THE TEARS OF YOUTH

Muhammed Mustafa ERKMEN



This book is the answer of a heart caught between two worlds to the question: “Who am I?”

Hayat

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Who is Muhammed Mustafa ERKMEN?

My name is Muhammed Mustafa ERKMEN. I was born on September 30, 1980, in Erkmen, a town in the city of Afyon, Türkiye. My father, Ali, was a Hajji, a teacher and an imam; my mother, Ehlinaz, was the daughter of an imam. As the eldest of five children, I spent most of my life in Austria. I am married and a father of three children.

From childhood, I was drawn to learning, discovery and serving others. My journey through life has shown me that knowledge elevates a person, but without practice, it is easily lost. That is why I have always sought to expand my understanding and to share what I have learned with others.

I studied English Language and Literature at the University of Vienna and later Economics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business. Yet what truly fulfilled me was helping young people to build lives that are conscious, strong and guided by values.

For this reason, I deepened my education in the fields of Pedagogy at Arel University in Istanbul, Family Counseling at Biruni University and Spiritual Coaching at the Şişli Vocational Academy. Through my work in practice, I came to understand that academic knowledge alone is never enough; a teacher must first live the values they seek to impart.

On July 24, 2020, we founded **Interaktiv.J — an educational, integration, cultural and humanitarian association** for young people with a migration background. Its purpose was to work directly with youth, to help them overcome challenges, discover themselves and develop their character.

At the same time, I worked in various departments of the City of Vienna, in the areas of mosque pedagogy, integration coaching and adult education. There, I experienced firsthand how valuable it is to walk alongside people and to support them practically and humanely.

For me, education is not merely an academic pursuit; it is a way of life.

Values should not only be taught in words but lived through example in everyday life.

True teaching lies in authentic representation: Our values must be professed by the tongue, believed in the heart and proven through our actions.

With this awareness, I continue to strive to raise young people who are not only professionally competent but also responsible, conscientious and guided by moral integrity.

For I believe that change begins with a single person. If I can grow within myself, live sincerely and inspire even one soul, then I have already changed the world. One does not need superhuman powers to make a difference; only a good, honest and serving heart.

Just like that merchant in Indonesia, whose single act became the means by which 241 million people embraced Islam.

> *"One flower does not make a spring,*
> *but every spring begins with a single flower."*
>
> **Prof. Dr. Necmeddin ERBAKAN**

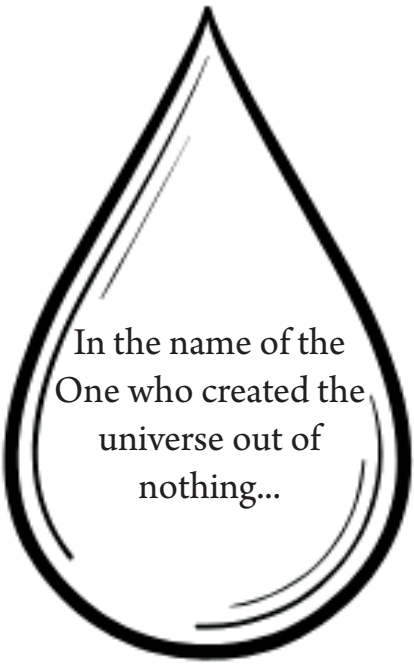
And I will remain faithful to this principle throughout my life.

Dedicated to my beloved family…

Note: All proceeds from this book will be donated by the author to the **Vienna Interaktiv.J Youth Association.**

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In the name of the
One who created the
universe out of
nothing...

Introduction

A young heart, filled with boundless dreams and the search for its true self.

Yet for a young person growing up in Europe, this search often feels like sailing through a storm. The waves of religion and culture rise on one side, while from the other, the digital spirit of the age crashes in.

At the same time, you try to hold on to your identity, to resist the seduction of the modern world. It is an inner conflict that leaves deep traces on the heart.

Amid all of this, one can find the tears of young people, sometimes hidden in silent prayers, sometimes soaking the pillow at night and sometimes reflected in a foreign, disdainful glance on the street. When a young person begins to feel like a stranger, they start to ask themselves: "Who am I really? Do I belong here? How can I remain strong without losing my values?" For many young people in Europe, these questions are not mere thoughts; they are a quiet struggle for survival.

The wave of challenges makes it increasingly difficult for young people to find their place in society. This affects not only their religious practice but also their inner and emotional balance. In an environment where wealth and possessions define a person's worth, it becomes hard to nurture the inner values of kindness and goodness. Now, many young hearts are losing their strength. Between the

religious and cultural values inherited from their families and the modern Western lifestyle that tries to lure them away, a gap opens, one that threatens to tear them apart. Some slowly drift away from their identity, while others cling even more tightly to their faith and their roots.

But is it possible to dry these tears? What do young people need to live with confidence, steadfastness and strength in their identity, without losing themselves?

This book speaks to you; yes, to you:

"You are not alone in your struggle for identity. Never give up."

Because you are not just an individual; you are part of a community. And within you lies the power to change the world.

Never forget:

Your tears are a sign of your inner strength.

And your story may be the hope that saves someone tomorrow.

Come, let us, together, wipe away the tears of our youth.

My Mother's Answer

"One question, one answer, one destiny…"

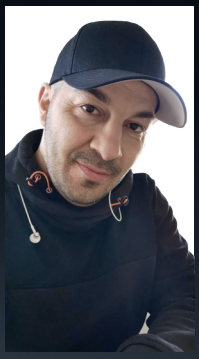
I was barely ten years old. My young mind was searching for answers to the questions that had quietly gathered in my heart.

One day, I asked my mother with innocent curiosity:

"Mom, didn't Dad study at the Faculty of Theology in Konya? And didn't he have a position at a good high school in Ankara with a decent salary, too? Then why did we come to this foreign country, just because a friend said, 'Hoca, would you like to serve as an imam in Vienna for one Ramadan?' Why don't we go back to our homeland? What are we even doing here in Austria?"

Muhammed Mustafa ERKMEN

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“You don’t have to be a superhero to change the world.”

True heroes are those who stand for their values, sincerely, consistently, and with courage.

This book invites you to rediscover yourself.

“Spring begins with a single flower.”

— Prof. Dr. Necmettin Erbakan

Perhaps you are that very flower.

When you change, the world changes with you.

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