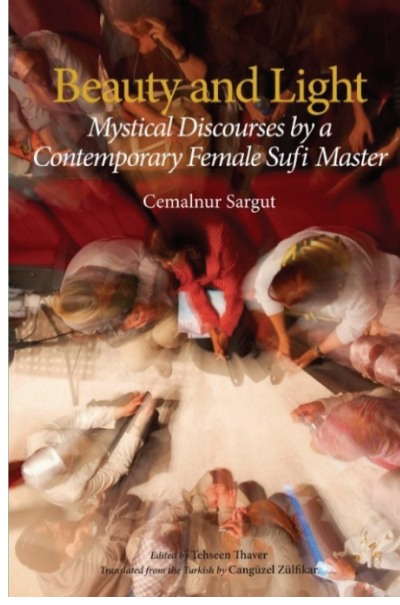


BOOK REVIEW:



Cemalnur SARGUT, *Beauty and Light: Mystical Discourses by a Contemporary Female Sufi Master*, Fons Vitae, 2017. Pp. 192.

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KİTAB İÇMALI:

Cemalnur SARGUT, *Gözəllik və İşıq: Müasir Qadın Sufi Ustadından Mistik Danışmalar*, Fons Vitae, 2017. Səh. 192.

İcmalçı: Banu BÜYÜKÇINGİL

Qadın sufi müəllim kimi Cemalnur Sarqutun bütün dünyada, xüsusən də Türkiyədə sadıq və aktiv izləyiciləri var. Alim və sufi lideri kimi onun karyerası müasir qlobal təsəvvüf dinamikasında mühüm bir nümunədir. Bu nəşr onun şifahi nitq janrı vasitəsilə tələbələrinə təqdim etdiyi bəzi əsas çıxışlarını və təlimlərini bir araya gətirən ilk ingilis dilinə tərcümə edilmiş əsəridir. Daha dəqiq desək, bu kitabın özəyini təşkil edən söhbətlər Türkiyənin

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milli radiosunda həftəlik proqram çərçivəsində tələbələri tərəfindən Cemalnur Sargut ilə şifahi müsahibələr əsasında toplanmışdır. İngilis dilinə tərcümə edilərək, nəşrin əsaslandığı original türkçə transkripsiya Dinlə (Dinlə) adlanır və 2012-ci ildə Nefes Nəşriyyat evi tərəfindən nəşr edilmişdir. Cemalnur Sargut son qırx il ərzində fəal surətdə mürid və tələbələrə Rifai təsəvvüf təriqətinin istiqaməti üzrə təlimlər keçir. Onun şifahi və yazılı çıxışları türk dilində geniş yayılmış olsa da, indiyə qədər ingilis dilli dinləyicilər üçün əlçatan deyildir.

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“Sufism is not a form of knowledge (*‘ilm*), but a way of life; a path taught to seekers by the perfect human beings (*al-insān al-kāmil*).” These are the words of Cemalnur Sargut who is a prominent female Turkish Sufi master, who lives in Istanbul, but her influence extends beyond Turkey, with the countless conferences she organized in many parts of the world. Sargut was born to a Sufi family and her parents were the disciples of Ken‘ān Rifā‘ī (d.1950), who was a significant Sufi master of the Rifā‘ī ṭarīqa in Istanbul, Turkey.

Her spiritual guide (*murshid*) Sāmiḥa Ayverdi (d. 1993), was a prominent disciple and caliph of Ken‘ān Rifā‘ī, and also she was one of the most well-known literary figures in Turkey. Sargut started teaching Sufism when she was twenty-four years old, at the request of Ayverdi, alongside, she worked as a chemistry teacher for twenty years at a high school. Since that time she has devoted herself to the service of Islam by dealing with her disciples one by one, organizing conferences, giving interviews, and writing numerous books. She has written forty-seven books of Qur‘ān commentary, a book on each chapter of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Bezels of Wisdom), and a collection of spiritual discourses (*ṣoḥba*) on Sufism.

Beauty and Light (2017) is her first book in English. The German translation named *Höre* was published in 2021 as well. Turkish version was published in 2008 by Nefes Publication, titled “*Listen*” (*Dinle* in Turkish) which is the first word of Rūmī’s *Mathnawī*. This book has been gathered through oral interviews, which were made weekly on a Turkish radio station, with her students, on the main teachings of Sufism. In each chapter of the book, one of her students asks some questions on the relevant topic and Sargut explains both their inner and outer meanings of them.

This book is not only an introduction to Sufism but also presents the deep understanding and teachings of Sufism. This way the book is suitable for all kinds of readers who are interested in Islam and Sufism and who would like to read these topics from a contemporary Sufi master. The book is divided into six main chapters, which are the major and intriguing topics: Sufism, the principles of courtesy (*adab*), divine decree and measuring out (*qadā’ and qadar*), divine unity (*tawḥīd*), ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) and sacrifice (*qurbān*). She begins with the various descriptions of Sufism, in chapter 1. In chapter 2, the principle of courtesy (*adab*), she describes it with the following words: “We see that *adab* is something that can even silence the tongue from time to time. It settles in a person’s heart and keeps them at peace. *Adab* is such a state. My

teacher says that Sufism is *adab*. *Adab* can lead to the furthest station of “Lā mawjūda illā Allāh” (except God nothing exists). Given this, *adab* elevates a person to such a state that they even begin to respect seemingly inanimate objects.”

In chapter 3 the topic is one of the most asked questions, which is “divine decree and measuring out”. She answers the question of whether there is free will or not. In chapter 4, divine unity is explained from the Qur’ānic and Sufi perspectives. Chapter 5 is on ritual prayer and in chapter 6 pilgrimage and sacrifice are interpreted with their inner meanings. In the book, topics are intertwined and their deep relationship with one another is portrayed very well. The Islamic terms and concepts are hard to grasp since they have various layers and different levels of meanings. However, Sargut expresses these subtle terms within Sufi stories for them to be understood easily.

As it is known, stories are used widely in the Qur’ān and Sufi literature, since they’re the best way to explain these perplexing terms and spiritual experiences. As she describes at the beginning of the first chapter, “Sufism is a journey to the depths of one’s being.” In this manner, Sargut takes the reader on a journey from outside to inner-self, explaining subtle meanings of Islamic terms and concepts. By telling stories and anecdotes Sargut moves through the husk to the kernel of the religion and explains the terms such as unity and ontological realities within apprehensible stories. One of the remarkable examples is paradise. Sargut without disregarding the paradise in the afterworld, states that the paradise should be found in this world and the way to find it here is through Sufi training. The outcome of reaching the real paradise in this world is permanent peace and happiness, which leads the seeker to real freedom (*hurriya*). In this respect, through this journey, a human being can attain real humanity.

After a question on unity (*tawhīd*), Sargut delineates majesty and beauty with a striking symbol, like the mirrors in the amusement park. Majesty and beauty are the manifestations of God seen through different mirrors. Maybe there is no good or evil, no beauty or no ugliness; rather, these are just projections that appear in varying degrees and amounts. At an amusement park, those distorted mirrors reflect us as taller, shorter, fatter, and thinner than we actually are. The person being reflected doesn’t change even as the reflections change in the mirror. Similarly, this world is a series of God’s appearances in different mirrors. And the very purpose of our creation is to see the reflection of God’s beauty in those mirrors.

The characteristic of the spiritual discourses (*sohba*) has a multi-layered structure. Readers might discern a different meaning in each reading, according to their needs, requirements, and receptivity (*isti’dād*). Although the book answers major questions on Sufism, it guides the readers on how to live Sufism as a way of life with stories and anecdotes from the Qur’ān, Prophets, and Sufis. Due to this, the book can be considered a manual to guide the path for the seekers, who are searching for their real selves.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.