47431 - What Is Sufism?

the question

What is Sufism (tasawwuf) about? Is the “Da’wah and Tabligh” group one of the misguided groups?

Summary of answer

1- The words “Tasawwuf” and “Sufism” are modern terms which refer to something that is not automatically approved of in the Shari’ah neither is it automatically condemned.
2- Jama'at al-Tabligh is one of the groups that is active in the field of da’wah, calling people to Allah. They do a great deal of good and make commendable efforts. But this group is not free of some innovations in knowledge and action. For more about Sufism and Jama'at al-Tabligh, see the detailed answer

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What is Sufism (Tasawwuf)?

It is important for us to understand, firstly, that the words “Tasawwuf” and “Sufism” are modern terms which refer to something that is not automatically approved of in the Shari’ah as the words imaan (faith), Islam and ihsan are. Neither is it automatically condemned like the words kufr, fusuq (immorality) and ‘isyan (disobedience, sin).

In such cases, we need to find out more about what is meant by such words before we can pass a comment.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The words al-faqr and al-tasawwuf (i.e., Sufism) may include some things that are loved by Alaah and His Messenger, and these are things that are enjoined even if they are called faqr or tasawwuf, because the Quran and Sunnah indicate that they are mustahabb and that is not altered if they are called by other names.

That also includes actions of the heart such as repentance and patience. And it may include things that are hated by Allah and His Messenger, such as some kinds of belief in incarnation and pantheism, or monasticism that has been innovated in Islam, or things that go against shari’ah and have been innovated, and so on.

These things are forbidden no matter what names they are given… And it may include limiting oneself to a certain style of clothing or certain customs, ways of speaking and behaving, in such a way that anyone who goes beyond it is regarded as an outsider, although this is not something that has been stipulated in the Quran or Sunnah; rather it may be something that is permissible or it may be something that is makruh, and this is a bid’ah that is forbidden.

This is not the way of the friends of Allah (awliya Allah); such things are innovations and misguidance that exist among those who claim to follow the Sufi path.

Similarly, among those who claim to be servants of knowledge there are innovations that involve beliefs and words that go against the Quran and Sunnah, using phrases and terminology that have no basis in shari’ah. Many such things happen among those people.

The wise believer agrees with all people in that in which they are in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah and obey Allah and His Messenger, but he does not agree with that in which they go against the Quran and Sunnah and disobey Allah and His Messenger.

He accepts from every group that which was taught by the Messenger… when a person seeks the truth and justice, based on knowledge, he is one of the successful friends of Allah and His victorious party…” (Al-Fatawa, 11/280-290)

Sufism nowadays

But what Shaykh al-Islam said about the view of Sufis depending on their situation is almost too theoretical for our times, when the objectionable matters that he referred to have become part of the path of those who call themselves Sufis nowadays, in addition to the different occasions they celebrate such as the Mawlid, and their exaggeration about their living shaykhs, and their attachment to shrines and graves, where they pray and circumambulate the graves and make vows to them, and other well-known practices of theirs.

Because of these matters, the correct approach now is to warn against them with no reservations. This is what was agreed upon by the Standing Committee in their answer to a question about the ruling on the Sufi tariqas that exist nowadays. They said:

“Usually those that are called Sufis nowadays follow bid’ahs (innovations) that constitute shirk, as well as other kinds of bid’ah, such as when some of them say “Madad ya sayyid (Help, O Master)”, and call upon the qutubs (“holy men”), and recite dhikr in unison using names which Allah has not called Himself, like saying “Huw, Huw (He, He)” and “Ah, Ah (a contraction of the word ‘Allah’)”. Whoever reads their books will be aware of many of their innovations that constitute shirk, and other evils.”

What is Jama'at al-Tabigh?

With regard to the Jama'at al-Tabligh , this is one of the groups that is active in the field of da’wah, calling people to Allah. They do a great deal of good and make commendable efforts. How many sinners have repented at their hands, and how many have now become devoted to worship of Allah!

But this group is not free of some innovations in knowledge and action, to which the scholars have drawn attention. But whatever the case they cannot be described as being one of the misguided groups. We have quoted above the words of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah:

“The wise believer agrees with all people in that in which they are in accordance with the Quran

and Sunnah and obey Allah and His Messenger, but he does not agree with that in which they go against the Quran and Sunnah.”

And Allah knows best.