



Islam and Sufism: Sufis were Muslims mystics. They rejected outward religiosity and emphasized love and devotion to god and compassion towards all fellow human beings. Islam propagated strict monotheism or submission to one God. It also rejected idol worship and considerably simplified rituals of worship into collective prayers. At the same time Muslim scholars developed a holy law called **Shariat**. The Sufis often rejected the elaborate rituals and codes of behavior demanded by Muslims religious scholars.

They sought union with god much as a lover seeks his beloved with a disregard for the world. Like the Nathpanthis, Siddhas and Yogis, the Sufis too believed that the heart can be trained to look at the world in a different way. They developed elaborate methods of training using Zikr (chanting of a name or sacred formula), contemplation, sama (singing), raqs (dancing), discussion of parables, breath control, etc. under the guidance of a master or pir. Thus, emerged the silsilas, a genealogy of Sufi teachers, each following a slightly different method (tariqa) of instruction and ritual practice.

Muinuddin Chrishti (1141-1238) was one of the most revered of the Sufi pirs. He came from Lahore and made Ajmer his home. All his life he worked for the poor. He felt that service of god meant service of humanity. Even today, his dragah at Ajmer is a popular holy place. Nizamuddin Auliya was famous Sufi pir of the 14th century. He set up his **khanqab (order or monastery) in Delhi**. He asked his followers to lead simple, austere lives and spend their time seeking god.

The Sufi Teachings

1. Respect all religions.
2. Lead a simple life.
3. Keep free from greed.
4. God is supreme. Worship him through love and devotion.
5. Chant god's name and meditate.
6. Indulge in charity and help the needy.

New Religious Developments in North India: New towns and kingdoms were emerging, and people were taking up new professions and finding new roles for themselves. Such people, especially craftspersons, peasant's traders and labourers, thronged to listen to these new saints and spread their ideas.

Some of them like Kabir and Baba Guru Nanak rejected all orthodox religious. Others like Tulsidas and Surdas accepted existing beliefs and practices but wanted to make these accessible to all. Tulsidas conceived of God in the form of Rama. Tulsidas's composition, the Ramcharitmanas, written in Awadhi.

This tradition also included saints like Dadu Dayal, Ravidas and Mirabai. Mirabai was Rajput princess married into the royal family of Mewar in the sixteenth century. Mirabai became a disciple of Ravidas, a saint from a caste considered untouchable. She was devoted to Krishna and composed innumerable bhajans expressing her intense devotion. Her songs also openly challenged the norms of the "upper" castes and became popular with the masses in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

A unique feature of most of the saints is that their works were composed in regional languages and could be sung. They became immensely popular and were handed down orally from generation to generation.

Kabir: Kabir, who probably lived in the fifteenth- sixteenth centuries, was one of the most influential saints. He was brought up in a family of Muslims julahas or weavers settled in or near the city of Benares (Varanasi).

Kabir's teachings were based on a complete, indeed vehement, rejection of the major religious traditions. His teachings openly ridiculed all forms of external





worship of both Brahmanical Hinduism and Islam, the pre- eminence of the priestly classes and the caste system. The language of his poetry was a form of spoken Hindi widely understood by ordinary people. He also sometimes used cryptic language, which is difficult to follow.

Kabir believed in a formless Supreme God and preached that the only path to salvation was through bhakti or devotion. Kabir drew his followers from among both Hindus and Muslims.

Through his **sakhis and dohas (saying in two lines, or couplets) and bhajans**, he preached to the world a life of devotion, dispassion and love for all. As he grew up he absorbed teachings from the Hindu scriptures and the Quran. But he was drawn by the teachings of the leading Bhakti and Sufi saints of the time and become a devotee of the Bhakti saint Ramanand. Kabir did not believe in the distinctions of religion. He taught that love for god was the basis of all religions. By saying this, Kabir struck at the apparent differences between Hinduism and Islam and brought out the essential similarity between all religions. Kabir was equally revered by the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Several of this sayings have been included in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs. But because he attacked all orthodoxy, whether of the Hindus or the Muslims, he was not accepted by the religious leaders of either religion.

Baba Guru Nanak: Baba Guru Nanak (1469-1539) than about kabir. Born at Talwandi (Nankana Sahib in Pakistan), he travelled widely before establishing a centre at Kartarpur (Dera Baba Nanak on the river Ravi). A regular worship that consisted of the singing of his own hymns was established there for his followers. Irrespective of their former creed, caste or gender, his followers ate together in the common kitchen (langar). The sacred space thus created by Baba Guru Nanak was known as dharmsal. It is now known as Gurdwara.

Guru Nanak was succeeded by nine other Sikh gurus. Guru Nanak selected **Guru Angad** as his successor. The third Guru Amardas the fourth Guru, Ramdas, greatly respected by Akbar. He granted a plot to Guru Ramdas on which he built the famous shrine of Harmandar Sahib. After **Gurus Ramdas**, his son Arjun Das became fifth guru and the position of the guru became hereditary.

Guru Arjun Das compiled the guru Granth Sahib. He was executed by Jahangir and the hostility between Sikhs and Mughals began.

Gurus Hargobind, Gurus Har Rai and Gurus Harkrishna were the sixth, seventh and eighth Sikh guru, respectively. **Gurus Tegh Bahadur** was the ninth guru. **Gurus Gobind Singh** was the tenth and last guru. He was Guru Tegh Bahadur's son. After Guru Gobind Singh, the holy book **Gurus Granth Sahib** came to be regarded as the eleventh and the eternal guru of Sikhs.

Baba Guru Nanak had a huge impact on the development from the very beginning. He emphasized the importance of the worship of one God. He insisted that caste, creed or gender was irrelevant for attaining liberation. His idea of liberation was not that of a state of inert bliss but rather the pursuit of active life with a strong sense of social commitment. He himself used the terms nam, dan and isnan for the essence of his teaching, which actually meant right worship, welfare of others and purity of conduct. His teachings are now remembered as nam- japna, kirt- karna and vand - chhakna, which also underline the importance of right belief and worship, honest living, and helping others. Thus, Baba Guru Nanak's idea of equality had social and political implications.

