

# A Study on Bhakti and Sufi Movements in Medieval India

Dr. Shashi Kiran

Associate Professor(History), CISKMV Fatehpur Pundri, Kaithal, Haryana

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## ABSTRACT

Religion became the foundation function of culture at the group and state rates throughout the medieval period. Originally the state permitted the creation of academic inquiry but later prohibited it for purposes of public policy, while it was limited to distinct classes and subjected to abstract thinking and logic disputes. Therefore, religions did not fulfill the role in bringing in a harmonious life cycle and needed to establish their own beliefs and actions. In finding and striving to introduce peace into being, Sufi and Bhakti embodied people's revolt against the ossified traditions. Sufism played the key part in creating the fantastic description.

## 1. Introduction

In Southern India the Bhakti revolution started in the 8th century, extended from 15th century to northern and east India and achieved tremendous heights in 17th century. The Bhakti movement ended in the 5th century. A pan-Indian movement, spreading from North to South, East to West, at the end of 17 thC was the Bhakti movement which led to a profusion of devotional poetry. While after the 17th century the trend can no longer be seen, devotional poetry is still a part of Indian literature. While the Bhakti movement started in the eighth century, 'bhakti' was mentioned for the first time in the first millennium BC, in the Upanishad Shvetashvatara, the Upanishad Katha and the Gita Bhagavad. The Shvetashvatara Upanishad is the oldest Sanskrit text that is inserted into Yajur Veda and is the main text that explains Vedanta's philosophy, saivism theory and yoga concepts. The last of Shvetashvatara Upanishad's three epilog chapters, at 6.23, uses the term Bhakti, which was given as:

Such teachings are enlightening for whoever has the highest Bhakti (love, devotion to Deva (God), like his Deva, so for his guru (teacher).

This verse is notable for the usage of the term Bhakti and is often referred to as "the love of God." Bhakti is a love towards the human God spiritual. The Bhakti marg (the path of devotion) is the primary aim of spiritual growth, an everlasting state of happiness which is beyond earthly life, as one of the divine paths to achieve the moksha or salvation. In the Bhagavad Gita the term Bhakti is used to denote a specific means of obtaining moksha.

The Bhakti movement traversed medieval India and most of the Bhakti poets sung the incarnations of Vishnu in loving devotion to Rama and Krishna. This revolution is significant as it created not only great poetry but also marked the start of a revolt against the simplistic brahminic traditions and practices, caste division and inequality in society. The Bhakti movement expanded across India through songs like Kabir, Ravi Das, Meera Bai, Chaitanya, etc. Such holy poems stressed the acts of God, as they alone would contribute to his redemption. They were called Bhakti writers, where in the ancient scriptures the Sanskrit word "Bhakti" was alluded to as "a dedication of a devotee and a human deity or symbolic deity." The Bhakti poets sought through their soulful poems to seek eternal unity with the Almighty.

## 2. The Sufi Movement In India

At the time the Bhakti movement was increasing and spreading, India also witnessed Islam's emergence with the ascension of the Mughal dynasty from the 16th to the 19th centuries. This began in 1526 with Babur's ascension and finished with Aurangzeb's death in 1707. This large Mughal empire began to crumble within five decades of Aurangzeb's demise. The emergence of the Provincial Princes of different Hindu Kingdoms and the introduction of the British rule by the East India Company put the Mughal Dynasty to a close with feeble heirs to Aurangzeb, an almost barren treasury. Bahadur Shah, the last of the Mughal emperors, was deposed by the East India Company in Rangoon in 1757. The Muslim religion of the conquerors under the Mughal rulers appeared hostile to Hinduism and condemned its polytheism, idolatry (idol adoration) and excessive practices. With its emphasis on the externalities only of Hindu worship Islam has not been able to recognize and grasp the main guiding principles of Hinduism, which acknowledge numerous sects and diverse worships of the various religions (and continue to accept and conform to them). The Hindu principle of unconditional brotherhood is focused upon this recognition. Yet as antagonism between the two faiths grew and contributed to shared hatred and enmity, it was lucky for a community of theological thinkers to have come to link the divide between the two religious organisations, establishing affection and friendliness, feelings of friendship and brotherhood for both. The Sufi revolution was a product of the Hindu control on Muslim philosophical philosophers, who undertook a detailed study of the Vedanta doctrine and the two offshoots of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Two hundred years before the Bhakti revolution the Sufi revolution came to India and extended to Muslims. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti founded the Chishtiya Sufi order in India in the 12th century. In 1230, he passed. His followers, after he passed away, wrote the order and transmitted his word of commitment to God (compassion and caring for everyone). Among those who were legendary were Hazrat Niamuddin Auliya and the Sufi mystic poet and singer, Amir Khusro, his prominent disciple (1253-1325) who had a profound influence on civilization, literature and culture in India. Khusro is considered one of the hybrid community champions in India. He has written several songs, ghazals, dohas, and riddles and

is enriched by the incorporation of Persian and Arabian components into Hindustani classical music, which is hence regarded as the originator of the musical styles of Khayal and tarana. He is called the 'father of qawwali' (Indian Sufi devotional music). Amir Khusro, and hence even the sitar, have historically been the fabricator of the tablet. Kabir was inspired profoundly by Khusro and several of his dohas are essentially Khusro's translations. Sufis Hence, the Sufis were developing and increasing in India in the 13th and 14th centuries. The above-mentioned Sufi movement was a social and religious movement. Nasiruddin Chirag Dehli died in 1356, the last Sufi in the Order of Chishtia and the only Sufi in Delhi. Both the Hindus and Muslims had a significant impact upon the Sufi message of Suleh-e-kul. Although some scholars say the impact of Sufi on the Bhakti movement, some claim the effect of the Bhakti on the Sufi movement is over – the truth is that the two religious organizations tend to the citizens of both sects to display solidarity and compassion towards the downtrodden and the weak. Their argument had a profound influence on the Indian masses' collective psyche. Thus, the 12th-14th century Sufi movement and the 15th- and 16th-century Bhakti movement have given poetry with the highest degree of dedication and are especially influenced and articulated by social signals in their respective religious communities.

### 3. Link Between The Upanishads and The Quran

Let us look at some significant facets of hinduism in the Upanishade of Svetasvatara to appreciate the relation between the Sufi and Bhakti movement.:

- There is no likeness of Him.
- His form is not to be seen; no one sees Him with the eye.
- He is bodiless and pure.

In the Quran, 'Oneness' is the main concept. The Quran states, 'no perception is worthy of knowing him, yet above all awareness is his grasp: over everything he is comprehension, and knowledge of all.' From the above, it is evident that there are similar ties between the Quran and the Yajur Veda where all talk about the creator. Throughout the Islam, Creator is special (tawhīd); the special (wahid), and the one yet only one (ahad), yet he is non-pitying and all-communicating.

### 4. The Bhakti Tradition

In medieval India, it was the caste systems that regulated men's lives and relationships. As stated, the system of social divisions was hierarchical, hierarchical and unequal, generating extremes of inequalities, rights and dispersions among citizens and social classes. Although this scheme was incredibly unjust, nothing could be done or against as Hindu religious philosophy embraced it, particularly the notion of pure and high birth and profession as compared to the low and the unclean. In other terms, the Hindu ideology was as much a secular one as a faith and was focused upon Hindu culture as an political structure. In other terms.-In other phrases. Hinduism became a faith as well as a social background and regulated Hindus' lives. Being a Hindu means being guided by considerations including being raised in the family, being immune to your own acts or karma, being in Brahman, and striving at obtaining moksha or the redemption of the soul or salvation. In fact, Hinduism was not an

transparent faith with only a single document. This must be remembered. New scriptures and texts have appeared at any point in the history of Hinduism. And the Veda, the Upnishad, the Purana and the Bhagavad Gita are here. Although we stressed that the caste structure represented a pillar of existence in Hindu India and was static and unchangeable, a significant number of anti-caste protests occurred during the religious creation. In 6th century B.C. Buddhism and Jainism. Talk against racial and socioeconomic injustice. This war has been continued and resulted in the emergence of the medieval bhakti or 'selfless' movement to a single Father, the key concern of this unit.

Hinduism has been strongly questioned and challenged by various protests. The bhakti movement is of considerable interest among these. Even though the bhakti movement was against some of the values of Hinduism, most which in later periods became part of Hinduism was the product of the bhakti tradition. This custom, originally from North to South India, was common. We will address its growth separately in the South and North.

### Paths and Pillars of Bhakti

From a historical point of view bhakti is formed in three major religious traditions of ancient India which unified considerably earlier theistic tendencies:

- i) the sacrificial cult of the invading Aryans and the recitation of the Brahmana priests that become the foundation of the Vedas;
- ii) the practice of bodily mortification and groups known as Sramanas probably continuing traditions of earlier inhabitants of India but soon adapted - by some of the Aryans; and
- iii) the pre Aryan cults of spirits and village goddesses inhabiting trees and rocks and protecting special people or special groups.

All who worship the Vishnu as a dietary of the Lord are named Vaishnavas; those who grant Shiva the Lord position are often named Saivas; and those devotees of the mighty Goddess are classified as Saktas. Every sector is split into teachers ' and students' sections. To keeping with the various moods of the devotees, the main bhakti are split. Natural feelings or bhava are transformed into tense moods or rasasa. Each bhava or rasa combining uses a specific human connection or devotional positions as a master or a parent's child or as friend to the mate, wife, and a lover. Although Bhakti stress intense connection, the comparison between Yoga and detachment is startling. Nevertheless, other types of Bhakti talk of separation like that which the Bhagavad Gita says. Against radical ascetic approaches and common Hindu religiosity, the Bhakti movements stand religiously. Ascetic reverence for moksa – liberation from everlasting life and awareness of transcendent beatitude – Bhakti typically expresses. Communion with the Lord is the first aspect. A few haktas are typical of the Hindu 'renunciators' spending all days praying and singing in their Lord's loudness for their toy devotion to time and way of life. Bhakti expresses the basic practice of puja, a diet of pictures of herbs, flowers and vegetables that have been restored as prasada after a Byzantine and Western worship, which is a question of the grace of the Lord. These puja can be held in the nearest

temple or shrine. Adoration can be for either meaningless or divine reason. The bhakti practices – public singing of hymns and music, conducting songs, dancing and singing and reciting the noble acts of Vishnu. They are special.

Such three directions of Bhakti given to Arjuna by Lord Krishna were:

- i) the path of knowledge or jnana; ii) the path of action or karma and iii) the path of devotion or bhakti

## 5. Sufism

In Mesopotamia, Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan moderns, Sufism grew. At the end of the 8th century it became formalized. A suspension between the ulemas and the mystics was right from the outset. Sufis and bhakti practices are distinguished by devotion to divine scripture, legislative authority and an objected external prayer ritualism. Sufis and bhakti are also within faith and relied on the heart. The Sufis aim for a near friendship with God and thus their basic features comprise elements, like Hinduism, from various traditions. Ritu Dewan pointed out that many Sufis took refuge in India, particularly in Multan, Punjab and Sindh as a consequence of a 12th century Mongal invasion. Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), one of the greatest Sufi mystics, was deeply inspired by the Indian mythology and also penned a poem on Krishna's flute. He created the order Maulavi Sufi where dance and music is sacred. Rumi, who frequently quoted in his writings, was very important to Soami ji Maharaj's founding member of the Radha Soami group. Rumi influenced Guru Nanak too. The compositions of Rumi and Baba Farid (1173-1265) along with the compositions of Kabir have been included in the Granth Sahib. The Hindu guru and the Muslim pir were called Guru Nanak. In attempting to combine Hindu mysticism with Sufism, the Bhakti movement had engulfed the whole North India by the end of the 16th century. It is illustrated by the following Kabir verse:

The Mussalmans support the Tarifat The Muslims,  
the Vedas and Puranas but I do not learn the  
scriptures of the two sects.

Sufis also rejected modern worship ritualism. Fasts and services were perceived to be less than voluntary activities. So Jihad's fight against the lower self, not an foreign battle. Sufis such as Shah Abdul Latif and Sachal Sarmast have called for "the Mullahs to be killed".

## The Spread of Sufism in India

Mostly from Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia, Sufism spread among Hindus. There is an account of the specific Saint Muinuddin Chisti, who had established himself in Ajmer and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, and his teachings and followers spread across India, in various parts of India. Regarding the spread of Sufism in India, its essence has modified to fit the Indian climate. The spiritual dimension had therefore been removed and the disciples were directly taught. Though, not all Sufis took followers. Shaikhs were the ones that did. The Shaikh was not only a guide, but also a guardian, a friend, partner or Wali. The instructor was often expected to have mystical or Karamah powers. The Shatkh or pir was called the disciple's spiritual leader or killer. We noticed that most people who came to the Sufi saints wished to cure an disease or satisfy a desire by utilizing their divine powers. Even today we see the several devotees who are allowed

to visit the others, i.e. their dargah, come there to pursue satisfaction of a wish or a blessing. Four main orders among the Sufis have already been stated. Each of these varies from the other in its doctrine, and in the degree to which it is spread in India.

## 6. Sufism and Bhakti : A Comparison

After explaining what the Sufistic philosophy implied, we now take the position of sufism in the Bhakti philosophy into account. You may also have found that many of the Sufis were very close to the instruction of the bhakti of emphasis on God and the sense of holy music and poetry. As stated earlier in sub-section 24.3.1, this relationship between the two is supposed to have produced a medieval mystique that was independent of religious or orthodox tradition and excluded particularly caste practices and atrocities. Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti, who arrived in Delhi in 1193 and stayed in Pushkar in Ajmer, was the first Sufi master to come to India. As already stated. His adherents were both Hindu and Islamic. The Urs at its dargah in Ajmer, to which flocks of followers come, are familiar to us, and even today they regard it as an important pilgrimage centre. Such Sufis are Muslim mystics who pursued the path of redemption by a sincere and intense love for Allah. As described above. Not only disciples but also bhakti saints, who were put together to incorporate the Sufi's principles, were profoundly inspired by the principles of the Sufis. Kabir and Guru Nanak were the two most influential personalities of the 15th-16th century. We shall discuss briefly their position in medieval mysticism.

## 7. Growth of Medieval Mysticism

Ramananda (1370-1440) was an important follower of Ramanuja in the development of medieval mysticism. Ramananda opposed caste distinctions, disputed conventional ceremonies, acknowledged Hindu division theory, rejected traditional ceremonies, and approved jnana or awareness ideology, meditation or yoga, or bhakti. He had multiple supporters, twelve of which were the most powerful ones and come from tiny castes. Kabir, the son of a Muslim weaver, was the most prominent of these disciples. While he left the Muslim religion early in his career, he maintained the rigid Islamic monotheism and opposition to the caste system. He found faith to be a personal interest and emphasized the link between man, god and his teacher and guru. He merged aspects of both Sufi and Bhakti practices in him, claiming that the same aspect was Allah and Rama. He used the dialect or its counterpart as the medium of correspondence as he wanted to meet the common people. He highlighted the value in one's existence of material and spiritual things. He had adherents of both Hindus and Muslims and was not secular. His Hindu followers may be more widespread, however. Most of Kabir's life and job stems from the restoration of the dohas or sakhis he has created. Those were primarily rhymed poems; set in poetry. However, there are also debates on how many dohas Kabir wrote himself, and about the number of his followers or Kabir's panthis. Therefore, some of the claims credited to Kabir are disputed as to the validity. Most of his devotees are claimed to be. It is assumed that these dohas have been used quite much in their sama by the Sufi saints. Dadu (1544-1608), who also belonged to a Muslim family, was significant among Kabir's followers. He has contributed

to the significant endeavor to reconcile religions and founded the "Brahma-Sampraday," where without ceremonies or orthodoxies, God will be worshiped. As a philosopher, he came to appreciate the wonder of the world, not by becoming a lonely person and an ascetic, but by leading a full existence and loving what it had to offer. The work of Guru Nanak of Punjab (1469-1538) is also part of Kabir's output. His dates and sources are more probable than those of Kabir. Live Kabir was not a monotheist and rejected the caste system to a significant degree. The Sikhs became united into a close-knit group of his disciples. The fifth Guru Arjun collected his teachings and writings and those of the subsequent Gurus into the Sikh's holy text, the *Adi Grantha*. The Sikhs were a bhakti sect, of which their *Gurbani bhakti* had a poem. The religious interpretations Guru Nanak has always taken into

account the best sufi influence and many of his teachings show the union of bhakti and sufi traditions.

### 8. Conclusion

We consider various parallels between the bhakti and Sufi traditions. At first, there is stress in both religions on concentrating attention to one deity. In Sufism this is recognised as the *ishta deva* and *dhikr* in bhakti. Furthermore, what Sufis call *Dard* can be compared to the concept of *Viraha* in Bhakti. Much as *Viraha* contributes to the creativity of *Agni* (the spark in the soul). Lastly, the two concepts of a love between devotee and god are the same, and both of them reflect the affection one experiences in relation to the lord and the discomfort and suffering aspect of the devotee in his connection to the lord. We may then assume that the differences represent the two traditions? interacting with one another.

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