

Sufism: Its Meaning and Early Roots in Umayyad Period

Meaning of Sufism

Sufism refers to the spiritual dimension of Islam that focuses on purifying the soul and seeking closeness to Allah. The word *Sufi* is derived from the Arabic word *Suf* meaning wool, because early Sufis wore simple woolen garments as a sign of humility. Sufism stresses inner purity, remembrance of Allah, love, and service to humanity rather than material wealth or power. Its main goal is achieving divine truth through love, patience, and spiritual exercises.

Origins of Sufism

The roots of Sufism can be traced back to the Umayyad period when rulers lived in luxury and society became more materialistic. In reaction, many Muslims sought a life of simplicity and spiritual devotion. They practiced constant prayers, fasting, meditation, and charity to remain close to Allah. Inspired by the Qur'an and the simple lifestyle of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), early Sufis avoided politics and focused only on worship and moral guidance.

Sufism in the Umayyad Period

During the Umayyad rule, wealth and political power increased, but this led to spiritual decline in society. Early Sufis criticized the materialism of rulers and instead promoted humility, justice, and faith. They wore rough woolen clothes to show rejection of worldly luxuries. Important figures like Hasan al-Basri preached piety and accountability, while Rabia al-Adawiyya introduced the idea of loving Allah purely, without fear of punishment or desire for reward. Their teachings inspired large sections of society.

Teachings and Practices of Sufis

The teachings of early Sufis revolved around love for Allah, patience, humility, and service to fellow human beings. They emphasized constant remembrance of God (*Zikr*), night prayers, fasting, and simplicity in life. Sufis avoided pride and dishonesty, instead encouraging honesty and truthfulness. Over time, poetry, stories, and music were also used to explain spiritual truths. Their message of peace, tolerance, and respect for all faiths helped bring harmony among diverse communities.

Legacy of Early Sufism

The legacy of early Sufism was significant because it preserved the spiritual essence of Islam at a time when materialism was spreading. Their humble lives and teachings inspired generations and laid the foundation for later organized Sufi orders. Sufi saints' shrines later became centers of worship, charity, and education. Their focus on love, tolerance, and peace influenced Muslim culture for centuries. Even today, Sufism continues to guide people towards spirituality, harmony, and unity among humanity.

