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Sufism and Bhakti Movement: Message of Love and Peaceful Co-Existence

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ABSTRACT

In the entire composite mystical culture of India, the tremendous role of the two great Movements--Sufism and Bhaktism-- would unreservedly be acknowledged, appreciated, and admired by all competent scholars of history and philosophy.

Sufism (or Islamic spirituality) is as old as Islam itself. It is generally known to be the spiritual or inner (*batin*) dimension of Islam. The outer (*dhair*) or exoteric dimension may be regarded as a religious world-view. However, both the esoteric and exoteric aspects of religion are essential aspects of Islam to understand it in totality. They are, in reality, the two sides of the same coin. As a matter of historical fact, the spiritual dimension of Islam has been overemphasized, for it is deemed to be representing the true spirit of religion in loving, serving and integrating humanity.

Bhakti or devotion is deeply rooted in Hinduism. Moksa or liberation, the highest goal in the Hindu religious value-system, can be attained through yoga. Yoga is a unique synthesis of the three ways: The Jnana Marga (the way of Knowledge), the Karma Marga (the mode of action), and The Bhakti Marga



(the way of devotion). However, it is generally assumed that the Bhakti Marga is the best way to achieve salvation, and it includes the other two ways as well.

People still get inspiration from these two high spiritual systems and the future generations would undoubtedly get benefit and guidance from them. It is the need of the day to understand the faiths and value-systems of the other communities living in the same land—India-- and develop love, mutual-understanding, the art of peaceful living, and spiritual freedom. In the present article, an effort has been made to pinpoint the common elements of love and peaceful co-existence for the people living on Indian soil, in particular, and humanity, as a whole.

A. INTRODUCTION

In the history of humankind, religion has been playing a vital role throughout the centuries. It became a beacon of light in over time in the life of man. Religious life, viz; emotional responses, beliefs, devotional practices etc., pervades human culture and shapes the conduct of men. Religious doctrines and practices involve enormous investments in human emotions, and obligations. Religion has got to have a corresponding value-system and way of life. It differs from both science and philosophy in emphasizing personal engagements, involvements and commitments. The philosophy of religion studies the concepts and belief-systems of religions as well as the perennial phenomena of religious experience and devotional and contemplative practices on which these belief systems rest and out of which they have emerged in the long-drawn-out historical evolution.(Fraizer, 1969, 01)

Religion has been the universal dimension of human existence as well as the perennially captivating and reassuring phenomenon of human



experience. It has evolved out of man's first cosmogonic, moral, aesthetic and social moorings and orientations. Religious persons believe that there is an Ultimate Being, a Supreme Power, the Real, the Divine and the Operative Spirit. That Ultimate Being is God, the Creator and the Sustainer of everything. He is Gracious and does respond to a person when he seeks His help. They respond to the Ultimate either through faith or through total self-submission to God or through the spiritual discipline and devotion that leads to enlightenment and liberation. In short, religion embraces the totality of human existence.

The most significant aspect of religion is the dimension of human spirituality. Mystical experience or human spirituality is not the legacy of any particular religion. On the contrary, it is common to all religions. It is not only a common element but also the core or essence of every religion. Consequently, all religions have undertaken studies of their respective mystical experience at the intellectual or scholarly plane and also launched mystical movements at a practical plane. These theoretical or doctrinal studies as well as practices constitute the warp and woof of what is known as Mysticism. Now, different religions have different versions or formulations of Mysticism. The mysticism of one religion differs from that of another religion in many respects. In addition, even within the same religion, there may be different shades of or approaches to mysticism. Here, an attempt is made to study the mystical dimension of human beings at the inter-cultural plane and as a perennial quest for peaceful co-existence; firstly with reference to Indian tradition (*bhakti*) and then in the light of the Islāmic spiritual tradition or say *Sufism*. Finally, we shall also discuss the influence and interaction between the *Bhakti* Movement and Sufism highlighting the significant role of the spiritual dimension of Islām and Hinduism and their religious and literary trends and legacies for encouraging, creating and promoting a suitable atmosphere for mutual understanding and suitable peaceful co-existence on the Indian mystical soil.



Medieval India, mainly, was dominated by monotheistic religious trends – *Bhakti* in Hinduism and *Sufism* in Islām. The adherents of these two important devotional movements were overwhelmed by the love of God as well as love and service to His creation, especially human beings. Their sole aim was to find themselves, in some way or the other, annihilated in Him and thus to attain salvation (*mukti* or *najat*) of their souls in the world hereafter. Let us discuss these two spiritual movements, which became significant sources and inspiring forces of cultivating the milieu of peaceful co-existence for Indo-Islāmic culture in particular and for the human world in general.

B. BHAKTI MOVEMENT:

Devotion or *bhakti* is an essential element of any religion. It plays a vital role in every theistic religion. *Bhakti* is deeply rooted in Hinduism. *Moksa* or liberation, the highest goal in the Hindu religious value-system, can be attained through yoga. Yoga is a unique synthesis of the three ways: (1) The *Jnana Marga* (the way of Knowledge), (2) the *Karma Marga* (the way of action), and (3) The *Bhakti Marga* (the way of devotion). However, it is generally assumed that the *Bhakti Marga* is the best way to achieve salvation, and it includes the other two ways as well.

In Hindu spiritual tradition, the first important literary recognition of *Bhakti Marga* as a true way of *Moksa* (salvation) was registered in the famous sacred book of the Hindus – *The Bhagvad Gita*. In this great Classic of religious literature, *Brahman* is considered as *Vishnu* and *Vishnu* is deemed to have been incarnated into Sri Krishna. When Arjuna (the faithful disciple) sought the counsel of Krsna regarding fighting while confronting his kith and kin; Krsna's answer is made in the course of a long dialogue whose purpose in the first instance, is to exalt caste-duty above every other consideration, no matter what is entailed and without thought of any reward. Sri Krsna instructs "him that it is his duty as a prince, as a warrior, as a righteous man to fight against evil and restore



peace and order.”(Sharma, 1976, 32) Arjuna is told that his duty as a *Ksatriya* is to fight when a just war is joined, and it is of little consequence whether in doing so, he kills his relatives or not. The Lord told Arjuna that to fight against evil is the prime duty of man.

In the Bhagavad Gita, furthermore, Lord Krishna throws open the gateway of devotion (*Bhakti*) and invites all wayfarers, whatever their caste or sex, to enter the blessed and blissed out porcine of liberation. The Lord says:

Be certain none can perish, trusting Me;
O Pritha’s son ! who so will turn to Me.
Though they be born from the very womb of sin,
Woman or man, sprung of the Vaisya caste or lowly disregarded
Sudra,
All plant foot upon the highest path. (John,1969, 201)

From the above teaching of the Gita, a universal lesson can be inferred that the Sacred Book provides a ray of hope for millions of Indians in their troubled bondage to social and religious restrictions. Accordingly, they realized that they could also exercise their social, moral, religious or spiritual rights to live like their co-religionists and communicate with their Lord.

The *Bhakti* Movement can rightly be divided into *two* distinct periods: the *first* starts from the time of the *Bhagvad Gita* to the 14th century and the *second* from the 14th century to the 16th century.

In the *first phase* of the *Bhakti* Movement, we find it emerging only as an individualistic sentiment. The religion of Vasudeva was the instrumental and natural expression for those followers who did not find spiritual and moral satisfaction in the intellectual and speculative systems of the *Upanisads* as such souls still were in search of a personal God. However, the principal theme of the Gita is to liberate the soul from the



low and selfish passion through *Bhakti* (devotion) towards Vasudeva, identified with Sri Krishna, the Supreme God; yet the authors or commentators of the Gita who believed in the *Brahmanic* tradition, introduced into the Gita the pantheistic conception of the theosophy of the *Upanishads*. In this Holy Book, we also find the utterances of personal God (*Naryana*) as well as the Immanent Being (*Antaryamin*), the motive-force of the life of the Universe. The traces of the influence of the essential old systems or schools of Indian philosophy like Samkhya and Yoga, too are available in the Gita. (Sharma, 1976, 149)

In Indian philosophy, Vedanta plays an important role in the formulation of religious teachings. Vedanta system – a composition of three basic works: the Upanisads, the Brahma-Sutra and the Gita – developed especially after the first century B.C. in three different systems founded by Sankara Ramanuja and Madhava.

It is generally believed that the *second phase* of the *Bhakti Movement* in India begins after the 14th century A.D. The first leading personality of Bhakti Movement was Ramananda (d. 1456 A.D.). His teachings were instrumental in creating two distinct schools among the Hindus – one conservative or orthodox and the other radical; Tulsidas and Kabir representing them respectively. The latter school emerged to advocate the *Bhakti* teachings and its famous advocates are Kabir and Nanak. We shall discuss their teachings in the subsequent pages while elaborating on some common themes of interaction between *Bhakti* Movement and *Sufism*.

C. SUFISM OR SUFI MOVEMENT:

Sufism (Islāmic mysticism or Islāmic spirituality) is as old as Islām itself. It is generally known to be the spiritual or inner (*batin*) dimension of Islām. The outer (*dhair* or *zahir*) or exoteric dimension may be regarded as a religious world-view. However, both inner and outer or esoteric and



exoteric aspects of religion are important aspects of Islām. They are, in reality, the two sides of the same coin. As a matter of historical fact, the spiritual dimension of Islām has been overemphasized, for it is deemed to be representing the true spirit of religion.

Islām consists of a Divine Law (*al-Shar‘iah*), a spiritual path (*al-Tariqah*) and the Truth (*al-Haqiqah*). The Truth or *al-Haq* or *al-Tawhid* (Unity of God) is the origin of the Divine Law and the spiritual way. The Holy Qur’ān, and the prophetic *Hadith* (tradition) and *Sunnah* are the prime sources of every aspect of human life – social, political, judicial, theological, artistic, literary, philosophical, spiritual etc. However, there is also a third important source, besides the Qur’ān and the Traditions of the Prophet, and that is the *Nahj-al Balaghah*, the collection of sermons, letters and sayings of Imām ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. This great treatise provides a comprehensive account of the approach of Imam ‘Ali to different aspects of human life in the light of the Qur’ān and practice of the Prophet Muhammad (s). The outstanding feature of the work is that it also gives an intensive account of the Islāmic spirituality long before the emergence of Sufism. (Shuja, 1997, 110)

The most significant development of Sufism, in its theoretical expression, however, took place in the early 13th century with the thought of a famous Spanish Sufi – thinker Ibn Arabi (1165-1240 A.D.) Inspired by Hallaj’s famous term *al-Haqq* for God, Ibn Arabi gave a new direction to Sufism. He is the founder of the doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (Unity of Being). According to him, Reality is an essential unity, but it is also a duality as far as it has two differentiating attributes: *haqq* (God) and *Khalq* (Creation or Universe). It is here that we find a similar attitude between *Vedanta* and *Wahdat al-Wujud*. Ibn Arabi’s book *Fusus al-Hikam* was very popular among the Sufis of India in the 15th and the 16th centuries and even now, it has great importance in the mystical circles of Indian.



Islām came to Northern India i.e. through the land-routes in the first half of the 8th century A.D. However, it stabilized its roots and penetrated into Indian soil after 11th century A.D. The systematic missionary work and initiation of the people to the teachings of Islāmīc spiritual tradition could not be started before Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti (d. 1236). He settled in Ajmer, the then capital of the Hindu ruler Prithvi Raj, and started preaching the Sufi teachings in the composite cultural atmosphere of India.

It is here in this third phase of the development of Sufism on Indian soil that the growth of *Sufi silsilas* (spiritual chains) or orders came into existence. These orders were responsible for the creation of a universal *sufi*-culture in the Islāmīc world, which attracted the people of other faiths as well. Consequently, the *Chishtiyyah* order in India was founded by Shaikh Mu'in al-Din Chishti which was subsequently popularized by his *murids* (disciples) Shaikh Qutub al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (1186-1235 A.D.) and Shaikh Farid al-Din Ganj-i Shakar (1175-1265 A.D.) and others. It reached its zenith or consummate personification through the life and teachings of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya (1238-1325 A.D.). Other important Sufi orders like the *Suhrawardiyyah silsila* by Shaikh Baha al-Din Zakariya Multani (d. 1262) and the *Firdausiyyah* order by Shaikh Sharf al-Din Yahya Munairi were established in India in the same manner. Besides these popular orders, we have other *silsilas* as well as in India, and these include, *Shattari* order (founded by Abdallah Shattari), *qadiriyyah* (founded by Abd al-Qadir Jilani, one of the oldest orders of Sufism of 11th century A.D.) and *Naqshbandiyyah Mujaddiyyah* order the foundation of which was laid down by Khwaja Baha al-Din Naqshbandi of Turkistan (d. 1389 A.D.) (Ibid., 276-312 & Haq, 1985, 13-165)

Thus, these orders were the outcome of multiple but interrelated developments in the world of Islāmīc spiritual tradition or Sufism. These



silsilas originated from the major Sufi leaders of the eleventh/thirteenth centuries and became popular in Indian composite culture.

D. MAIN COMMON THEMES BETWEEN SUFISM AND BHAKTI MOVEMENT

In order to understand the spirit of peaceful co-existence or say interaction between the two spiritual schools of the two great religions – Hinduism and Islām – it seems appropriate to select some common themes of interaction with reference mainly to medieval India. However, it would be in order to point out the general catholicity of outlook demonstrated by followers of Islām. Islāmic civilization and culture had been truly universal in the sense that it at once incorporated elements from the existing civilizations and religions and in its turn inspired and influenced many of them. Islāmic world-view and value system left its remarkable impact in different aspects of human life, more especially man's spiritual moorings. The early development of Islāmic spiritual tradition after Imam 'Ali took place in what were the centers of early Christianity, namely Egypt, Syria and Iraq. At the same time, it spread in Persia and central Asia, from where it incorporated certain elements of the existing religions and also influenced them. (Shuja, 1997, 325) Lastly, Islām penetrated in spiritually fertile soil, in negotiating a multidimensional and complex interaction with diverse indigenous spiritual traditions and contributed a lot through its teachings to the composite Indo-Muslim culture. Let us outline the main themes of interaction and mutual concern between the two schools of spirituality – *Bhakti* Movement and Sufism:

1. CONCEPTION OF GOD (UNITARIAN WORLD-VIEW)

Both *Bhakti* Movement and Sufism strongly believe in the Unitarian conception of God. The Ultimate Reality is one as mentioned in the Vedas, the Upanisads and the Gita. According to the Vedas 'The One Real' is worshipped in various capacities:

We make sacrifices to the Ultimate Lord of the universe, who runs through every particle of the universe, the whole existence, and who is Blissful and Indescribable'. 'Desireless, self-possessed, immortal self-proved, ever full of Bliss, inferior to none, ever young and everlasting is He, the soul of this universe; through His knowledge alone can one spurn death.,.... The Indescribable is the ground of all names and forms, the support of all the creation.... He is Brahman or Atman.... 'He is immanent in all this creation and yet He transcends it.' (Sharma, 1976, 15-7)

In the Upanishads, or more correctly in *Vedanta*, we find that the Supreme Reality is One and it is *Brahman* or *Atman*. The two terms are used as synonymous. The same Reality has its two sides: from the subjective side as '*Atman*' and from the objective side as '*Brahman*'. The Brahman is the Creator of the world and the whole world depends on Him. (Ibid.,25)

The same Unitarian concept was developed in Islām. The Supreme Reality, God, is One and Unique and none is like unto Him. The Qur'ān says: (*Al-Qur'ān*, 112: 1-4 & 2:163)

قل هو الله احد ☆ الله الصمد ☆ لم يلد ولم يولد ☆ ولم يكن له كفواً احد ط

Say : He is God, the One and Only;
God, the Eternal, Absolute;
He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;
And there is none like unto Him.

والهكم اله واحد لا اله الا هو لرحمن الرحيم ط (2:163)

And your God is One God: There is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.



All the Sufis do believe in *Tawhid* (Unity of God) and affirm that the Ultimate Reality is One. Man, through his purification of heart and pious deeds, can establish a spiritual relationship with *Allah*, the Creator and Sustainer of the worlds. All the Sufis preached the conception of personal God. Believing in the unity of God (*Tawhid*), they say that the One Supreme Reality has several attributes. Allah (God), according to all the Sufis, is Absolute, Unique and Perfect. His Essence, according to Shaikh Mu'in al-Din Chishti, Qutub al-din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya, Qazi Hamid al-Din Nagauri and Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i Delhi, is ineffable. He is Generous, Merciful and Self-sufficient. It is a common view of the Sufis that the One Perfect Being is not limited in any place or direction. Nothing can be indicated in connection with the Essence of God, because the indication is somewhat related to human senses, limited imagination or intellect; and the domain of all these human characteristics cannot estimate Allah. God is not perfect because of His countless attributes, His perfection is based on Himself. Such a conception of God was common to all the Sufis. However, there are some who believe that God is Immanent; others say that He is Transcendent, and still there are few who hold the view that He is both Immanent and Transcendent.

The age-old notion of the unity of all Being inherent in the Hindu spirituality and its accompanying culture, were bound to attract the attention of the Sufis too. In this regard, Das Gupta writes:

The pantheistic or rather panentheistic mysticism of the Upanishads, the devotional mysticism mainly in Vaisnavita line and the Sahajiya movements offered Sufism a ready field and this will account for the speedy growth and spread of Sufistic faith in India. (Dasgupta, 1959, 168)



Thus, both the spiritual schools were Unitarian in their outlook and orientation and this is one of the important factors of interaction and an essential element of peaceful co-existence between them.

It was *Chishtiyah* order of Sufism in India that facilitated the interaction between the *Bhaktism* and *Sufism* by its strong Unitarian outlook. It has been noted that the Chishti leaders, who with their most widely spread order in India in the early Indo-Muslim period, were less inclined towards Puritanism and showed greater interest and understanding of the independence of spiritual life from the formal structure of Islām, the Law and the State. With reference to Unitarianism, it may be pointed out that an important spiritual movement had already started in India sometimes between 10th and 11th centuries under the legendary Gorkhnath (or Gorakwa Natha). The founder of the movement indeed was one of the most influential spiritual leaders of Medieval India. His followers were known as the gorakhnathis, Nathpanthis or *Kanphata* (Bliteared *yogis*, due to their custom of slitting their ears to wear large ear-rings). Being a sect of Shiva ascetics, they believed in Shiva as the one Supreme God, “the primeval Lord.... The ocean of the bliss of knowledge.... Who is superior to qualities both manifest and unmanifest.” (Shuja, 1997, 328) This indigenous monotheistic movement is also known as ‘*Nathism*’ and its followers are called ‘*Nath Yogis*’. The Punjab and Tilla in the district of Jhelum were their initial centers. Later on, there emerged many centers of the Nath Yogis in Sailkote, Rawalpindi, Sargodha (now in Pakistan) and Gurdaspur etc.

Thus, Nathism opened a new chapter in socio-cultural and ethico-religious life of Indians. Such movements, being Unitarian in their orientation, were also famous for their being radically critical of formal Hinduism or say outdated character of the formal or external structure of the Hindu *dharma*. (Ibid.,325) The same path was followed later by the Sufis, who brought out the finite and the outdated man-made structure of



Islām in contradistinction to its perennial core. The Sufis, in a more sophisticated way, re-formulated the structure of Islām. They emphasized *Tawhid* (Unity of God), Love of God, service to humanity, justice etc. to be the fundamental teachings of Islām. The Sufis also underlined the need for the inculcation of character in accordance with the imperatives of the Holy Qur’ān and the traditions of the Prophet Mohammad and his spiritual descendants and true believers.

Indeed, many features of Nathism certainly bear a close resemblance to Islāmic teachings in general and with its spirituality in particular. Belief in one God, burying the dead and opposition to the caste system, resistance to discrimination among people on the basis of their caste, colour, creed, sex, geographical divisions and so on, are some of their most outstanding common features. (Vandeville, 1964, 191-201) Moreover, the *Nath Yogis*, as Vandevilla has observed, were able to form a bridge between Muslim and non-Muslim interpretations because of their monotheism and non-conformism, their opposition to caste distinction and their rejection of ritual purity. “Their conception of the all-pervading Godhead as *Parama-Shiva* or the invisible *Satguru*, made them more acceptable to Muslims than to the average *smarta* Hindu”. (Shuja, 1997, 328) Additionally, it is important to remember that for these common grounds Nathism or Nath yogic culture not only paved the way for Islām in India, but also, on the other hand, checked its greater expansion by enlarging the spectrum of indigenous spiritual tradition and cordial co-existence. In the composite culture of India Gorkhanath may be best remembered for his explorations of God-man relationship and spiritual visions that he expounded in his thought system. Such sincere efforts of the Hindu Bhagats and Islāmic mystics regarding the man-God relationship have prepared the fertile ground for common mutual understanding of the Supreme One Reality and a feeling of peaceful co-existence as the creation of the one Supreme Creator.



2. LOVE OF GOD:

Another outstanding theme of interaction and sincere common endeavour of goodwill between *Bhaktism* and *Sufism* is the love of God – the foundation of any spiritual system. In *Bhakti* Movement and *Sufism*, Love of God is deemed to be one of the important practices leading to apprehension, cognition and realization of God.

In the *Bhagvad Gita* the combination of *three* essential paths – *Jnana*, *Karma* and *Bhakti* or knowledge, action and devotion – form ‘*yoga*’ which stands for ‘union’ of the individual with the Absolute. Though all the three ‘*margas*’ are very essential for the spiritual march yet the *Bhakti* or devotion *marga* is supreme and unique in its approach. *Bhakti* signifies the disinterested service and love of God. A devotee who deeply loves his Lord will be liberated from all sins, sheltered and be lifted up from the ocean of birth-and-death by His Lord. The Love of God is the supreme Love and every other form of it is an imperfect manifestation of this supreme love. (Sharma, 1976, 36-7) This is the position of *Bhagvad Gita* regarding Love of God.

Love of God is the essential element in Islāmic spirituality as well. All the *Sufis* are unanimous in their view that Love of God is the core of Sufism and, in this mortal world, it is the highest end of a man’s or Sufi’s life. Love of God is inherent in every spiritual tradition of the theistic religions. In case of Islām, it has a unique place in establishing man-God spiritual relationship. For Sufi’s heart is the seat of love of God. Al-Junayad said, “Love is the inclination of the heart” meaning that the heart without any effort inclines towards God and what is of God. Some other Sufis say that “Love is concord”, which means obedience in what God



commands, refraining from what He forbids, and satisfaction with what He has decreed and ordained. (Arberry, 1979, 102)

Shaikh Mu'in al-Din Chishti, the founder of the *Chishtiyyah* order of Sufism in India, emphasizes that the aim and objective of a Sufi's life is gnosis (*ma'rifat*) of God which is not possible without purification of the heart. He further stresses that purification of heart from all things other than God is a pre-condition for His *Gnosis* which again is possible only through Love of God. Love of God, he maintains, produces a fire in the heart of a lover (of *Allah*) which consumes everything that comes in contact with it (Nabi, 1962, 23).

As mentioned earlier that the *Bhagvad Gita* represents a unique synthesis of knowledge (*jnana*) action (*karma*), devotion (*bhakti*) under a single name 'yoga' which provides a spiritual union of the yogi with the Absolute. The *Bhaktism* also considers that the human heart is the seat of both knowledge and love of God. The *Sufis* too believe in the same view and assert that heart is a mirror, an inner intuition or insight through which a mystic realizes God.

In fact, both the knowledge and love of God are essential in the Indian and Muslim spiritual traditions. In the *Sufi*-system, both the virtues are equally essential and never for once did one gain dominance over the other. This unity of the two aspects or qualities of man, or rather the whole of reality, was manifested in the perception of the 'heart' as the centre of both knowledge and love. Such brilliant synthesis – of knowledge and love of God – we find in the Indo-Muslim literature in the 14th century by the arrival and rapid spread of the works and ideas of Ibn-Arabi and Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi. It was this superb combination of two qualities of man represented in Arabic and Persian mystical literature of Ibn-Arabi and Rumi that enabled the Sufi movement to escape from becoming a prerogative of the few and thus attracted the attention of the



masses and the intellectual followers simultaneously. However, this synthesis was missing in Indian spiritual tradition (Shuja,1997, 322-36).

Ibn Arabi's *Fusus al-Hikam* and Rumi's *Mathnawi* played a pivotal role in establishing the mystical teachings of Islām in the form of Sufism and providing some important common grounds of interaction between *Bhakti* Movement and Sufism. By the end of the 14th century, there appeared the first commentaries on the *Fusus al-Hikam* in both Arabic and Persian by the Indian Sufis. Consequently, the popularity of *Fusus al-Hikam* and its foundational role in Indo-Muslim mystical literature of the period can hardly be overstressed.

Mawlana Rumi's *Mathnawi* received global acclaim and acknowledgment. It was greatly appreciated in India as well. It rather became the representative voice of a devotee's spiritual quest. Mawlana Rumi regards 'love' as the mode of knowledge of Reality and 'heart' as inner intuition. Iqbal, referring to his spiritual mentor Mawlana Rumi, presents the conception of 'heart' in these words : "The 'heart' is a kind of inner intuition or insight, which in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with that aspect of reality other than those open to sense perception. It is according to the Qur'an, something which 'sees' and its reports, if properly interpreted, are never false" (Iqbāl, 1944, 15).

Rumi's two great Persian works, the *Diwan* and the *Mathnawi* are deeply rooted in mystical love and gnosis in different ways. Both the works remained instrumental in Indo-Islāmic mystical literature and traditions during and after 14th century. Explaining the uniqueness of the Love of God, Rumi claims that it is 'Love for the Eternal' which burns one's temporal self and bestows on him the vision that perceives only God all around. Only then, when he sees that nothing else exists besides Him, does he rise above duality and become a true believer. Mawlana explains the notions of love and unity of all Being in the following words:



Love is the flame which, when it blazes up, consumes everything else but the Beloved.

He (the lover) drives home the sword of *Not* in order to kill all other than God: thereupon consider what remains after *Not*.

There remains nothing except God: all the rest is gone.
Hail, O mighty Love, destroyer of all polytheism.

Verily, He is the First and the Last: do not regard polytheism as arising from aught except the eye that sees double (Rumi, *Mathnavi*, V-558-9)

Mawlana Rumi introduces a ‘religion of love’, which attracted everyone irrespective of his belief, caste and educational level. In the words of Chittick, “Rumi’s spirituality attracts everyone who could appreciate beauty and music... Rumi employed the most ordinary phenomena and experiences of everyday life as imagery to explain the profoundest levels of metaphysics and spiritual psychology” (Chittick, 1983, 114).

A large number of Indian Sufis emphasize the doctrine of Love of God. Qadi Hamid al-Din Nagauri says that Love (*Ishq*) is the cause of the creation of the universe and without the Love of God, union with Him is impossible. Shaikh Farid al-Din Ganj-i-Shakr (popularly known as *Baba Farid*) explains that the aim and ultimate end of a Sufi’s life is the attainment of God and for this supreme purpose; he prescribes the path of ‘Love’. He attached so much value to Love of God that he greeted his visitors and followers with these words, “May God give you pain (*dard*) of Love” (*Ibid.*, p. 114).

Shaikh Nizam al-din Awliya also says that the creation has been made only for the Love of God. He explains in detail various dimensions of the Love of God, the higher aspects or virtues of Love such as *Sabr* (patience), *Rida* (submission to God), *Khauf* (fear) and *Tawakkul* (trust in God). According to Shaikh Nasir al-Din Chiragh-i-Delhi and Shaikh Sharf



al-Din Yahya Munairi, the Love of God is inherent in human nature and remains in veil for human beings. It implies obedience. He observes that Love of God necessarily implies the obedience to the Prophet, following the laws of *shari'ah*, and abstaining from Allah's prohibitions. However, Love of God, says Shaikh Nasir al-Din, is not one-sided. As the creatures Love God, so God also Loves His creatures (*Ibid.*, p. 114).

The *Sufis* and *Bhagats* prescribe the path of sincerity, self-mortification or devotion for the Love of God. They say that Love of God and love of things other than God cannot go side by side. Thus, the *Sufis* emphasize the self-purification through *mujahida* (penitence), *muraqaba* (absorption in God), *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and *fana* (self-annihilation). All are essential conditions or states for the Love of God.

The same spiritual orientation can be detected in the teachings of the *Bhakti* Movement pioneered by Ramananda after the fourteenth century and whose teachings created two distinct schools: one conservative or orthodox; and the other radical or liberal. The teachings of Tulsidas and Kabir represent these schools, respectively. However, both the schools preach Love of God and devotion to Him.

As far as the Love of God is concerned, it still remains an important theme of common concern of interaction between Sufism and *Bhakti* Movement. We have already given some views of the *Bhagvad Gita* in this regard and additionally, it would be appropriate to present the teachings of Kabir and Guru Nanak regarding the Love of God and gnosis of God.

Kabir, the paramount mystic of medieval India, contributed a lot to the composite Indian spiritual traditions. It is useless to attribute or attach any particular faith to Kabir or to prove whether he was a Muslim or Hindu because he himself says, "I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. I am a statue made of five elements". In fact, his religion was a religion of



Love and devotion to God. His God was the Eternal Truth (*Sat Purusa*) which created the universe which is independent and without passion. One may call the *Sat Purusa* either *Rama* or *Rahim* because both are the same. Kabir says, “*Rama, Khuda, Sakti* are one. Then to whom do the prayers go? The *Vedas*, the *Puranas* and the *Qur’ān* are only different manners of description. Neither the *Hindu* nor the *Turk*, neither the *Jain* nor the *Yogi* is cognizant of the secret”.

The destiny of the individual, according to Kabir is the realization of union with God that is possible only through the Love of God. He says that paradise and Hell are only for the ignorant, not for one who knows God. Knowledge and union of God can rightly be achieved only through Love and devotion. He asserts, “No one can be divine only by going through books. It is 2½ syllables of love (*prema*) which is sufficient to make a man divine”. For such devotion and the Love to God, Kabir points out that a devotee has to make the mortification and a sincere effort. He teaches love and universal brotherhood to the entire mankind. He further says that one who is merciful, who observes pity, who lives in this world but away from the world, and who considers every living being like his own self and loves and serves humanity, may attain union with that Immortal God. Thus, the mission of Kabir was like that of Mawlana Rumi; preaching a ‘religion of Love’ which would unite the entire mankind whatever their castes and creeds. (Nabi,1977, 61-3). If someone truly develops Love of God in himself, he would certainly love His creatures, especially human beings. It was this conception of inner freedom, moral courage and deep love which inspired and energized generations of Indian spiritual thinkers and devotees. His “influence, direct or indirect”, observed Sen, “on all liberal movements that occurred in the medieval times after him, is uncommonly deep.” (Sen,1930, 87) Rightly, Kabir is described, as “the true symbol of non-conformity, of all that is free, noble and challenging in the Indian tradition”. He was famous for his equal treatment of all human beings and Love and devotion to God.



He may be considered as a vibrant symbol of mutual love, peaceful co-existence and spiritual unity in Indo-Islāmic composite culture:

Kabir is a genius of a different order. He has gazed into the mystery of life and seen the vision of the ineffable light. He brings from the world of beyond a new message for the individual and for society. He dreams of a future purified of insincerities, untruths, uglinesses, inequalities; he preaches a religion based on the only foundation on which faith can stand, namely, personal experience. He brushes aside unhesitatingly the whole paraphernalia of dogma and authority, for his soul is sick of the sorry spectacle of the quarrels of creeds and the worship of empty shells of formal religions. He tolerates no shams and demands reality in the search after God. Kabir is no retiring ascetic who has abandoned the world in despair, nor is he an idealizer who finds good in all things, he is eager to lift the sword in the moral struggle of the world and strike a doughty blow for the victory of righteousness, and he is not afraid of administering stern even harsh rebuke to all infringements of rational conduct and all degradations of human dignity. He is a mighty warner, an intrepid pathfinder, the great pioneer of the unity of the Hindu and Muslim communities of India and the apostle of the faith of Humanity who taught that “the divine disclosed itself in the human race as a whole” (Chand, 1936, 117).

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was a contemporary of Kabir, and his mission was similar to that of Kabir. Nanak believed that God is one, the Creator and the Kindly (*Hari*) and Unique. He avoids attributing different names like *Rama*, *Shiva*, *Allah*, etc. to God. He simply called his God the ‘True Name’ (*satnam*) who is One, Sovereign, Merciful and Omnipotent: such a God, Nanak believes can be realized only through Love and devotion and



not by knowledge or ceremonial observance. He categorically says that God is Love and reciprocates our love with open arms.

We can conclude that the Love of God is the foundation of every mystical cult. This vital conception, in the sphere of spirituality, provides an indispensable common element of interaction and mutual peaceful co-existence for the two important mystical traditions – the *Bhakti* Movement and *Sufism* – on Indian soil, especially during and after the medieval period. Moreover, even in today's world of science and technology, the spiritual teachings of both of the great religions-Hinduism and Islām-become a prime source of inspiration for the millions of Indian people.

The *Chishti Sufis* particularly, and the other mystics belonging to subsequent *silsilas* (orders), were sympathetic to Hindus (and other small sections belonging to different faiths and religions) and respected their beliefs and convictions. Thus, the Indian composite culture experiences new attitude of equal treatment, mutual love and respect for all human beings without caste, creed or socio-religious consideration by the impact of Sufi's who stood for freedom of conscience and freedom of conviction and exercised their freedom by looking into their faith and intimate God-man relationship. Moreover, it may have been that the caste-ridden and socio-religiously neglected sections of Hindu society saw a new hope in the teachings of Islāmic mystics who believed in Monotheism and equality of all human beings. Therefore, *Sufi* teaching, because it had many things common with the emerging Hindu *Bhakti* Movement, also exercised a special appeal on general masses. Mystics of both the communities identified 'Ram' with 'Rahim' and preached Unitarian world-view of personal God and love and respect for all human beings.

3. LOVE AND SERVICE TO HUMANITY:

Besides the Unity of God and Love of God, the third important main element of interaction, between the *Bhakti* Movement and *Sufism*, is love



and service to humanity. In this regard, the representatives of both the mystical traditions believe firmly that love and service to humanity, is, in real sense, the Love and service to God. In this way, these mystics cut off the roots of the discrimination against human beings on the basis of caste, creed and colour. They made good actions, just behaviour and human service, the criteria for superiority and greatness.

Various renowned personalities in *Bhaktism* emphasize love and devotion to God as well as love and service to humankind. If a devotee really loves his God and obeys His commandments, then he should cultivate an atmosphere of love, goodwill and mutual cordial relationship among human beings. Kabir says that one, who is merciful, observes pity, serves man as a man, considers every living being like his own self and always works for the betterment of humanity, may attain the union with God and get His Blessings. Kabir provides a moral code with a view to attain the Ultimate goal. Though he prescribes the annihilation of the self, such annihilation in the system of Kabir never entails complete detachment or retirement from the worldly affairs and taking oneself to hills and forests. He believes that one may get both meditation (*yoga*) and pleasure (*Bhoga*) in one's own house-hold life, in this world of affairs where he devotes his time, energy, wealth and sincere effort for the service of his fellow-beings without any regard to caste or creed. Such a man is the true believer, a real devotee of God.

Kabir himself experienced various critical stages in his life. He passed through all stages (*hall*) which the *Sufis* or *Bhagats* describe such as contrition (*panchhtawa*) and sorrow (*dukkha*), hope (*asa*) and fear (*durasa*), intimacy in contemplating His Beauty (*Jamal*) and awe at His Majesty (*Jalal*); separation (*viraha*) and union (*milana*), absence (*shaibata*) and presence (*hudhur*). (Ibid., 117-125) All these states helped Kabir (or any other mystic like him) to love and work for human beings in



order to please his God. Through the service and Love to humanity, one may obtain one's spiritual mission.

The mission of Kabir and Nanak, like Rumi and Iqbal was to preach religion of love, which would unite all castes and creeds. They placed the greatest value on the inwardness of religion and condemned the external formalism of both the Hindus and the Muslims. For a mutual understanding of man's emotional attachments, the humanitarian worldview embedded with love and service provides a profound sense of goodwill and mutual co-existence.

Sufi teachings left a remarkable impact on the minds of the people who were discriminated against on the basis of their belonging to a particular caste, class or creed or faith. Such a discriminating or caste-ridden society saw a new hope in the teachings of Islām which were carried out preached and practiced by the Islāmic mystics who believed in *Tawhid* (Unity of Being), equality all human individuals and service to humanity. Such *Sufi* teachings and many others found common grounds in the emerging Hindu *Bhakti Marga* which appealed general masses and they started exercising their rights in multiple spheres of life. Mystics of both the communities preached Love of God and Love of His Creation. Both identified *Ram* with *Rahim* and preached mutual love, respect and service to humankind. In addition to educating the general masses in religious tolerance, equal treatment and good behaviour, the *Sufi* monasteries (*Khanqahs*) by establishing a network throughout the country, served as schools for poetry and mystical writings. These *Khanqahs* also attracted the royal court and the courts of the nobles of the time as well as many poets and the writers. A distinguished line of Sufis includes Amir Khusrau, Bu 'Ali Qalander, Jamal al-Din, Hamid al-Din Nagori and others (Kirmani, 1984, 03). These spiritual human thinkers and writers as well as the monastery culture of the time worked unitedly to promote love, mutual peaceful co-existence and service to humanity.



The great Indian *Bhagats* and *Sufis* stood against the anti-humanistic attitude of any religious, social or political system and preached mutual love and service to humankind. They did not (and even today do not) encourage any anti-human or terrorist tendency in human world of love, goodwill and unity. Sri Krsna and Kabir, for instance, openly denounced the caste system and claimed for *Sudras* complete socio-religious equality. Kabir categorically asserts, “Those who talk of high and low are drowned. They have perished.... There is one earth and one potter, one is the creator of all, all the different forms are fashioned by the wheel.” He emphasizes on performing good actions and behaving kindly to all human beings as it is good action and kind behaviour which give a man honour and position. He points out that man is known according to his *Karma*. Kabir, like the great Persian Sufis, often compares the relation of the individual to God with that of waves and the sea and uses the such expressions as wine and cup of love, the lover (*‘Ashiq*) and the beloved (*Mashuq*), the rose and garden, the path (*suluk*) its stations (*Muqam*) and difficulties of the traveller (*Musafir*) and his goal (*Manzil*) etc. All these are the proud heritage of the Persian *Sufi* poetry put forward by Sa‘adi Shirazi, Sanai, Attar, Mawlana Rumi and Hafiz Sherazi (Khosla, 1987, 9-21).

E. ROLE OF PERSIAN IN INDO-ISLĀMIC PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE:

In fact, the entire phenomenon of religious diversity is one of the crucial questions which the present religious discourse is facing. Muslim thinkers have tried (and are trying) to deal with the issue according to their intellectual training and tendencies as well as with regard to their emerging situations. However, the right and perfect or complete answer is yet to be required for which we all are also striving. So, while discussing the two important spiritual traditions— Bhaktism and Sufism— of the great religions— Hinduism and Islām —we are hopeful to find the more common grounds of mutual understanding, goodwill and peaceful co-



existence as examined and practiced by these great mystical movements along with the Persian language and literature.

The Persian language and its literature of the time played a great role in establishing harmony and mutual love between the followers of two faiths and enriched their spiritual moorings. It remained an official language in India for several artistic centuries. Both the Hindus and Muslims used to love and learn this language for various purposes, especially mutual common feelings and the art of living in a peaceful atmosphere. Consequently, the Persian language succeeded in moulding a composite culture with its full mystical vigour. The full flowering of this language became visible around the 15th century. Later on, during the reign of Sikandar Lodi, Sher Shah Suri and the glorious Mughal period, more especially during the regime of Akbar, Hindus were encouraged not only to learn Persian for government or official jobs but also to use it as a favourite and sweet medium of expression for cultural, artistic mystical and literary tastes and tendencies.

The role of the Persian language in India has been great and impressive in the sense that it attracted the attention of common masses as well as the intelligentsia. On the one hand, it emerged as a medium of love and mutual understanding and equally opened its wide spiritual doors to all religious communities, on the other. All moral, religious, social, political matters got their registration and publication in the Persian Language.

Constant touch between Hindu culture and Islām produced deeper results in the form of the teachings of *Sant* Kabir, Guru Nanak, Akbar, Dara Shikoh, Bhagats, Sufis and others made their contribution to hammer out common ideology and value-system acceptable to various communities living in the subcontinent. Sufism itself gave new horizons to Indian communities and inspired them in various ways. It, in its return, also assimilated many ideas of Indian origin including especially the *Bhakti* teachings and astrological directives. Numerous were the themes it



drew from the Indian stories such as *Nal-Daman*, *Padmawat* and *Madhu Mati*. The Mughal period was the golden one in this direction in which Persian art, architecture, language, mutual love and religious tolerance gained ground. A group of scholars and artists was appointed to translate the classics of Indian literature and scriptures into the Persian language, and illustrate them as well. In fact, historically speaking, India and Persia are the two sides of the same spiritual coin.

F. CONCLUDING REMARKS:

In the entire composite mystical culture of India the tremendous role of the *Bhakti* Movement, *Sufism* and the Persian language and its literature would unreservedly be acknowledged, appreciated, and admired by all competent scholars of history and philosophy. People still get inspiration from these systems and mediums and the future generations would certainly get benefits and guidance from them. It is the need of the day to understand the faiths and value-systems of the other communities living in the same land and develop love, mutual-understanding, the art of peaceful living, and spiritual freedom.

Contemporary India is deeply impacted by *Bhakti* Movement, *Sufism* and the Persian literature. The values of freedom, equality, brotherhood, goodness, kindness, love and co-operation incorporated into these streams of scholarship and frameworks for the human fellowship are the guiding values of modern Indian society and polity. They constitute the controlling vision of Modern India. This synthetic and humanistic outlook is not entirely the function of English Education and scientific developments. The long drawn out role of *Bhagats*, *Sufis* and Indo-Persian poets is an achievement of great significance in the cultural synthesis of India. It is time we take up the role of these movements for historical analysis with a view to anchoring a beacon-light for our future generations to love and live in the atmosphere of mutual understanding, goodwill and peaceful co-existence. The entire global society may be able to get such



supreme lessons from the composite Indo-Islāmic culture embedded with Persian mystic tradition. Thus, we shall have to revisit our glorious past in order to get ourselves enlightened with its superb spiritual and common human Indo-Islāmic traditions and values. May God help us in the pursuit of this glorious tradition and mission for our sensible generation. There is a great need in the 21st century to revisit the Holy Scriptures of the two great religions of the world and work for the common program of peace and co-existence initiated by them.

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