A MEDIEVAL ENCOUNTER BETWEEN HINDU AND MUSLIM: EKNATH'S DRAMA-POEM
HINDU—TURK SAMVAD

ELEANOR ZELLIOT
Carleton College, U. S. A.

The goal is one; the ways of worship are different.
Listen to the dialogue between these two:
The Turk calls the Hindu “Kafir!”
The Hindu answers, “I will be polluted—get away!”
A quarrel broke out between the two;
A great controversy began...

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

Recent studies of sāntś and poets in the bhakti or devotional religion schools of North India and of their qāfī counterpart in Islam have begun to shed considerable light on the ways in which
śūfis and bhaktas may have influenced each other. 2 The actual encounter between Hindu and Muslim is another matter, and one for which there is little source material available in English. Leaving aside the all important figure of Guru Nanak as the most radical synthesizer of Hindu and Muslim ideology and practice, one might point out three ways in which other Hindu bhaktas dealt with the presence of Muslims. Dadu of Rajasthan (1544–1603) dwelt on a “majestic and absolute but benevolent God/Guru” much like the contemporary concept of Akbar, the Mughal emperor. 3 Kabir (fifteenth century) has recently been called the “apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity,” 4 but often scorned the outward signs and symbols of both Hinduism and Islam and clung to his own tough poetic vision of reality. Caitanya in Bengal (1486–1533) converted Muslims to his Vaishnava faith by showing them that the Qur’an told of a personal God much like Kṛṣṇa, but his way was the better way to approach that God. 5

Eknath in Maharashtra (1533–1599) had a rather different approach from any of these, as well as a very different way of presenting his (or his characters’) attitudes toward Islam and Hinduism. Like Kabir, he was critical of much in Hindu and Muslim practice that seemed hypocritical, but he seems even more interested in finding similar practices and similar beliefs in both religions that can be incorporated into some higher truth. Like Caitanya, Eknath believed that the God of the Qur’an was the God of the Hindus, but his theme is that God made both Hindu and Muslim in His full wisdom, and there need be no conversion. Eknath’s purpose in writing the Hindu-Muslim dialogue was both to entertain his hearers with the ridiculousness of human behavior and to instruct them in the very nature of religion.

Eknath’s Hindu-Turk dialogue is one of some three hundred bhāruds, a bhakti poetry genre which has no strict rhyme or meter pattern but always involves the poet’s speaking through the voice of some other person, animal or bird, or through the metaphor of a game, a government document or some other aspect of the workaday world. Eknath’s other bhāruds include such things as a dialogue between a Brahman and a Mahar 6 and one between a Brahman and a dog; messages in the mouths of fortune tellers, tumblers, untouchables, a hen-pecked man, a prostitute, a devotee of the god Khandoba, a snake-charmer and a madman; and calls to devotion through the metaphor of a drum, a dance-game called phugāṭa, and an official government letter of warning. Several bhāruds are in corrupt Hindustani and ten others are spoken as if by Muslims: a darweshī, a fakir, and a Hapsi or Ethiopian migrant to Maharashtra who ends each second line in his accounting of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu with the word Muhammad!

As can be guessed from the listing above, Eknath’s bhāruds are often dramatic, often humorous. Those that I have heard sung by bhajan groups today are acted out vigorously, often in costume, not sung reverently or ecstatically. Although the voices of the bhāruds are those of the non-orthodox, Eknath does not scorn or deride them. Rather, each character, from untouchable Mahar to heterodox Mahanubhav to Hindi-speaking Muslim, is allowed to be the voice of some aspect of the bhakti religion. The messages that Eknath expresses through the bhāruds form are most often these: the necessity for a moral life and for devotion to the saṅīt; the need to understand God as both nirguṇa (without qualities) and saṅguṇa (with qualities, a personal God) and the fact that underneath all the trappings of caste and sect is one reality. However, the trappings, the outward signs, symbols and practices, are fully and often accurately delineated for each character. It is as if Eknath not only observed all the life around him with a keen eye but had a capacity for empathy with all living beings, however low, strange or foreign. 7

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

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

There are five instances in the 18th century biography of Eknath compiled by Mahipati in which Eknath encounters some facet of Islam. First, Eknath's beloved guru was Janardan, who was not only a swami but also some sort of military commander in the army of Daulatabad, a town and fort within the Sultanate of Ahmadnagar. The legend tells that Eknath himself once led the Muslim armies of that town in a counter attack rather than wake his guru from deep meditation. A little later when Eknath is ready for initiation, the god Datta appears as a bearded Muslim fakir, only revealing himself as the supreme being when Eknath drinks water from the pot the fakir has sent to be washed. Together with his guru Janardan, Eknath then meets Chandrabhat or Chand Bodbale; a distinguished \textit{bhākta} and a \textit{śāfī} of the unorthodox Malang order, who evidently came to Devagiri just before Alau'd-Din Khalji stormed that Yadava capital in 1296. Muntakhabu'd-Din died in Devagiri in 1296 and was buried in Khauldabad just outside the city. His tomb, now known locally as that of Muntajabuddin Zar Zari Buxsh Dulahen, is the site of one of the four largest religious festivals in Aurangabad District.

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

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

It is probable that there were \textit{śāfīs} in the Marathi-speaking area before the political presence of Muslims. The first recorded name, however, is that of Muntakhabu'd-Din of the Chisti order who evidently came to Devagiri just before Alau'd-Din Khalji stormed that Yadava capital in 1296. Muntakhabu'd-Din died in Devagiri in 1296 and was buried in Khauldabad just outside the city. His tomb, now known locally as that of Muntajabuddin Zar Zari Buxsh Dulahen, is the site of one of the four largest religious festivals in Aurangabad District.

As part of Tughluq's disastrous migration, a disciple of Nizamu'd-Din Awliya, the chief Chisti saint in India, was sent to Devagiri-Daulatabad. Mir Hasan 'Ali Sanjari lived in Daulatabad until his death in 1336, and, according to Subhan, spread Nizamu'd-Din's ideas there through a collection of his sayings, the \textit{Fawa'idu'l-Fawad} (Beneficent to the Heart.) Nizami credits Shaikh Burchanu'd-din Gharib, "one of the senior most disciples of Shaikh Nizamu'd-din Awliya," with making the great saints of the Chisti order "household words in the mystic circles of the South." It is
clear that for at least forty years, Daulatabad was one of the great Chisti centers in India.

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

The Bahmani kingdom began to break up toward the end of the fifteenth century, and out of its ruin came five Sultanates, among them the Nizam Shahi government under Malik Ahmad. A new Muslim capital was established in the Marathi-speaking area, the city of Ahmadnagar, begun in 1494 some fifty miles south and west of Paithan. There was an influx of Marathi speakers into the new government, and although no great cultural synthesizer such as Ibrahim II in Bijapur arose, the Ahmadnagar center saw a rich mixture of Persians, Turks, Hindus and Abyssinians, including the famous Malik Ambar. There seems not to have been a Sufi revival, but in the century following the establishment of the Ahmadnagar Kingdom, the bhakti tradition was revived and invigorated. The key figure in this revival was Eknath, who forged links with the past through his editing of the initial text of the bhakti movement, the Dnyaneshwari written three hundred years before, and his biographies in poetic form of all the early sants. So well was the bhakti tradition nourished that it produced its greatest sant, Tukaram, in the next century.

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

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

Hindu-Turk Dialogue

Eknath:

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

2. The Turk calls the Hindu "Kafir!"
   The Hindu answers, "I will be polluted—get away!"
   A quarrel broke out between the two;
   A great controversy began.
Muslim: 3. 'O Brahman, *listen to what I have to say:
Your scripture is a mystery to everyone.
God has hands and feet, you say—
This is really impossible!

Hindu: 4. Listen, you great fool of a Turk!
See God in all living things.
You haven't grasped this point
And so you have become a nihilist.*

Muslim: 5. Listen, Brahman dipper-in-water,
You leap in the water like water ducks.
Whoever studies your scripture
Is a great big fool!

6. You have a kamakaholoko* scripture.
It says God goes out to beg.
Bali caught him and made him a door-keeper!*
This sort of story deceives people.

7. All your scripture is just ridiculous.
You make Allah a servant!
What a bharavalavilla!*
This talk is for dim witted men.

Hindu: 8. You don’t remember your own book,
It can be read in the Sulkhan*

---

*3:1 The Muslim uses village Marathi for Brahman, i.e. Bahman.

*4:4 śūnyavatīkā—literally, of the doctrine of nility or emptiness. A curious technical term for the Hindu to call the Muslim!

*6:1 kamakaholoko śāstra could mean a scripture used for money and food; I have left it as is to carry the sense of ridicule

*6:3 A reference to a puranic story, answered in the last lines of verse 11.

*8:2 Sulkhan. Could this be suluk, meaning treatment or behavior, a term used in the titles of some Muslim works?

*8:3 pratham abdulla alla huve*—literally, “first Abdull became Allah,” which makes absolutely no sense.

*10-11 Richard Eaton has suggested that the Fakir may be different persona breaking into the dialogue between Hindu and Turk.

*10:2 Fajtārī may not be a name; the line could be read “This wretched (or humble) fakir is praised by God.”

*10:5 phakaranya khudāku—literally, “through the fakir to God.”

*10:6-7 Richard Eaton has suggested this interpretation with phakar lāhila khudāku phakar alle khudāku. 24

*11:2 Ḥafrat is an honorific.
Allah, you exist in the Caliph.
Allah, you are the seeing and the seen.
Allah, you are the knower and the known.
Allah, you are life and the giver of life.
Allah, you are the aims that fill the stomach and take away sin.

Bring oil and bread, you who have ears!
Allah, give me milk and rice,
Allah, give me gravy, bread, wheat cakes,
Allah, give me lentil cakes,
Allah, give me sweets and sugar!

Hindu: (Sanskrit) I, the Brahman, recite a verse:
One who lives on alms lives on nothing;
Bhikshus reject only their homes.
One who is discontent is the real sinner.
The contented one is described as drinking soma.

Bali was a special devotee of God.
God loved his way of devotion.
So God always stands near him.
Why do you revile this?

Muslim: 12. Your Brahman laid his daughter.*
The Vedas he preaches are all false.
Your Sästras, your Vedas, your “OM”*
Are all evil tricks.

13. How many falsehoods, how much nonsense all that is.
Thieves took away God’s wife
So monkeys came to help him!
You’ve read and read the scripture and died!
Admit your mistakes and shut up!

Hindu: 14. She you call your teacher’s wife
you treat as your own wife!
Look at the “faithfulness” of the Turk!
And he censures the Brahman!

15. Father Adam and Eve* made a pair.
You have read this book.
You don’t know your scriptures, you fool.
Why do you quarrel with us?

16. Adam and Eve enjoyed each other:
From that came the world of men!
You give your name as Adam.*
You speak, and make a fool of yourself!

17. Baba Adam’s Eve went away.
You say she was taken by Satan.
Well, Sita was stolen by Ravana.
Why do you deride our story?

18. Then the angels took counsel:
Gabriel
Israfael
mankail
naskail*
Michael
Victorious, they returned with wife Eve.
Rama called forth great warriors
To search for Sita.
(What’s the difference?)

19. Listen, Brahman, you are clever as an ass!
Your answer is nonsense; your answer is stupid.
Whoever reads your scripture
Is greatly unenlightened!

*15: 1 Eknath uses the word mayá for Eve throughout the poem.
*16: 4 A pun on the word for man, admi, in Hindi.
*18: 5 mankail and naskail may be the angels Munker and Nakeer. I have translated ijrail as Israfael and mitkail as Michael.
20. Fool! Your God was imprisoned; Kansasur came to kill him.
Devaki concealed your God.* What a stupid scripture for the ignorant!

21. What was hidden, closed in, was made open. From this sort of thing comes knowledge? *ya hila ya salim!*

Muslim:
22. You deceive yourself with your own mouth. You call God a keeper of cows. When you hear these stories you weep! You call God a cattleman!* 

23. The Kafir has lost his senses. You have destroyed the greatness of God! Shall I give you a blow? And still you argue! 

Hindu:
24. Look how your mouth babbles on. God is present in every place— Why not in prison? You take this as a contradiction in vain! 

25. One who has greatness of mind Knows God is not fixed in one place. God is hidden in the secret, brother! Read the Qur'an and see!* 

26. It is difficult for the mind to grasp God But God can fill one's mind And open the secret of the secret. Your Prophet so spoke!* 

27. Holy man, holy man Shahmodin Ali The great one said: Cow, elephant, monkey— God protects every one. This is stated in your books. Why don't you honor it? 

28. Dogs, crows, rats, birds— God protects these too. You don't know your own scripture, dumbbell! Why do you pick a fight with me? 

Muslim:
29. You go on talking, talking, Brahman. What sorts of pretexts are you giving me? You bow before God, But has God shaved your head and beard? 

30. You Hindus are really wicked. A stone statue rules over you. You give it the name of God. You take this as a contradiction in vain! 

31. In its presence you read the Purana. Men and women all stand together. You bow and scrape in front of it. Isn't that so, you great fool? 

32. You smear ocher on a stone And your women stand before it! Naked sadhus, clad in lemon leaves, Are followed by young maidens! 

33. Your Vedas and all are impotent! Without exception, your verses are unworthy. You make such a hubbub when you worship You must think God is unheeding, neglectful! 

Hindu:
34. God is in water, in places, in wood, in stone. That is the chief meaning of your book. Look, you yourselves don't know it! The Turk's ignorance is total! 

*20: 3 The Muslim refers here to the story of Krishna's birth. 
*21: 4 dhorki—literally of cattle. Also a pun on the caste name dhor, Untouchables who tan hides. 
*25: 4 In the text, "read your Persian and see." 
*26: 4 hādi Paigambar, hādi is one of the names for Allah—the Guide. paigambar is Persian-Marathi for the Prophet Muhammad. 
*30: 4 ek tāri—a one stringed musical instrument,
35. The ghee, liquid or solid, is one substance.
So, see, the absolute and the image are one.*
But you hate the images!
You are a great undiscriminating fool!

36. Whatever desire the devotee has,
That desire is fulfilled by God.
That is the theory of your book!
Why don't you realize this?

37. I have revealed your lack of faith to you!
You shout from afar at the God close at hand!
One time, "Allah!" One time, "Allah!"*
The rest of your day is wasted,
And He has not met you so far.

38. For the distant, one gives a great shout!
For the near, one whispers.
You ought to meet Him who is close,
By shouting you only wake the children!

39. You think God is in the West.*
Are all other directions barren?
You say God is in all four corners
But you don't understand this, you fool.

40. Five times a day belong to God.
Are other times taken by thieves?
You have deceived yourself about your scriptures.
You have made a one direction God!

---

*35:2 saguna—with qualities. nirguna—without qualities.
That these two concepts of the divine are one was
Eknath's chief message.

*37:4 ekbar alla ekbar alla. This pun on the call to prayer,
allahu akbar (God is great), was pointed out by Richard
Eaton.

*39:1 Mecca, the direction in which one who prays faces, is
west of Maharashtra.

---

41. You tell us we worship stones?
Why do you place blocks of stone over the dead?
You worship a hajji of stone.
You believe it to be the true pir!*

42. Why do you preserve the bones
Of those who are only corpses?
You cover the stone with flowers and silk cloth.
You burn incense before it!

Muslim:
43. You can bathe in the Ganga and become pure;
Then why do you maintain distinctions?
Even separate cooking and eating?
You call out "Pollution, pollution!"
All is impure, sinful, to you.

44. You say God exists in all living beings.
Tell me, who of you eats all together?
One man doesn't touch another.
Each lives apart from the other.

45. If so much as a grain of his food falls on yours,
You catch him by the throat!
Don't leave your religion half-done
What about this opposition between every two

46. A woman must eat in her own home.
But sometimes you expel her!*
You go to her at night, you sleep with her;
Then you don't call her impure!

47. That girl you have taken as mistress—
You don't eat in the house of her people!
You like the daughter but not the food!
O what a great book of the Brahmans!

---

*41:3-4 The power of the pir, the Sufi saint, was thought to
reside in his tomb, or dargah, and to continue to his
or grant wishes.

*46:2 This seems to be a reference to a woman's menstrual
period, at which time she may not go into a Hindu
kitchen.
48. "Our food is very holy;  
  His food is completely bad."  
  This is the relation between relations!  
  Your scriptures are false!

49. The daughter is pure, the father is impure!  
  Let your scripture become ash;  
  Let karma, dharma, be reduced to ashes!  
  To hell with the Brahman for his hypocrisy!

Hindu:

50. You Muslims are complete fools.  
  You don't know what is faulty or faultless.  
  When one creature gives pain to another,  
  How can he go to heaven?

51. If God kills an animal, look, it is carrion.  
  If you kill one—that is holy and pure!  
  You have become more pure than God!  
  The Muslim is deceitful and sinful.

52. When you sacrifice an animal, you throw it aside.  
  It suffers in front of you.  
  What the hell do you gain from this?  
  The learned one is mad, Maulana salim.

53. When sacrificed, the goat goes to heaven.  
  Then why do you fast and feast?  
  Why not kill yourself  
  To get to Heaven's home?

54. The Maulana may do a thousand killings,  
  But can the good Maulana bring one being back to life?  
  This is fruitless toil for heaven,  
  This immediately becomes a sin.

55. Hindu and Muslim both  
  Are created by God, brother.  
  But look at the belief of the Turk:  
  He is supposed to catch a Hindu and make him a Muslim!

Muslim:

56. Did God make a mistake in making the Hindu?  
  Is your wisdom greater than His?  
  You make the Hindu a Muslim  
  And assign the crime to God.

57. He who kills has committed a sin—  
  Look, the Turk says that is right!  
  Listen, he has committed a crime!  
  Let's not quarrel over nothing.

58. While killing, the Maulana recites from the Book  
  But his tongue cannot move to restore life.  
  No one can do that but God.  
  What the Brahman says is true.

59. It is the hand of heaven that cuts the throat;  
  That hand really creates its own ways.  
  If trouble comes in the future  
  God will rule.*

Hindu:

60. The Brahman says, O yes, swami.  
  As a matter of fact, you and I are one.  
  This controversy grew over caste and dharma.  
  When we go to God, there are no such things.

Muslim:

61. The Turk says, that is the truth.  
  For God, there is no caste.  
  There is no separation between devotee and God  
  Even though the Prophet has said God is hidden.

Eknath:

62. The Turk whose dharma had subsided  
  Listened to his inner heart.  
  He became filled with joy.  
  Instead of a mantra, instruction was given. *

*59 This whole verse is somewhat obscure.  
*61:2 Eknath seems to be using caste here for sect or any division of humans.  
*62:4 This crucial verse is obscure. mantra kela upades—literally, the mantra made instruction. Maxine Berntsen has suggested the extended translation of this verse and of similarly constructed verses 64:4 and 65:1, translations which are consistent with Eknath's other work.
63. At that moment, they saluted each other.
With great respect, they embraced.
Both became content, happy,
Quiet, calm.

64. “You and I quarrelled
to open up the knowledge of the high truth,
in order to enlighten the very ignorant.
In place of karma - awakening!

65. “In place of words we have established the
word's meaning”
The highest truth pierced them both.
Enlightenment was the purpose
of this quarrel
Both have been satisfied.

66. The argument was about oneness.
The argument became agreement.
Eka Janardan* says, “Self knowledge
And great bliss came to both.”

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

Ṣūfī technical terms do not appear in the bharut, although the

Fakir and the Turk both express ṣūfī ideas. The idea of wahdatul-wujūd, the unity of all beings, divine and human, is certainly behind the Fakir's hymn to Allah in verse 11: “Allah, you exist everywhere...you are the seeing and the seen...the knower and the known.” Toward the end of the poem, the Turk says “There is no separation between devotee and God even though the Prophet has said God is hidden” (verse 61.) This is not orthodox Islamic thought, but it is a common theme in Indian ṣūfism.

It seems to me from the content of the poem that Eknath certainly knew something of ṣūfism, perhaps even some remnant of Chisti thought. It is probable, however, that the ṣūfis he himself met were not of any established order, but members of the malang order, which was be-shar (without the law.) The begging patter which follows the ṣūfistic statement in the Fakir’s speech and the seven fakir bharuqs which Eknath also wrote point to this sort of ṣūfī order. One fakir bharuq introduces a malang fakir, who speaks in the intoxication of bhang. There has been no study of the malangs in Maharashtra, but the current physical evidence seems to indicate their importance. The urs (commemoration of a saint’s death day) of Haji Malang in Kalyan, near Bombay, is a very important occasion, attracting several hundred thousand Hindus and Muslims. Local people say the tomb was built 750 years ago and that it is the dargah of Haji Abdul Rehiman, an Arab missionary. The dargah as it is today, however, was re-constructed in 1900, and is presided over by a Brahman with hereditary rights.

There are a large number of pir's tombs in the district of Aurangabad in which Paithan is located, some of which bear the term malang. Fairs and Festivals in Maharashtra notes 104 urs, including ten in Paithan taluka. There are nineteen celebrations of Muslim saints' death days in the two talukas in Ahmadnagar district which border Paithan. The percentage of Muslims in the Aurangabad district also testifies to considerable conversion activity: that area counts seven percent of its population as Muslims, a higher percentage than in the Ahmadnagar district which was the seat of the Nizam Shahi government or in the other districts in Marathwada which were under the Nizam’s government in Hyderabad until very recent times. Whether these conversions came in the great days of the Chisti center at Daulatabad or after

---

*66 : 3 Eknath’s signature line always includes the name of his guru, Janardan.
Images of Man

Aurangzeb founded the city of Aurangabad, very near Daulatabad, in 1605, or during Eknath's period in which Muslim saints wrote Marathi poetry and unorthodox fakirs roamed the countryside is anyone's guess!

My own supposition is that Islam was an important presence in Eknath's 16th century world. Just as Eknath uses the ubiquitous untouchable Mahar as a voice in forty bharua to speak a tough bhakti message, he uses the familiar presence of the Muslim to speak about the basic unity of all religions, but also to get across some home truths about the hypocrisy of the Hindus. Most of the accusations of the Turk about the ridiculousness of Hindu concepts, such as the image which is god, the stories of Kṛṣṇa and Bali which "destroy the greatness of God," the incestuousness of Brahmā, are countered by the Hindu with jibes about similar Islamic practices and stories. The accusation the Hindu cannot answer comes in the taunts of the Muslim about caste divisions and pollution observances. All the Hindu can say is that "when we go to God, there are no such things." All of Eknath's writing points to this belief that the true bhakta may observe the inherent authority of the Brahman, but in spiritual matters he honors true bhaktas of any caste or creed.33

On the other hand, Eknath is very clear about the wrongness of conversion to Islam. "Hindu and Muslim both are created by God, brother. Did God make a mistake in making the Hindu? Is your wisdom greater than His?" Eknath also hangs the turning point of the Turk's attitude on a curious matter. The Muslim comes around to admitting the basic truth that God is in all living things when the Hindu accuses him of believing that killing an animal is a holy matter. This may be a reference to the very popular bakrid festival, a time of feasting when not only goats (bakrā) but cows and other animals were shared by the Muslim community. Hindus did sacrifice goats and buffalos in certain devi festivals, and the Muslim was often the butcher at these times, but Eknath disapproves heartily of this non-Brahman practice. His dwelling on this point may be a way of discouraging animal sacrifice among both Hindus and Muslims—or it may simply be a reinforcement of his basic idea that God dwells in all living beings and life should not be taken because it cannot be restored.


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

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

REFERENCES AND NOTES


Non-Literate Intellectual”, in *Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization*, edited M.S. Malik (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977) bears an almost uncanny resemblance to some of Eknath’s Turk’s lines.


10. There are Muslim influences in the Dattatreya sect in Maharashtra and also in the Nath or Yogi tradition which Eknath bears in his very name. Speculation on Muslim influence on Eknath through these traditions is difficult since he seems to have abandoned them in favor of the bhakti movement, or Varkari saqpradaya. See S. A. A. Rizvi, “Sufis and Natha Yogis in Medieval Northern India,” *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 7: 1–2 (1970), pp. 119–133 and Simon Digby, “Encounters with yogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography,” a paper given at the Seminar on Aspects of Religion in South Asia, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1976 (?), for interesting material on these encounters in the North.


12. A. R. Kulkarni, *Social Relations in the Maratha Country* (Medieval Period), Presidential Address, Medieval India Section, (32nd Session of the Indian History Congress, Japalpur, 1970), pp. 8–9. See also Tulpule, op. cit., p. 353, who adds that Chand Bodhale’s Muslim name was Said Candasaheb Kadri, which may indicate the Qadiri order of Sufis.


17. Subhan, op. cit., p. 335. For content, see Bruce B. Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute: Sufi Literature in Pre-Mughal India* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978.) Lawrence notes this Sufi’s name as Amir Hasan.

K. A. Nizami, “Sufi Movement in the Deccan,”

18. K. A. Nizami, ibid, 179 - 180. The brief articles and the notes in larger studies on Indian Ṣūfism make one yearn for a study on the Chisṭis of Daulatabad and the later Ṣūfis as rich as Richard Maxwell Eaton’s Ṣūfis of Bijapur, 1300—1700: Social Roles of Ṣūfis in Medieval India (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.) His notes on Ṣūfis as warriors and as social reformers may have relevance in the Maharashtrian situation.

19. Tulpule, op. cit., p. 344. It should be noted that the two great famines still remembered in Marathi folklore took place during this period, the Durgadevi famine beginning in 1396 and the Damojipant famine in 1460. See Mohd Abdul Aziz, “The Deccan in the Fifteenth Century,” Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal New Series XXI (1925), pp. 549 - 591.

20. See Radhey Shyam, The Kingdom of Ahmadnagar (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), pp 378 - 390, for the court literature of Ahmadnagar (1490 - 1636). Patronage does not seem to have been extended to Ṣūfis, except for land given to maintain the shrine of Hazrat Abd-ur-Rahman Chisti in the reign of Ahmad Nizam Shah in the late 16th century, according to B. G. Kunte, Maharashatra State Gazetteers History, Part II: Medieval Period (Bombay: Maharashtra State, 1972), p. 402.

21. The best introduction to the whole bhakti tradition is G. A. Deleury’s The Cult of Vithoba (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1960.)

22. The Muslim contribution to bhakti literature has been described in R. C. Dhere’s Musalman marathi sapikavi (Poona: A. M. Joshi, 1967.)

23. For translating assistance, I am indebted to Mrs. Sumati Vasant Dhadphale of Pune and Jayant Karve of Minneapolis. Richard Eaton and his associate Jaganath gave invaluable assistance in interpretation, Maxine Berntsen greatly aided me in boldly interpreting some very difficult lines and correcting some errors, and John M. Stanley encouraged some further speculation on meanings. The faults of the final version are my own.

24. A song by Shah Hashim Khudawant Hadi sung by women at the grind stone which uses this construction may be found in Eaton, op. cit., pp. 161 - 162.


27. I am tempted to think that line 27 : 1 in the Hindu-Tur samvod, avaliya avaliya sahamodin ali, which is followed by what “the great one” said, may be a reference to Nizamu’d Din Avliya, the greatest of the Chisti saints, whose sayings were circulated in the Deccan. The Nizam Shahi government in the area was replaced by that of the Nizam of Hyderabad and a possible confusion of the two terms would allow for corruption of the name in the text. ṣahīḥ is still used in villages as a term relating to any government.

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

29. Murray T. Titus in Islam in India and Pakistan (Calcutta Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1956) offers a brief note on Malangs and other Be-shar “orders of independent origin, pp. 134 - 136. Eaton, op. cit. devotes a chapter to the majzu of Bijapur and other darvishes who may be a similar group of fakirs, although their time period is the 17th century.


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