

Congregations of Prophet ﷺ



A Study of
Sultān Al-‘Arifīn Sultan Bahoo’s Classic Text

By:
Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali

Translated in English and Glossary By
M. A. Khan



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Al-Arifeen Publications
Lahore, Pakistan

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Published by

Al-Arifeen Publications, Lahore, Pakistan

ISBN: 978-969-9290-34-3

Price

Pakistan: 600 PKR

Elsewhere: 14 USD

Al-Arifeen Publications

Lahore, Pakistan

Head office: Darbar Hadrat Sultan Bahoo District Jhang, Pakistan.

Postal Address: P.O Box No. 11, GPO Lahore, Pakistan.

E-mail: alarifeenpublication@hotmail.com

Web: www.alfaqr.net, www.sultanbahoo.net

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Dedicated to Honourable Sultān Nūr Aḥmad (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ), (d. 1919 CE) honoured as the seventh heir of the Shrine of Sultān Al-‘Ārifīn Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ).

He produced Sufi poetry in Persian as well as Punjabi. Following Sarwarī Qādirī spiritual-order, he mentored hundreds of thousands of people in the entire region. Under the mentorship of Honourable Sultan Muḥammad Asghar Ali (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) (1947 – 2003 CE) – in my childhood days – I learned many unprecedented devotional accounts of Sultān Nūr Aḥmad (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) and his faqīrs. His poetry and manuscripts of Honourable Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ), reproduced by himself, are among some of his best legacies.

Mentored by himself, his magnificent son Honourable Amīr Sultān (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) (d. 1350 H) was honoured with the eighth heirship of the Shrine of Sultān Al-‘Ārifīn Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ). Amīr Sultān’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) contributions in the construction works at Shrine, with magnificent artwork, reflect his profound appreciation of aesthetics that beautifully mirror the exquisite principles of Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) metaphysics; central among them being the noble Name “Allaho”.

Names of great people like Sultān Nūr Aḥmad (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) – who devoted his entire life in preserving and spreading the prime objective of his life – live forever.

Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali

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About Sultān Al-‘Ārifīn Sultan Bahoo

Sultān Al-‘Ārifīn Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) was born in AD 1629 in Shorkot, a town in District Jhang, Pakistan. His father, Muḥammad Bāzayd (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ), was a pious jurist and commander of Shorkot Fort in Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan’s army. Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) belonged to *A‘wān* tribe in 31st line descendants of Honourable ‘Alī (عليه السلام). When *Sādāt* – descendants of Prophet (ﷺ) – left their homeland, it was the forefathers of *A‘wān* who, being closer to *Sādāt*, helped and companied them in difficult times.

Before Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) birth, his mother Honourable Bībī Rāstī (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) had a dream in which she was given glad tidings that she will have a son. It was also revealed upon her that her son will be a friend of Allah (ﷻ) by birth and he will unveil treasures of Allah Almighty (ﷻ) to illuminate the people. In that vision, she was advised to name him ‘Bahoo’. Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) received initial spiritual-training from his pious mother.

There is a beautiful depiction from glimpse of Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) life, which reveals the ardour of his spiritual pursuit. He was seeking for an accomplished spiritual master for thirty years. Finally, he is blessed with an extraordinary bestowal, where Honourable ‘Alī Al-Murtaḍā’ (عليه السلام) holds his hand and takes him in the presence of Prophet (ﷺ). Prophet (ﷺ) is pleased to see him and says, “*Hold my hand*”. His spiritual-oath (*bay‘at*) is administered on the hand of Prophet (ﷺ). Following the order from Prophet (ﷺ), Shaykh ‘Abd Al-Qādir Al-Jīlānī (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) bestows him *talqīn* i.e., transfers the spiritual-excellence into his heart through spiritual-concentration. Following the intuitive command of Shaykh ‘Abd Al-Qādir Al-Jīlānī (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ), he has physical oath

(bay'at) and enters into the discipleship of Shaykh 'Abd Ar-Rahmān (ﷺ), descendant of Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qādir Al-Jīlānī (ﷺ), in Delhi.

When fervencies of the renaissance had almost reconstituted European thought, here in Subcontinent, the reins of Mughal Empire came in the hands of Aurangzeb Alamgir in AD 1658, who would rule it almost for half a century onwards. Here, Sufi intellect had been drawing its light from the teachings of Imām Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (ﷺ), Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qādir Al-Jīlānī (ﷺ), Muḥay Ad-Dīn Ibn Al-'Arabī (ﷺ) and other such great personalities. However, the religious environment was going through the eclipses by the conceptual fissures simulated by the juridical experiments of Emperor Akbar and later on by Dārā Šikuh. In such time, Sultān Al-'Ārifin Sultan Bahoo (ﷺ) came forward to provide way forward to come out of that turmoil with re-realisation of Islam's universal rationales, and broader and steadier worldviews described by Sufism.

Sultan Bahoo (ﷺ) describes that owing to the delight emanated by the unveiling of secrets and spiritual-influence of Beloved in his heart, he was not left with enough time to engage with the knowledge earned through the letters and ink or syntaxed worship formulas. His being, he says, is absorbed in the deep sea of Oneness from pre-eternity till post-eternity. In perspective of knowledge, Sultan Bahoo (ﷺ) is uniquely blessed with spiritual-excellence and did not go through formal school or *madrasah* instruction.

He adheres to *Ḥanafī* school of jurisprudence and *Māturīdī* school of theology. Authorship of around 139 Persian works is associated with Sultan Bahoo (ﷺ). *Abyāt Bahoo* – a collection of poetry in a dialect of Punjabi language – earned him most popularity in the region. Till the end of twentieth century, most of his Persian works remained unknown (specifically in context of his philosophy). Considerable efforts are being invested recently in bringing this invaluable treasure to the fore. Tens of his books are available now.

Each verse in his Punjabi *Abyāt Bahoo* ends in the beautiful echo of *Hoo*. When recited in ardour, this echo penetrates deep into the depths of listeners' souls. It has been illuminating the inner selves of

generations of learned as well as simple unlettered villagers. Mothers recite to their children, and folk singers draw passion and enthusiasm from this echo, to keep their concerts warm and alive. *Hoo*’s echo has in fact earned him immense influence in South Asia.

Focusing on re-annotating the entire interpretations with Exalted Qur’ān and *Hadīth*, Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) revitalises the central concepts like Oneness and passionate love (*‘ishq*). He emphasises on re-energizing the rituals with their ideal objective and seeks completion of *sharī‘at* in *faqr* (spiritual-excellence); a term used in Prophetic traditions. Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) dedicates an entire treatise *‘Ayn Al-Faqr* to this subject. Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) metaphysics conceives spiritual-excellence (*faqr*) within total compliance of Exalted Qur’ān and *Hadīth*. It breeds power and action instead of leading to passiveness and evasions from the challenges of life. In our times, we hear the echoes of Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) *faqr* in Allama Muhammad Iqbal’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) poetry.

In his book *‘Aql-e Beydār* (awakened intellect), passionate love and perfect intellect are considered to be identical. Like Shaykh ‘Abd Al-Qādir Al-Jīlānī (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) and Muḥayy Ad-Dīn Ibn Al-‘Arabī (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ), he emphasises on contemplative remembrance (*dhikr*) of Almighty’s beautiful names to step into the realm of spiritual observation of Ultimate Reality. He marks the centre of entire spiritual curriculum at the most beautiful name “*Allaho*” (*Ism Allah Dhāt*). He realises that all material or nonmaterial realities, in the realm of existence, owe their sustenance to *Ism Allah Dhāt*. Prime focus of all works of Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) is in fact to provide with an exegesis of this Name of the Absolute Self. Reflective contemplation of *Ism Allah Dhāt*, he says, opens to desirous of Allah (ﷻ) the witnessing of the Absolute Reality, and perpetual presence in convention of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ).

In Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) epistemology, mere intellect cannot entirely perceive Divine-essence and spiritual knowledge. Strict abidance of Islamic Divine law (*Sharī‘at*) and guidance of an accomplished Sufi master are intercessory to witness the Divine-Reality. He describes that objective of human being is to quest for intimacy with the Essence of

Allah Almighty (ﷻ). Run of entire worlds from the non-existence to the realm of existence owes to the passion of the universal matter of,

“I was a hidden treasure, therefore I willed to be known”.

In one of his most famous works *Nūr Al-Hudá*, Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) says that with special bestowal, Almighty Allah (ﷻ) bestowed him at the spiritual-state of perfection, for the guidance of His creation, by virtue of which he thus proclaims to bring the desirous of Allah (ﷻ) in union with the Ultimate Beloved in a single merciful gaze. In one of the most beautiful quadruplets, engraved atop the tomb entrance door, he says:

“O desirous of Haqq come over I am present here. I shall take you to Allah (ﷻ) the very first day you come. O desirous of the Truth come, so that I may bring you in union with the Beloved God.”

Objective of all sciences, Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) says, is for witnessing the Divine-Reality.

Thoughts of friends of God, like Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ), provide with one of the best refuges in today’s circumstances. Union and Oneness is nexus of Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) thoughts; thus asserting that God is one; the nucleus around which all sciences of the cosmos and sciences of the soul revolve. Here, everything stands on the declaration (*Kalimah Shahādat*) of one truth, “*There is no god but God*”. All sciences are looked upon as branches of a single tree of Oneness.

Teachings of Sultān Al-‘Ārifin Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) are taught in the higher education institutions across the world. His Punjabi *Abyāt Bahoo* have penetrated deep into the South Asian Sufi literature, and have been translated into many languages as well. His teachings are of interest for anyone interested in learning Islamic mysticism.

Sultān Al-‘Ārifin Sultan Bahoo (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) departed from this temporal abode in AD 1691. His tomb is located in District Jhang, Pakistan, which is visited round the year by hundreds of thousands of people from all schools of thought to benefit from the Divine blessings being showered upon him.

Honourable Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) ninth descendent Honourable Sultan Muhammad Asghar Ali (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) (1947 - 2003) breathed a new spirit in Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) legacy. To expand the outreach of his literature legacy, for instance, Sultan Muhammad Asghar Ali (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) patroned the establishment of Al-Arifeen Publications, which has published Urdu and English translations of a number of Sultan Bahoo’s (رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) Persian books. His illustrious son, Honourable Sultan Muhammad Ali, is not only leading this publication enterprise with his patronage but also providing guidance to the desirous of Allah Almighty under practical training as per *Sarwarī Qādirī* spiritual-order.

Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali
Chairman, Al-Arifeen Publications

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