



JUXTAPOSITION AND VARIANCE BETWEEN BHAKTI MOVEMENT AND SUFI MOVEMENT (KABIR, MIRABAI, AMIR KHUSRO AND JALALUDDIN RUMI)

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the striking differences of the Bhakti movement and Sufi movement with highlights of literary works of the outstanding luminaries of the said eras. The prime focus is on the religious and spiritual aspects that are reflected in the hearts of literary works. The philosophic and spiritual delicacies of Kabir's dohas, Mirabai's bhajans, Amir Khusro and Jalaluddin Rumi's prayers are critically depicted with striking quotes.

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THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

An important milestone in the cultural history of middle age India was a silent rebellion in society brought about by a mass of socio-religious reformers, a revolution which was later called as Bhakti Movement which was a remarkable episode of medieval history. It created a new awareness in Indian society. The religious thought of time came under as new influence. Spiritual outlooks of man were enhanced. The culture of the age was freshened with active strength. This movement was responsible for many rites

and rituals associated with the worship of God in Indian subcontinent. It did not demand deep philosophical knowledge, costly ceremonies, or difficult rituals. Surrender to God was the only need of true religion. The Bhakti sect carried an emotional appeal to the mind of people.

The Bhakti Movement had its beginning in seventh century CE Tamil Nadu. In the Southern movement, there were 63 Nayanars or Shaivite devotees who organized and led. They favored devotion to Shiva, Vishnu and their Avatar



and believed that true knowledge can be acquired only by worshipping the supreme power selflessly. It then spread among Karnataka and Maharashtra; by the end of fifteenth century, it was established in Bengal and Northern India. The devotional movement in northern part of India was concentrated on Rama and Krishna, who are said to be the incarnations of Lord Vishnu had. But this did not have any impact on the sects of Shiva, it did not decline. The Bhakti movement existed peacefully with the other movements in Hinduism. It aimed at the principle of monotheism that is existence of one God. This took place during the later half of the medieval period in the history of India (800-1700 A.D). Great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata portrays the real essence of Bhakti movement. The Vedic scriptures also talk about the concept of pure devotion of God.

The term Bhakti is explained as "devotion" or passionate love for the Almighty. Moksha or salvation from rebirth was not in the following of rules, regulations of the society order, it was through simple devotion to the Divine. Scholars have been characterized within by useful distinctions between those poet saints who composed verses to highly praise God with namely, "*saguna*" or with attributes and, those extolling God without any attributes or form, "*nirguna*". While the differences between these two branches are indeed important, their overshadowing similarities cannot be neglected; both centered on singular devotion, magical love for God and had major focus on a personal relationship with the Almighty. Given their belief in the root of personal devotion, poet-saints were highly conscious of following rituals as set and maintained by Brahmins. For many, their focus also included the caste system which promoted the traditional

religious hierarchy, at which Brahmins were the head of this hierarchy. Many poets and saints were themselves belonged to lower castes when the movement developed towards north. Another similarity was their usage of the local or regional languages of the masses, which was opposite to the sacred language of the elite Brahmins, Sanskrit. This practice also came forward from the movement's focus on inner, magical and highly personal dedication to the Almighty. When discussed as a unified whole, the movement's message was expressed in different ways.

The Bhakti movement focusing on Rama as God was started by Ramananda. There is much written about him, but it is believed that he lived in the first half of the 15th century. Thyagaraja was another representative. He taught that Lord Rama is the supreme Lord, and that salvation could be attained only through love for him and devotion to him, and through the repetition of his sacred name.

Vaishnava Bhakti is the devotion to Vishnu and his avatars, such as Krishna. Prominent proponents of Vaishnava Bhakti were:

Ramanujacharya (1017–1137)

Madhvacharya (1199–1278)

Nimbarka (13th Century)

Vallabhacharya (1479–1531)

Srimanta Sankardeva (1449–1568)

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1534)

Meera (1498- 1557)

The Saiva Siddhanta school was found in the south and is a form of ancient tribes. It incorporates the teachings of the Shaiva nayanars and enlightens the belief that Shiva is Brahman and his love is revealed in the divine acts of the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe, and in the liberation of the soul.

**MIRABAI**

Mirabai is known for her works as a Hindu poetess. Her date of birth and date of death are not known clearly, yet researchers assume they are 1498 and 1547 respectively. She was one of the teachers of Bhakti movement and a significant saint of Vaishnava Bhakti and also was a disciple of Raidas who was also a prominent figure in Bhakti movement. Her works mainly comprised of simple form called *Chand* (verse) a spiritual song usually composed in simple rhythms in repeating refrains collected in her Padavli.

Most of her poems are in Rajasthani and Braj with a dialect of Hindi. All her poems revolve around Lord Krishna, her childhood love, may be the reason was that she was given a statue of Krishna, presented by a wandering *sadhu*. The only theme we see in her works is her immense dedication to Krishna whom she considered her husband, her lord, her lover and her friend is Shri Krishna. The poems are centered on her feelings for Lord Krishna.

All that we know about Meera comes from her poetry. Her poetry expresses craving and quest of her soul for union with Shri Krishna. At times she tells the pain of parting and at other times the bliss of divine of union. Her devotional poems were sung as *bhajans* and many are still sung today. Her devotion towards Krishna was infectious. She inspired many to follow the path of Vaishnavism. As Swami Sivananda said:

"Mira wafted the fragrance of devotion far and wide. Those who came in contact with her were affected by her strong current of Prem. Mira was like Lord Gauranga. She was an embodiment of love and innocence. Her heart was the temple of devotion. Her face was the lotus-flower of Prem. There was kindness in her look, love in her talk, joy in her discourses, and power in her speech and fervor in her songs."

Some of her well known poems are 'I am mad', 'That Dark Dweller', 'Dark friend, what can I say?', 'Drink the nectar'. And many more.

The project will discuss Mirabai's two famous compositions 'It's true I went to the market' and 'I Am Mad'

"It's True I went to the Market

It's true I went to the Market

My friend, I went to the market and bought the Dark One."

(I went to the Market, Mirabai, line 1-3)

Mirabai says: She assumes that her family would imagine that she slipped into the market area by the night. Some say it was not worth to give up all this power and advantage. She gave away her social position, the warmth of a family, the link with the hereditary ruler of her area and her right to riches. At this point she no longer speaks to her family. She turns to him and says:

"Be with me when I lie down; you promised me this is an earlier life."

As soon as we read the poem we know we are in presence of someone who is unworldly. Not someone who is deeply worldly. She knows what this world is like. With enormous glance she describes, how she abandoned her caste, the social roles for a married woman of her time, the conservative religious establishment, and anyone left over who believes in the middle road.

"I am mad with love

And no one understands my plight.

Only the wounded

Understand the agonies of the wounded"

(I am Mad, Mira Bai, line 1-4)

Addressing others Mirabai says that she had gone mad woman in love of Krishna. And she is in pain which nobody tries to understand. She states this situation by comparing an injured individual by saying that only the person who is wounded knows what another wounded person feels. Only he can feel the pain. She further says that she wants to meet the beloved and this longing gives birth to a fire which is constantly raging in her heart. She also says that only the jeweler understands the preciousness of a jewel and not the person who lets it go and loses it. Mirabai continues that because as



she is stricken by pain, she is walking from one house to another in order to get a cure, but still she cannot find a doctor who can cure her agony. She says that Hari Krishna, whom she loves so dearly, who is her only master, the time he will come as the doctor, only then her pain will become less.

KABIR

“Watching the grinding stones, the Light Kabir Cries Inside the Two Stones, no one survives.” (Kabir Doha)

Saint Kabir sees the friction as the duality that we live in. He states the grinding stone in the form of a simile of our mundane lives. Kabir states that heaven and earth, Good and Bad, Male and Female, High and Low - all around us is duality. This play of opposites, this *Chalti Chakki* (the moving mill) consumes everyone in the end finally. Kabir says that no one is safe from in its powerful grip and it is the inevitable end. Whoever enters this duality is crushed. No one is spared. Kabir admits because rarely, if ever, does one see the oneness, the divinity, behind the duality.

“I went on the search for the Bad Guy,
Bad guy I couldn't find

When I searched my mind, no one is nastier than me” (Kabir Doha)

This *Doha* is about observing one's own mind and consciousness. Kabir says that he searched the world for the bad person. In the quest to find the real evil soul, but he couldn't find the evil person, no matter where he looked in this vast world. Then he looked within, at his own thinking process, in his own mind. That's when he found the real evil person, who lived in his consciousness, unchecked. In other words Kabir meant that when we accuse someone or condemn another person, it is our mind that is doing the finger pointing. The other person is probably innocent or the victim of his circumstances. If we possess the convicted person's body,

live his life, have his conditioning, then we too would behave and act the same.

LANGUAGE USED IN MIRA'S POETRY

Mira was born in Merta and after her marriage she spent some lived in Mewar for some time. She also stayed in Braj and died in Dwarka. In this way she came into contact with three regional languages- Marwari, Gujrati and Braj bhasha. The literary language of north India then was Braj bhasha, which was also the language of Krishna literature. In Mira Bai's poems we find a mixture of both Marwari and Braj bhasha, though she tended towards the use of verb forms of Braj bhasha. Therefore the structure of her language is closer to Braj bhasha, though there are ample usages of Marwari. Mira Bai did not write to show her poetic talents, nor did she need to show her scholarships. For this reason, her use of words derived from Sanskrit is limited. She focused more upon everyday vocabulary. She made frequent use of onomatopoeic words, especially in poems depicting rainy season. Mira used variations of words to enhance the melody of her poems like *muraliya* in place of *murali* (flute), *niryata* for *nryta* (dance). She often used added syllables or word like 'ri' or 'ajri' in order to fit in line with the melody. Mira believed in *Saguna Brahman* (subjective approach towards god) though in the company of Saints like Jiv Goswami at Vrindavan, she also learnt the meaning and truth about *Nirgun Brahman* (objective approach for the attainment of God). She always worshipped Krishna instead of Vishnu. But both are reckoned identical in the real sense by Hindu traditions. Besides her love for Krishna she recognizes him as her own husband, thus reflecting a wife husband love relationship towards God, she creates an unparallel example in human history. When we objectively appraise the quality of her poems (pads), we find that some consider them not as rich as Tulsidas's or Surdas's pads are. Yet her pads contain agony and simplicity of a woman which is perceived nowhere else. In that respect no other literature or language can be compared to hers, simplicity and deep invocation



for god are uniquely blended in her writings. In fact, Mira created a tradition of her own, which cannot be easily compared to anyone's creation or literature.

LANGUAGE USED IN KABIR'S POETRY

Kabir lived at the time when the impassioned poetry and deep philosophy of the great Persian mystics, Attar, Sadi, Jalalu'ddin Rumi, and Hafiz, had a powerful influence on the religious thought of India, he dreamed of restoring this intense and personal Mohammedan magic with the traditional belief of Brahmanism.

Hindered the fiery meditation of his heart. Hating mere bodily sternness, he was no ascetic, but a married man, the father of a family a circumstance which Hindu legends of the monastic type vainly attempt to explain and it was from his heart of the common life that he sang his delightful lyrics of divine love. Here his works collaborate the traditional story of his life. Again and again he extols the life of home, the value and reality of everyday existence, with its opportunities for love and renunciation.

SUFISM

Sufism talks about the Truth. And its meaning is the selfless experiencing and actualization of truth. Sufism focuses on practices which intend to go towards the Truth, by means of love, devotion and dedication. This is called *Tarigat*, the spiritual path towards God. A Sufi is the lover of Truth and by means of love and devotion leans towards the Truth, towards the perfection which every being is seeking. As unavoidable by love's jealousy, the Sufi is taken away from all except the Truth.

Reputed Sufis such as Ali Hujwiri claim that the tradition first began with Ali ibn Abi Talib. Furthermore, Ali is Practitioners of Sufism hold that in its early stages of development Sufism effectively referred to nothing more than the identification of Islam. According to one perspective directly from the Qur'an which is constantly recited, meditated,

and experienced, that Sufism proceeded, in its origin and its development. Others have mentioned that Sufism is the strict effort of the way of Muhammad, through which the connection of heart to the Divine is strengthened. More prosaically, the Muslim conquests had brought large numbers of Christian monks and hermits, especially in Syria and Egypt, under the rule of Muslims. They maintained a efficient spiritual life for centuries after the invasion, and many of the especially pious Muslims who founded Sufism were influenced by their techniques and methods.

Sufism has a glorious history in India evolving for over a millennia. The mystic tradition of Islam gained significant ground spreading from Baghdad (Iraq) into Persia, known as Iran and Afghanistan today. As the Turkic military leader territories grew into the Indian Punjab region during 1027 A.D, Sufism became more prominent in the Delhi Sultanate. When South Asia sprawled with Islam, Sufi thought, syncretic values, literature, education, and entertainment grew and since then they have created an enduring impact on the presence of Islam in India today. through maritime voyages and trade Sufi Scholars, poets, and mystics from Central Asia and Iran became integrated within India by 1204 A.D. the momentum of Islamization in India was strategized and helped by the translation of Arabic and Persian texts (Qu'ran, Hadith corpus, Sufi literature) into vernacular languages. Particularly in rural areas, Sufis helped Islam spread deeply into prior characterized mass. As a result, between the late 12th century (1100–1200 A.D.) and 13th century (1200–1300 A.D.), Sufi brotherhoods became firmly coherent in northern India.

Actualization of divine ethics is Sufism which includes an enlightened inner



being and not proof of intellect; revelation and witnessing, not logic. Divine ethics refers to ethics that transcend social convention. a way of being that is the realization of the attributes of God. Explaining the Truth is a difficult task as Words being limited, can never really express the perfection of the absolute, the unbound. Thus, for those who are imperfect, words create doubt and misunderstanding. Yet: if one cannot drink up the entire ocean, one can drink to one's limit.

Many philosophers have spoken boundlessly of truth and written volumes, but somehow their efforts never paid. For the Sufi, philosophers are those who view the Perfection of the Absolute from a limited perspective; so all they see is part of the Absolute, not the Infinite in its entirety. It is indeed true that what philosophers see is correct; nevertheless, it is only a part of the whole.

Only by the light of the Spiritual Path and the mystic way can the Truth be discovered. In order for one to truly witness the Perfection of the Absolute, one must see with one's inner being, which perceives the whole of Reality. This perceiving happens when one becomes superlative, losing one's (partial) existence in the Whole. If the Whole is likened to the Ocean, and the part to a drop, the Sufi says that observing the Ocean with the eye of a drop is hopeless. However, when the drop becomes one with the Ocean, it sees the Ocean with the eye of the Ocean.

PROTAGONISTS OF SUFISM

Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī

Amir Khusrow

Khwaja Gharib Nawaaz

Hazrat Khawaja Nizamuddin Aulia

Ali el-Hujwiri (popularly known in India as Data Ganj Bakhsh)

AMIR KHUSRO

"Angel have become you, and you me,
I am the body, you soul;

So that no one can say hereafter,
That you are someone, and me someone else."

(Amir Khusro Love Poerty,

Angels have become you, and you me)

In the above lines Amir Khusro says that in love there is no you and me, that there are no such differences. Love is being one. There is no distance between the two lovers, they have one soul. A soul so pure and full of love. And he says that from now onwards, by becoming one, nobody can comment that we are different. Instead we are two bodies and one soul. We complete each other.

" People think they are alive because they have soul in them,
But I am alive because I have love in myself,
And I'm a martyr due to the beloved's affliction,
(for, to a lover, nothing is dearer than the affliction brought forth by the beloved) ."

(Amir Khusro Love Poerty, I am Alive)

In the above lines Amir Khusro expresses his views on love and life. He says that throughout the life a person is only existing by saying that he has soul in him. But it is not the truth. To be alive, there should be the presence of love in an individual. Amir Khusro says that he is alive because he posses love in himself. Having a lover or a dear one who is abode of love and affection is called living and there is nothing better than that Life is worth living if one has love with him and having just a soul is not called living it is just existing.

RUMI

"Say, I Am You

I am dust particles in sunlight.

I am the round sun."

(Rumi Poetry, Say I am You)

This is a very philosophic poem and from a very religious man who has a connection to God that is fantastic. Rumi is saying that we are one; we are one with nature, the wind, the sun, and



everything in the world. He further says that some are given the ability to see what cannot be seen by the eyes or what cannot be smelled or felt but they know without actually knowing. It is a gift beyond what others know or will ever know in life. When a human realizes his connection and enduring to nature it makes them want to honor it because that was your beginning and will be your end. From the moment we are born until we die. Our spirit and nature are formed from our existence of this world and the ideals our world teaches us. Some grasp it and sadly some do not. This man got it and he wanted us to know his thoughts and ideas.

"Birdsong brings relief
to my longing
I'm just as ecstatic as they are,
but with nothing to say!

(Rumi Poetry, Birdsong brings relief)

Here Rumi states that he is in agony and the birds that sing give relief to his longing. He is in pain but when he remembers the beloved, he is in ecstasy just like the birds who recall their loved one. But like the birds have nothing to say apart from singing the pain, he too cannot say anything to the world. So he prays to the Universal soul that is God to pass relief through his body and end his longing.

LANGUAGE USED IN AMIR KHUSRAU'S POETRY

Amir khurau has chosen to show his deepest languages in Indic Vernacular language he called Hindwai. It was unusual because the learned intellectual immigrants from Iran and Central Asia, to which were considered a disgrace. Amir Khurau dedicated a significant portion of his work to extol the virtues of India, its ancient civilization and the languages. He is proud of his partial Indian origin. Khusrau compositions in Hindwai/Hindi that include dohas,

riddles, songs, qawwalis, ghazals with Persian and Hindawi line alternatively.

Khurau's poetry is not only the literary genre, riddles constitute a substantial portion of his compositions. As is the case with his poetry, grave doubts have been cast on the authenticity of Amir Khusrau's riddles. He is sensitive and perceptive to the trends prevalent in the indigenous literary tradition of his time but by means unique or without parallel. He has become a symbol of culture.

LANGUAGE USED IN RUMI'S POETRY

Throughout the works by Rumi, language is discussed in a linguistic sense, he usually employs the Persian "sokhan" which could be rendered into the English "speech" or "word". In Rumi's sayings related to "sokhan", his view of language's relation to reality and consciousness is expressed in his own way. His major contribution lies in Islamic philosophy and Sufism which is called *Tasawwof*. This was mentioned largely in poetry, especially through his famous *Manasvi*. This book, the largest mystical exposition in verse, it discusses and offers solutions to many complicated problems in metaphysics, religion, ethics, mysticism, etc. Rumi himself is not a philosopher of systematic thinking, but he is a poet with mystical insight into Reality. Therefore, Rumi's language and its view perhaps are based on his poetic insight and mystical intuition rather than on logical analysis and inference.

Fundamentally, the *Manasvi* highlights many hidden aspects of Sufism and their relationship with the worldly life. Rumi for this creates a variety of subjects and derives numerous examples from everyday life. His main subject on the one hand is the relationship between man and God, and on the other between man and man. He apparently believed in Pantheism and portrayed the various stages of man's evolution in his journey towards the Ultimate.

The Sufi movement made a valuable contribution to Indian society and so did the Bhakti saints. The former infused a new liberal outlook within Islam whereas the latter were



engaged in breaking down the barriers within Hinduism. The relation between early Bhakti and Sufi ideas laid the foundation for more liberal movements of the fifteenth century. Sant Kabir and Mira had preached a non-sectarian religion based on universal love.

We see that Bhakti movement focused on the message of monotheism that is existence of one God; it is defined as "devotion" or passionate love for the Divine. It started in seventh century CE Tamil Nadu and then spread across the whole nation by different saints and teachers. Whereas, Sufism was not originated in India. Sufi mystic traditions became more visible during the 10th and 11th centuries of the Delhi Sultanate. It was a part of Islam and started in Arabic countries and then influenced India during the Sultanate. Furthermore is the difference between the message both gave and the protagonists of both the movements. Where Bhakti movement focused on existence of one God and that salvation can be attained by any person, here in Sufism, it focused on the selfless experiencing and actualization of truth.

The Sufis believed in the concept of *Wahdat-ul-Wajud* (Unity of Being). The Sufis said that all beings are essentially one. Different religions were somehow similar. This doctrine got popular in India. There was also much exchange of ideas between the Sufis and Indian. A notable contribution of the Sufis was their service to the poorer sections of society, the Sufi saints maintained close contact with the common people. According to the Sufis, the highest form of devotion to God was the service of mankind.

They treated Hindus and Muslims alike. Amir Khusro said "Though the Hindu is not like me in religion, he believes in the same things that I do".

The Sufi movement encouraged equality and brotherhood. The doctrines of the Sufis were attacked by the orthodoxy. Like the Bhakti saints, the Sufi saints contributed greatly to the growth of a rich regional literature. Most of the Sufi saints were poets who chose to write in local languages.

By the fifteenth century Hindi had begun to assume a definite shape and Bhakti saints such as Kabir used it extensively. The Bhakti saints believed that salvation can be achieved by everyone. They made no difference of caste, creed or religion before God. They themselves came from diverse backgrounds.

The saints stressed equality, disregarded the caste system and attacked institutionalized religion. The saints did not confine themselves to purely religious ideas. They advocated social reforms too. They opposed sati and female infanticide. Women were encouraged to join *kirtans*.

The Bhakti movement was a socio-religious movement that opposed religious bigotry and social rigidities. It emphasised good character and pure thinking. At a time when society had become stagnant, the Bhakti saints infused new life and strength. The Bhakti Marg was neither a mass movement, nor was it a social reform movement, it was based on the reform of the individual. Every man or woman who became a Bhakt was for the salvation of the individual.

They awakened a new sense of confidence and attempted to redefine social and religious values. It occupies a significant position in bringing about harmony and friendly relationships between the Hindus and Muslims. It stood for intense personal devotion and complete self-surrender to Almighty. It believed in the unity of brotherhood of man and equality of all religions. The history of the Bhakti Movement can be seen from the Upanishads, the Puranas and the Bhagvad Gita.

The Sufi Movement had twofold aims: To make their own spiritual peace and to serve the mankind. Sufism, which started as a reform movement, laid emphasis on free-thinking, liberal ideas and pertinence. They believed in the equality of all human beings and unity of man. Their concept of unity, brotherhood and the humanitarian ideas of the Sufi saints fascinated the Indian mind. The Sufi movement proved very helpful in completing the gap between the followers of the two religions and in bringing the Hindus and the Muslims together.



The liberal ideas and unorthodox principles of Sufism had a major influence on Indian society. Muslims in their attitude and encouraged many Muslim rulers to pursue kindhearted attitude to their non-Muslim subjects. Most Sufi saints preached their teachings in the language of common man that contributed greatly to the evolution of various Indian languages.

The growth of Bhakti was indeed a part of the social turmoil and upheaval and the social ferment of the period due to two factors: one internal which meant the social impact, internal religious debates and sectarian conflicts, and the reaction against a monistic, closed, environment, emotional satisfaction. And the other external. The internal factor which included the activities of Sufis, due to the Arab traders and others settling first in the south and later in the north. The latter may also account for the late rise of Bhakti Marg in north India. Rahman says Bhakti can also be taken as a revolt against Brahmanical ways.

Its expression and the language of expression differed from person to person, from Alvars to Ramanuja, from women saints Mirabai to Lal Ded, from Ravidas to Kabir, and from Tulsidas to Guru Nanak. As one could infer from the writings of the Bhakts, religion was presented as a matter of experience rather than the following of rituals.

The religious fervor of its upsurge and its nature, as also the social and cultural dimensions of Bhakti has been explored to some extent. But some of its linkages with intellectual activities and cultural movements remain to be investigated.

Sufism in fact was not one single system. It was as complex as the various trends in medieval life, society and culture woven together. The medieval time was dominated by the mysteries of life, which the human mind was unable to fathom. Moreover, the elite and the highly educated did not find any logic or rationality in the running of human and social affairs. And lastly, there was the utter helplessness of humans, who despite their knowledge and

reasoning power could not fight their destiny shortness of life, destruction and decay; people yearned for a peaceful and long life, with some degree of certainty. They desired their name and fame to continue after their deaths. Littérateurs and poets achieved this through their works.

The Bhakti movement was embraced by the masses while the Sufi movement was mostly followed by Muslims. The Bhakti movement of India uses ecstatic singing, chanting, and meditation to bring the follower closer to Almighty. In the case of bhakti, the devotee is trying to get closer to the Supreme Being.

In both cases the literature emphasizes poetry, even song, extolling the virtue of God. Often this poetry describes God in very personal terms, and uses these familiar terms to describe the devotee's emotions. The importance of the Bhakti and Sufi saints lies in the new atmosphere created by them which continued to affect the social, religious and political life of India even in later centuries.

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