



In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful
Peace and Blessings on our Beloved Prophet, His Family and Companions

Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi Order in America

Building Bridges Towards Justice, Peace and Understanding

Recent Activities in Texas on The Media:

The Dallas Morning News, July 21, 2001 & August 18, 2001, Dallas, TX

Sufi teaches tradition across U.S.

He says even Muslims sometimes misunderstand mystical ideas, practice

By JEFFREY WEISS
Staff Writer

In some ways, the portly man with the long beard would have seemed familiar to his Orthodox Jewish grandparents. Praying and chanting in a Middle Eastern language, lecturing on spirituality and theology, he might have been mistaken for a rabbi.

But the language is Arabic, not Hebrew, and he wears a pointed turban, not a yarmulke. Abdul

Haqq is a Sufi shaykh, a disciple of a Muslim mystical tradition that is more than 1,200 years old. Twenty-five years ago the spiritual seeker from Chicago — then named Peter Sazanoff — was transformed in an instant into a fervent Sufi, he said last week.

One day he met Shaykh Nazim, a Sufi master from Cyprus. One look in the elder shaykh's eyes was all it took, said Shaykh Abdul, 54.

"I knew I was in the presence of someone who understood me completely," he said.

For much of the past 20 years, Shaykh Abdul has been doing what he did in Dallas, Irving and Austin last week. He travels

around the country explaining Sufism to non-Muslims and, according to his tradition, carrying a spiritual power to fellow Sufis.

Because he has been designated a senior disciple by a Sufi master, Sufis who sit, talk and pray with Shaykh Abdul believe that they gain spiritual blessings just by being in his presence, he said.

"Our way is that by being associated with the shaykh, the blessings come on the group," he said.

Most Americans know little about Islam. If they know anything about Sufism, they may have heard of Rumi, a still-popular 13th-century poet and Sufi master.



ANDY SCOTT/Staff Photographer
Shaykh Abdul Haqq (left) and Mohamed Mohamed embrace at the Sufi center in Irving, where Mr. Mohamed is president.

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Sufi leader in Dallas to continue awareness

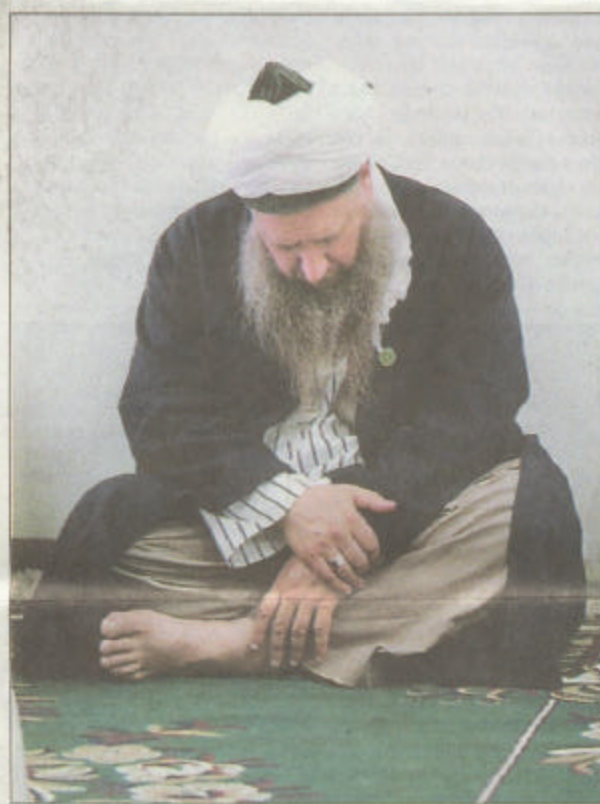
A Sufi instructor will return to the Dallas area next week to lead a program at an Oak Cliff mosque. Shaykh Abdul Haqq's visit is part of an effort to present Islam as a religion of moderation, tolerance, peace and justice, according to officials with the Islamic Supreme Council of America. Shaykh Abdul is a representative of Mowlana

Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Al Kabbani and Mowlana Shaykh Muhammad Nazim Al Haqqani, two Sufi spiritual masters. He will lead Naqshbandi Sufi chanting



Abdul Haqq

and prayer from 8 to 10:30 p.m. Thursday at Masjid Al-Haqq, 2723 Alaska Ave. The shaykh is visiting Texas to support the Sufi masters' work through the council and the Haqqani Foundation. The free event is open to anyone; call Jehan Ali at 214-616-6673.



ANDY SCOTT/Staff Photographer

Shaykh Abdul Haqq prays during a visit to the Irving Sufi center. His sermon focused on the sacredness of God.

Sufi comes to teach — but also learns

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Even many Muslims don't approve of Sufism. Veneration of the masters, the use of music during prayers and some other customs are considered un-Islamic add-ons by some Muslims. But Sufis say they're passing along their faith in the style that their prophet, Mohammed, and his direct followers first taught about Islam.

Battling ignorance and disapproval is a "daunting task," Shaykh Abdul said. "There's a bit of Don Quixote in it."

Sufism is a tradition with similarities to Jewish Hasidism and to some Christian religious orders. It suggests that the highest spiritual growth cannot be attained simply through logic and study of the sacred Muslim texts.

A saying on a local Sufi Web site reads: "Someone who seeks God through logical proof is like someone who looks for the sun with a lamp."

Sufism teaches that experience of the divine can be found through contact with Sufi masters who receive their titles in an apostolic system from their predecessors. There are many dozens of Sufi orders in the world, each led by its own master.

Shaykh Abdul belongs to the Naqshbandi order, which can trace its roots back more than 600 years.

The orders are not exactly competitive. While each believes its master is best, members aren't supposed to speak against any other master or order.

On July 13, Shaykh Abdul spent his prayer time with members of another order. The Algardia Almuksatefa follow a Sadaqee Sufi master, but they gave Shaykh Abdul a warm welcome. More than 50 people showed up for Friday

afternoon prayers at a storefront Sufi center in Irving.

The long room was sparsely furnished. A small partition marked the area in the back for women. A few pictures and hand-written posters adorned the walls. Padded mats covered the entire floor where the faithful would kneel while they prayed. Clocks at each end of the room signaled the time for prayer. Burning incense perfumed the air.

They prayed in a fashion similar to any variety of Islam. Shaykh Abdul delivered a short sermon emphasizing the sacredness of God — Allah in Arabic. And then the congregation took up a chant that is particular to its style.

Mohamed Mohamed, the Sudanese-born president of the Sufi center, offered a rhyming prayer that was half-sung, half-chanted as other members of the congregation kept time on drums.

"Always listen to my advice. Be wise and always be nice."

That was a new method of Sufi worship for Shaykh Abdul. A few days later, he quoted a sacred saying that supports novel ways to communicate with people.

"Allah says to make the way wide for people," he said. Mr. Mohamed "is trying to make his way wide for people. I think it's a good thing. I wish some of our ethnocentric, inward-looking communities would make similar efforts."

This week, he went home to Chicago. But soon he'll be back on the road, teaching and praying. Not that he expects to ever find universal acceptance for his messages. He quoted another saying:

"Saints are like an oasis in the desert. They are able to make green around them, but there is this huge desert," he said. "What can you do?"