



Sufi-Zentrum Rabbaniyya

Eusubillahi-mineş-şeytanirrajim
Bismillahirr-rahmanirrahim

Sufism and Islam - Radio 1 Interview

Sheikh Eşref Efendi | Berlin



Question:

They say Sufism and Islam belong together. But Sufis are being persecuted in Arabic countries. Why is this so?

Sheikh Esref Efendi:

To be a Muslim means to be a servant in surrender to God. How does a servant have to be or how does he have to perform his servanthood? The answer is he has to be disciplined and loving. He has to take his work seriously as well as love it for him to be successful.

Sharia is an Arabic word and means basic law. Every law signifies a call for discipline. Sharia is discipline and Tariqa/Sufism is love. Both have to be enjoined like the body and the soul. The scholars, who are the guardians of the law, are mostly fanatical about their work and they don't know much about love. Love is foreign to them. And because love is foreign to them they also want to expel everything else that is foreign to them. This is the reason for the persecution of Sufis in many Muslim countries.

It is not Islam as such that is fanatical, but the scholars are fanatical in their belief, because all they do is just look at the shell, and therefore they completely overlook the pearl which is inside the shell. Every law is quite difficult to be digested. However, tolerance and love are gentle and easy. Sharia is difficult and Sufism is easy, but only a mixture of both can bring about a perfect way of life. If either the one or the other is missing, everything is flawed and deficient and therefore malfunctions.

People have to understand that a child cannot be raised properly just with discipline. The upbringing of a child always has to be flavoured with love as otherwise the child's psyche will suffer. The same is also valid for love alone. Both, discipline and love, have to be combined for a healthy upbringing. Discipline and love!



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Question:

What is the difference between Sufism and the orthodox, more traditional Islam?
Are there different conceptions of the Quran?

Sheikh Esref Efendi:

Islam is Islam ... the many groups differ in their understanding of the Quran and in their methods. Unfortunately many Muslims and Europeans misunderstand Islam and interpret it incorrectly.

Question:

What are the differences between their practices? What is Dhikr and what is Sohbet?

Sheikh Esref Efendi:

Dhikr is the source of strength for those who believe.
Allah, the Lord, says: "I am with my servant as long as he is in remembrance of me."
During Dhikr we recite and internalise Allah's holy names.

During sohbet we learn about the attributes of these names, we learn to understand Allah better and we interpret Allah's holy revelations using current images and parables. This allows us to interpret and understand life correctly.

Question:

Sufism is being practiced in different orders/brotherhoods.
Which form of Sufism do Sheikh Esref Efendi and the Sufis of Berlin/Germany practice?

Sheikh Esref Efendi:

There are 40 true Tariqas, Sufi orders. They may differ in their methods but never differ in the principles of Islam. The Naqshbandi-Rabbani order is the oldest, the largest and the only one which the Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, has founded himself by order of Allah.

Question:

Are there any statistics about the number of Sufis? Worldwide? In Germany?
How did the belief develop in Germany/Berlin?
Who becomes a Sufi? Why is Sufism interesting to people of the West?
How can we understand your motto: "Sowing Respect ... Harvesting Love"?

Sheikh Esref Efendi:

According to our knowledge the Naqshbandi-Rabbani order is the largest and worldwide mostly widespread Sufi order and also the most known in Germany.

Most people and especially Europeans come to Sufism because they have had enough of the materialism and selfishness of this society. They are eager to find true inner peace and they yearn for love and the true Beloved.

Sufism is the path of love, the path of sincere loving kindness towards others. Only that which is sincere is long-lasting. Many people are searching for sincerity and permanence of love, but they cannot find it anywhere else.



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Therefore we say: Sowing Respect ... Harvesting Love. Because love has got nothing to do with understanding. We said in the beginning that people deny and persecute that which they cannot understand. If they could respect it at least, they could harvest love, even if they could not enter the realm of understanding. This is the reason why we say Sowing Respect - Harvesting Love.

Question:

I would be grateful for a few words regarding the biography of Sheikh Esref Efendi. What does it mean to live and teach the spirituality of the Orient (the East)? Did Sheikh Esref Efendi purposefully come to Berlin or was he specifically sent to Berlin?

Sheikh Esref Efendi:

In 1995 we were sent here by our Grandsheikh Muhammed Nazım el Haqqani el Rabbani. We were instructed to address people of all cultural backgrounds and all nationalities and to support them spiritually. Europe and Germany was our priority. Of course it is an honour and a pleasure to offer oriental delicacies of the heavenly cuisine to Europeans. We are truly honoured.