

# Sayyid Mohammed Abdulle Hassan: And the Role Of Poetic Stanzas in his Dervish Struggle against European Imperialist

By Ali Sheikh-Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 07-27-16

Sayyid Mohammed's powerful poetic language contained a considerable amount of Arabic borrowed-words. It's not surprising for the use of Arabic words among the Somalis. The connection with Arab culture emanates from their Muslim background and their early trade association with Arabian peninsular.

As its mention in one of his writings, the Somalis retained distinctiveness as a separate and extremely vigorous tongue which is unusually rich of oral literature (LEWIS, 2002 3rd ed) Sayyid Mohammed's poetry life was full of

struggle for death, revenge for relief, grief for motivational repulse, jealousy for the search of joy, mystical for manna. It's now almost hundred years since he passed on, but still Somali people celebrate his poems all around the world. He had a credible influence on the Somali language and invented hundreds of words (i.e. *Jaalle*) we use to the present today. Scant records exist with regards to poetry skill at his adolescent, Nevertheless, its widely said that, at a later age, all his age-mate born on the famous *Gu'gii Gobaysane* become prolific poets. *GU*—rainy season that starts March/April of every year and ends different period from year to year, but no longer than a month.

Said Mohammed, with cautious manner pioneered a mode of the poem, be full of, a wholesome intricate metaphor and rhetorical idioms that entirely aligned with the story and the plot he wishes to convey to his followers (Dervish or Darawiish). He created poetic theatre that



*Sayyid Mohammed's Statues in Jigjiga*

permeated, a dense free flow of words in a unique lyric style, (*Jiifto, Ligligato and Lalis and etc.*) that up to today live with Somali poets as a reference and test of time. During the 18th century and well over before that, it was not only a strong traditional, but good ethics for a poet to keep away from any “insulting and outwit” verses/stanzas that spoils poetic morals and serenity. Long before things fall apart, the Somalis maintained good linguistic discipline in poems. They were careful in using fragility of words and the breach of socially outlawed premise or subject matters; such as, direct incitement, verse holding women, genital insult both in public and in private, and others considered as a matter of myriad shame. However, defiant individuals among the society have never been exceptional for any rule, for stance, one Ali Dhuuh Aden Goroyo, a poet and diehard contender against the freedom struggle of Sayyid Mohammed was one among others. According to Dervish, Ali Dhuuh Aden was a traitor and colonial collaborator. He never gives up in sending poetry foul/abusive messages to his tribesmen, just to discourage them from the Dervish membership. On the contrary, the intelligent elders of the Dhulbahante clan (Darood tribe) and the pillar-base of the Dervish army who had a maternal connection to the Dervish commander dismisses his calls to abandon the ultra-religious Dervish commander’s companion. Accordingly, Dhulbahante clan took the standpoint against Ali Dhuuh, and was regarded as colonial bootlicker and a man filled with endless grudges. Like always, Ali Dhuuh put on the edge a poem that surfaced as a “tyranny of words” and in turn tarnished his fame so dreadfully in the eyes of the veteran Somali poet<sup>i</sup> of the time. Much as it was filled with insult of Sayyid Mohammed and his tribe. Here is the main part of Ali Dhuuh’s foul poem;

*Abtiyaalladaa iyo ku nece, ururtii Reer Khayre*  
*Arboow Jaamac iyo Aadaniyo, Oogle kaa tage e*  
*Waxaan uubateeyaba tolkey, oodda soo jebiye*  
*Axmaqyahow kuwaad ku amranayd, idinka ma ahayne*  
*Waa uur gaslow Aadan-dhagax, odayadaadiiye*  
*Abtirsiinadaa waxay gashaa, eyda Reer Xamare*  
*Arxan nimaan u gelihaynin, oo ina Ogaadeena*  
*Aabowda uun bay hayaan, kii arsaa'ilaye*

***{Literal Translation according to the stanza order}***

*May your maternal uncles and Khayre disgust you  
Thy Jaam'a, Adan and even Oogle offed you  
That my thunderous warbles have retreated my tribesmen<sup>ii</sup>  
Idiot! Those who fend you were not your tribesmen,  
They were the likes of Adan-Dhagah, the grudge-holder  
Your forefathers' origin cusps to the bitch race  
They plea behind the hitman, the wanton son of Ogaden.*

The above stanzas/verses are same of Ali Dhuuh Aden's insulting month. It did shock and offended the ears of every sane Somali poet of the time, particularly the great men of Dhulbahante. In all occasions Ali Doha was considered as an emotional and corrupt poet whose intent was nothing other than to conceal his thievery immorality with specific reference to the raided camels from Reer Hagar sub-clan of the Dhulbahante clan<sup>iii</sup>

In defense of his tribal ancestry chain of order (Ogaden via Darood) —Sayyid Mohammed vaunted his heredity piety starting from dignified Arabian lineage that end-roots to Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). In a reaction to Ali Dhuuh's poem, he marked colorfully the ancestral connection to the holy chain of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) both in faith and origin. here is the reply;

*Aw Yuusufow eray yar baan, ku erginaayaaye  
Hadduu Eebbaheey kuu idmood, ururta weyn gaadho  
Ikhwaanow adkee xaajadaan, kugu ammaaneystey  
Ku ansixi halkii aan ku idhi, aadna ugu fiirso  
Gurraasiyo Iljeex iyo u sheeg, nimanka Iidoora  
Ogaadeen haddaan ahay dad, wow amar sareeyaaye  
Oo ubaxa baarkaan ihiyo, awrta Haashimiye  
Abtirsiimadey waxay gashaa, odayo waaweyne*

*Halkaan ugu arooraana waa, odayga Daarroode  
Rasuulkii udgoonaana waa, ina-adeerkay e (csws)  
Sayidkii Axmed ahaana, way awow runna ahee  
Ibraahiin Rashiid aabbahay, odaygii weeyaane  
Asaxaabihii oo dhan baan, ehel wadaagnaaye  
Hadba anigu qoyskaan ahaa, loo irkanaayaye  
Nin Amxaara mooyee intii, edeg adduun joogta  
Islaameedku wuxuu ii yaqaan, ehelu kharykiiye  
Aakhiro albaabbada jannaan, agabsanaayaaye  
Adiguna Abbaanow midgaan, uraya sow ma ihid?  
War sow kii Illaahay nacee, eyga qalay ma ihid?*

**(Literal translations according to stanzas)**

*Thou Yusuf, be the courier of the runty word,  
If Almighty says and you touch the valley  
I trust you keep the message tight as it is,  
Make sure ye deliver to the point as thou gaze at  
Tell to Gurraase, Iljeeh and even the men of Iidoor clan.  
That I stand superior in virtue as an Ogaden son,  
That I was the cream laying top of the tribes, the Hashimites  
That my lineage sprout from a distinguish elders,  
Of their progeny enroots to the extolled Darood.  
Next of my kin is the whiff of the universe, Prophet Mohamed (PBUH).  
And Ahmed is my acclaimed grandsire,  
Even AbrahiimRashiid is my patriarch  
Those companions of the prophet are my kith and kin  
All and sundry, knows my piety except the Amhar  
That, in the other world, I expect best of paradise  
My friend, aren't you not low of the lowest caste?  
Aren't you not disgust of God, the dog eater?*

**Sayyid Mohamed Abdullah Hassan** puts down the lid as an important historical figure in Somali history and devoted much of his early life to Islamic studies and the struggle for freedom for his people. Beyond anything to boot, he mastered the poetic art of rhythmical composition and of spoken words. No Doubt Sayyid Mohammed was endowed the art of poetic inventiveness, grand thoughts and descriptive beautification of literary work in distinctive metrical form. What is more, he proved the knowledge and the anthropological setting of the Somalis. He hardly replies or reacts to rival poetic messages up until he collects full data relating to the person who sent the poem. He traces both personal behavior and purity of the sender's patriarchal order and finds out weaker points to beat his wit to wail. The only venue for the Dervish commander to express his enthusiasm as well as his emotional sentiments was through the poem. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the poem was the only means to carry communication. In another scenario, religio-commander sends a "*Poetic Will*"——*Dardaaran Gabay* to the imperialist British Deputy Consular-General in Berbera of African soil as well as to all Somalis that brings together wonderful compassion to poetic language. He uttered his inflexibility to the colonial offer to stop the Dervish struggle against the European rule on African soil, just like Menelik and other African heroes did in exchange of material gift. The poem describes expression and general clutch to his psychoanalytic notion of self-determination, and his unfathomable knowledge of the colonial "The diplomacy of dishonest" and conspiracy of divide and rule mechanism on African populace. To unfold plot of the British colony, the grieved Dervish religio-commander sent one of his eminent "**poetic will**"——*Dardaaran Gabay* in response to the British colonial offer. The *Poetic Will* contained two important tidings; first the Dervish commander acknowledges to his Somali opponent that he turned down the colonial gifts in exchange of his home country's sovereignty. Secondly, he left

to his people that he will never compromise the choice of ALLAH in the expense of the infidel's partnership. Here below is an extract of the *Poetic Will*;

“...Anaa diiday nabadiisa aan, daacad noqonayne  
Anaa diiday deeqdiisa ay, naari dabataale  
Dahabkii uu waday waanigii, daadiyee qubaye  
Dagaalkiisa anigow xishoo, daalib ku ahaaye  
Durdurada Fardowsaad anaa, doortay oo rabaye  
Anaan labada daarood tan hore, darajo moodaynin  
Anaa diiday gaal daacufle ah, dabagalkiisiye  
Doofaarka eyga ah anaan, daarihiis galine  
Sida doxorka lidoor anaan, duud xamaal noqone  
Anigaan dariiqiyo waddada, dowga sii marine  
Anigaan dillaalkiyo arliga, duubigaw xidhane  
Anigaan dariiqada Alliyo, diinta cassiyine...”

## **(The literal translation)**

I say no his (British) peace that will never be honest  
I decline his gift of which the other world the reward is hell  
I abstained all and discarded his gold offer  
I opted war more than his peace, wasn't wrong choice  
I picked divine abode (Fardowsaad) in the next world  
I made a clear choice of the two pleasures and picked the next world,  
I turned down dimwit infidel's companion bootlicking  
And say no to party with the son-of a bitche and reject pigsty houses  
I can't be porter for the colony, like the loose-lipped, talkative lidoor<sup>iv</sup> men  
I have not taken the turban just to brook for the colony  
I do not disobey thee Lord (ALLAH) to bless infidels

Sayyid Mohammed was someone who could speak in his poem across cultures and make his followers feel the abundant miseries European imperialist inflicted their faith and values that fueled the savagery revolt against British colonial power. The reminiscence of his philosophy, devotion and sacrifice for the freedom and the initiation of statehood for then balkanized Somali tribes inspired Somalis of the horn for generations. Sayyid Mohammed up to today remains immortal memory as an African hero and as an identity for all Somalis in the horn

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<sup>i</sup> Abdulahi Ma'alim Ahmed aka Dhoodan in an informal chat mention that Ali Dhuuh breached the noble ethic of Somali poem. Dhoodan kept saying that Ali Dhuuh Adan was never tired sending composure of abusive, incitement, vaunt boosting words which is against the rule of poem even when he grew old and bedridden

<sup>ii</sup> His tribesmen is Dhulbahante, also Ali Dhuuh was from the same tribe

<sup>iii</sup> Ali Dhuuh raided handful camels owned by Hagar Sub-clan of Dhulbahante clan, the camel were herded by unarmed young boys. The action was totally taboo to raid orphan owned camels in the eyes of the Somali societies even today.

<sup>iv</sup> Is a nickname for the Issack clan