

## **Heart Deeper Than Ocean**

Z. A. Awan, **Heart Deeper Than Ocean**, Lahore: Al-Arifeen Publications, 2017. 249 pp. ISBN 978-969-9290-2

Reviewed By Dr. María Isabel Maldonado García \*

It is a pleasure for me to present the review of this book for several reasons. First, I had the honor to meet its author, Dr. Awan, during the launch of his book in Lahore, where I was invited as a speaker. Second, Sultan Bahoo is a mystic author I am familiar with and have researched in the past.

Sultan Bahoo's charisma is such that he places most importance on various topics through the selective choice of lexical elements. If we ask any avid reader of the poetry of Hazrat Sultan Bahoo, he or she may say that his topics revolve around Allah and the love of the poet for the Creator. Nevertheless, the astonishing part and a great discovery that I made during the analysis of the poetry was that the main topic was not just limited to Allah but to the Unity of the poet's soul with the Creator as well as the Oneness of Allah subhanawtallah through internal soul searching.

The book of Dr. Awan treats first and foremost this point; the effects of the Love for Allah. Love in Bahoo's view produces pain. The Lover is unreachable and unattainable. The heart enlightened by love suffers from pain and other illnesses of the heart. If a person is not in continuous search for the Beloved, sacrificing precious worldly treasures he or she, will never be closed to Him.

Some of the poetry of Hazrat Sultan Bahoo is extremely vibrant. In some cases, the exposition of metaphors is astonishing. I am sure that for the readers of Hazrat Sultan Bahoo these types of manifestations are usual. However, for me, the process of expression by which the author exposes the intensity of the Love of those followers was absolutely appalling. Their bodies are on fire, which is usually a metaphor to depict the hell, and their spirits are in constant state of boiling while they suffer

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from heartache and sorrow. According to Bahoo, this is the definition of the true mystics.

The importance of the Love was followed by the Unity and this point at that time was found one hundred times in one hundred poems. It proves that in his view, we are all in hell if Allah subhanawatallah is not with us.

In this particular book, Dr. Awan places the importance of the Oneness of Allah through the words Wahdaniyat, followed systematically by the figure of the Messenger of Allah subhanawtallah Prophet Muhammad *sallah llahu wallaihi wassalam* through whom Hazrat Sultan Bahoo found valuable teachings as well as the friends of Allah subhanawatallah.

Norman Mailer said “Writing books is the closest men ever come to childbearing” and as the author of 8 books and the mother of three children I can testify to this fact. Writing a book is a complex process where the author pours a great deal of himself or herself in that pursuit.

On the other hand, the work of a translator is a very arduous one. The main reason for this is that the translator has no freedom. It is said that books are only as good as their translator. Interpreters and translators typically do the following: Convert concepts in the source language to equivalent concepts in the target language. In the case of poetry this is a very complex endeavor. The translation of poetry requires that the metaphors, the individual economy of language of the author, features that portray evocation and the elements of surprise of the original author be understood by the translator.

A book of poetry is something to celebrate, and so, this forum provides me with an excellent opportunity to share here some of the lessons I have learnt during my reading of the book. Many of the poems have caught my attention, some more than others, for example on page 93:

What heart demands, I don't have, the desire becomes intense-Hoo  
 Friend doesn't give my heart's remedy and my love remains earnest  
 –Hoo,

In this arena of love there are fiery emotions-Hoo,  
I sacrifice upon you, who still pursued the path of love-Hoo.

In page 105

The living do not know the plight of deceased, only one knows who dies –Hoo.

There is no food or water in graves; earnings made in this world are needed –Hoo.

A grief of separation from kith and kin and indeed a punishment in the grave –Hoo.

Enviably is fate of the one Bahoo, who dies in this life –Hoo.

In page 145

Pious became fatigued offering prayers and observing fasts- Hoo,

Lovers immersed in the Oneness of Lord with all secrets of love-Hoo,

A bee trapped in honey cannot fly along eagles-Hoo,

Those who are in the company of Prophet (SAW) Bahoo, are truly fortunate ones –Hoo.

Notice how the original text is present, underneath the translation by Dr. Awan and further a small explanation of terms for clarification of cultural context to the foreign reader.

The writer Toni Morrison once said: *‘If there’s a book you really want to read but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it.’* I believe this is exactly what Dr. Awan was trying to do when he completed this book.