

## Some Criticisms of Sufism and their Answers

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### ABSTRACT

*If philosophy, on one hand, has so many followers and believers, on the other hand, it has critics and opponents. The ones who criticize are usually mullahs and slightly educated ones. They assume that Sufis' acts and views do not have any place in Islamic Sharia. The acts and views which are criticized by them are the raqs (dance) and sama (singing), going to shrines and considering it a way of being close to Allah and of accepting prayer, respecting their Pirs and Murshids to the rank of worship, giving a special dhikr to his murids and specifying a special number to it by the Pir, and etc. This article is written in the light of holy Islamic Sharia aiming to answer such criticisms and objections, so they also reach the true and original reality based on it. The contents and conclusion of this article prove that various criticisms and objections, which they have against Sufism, have no base and origin of Islamic Sharia. In fact, the source of the mentioned criticisms and objections comes from personal complexes and beliefs. Therefore, this article tries to analyze and clarify this issue in the light of first hand references of Islamic Sharia, so they take the message that the evidence that they try to use as proof, the Sufi and theosopist also use it as proof; however, the only difference is that they and the Sufis draw different conclusions from it. Researching this issue is important because people are going away from the spirituality and coming closer to materiality at this time and they should not do this because love with materiality causes the destruction of life in the world and the hereafter. This is a library research and its method is analytical and descriptive.*

### KEYWORDS

*sufism; dhikr (Remembering Allah); ecstasy; solitude; jihad.*

### INTRODUCTION

Most issues of Sufism and Mysticism cannot be fully explained in words, therefore, their research and analysis are not interesting to people. However, Sufism itself is a way that prevents humans from all ethical vices. When a human reaches to the peak of ethics, the society itself gets reformed; based on it, research on the issues of Sufism is considered one of the most works in the time of materialism. For this reason, I have collected information for my article under the title of Criticisms of Sufism and their answers using the Library research type and analytical method, so that you do not come under the influence of people who do not consider Sufism right. Although sometimes there are some discussions on this issue in various articles and books, they cannot be considered sufficient because they do not present satisfactory answers to the critics of Sufism. In Afghanistan, the continuation of war for four decades have ruined the relaxation and peace. Only Sufism and Mysticism can bring their relaxation and peace back because in Sufism, one does not care about the world and attends to the hereafter. When a human attends to the hereafter, his belief on the destiny gets

stronger and this belief brings about spiritual and psychological peace. Keeping in consideration the intense need of Sufism, we should call on people to come to Sufism rather than believing and thinking against it. So the value of this research paper is to motivate people to the Sufism and Mysticism and lift their spirit regarding it.

### **Objectives**

1. Answering the critics of Sufism in the light of Sharia
2. To invite people to Sufism and Mysticism

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The type of research was library research and the method used for the research was descriptive and analytical.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***Sufism***

Sufism in love and toil is the cleanliness of oneself. (Salik, 2013. 71) The Word Sufism derives from Safa, Suf, Souf, theo Sofia, safah or Sawf. (Kheshkai, 2016, 1-2) Many people think the last one seems closer to the reality of Sufism and most scholars agree that it has come from the “Sawf” which means wool cloth i.e. Sufis who wear white clothes made of wool. (Nagar, 2017, 31) As people do not agree on the literal meaning of Sufism, they do not agree on definition of Sufism either.

#### ***Some Criticisms of Sufism and their answers***

Although Sufism is originally an intellectual and practical trend based on Islamic Sharia; many followers of Sharia are against it to a greater extent due to misunderstanding, and the criticisms and objections will probably continue in the future as well (Umar and Saihu, 2022)

There is no doubt that many acts have entered in Sufism that have harmed it rather than benefiting it; however, it is fair to say that Sufism is neither a specific way nor all the Sufis are the same, some of them have accepted innovation while others have not accepted them. Some of them have followed the ways of Holy Unity of God and others have associated a partner with Allah. Some have strongly practiced the holy ethics and others have not done so; so this is very unfair to say that all the Sufis are same or whole Sufism is the same. (Qardhawi. 2014: 22)

Here we will gather some of such criticisms and will try to answer them according to the Sharia of Holy Islam.

Some people criticize Sufism that its followers live only in solitude, and have no spirit for Tasbihat and Jihad and their bodies.

Rejecting the opinions of such people, we will say that all Sufis do not have such beliefs. Indeed, there are many Sufis who have fought against colonialism and cruelty, have struggled against cruel rulers, have called on them to do good deeds, and have felt no fear in the way of it. For example, we can mention Abdul Qader Aljazayeri from Algeria who did Jihad against the French colonialism. He was a scholar and Sufi who has written many articles about Sufism. He has written a book under the title of “Positions in Sufism”. Similarly, we can mention Amir Abdul Karim Alkhetabi in Al-Maghreb who did Jihad against the Spanish Colonialism. Likewise, Sanosids and Omar Mukhtar from Libia and Mohammad Al-Mahdi who fought against The English were all Sufis.

**In addition to it, the word Jihad has been mentioned in many kinds in Holy Quran**

1. Jihad with Wealth: It means spending money in the way of Allah. “وجاهدوا باموالكم” Translation: Strive with your wealth” is the proof.
2. Jihad with lives: Implementing decrees of Sharia on self. Allah orders us: “وتجاهدون في” سبيل الله باموالكم وانفسكم Translation: And strive hard in Allah’s way with your property and your persons.”  
Likewise, it has been mentioned in Hadith: “المجاهد من جاهد نفسه في طاعة الله” Translation: The one who strives (mujahid) in the way of Allah is he who strives against his soul.”
3. Jihad –ul- Quran: It means For Allah’s sake, calling on people to come to Islam. “وجاهدوهم” Translation: And strive hard against them with the help of this (Quran), a mighty striving.
4. Holy War: Fighting with disbelievers. Allah the Exalted says: “يا ايها النبي جاهد الكفار والمنافقين” Translation: O prophet, Fight against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be strict with them.

Generally, Sufis have been active in the first three kinds of Jihad and no one can deny this fact. When it comes to “Jihad with sword” and it becomes obligatory on every single Muslim, these people come to the battle ground being ready to fight against disbelievers with the cost of their lives. (Naqshbandi, 2014: 235)

Another criticism of Sufism is that in some special cases, the Sufis get emotional and get in ecstasy, whose existence can never be proven in the Sharia of Holy Islam.

Responding to them, we should say the Sufis are counted responsible to avoid the useless emotions and ecstasies keeping into considerations the guidance of Sufism because with such emotions humans in the state of (agony) may say something which is apparently the leads of the disobedience; such as Bayezid Bastami’s statement (May the merci of Allah be upon Him) “Glory to me! How great my estate is!” or Mansoor Halaj’s statement “I am the truth”.

In his book translated into Pashto by Professor Mohammad Dodeyal, Hazrat Sheikh Amin Alaudin Naqshabandi (May the merci of Allah be upon Him) says about it:

“A number of Famous Salikeen and Sufis say: Without any doubt, if a SALIK keeps himself in ecstasy and no complaint or action is done by him, his rank raises. Some people say that it is right, however, WADJ (ecstasy) requires emotions and feelings and these famous Sufis have a number of proofs for it. However, avoiding these acts and tolerance is generally considered better.” (Naqshbandi, 2012: 210)

Now this issue is clearly proven that emotion and ecstasy is better and superlative; because it raises the rank of Sufi for reaching which he strives day and night without taking any rest.

Sheikh Amin Alaudin Naqshabandi (May the merci of Allah be upon Him) also adds, “We should become aware that ecstasy is the basic position, that is the position of the people who are always changing and the one who has reaches the position of stability and deference, never has such positions.” (Naqshbandi, 2012: 210)

Now if someone is still overcome by such emotions despite of this position, it should not be considered disobedience to Islamic Decrees. Instead, he should be considered excused. Allah the Exalted says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (2)

Translation: “And the faithful are only those whose hearts tremble [with awe] when Allah is mentioned, and when His signs are recited to them they increase their faith, and who put trust in their lord (Sorah Anfaal, 2<sup>nd</sup> verse)

The following holy verse also witnesses it:

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِيَ تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَ قُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ  
(23) (د الزمر سورت/ ٢٣ آیت)

Translation: Allah has sent down the best of discourses, a scripture [composed] of similar verses, where the skins of those who fear their lord shiver, then their skins and hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah. (Naqshbandi, 2014:210)

So these holy verses can apparently be used to prove that the emotion and ecstasy of the Sufis are due to the fear and love of Allah (SWT). Junaid Baghdadi (May the merci of Allah be upon him) says about it. “Sufism means if it is the remembrance of Allah, it is with the presence of heart, if it is ecstasy, it is with listening to the verse and hadith, if it is knowledge, it is with the obedience of Quran and Sunnah.” (Qaderi, 2015: 351) Then it has no prevention in the Sharia of Islam.

Some people also criticize Sufism that having a Pir or Murshid which is the start of all the ways of Sufism is not needed at all; because Holy Quran and Hadith are always there for the improvement of human.

Answering this, we should say that in the era of Sahabah (May Allah be Satisfied with them), Quran was revealed, they saw the owner of Quran, heard the commands of Prophet Mohammad, however they could not refine themselves. Indeed Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) refined them. (Naqshbandi, 2012: 224) So how will people be able to do self-refinement by themselves although 1400 years have passed from the era of Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him)? The example of receiving refinement without a Sheikh is as if someone is sick and he says I am sick, but there are medical books, so I will read them and cure myself. Can someone be considered wise by doing so? (Naqshbandi, 2014: 224)

Some other people criticizes Sufism because some of its Sheikhs who scream (I am the truth!) and the words of (Glory to me! How great my estate is!), which are apparently against the Sharia. Such words are words of Sherk and has no base in Sharia, indeed, the one who says is no longer considered a follower of Islam.

Answer: We should say that first, these words are said by the mentioned Sufis in the state of (agony), in which they are considered excused. Second, these words are hardly said in the history of Sufism. Only Mansoor Halaj, Bayezid Bastami and only some others have used them for expressing love and obedience to Allah. If we explain it further, if a tree can say words like “Verily I am Allah”, so human who according to a hadith Allah created with his own shape and is a better mirror of all His beauty and signs than any other else. Therefore, insisting on this criticism and insulting the Sufis for it is not fair at all.

In addition, people criticize Sufism because Pir and Murshid specify a particular kind of Adhkar and choose a number to it as well. Both of them have no base in the Sharia of Islam because Dhikr of Allah SWT (remembrance of Allah) has no particular number in the Islamic Sharia.

Answer: This act of Sufis also has an Islamic base and principle because when the daughter of Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) Bibi Fatima (May Allah be Satisfied of Her) was not able to do housework due to the weakness of her body, Ali (May Allah be Satisfied of Him) told her to go to her father’s house so he can give you a servant; When she went there, and asked her father (Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him)) for it, he said, should I not show you something better than it that has the goodness of world and hereafter? She asked him to tell her. Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) said, say Subhanallah 33 times, Alhamdulillah 33 times and Allahu Akbar 34 times. So we can say that here the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) has also specified the kind and number of Adhkar to her daughter. (Muslim 1412:180)

Another criticism that Sufism faces is that they seek a mean of reaching Allah (SWT) although Allah (SWT) is the All-hearing, the All-seeing, the all-Knowing, and the All-aware. He (SWT) directly hears the word of everyone, therefore making a mean of reaching to Allah is sherk.

Answer: In its objection, it should be said that the one who makes something accepted as a mean to Allah and then prays, no change takes place in the Allah's attributes (the All-hearing, All-seeing, All-knowing, and All-Aware) according to beliefs. As Allah the Exalted is the Creator, the Owner, and the All-knowing in the chest, and controls the universe, why He (SWT) has appointed Keram-ul-Katibeen to write the deeds of humans day and night? There is no doubt that Allah the Exalted can see all the movements of His servants without any means, the why there is the need to appoint the Angels to do so? The God is He who has created all the universe and He needs no partner, and neither He needs the help or cooperation of someone, so why there is a need for angels to destroy the villages? Although He created the universe when there was (لم يكن شيئاً مذكوراً), he has no associate. Why did He create Gabriel (Peace be Upon Him)? All these points are considerable and worth being discussed. The truth is that the appointment of Keram-ul-Katebeen, descending angels for the destruction of villages and granting son to BiBi Maryam through Gabriel (peace be upon him) are not an interference in Allah's affairs, but it shows the His greatness because Allah (SWT) is able to destroy all the world and does not need anyone in creating human, however, angels are divine army and is always obedient to Him. Doing something through them is not a proof of any defect in God's Power, but is a sign of disciplined rule in the universe. Therefore, the appointment of the two recording angels (Keram-ul-Katibeen) does not oppose the power of Allah, and destroying villages and granting son to Bibi Maryam through Gabriel is not against the power and authority of Allah. Making the way of classifying servants as (prophets, the truthful, the honest martyred) as a means and listening to their prayers without a means are not against His knowledge and power of the environment, but it shows the greatness of Allah the Exalted. The best classification is the proof of the greatness of Allah and these classifications show the means of servants, Allah's greatness and clarity of our humbleness. (Khad, 2015, 135) on the other hand, the believers are ordered in Holy Quran to seek a means to Allah.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (سورة المائدة/ ١٨٣)

Translation: O you who have believed, fear Allah and seek the means [of nearness] to Him and strive in His cause that you may succeed.

The verse above shows that means is not any Non-Islamic imagination. Indeed, it is a part of Islamic education, but some news subjects cause tension in public. Therefore, it is essential to clarify the misconceptions of the followers of Sharia according to Quran and Sunnah. According to etymologists, the Arabic word "waseela" is a means and according to Sharia, and every deed or person through that one can get close to Allah is a means.

Believers make their deeds as a means to Allah, no one disagrees in making good deeds a means of nearness to Allah, but some people denies making prophets and other honest people a means, but their opinions are not right. Muslims agree that not only in this world, but also in the hereafter, Muslims can present (prophets, the truthful, the martyred and the good doers) as a means to Allah. The truth is human has great wishes of blessings from presenting his deeds, prophets and other truthful servants as a means to Allah. (Khad, 2015: 96 – 97)

Another criticism against Sufis is that they go the shrines of Sheikhs and close servants of Allah, they make them the means to Allah and consider it goodness and blessings. While they believe it is associating a partner with Allah. The reason is as it is pointed out above as

a mean, Allah (SWT) Himself is All-hearing, All-seeing, all-knowing, and All-aware and even He is closer than the back vein to the humans, so the God who is closer to us than jugular vein and is all-aware of every visible and hidden deeds and desires, why do we need the mean and going to shrines?

In its objection, it should be said that always visiting the places of holy scholars by individuals of the Ummah is considered better than hundred years worship without duplicity. They, therefore, consider visiting shrines as an act of nobility. Ahl-e-Sunnah say that coming to the service of holy scholars causes luckiness and blessing, which clarifies that gathering of holy people are Ryadh-ul-janat (gardens of heaven) and the glad tiding of forgiving comes from such gatherings. Spending time with these believers not only in their lives benefit people, but also after their death is a reference for people, and visiting the shrines of believers are important in doing good deeds. (Khad, 2015:159) Hazrat Suleiman Bin Bareed (May Allah be satisfied of Him) has narrated from his father: “قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قد كنت “نهيتكم عن زيارة القبور فقد اذن لمحمد في زيارة قبر امه فزروها فانها تذكره الاخره (Al-Tirmidhi, 270:55)

برديده حديث حسن صحيح و العمل على هذا عند اهل العلم لا يرون بزيارة القبور “باسا و هو قول ابن المبارك و الشافعي و احمد و اسحق It means the Bardida’s Hadith is the best and true, Scholars have practiced it and there is no problem in visiting shrines. Ibn Mubarak, Shafi, Ahmad, and Ishaq also agrees on it. There is no doubt or rejection that seeing the graves of the general cemetery, makes you remember the hereafter. Therefore, visiting the graves of the prophets comes in first positions in remembering Allah, thinking about the hereafter and coming closer to the best servants of Allah is a fact in accepting the prayer. (Khad, 1015:161).

## CONCLUSION

Conclusively, like other religions, Sufism is one of the important parts of the holy religion of Islam, and cannot be considered against the decrees of Islam at all as some critics of Sufism think. The critics of Sufism include many things in Sufism which are not part of Sufism such as ecstasy, sama, music, prostrating shrines and etc. However, some things that the critics of Sufism criticize and are really part of Sufism, generally never violate the holy decrees of the Islamic Sharia. Raising such issues only shows the ignorance of the critics of Sufism because they interpolate things in Sufism which do not relate to it at all.

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