

BOOK REVIEW

- Book Title : *Dobra Bosna*
(trans. *Bosnia the Good: Tolerance and Tradition*)
- Author : Rusmir Mahmutcehajic
- Publisher : Zagreb: Edition Durieux, 1997
- Translator : Marina Bowder
- Publisher : Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000
- Reviewed by : Muhidin Mulalic

The author started by defining the 1990's Bosnian conflict through analysing its roots and causes. He later presented an excellent discussion on the present predicament of the Bosnian people in the light of ideological, metaphysical (*taṣawwuf*), religious and historical perspectives. Accordingly, his contribution is indispensable for those who wish to have a better understanding of Serbian, Croatian and even European attempts to wipe out the Bosnian multi-ethnic and multi-religious identity.

The author argued that the problems began when the Serbian, Croatian and even Bosnian political parties began to form strong nationalistic tendencies. They played up differences in ideologies, history and religious traditions of the three ethnic groups in order to instigate intolerance and hatred towards each other. Another prevalent threat at the time was a wave of European antagonism against Islam, which contradicted European stand for 'the World order', 'the end of history' and 'supremacy of Western liberal democracy'. These two factors form the main reasons for the destruction of Bosnian identity.

After analyzing the major causes of Bosnian conflict, the author provided solution based on the idea of unity in diversity as propagated by *taṣawwuf* teachings. The author holds that harmony and ultimate salvation of multi-ethnic and multi-religious states and civilizations lies in co-equal respect of the various ethnic groups' different laws and ways in arriving at one single Reality. Therefore, the solution, harmony and salvation for Bosnia and humanity are in spiritual unity.

The author provided significant methodology in dealing with the Bosnian conflict. His scholarly approach in the domain of history and his presentation of its relevance in the case of Bosnian conflict were excellent. However, the idea of unity in diversity based on the teachings of *taṣawwuf*, as a mean of solution, salvation and harmony

between multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies is questionable. The author has intentionally or unintentionally, omitted discussion of the origin of this idea. His claim that it is based on the teachings of *taṣawwuf* is unsupported and quite inappropriate. Rather, the 'unity in diversity' concept can be traced back to the originators of the disciplines of comparative religions and inter-religious dialogues.

On the other hand, the teachings of *taṣawwuf* do provide essential elements for an Islamic worldview reflected in the idea of spiritual and material unity. Therefore, the harmony and salvation of Bosnia and humanity is not only in spiritual unity, as the author holds, but in material as well.

The author made an excellent attempt to provide solution for the Bosnian civilizational, multi-ethnic and multi-religious conflicts. His contribution is of vital importance to Bosnian policy-makers in particular and to World policy-makers in general. They must take into account his fundamental insights regarding the importance of ideology, religious traditions and history for determining and shaping the identity of an individual and society. In other words, the proper definition of ideology, religious traditions and history are essential for the conflict resolution.