

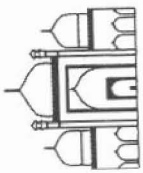
practice, one might point out three ways in which other Hindu bhaktas dealt with the presence of Muslims. Dadu of Rajasthan (1544–1603) dwelt on the 'majestic and absolute but benevolent God/Guru' much like the contemporary concept of Akbar, the Mughal emperor.³ Kabir (fifteenth century) has recently been called the 'apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity',⁴ but often scorned the outward signs and symbols of both Hinduism and Islam and clung to his own tough poetic vision of reality. Chaitanya in Bengal (1486–1533) converted Muslims to his Vaishnava faith by showing them that the Qur'an told of a personal God much like Krishna, but that his way was the better way to approach that God.⁵

Ekknath in Maharashtra (1533–99) had a rather different approach from any of these, as well as a very different way of presenting his (or his characters') attitudes toward Islam and Hinduism. Like Kabir, he was critical of much in Hindu and Muslim practice that seemed hypocritical, but he seems even more interested in finding similar practices and similar beliefs in both religions that can be incorporated into some higher truth. Like Chaitanya, Ekknath believed that the God of the Qur'an was the God of the Hindus, but his theme is that God made both Hindu and Muslim in His full wisdom, and there need be no conversion. Ekknath's purpose in writing the Hindu-Muslim dialogue was both to entertain his hearers with the ridiculousness of human behaviour and to instruct them in the very nature of religion.

Ekknath's Hindu-Turk dialogue is one of some three hundred bhāruds, a bhakti poetry genre which has no strict rhyme or meter pattern but always involves the poet's speaking through the voice of some other person, animal, or bird, or through the metaphor of a game, a government document, or some other aspect of the work-a-day world. Ekknath's other bhāruds include such things as a dialogue between a Brahman and a Mahar⁶ and one between a Brahman and a dog; messages in the mouths of fortune-tellers, tumblers, untouchables, a hen-pecked man, a prostitute, a devotee of the god Khandoba, a snake-charmer, and a madman; and calls to devotion through the metaphor of a drum, a dance-game called *phugadi*, and an official government letter of warning. Several bhāruds are in corrupt Hindustani and ten others are spoken as if by Muslims: a *darwish*, a faqir, and a Habshi or Ethiopian migrant to Maharashtra who ends each second line in his accounting of the ten incarnations of Vishnu with the word Muhammad!

As can be guessed from the listing above, Ekknath's bhāruds are often dramatic and also humorous. Those that I have heard sung by *bhajan* groups today are acted out vigorously, often in costume, not sung reverently or ecstatically. Although the voices of the bhāruds are those of the

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A Medieval Encounter Between Hindu and Muslim: Ekknath's Drama-Poem *Hindu-Turk Samvād**

Eleanor Zelliot

The goal is one; the ways of worship are different.
Listen to the dialogue between these two:

The Turk calls the Hindu 'Kafir!'

The Hindu answers, 'I will be polluted—get away!'

A quarrel broke out between the two;

A great controversy began...

The beginning lines of Ekknath's sixteenth-century *bhārud*, the *Hindu-Turk Samvād*,¹ set the stage for a long, hard-hitting, humorous argument between a Hindu and a Muslim. Composed in the heyday of Hindu-Muslim cultural interaction, it offers an interesting view of the way in which a Brahman viewed a Muslim and his religion. It may also offer some reality about the views of the Muslim, since Ekknath's style in his drama-poems, or *bhāruds*, was to speak as accurately as he could through the voice of another person. It is an unusual source through which to approach the problem of the nature of the encounter between Hindu and Muslim in medieval times.

Recent studies of *sants* and poets in the bhakti, or devotional religion, schools of North India and of their Sufi counterparts in Islam have begun to shed considerable light on the ways in which Sufis and bhaktas may have influenced each other.² The actual encounter between Hindu and Muslim is another matter, and one for which there is little source material available in English. Leaving aside the all-important figure of Guru Nanak as the most radical synthesizer of Hindu and Muslim ideology and

* Reprinted from Fred W. Clothey, ed., *Images of Man: Religion and Historical Process in South Asia* (Madras, New Era Publications, 1982), pp. 171–95.

non-orthodox, Eknath does not scorn or deride them. Rather, each character, from untouchable Mahar to heterodox Mahanubhav to Hindi-speaking Muslim, is allowed to be the voice of some aspect of the bhakti religion. The messages that Eknath expresses through the bhāruḍ form are most often these: the necessity for a moral life and for devotion to the saints; the need to understand God as both *nirguṇa* (without qualities) and *saḡuṇa* (with qualities, a personal God); and the fact that underneath all the trappings of caste and sect is one reality. However, the trappings, the outward signs, symbols, and practices, are fully and often accurately delineated for each character. It is as if Eknath not only observed all the life around him with a keen eye but had a capacity for empathy with all living beings, however low, strange, or foreign.⁷

Eknath seems at first an unlikely author of such a popular, wide-ranging and occasionally vulgar set of poems. He was a scholarly Brahman who lived in the orthodox centre of Paithan, an ancient capital on the Godavari river in the heartland of the Marathi-speaking country. His vast amount of writing includes translation of and commentary upon a number of Sanskrit philosophical works, several thousand of the traditional bhakti songs called *abhāṅgs* in Marathi, a Marathi version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a narrative of the marriage of Rukmini to Krishna, and his masterpiece, a commentary on the eleventh *skanda* of the *Bhāgavata Purāna* known as the *Eknāthī Bhāgavata*.⁸ In all his work, however, he tried to bring the highest of philosophical thought down to the level of understanding of the common man. The bhāruḍs seem especially shaped to appeal to the unlearned, to interest those who might not otherwise listen to the bhakti message.

Although Eknath's town of Paithan was considered so holy it was called the Banaras of Maharashtra, it was also a market city that produced a luxurious silk cloth called *paithānī*; it was on the trade route from the north of India to the sea; and it was forty miles south of Daulatabad, a former Muslim capital and an important city in the Ahmadnagar Sultanate. Eknath was not a Brahman recluse, but was a householder as well as scholar. The material in the bhāruḍs is drawn from all the bustling life, the variety of passers-by, the day-to-day sights and sounds that surrounded Eknath. Both the bhāruḍs and the legends of Eknath's life tell us that Muslims were an important part of the life in that area of Maharashtra.

There are five instances in the eighteenth-century biography of Eknath compiled by Mahipati⁹ in which Eknath encounters some facet of Islam. First, Eknath's beloved guru was Janardan, who was not only a swami but also some sort of military commander in the army of Daulatabad, a town and fort within the Sultanate of Ahmadnagar. The legend goes that Eknath

himself once led the Muslim armies of that town in a counter-attack rather than wake his guru from deep meditation. A little later, when Eknath is ready for initiation, the god Datta¹⁰ appears as a bearded Muslim faqir, only revealing himself as the supreme being when Eknath drinks water from the pot the faqir has sent to be washed. Together with his guru Janardan, Eknath then meets Chandrabhat or Chand Bodhale, a distinguished Vaishnava. When Chand Bodhale wishes to be entombed alive, Eknath and Janardan build a Muslim tomb 'lest the Mahomedans should cause trouble,' and so that 'both Hindus and Muslims were satisfied.'¹¹ Recent scholarship has added to the legend the supposition that Chand Bodhale was both a bhakta and a Sufi of the unorthodox Malang order.¹²

In the fourth instance, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva appear as Muslim faqirs to test Eknath's 'conviction of God being in every creature, and his love for them.'¹³ Eknath serves them food in his house, and is saved from excommunication by Paithan's orthodox Brahmans only by a timely miracle. The last story is the only one that indicates real friction between Hindu and Muslim. A Muslim who hates Brahmans spits on Eknath, who forgives him with saintly restraint.

There seem to be no references to Muslim government or to Muslim officials in Mahipati's story of Eknath, even though the area had been under Muslim control since 1296. Eknath's bhāruḍs in the metaphor of government documents, such as letter of assurance, letter of petition, injunction, etc., are heavily Persianized, and certainly indicate familiarity with officialdom. Modern Marathi hagiography usually casts Eknath in the role of saving Hinduism in Maharashtra from the hated Muslim tide, but a number of contemporary historians, both Hindu and Muslim, see the medieval period generally as one of tolerance, participation of Hindus in government, and cultural exchange.¹⁴

It is probable that there were Sufis in the Marathi-speaking area before the political presence of Muslims. The first recorded name, however, is that of Muntakhab al-Din of the Chishti order, who evidently came to Devagiri just before 'Ala al-Din Khalji stormed that Yadava capital in 1296. Muntakhab al-Din died in Devagiri in 1296 and was buried in Khuldabad just outside the city.¹⁵ His tomb, now known locally as that of Muntajab al-Din Zar Zari Bakhsh Dulahen, is the site of one of the four largest religious festivals in Aurangabad district.¹⁶ Chishti Sufis continued to come to Devagiri throughout the political upheavals of the next half century. Formal control by the Delhi Sultanate was established in Devagiri in 1310 after the death of the compliant, tribute-paying king of the Yadavas. In 1327, Muhammad bin Tughluq's curious effort to compel the

population of Delhi to migrate to his new capital in Devagiri resulted in turmoil, and in the renaming of the city as Daulatabad.

As part of Tughluq's disastrous migration, a disciple of Nizam al-Din Auliya, the chief Chishtī saint in India, was sent to Devagiri-Daulatabad. Mir Hasan 'Ala'i Sanjari lived in Daulatabad until his death in 1336, and, according to Subhan, spread Nizam al-Din's ideas there through a collection of his sayings, the *Fawā'id al-fu'ād* (Beneficent to the Heart).¹⁷ Nizami credits Shaikh Burhan al-Din Gharib, 'one of the senior most disciples of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya,' with making the great saints of the Chishtī order 'household words in the mystic circles of the South.'¹⁸ It is clear that for at least forty years, Daulatabad was one of the great Chishtī centres in India.

With the loss of control of the Delhi Sultanate over provinces in the South, the Bahmani kingdom came into being, and shortly after its establishment in 1347, the Bahmanis shifted their capital from Daulatabad to Gulbarga, outside the Marathi-speaking area. During the hundred and fifty years of Bahmani rule, there seems to be a decline both in the importance of the Chishtīs in Daulatabad, and in the creativity of Hindi *sants* and poets who had begun the Marathi literary tradition toward the end of Yadava rule. Dnyaneshwar wrote his great commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā* shortly before his death in 1296, the very year of Khalji's raid into the Deccan. The devotional religious movement that stemmed from Dnyaneshwar, however, flourished through a great circle of *sants* and poets in the generation following chiefly through Namdev. After 1350, the year of Namdev's death, 'no literary work worth the name comes to hand till we reach the age of Eknatha.'¹⁹ Curiously enough, the same thing could be said for Sufi writing during those two hundred years in the Maharashtra area.

The Bahmani kingdom began to break up toward the end of the fifteenth century, and out of its ruin came five sultanates, among them the Nizam Shahi government under Malik Ahmad. A new Muslim capital was established in the Marathi-speaking area, the city of Ahmadnagar, begun in 1494 some fifty miles south and west of Paithan. There was an influx of Marathi speakers into the new government, and although no great cultural synthesizer such as Ibrahim II in Bijapur arose, the Ahmadnagar centre saw a rich mixture of Persians, Turks, Hindus, and Abyssinians, including the famous Malik Ambar. There seems not to have been a Sufi revival,²⁰ but in the century following the establishment of the Ahmadnagar kingdom, the bhakti tradition was revived and invigorated. The key figure in this revival was Eknath, who forged links with the past through his editing of the initial text of the bhakti movement, the *Dnyāneshwārī*,

written three hundred years before, and his biographies in poetic form of all the early *sants*. So well was the bhakti tradition nourished that it produced its greatest *sant*, Tukaram, in the next century.²¹

The vigor of the bhakti movement after Eknath's dedicated work can be judged by the fact that a number of Muslims became bhakti poets. Best known is Shaikh Muhammad of Shrigonde in the district of Ahmadnagar, whose guru was the same Chand Bodhale who inspired Janardan, the guru of Eknath.²²

It was in this world, then, that the Hindu-Turk dialogue was written: a somewhat distant, always warring, reasonably tolerant Ahmadnagar kingdom; a memory of Sufi saints from the great and popular Chishtī order; a Marathi literary renaissance so strong that even Muslims wrote bhakti poetry in Marathi. Exactly who the Muslim in Eknath's dialogue might have been and why Eknath cast his message in this form will be discussed at the end of the poem. Meanwhile the reader should note that there is no critical edition of this *bhārūḍ*. Mistakes and changes have undoubtedly crept in over the years, particularly as the use of Persian words has lessened. The typographical errors alone make accurate translation difficult, and Eknath's penchant for puns and word play adds to the difficulty. In addition, some lines are so spare that only an intelligent guess is possible. The Hindu speaks Marathi, using some Hindi words. The Muslim speaks a Marathi-ized Hindustani. In some cases I have simply romanized the script and let it stand; in these cases either the meaning has been totally lost, or Eknath was using meaningless words to carry his poem along, or to give it a little Arabic or Persian flavour. In spite of the difficulties, I am reasonably certain that the translation is fairly faithful to Eknath's spirit.²³

Hindu-Turk Dialogue

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Eknath: | 1. The goal is one; the ways of worship are different
Listen to the dialogue between these two! |
| | 2. The Turk calls the Hindu 'Kafir!'
The Hindu answers, 'I will be polluted—get away!
A quarrel broke out between the two;
A great controversy began. |
| Muslim | 3. 'O Brahman, listen to what I have to say:
Your scripture is a mystery to everyone.
God has hands and feet, you say—
This is really impossible! |
| Hindu | 4. Listen, you great fool of a Turk!
See God in all living things. |

- Muslim 5. You haven't grasped this point
And so you have become a nihilist.
Listen. Brahman dipper-in-water,
You leap in the water like water ducks.
Whoever studies your scripture
Is a great big fool!
6. You have a *kamākhhaloko* scripture.
It says God goes out to beg.
Bali caught him and made him a door-keeper!
This sort of story deceives people.
7. All your scripture is just ridiculous.
You make Allah a servant!
What a *bhāravatavillā!*
This talk is for dim-witted men.
- Hindu 8. You don't remember your own book,
It can be read in the *Sul Khan*
pratham abdullā allā huve
[Allah] said begging is the sweets of heaven.
This begging is your God's counsel!
9. Faqir Abdulla was loved by God.
He went to Heaven by giving and taking alms.
Begging is ultimately holy—
God himself showed us this.
- Muslim-or 10. I, the Faqir, speak straight out.
new character Faqir Fajtāri is praised by God.
of Faqir? The Faqir serves God.
The Faqir loves God.
Faqir—God
The Faqir says, 'There is no god'
The Faqir says, 'But God.'²⁴
The Faqir is a servant of God.
11. Truth is duality.
Hājrat is the giver of life.
Make a joyful noise at the saint's tomb.
Salvation is in heaven;
The unwary go to sorrow.
Thig is Allah's creation;
The negligent go to hell.
I, the Faqir, ask alms.
Allah takes away sin.
Allā valkatatātīl tū allā

- O Allah, you exist everywhere.
Allah, you exist in the Caliph.
Allah, you are the seeing and the seen.
Allah, you are the knower and the known.
Allah, you are life and the giver of life.
Allah, you are the alms that fill the stomach
and take away sin.
Bring oil and bread, you who have ears!
Allah, give me milk and rice,
Allah, give me gravy, bread, wheat cakes,
Allah, give me lentil cakes,
Allah, give me sweets and sugar!
- Hindu: (Sanskrit) I, the Brahman, recite a verse:
One who lives on alms lives on nothing;
Bhikshus reject only their homes.
One who is discontent is the real sinner.
The contented one is described as drinking soma.
Bali was a special devotee of God.
God loved his way of devotion.
So God always stands near him.
Why do you revile this?
- Muslim: 12. Your Brahma laid his daughter.
The Vedas he preaches are all false.
Your Śāstras, your Vedas, your 'OM'
Are all evil tricks.
13. How many falsehoods, how much nonsense all
that is.
Thieves took away God's wife,
So monkeys came to help him!
You've read and read the scripture and died!
Admit your mistakes and shut up!
- Hindu: 14. She you call your teacher's wife
You treat as your own wife!
Look at the 'faithfulness' of the Turk!
And he censures the Brahman!
15. Father Adam and Eve made a pair.
You have read this book.
You don't know your scriptures, you fool.
Why do you quarrel with us?
16. Adam and Eve enjoyed each other:
From that came the world of men!

- You give your name as Adam.
You speak, and make a fool of yourself!
17. Baba Adam's Eve went away.
You say she was taken by Satan.
Well, Sita was stolen by Ravana.
Why do you deride our story?
18. Then the angels took counsel:
Gabriel
Israfael
mankāil
naskāil
Michael²⁵
Victorious, they returned with wife Eve.
Rama called forth great warriors
To search for Sita.
(What's the difference?)
- Muslim: 19. Listen, Brahman, you are clever as an ass!
Your answer is nonsense; your answer is stupid.
Whoever reads your scripture
Is greatly unenlightened!
20. Fool! Your God was imprisoned;
Kansasur came to kill him.
Devaki concealed your God.
What a stupid scripture for the ignorant!
21. What was hidden, closed in, was made open.
From this sort of thing comes knowledge?
yā hilā yā sālim!
22. You deceive yourself with your own mouth.
You call God a keeper of cows.
When you hear these stories you weep!
You call God a cattleman!
23. The *kāfir* has lost his sense.
You have destroyed the greatness of God!
Shall I give you a blow?
And still you argue!
- Hindu: 24. Look how your mouth babbles on.
God is present in every place—
Why not in prison?
You take this as a contradiction in vain!
25. One who has greatness of mind
Knows God is not fixed in one place.

- God is hidden in the secret, brother!
Read the Qur'an and see!
26. It is difficult for the mind to grasp God
But God can fill one's mind
And open the secret of the secret.
Your Prophet so spoke!
27. Holy man, holy man Shahmodin Ali
The great one said:
Cow, elephant, monkey—
God protects every one.
This is stated in your books.
Why don't you honour it?
28. Dogs, crows, rats, birds—
God protects these too.
You don't know your own scripture, dumbbell!
Why do you pick a fight with me?
- Muslim: 29. You go on talking, talking, Brahman.
What sorts of pretexts are you giving me?
You bow before God,
But has God shaved your head and beard?
30. You Hindus are really wicked.
A stone statue rules over you.
You give it the name of God.
You wake it with an *ek tāri!*
31. In its presence you read the *Purāna*.
Men and women all stand together.
You bow and scrape in front of it.
Isn't that so, you great fool?
32. You smear ochre on a stone
And your women stand before it!
Naked *sachus*, clad in lemon leaves,
Are followed by young maidens!
33. Your *Vedas* and all are impotent!
Without exception, your verses are unworthy.
You make such a hubbub when you worship
You must think God is unheeding, neglectful!
- Hindu: 34. God is in water, in places, in wood, in stone.
That is the chief meaning of your book.
Look, you yourselves don't know it!
The Turk's ignorance is total!

35. The ghee, liquid or solid, is one substance.
So, see, the absolute and the image are one.
But you hate the images!
You are a great indiscriminating fool!
36. Whatever desire the devotee has,
That desire is fulfilled by God.
That is the theory of your book!
Why don't you realize this?
37. I have revealed your lack of faith to you!
You shout from afar at the God close at hand!
One time, 'Allah!' One time, 'Allah!'
The rest of your day is wasted,
And He has not met you so far.
38. For the distant, one gives a great shout!
For the near, one whispers.
You ought to meet Him who is close.
By shouting you only wake the children!
39. You think God is in the West.
Are all other directions barren?
You say God is in all four corners,
But you don't understand this, you fool.
40. Five times a day belong to God.
Are other times taken by thieves?
You have deceived yourself about your scriptures.
You have made a one-direction God!
41. You tell us we worship stones?
Why do you place blocks of stone over the dead?
You worship a *hājī* of stone.
You believe it to be the true *pīr*!
42. Why do you preserve the bones
Of those who are only corpses?
You cover the stone with flowers and silk cloth;
You burn incense before it!
- Muslim: 43. You can bathe in the Ganga and become pure;
Then why do you maintain distinctions?
Even separate cooking and eating?
You call out 'Pollution, pollution!'
All is impure, sinful, to you.
44. You say God exists in all living beings.
Tell me, who of you eats all together?
One man doesn't touch another.
Each lives apart from the other.

45. If so much as a grain of his food falls on yours,
You catch him by the throat!
Don't leave your religion half-done.
What about this opposition between every two
groups?
46. A woman must eat in her own home.
But sometimes you expel her!
You go to her at night, you sleep with her;
Then you don't call her impure!
47. That girl you have taken as mistress—
You don't eat in the house of her people!
You like the daughter but not the food!
O what a great book of the Brahmins!
48. 'Our food is very holy;
His food is completely bad.'
This is the relation between relations!
Your scriptures are false!
49. The daughter is pure, the father is impure!
Let your scripture become ash;
Let *karma*, *dharma*, be reduced to ashes!
To hell with the Brahman for his hypocrisy!
- Hindu 50. You Muslims are complete fools.
You don't know what is faulty, or faultless.
When one creature gives pain to another,
How can he go to heaven?
51. If God kills an animal, look, it is carrion.
If you kill one—that is holy and pure!
You have become more pure than God!
The Muslim is deceitful and sinful.
52. When you sacrifice an animal, you throw it aside
It suffers in front of you.
What the hell do you gain from this?
The learned one is mad, Maulana *sālim*.
53. When sacrificed, the goat goes to heaven.
Then why do you fast and feast?
Why not kill yourself
To get to Heaven's home?
54. The Maulana may do a thousand killings,
But can the good Maulana bring one being back to life?
This is fruitless toil for heaven,
This immediately becomes a sin.

55. Hindu and Muslim both
Are created by God, brother.
But look at the belief of the Turk:
He is supposed to catch a Hindu and make him a Muslim!
Did God make a mistake in making the Hindu?
Is your wisdom greater than His?
You make the Hindu a Muslim
And assign the crime to God.
He who kills has committed a sin—
Look, the Turk says that is right!
Listen, he has committed a crime!
Let's not quarrel over nothing.
While killing, the Maulana recites from the Book,
But his tongue cannot move to restore life.
No one can do that but God.
What the Brahman says is true.
It is the hand of heaven that cuts the throat;
That hand really creates its own ways.
If trouble comes in the future
God will rule.
The Brahman says, O yes, swami.
As a matter of fact, you and I are one.
This controversy grew over caste and *dharma*.
When we go to God, there are no such things.
The Turk says, that is the truth.
For God, there is no caste.
There is no separation between devotee and God
Even though the Prophet has said God is hidden.
The Turk whose *dharma* had subsided
Listened to his inner heart.
He became filled with joy.
Instead of a *mantra*, instruction was given.
At that moment, they saluted each other.
With great respect, they embraced.
Both became content, happy,
Quiet, calm.
64. 'You and I quarrelled
To open up the knowledge of the high truth,
In order to enlighten the very ignorant.
In place of *karma*—awakening!

65. 'In place of words we have established the
word's meaning.'
The highest truth pierced them both.
Enlightenment was the purpose of this quarrel.
Both have been satisfied.
66. The argument was about oneness.
The argument became agreement.
Eka Janardan says, 'Self-knowledge
And great bliss came to both.'

What sort of a Muslim appears in this Hind-Turk dialogue? The 'Turk' can mean either an ethnic Turk or simply a Muslim.²⁶ Certainly no order of Sufis is clearly indicated, although verses 10 and 11 indicate a mendicant faqir is involved in the conversation, either as a new voice or as a facet of the character of the Turk. The terms the Hindu uses for the Turk are many, and only a few indicate Sufism. He addresses the Turk chiefly as Turk, but also calls him brother, using the Hindi word *bhāī*, and in verse 60, *swāmi*! When speaking of Muslims, the Hindu uses the terms *avaiiyā*²⁷ (Sufi saint or holy man), *maulānā* (in connection with the killing of animals), *pir* (in its proper usage regarding the *dargāh* or saint's tomb) and once *yavan* (stranger or foreigner). Only in verses 55 and 56 when the Hindu speaks about the crime of conversion does Eknath use the Persian (and Marathi) word *musalmān*. Both call each other 'fools' in a rich variety of Hindi and Marathi ways which English cannot match!

Sufi technical terms do not appear in the bhāṛud, although the faqir and the Turk both express Sufi ideas. The idea of *wahdatu'l-wujūd*, the unity of all beings, divine and human, is certainly behind the faqir's hymn to Allah in verse 11. 'Allah, you exist everywhere ... you are the seeing and the seen the knower and the known.' Toward the end of the poem, the Turk says 'There is no separation between devotee and God even though the Prophet has said God is hidden' (verse 61). This is not orthodox Islamic thought, but it is a common theme in Indian Sufism.²⁸

It seems to me from the content of the poem that Eknath certainly knew something of Sufism, perhaps even some remnant of Chishiti thought. It is probable, however, that the Sufis he himself met were not of any established order, but members of the Malang order, which was *be-shar'* (without the law).²⁹ The begging patter which follows the Sufistic statement in the faqir's speech and the seven faqir bhāṛuds which Eknath also wrote point to this sort of sufi order. One faqir bhāṛud introduces a Malang faqir, who speaks in the intoxication of *bhang*. There has been no study of the Malangs in Maharashtra; but the current physical evidence seems to point

to their importance. The 'urs (commemoration of a saint's death day) of Haji Malang in Kalyan, near Bombay, is a very important occasion, attracting several hundred thousand Hindus and Muslims. Local people say the tomb was built 750 years ago and that it is the dargah of Haji 'Abd al-Rahman, an Arab missionary. The dargah as it is today, however, was re-constructed in 1900, and is presided over by a Brahman with hereditary rights.³⁰

There are a large number of pirs' tombs in the district of Aurangabad in which Paithan is located, some of which bear the term malang. *Fairs and Festivals in Maharashtra* notes 104 'urs festivals, including ten in Paithan taluka. There are nineteen celebrations of Muslim saints' death days in the two talukas in Ahmadnagar district that border Paithan.³¹ The percentage of Muslims in the Aurangabad district also testifies to considerable conversion activity: that area counts seven per cent of its population as Muslims, a higher per cent than in the Ahmadnagar district, which was the seat of the Nizam Shahi government, or in the other districts in Marathwada, which were under the Nizam's government in Hyderabad until very recent times.³² Whether these conversions came in the great days of the Chishti centre at Daulatabad, or after Aurangzeb founded the city of Aurangabad, very near Daulatabad, in 1640, or during Eknath's period in which Muslim saints wrote Marathi poetry and unorthodox faqirs roamed the countryside, is anyone's guess!

My own supposition is that Islam was an important presence in Eknath's sixteenth-century world. Just as Eknath uses the ubiquitous untouchable Mahar as a voice in forty bhāruds to speak a tough bhakti message, he uses the familiar presence of the Muslim not only to speak about the basic unity of all religions, but also to get across some home truths about the hypocrisy of the Hindus. Most of the accusations of the Turk about the ridiculousness of Hindu concepts, such as the image which is god, the stories of Krishna and Bali which 'destroy the greatness of God', or the incestuousness of Brahma, are countered by the Hindu with jibes about similar Islamic practices and stories. The accusation the Hindu cannot answer comes in the taunts of the Muslim about caste divisions and pollution observances. All the Hindu can say is that 'when we go to God, there are no such things.' All of Eknath's writing points to this belief that the true bhakta may observe the inherent authority of the Brahman, but in spiritual matters he honours true bhaktas of any caste or creed.³³

On the other hand, Eknath is very clear about the wrongness of conversion to Islam. 'Hindu and Muslim both are created by God, brother. Did God make a mistake in making the Hindu? Is your wisdom greater than His?' Eknath also hangs the turning-point of the Turk's attitude on

a curious matter. The Muslim comes around to admitting the basic truth that God is in all living things when the Hindu accuses him of believing that killing an animal is a holy matter. This may be a reference to the very popular *bakrid* festival, a time of feasting when not only goats (*bakrā*) but cows and other animals were shared by the Muslim community. Hindus did sacrifice goats and buffalos in certain *devi* festivals, and the Muslim was often the butcher at these times, but Eknath disapproves heartily of this non-Brahman practice. His dwelling on this point may be a way of discouraging animal sacrifice among both Hindus and Muslims—or it may simply be a reinforcement of his basic idea that God dwells in all living beings and life should not be taken because it cannot be restored.

The ultimate message of the dialogue may be the simple statement found in verse 26, one which both Hindus and Muslims would understand:

It is difficult for the mind to grasp God.
But God can fill one's mind.

NOTES

1. The edition I have used is *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñca abhangancī gāthā*, edited by Brahmibhū Srinanamaharaj Sakhare (Poona: Indira Prakashan, 1952). *Samvād* means dialogue, talk, conversation.

2. See Charles S. J. White, 'Sufism in Medieval Hindi Literature,' *History of Religions* 5: 1 (1965), pp. 214-21; Yohanan Friedmann, 'Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions,' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95: 2 (1975), pp. 214-21; and the chapter on 'Sufism in Indo-Pakistan' in *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* by Annemarie Schimmel (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975). The bibliographies of these works as well as the references for Kabir, Dadu, and Chaitanya listed below contain references to older works on Hindu-Muslim interaction.

3. Harbans Mukhia, 'The Ideology of the Bhakti Movement: The Case of Dadu Dayal,' in *History and Society: Essays in Honour of Professor Niharranjan Ray*, edited by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi, 1978), pp. 445-54.

4. Muhammed Hedayetullah, *Kabir: The Apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity: Interaction of Hindu-Muslim Ideas in the Formation of the Bhakti Movement with Special Reference to Kabir, the Bhakta*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977). For Kabir, also see David Carlyle Scott, *Kabir: Maverick and Mystic: The Religious Perceptions, Doctrines and Practices of a Medieval Indian Saint* (University of Wisconsin, Ph. D. dissertation, 1976) and Charlotte Vaudeville, *Kabir*, vol. I (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1974). The Kabir poetry translated in Baidyanath Saraswati's 'Notes on Kabir: A Non-Literate Intellectual', in *Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization*, edited M.S. Malik (Simla: Indian Institute of Advance Study, 1977) bears an almost uncanny resemblance to some of Eknath's Turk's lines.

5. A long story about Chaitanya and the conversion of Muslims which offers an interesting comparison to Eknath's story is *Sri Chaitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇāśa Kavirāja Gosvāmi*. *Madhya-līlā* vol. 7, translated by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (New York: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1975), chapter 18: 162-212. See Edward C. Dimock, 'Hinduism and Islam in Medieval Bengal' in *Aspects of Bengali History and Society*, edited by Rachel Van M. Baumer (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1975), for a perceptive interpretation of medieval Bengali attitudes.
6. Translated in Eleanor Zelliot, 'Eknath's *Bhārūds*: the *Sant* as Link between Cultures,' in *The Saints: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, edited by Karine Schomer and Hugh McLeod (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).
7. I have discussed Eknath's extraordinary empathy in 'Chokha-mela and Eknath: Two *Bhakti* Modes of Legitimacy for Modern Change,' *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 14: 3-4 (1980), Special Number on Tradition and Modernity in *Bhakti* Movements, edited by Jayant Lele.
8. Part of the *Eknāthī Bhāgavata* has been translated by Justin E. Abbott as *Bhikshugita, Poet Saints of Maharashtra* 3 (Poona, 1928). For Eknath's total work, see R.D. Ranade, *Pathway to God in Marathi Literature* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1961) and Shankar Gopal Tulpule, *Classical Marāthī Literature*, Volume 9, Fasc. 4 of *A History of Indian Literature*, edited by Jan Gonda. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1979).
9. Mahipati, *Eknath*, a translation from the *Bhaktīlīlāmṛta* by Justin E. Abbott. *Poet Saints of Maharashtra* 2 (Poona, 1927.) Motilal Banarsidass in Delhi has reprinted this translation.
10. There are Muslim influences in the Dattatreya sect in Maharashtra and also in the Nath or Yogi tradition which Eknath bears in his very name. Speculation on Muslim influence on Eknath through these traditions is difficult since he seems to have abandoned them in favor of the bhakti movement, or *Vārkarī sampradāyā*. See S.A.A. Rizvi, 'Sufis and Natha Yogis in Medieval Northern India,' *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 7: 1-2 (1970), pp. 119-33 and Simon Digby, 'Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography,' a paper given at the Seminar on Aspects of Religion in South Asia, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1970, for interesting material on these encounters in the North.
11. Mahipati, *Eknath*, pp. 35-41. Janardan's place of *samādhi* and Chand Bodhale's tomb can still be seen at Daulatabad.
12. A.R. Kulkarni, *Social Relations in the Maratha Country (Medieval Period)*, Presidential Address, Medieval India Section (32rd Session of the Indian History Congress, Jabalpur, 1970), pp. 8-9. See also Tulpule, *Classical Marathi*, p. 353, who adds that Chand Bodhale's Muslim name was Said Cāndasāheb Kādrī, which may indicate the Qadiri order of Sufis.
13. Mahipati, *Eknath*, pp. 88-91.
14. See Kulkarni, *Social Relations*, various articles by P.M. Joshi in *History of Medieval Deccan*, vols. 1 and 2 (Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1973, 1974), edited by H.K. Sherwani with P.M. Joshi as joint editor; and an earlier article by Moulvi Abdul Haq, 'The Influence of Persian on Marathi,' *Islamic Culture* 10 (1936), pp. 553-609.

15. John A. Subhan, *Sufism—Its Saints and Shrines* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1970), p. 333. I have followed Subhan's spelling and dates in preference to more authoritative sources since his material seems to be corroborated best by local history.
16. *Fairs and Festivals in Maharashtra*, Part VII-B of the *Census of India 1961* Vol. 10 (Bombay: Maharashtra Census Office, 1969), pp. 175-6.
17. Subhan, *Sufism*, p. 335. For content, see Bruce B. Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute: Sufi Literature in Pre-Mughal India* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978.) Lawrence notes this Sufi's name as Amir Hasan. K.A. Nizami, 'Sufi Movement in the Deccan,' in H.K. Sherwani ed., *History*, pp. 174-199 of vol. 2, states that 'Amir Hasan Sijzi' went in the armies of Khalji to find 'a new field for mystic activity.'
18. K.A. Nizami, *ibid.*, 179-80. The brief articles and the notes in larger studies on Indian Sufism make one yearn for a study on the Chishtis of Daulatabad and the later Sufis as rich as Richard Maxwell Eaton's *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.) His notes on Sufis as warriors and as social reformers may have relevance in the Maharashtra situation.
19. Tulpule, *Classical Marathi*, p. 344. It should be noted that the two great famines still remembered in Marathi folklore took place during this period, the Durgadevi famine beginning in 1396 and the Damojipant famine in 1460. See Mohd. Abdul Aziz, 'The Deccan in the 'Fifteenth Century,' *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series 21 (1925), pp. 549-91.
20. See Radhey Shyam, *The Kingdom of Ahmadnagar* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), pp. 378-90, for the court literature of Ahmadnagar (1490-1636). Patronage does not seem to have been extended to Sufis, except for land given to maintain the shrine of Hazrat 'Abd ur-Rahman Chishti in the reign of Ahmad Nizam Shah in the late sixteenth century, according to B.G. Kunte, *Maharashtra State Gazetteers History*, Part 2: *Medieval Period* (Bombay: Maharashtra State, 1972), p. 402.
21. The best introduction to the whole bhakti tradition is G.A. Deleury's *The Cult of Vithoba* (Poona: Deccan College Post-graduate and Research Institute, 1960.)
22. The Muslim contribution to bhakti literature has been described in R.C. Dhere's *Musalman marāthī saṅkavi* (Poona: A.M. Joshi, 1967.)
23. For translating assistance, I am indebted to Mrs. Sumati Vasant Dhadphale of Pune and Jayant Karve of Minneapolis. Richard Eaton, and his associate Jaganath, gave invaluable assistance in interpretation, Maxine Bernitsen greatly aided me in boldly interpreting some very difficult lines and correcting some errors, and John M. Stanley encouraged some further speculation on meanings. The faults of the final version are my own.
24. A song by Shah Hashim Khudawand Hadi sung by women at the grind stone, which uses this construction, may be found in Eaton, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-2.
25. See A.S. Jayakar, 'Angelology of Arabs,' *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, VI: 6 (1901-1903), pp. 30-4-28.

26. See Annemarie Schimmel, 'Turk and Hindu: a poetical image and its application to historical fact,' in *Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages*, edited by S. Vryonis (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1975.)

27. I am tempted to think that line 27: 1 in the *Hindu-Turk Samvād*, *āvāfiya āvāfiyā śāhāmōdīn ālī*, which is followed by what 'the great one' said, may be a reference to Nizam al-Din Auliya, the greatest of the Chishti saints, whose sayings were circulated in the Deccan. The Nizam Shahi government in the area was replaced by that of the Nizam of Hyderabad, and a possible confusion of the two terms would allow for a corruption of the name in the text. *Shāhī* is still used in villages as a term relating to any government.

28. I am grateful to two former students, Jeff Coryell and Colleen Raske, whose interest and study led me into some of the by-ways of Sufi thought and Sufi orders in India.

29. Murray T. Titus in *Islam in India and Pakistan* (Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1956) offers a brief note on Malangs and other be-shar 'orders of independent origin,' pp. 134-6. Eaton, *Sufis*, devotes a chapter to the *majdhūbs* of Bijapur and other darvishes who may be a similar group of faqirs, although their time period is the seventeenth century.

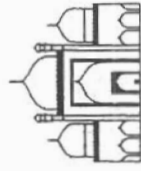
30. *Fairs and Festivals*, pp. 81-4.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 419-32, 313-17.

32. *Census of India*, Paper No. 1 of 1963. 1961 Census-Religion (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1963), p. 25

33. G.B. Sardar discusses the depth and the limitations of the egalitarian spirit of Eknath and other *sants* in *The Saint-Poets of Maharashtra (Their Impact on Society)*, translated by Kumud Mehta (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1969).

4



Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-colonial India*

Cynthia Talbot

The nature of medieval Hindu-Muslim relations is an issue of great relevance in contemporary India. Prior to the 200 years of colonial subjection to the British that ended in 1947, large portions of the Indian subcontinent were under Muslim political control. An upsurge of Hindu nationalism over the past decade has led to demands that the state rectify past wrongs on behalf of India's majority religion.¹ In the nationalist view, Hindu beliefs were continually suppressed and its institutions repeatedly violated during the many centuries of Muslim rule from 1200 AD onward. The focal point of nationalist sentiment is the most visible symbol of Hinduism, its temples. As many as 60,000 Hindu temples are said to have been torn down by Muslim rulers, and mosques built on 3,000 of those temples' foundations.² The most famous of these alleged former temple sites is at Ayodhya in north India, long considered the birthplace of the Hindu god, Rama. The movement to liberate this sacred spot, supposedly defiled in the sixteenth century when the Babri Masjid was erected on the ruins of a Rama temple, was one of the hottest political issues of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Tensions reached a peak in December 1992, when Hindu militants succeeded in demolishing the mosque.³

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