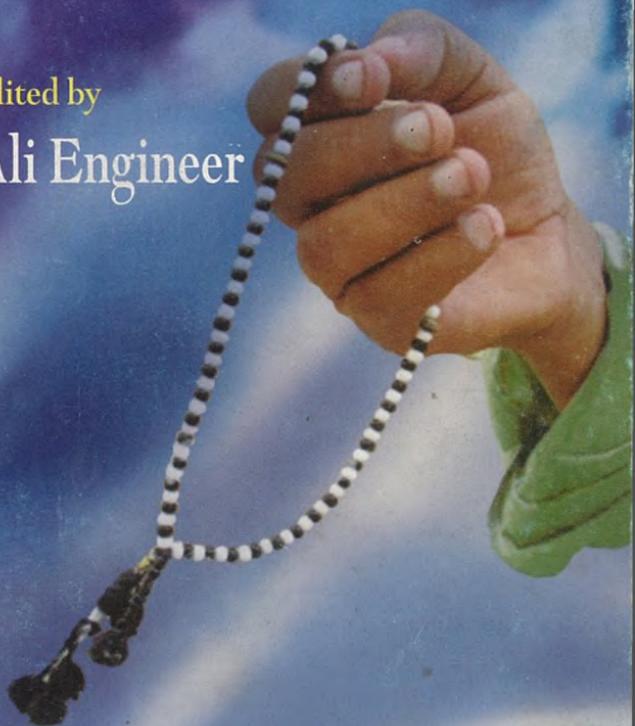


# Sufism



## INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

Edited by  
Asghar Ali Engineer



**HOPE**  
INDIA

*Sufism and Inter-Religious  
Understanding*

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER



In this violence torn world Sufism is the real balm. In early Islam, too, when rulers and those aspiring for power began to use violence extensively and legitimized it by invoking Islam and concept of jihad, those Muslims who were pious and peace-loving withdrew from political arena and preferred to practice Islam as a rich source of spiritual teachings. The Sufis are basically spiritual people and consider love and peace as fundamental part of human life.

The Institute of Islamic Studies, Mumbai keeps on holding seminars and discussions on Sufism as a very effective means of promoting love and peace. In this volumes too we have collected papers read in one such seminar held in Mumbai some time ago. The papers show that Sufis believe in universal love and their love

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transcends all religious, national, linguistic and ethnic boundaries as their very basic doctrine is *sulh-i-kul* (total peace, peace with all). They reject the outlook which is based on 'my religion or nation or ethnic group is better than yours'.

Sufis love all religions and followers of all religions. Maulana Rum, one of the greatest Sufis used to say, come to me o Muslim, come to me O Jews, come to me O Christians and come to me even if you are sinners. Muhiyuddin Ibn Arabi, another great Sufi, also revered as master by many Sufis, says in one of his poems that *hubbi dini wa shari'ati* i.e. love is my religion and my shari'at .

The Sufis acted as bridge between Hindus and Muslims in India and many of them like Baba Farid wrote in local languages like Punjabi etc. in order to relate themselves with local people and to become part of local people and their culture. They could better understand aspirations of people as they tried to integrate themselves with them. Indian people had great reverence for them irrespective of religion, caste and creed. They went to them for their blessings and found inner solace and peace.

Today we are witnessing so much violence and hatred in our world. The powerful vested interests have hijacked religion for their own ends and people are torn with conflict. Peace is so scarce. Religion has become part of the problem rather than part of solution of problem as it has been politicized. It is, therefore, highly necessary today to reappropriate it from these vested interests and make it a remedy of all our problems, as it was originally intended, than a problem. We have to make it a resource for peace than a source for violence.

Thus we have to rediscover it in Sufi Islam which is deeply spiritual Islam. We must study lives and teachings of Sufi masters and their philosophy. This book, I hope, would certainly help understand Sufi Islam. Sufis never believed in jihad by sword (which really it is not). They believed in jihad by love. While those promoting hatred and violence believe in love of power, Sufis believed in power of love.

Let us spread power of love and minimize our love of power. Then and then alone we will be able to minimize violence in our world. This should be our real jihad.

## 2

# MYSTICISM IN ISLAM

M. MUJEEB



Towards the end of the 9th century, a slave who dominated the policy of the court reported to the Khalifah that a new sect had appeared of people who made music and danced and uttered blasphemies and made an exhibition of themselves every day and gathered together in secret places. There was no doubt they were heretics, and if the Khalifah executed a few of the leaders, heresy would be extirpated. The Khalifah commanded them to be brought before him. Abu Hamza, Irqam, Shibli, Nuri and Junaid were dragged into court, and they seemed to the Khalifah to be men of such little significance that he carelessly ordered their execution. As the executioner was about to begin his bloody work, Nuri placed himself in front of his comrades and said joyfully, "I want to be killed first". The executioner replied. "It is not your turn yet, my man, and the sword is not a thing you should ask me to hurry with". "My way of life" said Nuri, "is based on sacrifice. The most precious thing in the world is life, and I would like to offer the few moments of my life that yet remain to prolong the lives of my friends. I consider, "he

went on, "that one moment of life in this world is of more value than a thousand years in the next, for here we serve and there we are near to God, and the better I serve God while here, the nearer I shall be to him in the next world". While the executioner, let us say, was scratching his head, trying to understand what all this meant, some of the spectators went and told the Khalifah what they had heard and seen, and he ordered the execution to be stayed. A Qddi was asked to interrogate the heretics, He soon sent word that if the men he had questioned were athiests and heretics, he would give it in writing that there were no true believers on the face of the earth. The Khalifah had the suspects brought before him again. They would not accept any favours by way of compensation and only asked to be let along and forgotten. The Khalifah publicly went in remorse, and allowed them to depart.

These men who had been brought to the court as suspects were the most outstanding sufis or mystics of their time.No doubt the Khalifah was cruel and stupid in passing judgement, but till the 10th century mysticism had not come out into the open. Muslim society knew little of the sufis, except that they were learned and pious men, some more inclined to asceticism, some less, their lives unsullied by wordly desires, their characters unpolluted by any form of association with rulers and noblemen, or even with those absorbed in the affairs of their daily life. Towards the close of the 9th century there came a change. The sufis who had kept to themselves, were moved by a longing to discover spirits akin to their own. They travelled long distances to meet each other, to hold conversation, to compare the nature of their spiritual experiences. Their reunions produced ecstasies that could not be concealed, forms of self-expression that could not be repressed. It was then that Sufism became a social movement. The awareness of this came as a surprise, if not a shock. The professors of orthodox theology condemned this movement. The ordinary Muslim could not fail to be impressed by the personality of the sufi, but it was some time before he could find the proper place for sufis in his estimation or reconcile their teachings with religion as he knew it.

The sufis trace their way of life, the *Tarlqat*, as they call it, to the Prophet's cousin and son- in-law, Ali, and their doctrines to the Quran. This is a kind of over-simplification which scholars resent

and European orientalists have been assiduously searching for the real origins of Sufism. According to some it derives primarily from Christianity, according to others from Iranian and Indian sources. Those who are most scrupulous about not overstating a case, point to many different directions from which the stimulus and the ideology of Sufism might have come, and one of these is Islam.

There can be no doubt, of course, about the multiplicity of the influences. In mysticism every where, not only in Sufism, you will find certain tendencies that are a part of Human nature, experiences that are common to all mankind, concepts and ideas which have been thrown up during the course of our mental and moral evolution. Mysticism is the quality of a certain type of man, and the quality and the type are both universal. As the mystic is by nature most receptive to moral and spiritual influences, he has everywhere and at all times represented the universal element in the ethical and religious culture of societies. It should be most pointless attempting to isolate the constituent elements of Muslim mysticism, the Christian from the Gnostic and Neo-Platonic, the Iranian from the Indian. For a while it can be safely predicted that, the history of the Near East being what it is, the most patient and persevering inquiry can lead to no definite conclusions, it is likely that our absorption in this inquiry will divert us from apprehending the distinctive features, the character, of Muslim mysticism. Muslim mysticism is Muslim, just as Greek architecture is Greek. I hold entirely with the tradition of the sufis that their way of life originates with Ali and that their doctrines derive from the Quran. Muslim mysticism, that is, began within Islam, began of itself and throughout retained its peculiar character. But it did not deny itself any sources of illumination and inspiration.

During the life-time of the Prophet and for over a century afterwards matters of belief as well as practice could be decided by people who could claim direct, personal knowledge. Religious experience was fresh, or could be refreshed by personal approach to those who had known the Prophet (Peace be upon him) or the apostles. But with the lapse of time it became inevitable that recourse should be had to traditions, opinions, interpretations, and these at best tend to make religion impersonal, legalistic, institutional. For most types of men, this is enough. They prefer to have

their spiritual food predigested for them. But not the mystic. He can only slake his thirst by drinking from the source, and he looks restlessly for the source. He does not find it in the law or the judgements of the learned, in prescribed observances or social practices. He finds it in himself. Either he was a personality of his own which burns with its own light and is both fuel and fire, or he discovers another personality, contact with which kindles and keeps alive the flame within him. The sufis insisted that the mystic way of life was consonant in every way with the Shari 'at, with institutional religion. Many of them were renowned scholars and theologians. But they could not disguise the fact that their own spiritual experience was for them the highest authority and there were not a few who openly proclaimed it.

Accounts of the early mystics generally include lives of people who were distinguished for their learning and strict adherence to the law. In the *Tazkirat-ul-Auliya* we have a biographical sketch of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal whom we would not consider a mystic at all. He was incredibly punctilious in following what he considered to be the law. He would not eat anything cooked in the house of Saleh, his son, because Saleh had served as a judge for some time, and might have given a wrong judgement. Once the Imam condemned some bread placed before him as legally uneatable. His servant did not know what to do with it, for even beggars would not dare to eat bread condemned by the Imam. So he threw it into the river. When the Imam found that out, he gave up eating fish caught in the river.

Such a character has been counted a mystic because the definition of a mystic was meant to be inclusive. Al-Qushairi, in his *Risala*, written some time in the 11th century, is even more catholic. His purpose was to show that the mystic practice inculcated all the moral and spiritual virtue which the ideal Muslim ought to possess. In the first part of *Risala*, these virtues are enumerated, defined and illustrated with examples. It seems, from these examples, that in the 9th and 10th centuries, religious-minded people used to form associations or brotherhoods for stimulating each other in the practice of a particular virtue such as hospitality or chivalry. We are told, for instance, of a meeting of such a brotherhood at a dinner in the house of one of the members. A maid-ser-

vant brought a vessel of water for washing the guests' hands. Some of the guests let her pour the water. One objected, "T think it discourteous to womanhood", he said, "to let such a service be performed by a maid-servant". Another guest, standing behind him, murmured, "I have been coming and drinking here for a number of years, but I have never allowed myself to notice whether this service was being performed by a man-servant or a maid". Another example is even more striking. A member of one of these brotherhoods was about to be married. His bride was suddenly stricken with smallpox and lost all her looks. The man heard of it. He complained of eye trouble and then declared that he had gone blind. However, the marriage took place, and husband and wife lived together for a number of years. Then the wife died, and shortly after the man seemed to have recovered his eye. His friends were surprised and asked how it had happened. "Nothing has happened" the man said. "I have all the time pretended to be blind that my wife should not feel sorry or ashamed at having lost her beauty".

There are many such illustrations in the Risala. They serve as a social background for the spiritual urge of mysticism, and also as a link between the personality of the sufi and the ordinary man who for some reason feels that he cannot change himself. The sufis do not appear in any way abnormal. They are men who have disciplined and developed their personalities to a remarkable degree through the resolve to be true to nature and true to God. The Risala succeeded in convincing not only contemporaries but also succeeding generations that there was no moral conflict between the orthodox and the mystic way of life. Imam Ghazzali (1058-111) used the methods of critical philosophy to show that religion is the birth right of man as such, that all the powers and activities peculiar to man point to a faculty which is not of this world and which enables its possessor to move in the world of reality, and that even the highest spiritual experience, that of prophets and saints, though it passes our understanding, is none the less grounded in human nature. "The outward actions and inward states of the mystics are irradiated by the lamp of prophethood...Unless a man has felt in himself something of these mystical states, he knows nothing of prophethood" -and revealed religion, one may add "except the name".

Imam Ghazzali, thus, considers mysticism the only true approach to religion. This view came to be generally accepted, because it was confirmed by the knowledge and spiritual experience of thousands of earnest men. Thus strengthened, the sufis multiplied and spread to all parts of the world where Muslims lived. They were organised in four orthodox orders, but there were also local orders sometimes affiliated to one of the four and claiming orthodoxy, sometimes independent and proud of their independence. These local orders made adaptations of belief and practice that are sometimes quite staggering, but there is no doubt they enriched religious life. Islam in India is what the sufis have made it, and it is to them we trace the doctrines of human and spiritual unity which inspired Akbar and the best Muslim statesmen and thinkers in India.

There is another aspect of Muslim mysticism that is quite as significant as the religious. The mystic seeks self-expression; he cannot live without it. The sufis, from the 11th century onwards took to poetry and made poetic images symbols of mystic ideas and states, and songs a means of attaining conditions of ecstasy and oblivion of self. Poetry, they declared, is a part of prophecy. That is, the poet and the prophet draw their inspiration from the same source. The mystics felt themselves free to use the language of poetry, to talk of beauty, of love, of separation and union, of cup and cup-bearer and wine. What they said was convincing because it was beautiful, exalted because it captivated the imagination and the heart. They destroyed the boundaries that have been raised between the physical and the spiritual by the cowardice of the worldly and the false pride of the ascetic and made the one lead freely and naturally into the other. They avoided everything coarse and sexual, they were strict and severe with themselves, and they refused human nature and imagination so that while retaining his humanity man could wander at will in the lands of the spirit and speak of their charm in a language all can understand. They made man, so incalculable, so deceptive, so inert, the well-spring of spirituality, the human personality a self directing, dynamic, inexhaustible force. The picture took long to draw and demanded a keenness of vision, a lightness of hand, an intensity of faith that are rarely found together, but man could not be more proud, more

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beautiful, more powerful and free than in the image of him.made by the Muslim mystics with the colours of poetry on the canvas of the divine.

# 3

## THE SUFI BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES IN INDIA

J.S. GREWAL



Scholars of Islam have underlined the importance of Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, in the history of Islam, and its great variety in different parts of the Islamic world, or even in a single country. D.B. Macdonald in his *Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* observes, for instance, that the Sufi way of life formed almost the whole of religious life in Islam. R.A. Nicolson in his *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* asserts that it is absolutely essential to understand the ideas and forms of Islamic mysticism, the vital element in Islam, in order to penetrate below the surface of Islamic religious life. Goldziher, underlines the fact that Sufism cannot be looked upon as a sect within Islam and that it cannot be reduced to a regular system because of its great variety.

Sufism is nearly as old as Islam, not only because the Sufis traced their ideas and beliefs to the Quran and the Hadis but also because its exponents appeared quite early on the scene in the

history of Islam. Ibrahim bin Adham, Hasan al-Basri, and Rabia, the first woman mystic in Islam, belonged to the 8th century. The earliest classics of Sufism began to appear in the 9th century, like the *Shathiyat* of Abu Yazid Bistami and the *al-Ri'aya li-Huquq Allah* of Haris bin Asad al-Muhasibi. Another equally famous mystic, al-Junaid, survived into the 10th century in which Mansur al-Hallaj, the wool-carder, was executed because of 'heterodox' ideas (which can now be studied in his *Kitab al-Tawasin*). Two other classics of the 10th century are the *Kitab al-Luma* of Abu Nasar al-Sarraj and the *Qut al-Qulub* of Abu Talib al-Makki. The *Risala* of Abu Qasim al-Qashairi was composed in the 11th century towards the end of which Abu Hamid al-Ghazali was beginning his career as a prolific writer. His *Ihya Ulum al-Din* is believed to have successfully reconciled Sufism to 'orthodox Islam'.

A great tradition of Sufis and their theosophy had thus developed in the Islamic world before its political power was extended to India in the shape of the Sultanate of Delhi during the 13th century. This tradition continued to flourish, as it is evident from the great names and works of the Sufis : the *Kashf al-Mahjub* of Ali al-Hujwiri, the *Tamhidat* of Ain al-Quzzat Hamdani, the *Awaraf al-Muarif* of Shihabuddin Umar Suhrawardi, and the *Mirsad al-Ibad* of Najmuddin. To these were added the classic works of Ibn al-Arabi : the *Futuhat-i-Makkiya* and the *Fusus al-Hakim*. Abdul Karim al-Jili's *al-Insan al-Kamil* appeared in the 15th century. By then the works of the famous Persian poets who popularized Sufi ideas and attitudes had also become classics, like the works of Iraqi, Sanai, Rumi and Nizami. A large number of Sufi orders too were now in witness all over the Islamic world.

## II

India could not be an exception. In fact, the richly developing tradition of Sufism was brought to India almost simultaneously from the 13th century onwards. The classics of Sufism, like the great works of the Persian mystic poets, were popularized in India by some of its eminent Sufis. The works which exercised special

influence in India were those of Abu Talib al-Makki, Abu Qasim al-Qashairi, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Shihabuddin Umar Suhrawardi, Ain al-Quzzat Hamdani and Najmuddin. The works of Ibn al-Arabi and al-Jili reached India soon after their composition. Before the end of the 16th century there were about a dozen orders of the Sufis existing in different parts of India. The most important among these were the Chishti, Suhrawardi, Qadiri and the Naqshbandi orders.

The Indian Sufis and their disciples developed indigenous forms of Sufi literature, particularly when the importance of the Shaikh was well established. Those who wrote poetry compiled *diwans*. Biographical notices of the famous Sufis began to be compiled as what may be called the *siyar* literature. The sayings of the great Shaikhs were recorded as *mulfuzat*. These forms of indigenous Indian literature were so popular that a whole range of literature was 'fabricated' in the names of well-known Sufis. The genuine works, like the *Fawaid al-Fuwad* compiled by the poet Hasan Dihlavi on the basis of his visits to Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, were treated as classics of Suffi literature. Shaikhs like Yahiya Muneri, Ashraf Jahangir and Abdul Quddus Gangohi wrote treatises or letters of their own, giving expositions of Sufism in which Indian elements begin to figure prominently. It is not surprising, therefore, that the historians of the Mughal period begin to devote separate chapters in their works to the *mashaikh* of India and their religious orders.

There are other indications too of the pervasive influence of the Sufis in India. Their popularity among the masses is well-known but there is also very clear evidence that the members of the middling class were coming under their influence by the early 14th century. During the 15th century the members of the ruling class generally paid their homage to one or another Shaikh of the period. There is also clear evidence that many of the Sultans had come to show great respect and regard for the contemporary Shaikhs. This may be taken as a measure of their influence and popularity with nearly all classes of Muslims. In northern India, there was hardly a city or a town without a Sufi Khanqah. In the country side too, small *khanqahs* or *deras* or *mazars* could be found almost everywhere, serving as centres of pilgrimage, particularly on the day of the

Shaikh's demise, called '*urs*' from the idea that on that day the Shaikh was finally united with God.

What did the Sufis stand for? In the first place we may repeat that they traced their beliefs and practices to the Quran. To give a few examples: 'We verily created man and we know what his soul whispers to him, and we are nearer to him than his jugular vein'; 'Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth'; 'everything will perish save His face'; 'He loves them and they love Him'. These verses, among others, were interpreted by the Sufis in the light of their own mystical experience, which, in the last analysis, was more important than anything else. This experience consisted essentially of a ecstatic union with God. From the idea of union with God as the goal of the mystic arose the associated idea of *fana* or dying of one's own self, and the idea of *baqa* or subsistence in God. In due course the path to the goal of union was well formulated, with its own stages and corresponding spiritual states. The most crucial ideas for this path were repentance, renunciation and willing acceptance of Gods' will. The guidance of a Shaikh, popularly known as the *pir*, was regarded as absolutely essential and hence his great importance. Among the practices of the Sufis in northern India the two most important were *zikr* or constant remembrance of God and *sama* or listening to mystical compositions being sung by professional musicians.

Probably the best way of understanding Sufism is to look upon it as a parallel interpretation of Islam as a religion. The Sufis emphasized the omnipresence and the immanence of God, as against the 'Ulama's emphasis on God's omnipotence and transcendence. Whereas the essential relationship of man with God, in the conception of the 'Ulama, was that of a servant or a slave with his master, the essential relationship between man and God for the Sufis consisted in the relationship of love. Consequently the supreme aim of life for the Sufis was not to gain paradise but to attain to union with God. Notwithstanding the formal recognition and respect given to the Prophet, the essential importance of the *pir* got underlined in actual practice. If we look at the attitudes of the majority of the Sufis in India towards the four pillars of Islamic piety, their difference from the 'Ulama becomes clear. The Sufis not only favoured the unfailing offering of five daily prayers (*namaz*) but they

in fact insisted on the constant remembrance of God. Instead of keeping fast only during the month of Ramzan they advocated austerity for the whole of one's life. Instead of advocating only *zakat* they offered the ideal of renunciation of all one's possessions. It is interesting to note in this connection that many of the Shaikhs in India kept an open kitchen (*langar*) for outsiders as well as the inmates of the *Khanqah* so as not to save anything for themselves. In the writings of the Indian Shaikhs it is preferable to visit the *pir's khanqah* than to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. In actual practice, a large number of people had started visiting even the *mazars* of the Shaikhs before the end of the 15th century. Whereas among the 'Ulama listening to music was unlawful, among the Sufis it was regarded as a great help on the path to union with God. In many of the *khanqahs*, the Shaikhs and their disciples as well as the people in general listened to Qawwals who sang mystical compositions. This tradition of *qawwalis* has survived in the 20th century.

The attitudes of the Sufis towards the non-Muslims was generally marked by tolerance. Shaikh Nizamuddin disapproved of cruelty in extracting the *jiziya*. The Chishti Shaikhs were seldom reluctant to come into contact with Hindus or to enter into discussion with them on religious matters. References to contact or contest with the Jogis in particular only confirm this impression. Shaikh Nizamuddin once made a frank admission that he appreciated a particular observation made by a Jogi. The Shattari Shaikh, Muhammad Ghaus, recommends in his *Bahr al-Hayat* the use of the some Hindvi 'incantations' and sees many parallels between Sufi theosophy and the *Yoga*. He reveals his familiarity with the Siddha-Jogis and the Gorakhnathis. Gesudaraz appreciates their complete devotion to God and detachment from the world. According to Shaikh Muhammad Ghaus, the Jogis related the truths of gnosis only in a different 'language' from that of the Sufis. It is interesting to note the general attitude expressed in *al-Insan al-Kamil*: 'Even if the infidels had known the torments which they must suffer in consequence of their worship, they would have persisted in it by reason of the spiritual delight they experience therein'. Shaikh Nizamuddin regrets that even when a Hindu knows that Islam is the true religion he does not become a Muslim. Significantly, the relative ineffectiveness of Islam as a

religious force in India was attributed by the Sufis to the lack of ethical superiority in Muslims themselves.

From the 13th century onwards in northern India many of the Shaikhs had begun to use what they called Hindvi as the medium of their conversation with the people around and also as the medium of their poetical compositions. In this process the Sufi tradition began to be indigenized. Since Hindvi actually referred to all regional languages, the process of indigenization of the Sufi tradition began simultaneously in the different regions of the country, contributing among many other things to the development of regional literatures.

### III

Turning to the Punjab, we find that Shaikh Fariduddin Chishti, popularly known as Baba Farid, began to write in Punjabi during the early 13th century. Some of his compositions are daily read and recited by thousands of people since they are included in the Sikh scriptures. The compositions of Shah Hussain, known as *kafis*, have remained popular among the Punjabi speaking people since the 16th century. Even more popular are the *kafis* of Bulhe Shah and Sultan Bahu. During the 18th century, Sayyid Waris Shah, produced his *Hir and Ranjha* as the greatest classic of medieval Punjabi literature under the influence of Sufi ideas. In the 19th century the rich tradition of Punjabi Sufi poetry was re-inforced by Ghulam Farid. The literary tradition reinforced the ideas and attitudes popularized through the Sufi tradition of *sama*, or *qawwali*, in which classical and folk music were combined to evolve a distinctive tradition.

Qawwalis are composed and sung in Punjabi to this day. To take only one example, the *qawwalis* sung by Nusrat Fateh Ali are popular not only in his native country, Pakistan, but also in India, and in U.K. and North America, indeed wheresoever Punjabi is spoken or understood. He has sung some of the compositions of Bulhe Shah, Sultan Bahu and Ghulam Farid. He has also used the compositions of less known twentieth-century poets like Khair Din.

Rafiq, Yusuf Shah, Jogi Jehlami, Sadiq and Nizami. Their compositions cover a whole range of ideas and attitudes, and carry great social and cultural significance. It is possible to give a detailed account and origins of these ideas and attitudes, but for our present purpose it may be enough to take up some of these *qawwalis* and indicate their content.

We may start with a few *qawwalis* which have God as their point of reference. One of these refers to the pre-creation state when there was nothing but God. There was no master and no slave; there was no temple and no mosque; there was no Lover, Love or Beloved. Then, out of love God created the universe and showed the path of love. In another *qawwali*, singing compositions of Bulhe Shah, the significance and the importance of the first letter of the alphabet, that is *alif*, is sought to be underlined. It stands for Allah, and that is why all that man needs is *alif*; this is the great 'secret' of life. Salvation lies in the realization of this single point. Men do not have to move on to the second letter (*bae*). They are exhorted to learn the single point for getting rid of infidelity, the tortures of hell and other kinds of torture. From one *alif* sprang up two, three and four and then thousands and millions. Hold fast to the Eternal teacher who cleanses the heart and leaves no traces of worry or desire.

The path of complete dedication to the Only God is the only purposeful path: it leads to 'release'. There is no need of studying cart-loads of books, or of committing the whole of the Qur'an to memory to be called a *hafiz* if your heart is in the good things of life. There is no need of rubbing your forehead on the ground, or of reciting the *Kalma* aloud, if your purpose is to demonstrate external piety and not to internalize its true meaning. Many have returned from pilgrimage to Mecca, and they have donned blue robes; they are 'selling' the merit acquired. But God does not like this show of piety. What really matters is a selfless devotion to Him.

In another *qawwali*, singing again some compositions of Bulhe Shah, the idea that God is within man is underlined. You cannot see Him unless you develop the sight to see Him. But once you have succeeded in your search you arrive at a state in which there is nothing but peace and which is not subject to any change. The Muslims are afraid of cremating the dead and the Hindus are afraid

of burying them: they wrangle over small outward observances and miss the One within. In this dark and slippery world, the eyes of men are turned outwards and they cannot see who is within. One here is called Ram Das and another there is called Fateh Muhammad, but when you see who is within both you see neither Ram Das nor Fateh Muhammad but the Only One. Men tire themselves by reading the Vedas and the Qur'an; their foreheads are worn thin through rubbing; they will never see God in Mecca, nor in any other sacred place, because He is within man. 'He sits concealed in my own heart'.

Between man and God there is a veil. In one of the *qawwalis* sung by Nusrat Fateh Ali, there is a prayer to the Friend to lift the veil. 'Sit before me O' friend with the veil lifted up so that my desire for your sight is finally fulfilled; even if it is at the cost of my life, let me have a lasting sight of your beauty'. The cobra of your curl has bitten me and the arrow of your eyes has wounded me, but now You have veiled Your face, what kind of a thief are You? You have wounded me with the dagger of separation, and You have not returned to ask after my state; Your promises are false. My faith is firm and unshakable, though I do not open my mouth to say so; I see Your face in every heart.

Among the 'revelations' made by the Friend, in another *qawwali* is the point that the One (*ahd*) put on the veil of *mim* to come to the world as Ahmad, the Prophet Muhammad. He is not God, but he is not distinct from God either. When the Formless One revealed Himself in a form, it was in the form of Muhammad. Paradoxically, had there been no Muhammad there had been no God because the universe was created to send Muhammad as the culmination of creation; to see his face is to know the Formless One. In His innumerable forms, God is a Sunni here and a Shia there; bears matted locks here and is close-shaved there; He reveals Himself here and conceals Himself there; He Himself is the Mulla and the Qazi and He Himself is the learner; in everyone is the form of God: in some it is concealed and in others it is made manifest. Here He is Rumi and there He is Shami; here the Master, there the slave; here among the distinguished ones and there among the commoners; He is all in all. He is in the mosque here and in the temple there. He is resident of the habitation He has created. This secret

is revealed by the Perfect Guru. In His Oneness He is the master (*maula*); in the many He is the slave (*banda*). When the *murshid* bestows the gift of sight, then men can see that God Himself is a *momin* here and a *kafir* there.

Another *qawwali* is directly addressed to the Prophet, the protector of honour, the reliever of suffering, the saviour of souls. He is the master who sympathizes with the sorrowful. He redeems the sinful from their sins. He is the strength of the weak. To offer complete devotion to him and to remember him all the time is to tread on the path to salvation. His lovers yearn to see his face and pray for such a boon. They yearn for seeing his city, Medina, where he sits in all his glory and fulfils the wishes of those who love him. 'May I live as yours, die as yours, remembering you, and with your name on my tongue ! 'I weep in separation from you; give these restless eyes a glimpse of your face'. 'Whether I am good or I am bad, I am yours'.

The Prophet, in another *qawwali*, is the Jogi-Ranjha and man is his beloved Hir. The metaphor is taken from the well known Punjabi tale of love between Hir and Ranjha. Hir wishes to become a servant of Ranjha, who in the story is the servant of Hir's father, because Ranjha is a metaphor for the Prophet; he has donned the strange dress of a *jogi* and changed from *ahd* to Ahmad; Hir wishes to go with this Jogi, putting a sacred mark on her forehead and with rings in her ears. He is no ordinary *jogi*; he is God in the garb of a *jogi*; he has captured Hir's heart: 'he fills my heart; I swear by the Qur'an that he is my faith (*din* and *iman*); I suffer from the disease of love for him; I am dedicated to him alone; I have been saved by this love; call me his *jogin* and not Hir because Hir is dead. The 'I' within me is dead. I want to go with the Jogi who wears the rosary of 'but Allah' on his neck and whose name is Kamliwala'. Separation from the Jogi is unbearable; all the sorrows of life would vanish if he were to visit my house.

If the Prophet is not much different from God, the *pir* is not much different from the Prophet. The *pir* reveals the 'secrets'; he shows the path. One can die to self through the *pir*. Only those go on pilgrimage who have no *pir*, for the abode of the *pir* is a veritable Mecca. 'The *hajjis* go to Mecca, but my Mecca is my Ranjha' the idea is transferred to the *pir*. One of the *qawwalis* sung by Nusrat

Fateh Ali is on the *dera* of Shaikh Muhiyuddin, the Ghaus-Pak of Baghdad, lying buried in the land of the five rivers.

'If he is pleased to see me suffer I shall throw all comforts into the oven'. 'My heart and my body, I will sacrifice for him'. 'People go towards the Ka'ba but my *ka'ba* is the *jhok* of my Pir.'

My yearning for Baghdad, to subsist there on a beggar's bowl, has broken my heart into bits and pieces scattered like the pieces of cloth in a tailor's workshop.

To know how to spin on the spinning wheel is a metaphor for knowing how to tread on the path of love. Just as the spinning wheel needs a thread to be operated, human life needs sustenance for continuing on the path of love. The objective is union with the Lover or the Beloved. It is in this context that a *qawwali* refers to the last few years of life and seeks from the Friend 'a new thread for the spinning wheel'. The thread will break if the art of spinning is not learnt; the soul will depart from the body and leave it behind as a corpse. The spinning wheel needs the thread of love, and there is no dearth in the Friend's treasures.

'I can only pray to you, having no power of my own; lead me to union with the Friend, putting a new thread on my spinning wheel'. Love makes life full of colour, but it also obliges one to renounce the comforts of life, to wander in wilderness, and to become indifferent to all earthly things. Bulhe Shah pleased the Friend with bells on his ankles; Ranjha earned *jog* by getting his ears split to put on rings; everyone has to find a means to meet the Friend, whatever the cost. 'Tell me pray, in what form would you accept my devotion? 'Having revealed the 'secret' of love, do not now close the door on me. You will not be able to do that, because my love and devotion will compel you to open the door'. 'I will not go to any other door, nor will I return empty-handed'. 'Put a new thread on my spinning wheel'.

Many a verse sings of separation, and the pangs of separation. Tears flow from eyes, like rain in the month of Sawan (the rainy month in the Punjab). I pray that 'separation' should vanish from

the whole world; the Friend should never get displeased. He should remain within sight. Nothing is left in life if the Friend gets annoyed, just as nothing is left in a garden after the spring. To annoy the Friend is to bid farewell to life. Ghulam Farid is the great composer of verses on the theme of separation, and Nusrat Fateh Ali seldom misses to sing Ghulam Farid. 'Whom should I congratulate on the 'Id when it has brought separation; the 'Id is only for those who are with the Friend, for without his sight there can be no 'Id; yet the 'Id is not without merit, for it has revealed the secret of martyrdom. I shall celebrate the 'Id thousand times when I meet the Friend again'.

'The streets are a veritable wilderness and the house threatens to eat me up; why should I live in a place where the Friend is not in sight?' 'I have left my house and come into the street; my eyes are on the road; I stand here with hands folded to welcome you to my place, to kiss your feet.'

In a lesser genius than Ghulam Farid, the mystical dimension of divine love tends to yield place to earthly love in effect: 'his memory is the prop of my life, how can I forget the friend?'. It is a fire that is neither fully blown nor quenched; his memory does not fade; it gets under the skin. The whole night passes without a wink of sleep, and life without the friend is a bundle of dust; time does not move without the beloved, and the heart does not forget him.

'The cold nights of separation are unbearable; my eyes shed tears more profusely than the cloud sheds rain. My friend has plundered me but not killed me. My heart beats and thinks of the friend; every hair on my body yearns for him; I cannot live without him'. 'The tears of my eyes are my rosary; the more I tell the beads of this rosary the stronger is my dedication to the friend. How can I forget him?'

More than one contemporary poet has sung of separation and Nusrat Fateh Ali makes use of their compositions.

'Come now my friend, my heart cannot bear separation and it remembers you all the time'. 'Why are you delaying your coming my stranger-friend; turn now the reins of your

mount and come to your deranged love'. 'My heart thinks of you and sighs all the time; fulfil your promise and come soon, otherwise it will remain a blot on love'. 'Peace has left me in this separation, and my eyes shed tears; I cannot conceal my love for you, and I cannot live without seeing you.' 'Tears begin to flow when the pang of separation overwhelms me'. 'My hopes tremble like the flame of the lamp.' 'I have sacrificed all the comforts of life for you, and I have embraced all the discomforts; with folded hands I place my life at your feet.' 'My heart is afraid of your indifference; if you forget me, my life would be a waste. I have lived long on your promises, with eyes fixed on your way. Why have you forsaken me?'

The pangs of separation are expressed in many ways.

'He did not tell me when he left me to which place I should send my letters; now I have to ask the wayfarers for his address'. 'He promised to return soon, but I am still waiting and my eyes know no sleep. Go my friends and bring him back, he has taken away my laughter, and left me surrounded by sorrows'. 'But they say there is no hope of return from strange countries, just as there is no fragrance in dried flowers'. 'No one can share this grief, and there is no one who can sympathize with me, to whom should I open my heart? The time passes in sighs, but the stranger-friend has not returned; no longer do the crows sit on my house-top' (as an indication of the arrival of guests). 'I made the mistake of befriending a bird; when he did not eat ordinary food I offered the flesh of my body; a day came when he flew away, never to return'. 'I cry like a crane separated from its flock in an alien land'. 'There is a longing in my heart and my eyes look in all the four directions; if someone were to tell me where he is, I would fly to him on wings'.

'Come my friend', says Ghulam Farid as sung by Nusrat Fateh Ali, 'and may God bring you here; it is a long time since we parted; my eyes flow in separation from you, like the rains of Sawan; they learnt how to weep when they came to know you; and this weeping

will cease only when my body is wrapped in the coffin'.

'Let me feed you with sweet *churi* O crow, come and sit on my house-top and give the message of my friend; come and sit on my house-top so that my friend may also come; I stand on my toes from morning to evening, with my eyes fixed on his path'. 'If you cannot come, call me; I can keep my eyes fixed on the road no longer'. 'I wait for you day and night; tell me when would you come? Come soon and show me your beautiful face, for I cannot fix my eyes on the road any longer'. 'People taunt me with the question "where is your friend? He has left you alone and gone no one knows where"; come and listen to how I feel and tell me how you feel'. 'I long to see you, and the hope of seeing you never ends; let me imbibe the intoxicating cup of your sight'. 'I can no longer keep my eyes fixed on your path'.

'Discard this indifference O my friend and give up spending your nights in the wilderness; the birds have returned to their nests, why do'nt you feel like coming back home; my heart overflows with love, I am yours and you are mine; I will sacrifice my life for a single visit of yours'.

So says Ghulam Farid and sings Nusrat Fateh Ali in one *qawwali*:

'I long for your sight, with eyes on your path, come home O' friend'. Your sight is a pilgrimage for poor me. I will thank you when you come to listen to my sorrows by sacrificing my life. Come home my friend, I look for you, with my eyes fixed on the road'.

In yet another *qawwali*, to remember the friend is a form of worship, and the rosary is the rosary of tears. But the nights are more painful than the days, the metaphor smacking more of earthly than of divine love. Or, is it possible to make a clear distinction? In any case, there is no life without love.

In a few compositions, it is difficult to decide whether the poet is talking of earthly or divine love. In sufism, or rather in literature written under Sufi influence, earthly love has its own merit though

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it is much less than the merit of divine love. Anyway, to love human beings is to love God. The transition from divine to earthly love, therefore, is not an unwelcome transition.

'The only prayer I offer, my beautiful one, is for your welfare'. 'May my life end at your feet!' 'May I die in your stead!' 'With the support of your love I can afford to forget the rest of the world'. 'To find you is to find all : do not leave me now. If you leave me now, I will be the laughing stock of the whole world'.

Finally, the objective is to please the Friend, irrespective of the means.

'Do not taunt me O' Mulla', says Bulhe Shah, 'and let me please my Friend. It does not affect my honour to become a dancing girl if my Friend is pleased with my dancing'.

He would wear a rosary on his neck if that is pleasing to the Friend. Steadfastness in devotion is the only thing that matters.

'I will dance to please the Friend'.

If he is not pleased, there is nothing in life that has any value.

'Let me place my head on the door of the Friend; let me please him in any manner in which he is pleased'.

God is never annoyed with those who know how to please Him; why should he talk of Mecca whose *hajj* lies in seeing the Friend?

'Dancing too becomes a mode of worship if one knows how to dance'.

The principle of love is that all prayers are addressed to the Friend; unless we bow to Him, no prayer is accepted.

'I will sacrifice thousands of my lives for him; I will serve him with devotion, and kiss his shoes'. 'I may be without merit, but I am totally dedicated to my Friend'.

## IV

In retrospect we can see that just as the basic ideas and attitudes of Sufism were translated from Arabic to Persian, so were they expressed in the Punjabi language and the Punjabi idiom, losing little of their pristine appeal. Whether the context is of divine or of earthly love, the *qawwalis* drenched in Sufi ideas, feelings and attitudes have an aesthetic appeal, irrespective of one's formal religious affiliation. This aesthetic appeal creates a kind of common culture, cutting across traditional religious affiliations. It is partly a secular culture.

Equally important is the import of the Sufi emphasis on the omnipresence of God and the relationship of love between God and man. The Sufis who regarded their way of life as far superior to that of the *'ulama* would not concede parity of any other way of life with their own, but they did not insist on the imposition of their way of life on others. They stood for cultural co-existence. The ideal of cultural co-existence became the norm of mutual relations during the medieval period of Indian history, and this is the grand legacy which the great Sufi Shaikhs have left for the succeeding generations of Indians. Respect for cultural diversity is perhaps the greatest contribution of Sufism to Indian civilization.

# 4

## THE DUAL ASPECTS OF ISLAM

SYED VAHIDUDDIN



Islam is a most misunderstood religion and we as Muslim are no less responsible for the misunderstanding. The West has found it difficult to overcome the inbuilt prejudices and even today we find their traces in many ways especially in the image which is projected of the Prophet of Islam. Prof Bernard Lewis has rightly observed: "the last traces of Western theological prejudices may still be discovered in the work of some modern scholars lurking behind the serrated footnote of the academic apparatus."<sup>1</sup> So far as the Muslims are concerned they have yet to distinguish, between what is essential and universal and what is relative to the local situation and historical conditioning. This does not amount to the denial of the transcendental source of the Quranic revelation but to appreciate the conditions under which the divine message had to operate. It had to take into account the local customs and mores as well as the heritage transmitted to it from the past. Unfortunately what fits in with modern susceptibility is comfortably traced back to non-Islamic sources while some of the aspects of

Islam, especially with regard to the provisions of the penal law, which seem at variance with modern perceptions are considered its original contribution derived from its own resources. Unless we take into full cognisance what is explicitly formulated and what is implicitly indicated we cannot do justice to Islamic ethos.

Polygamy, for instance, is allowed though with forbidding conditions and though slavery is accepted, freeing a slave is considered an act of charity and recommended for the atonement of one's sins. This clearly shows the thrust of Islamic attitude to life.

The Prophetic revelation has above all a universal dimension and addressed to man as man. However the revelation was first addressed to the Arabs of the Prophet's time and consequently the Quran could not but employ the idiom which corresponded with the intellectual level of the people with whom it was immediately concerned.

No wonder then if the imagery of the Quran, be it with regard to this world or that, while relative to the conditions of the time is at the same time big with surprises for those who dare to go behind the apparent meaning and this is greatly what the great sufis have done with great risk to their lives.

Now sufism is really the depth dimension of Islam. However it can be easily abused and distorted and alienated from the spirit of the Quranic message. A healthy Islamic society can only grow when the letter of the law is not made to kill the spirit and the spirit does not disown the letter as of no consequence.

In other words looking at Islam and its contribution to civilisation we cannot ignore the contingencies of historical situations and the challenges of the time. Islam was addressed primarily to a people who were not only given a revealed message and awakened to the transcendental dimension of life but were also taught moral values, social decorum and propriety. Very interesting light is thrown on the educational aspect of Islam and its concern for social propriety in some significant verses. The believers are told how to behave vis-a-vis the Prophet and how to betake themselves in his house and how to conduct themselves in his presence: "O, ye who believe! enter not the dwelling of the Prophet for a meal without waiting for proper time, unless permission be granted to you. But if

ye are invited, enter and when your meal is ended, then disperse. Linger not for conversation." (33: 52)

Again they are inculcated propriety in relation towards their fellow beings and they are given lessons in social ethics which is not so much a moral problem but a question of behaviour with which every civilized person is supposed to conform:

"O ye who believe! enter not houses other than your own without first announcing your presence and invoking peace upon the folk thereof. That is better for you, that ye may be heedful. And if ye find no one therein, still enter not until permission has been given. And if it be said unto you: Go away again, then go away, for it is purer for you. Allah knoweth what ye do."

This means Islam acts at different levels, bringing order at the elementary level of social behaviour and yet providing satisfaction in a graded way corresponding to one's spiritual maturity.

It may be further observed that sufism is not and cannot be a denial of Islamic ethos but a complement which highlights its universal vision stripped of its historical compulsions. An excellent example can be seen in the Quranic conception of *shirk* on which is based its campaign against idolatry. It is to the credit of the sufis to have distinguished what they call hidden shirk (*shirk-e-Khafi*) and apparent shirk (*shirk-e-Jali*). One can be an iconoclast in theory and yet invest the fleeting values of the world like success and fame as ultimate and absolute. As the great Urdu poet Ghalib says: Though our hands have become skilled in idol-breaking and yet so long we are as we are (with all attachments) there must remain heavy hurdle on our way yet to be overcome. Sufism has been an effective force to inculcate the feeling of human brotherhood even in social behaviour not as an etiquette or as a formal courtesy but with a view to shape and mould our attitude towards human commitment. Whether we have to deal with foes or friends we have to efface malice and ill-feeling towards one another. The great poet Hafiz echoes it in his own superb way:

"the good of this world and that can be summed up in a few words: that is kindness towards friends and hospitality

towards enemies".

Here again the Quranic spirit makes itself felt.

The Quranic concern for the maintenance of moral equilibrium is reflected in Sufi practices and way of life. The Quran categorically declares:

"And let not your hatred of a folk who (once) stopped your going to the Inviolable Place of Worship induce to transgress; but help ye one another unto righteousness and pious duty. Help not one another unto sin and transgression, but keep your duty to Allah, Lo. Allah is severe in punishment."

All this goes back to the metahistorical perception of the Quran that man's creation and resurrection, his origin and end are as of "single soul".(The Quran 39:6)

Recently some scholars have taken great care to differentiate the external and internal aspects of Islam, or as they call them, the esoteric and exoteric facets, though the distinction is by no means recent. God himself is referred to in the Quran as the one who is manifest (zahir) and also as unmanifest (*Deus absconditus*). However the inner dimension of Islam need not be called esoteric as it may provoke in some minds undesirable associations. Of the two dimensions which we are referring to, the one comprehends the outward behaviour of the Muslim in his socio-moral and collective life. Some people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, understand Islam in its outward aspect only, the five 'Arkan; (Prayer, Fasting etc). as its only constituents. That they are the foundation on which Islam has grown cannot be denied. But obligatory rituals become meaningful only when they are inspired by the consciousness of *Ghaib*, by our God-orientation. The internal dimension of Islam is, which makes Islam a spiritual force to be reckoned with. We can define more precisely these aspects by distinguishing between the prescriptive and contemplative dimensions. The prescriptive dimension includes all our moral imperatives and social obligations, whilst the contemplative aspect makes us aware as citizens of two worlds, the world of senses and the world unknown. It is characteristic of Islam, whether we consider it as a socio-moral

system or as a God oriented faith, it addresses itself to man as man in all his totality without distinction of race and creed, sex and status.

The prescriptive dimension of Islam itself has an inner as well as an outer profile. So far its outward expression is concerned it may lose its meaning and relevance if it is stripped of its spirit. Prayers can be performed mechanically, Haj may be undertaken to demonstrate one's piety and for ulterior motives; and fasting may be observed as a routine without imbibing the spirit and even *zakat* or alms giving may be observed to improve one's social standing. This means that religion as a social system may lose all its relevance and meaning if it is dissociated from the spirit which should inform it. The transcendent dimension shorn of its other worldly aspect is based on a vision of God and man which one cannot afford to ignore and sufism is just the implementation of this vision on the human plane. What kind of God Islam projects is above all *Rahman* and *Rahim*, mercifully gracious and graciously merciful. God is named in many ways but the basic attribute of all the names is *Rahma*, graciousness both on the Individual and the cosmic plane. "My mercy outstrips my wrath" says the holy tradition, "and my mercy envelopes everything", says the Quran (7-156). The sufi has developed a kind of humanism quickened by their Quranic vision of God and man. The Quran addresses itself to man as man and urges upon him to contemplate the signs of God that he sees everywhere, in nature, in history and in his own self. The poets who were mostly inspired by the sufi tradition tried to awaken in man the consciousness of His unity overriding all differences as given expression in the famous words of Shaikh Said:

"The children of Adam are of one piece, for in thier creation they have sprung from one substance. If one member is fated to suffer pain, others cannot remain in peace. If you are not sensitive to the ills of others, you deserve not to be called human."

The great sufis were nurtured by the Hadith which says: "*as-similate the virtues of God.*"

Now it cannot be over emphasised that even the prescriptive

aspect (*Shari'a*) has an inner dimension with a meaning and significance which is often ignored. Prayers are considered obligatory but they themselves negate their own significance if carried out in a spirit of indifference and in violation of the spirit. The Quran leaves no doubt about it,

"Ah, Woe unto worshippers, who are heedless of their prayer; who would be seen (at worship) yet refuse small kindness." (Q-108-467).

The prayers may just seem to the outsiders a mechanical routine whereas in fact they are meant to break the routine of daily life and worldly diversion and distraction. The main contribution of sufism is to bring out the spirit so as to make explicit what is implicit, to fight relentlessly against the powers that be, against tyranny of despots and dictators, against the sycophancy of the courtiers and the opportunism of the '*ulama*'. Whereas the so-called fundamentalist trend in Islam restricts its universality and converts Islam into a sect which promotes confrontation and politicises spiritual values, the sufis held before themselves the vision of the Quranic God who knows no difference and in whose scheme of things diversity is an essential constituent of Creation. As the Quran so eloquently proclaims:

"O mankind ! Lo we have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo ! Allah is knower, Aware." (XVIX-13)

Sufism is in fact a way of life, a form of deep spiritual sensitivity of perception and not a theoretical speculation, though it developed theories of far-reaching consequences which only led to a conflict of schools and ended in interminable controversies which have little relevance today. There is always a tendency among the scholar of sufism, be they western or Muslim juristically oriented *ulama*, to decry sufism as a phenomenon which is unislamic. This is far from true. Sufism has its roots in the Quran, as the scholars who have delved deep into its depths have clearly shown. It is also be noted that even '*Ulama*' have often nourished a mystic strain either explicitly or implicitly.

The universality of Islam and its non-exclusiveness comes nowhere else with such emphasis as in sufism. And this is something which is quite in keeping with the spirit of the Quran. In every religion there are historically conditioned moments and supra-historical dimension. Sufism in fact represents that supra-historical and timeless elan of the Quaranic message. The first sura *Al-Fatiha* embodies the essence of the Quran, its vision of God as the creator of not only this world but of worlds we know not and He is attributed all-embracing mercy which knows no distinction. Its call is not confined to any segment of humanity but to mankind at large, to man as man. It is a pity that in course of time the universal ethos has gone into the background and the Quranic consciousness is interpreted on almost sectarian lines. This is not by any means to deemphasise or ignore the imperatives and directives which grow in response to historical emergencies but to understand them in their context, neither ignoring them nor over-emphasizing them. Sufism whether practical or theoretical rightly utilises often the medium of poetry to give expression to its basic attitudes and perceptions, and the languages which became the media of Islamic civilization and spiritual life, be it Turkish, Persian or Urdu, embody within themselves the supreme expression of Muslim poetic mystic genius. In Persian the name of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi looms large and in him we find sufi concerns for human values finding their most eloquent expression. But he is not the exception. Even in poets whose poetry moves from the human love to the love divine we wonder at times where we are, in the ethereal spheres of the divine or down on the earthly passion of human love. We enjoy it nevertheless as a perfect expression of man's craving for the divine even in moments of earthly passion. The seemingly religious devotees and self styled spokesmen of religion are charged with hypocrisy, they do not practise what they preach and it is true not only in the Islamic context but with reference to all religions. Those who have gone astray, the sinners are not treated with contempt but singled out as objects of deep concern and the mercy of God is always invoked on their behalf in conformity with the Quranic assurance: "Yet who have been prodigal in life despair not of the mercy of God "(Qxxxix-53). The hound of heaven, as in the poem of Francis Thompson; is pursuing them relentlessly. It is to be always kept in view that the great sufis were humanists and more

than humanists. Their concern for man was based on their vision of the transcendent, but their vision of the transcendent did not alienate them from their deep involvement in the human condition, their participation in man's woes and misery, their sensitiveness to the human predicament and dilemmas. They did not deny external obligations but rather their compliance with them made them feel more secure before the assault of human temptations. The famous tradition attributed to the Prophet that there is no *ruhbania* (monkery) in Islam is not at all understood in any polemical sense as directed against Christian practices. We know that in the Quran the reference to the monks are far from derogatory.

While recognising in Christians a closeness in affection considers this quality as arising from them as priests and monks who are consequently devoid of pride. (Q-V-82). Again in a remarkable passage al-Quran declares that if God had not ejected some people through others then: "Cloisters and Churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is often mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down, (Q-V-40).

It only means that man had never to de-link relationship with the world at large, with the suffering and ailing humanity but should be in the world without being of it. This is quite in keeping with the social ethos of Islam which demands of its followers to be always alert to God and yet to develop compassion for his fellow being and to be always ready to extend help to his human brothers. If we study the life of great sufis we will find numerous anecdotes which call upon believers to think of man as a creation of God without any discrimination. Jalaluddin Rumi relates the story of a Shepherd and his encounter with Moses. The Shepherd who thought of God in his own crude way was scolded by Moses for his blasphemous utterances. On being thus rebuked the Shepherd could not control himself, "rent his garment, heaved a sigh and took his way to the wilderness." Soon Moses received a revelation which made it clear that the function of a prophet was to bring man closer to God rather than to alienate him from Him:

"I have bestowed on every one a particular mode of worship, I have given everyone a peculiar form of expression.

The idiom of Hindustan is excellent for Hindus; the idiom of Sind is excellent for the people of Sind. I took not at tongue and speech, I took at the spirit and the inward feeling."

In the end Maulana sums up the substance of the story in his own characteristic way:

"The religion of love is apart from all religions. The lovers of God have no religion but God alone."<sup>2</sup> (Page-170-171).

In other words, the image of God, be it philosophically sophisticated or crudely naive, is equally inadequate to exhaust His essence which is beyond all thought, all conjecture and all imaginary guess work. A story related of Farid Uddin Ganj Shakar, the famous Chishti saint is no less instructive. On being presented with scissors he is said to have explained, "you should have presented me rather a needle because my function is not to cut but to sew." This universalism of sufis is alas mostly forgotten by Muslims both individually and collectively as much, in their dealings with fellow Muslims as with non-Muslims. Sufism is a multifaceted and multi-splendoured phenomenon. Hence, we may find among great sufis astonishing diversity and while some of their practices and ideals may baffle us and may lead to misleading conclusions, there is the same thread which runs through all of them. If some of their practises and sayings may lead one to think of them in a fundamentalist perspective, their other practises may tempt one to jump to the non-Islamic origin. In some *silsilas sama* or musical audition is a main constituent while in others these practices are frowned upon. But the fact remains that whether the sufis are of ecstatic temperament or of sober mould, they insisted on the strict compliance with the *Shria* to preserve mystic ecstasies from running riot and sinking into antinomean practices and behaviour. This is the reason why the great German philosopher Kant for whom moral imperatives were of categorical nature was very suspicious of mysticism and deprecated what he called enthusiasm by which he, perhaps, meant ecstatic emotionalism which does not respect moral restraint. Hence we should not find fault with those *faqih*s (jurists) who were wary of sufism and who saw how easily sufism could degenerate into a social crudity and superstition. There is

one feature of sufism which has endeared it to one and all, its concern for human fraternity, its ruthless campaign against priestly hypocrisy and sham, its challenge to the powers that be and its readiness for sacrifice with incredible courage. The lives of some of the great sufis like Mansoor al-Hallaj and a number of others bear eloquent testimony to their ultimate concern. When Mansur was crucified, not simply through theological considerations but through political intrigues and jealousies, he is said to have pleaded for forgiveness from God for those who had gathered to kill him in their enthusiasm for the preservation of the law:

" If thou hast revealed people what thou hast revealed to me, they would not have done what they are now doing and if thou hast hidden from me what thou hast hidden from them I would not have stood the trial which I am now going through".<sup>3</sup>

Sufism has given a deeper accent to the Islamic perception of God and man. In consonance with a prophetic tradition sufism is equated with *ihsan* as distinguished from *Iman*. In other words, it is not considered alien to Islam but its natural development. The struggle against unbelievers (*jihad*) for self preservation is converted into a struggle with one's own passions, with evil in man. What was called *jihad* has now been transformed into self-struggle and not arbitrarily, as a Tradition attributed to the Prophet speaks of a greater *jihad* as against the smaller *jihad*, the former *jihad* is conditioned by time and history while the latter is timeless. It is not conditioned by the challenges of the time but by the constitution of man himself, by temptations which do not cease to affect man, by cravings which cannot be stilled. This means that through sufism we are brought back to Islam as a super historical force, to Islam before it took shape as a historical phenomenon through the holy prophet of Islam. The Quranic designation of the disciples of Christ as helpers in the cause of Allah is most significant.

It is also curious how one and the same injunction can be taken either in an extremist fundamentalist interpretation as it were, and as an inward spiritual sense. We know however clear injunctions about ritual performances are considered by sufis, not in their outward manifestation but rather in their inward thrust. It is not the

innovation of the sufis but it is already enshrined in the Quranic text. In fact *al-Quran* itself has shown the direction. Referring to the injunction about ritual sacrifice in the pilgrimage it says in terms which cannot be made more clear:

"Their flesh and their blood reach not Allah but the devotion from you reaches Him." (Q.XXII-37)

Response to social challenges and involvement in human concerns was combined with deep other worldly interest, the transcendental dimension of the mystic's life did not come in the way of his participation in social activity. The eminent Jewish scholar Prof Hava-Lazarus-Yafeh has characterised al-Ghazzali<sup>4</sup> as one whose "outstanding characteristic was his social activity". He belonged to the class of sufis whose "ecstatic experiences inspire them with social-educational idea" and lead them to reinterpret the tradition and respond creatively to new challenges. The sufis even dared to question the authority of the kings and did not pay obeisance to them in order to promote their own interests. But it is not to be surprised if in course of time degeneration set in their ranks and their outward life did not conform to their inner vocation and like the ulama of the day they might have lost their authenticity. But the universal element of the Quran was kept alive by them in thier Khanqahs and everyone had a free access to their presence. They silently brought about communal integration when no one ever thought of it.

While the *fuqaha* (jurists) in one way or the other tried to restrict the universality of the Message the sufis, be they of a liberal persuasion or of a highly orthodox mould, dared to insist on all its global significance and its cosmic dimension in no uncertain terms. The striking example is given in the sermons of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, himself of Hanbalite affiliation. Referring to his sermons Prof Margoliouth has pointed out that "the preacher would like to close the Gates of Hell and open those of Paradise to all mankind."<sup>5</sup> Indeed Allah's *Rahma* knows no bounds and consequently no barriers can be placed between man and man.

In a world torn with strife and sunk in blood, in a society where politics masquerades as religion and reliigon is equated with exclusiveness, Sufism serves as an antidote to extremism in all its

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forms. It does not allow man to be alienated from his Source and true to the Quranic perceptions never ceases to remind him of his common origin and common destiny.

"For each we have appointed a divine law and a traced out way. Had Allah willed, He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you. So vie one with another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differ."(Q. V-48).

*To sum up:* Sufism as a transhistorical dimension of Islam does not disown historical compulsions but absorbs them. That peculiar mystical structure which developed under the influence of Islamic revelation stands firmly rooted in the Quranic vision of man and God and yet has an openness which follows from its universal ethos. Of the Sufis who have given this aspect most eloquent and convincing expression the names of Muhi-al-Din Ibn Arabi (638/1240) and Jalal al-Din Rumi (672/ 1273) loom large. Apart from these two outstanding figures of Sufi life and thought we may mention also the great Iranian poet Hafiz who in his own way has given expression to the same strain of perception as in the verse: "the day when the reality will reveal itself put to shame will be those relied on the metaphor (*majaz*)." Ibn Arabi's verses have always fascinated the students of his thought.

"Within my heart, all forms may find a place, The Cloister of the monk, the idol's fane A pasture for gazelles, the Sacred House Of God, to which all Muslims turn face: The Table of the Jewish Law, the world Of God revealed unto His Prophet true. Love is the faith I hold, and wheresoever His camels turn, the one true faith is there.<sup>6</sup>

# 5

## THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF ISLAMIC MYSTICISM IN THE REORIENTATION OF MAN AND SOCIETY

MOAZZIZ ALI BEG



Man cannot survive long under spiritual torments, nor can he live indefinitely in a state of exiological confusion and suspense. This age of intercultural communication with its peak achievements in technology is also an age of devastating existential crisis where the visions of a new orientation of man and society must remain illusory so long he is tied down to its deadly clutches. An immediate spiritual intervention in human affairs seems indispensable for putting an end to dehumanization and for restoring the worth and dignity of man as a human being. Nations having technologically advanced order of life and a virtual military ascendancy need this intervention more urgently in order to protect human race from being annihilated.

We shall therefore examine the possibility of such an intervention from the Islamic point of view and would see how Islam can possibly contribute towards a new orientation of man and society in the present century which, as it is believed, requires a reorientation of our entire attitude toward the very reality of life. Prior to making this examination, we may mention, however, that signs of a new orientation are already visible, and one of the surest signs in the western culture is the emergence of a positive and more sober attitude toward death which has become quite prominent for the first time since the dissolution of the medieval world view. Consequently the attitude of abhorrence toward death is being minimized through death education in the American Society. One of the leading authorities investigation in the area of death anxiety, namely Herman Feifel has probably made the most pertinent remark in this regard. He writes

"Man of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance participated in his own death. It is fitting that we in the late twentieth century recapture our sovereignty over death and, hence, life. In responding to our temporality we shall find it easier to define values, priorities, and life goals, and move toward a more common sharing of our humanity all too eroded in the present world." (1977. p. 355).

Efforts to minimize death anxiety have received a sort of general consensus and one cannot escape noticing the fact that the upthrust of this attitude has largely been a reaction to an Epicurean view of life which seems to have been the outgrowth of a dichotomous view of reality.

The other clearly recognizable sign of a new orientation is a reemphasis on altruistic love and a return to subjectivity, and the forthright acceptance of natural language in psychology, curtailing there by the unchallenged supremacy of scientific philosophy. This reminds us of the prophecy of Sri Aurobindo (1962; p. 158) concerning subjectivity. Aurobindo had said that

"These ideas will first declare their trend in philosophy, in psychological thinking, in the arts, poetry, painting, in the application of subjective principles by thinkers to questions of sociology, such as education, criminology, etc., even to

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politics and economics, and in the new departures of science or at least on research....."

Perhaps the most impelling reason for a new orientation is the world-wide awareness of those spiritual afflictions that have eroded and even destroyed the core of human personality. The most frightening ailment of soul is probably meaninglessness which has been discussed by this writer elsewhere (1983).

These sufferings - loneliness, alienation, meaninglessness have now appeared on the surface of our awareness. They seem to be intertwined with the forces that are dialectically governing the existential crisis of our age. They are the dreadful consequences of the absence of faith and of a bleak skepticism which has deeply infatuated modern mind and has led to the denial of even the settled truths of human nature. It has developed a frantic inclination to yield to aberrant thoughts about life, conscious involvement in confusions about the place of man on earth and into an attitude of reconciliation with evils arising out of a faithless attachment to life. The dehumanization of human personality, destruction of the inner self and an outright mortification of spirit far outweighs the urge to reach the sublime truths of human nature pointing in the direction of higher ends of life. Mumford explicitly holds that

"Without a positive concentration upon love in all its phases, we can hardly hope to rescue the earth and all the creatures that inhabit it from the insensate forces of hate, violence and destruction that now threaten it". (1965, p. 239).

The "courageous faith" professed by Jaspers may or may not be the ultimate antithesis of nihilism, but his observations of the dialectics of this existential crisis are being increasingly borne out by the circumstances. Hence,

"On the one hand", he says, "we see, possibilities of decay and destruction, and on the other hand we see that a truly human life is now about to begin, but as between these conflicting alternatives, the prospect is obscure" (1951, p. 21).

And the very obscurity of this respect is a challenge to any spiritual intervention which takes the spiritual component of religion as the only binding force in this age of inhuman competition among individuals and conflicts between nations and races. We may therefore examine the effectiveness of the spiritual component of Islam which has remained almost indistinguishable from its mystic ethos and has suffered perturbations under the philosophico-theological developments in Islam through the centuries. Leaving aside this historical aspect we may turn to those aspects of Islamic mysticism which can bring the spiritual reserves of human potential into operation for the future orientation of man and society. The spiritual component of Islam, namely the TARIQAT, may however be distinguished from its more overt and formal aspect namely the SHARIA. Sharia is the coded discipline of the individual and collective religious conduct in Islam. The key point of this spiritual component, where its highest attainments touch the farther reaches of human nature, lies in the idea of nearness or proximity to God. This nearness is actually manifest in the concord of the Divine will and human aspirations where the fusion of altruistic love and the love for a Compassionate Benefactor becomes the impelling motive of action. This idea of proximity is mentioned thus in the Holy Quran : had we are nearer to him than his jugular vein. (16 : 26).

In fact, it is at variance with the cosmologically oriented belief in the proximity to God which had its roots in the geocentric theory, and was subsequently destroyed by the advent of Newtonian physics. Stace writes:

"Newtonian" science has produced in men's minds an ever-growing sense, or feeling, of the remoteness of God. Any sort of living religion requires a God who is near us, who is all around us in the world now..... But Newtonian science tended to dry up the springs of a living religion by pushing God back in time to the beginning of the world". (1953; p. 83).

He further writes:

"Thus, so far as we are concerned, God is far away and long ago, at the beginning of things, not acting now, remote

from the actual happenings of our daily lives. But such an imaginative picture of a God far away and long ago is death to a living religion (*Ibid*, p. 84).

As regards the concord of the Divine will and human aspirations and cherishing the Holy Quran says - But Ah Thou soul at peace ; Return into thy Lord, content in His good pleasure, Enter thou my bondmen, Enter thou my Garden. (30: 27; 28; 29; 30).

According to Iqbal the secret of the self lies in the gracious acceptance of an individual's will by the Divine will, so much so that the Divine grace may be pleased in the fulfilment of once aspirations. Since the Divine grace is not bounded, altruistic love is the only route to capture its meaning. After having many pitfalls, modern western psychology has regained its goal it had lost since the middle of the nineteenth century. The pioneer of Humanistic psychology A.H.Maslow believes -

"We must understand love, we must be able to teach it, to create it, to predict it, or else the world is lost to hostility and to suspicion" (1970, p. 181).

Mumford has rightly observed that -

"Any doctrine of wholeness that does not begin with love itself as the symbol and agent of this organic wholeness can hardly hope to produce either a unified self or a united world; for it is not in the detached intellect alone that this transformation must be effected." (p. 239).

The process of reaching the heights of altruistic love is actually a process of inward transformation in which the role of *Qalb* is most crucial. We shall turn to it shortly. Islamic mysticism does away with the dichotomous view of reality through obliterating the subjective-objective polarity by treating it as complementary. It is therefore the profound subjective experience of the objective which marks the beginning of the mystic experience of reality. It is the cognitive action of the psyche, rather than its cognitive function which directs the inner experience into its more profound aspects, and in this profoundness of experience those meanings of objective reality are transmitted into awareness which lie hidden under the dichotomies.

The transfusion of meaning of the objective and the subjective and the awareness of the Divine will through it are indispensable to inner transformation.

The philosopher — chemist Michael Polyani seems to have caught this point most precisely. He writes: "The religious mystic achieves contemplative communion as a result of an elaborate effort of thought, supported by ritual. By concentrating on the presence of God, who is beyond all physical appearances, the mystic seeks to relax the intellectual control which his powers of perception instinctively exercise over the scene confronting them. His fixed gaze no longer scans each object in its turn and his mind ceases to identify their particulars. The whole framework of intelligent understanding, by which, he normally appraises his impressions, sinks into obedience and uncovers a world experienced uncomprehendingly as a divine miracle." (p. 197). Awareness, in fact, is the capturing power of *Qalb*. The notion of *Qalb* carries exhaustive meanings in the mystic literature, but the most pertinent fact concerning *Qalb* is that it is potentially a mode of awareness undergoing transformations in the process of spiritual development. All inner experiences or *Waaridat-e-Qalbi*, as the mystics call it, derive their meaning through different stages of transformation, that are actually stations or *Maqamaat* in this process of transformation. The advanced stage of transformation is *Maarfat* where knowledge through acquaintance yields to awareness the kernel of existential truths. In fact, these stages alone lead into the stage of *Maarfat* which, in the oldest Persian treatise on sufism entitled *KASHF-AL-MAHJOOB*, is described thus:

"Gnosis is the life of the heart through God, and the turning away of one's inmost thought from all that is not God". (1970; 0. 267).

The author of this treatise Al- Hujwiri quite explicitly represents the view of the Sufis on the gnosis of God who consider it more excellent than cognition or (*ilm*) because they associate it with *HAL*. *HAL* is a term whose equivalent is probably unavailable in the English vocabulary and only through the German word *EINFÜHLUNG* can we hope to convey the sense implied in *HAL*. According to one of greatest sufi reformers of India, namely Sheikh Ahmad of

Sarhind, the station or *Maqamaat* eventually lead into a realm of experience which is described as '*Alam-i-Amr*, i.e., the world of directive energy which must be passed through in order to attain the unique experience which symbolizes the objective. But, as Iqbal has observed, the inner experience alone is not the only source of knowledge. There are two other sources as well, namely Nature and History, whose pursuit fulfils the spirit of Islam. It is exactly for this reason that prophethood is distinguished from the highest levels of mystic attainments. According to Iqbal.

"A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which unitary experience tends to overflow its boundaries and seeks opportunities of redirecting or re-fashioning the forces of collective life". (1934. p. 119).

Concerning prophethood he further writes -

"The desire to see his religious experience transformed into a living world force is supreme in the prophet (*Ibid*, p. 118).

Western civilization has tapped these two sources of knowledge through a tremendous overflow of its intellectual energy but only at the cost of the inner life of man. It has brought nations and societies closer and as Jaspers has observed

"Thanks to the technical conquest of time and space by daily press, modern travel, the cinems, wireless, etc., a universalisation of contact has become possible. No longer is anything remote, mysterious, wonderful" (*Ibid*, p. 48).

But the vision of an integral view of life requires recreation of the inner self and revival of the spiritual potential of man. The Islamic approach to such recreation treats the deepest awareness of one's self as inseparable from the awareness of the Divine, the two being the inextricable realities of our spiritual existence.

It is the unqualified regard for the inner self, for individuality, for human attributes, and for the sublime spiritual existence which can possibly emancipate man from the bondage of the cult of hatred. Rumi believes that the attainment of the love of God leads into self-actualization which is the mainspring of altruistic love; and self

awareness arising out of the inner transformations through *Qalb* refashions the entire perspective of reality and life in a manner which makes the concordance of the objective and the subjective the existential imperative. This subtle point was caught by Aurobindo whose imperishable writings reflect the spirit of Islam. He says-

"Our inner nature is the progressive expression of the external spirit and too complex to be tied down by a single dominant mental or moral principle". (*Ibid*; p. 80).

This age of intercultural communication with its astounding means of destruction is not only signalling death; it is also calling for fresh approach to religion which can hopefully come to the rescue of human race. "The modern world", says Iqbal,

"stands in need of biological renewal. And religion, which in its higher manifestations is neither dogma, nor priesthood, nor ritual can alone ethically prepare modern man for the burden of the great responsibility which the advancement of modern science necessarily involves, and restore to him that attitude of faith which makes him capable of winning a personality here and retaining it here after. It is only by rising to a fresh vision of his origin and future, his whence whither, that man will eventually triumph over a society, motivated by an inhuman competition, and a civilization which has lost its spiritual unity by its inner conflict of religions and political values" (*Ibid*, p. 178).

The external aspect of individual and collective life with its organizational character can not be hopefully reoriented exclusively on its external dimension because if the present civilization persists further in its vitalistic satisfactions, its libidinal expression and material productiveness there is every reason to apprehend, while the missiles are awaiting the signal, that like a massive Titan it may collapse under its own weight never to revive again, on this planet at least.

The reorientation of man and society is urgently required on the inner side of our existence and this may be the last effort on our part to survive. This last effort, however, may also end up in a failure if it fails to answer the question- how to be human ? in other words

if it fails to tell us the route to internal peace and altruistic love.

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# 6

## SUFISM AND COMMUNAL HARMONY

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER



We are faced with a very serious problem of communal conflict in our contemporary society. It would be very difficult to achieve the objective of modern nation-building if this conflict keeps on surfacing. It is, therefore, highly necessary to harness all our resources, spiritual as well as material, to bring about unity and integrity. As for spiritual resources, we must look upto our past heritage, specially to those who belonged to the Sufi or Bhakti movements. These movements were based on true religiosity, not on sectarianism; on humanism, not on religious denominations. We, in this paper propose to throw some light on the role of the Sufis in bridging the gap between the two great religions of India i.e. Hinduism and Islam. This would certainly help to remove many mutual misunderstandings.

## I

There are a few things which must be properly understood in this connection right at the outset. Firstly, it is not true that Islam spread only with the help of sword and that the Muslim rulers' primary interest was to preach Islam by force or by persuasion. Far from it, the Muslim rulers were primarily interested in ruling and governing India by whatever means possible.

Those who believe in the theory that Muslim rulers were primarily interested in spreading Islam either oversimplify things or, are victims of certain prejudices. Those who judge things by subjective sectarian prejudices, there is nothing to argue with them. They have already adopted a point of view which they uphold closing their eyes to all other realities. However, one can certainly persuasively argue with those who are only oversimplifying without being strongly prejudiced.

We would like to impress upon those who tend to oversimplify that the reality is often much more complex than what we assume it to be. Firstly, we must bear in mind that the successful rulers are, more often than not, more pragmatic than ideological zealots. Ideological zeal may at times help capturing power but hardly in retaining it. Allauddin Khalji adopted similar stance when Qazi Mughis advised him to rule according to the *shariah*. He bluntly told him I do not know what is and what is not according to the *shariah*; what I do know is that I must govern in the interest of the state.

Secondly, it is simply not true that it is easier to govern if those governed happen to be the fellow-religionists. It is empirically very well borne out that a religiously cohesive society is not necessarily a conflict-free society. Far from it. The causes of conflict are not religious in nature, they are material in nature; either maldistribution of material resources of the society or struggle for power. Both could be either intra or inter-religious in nature. Europe was religiously quite cohesive throughout the middle ages yet saw more socio-political conflict than India during the same period. One, therefore, should not make hasty assumption that the Muslim rulers could have smoothed out political conflict by adopting a pro-

gramme of massive conversion to Islam.

One cannot understand historical forces objectively and scientifically if one limits dynamics of history to religion only. One has to understand the dynamics of social conflict and the causes of this conflict - often material in nature - to properly understand the nature of conflict in history. Unfortunately, with some valuable exceptions, our whole focus in medieval Indian history has been on religion. Earlier we get rid of this obsession better it is for us and our nation.

Unfortunately, the communal interpretation of history has been made very popular in India. What is more unfortunate is that it is not only Britishers who did it to divide us so that they may continue to rule but we ourselves have remained as much obsessed with such interpretation until today. The communal interpretation of history revolves round the concept of tyranny of one ruling community against another ruled community and also around number of places of worship belonging to the ruled community smashed. Intrareligious conflicts are totally neglected and Hindus as well as Muslims are assumed to be socially perfectly cohesive communities without any internal conflict. They kept on expressing their religious solidarity against each other. Such assumptions, needless to say, are highly oversimplified and must be rejected forthwith.

## II

Another fallacious assumption has been on both the side of the religious divide that Islam and Hinduism are incompatible with each other. Hence no integration has ever been possible between them and they have always been mutually embroiled in conflict. There are some detectable fallacies in these apparently "neat" assumptions. Firstly it is assumed that any theological incompatibility would inevitably result in social incompatibility. In other words IF THERE ARE THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES SOCIAL DIFFERENCES ARE BOUND TO ARISE. This is not only empirically not borne out but even the Sufis proved this assumption wrong by bringing about various religious communities together in

their *takias* and *dargahs* (shrines)

Secondly, there has been as much intra-religious doctrinal incompatibilities as inter-religious one. In both the religions inter-religious sectarian rigidities have often resulted in great deal of religious conflicts. However, it is also important to note that the masses, by and large, remain unaffected by these controversies. It is only religious elite who fan them to serve their *extra-religious* interests. Had these interests been of religious or doctrinal nature, Sufis — intensely religious people — would not have succeeded in reconciling them when the 'Ulama failed to do so. 'Ulama assumed much more rigid doctrinal postures as they were more interested in having political say than the Sufis who always remained alienated from the power structures.

Thus, we see that religious compatibility or incompatibility is not on purely theological merit; it is rather motivated by considerations other than theological. Again, religious compatibility cannot be decided at any one theological level. What appears to be incompatible at one level may get reconciled at some other level. Thus at higher philosophical level the concept of *advaita* and *tawheed* (unity of God) seem to reconcile. Also, often the religious and theological language tends to be symbolical rather than excursive and we make of these symbols what we wish to make of or what is in keeping with out extra-theological interests.

Many Sufis held Brahma to be Adam and took the Vedas as the divinely inspired books. Learned theologians like Allama Mashriqi and Khwaja Hasan Nizami (a Sufi and the *sajjada nashin* of the Shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin Awliya) accepted some gods of Hindu pantheon like Rama and Krishna as the prophets of God and among the 1,24,000 prophets supposed to have been sent by Allah. A sufi poet of our time Maulana Hasrat Mohani held Lord Krishna in great esteem and used to visit Mathura every year on the occasion of Janmashtami. In fact all the Firangi Mahil 'Ulama of Lucknow held Lord Krishna in great esteem. Thus it would be rather oversimplification to talk of incompatibility of Islam and Hinduism at any one level only. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a son of a practising Bengali Sufi, brings to bear very catholic outlook and maintains that one must distinguish between *din* and *shariah* and

says that while *din* (essence of religion) is one everywhere the shariahs rituals, outward practices, personal laws and similar other matters) differ. Thus, in Maulana Azad's view too while Islam and Hinduism are incompatible at one level (i.e. *Shari'ah's* level), they are quite compatible at another level (i.e. *din's* level).

There is no doubt that Maulana Azad though he was not a practicing Sufi, his outlook was deeply influenced by his sufi heri-tage. The Sufis, it is important to note, distinguish between *shari'ah* and *tariqat* (i.e. a religious way, method or procedure). The *tariqah* essentially means a way of life of a Sufi without outward religious encumbrances. While most of the Sufis do not disregard *shari'ah*, they do emphasise their own intensely felt religious way of living and practicing. For them while *shariah* differentiates, *tariqah* integrates. It was under this Sufi influence that Maulana Azad emphasised the difference between *din* and *shari'at* and thus, gave a very useful outlook for a multi-religious society like that of India.

Thus, seen from our angle neither the theory of spread of Islam at the point of sword nor that of incompatibility of Islam and Hinduism are tenable and empirically maintainable. While the religious elite have always emphasised theological differences, the Sufis and saints have brought masses from both the religions closer together. Here in this paper we would deal little more in detail the endeavours of the Sufis and saints and their outlook about the multi-religious society of their own day and the way they dealt with religious tensions in their society.

### III

It is difficult to surmise on the beginning of the mystic trend in Islam. The Sufis trace it from the Prophet himself and find its justification in the Quranic verses. There are number of verses in the Quran called *mutashabihat* (these unsure of meaning) which can be interpreted in various ways and some Quranic verses are highly symbolic. Some of the verses which the mystics interpret in their own way are as under:-

"Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. A likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp — the lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a brightly shining star — lit from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof gives light, though fire touch it not — light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He pleases. And Allah sets forth parables for men, and Allah is knower of all things" (*The Quran, 24:35*)

"By the star when it sets. Your companion errs not, nor does he deviate. Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed. One Mighty in power has taught him. The Lord of strength. So he attained to perfection, and he is in the highest part of the horizon. Then he drew near, drew nearer yet, so he was the measure of two bows or closer still". (*The Quran, 3:1-9*)

These are of course only two of many verses which lend themselves to mystical interpretations and from which the Muslim mystics derive their beliefs and practices. The holy Prophet is looked upon by them as a perfect model who spent long hours in night prayers and fasting for days. He is also reported to be tying stones on his stomach to control hunger while praying. Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet is another model after the Prophet for deriving inspiration from. Ali is also reported to be deeply spiritual person with great control on his desires and was given to constant praying and devotion to Allah.

We do not wish to discuss the Sufi doctrine here which is altogether a different subject. We are only trying to throw some light on the background of the theory and practice of Sufism. Undoubtedly some companions of the holy Prophet and other Muslims in early period like Imam Hasan Basri (who is also considered, a great Sufi saint) had sufistic qualities about them. The Sufism, in fact, systematically began during the late Abbasid period. It is well known that the early Abbasid caliphs like Ma'mun and his immediate successors supported the Mu'tazalite rationalism. They were also supporters of liberal theology and expression of free thought. **But with the Caliph Mutawakkil a reaction set in. The Mu'tazalites lost their influence and the persecution of the unorthodox began.**

Even persons like al-Muhasibi (an early Sufi) who had opposed Mu'tazalism and refuted their doctrines were no longer free to teach or preach in Baghdad.

It is this period which was emotionally and psychologically suitable for germination of Sufi doctrines. It was extremely difficult period both spiritually and materially. The Abasid power had declined and a sense of insecurity had set in. On the other hand speculative theology under the influence of Greek thought and philosophy had fields day. Religion had become purely intellectual and speculative affair and starved of spiritualism and emotions. Moreover, as pointed out above, the days of liberalism were over and religious persecution got ascendancy due to decline of the Abbasid power. There was yet another dimension to the Abbasid society. It had attracted people from various parts of the world specially from Persia, India, Central Asia, Syria and other parts of Roman Empire. There were peoples of various faiths, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Christians, Jew and even Jains and Hindus though the latter two were very few. Thus, the Abbasid society had grown to be a multi-religious society.

The Sufism and its origin must be seen in this background. The society had developed sense of insecurity, was starved of emotional aspects of religion, had gathered people of different faiths and the Abbasid power was on decline. The theological elites were indulging too much in speculative theology and reasoning. The masses had no appeal for such religion. They needed a religion which could serve as a solace and also give them sense of security and provide an emotional outlet. The Sufis did precisely that. They distanced the religion from sterile speculative theologising and endowed it with spiritualism and emotionalism. They as if personalised religion and used it to give stability and sense of security to common people. To use Indian terminology *Bhakti Marg* got ascendance over *Jnan Marg*. *Jnan Marg* can be followed only by the elite whereas *Bhakti Marg* is open to all and is far more reassuring to them than the *Jnan Marg*. However, it must be said that as far as the Sufis were concerned they combined both the margs *m'arifat* (jnan) and *'ibadat* (bhakti).

Many attempts have been made to define Sufism. Here we give its definition by a greatly acclaimed sufi Junaid Baghdadi who was

disciple of al-Muhasibi earlier referred to. "Sufism", said al-Junayd, "means that God makes thee to die to thyself and to become alive in Him. It is to purify the heart from the recurrence of creaturely temptations, to bid farewell to all natural inclinations, to subdue the qualities which belong to human nature, to keep far from the claims of the senses, to adhere to spiritual qualities, to ascend by means of Divine knowledge, to be occupied with that which is eternally the best, to give wise counsel to all people, faithfully to observe the Truth, and to follow the Prophet in respect of the religious law". (See *Tadhkitat al-Awliya*, ed. R.A. Nicholson, London 1905, II, P.32). This is quite a comprehensive definition of Sufism and lays bare almost all its dimensions.

Here it would be seen from its above definition that a Sufi is supposed to give up all worldly temptations, bid farewell to all natural urges and subdue them. In this respect they were closer to Indian yogis. This control of sensual lust made them popular among the masses. The masses lived under tyrannical and exploitative rule of kings and feudal lords and anyone who resisted the temptation to be drawn near to these rulers made him quite popular among them. Most of the Sufis resorted to this passive resistance against the exploitative rule of their time though there also was an activist Sufi like Enayatullah Shah of Sind in 17th century who actively fought with arms against the exploitative Moghal rule though in the end he was defeated. But he fought with such dauntless courage that his enemies had to resort to guile to defeat him.

However, most of the Sufis resorted to passive resistance and many of them like Hazrat Nizamuddin Awliya doggedly refused to pay courts to even most powerful kings of his time. These Sufis opeted out of the system and thought it fit to lead emotionally and spiritually rich life. Even if they wanted to they could not have changed the system even with the help of armed struggle as technology and forces of production made such change impossible. The Sufis could at best establish communes outside the system which they did by establishing shrines where people of all faith and class ate *langar* without any distinction. Some Sufis accepted jagirs for their langar expenses while others refused even this and depended mainly on unsolicited *futuh* (contributions). They

made it a point never to ask for any contribution and yet people flocked to donate generously and the langars ran smoothly.

The Sufis, it is important to note from our viewpoint, never hesitated to adopt and assimilate spiritual practices from sources other than Islam. They had, in this respect, very liberal, even universalist approach. It is quite possible that the famous Sufi doctrine of *fana fi'llah* (i.e. dying to oneself and living in Him as Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi says in his definition of a Sufi) might have been borrowed from Hinduism as such a concept is found in Hinduism much before.

The Sufis laid stress on spiritualism rather than on theologising and dogmatising. They were hardly interested in either rational or dogmatic theology like the '*ulama and mullas*. The masses were never attracted towards the '*ulama and mullas* as unlike the sufis they were attracted by theology (an elite speculative rational activity) as opposed to spiritual practices (theologising leads to dogmas as opposed to spiritual practices which lead to sense of security and emotional satisfaction) they also coveted *darbar* positions and thus appeared to be on the side of exploiters whereas the Sufis kept their distance from the rulers, as pointed out above.

One also has to keep in mind that Islam, to begin with, was a religion of city dwellers, mostly small traders and artisans, not of peasants. To traders and city dwellers what appeals most is pragmatic rationalism. However, the peasant psychology is quite different. Pragmatic rationalism does not serve its needs. Its psychology and state of mind gets reflected, on the other hand, in elaborate ritualism, music and dance. When large sections of peasantry got converted to Islam outside urban Arabia, they brought their own psychology and mental equipment with them.

The '*ulama* belonged to the urban elite and hence were attracted to speculative theology and this left the rural peasantry cold. They needed more ritualistic and emotionally satisfying religion. Many Sufi *dervishes* (mendicants even adopted music (*sama*) and dance (rags) alongwith other elaborate rituals. *Sama'* and rags were strongly denounced by the '*ulama* who considered these practices as *bida'* (un-Islamic innovations) which they undoubtedly were. However, for the peasantry, and those sections of it which

migrated to urban areas the real question was not dogmatic theology but their own emotional needs. They found their fulfilment in Sufi practices.

Moreover, the Sufis, as pointed out earlier, never hesitated to assimilate the spiritual insights from other faiths. They were more akin to the Quranic verse:

"And for every people We appointed way of worshipping that they might mention the name of Allah on what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds. So your God is one God, therefore to Him should you submit, And give good news to the humble." (*The Quran*, 22:34).

And also:

"for every one there is direction to which one turns, so view with each other in good deeds". (*The Quran* 2:148).

Thus, these verses make it abundantly clear that the form of worship is not very material, each people have their own form. What is necessary is to excel each other in good works and also to give good tidings to the humble (*mukhbitin*). The Sufis were truthful to both these teachings of the Quran: they never disputed anyone's form of worship and they always had deep sympathy for the humble. When Hazrat Nizamuddin Awliya went on a morning walk in Delhi along the river Jamuna he saw some Hindu women bathing and worshipping the morning sun. He, on seeing these women in the act of worship, told his poet disciple *har qaum ra dine wa qiblagah* (for every people there is religion and direction to which they turn to worship). These words were literal translation of the Quranic verses quoted above and deeply reflected Hazrat Nizamuddin's approach towards other religions.

## IV

Lastly we would like to draw the attention to the famous doctrine of Muhiuddin Ibn Arabi known as *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of Being). It was quite a revolutionary doctrine as far as harmony between

peoples of different faiths is concerned. This doctrine implies that it is His existence which pervades through the whole universe.

The universe is manifestation of His glory and hence there should not be any distinction between one object and the other, let alone between one faith and the other. This doctrine, in a way was quite progressive in its time. Again, it was this doctrine which drew the Sufi saints close to the people of all faiths. A true *muwahhid* (believer in the unity of being) was one who made no distinction between one creature and another creature of God. The noted Urdu poet Ghalib who was believer in the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* goes further and says:

"We are believers in the doctrine of Unity of Being (*muwahhid*) and our creed is to renounce all formalities (of faith); the (different) communities, when obliterated, became ingredients of (my) faith".

Thus, the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* was instrumental in promoting communal harmony by eliminating all formal differences of faith. Naturally it did not go unchallenged by the theologians who strongly believed in *wahdat al-wujud*. Abdul Fazl and Faizi who deeply influenced Akbar's religious outlook and made him tolerant toward other faiths were also opposed by the prominent contemporary theologians. Mujaddid Alf Thani Sirhindi was one among them. He refuted the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* and instead propounded that of *wahdat al-shuhud* (unity of witnessing). What was implied was that though we witness such unity but in fact it does not exist. Existence is not emanation from God. God is beyond and transcendent. However, it must be said that the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* remained most popular and that of *wahdat al-shuhud* could never compete successfully with it. Shah Waliyulla tried to work out a synthesis of the two but even this synthesis did not find many takers. It remained confined to Shah Saheb's followers.

Of course we must understand the fact that Sufism was a product of a feudal society. It was, so to say, feudal humanism. The contemporary social structure is not congenial to the Sufi practices and hence it has nearly disappeared from our socio-religious

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scene. But it is part of our socio-cultural and religious heritage and must be valued as such. The sufistic values, though not its practice, are still quite relevant for us as we are torn with communal conflict today.

# 7

## BINOCULAR GLOSSARY OF VEDANTA AND TASAWWUF OF SHAIKH MOHAMMAD

P.V. RANADE



The purpose of this script is to present a feel of parallel and common identities of Vedanta and Taswwuf as found in the seventeenth century. Marathi writings of Shaikh Mahommad particularly exemplified in the binocular glossary (dochashma) which he had prepared as a sort of appendix to his works.<sup>1</sup> It is not supposed here to present the niceties and nuances of the philosophical and poetic presentation of shaikh Mohammad's works. The main purpose is to identify the common ground of philosophical concepts and ideas of Vedanta and Tasawwuf. Shaikh Mohammad himself had prepared the binocular glossary which would help his readers to understand and appreciate the main body, of his Marathi works.

Shaikh Mahommad in his Marathi work has actually put on the Marathi garments and uniform on a body of Islamic teachings of

Tasawwuf. Shaikh Mohammad did his job so very ably that his works were accorded almost a holy sanction in the Maharashtrian Warakari Silsila. No less a poet than Saint Samarth Ramdas, who is supposed to be the spiritual mentor of Shivaji Maharaj paid salutation to Shaikh Mohammad in the following words.

"Glory to Shaikh Mohammad you have unfolded the mystery of the universe in such diction and style that baffle the reason and logic of ordinary mortals. You have truly perceived the fundamental unity and identity of the entire universe. You have obliged us and put us in your debt which we can never pay back to you, even if we put our body and soul at your feet. I will carry the sacred dust raised by your feet on my head. (Free translation of Ramadasa's verse as quoted by Bendre).

The writer of present script presupposes the basic unity of all religious and mystic experiences recorded by the unselfish saints, fakirs and mystics of all times and of all ages. The saints and fakirs who could rise above the petty vested interest of material life would see the unclouded universal meaning of life. The saints and fakirs used to put on the garments of poets and philosophers to unfold the mystery of the universe around them. They generalised the truthful experiences and accounts of the hunters, plough-men and craftsmen, who objectively and realistically responded to the play-work of nature and human labour. Hunters, peasants and craftsmen were the creators of science and philosophies. Saint-poets were their interpreters, who saw the things around in vision and in actuality. All great philosophy and poetry is nothing but human endeavour to overcome man's alienation from nature. Overcoming the oppressive conditions of alienated life has always been the mission of poets and saints. Tasawwuf which is identical with vedantic postulates in therefore coveal with all poetry from the time immemorial. The composers of *Rigveda*, *Old-testament*, *New-Testament*, *The Quran* and Puranic scripts and texts of all old religions were sufis of their time.

The people living in Arabia had witnessed the rise and fall of many civilisations in the east as well as in the west. Islam which originated in Arabia was therefore a legate to the cultural attain-

ment of all civilisations of ancient times. Even before the coming of Islam Arab merchants and travellers had been trotting the globe. Wherever the winds of the Red Sea drove the sails of their ships and boats, wherever the camel led caravans went, the Arab travellers and merchants, moved in those directions and emptied their cargos of Arab-goods and filled them up with foreign goods which they drove to various cities and towns. In this transit operations they collected and distributed not only the goods but also the ideas. The inflow and outflow of goods and ideas between Arabia and India continued over centuries. Even before the Sultan led Turkish armies overran India the Arab travellers and merchants had already made India a transit-camp in the beginning and a permanent home in later times. The Indo-Arab contacts were super-imposed by Indo-Turkish and Indo-Persian ties after eleventh century.<sup>2</sup>

The doctrine of *Anal-Haqq* (I am the Truth) landed the Sufis of the Arbo-Turkish-Persian lands in trouble. India received them with open hands. The Indian sufism gathered patronage in all regions of India. Maharashtra being no exception.<sup>3</sup> The story of sufi-silsilas in India is a story of cultural migration of various Muslim generations of India and abroad.

The Takiyas, Maths and such other monasteries had been flou-rishing in almost all parts of India in every age. The Buddhist, Jain, and Shaivies had settled on all important trade routes cross-roads and by-lanes of market life from ancient times. These monasteries had been serving society in various ways. They cushioned and absorbed the shocks and tensions of social life. They functioned as educational centres. They offered protection and rest to the merchants, soldiers, villagers and citizens of all shades. The warring princes used to sign the truce and ceasefire agreements in the courtyard of these monasteries. The Rajas and Sultans used to take out their turbans offer their tributes and homage to the god-men of these monasteries. These monasteries functioned as spiritual and cultural exchanges, that is why these monasteries were being supported by the people.

The spiritual authority of the Sufi Takiya extended to almost all houses of landed aristocracy of the region. Shivaji's father and uncle Shahji and Sherfoji carried the celebrated name of Shah Sharief the Sufi-saint of Ahmednagar on their persons. Sayed

Yaqub and Mouni Baba were among the *Murshids* (spiritual guides) from whom Shivaji used to seek blessing whenever he launched a military campaign.

Shaikh Mohammad was preaching his doctrine of Tawhid at a time when the Bahamani Sultanate and its power structure had broken up to pieces and the Maratha landed aristocracy along with its account keeping paraphernalia was gaining ground in the courts of Bijapur and Ahmednagar. The peasant warriors and account keepers of the Maratha land were increasingly asserting themselves in the Turko-Irani courts of the Deccan sultanates. The Decanese elements in these courts were extending hearty patronage to Marathi men of letters. Janardan Swami, the guru of saint Ekanath was serving the Nizamshahi kingdom of Ahmednagar as the fort keeper of Daulatabad. Chand Bodhale, a Hindu mystic who had put on the garments of a Muslim fakir, was the spiritual guardian of Janardan Swami. Shaikh Mahommad had forged spiritual bonds with Janardan Swami and Saint Eknath through his spiritual attachment with Chand Bodhale, whose tomb is located in Daulatabad town. Chand Bodhale's tomb is visited and frequented by Hindu and Muslim devotees even today.

Shaikh Mohammad's forefathers had migrated to the Deccan from Afghanistan. They had settled in Dharur during the Bahamani times. Shaikh Mahommad had come to Daulatabad and he later migrated to Shrigonda in Ahmednagar district, where he received a land grant from Malojee Bhonsle, the grandfather of Shivaji. Locally Shaikh Mahommad was known as a Kabirpanthi fakir, though he strictly belonged to Quadari silsila.

The thematic content of. Yoga Sangram, Pavan Vijay, Achar Bodh, Vichar Bodh and all other poetical compositions of Shaikh Mahommad veer round the doctrine of *Tawhid* which is equivalent to Marathi and Sanskrit term *Advaita*. Overcoming the alienation of man from universe and restoring the bond between the two were the twin objects of *tawhid* or *advaita* philosophy. This called censuring the ritualistic plurality practised by the fake and untruthful gentry of kazis, Mulanas, Sanyasis, Jogis, Jangams, Bairagis, Mullas and Pandits. Shaikh Mahommad did not spare any of such untruthful godmen whom he subjected to ridicule and fun in almost every of his compositions.

Shaikh Mahommad's works are addressed to the Marathi audience that was well conversant with the folklore and mythology of Vedic and Puranic Hinduism.

The most widely known work of Shaikh Mahommad is *Yoga Sangram* - (Meditational Warcraft). *Yoga Sangram* is a sustained metaphorical allegory that illustrates various phases, manoeuvres and grounds of spiritual conquest. It picturizes a conflict of micro and macro (Jeeva and Shiva). It narrates the story of a warrior-soul (atma-veer) that mounts the prancing horse and humbles the knight-errants of desire, doubt, anger, ego, sloth and otehr vices of the body-kingdom, and thus the warrior-soul scales the spiritual summit, (brahmanda shikhar). While sustaining this metaphorical allegory the author has freely used the diction and idiom of Hindu and Muslim scriptures.

### **Do-Chashma**

Shaikh Mohammad's *Do-chashma* is being presented here with a view to identify the conceptual Unity of Vedant and Tasawwuf as understood by Shaikh Mohammad. This binocular glossary explains the Islamic philosophical categories in Vedantic terms. When we go through the glossary, we are at once made aware of the fact that Shaikh Mohammad has selected such terms that we come across in Vedic, Upnishadic, Puranic and Vedantic literature of ancient India. It may be noted here that the purpose of Shaikh Mohd. in preparing binocular glossary is to acquaint his Marathi readers with the Islamic philosophical terms. All his Marathi compositions are loaded with the wisdom of Tasawwuf. Shaikh Mohd. presents his *lufi* philosophy of life and universe in metaphors and similies with which the average Maharashtrian literate person is closely acquainted. Shaikh Mohd's work is addressed to such a Maharashtrian audience which is well versed in Marathi-Vedantic works, which were popularised by the saint-poets of Maharashtra from 13th century onwards. While going through the binocular-glossary the author of present script felt as if he was going through a glossary that could have been prepared by a person, who had read "Gyaneshwari" and *Shamael-i-Atqia*. The compositional style of Gyaneshwari and that of *Shamael-i-Atqia* differ. Yet the basic philosophical categories, concepts and the mystic experience as

recorded in both the works run almost parallel.

The *Do-chashma* is attached to Sh. Mohammads' Diwan i.e his poetical collection. His Diwan contents the following works.

- ❑ *Yoga-Sangram*
- ❑ *Pavan Vijay*
- ❑ *Bhakti-Bodh*
- ❑ *Achar-Bodh* and
- ❑ his miscellaneous poems.

Shaikh Mohammad was a Muslim-Saint poet of Maharashtra who lived in the sixteenth-seventeenth (16th-17th) century. His Takiya or dargah was awarded a land grant by Maloji Bhosale in Hijra 1005 (1596-97 A.D.)<sup>4</sup>.

Shaikh Mohammad's known and documented date of demise is 1663AD. That makes him a contemporary of great saint poet of Maharashtra Sant Tukaram and Ramdas. Shaikh Mohammad's *Yogasangram* is proto-type of Saint Ramdasa's famous Marathi work *Das-Bodh*. The precursors of *Yogasangram* are Jnyaneshwara's *Bhavarth Dipica* a fourteenth century Marathi commentary of *Bhagwadgita* and *Shama-el-Atqia* of Rukn-ud-din Kashan, a 14th century Persian work which was rendered into Dakhani-Hindi in the 17th century. Ramdasa's *Das-Bodh* is a late seventeenth century Marathi composition.

The entire corpus of conceptual frame work of *Gyaneshwari*, *Shamaet-Atqia* and *Yogasangram* has almost parallel and identical philosophical back-drop.

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# 8

## THE SUFIS AND RELIGIOUS HARMONY IN KERLA

K.K.N. KURUP



Sufism is a mystical movement in Islam represented by individual men and women who devoted themselves singly and exclusively for the service of god and the joyous experience of His grace.<sup>1</sup> When Islam spread in India, the Sufi orders had also become popular in the continent. The common belief of the rural masses credited the sufis with supernatural powers and attributed to them the ability to perform miracles. Among such powers, the ability to forecast the future, to trace the lost or stolen properties, to cure chronic diseases and to effect rain during the devastating drought were widely enumerated by the people. The sufis were loved and respected by all sections of society irrespective of their religious affinity. It is important to note that the sufis led a married life as there was no sanction by the prophet for monkery or rahbaniya in Islam.

## ISLAM IN KERALA

Kerala being a coastal region which had continuous contacts with the Arabs as a matter of maritime trade, had welcomed the religion of Islam since the days of the Prophet. The Kerala rulers on account of their maritime trade interest with the Arabs gave all facilities for peaceful religious conversion of their subjects to Islam.<sup>2</sup> The earliest mosque in Kerala, as per tradition, was constructed in Cranganore, where the later Chera rulers had their headquarters. The early Islamic missionaries in Kerala including Malik-bin-Dinar and his companions after effecting the first mosque at Cranganore continued the process of construction in Southern Quilon, Chaliyam, Panthalayini, Srikanthapuram, Elimala (Matayi), Kasaragod, Mangalore and Pakkanur (Bharacore) on the western coast.<sup>3</sup>

The spread of Islam in Kerala had been noted by the fourteenth century travellers like Ibn Batuta. The religious and communal harmony which had existed in Kerala between the Hindus and the Muslims continued over centuries without much change. The sufis and the Islamic intellectuals promoted communal harmony with their devoted activities and attracted the caste-ridden and oppressed lower section to their religious and organisational fold.

The advent of the Portuguese in Kerala during the end of the fifteenth century completely changed the socio-political milieu of the region in the ensuing years. The Portuguese even carried over their medieval political and religious hatred against Islam to Malabar also. The Mappilas or the descendants of Islam had established a monopoly over maritime trade and commerce in Kerala which also accelerated the hatred of the Portuguese against the former.<sup>4</sup> They destroyed several Mappila villages on the coastal belt and enforced innumerable atrocities on Mappila women and children. Even the vessels carrying pilgrims to Mecca were destroyed on the sea as a matter of religious fanaticism.

The sufis, theologians and other intellectuals of Islam found this as a hard situation faced by their religion in Kerala. The petty chieftains and rulers of Kerala found this situation created by the Portuguese, absolutely irresistible one on account of their inferior naval force. However, with the help of the naval force organised by

the Mappilas under the admirals of Marakkar family (Kunhali to Kutti Ali) ; the Zamorines of Calicut offered a stubborn resistance against the Portuguese intrusion and expansion.

The aforesaid political situation in Kerala had greatly changed the character of Islamic sufis and theologians in this region. In spite of their religious teachings and preachings of harmony and solidarity, they were compelled to profess an organised war or jihad against the Portuguese to safeguard Islam and its followers and other communities. In another sense, the traditional intellectuals of Islam in Kerala remained as defenders of Islam on one side and on the other preached communal harmony. Their cult of Xenophobia or hatred of foreigners, particularly the Portuguese, made them different from their counterparts in the rest of India. The character of Indian sufism and mysticism had greatly changed in Kerala on account of the Portuguese invasion and later the British conquest of Malabar. Under the British colonial systems the sufis and the intellectuals and the theologians of Islam shared the responsibility of organising the rural masses against the cultural hegemony of the British. Some of the sufis who could not accommodate with this new situation migrated to interior rural areas, quite away from the coastal line and led ascetic life preaching social harmony and religious solidarity among the Hindus and the Muslims. They had combined the role of fakirs, physicians, fortune-tellers, poets and followed Islamic purity of life. Their tankhavs and tombs scattered in different places are centres of rural pilgrimage. The annual festivals in these centres attract thousands of rural folk irrespective of their religion.<sup>5</sup>

### **PONNANI AND TIRURANGADI**

The two great centres of sufism and theology in Kerala are Ponnani and Tirurangadi. These centres had seen several sufis, scholars and theologians. Some of them are known as Tangals. On account of their diametrically opposite roles as sufis, scholars, jurists, etc., at least some specialists doubt the sufi-mysticism of Kerala as an inferior character. Perhaps sufism in its original form may be said to have come to an end in Kerala after the advent of the foreigners. Anyhow the classical tradition of sufism must have come to an end on account of various socio-political reasons of which an indepth

study is a historical desideratum.<sup>6</sup>

Ponnani was the birth place of Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdum whose mother hailed from Chombayi (Chombala) near Mahe.<sup>7</sup> His major works both religious and historical, consist of *Khurrathul. In, Ajeebathul Ajeeba, Ahkamun-Nikhah, Manhajul Valiyah, Irshad, Fathhul Muyin, Tuhfatul Mujahideen*, etc. *The Tuhfatul Mujahideen* is th first historical account of the Portuguese invasions written from Kerala side.<sup>8</sup> The author even instigated the Muslims for a jihad or holy war against the Portuguese who had destroyed mosques and Mappila settlements in large numbers on the Malabar coast. He found Adilshah I, the Sultan of Bijapur as a true defender of Islam and a close friend of the author. It is believed that his death had taken place in Hijira 991 or A.D. 1583.

Qazi Muhammad bin Abdul Aziz of Calicut who passed away in Hijira 1025 was a renowned philosopher, poet and sufi. He had profusely contributed to the growth of Arabi-Malayalam literature. As a social reformer he gave leadership to settle some of the religious issues and conflicts prevalent as Tarikhats in Kerala. It is believed that Qazi Muhammad was the follower of Qadiri sufi order founded by Muhyi-al Din Abd al Qadiri whose teachings were based on the kuran and its traditions. Qazi Muhammad's Muhyi-al-Din Mala is a great contributor to Islamic devotional or Bhakti literature.

Hazarat Umar Qazi of Veliyamkode, born in 1765 in a family reputed for religious scholarship was educated under Mammikutty Qazi of the Maqдум family at Ponnani. Hazarat Mammikutty Qazi initiated him to Qadiriyya order. It was believed that Umar Qazi had possessed supernatural powers with the ability to disappear from a police-lockup and also to force the police to act according to his desires. He had written several tracts and fatwas both in prose and poetry on various aspects of religion. After his death in 1857 he became a popular cult figure among the rural folk of Malabar.

Although he was a sufi with power of supernatural to cure chronic diseases and bring rain in extreme drought, he was a great critic of the British and their administrative system. His landed properties in Veliyamkode were heavily assessed by the revenue officials. He had even protested against such collections and even

demanding a non-payment of tax. He never paid land revenue, but his friends had fulfilled this obligation. After his death, the village headman demanded the payment from Umar Qazi. He scolded them as servants of the imperialists who had slain Tipu Sultan and destroyed many native rulers. When a complaint was filed before the Revenue Divisional officer, Umar Qazi was brought before him for trial. During the trial he was forced to spit on the face of the officer Neebu. He was put under imprisonment at Choughat from where the Qazi disappeared during the night from the lock-up. Later he was arrested and produced before the District Magistrate who sentenced him on 18 December 1819 for imprisonment at Calicut for a long period. However, after hearing these developments the Mappila aristocracy under the leadership of the Mamburam Tangal went to Calicut and got him released. He was highly respected by the Hindus and the Mappilas as a divine personality.<sup>9</sup>

Tirurangadi is a well-known religious centre for the Muslims of Malabar as several sufis, philosophers and theologians had lived there and commanded respect. They were not sectarians in their outlook and always promoted communal harmony. They played an important role in regenerating an anti-British consciousness in the minds of the Mappilas who were greatly exploited by the British raj. These scholars and sufis of Tirurangadi are generally known as Mamburam Tangals. Sayyid Alavi Tangal and his son Sayyid Fazl Pookkoya Tangal are renowned scholars, mystics and theologians. Sayyid Alavi had arrived here in 1767 from Arabia as a boy of seventeen and settled at Mamburam where his maternal uncle was also a scholar and theologian. His uncle Sayyid Hassan Jifri came from the family of Alavis of Tarim, near Yaman being the direct descendant of prophet through his daughter Fatima and cousin Ali. This blood relationship of the Tangals with the prophet made Mamburam as a holy seat.

Like Umar Qazi and others, Sayyid Alavi Tangal also aroused anti-British feelings. His tract known as *Saiful Battar* demanded a fight against the British till the end<sup>10</sup> The English were known by the term *afarang* which was used originally for the Portuguese. Tangal's involvement in the Mappila uprisings of 1801 and 1817 had been noted by the British who did not arrest him fearing of a possible riot in protest in South Malabar. He had a large number of

Hindu followers. Through his teachings he brought Mappila community to a process of revitalization, regeneration and purification. He emphasised the role of self purification. It is believed that the Tangal had possessed all sorts of super natural powers. It is also believed that he had participated in the Cherur uprising against the British.

His son and successor, Sayyid Fazal Pookkoya Tangal had established the Jamait mosque of Mamburam. He was very much an architect of Hindu-Muslim unity. Like his father he also inherited anti-British feelings and issued a radical fatwa known as "Uddathul Umaravū" which was prohibited by the district authorities. In 1852 he went to Arabia with his family and later even assumed the office of governor of Yaman. He passed away in 1901 in Constantinople.

H.V. Conolly, the District Magistrate of Malabar observed:

The lower orders look upon the Tangal as imbued with a portion of divinity. They swear by his foot as their most solemn oath. Earth on which he has spat or walked is treasured up. Marvellous stories are told of supernatural knowledge. His blessing is supremely prized.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the Tangals combined in themselves the role of sufis scholars and theologians and made Tirurangadi one of the distinguished centres of Islamic scholarship and mysticism.

A brief survey of these facts reveal that sufism, although in its changed or deteriorated form with anti foreign feelings, had popularised communal harmony and religious solidarity in Kerala. Both Hindus and Muslims followed these ascetics and tried to purify their life in the light of their teachings. Sufism in its pristine purity of mysticism is not traceable in Kerala as one could find in the different sufi orders in the rest of India. Here the foreigners had unleashed great atrocities against Islam. Thus, the mystics and sufis assumed the role of defenders of Islam, social reformers, traditional intellectuals and poets. Even they dedicated themselves to the service of the poor and depressed. Their hatred against the foreigners or xenophobia had been due to the fanatic activities of the foreigners. Sheikh Zainuddin and the Tangals of Mamburam had regenerated

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Islam through their teachings and activities. However, they were not sectarians but propagated the cause of religious harmony.

### REFERENCES

1. A.J. Arberry, *Sufism: An account of the Mystics of Islam* (Aylesburg, 1979 edn), p.84.
2. The tradition relating to the Zamorin of Calicut and other local rulers are important in this respect.
3. C.N. Ahmed Moulavi and K.K. Muhammad, *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Paramaryam* (Calicut, 1978) PP 123-4.
4. See details in K.M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Portuguese*.
5. These festivals are known as Urus, Nerchas, etc.
6. Arbery argues that there was a decline of sufism in Egypt from the political and economic disorders in the 16th century. n.1, p.120.
7. The tombs of the mother and the son are available in the mosque of Kunhippalli in Chombala.
8. Moulavi, n.3, pp. 146-50.
9. See *Hazarat Umarkhasiyute Jeevacharithravum Kritikalum* (Veliyamkode, 1988).
10. Moulavi, n. 3, pp. 175-7.
11. Quoted in K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State* (Delhi, 1989), p.63.

# 9

## TASAWWUF: THE MEETING GROUND OF TASHAYYU AND TASANNUN

SAYYID WAHEED AKHTAR



Sufism is defined as the essence of Islamic morality by some eminent sufis. There are different views regarding the origin of the term sufism and its doctrines are usually considered borrowed from non-Islamic sources. Among orientalisits only a few are of the view that sufism is the core of Islamic teachings, such as Nicholson and Henry Corbin. Undoubtedly all religions have a mystical dimension that may be said to be the common element or essence of religion. Still Islam is different from other religions because of its special nature. Except original Judaism no religion emphasised the organic unity of the worldly and other worldly matters and laid down a comprehensive law to govern human life and society. Islam is closer to Judaism in this respect, for *din* and *millat* both the terms literally mean a path and a way of life. Thus, morality may be

justifiably considered to be the essence of Islam, because morality has two dimensions that are inseparable: individual and social.

Islam comprises three aspects: dogmas (*aga'id*), worship (*ibadat*) and social obligations (*muamalat*). The fundamentals of faith were revealed through the Prophet (S), and he prescribed the details of ritualistic forms of worship that were decreed by Allah in His Book in general terms only. Hence, the *Quran* and *Sunnah* are two sources of the Muslim faith and practice. The path to attain — perfection in religion is not isolated from social obligations, but a Muslim has to reach the highest spiritual stage through his dealings with other human beings. Muslim theologians in general and Sufis in particular believe that Allah can forgive man's lapses with regard to His worship (*haqq Allah*), but will never forgive one's failure to fulfill his duties toward fellow beings (*huquq al-nas*). Hence, morality that is possible in the society only is more important than dogmas and worship. From Islamic view-point the fundamentals of faith and ritualistic worship are aimed at perfecting morality. The Prophet (S) himself declared:

"I am assigned (by Allah) the mission of perfecting morals."

It may be therefore, concluded that defining sufism as the essence of Islamic morality is more compatible with the spirit of Islam than any other definition of *tasawwuf*. That is why, apart from linguistic controversy regarding derivation of this term, since the time the terms *sufi* and *tasawwuf* came into vogue. Sufis have been emphasising on *safa* (purification) as the main characteristic of a *sufi*. The Quran declares:

"He indeed shall be successful who purifies himself"  
(87:14)

"He will be indeed successful who purifies it (the soul),

And he will indeed fail who corrupts it". (91: 9-10)

The two verses preceding these two verses say that God made the human soul perfect and inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it (91: 7-8). The purification of the heart and soul is not an end itself, but a means to attain Divine pleasure, which is a

sufis *sumum bonum*. The way to purification passes through social life, in isolation it is not attainable. Islamic conception of spirituality is grounded in man's social life that provides man possibility of winning Divine pleasure. The word *sufi* is not used in the Qur'an or *hadith*, but the term pleasure has occurred on many occasions in the Qur'an in its different forms:

"O soul that are at rest! Return to thine Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well-pleasing (Him), so enter among My servants, and enter into My garden. (89: 27-30)

The highest stage that a man can attain in pleasing his Lord is that at which his will becomes one with Divine Will:

"And among men is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is Affectionate to the servants. (2: 207)

In my view the above two verses contain the truest definition of a *sufi*. I hold this view on the basis of the unanimous commentary of *mufassirun* (commentators) of the verses 27 of the *Surah al-Baqarah*, according to whom this verse was revealed at the Night of *hijrah* (migration) when Ali offered to sleep in the place of the Prophet (S) risking his own life. Incidentally Amir al-Mu'-minin 'Ali is accepted as the chief source and head of all Sufi orders (*salasil*) with the exception of a branch of the *Naqshbandiyyah* that too accepts him as its head after the first three Caliphs. He is also called *Sayyid al-awliya'* (the chief of all *walis* or *sufis*). Thus, sacrificing one's life in the way of Allah is the only way to win Divine pleasure and even becoming the instrument of Divine Will. The greatest sacrifice in the history of Islam is that of Imam al-Husayn at Karbala'. Many *mufassirun* (commentators) are of the view that the verses from 27 to 30 of the *Surah al-Fajr* refers to Imam al-Husayn's martyrdom. It is pertinent to note that the sacrifices of Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali and Imam al-Husayn are of great socio-political significance in the history of Islam as well as in human history. No Muslim or an honest historian can deny the high spiritual status of 'Ali and al-Husayn. What I want to infer from this rather lengthy introduction to *sufism* is that in Islam true spirituality is morality of the highest order in one's attitude towards Allah and His creatures.

Sufism, defined in whatsoever terms, is inseparable from this spirit. It is from this point of view that at the very outset I said that Islamic mysticism is different and distinguished from all other forms of mysticism which usually seek Divine pleasure, or in some cases oneness with God, in renouncing the world. On the contrary Islam explicitly prohibits and denounces asceticism and renunciation of the social life.

What makes sufism distinct from the mystical dimension of all religions and religious philosophies is its basic social character. The Prophet (S) himself lived among the people and conducted their social and political affairs. He is the perfect man (*insan al-kamil*) in the view of all Muslims. No sufi can claim a higher status than him in his spiritual ascension. The Imams of his Family (*A'immah Ahl al-Bayt*) also had been always actively involved in instructing Muslims and seeking to uplift them morally and socially as the true servants of Allah. They are also held in high esteem by all Sufis, and some of the early Sufis are said to be direct disciples of one or the other Imam. Usually orientalist have ignored the important role of the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* in the origin and development of sufism. In order to understand the socio-political aspect of sufism one has to study their relation with sufis and sufi doctrines. Henry Corbin's observation in this regard is very significant and relevant to this study. He observes that the distinction between *shari'ah* and *tariqah* is made in Sunni Islam, while no such distinction was ever made in Shi'i Islam, for the former separated political leadership from the spiritual leadership and the latter combined both forms of leadership in their conception of the *imamah*. In Sunni Islam from the third/ninth century when sufism assumed the form of a movement it was vehemently opposed by *fuqaha'* and '*ulama'*, but in Shi'i Islam no such opposition arose due to the Shiah belief in the Infallible Imams who combined both the esoteric and exoteric aspects in their persons.<sup>1</sup> Henry Corbin and Kamil Mustafa al-Shaybi, the author of *Tashaiyu' wa tasawwuf*, are almost unanimous that sufis borrowed their notion of *qutb* or *ghawth* from the Shi'i conception of the *imamah*<sup>2</sup>. Sufis believe that the world can never remain without a *qutb*, upon whom depends the preservation and guidance of human beings. He is nearest to God, is the guardian of the faith and receives instruction from Allah directly.

Amir al-mu' minin 'Ali addressing to his pupil, Kumayl ibn Ziyad, one of the earliest sufis to whom some sufi orders attach themselves, says:

But this earth will never be without such persons who will prove universality of truth as disclosed by the Lord, they may be well-known persons, openly and fearlessly declaring the things revealed to them; or they may, under fear of harm, injury or death, hide themselves from the public gaze and may carry on their missions privately so that reasons (hujjah) proving the reality of truth as preached by religion and as demonstrated by His apostles may not totally disappear. How many are they and where they could be found ? I swear by God that they are few in number, but their worth and their ranks before God are very high. Through them the Lord preserves His teachings so that they, while departing, may hand over these truths to persons like themselves. The knowledge which they have acquired has made them see the realities and visualize the truth, and has installed into them the spirit of faith and trust. The duties which were decreed as hard and unseemly by easy living and easy going people are considered easy and bearable by them. They feel happy in the company and association of things which frighten the ignorants and uneducated. They live in this world like everybody else but their souls soar the heights of Heavenly eminence. They are delegates of God on this earth and they invite people towards Him. How I love to meet them O Kumayl ! I have told you all that I have to say, you can go back to your place whenever you like.<sup>3</sup>

No description of a sufi may be better than the one detailed in the above passage. The place to go back to as permitted by the Imam is this world of ours. It is usually believed that 'Ali, as his views are projected in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, was a person angry and disillusioned with this world, but on the contrary, he seems to anticipate the view of the European pantheist philosopher, Leibnitz, who said that ours was the best of all possible worlds, in his following statement that he made when a Muslim accused the

world:

Verily this world is a house of truth for those who look into it deeply and carefully, an abode of peace and rest for those who understand its ways and moods, and it is the best working ground for those who want to procure rewards for the life hereafter. It is a place of acquiring knowledge and wisdom for those who want to acquire them, a place of worship for friends of God and for Angels. It is the place where prophets receive revelations of the Lord. It is the place for virtuous people and saints to do good deed and to be assigned with rewards for the same; only in this world they could trade with God's Favours and Blessings and only while living here they could barter their good deeds, with His Blessings and Rewards. Where else could all this be done.<sup>4</sup>

The above passage sums up the functions and the role of a sufi in this world. Obviously this view is different from what is generally believed to be the role and aim of a sufi.

At this juncture I would like to substantiate my thesis regarding the intimate relationship of the Shi'i belief with regard to the Imamah and the sufi conception of the spiritual leadership with reference to history of Sufism.

## II

Henry Corbin, in *The History of Muslim philosophy*, Mustafa Kamil al-Shaybi, in *Tashayyu wa tasawwuf*, Shah Wali Allah, in *Hama'at* and I.P. Petroshvensky, in *Islam in Iran*, holding the view that sufism is the natural outcome of Qur'anic teachings, maintain that it originated in the practice of early Arab Muslims<sup>5</sup> who were disillusioned with the corruption of the Muslim society due to affluence as a result of continuous flow of wealth in Arabia and its major cities, and occupation of fertile lands by Muslims soon after the death of the Prophet (S). They withdrew themselves from the society that was deviating from the ideals of Islamic justice and simple living, and they concentrated on worship and spiritual

growth. This tendency began during the regime of the Third Caliph and was strengthened after the tragedies of Karbala', Harrah and massacre in the city of the Holy Ka'bah. Hasan al-Basri belongs to the first generation of *Zuhad* or '*Ubad* (devotees) and mutakal-limun. Shah Wali Allah did not discuss these details in Hamat, yet he holds the view that sufism owes its origin to *Zuhad* and '*Ubad* among the Companions and their immediate successors (tabi in and tab' tabi'in). All of them with a few exceptions were Arabs. This fact is sufficient to dispell the commonly believed misconception that sufism is a reaction of Iranian mind against Arabs.<sup>6</sup>

Imam al-Hasan's surrender of the caliphate marked the beginning of total domination of the Umayyads' unjust rule that was contrary to the Islamic ideal of a just socio-political order. After the tragedy of Karbala' the Imams of *Ahl al- Bayt* (Prophet's House) as a principle withdrew from politics and devoted themselves to worhsip and developing religious sciences with a view to save Islam and its spirit. 'Ali ibn al- Husayn's collection of supplications, *Sahifat al-Kamilah*, is one of the most authentic earliest sources of mystic dimension in Islam in the first century of Hijrah calender.<sup>7</sup> After the sermons, letters and stray sayings of Imam 'Ali, which is the richest treasure of Islamic spiritual and mystic literature containing most of the issues that later acquired significance in Muslim thought and provided (solid) foundation for the development of *kalam* (theology) '*irfan* (gnosis) and the principles of socio-political philosophy in Islam, *Shifat al- Kamilah* is the first collection that embodies Muslim gnostic experience. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn's son Muhammad al-Baqir started regular instructions in *tafsir*, (commentary) *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and '*irfan*. His son Ja'far al-Sadiq developed the school of the Baqiri *fiqh* and is said to have trained and educated more than three thousand pupils in various fields of *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh*, *kalam* and '*irfan*.<sup>8</sup> He refused to be drawn into politics after the fall of the Umayyads when the caliphate was offered to him by Abu Muslim Khurasani. Thus, he maintained and continued the tradition of his grand father and shunned the worldly power. All other Imams of the Twelver Shi' 'ah followed this tradition and were known and revered for their piety and religiosity. The Shi'i belief in their infallibility has its origin in the Qur'anic view of the impeccability of prophets, and, as Donaldson holds, has nothing to

do with the Iranian belief in the Divine origin of kings or the Isra'ili tradition.<sup>9</sup> These Imams were accepted as spiritual guides by some of the well known Sufis of their times, such as Harith al-Muhasibi, Ba Yazid Bistami, Hassan al-Basri, Sufyan al-Thuri. Among the ladies of the Ahl al-Bayt some are known as the earliest exponents of the school of 'ishq in sufism. A'ishah, daughter of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq and a contemporary of Rabi'ah al-Basri, Nafisah (2nd/8th century) and Fatimah (d.224 A.H.) are prominent among them.<sup>10</sup> Though the Shi'ah and the 'Alawids usually did not call themselves Sufi, there are some names among the Family of the Prophet (S) that are mentioned in *tadhkirahs* (memoirs) of Sufis, such as 'Abd Allah, grandson of the Zaidiyyah leader, Ibrahim ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan (mentioned by al-Hujwayri in *Kashfal-mahjub*), 'Abu al-Hasan al-'Alawi (d. 292 H.) (mentioned in *Tabaqat al-sufiyyah* by 'Abd Allah al-Ansari), Abu Hamzah al-Khurasani (d. 290 H.) (mentioned in *Tabaqat al-Kubra* by Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-Ansari), Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-'Alawi, in whose house Mansur al-Hallaj stayed while in Kufah (mentioned in *Kashfal-Mahjub* by al-Hujwayri), Hamzah ibn 'Abd Allah al-'Alawi, a disciple of Abu al-Khayr al-Tinati, Hamzah ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah (mentioned in *Sharh Manazil al-sa'irin*), Ibrahim ibn Sa'd al-'Alawi, known as al-Sayyid al-Zahid, Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz used to see him and he narrated traditions from him (*Kashf al-mahjub*), Zayd ibn Rifa'ah, a friend of Shibli and supposedly one of the authors of the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'* (*Tatimmah Sawan al-hikmah* by Bayhaqi and *Ta'rikh Baghdad*), and Muhammad ibn Abu Ismail 'Ali al-'Alawi (d. 395 H.) (*Ta'rikh Baghdad*).<sup>11</sup>

Despite the belief of some sufis like Khwajah 'Abd Allah Ansari, who held that the lineage of 'Ali is incompatible with sufism, and the Shiah's reluctance to call themselves sufi, there has been a close connection between sufism and the Shi'ah and the 'Alawids. Sufis invariably attached themselves and their orders to one of the eleven Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt*. The Shi'ah did not establish any order for centuries, but in the course of time there emerged a number of purely Imamiyyah Shi'i *salasil* of Sufis, some of them are Tayfuriyyah, Bektashiyyah, Safawiyyah, Haydariyya, Ni'matal-lahiyyah, Jalaliyyan, Nurbakhshiyyah, which attracted hundreds of Sunni followers also. On the other hand shi'i 'urafa' (gnostics), who

seldom used the term *sufi* for they usually called themselves '*arif*' and their knowledge of the highest spiritual order '*irfan*', accepted Sufi teachings of al-Ghazzali and Ibn al- 'Arabi'. Murtada Mutahhari, in *An Introduction to 'Irfan*, says:

The '*urafa*' and *sufis* are not regarded as forming separate sect in Islam, nor do they claim themselves to be such. They are to be found within every school and sect, yet, at the same time they coalesce to form a distinct social group. The factors that set them apart from the rest of Islamic society are a distinctive chain of ideas and opinions, a special code governing their social intercourse, dress and even, sometimes, the way they wear their hair and beards, and their living communally in their hospices.

Of course, there are and have been '*urafa*' — particularly amongst the Shi'ah—who bear none of these external signs to distinguish them socially from others; yet, at the same time, they have been profoundly involved in the spiritual methodology of '*irfan* (*sayr wa suluk*).<sup>12</sup>

He makes distinction between ethics and *sayr wa suluk* (journeying), for, in his view, while ethics is static, '*irfan* is dynamic and progressive movement toward attaining and realizing the higher and higher moral values through spiritual elevation. This distinction is made by Mutahhari in his account of the difference between *shari'ah*, *tariqah* and *haqiqah*. It is important to note that Mutahhari traces back the origin of '*irfan* in *hadith*, *tafsir*, *fiqh*, *kalam* and *usul al-fiqh*.<sup>13</sup> This is purely Shi'i point of view, because the Sunnis separate *sufism* from *shari'ah* and do not accept the role of reason and philosophy in the development of *tasawwuf*. Al-Ghazzali, when turned to *sufism*, rejected philosophy altogether. On the contrary, we find some eminent Shi'i philosophers and *fuqaha*' (jurists) that reconciled '*irfan* (gnosis) with philosophy and *kalam*. Though al-Ghazzali is greatly respected among Shi'ah '*urafa*', his rejection of philosophy, particularly that of Ibn Sina, was never accepted by them. The Shi'ah tradition of philosophical mysticism, known after Mulla Sadra as *al-Hikmah* philosophy, developed on the basis of a wonderful synthesis of rational and spiritual tendencies, culminating in the metaphysics of Sabzawari. As mentioned earlier there

has been no gulf between Shi'i irfan and shari'ah, similarly the Shi'ah 'urafa' (gnostics) and 'ulama' were never separated into two distinct groups. Even during the Safawids' period when al-Allamah Baqir al-Majlisi made an all out effort to demolish tasawwuf and 'irfan from Shi'i Iran, among his contemporary 'ulama' some were of sufi inclination, such as Mulla Muhsin Fayd al-Kashani. 'Irfan regained its foothold in Shi'i Iran in the reign of the Qajaris. It is much more surprising that with the return of the Ni'matullahi *pirs* from India to Iran other sufi orders also were revived irrespective of their Shi'ah or Sunni origin. Mutahhari, who separated Sunni and Shi'h *muhaddithun* (narrators of hadith) *fuqaha'* (jurists), *mutakal-limun* (theologians) and *mufasssirin* (commentators) in his series of books, entitled *Ashnai ba 'ulum-e Islami* (An Introduction to Islamic sciences) could not or intentionally did not mention any sufi or 'arif as Shi'i or Sunni. This is in itself an evidence that such sectarian differences disappear in the fold of sufism. Qadi Nur Allah al-Shushtari, known in India and Pakistan as Shahid-e Thalith (third martyr), despite being a staunch Shi'ah, included in his book of the accounts of Shi'ah personages the names of *Bishr* al-Hafi, Ba Yazid Bistami, Shafiq al-Balkhi, Ibrahim ibn Adham, Yahya ibn Mu'adh al-Razi, Abu Sari Mansur ibn Amir, Sari al-Saqati, Junayd al-Baghdadi, Shibli, Muhammad Sawar, Sahl ibn 'Abd Allah al-Tustari, Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, Shaykh Ahmad Jami, Ibn al-Farid, Muhy al-Din ibn al-'Arabi, Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, Najm al-Din Kubra, Sa'd al-Din al-Hamawi, Farid al-Din 'Attar, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Shaykh Sa di Shirazi, Hafiz, Awhad al-Din al-Maraghi, 'Ala' al-Dawlah al-Simnani and many other sufi poets and saints along with certain known Shi'i 'urafa' like Kumayl ibn Ziyad, Bahlul al-'Aqil, Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtul, Sayyid Hayder al-Tuni and Sayyid Hyder al-Amuli.<sup>14</sup> It may be noted that Qadi Nur Allah Shush-tari was executed on the charge of being an extremist (*ghali*) shiah faqih. His extreme view is evident throughout his works, *Majalis al-mu'minin* and *Ahqaq al-haqq*. But in the case of Sufiyyah he sets aside his prejudice against other sects. This is an indication how *tasawwuf* (mysticism) and *'irfan* can provide a converging point to various sects. As for other Muslim sects such as the Zaydiyyah or the Ismailiyyah it may be said that their approach is similar to that of the Twelver Imami Shi'ah in many respects. The Zaydiyyah do not accept the Imamiyyah view of the

Imamate, for they accept the first two Caliphs and do not accept the last eight Imams of the Twelve Imamiyyah. The Ismailiyyah believe in the same concept of the Imamate that is accepted by the twelver Imamiyyah, with a greater emphasis on the esoteric aspect of the *Qur'an*, *hadith* and the Imamate, because of which they are known as the *Batiniyyah*.<sup>15</sup> *Ibn Sina* is said to be of the *Isma'ili inclination*. The *Ikhwan al-safa'* are also believed to be of *Isma'ili inclination*. *Nasir Khusraw*, an *Isma'ili da'i* and a great Persian poet-philosopher, was also of the same sect. The similarity between the Ismailis and the Imamiyyah Shi'ah in their approach to 'irfan is very obvious. Both the sects synthesized reason, which is the source of intellection in *Kalam* (theology) and philosophy, and inner spiritual experience of the totality of human existence. What distinguishes Shi'i 'irfan from common Sufi approach to Allah and human self is its acceptance of the role of reason in existential mystic knowledge. It is true that al-Ghazzali held that intuition (*kashf*) was the higher level of reason (*'aql*) and was organically united with it, but in his mystic experience he seems inclined to reject reason. Another contradiction in al-Ghazzali is his presentation of his mystic experience and rejection of philosophy in rigorously logical form. The Shi'ah, *Kamil Mustafa al-Shaybi* rightly points out, he reached theoretical Sufism starting from *kalam* and passing through the crucible of philosophy. This point needs further elaboration.

Sufi practices were in vogue even in the early part of the third/ninth century among the Shi'ah, as *Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi* has referred to them. He has also referred to the cult and tradition of *futuwwah* (chivalry).<sup>16</sup> *Sayyid al-Murtada* (d. 436 A.H.); in *al-Amali*, *Abu 'Ali al-Tabrisi* (d. 548A.H.) and some other early Shi'i Imamiyyah 'ulama' made sympathetic references to sufism showing that they thought Shi'i faith to be compatible with sufi practices.<sup>17</sup> *Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi* defended *Mansur al-Hallaj's* utterance *Ana al-haqq*. *Khwansari* regards *Khwajah al-Tusi* as a person in whom 'irfan and ratiocination were synthesized.<sup>18</sup> Among other Shi'i 'ulama' who had a predominant 'irfani inclination a few can be mentioned in brief.

*Kamal al-Din Maytham ibn 'Ali ibn Maytham al-Bahrani* (d. 679 A.H.), in *Sharh Nahj al-balaghah*, has interpreted Imam 'Ali's words

in terms of Sufism. It was he who directed the attention of Muslims toward the significance of *Nahj al-Balaghah* with regard to the doctrine of 'irfan. He claims that 'Ali is the leader and master (*wali*) of the Sufiyyah. Despite al-Ghazzali's criticism of the Shi'ah he refers to him as an authority on the issues of 'irfan. He, in his *Sinahr* (commentary) criticizes Ibn Abi al-Hadid for his hostility toward philosophers and Sufis.<sup>19</sup>

Among the Imamuyyah 'ulama' of Hillah the Tawus Family, (al-Tawus) Sharaf al-Din Muhammad Tawus, Majd al-Din Tawus, Radi al-Din Tawus were of mystic disposition, particularly the latter that was famous for his piety (*taqwa*) and *zuhd*. All 'ulama' of this family considered men of supernatural powers and were known to be attached to Sufism.<sup>20</sup>

The most eminent among Shi'i fuqaha' that subscribed to Sufi approach and views was Hasan ibn-Yusuf ibn Mutahhar al-Hilli, popularly called al-'Allamah al-Hilli (648-727 A.H.). He converted Khuda Bandeh to Shi'i faith after overcoming the arguments of Sunni 'ulama and fuqaha', for which Ibn Taymiyyah condemned him. But 'Allamah al-Hilli answered his criticism in a mild way in one of his poems. He was a committed seeker of the path of love. He regarded Imam 'Ali as the source of all Sufi teachings and the leader of all Sufi orders. He was very fond of Ibn al-'Arabi' without being an advocate of *wahdat al-wujud* (Unity of Being).<sup>21</sup> His son, Muhammad, known as Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (682-771 A.H.) was the teacher of the man who ultimately reconciled *tashayyu* and *tasawwuf*. This great and versatile scholar was Shaykh Baha al-Din Hyder ibn 'Ali Ubaydi al-Amuli (d. after 793/ A.H.)<sup>22</sup>

Sayyid Hyder was an 'Alawid and is popularly called Shaykh al-Baha'i. He is the first Imamiyyah scholar, who, in spite of holding the status of *marja' iyyah* in the Shi'i world, associated himself with a Sufi *silsilah* that originates with Ba Yazid Bistami. He has given an account of his sufi lineage in *Nass al-Nusus*, a commentary on Ibn al-'Arabi's *Fusus al-hikam*. Ibn Abi Jamhur al-Ahsa'i calls him "the culminating point of knowledge and possessor of right capacity (*quwwah*) of *kashf* (intuition). His major work in 'irfan is *Jami al-asrar wa manbi al-anwar*, in which he proved that the creed of the Sufis was compatible with the Imamiyyah faith. Writing of this book brought about a radical change in his outlook, as a conse-

quence of which he gave up his prejudice against the Sunnis and embraced the liberal faith of 'urafa'. He called the followers of *wahdat al-wujud* the people of Unity (*arbab al-tawhid*). It is his influence that restrains Shi'i fuqaha' from refuting Ibn al-Arabi's doctrine of *tawhid*. In his view the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* occupy the position of the spiritual leadership of both the Shi'ah and the Sufis. He maintains that the Shi'ah and the Sufis are dependent on each other, but are not fully aware of this fact. In order to prove his point he referred to the (favourable) views of the Shi'ah with regard to the Sufis and the views of Sufis supporting Shi'i stand on various issues. Quoting Maytham al-Bahrani's *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, al-Allamah al-Hilli's *Minhaj al-karamah* and Khwajah Nasir al-Tusi's views reproduced in *Sharh Tajrid* and from among the Sunnis al-Ghazzali's and Ibn Al-'Arabi's works, he posits the view that no one but 'Ali is the possessor of Divine wisdom and Divine truths embracing the entire span of time from pre-eternity to eternity. He calls himself Shi'ah Muhammadi, a term which was recently modified by 'Ali Shari'ati, who claimed that *Tashyyu 'Alawi* and *tasannun Muhammadi* were one and the same thing. With a view to bring the Sunnis closer to the Shi'ah, Shaykh al-Baha'i, following the view of Maythama al-Bahrani, says that *tabarra'* does not mean vilifying the first three Caliphs, but it implies emancipation from one's self and renouncing its worldly attachments. Similarly he reinterpreted the term *taqiyyah* (dissimulation) saying that it meant not to disclose the Divine mysteries to common men. He made a great contribution to Shi'i 'irfani literature by reinterpreting many ideas of 'Ali, particularly his views on *tawhid*<sup>23</sup>

Shaykh al-Bahai's influence paved the way for a unitary faith embracing in its fold both the Sunnis and the Shi'ah of various inclinations. In later periods this tendency was extended by Shi'i 'ulama' with Sufi temperament. As a reaction of Ibn Taymiyyah's vehement accusation of al-Allamah al-Hilli many of his contemporary Sunni fuqaha gravitated toward a liberal Sunni view. For instance Najm al-Din al-Sarsari (d. 716 A.H.) a Shafi'i Asha'ri jurist, declared himself a Shi'ah of 'Ali, and another Sunni qadi, Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Mukarram al-Ansari, was dubbed as a Shi'ah. In this period Shi'ah became a term for those Sunnis who accepted 'Ali's spiritual superiority over other Companions, while

the real Shi'ah were called *Rawafid*.<sup>24</sup> Between the fall of the Ilkhanis and the emergence of Timur and the establishment of his vast empire various political movements arose that were Shi'i, but in the garb of Sufism. Sufism provided these movements a secure ground to struggle for overthrowing alien rule by attracting multitudes of followers. They also created an atmosphere conducive to the spread of Shi'i faith among the Sufis, and at the same time weakened common Shi'ah's resistance to accept Sufi teachings and practices. It was in the reign of the Ilkhanis and the Timuris that Shi'i orders came into existence.<sup>25</sup>

Sufism, apparently an apolitical movement, in reality was an expression of non-cooperation of pious Muslims with tyrant rule of the Umayyads. Metaphysical notions or spiritual tendencies do not rise in a vacuum. Howsoever, removed from mundane realities a theory may appear to be, it is necessarily related to contemporary historic situation and its demands. The Sufis consistently refused to accept favours of the rulers and sided with the masses in their struggle for attaining their just rights accorded to them by Islam. The Abbasid's movement to overthrow the Umayyads also assumed a mystic character. The Isma'ili *da'is*, too, worked among people secretly, organizing secret societies on the basis of esoteric ideas. The socio-political aspect and content of Sufism needs to be discussed in a separate article or rather in a full length book. Here I propose to merely give a very brief account of the Sufi movements that arose as a result of the fusion of Sufi and Shi'i ideas of social justice culminating in revolutionary upheavals in the Muslim world.

The most successful of such Sufi movements issued in the form of the revolt of the Sarbedaran in Khurasan that spread in other adjoining provinces soon. This movement was initiated by Shaykh Khalifeh, a Sufi shaykh of an unknown spiritual lineage. He organized his followers to revolt against Tugha Khan and Miran Shah, successors of Timur, in whose regimes villages were devastated and farmers were forced to pay heavy taxes. The revolt started soon after the crucifixion of Shaykh Khalifeh at the hands of secret mercenaries of the rulers in 736 A.H. His angered followers revolted first in Khurasan in 73 A.H. under the leadership of Shaykh Hasan Juri, the successor of Shaykh Khalifeh, who

claimed to be associated with the Sufi order that attached itself to Imam Jafar al-Sadiq through Ba Yazid Bistami. Then it spread in Samarqand, Khurasan and Mazandaran between the years 738 and 825 A.H. This was a Shi'i-Sufi movement that succeeded in establishing its rule on the basis of Islamic ideals of justice and equalities. But differences plagued this movement and Hasan juri was assassinated in the process. This regime continued for some time, but ultimately it fizzled out. Other similar movements emerged and failed in the course of time because of organizational lapses. Among such movements were the Sufi movements of the Hurufiyyah and the Nuqtawiyyah, leaders of which some were executed by the monarchs. The Safawids whose founder was a Sunni Sufi, Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardebili, were converted to the Shi'ite faith after a few generations, and captured power ultimately. But in order to secure their monarchy they tried to suppress other Sufi movements and *salasil* with a heavy hand. This attitude of the Safawids resulted in staunch opposition to Sufism in Iran and India. Sayyid Dildar 'Ali Ghufran Ma'ab the first Shi'i mujtahid in India during the Shi'i reign of the Awadh state wrote a book condemning the Sufis under the title of *Shihab al-Thaqib* under the influence of the short sighted sectarian rule of the latter Safawids that broadened the gulf between the Sunnis and Shi'ah in the sub-continent. Even today the Shi'ah believe unwittingly that Sufism is incompatible with their creed. This breach was created by the divisive forces that wished to disturb communal harmony among the Muslim Ummah. The only way to meet this challenge from within is to converge on Sufism, which in the long course of Islamic history, has been the only source of strength unity for Muslims.

Sufism sticking to the true spirit of Islamic tolerance for other faiths has been instrumental in the spread of Islamic ideals in the sub-continent and its composite culture has retained its potential till now to unite warring factions and sects of Muslims. This potential may be actualized by giving up narrow sectarian prejudices and adopting the attitude that enabled 'Urfi to pronounce:

A gnostic is spoiled by Islam and Kufr equally; Fire moth does not discriminate between the light of mosque and temple.

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# 10

## SUFISM AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

MIRZA M. KHIZER



### INTRODUCTION

INDIA the land of Avatars (incarnations) and Rishis (Sages), the land of Yogis (Saints) and Sufis, the land of Ahimsa (Non-Violence) and love and the land of milk and honey is now taking an ugly turn of communal hatred, when we are at the threshold of 21st Century. The frenzy of communalism is prevalent in every walk of life, which seems to break the very fabric of society. It has, no doubt, impeded national progress whereas there are many grave internal and external problems before the nation. Therefore, it is a crying need of the day to bury the ghost of communalism and create once again the congenial and harmonious atmosphere in the country.

Till the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century, all Indians irrespective of caste, creed and colour and socio-economic status

were living together in peace. During the medieval age the saints and sufis nurtured the values of humanism but unfortunately now-a-days the dark clouds of communalism threaten to sabotage our glorious heritage. To promote humanitarianism let us have a glance at the services rendered by sufis in promoting harmony among the various sections of the society by their message of love unto mankind. This aspect of the sufi's life could help to promote love and affection for all human beings and extinguish hatred for others. Dr. Sayyed Hossein Nasr manifests the ultimate value of sufism in these words,

"The role of doctrine in the integration of man can hardly be emphasized, especially for modern man, who is over-cerebral, thinking too much and often wrongly. The maze of contradictory assertions, the ambiguities and intellectual snares that characterize modern thought, are the greatest obstacle to the integration of the mind and can only be cured through the purifying effect of sufi metaphysical doctrine which washes away the dross of contingency and multiplicity"<sup>1</sup>

### CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE RISE OF SUFISM

After the martyrdom of Hadrat Ali (660 AD), the fourth caliph, who was cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad, caliphate, the political system which followed the death of the Prophet, was converted into absolute monarchy at the point of sword by Hadrat Mu'awia in 661 AD.,<sup>2</sup> He made Demascus his capital which was the seat of his viceroyalty and laid the foundation of Ummayyad dynasty (661-750 AD)<sup>3</sup> Yazid, the son and successor of Amir Mu'awia, openly violated the tenets of Islam. Hadrat Husain, the son of Ali, raised his voice against Yazid and the most grievous and tragic incident of Islamic history took place at Karbala on 10th October 681, in which Husain, his sons, nephews and friends were killed in coldblood by the instigation of Ibn-i- Ziyad, the Governor of Kufa.<sup>4</sup> In 682 A.D. the forces of yazid attacked and plundered the holy towns of Mecca and Medina in which hundreds of innocent people were killed.<sup>5</sup> During the viceroyalty of Hajjaj Bin Yusuf, thousands of people were persecuted, imprisoned and put to death. Even the theologians, jurists and pious people were not

spared.<sup>6</sup>

Mecca and the holy Kaba were attacked by stone missiles during the Haj by the order of caliph Marwan bin Abdul Malik<sup>7</sup>. Abdullah bin Zubair and Ma'sib bin Zubair, the eminent jurists were executed.<sup>8</sup> During the reign of Abbasid (750 - 1258 AD) also many ulma and scholars were oppressed and finally killed. Imam Abu Hanifa, the great jurist was imprisoned, who after four years in prison, died. Imam Ahmed Hambal and Imam Malik were whipped publicly and then imprisoned<sup>9</sup>. Kufa and Basra were the main targets of barbarity and tyranny since 661 AD. That is why sufism originated in these two towns. In the darkness of tyrannical rule, God fearing and pious people started a holy mission to impart religious education to develop moral and humanitarian values. The efforts of these God-fearing people in this direction created new dimensions in the hearts of common masses. They exemplified a high character and purity of action. The seat of these people became known as '*Khanqah*' i.e. monastery and they were called 'Sufis', because some of them used to wear woollen robes. The sufis were called 'Murshids or Mashaekh by their followers and their disciples popularly came to be known as 'Murids'. In course of time the Madarsas (Schools) of sufis were named after their names the Suharwardi Silsila after the name of Shaikh Shihabuddin Suharwardi, the Chishtiya Silsila, after the name of Khwaja Is'haq and so on. Thus, were existed Silsilas (sufi-orders). Sufism from its origin till to-day had remained a controversial subject in the Islamic world.

It was believed by sufis that sufism had its beginning in the Prophet himself and that all sufi orders trace their line of succession from him. "He is said to have been the recepient of a two-fold revelation, the one embodied in the contents of the Quran, the other within his heart. The former was meant for all and is binding on all, the latter was to be transmitted to the chosen few through these lines of succession. Hence it is that (Prophet) Mohammad's knowledge is described as being *Ilm-i-Sahifa* knowledge of the book and *Ilm-i-Sina*, knowledge of the heart. The former is corporated in the doctrinal teachings of the 'Ulma (Jurists), the latter is strictly esoteric, the mystical teachings of the sufis"<sup>10</sup>.

Islamic mysticism can not be separated from Islam. Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi opines that for Tasawwuf, the words *suluk* and *ahsan* are in the Holy Quran and Hadith respectively depicting the same sense.<sup>11</sup>

According to Imam Qushayri, the word "Sufi" came into vogue a little before the expiry of the second century Hijri (or 822 AD)<sup>12</sup>. After the death of the Holy prophet, those who had met him were called his companions. They needed no better title, for "companionship" was unanimously regarded to be the highest and the best. Those who associated with the "companion" were called in their own times Tabe'iyin (followers). And "The followers of the followers was the title conferred upon those who sat at the feet of the followers"<sup>13</sup>. After the expiry of this period there was a slackening of religious spirit. Hearts were turning more towards the pleasure of the world than towards God. A number of systems and orders cropped up. Each order was divided into a number of branches. Seeing this state of affairs those who adored God above all things and were wholly consumed by the fire of His love, separated from the rest of the world and devoted themselves to the recollection and remembrance of God the only object of their love. These men were later called the "Sufis".<sup>14</sup>

During the early phase, the doctrines of sufism were not well formulated. Dhun-Nun Misry, the eminent sufi, was the first to put the Islamic mystic doctrine in words and Junaid of Baghdad systematized them. Abu Bakr Shibli was the first to preach from the pulpit of the mosque. He brought them out from the innermost recesses of heart. The suifs of early phase were orthodox Muslims<sup>15</sup>. According to Jami Abu Hashim of Kufa (d-778) was the first who came to be called "Suffi".<sup>16</sup> The eminent sufis of the early period were Hasan Basri (642-728 AD), Rabia Basri (d-752) Malik bin Dinar (d-744) Abu Hashim, Sufyan (d-777), Ibrahim bin Adham (d-783) Fudadyl bin Ayaz (d-801). By Hasan Basri's time the wearing of wool (suf) had become fashionable among Muslim ascetics. Significant changes came in the second phase of sufism. Probably it began towards the close of the 8th century, when the Ummayyad dynasty was replaced by the Abbasid dynasty in 750 AD. The Abbasid made Baghdad their capital and a new era of learning and socio-religious life began. The Ummayyad and then

Abbasid caliphs expanded the limits of their empire from Indus-river in the east to Spain in the west. The Abbasid caliphs Ma'mun and Haroon Al Rasheed encouraged the study of Greek and Vedantic thought. The philosophical works of great Greek thinkers like Plato, Aristotle and Porphyry were translated. And along with it the philosophy of Vedanta, Zoroastarianism, and Buddhism were studied which greatly influenced sufism<sup>17</sup> and a new phase of it began. The prominent sufis of this age were Ma'ruf Karkhi (815), Abu Sulaiman-ud-Darani, Dhun-Nun Misri, Bayazid Bastami, Mansoor bin Hallaj, Abu Hamid Mohammad-ul Gazzali, Junaid Baghdadi, Mohammad Samak, Yahya bin Ma'az, Imam Qushyari etc. During this second phase Imam Gazzali and Abdul Qadir Jilani played a very significant role in the Islamic world by their preaching and literary works. The writings of Abdul Qadir Jilani present him as a sober preacher who avoid sufi terminology and expressed himself in simple, but coherent language. He strongly condemned the materialistic life of his contemporaries, urging them to develop a balanced personality by adhering to both their material and spiritual well being.<sup>18</sup>

### IDEOLOGY OF HUMANISM AND UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD OF SUFIS

All religions try to discipline the human behaviour and create harmonious atmosphere in the society in which man could live in peace. But man by nature is a queer combination of contradictions. The religious codes and sufi teachings about Hell and Heaven therefore serve as a powerful deterrent to keep mankind within bounds, organised and disciplined.<sup>19</sup> "Hence", in the opinion of Iqbal Ali Shah,

"in accordance with the teachings of Al-Quran, Islamic Sufism is the name of every religion, creed or faith, which has been preached from time to time in different countries and various tribes by teachers inspired by God."<sup>20</sup>

It is the significant characteristic of sufis that they had absorbed the teachings of the Quran and Prophet Mohammad and they brought it in line with their day to day life. That is why they believed in universal brother-hood and never made any invidious distinction

between the people of different races, communities and creeds because the concept of God, people and existence of the universe in the Quran is very clear and lucid which enlightened and influenced the sufis and they put it into practice. The very first verse of the Quran sums up the concept of Almighty God, the creator of all by the words "Rabbal-Alameen" the Lord of the worlds. He sustains not only the people of this or that religion, people of this or that country but all irrespective of creed, race or colour. He is the Lord of all ages and all places, the fountain head of all grace, the source of all power, physical and spiritual, the nourisher of all that is created and the supporter of all that exists. The grace of God encompasses the whole world and encircles all people of all ages<sup>21</sup>. There are a number of verses in the Quran which imply that the universe has been created by Him and He is the Lord of all. About mankind Allah Says,

"O Men, we have created you all of a male and female and then made your tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most careful of his duties."<sup>22</sup>

God sent his messengers in every nation and in every community and each Muslim must believe in it. The verse No. 24 and sura (Chapter) No. XXXV, gives this notion, "there was no nation but had had its guide (Prophet)" and "A Divine messenger was sent to every class of men"<sup>23</sup>. Human beings therefore, cannot be partitioned into different castes, and colours or made superior and inferior on the basis of socio-economic status as God says:

"Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you".<sup>24</sup>

The sufis gave great importance to the Hadith i.e. tradition and sayings of the Prophet. The Prophet stresses brotherhood of entire humanity in the Hadith,

No one of you is a believer in God until he loves his brother the way he loves himself."<sup>25</sup>

**Moderation in expenses is half livelihood, and the love of men is half wisdom and good questioning is half**

## SUFISM AND INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

knowledge! Verily, modesty and faith are related to each other. When one of them is taken away, the other also is taken away.<sup>26</sup>

The aim of a sufi's life always is to love God and to seek His favour and pleasure, which is not possible unless he renders his services to mankind. Many sufis have expressed their views about the object of sufism.

Shaykh-ul-Islam Zakariya Ansari beautifully expresses the aim of sufis in these words:

"Sufism teaches how to purify one's self, improve one's morals, and build up one's inner and outer life in order to attain perpetual bliss. Its object matter is the purification of the soul and its end is the attainment of eternal felicity and blessedness".<sup>27</sup>

The sufis cut themselves off from the carnal pleasure and devoted themselves for the fulfilment of God's will. Abul- Hasan Nuri has defined sufism as "the renunciation of all selfish pleasures"<sup>28</sup>.

About the attributes of a sufi, Amar bin Usman Makki says

"A sufi is alive to the value of time and gives every moment to what that moment demands".

Abu-Bakr Shibli, the eminent sufi expresses his opinion in such a way,

"A sufi is severed from the world and connected with God alone."<sup>29</sup>

A sufi had no desire for mundane pleasures but his ambition was to attain the highest rank, the noblest station and the most exalted stage in the eyes of God. Dhun-Nun Misry, the eminent sufi thinks,

"Sufis are those who preferred God Almighty to all things and liked Him, God Almighty too, then, preferred them to all things liked them"<sup>30</sup>

A sufi is one whose speech accords with his behaviour and

whose silence indicates his state, and who discards worldly connections<sup>31</sup>

Mohiuddin Ibn-i-Arbi, the distinguished scholar sufi defined the aim of a sufi,

"to make man whole again as he was in the Edenic state. In other words the goal of sufism is the integration of man in all depth and breadth of his existence, in all the amplitude which is included in the nature of the universal man".<sup>32</sup>

The fundamental ideology of sufis is God, man and the relation between them which is love. The sufis helped in developing a more humanitarian approach in religious life with their stress on service to mankind and their belief that love of God was not possible without love of mankind.

### SUFISM IN INDIA AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The Muslim mystics arrived in India alongwith the caravans that came through the Khyber pass and with the merchantships that brought Arab traders to South-eastern and South-western coastal towns of India.

The sufis, unlike the 'ulama, did not keep themselves aloof from Indian mainstream. They adopted local idiom and preached message of love and universal brotherhood. K. Ahmed Nizami says, "mysticism is nothing but service of humanity".<sup>33</sup> The sufis believed in equality and fraternity of mankind. They abjured narrowness of mind and opposed caste and communal barriers, which cause conflict and destroy social harmony. Sufis also adopted local customs and traditions and indigenised Islam thus drawing Indian masses nearer to Islam. Thus, they played much greater role in spreading universal values of Islam than the doctrinaire 'ulama.

Indian sufis began to spread Islam and its universal values much before Muslim invasions and conquests. Sufi Islam was definitely more influential than the Islam of the ambitious conquerors. The sufis deeply influenced local Hindus and thus resulted in the rise of some new Hindu sects. Dr. Titus mentions no less than eleven of these by name and gives in addition a brief description of several others, such as the Pirzadas, the Chhajju Panthis,

the Husayni Brahmins and the Shamis, in which a "definite mixture of Hindu and Muslim notions and practices prevail"<sup>34</sup>. It is said that Baba Ratan, a Hindu, visited Mecca twice, met Prophet Mohamad and embraced Islam and then returned to India. A Hindu prince of Lahore accepted Islam. He was named 'Abdullah' and became popular as "Baba Khaki" He died in 719-720 A.D. and was buried in the cemetery of Pakdaman. The first sufi-saint who came in North-Western India, in the beginning of eleventh century A.D. was Sayyad Salar Mas'ud Gazi Miya known as *Bale Miyan*. He died in 1033 A.D. at Bahraich in U.P. A large number of Hindus participate in his Urs with great reverence.<sup>35</sup> Another sufi to settle in north-western India was Shaikh Safiuddin Kazimni who founded his Khanqah at Uch. He was the first sufi, who started preaching mysticism systematically in North India. But first outstanding sufi who acquired great popularity among common people and who was revered like a deity, was Abul Hasan Ali bin Sayyad Usman Jullabi known as Ali Hujwari. During the reign of Nasir-ud-din Masood Gaznavi (1030-1040 A.D.) he entered India in 1035 and settled in Lahore. Ali Hujwari visited many villages and towns and gave the message of equality and humanism. His Khanqah was visited even by the Yogis and free discussions used to take place on different topics between Ali Hujwari and the Yogis. On account of his munificence, Hujwari was called Data Ganj Baksh, Distributor of (unlimited) Treasures<sup>36</sup>. It is said that Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chishti of Ajmer prayed and meditated at the tomb of this pioneer sufi-teacher. He addressed him in one of his verses as "ganj bakhsh" who, through his rich spiritual treasures, makes his devotees and disciples perfect spiritual guides. Since that time Ali Hujwari became famous as "Data Bakhsh" or Data Ganj Bakhsh".<sup>37</sup> He was an exalted writer of both poetry and prose. Out of his eight mystic works *Kashf-ul- Mahjub* became very famous throughout the mystic world and was considered a guide for the sufis. He passed away in 1077 A.D.

The outstanding sufis who played a revolutionary role in the social, cultural and religious life of India were Khwaja- Muin-ud-Chishti, Baba Farid, Hadrat Nizam-ud-din Auliya and Amir Khusrao. -

At the close of twelfth century, Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chisti

entered India, stayed for some time in Lahore at the tomb of Ali-Huweri Data Ganj Bakhsh as pointed out above and then he went to Delhi and about 1190, he went to Ajmer, the capital of Prithviraj Chauhan. He lived there till his death (6 Rajab 633/ 16 March 1236)<sup>38</sup>. His tomb is considered as the most celebrated of all shrines in India. On the occasion of his "Urs", his death anniversary, people of different castes and creeds come there from every part of this sub-continent and even abroad. It has become a symbol of our unity and integrity. Due to the efforts of Muin-ud-din Chishti the Chishtiya order spread far and wide in India. His sayings, as recorded by his disciples give the quintessence of his religious and social ideology and reveal him as a man of wide sympathies, catholic views and deep humanism. The entire structure of his thought stood on the bedrock of love of humanity and removal of suffering and distress. He upheld the doctrine of Wahdat al-Wujud and this pantheistic approach brought him very close to the treasure of ancient Hindu religious thought, particularly the Upanishads, and created an atmosphere favourable for the exchange of ideas at a higher level.

For him the highest form of devotion to God was 'to redress the misery of those in distress, to fulfil the needs of the helpless and to feed the hungry.

He describes the attributes which endear a man to God in these words-

"First, river — like generosity, secondly sun-like affection, and thirdly, earth like hospitality".<sup>39</sup>

His mystic morality struck at the very root of parochialism, casteism and religious exclusiveness.<sup>40</sup>

He was of the opinion that if a mystic cut himself off the responsibility of social service, he failed to fulfil the mystic mission. When he was asked about the highest form of devotion, he replied that it was nothing but helping the poor, the distressed and down-trodden.<sup>41</sup>

Shaikh Qutb-ud-din Bakhtiyar Kaki and Shaikh Hamid-ud-din were two eminent disciples of Khwaja Muin-ud-din who popularized Chishti order and propagated his teachings in northern India.

Shaikh Hamid-ud-din worked in rural area at Suwal, a small village in Nagaur in Rajasthan. Unlike most of the sufis, Hamid-ud-din procured his livelihood by cultivating land. He had only one bighah land. In India he introduced the principle of the rotation of crops. He cultivated half of his land in one season and the other half in the next.<sup>42</sup> He lived and dressed like a common Indian peasant. He used two sheets of cloth to cover the upper and the lower parts of his body. He was a strict vegetarian<sup>43</sup> and his dislike for meat eating was so great that he warned his disciples against distributing meat preparations for blessing his soul after his death.<sup>44</sup> He had become popular by his politeness and human sympathies among the common folk. His catholicity of views is best illustrated by the fact that he could discern and appreciate spiritual virtues in non-Muslims also.<sup>45</sup> He always spoke in Hindavi language and composed verses and songs in Hindavi.

While performing socio-religious duties, the sufis used to advise and instruct the kings also for doing justice to their subjects. Once Shaikh Qutb-ud-din Bakhtiyar Kaki advised Sultan Iltutmish.

'O ruler of Delhi, it is incumbent on thee to be good to all poor people, mendicants, derveshes and helpless folk. Treat all men kindly and strive for their welfare. Every one who thus behaves towards his subjects is looked after by the Almighty and all his enemies turn into friends.'<sup>46</sup>

The two celebrated disciples of Qutb-ud-din Bakhtiyar Kaki were Badrud-din Gazani and Shaikh Farid-ud-din Ganj-e-Shakar;<sup>47</sup> who were bestowed upon Khalifat by Qutb-ud-din. Shaikh Farid-ud-din Ganj-e-Shakar gave to the Chishtiya the momentum of an organised spiritual movement and made it very popular. He also founded a Khanqah at Ajodhan which had become the centre of his mystic activities and its door was open till midnight to all the needy people without any distinction of caste or creed. Even Yogis used to visit his Khanqah and discuss various religious and mystic matters. Shaikh Farid-ud-din was the first Indian sufi who had cordial relations with the Hindu thinkers.<sup>48</sup> Nasir, the scholar, gave up his studies and became the disciple of Baba Farid. His head was shaved. He felt it so odd without his hair that one day he was seen asking a Yogi about some medicine for

growing hair.<sup>49</sup>

Baba Farid was a great theologian, a profound scholar and a distinguished poet. As a great theologian he did not seek religious knowledge to impress ulema but to practice it in his day to day life. He used to say,

"the aim of acquiring knowledge of the religious law is to act upon it and not to harass people."<sup>50</sup>

As a poet he left everlasting effects on the minds of people and it was his great achievement. Baba Farid's poetry was a means of creating congenial moral atmosphere and purge society of evils. He wrote excellent poetry in Arabic, Persian, Punjabi and local Hindavi dialect. But his Punjabi and Hindavi poetry became immortal and even today his verses are being sung in Punjab, Haryana and in other parts of our country. Baba Farid's shloks and shabads won the hearts of Punjabi people. His shloks and shabads have been incorporated in the "Holy guru granth saheb", by the fifth guru Arjun Singhji.<sup>51</sup> It is interesting to note that the poetry of Sikh and Hindu saints and sufis was full of humanism and through it Hindus and Muslims came nearer to each other. Guru Arjun himself has at several places put riders on the verses of Shaikh Farid.<sup>52</sup> Shaikh Farid was the first poet in Punjabi literary tradition to herald an essentially humanistic poetry. There are several aspects of his literary creations but none more significant than his deliberate choice of the language of the soil and exploitation of its rich repository of folk motifs to propagate his vision and message. By adopting a language that was neither the court language nor the language of the church and elitist culture of those times, Shaikh Farid virtually ushered in renaissance in medieval Punjab'.<sup>53</sup> Baba Farid also exhibits a keen awareness of social injustices inherent in the socio-political situation of his times.<sup>54</sup> Ganda Singh opines,

"His message of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man delivered to the people in their own language went right home into their hearts and attracted them to his presence and views."<sup>55</sup>

Baba Farid used to say,

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"do not use a harsh word for any one, for the True Lord abides in all and break not the heart of anyone as they are priceless gems" and

"Humility and sweetness are the essence of all human virtues."<sup>56</sup>

Once he told a visitor,

"Do not give me a knife, give me a needle. The knife is an instrument for cutting and the needle for sewing together."<sup>57</sup>

Having given the message of universal brotherhood Baba Farid passed away in 1265. And then Nizam-ud-din Auliya appeared on the horizon of Islamic mysticism and Indian society as a guiding star. He was the most outstanding khalifa of Baba Farid.<sup>58</sup> He holds a unique position among the sufis of medieval India. His age had become the age of sufism, an age of literature and learning. It was under him that the Chishti order reached its zenith of popularity. He passed through very difficult conditions in his early life. He was born in 636/1238 in Badaun. His original name was Muhammad and his father called him Ahmed.<sup>59</sup> His mother, though a destitute, made all necessary arrangements for his education. His first instructor was Shadi Muqri, an expert in reciting the Quran.<sup>60</sup> Nizam-ud-din Auliya studied fiqh i.e. Islamic jurisprudence under noted Ulema Maulana Alauddin Wsuli, Maulana Kamal-ud-din Zahid and Khwaja Shams-ud-din Kharzani.<sup>61</sup> He completed his education around 1253 A.D. and met Baba Farid for spiritual guidance at Ajodhan in 1257. He was warmly received by Baba Farid. In June 1265, Baba Farid bestowed Khalifat (successorship) upon him. He lived in Delhi till his last breath. He was the pivotal figure in socio-religious sphere of Delhi. Zia-ud-din Barani, the contemporary historian writes,

"Shaikh Nizam-ud-din had opened wide the doors of his discipleship and admitted nobles and plebeians, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, citizens and villagers, soldiers and warriors, free-men and slaves. The impact of the company of the Shaikh was that these people refrained

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from many improper things and evil practices, and all talk of sinful acts had disappeared from among the people".<sup>62</sup>

The general public showed an inclination to religion and prayer, men and women, young and old, shopkeepers and servants, children and slaves all came to perform their prayers. It was the influence of the Shaikh that, the hearts of people having become virtuous by good deeds, the very name of wine, gambling and other forbidden things never came to any one's lips. Sins and abominable vices appeared to people as bad as infidelity.<sup>63</sup> The people refrained from hoarding things (*Ihtikar*), while the shopkeepers gave up speaking lies, using false weights and deceiving the ignorant'<sup>64</sup> He could not bear the misery of people. He used to say,

"No one in the world is as sad and unhappy as I am. Large number of people come to me and tell me of their misery and troubles. All this afflicts my heart and soul".<sup>65</sup>

Once, one of his disciple persisted the Shaikh to eat some more food. Nizam-ud-din Auliya with tears in eyes said that so many starving people slept in the corners of mosques and in the streets that these thoughts made it difficult me to swallow the food.<sup>66</sup> His *langer* (kitchen) was open to Muslims and Hindus alike.<sup>67</sup> The Khanqah of Nizam-ud-din Auliya was not visited by the Muslims only but by the Hindus alike and even Yogis also used to visit Nizam-ud-din Auliya to discuss various aspects of mysticism. Amir Hassan Sajzi, the favourite disciple of the Shaikh recorded such a meeting of a Yogi with Nizamuddin in his book '*Fawad-ul-Fuwad* in the discourse of Wednesday, 23 Muharram 712/31 May 1312.

The sympathetic nature and attitude of the sufis attracted the people. Their Khanqahs had become the centres where mental and physical ailments could be cured. There was always rush of visitors in the Khanqah of Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya. Once he said,

"come to me one by one, so that I may attend to your problems individually."<sup>68</sup>

The sufis considered social service as supreme object of all their spiritual exercises. And while performing social services they

never distinguished between Hindus, Muslims and others. Nizam-ud-din Auliya gave very much importance to the service of humanity. One day in his Majlis (Meeting) Nizam-ud-din said,

"Devotion to God is of two kinds, *Lazmi* (obligatory) and *Mutaaddi* (Communicable). The *lazmi* devotion includes prayers, fasting, Zakat (i.e. Charity), Haj' (pilgrimage) etc., while *Muta'addi* devotion is that which brings advantage and comfort to others, and it is performed by spending money on others, showing affection to people and by other means through which a man strives to help his fellow human beings. The reward of it is endless and limitless."<sup>69</sup>

This discourse of Nizam-ud-din Auliya recorded in *Fawaid-ul-Fuwad*, *Fadl-ul-Fuwad*, *Raht-ul-Fuwad* and *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, reflects his love for mankind. The love of humanity was one with the ethical ideals which Shaikh inculcated in the minds of his disciples. In a military campaign while Amir Hasan Sijzi the disciple of Nizam-ud-din Auliya, was at Deogiri, his servant bought a slave girl for five tankas, while they were to leave Deogiri for Delhi, the poor parents begged to re-buy their daughter for twice the amount the servant had originally paid. Amir Hasan himself paid the sum and returned the girl to her parents. The girl was a Hindu who had been possibly converted to Islam. When Nizam-ud-din Auliya came to know about it, he appreciated this action of Amir Hasan<sup>70</sup>. It is one of the examples of the teachings, and influence of sufis which helped to promote values of humanism. The teachings of Nizam-ud-din Auliya was based on the principles of humanism which was a part of his religion. He said,

"If a man places thorns (in your way) and you do the same, it will be thorns everywhere."<sup>71</sup>

A man should strenuously strive to develop the faculties of patience and endurance. Those who get excited at the slightest provocation debase their spiritual powers. Anger should not be suppressed; it should be eliminated by forgiving the person who has committed a wrong. If there is a strife between two persons, -say, between me and some other person, its solution is this: I should, on my part,

cleanse my heart of all ideas of revenge. If I succeed in that, the enemy's desire to do some harm to me would also be lessened."<sup>72</sup>

To the Shaikh, Islam was not an empty round of prayers and rituals but a highly ethical code and he displayed it by his behaviour with the people of different walks of life. On one occasion when the Shaikh was ambling with Amir Khusrao on the roof of the Jamat Khan from where he saw a group of Hindus at worship on the bank of Yamuna. He was very much impressed by their devotion. He remarked to Khusrao: Every community has its own path and faith, and its own way of worship.<sup>73</sup>

To him, the main purpose of man's creation was the love of the Supreme Beings and to love humanity is to love God. He says,

"O Muslim ! I swear by God that He holds dear those who love for the sake of human beings and also for the sake of God."<sup>74</sup>

These words bear eloquent testimony to the Shaikh's deep attachment to the idea of universal love and fraternity. He did not hold men superior to women by virtue of their sex. Pious woman is far superior to a man who is not pious<sup>75</sup> (Fawaid-ul- Fuwad). Zia-ud-din Barani seems to have given us a fairly accurate idea of the tremendous impact of Nizam-ud-din Auliya's noble presence on the character of the people and morale of the society. This was indeed a significant achievement of Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya who tried in his own way to make the world a better place to live in. He loved children and those who came to him were treated with care and affection.<sup>76</sup> Nizam-ud-din Auliya rendered his socio-religious services to all irrespective of caste and creed and propagated his message of humanity for about fifty years and passed away on 18th of *Rabi-ul-Awwal* seven hundred twenty five Hijra' (1324 AD).<sup>77</sup>

Hundreds of Khalifas and disciples (*Murids*) got the Islamic mystic knowledge and training in the Khanqah of Nizam-ud- din Auliya who propagated his message and teachings of humanism in different parts of the country. During his fifty years of mystic life, Nizam-ud-din sent seven hundred khalifas to the different parts of the country. Most noteworthy were Shaikh Nasir-ud-din Chirag of

Delhi, Khwaja Burhan-ud-din Garib who settled in the Deccan at Daulatabad, Maulana Shamsud-din Yahya, Shaikh Hisam-ud-din, Maulana Alaud-din Nili, Maulana Fakhr-du-din Zarradi, etc., but Amir Khusrao and Amir Hasan Sajzi were very favourite disciples of Nizam-ud-din Auliya. In the praise of Amir Khusrao, Nizam-ud-din Auliya composed this quatrain:

There are few comparable to Khusrao in poetry and prose;

Khusrao the monarch of this Kingdom. He is our Khusrao,  
not Nasir-i-Khusrao; May God help my Khusrao."<sup>78</sup>

Amir Khusrao occupies a prominent position among the spiritual benefactors of mankind by his love towards the common people, Hindustan and its flowers and plants, rivers and mountains, birds and animals, civilisation and culture, and languages and rituals. He expressed his sentiments through Perso — Hindi verses. He can be called the most powerful exponent of communal harmony and integration. He says,

"Though Hindu is not our fellow religionist, yet he is at peace with himself as we are with ourselves."<sup>79</sup>

"O, who sneers at the idolatory of the Hindu, learn also from him, how to be devoted."<sup>80</sup>

Love of ones country is part of the Prophet's religion.<sup>81</sup> This refers to the holy Prophet's tradition that love of ones country is integral part of faith.<sup>82</sup>

Against the Tartar invasion Hindus and Muslims came together and repulsed the Tartar forces. On this unity of people of both the communities, Khusrao expresses his happiness in his couplet of *Qiran-us-Saadain*:

The duality of Turks and Hindus vanished and Hindustan and Khurasan became one."<sup>83</sup>

Amir Khusrao was proud of India and Hindi language. He expressed his sentiments for India and Hindi language saying, "As I am the parrot of India, ask me in Hindvi so

that I may talk sweetly'.<sup>84</sup> In one couplet he says, "I am an Indian Turk and can reply you in Hindi. I have no Egyptian sugar to talk of Arabia and Arabic."<sup>85</sup>

Khusrao was in true sense a religious man, he was humanist, to the core. He was therefore held in high esteem by all irrespective of religion. He played a very significant role in promoting communal harmony through his poetry and other writings.

After the death of Hazrat Nizam-ud-din Auliya, his Khalifas and Muridis continued the mission of preaching sufi-ideology and rendering their services to mankind in different parts of the country. The sufis of Naqshbandiya, Suharvardiya, Qadria etc., were propagating mystic teachings and were working for moral and spiritual uplift of the people. They tried to root out social vices. They created a congenial atmosphere for cultural harmonious relations between the people of different communities.

The sufi-saints instituted their mission in the Deccan and South India long before coming of Turko-Afghan war-lords there. The main centres of the sufis were Deogiri-Daulatabad, Bijapur, Gulburga, Golkonda, Penukonda and Trichnopalli.<sup>86</sup> Khalique Ahmed Nizami Says, "The story of the development of Muslim mystic ideology and institutions in the Deccan, forms a glorious chapter of the history of movement for the the unity of religious in medieval India. Long before the Khalji armies marched into the Deccan, Sufi saints had settled in various parts of the south and their pious ways and concern for the welfare of people earned them popularity in the Deccan society."<sup>87</sup>

It is said that in the first century of Hijra three companions of the prophet came to south India, settled and died there. The first was Hazrat Tameem Ansari who settled at Mailapur in Pondicheri. The second was Hazrat Shaikh Sharief Bin Malik who came in Malabar and converted Raja Kangtu to Islam and the third Sahabi whose name is not known lived and died at Ratnagiri. Sayeed Nather Shah, was probably the first sufi who propagated Islam at Trichnapalli and died there in 1039 A.D. His disciple Baba Fakhruddin continued his mission in Tamilnadu.<sup>88</sup>

The early sufis, who were working at different places in the Deccan were Haji Rumi (1160) the Murid of Shaikh Usman-i-Haruni

and the companion of Khwaja Muin-ud-din Ajmeri, was stationed at Bijapur, Karnataka. There were many offices like Mirarn Sayyed Husaini (1188 A.D.), Syed Shah Momin Arif (1200 A.D.), Shaikh Shahid (1272 A.D.), Syed Ali Shahid (1305 A.D) and others.<sup>89</sup>

During the 13th century A.D. Deogiri (Daulatabad) became an important sufi centre. Momin Arif (1200 A.D.) and Jalud-din Gani-i-Ravan (d 26th Ziqada of 644 Hijra) were the earliest sufis who settled at Deogiri, Maharashtra.<sup>90</sup> After them in the first quarter of 14th century came Khwaja Muntajib-ud-din, Zar-Zari, Zar Bakhsh (1276-1303 A.D.) Burhan-ud-din, Gharib, Amir Hasan Dahlavi, Sayed Zainuddin Shirazi and hundres of others. Khwaja Burhan-ud-din Garib, Amir Hasan Zain-ud-din Shirazi and Kashani brothers were scholar saints. Amir Hasan Sijzi is well known for his compilation of (1) *Fwad-ul-Fawaid*, the discourses of Hazrat Nizam-ud-din Auliya and (2) Poetic works, Diwan. He was buried in Khuldabad<sup>91</sup>, Rukn-ud-din Kashani wrote *Shamael-ul- Atqia*, *Nafais-ul-Anfas*, *Rumuz-ul-Waleheen* and *Azkar-ul-Mazkur*.<sup>92</sup> Among these books, *Shamael-ul-Atqia* which was written between 1328 and 1332 A.D. at Deogiri, occupied a conspicuous place in the mystic world. It was published in 1933 and was translated into Dakhani in 1667 A.D. by Mir Yaqub.<sup>93</sup> It is not only a book on mysticism but it is an ethical code of life also. Shaikh Hammad Kashani wrote (1) *Ahsan-ul-Aqwal*, (2) *Munaf-ul-Muslimeen* (3) *Risala-i-Husul-ul-wasl and Israri-Tariqat*. Shaikh Ruknuddin's third brother Shaikh Majad-ud-din composed (1) *Gharaib-ul-Karamat* (2) *Baqiyat-ul-Gharaib* (3) *Diwan A'in-ul-Hayat*<sup>94</sup> Zain-ud-din Dawood Shirazi was a great theologian but due to the influence of Burhanuddin garib, he bacame his disciple and Khalipha. Meer Hasan, who was the disciple of Zainuddin wrote a book on his teachings and life of Burhan-ud-din Garib known as '*Hidayat-ul- Qulub*'<sup>95</sup> Among all mystic literature of Daulatabad *Shamael-ul-Atqiya* is a celebrated work. In 21st chapter of second part and 1st to 3rd chapters of third part of *Shamael-ul-Atqiya*, the philosophy of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* (Unity of Being) has been discussed. Many Indian sufis propounded this mystic philosophy which was for the first time put forth by the eminent sufi Ibn-i-Arabi. In the vedas and upnishadas the same philosophy was discussed.

Asghar Ali Engineer, the eminent Scholar, writes in his book

*Islam and Muslims, a critical Reassessment.*

"when Islam spread in India, it did so through latitudinarian and assimilative practices of sufi-saints rather than rigid and exclusivistic practices of Ulema or the jurists. *Wahdat-ul-Wajud* of Ibn-i-Arabi which inspired these sufi-saints was assimilative rather than rejectionist. Thus, many of the vedantic traditions representing different vision of life, tended to become part of Indian Islam."<sup>96</sup>

It was the reason that the sufis found india a fertile land for growth and development of sufism. Sufism became very popular in India. Syed Sulaiman Nadvi also asserts that the sufis were inspired by vedanta and sufism is a form of vedantic philosophy.<sup>97</sup>

Burhan-ud-din Garib sent his disciples to different places to propagate the chishtia principles.

In the socio-religious and political life of the Deccan Burhan-ud-din Garib, Syed Zain-ud-din Dawud, Shaikh Ain-ud-din Bijapuri, and Shaikh Siraj-ud-din Junaidi played a significant role. Under their instruction, Bahmani rulers, Ala-ud-din Hasan Bahman, and Mohammad Shah-I and Malik Raja Farooqi of Khandesh brought changes in their civil administration, wine shops were closed and all evil practices were exterminated.<sup>98</sup>

After the death of Syed Zain-ud-din Dawad Gulbarga and Bijapur became great centres of mysticism which dominated society and politics. One of the most celebrated figures in the early history of sufism in the Deccan was Syed Mohammed Gesu Draz, who played a very conspicuous role in the Deccan. Syed Gesudraz, the Khalipha of Nasir-ud-din Chirag Dehlavi, finally settled down at Gulbarga (1400 A.D.) and cherished the people of every section of the society. Not only Muslim kings and nobles were attracted by him, but the Hindu learned men, yogis and common folk also gathered round him. It was his basic principle that one should not be disrespectful to any regardless of his religion.<sup>99</sup> He helped poor people in every possible way, and therefore, he came to be known as "Banda Nawaz". Khwaja Gesudraz was a great humanist, whose khanqah always used to be full of devotees and needy people. Hindus also frequently visited him and stayed in his

khanqah without any inhibition. Even today the first ceremony of annual Urs of Banda Nawaz is performed by the Hindus. There are some references in his accounts in *Jawami-ul-Kilam* about the visits of Yogis and their arguments and discussions with Banda Nawaz. In a meeting with a Yogi the Khwaja said, that the pursuit of mundane interests will lead to destruction whereas simplicity alone will bestow salvation.<sup>100</sup> Khwaja further states. "I have met their learned men, they came to me challenging and disputing. I have read their Sanskrit books and know their mythology. I spoke to them about it. I told them of their belief. I gave them reasons and arguments. They were astonished."<sup>101</sup> The broadmindedness and liberal attitude of the sufis, created pleasant atmosphere and their khanqahs became the centres of cultural synthesis and communal harmony. That is why a new language known as "Dakhni" originated in the khanqahs of the sufis. At first the "Dakhani" began to take its shape in Khuldabad (Daultabad) in the khanqahs of Burhan-ud-din Garib, Zain-ud-din Shirazi and others. Sayyed Yusuf bin Sayyed Ali the father of Gesudraz popularly known as Raju Qattal, came to Daulatabad alongwith caravans of Mohammad bin Tughlaq a (1327A.D.) and died at Daulatabad. He composed *Manan Suhagan Nama* in Dakhani. It is considered the first poetic work in Dakhani. Gesudraz was a great scholar too. According to tradition he is supposed to have compiled 105 works.<sup>102</sup> His books in Dakhani *Miraj-ul-Asheqain*, *Shikarnama*, and other miscellaneous works became very famous. The Dakhani i.e. proto-Urdu and Hindi is a symbol of composite culture and social integration.

The sufis worked for the moral and spiritual uplift of the people in every town and village of the Deccan. Shaikh Mohammad Baba of Shirgonda, Ahmednagar District gave his message in Marathi and wrote verses in Marathi. His *Yoga Sangram* is a famous book on mysticism. Satya Saibaba of Shirdi (Ahmednagar District), Shaikh Mohammed Baba and Jangali Maharaj of Poona are being worshipped by our Hindu brethren as their dieties. According to Khalique Ahmed Nizami, the renowned scholar. "Taken as a whole the sufi movement, apart from providing a moral strength to the Bahmani Kingdom and its successor states worked for the moral and spiritual uplift of the people, checked levities and social vices

and created a favourable atmosphere for cultural *rapprochement* between various groups in the Deccan."<sup>103</sup>

If the national integration is to be achieved, we need to revive the spirit of sufism. We need Ulema, Shankaracharyas, Munis and Acharyas to come out of their religious places to propagatate brotherhood, tolerance and harmony. The people of this great nation still have their roots in reliigon and religious leaders can greatly help to achieve goal of peace and harmony.

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# 11

## POLITICAL IDEAS OF MIR SAIYID ALI HAMADANI

S.M. AZIZUDDIN HUSAIN



Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani<sup>1</sup> (1314-1384 AD) well known as Shah-i-Hamadani<sup>2</sup>, was a saint of fourteenth century. He came from Hamadan<sup>3</sup> and preached Islam in Kashmir.<sup>4</sup> He wrote several books<sup>5</sup> and also *Zakhiratul Muluk*,<sup>6</sup> which is based on his political ideas about the Islamic State. Several scholars<sup>7</sup> had studied his life and works but no attempt has been made to look into his political ideas, which are reflected in this specific work.

In the preface of *Zakhiratul Muluk*, Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani has written that well as in the life after death<sup>8</sup> but also with the purpose that the Muslim kings (Muluk), administrators (Kukkam), honourable persons (amajid) and nobles (ashraf) could consult this work in matters of state.<sup>9</sup> It contains the regulations of *Saltanat-i-suri wa manavi* (temporal and spiritual) based on the rules of government and *Vilayat*, so that the rulers could be benefited in this world as well as in life after death.<sup>10</sup> It seems that he has compiled this work

for circulation and consultation amongst the ruling classes. He does not mention the date and place of the compilation of *Zakhiratul Muluk*. Other scholars who worked on Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani, are also silent on this issue.<sup>11</sup>

*Zakhiratul Muluk* is based on ten chapters. The first chapter deals with the regulation of faith. The second chapter deals with the duties of the followers of Islam. The third chapter deals with the moral standards to be followed by the rulers. The fourth chapter deals with the rights & duties of parents, husband & wife, sons & daughters, relatives & friends. The fifth chapter deals with the regulations of *Saltanat*, *Vilayat* and *Imarat*, rights of people, limitations of government, the perils of such offices and the obligations of justice and kindness. The sixth chapter deals with *Saltanat-i-manavi* and the mystics of the spiritual leadership. Seventh chapter deals with the *amr maaruf wa nahi munkar* (execution of the lawful & abstinence from the un-lawful). The eighth chapter deals with the feeling of gratitude towards God.

Ninth chapter deals with the ways of facing worldly afflictions inherent in *Saltanat* & *Vilayat*. The last or the tenth chapter deals with the condemnation of arrogance & wrathfulness as well as their essence.<sup>12</sup>

Several manuscript copies of *Zakhiratul Muluk* are available in different Oriental Sections of the libraries and Archives, in India as well as in other countries. I have consulted two copies of *Zakhiratul Muluk*, one is available in the library of Imam Bara Saiyid Khairat Ali Hamadani.<sup>13</sup> It is dated 904 AH. The other copy is available at National Museum, New Delhi, which is dated 1085 AH.<sup>14</sup>

According to A.J. Syed *Zakhiratul Muluk* was not considered as a standard text by the jurists and never served as a guide in the country and not even in Kashmir, where it was written.<sup>15</sup> G.M.D. Sufi is of the opinion that "it was a favourite book with scholars during the Pre-Mughal regime in India. But the National Museum, manuscript, bears the seal of Qazi Shaikhul Islam<sup>17</sup>, the Qaziul Qazat during Aurangzeb's reign (1658-1707 AD), which shows that Qazi was having *Zakhiratul Muluk* in his personal collection and might be consulting it. However, in the Oriental sections of libraries, Museum and Archives, visited by me, one or more than one

manuscript copies of *Zakhiratul Muluk* are available, while it is not the case with other such works. *Zakhiratul Muluk* was translated into Latin by E.F.C. Resenmuller in 1825 and into French by C. Solvent in 1829.<sup>18</sup> This indicates the popularity and importance of this work, A.J. Syed claims the Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani had written this working during his stay in Kashmir<sup>19</sup>. This is neither substantiated by Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani himself nor through any other contemporary source. A.J. Saiyid has also not quoted any source for this information.

As far as the nature of Islamic state is concerned there are lots of differences among *ulema* and modern scholars. Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani recognises the institutions of caliphate, Badshahat and Saltanat, if they follow the regulations of Islam administering their state. He does not bother for the title of the ruler but basically how the ruler rules.<sup>20</sup> He also differentiates the office of the Prophethood with that of Saltanat,<sup>21</sup> but he considers the office of the ruler absolutely essential in the interest of law and human society.<sup>22</sup>

According to Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani Adam was having *two mansabs* (positions) *nabuwwat* and secondly the position of *Saltanat-O-hukumat* (government). The position of Prophethood is only given by God to the selected persons but the position of *Saltanat-O-Hukumat*, depends upon the desire to rule, and mostly it goes to tyrants.<sup>23</sup> It shows that he does not believe that the kings are also appointed by God. as is believed by some other thinkers.

Then he says that from the days of Adam, there were a few persons among the Prophets, i.e., Yusuf, Musa, Daud, Suleman and Muhammed and the Pious Caliphas, who had been bestowed with the qualities to head the state.<sup>24</sup> Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani further clarified that God had created the qualities of the rulers only among five Prophets and four pious caliphas.

Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani states that the Prophets & the Pious Caliphas although they were having full control over the State affairs & the treasury and did not utilize it for personal benefits, earning their livelihood by doing some other jobs, and tried their best to provide all the facilities to people, even then their lives were not safe.<sup>25</sup> In this statement Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani makes the

point that the headship of a state is not an easy task. Even Prophets & Pious Caliphas faced perils in their duties as head of the state, though they were selected by God for this job.

According to Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani a ruler who does not have a benign attitude towards his people transgresses the limits of the *shara*, is really an enemy of God and the Prophet. He calls such type of a ruler is the calipha of the Devil. Thus, he puts two conditions for a good ruler (i) following the shariat and (ii) kindly attitude towards his people i.e. all people of that state.<sup>26</sup>

Again on the basis of knowledge Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani divides the rulers into four categories. In the first category he places those rulers educated by God. To the second category belong those rulers who function like uneducated person. Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani regards them as devils of their time. Whosoever attaches himself with such rulers would also put him into disgrace for ever. The third category is of those rulers who have a desire to gain knowledge but the people of that state keep them away from acquiring knowledge. To the fourth category belong such rulers who give correct advice to the people of their state although they are ignorant. Such a ruler is tyrant. People of his state are also blame for it because knowing about his ignorance they do not pay proper attention to it and consider it as a quality.<sup>27</sup> Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani, not only talks of theory only, according to the author of *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, Sultan Qutubuddin, had married two sisters (Khwahar-i-Aiyani) contrary to the *shariat*, had to divorce one at the suggestion of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani.<sup>28</sup> Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani, alone amongst Muslim thinkers classifies rulers into categories on the basis of knowledge.

He defined the good ruler of a state, as a person who had qualities of the *ambiya* (Prophets) and *auliya* (saints). Saiyid Ali Hamadani criticises the nature of governments under the leadership of Muslim rulers during his time and observes that they had taken the form of tyrannies.<sup>29</sup>

Now we will examine the opinion of some other medieval Muslim thinkers on the nature of state. Ghazzali's theory for Islamic state contained three elements, the calipha, the sultan and the ulema. Ghazzali changes the interpretation of the Quranic verse,

"Obey God, obey the Prophet & those in authority amongst you to mean obedience to God, the Prophets, and amirs."<sup>30</sup> Ibn Taymiya is no less enthusiastic in accepting the institution of king. He calls sultan as the shadow of God upon earth & he is of opinion that even an unjust or ignorant ruler is to be obeyed.<sup>31</sup> Ibn Jama includes among the *ahl al-hal wa aqd*, the *umara*, the *rausa* and *wajh al-nas* (leading people). Ibn Jamaa says that sultan on the one hand had the rights to expect obedience from his subjects in everything except sin & his subjects on the other hand have the right to expect that sultan would be just in all his dealings.<sup>32</sup> Nizamul Mulk in his political thought was deeply influenced by the sasanid practices.<sup>33</sup> Ibn al-Muqaffa categorised the kings into three categories. The first was that founded on religion the second was based on the will to power and the third on desire.<sup>34</sup> Al-Bagilani, is concerned to refute & counter the arguments of sects and groups, which posed a threat to continuance of shari govt. as introduced by the sunnis.<sup>35</sup> Farabi is all concerned with relation between the best regime and the religious law of Islam<sup>36</sup> Ibn Khalladun finds nothing wrong in power wielded by a royal authority as long as there is no violation of justice & fair play.<sup>37</sup>

According to shia doctrine of imamat, the *imam* cannot be elected. Imamat is by *nass* (appointment) and not by election and that Imam is *masum* i.e. above the possibility of committing sins. Imam enjoys absolute powers & being *masum*, his actions and motives cannot be questioned by the people. Thus, Imam is the final authority in religious as well as political matters. As they never came to power so the theory was never practiced.<sup>38</sup> Indian shia *ulema* did not bother to write a book on the shia political theory, as far as knowledge is concerned. The shia Muitahid of India, Saiyid Dildar Ali, attached himself to a purely feudal institution of the Nawabs of Awadh. With the recent revolution in Iran, we come across the concept of Islamic Republic of Shia *ulema* of Iran.

A contemporary scholar of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani, working in Delhi, was Ziauddin Barni. He had compiled *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, in which he has discussed the political theory. Prof. Muhammed Habib is of the opinion that Barni's *Fatawa-i-Jahanderi* is the only Indo-Persian source on political theory. In the presence of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani's work *Zakhiratul Muluk*, we cannot accept his

statement. Barni starts with Pious calipha and says that "they (Pious Caliphas) alone have been able, among all early and later generations to combine darweshi (Religions age) with Jamshedi (kingship). It seems that Barni is of the opinion that the form of government followed by Pious calipha was kingship. Then Barni also quotes a saying of Prophet Muhammed. "The Sultan is the shadow of God on earth and all the oppressed take refuge with him."<sup>39</sup>

Then Aurangzeb compiled the *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*, during his reign. (1658-1707 AD). Not only they have accepted the institution of kingship but they are of the opinion that Muslims should accept even the authority of an unjust Imam.<sup>40</sup>

On the basis of the analysis of medieval Muslims thinkers we can say that they do not regard kingship as un-Islamic institution. Asghar Ali Engineer writes that now they (*ulema*) made it obligatory for all the faithfuls, to obey any one who wielded power, provided he professed the religion of Islam and enforced Islamic prayers.<sup>41</sup> It seems that Asghar Ali Engineer did not consult Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani's *Zakhiratul Muluk*, because it is neither in the discussion of the text nor in the bibliography of his work. Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani does not ask the follower of Islam to follow a ruler who simply professes faith & enforces Islamic prayer but he considers some more conditions as an essential attitude of a ruler who is to be followed by Muslims.

Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani divides the people into following categories. People (raiyat) of the calipha is equal to the people of king. The people of Badishah is further divided into two categories (i) Dwellers (ii) & At the service. Now dwellers are further divided into two categories (i) Separated & (ii) Nearer. People of second category i.e. at the service are divided into two categories, one who are educated and having knowledge and do justice and the second category of those who are totally ignorant and follow all the bad habits.<sup>42</sup> This is another significant point in Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani that he analyses the members of society according to their conditions. He does not believe in classes among Muslims as is the case with other Muslim political thinkers like Ziauddin Barni & others. Barni writes that teachers of every kind are to be sternly ordered not to thrust precious stones down the throats of dogs or to put

collars of gold round the necks of pigs & bears — that is, to the mean, the ignoble & the worthless, to shop keepers and to the low born they are to teach nothing more than the rules about prayer, fasting, religion, charity & the pilgrimage alongwith some chapters of the Quran & some doctrines of the faith.<sup>43</sup>

Then Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani defines *Muslim* and *Mumin*. He says that Muslim is he who, from whose hands and tongue Muslims are safe. Mumin is that person from whom people live in peace — A follower of Islam who does not harm a Muslim or a non-Muslim is a Mumin in the definition of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani because in the definition of Muslim he only expects from him to allow Muslims to live in peace but from Mumin he expects that such persons will allow people to live in peace which are meritorious one in the eyes of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani.<sup>44</sup>

Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani lays down several conditions for kingship, not fulfilling them no government temporal or spiritual can be established. Citizens of a country also have some rights over the king. If the king does not respect these rights he will not escape punishment on the day of judgement. The conditions for *Saltanat* and *Badshahat* are summed up into the following ten conditions.<sup>45</sup>

- (1) The first condition is that while deciding on matters involving his people he should place himself as one of the governed — the people — and pass only such orders as he as a subject would expect from a benevolent king. He should treat the Muslims in the way he would like to be treated.
- (2) He should solve the problems of the Muslims.
- (3) In food habits and dress, he should follow the example of the Pious caliphas. He should keep himself away from luxurious life.
- (4) He should patiently listen to people specially the poor. He should not treat the people harshly without good reason.
- (5) He should not delay or hesitate in taking decisions and should always act according to *shariat*, however, unpleasantness it may cause amongst the populace.

- (6) He should not ignore the dangers and perils involved in leadership of the state - temporal or spiritual. He should bear such sufferings patiently. This would earn for him reward in life after death.
- (7) He should seek the company of the Pious and learned people, though there is scarcity of such people now a days. He should follow their advice. He should keep himself away and aloof from the ignorant, greedy *ulema* and *mashaikh*. They praise ruler, however cruel he may be, to gain his favour. They are the destroyers of religion in the garb of *ulema* and *mashaikh*.
- (8) He should not keep aloof from the people. He should do justice to them and behave sympathetically towards the weak and the downtrodden. This will endear him to his people.
- (9) He should be vigilant that none of *nawabs* or officers oppress the people and should award exemplary punishment to the erring ones. He should never connive with the guilty, and should cultivate the nobles with wisdom and good advice.
- (10) A king should be knowledgeable. While deciding the matters of the state, he should give specific orders in clear words taking into account all the implications of the issue as well as of the order. He should also discern the truth out on the information supplied by his spies.

According to *Zakhiratul Muluk* Muslim citizens have twenty rights over kings and officers. These are compulsory for the rulers to fulfil.<sup>46</sup> A.K.S. Lamton is not correct when he says that the individual and the state, or the religious community, are broadly at one in their moral purpose, and so conception of the individual is not prominent, nor the concept of rights. Islam does not in fact recognise the legal person or the individual in which his rights are secured to him and in him by law.<sup>47</sup>

- (1) The ruler should behave properly with Muslims. He should not consider himself as a high one because he is a ruler. He should know that God dislikes such people.<sup>48</sup>

- (2) He should not listen to the unnecessary talks of useless people, because that will make him unpopular.
- (3) If any mistake is committed by a Muslim, the king should give an opportunity for three days to realise because he will punish people abruptly that might take him away from faith. If he realises his mistake, it is the duty of the king to pardon him.
- (4) The king should be large hearted for his people. He should love his people. He should not be selective in giving love & affection because the king and officers are the shadow of God, and God does not make any discrimination on the basis of religion.
- (5) The king should have a sympathetic attitude towards the ladies of the Muslims. He should not enter into their residences without permission.
- (6) He should not have any sort of greed from any one. He should not talk to ignorant persons in hard language. He should not expect the etiquettes of the sittings from the villagers. He should assign duties to people according to their capacity.
- (7) The King should give respect to old people in his assembly
- (8) Whatever a king promises, he should fulfil it.
- (9) The king should use language of perfection in his orders. He should meet the gentle persons.
- (10) The king should do justice with his office. He should expect justice from people. He should examine his own attitude that whether he is really doing justice with the people.
- (11) The king should consider it his duty to reform himself. He should not become the enemy of Muslims. He should wait in issuing orders against enemies.
- (12) The king should not be eager to know the mistake of Muslims. He should not tease the poor people.
- (13) The king should not encourage people to follow wrong

path. He should try his best to reform the people.

- (14) The king should solve the problems of the people because he will be rewarded for it on the day of judgement.
- (15) He should give preference to the poor people against the wealthy one. He should meet the pious persons because association will make him enlightened. His association with wealthy and greedy person will take him to darkness.
- (16) The king should be aware of the condition of his people. He should try to solve their problems, if he will not solve their problems then they will demand justice on the day of judgement. On that day he will be helpless.
- (17) The king should keep the high ways safe for Muslims. He should give exemplary punishment to the robbers.
- (18) The king should construct bridges and houses, needed for the convenience of the people.
- (19) The king should construct mosques in Muslim localities and appoint *imam*, *moazzin* and also arrange their livelihood so that they could perform their duties properly.
- (20) The king should, enforce *amr maroof* and avoid *munkar*. He should preach to the people to follow God and those who do not, he should punish them.<sup>48</sup>

Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani also discussed the position of Non-Muslims in detail. He lays down twenty conditions for pagans and *Zimmis*.<sup>49</sup> He also divides the non-Muslims into two categories.<sup>50</sup> (i) pagans and (ii) scripturaries. This is not the case with other Muslim political thinkers. On the position, status and rights of the non-Muslims the Muslim scholars are divided as we see in *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, *Zakhiratul Muluk*, *Fatawa-i-Firoz Shahi* and *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*. Barni says that if the Muslim king, in spite of the power & position which God has given him, is merely content to take the *jizia* (poll tax) and *kharaj* (tribute) from the Hindus and preserves both infidels and infidelity and refuses to risk his power in attempting to overthrow them, what differences will there be in this respect between kings of Islam and the *Rais* of the infidels.<sup>51</sup> While Mir Saiyid

Ali Hamadani, gives them freedom to follow the fundamentals of their faith, *Fatawa-i- Alamgiri*, allows the entry of a zimmi into a mosque. Then declares it sinful if calling a zimmi kafir hurts the feelings of a non-Muslim.<sup>52</sup> R.C. Majumdar declares that under the Islamic law, twenty conditions, some of which were most humiliating, were imposed on *zimmis*. These are given in detail by Shaikh Hamadani in *Zakhiratul Muluk*.<sup>53</sup> But Majumdar did not bother to consult the other chapters of *Zakhiratul Muluk* because he has lifted a matter of his own choice. In the list of twenty rights of Muslims, Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani says that the king should be large hearted for his people. He should love his people. He should not be selective in giving love and affections because king and the officers are the shadow of God, as God does not make any discrimination on the basis of faith.<sup>54</sup> Not only this but at different points Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani talks of the responsibility of the king for all the people of state. The twenty conditions for *zimmis* and pagans are as follows:

- (1) In the first condition the Muslim ruler should not allow the non Muslims to construct new churches and temples.
- (2) They are not allowed to rebuild any old temple which has been destroyed.
- (3) Non-Muslims should allow Muslim travellers to enter their religious buildings.
- (4) They should allow Muslim travellers to stay as guests for three days with them.
- (5) They should not act as spies.
- (6) If any relative of a non-Muslim wants to accept Islam they should not forbid him to do so.
- (7) Non-Muslims should give respect to Muslims.
- (8) If the non-Muslims are sitting in an assembly and if Muslims happen to reach there, they should offer that place to Muslims.
- (9) They are not to dress like Muslims.

- (10) They should not christianise the Muslim names.
- (11) They should ride on horses without saddle.
- (12) They are not allowed to carry swords and arrow.
- (13) They should not use rings with engraved stone.
- (14) They should not sell wine openly.
- (15) They should wear their old type of clothes so that there should remain a distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims.
- (16) They should secretly perform the traditions of paganism.
- (17) They should not live in the neighbourhood of Muslims.
- (18) They should not carry their dead bodies through the Muslims graveyards.
- (19) They should not weep loudly, in case of a death in their family.
- (20) They should not buy Muslim slaves.

As far as Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani's conditions for kings are concerned he differs in some respects with other Muslim thinkers. The rights assigned by him to the Muslims in a state are also different with others. Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani gives the right of disagreement with the ruler, if he does not follow the *sharīf*, when most of Muslims political thinkers do not give this right to Muslims. As far as the position of non-Muslims is concerned, Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani, also differs with others. For example Ziauddin Barni does not allow the preaching of paganism in a Muslim state,<sup>57</sup> while Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani, allows non-Muslims to preach their faith secretly<sup>58</sup> In this paper I have just introduced the problem. There is a need for a deep study of *Zakhiratul Muluk*, and each & every aspect of it should be compared by other Muslim political thinkers. I think that will lead us towards more understanding of the political ideas of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani.

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1. For his genealogical record see - *Sahib-i-Muwaddatul Quraba-Hazrat Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani* - by S.M. Kamaluddin Hi Maligaon 1984. p. 15.  
The grandson of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani Mir Saiyid Kamaluddin Hamadani, during the reign of Humayun came from Kashmir and settled down in Jalai Distt. Aligarh (U.P.) The Saiyids of Jalali, are among his descendents. I can also count myself among his descendents.
2. G.M.D. Sufi: *Kashmir*, (Lucknow, 1974) p. 84.
3. *Hamadan* - A well known educational and mystic centre of Iran.
4. G.M.D. Sufi. pp.84, 90 & S. M. Kamaluddin Husain. pp. 6
5. *Muwaddatul Quraba, Firdausul Akbar, Khulasatul Manasik* etc. etc.
6. Several manuscript copies of *Zakhiratul Muluk*, are available in Indian libraries and the libraries of other countries.
7. Several books were written on his biography, but this aspect was not given importance.
8. *Zakhiratul Muluk*, MS, National Museum, New Delhi f.2a.
9. *Ibid.* f. 2a.
10. *Ibid.* f 2a.
11. G.M.D. Sufi and S.M. Kamaluddin Husain.
12. *Zakhiratul Muluk.* f. 5b.
13. Saiyid Shah Khairat Ali, was one of the descendents of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani. In 1774 A.D., Nawab Shujaud Daula of Awadh, performed the *azadari* of Muharram at Jalali Distt Aligarh, (U.P.). Then he had assigned five villages, Malpur, Kamalpur, Northa, Nirdhi and Mubarikpur, in Distt Etah (U.P.) for his *imambara*. Four villages were confiscated by the British govt. and only Mubarikpur was again assigned in 1842. The *Imambara* and the Library founded by Saiyid Shah Khairat Ali is still in existence. (For details consult S.M. Kamaluddin Husain Op cit. pp.69-75.)
14. MS Section, National Museum, New Delhi.
15. A.J. Syed - *State, Religion and Society in Medieval India.* (Dec. 1984) p. 10, 11.
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22. *Ibid.* f. 105b.
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25. *Ibid.* f. 105a.
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27. *Ibid.* f. 137a.
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29. *Zakhiratul Muluk*. f. 106a.
30. Asghar Ali Engineer: *Theory and practice of the Islamic State* (Lahore, 1985) p. 78.
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32. A.K.S. Lambton *State and Government in Medieval Islam* (New York, 1981) pp. 144.
33. *Ibid.* pp. 79, 80.
34. Lambton. p. 54.
35. *Ibid.* p. 73.
36. *Ibid.* p. 81.
37. *Ibid.* pp. 82-87.
38. *Ibid.* p. 87.
39. Afsar Begum: *The Fatawa-i-Jahandari of Ziauddin Barni, Medieval India Quarterly*. p.39.
40. *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri* (Devband) Kafilur Rehman (Urdu Translation.) 48. 29. p. 78.
41. Engineer. p. 89.
42. *Zakhiratul Muluk*. f. 137b.
43. *Ibid.* f. 138a.
44. *Ibid.* f. 11a.
45. *Ibid.* f.115b.
46. *Ibid.* f. 115b.
47. A.K.S. Lambton: *State and government in Medieval Islam*. (New York, 1981) p. XV.
48. *Zakhiratul Muluk*. f. 115b-128a.
49. *Ibid.* f. 128a.
50. *Ibid.* f. 128a.
51. Afsar Begum. *Op.cit.* p. 68-86.
52. *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri* as quoted by A.J. Syed. p. 13.
53. R.C. Majumdar: *The Delhi Saltanat*. (Bombay, 1967) pp. 618
54. *Zakhiratul Muluk*. f. 125a.
55. *Ibid.* f. 128a.
56. *Ibid.* f. 139b.
57. Afsar Begum. pp. 65, 73.
58. *Zakhiratul Muluk*. f. 128a.

Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani has extensively quoted the anecdotes relating to the period of Prophets, Pious Calipha and some rulers in *Zakhiratul Muluk*.

# 12

## THE LABYRINTH OF BHAKTI

HIREN GOHAIN



The underlying connections of many important historical phenomena still remain obscure because of the preponderance of chronicle-style narratives in our history. This is especially true of ideological developments, which have been monopolised by spiritualists with their transcendent longings and social apathy. Historical processes are thus further mystified rather than explained. There are of course exceptions like Kosambi and Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. But as path-finders they often cannot linger long even on an interesting spot or explore promising byways. Besides, they have mostly concentrated on ancient Indian history. Further, their strong suspicion of mysticism and idealism appear to lead them at times into rather crass formulations.<sup>1</sup>

The immense, prolonged and richly variegated movement of medieval India- generally known as the *bhakti* movement- has not yet benefited from such a searching study. There are a few good books, but they do not match the scope and complexity of the

subject with a corresponding range of erudition and depth of scrutiny. Certain questions kept nagging me throughout when I recently attempted a modest survey of the *bhakti* movement in Assam.<sup>2</sup>

The first question is the origin and background of the *bhakti* movement. It is customary to see it mainly as an aspect of Vishnu-worship, especially in his human incarnations. Yet the shaiva form of *bhakti* had been not less ardent and intense, suggesting that the impulse was much deeper than attachment to a particular deity. What was the substratum of ideas and attitudes, or going deeper, social structure, common to vaishnavas and shaivas? Again it is common to trace the origin of *bhakti* to the Bhagavadgita.<sup>3</sup> One indeed finds there the stress on monotheism, the deification of Krishna, and devotion as a superior path to salvation—all elements that played a vital role in later schools of *bhakti*. Yet the very sublimity of the conception and language there put them at some distance from the passionate longings and intimate fervours of the *bhakti* of medieval times.

Kosambi sees apart from sublimating feudal loyalty two social functions of *bhakti* as it occurs in the Gita: (1) reconciling different sects and schools of thought among the ruling-classes during a period of abundant economic surplus, and (2) guaranteeing divine intervention in times of *Adharma* (impiety) and human distress.<sup>4</sup> Yet *dharma* in the *Gita* is only one of the four-fold human goals, and it is different from *moksha* or salvation. It would thus follow that when god descended into the human world to restore *dharma* he would show more interest in buttressing a collapsing caste system than in establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The haunting fear of *vamashankaras* (offspring of miscegenation) and the anxious admonition to uphold *swadharma* (specific caste rules and taboos) certainly indicate a social crisis which does not interest Kosambi.

The other important sacred text for the vaishnava form of *bhakti*—the “bhagavata purana”—had been composed centuries later. It is definitely more tolerant and liberal in its attitude to caste, and concedes that a chandala devoted to god is more worthy of respect than a brahmin who has no true devotion in his heart,<sup>5</sup> Yet the twelfth book of the “bhagavatha purana” has plenty of apocalyp-

tic passages where social chaos is depicted with grim despair. *Kali Yuga* is characterised by unbounded greed and oppression of kings, the ruin of the caste system including the monstrous rise of kaivartas and other despised castes to positions of prominence, and the atrocious power of money to subvert even the justice of the courts. Women are particularly prone in this base epoch to behave with gross sexual freedom.<sup>6</sup> The "bhagavatha purana" also pays a rather fulsome tribute to the brahmins, who are adored by the great god Krishna himself, and whose property is insured against the rapacity of the possessive kings.<sup>7</sup>

*Bhakti* in these two central texts thus remains ideologically subservient to the interest of the dominant intelligentsia and the ruling-classes even in the midst of social crisis. It is yet to turn into a movement of radical social protest against an oppressive social structure.<sup>8</sup> This reorientation comes through the leaven of popular feeling in the work of the alvar saints of the south India, many of whom belonged to the lowest strata of society and whose songs were filled with a profound sense of worldly distress and ardent longing for god as friend and redeemer.<sup>9</sup> A later North Indian saying declared that *bhakti* first arose in the south, was then revealed by Ramananda, and finally spread broadcast by Kabir. It was the emotional leaven, with close and deep links with popular feeling, that brought *bhakti* to its influential radical stage.

How did it happen? Historians of ancient India like R S Sharma and Romilla Thapar, following in the footsteps of Kosambi, point out how during and following the Gupta era outlying areas in the south, central India and eastern India made the transition to plough-agriculture and adopted a pattern of social life marked by the exalted position of the brahmins, who almost received an obeisance due to gods and corresponding exploitation and degradation of a vast and heterogeneous mass of sudras who provided the labour for the transformation.<sup>10</sup> And the kings of such regions, neo-kshatriyas recruited from the ranks of tribal chieftains, were only too glad to follow literally all the traditional ritual obligations of kingship, including the very important one of preservation of caste. It is significant that the ancient copper-plate inscriptions of *Kamarupa* (old Assam) refer a number of times to the king's active role in maintaining the *varnashrama dharma* or the caste

system.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, it is arguable that like the negro spirituals of the American deep south, the *bhakti* movement was a sublimation of terrible worldly suffering, pain and misery that found natural outlet in spontaneous, sweet-sad and poignant devotional songs. The compensatory imagination of a friendly and loving god, who would not abandon the devotee in his most forlorn moments, seems to have been compelled by grim and relentless exploitation and oppression. At the same time it also made for adjustment and adaptation to the pains and privations of the real world. Further, this was a more acceptable creed than the esoteric cult of *tantra*, which merely veiled actual social misery through the fantasy of primitive communism.<sup>12</sup> As far as I can see, the main attraction of *tantra* must have been the recall of primitive communism and tribal solidarity through ritual inter-caste dining, ritual equality of women, and ritual freedom of sex.

When Ramanuja, following a line of acharyas, decided to give an exalted status to the *prabhandham* of the alvar saints, it was a marked departure from the convention that the *Vedas* alone, the monopoly of the brahmin intelligentsia, had a claim to be the 'Word of God'. Ramanuja's *bhakti* prescribed charity to the oppressed and the injured, and it was a more progressive doctrine than Shankaracharya's *advaita* which obliterated all social differences and degrees at the transcendent level only to insist rigidly on enforcing them in day-to-day life.<sup>13</sup> But Ramanuja showed a patronising attitude to the *stn* (woman) and the *sudra*, did not overturn the ritual supremacy of the brahmin, and preserved the overriding status of Sanskrit as the sacred language.<sup>14</sup> But Ramananda, a later follower of his sect, settled in Benares, and threw the doors of *bhakti* open to all castes and professions, including the most despised and degraded. His great disciples abandoned Sanskrit altogether to speak in *Bhasa* or the language spoken by the people. They totally ignored the ritual purity and supremacy of the brahmin which found a place even in the "bhagavata purana" and allowed true spiritual authority to a genuine *bhakta* from any caste. There is here a clear transition from notions of ritual purity to those of sincerity and spiritual purity, dramatically demonstrated in many of Kabir's iconoclastic acts. The age-old caste structure is simply laid aside.

If Ramanuja had widened the scope of society to accommodate the new questionings and aspirations, the later *bhaktas* undermined the foundations of that unjust society itself.

Kshiti Mohan Sen's outstanding work, "Medieval Mysticism of India" (1935) is sometimes given to closeness to the soil and that great religious liberal did not allow his vision to be clouded by orthodox prejudices. He divided the great saints of medieval India between those who accepted central Hindu scriptures and institutions within a reformed and liberalised framework, and those who rejected them outright. Indeed they even overcame the fear of and prejudice against Islam and went on to found virtually new religions free from the narrowness of both orthodox brahminism and orthodox Islam.<sup>15</sup> Kabir, Nanak, Dadu and Rajjab desired to anchor their views to a free religious atmosphere untrammelled by external symbols and observances. They made fun of the *sraddha*, obligatory Hindu funeral rites, and were less concerned with god as an *avatara* than as a presence within every human heart.<sup>16</sup> Traditional religious concepts were re-interpreted, so that *maya* changed from cosmic illusion somehow emanating from god himself to conventional beliefs and attitudes that prevented the meeting between the self and the god within. The emotional fervour of *bhakti* must have acted as a solvent on rigid social taboos and prescriptive communal rules.

How far was this change linked to the advent of Islam? Tara Chand's "Influence of Islam on Indian Culture" (1922, first published in 1946) and Sen's book show decisively that the heterodox *bhaktas* owed a lot to Muslim sufis, who mixed with the down-trodden, illiterate masses without pretence and presumption, and practised the fellow-feeling for the creatures of god that they preached.<sup>17</sup> The inward-looking meditation of the sufi saints also helped to release the individual from the constraints of conventional society. This is a point hotly contested by some historians who would not have the 'native' religion owe anything to an 'alien' source. Yet popular traditions resound with stories of Kabir's and Nanank's wanderings as far as Basra and Baghdad in search for spiritual enlightenment. From the accounts of Sen and Tarachand it appears that ideas travel and penetrate society in ways other than those of floating seeds, notwithstanding the endeavour of idealists

to prove the contrary. Islam and Hinduism found a meeting-ground in the masses of new converts to Islam, people who belonged to the lowest and most despised castes and were subject to grim exploitation and oppression. Another meeting-ground was found in the minds of travelling peddlars and small traders, whose livelihood tended to free them from local prejudices and customary inhibitions. The new converts could hardly have been deeply immersed in Islamic traditions. They had embraced Islam, moved by the piety and loving humanity of the sufi saints, but the entire hinterland of their mind had been still under the spell of age-old Hindu concepts and attitudes. They had every reason to resent brahminical tyranny and humiliation, but both the language and ideas of Islam were only partly assimilated by them. That is why the mission of the *bhaktas* which made use of ideas familiar to them and yet transcended the narrowness of orthodoxy had such an impact on them. Many of them must have drifted towards various forms of *bhakti*, along with other castes that had not changed their religion.

But by itself the impact of Islam cannot explain the phenomenal growth of *bhakti*. Historians have rightly sought an explanation in the rise and expansion of commodity-production and domestic trade in medieval India.<sup>18</sup> It seems to me that Soviet historians have grasped this point more firmly, though I am not aware of any systematic treatment of this subject. A swift survey of the scene will be quite in order here.<sup>19</sup> It must be borne in mind that in backward regions like Assam and Maharashtra proper, where commodity production did not reach the degree of development it did in Gujarat and some parts of north India, the heterodox forms of *bhakti* with their defiance of orthodox Hindu traditions also failed to burgeon. The caste structure, along with the ritual supremacy of the brahmin, prevailed in spite of the challenge from the liberal *bhaktas*.<sup>20</sup> Further, even in the advanced areas, feudal institutions and ideas revived sufficiently in the end to limit the effectiveness of the heterodox preaching.

The combination of agriculture and domestic industry, considered by Marx the basis of the 'unchanging' Asiatic society, and inferred by Kosambi to have been the stable unit of Indian feudalism emerging after the collapse of empires<sup>21</sup> was certainly not transformed completely. Areas remote from the centres of growth

retained that form down to British times. But that mode of production and its corresponding social relations undoubtedly underwent significant changes during the period under review. The village artisan in such areas ceased to be a mere servant of the village community, and began to cater to a wider clientele through the market, the small trader helping him to sell his goods at places far from his native village. Money transactions replaced barter, at times helping to improve the economic position of the artisan. Specialisation and division of labour increased at a pretty fast pace, and even the implements of production showed improvement. This rise in productivity and circulation of commodities led to the growth of towns, which now depended on trade and industry to a remarkable extent. Such towns as Dacca, Patna, Surat, Masuli-pattam had the majority of their residents dependent on industry, especially weaving. Out of an estimated population of two million in the Bhagalpur district in the late 18th century, 1,69,000 were spinners and 7500 weavers. There was regular trade in foodgrain, thread, spices, etc, between Bengal and coastal area of the Deccan and the Punjab.<sup>22</sup> Correspondingly roads and communications also improved. The ruins of *serais* or travellers' inns dotting the major roads of the Mughal times bear eloquent testimony to the flourishing commerce of those days. On the other hand in Assam, in spite of a brisk increase in trade, even the bullock cart was unknown before the nineteenth century. Marx himself had testified that in the eighteenth century India's balance of trade with Britain had been favourable and Indian textiles far outweighed the British exports to India.<sup>23</sup>

This growth of commodity production had its expected impact upon the social relations. New caste groups had formed corresponding to the increasing division of labour. Rigid caste rules and taboos had also been loosened up in some respects. Brahmin widows now found a source of livelihood in the despised occupation of spinning.<sup>24</sup> Dependence on the market may also have freed the artisans from direct feudal links, given them a taste for independence and self-respect and a new courage to think more highly of their lowly professions. It is interesting that Kabir was a *jolah* or weaver, Dadu (or Daud) a cotton-carder of Muslim origin, and Ravidas a shoe-maker. It is also noteworthy that all three of them

believed in doing an honest day's labour, economic self-reliance, and ridiculed asceticism and renunciation of the world.<sup>25</sup> Abul Fazl reports that Akbar the Great took special care to fix the prices of essential commodities throughout his realm on the basis of periodic studies of the market, and taxes on the people including the artisans had also been similarly fixed.<sup>26</sup> But Aurangzeb showed no such compunctions.<sup>27</sup> Only the bare subsistence was left with the working people in the extortionate demands of the state on their income. The alienation of the court and the feudal ruling orders from the people from his time onwards is thus suggested by such trends, whereas Akbar's concern showed a relatively progressive role of the state in his time. Aurangzeb persecuted some of the new sects and sufi saints, but Akbar had been sufficiently influenced by the new intellectual and spiritual currents to abandon Muslim orthodoxy. Aurangzeb's reaction seems to us roughly contemporaneous with the feudal counter-attack. Some of the Hindu princes at the same time (those of Assam for instance) also started to persecute the new liberal trends and patronise a rigid version of Hindu orthodoxy. The economic position of artisans declined in the eighteenth century as a result of such feudal extortion in spite of the rise in productivity and the expansion of the market. Death from famine and starvation was a familiar fate.<sup>28</sup>

But the new trends certainly had progressive, democratic potentialities. The widening of economic and social links beyond the narrow confines of the village-community led to wider and more liberal notions of human relations than allowed by Hindu orthodoxy. The new spiritual consciousness of the heterodox sects, like the radical sects of European Protestantism (chronicled by Troeltsch and other historians), laid great stress on the "movement of the spirit within", an experimental attitude to spiritual truths, and a categorical rejection of the feudal hierarchy in spiritual life.<sup>29</sup> The society of *bhaktas*, who at times broke off from conventional communities to live separately, was potentially more democratic in that they made light of all traditional distinctions. Like Wycliffe and Luther the medieval Indian saints also cultivated the languages of the people. Of course there are important differences, like the Indian reliance on the Guru or Pir. But the parallels are too striking to be thought accidental.

The Weber-Tawney thesis on the connection between the Reformation and the rise of capitalism still remains a very convincing hypothesis.<sup>30</sup> The question that naturally occurs to us is, why capitalism did not follow the remarkable development of commodity production in India. While some historians dismiss that question as smacking of a unilinear scheme of human progress and hence irrelevant, others argue that the natural growth of native capitalism had been frustrated and foiled by the deliberate sabotage by western colonialists.<sup>31</sup> The further question raised by this answer is, why did not the budding Indian capitalist class fight back before the westerners grew more powerfully? Why, again, did it not hasten to seize power even when the feudal forces had suffered a decline? One possible explanation was the failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to develop a revolutionary political ideology and a sound political base, whether in the civic organisations or in the community of new proselytes. The fact that the sikhs in the Punjab and the *Moamorias* in Assam did take to arms suggest that such a possibility could not be ruled out of hand. But the fact remains that the possibility was only thinly realised. In the west the first phase of the Reformation succeeded because the secular princes supported it in their greed for the vast landed property of the Church. In the second phase there was an attempt to take over power from the kings and princes themselves, as in the English Revolution of the seventeenth century. Concomitantly, one may observe that the Puritans and advanced Reformers showed a paradoxical enthusiasm for science.<sup>32</sup> Bacon believed both in Protestant doctrine and the necessity of adding to god's glory through such human efforts as improved technology.<sup>33</sup> The radical forms of *bhakti* rather remind us of anabaptism with its elements of strong social protest and revolutionary tendencies, confined to the lower orders of society but held in deep suspicion by the affluent and the learned.<sup>34</sup>

Long before the European merchants became a menace, the development of commodity production and liberal social relations seem to have reached a kind of plateau in India, and one witnesses feudal relations and ideology once again conquering the space wrested from them by ideas of human dignity and freedom. Even the lives of the great saints become shrouded in obscurantist mystification. Kabir is given out to be a brahmin by birth, and Dadu

is held to be a human incarnation of god, whose caste is indeterminate.<sup>35</sup> While the tailor Namdev's remains had been buried under the gate of the shrine of Pandharpur, the priests now begin to plead it was a different Namdev, a brahmin who had been so honoured for his piety.<sup>36</sup> In Assam vaishanava *satras* or monasteries, founded by great men with radiant humanistic ideals and radical attitudes (though not going as far as the heterodox saints like Kabir or Nanak) in the sixteenth century, later became the pillar of the caste-system.<sup>37</sup> The simple trail of *bhakti* with its cry of the heart ended in a labyrinth.

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Courtesy Economic and Political Weekly

# 13

## MYSTICISM IN MAHARASHTRA THE VISION OF NON-COMMUNAL SOCIETY

THOMAS DABRE



Traditional Hinduism has, in a somewhat simplistic way, been hailed for its tolerance (*sahishnuta*). Indian society, however, run on the axis of the ancient religion was never free of communalism in one form or another. Buddhism and Jainism were epoch-making revolts against dehumanizing manifestations of religious communalism. Communalism is designated religious when religion is manipulated by misguided or crafty adherents to exclude the interests of those belonging to other religions or other groups within one and the same religious community. This religion-based discrimination is in relation to such factors as caste, sex, language, state, status etc.<sup>1</sup>

Religious communalism, unfortunately, is able to maintain its stranglehold on the psyche of the masses for centuries. Scriptures, traditions, theologies are all utilized to legitimize communal behaviour. However, the true spirit of religion transcends communal mentality and generates a process of integration and unification in society.

Moses brought about a much-needed cohesion and integration in his community when he presided over the liberation of his people from the damning subjugation under the Pharaoh. Jesus communicated the vision of universal community of mankind when he proclaimed the kingdom of God. Mohammed unleashed a movement of unification and consolidation when he dislodged idolatry and polytheism.

It is ironical that religion whose original inspiration is to promote the integral and enduring well-being of man, in the course of time, degenerates into a divisive and communal force. All religions with their sects are tainted with fissiparous tendencies. What, however, is a matter of hope and consolation is that charismatic leaders emerge from within religious communities to initiate the process of renewal and regeneration.

### **THE VARKARI PANTH**

The Varkari Panth with its vast following in Maharashtra overflowing into Karnataka, Andhra and Gujarat is a phenomenon about 1000 years old. Arising from within mainline Hinduism, it is an inspiring example of a collective protest against religious communalism that marginalized vast masses of the Maharashtrian society in spiritual, cultural, social and economic spheres. This Maharashtrian version of Indian Vaishnavism acted as a catalyst that set in motion a long-lasting process of integration and unification in a fragmented and disintegrating society.<sup>2</sup>

### **RISE AND FALL OF MAHANUBHAV PANTH**

The Varkari Panth's contribution to a communalism — free society would stand out all the more clearly if we take into account the new trail blazed by the Mahanubhav Panth under the dynamic and courageous leadership of its founding father Chakradhar in 13th century. This trend-setting movement affirmed the primacy of

*bhakti* (devotion) over *jnana* (knowledge) and *karma* (action). It affirmed the fundamental equality of all ignoring the differences of caste and sex as was being done in the traditional Hindu society. Women were admitted into the religious fellowship. Religious literature was until then available only in Sanskrit. Chakradhar and his followers departing from tradition, employed the local language of the people, namely, Marathi, for their religious discourses and commentaries.

Unfortunately, this movement alienated itself from the masses whose hopes and aspirations it had aroused. Its popular appeal was lost. The Marathi that was used was highly sanskritic and sophisticated. Explanation of religious message and doctrine developed into an abstruse philosophical systematization. A negative view of secular life and pursuit was propounded. As a result, a heavy emphasis was placed on silence, solitude and renunciation. Their isolation from the masses was further accentuated by the code-script they devised for secret communication.<sup>3</sup>

When a fellowship turns into a ghetto smacking of elitism, it undermines unity and harmony in the wider community. The interests and pursuits of this sub-group diverge from those in the larger community. Thus, emphasizing differences in a way that brings about division in the community is a form of communal behaviour of which the Mahanubhav Panth was by all means guilty.

### RISE OF VARKARI PANTH

The Varkari Panth came into existence just when the Mahanubhav Panth was gaining ground. Many perspectives and ideas are common to the two sects which are a striking departure from the established traditional course. Even so the Varkari Panth, in the course of time, displaced the once popular cult and itself developed into the most collective expression of the People's hopes and aspirations. This was achieved precisely by steering clear of the excesses committed by the Mahanubhav adherents.

### THE CONCEPT OF GOD

There is much truth in the proposition that the concept of God advocated in this cult reconciles and sublimates the multiple

strands and streams of Indian religiosity spread across the country from the Vedic times onwards. An eminent scholar has observed, "They (the Varkari saints) have regarded him as Shiva together with Vishnu; they have called him under the title of the Buddha; they have called the Buddha the son of Jin; they have set him up as the ninth descent- *avatar*; they have called him *digambar*; they have addressed him as *Kannada*, the one from Karnataka. All this means that the saints have, through their liberal and lofty vision, attained in a felicitous manner, a synthesis is Viththal, of Shaiva, Vaishnava, Buddhist, Jains and other conflicting religious streams."<sup>4</sup>

For our purpose, it is not necessary here to discuss whether the Varkaris are successful in their attempts to bring about a synthesis of varied religious traditions. What is, however, of decisive significance is that the Vithoba cult is *ex-professo* not confined to one particular religious tradition. It is proclaimed as being open to a variety of spiritual traditions, even as being an embodiment of them all. Thus, the cult is intended to transcend exclusivistic, communal, sectarian and divisive religiosity.

### Unity of *nirguna* and *saguna*

The very concept of God in this spirituality is remarkable for its conciliatory perspective. It unites the two distinct modes of the divine, i.e., the *nirguna* (the one without attributes) and the *saguna* (the one with attributes). The *nirguna* is the ultimate reality of God in its transcendent, absolute, quality-less state, beyond all manifestations. The *saguna* is the same ultimate reality in its manifest, phenomenal, relational form.

Philosophers tend to think that the *nirguna* Brahman is higher than the *saguna* Brahman. For the Varkaris, the two modes are equal, know him, for sure, to be a fool,

Who says that the *saguna* is lesser than the *nirguna*.<sup>5</sup>

### UNITY OF VISHNU AND SHIVA

Within the *bhakti* tradition too, there are two main sects, namely Vaishnavism and Shaivism. In the course of the chequered history of Hinduism, there have been acrimonious battles between the two

sects. There would be nothing wrong for the followers of the two traditions to have their own distinct approaches to the divine for the purpose of liberation. Differences by themselves are never destructive but constructive and enriching. It is only when the lower instincts conceitedly seek to affirm the supremacy of one over the other and induce contempt for the other that the differences become a threat. The Maharashtrian saints sought to unite the warring factions by affirming the oneness of Vishnu and Shiva.

Know those theologians to be worthy of condemnation who discriminate between Vishnu and Shiva. Vishnu and Shiva are one. There is no distinction. What are the fools arguing about? Sweetness and sugar, sugar and sweetness are inseparable. When half the portion is taken away, the two are not separated. According to the Eknath of Janardan, at the utterance of the names of Vishnu and Shiva, liberation and ultimate union fall prostrate.<sup>6</sup>

This text makes it clear that one and the same reality of God manifests itself in two different forms, i.e., Vishnu and Shiva. The two are as one and inseparable as sugar and its sweetness. Both the forms are channels of having communion with God. Eknath offers here a vigorous critique of sectarian superiority and rivalries. This equality of the two predominant Hindu sects has been unambiguously affirmed in the writings of the Varkari mystics from Jnaneshwar to Tukaram.

It is futile to play one against the other for they are intimately united.

1. There is no distinction between Vishnu and Shiva. There should therefore, be no quarrel over them.
2. As sweetness is in sugar so is one in the heart of the other.
3. For the one who wants to discriminate between the two, he can find only the spelling mark as an obstacle.
4. Tuka says, the right and the left are two sides but the body is one.<sup>7</sup>

**The cult of Vitththal explicitly harmonizes the two warring sects**

of Vaishnavism and Shaivism. There is no question, therefore, about its being open, tolerant and appreciative towards the adherents of Shaivism.

### PRIMACY OF BHAKTIMARGA

The Varkari leaders affirmed the primacy of the *bhaktimarga* over the *jnanamarga* and *karmamarga*. The latter two *margas* rather than facilitate unification of the various strata of society were responsible for division and separation in society. The intellectualism of the *jnanamarga* and the ritualism of *karmamarga* were not all within the reach of the illiterate and impoverished masses. They had neither the intellectual resources nor the ritualistic paraphernalia at their command. They were for centuries, economically, socially and culturally backward. Survival was the big problem that haunted and preoccupied them. The *jnanamarga* called for an elevated level of consciousness which they were not capable of attaining because of the miseries of life. The iniquitous caste system had deprived them of the access to the spiritual treasures in religious literature which was in Sanskrit. Tradition had kept the members of the low-castes out of the intellectual stream of ancient Hinduism. The masses had their problems also with the *karmamarga* with its rigid and intricate cult, ritual and rubrics. The professional theologians and priests were in an exclusively privileged position to exploit and benefit by the way of knowledge and action.

The *bhaktimarga* taught a religion of the heart. This way of love and surrender towards God was available to all. It steers clear of the rigours of the *jnanamarga* and the cumbersome complexities of the *karmamarga*.

### MUTUAL LOVE OF GOD AND DEVOTEE

In the Varkari literature we find a moving description of the mutual love between God and the devotee. The symbol of mother is employed to express the warmth and intimacy of God's love for the devotee.

Viththala is my mother. Her breast is filled with the milk of love. She caresses and lifts me to her breast. She does not move away from me. She fulfils my entreaties. She is not

harsh but tender. Tuka says she puts into my mouth the morsel of the juice of God.<sup>8</sup>

The devotee on his part responds to God's abundant love by his intense yearning for Him.

1. The mother bird goes early in the morning for food.  
The chick, hungry waits for her.
2. Just so my heart desires you.  
Day and night I contemplate your feet.
3. O God, the unweaned calf is tied at home.  
In its heart, it is pining for mother.
4. Nama says O Lord, you are my kith and kin.  
O Father of the orphans, do not forsake me.<sup>9</sup>

#### **DANGER OF JNANAMARGA**

The Varkari preachers spoke of the futility of the way of knowledge as it led to pride and arrogance.

Those who are dependent upon their own intellects, try to swim over this flood (of the world) and no trace of them remains. Those who are given to over self-consciousness sink in the abyss of pride. Those who try to cross this flood by means of the knowledge of the Vedas, hug to their heart huge pieces of stone and disappear into yawning arrogance. Those who clasp to their breast sacrifice go only into the recess of heaven, where no boat of dispassionateness is available, where no raft of discrimination is to be found.<sup>10</sup>

#### **IRRELEVANCE OF KARMAMARGA**

Vithoba and devotion to Him dispenses with ritual and rubrics. Namdev sang,

You are, O Viththala, the treasure of science, my life and my only remedy.

You are my austerities and my religious observances.

The holy places, the offerings and my merit.

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You are, O Viththala, the observances that lead to *samadhi*.<sup>11</sup>

The devout recitation of the name is the most effective means for experiencing communion with God and attaining final liberation. There is no need to perform karmic religious observances prescribed by tradition and orthodoxy.

The reading of all scriptures (*shastras*) and the Vedas cannot equal the name of God.

All pilgrimages like Prayag, Kashi cannot be compared to the (recitation of) name.

The practice of mortifications of the body by means of weapons such as the saw is in no way equal to the name. Tuka says, this is the highest practice. The name is the very essence of Vithoba.<sup>12</sup>

## METHODS OF PRAYER

The methods of prayer through which the *bhakti* is expressed are simple and hence the masses were able quickly to identify with them.

1. The *Namasmaran*: This is a prayerful, loving devotional recitation or chanting of the divine name. The name of God is not just a word; it stands for God. The *namasmaran* is the *bhakta's* joyful praise and worship of God, signifying his surrender to God.
2. *The Bhajan*: It consists of the chanting of the divine names and the singing of hymns, to the accompaniment of musical instruments. This form of devotion is both individual and collective. "The joy of the *bhajan* overflows in a communitarian manner."<sup>13</sup>
3. *The Kirtan*: It is a service of devotion conducted under the guidance of a leader who has around him a team of fellow-devotees playing different musical instruments. The leader gives a spiritual discourse interspersed with enthusiastic devotional singing to the assembly of worshippers.

4. *The Vari*: The Varkari Panth is characteristically the spirituality of pilgrimage. In the name Varkari, the word *var* means the practice of proceeding regularly or recurring monthly or annual periods on pilgrimage to any sacred place; and the word *kari* means the doer. The Varkari is expected to go on a walking pilgrimage to Dehu, (the place of Tukaram) Alandi (the *samadhi* place of Jnaneshvar) and Pandharpur, believed to be the abode of Lord Vithoba. Ashadhi Ekadashi (in June - July), Kartiki Ekadashi (in October- November), Maghi Ekadashi (in January-February) and Chaitry Ekadashi (in March-April) are great festival days for the Varkaris when hundreds of thousands of pilgrims assemble in the sacred city of Pandharpur.

During the walking pilgrimage which for many covers a journey of several hundred miles, the Varkaris worship God by means of *nama-smaran*, *bhajan* and *kirtan*. Apart from the hazards of the journey lasting over two weeks, the *vari* is free of the rigours and complexities of the *jnanamarga* and *karmamarga*. Therefore all sorts of people, men and women, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the simple and the sophisticated join in the pilgrimage out of devotion to Vithoba.

## RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY LANGUAGE

The use of Sanskrit for spiritual literature was distinctly in favour of the Brahmins who had a long-standing tradition of the study of this language. It was responsible for Brahmin communalism in society. The vast masses were not, as the tradition had been, instructed in the prestigious religious language. As a result, they were deprived of the ancient spiritual treasures. The Brahmin scribes and scholars became proud and conceited and acted as God's vicegerents. These went so far as to project Sanskrit as the language of the gods. They looked down upon Marathi, the common language of the people.

The exponents of the Varkari spirituality rendered yeoman service to the cause of social unification and integration by their courageous use of Marathi for spiritual literature.

In 13th century Jnaneshvar broke new ground with his commen-

tary in Marathi on the Sanskrit Bhagvad Gita. In 16th century Eknath translated some other Sanskrit religious texts into Marathi. He wrote a voluminous commentary on the eleventh book of the Sanskrit Bhagavat Purana. The Varkari leaders made no secret of their vigorous opposition to the oppressive domination of Sanskrit, which apart from having ceased to be a living language, was known only to a few.

The authors of the Sanskrit books are great poets.

But, then, why should the Prakrit (the Marathi spoken by the masses) be under estimated?

The Sanskrit language is supposed to have been created by the gods.

Is the Prakrit language, then, from thieves?

All these are things of false conceit. Why should we speak in vain?

Now as regards Sanskrit and Prakrit, the language in which the Harikatha, (religious discourse) is given, is in truth everywhere regarded sacred in principle.<sup>14</sup>

The Varkari's revolutionary use of Marathi opened the flood-gates of spiritual knowledge to the general public. The use of the so-called language of the gods, Sanskrit led to esotericism, elitism and exploitation. With Marathi, on the other hand, the Varkari leaders established a dialogue with and within the entire community of the local people. Through, their religious discourse in Marathi, the Varkaris affirmed the sanctity of this popular language on par with Sanskrit.

## **IRRELEVANCE OF CASTE SYSTEM**

An outstanding feature of the Varkari Panth is that it has set aside the ancient iniquitous caste system in the context of *bhakti*. It proclaims God's universal love for all without discrimination. All need to be liberated and therefore people of all castes, high and low have the right and the privilege of enjoying blissful communion

with God through loving, self- surrender and devotion.

In the celebrated 13th century text, Jnaneshvari, Krishna says to Arjuna

Regard any being whatsoever that you meet as being God.  
Know this for sure, to be my *bhaktimarga*.<sup>15</sup>

What is of decisive significance is total and intense devotion to the Lord.

Therefore what matters here is devotion.

The caste is of no value whatever.

Therefore, clan, caste and class (*varna*) is all of no avail.  
O Arjuna, here oneness with me is the only thing that fulfils.<sup>16</sup>

Discrimination is incompatible with true religion. Affirmation of unity and fellowship of all human beings is at the heart of religion.

The religion of the Vaishnavas regards that the world is one with God.

Tuka says all organs are limbs of one body.<sup>17</sup>

The Varkari Panth has never been sectarian and ghettoist precisely because it was never identified with any particular caste. The Ramdasi Panth founded by Ramdas in 17th century in Maharashtra has been closely associated with the high caste Brahmins.<sup>18</sup> The Varkari Panth, on the other hand, became a movement of the entire community cutting across caste-based distinctions. The Varkari saints came from all castes. Jnaneshvar, Visoba Khechar, Parisa Bhagvat, Eknath were all Brahmins. Goroba was a potter, Savta a gardener and Sena a barber; Chokhamela, Raka and Banka were Mahars. Rohidas was a tanner and Narahari a goldsmith.

## RECOGNITION OF WOMAN

Traditional Hinduism had discriminated against women too. The Varkari movement opened spiritual treasures to women on terms

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of equality. Women were allowed and encouraged to be Varkaris. A number of them were also recognized as leader, spokespersons and saints. The abhangas of Muktabai, Janabai and Bahinabai who are revered as saints are read, recited and sung with reverence and devotion.<sup>19</sup> The Varkaris' consistent reference to God in terms of mother has helped in integration of sexes.

A highly respected scholar in Maharashtrian mysticism, R.G. Dhare writes,

There was an inequality-stricken community an inner longing for the Great Mother who would take all equally close to herself; who would not pamper some regarding them high; who would not despise some regarding them low; who would not abandon some regarding them wicked. A mother who would accept all, who would equally overshadow all with her love, who would defend all and who would save all, was the inner need of the collective consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

### HINDU-MUSLIM DIALOGUE

The Varkari spirit of openness and universality went beyond the bounds and borders of the Hindu community. Maharashtra came under the control of Islamic powers after the fall of the Hindu rulers, the Yadavas of Devgiri. Given the mentality of the period in history, excesses and clashes were bound to be there in the unnatural and forced encounter of the two major religious civilizations.

In such a disturbing context of history, there were elevating examples of religious osmosis.

Narndev, Eknath and Tukaram composed hymns in Hindi. Probably they intended to address the Muslims as partners in dialogue. They employed Islamic terms like *khudayee* (concerning God), Allah (God), *Mundha* (spiritual leader), *malang (fakir)*, *darvesh* (mendicant).<sup>21</sup> Eknath's Hindu-Turk dialogue is a classic example of reconciliation, tolerance and acceptance. Initially they distrust and argue with each other. But as their dialogue proceeds they both get enlightened and admit, "Oh brother, Hindu-Muslim are both created by God."<sup>22</sup>

Sheikh Mohammed was an admirer of Tukaram by whom he

was deeply influenced. The Varkari composers let themselves be influenced by the soul-stirring mystical utterances of the Muslim sufis and vice versa. The leadership tradition (*guru parampara*) inherited by Eknath was associated with the sufi sect. The biography of Eknath's guru Janardanswami reveals close ties between the Hindu and Muslim communities.<sup>23</sup>

The well-known 19th century Hindu reformer M.G. Ranade writes,

The Hindus make common cause with the Mohamedans in their great festivals, and this feeling is reciprocated by the Musalmans, except where influences from North India intervene. Some Mohamedan fakirs have been ranked with the the Hindu saints in general veneration and there are some saints who are venerated by both communities alike. These features of tolerance and moderation have been developed in the course of centuries and they constitute some of the most stable elements of the national character.....<sup>24</sup>

The Varkaris can certainly be regarded to have contributed in a big measure towards this happy interaction between the two Hindu-Muslim faiths.

The service of *kala* celebrated in Pandharpur highlights the integrationist spirit of the Varkari spirituality. On the full moon day of *ashadha* and *kartika* (July and November respectively) the Varkaris gather in front of Gopal Krishna temple at Gopalpur about two miles from the main Vitthal temple to conduct and participate in *bhajan*, *kirtan* and *harikatha*. The final part of the service is called *kala* at which the devotees put *lahya* (puffed food grains) into each other's mouth. There is no discrimination at this worship on ground of caste, sex and status. Even religion is no bar for participation in this sacramental meal-fellowship. The Varkaris would put *lahyas* into the mouths of those belonging to other religions as well.<sup>25</sup>

It is unfortunate that the Varkari movement in our times is not in the vanguard of social reform in Maharashtra. It was Jyotiba Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar who revolted against caste systems and provided an effective leadership for a radical transforma-

tion of a tradition-bound society. Even today when many groups and movements are agitating for justice and equality, the Varkaris are not in the arena.<sup>26</sup> However, as we have seen, their spirituality itself arose and conducted itself as a protest against discrimination based on caste, sex, language and so on.

It can indeed be taken as a divine blessing that the Varkari Panth is a living phenomenon in contemporary society. Many a cult have fallen prey to the onslaught of modernity and secularization. Varkarism, however, has stood the test of time. It is no mere sentimental optimism that the mystical tradition represented by Varkarism will continue to be a part and parcel of the religiosity of the Maharashtrian masses. Its characteristic ethos and message is of vital importance in the context of growing communalism in our society. The *bhakti* promoted by this tradition is *shakti* (power) for unification and integration and an antidote against communalism. True religion has all along been a call to transcend communalism. After the completion of his magnum opus *Jnaneshvari*, the high-minded author invoked the blessings of the Almighty not for himself in a selfish manner, nor for his fellow-Varkaris in communal-mindedness but for all mankind in lofty openness. "That all beings may be in deep friendship with one another. That the universe may behold the sun of righteousness. That all living beings may obtain whatever they wish."<sup>27</sup>

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## THE LIFE AND MESSAGE OF GURU RAVIDAS

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Saints and philosophers have always kept the torch burning. Their message of universal love and brother-hood have always reached the masses through their philosophy. Most of them had been poets who reached the people through their gospel of love. They were great humanist who firmly believed in the equality of man. Their contribution in the spiritual unity of India has been of immense importance. They preached the Adi-sant Parampra i.e. the cult of Bhakti or complete surrender to Almighty God which is omnipresent. Guru Ravidas was one of the great poets and mystics of the fifteenth century. He took himself the task of spreading the message of righteousness and devotion to God. He occupies a unique place in Hindi and Punjabi literature. He influenced the masses with his simple words, oneness of God humanism and morality.

Guru Ravidas was a great philosopher, an unusual religious

figure, who rose to be hailed as one of the most prominent saints of his time and the distinction of kings, queens and men of eminence accepting him as their spiritual guide. He had also been inspiring on a mass level the seeker after truth all over India, showing them a direct way to wisdom and impressing upon their mind the true meanings of existence, freedom and human destiny. The revivalist movement in medieval India was pioneered by him and furthered by other equally great teachers all over the country.

Guru Ravidas, though belonged to a poor family, that of a cobbler, yet by virtue of a saint the high caste people acknowledged him as a great religious teacher or Guru. The followers of Guru Ravidas in India and abroad not only consider him as a poet of extra-ordinary perceptions and sensibility but treat him as their revered Guru. They are known as Ravidasis so called Adidharmis. Thus, the society recognised his greatness and sainthood. He himself has said that learned Brahmins used to lie prostrate before him. Supporting this, Nab-hadas has said that all people irrespective of castes and status in life offered their respectful salutation to him. Sant Kabir has said that Ravidas is one of the shirkmani saints. Mirabai had the distinction of accepting him as her Guru. According to Dr. K.M.Munshi, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was a disciple of Ravidas. A Sanskrit poet has said that in modern times the words of Ravidas paved the pathway to God realisation. He was the first among the Nirguna saints who advocated for the religious heritage and disseminated the reality about the Almighty God.

The messengers of God carrying the message from the Almighty, come in the form of Saints and Mystics, impart the message of love and devotion for God and take their disciples and devotees back to the Lord. Guru Ravidas appeared in this world when the ritual-oriented and caste-ridden society of India needed a powerful jolt and needed spiritual guidance in order to get rid of its religious dogmas and ritualistic practices.

It was in Seergovardhanpur, Banaras that Ravidas born during the period of Muslim rule, characterised by an intense struggle and interaction among religious, social and political forces, systematic efforts were being made to weaken the religions of Indian origin. The weaker sections of the society were being doubly oppressed.

They were facing repression by their political masters and were also the victims of the cruelties of the higher castes.

Guru Ravidas was the embodiment of spiritual divinity and from childhood showed spiritual wisdom and fearlessness. When he grew up he found the social degradation atmosphere choking. He could not tolerate the indignities to which his fellow beings were subjected on account of caste distinctions. His mind revolted to see the pitiable conditions of Dalits. He, therefore, took up the cudgels for equal status of all human beings in religious and social spheres. In his *vani* he has even addressed God saying "What difference is between you and me ?" Then he answers himself saying "It is like water and its waves are gold and its ornaments." A divine personality with such a high connection, would not accept the superiority of the Brahmins. In order to shatter the vanity of dogmatic religious leaders Guru Ravidas started doing Pooja in the usual Brahmins way. At this the religious leaders became furious and took the matter to the court of the king. The king gave hearing to both the parties. The orthodox and flimsy grounds of objections of the Brahmins could not stand in the face of divine truth. The Brahmins lost their case and this was first triumph for Guru Ravidas in his struggle for religious justice and equality.

A fearless crusader against ritualism, casteism and the priestly order, Guru Ravidas strove to establish the dignity of man. This gave a heavy blow to untouchability practised by the Brahmins. Then he established common claim on Ganga water irrespective of caste and creed. This was another milestone on the road to social justice and equality. Now he rose from the lowest state of an untouchable to the highest state of a Saint and did not suffer from inferiority complex. His initiation into the spiritual life must have invited the fury of the Brahmins. Their opposition continued for a long time without in the least affecting the devotional activities of Guru Ravidas. He continued worshipping God alongwith his disciples because his approach was realistic and practical. It convinced the weaker sections of the purity and dignity of their caste and profession. His efforts gave altogether a new outlook and attitude to the people of India. In this he emphasised the purity of labour. It was in the vision of Guru Ravidas the downtrodden castes found their social and religious freedom. He clearly demonstrated

that a man becomes great not by family in which he is born, but by the spiritual work that he accomplishes.

The poems of Guru Ravidas reflect his view of religion. He holds that religion is the basic need of a man. Man has a religious instinct. This instinct is different from the instinct of art of expression. Religion is thus not a drink or opium, food or bread, dance or art. It is unique and is of its own kind. It cannot be placed into the procrustean bed of any other experience. The religious experience, as Guru Ravidas says, present both the sun and the moon together before the devotee at one and the same time. It is blissful knowledge. In other words, it is wisdom or knowledge tampered with feeling or enjoying emitting enlightenment. According to Guru Ravidas, God is not to be perceived by the human senses, but to be realised intuitively, like the drop merging in the ocean which cannot know the ocean, but can become one with it. God is the one God. There is no scope for duality or trinity for HIM. All are equal in the eyes of God and all have an equal right to love and worship HIM.

One characteristic emphasis of Guru Ravidas in his description of nature of God is that God has been described as the cherisher of the poor, protector and uplifter of the downtrodden, who shows His grace without the consideration of high or low. He is pioneer of their just cause against the inequalities among men created by the dominating priestly class.

According to Ravidas, the Guru is like the sun, who dispels the ignorance of the seeker. The Guru is the supreme philosopher's touchstone that transforms the life of the seeker. Following the instruction of the Guru the seeker comes to realise God in the heart. For the seeker Guru's word is 'Name'. The seeker should put his faith in the word of the Guru and contemplate upon it. The content of name is nothing but God. Name is the total expression of all that God is. God's revelation for the seeker is contained in name. The name in the verses of Guru Ravidas had been called the divine wealth, the divine knowledge of the divine love within the easy access of man, the taste of God and the Supreme essence of the nature of God.

Guru Ravidas is the eradicator of irreligion from among the

masses of India. His religious contribution consists in reviving and revitalising the essential spirituality that had been lost in the eternal formalism and ritualistic practices devoid of inner content. Mirabai has rightly said that Guru Ravidas is a great guru and his guidance is comfortable and infallible. He has given us the religion of man and armed against irreligion. Self-culture or spiritual culture which is devoid of a theism is the religion of man. Everything else is irreligion. Thus, he purged the spirit of religion from the outward wrong practices. In this way he reunited and restored the divorced spirit of religion to life through his songs and hymns which are full of humility and devotion.

Saint poets like Namdev of Maharashtra, Sankaradeva of Assam, Guru Nanak of Punjab and Mirabai of Rajasthan have played a vital role in cultural exchanges from Maharashtra to Punjab and from Assam to Rajasthan. Their contribution in the national harmony of India has been by far the best. Guru Ravidas was one of the glittering stars in the galaxy of these saint poets who moulded the minds of the people with their message of equality of mankind and revived Adi-Dharma through, the instrument of Bhakti throughout the country.

In one of his hymns, Guru Ravidas gives an interesting account of Begampura (the city of no pain). This in fact is the description of the state of liberation or the kingdom of God. It is a place free from sorrow and pain, free from the cares and worries of the world, and from the fear of being fallen away from the Lord. It is a place of eternal bliss, where contented persons, free from desire and greed, dwell. It is a place where there is freedom from all kinds of restraints. The company here is that of the liberated and holy person. The attainment of this state is the final and of all the religious strivings. The characteristics of the redeemed person are not different from God. He in fact is a god on earth. His life now is a tool in the hands of God to further his purpose of redeeming the whole mankind.

Though Guru Ravidas was born in Uttar Pradesh, but he travelled to distant places all over India and he has a lot of following. These days Guru Ravidas Birth Day is celebrated besides Uttar Pradesh in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maha-

rashtra, Bihar and West Bengal and also by migrants from Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in foreign countries like UK, USA, Canada, Malaysia and other places. He is thus, a national Saint.

Guru Ravidas never interested in worldly pleasures. He stood for universal brotherhood and preached for classless society. Hundreds of hymns are preserved in the "Adigurvani" a holy book of Ravidasi Sect and about 40 Shabdas are included in the Guru Granth of Sikhs. A beautiful sacred Guru Ravidasdharm (Guru Ravidas Memorial) has been built at the native place of this Great Prophet at Sreergoverdhanpur, near Banaras Hindu University, where lakhs of people have darshan and pay their homage on the auspicious occasion of birth day on Maghi Purnima every year. Followers of Guru Ravidas from far and wide places in the country and even tourists from abroad used to have darshan of this Dharamsthan. Guru Ravidas's teachings of human equality and brotherhood in the present day caste, creed and colour torn world is of great importance. Therefore, his spirit and ideals continue to guide and inspire us.

Courtesy - Voice of the Weak

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## SWAMI

### DAUD ALI



#### PRELUDE

India is a land of mysteries and mystics. Mysticism is the spirit of Indian religions — whether Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism or even Islamic Sufism. The heritage of ancient wisdom of India enlightening on God-realisation through self-realisation by spiritual journey within the human body is not only priceless but also has its shadow on the philosophy and mystical practices adored by any seeker of the truth, wherever he comes from or belongs to.

India has produced or sheltered many great saints and Masters who have always been a source of inspiration to a seeker. One may come across the names of towering personalities like Khwaja Moinuddin Chishty of Ajmer, Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia of Delhi, and many others in India Sufi orders, and also saints like Tulsidas,

Tukaram, Nmdev, Ramdas, Nanak, Kabir, Paltu, and Rohidas to name a few great souls, whose teachings were above all ceremonial practices in religions, with oneness of purpose to salvage humanity with real unity.

The Indian mysticism is exalted in the Sant tradition (sant mat)<sup>1</sup> which has crossed the frontier between the Hindu and the Muslim blocks and succeeded, to some extent, in establishing communal harmony in the country in the past. Kabir, for instance, ruled out any difference between 'Ram' (Hindu term) and 'Rahim' (Muslim term) by referring to 'Ram' as the supreme reality which has nothing to do with the divinized Hero of the Ramayana. In the Sant tradition, thus, Ram is the Divine Name Par Excellence which simply means God.

In modern times, the Sant tradition is revived in a refined form by the Radha Soami movement. The beginning of the Radha Soami movement can be traced back to 1861 at Agra when its founder *Param Sant* Shri Shiv Dayal Singh Ji popularly called 'Soamiji Maharaj' started publicly preaching his interpretation of the teachings of Guru Nanak and Kabir in terms of *Surat-Shabd Yoga*. It is said that Soamiji Maharaj had no proclaimed Guru, except that he and his family had a close association "of great love" with a holy man Tulsi Sahib who lived in Hathras — a place just 20 miles away from Agra.

The *Sar bachan* (Essential Teachings)- the collection of prose and poetry — written by Soamiji Maharaj is regarded as the primal document of the Radha Soami Path/Faith.

For want of space and time, it is out of the scope of this paper to give any historical account of the progress of the Radha Soami Panth. However, it may suffice to note that there emerged various branches/sects of the Radha Soami movement after the departure of the founder, as has been the usual case with almost all religions or mystic orders in this world. There are at least, five major sects of the Radha Soami movement:<sup>2</sup>

- ❑ The Soami Baug Group at Agra.
- ❑ The Radha Soami Satsang Beas or Dera Group at Beas in Punjab.
- ❑ The Delhi Group of Baba Garib Das.

- ❑ The Dayal Bagh Group at Agra.
- ❑ The Gopi Ganj Group of Maharishi Shiva Bharat Lal.

The Soami Bagh group claims to have direct original lineage with the founder. There were three successors to Soamiji Maharaj, namely: Rai Saligramji (called Huzur Maharaj), Majaraj Saheb and Babuji Maharaj.

After Babuji Maharaj's death in 1949, there was no recognised Master to initiate, and the Group's affairs were managed by Shri Sant Das Maheshwari, P.A. to Babuji Maharaj, till his death in 1982 and his sons now probably supervise the activity. It is but natural that in the absence of a living master, the progress of the Soami Baug Group's activity has been rather slow. Still, it is claimed to have many followers including foreigners and a few Muslims too.

The Radha Soami Satsang Beas or Dera group, however, has the largest following today. It has also a living Master and a sound and systematic organisation. It has also maintained friendly relations with the parent body.

Other groups, Dayal Bagh, Delhi and Gopiganj groups have the least following. There is also no cordial relations among these groups with the parent body.

Though there are no significant doctrinal differences among the several branches of the Radha Soami movement, one would notice a marked difference in their organisational structures and leadership style. The Beas Group has created an imposing and impressive organisation at Dera under the unmatched/able spiritual leadership of its Masters. To-day, it has become so popular that for all practical purposes, when anybody talks of Radha Soami Path, mostly he is *per force* referring to the Radha Soami Satsang Beas or Dera Group.

## II

### **RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS**

Rai Shaligramji and Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, two chief disciples of

Soamiji Maharaj, led the systematized movement of Radha Soami teachings to a great spread after the departure of the founder in 1978. Rai Saligramji confined to building the movement in Agra. Baba Jaimal Singh Ji established a separate branch of the movement called Radha Soami Satsang Beas at Dera near Beas in Amritsar District in Punjab. His followers regarded him as the Sat Guru, who was Master from 1878-1903. His successor was Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji, who was Master from 1903-1948, affectionately called "The Great Master" by his disciples, having initiated 1,24,000 devotees. His successor was Maharaj Sardar Jagat Bahadur Singh Ji, Master from 1948-1951. His successor is the present living Master Maharaj Charan Singh Ji, since 1951. The Dera Group (Radha Soami Satsang Beas) has its hey day of progress and spread under the spiritual leadership of the present Master Sat Guru Maharaj Charan Singh Ji. which would be the envy of other groups, including the Soami Bagh Group as well as other cults and spiritual organisations in India and abroad. He is spiritually leading a trans-national movement of Radha Soami teachings with its international network of over 360 local centres in India, Europe, North and South America, Africa, the Middle East and the Far East. Today, the Beas Dera has become a dream town functioning as a residential community, as well as a sort of Radha Soami Vatican.

To any impartial observer, Maharaj Charan Singh Ji Huzur Maharajji — (as popularly called by his disciples) possesses a magnetic personality which would fascinate even a non-believer. In his spiritual discourses, at a time, over a lakh of men and women sit, in a city like Bombay or Delhi, for his *darshan* and to seek his blessings and spiritual guidance. Yet, he is found to be modest, unassuming and has compassionate humbleness. He is cosmopolitan in outlook and treats all men as his brothers. A westerner would perhaps call him a serene-minded yogi, a practical man and a polished perfect gentlemen:

A spiritual leader like Charan Singh Ji, with a social touch, devoid of ego of fame and name, bestowing immense love to mankind and his organisation and mission for salvation towards unity with the Supreme Being is remarkable in achieving and maintaining communal harmony.

## III

## TEACHINGS AND TENETS OF RADHA SOAMI PATH

To understand the role of Radha Soami Path (irrespective of its many sects and sub-sects and their all differences) in the context of promoting communal harmony, it is essential to know its basic teachings and tenets. Here an humble attempt has been made to present a synoptic account in this regard.

Radha Soami Path is not a new religion. Actually it is neither a religion nor a theosophic society. It is rather a secular school of mysticism/spirituality teaching the science of soul. It provides basically a systematic scientific teaching of meditation called *Surat-Shabd Yoga*.

According to the Masters of Radha Soami Path, 'Radha Soami' is only an additional name to address the Supreme Lord — who had no beginning and has no end — people have called Him Allah, Ishwar, Nirakar, Vahiguru, Ram, Father, etc. Actually He is nameless — 'Anami Purush'. However, Radha Soami has a definite meaning. Radha means 'Soul' and Soami means 'Lord'. So, the supreme being is rightly addressed as the Lord of soul or spirit — who is the true Lord. He is *La-makan* (spaceless), but resides in the living temple of human body. Soul or *Atma (Ruh)* is a part of *Parmatma*. It has descended from the highest region of the Universe, that is, the region of '*sat-nam*' or '*Haq*' (as a sufi would call it) and has taken its abode in human body. So, one does not have to find Him elsewhere, but within oneself. To know God, know thyself. But, how to know ? The technique is suggested by the Radha Soami Path.

Most organised religions talk of *Moksha or Najat*. But, there is hardly any convincing clarification provided for an intellectual mind. Pundits and Mullas probably have failed to convey the depth of the internal meanings of the sayings of the founders of these religions which emerged from their own spiritual experience and inner realisation of the power of union with the All-mighty and could not be described properly in words. And later on those who preached on the basis of bookish knowledge could give only spiritless rituals

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in outward search of God. Such an approach often results in sectarian clashes. It also gives rise to powerful vested interests political as well as economic who fight among themselves on worldly gains.

Radha Soami Satsang's teachings have many common points to share with Sufism. It seeks inspiration from many Hindu and Muslim Saints including Dadu Dayal, Tulsi Sahib, Guru Nanak, Paltu Saheb, Kabir, Rohidas, Maulana Rumi, Shams Tabrez, Hafiz, Sarmad, Sultan Bahu, Bulle Shah, etc. Its teachings are essentially the '*Sant-mat*' teachings. To a Radha Soami Master, by *Moksha* (liberation) is meant the freedom of the soul from the inner and outer bondages of life. Inner bondages refer to mind, *indriyas* (ten organs and senses), *tatwas* (five organical conditions of matter — *Panch Mahabhut*), *Gunas* (attributes) etc., bondages of the human body in which the soul resides. External bondages are the bondages of *Maya and Kal-Jaal*, comprising wealth, family ties, ambitions, name and fame, power and successes etc. Under the influence of these bondages, the spirit is lost in the worldly attachment and loses consciousness about its original abode the - *Param tatva* from which it has descended.

In a true sense, *Moksha or Najat* is achieved when the soul or *surat* is detached (without renunciation) from these bondages of body and slavery of mind for the worldly *Maya* and Joins with its reservoir - the place of its origin — Sat Dham. (Hindus call it *Par Brahama*). To be a perfect man (*Insane-Kamil*) one has to undertake internal journey within his body, transporting his spirit back to its original abode, through spiritual practices of detaching the mind from various bondages and experiencing true liberation of soul.

Radha Soami Masters teach *Surat-Shabd Yoga* distinctively under peaceful environment of unusual fraternity, love and kindness. There exists a subtler body along with the human physical body. In this subtle body there are centres of activities bestowing psychic and spiritual sight. The master would teach how to activate these centres. The seat of soul is at the eye-centre at the middle of the two eye-brow levels called 'third eye' or '*Tisra Til*' or '*Nuqta-e-sweda*' at which one has to concentrate. Incidentally, it is explained that actually there are six lower centres in the human body, namely: *guda chakra, indri chakra, nabhi chakra, hridaya chakra,*

*kantha chakra* and *agya chakra*. It is believed that the Sufis usually concentrate to wake up the *hridaya chakra* at heart. Radha Soamists, however, begin with the *agya chakra* by concentrating at the Third-Eye focus or *Tisra-Til*. But, this is also known to some sufis, as *Qalab-i-munib*. Radha Soami Masters opine that instead of doing yogic practices to wake up the rest of the lower chakras one should start with the *agya chakra* and proceed through *sushamna nadi* on the astral plane by awakening the *Kundahni Shakti*. Muslim mystics described *Sushamna nadi* as 'Shah Rag'. In further upward journey by crossing 'Bank Nal' the seeker would reach the higher region of 'Trikuti' (or *maqam-i-Alla Hu* in Muslim Mysticism) which is the origin of our mind. From there he would proceed to *sat iok* and other higher spiritual stages. When through constant spiritual practices, soul and mind unitedly reach the spot of *Asht Dal Kawal*, the seeker starts hearing the heavenly music (Shabd) and as he drops off impurities of thoughts and actions, he starts seeing light and spiritually rises faster, with the grace of Lord, in moving towards the higher eternal region — 'Sat-lok', i.e., the reign of bliss. No detailed account of the mystical experiences could be fully narrated by the Radha Soamist or even by any Sufi Mystic, probably because it may be misunderstood. It cannot be described in words, as the taste of pudding lies in eating and not in wordings!

To a Radhasoamist, beside spiritual literature of Indian Saints like Nanak and Kabir, Maulana Rumi's "Masnavi" happens to be the main source of inspiration among other books of sufi literature.

Presumably, the origin of 'Surat-Shabd' Yoga of the Radha Soami Path may be traced to *upanishads* and *Shiv-Puran* where references are found about hearing of *Brahma-Naad*, i.e., Divine Melody (Sound Current) for the *Moksha*. Even Muslim Sufi Saints seemed to have possessed the knowledge of this yoga technique. Muslim Fakirs have referred to *Brahm-Naad* as *Sada-e-Asmani*. In Gujarat, for instance, there was a Fakir called Sattar Shah who in his devotional songs in Gujarati has made clear references of the importance of 'Shabd'.

Like most Sufis and Saints, Radhasoamists are also perfectly secular in their belief and approach that any religion is just a label to the human body for a social identification; but at a spiritual level

soul has no religion. Can God be identified with any one religion? Is Allah Muslim or Hindu? So, how can his particle an 'ansh', i.e., this human soul be identified with any particular religion? Religion in its outer sense is the innovation of mind. Radha Soami Path propagates devotion (*Bhakti*) and spiritual love by asserting that spirituality is essentially interior rather than bound up with the external forms of piety and religiosity that characterize both Hindu and Muslim customs. To a Radha Soami Master, true devotion or Bhakti lies in *Surat-Shabd Yoga*. The essence of this philosophy is probably unpalatable to many, especially, those having no inclination towards inner peace and being satisfied with outer religious beliefs and *Karamkands* or rituals. Time and again, theologians and mystics (including Radhasoamists) can not come on the same platform, for such obvious reasons.

There are three main strands in the technique of sound-light meditation prescribed by the Masters of the Radha Soami Path:

1. *Simran*,
2. *Dhyan*, and
3. *Bhajan*.

*Simiran* implies repetition of the holy names of the Supreme Being. These names are *Varnatmak* (writenable) kept in secret and revealed only to the disciple at the time of initiation or '*Nam-dar*' as it is called. It is similar to *Jap Yoga* or '*Vird*' of Allah's name suggested by Muslim mystics. It helps in concentration and purification of mind/heart. With *Simran* gradually *surat* starts winding up from below and moves up in the spiritual journey.

*Dhyan* implies contemplation on the immortal form of the Master through Darham of the living Master. It is similar to Sufi technique of concentration upon *Murshid* (guide) and reaching the state of '*fana-fil-shaikh*'. It is claimed that *dhyan* helps in retaining the *surat* at the higher level of spiritual region and visualising the radiant form of the Master, eventually.

*Bhajan* refers to listening to inner sounds — *Sultan-ul-Azkar* or *Kalame-ilahi* — which is a *dhunatmak* (not wordable) Naam. *Anhad shabd* or celestial music that is constantly reverberating within us.

Perfection in *Bhajan* is required to enjoy the real bliss of the Lord.

An important feature of the Radha Soami faith is its firm belief in the principle of 'Karma' and rebirth. A soul will get birth in the *yonis* (not necessarily human body) which would quench the unfulfilled desire at the time of death. It has to pass through the cobweb of many births (out of 84 lakh *yonis*) as per the *Karmas* — good or bad. However, it is claimed that a Satsangi is assured of his birth again in a human body, because his account lies with the master who is always Graceful. And God-realisation is possible only through him. For this reason, human life is regarded as the '*Ashraful-Makhlukat*'- the best of all the creation of God.

Radha Soami Path is a non-proselytising and purely spiritual cult. Persons from any religion, caste or creed can seek initiation from the master provided he is worthy of it. God realisation does not lie in conversion from one religion to another. Thus, Radha Soami cult does not believe in conversion from one religion to another. The Beas Group even does not preach, nor advertise or resort to publicity/propaganda.

In the Radha Soami Cult, the initiated disciple is called 'Satsangi'. A Satsangi has to be strictly a vegetarian and has to abstain from vices like intoxicants and comply with common moral and ethical principles. Like in Islam, where all Muslims are treated as brothers, in Radha Soami cult all satsangis are guru-bhais or brothers. The present author had visited many places to study mysticism/Sufism and had an opportunity to enter into conversation with some ardent followers of the Radha Soami Path (Indians as well as foreigners belonging to Soami Baug as well as Dera groups) and is impressed by their abundance of love, spiritual aspirations, respect for the fellow beings, service motives and other qualities of high character. They claimed that through Radha Soami teachings and yoga practices they have become a better Hindu, a better Sikh, a better Christian and a better Muslim !

A distinguishing feature of Radha Soami cult is that it prescribes no rituals or ceremonial festivals. It also discards recitals, penances and pilgrimages as utterly futile. It, however, observes *Bhandaras*, i.e, celebrating the anniversaries of previous Masters and at that time there are spiritual discourses and initiation prog-

ramme conducted by the living Master (as in the case of the Dera group).

## IV

### SUMMING UP

Radha Soami Path essentially, the Sant Mat<sup>3</sup> of present generation — is a distinctive mystical faith based on four elements:

- ❑ Love
- ❑ Perfect Guru
- ❑ Satsang
- ❑ Secrets of Naam (*Isme-Azam !*)

Somewhat similar to *naad-Brahm yoga*, it is a *Surat- Shabd* yoga with a modern approach of convenience and contention.

Radha Soamists consider the absolute need for a perfect Master on the spiritual path.<sup>4</sup> But, here a question is raised: How to recognise a true Master who has reached the final stage of God-realisation. Often a reply is put forward: the Master knows beforehand who is to come next and he will draw the devotees magnetically to himself ! Nevertheless, Radha Soamists are increasing in number. One may witness that right from Kashmir to Kanyakumari more and more people have become disciples of the present Beas Master Charan Singh Ji. At Beas Dera, practically, in every Bhandara programme for three consecutive days, now disciples are initiated and each day atleast over a thousand persons receive initiation.

As is common with all other religions or mystical orders, one may also find many splits in the Radha Soami movement, with differences of opinions.<sup>5</sup> Radhasoami devotees in general regard *Satguru*<sup>6</sup> to be the living Master who is considered as an incarnate form of the Absolute. Sometimes, therefore, one may witness an extreme form of *guru-bhakti* among enthusiastic Radhasoamists. To quote Juergensmeyer: "Among village followers of the movement especially, the sacred sight (*darsan*) of the living Master has powerful, even healing qualities. I have seen mothers rush to hold

up their sick children as the automobile of the present Master of the Beas branch hurries past, hoping that even such a brief exposure to such powerful spiritual energy would work its healing effects." ("The Radhasoami Revival of the Sant Tradition" in *The Sants* P. 342).

However, the present Beas Master himself makes no tall claims for any such miracle and always refer to the Lord who is omnipresent and omniscient.

Again there may be many who just join the Radha Soami cult for the sake of joining or having a psychological satisfaction of not being without a guru. Hence, all the conscious and unconscious thinking of an average Radha Soami follower, who is perhaps less devoted to spiritual yoga taught by the path, is coloured by unenlightened faith in guru and religiously visiting satsang ghar (a meeting place of devotees) weekly only as a matter of habit and probably may be enjoying only a worldly pleasure of a typical gathering there. Today, thus, like 'Ram Ram', 'Jai Shri Krishna', 'Jai Satchit Anand' etc. the phrase 'Radha Soami' is also being used as mere social convention of greeting. Some people, therefore, out of sheer ignorance of the truth may probably start treating it as another kind of a customary religion. Yet, to quote Dr. Paul Brunton: "Nowhere in this land have I come across such an amazing cult as the Radha Soamis. It is undeniably unique." (*A search in Secrets of India*, P. 247). Indeed, with its direct approach to spirituality, Radha Soami Path is devoid of all religious dogmas, fundamentalism and taboos which are responsible for dividing humanity with enmity, and its course of mysticism being very simple, with practical approach to yoga (Union with the Lord) embodied with love and fraternity, its ideals and practices may provide a source of inspiration towards integrated communal harmony in the world at large. Especially, even a so-called secular state like India needs it most today.

## REFERENCES

1. Sant Mat is the teaching of Saints. A Saint is one who has attained the highest stage in spiritual dimension and merged with Lord (*fana-fi-Allah*)
2. David Lane in his "Genealogical Tree of sant Mat Gurus and Gaddis" (unpublished chart, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, 1979) identifies about 30 different lineage of Gurus and Branches of Radha Swami Path.
3. The Dera Group insists on identifying Radha Soami with Sant Mat. However, the Agra Group distinctly asserts it as 'Radha Soami' religion. History records that the name Radha Soami was especially encouraged not by the founder, but the second guru Rai Saligram at Agra whose family members were devotees of a Krishna temple in Brindavan. Again, similarities between Radhasoami beliefs and practices with Sikhism (particularly about the semi-divine nature of the guru) might be attributed to the family background of Shiv Dayalji — the founder — whose parent were devotees of Guru Nanak. Likewise, all the Masters in Dera Group have retained their Sikh identity (For details See, Mark Juergensmeyer's article: '*The Radhasoami Revival of the Sant Tradition*' in *The Saints*, p.345)
4. Sant Mat has arderity emphasised *Guru-Bhakti* — devotion to *Sat Guru*.
5. Incidentally, though Dera or Beas Group is all powerful today, it has also some offshoots. For instance, Kirpal Singh, a close associate of Maharaj Sawan Singhji who aspired to be the next Master, started his separate group called Ruhani Satsang. Similarly, Paul Twitchell, a disciple of Kirpal Singh, started the eclectic American movement called Eckanka. Likewise, a Divine Light Mission was started by boy Guru Maharaj Ji whose family members were the disciples of Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji.
6. *Sat Guru* in its proper perspective refers to a sort of spiritual conscience, an inner voice.

## SUFISM AND INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

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SUFISM AND COMMUNAL HARMONY IN  
SINDHI POETRY

A.J. UTTAM



Sufism arose as a movement of revolt in middle period of our history against the religious fanaticism and ritualism, communal hatred and hypocrisy. It has played a very significant role of social integration and communal harmony, especially through the Sufi and Saint poets of our Indo-Pak Sub-continent. During that period both Sufi and Bhakti movements had, a great impact on our people. But by and by this force, lost its spirit of revolt and became a victim of ritualism and formalism, sectarianism and priesthood. It forgot its message of love, tolerance, oneness and respect for different faiths so much so that our country was divided on the basis of religion, resulting in the frenzy of 1947 and uprooting of people on vast scale from their homeland.

Today when we are facing a great challenge from the communal and divisive forces bent upon promoting conflict in the name of religion, caste and creed, it is very necessary to revive the spirit of

Sufi and Bhakti poets and saints. Today its modern meaning will be secularism, harmony and co-existent of different faiths and communities.

Sufism had a very great impact on Sindhi life and literature, with its humanist outlook and harmonious approach especially through the secular poetry of our great Sufi and Saint poets like Qazi Qadan, Abdul Karim, Shah Inayat, Shah Latif, Sachal Sarmast, Sami, Roohal, Bedil, Bekas, Dalpat, etc. of mid sixteenth to mid nineteenth century. So much so that there is hardly any literature of communal hue in Sindhi language, even though it has suffered a lot at the hands of communal politics, leading to the partition of the country and migration of Sindhis from Sindh to India.

All these poets had condemned communal hatred and religious bigotry and preached communal harmony and social integration, excepting the sixth and last poet the rest of the eight poets were Muslims. The first two early poets Qazan and Karim had written not much and the third poet Shah Inayat (1623- 1719 AD) was unknown before partition. He had written substantial and significant Sufi poetry but had no mass influence.

It is Shah *Lateef* (1690-1750 AD) and *Sachal* (1739- 1829) who had the mass influence and are household names for both Sindhi Muslims and Hindus till today in not only in Sindh but also in India. *Sami* (1743-1850 AD) a saint poet of Vedantism is known to literary class of Muslims only but has a mass influence among Hindus till today. The rest of the other poets had followed in the footsteps of this trimurti of "Shah-Sachal-Sami"

All these poets had passed through very harsh times of religious as well as political fanaticism. The Muslim rulers and Mullahs of those days had oppressed and suppressed their own co-religionists especially the Sufis. The two Sufi martyrs are still remembered today. The one was Makhdoom Bilawal of Suhrawardy order and the other was Shah Inayat of *Qadri order*.

Makhdoom Bilawal lived a very simple life not only himself but his family friends also. He made a will that no tomb should be built on his dead body. He believed in separation of politics from religion. He was martyred on *6th May, 1523 AD* by Argun king who sent him a gift of shoe, which had Quran hidden in it. On the false fatwa of

a Mulla for showing disrespect to the Quran, he was crushed to death in oil pressing machine - a cruel event never heard before. The other *Sufi martyr* Shah Inayat Shah (1665-1718 AD) is very famous not only in Sindh but outside also. He was the 1st Socialist leader of the Sub-continent who distributed the land among the peasants and organised their army for fighting oppressive reign of Kalhora rulers, supported by Moghul emperor Farookh siyar of Delhi. Their giant army fought with Inayats peasant army for full 6 months, but could not succeed. Ultimately they pretended peace and sent to Inayat Shah their messengers with white flags in one hand and Quran in other hand for talks. But as soon as Shah Inayat came out of his camp and went near the enemy's camp for peace talks, he was treacherously arrested. But still his people fought bravely without success. Shah Inayat did not yield to the temptations offered to him by Kalhoras and Moghuls for complete surrender. His head was cut off on 8th January 1718 by the executioners with the same sword, which was given to him by his Murshid (teacher) for his defence. The place of martyrdom known as "Jhok Sharif" has been a pilgrimage for not only Muslims but some of Sindhi Hindus also living in India.

Our greatest Sufi poet Shah Lateef (1690-1750) was a young man of 28 years when Inayat Shah was martyred. The young poet was reported to have met him and was very much influenced by his martyrdom. Lateef has paid handsome tributes to him in his '*Risalo*' a collection of poems. Not only that he had written a good number of couplets using the words "Guillotine" and "Hanging" along with the word of Great Sufi Mansoor Ul- Hallaj, in them which implies the challenge to the fanatic and oppressive rulers and Mullas. He addressed them "How long and how many people will you hang like Inayat Shah, when thousands have become Mansoor." It is reported that Mansoor-Ul Hallaj had visited Sindh and his message had a great impact on not only Shah Lateef but Sachal also, whose poetry contains the rebellious spirit of Mansoor. Shah Lateef like a true secular poet emphasised communal harmony which was disturbed due to fanaticism of Mullas who were openly and vehemently condemned by him in his poetry. At the same time he praised the Hindu Yogis who practised simple living with high thinking. He visited with them their temples and other places of

pilgrimages in Sindh for months together. He said, he saw in the temple "Satguru with Allah", thereby emphasising the spirit of co-existence. He has used the Hindu Awatars' names like Shiva and their mantra like "OM" etc. in his poems, thereby emphasising the Sufi spirit of tolerance. There are chapters after chapters on these yogis. In some poems he has criticised Yogis also for ritualism and formalism. But there is more criticism of Mullas and Maulvais, their fanaticism and conservatism. While rebuking them Latif said, "Roza and Namaz are alright, but it is some other understanding which leads us to Lord". He goes even to the extent of saying that "the real lover of God is Satan". This is against the very fundamentals of Islam and Shariat. The other forbidden thing in Islam was music. But Shah Latif considered it permissible. He held sama<sup>6</sup> (music) sessions with Muslim as well as Hindu musicians.

It is the outspoken poems of Shah Lateef which provoked one of the founders of Sindhi prose—Mirza Kalich Beg (1853-1929 AD) to say that "Shah Lateef has composed such poems which outwardly are against Shariat and can bring the charge of Kufr (heresy) against him like other intoxicated Sufis".

What Arberry said in his "Introduction to the history of Sufism" applied to the Sufi poetry of Shah Lateef also. He said "the practice of many Hindu social customs (*bid'at*) is an Indian innovation not known in other Islamic countries. Pilgrimages to shrines of the saint, giving offerings and making vows, burning *chiragh* the oil lamp with a wick over the tomb of a saint, the partaking of the sweets and food given as offering on tombs and shrines of saints as sacred things (*tabarruk*) are not indigenous to Islam, but result of the influence of Hindu environments which has also resulted in veneration for the Muslim saint, gradually merging into such phrases as are hardly distinguishable from the saint worship in Hinduism and the animistic phrases of pagan primitive religious life."

More than half of Lateef's poetry deals with Sindhi life which is influenced by Hindu customs and conventions. Almost all heroes and heroines of his poetry except 2 — 3 are Hindus from Sindhi folk tales. He has not praised a single muslim conquerors of Sind. His whole poetry is indigenous form of Bait, Wai, Kafi, Doho and

Sorto. This applies to all the Sufi poets mentioned above. Only Sachal being multilingual poet of Sindhi, Saraiki, Persian, Urdu, has used Persian prosody also along with indigenous form. Shah's poetry is based on Raags and Raaginis like other Sufi and saint poets of the sub-continent, which is one of the main cause of its popularity also. That is why Latif is beloved of Sindhi, Hindus in India also. He is one of the real people's poet not only of Sindh, Pakistan and India but also of the world. In one of his longest poem on clouds he speaks about not only of Sindh, India but other countries like China, Kabul, Turkey, Russia, etc. where the clouds have spread rain. He prays for peace and prosperity of Sindh, as well as the whole world, echoing the sentiments of Cloud-Messenger of Kalidas, the symbol of love and unity.

It is a tragedy that such people's poet has not been translated in full in Hindi and other Indian languages (except Urdu). A European Scholar Dr. H.T. Sorely, who considered Shah Latif as one of the greatest poets of the world, has published some of his poems along with his commentary, wrongly portraying him as an Islamic poet. He was attracted to him, by sheer accident, when he as a Collector of Sind in 1919, tried our well-known writer and lover of Shah Latif's poetry Jethmal Parsaram, for using a poem of four lines of Latif in his editorial written against the Britishers' killings at Jallianwala Bhag Massacre. Dr. Sorley after getting the different meanings of that poem from pro-government persons, sentenced Jethmal to 10 years imprisonment. But thereafter he himself studied Shah Latif and became his lover and devotee and even authority on him. He wrote two books in English. The other translators of Shah Latif in English are Elsa Kazi, Allana, Emil Shimel and the latest one is S. Abdul Gafoor, a Sindhi writer. In his book "Celestial Sunrise from Sindh" which contained 1/3rd of Latif's poems, more than in any other English Book, the writer has put him in the company of Krishna, Buddha, Kalidas, Tukaram, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Tagore, Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe and others and called him not only the poet of communal harmony, humanism but of world peace and amity — the real spirit of Sufism.

The other greatest Sufi poet and preacher of communal harmony and religious tolerance of Sind, "Sachal" (1739-1829) is really the rebel poet of Indo-Pak continent. The meaning of his

pen-name Sachal (i.e. truth) is most significant. When he was a boy of 6-7 years, Shah Latif had seen him a few year's before his death. He had then blessed him that "Sachal would complete the mission he had undertaken". Sachal not only fulfilled his mission but went further and rebelled against every symbol of fanaticism, conservatism, formalism, ritualism and also of oppression and suppression. He openly said "I am Mansur-al-Hallaj", "God" etc. The Late Professor L.H. Ajwani says about him "What Shah Latif had proceeded to say in narratives and songs, Sachal completed with an explosive outburst.....He was even more in revolt against the falsehood cant and silly dogmas of his times than Shelly or Hafiz .....and went on so far as to say..... 'strike the Mulla on his Pate'... He perpetrated enough heresies to have been burnt many times over by the orthodox and only the repeated intervention of the Talpur rulers saved him from a violent death and allowed him to live until the age of 90. Just think Sachal, a Muslim, saying with defiance. 'The Kalma alone cannot make me a Muslim. Sachu is the most high himself. Though called a human being'. In another place he says", if I recite Kalma, I turn a heretic".

I don't think any other Sufi poet of the world has used such an outspoken language of revolt, against the orthodox priesthood, which is a great hinderance in the way of communal harmony. In fact, he goes further to say in one poem "so long as pulpits and mosques are not made barren, real position of truth can't be achieved". He openly said, "Religion has confused the people". He has spoken of classless society and peace, necessary for communal harmony and warned the people against the Britishers also.

Professor Kalyan Advani, an authority on Sachal says, "Sachal's poetry furnishes positive evidence that he was an advocate of a new society, free from class shackles and unfettered by orthodox customs and set ceremonies. He was a fearless critic of all dogmas and dreamt of a New Age free from class and sectarian distinctions. 'Be a slave of none' he says 'uphold thy dignity'.

'Break the bonds of all customs and banish from your mind all thought of slavery. Be a hero and wear a royal turban of splendour'.

"Sachal had hinted at grave and gruesome consequences for the people of Sind because of thier disunity and discord.

He said in one of his poems. 'e

Now is the time when you should discard duality, Banish religion  
from your minds in right earnest;

Hindus and Muslims unite in the bond of love.

Before it is too late and the sun sets in the West."

And we paid the heavy price for not heeding the wise and grave warning of Sachal and lost our Sind to Britishers who left our country only after dividing it on communal and religious basis. Sachal had used many holy names from Hindu scriptures like Rama, Sita, Laxman, Hanuman, Mahadev, Krishna, Ganga, Jamuna etc. to emphasise the spirit of co-existence of different creeds and communities. Our famous modern sage and seer (Late) Sadhu Vaswani said in "A voice from the Desert" that "when some Muslims came to Sachal one day and reported that a Hindu in a village has become a Muslim. Why don't you rejoice ? Sachal smiled and said if Indeed Mulla has become a real Muslim, it would have been a matter of joy". In another place Sadhu Vaswani says about Sachal that "this great dervish of Sind asked his followers to live together in comradeship and peace. Is not this message of comradeship an urgent need of India, today ?"

The 3rd great poet of trimurti Saint poet "Sami" has also expressed same sentiments and views like Shah Latif and Sachal, by giving instances from Hindu philosophy of Vedanta and way of life. At the same time he has cited Sufi ideas, pharasology and Persian poetic symbols in good number of his poems emphasising the unity and equality of all religions and communal harmony.

Sami says, "Whether you speak *ari al-Haq* or Rama-Rama, it is same thing..... There is same essence in Quran and Puran .... Persian and Hindu Saints speak with same voice ...." He has also condemned the fanaticism and ritualism, formalism and hypocrisy of Pandit's and Brahmins, Kazis and Mullas also. He tells them that "there is Khaliq (God) in Khalq (People) and vice versa .... There is no difference between Masjid and *Maikhana* ..... Real love for god should be that of Laila and Majnu" .....

## SUFISM AND INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

It may be pointed out that Sami like Shah and Sachal came from upper class, unlike some other Sufi and Saint poets of the Indo-Sub-continent. Still he, like his predecessors, did not lag behind in exposing their class by depicting the picture of exploitation & injustice, formalism and ritualism. Being the son of a rich man, Sami had seen the ignoble role played by monied men in day to day life. At the same time he had seen the hard and struggling life of poor people, peasants etc. He therefore condemned in quite good number of poems, the mad rush of even pandit's and Kazis, after money, which he called "witch", "black faced", "Snake" etc. He also criticized big people "Mir, Mutahti, Choudhary" for their hypo-critic behaviour and misguiding preachings. While doing this he uses the Similies and Metaphors of peasants' life from sowing the field to reaping the harvest. He openly tells Hindus "I am not a dogmatist believer in Vedas" and to Muslims he said "There is hardly a Momin (real Muslim), who has banished doubt and become one with God". In his free and frank thinking Sami follows Mansur-ul-Hallaj and says "My whole body echoes An-al-Haq without duality" and "Every time Sami speaks An-al Haq with full force". This clearly shows the influence of sufism on this Vedantist poet Sami as his two Sufi predecessors Shah and Sachal had the influence of Vedantist and Bhakti philosophies. This synthesis, which emphasises the communal harmony and tolerance, love and respect for other faiths, is the main cause of the popularity and the impact of Sufi & Saint poetry of this trimurti of Shah-Sachal-Sami, on Sindhi life till today.

After this trimurti of Sufi-Saint-Poets there were number of other poets who followed them. The most popular are Rohal (1747-1835) Bedil (1814-1872) Bekas (1859-1882) Asoomal (1824) and Dal-patrai. The first 3 were Muslims. All these poets were the followers of great Sufi martyr and first socialist leader of the sub-continent *Shah Inayat Shah*. All have paid him tributes in their poetry and has preached his ideals in it. All of them have written poetry not only in Sindhi, but Hindi, and Saraiki also. It shows they had studied Sufi as well as Vedantist literature and learned Hindi and Sanskrit also alongwith Persian. One *Hindu Asumal* had even studied *Quran* and *Bible at the age of 20*. Rohal who was the oldest of all these poets wrote more poetry in Hindi than in Sindhi. There is no other such instance in Sindhi poetry. It is said that he knew Hindi and Sanskrit

so well and studied Vedantist literature, Mahabharat, Ramayan etc. so much, that he used to hold discussions with the pandits of Jodhpur where he is still remembered and he has some followers among Marwari people. He has quoted some of the names from Mahabharat etc in his poetry like Sachel. As his Hindi poetry contains much of Vedantist thought so his Sindhi poetry though not much, contains Sufi thought. Like Sachal he must be given credit for quoting profusely in his Hindi poetry from Hindu scriptures during the age of his conservative co-religionist rules of Sindh.

Rohal boldly said that "we have seen our 'Kaltar' (GOD) in Kandro" — (His living place in Sind) His unique poem emphasising communal harmony and co-existence, is still remembered today, having read in school days *50 years ago*. He says therein, "In Kufir as well as Islam they are treading the wrong paths. Some say Hindu, some say Muslim, and in between is enmity. The blind, who see only the darkness can not reach the truth. O, Rohal, when we penetrate the beloved's boundary we will see that their is one God everywhere. There is no doubt about it." Rohal's son Dariyakhani and disciple Murad Fakir are also popular about their melodious poetry of love and tolerance.

Bedil and Bekas were also father and son and gave the same message of love, tolerance and unity of all faiths. Bedil says in one poem,

"The Love is sick of Religion", In another he says, 'There is no need to study or teach scriptures. Learn only the art of self-effacement. If you are entangled in the scriptures you will never reach the destination of your beloved.'" In another poem Bedil clearly preaches unity between Hindus and Muslims. He says "Hindu and Momin are one. One will go the Mecca as Haji — The other will go to Kashi, Mathura and yet other will cry Anal Haq. Bedil will salute all"

His son Bekas though died young at the age of 23, still he enriched Sindhi. Sufi poetry with his melodious Kafis had earned a name. In one, Bekas addressing Mullas and Kazis he says

"Oh Mulla don't prattle and waste our time, Oh liar Kazi why are you covetous of people's material. You should know

the art of intoxication and stop the wasting of writing paper. This is the noose of love and medicins will not have effect on love-sickness".

The last 2 Hindi poets were named as Sufi Asoram and Sufi Dalpatrai. The 1st was elder one and Guru to the later one. Asoram was born in 1824 and Dalpatrai was born some years after and had served under the Talpur rulers. Asoram was a teacher. He had written a lot of poetry which contains a Diwan of Ghazals also. But in it the main emphasis is on Sufi and Vedantist ideas rather than romantic love. In his poetry he has specifically criticised the madness and hard heartedness (Maya) of rich people like Sami. Like his predecessors he had also emphasized the unity of different faiths to achieve communal harmony and maintained peace. He openly says:

*"Din Kufr Sabha chod Sayana — Sahib Sabh Te Niyara"*  
(Be wise and leave Islam and kufr — God is unique).

He further says

"There is only one God and see him inside your heart. He who leaves the trunk of the tree but catches its branches will lose all his intelligence"

Sufi Dalpatrai has not only conveyed his message through Sindhi only but Hindi and Saraiki poetry also, which is coupled with Sufi as well as Vedantist thoughts. He says, "God is within you. You should make your ear as Kaaba, Mouth as Mosque, Mind as faith" (i.e. *kan kaaba, Mukh Masit, Man Iman*). But his very famous poem which is still remembered today and which has brought out the essential unity of Hindu Muslim faiths and communal harmony is the following one:-

"If there is God in peepul tree, is there different one in babul tree ? If Kaaba is house of God, then what is the fault of Church ? There is one lamp of enlightenment in temple as well as Mosque. Oh Dalpat how these dissensions have come among the people".

I remember clearly that before partition in Sind this poem and

such other poems mentioned above were being recited even from public meetings to maintain communal harmony and it is because of this synthesis of Sufism and Vedantism that Hindu Muslim lived a peaceful life by and large. Late prof. L.H. Ajwani had therefore called Sindh a "House of Indian Sufism" and late Gurdial Mallick, who after visiting Sindh had published his lectures given in Tagore's Shanti-Niketan about Sindhi Sufism in the book *Divine Dwellers in the Desert* says "Sindh acquired a spirit of adaptability, elasticity and hospitality of mind."

THE INFLUENCE OF SUFISM IN THE  
GROWTH OF HINDI POETRY

RAMESH KINTAL MEGH



The whole perspective and panorama of Hindi or 'Hindavi' would change, if we donot move astray into the philosophy of Sufism and, instead, begin with the *first* national and Hindi Sufi-poet of medieval India, Amir Khusrow Dehalwi (1253- 1325), the great disciple (mureed) of the Sufi Saint Hazrat Sheikh Nizamuddin Aulia (1238-1324).

Born of an Indian mother and the Turkish father, Khusrow was a diffusion of two cultures, imbibing the best of both. Extremely proud of being an Indian, intensely devoted to 'Hindavi' as his mother tongue and profusely versed in the Turkish and Persian languages, this Sufi poet and musician has the singular honour of being the father of both the Hindi and Urdu languages through Hindavi, developed by him into its various genres, folk idioms and performing paroles, as well as its bio- polar styles of Hindi and Urdu.

His was also an age when India-born muslims organized themselves to snatch the power from the Turkish and the Slave rulers. Khiljis took the lead and captured power at Delhi. Alauddin Khilji (1296-1316), among them, was greatly admired by Khusrow, as it was during his reign that his genius flowered most. He composed five sagas (masnavis) of love and romance, and also 'Ashika', — a tale in verse about the love of Deval Devi and Khijr Khan Khilji. For centuries, his ghazals, masnavis and qawwalis have charmed the people and, even today his ghazals are sung not only in Delhi, Lucknow and Bhopal, but also in Lahore, Karachi, Tashkent and Azerbaijan.

Sufism evolved out of the socio-economic contradictions of the medieval Islamic world.

The dominance of the monolithic Arab state power (7c- 9c A.D.) was based on theo-centrism of Kaba and the politico- centrism of the Caliphate. With the subsequent spread of Islam to Asia and Africa (10c — 14c A.D.), its ethnic composition was extremely broadened. The inclusion of local tribes, newly converted princes, and more advanced urban civilizations posed a tremendous non-Arab challenge.

A differential Muslim culture emerged within the Islamic world. To the older groups of the Islamic power — weilders like the Caliphs, Sultans, Salars, Vizirs, Quazis, Subedars etc, were added different kinds of craftsmen, merchants and traders to enhance the new forces of production needed to produce items for warfare, feudal grandeur, courtly enjoyments and domestic consumptions. It was accompanied by the development of scientific attitude (al-Ghazali), natural Sciences (Ibn Sina), Craftmanship (Mohammad Khoja Naqsh-bandi), new merchandise and revenues. It also led to the spread of education, search for new knowledge, and also to the rapid secondary urbanization. The conflict between the Arab power and the regional national powers became sharper, especially in Central Asia, India and Iran.

As a result, there was, first, the blunting of orthodoxy of shariat; secondly the rise of the non-Arab thinkers, like Abu-Lababa bin-Hashim, Ms Rabia Basri (10th C), Omar Khayyam (second half of 11th C) etc etc. As these contradictions became more acute, there

was a radical emergence of polar or alternate epi-centres:- the quazi vs the dervesh, the Calipha vs the Sufi sheikh, Kaba vs Khanqah; the mosque vs the dargah; the sultan vs the folks; and the classical languages vs regional dialects. The class alienation of religion was manifest in so many ways as such.

In India, the problem assumed socio-cultural dimensions of challenge and response. The effective advent of Sufi saints and poets in India became perceptible during the phase of Asianization of Islam (10c-14c A.D.), also associated with the synthesis of a composite Hindu — Muslim culture and the various provincial vernaculars (dialects and idiolects) of Hindavi. The major thrust in the cultural leap was provided by the Sufis, who served as a bridge between these two major communities. Baba Sheikh Farid Shakarganj (1173-1265) was the melting pot of the Sufi cult of love and the nirgun order of saint mysticism. His Khanqah had all its windows open equally to all: the Hindu Yogis and the Khwajas. His were the unique ways of God-realization, a worldly life of innocence and masochistic restless experience of the divine love. He was the master of three languages — *Multani*, *Panjabi* and *Hindavi*. His bani (kalam) has been incorporated in Sri Aadi Granth (17th century). He was followed by Amir Khusrow Dehalvi. He also abandoned two of the accepted languages of medieval Hindi poetry. In the first one, i.e., Rajasthani, the *dingal* poetry was prevalent while in the second namely, *Apabhramsha* oriented (sandha) *Bhakha*, the poetry of the Siddhas and the Jains was being composed. Khusrow endeavoured to transform the common speech of the people into a literary language 'Hindavi' which he regarded as not being second to either Persian or the Arabic. In accordance with the principles of Sufism, he pleaded the oneness and unity of man and the God; replaced the concept of maya with that of Iblis (shaitan); and propounded the four stages of God-realization, viz; *shariat*, *tariqat*, *marifat* and the *haqiqat* meaning thereby the unity of God and man and the acceptance of Mohammad as his prophet; the purification of the devotee who would be led by the Pir, the devotee knowing the secrets and mastering the miracles and merging one into the Godhood after overcoming all the obstacles respectively. Such a path of mystical journey had since then been transformed and symbolised into love, between the lovers

(*mithunas*) or the couples (*damatis*). Similarly, Khusrōw elevated the worldly (*makrooh*) and the sensuous (*haram*) stages of music into the God-oriented and the God-dedicated (*hala*). He also brought about a synthesis of Indian and Iranian music with seven and twelve notes respectively. In a nutshell, the Indian Sufis, with certain exceptions, of course, believed in the 'tauheed' (only oneness) of Allah, and not in the 'aikashwarvad of the Brahma of Nirgunitia saints. In their works, there are clusters and sets of terminologies of the contemporary Naths, Yogis and the Vaishnavas. As we know that during the 12th and 13 centuries A.D., the systems of religious practices of the Naths and the Yogis were widely practised and the Indian Sufis not only learnt from, but also adopted them. They had the wonderful tendencies of mobility and adaptability. Even during the times of Addahman (1170-1213 A.D.) the cities of Multan and Lahore were centres of Brahmins, Buddhists Siddhas and Mussalmans. In the eleventh century the caves of the Siddhas and the Khanquahs of the Sufis co-existed harmoniously. The '*Surati-yoga*' ( सुरति-योग ) of the Naths and Sants was also assimilated as '*surai-sangi*'. The Sufi concept of love is also bi-polar-*ishke-maja zi* and *ishq-e-haqiqi*. And the love *ishq* central to Sufism — is nothing but a divine mystery (*Sirre-ilahi*); for Allah is nothing but beautiful (*jameel*) and loving his own beauty (*jama*). Therefore it is not a mere coincidence that the 'Geeta-Govind' by the Sanskrit poet Jayadeva (middle of 13th C), also reveals the similar bipolarity of sacred and profane love. The tradition was carried on by Chai-tanya Mahaprabhu (1485-1533) in the exposition of '*parkiya-rati*' and by the Krishna-vaishnavites in elucidation of *mahabhava* (supreme emotion) of love.

A poetic language richly ingrained by signs and symbols, analogies and allegories, and competent enough to perform the exotic religious practices was the medium for Buddhist tantriks and the Sufis. The 'ulatabanshis' by *Kabir* and 'dristakoots' by Soordas are such examples from the different schools. Jayadeva's 'Geeta Govinda' is ritually sung every night before Lord Jagannath in the temple at Puri. Though its poetic style at the surface reflects sensuous love and erotic desires, but in its deeper levels the mystical union of God and the human soul is signified. Similarly the poetic works of Mula Dawood and Malik Mohammad Jayasi have

greater significance because of the semiotic layers inherent in them. It has been reported by Mulla Abdul Qadir Badayuni that 'Chandayan' (of Mulla Dawood) was most popular amongst the contemporaries because of its latent layers of meanings and it was duly recited from the pulpits of mosques at Delhi. Its importance, then, was parallel to the works by Rumi (1207-1273), Attar (1136-1230) and Sheikh Saadi (1184-1292). Because of its competence for elaborate expressionism of the symbolic, semiotic and the mystical, Hindi, alongwith its dialects, was extremely popular with the Sufis. The urban citizenry and the rural folks were usually familiar with these conventions. The Khanqahas, abode of Sufi derveshas, were the centres for propagating social awareness and the spiritual culture by them. An environment of equality and fraternity pervaded over there wherein thousands of rich and the poor, oppressed and the untouchables would assemble. Those centres maintained a sort of ethical balance in the rigid medieval society. They left their imprint over the renaissance of the Bhakti (14-15c A.D.). That influence is clearly perceptible especially in Kabir, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and Namdeva. The teachings and the norms of Khanqahas as institutions, had their immense reformist impact upon the caste conflicts, class- conflicts, political upheavals and multifarious immoralities of contemporary society. The Bhakti movement owes its deep debts to such Sufi ethos also for its humanistic goals of human love and the equality of all men before God. The Allah of the Arabs was in Kaba, but the Khuda of the Sufies was everywhere and anywhere . The feudal class-contradictions betrayed such social polarities. However, the class-stratifications within the medieval order of Muslim Sultanates necessitated certain groups of Sufis aligning themselves as *murshids* with Sultans and Subedars who sought the legitimacy of their sovereignty; Sans Kaba and the Caliph. The decline of some of the Sufi orders and the downfall of the Muslim social order was thus brought about gradually. What else could be expected of Sufi Ali Makhdoom Hujveri (1020 C) who settled in Lahore along with the Subedar Masood Ghaznavi. The Sufi influence among the newly converted artisans, craftsmen and lower castes was eroded and they alternatively sought after new utopias in profane romances (Akhyanas), Yoga and tantra, and also in the avatar motifs of redemption (mukti).

The radical change is clearly visible by the 15th century when the Sufis not only made reproachment with the lexicons of Buddhist tantriks, Siddhas, Naths and the Sants, but also produces various amalgams out of the different sets of terminologies and prepared newer semantic register. Mir Abdul Wahid Bilgrami bears testimony to such religious transformations. Malik Mohammad Jayasi is now followed by a galaxy of Hindi Sufi poets like Shah Sayyad Ahmed, Shah Sayyed Barkatullah 'Premi', Aalam, Raskhan, etc., who also adopted Vaishnavite terminologies. However, this cultural exchange was reciprocal and much deeper. We find the Sufi psychic condition of *haq* getting metamorphosed with mahabhava of the *bhakti*.

Another Sufi poet Sheikh Kutuban of Jaunpur, in his 'Mīrgavati' (1503 A.D) an epic of love and romance, has elaborated seven types of mystical experiences to meet the Beloved (God as feminine), in accordance with the Sufi canons. Being an alim as well as a pandit, the poet has profusely utilized Hindu mythology, astrology and many a religious symbol to weave a wonderful tale which culminated to preach oneness and the unity of God. Yet the tale is an imaginary one.

Assimilating the historically relevant elements, Jayasi followed the tradition of Khusrow's *masnavis*, 'Chandayan' (1379) and 'Mīrgavati' (1503) etc to create one of the two best supreme Hindi (Avadhi) epics, 'Padmavat' (1540 A.D). A combination of the classical and the romantic, historical and the imaginary, Sufi and the yogic, tantric (padma, ratna, nag) and the clanish elements of Rajputs for exposition of his world-view, plot, symbolization, conventions and motifs respectively, PADMAVAT has to be accepted as a supreme achievement of medieval. Hindi poetry in the Sufi branch of the nirguna school. There is systemic mobility from the rural to urban; folks to classes, lingua to parole, signs to symbols, metaphors to metamorphosis etc and this dynamism of binary oppositions generates brilliance of the best of Hindu and Muslim ethos in its composite unity, harmonious cultural identity and Indianness of the literary tradition. The pro-liferation of this rich heritage continued to 'Madhumalati' (1545), especially in the exposition of the spiritual methodology of Love and Beauty, in all its diverse and mystical ramifications. And the influence of tradition

was relayed and replayed for the growth of 'Chitravali' by Usman, 'Hans Jawahir' by Quasim Shah, and 'a host of other such works. From 17th century onwards, quite a few Sufi poets translated in Dakhni Hindavi the major persian *masnavis*. It was initiated by Mullah Ghawasi during the reign of Quli Qutab Shah and reached its zenith in 'Yusuf Zulekha' by Sheikh Nissar.

The reflexive Hinduization of Sufism of Central Asian type, led to the organic growth of Indianization, to the composite Hindu-Muslim or Hindustani Renaissance during the four centuries (10 -14c A.D) of medieval India. The Sufi poets adopted The Hindu Aakhyayikas (love tales) deeply embedded in the collective unconscious of the folk-psyche. They neither hurt the religious sentiments of the Hindoos nor coerced their world-view through distortions or deceptions. Rather, they regained the human innocence and the restlessness in human life through spiritual development. They were thoroughly engrossed in the eternal problem of the history of religion namely, how to explain the role of evil and how to cope with it. The *maya* has been replaced by the shaitan (satan), whose fate illustrates the results of pride (*Aham*) and intellectual conceit (*Buddhi*). Alauddin Sultan in 'padmavat' is allegorised as the satan. Counterposed to him is Darvesh like Yogi Ratnasen constituting the principle of fruitful restlessness in human life by renouncing sensual pleasure and worldly life to be able to realize some deeper levels of human experience through certain stage of the love of feminine God (*ishqe-majazi*). The Sufi erotica is bi-polar: of the *ishqe-majazi* and *ishqe-haqiqi*, of the wife and the beloved, of the Yogi and the murid, of agony and ecstasy, of miracles and innocence, and of profanity and mysticism. Therefore it reveals its meanings on to various channels.

The similitudes between the nirgun Sufi *sadhana* and the sagun Vaishnava *bhakti* have also mingled in harmony. Both the ideologies disdain the intellect (gyan, buddhi) as the (sole) guide for the spiritual progress; both are romantically wedded to love and beauty and both glorified suffering for self-purification. Such a manifestation of the 'eternal feminine' is a radical departure from the feudal cultural system. Almost they believe that love is the prime cause of creation; love and beauty are the sustainers of the cosmos; the love of creation leads us on towards the love of God; love is the creator

of the divine knowledge; love and agony are the twins; love is one and indivisible; love is not realized without beauty and one must sacrifice oneself, in the fire of love. So complex are these ways of eros and psyche in Sufi humanism.

The intermingling of the two phases or the dialectical dyads had far reaching effects in the confluence of two cultures. Kabir and Guru Nanak illustrate the two aspects of love (ishq) by *Duhagan* and *Suhagan* types of womanhood. Jayasi narrates them as mutually complementary in the characters of Nagmati and Padmavati. Meerabai combines the sweetness of sagun trend with the pathos of the Sufi trait:

राम मिलण के काज सखी, मेरे आरति उर जागी री ।  
तलफत तलफत कल न परत है, विरह बाण उर लागी री ।  
जिस दिन पथ निहारू पीव को, फलक न फल भरि लागी री ।  
पीव पीव मै रूढ़ अत दिन, दूजां सुधि बुधि भागी री ।

सोच सोच पग धरर जतन से बार बार डिग जाइ ।  
ऊचा नीचा महल पिया का हमसे चढा न जाइ ।  
पिया दूर पथ म्हारो झीणों सुरत झकोला खाइ ।  
मीरा के प्रभु गिरधर नागर सतगुरु दई बताइ ।  
जुगन जुगन से बिछडी मीरा घर में लीन्ही लाइ ।

It would not be an exaggeration to propose that it was a parallel romantic current, feeble as it was and called by the name of *Reeti-mukta dhara*, in the later phase of the medieval mannerism that fully exhibited the feudal decadence through rivalry and revelry, sensuality and immorality, which owed its inspiration to the Sufi sensibility. Some of the poets revolted against mediocrity and mannerism of the Reeti-tradition and joined the romantic band of liberated poets of love and beauty. Though the spiritual dimension in them is blurred, yet they are clearly against the sexuality and lust; they have certainly transformed their 'ishq-majazi' into the 'ishq-haquiqui'; they have elevated the woman of pleasure and dance into that one divine feminine. Among such romantic rebels of the later medieval period (18-19c A.D.) prominent ones were

Ghananand (1803-1853), Thakur (1766-1823), Bodha (Beginning of 18th century). Almost all of them were also under the deep influence of the Sufi cult of the agony of love (*prem ki peer*). 'Ishqlata' by Ghananand and 'Ishqnama' by Bodha are the glowing examples. Ghananand bravely accepts the motto.

संजोगी इश्क से, इश्क कियोगी खूब ।  
 आनंद घन चस्मों सदा, लगा रहे महबूब ॥  
 लगा इश्क ब्रजचन्द सों, सुन्दर अधिक अनूप ।  
 तब ही "इश्कलता" रची, आनंद घन सुख रूप ॥इश्कलता"2-4"

In their epical works, Ghananand and Bodha are ever intoxicated with the love of and restless in the separation from the beloved. The romantic agony leading to mystical ecstasies and tragic nemesis overpowers them. \*Likewise the poets Thakur and Aalam have transcended from the beauty and love of human body, to all loving and beautiful beings and ultimately to the ideals of Love and Beauty as such. Yet those four or seven stages of spiritual realization, as well as the thematic symbolizations of characters and events have faded out of the literary system, by now.

It has, of course, emerged in another *dynatype* of the Baramasa. The dominant Sanskrit-cum-Prakrit tradition of 'Shatritu' ( षट्क्रतु ) for the pleasure and beauty of the couples (dampati) and lovers (mithunas) has been gradually replaced by the continuous agony of separation of the beloved (*nayika*) during all the twelve months divided into six seasons of the year alongwith her differentiated yearnings and sufferings. This rural and folk tradition was utmost popularized by the Sufi poets and it persists even to this day in our literary culture as a whole.

Furthermore, it appears that the Sufi influence has become a strong archetype in our cultural pattern. Whenever there is a glow and glory of human love and the romantic spirit, there would be a sudden golden burst of the Sufi motifs and symbols. In the Romantic age of Hindi poetry, aptly called "Chhayavada" (1918-1935), this influence re-emerged in many a direction.

The rubaiyyats of Omar Khayyam had become a craze, only to be matched by the 'Gitanjali' of Rabindra Nath Tagore. The Rubais, as we also know through Fitzgerald, are profusely tinted with Sufi-imagery, and they have been variously translated by Hindi poets of different schools and periods. Among such poet-translators are Maithili Sharan (Umar :1931), Giridhar Sharma Navratna' (1931) Gupta Khayyam Keshav Prasad Pathak (Khayyam ki Rubaiyan; 1932), Harivansha Rai 'Bachchan' (Khayyam ki Madhu Shala 1935), Sumitra Nundan Pant (Madhujwala) and others. Bachchan even composed many tendencious lyrics original rubais in 'Madhu-shala' (1935), and 'Madhubala' (1936). An illustration from the translation of Pathak would reveal much:-

" आ, प्रियतम ! ढाल प्याली में होने दे आसव का पान ।  
 होमित कर मधु को ज्वाला में मनस्ताप का हिम-परिधान ।"  
 समय-विहंगम को थोड़ा ही पथ चलना है उड़कर पार,  
 और देख ! उड़ चला कीर वह अपने दोनों पंख पसार ।।"

Apart from 'Naveen' and Bhagwati Charan Verma Jayashankar Prasad (1891-1937) also has intimately drawn from the Sufi-idioms, a few examples of which hardly need any explanation:-

छिल छिल कर छाले फाड़े धूल धूल कर मृदुल चरण में  
 शशिमख पर घूँघट डाले आचल में दीप छिपाये  
 जीवन की गाधूली में कौतूहल से तुम आये ।

ये सब स्फूर्तिंग हैं मेरी इस ज्वालामयी जलन के  
 कुछ राप चिहन हैं केवल मेरे उस महामिलन के ।।

And last, but not the least, Mahadevi Verma (1907- 1987) has immensely dived deep into the layers of Buddhist, Vaishnava and the Sufi symbology to express her mystical experiences of love of God and beauty of nature. She eternally pines for oneness with Him who is simultaneously the Master ( प्रभु ), the Lover ( प्रिय ) and the Lord ( देव ) and from whom the Soul ( मैं ) has been separated

Since ages, therefore, her life is intoxicated:

“जैवन हे उन्नाद तभी स निधिया प्राणों के छाले  
माग रहा है विपुल वेदना के मन प्याले पर प्याले।”

We can thus conclude that whenever there is a crisis of cultural identity, or the romantic spirit is resurrected, the Sufi heritage would speak with a thousand tongues to us all.

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# 18

## INFLUENCE OF SUFISM IN THE GROWTH OF HINDI POETRY-II

WAGISH SHUKLA



The look at the *diachrony* of human beliefs reveals that the original belief systems were authenticated by popular narrative pragmatics. At some point of time, a popular narrative pragmatics was overpowered by an idiologic narrative pragmatics. The takeovers by the idiologic narratives are all recorded in various sacred books — Moses' narrative in the Old Testament, Zoroaster's narrative in the Avesta, Christ's narrative in the New Testament, Mohammad's narrative in the Kuran. Buddha's narrative, when it was exported out of India. also has occasionally assumed a similar role.

The idioblasts share a few basic characteristics. There is a fierce denunciation of the beliefs and practices which precede it, some are declared unacceptable thus identifying a few points for differentiation and agonistics, some are acceptable but are now authenticated by the ideologic narrative pragmatics and no more by the popular narrative pragmatics, some are pronounced upon with enough room for a never ending logomachy. The

selfrighteousness and the persecution mythos of the idiologic narrative gradually solidify into a militancy which is differential enough to proselytize. At the same time, since the logos is now privatized into the idiologic narrative, this narrative can claim to be the proto-language and thus term every nonproselyte a tergiversate.

The collective cerebrocosm, at the terminus a quo of the idiolblast, works as a semipermeable membrane which will permit the solvent molecules of the popular narrative to move out but not permit the solute molecules of the idiologic narrative to move in. The somatic struggle cannot result in a victory for the solute unless there is mechanical injury to this membrane, and thus the idiologic narrative is in a hurry to capture state power and to stamp out visible symbols of popular authentication. The final solution, while it does naturally consist of the solute and the solvent, is authenticated by the solute molecules only and the alchemy of 'paganism' into 'religion' is complete. This terminus *ad quem* is the recorded version.

Perhaps it will not be out of place to draw attention to fact that the word 'pagan' derives from 'Paganus', which in its ecclesiastical usage meant 'civilian' (contraposed with 'soldier of the christ') and in its non-ecclesiastical usage meant 'peasant' (contraposed with 'city-dweller'). The synergic processes of militarization and urbanization acculturating the popular symptomatology, constitute the single methodology by which paganism has been transmuted into religiosity in human diachrony. Again the etymology should be looked into: the root from which the word 'religion' derives, means 'to tie' or 'to fasten'. Militarization, Urbanization and Bondage are the three differentials of 'religion' from 'paganism'

Today, popularly authenticated paganism has been incarcerated into ghettos whose inhabitants are generally described as 'tribals' or 'aborigines'. The largest ghetto which has remained popularly authenticated and is successfully surviving pogroms by idiologic authentications is known as 'Sanatan Hindu Dharm'. Once again, it is pertinent to recall that all the three words in this nomenclature are negative or neutral signifiers. 'Sanatan' is a relatively recent choice to differentiate from certain idiologic internal movements generally called 'reformist'. 'Hindu' is a Persian

word and simply means a 'native of Hind (India)'; its identification with a 'religion' is merely an acknowledgement that the natives did not have a differential name for their belief system. The word 'Dharm', though it could be interpreted as 'a belief and behaviour system' means no more than that and is common to secular and sacramental usage. The differentials of 'religion', namely, militarization, urbanisation and bondage, are absent from 'Hinduism', it has no idiologic authentication, and has no terminus *a qua* or terminus *ad quem*.

## II

The first serious encounter that Hinduism had with a religion was with Islam. This was mediated by the Persian articulation and it is necessary to recall a few things briefly.

Though the details of acceptance of Islam by Persia have never been analysed, the basic mechanism is not difficult to understand. Zoroastrianism was an idiologic narrative and was already in occupancy of the collective corebrocosm. Any resistance, therefore, was bound to be only of a somatic nature. A transfer from one idiologic narrative to another did not involve any essential architectural incompatibility, it was only a reset.

The architectural compatibility also ensured that the original idiologic narrative could be concordantly introjected as a hypotext into the new idiologic narrative which was now the text. This was done by certain isomorphisms which are generally not taken note of in Hindi literary studies, and to that extent, the Hindi literary studies are incomplete and deficient. The isomorphisms are as follows.

The 'wine' in Persian and Urdu poetry is isomorphic to the sacred fire of the Zoroastrian houses of worship. This isomorphism enables the 'mai' (= wine) to serve as a polyseme. It stands for love, love for god, at the text level and at the level of the hypotext, it stands for the sacred fire of the hyponarrative. The isomorphism extends: the 'mugh' (= the cup-bearer) is the guru who shows the path of love for god at the text level and is the priest in the

'fire-worship' (which is not the correct way to describe the actual Zoroastrian thought) at the level of the hypotext.

(It may be recalled that the 'mugh' is a derivative from 'Mag' or 'Magi' who were themselves priests of the hyponarrative on which the Zoroastrian narrative was superimposed. The word 'Mag' is available in Sanskrit literature where it stands for the Brahmins from Shakadeep identified with Iran).

With the 'mugh' isomorphousing to the priest and the 'Mai' isomorphousing to the sacred fire representational of the divinity of the hyponarrative, it is obvious that participation in the worship rites of the hyponarrative now beyond all possibilities of actualization, could isomorphous into only one thing. 'Ishq' (=desire) with the 'Mugh' as the desired. Naturally, it is the 'Mashooq' (=desired, beloved) who is in control. Naturally, the 'Ashiq' (=desirer, lover) is always in a subordinate position, asking for a favour which is never granted. And naturally, the Mashooq has no sex, but being representational of God/Teacher/Priest in the narrative/hyponarrative, is addressed in masculine gender. So both the Mashooq and the Ashiq are 'males', and the imagery of the Persian and Urdu love poetry is never quite clear to those who are not reading the hyponarrative. Indeed, it sounds 'unnatural' if you have already a definite idea of what 'natural' love is. A spoonerist appreciation of this literature naturally ensues. I will be more specific because I think a grave injustice continues to be done.

Maulana Shibli in his 'Sher-ul-Ajam' seems to think this imagery validates from sodomization of the conquered by the conquerors. His argument is hopelessly anachronistic but can be reset. Briefly, the force of the argument lies in the observation that 'Mguhbacha' (=the young Mugh) and 'Turkbacha' (=the young Turk) both stand for the Mashooq. When we add to it the fact that 'Tarsabacha' (=the young Christian) also stands for the same and that in some poems ascribed to Amir Khusro and later Urdu poets, the 'Hindubacha' (=the young Hindu) assumes this role, the argument can indeed be built into a seemingly unassailable one. With luminaries like Maulana Hali, Dr. Iqbal, and Firaq agreeing that this 'unnatural' imagery is a characteristic of the Persian and Urdu literature, a firm connection of the love poetry of this tradition with an 'actual social

practice' has been accepted and no one questions it.

But I do. The entire 'pederasty connection' is based on the literary database. So in fact the whole argument is circular. You look at the literature, construct a 'social situation' from it and then validate the literature in this 'social situation'. This, in essence, is what it amounts to. I am not prepared to accept this 'social situation' connection for this imagery, I have a more plausible explanation which I have outlined above.<sup>1</sup>

My hypotext hypothesis can, however, be construed into an argument that the Persian and Urdu poetry is a 'protest poetry'. Look at the 'wine', the 'music', the taunts at the Zahid (= the meticulously virtuous) and the Vaiz (= the Preacher), the casual, even the disrespectful, treatment of the most sacred symbols like Kaaba (the House of God), the claim of Maulana Rumi that his Masnavi is the Kuran in Persian, and you can see that the poetry is consistently and consciously legitimizing everything declared illegal by the Holy Law. To the extent that the 'protest' is confined to a political protest, I am inclined to agree. Because one can add certain political data in its support. For instance, the court genealogies consciously start from the non-Islamic legendary Kings: Mahmud of Ghazna is said to descend from Yazdgird III, the last Sasanid Emperor of Iran, Muhammad Ghorī from an anti-Islamic tyrant Zuhak, Ilututmish (and our poet Mirza Ghalib) claimed to be from the family of Afrasiyab who is the anti-hero in *Tilism-e-Hoshrubā*. The symbol of justice is Nausheervan, a 'fire-worshipper' Emperor contemporaneous with the Prophet. Mahmud's court poet Firdausi, the national poet of the Iranian reassertion, claims to be writing in Pahlavi, a language which was totally destroyed out of existence by an executive order in 697 A.D. by the then governor Hajjaj. Nevertheless, I do not think the 'protest' goes any deeper than this. The hyponarrative serves to acculturate the narrative but the separating membrane is not semipermeable. It is completely permeable. The misunderstandings are not fundamental disagreements and all angularities, if any, were finally smoothed out by Imam Ghazzali in any case.

## III

I have deliberately not used the word 'Sufism' so far and have talked of Persian & Urdu poetry. I must state my position clearly now. I regard the two as identical. I do not, of course, mean that all Persian & Urdu poetry is only Sufism or that all the Sufism is available in this poetry. But I do not think any differentials can be isolated which can aspire to be significant, certainly not in the context of literary studies. In other words, "The Influence of Sufism in the growth of Hindi Poetry" is in my view the same as "The Influence of Persian & Urdu poetry in the growth of Hindi poetry

## IV

The part of Indian History which has percolated down to the level of non-historians is extremely garbled and the historians have certainly helped. I must start therefore, with removing certain impressions which have informed the axiomatics in the studies of Sufi poets writing in Hindi. These axiomatics have been agreed upon because they have been supplied as 'historical facts' for non-professional consumption.

The first axiom of this category is the contraposition of the 'liberal Sufis' with the 'bigoted Ulema' and of the consequent 'liberal rulers' under the influence of Sufis with the 'bigoted rulers' under the influence of Ulema. However, there is not one single ruler from Aibak to Zafar who was not under the influence of Sufis. All the whipping boys, the invaders Mahmud Ghaznavi, Muhammad Ghori, and Taimur, the rulers Alauddin Khaliji and Aurangzeb, the historians Barni and Badayuni were under direct influence of Sufi saints. The same, of course, is true of the blue-eyed boys like Akbar and Abul Fazl. Jalaluddin Khalji did not get Sayyidi Maula executed, he merely appealed to Sheikh Abu Bakra Tusi and a dervish of the Hyderia order started torturing Sayyidi Maula. If Aurangzeb got Sarmad executed, he himself belonged to the Naqshbandia silsilah. If Abul Fazl was a Sufi, so was his great opponent, the 'bigoted' Shaikh Abdullah. Sufis were in the army of

Taimur.

In other words, Sufism and liberalism are independent of each other. It is possible to be a Sufi and be extremely bigoted. It is possible to be a Sufi and be extremely liberal.

The second axiom in this category is that because these poets were writing in Hindavi (=the language of Hindus, which could mean anything from Avadhi to Gujarati) and were using local names and motifs, they were 'closer to the popular mind'. Through sheer repetition, the naivete of this argument has hardened into a conviction which walls out any sensible appreciation of this poetry.

I will explain what I mean by taking up a couple of generic examples.

- i) We can begin with the much discussed dispute between Kabir and Tulsī. Kabir's stand is that although everybody says that Rama is a son of Dasharath, the actual meaning of Rama is an entirely different thing. This seemingly innocuous and universally acceptable statement provoked Tulsīdas so much that he has, in his *Ramcharitamanasa*, castigated it at length and used a very strong language full of invectives which is quite uncharacteristic of him otherwise. What is the provocation?

As Tulsīdas has stated in his rebuttal, the provocation derives not from the fact that Rama is being described as one who is beyond birth and death which is of course okay, the provocation derives from the fact that his identity as a son of Dasharath is being flatly denied. The abstract (= 'Nirguna') and the concrete (= 'Saguna') are not contrapositives of each other in the indigenous popular narrative pragmatics which we have agreed to call Hinduism. Kabir's statement is not part of this narrative. His stand is aniconic. His condemnation of temples and mosques is not simply a call to free God from these buildings (which is a non-issue anyway), his condemnation derives from theurgic implications of locations of God, i.e. the implication that by fixing God in time and place, people may seek to control him. Thus, Kabir is against iconism and against theurgy. This is architecturally incompatible with the Hindu Advaita. After all, the greatest Acharya of this Advaita, the Adishankaracharya, is credited with the authorship of hymns to all gods and

goddesses in the Hindu pantheon, and is said to be responsible for the structuralization of the worship rituals prevalent today in temples all over India.

This aspect has been totally glossed over by all scholars in modern studies. No distinctions have been made between aniconic & atheurgic monism and iconic & theurgic monism. In fact, most of them are under an impression that the iconism of Hinduism is an 'aberration' which crept into the 'pure thought' of Vedanta under 'non-Vedic', preferably 'non-Aryan' influence.

The Tauheed (monism) which Sufis talk about is aniconic and has nothing in common with the iconic Advaita Vedantic monism which has been generally taken by modern scholars to be the single philosophical system to which all Hindus adhere. They fail to see that the Hindu Advaita is not a matter of faith and is an intellectual discourse. They close their eyes to the fact that the temples, the ritual worships, the sacramental rites are not located in one's being an Advaitist or a Dvaitist, that indeed there are several systems of Advaita itself.

It is a sad commentary on the quality and integrity of modern scholarship that the obloquies and the sneers (directed against some ritual practices) which are available in the Siddha- Santa literature have been projected as 'revolts' in order to 'liberate' the Society which was held in thrall by the Brahmins. To be fair to this scholarship, when it comes across somebody like Tulsidas, the author under discussion is again a 'liberator' from, among other things, the 'voodooism' of these very siddhas and santas.

Thus, Tulsidas and Kabir are both Bhakta poets but both liberating the society from the influence of each other ! Nobody, of course, bothers to ask the society why it is prepared to accept without question both Kabir and Tulsi.

The society, or rather the popular narrative pragmatics, accepts Kabir, Tulsi, or anybody else on its own terms. It respects Meera or Kabir or Tulsi but will not like its quotidian members to behave like them. *For, unlike the scholars, it knows that a behaviour mechanism does not make a saint.*

The scholars ignore the fact that a vituperation of externally identifiable routine is itself an externally identifiable routine and is recognized as such by the popular pragmatics. So you can rave against idolatry as much as you like, but when the popular pragmatics accepts you as a narrator, it is not because what you say is true in the sense that the pro-idolatry narrations are false, it is because it believes that what you say is not new, is indeed always already old. In other words, the authentication derives from an eternal participation.

As long as this eternal participation is guaranteed, you are accepted, exactly as the one you have censored is accepted.

At this point, it may be helpful to recall that Bhakti means 'participation' and not 'devotion'.

So Tulsidas is correct in saying that Kabir's negation of Rama as a son of Dasharath is not acceptable. But Tulsi's acceptability is not because of this reactive statement, just as Kabir's acceptability is not because of his reactive statements.

ii) The following incidents<sup>2</sup> illustrate the same point.

- a) Sayyid Jalal-U'd-din Bukhari Makhdum-i-Jahanian (ob.1384) was on his death bed. Nawahun, a *darogah* of Uchch, called on him to enquire about his health. "May God restore your health", said Nawahun, "Your holiness is the last of the saints as the Prophet Muhammad was the last of the prophets". Sayyid Jalal-u'd-din Bukhari and his brother, Sadr-u'd-din Raju Qattal construed it as an expression of faith in Islam<sup>7</sup> and therefore, they demanded a formal declaration of conversion from him. Nawahun firmly declined to make any such declaration. Thereupon he was charged of apostasy. He fled to the court of Firoz Shah Tughluq in search of asylum and redress. When Sayyid Jalal-u'd-din Bukhari expired, his younger brother pursued the matter further and reached Delhi in order to persuade Firoz Shah to execute Nawahun. Though some scholars of the capital did not agree with the viewpoint of Raju Qattal, the latter prevailed upon Firoz Shah in obtaining his permission for Nawahun's execution as a

renegade.

- b) A visitor asked Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya: "If a Hindu recites the *Kalima* (Muslim formulae of faith) and believes in the Unity of God and acknowledges the Prophethood of Muhammad; but, when a Mussalman comes, he keeps silent. What will be his ultimate end?" The Shaikh refused to pronounce any verdict on such a Hindu and remarked: "His affair is with God. He can punish him or forgive him as He likes."

On another occasion a disciple of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya brought a Hindu friend with him and introduced him saying :

"He is my brother." "Has your brother any inclination towards Islam?" asked the Shaikh. "I have brought him to your feet", the man replied, "so that owing to the blessings of the Shaikh's glance, he may become a Mussalman".(\*\*)

You may talk to these people as much as you like," replied Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya, "but no one's heart is changed. Still if he lives in the company of a pious man, it is possible that owing to the blessing of his company, he may become a Mussalman." The Shaikh's eyes were filled with tears as he narrated a long story to show that there was lack of character among the Mussalmans themselves. When Shaikh Bayazid Bistami died, he told his Hindu visitor, people asked a Jew who lived in the neighborhood of the saint;

"Why do you not become a Mussalman?" "If Islam is what Bayazid possessed, it is beyond me. If it is what you possess, I would feel ashamed of such Islam", replied the Jew.

Prof. Nizami has used the two incidents to observe that the Chistia silsilah (to which Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya belonged) had one attitude towards conversion and the Suhrawardia silsilah (to which Shaikh Jalaluddin Bukhari belonged) had another. As far as I am concerned, the import of the two incidents is that both the Shaikhs agreed on one common point: You cannot 'reach' the popular narrative except on its own terms. Both the Shaikhs knew

that a Hindu would readily agree that Hazrat Muhammad Sahib was indeed the last of the prophets and yet, this would not mean to the Hindu an acceptance of a new faith because he has simply agreed in accordance with his narrative pragmatics which constitute his old faith.

I can probably use the words of Prof. Nizami<sup>3</sup> to express my view point:

"We find the early Muslim mystics more interested in Hindu religious *practices* than in the Hindu religious *thought*" (emphasis in the original).

And I will offer my own explanation for it: I believe they knew that the 'thought' was architecturally incompatible.

## V

All attempts to examine Sufi influence on Hindi poetry (or Hindi influence on Sufi poetry) have sidestepped the basic question of what 'influence' means. They have found 'love' or 'intoxication' or 'rapture' in Bhakti poetry and concluded that this is Sufi 'influence'. They have found 'Krishna' or 'Mathura' in Sufi poetry and concluded that this is Hindi 'influence'. But both narratives use the terms in accordance with their own pragmatics, for instance 'Mathura' means 'Medina' in Indian Sufi poetry.

There was no Hindi hypotext ready to receive the Sufi narrative and the latter has remained a separate stream in Hindi poetry neither influencing nor being influenced by the mainframe flow. Of course, Sufi works in Hindi have continued to be written, the last two well-known ones in Avadhi were completed in 1915 and 1917 respectively. However, it became clear to the writers quite early that the local legends were not competent to receive this narration and after a few initial efforts, they started writing the familiar story of Yusuf-Zulaikha. The earliest known work, Chandayan of Mulla Daud has not influenced the folk narration of Lorik and Chanda (which it rewrites) at all. The best known, the most ambitious, and the most complex of them all, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, succeeded

in creating a historical legend quite early but had to wait till this century to find a place in the list of Hindi poets — in fact it was given to him by Acharya Ramchandra Shukla. If we contrapose him with his near — contemporary Rahim, my statement will be clearer. Both Jaisi and Rahim were great scholars, both wrote in Avadhi. If anything, Rahim had a smaller chance of reaching the common folk because of his busy and elite political life. And yet, Rahim has always been a Hindi poet, known to be an alphabetic and the lucubratory alike. Rahim was as familiar with the Sufi thought as anybody else and has used it in his poetry whenever he wanted to. But his pragmatics is the popular pragmatics. Nor is Rahim a lonely figure. Raskhan and Ghananand, Alam and Bodha, are of the same genre.

But the poets who can be classed as Sufi poets in Hindi — and there are a large number of them both in the so-called 'Dakani Hindi' and the Hindi located in northern parts — form a band of their own. This tightened into narrower lopps with the passage of time as it became clearer and clearer that no compatibility with the popular pragmatics could be achieved. This realization is the one single reason for the emergence of Urdu literature — perhaps the most significant contribution this country has made to the Sufi thought system because this is the only locale where it is still surviving and in turn, has helped this locale to outsmart the 'modernism' which has seriously threatened continuity in the literature of many other contemporary languages.

### **Explanatory comments**

- (\*) Nawahun practically recited the second part of the Kalima when he said that "the Prophet Muhammad was the last of the prophets". The first part of the Kalima, i.e. "There is no God but God" is presumed to be common to all religions and it is second part which distinguishes a Muslim from others. Sayyid Jalal-u'd-din Bukhari and Raju Qattal therefore, decided that Nawahun expressed faith in Islam.
- (\*\*) This should not be taken as a metaphorical statement. Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi is said to have converted a Hindu milkman to Islam by merely a look. Hasan Kabir-al-Din, one of the saints of Uchh once fell ill and called a Hindu physician; the physician

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did not come personally for fear that he will be converted to Islam if the Shaikh looked at him and said that he will examine his urine. As soon as he looked at the urine, however, he immediately got converted to Islam.

For these and some other stories about Sufi saints, see Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (ed. James Hastings) Vol.11 under *Saints and Martyrs (Muhammadan in India)* p.69.

## REFERENCES

1. The isomorphisms discussed are supposed to have been introduced by Shaikh Abu Yazid Taifur Bustami (ob.874 AD) whose doctrine of the superiority of *Sukr* (= rapture) over *Sahv* (= sobriety) forms the spinal core of all Sufi poetry. He is also known for the most daring *Shathat* (= ecstatic utterances by Sufis which generally go against the Islamic thought as it is understood normally). For some of them see Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden 1961 under *Shathat*.  
One thing needs to be pointed out. *But* (=idol) is unmistakably female, in spite of the masculine address just as *Saqi* or *Mugh* is unmistakably male. In pre-Islamic Arabia, the idols were supposed to be female deities. It is tempting to postulate a pre-Islamic Arabian hyponarrative, specially in view of the reported fact that in Arabic Sufi poetry, the beloved is occasionally addressed as a female. I am at present inclined to reject this postulate however, because (barring the Laila-Majnun narrative), the beyond - actualization factor seems to be absent in the Urdu poetry when it has a female beloved. As far as I can see, the *but* (=idol) stands for *Ishq-e-Majazi* (=worldly love), of course as a *zeena* (=ladder) to the *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* (=love of Truth or God). But I cannot come to a definite conclusion.  
The argument attributed to Maulana Shibli is based on extracts in '*Hindi Aur Farsi Sufi Kavya Ka Tulanatmak Adhyayan*' by Dr. Srinivas Batra, Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi 2027/ 1969 AD pp. 579-580 and 513-524.
2. The incidents have been taken from *Some aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the thirteenth century* by Prof. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi second ed. 1974 pp. 179-180; the explanatory comments are my own.
3. *Ibid.* p. 263.

# 19

## SUFISM AND COMMUNAL HARMONY PADMAVAT OF MALIK MOHAMED JAYSEE

ZAINAB BANU



India has been going through confused and turbulent times. The most pertinent threat that is growing at a frightening speed and ferocity is that of the communal virus that is taking hold of the Indian mind and is becoming increasingly volatile and violent. There has been a three fold increase in the number of communal parties or groups and the spate of incidents is unprecedented. The R.S.S. was the avowedly Hindu oriented organisation until quite recently but now with the revival of Vishwa Hindu Parishad at least four new powerful fanatic groups have come up — Ram Janmabhoomi, Mukti Yagna Samiti, the Bajrang Dal, the Shiv Sena and the Hindu Jagran Samiti. Obviously to counter the alleged designs of the fanatical Hindu groups, Muslim fundamentalism has raised nearly half a dozen activist groups. As against Jamat-e-Islami in the past,

today there are the Babri Masjid Action Committee, the Sunni Youth Federation, the Ali Sena, the Adam Sena, the Sunni Youth Action Committee, the Shia Youth Action Committee and the Jamiat-ul-Tulba. Even while the situation is clearly worsening every day, fundamentalist bodies have been allowed to flourish. Such organisations whether Hindu or Muslim are exploiting the religious emotions of the man in the street, who invariably gets swayed by slogans in the name of Ram Janmabhoomi or Babri Masjid. India today is far from being able to stand up on its own, leave alone fulfilling its divine mission. 'A second freedom struggle' has become necessary to awaken India to the honour and glory that rightfully belongs to her.

Spirituality, is the essence of the Indian culture. Awakening India is possible only through an awakening of this inherent spirituality of hers. In the present selfish and materialistic world, spirituality tends to be confused with a crude form of religiosity, perpetuated by various institutionalised religions which have more or less outlived their utility. True spirituality helps man to achieve peace and harmony in life and blossom to his fulness in universal brotherhood. It also helps him understand his oneness with the entire humanity as well as with the whole universe. Religions are means to help man rise to such levels of spirituality.

In the medieval period the sufis<sup>1</sup> taught people disinterested virtue, purification of the soul and divine love and thus, raised the standard of life from the spiritual point of view. They laid more emphasis on the inward rather than on the outward aspects of life. It was due to this fact that they had a greater hold on the people than the scholastic theologians or formal Jurists, and their mode of training was more effective. Their motto was service to humanity at large irrespective of caste or creed. They always showed unity of thought despite professing different religions.

"It was through Sufism that Islam really found a point of contact with Hinduism and effective entrance to Hindu heart".<sup>2</sup>

Really, with the emergence of Sufi movement in India, the trend of assimilation between the two major religious communities

began. Islam with its clear, definite and simple creed, which stood in contrast to the indigenous vagaries of the imagination and speculation about God, appealed to many Hindus as a satisfying solution of the vexed problems of theology. To others its social democracy granted a welcome release from the bondage of caste.<sup>3</sup> On the other side "Owing to the ancient *guru-chela* practice existing among the Hindus and the universal belief in the worship of local gods and goddesses, which was the heritage of the majority of the Muslims of India through their Hindu religion, it became all the more easy for saint worship to become part of Muslim religious life.<sup>4</sup> The process of sharing of each other's merits and demerits continued for a few centuries till a composite culture and philosophy started developing in India which flowered in the form of *Bhakti* movement. In 15th century practically all parts of India witnessed the emergence of groups of saints, poets and reformers who represented a new synthesis. They vehemently attacked religious rituals, priestcraft, social inequalities and hypocrisy. Their approach was simple, devotional and popular. Ramanand and Kabir, Nanak and Dadu, Chaitanya and Tukaram represented in the field of religion the Indian part of international mental awakening.<sup>5</sup> Malik Mohammed Jaysee<sup>6</sup> was among them. He was an excellent poet. He happened to be a Muslim, unknown to 'Devnagri script'. In spite of this he had an aptitude to express himself in a common language so that a lay man could understand him. Therefore, he wrote thousands of verses in '*Awadhi language*' but in '*Persian script*'.<sup>7</sup> This is a lesson for us that if we really want to curb communal disharmony, first of all we should acquaint common people about the common roots rather than religious and cultural differences. Academically thousands of papers and hundreds of books have been written on the subject but no one reaches the heart of the people. Because these have been written in literary language, they are beyond the grasp of the masses. Therefore, the need of the hour is to express the problem in a simple common language (why was Kabir so much popular among the common men, only because he narrated all his views in so simple a language that no one found any difficulty to understand).

Besides common language, he expressed secular feelings every where in his writings. 'He has left no room for communal

disharmony. His description of events smoothly goes on without any modification at the cultural or social level. If he gave any example of Jogi, Tapsvee or Hindu gods and goddesses, simultaneously he referred to Khawaja and Khijre. Interestingly both served the same purpose.<sup>8</sup> For example in Padmawat he referred to prophet Mohammed and Shanker in the same sense.

जो जम आन जिउलेत है शकर तिनहु कर जिउलेन  
सो अवतरे मोहम्मद देखु तहु जिनु देव

At another place he used 'Narad' in the sense of 'Iblees' — the devil who disturbs the meditation to God. And at the same time he used 'Kubilas', Amarpur, 'Indralok', 'Benkut', 'Shivlok', 'Mertyoo lok', 'Nark', 'Dozakh', 'Baheesht' and *Pul-e- Sirat* for heaven.<sup>10</sup>

आदम होवा कहो सूजा ।।  
लइ धाला कबिलास  
पुनि तहवा ते कादा  
नारद के बिसवास  
आयसु इबलीस हू जो बरा  
नारद होइ नरक मह परा

He compared 'Hanuman' with 'Prophet' who will provide help in crossing the 'bridge of Sirat'.

हनुमान करे मुनब पुनि हाका  
दुह को पार होई को थाका

In 'Akheri Kalam' he expressed 'Puran' as 'Kuran'.

सो बड़ पथ मोहम्मद केरा , हं निरमल कबिलास बसेरा  
लिखि पुरान विधि पढ़वा सांघा , भा परवीन दुवो जग वांघा  
सुनत तहि नारद उठि भागे , घुट पाप पुनि सुनि लावे  
वह मारण जो पावे , सो पहुँचे भव पार  
जो भूला होइ अनताहि , तोहि लूटा बट पार

Padmawat was written around 1500 A.D. There is an embodiment of epic pattern and the plot is based on the historical perspective. The book deals with various themes like Indian History, culture, art and philosophy. The epic deals with the love story of 'Sinhala Dweep's' (Ceylon's) beauty Padmawati and king Ratansen of Chittoor. Classified into fifty eight cantos this epic has been divided into two parts; the first and the second. The book is partly historical and partly fictitious and imaginary. It reflects socio-economic and cultural set up of the time. The epic presents mystic philosophy in the form of an emotional love story. Mysticism is an admixture of Advaitavada and Tasawwuf. For example, Ratansen has been portrayed as 'Manu' or 'Mana', Padmawati as 'Shridha' or intellectual, Nagmati as Ida or the Worldliness the motivating force, Allauddin — as 'Maya', Rahgachetan as 'Devil' (who disturbs the unification with God), Chittoor as 'Tan' body, Sinhala-deep as heart and parrot Hiraman- via media to approach the truth or teacher. Padmawat is the famous publication of Jaysee. It is known as the 'Mahakavya' (epic) of Hindi literature. Besides he wrote a number of poetry books.<sup>14</sup> Among these 'Akharawat' and 'Akheri Kalam' are well known publications. Akharawat is famous for the articulation of his own philosophical doctrine, that is, neither classical sufism nor emotional mysticism, but it inherits the merits of Islam, Vedas, Jain, Buddha, Shiva, Vaishnava and Shakti, etc. In his view, nothing exists, but the eternal soul. This may be called, 'Noor', 'Shoonya', 'God', 'Anadi', and the universe is either an illusion or a part and parcel of one's being. And self annihilation, that is, merging the apparent self into the real one could be achieved through Yogic meditation like 'Trikoota', 'Chakrabhedha' and also by following the four paths<sup>15</sup> of 'Shariat, Tariqat, Maarfat and Haqiqat. Interestingly enough, nowhere Jaysee uses the term 'Allha' or 'Khuda' for God<sup>16</sup> except at one place in 'Akharawat' for the explanation of 'Adam' — 'Alif' of Adam denotes Allha 'Dal' 'Din. and Doniya' (world) and "Meem" Mohammed (Prophet).

आलिफ़ एक अल्लाह बड़ सोइ  
 दाज़ दीन दुनिया सब कोई  
 मीम मोहम्मद प्रीति पियारा  
 तीनी आखर यह अर्थ विचारा

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The centre of Tasawwuf is the search for union with God, God can be achieved through love only. Sufis conceive of God as a beloved and the lover can get united with Her only after great sacrifice and devotion.

तन चितउर मन राजा कीन्हा ।  
हिय सिंघल बुधि पदिनिनि घीन्हा ॥  
गुरु सुआ जोहि पथ दिखावा ।  
बिना गुरु जगत को निरगुन पावा ॥  
नागमति यह दुनिया घधा ।  
बाघा सोइ न रंगइ चित्त बंधा ।  
राघवदूत सोइ सेतानु ।  
माया अरुदाँन सुलतान ॥  
प्रेम कथा इहि भाति विचारहु ।  
बूझि लेहु जो बूझे पारहु ॥  
तुरकी अरबी हिन्दुई भाषा जेति आहि ।  
जेहि मह मारण प्रेम करे सबे सराहे ताहि ॥

This, too, is a reflection of his non-communal approach. According to him, Essence of God is pure Being. He is the highest manifestation of Essence, embracing all that is manifested. The creator appears in the form of the creation and it is the sum total of attributes. It is invisible, though visible every where in its effects. Mercy and lordship are the primary aspects of Divinity. One who speaks of the oneness of God attributes to him: Unity of Essence, Unity of Attributes, and Unity of Acts — 'Karma, Dharma and Satnam.

दस महा एक जई कोई करम धरम सतनम ।

Love is a sort of austerity where the activities of body and the aptitudes of mind are in uniform and united action. If all these interacting procedures are opposed to the uniformity then, this is the immaturity of love and of the devotee of love. For assessing this aspect Parvati went to Ratna Sen.

कहुं या बीघ कि प्रेमहि पूजा ।  
तन मन एक कि मारठा दूजा ॥

-पदमावत 209:2

Here Ratna Sen was ever ready to sacrifice his life shedding tears for getting the beloved. Bhagwan Shiva consoled him and communicated to him that the beloved cannot be got by sacrificing life. It is only possible by making the procedure of love uniform and controlling the senses and the mind.

कहीं बात अब होई उपदेशी ।  
 लागू पथ भूले परदेसी ॥  
 तू मन नाथु मारि के स्वांसा ।  
 जो पे मरहि आपुहि करू नांसा ॥

-पदमावत 216:3

When the mind is controlled, the notion of immense pleasure and rest is automatically done away with and only pain remains. According to Jaycee, if a person crosses the status of such dukhā (Pain) he improves this and the next lokas — the worldly and para-worldly situations. Since, the feeling of pain exists only till the beloved is not with one. When he gets her or him the pain vanishes.

भलेहि पेम है कठिन दुहेला । दुई जग तरा मेम जई खेला ॥  
 जोई नहि सीस पेम पथ लावा । सोप्रियमी मह कोई को आवा ॥  
 तब लागि दुःख पौतम नर्री भेटा । जब भेटा जन मन दुःख मेटा ॥

-पदमावत 98:2:7

According to Jaycee, the seekers proceeding towards the path of love are placed under three categories: First is a thief who is desirous of getting the desired object and he is ready to face any danger for achieving this. Second is a gambler, who for seeking favour submits everything, every possession of his and third is a sacrificer who even sacrifices his life. Such lovers are termed as selfish, hardworking and the excellent class of lovers.

घोर पेठि जस सेधि सवारी ।  
 जुआ पेत जेऊ लाव जुआरी ॥  
 जस मरजिया समुंद धंसि ।  
 हाथ आवे तब सीप ॥  
 दुंढि लेहि सरग दुबारी ।  
 औ चपू सिंघल हीव ॥

-पदमावत 215:1 से 4

Another peculiarity of Jaycee is that he gives due importance to

the pains and sufferings of love. Sufi only emphasises love. But his perception of love is of 'Virah' or 'Viyog' pangs of separation.

He has manifested in Padmawat the pangs of separation in detail. The epic begins with separation — between the lover and beloved and ends with separation. Jaycee accepts the value of love in separation from love. Just as an old man can realise the value of youth only, sick can realise the value of health, similarly a lover can realise the sense of loneliness when separated from love. To him greater is the beauty, stronger is the love and deeper the pangs of separation.<sup>18</sup> Through the Sufi doctrine one achieves the status of 'aqa' (permanent existence) step by step through four devotional stages — Shariat, Tariqat, Marfat and Hquiqat, similar to Hindu Karmkand, Bhaktikand, Gyankand and Sindhi. The following table may give the comparative picture:

The position of man	Stages of Devotion	Sufi form of world	Vedic form
Momin	Shariat	Nasut	Manush Lok
Mureed	Tariqat	Malkut	Dev Lok
Salik	Marfat	Jabrut	Eshvarya Lok
Arif	Haquiqat	Lahut	Madhyarya Lok

Jaycee writes that the love stricken Ratna-Sena wept so bitterly that all became rainy, as if everything was flooded. Because of this flood and torrential tear shedding the sea left its shores and spread all over, the mountains were submerged and the rocks were even cut by the force of water. Everything was converted into air and water and whole globe was rather mingling with the air and water — there was a molecular explosion everywhere.

सागर उपटि, सिखर या गा पाटी ।

जरे पानि पहन हिये फाटी ।।

पवन पानि होइ होइ सब गिराई ।

पेम के फाद कोऊ जनि परई ।।

-पदमावत 213 - 6 - 7

He writes at other places:

"Because of the distance (she was away) Ratna Sena was weeping bitterly, his tears were so bloodshot that even the morning sun submerged into the flood and blood shot tears and all was red, the Sun was red, the forest grounds were red, and the Casia fistula flowers turned dark red. The earth dampened and became wet and the soil turned red. The 'gheru'. . . the plantation of spring season too turned red, the newly sprouting petals, buds too turned red and all the Yoginis and Yatis had red aprons and clocks because of Ratna Sena's red tears. SATI turned red and there was all fire. She began burning and her shadow converted all the clouds into red".

This seems to be exceptional but if seen in sufian context, we find it acceptable. Ibne Sina in Dictionary of Islam explained:

Love is not manifested through human beings alone. It is all pervading on earth, all around sky and in all things existing. Love exists even in all non-living things, in plantation and even in minerals; love is all pervasive.

Jaycee has said at many places that the worshipped exists very near to the heart and yet He is so far and there is no easy union with Him. One can say that he is available and yet he is not available. He is within and yet He is without.

घट मन निकट, बिकट भा भेरु ।  
 मिलेहु न मिले, परा तस पेरु ॥  
 पिऊ हिये मंह, भेंट न होई ।  
 को ने मिलापए कोहि कीन्दि रोई ॥  
 जानु अहि दखन मोर हिया ।  
 तोहि मंह दरस दिखाव प्रियो ॥

-पदमावत 255:5, 401:4, 40:2,3

Thus, it will be seen that Jayacee's concept of God comes very close to that of Ispanishad and Srimad Bhagwadgita.

तद्वजित तन्नेजाति तद्दरे तदनपित्के  
 तदन्तरस्य सर्वसथ तदु सर्वस्याप्य बाह्व्यत ।

-ज्ञषोपनिषद - 5

Through Padmavat Jaycee opens the eyes of all those who advocate separation between the followers of the two religions. He says that 'Viyog' of Ratnasen for Padmawati was the same as that of Allauddien for her. It evokes emotions and feelings irrespective of caste, colour or religion. There is unity of emotion among all human beings. The total aim and objective of Padmawat is the extension of broad and liberal human values and refinement of human sentiments and feelings. During the course of this interaction the bonds of caste, religion and nationality breakdown automatically and there emerges a perfect being whose heart becomes tender, liberal, permissive and powerful.<sup>19</sup> Jaycee appealed to the entire personality of man — the heart as well as mind, reason as well as emotion, moral as well as spiritual. This is all pervasive input of his philosophy. In short Jaycee, by his creative writings played a vital role in removing the feelings of differences from the hearts and minds of Hindus and Muslims. He expressed beautifully that the word and its resources are gifts of God through which his love for each one of us is abundantly manifested. It is not renouncing them or fighting over them but by sharing them in love and thus transforming them to be worthy of being offered as worship to Him that we can respond to his love. Offering as worship to him means offering in love to others. It is because God is love and love is experienced and expressed through surrender of one's being to others.

## REFERENCES

1. "In the early days of Islam, Sufism was nothing more than a form of asceticism or quietism, mainly derived from Quran and Sunnah and inspired by the noble examples of the prophet but in the later stages, it developed into a philosophical system which was positively pantheistic in its nature and had imbibed certain foreign elements." Zia Ahmad (ed) *Sufi influence And other Essays* p.52-63.
2. Murray T. Titus *Islam in India And Pakistan*. p.36.
3. *Ibid*
4. *Ibid*.

## SUFISM AND INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

5. Interestingly this movement coincided with an intellectual upsurge on a global sector. 'It was an age of Luther and Calvin smashing corruption in Christianity, Columbus and Vasco-de-gama — exploring new horizons -Michael Angelo and above all Leonarde da-Vinci philosopher, scientist and artist. Puri, Balraj, "Sufism And Sikhism", *Bulletin of Comparative Religion*, Vol.1, No.3, July 1981 p.75.
6. Malik means an owner-farmer. His father Malik Raja Ashraf was a small farmer in Iran. Jaysee is one who hails from a village Jayse in Rai Barelli district of U.P. He calls himself Mohammed in Padmawat and not Malik noor Jaysee.
7. 'Jaysee's Awadhi language is much more sweet than that of Tulsidas.' Shukla Acharya — *Jaysee Granthawali* (Introduction) vth edition, p.205.
8. Sharma Raj Kumar, *Jaysee And His Padmawat*, (Jaipur n.d). p. 30-31.
9. Quoted by Shukla Acharya — *op.cit* - page. 4.
10. *Ibid*
11. *Ibid*
12. *Ibid*
13. *Ibid*
14. About 17 books are written by him — Padmawat, Akharwat, Akheri Kalam, Chitrarekha, Lehrawat, Itrawat, Maree Baisee.
15. चारि यमंसा जोई फनुये सत सौ उतले पार  
Pandeya, Brij Narayan, *Jaysee ka Sanskritik Adhyan*, Shodh Sahitya Parkashan, 1973, p. 140-43.
16. The terms used 'karta', 'kartar', 'Dharta', 'Hasta', 'Dai', 'Deav', 'Sirjanhar', 'Saai', 'Vidhi', 'Hari', 'Devee'. Jaysee Malik Mohammed Akhrawat p. 321-322.
17. In another place he wrote भव घरमी जो पढत सीखे ।  
Those are religious who could recite Kalma.  
Pandya Brij Narayan — *op cit* - p. 42-43.
18. Singh Raj Dev *Padmawat Naya Moolyankan* p. 112.
19. Singh Shambhoo Nath *Hindi Mahakavya ka Swaroop Aur Vikas*, p. 85-86.