



Al Azhar Fatwa on Sufism



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H.E. Imam 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud at ASFC Chairman Sayyid Ahmed Amiruddin's family home in Hyderabad, India

The former Shaykh al-Azhar, the chief religious authority of Egypt, H.E. Imam Shaykh 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, in his book of legal pronouncements (Fatawa) clarified the nature of Sufism in the following manner:

“Sufism is purity and witnessing. And Sufism began immediately with [the advent of] Islam. This is because Islam consists of noble behavior as well as attunement to God in both simple affairs and those of great magnitude.

Among the first Sufis after the Companions [of the Prophet] and the Followers [who succeeded them] were Ibrahim ibn Ad'ham and Fudayl ibn 'Ayyad. As a consequence of people's confusion between the [terms] ascetic (zahid), worshipper ('abid), and Sufi, we can state [the following]:

The ascetic is one who turns away from the goods of the world and its pleasant things. The worshipper is one who is careful to observe the acts of worships, such as getting up [to prayer at night] (al-qiyam), canonical prayer (al-salat), and similar things.

The Sufi is both an ascetic and a worshipper. Thus the Sufi abstains from the world, since he is beyond the point where anything can distract him from God.

Also, the Sufi is a worshipper because of his constancy with God and his link with God (may He be exalted). He worships God because God is suitable for worshipping, not out of desire or fear.”

(Translated by Dr. Alan Godlas. From the Fatawa of Imam 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, p. 334, 38)

