

Saṅt Mat

Wikibook

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Sant Mat

Sant Mat (Hindi: संत मत) was a loosely associated group of teachers that became prominent in the northern part of the Indian sub-continent from about the 13th century. Theologically, their teachings are distinguished by an inward, loving devotion to a divine principle, and socially by an egalitarianism opposed to the qualitative distinctions of the Hindu caste system, and to those between Hindus and Muslims.^[1]

The sant lineage can be divided into two main groups: The northern group of Sants from the provinces of Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, who expressed themselves mainly in vernacular Hindi, and the southern group, whose language is archaic Marathi, represented by Namdev and other Sants of Maharashtra.

Etymology

The expression "Sant Mat" literally means the "Path of Sants (Saints)", "Path of Truth", "Right or Positive Path" or "point of view of the Sants." The term *Sant* is derived from the Sanskrit *sat* (सद्) and has overlapping usages (true, real, honest, right). Its root meaning is "one who knows the truth" or "one who has experienced Ultimate Reality." The term Sant has taken on the general meaning of "a good person" but is properly assigned to the poet-sants of medieval India.^[2]

The Sants

The Sant Mat movement was not homogeneous, and consisted mostly of the Sants' own socio-religious attitudes which were based on *bhakti* (devotion) as described a thousand years earlier in the Bhagavad Gita.^[3] Sharing as few conventions with each other as with the followers of the traditions they challenged, the Sants appear more as a diverse collection of spiritual personalities than a specific religious tradition, although they acknowledged a common spiritual root.^[4]

The boundaries of the movement were likely not sectarian and were devoid of Brahmin concepts of caste and liturgy. The poet-sants expressed their teaching in vernacular verse, addressing themselves to the common folk in oral style in Hindi and other dialects such as Marathi. They referred to the "Divine Name" as having saving power, and dismissed the religious rituals as having no value. They presented the idea that true religion was a matter of surrendering to God "who dwells in the heart".

The first generation of north Indian sants, (which included Kabir and Ravidas), appeared in the region of Benares in the mid 15th century. Preceding them were two notable 13th and 14th century figures, Namdev and Ramananda. The latter, according to Sant Mat tradition, was a Vaishnava ascetic who initiated Kabir, Ravidas, and other sants. Ramanand's story is told differently by his lineage of "Ramanandi" monks, by other Sants preceding him, and later by the Sikhs. What is known is that Ramananda accepted students of all castes, a fact that was contested by the orthodox Hindus of that time. Sant Mat practitioners accept that Ramananda's students formed the first generation of Sants.^[5]

These Sants developed a culture of being close to marginalized humans in society including women, and the untouchables (*Atishudras*). Some of the more notable Sants include Namdev (d.1350), Kabir (d.1518), Nanak (d.1539), Mira Bai (d.1545), Surdas (d.1573), Tulsidas (d.1623), and Tukaram (d. 1650).

The 'tradition of the Sants' (sant *parampara*) remained non-sectarian, though a number of Sant poets have been considered as the founders of sects. Some of these may bear the Sant's name, but were developed after them by later followers such as Kabir Panth, Dadu Panth, Dariya Panth, Advait Mat, Science of Spirituality and Radhasoami.^[6]

Only a small minority of religious Hindus have formally followed Sant Mat, but the tradition has considerably influenced Hindus across sects and castes. Bhajans (devotional songs) attributed to past Sants such as Mira Bai are widely listened to in India and in Hindu communities around the world. The Sant tradition is the only one in

medieval and modern India which has successfully crossed some barriers between Hindu and Muslim blocks. Julius J. Lipner asserts that the lives of many Hindus have been leavened by the religious teachings of the Sants, which he describes as liberating.

The Sant Mat tradition refers to the necessity of a living human master, which is referred to with honorific titles such as Satguru, or perfect master.

Similar movements

Classical Gnostics,^[7] medieval Sufi poets such as Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi, as well as Sindhi poets, are considered to have many similarities with the poet-sants of Sant Mat.^[8]

The Radhasoami movement in North India regards itself as the main repository of the tradition of the Sants and their teachings, as well as their approach to religious endeavors, and presents itself as the living incarnation of the Sant tradition. The most notable being Radhasoami Satsang Beas, situated on the banks of the river Beas, whose current living master is Maharaj Baba Gurinder Singh Dhillon. According to Mark Juergensmeyer, that claim is also made by the Kabir-panthis, the Sikhs and other movements that continue to find the insights from the Sant tradition valid today.^[9]

Guru Maharaj Ji (Prem Rawat) and the Divine Light Mission (Elan Vital) are considered to be part of the Sant Mat tradition by J. Gordon Melton, Lucy DuPertuis, and Vishal Mangalwadi, but that characterization is disputed by Ron Geaves.^{[10][11][12]} The 20th century religious movement Eckankar is also considered by David C. Lane to be an offshoot of the Sant Mat tradition.^[13] James R. Lewis refers to these movements as "expressions of an older faith in a new context".^[14]

Notes

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- [6] Vaudeville, Charlotte. "Sant Mat: Santism as the Universal Path to Sanctity" in *Sant Mat: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India* in Schomer K. and McLeod W.H. (Eds.) ISBN 0-9612208-0-5
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- [12] Geaves, Ron. "From Divine Light Mission to Elan Vital and Beyond: an Exploration of Change and Adaptation" in *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* Vol. 7 No. 3. March 2004, pp. 45–62. Originally presented at 2002 International Conference on Minority Religions, Social Change and Freedom of Conscience (University of Utah at Salt Lake City). At Caliber (Journals of the University of California Press) (<http://caliber.ucpress.net/doi/abs/10.1525/nr.2004.7.3.45>)
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Further reading

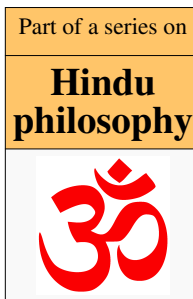
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- *A Treasury of Mystic Terms*, New Delhi: Science of the Soul Research Centre. ISBN 81-901731-0-3

External links

- Sant Baljit Singh website (<http://www.santmat.net/>)
- Radha Soami Satsang Beas (<http://www.rssb.org/>)
- Science of the Soul (<http://www.scienceofthesoul.org/>)
- Science of Spirituality (<http://www.sos.org>)
- Hafiz on Love (<http://www.hafizonlove.com/>)
- Kabir Sahib (<http://www.boloji.com/kabir/>)
- Tulsi Sahib Poetry (<http://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/T/TulsiSahib/>)
- about Satguru Sirio Carrapa (<http://www.santbani.hu>)
- Guru Shrimat Paramahansa Sarananandji's website (http://www.gurusantmat.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61&Itemid=70&lang=en)
- Sant Mat Library Online (<http://www.spiritualawakeningradio.com/library.html>)
- Sant Mat, Kabir Panth, and Radhasoami Guru Lineage Charts (http://www.spiritualawakeningradio.com/surat_shabd_yoga_sant_mat.html)
- Charts of the Heavens According to Sant Mat, Radhasoami, and Surat Shabd Yoga (http://spiritualawakeningradio.com/Charts_of_the_Heavens.html)

Namdev

Namdev	
Born	namdeva 26October, 1270 CE Maharashtra, India
Died	1350 CE padharpur
Titles/honours	religious saint poet of Maharashtra
Guru	Visoba Khechar
Literary works	Bhagwat-Dharma
Quotation	after sometime



Sant Namdev is a poet-saint from the Varkari sect of Hinduism. He is also venerated in Sikhism. He was born on October 29, 1270 in the state of Maharashtra village of Narasi-Bamani, in Hingoli district (presently called Narsi Namdev). His father, a calico printer/tailor (Bhavsar), was named Damshet and his mother's name was Gonai / Gonabai. Most of the spiritual messages of Namdev emphasized the importance of living the life of a householder (गृहस्थ जीवन) and that through marriage and having a family, one could attain Moksha.

Background

The first biographer and auto-biographer in Marathi and the foremost proponent of Bhagawad-Dharma who propagated the religion right up to Punjab.

Saint Namdev, a contemporary saint-poet of Saint Dnyaneshwar, is considered a prominent religious poet of Maharashtra. He was one of the earliest writers who wrote in the Marathi language. He is the foremost proponent of the Bhagwad-Dharma who reached beyond Maharashtra, right into Punjab. He also wrote some hymns in Hindi and Punjabi. His depth of devotion and talent in delivering Kirtan was of such a high standard that it is said even the Lord Pandurang swayed to his tune. Despite being a proponent of the Warkari sect, Saint Namdev established religious unity across the country.

Saint Namdeo was born in the year 1270 in the village of Narasi-Bamani, now located in the Hingoli District in Maharashtra. He was born to a tailor named Damasheti Relekar and his wife Gonai. Yadusheth, his ancestor in the seventh generation, was a devotee of Bhagawad-Dharma. Soon after his birth, his family moved to Pandharpur, where the prominent temple of Lord Vitthal (also called Vithoba) is located. Saint Namdev's spent the better part of his life, spanning eighty years, at Pandharpur. His parents were devotees of Vithoba.

Namdev showed little interest in the family profession. Even as a child his devotion to Lord Vitthal was extraordinary - his sole occupation was to spend day and night in devotion to Vithoba. His devotion was so sincere that sometimes he would consider Vithoba to be his dearest brother or his play mate. According to a legend, when

Namdev was five years old, his mother once gave him some food offerings for Vithoba and asked him to give it to Vithoba in the Pandharpur temple. Namdev took the offerings and placed it before Vithoba's idol in the temple, asking Vithoba to accept the offerings. When he saw that his request was not being met, he told Vithoba that he would kill himself if Vithoba continued to ignore the offerings. Vithoba then appeared before him and ate the offerings in response to the utter devotion of young Namdev.

At the age of eleven, Namdev was married to Rajai. Namdev and Rajai had four sons namely Nara, Vitha, Gonda, Mahada and a daughter called Limbai. His elder sister, Aubai also lived with them. There were in all fifteen people in the household.

The year 1291 was a turning point in his life at the age of twenty-one when he met Saint Jnaneshwar. Several records in various saint literatures have been found to the following event :-

Once, all the Saints like Dnyaneshwar, Nivruttinath, Sopandev, Muktabai, Namdeo, Chokhamela, Visoba Khechar, etc. had congregated at Saint Goroba's house in Terdhoki. As instructed by Saint Dnyaneshwar, Saint Goroba tapped each saint's pot (head) to find out who was spiritually mature. The reference to the pot being tapped is because Saint Goroba was a potter and him being selected for the test shows his own spiritual maturity. On testing Namdev, Saint Goroba expressed his opinion that Namdev was still immature, which was backed by Saint Muktabai. Miffed by this, Namdev complained to the Lord himself. But the Lord advised him to accept the guidance of Visoba Khechar and Namdev acquired a Guru.

He accepted Visoba Khechar as his guru, through whom he actually saw the form of God.

Namdev's Kirtans have references to many holy books. This shows that he was well read and a great scholar. His Kirtans were so effective that it is said –

Namdev Kirtan kari, pudhe nache dev Panduranga (Namdev delivers his kirtan, in front of him dances the Lord Pandurang)

His goal in life was –

Nachu Kirtanache rangi, Dnyandeep lavu jagi (Will dance to the tune of Kirtan, light the lamp of knowledge the world over)

Namdev travelled through many parts of India, reciting his religious poems (Kirtans). In difficult times, he played the difficult role of uniting the people of Maharashtra spiritually. He is said to have lived for more than twenty years in the village of Ghuman in the Gurdaspur district of Punjab. The Sikh brethren in Punjab consider him one of their own, singing praises of him as Namdev Baba. Bahordas, Laddha, VishnuSwami and Keshav Kaladhari were his disciples in Punjab. He composed around 125 Abhangas in Hindi. Sixty-one of these came to be included in the Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib as Namdevjiki Mukhbani (The holy songs of Namdev). There is an amazing similarity between the ShabdaKirtan of Punjab and the Warkari Kirtan of Maharashtra. A memorial in Ghuman, Punjab commemorates him. Temples in his memory have also been built in Rajasthan by the Sikhs.

In his early fifties, Namdev settled down at Pandharpur where he gathered around himself a group of devotees. His Abhangas became very popular and people thronged to listen to his Kirtans. Approximately 2500 of Namdev's Abhangas have been collected in NamdevVaachi Gaatha. The book also includes the long autobiographical poem Teerthaavali, talking about his travels in the company of Saint Dnyaneshwar. This poem makes him the first auto-biographer in Marathi literature. He has also written a biography on Saint Dnyaneshwar through Aadi, Samadhi and Teerthavali, which makes him the first Marathi biographer. He continued to propagate the Bhagawad-Dharma for 50 years after the death of Saint Dnyaneshwar. Saint Namdev is regarded to have had a significant influence on Saint Tukaram.

He died in July, 1350 at the age of 80 in Pandharpur at the feet of the Lord at Pandharpur. He preferred to be a stepping stone at the temple in Pandharpur so that he would be forever blessed by the touch of innumerable saints and devotees stepping on him into the temple.

गोबदि गोबदि गोबदि संग नामदेउ मनु लीणा ॥ आढ दाम को छीपरो होइओ लाखीणा

Gobindh Gobindh Gobindh Sang Namadhaeo Man Lena Aadt Dhaam Ko Shheparo Hoeiou Lakhena.

Naam Dayv's mind was absorbed into God Gobind Gobind, Gobind. The calico-printer, worth half a shell, became worth millions.

Sat Guru Arjan Dev Guru Granth Sahib (Page 487)

Namdeo was married before he was eleven years of age to Rajabai, daughter of Govinda Sheti Sadavarte. They had four sons and one daughter. Janabai, the family's maidservant and a devotee and poetess in her own right, records the tradition that Namdeo was born to Gonabai as a result of her worship of Vitthala in Pandharpur.

God's name was always on the lips of Namdeo. He was asked by the king to show miracles. He refused to do so and was thrown before a drunk elephant to be crushed to death.

Follows Bhakti Marg

Under the influence of saint Gnanadeva, Namdev became part of the Bhakti Movement. Vitthala of Pandharpur was now the object of his devotion and he spent much of his time in worship and kirtan, chanting mostly verses of his own composition. In the company of Gnanadeva and other saints, he roamed about the country and later came to the Punjab where he is said to have lived for more than twenty years at Ghuman, in Gurdaspur district, where a temple in the form of samadhi still preserves his memory.

In his early fifties, Namdev settled down at Pandharpur where he gathered around himself a group of devotees. His abhangas or devotional songs became very popular, and people thronged to listen to his kirtan. Namdeo's songs have been collected in Namdevachi Gatha which also includes the long autobiographical poem Tirathavah.

His Hindi verse and his extended visit to the Punjab carried his fame far beyond the borders of Maharashtra. Sixty-one of his hymns in fact came to be included in the Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. His hymns or shabads were very much an inspiration to the Sikh Gurus and they were able to identify the God in Namdeo's hymns with the Sikh version of the formless God.

Remembrance of God's Name central

Namdeo is a pioneer of the Radical bhakti School. Though he appeared a century earlier than Kabir, his religious and social views are very much like those of Kabir. He unambiguously repudiates all the four fundamentals of Vaisnavism. Though in his devotional approach, he is clearly a monotheist, he makes many pantheistic statements too, e.g., every thing is God; there is nothing but God; consider the world and God to be one; the foam and the water are not different. Chaturvedi writes: "Sant Namdeo seemed to believe both in transcendence and immanence, in pantheism and nondualism.

His devotion was purely of the non-attributional absolute. He also considers God to be immanent, everywhere, in all hearts, and the Creator of everything. Like Kabir and the Sufis, Namdeo is very other worldly. He says, "The strength of contempt of the world should be in the body an unchanging companion.

Message of Unity for all

One should lay aside differences between oneself and others, and feel no anxiety for things of the world. Rānadé also writes: "He (Namdeo) tells us that it is impossible that the pursuit of God can be coupled with a life of Samsara. If it had been possible for a man to find God while he was pursuing Samsara, then Sanaka and others would not have grown mad about God. If it had been possible for him to see God while carrying on the duties of a householder, the great Suka would not have gone to the forest to seek God. Had it been possible for people to find God in their homes, they would not have left them to find out. Nam Dev has left all these things, and is approaching God in utter submission." (Abhg. 83)

Namdeo's cosmogenic views are also orthodox. He says that God created maya and "*maya is the name of the power that placeth man in the womb.*" Indirectly, he is neither happy with the world, nor with human birth. To him, shop, shopkeeper, men and everything are unreal excepting God. Against this background, he sought release from the world and suggested renunciation: "Namdeo gave up trade, and devoted himself exclusively to the worship of God".

The world being a play of maya and not being a worthwhile arena for spiritual endeavours, Namdeo's goal was to have union with God through devotion and singing His praises. He says, "I perform worship, sing God's praises and meditate on Him for eight prahar in a day i.e., round the clock. At the same time, he suggests good conduct and purity of life. For, God created all men alike. Though he holds every person responsible for his acts, he clearly does not believe in a world rigidly governed by karma. Because he says: If everything were determined by karma, who created karma originally?

Sant Namdeo not only claims union with God, but, like Kabir, also states that more than once, God miraculously intervened on his behalf to reveal Himself to him, or help him. Without doubt, Namdeo's approach remains otherworldly both before and after his achievement. At one time, he even gave up work so as to remain absorbed in his worship and meditations. He never initiated any religious institution or movement. His was a solitary search for God, without creating any social or religious organisation.

We find that in his repudiation of Vaisnava doctrines, in his metaphysical ideas, methodology and goal and more particularly in his otherworldly approach to the world and society, Namdeo's views are quite identical with those of Kabir.

There is a shabad about Bhagat Namdeo in the Siri Guru Granth Sahib according to which the temple rotated towards his direction as he was not allowed to sit inside the temple.

Gurdwara & Temple

Ghuman is situated 26 KM Southeast of Batala city and about 10 KM from Sri Hargobindpur. It is towards west side of Sri Hargobindpur. Ghuman is associated with Baba Namdeo (1270–1350). Baba Namdeo was the founder of this town and meditated here for 17 long years. Here he did miraculous deeds. There is a temple in Punjab of Saint Namdev.

The eastern entrance to this temple is known as the Namdeo gate (after the great 13th century Vaishnava saint). The sanctum enshrines the standing image of Vithoba also known as Panduranga, Pandhari or Vitthala. Stylistically the image dates back to the 5th century. There are inscriptions in this temple dating back to the 13th century which place origin of this shrine to the 6th century.

in memory of Saint Namdeo, Chitrakoot Namdeo Samaj made a holy Dharamshala in Chitrakot. Chitrakot is pilgrim place from vadic history. Lord Ram had also spent 12 year in chitrakot with seeta and Lakshaman in vanvasa period.

Profession of Chhimba

Namdeo is referred to as a chhimba, "chhīpro", "Chhīpē" and "chhīpā" by the Sikhs. This refers to Bhagat ji's profession as a printer of cloth. Chhippas were calico printers/artists and used to decorate, colour and print textiles with art work. Some of them were also tailors as this was a profession connected with clothes. However he was a Maharashtrian Bhavsar, as his surname was Relekar.

References


See Also

External links

- Saint Namdeo/Namdev Community People Site (<http://www.namdev.co.in>)
- Saint Namdeo Maharaj (http://www.namdeooshimpisamaj.org/Saint_Namdeo_Maharaj/Sant_Namdev_Maharaj.asp)
- Saint Namdev (<http://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=68&smid=23&pmid=2&id=370>)
- Ringan Ashadhi Special Edition on Sant Namdev (<http://www.ringan.in>)
- (<http://santeknath.org/home.html>)
- Religion and public memory By Christian Lee Novetzke ([http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=SqUdRVOv9TUC&lpg=PA55&ots=AcTnz3Xs4N&dq=Namdev Maharashtra temple&pg=PA63#v=onepage&q=Namdev Maharashtra temple&f=false](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=SqUdRVOv9TUC&lpg=PA55&ots=AcTnz3Xs4N&dq=Namdev+Maharashtra+temple&pg=PA63#v=onepage&q=Namdev+Maharashtra+temple&f=false))
- Sant Namdev (http://www.hindupedia.com/en/Sant_Namdev) on Hindupedia, the Hindu Encyclopedia

Kabir

Al-Kabir ("the Great") is also one of the 99 names of God in Islam. For a complete disambiguation page, see *Kabir (disambiguation)*

Kabir	
 <p>A 1825 CE painting depicts Kabir with a disciple</p>	
Born	1440 Lahartara near Kashi (present-day Varanasi)
Died	1518 Maghar
Occupation	Weaver, poet
Known for	influenced the Bhakti movement, Sikhism, Sant Mat and Kabir Panth

Kabīr (also **Rangaa**) (Hindi: कबीर, Punjabi: ਕਬੀਰ, Urdu: کبیر) (1398-1518)^[1] was a mystic poet and saint of India, whose writings have greatly influenced the Bhakti movement. The name Kabir comes from Arabic *al-Kabīr* which means 'The Great' – the 37th name of God in Islam.

Kabir's legacy is today carried forward by the Kabir Panth ("Path of Kabir"), a religious community that recognizes him as its founder and is one of the Sant Mat sects. Its members, known as *Kabir panthis*, are estimated to be around 9,600,000. They are spread over north and central India, as well as dispersed with the Indian diaspora across the world, up from 843,171 in the 1901 census. His writings include Bijak, Sakhi Granth, Kabir Granthawali and Anurag Sagar.^[2]

Early life and background

Kabir was born to a Brahmin widow at **Lahartara** near **Kashi** (modern day **Varanasi**). The widow abandoned Kabir to escape dishonour associated with births outside marriage. He was brought up in a family of poor Muslim weavers Niru and Nima. Vaishnava saint Ramananda accepted Kabir as his disciple; when **Ramananda** died, Kabir was 13 years old.

It is not known in detail what sort of spiritual training Kabir may have received. He did not become a sadhu, nor did he ever abandon worldly life. Kabir chose instead to live the balanced life of a householder and mystic, a tradesman and contemplative.

Kabir's family is believed to have lived in the locality of Kabir Chaura in Varanasi. *Kabīr maṭha* (कबीरमठ), a *maṭha* located in the back alleys of Kabir Chaura, celebrates his life and times. Accompanying the property is a house named *Nīrūṭīlā* (नीरू टीला) which houses Niru and Nima's graves. The house also accommodates students and scholars who live there and study Kabir's work.

Philosophies

Kabir's legends describe his victory in trials by a Sultan, a Brahmin, a Qazi, a merchant and god. The ideological messages in Kabir's legends appealed to the poor and oppressed. David Lorenzen describes primary purpose of his legends as a "protest against social discrimination and economic exploitation".

His greatest work is the *Bijak* (the "Seedling"), an idea of the fundamental one. This collection of poems elucidates Kabir's universal view of spirituality. Though his vocabulary is replete with Hindu spiritual concepts, such as Brahman, karma and reincarnation, he vehemently opposed dogmas, both in Hinduism and in Islam. His Hindi was a vernacular, straightforward kind, much like his philosophies. He often advocated leaving aside the Qur'an and Vedas and simply following Sahaja path, or the Simple/Natural Way to oneness in God. He believed in the Vedantic concept of *atman*, but unlike earlier orthodox Vedantins, he spurned the Hindu societal caste system and *murti-pujan* (idol worship), showing clear belief in both *bhakti* and Sufi ideas. The major part of Kabir's work as a *bhagat* was collected by the fifth Sikh guru, Guru Arjan Dev, and incorporated into the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib. The hallmark of Kabir's works consists of his two line couplets, known as the 'Kabir ke Dohe'. The Dohas reflect the deep philosophical thinking of the poet saint.

Poetry

Kabir composed in a pithy and earthy style, replete with surprise and inventive imagery. His poems resonate with praise for the true guru who reveals the divine through direct experience, and denounce more usual ways of attempting god-union such as chanting, austerities, etc. Kabir, being illiterate, expressed his poems orally in vernacular Hindi, borrowing from various dialects including Avadhi, Braj, and Bhojpuri. His verses often began with some strongly worded insult to get the attention of passers-by. Kabir has enjoyed a revival of popularity over the past half century as arguably the most accessible and understandable of the Indian saints, with a special influence over spiritual traditions such as those of Sant Mat, Garib Das and Radha Soami.^[*citation needed*]

Legacy

A considerable body of poetical work has been attributed to Kabir. And while two of his disciples, Bhāgodās and Dharmadās, did write much of it down, "...there is also much that must have passed, with expected changes and distortions, from mouth to mouth, as part of a well-established oral tradition."^[3]

Poems and songs ascribed to Kabir are available today in several dialects, with varying wordings and spellings as befits an oral tradition. Opinions vary on establishing any given poem's authenticity.^[4] Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the spirit of this mystic comes alive through a "unique forcefulness... vigor of thought and rugged terseness of style."^[5]

Kabir and his followers named his poetic output as 'bāṇīs,' utterances. These include songs, as above, and couplets, called variously dohe, śalokā (Sanskrit: ślokā), or sākhī (Sanskrit: sākhī). The latter term, meaning 'witness,' best indicates the use that Kabir and his followers envisioned for these poems: "As direct evidence of the Truth, a sākhī is... meant to be memorized... A sākhī is... meant to evoke the highest Truth." As such, memorizing, reciting, and thus pondering over these utterances constitutes, for Kabir and his followers, a path to spiritual awakening.^[6]

Kabir's influence was so big that similar to how different communities argued to cremate the Buddha upon his death, after Kabir died both the Hindus and Muslims argued to cremate it in Varanasi or bury it in Maghahar them according to their tradition.^[7]

Kabir's poetry today

There are several allusions to Kabir's poetry in mainstream Indian film music. The title song of the Sufi fusion band Indian Ocean's album Jhini is an energetic rendering of Kabir's famous poem "The intricately woven blanket", with influences from Indian folk, Sufi traditions and progressive rock.

Documentary filmmaker Shabnam Virmani, from the Kabir Project, has produced a series of documentaries and books tracing Kabir's philosophy, music and poetry in present day India and Pakistan. The documentaries feature Indian folk singers such as Prahlad Tipanya, Mukhtiyar Ali and the Pakistani Qawwal Fareed Ayaz.

The album No Stranger Here by Shubha Mudgal, Ursula Rucker and Business Class Refugees draws heavily from Kabir's poetry.^[8]

Kabir's poetry has appeared prominently in filmmaker Anand Gandhi's films Right Here Right Now (2003) and Continuum.



Indian postage stamp portraying Kabir, 1952



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- The Anurag Sagar of Kabir (<http://archive.org/details/AnuragSagarOfKabir>)

Guru Ravidass

Guru Ravidass	
Senior posting	
Title	Guru
Period in office	1450–1520
Religious career	
Website	Guru Ravidass Ji Website ^[1]

Part of a series on The Ravidasi Panth

Ravidasi beliefs and practices
Aarti
Meditation ·
Bhawan
Holy Book
Amritbani Guru Ravidass Ji
Ultimate Place of Pilgrimage
Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan
Topics
Guru Ravidass ·
Guru Ravidass Jayanti
Harr Nishan


Guru Ravidass (also **Rohidas**^[2] and **Ruhidas** in eastern India) was a North Indian Guru mystic of the bhakti movement who was active in the 15th century CE. Venerated in the region of Uttar Pradesh as well as the Indian state of Maharashtra, his devotional songs and verses made a lasting impact upon the bhakti movement. He is often given the honorific *Guru*. He was a socio-religious reformer, a thinker, a theosophist, a humanist, a poet, a traveler, a pacifist and a spiritual figure before whom even head-priests of Benaras lay prostrate to pay homage.

Guru Ravidass was a shoemaker of the Kutbandhla Chamar caste. His devotional songs were included in the Sikh holy book.^[3] There is also a larger body of hymns passed on independently that is claimed and attributed to Guru Ravidass. Guru Ravidass was subversive in that his devotionism implied a leveling of the social divisions of caste and gender, yet ecumenical in that it tended to promote crossing of sectarian divides in the name of a higher spiritual

unity.

Guru Ravidass taught that one is distinguished not by one's caste (jāti) but by one's actions (karma) and that every person has the right to worship God and read holy texts. He opened a frontal attack against the system of Untouchability. He rejected the tradition of Brahmin mediator to reach the Supreme Being. He also said that one need not to hide his caste or leave his low profession to reach God. He became a model for his fellow beings to overcome the hierarchical barriers of Brahminical social order and to establish Begumpura - a state without fear and sorrows. Guru Ravidass elevated the status of the labour by emphasizing on the fact that honest labour is empowering.

Background

Details of the life of Guru Ravidass are controversial. According to some he was born in 1376/7 or else 1399 CE but many scholars offer later dates. Schaller estimates his lifespan as 1450–1520 while the *Encyclopædia Britannica* contents itself with a *floreat* of 15th-16th century CE. Partly this is due to traditions that make him, the guru of Meera (according to a song attributed to her:^[4] "guru miliyaa raidasjee"). However, as Schaller points out, the importance of such claims lies in their establishing the authority of a lineage of gurus (parampara). One may count oneself a disciple of a master without having actually met him.

Guru Ravidass' origin and parents are also given differently. According to history he was born in a village named Seer Govardhanpur, near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, India. His father Baba Santokh Das was a Chamar leather merchant and Mata Kalsa Devi was his mother. Guru Ravidass' father married him to Mata Lona Devi at early age and according to the *Ravidas Purana* he had a son named Vijaydas. A region between Allahabad and Benares is named after him.

The queen of Chittorgarh is said to have been a disciple (this may be connected with Meera, who was married to the ruler of Chittorgarh). It is said that the conservative Brahmins of Kashi could not stand the popularity of this "untouchable Guru". A complaint was made to the king that he was working against age-old norms of social order (*varnashrama dharma*) - a cobbler was not supposed to talk of God or do work of advising or teaching. The ruler arranged for an assembly of learned men. Ravidas was also invited and was felicitated publicly. A procession was arranged (*shobha yatra*) and the king himself participated.

Devotion to God

As a Vaishnava Hindu, Guru Ravidass was an adherent devotee of God in His form of Rama.

Frequently he was use the words Ram, Raja Ram Chanda, Raghunath, Hari, Krishna, Madho, Gobind to describe God.

He writes:^[5]

My caste is mean; my birth is mean.

I come under your protection Ram

Says Ravidass, the cobbler.

Begumpura Shehr

Begumpura ("land without sorrow") is a term coined in a poem by Guru Ravidass. Begampura is the name of an idealized city where there is no suffering or fear, and all are equal.^[6] The verse is seen as reflecting both a sense of poverty and caste humiliation, and a desire to find a utopia without suffering:

The regal realm with the sorrowless name
they call it Begumpura, a place with no pain,
no taxes or cares, none owns property there,
no wrongdoing, worry, terror, or torture.
Oh my brother, I've come to take it as my own,
my distant home, where everything is right...
They do this or that, they walk where they wish,
they stroll through fabled palaces unchallenged.
Oh, says Ravidas, a tanner now set free,
those who walk beside me are my friends.

Guru Ravidass and Meera Bai

Meera Bai considered Guru Ravidass Ji as her spiritual Guru. Meera was a queen of Chittor and a daughter of the king of Rajasthan and she used to follow the teachings of Guru Ravidass which teaches about that one's fate of the future lies on his karmas (doings) rather than on his caste or creed's.

His life has become the inspiration for the people of today and in one such incident when his disciples were going to take holy dip in the sacred river Ganges and wanted Guru Ravidass to accompany them and Guru replied that he has promised to deliver shoes to his customer on that particular day and will not be able to join them due to this particular reason and when one of his disciple urges then Guru Ravidass uttered his belief saying that: "Man changa tow kathoti mein Ganga", i.e. That is if your heart is pious then the holy river is right in your tub and you need not go anywhere else to take a dip. There is a small chhatri (umbrella) in front of Meera's temple in Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan. It has Guru Ravidass' engraved foot print also.^[7]

Ravidass' Panth and relation with Sikhism

The earliest collection of these poems are available in the Sikh scriptures, Sri Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book). It was compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth guru of the Sikhs. It contains 41 verses by Guru Ravidass.

In the 20th century, syncretic followers of Ravidass' teachings, who may have identified as Sikh, Hindu, or simply "Ravidasi" began to coalesce. Following the murder of their cleric Ramanand Dass in Vienna in 2009, this movement declared itself to be a religion fully separated from Sikhism, and now known as the Ravidassia religion. The Ravidassia religion compiled a new holy book, Amritbani Guru Ravidass. Based entirely on the writings and teaching of Guru Ravidass, it contains 240 hymns and all Ravidassias temples utilize it.

Songs and teachings

ਗੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਗੋਹੀ ਅੰਤਰੁ ਕੈਸਾ ॥ ਕਨਕ ਕਟਕਿ ਜਲ ਰੰਗ ਜੈਸਾ ॥੧॥

ਜਤ ਪੈ ਹਮ ਨ ਪਾਪ ਕਰੰਤਾ ਅਹੇ ਅਨੰਤਾ ॥ ਪਤਿ ਪਾਕਨ ਨਾਸੁ ਕੈਸੇ ਹੁੰਗਾ ॥੨॥ ਰਹਾਤ ॥

ਰੁਮ੍ਹ ਜੁ ਨਾਫਕ ਆਛਹੁ ਅੰਤਰਜਾਮੀ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਥਮ ਤੇ ਜਨੁ ਜਾਨੀਐ ਜਨ ਤੇ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥੩॥

ਸਰੀਰੁ ਆਰਾਧੈ ਮੋ ਕਤ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ਦੇਹੂ ॥ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਸਮ ਦਲ ਸਮਝਾਵੈ ਕੋਝੁ ॥੪॥

ਤੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਤੋਹੀ ਅੰਤਰੁ ਕੈਸਾ ॥ ਕਨਕ ਕਟਕਿ ਜਲ ਤਰੰਗ ਜੈਸਾ ॥੧॥

ਜਉ ਪੈ ਹਮ ਨ ਪਾਪ ਕਰੰਤਾ ਅਹੇ ਅਨੰਤਾ ॥ ਪਤਿ ਪਾਵਨ ਨਾਮੁ ਕੈਸੇ ਹੁੰਤਾ ॥੨॥ ਰਹਾਉ

॥

ਤੁਮ੍ਹਰੁ ਜੁ ਨਾਇਕ ਆਛਹੁ ਅੰਤਰਜਾਮੀ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਥ ਤੇ ਜਨੁ ਜਾਨੀਐ ਜਨ ਤੇ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥੩॥

ਸਰੀਰੁ ਆਰਾਧੈ ਮੋ ਕਉ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ਦੇਹੂ ॥ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਸਮ ਦਲ ਸਮਝਾਵੈ ਕੋਝੁ ॥੪॥

You are me, and I am You-what is the difference between us? We are like gold and the bracelet, or water and the waves.

If I did not commit any sins, O Infinite Lord, how would You have acquired the name, Patit-Pavan (Redeemer of sinners)?

You are my Master, the Inner-knower, Searcher of hearts. The servant is known by his God, and the Lord and Master is known by His servant.

Grant me the wisdom to worship and adore You with my body.

O Ravi Daas, one who understands that the Lord is equally in all, is very rare.



View of Sri Guru Ravidass Park, Varanasi


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Ramananda

Ramananda	
 <p>Ramanand after his study years.</p>	
Born	1400 Allahabad, present day Uttar Pradesh, India
Died	1476 Varanasi, present day Uttar Pradesh, India
Known for	Vaishnava sant,
Religion	Hindu

Part of a series on

**Hindu
philosophy**



Ramananda (1299-1410), also referred to as **Saint Ramanand** or **Swami Ramanand**, was a Vaishnava sant. He is considered to be the reviver of the Ramanandi sect. Ramananda for the most part of his life lived in the holy city of Varanasi, and was a pioneer of the Bhakti movement, as well as a social reformer in Northern India. He was known for communicating in vernacular Hindi, and accepting disciples of all castes. His 12 disciples are very famous-Anantananda, Bhavananda, Dhanna Bhagat, Kabir, Nabha, Naraharyanda, Pipa, Ravidas (also known as Guru Ravidas), Bhagat Sain, Sukhanada, Ranka and Tulsidas (Not to be confused with Tulsidas the author of the Ramcharitmanas, who was in turn adopted by Narharidas, a Vaishnava ascetic of Ramananda's monastic order who is believed to be the fourth disciple of Ramananda and a direct disciple of Anantacharya).

Saint Ramananda is generally considered to have been born around AD 1400; some say that he was born in 1366 CE.^[*citation needed*] Although there is disagreement on the exact date and place of birth, due to the few texts regarding his early life. The birthplace has been suggested to be Triveni Sangam Allahabad, Prayaga. He was born to an upper-caste Brahmin family, and his parents were probably named Sushila and Punyasadan Sharma. He was spiritually inclined right from his childhood. Acharya Raghavanand who is also known as Dakshinayat Rishi (as he lived in Jagannath Puri which is always considered a southern city in Hindu scriptures) included him in the Ramavat sect. Ramananda spent most of his life in Kashi (Banaras / Varanasi), where, as a mark of respect, people built a memorial that stands there to this day.

When Ramananda was a child, he studied the Hindu scriptures and showed great interest in spiritual thoughts. He received his early education in Kasi. A renowned philosopher and the prophet of the new Vaishnava religion, known for his downplaying the role of caste, Ramananda was particularly known for worshipping Lord Rama and his wife Goddess Sita. Ramanuja and Ramananda both believed that the human soul is distinct from the Supreme Spirit and retains its identity and separate consciousness.

Adult life

When Ramananda was as young as twelve, he left home and became a sannyasi (ascetic) and lived at Varanasi.

Death

There is much controversy concerning the place and date of Saint Ramananda's death due to the lack of information available about his life. Many historians believe that Ramananda died around AD 1470-80, yet there is no unanimity regarding the date. Ramananda's name is read on the list of predecessors during the time of a religious dispute between Sikandar Lodi and his religious teacher, Sheikh Taki. From this information, Ramananda's date of death can be fixed as sometime around the late 15th century. However, there is a story about Ramananda which claims he escaped death altogether by entering a Samadhi state, a meditative state and remaining alive, where his Charan paduka is still visible at Srimath in Kashi.

Disciples of Ramananda

Ramananda's disciples include:-

Bhavananda

Dhanna Bhagat

Kabir

Nabha

Naraharyanda

Pipa Bairagi (Of Rajputana Clan)

Ravidas

Sain

Sukhanada

Ranka

Tulsidas(the author of Ramcharitmanas)

Anantananda

Vitthal Kulkarni (Father of Dnyaneshwar, who is founder of the Varkari movement)(Sant Dnyaneshwar, son of Vitthal Kulkarni as per wikipedia lived in the 2nd half of 13th century whereas Ramanandji lived in the 14th century, so it is unlikely that Vitthal Kulkarni could have been his disciple.)

Kabirpanthi claims that In Real Kabirdas is Disciple of Ramanad ji, But the original Knowledge(About God) to ramanad is Given by Kabir.

By legend, Kabir originally hesitated to ask Ramanand to adopt him as his disciple due to the rigid caste system of the Hindus. Ramananda stayed in his cottage all day and only left it at about 3 o'clock in the morning to go down to the Ganges River to have a bath and perform his rites. Kabir had a knowledge of Ramananda's daily habits and so he waited one night for Ramananda by lying on the steps of Panchganga ghat. When Ramananda accidentally stepped on Kabir on his way to bathe, he uttered "Utho! Ram ko Ram bolo!" (Rise up! Say Ram to Ram!). This became, for Kabir, the sacred mantra. Ramananda later gave him formal Diksha. Kabir grew among the ranks of important

religious reformers in India.

Contributions

Ramananda was an influential social reformer of Northern India. Ramananda played an important role in reviving a religious sect that provided a spiritual pathway to people of all castes.

Revolution Against Casteism

Ramananda realised that God can be worshiped by everyone because Lord Rama himself has never stopped the people of any caste from reaching Him. Instead, the Ramayan is full of stories about Shabri, Kevat, etc. who all were Lower castes, but Rama gave them equal respect, the way he respected Brahmins. Ramananda believed that in spiritual pursuit, the caste system of India is redundant. He believed that to truly devote yourself to Lord Rama, one must forget one's caste identity and social status. Ramananda is quoted as saying, "Let no one ask a man's caste or with whom he eats. If a man is devoted to Hari, he becomes Hari's own." Ramananda had disciples of all castes.

He took a very radical approach to teaching and preaching through the inclusion of the poor and the people of low castes. After Ramananda's death, the members of the Ramanandi sect led a social revolution in the Ganges basin by recruiting women and members of low castes into their sect. In addition, Saint Ramananda was the driving force of the popularization of the devotion of Lord Rama.

Contribution towards Hindi

Ramanandi sect also played a significant role in the development of Hindi literature, because Ramananda generally spoke and wrote in Hindi. The study of modern Hindi literature as it is taught in the colleges of India today, generally starts with the telling of devotional stories and poems written by people whom the Vaisnavite bards claim were spiritual descendants of Ramananda. These men include the great saints Tulsi Das, Mira Bai, and Kabir.

Teachings

The institutional centrality of Ramananda has long been reflected in the 'guru parampara' that connects every Ramanandi through an unbroken succession of gurus with Ramanand himself and, eventually, Ramchandra.

Ramananda defined his own studies with his dedication and self-surrender to the Supreme Soul, 'Paramatma'. According to Saint Ramananda, Lord Rama was the Supreme Spirit and the human race was simply one large family, 'Vasudaiva Kutumbakam'. He was a skilled and impressive preacher, who drew large crowds wherever he traveled, yet most of Ramananda's poems and sayings were not preserved. The result is the lack of texts that modern scholars and historians can use to unearth the life of Ramananda.

Ramananda was a learned man. Many of the books which are supposed to have been written by him such as Sri Vaishnava, Matanbuj Bhaskar and Sri Ramarachan Padhti are still available. He is also said to have authored a commentary called AnandabhAshya. In Sri Vaishnava, Matanbuj Bhaskar, Vaishnav Ramananda gave his profound philosophy and declared everyone has right to take refuge of Rama, a person can take refuge of Shri Rama in any mood (either Shanta, or Dasya, or Sakhya, or Vatsalya or Kanta Bhava). He further writes relation between Param-Brahman Rama and individual soul (Jiva) is like that of two friends, or father (Ram) and son (Jiva), or Husband (Ram) and wife (Jiva), or master and servant, etc.

Shabad of Ramananda in Guru Granth Sahib

- Where should I go?
- My home is filled with bliss.
- My consciousness does not go out wandering.
- My mind has become crippled. || 1 || Pause ||
- One day, a desire welled up in my mind.
- I ground up sandalwood, along with several fragrant oils.
- I went to God's place, and worshipped Him there.
- That God showed me the Guru, within my own mind. || 1 ||
- Wherever I go, I find water and stones.
- You are totally pervading and permeating in all.
- I have searched through all the Vedas and the Puraanas.
- I would go there, only if the Lord were not here. || 2 ||
- I am a sacrifice to You, O my True Guru.
- You have cut through all my confusion and doubt.
- Raamanand's Lord and Master is the All-pervading Lord God.
- The Word of the Guru's Shabad eradicates the karma of millions of past actions. || 3 || 1 ||

One poem of Swami Ramanand is recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs. This poem, called the Raga Basant, describes Ramananda's profound philosophy. This poem, originally written in Hindi, professes Ramananda's great teaching of the giving up of caste for Ram, or the, "true guru", who remains, "all-pervasive and forever unchanging. However, As per the great Hindi scholar Acharya Ramchandra Shukl, the above Pada (verses) found in Guru Granth Sahib can't be attributed to VaishNav Ramananda who is reviver of Ramanandi sect, it can be of any other Ramananda, but not the writer of Shri Vaishnav-Matanbuj-Bhaskar as Vaishnav Ramananda wrote his heart takes refuge of Raghava (Shri Ram) alone, non else.^[1]

Historical sources and controversies

Controversy about Birth and Death Year - Controversy about Birth and Residence Place - Many southern scholars tried to prove him to be of Tamil origin.

Controversy about his importance - Much about the life of Ramananda and his contributions to India are disputed between scholars. Dearth of information has led to disputes about the birthplace, life, and death of Ramananda. More significantly, while texts written by his disciples indicate that Ramananda was significant in the lives of people in Northern India while he was living, modern scholars argue whether he was in fact as influential as he is described to be. Given the historical importance of the Ramanandi sect, many scholars find it hard to believe that there is such little information in the sectarian literature on the events which led to its formation. Scholars have tried to reconstruct the early history of the Ramanandi sect, yet there is such a scarcity of information that scholars reach different conclusions. Some scholars believe that Ramananda truly was a great Hindu saint, yet others feel that from the lack of information provided, that Ramananda was not a historically important enough saint to have caused others to write details of his life. It seems to many scholars, that the life of Ramananda is far inferior to the accounts of the lives of his disciples who have extensive biographies written about them.

Controversy about his literary works - Of the few books written by Ramananda himself, some may have been written by his followers and then accredited to Ramananda.

Prasang Paarijaat

Just after the death of Swami Ramananda, Swami Chetan-Dasji composed a book called Prasang Paarijaat in Paishachi language in the year 1574 AD. This was a long poem containing the major events of Ramananda's life. Due to some curse and some predictions given in the book the book couldn't be published before 30 January 1948. After 1948, the book was first published by Shri Ram MangalDas Ji, Gokul Bhavan. Its manuscript was brought by Saint Balakram Vinayak from Sarnath and for many years it was kept at Ayodhya before publishing.

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[3] <http://www.kamat.com/indica/faiths/bhakti/ramanand.htm>

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Guru Nanak

Guru Nanak	
	
Guru Nanak with Bhai Bala and Bhai Mardana and Sikh Gurus	
Born	Nanak April 15, 1469 Rāi Bhoi Kī Talvaṇḍī, Delhi Sultanate (now Nankana Sahib, Punjab, Pakistan)
Died	September 22, 1539 (aged 70) Kartarpur, Mughal India
Resting place	Kartarpur (now in Punjab, Pakistan)
Years active	1507–1539
Successor	Guru Angad
Spouse(s)	Mata Sulakhani
Children	Baba Sri Chand and Baba Lakhmi Das
Parents	Baba Mehta Kalu and Mata Tripta

Guru Nanak [ⓘ] [Ⓘ] pronunciation Wikipedia:Media helpFile:Guru Nanak Dev.ogg^[1] (Punjabi: ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ; Hindi: गुरु नानक, Urdu: گرونانک, [ˈɡʊɾu ˈnənək] *Gurū Nānak*) (15 April 1469 – 22 September 1539) is the founder of the religion of Sikhism and is the first of the ten Sikh Gurus, the eleventh guru being the *living Guru*, Guru Granth Sahib. His birth is celebrated world-wide on Kartik Puranmashi, the full-moon day which falls on different dates each year in the month of Katak, October-November.

Guru Nanak travelled to places far and wide teaching people the message of one God who dwells in every one of God's creations and constitutes the eternal Truth. He setup a unique spiritual, social, and political platform based on equality, fraternity love, goodness, and virtue.

It is part of Sikh religious belief that the spirit of Guru Nanak's sanctity, divinity and religious authority descended upon each of the nine subsequent Gurus when the Guruship was devolved on to them.

Family and early life

Nanak was born on 15 April 1469, now celebrated as Guru Nanak Gurpurab, at Rāi Bhoi Kī Talvaṇḍī, now called Nankana Sahib, near Lahore, in present day Pakistan.^[2] Today, his birthplace is marked by Gurdwara Janam Asthan. His parents were Kalyan Chand Das Bedi, popularly shortened to Mehta Kalu, and Mata Tripta. His father was a *patwari* (accountant) for crop revenue in the village of Talwandi, employed by a Muslim landlord of that area, Rai Bular Bhatti.



Gurdwara Janam Asthan

He had one sister, Bibi Nanaki, who was five years older than him and became a spiritual figure in her own right. In 1475 she married Jai Ram and went to his town of Sultanpur, where he was the steward (*modi*) to Daulat Khan Lodi, the eventual governor of Lahore during the Afghan Lodhi dynasty. Nanak was attached to his older sister, and, in traditional Indian fashion, he followed her to Sultanpur to live with her and her husband. Nanak also found work with Daulat Khan, when he was around 16 years old. This was a formative time for Nanak, as the Puratan (traditional) Janam Sakhi suggests, and in his numerous allusions to governmental structure in his hymns, most likely gained at this time.

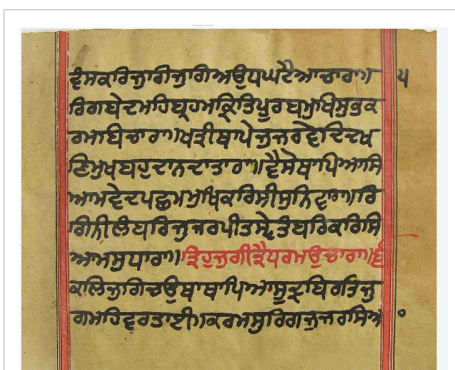
Commentaries on his life give details of his blossoming awareness from a young age. At the age of five, Nanak is said to have voiced interest in divine subjects. At age seven, his father enrolled him at the village school as was the custom. Notable lore recounts that as a child Nanak astonished his teacher by describing the implicit symbolism of the first letter of the alphabet, which is an almost straight stroke in Persian or Arabic, resembling the mathematical version of one, as denoting the unity or oneness of God. Other childhood accounts refer to strange and miraculous events about Nanak, such as one witnessed by Rai Bular, in which the sleeping child's head was shaded from the harsh sunlight, in one account, by the stationary shadow of a tree or, in another, by a poisonous cobra.

On 24 September 1487 Nanak married Mata Sulakkhani, daughter of Mūl Chand and Chando Rāṇī, in the town of Batala. The couple had two sons, Sri Chand (8 September 1494 – 13 January 1629) and Lakhmi Chand (12 February 1497 – 9 April 1555).

Biographies

The earliest biographical sources on Nanak's life recognised today are the *Janamsākhīs* (life accounts) and the *vārs* (expounding verses) of the scribe Bhai Gurdas. The most popular Janamsākhī were allegedly written by a close companion of the Guru, Bhai Bala. However, the writing style and language employed have left scholars, such as Max Arthur Macauliffe, certain that they were composed after his death.

Gurdas, a purported scribe of the Gurū Granth Sahib, also wrote about Nanak's life in his *vārs*. Although these too were compiled some time after Nanak's time, they are less detailed than the Janamsākhīs. The Janamsākhīs recount in minute detail the circumstances of the birth of the guru.



Gyan Ratnavali, Janamsakhi, written by Bhai Mani Singh

Sikhism

Rai Bular, the local landlord and Nanak's sister Bibi Nanaki were the first people who recognised divine qualities in the boy. They encouraged and supported him to study and travel. Sikh tradition states that at around 1499, at the age

of 30, he had a vision. After he failed to return from his ablutions, his clothes were found on the bank of a local stream called the Kali Bein. The townspeople assumed he had drowned in the river; Daulat Khan had the river dragged, but no body was found. Three days after disappearing, Nanak reappeared, staying silent. The next day, he spoke to pronounce:

"There is neither Hindu nor Mussulman (Muslim) so whose path shall I follow? I shall follow God's path. God is neither Hindu nor Mussulman and the path which I follow is God's."

Nanak said that he had been taken to God's court. There, he was offered a cup filled with amrita (nectar) and given the command,

"This is the cup of the adoration of God's name. Drink it. I am with you. I bless you and raise you up. Whoever remembers you will enjoy my favour. Go, rejoice of my name and teach others to do so. I have bestowed the gift of my name upon you. Let this be your calling."

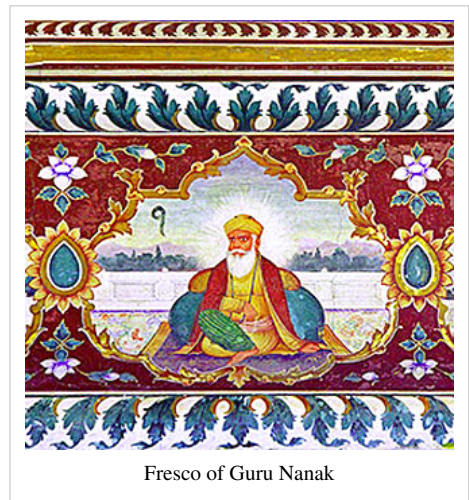
From this point onwards, Nanak is described in accounts as a Guru, and Sikhism was born.

Teachings

Guru Nanak's teachings can be found in the Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib, as a vast collection of revelatory verses recorded in Gurmukhi.

From these some common principles seem discernible. Firstly a supreme Godhead who although incomprehensible, manifests in all major religions, the Singular "Doer" and formless. It is described as the indestructible (undying) form.

Nanak describes the dangers of egotism (*haumai*- "I am") and calls upon devotees to engage in worship through the word of God. *Naam*, implies God, the Reality, mystical word or formula to recite or meditate upon (*shabad* in *Gurbani*), divine order (*hukam*) and at places divine teacher (*guru*) and guru's instructions) and singing of God's qualities, discarding doubt in the process. However, such worship must be selfless (*sewa*). The word of God, cleanses the individual to make such worship possible. This is related to the revelation that God is the Doer and without God there is no other. Nanak warned against hypocrisy and falsehood saying that these are pervasive in humanity and that religious actions can also be in vain. It may also be said that ascetic practices are disfavoured by Nanak, who suggests remaining inwardly detached whilst living as a householder.



Fresco of Guru Nanak

Through popular tradition, Nanak's teaching is understood to be practised in three ways:

- *Vanḍ Chakkō*: Sharing with others, helping those with less who are in need
- *Kirat Karō*: Earning/making a living honestly, without exploitation or fraud
- *Naam Japna*: Meditating on God's name to control your 5 evils to eliminate suffering and live a happy life.

Nanak put the greatest emphasis on the worship of the Word of God (*Naam Japna*). One should follow the direction of awakened individuals (*Gurmukh* or God willed) rather than the mind (state of *Manmukh*- being led by self will)- the latter being perilous and leading only to frustration.

Reforms that occurred in the institution and both Godhead and Devotion, are seen as transcending any religious consideration or divide, as God is not separate from any individual.

Guru Nanak's Divine Journeys

Although the exact account of his itinerary is disputed, he is widely acknowledged to have made four major journeys, spanning thousands of kilometres, the first tour being east towards Bengal and Assam, the second south towards Sri Lanka, the third north towards Kashmir, Ladakh, and Tibet, and the final tour west towards Baghdad, Mecca and Medina on the Arabian Peninsula.

Nanak crossed into Arunachal Pradesh and visited most of the part. First while going to Lhasa (Tibet) he passed through Tawang after crossing from Bhutan and entered Tibet from Samdurang Chu. He returned from Lhasa and went to the famous monastery Samye and entered Pemoshubu Menchukha in Arunachal Pradesh. He meditated for some time at this location. From Menchukha he went back to Tibet, brought the residents of Southern Tibet and got them settled in Menchukha. Thereafter through Gelling and Tuiting he proceeded to Saidya and Braham-Kund, before entering the state of Assam again.

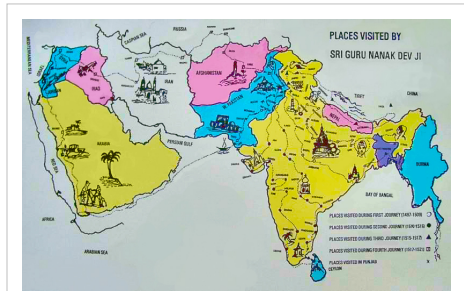
Nanak was moved by the plight of the people of world and wanted to tell them about the "real message of God". The people of the world were confused by the conflicting message given by priests, pundits, qazis, mullahs, etc. He was determined to bring his message to the masses; so in 1499, he decided to set out on his sacred mission to spread the holy message of peace and compassion to all of mankind.

Most of his journeys were made on foot with his companion Bhai Mardana. He travelled in all four directions - North, East, West and South. The founder Sikh Guru is believed to have travelled more than 28,000 km in five major tours of the world during the period from 1500 to 1524.

Nanak saw the world suffering out of hatred, fanaticism, falsehood and hypocrisy. The world had sunk in wickedness and sin. So he decided that he had to travel and educate and press home the message of Almighty Lord. So he set out in 1499 on his mission for the regeneration of humanity on this earth. He carried the torch of truth, heavenly love, peace and joy for mankind. For 1 year he spread his message of peace, compassion, righteousness and truth to the people in and around his home.

Then in 1500, he embarked on his Divine Mission and went towards east, west, north and south and visited various centers of Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Jainis, Sufis, Yogis and Sidhas. He met people of different religions, tribes, cultures and races. He travelled on foot with his Muslim companion named Bhai Mardana, a minstrel. His travels are called Udasis. In his first Udasi (travel), Nanak covered east of India and returned home after spending about 6 years. He started from Sultanpur in 1500 and went to his village Talwandi to meet and inform his parents about his long journey. His parents wanted their young son to provide comfort and protection for them in their old age and so they told him they would prefer it if he did not go. But he told them that the world was burning in the fire of Kalyug and that thousands and thousands were waiting for the Divine message of the Almighty for comfort, love and salvation. The Guru, therefore, told his parents, "There is a call from Heaven, I must go whither He directs me to go." Upon hearing these words, his parents agreed and gave their blessings. So Nanak started his mission and the roots of Sikhism were laid down first towards the east of India.

According to the Puratan Janamsakhi, which is one of the oldest accounts of the life history of Guru Nanak, the Guru undertook five missionary journeys (udasiya) to the far away places of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Mecca, Baghdad, Kamroop (Assam), Tashkand and many more. Guru ji travelled far and wide to spread the word of Gurbani and covered most of India, present day Bangladesh, Pakistan, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, South West China, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.



The 5 Udasis and other locations visited by Guru Nanak

The five journeys

Below is a brief summary of the confirmed places visited by Nanak:

- First Udasi: (1500-1506 AD) Lasted about **7 years** and covered the following towns and regions: Sultanpur, Tulamba (modern Makhdumpur, zila Multan), Panipat, Delhi, Banaras (Varanasi), Nanakmata (zila Nainital, Uttranchal), Tanda Vanjara (zila Rampur), Kamrup (Assam), Asa Desh (Assam), Saidpur (modern Eminabad, Pakistan), Pasrur (Pakistan), Sialkot (Pakistan).
- Second Udasi: (1506-1513 AD) Lasted about **7 years** and covered the following towns and regions: Dhanasri Valley, Sangladip (Ceylon).
- Third Udasi: (1514-1518 AD) Lasted about **5 years** and covered the following towns and regions: Kashmir, Sumer Parbat, Nepal, Tashkand, Sikkim, Tibet.
- Fourth Udasi: (1519-1521 AD) Lasted about **3 years** and covered the following towns and regions: Mecca and the Arab countries.
- Fifth Udasi: (1523-1524 AD) Lasted about **2 years** and covered the following towns and regions: Places within the Punjab.

To spread his knowledge, Nanak traveled widely throughout Asia . To this end he undertook four Udasis (Tours). The first udasi (1500-1505) was to the central and eastern parts of India. Second udasi (1506-1509) took him to important towns and religious centers of south India, including Sri Lanka. During the third Udasi (1514-1516) Nanak traveled to the Gangetic plains, Bihar, Nepal, Lhasa, Leh, as far as Tashkand and then back to Punjab via the Kashmir valley. The fourth Udasi (1518-1521) took him to various Arab countries.

Succession

Nanak appointed Bhai Lehna as the successor Guru, renaming him as Guru Angad, meaning "one's very own" or "part of you". Shortly after proclaiming Bhai Lehna as his successor, Guru Nanak died on 22 September 1539 in Kartarpur, at the age of 70.

References

[1] Guru Nanak may be referred to by many other names and titles such as **Baba Nanak** or **Nanak Shah**.

[2] Also, according to the Purātan Janamsākhī (the birth stories of Guru Nanak).

Further reading

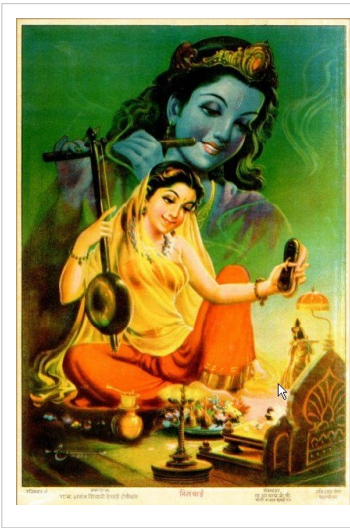
- Macauliffe, Max (1909) *The Sikh Religion Vol I*
- Singh, Sahib (Prof) *Guru Nanak Dev and His Teachings*

External links

- Guru Nanak Dev Ji (<http://www.srigurunanaksahib.org>)
- First Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji (http://www.singhsahib.com/guru_nanak_dev_ji.php)
- Singh, Kirpal (First edition March 2004). "Janamsakhi Tradition - An Analytical Study" (<http://www.globalsikhstudies.net/pdf/janamsakhi.pdf>). globalsikhstudies.net. Retrieved 29 November 2010.
- Guru Nanak by Jyotsna Kamat (<http://www.kamat.com/indica/faiths/bhakti/nanak.htm>)
- Shree Guru Nanak Dev Quotes in English and Hindi (<http://www.achhikhabar.com/2011/11/10/shree-guru-nanak-dev-quotes-in-hindi/>)

Meera

Meera



Meera bai

Born	Meera c. 1498 Merta, Rajasthan, India
Died	c. 1557 Dwarka, India
Philosophy	Sant tradition of the Vaishnava bhakti movement

Meerabai was a princess Hindu mystical and a devotee of Lord Krishna from Rajasthan. She was one of the most significant figures Sant of the Vaishnava bhakti movement. Some 1,300 *pads* (poems) commonly known as *bhajans* (sacred songs) are attributed to her. These are popular throughout India and have been published in several translations worldwide. In the *bhakti* tradition, they are in passionate praise of Lord Krishna. In most of her poems she has described her unconditional love for her Lord. She has tried to give the message that Krishna bhakti is the best way to live life as it helps us forget our desires.

Details of her life, which has been the subject of several films, are pieced together from her poetry and stories recounted by her community and are of debatable historical authenticity, particularly those that connect her with the later Tansen. On the other hand, the traditions that make her a disciple of Guru Ravidas in Chittor, her association with Tulsidas and later interactions with Rupa Goswami in Vrindavan are consonant with the usual account of her life.

Biography



Meera's temple to Krishna at Chittorgarh Fort, Rajasthan

Meera was a princess.^[1] Her father, Ratan Singh, was the youngest son of Rao Duda ruler of Merta and belonged to the Rathore clan. Rao Duda was son of Rao Jodha ruler and founder of Jodhpur.^[citation needed]

As a child Meera became deeply enamored by a Murti of Giridhar Gopal, Lord Krishna, owned by a holy man; she was inconsolable until she possessed it and kept it all her life.^[citation needed] (Some myths say that Meera saw a wedding procession of a bride-groom and asked her mother about her husband, then her mother took her in front of the deity Lord Krishna and told her that He was her husband.) Then she was around seven years old. She was highly influenced by her father as he was a worshiper of Krishna.^[citation needed]

Meera's mother, Veer Kumari, died during child birth when Meera was around seven. Meera was then sent to her grandfather, Rao Duda and father's older brother, Rao Viram Dev at Merta. It is here that she received her education.^[citation needed]

Her uncle, Rao Viram Dev arranged Meera's marriage, in 1516 when she was eighteen, with prince Bhoj Raj, the son of Rana Sanga of Chittor. She was not happy with her marriage

as she considered herself already married to Krishna. She went to live in Chittor accompanied by her childhood mate, Mithula, who stayed with Meera till the end.^[citation needed]

Her new family did not approve of her piety and devotion when she refused to worship their family deity- Tulaja Bhawani (Durga).^[citation needed]

Rajputana had remained fiercely independent of the Delhi Sultanate, the Islamic regime that otherwise ruled Hindustan after the conquests of Timur. But in the early 16th century AD the central Asian conqueror Babur laid claim to the Sultanate and some Rajputs supported him while others lost their lives in battle with him. Her husband's death in battle (in 1521 AD) was only one of a series of losses Meera experienced. Her father-in-law, Rana Sanga respected and protected Meera Bai. However; he also died after a few years and Meera was then persecuted by the rest of her in-laws. She found Krishna to be her only support and resisted the wishes of her in-laws to give up her worship of Giridhar Gopal. Her grief turned into a passionate spiritual devotion that inspired in her countless poems drenched with separation and longing.^[citation needed]



The Meera Museum in Merta City

Meera's love for Krishna was at first a private thing but at some moment it overflowed into an ecstasy that led her to sing and dance in public and other religious folk. She would quietly leave the Chittor fort at night and join *Satsangs*

(religious get-togethers) in the town below. Her brother-in-law, the new ruler of Chittorgarh, Vikramaditya, was a cruel youth who strongly objected to Meera's devotion, her mixing with commoners and her lack of feminine modesty. Vikramaditya made several attempts to kill Meera.^[2] Her sister-in-law Uda bai is said to have spread defamatory gossip.

According to some myths^[citation needed] Meera's brother-in-law Vikramaditya, who later became king of Chittor, after Bhojraj's death, tried to harm Meera in many ways, such as:

- The famous one is that he mixed poison in the prasadam or charna-amritam of Krishna and made her drink it. But by God's grace, Krishna changed it to Amrit.
- He pinned iron nails in Meera's bed, but, again by God's grace they turned into rose petals. As she explains in one of her couplets 'शूल सेज राणा नै भेजी, दीज्यो मीरा सुलाय/साझ भई मरि सोवन लागी, मानो फूल बछिय'
- He put a snake in a flower basket and told her that it was a gift from him to her Lord, but when she opened it actually became a gift- a garland.

There are many more in a similar vein.

At some time Meera declared herself a disciple of the guru Raidas ("guru miliyaa raidasjee"). After unbearable torture she left Chittor. First she went to Merta where she was still not satisfied and after sometime left for the centre of Krishnaism, Vrindavan. She considered herself to be a reborn gopi, Lalita, mad with love for Krishna. Folklore informs us of a particular incident where she expressed her desire to engage in a discussion about spiritual matters with Rupa Goswami, a direct disciple of Chaitanya and one of the foremost saints of Vrindavan at that time who, being a renunciate celibate, refused to meet a woman. Meera replied that the only true man (purusha) in this universe is Lord Krishna. She continued her pilgrimage, "danced from one village to another village, almost covering the whole of north India".^[3] One story has her appearing in the company of Kabir in Kashi, once again causing affront to social mores. She seems to have spent her last years as a pilgrim in Dwarka, Gujarat. It is said that Mirabai disappeared into the Dwarkadhish Murti (Image of Lord Krishna) in front of a full audience of onlookers.^[citation needed]

Poetry

Meera's songs are in a simple form called a ch' (verse), a term used for a small spiritual song, usually composed in simple rhythms with a repeating refrain, collected in her *Padavali*. The extant versions are in a Rajasthani and *Braj*, a dialect of Hindi spoken in and around Vrindavan (the childhood home of Krishna), sometimes mixed with Rajasthani.

That dark dweller in Braj

Is my only refuge.

O my companion, worldly comfort is illusion,

As soon you get it, it goes.

I have chosen the indestructible for my refuge,

Him whom the snake of death will not devour.

My beloved dwells in my heart all day,

I have actually seen that abode of joy.

Meera's lord is Hari, the indestructible.

My lord, I have taken refuge with you, your maidservant

Although Meera is often classed with the northern Sant bhaktis who spoke of a formless divinity, there is no doubt that she presents Krishna as the historical master of the Bhagavad Gita who is, even so, the perfect Avatar of the eternal, who is omnipresent but particularly focused in his icon and his temple. She speaks of a personal relationship with Krishna as her lover, lord and master. The characteristic of her poetry is complete surrender. Her longing for

union with Krishna is predominant in her poetry: she wants to be "coloured with the colour of dusk" (the symbolic colour of Krishna). Her style of literature is mainly Rajasthani mixed with Brij language. But one can also see a hint of Gujarati as well as Punjabi in her writings.

Her noted songs include, *Hari Tuma Haro*, also sung by M S Subbulakshmi and *Sanson ki Mala Pe* sang as a qawwali by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

Folk culture

In many regions of Rajasthan, bhajans of Meera are still common in religious night gathering known as 'Ratijuga' (रातीजौगा) organized by women. Tune and lyrics of a very popular Hindi song 'Rang Barse Bhige Chunar wali, rang barse' (movie: *Silsila* (film), Music: Shiv-Hari, Lyrics: Harivansh Rai Bachchan) which is generally played on Holi in urban areas of northern India, are taken from a folk bhajan. However, the lyrics are slightly altered to mold the song into appropriate context of the movie script. First few lines of the original bhajan are

"Rang barse o meeran ,bhawan main rang barse.

Kun e meera tero mandir chinayo, kun chinyo tero devro..

Rang barse o meeran ,bhawan main rang barse"

This popular bhajan is sometimes used as a dance song. Meera is also a common figure in wall paintings.

English versions

An article <i>related to</i>	
Hinduism	
	
•	Hindu
•	History
•	 <i>Hinduism portal</i>
•	 <i>Hindu Mythology portal</i>

Aliston and Subramanian have published selections with English translation in India.^{[4][5]} Schelling^[6] and Landes-Levi^[7] have offered anthologies in the USA. Snell^[8] has presented parallel translations in his collection *The Hindi Classical Tradition*. Sethi has selected poems which Mira composed presumably after she came in contact with Saint Ravidas.^[9] and Meera Pakeerah.

Some bhajans of Meera have been rendered by Robert Bly in his *Mirabai Versions* (New York; Red Ozier Press, 1984). Bly has also collaborated with Jane Hirshfield on *Mirabai: Ecstatic Poems*.^[10] Dr Prayag Narayan Misra has presented more than 20 devotional poems—available online in both Hindi and English languages.^[11]

Popular culture

Composer John Harbison adapted Bly's translations for his *Mirabai Songs*. There is a documentary film *A Few Things I Know About Her* by Anjali Panjabi. Two well-known films of her life have been made in India, *Meera* (1945), a Tamil language film starring M. S. Subbulakshmi, and *Meera* a 1979 Hindi film by Gulzar. TV series, *Meera* (2009–2010) was also based on her life.

J. A. Joshi^{[12][13]} has written a novel "Follow the Cowherd Boy"^[14] published by Trafford Publishing^[15] in 2006. Meera Bai's life has been interpreted as a musical story in **Meera—The Lover...**, a music album based on original compositions for some well known Meera bhajans, releasing 11 October 2009.^[16]

Osho has given a commentary on Meera's bhajans.

Sagar Arts, the creator of mythological and historical serials such as Hatim Aladin, Chandragupta Maurya, Prithviraj Chauhan, Dwarkadheesh, Jai jai jai Bajrangbali, Mahima Shani Dev Ki, Ramayan etc., created a serial on July 27, 2009 – January 29, 2010. Younger Meera was played by **Aashika Bhatia** and elder Meera was played by **Aditi Sajwan**.

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boon. Surdas returns the anklets says he has already got what he wanted (the blessings of Krishna) and asks Krishna to make him blind again as he does not want to see anything else in the world after seeing Krishna. Radha is moved by his devotion and Krishna grants his wish by making him blind again thus giving him everlasting fame.

Poetical works of Surdas

Although Surdas is known for his greatest work — the Sur Sagar, he also sung Sur-Saravali,[which is based on the theory of genesis and the festival of Holi], and Sahitya-Lahiri, devotional lyrics dedicated to the Supreme Absolute. As if Surdas attained a mystical union with Lord Krishna, which enabled him to compose the verse about Krishna's romance with Radha almost as he was an eyewitness. Surdas' verse is also credited as one that lifted the literary value of the Hindi language, transforming it from a crude to a pleasing tongue.

A Lyric by Surdas: 'The Deeds Of kanha'

There is no end to the deeds of kanha: true to his promise, he tended the cows in Gokula; Lord of the gods and compassionate to his devotees, he came as Nrisingha and tore apart Hiranyakashipa. When Bali spread his dominion over the three worlds, he begged three paces of land from him to uphold the majesty of the gods, and stepped over his entire domain: here too he rescued the captive elephant. Countless such deeds figure in the Vedas and the Puranas, hearing which Suradasa humbly bows before that Lord.

Surdas was called the sun in the sky of Hindi literature. He is best known for collection of his composition 'Sursagar'. This famous collection is originally said to contain 100,000 songs, however, only 8000 remained today. These songs present vivid description of childhood Lilas of Krishna.

Influence

On Bhakti movement

The philosophy of Surdas is a reflection of the times. He was very much immersed in the Bhakti movement that was sweeping North India. This movement represented a grass roots spiritual empowerment of the masses. The corresponding spiritual movement of the masses happened in South India in the first millennium A.D. but also started in 17 years

On the status of Brij Bhasha

Surdas' poetry was a dialect of Hindi language, Brij Bhasha, until then considered to be a very plebeian language, as the prevalent literary languages were either Persian or Sanskrit. The works of Surdas immediately raised the status of Brij Bhasha from a crude language to that of a literary language of great repute.

Philosophy

Shuddhadvaita

Due to the training he received from his guru Vallabhacharya, Surdas was a proponent of the Shuddhadvaita school of Vaishnavism (also known as Pushti Marg). This philosophy is based upon the spiritual metaphor of the *Radha-Krishna Rasleela* (The celestial dance between Radha and Lord Krishna). It propagates the path of Grace of God rather than of merging in Him, which seems an extension of the belief of earlier saints like Kabir Das.

Foremost amongst the Ashta-chhaap

Eight Disciples of the Master-Teacher Vallabhacharya are called the Ashta-chhaap, meaning, eight reprints (of the Master). Surdas is considered to be the foremost among them.

Compositions

Devanagari	Romanized	English			
<p>प्रभू मोरे अवगुण चति न धरो । समदरसी है नाम तहियो चा पारस गुण अवगुण नहीं चितिवत कंचन करत खरो ॥</p> <p>एक नदियो एक नाल कहावत मैलो ही नीर भरो ।</p> <p>जब दौ मलिकर एक बरन भई सुरसरी नाम परो ॥</p> <p>एक जीव एक ब्रह्म कहावे सूर श्याम झगरो ।</p> <p>अब की बेर मोहे पार उतारो नहीं पन जात टरो ॥</p>	<p>samadarasi hai naam tihaaro chaahe to paara karo</p>	<p>paaras gun avagun nahim chitavata kamcan karat kharo</p>	<p>jab dou milakar ek baran bhai surasari naam paro</p>	<p>ab k ber moMhe paar utaaro nahim pan jaat Taro</p>	<p>Lord, heed not my faults! You are known as he who sees as all equal, At will you can take me across the ocean of existence. One iron is used in worship, another in butcher's steel; The philosopher's stone counts not merit or fault But turns both to purest gold. One is called "river", another a "rivulet" filled with murky water; When they merge they become of one colour and are known As "Sursari"(Ganges), river of gods. The soul and the Supreme are given different names, But all is one in Sur's Shyam. This time, take me across, or give up your vow to be saviour!</p>

Devanagari	Romanized	English		
<p>अखिहीं हरि दर्शन की प्रयासी । देखो चाहत कमल नयन को, नसि दनि रहत उदासी ॥</p> <p>केसर तलिक मोतनि की माला, वृंदावन के वासी ।</p> <p>नेहा लगाए त्यागी गये तृण सम, डारि गये गल फाँसी ॥</p> <p>काहु के मन की कोऊ का जाने, लोगन के मन हाँसी ।</p> <p>सूरदास प्रभु तुम्हरे दरस बनि लेहो करवत कासी ॥</p>	<p>dekho chaahat kamala nayan ko, nis din rahat udaasI</p>	<p>nehaa lagaae tyaagI gaye tRuN sam, Daari gaye gal phaa~MsI</p>	<p>sUradaas prabhu tumhare daras bin lehoM karavat kaashI</p>	<p>Our eyes thirst for a vision of Hari; They long to see the lotus-eyed one, Grieving for him day and night. Wearing a saffron tilak and pearl garland And dwelling in Vrindavan, He gave us his love, then cast us aside like a blade of grass, Throwing a noose around our necks. No one knows what is in another's mind, There is laughter in people's hearts; But Lord of Surdas, without a vision of you we would give up our very lives.</p>

Confusions

Surdās, or Bhakat Surdas, whose verse figures in the Guru Granth Sāhib is to be differentiated from Sant Surdas, the blind poet of the same name who wrote Sūr Sagar. Sūrdās, whose original name was Madan Mohan, is said to have been born in 1529, in a high-ranking Brāhman family. As he grew up, he gained proficiency in the arts of music and poetry for which he had a natural talent. He soon became a celebrated poet, singing with deep passion lyrics of Divine love. He attracted the attention of Emperor Akbar who appointed him governor of the parganah of Sandilā. But Sūrdās' heart lay elsewhere. He renounced the world and took to the company of holy men dedicating himself solely to the Lord. He died at Banāras. A shrine in the vicinity of the city honours his memory. The Guru Granth Sahib contains one hymn by Bhakta Sūrdās, in the Sāraṅg measure http://searchgurbani.com/index.php/bhagats/bhagat_surdas^[1]. Retrieved 23 September 2013. Missing or empty |title= (help)

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[1] http://searchgurbani.com/index.php/bhagats/bhagat_surdas

External links

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 - Works of Surdas at oldpoetry (http://oldpoetry.com/oauthor/show/Sant_Surdas)
 - Surdas Poems in Hindi (<http://www.hindisahitya.org/category/surdas-poems-in-hindi/>)
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Tulsidas

Goswami Tulsidas

गोस्वामी तुलसीदास



Statue of Goswami Tulsidas at Kanch Mandir, Tulsi Peeth, Chitrakuta, India

Born	<i>Rambola</i> 1497 or 1532 ^[1] Rajapur (present-day Chitrakoot district, Uttar Pradesh, India)
Died	1623 Assi Ghat, Varanasi (present-day Uttar Pradesh, India)
Titles/honours	<i>Gosvāmī</i> , <i>Abhinavavālmiki</i> , <i>Bhaktaśiromaṇi</i> , etc
Guru	<i>Naraharidāsa</i>
Philosophy	Vaishnavism
Literary works	<i>Ramcharitmanas</i> , <i>Vinaypatrika</i> , <i>Dohavali</i> , <i>Kavitavali</i> , <i>Hanuman Chalisa</i> , <i>Vairagya Sandipani</i> , <i>Janaki Mangal</i> , <i>Parvati Mangal</i> , and others
Quotation	I bow down to the whole world by folding both hands, considering it to be born out of Sita and Rama. ^[2]

Tulsidas (Devanagari: तुलसीदास, Hindi pronunciation: [t̪ʊl̪siːd̪aːs̪], also known as **Goswami Tulsidas**; 1497/1532–1623) was a Hindu poet-saint, reformer and philosopher renowned for his devotion to the god Rama. A composer of several popular works, he is best known as the author of the epic *Ramcharitmanas*, a retelling of the Sanskrit *Ramayana* in the vernacular Awadhi. Tulsidas was acclaimed in his lifetime to be a reincarnation of Valmiki, the composer of the original *Ramayana* in Sanskrit.^[3] He is also considered to be the composer of the *Hanuman Chalisa*, a popular devotional hymn dedicated to Hanuman, the divine devotee of Rama.^[4] Tulsidas spent most of his life in the city of Varanasi.^[5] The Tulsi Ghat on the Ganges River in Varanasi is named after him. He founded the Sankatmochan Temple dedicated to Hanuman in Varanasi, believed to stand at the place where he had the sight of Hanuman. Tulsidas started the Ramlila plays, a folk-theatre adaption of the *Ramayana*.^[6] He has been acclaimed as one of the greatest poets in Hindi, Indian, and world literature.^{[7][8]} The impact of Tulsidas and his works on the art, culture and society in India is widespread and is seen to date in vernacular language, Ramlila plays, Hindustani classical music, popular music, and television series.^{[9][10][11]}

Transliteration and etymology

The Sanskrit name of Tulsidas can be transliterated in two ways. Using the IAST transliteration scheme, the name is written as *Tulasīdāsa*, as pronounced in Sanskrit. Using the Hunterian transliteration scheme, it is written as *Tulsidas* or *Tulsīdās*, as pronounced in Hindi. The name is a compound of two Sanskrit words: *Tulasī*, which is an Indian variety of the basil plant considered auspicious by Vaishnavas (devotees of god Vishnu and his avatars like Rama), and *Dāsa*, which means *slave* or *servant* and by extension, *devotee*. Tulsidas, thus means a servant of the plant Tulsi.

Life

Sources



Picture of Tulsidas published in the *Ramcharitmanas*, by Sri Ganga Publishers, Gai Ghat, Benaras, 1949.

Tulsidas himself has given only a few facts and hints about events of his life in various works. Till late nineteenth century, the two widely known ancient sources on Tulsidas' life were the *Bhaktamal* composed by Nabhadas between 1583 and 1639, and a commentary on *Bhaktamal* titled *Bhaktirasbodhini* composed by Priyadas in 1712. Nabhadas was a contemporary of Tulsidas and wrote a six-line stanza on Tulsidas describing him as an incarnation of Valmiki. Priyadas' work was composed around a hundred years after the death of Tulsidas and had eleven additional stanzas, describing seven miracles or spiritual experiences from the life of Tulsidas. During the 1920s, two more ancient biographies of Tulsidas were published based on old manuscripts – the *Mula Gosain Charit* composed by Veni Madhav Das in 1630 and the *Gosain Charit* composed by Dasanidas (also known as Bhavanidas) around 1770. Veni Madhav Das was a disciple and contemporary of Tulsidas and his work gave a new date for Tulsidas' birth. The work by Bhavanidas presented more narratives in greater detail as compared to the work by Priyadas. In the 1950s a fifth ancient account was published based on an old manuscript, the *Gautam Chandrika* composed by Krishnadatta Misra of Varanasi in 1624. Krishnadatta Misra's father was a close

companion of Tulsidas. The accounts published later are not considered authentic by some modern scholars, whereas some other scholars have been unwilling to dismiss them. Together, these five works form a set of traditional biographies on which modern biographies of Tulsidas are based.

Incarnation of Valmiki

Tulsidas is believed to be a reincarnation of Valmiki. In the Hindu scripture *Bhavishyottar Purana*, the god Shiva tells his wife Parvati how Valmiki, who got a boon from Hanuman to sing the glory of Rama in vernacular language, will incarnate in future in the Kali Yuga (the present and last Yuga or epoch within a cycle of four Yugas).^[12]

Devanagari

IAST

वाल्मीकस्तुलसीदासः कलौ देव भविष्यति ।
 रामचन्द्रकथामेतां भाषाबद्धां करिष्यति ॥

vālmīkistulasīdāsaḥ kalau deva bhaviṣyati ।

rāmacandrakathāmetāṃ bhāṣābaddhāṃ kariṣyati ॥

“O Goddess [Parvati]! Valmiki will become Tulsidas in the Kali age, and will compose this narrative of Rama in the vernacular language. *Bhavishyottar Purana*, Pratisarga Parva, 4.20.

Nabhadas wrote in the *Bhaktamal* (literally, *the Garland of Saints*) that Tulsidas was the incarnation of Valmiki in the Kali Yuga.^{[13][14][15]} The Ramanandi sect believes that it was Valmiki himself who incarnated as Tulsidas in the Kali Yuga.

According to a traditional account, Hanuman went to Valmiki several times to hear him sing the Ramayana, but Valmiki turned down the request saying that Hanuman being a monkey was unworthy of hearing the epic. After the victory of Rama over Ravana, Hanuman went to the Himalayas to continue his worship of Rama. There he scripted a

play version of the Ramayana called *Mahanataka* or *Hanuman Nataka* engraved on the Himalayan rocks using his nails. When Valmiki saw the play written by Hanuman, he anticipated that the beauty of the *Maha Nataka* would eclipse his own Ramayana. On Valmiki's request, Hanuman cast all the rocks into the ocean, some parts of which are available today as *Hanuman Nataka*. After this, Valmiki was instructed by Hanuman to take birth as Tulsidas and compose the Ramayana in the vernacular.

Early life

Birth

Tulsidas was born on saptami, the seventh day of shukla paksha, the bright half of the lunar Hindu calendar month Shraavana (July–August).^[16] Although as many as seven places are mentioned as his birthplace, most scholars identify the place with Rajapur (Chitrakuta), a village on the banks of the Yamuna river in modern-day Uttar Pradesh. His parents were Hulsī and Atmaram Dubey. Most sources identify him as a Saryupareen Brahmin of the Parashar *Gotra* (lineage), although some sources claim he was a Kanyakubja or Sanadhya Brahmin.

There is difference of opinion among biographers regarding the year of birth of Tulsidas. Many sources rely on Veni Madhav Das' account in the *Mula Gosain Charita*, which gives the year of Tulsidas' birth as Vikrami Samvat 1554 (1497 CE).^[17] These sources include Shivrām Pathak, popular editions of Ramcharitmanas (Gita Press, Naval Kishore Press and Venkateshvar Press), Edwin Greaves, Hanuman Prasad Poddar, Ramanand Sarasvati, Ayodhyānath Sharma, Ramchandra Shukla, Narayandas, and Rambhadracharya. A second group of biographers led by Sant Tulsi Sahib of Hathras and Sir George Grierson give the year as Vikram 1589 (1532 CE). These biographers include Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Ramghulam Dwivedi, James Lochtefeld, Swami Sivananda and others. A third small group of authors which includes H. H. Wilson, Garse De Tasse and Krishnadatta Mishra gives the year as Vikram 1600 (1543 CE).

The year 1497 appears in most current-day biographies and in popular culture. Biographers who disagree with this year argue that it makes the life span of Tulsidas equal 126 years, which in their opinion is *unlikely if not impossible*. In contrast, Ramchandra Shukla says that an age of 126 is not impossible for Mahatmas (*great souls*) like Tulsidas. The Government of India and provincial governments celebrated the 500th birth anniversary of Tulsidas in the year 1997 CE, according to the year of Tulsidas' birth in popular culture.

Childhood

Legend goes that Tulsidas was born after staying in the womb for twelve months, he had all thirty two teeth in his mouth at birth, his health and looks were like that of a five-year old boy, and he did not cry at the time of his birth but uttered *Rama* instead.^{[18][19][20][21]} He was therefore named **Rambola** (literally, *he who uttered Rama*), as Tulsidas himself states in **Vinayapatrika**.^[22] As per the *Mula Gosain Charita*, he was born under the *Abhuktamūla* constellation, which according to Jyotisha (Hindu astrology) causes immediate danger to the life of the father.^[23] Due to the inauspicious events at the time of his birth, he was abandoned by his parents on the fourth night, sent away with Chuniya (some sources call her Muniya), a female servant of Hulsī. In his works *Kavitavali* and *Vinayapatrika*, Tulsidas attests to his parents abandoning him after birth due to an inauspicious astrological configuration.^{[24][25][26]}

Chuniya took the child to her village of **Haripur** and looked after him for five and a half years after which she died. Rambola was left to fend for himself as an impoverished orphan, and wandered from door to door begging for alms. It is believed that the goddess Parvati assumed the form of a Brahmin woman and fed Rambola every day.

Initiation from guru and learning

At the age of five years, Rambola was adopted by Narharidas, a Vaishnava ascetic of Ramananda's monastic order who is believed to be the fourth disciple of Ramananda, or alternately, the disciple of Anantacharya. Rambola was given the *Virakta Diksha* (Vairagi initiation) with the new name of Tulsidas. Tulsidas narrates the dialogue that took place during the first meeting with his guru in a passage in the *Vinayapatrika*. When he was seven years old, his Upanayana ("sacred thread ceremony") was performed by Narharidas on the fifth day of the bright half of the month of Magha (January–February) at Ayodhya, a pilgrimage-site related to Rama. Tulsidas started his learning at Ayodhya. After some time, Narharidas took him to a particular *Varaha Kshetra* (a holy place with temple dedicated to Varaha - the boar avatar of Vishnu), where he first narrated the Ramayana to Tulsidas. Tulsidas mentions this in the Ramcharitmanas.^[27]

Devanagari

IAST

मै पुनि निजि गुर सन सुनी कथा सो सुकरखेत । maĩ puni nija gura sana sunī kathā so sūkarakheta ।

समुझी नहि तिस बालपन तब अति रहेउँ अचेत ॥ samujhī nahī tasi bālapana taba ati raheū aceta ॥

“And then, I heard the same narrative from my Guru in a Sukarkhet (Varaha Kshetra). I did not understand it then, since I was totally without cognition in childhood. Ramcharitmanas 1.30 (ka).”

Most authors identify the Varaha Kshetra referred to by Tulsidas with the Varaha temple on the second entrance of the pilgrimage of Kamadgiri in Chitrakuta. Some biographers believe this Sukarkshetra is the *Soron* Varaha Kshetra in modern-day Kanshi Ram Nagar, while some others believe it to be Paska-Rajapur Varaha Kshetra in current-day Gonda. Tulsidas further mentions in the Ramcharitmanas that his guru repeatedly narrated the Ramayana to him, which led him to understand it somewhat.

Tulsidas later came to the sacred city of Varanasi and studied Sanskrit grammar, four Vedas, six Vedangas, Jyotisha and the six schools of Hindu philosophy over a period of 15–16 years from guru Shesha Sanatana who was based at the Pancaganga Ghat in Varanasi. Shesha Sanatana was a friend of Narharidas and a renowned scholar on literature and philosophy.^[28] After completing his studies, Tulsidas came back to his birthplace Rajapur with the permission of Shesha Sanatana. Here he found that his family was no more, with his parents dead. Tulsidas performed the Shraddha ceremony (which deals with giving offerings to the ancestors) of his parents. He started living in his ancestral home and narrating the Katha ("story") of Ramayana in Chitrakuta.

Marriage and renunciation

According to the *Mula Gosain Charita* and some other works, Tulsidas was married to Ratnavali on the thirteenth day of the bright half of the Jyeshtha month (May–June) in Vikram 1583 (1526 CE). Ratnavali was the daughter of Dinbandhu Pathak, a Brahmin of the Bharadwaja Gotra, who belonged to Mahewa village of Kaushambi district.^{[29][30]} They had a son named *Tarak* who died as a toddler. Once when Tulsidas had gone to a Hanuman temple, Ratnavali went to her father's home with her brother. When Tulsidas came to know this, he swam across the Yamuna river in the night to meet his wife. Ratnavali chided Tulsidas for this, and remarked that if Tulsidas was even half as devoted to God as he was to her body of flesh and blood, he would have been redeemed.^[31] Tulsidas left her instantly and left for the holy city of Prayag. Here, he renounced the Grihastha (householder's life) stage and became a Sadhu (Hindu ascetic).

Some authors consider the marriage episode of Tulsidas to be a later interpolation and maintain that he was a bachelor. They include Rambhadracharya, who interprets two verses in the *Vinayapatrika* and *Hanuman Bahuka* to mean that Tulsidas never married and was a Sadhu from childhood.

Later life

Travels

After renunciation, Tulsidas spent most of his time at Varanasi, Prayag, Ayodhya, and Chitrakuta but visited many other nearby and far-off places. He traveled across India to many places, studying different people, meeting saints and Sadhus and meditating.^[32] The *Mula Gosain Charita* gives an account of his travels to the four pilgrimages of Hindus (Badrinath, Dwarka, Puri and Rameshwaram) and the Himalayas.^[33] He visited the Manasarovar lake in current-day Tibet, where tradition holds he had Darshan (sight) of Kakabhushundi,^[34] the crow who is one of the four narrators in the Ramcharitmanas.^[35]



Tulsidas' patron deity Rama (centre) with wife Sita to his left and brother Lakshmana to the right, while Hanuman bows to his Lord.

Darshan of Hanuman

Tulsidas hints at several places in his works, that he had met face to face with Hanuman and Rama.^[36] The detailed account of his meetings with Hanuman and Rama are given in the *Bhaktirasbodhini* of Priyadas.^[37] According to Priyadas' account, Tulsidas used to visit the woods outside Varanasi for his morning ablutions with a water pot. On his return to the city, he used to offer the remaining water to a certain tree. This quenched the thirst of a Preta (a type of ghost believed to be ever thirsty for water), who appeared to Tulsidas and offered him a boon.^[38] Tulsidas said he wished to see Rama with his eyes, to which the Preta responded that it was beyond him. However, the Preta said that he could guide Tulsidas to Hanuman, who could grant the boon Tulsidas asked for. The Preta told Tulsidas that Hanuman comes everyday disguised in the mean attire of a leper to listen to his Katha, he is the first to arrive and last to leave.

That evening Tulsidas noted that the first listener to arrive at his discourse was an old leper, who sat at the end of the gathering. After the Katha was over, Tulsidas quietly followed the leper to the woods. In the woods, at the spot where the Sankat Mochan Temple stands today,^[39] Tulsidas firmly fell at the leper's feet, shouting "I know who you are" and "You cannot escape me". At first the leper feigned ignorance but Tulsidas did not relent. Then the leper revealed his original form of Hanuman and blessed Tulsidas. When granted a boon, Tulsidas told Hanuman he wanted to see Rama face to face. Hanuman told him to go to Chitrakuta where he would see Rama with his own eyes.

At the beginning of the Ramcharitmanas, Tulsidas bows down to a particular Preta and asks for his grace (Ramcharitmanas, Doha 1.7). According to Rambhadracharya, this is the same Preta which led Tulsidas to Hanuman.

Darshan of Rama

As per Priyadas' account, Tulsidas followed the instruction of Hanuman and started living in an Ashram at Ramghat in Chitrakuta. One day Tulsidas went to perform the Parikrama (circumambulation) of the Kamadgiri mountain. He saw two princes, one dark and the other fair, dressed in green robes pass by mounted on horsebacks. Tulsidas was enraptured at the sight, however he could not recognize them and took his eyes off them. Later Hanuman asked Tulsidas if he saw Rama and his brother Lakshmana on horses. Tulsidas was disappointed and repentful. Hanuman assured Tulsidas that he would have the sight of Rama once again the next morning. Tulsidas recalls this incident in a song of the *Gita-Vali* and laments how "his eyes turned his own enemies" by staying fixed to the ground and how everything happened in a trice. On the next morning, Wednesday, the new-moon day of Magha, Vikram 1607 (1551 CE) or 1620 (1564 CE) as per some sources, Rama again appeared to Tulsidas, this time as a child. Tulsidas was

making sandalwood paste when a child came and asked for a sandalwood Tilaka (a religious mark on the forehead). This time Hanuman gave a hint to Tulsidas and he had a full view of Rama. Tulsidas was so charmed that he forgot about the sandalwood. Rama took the sandalwood paste and put a Tilaka himself on his forehead and Tulsidas' forehead before disappearing.

In a verse in the *Vinayapatrika*, Tulsidas alludes to a certain "miracle at Chitrakuta", and thanks Rama for what he did for him at Chitrakuta.^[40] Some biographers conclude that the deed of Rama at Chitrakuta referred to by Tulsidas is the Darshan of Rama.

Darshan of Yajnavalkya and Bharadvaja

In Vikram 1628 (1572 CE), Tulsidas left Chitrakuta for Ayodhya where he stayed during the *Magha Mela* (the annual fair in January). Six days after the Mela ended, he had the Darshan of the sages Yajnavalkya and Bharadvaja under a banyan tree. In one of the four dialogues in the *Ramcharitmanas*, Yajnavalkya is the speaker and Bharadvaja the listener. Tulsidas describes the meeting between Yajnavalkya and Bharadvaja after a Magha Mela festival in the *Ramcharitmanas*, it is this meeting where Yajnavalkya narrates the *Ramcharitmanas* to Bharadvaja.^[41]

Attributed Miracles

In Priyadas' biography, Tulsidas is attributed with the power of working miracles.^[42] In one such miracle, he is believed to have brought back a dead Brahmin to life.^{[43][44][45]} While the Brahmin was being taken for cremation, his widow bowed down to Tulsidas on the way who addressed her as *Saubhagyavati* (a woman whose husband is alive). The widow told Tulsidas her husband had just died, so his words could not be true. Tulsidas said that the word has passed his lips and so he would restore the dead man to life. He asked everybody present to close their eyes and utter the name of *Rama*, on doing which the dead Brahmin was raised back to life.

In another miracle described by Priyadas, the emperor of Delhi, Akbar summoned Tulsidas on hearing of his bringing back a dead man to life.^[46] Tulsidas declined to go as he was too engrossed in creating his verses but he was later forcibly brought before the Akbar and was asked to perform a miracle, which Tulsidas declined by saying "It's a lie, all I know is Rama." The emperor imprisoned Tulsidas at Fatehpur Sikri, "We will see this Rama." Tulsidas refused to bow to Akbar and created a verse in praise of Hanuman and chanted it (*Hanuman Chalisa*) for forty days and suddenly an army of monkeys descended upon the town and wreaked havoc in all corners of Fatehpur Sikri, entering each home and the emperor's harem, scratching people and throwing bricks from ramparts. An old Hafiz told the emperor that this was the miracle of the *imprisoned Fakir*. The emperor fell at Tulsidas' feet, released him and apologized. Tulsidas stopped the menace of monkeys and asked the emperor to abandon the place. The emperor agreed and moved back to Delhi. Ever since Akbar became a close friend of Tulsidas and he also ordered a firman that followers of Rama, Hanuman & other Hindus, should not be harassed in his kingdom.^[47]

Priyadas narrates a miracle of Tulsidas at Vrindavan, when he visited a temple of Krishna.^[48] When he began bowing down to the idol of Krishna, the Mahant of the temple named Parshuram decided to test Tulsidas. He told Tulsidas that he who bows down to any deity except their Ishta Devata (cherished form of divinity) is a fool, as Tulsidas' Ishta Devata was Rama. In response, Tulsidas recited the following extemporaneously composed couplet



A Mughal prince visits Tulsidas. Early 18th century Sisodia dynasty painting from Udaipur, Mewar.

Devanagari

IAST

काह कहौ छबि आजुकि भले बने हो नाथ । kāha kahaū chabi ājuki bhale bane ho nātha ।
 तुलसी मस्तक तब नवै धरो धनुष शर हाथ ॥ tulasī mastaka taba navai dharo dhanuṣa śara hātha ॥

“O Lord, how shall I describe today's splendour, for you appear auspicious. Tulsidas will bow down his head when you take the bow and the arrow in your hands.”

When Tulsidas recited this couplet, the idol of Krishna holding the flute and stick in hands changed to the idol of Rama holding the bow and arrow in hands. Some authors have expressed doubts on the couplet being composed by Tulsidas.

Literary life

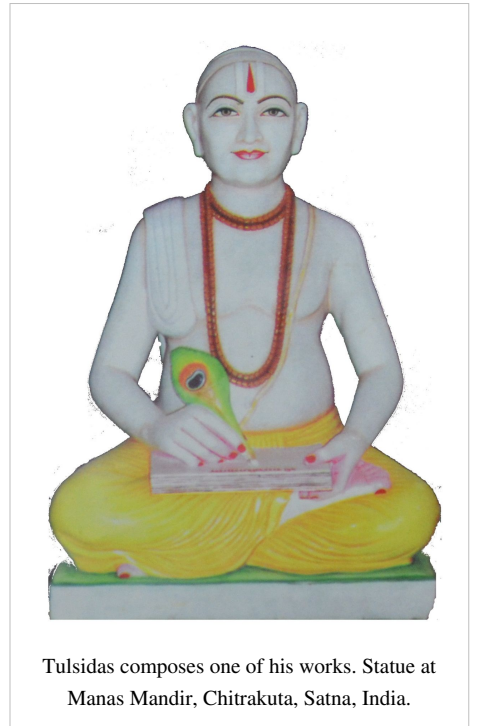
Tulsidas started composing poetry in Sanskrit in Varanasi on the Prahlada Ghat. Tradition holds that all the verses that he composed during the day, would get lost in the night. This happened daily for eight days. On the eighth night, Shiva - whose famous Kashi Vishwanath Temple is located in Varanasi - is believed to have ordered Tulsidas in a dream to compose poetry in the vernacular instead of Sanskrit. Tulsidas woke up and saw both Shiva and Parvati who blessed him. Shiva ordered Tulsidas to go to Ayodhya and compose poetry in Awadhi. Shiva also predicted that Tulsidas' poetry would fructify like the Sama Veda.^[49] In the Ramcharitmanas, Tulsidas hints at having the Darshan of Shiva and Parvati in both dream and awakened state.^[50]

Composition of Ramcharitmanas

In the year Vikram 1631 (1575 CE), Tulsidas started composing the Ramcharitmanas in Ayodhya on Tuesday, Ramnavami day (ninth day of the bright half of the Chaitra month, which is the birthday of Rama). Tulsidas himself attests this date in the Ramcharitmanas.^[51] He composed the epic over two years, seven months and twenty-six days, and completed the work in Vikram 1633 (1577 CE) on the Vivaha Panchami day (fifth day of the bright half of the Margashirsha month, which commensates the wedding of Rama and his wife Sita).

Tulsidas came to Varanasi and recited the Ramcharitmanas to Shiva (Vishwanath) and Parvati (Annapurna) at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple. A popular legend goes that the Brahmins of Varanasi, who were critical of Tulsidas for having rendered the Sanskrit Ramayana in the vernacular, decided to test the worth of the work. A manuscript of the Ramcharitmanas was kept at the bottom of pile of Sanskrit scriptures in the sanctum sanctorum of the Vishvanath temple in the night, and the doors of the sanctum sanctorum were locked. In the morning when the doors were opened, the Ramcharitmanas was found at the top of the pile. The words *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (Sanskrit: सत्यं शिवं सुन्दरम्, literally "truth, auspiciousness, beauty") were inscribed on the manuscript with the signature of Shiva. The words were also heard by the people present.^{[52][53]}

Per traditional accounts, some Brahmins of Varanasi were still not satisfied, and sent two thieves to steal the manuscript.^[54] The thieves tried to break into the Ashram of Tulsidas, but were confronted by two guards with bows and arrows, of dark and fair complexion. The thieves had a change of heart and came to Tulsidas in the morning to ask who the two guards were. Believing that the two guards could be none other than Rama and Lakshmana,



Tulsidas composes one of his works. Statue at Manas Mandir, Chitrakuta, Satna, India.

Tulsidas was aggrieved to know that they were guarding his home at night. He sent the manuscript of Ramcharitmanas to his friend Rai Todar Mal, the finance minister of Akbar, and donated all his money. The thieves were reformed and became devotees of Rama.

Last compositions

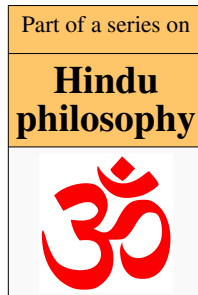
Around Vikram 1664 (1607 CE), Tulsidas was afflicted by acute pain all over his body, especially in his arms. He then composed the *Hanuman Bahuk*, where he describes his bodily pain and suffering in several stanzas.^[55] He was relieved of his pain after this composition. Later he was also afflicted by *Bartod* boils (Hindi: बरतोड़, furuncles caused by pulling out of the hair), which may have been the cause of his death.

The Vinaypatrika is considered as the last compositions of Tulsidas, believed to be written when Kali Yuga started troubling him. In this work of 279 stanzas, he beseeches Rama to give him Bhakti ("devotion"), and to accept his petition. Tulsidas attests in the last stanza of *Vinaypatrika* that Rama himself signed the manuscript of the work.^[56] The 45th stanza of the Vinaypatrika is sung as the evening Aarti by many Hindus.^[57]

Death

Tulsidas died at the Assi Ghat on the bank of the river Ganga in the Shraavan (July–August) month of the year Vikram 1680 (1623 CE). Like the year of his birth, traditional accounts and biographers do not agree on the exact date of his death. Different sources give the date as the third day of the bright half, seventh day of the bright half, or the third day of the dark half.^{[58][59]}

Works



Twelve works are widely considered by biographers to be written by Tulsidas, six major works and six minor works. Based on the language of the works, they have been classified into two groups as follows—^[60]

1. **Awadhi works** – Ramcharitmanas, Ramlala Nahachhu, Barvai Ramayan, Parvati Mangal, Janaki Mangal and Ramagya Prashna.
2. **Braja works** – Krishna Gitavali, Gitavali, Kavitaavali, Dohavali, Vairagya Sandipani and Vinaya Patrika.

Besides these twelve works, four more works are popularly believed to be composed by Tulsidas which include Hanuman Chalisa, Hanuman Ashtak, Hanuman Bahuk and Tulsi Satsai.

Ramcharitmanas

Ramacharitamanas (रामचरितमानस, 1574–1576), literally *The Holy Lake of Acts of Rama*, is the Awadhi rendering of the Ramayana narrative. It is the longest and earliest work of Tulsidas, and draws from various sources including the Ramayana of Valmiki, the Adhyatma Ramayana, the *Prasannaraghava* and Hanuman Nataka.^[1] The work consists of around 12,800 lines divided into 1073 stanzas, which are groups of Chaupais separated by Dohas or Sorthas.^[61] It is divided into seven books (Kands) like the Ramayana of Valmiki, and is around one-third of the size of Valmiki's Ramayana. The work is composed in 18 metres which include ten Sanskrit metres (*Anushtup*, *Shardulvikridit*, *Vasantatilaka*, *Vamshashta*, *Upajati*, *Pramanika*, *Malini*, *Sragdhara*, *Rathoddhata* and *Bhujangaprayata*) and eight

Prakrit metres (*Soratha, Doha, Chaupai, Harigitika, Tribhangi, Chaupaiya, Trotaka* and *Tomara*).^[62] It is popularly referred to as *Tulsikrit Ramayana*, literally *The Ramayana composed by Tulsidas*.^[63] The work has been acclaimed as "the living sum of Indian culture", "the tallest tree in the magic garden of medieval Indian poesy", "the greatest book of all devotional literature", "the Bible of Northern India", and "the best and most trustworthy guide to the popular living faith of its people."^[64]

Several manuscripts of the *Ramcharitmanas* are claimed to have been written down by Tulsidas himself. Grierson wrote in the late nineteenth century, two copies of the epic were said to have existed in the poet's own handwriting. One manuscript was kept at Rajapur, of which only the *Ayodhyakand* is left now, which bears marks of water. A legend goes that the manuscript was stolen and thrown into Yamuna river when the thief was being pursued, and only the second book of the epic could be rescued.^[65] Grierson wrote that the other copy was at Malihabad in Lucknow district, of which only one leaf was missing. Another manuscript of the *Ayodhyakanda* claimed to be in the poet's own hand exists at Soron in Etah district, one of the places claimed to be Tulsidas' birthplace. One manuscript of *Balakanda*, dated Samvat 1661, nineteen years before the poet's death, claimed to be corrected by Tulsidas, is at Ayodhya. Some other ancient manuscripts are found in Varanasi, including one in possession of the Maharaja of Benares that was written in Vikram 1704 (1647), twenty-four years after the death of Tulsidas.

Other major works

The five major works of Tulsidas apart from *Ramcharitmanas* include—

1. *Dohavali* (दोहावली, 1581), literally *Collection of Dohas*, is a work consisting of 573 miscellaneous Doha and Sortha verses mainly in Braja with some verses in Awadhi. The verses are aphorisms on topics related to tact, political wisdom, righteousness and the purpose of life. 85 Dohas from this work are also found in the *Ramcharitmanas*, 35 in *Ramagya Prashna*, two in *Vairagya Sandipani* and some in *Rama Satsai*, another work of 700 Dohas attributed to Tulsidas.
2. *Kavitavali* or *Kavitta Ramayan* (कवितिवली, 1608–1614), literally *Collection of Kavittas*, is a Braja rendering of the *Ramayana*, composed entirely in metres of the *Kavitta* family – *Kavitta*, *Savaiya*, *Ghanakshari* and *Chhappaya*. It consists of 325 verses including 183 verses in the Uttarkand. Like the *Ramcharitmanas*, it is divided into seven Kands or books and many episodes in this work are different from the *Ramcharitmanas*.
3. *Gitavali* (गीतावली), literally *Collection of Songs*, is a Braja rendering of the *Ramayana* in songs. All the verses are set to Ragas of Hindustani classical music and are suitable for singing. It consists of 328 songs divided into seven Kands or books. Many episodes of the *Ramayana* are elaborated while many others are abridged.
4. *Krishna Gitavali* or *Krishnavali* (कृष्णगीतावली, 1607), literally *Collection of Songs to Krishna*, is a collection of 61 songs in honor of Krishna in Braja. There are 32 songs devoted to the childhood sports (*Balalila*) and *Rasa Lila* of Krishna, 27 songs form the dialogue between Krishna and Uddhava, and two songs describe the episode of disrobing of Draupadi.
5. *Vinaya Patrika* (वनियपत्रिका), literally *Petition of Humility*, is a Braja work consisting of 279 stanzas or hymns. The stanzas form a petition in the court of Rama asking for Bhakti. It is considered to be the second best work of Tulsidas after the *Ramcharitmanas*, and is regarded as important from the viewpoints of philosophy, erudition, and eulogistic and poetic style of Tulsidas. The first 43 hymns are addressed to various deities and Rama's courtiers and attendants, and remaining are addressed to Rama.

Minor works

Minor works of Tulsidas include—

1. *Barvai Ramayana* (बरवै रामायण, 1612), literally *The Ramayana in Barvai metre*, is an abridged rendering of the Ramayana in Awadhi. The work consists of 69 verses composed in the *Barvai* metre, and is divided into seven *Kands* or books. The work is based on a psychological framework.
2. *Parvati Mangal* (पार्वती मंगल), literally *The marriage of Parvati*, is an Awadhi work of 164 verses describing the penance of Parvati and the marriage of Parvati and Shiva. It consists of 148 verses in the *Sohar* metre and 16 verses in the *Harigitika* metre.
3. *Janaki Mangal* (जानकी मंगल), literally *The marriage of Sita*, is an Awadhi work of 216 verses describing the episode of marriage of Sita and Rama from the Ramayana. The work includes 192 verses in the *Hamsagati* metre and 24 verses in the *Harigitika* metres. The narrative differs from the *Ramcharitmanas* at several places.
4. *Ramalala Nahachhu* (रामलला नहछू), literally *The Nahachhu ceremony of the child Rama*, is an Awadhi work of 20 verses composed in the *Sohar* metre. The Nahachhu ceremony involves cutting the nails of the feet before the Hindu Samskaras (rituals) of Chudakarana, Upanayana, Vedarambha, Samavartana or Vivaha. In the work, events take place in the city of Ayodhya, so it is considered to describe the Nahachhu before Upanayana, Vedarambha and Samavartana.^[66]
5. *Ramagya Prashna* (रामाज्ञा प्रश्न), literally *Querying the Will of Rama*, is an Awadhi work related to both Ramayana and Jyotisha (astrology). It consists of seven *Kands* or books, each of which is divided into seven *Saptakas* or Septets of seven Dohas each. Thus it contains 343 Dohas in all. The work narrates the Ramayana non-sequentially, and gives a method to look up the Shakuna (omen or portent) for astrological predictions.
6. *Vairagya Sandipini* (वैराग्य संदीपनी, 1612), literally *Kindling of Detachment*, is a philosophical work of 60 verses in Braja which describe the state of Jnana (realization) and Vairagya (dispassion), the nature and greatness of saints, and moral conduct. It consists of 46 Dohas, 2 Sorathas and 12 Chaupai metres.

Popularly attributed works

The following four works are popularly attributed to Tulsidas—

1. *Hanuman Chalisa* (हनुमान चालीसा), literally *Forty Verses to Hanuman*, is an Awadhi work of 40 Chaupais and two Dohas in obeisance to Hanuman. Popular belief holds the work to be authored by Tulsidas, and it contains his signature, though some authors do not think the work was written by him.^[67] It is one of the most read short religious texts in northern India, and is recited by millions of Hindus on Tuesdays and Saturdays. It is believed to have been uttered by Tulsidas in a state of Samadhi at the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar.
2. *Sankatmochan Hanumanashtak* (संकटमोचन हनुमानाष्टक), literally *Eight verses for Hanuman, the Remover of Afflictions*, is an Awadhi work of eight verses in the *Mattagajendra* metre, devoted to Hanuman. It is believed to have been composed by Tulsidas on the occasion of the founding of the Sankatmochan Temple in Varanasi. The work is usually published along with Hanuman Chalisa.
3. *Hanuman Bahuka* (हनुमान बाहुक), literally *The Arm of Hanuman*, is a Braja work of 44 verses believed to have been composed by Tulsidas when he suffered acute pain in his arms at an advanced age. Tulsidas describes the pain in his arms and also prays to Hanuman for freedom from the suffering. The work has two, one, five and 36 verses respectively in the *Chhappaya*, *Jhulna*, *Savaiya* and *Ghanakshari* metre.
4. *Tulsi Satsai* (तुलसी सतसई), literally *Seven Hundred Verses by Tulsidas*, is a work in both Awadhi and Braja and contains 747 Dohas divided in seven *Sargas* or cantos. The verses are same as those in *Dohavali* and *Ramagya Prashna* but the order is different.

Doctrine

The philosophy and principles of Tulsidas are found across his works, and are especially outlined in the dialogue between Kakhushundi and Garuda in the Uttar Kand of the Ramcharitmanas.^[68] Tulsidas' doctrine has been described as an assimilation and reconciliation of the diverse tenets and cultures of Hinduism.^{[69][70][71]} At the beginning of the Ramcharitmanas, Tulsidas says that his work is in accordance with various scriptures - the Puranas, Vedas, Upavedas, Tantra and Smriti.^[72] Ram Chandra Shukla in his critical work *Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihaas* elaborates on Tulsidas' *Lokmangal* as the doctrine for social upliftment which made this great poet immortal and comparable to any other world litterateur.^[citation needed]

Nirguna and Saguna Brahman

As per Tulsidas, the Nirguna Brahman (quality-less impersonal absolute) and Saguna Brahman (personal God with qualities) are one and the same. It is the devotion (Bhakti) of the devotee that forces the Nirguna Brahman which is quality-less, formless, invisible and unborn, to become Saguna Brahman with qualities. Tulsidas gives the example of water, snow and hail to explain this – the substance is the same in all three, but the same formless water solidifies to become hail or a mountain of snow – both of which have a form.^{[73][74]} Tulsidas also gives the simile of a lake – the Nirguna Brahman is like the lake with just water, while the Saguna Brahman is a lake resplendent with blooming lotuses.^{[75][76]}

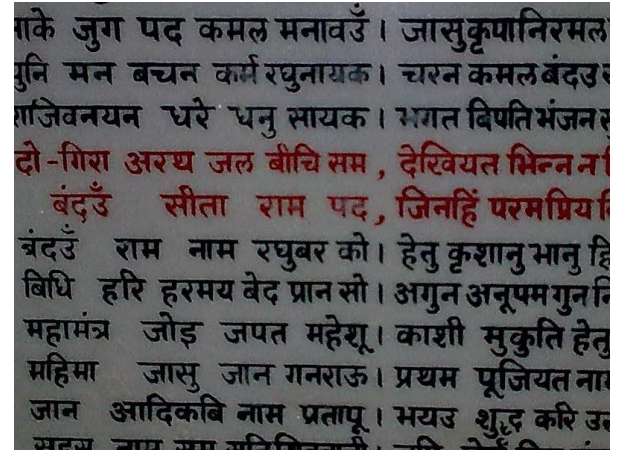
In the Uttar Kand of Ramcharitmanas, Tulsidas describes in detail a debate between Kakhushundi and Lomasha about whether God is Nirguna (as argued by Lomasha adhering to monism) or Saguna (as argued by Kakhushundi adhering to dualism). Kakhushundi repeatedly refutes all the arguments of Lomasha, to the point when Lomasha becomes angry and curses Kakhushundi to be a crow. Lomasha repents later when Kakhushundi happily accepts the curse but refuses to give up the Bhakti of Rama, the Saguna Brahman.^{[77][78]} Though Tulsidas holds both aspects of God to be equal, he favours the qualified Saguna aspect and the devotees of the highest category in the Ramcharitmanas repeatedly ask for the qualified Saguna aspect of Rama to dwell in their mind.^[79] Tulsidas has at multiple places vigorously contradicted the denial of Avatar by Kabir.^[80] In several of his works, Kabir had said that the actual *Rama* is not the son of Dasharatha. In the Balkand of Ramcharitmanas, Shiva tells Parvati – those who say that the Rama whom the Vedas sing of and whom the sages contemplate on is different from the Rama of Raghu's race are possessed by the devil of delusion and do not know the difference between truth and falsehood.^[81]



Verses from Ramcharitmanas equating the Saguna Brahman and Nirguna Brahman, at the entrance of a temple in Bhopal.

The name of Rama

At the beginning of the Ramcharitmanas, there is a section devoted to the veneration of the name of Rama.^[82] As per Tulsidas, repeating the name of Rama is the only means to attain God in the Kali age where the means suited for other ages like meditation, Karma, and Puja are ineffective.^[83] He says in Kavita-Vali that his own redemption is because of the power, glory and majesty of the name of Rama. In a couplet in the Gitavali, Tulsidas says that wishing for liberation without refuge in the name of Rama is like wishing to climb to the sky by holding on to the falling rain.^[84] In his view, the name of Rama is greater than both Nirguna and Saguna aspects of God – it controls both of them and is illuminates both like a bilingual interpreter.^[85] In a verse in the Dohavali, Tulsidas says that the Nirguna Brahman resides in his heart, the Saguna Brahman resides in his eyes and the name of Rama resides on his tongue, as if a radiant gemstone is kept between the lower and upper halves of a golden casket.^[86] He holds that *Rama* is superior to all other names of God,^[87] and argues that *ra* and *ma* being are the only two consonants that are written above all other consonants in the conjunct form in Sanskrit because they are the two sounds in the word *Rama*.^[88]



Verses from Ramcharitmanas at the beginning of *Nam-vandana* (Extolling the name of Rama), at the Manas Mandir, Chitrakoot, India.

Rama as Brahman

At several places in Tulsidas' works, Rama is seen to be the higher than Vishnu and not as an avatar of Vishnu, which is the general portrayal of Rama.^{[89][90]} In the episode of the delusion of Sati in Ramcharitmanas, Sati sees many a Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu serving Rama and bowing at his feet.^[91] When Manu and Shatarupa perform penance, they crave to see that Supreme Lord "from a part of whose being emanate a number of Shivas, Brahmas and Vishnus."^[92] Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva come to them many times tempting them with a boon, but Manu and Shatarupa do not stop their penance. They are finally satisfied only by the appearance of Rama, on whose left side is Sita, from a part of whom are born "countless Lakshmis, Umas (Parvatis) and Brahmanis (Sarasvatis)." In the episode of marriage of Sita and Rama in Balkand, the trio of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is present - Brahma is astounded as he finds nowhere anything that is his own handiwork, while Vishnu is enchanted with Lakhmi on seeing Rama.^[93] In the Sundarkand, Hanuman tells Ravana that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva can create, preserve and destroy by the might of Rama.^[94] In the Lankakand, Tulsidas presents the universe as the cosmic form of Rama, in which Shiva is the consciousness, Brahma is the reason and Vishnu is his intelligence.^[95] As per Tulsidas, Rama is not only an avatar, but also the source of avatars – Krishna is also an Avatar of Rama.^[96]

In the opinion of Urvashi Soorati, the Rama of Tulsidas is an amalgamation of Vishnu who takes avatars, Vishnu in the abode of Ksheera Sagara, Brahman and the Para manifestation of the Pancharatra. Macfie concludes that Tulsidas makes a "double claim", i.e. Rama is an incarnation of both Vishnu and Brahman.^{[97][98]} In the words of Lutgendorf, Tulsidas' Rama is at once "Valmiki's exemplary prince, the cosmic Vishnu of Puranas, and the transcendent *brahman* of the Advaitins."^[99]

Vedanta, World and Maya

In the Sundarkand of Ramcharitmanas, Tulsidas says that Rama is knowable by Vedanta.^{[100][101]}

As per Tulsidas, Rama is the efficient and material cause (*Nimitta* and *Upadana*) of the world, which is real since Rama is real.^[102] In several verses of the Ramcharitmanas, Tulsidas says that the animate and inanimate world is a manifestation of Rama, and the universe is the cosmic form of Rama. Authors interpret these verses to mean that the world is real according to Tulsidas, in keeping with the Vishishtadvaita philosophy of Ramanuja.^{[103][104][105]} However, at some places in the Ramcharitmanas and Kavitavali, Tulsidas compares the world to a night or a dream and says it is *Mithya* (false or unreal). Some commentators interpret these verses to mean that in Tulsidas' opinion the world is unreal as per the *Vivartavada* doctrine of Adi Shankara, while some others interpret them to mean that the world is transient yet real as per the *Satkhyativada* doctrine of Ramananda.^{[106][107]} Uday Bhanu Singh concludes that in Tulsidas' view, the world is essentially the form of Rama and appears to be different from Rama due to Maya. Its visible form is transient, which is what Tulsidas means by *Mithya*. In the Vinayapatrika, Tulsidas says that the world in itself is neither true (*Satya*), nor false (*Asatya*), nor both true and false together (*Satyasatya*) – one who casts aside all these three illusions, knows oneself. This has been interpreted to mean that as per Tulsidas, the entire world is a Lila of Rama.^[108] At the beginning of the Ramcharitmanas, Tulsidas performs *Samasti Vandana* (obeisance to all beings) in which he bows down to the world also, saying it is "pervaded by" or "born out of" Sita and Rama.^{[109][110][111]} As per some verses in Ramcharitmanas and Vinayapatrika, when a Jiva (living being) knows the Self, *Maya* and Rama, it sees the world as being pervaded by Rama.

In the Balkand episode of the marriage of the princes of Ayodhya with the princesses of Mithila, Tulsidas presents a metaphor in which the four brides are compared with the four states of consciousness – the waking state (*Jagrat*), sleep with dreams (*Swapna*), dreamless sleep (*Sushupti*) and the fourth self-conscious state (*Turiya*). The four grooms are compared with the presiding divinity (*Vibhu*) of the four states – *Vishva*, *Taijasa*, *Prajna* and *Brahman*. Tulsidas says as the four states of consciousness with their presiding divinities reside in the mind of a Jiva, so the four brides with their grooms are resplendent in the same pavilion.^{[112][113]}

Tulsidas identifies Maya with Sita, the inseparable energy of Rama which takes avatar along with Rama.^[114] In his view, Maya is of two types – Vidya and Avidya. *Vidya Maya* is the cause of creation and the liberation of Jiva. Avidya Maya is the cause of illusion and bondage of the Jiva. The entire world is under the control of Maya. Maya is essentially the same but the two divisions are made for cognitive purposes, this view of Tulsidas is in accordance with Vaishnava teachers of Vedanta.

Views on other Hindu deities

As per Tulsidas, there is no incompatibility between devotion to Rama and attachment to Shiva.^{[115][116]} Tulsidas equates the Guru as an incarnation of Shiva,^[117] and a considerable part of the Balkand of Ramcharitmanas is devoted to the narrative of Shiva including the abandonment of Sati, the penance of Parvati, the burning of Kamadeva and the marriage of Parvati and Shiva.^[118] In addition, Tulsidas venerates the whole Hindu pantheon. The Ramcharitmanas begins with reverence of Ganesh, Sarasvati, Parvati, Shiva, the Guru, Valmiki and Hanuman. At the beginning of the Vinayapatrika, he bows to Ganesh, Surya, Shiva, Devi, Ganga, Yamuna, Varanasi and Chitrakoot, asking them for devotion towards Rama.^[119]

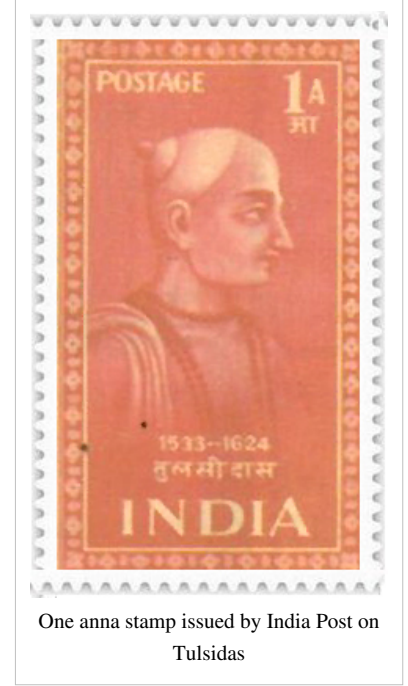
Bhakti

The Lord is to be approached by faith (bhakti) single minded devotion and surrender of self in perfect love, and all actions are to be purified of self-interest in contemplation of Him. Show love to all creatures, and thou wilt be happy; for when thou lovest all things, thou lovest the Lord, for He is all in all. The soul is from the Lord, and is submitted in this life to the bondage of works (karma); Mankind, in their obstinacy, keep binding themselves in the net of actions, and though they know and hear of the bliss of those who have faith in the Lord, they do not attempt the only means of release. The bliss to which the soul attains, by the extinction of desire, in the supreme home, is not

absorption in the Lord, but union with Him in abiding individuality. This is emancipation (mukti) from the burden of birth and rebirth, and the highest happiness. But the practical end of all his writings is to inculcate bhakti addressed to Rama as the great means of salvation and emancipation from the chain of births and deaths, a salvation which is as free and open to men of the lowest caste as to Brahmins.

Critical reception

From his time, Tulsidas has been acclaimed by Indian and Western scholars alike for his poetry and his impact on the Hindu society. Tulsidas mentions in his work *Kavitavali* that he was considered a *great sage* in the world.^[1] Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, one of the most acclaimed philosophers of the Advaita Vedanta tradition based in Varanasi and the composer of *Advaitasiddhi*, was a contemporary of Tulsidas. On reading the *Ramcharitmanas*, he was astonished and composed the following Sanskrit verse in praise of the epic and the composer.^[120]



आनन्दकानने कश्चिज्जङ्गमस्तुलसीतुरः ।
कवति मञ्जरी यस्य रामभ्रमरभूषति ॥

ānandakānane kaścijjaṅgamastulsītaruḥ ।
kavitā mañjarī yasya rāmaḥbhamarabhūṣitā ॥

“ In this place of Varanasi (Ānandakānana), there is a moving Tulsi plant (i.e., Tulsidas), whose branch of flowers in the form of [this] poem (i.e., *Ramcharitmanas*) is ever adorned by the bumblebee in the form of Rama. ”

Surdas, a devotee of Krishna and a contemporary of Tulsidas, called Tulsidas as *Sant Shiromani* (the highest jewel among holy men) in an eight-line verse extolling *Ramcharitmanas* and Tulsidas.^[121] Abdur Rahim Khankhana, famous Muslim poet who was one of the Navaratnas (nine-gems) in the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar, was a personal friend of Tulsidas. Rahim composed the following couplet describing the *Ramcharitmanas* of Tulsidas ^{[122][123]}

रामचरितमानस बमिल संतनजीवन प्रान ।
हन्दुवान को बेद सम जवनह प्रगट कुरान ॥

rāmacaritamānasa bimala santanajīvana prāna ।
hinduvāna ko beda sama javanah pragaṭa kurāna ॥

“ The immaculate *Ramcharitmanas* is the breath of the life of saints. It is similar to the Vedas for the Hindus, and it is the Quran manifest for the Muslims. ”

The historian Vincent Smith, the author of a biography of Tulsidas' contemporary Akbar, called Tulsidas as *the greatest man of his age in India and greater than even Akbar himself*.^[124] The Indologist and linguist Sir George Grierson called Tulsidas "the greatest leader of the people after the Buddha" and "the greatest of Indian authors of modern times"; and the epic *Ramcharitmanas* "worthy of the greatest poet of any age." The work *Ramcharitmanas*

has been called "the Bible of North India" by both nineteenth century Indologists including Ralph Griffith, who translated the four Vedas and Valmiki's Ramayana into English, and modern writers.^{[125][126]} Mahatma Gandhi held Tulsidas in high esteem and regarded the Ramcharitmanas as the "greatest book in all devotional literature". The Hindi poet Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala' called Tulsidas "the most fragrant branch of flowers in the garden of the world's poetry, blossoming in the creeper of Hindi". Nirala considered Tulsidas to be a greater poet than Rabindranath Tagore, and in the same league as Kalidasa, Vyasa, Valmiki, Homer, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and William Shakespeare. Hindi litterateur Hazari Prasad Dwivedi wrote that Tulsidas established a "sovereign rule on the kingdom of Dharma in northern India", which was comparable to the impact of Buddha. Edmour J. Babineau, author of the book *Love and God and Social Duty in Ramacaritmanasa*, says that if Tulsidas was born in Europe or the Americas, he would be considered a greater personality than William Shakespeare.^[127] In the words of the archaeologist F. R. Allchin, who translated Vinaypatrika and Kavitavali into English, "for people of a large part of North India Tulsidas claims reverence comparable to that accorded to Luther as translator of the Bible into the native German". Allchin also mentions that the work Ramcharitmanas has been compared to not only the Ramayana of Valmiki, but the Vedas themselves, the Bhagavad Gita, the Kuran and the Bible. Ernest Wood in his work *An Englishman Defends Mother India* considered the Ramcharitmanas to be "superior to the best books of the Latin and Greek languages."^[128] Tulsidas is also referred to as *Bhaktaśiromaṇi*, meaning the highest jewel among devotees.^[128]

Specifically about his poetry, Tulsidas has been called the "emperor of the metaphor" and one who excels in similes by several critics.^[129] The Hindi poet Ayodhyasingh Upadhyay 'Hariaudh' said of Tulsidas —^{[130][131]}

कविति करके तुलसी न लसे
कविति लसी पा तुलसी की कला ।

kavitā karake tulasī na lase
kavitā lasī pā tulasī kī kalā ।

“Tulsidas did not shine by composing poetry, rather it was Poetry herself that shone by getting the art of Tulsidas.”

The Hindi poetess Mahadevi Verma said commenting on Tulsidas that in the turbulent Middle Ages, India got light from Tulsidas. She further went on to say that the Indian society as it exists today is an edifice built by Tulsidas, and the Rama as we know today is the Rama of Tulsidas.^[132]

Notes

- [1] Pandey 2008, pp. 23–34.
- [2] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 12: सीयराममय सब जग जानी । करउँ प्रनाम जोरि जुग पानी ॥ (Ramcharitmanas 1.8.2).
- [3] Lutgendorf 2007, p. 293.
- [4] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 306.
- [5] Prasad 2008, p. 857, quoting Mata Prasad Gupta: Although he paid occasional visits to several places of pilgrimage associated with Rama, his permanent residence was in Kashi.
- [6] Handoo 1964, p. 128: ... this book ... is also a drama, because Goswami Tulasidasa started his *Ram Lila* on the basis of this book, which even now is performed in the same manner everywhere.
- [7] Prasad 2008, p. xii: He is not only the supreme poet, but the unofficial poet-laureate of India.
- [8] Prasad 2008, p. xix: Of Tulasidasa's place among the major Indian poets there can be no question: he is as sublime as Valmiki and as elegant as Kalidasa in his handling of the theme.
- [9] Lutgendorf 1991, p. 11: ... – scores of lines from the *Rāmcaritmānas* have entered folk speech as proverbs – ...
- [10] Lutgendorf 1991, p. 411: The hottest-selling recording in the thriving cassette stalls of Banaras in 1984... was a boxed set of eight cassettes comprising an abridged version of the Manas sung by the popular film singer Mukesh... it is impossible to say how many of the sets were sold, but by 1984 their impact was both visible and audible. One could scarcely attend a public or private religious function in Banaras that year without hearing, over the obligatory loudspeaker system, the familiar strains of Murli Manohar Svarup's orchestration and Mukesh's mellifluous chanting.
- [11] Lutgendorf 1991, p. 411–412: On January 25, 1987, a new program premiered on India's government-run television network, Doordarshan... it was the first time that television was used to present a serialized adaption of a religious epic. The chosen work was the Ramayan and the major source for the screenplay was the Manas. Long before the airing of the main story concluded on July 31, 1988, the Ramayan had become the most popular program ever shown on Indian television, drawing an estimated one hundred million viewers and generating

unprecedented advertising revenues. Throughout much of the country, activities came to a halt on Sunday mornings and streets and bazaars took on a deserted look, as people gathered before their own and neighbors' TV sets.... The phenomenal impact of the Ramayan serial merits closer examination than it can be given here, but it is clear that the production and the response it engendered once again dramatized the role of the epic as a principal medium not only for individual and collective religious experience but also for public discourse and social and cultural reflection.

- [12] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. xxv.
- [13] Growse 1914, p. v.
- [14] Prasad 2008, p. xix.
- [15] Lamb 2002, p. 38
- [16] Gita Press Publisher 2007, p. 25.
- [17] Ralhan 1997 pp. 187–194.
- [18] Shukla 2002, pp. 27–30.
- [19] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. xxvi–xxix.
- [20] Gita Press Publisher 2007, pp. 25–27.
- [21] Tripathi 2004, pp. 47–50.
- [22] Poddar 1997, pp. 112–113 (Stanza 76).
- [23] Pandey 2008, pp. 34–44.
- [24] Lutgendorf 1991, p. 6.
- [25] Indradev narayan 1996, pp. 93–94, 101–102 (Quatrains 7.57, 7.73).
- [26] Poddar 1997, pp. 285–286, 337–338 (Stanzas 227, 275).
- [27] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 80.
- [28] Ralhan 1997 pp. 197–207.
- [29] Pandey 2008, pp. 44–49.
- [30] Tripathi 2004, pp. 51–55
- [31] Pandey 2008 p. 49: As per the Mula Gosain Charita, Ratnavali said, "हाड माँस की देह मम तापर जतिनी प्रीति तसि आधी जो राम प्रत अवस मितिहि भवभीति॥." Acharya Ramchandra Shukla gives a slightly different version as "अस्य चर्म मय देह मम तामे जैसी प्रीति तैसी जो श्री राम मैंह होत न तो भवभीति॥"
- [32] Ralhan 1997, pp. 194–197.
- [33] Shukla 2002, pp. 30–32.
- [34] Gita Press Publisher 2007, pp. 27–29.
- [35] Lutgendorf 1991, p. 25.
- [36] Pradas 2008, p. 878, quoting J. L. Brockington: ... for in his more personal *Vinayapatrika* Tulasi alludes to having visions of Rama.
- [37] Lutgendorf 1991, pp. 49–50.
- [38] Growse 1914, p. ix.
- [39] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. xxix–xxxiv.
- [40] Poddar 1997, pp. 338–339 (Stanza 276).
- [41] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. 48–49 (Ramcharitmanas 1.44.1–44.6)
- [42] Macfie 2004, p. xxiv
- [43] Growse 1914, p. ix–x.
- [44] Mishra 2010, pp. 22–24.
- [45] Singh 2008, pp. 29–30.
- [46] Mishra 2010, p. 28–32
- [47] The Din-I-Ilahi, or, The religion of Akbar by Makhan Lal Roy Choudhury. Oriental Reprint, 1985
- [48] Mishra 2010, pp. 37–38
- [49] Gita Press Publisher 2007, pp. 29–32.
- [50] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 66 (Ramcharitmanas 1.15).
- [51] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. 38–39: संवत् सोरह से एकतीसा। करउँ कथा हरि पद धरि शीसा॥ नौमी भौम बार मधु मासा। अवधपुरी यह चरति प्रकासा॥ जेहि दिन राम जनम श्रुत गावहि तीरथ सकल इहाँ चलि आवहि॥ (Ramcharitmanas, 1.34.4–1.34.6)
- [52] Lutgendorf 1991, pp. 9–10
- [53] Lamb 2002, p. 39
- [54] Macfie 2004, pp. xxiii–xxiv.
- [55] Pandey 2008, pp. 51–58.
- [56] Poddar 1997, pp. 341–342 (Stanza 279): मुदति माथ नावत बनी तुलसी अनाथकी परी रघुनाथ हाथ सही है (Tulsidas bows his head with elation, the orphan has been redeemed, for the signature of Rama's hand has been made [on the Vinayapatrika]).
- [57] Poddar 1997, pp. 64–65.
- [58] Pandey 2008, pp. 58–60: संवत् सोरह से असी असी गंग के तीर। श्रावण शुक्ला सत्तमी तुलसी तज्यो शरीर॥ quoting Mata Prasad Gupta, and also संवत् सोरह से असी असी गंग के तीर। श्रावण श्यामा तीज शनि तुलसी तज्यो शरीर॥ quoting the Mula Gosain Charita.
- [59] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. xxxiv: संवत् सोरह से असी असी गंग के तीर। श्रावण शुक्ला तीज शनि तुलसी तज्यो शरीर॥
- [60] Pandey 2008, pp. 54–58
- [61] Lutgendorf 1991, pp. 13–18.

- [62] Prasad 2008, p. xix, footnote 3.
- [63] Mishra 2010, Title.
- [64] Lutgendorf 1991, p. 1.
- [65] Prasad 2008, p. 850, quoting George Grierson.
- [66] Singh 2005, p. 44.
- [67] Lutgendorf 1991, p. 11.
- [68] Prasad 2008, pp. xiii–xv.
- [69] Prasad 2008, p. xv: Probably the most marvellous thing about the life of Tulasidasa... is his capacity for assimilating diverse tenets, Vaishnava, Shaiva, Advaita, Sankhya, etc.
- [70] Prasad 2008, p. xx: ... the *Ramacharitamansa* interprets the period allegorically and from the Vaishnavite angle of a poet who "attempted to reconcile the Advaita Vedanta point of view with the Ramaite teachings of Ramananda's disciples".
- [71] Dwivedi 2008, p. 99: उनका सारा काव्य समन्वय की वरिष्ठ चेष्टा है। लोक और शास्त्र का समन्वय, गार्हस्थ्य और वैराग्य का समन्वय, भक्ति और ज्ञान का समन्वय, भाषा और संस्कृत का समन्वय, नरिगुण और सगुण का समन्वय, कथा और तत्त्व ज्ञान का समन्वय, ब्राह्मण और चांडाल का समन्वय, पांडित्य और अर्थाडित्य का समन्वय — रामचरितमानस शुरु से आखिर तक समन्वय का काव्य है।
- [72] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 3: नानापुराणनगिमागमसम्मत ...
- [73] Prasad 2008, pp. 84–85.
- [74] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 149 (Ramcharitmanas 1.116.1–1.116.3): सगुनह अगुनह नहि किछु भेदा। गावह मुनि पुरान बुध बेदा॥ अगुन अरूप अलख आज जोई। भगत प्रेम बश सगुन सो होई॥ जो गुन रहति सगुन सोई कैसे। जल हमि उपल बलिंग नहि जैसे॥
- [75] Prasad 2008, pp. 520–521.
- [76] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 647 (Ramcharitmanas 4.17.2): फूले कमल सोह सर कैसे। नरिगुन ब्रह्म सगुन भए जैसे॥
- [77] Prasad 2008, pp. 767–771.
- [78] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. 943–948 (Ramcharitmanas 7.111.1–7.114.7)
- [79] Dwivedi 2009, p. 132.
- [80] Singh 2008, pp. 200–201: उन्होंने उत्तेजित होकर कबीर के मत का ओजस्वी शब्दों में प्रतिकार किया ... कबीर का अवतार वरिधी कथन था ... तुलसी ने "आना" और "अंधा" शब्दों को लक्ष्य करके शिव से मुँहटोड़ उत्तर दिलाया ...
- [81] Prasad 2008, p. 84.
- [82] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. 24–32.
- [83] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. 31–32 (Ramcharitmanas 1.27.3, 1.27.7): ध्यान प्रथम जुग मख बधि दूजे। द्वापर परतिपत प्रभु पूजे॥ ... नहि कलि करम न भगत बिबिक्। राम नाम अवलंबन एक॥
- [84] Poddar 1996, p. 14 (Dohavali 20): राम नाम अवलंब बनि परमारथ की आस। बरषत बारदि बूँद गहि चाहत चढ़न अकास॥
- [85] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. 27–28 (Ramcharitmanas 1.21.8, 1.23.3): अगुन सगुन बचि नाम सुसाखी॥ उभय प्रबोधक चतुर दुभाखी॥ ... मोरे मत बड़ नाम दुहूँ ते। कएि जेहि जुग नजि बस नजि बूँते॥
- [86] Poddar 1996, p. 10–11 (Dohavali 7): हरि नरिगुन नयन निसिगुन रसना राम सुनाम। मनुहुँ पुर संपुट लसत तुलसी ललति ललाम॥
- [87] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. 623–624 (Ramcharitmanas 3.44.7–3.44): जद्यपि प्रभु के नाम अनेका। श्रुति कहि अधिकि एक ते एका॥ राम सकल नामन्ह ते अधिकि। होउ नाथ अघ खग गन बधिक॥ राका रजनी भगति तव राम नाम सोई सोम। अपर नाम उडगन बमिल बसहुँ भगत उर व्योम॥ एवमस्तु मुनि सन कहेउ कृपासधि रघुनाथ। तब नारद मन हरष अति प्रभु पद नाथउ माथ॥
- [88] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 26 (Ramcharitmanas 1.20): एक छत्र एक मुकुटमनि सब बरनन पर जोउ। तुलसी रघुबर नाम के बरन बरिजत दोउ॥
- [89] Prasad 2008, p. 875, quoting Frank Whaling: Theologically, Tulasidasa continues the process, begun in the *Adhyatma [Ramayana]*, whereby Rama is seen to be higher than Vishnu. We see this in Tulasi's stress upon the Name of Rama; we see it also in Tulasi's assertions that Rama is Brahman whereas Vishnu is not. ... Tulasi uses the word Rama in the sense of God, ... The usual comparison has been between Rama and Christ, but perhaps an apter comparison is between Rama and the Christian God, for in terms of Ramology, Rama is equivalent to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- [90] Singh 2005, p. 180: भगवान राम ब्रह्मा, विष्णु और महेश को नचाने वाले हैं, क्योंकि उनके अंश मात्र से इन तीन मूर्तियों का आविर्भाव हुआ है। आदशिकृति के भू-कटाक्ष से अगणति सरस्वतियों, लक्ष्मणियों और उमाएँ उत्पन्न होती हैं; अतएव सीताराम विवाह के अवसर पर ये त्रिदेव अपनी देवियों के साथ उपस्थिति थे। ... तुलसी के लिए रामचन्द्रजी भगवान् विष्णु और शिव से बहुत ऊँचे हैं, क्योंकि वे दोनों ही अपनी अपनी पत्नियों सहित उपस्थिति रहते हैं।
- [91] Prasad 2008, p. 45 (Ramcharitmanas 1.45.7–8).
- [92] Prasad 2008, pp. 102–104.
- [93] Prasad 2008, pp. 210, 212 (Ramcharitmanas 1.314.8, 1.317.3).
- [94] Prasad 2008, p. 549 (Ramcharitmanas 5.21.3).
- [95] Prasad 2008, p. 589 (Ramcharitmanas 6.15 Ka).
- [96] Singh 2008, p. 230: तुलसीदास द्वारा किया गया इतिवृत्त वर्णन तीन कथानायकों पर केन्द्रित है — राम, शिव और कृष्ण। ... राम अवतार मात्र नहीं है, वे अवतारी भी हैं। कृष्ण राम के ही अवतार हैं। अतः उनकी अवतार-लीला भी रूपान्तर से राम की ही अवतार लीला है।
- [97] Macfie 2004, p. 93: The poet's claim is that he is not only an incarnation of Vishnu, the second member of the Triad, but of Brahm, the uncreated, invisible, all-pervading Brahm, the Supreme Spirit of the universe, who has taken on himself a visible form.
- [98] Macfie 2004, *Chapter IX: Rama, the incarnation of Vishnu, and of Brahm, the Supreme God*, pp. 93–160.
- [99] Lutgendorf 1991, p. 10.
- [100] Prasad 2008, p. 533.
- [101] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 660
- [102] Singh 2008, pp. 272–273.
- [103] Shukla 2002, pp. 50–51.

- [104] Prasad 2008, pp. 510, 588–589.
- [105] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 632–633, 728–729.
- [106] Prasad 2008, pp. 82, 307, 500.
- [107] Rambhadracharya 2008, pp. 101, 377–378, 621.
- [108] Poddar 1997, pp. 144–145 (Stanza 111).
- [109] Lutgendorf 1991, p. xi.
- [110] Prasad 2008, p. 8.
- [111] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 12.
- [112] Prasad 2008, p. 221.
- [113] Rambhadracharya 2008, p. 275.
- [114] Singh 2008, p. 272.
- [115] Prasad 2008, p. 579 (Ramcharitmanas 6.2): Those who are devoted to Shankara and are hostile to me, and those who are opposed to Shiva but would fain be my servants, shall have their abode in the deepest hell for a full aeon.
- [116] Lutgendorf 1991, p. 48: I have noted that a major theme of Tulsi's epic is the compatibility of the worship of Ram/Vishnu with that of Shiva.
- [117] Prasad 2008, p. 1
- [118] Prasad 2008, pp. 40–77 (Ramcharitmanas 1.48–1.104).
- [119] Poddar 1997, pp. 1–24 (Stanzas 1–24).
- [120] Shukla 2002, p. 33.
- [121] Shukla 2002, p. 34.
- [122] Shukla 2002, p. 35.
- [123] Pandey 2008, pp. 11–12.
- [124] Dwivedi 2009, p. 125.
- [125] Growse 1914, p. Cover: "The Ramayan of Tulsi Das is more popular and more honoured by the people of North-Western provinces than the Bible is by the corresponding classed in England", Griffith.
- [126] Macfie 2004, p. vii: The choice of the subtitle is no exaggeration. The book is indeed the Bible of Northern India.
- [127] Pandey 2008, p. 12.
- [128] Shukla 2002, p. 27
- [129] Prasad 2008, p. xx: Kalidasa's *forte* is declared to lie in similes, Tulasidasa excels in both metaphors and similes, especially the latter.
- [130] Pandey 2008, p. 10.
- [131] Singh 2008, p. 339.
- [132] Pandey 2008, p. 11: इस सन्दर्भ में सुप्रसिद्ध कवयित्री महादेवी वर्मा का कथन द्रष्टव्य है — हमारा देश नरिशा के गहन अन्धकार में साधक, साहित्यकारों से ही आलोक पाता रहा है। जब तलवारों का पानी उतर गया, शंखों का घोष बलीन हो गया, तब भी तुलसी के कमंडल का पानी नहीं सूखा ... आज भी जो समाज हमारे सामने है वह तुलसीदास का नृसिंहाण है। हम पौराणिक राम को नहीं जानते, तुलसीदास के राम को जानते हैं।

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External links

- Tulsi-Eulogy
- Works of Tulsidas in Hindi on Wikisource (<http://wikisource.org/wiki/तुलसीदास>)
- The Ramcharitmanas of Tulasidas, published by Gita Press (http://www.gitapress.org/BOOKS/1318/1318_Sri_Ramchritmanas_Roman.pdf)

Tukaram

Tukaram



Sant Tukaram

Born	1577 Dehu, near Pune, India
Died	indrayani, Maharashtra
Titles/honours	<i>Sant</i> in Marathi
Sect associated	Varkari
Literary works	Abhanga devotional poetry, Tukaram Gatha

Sant Tukaram (1577–1650) was a prominent Varkari Sant and spiritual poet of the Bhakti. He is often referred to with an honorific, Sant Tukaram. Tukaram was a devotee of Vitthala or Vithoba, a form of God Vishnu.

Life and Works

Tukaram was born in the year 1577 and lived most of his life in Dehu, a town close to Pune in Mahārāshtra, India. Kumar, Munshi, Kincaid and Parasanisa, consider him to be of the Kunbi Maratha or agricultural tillage caste or vaani. In accordance with an Indian tradition, Tukaram's family name is rarely used in identifying him. His real name is Tukaram Bolhoba Aambile. Rather, in accord with another tradition in India of assigning the epithet "sant" (संत) to persons regarded as thoroughly saintly, Tukaram is commonly known in Maharashtra as Sant Tukaram (संत तुकाराम). He is known as *Bhakta Tukaram* to southern Indian people.

Scholars assign various birth years to Tukaram: 1602, 1608, 1618 and 1639 CE. The year of Tukaram's departure —1650 CE— is much more certain.^[1]

Tukaram's first wife, Rakhumābāi, died in her early youth. Sant Tukaram and his second wife, Jijiābāi (also known as Āvali), had three sons: Santu or Mahādev, Vithobā, and Nārāyan.

Contribution To The Bhakti Movement

Sant Tukaram is considered as one of the most important saints of the Bhakti Movement. The Bhakti Movement which spread across India from the 13th-17th Century challenged its contemporary stratification of society which placed Brahmins at the apex and others below them. Tukaram and many other saints of his generation were active in challenging this set-up.

The Indian subcontinent had prospered culturally for many centuries, with the most prominent eras being 500 BC to 1000 AD. The Indian subcontinent enjoyed an upsurge in education, scientific and philosophical introspection. Not only this, every aspect of the society prospered including, establishing trade relations with countries like Greece, Iran and China. But after 1000 AD, the society went downhill, there was widespread disparity, "caste practices" and other social evils began in this era. Brahmins made education inaccessible to other classes of the society. Orthodox practices and rituals were used as tools for dominating others. Since caste system placed "Brahmins" in position of teaching, all rights towards education and ultimately towards "finding God" were owned by Brahmins. This led to "untouchability"

Circumstances reached a climactic point where the society was facing evils due to Brahmin domination as well as there were many foreign invasions that were changing and challenging the known worldview for the contemporary people. It is during this time that, what constitutes the Bhakti Movement began to take shape across the many parts of the country.

One of the prominent saint of the Bhakti Movement is Sant Tukaram. He had a great understanding of Hindu philosophy and wrote many songs in praise of God Vitthal, revered as an incarnation of Vishnu. The Brahmins of his village Dehu were deeply offended by this act of pursuing God by a non-Brahmin. They challenged his interpretation of the Vedas and Puranas and tried to destroy the abhang songs written by him. According to Sant Tukaram, there is no reference of any caste hierarchy mentioned in the Vedas. This opinion became very popular. His abhangs had themes varying from humility, equality, concern for ecology and God's Grace, were sung and recorded in his name.

Dilip Purushottam Chitre, a well known Marathi Scholar, identifies Tukaram as the first modern poet of Marathi. Chitre believes that Tukaram was the successor to Dnyaneshwar who denied caste hierarchy in Hindu religion and attacked rituals present in Hinduism. Tukaram has attacked almost every form of myth existing in Hindu society during his time. He opposed the existing system of human's by misunderstanding **chaturvarna** in veda's as un-touchability or division's of politic's.

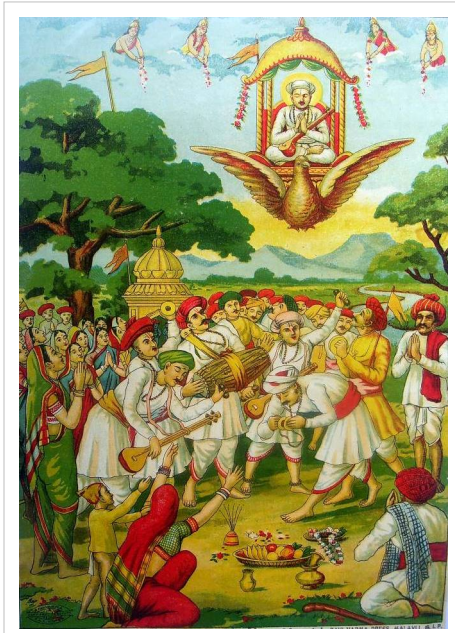
Spiritual life and poetry

Tukaram was a devotee of Vitthala or Vithoba, a form of God Vishnu.

Tukaram is considered to be the climactic point of the (वारकरी) Wikipedia:Please clarify tradition, which is thought to have begun in Maharashtra with Namdev. Dnyaneshwar, Janabai, Eknath, and Tukaram are revered especially in the (वारकरी) Dharma in Maharashtra. Most information about the lives of the above saints of Maharashtra comes from the works *Bhakti-Wijay* and *Bhakti-Leelāmrut* of Mahipati. Mahipati was born 65 years after the death of Tukaram, (Tukaram having died 50 years, 300 years, and 353 years after the deaths of Ekanath, Namdev, and Dnyaneshwar, respectively.) Thus, Mahipati undoubtedly based his life sketches of all the above "sants" primarily on hearsay.

Namdev as Guru

Tukaram accepted 'Namdev maharaj as his Guru. One of his abhanga is proof for this.[नामदेवे केले स्वप्नामाजी जागे....सवे पांडुरंगे येवूनयि.] Namdev woke me from a dream, and prepared me for the service of Lord Vitthal. Sant Tukaram has also mentioned in one of his abhanga that his sadguru's name is 'Babaji Chaitanya'. [बाबाजी चैतन्य सांगतिले नाम, मंत्र दलि राम कृष्ण हरी]



Tukaram leaves for Vaikuntha, Supreme Abode of God Vishnu.

Films on Tukaram

Tukaram was also the subject of a biopic, title *Sant Tukaram*, made in 1936 by V. Damle and S. Fattelal of the Prabhat Film Company, starring Vishnupant Pagnis as the lead, and released on December 12, 1936 at the Central Cinema in Mumbai. The film was a big hit, and broke all previous records by running continuously for 57 weeks. It also had won an award at the 5th Venice International Film Festival in 1937, and still remains a part of film appreciation courses.^{[2][3]} It is preserved at the National Film Archive of India.

A Hindi film entitled "Sant Tukaram" starring Shreepadraj Amle and Anagha Kulkarni was released in 1965. This film was very well made, and featured hit songs sung by Rafi such as "ab to bata de avgun mere paav pada hoon shyam" etc. Both Shreepadraj Amle and Anagha Kulkarni have given outstanding performances in this film.

More recently, in 2012, a Marathi language film titled "Sant Tukaram" has been released. For 2012 Marathi film, see Tukaram (film).

The story of Tukaram was also made in Telugu as Bhakta Tukaram in 1973 by Anjali Pictures. Akkineni Nageswara Rao played the title role with great devotion.^[4] The Telugu film features melodious songs sung by Ghantasala among others, and music by Adinarayana Rao. Madhusudana Rao has provided exemplary direction and versatile actor Akkineni Nageswara Rao has given one of the best acting performances of his career. Well known Telugu actress Anjali Devi plays the role of Tukaram's second wife Jijabai in this film and is also the film's producer. The songs in this movie fill one's heart with devotion and are melodious to the ears even to this day, so much so that one wants to hear them again and again.

Dr. Raj Kumar played the role of 'Santa Tukarama' in the Kannada language.

All the films that have been made thus far on Tukaram's life have been excellent, and very moving. They feature many of the miracles observed by the people of Dehu village involving Sant Tukaram, who had Lord Panduranga Vitthal's name on his lips all the time. These miracles show God's love for, and support to His devotees who chant His name without selfishness day and night. Tukaram believed that one should chant God's name (Panduranga

Vitthal) with love, and not for earning something in exchange for the chant. He urged people to look beyond the transience of worldly affairs, and realize that it is only the unselfish chant of God's name that delivers a person from the misery and suffering of this earthly existence. Tukaram himself realized this after his mother, wife and son died and he experienced one suffering after another. When Tukaram became disgusted after all this, God appeared in his dream and suggested that his suffering would end if he chants God's name with love. After this incident, Tukaram began chanting God's name and singing poems called "abhangs", which are loaded with meaning and messages about love for God and the transience of worldly affairs. These messages are conveyed by all the films mentioned above very well, and one gets emotional after seeing any of the above films. The essence of Tukaram's abhangs have also been captured well enough in the music of all the films about Tukaram that have been made to date.

Books on Sant Tukaram

Mahipati received one night in his dream a command from the departed spirit of Sant Tukaram to write the life stories of past prominent religious figures in Maharashtra. Accordingly, Mahipati put together his biographical book Bhaktavijaya in Marathi. Mahipati wrote two books titled Bhaktavijay and Bhakti-Leelāmrut, whatever information about the life of Tukaram is known today is mostly from works of Mahipati.

Dilip Chitre (18 September 1938 - 10 December 2009) has translated writings of Sant Tukaram into English in the book titled *Says Tuka* for which he was awarded the *Sahitya Akademi* award in 1994. *Says Tuka* was later translated into other languages.^[5]

Further reading

- Fraser, James Nelson; Rev. Edward Cullen (1922). *The Life and Teaching of Tukārām*^[6]. The Christian Literature Society for India, Madras.

Notes

- [1] A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives By Richard M. Eaton ISBN 0-521-71627-6, ISBN 978-0-521-71627-7
- [2] 'Saint Tukaram' film still a topic of interest (<http://www.televisionpoint.com/news2007/newsfullstory.php?id=1198663828>) Anurag Basu - Televisionpoint.com, Dec 26, 2007.
- [3] Lost & found: A piece of classic cinema history (<http://cities.expressindia.com/fullstory.php?newsid=79904>) Indian Express, March 26, 2004.
- [4] Retrospect : Bhakta Tukaram (http://www.telugucinema.com/c/publish/movieretrospect/retro_bhaktatukaram.php)
- [5] Times of India 11 December 2009
- [6] <http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924023185857#page/n5/mode/2up>

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- Multiple Essays on Sant Tukaram and his work in books of M. V. Dhond
- "Shakti Saushtava शक्ती सौष्टव" by D. G. Godse
- "Vinoba Saraswat" by Vinoba Bhave (edited by Ram Shewalkar)
- "Tryambak Shankar Shejwalkar Nivadak Lekhsangrah" by T S Shejwalkar (collection- H V Mote, Introduction- G D Khanolkar)

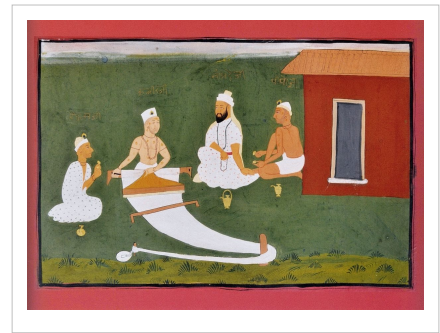
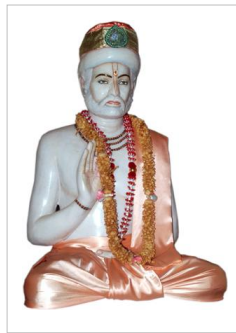
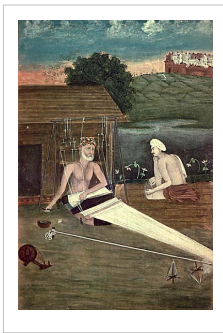
External links

- <http://santeknath.org/abhasakachya%20pratikriya.html>
- Tukaram Online (<http://tukaram.com/>)
- Tukaram Gatha (http://mr.wikibooks.org/wiki/अ॒र॒व॒ण॒क॒व॒च॒/४॒अ॒र॒व॒ण॒क॒व॒च॒_॒अ॒र॒व॒ण॒क॒व॒च॒_॒अ॒र॒व॒ण॒क॒व॒च॒)

Kabir panth

The **Satguru Kabir Panth** (Hindi: कबीर-पंथ) "Path of Kabir") is a Philosophy and religious community of India encompassing a wide spectrum of beliefs, traditions and practices based on the teachings of Kabir. Its adherents are of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain ancestry (with an overwhelming majority being Hindu.^[1]) . KabirPanthis or "followers of the path of Kabir" are numerous throughout all parts of India and are also found in Indian communities in large numbers in Africa, particularly Eastern Africa in Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda and the island of Mauritius as well as in Nepal, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Guyana, Fiji, Suriname, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom, Canada and the United States.

Pictures about Kabir



Kabir

Kabir Saheb appeared on lotus in the Hindu holy city of Varanasi, also known as Kashi, in the 13th century AD and disappeared in the early 15th century AD. According to some people he was initiated by Ramananda, a famous Hindu guru and community leader at that time. Using poignant language, Kabir criticized caste ideology and declared the equality of all human beings. He employed a Socratic method of teaching, pleading with all human beings regardless of their gender, status, caste, color, race, religion or occupation to think critically about their lives and pursuits and the salvation of their soul. He "spoke truth to power", confronting the most hostile of the Muslim rulers as well as the Hindu kings and sages, Buddhist scholars and Jain monks of the time, and was fearless and relentless in his pursuit of the salvation of humanity at large.^[*citation needed*]

Kabir Saheb was an oral poet whose works were written down by others. His lyrics have flourished for more than 600 years, producing music, folk and classical, in countless local dialects and regional styles. Thousands of poems are popularly attributed to him.

Practices and beliefs

Kabir Panthis can follow the ethical and social customs of the day according to tradition without hindrance. Lay persons can be cremated according to Hindu law and priests can be buried or cremated depending upon which tradition one wishes to follow. In the West Indies and across Canada and North America, Kabir Panthis may opt for burning or burial.

Kabir Panthis observe sanctity and purity in their daily lives and behavior. The foundation of their belief and practice is Dharma, or "the natural Law of life", Satya, or "The primordial and eternal truth", Ahimsa, or "Non-violence towards all beings through word and deed", Bhakti, or "devotional love for god and a higher spiritual reality", Sraddha, or "Faith and unswerving loyalty", Asteya, or "not hoarding, not coveting", Kshama, or "forgiveness and patience", Daya, or "compassion, mercy, and conquering feelings of cruelty and insensitivity towards all beings", Shaucha or "purity in body, mind and speech", Aparigraha, or "limiting possessions to what is necessary and being non-materialistic", Anekantvada, or "acceptance of different beliefs and the multiplicity of viewpoints", Vishwa Bandhutva, or "The universal brotherhood of all beings" and Atma Gyan or "The awareness of ones true self, which is no different from the one true reality which pervades in everyone, thus making everyone the one and only true reality". This basic set of guidelines gives Kabir Panthi's an all encompassing formula for Love, Humility, Compassion and Unity. A Kabir Panthi Lay person is called a Bhakt and priests are addressed with the honorific title of Mahant. Spiritual leaders are called Acharya or Guru. Monks who are more ascetic in nature, who do not marry and engage in more severe spiritual pursuits while never living in one place, constantly moving from monastery to monastery are called Brahmachari Sadhu's, whereas those monks who do marry, have children and live a more relaxed spiritual life are *Grihasta* Sadhus. Similarly, women who have chosen to be Nuns are called Sadhvis. God is called by an infinite array of names but some of the more common names are "Satya Purush", "Soham Sadguru", "Adi Guru, Param Satyeshwar", or simply "Sadguru Kabir Saheb". During their religious ceremonies Kabir Panthi's sing the songs, *bhajans* and *Sakhis* of Kabir to the music of cymbals, drums and other Indian instruments. The Guru recites various prayers and Mantras, all of which remind devotees to remember God in all that they do.

One's mind and body must be kept pure by contemplation and avoiding gross and complicated behaviour. Such practice will allow one to attain salvation while living no matter what ones religion or other personal endeavour may be. A mark of initiation into the Kabir Panth is given in the form of a Kanthi Mala. It is a necklace made from the sacred Tulsi beads. It is also made out of holy Rudraksha beads and can also be made using yagyopaveet string with just one large Tulsi or Rudraksha bead. It is worn by choice and is typically given to one who has committed to avoiding lust, anger, greed, attachment to perishable things, and ego. Sahaja Yoga involves remembering God by repeating *Satyanaam*. Kabir Panthis believe in simplicity of life; simple food, clothing and belongings. One should only acquire what is needed for sustenance. Kabir Panthis are strictly vegetarian and avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco.

Separate organizations have formed over the years. One of the largest groups of Kabir Panthis outside India is in Trinidad and Tobago: three smaller active groups exist in Guyana, Suriname and also in Canada. The Kabir Panth Association in Trinidad and Tobago operates two primary schools and was one of the first religious denominational schools founded in the region. Recently, other groups have been formed in Trinidad and Tobago [like Kabir Chaura Math, Satya Kabir Nidhi], each with their own emphasis on the teachings of Kabir Saheb and with their own affiliations in Trinidad and Tobago, Bhaarat and elsewhere in the World.

Scriptures

The Bijak

The most sacred books of the Kabirpanthi sect are the Bijak, many passages from which are presented in the Guru Granth Sahib and the Anuraag Saagar. In a blunt and uncompromising style the Bijak exhorts its readers to shed their delusions, pretensions, and orthodoxies in favor of a direct experience of truth. It satirizes hypocrisy, greed, and violence, especially among the religious.

The Bījak includes three main sections (called *Ramainī*, *Shabda* and *Sākhī*) and a fourth section containing miscellaneous folksongs. Most of Kabir's material has been popularized through the song form known as Shabda (or pada) and through the aphoristic two-line sākhī (or doha) that serves throughout north India as a vehicle for popular wisdom. In the Anurag Sagar, the story of creation is told to Dharamdas [one of Kabir Saheb's disciples], and the Maan Sarowaris another collection of teachings of Kabir Saheb from the Dharamdasi branch of the Kabir panth.

Anurag Sagar

Kabir Bani

Kabir Granthawali

Sakhi Granth

Biographies

Kabir Kasauti

Kabir Manshur of Paramanandadas

Major centres

The centres of major branches of Kabirpanthis are the ^[2]

- Kabir Chaura based in Varanasi with a branch at Maghar, founded by Shruta Gopal Sahib (d. 1551 AD)^[3]
- Biddupur seat founded by Jagu Sahib
- Dhanuati (Chhapra, Bihar) founded by Bhagvan Sahib, the scribe of Bijak^[4]
- Chhatisgarh seat at Kudurmāl, founded by Mukhtamani Sahib (Vikram Samvat 1570-1630). They belong to the line of Dharmadas Sahib.

External links

- Website of the Kabir Chaura, monastery of the Kabir Panthis ^[5]
- Website for Sadguru Prakatya Dham, Kabir Bagh. Lahartara .Varanasi ^[6]
- Kabir : Truth Beyond Legends and Miracles ^[7]
- Website for Kabir Association Canada. Includes Sakhis, Ramaini and Bhajans ^[8]
- Website of the Kabir Ashram Jamnagar ^[9]
- Website dedicated to Kabir Ashrams ^[10]
- Mandir in the capital of India, New Delhi ^[11]
- website of the Kabirpanthi's in Holland and Surinam ^[12]
- Information about Kabir Panth ^[13]
- website of the Sahib Bandgi in India ^[14]
- Website for Kabir Ashram Limdi ^[15]
- Bhagat Mahasabha's Efforts to Unite Kabirpanthi In India ^[16]
- Website of Kabir Panthi Satgur Isherdas Ji Maharaj ^[17]
- Satguru Kabir GuruSaheb Foundation ^[18]

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Advait Mat

Advait Mat was a cluster of movements in northern India which perceive themselves to be originating from Totapuri in the 18th century.^[1]

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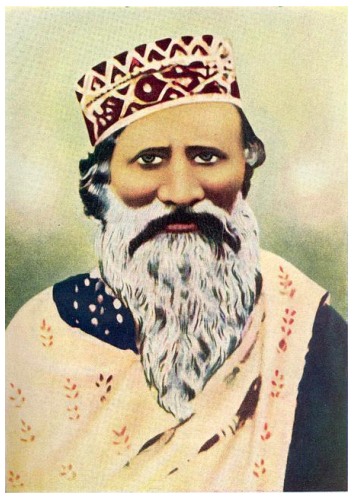
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Radha Soami

Radha Soami



Radha soami Satsang

Motto	To experience the divinity of God who resides in all of us. To realize the truth of the concept that there is only one God and we are all expressions of his love.
Formation	1861
Region served	Worldwide
Membership	3,000,000
Official languages	Hindi, Punjabi
Main organ	Radhasoami Satsang

Radhasoami (Radha Swami) is a spiritual movement that originated in 19th century India, and is considered by adherents as a true way to attain God realization. The Radhasoami faith is also referred to as Sant Mat, the "Path of the Sants." The word "Radhasoami" itself is actually a combination of two words: "Radha" (referring to the soul or spiritual essence, either of an individual or of the whole) and "Soami" (referring to the spiritual master; cognate to the Sanskrit term swami or svami); the combined word thus refers to the "Lord of the Soul" or God. It also can be interpreted to mean the "Master Soul" or "Spirit Master" who guides the disciple to higher states of consciousness. Like Sant Mat sects, Radhasoami emphasizes the use of listening to inner sound accessed by (mantra/simran), combined with personal loyalty to a given living Master, for devotees to attain desired states of spiritual advancement.

Shiv Dayal Singh, called "Soamiji Maharaj" by devotees and admirers, was a khatri seth by caste in Agra, India. He used to insist that anyone who chose to follow him must give up non-vegetarian food, abstain from alcohol and intoxicants, lead a high moral life and engage in over two hours of shabd yoga (sound-current yoga) meditation per day.

In the mid-1850s, Shiv Dayal Singh had a handful of followers in Agra. However, his teachings eventually attracted disciples from across India and by the time of his death in 1878, Shiv Dayal had several thousands of followers. He died on 15 June 1878 in Agra, India.

Shiv Dayal Singh's wife, Narayani Devi (called Radhaji), Rai Saligram (called Huzur Maharaj), Sanmukh Das, Gharib Das, Partap Singh (Shiv Dayal's younger brother) and Baba Jaimal Singh were some of his prominent

followers around whom individual satsang groups formed. This splintering off, led to the propagation of Radhasoami teachings to a wider audience, although with slightly varied interpretations.

Spiritual Meditation

Radhasoami teachings center upon a type of meditation practice known as surat shabd yoga. *Shabd* is referring to a spiritual current which can be perceived in meditation as inner light and sound. *Yoga* is referring to the uniting of our real essence (*soul*) through an inner listening with focused mental concentration (*surat*) upon an inner sound (*shabd*) which it is maintained emanates from *Radhasoami* the Supreme Being. It is therefore taught as the unchanging and primordial technique for uniting the soul with the supreme being via the power of Shabd.

Following the practice of meditation under the guidance of a spiritual teacher who is himself in contact with Shabd, is considered of paramount importance.

Pre-requisites for successful achievement of the meditation practice are a lacto-vegetarian diet, abstaining from drugs and alcohol, and maintaining a pure and moral lifestyle.

Radha Soami Satsang Beas Lineage of Successors

The Beas Satsang was founded by Shivdayal Singh's disciple Jaimal Singh. The Beas lineage is:

- Bābā Jaimal Singh Mahārāj - Master, 1884-1903.
- Hazur Bābā Sāwan Singh Mahārāj - Master, 1903-1948.
- Sardār Bahādūr Jagat Singh Mahārāj - Master, 1948-1951.
- Mahārāj Charan Singh - Master, 1951-1990.
- Bābā Gurinder Singh Mahārāj - Master, 1990—present.

At the core of the RSSB philosophy is a belief that there is a spiritual purpose to human life – to experience the divinity of God who resides in all of us. It is through this experience that we will realize the truth of the concept that there is only one God and we are all expressions of his love. Central to the RSSB philosophy is a living spiritual teacher who explains the purpose of life and guides and instructs members in a method of spirituality based on a daily meditation practice. The present teacher Gurinder Singh Dhillon lives with his family at the main centre in Beas.

Radhasoami Satsang, Peepal Mandi, Agra [lineage]

- **Param Purush Puran Dhani Swami ji Maharaj** [Shiv Dayal Singh ji]
- **Param Purush Puran Dhani Hazur Maharaj** [Rai Bahadur Saligram ji]
- **Param Purush Puran Dhani Lalaji Maharaj** [Rai Ajyudha Prasad Ji]
- **Param Purush Puran Dhani Kunwarji Maharaj** [Guru Prasad Ji]
- **Param Pujya Dadaji Maharaj** [Prof. Dr. Agam Prasad Mathur]

visit WEBSITE: www.radhasoamisatsang.org v

Radha Swami Satsang, Dinod

The Radha Swami satsang at Dinod was founded by Param Sant Tarachand ji Maharaj. His name and fame spread to every nook and corner of the world in these thirty-eight years. For his holy cause he visited western countries and Europe twenty times. As a result, there are thousands of initiates in Canada, U.S.A, U.K. and Mid-east countries.

Param Sant Kanwar Saheb ji Maharaj is the present master/guru in Dinod Dham Ashram. He was born on March 2, 1948. His first meeting with his guru had a great phenomenal effect upon him. He declared that he will not return home and will breath his last in his Dinod Ashram. Dinod is a village located in Distt. Bhiwani, State Haryana.

Spiritual gurus in Radha Swami Satsang, Dinod lineage:

- 1st Guru: Param Sant Shiv Dayal Singh ji (Swami ji Maharaj)
- 2nd Guru: Param Sant Rai Bahadur Saligram Sahib ji (Hazur Maharaj ji)
- 3rd Guru: Param Sant Shiv Brat Lal Verman ji (Data Dayal Maharishi ji)
- 4th Guru: Param Sant Master Ram Singh ji Arman (Arman Saheb ji)
- 5th Guru: Param Sant Tarachand ji (Bade Maharaj ji)
- 6th Guru: Param Sant Kanwar Saheb ji (Haal Hazur Maharaj ji)

Star Monument at Radha Swami Satsang, Dinod

Holy *Samādhi* of Sant Tarachand. Its foundation was laid on October 1, 1997 by Param Sant Huzur Kanwar Saheb ji Maharaj. It was completed in just four years. The monument is a hexagonal pyramid, with its six sides being in the shape of star, as Bade Maharaj ji's first name 'Tara' means a star. Each side measures about 101 feet from the base built on a raised platform measuring about 6 feet. Out of the six, three alternative sides are covered in white marble while the other three in blue Italian glass capable of bearing extreme climatic conditions. A unique thing about the design of this building is that it doesn't have pillars or columns to support itself. The three walls of the *Samādhi* have prominent stars on them while inside the holy *Samādhi* there are sparkling and twinkling stars. Ventilation and cooling techniques are traditional. Fresh air when passes over the fountains is cooled and enters the *Samādhi* through openings and is expelled through vents at the top. During the humid season, the exhaust fans recycle the air.^[1]

The *Samādhi* is constructed on a rectangular platform in the center. The statue of Bade Maharaj ji is erected near the western wall. Apart from this, there are six paintings depicting the life of Bade Maharaj ji on the six corners of the *Samādhi*. The marble slippers placed on lotus flower near the *Samādhi* symbolizes the holy feet of Bade Maharaj ji.

Radha Soami TaranTaran

Website : www.rstt.org.in ^[2]

LOCATION

Tarn Taran is a district in the state of Punjab in North-West Republic of India. It is 35 kilometers away from the Raja Sansi International Airport and 23 kilometers from Amritsar. Dera Baba Bagga Singh is situated near the Head Post Office at a distance of 300 meters from Tarn Taran Railway Station. Dera is visited by people from around the world



Picture depicting all six gurus of Radha Swami Satsang, Dinod



Star Monument at Radha Swami Satsang, Dinod

and all walks of life.

DETAILS

Radha Soami Dera Baba Bagga Singh, Tarn Taran is a spiritual organization which rests on the spiritual teachings of Surat (Consciousness) given by all Religions and Saints. It is devoted to help people seeking spiritual growth under the supervision of living spiritual master (Satguru).

The philosophy teaches us the path of spiritual development which includes :

Complete vegetarian diet and abstinence from intoxicants: A vegetarian diet is a must. No meat, eggs, fish, alcohol, or mind-expanding drugs are permitted to a disciple. We are accountable for our every act, in the court of God. Accountability for a diet other than the recommended is extremely high. To minimize the negative repercussions and payback we should take the lowest form of life, which are plants.

Moral way of life: All disciples should not be a burden to the society and must live on their own earnings. Disciples must lead a monogamous or a celibate life style.

The practice of daily meditation: At the time of initiation the disciples are taught the method of meditation (Surat Shabad Yoga). Disciple must practice daily to achieve spiritual growth & finally God realization.

It also encourages one to build-up the habit of listening routine Satsangs (discourses) every weekend, held at all Centers. There are no rituals or mandatory contributions. Members need not give up their cultural identity or religious preference to follow this path.

• MAIN EVENTS

- **1864:** Baba Bagga Singh Ji, was born in village Chuslevar, District Lahore (now in Pakistan).
- **1882:** Baba Bagga Singh Ji qualified for the recruitment test and joined the Army While receiving his uniform he met Baba Jaimal Singh Ji (Founder of Radha Soami Dera Beas).
- **1883:** Baba Bagga Singh Ji was initiated by Baba Jaimal Singh Ji.
- **1894:** Baba Jaimal Singh Ji during his visit to Chuslevar, entrusted the holy task of blessing the devotees with Nam to Baba Bagga Singh Ji.
- **1889:** Baba Bagga Singh Ji went on reserve duty on and began living in his village Chuslevar where kept busy in meditation day and night for nine years.
- **1899:** Baba Jaimal Singh Ji decreed Baba Bagga Singh Ji to find land for his dera in Tarn Taran.
- **1900:** By the order of Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, Baba Bagga Singh Ji purchased land in Tarn Taran and started giving satsang. This place is now called the 'old Dera'. On the occasion of dera in-auguration, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji with Rukki Ji arrived Tarn Taran and blessed the sangat with his satsang (spiritual discourse). City sangat also came to hear spiritual discourse. That day Hazur Baba Jaimal Singh Ji himself prepared a chapatti in Dera Langar.
- **1901:** With the increase in the sangat (devotees), the land for the present Dera was purchased and the building was constructed on Railway Road Tarn Taran. Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, arrived in this dera with Rukki Ji and blessed the sangat with his spiritual discourse.

Succession at Dera Baba Bagga Singh

- 1900 to 1944 :Baba Bagga Singh Ji
- 1944 to 1961 :Baba Deva Singh Ji
- 1961 to 1988 :Baba Pratap Singh Ji
- 1988 onwards :Baba Kehar Singh Ji

Spiritual Gurus of Radha Swami Satsang, Saidpur

Spiritual gurus in Radha Swami Satsang, Saidpur lineage:

- Sant Seth Shiv Dayal Singh also known as (Swami Ji Maharaj). It was succeeded by
- Baba Jaimal Singh Ji The founder of Radha Soami Satsang Beas. Ministry lasted from 1884 to 1903.
- Baba Sawan Singh Ji, also known as The Great Master, Ministry from 1903 to 1948.
- Baba Teja Singh Ji, founder of Dera Baba Teja Singh, Saidpur, Amritsar from 1948 to 1966
- His Holiness Hazur Maharaj Sant Rasila Ram Ji, Saidpur, Amritsar from 1966 to July 2011
- Hazur Baba Subash Chander Singh Ji, Saidpur, Amritsar from 01, August 2011 to till date

Science of the Soul Research Center

Science of the Soul Research Centre is a registered charitable Society based in New Delhi, India. Its main objective is to promote a sense of brotherhood and communal harmony for the betterment of humanity. One of the ways the Society tries to meet this objective is to conduct research into the spiritual literature of various systems of belief and schools of thought. The Society's aim is to help eradicate bias, prejudice, ill-will, and acrimony between people by revealing their common spiritual heritage and thus forging bonds of empathy and fellowship, the building blocks of love and understanding.

Science of the Soul Research Centre also acts as the international mail order book seller for Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB). A non-profit charitable Society, RSSB publishes books about a path of inner development under the guidance of a spiritual teacher. The path is non-sectarian and incorporates a meditation practice, adherence to a vegetarian diet, abstinence from intoxicants, and a moral and ethical lifestyle.

Books From SSRC

- *Adventure of Faith*
- *A Treasury of Mystic Terms* (6 volumes)
- *A Soul's Safari*
- *A Room Full of Sweets*
- *The Divine Romance*
- *The Gospel of Jesus*
- *The Odes of Solomon*
- *The Prodigal Soul*
- *The Song of Songs*
- *Vaishnav Bhojan I* (Hindi)
- *Vaishnav Bhojan I* (Punjabi)

Radha Soami Satsang, Dera Baba Deva Singh Ji Dhianpur

Swami Gurbachan Lal ji Maharaj was born on 24th sept 1933 in a village - Dhianpur, district Gurdaspur in the state of Punjab in India. He served Police department as a cop till the period of retirement. During his service he was blessed with Naam-daan by his great Master - Baba Deva singh Ji, who was the presiding Satguru at Radha Soami Dera Taran Taaran in Punjab at that time. Baba Deva Singh Ji was born on 25 September 1885, in a village near Lahore. He was initiated at the age of 14 and became a verses reader (Pathi) to his Satguru Baba Bagga Singh Ji. As per the instructions of his Satguru (Baba Jaimal Singh Ji), Baba Bagga Singh Ji never ignored Baba Deva Singh Ji in his whole life. After Baba Bagga Singh Ji left the mortal world, Baba Deva Singh Ji was appointed the next Satguru at Taran Taaran by Baba Sawan Singh Ji. At the time of ceremony Baba Sawan Singh Ji announced, "the person who will differentiate between Beas and Taran Taaran will straight go to the hell."

Baba Deva Singh Ji used to love and like Swami Gurbachan Lal Ji very much for his clean and kind heart, simplicity and pure dedication towards his Master. Once in a satsang Baba Deva Singh Ji told him that he should never think of

the Gaddi (post of Satguru) of Dera, like a few other ignorant disciples. Whether it is a Dera, City or Jungle wherever he sits for Satsang, his Master will be with him. The place for Seva of Satsang doesn't matter for a disciple when his Satguru is with him. Baba Deva Singh Ji used to call him with love, Sant Chhora - A hawker of Satnam.

With the order of his Satguru Baba Deva Singh Ji, Swami Gurbachan Lal Ji started blessing the suffering souls with the treasure of Naam - Daan just before his retirement from the police service. He got Satsang Dera constructed in his own land, in his birthplace Dhianpur on the name of Radha Soami Satsang, Dera Baba Deva Singh Ji Dhianpur.

Swami Gurbachan Lal ji Maharaj left this immortal world on 19-12-1981. After that His son Shri Baldev Raj ji took over the responsibility of Guru-gaddi (Post of Guru) as a pooran (complete) Sant Satguru of the Dera Baba Deva Singhji, Dhianpur Sahib, from the year 1992 to 2002. He was an ocean of love and also very kind like Swami Gurbachan Lalji Maharaj. He was a devoted disciple and used to attend satsang and do sewa in the Dera from a very young age.

After Maharaj Baldev Raj ji left for Nijdham (Sachkhand), his wife Mata Indra ji continued the sewa of Satsang in the Dera. As per the indications given by Maharaj Baldev Raj ji, Mata ji knew about the next successor of Dera Baba Deva Singh ji - 'VIKRAMJIT SINGHJI.' But since he was very young at that time, so she waited for him to grow-up.

Finally on the auspicious occasion of the Bhandara of Swami Gurbachan Lal ji and Baba Deva Singh ji (which falls on the same date) in September 2012, Guru-gaddi of the Dera was entrusted to Maharaj Vikramjit Singhji by Mata Indra ji. Maharaj Vikramjit Singh ji is a symbol of calmness, kindness and forgiveness. Anybody who meets Him becomes His lover and a follower.

Sangat of Guru Maharaj will never remain orphan in the Dera Baba Deva Singh ji, Dhianpur Sahib.

ADDRESS :- Radha Soami Satsang,

Dera Baba Deva Singh ji,
Dhianpur Sahib,
District - Batala,
Punjab, INDIA.

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External links

- Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB) (<http://www.rssb.org>)
 - Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB) (<http://www.scienceofthesoul.org>)
 - Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB) (<http://www.radhasoamiji.in>)
 - Radha Swami Satsang Tarn Taran (<http://www.aors-dbbs.org/>)
 - Radhasoami Satsang Sabha Dayal Bagh (<http://www.dayalbagh.org.in>)
 - Radhasoami Satsang Dinod (<http://www.radhaswamidinod.org>)
 - Radhasoami Satsang, Huzuri Bhawan, Pipal Mandi, Agra (<http://www.radhasoamisatsang.org>)
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 - Radhasoami Satsang Shabd Pratap Ashram (<http://www.shabdpratapashram.com>)
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 - Radha Soami (<http://www.radha-soami.info>)
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Prem Rawat

Prem Rawat	
 <p>Prem Rawat in Lisbon, Portugal 2007</p>	
Born	10 December 1957 Haridwar, India
Spouse(s)	Marolyn Rawat
Parents	Shri Hans Ji Maharaj, Rajeshwari Devi

Prem Pal Singh Rawat (Hindi: प्रेम पाल सिंह रावत; born 10 December 1957), also known as **Maharaji** and (for publications going back to the early years of his public appearances) as **Guru Maharaj Ji** and **Balyogeshwar**, is a native of India who teaches a meditation practice he calls Knowledge. He came to prominence leading the Divine Light Mission (DLM), which has been described as a new religious movement, a cult, a charismatic religious sect and an alternative religion. Rawat has been called a cult leader in popular press reports^{[1][2]} and in anti-cult writings.^[3] He has been criticized for a lack of intellectual content in his public discourses,^[4] and for an opulent lifestyle.^[5] His followers, when they have reacted to such criticism, have tended to point to issues of perception^{[6][7]} while Rawat himself has attributed it to ability to give peace^[8] and his mistrust of the press.^[9]

Rawat is the youngest son of Hans Ji Maharaj, an Indian Satguru (True Master) and the founder of the Divya Sandesh Parishad (DLM's native name.) After his father's death, eight-year-old Rawat, became the new Satguru at the center of the organization his father had founded. At age 13 Rawat travelled to the West, soon taking up residence in the United States. Many young adults were attracted to DLM, taking interest, for instance, in the claim that Rawat could impart direct knowledge of God to his followers. News media were nonplussed by his youth and supposed divine status. Tens of thousands were initiated in Knowledge techniques, and hundreds of DLM centers opened worldwide. Some Western followers took up communal life in dozens of ashrams, guided by DLM Mahatmas.

In November 1973 the Millenium '73 festival was held, centered around Rawat's addresses. Although media attention was peaking, attendance to the festival was much lower than the expected 100,000. Within half a year — Rawat had turned sixteen, married, and ties with his mother and eldest brother were broken — he had gained an active control of the DLM (by now established in 55 countries), except its Indian severed stem. From the early 80s he discarded ostensible references to religion. Ashrams were closed and the part of DLM he controlled was replaced by Elan Vital. Rawat toured extensively in the 80s and 90s. In 2001 he established "The Prem Rawat Foundation" to fund his work and humanitarian efforts. By the 2010s more organizations were put to the front and Elan Vital was eventually replaced by a complex of them. Rawat continues to speak for large and/or select audiences worldwide, and on several occasions has received a significant recognition for his work and message of Peace.

The core of Prem Rawat's teaching is that the individual's need for fulfillment can be satisfied by turning within to contact a constant source of peace and joy. Rather than a body of dogma, he emphasizes a direct experience of

transcendence that he says is accessible through the meditation techniques he teaches.

History

1960s

Rawat was born in Haridwar, northern India, on 10 December 1957, the fourth and youngest son of guru Shri Hans Ji Maharaj and his second wife, Jagat Janani Mata Shri Rajeshwari Devi. Rawat attended St. Joseph's Academy elementary school in his hometown of Dehra Dun.^[10] At the age of three he began speaking at his father's meetings, and at six his father taught him the "techniques of Knowledge." His father died in 1966, and during the customary 13 days of mourning his mother and senior officials of the organization discussed the succession. Both his mother, Mata Ji, and eldest brother, Satpal Rawat (known then as Bal Bhagwan Ji, and currently as Satpal Maharaj), were suggested as potential successors, but before either could be nominated, Rawat addressed the crowd of mourners, reminding them that their master was immortal and was still among them. In response, his mother, brother and the senior disciples accepted Rawat as their Satguru, bowed to his feet and received his blessing. Previously known to his father's followers as Sant Ji, Rawat now assumed the title "Guru Maharaj Ji" and was called "Balyogeshwar" by others (roughly "born saint" or "born lord of Yogis") on account of his youth and spiritual precocity.^{[11][12][13][14]} From that time, Rawat spent his weekends and school holidays travelling as his father had, addressing audiences on the subject of Knowledge and inner peace. Because of his youth, effective control of the DLM was shared by the whole family.^[15]



Prem Rawat in traditional mourning clothes, speaking after the death of his father in July 1966

During the 1960s, Westerners in India searching for spiritual guidance met members of his father's Divine Light Mission and a few became initiates or premies (from the Hindi *prem*, meaning "love".) British initiates invited him to visit the West, and in 1969 he sent one of his closest Indian students (known as Mahatmas) to London to teach on his behalf. In 1970, many of his new Western followers flew to India to see him, and were present at India Gate, Delhi, when, still only twelve years old, he delivered an address known as the "Peace Bomb," which marked the start of his international work.^{[16][17]}



Arriving in the US, Prem Rawat at Los Angeles Airport

1970–1973

In 1971, Rawat travelled to the West against his mother's wishes.^{[18][19]} His first western address was given in June 1971 at the first Glastonbury Fayre, he then went to Los Angeles, New York, Washington, Canada and South Africa. His arrival in the United States was met with some ridicule, as the teenaged Rawat was seen as immature and hence unfit to be a religious leader.^[20] But he also created an extraordinary amount of interest among young adults who were willing to examine his claimed ability to give a direct experience of God. Many were attracted by the sense of joy, peace and commitment shown by Rawat's followers.^[21] One witness said that Rawat "played the whole time he was there ... he played with squirt guns, flashed pictures of himself for all to see, and took movies of everybody ... Love flowed back and forth between him and his devotees."^[22] Enthusiastic new members spread the message that the 13-year-old

Rawat could reveal God.^[23] He returned to India later that year with 300 westerners, who chartered an Air India Boeing 747 to accompany him and stayed in the mission's ashrams.

Rawat took flying lessons beginning when he was 13,^[24] and had begun training in a jet by age 15.^[25] In 1972 two Cessna airplanes were obtained for his use.^{[26][27]} Travelling almost constantly, he was reported to have residences in London, New York, Colorado, California, India, and Australia.

The 1972 *Hans Jayanti*, an annual festival celebrating the birthday of Rawat's guru was attended by over 500,000 people. Six Jumbo jets were chartered by American followers who paid extra so that South Americans could fly from New York to India for free. Other countries made similar arrangements to help the less financially able.^[28] On arrival, Indian customs impounded a suitcase containing cash, jewelry and wristwatches worth between US\$27,000 and \$80,000 which they said had not been properly declared.^{[29][30]} Rawat said, "It has nothing to do with me, it is an attempt to harm the Divine Light Mission. When someone grows, others get jealous of him, and the Divine Light Mission has just blasted like an atomic bomb all over the world."^[31] A DLM spokesman said that the money had been pooled by 3,000 followers to cover expenses, and that the valuables were gifts.^[32] The finances of Rawat and the DLM in India and overseas were investigated by the Indian government.^[33] In June 1973 the investigation was still under way, and Rawat had to post a \$13,300 bond in order to leave the country.^[34] Charges were never filed, and the Indian government later issued an apology.^[35]

A reporter who attended an event in Boston in August 1973 which drew 9,000 attendees wrote that Rawat appeared humble and human, and seemed to intentionally undercut the claims of divinity made by followers.^[36] Sociologist James Downton said that from his beginnings Rawat appealed to his followers to give up concepts and beliefs that might impede them from fully experiencing the Knowledge (or life force), but this did not prevent them from adopting a fairly rigid set of ideas about his divinity, and to project millennial preconceptions onto him and the movement.

Followers stressed "love, peace and happiness" in their lives, but public attitudes were often unsympathetic. Sociologist Stephen A. Kent wrote that as a 22-year-old hippie, he found Rawat's message to be banal and poorly delivered, though his companions spoke about it glowingly.^[37]

In August 1973 while Rawat was in Detroit to receive an award, he was slapped in the face with a shaving cream pie by Pat Halley, a radical journalist. Rawat said that he did not want his attacker arrested or hurt, but Halley was himself attacked a few days later and seriously injured.^[38] When local members heard of the incident they notified Rawat who requested that DLM conduct a full investigation. Two followers were identified as the assailants and the police were immediately notified but the Detroit police declined to initiate extradition proceedings. There was speculation that the lack of action by the Detroit police may have been connected with Halley's radical politics.

Rawat's publicity campaign was unparalleled. One journalist reported,

Thousands of people follow him wherever he goes; posters of his round, cheerful face adorn the walls of buildings in every major Western city; newspaper reporters and TV cameras cover his every public appearance — particularly his mass rallies, which attract hundreds of thousands of followers each.

A tour of US cities was cut short in early September 1973, when Rawat was hospitalized with an intestinal ulcer. His personal physician said that his body, weakened by the pace of continual travel, showed the stresses of a middle-aged executive.^[39]

The *Hans Jayanti* of 1973, which was named "Millennium '73", was held in the Houston Astrodome. Press releases said that the event would mark the beginning of "a thousand years of peace for people who want peace." The main organizers were Rawat's eldest brother Satpal and activist Rennie Davis, who predicted an attendance of 100,000 or more. The event attracted only about 20,000. It was not covered by the national television news, although it received extensive coverage in the print media and was depicted in the award-winning US documentary "Lord of the Universe".^[40] The premises were described as "cheerful, friendly and unruffled" and seeming "nourished by their faith". To the 400 premie parents who attended, Rawat was "a rehabilitator of prodigal sons and daughters", though

some reporters found "a confused jumble of inarticulately expressed ideas."^[41] The event was called the "youth culture event of the year".^[41]

The failure of the event to meet expectations hurt the Divine Light Mission and left it heavily in debt, forcing changes within the movement. By 1976, the DLM was able to reduce the debt to \$80,000.^[42] According to Thomas Pilarzyk, the Millennium economic deficit was partly the result of poor management by the "holy family" (Rawat's mother and three older brothers), and partly the much lower than anticipated attendance.^[43]

Because of Prem Rawat's youth, his mother, Mata Ji, and eldest brother, Satpal, managed the affairs of the worldwide DLM. When Rawat reached sixteen years of age he wanted to take a more active part in guiding the movement. According to the sociologist James V. Downton, this meant he "had to encroach on his mother's territory and, given the fact that she was accustomed to having control, a fight was inevitable".^[44] In December 1973, Rawat took administrative control of the Mission's US branch, and his mother and Satpal returned to India.^[45]

By the end of 1973, the DLM was active in 55 countries.^[46] Tens of thousands had been initiated, and several hundred centers and dozens of ashrams formed. 1973 has been called the "peak of the Mission's success".

Rawat's affluent lifestyle was a source of controversy in the early 1970s.^[47] Some media reports said that Rawat "lived more like a king than a Messiah". Critics said that his lifestyle was supported by the donations of followers and that the movement appeared to exist only to support Rawat's "opulent existence".^[48] Supporters said there is no conflict between worldly and spiritual riches, and that Rawat did not advise anyone to "abandon the material world", but said it is our attachment to it that is wrong.^[49] Press reports listed expensive automobiles such as Rolls-Royces, Mercedes-Benz limousines and sports cars, some of them gifts.^{[50][51]} Rawat said, "I have something far more precious to give them than money and material things – I give peace". "Maharaj Ji's luxuries are gifts from a Western culture whose fruits are watches and Cadillacs," a spokesman said. Some premies said that he did not want the gifts, but that people gave them out of their love for him.^[52] They saw Rawat's lifestyle as an example of a *lila*, or divine play, which held a mirror to the "money-crazed and contraption-collecting society" of the West.

1974–1983

In May 1974, a judge gave Rawat his consent to marry without parental permission.^[53] His marriage to Marolyn Johnson, a 24-year-old follower from San Diego, California, was celebrated at a non-denominational church in Golden, Colorado.^[54] Rawat's mother, Mata Ji, had not been invited.^[55]

Rawat's marriage to a non-Indian finally severed his relationship with his mother.^[45] She retained control of the Indian DLM and appointed Satpal as its leader.^[45] Mata Ji said she was removing Rawat as Perfect Master because of his "unspiritual" lifestyle and lack of respect for her wishes.^{[56][57]} Rawat retained the support of the Western disciples. Most of the mahatmas either returned to India or were dismissed. Rawat had become wealthy as a result of contributions from his Western devotees, and led the life of an American millionaire. He ran a household for his wife, his brother (Raja Ji) and his sister-in-law (Claudia), and financed travel for the close officials and mahatmas who accompanied him on his frequent trips around the globe to attend the Mission's festivals.^[58] By early 1974 the number of full-time DLM staff had increased from six to over one thousand.

In November 1974, seeking more privacy for himself, his wife and his entourage following security concerns, Rawat moved to a 4-acre (16,000 m²) property in Malibu, California.^[59] Purchased by the DLM for \$400,000, the property served as the DLM's West Coast headquarters.^[60] Controversy around a helipad on the property^[61] was resolved by installing emergency water storage for the Los Angeles County Fire Department and by limiting the number of permitted flights.^[62]

By 1976, most students viewed Rawat primarily as a spiritual teacher, guide and inspiration.^[63] In January 1976 Rawat encouraged them to leave the ashrams and discard Indian customs and terminology.^[64] He said that the organization had come between his devotees and himself.^[65] He decentralized some decision making to local premie communities, while he maintained his status as the ultimate authority over spiritual and secular matters. The staff at the Denver headquarters were reduced from 250 to 80. He described the managerial mentality that had grown in the

Mission as "only cosmetic and totally unnecessary. It's like trying to take a cow and put lipstick on it. You can do it, but it's unnecessary in practical terms".^[66]

His appearance on 20 December 1976 in Atlantic City, New Jersey, wearing a traditional Krishna costume for the first time since 1975, signaled a resurgence of Indian influence and devotion. During 1977, many returned to *ashram* life, and there was a shift back from secular tendencies towards ritual and messianic beliefs.^[67] In 1977 Rawat became a US citizen.^[68]

In October 1978, the hillsides surrounding Rawat's Malibu estate were burned by a brushfire. His family and the DLM headquarters subsequently moved to Miami Beach, Florida.[□] The family, which grew to four children, returned to Malibu in 1984.



12 October 1981. Prem Rawat speaking at the Royal Albert Hall, London

In January 1979 the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Rawat was maintaining his Malibu following despite a rising mistrust of cults.[□] Bob Mishler and Robert Hand, a former vice president of the movement, complained that money was increasingly diverted to Rawat's personal use and that the ideals of the group had become impossible to fulfill. The charges found little support and did not affect the progress of the Mission.[□]

In 1980, Rawat removed all the "religious" aspects of the movement and declared he now wanted "no movement whatsoever".^[69] The Hindu references and religious parables that had been prominent in his teachings gave way to a focus on the meditation techniques. Once called "Perfect Master", Rawat abandoned his "almost divine status as guru" [□] but affirmed his status as a master. Scholars such as Kranenborg and Chryssides describe the departure from divine connotations.^{[70][71]} In 1983 the Divine Light Mission was renamed Elan Vital and Rawat closed the last western *ashrams*, marking the end of his use of Indian methods for international objectives.^[72]

1983–2000s

In the 1980s and 1990s Rawat toured extensively. In one two-year period he spoke at over 100 programs in 37 international cities, including New York, London, Paris, Kuala Lumpur, Rome, Delhi, Sydney, Tokyo, Caracas and Los Angeles.

In 1990 there were said to be 1.2 million followers worldwide, with 50,000 in the United States. 1999 saw the commencement of regular satellite broadcasts to North America and other countries.^[73]

In 2001, Rawat founded The Prem Rawat Foundation (TPRF),^[74] a Public Charitable Organization for the production and distribution of materials promoting his message, and also for funding worldwide humanitarian efforts. TPRF has provided food, water and medical help to war-torn and impoverished areas.

Between January 2004 and June 2005, Rawat delivered 117 addresses in Asia, Europe, and North America focusing on a universal message of peace and self-fulfillment. His message is currently distributed in eighty-eight countries in print and on video, and his program "Words of Peace" is broadcast on TV channels such as *Canal Infinito* in South America, *Channel 31* in Australia, and *Dish Network* in the USA.^{[75][76]}

Elan Vital states that the only effective way of reaching out to the over 80 countries where his message is now promoted is by leased private jet, which Rawat self-pilots, flying around a quarter million miles a year. In 2007 during a two-month tour of India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, Rawat spoke at 36 events, addressing over 800,000 people, and by live satellite broadcasts reached an additional 2.25 million.

A biography of Rawat, *Peace is Possible*, by Andrea Cagan, was published in 2006 with a foreword by Emilio Colombo, a former President of the European Parliament and former Prime Minister of Italy.^[77] In 2007 Rawat started the Peace Education Program for inmates which, as of 2012, operates in 25 prisons across 10 countries.

Michael Gilbert, UTSA associate professor of criminal justice, stated that "The constructive changes in behavior among participants have been noticed in our local Dominguez prison".

In 2009, Rawat was made "Ambassador of Peace" for the Basilicata region of Italy. In 2010, he spoke at the "Words of Peace for Europe" conference in Brussels, at the invitation of European Parliament Vice-President Gianni Pittella. In 2011, he again spoke in Brussels at the conference, "Peace and Prosperity. Founding Values of the European Union."^[78] In September, 2012, in Malaysia, Rawat was awarded the Asia Pacific Brands Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award, "for his contributions in championing and promoting global peace."^[79]



30 June 2003. Prem Rawat addressing the first "Conference on Peace" at the University of Salamanca

Teachings

A number of scholars have said that Rawat's teachings began in the North Indian Sant Mat or Radhasoami tradition,^[80] which dismisses ritual and claims that true religion is a matter of loving and surrendering to God who dwells in the heart.^{[80][81]} Geaves argues that this is not quite correct; referring to Rawat's own statements about his lineage,^{[82][83]} he places Rawat and his father within the tradition established by Totapuri, which also gave rise to the Advait Mat movement. Geaves argues that while the teachings within Totapuri's lineage have similarities with those of the Radhasoami tradition and developed in the same geographical area,^[84] they are nevertheless distinct. He adds that Rawat "is unusual in that he does not consider his lineage to be significant and does not perceive his authority as resting in a tradition."

Prem Rawat claims that light, love, wisdom and clarity exist within each individual, and that the meditation techniques which he teaches, and which he learned from his teacher, are a way of accessing them. These techniques are known as the 'Knowledge'. In his public talks he quotes from Hindu, Muslim and Christian scriptures, but he relies on this inner experience for his inspiration and guidance.^{[85][86][87][88]}

Before they receive the Knowledge, Rawat asks practitioners to promise to give it a fair chance and to stay in touch with him. He also asks that they not reveal the techniques to anyone else, but allow others to prepare to receive the experience for themselves. Rawat, who emphasizes a direct experience of transcendence rather than a body of dogma, has been criticized for a lack of intellectual content in his public discourses.^[4]

Practitioners describe Knowledge as internal and highly individual, with no associated social structure, liturgy, ethical practices or articles of faith. According to sociologist Alan E. Aldridge, Rawat says he offers practical ways to achieve spiritual tranquillity that can be used by anyone. Aldridge writes that Rawat originally aspired to bring about world peace, but now he places his attention on helping individuals rather than society.^[89]

George Chrystides describes what Rawat terms 'Knowledge' as based on self-understanding and an inner self, identical with the divine.^[90]

Reception

Rawat has been described in multiple ways. He has been termed a cult leader in popular press reports and anti-cult writings. Biographer Andrea Cagan described Rawat as a man who loves life and is focused "on spreading the message of peace."^[91]

Media

From Rawat's first travels in the West, he and his followers attracted media attention. In an interview in *Der Spiegel* in 1973, Rawat said, "I have lost confidence in newspapers. I talk with them [about this] and the next day something completely different is printed." In 1973, the Divine Light Mission's 50-member public relations team concluded that Rawat's credibility had been compromised by his youth, his physical appearance, and the Rolls Royce, as well as the Detroit "pieing" incident and an allegation of smuggling (which was never prosecuted). The head of the team said that they needed to get the public to look past these factors to judge Rawat's credibility.

Sociologists' views: leadership type

Several scholars referred to Max Weber's classification of authority when describing Rawat as a charismatic leader.^{[92][93]}

J. Gordon Melton said Rawat's personal charisma was one of the reasons for the rapid spread of his message among members of the 1960s counterculture.

Thomas Pilarzyk, a sociologist, wrote in a 1978 paper that the distribution of power and authority in the DLM was officially based on the charismatic appeal of Maharaj Ji, which he described as being somewhat ambiguous, and that many followers were not certain about his position in the organizational scheme of the movement, or the claim that he was the only true spiritual master.^[94]

By the early 1980s Meredith McGuire, a professor of sociology and anthropology, saw a process of formalization (transition of charismatic to rational management), resulting from Rawat's desire to consolidate his power and authority over the movement in the United States.^[95]

Around the same time, Paul Schnabel, a sociologist, described Rawat as a pure example of a charismatic leader. He characterized Rawat as materialistic, pampered and intellectually unremarkable compared to Osho, but no less charismatic.

Lucy DuPertuis, a sociologist and one-time follower who assisted James V. Downton with his book about the Divine Light Mission, described Rawat's role as a Master as emerging from three interrelated phenomena: traditional or theological definitions of *Satguru*; adherents' first-hand experiences of the Master; and communal accounts and discussions of the Master among devotees.^[96]

David G. Bromley described Prem Rawat and other founders of new religions as being held in awe by their early followers, who ascribe extraordinary powers to them that set them apart from other human beings. When describing the difficulty of charismatic leaders in proving to be above normal human failings such as not to suffer ill health or indulge in worldly pursuits, he used Rawat's marriage as an example.

Stephen J. Hunt described Rawat's major focus as being on stillness, peace and contentment within the individual, with his 'Knowledge' consisting of the techniques to obtain these.^[97] According to Hunt, in Rawat's case the notion of spiritual growth is not derived — as is traditionally the case with other gurus — from his personal charisma, but from the nature of his teachings and the benefits to the individuals applying them.^[98]

Ron Geaves, a professor in various fields of religion and long-time adherent of Rawat, wrote that Rawat is not a renunciate, and that he has made great efforts to assert his humanity and take apart the hagiography that has developed around him. According to Geaves Rawat, rather than considering himself a charismatic leader, deemphasizes the sealing of the master disciple relationship, and focuses on correct practice and staying in touch through participation or listening.^[99]

Following

Estimates of the number of Rawat's adherents have varied widely over time. Petersen stated that Rawat claimed 7 million disciples worldwide in 1973, with 60,000 in the US.^[100] Rudin & Rudin gave a worldwide following of 6 million in 1974, of which 50,000 were in the US. According to these authors, the adherents had fallen to 1.2 million for Prem Rawat's personal worldwide following in 1980, with 15,000 in the US.^[101] Spencer J. Palmer and Roger R. Keller published a general DLM membership of 1.2 million worldwide, with 50,000 in the US, in 1990 and 1997.^[102]

James V. Downton, who studied Rawat's followers for five years in the 70s, said "these young people had a spiritual experience which deeply affected them and changed the course of their lives. It was an experience which moved many to tears of joy, for they had found the answer they had been seeking".^[103] Downton said by 1976 the vast majority of students viewed Rawat "as their spiritual teacher, guide and inspiration". Quoting a student he had studied, Downton said a typical view was that "the only thing he (Rawat) wants is to see people living happily and harmoniously together".^[104] Downton concluded that the students had changed in a positive way, "more peaceful, loving, confident and appreciative of life".^[105]

Paul Schnabel referenced professor in the psychology of religion Van der Lans saying that among his Western students, Rawat appeared to stimulate an uncritical attitude, which gave them an opportunity to project their fantasies of divinity onto his person. According to Schnabel, the divine nature of the guru is a standard element of Eastern religion, but removed from its cultural context, and confounded with the Western understanding of God as a father, what is lost is the difference between the guru's person and that which the guru symbolizes—resulting in what was described as limitless personality worship.^[106]

Stephen Hunt wrote that Western followers do not see themselves as members of a religion, but rather as adherents of a system of teachings focused on the goal of enjoying life to the full.

Former followers became known as "ex-premies",^{[107][108][109][110]} and Elan Vital has characterised the vocal critics among them as disgruntled former employees. Based on an analysis of Sophia Collier's *Soul Rush*, John Barbour, a professor of religion, concluded that Collier's deconversion from DLM was uncharacteristic compared to other deconversions from other movements, in that her deconversion brought her no emotional suffering.^[111]

According to Prem Rawat's official website, in the eight years prior to May 2008, *Key Six sessions* were attended by 365,237 people in 67 countries. These are the video sessions where the techniques of Knowledge are taught by Rawat.

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- [85] Geaves, Ron, Globalization, charisma, innovation, and tradition: An exploration of the transformations in the organisational vehicles for the transmission of the teachings of Prem Rawat (Maharaji), 2006, *Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies*, 2 44–6 – Although Rawat does not see himself as part of a tradition or as having to conform to the behavior of any predecessor, in my view, the best way to place him is to identify him with Vaudeville's definition of the saint.
- [86] Drury, Michael, *The Dictionary of the Esoteric: 3000 Entries on the Mystical and Occult Traditions*, pp.75-6, (2002), Sterling Publishing Company, ISBN 1-84293-108-3
Maharaj Ji [teaches] meditation upon the life-force. This meditation focuses on four types of mystical energy, known as the experiences of Light, Harmony, Nectar, and the Word. These allow the practitioner to develop a deep and spiritual self-knowledge
- [87] Chryssides, George D. *Historical Dictionary of New Religious Movements* pp.210-1, Scarecrow Press (2001) ISBN 0-8108-4095-2
"This Knowledge was self-understanding, yielding calmness, peace, and contentment, since the innermost self is identical with the divine. Knowledge is attained through initiation, which provides four techniques that allow the practitioner to go within."
- [88] Hunt, Stephen J. *Alternative Religions: A Sociological Introduction* (2003), pp.116-7, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd. ISBN 0-7546-3410-8.
The major focus of Maharaji is on stillness, peace, and contentment within the individual, and his 'Knowledge' consists of the techniques to obtain them. Knowledge, roughly translated, means the happiness of the true self-understanding. Each individual should seek to comprehend his or her true self, which brings a sense of well-being, joy and harmony. The Knowledge includes four meditation procedures: Light, Music, Nectar and Word. The process of reaching the true self within can only be achieved by the individual, but with the guidance and help of a teacher. Hence, the movement seems to embrace aspects of world-rejection and world-affirmation. The tens of thousands of followers in the West do not see themselves as members of a religion, but the adherents of a system of teachings that extol the goal of enjoying life to the full."
- [89] Aldridge, Alan — *Religion in the Contemporary World* (2007) — p.59
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"Maharaji progressively dissolved the Divine Light Mission, closing the ashrams, affirming his own status as a master rather than a divine leader, and emphasizing that the Knowledge is universal, non-Indian, in nature" [...] "This Knowledge was self-understanding, yielding calmness, peace, and contentment, since the innermost self is identical with the divine. Knowledge is attained through initiation, which provides four techniques that allow the practitioner to go within."
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External links

- Maharaji.net - Official site of Prem Rawat (<http://www.maharaji.net/>)
- The Prem Rawat Foundation (<http://www.tprf.org/>)

Divine Light Mission

The **Divine Light Mission** (*Divya Sandesh Parishad*; **DLM**) was an organization founded in 1960 by guru Shri Hans Ji Maharaj for his following in northern India. During the 1970s, the DLM gained prominence in the West under the leadership of his fourth and youngest son, Guru Maharaj Ji (Prem Rawat). Some scholars noted the influence of the Bhagavad Gita and the Sant Mat tradition, but the western movement was widely seen as a new religious movement, a cult, a charismatic religious sect or an alternative religion. DLM officials said the movement represented a church rather than a religion.^[1]

When Shri Hans Ji Maharaj died in 1966, he was succeeded as guru by Prem Rawat, then just eight years old, despite rival claims from other family members. Although Prem Rawat was accepted as his father's successor, because of his age his family retained effective control of the DLM. In 1971, Rawat defied his mother by travelling to the UK and the US, where local branches of DLM were established and rapidly expanded. By 1973, DLM had over a million followers in India and tens of thousands of followers in the West, along with dozens of ashrams and hundreds of centers.^[2]

As Rawat grew older, he began to take a more active role in the movement and, when he turned sixteen, following the financially disastrous Millennium '73 festival, he took administrative control of the US branch. His increasing independence and his marriage to a non-Indian in 1974 caused a permanent rift with his mother and two of his brothers. They returned to India, where his eldest brother Satpal Maharaj gained control of the Indian DLM.

In the early 1980s, Rawat began disbanding the western DLM. He closed the ashrams and eliminated the remaining Indian influences from his presentation to make it independent of any specific culture or religion. In the US, UK, France and Australia, Elan Vital was formed to replace the DLM in supporting Rawat in his role as teacher.

History

Founding and early years in India

Shri Hans Maharaj Ji, initiated by the Sant Mat guru Sri Swarupanand Ji, began teaching in the Sind and Lahore provinces of India in the 1930s. In 1950 he began initiating *Mahatmas*, followers who could themselves initiate devotees, and formed a magazine called "Hansadesh."^[3]

In 1960 in the city of Patna, he founded the Divine Light Mission (*Divya Sandesh Parishad*) to organize followers across Northern India. At the time of his death on 19 July 1966, the Divine Light Mission had six million members in India.^[4]

During the customary 13 days of mourning, his mother and senior officials of the organization discussed the succession. Prem Rawat, who was 8 years-old at the time, addressed the crowd and was accepted by them as their teacher and "Perfect Master".^{[5][6][7]} Because of his age, effective control of the DLM was shared by the whole family.^[8]

International expansion

In 1971, Rawat, then known as Guru Maharaji Ji, travelled to the West against his mother's wishes.^[9] DLMs were established in the U.S. and the U.K. The U.S. branch was headquartered in Denver, Colorado. It was registered there as a non-profit corporation and in 1974 was recognized as a church by the United States Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(3).^{[10][11]}

By 1972 DLM was operating in North and South America, Europe and Australia. By 1973, DLM was operating in 37 countries, tens of thousands of people had been initiated (become premies) and several hundred centers and dozens of ashrams formed in the U.S. and the U.K. DLM said it had 8,000 devotees and forty ashrams.^{[12][13]}

In the United States, the staff at the headquarters grew to 125, and Telexes connected the headquarters with the ashrams.^[14] Social service facilities, including a medical clinic in New York City, were opened. A Women's Spiritual Right Organization dedicated to reaching out to persons in prisons, mental institutions and hospitals, was organized.^[15] The U.S. DLM published two periodicals: *And It Is Divine (AIID)*, a monthly magazine with a circulation of 90,000; and *Divine Times*, a biweekly newspaper with a circulation of 60,000.^[16] The cover price of *AIID* was \$1 but most were given away free, as were the advertisements.^[17] The World Peace Corps (WPC) was established as a security force to provide protection for Rawat. After Bob Mishler, the DLM President, was removed from power he said that Rawat got the idea to start a bodyguard unit after watching *The Godfather*. The WPC became the organizing agent of meetings and businesses. A variety of businesses were founded under US DLM auspices including laundromats, used clothing stores, a plane charter agency ("Divine Travel Services"), a repair service, and the "Cleanliness-is-Next-to-Godliness" janitorial service.^[18]

Detroit incident

On 8 August 1973 while Rawat was at the Detroit City Hall to receive a testimonial resolution praising his work, Pat Halley, who was at the time a reporter from Detroit's underground periodical *Fifth Estate*, slapped him in the face with a shaving cream pie.^{[19][20]} Rawat responded by saying that he did not want his attacker arrested or hurt, but the reporter was attacked by two men a few days later and seriously injured.^{[21][22]} When local members heard of the incident they notified Rawat in Los Angeles who extended his regrets and condolences to Pat Halley's family, and requested that the DLM conduct a full investigation. The assailants, one of them an Indian mahatma, were identified. They admitted their part in the incident and offered to turn themselves in. The Chicago police were immediately notified.^[23] The Detroit police declined to initiate extradition proceedings, variously claiming that they were unable to locate the assailants, or that the cost of extraditing them from Chicago to Detroit made it impractical. The arrest warrant remained outstanding.^[24] This lack of action by the Detroit police was attributed by some to Halley's radical politics. A spokesman later stated that the Indian national had been "shipped off to Europe".^[25]

Festivals

Festivals were a regular part of the Divine Light Mission's activities and a source of revenue. Members would pay from \$50 to \$100 to attend, and Darshan events would generate considerable donations.^[26] The DLM celebrated three main festivals: Holi, which is celebrated in late March or early April; Guru Puja, which was held in July; and Hans Jayanti, which falls in November.^[27] Hans Jayanti marks the birthday of the DLM's founder.^[28] According to Marc Galanter, the members at a festival in Orlando, Florida "looked as though they had been drawn from the graduate campus of a large university—bright, not too carefully groomed, casually dressed. They were lively, good-tempered, and committed to their mutual effort. There was no idleness, brashness, marijuana, beer, loud music, or flirtation—all hallmarks of a more typical assembly of people in their twenties".^[29] Other festivals were held nationally and locally, and sometimes organized with little advance notice. Attending as many as ten festivals a year meant many members were unable to hold regular full-time jobs, and required sacrificing leisure and community activities in order to devote time to earning the money needed to attend.^[30]

In 1972 seven jumbo jets were chartered to bring members from the U.S. and other countries to the Hans Jayanti festival held at the main ashram near New Delhi. 2500 foreign members camped out at the mission's "city of love" for a month.^[31] The event attracted a reported total of 500,000 attendees.^[32] When Rawat flew to India to attend he was accused of attempting to smuggle \$65,000 worth of cash and jewelry into the country, but no charges were ever filed,^[33] and the Indian government later issued an apology.^{[34][35]} The accusation led to negative coverage in the Indian press and hard feelings between Rawat and his mother, who had persuaded him to return to India for the festival.

In June 1973 the British DLM, with Prem Rawat's mother acting on behalf of her son, organized the "Festival of Love" at the Alexandra Palace in London. While it drew thousands of attendees, Rawat began receiving hostile press coverage, partly due to his showing up late, or not at all, at scheduled appearances. The large membership had grown up very rapidly but the organizers had no clear idea where to lead the following, nor did they have the financial resources to maintain so many full-time workers.

Millennium '73

The 1973 Hans Jayanti festival was held at the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, and publicized as "Millennium '73".^[36] The free three-day event was billed as "the most significant event in human history" that would herald "a thousand years of peace for people who want peace", the idea being that peace could come to the world as individuals experienced inner peace. To promote the event Prem Rawat's 20-year old brother, Bhole Ji Rawat toured with a 60-piece band, "Blue Aquarius" for two weeks giving free concerts.^[37] The 500-member tour was dubbed "Soul Rush" and traveled to seven cities on the way to Houston.^[38]

Rennie Davis, well known as one of the defendants in the Chicago Seven trial, attracted extensive media coverage as a spokesperson for Rawat.^{[39][40]} At the event Davis declared that "All I can say is, honestly, very soon now, every single human being will know the one who was waited for by every religion of all times has actually come."^[41] In a press conference at Millennium, Rawat denied being the Messiah, and when asked by reporters about the contradictions between what he said about himself and what his followers said about him, Rawat replied, "Why don't you do me a favor ... why don't you go to the devotees and ask their explanation about it?"^[42] While Rawat's brother Satpal was nominally in charge of the festival, Davis was the "General Coordinator" and handled the details.^[43]

Expectations for the event were very high, with predictions that it would attract more than 100,000,^[44] or even as many as 400,000 people from Satpal. Davis privately said he thought 22,000 was a more realistic estimate and reserved 22,000 hotel beds.^[45] There was even talk about a space in the parking lot reserved for a flying saucer to land.^[46] When Satpal heard about the flying saucer he said, "If you see any, just give them some of our literature". The actual attendance was estimated at 35,000, and at 10,000 by police.^[47]

The event featured spectacular staging, a 56-piece rock band and a giant video screen that showed a barrage of shots from the tumultuous 1960s.^[48] Though it was not covered by the national television news, it did get extensive

coverage in the print media. The premies were reported to be "cheerful, friendly and unruffled, and seemed nourished by their faith". To the 400 premie parents who attended, Rawat "was a rehabilitator of prodigal sons and daughters".^[49] Media people found a "confused jumble of inarticulately expressed ideas."^[50] It was depicted in the award-winning U.S. documentary "Lord of the Universe" broadcast by PBS Television in 1974.^[51] The event was called the "youth culture event of the year".^[52] Singer-songwriter Loudon Wainwright III visited the festival and later remarked that while the premies inside were looking happy the ones outside were arguing with Jesus Freaks and Hare Krishnas. Wainwright's song "I am the Way" was partly inspired by Prem Rawat.^[53]

At the festival, Larry Bernstein, a prize-winning, 41-year-old architect described a "Divine City" to be built from the ground up starting the following year. It was to feature translucent hexagonal plastic houses stacked on concrete columns and connected with monorails. Polluting vehicles would be replaced by electric vehicles, and solar power would be used to provide energy. Cards would replace cash. The use of advanced technologies to ensure pollution-free air, Rennie Davis told a journalist, would be a practical demonstration of what it means to have Heaven on Earth.^[54] Two sites were suggested: either the Blue Ridge Mountains or somewhere near Santa Barbara, California.^[1] The former president and vice president of the DLM later said that Prem Rawat had spoken frequently of building such a city.^[55] Plans for the city were delayed amid the fiscal crisis following the Millennium festival. Incorporation papers for the formation of the "City of Love and Light Unlimited, Inc." were filed in Colorado in 1974, and there was a failed attempt in 1975 to build the community near San Antonio, Texas.^[56]

The DLM incurred a debt estimated between \$600,000 and over \$1 million, attributed to poor management and low attendance.^{[57][58][59]} The debt severely damaged the DLM's finances.^[60] Event-related expenses were covered by short-term credit based on the expectation that contributions would pour in following the free festival.^[61] DLM's post-Millennium financial troubles forced it to close ashrams, sell its printing business and real estate, and to drop the lease on its IBM computer. Monthly donations fell from \$100,000 to \$70,000.^[62] According to Messer, "to pay the debts remaining from the Houston event, devotees all over the country turned over their own possessions to Divine Sales, which had crash garage sales, attended flea markets, and invented numerous activities to dispose of the goods."^[63] By 1976 it was able to reduce the debt to \$80,000.^[64] Consequently, the festival necessitated policy shifts within the movement organization.

Marriage and rift

Because of Prem Rawat's age, Mata Ji, his mother, and her eldest son, Satpal Rawat had managed the affairs of the worldwide DLM. As Prem Rawat approached sixteen he wanted to take a more active part in guiding the movement. According to Downton, "this meant he had to encroach on his mother's territory and, given the fact that she was accustomed to having control, a fight was inevitable".^{[65][66]} In December 1973, when he turned 16, Rawat took administrative control of the Mission's U.S. branch and began to assert his independence from his mother who returned to India with Satpal.

In May 1974, a judge gave Rawat his consent to marry without parental permission.^[67] His marriage to his secretary, Marolyn Johnson, a 24-year old follower from San Diego, California, was celebrated at a non-denominational church in Golden, Colorado.^[68] Rawat's mother, Mata Ji, had not been invited.^[69] As a result of his marriage Rawat became an emancipated minor. He called his wife "Durga Ji", after the Hindu goddess Durga.

Rawat's decision to marry a Westerner precipitated a struggle for control of DLM.^[70] His mother claimed that Rawat had broken his spiritual discipline by marrying, and had become a "playboy". She appointed Satpal as the new head of DLM India, but the Western premies remained loyal to Rawat. The marriage led to a permanent rift between Prem Rawat and his mother, and was also credited with causing a profound disruption in the movement. Many followers left the ashrams to get married, and the base of support inevitably shifted from the ashrams to the wider premie community. Others felt "almost betrayed", in part because he had championed celibacy, one of the requirements of ashram life, before getting married himself.^{[71][72]} The bad press from the festivals and the rift caused by Prem Rawat's marriage in 1974 marked the end of the movement's growth phase.^{[73][74]}

In 1975 Prem Rawat returned to India in an attempt to gain control of the Indian DLM. A court-ordered settlement resulted in his eldest brother Satpal retaining control of the Indian DLM, while Rawat maintained control of the DLM outside of India.

Westernization

Following the rift with his mother, Rawat announced that he was replacing the predominantly Indian image with a Western one and began to wear business suits instead of his all-white Indian attire. The Indian mahatmas were replaced with Westerners, and Indian terminology fell from use. Rawat encouraged premies to leave the ashrams. According to one estimate, the worldwide membership had declined from 6 million to 1.2 million by 1976, and in the U.S. the 50,000 claimed initiates had dwindled to 15,000 regular contributors. A spokesman for the Mission explained in 1976 that the higher numbers had been inflated due to poor record-keeping.^[75] One estimate had from 500 to 1200 members living in ashrams in the mid-1970s.^[76] By the end of the 1970s, the movement had lost an estimated 80% of its followers in the U.S.^[77] Bromley and Hammond attribute the decline of groups including the Divine Light Mission to internal factors, but also in part to the news media's "discrediting reports about their activities", accounts which created a "wide-spread public perception of 'mind control' and other 'cult' stereotypes."^[78]

The Divine Light Mission also attracted the attention of the anti-cult movement. Some members were violently kidnapped and deprogrammed.^[79] Some former members became outspoken critics of the organization and attacked the group with what Melton calls "standard anti-cult charges of brainwashing and mind control".^[80] In reference to ex-followers, DLM spokesman Joe Ancil said that "A lot of people were just on a trip in the beginning. They felt they had to be 'hyped', and some didn't stay long enough to get beyond that. But we've changed as our understanding has changed."^[81] Bob Mishler, the founding president of the DLM in the U.S., was removed by Rawat in 1977 and gave an interview in 1979, along with the former vice president, in which he said he was concerned that the DLM was becoming a "tax evasion for the guru", and said he feared a repeat of Jonestown. They also accused Rawat of engaging in inappropriate behavior.^[82] Mishler's charges found little support and did not affect the progress of the Mission.

In the 1980s, Prem Rawat removed the Indian trappings from his message, and adopted a more Western style.^[83] Melton said the mission was disbanded [when] Prem Rawat personally renounced the trappings of Indian culture and religion, to make his teachings independent of culture, beliefs and lifestyles.^[84] Prem Rawat was no longer to be venerated as a god or regarded as a Perfect Master.^[85] The ashrams were closed along with the Denver headquarters (1979). The Divine Light Mission organization was replaced by Elan Vital;^{[86][87]} the U.S. organization's name was changed to Elan Vital in 1983, by filing an entity name change.^{[88][89]} Prem Rawat asked to be referred to as "Maharaji" instead of "Guru Maharaj Ji."

According to Ron Geaves, a religious scholar who has been associated with the teachings of Prem Rawat for the last thirty years.^[90]

Maharaji has chosen a route of perpetual transformation in which organizational forms are created and utilized and then destroyed, thus providing flexibility to deal with rapidly changing social attitudes, to provide pragmatic solutions to internal problems, and above all to keep his students focused on the core message rather than the peripheral requirements of organizational forms.^[91]

Since then the Elan Vital has been "virtually invisible." Rawat stopped granting interviews and making public announcements of his visits.^[92] As of 2008 he has continued to write, lecture, and tour with the support of the Elan Vital and the Prem Rawat Foundation.

DLM in India

In 1975 Mata Ji took control of the DLM in India as a result of the rift and installed her eldest son, Satpal Rawat, as its head. A lawsuit in India resulted in his brother Satpal gaining control of the Divine Light Mission in India, and Rawat continuing to lead DLM in the rest of the world.^{[93][94][95]}

Satpal Rawat, now known as Shri Satpal Ji Maharaj, teaches "Manav Dharam" (the "Dharam [Religion] of Mankind"). He is also a politician and former Union Minister in India, and founded Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti, which he describes as "an all-India registered voluntary social welfare and charitable organization", that is also "making freely available the spiritual Knowledge which is the essence of all religions." Satpal Rawat's supporters now assert that he is the rightful successor to his father, Hans Ji Maharaj.^[96] Scholars that have written about the succession report that Satpal and the rest of the family accepted and supported Prem's declaration of succession for eight years.^{[97][98]}

The Divine United Organization (DUO) was an organization registered under the Societies Registration Act 21 of 1860 with the Registrar of Delhi in 1977, to disseminate the teachings of Prem Rawat in India.^[citation needed] According to Geaves, DUO remained in India until it was replaced by **Raj Vidya Bhavan** [sic]. **Raj Vidya Kender** (Center for the King of Knowledge) states on its website that it was registered under the societies Registration Act in 1977, with registration No. 8845/77, "by individuals eager to help in the dissemination of Maharaji's message of hope and peace."^[99]

Beliefs and practices

According to some scholars, Shri Hans was influenced by both the Sant tradition and the Bhagavad Gita. Reinhart Hummel wrote that from the former came the reduction of Hinduism to the inner realization of the divine and the veneration of the guru, and from the latter the emphasis on the practical life. Hummel also noted that the DLM never developed a systematic doctrine, either during Hans' time or Prem Rawat's time. Hummel further asserted that the influence of the North Indian Sant tradition was dominant in Hans' eclectic thinking, and that from the Sant tradition also came the rejection of outward rituals and ceremonies; the rejection of asceticism in favor of life as a householder; the rejection of veneration of idols, and the focus on the guru as the manifestation of the divine. Hummel also noted that the four meditation techniques are of central importance to Prem, as they were to Hans.^[100]

No rules or regulations were imposed, and no beliefs or ethical practices were taught.^[101] The fundamental practices of inner peace were embodied and experienced through satsang, service and meditation, the sum of which is an experience called "Knowledge." Members of the DLM meditated formally twice daily and attended discourses on the Knowledge (known as satsang) when possible. According to Galanter "satsang could be delivered to active members or to those with only a casual interest. It was something of a polemic interspersed with parables, and because members were bright and sophisticated, these discourses tended to be engaging, making use of both Hindu mythology and Western philosophy". In a study by Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman former followers said that they had spent 32.9 hours per week in group-related processes and ritual and 19.9 hours in additional study or indoctrination (lectures, seminars, workshops etc).^[102] Vegetarianism was encouraged but not enforced except in ashrams and Divine Centers.

Five "commandments" were part of the Divine Light Mission's teachings:^[103]

1. Do not put off until tomorrow what you can do today.
2. Constantly meditate and remember the Holy Name.
3. Leave no room for doubt in the mind.
4. Never delay attending satsang.
5. Always have faith in God.

In the United States, the early years of the Divine Light Mission were marked by the rapid growth of loosely affiliated local ashrams, united mainly by a shared devotion to Guru Maharaj Ji. As the DLM became more and more

structured and centralized, leadership and power came to be concentrated in the Denver headquarters. According to scholars, Prem Rawat's desire to consolidate his power and authority over the U.S. movement led to increasing formalization, with rules and regulations for ashram living, standards for recruited "candidates," and pressure towards certification of the movement's teachers.^[104] According to scholars Foss and van der Lans, the teachings of Hans Ji Maharaj were minimized after 1975, and followers were expected to accept Prem Rawat as their personal savior.^[105]

David V. Barrett noted that the DLM movement was often criticized for emphasizing the superiority of subjective emotional experience over intellect.^[106] The sociologists Ralph Larkin and Daniel A. Foss made similar observations in 1978. In response, the religious scholar Ron Geaves, himself a member of the movement, accused Foss and Larkin of bias.^[107]

A 1981 article based on the Dutch branch of the Divine Light Mission stated that the DLM had little philosophical background and that all its central creeds and tenets were described in the song associated with the Hindu ritual called aarti.^[108] Arti was sung to Prem Rawat in the morning and evening in ashrams.^[109]

Rawat says he does not charge for teaching people the techniques of Knowledge.^[110] Related organizations that support the dissemination of Rawat's message are funded by donations. According to the Prem Rawat Foundation, it is supported by people who appreciate Rawat's message and wish to help make it available to others.

Members

In a comparison of new religious movements, Gartrell and Shannon noted that people appeared to seek out such religious organizations to get answers to questions about ultimate meaning as well as answers to more prosaic issues. In discussing the differences in recruiting tactics employed by these groups, they placed the Divine Light Mission in the middle ground between movements in which recruits were love bombed, or overwhelmed by waves of intense sentiment, and those in which affective bonds were discouraged. They reported that close ties between newcomers and DLM members developed gradually over a period of three to four months, between initial contact and their attending a "Knowledge session", and the emergent friendships were an important forum in which recruits aired doubts and discussed DLM beliefs. These relationships thus supplemented a very cognitive conversion process, in which active consideration of the movement's ideas and beliefs was encouraged from the outset. They found little evidence to suggest that social rewards were orchestrated by the movement, either in degree or timing.^[111]

The sociologist James V. Downton, who studied the DLM for five years, reported that the "idealism of these premies was one of the motivating forces behind their conversion [to DLM]. They wanted to create a more caring world".^[112] Five years after the subjects of his study became premies he wrote:

"There is little doubt in my mind that these premies have changed in a positive way. Today, they seem less alienated, aimless, worried, afraid, and more peaceful, loving, confident, and appreciative of life. We could attribute these changes to surrender, devotion, and their involvement in the premie community. Each of these undoubtedly had a positive impact, but, if we accept what premies say, none were as critical as their experience of the universal spirit. Meditating on the life-energy for five years, they report having more positive attitudes about themselves."^[113]

According to Carroll Stoner and Jo Anne Parke, when they visited an ashram the premies "appeared to be in control of their own lives and seemed to be achieving some measure of peace as a by-product of a lifestyle they feel is constructive and healthy". When the same members attended an appearance by Prem Rawat a week later, "they lost control, sobbed and swayed and knelt to kiss his feet."

According to Foss and van der Lans, members who joined before 1975 tended to be young people from the counterculture who had used psychedelic drugs. Later members, they asserted, were older and more responsible with ordinary jobs who were disillusioned with conventional religions or other Eastern movements.^[114]

A study of group cohesiveness carried out by Marc Galanter in 1974, based on questionnaire responses given by 119 DLM members randomly chosen from festival registration lines, found that after two years involvement with DLM, members reported a considerable decline in psychological distress and drug use compared to their pre membership status. The study found that 45% of those surveyed had used marijuana daily before joining, while only 7% did so at the time of the study. Seventy-one percent reported psychological stress before joining compared to 37% at the time of the study. Overall, 38% had sought professional help for psychological problems before joining. These observations led to what Galanter's describes as "an apparent overall improvement in psychiatric state derived from conversion and its retention through continued membership", and that members, whether they were seriously distressed or not before joining, reported an improved emotional state after joining. Galanter reports that 82% of members surveyed were single, 97% were white, and 73% were in their twenties. The percentage of these with Catholic or Protestant backgrounds mirrored the general population, while there were ten times as many members with Jewish backgrounds as in the general population (21% versus 2%). Three-quarters of them had attended college.^[115]

James V. Downton conducted a comparative study of 41 DLM members from three US cities, 29 members of the Hare Krishna movement and 40 college students. Among the DLM members the average age was 23 and ranged from 19 to 29. They came from middle-class backgrounds, all were white and had attended an average of 1.5 years of college, similar to the Hare Krishna sample, though DLM members were less likely to have come from broken homes. Sixty-five percent of DLM members reported having religious experiences while tripping on LSD. Overall, 95% of DLM members had used psychedelic drugs, compared to 89% of Hare Krishna and 67% of the college student cohort. Compared to the college students, fewer DLM members had had religious upbringings and they tended to have had worse family experiences though only 17% came from "broken homes".^[116]

One member, writing in the 1970s said that followers were "nagged to donate funds of their own" and some devotees signed pledges to donate a dollar a day to provide the Mission with some reliable income. One former accountant for the DLM said that new followers were asked to turn over their entire savings, sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars, and in several cases their families contested the donations. He was quoted as saying "it takes a lot of money to keep a guru." Bob Mishler, the mission's executive director, talked one person into signing over power of attorney shortly after she joined. Mishler was sacked by Rawat in 1976.^[117]

Ashrams

In India

The Divine Light Mission began creating ashrams in India in the 1960s, starting with a small one in Rajasthan and a larger one called Satlok ("Place of Truth") between Delhi and Haridwar.^[118] Khushwant Singh, who visited the Mission's headquarters in Delhi in 1973 described it as being like a fortress with 8-foot (2.4 m)-high walls, an iron grilled gate enclosing a courtyard and a complex of buildings capable of housing 100 and with the capacity to feed 50,000 visitors on special occasions. Singh also described "the lavish use of marble, wall-to-wall carpets, chandeliers and modern furnishings" as evidence of affluence.

In the West

Only a small fraction of the overall DLM membership lived in organized ashrams during its short history but several dozen ashrams were formed in the U.S., Britain, Europe and Australia. Ashrams were run by "general secretaries" appointed by the national office.^[119] Each ashram had a "house mother" who oversaw cooking, washing, ironing, and food service but the normal isolation of the housewife and cook became a communal, everyone-pitchin-and-help festival. Followers ("premies") who lived in them often worked part or full time at ordinary jobs and gave a sizable portion – sometimes all – of their income to the movement. Ashrams typically had an associated business, such as a Divine Sales outlet and a Divine Service Company.^[120] The ashram premies became the core of the Mission in the

United States, but the ashrams themselves were not a source of income, never becoming more than self-sufficient.^[121] Followers wishing to stay in the ashrams established by Rawat were required to fill out detailed applications that focused on their trust funds, insurance policies, and other assets.

In Australia in the early 1970s a small percentage of premies lived in ashrams. Some premies choose to live in an ashram for a couple of months, to get into their meditation, and then moved out into households or shared houses. Ashram rules demanded celibacy and abstinence from meat, alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. Married people, as well as single, lived in ashrams and, in their case, the practice of celibacy meant that they had sexual relations only with their marital partner. About three hundred people chose to live in communal houses and almost all households were non-smoking, non-drinking and vegetarian and, in some, the finances and energies were pooled for the good of all. Each household made its own decisions about life styles and often contained students and married couples.^[122]

In addition to the ashrams there were many more residences with less formality. "Premie Centers", were households committed to the Mission's activity that donated 30% of their income and followed dietary rules, but that allowed married, non-celibate couples and children, and which weren't subject to orders from the national Mission. "Premie houses" were informal households (with as many as 30 followers) held together by their shared commitments and values. Ashrams served as local coordinating centers for all the local devotees.

Carroll Stoner and Jo Anne Parke wrote in 1977 of their visits to several ashrams that "there was no persuasion or cajoling for us to become part of this group. We did feel a sense of calm and peace in the ashrams."^[123] Marc Galanter, wrote in 1989 of his visit to a DLM ashram that —

"The atmosphere in the ashram was indeed quite striking. ... I was greeted in a friendly, even intimate fashion by people who were complete strangers. The intense communality of the members was immediately apparent, a quality that was clearly an important aspect of the group's function. One could sense a closeness among those present, and an absence of the minor tensions that would be expected in a setting where two dozen people were living in tight quarters. ... Caring and intimacy, reflective of the group's cohesiveness, seemed to mute any expression of animosity. ... I was made to feel as if I were entering a supportive envelope, to be protected from the rough edges of relationships in the outside world."^[124]

Reception

The Divine Light Mission was described in various and sometimes conflicting terms. It was called a new religious movement,^[125] a cult,^[126] a charismatic religious sect,^[127] an offshoot of Sant Mat,^[128] an alternative religion or spin-off from other traditional religions,^[129] a youth religion,^[130] a Radhasoami offshoot,^[131] an orthodox Sikh community,^[132] an Advait Mat related tradition,^[133] a proselytizing religion ("Guru-ism"),^[134] and a defunct religious movement.^[135] A study of terms used in U.S. newspapers and news magazines, which examined the media's failure to use the more neutral terminology favored by social scientists, found that the Divine Light Mission was referred to as a "sect" in 10.3% of articles, as a "cult" in 24.1%, and as both in 13.8%. It was referred to as a "sect" in 21.4% of headlines, with 0% for "cult".^[136]

The president and spokesman of the DLM said in 1977 that "they represent a church rather than a religion".^[137]

In some countries, the DLM faced persecution and even banning. In 1972, in Argentina, as part of a crackdown on small religious groups by the military junta, 87 members of the DLM were arrested in Mar del Plata on charges of using drugs and practising their faith. The DLM, the Hare Krishnas and the Jehovah's Witnesses were banned, reportedly at the behest of the Roman Catholic Church.^{[138][139]} The Government Junta of Chile (1973) arrested over 200 members, including 12 foreigners, in 1974.^[140] The DLM was banned by Singapore authorities in the late 1980s.^[141]

Bromley and Hammond described the Divine Light Mission as belonging in a "medium tension category", among movements that were seen by the public as peculiar rather than threatening, and to which society responded with

watchfulness and ostracism.^[78] Psychiatrist Saul V. Levine wrote that the DLM, along with other groups such as the Unification Church, was widely held in low esteem – families felt their children were being financially exploited while the groups' leaders lived in "ostentation and offensive opulence."^[142]

Ron Geaves states that the Divine Light Mission "developed into a vigorous new religious movement with its own specific traits that included characteristics of a contemporary North Indian Sant panth (sectarian institution) and nirguna bhakti was combined with intense reverence for the living satguru and millennial expectations of the western counter-culture."

According to sociologist Pilarzyk the youth culture response — mainly from decidedly leftist political ideologies — was somewhat ambiguous, combining indifference with some instances of overt hostility. Pilarzyk mentioned that these criticisms usually focused on what they perceived as phoniness of the "blissed-out premies", and referring to the "hocuspocus" aspects of the meditation, and the "materialistic fixations" and physical condition of the guru. These accounts are described by Pilarzyk as being quite negative and full of distortions from the DLM's adherents point of view, which drew responses from them that varied from bewilderment and amusement to extreme defensiveness. Positive comments came from youth culture "folk heroes" as anti-war activist as Rev. Daniel Berrigan, radical lawyer William Kunstler, and singer-songwriter Cat Stevens.^[143]

Summarizing his 1985 review of studies of a number of new religious movements, such as The Jesus Movement, the Unification Church, the Children of God group in Europe and the Divine Light Mission, James T. Richardson stated that "life in the new religions is often therapeutic instead of harmful", and suggested that the young people attracted to these movements were affirming their idealism by their involvement. Richardson asserted that his review found there was little data to support the almost completely negative picture of these groups painted by a few mental health professionals and others.^[144]

Notable members

- Jonathan Cainer^[145]
- Julia Callan-Thompson^[146]
- Sophia Collier
- Rennie Davis
- Paul Dunmall
- Timothy Gallwey^[147]
- Ron Geaves
- Jimmie Dale Gilmore^[148]
- John Grefe^[149]
- Tommy Hancock^[150]
- Jenny McLeod^[151]
- Johnny Rodgers^[152]

Footnotes

- [1] "Miami's startled elite wish the guru, in short, a pleasant stay", By Barry Bearak, Knight-Ridder Service, 30 July 1977. INDEPENDENT PRESS TELEGRAM (Long Beach, CA) A-11 "ACCORDING to Anctil and mission president Bill Patterson, they represent a church rather than a religion."
- [2] Downton (1979), p. 5
- [3] Melton (1992), pp. 217-218
- [4] "Whatever Happened to Guru Maharaj Ji? ", Hinduism Today Magazine, October 1983 Available Online (<http://www.hinduismtoday.com/archives/1983/10/1983-10-06.shtml>) (Retrieved March 2008)
- [5] Aagaard (1980)
- [6] U. S. Department of the Army (2001), pp.1-5
- [7] Fahlbusch et al. (1998), p. 861
- [8] Melton (1986), pp.141-2
- [9] Lewis (1998), p. 301
- [10] Hunt (2003), pp.116-7
- [11] GuideStar - American Express Search - ELAN VITAL INC (<http://www.guidestar.org/pqShowGsReport.do?partner=amex&ein=23-7174539#rptlink1>)
- [12] Oz in the Astrodome; Middle-class premies find Guru. The guru enthroned by Ted Morgan, New York Times, 9 December 1973, Page 338
- [13] Price (1979)
- [14] "Indian Shrewdness Plus American Merchandising Equals Guru", BETTY FLYNN *Chicago Daily News*
- [15] Messer in Glock & Bellah (1976), pp. 52-72
- [16] "Snowballing Movement Centers On Teen-Age Guru From India", AP, *THE LAWTON CONSTITUTION-MORNING PRESS*, Sunday, 29 July 1973
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Elan Vital (organization)

See also Elan Vital (disambiguation)

Elan Vital	
Formation	1971 (In United States)
Type	501(c)(3)
Headquarters	California, United States
Official languages	English
Maharaji	Prem Rawat
Key people	Russ Henderling, President
Staff	Five full-time, plus volunteers
Website	http://elanvital.org/

Elan Vital is the name shared by several organizations that support the work of Prem Rawat, a spiritual teacher also known by the honorary title "Maharaji". Independent Elan Vital organizations in several countries raise funds, organize speaking engagements by Prem Rawat and in some cases broadcast his public addresses.

The "Divine Light Mission" in the United States changed its name to Elan Vital in 1983, by filing an entity name change.^[1] According to the *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, the mission was disbanded [when] Prem Rawat personally renounced the trappings of Indian culture and religion, to make his teachings independent of culture, beliefs and lifestyles.^[2]

According to Glen Whittaker, a former spokesperson for the organization in the United Kingdom, Elan Vital no longer has any connection to its originally Hindu or Sikh religious background. The *Historical Dictionary of New Religious Movements* states that Elan Vital insists that it is not a religion and that Maharaji's teachings are independent of culture and by no means bound to the traditions of India. Elan Vital, Inc. in the U.S. is registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. It has been labelled a "church" in reference to its tax status.^[3] Its 2005 articles of incorporation described its purpose as performing "religious, charitable and educational activities". The Elan Vital website states that Elan Vital ceased operations in 2010, and has been succeeded by new entities such as Words of Peace International, Inc.^[4]

History

The organization was originally incorporated in the U.S. in 1971 as the Divine Light Mission as a non-profit corporation and in 1974 was recognized as a religious organization by the United States Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(3). The organization changed its name to Elan Vital in 1983, by filing an entity name change. Elan Vital states in its website that the name was changed to remove Indian labels and to present Maharaji's message in a manner more congruent with Western culture.^[5]

The Elan Vital organization in the United Kingdom changed its name to HDSK (Human Development through Self Knowledge) at the end of 2009. In April 2010, the Elan Vital website announced that Elan Vital had stopped collecting donations and would cease operations in 2010, to be succeeded by entities such as Words of Peace International, Inc., a new US 501(c)(3) organization "closely aligned with Words of Peace Global (WOPG), the international charitable foundation that promotes Maharaji's message of peace".

Purpose

The United States Elan Vital organization provided support for the dissemination and archiving of materials containing Prem Rawat's message. They say that their materials reach a global audience in 80 countries in more than 60 languages. They also state that Prem Rawat receives no compensation from Elan Vital, and that the organization is supported by voluntary contributions and sales of its materials.^[6]

The Elan Vital organizations in the United Kingdom and Australia are a registered charity and a non-profit, respectively, with aims and objectives similar to their U.S. counterpart.^[7] There are also Elan Vital organizations in Spain and Switzerland.

Persons who have been taught Maharaji's techniques can apply and receive a Smartcard, issued by Elan Vital in the U.S., that is used to facilitate admittance to events in which the techniques of Knowledge are reviewed, or to gain access to events designed specifically for people that have received such techniques.^[8]

Reception

Ron Geaves, a Professor of Religion at Liverpool Hope University in England and follower of Prem Rawat, says

Elan Vital was established to more effectively promote Maharaji's teachings in a way that was free from any particular religious or cultural association.^[9]

Sociologist Stephen J. Hunt, writes

For Elan Vital, the emphasis is on individual, subjective experience, rather than on a body of dogma. The teachings provide a kind of practical mysticism. Maharaji speaks not of God, but of the god or divinity within, the power that gives existence. He has occasionally referred to the existence of the two gods—the one created by humankind and the one which creates humankind. Although such references apparently suggest an acceptance of a creative, loving power, he distances himself and his teachings from any concept of religion...deliberately keeping a low profile has meant that the movement has generally managed to escape the gaze of publicity that surrounds other NRMs.^[10]

Elan Vital was listed as a cult in a 1996 French parliamentary commission report. The report was compiled by the general information division of the French National Police (Renseignements généraux) with the help of cult-watching groups. This list has no official statutory or regulatory authority, and in May 2005 the former prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin issued a circular indicating that the parliamentary report should no longer be used to identify cults.^[11] A 1998 article in *Rocky Mountain News* referred to Elan Vital as a "cult".^[12] In 2002 an article by the *Australian Associated Press* referred to the organization as the "Elan Vital cult."^[13]

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Notes

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- [2] Melton, Gordon, *Encyclopedia of American Religions* 7th edition. Thomson (2003) p.2328 ISBN 0-7876-6384-0
 "In the early 1980s, Maharaj Ji moved to disband the Divine Light Mission and he personally renounced the trappings of Indian culture and religion, disbanding the mission, he founded Elan Vital, an organization to support his future role as teacher." [...] Maharaji had made every attempt to abandon the traditional Indian religious trappings in which the techniques originated and to make his presentation acceptable to all the various cultural settings in which followers live. He sees his teachings as independent of culture, religion, beliefs, or lifestyles, and regularly addresses audiences in places as culturally diverse as India, Japan, Taiwan, the Ivory Coast, Slovenia, Mauritius and Venezuela, as well as North America, Europe and the South Pacific.
- [3] GuideStar – American Express Search – ELAN VITAL INC (<http://www.guidestar.org/pqShowGsReport.do?partner=amex&ein=23-7174539#rptlink1>)
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- [10] Stephen J. Hunt *Alternative Religions: A Sociological Introduction* (2003), pp.116–7, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd. ISBN 0-7546-3410-8
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External links

- Official site in the U.S. (<http://elanvital.org/>)
 - Official site in United Kingdom (<http://elanvital.org.uk/>)
 - Official site in Spain (<http://fundacionelanvital.es/>)
 - Official site in Australia (<http://elanvital.com.au/>)
-

J. Gordon Melton

John Gordon Melton	
	
Born	September 19, 1942 Birmingham, Alabama
Residence	Santa Barbara, California
Nationality	American
Fields	religion, new religious movements
Institutions	University of California, Santa Barbara
Alma mater	Birmingham Southern College, Garrett Theological Seminary, Northwestern University
Known for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Religious Leaders of America</i> • <i>Prime-Time Religion</i> • <i>The Encyclopedia of American Religions</i>

John Gordon Melton (born September 19, 1942) is an American religious scholar who was the founding director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion and is currently a research specialist in religion and New Religious Movements with the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion.^[1]

He is the author of more than twenty-five books, including several encyclopedias, handbooks, and almanacs on American religion and new religious movements. He lives in Santa Barbara, California.

His areas of research include major religious traditions, new religions and alternative religions, Occultism and Parapsychology, New Age, and vampirology.

Early life

Melton was born in Birmingham, Alabama, the son of Burnum Edgar Melton and Inez Parker. In 1964 he graduated from Birmingham Southern College with the B.A. degree and then proceeded to theological studies at Garrett Theological Seminary (M.Div., 1968). He married Dorothea Dudley in 1966, with one daughter born. The marriage ended in divorce in 1979.

In 1968, Melton was ordained as an elder in the United Methodist church and remains under bishop's appointment to this day. He was the pastor of the United Methodist church in Wyand, Illinois (1974–75), and then at Evanston, Illinois (1975–80). He was also a member of the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship.

Graduate studies

Melton pursued graduate studies at Northwestern University where he received his Ph.D. in the History and Literature of Religions in 1975. His doctoral dissertation surveyed some 800 religious groups known to exist in the United States at the time and led to the development of a classification system that has come to be widely used.

Melton recounts that "vocationally, the most influential force in my life was the writings of a man I never met but who became my hero, Elmer Talmage Clark ... while my contemporaries became enthused with UFO's, Elvis Presley, or Alabama football, during my last year in high school one of Clarke's books, *The Small Sects in America*, captured my imagination. After reading it I wanted to consume everything written on American alternative religions."^[2]

Professional organizations

- American Academy of Religion
- American Society of Church History
- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion

Methodology and writing

Reference works

Much of Melton's professional career has involved literary and field-research into alternative and minority religious bodies. In taking his cue from the writings of Elmer Clark, Melton has spent almost four decades in identifying, counting and classifying the many different churches, major religious traditions, new religions and alternative religions found in North America. His *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, which was originally published in 1978, has become a standard work of reference that outstrips the number of groups that Clark was able to identify and classify in the 1940s.

Other noteworthy reference works include his *Biographical Dictionary of American Cult and Sect Leaders*, *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, *New Age Almanac*, and *Prime-time Religion* (co-authored with Phillip Charles Lucas and Jon R. Stone). He has also acted as the series editor for four different multi-volume series of reference books: *The Churches Speak* (published by Garland), *Cults and New Religions* (published by Garland), *Sects and Cults in America Bibliographical Guides* (published by Garland), and *Religious Information Systems Series* (published by Garland). Several of these reference works provide significant information for the study of American religious history and church history.

He is a contributor to academic journals such as *Syzygy*, and *Nova Religio*. He has also contributed chapters to various multi-authored books on new religions, and articles in many other reference works, handbooks and encyclopedias of religion.

Research emphasis

Melton's major emphasis has been on collating primary source data on religious groups and movements. His approach to research is shaped, in part, by his training in church history, but also in the phenomenology of religion. His methodology has followed that of a historian seeking primary source literature, and so he has generally made direct, personal contact with the leaders or official representatives of a church or religious group. The purpose of such contact has been to obtain the group's main religious literature to ascertain their principal teachings and practices. His inquiries also comprise, gathering membership statistics, details of the group's history and so forth. These details then take shape in the profiles Melton drafts up in reference texts like the *Encyclopedia of American Religions*.

Melton uses a group's religious texts as the essential mainstay for reporting about a group before then proceeding to scholarly questions and analysis about the wider social, religious and historical contexts.

Main areas of research

Christian countercult and secular anti-cult

Melton is one of the more prominent critics of the anti-cult movement and some Christian countercult organizations, pointing out that since colonial times many US Christian theologians, pastors, missionaries and apologists have questioned the legitimacy of other religious groups and teachings. (see his *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America*, pp. 221–227; and his essay "The Counter-cult Monitoring Movement in Historical Perspective").

Some of Melton's criticisms concerning the secular anti-cult movement revolve around his rejection of the concept of brainwashing as an explanation of religious conversion and indoctrination. During the 1970s and 1980s he was a prominent opponent of the controversial methods of deprogramming. He based his criticisms on the grounds that (a) deprogramming violated civil liberties and religious freedom principles guaranteed in the US Constitution and (b) the efficacy of deprogramming or counter-brainwashing stratagems were doubtful.

In his *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America* he drew an academic distinction between the Christian countercult movement and the secular anti-cult movement. He made the distinction on the grounds that the two movements operate with very different epistemologies, motives and methods. He was also urged to make this distinction in the course of a formal dialogue with evangelical sociologist Ronald Enroth, and also after conversations with Eric Pement of Cornerstone magazine (Chicago). This distinction has been subsequently acknowledged by sociologists such as Douglas E. Cowan and Eileen Barker.

Questions critical former members' testimony validity

Melton challenges the validity of anti-NRM sources, and the testimonies of former members (which he refers to as apostates) critical of their previous groups. While testifying as an expert witness in a lawsuit, Melton asserted that when investigating groups, one should not rely solely upon the unverified testimony of ex-members, and that hostile ex-members would invariably shade the truth and blow out of proportion minor incidents turning them into major incidents.^[3] Wikipedia:Link rot Melton also follows the argumentation of Lewis Carter and David Bromley and claims that as a result of their study, the treatment (coerced or voluntary) of former members as people in need of psychological assistance largely ceased and that an (alleged) lack of widespread need for psychological help by former members of new religions would in itself be the strongest evidence refuting early sweeping condemnations of new religions as causes of psychological trauma.^[4] This view is shared by several religious scholars,^[5] and contested by others.^[6]

New Age

In a paper presented at the conference on "New Age in the Old World" held at the Institut Oecumenique de Bossey, Céligny, Switzerland, Melton presented his views on the New Age movement, stating that it led to a dramatic growth of the older occult/metaphysical community, and created a much more positive image for occultism in Western culture. He believes that the community of people it brought together has grown to be "one of the most important minority faith communities in the West."^[7]

Vampirism research

Melton has researched the history of vampires, as well as the study of contemporary vampiric groups and rites. In 1983 he served as editor for *Vampires Unearthed* by Martin Riccardo, the first comprehensive bibliography of English-language vampire literature. In 1994 he completed *The Vampire Book: An Encyclopedia of the Undead*.^[8] He has also written *The Vampire Gallery: A Who's Who of the Undead*.^[9]

In a 2000 *Speak Magazine* interview, Melton comments on how he first became interested in the subject of vampires, stating that his interest in the subject started during college days. He stated that: "*During the 1990s, vampires began to consume my leisure time.*"^[10]

In 1997, Melton, Massimo Introvigne and Elizabeth Miller organized an event at the Westin Hotel in Los Angeles where 1,500 attendees (some dressed as vampires) came for a "*creative writing contest, Gothic rock music and theatrical performances*".^[11]

In the TSD annual colloquium, "Therapy and Magic in Bram Stoker's 'Dracula' and beyond" held in Romania in 2004, it was announced that Melton and Introvigne would be participating in the TSD conference "Buffy, the vampire slayer", in Nashville, TN in 2004. Melton was titled as the "Count Dracula Ambassador to the U.S".^[12]

Melton is the president of the American chapter *The Transylvanian Society of Dracula* (TSD). This chapter appears to be inactive, as most English speaking members join the Canadian chapter.

Amicus curiae

Melton, together with a group of scholars and the American Psychological Association, submitted on February 10, 1987 an *amicus curiae* brief in a pending case before the California Supreme Court related to the Unification Church. The brief stated that hypotheses of brainwashing and coercive persuasion were uninformed speculations based on skewed data.^[13] The brief characterized the theory of brainwashing as not scientifically proven and advanced the position that "this commitment to advancing the appropriate use of psychological testimony in the courts carries with it the concomitant duty to be vigilant against those who would use purportedly expert testimony lacking scientific and methodological rigor."

Encyclopædia Britannica contributor

Dr. Melton is the second most prolific contributor to the Encyclopædia Britannica, after Dr. Christine Sutton. He has contributed 15 *Micropædia* articles, generally on religious organizations or movements: Aum Shinrikyo, Branch Davidian, Christian Science, Church Universal, Eckankar, Evangelical Church, The Family, Hare Krishna, Heaven's Gate, Jehovah's Witnesses, New Age Movement, Pentecostalism, People's Temple, Scientology and Wicca.

Aum Shinrikyo investigation

In May 1995, in the early stages of investigations into the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway, Melton, fellow scholar James R. Lewis and religious freedom lawyer Barry Fisher flew to Japan to voice concern that police behaviour, including mass detentions without charge and the removal of practitioners' children from the group, might be infringing the civil rights of Aum Shinrikyo members. They had travelled to Japan at the invitation and expense of Aum Shinrikyo after they had contacted the group to express concern over developments, and met with officials over a period of three days. While not having been given access to the group's chemical laboratories, they held press conferences in Japan stating their belief, based on the documentation they had been given by the group,^[14] that the group did not have the ability to produce sarin and was being scapegoated.^[15] Melton revised his judgment shortly after, concluding that the group had in fact been responsible for the attack and other crimes. The scholars' defence of Aum Shinrikyo led to a crisis of confidence in religious scholarship when the group's culpability was proven.

Criticism

As a scholar who reports on New Religious Movements without condemning those groups, Melton has received criticism from scholars and organizations, especially from the anti-cult movement, that feel that New Religious Movements are dangerous, and that scholars should actively work against them. Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs published a critical article *When Scholars Know Sin*, in which they characterize Gordon Melton, James R. Lewis, and Anson Shupe as biased towards the groups they study. Melton was also characterized as an "apologist" in an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*,^[15] and by a Singaporean lawyer as a "*cult apologist who has a long association of defending the practices of destructive cults*" in the *Straits Times*, and in an article: "Apologist versus Alarmist", in *Time Magazine*. The term "cult apologist" was also used in *Esquire Magazine* in describing Melton's actions in the Aum Shinrikyo incident.^[16]

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- [8] "John Gordon Melton", *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, 5th ed. Gale Group, 2001.
- [9] "John Gordon Melton", *Contemporary Authors Online*, Thomson Gale, 2006.
- [10] Interview (http://www.cesnur.org/testi/melton_speak.htm), *Speak Magazine*, J. Gordon Melton, by John Mardas - No. 2, Summer 2000.
"I found out during my college days that I liked vampire books more than any other kind. So when I saw vampire books, I just started buying them, reading them and clipping magazine articles and saving them. During the 1990s, vampires began to consume my leisure time. And by this time, the university had taken over my religious collection and I was very happy with that, so I began to collect vampire literature. I now have what is undoubtedly the largest collection in the United States."
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[t]he methodology of Drs. Singer and Benson has been repudiated by the scientific community, that the hypotheses advanced by Singer were little more than uninformed speculation, based on skewed data and that "[t]he coercive persuasion theory ... is not a meaningful scientific concept.
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- [15] Combatants in Cult War Attempt Reconciliation: Peacemaking conference is held near Seattle (<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Combatants-in-Cult-War-Attempt-Reconciliation-2761953.php>), *San Francisco Chronicle*, Don Lattin, May 1, 2000.
- [16] Giving Cults A Good Name, *Esquire Magazine*, June 1997, Jeannette Walls
One of them, J. Gordon Melton, is considered by many cult foes to be an apologist for the groups. Melton, who has written extensively on cults and religions, has come out in defense of Aum, the Japanese cult linked to the gassing of a Tokyo subway in March that killed twelve people, and the Church of Scientology has asked him to testify in court on its behalf. What's more, Melton, whom [the New] CAN identified as "executive director, Institute for the Study of American Religions, University of California, Santa Barbara," is not a professor at the school; he works in the library.

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External links

Related sites

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- "Brainwashing and the Cults: The Rise and Fall of a Theory", essay by Melton published in Germany, Cesnur.org (<http://www.cesnur.org/testi/melton.htm>)
- "Author's Information on Religious Sects Provides Invaluable Guide" article by evangelical journalist Richard N. Ostling, Associated Press, January 31, 2003, Cesnur.org (<http://www.cesnur.org/2003/melton.htm>)

Vishal Mangalwadi

Vishal Mangalwadi (born 1949) is an Indian Christian philosopher, writer, lecturer, and social reformer.

Early life

Vishal was born in Chhattarpur (M.P.) India to Victor and Kusum Mangalwadi and grew up along with his six siblings in the states of UP and MP.

Education and career

Vishal Mangalwadi graduated from the University of Allahabad in 1969 and earned MA in Philosophy from the University of Indore in 1973. In 1974, Vishal co-founded The Theological Research and Communication Institute (TRACI) and began to develop his Master's thesis into his first book, *The World of Gurus*, published by Vikas Publishing House in 1977 and serialized in the weekly magazine, "Sunday".

In 1975 Vishal married his wife Ruth from Bareilly (UP), a graduate of Lucknow University who returned to India after obtaining a Masters in Theology from Wheaton IL in the USA. In 1976, Vishal and Ruth moved to his father's farm in Gatheora village in Chhattarpur District and founded a non-profit, the Association For Comprehensive Rural Assistance to serve the rural poor and transform their caste-based feudal social system. His work was opposed, violently resisted. In 1980 he was briefly incarcerated in Tikamgarh Jail where he began writing his second book, "Truth and Social Reform." During the anti-Sikh riots that followed the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984, his organization was also burned down. From 1984-'87 Vishal served as the honorary Director of TRACI and published "Truth and Social Reform. In 1984 Vishal was appointed the Covenor of the Peasant's Commission of the Janata Party. In 1987 he initiated a national movement against the revival of Sati. From 1988 to 1994 Vishal served as an assistant to Kanshiram, the founder of the Bahujan Samaj Party. From 1996 Vishal has been writing, lecturing and publishing around the world. In 2003, William Carey International University, Pasadena, CA honored him with a Doctorate in Laws. In 2009 he published the US edition of "Truth and Transformation" encouraging local churches around the world to double up as centers of learning and service, offering tuition-free, internet based college education. In 2010 a pilot project began in Indonesia. Vishal continues to travel around the world to promote this vision of Church-and-Internet Based Higher Education. He writes regularly for New Delhi based bilingual monthly FORWARD Press.

Books published

- *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (2011)
 - *Truth and Transformation: A Manifesto for Ailing Nations* (2009)
 - *Spirituality of Hate: A Futuristic Perspective on Indo-Pakistan Conflict* (2002)
 - *The Quest for Freedom and Dignity: Caste, Conversion, and Cultural Revolution* (2001)
 - *Burnt Alive: The Staines and the God They Loved* — with Vijay Martis, M.B. Desai, Babu K. Verghese and Radha Samuel (2000)
 - *Why Must You Convert?* (1999)
 - *Corruption Vs. True Spirituality* — with Francis Schaeffer (1998)
 - *India: The Grand Experiment* (1997)
 - *Missionary Conspiracy: Letters to a Postmodern Hindu* (1996)
 - *What Liberates a Woman?: The Story of Pandita Ramabai — A Builder of Modern India* —with Nicol McNicol (1996)
 - *The Legacy of William Carey: A Model for the Transformation of a Culture* —with Ruth Mangalwadi (1993)
-

- *In Search of Self: Beyond the New Age*; also titled *When the New Age Gets Old: Looking for a Greater Spirituality* (1992)
- *Truth and Social Reform* (1989)
- *The World of Gurus* (1977)
- *Dear Rajan: Letters to a New Believer* (1972)
- *William Carey and the regeneration of India* (1977) with Ruth Mangalwadi and Dorrow L. Miller
- *Astrology* (2002)
- *Why Are We Backward: Exploring Roots, Exploding Myths, Espousing True Hope* (2013)

Book reviews

The World of Gurus "This volume examines the social and historical background, the religious intellectual impulses, and the religious and cultural aspirations of humanity that have produced the institution of gurudom" - The Companion.

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External links

- Vishal Mangalwadi's official web site (<http://www.vishalmangalwadi.com>)
- Vishal Mangalwadi's blog (<http://vishalmangalwadi.blogspot.com>)

Ron Geaves

Ron Geaves is a professor of religion at Liverpool Hope University in England. He was formerly Programme Leader and Chair in religious studies at the University of Chester in England and Head of Department at the University of Chichester. He is currently Chair of the Muslims in Britain Research Network. His Ph.D. from the University of Leeds was on community formation amongst British Muslims. He has become known by his expertise in the adaptation and transmigration of religions to the West, especially Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism. He is the author of several books, including *The Sufis of Britain*, which explored the manifestations of Islamic mysticism in the UK and *The Continuum Glossary of Religious Terminology* an extensive glossary of seven major world faiths.

Geaves has taught several subjects including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, the Sociology and Anthropology of Religion, Judaism, Christianity and ancient religions. His interests lie in the spiritual manifestations of Islam and Indian traditions.^[1]

Geaves was one of the earliest Western students of Maharaji (Prem Rawat, known also as Guru Maharaj Ji).^[2] Geaves has written a number of papers related to Maharaji and his organizations, such as the Divine Light Mission, and Elan Vital. In July 2006, as he prepared to give an inaugural lecture at the University of Chester to dignitaries and members of the Muslim community in the North West of England, he commented that the 7 July 2005 London bombings were "primarily an extreme form of demonstration" that had to be seen within a long history of protests by British Muslims. He also said that "terrorism is a political word which always seems to be used to demonise people".^[3] Various spokespersons expressed strong disagreement with these statements.^[4]

Geaves has published books entitled *Study of Religion* written in collaboration with George Chryssides of Wolverhampton University. (2007) and *Isms: Understanding Religion* with Theodore Gabriel (2006), of the University of Gloucester. He is engaged in two collaborative edited works, one exploring local and global manifestations of Sufism, and the other an *Encyclopedic Handbook of Islamic Sects*. Geaves has been a pioneer in creating the first degree program in Muslim Youth Work.

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Articles

- *The legitimisation of a North Indian form of Skanda worship in the UK: the transmigration of Baba Balaknath from rural Punjab to urban centres of Britain*, with Catherine Barnes, 2nd Skanda-Murukan Conference, Published in DISKUS Vol. 4, No.2 (1996)
- *Baba Balaknath: an exploration of religious identity* delivered to the British Association for the Study of Religions' Annual Conference September 16th - 19th 1996 at University College of St. Martin, Lancaster.
- *From Divine Light Mission to Elan Vital and Beyond: An Exploration of Change and Adaptation*. Nova Religio, March 2004, Vol. 7, No. 3, Pages 45-62
- *From Totapuri to Maharaji: Reflections on a Lineage (Parampara)* (2007), in *Indian Religions: Renaissance and Revival*, ed. Anna King. London: Equinox, 2007

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External links

- Biographical page at the University of Chester website (<http://www.chester.ac.uk/trs/ron.html>)

David C. Lane

David Christopher Lane (born April 29, 1956 in Burbank, California) is a professor of philosophy and sociology at Mt. San Antonio College, in Walnut, California. He is notable for his book *The Making of a Spiritual Movement: The Untold Story of Paul Twitchell and Eckankar* which exposed the origins of Eckankar and demonstrated the plagiarism of its founder, Paul Twitchell. He is also notable for introducing to a wider audience the teachings of Baba Faqir Chand, the Indian exponent of Surat Shabd Yoga from Hoshiapur. Among writings on Chand, he edited and published a book entitled 'The Unknowing Sage: Life and Work of Baba Faqir Chand'.^[1]

Education

Lane has a Ph.D. and an M.A. in the sociology of knowledge from the University of California at San Diego. Additionally, he has another M.A. in the history and phenomenology of religion from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, and a B.A. from California State University, Northridge. Lane received his A.A. from Los Angeles Valley Community College. Attended Notre Dame High School

Career

Lane is a lecturer in religious studies at California State University who specializes in the study of new religious movements including cults.

Lane was raised Roman Catholic, but went on to be initiated in 1978 by Sant Charan Singh of Radha Soami Satsang Beas. He later has become critical of some but not all of the teachings of Radha Soami Sant Mat.^[2]

He previously taught at the University of California, San Diego, The California School of Professional Psychology, the University of Humanistic Studies, Palomar College, Mira Costa College, and the University of London and other academic institutions. He has given invited lectures at the London School of Economics, California State University, Fullerton.

In an interview in the San Diego Reader published on June 22, 1995, Lane complained about receiving death threats from defenders of several new religious movements or cults. He has also been involved in a number of law suits due to his critical stance of these groups.^[3]

Lane's booklet, *Why I Don't Eat Faces: A Neuroethical Argument for Vegetarianism*, was published in 1993.

Lane has also produced a number of short films, including *Vertical Geometry*, *Moving Water*, *Liquid Air*, and *Digital Baba*.

Lane frequently joins discussions and debates between current and former members of new religious movements, especially on Yahoo! group he set up for use with his classes. He puts some of his discussions on The Neural Surfer

[4], the Mt. SAC philosophy department web site which also contains Lane's online diary and essays of a satirical nature on religious topics.

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James R. Lewis (scholar)

James R. Lewis (born November 3, 1949) is a professional writer and academic specializing in new religious movements and New Age.

Life and work

Lewis was born in Leonardtown, Maryland, and raised in New Port Richey, Florida. In his youth, in the early and mid-seventies, he was a member of Yogi Bhaḥan's 3HO, a new religious movement combining the teachings of kundalini yoga and Sikhism. Feeling disenchanted with the organization, he formed a small and short-lived breakaway movement.

Lewis received his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of Wales, Lampeter, in the United Kingdom, and pursued a career as a professional reference book writer in the 1990s.^[*citation needed*] In 1992, he formed an academic association called AWARE, with the primary goal "to promote intellectual and religious freedom by educating the general public about existing religions and cultures, including, but not limited to, alternative religious groups." Describing its outlook as "scholarly and non-sectarian", AWARE stated that it sought to educate scholars and the general public about the persecution of religious and cultural minorities in the United States and abroad, and to assist the United States in its efforts to counter prejudice. Other scholars involved in the formulation of AWARE as an "anti-anti-cult organization" included Eileen Barker, David G. Bromley, and Jeffrey Hadden, who felt a need for an organization of academics prepared to appear as expert witnesses in court cases. AWARE proved controversial; critics complained that Lewis associated too closely with NRM members, and Lewis dissolved the body in December 1995 after concerns from members of its advisory board.

Some months prior, in May 1995, Lewis, fellow scholar Gordon Melton and religious freedom lawyer Barry Fisher had flown to Japan in the early stages of investigations into the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway to voice their concern that police behaviour, including mass detentions without charge and the removal of practitioners' children from the group, might be infringing the civil rights of Aum Shinrikyo members. They had travelled to Japan at the invitation and expense of Aum Shinrikyo after they had contacted the group to express concern over developments, and met with officials over a period of three days. While not having been given access to the group's chemical laboratories, they held press conferences in Japan stating their belief, based on the documentation they had been given by the group,^[1] that the group did not have the ability to produce sarin and was being scapegoated.^{[[]]} Lewis likened the group's treatment to a Japanese Waco. The scholars' defense of Aum Shinrikyo led to a crisis of confidence in religious scholarship when the group turned out to have been responsible for the attack after all.

Lewis edits a series on Contemporary Religions for Brill, and co-edits a series on Controversial New Religions for Ashgate. He is a co-founder of the International Society for the Study of New Religions and editor-in-chief of the *Alternative Spirituality & Religion Review* (ASSR). He has taught in the University of Wisconsin system and, on an adjunct basis, at DePaul University, and is currently Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Tromsø and Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Wales, Lampeter.^{[[]]}

Reception

A prolific author, Lewis won a *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title award for *Cults in America* in 1999. The *Choice* review described it as a "very readable book" that offered a "balanced overview of controversies centering on cults in America", containing basic information on several dozen groups, as well as the more general conflict between "anti-cultists" seeking government assistance to eliminate cults, and religious "libertarians" defending religious liberty even for disliked groups. The review stated that while Lewis differed with the anti-cult view, he presented "arguments and references from both sides – respectfully and in language free from insinuation or invective. Strongly recommended". Lewis won another *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title award in 2005, for *The Oxford*

Handbook of New Religious Movements. He has also won New York Public Library and American Library Association awards for his reference books.

The work of AWARE in the 1990s was criticized by Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, who alleged that Lewis was disseminating movement "propaganda", and used poor research methods. This echoed earlier criticisms in a *Skeptic* article by Stephen A. Kent and Theresa Krebs, who felt that materials produced by Lewis and J. Gordon Melton on the Church Universal and Triumphant and The Family were "as much an apology as a social scientific product". Anson Shupe and Susan E. Darnell in turn characterised Kent's and Krebs' paper as an ad-hominem attack, and part of a pattern of accusing scholars of bias when their field research produced findings at variance with anti-cult stereotypes. J. Gordon Melton defended the work done by Lewis and himself, stating that far from being a public relations exercise, the AWARE report on the Church Universal and Triumphant had "startled and upset" the group's leadership, and led to wide-ranging changes in the organization. Jeffrey Kaplan stated that the aims of AWARE had been "laudable", but that the risks involved for academics in joining the "cult wars", as well as the organization's apparently unsuccessful appeals for funding from new religious movements, led to controversy.

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External links

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