CHAPTER – V

RELIGIOUS TRENDS AS REFLECTED IN THE NIRGUN BHAKTI LITERATURE

Hinduism

In the 16th and 17th centuries we invariably find the existence of Hindu concept of 33 crore gods and goddesses\(^1\) and like their ancestors the Hindus of this period also believed in the triple deity\(^2\) viz. Brahma (Who was believed to be the creator of Universe), Vishnu (The protector of mankind) and Siva (The destroyer)\(^3\). According to the description made by the Nirgun bhakti saints, Brahma lives in Satyalok\(^4\) with his wife Savitri\(^5\) (Saraswati). He is the creator of the Vedas\(^6\) and rides on swan (Hams)\(^7\). In the same period the independent worship of Brahma was also popular in Rajasthan and a temple of this deity on the side of the sacred lake Pushkara, near the modern Ajmer, was the only one known.

The devotees of Vishnu are called Vaishnavites\(^8\). For them god Vishnu is the source of the Universe and of all things. In the various compositions of Nirgun bhakti saints we find mentioning of the most known cosmic myth of the Hinduism, according to which god Vishnu sleeps in the primeval ocean in Vaikuntha\(^9\) (Highest heaven) on the thousand headed snake Sesa\(^10\) and his wife Lakshmi\(^11\) whose another name is Kamla\(^12\) always remains near to him. He rides on the great eagle Garuda\(^13\) and is generally thought of as wholly benevolent who works continuously for the welfare of the world.

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Almost as popular as Vishnu was god Siva who has been mentioned by many other names such as Rudra, Mahesh, Mahadeva and Shankar in the sayings of Nirgun bhakti saints. Siva was regarded in the great reverence by his followers and was the chief deity of ascetics. He is depicted in the sayings of saints as seated in the deep meditation on the high slopes of the Himalayan mount Kailasha and accompanied by his wife Parvati or Sakti. The narration also describes the mount of Siva, the bull (vrasabha or nandi) standing near him. Though Siva is always shown in the meditation, yet has been described also as the Lord of dance (nateshwara or nataraja) which implies that Siva had two distinct images, primarily the meditation reveals his great mystical power and secondly that his dancing image reflects the philosophical aspect. This aspect of Siva was and is still popular in Tamil Nadu where religious dancing has been mentioned in their tradition. Siva has been described in the sayings of Sundardas as Ardhanarisvara (A figure half Siva and half Parvati representing the union of the god with his Sakti).

Furthermore, Siva was also worshipped in the form of Linga (Male organ) which is symbolized as a short cylindrical pillar with rounded top. This is the survival of a very ancient cult which is surviving till date.

Besides Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, mother goddesses are also frequently mentioned by Nirgun bhakti saints. These goddesses were usually connected with the gods as their spouses and were also worshipped in this period. The cult of goddess is
still strong in Bengal and Assam, and is well known in other parts of India.

One of the goddess was the Sakti\textsuperscript{23}, the strength or potency of her male counterpart. Her chief form was that of the wife of Siva, called in her benevolent aspect, Parvati\textsuperscript{24}. (Daughter of the mountain), Gauri\textsuperscript{25} (The white one) etc. In her grim aspect she was called by various names such as Durga\textsuperscript{26} (Inaccessible), Kali\textsuperscript{27} (The black one) and Chandi\textsuperscript{28} (The fierce). In fierce aspect she was often depicted as a horrible hag, frequently with eight arms bearing different weapons with carnivorous tusks and a garland of skulls. Her mount was a lion\textsuperscript{29}. She has also been shown as a sternly beautiful woman slaying a buffaloe-headed demon known as Mahisasur\textsuperscript{30}. The more gentle aspect of the goddess was that of Parvati often portrayed as obedient spouse of Lord Siva.

Along with Parvati or Durga other important goddesses of Hinduism are also mentioned by the Nirgun bhakti saints. One of them is Lakshmi\textsuperscript{31} or Kamla\textsuperscript{32} (The wife of Lord Vishnu) who is the goddess of good luck, fortune and temporal blessings. The other is Saraswati\textsuperscript{33} (The wife of Brahma) has been shown as the patron of art, music and letters and is still worshipped by students, writers and musicians and this cult continuous to exist.

Besides these greater gods and goddesses, there were infinite number of lesser gods, demigods and spirits good and evil, who were worshipped in Hinduism and some of them have been mentioned by Nirgun bhakti saints in their sayings.
These are:

**Ganesh**\(^{34}\): Ganesh was the chief of the *Ganas* (The Ganas were a class of demigods who were subordinates of Siva). Ganesh, undoubtedly, is the most important and most worshipped among all of them. He is the son of Siva and Parvati\(^ {35}\). He has an elephant head with one broken tusk and a fat paunch. The non-sectarian worship of Ganesh at the beginning of a religious rite or on a special occasion has been very common among the Hindus.

**Hanuman**\(^ {36}\): The Monkey god, the son of Vayu the friend and servant of Rama, was and still is a popular deity. He is worshipped in many shrines in the form of monkey with more or less human body. He is a beneficent guardian spirit and in his honour monkeys are generally looked on as sacred.

The tradition of Sun (*Surya*) worship has been continuing from quite early ages and was also prevalent in the 16\(^{th}\) century as has been described by Jambhoji\(^ {37}\). In comparison with the Sun, the Moon (*Chandrama*)\(^ {38}\) had no independent cult, but was worshipped as one of the nine planets i.e. *Navagraha*\(^ {39}\), whose worship was widely popular in different parts of India. They were worshipped for health, long life, prosperity, ample rains, success over enemies etc. The cult of nine planets was closely connected with the growing popularity of astrology in the period under review.

Hindu worship was not confined to the propitiation of gods and demigods, for the whole of nature, was in some sense divine and sacred. Animals and plants were and still are considered holy,
notably, of course, the cow who was regarded sacred by Hindus. Among the various “wishing cow” Nirgun bhakti saints have mentioned Kamdhenu, a sacred cow whose milking fulfilled all desires. Despite her sanctity, there was no cow goddess. The living beast was revered, not as representative of any deity, but in her own right. The bull on the other hand, received honour largely as the mount of Lord Siva; the image of Nandi is found in most Saivite temples and honoured with occasional offerings.

After the cow, the snake was perhaps the most revered animal and the cult of serpents was wide spread in India. Legendary serpents, such as Sesa and Vasuki were worshipped by the people, which gave prestige to the snakes.

There were also sacred trees and plants such as Vata (The banyan tree), the secondary roots of which reaching down from its branches, formed the basis of much religious symbolism. In Prayag or modern Allahabad a banyan tree called ‘Akshay-Vata’ (The undecaying banyan) or ‘Akshay-Taru’ (The undecaying tree as referred to by Sundardas) was and still is regarded very sacred. Among the sacred plant, Tulsi, a type of basil, was sacred to Lord Vishnu and by his devotees it was frequently worshipped and was used in almost every Hindu rite. It is still grown in the courtyard of many Hindu homes and tended with great care.

It seems that hills or mountains had also some degree of sanctity. Even rocks often had religious significance, especially if upright and resembling Siva Linga. Besides a kind of black stone containing one or more ammonite (saligrama) which
was supposed to be pervaded by the substance of Vishnu was sacred to Vaishnavas and many of them wore it in their neck

**Avatarvad (The Theory Of Incarnation)**

The Vaishnava concept of *Avatarvada* can be traced back to the sacred literature of ancient period. In a verse of *Bhagavad Gita*, we find the resolve of Lord Vishnu to incarnate himself from age to age for the protection and preservation of the virtuous and the destruction of the wicked. *Nirgun bhakti* literature and other literary evidences reveal the popularity of the belief in and worship of the *Avataras* of Vishnu in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The theory of *Avatarvad* was popularized by the *Puranas*. But the number of the *Avataras* of Vishnu given in the different *Puranas* vary to a considerable extent. However, according to the most popular classification, the incarnation of Vishnu are ten. An incarnation might be total (*purnavatara*) or partial (*ansavatara*). Every good or great man was thought of as a partial incarnation of Vishnu. The ten chief incarnations, however, are of more special type, for in them, the god is believed to have taken flesh to save the world from imminent danger of total destruction. Among them Rama and Krishna were and still are more popular.

Rajjabdas and Guru Gobind Singh have just given the number of fourteen other *Avataras* in their sayings.

**Rites And Rituals**

The basic rite of Hinduism is ‘*Isvara-Puja*’ or divine worship. In general, a god is worshipped in the form of an idol. In
the period under review the idols of the gods were made of different materials such as stone \((pashan^{56}, pahan^{57}, pathar^{58})\), clay \((mati^{59}\) or \(mitti\)), shellac \((kanjo^{60}\) or \(laksha\)), wood \((kath^{61}\) or \(kasth\)), brass \((pitar^{62}\) or \(pittal\)), iron \((loha)^{63}\), silver \((rupa^{64}\) or \(chandi\)) and gold \((kanchan^{65}\) or \(sona\)) and were placed and worshipped in every Hindu home as well as temples. In a temple, the heart of the temple or the central shrine was the home of chief divinity where a throne of metal or other substance was placed as his seat\(^{66}\). Sometimes the chief deity was joined by other lesser gods\(^{57}\). Nirgun bhakti saints have described in detail all the ceremonies related to divine worship.

Firstly the idol of the god was washed, dried\(^{68}\) and dressed with expensive costumes and jewellery\(^{69}\) and then was honoured with flowers, garlands, incense and lamps. Devotees made Tilak (Sectarian mark) with sandal or saffron and rice \((akshat)^{70}\) on the forehead of the idol\(^{71}\) and waved flapper \((chamvar)^{72}\) over the idol’s head. Food offering was then made according to ability. In the temples the offerings comprised of various types of dishes and sweets, of which some part was offered to the god\(^{73}\) and the remaining of it was distributed among his worshippers as Prasad\(^{74}\). An important part of divine worship was the ceremony of Arati. The ceremony of Arati required a devotee to stand before the deity and perform the worship by clapping, dancing and singing the praise of the god amidst the sounds of Ghanta (Gong), Shankha (Conch-shell) and Mridanga\(^{75}\) (A kind of small drum). Then they circumambulated the deity several times\(^{76}\). They fall prostrate with their whole body at the feet of the deity\(^{77}\) and paid their homage to get the blessings in the form of boons. This type
of prostration was called Dandavat\textsuperscript{78} (Staff-like). Besides this, repetition of an incantation or the name of deity\textsuperscript{79} and counting the beads of a rosary\textsuperscript{80}, generally made of Tulsi\textsuperscript{81} or Rudraksha\textsuperscript{82} was also a mode of divine worship.

**Yajna (Sacrifice)**

*Yajna* or sacrifice has been an important rite of Hinduism from the very ancient period. Its chief purpose was the gratification of the gods in order to obtain boons from them. In the *Nirgun bhakti* literature generally the term *Homa*\textsuperscript{83} is used for sacrifice. *Sompaku*\textsuperscript{84} or *Som-Pak-Yajna* (Simple or domestic sacrifice) performed by the head of a *Brahmana* family was the daily practice in Hinduism. According to the information provided by the saints, to perform sacrifice *Samdha*\textsuperscript{85} or *Samidha* (Fire wood) was collected in a sacrificial altar and fire was kindled in them. Then oblations (*ahuti*)\textsuperscript{86} of *Ghee*\textsuperscript{87}, *Til*\textsuperscript{88} and other materials were offered in the name of the deity with the recitation of sacred verses generally from the *Vedas*.

*Nirgun bhakti* saints have also referred to some great sacrifices such as *Ashvamedha*\textsuperscript{89} (Horse-sacrifice) and *Vajpeya*\textsuperscript{90} (Chariot-race – one of the seven forms of the *Soma* sacrifice, generally offered by kings aspiring to the highest position). One of the sacrifices i.e. *Ashvamedha* has also been mentioned by Abul Fazl\textsuperscript{91}.

It appears that these great sacrifices must have performed in the ritualistic manner only in the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries, but by no means it can be compared with the ancient period. These were
complex rites which involved much preparations, the sacrifice of many animals and the participation of several well-trained priests.

Animal Sacrifice

Animal sacrifice was practiced in Hinduism especially in the cult of goddess\(^92\). Animals were sacrificed like buffaloes\(^93\), goats\(^94\) and cockerels\(^95\). These animals were the most favourite for the rites.

Dana (Alms giving)

The practice of bestowing alms to the *Brahmanas* was widely followed in the Hinduism. For Hindus it was the mode by which the provision for their last journey was secured. In their different sayings *Nirgun bhakti* saints have described various kinds of alms which were prevalent in their contemporary Hindu society. These were: 1. *Gau-dana*\(^96\): the alms of cow has been prevalent in India from ancient times. It was generally made at the time of the death of a person. In the 16\(^{th}\) century Abul Fazl had mentioned ‘*Go-Sahasradana*’ which consisted of the alms of thousand cows, adorned with gold, pearls and other precious materials\(^97\). It was generally made at pilgrimage places\(^98\) by kings and the people of royal and well to do classes. 2. *Tula-dana*\(^99\): the weighing of the person against gold, silver and other valuables. It is also referred to by Abul Fazl\(^100\). 3. *Dharani-dana*\(^101\) or *Dharadana* as mentioned by Abul Fazl, it was a figure of the surface of the earth made up of gold and upon which were represented mountains, woods and seas, weighing not less than sixteen *Tolahs*, eight *Masha* and not more than 3,633 *Tolahs*\(^102\). 4. *Pattal-dana*\(^103\):
the alms of a leaf-plate full of rice, wheat, paddy mixed with milk and clarified butter\textsuperscript{104}; 5. Alms of gold\textsuperscript{105}; 6. Alms of cloth\textsuperscript{106}; 7. Bhumi-dana\textsuperscript{107}: alms or grant of land. It was generally made by kings.

For charity, although no distinct season was fixed, however, it was generally given in times of Grahana\textsuperscript{108} (Eclips) and ‘Makar Sankranti’\textsuperscript{109} (When the Sun enters capricorn) and on some other occasions.

**Vrat (Fast)**

Among the numerous kinds of Hindu Vratas or fasts, Nirgun bhakti saints have referred to the fast of Ekadashi\textsuperscript{110}, which was kept on the eleventh day of each lunar fortnight of every month. Kabir has described that Hindus kept twenty four Ekadashi fasts in a year\textsuperscript{111}. According to the saints, on this occasion people took only fruits\textsuperscript{112} and milk\textsuperscript{113}. Singhara\textsuperscript{114} or the water-chestnut was and still is important in the Hindu fasts. It is used as fruits as well as flour which was made of dried water-chestnut. The fast was concluded on Dwadashi\textsuperscript{115} or the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight.

In the Ain-i-Akbari, Abul Fazl has described various kinds of fasts kept by Hindus in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{116}.

**Tirtha-Yatra (Pilgrimage)**

In the Hindu scheme of life ‘Tirtha-Yatra’ occupies a significant place. It is believed that Tirtha-Yatra undertaken with faith and piety destroys sins and lead moral elevation, mental discipline, happiness and even salvation. That’s why Tirthas
attract large number of pilgrims from the different regions and have become vital spots of Indian culture.

In the 16th and 17th centuries also Tirtha-Yatra acquired much importance and popularity which is clearly reflected in the sayings of Nirgun bhakti saints. According to them sixty eight places (arsath-tirath) were considered sacred and were most famous for pilgrimage. Of these, the chief Tirthas figuring in their works are Kashi or Banaras (Varanasi), Prayag (Allahabad), Mathura, Dwarika, Vrindavana, Gaya, Jagannathpuri, Haridwara, Badrinatha, Kedarnatha, Kurukshtera and Pushkara.

Besides this, certain rivers which were sacred to the Hindus have also been referred to by the saints. Of these the most important was Ganga which was often personified as a goddess in her own right. Ten days during the year were considered more sacred and were regarded more efficacious for taking bath in the Ganges. Some other rivers mentioned by Nirgun bhakti saints are Jamuna, Sarasvati, Godavari, ‘Triveni Sangam’ (Confluence of the river Ganga, Jamuna and Sarasvati at Prayag).

Abul Fazl has described the ancient concept of classification of Tirthas where the four divisions of Tirthas are as following 1. Deva or divine, 2. Asura; 3. Arsa; 4. Manusha.

The Last Rites

So far as the last rites are concerned, they were mostly based on the Hindu traditions which they had followed for centuries. Some of these rites have been described by the Nirgun bhakti saints. On the death of a Hindu the last rites were performed
generally by the eldest son and in his absence by the youngest. This was the prevalent custom in almost all parts of Northern India in the period under review.

When a person breathed his last the Brahmana read prayers over him and alms were given\(^{124}\) to console his soul and appease gods. Relatives put Ganga-Jal (Ganga’s water), Tulsi-Dal (Leaves of Tulsi plant) and gold in the mouth of the dying person\(^{125}\). And when he died his relatives got themselves engaged in number of rituals and many rites were performed\(^{126}\). The dead body was washed and dressed in new clothes\(^{127}\) or loin cloth. After that the body was carried to the funeral ground (shamsan or masan), mostly on the river bank. A funeral pile was formed upon which the body was laid\(^{128}\). The funeral pile of the rich and affluent people was prepared from sandal wood\(^{129}\). The pyre was given fire by the son with all the solemnities\(^{130}\). He performed ‘Kapal Kriya’\(^{131}\) (Ceremonial breaking of the skull of the burning corpse).

After completing all the rites, the relatives and friends of the deceased used to take bath and wash their cloths on the river bank or at a nearby pond and at home recitation of the sacred texts especially of ‘Garuda Purana’ by a Brahmana was taken up later\(^{132}\). Some days after the death of a person the son or other relative, who had set fire used to collect the ashes from the funeral ground to throw into the Ganga river\(^{133}\). The ceremony of ‘Diya’\(^{134}\) was also performed by the wife or the son of the deceased which involved putting a kindled earthen lamp with flower in leaf basket and was flown into the Ganga.
The ceremony of ‘Pindadana’ was also performed at Gaya by the son of the deceased in which oblation of cooked rice was made through a Brahmana as nourishment to the new body of the deceased\textsuperscript{135}. It was believed that when the natural body dies, the soul takes a subtle frame called ‘Preta’\textsuperscript{136} and cannot enter paradise in his form and that the act of Pindadana would release the soul from this form and would finally allow it to assume another form fitted for paradise.

We get information from the saints compositions that the day of departure of the person was observed in ceremonial form where the son or the wife of the deceased performed Shradh\textsuperscript{137} ceremony. It was also observed for the ancestors and was performed on the first day of the first quarter of the new Moon, or on the sixteenth lunar day of the month of Kuar (Sept-Oct.) and is marked by giving charity and feeding four to five Brahmanas at a pilgrimage place in the name of the deceased\textsuperscript{138}.

**Self-Immolation**

On the basis of the evidences provided by the saints, it can be said that self-immolation or religious suicide had become quite common in the period under review. These suicides were generally committed at sacred places in various forms. The custom of cutting one’s own throat\textsuperscript{139} in Prayag at the confluence of Ganga and Jamuna was very common\textsuperscript{140}. There was a belief that if a person would put his own head in a noose and drowned himself into the river Ganga to end his life shall find way to heaven\textsuperscript{141}. Besides there were also other horrible method of suicide
encountered like getting voluntary plunging oneself inside snow\textsuperscript{142} or even getting oneself sawed at Kashi\textsuperscript{143}.

**Belief In Rebirth Or Transmigration Of The Soul**

*Nirugna bhakti* saints have referred to the Hindu belief of the theory of rebirth and transmigration of the soul. They also subscribe to the Hindu thought of eighty four lakhs birth\textsuperscript{144} and believed that soul passes into a different body after death like divine, human, animal and this depends on the previous deeds and on the deeds of previous births\textsuperscript{145}, which consequently defines how a soul could find happiness and sorrow\textsuperscript{146}.

In Hinduism, the continual passage of the soul from body to body is often compared to an ever-rolling wheel\textsuperscript{147} and in Hinduism the desire for release from transmigration seems to be the primary goal of mankind. Guru Ramdas warns that a person who has no respect for his *Guru* or preceptor cannot obtain salvation from the tedious passage of transmigration\textsuperscript{148}.

**Various Sects**

In the period under consideration i.e. 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries, there existed various sects which belonged to either the Saiva or the Vaishnava system of Hinduism. Some of them have been described in great detail by different *Nirgun bhakti* saints. Here an attempt has been made to describe these sects, their followers and their practices on the basis of rich material available in the *Nirgun bhakti* literature.
**Yogis**

The term ‘*Yogi*’ is properly applicable to the followers of the *Yoga*, the Patanjala school of philosophy, which amongst other tenets maintained the practicability of acquiring entire command over elementary matter by means of certain ascetic practices. The journey to this goal required the eight courses of *Yoga* (*Astanga-Yoga*) to be strictly followed. 1. The first lesson is *Yama*\(^{149}\) (Abstentions). In this great stress has been laid on *Ahimsa* or non-violence as it is considered that all other virtues are rooted in. *Ahimsa* may be interpreted broadly as abstinence from malice towards all living creatures. It has been further stressed that it is not merely non-violence but non-hatred (abandonment of hostility) which is needed for a *Sadhaka*\(^{150}\). 2. The second course is *Niyama*\(^{151}\) (Observances), deals with the purification of both external and internal part of the body and also prescribes contentment, austerity and devotion to God as necessary prerequisites for a person to become Yogi\(^{152}\). 3. The third is *Asana*\(^{153}\) - it talks about postures. The posture should be steady and comfortable. And this is possible when the person sits with the head, trunk and the neck in a straight line\(^{154}\). 4. The fourth being *Pranayama*\(^{155}\) which teaches a *Yogi* to control the motion of exhalation and inhalation after the full practice of *Asana*\(^{156}\). 5. The next is *Pratyahara*\(^{157}\) which is withdrawal from the external world. It means the withdrawal of the senses from their natural outward functioning\(^{158}\). 6. This is followed by *Dharana*\(^{159}\) which means concentration. It required a *Yogi* to concentrate the mind on a particular object\(^{160}\). 7. This is followed by *Dhyana*\(^{161}\), an unbroken current of knowledge of the object of *Dharana* becomes *Dhyana*. 

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or mediation\textsuperscript{162}. 8. The last lesson of a Yogi is Samadhi\textsuperscript{163} - this is a higher state of meditation in which all the properties of form are given up and only meaning without form remains\textsuperscript{164}.

Yoga became more popular in India in the form of ‘Hathayoga’ which was expounded by Gorakhnath\textsuperscript{165}. ‘Hatha’ is a compound word in Sanskrit, formed of two syllables ‘Ha’ and ‘Tha’. The letter ‘Ha’ stands for ‘Surya’ (The Sun) and the letter ‘Tha’ denotes ‘Chandra’ (The moon). When ‘Surya’ and ‘Chandra’ are brought in a balanced condition this is called ‘Hathayoga’. In other words, the union or Yoga of ‘Surya’ and ‘Chandra’ is called ‘Hathayoga’\textsuperscript{166}.

‘Hathayoga’ was and still is practiced by the disciples and followers of Gorakhnath, (A sect of ‘Kanphata Yogis’). This sect was called by different names such as ‘Yoga Marga’, ‘Nath Sampradaya’, ‘Siddha Sampradaya’, ‘Siddha Marga’, ‘Avadhuta Mata’\textsuperscript{167} etc. and was divided into twelve classes\textsuperscript{168} viz. 1. Satanath, 2. Ramanath, 3. Dharmanath, 4. Lakshamananath, 5. Darianath, 6. Ganganath, 7. Bairag, 8. Raval or Naganath, 9. Jalandharip, 10. Aaipanth, 11. Kapilani, 12. Dhajanath\textsuperscript{169}.

Followers of Yogi or Nath Sampradaya worshipped Lord Siva who is also known by the names Adinath\textsuperscript{170} and Bhairava\textsuperscript{171}. According to their tradition ‘Hathayoga’ was originally taught by Lord Siva to Parvati. A significant factor of the ‘Hatha’ text was therefore, that they began with a tribute to Adinath. This feature is also evident in the sayings of Sundardas which deal with the ‘Hathayoga’\textsuperscript{172}. In the texts of the sect many perfect Yogis or Siddhas are figured. Among them eighty four\textsuperscript{173} are most popular.
It is said that they are still upon the earth. Some of these Siddhas viz. Adinath, Matsyendranath, Meananath, Gorakhnath, Charpatinath, Chauranginath, Gopichandra, Bharthari and Kaneri are referred to by the Nirgun bhakti saints\textsuperscript{174}. The philosophy of ‘Hathayoga’ is described in great detail by Nirugna bhakti saints\textsuperscript{175}. It is evident from their sayings that the ultimate aim of a Yogi is to attain Siddhi and to unite with Siva. However, this is not an easy job. According to Sundardas this aim cannot be achieved without the process of internal purification i.e. the purification of Nadis or veins. The veins are distinguished in two principal parts. \textit{Ida} is the veins of left side and is also called the lunar veins\textsuperscript{176}. \textit{Pingala} is the veins of right side and is also called the solar veins\textsuperscript{177}. In the middle of these two is the chief vein of the body which is known as ‘Susumna’ and it runs through the spinal cord\textsuperscript{178}. And along it lies six wheels (\textit{Shatchakra}\textsuperscript{179} or concentrations of psychic energy) at different points. These are – 1. ‘Adhara Chakra’ symbolically represented by four petals of lotus\textsuperscript{180}, 2. ‘Svadhishthana Chakra’ with six petals\textsuperscript{181}, 3. ‘Manipura Chakra’ with ten petals\textsuperscript{182}, 4. ‘Anahata Chakra’ with twelve petals\textsuperscript{183}, 5. ‘Vishuddhakhyya Chakra’ with sixteen petals\textsuperscript{184} and 6. ‘A-jna Chakra’ with two petals\textsuperscript{185}. At the top of the vein \textit{Susumna} within the skull is situated ‘Sahasrara’ (Also called \textit{Shunya Chakra}), a especially powerful psychic centre symbolically referred to as a lotus of thousand petals\textsuperscript{186}. In the lowest wheel behind the genitals is the ‘Kundalini’\textsuperscript{187} the serpent power, generally in a quiescent state\textsuperscript{188}.

The veins or \textit{Nadis} are purified by the regular practice of six-fold activities (\textit{shatkarman})\textsuperscript{189} prescribed in ‘Hathayoga’.
These are Dhauti, Vasti, Neti, Lauli, Trotaka and Kapalbhati\textsuperscript{190}. Pranayama and different Asanas are then followed which provide the Yogi the power to control the body. As the Yogis believed that once Nadis or veins are purified the Vayu (breath) flows through with ease. By different Yogic practices the Yogi stops the motion of Vayu in the lunar and the solar veins. viz. Ida and Pingala Nadis respectively and make it to pass through Susumma. By this process the mind attains steadiness. Then the sleeping Kundalini is awakened which rises upwards through the vein Susumna and passes through all the six wheels of psychic force and unites with Siva in the topmost ‘Sahasrara’. By awakening and rising his Kundalini the Yogi can gain spiritual power and by uniting it with Siva he can attain salvation\textsuperscript{191}.

Sundardas has described the principal of Hathayoga where a Yogi is required to reside in a small cottage in solitude, in a righteous country which is free from all kinds of disturbances. The cottage should have a small entrance and no other opening, holes or pits. The idea was to keep the learner free from all worries and in complete isolation from the outside world. A Yogi should control his diet, the good grain-wheat, rice especially Sathi rice (rice produced in 60 days) milk Ghee, sugar, butter, honey, dry ginger, Patola fruit and rain water are considered to be wholesome food for Yogis. Eating food which is bitter, sour, salty is prohibited. The pungent, green vegetables, oil, mustard and sesame, meat, asafoetida, garlic and alchohal consumption are all strictly forbidden\textsuperscript{192}. Wicked company, bathing early in the morning, fasting, over eating, talking too much, over exertion etc.
are also to be avoided by a Yogi. Infact any work which causes discomfort to the body is asked to be avoided.

The Yogis or Nath Yogis\textsuperscript{193} were called ‘Kanphatas’,\textsuperscript{194} due to their peculiarity in having their ear-lobes teared and ring called ‘Mundra’,\textsuperscript{195} (Mudra) inserted in them at the time of their initiation. There was another class of Yogis called Aughar\textsuperscript{196} whose ears were not teared and they did not wore Mudra. Mudra of Kanphata Yogis was made of different metals and sometimes of crystal (phatak).\textsuperscript{197} They wore Gunja or Chirghat\textsuperscript{198} (The smallest of Jwellers weight,) and Kanthmala or Kanthla\textsuperscript{199} usually made of Rudraksha beads in their neck and carried Jata\textsuperscript{200} (Long and matted hair). They used to grow their nails (nakh) of hands and mark their forehead with a transverse line of Bhasma, Bhabhut or Bibhuti\textsuperscript{203} (Ashes) and used to smear their body with the same. They wore a patched garment dyed with ochre colour called Kantha or Khintha. Some of them wore Langot or Jagota (loin-cloth) tied with Mekhala or Mekhali (Belt, girdle), while some would put on Mrigchhala (Deer skin) while some of them remained entirely naked.\textsuperscript{212} The footwear of Yogi was Pavodi or Kharau (Wooden soled sandal). Some used Paychiye (Socks made of leather) to cover the feet. Some Yogis would also put on Baghambar (Tiger skin) over their shoulders which was also used as their Asana or seat to sit on.

Yogis’ mode of salutation was Adesha.\textsuperscript{216} They earned their livelihood by begging and used to take alms in the name of ‘Alakha Niranjan’ – ‘the invisible God’. They used to carry Batua (Purse), Jholi (A bag or sack), Chipiya or Kamandal
(An earthen or wooden water pot) and begging bowl called ‘Khappar’\textsuperscript{221} (Which was usually a broken piece of earthen ware or coconut shell). They also kept Adhari\textsuperscript{222} (A portable seat or tripod which was used as a hand support at the time of sitting) and a Danda\textsuperscript{223} or Sota (A small club), for the purpose of incantation. They used a Singi\textsuperscript{224} (A small horn) and Kingri\textsuperscript{225} or Kinguri\textsuperscript{226} (Stringed instrument). They used their musical instruments like Kingri while singing\textsuperscript{227} religious songs containing vivid description of Bhartihari and Puranic legends of the marriage of Siva and Parvati\textsuperscript{228}.

In one of his sayings Kabir has mentioned about the growing militarization of the sect of Nath Yogis in the medieval period. They had different type of weapons and even horses to challenge their opponents\textsuperscript{229}. This is evident from the fact that in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century the Nath Yogis of Cuchh in Gujarat had resorted to violence and forcibly converted the ‘Atithas’ (Ascetics) of Junagarh in the sect of Kanphata Yogis. The ‘Atithas’ when objected, had to face the Yogis in the open fight\textsuperscript{230}.

However, Yogis usually lived in the forests and caves\textsuperscript{231} by making small cottage or hut (mathika\textsuperscript{232} or marhi\textsuperscript{233}) as ascetics. Siva was the main object of their worship. Some of the Yogis also officiated as the priests in Saiva temples and were called ‘Mahanta’\textsuperscript{234}. They used to live in the groups of their disciples called ‘Jamats’\textsuperscript{235} in Mathas. There were many centres, established by them at different places in India, such as Jodhpur, Jaipur, Nauhar (Shri Gangasagar), Tai (Sikar), Mahamandir, of Rajasthan have always been famous seats of Nath Yogis\textsuperscript{236}. 

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Kadrimatha in South Kanara district in modern Karnataka was and still is one of their famous centre in South India. In the 17th century a Yogi named Bhatnath was the head of Kadrimatha. Gorakh-hattri in Peshawar was another sacred and famous centre of Yogis in this period. In this period Nath Yogis entertained the reputation of being peculiarly enlightened ascetics for their profound meditation and other religious mortifications. But at the same time some Yogis had fallen into disgrace because of their various disgusting practices and disrespectful conduct. Common people were frightened by them. They were Tantrics and followed the leftist path of Nath Sampradaya. In some of their sayings Nirgun bhakti saints have described their practices. They lived in cremation places where they recite incantation over dead body for acquiring power, made animal and even human sacrifices to Bhairava (A manifestation of Lord Siva), consumed wine, Bhang and other intoxicants and were meat eaters. These practices were very much similar to those of ‘Kapalikas’ and on the basis of literary sources of Nath Sampradaya they are also included in that sect. They were Saiva Yogis and wore Mudra or Kundal in their ears. The founders of their sect namely, Jalandharnath (Jalandharpad) and Krishnapad (Kanipa, Kanupa, Kanhupa) were the famous Acharyas or preceptors and Siddhas of Nath Sampradaya.

The ‘Kapalikas’ maintained that if one’s mind was fixed on the soul enthroned in the feminine organ and was aware of the six signs (mudrikas) viz. 1. a necklace, 2. an ornament, 3. an ear ornament, 4. crest jewel 5. ashes, 6. the sacred thread (yajnopavita), one could attain salvation and whose body bore
these marks, was free from transmigration. Kapalikas wore Kundal and Mala of human bones in their ears and neck and kept Narkapal (Human skull). Wine was necessary for the fulfillment of their various practices. In one of his compositions, Sundardas has condemned these Kapalikas as the corrupt people.

**Lingayats Or Jangamas**

The foundation of this sect is generally attributed to Basava, who was the son of Madiraja, a Brahmana supposed to be of the Aradhya sect. Lingayat sect was also known by the name of ‘Virasaiva’. And as described by Sundardas and Guru Gobind Singh, the followers of this sect worshipped Siva as their one and only deity and their essential characteristic was that they wore Linga the emblem of Siva on some part of their body, generally in a silver or metallic casket suspended round their necks with a cord like a necklace. And their attendance at temples and worship of the Linga therein were by no means necessary for them.

In the South of India, especially in Karnataka, the Lingayats are still numerous. The members of ‘Acharya’ or teacher class of Lingayat sect are popularly called ‘Jangamas’ whom Sundardas has referred to as worshipper of Siva. Of these there are some who are called ‘Viraktas’ (Passionless) and who lived a life of celibacy and asceticism and maintained a convent (matha). It is evident by some of Farmans (Imperial orders) of Emperor Aurangzeb that even lands were granted by Emperor to the Jangambari Matha of Banaras. The class also had married men who laid the life of householders and also followed priestly
occupation. *Jangamas* exercised great religious control over the followers of the sect\(^{254}\).

The *Lingayats* or *Jangamas* fiercely reject the verses written in the praise of Vishnu, Rama and Krishna such as *Bhagavad Gita* and *Ramayana* and also deny the authority of *Brahmanas*. They also reject the efficacy of pilgrimage, self mortification and the restrictions of castes. While they revere principally the *Vedas* and the teachings of the great Saivite reformer Shankaracharya\(^ {255}\).

*Jangamas* lived upon alms and abstained from meat and wine. They are still found in the villages as mendicants who carry a bull symbolizing *Nandi*, the bull of Siva, decorated with various colours and strings of cowri shells. They move from place to place and asks alms\(^ {256}\). According to Sundardas they always begged in the name of Siva\(^ {257}\).

**Aghoris**

*Nirgun bhakti* saints like Kabir and Sundardas have referred to ‘*Aghori*\(^ {258}\) (*Aghorpanthi*) in their sayings. They were a class of Saiva mendicants. *Aghori* style of worship had some horrible practices which required even human sacrifice. They lived in cremation places and practised cannibalism. They smeared their bodies with human excreta and also carried it with them in a wooden cup or skull\(^ {259}\). The *Aghoris* represented their filthy habits as merely giving practical expression to the abstract doctrine that the whole universe is full of *Brahman* and consequently that one thing is as pure as another. By eating the most horrible things they showed their indifference to worldly objects and said to have
utterly subdued their natural appetites and thus claimed to acquire great power over themselves and over the forces of nature. It was believed that an Aghori could at will assume the form of a bird, an animal or fish and that he could bring back to life a corpse of which he had eaten a part.260

They were universally hated and feared. Kabir also criticized them because of their practices and says, “The (Aghori) lost their community and family honour.”261 They are still found in Banaras and at Girnar near Mount Abu in Rajasthan.262

Sanyasis

The state of Sanyasi was the fourth stage or Ashrama in the life of any Hindu of first three classes viz. Brahamana, Kshatriya and Vaishya. At this stage all worldly ties were renounced. When a person would enter the stage of Sanyasa, he had to discard his sacred thread, shave his top-knot (in case of a Brahma) and leave his house and would lead a wandering life and would keep himself subsisted upon the alms.266

Sanyasis were also called ‘Dasnami’ or ten-named as they were divided into ten classes viz. Tirtha, Asrama, Vana, Aranya, Sarasvati, Puri, Bharti, Giri or Gir, Parvata and Sagara. They were regarded as the descendents of the original members of the fraternity who relate their origin to Shankaracharyya, who was regarded as an incarnation of Siva and was very much revered by
Sanyasis. Besides Shankara, the different orders of Sanyasis also hold Muni Dattatreya in high veneration. He was the son of Atri and Anusuya and was known for his practice of the Yoga and was regarded as an incarnation of a portion of Vishnu.

Some of the members of the Sanyasi sect carried ‘Danda’ or a small wand with them and were thus called ‘Dandis’. Sanyasis generally kept long and matted hair (jata). However, many of them shaved their head and beard. They wore ochre coloured tattered clothes, applied Tilak (Sectarial mark) on their forehead and wore a Mala (Garland generally made of Rudraksha beads) in their neck. Sometimes they smeared their forehead with ashes (bibhut or rakh) which was generally taken from the fire of an Agnihotra Brahmana or it might be the ashes of burnt cow dung from an oblation offered to the god. They spend their time in meditation or in practices corresponding with those of the Yoga and in the study of Vedanta.

In the period under review, there were many Sanyasis who had extraordinary perfection in their meditation. One of them was a Dandahari named Chaturvapa who was so perfect in Yoga that he could suspend his breath for three hours. Some of them remained immovable for years standing upon one leg and were called ‘Thavesar’ or ‘Sthavar’. While still other ascetics kept continuous silence and were called ‘Mauni’. In one of his sayings Sundardas has referred to ‘Paramahansa Sanyasi’ which was the most eminent among the four gradations of Sanyasis (Kutichara, Bahudaka; Hansa and Paramahansa). The Paramahansas were the ascetics who got solely occupied with the
investigation of *Brahman* or spirit and were equally indifferent to pleasure or pain, heat or cold, and satiety or want\textsuperscript{285}.

**Bairagis**

The term ‘*Bairagi*’ or ‘*Vairagi*’ implied a person devoid of passion and estranged from the interests and emotions of mankind. This was indeed used in many cases but was more precisely attached to the Vaishnava mendicants of the Ramanandi class\textsuperscript{286}.

They were the followers of Ramananda\textsuperscript{287} who was born at the close of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century and preached in Northern India at the beginning of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{288}. They addressed their devotion peculiarly to Lord Vishnu and had reverence for all of his incarnations. They maintained the superiority of Rama. As the every Vaishnava sect, they had high regard for the *Saligrama* stone and *Tulsi* plant\textsuperscript{289}.

This ascetic order of Ramanandi Vaishnavas travelled different *Tirthas*\textsuperscript{290} dedicated to Vishnu\textsuperscript{291} in various parts of India singly or in bodies and subsisted upon alms\textsuperscript{292}. They applied various streaks or sectarian marks on their forehead, breasts and arms made of ‘*Gopichandana*’ (White clay)\textsuperscript{293}. On the forehead they had marking or *Tilak* with two perpendicular white lines, drawn from the root of the hair to the commencement of each eyebrow, and a transverse streak connecting them across the root of the nose and in the centre was a perpendicular streak of red sandal or ‘*Roli*’ (A preparation of turmeric and lime)\textsuperscript{294}. Besides these marks, the *Bairagis* wore a necklace (*Kanthi*\textsuperscript{295} or *mala*) of *Tulsi* beads\textsuperscript{296} and also carried a rosary of the seeds of the same plant.
Jainism

In the 16th and 17th centuries Jainism was quite popular in parts of Western and Northern India. Many regions of Gujarat and Rajasthan and parts of modern Madhya Pradesh (M.P.) and Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) had a large number of followers of this faith. They were mostly merchants and bankers (vaishyas) who formed a very opulent portion of the society.

The leading tenets of the Jains clearly distinguished them from the rest of the Hindus. Firstly, they deny in the divine origin and infallible authority of the Vedas; secondly, they had great reverence for certain deified saints, who acquired by practice of self-denial and mortification, a station superior to that of the gods; and thirdly, extreme and even ludicrous tenderness of animal life.

The holy mortals or deified saints who are highly adorned by Jains are twenty four in number. They are called by various epithets. Some of these titles such as ‘Tirthakara’ or ‘Tirthankara’, ‘Arhat’ or ‘Arihant’ and ‘Jinaraja’ are referred to by Nirgun bhakti saints. The first, Tirthankara implies one who has crossed over (Tiryateanena) that is the world compared to the ocean; Arhat is one who is entitled to the homage of gods and men, and Jina is the victor over all the human passions and infirmities. Among these twenty four, two namely Parsavanath and Mahavira, the twenty third and twenty fourth Tirthankara of the sect held in highest esteem by Jains.

The moral code of Jains can be expressed in its five ethical principles: Ahimsa (Non-violence) Satya (Truth), Asteya (Non-
stealing), **Brahmacharya** (Celibacy) and **Aparigraha** (Non-possession). Besides this, there are number of minor instructions and prohibitions.

In the very early period **Jains** got divided into two principal divisions – ‘**Digambara**’ (Space-clad, naked) and the ‘**Svetambara**’ (White-clad) who were also called ‘**Sewaras**’. **Nirgun bhakti** saints have referred to both the divisions of **Jains** by calling them **Digambara** and **Svetambara**. This division has persisted down to the present day. Besides, the whole **Jain** community was also classified into two groups namely **Yatis** or **Jatis** (The Jain ascetics who led a religious life) and **Sravaka** or **Sravaga** (The secular member or the laymen of the sect). The regimen of the **Jain** ascetics or **Yatis** was and still is strict in the extreme. They subsisted upon the alms supplied by the **Sravakas**. Their hair, beards and moustaches were not shaved but were pulled out by the roots. They followed the aforementioned five principles quite strictly. They were expected to follow a life of abstinence, taciturnity and continence. Acts of violence and killing whether intentional or not were regarded as the most potent cause of the influx of **Karma** and were, therefore, particularly to be avoided. Meat eating was quite forbidden to ascetics and laymen alike. Even insect life was carefully protected especially by the **Jain** ascetics. They strained their drinking water to save the lives of animalculae and wore a piece of cloth over their mouths to prevent the minute living beings in the air from being inhaled and killed. They travelled barefoot and besides water pots they usually carried dusters to brush ants and other insects from their path and save them from being trampled under feet. In the
Adi Granth it is mentioned that Jain ascetics carried Fuman\textsuperscript{320} (A brush of cotton threads) with them and was most probably used for the same purpose.

There were many famous Jaina ascetics who were honoured by Mughal Emperors in the period under review. Among them Padamasundara, Hiravijaya Suri (He got the title Jagadguru from Emperor Akbar), Vijayasena, Bhanuchandra were contemporaries of Akbar and honoured by him\textsuperscript{321}. While Siddhichandra Yati and Nandivijaya were honoured with the title ‘Khushfaham’- man of sharp intellect. Vijayadeva Suri was honoured with the title ‘Mahatap Viruddharak Bhattarak’ by the Emperor Jahangir\textsuperscript{322}.

As far as Sravakas or the common Jains are concerned, they formed, as stated earlier, a predominantly mercantile community. From the very early period Jainism encouraged the commercial activities, no Jain could take up the profession of agriculture, as this involved not only the destruction of plant life but also of many living beings in soil. Besides this, Sravakas observed some other usual prohibition of the sect such as they abstained from meat, wine, honey, butter, opium and everything that grow beneath the earth\textsuperscript{323}, Sravakas gave alms only to the Yatis and presented offerings and paid homage only to the Tirthankaras whose statues were erected in many splendid Jain temples\textsuperscript{324}. The rituals of Jains were very simple. They walked round the statue three times, made an obeisance to the images with offerings usually of fruits or flowers\textsuperscript{325}. Kabir also mentioned that Jains offered flowers to the statue in the temple\textsuperscript{326}.
There were many famous Jain centres in India in the medieval period. For instance, Agra, which became a centre of Jainism from the days of Akbar and by the end of the 17th century, it had as many as forty eight Jaina temples. Amkalesvara near Barauch in Gujarat, Bikanar, Sanchor, Jalor, Jaisalmer, Abu, Chitrakuta, Bairat in Rajasthan, Deogarh in U.P., Bankapura and Sravana Belgola in Karnataka and several others327.

Islam

Muslims or the followers of Islam form on integral part of the Indian society. The Muslim community in 16th and 17th centuries in Northern India consisted of a number of foreign elements who had settled here generations earlier; and the Indian Muslims who had embraced Islam at some stage and were trying to emulate the various customs and rituals recommended by Islam. Among the foreign Muslims the major groups were of Turks who settled down during the Sultanate period; the Afghans, the Mughals and the Iranis. Of these the last three groups took active interest in politics and administration and thus considered as members of the ruling class in the period under review.

The Muslim community presented a sharp contrast to the vast Hindu majority on account of having a very distinct and unified account of religious beliefs and practices which were instituted by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and enshrined in the Holy Quran. These practices which constituted the basic and fundamental principles of Islam are as following, giving witness to the oneness of Allah (God) and His Prophet (Shahada), prayer (salat), charity (zakat), fasting (sawn) and pilgrimage (haj)328.
Except charity, *Nirgun bhakti* saints have given detailed information about other Islamic principles and practices followed by the Muslims during 16th and 17th centuries.

The witness to faith (*shahada*) in Allah (God) consists of repeating the Holy, *Kalima*\(^{329}\) (Creed) i.e. ‘There is no god but God’, ‘*Lailaha Illa Allah*’ and ‘Muhammad is the messenger of God’ ‘*Muhammad Ur Rasual Allah*’. As mentioned by Sundardas that *Kalima* was an essential part of the faith\(^{330}\) and that it was recited in order to witness conversion to Islam\(^{331}\). He further mentions that Muslims have not followed the path of Allah (God) as prescribed by Muhammad (PBUH). Sundardas while harshly critisizing the Muslim in his couplet says that Muslims do not properly understand the secret of the *Kalima* and what they kill as sacrifices are contrary to the teachings of Islam\(^{332}\).

The second most important principle of Islam is prayer called *salat* or *namaz* by Iranians and the Muslims of Indian subcontinent. *Nirgun bhakti* saints have referred to these obligatory prayers as *Nivaz*\(^{333}\) or *Namaz*\(^{334}\). Muslims might pray alone but since the congregation prayers are strongly recommended in Islam, they generally offered their prayers in congregation (*jamat*)\(^{335}\) in the mosque (*masjid*\(^{336}\) or *masiti*\(^{337}\) which was led by a *Imam*\(^{338}\) who leads the prayer.

We also find in the text of *Nirgun bhakti* saints like Kabir\(^{339}\) and Jambhoji\(^{340}\) some highly ill understood and obnoxiously provoking verses. On one occasion Kabir has infact made fun of Muslims by asking whether the God is deaf that they used the call of prayer (*Azan or Bang*) to be called from the top of minaret\(^{341}\). It
is interesting to know that the concept of the call was to call the people and had nothing to do with the hearing of God. It seems probably that the saint did not properly know the essence of the call and went for the reckless charging and still it is possible that they witnessed the Muslims who were only maintaining the external form of religion as a mere tradition. As with regard to the preparation of prayer Nirgun bhakti saints give a vivid account of the same. Muslims were required to perform the ablution, either minor (wudu or ozu)\textsuperscript{342} or major (ghusl)\textsuperscript{343} depending on the state of purity of the individual prior to the ablution.

_Nirgun bhakti_ saints have used the term ‘Roja’\textsuperscript{344} (Fast) which was obligatory for Muslims to observe from sunrise to just after sunset during whole month of _Ramadan_ (the ninth month of lunar calendar)\textsuperscript{345}. Kabir says, “Muslims kept fast for thirty days in a year”\textsuperscript{346}.

Pilgrimage (_Haj_) is the another principle of Islam. As with regard to the ritual of _Haj_ Jambhoji says that a _Turk_ (Here referred to Muslim) who goes to _Haj_ (Pilgrimage) and asks something from God, and still his actions are contrary to the commands of Allah (God); is like the one has forsaken his religion\textsuperscript{347}. On another instance Sundardas has become harsh by commenting that the Pilgrims are only satisfied by their tedious journey yet they do not know that the journey alone cannot give them the supreme salvation\textsuperscript{348}.

As described by the _Nirgun bhakti_ saints, Muslims read the verses of _Quran_ regularly\textsuperscript{349} and also recite them when they offered _Namaz_. They hold that in principle the specific commands
and prohibition found in the *Quran* express God’s will for all time. Therefore, it plays a central role in Islamic law and recognized as a source of the *Sharia* the Islamic legal system\(^{350}\). Guru Nanak mentioned that in this period law of *Shara* or *Shariat* was held supreme and justice was dispensed by *Qazi* (Judge). The Qazi or Judge had blue official garment\(^{351}\).

We also find mentioning of the Prophet of Islam (Muhammad) in the verses of the saints besides the word *Hadith* (The collection of the sayings of Prophet) also seem to be known to the saints\(^{352}\).

There were some other practices of Muslims which are also mentioned in the saints verses. They visited like shrines and tombs (*dargah*) of the Holy *Sufi* saints. *Nirgun bhakti* saints seemed to express their grief over the practice by calling upon them to make the God happy instead of Pir\(^{353}\).

All the *Nirgun bhakti* saints infact were severely critical of the rituals which had taken away the real essence of religion. At one place the mere enchanting the name on rosary (*tasbih*) was also criticized\(^{354}\). Dadu in his philosophical verse wishes that his whole body should become unified in praising the God instead of merely uttering the name by tongue on rosary\(^{355}\).

Another important practice of Muslims was the rite of circumcision (*sunnat*) of a boy. Kabir on occasion makes another comment on the practice of circumcision when he asks the Muslims that should the God wanted He would have given birth only in this way and that he questions about women, what about
the women\textsuperscript{356}. This verse like his previous one seemed to be utterly based on a wrong notion as the practice was taken up not as religious command from \textit{Quran} but by the instruction of Prophet which was meant to avoid the germs which normally gather near the tip of the skin of penis. Similarly Jambhoji makes a bit mild comment in his verse on the practice of circumcision when he questions the Muslims about purpose of circumcision. He argues that by merely cutting of the foreskin it would not serve any purpose unless a man knows in reality the supreme lord\textsuperscript{357}.

\textbf{Sufism}

\textit{Sufism} is an Islamic way of reaching God which specialize in the spiritual dimension of Islam. In the Islamic world it is popularly known as ‘\textit{Tasawwuf}’ (Arabic) while Western writers have termed as ‘Islamic Mysticism’\textsuperscript{358}.

Many \textit{Sufi} ideas and \textit{Sufi} terminology have found place in the sayings of \textit{Nirgun bhakti} saints. The terms, ‘\textit{Auliya}’, ‘\textit{Shaikh}’, ‘\textit{Masaikh}’, ‘\textit{Pir}’, ‘\textit{Murshid}’ etc. are often used with reference to Muslim mystics in the \textit{Nirgun bhakti} literature\textsuperscript{359}. Besides these terms the tittles ‘\textit{Qutb}’ and ‘\textit{Ghaus}’ which were used for Sufis are also mentioned by the saints\textsuperscript{360}. ‘\textit{Qutb}’ means axis pivot, head of the hierarchy of \textit{Auliya}, the highest stage of sanctity among Muslims. While ‘\textit{Ghaus}; denotes the helper (of the age) a title second to the rank of \textit{Qutb}\textsuperscript{361}.

\textit{Sufism} aims at the personal experience of the central mystery of Islam i.e. \textit{Tauhid} - Unity of God\textsuperscript{362}. It makes use of the symbolism of love (\textit{ishq})\textsuperscript{363} to show the attraction between God
and the universe. Thus, love of God (Ishq-i-Haqiqi) and the Absolute Unity of creation and creator are the important strands in Islamic mysticism. Here the creator is in fact the only beloved (mashuq, mehboob) and the holy object of desire (talab) of the mystic who is the lover (ashiq) of Allah. All these major components of Sufism are described in great detail by Nirgun bhakti saints especially by Sundardas.

Till 16th century various Sufi Silsilas were established in India and Sufism had reached every nook and corner of the country. In Ain-i-Akbari, Abul Fazl mentions fourteen orders which he says were common in his time. However, there were five well known major religious orders in 16th and 17th centuries, that made inroads into the religious life of Indian Islam. They were 1. Chishti Order – Shaikh Salim Chishti was a very famous and highly respected Sufi saint of this order. 2. Suharwardi Order – Sheikh Jamali was the renounced Sufi in the 16th century of this order. 3. Shattari Order – In 16th century Syed Muhammad Ghaus was very famous saint of this Silsila. 4. Qadri Order – Mian Mir and Mullah Shah Badakshi were eminent Sufi in the 16th and 17th centuries. 5. Naqshbandi Order – Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi played a big role in popularizing this order.

In Sufism a highly exalted and venerable status is attributed to the mystic guide. The preceptor – disciple relationship is popular as ‘Pir-Muridi’ in Islam. In Sufism the preceptor is an object of contemplation who alone is capable of revealing the truth and it is the duty of the Murid to respect his Pir’s command. In his ‘Pir-Murid Ashtak’ Sundardas describes the communication
of *Pir* and *Murid* in which the disciple expresses his desire to know the right path to reach at the sublime state of obeisance (*bandagi*) to God (*Mehboob*) and to communicate with Him\(^{371}\). The preceptor tells to his disciple that by purifying his innerself through renouncing devlish desires and the greed for worldly possessions and by repressing his animal spirit (*nafs*), he can achieve communication with God\(^{372}\). In this composition the *Sufī* concept of the four stages *manjil* or *manajil* viz. *Sharia*, *Tariqa*, *Haqiqa* and *Marifa*, as well as their four corresponding stations (*maqamat* or *maqam*) viz. *Nasut*, *Malkut*, *Jabrut* and *Lahut* are described\(^{373}\).

In Sufism great emphasis has been given on the strict observance of *Sharia* and its station *Nasut*. And in addition to the five essentials of Islam viz. faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage, repentance (*tauba*), preparatory to mediation (*ibadat*) observance of the destination between permitted (*halal*) and prohibited (*haram*) food and of other injunctive commandments (*farman*) of God are strongly urged\(^{374}\).

The complete mastery of the stage of *Sharia* and the station of *Nasut* then leads to the next stage of *Tariqa*\(^{375}\) and the station of *Malkut*. The seeker of this stage when loses all desires then only he transcends the feelings of desire, anger, greed and attachment and also of malice and envy\(^{376}\).

At the stage of *Haqiqa*\(^{377}\) and the station of *Jabrut* the seeker finds himself in the world of spirits and comes to realize his own self as at one with the Supreme soul. The bright irradiance
of the light ($nur$) of the spirits totally blurs the destination between the self and the non-self.

The attainment of the station of Jabrut in the stage of Haqia leads mystic to the penultimate stage of Marifa with its station of Lahut. Here he is invested with the power of miracles ($karamat$) and offered the vision of Allah.
Notes And References:

2. K.B., Sh-16, p. 2; D.G., S-134, p. 143; R.S., S-66, p. 271
3. K.B., R-27, p. 12; S.G., I, D-56, p. 205
4. Ibid., D-7, p. 206
5. Ibid., II, P-6, p. 922
6. K.B., Sh-114, p. 68; D.G., S-132, p. 142
8. S.G.G.S., IV, M-5, p. 263; R.S., Granth Abigat Lila, p.218
9. S.G., I, D-7, p. 206
10. Ibid., D-17, p. 207
11. Ibid., II, P-6, p. 922
12. K.G. (Tiwari), II, P-163, p. 95
13. S.G., II, Chh-8, p. 521
16. K.B., R-27, p. 12
17. Ibid., R-3, p. 4; D.G., S-11, p.97
18. S.G., II, S-16, p.751
19. D.G., S-103, p. 26
20. S.G., II, Chh-19, p. 651
21. Ibid.
22. K.B., R-27, p. 12
23. Ibid., R-25; D.S., Barhamasa-8, p. 52; S.G., II, Chh-19, p. 651; S.D.G.S., I, Chh-1, p. 159
24. K.B., R-27, p. 12
25. S.G., II, P-6, p. 922
27. S.D.G.S., I, D-76, p. 175
28. Ibid., D-5, p. 160
29. Ibid., D-24-25, p. 164
30. Ibid., K-52, p. 169
31. K.G. (Tiwari), II, P-155, p. 90; R.S., S-34, p. 355; S.G., II, P-6, p. 922
32. K.G. (Tiwari), II, P-163, p. 95
33. Ibid., P-149, p. 87
34. S.G., II, Chh-8, p. 474
35. K.B., Sh-45, p. 46
36. Ibid., Bas-10, p. 80; S.D.G.S., I, Savayya-46, p. 168
37. J.V., Sh-30, p. 215
40. S.G.G.S., I, M-1, p. 406; Thevenot, p. 91; Manucci, III, p. 42; Bernier, p. 326
41. D.G., S-139, p. 14; R.S., S-18, p. 545; S.G., II, Chh-20, p. 496
42. Ibid., Chh-8, p. 521
43. J.V., Sh-5, p. 186
44. Ibid.
46. R.S., S-43, p. 109
47. Ibid., S-12, p. 176
49. Ibid., III, M-5, p. 78
51. Ibid.
53. Ibid., pp.308
54. K.B., R-54, p. 20; S.G.G.S., II, M-3, p. 242; D.G., S-134, p. 143; R.S., S-18, p. 302
55. R.S., S-24, p. 268; S.D.G.S., I, Chh-4, p. 330; Ain, III, p. 319
56. J.V., Sh-27, p. 209; D.G., S-143, p. 144
57. Ibid., P-29, p. 389; S.D.G.S., I, Chh-99, p. 102
58. K.B., Sh-4, p. 31; S.G.G.S., II, M-1, p. 577
59. K.B., Sh-70, p. 54
60. J.V., Sh-71, p. 266
61. Ibid.
62. K.B., Sh-4, p. 31
63. K.G. (Das), P-28, p. 206
64. J.V., Sh-71, p. 266
65. K.G. (Das), P-28, p. 206
66. S.G., I, Ch-17, p.20; Ibid., Ch-8-9, pp. 95-96
67. S.G.G.S., IV, M-1, p. 350
68. D.G., S-245, p. 72; S.G., I, Ch-18-20
69. J.V., Sh-71, p. 266
70. S.D.G.S., II, Sav-2, p. 69
71. D.G., S-245, p. 72; S.G.G.S., I, M-1, p. 73; S.G., I, Ch-19-20, p. 20; Ibid., Ch-8-9, pp. 95-96
72. S.G.G.S., I, M-1, p.73; D.G., P-2, p. 497
73. K.G. (Tiwari), II, P-187, p. 109; S.G., I, Ch-20, p. 20
74. D.G., S-245, p. 72; Ibid., S-242, p. 71
75. Ibid., P-30, p. 390; Ibid., P-1, p. 497; S.G., I, Ch-21, p. 21; Ibid., Ch-11-12, p.96
76. D.G., P-2, p. 497
77. J.V., Sh-71, p. 266; S.G.G.S., IV M-1, p. 35; S.G., I, Ch-11, p. 96
78. Ain, III, p. 303
79. S.G., I, Ch-21, p. 21
80. D.G., S-245, p. 72; R.S., P-20, p. 485; S.D.G.S., I, Chh-20, p. 332
81. S.G.G.S., IV, M-1,p. 183
82. S.G., II, Chh-22, p. 597
83. D.G., P-2, p. 562; S.G., I, Ch-20, p. 90
84. S.G.G.S., IV, M-5, p. 263
85. Ibid., I, M-1, p. 205
86. Ibid.
87. S.G., I, Ch-20, p. 90
88. Ibid.
89. R.S., S-39, p. 109
90. S.G., I, Ch-12, p. 88
91. *Ain*, III, p. 304
92. *S.G.*, I, *Ch*-19, p. 90
93. *K.B.*, *Sh*-11, pp. 34-35
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., *Sh*-105, p. 65
96. *D.S.*, *Sh*-2, p. 5; *J.V.*, *Sh*-57, p. 239; *R.S.*, *S*-38, p. 109; *S.G.*, II, *Chh*-1, p. 613
97. *Ain*, III, p. 305
98. *J.V.*, *Sh*-57, p. 239; *R.S.*, *S*-38, p. 109
100. *Ain*, III, p. 305
102. *Ain*, III, p. 306
104. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
111. *K.B.*, *Sh*-90, p. 63
113. *K.B.*, *Sh*-10, p. 34
114. Ibid.


120. *S.G.G.S.*, III, *M*-1, p. 757

121. Ibid., II, *M*-1, p. 911; 1. *Ashtami*: the eight day of the lunar fortnight; 2. *Chaudas*: the fourteenth day of the lunar fortnight; 3. *Amavasya* or *Amavas*: the last day of the dark fortnight of a lunar month; 4. *Purnima*: the night or day of full Moon; 5. *Uttarayana*: the summer solstice or the Sun’s Northward progress; 6. *Dakshinayana*: the winter solstice or the Sun’s movement South of the equator; 7. *Chandragrahana*: eclipse of the Moon; 8. *Suryagrahana*: eclipse of the Sun; 9. *Sankranti*: entry of the Sun into a new sign of the Zodiac e.g. *Makar Sankranti* which signifies the entry of the Sun into capricon; 10. *Vyatipat*: an inauspicious position of the Sun and Moon (When they are on opposite sides of either solstice, and of equal declination).


123. *Ain*, III, pp. 332, 335, 336

124. *S.G.G.S.*, IV, *M*-1, p. 558; *S.G.*, II, *Chh*-1, p. 613; *Gau-dana*- the alms of cow was the main ceremony connected with the dying person- *Careri*, pp. 260-61

125. *K.B.*, *Vip*, p. 71
These included taking out the dead from the house, cleaning the floor with cow dung, setting of coffin which was quite open and made of pieces of wood tied together with straw - Manucci, III, p. 68

S.G., I, Chh-42, p. 327; S.G.G.S., II, M-5, p. 972

S.G., I, Chh-43, p. 328

K.G. (Das), P-99, p. 223; Manucci, III, p. 68

In the absence of the son the youngest brother of the deceased or failing him the eldest burnt the funeral pile – Ain, III, p. 365

S.G., I, Chh-44, p. 328

S.G., I, Chh-45-46 p. 328; S.G.G.S., III, M-5, p. 522

K.G. (Das), P-356, p. 156; S.G., I, Chh-45, p. 328

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K.G. (Das), P-356, p. 156

Manucci, III, p. 69

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S.G.G.S., IV, M-4, p. 542; Ain, p. 358

S.G., I, S-23, p. 147; S.D.G.S., I, Chh-83, p. 44

S.G.G.S., I, M-3, p. 275

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<td>S.G., I, Ch-37, p. 106</td>
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<td>156.</td>
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<td>162.</td>
<td><em>The Yoga Of Patanjali</em>, p. 46</td>
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<td>163.</td>
<td>S.G., I, Ch-49, p. 108-09</td>
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<td>164.</td>
<td><em>The Yoga Of Patanjali</em>, p. 46</td>
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<td>165.</td>
<td>Gorakhnath is said to have been flourished in the 9th century or 10th century A.D. However, on the basis of some dialogues or ‘Goshthi’ between Kabir and Gorakhnath and between the latter and Guru Nanak, it is also argued that Gorakhnath was the contemporary of both the <em>Nirgun bhakti</em> saints viz. Kabir and Guru Nanak- Hazari Prasad Dwivedi-<em>Nath Sampradaya, 3rd</em> Ed., Allahabad, 1981 pp. 50-53, 95-97</td>
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<td>167.</td>
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170.  *S.G.*, I, *D*-3, p. 87; *J.V.*, *Sh*-47, p. 231


172.  *S.G.*, I, *Ch*-1, p. 102


174.  Ibid., *P*-128, p. 76; *D.G.*, *S*-105, p.26; *S.G.*, I, *D*-4, pp. 87-88


176.  *S.G.*, I, *Chhap*-45, p. 44; *Hatharatnavali*, p. 104

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181.  Ibid., *Ch*-2

182.  Ibid., *Ch*-3

183.  Ibid., *Ch*-4

184.  Ibid., *Ch*-5

185.  Ibid., *Ch*-6

186.  *N.S.*, pp-123-129


188.  *N.S.*, pp. 123-129

189.  *S.G.*, I, *Ch*-9, p. 103

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192.  *S.G.*, I, *Ch*- 1-8, pp. 102-03; *Hatharatnavali*, pp. 20-24
196. K.G. (Tiwari), II, S-6, p. 229
197. S.G.G.S., III, M-1, p. 475
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209. S.G.G.S., III, M-1, p. 418
211. J.V., Sh-116, p. 301, S.G., I, Chh-37, p. 92

213
213. J.V., *Sh*-116, p. 301
214. Ibid., *Sh*-45, p. 229
218. *K.G.* (Das), P-207, p. 118
221. *K.G.* (Tiwari), II, P-151, p. 88; *S.G.G.S.*., III, M-1, p. 475; *D.G.*., P-17, p. 405
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225. *K.G.* (Tiwari), II, P-142, p. 83
227. Ibid., II, M-4, p. 90; Ibid., III, M-1, p. 475
228. *N.S.*, pp. 7-20
229. *K.B.*, R-69, p. 25
230. *Sabad*, p. 116
231. *S.G.G.S.*., II, M-1, p. 358; *K.G.* (Tiwari), II, P-151, p. 88; *D.G.*., P-18, p. 405
232. *S.G.*., I, *Ch*-2, p. 102
233. *D.G.*, S-20, p. 248
234. *K.B.*, R-69, p. 25

236.  *Sabad*, p. 116


238.  Della Valle, II, pp. 345-351

239.  J.V., *Sh*-50, p. 233; Mughal Emperor Babur and Jahangir have informed us about the importance of this place during medieval period. Babur describes that, “Tales had been told us about Gur-Khattri, it was said to be a holy place of the Yogis and Hindus who come from long distances to shave their heads and beards there” *B.N.*, p.230; And Jahangir mentions that, “Near Peshawar, I walked round Gorakhatri which is the worshipping place of the Yogis”- *Tuzuk*, I, p. 102

240.  *Dabistan* refers to some of the respectable Yogis of 17th century as Baliknath, Sanjanath, Surajnath and Serudnath – *D.M.*, pp. 137-38


243.  *N.S.*, pp. 4-8, 85; It is noticeable that the *Nath Panthis* of Bengal also called themselves *Kapalikas* -Ibid., p. 16, f.no.-6


245.  *N.S.*, p. 85

246.  *S.G.*, I, *Ch*-18, p. 89

247.  Bhandarkar, p. 131


252. Bhandarkar, p. 138


254. Bhandarkar, p. 138

255. *A.E.R.*, p. 196


257. *S.G.*, I., *Chh*-4, p. 236


259. *A.E.R.*, p. 10; Wilson, pp. 131-32

260. *A.E.R.*, p. 10


262. *A.E.R.*, p. 10

263. Ibid., p. 314; Wilson, p. 103


265. *S.G.*, I, *Ch*-15, p.89

266. *S.G.G.S.*, III, *M*-1, p. 736

267. Ibid., IV, *M*-1, p. 558

268. Wilson, pp. 109-115


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271. Ibid., pp. 108-109; *D.M.*, p. 140

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276. Ibid.
278. *S.G.*, I *Chh*-3, p. 236
279. Wilson, p. 109
280. *D.M.*, p. 142
282. *D.M.*, p. 148
284. *S.G.*, I, *Ch*-15, p. 89
285. Wilson, pp. 130-31
286. Ibid., p. 104
289. Wilson, pp. 27-28
291. *D.M.*, p. 184
292. Wilson, p. 25
293. Ibid., pp. 20, 28
294. Ibid., p. 20
296. *D.M.*, p. 184
298. Ibid.
299. Ibid., I, Chh-5, p 236
300. Ibid., II, P-10, p. 863
301. Ibid., II, Chh-20, p. 610
302. Wilson, pp. 160, 161
303. S. Gopalan - *Outlines Of Jainism*, Delhi, 1973, pp. 159-65
305. D.G., S-31, p. 173; Abul Fazl has referred to the *Svetambara* as *Sewaras* – *Ain*, III, p. 222; Jahangir also refers to them as *Sewaras* in his Memoirs – *Tuzuk*, I, p. 438; *D.M.*, p. 212
307. Ibid., II, S-25, p. 735
308. *Ain*, III, p. 216; *D.M.*, p. 211
310. *Ain*, III, p. 220; Wilson, pp. 190, 91
311. *S.D.G.S.*, I, Chh- 81, p. 44
312. K.G. (Tiwari), II, S-29, p. 139; *S.G.G.S.*, I, M-1, p. 431
314. *Ain*, III, p. 222
315. *S.G.G.S.*, I, M-1, p. 432
316. *Ain*, III, pp. 219-20; *D.M.*, p. 212; Mandelslo, p. 25; Wilson, pp. 177, 190
Abul Fazl mentioned that *Jaina* ascetics sweep the place, on which they were about to sit, with their hands – *Ain*, III, p. 220; While according to *Dabistan*, during travel Jain ascetics carried a besom of the bark of a soft tree with them to sweep the path before they put down their feet – *D.M.*, p. 212


Puspa Prasad- “*Jahangir And Jains (Study Based On Jain Historical Sources And Inscriptions)*”, I.C., Vol. LVI, No.-1, Hyderabad, January 1982, pp. 37, 38, 40

*Ain*, III, p. 222

Mandelslo, pp. 23-25

Ibid., p. 25; Wilson, p. 177

*K.B.*, R-30, p. 13

Chatterjee, pp. 283-357


*K.G.* (Tiwari), II, R-6, p. 120; J.V., *Sh*-10, p. 191; *S.G.G.S.*, I, *M*-1, p. 406; *D.G.*, *S*-213, p. 68; Rippin, I, p. 87

*S.G.*, II, *P*-2, p. 932

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*S.G.*, II, *P*-2, pp. 931-32


335. *D.G.*, *S*- 212, p. 68
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342. *J.V.*, *Sh*-10, p. 191; *D.G.*, *S*-211, p. 68; *S.G.*, I, *Ch*-4, p. 304
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345. Rippin, I, p. 95; Robinson, p. 117
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347. *J.V.*, *Sh*-50, p. 234; Careri, p. 246
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369. Ain, III, pp. 393-397
370. Roy, p. 159
371. S.G., I, Chh-1-2, p. 283
372. Ibid., Chh-3, p. 284
373. Ibid., Chh-1-8, pp. 283-85; Ibid., f.no.-8, p. 285
374. S.G.G.S., III, M-5, p. 906; D.G., S-129, p. 57; Roy, pp. 170-71
375. D.G., S-130, p. 57; S.G.G.S., III, M-5, p. 906
376. Roy, pp. 170-71


378. D.G., S-132, p. 58; Roy, p. 171

379. Ibid.


381. Roy, 171