

Marathi Muslim Saint-Poets

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Muslim Marathi Saint-Poets

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Translated by

Shubhangana Atre

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Marathi Muslim Saints

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Preface

It is with great pleasure that I present the English translation of *Marathi Muslim Saints* by eminent scholar R.C. Dhere. Originally published in Marathi in 1967, this work stands as the only book length study of Muslim saints in Maharashtra who transcended the boundaries of religious identity to become integral to the Hindu bhakti movement. These saints embraced devotion to deities such as Viṭṭhal, Śiva, and Kṛṣṇa, and engaged deeply with Vedānta philosophy.

The saints discussed in this book— Shāh Muntoji Brahmanī, Sheikh Mammad, Sheikh Sultān, and others—reflect a historical period when the boundaries between religious traditions were fluid and permeable, unlike the rigid demarcations that later emerged. Their lives and works echo the transcendent ethos of figures like Kabir, who, though born into a Muslim family, became a torchbearer of the bhakti tradition.

Advaita Vedānta played an extraordinary role in shaping the philosophy of these saints. Their teachings brought the ontological heights of Advaita down to the common masses, emphasizing the oneness of all existence. To these saints, this profound philosophy of oneness (Advaita) offered a unifying vision and a theological underpinning through which they could transcend sectarian divides.

Despite their Muslim origins, these saints were initiated into various bhakti traditions by some of the most prominent Hindu gurus of their time. They not only learned Sanskrit and studied its śāstras but also made these profound teachings accessible by preaching and composing in the language of the people. This rebuts a often-repeated trope of the insularity of the Hindu tradition or the canard that Sanskrit texts were strictly restricted to the brahmins.

R.C. Dhere's meticulous research, based on published works, manuscripts, oral traditions, and extensive fieldwork, vividly brings to life the cultural and spiritual milieu of medieval Maharashtra. His encyclopaedic

knowledge of Marathi village life and religious traditions imbues this work with an unequalled depth. He unearths forgotten histories, illuminating lives and legacies that might have otherwise faded into obscurity. Moreover, he draws our attention to the interconnectedness of Sufi principles and Hindu devotional practices that shaped the lives of these remarkable saints. Their poetry and philosophy remind us of the shared spiritual foundation that underpins diverse traditions.

The translation by Shubhangana Atre skilfully preserves the lyrical quality of Dhere's prose while rendering the saints' verses with elegance and sensitivity. This English edition opens up a profound body of work to a global audience, allowing readers to engage with a tradition of bhakti that continues to break sectarian boundaries. As one bhakti poet says to his Muslim audience:

Oh, Brothers! Yours and ours is the same God I
Devdās says God cannot be said as being apart II

At its heart, this work is not merely a historical study; it is an invitation to reflect on an era when spiritual pursuits dissolved barriers, creating a shared devotional culture. I hope it inspires scholars, practitioners, and readers to delve deeper into the confluence of traditions that shaped India's spiritual landscape.

**Manish Maheshwari,
Tattva Heritage Foundation.**

Prologue

Indian saints played a great role in strengthening the foundations of Indian awareness of being of the same roots. The Indian culture of their vision as 'harmonised-being of one substance', does not hold bars of religion, caste, regional differences, gender, age, erudition or any other. The credit of building this liberal tradition goes to Hindus and Muslims together.

Challenges to the Indian cultural harmony that followed the Muslim invasions were met with evenness by the Hindu-Muslim saints and they also paid a great price for it.

Saints like Kabīr, Rahīm, Raskhan were from north India among the Muslim architects of the Indian tradition, as were the saints from Maharashtra like Shāh Muntojī Brahmanī, Husein Ambarkhan, Alamkhan, Sheikh Mahammad, Shāh Munī. With one or two exceptions, the work of most of these Muslim saints did not receive due attention.

When the significance of the life, work, and literature of these Muslim saint-poets became evident to me, I undertook an extensive tour across Maharashtra and its border regions, searching for manuscripts and oral traditions. I examined numerous neglected manuscripts scattered across various collections and, in 1967, I presented this book, *Musalman Marathi Santkavi*, to the readers. This book was honoured with awards from the Maharashtra State Government and Pune University (Savitribai Phule Pune Vidyapeeth); it was greatly appreciated by various Indian and international scholars such as G.B. Sardar and Gunther Sonthheimer. This book was out of print for many years. I would have especially felt happy, if I could include the outcomes of my latest research in it.

However, I could not do it because of ill health and the new projects undertaken by me.

I am grateful to all those who offered unconditional help and those who contributed actively to the reprinting of this book.

Ramachandra Chintaman Dhere

21st July 2008

A Note on Diacritic and Italics

This book follows the IAST (International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration) convention for all Marathi, Sanskrit and Hindi words. However, certain modifications have been made to accommodate Marathi phonetic conventions and ease of reading.

In cases where a word is primarily used in a Marathi context, the short *a* at the end—pronounced in Sanskrit—has been omitted. For example, *abhaṅg* instead of *abhaṅga*, and *nāth* instead of *nātha*, etc. For names of modern authors, people and places diacritics have been omitted. However, names of obscure villages have been given in their proper diacritic form for accuracy. To ensure readability, common words such as Brahmin, Swami, Khan, etc., have been left without diacritics.

We understand that the convention is to italicize non-English words and book titles, but in this book, we have chosen not to do so. Due to the high frequency of such terms, excessive italicization would have disrupted the flow and readability of the text. However, we have put the name of the book in caps. We have tried to balance linguistic precision with reader accessibility.

Chapter 1:

Shāh Muntoji Brahmanī

The Bādshāh of Bedar

Among the illustrious names of Marathi saint poets, Mr̥tyuñjaya is a greatly celebrated name. His original name was Shāh Muntoji Brahmanī. He was born in the Bahāmanī royal family of Bedar, at a time when the Bahāmanī Sultanate was already on the decline. In 1481 C.E., Mahmūd Gawān, the capable vizier of the Bedar Sultanate, was executed, and in 1521 C.E., Amir Barīd finally uprooted the Bahāmanī rule. Even though traditional biographers refer to Muntoji as Shāh, and he himself used the title in his book, it does not seem likely that he belonged to the royal Bahāmanī family. Of course, in the absence of extensive details of his life, we cannot make any definitive statement in this regard. Traditional discourse maintains that he was the Bādshāh of Bedar and he regarded himself as a Brahmanī. So, purely based on the traditional discourse, he may have belonged to the royal line of the Bahāmanīs. There are three sources that afford us some glimpses of the life of Mr̥tyuñjaya or Shāh Muntoji Brahmanī:

1. Mr̥tyuñjayacaritra,¹ composed by Uddhava Chidghana (24 verses),
2. Chapter 41 of Bhaktavijaya, composed by Mahipatī (101 verses) and
3. Chapter 16 of Pūrṇānandacaritra² composed by Hanumadātmaja (verses 233-295).

1. Author's note: Kelkar N.C. (ed.), 1902, Mahārāṣṭrakavī Uddhava Chidghana-kṛt Kavitaśaṅgraha, pp.9-11. Please refer to verse no. 37.

2. Author's note: The manuscript was made available to me by Śrī Kisanrao Karalagi, Gulbarga. Śrī. N.B. Joshi, Vijapur wrote an introductory article on Hanumadātmaja, the composer of Pūrṇānandacaritra based on the information derived from this manuscript (please refer to "Indrāyaṇī" March-April 1964, pp.13-18).

It is true that of these three, Uddhava Chidghana's work is the source of Mahīpatī's work, and Hanumadātmaja has based his writings on Mahīpatī's work. However, each of them has added newly available information. Mṛtyuñjaya was also an initiate of the Ānanda sect. Hanumadātmaja was from the Bidar region and was also initiated into the same sect. This fact makes the information provided by Hanumadātmaja more significant.

Uddhava Chidghana mentions Mṛtyuñjaya's pre-initiation name as Shāh Mahammad Bamañī, whereas Mahīpatī calls him Shānt Brāhmañī. However, Hanumadātmaja mentions him simply as Bahāmani Pādshāh of Bedar, instead of using Mṛtyuñjaya's pre-initiation name.

Beginning of the spiritual search

An incident transformed Muntoji Brahmanī's life of royal luxuries into that of a spiritual seeker. Both Uddhava Chidghana and Mahīpatī have narrated the tale. One day, while enjoying his wife's company, Muntoji Brahmanī sat by a window, savoring the view and eating bananas. Guards stood watch beneath the window to ensure the couple's privacy. Muntoji kept throwing banana peels out of the window, which a passing beggar picked up and began to lick. The queen noticed this and pointed it out to her husband. Disturbed by the scene, Muntoji became angry. He wondered how the beggar had entered despite the strict vigilance around his palace. He was furious with the guards. He ordered them to punish the beggar, who was then kicked mercilessly by the guards. Surprisingly, the beggar laughed throughout the ordeal. Observing his strange behaviour, Muntoji ordered the guards to stop. As soon as they did, the beggar began to weep. Amazed by the beggar's reaction, the king asked him to explain. The beggar's answer was very meaningful:

A bit of the peel I tasted | Got punished so |
 What is awaiting you | I wondered ||
 On your land, I put my foot | And got punished so |
 Within the palace, you rest | For your sake, deeply I fret ||
 I tasted peels once junked | And got kicked so ||
 You ate the inner pulp | I fear, what punishment will you get ||
 (Bhaktavijaya, 41. 20-21)

The beggar's reply changed Muntoji's heart completely. Thereafter, he gave up all his riches and without informing anybody left his home. Mahīpatī tells

us that once, after leaving home, he reached a forest where he encountered a group of pilgrims en route to Pandharpur for their annual pilgrimage during the fourth month of the Hindu almanac, Āṣāḍha. Contrary to it, Uddhava Chidghana recounts that after leaving home, Muntoji went directly to Kalyani and from there, he joined a group of pilgrims heading to Pandharpur. Hanumadātmaja does not include this story in his narrative. According to him, Muntoji's renunciation was a result of his previous karmic journey, and he set out to discover the true spiritual path by consulting both Hindu and Muslim religious authorities.

The mullā-maulavīs told him, “Let namāz and rozā, be the rule of your life | With that alone will you find khudā |” (Pūrṇānandacaritra 16.238). Hindus told him, “Our God is jagannivās³ | From Paṇḍharī⁴ he rules ||” Thus, hearing about Paṇḍharī so often, the spiritually inclined Muntoji left his kingdom, and went there.

Being graced by the guru

At the time when Muntoji reached Pandharpur, described as heaven on earth, he witnessed the vast assembly of Vaiṣṇavas. The vārkarīs were singing and dancing to the rhythm of various instruments like ṭāl, mṛdaṅga, and vīṇā. The sky was filled with the resounding sounds of devotees singing the glory of Hari. The atmosphere in Paṇḍharī was charged with the ecstatic joy of devotion. Witnessing all of this, Muntoji's otherwise detached mind felt a longing for that kind of joy. He yearned for that exalted state of devotion. And then:

He bowed to all Vaiṣṇavas⁵ | And lovingly embraced them |
To see God⁶ | He stepped in śejāramaṇḍapa⁷ ||

3. Jagannivās – Omnipresent

4. Paṇḍharī – Pandharpur

5. Vaiṣṇavas – While generally referring to the devotees of Viṣṇu or Viṭṭhal, in this context, it signifies those who pay homage to the samādhis of Sant Nāmdev and Sant Chokha Mela. These samādhis are located outside the main entrance of the temple, known as the mahādvāra.

6. For the devotee the moment of darśan is actually the moment of meeting the god in person. Hereafter, the term darśan will be used as it is.

7. Śejāramaṇḍapa – Refers to the hall adjacent to the entrance (mahādvāra), which includes a gallery where drums or nagārās are kept. This part of the entrance hall is known as the nagārkhānā. The śejāramaṇḍapa mentioned here is, in all probability, the nagārkhānā. Śejā means gallery. It is noted that Muntoji came to this entrance hall, and from there, he had the first sight of Viṭṭhal.

He saw Brahman⁸ | Standing on a brick ||
 Happily, he embraced | Touched the feet of God ||
 He said, “Glory to you | Oh, saṅṣasvarupa⁹ ḥṛṣikeśa!¹⁰ ||
 Oh, līlānāṭakī,¹¹ sarveśā!¹² | The lord of Pandharpur, Oh Viṭṭhal! ||
 Hearing of your glory! Oh, Chakrapāṇi! I surrender to you |
 I wish to know you in your essence | Alas! I fail to find any guru ||
 Fulfil my desire!” | He sat at the temple entrance with a firm resolve |
 He gave up water, fruits and roots |
 Repentant, he stopped eating food ||
 He spent three nights thus | Rukmiṇī’s lord was finally pleased |
 Vivekasindhu,¹³ he saw in a dream | Getting the book from the Lord ||
 “Sahajānandaswami is in Kalyan | Make him your guru soon” ||
 So said the Lord in his dream | That awakened him ||

(Bhaktavijaya, 41.43-49)

Thus, after sitting at the entrance of Pāṇḍuraṅg’s temple for three days without moving, he received a copy of Vivekasindhu and an instruction in his dream to get initiated from guru Sahajānanda of Kalyani. Setting aside the seemingly mysterious part ascribable to the devotional style of narrating this tale, it is obvious that there is a coherence in two things—Muntojī receiving a copy of Vivekasindhu and being instructed to get initiated by guru Sahajānanda at Kalyani. Whoever had given the copy of Vivekasindhu to Muntojī must have had a clear inkling about the close association between Sahajānanda and Vivekasindhu. This book was very dear to Sahajānanda. The book had a great impact on him and others following his tradition. That could be the reason the well-wisher who gave the copy of Vivekasindhu to Muntojī must have also advised him to go to Sahajānanda.

Following the divine message he received at Pandharpur, Muntojī immediately went to Kalyani. However, he found out that Sahajānanda Swami was not there. He then returned to Pandharpur on the day of Kārtikī yātrā

8. Brahman – The indescribable and the highest ontological principle in the Advaita tradition. The terms Brahman, Parabrahma, or Brahma are often used interchangeably.

9. Saṅṣasvarūpa – The formless that has assumed a form.

10. Ḥṛṣikeśa – Derived from ḥṛṣika (senses or organs) and īśa (lord), it means “Lord of the senses” or “God.”

11. Līlānāṭakī – Puppeteer of the universe

12. Sarveśā – Lord of all

13. This text on Advaita Vedānta was composed by the first Marathi poet Mukundarāja.

¹⁴and surprisingly met Sahajānanda there. Muntoji narrated the incident that occurred in Pandharpur and seeing his yearning, Guru Sahajānanda initiated him. As Mahīpatī says:

After initiation I He was named, Mṛtyuñjaya I
 He left soon I Went and stayed in Narayanpur II
 (Bhaktavijaya, 41.43-49)

After initiating Muntoji, Sahajānanda named him Mṛtyuñjaya and asked him to go to Narayanpur near Kalyani and reside there.

In complete surrender to the guru

Hanumadātmaja tells us a slightly different story in Pūrṇānandacaritra. According to him, when Muntoji was wandering in search of a guru from Kalyani to Pandharpur and back, he finally met Sahajānanda at Kalyani itself. He narrated the occurrence at Pandharpur [as mentioned above] to Sahajānanda. He put down the copy of Vivekasindhu for Sahajānanda to see. To test his endurance, Sahajānanda kept the book aside and asked him to help with the daily chores of the maṭha:

Oh! In want of a servant, I ask I Will you take up the work willingly? II
 Collect firewood for the maṭha I Each day do this task I
 This is all for you as a devotee I Keep it in mind and complete it II
 (Pūrṇānandacaritra, 16.252-253)

To test Muntoji's determination in giving up all the pleasures of royal life, Sahajānanda asked him to serve in the maṭha. Muntoji thought, "Anyway, I am not of any caste¹⁵ I How will I get an opportunity to serve?" He earnestly accepted the task of fetching firewood. When he served guru Sahajānanda for six months, Muntoji's sincerity touched him. The guru praised him for his service:

Thus, talking to him I The guru gave him Vivekasindhu I
 Unfolding the principles of the sect I
 He conducted [Muntoji] to realise Brahman II
 (Pūrṇānandacaritra, 16.265)

14. Yātrā – A periodic festival in the honour of a deity. Kārtik – The 8th month of the Indian almanac.

15. Being a Muslim I am not of any Hindu caste.

This order of events narrated by Hanumadātmaja seems to be more authentic. It is more natural that after testing Muntoji's spiritual authority, Sahajānanda decided to initiate him.

Efforts to announce Muntoji as a brahmin

If you imagine Muntoji's heart as a cultivated field that had become fertile by being burnt under the fire of devout spirituality, then the excellent seed of the guru's teachings came to fruition; it blossomed and within no time transformed into a rich-vine laden with fragrant flowers and juicy fruits of knowledge. Observing the miracle, Mṛtyuñjaya (aka Muntoji) became extremely happy. The guru found his conduct and words like those of an austere brahmin. The guru regarded Mṛtyuñjaya much better than anyone born as a brahmin, because now he had known Brahman. The guru thought that he should receive the sacraments meant for a brahmin:

Watching his devotion to the guru |

Swami [Sahajānanda] asked the brahmins there |

Tell me the way for sure | To ordain him a brahmin ||

(Pūrṇānandacaritra, 16.266)

This liberal approach of Sahajānanda was unheard of, considering the then social scenario it was revolutionary. He accepted a yavana, unfolded to him the mysteries of spiritual path described in the Vivekasindhu, gave him a Hindu name, Mṛtyuñjaya, and also named him as Jñānasāgarānanda according to the tradition of his own sect. Sahajānanda took special efforts to get him officially announced as a brahmin. However, his efforts were thwarted very cunningly by the brahmins in Kalyani. How they did it, is narrated in a story by Hanumadātmaja. He tells us that when Sahajānanda expressed his desire to bring Muntoji in the Hindu fold as a brahmin, the brahmins in Kalyani seemingly consented to it on one condition—if Muntoji survives fire thrice, after being thrown in it, he may be equitably accepted as a brahmin. Mṛtyuñjaya standing true to his name, which means death conqueror, survived even this strange ordeal imposed by the brahmins. Then the brahmins found another way out:

Oh, it cannot be humanly possible | The brahmins said |

(Pūrṇānandacaritra, 16.270)

Thus, saying it is impossible for a human being to survive such ordeal, not only once but thrice; Mṛtyuñjaya is apparently not human. Those brahmins turned him into a god and washed their hands off. Sahajānanda's wish remained unfulfilled. Mṛtyuñjaya, though an adherent to Hindu path, for the outside world he remained a Muslim. Later his Muslim brethren erased every sign that could remind of Mṛtyuñjaya as a disciple of a Hindu guru. They kept up his Muslim name, i.e. Shāh Mutabājī Qādarī. At present, his samādhi place is completely forgotten—not even mentioned in any of his biographies. Muslims have claimed it as a tomb of an auliya.¹⁶

Stay at Narayanpur

As long as Sahajānanda was present in the Sadānanda maṭha, Mṛtyuñjaya stayed there, outside the entrance, silently waiting for the guru's orders and lived only on the food obtained by begging alms. When Sahajānanda left his body, Mṛtyuñjaya shifted to Narayanpur. Hanumadātmaja tells us¹⁷ that Mṛtyuñjaya had built a step outside the main entrance of the Kalyani maṭha and had carved the letters Jñānasāgarānanda Pādaśāhī on it. Mṛtyuñjaya's purpose of doing this was:

Let devotees walk trampling on my name |
Then proceed for Sahajānanda's darśan ||

(Pūrṇānandacaritra, 16.294)

Mṛtyuñjaya built a hut in Narayanpur and began to live there. There he seems to have performed many miracles. According to Hanumadātmaja:

Mṛtyuñjaya | Caused several miracles |
I will not narrate them all | As I fear that this book will bulge ||

(Pūrṇānandacaritra, 16.275)

Things which were not mentioned by Hanumadātmaja have been lost to us permanently, but he tells us that he avoided it for the fear of increasing the volume of the book.

16. Auliya – A saint absorbed in devotion; one who is not aware of worldly concerns.

17. Author's note: The original text appears as, Amṛtānanda pādaśāhī. However, it seems to be an error, because the sectarian name of Mṛtyuñjaya is Jñānasāgarānanda. It is also possible that the name Amṛtānanda was derived from Mṛtyuñjaya (Pūrṇānandacaritra 16.293).

Influence on the local Liṅgāyats

Kalyani¹⁸ was the major centre¹⁹ of the Liṅgāyats. Uddhava Chidghana and Mahipatībuvā have related a story indicating the strong influence of Mṛtyuñjaya's mystical powers on the Liṅgāyats of Kalyani. The story mentions one Bhavarāyā, a jaṅgama,²⁰ came under Mṛtyuñjaya's influence and became his disciple. Samuchchaya, another jaṅgama was enraged by this. He began to openly cast aspersions on Bhavarāyā, saying:

Mṛtyuñjaya, born a yavana |
Just a little bit of knowledge he has earned |
How Bhavarāyā could think of becoming his disciple | Heedlessly ||
(Bhaktavijaya, 41.59)

Saying so, he declared Bhavarāyā be considered as an outcast. Bhavarāyā was pained because of this and he reported this to his guru. On hearing it Mṛtyuñjaya advised his disciple, saying: "Remain firm in your faith | Calmly sing the glory of God ||"

There was a local feudal lord in Kalyani, whose name was Kāśipati. He was a devotee of Lord Śiva. He regularly fed ten thousand jaṅgama gurus to honour them. One day something unthinkable happened, when Kāśipati began to serve food to his guests. They all were wearing the mandatory liṅga when they had arrived. But each of them was surprised to find that it had gone missing. They were so staunch in their faith that they would prefer to die than losing it. Hence, realising that each of them had lost his liṅga, they were utterly confused. Kāśipati, seeing what has happened, said:

Somebody has returned | Humiliating some saintly men ||
So Viśveśvara has left you all | Enraged by it |
(Bhaktavijaya, 41.81-82)

18. Author's note: Once an ancient city, it is located, near Umarga 23 miles off the Umarga-Humanabad road. From that point on it is further 3 miles on the left side of a byroad. Basaveśvara was the prime minister of the Kalacūri king, Bijjwal Kalacūri, in this city. There are several places around here, which are perceived as holy by the Liṅgāyats.

19. Kalyani was the capital of a branch of Cālukya Dynasty, known as Western Cālukya or Kalyāṇi Cālukyas (11th-12th century C.E.). Now Kalyani is renamed as Basavakalyan (District Bidar, Karnataka)

20. Jaṅgama – Member of the priestly class among Liṅgāyats.

When Kāśīpati said so, Samuchchaya jaṅgama overcame with remorse for his unscrupulous intentions and deeds. To the gathering of the jaṅgama gurus, he confessed, “I insulted Bhavarāyā | For having an avindha²¹ for a guru ||” On hearing this, Kāśīpati told all the jaṅgama gurus, “It is better for you to go to Mṛtyuñjayaśwami and pray to him so that you retrieve your liṅgas.” So, all of them arrived at Mṛtyuñjaya’s maṭha, humbly asked for his forgiveness and for their liṅgas. Mṛtyuñjaya with a gentle smile, said:

Vedānta and Siddhānta are two dogs | Of our house |
Perhaps your liṅgas | Are stolen by them ||

Mṛtyuñjaya called up both the dogs and made them return all the ten thousand liṅgas that they had swallowed. Thereafter, he was acknowledged as Jñānasāgara Ayyā²² among the jaṅgama gurus. This myth has clear underlying meaning that Vedānta—the essence of Knowledge—and Siddhānta²³—the truth, dwelt and served like docile dogs at Mṛtyuñjaya’s door. Thus, Mṛtyuñjaya’s mystical powers being proved, thousands of Liṅgāyats started addressing him as Jñānasāgara Ayyā.²⁴

Samādhi at Narayanpur

Having experienced the joy of an exalted spiritual experience, Mṛtyuñjaya blessed many spiritual aspirants with the same experience for a long time before leaving his body at his maṭha. It is likely that he was buried according to Muslim rites.

If one proceeds to Narayanpur from Kalyani, then on the other side of the village, on a raised platform is the samādhi shrine of Mṛtyuñjaya. At present this place is known as the dargāh of Murtazā Qādarī. A family of caretakers with the surname Dargāhwāle resides in the premises of the dargāh and they conduct the services at the place. Members of the family would not accept the fact that he had any link with Hindu traditions. However, Hindus traditionally suppose that the saint who is enshrined there

21. Avindha – The one whose ears are not pierced. Hindus get their male child’s ears pierced, while Muslims do not. Hence the term applies to a Muslim.

22. Jñānasāgara – Sagar meaning ocean of knowledge and Ayya meaning the respected one.

23. Siddhānta – Established truth, doctrine, or axiom.

24. Author’s note: Jñānasāgara – Abbreviation of the sectarian name Jñānasāgarānanda. Ayyā is an honorific address in Kannada.

was none else but Sahajānanda's disciple Mṛtyuñjaya and they think of him as their own. Hindus form the majority among the participants in the urs,²⁵ organized in the memory of the saint. This was told to me by Mr. Rahimāshā Dargāwāle. Mṛtyuñjaya or Murtazā Qādārī's urs falls on the 21st day of the month of Ramzān and it is celebrated according to Muslim traditions.

There is a small Śiva temple behind the samādhi shrine on the same raised platform. It is looked after by the Hindus. There are several remains of Hindu architecture in the vicinity of this samādhi shrine. This shrine/dargāh is the only earthly representation of Mṛtyuñjaya's acceptance of Hindu way of life, which survived his death. However, his precious compositions, expressing his deep spiritual wisdom, have been preserved by spiritually aware Hindus. His life story might have been lost in oblivion but his words steeped in devotion are capable enough, like a lightning, striking at the very core of darkness. So, let us stop our search of his life story and try to understand some debates in its context. We shall then proceed to get a gist of his writings.

Guru and spiritual lineage

A detailed description of Mṛtyuñjaya's boundless devotion to his guru, is given by Hanumadātma. A fellow disciple of Mṛtyuñjaya, Pūrṇānanda has praised his devotion to the guru as follows, "As clouds by way of rains create holy rivers, in turn making the places on their banks famous as holy places, so does Mṛtyuñjaya's devotion to his guru endows a special dimension to the very concept of devotion. He has created the highest ideal of devotion." Mṛtyuñjaya himself has said:

With no love for worldly things |
Serving the guru with loving devotion |
Having faith in the essence of Truth | Only he attains it ||
(Svarūpsamādhāna, 34)

Thus, he often sung the glory of service to the guru and the compassion of the guru for his disciples: "The word spoken by the sadguru is the Brahman manifest!" With such deep faith and in utmost esteem, he held every word of his guru. Mṛtyuñjaya's declares in his writings, at every stage, that his experi-

25. Urs – Celebration of the death anniversary of a sufi saint.

ence of the Brahman, was made possible only because his guru showered him with compassionate kindness. However, it is mysterious that neither did he write anything about himself nor did he ever spell out his guru's name. It is Uddhava Chidghana, who has mentioned his guru's name very clearly: "Sahajānanda, the revered one, the sadguru dwelling in Kalyani, had initiated him."

Mahīpatī has also narrated the story of Pāṇḍuraṅg himself appearing to Muntoḥī and asking to go to Pandharpur: "Swami Sahajānanda, the guru, he lives in Kalyani | Seek his guidance having his blessing |" While writing Pūrṇānandacaritra, Hanumadātmaja also noted down the history of the Ānanda Sect. He has included the details of Mṛtyuñjaya's daily routine when he stayed in the maṭha serving his guru. The people at the main centre of the Ānanda Sect, i.e. the Sadānanda maṭha of Kalyani and samādhi shrine at Narayanpur do not express any doubt about this guru-disciple bond. It is impossible to dispute that Sahajānanda Swami of Kalyani was Mṛtyuñjaya's guru is a historical fact, since both the maṭhas of the Ānanda Sect and the three biographers support this unanimously.

The tradition of the Ānanda Sect acknowledges only one Sahajānanda Swami, who lived in the maṭha at Kalyani. There are other reliable sources, which confirm that there never was any other guru known as Sahajānanda, and one being mentioned in this context was also the guru of Śivarāmaswami Kalyānikar, a well-known saint poet. Śivarāmaswami was Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa's guru. Pūrṇānanda lived in the second half of the 16th century C.E. However, the author of Pūrṇānandacaritra, because of some misunderstanding, added two more names between Sahajānanda and Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa. Hence, some scholars tend to push back the date of Sahajānanda.

Hanumadātmaja has given the guru-disciple spiritual lineage in the 16th chapter of Pūrṇānandacaritra as follows: Īśa (Śiva) -> Datta [Dattātreyā] -> Sadānanda -> Rāmānanda -> Amalānanda -> Gambhīrānanda -> Brahmānanda -> Sahajānanda -> Pūrṇānanda -> Brahmānanda -> Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa (father and guru of Śivarāmaswami). In this spiritual lineage, two names, Pūrṇānanda and Brahmānanda have been mistakenly repeated by Hanumadātmaja. Avadhūtagītāṭīkā²⁶ written by Sahajānanda's disciple Pūrṇānanda is dated to the year 1532 of śaka era (1610 C.E.). Pūrṇānanda

26. Author's note: Manuscript of Avadhūtagītāṭīkā is housed in the school of Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Pune. Manuscript no. 21, 64 (This endnote appears in the text. However, its reference number is missing on the concerned page of the article. Reference to Avadhūtagītāṭīkā occurs twice on page 18.).

Nārāyaṇa's son Śivarāmaswami was born in the year 1546 of śaka era (1553 C.E.). Śivarāmaswami was the youngest child in the family. Keeping in view Śivarāmaswami's birth year, it would become clear that Pūrṇānanda, the disciple of Sahajānanda, who authored Avadhūtagītāṭikā was the same person as Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa, the guru and the father of Śivarāmaswami.

Pūrṇānanda, the author of Avadhūtagītāṭikā has given the spiritual lineage in another book, Gurugītāṭikā ²⁷ as – Śaṅkara [Śiva] -> Dattātreyā -> Sadānanda -> Rāmānanda -> Amalānanda -> Gambhīrānanda -> Brahmānanda -> Sahajānanda -> Pūrṇānanda (Gurugītā 5.97-100). Śivarāmaswami himself has also referred to the guru-disciple spiritual lineage in the maṅgalācaraṇa of his Gītācandrikā, as follows:

Īśa, Datta, that is Sadānanda and his disciple Rāmānanda
Nirmaladeva deep like ocean, the honoured guru
Brahmānandākhyā,²⁸ Sahajānanda, yogirāja Pūrṇānanda
Let Sadānanda stay in your mind ||25||

Among these, Sadānanda is Śivarāmaswami's sectarian name. According to the authentic information from Śivarāmaswami's own life, Sahajānanda was his paramaguru²⁹ and he has not repeated the names, Pūrṇānanda and Brahmānanda, before Yogirāja Pūrṇānanda's name. The guru-disciple tradition as stated by Śrīdharaswami of the Ānanda tradition of Kalyani in Śivalīlāmṛta is as follows:

Śrīdharaswami Brahmānanda ³⁰ | The boundless Ānanda Sect |
Govinda pervades the primaeval ocean | Brahmā is his first disciple ||
Sage Atri, Brahmā's disciple | The omniscient Dattātreyā after him |
His disciple Sadānanda | Yati Rāmānanda, his disciple in turn ||
Then was Amalānanda, deep as ocean |

27. Author's note: An incomplete manuscript of Gurugītāṭikā is in my personal collection of manuscripts, I could also obtain one lithographic print of the same.

28. Brahmānandākhyā – Derived from Brahma (the Absolute) and Ānanda (bliss), meaning one who has attained the bliss of Brahman. When combined with ākhyā (ākhyā meaning "name," which becomes ākhyā when at the end of a compound), it refers to "one who is named or epitheted as Brahmānanda," symbolizing the enlightened one who knows the joy of Brahman.

29. Paramaguru – Guru's guru.

30. Brahmānanda was Śrīdharaswami's father and guru. So, he mentions his name as Śrīdharaswami Brahmānanda.

Brahmānanda, the munificent one |
 In Kalyani the yati resided | Sahajānanda, as he was known |
 Yati Pūrṇānanda, the holy one | Then was guru's guru, Dattānanda |
 To have one's own father as guru, what a fortune |
 Yatindra Brahmānanda, he was known ||
 (Śivalilāmṛta, 14.204-208)

Śrīdharaswami's paramaguru, Dattānanda left his body in the year of 1510 of śaka era (1588 C.E.). Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa left his body in the year 1570 of śaka era (1658 C.E.). Considering these dates, it is obvious that Pūrṇānanda, who was Dattānanda's guru and disciple of Sahajānanda is none other than Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa.

The traditional information provided by the authorities of olden days, in the Ānanda sect confirms that Sahajānanda was the guru of Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa. The two additional names— Pūrṇānanda and Brahmānanda— between Sahajānanda and Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa, mentioned by Hanu-madātmaja is an error. There is no doubt that Pūrṇānanda was Mṛtyuñjaya's fellow disciple. They both were disciples of Sahajānanda.

Mṛtyuñjaya's guru Sahajānandaswami was a sādhu of very high merit. References in the Pūrṇānandacaritra indicate that besides Mṛtyuñjaya there were some other Muslims also, among his followers. Words are not enough for describing the greatness of Sahajānanda. He bestowed Mṛtyuñjayapada³¹ to Muntojī of the Bahāmanī royal house, felicitated him by an epithet Jñānasāgarānanda, acknowledging the depth of his spiritual authority and ultimately thinking of publicly accepting him in the fold of Hinduism as a worthy brahmin. Sahajānanda's disciple Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa, while concluding Gurugītāṭikā says:

In praise of the great man | Last word cannot be mine |
 Knowledge personified | In kaliyuga, he was born ||
 In a human body | Yet, he sees the pure reality |
 With his darśan | Even the ignoble, found liberation ||
 (Gurugītāṭikā, 5.101-102)

31. Mṛtyuñjayapada – A seat of immortality. Sahajānanda named Muntojī as Mṛtyuñjaya. In a way, he bestowed Muntojī with a seat of spiritual immortality.

Vivekasindhu and Sahajānanda

The story that God Pāṇḍuraṅg himself gave Vivekasindhu to Muntoji and asked him, in his dream, to go to Sahajānanda should be taken into consideration by us because it suggests guru Sahajānanda's close association with Vivekasindhu. The reason for thinking that Sahajānanda was the right guru to understand Vivekasindhu – the guruśāstra,³² becomes clear by reading Gurugītāṭikā written by Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa, who was guru Sahajānanda's disciple. It shows a great influence of Vivekasindhu. Here, I am quoting a few examples. They would give some inkling of such influence:

1. My words sing | With a pure mind, the guru's praise |
Because our predecessors | Revered, this Gurugītā ||
(Gurugītāṭikā, 5.96)

I cleansed my speech | With these words of mine ||
(Vivekasindhu, 71.56)

2. To liberate people | I speak Marathi not Sanskrit ||
It will certainly please | All revered gurus ||
(Gurugītāṭikā, 5.108)

For that purpose | I wrote this book in Marathi ||
I pray! Let the words please | The Lord of all beings |
(Vivekasindhu, 12.123, 136)

3. Extreme devotion to God |
As with the God, so it is with the guru, is the dictum |
Guru and the Brahman are but one |
The guru instructs from that oneness ||
(Gurugītāṭikā, 5.109)

Extreme devotion to God |
As with the God, so it is with the guru, is the dictum |
In oneness are Īśvara and the guru | Guru instructs that oneness ||
(Vivekasindhu 18.24)

32. Guruśāstra might mean a śāstra (knowledge) received from the guru. The last chapter of Vivekasindhu is exclusively devoted to the role of the guru, without whose instructions and blessings it is impossible to complete the spiritual journey. However, guru also means great or heavy. Thus, it is likely that in this context guruśāstra might mean the highest knowledge of the Brahman.

4. I dwell in the moment I
 There, to the vastness of (this?³³) book pay attention I
 The resolve in the Brahman came to fruition! Of
 jñānasāgarānanda³⁴||
 (Gurugītāṭikā, 5.112)
- I get tired of the efforts, even of a single cycle of breath I
 So why should I intend to create a book I
 But what came to fruition I Was my good intention who is fortunate II
 (Vivekasindhu 1.7.154)
5. Heaps of austerities and pilgrimage I
 Burden of religion and laws of duties I
 But the only path I
 Listen, Oh Umā!³⁵ is an absolute commitment to the guru II
 (Gurugītāṭikā, 1.44)
- Decrees of austerities and pilgrimage I Slaves of religion and laws I
 The darkness of their ignorance cannot be dispersed I
 Without the unique tool of knowledge II
 (Vivekasindhu, 12.118)
6. Gurus who instruct in mantra and yantra,³⁶ bear it in mind I
 They are many I
 (Gurugītāṭikā, 1.11)
- Gurus who instruct in mantra and yantra I
 Can be found almost in every house II
 (Vivekasindhu, 2.27)
7. They become guests I In the hell II
 (Gurugītāṭikā, 1.13)
- Heedless people, become guests I In the hell II
 (Vivekasindhu, 2.20)

33. The text is lost, so the question mark. However, on p. 26 the author refers to the same verse where he has not added any question mark. Instead, he fills the gap as, ...(yā).

34. Jñānasāgarānanda – Absolute knowledge, the joyful ocean. It is the sectarian name of Mṛtyuñjaya.

35. Lord Śiva is addressing Goddess Umā or Pārvatī, his wife.

36. Yantra – Mystic diagram.

If studied closely, we find such parallels to Vivekasindhu in almost every verse of Gurugītāṭīkā. These parallels clearly bring out the deep meditative conviction of Sahajānandaswami and others who belonged to the same tradition. A comparative analysis of Vivekasindhu and other literature of the Ānanda tradition, with respect to its language and content, may be helpful to understand this spiritual bond. The influence caused by this spiritual bond is evidenced in Ātmaprakāśa,³⁷ a book authored by Brahmānanda, the disciple of Dattānanda who was in turn the disciple of Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa. Here is an example of the similarities with regard to the language and thought or images:

Bhagīratha³⁸ toiled for his own cause |
 He brought down Jāhnavī³⁹ on the earth |
 But, the world was cleansed | By the holy bath ||
 (Ātmaprakāśa, 13.63)

Bhagīratha's fortune was instrumental |
 For the world to get to bathe in the Ganga ||
 Jaitpāla's⁴⁰ command(?) in the same way |
 Became a cause for the world to be happy ||
 (Vivekasindhu, 7.156)

There is one more link to confirm the close association between Vivekasindhu and the Ānanda Sect. The first guru of this tradition is God Dattātreyā himself, hence Gurugītā is of prime importance for the members of the sect. Three commentaries of Gurugītā are now available, written by Pūrṇānanda Nārāyaṇa, Śivarāmaswami and Ātmānandaswami. Elsewhere, I have shown the close connection between Gurugītā and Vivekasindhu, with evidence.⁴¹

Vivekasindhu enhances the glory of the guru principle and explains Ad-

37. Author's note: Prof. C.N. Joshi in his Śrīdhara: Caritra āṇi kāvyavivecan (1951(?), pp.138-143), has briefly introduced Ātmaprakāśa.

38. Bhagīratha – A prince of the Ikṣvāku dynasty in ancient India, who practiced severe austerities to bring the river Ganga down to earth from the heavens. His goal was to free his forefathers, who were frozen in death, and open their passage to heaven. This story appears in the Tīrthayātrā Parva, a subsection of the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata (3.108).

39. Jāhnavī – Another name of river Ganga.

40. Mukundarāja is believed to have composed the Vivekasindhu at the request of King Jaitrapāla. In the first chapter, verse 23, Mukundarāja addresses Jaitrapāla as mahānubhāva (Athle Vishnu Krishna, Sārth Vivekasindhu, Pune, p. 19). Mukundarāja mentions his own name in the 7th chapter, verse 155 (Athle, p. 135).

41. Author's note: R.C. Dhare (1964, 2nd ed.) Datta Saṃpradāyācā Itihāsa. Pp. 236-237.

vaita Vedānta with authority. So, it is no surprise that this celebrated book, was treasured by the followers of Ānanda Sect. In this regard, one more thing may be noted here that Keśav Swami Bhāgānagarakar, the well-known poet in the Mukundarāja tradition, was originally from Kalyani.

Śrī. V.A. Kanole has used a doubtful source to place Muntoḥī in the spiritual lineage of Mukundarāja.⁴² He has identified Muntoḥī Brahmanī and Mṛtyuñjaya as two different individuals. According to Kanole, Muntoḥī Brahmanī was Mṛtyuñjaya's disciple who was drawn to spiritual path after listening to Mṛtyuñjaya's exposition of Vivekasindhu. He has completely ignored the traditionally accepted Sahajānanda-Mṛtyuñjaya connection. Kanole says, "Mṛtyuñjayaswami was an illustrious saintly man in the core tradition of Śrīmukunda Mahārāja; his great devotee and worshipper. It appears that Mṛtyuñjayaswami contributed extensively in keeping Mukundarāja's tradition alive and making Vivekasindhu popular in Maharashtra."

These statements of Kanole are based on the information on the concluding remarks of a book entitled, Pañchikaraṇa, composed by someone called Ananta. Kanole writes further, "This manuscript seems to have been copied just before a century or a half and so cannot be said to be an ancient one...It cannot be ascertained whether the passage at the end of the treatise about the guru lineage is from the original Pañchikaraṇa composed by Ananta, the disciple of Mṛtyuñjaya, or is interpolated afterwards." Nonetheless, Kanole, based on the same passage includes Mṛtyuñjaya in the Mukundarāja's spiritual lineage. The information appearing in this passage is as follows: "Śrī Harināth performed a homa, from which emerged the First One in the order, i.e. Lord Śrī Ādināth | He initiated Hariswami | Hariswami initiated Śrī Rāmacandraswami | Rāmacandraswami initiated Śrī Mukundarājaswami | He instructed Śrī Guru Mṛtyuñjayarāmaswami | [God Viṭṭhal] appeared to him at Pandharpur, on the banks of the [river] Bhīmā and blessed him with the book Vivekasindhu, the boon of self-knowledge, the ātmopāsana⁴³ and brahmabodha.⁴⁴

It is obvious that the source of the above-mentioned information for Ananta was the same traditional lore about Muntoḥī getting hold of the Vivekasindhu at Pandharpur and there itself being directed to meet Sahajānanda of Kalyani and seek his guidance. For Mṛtyuñjaya, Vivekasindhu

42. Author's note: Aitiḥāsika Saṅkīrṇa Nibandha, (1956) Vol. VI, pp 55-59.

43. Ātmopāsana – Meditation on the Self.

44. Brahmabodha – Knowledge of the Brahma [the highest].

was his guruśāstra, and Sahajānanda was his only guru. We have also witnessed from Pūrṇānanda's book, the impact of Vivekasindhu on Sahajānanda's thoughts. Ananta, the author of Pañcikaraṇa, places Mṛtyuñjaya in Mukundarāja's spiritual lineage.

However, it cannot be assured with certainty on this basis that Ananta was a direct disciple of Mṛtyuñjaya. In his book Ananta has prayed thus, "Oh Śrī Mṛtyuñjaya! Bless me with freedom from the bondage [of existence] I Keep your promise!" However, this is not proof enough to prove that Mṛtyuñjaya was his direct guru. The guru lineage, as it appears at the end of the book (even Kanole himself is not certain, whether it is original or modification made by the one who prepared this copy [of Pañcikaraṇa authored by Ananta]). Indeed, he addresses Mṛtyuñjaya as Śrīguru, but it is also true that followers of any particular sectarian tradition would address all earlier great men of that tradition as Śrīguru, just as an overt expression of their faith. The later followers of Ānanda tradition also seem to be addressing Sadānanda, Pūrṇānanda and Śivarāma as Śrīguru.

Vivekasindhu and Mṛtyuñjaya's literature

We have examined in detail the impact of Vivekasindhu on Sahajānanda, Mṛtyuñjaya's guru, through passages from Pūrṇānanda's (Mṛtyuñjaya's fellow disciple) Gurugītāṭikā. We have also read Hanumadātmaja's description of Mṛtyuñjaya receiving Vivekasindhu at Pandharpur and Sahajānanda later unfolding its core meaning to him. Given that Mṛtyuñjaya had the fortune of hearing the profound exposition of Vivekasindhu at the beginning of his spiritual journey, it is inevitable that his thought process would be influenced by it. We can see the marks of this influence in many places in Mṛtyuñjaya's writings.

In the present context, I shall bring out the influence of Vivekasindhu on Mṛtyuñjaya's writings with the help of his published literature. Only three of his works have been published—Svarūpasamādhāna and Prakāśadīpa—which are short treatises and the second chapter (entitled Siddhasaṅketa) in a longer treatise called, Vihaṅgamamārga.⁴⁵ These three works comprise not even a third of Mṛtyuñjaya's complete literature. However, finding truth in

45. Author's note: All the three chapters have been published separately by Śrī. V.L. Bhavé in his magazine, entitled, Mahārāṣṭrakavi.

the truism, ‘a drop is all, that the ocean has,’ I shall outline the close connection between Vivekasindhu and Ṛṭyūñjaya’s literature.

Of the three publications, I will keep aside the third one, which is a complete chapter of a longer treatise. Of the rest of the two, the 6th and the 14th chapter of Svarūpasamādhāna shows a great influence of Vivekasindhu. Also, Prakāśadīpa displays a very prominent influence of Vivekasindhu, throughout the text. This influence is not limited to the content only, but Ṛṭyūñjaya has adopted Mukundarāja’s lexical expressions as well.

The first chapter of Prakāśadīpa is the maṅgalācaraṇa. Therein, Ṛṭyūñjaya asserts in Mukundarāja’s style (Prakāśadīpa 1.8; Vivekasindhu 1.10): “Candracūḍa⁴⁶ is pleased.” We have some examples here, to illustrate, the indebtedness of Ṛṭyūñjaya to Mukundarāja:

1. Enwrapped in three bodies⁴⁷ |
Shrouded in ignorance, desire-laden actions |
Sentience suffers three affliction⁴⁸ | Individual soul became tainted ||
(Vivekasindhu, 8.11)

Enwrapped in the gross, subtle, and causal bodies |
Shrouded in ignorance, desire-laden actions |
Ensnared by the mundane, it got weakened |
Individual soul became tainted ||
(Prakāśadīpa, 2.10)

2. Let the darkness of both,⁴⁹ be cleared | Let the pure reside |
(Vivekasindhu, 8.13)

Let go of the darkness of both | Embrace the pure intent |
(Prakāśadīpa, 2.13)

46. Candracūḍa – One who wears the moon in his hair, God Śiva.

47. Gross body – The physical, corporeal attribute of one’s existence, perceiving through the five sense organs and nourished by food. Subtle body – An unseen body that serves as the vehicle for the Self to experience desires, feelings, discernments, and similar functions. Causal body – Also invisible, this body is the seat of a person’s innate tendencies, shaping desires, feelings, and discernments.

48. Ādhibhoutika – Pertaining to the mundane or physical world. Ādhidaivika – Related to the gods, goddesses, and fate. Ādhyātmika – Concerning the spiritual realm.

49. That of the ignorance and desire-laden actions.

3. Ears receive the sound | Skin enjoys tactility |
 Eyes perceive appearance | Only in your closeness ||
 Taste, the tongue knows | Scent is for the nose |
 It's possible only in your presence |
 But, nothing is real, no action is yours ||
 Speech gives sound to uttered words |
 Give and take is the hands onus |
 Walking is for the legs |
 You are not the doer, yet without you nothing happens ||
 Pleasure is for the phallus | Cleaning of the bowel does the anus |
 Passive you are, always like this | Even so, how do you effect it, thus ||
 (Vivekasindhu, 9.57-60)

Hearing with the ears | Skin, the vehicle for various pleasures |
 Seeing with the eyes | You are the only source ||
 Flavours many, the tongue savours | Every scent the nose knows |
 Aware of these organs | Is none but you ||
 The speech realised in utterance |
 Hands perform exchange of things |
 Walking are the legs | Because of you, who else ||
 Pleasures of the phallus | Expelling waste, does the anus |
 You do not do it, but all that is yours |
 Whatever is done by the organs ||
 (Prakāśadīpa, 2.88-91)

4. Waters bring the moss to life |
 It is soon submitted back to the water |
 The same way, the true you | Got covered by ignorance ||
 (Vivekasindhu, 10.32)

From the water, the moss arose |
 Soon fell back in the water's embrace |
 Similarly, ignorance | Have the true you wound in its curls ||
 (Prakāśadīpa, 2.88-91)

5. Otherwise, you truly exist |
 You only deny it being enveloped in ignorance |
 "I am not", is ignorance | Who else knows it, but you ||
 (Vivekasindhu, 10.31)

You are with yourself I

However, you are in the embrace of ignorance I

“I am not”, is ignorance I Who else would know it, but you II

(Prakāśadīpa, 3.27)

6. The gross and the subtle bodies I The false knowledge as well I

Ignorance gives birth to all these I

So it is called the causal body II

(Vivekasindhu, 10.33)

The gross and the subtle bodies I The false knowledge as well I

It is born from ignorance I So it is the causal body II

(Prakāśadīpa, 3.35)

I think, these examples are eloquent enough to establish the bond between Vivekasindhu and Prakāśadīpa. Those who wish to know more, may compare Vivekasindhu verse number: 10.37, 10.42, 10.51, 11.59-61, 11.9, 11.10-11 to Prakāśadīpa verse number: 3.10, 3.59, 3.68, 4.29, 4.9 and 4.10, so that they get a good idea of this similarity. The content and style of expression of Vivekasindhu show such a prominent influence on Prakāśadīpa that one may feel, as if the latter is an abridged version of the former.

Sectarian name of Mr̥tyuñjaya: Jñānasāgarānanda

Sahajānanda named his Muslim disciple as Mr̥tyuñjaya, a modified Sanskrit version of his original name, Muntoji or Mutabajī. Similarly, keeping in with the tradition of the Ānanda Sect, he also named Muntoji as Jñānasāgarānanda. The fact that Mr̥tyuñjaya was named so, is evident from the following passage in Mr̥tyuñjayacaritra, written by Uddhava Cidghana. He says:

Sahajānanda, the guru extolled his name, in front of everybody I

All addressed him, Jñānasāgara Ayyā and worshipped him II23II

Uddhava Cidghana asserts that members of the Liṅgāyat community at Kalyani had seen the spiritual powers of Mr̥tyuñjaya and they began to address him as Jñānasāgara Ayyā. Based on this assertion by Uddhava Cidghana, Mahīpatī has confirmed, “He was named Jñānasāgara Ayyā I By all people around I” (Bhaktavijaya, 41.99). However, this assertion by both Uddhava Cidghana and Mahīpatī needs to be accepted with some reservations. It is

possible that the people around Kalyani might have known Mr̥tyuñjaya as Jñānasāgara Ayyā and so Uddhava Cidghana thought that this was a name given to him by Liṅgāyat community (a name with the suffix Ayyā, which is typical of Liṅgāyat names). Gurugītāṭīkā, written by Pūrṇānanda, a fellow disciple of Mr̥tyuñjaya, explicitly mentions that it was his sectarian name. Pūrṇānanda wrote Gurugītāṭīkā on Jñānasāgarānanda's insistence:

The devotee of Sahajānanda |
 Pūrṇānanda, the wanderer, who had renounced the world |
 Writing a commentary |
 Of Gurugītā, the highest of the Ūrdhvamaṭha tradition⁵⁰ |
 I dwell in the moment |
 To the extensive address of this book, pay attention |
 My resolve in the Brahman came to fruition |
 Absolute knowledge, the joyful ocean ||
 With this intent | In Marathi, this book I wrote |
 The illustrious ones | They drink the nectar of Brahman ||
 Just as rain waters fill the holy rivers and water bodies along the
 pilgrim centres, bestowing them with holiness |
 Similarly, Jñānasāgarānanda illumined the phenomenon of
 gurubhakti⁵¹ ||
 Which is for the good of all | Was unfolded ||
 With sunrise, darkness melts |
 With Jñānasāgarānanda the worship of guru shines |
 And the great devotees enjoy | Songs devoted to the guru, full of joy ||
 Listening to Purāṇas makes the mind guileless |
 With Gurugītā every sin is burnt ||
 To dissolve all bondage | Jñānasāgarānanda has laid the pathway ||
 (Gurugītāṭīkā, 5.111-116)

Readers will now easily know that the name Jñānasāgara Ayyā mentioned by Uddhava Cidghana and Mahīpatī, is indeed the popular version of

50. Ūrdhvamaṭha Tradition – A direct reference to the term Ūrdhvamaṭha is not found elsewhere. However, the tradition of the Ānanda sect is based on the daily worship routine prescribed for the maṭha by Swami Sadānanda, the founder of the sect, to his first disciple before entering samādhi at the maṭha in Basavkalyan. This sectarian tradition, established according to those instructions, is commonly referred to as the Ūrdhvamaṭha Paramparā (Ref. Hanumadātmaja, Pūrṇānandacaritra, 16.186–218).

51. Gurubhakti – Devotion to guru.

Jñānasāgarānanda, the sectarian name. Pūrṇānanda's description of Mṛtyuñjaya's dedication to his guru is also echoed by Hanumadātmaja in detail, in his Pūrṇānandacaritra. Its contents prove that Mṛtyuñjaya absolutely deserved his sectarian name Jñānasāgarānanda.

*Sadguru is pleased, now is the time of brahmasukāḷa*⁵²

After getting graced by the sadguru, Shāh Muntoji Brahmanī attained the rarest state of being in the union with Brahman and he realised by his own experience, the worthlessness of all other mundane powers and riches:⁵³

Rarest of the rare,
Rare is the paramapada⁵⁴ |

This is what, he says again and again. He warned very clearly that ṛddhi-siddhi⁵⁵, the mystical powers earned by spiritual practices are illusive. Even the creator of the universe cannot do anything but let the māyāmahanti⁵⁶ persist:

Ṛddhis became the handmaids, siddhis were manifest,
I now find joy of knowing the true Self everywhere, in everything |
All mundane world is the play of māyā
But it does not let you unite with Brahman ||
It also overshadows the Creator |
Everywhere it is māyā that prevails
But it is all different, says Mṛtyuñjaya
When sadguru has graced you ||

Mṛtyuñjaya tells you that unless you meet sadguru, you will not have even slightest idea of that greatest experience. He says this, only after a prolonged period of devoted spiritual life. Mṛtyuñjaya also tells us about the signs of sadguru and how to recognise it. When one meets somebody and knows in-

52. Brahmasukāḷa – Abundant harvest of truth.

53. Author's note: The verses quoted in this section are copied from the manuscripts (No.132, 244, 250, 373,1204, 1742) in the collection at Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule.

54. Paramapada – State of union with Brahman.

55. Ṛddhi and Siddhi – Prosperity and success.

56. Māyāmahanti – Power of māyā or the illusion of manifest universe.

tuitively that his word is the manifest Brahman itself, then one should know that he is sadguru.

Sadguru is pleased, now is the time of brahmasukāḷa |
 I found the treasure of bliss in true Self that pervades all ||
 Utterance of the sadguru is the Brahman manifest |
 Once aware of this crucial secret, how can karma hold
 on any further ||1||
 The great bliss also finds joy at the sadguru's feet |
 The manifest world has evaporated, what is witnessed now is only
 the Cidrūpa⁵⁷ ||2||
 The one who gifts it to you, know him to be the sadguru |
 Mṛtyuñjaya says, remember this all the time ||3||

Is it the consciousness of 'I' existing inside the body or is the body enwrapped in that consciousness? Mṛtyuñjaya unhesitatingly states that this question cannot be resolved just by rhetoric. To speculate without experience and to speak about it, is absurdity. Actual experience is not possible without sadguru's grace:

Many speculate and speak without experience |
 They talk a lot, but that is not the true sign ||
 They have no awareness of their Self, they get befooled |
 Surrender to the guru, says Muntoji, who is Brahman⁵⁸ ||

Mṛtyuñjaya praises sadguru wholeheartedly for his grace. Because of sadguru's grace, he could experience disembodiment when alive. In this state his heart was warmed up by penitence and softened by his guru's showering grace. Thus, his heart was ready to reap the benefit of Brahmsukāḷa. Mṛtyuñjaya ascended to that eternal abode, the one described by Lord Kṛṣṇa, (Bhagavadgītā 15.6): "It is my abode; once entered, there is no return." Mṛtyuñjaya's journey through rebirth and death ceased, after ascending to that eternal abode. He has described this extraordinary experience in one of his compositions:

57. Cidrūpa – God, i.e. pure consciousness.

58. Muntoji is calling himself Brahman to assert his liberated state, his being in the state of union with Brahman.

Seeds pop up on roasting them |
 Our journey of birth-rebirth is in the same way ||1||
 Now not bound to any form | I see God within me ||2||
 Sugarcane does not bear sugar |
 Similarly no womb would bear me now ||3||
 Burning camphor leaves no soot behind |
 Similarly, Mṛtyuñjaya has also reached the state of 'nothingness' ||4||

On attaining this state, Mṛtyuñjaya explains the phenomenon of the triads — e.g. viewer-view-vision; enjoyer-enjoyable-enjoyment — becoming one and merging into nothingness. He has described his extraordinary experience with apt examples, saying that he is the lake, he is the fish in it and he is the kingfisher diving in the lake to catch it. He describes the same experience, saying that he is the buried treasure, he is the sorcerer trying to exhume it, he is the magical collyrium giving him a magical vision. Equipped thus, he, the sorcerer has sacrificed his ego,⁵⁹ and he is successful in finding the buried treasure [of oneness].

Mṛtyuñjaya was the devotee of Lord Viṭṭhal. His life story tells us that it was with Viṭṭhal's grace that he received a book like Vivekasindhu, which explains the importance of sadguru in his life. With Viṭṭhal's grace he met the sadguru like Sahajānanda. Marathi saint poets have believed that Viṭṭhal is Lord Kṛṣṇa in his childhood image and Mṛtyuñjaya also carries the same image of Viṭṭhal in his mind. He has no doubt that it is the same supreme one, the source of bliss, who resides in Pandharpur. He is the one whose lips hold the flute, who protected Pāṇḍavas, who rescued Draupadī. Mṛtyuñjaya is serving none else but him: "Hari is the one, whom Mṛtyuñjaya serves."

Marathi saint poets believed that Viṭṭhal is Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa in his childhood image. With this faith, they have sung songs of playful mischiefs of Kṛṣṇa. Mṛtyuñjaya also loved this image of the Lord. His heart was flooded with love, while remembering stories of the innocent mischiefs of young Kṛṣṇa in Gokul. While meditating on Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd, Mṛtyuñjaya saw the entire universe transforming into Gokul⁶⁰ and then intoxicated by that mighty experience he began to sing:

59. It was believed that the buried treasure will not show unless some animal is sacrificed on its site.

60. Gokul – Place where Kṛṣṇa grew up with his foster parents.

Śrīkṛṣṇa, the cowherd is grazing cows |
 Omniscient Śrīhari, the beautiful one ||1||
 His blanket as dark as the night sky |
 An outfit of cowherds, he has worn ||2||
 Shepherd Viriñcī⁶¹ wove his blanket with his own hands |
 With threads woven in four layers⁶² ||3||
 Mṛtyuñjaya says, Śrīkṛṣṇa has wrapped the entire
 universe around him ||
 The lustrous blanket known as rayā ||4||

The rayā, the expansive blanket of the universe, woven by Brahmā, is wrapped around by the omniscient Śrīhari, who is larger than the blanket, spreading much beyond⁶³ it. However, the omniscient Hari reduced in size to contain himself in Mṛtyuñjaya's inner world. To remain permanently in such proximity to his greatest devotee, the supreme one is benefitted with the greatest of joy.

Qādarī Bedarī Bācchā

There is some evidence, which indicates that Shāh Muntoji Brahmanī was a member of the Qādarī order of the sufi sect. Even today, local people know Mṛtyuñjaya's samādhi at Narayanpur, as the dargāh of Qādarī Bedarī Bācchā. Ātmārāma Yekkehālikara in his Dāsaviśrāmadhāma (7.24) mentions him as Qādarī Bedarī Bācchā. It confirms that Mṛtyuñjaya was a ruler of Bedar, who was a member of the Qādarī order of the sufi sect.

Mahammad Ghaus (died 1517 C.E.) was the first proselytiser of the Qādarī order of the sufi sect. Sant Cānda Bodhale whose samādhi is at Devgiri, belonged to the tradition of Mahammad Ghaus.⁶⁴ It is not known, which sufi

61. Viriñcī – Creator, a name of Brahmā, but in various contexts also used for Viṣṇu and Śiva.

62. Caupadarī – Woven in four layers, representing the four categories of consciousness: Brahma Caitanya (absolute consciousness), Īśvara Caitanya (cosmic consciousness), Jīva Caitanya (individual consciousness), and Śakṣī Caitanya (inner consciousness).

63. Sarva sthiracar vyāpun daśāṅguḷe uralelā – Literally, it means “an extension measuring an additional ten fingers beyond all the animate and inanimate world.” Figuratively, it signifies something much larger than the entire animate and inanimate world, expanding beyond it.

64. Author's note: See, Vividhā, Ramacandra Cintaman Dhere, pp.136-142, 238-239.

saint initiated Muntoji Brahmanī into the Qādārī order. However, it is also true that right from the founding of the Bahāmanī Sultanate, its rulers were continually in contact with sufi saints. Nizāmuddīn Auliya (1226-1325 C.E.), the celebrated sufi saint had blessed Hasan Gaṅgo Bahāmanī, the founder of this Sultanate. Sirājuddīn Junedī, the sufi saint of Gulbarga had seen the first three generations of the Bahāmanī rulers in his lifetime. He was present at the occasion of the coronation of all three Sultāns. He solemnised the coronation of each of them, by performing the essential rite of tying the sword, a royal insignia, to the Sultān's waist. According to Setumadhavarao Pagdi, Sirājuddīn Junedī was the royal priest of this Sultanate.⁶⁵ Khwājā Bandānewāz Gesu-Darāz was brought and respectfully established in Gulbarga by Firoz Śahā (1396-1422 C.E.), the grandson of Hasan Gaṅgo Bahāmanī. Khwājā Bandānewāz Gesu-Darāz was the disciple of Khwājā Nasīruddīn Chirag-e-Dilli. He died in Gulbarga in 1423 C.E. The Bahāmanī Sultanate collapsed in 1526 C. E. There are no historical sources available giving any information about later members of the Bahāmanī royal house. It is not known if any of them had any association with any of the sufi saints. However, Muntoji Brahmanī's name is still associated with the epithet Qādārī in popular memory. It indicates that he was initiated by some sufi saint into the Qādārī order.

Śrī. V.A. Kanole is in possession of an evidence confirming that Muntoji Brahmanī, was initially a member of the sufi sect.⁶⁶ He has acquired a fragmentary copy of Pañcīkaraṇa written by Muntoji. Kanole says, "[Muntoji] affirms in this small book that the philosophical principles as laid out in the Hindu and Islamic religious treatises are not different. He [Muntoji] has also drawn attention to the similarities between Sufism and Hinduism." Contents of this book written in Dakkhani Hindi indicate clearly that earlier [Muntoji] was initiated in the sufi tradition. Muntoji has stated his noble objective in clear words at the beginning of this book:

Shāh Mutabji Brahmanī I
He is not ruled by wilfulness II
He found out about Pañcīkaraṇa⁶⁷ I

65. Author's note: Setumadhavarao Pagdi, *Sūfi Saṃpradāya*, p. 55.

66. Author's note: *Aitiḥāsika Saṅkīrṇa Nibandha*, Vol. 6, pp. 55 - 59. [Ubhayakar, S.G. (ed.)].

67. Pañcīkaraṇa – Gaining knowledge of the Pañcamahābhūtas (five great elements) and the creation of the world involves meditating on them and witnessing their essence. The Pañcamahābhūtas are: earth (pṛthvī), water (jala), wind (vāyu), fire (agni), and sky (ākāśa).

And thereby, he could wipe out the discrimination between Hindu and Muslim ||

Mṛtyuñjaya is the Sanskrit name of Shāh Mutabājī Brahmanī

Some ten years ago Śrī V.A. Kanole opened a debate by stating that “Mṛtyuñjayaswami and Muntoji—the member of the Muslim royal house of the Bahāmanīs—were probably two different individuals.”⁶⁸ He has claimed that his statement is based on supportive evidence; but surprisingly, he has not provided a single piece of evidence to support his opinion. He has raised some questions, which are: “The clarity and refinement of the Marathi compositions of this poet and his knowledge of Hinduism and Vedāntic philosophy are so deep and insightful that one cannot think of him as a Muslim. For example, Siddhasaṅketa, a treatise written in verse (ovī) by him, based on Padmapurāṇa. Its language is beautiful, easy-flowing, and mature. Also, the exposition of Vedāntic philosophy in this book is so authentic that it is hard to believe that Mṛtyuñjaya was a Muslim. Except Mahīpatī’s reference, there is no other mention of Mṛtyuñjaya or Muntoji Brahmanī being a Muslim... So, it is doubtful, if Mahīpatī’s information is authentic.”

Both points raised here by Śrī. Kanole are untenable. Mṛtyuñjaya is not the only saint poet, who regardless of being a Muslim, demonstrates deep knowledge of Vedāntic philosophy and mastery over Marathi. Generally, the writings of all Marathi Muslim saint poets are free from any traces of yavana influence. The verses composed by Alamkhan or Sheikh Sultān, for example, are similar to other Hindu saints. Ambarhuseinī, a commentary on Bhagavadgītā, written by Ambar Khan does not have anything Muslim except the name of the author. Then there is no reason to presume that some Hindu saints might have adopted Muslim names. It is also not true that no one else except Mahīpatī regards Mṛtyuñjaya as a member of the Bahāmanī royal house. Uddhava Cidghana before Mahīpatī, has clearly stated that Shāh Mahammad Bamañī ruled Bedar. All the three places – Mṛtyuñjaya’s place of origin, the place of his guru and the place of his samādhi – are located in the same region. There is another place, Yekkehālī, which is in the same region. It is at the distance of about 5-25 miles, respectively from Bidar and Kalyani-Narayanpur. In Dāsvisrāmadhāma, Ātmārāmaswami of Yekkehālī also

68. Author’s note: ibid.

has referred to Mṛtyuñjaya as 'Bādshāh of Bedar.' In another book authored by Hanumadātmaja, entitled *Pūrṇānandacaritra*, he has compiled the history of the Ānanda sect. He accepts the information provided by Mahīpatī without any doubt. Hanumadātmaja also came from the same region.

I have myself visited Kalyani and Narayanpur to clear the doubts in this regard. It was confirmed in this visit that Murtzā Qādārī or Muntoḷī Bamaṇī known to Muslims at the Narayanpur dargāh, and Mṛtyuñjaya known to Hindus at the Sadānanda maṭha of Kalyani are not two different individuals but one and the same person.

Śrī Kanole says, "Muntoḷī Brahmanī, a member of the Bahāmanī royal house might have been a disciple of Mṛtyuñjayaswami. When he felt spiritually inclined, he went to Pandharpur. There his spiritual inclination got firmly rooted, perhaps after listening to the exposition of Vivekasindhu by Mṛtyuñjayaswami...The compositions available now, by the name of Muntoḷī Brahmanī or Mṛtyuñjaya were perhaps written by Mṛtyuñjayaswami, and not by any of the royal Bahāmanīs...By the grace of Mṛtyuñjayaswami, Muntoḷī must have reached an exalted spiritual state and might have acquired a mastery over Marathi enabling him to create some finest compositions. Realising his authority in the spiritual field, it is possible that Mṛtyuñjayaswami himself added Muntoḷī's name with his own."⁶⁹

All these inferences by Śrī Kanole are imaginary. If he is willing to accept that Muntoḷī, a member of the Bahāmanī royal house could attain such a high degree of spirituality and mastery of the language to create excellent compositions in Marathi, then why should he be reluctant to accept that his sectarian name was Mṛtyuñjaya and he used the same name as an author? A disciple often adds his guru's name to his own. A guru adding his disciple's name to his name, is not usual. Besides, Mṛtyuñjaya often uses two names as alternatives: Mṛtyuñjaya and Muntoḷī Brahmanī. Mostly, he has not used these names together. However, at the end of *Svarūpsamādhāna*, a book authored by him, he has explicitly indicated that both are his names. He says, "Brahmanī Muntoḷī Mṛtyuñjaya | These names are vain epithets | That too for the one who does not belong to any single place | By sadguru's grace" || (*Svarūpsamādhāna*, 391). This being the truth, in some of the chapters in his books, he uses Mṛtyuñjaya while in others Muntoḷī Brahmanī, as his alternate names.

69. Author's note: *Mahārāṣṭriya Santkavikāvyasūcī*, p. 81.

The only supportive evidence given by Śrī Kanole is a reference cited by Chandorkar, the compiler of *Santakāvyasūci*.⁷⁰ It says, “He [Mṛtyuñjayaśwami] gave a manuscript of *Vivekasindhu* to the Shāh of Bedar [Muhammad].” However, this citation itself is unsupported, hence a supposition based on it, cannot stand. Moreover, Chandorkar has added *Brahmaṇī* as an epithet of Mṛtyuñjaya, which contradicts the information given by him.

Śrī Kanole has got hold of a fragmentary manuscript of *Pañcikaraṇa*.⁷¹ This book is written in Hindi prose. It has the author’s name as Shāh Mutabaji *Brahmaṇī*. According to Śrī Kanole, this book is written by the ruler of Bedar who is not Mṛtyuñjaya but the one who was Mṛtyuñjaya’s disciple. Of course, this is only his opinion based on a presupposition. We have seen that earlier in his life Muntojī *Brahmaṇī* was a member of the Qādarī order of the sufi sect. Once he was graced by Sahajānanda and thereby introduced to Indian spirituality, it was natural for him to attempt to bring the two streams together. Considering the contents and the lingual style of the book, it appears to be his initial effort at writing.

In short, the saint who was well acknowledged in the ambit of Marathi saints as Mṛtyuñjaya, was originally a member of the royal house of the Bahāmanīs according to tradition and there is no valid reason to doubt that he was the writer of spiritual treatises such as *Svarūpsamādhāna*, *Prakāśadīpa*, etc. The very fact that despite being born as a Muslim, he authored such excellent spiritual treatises in Marathi, bespeaks of his greatness. There is no doubt about it.

Date of Mṛtyuñjaya

There is no mention in Mṛtyuñjaya’s writings that can be useful to determine his date. Ramāvallabhadās says that he continuously chants his guru’s name: “It is only the nāma that Mṛtyuñjaya keeps singing.”⁷² Later, in several *Nāmāvalīs*⁷³ of venerable Marathi saints, Mṛtyuñjaya’s name was included with honour. The treatise of Ramāvallabhadās was composed sometime around the year 1550 of the śaka era (1628 C.E.). Hence it can be inferred that Mṛtyuñjaya lived sometime before it, or by Ramāvallabhadās’s times, he had

70. Author’s note: *Ētiḥāsik Sankīrṇa Nibandha*, Vol. pp. 55- 59.

71. Author’s note: *Śriramāvallabhdāsāncī Gāthā*. P.57.

72. Author’s note: Bhāve V.L., *Mahārāṣṭra Śāraswat* (5th edn.) p. 249.

73. *Nāmāvalīs* – Lists of names.

so advanced on the spiritual path that his name as a saint had become well-known all over Maharashtra.

Anyhow, this inference is not enough to conclude our search. Pūrṇānanda, the fellow disciple of Mr̥tyuñjaya wrote Avadhūtagītāṭikā in the year 1532 of the śaka era (1610 C.E.) in Phālguna - the twelfth month of the Indian almanac, on the 5th day of the bright half of the month, Monday. He also wrote Gurugītāṭikā, at about the same time, on the insistence of Mr̥tyuñjaya. Pūrṇānanda has mentioned Mr̥tyuñjaya's sectarian name in Gurugītāṭikā. It indicates that after being graced by the guru by the year 1532, Mr̥tyuñjaya had already gained recognition among the other followers of his guru. Considering his earlier ten to twelve years in his guru's service, and before that, the period of his happy married life, it may be reasonably argued that in 1532, his age was at least thirty-five to forty years. This puts Mr̥tyuñjaya's life time between the years 1497-1572 of the śaka era (1575-1650 C.E.).

This time-span of seventy-five years may be adjusted by five-six years at either end, but one thing is certain that by the year 1532 of the śaka era, Mr̥tyuñjaya was honoured and loved by other disciples of his guru. The year 1521 of the śaka era is supposed to be the year of Sant Eknāth's samādhi, a time when Mr̥tyuñjaya had begun his spiritual journey. Hence, estimation of Mr̥tyuñjaya's date as being contemporary to Sant Eknāth by many scholars like the author of Mahārāṣṭra Sāraswat,⁷⁴ is erroneous. Therefore, the date of Mr̥tyuñjaya has to fall in the post-Eknāth period.

Mudhayā: Mr̥tyuñjaya's disciple

The name Mudhayā, seems to occur frequently with Mr̥tyuñjaya's name. Uddhava Chidghana, acknowledges Mr̥tyuñjaya as Brahman itself. He has described Mr̥tyuñjaya and Mudhayā thus, "Mr̥tyuñjaya the noble yogi | Brahman manifest, Mudhya had the fortune to remain in his company ||"⁷⁵ History has no records about the whereabouts of this Mudhayā. However, two of his compositions are available, which testify Mudhayā's close association with his guru. By his guru's grace, he had attained the highest plane of being. It seems that Mudhayā, like his guru Mr̥tyuñjaya, remained in that exalted

74. Author's note: Bhāve V.L. Sphuṭa-Saṅgraha. Part 1, p.4.

75. Author's note: Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule, Manuscript No. 132.1147.

state all the time. In one of the verses composed by him, he has invoked *turiyāvasthā*.⁷⁶ He says:

Oh *turiye*! You, oh *Brahmabhāvanā*!,⁷⁷ come upon me |
 With my eyes of wisdom, let me witness you within me ||
 Oh *turiye*! You are beauty in itself, giver of joy |
 Forever, in the embrace of oneness, do hold me ||1||
 Oh *turiye*! No happiness is happiness, without your embrace |
 All four sounds⁷⁸ are not enough to sing in your praise ||2||
 Oh *turiye*! How adorable are you, the supreme Goddess |
 Never letting them in, those threesomes,⁷⁹ the root of ignorance ||3||
 Oh *turiye*! *Mudhayā* begs you to grant his prayers |
 That ecstatic moment of union with you, let me experience ||4||

Mudhayā is in agony, suffering with the pangs of separation. He is impatient in the hope to hold *turiyā* close to him. In another verse composed by him, it is apparent that he is on the highest plane of that experience. He has described it, thus:

Enraptured now, knowing *soham*,⁸⁰ the yogi does not see any other aim |
 He is all, all is him, beyond bondage, beyond liberation |
 Ultimate realisation, comes of its own ||1||
 It is a complete immersion in the true Self |
 The Self, forever dwelling in itself ||

This verse is about the exalted experience of a yogi. For a yogi the manifest world is a mere illusion:

76. *Turiyāvasthā* – Highest level of consciousness; remaining in the consciousness of Brahman.

77. *Brahmabhāvanā* – The consciousness of the reality that all existence is the essence of Brahman, embodying the awareness of Advaita (oneness).

78. Four stages of sound – *Parā* (the unmanifest sound at the highest level of consciousness), *Paśyanti* (sound that manifests in the mind), *Madhyamā* (sound that manifests in the Body), *Vaikhari* (sound that manifests on the tongue – articulate expression).

79. Three bodies – Gross, Subtle and Causal.

80. *Soham* – I am ‘That’.

Know your true face,⁸¹ to know who you are
 Dreams are like wind and manifest world is ephemeral, unreal |
 How can there be any ignorance, any false knowledge
 When only knowledge of Self as Brahman prevails ||2||

His life became the quintessence of the mahāvākya (I am Brahman)⁸²; with it, his entire being naturally radiated the bliss of Brahman. Mudhayā insists that a yogi, who is completely immersed in the bliss of knowing the true svasvarūpa⁸³ cannot remain unnoticed:

The one immersed in the bliss of Brahman,
 His very being radiates nothing but the blissful state |
 All over him is seen the hues of true Self
 How that colour can mask itself ||3||
 It is that bliss, which now speaks, walks,
 It is the bliss that sways in the bliss |

By cutting off all bondage of desires and attachments along with emotional states

Bliss is manifest in its inherent way ||4||
 Bliss expands in the space framed by prārabdha⁸⁴
 In the end,⁸⁵ it is absolute peace |
 Says Mudhayā with Mrutyunjaya's grace
 It is the end of sensory perception⁸⁶ ||5||

This expression of Mudhayā reminds us of similar words of Sant Tukārām: “Ānandāce dohī ānanda taraṅga.”⁸⁷ The last stanza of this verse composed by Mudhayā reaches almost the same height of Amṛtānubhava written by Sant Jñāneśvara. Such expression touched by the divine, is not even remotely pos-

81. Cheharā – True Self or identity.

82. Mahāvākya – A brief statement that catches the essence of wisdom of Vedāntic philosophy.

83. Sva-svarūpa – True nature of Self.

84. Prārabdha – Fate that is determined by past deeds.

85. Sekhi – In the end.

86. Anubhavajñapti – Derived from anubhava (experience) and jñapti (sensory perception or awareness), it signifies the realization or awareness arising through direct experience.

87. Ripples of bliss on the deep and still waters of bliss.

sible unless the poet is firmly settled in a state of absolute peace; that is, when his entire being is transformed into the highest consciousness. The depth of this single verse is enough to make Mudhayā's unforgettable for eternity in the world of Marathi spiritual literature.

Literature of Mṛtyuñjaya

Mṛtyuñjaya has authored numerous books and many of them are now available. Nine of them are catalogued by Śrī. G.K. Candorakara in his Mahārāṣṭrīya Santa-kavi-kāvyasūcī.⁸⁸

1. Siddhasaṅketaprabandha (Sītābodha)
2. Amṛtasāra
3. Advaitaparakāśa
4. Prakāśadīpa
5. Svarūpasamādhāna
6. Anubhavasāra
7. Gurulīlā
8. Vivekotpatti Chapter 1 (Jivoddhāraṇa)
9. Anubhavāmṛta

The author of Mahārāṣṭra Sāraswat, Bhāve has listed eight of Mṛtyuñjaya's books, in addition to a few poems and devotional songs.

1. Anubhavasāra,
2. Gurulīlā,
3. Amṛtasāra,
4. Advaitaparakāśa,
5. Sītābodha,
6. Pañcikaṇṇa,
7. Svarūpasamādhāna and
8. Siddhasaṅketaprabandha.

He also says that some of Mṛtyuñjaya's miscellaneous compositions like verses, songs are available.⁸⁹ It means Bhāve has omitted three names, which are included in Kāvyasūcī—Prakāśadīpa, Vivekotpatti and Anubhavāmṛta and

88. Author's note: Cāndorakara G. K., Mahārāṣṭra Santkavikāvyasūcī. P. 81.

89. Author's note: Bhāve, V.L., Mahārāṣṭra Sāraswat, 5th edn. P. 249.

added two new names—Sītābodha and Pañcīkaraṇa. In fact, both lists have some errors. For instance, Anubhavasāra and Amṛtasāra are not two independent books but two names of one and the same book. Sītābodha is not an independent book but another name for Siddhasaṅketaprabodha (or possibly the name of its second chapter). Similarly, Vivekotpatti is also not an independent book but the first chapter of the book entitled, Jivoddharaṇa. After putting together, the two lists cited above and also the names of manuscripts safely archived in various manuscript collections, we can finally arrive at a valid list of Mṛtyuñjaya's books:

1. Siddhasaṅketaprabandha (Sītābodha)
2. Anubhavasāra or Amṛtasāra (or Jñānāmṛta)
3. Advaitaparakāśa
4. Prakāśādīpa
5. Svarūpasamādhāna
6. Amṛtānubhava (or Paramāmṛta, Tripadāvivaraṇa)
7. Jivoddharaṇa
8. Pañcīkaraṇa
9. Gurulīlā (not available)
10. Verses and Devotional songs

We have already been introduced to Mṛtyuñjaya's poems in the section entitled: "Sadguru is pleased, now is the time of Brahmasukāla." Now, we will have a brief introduction to his books, except Gurulīlā, which is not available.

Siddhasaṅketaprabandha – This is Mṛtyuñjaya's most extensive book, which has nine chapters containing about two thousand oṽs. Titles of the nine chapters are: Pipīlikāmārga, Vihaṅgamamārga, Markaṭamārga, Manuṣyamārga, Prapañcanirasana, Bhedakhaṇḍana, Matāntarāṁśanirūpaṇa, Prārabdhayogasaṅgarahaṇī and Ubhayasamādhigurucaraṇāravindabhaktipūjana. Several copies of the second chapter are available. This chapter is named as Vihaṅgamamārga, and also as Sītābodha or Rāma-jānakisaṁvāda.

Two complete copies of this book are available in the Saraswati Mahal Library of Tanjavur. One of these copies, dated to 10th day of the bright half of Māgha, the eleventh month of the Indian almanac, in the year 1745 of the śaka era (1823 C.E.). It has its cover illustrated with beautiful pictures

of Mṛtyuñjaya Bādshāh and Śrīrāma-Sītā.⁹⁰ The author has mentioned the source of this book, saying:

“The dialogue between Rāma and Sītā in Padmapurāṇa |
Unfolds the key to spiritual perfection |”

In the initial invocation to Lord Gaṇeśa and Goddess Sarasvatī, Mṛtyuñjaya pays his obeisance to sadguru:

Then suddenly I remembered | Śrīguru's image in my mind's eye ||
The sky-clad perfect one | In the bliss of Brahman ||

The word brahmānanda may be mistaken for the name of a guru, however, the poet has used it here as an epithet of Sadguru, he being the bliss incarnate. In the well-known second chapter of this book, Lord Rāma tells Jānakī:

Let your mind and eyes be in silence | Fill your heart with love |
Have full faith in the truth | With a firm resolve ||
It will appear luminous like sun and moon together |
Hold it in your eyes |
Enter into it | With a stilled mind ||
The eyes on the peacock feathers | Circles just like them |
Look at the innermost blue of it | That is how I may look ||
Just fix your eyes on that deepest blue |
Let it be like collyrium in your eyes |
It will open the coffers | Of the lustre of the Brahman |
A mind stilled in meditation | In the perpetual light, it will remain |
It will become that light | Ascending above all physical confines |
(Siddhasaṅketaprabandha, 2.48-52)

Anubhavasāra – This is a small treatise, alternatively named as, Amṛtasāra or Jñānāmṛta, which contains 42 verses (ovīs). It is about defining the nature of the ātman:

Within this body is a constant witness |
That is you, you are ātman, be certain |
Yet, from the body, you are apart ||3||

90. Author's note: Detailed List of Books in Saraswati Mahal Granthsangraha, Section 1, Category 1, Vedānta Section, No. 416, 417.

Sound, touch, form, fluid, smell | Objects that you enjoy ||
 You are the incarnate bliss, merely an onlooker |
 You the self-illuminated ||1||
 You are neither male, nor female | A passive viewer inside |
 The pangs of birth and death | Indeed You know not ||2||
 Not attached to any of it | You are ātman, the seer and apart ||
 Omniscient, absolute | In every form, you exist ||3||

Thus, this chapter containing pure philosophical discourse guides spiritual seekers on their path.

Advaitaprakāśa – This book has four chapters and it contains more than five hundred ovis. Two of its manuscripts are there in the Saraswati Mahal Library of Tanjavur.⁹¹ Mṛtyuñjaya has mentioned his name variously in this book, as Matoji, Mantoji and Mṛtyuñjaya.

Prakāśadīpa – This book was published by Śrī. V.L. Bhāve in Mahārāṣṭrakavī. It has five chapters with 399 ovīs (24+112+8+105+80 = 399). At the onset, Mṛtyuñjaya says that this discourse is a storehouse of precious gems of words. He asks the audience to enjoy the essence of this discourse with an alert mind, as a wise one enjoys the fragrance of a bud but does not waste all his efforts trying to enter it, like a bee. He requests the audience to pick the jewels of wisdom like the divers who fetch well-formed pearls from the sea, or to grasp only the pure wisdom like a swan, who, it is said, separates milk from water and then drinks it. He also warns the audience that if they only keep stirring it up superficially like a crow, they will never be able to separate milk from water. Mṛtyuñjaya says very clearly that only a true devotee can access to the wisdom of this book. It is so, because this book is indeed the “Essence of the Upaniṣads | The [deep] cave of the Vedas | The seed syllable (bijākṣara) of the absolute truth!” Hence, only those will grasp the secret laid out in this book, who has received the affection of his guru and the one who knows all scriptures.

The first chapter of this book is introduction. The next four chapters are respectively called: Liṅgadehanirasana, Sthūladehanirasana, Mahākāraṇdehanirasana, and Tatpadanirasana. The clear and precise style of Mṛtyuñjaya can be seen in the following ovīs:

91. Author's note: Detailed List of Books in Saraswati Mahal Granthsangraha, Section 1, Category 1, Vedānta Section, 4, 5.

Ears hear | But You perceive the sound |
 Who else other than You⁹² | Will know this ||
 Comforts and pains of the skin | You only feel |
 It happens without You doing it | You are not attached to it ||
 You see forms | You know, the eyes see, not You |
 So, You are not the eyes | You are apart ||
 The nose knows | Fragrance, stench and the moving air |
 Who is the knower? | Who else can it be but You |
 These are the five sense organs | But the knower is only You |
 It is apart from the body | It is the life energy, that is You |

Svarūpasamādhāna – This is a booklet with three chapters. It also was published in Mahārāṣṭrakavi. The number of oṽis in it is 394. Thus, this book is about the same length as Prakāśdīpa. The author's name mentioned in Prakāśadīpa is Brahmanī Muntoji. In this book both names occur—Mṛtyuñjaya and Brahmanī Muntoji. While explaining how the tripuṭī—knowable, knower and knowledge—gets dissolved [into oneness] after the awareness of the true Self Mṛtyuñjaya says:

Know that, knowing which | Is to know who knows it ||
 Knowing the knower | Is to become the knower ||
 Sunrays trying to gaze at the sun | Will disappear in the Sun ||
 Left behind is the sun alone | With its own luminescence ||
 The radiance of a lamp | Searching its own source ||
 Will vanish in the source without a trace | Only the lamp remains ||
 The shimmering of light | Settling in its own, withdraws ||
 Then who sees whom | Its being light alone ||

(Svarūpasamādhāna, 24-27)

Mṛtyuñjaya insists that the 'implicit message of this philosophy' (vedāntasid-dhāntāce guja) about oneness will fascinate, only those extremely sāttvika ones, who long for [that supreme state of oneness].

Amṛtānubhava – This book known by names such as, Amṛtānubhava, Ātmānubhava, Paramāmṛta, etc. bear witness to Mṛtyuñjaya's indebtedness to the saint poets Jñāneśvara and Mukundarāja. In this book, containing

92. You – Chaitnaya.

about three hundred ovīs, Mṛtyuñjaya explains Saccidānandapadatraya⁹³. There are seven manuscripts of this book in Saraswati Mahal Library.⁹⁴

Jivoddharaṇa – This book is a lengthy one like Siddhasaṅketa, with 13 chapters containing more than 1200 verses. There are two manuscripts of this book in the Saraswati Mahal Library.⁹⁵

Pañcīkaraṇa – This book is not about explaining metaphysical doctrine but it is a Sanskrit-Persian dictionary of the words associated with Pañcīkaraṇa. The manuscript in the collection at Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule⁹⁶ carries the title of the book at its beginning, as

Pañcīkaraṇaprameya – Avindha Bhāṣā. The book ends with a Sanskrit colophon, “iti Mṛtyuñjaya - Ajñānasiddhanāgeśa – Pṛcchāniścaya” next to it is the translation in Avindha (Persian) language, “iti Mṛtyuñjayaku Ajñānanasiddha Nāgeśa puchāyā hakka.”⁹⁷ One copy of this book is in the Godatir Itihasa Samsodhan Mandal at Nanded.⁹⁸ There are four lines at the onset of this book:

Shāh Mutabji Brahmanī I
He is not ruled by wilfullness II
He searched for reality of Pañcīkaraṇa I
He united Hindu and Muslim II

These lines indicate Mṛtyuñjaya's liberal attitude and desire for harmony. The concluding lines of this book (Dhule Manuscript) are important. These lines suggest that Mṛtyuñjaya wrote this Pañcīkaraṇakośa while he was with Ajñānasiddha Nāgeśa. If this is right, then Ajñānasiddha Nāgeśa and Mṛtyuñjaya are contemporaries. Siddharāja or Siddhānanda, in Ajñānasiddha's lineage and the founder of the Mahāgāv maṭha, was associated with the members of the maṭha at Kalyani. Vivekasindhu had a great place of honour in both

93. Saccidānandapadatraya – Padatraya (three conceptual realities) that define the nature of Brahman in the Vedānta philosophy: Sat (truth or absolute existence), Cit (consciousness or pure awareness), and Ānanda (bliss or supreme joy).

94. Author's note: Detailed List of Books in Saraswati Mahal Granthsangraha, Section 1, Category 1, Vedānta Section, 32, 33, 34, 68, 141, 208, 209.

95. Author's note: Ibid, 127, 128.

96. Author's note: Samarth Vagdevata Mandir Dhule, Manuscript no. 1142.

97. Mṛtyuñjaya says, “Ajñānasiddha Nāgeśa asked about the reality (haqq) to Mṛtyuñjaya.”

98. Author's note: The manuscripts in Godatir Itihasa Samsodhak Mandal, Nanded, became available by the courtesy of Śrī V.A. Kanole and Prof. Kurundakar.

maṭhas. These circumstances must have been conducive to a close association between Mṛtyuñjaya and Ajñānasiddha.

This book must have been completed at the start of Mṛtyuñjaya's spiritual pursuits. In both copies of the book mentioned above, the contents are arranged in two columns. The first column has Sanskrit words while the second column has corresponding Persian words. For example:

Oṃ Rāma	Bismillā
Cahu dehāṃcā ukalā	Cāro vajūdakā khulāsā
Sthūla deha	Vājabul vajūd
Linga deha	Mamakinal Vajūd
Kāraṇa deha	Mamatanal Vajūd
Mahākāraṇa deha	Arifal Vajūd

There is one more copy of Pañcīkaraṇa written in Marathi prose at the Godatir Itihas Samshodhak Mandal. The author's name does not appear either at the beginning or at the end. However, the one who prepared the copy, has written Mṛtyuñjaya at the top of the first two pages. That is the only clue to guess that this book is authored by Mṛtyuñjaya. The name of the person who prepared the copy is noted as Takhta-Siṃhāsana-Paṭṭādhikārī-Devaliṅgayyā and he completed this work on the 10th day in the dark half of the month of Jyestha, (the third month of the Indian calendar) in the year 1773 of śaka era. The following passage can give a rough idea of the writing style of this book: The seeker asks, "What is intransient-transient? || What is meant by discretion between intransient and transient? || So listen, I will tell you about the discretion between intransient and transient || Intransient is the ātman || Transient are the body, etc. || To get detached from the material world, to seek ātman is to practice discretion between intransient and transient || This is the first measure⁹⁹ [for obtaining Brahman]." (p.1)

99. Sādhana-catuṣṭaya refers to the fourfold practices or measures for attaining Brahman. These include Viveka (discretion or discrimination, the ability to discern the real from the unreal) and Vairāgya (non-attachment or detachment from worldly pleasures). The third is Śaṭsāmpatti, a sixfold self-discipline comprising Śama (control of the mind), Dama (control of the senses), Uparati (withdrawal from external distractions), Titikṣā (forbearance or endurance), Śraddhā (faith in the teachings and the Guru), and Samādhāna (focus or concentration of the mind). The fourth is Mumukṣutva, the intense desire for liberation (mokṣa).

I could neither get the copies of the manuscripts in Saraswati Mahal Library nor could I go there personally to see them. Hence, I could not quote passages from the rest of the books, except for three published chapters. However, from the published chapters it seems that Mṛtyuñjaya's inclination was to explain the explained. He shows a strong influence of Pañcīkaraṇa school of thought. This is, of course, coherent with his guru tradition of Vivekasindhu. The extraordinary characteristic of Mṛtyuñjaya's writings is that he never drifts away from the highest state of the transcendental experience. His exposition comes from the highest plane. He does not attempt to adopt more lucid style for the sake of making the discourse easier or does not deviate in order to please the audience. Clarity and authenticity of content and unambiguity of words is apparent throughout his books. Despite that, his verses are endowed with a unique sweetness. Just a few available verses enchant the audience and make the researchers search for more of them.

Thus, this great saint-poet, who comes from a great tradition, should be regarded not just as a Muslim saint-poet but as worthy of a place of honour in the entire gamut of Marathi saint-poets. Marathi saints of the later period have aptly regarded him as mahāyogi.

Chapter 2:

Husein Ambarkhan

*The yavana who got transformed because of Bhagavadgītā*¹⁰⁰

Sant Jñāneśvara's Marathi commentary of Bhagavadgītā, the liberal and noble philosophy expounded by Lord Kṛṣṇa, caused a surge of Brahnavidyā,¹⁰¹ in the realm of Marathi. Many benefitted by the abundance of Brahnavidyā, especially women of all castes and classes, vaiśyas, śūdras and some mlechhas¹⁰² too. Jñānadeva's tireless efforts, comparable to those of Bhagīratha¹⁰³, brought the Ganga of Bhagavadgītā into the land of Marathi and many gardens of sublime wisdom blossomed along her banks. The peaks of Sahyādri [the land of Maharashtra] happily reaped its fruits.

Ambarkhan, soaked himself in the same purifying stream of thoughts that thoroughly changed his life. He expressed his gratitude by writing a commentary on Gītā, which is composed in the ovī meter.

Ambarkhan is a family name

Ambarkhan is the family name of Husein Ambarkhan. He has mentioned his grandfather and father's name at the onset of his commentary:

100. Literal translation – The yavana who got cleansed in the waters of Gītāgaṅgā.

101. Brahnavidyā – Knowledge of Brahman.

102. Mleccha – Muslim.

103. A legendary king of Īkṣvāku dynasty, who is said to have brought down the Ganga.

First Ambar Ambarkhan | His son Yākut Ambarkhan |
His son Husein Ambarkhan | Who is revered by all ||1.6||

This undoubtedly decides his family lineage as Ambar Ambarkhan -> Yākut Ambarkhan -> Husein Ambarkhan. Elsewhere, he mentions the same lineage in a Sanskrit śloka:

Yākut Ambarkhan was born of Ambar Ambarkhan |
His son, Husein Ambarkhan the great is revered by all ||

No definite information is available about the whereabouts of the Ambarkhan family. One year after Husein Ambarkhan composed his *Gītāṭikā*, one Bālājī Trimālā in *Canjī* (Jinjī) made its copy. At present, this copy is housed in the Saraswati Mahal Library, Tanjavur. Hence, scholars infer that this poet might have been from somewhere near Tanjavur.¹⁰⁴

I think that the Ambarkhan family stayed at Daulatabad, in the service of the Nizām. There are a few references to support it. A dispute regarding the inheritance rights of one Divākar family on the two offices of Jośī and Kulkarnī, in the village of Cimaṅgāv (District Satara), was settled by Ambarkhan, who was an officer in Daulatabad as per an official document.¹⁰⁵ The same document also records that Ambarkhan had stayed in Khadkī (Aurangabad, now Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar), Indapur (Tehsil Indapur, Dist. Pune), as also Māyaṇī (Tehsil Khatava, Dist. Satara) as an officer on duty. This document also mentions the date of the settlement of the Divākar case as the 10th day of the second half of the month of Kārtika, the eighth month of the Indian almanac, in the year 1540 of the śaka era. This document, thus, confirms that in 1618 C.E., there was an officer posted at Daulatabad, whose name was Ambarkhan.

The name Ambarkhan is also mentioned in the biography of the renowned Saint Ramāvallabhadās of the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁶ Ambarkhan's

104. Author's note: Detailed list of text in Saraswati Mahal Granthsangraha, Section 1, Vedānta Category, No.49, 374 (There are three more manuscripts of Ambarhuseinī, no. 50, 51 and 52). Prof. A.K. Priyolakar published first two chapters of Ambarhuseinī in *Marāṭhī Saṁśodhanpatrikā*, October 1954 and a passage each from the 9th and the 18th chapters of Ambarhuseinī in the January 1963 issue of the same journal.

105. Author's note: Sanadapatrātila Māhitī, Mavaji Purusottam Visram and Parasnis D.B. (editors), p, 62.

106. Author's note: Śīramāvallabhadāsāñcī Gāthā, Ubhayakar Subrva Gopal (Editor), p. 22 (of the pages after p. 255).

name occurs in the book entitled *Birudāvaḷī*, written by Rāghavadās, the disciple of Ramāvallabhadās. It mentions that Ramāvallabhadās's father Ambājipant, worked for Ambarkhan at Daulatabad:

Close to Aurangabad | Is the impregnable Devgiri |
 That fort is not easily accessible |
 Just a look at it gives a feeling of awe ||6||
 A mlechha is the keeper of the fort |
 Ambarkhan is his chief administrator |
 Ambarkhan's office administration |
 Was looked after by Ambājipant ||7||

We have already seen that around 1618 C.E., Ambarkhan held a significant office at Daulatabad. Fifteen years later, in 1633 C.E., (on 17th June) Husein Nizāmshāh was defeated and imprisoned by the Mughals, ending Nizām's rule. After this, Śahājirāje actively controlled Junnar and the region around it. He made this region the centre of his activities and made the Mughals run helter-skelter for three years. Murtazā, the infant heir, of the Nizām dynasty, was imprisoned in the fort of Jivadhana fort, located to the west of Junnar, at the distance of 30 miles. Śahājirāje freed him from there and installed him on the throne in 1633 C.E., in the presence of Murār Jagdev, a commander in Adil Shāh's service. It is mentioned that after the coronation of Murtazā, Murār Jagdev returned to Bijapur. Before returning, he left behind troops of about five-six thousand soldiers with Śahājirāje, as auxiliary forces, under Ambarkhan's command.¹⁰⁷ It indicates that after Daulatabad was conquered by the Mughals in the year 1636 C.E., Śahājirāje tried courageously to revive Nizām's rule, with the support of Bijapur court, and Ambarkhan in his capacity must have helped him in his efforts. Shāh Jāhān descended in the south and shattered the dreams of Śahājirāje. After that Śahājirāje went to Karnataka, as he was deputed there by the Bijapur court. It should not seem far-fetched, if we infer that Ambarkhan also might have accompanied Śahājirāje.

When Ambarkhan was in the office at Daulatabad, saintly and good people like Chānd Bodhale, Janārdan Swami and Ambājipant, father of Ramāvallabhadās lived there. They could pursue their spiritual goals, under his patronage. This shows the mindset of Ambarkhan who employed several high-caste Hindus and let them follow their faith without any restriction. He

107. Author's note: Māloji va śahāji: Vāsudeva Vaman Khare, p. 22.

himself must have been a man of spiritual inclination, who employed many high caste Hindus and allowed them to follow their own faith freely and above all facilitated peaceful environment required for pursuing their spiritual goals. He himself must have been spiritually oriented and also strongly influenced by the proximity of these Hindu saintly personalities.

From the chronological point of view, this Ambarkhan could possibly be Yākut Ambarkhan, father of Husein Ambarkhan, the author of *Gītāṭikā*.

Husein Ambarkhan's date of birth

Husein Ambarkhan's date of birth can be determined with the help of a reliable evidence. Husein Ambarkhan was highly respected by Vaidyanāth, an author contemporary to him, who hailed from the Tanjavur region. To express his respect for Ambarkhan, he called his commentary of *Aṣṭāvakra*¹⁰⁸ as *Siddhāntacidambarī*. The same author also wrote a book entitled *Cidam-barajayanāntistotra*.¹⁰⁹ In this book, he says: "Mlechha Ambarkhan is God's incarnation in this Kaliyuga."¹¹⁰ He has noted the date with elaborate details, as follows: "This incarnation appeared on Tuesday, the 11th day of the bright half of the month of Jyeṣṭha, the third month of the Indian almanac, of the year 1515 of the śaka era (1603 C.E.), which carries the name of Śubhakṛt saṃvatsara, at the 17th ghaṭikā¹¹¹ of the day, when Leo was in ascendance. Husein Ambarkhan, in all probability can be the son of that Ambarkhan, who was well known as an official at Daulatabad, in the year 1540 of the śaka era (1618 C.E.). It is in accordance with the chronology. Moreover, as a matter of natural course, it is quite likely that Husein Ambarkhan inherited his father's spiritual traits.

108. *Aṣṭāvakra* an Indian sage who wrote *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā*. It is in the form of dialogue between King Janaka and *Aṣṭāvakra*. *Aṣṭāvakra-gītā* is a classic treatise on the Advaita philosophy.

109. Author's note: Detailed list of book in *Saraswati Mahal Granthsangraha*, Section 1, *Vedānta Category*, No.123, p. 38.

110. Kaliyuga is the fourth and the last epoch of Hindu concept of the Wheel of Time (*kāla-cakra*). The four epochs are named as *Satyayuga*, *Tretāyuga*, *Dvāparyuga* and *Kaliyuga*. The Hindu concept of the end of the world in *Kaliyuga* anticipates the destruction to be the point of new beginning. The Wheel of Time continues its rounds from regeneration to destruction and vice versa.

111. *Ghaṭikā* – One *ghaṭikā* is twenty-four minutes and two and half *ghaṭikā* makes one hour.

Who was Husein Ambarkhan's guru?

Husein Ambarkhan has not clearly mentioned his guru's name. At the onset of his book, he says:

From where this universe begins | There it dissolves again |
To that saccidānanda Śrīguru | In complete surrender, I bow ||1.5||

In this ovī, the term saccidānanda¹¹² is not clearly defined. Hence, it cannot be decided, whether it is to be understood as the name of a guru or to be interpreted as his state of absolute bliss in the form of saccidānanda. According to Vaman Daji Oka, (editor of the magazine, entitled *Kāvyaśaṅgraha*), Husein Ambarkhan was the disciple of Keśav Swami Bhāgānagarakar.¹¹³ However, his opinion is not supported by any definitive evidence. It is true that Keśav Swami did travel in South India and many Muslim men like Shāh Beg, Bājīd Paṭhān, Śakaragañj, etc. were his disciples. However, this is not enough to assert that Husein Ambarkhan was Keśav Swami's disciple. Another clue is available, but it is unclear. The name of the scribe of Husein Ambarkhan's *Gītāṭikā* was Nārāyaṇa, and the scribe of a book entitled, *Cintānivāraṇa*, authored by Santarāja, a disciple of Keśav Swami was also Nārāyaṇa. If these two Nārāyaṇas are one and the same person, then it is likely that there was a spiritual association between Husein Ambarkhan and Keśav Swami. However, as it stands today, the question of Husein Ambarkhan's guru remains unsettled.

Gītāṭikā

The date of Husein Ambarkhan's *Gītāṭikā* is recorded as follows:

In the year fifteen hundred seventy-five of the śaka era |
Known as Vijaya Saṃvatsara |
On Monday, the tenth day of the bright half of Āśvina¹¹⁴ |
Ambarhuseinī ṭikā was completed ||18.86||

112. Truth (sat), Consciousness (cit), and Bliss (ānanda).

113. Author's note: Satkāryottejaka Sabhā Suvarṇmahotsava Grantha: Dev Ganesh Shankar (editor). Dhule. P. 255.

114. Āśvina – The seventh month of the Indian almanac that corresponds to September-October.

This commentary was completed in the year 1575 of the śaka era (1653 C.E.) on the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Āświn, the seventh month of the Indian almanac. In this verse the author mentions the name of his commentary as Ambarhuseinī. Each and every chapter of the commentary ends mentioning the same name, saying, 'Iti śrīmadambarhuseinviracitāyām ambarhuseinīnāmikāyām śrībhagavadgītāṭīkāyām'. At another place, he calls it as Gītābhāvārthadīpikā (18.84). However, this is not another name of his book, but the nature of its contents. The author does not mention the place, where the book was written. However, a copy of the book was made at Chanji (Tanjavur) within a year. So, it may be presumed that the book was also written in the Tanjavur region. At the end of the copy, the scribe has clearly mentioned his name, place and time, as follows: "This was written in Chanji, in the year 1576, known by the name Jaya saṁvatsara, during Dakṣiṇāyana,¹¹⁵ in the season of Śarada,¹¹⁶ on Tuesday, the third day of the bright half of the Āśvina month | Written (copied) and completed by Bālāji Trimala."

It means that this copy was made ready, one week before the original composition completed its one year. Vaidyanāth, an author in the Tanjavur region wrote an eulogy of Ambarkhan, entitled, Jayantīstotra. So, there should not be much difficulty in assuming that Ambarkhan must have resided somewhere in this region. It is already mentioned that the scribe of Ambarhuseinī was someone called Nārāyaṇa. This Nārāyaṇa has mentioned his name at the end of the book, thus:

By the grace of Husein Ambar | Nārāyaṇa, the scribe written this |
Its purity and exactness | I leave it to all saints to judge ||18.85||

General nature and structure of Ambarhuseinī

Ambarhuseinī, which consists of 871 verses, is almost equal to the number of śloka (verses) in the Bhagavadgītā.¹¹⁷

115. Dakṣiṇāyana – The southerly declination of the Sun.

116. Śarada – Autumn.

117. It is said to be a samaśloka meaning that the number of the translated verses is the same or almost same as in the original text. The number of śloka in the Bhagavadgītā is 700.

Saints like Nivṛttināth,¹¹⁸ who dwell in the heart of Acyuta (Lord Viṣṇu) |
 Against each śloka of Bhagavadgītā | They wrote one ovī |
 But it does not offer complete explanation of the śloka ||1.11||

Ambar Husein says that this is the reason, why he felt like writing a new commentary. He confirms that he has written this commentary in the Maharashtra language, only after carefully referring to the discourse by Śrīdharaswami (1.13):¹¹⁹

The intent here is not to explain the Undiminishable¹²⁰ |
 Not even to write the literal meaning of every word |
 The purpose is to know the core meaning of the sentence |
 And then to explain its essence ||1.14||

This is how Ambar Husein has explained his approach to writing the commentary. It means, he does not intend to explain the meaning of each and every word. His focus is only on grasping the essence of Bhagavadgītā, on understanding its inherent sense. That is why, he uses a descriptive term, Bhāvārthadīpikā,¹²¹ for his commentary. Husein's main thrust is on the essence and for that reason, he does not elaborate. To him, his purpose is fulfilled, once he translates the contents of the original text [of the Bhagavadgītā] in simple and plain Marathi. As he has avoided elaboration, it is natural that his text is mostly devoid of the beauty of allegories and illustrations. For example, we may have a look at his translation of a few ślokas in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgītā:

My entire body has given way | My mouth has gone dry ||
 I am trembling all over | I have goosebumps on my body ||29||
 Gaṇḍīva is slipping from my hand | My skin is burning ||
 I am unable to stand | My mind spins ||30||

118. Sant Jñāneśvara wrote Jñāneśvari at the behest of Nivṛttināth. Nivṛttināth himself had written devotional verses known as abhaṅg and some other books. Among those Ut-targītāṭīkā is the commentary of Bhagavadgītā. A manuscript, entitled Saṭīka Bhagavadgītā is said to be written by him.

119. Śrīdharaswami belonged to the Śuddhādvaita Vaiṣṇava sect.

120. Avyayārtha – Derived from avyaya (undiminishable, Brahman) and artha (meaning); it signifies the essence or meaning of the undiminishable, referring to Brahman.

121. Bhāvārthadīpikā – A treatise that illumines the meaning in essence.

I sense bad omens | Oh Keśavā, Oh Janārdanā, Oh Lord ||
 In the killing of my own people | I do not see any happiness ||3||
 I neither desire victory over the enemy |
 Nor, the kingdom and pleasure ||
 The luxurious life of the ruler | We are not inclined to it ||32||

Husein has the ability of conveying the essence of the original Sanskrit śloka in Marathi. The following Sanskrit śloka, and Husein's Marathi oṽi is conveying the essence of the original śloka, is a clear example of his ability:

hato vā prāpyasi svargaṃ jtvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm |
 tasmāt uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtniśchayaḥ |
 melāsi tari svarga pāvasi, jintoni tari pṛthvī bhogisi |
 mhañauṇi kaunteyā ūṭhiṃ yudhāsi kṛta-niśchayeṃ |

Husein has translated the original from Sanskrit by choosing precise Marathi words with the same meaning. He has done this with a natural ease and without affecting the original content in the slightest. The commentary by Husein on the śloka such as, “mayā tatamidam sarvaṃ...” uses minimum words and yet maintains absolute clarity of meaning:

Which is not sensed by the sense organs, that is me |
 I pervade all that 'is' |
 All elements are contained in me | But none holds me ||5||
 But the elements do not remain within me |
 Look at this wonder of my divine energy |
 I am the source of the elements and I sustain them |
 But I am not in them ||6||
 I cause the things to happen, but I do not do it |
 I have all the elements within me but I do not hold them ||
 This is the marvel of detachment | Oh Arjun, hold it in mind ||7||
 The great wind in the all-encompassing sky | Blows in all directions |
 But, oh archer, it does never touch the sky | This is detachment ||8||
 This is how all elements || Are verily contained in me ||
 But I remain untouched by them ||
 By the virtue of my being detached ||9||

This short passage serves as a sufficient example to understand the nature of exposition in Husein Ambarkhan's *Gītāṭīkā*. He refers to earlier Sanskrit and Marathi commentaries, demonstrating his deep knowledge of Sanskrit and his association with Marathi saint-poets. Consequently, he became well-versed in Vedāntic discourse. In his commentary, he presents the essence of the *Bhagavadgītā* as he perceives it, in a manner that is easy for readers to grasp. While he may not introduce particularly striking insights from a poetic or philosophical standpoint, his exposition remains clear and accessible.

Husein Ambarkhan's expression of self-pride

Husein states that he has written this commentary with a view to do good to people by helping them in knowing the absolute truth (1.10). All the Marathi saints tend to be extremely modest and prefer to remain silent about their great spiritual authority. However, Husein Ambarkhan is the other extreme in this matter. He calls himself the pre-eminent one among the Vedāntic philosophers and the jewel in the crown of the knowers of Brahman (*Vadānyāñcā Śiromaṇi* | *Brahmajñāniyañcā mukuṭmaṇi*, 1.8). At the start of his composition, twice he calls himself, *jagadvandya* (1.6, 1.12), meaning the one who is to be revered by the world. This self-praise may be found odd by the scholars of the spiritual literature composed by the saints. Nonetheless, he indeed deserves our reverence, who studied Vedānta and created the Marathi version of Sanskrit *Bhagavadgītā*. In the beginning of his treatise, he prays to Śrī Ganeśa, thus:

The insistence on discriminations is abundant |
Huge is the group of those obstacles ||
Vakratuṇḍa, the destroyer of it | I pay homage to him ||1.1||

Thus, the Muslim saint, while praying to Śrī Ganeśa, has also established himself firmly on the platform of Advaita, by destroying the insistence on the discriminations in the sphere of religion.

Chapter 3:

Alamkhan

From Beyond the Vindhya Mountains

The Indian saints spiritually integrated the Indian society and firmly established the culture of spiritual harmony in India. There is no discrimination based on caste, religion, nationality, gender, age, or knowledgeability in the spiritual realm established by these saints. Waḍwālasiddha Nāganāth, a sage, holds an honourable position among them, who contributed greatly in the formation of this liberal and all-inclusive spiritual tradition. Although Nāganāth's life is shrouded in mystery, his followers came from all the social and religious strata: Muslims and Hindus, Vaiṣṇavas and Vīraśaivas, as well as Shāhirs¹²² and spiritual seekers. Alamkhan, among the fortunate disciples of Nāganāth was originally not from Maharashtra. He came to the South from beyond the Vindhya mountains and developed a close affinity with the land of Maharashtra after attaining enlightenment by guru Nāgeśa's grace. His Marathi compositions are the testimony to his generous heart.

The only source to know anything about Alamkhan's life is the book entitled, Nāgeśalīlāmṛta composed by Bhānājī Trimbaka Deśapāṇḍe, a follower of Nāgeśa sect. The 39th chapter of this book contains a basic description of Alamkhan's life. My friend Dr. Pandit Awalikar published an introductory article throwing light on this subject.¹²³ According to the information, available to Bhānājī Trimbaka :

122. Shāhirs: Poets and performers in the Indian bardic tradition.

123. Author's note: June Vāṇmāyā-Nave Saṃśodhan, Dr. Pandit Awalikar p.251-260. I could reintroduce Alamkhan with more details with the help of the information in the manuscript of Nāgeśalīlāmṛta (No. 29, 404) available at Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Pune.

In the region beyond the Vindhya Mountains |
 Alamkhan, the resident of Mahāpūra |
 Among four happy brothers | The youngest, was full of virtues ||40||

Mahāpūra, beyond the Vindhya mountains, was the native village of Alamkhan. He was the youngest among four brothers and was loved by all. Still, right from the beginning his leanings were, 'always indifferent, detached from the mundane.' Although it is so, his brothers never had any grudge about it; even their wives treated him like a son. Once, the wife of his eldest brother had gone to fetch water, carrying an earthen jar on her head. Alamkhan was playing nearby with an arrow. His arrow, by mistake, hit the jar filled with water on his sister-in-law's head while she was returning:

The jar got a hole | Alamkhan saw it |
 He said, this was accidental, an unhappy occurrence |
 He felt remorseful ||51||
 He was afraid of the manner | His brother's wife might report this |
 I will not stay here anymore, he thought |
 Thus, he was saddened ||52||

The instance of breaking the earthen jar was enough for Alamkhan to decide to leave home. His brothers and sisters-in-law tried to persuade him in various ways, not to leave home. They tried to convince him that he could pursue his spiritual goal by remaining with the family. However, Alamkhan was determined to leave behind all the temptations: "For celibates like us | It is good to abandon everything and go in the forest | May all of you lead your lives in happiness ||59||." Saying so, Alamkhan left home and started in the Southern direction:

Thus, turning an ascetic, he left home |
 Alamkhan arrived in the South |
 Unhurried, in a forest | He rested in a very happy state ||60||

Meeting the king of Kalyani

Bhānājī Trimbaka tells us that Alamkhan arrived in the south and started living in a forest surviving on roots and fruits. The forest was most probably near the city of Kalyani (Basavakalyan) in Karnataka, which was not far from

the boundary of Maharashtra. While Alamkhan was living in this forest, the jāgirdār (feudal lord) of Kalyani, whose name was Rāma, arrived there on a hunting expedition with his army (Bhānājī Trimbaka mentions his name as Rāmanṛpati). He was ambushed and was almost defeated by an enemy. Alamkhan was watching this from a distance. He could not bear witnessing the unjust attack on Rāma, the feudal lord. Alamkhan picked up his bow and:

The ornament of a yavana kula | Was watching from a distance |
 Due to the surge of compassion for the helpless |
 He confronted the enemy ||66||
 With an extraordinary skill [in archery] | He shot all with his arrows |
 For the most valiant ones the war field became a bed |
 On it, peacefully they lay ||67||

Rāmarājā was impressed greatly by Alamkhan's valour and his mind was filled with gratitude because Alamkhan had rescued him from the clutches of the enemy. He went to Alamkhan and offered him an office of authority. However, Alamkhan politely denied the offer saying that he did not want to serve any human being. However, Rāmarājā's desire was to serve Alamkhan rather than having him to serve him:

The king heard Alamkhan's reply |
 He said, "You have no reason to serve me" |
 He wished to serve Alamkhan |
 Because Alamkhan was his saviour ||70||

Alamkhan honoured Rāmarājā's wish and went to Kalyani with him. Rāmarājā received him with honour. However, in all that splendour around, Alamkhan moved about with an attitude of detachment. The sense of renunciation was purifying his heart and his predestined guru was eager, to ascend the throne of his pure heart. That opportune moment came very soon.

The first audience with the sadguru

While staying in Kalyani, in the palace given to him by Rāmarājā, as good luck would have it, there occurred a miracle:

When Alamkhan was alone |
 There appeared in the disguise of a sanyāsī |

Nāgeśa Nidhāna himself | The brilliance manifest ||73||
 The yavana saw him and stood up |
 Honoured him and offered him a seat of honour |
 Asked him, "Oh revered one, where do you dwell |
 What brings you here?" ||74||
 I am of lesser rank, a yavana | You are a caturthāśhramī¹²⁴ |
 With caring grace |
 You blessed me, your servant, by your presence ||75||
 Whatever is your desire | Please let me know |
 I will give you chāṭī¹²⁵ and other things |
 Oblige me by expressing your desire ||76||

Alamkhan was surprised to see a Hindu sanyāsī coming to his residence. He quickly got up and respectfully offered, a seat to him. Alamkhan was really astonished that a revered Hindu sanyāsī should visit him, on his own. Alamkhan was surprised that he, a Muslim should be blessed thus, by the privilege of a highly respected sanyāsī's voluntary audience. The sanyāsī answered his basic questions, telling him that he was from a place called Waḍawāl,¹²⁶ and that he did not want anything from Alamkhan. However, if:

You have devoted yourself in God's service |
 If you compose devotional poetry |
 You will find happiness | I only came to give you this message ||78||

Alamkhan was overwhelmed by Swami's words. He went to the inner quarters thinking that he would announce his firm resolution to dedicate his life to devotion. This would make an invaluable offering to Swami. By the time he returned, Swami was not to be seen anywhere. Alamkhan came out and asked the doorkeepers about Swami. They replied, "If nobody had entered the house, how could anybody leave?" That unfolded the true secret of Swami to Alamkhan. In a moment he realised that unless he personally went to Waḍawāl, it was not possible for him to attain the highest bliss. He started for

124. Caturthāśhramī – One who has renounced the world.

125. Chāṭī – Loin clothes used by a renunciate.

126. Author's note: There are two villages with the name Waḍawāl – One is in Solapur District near Mohol and another is in Usmanabad district near Latur. Both villages are associated with Nāganāth. The Waḍawāl near Latur is closer to Kalyani.

Waḍawāl along with the retinue accorded to him by Rāmarājā.

Eternal contentment settled deep

After reaching Waḍawāl, the holy place, Alamkhan asked the villagers, “Is there any sanyāsī in your village?” The villagers answered:

You ask about a sanyāsī in the temple |
But, there is no such person |
Sāi, gosāvī, Swami, or a holy person |
Except Nāganāth there is none ||85||

This answer from the villagers was a clear revelation to Alamkhan: ‘Swami will afford me his audience | Then and then only, I will get up from here |’ Thus steadfast in his resolve he sat firmly in the temple. That night a miracle happened. The main horse in his retinue disappeared. Alamkhan understood the message conveyed by this miracle that his guru wants him to renounce everything mundane. He wrote a letter to Rāmarājā to this effect, returning all the entourage in his service:

The mundane and the spiritual | In life both should go hand in hand |
Humans should be capable of this |
In ancient times Janaka¹²⁷ could achieve this ||89||
That kind of ability | Possible only for handful of men |
In fact, detachment is good |
Anxiety caused by the mundane is unbearable ||90||
The body is temple, mind is the lamp that burns in it |
Wind of the mundane |
Shakes the lamp with manifold force |
It is then neither steady nor wondrous ||91||
Without that wind | We shall keep the mind-lamp burning |
This is the Only path for me | I thought, oh king ||92||
For this reason, whatever belonged to you |
I have returned, please receive it |
Writing thus at that time | Alamkhan sent back all servants ||93||

127. Janaka, the king of Mithila, Lord Rāma’s father-in-law and Sitā’s father was an enlightened soul and a wise, just king.

In this manner, detaching himself completely, Alamkhan began to meditate with unbroken attention upon Swami. At last, 'seeing a perfect devotee, the cloud of mercy was pleased':

As before | He appeared as a sanyāsī to Alamkhan, his devotee |
 His face expanded to infinity |
 No more contained within the universal womb ||94||
 The vaidyarāja¹²⁸ Nāgeśa | Dispelled the disease of illusion |
 With his wonderful blessings, the divine medicine | He cured ||95||
 Appearing as a sanyāsī | He made Alamkhan happy |
 The everlasting bliss was set deep | which was short of nothing ||96||

*Residing at Mugaḷī*¹²⁹

The guru, instructed Alamkhan to walk to a village called Mugaḷī, after bestowing an extraordinary gift, i.e., his blessings upon him. The importance of village Mugaḷī is obvious in this instruction. Before Alamkhan's going to Mugaḷī, it had already become well-known as a place associated with the Nāganāth sect. Bhāgūjī Kulkarnī,¹³⁰ who resided in Mugaḷī, was a devotee of Nāganāth. He used to travel regularly to Waḍawāl from Mugaḷī because of his deep devotion to Nāganāth. Once, while returning from Waḍawāl after having the audience [of Nāganāth], Bhāgūjī was seized by dacoits. While held by them, he began to pray frantically to Nāganāth. Nāgeśa, the one who was very affectionate to his devotees, appeared there on horse and punished the dacoits, who were tormenting Bhāgūjī. He then took him to Mugaḷī on his horse. Bhāgūjī wished to honour the horse rider by giving him a warm welcome, however, the moment they reached his place, the horse rider disappeared. Bhāgūjī realised that the horse rider was none other but Sadguru Nāgeśa himself. After that with a determination to get blessed by Nāgeśa by having his audience, Bhāgūjī sat down for an anuṣṭhāna.¹³¹ After eleven days of of fasting by Bhāgūjī, without touching food or water, Nāganāth appeared in front of Bhāgūjī as the horserider:

128. King of (the best among) the experts in medicine.

129. Mugaḷī/Mugali, Tehsil Akkalkot, District Solapur.

130. Author's Note: The story of Bhāgūjī Kulkarnī is narrated at the beginning of the 39th chapter of Nāgeśalīlāmṛta.

131. Anuṣṭhāna – Continuously praying or chanting and fasting for a certain period.

“Let that be!” | Nāganāth said to Bhāgūjī |
 “Know that I am near you | You need not come to Waḍawāl ||39||
 In front of your door is a place of ancestors¹³² |
 Quickly dig there, that khargatīrtha¹³³ |
 A magnificent liṅga will appear there |
 That is me in liṅga form, worship it immediately” ||40||

Hearing this from Nāgeśa, Bhagūjī felt extremely happy. He dug the pit and found a liṅga, just like the one at Waḍawāl, the holy place. Bhagūjī started worshipping at that place with full devotion. Many devotees believed that they could indeed feel Nāganāth’s presence in the Mugaḷī Śivaliṅga, established by Bhāgūjī. Mugaḷī’s fame began to spread. Thus, Guru Nāgeśa’s instruction to Alamkhan to walk to Mugaḷī was in accordance with the fame of Mugaḷī.

The village Mugaḷī is on the Umarga-Humanabad road, just 8 kilometres away from Umarga. There are several villages in that region, with the name Mugaḷī. This particular Mugaḷī is known as Jājar Mugaḷī. This Jājar Mugaḷī is located at about fifteen to twenty kilometres from Kalyani. It means that on arriving at Kalyani from beyond the Vindhya and after staying there, he heard about Nāganāth Siddha of Waḍawāl as a divine person for the first time. It was then and there itself, that the sprout of devotion had grown in his mind. After going to Waḍawāl and experiencing sāksātkāra (revelation) from Nāganāth, Alamkhan returned to Kalyani—a place already familiar to him and known for Nāganāth’s spiritual presence. He continued to stay there in a blissful state of attaining the highest knowledge. His fame as a spiritual authority spread far and wide during his stay at Mugaḷī but people of his own community were very unhappy with him.

Alamkhan and sufi faqīrs of Dastgīr

Alamkhan’s Muslim brethren were displeased because he became a follower of a Hindu siddha¹³⁴ and began to sing bhajans¹³⁵ in his praise. There were

132. Pramīta – Ancestors tomb or samādhi.

133. Khargatīrtha – Derived from khaḍgatīrtha (khaḍga – short sword, symbolizing the sword of knowledge that destroys desires and sins), it refers to a holy place believed to cleanse sins. This tīrtha is said to be located on the banks of the river Gautamī Godāvari.

134. Siddha – An ascetic with supernatural powers.

135. Bhajan – Worship and singing in praise of God.

many followers of the Qādarī order of the sufi sect of Islam at that time, in the region around Bidar Kalyani. We have already seen in the first chapter that Mṛtyuñjaya Swami, also known as Shāh Muntojī Brahmanī, whose samādhi is at Narayanpur, also belonged to the Qādarī order of the sufi sect. We have also seen how his Muslim brethren washed out all the signs of Mṛtyuñjaya being a follower of the Ānanda sect, so that he should be remembered only as Murtazā Qādarī. The sufi mendicants of the Qādarī order were moving about in Maharashtra since the times before Sant Eknāth. Sayyad Rāje Mahammad, father of Sheikh Mahammad Śrīgondekar was also a follower of the Qādarī order. His disciple Sant Chānd Bodhale, who was the guru of both Janārdan Swami and Sheikh Mahammad, was also a Qādarī. He used to move about as a malaṅg.¹³⁶ Dr. Pandit Awalikar has pointed out by referring to the Dictionary of Islam (p. 118) that the faqīrs of the Qādarī order are also known as Pīr-i-Dastgīr.¹³⁷ These faqīrs of Dastgīr began to ridicule Alamkhan:

The faqīrs of Dastgīr | They ridiculed the great saint |
 Alamkhan, blessed by the guru, asked them |
 What is it really that you are wearing around your ankle? ||105||
 They immediately said | It is the chain of the Dastgīr |
 The saint said, you carry this chain, your pride, like an ornament |
 But real ornament is different ||106||
 For your physical pride | The chain of strong conscience is good |
 That would really be a beautiful chain |
 Any other ornament is deceptive ||107||
 Let go of your physical pride | Show me that you are free from it |
 Saying thus, the saint with his playfulness |
 Showed a miracle at that time ||108||
 He put the chain in fire | And, placed the red-hot chain before them |
 He asked them to wear it, without fear | To this, the faqīrs said ||109||
 You ask us to wear it | Then wear it yourself and show us |

Then the faqīrs felt ashamed when they could themselves see that Alamkhan had reached a completely disembodied state of being. Experiencing the power of his devotion, they exclaimed: “Glory to Nāgeśa and glory to the devotion of Alamkhan.”

136. Malaṅg – An unorthodox sufi mendicant.

137. Author's note: June Vāṇmāyā-Nave Saṃśodhana, Dr. Pandit Awalikar p.256.

*The mahasamādhi at Karaḷi*¹³⁸

However, Alamkhan did not have any intention of repeating such miracles:

Wanting to be famous | Is not a noble desire |
Such fame is troublesome |
It does not allow to settle in uparama samādhi¹³⁹ ||113||

That is why, Alamkhan decided that he will enter pūrṇasamādhi and said to the residents of Mugaḷi: “Give me some land for samādhi.” On hearing this the residents of Mugaḷi felt extremely disheartened, and hence, fearing that they will be separated from the saint forever, kept delaying the grant of land. However, Alamkhan did not want to wait any longer. His heart was completely filled with the highest bliss. There was nothing left for him to achieve. He was extremely eager to cross the barrier of his physical existence and be dissolved in the form of Nāgeśa. Hence, without informing the residents of Mugaḷi:

The devotee, with no attachment to his body |
Immediately went to the holy place, Karaḷi |
Agajī Mahārāj rests there |
Who was the disciple of Anantacaitanya ||116||
Next to him | He chose to rest in the ocean of bliss forever |

Alamkhan entered samādhi near the samādhi of Agajīmaharaja at Karaḷi, quite close to Mugaḷi.

Anantacaitanya¹⁴⁰ was the son of a merchant woman, obtained with Nāganāth's blessings. Later, he became Nāganāth's disciple and began to wander everywhere freely. While wandering thus from place to place he reached Barhāṇapūr (Dist. Akkalkot) where Agajī, a son of a merchant got initiation as his disciple. Gradually, Agajī also attained the same stature as his guru with his own spiritual power, and settled down in a place called Acalabeṭ by his guru's order, where he finally attained samādhi:

That holy place, Acalabeṭ | You ask me where it is |
So, I will tell you clearly, listen carefully |

138. Karaḷi/Karali, Tehsil Umarga, District Dharashiv.

139. Uparama Samādhi – Complete cessation of physical existence.

140. Author's note: The story of Anantacaitanya and Agajī Mahārāj occurs in the 29th chapter of Nāgeśalilāmṛta.

Keep your mind focused ||29.100||
 Right between Muļūj¹⁴¹ and Taramūḍ¹⁴² | There is this Acaḷabeṭ ||
 There settled the celebrated enlightened one |
 The unfailing Yogi Agajī ||101||
 On that Acaḷabeṭ | A nice village Karaḷī by name ||
 Where devotees worship Karaḷīnāth | With supreme devotion ||105||

Acaḷabeṭ, situated between two villages—Muļūj and Taramūḍ, is actually a hill, at the foot of which is the village, Karaḷī, the place sacred to Karaḷīnāth. Today, it is known as Karale, just six miles (about 9.6 kilometres) away from Umarga; a mile away to the left, off the Umarga-Humanabad Road. The hill of Karale, which is not very high, and the samādhi temple of Agajī-appā on its top is visible from the road itself. The premises of the temple are fortified all around. Within the same premises, to the right of the samādhi temple, under the cool shade of a neem tree is a spacious platform of Alamkhan's samādhi. Even today, the sensitive people do experience the vibrations charged with the energy of the soul of Alamkhan.

Prasādasamādhi at Mugaḷī

Residents of Mugaḷī felt very sad for the departure of Alamkhan from their village to Karaḷī because of their failure in handing over the land for his samādhi in time. They also feared that unwittingly they had happened to disobey a sādhu. At about the same time, snakes were appearing there in increasing number in the village. The residents of Mugaḷī were convinced that it was because of the disobedience on their part. So, they prayed to Alamkhan with full devotion. At that time a miracle happened: a great cobra appeared from the temple of God Mārutī, went to the usual sitting place of Alamkhan and disappeared there. The residents of Mugaḷī understood the significance of it and immediately built a prasādasamādhi¹⁴³ on that place. Till today, devotees of Alamkhan can be found in a considerable number, in Kāraḷe-Mugaḷī region. About a hundred to one hundred fifty years ago, there was a considerable number of Alamkhan's followers, as mentioned in Dāsaviśrāmadhāma, written by Ātmārāma Yekkehāḷīkar, an ascetic of the Samarth Sect:

141. Muļaj/Muļūj, Tehsil Umarga, District Dharashiv.

142. Talmoḍ/Taramūḍ, Tehsil Umarga, District Dharashiv.

143. Prasādasamādhi – Symbolic samādhi.

In Mugaḷī, I conducted a kīrtan |
 The audience renounced and detached |
 The members of the sect of guru Alamkhan |
 Who himself was instructed by guru Nāgobā¹⁴⁴ ||
 By seeing Alamkhan exerting with pure heart |
 Gosāvi Nasaruddīn Nāgobā was pleased |
 The one who aimed at the final destination has actually attained it |
 The story of his followers is the same |

(Dāsaviśrāmadhāma 121.107-108).

Surge of bliss

Alamkhan has expressed his gratitude in the form of poetic expressions, for the reward [of bliss] received from guru Nāgeśa. Śrī Māṇikamahārāja, the maṭhādhipati¹⁴⁵ of Mahāgāva maṭha informed me that local devotees of Alamkhan in the Mugaḷī-Kāraḷe region have preserved hundreds of songs composed by him. However, I could not meet any of those people. A few of his songs, which are included in the daily rituals at Mahāgāva maṭha, were copied for me by Śrī Māṇikamahārāja. Moreover, two of his songs are included in the book of songs composed by the ascetics of Nāgeśa tradition, published by Kuraḍe Mahārāja of Mohol. Two more are included in the Dāsaviśrāmadhāma and four to six songs are available in the collections at Samarth Vagdevata Mandir and Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal.¹⁴⁶ Omitting some repetitions, I could gather totally 15 songs from these sources. We would try to get some inkling about the spiritual experiences of Alamkhan, with the help of these songs. Alamkhan, a saint though born in a Muslim family, unhesitatingly invoked Goddess Śaradā with endearing words such as janani and vedamātā and prayed for her blessings and love:

144. Nāgobā is Nāganāth. Nasaruddīn is his Muslim name, meaning 'supporter of faith'.

145. Maṭhādhipati – The chief of a maṭha.

146. Author's note: Places where the songs of Alamkhan became available – (1) Śrī Govindarāj Babā Mahārāj Samsthān Mahāgāv (Taluka & District Gulbarga) – Courtesy: Śrī Māṇika Mahārāj. (2) Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule – MS 376 & 1152. (3) Bharat Itihas Samsodhak Mandal Annual Report, śaka era 1837, pp.279-280. (4) Śrī Nāganāthāce Abhaṅg (Songs of Nāganāth Sect) – Nāganāth Guṇḍubuvā Kuruḍe, Mohol. Pp.23-24 & 36. (5) Dāsaviśrāmadhāma (Vol. 4), pp. 967-968.

Oh Śāradā, jananī vedamātā |
 Whenever I sing songs and prayers in your honour ||
 Alamkhan implores you to be here from its beginning |
 Grace me with your blessings and love ||

Alamkhan, at times, has a dialogue with his mind, like Samarth Rāmadās. Alamkhan realized the illusory worlds created by the ongoing interplay of *saṅkalpa-vikalpa*¹⁴⁷ in the uncontrollable mind, which worked like a trap for many great men. Alamkhan after experiencing this began to sing songs describing the mind as an impactful force:

The many coloured mind¹⁴⁸ | Controller of the three worlds¹⁴⁹ ||
 Mind creates intents and doubts |
 Provoking a person toward sensual pleasures ||
 Mind has tortured many a siddhas-sanyāsī |
 Nāthpanthī, munīs and yogis ||
 Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara | They also dance to the mind's tune ||
 When the mind stopped and began to introspect |
 Then he became a bairāgī¹⁵⁰ ||

And hence Alamkhan warns his own mind:

Alamkhan says, “Oh mind, I appeal to you, please listen |
 Surrender yourself at the guru's feet” ||

Once surrendered at the guru's feet the goal of life became clear to Alamkhan and then he became aware of the pains he suffered during his mindless journey on a mistaken path. With intense affliction, Alamkhan makes his mind aware of this change in him:

I am weary of being in and out of the mother's womb again and again |
 There is no break in this cycle of birth and death, oh my mind ||
 There is no solution to it except self-realization |
 So, my mind, remain in the awareness of your Self ||

147. *Saṅkalpa-vikalpa* – Intent-doubt.

148. One may note that Alamkhan is using masculine gender while referring to his mind.

149. Three worlds – Heavens, earth and the netherworld.

150. *Bairāgī* – One with no desire or attachment.

You experienced the cycle of eighty-four lakh life-spans of various species ||
Still, oh mind! You are still heedless of its pains ||

Alamkhan was overcome with gratitude to sadguru when freed from the cycle of life and death as the sadguru bestowed his grace on him and established him in eternity. He expressed his gratitude in these words, “You showered undiminishing mercy on me” and “A single glance of yours at me made all illusions fade away.” So, he said, “I am now ready to step out of my body [as a result of the end of all illusions].” Guru is so great to him that he states, “For us, guru is Kāśī.” Not only this, he announces the supreme greatness of his guru, saying, “None else is greater than the guru | This is the final decision |” Alamkhan describes his transformation, which was the fruit of his guru’s blessings:

He told me about the essence | The very seed of brahmāṇḍa |
It clearly illumined in an easy manner | The mystery of samādhi ||
That made me look within |
And became the witness to my own inner world |
I saw my own nature | It made me impartial |
Set firmly in my decisions, though difficult | I held my mind closer ||
When I met the Paravastu¹⁵¹ | I broke away from the chain of births ||
The truth of Self pervaded my consciousness |
I know the highest Brahman ||
Which is indivisible, indestructible, ever-illumined |
It is the eternal One ||

Alamkhan’s fortune came to fruition as the guru showed him the path of Caumukti.¹⁵² The moment guru placed his hand on his head, there was the fully blown cidrūpa¹⁵³ and then the guru applied jñānāñjana¹⁵⁴ in his eyes:

By putting jñānāñjana he made my eyes shine with the light of its own effulgence |

151. Paravastu – The Supreme Entity.

152. Caumukti – Salokatā, samīpatā, svarūpatā, sāyujyatā are the four stages or forms of liberation.

153. Cidrūpa – Pure intelligence.

154. Jñānāñjana – Collyrium of knowledge.

It became all divine light, inside and outside, everything lighted up
bright ||
The chidāditya¹⁵⁵ had risen, scattering every darkness away |
As if innumerable suns are shining together ||

It is no wonder that one who receives such an extraordinary gift from his guru, is overcome with an unending surge of devotion toward the Guru. Alamkhan was overwhelmed with the urge of praising his guru. He made preparations to circumambulate his guru: five lamps of five basic elements, twenty-five wicks in them and ignited them with the clarified butter of ignorance. Thus, while singing this sahaja¹⁵⁶ āraṭī he says:

Let us sing in the praise of Nāganāth, my guru |
In complete surrender to you I rest my head at your feet ||

Alamkhan has also sung praises of the greatness of other saints around him. He says that he was fortunate to receive the grace of guru Nāgeśa, as also to be in the company of the saints. In one of his songs, describing the ‘unfathomable deeds of the saints’ he has glorified the detached life of the yogis:

Like a piece of cloth burnt | A yogi remains in this mundane world |
He is unaffected | Detached ||
Untouched, he remains in water | Like a leaf of a lotus-creeper |
He does not get tainted by the mundane | He is unattached ||
The sun is in the sky | Its reflection in the earthen jar looks complete |
But the sun does not change |
It is the same sun, the real and the reflection ||
Similarly, the soul is in the body |
It is the same in all individual bodies |
It occupies the body, yet aloof from the body It remains unaffected ||

Alamkhan names this detached state of being as the sign of the attainment of Nāgeśa [his guru] (nāgeśaprāptīci khūṇ). The mystery of this experience can be understood only by another saint who has also experienced it. Alamkhan has described his experience in the form of a riddle:

155. Chidāditya – The sun of pure intelligence.

156. Sahaja – Natural without any specific objective.

A saint's experience of such union can only be understood by another saint |
 An inexperienced person will never be able to fathom it ||
 If you go to a village full of idiots |
 With whom can you share your wisdom ||
 A man unable to see winks at another with same disability |
 Does the other see it ||
 People unable to walk, stand together |
 Will any of them complete the journey ||
 A person unable to speak sees a dream | How does he narrate it ||
 In the wedding of a childless woman's son |
 Attended by all kings in a painting ||
 Alamkhan says, this is all about nothingness |
 Let us be that nothingness ||

Now, before concluding, let us enjoy a very simple and beautiful song composed by Alamkhan. He composed this song to describe the surge of bliss in his heart after his guru took care of him as the female turtle is supposed to do with her affectionate gaze, and removed the mind-ness of his mind:

Oh mother, today I am very happy |
 I met my venerable guru ||
 Like a tortoise¹⁵⁷ my guru has his loving gaze upon me |
 It made my mind lose its inherent nature completely ||
 The seer, the seeable, and the seeing became one |
 The distance between I and You vanished automatically ||
 The triad lost its characteristic existence ||
 Now what I see, without and within me, is only oneness |
 The surge of bliss is immense |
 In no time Alamkhan was immersed in it ||

Thus, Alamkhan in his guru Nāganāth's company was indeed immersed in that overwhelming surge of bliss. He lost his yavana character and became an inseparable drop in the ocean of the greatness of the Marathi spirit. His memory will always be regarded by us with reverence.

157. Kūrmadriṣṭi – Gaze of a tortoise; a tortoise is said to nourish its young ones with her loving gaze.

Chapter 4:

Sheikh Sultān

At the feet of Śrī Gopālanāth

Śrī Gopālanāth, of the eighteenth century, like Waḍwālsiddha Nāganāth, was regarded as a great saint. He originally belonged to Devagiri.¹⁵⁸ From there he migrated to Satara and settled there. He left his body in a state of samādhi at Tripuṭī (Tehsil Koregāv, District Satara), which is located at a distance of about 11-12 km from Satara. He shared his spiritual riches with many fortunate ones. Among them were all—men and women, of high caste and low caste, kīrtankārs and shāhirs, Hindus and Muslims. Devanāth and Dayālanāth, the pre-eminent saint poets of the ancient times, belonged to the same tradition of saint Gopālanāth. Sheikh Sultān, a Muslim, was closely associated with him. Sheikh Sultān could experience the boundless joy of the highest experience in Gopālanāth's company and sang in his praise. Not much of the information about him is available, except for a few of his compositions that are available.

Information about Sheikh Sultān to a little extent is known from a brief note and some of his compositions that were made available to me by my senior friend Śrī Annasaheb Gholap (a successor of the younger brother of Śrī Gopālanāth and also the maṭhādhīpati of the Gopālanāth maṭha at Tripuṭī).

¹⁵⁸. The city of Devagiri was founded in 1187 AD by the Yādava king Bhillaṇa V. It was captured by Allāuddīn Khiljī in 1294 AD. In 1318, the last Yādava king Harapāla was killed by Malik Kāfūr, the general of Allāuddīn Khiljī. In 1327 AD, Muhammad Tughluq moved his capital to Devagiri and named it Daulatabad. Later it came under the rule of the Bahāmanī Sultanate till 1526 AD and then Aurangzeb till 1707. After that it remained in the domain of Nizām.

These sources made it possible for me to provide a glimpse of Sheikh Sultān to Marathi readers, which, otherwise, was an impossible task.

The native village of Sheikh Sultān was Kārve near Karāḍa (District Satara). In the beginning, he was a shāhir in the turewālā¹⁵⁹ category. He enjoyed a respectful position among the shāhir community as he could effortlessly compose verses containing spiritual riddles, known as bhedika songs. In those days shāhirs could find generous patronage in royal courts. It is said that Sheikh Sultān also enjoyed the patronage of Chhatrapatī Śāhū.

Once, Sheikh Sultān performed at the Satara royal court and was bestowed with various court honours. He then set on the return journey with his family and was passing through Tripuṭī. Gopālanāth happened to be sitting there with some members of the maṭha of Satara. He saw Sheikh Sultān, full of pride, passing by with his tambourine embellished with plumes. Gopālanāth summoned Sheikh Sultān near him. This instance has been described in Gopālanāthacaritra,¹⁶⁰ authored by Gopālanāth's younger brother Śyāmarāva alias Nānā. Śyāmarāva wrote:

Śrī Gopālanāth invited Sheikh Sultān |
 And quickly brought him near |
 "Sing something", he ordered |
 So Sheikh Sultān quickly began to sing a gaṇa¹⁶¹ ||
 Then Gopālanāth | Asked him the meaning of the song |
 Sheikh Sultān, not knowing it, felt mortified |
 He was completely taken aback ||
 Śrīnāth said, "Are you not going to explain? |
 Why have you become so speechless? |
 This gaṇa is composed by you | What is the difficulty?" ||
 He held Gopālanāth's feet firmly |
 "Swami, I am the fallen one, make me flawless" |

159. A poet in the category known as turewālā, which is derived from turā meaning a cap, the plume of which looks like the silks of the corn ear. The other category is known as kalagīwālā, whose cap's plume looks like the flowers of tulasī plant. These words have its origin in the Persian language. In the tamāśā tradition of Marathi folk theatre, these words indicate two parties, who engage each other in a debate with riddles presented in verse form. These riddles were based on spiritual and mythological traditions.

160. Author's note: I could see the unpublished copy prepared by Śrī. V.B. Gholap, Tripuṭī by his courtesy.

161. Gaṇa – A song sung at the beginning of tamāśā invoking Śrī Gaṇeśa.

Śrīnāth said to him | “Henceforth give up singing with tambourine” ||
 Thus, making him leave singing with tambourine |
 The guru initiated him |
 Sheikh Sultān experienced pure joy | All illusion vanished ||
 (Gopālanāthacaritra, 32.11-15)

When Gopālanāth asked Sheikh Sultān to sing something, he sang a song known as gaṇa. However, when Gopālanāth asked him to explain its meaning, Sheikh Sultān was baffled. It was a routine thing in the tradition of kalagītūrā¹⁶² contests of tamāśā¹⁶³ theatre, to take great pride in being able to play with Vedāntic words and to beat the rival party, without understanding their essential, deep meaning. Sheikh Sultān was a shāhir trained in the same tradition. He felt proud of his own compositions, but he became tongue-tied in the presence of a saint whose every action and speech were an easy-flowing expression of spirituality. Obeying Gopālanāth, Sheikh Sultān gave up singing with tambourine for tamāśā and surrendered himself completely at his guru Gopālanāth's feet.

A shāhir turned into a kīrtankār

An interesting story of how Gopālanāth began performing kīrtan with guru's blessings, occurs in Gopālanāthacaritra:

At some other time | Śrīnāth was sitting among people gathered for kīrtan | At that time, he summoned | His disciple Mādhavanāth ||

Mādhavanāth was an outstanding singer | Narrator of stories unfolding the essence of Brahman | Śrīnāth always | Liked his great stories |
 When summoned by Śrīnāth | Mādhavanāth swelled with pride | At that time | Śrīnātharāj exclaimed ||

“Better than you | I will now turn the avindha into a foremost kīrtankār | To hear his stories | People will pray eagerly | The poetry flowing from him | I will bless it to be multi-faceted” ||

162. Kalagītūrā – Contest between two performing parties in the form of questions and answers (riddles) based on mythological stories.

163. Tamāśā – Folk theatre of Maharashtra.

Thus spoke Śrīnāth | At that time in front of all ||

(Gopālanāthacaritra, 32.4-8)

When Gopālanāth asked Mādhavanāth, one of his disciples, to perform a kīrtan, he could sense that Mādhavanāth, because of his skill of narration was puffed with pride. So Gopālanāth warned him in the presence of all, saying that he will turn the avindha into a kīrtankār, much superior to him. Gopālanāth had Sheikh Sultān's talent for impromptu compositions on his mind:

Then one day the guru commanded |

“Get ready for performing a kīrtan” |

Sheikh Sultān picked up his vīṇā¹⁶⁴ |

And stood touching the feet of the guru ||

All were wondering | How would he perform |

Once you are blessed by the guru |

Is there anything, that is impossible? ||

Then he positioned his vīṇā in his hand | And began to perform |

Varied kinds of poetic compositions | He sang at that time ||

Also, compositions of various saints |

Wise words he uttered by the guru's grace ||

(Gopālanāthacaritra, 32.16-19)

Thus, this Muslim shāhir, with the blessings of the guru became an excellent kīrtankār composing songs, which unfolded the highest truth, and thereby made his guru extremely happy. The prevalent tradition tells us that Gopālanāth fed Sheikh Sultān the betel leaf chewed by him and thus by way of śaktipāta¹⁶⁵ the guru transmitted vāksiddhi¹⁶⁶ to his disciple. Gopālanāth was always pleased with Sheikh Sultān's kīrtan. Even now, the honour of playing vīṇā during the celebrations of Gopālanāth's samādhi anniversary is given to a Muslim artist.

164. Vīṇā – A kind of lute.

165. Śaktipāta – Initiation by the Guru, by directly imparting his spiritual power to his disciple.

166. Vāksiddhi – Superhuman power of speech.

Honoured in the Peśvā court for excellence in kīrtan

It became a daily routine of Sheikh Sultān to serve the guru in every possible manner, to engage in sādhanā¹⁶⁷ as guided by him, to combine the knowledge earned through listening to philosophy from various treatises with his own experience and then to present it in kīrtan. He permanently settled in Tripuṭī, in order to be able to serve his guru without any hindrance. Remains of his sprawling, fortified vāḍā¹⁶⁸ can still be seen there. It was built for Sheikh Sultān by the members of a family in Koparḍe near Loṇanda (District Satara), with surname Shinde. They were followers of Gopālanāth. In age, Sheikh Sultān was senior among the followers of Gopālanāth, and hence was addressed as Ābāsāheb to show respect. His younger brother, Choṭubhāi by name also followed him to Tripuṭī and become a disciple of Gopālanāth. People addressed him as Sheikh Dājī or Dājīsāheb.

The orthodox people could not tolerate the fact that a Muslim is performing kirtans on Vedānta. They were not capable of understanding that Vedānta is not a monopoly of any particular sect, but a noble outlook on life. They lodged a complaint to the Peśvā against this. Sheikh Sultān was summoned by the Peśvā. There, in the Pune court and in the presence of Peśvā himself, Sheikh Sultān performed a kīrtan. Peśvā was spellbound by his performance and also extremely happy to see that a Muslim was so entranced in singing the praise of God Govinda. By announcing his happiness, he felicitated Sheikh Sultān and gifted him a garden, near Pune, which was under the governance of Muñjerī.¹⁶⁹ Later, a maṭha was established in this garden in the sectarian tradition of Paramhansa, who was a disciple of the guru Gopālanāth. Sahajanāth, his disciple Subhānanāth and Subhānanāth's disciple Gopālanāth (II) used to reside in this maṭha. Even today, remains of this maṭha can be traced at Swargate intersection. There are few samādhis of some great men from the Gopālanāth tradition and a beautiful icon of Goddess Daśabhujā.

167. Sādhanā – Unswerving pursuance of spiritual attainment.

168. Vāḍā – A house with a central courtyard with rooms around it.

169. Muñjerī – As informed by historian Mandar Lawate, muñjer is a corrupt form of mujer. During Peśvā period some plots of land around Pune were kept reserved, which were known as mujerī (muñjerī).

Mother Kṛṣṇā (the river) appeared in the courtyard

Sheikh Sultān used to regularly travel to Māhulī¹⁷⁰ for taking a dip in the Kṛṣṇā River. However, later, he found it difficult to continue with this routine because of old age. Sensing this, Gopālanāth said to his virtuous disciple, “Wherever there is purity of mind, there is the water of Kṛṣṇā. Dig a well in your courtyard. Mother Kṛṣṇā will come to your house.” Sheikh Sultān dug a well, following his guru’s instructions. Whenever the waters of Kṛṣṇā gets muddy in the rainy season, the water of this well too gets muddy. This concurrence can make the faithful devotee believe that it is Mother Kṛṣṇā, who had indeed appeared in Sheikh Sultān’s house. The story narrated in Bhaktamañ-jarīmālā¹⁷¹ written by Rājārām Prasādī, differs a little:

Virtuous, extremely faithful I
 There was a person from Muslim community I
 Who was an extraordinary devotee I Sheikh Sultān by name II
 To Gopālanāthswami I See his limitless devotion I
 Who made Mother Kṛṣṇā appear I On a barren land II
 Listen to the reason behind it I The narration will be brief I
 Who spent his life I In the navavidha bhajan¹⁷² of sadguru II
 When it was time to exit the body I
 Enlightened ones gathered around him I
 And asked Sheikh Sultān I
 “How about [your] samādhi on the banks of Kṛṣṇā?” II
 At that time Sheikh Sultān I Said to All I
 “Know this, all holy places exist I At the feet of the guru II

170. Māhulī – A holy place in Satara District, situated at the confluence of rivers Kṛṣṇā and Veṅṇā.

171. Author’s note: Śrībhaktamañjarīmālā Vol. II: Śaṅkara Kṛṣṇa Deva, Editor - Satkāryottejaka Sabhā. Dhule.

172. Bhajan also means devotion, very similar to bhakti, both derived from the verbal root bhaj. It is of nine types (navavidhā bhakti). It is defined thus in Bhāgavata:

śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṁ pādasevanam |
 arcanaṁ vandanaṁ dāsyam sakhyam ātmanivedanam ||

Translation: Śravaṇa – listening to God’s name; kīrtana – singing God’s praise; smaraṇa – remembering God; vandana – bowing to God; archana – worshipping God; pādasevana – taking resort at God’s feet; dāsyā – complete surrender to God; sakhya – developing a close bond with God as one’s own kindred spirit; ātmanivedana – offering one’s complete being to God.

Among them sat a troublemaker | The one without faith |
 Said he, "The waters of Kṛṣṇā, nothing else |
 Make it appear at this place" ||
 Immediately, Sheikh Sultān | Dug there, in the wilderness |
 And there appeared Mother Kṛṣṇā |
 Glory to the yavana, a devotee of the guru ||
 Till date at Tripuṭī | People can still see the tank there |
 Whenever Kṛṣṇā gets muddy | The same thing happens here ||
 (Bhaktamañjarīmālā, 47.80-87)

According to Rājārām Prasādī, the miracle of the appearance of river Kṛṣṇa seems to have happened after Gopālanāth took samādhi and at the time of Sheikh Sultān's samādhi.

*Sheikh Sultān entered samādhi on the day of sadguru's
samādhi anniversary*

In this way, by serving the guru constantly and by enjoying guru's blessings, Sheikh Sultān became eligible for the attainment of 'eternal joy'. His devotion to the guru was so intense that on the third anniversary of his guru's samādhi day he also left his body in samādhi state, completely engrossed in the remembrance of his guru. According to the information provided by Śrī Gholap, the day of Sheikh Sultān's samādhi was the 15th day of the dark half of the month of Śrāvaṇa (fifth month of the Indian Almanac) in the śaka year 1691 (1769 C.E.).

The place of Sheikh Sultān's samādhi is in his meditation cavern in the courtyard and the symbolic (darśan) samādhi is built above that cavern. The samādhi of his brother, Sheikh Dājī is in the north-western part of the vādā. Viṭṭhalanāth, the nephew of the great guru of Sheikh Sultān, has glorified this great devotee of his guru in an āratī. He wrote:

Glory to the one who was a born saint | Sheikh Sultān Ābā |
 He has a body, but not bound to it | He is born but beyond birth |
 The unmanifest and the manifest,¹⁷³ unbound and the bound¹⁷⁴ |

173. Brahmāvadhi – Brahma (infinite/the unmanifest/the unbound) and avadhi (demarcated space/limit).

174. Muktbaddha – Unbound-bound.

In its interplay is the avindha, liberated |
 A śukti¹⁷⁵ of detachment and enlightenment |
 A vinda¹⁷⁶ arose from it ||
 Nārāyaṇa drilled a hole through the vinda |
 With the thread of his own will |
 Threaded it and put it around the neck |
 That became a garland of delight |¹⁷⁷

Gopālanāth chiselled well and pierced (vindhaleṃ) the avindha, a pearl formed in the oyster shell of detachment and enlightenment, and threaded him with his own will, and made it look beautiful on the neck of the saints. This praise by Viṭṭhalanāth glorifying Sheikh Sultān seems to be very sincere, as evidenced by his compositions.

Available Hindi-Marathi compositions

It is likely that Sheikh Sultān and his family spoke Dakkhinī Hindi¹⁷⁸ at home. Hence, it was natural that some of his compositions were in Hindi. A few of his Hindi compositions are available. There are a few narratives composed in Marathi, a few songs and a few āratī songs. However, all the compositions may not be his own. His brother Sheikh Dājī was also an excellent poet and his affection for Sheikh Sultān was so great that he ascribed a number of his compositions to his brother. Viṭṭhalanāth, Gopālanāth's nephew, has mentioned this very clearly in the beautiful āratī he composed on Sheikh Dājī:

Glory to the saint | Dājī, my bosom friend |
 From the Islamic treasure |
 A drop, a portion manifested as you in person ||
 You have no mundane desire | An excellent poet |
 Through your abhaṅgs | You enhanced your brothers fame ||
 Bliss of kirtan was heightened | When you stood happily to perform |
 Like sky, your roaring sound | Rained spiritual wisdom like a cloud ||

175. Śukti – Oyster shell.

176. Vinda – Used as vindha meaning clean, chisel and pierce through and also ‘a pearl.’ An attempt of having pun on avindha and vinda/dha.

177. Author's note: Shrināthāciye Dvārī – in the collection of V.B. Gholap, p. 14.

178. Dakkhinī Hindi – Urdu – A language developed by combining Persian and local Indian languages. It originated in the southern regions of India ruled by the sultanates.

Having command over all the elements |
 The guru, the Lord, became complete |
 The acyutavṛkṣa¹⁷⁹ bore fruits |
 But the disciple was dissolved completely like salt¹⁸⁰ ||
 Except guru Gopālanāth's feet | Nothing else do I know |
 My love Viṭṭhal [the form of the guru] | Knows no bound ||¹⁸¹

The composition of this āratī, indicates very clearly that Sheikh Dājī was an excellent poet and kīrtankār. He showered spiritual wisdom on his audience through his kīrtans and perpetuated his brother's name by using it in his samāptimudrā¹⁸² of the abhaṅgs composed by him. It means that some of the compositions credited to Sheikh Sultān were actually composed by Sheikh Dājī. Those compositions cannot be classified separately. Considering that the poet dissolved his name in his brother's due to devotion, it will be inappropriate for us to try to classify them. However, there are a couple of compositions, in which their individual names were retained by mistake. For example:

Gopālanāth is my nabī,¹⁸³ [my] pīr¹⁸⁴ |
 He showed me my mind in the mirror of my heart |
 Sheikh Sultān, his disciple |
 His tomb is behind [the guru's samādhi] ||

This samāptimudrā indeed carries Sheikh Sultān's name. However, the poet, who mentions that his tomb is behind Gopālanāth's samādhi, is obviously somebody else than Sheikh Sultān. This somebody is clearly none else than Sheikh Dājī, who established his brother's name as the composer of the abhaṅgs written by him. In the following song Sheikh Dājī has presented a spiritual allegory while describing Tripuṭī, the town where his sadguru dwelt:

179. Acyutavṛkṣa – Who is as steadfast as a tree – The guru.

180. Had no separate existence.

181. Author's note: Śrīnāthāciye Dvārī, p.14.

182. A name used by a poet at the end of a composition.

183. Nabī – Prophet.

184. Pīr – Saint.

The city of Tripuṭī¹⁸⁵ |
 It is such a beautiful creation ||
 There is no other place like it in this world |
 Observing it, all the fatigue of the body and mind vanished |
 The mind was naturally drawn to it |
 And became a faqīr ||1||
 This gaibi¹⁸⁶ city is unique |
 Above all sāheb¹⁸⁷ resides here |
 It is nabī Gopālanāth's domain |
 Here faqīr¹⁸⁸ rules supreme ||2||
 This city is surrounded by strong, fifty-two¹⁸⁹ fortifications |
 Three hundred and sixty¹⁹⁰ heavy chains are fixed on them |
 There is regular patrolling and uninterrupted vigilance¹⁹¹ |
 At this place, there is a sadar¹⁹² ||3||
 Below it are five and above nine khaṇ¹⁹³ |
 A nirguṇī saint stays there |
 And see the charm of this abode of sadguru |
 Nobody knows about it ||4||...

In this allegory, Sheikh Dāji imagines the human body in the form of the city of Tripuṭī and explains that at all times, the sadguru dwells there and acts. [That is to say that the unbroken awareness of sadguru is alive within the devotee's consciousness at all three levels – the gross, the subtle and the causal body.] No wonder, a poet who had attained such spiritual height, did not

185. Tripuṭī – The universe 'within and without' of the human existence comprising –

1. the three bodies subtle body, gross body, and causal body.

2. three realms of Hindu cosmology: bhūḥ (earth); bhuvaḥ (intermediate realm) and svaḥ (sky).

186. Gaibi – Divine.

187. Sāheb – Lord or guru.

188. A life of poverty and beggary willingly accepted because one wants to devote completely to God.

189. Fifty-two weeks calculated on the basis of 7 days a week.

190. Three Hundred and sixty days.

191. Patrolling – Rotations of the sun and moon that continue through 52 weeks and 360 days.

192. Sadar – Open veranda; here, the earth.

193. Khaṇ – A unit of measuring; span between two beams; fourteen sphere or levels of the universe as imagined in the Indian tradition.

care for his name to stay on for posterity. This is in keeping with his bearing. However, it is disappointing for us, who are curious about saint's lives.

Poetic narratives written by Sheikh Sultān

I was able to get access to five narratives written by Sheikh Sultān:¹⁹⁴

1. Satī Anasūyā
2. Gaṇapati-janma
3. Hanumanta-janma
4. Kolhāṭyāce Caritra
5. Śivarātrikathā

All these five narratives fall in the category of folktales and their composition also is in the style of folk songs. Satī Anasūyā is of 22 stanzas composed in the style of Lāvaṇī, which Sheikh Sultān begins thus:

Two virtuous daughters of good character were born to him |
 They were named Saī and Anasūyā |
 When they were of marriageable age, he [the father] said to his wife |
 Tell them stories of virtuous wives |
 Oh, my audience, you also give me your ear |
 Listen with a focused mind ||||

The father conveys his decision to begin the search for suitable grooms for both of his daughters. A groom is chosen for Saī but Anasūyā refuses to marry, becomes a renunciate and goes to the forest:

After seeing a prospective groom |
 The virgin bride smiled at her father after hearing him |
 I shall not marry a mortal groom |
 How many lives should I suffer a widow's life ||
 Head smeared with dust, she wrapped herself in saffron coloured sari |
 Garlands, marks on the earlobes, she slept on the bed of grass |

194. Author's note: These five narratives and some Hindi-Marathi songs are from the manuscripts sent by Śrī. V.B. Gholap. References to the compositions, which are not from these manuscripts are mentioned independently.

Only roots for food and water to drink |
In this way she lived for twelve years, moving in forests ||4||

Once, after spending twelve years in forests, Anasūyā came to see her sister. After dinner, Anasūyā went to the veranda to sleep and Saī went to her sleeping quarters to be in the service of her husband. Suddenly, a massive fire broke out in the town and one after another, the houses began to burn. Anasūyā seeing the fire called out to Saī. Saī answered from inside:

The woman said, I have undressed and now sleeping |
Tell the fire-god to spare my house |
I will remain in his debt |
I will be his slave, in all lives to come ||8||

And a miracle happened. The fire left Saī's house untouched and went ahead. This happened because of the impact of her *satī*tva.¹⁹⁵ Realising this, Anasūyā was humbled. She felt that her austerities bore no fruit and being convinced of the merit of the *pativrata*-dharma,¹⁹⁶ she agreed to marry. Saī told her, "Go to the temple of goddess Ambā and wait there through night. Accept the first man you meet as your husband." Anasūyā followed her instructions. The first man she met was a leper. She garlanded him, accepting him as her husband, put him in a basket and started walking. At that moment a prostitute was passing by, seeing whom, Anasūyā's leper husband had a desire for her. Anasūyā, knowing her husband's wish, went to the prostitute and served her for six months and pleaded her to fulfil her husband's wish. When the prostitute agreed, Anasūyā went home, put her husband in a basket at night and started going hurriedly to the prostitute's place. In her rush, inadvertently she bumped into Sage Māṇḍavya,¹⁹⁷ who was punished to impalement. Thus, being put to unbearable pain, he cursed Anasūyā:

The one who passed by from here will become a widow, at sunrise ||
Then, what did Anasūyā do?
She put the basket on the ground | Obscuring the Sun ||

195. *Satī*tva – Virtue of a woman.

196. *Pativrata* dharma – The duties of a woman being totally devoted to her husband.

197. Sage Māṇḍavya was wrongly punished by the king, who misunderstood the sage to be a thief, because the spoils of a theft were found near his hermitage, which were buried there by the thieves.

Anasūyā's satīva had such impact that the sun did not rise. The entire world remained in darkness. The gods became worried, but a solution was found. True to the curse of Sage Māṇḍavya, Anasūyā's ailing husband did die but immediately her widowhood was shared voluntarily by women in all directions. As an effect of this act, Anasūyā's dead husband came back to life as a handsome man. At that time, he was cured of leprosy:

He came back to life in its fullness, a handsome one |
 Anasūyā was sent home with him |
 By the Master's grace Sultān learnt that firm resolve holds true ||

Thus, this poetic narrative falls truly in the category of folklore. It is written in the style of Lāvaṇī, which is known as vag. It is typically performed in the folk theatre.

Gaṇeśajanma, the other poetic narrative composed by Sheikh Sultān, is similar to the 'songs of satī' (satīgīte)¹⁹⁸ composed by Moropanta and has 28 ovīs.¹⁹⁹ Sindhurāsura, the demon of Sindhupur pleased Śiva with his austerities and asked for a boon saying, "Spare me from the fear and anxiety of death":

"I grant you a boon" | Said Śiva |
 However, listen | To a secret in my heart ||7||
 To Pārvatī | Gaṇapatī will be born |
 You will meet your death | At his hands ||8||

Sindhurāsura was distraught on hearing the secret of his death. He became watchful of Pārvatī's movements. After a while, he came to know about Pārvatī's pregnancy and realised that the agent of his death was growing in her womb. Using trickery (māyā) he cut off the head of Gaṇeśa in foetus. Later, Pārvatī delivered a headless baby. Meanwhile, Śiva had killed Gajāsura, the elephant-headed demon and had carried his head home in jubilation. When he reached home, he saw that a headless baby was born to him and immediately he fixed the elephant's head on the baby. Thus, the headless baby be-

198. Among Moropant's numerous compositions there are three poetic narratives: Sitāgīta, Sāvitrīgīta and Rukmīṇīgīta written in a metre known as ovī. These together are known as Satīgīte or Satīncī gāṇī.

199. Moropant was a renowned Marathi poet of the 18th century, known especially for his compositions in a metre known as āryā.

came Gajānana, a baby with an elephant head or face. When Gajānana grew up, Sindhurāsura attacked Gajānana with his army. Gaṇeśa, i.e. Gajānana first destroyed Sindhurāsura's army and in the end killed Sindhurāsura also. Sindhurāsura before dying requested Gaṇeśa:

Grant me that you would apply sindūr | To all over your body |
 You would use it constantly | The sindūr ||24||
 Granting Sindūra's wish | He killed the demon |
 Victorious was | Gaṇarāja ||25||
 Dundubhi²⁰⁰ resounded | Victory standards were waved high |
 People greeted each other | In happiness ||26||
 The happiness of Śaṃbhu and Pārvatī was overwhelming |
 The bliss of Brahman pervaded | In all three lokas ||27||

Sheikh Sultān, at the end authenticates the story stating, that this is the narrative from the Skandapurāṇa.

Hanumantajanma is another story in verse composed in the strī-ovī meter (17 ovīs). A portion of the prasādam²⁰¹ in Kaikayī's hand²⁰² was snatched away by a kite. It fell into the hands of Vāyu, the wind god. He ate it and the foetus descended into his stomach. The wind-god got anxious about finding a proper womb for this divine foetus. While wandering from one forest to another in the anxiety of where to drop it, he happened to see pativratā²⁰³ Añjanī, who was practicing austerities. Approaching her in the disguise of a brahmin, he said to her, "I am going to grant you the fruit of your austerities," and placed the foetus inside her by blowing it through her ear. When Añjanī felt heaviness inside her, she immediately shouted, "Who is that treacherous one here?" On that:

Vāyu the wind-god said, "All through | I searched |
 Do not worry | About the foetus |
 In your womb | Is growing the incarnation of god Rudra ||

200. Dundubhi – A sort of kettle-drum.

201. Prasādam – Blessed food.

202. At the conclusion of the yajña performed by King Daśaratha for male progeny (putrakāmeṣṭī), God Agni appeared and handed over the prasādam to King Daśaratha of Ayodhya. The king divided it into portions and gave one portion to each one of them to his three queens, viz. Kausalyā, Sumitrā and Kaikayī.

203. Pativratā – A virtuous wife completely devoted to her husband.

Time and desire | He will tie them both, down to his anklet |
 In all directions, his fame | Will expand ||
 He will be known among people | As the devotee of Rāma |
 Let Hanumanta | Be his name” |

Saying so, Vāyu left and at proper time, Hanumanta was born on Saturday, a full-moon day in the month of Caitra, the first month of the Hindu almanac, when the moon was in the [15th] constellation, named Svātī.²⁰⁴

Śivarātrikathā is composed in 49 oṽs. Sheikh Sultān has narrated here the famous story of ‘The hunter and the deer’. A deer had come to a jungle water hole to drink water and was about to be killed by a hunter, and just at that very moment:

All [in the deer’s family] came running | Near the deer |
 They started praying | How could you let this happen, Oh Hṛṣīkeśa |
 The deer said to his wife, “Oh woman! | Take care of our baby |
 You foursome | Be together” ||35||
 The wife said, “Without my husband | This world |
 Is like an empty temple | Without a lamp” ||36||
 The baby said, “Hand me over | To the Death |
 More offsprings | You will have” ||37||

Thus, in a simple manner, Sheikh Sultān narrated the deer family’s readiness for self-sacrifice.

The narrative poem, Kolhāṭyāce Caritra is composed in 33 oṽs. It describes the detrimental effects of lust for woman and the importance of detachment from mundane desires. A son of a money lender gets enamoured by a woman of kolhāṭī²⁰⁵ caste, leaves home and keeps wandering and performing with her. After a while, when they are performing in front of the king’s palace, the king also falls for her. Watching it, the son of the money lender gets perplexed and begins to think about what had happened. At that time, he happens to meet an ascetic of Nirmohī²⁰⁶ order and instantly a feeling of detachment surges in his heart. Looking at his transformation, the kolhāṭī woman and also the king were influenced and renounced the mundane world. Purified by the renunciation, all three of them got liberated in due

204. The ruling deity of the constellation ‘Svātī’ is Vāyu, the wind-god.

205. Kolhāṭī – Traditional wandering entertainer caste in Maharashtra.

206. Nirmohī – A Vaiṣṇava sect of warrior sādhus.

course of time. This is the story narrated in this poem. The moral of the story is that the one who is freed from sensual desires walks the path of liberation. Sheikh Sultān's style of narration is beautiful yet simple, as illustrated in the following lines:

In that city | A dancer of kolhāṭī community was performing |
 Her shifty eyes | Were fast like a fish ||4||
 The sixteen marks of beauty | She was bestowed generously with it |
 The lustful ones |
 Got pulled to her like a dragon fly to a lighted lamp ||5||
 The son of the money lender | Went to see her |
 The arrow [of her beauty] hit | His heart ||6||

These lines reflect the shāhirī style of Sheikh Sultān, who was once joyously engaged in composing romantic songs. His inner stance changed but his original shāhirī style did not change.

The essence of Sheikh Sultān's Hindi-Marathi verses

There are only a handful of verses available, composed by Sheikh Sultān. Those are not enough to give us a glimpse of all the shades of his experience of the divine. I could lay my hands only on three of his verses, in one of which, Sheikh Sultān appears to be searching for a nijayogī²⁰⁷ who could guide him on the spiritual path. In another song, he says, "We have seen this world | It seems like those strong lapping flames in a picture |." In this manner, he has explained the world as false as those flames in the picture. In the third song he has described, how the words of a siddha are like a riddle. Thus, these three songs are not indicative of the intensity of his devotional urge, as his purpose here is to unravel the mysteries of the spiritual path.

There are two Marathi āratīs composed by him,²⁰⁸ which are sung on certain occasional festivals at Tripuṭī. One of them sings the glory of Goddess Tukāī, who is on a hill to the West of Tripuṭī, and another sings the glory of Goddess Padmāvatī. These āratīs predominantly reflect the Vedāntic thoughts rather than intense devotional feelings. For example, see this āratī of Tukāī:

207. Nijayogī – The one whose inherent nature is that of a yogi.

208. Author's note: Śrināthāciye Dvārī, p.13 & 16-17.

Glory to the one who is nijānandā²⁰⁹ |
 Tukai who herself is brahmānandā |
 Who dwells in Tuḷajāpūr | Eternally established in yoga ||
 You yourself remained formless | And created māyā |
 Through the primal seed Aum | Elements five and five bodies²¹⁰ |
 You drew the lines of triguṇa²¹¹ |
 And brought forth the physical existence |
 Nāda-bindu²¹² is jyotirūpa²¹³ | Turyā²¹⁴ witnesses bodily existence ||||
 The three gods²¹⁵ including Brahmā |
 They were born from your womb |
 Brahmā created the universe | Three of them became its keepers ||
 You created brahmāṇḍa, brahmaśakti | You made saptapātāle²¹⁶ |
 This was how the Universal Mother envisioned it |
 The manifest world ||2||
 Devotion, knowledge and detachment | It's for those blessed by you |
 Sensual desires and anger do not touch me |
 I washed off all the dirt of mind at Kashi |
 All my sins | I burnt their heaps |
 While this was happening |
 Guru Gopāḷa, the eternal, was watching over Sultān |

The all-pervading form of the saccitsukhadāyī²¹⁷ Goddess is also described in the same manner in the āratī of Padmāvati. Similar to these two āratīs of the goddess, Sheikh Sultān, in one of his compositions, has praised bhairavajogī²¹⁸ also, who possesses triśūḷa, ḍaura and śiṅgi.²¹⁹ There is a song composed

209. Nijānanda – Bliss in its true form.

210. Pañcatattve and Pañcakāyā – pañcamahābhūtas and pañcakośas – Five elements and five sheaths.

211. Trigūṇa – Three qualities: sattva, rajas and tamas.

212. Nāda-bindu – Source of primal sound.

213. Jyotirūpa – In the form of a column of light.

214. Turyā – Pure consciousness.

215. Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva.

216. Saptapātāle – Seven netherworlds – viz. Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Talātala, Mahātala, Rasātala, Pātāla.

217. Saccitsukhadāyī – The bestower of bliss in sat (truth), cit (pure consciousness) and dāyī (bestower).

218. Bhairavajogī – A form of Śiva.

219. Triśūḷa – Trident; Ḍaura – Hourglass tabor; Śiṅgi – Blowing horn.

by Sheikh Sultān ²²⁰ in one of the manuscripts (No. 1733) in the collection of Samarth Vagdevata Mandir. In it, he describes in mysterious style, his experience of the supreme Brahman (parabrahma) as raṅgānubhava:²²¹

I saw an image |
 Sharp like a masurā²²² ||
 Of reddish-yellow colour |
 Occasionally filled with white ||1||
 When it gets dark blackish |
 It does swallow the brahmaṇḍa²²³ ||2||
 Guru Sāhebnāth²²⁴ showed |
 The master-key to Sultān ||3||

Sheikh Sultān has described raṅgānubhava in some of his Hindi poems in a different style. For that he uses the simile of young women dressing up in various colours. This experience of his, though unusual, his expression is in the style of a shāhir. Just see this description of a young beautiful woman whose appearance is dominated by the red colour:

Please listen, the charming beauty, adorned with red coloured things |
 Wearing a red saree |
 Hiding gulāl²²⁵ in her lap |
 Specially saved for throwing it on Lāla [Kṛṣṇa] ||
 Her eyes are red |
 The collyrium in her eyes is also red |
 Kṛṣṇa is dear to her like a gem worn around her neck |
 She is going just to get his glimpse |
 Chewing a betel roll |
 She has covetous thoughts in her mind |

220. Author's note: This song is printed in Marāṭhī Saṣodhana-Patrikā (Year 10, Issue No.3) by Prof. A.K. Priyolakra and in Sheikh Mahammadbābā Śrīgondkar Yāñcā Kavitaśaṅgraha, p.69, as a composition by Sheikh Mahammad.

221. Raṅgānubhava – Colourful drama of life or play of colours; experiencing something that is performed on a stage; in present context, it is the interplay of the Brahman and the manifest world happening in the universe.

222. Masurī – Edge of a sword.

223. Brahmaṇḍa – Universe.

224. Guru Gopālanāth addressed with love and respect as Sāhebnāth.

225. Red coloured powder made from herbal dye.

Thinking of playing Holi with him !
 Thinking, he must have tied swings in the woods ||
 All over there is the red colour !
 He is playing with full fervour !
 Playing shrewdly !
 [Says] Sheikh Sultān ||

This playful young woman taking pleasure in swaying on the swing in the woods and throwing gulāl at her 'Lāla' [Kṛṣṇa, the dear child], celebrating Holi, appears dressed up completely in white the very next moment and at other times in green or in black:

The woman saunters on black earth !
 Herself in black, face enchanting !
 Black bangles, black collyrium !
 Colī²²⁶ also black, firm, and erect ||

To experience such an outstanding world of colours one needs to get intoxicated with some extraordinary or divine drink, otherwise, one cannot experience the festival of colours that fills the entire animate and inanimate world. Sheikh Sultān, being thus intoxicated is soaked in various colours. He has within him, a jogī, who is lost in bliss and who is constantly swaying. He is drunk with a special hemp drink, prepared by mixing smoothly the powder of the 'five elements.' Having drank it, chanting the name of his guru, he, the jogī who is brahmavilāsi,²²⁷ is in a completely drunken state:

When I looked around, I felt the misty darkness !
 I was witnessing the abināsi²²⁸ ||
 It was in the natural course that I got into khecharī mudrā²²⁹ !
 I dwelt in the abode, which is without any blemish !
 And of its own, I found myself in the quietude !
 I, the jogī drunken with it, am swaying in bliss ||

226. Colī – Bodice.

227. Brahmavilāsi – One who takes pleasure in the Brahman.

228. Abināsi – Indestructible, i.e., the Brahman.

229. Khechari Mudrā – A yogic mudra where the tip of the tongue is curled up and pushing it backward till it reaches the soft part of the palate and further into the nasal cavity. It is claimed that with the practice of this mudra one can taste the nectar seeping down from the crown chakra.

Most of the compositions of Sheikh Sultān, composed in a state of intoxication after enjoying the brahmarasa, are lost to us in the course of time but whatever little, we could lay our hands on provides us with a glimpse of his inner world.

Note: Gopālanāthcaritra authored by Śyāmarāva and Poems of Sheikh Sultān were later published by Gopālanāth Maṭha of Tripuṭī.

Chapter 5:

Sheikh Mahammad

Incarnation of Kabīr

Among the Marathi saints, Sheikh Mahammad is known as the incarnation of Sant Kabīr, who was Muslim by birth but attained realization with the grace of a Hindu guru. He accepted the Hindu spiritual practice and crossing over the Hindu-Muslim confines experienced the pure spiritual existence. Sheikh Mahammad too, like Kabīr, attained a very high place among saints who thought in an unorthodox way. Traditional biographers have drawn our attention to this similarity between Kabīr and Sheikh Mahammad:

Pir Sheikh Mahammad | Incarnation of Kabīr |
His life-story | Please you listen to ||1||
He is the incarnation of Kabīr | But, people do not understand |
They do not realize it |
Because of the illusions of the manifest world ||4||
In uninterrupted samādhi | He would sit in a cave |
In his mind, in his breath and in his feelings |
Rings only Harināma ||5||
The flutters of his mind | He conquers it at all the times |
In continuous meditation | He would sit ||6||
Nobody can fathom | Their secrets |
Those signs of incarnation | Shown by them ||7||
Signs of incarnation | Shown by them have no bounds |
Highly reputed saints and sādhus | Have been talking about it ||8||

The life story of Sheikh Mahammad has been generously recounted by saints and sādhus, but the available authentic historical sources are just a handful. Even so, in the lists of the names of saints, his name has a very honourable place. The great poet, Moropant, while including Sheikh Mahammad's name in his Sanmaṇimālā, said:

The boats of name and fame do not save a man [from the ocean of existence], who is as stiff as a wooden pestle, the one who does not bend !
With joy, honour Sheikh Mahammad, a musalmān, who belongs to God ॥8०॥

As Moropant says, “A man stiff like a wooden pestle, who does not have enough modesty to bow down, will not be able to cross the ocean of existence with his fame as the only means. For this very reason we should feel very happy to honour this Muslim devotee of God, who exemplifies modesty.” Even if such references are found in plenty in the ancient Marathi literature, it is not possible to write a complete life-story of Sheikh Mahammad, with considerable clarity.

It is fortunate, however, that most of Sheikh Mahammad's poems have been published. The historian Śrī V. C. Bendre has compiled and published two edited volumes of Sheikh Mahammad's compositions with elaborate introductions—the first volume in the year 1959 and the other in 1961.²³⁰ Even though Śrī Bendre has not elaborated on all aspects of Sheikh Mahammad's extraordinary character as reflected in his literature, these volumes have made it easier to get some glimpses of his inner world. No other saint from the Marathi Muslim saint poets has been paid any attention by scholars except Sheikh Mahammad.

Family and parents

A traditional biographer²³¹ gives Sheikh Mahammad's parents name as follows:

230. Author's Note: Sheikh Mahammadabābā Śrīgondekarakṛta Yogasaṅgrāma and Sheikh Mahammadabābā Śrīgondekar yāñcā Kavitāsaṅgraha; Editor: V.C. Bendre, June 1959 and June 1961.

231. Author's Note: The author of this biography is unknown. It is included in the Kavitāsaṅgraha, edited by Śrī. Bendre. Pp.119-123.

Father Rāje Mahammad | Mother Puvhaleśā
They begot a son | A godly incarnation ||3||

This is confirmed in Yogasaṅgrāma written by Sheikh Mahammad. He writes:

Father Rāje Mahammad of Gore clan | Mother Phulāi, a pativrata |
She gave birth to a resolute devotee | Sheikh Mahammad || (3.50)

From both the references, we know that the name of Sheikh Mahammad's father was Rāje Mahammad and mother's name was Phulāi. Rāje Mahammad initially resided in Dhārūr (District Beed). He was in-charge of the security of Dhārūr Fort, where his tomb is said to be. Sheikh Mahammad was born in Dhārūr.²³² Later on, Rāje Mahammad must have moved to the precincts of Daulatabad. Chānd Bodhale, one of his disciples exercised a considerable influence on the ruling Nizām family. Rāje Mahammad facilitated his son Sheikh Mahammad to receive guidance from Chānd Bodhale, his influential disciple and saw to it that the door of true paramārtha²³³ opens to his son when he was still a child. From the information Śrī Dāsagaṇū had from the local sources, Chānd Bodhale had given a copy of Jñāneśvarī to Sheikh Mahammad on the banks of the river Godavari. This local tradition gets validated by Sheikh Mahammad's lingual style, which is inspired by Jñāneśvarī. So, we can fairly infer that when he was with Chānd Bodhale, he must have critically read the literature of earlier saints.

Guru and sect

In the chapter, Qādarī Paramparā, Sheikh Mahammad's spiritual lineage is given as follows: Abdul Qādar Gilānī (also spelt as Jiānī) – Sayyad Abdul Razzāq Tajoddīn Qādarī – Sayyad Mahammad Ghaus Gwāliyārī Qādarī – Sayyad Chāndsahab Qādarī – Sayyad Mahammadsāheb Qādarī (Sheikh Mahammad).²³⁴ The chapter recounts the Qādarī guru-disciple lineage from its

232. Author's Note: In one of the miscellaneous poems of Sheikh Mahammad occurs the mention of his native land as, janmabhūmikā Dhārūr.

233. Paramārtha – Spiritual pursuit.

234. Author's Note: The chapter 'Sajrā-Jadi-Qādarī' is included in Kavitāsaṅgraha (pp. 123-124).

origins. However, here I have noted it starting only from Abdul Qādar Gilānī. This is an offshoot of the sufi sect in Iran and it got its name from Qādar Gilānī.

Abdul Qādar Gilānī's disciple Sayyad Mahammad Ghaus was the first Qādarī sufi proselytiser who came to India. He mainly preached in and around Gwalior. He died at Gwalior in 1517 C.E. His tomb is there. He got the sobriquet Gwāliyārī because he resided there.²³⁵ Rāje Mahammad, i.e., Sheikh Mahammad's father was a disciple of Sayyad Mahammad Ghaus. Chānd Qādarī, i.e., the famous Hindu saint Chānd Bodhale was a disciple of Rāje Mahammad and Sheikh Mahammad's guru. Thus, Rāje Mahammad, Sheikh Mahammad's father was his paramaguru (guru's guru). Sheikh Mahammad has clearly mentioned his guru's name in Yogasaṅgrāma:

Aum! I bow to Śrī Sadguru Chānd Bodhale |
 He accepted Jānopant as his disciple |
 Jānobā²³⁶ initiated Ekā²³⁷ |
 By remaining in the state of complete surrender to his own guru |
 (Yogasaṅgrāma 15.1)

He has mentioned the same association very clearly in an abhaṅg, in following words:

Glory to Chānd Bodhale | He made Jānopant his disciple |
 The one to become happy with Jānopant's influence was |
 Eko Janārdan²³⁸ ||
 Eknāth wrote Bhāgavataṭīkā |
 A treatise for the spiritual upliftment of the world |
 That was his unique vision | Being with swami ||

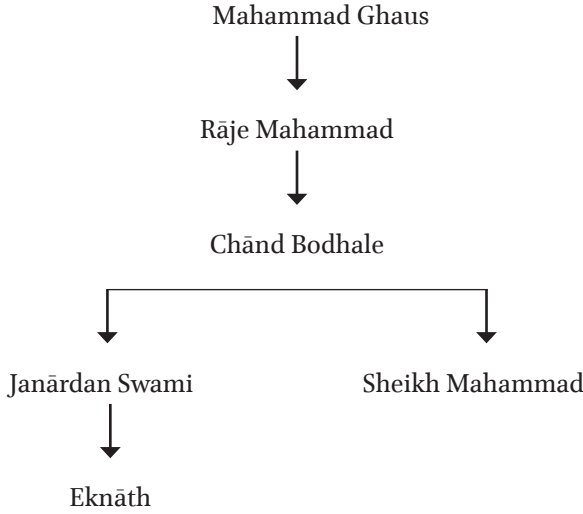
Both the citations support the fact that Sheikh Mahammad and Janārdan Swami were disciples of the same guru, thus belonging to same spiritual fraternity. Chānd Bodhale was their guru. Their lineage tree will look like this:

235. Author's Note: Sufi Sampradāy: Setumadhavarao Pagdi, p.20.

236. Janārdan Swami.

237. Sant Eknāth.

238. Ekā/Eko Janārdan – Sant Eknāth's nāmamudrā.



The popular tradition is that the god, Śrī Dattātreyā himself was the guru of Janārdan Swami. However, with the evidence from many historical sources, it becomes clear that Chānd Bodhale, perceived as the incarnation of Śrī Dattātreyā was the guru of Janārdan Swami, and not the god Śrī Dattātreyā of the Purāṇic tradition. Chānd Bodhale belonged to a sufi order, so he dressed like a sufi sādhu. The traditional biography of Sant Eknāth mentions that Śrī Dattātreyā appeared to him in the malaṅg²³⁹ attire. This description is undoubtedly that of Chānd Bodhale, who was looked upon as an incarnation of Dattātreyā. A biographer of Eknāth has clearly stated in the book, *Pratiṣṭhānacaritra*:

When Eknāth was instructed by his guru |
 Chānd Bodh[le] arrived there |
 Chandraśekhara [Chānd Bodhale], a great sādhu |
 Was deemed as the incarnation of Dattātreyā ||
(Pratiṣṭhānacaritra 2.67)

A number of saints in the Nāth tradition have accepted this tradition as reality.²⁴⁰ Sheikh Mahammad himself, while paying respect to Chānd Bodhale addresses him, saying, “You are the highest one, Oh Digambara!”,²⁴¹ “Glory to

239. Malaṅg – An unorthodox sufi ascetics.

240. Author's Note: Vividhā: Ramacandra Cintaman Dhere, p. 136-142, 238-239.

241. Digambara – One of God Dattātreyā's epithets.

you, sadguru Digambara!”

Chānd Bodhale, who was instrumental in Sheikh Mahammad’s attainment of ‘absolute’ knowledge, exercised a considerable influence on the Nizām. At the beginning of the fifteenth chapter of Yogasaṅgrāma, Sheikh Mahammad has briefly narrated a story referring to his influence on Nizām:

Pātshāh banned [bagani?] ²⁴² | Chānd Bodhale the powerful master |
 He affected Pātshāh’s bowel movements |
 It was witnessed by one and all |
 The king put himself at his feet |
 Then he blessed the king again with healthy bowels |
 There was joy all over |
 People could have Chānd Bodhale’s darśan and worship him |

Apparently, it seems that the Nizām had imposed some prohibitions on Chānd Bodhale, as a result of which, Chānd Bodhale, by using his miraculous powers, affected Nizām’s bowel movements and made him surrender. Sheikh Mahammad describes the greatness of his guru by calling him *ajamateche dhanī*.²⁴³ Later, the mystic influence of Chānd Bodhale and his disciples seems to have earned them a distinct position under the Nizāmshāhī Sultanate. Chānd Bodhale’s *samādhi* is built by Janārdan Swami at the foot of Devgiri. Chānd Bodhale had embraced the sufi way of life and sufi attire, so, despite his being a Hindu, his *samādhi* temple was built like a *dargāh*.

Sheikh Mahammad has sung praises of sadguru, who can destroy mines of sins, in no time (Yogasaṅgrāma 10.100). He sung the songs of his guru’s greatness, “The lamp burns itself for giving light to others | So does sadguru, showing light with his guiding words.” He says that the generous heart of his sadguru extends warmth, love and affection to the entire universe, comparable to the mother’s house²⁴⁴ (Yogasaṅgrāma 6.38). He feels so because, “He had all the signs of a low-born | But the sadguru honoured and accepted him irrespective of it.” This expression of extreme gratitude by Sheikh Mahammad, a Muslim, seems to be in accord with the fact that Chānd Bodhale accepted him with open heart. Chānd Bodhale grew up as a Hindu and was initiated in a sufi lineage; his spiritual orientation was liberal and inclusive.

242. Bagani – Most likely it is a corrupt form of *baghaṇi* meaning seeing/darśan.

243. *Ajamateche Dhanī* – Someone worthy of great honour.

244. *Māher* – Mother’s house.

He instructed Sheikh Mahammad in the eternal principle of Islam and also explained the Hindu philosophy which is not contradictory to Islam in essence; rather it is essentially inclusive. Sheikh Mahammad himself has described this inheritance of inclusivity, which he was endowed with:

I was born a Muslim | I started talking of Qurān and Purāṇa |
I became worshipful of wallīs²⁴⁵ and sādhu-siddha |
For the benefit of others and of my own |

(Yogasaṅgrāma 16.66)

*Patronage of Mālojī Rāje*²⁴⁶

Sheikh Mahammad gained the highest knowledge by remaining and meditating in the proximity of Chānd Bodhale and walking on the path of spirituality under his guidance. After Chānd Bodhale left his body by entering a samādhi state, Sheikh Mahammad's fame as a sādhu began to spread in the area around Daulatabad and devotees like Mālojī Rāje were pulled to him like a bumble bee to a flower. Mālojī Rāje was serving in Nizām's²⁴⁷ court. His native place was Verūl hardly four kos,²⁴⁸ i.e., about 12.5 kilometres away from Daulatabad. He had faith in the devotional path of life. He also had great faith in pīrs and faqīrs.²⁴⁹ So, it was no surprise that he got pulled to Sheikh Mahammad. He and his Diwān Bālājī Konhera became Sheikh Mahammad's disciples and with great faith built a maṭha for him in Chāmbhāragonde or Śrīgonde (district Ahmednagar). Śrī. Bendre has published a cakanāmā²⁵⁰ issued in this context, the important part of which is as follows:

245. Wallis – A Muslim saint.

246. Mālojī Rāje Bhosle (1552-1605 C.E.), father of Śahājī Rāje Bhosle and the grandfather of Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj, the founder of the Maratha kingdom.

247. Murtazā Nizām Shāh I of Ahmednagar Sultanate.

248. One kos is a unit of measuring distance, usually said to be equal to 2 miles, that makes it equal to 3.12 km.

249. Author's Note: Mālojī Rāje had two sons, Shāhājī and Sharifī, by the blessings of Shāh Sharif, a pīr (Bharat Itihas Samsodhak Mandal, Annual Report, śaka year 1838, pp. 180-193).

250. Cakanāmā – The account of the village lands, assignments, common pasture grounds, grants, etc. Also, a document descriptive of the boundaries of an estate or a field.

“Land measuring five cāhūr²⁵¹ from the written records of the village Cāmbhāragonde ... was duly bought and the settlement of Peṭh Makarandapūr was established there, a plot measuring twelve bighās and Gaaj Ilāhi²⁵² from the plantation land that belonged to Bādal Thal Chelekar. On that plot, a chak²⁵³ has been built. We pray that this humble gift from us may be accepted... You are our guru and we are your disciples. So out of the land that was bought, five cāhūr, we declare as a gift in your name. If anybody puts a claim on this land, we shall remove him from there.”

This happened around the year 1595 CE., when Sheikh Mahammad might have been about 40 years of age. Mālojī Rāje was known to be generous at heart. A Persian epithet of Mālojī Rāje meaning ‘generous’ is translated as Makaranda in Sanskrit. So, a peṭh²⁵⁴ established by Makaranda was named after him as Makarandapūr Peṭh. Sheikh Mahammad started living in Makarandapūr Peṭh, in the cell built by Mālojī Rāje, his disciple. After that, his work of spreading spiritual knowledge and creating spiritual literature continued without any hindrance till the end.

Muslim by caste – The wise one

Sheikh Mahammad’s truthful disposition was comparable to Kabīr. He did not cater to blind popular sentiments. His concept of Rām was expansive, which was similar to that of Kabīr, who is unhesitant in his statement that the Rām he is talking of is not the Dāśarathī Rām. Like Kabīr, Sheikh Mahammad also expressed his intense love for parabrahma quite often, but his focus remained singularly on the ‘One’ without attributes, the unmanifest:

The indestructible, the Supreme, without attributes | My soul’s life ||
 Gods and goddesses are falsities | Shame, may they be nothing ||
 Ghosts ask for offerings of castaways |
 By worshipping them one gets hell as reward ||
 They demand and cause violence |
 How can their devotee be uplifted ||

251. Cāhūr – A measurement of land – 1 cāhūr is 120 bighās, i.e. little less than 40 acres.

252. Gaaj Ilāhi – Bādshāh Akbar standardized the land measurements and revenue system. Ilāhi Gaja was the basic unit under that system. It was equivalent to 41 fingers, about 74-81 centimetres.

253. Chak – Cavern.

254. Peṭh – Market place.

At the places of water, stone, images |
 Senseless people come together ||
 Sheikh Mahammad will gain knowledge, the true vision |
 He will meet his true self ||

He seems to be criticising the deities ruthlessly because his vision is the result of true knowledge. This is the reason why Sheikh Mahammad's utmost devotion for Viṭhobā and his Paṇḍharī²⁵⁵ did not dwindle when the temple at Pandharpur was desecrated [by Afzal Khan] because Śrīhari, the indestructible dwells forever in the imperishable Paṇḍharī, i.e., his heart:

Imperishable Paṇḍharī | Indestructible Śrīhari |
 I will hold him in my heart | He has occupied it completely, yet not
 fully contained within it ||
 Images were hidden | Muslims broke images |
 All say it is in ruins | The Paṇḍharī ||
 That which is infallible does not fall |
 Even Brahmā and others do not understand it |
 Blind are those who say | Gods were assaulted, hammered down ||
 The omnipotent cannot be obscured |
 Which is neither unmanifest nor manifest |
 Recognise it which is close to you | Let the knowledge be your eyes ||
 Neither the living nor the dead can take it away |
 Neither who arrived, nor who left |
 It is safeguarded | In Sheikh Mahammad's heart ||

Thus, Sheikh Mahammad's knowledge-eyes are forever open and so he uses his words in the manner, as if to flog the staunch Muslims for their act of breaking icons and the weak Hindus getting distraught by its breaking, prodding both to seek the Eternal. His words assume the sharpness of a double-edged sword while criticising superstitions and irrational ideas. However, it seems that he had to pay highly for this clear vision of discretion. His staunch Muslim brethren called him *kāfir* because he followed a Hindu guru, scriptures, life ideals of Hindu saints and also their wisdom. Hindus misunderstood him thinking that because he was a Muslim, he censured their deities. He has repeatedly described the awkwardness created by this situation:

²⁵⁵. Pandharpur is fondly called Paṇḍharī by the devotees.

Some say, “He is a Muslim | So he censures our deities |
 We do not believe in him |
 The Muslims smashed the images of our deities ||
 The Muslims brought down our temples in front of our eyes |
 He is also of their community |
 They smashed the images of our god into dust |
 What should we worship now ||
 The yavanas hammer our deities |
 This has been continued for generations |
 We will not honour his opinion | He is their kin |”
 (Yogasaṅgrāma 16.62–64)

Sheikh Mahammad used to feel sad about people trying to know the caste and creed of the saints (Yogasaṅgrāma 16.74). He keeps reiterating that the spiritual knowledge does not have any caste—Knowledge is not identified with any specific person (Yogasaṅgrāma 16.65). He reminds us of the dictum, “The one upon whom God bestowed love | Do not try to search for his family roots |” (Yogasaṅgrāma 16.67). He also cites a number of examples from Purāṇic mythology to support it. When he gets weary of the various caste divisions and foolish customs of untouchability, he says, “It is for the better that I was born a Muslim | I do not have to remember the rules of pollution by touch.” However, it is similar to what Sant Tukārām Mahārāj says, “It’s good that I was born in a lower caste | So that I did not develop any pride.” In his statement there is no suggestion of being superior because he is a Muslim. On the contrary, he himself was fascinated by the fact that despite being a Muslim, i.e., being born in an environment of fierce religious loyalty, he has been walking steadily on the path of pure spirituality, and could attain aparokṣa-jñāna.²⁵⁶ His experience is reflected in his composition. He says:

On an acasia tree | Mangoes have begun to ripe |
 Knowledge of true Self | Granted to Sheikh Mahammad ||
 His caste musalmān | His words Marathi |
 Are listened fondly | By brahmins and śūdras ||

256. Aparokṣa means direct, parokṣa means indirect. The state of experiencing ‘I am Brahman’ is aparokṣajñāna. The information about Brahman gathered through hearing or reading is parokṣajñāna (In current Marathi usage the meaning of aparokṣa and parokṣa are reverted).

The climbers of Indrāwaḷī²⁵⁷ | Are bearing ripe melons |
 Those I ate with faith | While roaming in the realm of truth ||
 A Muslim by birth | Wisdom arose in his mind |
 That wisdom is now owned by all | All the aṭharā pagaḍ²⁵⁸ ||

The restlessness felt by Sheikh Mahammad is reflected in his words. His genuineness earned him a position of reverence among all the Hindus in Maharashtra. They kept his memory alive by honouring him as one of the illustrious Marathi saints. Many saints of the contemporary and later periods have referred to him with utmost respect.

Sheikh Mahammad met Jayarām Swami

Sheikh Mahammad and Jayarām Swami Vaḍagāvakar, of the Samarth Pañcāyatan,²⁵⁹ shared a special bond between them. A traditional biographer has described the instance of their first meeting by a way of a miracle. Although Muslim by birth, he was firm in the belief that everything is Brahmasvarūpa.²⁶⁰ Jayarām Swami heard about this and went to Śrīgonde with five hundred disciples to meet him. He did not find Sheikh Mahammad in his cell in Makarandapur. Somebody told Jayarām Swami that he will find Sheikh Mahammad meditating by the riverside. Jayarām Swami went to the river. There, Sheikh Mahammad was standing, his head covered with a ghoṅgaḍī,²⁶¹ and wearing shoes nailed with horseshoes. Jayarām Swami, not knowing Sheikh Mahammad personally, reached out to him and directly asked him about his own whereabouts. Sheikh Mahammad was amused, and in a lighter vein replied, “He is enjoying the shade under that tree.” Jayarām Swami went there and to his surprise, he saw a tiger resting under the tree. When he returned from there, Sheikh Mahammad playfully teased him:

257. Indrāwaḷī (Citrullus colocynthis Linn) – Colocynth or bitter apple is a medicinal herb, a climber that spreads on the ground and bears small fruits that look like miniature melons but are very bitter in taste.

258. Aṭharā Pagaḍ castes are various (eighteen) castes separated by their manner of tying a turban, which became an identifying mark of the person's caste.

259. Samarth-Pañcāyatana includes Samarth Rāmdās Swami and four other saints, viz., Jayarām Swami Vaḍagāvakar, Raṅganāth Swami Nigaḍīkar, Ānandamūrtī and Keśav Swami.

260. Brahmasvarūpa – Of the form or nature of Brahman itself.

261. Ghoṅgaḍī – A handwoven blanket of coarse wool.

Smiling the sādhu said | To Jayarām Swami |
So you do not realise | The Oneness of me and the tiger ||

Later, Jayarām Swami went back to the tree, hugged the tiger and realized that Sheikh Mahammad and the tiger were not separate. This story of a miracle might be symbolic. Sheikh Mahammad himself has noted that at the moment of meeting Jayarām Swami, he was tempted to show some miracle. However, his guru saved him from such temptation. Jayarām Swami himself was a great sādhu, and had already attained the state of oneness with Brahman. He was instrumental in inspiring Bahiṇābāī, a married woman of brahmin caste to become a disciple of Sant Tukārām, who was of a śūdra caste. When her husband vehemently opposed her decision, Jayarām Swami was the one who gave her strength to remain firm in her decision. He provided a philosophical support by introducing her to Vajrasūcikopaniṣad.²⁶² It must be that Jayarām Swami, having known Oneness, did not hesitate to accept an unorthodox thinker like Sheikh Mahammad with unconditional affection. We do not see here any possibility of either of them having any intention to test one another's spiritual authority and exhibit spiritual powers.

Thrice bitten by cobra

Sheikh Mahammad, because of his spiritual authority could create an affectionate bond with many saints of his times; but on the other hand, he also seems to have suffered torture at the hands of some mean and evil people. He complained to God about it: "The wicked ones torture me | They taunt me in various ways calling me names." Along with the aspersions caused by these people, he also had to suffer thrice from a cobra bite. He has recorded that experience in Yogasaṅgrāma:

It was the auspicious day of Sunday |
I went to the river with a desire to worship you |
Why would somebody release a pāna²⁶³ on me |
Swami! I ask you with faith ||

262. Vajrasūcikopaniṣad – A text of the Upaniṣadic genre that discusses the varṇa or caste divisions. It is a treatise that attacks the notion of superiority based on birth.

263. Maja lāville pāna – Somebody released a snake on me. Pāna lāvaṇe or Pāna lāgaṇe is an euphemism for being bitten by a snake or cobra, often used in rural Maharashtra.

Thrice I suffered snakebites | Thrice I was poisoned, Oh Master |
 Where did I fall short in your service | I must know ||
 Those evil people torture me in many ways |
 They humiliate me in many ways ||
 They also attack me physically |
 Stealthily, but they make no mistakes ||

Sheikh Mahammad digested the venom of real snakes, the hostilities of detractors, the hatred caused by ignorant people's social attitudes and by casting away all discrimination, he kept showering the ambrosia of spiritual wisdom upon everybody. That itself made him the conqueror of death. His name became immortal in people's memory.

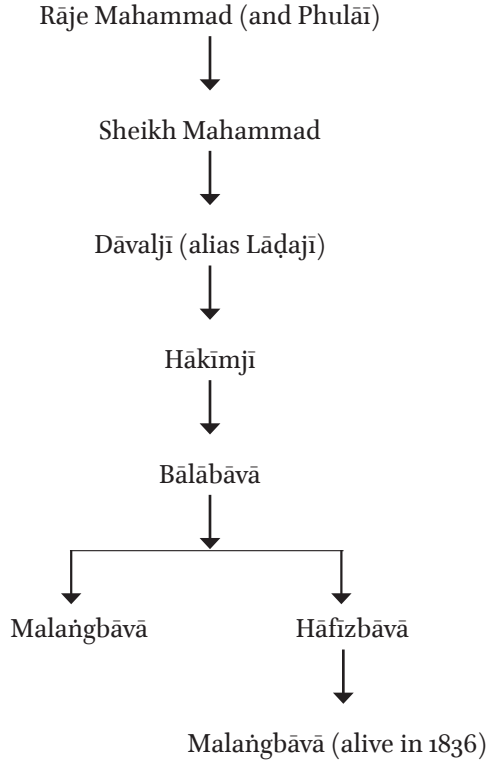
Samādhi and his life

Sheikh Mahammad was a yogi and so had a long life. He spent more than fifty years in Śrīgonde and was immersed completely in spiritual bliss. During this period, he enkindled the light of spiritual life in the hearts of many seekers, as if enkindling one lamp by another. Apart from a major treatise entitled Yogasaṅgrāma, he wrote many minor treatises and miscellaneous poetry. He arrived in Śrīgonde and settled there at about 1595 C.E. He wrote Yogasaṅgrāma in the year 1645 C.E. In the year 1660 C.E, on the ninth day of the bright half of Phālguna (the 12th month of the Hindu almanac), he left his mortal body after living a fulfilled life. He died in his cell, where his tomb still stands testifying his greatness. Hindus, aware of the purity of his devotion, whole-heartedly participate in great numbers, in the celebrations of his death anniversary, which must be a happy scenario for the soul of the great saint.

Lineage

Sheikh Mahammad was a married man. His wife's tomb is just next to his dargāh. The family members of the successors of Sheikh Mahammad are the caretakers of Śrīgonde maṭha for generations. The order of the successors of Sheikh Mahammad as it occurs in the Qādarī tradition (Sijra-i-Qādarī) is as follows: Dāvaljī, Hākīm and Bālāsāheb, in that order. In one of the charters

issued by Janakoji Śinde II (20 December 1836²⁶⁴) the name Bālābāvā is mentioned as the great-grandson of Sheikh Mahammad. So, it can be inferred that Dāvalji was his son and Hākīm was his grandson. Based on the charter and the Qādārī tradition, the family lineage of Sheikh Mahammad can be drawn as follows:



The name of the current head of the maṭha is also Malaṅgbāvā.²⁶⁵ Successors of Sheikh Mahammad have continued to manage the granted lands and annual grants, and have continued to celebrate the festival of Sheikh Mahammad's death anniversary.

Dāvalji and Hākīm among the successors of Sheikh Mahammad have composed āratīs in his praise. Both āratīs reveal their deeply felt emotions.

264. Janakoji Śinde I, the third Mahārāja of Gwalior State, who fought in the third battle of Panipat (14 January 1761) was killed in it. Janakoji Śinde mentioned by the author in this book is Janakoji Śinde II (1827-1843).

265. At present there is no appointed head at the maṭha. Members of each of the successor families of Sheikh Mahammad take yearly turn as caretaker (information provided by Mr. Kisan Atole, a follower of Sheikh Sultān's sect).

Have a look at the vast canvas on which Dāvaljī paints the backdrop of the āratī being sung :

The sky, space without columns adorned with stars |
 Moon and the sun, the torches, their light descends ||
 The wind is the incense and lamp, the bells ring on the mountain-tops |
 Kettle drums roar, worshipping God Śaṅkara ||
 Nine celestial bodies²⁶⁶ are dancing in circle |
 Four Vedas are singing there ||
 Ten incarnations [of God Viṣṇu] come for your audience |
 Śeṣa got tired singing your āratī |

Sheikh Mahammad's son seems to have received his father's spiritual legacy in full measure. He portrays his father, the great saint, aptly as parabrahma itself:

I prepared the plate of five elements for āratī |
 Lighted a lamp of knowledge and took it in hands |
 With that we sang and swayed the āratī around Śrīpatī, with complete devotion |
 Sheikh Mahammad my guru is True²⁶⁷ ||

Thus, Dāvaljī who sang this unforgettable āratī called himself bahu mūḍhamatī meaning absolutely ignorant. However, after seeing and hearing the composition of this āratī, Sheikh Mahammad, the great saint who became one with Brahman, must have felt very happy and he must have truly blessed his great son. The āratī composed by Hākīm is also written in spiritual terms:

Being ūrdhvaḍṛṣṭī,²⁶⁸ the outer world submerged, the mind turned within |
 There are showers of the nectar of knowledge, all activities of the mind ceased ||

266. Navagrahas – The nine celestial bodies: the Sun, moon and the seven planets and the points called Rāhu and Ketu.

267. The word sati usually means a virtuous wife or woman. In this context, perhaps it is used to mean 'true.'

268. Ūrdhvaḍṛṣṭī – Eyes rolled up in the state of trance, as if witnessing with the 'third eye.'

Hākīm, who has bathed in the dancing showers of the nectar of knowledge, is happily enjoying in the confluence of three streams (triveṇī saṅgam²⁶⁹)—worshipper, worshipped and the act of worship:

Bathing in the confluence of the Triveṇī, witnessing it all the time |
 Witnessing the Triveṇī, he himself became the Triveṇī ||
 The mind that has attained turyā and so in great joy |
 Hakīm Mahammad says a devotee is happy while singing such āratī ||

The fact that Sheikh Mahammad was blessed with sons and grandsons, who nurtured their spiritual inheritance, is indeed a matter to rejoice.

Disciples and fellow seekers

Sheikh Mahammad, after attaining enlightenment, the highest peak of spiritual experience, kept leading his followers—Hindus and Muslims—steadily and gradually towards mokṣa. We have already seen that his son Dāvaljī was his disciple also. Besides these, the names and compositions of some other disciples like Mudhā Pāṅguḷ, Dayāldās Devāṅg, Raghunāth Yogī, Āzam are also known to us. Mudhā Pāṅguḷ was from Rui-Vāhire village. He belonged to the Pāṅgu!²⁷⁰ community who go around the village in the quiet period before sunrise, giving a call to the villagers by calling out, “dharma jāgo!”, meaning ‘wake up to your duties’. Thus, Mudhā Pāṅguḷ, who lived by begging alms by going around the village and giving a wake-up call to the villagers met Sheikh Mahammad. After meeting him, Mudhā’s heart desired to experience the absolute truth and he started calling out, “May you wake-up to the spiritual call of Mahammad”.

In the śaka year 1599 (1677 C.E.), on the first day of the bright half of Kārtika (the eighth month of the Indian almanac), Mudhā Pāṅguḷ was blessed with Sheikh Mahammad’s divine audience for the first time. Later, on the seventh day of the dark half of the month of Vaiśākha, in the śaka year 1600, named as Kālayukta Saṃvatsara (1678 C.E.), he had a vision in which

269. The confluence of triveṇī – The union of three components of knowledge, e.g., that to be worshipped, the worshipper, and the worship; the knowable, the knower, and the known or knowledge; the viewable, the viewer, and the viewed or vision; the seeable, the seer, and the seen.

270. Author’s Note: Marāṭhi Lokasaṃskṛtice Upāsaka: Ramacandra Cintaman Dhere. Pp.116-120.

he met his guru Sheikh Mahammad and by his grace got enlightened. With a benefactor like Sheikh Mahammad, his sadguru, he became so adept that this Pāṅguḷ²⁷¹ could easily cross the highest mountain and reach the highest peak of spiritual experience. Expressing his gratitude, Mudhā Pāṅguḷ says:

I had not earned any merit of devotion |
 I did not serve you in any way ||
 Chanting, asceticism, ritual | Offering, sacrifice, I know not ||
 Due to what merit is this kindness shown | By sadguru ||
 One who is called Sheikh Mahammad, the sadguru |
 Mudhā Pāṅguḷ surrenders at his feet ||

In one verse, Mudhā Pāṅguḷ describes his shortcomings and prays to sadguru to rescue him. In another verse, imagining sadguru as Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, he sings the praise of sadguru, the knower of all:

Oh, sadguru Vāsudeva! How should I describe you |
 You are beyond all—heaven, hell and netherworld ||
 You can easily swallow and then gargle out the waters of all seven oceans, in no time |
 Above the twenty-one heavens²⁷² you are, oh guru-mahārāj ||
 Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahmā and others, were established firmly in their abodes by you |
 Rāma and Kṛṣṇa surrendered to you, oh guru ||
 Eighty-eight thousand ṛṣis²⁷³ bowed to the guru |
 The king,²⁷⁴ full of valour, became victorious by your grace ||

Like Mudhā Pāṅguḷ, Dayāldās also seems to have been favoured by Sheikh Mahammad's special grace. The whereabouts of Dayāldās cannot be told specifically. However, his surname Devāṅg suggests that he was from the kannaḍa koṣṭi caste, a weaver community. A miscellaneous composition, where

271. Pāṅguḷ – Also means a physically challenged person.

272. The concept of twenty-one heavens occurs frequently in the writings of Marāṭhi saint-poets. Its essence is: Brahmā created cities, viz. Brahmapurī, Viṣṇupurī, and Śivapurī. Each of them contained seven heavens. Thus, it comes to twenty-one heavens. Above the twenty-one heavens is Absolute Energy (Mūlastambha 6.9.11).

273. Specific explanation of eighty-eight thousand ṛṣis could not be found.

274. Rājendra – Refers to Māloji Rāje (?).

he has used his guru's name Sheikh Mahammad, like a six-letter mantra:

Sheikh Mahammad, a six-lettered mantra is the supreme I
Having uttered it with complete devotion, all sufferings disappear II

Thus, he has vouched for the efficacy of this mantra, since he has experienced it by surrendering to his guru, Sheikh Mahammad:

The distance [between the guru and disciple] disappeared I
The toil and ignorance are gone, and the sufferings of existence vanished II

Dayāldās, who happily announces thus, has now frightened even the kaḷikāḷa.²⁷⁵ He says:

The kāḷa was stuck with fear and ran away when he saw the Brahman and Dayāldās merging into one another I
There was no more distance left between Sheikh Mahammad and Dayāldās Devāṅg II

This disciple of Sheikh Mahammad, who even makes the kāḷa run away out of fear, is emphasizing the great spiritual authority of his guru.

Like Mudhā Pāṅguḷ and Dayāldās Devāṅg, Raghunāth Yogī also has addressed Sheikh Mahammad as parabrahmasāmya,²⁷⁶ in his composition. Āzam, another Muslim disciple of Sheikh Mahammad says that his guru's name is ṣaḍakṣarī sāveva parabrahma.²⁷⁷ Āzam says that by being near this ṣaḍakṣarī sāveva parabrahma, he had to shed his illusive physical existence and now his existence is like the 'garment on fire' (dagdhāmbara), i.e., absolutely formless.

By shedding the illusive material form and aiming at realising the joy of absolute Self I
He is formless; nothing; like the sky on fire; Āzam has become one with Parabrahma II

275. Kaḷikāḷa Kāla – Adverse times or 'Death.'

276. Parabrahmasāmya – One who is not different from or one who is similar to Parabrahma.

277. Ṣaḍakṣarī sāveva parabrahma – The absolute truth manifested in human form with a six lettered name, the name that itself is a mantra.

Apart from these four-five disciples, there were others too, whose names are forgotten, but the eulogies of their guru composed by them are still fresh in people's memory. Some of them have described him as ocean of knowledge and the bestower of highest knowledge. Some have praised him as the seer of the seers²⁷⁸ and the giver of liberation to his own people.²⁷⁹ These epithets are indicative of their extreme reverence for their guru.

Similar to the successors and the disciples of Sheikh Mahammad, there are many saints and fellow seekers who have praised him. All of them, the Muslim saints like Akbarshāh, Bālāshāh, Burhānshāh, Moajjamshāh, Shāh Husein Faqīr, as well as the Hindu saints like Jayarām Swami Vaḍagāvakar, Samarth Rāmdās Swami have exalted him without any reservations. In the āratī composed by Samarth Rāmdās, he has described how he could visualise Sheikh Mahammad in his mind's eye and holding him in an embrace. The reverential expression of Samarth Rāmdās, which has placed Sheikh Mahammad on the highest seat of parabrahma, bears out his authority in the spiritual sphere. At the end of his āratī, Samarth Rāmdās says:

Alas! I cannot give my body in offering to you as it is a loan from the
five elements |
I wish to offer my life and soul to you, but anyhow it is a gift received
from you ||
I do not know what is devotion, that too, is nourished by the saints |
Rāmi Rāmdās is nothing but the dust brushed off from the feet of
the saints ||

Sheikh Mahammad, who was thus revered by his disciples and contemporary saints, was so humble that he described himself as a mere servant of the saints and with all humility prayed at their feet:

I am a weak one but I am loved by you |
I seek your blessings ||

(Yogasaṅgrāma, 1.51)

278. Ḍoḷyañcā ḍoḷā – Seer of the seers.

279. Nijajanām muktidāni – The giver of liberation to his own people.

Writings of Sheikh Mahammad

Sheikh Mahammad has authored many books in various languages such as Marathi, Hindi, Urdu and Persian, among which the work in Marathi is the main. His published work includes:

1. Yogasaṅgrāma, 17 chapters, 2319 verses
2. Pavanavijaya, 3 Volumes, 482 verses, incomplete
3. Niṣkalaṅkaprabodha, 300 verses, incomplete
4. Allegories (rūpakas), bhāruḍas, etc.
5. Miscellaneous abhaṅgs and
6. Hindustānī kavita

We will first get a brief introduction to various types of his literary compositions and then we will turn to the philosophical view and personality of Sheikh Mahammad as reflected in his written work.

Yogasaṅgrāma is the major work of Sheikh Mahammad. It was completed on the full moon day of the śaka year 1567, Pārthiva Saṃvatsara. The book has 17 prasaṅgas, i.e., chapters, which contain 2319 oṽis. Sheikh Mahammad has used an extensive spiritual metaphor in it, which seems to have been inspired by his deep study of Jñāneśvarī, the magnum opus composed by Sant Jñāneśvara. In the twelfth chapter of Jñāneśvarī (46-58) the metaphor of yogadurga with its various aspects²⁸⁰ is used, and in the ninth chapter the metaphor of Yogasaṅgrāma²⁸¹ is used (211-217). This philosophical world of Sant Jñāneśvara was further expanded by Sant Eknāth. Being influenced by Jñāneśvara, he has used it in his commentary on Bhāgavata (9.120-142). Sheikh Mahammad too has used the metaphor of yogadurga and the battle to win it (Yogasaṅgrāma), which, as mentioned, has its source in the tradition set by Sant Jñāneśvara.

Jñāneśvarī was very close to the heart of all the three: Sant Chānd Bodhale, Sheikh Mahammad's guru; his fellow disciple Janārdan Swami and Janārdan Swami's disciple Eknāth. According to the tradition Chānd Bodhale, Sheikh Mahammad's guru had given a copy of Jñāneśvarī to him. Sheikh Mahammad has mentioned that, "Sheikh Mahammad was blessed

280. Yogadurgāce sāṅga (sa plus aṅga meaning with all parts or aspects) – The concept of Yoga as a form imagined in the likeness of various parts of a fort.

281. The battle fought to win the Yogadurga.

by Jñānadeva.”²⁸² He tells us that his guru was pleased by his devotion, and so, [it was as good as] Jñānadeva was also pleased (Collection of Sheikh Mahammad’s Poems, No. 235). Based on these factors, it seems justified to presume that the metaphor of Yogasaṅgrāma, which is also the title of Sheikh Mahammad’s book is set in the tradition of Jñāneśvarī. This premise is also strongly supported when the book’s content is examined thoroughly.

In the Yogasaṅgrāma authored by Sheikh Mahammad, the soul is a warrior, who is riding a horse, which is his mind. He has waged war against the ego. The ego is marching on with its army of various impure things like worldly intensions and doubts, lust, anger, lethargy etc. This war ends when the soul overpowers this army and reaches the summit of the brahmānanda.

The metaphor occurs only in the fourth and the last two, i.e., the seventeenth and the eighteenth chapters. These chapters carry an explicit discussion about the factors, which are both, conducive and non-conducive, for the spiritual practice. We need to look at this discussion as the preparatory ground for the actual war (saṅgrāma). However, the book itself does not use metaphorical language. Also, it does not explain the topic in a systematic way. Things visualised here are actually experienced, and the outcome of deep meditation, with the help of his memory is presented by the author as it occurred to him. He does not strive anywhere to adopt an ornate style of writing.

Pavanavijaya is another book written by Sheikh Mahammad. It is a translation of a Sanskrit book entitled, Śivasvarodaya, which is in the form of a dialogue between Śiva and Kārtikeya. It is divided into three volumes: Tattvasāra, Pavanavijaya and Kāḷajñāna. The last volume is incomplete. I have in my collection, a manuscript of Pavanavijaya written by Jñānadeva (copied on the sixth day of the dark half of the month of Vaiśākha, the second month of the Indian almanac, in the śaka year 1782, i.e. 1860 C.E.). After comparing it with Sheikh Mahammad’s Pavanavijaya, it was apparent that major portion of both the books is similar in many ways. For example, the nāmamudrā in both the texts:

The essence of the four Vedas was extracted |
Gathered the substance of the Upaniṣads |
Sheikh Mahammad has described |
The victory after lot of thinking and contemplation ||
(Sheikh Mahammad, Pavanavijaya 1.84)

282. That is, Sheikh Mahammad received Jñāneśvarī.

The essence of the four Vedas was extracted |
 Gathered the substance of the Upaniṣads |
 Jñānadeva, with the grace of Nivṛttināth |
 Narrated Pavanavijaya after lot of thinking and contemplation ||
 (Jñānadeva, Pavanavijaya 12)

Some more manuscripts of these books are needed to throw more light on this perplexing similarity.

In Niṣkalaṅkaprabodha, Sheikh Mahammad scorns the external grandeur of rituals and unfolds the secret of spiritual path. He says, “Thirst is not quenched without drinking water | Similarly, without experience there is no knowledge.” Thus, the book begins by holding the experience in the highest esteem. Sheikh Mahammad has openly expressed his views on many prevalent practices such as the worship of inferior gods and demigods, the loathsome ways of worshipping them, the immoral practices in the maṭhas of the Mahānubhāva sect, the false notions of superiority based on birth, and so on. He has cited a book entitled Nibandha Upaniṣad, which clears out the false notion of brāhmaṇya²⁸³ by birth. He puts forth a noble thought saying, “Those who shear off [false] ideas are of the form of Brahman.” The similarity of thoughts in this book suggests that this thought is likely to be about Vajrasūcikopaniṣad. Also, there is supportive evidence for this conjecture. Sant Bahiṇābāi, who composed a commentary on Vajrasūcikopniṣad in abhaṅg form, was a contemporary of Sheikh Mahammad. Jayarām Swami had actively encouraged Bahiṇābāi on her spiritual path from the beginning. We know that Jayarām Swami and Sheikh Mahammad had a special bond between them as fellow spiritual seekers.

Social observer and social educator

Sheikh Mahammad, an unorthodox thinker and a reformer like Sant Kabīr, created awareness among people. He minutely observed things in people’s everyday life that were unpropitious, and ignited the fire of conscientiousness to burn them all. His observation of social life around him is amazing, and is capable of throwing people off the ground, who blindly live their routine lives. His observations might have created a sort of fear in the contem-

283. Duties and way of life of a Brahmin.

porary society, akin to the fear a person with a terminal illness would undergo knowing the prognosis. The society must have experienced the same fear by looking at the reflection of its decay mirrored in Sheikh Mahammad's words. His observations came from an impartial and clear approach, and he expressed it in a ruthlessly open manner.

Sheikh Mahammad specifically feels pity for those who worship the demigods and goddesses and people practicing certain rituals. He has elaborated on the mindless celebrations of worshipping one or the other god or goddess on almost every day and the rampant hypocrisy in the pilgrim centres. These things are like enemies of true spiritualism. Like a fearless warrior, he attacks them from all sides. While criticising the demigods he says:

If deities were powerful enough I
Then why would dogs urinate on their icons I
The ignorant ones misled by their popularity I
Take to their worship II

(Yogasaṅgrāma 14.73)

Sheikh Mahammad feels pity for the common people, especially for those, who follow certain ways of worshipping. He has elaborated on how ludicrous the love for religion is of those, who spend every day of the week of the fortnight in celebrating festivals of one deity or another. He was very critical of self-mortifying practices, practiced either to please a deity or to fulfil a vow. For example, walking with fetters (khoḍābedī) or swinging on a high pole (bagāḍa), pouring burning embers on one's body (iṅgaḷāñce snāna), animal sacrifice (paśubalī), etc. He has verbally spewed fire when it comes to the practice of muraḷī:²⁸⁴

Muraḷīs live a wanton life I
They perform at the houses of the vain people I
They ask the householders to smear bhaṇḍārā²⁸⁵ on their forehead I
With their hand II
Muraḷīs do not know of meritorious behaviour I
They can become anybody's wife I

284. Muraḷī – A woman consecrated to the deity Khaṇḍobā.

285. Bhaṇḍārā – Consecrated turmeric powder.

Can their blessings I Do good to anybody? ||
 If a Muraḷī is consecrated to one's family god I
 Why such unmanly²⁸⁶ behaviour with her? I
 In the Kaliyuga it is glorified I Such sinful behaviour ||
 Muraḷī are the servants of the family god I
 Cursed people do not get tired of seeking pleasure from them ||
 Malhārī does not punish them I
 Why has he become bereft of his essence? ||
 (Yogasaṅgrāma 14.54–58)

He has derided the muraḷīs again and again. He is also ruthless to the god [Khaṇḍobā] and brings him to court, who subjects the boys of tender age to go around like a growling dog. For him the god is an accused in the court of righteousness.²⁸⁷ Sheikh Mahammad is a worshipper of the Unmanifest, which he describes as 'without form, and so without silhouette.' However, he does not necessarily repudiate image worship in toto. His criticism is only directed towards ignorance and hypocrisy. Using knowledge as the powerful floodlight, he destroys ignorance and tears off the veil of hypocrisy. In his opinion, pilgrimage and idol worship are the rudimentary things meant for a beginner on the spiritual path. He knows that the seeker at the initial stage may need to engage himself in the worship of the manifest but gradually he would settle on meditating on the unmanifest. He does not get involved in any unnecessary debate about the manifest-unmanifest. He agrees that the unmanifest manifests to experience the pleasure of the devotee's love:

That, what is without form or silhouette I
 It is the unmanifest, dear to my heart I
 To experience the pleasure of devotee's love I
 The unmanifest manifests itself ||
 It manifested as Hari I In Gokul I
 The beautiful milkmaids I He enamoured them ||

286. Dhav – Eunuch. Dhavālī – Unmanly, like a eunuch, or unbecoming behavior.

287. Boys dedicated to Khaṇḍobā are known as vāghyā. To honor their appellation, they are supposed to growl like a dog while going on a round to beg for alms. Not only that, but they also walk on all fours and bark.

Twelve and sixteen milkmaids²⁸⁸ | The seventeenth²⁸⁹ the wise one |
 Rakhumāī, is their leader | The dot in the Aum²⁹⁰ |
 Gokul is all fourteen realms²⁹¹ | With fifty cowherds²⁹² |
 Hari has started this game of existence |
 In the animate and inanimate world ||
 That is the place of the transcendent eternity²⁹³ |
 The sky²⁹⁴ stands like a boundless tree |
 This tune that I sing | Is of my own experience ||
 There the desire gets dissolved | Imagination ceased |
 There what became of Sheikh Mahammad | It cannot be fathomed ||
 (Kavitāsaṅgraha, 136)

With regard to worship, Sheikh Mahammad's theory is: "Spiritual attainment is the outcome of one's basic volition"²⁹⁵ (Kavitāsaṅgraha, 218). He supports his theory by quotations from the Bhagavadgītā.

Just as he has in the case of the worship of demigods, he has also heavily criticised the notions of caste hierarchy based on birth. He cites many examples to support this. For instance, despite Prahalāda being the son of Hiranyakaśipu, a demon (asura), he was a great devotee of Śrī Viṣṇu. Sheikh

288. Bārā Soḷa Gouḷiṇī – The twelve positions of the sun and sixteen phases (kalā) of the moon (the sixteenth being the crescent on Śiva's head). It is said that when these twelve and sixteen phases come together, they create the primal sound (anāhata nāda, Praṇava – Aum).

289. Satarāvi – The seventeenth milkmaid. In Haṭhayoga, this is referred to as jīvanakalā or vyomacakra. It is the small opening in the soft palate, the point of concentration for yogis practicing Khecari Mudrā. This point is believed to be the source of the nectar of the moon (chandrāmṛta). In the Jñāneśvarī (12.7), this nectar is mentioned as satarāvi-yeche stanya (the milk of the seventeenth milkmaid).

290. Ardhamātrikā – The dot representing the anusvāra (nasal m) in the syllable Aum. It is known as vyomacakra and is referred to here as Rakhumāi.

291. Choudā bhuvan – Seven heavens and seven netherworlds.

292. Pannās govāḷa – Fifty cowherds. The reference is not very clear and might be understood as a group of cowherds. However, it could also be interpreted as the summation of groups of five various principles in Indian philosophy, such as pañca mahābhūtas (five great elements), pañca jñānendriyas (five sensory organs), pañca tanmātras (five subtle elements), pañca karmendriyas (five organs of action), pañca prāṇas (five vital breaths), and pañca kośas (five sheaths).

293. Unmanī – Transcendental. Ākhar – Akṣara – Eternity.

294. Nīlārambha – Sky.

295. Bhāva – Mental or emotional volition. Bhāva taisi siddhi – As the feeling, so the accomplishment (similar Marathi proverb: Bhāva tasā deva.)

Mahammad defines a brahmin not by his birth. To him, a devotee who has risen above the state of duality and has become one with the Brahman, is worthy of reverence, even if he is from a low caste. He says, “The one who has known Brahman, is worthy of being called as a true brahmin” (Yogasaṅgrāma 17.185). Elsewhere he says, “He might be of a low caste | But, if he has experienced the state of oneness with Brahman | He is a real brahmin | He deserves salutation before anybody else ||” (Kavitāsaṅgraha 173). Thus, he declares that a true brahmin is the one, who has attained the Truth. According to him, those who are born in a brahmin family, but are devoid of devotion, are not real brahmins. He declares this in very clear terms:

The high family lineage of a brahmin | Is worthless, burn it |
Who does not understand | Devotion to Hari ||

(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 175)

The way he shows the vainness of Hindu notion of caste hierarchy, he has also taken aim at certain practices prevalent among the Muslims. He defines every human being as a Muslim because each one is born from a mother's womb. So, he asks not to hate others as kāfirs (non-believer). He could observe consistently that Muslims blinded by their faith were causing violence and hence he felt disgraced being a Muslim. His feelings pertaining to this are reflected in his words, when he says “Ignorance is avindha and knowledge is brahmin.” At times he is explaining his identity as a Muslim (Turk), in an allegorical way:

I, a Turk of Brahmpuri |
Swallowed down duality and became one with Brahman ||
I also ate up the roḍgā²⁹⁶ of ego | Drank the glass of self-love ||
I abandoned all the religious observances and customs |
Let others call me whatever names ||

(Kavitāsaṅgraha 179)

Thus, his spiritual outlook was untouched by any bias, and hence, he emphasized on the commonalities of notions of virtues, rather than differences:

Musalmān call him saccā pīr |
People of Maharashtra call him sadguru |

296. Roḍgā – A kind of thick unleavened bread.

However, there is no difference between the two I
Open your eyes, brothers II

(Yogasaṅgrāma 17.3)

Sheikh Mahammad has noted his social observations, with a view to awaken society to true spiritualism in an incredibly subtle yet comprehensive manner. In his compositions are found references to various deities, ritualistic structure of their worship, various groups of their followers, various sects, the corrupt practices prevalent within those sects, social notions, shortcomings in the sectarian practices, etc. He provides us with lot of information to support his opinions. That itself forms a good source to reconstruct the social history of Maharashtra. One may certainly look at Sheikh Mahammad's poetry from this point of view.

Lingual Style: Uprightness of language

As far as the literary style of Sheikh Mahammad's compositions is concerned, we can position him as the precursor of Samarth Rāmdās. He does not seem to be in favour of flowery language. His method is to make a frank statement in clear words. His audience comprised a cross-section of the society, people coming from all strata. Hence, to reach out to all of them, he uses the words in their bare form, without much adornment. He does not hesitate to use coarse language while attacking the undesirable. He is adept at using simple examples that have been deeply rooted in the traditional wisdom through the ancient texts and folklore and are prevalent among people.

Sheikh Mahammad, like a truly people-oriented orator, does not stop at just a passing mention of those examples but turns them into interesting tales. For example, the idea of Kabīr that the eternal Rāma who has no beginning and no end cannot be the son of Daśaratha. To elaborate this thought, Sheikh Mahammad narrates the story of Śravaṇa. He asks, "If Śravaṇa had uttered the name of Rāma on being hit by Daśaratha's arrow, how could it be the name of Daśaratha's son, who was yet to be born" (Yogasaṅgrāma 18.230.245). The sources of the tales used by him as examples, are not the from the Purāṇa texts, but their popular versions rooted in the minds of the people and largely of mundane nature. For example:

In my mind I worshipped the unmanifest Hari |
 Who resides inside aṣṭadaḷa kamaḷakaḷikā²⁹⁷ |
 From there I focused on the urdhva²⁹⁸ |
 Like Arjuna pierced the eye of the fish |

(Yogasaṅgrāma 18.230)

It need not be mentioned, that the story of Arjuna piercing the eye of the fish does not occur in the Mahābhārata but is part of the folklore. Sheikh Mahammad uses the language of common people and it exhibits various aspects of the folklore. Instead of attempting to explain all of them here, I would insist that the readers should read his original treatise. I am presenting here some of the genuine Marathi proverbs used by Sheikh Mahammad:

1. A wooden baton born of a tree | is hafted to a hoe or an axe |
 It destroys the woods |
 Let me be dissolved in such union with Brahman²⁹⁹

(Yogasaṅgrāma, 12.20)

The haft of an axe becomes the cause of death of its own family.

(A proverb)

2. The stone-mason shaped a stone | Thus the stone suffered the sculptor's chisel and got transformed into an image |
 A sādhu should have such forbearance | When people mock at him ||

(Yogasaṅgrāma, 18.134)

A rock does not attain godhood without suffering the strokes of a chisel.

(A proverb)

297. Aṣṭadaḷa kamaḷakaḷikā – The heart is symbolized here by a lotus, which in turn represents Goddess Lakṣmi and also serves as the seat of God Brahmā, the Creator of the universe. Tantric yantras like the Śriyantra and Sarvatobhadrayantra feature a lotus with 12, 24, or more petals, and at their heart lies a lotus with 8 petals (Aṣṭadaḷa kamaḷakaḷikā) as the base. Similarly, yantras such as the Kālī-yantra, Dhūmāvati-yantra, and Chinnamastā-yantra have a base of a lotus with 8 petals.

298. Urdhva (up/above) – The Sky.

299. A union that turns him into a tool of dissolving his own existence.

3. Under one's clothes is nakedness hidden |
Inside the wood is fire hidden |
(Kavitāsaṅgraha 115)
4. Excited sheep | Followed the wolf |
He feasted on them | Tearing them up |
(Kavitāsaṅgraha 197)
5. The one whose hunger cannot be satiated | Should fill his stomach
with thorns |
(Kavitāsaṅgraha 234)
6. From distance the mountains | Look beautiful |
When closer in | One sees thorny bushes ||
(Kavitāsaṅgraha 80)
- Mountains are beautiful from distance.
(A proverb)

7. People stick the bark of a Banyan tree to a Pīpal tree.³⁰⁰
(Yogasaṅgrāma, 14.120)

Sheikh Mahammad frequently uses myths which are popular among people and also many well-known Sanskrit citations. The Sanskrit term, *tilataṇḍulakam*,³⁰¹ denotes a concept of inseparability or inextricable embrace. Sheikh Mahammad explains it in *Yogasaṅgrāma* (4.19), "Well, I became Sesame and Rice | Thus, made to see the meaning of a quarrel between Śiva and Śakti." In a way he suggests that Śiva and Śakti are inseparable like *tilataṇḍulakam*. His writing also shows the influence of Jñāneśvarī. The verse, "I do not dwell in *Vaikuṇṭha ...*" is translated by Sheikh Mahammad in seven oṽs (*Yogasaṅgrāma*, 18.74–80). The influence of this verse is seen elsewhere also in his writings:

Wherever God's name is sung with love |
Deities and devotees are present |
God stands in that place | Waiting for the devotees |
(*Yogasaṅgrāma*, 18.226)

300. People rationalize things in a fallacious manner.

301. *Tilataṇḍulakam* – Sesame and rice mixed with each other.

Just look at how Sheikh Mahammad sings the glory of Viṭṭhal, the Lord of Paṇḍharī:

With arms akimbo | Standing on the banks of Candrabhāgā |
 Reminding people | Of the ocean of existence ||
 He becomes a kaḍasūtra,³⁰² restraining the fallen ones | But he shows
 the pathway to the devotees |
 Closely showing milestones | He is standing on the banks ||
 Guiding closely | He stands on the banks |
 The depth of bhavasindhu³⁰³ | Is enough to immerse entire universe ||
 But for the saints and ṛṣis |
 It is not deep enough, even to soak the bottom of their feet ||
 (Kavitāsaṅgraha, 234)

It is obvious that this is an expansion of the idea implied in the Pāṇḍuraṅgāṣṭaka credited to Śaṅkarācārya. The words in Pāṇḍuraṅgāṣṭaka are, “He is standing with arms akimbo so it becomes a standard mark for his devotees to know³⁰⁴ that the depth of bhavasindhu is only as deep as his waist.” As Sheikh Mahammad uses well-known Sanskrit citations, he also has an instinctive way of using imaginary etymologies, for example:

Vi means vikāsalā³⁰⁵ | ṭha means ṭhāsāvalā³⁰⁶ [in the devotee’s mind] |
 So, call him Viṭṭhal | This is the answer to the question³⁰⁷ ||
 (Kavitāsaṅgraha 235)

As he defines the etymology of Viṭṭhal, he also defines the term Musalmān as follows, “All animals that are born after staying in the mother’s womb (mūsa)³⁰⁸ for nine months are called Musalmān; this is the common attribute for all of them. Thus, by putting all humans, on an equal platform, he attempts to wipe out the hatred of Musalmāns for kāfirs (Yogasaṅgrāma 6.11).

302. Kaḍasūtra – A thread or band tied around the waist.

303. Bhavasindhu – The ocean of existence.

304. Pramāṇaṃ bhavābdheridam – This is the proof of the ocean of existence.

305. Vikasālā – Expanded.

306. ṭhāsāvalā – It was deeply imprinted [in the devotee’s mind].

307. Praśnīka – At present this word is not used in Marathi. It is used in Koṅkaṇī meaning ‘to/of a question’.

308. Mūsa – A crucible.

Influence of predecessors

The influence of Jñāneśvarī on Sheikh Mahammad's literary style is not limited only to the metaphor of Yogasaṅgrāma but extends to his overall way of thinking and expressing it. It is evinced in many places. There are a few examples³⁰⁹ here,

Now it is an ever-new dialogue with the Self |
Using it like a lamp-stand |
One who does it by keeping aside his physical awareness |
Can only know it ||
(Jñāneśvarī, 6.23)

Now it is an ever-new dialogue with the Self |
Using knowledge like a lamp-stand |
One who does it by raising his five senses to a higher plane |
Can only do it ||
(Yogasaṅgrāma, 3.76)

However, if you cannot find me anywhere, Oh Pāṇḍava! |
You will find me there |
Where you hear people chanting my name |
Continuously and loudly ||
(Jñāneśvarī, 9.207)

Hari says to Nārada, "Listen to my words |
Wherever there is chanting of my name completely |
Know that I stand there waiting | With folded hands" ||
(Yogasaṅgrāma, 18.80)

("Oh Nārada! I neither reside in Vaikuṇṭha, nor in the hearts of the yogis |
Wherever my devotees are singing, there I stand in waiting" ||)
Worshipping the guru with complete awareness |
Its natural outcome is the joy of fulfillment³¹⁰ |
It is like the roots being watered |
The branches and foliage grow naturally ||
(Jñāneśvarī, 1.25)

309. Author's Note: Citations and references here are from Jñāneśvarī, edited by Rajawade.

310. Kṛta+kārya hoije – One who has accomplished what is to be done.

When the trunk of a tree is watered |
It results in the growth of the tree
Similarly, know that realization happens | To saints through visions ||
(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 83)

The milk by itself is pure and sweet | Available, close under the skin |
But the foolish cattle louse leaves it |
And prefers the impure [blood] ||
(Jñāneśvarī, 9.56)

The cattle louse has its mouth fixed on the cow's udders |
But it leaves milk and drinks the impure [blood] |
The insolent ones are attached to ignorance |
They get bound to sensual pleasures ||
(Yogasaṅgrāma, 13.57)

Many such examples of similar words and meaning can be found, if searched carefully. Keeping this in mind, one more example can be cited here, “Te taṃ bhuktṛvā svargalokaṃ viśālam...” Jñāneśvara has elaborated on this śloka in the ninth chapter of Jñāneśvarī. While doing so, he has drawn an attractive picture of the expulsion of a meritorious soul from heaven, after the merit is depleted fully. Jñāneśvara has used a very striking imagery for it:

A man goes to a prostitute and spends all his money |
Then he cannot even knock at her door |
The initiate,³¹¹ similarly, when loses merit, loses all his grace |
What to say ||
(Jñāneśvarī, 9.3-26)

A man who spends all his money on a prostitute, gets thrown out from her house and is not allowed to even knock on her door again. Similarly, a meritorious person falls in disgrace on losing spiritual merit. Sheikh Mahammad also gives the same example:

The visit of a rich man makes the prostitutes happy |
Feeling extremely fortunate |

311. Dikṣita – An initiate during a sacrifice, who officiates for fulfilling a mundane desire. It may cause loss of spiritual merit and the initiate loses the opportunity of liberation from the repeated cycles of birth and death.

But when the man loses his riches, they throw him out |
If seen again they spit on him ||

(Yogasaṅgrāma, 7.84)

The grand worship on a cosmic scale visualised by Santa Jñāneśvara in one of his verses³¹² of the Śiva present everywhere is well-known to the Marathi reader:

Heaven is its sālonkhā³¹³ | See, the seashores outline its piṇḍa³¹⁴ |
The serpent Śeṣa, is the seat |
On which the three spheres³¹⁵ balanced |
I saw the liṅga, I saw it | It has expanded over all three spheres ||
With offerings waters of the rain, it was pacified |
Then worshipped with flowers of stars |
The moon was offered as a fruit |
The sun was made into a lamp and was swayed to sing its glory ||2||
One's own Self was made into food offering |
And, the liṅga was worshipped in the state of brahmānanda³¹⁶ |
The liṅga in the form of fire column (jyotirliṅga) was meditated upon |
By Jñānadeva in his heart ||3||

Enriched by Santa Jñāneśvara's literary style, Sheikh Mahammad has also worshipped Śiva in the same manner:

The city of Kāśī,³¹⁷ [the material manifestation of Śiva] |
Where is housed Śiva's nijaliṅga³¹⁸ |
In addition, countless liṅgas, variously named |

312. Author's Note: Śri Jñāneśvara Mahārāja Yañcyā Abhaṅgañcī Gāthā: Editor, Trymbaka Hari Avate, Abhaṅg No. 47, p. 71.

313. Sālonkhā or śālunkā – Circular (yoni shaped) base of a liṅga.

314. Piṇḍa or Piṇḍī – Liṅgam.

315. Tinhī lokā – The three spheres (heaven, earth and netherworld).

316. Brahmānanda – Ecstatic state of uniting with Brahman.

317. Pañcakrośī Pañcatattvaṃ – Ancient Varanasi or Kashi is believed to have been settled within a periphery of five kosas (one krośa or kosa is equal to 3.08 km). The pilgrimage circuit around Varanasi is known as pañcakrośī yātrā. In Skandapurāṇa there is an independent section describing the importance of Kasi. Accordingly, pañcakrośī Kāśī is believed to be the material manifestation (of the five elements) of Viśvanāth, i.e., Śiva.

318. Ātmā nijaliṅga svabhāveṃ – Śiva in his Essence.

Signifying Śiva and Śakti in union ||1||
 The earth is its base | On it, stands Meru³¹⁹ mountain, the liṅga |
 His movable-unmovable creation consists of the animate and inanimate world |
 Waters of the clouds, oceans and rivers are the offerings made to it ||2||
 The sun has become incense and lamps | Winds ringing the bells |
 The sky is like a circle of thick gathering |
 Stars and the planets make the pandal ||3||
 The sun and the moon each function as a torch |
 The earth becomes their reflection in the day and night |
 The brilliance of the 'All-knowing' is limitless |
 Sheikh Mahammad knows this ||4||

(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 64)

The influence of Jñāneśvarī on Sheikh Mahammad is so deep that its influence on his writings is obvious to a careful reader in many instances. It is quite likely that when Sheikh Mahammad refers to Gītā and Bhāgavata, he is actually citing Jñāneśvarī and the commentary of Sant Eknāth on the eleventh skandha of Bhāgavata, respectively (see Yogasaṅgrāma 11.83; 14.87). We have seen in the section on Sheikh Mahammad's guru and sectarian lineage, that he has already mentioned Ekanāthī Bhāgavata specifically. In that lineage, Sant Eknāth, though junior to Sheikh Mahammad in sectarian lineage, being fellow-disciple's disciple, he was senior with respect to age and spiritual authority. Just a couple of years before Eknāth's samādhi, Sheikh Mahammad's fame as a saint was on the rise. Considering this chronological order, it seems that before arriving in Śrīgonde, Sheikh Mahammad was residing in the region where Sant Eknāth's guru (Janāradan Swami) spent his active life. So, it is but natural that Sheikh Mahammad came under his influence. His subtle observation of people and his will to educate people had blossomed out of his fearless nature. We may say that Sant Eknāth's proximity must have helped in his blossoming.

At one place (Yogasaṅgrāma, 3.66) Sheikh Mahammad has referred to Svātmasukha, a treatise written by his fellow disciple, Janārdan Swami,

As Janārdan created Svātmasukha |
 Similarly, I have expressed myself here ||

319. Meru Mountain – Axis Mundi.

Svātmasukha is not yet available to us. It needs to be noted here that Sheikh Mahammad has praised a short book written by Nāmā Pāṭhak, entitled Nāmaratnamālā, which tells you that ‘God craves for true love from his devotee’.³²⁰ See, what Sheikh Mahammad has to say about this book:

Listen, in Nāmaratnamālā | God himself is praising the devotees |
Till today Hari has never stopped doing that |
Therefore, Saint Nāmā is God's favourite ||

(Yogasaṅgrāma, 14.67)

Sant Kabīr is especially dear to Sheikh Mahammad's heart. As is already mentioned before, people looked up at him as his incarnation. This belief is reflected in a proverb ³²¹ in Maharashtra, “Jñāneśvara's Eknāth, Nāmdev's Tukārām and Kabīr's Sheikh Mahammad!” While describing the limitless greatness of God, Sheikh Mahammad says in the style of Kabīr:

A paper as wide as the earth |
A stylus of wood equal to eighteen full-grown trees in weight |
Seven oceans turned into ink |
But, the writing of God's name remains incomplete |

(Yogasaṅgrāma, 14.99)

Kabīr has described the infiniteness of Hari's attributes in a similar manner before:

The seven oceans were made into ink |
Trees of all the forests were used to make a stylus |
Entire expanse of the earth was used as paper |
All that is not enough to write Hari's name ||

(Kabīrgranthāvali)

Kabīr's mind was beyond the Hindu-Muslim boundaries. After announcing that he is neither Hindu nor Muslim, he says:

The body made of five elements, inside plays the Gaibī³²² |

(Amṛtavāṇī - Sākhikhaṇḍa, 669)

320. Deva bhāvācā bhukelā – God is hungry for devotion.

321. Jñānācā Ekā, Namyācā Tukā āṇi Kabirācā Sheikh ā.

322. Gaibī – The impervious or unmanifest Supreme Soul.

With similar thoughts in mind Sheikh Mahammad uses similar words:

A body of five elements has been made |
Inside resides the soul, the bolanahāra³²³ |

(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 311)

The slight difference to be noticed here is that Kabir's Gaibi is playing inside the body made of five elements and Sheikh Mahammad's Gaibi is the master of speech that shines in the body.

Sheikh Mahammad's linguistic style was thus inspired from various sources. His style is largely influenced by folklore and devotional literature. Sheikh Mahammad himself is aware of his special ability of using words very effectively. He believes that words can wield such power, which can leave deeper impact than the ocean. However, he does not forget to remind that the words attain this depth, only when they occur as the consequence of actual experience. He clearly says, "Words may be poetry, but experience is the real blossom and fruits." He modestly submits to Goddess Śāradā, saying, "I am born as a Muslim | So my Marathi is not refined |" However, it is apparent that the goddess is playing on the tongue of this yogabhraṣṭa,³²⁴ following the order of the Īśvara, and hence, Sheikh Mahammad can tell his listeners,

I will speak Marathi, the language of Maharashtra |
I will speak from the depth of my mind |
By weighing it in mind for various aspects |
The audience should grasp the secret ||

(Yogasaṅgrāma, 17.76)

Tribute of the Guru Principle

Like all other saints, Sheikh Mahammad also sang praises of his guru, and has described the pitiable position of those, who have not found one:

There are many who teach various skills |
Know that they are vidyāguru³²⁵ |

323. Bolanahāra – The master of speech.

324. Yogabhraṣṭa – One who has strayed from the path of yoga.

325. Vidyāguru – Teachers teaching worldly knowledge.

But they cannot make you cross the ocean of existence | Only a sad-guru can do it |

(Yogasaṅgrāma, 5.75)

Thus, after pointing out the inadequacy of the teachers teaching worldly matters, he emphasises on how imperative it is to have the sadguru with you to walk you on the path of spirituality. He says that a person without sadguru's grace falls out of the spiritual path:

Like a lamp spreading light for others |

Sadguru himself shows me the path |

Wiping away all concerns of caste-family | He made an exit ||

(Yogasaṅgrāma, 6.49)

He cannot forget the benevolence of his sadguru. Sheikh Mahammad says that a sadguru makes it possible to put away the consciousness of the body and offers words of wisdom gained through actual experience. He complains that it is rare to have good disciples who understand this, who earnestly desire to absorb and fill their hearts with guru's teachings and enjoy its spiritual flowers and fruits. The sadgurus become sad when they witness the misery of living beings and accept them as their own. But then, the sadguru also has to suffer the pain, which arises out of the sins of those accepted by him into his fold:

The sins of the disciples | Sadguru bear its pain |

Like, when mountain begins to burn |

The rocks burst and break in fragments ||

(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 208)

Good disciples are scarce. The number of disciples, for whose sins the sadguru suffers, is more in comparison. Sheikh Mahammad is narrating his own experience that anyone who surrenders to the guru, is bound to get liberated:

Those who surrendered at sadguru's feet |

Innumerable were freed from bondage |

Sheikh Mahammad says | This is good for the Self ||

(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 55)

That is why he gratefully exclaims, “My master, my sadguru | Life of my life | My mind finds | No other companion ||” (Kavitāsaṅgraha 43). See the intensity of Sheikh Mahammad, who is yearning to meet sadguru:

Sadguru come to me | To meet me |
 Without you | My mind is not at rest ||
 My mind | Rests at your feet |
 Without you | I wander in strange lands and among strangers ||
 With your grace | Places, populated or barren, make no difference |
 As I found the joy of brahman | By your grace ||
 (Kavitāsaṅgraha, 46)

Devotion is my love

Sheikh Mahammad grew up with his father in a spiritual environment, where seeking mokṣa was set as the highest goal. It was because of his father’s merit that he could meet his sadguru, Chānd Bodhale, with whom his progress on the spiritual path was very swift. Sheikh Mahammad’s ability to integrate Hindu and Muslim traditions enabled him to receive the subtlest experiences. It led him to discover the truth that transcends all borders. His spirituality began to thrive in all dimensions, in the company of other seekers. His mind began to reach out to the spiritual world by breaking the confines of the physical world. The one who is pulled back by thinking of the mundane world around him, is troubled by the reproach of his mind and then he deviates from the path of devotion. Hence, Sheikh Mahammad says:

Our dance | Nobody should attempt |
 Especially those who are troubled by | The worldly concerns ||
 (Kavitāsaṅgraha, 90)

Sant Tukārām warns, “The path of bhakti is very difficult like a mine of burning embers.” Sheikh Mahammad was of the same opinion. However, he accepted the challenge of worldly concerns and with all his essence adopted the path of bhakti.

More than my mother | My devotion, my love, is dear to me |
 She makes me happy | All the time ||
 (Kavitāsaṅgraha, 91)

Thus, he sung the praise of the undiminishing joy of devotion.

Nāma - The life of life

To Sheikh Mahammad nāmasmaraṇa³²⁶ is the most important thing on the path of bhakti. “Innumerable people could cross the ocean of existence just by uttering your name,” he tells God, “that is the very reason that I have this yearning for your name.” Those who continuously talk about the marvel, that your name is, become the charioteers for the rest of the world. Sheikh Mahammad praises such sādhus, who are immersed in the nāmabhakti:³²⁷

Their hearts are filled with the brilliance of truth |
 They chant only nāma |
 Those are saints paramount | King of dharma ||
 All accumulated sin gets burnt | By just a glimpse of them |
 Those who are fallen | Get uplifted by uttering their name ||
 Such sages become for others | Boats in the ocean of existence |
 Sheikh Mahammad | Ever bows to them ||

(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 85)

Śrīhari is a playmate of those who keep uttering his name:

Surrounded by the sages | Inside-outside, in all four directions |
 Śrīhari is playing | For the sake of nāma |

That is why, nāma is extremely dear to Sheikh Mahammad:

Nāma, the life of life | I preserve it with devotion ||
 No words are needed | I remember it every moment, filled with love ||
 Resting, eating, nothing stops me | Day and night, I never forget it ||

(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 100)

Sheikh Mahammad’s fatigue instantly vanished by remembering the respite of his life, i.e. Govinda’s nāma. He was relieved from the cycles of birth and death, his suffering ended and his pains and troubles vanished. Sheikh Ma-

326. Nāmasmaraṇa – To remain in the remembrance of God’s name.

327. Nāmabhakti – Devotion by way of continuously remembering and chanting god’s name.

hammad describes himself as 'yogabhraṣṭa'.³²⁸ He thinks that Goddess Śārādā deemed him to be so. That is because his accumulated merit was substantial and because of it, the desire to seek parabrahma had awakened in him. After meeting the sadguru, he had the fortune of fulfilling his desire:

It was in my destiny | So it happened |
 Parabrahma has come home | With love ||
 Inside and outside | Filled with bhakti |
 I attained sāyujyatā mukti | A permanent state ||
 It has come to stay | There is no coming and going |
 At sadguru's feet | It happened so ||
 What can I say about it | The manifest was beyond words |
 Unsounded utterance | Complete silence ||
 Disappearance of dvaita | Is not a false thing |
 Sheikh Mahammad | Now dwells in advaita ||

(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 141)

This indescribable experience reflects throughout his literature. In his opinion, expressions that are not based on experience are like a woman, who does not know the pains of carrying a baby. When a woman bears these pains of giving birth to a son, it is only her, who is qualified to walk around with pride as a bridegroom's mother. So, Sheikh Mahammad has held the Lord of All like a baby, in his heart:

Sheikh Mahammad | Pregnant in his heart |
 The master of all | Is the baby filling my heart ||

(Kavitāsaṅgraha, 199)

Do we really have the ability, to describe the greatness of Sheikh Mahammad's speech, in whose heart dwells the Lord of the Universe?

328. Yogabraṣṭa – One who has strayed from the path of yoga.

Chapter 6

Shāh Munī

Shāh Munī's caste in his own words

Shāh Munī, despite being a Muslim and a follower of Mahānubhāva sect, became a celebrated saint-poet and exercised great influence on the Marathi-speaking world. The treatise authored by him Siddhāntabodha³²⁹ is very popular in Maharashtra. The devotees arrange its collective reading during the four months of the Indian calendar, from Śrāvaṇa (fifth month of the Indian almanac) to Kārtika (eighth month of the Indian almanac), known as chāturmāsa.³³⁰ Shāh Munī due to his inclination toward Hinduism, regretted being born into a Muslim family, because he was aware that Muslims have always acted as the destroyer of Hinduism throughout their existence in India:

Neither of the brahmin caste | Nor kṣatriya, nor vaiśya |
Of a lower rank than śūdra | I took birth as an avindha ||
Their spiritual path is twisted |
They say that Maharashtra Dharma is false |
By force they destruct the images in Śiva temples |
Haters of God, violent ones ||
On their festival days | They are overjoyed by butchering a cow |

329. Author's note: This treatise was first printed by Ganpat Krishnaji in 1870 C.E. (The fourth day of the bright half of Āṣāḍha, the fourth month of the Indian almanac, of the year 1793 of śaka Era.)

330. Śrāvaṇa, Bhādrapada, Āśvina and Kārtika are the four months of rainy season, which are supposed to be holy and the period marked by them is known as Chāturmās (four months).

Veda-śāstras and Purāṇas | They talk about all of it with contempt ||
 I took birth in such circumstances | Became a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa |
 I surrendered to the enlightened saints |
 I pray to them to call me their own ||

(Siddhāntabodha 2.129-132)

Shāh Munī feels that his birth as a Muslim makes his status lower than a śūdra and with reference to the Hindu tradition, he states very clearly that the religious tradition inherited by him, i.e. Islam, appears to him as distorted. He feels amazed by the fact that he became a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, despite being born into a tradition of violence that labels Marathi spiritual tradition (Maharashtra Dharma) as false, destructs images-temples, hates Hindu Gods-Goddesses, intentionally asks to butcher cows to celebrate festivals, reviles Vedic literature, Dharmaśāstra³³¹ and Purāṇas. His heart gets flooded with gratitude for his guru and sages who held him close without any concern for his origin. He says that though he belongs to a caste, which is like a bitter, unpalatable pumpkin but Gopāla, i.e. Śrī Kṛṣṇa transformed him completely, and so his poetry assumed the sweetness of real-life experience.

Drawing the family tree

The account of Shāh Munī's family history as noted in his treatise indicates that his family, at least for three-four generations, had followed the Hindu traditions. At the beginning of the 36th chapter (lines 2-12) the account of the lineage as recorded by Shāh Munī:

Now I pay respect to my family lineage |
 The family in which I was born |
 My great grandfather founded our family | His name was Shāhbābā ||
 Marathi and Persian | He knew both languages |
 He worshipped Śiva | No other god, he worshipped ||
 His wife was Āminā |
 She possessed the highest qualities of being a devoted wife |
 She gave birth to a virtuous son | His name was Janājī ||
 He was a devotee of Śrī Viṣṇu | His wife was Maṇḍūbāi |

331. Books that prescribe the social and religious rules.

She gave birth to a wise son | His name was Mānsingh ||
 His wife's name was Āmāi | People called her Tāi³³² |
 She was my mother | I came from her pure womb ||
 My father was a devotee of Gaṇeśa |
 To him, I was the reincarnation of my grandfather |
 Believing it, happily | He named me, Shāhbābā ||
 My great-grandfather sowed the seed of bhakti |
 It sprouted and grew without effort |
 That is how the dust of the feet of sages | I was fortunate to gather it |
 My grandfather was born at Prayag, the holy place |
 Grandfather born in Avanti ||
 The place called Siddhatek | That is where my father was born |
 On the banks of Bhīmā is the city of Peḍgāv |
 To its East, Bhīmā meets Sarasvatī ||
 There, my mother Tāi, from her pure womb | I was born |
 My grandfather exemplified detachment |
 His offsprings were incomparable ||
 Thus, I have unfolded our family lineage |
 In front of you, Oh! Virtuous ones |
 My elders were meritorious people |
 By virtue of their merit, I could bow at your feet ||
 I was cleansed of all my sins |
 I am freed from future births and deaths ||

This information reveals several unique aspects of Shāh Munī's family. Firstly, devotion to Hindu Gods-Goddesses was running in their family for four generations. It appears that the family was frequently on the move, moving from Prayag to Ujjayini, then to Siddhatek and Peḍgāv, and this continued until Shāhbābā was born. Wherever they stayed, they were inclined to immerse deeply in the worship of the principal deity of that place.

The great-grandfather of Shāh Munī was Shāhbābā and Shāhbābā's wife was Āminā. The whereabouts of Shāhbābā's parents before arriving in Prayag are not known, however, there is no doubt that Shāhbābā was born in Prayag. Later, it seems that Shāhbābā shifted to Ujjayini (Avantikā) with his wife Āminā. Consider the distance between Prayag and Ujjayini! Did his

332. Tāi – An honorific, elder sister, wife of the eldest uncle.

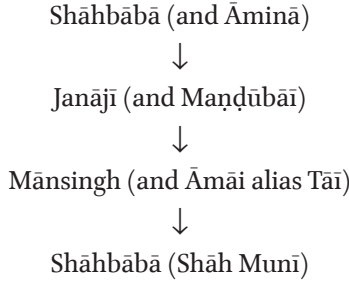
work required this migration and if so what was the nature of his occupation is not known.

Shāhbābā came to Ujjayini and as Ujjayini is a place, well-known as a place of jyotirlinga, Shāhbābā found himself easily absorbed in the ambience there, which was highly charged by devotion to Śiva. With utmost respect, Shāh Munī has noted that his great-grandfather's attitude of detachment was deep like a mine, his devotion to Śiva was unswerving and he also had mastery over Marathi and Persian languages. The fact that Shāhbābā, a resident of Ujjayini could swiftly use Marathi along with Persian, indicates that he came to Ujjayini after or around 1728 C.E., when the Marathas had already expanded their rule in Malwa.³³³

Shāhbābā had a son named Janājī, who was born in Ujjayini. He was devoted to Viṣṇu. His wife was Maṇḍubāī. The fact that the son of a Śiva's devotee, was a devotee of Viṣṇu, is a proof enough of the tolerant, generous attitude of this family and their desire of remaining in tune with Maharashtra Dharma. The origin of Janājī's devotion was perhaps because of his stay in some place where devotion to Viṣṇu was a prominent trait. There is no clue as to the reason or time of his arrival in Maharashtra. It is likely Malwa (Madhya Pradesh) being ruled by Marathas at that time, and the prominence of Maharashtra Dharma in that region, might have prompted him to move to Maharashtra.

His son Mānsingh was born while he stayed in Siddhatek (Tehsil Karjat, District Ahmednagar). Mānsingh was Shāh Munī's father. Siddhatek is a place, established as one of the eight places famous for Śrī Ganeśa being the tutelary deity there. It was natural that Mānsingh was attracted to the worship of Ganeśa in the ambience of Siddhatek. Mānsingh's wife was known as Āmāi or Tāi. Shāh Munī was born around the śaka era 1670 (1748 C.E.), at Peḍgāv (Tehsil Śrīgonde, District Ahmednagar, now Ahilyanagar), which is located near the confluence of Bhīmā-Sarasvatī. Mānsingh named his son as Shāhbābā with a belief that his grandfather, who was detached from all worldly things and was a devout devotee, had reincarnated as his son. All this information helps us to draw the family tree of Shāh Munī –

333. Historically and Geographically Malwa includes parts of the western and central region of Central India, southeastern part of Rajasthan and also a part of northern Maharashtra.



Peḍgāv, the birthplace of Shāh Munī is just ten-twelve miles to the south from Śrīgonde, the birthplace of Sheikh Mahammad, another great Marathi saint. Naturally, Shāh Munī took pride in the devotional inclination of the members of his family. He is grateful that he found the feet of (proximity) the sages because of the accumulated merit of his ancestors. He preserved the legacy of four generations, enriched it and gave it an expression in the form of his magnum opus, Siddhāntabodha. His grand work was in a way a reward for his ancestors lives of devotion.

Munī instructed Shāh

Shāhbābā has not told much about his life except that he was born in Peḍgāv on the banks of Bhīmā. However, there is nothing to tell us about the progress on the spiritual path of that son of Ganeśa's devotee. His popular name, Shāh Munī, is a joint name like the name Ekā Janārdan. His name was Shāh (Shāhbābā) and his guru's name was Munī. Munī is not Shāhbābā's title. Considering the possibility of such doubt he made it a point to explain:

There may be a doubt about the word Munī |

Munī is my guru's name ||

With his blessings | This book will be completed ||

(Siddhāntabodha, 1.151)

Also, at the beginning of the book, he has mentioned, "Munīndra Swami is a complete guru | Shāh is his servant |" (Siddhāntabodha 1.15). Munī or Munīndra Swami was supposed to have been initiated by Śrī Dattātreyā himself. In the last chapter of Siddhāntabodha, Shāhbābā recorded his guru's lineage:

Munīndra is the name of the enlightened one |
 He was initiated by Datta himself |
 He became the guru to Shāh | Hence the name, Shāh Munī ||
 Munī received instructions from Datta |
 Munī instructed Shāh in turn |
 According to my ability |
 My lord, my guru bestowed me with his grace ||
 (Siddhāntabodha, 50.353-354)

Thus, it is clear that Shāh Munī's guru lineage runs like this: Dattātreyā – Munīndra Swami – Shāhbābā (Shāh Munī). Shāhbābā was instructed by Munīndra Swami in far-off Varanasi. This moment of receiving instruction from the guru and the divine brightness filling his heart because of his enlightenment have been described by Shāh Munī:

In Varanasi, on the banks of Ganga |
 After the first part of the night was over |
 On the auspicious time of Āyusmān Yoga and Revatī constellation |
 Swami initiated me ||
 He did not mind my caste | He gave me knowledge openly |
 Unfolded the entire riddle | He unknotted the knot of ignorance ||
 He uttered the mantra in my ear |
 He enkindled the lamp in my heart |
 All my confusion was cleared | I shined in my own being ||
 I was awakened to the truth, I am brahman | That awareness too was
 cleared, the ultimate bliss created |
 Eruption of that bliss | That too was quelled ||
 I dissolved within myself | My inner being occupied my entire being |
 I froze myself in that state |
 Freedom and bondage, both lost their meaning ||
 The sky dissolved in the sky | Ocean became one with the ocean |
 Suns were established in the sun |
 The moon was embraced by the moon ||
 Sound was submerged in the silence |
 Jiva and Śiva, words separating them, vanished |
 The tumult of turyā was silenced |
 Vibrations within vibrations became neutral ||

What is pūrvapakṣa or uttarapakṣa | The distance between the final
 destination and its meditation as the path to reach it disappeared |
 Neither duality, nor nonduality is perceived |
 Then who worries about mokṣa ||
 There is no separate existence of the guru-disciple |
 Sāyujyātā also lost its presence |
 The triṣṇas created from the sound of Aum |
 Those three also are like ripples on water ||
 Thus, I was instructed | I was shown the entire play of the Brahman |
 No longer there is any space for the 'I' |
 The physical existence and appellations no more make sense ||
 (Siddhāntabodha, 50.355-364)

Shāh Munī has expressed this moment, charged with the realization of Brahman in such powerful words that the brilliance in his heart, shining by the virtue of this utmost experience can be easily felt. Munīndra Swami, who made it possible for Shāh Munī to witness this play of Brahman, was a paramahansa, a saṃnyāsī.

Shāh Munī expressed gratitude time and again: "Guru has the knowledge | Contentment can be achieved near the guru | With the guru, realisation of Self is possible |" (Siddhāntabodha 32.117). He knows it from his own experience. Hence, he asks the seekers of mokṣa to surrender at the feet of the guru. Guru's words are beneficial, not only to him but to everybody. That is why, he asks, "By going away from the guru | What is there to gain? |" (Siddhāntabodha 31.202). He ascribes all credit of his authorship to his guru at the beginning of the forty-sixth chapter (Siddhāntabodha 13-16):

Munīndra guru's teachings | Were received by Shāh Munī |
 A wise man should stop imagining |
 He should be attentive to the true meaning ||
 There are many ways of imagination |
 Several cults have created hindrances |
 The false notion of duality is rooted very deep |
 The Truth of Oneness is not understood ||
 Appellations and separate existence are notions |
 For the convenience in this world |
 Ātman is the only truth |
 Its complete realisation can happen only by the guru's grace ||

The magnitude and greatness of the guru's grace I
 Will see the completion of this difficult book I
 I will erect the pole of victory, for experiencing the ultimate I
 The sweetest mystery, that it is II

Next in the forty-seventh chapter as well (Siddhāntabodha, 102-106), Shāh Munī accepted the debt of his guru, without any reservations:

Munīndra Swami is the complete guru I
 He is Paramahaṃsa Nārāyaṇa I
 After taking me into his fold I He initiated me II
 It was because of my earlier merit I
 I could be at his divine feet that are beyond description I
 He blessed me into complete knowing I
 There is no confusion left now II
 He is Munī Swami Paramahaṃsa I I had the fortune to meet him I My
 caste did not stop him I The master accepted me, as his own II
 The one who himself is above any bondage I
 For him, the universe itself is the Brahman I
 Those who believe in duality I They see it as separate phenomenon II
 My Lord, the guru is known by the name Munī I
 Shāh has surrendered to him I
 Thus, I get the name Shāh Munī I That I use in this book I

Munīndra Swami made it possible for Shāhbābā to witness the marvel of One in Multiple and Multiple in One, and thus to know that the world and its lord, are one and the same. Aware of the truth, Shāhbābā became one with it and his world became complete in itself. Thus, established in the bliss of Self, he wrote this book, by acting as the medium of his sadguru.

Samādhi of Shāh Munī

Shāhbābā also seems to have inherited the tendency to be on the move, from his ancestors. His book reflects the essence of people's lives, in a profound and subtle manner, showing the depth of his observation. One feels like attributing these qualities to his innate tendency to travel. His great grandfather, Shāhbābā was born in Prayag, his grandfather, Janājī was born in Ujjayini and his father, Mānsingh was born in Siddhatek (District Ahmednagar,

Maharashtra). Shāh Munī himself was born in Peḍgāv, which is on the banks of the river Bhīmā, around the śaka era 1670 (1748 C.E.). He was initiated in Kashi by Munīndra Swami around the śaka era 1700 (1778 C.E.) and in the śaka era 1717 (1795 C.E.), he completed his magnum opus, Siddhāntabodha.

At that time, he was in the village named as Paṭharīmaṇḍaṇa, near Cām-bali in Satara District. Thus, his male ancestors of four generations were all born in different places, distant from each other. Shāh Munī's birthplace, place of receiving initiation, the place of writing his book and the place of his samādhi are all located distantly from each other. Shāhgaḍ, is a village on the banks of river Godavari, at a distance of thirty miles from Beed (District Beed), on the Beed-Aurangabad (now Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar) road.

Shāh Munī left his body in a samādhi state around śaka era 1730, (1808 C.E.). There is a fortified mound on the outskirts of Shāhgaḍ, close to the river. This place is known as killā (fort). In this fort, Shāh Munī lies in eternal rest. It is likely that he spent the last days of his life in a maṭha, in this fort. Presently, there are five Muslim families of Shāh Munī's followers, staying near his samādhi temple. They look after the maintenance and the routine upkeep of the temple traditions. The anniversary of the samādhi day is celebrated every year on the seventh-eighth days of the dark half of Chaitra, the first month of the Indian almanac. All these five families because of their faith in Shāh Munī, abstain from meat and alcohol, worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa and get initiated from Mahānubhāva ascetics. Presently, they follow the instructions of Mahanta Kapāṭeśvara Bābā. The groups of Mahānubhāva ascetics and their disciples keep visiting this fort and stay there. Muslims in the village, other than these five families, do not participate in the celebrations of the samādhi day.³³⁴

The sect followed by Shāh Munī

By this current tradition it can be inferred that Shāh Munī was a follower of the Mahānubhāva sect. The fact that despite the place of Shāh Munī's samādhi being under the care of his Muslim followers, they do not claim him to be a Muslim and have faithfully continued the tradition of Kṛṣṇa worship, suggests that the faith of his current followers has its roots in Shāh Munī's

334. Author's note: This information was obtained by me by visiting Shāhgaḍ in January 1966.

sectarian faith. Also, the treatise Siddhāntabodha authored by him is a part of the basic collection of Mahānubhāva literature, preserved by the current followers of the sect.³³⁵ The followers of Mahānubhāva sect never keep books of other sects in their collection. So Siddhāntabodha being preserved in their collection supports that Shāh Munī was a follower of the Mahānubhāva sect. In Siddhāntabodha, he indirectly suggests his sectarian inclination, in the following manner:

1. In the first sixteen chapters of Siddhāntabodha and in the remaining text as well, he attributes Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Maheśa a secondary status. All the three gods are presented through dialogues of sages, as of a junior category to Parameśvara.

The incarnations like Brahmā and others |
 Are the incarnations of that Brahman |
 These are the formulations in the canons |
 Ignorant not knowing its core, keep debating ||
 The Supreme One is the creator and protector |
 In the end he only destructs |
 Those who talk thus | Are misled by illusion as if under a dream ||
 Creation-destruction |
 These phenomena are unknown to the ultimate being |
 Parameśvara, that passive one | It does not act ||

2. Shāh Munī expounded the Mahānubhāva philosophy in a detailed manner and refuted the Dvaita philosophy. He does this through dialogues between Māhimbhaṭṭa and Parameśvara (Chakradhara).
3. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Datta are the deities worshipped by him. He calls himself as a worshipper of Kṛṣṇa (10.119) and gives all the credit for his inspiration to the grace of Dattātreyā. He does not look upon Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, nor does he look upon Dattātreyā as anyway related to Viṣṇu or Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Maheśa. His viewpoint on Kṛṣṇa and Datta is in keeping with Mahānubhāva philosophy.
4. He begins the twenty-fourth chapter with salutations to the five Kṛṣṇas—Avyakta, Haṃsa, Datta, Kṛṣṇa and Chakradhara.

335. Author's note: See: Mahānubhāviya Marāṭhī Vāṅmay: Dr. Y. K. Deshpande. (2nd edition, 1960), PP 80-82.

The one that is immutable, free of illusion |
 That is beyond the bliss of pure consciousness |
 The One upon which the entire universe meditates |
 My salutations to 'That' ||
 The One not accessible to the eight Bhairavas |
 Who is beyond the knowledge of even Mahāviṣṇu |
 Mahāviṣṇu and Maheśvara are the witness | Of that supreme soul ||
 The Lord who is unmanifest |
 My earnest obeisance to him with all aṣṭabhāvas³³⁶ |
 Because of his grace | I remain untouched by any disbelief ||
 Now my salutations to Haṃsamūrti³³⁷ |
 That shone above the confusion of Brahmā and others |
 Sanaka and others, the muktapanthis |
 Got there by Haṃsamūrti's grace ||
 Haṃsamūrti, the creator of Haṃsagītā |
 Opened the treasure of spiritual knowledge |
 That incarnation in Kṛtayuga | My obeisance to him ||
 Now my salutations to | Anasūyā's son |
 Dattātreya showed miracles to Gorakhnāth |
 He won over nine Nāths³³⁸ ||
 To that Śrī Dattātreya | We surrender completely and bow at his feet |
 He stays in the mountains of Siṃhādri³³⁹ | He is omnipotent ||
 The one who controls the illusion in the form of life |
 Who is omnipotent in all aspects |
 At the lotus feet of that Śrī Kṛṣṇa | Let us bow a thousand times ||
 Now let us bow to Supreme Puruṣa | Who instructed Bhaṭṭa³⁴⁰ |
 He gave Bhaṭṭa the complete essence of knowledge |
 And opened the doors of Brahmayidyā ||

(Siddhāntabodha ,24.1-17)

336. Aṣṭabhāva or Aṣṭasāttvika-bhāva refers to the eight emotional or physical responses that a devotee may experience while meditating upon his or her iṣṭa-devatā. These include: Stambhavṛtti – being unable to move; Svedana – sweating profusely; Romāñca – having goosebumps; Svarabheda – voice being choked; Kampana – having a shaky body; Vaivarṇya – face becoming pale; Āsrupāta – watering eyes; and Pralaya – fainting.

337. Haṃsamūrti – Śrīviṣṇu or Śrīkṛṣṇa.

338. Gorakṣanāth is supposed to have incorporated Śrī Dattātreya into the Nāth sect.

339. Siṃhādri – Siṃhācalaṃ (Andhra Pradesh).

340. Bhaṭṭa/Bhaṭṭobāsā – Nāgadevāchārya Bhaṭṭobāsā – He became the head of the Mahānubhāva Sampradāya after Chakradhara.

Later, in the thirtieth chapter also (Siddhāntabodha, 61-63), he has mentioned the names of Haṃsa, Datta, Kṛṣṇa and Chakradhara, in a style, as if Parameśvara himself is giving out their names. Chakradhara's name is presented in a way to indicate that he is Parameśvara:

In Kṛta [yuga] Haṃsa, In Tretā [yuga] Datta |
 In Dvāpāra[yuga] Kṛṣṇa |
 In Kali[yuga] Ananta³⁴¹ | Shall be known as Chakradhara ||
 The greatness of the name, Chakradhara |
 In whom 'speech' would settle quickly |
 He will victoriously raise the standard of liberation |
 Kali cannot harm him ||
 This name, Chakradhara, its efficacy is such |
 Ghosts and goblins run far away from it |
 Misfortunes cast by deities evaporate |
 It creates a protective shell around us ||

Thus, considering the integral evidence, there is no doubt that Shāh Muni was a Mahānubhāva.

Adherence in the end to philosophy of non-duality

While following the Mahānubhāva sect, Shāh Muni seems to have accepted the philosophy of non-duality.³⁴² The explication given in the first thirty chapters of Siddhāntabodha is used by him, ultimately to prove the principle of non-duality in the rest of the text (Chapter 31-50). Earlier, we have seen that while receiving instruction from his guru he had already experienced the state of I am Brahman. His entire life seems to have been steeped in the awareness of 'I am Brahman'. He says, "Hence, with devotion to non-duality | One obtains happiness and stability" | (35.247). He does not stop at that. Like other Marathi saints he keeps reiterating: I see the protector of people among people (35.109), the one who fills the universe is universe (39.113), the lord of the world is the entire world itself (44.313). Like Śaṅkarācārya, he puts in his

341. Ananta – One of the epithets of the Supreme One, Parameśvara, which means 'the one that has no end.'

342. Mahānubhāva philosophy is fundamentally based on the principle of duality-nonduality (dvaitādvaita).

feelings in very firm words, “Non-duality is the truth, duality is false.” He sings in the glory of non-duality saying, “Non-duality is the pride of the devotees.” (45.35) To put away all doubts in this respect, he tells his audience in clear terms:

The inherent essence of this treatise I
 Is to gain an equanimous vision at the seat of samādhi (third eye) I
 To gain the awareness of non-duality I
 It is the principle of I am Brahman II
 The bliss of samādhi is in the awareness of non-duality I
 In which are immersed Sanaka and others I
 Vaikuṇṭhanāyaka³⁴³ explained exactly this secret in Bhagavadgītā I
 The essence of Vedas II
 A serpent moves in a zigzag way I
 But, it descends in the anthill in a straight manner I
 Similarly, the poets may use different styles I
 But in the end the truth is non-duality II
 I have also described in Siddhāntabodha I
 Many opinions about duality I
 In the end prevails only the principle of non-duality I
 The sum-total of all is One II

The Parabrahma is standing on a brick

Shāh Munī initially seems to have followed the Mahānubhāva tradition. There is a clue to understand how and when he overcame the sectarian Mahānubhāva tradition and got inclined to the philosophy of non-duality. He has credited his guru for the awareness of non-duality. It suggests that his guru must have been liberal in sectarian matters. Irrespective of this, one thing is certain Shāh Munī had completely accepted the philosophy of non-duality and there is no doubt that he had bathed (plunged) in the unfathomable waters of the river of devotion. In his book, he has twice paid homage to Sant Jñāneśvara and other saints, who were charged with the faith in the principle of non-duality (34.68-72, 35.37-63). Also, at the beginning of the thirty-eighth chapter

343. Referring to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

he has sung the praises of Pandharpur and Pāṇḍuraṅg (Śrī Viṭṭhal) in a very emotional tone.

“In Kaliyuga,” he says, “the sins grew immensely and so God created the settlement of Pandharpur, and here he ignited the fire to burn all bad things. Pandharpur is like sage Agastya, a Vedic seer who is supposed to have swallowed the ocean in one gulp and emptied it to expose the demons who were hiding in the ocean. Sage Agastya helped the gods by exposing the demons in the war. Similarly, Pandharpur absorbs and destroys all sins. The way an eagle cuts the serpent into pieces, Pandharpur cuts down the sins.” Thus, extolling Pandharpur, Shāh Munī proceeds, saying:

The devotees have gathered | It is time to be absorbed in bliss |
 There is the sound in a high pitch of singing God's name |
 Away runs the death, hearing it ||
 On the right bank of the river |
 The Parabrahma is standing on a brick awaiting the devotees |
 Akimbo | It is digam̐bar³⁴⁴ appearance looks beautiful ||
 The sandy banks of Candrabhāgā³⁴⁵ |
 Are crowded for the sacred pilgrimage |
 Devotees and the Parabrahma meet each other |
 The feet of God, embraced by the devotees ||
 Everybody gets to meet God personally |
 Tell me where else does this happen |
 One does not need to shave off his beard and moustache |
 Rituals like the other pilgrim centres are also not required³⁴⁶ ||
 Such roar of the name of God | Is not to be heard anywhere else |
 God, worshipped by all the eighteen types of castes |
 He, who uplifts the downtrodden to the utmost heights ||
 Everybody has the powerful medicine of nāma in their mouth |
 Scaring the god of death |
 Sin is searching for a place to keep alive |
 Other pilgrim centres are crying for they are abandoned ||

344. Digam̐bar – Bare appearance; literal meaning - one that is clad in four directions.

345. Chandrabhāgā – The river Bhīmā is known as Chandrabhāgā at Pandharpur as it meanders there.

346. These are the essential parts of the preparation for some of the Vedic and Purāṇic rituals.

Pride has fled far away | Only love remains in the heart |
 Eyes are oozing with joy | Both gods and people are wondering ||
 Pandharpur has become the centre of saints |
 The distress of disease-poverty has vanished ||
 God is accessible without hindrance | Struggle of karma has ceased ||

Pandharpur and Pāṇḍuraṅg were always held as of lesser importance by the followers of the Mahānubhāva sect. However, the fact that he puts aside all of his initiation-training and sings the praises of Pandharpur and Pāṇḍuraṅg as fervently as the saints of Vārkarī sect is something extraordinary. As a result, Shāh Muni's book was immensely popular in Maharashtra in all strata of the society.

Siddhāntabodha sprang forth from the ocean of knowledge

So far, we have seen Shāh Muni's life journey—his initiation by his guru, his being a member of Mahānubhāva sect, his overriding leaning towards the philosophy of non-duality that culminated into his great devotion to Pāṇḍuraṅg. It was done along with the introduction to his treatise, Siddhāntabodha, in which various aspects of Siddhāntabodha became apparent. This treatise contains 50 chapters, 9858 verses (this number is more than the number of verses in Jñāneśvarī). The place and time of the composition of this book is as follows:

It is śaka era 1717 | The book is completed in this year |
 At Paṭhārīmaṇḍaṇa near Cāmbaḷī village³⁴⁷ | This book was written ||
 The disciple of Shāh Muni |
 Bhagavanta Nārāyaṇa was the scribe of this book |
 Whose surname is Pāṇḍharakāma |
 He resides in Pāḍaḷī Dhāyaguḍe ||

The printed version of this book gives the year of the book as śaka year 1700, instead of 1717. L.R. Pangarkar has praised this book very highly: "This book is worthy of being counted as one of the best books in Marathi. However, because of our apathy, it has not been accorded its proper status so far. The book has been composed taking the best stories from various Purāṇas and beauti-

347. Chāmbaḷī village is in Taluka Purandar, District Pune.

ful narratives from Ramāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. These stories are narrated briefly, in an apt style, using right words, very simple and sweet language. The stories are used to weave together ethical principles and Vedic philosophy. The style of presentation in this book is easy-flowing, simple prose. One's mind can flow unhindered in its stream of thoughts, like a flower flowing smoothly in the Ganga. The magical influence of this book is so strong that words are not enough to describe it. It has the power to make one forget all preoccupations. With its divine quality it enables all ten organs³⁴⁸ to function in harmony. Words would fall short describing it. This book includes stories of several instances, which can help to increase one's alertness, stories talking about the union of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul, praising the greatness of the guru, and describing the greatness of saints. The stories of ancient sages and divine incarnations are threaded together in spiritual fibre. In essence, this is a precious diamond of Marathi literature and such 'diamond, which cannot be sullied even if it falls in a dump yard; it maintains its quality.' Despite being neglected by Marathi readers, it maintains its brilliance, which is bound to astound everybody who would see it."³⁴⁹

Maharashtra-Bhāṣābhūṣaṇa Ajagavakar does not see slightest exaggeration in these comments by Haribhaktiparāyaṇa Paṅḡarakar. In his opinion, "Shāh Muni's language is so lucid, clear and easy to understand that its exuberance is bound to astonish the reader's mind. It does not seem that the poet was a very learned man. However, the brilliance of his words is such that can be possible only by God's grace."³⁵⁰ Shāh Muni himself feels that his book is a bestower of happiness:

By guru's grace I attained knowledge |
My heart was filled with the ocean of knowledge |
That is from where sprang forth the Siddhāntabodha |
Waves of bliss swelled up ||

The praise may be deemed as exaggerated, arising out of extreme respect. However, one thing is certain that the book cannot be looked upon as a 'vague medley of miscellaneous things', as stated by Bhavē, the author of Mahārāṣṭra

348. Five sense organs and five action organs respectively: ears, nose, eyes, tongue and skin; hands, feet, mouth, urethra and anus.

349. Author's note: Mahārāṣṭra-Kavi-Caritra, Vol. II: Ajgaonkar, J.R. pp 77-78.

350. Author's note: Ibid, pp.78-79.

Sāraswat.³⁵¹ No other composition of Shāh Munī is available. Songs in the form of question-answers composed by some of his followers have been printed.³⁵²

Yavana: As a character

Shāh Munī's inclinations and gift of observation, is similar to that of Sheikh Mahammad. He has put Sant Kabīr on the guru's pedestal. He has honoured Sant Kabīr with various epithets such as 'truth incarnate', 'emergence of knowledge', 'Brahman embodied' (39.1-20):

Kabīr, the great one | He appeared in my dream |
He has been a complete guru | Day and night I chant his name ||

Thus, it seems that Shāh Munī had created an emotional bond in his mind with Kabīr's life and philosophy about the mundane world. Kabīr, in a way, was deemed as a guide in the world of seekers of truth, who wished to find a syncretic path. It is very natural that Muslims who could also correlate with the Hindu tradition should find a guru in Kabīr.

[Translators Note: A part of the text is omitted here as it may be too sensitive.]

Shāh Munī felt sad about the Hindu-Muslim conflicts and drew attention to the fact that if both communities nurture the awareness that the concept of almighty is essentially the same for both religions, the conflicts will be easily resolved. He draws everybody's attention to this. Through his wide experience, he had realised the vainness of hatred and social discrimination and so he does not believe in the hierarchy based on birth. In this regard, he has asked a very pertinent question:

Cokhāme|ā is devoted to God |
But people do not let him come near them |
Does God create a separate place for his caste |
In Vaikuṇṭha (heaven) ||
People of high and low castes, both get down into the river |
Come out with water-filled pitchers |

351. Author's note: Mahārāṣṭra Sāraswat – V.L. Bhavē (5th edition, 1963), p.621.

352. Author's note: Shāh Munīce Praśnottar Abhaṅg: Tardeo Book Depot Prakashan, Mumbai.

Once out, they say, do not touch, keep your distance |
They both stood in the same water before that ||

(50.400-401)

Knowing that such discrimination is senseless, Shāh Munī did not hold any bias in mind regarding the discrimination between his caste and other castes. He has presented liberal and syncretistic thoughts through ten thousand verses (ovis). I would strongly recommend that readers read the original Sidhāntabodha. Now I ask your permission to leave by quoting Shāh Munī:

Now what more could I say | I surrender completely at your feet |
Kṛṣṇabāi³⁵³ | I ask for your blessings ||

353. Here Shāh Munī is addressing to Lord Kṛṣṇa in feminine (as a mother). It has been the tradition of saints in Maharashtra to address the god in this way.

Chapter 7

Some More Saints

Some unknown and some little-known saints

In the preceding chapters, we read about six Muslim saints, whose life-story is known to some extent through available sources. In contrast, many other Muslim saints are only known by their names, and no information about their lives or their literature is available. Nonetheless, a few compositions by some of them are available. We must put on record, their names and whatever little of their compositions is available and keep their memories alive and also prepare a backdrop for further research. Feeling duty bound thus, I am recording some of such Muslim saint-poets here, though the task might remain of somewhat tentative nature. Any legend available about them is noted here, because when nothing is available to illumine a saint's life, even a dim ray of light cast by a popular legend can afford us some glimpse.

Three disciples of Keśav Swami

Keśav Swami, a famous saint in the Dāsa Pañcāyatana³⁵⁴ was originally from Kalyani (near Latur), but for most of his life he lived in Bhāgānagar (South Hyderabad) and he left his body at the same place. Hence, he is known as Bhāgānagarkar Keśav Swami. He was a disciple of Raṅgabodh in the tradition of Mukundarāja. The guru-disciple tradition runs as follows: Ādināth-Harināth-Raghunāth-Narasimhabhārati-Jagannāth-Sahajabodh-Raṅgabodh-Keśav Swami. Keśav Swami had found the 'treasure of complete bliss in Self',

354. Dāsa-pañcāyatana is a group of five saints, 1. Samarth Rāmdās, 2. Jayarāmaswami Vaḍagāvakar, 3. Raṅganāthswami Nigaḍikar, 4. Ānandamūrti and 5. Keśav Swami.

and he continuously worked to see other seekers also find it. Like a touchstone, he converted their lives into gold. Among them were three Muslim seekers: 1. Bājīd Pathān, 2. Shāh Beg and 3. Shakargañj. The poet, Moropant, praised the saint-poet Bājīd Pathān in these words:

Bājīd, the Pathān, detached from the mundane I
 Constantly remembered the Lord I
 Was given a place in Vaikuṇṭha, as a fruit of austerities I
 He attained glory in this world II

(Sanmaṇimālā, 71)

Uddhava Chidghana, Jayarāmasuta, and some others have cited his name in their compositions, as well as the names of all saints, known as Santamālikā. Also, Mahīpatibuvā, in chapter 41 of his Bhaktalīlāmṛta has given a brief introduction of Bājīd Paṭhān (verse numbers 64-87).

According to Mahīpatibuvā's account, Bājīd was the subhedār in Ādil Shāh's court. He maintained an army of 25,000 soldiers. His family was complete with all relatives, including grandparents, parents, brothers-sisters, wife-son, etc. His coffers were overflowing. Once, when he was returning home from an expedition one of the camels owned by him died by the weight of the treasure it was carrying. The camel driver unloaded the treasure and stood waiting by the side of the road, for his lord to arrive. When Bājīd reached there he asked the camel driver, "Why are you waiting here?" He answered that the camel was dead.

Till then, Bājīd had not seen any death. So, he did not wait for the camel driver to complete and ordered him, "What are you waiting for? Make that camel stand, reload the treasure on his back and proceed." The camel driver had to obey his lord. So, he raised four bamboos on the ground, tied the camel's legs to each of the four bamboos and made the camel stand with their support. Thereafter, he loaded all the treasure on the camel's back. But how could a dead camel walk?

In this mortal world living beings die I
 Bājīd was not aware of this fact I
 Because of some of his prior merit I
 He could fulfil his sensual desires I
 Not seen any death before, he said to his cameleer I
 "Come on, drive the camels, let them catch speed" I

The cameleer said, "The life I
 That could make the camel walk, had already left it II
 Out of the fear of you I
 I have loaded the dead camel with the treasure I
 However, when the driving force—the life—has left I
 What solution can be there" II

(Bhaktalilāmṛta 41.76-78)

Thus, with a profound realisation of the transient nature of the mortal body, Bājīd became conscience-stricken (as if an urge of introspection germinated within him). By renouncing everything, he nurtured this new awareness and when he totally surrendered to guru Keśav Swami, the vine of his spiritual awareness blossomed in all respects. Keśav Swami initiated him with the mantra of Lord Rāma's worship and also bestowed him with the gift of poetic skill to express his feelings of devotion.

According to Mahīpatībuvā, Bājīd Paṭhāṇ composed five hundred verses in Hindi and many more in Marathi. This reference is very important because in all these compositions Bājīd Paṭhāṇ has not used his name or any pseudonym; instead, he has credited his compositions to his guru Keśav Swami's grace. Mahīpatī has quoted two of the verses composed by Bājīd Paṭhāṇ:

Whatever work you are engaged in, keep reciting the name of Rāma I
 This colourful mundane life is only of four days, then you will be a
 part of the soil I
 Wear a garland of tulasī and remember Kṛṣṇaśyāma I
 Know that your hands will remain filled with only one time meal II

It is almost impossible to trace Bājīd Paṭhāṇ's Marathi compositions because he has preferred to remain anonymous. Few of his compositions credited to Keśav Swami carry Keśav Swami's name with utmost respect but Bājīd does not announce his own name. Is it possible that these verses are composed by Bājīd? For example, see this verse which praises the guru's deeds that have guided the disciple to experience liberation in the out-of-body state:

Today my mind was spellbound I
 I am not the same person any more II
 Dinānāth, the merciful has possessed me I
 Oh, my dearest friend, now what should I do II

I have lost every sense of bodily existence |
 Awareness of both, union and separation has been wiped out ||
 This miracle is Keśav Swami's doing |
 He established me in that Immutable [Truth] ||³⁵⁵

In light of the opinion recorded by Mahīpatībuvā, I feel that such verses are composed by Bājīd Pathan, the great devotee of his guru.

Shāh Beg is another disciple of Keśav Swami. Some of his immersing Marathi verses are included in the manuscript of Keśav Swami's poems.³⁵⁶ Stringent austerities and boundless devotion to the guru are characteristic³⁵⁷ of his compositions.

The 'time'³⁵⁸ has come with its mouth wide open |
 Swallowing all, making the three-worlds barren |
 Get up and escape before it is too late |
 Otherwise it will gulp you down in a single swipe ||

Thus, after warning people of the predatory character of the 'time', he implores them to escape its wrath by surrendering at the guru's feet:

Guru rescues you from 'time' |
 He is your kin, brother, father, mother and companion |
 Even gods like Brahmā cannot get a place at his feet |
 If you get it, then nothing to be frightened ||
 Keśav Swami is an unending source of bliss |
 Surrender to him completely from your heart |
 Every place touched by his feet is Kashi³⁵⁹ |
 So you attain samādhi without effort ||

355. Author's Note: Shrikeśavaswāmiñcī Kavita: Editor – Narhar Sadashiv Joshi, Śrī. Kharshikar Shastri. Verse Number 207, p.62.

356. Author's Note: Śrī Kharshikar has noted down that this manuscript of Keśav Swami's poems is in the collection of Barrister Shridhar Vaman Naik of Hyderabad.

357. Author's Note: In the book Shrikeśavaswāmiñcī Kavita a composition of Shāhbeg is given in the Editor's Note (Sampadkache Manogat) at the beginning of the book. One more of his composition is given on p. 272.

358. Kāla – Time (also means death) is the ultimate boundary of human existence, something to be feared of.

359. Kashi/Varanasi (Banaras) – Hindus believe that if one can breathe his last at Kashi, he can attain mokṣa.

Shāh Beg speaks with complete faith that his guru is an incarnation of Lord Śiva. To him his guru is the one who is an unending source of bliss and every place where he has stepped is equivalent to the holy city of Kashi, which is the eternal source of merit. See the song that is an expression of his faith:

His expanse cannot be grasped by gods like Brahmā |
 But He is within the reach of the yogis ||
 Oh Mother, though, I wish to attain liberation |
 I don't expect that I offer my mind at his feet like a flower |
 He, the unchangeable would take me beyond existence |
 He is essentially the incarnation of God Śaṅkara ||
 My being is completely dissolved in Keśav Swami |
 Shāh Beg says, "I have come to liberate myself" ||

Shakargañj, the third Muslim disciple of Keśav Swami, seems to have sung the songs of his 'lover'³⁶⁰ in an intoxicated frame of mind, as indicated by the only available song composed by him. He calls his intoxicated state, a witch:

The young witch comes floating |
 She holds the chalice of wisdom and dances fearlessly ||
 Oh brother, I have given up all worldly dealings |
 I have got the authentic vision from the Lord ||
 Intoxicated with the bliss in Self, I have forgotten about my physical being |
 Since my heart has met my Lord, where is the place for illusion ||
 It now thinks without any pretence, it feels completely euphoric |
 Today, Shakargañj has found his guru Keśavrāja ||³⁶¹

The disciples of Keśav Swami, who are an embodiment of devotion to their guru and have attained the supreme position (paramapada) through his blessings, have dodged our curiosity and are as if sitting in meditation in the dark cave of the unknown. The day, enough information about them is available, those interested in the lives of the noble (sant) will be in possession of a priceless treasure.

360. Parapurūṣa – Lover.

361. Author's Note: Śrīkeśavswāmiñcī Kavitā, verse no. 619, p.190.

Shāh Navraṅg

Recently, I have found a verse³⁶² composed by a Muslim saint poet, who indicated that he was associated with Keśav Swami's sect:

Sadguru is my father, you do not ask me any questions |
 The kindness in your eyes is my mother ||
 The omnipotent Lord, found in a dot, know it |
 You search and you would know, that nothing is without it ||||
 There is no awareness of separation between I and You |
 Ask a few around you and make sure of it ||2||
 Shāh Navraṅg sees beyond the visible shades of colour |
 Is there any need to iterate its name, it is Pūrṇabrahma ||

I have named this poet, Shāh Navraṅg, but considering the suggestive words of two names [Raṅgātīta and Pūrṇabrahma] in the last two lines, indicate that Raṅgabodh (the guru of Keśav Swami), was Shāh Navraṅg's paramguru. and Pūrṇabodh was his guru. This Shāh has immersed himself completely in the colour of the omnipotent, Pūrṇabrahman, where the thought of separation between I-You disappears. Yet, he remains largely unknown to us, who is in an empty state that is beyond any colour.

Jaṅgalī Faqīr Sayyad Husein

Earlier, we learned about the life and poetry of a Muslim saint—Alam Khan. One of his fellow disciples Jaṅgalī Faqīr Sayyad Husein had composed a long poem³⁶³ in ovi metre, which is in the collection of Samarth Vagdevata Mandir. Its composition in ovi metre does not necessarily conform to the usual rules, the stanzas are not numbered. The poet has frequently mentioned the name of Waḍawālasiddha Nāganāth:

First, I bow to the Master, Siddha Waḍawāl Nāgeśvara |
 He blessed me, the ocean of grace |
 With his grace, my heart is filled with knowledge |
 I shall narrate it now, please listen ||

362. Author's Note: I found this verse in a manuscript collection of my friend Mr. M. V. Nikhal, Pune.

363. Author's Note: Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule. Manuscript no. 1637.

I bow to that Śrī Siddha Waḍawāl Nāganāth |
 Who has blessed me, and gave me the ultimate knowledge |
 With his grace, my heart is filled with knowledge |
 Now I will narrate immediately the sayings of messiah ||

Jaṅgalī Faqīr seems to be the adjectival nickname and Sayyad Husein is the real name. He has used both names in his compositions.

Jaṅgalī Faqīr says the clever ones should remain in the company of
 saints |
 Jaṅgalī Faqīr says please listen attentively |
 Sayyad Husein says, now I will tell you what the Messiah has said |

I have asked for a copy of some of the poems of Jaṅgalī Faqīr. It includes stories like Śiva's war with Dundubhī and Gajāśura, the birth of Kārtikeya, the birth of Gaṇeśa, the elephant head of Gaṇeśa, etc. In the case of the birth of Gaṇeśa, he has cited Liṅgapurāṇa: "The birth of Gaṇeśa, is told in the Liṅgapurāṇa." The narrative style of Jaṅgalī Faqīr is realistic. The stories are narrated posing Nārada as telling those stories to Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna.

When Gajāśura became unconquerable to all gods including Śiva and others, and began to devastate everything around him, Śiva sent Vīrabhadra to confront him. While narrating that instance Jaṅgalī Faqīr writes:

Vīrabhadra gave a call to Gajāśura |
 Then he started walking forward |
 How did they fight? |
 Audience, please see the amazing spectacle ||
 One is kālā (dark) and the other is the mahākālā (darkest) |
 Both collided with each other |
 The universe was filled with its resounding resonance |
 With that sound the Panaka ³⁶⁴ had an urge to run away ||
 Gajāśura did not step back, see, he came face to face |
 Then Vīrabhadra gave a blow to him, you should know |
 He headed forward |
 To challenge Vīrabhadra, see (Oh audience!) ||

364. The term is used to indicate Gajāśura.

After witnessing that even Vīrabhadra was unable to control Gajāśura, Śiva himself attacked him and cut off his head with his trident. How the same head got fixed on the headless torso of Gaṇeśa and how he came to be known as Gajamukha (elephant-headed) is narrated by Jaṅgali Faqīr in a very interesting manner:

Carrying Gajāśura's head in hand I
 Tripurāri³⁶⁵ was coming quickly I
 Then he arrived at the main entrance I
 The gatekeeper sitting there saw him II
 He obstructed Tripurāri with the staff in his hand I
 He did not allow Śiva to enter I
 "Please hold it in mind, I have no order I
 From Pārvatī, Oh Tripurāri!" II
 Then Tripurāri got angry I
 In disapproval, he cut off his head I
 The head flew to the heavens II
 The headless torso was dancing in the Lord's courtyard I
 Pārvatī saw it with her own eyes I
 Pārvatī – Śakti said to Śiva I
 "What have you done, Oh the holder of the trident II
 This is our son I
 I had asked him to guard the entrance I
 How could you kill him? I
 Didn't you think twice before doing it" II
 Śiva was holding Gajāśura's head in his hand I
 Gaṇeśa's torso was dancing in the Lord's courtyard I
 Śiva fixed Gajāśura's head on him I
 Know it the truth II
 Śiva named him Narakuñjara³⁶⁶ I
 In the war Gajāśura confronted Vīrabhadra I
 He broke one of Gajāśura's tusks I
 So only one tusk remained on the elephant's head II
 So the Narkuñjara-Gajānana is known as 'Yekdantu' I
 Known as the possessor of the fourteen sciences I

365. Tripurāri – Enemy of Tripurāsura, a demon.

366. Narakuñjara – Composite of man and elephant.

And Vedānta doctrine |
 Known to be the possessor of all attributes ||
 Storehouse of all sciences |
 A shelter like Mother's house for poets |
 He was given the shell of cinnabar |
 By Maheśvara-Śiva ||

Jaṅgali Faqīr's forthright style of narration is evident from this lengthy citation.

Shāh Husein Faqīr

In the ambit of ancient Marathi saints, Shāh Husein Faqīr was a valued name. Uddhava Chidghana and others have categorically included his name in the saint tradition, with great esteem. Moropant has open-heartedly praised his soft-sweet-pleasing poetry:

His speech is sweet, pleasing and soft, his name is Shāh
 Husein Faqīr |
 Even the parrot³⁶⁷ whose throat does not have any trace of phlegm,
 may fall short of these qualities ||

[The poet, whose name is Shāh Husein's speech is very sweet, attractive, and soft. Goddess Sarasvatī's parrot(?),³⁶⁸ the one that does not have a bit of phlegm (having a clear throat), is also no match to him.]

Today, Shāh Husein Faqīr has disappeared behind the curtain of obscurity, and the soft-sweet-pleasing sound of his speech—once praised highly by the brilliant paṇḍit like Moropant and other saint-poets who remembered him with great fondness—is forgotten.

His name occurs variously in his compositions and elsewhere as Shāh Husein Faqīr, Shāh Husein Faqīr, Shāh Faqīr, Shāhu Faqīr, Shāhusein Faqīr, Shāh Husein Alādā, etc. I have found a sole Marathi song composed by him

367. Keer – Parrot.

368. Parrot in Indian mythology is generally associated with Pārvatī, Śiva's consort, especially as Kāmākṣī – the goddess of love. However, a parrot as a symbol of Goddess Sarasvatī does not occur either in the Indian literature or iconography.

and a few Hindi songs.³⁶⁹ Such small number of his available songs also reflect the softness, and sweetness of Shāh Husein's compositions. Shāh Husein, in his only available Marathi song, a free composition, has described the playfulness of Kṛṣṇa in the house of Nanda:

My Śrīhari is playing at Nanda's house ||
 He catches the tail of the calf and runs after it,
 The little bells around his ankles keep jingling,
 He wears a golden chain around his neck and a kuñcī³⁷⁰ on his head,
 His manifest dark-coloured form is charming
 The mother is watching her small baby,
 Imitating the child, she utters lispingly—"Ale! Ale"³⁷¹ |

A small baby, whom the mother is calling out lovingly, sneaks out with his playmates to steal the fruits of jujuba. All the playmates have mock fights; they pinch each other with closed eyes; play marbles, ball, and trapstick. In this manner:

They have fun in various ways,
 To satisfy all their desires,
 There is Hari, the omnipotent,
 Who is praised by Brahmā and other gods ||
 He, who is neither knowable, nor visible to the Vedas,
 Is crawling in the front of the door as a baby,
 He spreads hands to get butter,
 Suckles at Yasoda's breasts,
 Drinks her milk, making gulping sounds,
 Keeps toddling,
 Letting himself down he rolls on the floor,
 He cries in their house ||

Thus, Shāh Husein paints a vivid and delightful picture of Kṛṣṇa's endless exploits and playful mischiefs—accompanying the cowherds as they take their

369. Author's Note: Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule. Marathi song – Manuscript No. 4 (This is included in one of the manuscripts in the Mujumdār Collection at Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Pune), Hindi songs – Manuscript nos. 681, 778, 793, 1174, 1506, 1519, 1614, 1639, 1966.

370. Kuñcī – A bonnet with a pleated, attached wrap to it.

371. Ale! Ale! (Are! Are!) – Oh baby! Oh baby!

cattle to graze, soothing the cows with soft “hek hek” sounds, patting them to dispel their fear, smearing butter on the faces of wandering milkmaids, breaking earthen water pots on their heads with well-aimed stones, strolling along the banks of the Yamunā with a stick in hand in the manner of a cow-herd, and stealthily stealing curds and milk. The list is endless. Despite all his mischiefs, Kṛṣṇa, the slayer of Mura demon, was loved by all because among other things he had destroyed many demons. He is also dear to Shāh Husein’s heart:

But Murārī does miracle,
He takes away everything negative and gives us happiness,
Whenever Shāh Faqīr utters his name, he appears to him,
The one whose name is dear to Śiva,
Nārada sings his praises ||

This song composed in a free metre demonstrates Shāh Husein’s unconditional love for Kṛṣṇa. In this song, he has overcome with affection for his lord. In his Hindi songs, he perceived Kṛṣṇa with a feeling of love. Sometimes, his heart is spellbound by Kṛṣṇa who plays flute on the banks of Yamuna just as a beautiful woman is drawn to her lover. At other times he calls himself a gamesman and Kṛṣṇa, a dice, as if he is about to play an out-of-this-world game of chausara or sārīpāṭa³⁷² with his lord. Shāh Husein is aware of the transient nature of human life. Hence, he is inclined to meditate upon Śrīharī, by establishing him in the lotus of his heart. He is fully aware of the vainness of rituals. That is the reason, why his inner mind calls out loudly without any hesitation:

Who wants to go on pilgrimage |
Why would any of us go on pilgrimage ||
The Ganga is in our hearts, and so is the Jamuna |
Let us meditate within our heart ||1||
The mudra and āsana of a yogi, are both internal |
Let us meditate in transcendent state ||2||
Shāh Husein Faqīr says |
Who would want to wander aimlessly ||3||

372. Sārīpāṭa – An Indian board game of ancient origin that is supposed to be the precursor of chess.

Thus, this was a Muslim Marathi saint-poet, who on one side relates to the soft emotions expressed by Surdās and on the other hand to the enraptured, heedless attitude of Kabīr. If at all, at some point of time, the veil of the obscurity be removed from his life, then it will be an extremely happy occurrence for those who are interested in devotional literature.

Sayyad Mahammad - Fascinated by the flute

This saint-poet is among those, about whom nothing much can be written. Name of this poet is Sayyad Mahammad and the only available song³⁷³ composed by him is about the power of Kṛṣṇa's flute. He is singing from the core of his heart, assuming the role of a gopī³⁷⁴ (milkmaid):

With your flute's sonorous sound I got smitten, Oh Kānhā ||
 The entire night my own mind acted as my enemy I
 Oh! You like a shelter manifest ||
 That sound of flute of yours I
 Makes me forget my existence ||
 When you broke my pitcher I
 My neighbour, she happened to see it ||
 Mind is unstable by default I
 But now it is attached to Govinda ||
 [Kṛṣṇa said to me] "Among seven hundred gopīs I
 You are the only one ||
 So, I have come to you ||
 To ask for a gift I
 I am Hari, the son of Nanda, the cowherd" ||
 I was on my way to fetch water I
 Oh, my dearest friend ||
 What can I say about him I
 He honoured me thus [by asking for a gift] ||
 But the playful Kṛṣṇa, asking for a gift I
 Has himself become the benefactor ||
 Sayyad Mahammad bows and prays I
 At the feet of Kṛṣṇa I

373. Author's Note: Samarth Vāgdevatā Mandir, Dhule. Manuscript no. 1218.

374. Gopī – Milkmaid.

Sheikh Mahammad Śrīgondekar is also known as Sayyad Mahammad. Then the question arises, was this song possibly composed by Sheikh Mahammad?

Sheikh Alī Salī Mahammad

An abhaṅg was composed in the form of a riddle³⁷⁵ by a poet known as Sheikh Sali Mahammad. He says:

I am of brahmin caste | My relatives are Musalmān ||
 I gave up all the rituals such as daily bathing and ablutions |
 Married one of Mahār caste ||
 Sheikh Ali Sali Mahammad is a good man |
 He, leaving the daughter-in-law went to the mother-in-law ||
 She gave birth to a daughter | Whom he married again³⁷⁶ ||

This type of riddles composed in verse was a tradition in Marathi devotional literature, prevalent from Jñāneśvara to Sant Tukārām.

Latīf Shāh - Śrī Rāma devotee

The story of the saint who got immersed in the devotion of Śrī Rāma has been narrated by Mahīpatibuvā in Bhaktavijaya. Latīf Shāh was the name of this devotee. Mahīpatibuvā could not get any details of Latīf Shāh's life history but his fame as a devotee of Rāma was known to him. Mahīpatibuvā preserved it in his writing:

Latīf Shāh Musalmān | An extremely devoted Vaiṣṇava ||
 He listens to Gītā and Bhāgavata |

375. Author's Note: Marāṭhī Saṃśodhan Patrikā, 10th year, Issue no. 3, p. 30.

376. Dhare has not elaborated on the riddle. The translator feels that we may interpret this riddle (tentatively, till we get an exact interpretation) in the following manner: The daughter-in-law in this riddle might be bhakti (devotion to Allah) and the mother-in-law also bhakti (devotion to a Vaiṣṇava deity). Sheikh Sali Mahammad calls himself as Brahmin of caste, who has left observing the daily rituals a brahmin is supposed to perform. He (perhaps) does not feel the need to do so because he has known Brahman but his relatives are Muslims. Next (after giving up Brahmin's duties) he established a marital alliance in the Mahār caste. After leaving the daughter-in-law (of the family/his wife), he went to his mother-in-law and the mother-in-law gave birth to a daughter (devotion to Brahman); he grew so fond of her that he married her (i.e. he made her his lifelong partner).

He sings day and night the praises of Śrīrāma |
 He gave up his yavana religion | His love for kīrtan is extraordinary ||
 Worshipping God is his routine | He does it very lovingly ||
 (Bhakatvijaya, 55.178-79)

It would be surprising if life for Latīf Shāh was not made difficult by his staunch religious fraternity for giving up Islamic practices and getting immersed through day and night in listening to Gītā-Bhāgavata like a true Vaiṣṇava. The Muslim community complained to the king against Latīf Shāh that he had left his own religious practices and was worshipping Hindu gods. The king immediately acted upon this and ordered to destroy Latīf Shāh's hermitage. The messengers of the king went to Latīf Shāh's hermitage. However, something surprising happened. The moment they saw the great Bhāgavata,³⁷⁷ they simply forgot about executing the inappropriate order of the king and became Latīf Shāh's followers:

They overcame with repentance |
 They decided not to serve the king anymore ||
 Listening to Bhagavadgītā | We should remain here forever ||
 (Bhaktavijaya, 55.183)

After waiting for a while and noticing that none of his messengers had returned, the Bādshāh himself set about to punish Latīf Shāh. When he reached Latīf Shāh's hermitage, he saw something unexpected. The environment there was very clean and pleasant. The courtyard was plastered with cowdung. The surroundings of the house were filled with the fragrance of flowers. A vṇdāvana³⁷⁸ with tulasī planted in it, was placed in the courtyard. The walls of the house were plastered with lime³⁷⁹ and on it were paintings from mythical stories of daśāvatāra.³⁸⁰ The vṇdāvana was painted with a picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, in which Rādhā was offering a viḍā (a roll of betel leaves). Latīf Shāh was seated nearby, reading Bhāgavata and many in the audience along with Bādshāh's messengers were attentively listening.

Watching this scene, Bādshāh became very angry and tried to put Latīf Shāh to a test. However, there was a miracle because of the strength of Latīf

377. Bhāgavata – Devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

378. Vṇdāvana – Altar built for holy basil plant.

379. Chuna – Lime powder of calcium oxide.

380. Daśāvatāra – Ten incarnations of God Viṣṇu.

Shāh's devotion, which led to a humbling effect on Bādshāh. This story is narrated by Mahīpatībuvā in his usual style:

After observing the picture of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa on the vṇdāvana, Bādshāh asked Latīf Shāh

“Oh, what is Rādhā holding in her hand?”

“She is offering a viḍā to Kṛṣṇa,” Latīf Shāh answered with complete faith.

“If so, why is not your Kṛṣṇa eating it?”

When Bādshāh asked thus, Latīf went near the vṇdāvana and started praying to Kṛṣṇa, “Oh My Lord! Rādhikā is waiting for you with such love, with a viḍā in her hand, please accept it from her.” Lord Kṛṣṇa in the recognition of his devotee's devotion created the magical illusion and watching it, Bādshāh's mind was changed:

Kṛṣṇa's painting was there | He immediately opened his mouth ||

Rādhikā then | Quickly put the viḍā in his mouth ||

What was the evidence kept behind | Viḍā was in Rādhikā's hand ||

So suddenly the green colour |

Of the viḍā in her hand had disappeared ||

(Bhaktavijaya 5.199-200)

The truth of the story of this miracle as narrated by Mahīpatībuvā might be a subject of debate, but the blissful quality of this memory of Latīf Shāh's devotion, as preserved in the folk tradition, cannot be denied. Latīf Shāh is mentioned respectfully by Siddhachaitanya and Raṅganāth Swami in their respective Santamālikā. The great poet Moropant has praised him profusely in his Sanmaṇimālā. He says:

Celebrated! Praised by Sant Tukārām, the life of the assemblies of saints, Latībāl

Oh my heart! Remember him with reverence, that devotee of Śrīkṛṣṇa, though he was of different caste ||

(Sanmaṇimālā, 97)

Moropant has praised him as the life of the assemblies of saints, and more so, being of a different caste, he is a devotee of Śrīkṛṣṇa, so Moropant urges his own heart to always remember him. Moropant mentions Latīf in the above

verse as praised by Sant Tukārām, though he belongs to a different caste. Latīf Shāh, who was praised by Sant Tukārām and Raṅganāth Swami, must have lived before the seventeenth century. He has mentioned Sant Kabīr and Mīrābāī in one of his Hindi verses. This leads us to a definitive conclusion that the date of Latīf Shāh falls between the times of Kabīr-Mīrābāī and Sant Tukārām-Raṅganāth Swami, i.e., the sixteenth century.

The medium to express his heart, which was immersed in the colour of devotion was Latīf Shāh's compositions. However, those compositions are not available presently, except three Hindi and one Marathi verses which are kept in Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule.³⁸¹ These few verses are enough to understand the depth and the stature of his spiritual attainment. In one of his verses, he admires the great saints who have contributed to spreading the fame of Śrīrām's name, and modestly states that in a very small way, he has also contributed to this task:

Many have played the drums of Rām-rām ||
 Nārada and Tumburu were the first among them |
 Next were saints Nāmdev and Kabīr ||1||
 The third to do it was Sudāmā ||
 The same sound magnified the greatness of Prahalād ||2||
 The fourth to beat the drum was Janājāsvantā ||
 Dhanā Jāt and Mīrābāī ||3||
 Oh my brother! Listen, Latipā has something to say ||
 Among all of them, I just put in a small bit of mine ||4||

The company of Śrīrāma's devotees is as much prized by Latīf Shāh as the name of Śrīrāma. Those worshippers of Hari are greeted with Rām-Rām, who have overcome all the doubts and negative traits and who have crossed [the ocean of the mundane world] and have helped others to do so:

I say Rām-Rām, I say Rām-Rām to those ||
 To those men who worship Hari |
 Those who themselves were liberated and helped others to liberate ||1||
 Hope, mind and five prāṇa |
 Leaving it all behind ||2||

381. Author's Note: Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule. Marathi verse – Manuscript No. 10, 62, 135, 166.

Latīf says I worship all those I
I remember Śrīkṛṣṇa, one who holds a flute ||3||

As Latīf Shāh himself has experienced extreme happiness in the company of the saints, he feels pity for those who have wandered off from the right path. Latīf Shāh has something to say about the world, which is always surrounded by illusions and self-deception due to false pride:

The blind world is led astray, Oh Man! The blind world is led astray ||
People bathe, and clean themselves externally, but they remain un-
clean internally |
They go to Varanasi-Ganga to get cleansed ||1||
A dishonest man vilifies good men |
Such a man is the most immoral one ||2||
Latīf says I am a faqīr's endowment ³⁸² |
The carder³⁸³ put on a job ||3||

Only a single Marathi composition of Latīf Shāh is available. He has recorded his ultimate experience in it. This experience rendered the concept of the worshipped and the worshipper as irrelevant because the entire inanimate and animate world as pervaded by Govind. There is no division between them. It brings forth a question—who is to worship, who is to be worshipped and with what means? This phenomenon is expressed by Latīf Shāh in his Marathi abhaṅg. He describes the supramundane act of worship in his composition, which needs your heart be the witness:

Where to offer my worship now |
As I feel the oneness in my being and God ||
When I worshipped with full devotion |
My body itself was seen as God ||1||
I tried to pick leaves of holy basil | I found Madhusūdana³⁸⁴ in it ||2||
Perfume, sandal paste, flowers, frankincense |
I sense Śrī Viṭṭhal in all of it ||3||

382. Faqārī chandā – Derived from faqārī (of a faqīr or ascetic) and chandā (endowment), it signifies an offering or endowment made to or by a faqīr.

383. Duniku [?] – Duniyā – A carder, one who prepares yarn from raw wool.

384. Madhusūdana – Slayer of the demon Madhu. It is one of Śrī Viṣṇu's/ Kṛṣṇa's name. Rām also may be addressed by these name as he is an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Fruits, viḍā, offerings of food |
 When I see it, I see Govind in each of it ||4||
 Latīf, who knows Brahman | Sees Cakrapāṇi everywhere ||5||³⁸⁵

As Shāh Latīf has experienced the ultimate truth, his devotion to Śrī Rāma is no more bound by any sectarian boundaries. He is aware that various names like Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and Viṭṭhal are of one and the same Supreme Being. The Marathi devotional tradition, which is liberal and noble is completely integrated in his being. It is sad that details about his life are not available and only a couple of his compositions are available.

The samādhi of Latīf Shāh stands at Bhuī Galli, (Ward No. 3) in Maṅgaḷaveḍhe (District Solapur) in Maharashtra.³⁸⁶ Traditionally, it is believed in Maṅgaḷaveḍhe that the Mughal Bādshāh Aurangzeb was the one, who put Latīf Shāh to test to prove his devotion. The land gift made by Aurangzeb is still enjoyed by the attendants at Latīf Shāh's samādhi. However, it is unfortunate that his Muslim attendants have not allowed any of the signs of his Vaiṣṇava identity to sustain and the Hindus have also forgotten this wonderful devotee of Rāma-Kṛṣṇa.

How many such devotees should we count? Sayadulāl³⁸⁷ spoke of the multicoloured nature of the world by saying, "This world is frivolous, strange, and two-coloured." As if assuming the role of a night patrol, Bandā Faqīr³⁸⁸ gave a wake-up call to people blinded by ignorance. He called out, "My dear ones wake up, my dear ones wake up." Those who chose to leave the human world and go to the jungle by smearing themselves with ash were labelled as 'not so ripe' by Burhān Shāh.³⁸⁹ There were many others! We cannot forget them. They all attest to the internal truth of the human existence. We pay obeisance to their memories.

385. Madhūsudana, Viṭṭhal, Govind and Cakrapāṇi are various names of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa/Viṭṭhal.

386. Author's Note: Shrimant: R. G. Karandikar, p.36.

387. Author's Note: Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule. Manuscript no. 511.

388. Author's Note: Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule. Manuscript no. 597.

389. Author's Note: Samarth Vagdevata Mandir, Dhule. Manuscript no. 1449.

Chapter 8

Avindha and Govinda

Ketaki (Pandanus odorifer) is a thorny plant, yet its flower exudes an exquisite fragrance. The jackfruit, though covered in thorns, conceals within it a treasure trove of sweetness. The coconut, encased in a hard shell, holds within it sweet, life-giving water. In the same way, Sheikh Mahammad proclaims that though he is a Muslim, it is Govinda who dwells in his heart:

Sheikh Mahammad avindha | In his heart dwells Govinda ||

While describing the relationship between avindha and Govinda, Sheikh Mahammad seems to be in an overwhelmed state. He finds this relationship extraordinary, and exerts to convince common people about its genuineness.

As a child I have personally met some Muslim people who were Sheikh Mahammad's type. In the village of my grandparents there lived one such person, whose name was Usmānbhai. He was a *kāzī*³⁹⁰ but to make it convenient for the villagers he also worked as *mulānī*,³⁹¹ though his mind was not in that job. He loved to hear the stories of saints-devotees narrated lusciously by Mahīpatībuvā, to keep thinking about it and repeating it in his mind and speech, and whenever possible, to narrate it to others, to abide by the life values that are eternal and to get immersed in the joy of singing devotional songs in the temple at night. He participated in Hindu festivals with unmatched enthusiasm. His muslimness was limited to the confines of his household, just like Hindus whose caste traditions were followed within the limits of their households. There was nothing in his clothing, behaviour

390. *Kāzī* – An Islamic judge.

391. *Mulānī* – A butcher.

and speech to differentiate him as a Muslim. He discussed Hindu-Muslim relations, but while doing so he sought support in the teachings of the saints, so that he could emphasize on universal human values. When the singing of devotional songs in the temple reached its climax, his poetic talent would come alive and he would compose abhaṅgs with ease. He attributed his abhaṅgs to Sant Tukārām. His modesty was such that he did not claim it as his own creation.

I have spoken of Usmān in past tense not because his memory has faded, but because it belongs to the old times. His memories are still fresh in mind. Usmānbhai is no more. I used to call him Usmānmāmā³⁹² in childhood. The old uncle of Usmānbhai, used to stay in Pune quite close from my place. Usmānbhai had told me that his uncle had a few documents and a copper plate with him. That tempted me to visit him. He received me kindly. In the very first visit he said very frankly:

“See Mr. Dhere, I have spent all my life in the company of people like you. The speech and manners of our family members improved because of the good atmosphere as we socialised with people like you. However, today our world is changing. I came to Pune in search of livelihood. My son was brought up here. He started looking up to Pakistan for ideals, while staying here. He insisted on admitting his kids in an Urdu school. What would we do with Urdu. Are we going to Pakistan, so that we should study only Urdu? Or are we going to bring Pakistan here? This made me very uneasy. One day I told my son straightaway, go ahead with whatever you wish to do, but I will not allow you to harm the future of these children of tender age! I went and saw a teacher in our old class and with his help, I admitted my grandchildren to a Marathi school. When they began to study Marathi, I was happy.”

Usmānbhai and his old uncle had, in a way, opened the secret of the psychological make-up of the Muslim Marathi saint-poets.

Before integration

The history of integration of the two communities—Hindu and Muslim—goes back to the 14th century C.E. Islam was introduced in Maharashtra since the times of its inception. The Arabian traders used to descend on the Western Coast of Maharashtra since pre-Islamic times. There are some random

392. Maternal uncle is addressed as māmā.

instances of few Arabs being given posts of authority in the courts of Rāṣṭra-kuṭas.³⁹³ The trading contacts were not affected in any way because the Arabs had converted to Islam. They were given concessions by the Hindu rulers. Their religious places were also constructed without hindrance and they married the local women here which resulted in the increase of their population. They kept themselves aloof from the Hindu society but there was also no significant conflict.

From the eighth century, C.E. the destructive political invasion of Islam began. The invasions of Mahammad Kāsim and Mahammad Ghaznī created utter havoc in Sindh and Gujarat. However, Maharashtra did not experience Islamic invasions till the thirteenth century.

Some of the newly converted Muslims, settled on the western coast, some Arab travellers and some Islamic proselytisers were arriving since the seventh-eighth centuries. The ways adopted by the Islamic proselytisers were not straightforward. Many of them belonged to the Sufi sect, the philosophy of which was similar to Hindu Vedānta. However, that philosophy was understood by only a few of them, the rest were staunch followers of orthodox Islam.

Nuruddīn was the first known sufi proselytiser to arrive in Maharashtra (Tehsil Ambad, District Aurangabad, now Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar). He came here from Egypt and first settled at Rākṣabhuvan (District Beed). However, facing the opposition of the local people, he shifted to Dongāon, Tehsil Ambad, District Aurangabad and later died at the same place. There are sources to indicate that sufi proselytisers were moving to the south, in a considerable number after Nuruddīn and even before the invasion of Allāuddīn (Khiljī). Śrī. Setumadhav Rao Pagdi has given a list of them in Sufi Sect, a book authored by him. The list includes the following names along with Nuruddīn: Momīn Ārif (Daulatabad), Jalāluddīn Gañjarawāṃ (Khultabad), Bābā Sharfuddīn (Hyderabad), Bābā Shamsuddīn (Hyderabad), Hyāt Kalandar (Mangarulpur-Vidarbha), Hiāmuddīn (Gulbarga), Sheikh Shāhīd (Talikot), Sheikh Sarmast (Sagar-Shahpur), Shāhdulā Rahmān (Elichpur), and so on.³⁹⁴ It needs to be noted here that many of them were actively spreading Islam during the Yādava period and within the territories under Yādava administration.

393. Author's Note: Saṃśodhanmuktāvalī (III): Dr. V.V. Mirashi, pp. 149-170.

394. Author's Note: Sufi Saṃpradāya, Setumadhavrao Pagdi, pp. 22-23, 67-64.

Later, in the year 1284, Allauddīn Khiljī invaded Devgiri, and within no time he destroyed the rich empire of Devgiri. The rulers, who were unaware of the political scenario and their duties towards the society that was rendered defenceless because of ritualism and social disparity, could not stand the tornado of Muslim invasion. All the exterior richness was brought to a naught because there was no inner dignity left.

The religious invasion by the sufis happened simultaneously with the political invasion. Nizāmuddīn Auliā, a sufi proselytiser of Delhi sent Sheikh Muntājiboddīn alis Zarzarī Baksha in 1300 C.E. and his brother Burhānuddīn Gharīb Shāh in 1309 after his death. Each of them was accompanied by 700 assistant proselytisers. These 1400 proselytisers made Devgiri a centre of their activities and they gradually spread all over Maharashtra. They also destroyed the maṭhas and temples just like the Muslim rulers. They converted people by force and by exhibiting magical powers they attracted many Hindus.

Many visit Dāwal Malik

The sect of Dāwal Malik is a clear historical example of the impact of sufism on the lives of people. Dāwal Malik,³⁹⁵ whose original name was Abū Masūd, was a sufi proselytiser in Gujarat-Kathiawar region. His name Dāwal Malik is a corrupt form of his epithet Dāwalmulk meaning the 'master of the land'. Hazrat Shāh Ālam, an Auliā was his guru.

It is said that Dāwal Malik possessed healing powers. A story is told in this context. Being extremely devoted to his guru, Dāwal Malik served his guru till the guru was alive. Once he was assisting his guru in performing vajū.³⁹⁶ A man suffering from a disease arrived there at that moment and prayed to Hazrat Shāh Ālam, saying, "Please pray to Allah to relieve me from this disease and bless me." Shāh Ālam sprinkled the remaining water on the patient after finishing his ablutions and within no time he was cured of his disease. After he left happily, Shāh Ālam said to Abū Masūd, later known as Dāwal Malik, "Many such patients used to visit Khwājā Moinuddīn Chistī but he used to assign them to Hazrat Sayyad Sālār Masād Gāzī. Now I should also be appointing somebody in the same way." This made all his disciples to

395. Author's Note: Vividhajñānavistār, January 1914 (pp. 35-37) by Śrī. H.R. Piṭake and Pratiṣṭhān. February 1960 (pp. 14-17) by Śrī. N.S. Pohanerakar.

396. Vajū – Ablutions.

look up at him with expectation. However, Shāh Ālam immediately turned to Dāwal Malik and said, "I am giving this authority to you, however, you may even have to sacrifice your life for it." After this Dāwal Malik attained the magical power to cure people of their diseases.

After being bestowed with healing powers, Dāwal Malik went to the South and travelled there extensively to spread Islam. With the help of his magical powers, he earned thousands of followers. The signs of his influence can be seen all over Maharashtra.

Dāwal Malik met his death as predicted by his guru. During the reign of Mahmūd Shāh I, known as Mahmūd Begadā of Gujarat, he was working as the administrative head of Kamroon (?), where he was killed by a member of Girāsiyā tribe in Hijri year 889 (1484 C.E.).

Dāwal Malik lived in the fifteenth century. He had become so influential in Maharashtra, in his lifetime, that after his death people built chillās³⁹⁷ in his name at many places. It is said that there are 360 chillās in South India.

There are such memorials near the fortification wall of Aurangabad, also at Verūl, Bābhulagāv and Pimpalavāḍī. The chillā at Verūl is very popular. At this place, his mother's chillā also exists by the side of his chillā. It may be noted that there are a number of these chillās around Paithan, an important centre of the bhakti movement in Maharashtra. Sant Eknāth was born there in the first half of the fifteenth century, which was not very far off from Dāwal Malik's times. Sant Eknāth was saddened by the fact that thousands of Hindus from the precincts of Paithan, where he spent his life, had become staunch followers of Dāwal Malik. He laments:³⁹⁸

They worship the begging bowl of Dāwal Malik!
Once a year they dress themselves as a faqīr ||
When the bier gets discharged in the water, they eat Malidā l
It is as good as Hindus eating the leftovers from the Turuks³⁹⁹ ||

Sant Eknāth did not approve the practice of going around begging assuming the appearance of a faqīr and eating food as blessings, handed over by a mu-jāwar, i.e. an officiating priest in the service of Dāwal Malik. This form of the worship of a pīr, disapproved by Sant Eknāth is still prevalent to some extent in Vidarbha-Marathwada region.

397. Chillās – Memorials.

398. Author's Note: Śrī Eknāth Mahārājānchi Gāthā, (Apte edn. śaka year 1830), Number 3893, p. 784.

399. Turuks – Muslims.

In Marathwada, this form of worship is practiced more in the context of diseases of the eyes. Any ailment, either of the eyes or any other part of the body is understood as symbolic of Dāwal Malik's command to visit him, and the family begins preparations for a visit to his dargāh. The one who is suffering from a disease turns a blue cloth in a begging satchel and takes a spade, gathers a large number of family members and kin, and sets on a pilgrimage. Wherever there is a human settlement, he begs for food, calling out, "Dom Dom Dāwal Malik." All are supposed to sustain themselves only on the foodgrains they get by begging thus. Any excess of foodgrains collected as alms are supposed to be cooked at the end of the pilgrimage and offered in a community feast. On reaching the destination the begging satchel and the spade are kept on a triangular stand. The mujāwar is paid with officiating fees and he asks the patient to perform the required rituals at the chillā of Dāwal Malik and cook food for the community feast, using the foodgrains received as alms. However, this is not the end of the proceedings and the pilgrims still need to wait for Dāwal Malik to appear to them in a dream and assure the relief of the patient from his sufferings. During this waiting period, the mujawār narrates the stories of the miracles of Dāwal Malik to the pilgrims so that they are established firmly in their devotion.

Chillās of Dāwal Malik exist in Vidarbha, also at Uparāi (Taluka Elichpur, District Amaravati), Mirāḍ (Taluka Hinganghat, District Vardha), etc. People in Vidarbha appeal to Dāwal Malik and do the pilgrimage, not only for curing people but also for curing domestic animals. If a family decides to seek help from Dāwal Malik in the instance of difficulties, then it is necessary that they get initiated by the mujāwar, who ties a thread on the wrist of the novice and once initiated, the worship of Dāwal Malik is permanently accepted as part of that family's religious duty.

There are two types of manners in which this worship is performed: baiṭhī kandurī (to celebrate community feast at home) and firatī kandurī⁴⁰⁰ (to go on pilgrimage and to celebrate community feast by cooking the foodgrains received as alms.) People in Vidarbha keep a begging satchel of saffron colour, the lower half of a sun-dried bottle gourd (known as patar or pātra, i.e. a vessel or a begging bowl), a small stick, and a wooden spade during the pilgrimage. On the route, some believers may provide them with food according to their individual capacity. This is known as worshipping

400. Kandurī – Community feast.

the vessel (pātra pūjā). Sant Eknāth has referred to this very practice, when he says, malikācī pūjītī gadā. Gadā means alms. Pātra is actually a begging bowl. The devotees cook chicken or goat meat for the final community feast after a patient is cured.

The worship of Dāwal Malik in Vidarbha is prevalent among the following castes: Dhaṅgar, Tiḷole, Dhanoje Kuṇbī, Telī, Bhoī, Mahār, Māṅg, etc. There are even few followers from the supposed higher castes. In Maharashtra, even today there are quite a few brahmin families who carry the surname Dāwalbhakt (devotees of Dāwal). Like Sant Eknāth, Samarth Rāmdās⁴⁰¹ has also noted the popularity of Dāwal Malik among the people of Maharashtra:

Many go on pilgrimage to Dāwal Malik | Many worship a pīr |
Many become Turks | Of their own will ||

Many worship pīrs

Similar to the many Hindus becoming followers of Dāwal Malik because of his magical powers, there were many Hindus who worshipped pīrs. The devotion to a pīr was not to be found only among the common people but also among the nobility. It is well-known that Mālojī Rāje Bhosale and his wife Dipābāi had vowed to Shāh Sharīf, a pīr at Ahmednagar, for getting blessed with a son. In a biography of Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj,⁴⁰² Malhar Ramarao Citnis has written: “For not having children, Dipābāi prayed and vowed in many ways. Shāh Sharīf, the pīr at Ahmednagar is known for his magical powers. They vowed to pīr Shāh Sharīf for getting a child, which included the promise of naming that child after the pīr.”

According to Bhosalavaṃśacaritra inscribed on the wall of the Bṛhadīśvara temple at Tanjavur, Mālojī Rāje himself had visited Shāh Sharīf.⁴⁰³ At that time Shāh Sharīf was alive. When Mālojī Rāje prayed to him for the fulfilment of his desire for having sons, Shāh Sharīf meditated for some time and then blessed him, saying that he will have two sons who will grow up to be very famous and will be blessed with great fortune... name both of them after me.” Along with this blessing, the pīr made a gift of five things to Mālojī

401. Author's Note: Dāsbodh. 14.7.32.

402. Author's Note: Malhar Rāmrao Citnis (Author), Śakakarte Shriśivachhatrapatī Mahārāj hyāanche Saptaprakaraṇātmak Charitra: K.N. Sane (Editor), 1924, pp.15-16.

403. Author's Note: Tanjavarchā Śilālekḥ: Rajwade Collection, śaka year 1828, pp. 5-6.

Rāje – two swords, named as nāgīṇ and padmīṇ, a loincloth, one kaldarā (a silver coin), and a pañcā (handwoven multipurpose piece of cotton cloth).

Two sons were born to Mālojī Rāje and Dīpābāī with the blessings of Shāh Sharīf, so he named them Shāhaji and Sharīfji. This is confirmed in Śiv-abhārata by poet Paramānanda. He says, “Shāhāji and Sharīfji, the two sons, who enhanced the glory of their family, who carried the name of a saint, were growing up in splendour.”

The dargāh of Shāh Sharīf is within the boundary of Bhingar, a town in Ahmednagar District, which is near the fort of Ahmednagar. This dargāh is known as Dāyar Dargāh. This dargāh still receives a grant, and it is managed by Sheikh Pīrjāde family. There are many documents⁴⁰⁴ available since the times of Chhatrapati Shāhu about the grant of two villages, Konavasī and Yekalhāre, and some cash, made for the expenses for incense-flowers, lamp-lighting, maintenance of faqīr and wandering ascetics⁴⁰⁵ and celebration of Urs. One of the charters is quoted here:

“May all be well. In the year 45 of Rājyābhiṣeka śaka⁴⁰⁶ named as Vil-ambī, on the twelfth day of the dark half, Friday, the one who has augmented the pride of the kṣatriya lineage, King Shāhu Chhatrapati Swami, has issued this order to Rājamānya Rājaśrī Bālājī Paṇḍit, the chief minister (pradhāna), who is skilled in all kinds of administrative tasks,⁴⁰⁷ and who is absolutely trustworthy.⁴⁰⁸ Village Konosī in (Shevgaon Taluka) and Yekalhāre (Saṅga-manera Taluka) are assigned as gifts to Dargāh Hazrat Shāh Sharīf, Ahmednagar. See that it continues without hindrance. If anybody creates trouble then warn the concerned person. There is no need to elaborate as you are a wise one. Maryādayāṃ virājate.”⁴⁰⁹

This charter shows the widespread faith in various pīrs and the sympathetic view of the rulers for that faith. Many places of pīrs can be found throughout Maharashtra, particularly in Ahmednagar, Marathwada, and Vidarbha, which attract a large number of Hindu pilgrims.

404. Author's Note: Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Pune, Annual Report, śaka year 1838, pp.180-193.

405. Faqīr-fakaḍa – Wandering ascetics.

406. The day of coronation ceremony of Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj signified the beginning of a new era named as Rājyābhiṣek śaka.

407. Samastrājyakāryadhurandhar – Skilled at all administrative tasks.

408. Viśvāsniḍhi – Ocean of trustworthiness.

409. Maryādayāṃ virājate – Mortab (meaning the end – words marking the end of the letter)

Reflections on sufi pīrs in the writings of Marathi saints

The disastrous advent of Islam left the entire Maharashtra in a chaotic situation. With the advent of Islam, the bhakti movement in Maharashtra played a crucial role in protecting the quintessence of Maharashtra. In Maharashtra, the thoughts of saints created a common bond in a society filled with disparity. These thoughts kept the native faith alive in the society, though in an inert way. The social reactions to Islam are reflected in the thoughts of Marathi saints. The immediate thought was that this is the effect of Kaliyuga,⁴¹⁰ the Age of Kālī. Sant Nāmdev says:

The corrupt rulers became yavana |
 As everywhere the atmosphere was vitiated |
 Hence God incarnated on the earth |
 To remove the evil of the age of Kālī ||
 Nāmā says, later | When people faced bad times with the yavana |
 Began singing praises of Hari | And they found complete liberation ||

However, how long could this painful contact be sustained with the yavana, by singing the praises of Hari:

At the end of the age of the kālā, Kālkī will arrive |
 Riding on a horse, he will kill the mlecchas ||
 Once again he will raise the victory standard of dharma |
 He will re-establish the glory of Kṛtayuga ||

Till then the only means of respite is remembering the Glory of Harīnāma

And to remain in the company of saints, says Nāmā ||

Many saints have expressed similar thoughts in the subsequent period. During this period God Hari/Viṭṭhal and his worship somehow survived, but in a humble way, depending on the capacity of their already intimidated devotees. There are stories to show that even the God had to submit in the service of the Bādshāh, for the sake of his devotees. For example, Senā Nhāvi had to shave Bādshāh's head; Dāmāji had to assume the role of Viṭhū Mahār and had to salute the Bādshāh; or had to appear as Dattāji Pāḍevār and pay in

410. Author's Note: See Mahārāṣṭradharm, B.V. Bhat. Pp.193-195.

an amount of two lakhs in Bādshāh's treasury in order to relieve Dāsopant, who was confined to house arrest because his father had failed to deposit the collected revenue. This was the situation in Maharashtra before the rise of Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj and before Samarth Rāmdās. There was no dearth of valour in Maharashtra but there was a lack of self-respect, people were loyal to their religion but there was no urge to protect it, there was rage against injustice but no confidence to get justice, there was awareness of the root of misery but the solution to wipe it out was not found. In essence it meant that there was restlessness against the foreign rule but attempting for independence was deemed impossible.

The scenario began to change

The rule of Tughlaq dynasty ended and the Bahāmanī rule was established. However, it did not end the adverse times for the Hindus. Nevertheless, one thing had changed, the Muslim rulers in the south were proud of their regional identity. They found it difficult to maintain congenial relations with Muslims of Iranian or Turkish origin. The administration of the Muslim rulers in the Deccan was largely dependent on the cooperation of the Hindus. They had begun to launch wars against the Muslims of foreign origin with the support of their Hindu commanders and soldiers. The native languages and scripts were being used in court transactions. They found it necessary to seek the blessings of Hindu sādhus and saints. Hence, they had begun to grant donations and annual funds. A Bādshāh not paying heed to the anger of mullās and maulavīs, was finding joy in worshipping a sādhu such as Narasiṃha Sarasvatī. A handful among the sufi proselytisers who had become much like Hindu saints felt an affinity toward them. They shared their spiritual experiences with Hindu saints. However, this little warmth was not established on a firm basis. This warmth was based on two uneven elements, handicap of Hindus and compassion on the part of Muslims. It still needed some more time for the relationship to become firmer and more real.

Rise of Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj and Samarth Rāmdās

With the rise of Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj and Samarth Rāmdās the scenario changed to a large extent. They motivated Hindus to grow stronger. They awakened the self-assurance among Hindus and taught a lesson to Muslims

who were aggressive and attached only to lavishness and luxury, not willing to have any affection for this land, its people, and its traditions. Those Hindu aristocrats opposing these efforts [to oust the Muslims] were also not spared. Afzal Khan and Shāhiste Khan were deemed as people who deserved to be killed by Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj but the same rule applied to Chandrarāo More and Bājī Ghorpaḍe who belonged to prestigious Maratha families. Everything that transpired in the king's life was guided by greater principle of justice. Bājī and Tānājī, Daulat Khan and Madārī Mehetar were also equally close to his heart. Similarly, along with Rāmdās and Tukārām, Bābā Yakūb of Ratnagiri was also equally venerated by him. The core of Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj's outlook in this matter was that those who pledged their loyalty to svarājya found a permanent place in his heart and those who denied allegiance to it had to face his anger.

The outlook of Samarth Rāmdās was also similar. Indeed, his happiness would know no bounds seeing that the extremely insolent mleccas were being destroyed. However, he never hated them just for being mleccas. Samarth Rāmdās, who showed the Muslim officer his place in the festival of Rāmnavamī at Masoor, was very affectionate toward the saint-like Mir Shamanā and unconditionally praised Sheikh Mahammad. There was no prohibition for Muslims in the Samarth tradition. Kalyāṇ Swami, a disciple of Samarth, had a Muslim disciple. His name was Ali Walī Mahammad.⁴¹¹

In the times before the British started their strategy of divide and rule, the rift between Hindus and Muslims had stopped to exist because of the good work of Chhatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj. The Muslim community had found its place as an integral part of our social system. It was established in rural Indian life as an integral part of the rural social and economic system as balutedārs (one of the sections providing essential services). The rift was closed and the assimilation of the two communities was apparent in various ways. The life and compositions of Muslim saint poets were the signs of this assimilation.

The jewel in the crown of music and literature – Muntojī of Khalajī Royal House

The contribution of Muslim writers in Marathi is not only limited to devotional writing. As Muntojī of Bahamaṇī royal house wrote copiously on Vedān-

411. Author's Note: Rāmdāsi Samśodhan (Voll. I), Manuscript no. 57.

ta in Marathi based on his own experience, Muntoji of Khalji house wrote a scholarly treatise on music and astrology. Nothing definitive about this Muntoji's whereabouts is known. But he calls himself Vazīrūlmulk and mentions his father's name as Ziā Daulatkhan. He also calls himself as Khaḷaci-vaṃśa-vardhan. He wrote a Marathi commentary on Saṅgīta-makaranda ⁴¹² composed in ovi metre, and a book on astrology in Marathi prose, entitled, Vijayabhairava. ⁴¹³

He concludes his commentary on Saṅgīta-makaranda with this line, "The one who tops the list of all scholars-chief of the kingdom of the worshippers of Sarasvatī—the venerable king of kings, the jewel in the crown of music and literature, the venerable one, who takes forward the family of Khalji-Muntoji Vazīrūlmulk, son of Ziā Daulatkhan—the commentary of Saṅgīta-makaranda, in Prākṛta, created by him, for the benefit of the learned ones..." It is clear from this concluding line that Muntoji was somewhere working as a very high-level royal officer, felt extremely proud of his scholastic achievements in music and literature.

Vijayabhairava deals with Pañcāṅga, i.e. almanac, omens, twitching in various parts of the body and the oncoming good or bad events indicated by them, also predictions about land, favourability of planets, travel, rains, etc. Muntoji begins this book, saying:

"I am writing this book entitled Vijayabhairava in easy prose with an intention to enlighten the ignorant so as to be blessed by Śrīmanmahendrācārya ||"

Mahendrācārya, mentioned here seems to be the guru of Muntoji. Muntoji ends this book, by calling himself the disciple of the lotus feet of Śrīmanmahendrācārya. Sardar Mujumdar opines that he might have belonged to the Khalji family of Malwa and lived during 1435 C.E.-1550 C.E.

Muslim Marathi poets in the bardic tradition

As Muslim saint poets gained an honoured position, so did the Muslim shāhirs. They achieved a leading position in the field of bardic poetry. In the

412. Author's Note: Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal Quarterly, Year 20, Issue 2, pp.87-92.

413. Author's Note: Marāṭhī Granthānchya Bayājvār Yādiche Anubandh (Saraswati Mahā Granthsangrahalaya), Section 4, S. J. Nagraj Rao, Category 12 – Astrology Division, Number 2542, pp. 162-163.

tradition of kalagī-turā, Shāh Alī's name as the leader of the kalagī party is still remembered today. Not much is known about Shāh Alī's life. However, poets following his school are still found in Marathwada, so it may be surmised that he lived during the times of the Peśvās.⁴¹⁴ He is known, especially as the rival of Tukangīr Turevālā. The tradition of the question-answers of kalagī-turā reached to north India as well and he became famous there too.

Nārū Bāpū, a shāhir composed a song of salutation in the śaka year 1799 (1877 C.E.), wherein he mentioned Shāh Alī with great honour, saying:⁴¹⁵

Wherever Shāh Alī Kādar Alī is playing the tambourine, the golden
flag of kalagī waves victoriously ||

This indicates that his full name was Shāh Alī Kādar Alī. The kalagī poets show a great influence of sufi tradition. Hence the statement by Prof. Trilokinarayan Dikshit⁴¹⁶ that "Shāh Alī was influenced by sufi philosophy", seems to be right. In this context, Dr Prabhakar Mande says: "It might be that the shāhirs of kalagī party thought on similar lines of sufi philosophy or it might be that some sufi saints were interested in the spiritual debates of the kalagī-turā tradition, whatever is the case, it is certain that the compositions in that tradition were greatly influenced by sufism (it is because kalagī and sufism, both talk about Advaita). Some Hindi metres used by the poets of kalagī party are available now to see, which have considerable influence of Urdu and are known as Musalmānī Chand. This proves the Muslim influence.

Say Bismillā the Lord of all is Allah |

Have a look at this metre and the following lines composed by Shāh Alī Vastād:

Read the Kalmā of Mahammad |
This Kalmā spreads the light of the Prophet ||
This is the light of Kalmā |
You will be asked on the Doomsday, you describe it then ||
Recite that Kalmā by which |
This Joyful call will rise, this is the Paradise ||

414. Author's Note: Marāṭhwādyātil Kalagīturāyāchī Adhyātmik Shāhīri: Prof. P.B. Mande, Foreword, p.35 – Second salute, Guru Shāh Alī Vastād's name has become famous around Jalana).

415. Author's Note: Pratishṭhān, August 1955, p. 21.

416. Author's Note: Saptasindhū (Language Department, Punjab, Patiala), June 1963, p. 14.

Many such lines can be quoted from the poetry of shāhirs, in which the Muslim murshids⁴¹⁷ have brought together the principles of Islam. The shāhirs who followed the tradition of Shāh Alī have repeatedly announced the greatness of his name:

Shāh Alī, the teacher says, go and submit at the feet of the sadguru I
 Shāh Alī, the teacher says ...
 Shāh Alī, our teacher the pīr is our preferred peace-giver I
 Shāh Alī gave a wound [of defeat], [apply] lime brought from a cobbler I
 I will catch you and make a goat in the house of Shāh Alī II
 The grand baton of justice of Shāh Alī Faqīr has touched Tuk(kh) angīr⁴¹⁸ I
 Shāh Alī shāhir himself is full of knowledge, listen to the question of Ranjit Singh II

Shāh Alī must have been a gifted shāhir because he heavily criticised those shāhirs without depth, who live on borrowed information.⁴¹⁹ He says:

Those who steal somebody else's poems and write their name on them II
 If we show them the mirror then what II
 It is difficult to understand that the blind would be able to see II
 Without the books of knowledge, it is difficult to compose poems II
 A coward may try his best but it is difficult to win against the fearless II

Shāh Alī was a follower of sufi sect so it is quite natural that he was attracted to the principle of madhurā bhakti.⁴²⁰ Two songs composed by Shāh Alī, ascribing the influence of the sweet sound of Śrīkṛṣṇa's flute, are available. These songs⁴²¹ are filled with spiritual mysticism and made beautiful by poetical sweetness:

417. Murshids – Teachers.

418. Shāh Alī and Tuk(h)angīr – These two saints wrote a verse drama entitled, Turra Kalangī. This drama is in the form of a dialogue between Śiva (represented by Turra) and Pārvatī (represented by Kalangī).

419. Author's Note: Pratishṭhān, September 1955, p. 28-29.

420. Madhurā Bhakti – The highest state of devotion in which the devotee is completely immersed in selfless love for God.

421. Author's Note: *ibid*, pp. 27-28.

The dark Kṛṣṇa is standing on the banks of Jamuna where all the
 maidens of Braj have gathered ||
 That son of Nanda awakens burning pangs of separation at a very
 young age ||
 The son of Nanda by making a flute, instils magic in it ||
 He puts the sway of his magic and puts a beautiful garland around
 my neck ||
 With that garland around my neck he made my mind uneasy like a
 Chakora⁴²² ||
 And his behaviour is overtly suggestive of love ||
 His piercing look like a spear, knocked me with temptation ||
 Scared as I was of that tempting look, I did not even cast a fleeting
 glance at it ||
 The dark Kṛṣṇa is standing on the banks of Jamuna where all the
 maidens of Braj have gathered ||

Another song⁴²³ of Shāh Ali is very musical. The milkmaids have become so
 enamoured by the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute that they have forgotten themselves.
 Shāh Ali's heart personified as a milkmaid has reached the banks of river Ja-
 muna like all other milkmaids to listen to Kṛṣṇa's flute and by listening to it
 all illusions were wiped out:

Come, lets go (Oh, my mind) | The flute is calling, the flute is calling ||
 Listening to the pure flute of Kānhā |
 The women of the town were all stunned |
 Indeed, they forgot their own being |
 The maidens of Gokul were tranced |
 Now you listen to it, you listen to it ||||
 All started toward Jamuna to fetch water |
 Putting water pitchers on their heads |
 Joyfully they were walking past all the boys |
 Fully content, their minds filled with the sound of flute |

422. Chakora – A bird imagined to be looking at the moon whole night without a wink and
 eating burning embers thinking they are fallen pieces of the moon. In brief, a state of
 mind where the awareness of surroundings is lost when somebody, especially a woman
 is away from her lover.

423. Author's Note: Endnote no.18 in the Marathi text (p.152-153): Samarth Vagdevata
 Mandir, Dhule, Manuscript no. 379.

With a strange feeling of restlessness, feeling restlessness ||2||
 Kṛṣṇa, the incarnation of Viṣṇu | Regularly worship Lord Śiva |
 Playing tunes on the flute | Songs of cows and their calves |
 In Brindāvana, Oh, in Brindāvana ||3||
 Whenever Śiva was pleased | Kṛṣṇa played his flute |
 Shāh Alī says, now my mind is cleared | All ignorance vanished ||

In the bhedic question-answers, there is a type of song, which is based on a mathematical presentation to shock the rival party. Shāh Alī has given the number 360 and the details of the bones⁴²⁴ in the human body in one of his mathematical songs known as the Song of Bones:

Three Hundred and sixty such bones |
 Were set in the body |
 Those were described by the canons ||
 This happened in Uttarkāshi |
 Listen to it with full attention |
 God Śaṅkara told Pārvatī ||
 A few bits were picked from that story by |
 Shāh Alī Faqīr, he narrated it |
 The saintly audience listened and felt happy ||

A number of Muslim shāhirs in Maharashtra followed Shāh Alī's tradition of kalagī. To name a few shāhirs of kalagī-turā shāhiri from Marathwada: Lāḍan-shāh, a disciple of Madshāh, worked with an aggressive stance, asserting that "the rivals shake with fear when they see me." Mahammadshāh Faqīr who described mystic dreams such as—How should I narrate the miracle, An elephant sitting on an ant, etc. Daulat Khan Sultān who was the guru of one Rāṇo Koṇḍū Kerū who used magical charms to win against the competitors, and so on.

There were also many shāhirs, who came from Western Maharashtra. I could find a Lāvaṇī song composed by one Husein Khan.⁴²⁵ The woman in this song is requesting her lover/husband:

424. Author's Note: A manuscript made available by Śrī. V.B. Gholap that includes Sheikh Sultān's compositions.

425. Author's Note: A manuscript from Ābāsheb Mujumdār collection, in Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Pune.

Don't leave me for the army, my love I Many who went there, died I
 We will stay in the house and enjoy II
 I curse the job that takes you to war and fight, my mind is restless I
 Those doomed ones have their camps so far away II...
 I will serve you the best food, ghee, unleavened bread and sweet vermicelli cooked in milk I
 I will give you hot water for bath II
 With cardamom, cloves and areca nut, its cooling juice (?⁴²⁶) I
 The roll of betel leaves, I will give you to eat II

This amorous song, sung by Husein Khan was very much in keeping with the social atmosphere of Peśvā period. Many songs similar to this one can be found in the songs composed by shāhirs.

Born in Jejuri in 1778, Saganbhāū was a very famous Muslim shāhir from western Maharashtra. He rose to fame in the period when the Peśvā rule was on the decline. Crafting weapons was his family's traditional occupation. However, he left Jejuri and with it, he also left his family occupation. Instead, he preferred writing songs, in a sense he sharpened words, if not weapons. He was happy to entertain the appreciative audience of Pune. He organized his own troupe during the times of Bājirāo Peśvā II and stood against Honājī, the shāhir of the first rank. Sidū Rāvaḷa of Nāth sect was the guru of Saganbhāū. Saganbhāū, though a Muslim, was loyal to his native land, was proud of its language—Marathi and its traditions. He had known the joy of the poetry of Sant Jñāneśvara and Sant Tukārām. He was fascinated by the thought of devotion to God Pāṇḍuraṅg (Viṭṭhal) of Pandharpur. His chest would fill with pride while singing the ballads of the valour of Marathas. When it seemed that Maratha rule had started losing ground, he lost heart:

Where is the strength of our king, the subjects are mortified,
 What did ignite such a destructive fire I
 I have lost any desire either for food or for water,
 I am like a fish fallen in a desert I
 Above all – the armies scattered in all four directions,
 Are scared, their fears heightened, reaching sky I
 Our flag as mighty as an elephant,
 Is now stuck in the deadly mire I

426. Chatsāyā – Having cooling juice(?).

Saganbhāū, like all other Marathi shāhirs, sang candid amorous songs. He did not use delicately pleasant words like Ram Joshi, who chose words as sweet as the jingling of anklets. The language he used was not as ornate as Honājī. However, his mind like a fledgeling freely whirled and twirled in the realm of genuine love, and then he ceaselessly sang the songs of love. Saganbhāū has portrayed the lovelorn woman, completely lost in her lover's charm. She says, "You are pure essence of life in the form of a swan and I am the golden body of that swan | You are the wish-fulfilling tree and I am your shadow on the ground ||" Saganbhāū describes her suffering caused by separation from her lover:

My life and breath is weakening |
 My dear, I am wallowing in misery like a peacock⁴²⁷ ||
 I am like a fish falling out of the water,
 That bounced up after meeting its love |
 I am a Chatak⁴²⁸ bird and you the rain-cloud,
 I ask you to shower millions of drops [of love] from above ||

With such beautiful love songs composed in a natural style, Saganbhāū has got an honourable position in the world of shāhiri literature. In recent times there have been many renowned Muslim shāhirs such as Jān Mahammad Bhāī (Satara), Laharī Haidar (Kolhapur), Sultānbhāī Piñjarī (Malavaḍī), Amīnbhāī (Baramati), and so on.

Muslim Marathi folk literature

Whether it is devotional poetry or songs in shāhiri tradition, Muslim poets dissolved their Muslim identity and they assumed the way of living, emotions, customs and beliefs-norms of their Hindu brethren. Shikandar Lal Atar, a historian says in this context, "All or most of the Muslim poets who contributed to early Marathi literature were inspired by the devotion to God Viṭṭhal, because they were inspired by it. These poets from our community adopted the style of Vaiṣṇav poets. Hence, it is obvious that in a way their creation is a

427. According to the tradition the peacock is very happy when it dances and flaunts its tail but feels sad and sheds tears when it looks at its ugly feet. The tradition also has it that the peahen drinks those tears and gets pregnant. So the birds do never mate.

428. Chatak (*Cuculus Melanoleucus*) – It is said that the bird only drinks rain-water and so it keeps looking for the rain-cloud all the time.

part of the Hindu devotional literature. It does not reflect Muslim thoughts, emotions, or culture. So, it cannot be categorised as Muslim literature. At the most it can be looked upon as the literature created by Muslims. But it is not specifically Muslim in character.”⁴²⁹

Whatever little of the Muslim literature, which can be categorised as belonging to Muslim community, falls in the category of folk literature. Śrī Atar has found a manuscript of rivāyats (songs sung during Muharram) of eighteen Muslim poets. “Those poets composed rivāyats to sing in Muharram Karbala, in the style of Hindu shāhiri poetry. These heart-touching songs are modelled on various tunes and represent emotions of grief and bravery, describing the death of Hasan Ali and Hussain Ali, sons of Alī and Fātimā (daughter of Mahammad, the prophet) in the war of Karbala. Muslims in our part of India carry tābuts⁴³⁰ in procession; at some places and emblems known as nālpīr and pañjā. During the ten days of Muharram, they also organize various games and gatherings in which the memories of the Karbala war are recreated. There is a book of poetry, entitled Jaṅnāmā in Arabic. It has been translated in Urdu. The Muslim poets in Maharashtra have composed the rivāyats based on Jaṅnāmā. These rivāyats are eloquent in many aspects such as language, poetry, history, moral principles, philosophy, etc. The language of these songs is a blend of two languages—Musalmāni (Urdu) and Marathi. It is full of emotions of suffering and bravery. Common listeners including Muslim women get very touched and weep. It narrates the history of Mahammad Paigambar, Caliphā Alī and his family. These songs help nurture moral principles like love and affection and awareness of one’s duties, applicable to all, fathers, sons, brothers, mothers. Many spiritual riddles are also expounded in the rivāyats.”

The names of some of the poets who composed rivāyats include Abdul, Gharīb Abdul, Bāban, Mahammad Hanīf, Ābālāl, Dārā, Fatishā, Bābāsāheb, Sheikh Mirājī, Jovhārashā, Rāje Bāpū, Nabī Mahammad, Sultān Dādā Ātāra, Karīm, Kāsam, etc. Although, the subject of rivāyats is about Muslim tradition, its composition shows ample Hindu influence. Poet Abdul begins the rivāyat with a prayer saying: “Śrī, I begin my prayers saying Bismillā⁴³¹ | I

429. Author’s Note: Eitihāsik Sankīrṇ Vāṅmay Sāhitya (Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal, Pune, Book Series no. 57.), pp.9-18.

430. Tābuts – Taziye – Symbolic coffins taken out in procession during the celebrations of Muharram.

431. Bismillāh – In the name of Allāh.

submit my prayers to bhagvān | My prayers to the Friend of God⁴³² | Daruda Salīma (Śarīfa?)⁴³³ Bismillā |” Another poet, Garīb Abdul begins his rivāyat from the role of a faqīr. He says:

First I bow to all | Young and old in the gathering ||
 Listen with due attention | To the teachings of the true guru ||
 I became a faqīr of Muharram |
 I wish to be in the service of Shāh Husein ||
 I rest in the Absolute | I am the beggar of seven days⁴³⁴ ||
 I am wearing the laṅgoṭa of Viraśa⁴³⁵ |
 Wielding the mace of courage in my hand ||
 It is big, its name is meditation | Turning the rosary of devotion ||
 The thread worn around my neck is five coloured⁴³⁶ |
 My satchel is of a cloth stitched with thousand rags ||
 I smeared myself with ash in the form of knowledge |
 Ash of ego burnt in fire ||
 Throwing my ego in a fire |
 Made by igniting seven cow-dung cakes⁴³⁷ ||
 We have only one goal | To go to Karbala ||
 With the permission of our Lord |
 Now you should understand the secret of this ||
 Gharīb Abdul has this in mind |
 Understand the word of the son of the guru ||
 In the ground made of the clash of egos(?) |
 We will play and emerge above it (?) ||

Gharīb Abdul's guru was one Shāh Husein, whose ways seem to be akin to the Nāth sect. Abdullā of Kāgavād has described Imam Husein's mother weeping uncontrollably after her son was killed by Yazid's arrow. This Abdullā was the disciple of the renowned bhedic poet Shāh Alī. He has expressed the grief of Husein's mother in a heart-rending way:

432. In the Abrahamic tradition Abraham is mentioned as the 'Friend of God'.

433. Darud Sharif? – A wish-fulfilling prayer.

434. Six (seven?) Days (eons) of creation by Allah.

435. Virshāchā(?) langōṭa – Red loin cloth Vir Hanumān (?).

436. Five breaths (prāṇas).

437. Seven Chakras.

The child was hit by an arrow and killed |
 All people were saddened, all were saddened ||
 Holding each other, the mothers there cried, hitting their chests |
 On the wall pegs the baby clothes remained hung ||
 Whom would I rock in the colourful swing, whom would I rock |
 Oh, my Prince! Tell me why are you angry with me ||
 Have I not held you in my lap |
 My breasts are tightened with milk, tightened with milk ||
 Whom would I nurse now, why did you have to face this ordeal ||
 Your delicate throat was pierced by the arrow |
 How did you fall my tender little one, my tender little one ||
 That dark one, Yezid! Open your mouth and talk to me, my Baby ||
 How can I forget you, my young one, my son |
 There is sweat on your fair coloured face, sweat on your face ||
 Where can I find you, my little fawn, why are you unhappy with me |
 The destiny is written by God Brahmā |
 It will come true, cannot avoid it, cannot avoid it ||
 Whatever has to happen, will happen, listen, I am telling you all |
 Stop telling the tale of grief, Abdullā |
 Who is from Kāgavāḍa, he stays there, he stays there ||
 He salutes the gathering, may Shāh Alī bless me ||

The readers will know that this song composed by Abdullā is of the shāhiri style. The compositions of the bhedic style are also found in Muslim rivāyats. Here is an example of bhedic question-answers composed by Rāje Bāpū, a Muslim poet:

Question - Who are the Hasan-Husein brothers, Oh Śrīharī, pick the answer and tell us |
 And you the erudite one, tell us, the question may be attempted only by a wise one ||
 The 'Mother of the Universe' gave birth to whom, and Alī sired whom |
 How did the babies of the doe die, tell us who was supporting Yazid ||
 Answer - Hasan-Husein, the two brothers, know that they are the sun-moon in the universe |

Two eyes should know the body, knowing the Jīva-Śiva⁴³⁸ as unified,
 the sign of Self-Knowledge ||
 Desire gave birth to māyā, the illusion, bliss of Self-Knowledge is Alī,
 the father |
 It was karma that died in the war of Karbala, the father's own brother
 killed it ||

Beside these rivāyats in the shāhiri style, any other Muslim Marathi folk literature could not become available. It does not mean that such literature was not created by Muslims. Hamīd Dalwāī had collected five folk songs composed by Muslim women from the Konkan region.⁴³⁹ These songs are sung on the occasion of child-birth, weddings, etc. It is likely that many more folk songs of such type were common in the Muslim community. If such songs could be collected carefully, they will certainly prove to be a valuable source to know the mind of common Muslims.

Shāh Datta Alamāprabhu

We have already seen in detail that many worthy well-meaning Muslims allowed themselves to blend in the liberal and amenable tradition of bhakti in Maharashtra. This predisposition to harmonious blend is prominently witnessed in the sect of Datta worship. Dattātreyā got established in this sect as the main deity to be worshipped as Shāh Datta Alamāprabhu.⁴⁴⁰

Efforts to blend the Hindu-Muslim ways in the field of Dattātreyā worship had already started in the times of Narasiṃha Sarasvatī. During the lifetimes of Janārdan Swami and Sant Eknāth, Dattātreyā worship sought Hindu-Muslim harmony. Chānd Bodhale, the teacher of Janārdan Swami belonged to Qādārī sect, a branch of sufi sect. We know that Sheikh Maḥammad, a disciple of Chānd Bodhale wrote books in Marathi on yoga and bhakti. We have also seen in the beginning that another Muslim saint of high standing Shāh Mutabājī Brahmanī, also known as Mṛtyuñjayaśwami later followed Ānanda sect, a branch of Dattātreyā sect and attained oneness with Brahman. Janārdan Swami, though in the service of a Muslim ruler, had influence of his devotion to Dattātreyā on some of the Muslims which was ap-

438. Jīva-Śiva – Manifest-unmanifest.

439. Author's Note: Mahārāṣṭra Loksāhitya-Mālā, No. 1, pp.17-21.

440. Author's Note: Datta Sampradāyāchā Itihās, R.C. Dhere, pp.199-200, 231-235.

parent. During his period the weekly holiday on the fort of Devgiri was shifted from Friday to Thursday.⁴⁴¹ They also built the samādhi temple of their guru Janārdan Swami, who is supposed to be an incarnation of Dattātreyā, at a vantage point at the foot of the Devgiri Fort. The Sakala-mata sect of Māṇikaprabhu, another school of the Dattātreyā sect had an extensive following among Muslims.

There are many myths found in the traditional biographies of devotees of Dattātreyā, about Dattātreyā appearing as a malaṅg, which is a sufi term, denoting a wandering saint not bound by the rules of the mundane world. It can be considered as an alternative term for avadhūta of the Dattātreyā sect.

Dattātreyā is known by the name Shāh Datta Alamāprabhu in the Ānanda sect in Maharashtra. Ānandaprabhu and Kānho Kānaḍā are supposed to be his two principal disciples. Ātmārāmaswami and Sadānandaswami, respectively the sixth and the seventh saint in the line after Ānandaprabhu have frequently mentioned Shāh Datta Alamāprabhu. Ātmārāmaswami says:

In all the four aeons, the flawless one |
 Parabrahman, Knower of the Absolute
 Incarnated in the Kali Age for his devotees |
 Śrī Shāh Datta Alamāprabhu ||
 The one who does not belong to any caste or creed |
 He is the absolute Parabrahma |
 The one of beautiful blue colour appeared in the Kali Age |
 On the Earth ||
 The guru of parāvidyā | The Parabrahma itself |
 Became the guru of gurus | By instructing Ānandaprabhu ||
 He is the incarnation in Kaliyuga | The giver of parāvidyā |
 Parabrahma Indeed | Śrī Shāh Dattaprabhu ||
 The one who is wrapped in the blue sky |
 The Parabrahma itself has manifested |
 For the cause of the living being in this world |
 He came to liberate them ||

In one of the abhaṅgs Ātmārāmaswami says: “Davgiri is the throne of God | It will become the kingdom of Shāh (Shāh Datta Alamāprabhu) |” Thus he mentions the central place of Shāh Datta. Sadānandaswami, in a similar manner

441. Thursday is supposed to be the day devoted to Dattātreyā worship.

says, “Shāh, the lord is in the place at north | In Daulatabad ||” Elsewhere, he says, “Especially, in the place known as Bhūmikānagar | Resides the God ||” Thus, he has described the importance of Bhūm (District Osmanabad).

The worshippers of Shāh Datta include people from various sects such as Ānanda sect, Liṅgāyat, Muslims and Daśanāmī Gosāvis. This information is provided by Ātmārāmaswami and Sadānandaswami. Their maṭhas are in Sindkheḍe and Chopade in Khandesh. According to few people, Aṣṭūr near Bidar is also a place of Shāh Datta. Muslims believe that it is the burial of Ahmad Shāh Bahāmanī and to Hindus, it is a samādhi of Shāh Datta. In a manuscript of the collections of āratīs,⁴⁴² I got to see two āratīs of Dattātreyā, which mention Śrī Datta:

Shāh Datta incarnated in the Kaliyug |
Mādhavaswami rolls at his feet in submission ||
Shāh Datta in Kaliyug | One who liberates the living |
On the full-moon in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa |
Is seen in its full glory ||

Oh, brother, yours and ours is the same god!

All these efforts toward syncretism were not much successful. Hindus have been inherently tolerant and welcoming to assimilation, so the doors were always open from their side. However, there was not any significant response from Muslims. Hence, the respect for those handful of Muslims increases multi-fold who tried honestly, to bring about harmony between the two communities. We become more appreciative of them in our expressions.

In a miscellaneous, important work of Sant Eknāth, entitled, Hindu-Turk Samvad,⁴⁴³ he has pictured a debate between Hindus and Muslims. Through this debate he points out at various drawbacks in both traditions with an intention of making them aware of the eternal quality of unity. Sant Eknāth believes that this awareness is the only means to put an end to the feeling of discord. While concluding this debate he comments:

You and we have quarrelled |
It concludes in the knowledge of the highest truth |
To create awareness among the ignorant |
To awaken those who lack action ||64||

442. Author's Note: A manuscript in the collection of Śrī. Narayan Ganpat Vinchu, Pune.

443. Author's Note: Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yānchī Gāthā (Awate Edition, śaka year 1830).

Now there is no distance between the word and its meaning |
 Both are spiritual |
 The only intent is the highest truth | Both are saturated with it ||65||
 The disagreement about unity | Now turned into agreement |
 Eknāth of Janārdan Swami says, Self-realisation |
 Gives highest joy to both ||66||

A saint known as Devdās of Dādegāv, a follower of Samarth Rāmdās's tradition has enriched Sant Eknāth's legacy. He, has addressed the Muslims, thus:⁴⁴⁴

Oh, Brothers! Yours and ours is the same God |
 Devdās says God cannot be said as being apart ||

By dissolving distance and increasing feelings of closeness, Muslim Marathi Saint-Poets have contributed a great deal to enrich the liberal tradition of Maharashtra. And so the Maharashtrians have always remained indebted toward these Muslim saints.

444. Author's Note: Marāṭhī Vāṅmayāchā Itihās, (Vol.III), L.R. Pangarkar, p.756.

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