development that fundamentally altered the landscape of Islamic spirituality. As one scholar notes: “From the 6th century AH, or 12th century AD, onwards, the Sufi movement would evolve and expand into what are today recognized in the representation of Sufi turuq or orders, which continue to flourish and spread throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds until this very day. As we saw earlier, Sufism was always concerned with spiritual lineage, with the relationship between master and

student and the spiritual transmission that was handed down in this kind of line between master and student.

The institutionalization of Sufism through orders represented a response to specific historical circumstances and spiritual needs. As Islamic civilization expanded geographically and grew more complex socially, Sufi orders provided structures for spiritual education, community organization, and cultural integration. This period saw the establishment of physical infrastructure associated with Sufi practice-the zawiya (lodge), ribat (retreat), khanaqah (hospice), and tekke (meeting house)-creating spaces for both intensive spiritual practice and community engagement.

The patronage of these institutions served important political and religious functions. Rulers demonstrated their piety and garnered public support by funding Sufi establishments. Nur ad-Din Zangi was the first major patron of Sufi structures in Syria, building and gifting khanqahs to Sufi groups throughout his domain. In Damascus, these institutions were centrally

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located near the Umayyad Mosque, often paired with madrasas dedicated to the same patron.

In Egypt, Saladin founded the first khanqah in Cairo in 1173, marking his defeat of the Fatimids and the beginning of Ayyubid Sunnism. He converted the Sa'id al-Su'ada, a Fatimid palace, into a Sufi khanqah called al-Khanaqah al-Salahiyya⁵. This institution provided accommodation for visiting Sufis and created the role of the Chief Sufi, who operated daily activities and mentored resident Sufis. This position carried significant influence, maintaining close

relationships with the Sultan and obtaining military power and educational authority in local madrasas.

as an example, one of the earliest Sufi orders in history is the so-called Qadiriyya order, which remains one of the largest and most widespread in the world today. this tariqa was formed around and takes its name from the famous 12th-century Baghdadi Sufi, Abdul Qadir al-Jilani.

another example is the more worldwide famous Mevlevi order, which was formed based on the teachings, lineage, and personality of the famous Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Rumi, and in this case it's named after the common title that he was called by, Mawlana or Mevlana, which means "our master."

These orders have this idea of lineage at the root and will always have a particular chain of transmission, or silsila in Arabic, unique to that order. Any initiate in the order takes on a master that was given spiritual transmission by his master in the order, who has given it from his master, and so on. The chain of a Sufi order always goes through the founder of that order, so in the case of the Qadiriyya through Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, but also beyond them and further back all the way to the Prophet Muhammad.

In other words, all spiritual lineage in Sufism claims to go back to the Prophet SAW himself, and this is a very important factor in their legitimacy, which of course also helped in their wider acceptance of Sufism in the Islamic world.

Post-Medieval Developments

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So these are some of the basics of Sufism developed in their more systematized forms in the Middle Ages, but we should not fall

into the trap of talking about Sufism and thinking about Sufism in a sense that it hasn't developed further since the Middle Ages.

A lot of people, even scholars, often make this mistake of talking about the Middle Ages and not later centuries and today, and how things have developed.

The proliferation of orders accelerated dramatically between the 13th and 16th centuries, with distinctive regional manifestations emerging throughout the Islamic world. By the mid-20th century, hundreds of orders existed with memberships in the millions. This expansion created a complex ecosystem of spiritual lineages, with new orders often developing as offshoots from established ones—a process of spiritual diversification that continues today.

Sufism has continued to develop and change over these centuries, even though certain key characteristics that we have talked about do remain key principles and aspects.

But I focus so much on this period here because it is so formative. In many ways, it is in this period that many Sufi ideas are systematized and formalized in a concrete way for the first time, and that Sufism is also institutionalized through the Sufi orders in a way that would continue to be very influential throughout history.

Like we said, from this period—from the Middle Ages, especially the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries—Sufism basically becomes mainstream Islam. It is part of the mainstream, majority expression of Islam right up until the modern age in the 19th and 20th centuries, and sometimes, in some parts of the world today, it still holds this kind of position.

A good example is West Africa, in places like Senegal and The Gambia, where over 90% of the population are Muslims, and a

further 90% of those Muslims are connected to Sufi brotherhoods and are Sufi, so to speak. This reflects the way that Sufism worked historically, but maybe not so much in many other parts of the Islamic world today.

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Although tasawwuf isn't as prominent throughout the Islamic world as it was earlier, it still is a significant presence across the world. Like I said, in places like Senegal, where over 90% of the population are Muslim, an additional 90% of those Muslims belong to a Sufi brotherhood.

But in short terms, it's a combination of colonialism and the connected rise of modernist reform movements within Islam that looked at Sufism as superstition. Basically, to the modernist Muslims of the 19th and 20th centuries, Sufism was an ideology based on old, superstitious traditions, which had polluted the rational, "true" religion of Islam, which they sought to reconstruct.

Some of these modernist traditions of the more radical sort, such as Salafis and Wahhabis, similarly see Sufism as reprehensible innovation, accusing Sufis of things like grave worshipping, for different reasons among other things. Western interventions and colonialism also played a role.

These modernist movements within Islam became very popular over the course of the 20th century and have thus influenced the general situation to a major degree. Similarly, orientalist scholars and Europeans who got their hands on Sufi literature had a hard time reconciling their preconceived notions about Islam with the beautiful and sophisticated ideas of Sufism.

So increasingly, they pushed the idea that they must somehow be two different things—that Sufism and mysticism survived in spite

of Islam rather than as a result of it. In other words, this idea of “Sufism” as a category that can be distinguished from Islam, or even seen as two fundamentally different things, became more pronounced through these developments from different fronts, both from within the Islamic world and from the outside.

And while Sufism has seen a kind of resurgence in some regions today, the general situation still remains: Sufis are comparatively marginal in some major parts of the Islamic world and even face oppression in some places.

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In all this, the Sufis in the Islamic world today often emphasize their role as representing a true, traditional Islam that is open, tolerant, and peaceful, in opposition to the more modernist and often fundamentalist radical movements within Islam, like Salafism and Wahhabism. This is, in fact, a very important aspect of many Sufi self-understandings today—identifying themselves in opposition to these other groups.

At the same time, with increased globalization, Sufism has also made its way into the West to a much larger degree today—not only through immigrants coming from the Middle East and the Islamic world and bringing their native traditions with them, but also through other means.

Sufism entered Europe and America as a kind of universalist spirituality. This idea becomes very prominent in the 20th century—a Sufism that is not necessarily connected to Islam, but seen as part of a larger perennial wisdom or universal spirituality.

This idea was very much influenced and spearheaded by movements like the Theosophical Society, writers like Idris Shah, to some

degree the perennialist movement, and of course also the general interest in Eastern spirituality in the 1960s and 70s.

All these developments also led to a new kind of Sufism appearing in the Western world. A key figure in this development is the Chishti Sufi teacher Inayat Khan, who is often said to have been the first figure to bring Sufism to the West. Increasingly, he presented it in a more universalist form—you didn't have to be Muslim to be Sufi, in other words.

And this idea of Sufism has continued to be very popular to this day. So we see various kinds of Sufism around the world currently—it's certainly a global phenomenon—but Sufis can look rather different depending on the context.

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There are those that are still deeply connected to the traditional forms of tasawwuf as simply the way that Islam is practiced, organized in the established Sufi orders and their spiritual lineages. But there are also many Sufi groups and individuals that emphasize universalist interpretations where adherence to Islam isn't necessarily a requirement, and various approaches in between on a spectrum.

In other words, while it is quite easy to say that Sufism is fundamentally a part of the religion of Islam, when looking at its history, that statement isn't as obviously true in all cases today, at least without further nuance.

Historical Patterns of Expansion

The geographical expansion of Sufi orders created distinctive patterns of transnational connection that transcended political boundaries while maintaining deep local roots. These patterns of circulation and exchange have evolved over centuries, creating complex networks that continue to shape contemporary Islamic spirituality.

The geographical spread of Sufi orders followed distinctive historical patterns, with orders initially emerging in centers of Islamic learning before expanding along trade routes, pilgrimage paths, and political networks. Major orders developed regional concentrations while maintaining connections to their places of origin, creating overlapping zones of influence across the Islamic world.

Historical evidence indicates that “from the eleventh century the *zawiyas* and *khanaqahs* which provided temporary resting-places for wandering Sufis spread the new devotional life throughout the countryside and played a decisive role in the Islamization of borderland and non-Arab regions in central Asia and north Africa”⁶. This process created a complex geography of spiritual lineages that connected distant regions through shared practices and affiliations.

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The reality of Sufi orders as transnational institutions depended on constant circulation of people, texts, and ideas across geographical boundaries. This circulation occurred through multiple channels:

1. Travel of masters to establish new branches
2. Journeys of disciples seeking instruction from renowned shaykhs
3. Pilgrimage to tombs of founding figures

4. Exchange of instructional texts and spiritual poetry
5. Correspondence between affiliated centers

These patterns of movement created what scholars have called “Muslim circulations and networks” that knitted together diverse regions through shared spiritual affiliations. As one study explains, “Sufism operated in the service of economic, religious, and political proselytization and mediation across West Asia”⁹. These networks facilitated not only spiritual exchange but also cultural, intellectual, and sometimes commercial connections across vast distances.

Organizational Structure: The Anatomy of Sufi Orders

Sufi orders developed distinctive organizational structures that balanced hierarchical authority with communal participation. These structures provided frameworks for transmitting spiritual knowledge, maintaining doctrinal continuity, and adapting to diverse social contexts.

The Master-Disciple Relationship

At the core of every Sufi order lies the relationship between spiritual master (variously called shaykh, murshid, or pir) and disciple (murid). This relationship transcends mere educational instruction, instead representing a profound spiritual connection through which mystical knowledge and blessings are transmitted. The master-disciple relationship in Sufism typically demands complete surrender to the guide’s authority in spiritual matters, with disciples expected to follow the master’s directives without question.

This hierarchical relationship exists within a framework of mutual obligation. The master assumes responsibility for the disciple's spiritual development, while the disciple commits to obedience, service, and diligent practice. This seemingly authoritarian dimension must be understood within the context of traditional Islamic educational methodologies, where surrender to a teacher's authority is seen as necessary for overcoming the ego's resistance to transformation.

Chains of Transmission and Lineage

Every legitimate Sufi order claims authenticity through an unbroken chain of spiritual transmission (silsilah) connecting the current leadership to the Prophet Muhammad¹⁵. These spiritual genealogies serve multiple functions: they establish doctrinal legitimacy, provide models for emulation, and create a sense of connection to the foundational period of Islam. As one source explains: "All true Sufi tariqas have a lineage that is traceable to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through his son-in-law Hazrat Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) or Hz. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him)".

The silsilah represents more than historical documentation; it embodies a living transmission of spiritual states (hal) and stations (maqam) from master to disciple across generations. This concept of unbroken spiritual lineage distinguishes Sufi orders from other religious organizations and reinforces their claim to authentic spiritual authority within Islamic tradition

Hierarchical Structures and Community Organization :

Beyond the master-disciple relationship, Sufi orders developed complex organizational hierarchies to manage growing communities.

These typically include several ranks of spiritual advancement and administrative responsibility:

1. The shaykh or pir (supreme master)
2. Senior khalifas (representatives authorized to initiate others)

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3. Muqaddams (local leaders with limited authority)
4. Devoted murids (fully initiated disciples)
5. Casual affiliates and sympathizers

This hierarchical structure allows orders to maintain core spiritual practices while expanding geographically. The order's central leadership typically maintains doctrinal and methodological consistency, while local representatives adapt practices to specific cultural contexts.

Initiation and Membership

Formal initiation (bay'ah or intisab) marks the entry into a Sufi order as a committed disciple. This ceremony typically involves a pledge of allegiance to the master, the order's spiritual lineage, and its methodological approach. Initiation creates a spiritual covenant between master and disciple that transcends ordinary social relationships.

Membership within Sufi orders exists on a spectrum of commitment—from casual affiliates who occasionally participate in public ceremonies to devoted disciples who structure their entire lives around the order's practices and community. This flexibility in membership requirements has contributed to orders' ability to integrate into diverse social contexts while maintaining spiritual integrity.

The Sufi Center: Heart of Communal Practice

Sufi centers-known variously as zawiya, ribat, khanaqah, tekke, or dargah depending on regional terminology-constitute the primary physical manifestation of Sufi orders⁶. These institutions serve multiple functions simultaneously: “For the general population, a Sufi Centre may be seen as a place where people gather and worship. For adherents of Sufism, the Sufi Centre is a transformative place where teaching is transmitted, subtle energy (baraka) is concentrated, and soteriological development is intensified”.

The architectural arrangement of Sufi centers typically reflects their spiritual function, with spaces dedicated to different aspects of practice: areas for communal worship, private meditation, religious instruction, and

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hospitality. Many centers also incorporate the tombs of venerated masters, creating sacred geography that connects living practitioners with the order’s spiritual lineage.

Economic Foundations and Material Culture

Sufi orders developed distinctive economic models to support their institutional activities. Historically, many orders maintained economic independence through a combination of endowments (waqf), agricultural properties, donations from disciples and patrons, and income-generating crafts or trades⁶. This economic self-sufficiency allowed orders to maintain autonomy from political authorities while providing services to surrounding communities.

The material culture associated with Sufi orders-including distinctive clothing, ritual objects, calligraphic art, and musical instruments-constitutes another dimension of their physical reality. These material expressions both reflect and reinforce the orders’

spiritual identities, creating visual and tactile connections to abstract metaphysical concepts.

Conceptual Foundations: The Intellectual Architecture of Sufi Orders

Sufi orders are built upon complex theological and metaphysical foundations that provide intellectual frameworks for understanding mystical experience within Islamic orthodoxy. These conceptual systems articulate distinctive perspectives on divine unity, spiritual authority, and the relationship between esoteric and exoteric dimensions of religion.

Spiritual Epistemology: Knowledge Through Experience

Sufi orders share a distinctive epistemological approach that privileges experiential knowledge (ma'rifa) over theoretical understanding. This perspective values direct spiritual realization above intellectual comprehension, though it does not reject the latter entirely. As one source indicates, tariqa refers to “the Muslim spiritual path toward direct knowledge (ma'rifah) of God or Reality (haqq)”.

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This epistemological framework distinguishes three levels of religious understanding:

1. Shari'a (exoteric law or “path to the waterhole”)
2. Tariqa (esoteric path or methodology)
3. Haqiqa (ultimate truth or reality)

Some orders add a fourth level-ma'rifa (direct knowledge through experience)-representing the culmination of the spiritual journey⁵. This hierarchy of knowledge creates a developmental model for spiritual progression that guides disciples' expectations and practices.

Integration of Law and Mysticism

Despite their emphasis on direct spiritual experience, most Sufi orders maintain that adherence to Islamic law (shari'a) forms the necessary foundation for spiritual advancement. The relationship between legal observance and mystical practice takes different forms across orders, but typically involves viewing external religious obligations as preparatory for internal spiritual realizations.

As Islamic mysticism developed institutionally, two primary approaches to reconciling mysticism with orthodoxy emerged. The first, associated with figures like al-Ghazali (d.1111 CE), sought "to find a convincing formula for reconciling the knowledge of the inner self and the spirit of Sufism with Islamic law in its manifest form"¹⁶. The second, associated with Ibn Arabi and others, attempted to reconcile Sufism "with what is called the 'inner and esoteric meaning and spirit of Islamic shari'a (or law)' in its profound sense, and in its higher meaning".

These integrative approaches helped Sufi orders establish legitimate positions within mainstream Islamic discourse while maintaining distinctive spiritual perspectives. They also contributed to the orders' resilience in the face of criticism from purely legalistic interpretations of religion.

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Sufi Practices & Methods :

The distinctive methodologies for spiritual cultivation constitute the functional core of Sufi orders. These practices-ranging from

controlled breathing and movement to chanting and meditation-represent sophisticated technologies for transforming consciousness and cultivating direct experience of divine reality.

Dhikr: Remembrance as Spiritual Technology

The practice of dhikr (remembrance of God through repetitive invocation) forms the methodological cornerstone of virtually all Sufi orders. While specific techniques vary considerably, the fundamental practice involves systematic repetition of divine names, religious formulas, or sacred phrases as a means of concentrating attention and transforming consciousness.

Each order typically maintains distinctive forms of dhikr, with variations in the formulas recited, bodily postures adopted, breathing techniques employed, and whether practice occurs silently or vocally. These specific methods are transmitted from master to disciple as part of the order's spiritual heritage. According to tradition, "Prophet [Muhammad] taught these esteemed individuals how to do zikr (the Sufi practice of repeating the Names of Allah) in two different ways. These methods were passed down through generations and are the foundation upon which the Sufi tariqas were later established".

Sama: Spiritual Concerts and Ritual Movement

Many orders incorporate ceremonies involving music, poetry, and movement as means of inducing altered states of consciousness conducive to spiritual realization. These practices-variously called sama (audition), hadra (presence), or in some cases involving the distinctive whirling meditation of the Mevlevi order-use rhythmic sound and motion to transcend ordinary consciousness.

Though specific forms vary dramatically across orders, these ceremonies typically combine recitation of mystical poetry, instrumental music, controlled breathing, and ritualized movement to create immersive experiences that bypass intellectual analysis. Some orders maintain austere approaches to such practices, while others developed what outsiders described as “wild acrobatics, activities that earned for some of the orders the names whirling, howling, and dancing dervishes”.

Spiritual Retreat: Khalwa and Uzla

Practices of spiritual seclusion-variously called khalwa (retreat) or uzla (solitude)-constitute another methodological element common to many orders. These practices involve temporary withdrawal from social interaction to focus intensely on spiritual exercises under the guidance of a master.

During retreats, disciples typically engage in intensive programs of prayer, fasting, dhikr, and contemplation designed to induce transformative spiritual states. The duration, frequency, and specific practices associated with retreat vary across orders, but the underlying principle of temporary withdrawal for spiritual intensification remains consistent.

Muraqaba: Meditation and Contemplation

Muraqaba, or spiritual meditation, is another core practice in Sufism. It involves inner spiritual development through meditation and contemplation. Sufis believe that by turning inward and seeking a deeper connection with the divine, they can attain a state of spiritual enlightenment and union with God.

This practice is achieved through various techniques, such as focusing on the breath, silent meditation, or contemplating divine attributes. The goal is to quiet the mind and open the heart to

divine presence, leading to direct experiential knowledge of spiritual realities.

Ethical Formation and Character Development

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Beyond specific meditative techniques, Sufi orders emphasize comprehensive ethical and moral development as essential to spiritual advancement. This formative dimension focuses on cultivating virtues such as humility, generosity, patience, gratitude, and selfless service while systematically addressing character flaws.

The process of ethical formation typically involves regular self-examination (muhasaba), confession of faults to the master, practices of repentance (tawba), and gradually increasing moral responsibilities within the community. This ethical dimension establishes Sufism as a comprehensive way of life rather than merely a set of meditative techniques: “Sufism is a way of looking at the world and a way of living in the world. It emphasizes bringing one’s highest ideals into everyday practice”.

The Path of Transformation

Through all the aforementioned methodologies The Sufi path represents a systematic approach to spiritual transformation, structured around a series of stages or stations (maqamat) that the seeker must traverse and states (ahwal) that are experienced along the way. These elements form the foundation of Sufi practice and provide a roadmap for the inner journey toward divine realization. The maqamat represent specific spiritual stages or stations that a Sufi must attain and master before moving to the next level. As described in the search results, “Maqām (Arabic: ^{مقام} ‘station’; plural ^{مقامات} refers) ^{maqāmāt} ^{مقامات} to each stage a Sufi’s soul must attain in its search

for God”. These stations are “derived from the most routine considerations a Sufi must deal with on a day-to-day basis and is essentially an embodiment of both mystical knowledge and Islamic law (Sharia)”.

While different Sufi orders may enumerate these stations differently, there is general agreement on a core set of stations including: “Tawba, Wara’, Zuhd, Faqr, Şabr, Tawakkul, and Riḍā”.

These can be understood as follows:

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1. Tawba (Repentance): The initial station of turning away from sin and returning to God. As Al-Ghazali described it, Tawba is “the repentance of a sin with the promise that it will not be repeated and that the sinner will return to God”. This represents the starting point of the spiritual journey.

2.Wara’ (Caution): A heightened state of moral vigilance where the seeker carefully avoids not only what is forbidden but also what is doubtful.

3.Zuhd (Detachment): The station of asceticism and renunciation of worldly attachments, allowing the heart to focus more fully on God.

4.Faqr (Spiritual Poverty): A recognition of one’s complete dependence on God and detachment from material concerns.

5.Sabr (Patience): The cultivation of steadfastness in the face of difficulties and trials.

6.Tawakkul (Trust in God): Complete reliance on divine providence, sometimes “practiced to such an extent that every thought of tomorrow was considered irreligious”.

7. Rida (Contentment): The state of being pleased with whatever God has decreed, representing a profound level of surrender.

The Metaphysical Dimensions of Sufism

Sufism encompasses a sophisticated metaphysical framework that provides the philosophical foundation for its spiritual practices and mystical experiences. While sometimes presented as opposed to rational philosophy, Sufism in fact incorporates profound philosophical insights that address fundamental questions about the nature of reality, God, and human existence.

Wahdat al-Wujud: The Unity of Being

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One of the most significant metaphysical concepts in Sufism is *wahdat al wujud* (unity of being), a doctrine “according to which the monotheistic God is identical with existence (*wujud*) and this one existence is that through which all existing things (*mawjūdāt*) exist”⁹. This concept is particularly associated with Ibn Arabi, described as “the greatest of all Muslim philosophers” and “the Greatest Master,” whose works synthesized Islamic sciences including “Koran commentary, Hadith (sayings of Muhammad), jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, and mysticism”.

Wahdat al-wujud represents a sophisticated ontological view that recognizes the unity underlying apparent multiplicity. While sometimes characterized as “ontological monism” or criticized as “pantheistic heresy,” its proponents emphasized that “this teaching did not provide any justification for transgressing Sharia”. Rather than identifying God with the physical universe in a simplistic manner, this doctrine suggests that existence itself is singular and that all apparently separate existents derive their being from the one absolute existence that is God.

Ibn Arabi's metaphysical vision included the concept of the "Muhammadan Reality" (al-haqiqah al-Muhammadiyah), described as "the master of all creatures and a central model for human emulation". This concept refers to the essence or spiritual reality of the Prophet Muhammad, understood not merely as a historical individual but as a cosmic principle representing perfect human realization of divine attributes.

Haqq and Haqiqa: Truth and Reality

Central to Sufi metaphysics are the interrelated concepts of haqq (truth) and haqiqa (reality). Haqq "denotes that an utterance, an act, or a creed is totally in agreement with what is originally true, real, and genuine". When used without reference to anything particular, haqq refers to "the Divine Being". Haqiqa, derived from the same root, means "the essence and original or exact form of something; that which is genuine and real, not figurative".

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In Sufi metaphysics, haqiqa represents the ultimate reality behind the appearances of the phenomenal world. The Sufis called themselves "ahl al haqiqah" ("the people of truth") to distinguish themselves from "ahl ash shari'ah" ("the people of religious law"). This distinction highlighted the Sufi emphasis on penetrating beyond external forms to the inner reality of existence.

The realization of haqiqa comes through the spiritual journey, as it is "the mystical truth or reality that is revealed to the seeker after traversing the path of Tariqa"¹¹⁸. This realization involves direct perception of the divine reality underlying all existence, a perception that transcends ordinary dualistic consciousness.

Tawhid: Divine Unity

Sufi metaphysics places special emphasis on tawhid (divine unity), described as “the central concern of the Sufis, as of every Muslim”. While all Muslims affirm that “there is no deity but God,” Sufis have explored the profound implications of this principle beyond its basic theological meaning.

Early Sufism understood tawhid as involving “the approach to God through love and voluntary suffering until a unity of will was reached”. Later developments included understanding tawhid as “recognizing God as He was before creation,” seeing God as “the One and only actor” who alone “has the right to say ‘I’”. In its most developed form, tawhid came to mean “the knowledge that there is nothing existent but God, or the ability to see God and creation as two aspects of one reality, reflecting each other and depending upon each other (wahdat al-wujud)”.

This metaphysical understanding of tawhid has profound implications for spiritual practice, as it suggests that the ultimate goal of the Sufi path is to realize experientially the oneness that exists theoretically. Through practices like dhikr and fana, the Sufi seeks to dissolve the illusory sense of separation from God and recognize the underlying unity of all existence.

Ma'rifa: Mystical Knowledge

Sufi metaphysics incorporates a distinctive epistemology centered on ma'rifa (mystical knowledge or gnosis). Ma'rifa represents “experiential

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knowledge” or “gnosis” of divine reality, described as “an immediate recognition and understanding of the true nature of things as they are”. This form of knowledge differs fundamentally

from rational or theoretical knowledge, as it involves direct perception rather than conceptual understanding.

Ma'rifa is attained by “embarking on a spiritual journey, typically consisting of various stages referred to as ‘stations’ and ‘states.’”. In this process, “the mystic transcends the temptations of the self and is absorbed in God, experiencing a sense of alienation from their own self”. This experience leads to a transformation of consciousness in which the seeker directly perceives divine reality without the mediation of concepts or images.

Al-Ghazali, after his personal spiritual transformation, concluded that this level of mystical understanding “was something that could not be apprehended by academic study, but only meaningfully by immediate experience and ecstasy, by disunion from materialism, and by moral change”. This insight highlights the experiential nature of ma'rifa as a form of knowledge that surpasses rational understanding.

These metaphysical dimensions of Sufism-wahdat al-wujud, haqq and haqiqa, tawhid, and ma'rifa-provide the philosophical framework within which Sufi practices operate. Rather than representing abstract speculation disconnected from practical spirituality, these concepts articulate the underlying principles that give meaning and coherence to the Sufi path. They offer a sophisticated understanding of reality that both guides spiritual practice and makes sense of mystical experience, forming an integral part of Sufism's comprehensive approach to human transformation.

Regional Distribution and Demographics of Sufi Institutions

North Africa and the Maghreb

The Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya) developed a particularly rich tradition of zawiyas that continued to flourish even as Sufi institutions

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faced decline elsewhere. In Algeria alone, more than 1,600 zawiyas existed before independence in 1962¹¹. These institutions were essential to preserving Islamic education during periods of political fragmentation between rival emirates in the 15th century:

“To save Quranic teaching in this conflicting central Maghreb, which later became Algeria, the village customary authorities took charge of safeguarding the Muslim cult by erecting zawiyas in each confederation of tribes”.

The strength of Sufism in modern North African countries is evidenced by demographic data showing high percentages of Muslims identifying with Sufi practices. Senegal leads with an estimated 92% of Muslims having Sufi affiliations, followed by Chad (55%), Cameroon (48%), Niger (47%), and Libya (98%).

Ottoman Territories

In the Ottoman Empire, tekkes (Sufi lodges) were established throughout the territory, with particular concentrations in urban centers like Istanbul. According to Sufi author Samiha Ayverdi, “Until the year 1925, there were 365 dargahs (tekke khanqahs) in Istanbul alone. If each of these had at least fifty members, that would make 18,250 people”¹⁴. When family members and sympathizers are included, the estimate rises

to 91,250 people approximately one-eighth of Istanbul's population of around 800,000 at the time.

The importance of tekkes in Ottoman territorial expansion is evident in their early establishment in newly conquered regions. During the era of Orhan Gazi, approximately one hundred years before the conquest of Istanbul, tekkes were established along the north shore of İzmit Bay, functioning as "advanced outposts" for Ottoman influence⁹. Following the conquest of Istanbul, numerous tekkes were established, including Şeyh Mehmet Geylanî (Bursa) Tekke in Bahçekapı, Akbiyık Tekke in Cankurtaran, and Akbaba Tekke in Beykoz.

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Based on historical records, the number of Istanbul tekkes fluctuated between 250 and 300 throughout the city and its immediate vicinity. These institutions were central to Ottoman religious and cultural life until their closure in 1925.

South Asia

The Indian subcontinent developed a particularly vibrant Sufi institutional culture, with Delhi emerging as a major center. According to the 14th century text *Masalik ul-Absar fi Masalik ul-Amsar* by Shihab ad-din al Umari, Delhi and its surrounding areas had over 2,000 *khanqahs*⁶. This remarkable concentration demonstrates the central role these institutions played in South Asian Islamic culture.

In South Asia, various terms were used for Sufi lodges, including "khānaqāh," "jamā'at-khāna," "takya," "dargāh," "langar," and sometimes "imārat"⁵. Major establishments included the *Madrasa-i-Firozshahi* built by Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq near Hauz-

i-Alai, which was so architecturally impressive that locals relocated to be closer to the complex.

The demographic significance of Sufism in the region continues today, with an estimated 26% of Bangladeshi Muslims, 17% of Pakistani Muslims, and 10% of Indian Muslims identifying with Sufi practices.

Middle East

In Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, khanqahs played a central role in urban religious landscapes, particularly during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. Ibn Jubayr's 12th-century account of Damascus describes numerous ribats (called khanqahs) intended for Sufis, describing them as "lavish palaces with water flowing through them".

In Egypt, Saladin's establishment of the first khanqah in Cairo in the late 12th century set a precedent for state sponsorship of Sufi institutions that continued through the Mamluk period. Unlike in North Africa, where rural zawiyas predominated, Egyptian khanqahs were primarily urban phenomena, often located near centers of political power.

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Modern demographic data shows varying levels of Sufi affiliation in Middle Eastern countries, with significantly lower percentages than in North Africa: Egypt (9%), Lebanon (9%), Jordan (2%), Saudi Arabia (less than 1%), and Yemen (8%).

Central Asia

Central Asia has a long history of Sufi lodges, particularly associated with the Naqshbandi order, which originated in the region. Demographic data shows moderate Sufi populations in modern Central Asian states: Tajikistan (18%), Uzbekistan (11%), Kyrgyzstan (7%), and Kazakhstan (1%).

Contemporary Global Presence of Sufism & It's Nature Today

In the contemporary period, Sufi orders maintain significant global presence through complex networks that connect traditional centers with diaspora communities and new converts. Major orders like the Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, Shadhiliyya, and Tijaniyya maintain branches across multiple continents, adapting their practices to diverse cultural contexts while maintaining core spiritual methodologies.

This global expansion has been facilitated by new communication technologies that enable “communication between the lodges in Bosnia Herzegovina, Egypt, Kosovo, and Turkey via Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp applications, and weekly updates about” activities in different centers⁹. These digital connections supplement rather than replace traditional forms of in-person transmission, creating multi-layered networks that combine physical travel with virtual communication.

Contemporary Adaptations: Sufi Orders in Modern Contexts

Sufi orders have demonstrated remarkable adaptability in response to modern challenges, developing innovative strategies for maintaining spiritual continuity amid rapid social change. These adaptations reveal the

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dynamic nature of Sufi institutions while highlighting tensions between preservation and innovation.

Responses to Religious Reform Movements

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw Sufi orders facing unprecedented challenges from Islamic reform movements

that questioned their legitimacy. As one source explains: “In the Modern age, Sufism suffered a twofold attack: on one hand from ‘Islamic reformists’ (Salafi and Wahabi), who consider Sufism to be a form of innovation and syncretism and, on the other, from ‘Modernists’, who see it as an archaic religious manifestation”.

In response to these critiques, many orders undertook internal reforms to demonstrate compatibility with Islamic orthodoxy.

These reforms typically involved:

1. Increased emphasis on textual authority and Quranic foundations
2. Greater attention to legal scholarship alongside mystical practice
3. Reduction of controversial ecstatic practices
4. Development of apologetic literature defending Sufi traditions

These adaptive strategies enabled many orders to maintain legitimacy within changing religious landscapes while preserving their core spiritual methodologies.

Engaging with Modernity: Urban Transformations and Education

As Muslim societies underwent rapid urbanization and educational transformation, Sufi orders developed new institutional forms appropriate to changing social contexts. Urban branches of traditionally rural orders emerged in major cities, while educational initiatives integrated spiritual training with modern subjects.

Some orders established formal educational institutions combining traditional Islamic sciences with contemporary disciplines, while others developed publishing houses and media outlets to disseminate their

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teachings through modern channels. These innovations enabled orders to remain relevant to educated urban populations while maintaining distinctive spiritual identities.

Globalization and Digital Presence

Contemporary Sufi orders increasingly maintain sophisticated digital presences that complement their physical institutions. Official websites, social media accounts, online classes, and digital archives of lectures and ceremonies extend orders' reach beyond geographical limitations.

These digital adaptations create new possibilities for transnational connection while raising questions about traditional modes of spiritual transmission. As one study notes, Sufi disciples now “create, share, and exchange diverse sonic media on the Internet and as portable objects on DVDs, CDs, and USBs, all of which flow within the circuit of dervish lodges”⁹. This digital circulation creates new forms of connection that supplement but do not replace traditional face-to-face transmission of spiritual knowledge.

Political Engagements and State Relations

Sufi orders' relationships with contemporary states represent another dimension of adaptation to modern conditions. While historically maintaining varying degrees of autonomy from political authorities, orders today navigate complex relationships with nation-states that range from patronage to persecution depending on local political contexts.

Some contemporary states actively promote particular Sufi traditions as alternatives to political Islam or religious extremism, creating complicated dynamics of support and co-optation. As one study observes: “States and political actors in the West and in the Muslim world are using the mantle and language of Sufism to promote their objectives, while Sufis are building alliances with them against common enemies”. These political entanglements raise

questions about autonomy and authenticity while demonstrating orders' continued social relevance.

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Major Sufi Orders and Their Distinctive Concepts

Naqshbandi Order

The Naqshbandi order, one of the major Sufi tariqas, is known for its adherence to Shariah and its distinctive spiritual methodology. The order is founded on eleven principles known as the Naqshbandi Terminologies, eight of which were transmitted from Khwaja Abdul Khaliq Ghijduwani and three more introduced by Khwaja Shah Naqshband Bukhari⁴.

The eight principles from Ghijduwani are:

1. Hosh dar Dam (Awareness with every breath): Remaining conscious of God with each breath.
2. Nazar Bar Qadam (Watching over the steps): Being mindful of one's actions and path.
3. Safar Dar Watan (Journey within oneself): Inner spiritual travel while physically remaining in place.
4. Khalwat Dar Anjuman (Solitude in multitude): Maintaining spiritual focus even in crowd.
5. Yad Kard (Remembrance): Continuous remembrance of God.
6. Baz Gasht (Returning): Returning to God after distraction.
7. Nigahdasht (Watching over): Guarding the heart against negative thoughts.
8. Yad Dasht (Keeping in mind): Constant awareness of divine presence⁴.

The Naqshbandi order is also distinctive in its understanding of the *laṭā'if* (subtle centers of perception). According to the Mujaddidiyya branch of the Naqshbandi order, represented by Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624), the *laṭā'if* are psychospiritual organs or capacities that are potential receptors of Divine energy when activated in those undergoing spiritual development.

Chishti Order

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The Chishti order, prominent in South Asia, is characterized by its inclusive approach and emphasis on love and service. The cornerstone of Chishti ideology is the concept of Tawhid (Unity of God), which “supplies the motive force to their mystic mission and determines their social outlook”. The Chishti Sufis believe in a peaceful attitude toward life and consider retaliation and revenge as laws of the animal world. They live and work for a healthy social order, free from dissensions and discriminations, and greatly discourage contact with the state.

A distinctive feature of the Chishti approach is that they do not demand formal conversion to Islam as a prerequisite to initiation in mystic discipline. They believe that formal conversion should not precede but follow a change in emotional life, a perspective that contrasts sharply with other orders like the Suhrawardi⁵.

According to Chishtis, the great objective of a mystic's life is to live for Allah alone—one should neither hope for Heaven nor fear Hell. They describe three kinds of love toward Allah, though the specifics are not detailed in the available source⁵.

Shadhili Order

The Shadhili order, founded by Abu'l Hasan al-Shadhili (1196–1258 AD), emphasizes the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being),

which can be realized only through asceticism and khawfu billah (fear of God and His judgments)⁶.

Key teachings of al-Shadhili include:

- The belief that God is everywhere and that it is necessary to see His Face in everything He has created.
- That only through drowning in the Ocean of Unity (awnu fi bahri al wahadati) can the seeker cast off their own existence and attributes to be merged and absorbed into Allah and His Attributes.
- The importance of fulfilling religious obligations while protecting oneself from forbidden things.

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- Fleeing from men's benevolence more than from their malevolence, as benevolence can afflict the heart while evil only afflicts the body.

The parting advice that al-Shadhili received from his master Abd as-Salam emphasized “the transformation of consciousness to inward and outward God-centeredness, contentment with God in all states, and the inner withdrawal from creation in prosperity and adversity.” These teachings would become the fundamental precepts of the Shadhili Tariqa.

Kubraviyah Order

The Kubraviyah order, founded by Najmuddin Kubra, places strong emphasis on the stages of shariah (Islamic law), tariqa (the mystical path), and haqiqa (truth). Kubra explained these stages with life experience-based examples and emphasized that shariah plays a vital role in the Kubraviyah tariqa.

According to Kubra, “tariqa is the way that refrains you from the comforts of this life and shortens the distance between you and Allah. Truth is the achievement of the purpose, to ponder over

Truth. Praying to Allah is – shariah, an effort to reach his place is – tariqa, to ponder over Him is – truth”.

A significant contribution of Najmuddin Kubra was his theory of “latoif” (subtle points), which he used to explain changes in a human’s state of mind. According to Kubra, these changes occur in different shapes like dots, stains, circles, and colors, each carrying symbolic significance. For instance, a circle represents the revolving of the universe, a stain symbolizes the universe, and a dot signifies vahdat (unity)⁸.

Kubra also developed a four-staged theory of “death” based on the Hadith “Die before you die”:

- “Mavti ahmar” (red death): Overcoming feelings of lust.
- “Mavti abyoz” (white death): Overcoming hunger by staying hungry.

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- “Mavti ahdar” (green death): Getting rid of new clothes and wearing old ones, as new clothes signify desire for material benefits.
- “Mavti asvad” (black death): Undergoing patience through the bad deeds of the public⁸.

The Kubraviyah tariqa also follows ten main rules or principles, though these are not specified in the available source.

Mawlawi (Mevlevi) Order

The Mawlawi order, established in the name of Mawlānā Jalal al-Din al Rumi, is renowned for its rich symbolic tradition. Although Rumi himself did not organize specific entrance ceremonies or apply specific forms of dhikr, his pupil Sultan Walad systematized his father’s thoughts, transforming Mawlawiyya into an order with its own rules and ceremonies⁹.

Symbols hold great importance in the Mawlawi order, often expressing deep metaphysical thoughts. The most famous practice

is the Sema ceremony, a symbolic form of dhikr involving whirling movements. This practice “expresses the formation of the universe, the resurrection of man in the world, the transition of love and motion to the Supreme Creator, and the turning towards the Perfect Man”.

The symbolism extends to the attire of Mawlawi dervishes: the cap symbolizes a tombstone, clothes represent a shroud, and the dervish cardigan symbolizes a grave. Similarly, the place where the ceremony is held symbolizes the universe, with the right side representing the material world and the left side symbolizing the spiritual realm.

Tijaniyya Order

The Tijaniyya order, also known as the Ahmadiyya or Muhammadiyya, is an independent Sufi order with followers present in many regions of the world, especially in North and Central Africa. The order is estimated to have millions of followers who gather for specific feasts and daily collective practices.

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Distinctive practices of the Tijaniyya include daily gatherings in a zawiya (meeting place) for collective dhikr and a special Friday practice called the Haylala, which involves reciting “there is no god but God” 1,200 times. The order is characterized by “strong love for the Prophet Muhammad, the believers, and the general public, regardless of their religion”.

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Chapter 3 : Problems Within Sufism : Sufism & Shari'ah

Prophetic relationship to Shari'ah :

The mission of the prophets on earth is to preach Shari'ah. On the day of judgement we shall be questioned about the shari'ah, not tasawwuf. Entrance into paradise & deliverance from hell depends upon obedience to the shari'ah.

Hence the greatest virtue lies in the practicing the shari'ah & in reviving its provision that have been neglected, particularly at a time when its rites and symbols (sha'air) are in ruin. At such a time to spend millions in the way of god is not equal to reviving a single rule of the shari'ah. Because to establish the rule of shari'ah is to do the work of the prophets.

The object of man's creation is to perform the duties of servanthood (Ubudiyyah), to surrender & Submit to the lord, to express his lowliness & dependance, & constantly turn to god & pray in humility.

The service (ibadah) which the shari'ah of the prophet speaks of (as the purpose of man's creation) is for the good of man, and for the fulfillment of his life. It is not at all for the good of Allah swt. Hence one should be thankful to god and follow his shari'ah, obey his commands & refrains from his prohibitions in all sincerity.

Shari'ah, Tariqah & Haqiqah

The shariah has three parts : Iman (Faith), Amal (action) & Ikhlas(sincerity) ; unless we fulfill the demands of all three parts, we don't obey shari'ah. The ultimate goal of human life is to attain pleasure of Allah Swt by following shari'ah.

The Tariqah & haqiqah, for which the Sufis are known, are subservient to shari'ah, as they help to realise it's third part, namely 'Ikhlas'. Hence, they

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are sought in order to fulfill the shari'ah; not to achieve something beyond the shari'ah.

The raptures & ecstasies which the Sufis experience, & the ideas & truths which come to them in the course of their journey, are not the goal of Sufism. The purpose of traversing the stages of tariqah & haqiqah is nothing other than the realization of 'Ikhlas' which involves the attainment of 'Rida' or 'satisfaction of Allah SWT'. It is the fools who consider emotional experiences & ecstasies part of the goal & regard visions and illuminations(tajalliyat) as ends. To be sure, the realization of 'Ikhlas' & 'rida' depends upon passing through these states & experiences & realizing these ideas & truths. But they are means to an end & a way to the goal, that is to satisfy your lord by observing shari'ah with proper Ikhlas.

Shari'ah & Ma'rifa :

The duties of the shari'ah are for the novice as well as for the accomplished sufi practitioner. In this matter an ordinary Muslim

& the most perfect gnostics are one. It is the amateur sufi. It is the amateur Sufis and unworthy heretics trying to throw away the yoke of the shari'ah who say that the rules of the shari'ah are for the novice. In their view, what is required of the sufi is to attain gnosis (ma'rifa), just as what is required of the amirs & the sultans is to rule with justice. They say that the purpose of obeying the shari'ah is to gain knowledge of god; consequently when knowledge is gained the duties of the shari'ah declines. In support of this they cite the verse of the quran -

Serve your lord till you get Yaqin. (15:99)

Using this verse they want to say, the duty of serving God comes to an end when one gets to know him & the yaqin is achieved. But what it actually means is, the feeling of 'obligation' disappears when one comes to know him truly, because when you have certain yaqin on something, it would not be felt an obligation to act towards what you believe, act would be felt like spontaneous and effortless; but it does not mean that the service itself drops. Because that would be sheer heresy & infidelity (kufr).

Nabuwwah is superior than Walayah

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Some people among sufi practitioners who have wrong ideas believe that *Walayah* is better than *Nubuwah* & hold that the Shari'ah which is the essence of essences is only a shell. These people see only the outer form of shari'ah & know nothing of its reality except the outer shell.

Since *Nubuawah* is concerned with not only one's personal or individual bonding with Allah SWT but also concerned with the world, they think that it is something inferior, as their goal is detached from the world & uniting with Allah SWT which they call *Walayah*, that's why they think *Nubuawah* is something inferior to *Walayah*.

In their view, the prophet's concern with the world is like the concern of a common man; consequently they consider it lower & regard *Wulayah* higher, which is a concern with god & conclude that *Walayah* is superior to *Nubuawah*.

Prophets' mission in the world is establishing the Haqimiyyah of Allah SWT on the earth, individual purification is one part of that.

Performing *Dhikr* & retreat from all other worldly responsibilities

Contrary to what people think, *Dhikr* is not confined to repeating the formula of *nafi wa ithbat (i.e. la ilaha illallah)*. In fact every act in compliance to the Shar'ia, whether positive or negative, is to remember god. To be sure, the *dhikr* which consists in saying the names & attributes of Allah SWT is more effective & helpful in generating the love of Allah SWT, it's an *wasilah* to attain the observance of Shari'ah more easily, because when you have love, it's easy to do something for the sake of love.

But observing the worldly responsibilities, even if it is so ordinary act like buying or selling, according to shari'ah is also the form of *dhikr*, as the meaning of *dhikr* is to remember Allah swt all the time.

Observe, therefore, the rules of shari'ah in all activities of life becomes the dhikr.

Rules of the shari'ah vs *Kashf & Ilham*

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The only way to know what things are legal or illegal, what acts are right or wrong is the Quran & the Sunnah of the prophet SAW, the Ijtihad of the Mujtahidin, & their consensus (ijma'). These are also means for knowing the degrees of obligation. Whether a thing is obligatory (fard/wazib) or forbidden (haram), commendable (mandhub), undesirable (maqrub) or permissible (mubah). The inspiration (ilham) or the kashf of the sufi has no role in this regard, neither in determining the legality nor in fixing the degree of the obligation. Their *kushuf* or *ilhamat* do not elevate their status & relieve them from following the judgements of fuqaha.

If a wali gets something in vision, he should examine it in the light of the Quran & Sunnah. If it agrees with them he should consider it as a communication of truth & an honour, but nothing more. Moreover kashf is not something infallible which can be the independent source of knowledge.

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Chapter 4 : Conclusion

How we can Practice balanced Tasawwuf in today's world

To practice tasawwuf (which is very important fundamental of our deen and shari'ah) in a proper manner, we must have to know the actual prophetic way of tasawwuf as well as the differences between the prophetic way and sufi way of tasawwuf, so that we can fix our way and immune from deviations.

Prophetic way & Saintly (sufi) way of practicing Tasawwuf :

- Fanā', which the saintly piety involves, means that the dualism (ithnayniyat) of man and God is to be abolished. But as the prophetic piety does not involve fanā', it does not require the abolition of dualism; just the opposite, it maintains and preserves dualism.

Since the Sufi wants to remove dualism, he is always in a state of intoxication. But/as the prophetic piety does not obliterate dualism, it does not know intoxication: it is complete sobriety (sahw).

Since walāyat requires the abolition of duality between person and God, the saint tries to negate his will, his attributes & all of his personality.

prophetic way, as the goal is not to abolish duality, the travel on this way does not have to negate his will, nor to eradicate his attributes and his self-hood, All that he has to do is to remove the evil objects of his will, and replace them by good objects.

- The Sufi love of God is a passionate love: it seeks to dissolve oneself and merge in God; and unless that happens the Sufi cries,

weeps and sighs, and indulges in things which induce self-abandonment and ecstasy, such as music and dance .

But the prophetic love is a completely different love; it is unaware of the cries of separation, sighs for union, raptures and abandonment that characterise the former.

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- In the walāyat the Sufi has to wash his hands of this world and the next, and believe that to seek the next world (ākhirah) is no better than to seek this world. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi refers to the words of, Dāwūd al-Ṭai (d. 166/782): "If you want safety, bid farewell to the world; but if you want honour, bid farewell to the Hereafter." He also refers to the saying of Rābi'ah al-Adawiyah (d. 185/801) in which she opposes the love of Paradise to the Love of God and wishes to burn the Paradise.

In the prophetic way, on the other hand, love of the next world has been praised, and the concern for the life hereafter is commended. Rather, the concern in this way means concern with the life hereafter, and love means love of the next world'. The reason is that 'meeting with God is destined for the Hereafter, as the complete attainment of His pleasure (ridā) will be available only there', The travellers of the prophetic way know this truth; therefore, they do not oppose the love of Paradise to the love of God) But the travellers of the Sufi way do not realise this truth; consequently they imagine a contradiction between them .

- In walāyat the Sufi encounters appearances and illuminations (zuhūrāt wa tajalliyāt). He sees forms and figures, colours and lights, particularly at the first stages of his sulūk and is obsessed with his visions.

But The traveller of the prophetic path sees hardly any visions, not even in the beginning of his career; and does not need them. For, these visions are nothing but shadows of the Real, and the traveller of the prophetic way 'has no love for shadows', and is not the captive of illumination (tajalli).

- During the time of the Prophet and his Companions, even in the prophetic way, people were primarily concerned with the commands of the Shari'ah; other things (i.e. feelings and sentiments) were associated with the carrying out of those commands. Their ihsān was prayer (salāt), fasting, dhikr, reading the Qur'ān, performing hajj, charity and jihād. None of them ever spent an hour in meditation (tafakkur), or thought of a pure presence of God isolated from dhikr and other things, or tried to attain it, The best of them got pleasure in

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communion (munājāt) with God, in salāt and in dhikr, they experienced an upsurge of feeling in reciting the Qur'ān; paid zakāt to avoid the displeasure of God, and to overcome their greed and love for things other than God, and So On. None of them emitted a cry, went into ecstasy, behaved abnormally, or uttered shath. No one knew the appearance (tajalli) of God, or His hiding (istitār) and things like that. They loved Paradise and feared Hell. Revelations (kashf) and miracles, ecstasies and trances are hardly reported of them. and if any of these things occurred to them it was accidental, never intended or deliberately cultivated. The conviction (yaqin) which they had was the living consciousness of things in which they had faith.

Shāh Wali Allah wrote In his Fuyūd -Haramayn, which is a record of his meditations in the House of God at Makkah and the Mosque

of the Prophet at Madinah, he makes his assessment of the Prophet's attitude to the Sufi way: Regarding the second way of attaining to God my impression is that the Prophet did not have a good opinion about it, nor did he like it. His life symbolised the first way of approaching God. God has made him the source of the good which was to flow to people from this way and the means through which they acquired that good.

The role & Significance of Tasawwuf in modern-day Crisis

In a world often characterized by division and materialism, the Sufi emphasis on unity, love, and the cultivation of inner qualities offers a timeless wisdom that remains relevant and transformative. The diverse conceptual frameworks developed by different Sufi orders provide multiple pathways for this transformation, allowing seekers to find approaches that resonate with their individual temperaments and needs.

As we continue to navigate the complexities of modern existence, the rich conceptual heritage of Sufism offers valuable resources for addressing contemporary challenges. Whether through its psychological insights into the nature of the self, its ethical teachings on compassion and service, or its mystical vision of divine unity permeating all existence, Sufism presents a comprehensive approach to human fulfillment that integrates body, mind, and spirit.

The journey through the conceptual landscape of Sufism across its major orders reveals not just a historical tradition but a living wisdom that continues to evolve and adapt while maintaining its essential principles. In this sense, the study of Sufi concepts is not merely an academic exercise but an invitation to deeper understanding and, perhaps, to embark on the transformative journey that these concepts illuminate.

Ethical Implications of Sufi Spirituality

The highest practices and aims of Sufism carry significant ethical implications, both for individual conduct and social relationships. Unlike purely individualistic forms of spirituality, Sufism insists on the integration of spiritual realization with ethical behavior in society. As one source explains, “The aim of the Sufi way is impart the zest of morality onto the heart of a believer; a zest for mercy, affection, generosity, forgiveness and gratitude”¹¹⁴. This emphasis on ethical virtues ensures that spiritual advancement is measured not merely by mystical experiences but by concrete manifestations of character.

The Sufi understanding of spiritual realization as the embodiment of divine attributes naturally leads to ethical action. Attributes such as mercy (rahma), generosity (karam), and justice (adl) necessarily express themselves in relationships with others. The seeker who realizes these qualities becomes a vehicle for their manifestation in society, contributing to the welfare of the community through service and compassionate action.

Psychological Benefits and Therapeutic Applications

The spiritual practices and concepts of Sufism offer significant psychological benefits that have attracted increasing attention from mental health professionals. The Sufi emphasis on self-awareness, emotional regulation, and the transcendence of egoic patterns aligns with many goals of contemporary psychotherapy. The transformation of the nafs (lower self) through spiritual discipline parallels psychological processes of integration and maturation. Practices such as dhikr (remembrance of God) serve not only religious purposes but also produce measurable psychological effects, including

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