

Cross-Cultural Interaction in the Development of Sufism

Ms. Neelam Mittal

Department of English
Satyawati College
University of Delhi

Abstract: *Many of the early Sufis had myriad influences working on them. Sufism is not just an off-shoot of Islam; it takes off from the religious platform of Islam and assimilates varied mystical components from different theosophical frameworks. The reason for the same is cross-cultural interaction in the development of Sufism as well as the eclectic sensibility of the Sufis, who spurned from rigid adherence to a single theological framework. There are instances of prominent Sufis who outgrow a single theological framework by virtue of their birth, education and geographical itinerary through different lands. In its eclecticism and all-embracing ethos of love, Sufism presents a cosmic vision of a sense of identification between the supposed dichotomies: internal and the external, the self and the other, the human and the divine.*

Keywords: *cultural and intellectual amalgam, gnosis, love, non-dualism, cosmic consciousness.*

An early ninth century Sufi figure, Mansur al-Hallaj is Persian by birth; his father a convert from Zoroastrianism to Islam. (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 1, 60) Hallaj followed Sufi teachers like "Tustari, Junayd and Amr Makki" (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 1, 60) and assimilated mystical ideas from each one of them which appealed to his own mystical sensibility. Further, his mystical ideas must have taken shape in the course of his journey through "Khurasan, Ahwaz, Persia, India and Turkistan" (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 1, 60). The literal physical journey of a mystical aspirant becomes parallel to the psychological journey towards maturation of his mystical convictions. His indomitable fortitude and single-minded pursuit of truth (Haqq) earned him fame as well as notoriety as "a dangerous intriguer, a Christian, a rank blasphemer, a charlatan and a martyred saint". (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 1, 60) Having proclaimed 'ana'l haqq', 'I am Truth', he was charged with presumption and blasphemy. Nothing could deter him and Hallaj met his final fate hence:

In the year A.D. 922 after eight years imprisonment, he was scourged, mutilated, hung on a gibbet, and finally beheaded and burned. (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 1, 60)

Hallaj extols Jesus to a sublime position, which suggests his being influenced by Christian theology. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram cite Hallaj's eulogy of Christ hence:

Praise be to him who manifested His humanity,
the secret of His glorious divinity
And the visible appeared to his creation in the form of one who eats and drinks
So that His creation could perceive Him as in the flicker of an eye-lid. (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 1, 61)

Christ's divine and human natures find a parallel in Hallaj's concept of 'Lahut' and 'Nasut'. The concept is parallel to the concept of 'huwiah' and 'aniyat'. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram trace the development of Sufism from a purely ascetic ideal to the incorporation of gnostic elements. This change is said to have been brought about by the influence of Neo-Platonism, Persian, Indian and Buddhist elements as well as Christian mysticism. Writes S. Ram:

Now the ascetic, while not losing altogether his ascetic ideal, tends more and more to centre his attention in Gnosis and the Zahid (ascetic) becomes the Arif (gnostic). (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 1, 58)

As exemplars of this characteristic in the development of Sufism, S. Ram mentions great Sufis like Ma'iu'ul-Kaikh, Sulayman'u'd-Daini and Dhun-Nun Misri. Instead of unthinking acceptance, quietism and asceticism, the gnostic assimilated elements of "theosophy, gnosticism, ecstasy and pantheism". (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, 58)

Hujwiri in Kashf Al- Mahjub defines gnosis as "the life of the heart through God, and the turning away of one's inmost thoughts from all that is not God" (Al-Hujwiri, 267). Hujwiri aptly makes a distinction between the two types of gnosis: "cognitional ('ilmi') and emotional ('hali')" (Al-Hujwiri, 267). He presents the latter as more profound and authentic cognition of one's connection with God. Reason and intellection take man away from the realization of God. Both reason and intellect have their limitations. Hujwiri explains that inference of existence of God on intellectual grounds is "assimilation (tasbih)" (Al-Hujwiri, 270) and denial of the existence of God on the same grounds is "nullification (ta'til)" (Al-Hujwiri, 270). Reason and intellect operate in the phenomenal world. God cannot be delimited to the phenomenal realm and hence cannot be defined by its parameters. Here, I quote Hakim Sinai, an early Afghan Sufi teacher, who insists on going beyond rational and intellectual faculties and gives prominence to the love-motif in Sufism:

The essence of truth is superior to the terminology of 'How?' or 'Why?'

(Shah, Idries, 100)

At the same time, the proclaimed gnostics can also be pretentious and boastful about their attainment. For instance, Dhu 'l -Nun remarks: "Beware lest you make pretensions to gnosis":

"the gnostics pretend to knowledge,

But I avow ignorance: that is my knowledge." (Al-Hujwiri, 274)

Uthman Al-Makki, a disciple of Junayd is known to have advocated ecstasy as a stepping stone to attainment of God:

Ecstasy does not admit of explanation, because it is a secret between God and the true believers. (Al-Hujwiri, 274.)

There began a new trend, in Sufism, of expressing the palpable and the hitherto eccentric mystical ideas and views from extraneous philosophical systems. Dhu'l Nun Misri (796- 860 CE), the Egyptian Sufi scholar and alchemist is posited as an important figure in the percolation of neo-Platonic ideas into Sufi thought. Misri's father is known to have been a Nubian freedman of the Quraysh tribe. (Rustom, Mohammed. The Sufi Teachings of Dhul Nun) 'Quraysh' being a mercantile tribe known to have historically controlled Mecca and Kaaba, Misri outgrew the strict confines of orthodox religiosity and became a key figure in the percolation of neo- Platonic ideas into Sufi thought. This hypothesis has been endorsed by Professor Nicholson, the eminent scholar on Sufi studies. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram also suggest:

When we remember that he [Misri] was an Egyptian, it is not too much to suppose that the school of Alexandria had too much to do with the shaping of his thought. (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 1, 59.)

All kinds of stories and hagiographical narratives circulate around these early mystics. Simultaneously, there exist books like *The Sufi Teachings of Dhu'l-Nun* by Mohammed Rustom, which cite from the Arabic Sufi texts like *Qut al qulub* of Abu Talib al-Makki (d. 386/ 966), the *Luma* of Abu Nasr al' Sarraj (d. 378/ 988) and many others. Misri laid emphasis on gnosis (Marifah), and on the intuitive mystical approximation of spiritual truth revealed through divine ecstasy. Here we have the following citation from page 240 of Sarraj's *Luma* as cited on page 76 of Rustom's book:

The audition [sama] is a true inrush which rouses hearts for the Real. Whoever listens to it as its due attains realization, and whoever listens to it for the sake of his ego commits heresy" (Rustom, Mohammed. The Sufi Teachings of Dhul Nun)

Misri approved the capability of music to induce a state of ecstasy and consequent forgetfulness of the material world. He simultaneously undermines the value of intellect or rationalization in the progression towards the Divine Being:

Whatever eyes can see relates to knowledge [ilm'], and whatever hearts can know relates to certainty ['yaqin']. (Rustom, Mohammed. The Sufi Teachings of Dhul Nun)

Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram document the importance of "extraneous influences" on Sufism in its "evolution to the sublimity it has come to acquire" (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 2, 143)

Occupation of Makran and Kankan by the Arab army as early as A.D. 672 and the conquest of Sind by the Abbasid Empire triggered a chain of cross-cultural interactions. S. Ram documents the translation of *Brihamsiddhanta* and *Khandakhadyaka* into Arabic during the time period of Mansur al-Hallaj. The period of khalifa Harunu Rashid saw the translation of Sanskrit treatises on arithmetic, philosophy, astrology and medicine into Arabic. The visit of Al Muwaffiq and Al Beruni around 1030 A.D. to India and their appreciation and documentation of "Indian Literature, religion, philosophy, chronology, astronomy, geography, astrology, customs and laws..." (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 2, 143) speaks volumes about the indispensable and healthy cross-cultural interaction. Al Beruni is known to have translated Kapila's *Samkhya* and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, as well as introduced *Srimadbhagavadgita* to his people. Khan and S. Ram comment on the escalation in literary and philosophical exchanges, "for down the centuries Sufis began to study Hindu scriptures, their attitude mellowed towards idolatory and polytheism" (Encyclopaedia of Sufism. Ed. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram. Vol 2. New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2003. Pg 143). This process reached its acme with Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shahjahan. Dara's Persian translations of the *Ramayana*, the *Gita*, the *Upanishads* and the *Yogavashista* gained fame. S. Ram writes:

The Surr-i-Akbar translation of the Upanishads, begins with 'Om Sri Ganeshaya Namah'. According to Dara Shikoh, the opening chapter of the Koran, Sura Fatiha, is Omu'l-Quran which he regarded as corresponding to the Vedic word OM in both meaning and context. (Encyclopaedia of Sufism.vol 2, 143.)

As expected, Dara Shikoh meets the same fate as Hallaj and Sarmad. The fight against man-made stringent confines of Hinduism and Islam was hence fought by men from both sides of communal divide.

Another seminal Sufi, Abu Yazid'l Bistami (804-874 CE), also called Bayazid Bistami is an exemplary figure of the cultural and intellectual amalgam we are looking at. Bayazid Bistami has a Persian ancestry. His grand father, Sharawan, is known to have been a zoroastrian. His Sufi teacher, Abu Ali of Sind, has Indian origin. Ideologically, Bistami is known for his pantheistic ideas. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram cite his famous saying:

Beneath this cloak of mine, there is nothing but God. Glory to me! How great is my majesty! Verily I am God; there is no God beside me, so worship me!
(Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 1, 60.)

Abu Ali was from the Indian region of Sind. R.C.Zaehner's research on Bastami and his spiritual teacher is elaborated in a thesis published in two books: (i) *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (ii) *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*. In the latter, Zaehner cogitates that "Abu Ali of Sind was a convert; Bistami taught him how to perform the obligatory duties of Islam; since a convert from Sind, then necessarily a convert from Hinduism; and if Hindu, then surely acquainted with Sankara's monism, which ultimate truths he must have conveyed to Bistami". (Zaehner, 91)

The Sufi understanding of the divine Being and the conception of God in Indian mysticism have striking similarities. The 'Wahadau'l Wujud' of Sufi paradigm corresponds with the Indian concept of 'Advaita'(non-dualism'). The explanation offered by the Sufis is that God created this universe out of the creative Truth ('Haqq'). Creative Truth is the substance ('hayula') of the universe. God does not divide Himself into parts in the process of creation. Instead, explain Masood Ali Khan and S.Ram:

Creative Truth lent his ideal prototypes (haqa'iq) the name of creatureliness in order that the mysteries of Dvinity and their necessary counterparts may be made manifest.
(Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol2,145.)

Even the analogies used by the two mystical frameworks have a striking similarity. Explaining the concept of wahadatu'l Wujud, Jili says:
The Universe is like ice, and God, the Magnified and Exalted, is the water which is the origin of this ice. The name ice is lent to that frozen thing and the name water is the right name for it.
(Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol 2, 145.)

Khan and S.Ram cite an example of the explanation of non-dualism offered by a Vedantist, from Chhandogya Upanishas:

Uddalaka explains to his son Svetaketu the mystery how the things that exist spring from the primary Unitary Being. For example, clay may be moulded into several things...the reality behind every article is only clay.
(Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol2, 145.)

And do we not come across the following couplet in *The Bhagwad Geeta*?

lfP×knkReR;uqL;wrs fuR;s fo".kkS izdfYirk%A
O;Dr;ks fofo/kLlokZ gkVosQ dVdkfnokr~AA
(Bhagwad Geeta, 164.)

Translation:

All the forms exist in the imagination of the perceiver, the substratum being the eternal and all-pervading Vishnu, whose nature is Existence and Intelligence. Names and forms are like bangles and bracelets and Vishnu is like gold.
(Bhagwad Geeta, 164.)

Further, the Ramanuja's 'Vishistadvaita' or 'modified non-dualism' corresponds well with the Sufic 'Wahadatu'l Shuhud'. 'Vishistadvaita' or 'modified non-dualism' understands God and his creation as separate, though the creation inclines itself towards the attainment of the divine. Where advaita or non-dualistic mould focuses on the concept of 'All is He', the 'Vishistadvaita' or 'modified non-dualism' points towards the concept of 'All is from Him'. The latter was, however, misplaced and misused by autocratic opportunists like Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Sirhindi (1564–1624), who placed himself in the position of the divine Godhead and subjugated his subjects with abject claims of self-deification.

As per the samkhya yoga, cosmology displays the existence of individuals as isolated personalities. The individual soul is a result of the split of the cosmic 'ahamkara' as depicted in the diagram. The union of the 'jiva' with the cosmic consciousness is through the recognition and isolation of the soul and realization of an eternal mode of being outside of time and space. After the recognition and isolation of the soul, the next step is the destruction of the particular, the individual consciousness and restoration to the cosmic consciousness, which is the originator of the particular, individual consciousness.

The Sufi concept of 'fana' has a parallel concept of 'nirvana' and 'moksha' in Indian mysticism. The state of 'Fana' or self-annihilation is attained through the destruction of all desires ('nafs'). Shorn of desires and cravings, human being gets rid of pain, sorrow, anxiety as well as happiness which are a concomitant of those desires. Consequent upon the state of 'fana' or self-effacement, the ardent and undistracted seeker attains the sought. The following verses from *Mundaka Upanishad* substantiate the Indian mystical concepts parallel to Sufic concepts of 'fana' and 'baqa':

As the flowing rivers in the ocean

Disappear, quitting name and form.

So the knower, being liberated from name and form,

Goes unto the Heavenly Person, higher than the high.

(Encyclopaedia of Sufism, Vol 2, 149.)

He becomes merged in the Supreme imperishable soul.

(Encyclopaedia of Sufism, Vol 2, 150)

Early Sufis like Al- Bistami and Al- Hallaj regarded Muhammad's role as mediator between God and man as somewhat secondary. Al-Bistami took resort to "extravagancies" ('shahadat') (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, vol1, 76), which have a bearing on the general mystical themes of ecstasy and union with God, and imply an insinuation of self-deification, but without any presumptuous or blasphemous intention. Zaehner, in *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, expatiates how Bistami lived chronologically at the time in which the revival and systematization of Vedantic thought itself was being actively pursued by Shankara (d. 820). Other than Bistami's utterances: "Glory be to me", "I am Thou", "I am I", Zaehner cites the wildest of his utterances where in his search for God, Bistami proclaims: "I plunged into the ocean of malakut [the realm of ideas], and the veils of divinity ['lahut'], until I reached the throne and lo! It was empty; so I cast myself upon it and said: 'Master, where shall I seek thee? And the veils were lifted up and I saw that I am I, yea I am I. I turned back into what I sought, and it was I and no other, into which I was going'. (Majid Fakhry, 273.) (cited by Majid Fakhry from page 111 of Al Salhaji's *Manaqib al Bistami*).

The capacity for making such extravagant claims in the ninth century, without impunity, comes from the expedient deployed by Sufis like Al-Bistami: "affected madness". Ali Bin Uthman Al-Hujwiri writes in *Kashf Al- Mahjub*:

Do you not see that Shibli said: "Al Hallaj and I are of one belief, but my madness saved me, while his intelligence destroyed him.

(Al-Hujwiri, 151.)

Other Sufis like Ibn Sina, al- Shibli (d. 945), Abi'l Khayr (d. 1049), in the next two centuries gave expression to features of extravagant mysticism, such as eccentric behaviour and affected madness.

It is interesting to note the Parallels between the Indian bhakti poetry and Sufi poetry. Motilal Jotwani discusses the use of the poetic form 'doha' as common to both Bhakti poets and Sufi poets like Sachal and Dalpat. The content of the verses of both move around advaita (non-dualism).

The tradition of Bhakti and Sufi cult are co-terminus and co-incident on the Indian soil, despite proclamations, by the orthodox Hindus and Islamists, of their ideological and conceptual exclusivity. If Bhakti is understood as a Dravidian revolt against what Taufiq Rafat calls "the Aryan sacerdotalism and philosophy" (Rafat, Taufiq. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. Pakistan: Oxford UP, 2014.pg 10.) So was Sufism a departure from orthodox Islamic ritualism and staunchness. In form, both Bhakti and Sufi tradition expressed themselves in an idiom close to the modes of localized speech patterns, gravitating away from strict prosodic regulations and elitism associated with Sanskrit and Persian. The connections do not end here. There is also a prominent sense of contemporaneous development of the two. Though distanced geographically, the temporal framework of early Bhakti poets and the early Sufis coheres quite well. Ramanuja (d. 1137) the early Tamil poet, Madhava (1197-1276) the Karanese poet and Nimbarka, the Telugu poet placed in the thirteenth century find a parallel set of Sufi poets in the North: **Moinuddin Chishti**, (1142–1236 CE) , **Baha-ud-din Zakariya** (1170 – 1262), **Outbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki** (1173–1235) His most famous disciple and spiritual successor was **Fariduddin Ganjshakar** 1173-1265), who in turn became the spiritual master of Delhi's noted Sufi saint, **Nizamuddin Auliya** (d. 1325), who himself was the spiritual master of **Amir Khusrau** (d. 1325) and **Nasiruddin Chirag-e-Delhi**. another important contemporaneous Sufi figure is Syed Usman Marvadi (1177-1274), popularly called Lal Shahbaz Qalandar Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. Amir Khusrau enjoys an iconic place in the history of Indian Sufi literature. This mystic disciple of Hazrat **Nizamuddin Auliya**, wrote in Persian as well as Hindavi. His verses are replete with the Sufi impulse of intense desire for the divine Beloved. The most popular lines from Amir Khusrau, eulogizing his spiritual mentor, are full of total submission towards the teacher

Chhap tilak sab cheeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Chhap tilak sab cheeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Prem bhatee ka madhva pilaikay
Matvali kar leeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Gori gori bayyan, hari hari churiyan
Bayyan pakar dhar leeni ray mosay naina milaikay

You've taken away my looks, my identity, by just a glance.
By making me drink the wine of love-potion,
You've intoxicated me by just a glance;

My fair, delicate wrists with green bangles in them,

Have been held tightly by you with just a glance. (https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/3422102.Amir_Khusrau. Last visited 18 september, 2018)

In an article, "Amir Khusrau's lasting tryst with love", Pranav Khullar writes:

At the heart of the Sufi mystical experience lies zikr or remembrance of God. In its musical expression through Quawalli, it has become synonymous with Amir Khusrau, whose musical idiom presented a unique synthesis of the Persian and Hindu-Braja cultures. His prodigious literary and musical experimentation is a unique effort at creating a universal Sufi language of love..

Article appeared in *The Times of India* on 17th November, 2008. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> › last visited 18 november, 2018.

Syed Usman Marvandi^[3] (1177 – 1274), popularly known as **Lal Shahbaz Qalandar**, was a **Sufi** saint and religious-poet of present-day **Pakistan** and **Afghanistan**^{[4][5]}. He is highly regarded and respected by people of all religions because he preached religious tolerance among Muslims and Hindus. He was called *Lal* ("ruby-colored") after his usual red attire and "**Shahbaz**" to denote a noble and divine spirit and "**Qalandar**" as he was a wandering holy man. The spiritual song "**Dama Dam Mast Qalandar**" glorifies Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's teachings, and the song is widely used in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Masood Ali Khan and S. Ram in the second volume of the Encyclopaedia of Sufism cite Lal Shahbaz hence:

"I banished duality from my mind, and saw both the worlds as One—So I See One. Seek One, know One, and Proclaim One." (Encyclopaedia of Sufism, Vol 2, 285.)

In **Multan**, he met **Baha-ud-din Zakariya** of the **Suhrawardiyya** order, **Baba Fariduddin Ganjshakar** of the **Chishtiyya** and **Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari**. The friendship of these four became legendary, they were known as the 'Chaar Yar'.

The nature of revolt at the centre of both Sufi and Bhakti poetry was a breakdown of caste hierarchy; a dismantling of the polemics of religious elitism exercised by the Hindu as well as the Muslim priesthood; the establishment of direct connection between individual consciousness and his divine source; and a faith in the divine Being as not just approachable, but attainable. Sufi concept of 'unity of Being', 'wahadat-ul-wujud' coheres with the Bhakti concept of 'Aham Brahmasmi'. The final stage of both is not just close approximation but union with the Supreme Being. Baba Farid began with experimentation in stringent and prolonged rounds of harsh asceticism but went on to pronounce the greater value of deep desire for the divine Beloved and a need for introspection instead of searching for the divine Beloved in the hermetic renunciation incurred in the jungles. Bhakti saint poet Namdev (1170-1350 AD) from Maharashtra rejects asceticism and ascends the realization of One God to be attained through unremitting personal love for the lord, pronounced as 'Vithola'. Chandidas in the thirteenth century in Bengal, strongly reverberates Bulleh Shah in his voice of revolt against traditional religious formalism. Kabir (1440-1518) stands as a Bhakti poet whose Hindu-Muslim ambiguous identity has as a concomitant a 'mixing of Vedantic monism with Islamic Sufism'. (Rafat, Taufiq. *Bulleh Shah: A Selection*. Pakistan: Oxford UP, 2014, p10). The following verses of Kabir

If caste was what the creator had in mind,
Why wasn't anyone born
With Siva's three-lined sign?
And if you're a Muslim
From a Muslim woman born,
Why weren't you circumscribed inside?
Hey brother, why do you want me to talk?
Talk and talk and the real thing gets lost.

(Hawley, 55.)

Such enunciations and their condemnation of official religion find parallel in Bulleh Shah's interrogation of socially denominated identities and the fixities of official religion as expressed in Bulleh Shah's famous kafi, "Bullah ki jaana mai kaun" and "Ilmon bas karen O' yaar". Mirabai's (1503-1573) verses are imbued with intense feminine devotion for the divine beloved, very much like Bulleh Shah. The sense of desired union with the beloved is central to both. Although Mirabai belongs to the saguna Bhakti tradition and Bulleh Shah's frame of reference to Kanha's flute is to the unheard cosmic music sweeter than manifest music heard through the senses, yet the quintessential sense of being overwhelmed by the beauty of the Supreme Being and desire for union with Him coheres in both, with the absence of physicality in the love of Heer as well as Meera for their respective divine Beloveds.

Taufiq Rafat aptly presents significant parallels between Bulleh Shah and the 'Vacana' tradition Bhakti poets from Kannada from 1100 to 1200 AD. The most perspicuous similarity between the two apart from parallel mystical traits is the spontaneity of the verses, close to everyday colloquial speech pattern and rhythm. Rafat quotes Kanarese Chowdayya's free verse:

Winnow, winnow!
Look here, fellows,
Winnow when the wind blows.

Remember the winds
Are not in your hands,

Remember you cannot say
I'll winnow, I'll winnow
Tomorrow.

(Rafat, 12)

Rafat compares it with Bulleh Shah's dexterous employment of localized metaphor:

Lass, look to your spinning
The new cotton crop is in.
Take it for scouring, and then
Sit down to spin and spin,
Or spinning time will be gone

Lass look to your spinning. (Rafat, 12)

There is a similarity in the inversion of the 'carpe diem' theme and engagement of scarcity of time in focused labour instead of losing it in wasteful meaningless activity. There are also similarities with the works of Kannada poets Basavanna, Dasimayya, Mahadeviyakka and Allama Prabhu:

Two characteristics were distinct in this poetry. It broke with the conventional polytheistic religion conveyed through Sanskrit and took one God, Shiva, for celebration in a local dialect; and it assumed an iconoclastic tone which subverted the orthodoxy and delivered sharp rebuke to the spiritually complaisant. (Rafat, 12)

The "local dialect", "iconoclastic tone", subversion of orthodoxy and delivering sharp rebuke to the complaisant all cohere so well with the description of Bulleh Shah's verses. The sense of pain of an ardent lover for the divine Beloved is expressed in parallel expressions in Basvanna:

Siva, you have no mercy
Siva, you have no heart
Why did you bring me to birth
Wretch in this world
Exile from the others? (Rafat, 12)

and Bulleh Shah:

Don't take on this thing called Bhakti
Like a saw
It cuts when it goes
And it cuts again
When it comes.
If you risk your hand
With a cobra in a pitcher
Will it let you
Pass? (Rafat, 12.)

Rafat also brings to our notice Mahadeviyakka (twelfth century) describing God as an illicit lover and explains how she brings to mind Bulleh Shah's description of God as thief, in his famous Kafi, "Meri bukkal de vicch chor". What we notice in all of the above mentioned instances is the poet-lover's intense devotion for the divine Beloved expressed in an idiom which takes the lover and the Beloved by turns or together out of the fold of laity or the commonplace and re-situates both in a position of either utter humility or marginalized position in a gesture of extreme self-abasement. Bulleh Shah says:

I am just a sweepress.
Hair uncombed, barefoot, I receive word
Of his coming...
Being untouchable none comes near me...
This is my life: cold and sickness and scorn,
An empty stomach, clothes that are torn.
(Rafat, 14)

Mahadeviyakka is quoted hence by Rafat:

O brothers why do you talk
To this woman,
Hair loose,
Face withered,
Body shrunk?
(Rafat, 14)

What are we trying to say and what do these parallels mean? What is the underpinning of these intense parallels between poets geographically situated so far away, even temporally distanced by more than four centuries and linguistically different from each other. These parallels seem to come from the same source wherefrom come parallels like al-Hallaj's 'anal Haqq' and Shankaracharya's 'Shivoham Shivoham'. The trans-mental structures and a deep delving into the inner-most mystical instincts of mankind takes humanity to the core of the mystical springs of human life. This epicentre would be the hub of what Goethe calls 'weltliteratur' or world literature: compilations of literatures from around the world springing from the inner-most convictions, feelings and emotions of mankind, which despite their manifold variations would concur at some point of their inception.

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