Hinduism Reconsidered

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Shāh-Muni, the eighteenth century Muslim bhakti poet, in his Marathi work, Siddhānta Bodha, observes:

The avindhas (Muslims) consider the ways of the Maharashtra dharma as being twisted and upside down. And these people abhor the doings of the Yavanas (Muslims). Avindhas say, “The Maharashtra dharma is false.” The Maharashtras say, “The avindhas’ way is upside down.” There is a rift between the two. No one knows whose dharma is better. Some say that the ways of both are identical. Isvara and Allāh are one and the same. But due to ignorance they (Hindus and Muslims) do not understand the meaning [of this statement]. (Phadke 1972: ch. 18, 13-17)

Allauddin Khalji’s conquest of the Yadavas of Devagiri (1296) signalled the entry of Muslims into Maharashtra. The Muslim rulers dominated that area continuously from the fourteenth century until the end of the seventeenth century. Over the centuries of co-existence, the two communities had to make adaptive compromises to co-exist. While doing so they seem to have entered into a symbiotic relationship by coming to terms with the mores and norms of each other. This symbiotic relationship, however, does not preclude social tensions. In medieval Maharashtra, the underlying theme in Hindu-Muslim relations does not seem to be one of “secularism” or “peaceful co-existence”. Neither is the period characterised by constant clashes of totally disparate ideologies making their co-existence a historically painful experience. The present paper deals with the dynamics of this symbiosis. Illustrative examples are drawn from the historical-biographical literature (caritra-bakhars), the writings of the three Marathi bhakti poets, Eknāth, Shekh Mahammad and

Shāh-Muni, the eighteenth century legal documents and the modern pīr worship in Maharashtra. Through focusing on Hindu-Muslim symbiosis, certain “inclusive” strategies of Hindus, hopefully, would become apparent.

HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY: MUSLIMS IN THE HINDU SCHEME OF HISTORY

The writing of the caritra-bakhars (historical biographies) began with the advent of Maratha rule under Shivaji (Rajvade 1929: 348f; Hervädkar 1957: 8f). However, such writings were not unknown earlier in Maharashtra. An example is the Mahākavi Rājivāk sahita bakhari, an early seventeenth century work (Rajvade 1924). The re-writing of history in Maharashtra started earnestly in the third quarter of the eighteenth century when the Maratha hegemony had become secure, not only in Maharashtra but also in large areas of Gujarat, Malwa, Karnataka and Rajputana. There was a need felt by the Maratha historians to relate their history to other glorious periods of Indian history. It was the age of Maratha “imperial” history. The Marathas had succeeded the Mughal rule. We find, therefore, the Maratha historians consciously trying to accommodate and legitimize the Muslim rule and the Muslim presence in their history. In other words, they felt that it was necessary to legitimize the Muslim rule so that the subsequent Maratha rule would not be compromised. There is thus a deliberate move to accommodate Muslims in their scheme of history.

Many caritra-bakhars include a dynastic list of the rulers. In some instances, the list begins with the traditional golden age (kṛta yuga), and through the kali yuga (the dark age), it covers ancient and medieval “Hindu” dynasties. The list of Muslim rulers follows next. But the transition to the Muslim rulers proved to be a difficult proposition and had to be explained. The Cāryugāti bakhari (the history of the four yugas), an unpublished MS dated 1795, mentions the Ramala śāstra as the authority of the Yavanas (Muslims) which describes their origin and the dynastic rule. The Ramala śāstra, according to the Cāryugāti bakhari, originated with God Śiva. In a Sanskrit śloka in that bakhari, which is in Marathi mōfi script, to underline the importance of the event the author states:

Śri Īśvara Śiva told Pārvati (his wife) the Ramala śāstra. Pārvati told this to
Skanda. Skanda told this to Narada munı. Narada told this to Bhrgu ṛṣi, who, in turn told this to his son (Sukra). Sukra told this to the Yavanas. Therefore, the Ramaṇa śāstra is held in esteem as a great śātra.4

The origin of the Yavanas is explained through Paigambar (the Marathi term for Prophet Muhammad) by the same Ramaṇa śāstra in a Sanskrit sloka.5

Once residing on Mount Kailaš in the Himalayas, Siva felt sad and forlorn because his wife Parvati and son Ganeśa were not beside him. As he was contemplating their absence, Paigambar munı manifested before Siva. Siva said to him, “I have invited you to search for my son and wife.” Paigambar brought Parvati and Ganeśa over to him at a moment’s notice. Pleased, Siva gave him a boon, saying, “you will appear on this earth in human form.” By the grace of Siva’s boon seven Paigambars appeared on earth. They are Adam, Ayedari, Bhuh, Kukuma, Raiman, Aserya, Danu Asūra. The Ramaṇa śāstra states that seven Paigambars were the wisest and the most honoured of the Yavanas. They descended to earth in the Kaliyuga. They started the san (Muslim era). Hastiniapur was renamed as Dilli and that was the beginning of the yavana Pūrṇi (Muslim empire).6

The message of this bakhar writer is clear: the Paigambar and the Yavanas emerged on this planet because of the divine grace of Siva. The Ramaṇa śāstra of the Yavanas is known to Siva first. The Yavana dynastic rule and the subsequent list of their kings is thus blessed by Siva. In another place the Caṇyauga bhakhar narrates the rise of the Muslim rule in prosaic manner:

On account of Siva’s boon, Paigambar reincarnated as a human being on this earth. And because of the blessings of that Paigambar, the Yavanas obtained the kingdom of Dilli.7

Citnis’ Sapta prakarnaśtma caritra gives a rather elaborate explanation of the rise of the Yavana dynasty:

Paigambar became overcome by the display of a fervent form of devotion on the part of Rukhnumuddin (Muhmmad Ghur). Paigambar flogged him with an iron chain (laṅgūr), twelve times. Rukhnumuddin bore with the pains and said, “enough”. Paigambar than gave a boon to him that he and his descendants would rule the kingdom of Dilli for 1200 years.

The Pithor Raja Chauhān in spite of his brave efforts, could not defeat the enemy. Pithor Raja realised that he would have no hope of winning the battle that was to ensue between him and Rukhnumuddin, because God had bestowed the kingdom to Rukhnumuddin. The Raja killed all his women and children (ka’bile pura karun), wore the ocre coloured robes (ka’vi poṣākh) [of a martyr] and died in the battlefield. The Kingdom was lost. Indraprastha was named Dilli. (Herväddkar 1967: 9)

The emergence of Muslim rule in India was an event of great magnitude and the historians of Maharashtra had to explain it to their readers in order to make it relevant to them. The notion of divine intervention is a well tried purānic device used in Maharashtra. Divine intervention was the cause of the rise of Śivāji, an incarnation of the God Śiva himself. The Brahman Peshwas were the amśadāhāris (“essence-holders”) of Paraśurāma, the sixth incarnation of Viṣṇu (Wagle and Kulkarni 1976: 14). It is thus God’s will, through Paigambar, according to the Hindu historians of Maharashtra, that assured the emergence of Muslim rule in India. Thus, in dealing with the formal Muslim dynastic list, there is no recrimination found against them. The spirit of accommodation is the historians’ guideline.

The Paraśurāma caritra, a history of the Brahman Peshwa dynasty was composed by a Brahman author in 1773. While describing the dynasty, it accommodates the Muslim rule by way of dynastic list and attendant comments that appear in the caritra. The author of the caritra, however, uses the Kali motif, Kali in the caritra is the personification of the evil Kaliyuga. It is the central motif of the caritra. All the discomforts of Peshwa family and all the calamitous events are attributed to Kali. The evil Kali is always contrasted with the goodness of the Peshwas, the amśadāhāris of Paraśurāma, the avatāra of Viṣṇu. As in the Caṇyauga bhakhar there are genealogies (vaṃśavali) of both Muslim and Hindu rulers. Concerning the beginning of the Muslim rule in India, it is said:

Kali established the san (Muslim era) in the Yavana deśa (country) and then brought it over to svadeśa (one’s own country). Kali, hoping to destroy dharma, and to usher in great prosperity for the Mlecchas (Muslims), himself went to their country to bring them. (Wagle and Kulkarni 1976: 33, 156f)

There are no other comments about the origin of the Yavanas in the text. But the origin of the pīr (Muslim holy men) is interestingly and fancifully told in the Paraśurāma caritra:

Mahamad had two brave sons, Hasan and Husen. Both brothers, Hasan and Husen, were the Shāhs of their deśas and were of demonic disposition. Because of Kali’s influence, their minds became afflicted and they began hating all Hindus and fought with them. The Hindus emerged the stronger (of the two) and Hasan died in the battlefield. Hasan died in the 7th night
The King of the Yavanas protected this earth viable alternative to the "assimilative pull" concept of Hinduism. Roy succinctly states: "The most significant part of the attempt to make Islam more acceptable to new and potential Hindu converts was to reduce the separateness between God and his devotees (kahf)." Hasan and Husen fighting the Hindus, in the realm of God these do not apply. (Wagle 1976, 356)

The authors of the *Parasurāma carita*, Cārvuśāsīka ṇak and *Sêpta prakadvāṃaka carita* are obviously distorting Islamic history and mythology. Hasan and Husen fighting the Hindus, Śiva giving a boon to Paigaṃbar and Paigaṃbar flogging Rukhnuddin are cases in point. But the author's aim is to accommodate Muslims and Muslim writers to use the theme of the symbiosis the Yavanas thus rose to prominence and they did not care for the authority of the kings of Hastinapur in the time of the Mlecchas. The people of Sindh, Lāhor and Kāśmīr, however, accepted the prophet himself in line with comparable symbols of the Hindu mythology. Hasan and Husen fighting the Hindus, the people of Sindh, Lāhor and Kāśmīr, all of them celebrated the śastra and the stories of the Mahābhārata. However, some Muslims found such activities objectionable and contrary to their tenets and contemplated the dissolution of this amity. (Wagle and Kulkarni 1976: 356)

**EKNAITH AND HIS HINDU-TURK DEBATE (SAVĀD)**

Eknāth (1553-99), one of the most famous Marathi bhakti poets, illustrates in his Hindu-Turk (Muslim) debate the intensity of religious tensions and polemics between the two communities in sixteenth century Maharashtra. The debate is full of recrimination. Consisting of 66 stanzas, it subsumes the issue arising out of *dharma* rules of purity and worship, the theology of the epics, Purāṇas and Vedas. The justification and rebuttal of image worship appear as a key point of the debate. The Korānic rituals, *hadith* and *Sharia*, are incorporated as points of the debate. The debate ends significantly on a note of mutual accord and harmony of thought, kind of idealised version of the symbiosis the two communities would achieve.

**HINDU:** Really, you and I are of one mind. The dispute became aggravated over the question of the norms of social order (*jāt dharmas*) in the realm of God these do not apply. (vs. 60, 414)

**TURK:** What you say is true. For God, caste does not exist. There is no separateness between God and his devotees (banda), even though Hazrat Rasul (Prophet) has spoken that God is unapproachable. (vs. 61, 414)

**EKNAITH:** They (Hindu-Turk) greeted each other and with respect they embraced. The dispute resulted in a settlement. From differing views, a consensus was achieved. (vs. 62, 64, 414)

The actual debate (only a few excerpts are given below) was full of hostile exchanges of views.

**EKNAITH:** The Turk says to the Hindu that he is a "kafar" (Hindu-Turk kahē kafar). The Hindu answers, "I will be contaminated (ṣītāf), stay away from me."

A quarrel started between the two. And it was the start of a great debate. (vs. 2, 412)

**TURK:** Listen to what I say, Brahman your śāstra (śāstar) is useless. You affirm that God has hands and feet. What a stupendous thing to say. (vs. 3, 412)
HINDU: Listen, Turk, you great idiot (mahāmūrkha), ignoring the truth that God is in all living things, you have become an atheist (ṣunyavādhaḥ). (vs. 4, 412)

TURK: You Hindus are really bad (tumhi Hindu asat hārē). The stone statue governs your lives. You make that into God. With an ekārī (one string instrument) you draw his attention. In its presence you read the purāṇ. Men and women, all stand in front of it. You bow down and fall flat on the ground. Is it not the case, you great idiot (bāye nādān)? Dressed in nimū leaves, the (half) naked (sādhus) congregate, and young women follow them about. Your Vedas are a poor show. All their sayings are useless. You make such a noise. Your God must be lying unconscious. (vs. 30-3, 413)

HINDU: God is in all places: in water, in wood and stone. This is the essential import of your book. Look, you yourself are unaware of it. The Turk is totally ignorant. Even as the ghee, melted or solid, is one material, God is one, with attribute or without (ṣaguna, nirguna). You abhor images. You are an utterly senseless idiot. God fulfils the wishes of his devotees (bandī). This is the doctrine of your book. Why don't you grasp it? I have pointed out your shortcomings to you.

God is near you, yet you shout at him from a distance “ek bār Allāh, ek bār Allāh” (one time Allāh, one time Allāh)—obviously a pun on “Allahu Akbar”, the Muslim prayer call). The rest of the time is whiled away. He has not met you yet. You hail people at a distance; to those who are near you, you whisper. You should meet Him at a close range (fig. you should worship the image). By shouting you merely wake the children.

You consider God is towards the west (Mecca). Are all directions empty? You say God is everywhere, yet you cannot comprehend this, you idiot.

Five times a day are devoted to God. Are other times lost? You have cheated your own sāstra. For you, God is in only one direction. You tell us, we worship stones. Why do you place stones over the dead? You worship the Haji (spirit) of the stone. You believe the tomb to be the true pīr. Why do you conserve the bones of those who are only corpse? You cover the stones (tomb of the pīr) with flowers and cloth and burn incense before it. (vs. 54–42, 413)

TURK: You say God resides in all living beings. Tell me the place where you people all eat together. They do not touch each other and stay apart from one another. There is cleavage between every two castes (jāmāt). If so much as a grain of other's food falls on you while you eat, you will be at his throat. (vs. 44, 45, 413)

HINDU: You Turks are total idiots (param mūrkha). You cannot distinguish between faultless and faulty. When one starts administering pain to another, how can he reach heaven? Because of God (i.e. by natural cause), the animal dies, it becomes carrion. When you dispose of an animal, that is holy and pure, you have indeed, become more pure than God! The Yavanas are full of deceit and guilt. When you sacrifice a chicken, it flutters (in pain) in front of you. What do you gain from this. The sacrificed goat reaches heaven. Then what use is your praying and fasting. Why don't you kill yourself to attain heaven.

Both Hindu and Muslim (Musalmān) are God's creation, brother. (But) observe the determination of the Turk; he has to catch a Hindu and make him a Muslim. (vs. 50-5, 413)

SHEKH MAHMADD: A MUSLIM PERCEPTION OF HINDUS

When Rāmdās, an activist, and, supposedly, anti-Muslim sant of Maharashtra praises Sayyad Shaikh Mahammad Qādirī (Shekh Mahammad in Marathi) as a great sant, his character assumes a special status. Moropant, yet another well known Marathi poet of the eighteenth century, too, admires the spiritual greatness of Shekh Mahammad and asserts that “even the Brahmins praise him with great enthusiasm as a great Musalmān” (Quoted in Dhere 1967: 85).

Shekh Mahammad's Muslim identity is beyond compromise. Most scholars of Marathi bhakti literature assume that Shekh's Guru was a Hindu Brahman, Cānd Bodhale. Bodhale, himself was a murid (disciple) of Rāje Muhmad, Shekh's father. In the world of the sādhus and the sants, symbiosis was a working proposition. The above information indicates that it was possible for a Brahman to accept as a cēla (disciple) a Muslim and that a Muslim could be accepted as Guru for a Brahman. This happened without a formal requirement to change one's religion. Cross-fertilization of this type of interaction surely led to a better understanding of the mores of the two communities. Judging by Eknāth's Hindu-Turk debate, discussed earlier, knowledge of Islam was readily available to Hindus without joining the Muslim rank as a member of that community.

Shekh Mahammad is best known for his Yogasamgrāma, a philosophical work dealing with the theme of the soul's struggle to realize and experience God. The Yogasamgrāma is an unusually frank critique of Hindu ritualist Brahmanism and the sāstras on the one hand. On the other hand, it is an attack on the popular folk-gods. The work denounces, in no uncertain terms, such practices as smoking tobacco, prostitution, animal sacrifices offered to the local
folk-gods and goddesses and self-induced tortures like hook-swinging. For example, commenting on the shrines of the mother goddess as found along the roads and amidst the fields, Sheikh Mahammad says, "If the deities were all that powerful, how come the dogs urinate on them?" (devata uste samarth phaṇa tar teṇḍāvar hā mutatē svān) (Yog. 14, 70).

In the Yogasamgrāma, Sheikh Mahammad freely accepts Hindu Gods like Kāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva and Viṣṇu. He illustrates his ideas with example from the Purāṇas and philosophical texts. Each of the eighteen chapters of the Yogasamgrāma begins with an invocation to God Ganeśa. But his writings reveal him as monotheist. He describes his God as formless (nirākāra) indistinct (avyakta) without attributes (nirguna) and invisible (alakṣa). The structure of Islamic belief in one God is still with him.

In fifty-six languages one God is exalted with different words (choppana bhasā varan ṣukāra karati ek Allāhi jīkhi). Cleavages arise because of harangues in different tongues (Yog. 17.4). I salute the sacred Om by which the God creator (Nārāyaṇ) is known. Muslim salute him as yā Allah (īrī harī om nameji Nārāyaṇa yā Allā waḥanā yavaṇā). (Yog. 1, 52)

In a lighter vein, he comments that if there were (two gods) (Hindu) Hari and (Muslim) Allāh, they would have perished fighting each other (Hari Allā jari donaste tare te bāṇḍa bāṇḍon marate) (Yog. 1, 95). The syncretistic ideas of Sheikh Muhammad are revealed further when he tells people, in a true sūfī way, to trust their religious mentors:

While Muslims call him sacca pîr (the true pîr) the Marāthās call him sadguru (the true guru). There is no difference between these two. Brothers open your eyes (sacca pîr khe Musalmaṇ Marāhī psycho nanda sadguru pîrna pîr donhit nāhi bhimaṇvaṇa akhi ko khel dekho bhāt). (Yog. 17, 3)

Among the Marāthās it is the sadguru. For the Muslims it is the sacca pîr, who enables one to cross the ocean of existence. The others will sink in it and pull others with them (Yog. 16, 57). Ignoring the attestations of good people and those found in the great Purāṇas, the people worship the demonic gods (bhate pujhī). But how will that [god] who has assumed the shape of a stone cross the ocean of existence with a devotee. If one were to be hit by a stone on the head, blood would gush forth out of the wound. For fulfilling a vow, fools fashion gods out of gold and silver and kill living creatures to appease them. (Yog. 16, 59-61)

Sheikh Mahammad's Muslim identity surfaces in a candid statement he makes to smooth the anxiety felt by Hindus of his times. The area around Ahmadnagar in Maharashtra was then under control of Muslim rulers. His statement also reflects the points of frictions between the two communities:

People say of me, he is of a mleccha jāti (Muslim). That is why he reviles our gods. We cannot trust him. We see Musalmans smashing the images and destroying our temples. He is surely one of them. The images have been turned to dust. What is there left to worship now. The tradition (paramparā) of the Yavanas is to destroy our gods. He is of their lineage (kā śāmyacā gopt). We shall not, therefore, listen to what he says. Sheikh Mahammad says, Musalmans are also created by God. Born as a Musalman, he is well versed in Qurān and Purāṇ. For his own welfare he listens to the perfected holy ones (śiddha sādhaḥ śānala). One should not search for the origin of a person who exalts God (jyā māvajē ḍvara tyācē adhū na ye kulaśān). (Yog. 16, 62-67)

Shāh-Munī AND Hindu-MusLIM INTERACTIONS

Shāh-Munī emerged in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, a period of Maratha history that saw Maratha Hindu rule well established in Maharashtra and beyond. Deeply rooted in Hindu scriptures as found in the Veda, Purāṇa and Dharmasastra, he writes with knowledgeable insights into Hindu popular and high religion. Although he was an expert in Hindu ideologies, his own bent was towards Mahānbhāv doctrines (Dherē 1976: 127-9). Shāh-Munī is best known for his monumental work Siddhānta Bodha (which is in 50 chapters with 9858 verses, and was composed in 1778, Phadke 1972). In a puranic fashion, Shāh-Munī explains the origin of the "fifty-two varnas and eighteen jātis". This was a standard expression for describing the entire caste-class structure of Maharashtra as found in the late eighteenth century documents and literary works:

Mahāviśnu (God creator) explained the division of the varnas (varna bhed) to God Brahmā. I have told you the ways of the Yavanas before, I shall now add to it. Dīva was a great rṣi (sage). Yavanas called him Ādam. Dīva worshipped Mahāviśnu (God in the Muslim sense) and hated Śiva. Kārava worshipped Śiva constantly and ridiculed Mahāviśnu. Their enmity grew day by day. Kārava built a Śiva temple (śivālaya) and propitiated [the image]
with regular rituals. Dilva built a \textit{Masjid} (mosque) and started praying in it (\textit{karta pahāla nimā}). One day Kārfar's cow, entering Dilva's abode, stood in his \textit{Masjid}. Diva said to himself, "this cow is standing in the centre of my house of worship." With anger, he ran to beat her with a stick. The cow counter-attacked and gore him to death with her horns. His hotheaded son, Musal, became extremely furious and with a weapon killed the cow and avenged his father's death by eating her flesh. The sons born in his lineage became like him and started killing cows and eating them. Dilva's house is called \textit{din} (a Marathi term used for the Muslim religion) and Musal's descendants are known as Musalmāns. The enmity against Kārfar was maintained (in Musal's lineage), hence Maharashtra is called Kāfar (infidel). They [Musalmāns], therefore, break the images and Śiva temples and hate the gods. This is the origin of the \textit{yavana jāti}. (SB. 23, 196-210)

Shāh-Muni is using a \textit{purānic} style myth to explain the origin of the Muslims. Shāh-Muni's \textit{"purāṇa"} (the fifth Veda) gives, or rather rubber-stamps the certificate of genuine local roots of the community of Islam. Thus both Hindus and Muslims have roots in Vedic āśram. However, Shāh-Muni's Dilva \textit{ṣi} worshiped Mahāviṣṇu, the attributeless God. Kārfar's God is Śiva in the form of a \textit{ṭīṇga} worshipped in the temple. Shāh-Muni seems to be giving a local colouring to a conflict between the two communities by making it a sectarian Viṣṇu–Śiva conflict. Sectarian conflicts between Śāivites and Viśvānites were a recurring feature of medieval Hinduism in Maharashtra and south India, although the bhakti tradition of both regions had tried to overreach it. Shāh-Muni thus makes the conflict indigenous to the soil. The fanciful etymologies, of the words, \textit{Musalmān} and \textit{Kāfar}, are in line with the methods of the traditional Hindu pandits and \textit{pavānakas in} Maharashtra and elsewhere in India. Shāh-Muni appears to be more sensitive to Hindu-Muslim tensions than Sīkh Mahammad. The latter lived essentially in an area under Muslim political control in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Shāh-Muni lived under the Brahman Peshwa's rule in the late eighteenth century.

Shāh-Muni is far more generous in his use of Hindu imagery in the \textit{Siddhānta Bodha}. But he appears to be very consistent throughout in pointing out his preference for an attributeless God. In other words his God is within the framework of the monotheistic conception of god in Islam. He articulates his faith in no uncertain terms in the \textit{Siddhānta Bodha}. He describes the origin of the Muslims:

Mahāviṣṇu, the Īśvara, is the supreme ruler of this world. His rule stretches from this land (\textit{karmabhūmi, India}) to the milky primeval ocean of Mahāviṣṇu who rests there on the eternal serpent. From Mahāviṣṇu sprang Paigambar (\textit{īqādasūn fīr Paigambar}) who descended to earth. From Paigambar we find the spreading of Yavanas (\textit{yavanayāśīcā vistāra}) throughout the world. Out of the millions of gods (\textit{daivat}) a select 80 thousand became wise Paigambars and established the \textit{mīchā drhma} (Islam). That sustainer of the world Nārāyaṇa created the four \textit{sāstras} which the Yavanas call the Qurān. The Yavanas read the Qurān which is the word of God (Nārāyaṇ). Believing in Paigambar, the Yavanas worship God. The Yavanas call Nārāyaṇ the great Allāh (\textit{Nārāyaṇā yavana mhatēr thor Allāh}). They worship Mahāviṣṇu with great devotion. Mahāviṣṇu declared the truth in the Qurān: "That there is no one greater than I. I am Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Hārītā. I am the originator of Nature. I am the controller of the Universe. Besides me there is no one who punishes and saves." (SB. 18, 97-117)

The \textit{Siddhānta Bodha} is not without its share of criticism of the social mores of the late eighteenth century Maharashtra. Shāh points out social hypocrisy and ills. He dislikes the divisive forces of the \textit{jāti} system. Scornfully he asks:

Cokhāmelā (the untouchable Mahār bhakti sant of Maharashtra) worshipped God and people kept their distance from him. Will there be a separate Mahār quarter in heaven for Cokhāmelā to reside in? The low-born and high-born enter the river, fill their pots with water and come out. The high-born say, "Don't touch us. Keep away from us." A little while before they were standing in the same water. Shāh-Muni knows that it is a futile exercise to uphold a distinction between one's own \textit{jāti} and another's. For him the distinction does not exist. (SB. 50: 400-2)

\textbf{Law and Hindu-Muslim Interaction}

A good illustration of Hindu-Muslim symbiotic relations is to be found in the sphere of law in Maharashtrian society. The properly tried law cases before a formal court convened by the government would depict social reality at a given point more accurately than that which can be gleaned from religious literature, with its biases and prejudices. The adjudicative rules in a court are geared to sustaining equity in law. Both the parties in the case have the opportunity to express their views and a review is made by the adjudicators. In relation to the paper's theme, I have singled out two Maratha law cases, one adjudicated in 1701 and the other in 1742. The 1701 case

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was fought during Aurangzeb's time when the region, where the case was fought, was under his jurisdiction. The 1742 case was settled during Šahbhah's regime when the Marathas controlled that region. Both cases involved judgement by ordeal in a mosque.

In 1742, the legal dispute was between two Muslims, Bāvākhān bin Ismāil Ghori and Polādshōh (both ashraf Muslims)\(^\text{10}\) over the right of ownership to the headship of a village in Maharashtra. The case was tried by Hindu administrators. The dispute was not resolved in the regular judicial trial, with witnesses and documents produced as evidence. In order to break the legal deadlock, with the consent of both parties, a trial by ordeal in a masid (mosque) was agreed upon. The parties went to the mosque of Rānjangāv near Pune. They began the divine ordeal of the mosque, as it is called in the legal document (maṣūdī kriya), by placing ashes of burnt frankincense on each other's hand as an act of affirmation of the truth of their statements. In this case they asserted their version of the claims to the rights of ownership. As agreed upon previously, they encamped in the mosque for fifteen nights watched over by the mujāvar, the keeper of the mosque and the government people. The mujāvar gave a written testimony about the events which took place in the mosque:

On the first day Polādshāh's hand quivered at the time of receiving the ashes. On the third day the lamp lighted by Polādshāh would not burn; the oil overflowed. Attempts were made to light the lamp twice, but it only fluttered intermittently. For eight consecutive days the lamp lighted by Bāvākhān burnt with great consistency. On the fourteenth and fifteenth day he (Polādshāh) became ill.

The mujāvar declared that Polādshāh was overcome by the manifestation of divine greatness (śrī devātī ajmat ghaḍfī). Bāvākhān won the trial by ordeal in the mosque. Rājā Šahbhah restored the rights of ownership to Bāvākhān based on the ordeal:

The other trial in the mosque of Rānjangāv took place in 1701.\(^\text{16}\) Both the disputants were Hindus in this case and the dispute was in connection with the headship of a merchant guild. A Hindu chief ordered the trial because of a legal deadlock. In this case too, the mujāvar was the key witness of the events which took place in the mosque during the fifteen nights trial period. The mujāvar reported that on the fifth day about midnight, Mānājī, one of the disputants, made an awful sound as if he were suffering from acute pain and said thrice, “get off my chest”, as if possessed by evil spirits. Mānājī lost the case.

Ordeals in the mosque are referred to as maṣūdī kriya. The mosque is referred to in the two Marathi documents as šrī devai (temple), šrī devāceghar (house of God). The honorific śrī is indicative of the sanctity of the place. Maṣūdī kriya (ordeal in the mosque) is equated with śrīdīvya (ordeal of God). For legal purpose the mosque and God of Muslims had the same standing as the Hindu temple and God of the Hindus.\(^\text{17}\) The use of language here is indicative of the willingness of each community (more particularly Hindus) to accept a common sacral denominator. Islamic law, in theory at least, prohibits resorting to trial by ordeal. Hindus are not expected to hold a mosque as a place of veneration. It is evident from these cases that the parties, Hindus and Muslims were willing to accommodate each other's religious sensitivities in the pursuit of justice.

**Pir Worship and Hindus: A Case of Dāvalmalak**

Pir worship of Hindus could be construed as a good example of Hindu accommodation of an essentially Muslim practice of India. A case of Hindu worship of Dāvalmalak is a case in point. According to sūfī hagiographical literature, Abu-Masud better known as Dāvalmalak, was a pir of the Chisti order and a murid of Šah Alam of Gujarat. Within a century of his death in 1484, his fame had spread throughout Maharashtra. Presently most of the memorial shrines of Dāvalmalak are located in the Marathwada and Vidarbha regions of Maharashtra (Pitake 1914: 35-7; Pohankar 1960: 14-70; see also Dhure 1967: 161-4). The worship of Dāvalmalak was in vogue in Eknāth's time (1523-99). In his jōhār, Eknāth remarks:

> The people worship the begging bowl of Dāvalmalak. They become fakirs ((Muslim mendicants) once a year. Having cured their eyes of their disease, they eat malti (a milk-based sweet offered at the shrine of the pir) from the hand of a Turk. (cit. in Dhure 1967: 162-3)

Rāmādās, the mid-seventeenth century Marathi sants, in the course of lamenting the demoralization of the Brahmins in the Maharashtra says:

> Some go on pilgrimage to Dāvalmalak. Some worship the pir and some on their own embrace Islam kriyak turuk holi ñple ñchene (Dhure 1967: ibid.).
Shāh-Muni also observes that the “Brahmans go to Dāvalmalak”. Even today in Maharashtra, according to R.C. Dhāre, the tradition of pilgrimage to Dāvalmalak is followed by such castes as Dh Pangars, Tilole, Kūnbī, Teli, Bhuī, Mahār and Māṅg, and, of course, Muslims. A number of Marathas and Brahmins are believers in Dāvalmalak. There are Brahmins in Maharashtra whose family name is Dhāvalbhakta (Dāval-devotees). At the present time in the Marathwada area on the onset of eye trouble a Hindu believer in Dāvalmalak makes a pilgrimage to Dāvalmalak shrine. He is prepared with a blue cloth for begging and a wooden hoe. He is accompanied by a group of companions. He shouts, “Dom Dom Dāvalmalak”, and begs for food. For he must subsist only on food obtained by begging. At the end of the journey, he places the begging cloth and hoe on a triangular stand. He gives gifts to the mujāvar, the keeper of the shrine. Through him he offers homage to the shrine. In turn the mujāvar gives him as the “prasād” of the Dāvalmalak, malīda.¹⁰ Then he gives a feast (bhūṣṭara) with the grain remaining from his begging. Then he waits to receive in dream a message from the spirit of Dāvalmalak that his eyes will be cured and that he may return home.

In the Vidarbha area of Maharashtra, Dāvalmalak is known to cure the eye diseases of both men and cattle. There are two modes of worship. One is known as keiṣṭha kundari (to give a feast in one’s house) or phītī kundari (to travel to Dāvalmalak’s shrine and give a feast). The pilgrims carry a coloured cloth for begging, a small stick, a wooden hoe and half of a dried white gourd called pāţār. On their way many people feed them and the act of feeding is called the worship of pāţār. It is the same as the gada pujātī referred to by Ekñāth. In Vidarbha, the kundari feast may consist of a chicken and goat dinner (Dhāre 1976: 164).

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Shāh-Muni and Shekh Mahammad refer to non-Muslims of Maharashtra as Māryāiga and Maharashtra. For themselves they use terms such as avindha, Yavana, mleccha and, the preferred expression, Musalmān. The expression Maharashtra Dharma is used by Shāh-Muni as a comprehensive term of reference for brahmanical and folk practices, theology from the Vedas, Purāṇas, Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana, dharmaśāstra and dvaita and advaita philosophical tenets. In Ekñāth’s Hindu-Muslim debate the issues singled out as being specifically Hindu are a belief in the Veda and Pūrāṇa, image worship and jāti rules. The juxtaposition of traditions of Muslims with Hindus in the debate, thus, exposes the distinctiveness and general characteristics of Hinduism. It also tells us about the dynamics of adoptive compromises needed to lead a relatively unfettered life for the two communities.

In the historical and biographical literature in the eighteenth century Maharashtra, when the Muslims had lost political control of that region, Maharashtra’s historians are seen as accepting Muslims as legitimate past rulers of India and Maharashtra, and as a community anchored to the soil. The acceptance of the Muslim rulers is accomplished through a purānic style myth of origin in the Ramala śāstra. Whatever is stated in the śāstra must be true—it does not matter whether it is Hindu śāstra or “Muslim śāstra”—and lends authenticity to the myth.

Muslim poet-saints like Shekh Mahammad and Shāh-Muni were canonized as great saints by Hindus on account of their contributions to the bhakti tradition of Maharashtra. While staying within the framework of the monotheistic concepts of Islam, they were willing to accommodate gods of the Hindu pantheon as long as those gods conformed to their conception of God as devoid of definable attributes, indistinct and being one entity. Shāh-Muni uses a purānic device to explain the origin of Islam through Mahāviṣṇu, his version of Allah; the Hindu-Muslim differences are explained away by another origin myth. By describing Dilva “the founder of the Muslim community”, as a Vedic seer, he is, like the Hindu historians of Maharashtra, making the Muslims acceptable members, rooted in the tradition of Maharashtra. Shāh-Muni and Shekh Mahammad struck at the bases of brahmanical rituals and caste divisions. Both were aware of the antipathy between Hindus and Muslims. They hoped that this would be melted away through belief in God.

The popular ār worship was nearer to the Hindu beliefs in terms of the perceived efficacy (karamat in Sufi terms) of their gods and deities to bestow pragmatic rewards. Hindu believers in Dāvalmalak without giving up their own Hindu identity, were willing to assume temporarily the Muslim identity of a fakir, if this would help them to alleviate physical deformities and pains. Muslims, Brahmins, Mahār and others through centuries have been worshipping Dāvalmalak.

In the law cases examined above one finds to what extent the two
communities were willing to share each other’s institutional mores in the pursuit of a just settlement.

NOTES

1. For the “peaceful coexistence” and “secularism” approach, see Chand (1936); Mujeeb (1967); and Kabir (1955).
2. For the classic exponent of the theory of Hindu-Muslim incompatibility and distrust, see Ahmad 1964.
4. A part of the sloka in four lines, written in Sanskrit, appears in Nandurbarkar and Dāṇḍekar (eds.) 1895: 135.
5. Čaryugī, Bakhr (unpubl. MS.) pp. 9-10. The MS is without the author’s name but was most probably written in 1795 from the internal evidence.
6. Čaryugī, Bakhr, p. 10.
7. Ibid.
9. According to the Mahabāvadī, Bhakar, Allaudin Khalji was killed by the son of Hasan, Husān, Husān attacked the king Rāmdēvraāv of Devagīri. One of the ministers of Rāmdēvraāv killed Husān. Husān was killed by Chitrāgupta, another of his ministers. Allaudin killed Rāmdēvraāv in revenge against this bhakar. The advent of Islam in Maharashtra is thus associated with Allauḍiṇ’s victory.
11. For social and political background of Eknāṭh’s period which saw the domination of Muslim Sultans over much of Maharashtra, see, N.R. Phāṭak, Śrī Eknāṭh (Phāṭak 1950: 35-50). Phāṭak has also critically analysed the Hindu-Turk Saṃvād in the context of Eknāṭh’s period (ibid.). See also Sonavane 1907: 1-14. Sonavane (p. 10) narrates a hagiographical account of an encounter between Eknāṭh and a Muslim. The incidence is given by Sonavane as an example of Eknāṭh’s forbearance and determination (saḥanīlīn) when he was confronted with an hostile and humiliating situation:

Nāṭh was on his way home after taking a bath in the Gāṇī (Godāvāri river). A Muslim after chewing a pān spat on him. Nath without uttering a word went back to the river and took his bath. He again encountered the Muslim who, it seems, was waiting for the freshly bathed Eknāṭh’s arrival only to spit on him. These acts of spitting and bathing went on for a while. A crowd gathered to see who would win this ‘content’. In the end the Muslim gave up spitting and withdrew shamefacedly.

12. See R.C. Dhere, 1967: 89. Dhere is of the opinion that Cānd Bedhale, who according to him was a Brahman, adopted Muslim sīfī practices and the sīfī dress. Because of such a behaviour, Muslims adopted him as their own. His samākti has now become a Muslim dargāh. In effect, Bedhale became a Muslim fiṭrī. The official record of the Qādirī Sīfī order Sīfī qādirī, Cānd is referred to as Sayyad Cānd Bedhāeb Qādirī. Jānārdān Sāvmi, A Hindu and guru of Eknāṭh was a disciple of Cānd Bedhale (Dhere 1967: 86-9).
13. See Dhere 1967: 12, 28-106. Although Šekhi’s critique of Hindu rituals and practices are scattered through his 18 chapters of the book, it is particularly intense in the above section. The Vagasaṅgrāma references mentioned in this paper are from Dhere’s edition.
14. For a detailed analysis and translation of the two law cases see N.K. Wagle 1983: 314-34.
17. The Hindu members of the tribunals were sometimes sent to the Muslim dargāh (the tomb of a fiṭrī) and, on occasion, were made to take an oath that they would abide by the truth of the case. See Narāgyāv Śikūr v. Mārālī, 30 November 1726, Śikūv Dājār Būmātī No. 6, cited in Gune, 1953: 292.
18. Phāṭak (1914: 97) finds the role of the mūjīvar and the act of receiving the food from a Muslim, very instructive. He says that normally if a Hindu Maratha peasant (Kumbhī) were to receive food from the hands of a Qāzī (Muslim theologian-jurist), he would be instantly excommunicated from his community. But in the case of Dāvalmalak’s worship a Muslim’s food becomes acceptable because it is kulekā, an acceptable norm. Phāṭak observes that such acts at the religious level went a long way in establishing amicable relationships between Hindus and Muslims.

REFERENCES


1. INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists often fail to relate the study of meaning to that of social action. However, when they concern themselves with civilizations, frequently qualified by adjectives such as “high”, “great” and “ancient”, the problem becomes acute. Renouncing the study of this connection is a form of abdication for an anthropologist. I wish to submit that this withdrawal is caused by a feeling on the part of the anthropological community that they are “outsiders” and “intruders” in a field which has been dominated for so long by disciplines like islamology, indology, in short by oriental studies. In what might be an attempt at gaining respectability the anthropological upstart seems to be inclined to perpetuate the static and harmonious image of a “Hochkultur” that he encountered in the works of the textual scholars.

The orientalist perspective in the study of Hinduism has above all resulted in a picture of Indian society as static, timeless and spaceless, and dominated by the Brahmins as guardians of the sacred order of society (Cohn 1968: 7). There can be no doubt that this picture has haunted anthropological research on Hinduism. This is especially clear in the attempts to combine, in one way or another, the approaches of textual scholars and anthropologists. The most influential of those attempts has, of course, been that of Louis Dumont and David Pocock who declared that “a Sociology of India lies at the point of confluence of sociology and indology” (1957; see Dumont 1970: 2). Their programme was to develop a sociology of values and ideas, for which they relied upon the indological interpretation of those (Sanskrit) texts in which the Hindu “system