Sufism or *taṣawwuf*

The word *taṣawwuf* (تَصَوَّف) derives from the radical ṣ-w-f (صَوْف) indicating in the first place one who wears woollen clothes (wool = ṣūf), the rough garb of ascetics and mystics.

Sufism is the esoteric and spiritual dimension of Islam representing the inward aspects of Islam.
Sufism finds its roots with the life and personality of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, who is the role model for all Sufis (i.e. Darwishes, Faqirs, Rishis, Pirs etc.). Sufis is not something different or a new religion from Islam.
In fact the mystic spirituality also depends on the five basic and fundamental pillars of Islam i.e., Shahadah, Salat or Prayer, Sawm or Fasting during Ramadan, Zakat or the obligatory contribution towards poor, and finally the performance of Hajj or Pilgrimage if the person could effort it.
Sufis strive to **constantly be aware of God’s presence**, stressing contemplation over action, spiritual development over legalism, and cultivation of the soul over social interaction.

In contrast to the academic exercises of theology and jurisprudence, which depend on reason, **Sufism depends on emotion and imagination** in the divine-human relationship.
Sufism is unrelated to the Sunni/Shii split, schools of jurisprudence, social class, gender, geography, or family connections. It is closely associated with both popular religion and orthodox expressions of Islamic teachings. It has been both opposed and supported by the State.
Sufi rituals typically consist of the recitation of prayers, poems, and selections from the Qur’an, and methodical repetitions of divine names (dhikr) or Qur’anic formulas, such as the shahadah. In communal gatherings, Sufis perform dhikr aloud, often with musical accompaniment.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjZqvy_aMRU
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cMhAm-GgX4
In Sufism, *dhikr* refers both to a divine name or Qur'ānic phrase repeatedly chanted (such as *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, “no god but God”), and to the practice of chanting. *Dhikr* keeps the Ṣūfī from stopping along the mystical ascent and from panic or inappropriate behavior when overcome by various mystical states (*aḥwāl*).

For Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) *dhikr* polishes the heart, allowing it to serve as a mirror reflecting the divine attributes.

Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 1220) writes of *dhikr* as an interior sob or cry of yearning.

[The Mughal emperor Jahangir (d. 1627) preferring a Sufi saint to his contemporary.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSTh0ybvSLk) 6’-20’
Dhikr ends with *fanā’* (the passing away of the ego-self in union with the divine, in an “all-love” dimension), at which point, according to many Ṣūfīs, there can be no further dhikr because there can be no consciousness of otherness or self.
Samāʿ (“audition”) is:

- spiritual concert, ritualized music and dance;
- a public recital of poetry, typically accompanied by music, as part of a Sufi dhikr ritual;
- liturgical means of inducing ecstasy.

Often held on the same day of each month.

In early Sufi orders, samāʿ involved three physical actions—dancing, whirling, and jumping—by participants.

Use of music is often attacked by orthodox and legalistic interpreters as an irreligious innovation, constituting a major source of criticism of Sufism.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy2R4FDCuzw
The combination of *dhikr* with *samāʿ* (ritualized music and dance) leading toward ecstasy (*wajd*) has been a continual source of controversy within Islam.
The Mevlevi order (in Arabic “Mawlawiyya”) was founded by Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, d. 1273, known as mawlanā. This order is better known as “the whirling dervishes”. Among them, the practice of *dhikr* is performed in a traditional dress: a sleeveless white frock, a long sleeved jacket, a belt, and a black overcoat or *khirqa* to be removed before the whirling begins. As the ritual dance begins, the dervish dons a felt cap (*sikke*) in addition to a turban wrapped around the head, a trademark of the Mevlevi order. The *sheikh* (teacher, master) leads the ritual with strict regulations.

Whirling dervishes in Istanbul
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_Km4j36khA

Whirling dervishes in Aleppo
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7P-Ije2kEl8&index=2&list=RDiUfxbERMYdg