

# Indian History

## 15th Century

**Richard McCray**



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by Richard McCray

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## Chapter 1

# Bhakti Movement

The **Bhakti movement** refers to the trend that was brought forward by a number of Hindu saints in medieval Hinduism that sought to bring religious reforms by adopting the method of devotion to achieve salvation. It was prominent in eighth-century south India (now Tamil Nadu and Kerala states), and spread northwards. It swept over east and north India from the 15th century onwards, reaching its zenith between the 15th and 17th century CE.

The Bhakti movement regionally developed around different gods and goddesses, and some sub-sects were Vaishnavism (Vishnu), Shaivism (Shiva), Shaktism (Shakti goddesses), and Smartism. It later acted as a *de facto* catalyst to the formation of Sikhism. Bhakti movement preached using the local languages so that the message reached the masses. The movement was inspired by many poet-saints, who championed a wide range of philosophical positions ranging from theistic dualism of Dvaita to absolute monism of Advaita Vedanta.

The movement has traditionally been considered as an influential social reformation in Hinduism, and provided an individual-focused alternative path to spirituality regardless of one's birth or gender. The Bhakti movement began with the aim of reforming Hinduism against evil practices, the caste system and the dominance of Brahmanas. Contemporary scholars question this traditional view and whether the Bhakti movement ever was a reform or rebellion of any kind. They suggest Bhakti movement was a revival, reworking and



recontextualisation of ancient Vedic traditions. *Bhakti* refers to passionate devotion (to a deity). Scriptures of the Bhakti movement include the Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavata Purana and Padma Purana.

## **Terminology**

The Sanskrit word *bhakti* is derived from the root *bhaji*, which means "divide, share, partake, participate, to belong to". The word also means "attachment, devotion to, fondness for, homage, faith or love, worship, piety to something as a spiritual, religious principle or means of salvation". The meaning of the term *Bhakti* is analogous to but different from Kama. Kama connotes emotional connection, sometimes with sensual devotion and erotic love. Bhakti, in contrast, is spiritual, a love and devotion to religious concepts or principles, that engages both emotion and intellection. Karen Pechelis states that the word Bhakti should not be understood as uncritical emotion, but as committed engagement. Bhakti movement in Hinduism refers to ideas and engagement that emerged in the medieval era on love and devotion to religious concepts built around one or more gods and goddesses. Bhakti movement preached against the caste system using the local languages so that the message reached the masses. One who practices *bhakti* is called a *bhakta*.

## **Textual roots**

Ancient Indian texts, dated to be from the 1st millennium BCE, such as the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, the Katha Upanishad and the Bhagavad Gita mention Bhakti.

## Shvetashvatara Upanishad

- The last of three epilogue verses of the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, 6.23, uses the word *Bhakti* as follows,

He who has highest *Bhakti* (love, devotion) of *Deva* (God), just like his *Deva*, so for his *Guru* (teacher), To him who is high-minded, these teachings will be illuminating.

- —□ *Shvetashvatara Upanishad 6.23*

This verse is notable for the use of the word *Bhakti*, and has been widely cited as among the earliest mentions of "the love of God". Scholars have debated whether this phrase is authentic or later insertion into the Upanishad, and whether the terms "Bhakti" and "God" meant the same in this ancient text as they do in the medieval and modern era *Bhakti* traditions found in India. Max Muller states that the word *Bhakti* appears only in one last verse of the epilogue, could have been a later insertion and may not be theistic as the word was later used in much later *Sandilya Sutras*. Grierson as well as Carus note that the first epilogue verse 6.21 is also notable for its use of the word *Deva Prasada* (देवप्रसाद, grace or gift of God), but add that *Deva* in the epilogue of the Shvetashvatara Upanishad refers to "pantheistic Brahman" and the closing credit to sage Shvetashvatara in verse 6.21 can mean "gift or grace of his Soul".

Doris Srinivasan states that the Upanishad is a treatise on theism, but it creatively embeds a variety of divine images, an inclusive language that allows "three Vedic definitions for

personal deity". The Upanishad includes verses wherein God can be identified with the Supreme (Brahman-Atman, Self, Soul) in Vedanta monistic theosophy, verses that support dualistic view of Samkhya doctrines, as well as the synthetic novelty of triple Brahman where a triune exists as the divine soul (Deva, theistic God), individual soul (self) and nature (Prakrti, matter).

Tsuchida writes that the Upanishad syncretically combines monistic ideas in Upanishad and self-development ideas in Yoga with personification of Shiva-

Rudra deity. Hiriyanna interprets the text to be introducing "personal theism" in the form of Shiva Bhakti, with a shift to monotheism but in henotheistic context where the individual is encouraged to discover his own definition and sense of God.

## **Bhagavad Gita**

The *Bhagavad Gita*, a post-Vedic scripture composed in 5th to 2nd century BCE, introduces *bhakti marga* (the path of faith/devotion) as one of three ways to spiritual freedom and release, the other two being *karma marga* (the path of works) and *jnana marga* (the path of knowledge). In verses 6.31 through 6.47 of the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna as an Avatar of deity Vishnu, describes *bhakti yoga* and loving devotion, as one of the several paths to the highest spiritual attainments.

## **Sutras**

Shandilya and Narada are credited with two Bhakti texts, the *Shandilya Bhakti Sutra* and *Narada Bhakti Sutra*.

# History

The Bhakti movement originated in South India during the seventh to eighth century CE, spread northwards from Tamil Nadu through Karnataka and gained wide acceptance in fifteenth-century Bengal and northern India.

The movement started with the Saiva Nayanars and the Vaisnava Alvars, who lived between 5th and 9th century CE. Their efforts ultimately helped spread *bhakti* poetry and ideas throughout India by the 12th–18th century CE.

The Alvars, which literally means "those immersed in God", were Vaishnava poet-saints who sang praises of Vishnu as they travelled from one place to another. They established temple sites such as Srirangam, and spread ideas about Vaishnavism. r poems, compiled as Alvar Arulicheyalgal or Divya Prabhandham, developed into an influential scripture for the Vaishnavas. The Bhagavata Purana's references to the South Indian Alvar saints, along with its emphasis on *bhakti*, have led many scholars to give it South Indian origins, though some scholars question whether this evidence excludes the possibility that *bhakti* movement had parallel developments in other parts of India.

Like the Alvars, the Saiva Nayanar poets were influential. The *Tirumurai*, a compilation of hymns on Shiva by sixty-three Nayanar poet-saints, developed into an influential scripture in Shaivism. The poets' itinerant lifestyle helped create temple and pilgrimage sites and spread spiritual ideas built around Shiva. Early Tamil-Siva bhakti poets influenced Hindu texts that came to be revered all over India.

Some scholars state that the Bhakti movement's rapid spread in India in the 2nd millennium, was in part a response to the arrival of Islam and subsequent Islamic rule in India and Hindu-Muslim conflicts. This view is contested by some scholars, with Rekha Pande stating that singing ecstatic bhakti hymns in local language was a tradition in south India before Muhammad was born. According to Pande, the psychological impact of Muslim conquest may have initially contributed to community-style bhakti by Hindus. Yet other scholars state that Muslim invasions, their conquering of Hindu Bhakti temples in south India and seizure/melting of musical instruments such as cymbals from local people, was in part responsible for the later relocation or demise of singing Bhakti traditions in the 18th century.

According to Wendy Doniger, the nature of Bhakti movement may have been affected by the "surrender to God" daily practices of Islam when it arrived in India. In turn it influenced devotional practices in Islam such as Sufism, and other religions in India from 15th century onwards, such as Sikhism, Christianity, and Jainism.

Klaus Witz, in contrast, traces the history and nature of Bhakti movement to the Upanishadic and the Vedanta foundations of Hinduism. He writes, that in virtually every Bhakti movement poet, "the Upanishadic teachings form an all-pervasive substratum, if not a basis. We have here a state of affairs that has no parallel in the West. Supreme Wisdom, which can be taken as basically non-theistic and as an independent wisdom tradition (not dependent on the Vedas), appears fused with highest level of bhakti and with highest level of God realization."

## **Poets, writers and musicians**

The Bhakti movement witnessed a surge in Hindu literature in regional languages, particularly in the form of devotional poems and music. This literature includes the writings of the Alvars and Nayanars, poems of Andal, Basava, Bhagat Pipa, Allama Prabhu, Akka Mahadevi, Kabir, Nanak (founder of Sikhism), Tulsidas, Nabha Dass, Gusainji, Ghananand, Ramananda (founder of Ramanandi Sampradaya), Ravidass, Sripadaraja, Vyasatirtha, Purandara Dasa, Kanakadasa, Vijaya Dasa, Six Goswamis of Vrindavan, Raskhan, Ravidas, Jayadeva Goswami, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram, Mirabai, Ramprasad Sen, Sankardev, Vallabha Acharya, Narsinh Mehta, Gangasati and the teachings of saints like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

The earliest writers from the 7th to 10th century CE known to have influenced the poet-saints driven movements include, Sambandar, Tirunavukkarasar, Sundarar, Nammalvar, Adi Shankara, Manikkavacakar and Nathamuni. Several 11th and 12th century writers developed different philosophies within the Vedanta school of Hinduism, which were influential to the Bhakti tradition in medieval India. These include Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Nimbarka. These writers championed a spectrum of philosophical positions ranging from theistic dualism, qualified nondualism and absolute monism.

## **Philosophy: Nirguna and Saguna Brahman**

The Bhakti movement of Hinduism saw two ways of imaging the nature of the divine (Brahman) – *Nirguna* and *Saguna*. *Nirguna*

Brahman was the concept of the Ultimate Reality as formless, without attributes or quality. *Saguna* Brahman, in contrast, was envisioned and developed as with form, attributes and quality.

The two had parallels in the ancient pantheistic unmanifest and theistic manifest traditions, respectively, and traceable to Arjuna-Krishna dialogue in the Bhagavad Gita. It is the same Brahman, but viewed from two perspectives, one from *Nirguni* knowledge-focus and other from *Saguni* love-focus, united as Krishna in the Gita. *Nirguna* bhakta's poetry were *Jnana-shrayi*, or had roots in knowledge. *Saguna* bhakta's poetry were *Prema-shrayi*, or with roots in love. In Bhakti, the emphasis is reciprocal love and devotion, where the devotee loves God, and God loves the devotee.

Jeaneane Fowler states that the concepts of *Nirguna* and *Saguna* Brahman, at the root of Bhakti movement theosophy, underwent more profound development with the ideas of Vedanta school of Hinduism, particularly those of Adi Shankara's Advaita Vedanta, Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita Vedanta, and Madhvacharya's Dvaita Vedanta. Two 12th-century influential treatises on bhakti were *Sandilya Bhakti Sutra* – a treatise resonating with *Nirguna*-bhakti, and *Narada Bhakti Sutra* – a treatise that leans towards *Saguna*-bhakti.

*Nirguna* and *Saguna* Brahman concepts of the Bhakti movement has been a baffling one to scholars, particularly the *Nirguni* tradition because it offers, states David Lorenzen, "heart-felt devotion to a God without attributes, without even any definable personality". Yet given the "mountains of *Nirguni* bhakti literature", adds Lorenzen, bhakti for *Nirguna* Brahman

has been a part of the reality of the Hindu tradition along with the bhakti for *Saguna Brahman*. These were two alternate ways of imagining God during the bhakti movement.

## **Social impact**

The Bhakti movement was a devotional transformation of medieval Hindu society, wherein Vedic rituals or alternatively ascetic monk-like lifestyle for moksha gave way to individualistic loving relationship with a personally defined god. Salvation which was previously considered attainable only by men of Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya castes, became available to everyone.

Most scholars state that Bhakti movement provided women and members of the Shudra and untouchable communities an inclusive path to spiritual salvation. Some scholars disagree that the Bhakti movement was premised on such social inequalities.

Poet-saints grew in popularity, and literature on devotional songs in regional languages became profuse. These poet-saints championed a wide range of philosophical positions within their society, ranging from the theistic dualism of Dvaita to the absolute monism of Advaita Vedanta. Kabir, a poet-saint for example, wrote in Upanishadic style, the state of knowing truth:

There's no creation or creator there, no gross or fine, no wind or fire, no sun, moon, earth or water, no radiant form, no time there, no word, no flesh, no faith, no cause and effect, nor any



thought of the Veda, no Hari or Brahma, no Shiva or Shakti, no pilgrimage and no rituals, no mother, father or guru there...

- —□ *Kabir, Shabda 43, Translated by K Schomer and WH McLeod*

The early 15th-century Bhakti poet-sant Pipa stated,

Within the body is the god, within the body the temple,  
within the body all the Jangamas within the body the incense,  
the lamps and the food-offerings, within the body the puja-  
leaves.

After searching so many lands, I found the nine treasures  
within my body, Now there will be no further going and coming,  
I swear by Rama.

- —□ *Pīpā, Gu dhanasari, Translated by Vaudeville*

The impact of the Bhakti movement in India was similar to that of the Protestant Reformation of Christianity in Europe.

It evoked shared religiosity, direct emotional and intellection of the divine, and the pursuit of spiritual ideas without the overhead of institutional superstructures.

Practices emerged bringing new forms of spiritual leadership and social cohesion among the medieval Hindus, such as community singing, chanting together of deity names, festivals, pilgrimages, rituals relating to Saivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism. Many of these regional practices have survived into the modern era.

## **Seva, dāna, and community kitchens**

The Bhakti movement introduced new forms of voluntary social giving such as *seva* (service, for example to a temple or *guru* school or community construction), *dāna* (charity), and community kitchens with free shared food. Of community kitchen concepts, the vegetarian Guru ka Langar introduced by Nanak became a well established institution over time, starting with northwest India, and expanding to everywhere Sikh communities are found. Other saints such as Dadu Dayal championed similar social movement, a community that believed in Ahimsa (non-violence) towards all living beings, social equality, and vegetarian kitchen, as well as mutual social service concepts. Bhakti temples and matha (Hindu monasteries) of India adopted social functions such as relief to victims after natural disaster, helping the poor and marginal farmers, providing community labor, feeding houses for the poor, free hostels for poor children and promoting folk culture.

## **Sikhism, Shakti and Bhakti movement**

Some scholars call Sikhism a Bhakti sect of Indian traditions. In Sikhism, "nirguni Bhakti" is emphasised – devotion to a divine without Gunas(qualities or form), but it accepts both nirguni and saguni forms of the divine.

The *Guru Granth Sahib*, the scripture of the Sikhs, contains the hymns of the Sikh gurus, fourteen Hindu bhagats, and one Muslim bhagat. Some of the bhagats whose hymns were included in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, were bhakti poets who

taught their ideas before the birth of Guru Nanak – the first of Sikh Guru. The fourteen Hindu bhagats whose hymns were entered into the text, were poet saints of the Bhakti movement, and included Kabir Saheb Namdev, Pipa, Ravidas, Beni, Bhikhan, Dhanna, Jayadeva, Parmanand, Sadhana, Sain, Surdas, Trilochan, while the one Muslim bhagats was Sufi saint Farid. Most of the 5,894 hymns in the Sikh scripture came from the Sikh gurus, and rest from the Bhagats. The three highest contributions in the Sikh scripture of non-Sikh bhagats were from Bhagat Kabir (292 hymns), Bhagat Farid (134 hymns), and Bhagat Namdev (60 hymns).

While Sikhism was influenced by Bhakti movement, and incorporated hymns from the Bhakti poet saints, it was not simply an extension of the Bhakti movement. Sikhism, for instance, disagreed with some of the views of Bhakti saints Kabir and Ravidas.

Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru and the founder of Sikhism, was a Bhakti saint. He taught, states Jon Mayled, that the most important form of worship is Bhakti. *Nam-simran* – the realisation of God – is an important Bhakti practice in Sikhism. Guru Arjan, in his *Sukhmani Sahib*, recommended the true religion is one of loving devotion to God. The Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib includes suggestions for a Sikh to perform constant Bhakti. The Bhakti themes in Sikhism also incorporate Shakti (power) ideas.

Some Sikh sects outside the Punjab-region of India, such as those found in Maharashtra and Bihar, practice Aarti with lamps in a Gurdwara. *Arti* and devotional prayer ceremonies are also found in Ravidassia religion, previously part of Sikhism.

## **Buddhism, Jainism and Bhakti movement**

Bhakti has been a prevalent practice in various Jaina sects, wherein learned Tirthankara (*Jina*) and human *gurus* are considered superior beings and venerated with offerings, songs and *Āratī* prayers. John Cort suggests that the *bhakti* movement in later Hinduism and Jainism may share roots in *vandan* and *pujan* concepts of the Jaina tradition.

Medieval-era *bhakti* traditions among non-theistic Indian traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism have been reported by scholars, wherein the devotion and prayer ceremonies were dedicated to an enlightened guru, primarily Buddha and Jina Mahavira respectively, as well as others. Karel Werner notes that *Bhatti* (Bhakti in Pali) has been a significant practice in Theravada Buddhism, and states, "there can be no doubt that deep devotion or *bhakti* / *bhatti* does exist in Buddhism and that it had its beginnings in the earliest days".

## **Christianity**

Bhakti, according to William Dyrness, has been a "point of convergence" between Christian gospel tradition and the Hindu devotional tradition. It has helped Indian Christians devote themselves to God as distinct from his creation, and as a personal being to love, to expect grace from, through self-giving devotion. Songs were composed by poets such as A.J. Appasamy, Sadhu Sundar Singh and other early converts in the early twentieth century that were rich in lyrics and brought

out the mysticism, legends and meaning of Christianity. According to Kugler, some of the pioneers of bhakti in Christian sects in India include Murari David.

## **Controversy and doubts in contemporary scholarship**

Contemporary scholars question whether the 19th- and early 20th-century theories about Bhakti movement in India, its origin, nature and history is accurate. Pechilis in her book on Bhakti movement, for example, states:

Scholars writing on bhakti in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were agreed that bhakti in India was preeminently a monotheistic reform movement. For these scholars, the inextricable connection between monotheism and reform has both theological and social significance in terms of the development of Indian culture.

The orientalist images of bhakti were formulated in a context of discovery: a time of organised cultural contact, in which many agencies, including administrative, scholarly and missionary – sometimes embodied in a single person – sought knowledge of India.

Through the Indo-European language connection, early orientalists believed that they were, in a sense, seeing their own ancestry in the antique texts and "antiquated" customs of Indian peoples. In this respect, certain scholars could identify with the monotheism of bhakti. Seen as a reform movement,

bhakti presented a parallel to the orientalist agenda of intervention in the service of the empire.

- —□ *Karen Pechilis, The Embodiment of Bhakti*

Madeleine Biardeau states, as does Jeanine Miller, that Bhakti movement was neither a reform nor a sudden innovation, but the continuation and expression of ideas to be found in Vedas, Bhakti marga teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, the Katha Upanishad and the Shvetashvatara Upanishad.

John Stratton Hawley describes recent scholarship which questions the old theory of Bhakti movement origin and "story of south-moves-north", then states that the movement had multiple origins, mentioning Brindavan in north India as another center. Hawley describes the controversy and disagreements between Indian scholars, quotes Hegde's concern that "Bhakti movement was a reform" theory has been supported by "cherry-picking particular songs from a large corpus of Bhakti literature" and that if the entirety of the literature by any single author such as *Basava* is considered along with its historical context, there is neither reform nor a need for reform.

Sheldon Pollock writes that the Bhakti movement was neither a rebellion against Brahmins and the upper castes nor a rebellion against the Sanskrit language, because many of the prominent thinkers and earliest champions of the Bhakti movement were Brahmins and from upper castes, and because much of the early and later Bhakti poetry and literature was in Sanskrit. Further, states Pollock, evidence of Bhakti trends in ancient southeast Asian Hinduism in the 1st millennium CE, such as those in Cambodia and Indonesia where Vedic era is

unknown, and where upper caste Tamil Hindu nobility and merchants introduced Bhakti ideas of Hinduism, suggest the roots and the nature of Bhakti movement to be primarily spiritual and political quest instead of rebellion of some form.

John Guy states that the evidence of Hindu temples and Chinese inscriptions from 8th century CE about Tamil merchants, presents Bhakti motifs in Chinese trading towns, particularly the Kaiyuan Temple (Quanzhou). These show Saivite, Vaishnavite and Hindu Brahmin monasteries revered Bhakti themes in China.

Scholars increasingly are dropping, states Karen Pechilis, the old premises and the language of "radical otherness, monotheism and reform of orthodoxy" for Bhakti movement. Many scholars are now characterising the emergence of Bhakti in medieval India as a revival, reworking and recontextualisation of the central themes of the Vedic traditions.

## Chapter 2

# Dilawar Khan Establishes the Malwa Sultanate

## Dilawar Khan

**Dilawar Khan Ghorī** was a Pashtun governor of the Malwa province of central India and laterly Sultan of the Malwa Sultanate during the decline of the Delhi Sultanate. After serving at the court in Delhi, he was appointed governor at Dhar in A.H. 793/C.E. 1390–91. Dilawar Khan took the title of 'Amid Shāh Dā'ūd and caused the *khutba* to be read in his name in A.H. 804/C.E. 1401–02. He passed his kingdom – the Malwa Sultanate – to his son Hoshang Shah upon his death in A.H. 809/C.E. 1406.

- Dilawar Khan in the reign of the Later Tughluqs (1391/92 - 1401/02)

Dilawar Khan was the follower of Firuz Shah Tughluq's son, Muhammad ibn Firuz, later known as Muhammad Shah. He was imprisoned by the court officials at Delhi for his support for the rebel prince. Not only Dilawar Khan, but many important provincial governors, such as that of Gujarat, and various other important and powerful nobles of the court supported the Prince' claim to the throne. After Timur's invasion in 1398, the same prince, who was the then Sultan of Delhi, ran away from the capital and sought shelter, first in the Gujarat Sultanate, but receiving a less than enthusiastic



response there, moved to the Malwa Sultanate. Dilawar Khan is said to have welcomed him with open arms and told him that his Sultanate and treasure was all for the service of the Delhi Sultan.

## **Malwa Sultanate**

- The **Malwa Sultanate** was a late medieval empire of Pashtuns origin in the Malwa region, covering the present day Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and south-eastern Rajasthan from 1392 to 1562.

## **History**

The sultanate of Malwa was founded by Dilawar Khan Ghuri, the governor of Malwa for the Delhi Sultanate, who asserted his independence in 1392, but did not actually assume the ensigns of royalty till 1401. Initially Dhar was the capital of the new kingdom, but soon it was shifted to Mandu, which was renamed Shadiabad (the city of joy).

After his death, he was succeeded by his son Alp Khan, who assumed the title of Hoshang Shah. The Ghurid dynasty, founded by Dilawar Khan Ghuri, was replaced by Mahmud Shah I, who proclaimed himself king on 16 May 1436.

The Khalji dynasty, founded by him, ruled over Malwa till 1531. Mahmud Khalji I was succeeded by his eldest son Ghiyas-ud-Din. The last days of Ghiyas-ud-Din were embittered by a struggle for throne between his two sons, with Nasir-ud-Din emerging victorious over Ala-ud-Din and

ascending the throne on 22 October 1500, The last ruler Mahmud Shah II surrendered to Bahadur Shah, the sultan of Gujarat after the fort of Mandu fell to Bahadur on 25 May 1531.

During 1531 – 1537 the kingdom was under the control of Bahadur Shah, though the Mughal emperor Humayun captured it for a short period during 1535-36.

In 1537, Qadir Shah, an ex-officer of the previous Khalji dynasty rulers, regained control over a part of the erstwhile kingdom. But in 1542, Sher Shah Suri conquered the kingdom, defeating him and appointed Shuja'at Khan as the governor. His son, Baz Bahadur, declared himself independent in 1555.

In 1561, emperor Akbar sent the Mughal army, led by Adham Khan and Pir Muhammad Khan, which attacked Malwa and defeated Baz Bahadur in the battle of Sarangpur on 29 March 1561, culminating in the Mughal conquest of Malwa. Akbar soon recalled Adham Khan and made over command to Pir Muhammad. Pir Muhammad attacked Khandesh and proceeded up to Burhanpur, but he was defeated by a coalition of three powers: Miran Mubarak Shah II of Khandesh, Tufal Khan of Berar Sultanate and Baz Bahadur. Pir Muhammad died while retreating.

The confederate army pursued the Mughals and drove them out of Malwa. Baz Bahadur regained his kingdom for a short period. In 1562, Akbar sent another army, led by Abdullah Khan, an Uzbek, which finally defeated Baz Bahadur. He fled to Chittor. It became the Malwa Subah (top-level province) of the Mughal empire, with seat at Ujjain and Abdullah Khan became its first governor.

# Art and architecture

## Malwa painting

Many remarkable illustrated manuscripts were prepared during the period of the sultanate. An illustrated manuscript of *Kalpa Sutra* (1439) (presently in the National Museum, Delhi) was prepared in Mandu during the reign of Mahmud Shah I. But the most interesting is a manuscript of the *Nimat Nama*, a treatise on the art of cooking, which bears many portraits of Ghiyas-ud-Din Shah but the colophon bears the name of Nasir-ud-Din Shah.

The other notable illustrated manuscripts of this period are of the *Miftah-ul-Fuzala*, a dictionary of rare words, the *Bustan* (1502) painted by Haji Mahmud and the *Aja'ib-us-San'ati* (1508). Another manuscript of the *Anwar-i-Suhaili* (now in the National Museum, Delhi) probably also belong to this period.

## Malwa architecture

- The monuments built during the sultanate period are almost concentrated in Mandu city. The early monuments were assembled out of the materials of earlier Hindu temples, according to the Islamic plan and convention. But nothing seems to have been done to conceal or alter their essential Hindu appearance. The significant among them are the *Kamal Maula Masjid* (c.1400), the *Lal Masjid* (1405), *Dilawar Khan's Masjid* (c.1405) and the *Masjid of Malik Mughis* (1452) in Mandu.

Hoshang Shah laid the foundation of the Mandu fort on the ruins of the original fortification. With him began the second and the classical phase of Malwa architecture. Some of the ten gateways on the 25 miles long wall of the fortress of Mandu were built by the Malwa sultans, the earliest one being the *Delhi Darwaza* (northern gateway). Within the walls of the fortress, presently only forty structures survive in different stages of preservation.

The largest and most impressive of them is *Jami Masjid*, which according to an inscription was begun by Hoshang Shah and completed by Mahmud Shah I in 1454. The remarkable Durbar hall, known as the *Hindola Mahal* is also attributed to Hoshang Shah. Opposite to Jami Masjid, the large structural complex known as the *Ashrafi Mahal* comprises a group of buildings successively built in course of a rather long period. Its original nucleus seems to be a *madrassa* building erected as an adjunct to the *Jami Masjid*, probably during the reign of Hoshang Shah. According to Firishta, the tomb of Hoshang Shah was built by Mahmud Shah I. The later mausoleums, such as the tomb of Darya Khan, the *Dai ka Mahal* and the *Chhappan Mahal* were built on the same design. A long structural complex situated between two lakes has a curious name, the *Jahaz Mahal* (ship-palace). Though the date of this monument is not definitely known, its general style is in accord with the character of Ghiyas-ud-Din Khalji. A lonely building on the slope of a hill by the side of Riwa Kund is known by the local people as Baz Bahadur's palace. According to an inscription this monument was actually built by Nasir-ud-Din Shah. The Rani Rupmati Pavilion stands on the southern edge of the plateau and as its situation and form indicate, was, in all probability, designed for military purposes.

# **Rulers**

## **The Ghurid/Ghorid dynasty (1401–36)**

- Dilawar Khan 1401–1406
- Husam-ud-Din Hoshang Shah 1406–1435
- Taj-ud-Din Muhammad Shah I 1435–1436

## **The Khalji dynasty (1436–1531)**

- Ala-ud-Din Mahmud Shah I 1436–1469
- Ghiyas-ud-Din Shah 1469–1500
- Nasir-ud-Din Shah 1500–1510
- Shihab-ud-Din Mahmud Shah II 1510–1531

## **The interregnum**

- Bahadur Shah (the sultan of Gujarat) 1531–1537
- Humayun (Mughal emperor) 1535–1540

## **The later rulers**

- Qadir Shah 1540–1542
- Shuja'at Khan (the governor of Sher Shah Suri) 1542–1555
- Baz Bahadur 1555–1561

## Chapter 3

# Muzaffarids (Gujarat)

- The **Muzaffarid dynasty**, sometimes referred as **Ahmedabad dynasty**, were sultans of Gujarat in western India from 1391 to 1583. The founder of the dynasty was Zafar Khan (later Muzaffar Shah I) who was governor of Gujarat under the Delhi Sultanate. Zafar Khan's father Sadharan, was a convert from Hinduism to Islam. He adopted the name Wajih-ul-Mulk. He was originally from Southern Punjab, rising to nobel status in the Delhi Sultan's court. His Hindu forebearers claimed descend from Rāmachandra, who the Hindus worshipped as God. When the Sultanate was weakened by the sacking of Delhi by Timur in 1398, and Zafar Khan took the opportunity to establish himself as sultan of an independent Gujarat. His son, Ahmed Shah I established the capital at Ahmedabad. The dynasty ruled for almost 200 years, until the conquest of Gujarat by the Mughal Empire in 1572. The sultanate reached its peak of expansion under Mahmud Begada, reaching east into Malwa and west to the Gulf of Kutch.

## Muzaffar Shah I

**Muzaffar Shah I**, born **Zafar Khan**, was a ruler of the Muzaffarid dynasty, who reigned over the Gujarat Sultanate from 1391 to 1403 and later again from 1404 to 1411.

Appointed as the governor of Gujarat by Tughluq of Delhi sultanate, he declared independence and founded the Gujarat Sultanate when there was a chaos in Delhi following Timur's invasion. He was disposed by his ambitious son Tatar Khan but he regained shortly the throne when he died. Muzaffar Shah I was a Tanka Khatri convert to Islam. The Gujarati historian Sikandar in his persian work the Mirat-i-Sikandari narrates of the Sultan's ancestors having once been Hindu 'Tanks', a branch of Khatri who traced their descent from Rāmachandra. Persian historical sources such as Mirat-i-Ahmad [Chapter 7] say the person who converted to Islam was Sidharan, titled Wajuh Ul Mulk, of the Tank, subcaste of the Khatri community.

## **Ancestors**

The dynasty was founded by Zafar Khan Muzaffar, a Hindu who converted to Islam, originally from Southern Punjab, but born in Delhi. He rose to nobel status in the Delhi Sultan's household. He was Governor of Gujarat and became independent from Delhi after Tīmūr devastated the city.

## **Early life**

Zafar Khan was born on Muharram 25, year 743 (30 June 1342).

Zafar Khan was a son of Wajih-ul-Mulk. According to a legend, saint Bukhari promised Gujarat to Zafar Khan prophetically in return of food provided to Fakirs at his house. He gave him handful of dates and declared, "Thy seed like unto these in

number shall rule over Gujarat". The number of seeds varied from eleven to thirteen according to various sources.

Muhammad Bin Tughluq was on an expedition to intervene in a war but he died at Thatta on bank of Indus river in 1351 from fever induced by a surfeit of fish. As he had no sons, his cousin Firuz Shah Tughluq succeeded.

Firuz Shah Tughluq appointed Malik Mufarrah, also known as Farhat-ul-Mulk Rasti Khan governor of Gujarat in 1377. In 1387, Sikandar Khan was sent to replace him, but he was defeated and killed by Farhat-ul-Mulk. Firuz Shah died in 1388 and his grandson, Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlaq II succeeded but was reign only for five months. He was succeeded by another grandson Abu Bakr Shah but after nine months he was deposed by Firuz Shah's son, Nasir ud din Muhammad Shah III who ruled for three years 1389-1392.

## **Reign**

### **Governor of Gujarat under Tughluqs (1391-1407)**

In 1391, Sultan Nasir ud din Muhammad Shah III appointed Zafar Khan, the son of Wajih-ul-Mulk as governor of Gujarat and conferred him the title of Muzaffar Khan. In passing Nagor he was met by a deputation from Cambay, complaining of the tyranny of Rásti Khán. Consoling them, he proceeded to Pátan, the seat of government, and then marched against Rásti Khán. The armies met near the village of Kamboi, a dependency of Pátan, and Farhat-ul-Mulk Rásti Khán was slain and his army defeated. To commemorate the victory, Zafar Khán founded a village on the battle-field, which he named Jítpur (the city of



victory), and then, starting for Cambay, redressed the grievances of the people. It was rumoured that Farhat-ul-Mulk was trying to establish independent rule in Gujarat. In 1392, Farhat-ul-Mulk was defeated and killed in the battle of Kambor (now Gambhu), near Anhilwada Patan and occupied the city of Anhilwada Patan. He founded Jitpur at the site of victory.

On the death of Nasir ud din Muhammad Shah III in 1392, his son Sikandar assumed the throne but he died just after 45 days. He was succeeded by his brother Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud Shah Tughluq II but his cousin Nusrat Khan also claimed similar rank in Firuzabad.

Zafar Khán's first warlike expedition was against the Rao of Idar, who, in 1393, had refused to pay the customary tribute, and this chief he humbled. The contemporary histories seem to show that the previous governors had recovered tribute from all or most of the chiefs of Gujarát except from the Ráo of Junagadh and the Rája of Rajpipla, who had retained their independence. Zafar Khán now planned an expedition against the celebrated Somnath temple, but, hearing that Ádil Khán of Ásir-Burhánpur had invaded Sultánpur and Nandurbar, he moved his troops in that direction, and Ádil Khán retired to Ásir.

In 1394, he marched against the Ráo of Junága᳚h and exacted tribute. Afterwards, proceeding to Somnath, he destroyed the temple, built an Jumma Mosque, introduced Islám, left Muslim law officers, and established a *thána* or post in the city of Somnáth Pátan or Deva Pátan. He heard that the Hindus of Mandu were oppressing the Muslims, and, accordingly, marching there, he beleaguered that fortress for a year, but

failing to take it contented himself with accepting the excuses of the Rájá. From Mándu he performed a pilgrimage to Ajmer. Here he proceeded against the chiefs of Sambhar and Dandwana, and then attacking the Rájputs of Delvāṇa and Jhálávāṇa, he defeated them, and returned to Pátan in 1396.

About this time his son Tátár Khán, leaving his baggage in the fort of Panipat, made an attempt on Delhi. But Iqbál Khán took the fort of Pánipat, captured Tátár Khán's baggage, and forced him to withdraw to Gujarát. In 1397, with the view of reducing Ídar, Zafar Khán besieged the fort, laying waste the neighbouring country.

In prevailing situation, Timur invaded India and marched on Delhi in 1398. In early 1399, he defeated Mahmud II and looted and destroyed the much of Delhi. Sultan Mahmud II escaped and after many wanderings, reached Patan. He hoped to secure Zafar Khan's alliance to march to Delhi but Zafar Khan declined. He went to Malwa where he was declined again by local governor. Meanwhile his Wazir Iqbal Khan had expelled Nusrat Khan from Delhi so he returned to Delhi but he had no longer enough authority over provinces which were ruled independently by his governors.

Before Zafar Khan had taken the Idar fort Zafar Khán received news of Timur's conquest of Delhi, and concluding a peace with the Ídar king, returned to Pátan. In 1398, hearing that the Somnáth people claimed independence, Zafar Khán led an army against them, defeated them, and established Islám on a firm footing.

In 1403, Zafar Khan's son Tatar Khan urged his father to march on Delhi, which he declined. As a result, in 1403, Tatar

imprisoned him in Ashawal (future Ahmedabad) and declared himself sultan under the title of Muhammad Shah. He humbled the chief of Nandod in Rajpipla. He marched towards Delhi, but on the way he was poisoned by his uncle, Shams Khán Dandáni at Sinor on the north bank of Narmada river. Some sources says he died naturally due to weather or due to his habit of heavy drinking. After the death of Muhammad Shah, Zafar was released from the prison in 1404. Zafar Khán asked his own younger brother Shams Khán Dandáni to carry on the government, but he refused. Zafar Khán accordingly sent Shams Khán Dandáni to Nágor in place of Jalál Khán Khokhar. Zafar took over the control over administration. In 1407, he declared himself as Sultan Muzaffar Shah at Birpur or Sherpur, took the insignia of royalty and issued coins in his name.

### **Gujarat Sultanate (1407-1411)**

At this time Álp Khán, son of Diláwar Khán of Málwa, was rumoured to have poisoned his father and ascended the throne with the title of Sultán Hushang Ghori. On hearing this Muzaffar Sháh marched against Hushang and besieged him in Dhár. He had successful expedition against Dhar (Malwa) which came under his control.

Muzaffar handed Hushang to the charge of his brother Shams Khán, on whom he conferred the title of Nasrat Khán. Hushang remained a year in confinement, and Músa Khán one of his relations usurped his authority. On hearing this, Hushang begged to be released, and Muzaffar Sháh not only agreed to his prayer, but sent his grandson Áhmed Khán (later Ahmad Shah I) with an army to reinstate him. This expedition was

successful; the fortress of Mándu was taken and the usurper Músa Khán was put to flight. Áhmed Khán returned to Gujarát in 1409–10 AD. Meanwhile Muzaffar advancing towards Delhi to aid Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud Shah Tughluq, prevented an intended attack on that city by Sultán Ibráhím of Jaunpur.

He had suppressed a rebellion or sent an unsuccessful expedition to Kanthkot in Kutch. According to *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, he abdicated the throne in favour of his grandson Ahmad Shah I in 1410 due to his failing health. He died five months and 13 days later. According to *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, Ahmad Shah was going to an expedition to quell the rebellion of Kolis of Ashawal. After leaving Patan, he convened an assembly of Ulemas and asked a question that should he took retribution his father's unjust death. Ulemas replied in favour and he got the written answers. He returned to Patan and forced his grandfather Muzaffar Shah to drink poison which killed him. He was buried in Patan. Ahmad Shah I succeeded him at the age of 19 in 1411.

## Gujarat Sultanate

The **Gujarat Sultanate** was a medieval Indian kingdom established in the early 15th century in present-day Gujarat, India. The dynasty was founded by Zafar Khan Muzaffar, a Tank Khatri convert to Islam. He rose to the nobility after offering his sister in marriage to Firuz Shah Tughlaq in the Delhi Sultan's household. He was Governor of Gujarat and became independent from Delhi after Tīmūr devastated the city. Zafar Khan defeated Farhat-ul-Mulk near Anhilwada Patan and made the city his capital. Following Timur's invasion of Delhi,

the Delhi Sultanate weakened considerably and so he declared himself independent in 1407 and formally established Gujarat Sultanate.

The next sultan, his grandson Ahmad Shah I founded the new capital Ahmedabad in 1411. His successor Muhammad Shah II subdued most of the Rajput chieftains. The prosperity of the sultanate reached its zenith during the rule of Mahmud Begada. He subdued most of the Rajput chieftains and built navy off the coast of Diu. In 1509, the Portuguese wrested Diu from Gujarat sultanate following the battle of Diu. The decline of the Sultanate started with the assassination of Sikandar Shah in 1526. Mughal emperor Humayun attacked Gujarat in 1535 and briefly occupied it. Thereafter Bahadur Shah was killed by the Portuguese while making a deal in 1537. The end of the sultanate came in 1573, when Akbar annexed Gujarat in his empire. The last ruler Muzaffar Shah III was taken prisoner to Agra. In 1583, he escaped from the prison and with the help of the nobles succeeded to regain the throne for a short period before being defeated by Akbar's general Abdul Rahim Khan-I-Khana.

## **Origin**

The claim of the founding sultans' links with the solar lineage are mentioned by Gujarati historian Sikandar does narrate the story of their ancestors having once been Hindu 'Tanks', a branch of Khattris who traced their descent from Rāmachandra, whom the Hindus worship as God'. The Tanks were expelled from their community, according to Sikandar, because they had taken to drinking wine.. The Persian historical source

Mīrat-i-Ahmadī in Chapter 7 (origins of the Sultanate) says the first person first ennobled with honor of Islam was Sidharan, of the Tank, subcaste of the Khatri community and their lineage is in Rāmachandra who the Hindus consider God.

During the rule of Muhammad bin Tughluq, his cousin Firuz Shah Tughlaq was once on a hunting expedition and lost his way. He reached a village and encountered Sadhu and Saharan. He was welcomed to partake in the hospitality of the brothers. After drinking, he revealed his identity as a cousin and successor of the king.

The brothers offered their beautiful sister in marriage and he accepted. They accompanied Firuz Shah Tughluq to Delhi along with his sister. They converted to Islam there. Sadhu assumed new name, Samsher Khan while Sadharan assumed Wajih-ul-Mulk. They were disciples of saint Makhdum-Sayyid-i-Jahaniyan-Jahangshi aka Saiyyd Jalaluddin Bukhari.

## **History**

### **Early rulers**

Delhi Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq appointed Malik Mufarraḥ, also known as Farhat-ul-Mulk and Rasti Khan governor of Gujarat in 1377. In 1387, Sikandar Khan was sent to replace him, but he was defeated and killed by Farhat-ul-Mulk. In 1391, Sultan Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad bin Tughluq appointed Zafar Khan, the son of Wajih-ul-Mulk as governor of Gujarat and conferred him the title of Muzaffar Khan (r. 1391 - 1403, 1404 - 1411). In 1392, he defeated Farhat-ul-Mulk in the battle of Kamboi, near Anhilwada Patan and occupied the city

of Anhilwada Patan. In 1403, Zafar Khan's son Tatar Khan urged his father to march on Delhi, which he declined. As a result, in 1408, Tatar imprisoned him in Ashawal (future Ahmedabad) and declared himself sultan under the title of Muhammad Shah I (r. 1403 - 1404). He marched towards Delhi, but on the way he was poisoned by his uncle, Shams Khan. After the death of Muhammad Shah, Muzaffar was released from the prison and he took over the control over administration. In 1407, he declared himself as Sultan Muzaffar Shah I, took the insignia of royalty and issued coins in his name. After his death in 1411, he was succeeded by his grandson, the son of Tatar Khan, Ahmad Shah I.

## **Ahmad Shah I**

Soon after his accession, Ahmad Shah I was faced with a rebellion of his uncles. The rebellion was led by his eldest uncle Firuz Khan, who declared himself king. Ultimately Firuz and his brothers surrendered to him. During this rebellion Sultan Hushang Shah of Malwa Sultanate invaded Gujarat. He was repelled this time but he invaded again in 1417 along with Nasir Khan, the Farooqi dynasty ruler of Khandesh and occupied Sultanpur and Nandurbar. Gujarat army defeated them and later Ahmad Shah led four expeditions into Malwa in 1419, 1420, 1422 and 1438.

In 1429, Kanha Raja of Jhalawad with the help of the Bahmani Sultan Ahmad Shah ravaged Nandurbar. But Ahmad Shah's army defeated the Bahmani army and they fled to Daulatabad. The Bahmani Sultan Ahmad Shah sent strong reinforcements and the Khandesh army also joined them. They were again

defeated by the Gujarat army. Finally, Ahmad Shah annexed Thana and Mahim from Bahmani Sultanate.

At the beginning of his reign, he founded the city of Ahmedabad which he styled as *Shahr-i-Mu'azzam* (the great city) on the banks of Sabarmati River. He shifted the capital from Anhilwada Patan to Ahmedabad. The Jami Masjid (1423) in Ahmedabad were built during his reign. Sultan Ahmad Shah died in 1443 and succeeded by his eldest son Muhammad Shah II.

### **Successors of Ahmad Shah I**

Muhammad Shah II (r. 1442 - 1451) first led a campaign against Idar and forced its ruler, Raja Hari Rai or Bir Rai to submit to his authority. He then exacted tribute from the Rawal of Dungarpur. In 1449, he marched against Champaner, but the ruler of Champaner, Raja Kanak Das, with the help of Malwa Sultan Mahmud Khilji forced him to retreat. On the return journey, he fell seriously ill and died in February 1451. After his death, he was succeeded by his son Qutb-ud-Din Ahmad Shah II (r. 1451 - 1458). Ahmad Shah II defeated Khilji at Kapadvanj. He helped Firuz Khan ruling from Nagaur against Rana Kumbha of Chittor's attempt to overthrow him. After death of Ahmad Shah II in 1458, the nobles raised his uncle Daud Khan, son of Ahmad Shah I, to the throne.

### **Mahmud Begada**

But within a short period of seven or twenty-seven days, the nobles deposed Daud Khan and set on the throne Fath Khan, son of Muhammad Shah II. Fath Khan, on his accession,



adopted the title Abu-al Fath Mahmud Shah, popularly known as Mahmud Begada. He expanded the kingdom in all directions. He received the sobriquet *Begada*, which literally means the conqueror of two forts, probably after conquering Girnar and Champaner forts. Mahmud died on 23 November 1511.

### **Muzaffar Shah II and his successors**

Khalil Khan, son of Mahmud Begada succeeded his father with the title Muzaffar Shah II. In 1519, Rana Sanga of Chittor defeated a joint army of Malwa and Gujarat sultanates and took Mahmud Shah II of Malwa captive. Muzaffar Shah sent an army to Malwa but their service was not required as Rana Sanga had generously restored Mahmud Shah II to the throne. However, Rana Sanga defeated Ibrahim Lodhi of Delhi at Battle of Dholpur around the same time and Conquered Much of Malwa along with Chanderi and he bestowed it to his Vassal Medini Rai who ruled over Malwa under his lordship with Chanderi as his capital.

The victory brought Rajputs within day's march of Agra and Delhi and made them contender of supremacy of Northern India. Rana Sanga later invaded Gujarat and plundered the Sultanate's treasuries, greatly damaging its prestige, Sanga also annexed northern Gujarat and appointed one of his Rajput vassals to rule there.

The invasion of Rana weakened Gujarat, however after Rana Sanga's death, the sultans of Gujarat freed their kingdom from Rajputs and grew even more powerful as they sacked Chittor

fort in 1535. He died on 5 April 1526 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Sikandar.

After few months, Sikandar Sháh was murdered by a noble Imád-ul-Mulk, who seated a younger brother of Sikandar, named Násir Khán, on the throne with the title of Mahmúd Shah II and governed on his behalf. Other son of Muzaffar Shah II, Bhadur Khan returned from outside of Gujarat and the nobles joined him. Bahádur marched at once on Chámpáner, captured and executed Imád-ul-Mulk and poisoning Násir Khán ascended the throne in 1527 with the title of Bahádur Sháh.

### **Bahadur Shah and his successors**

Bahadur Shah expanded his kingdom and made expeditions to help neighbouring kingdoms. In 1532, Gujarat came under attack of the Mughal Emperor Humayun and fell. Bahadur Shah regained the kingdom in 1536 but he was killed by the Portuguese on board the ship when making a deal with them.

Bahadur had no son, hence there was some uncertainty regarding succession after his death. Muhammad Zaman Mirza, the fugitive Mughal prince made his claim on the ground that Bahadur's mother adopted him as her son. The nobles selected Bahadur's nephew Miran Muhammad Shah of Khandesh as his successor, but he died on his way to Gujarat. Finally, the nobles selected Mahmud Khan, the son of Bahadur's brother Latif Khan as his successor and he ascended to the throne as Mahmud Shah III in 1538. Mahmud Shah III had to battle with his nobles who were interested in independence. He was killed in 1554 by his servant. Ahmad Shah III succeeded him but now

the reigns of the state were controlled by the nobles who divided the kingdom between themselves. He was assassinated in 1561. He was succeeded by Muzaffar Shah III.

### **Muzaffar Shah III**

Mughal Emperor Akbar annexed Gujarat in his empire in 1573 and Gujarat became a Mughal Subah (province). Muzaffar Shah III was taken prisoner to Agra. In 1583, he escaped from the prison and with the help of the nobles succeeded to regain the throne for a short period before being defeated by Akbar's general Abdul Rahim Khan-I-Khana in January 1584. He fled and finally took asylum under Jam Sataji of Nawanagar State.

The Battle of Bhuchar Mori was fought between the Mughal forces led by Mirza Aziz Koka and the combined Kathiawar forces in 1591 to protect him. He finally committed suicide when he was surrendered to the Mughal.

## **Administration**

Gujarāt was divided politically into two main parts; one, called the *khālsah* or crown domain administered directly by the central authority; the other, on payment of tribute in service or in money, left under the control of its former rulers. The amount of tribute paid by the different chiefs depended, not on the value of their territory, but on the terms granted to them when they agreed to become feudatories of the king. This tribute was occasionally collected by military expeditions headed by the king in person and called *mulkgiri* or country-seizing circuits.

The internal management of the feudatory states was unaffected by their payment of tribute. Justice was administered and the revenue collected in the same way as under the Chaulukya kings. The revenue consisted, as before, of a share of the crops received in kind, supplemented by the levy of special cesses, trade, and transit dues. The chief's share of the crops differed according to the locality; it rarely exceeded one-third of the produce, it rarely fell short of one-sixth. From some parts the chief's share was realised directly from the cultivator by agents called *mantris*; from other parts the collection was through superior landowners.

- Districts and crown lands

The Áhmedábád kings divided the portion of their territory which was under their direct authority into districts or *sarkárs*. These districts were administered in one of two ways. They were either assigned to nobles in support of a contingent of troops, or they were set apart as crown domains and managed by paid officers. The officers placed in charge of districts set apart as crown domains were called *muktiā*. Their chief duties were to preserve the peace and to collect the revenue. For the maintenance of order, a body of soldiers from the army headquarters at Áhmedábád was detached for service in each of these divisions, and placed under the command of the district governor. At the same time, in addition to the presence of this detachment of regular troops, every district contained certain fortified outposts called *thánás*, varying in number according to the character of the country and the temper of the people. These posts were in charge of officers called *thánadárs* subordinate to the district governor. They were garrisoned by bodies of local soldiery, for whose

maintenance, in addition to money payments, a small assignment of land was set apart in the neighbourhood of the post. On the arrival of the tribute-collecting army the governors of the districts through which it passed were expected to join the main body with their local contingents. At other times the district governors had little control over the feudatory chiefs in the neighbourhood of their charge. The Gujarat Sultanate had comprised twenty-five *sarkars* (administrative units).

- Fiscal

For fiscal purposes each district or *sarkár* was distributed among a certain number of sub-divisions or *parganáhs*, each under a paid official styled *ámil* or *tahsildár*. These sub-divisional officers realised the state demand, nominally one-half of the produce, by the help of the headmen of the villages under their charge. In the sharehold and simple villages of North Gujarát these village headmen were styled *Patels* or according to Muslim writers *mukaddams* and in the simple villages of the south they were known as *Desais*. They arranged for the final distribution of the total demand in joint villages among the shareholders, and in simple villages from the individual cultivators. The sub-divisional officer presented a statement of the accounts of the villages in his sub-division to the district officer, whose record of the revenue of his whole district was in turn forwarded to the head revenue officer at court. As a check on the internal management of his charge, and especially to help him in the work of collecting the revenue, with each district governor was associated an accountant. Further that each of these officers might be the greater check on the other, Ahmad Shah I enforced the rule

that when the governor was chosen from among the royal slaves the accountant should be a free man, and that when the accountant was a slave the district governor should be chosen from some other class. This practise was maintained till the end of the reign of Muzaffar Sháh II, when, according to the *Mirāt-i-Áhmedi*, the army became much increased, and the ministers, condensing the details of revenue, farmed it on contract, so that many parts formerly yielding one rupee now produced ten, and many others seven eight or nine, and in no place was there a less increase than from ten to twenty per cent. Many other changes occurred at the same time, and the spirit of innovation creeping into the administration the wholesome system of checking the accounts was given up and mutiny and confusion spread over Gujarát.

## Sources of history

*Mirat-i-Sikandari* is a Persian work on the complete history of Gujarat Sultanate written by Sikandar, son of Muhammad aka Manjhu, son of Akbar who wrote it soon after Akbar conquered Gujarat. He had consulted earlier works of history and the people of authority. Other Persian works of the history of Gujarat Sultanate are *Tarikh-i-Muzaffar Shahi* about reign of Muzaffar Shah I, *Tarik-i-Ahmad Shah* in verse by Hulvi Shirazi, *Tarikh-i-Mahmud Shahi*, *Tabaqat-i-Mahmud Shahi*, *Maathi-i-Mahmud Shahi* about Mahmud I, *Tarikh-i-Muzaffar Shahi* about Muzaffar Shah II's conquest of Mandu, *Tarikh-i-Bahadur Shahi* aka *Tabaqat-i-Husam Khani*, *Tarikh-i-Gujarat* by Abu Turab Vali, *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*. Other important work in Arabic about history of Gujarat includes *Zafarul-Walih bi Muzaffar wa Alih* by Hajji Dabir.

## **Architecture**

The distinctive Indo-Islamic architecture style of Gujarat drew micro-architectural elements from earlier Maru-Gurjara architecture and employed them in mihrab, roofs, doors, minarets and facades. In the 15th century, the Indo-Islamic style of Gujarat is especially notable for its inventive and elegant use of minarets.

They are often in pairs flanking the main entrance, mostly rather thin and with elaborate carving at least at the lower levels. Some designs push out balconies at intervals up the shaft; the most extreme version of this was in the lost upper parts of the so-called "shaking minarets" at the Jama Mosque, Ahmedabad, which fell down in an earthquake in 1819. This carving draws on the traditional skills of local stone-carvers, previously exercised on Hindu temples in the Māru-Gurjara and other local styles.

Gujarat Sultans built lavishly, particularly in the capital, Ahmedabad. The sultanate commissioned mosques such as the Jami Masjid of Ahmedabad, Jama Masjid at Champaner, Qutbuddin Mosque, Rani Rupamati Mosque, Sarkhej Roza, Sidi Bashir Mosque, Kevada Mosque, Sidi Sayyed Mosque, Nagina Mosque and Pattharwali Masjid, as well as structures such as Teen Darwaza, Bhadra Fort and the Dada Harir Stepwell in Ahmedabad.

The Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park, the 16th century capital of Gujarat Sultanate, documents the early Islamic and pre-Mughal city that has remained without any change.

Indo-Islamic architecture style of Gujarat presages many of the architectural elements later found in Mughal architecture, including ornate *mihrabs* and minarets, *jali* (perforated screens carved in stone), and *chattris* (pavilions topped with cupolas).



## Chapter 4

# Deva Raya II

**Deva Raya II** (r. 1422–1446 CE) was an emperor of the Vijayanagara Empire. The greatest of the Sangama dynasty rulers, he was an able administrator, warrior, and scholar. He authored well-known works in the Kannada language (*Sobagina Sone* and *Amaruka*) and in the Sanskrit language (*Mahanataka Sudhanidhi*).

He was patron to some of the most noted Kannada poets of the medieval period, including Chamarasa and Kumara Vyasa, the Sanskrit poet Gunda Dimdima, and the noted Telugu language poet Srinatha, whom the king honored with the title *Kavisarvabhauma* ("Emperor among poets").

He supported development in secular literature as well as the noted South Indian mathematician Parameshvara, from the Kerala school of astronomy and mathematics lived in his empire.

According to the historian Sastri, Deva Raya II had the title *Gajabeteegara*, which literally means "Hunter of elephants", an honorific that explained his addiction to hunting elephants or a metaphor referring to his victories against enemies who were "as strong as elephants". Despite some reversals, Deva Raya II extended and held territories up to the Krishna river. According to an account of the visiting Persian chronicler Abdur Razzak, Deva Raya II's empire extended from Ceylon to Gulbarga, and Orissa to the Malabar. According to the historians Chopra, Ravindran and Subrahmanian, the king

maintained a fleet of ships which helped him in his overseas connections. From the account of the contemporary European explorer Nicolo Conti, the king levied tribute on Ceylon, Quilon, Pegu, Pulicat and Tenasserim.

## **The empire**

### **Wars with the Gajapati Kingdom**

Deva Raya II's rule is the golden age in the history of South India and in particular, that of Karnataka. He succeeded his father Veera Vijaya Bukka Raya after his short uneventful two-year reign. Even as a crown prince in c. 1423, he had tasted success in battle against the Bahamani Sultanate, forcing them to switch capitals to Bidar in c. 1426. Deva Raya II fought three important battles against the Gajapati of Odisha: in c. 1427 against King Bhanudeva IV in the battle of Kondavidu, in c. 1436 against King Kapilendra when the latter tried to conquer Rajamahendri, and again in c. 1441. An invasion by the Reddis of Kondavidu was also repulsed and by c. 1432, all the petty chiefs of the region were brought under the Vijayanagara control.

### **Sultanate affairs**

After a short period of peace, Vijayanagara was pulled into war with their traditional foes, the Bahamani Sultanate. These wars however brought mixed results. In c. 1436, Ala-ud-din II ascended the Bahamani throne and promptly sent his brother Muhammad to collect tribute. According to the Sastri, Deva Raya II had to pay a large tribute to buy peace. During this

time, the Vijayanagara armies were consistently defeated by the Bahamani armies and Deva Raya II was hard pressed to find a solution, which eventually led to the inclusion of many skilled Muslim soldiers in the Vijayanagara army. In c. 1436, in a military altercation, some accounts suggest Deva Raya II lost the fort at Mudgal but according to the historian Kamath, a c. 1436 inscription at Mudgal shows the fort remained under Vijayanagara control. During an uncertain period that followed in c. 1443, when the king appears to have been a victim of an attempted assassination, some regions in the Tungabhadra river-Krishna riverdoab were lost to the Bahamani Sultanate.

There are conflicting accounts provided by contemporary Persian writers Ferishtah and Abdur Razzak regarding the events that led to the war. According to Ferishtah, Deva Raya II had bought peace earlier by paying a handsome tribute to the Bahamanis. He however refused to honor the agreement and this led to war.

According to this account, with an intent of strengthening his army, Deva Raya II employed many expert Muslim archers and cavalry and this incited the war. But according to Razzak's account written in Calicut in c. 1443, the Sultans attempt to seize more Vijayanagara territory by taking advantage of the prevailing confusion (caused by the assassination attempt that he appeared to be aware of) was the cause of the war. According to Razzak who was eye witness to the episode, a brother of Deva Raya II invited the king and many important nobility to a feast and had most of the invitees beheaded. But finding that the king had not attended the dinner, he went to the royal palace and stabbed and wounded an unaided Deva Raya II. Seizing the opportunity, the Bahamani Sultan

demanding seven lakh *Varaha* (700,000) *Pagodas* as tribute. Deva Raya II refused to pay and this led to war. According to Chopra et al., and Sastri the first battle was a success for Vijayanagara armies who captured Raichur, Bankapura and marched up to Bijapur. But in the last three battles, Deva Raya II's son may have been killed in battle, and the Vijayanagara armies were pushed back to their original stronghold at Mudgal. Two Sultanate generals were taken prisoner but later released to end hostilities.

### **Success in the south and Ceylon**

Deva Raya II's empire included Kerala where he defeated the ruler of Quilon as well as other chieftains in the region. His able commander Lakkanna invaded Ceylon and collected rich tributes there. The Zamorin of Calicut and even the kings of Burma ruling at Pegu and Tanasserim paid tribute. This information was obtained from the writings of Nuniz. Though the Zamorin maintained his independence, from Razzak's account, he feared and respected Deva Raya II.

### **Accounts of foreign visitors**

It was during this time that the explorer Nicolo Conti and Persian chronicler Abdur Razzak arrived in South India. Conti wrote : "the king of Vijayanagar is more powerful than all the other kings in India." Razzak wrote : "the ear of intelligence had never been informed that there existed anything equal to Vijayanagara in the world and the pupil of eye has never seen a place like it" (on an interesting side note the two explorers also commented on Deva Raya II's large harem in which 4000 queens followed him everywhere he went). Razzaq who was also

an ambassador at the court of Deva Raya II wrote:"This prince has in his dominions three hundred ports, each of which is equal to Calicut and his territories compromise a space of three months journey.

Both travelers concur that the country was thickly populated with numerous towns and villages. Razzaq wrote:"The country is for the most part well cultivated and very fertile.

The troops amount in number to eleven Lakhs (1,100,000)." Razzaq considered Vijayanagara to be one of the most splendid of the cities in the world he had seen. Describing the city, he wrote: "It is built in such a manner that seven citadels and the same number of walls enclose each other.

The seventh fortress, which is placed in the center of the others, occupy an area ten times larger than the market place of the city of Herat". With regards to the market places he wrote:"the jewelers sell publicly in the bazaar pearls, rubies, emeralds and diamonds in this agreeable locality and in the king's palace one sees numerous running streams and canals formed of chiseled stone, polished and smooth..."

## **Culture and the arts**

Deva Raya II's rule was a high point in the development of Kannada literature, when competition between Vaishnava and Veerashaiva writers was fierce and literary disputations between the two sects were common. Some of most noted Kannada writers of the 15th century, Chamarasa and Kumara Vyasa; Chandrashekara (Chrakavi) who wrote on secular topics; and the king's zealous Veerashaiva ministers and

writers, Lakkana Dandesa and Jakkanarya (who himself patronized the Kannada poets Kumarabankanatha and Mahalingadeva) were in his court. The king himself was no less a writer, the romantic stories *Sobagina Sone* (lit "The Drizzle of Beauty") and *Amaruka* are assigned to him. In the Telugu realm, this was the age of Srinatha. With an unrivaled command on Telugu and Sanskrit languages, he is known to have defeated in a debate, the reputed Sanskrit scholar Dindima. Srinatha was honored with the title *Kavisarvabhauma*.

The king showed his appreciation with a *kanakabhisheka* ceremony (the "showering of gold coins on the head"). Srinatha is known to have lived a life of pleasure and moved on equal terms with the ministers in the king's court, though he died a poor man.

## Veera Vijaya Bukka Raya

**Veera Vijaya Bukka Raya** (or **Bukka Raya III, Vijaya Raya**) (1371–1426 CE) was an emperor of the Vijayanagara Empire of the Sangama Dynasty. Veera Vijaya Bukka Raya was the son of Deva Raya I and succeeded his brother, Ramachandra Raya, in 1422 as the king of the Vijayanagara Empire. Similar to Ramachandra Raya, Vijaya Raya is not known for doing anything significant and his short reign ended in 1424 (though Fernao Nuniz had noted that his reign lasted six years) when he was succeeded by his son, Deva Raya II.

## Chapter 5

# Sankardev, Founder of Ekasarana Dharma

**Srimanta Sankardev** (International Phonetic Alphabet: [sɪmʌntə xɐŋkə(r)deɪv]; Assamese: [sɪmʌntə xɐŋkə(r)deɪv]; 1449–1568) was a 15th–16th century Assamesepolymath: a saint-scholar, poet, playwright, dancer, actor, musician, artist social-religious reformer and a figure of importance in the cultural and religious history of Assam, India. He is widely credited with building on past cultural relics and devising new forms of music (Borgeet), theatrical performance (Ankia Naat, Bhaona), dance (Sattriya), literary language (Brajavali). Besides, he has left an extensive literary oeuvre of trans-created scriptures (Bhagavat of Sankardev), poetry and theological works written in Sanskrit, Assamese and Brajavali.

The Bhagavatic religious movement he started, Ekasarana Dharma and also called Neo-Vaishnavite movement, influenced two medieval kingdoms—Koch and the Ahom kingdoms—and the assembly of devotees he initiated evolved over time into monastic centers called Sattras, which continue to be important socio-religious institutions in Assam and to a lesser extent in North Bengal. Sankardev inspired the Bhakti movement in Assam just as Guru Nanak, Ramananda, Namdev, Kabir, Basava and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu inspired it elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent. His influence spread even to some kingdoms as the Matak Kingdom founded by Bharat Singha, and consolidated by Sarbanda Singha in the

latter 18th century endorsed his teachings. His literary and artistic contributions are living traditions in Assam today. The religion he preached is practised by a large population, and Sattras(monasteries) that he and his followers established continue to flourish and sustain his legacy.

## Biography

After the death of Sankardev, Madhavdev incorporated narrations of his life in prayer services, a practice that was followed by his apostles, and in due course of time a large body of biographical literature arose. These are generally classed in two groups: early (those by Daityari Thakur, Bhusan Dwija, Ramananda Dwija and Vaikuntha Dwija) and late (*Guruvarnana* by Aniruddha Das, the more than one anonymous *Katha-guru-carits*, *Bardowa-carit*, *Sankardev caritra* from Barpeta, the *Saru-svarga-khanda* and *Bar-svarga-khanda* by Sarvabhauma). The authorship of the biography credited to Ramcaran Thakur, Daityari Thakur's father, is doubted and it is generally dated to the 17th-century and classed with the late biographies.

In general, all biographies consider Sankardev as an incarnation of Vishnu, including that by Daityari Thakur, the earliest. The late biographies differ from the early group on the count that they ascribe supernatural feats to Sankardev, and describe miraculous events; and there is a tendency to read some events of the Bhagavata into his life. The biographies are full of contradictions; even though the earlier ones are considered more accurate, not all they claim are true—Daityari Thakur's biography, the earliest one, claims Sankardev met with Chaitanya, which is now not accepted to be true.



## **Early life: Alipukhuri and Bordowa**

Sankardev, then named Sankaravara, was born into the Shiromani (chief) *Baro-Bhuyans* family at Alipukhuri near Bordowa in present-day Nagaondistrict in c1449. Though some authors have expressed doubt that Sankardev could have lived that long, considering that he was of robust health 1449 is generally accepted. The Baro-Bhuyans were independent landlords in Assam, and Sankardev belonged to the Kayastha Hindu caste. His family-members, including parents Kusumvar Bhuyan and Satyasandhya Devi, were Saktas. Sankardev lost his father to smallpox when he was about 7 years old, and his mother died either soon after his birth, or soon after his father's death; and he was raised by his grandmother Khersuti.

He began attending Mahendra Kandali's *tol* or *chatrasaal* (school) at the age of 12 and soon wrote his first verses *karatala-kamala*. The complete poem was written before he was taught the vowels except, of course, the first one, and is often cited as an example of the early flowering of his poetic genius. He stayed at the *tol* during his teens, and studied grammar and Indian scriptures. He practised *yoga* (which he gave up later) and was physically very able, and according to legend, he could swim across the Brahmaputra while it was in spate. It is generally believed that he wrote his first work, *Harishchandra upakhyān*, while at the *tol*. Mahendra Kandali changed his name to 'Sankardev' while he was at school.

## **Bhuyan shiromaniship**

Sankardev soon mastered the major scriptures and thereafter left the *tol* in his late teens (c1465) to attend to his

responsibilities as the Shiromani Bhuyan. He came to be known as the *Dekagiri* among his subjects and admirers. As Alipukhuri had become crowded, he moved his household from Alipukhuri to Bordowa. He married his first wife Suryavati when he was in his early 20s and a daughter, Manu, was born in about three years, but his wife died about nine months later.

### **First pilgrimage**

It is possible that the death of his wife increased his already existing spiritual inclination and he left for a twelve-year-long pilgrimage, sometime after his daughter was married to Hari, a Bhuyan scion. He handed over the maintenance of his household to his son-in-law Hari; the Bhuyan Shiromaniship to his grand uncles Jayanta and Madhav; and began his journey in 1481. He was accompanied by seventeen others including his friend and associate Ramaram and his teacher Mahendra Kandali. At this point of time, he was 32.

The pilgrimage took him to Puri, Mathura, Dwaraka, Vrindavan, Gaya, Rameswaram, Ayodhya, Sitakunda and almost all the other major seats of the Vaishnavite religion in India. He seem to have spent many years at Jagannath-kshetra at Puri, where he read and explained the Brahma Purana to the priests and lay people. At Badrikashram in 1488, he composed his first *borgeet*—*mana meri ram charanahi lagu*—in Brajavali. According to *Katha Gurucharit*, the first Borgeet was "Rama meri hridaya pankaje baise" and he composed it in 1481 at the very outset of the pilgrimage at a place called Rowmari. He returned home to Alipukhuri after 12 years (his family had moved back from Bordowa in his absence). During his

pilgrimage, he became the part of a pan-Indian Bhakti movement and helped it blossom.

### ***Shiromaniship refusal***

On his return from his pilgrimage (c1493), Sankardev refused to take back the Shiromaniship, though on the insistence of his elders, he took responsibility of a hundred families (*gomastha*) but he soon handed over the responsibility to his son-in-law Hari. On his grandmother's insistence, he married Kalindi at the age of 54.

Finally, he moved back to Bordowa and constructed a temple (*devagriha*) in c1498, possibly a thatched house, built on the original site of his father's house where he could meet with people, discuss religious matters and hold prayers, and preach.

He wrote *Bhakti pradipa* and *Rukmini harana*. Soon after, he received a copy of the Bhagavata Purana from Jagadisa Mishra of Mithila, with Sridhara Swami's monistic commentary "Bhavartha-dipika". Mishra recited and explained the entire Bhagavata in the presence of Sankardev and this event is considered momentous in the development of Ekasarana. Datyari, an early biographer of Sankardev writes: Sankardev listened with rapt attention to the exposition by Jagadish Mishra and realised that the *Bhagavata* was a scripture without parallel, a scripture that determined Krishna as the only God, *naam* as the real dharma, and *aikantika-sarana* and *sat-sanga* as the indispensable elements of the faith." He also began composing the *Kirtana ghosha*.

## ***Cihna-yatra***

After his exposure to the detailed Bhagavata Purana and Sridhara Swami's commentary *Bhavartha-dipika*, Sankardev produced a dance-drama called *Cihna yatra*, for which he painted the *Sapta vaikuntha* (seven heavens), guided the making of musical instruments and played the instruments himself. According to other biographers, Sankardev produced *Maha-nata* in the presence of Jagdish Mishra in the temple he had constructed at Alipukhuri.

According to Neog, this was the point when Sankardev decided to preach a new religion. Some of the first to be initiated into this religion was the wife of Jayanta-dalai, a leper named Hariram (later Tulasiram), Ramaram his associate and Mahendra Kandali, his *tol* teacher. The 13 years at Alipukhuri was the period during which he reflected deeply on Vaishnavism and on the form that would best suit the spiritual and ethical needs of the people. Ananta Kandali, a profound scholar of Sanskrit, became his disciple during this time; he translated the later part of Canto X of the Bhagavata Purana after consulting Sankardev.

From Alipukhuri Sankardev moved back to Bordowa in 1509 and built a *thaan*. Some authors claim that this *than* had all the major features of a sattrā (central *kirtanghar*, *cari-hati* etc.), whereas many others assert that these features did not exist during Sankardev's time. This *than* was abandoned and more than a hundred years later in the middle of the 17th-century, Sankardev's granddaughter-in-law, Kanaklata, established it again.

## Literary works in the Baro-Bhuyan territories

- Non-*Bhagavata* group
- *Harishcandra-Upakhyana*
- *Bhakti-pradip*
- *Kirtan-ghosa* (*Uresa-varnana*)
- Non-*Bhagavata* mixed with *Bhagavata* elements, not influenced by Sridhara Swami
- *Rukmini-harana-kavya*
- Lyrics
- *Borgeet*
- *Bhagavata* tales, not from Book X
- *Ajamilopakhyan* (Book VI)
- *Amrta-manthan* (Book VIII)
- *Kirtan-ghosa* (*Ajamilopakhyan*, *Prahlada-caritra*, *Harmohana*,
- Sections ii–vi

## Ahom kingdom

### Gangmau

Biswa Singha, began his activities to remove the Bhuyans from power in the western part of the Brahmaputra valley in 1509. Furthermore, the Bhuyans in the Bordowa area picked up a quarrel with their Kachari neighbours, and when attacked Sankardev advised the Bhuyans to move, which brought to an end the independence of this group of Bhuyans. Sankardev and his associates first crossed the Brahmaputra river in 1516–17 and settled first at Singari and finally at Routa; and when Viswa Singha advanced towards Routa, Sankardev moved to

Gangmau in the Ahom kingdom in 1527. At Gangmau they stayed for five years where Sankardev's eldest son Ramananda was born. At Gangmau, he wrote the drama *Patniprasad*. In fact he lived alone at a place named Gajalasuti out of dissatisfaction with some relative. He penned the play there.

## **Dhuwahat**

While at Gangmau, the Koch king Biswa Singha attacked the Ahoms. The Bhuyans fought for the Ahoms and the Koch king was defeated. Due to the unsettled situation at Gangmau Sankardev next moved to Dhuwahat, near Ahatguri in present-day Majuli, washed away by the Brahmaputra in 1913. The Bhuyans were settled here by the Ahoms with land and estate, Hari, Sankardev's son-in-law became a Saikia, and his cousin Jagatananda, grandson of Jayanta received a title 'Ramarai'.

At Dhuwahat, he met his spiritual successor Madhavdev. Madhavdev, a sakta, got into a religious altercation with his brother-in-law Ramadas who had recently converted to Vaishnavism. Ramadas took him to Sankardev, who, after a long debate, convinced him of the power and the efficacy of *Ekasarana*. The acquisition of Madhavdev, with his talent in poetry, singing and dedication to his new-found religion and guru, was a significant event in the *Ekasarana* history. At Dhuwahat he managed to attract a wider attention and popularity and he initiated many others into his religion.

The popularity of *Ekasarana* and the conversion of people alarmed the priestly Brahmins, who reacted with anger and hostility. Sankardev tried to diffuse their hostility—by meeting with them at the house of his relative Budha-Khan and asking

his Brahmin antagonists to install a wooden idol of Jagannath, called Madan-Mohan, at his religious seat. (Sankardev left this idol hanging on a tree when he took flight from Dhuwahat, and it was rescued years later by Vamshigopaldev and installed at Deberapar-sattra).

The Brahmins finally complained to the Ahom king, Suhungmung (1497–1539), who summoned Sankardev to his court for a debate with them. Sankardev was able to convince the king that he was not a religious rebel and a threat to the social order, and the charges against him were dropped. The hostility, nevertheless, continued.

### ***Flight from Dhuwahat***

Though the positions of the Bhuyans in the Ahom kingdom began comfortably—with Sankardev's son-in-law, Hari, becoming a Paik officer and Ramrai, his cousin, becoming a royal official—the relationship gradually deteriorated. After the death of Viswasingha, who was inimical to the Bhuyans, and the rise of Naranarayan (1540), the Koch-Bhuyan relationship improved somewhat. Sometime in the 1540s during the reign of Suklenmung (1539–1552) a royal officer visited the region for an elephant capturing expedition.

Hari did not make himself available and furthermore, an elephant escaped through a barrier managed by the Bhuyans. The officer took grave offence in this dereliction of duty and arrested Hari as well as Madhavdev. At Garhgaon, Hari was executed and Madhavdev interned for about a year. According to Daityari, taking advantage of the Koch advance against the Ahoms (1546–1547), Sankardev and his followers escaped from

the Ahom kingdom as they fell behind the vanguard of the Koch army setting up their garrison in Narayanpur further to the east.

### **Literary works in the Ahom kingdom**

- Arguments against those antagonistic to *bhakti*
- *Kirtan-ghosa* (*Pasanda-mardana*, *Namaparadha*)
- *(Vipra)-patni-prasad* (Ankia Naat)
- Tales from Krishna's early life
- *Kirtan-ghosa* (*sisu-lila*, *rasa-krida*, *kamsavadha*, *gopi-uddhava-samvada*, *kujir vancha-purana*, *akrurar vancha-purana*)
- *Borgeets*

### **Koch kingdom**

#### **Sunpora**

Sankardev and his followers reached Kapalabari in Koch kingdom in later part of 1540 and put up there. But the water was very alkaline there. Several members including Madhavdev's mother Manorama died there. So after staying for some time at Kapalabari, Sankardev and his group moved to Sunpora in 1541. At Sunpora Sankardev initiated Bhavananda, a rich trader who had extensive business interest in the Garo and Bhutan hills besides Kamarupa. The trader, Narayana Das, settled at Janiya near Barpeta and took to agriculture. A man of the world otherwise, he soon flourished and became a provider to Sankardev and his devotees. He came to be known popularly as Thakur Ata.



## Patbausi

After a great deal of moving, Sankardev settled at Patbausi near Barpeta in the Koch Kingdom and constructed a *Kirtanghar* (house of prayer). Some of the people he initiated here are Chakrapani Dwija and Sarvabhaum Bhattacharya, Brahmins; Govinda, a Garo; Jayaram, a Bhutia; Madhai, a Jaintia; Jatiram, an ascetic; and Murari, a Koch. Damodardev, a Brahmin, was initiated by Sankardev. Damodardev was entrusted by Sankardev to initiate Brahmin disciples. A Sattrā was also constructed for him at Patbausi itself. Later Damodardev became the founder of the Brahma Sanghati sect of Sankardev's religion.

Among Sankardev's literary works, he completed his rendering of the Bhagavata Purana and wrote other independent works. He continued composing the Kirtan Ghosha, further translated the first canto of the Ramayana (*Adi Kanda*) and instructed Madhavdev to translate the last canto (*Uttara Kanda*), portions that were left undone by the 14th century poet Madhav Kandali. He wrote four plays: *Rukmini harana*, *Parijata harana*, *Keligopala* and *Kalidamana*. Another play written at Patbausi, *Kansa Vadha*, is lost. At Patbausi, he had lent his Bargeets numbering around 240 to Kamala Gayan. But unfortunately, Gayan's house was gutted and most of the *borgeets* were lost. Since that incident Sankardev stopped composing *Bargeets*. Of the 240, 34 remain today.

## Second Pilgrimage

Sankardev once again left for a pilgrimage in 1550 with a large party of 117 disciples that included Madhavdev, Ramrai,

Ramaram, Thakur Ata and others. Thakur Ata had to return after just one day's journey. Madhavdev had to take entire responsibility of logistics. He on the request of Sankardev's wife Kalindi urged him to return from Puri and not proceed to Vrindavana. Sankardev and the group returned to Patbausi within six months in 1551.

### **Koch capital and Bheladanga**

On receiving repeated complaints that Sankardev was corrupting the minds of the people by spreading a new religion Nara Narayan, the Koch king, ordered Sankardev's arrest, and Sankardev went into hiding. Chilarai—the general of the Koch army, half-brother of the king and married to Kamalapriya the daughter of Sankardev's cousin Ramarai—then convinced the king to give Sankardev a hearing instead.

For the audience with Nara Narayan, as he moved up the steps to the court, Sankardev sang his Sanskrit *totaka* hymn, composed extempore, to Lord Krishna *madhu daanava daarana deva varam* and as he sat down, he sang a *borgeet*, *narayana kahe bhakati karu tera*, playing on the name of the king. At the debate with the court pundits that followed,

Sankardev was able to refute all allegations against him. The king declared him free and furthermore honored him with a seat close to the throne. Sankardev began to attend Naranarayana's court regularly, and received the freedom to propagate his teachings.

Chilarai was instrumental in keeping Sankardev safe and supporting his work. Many of Sankardev's literary and dramatic works were completed in his domain with his

patronage and protection. Sankardev acknowledged his appreciation in his play 'Ram Vijaya'.

Sankardev shuttled between Kochbehar the capital and Patbausi his seat. He was often hosted by Chilarai, and on his request agreed to have the images of the childhood days of krishna at Vrindavan woven on cloth. He engaged the weavers of Tantikuchi, near Barpeta, to weave a forty-yard long tapestry panel. Sankaradeva provided the designs to be woven, chose the various colours of thread to be used, and supervised the weaving. It took about a year to complete and, deriving its name from its theme, came to be known as the Vrindavani vastra. It was presented to Chilarai and Naranarayan. A section of this cloth is preserved now in the Victoria and Albert museum in London.

Chandsai, a Muslim tailor serving the Koch king became a disciple of Sankardev at Kochbehar. When Sankardev returned to Patbausi some time later, Chandsai too came with the saint. Sankardev frequented the capital for more than 20 years and enjoyed unstinted royal patronage for the first time.

## **End**

He made arrangements with Madhavdev and Thakur Ata and gave them various instructions at Patbausi and left the place for the last time. He set up his home at Bheladonga in Kochbehar. During his stay at Kochbehar, Maharaja Naranarayana expressed his wish to be initiated. Sankardev was reluctant to convert a king and declined to do so. (According to one of the biographers Ramcharan Thakur) A painful boil; a *visha phohara* – had appeared in some part of

his body and this led to the passing away of the Saint. Thus, in 1568, after leading a most eventful life dedicated to enlightening humanity; the *Mahapurusha* breathed his last – after four months of his last stay at Bheladonga– at the remarkable age of 120 years.

### **Literary works in the Koch kingdom**

- *Bhagavata* tales, not from Book X
- *Bali-chalana* (Book VIII)
- *Anadi-patana* (Book III, *Vamana-purana*)
- *Bhagavata* tales from Books X, XI, XIII
- *Kirtan-ghosa* (*Jarasandha yudha*, *Kalayavana badha*, *Mucukunda-stuti*, *Syamanta-haran*, *Naradar-krishna-darsan*, *Vipra-putra-anayana*, *Daivakir-putra-anayana*, *Veda-stuti*, *Lilamala*, *Rukminir-prem-kalah*, *Bhrigu-pariksha*, *srikrishnar-vaikuntha-prayana*, *Chaturvimsati-avatar-varnana*, *Tatparya*)
- *Gunamala*
- Section i
- Renderings of *Bhagavata Purana*
- *Bhagavata X (Adi)*
- *Bhagavata XI* (with material from Books I and III)
- *Bhagavata XII*
- *Bhagavata I*
- *Bhagavata II*
- *Bhagavata IX* (lost)
- *Kurukshetra* (Book X, *Uttarardha*)
- *Nimi-nava-siddha-samvada*
- From *Ramayana*
- *Ramayana, Uttara-kanda*
- Lyrics

- Borgeets
- Totaya
- Bhatima
- Doctrinal treatise
- *Bhakti-ratnakar*
- Drama (Ankia Naat)
- *Kali-daman*
- *Keli-gopal*
- *Rukmini-haran*
- *Parijat-haran*
- *Ram-vijay*
- Visual Art
- *Vrindavani vastra* – parts of this work are preserved in London.

## ***Ekasarana***

Sankardev preached pure devotion (*bhakti*) to Krishna consisting primarily in the singing (*kirtan*) and listening to (*sravan*) of his deeds and activities. *Ekasarana* follows the *dasya* attitude (*bhava*) of worship in which the devotee considers himself to be a servant of God. In contrast to other Vaishnava schools, Radha is not worshiped along with Krishna.

The people who practice his religion are referred to variously as *Mahapurushia*, *Sarana* and *Sankari*.

Srimanta Sankardev started a system of initiation (*Sarana*) into his religion. He caused a huge social revolution by fighting against the caste discrimination prevailing at that time. He initiated people of all castes and religions, including Muslims. After initiation, the devotee is expected to adhere to the

religious tenets of *Ekasarana* consisting in worship to one God, Krishna, and offering devotion to him, forsaking completely all forms of Vedic rites.

Though he himself married twice, had children and led the life of a householder, his disciple Madhavdev did not. Some of his followers today follow celibate life (*kevaliya bhakat*) in the Vaishnavite monasteries – the *sattras*.

Sankardev's famous debate with Madhavdev, who was a staunch sakta (devotee of Shakti) earlier, and Madhavdev's subsequent induction into *Ekasarana*, is often cited as the single most epoch-making event in the history of the neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam. Madhavdev, an equally multi-talented person, became his most celebrated disciple.

## Literary works

Sankardev produced a large body of work. Though there were others before him who wrote in the language of the common man – Madhav Kandali who translated the Ramayana into Assamese in the 14th century – This was the first ramayana to be written in a modern Indian language – Harivara Vipra and Hema Saraswati, it was Sankardev who opened the floodgates and inspired others like Madhavdev to carry on where he left off.

His language is lucid, his verses lilting, and he infused *bhakti* into everything he wrote. His magnum opus is his *Kirtana-ghosha*, a work so popular that even today it is found in many household in Assam. It contains narrative verses glorifying Krishna meant for community singing. It is a *bhakti kayva par*

excellence, written in a lively and simple language, it has "stories and songs for amusement [for children], it delights the young with true poetic beauty and elderly people find here religious instruction and wisdom".

For most of his works, he used the Assamese language of the period so the lay person could read and understand them. But for dramatic effect in his songs and dramas he used Brajavali, medieval Maithili.

Other literary works include the rendering of eight books of the *Bhagavata Purana* including the *Adi Dasama* (Book X), *Harishchandra-upakhyana* (his first work), *Bhakti-pradip*, the *Nimi-navasiddha-samvada* (conversation between King Nimi and the nine Siddhas), *Bhakti-ratnakara* (Sanskrit verses, mostly from the *Bhagavata*, compiled into a book), *Anadi-patana* (having as its theme the creation of the universe and allied cosmological matters), *Gunamala* and many plays like *Rukmini haran*, *Patni prasad*, *Keli gopal*, *Kurukshetra yatra* and *Srirama vijaya*. There was thus a flowering of great Bhakti literature during his long life of 120 years.

### **Poetic works (*kavya*)**

- *Kirtana-ghosha*
- *Harischandra-upakhyana*
- *Rukmini-harana*
- *Ajamilopakhyana*
- *Bali-chalana*
- *Kurukshetra-yatra*
- *Gopi-uddhava-samvada*
- *Amrita-manthana*

- *Krishna-prayana-pandava-niryana*
- *Kamajaya*

## **Bhakti Theory**

- *Bhakati-pradipa*
- *Anadi-patana*
- *Nimi-navasiddha-samvada*
- *Bhakti Ratnakara* (in Sanskrit)
- *Gunamala*

## **Transliteration**

- *Bhagavata* (Book VI, VIII, I, II, VII, X, XI, XII, IX, X(partial), XI(partial) & XII)
- *Ramayana* (*Uttarakanda*, supplemental to Madhav Kandali's *Saptakanda Ramayana*)

His translation of the *Bhagavata* is actually a transcreation, because he translates not just the words but the idiom and the physiognomy too. He has adapted the original text to the local land and people and most importantly for the purpose of bhakti. Portions of the original were left out or elaborated where appropriate. For example, he suppressed the portions that revile the lowers castes of *sudra* and *kaivartas*, and extols them elsewhere.

## **Drama (Ankia Nat)**

- *Cihna Yatra* (lost)
- *Patni-prasada*
- *Janma-jatra* (lost)



- *Kangsa-badha* (lost)
- *Parijata-harana*
- *Kali-damana*
- *Rukmini-harana*
- *Keli-gopala*
- *Srirama-vijaya*

Sankardev was the fountainhead of the *Ankiya naat*, a form of one-act play. His *Cihna Yatra* is regarded as one of the first open-air theatrical performances in the world. *Cihna yatra* was probably a dance drama and no text of that show is available today. Innovations like the presence of a *Sutradhara* (narrator) on the stage, use of masks etc., were used later in the plays of Bertolt Brecht and other eminent playwrights.

These cultural traditions still form an integral part of the heritage of the Assamese people.

## **Songs**

- *Borgeet* (composed 240, but only 34 exist now)
- *Bhatima*
- *Deva bhatima* – panegyrics to God
- *Naat bhatima* – for use in dramas
- *Raja bhatima* – panegyrics to king Nara Narayan

He is a musician; All his creations were orienting to the Vishnav religion and one set of them is called 'Holy Songs', which are known as 'Borgeet(Bargit or Bargeet)' till today in Assam.

The *Borgeets* (literally: great songs) are devotional songs, set to music and sung in various *raga* styles. These styles are slightly

different from either the Hindustani or the Carnatic styles. The songs themselves are written in the 'Brajavali' language.

## Dance

Sattriya dance, that Sankardev first conceived and developed and which was later preserved for centuries by the *sattras*, is now among the classical dance forms of India. Although certain devout Sankarite calls this form as Sankari dance

## Visual Art

- *Sapta vaikuntha* – part of the *Cihna yatra* production, does not exist today.
- *Vrindavani vastra* – parts of this work are preserved in London.

The famous *Vrindavani Vastra*—the cloth of Vrindavan—a 120 x 60 cubits tapestry depicted the *lilas* of Lord Krishna at Vrindavan through richly woven and embroidered designs on silk. A specimen, believed to be a part of this work, is at the Association pour l'Etude et la Documentation des Textiles d'Asie collection at Paris (inv. no. 3222). The *vastra*, commissioned by Koch king Naranarayana, was woven by 12 master weavers in Barpeta under the supervision of Sankardev over a period of six-month and completed towards the end of 1554. This textile art depicted the life and deeds of lord Krishna, who is worshipped in Eka Sarana Nama Dharma. The cloth was housed in the royal court of Kochbehar after the saint presented it to the king; but it disappeared at some point. It is believed that parts of this cloth made its way to Tibet and from there to its present place.

## Ekasarana Dharma

**Ekasarana Dharma** (literally: *Shelter-in-One religion*) is a neo-Vaishnavite religion propagated by Srimanta Sankardeva in the 15th-16th century in the Indian state of Assam. It rejects focus on vedic ritualism and focuses on devotion (*bhakti*) to Krishna in the form of congregational listening (*sravan*) and singing his name and deeds (*kirtan*).

The simple and accessible religion attracted already Hindu as well as non-Hindu populations into its egalitarian fold. The neophytes continue to be inducted into the faith via an initiation ceremony called *xoron-lowā* (literally: take-shelter), usually conducted by *Sattradhikars*, heads of monastic institutions called *Sattras*, who generally draw apostolic lineage from Sankardev. Some *Sattradhikars*, especially those from the Brahma-sanghati, reject apostolic lineage from Sankardev due to an early schism with the order. Some modern reformation institutions conduct *xoron-lowā* outside the *sattrā* institution. Institutions propagating Eka Sarana like *sattrā* (monasteries) and village *Namghar* (prayer houses), had profound influence in the evolution of the social makeup of Assam. The artistic creations emanating from this movement led to engendering of new forms of literature, music (*Borgeets* or songs celestial), theatre (*Ankia Naat*) and dance (*Sattriya* dance).

The central religious text of this religion is Bhagavat of Sankardeva, which was rendered from the Sanskrit Bhagavata Purana by Srimanta Sankardeva and other early members of the Eka Sarana school. This book is supplemented by the two books of songs for congregational singing: *Kirtan Ghoxa* by

Sankardeva and *Naam Ghosa* by Madhabdev. These books are written in the Assamese language.

The religion is also called *Mahapuruxiya* because it is based on the worship of the Mahapurux or Mahapurush (Sanskrit: *Maha*: Supreme and *purush*: Being), an epithet of the supreme spiritual personality in the Bhagavata and its adherents are often called *Mahapuruxia*, *Sankari* etc. In course of time, the epithet 'Mahapurux' came also to be secondarily applied to Sankardeva and Madhabdev, the principal preceptors. Non-adherence to the Hindu *varna* system and rejection of Vedic karma marked its character. Though often seen as a part of the wider, pan-Indian Bhakti movement, it does not worship Radha with Krishna which is common in other Vaishnava schools. It is characterised by the *dasya* form of worship. Historically, it has been against caste system, and especially against animal sacrifices common in other sects of Hinduism, especially Saktism. Noted for its egalitarianism, it posed a serious challenge to Brahminical Hinduism, and converted into its fold people of all castes, ethnicity and religion (including Islam).

## **Worshipful God and salvation**

The preceptors as well as later leaders of the Ekasarana religion focused mainly on the religious practice of *bhakti* and kept away from systematically expounding philosophical positions. Nevertheless, references found scattered in the voluminous works of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva indicate that their theosophical positions are rooted in the Bhagavata Purana with a strong Advaita influence via its commentary *Bhavartha-dipika* by Sridhar Swami. Nevertheless, Sankardeva's interpretation of these texts were seen at once to

be "original and new". Scholars hold that these texts are not followed *in-toto* and deviations are often seen in the writings especially when the original philosophical contents came into conflict with the primary focus of *bhakti* as enunciated in the Ekasarana-dharma.

## Nature of God

Though Ekasarana acknowledges the impersonal (nirguna) god, it identifies the personal (saguna) one as worshipful which it identifies in the Bhagavad-Puranic Narayana. The sole aspect that distinguishes the personal from the impersonal one is the act of creation, by which Narayana created everything. Unlike in Gaudiya Vaishnavism it claims no distinction between Brahman, Paramatman and Bhagavat, which are considered in *Ekasarana* as just different appellations applied to the same supreme reality.

Even though Narayana is sometimes used synonymously with Vishnu, the gods Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva are considered of lower divinity.

Narayana as the personal and worshipful god is considered to be a loving and lovable god, who possesses auspicious attributes that attract devotees. He is non-dual, omnipotent and omniscient; creator, sustainer, and destroyer of all. He also possesses moral qualities like *karunamaya* (compassionate), *dinabandhu* (friend of the lowly), *bhakta-vatsala* (beloved of devotees) and *patit-pavana* (redeemer of sinners) that make him attractive to devotees. Though it does not deny the existence of other gods, it asserts that Narayana alone is worshipful and the others are strictly excluded.

## Krishna

Following the Bhagavata Purana, the object of devotion in Ekasarana is Krishna, who is the supreme entity himself. All other deities are subservient to Him. Brahman, Vishnu and Krishna are fundamentally one. Krishna is alone the supreme worshipful in the system. Sankaradeva's Krishna is Nārāyana, the Supreme Reality or Parama Brahma and not merely an avatara of Visnu. Krishna is God Himself. It considers Narayana (Krishna) as both the cause as well as the effect of this creation, and asserts Narayana alone is the sole reality. From the philosophical angle, He is the Supreme Spirit (Param-Brahma). As the controller of the senses, the Yogis call him Paramatma. When connected with this world, He assumes the name of Bhagavanta. Moreover, some of the characteristics usually reserved for the impersonal God in other philosophies are attributed to Narayana with reinterpretations.

## Jiva and salvation

The embodied self, called *jiva* or *jivatma* is identical to Narayana. It is shrouded by *maya* and thus suffers from misery. When the ego (*ahamkara*) is destroyed, the *jiva* can perceive himself as Brahma. The *jiva* attains *mukti* (liberation) when the *jiva* is restored to its natural state (*maya* is removed). Though other Vaishnavites (Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Vallabha, Caitanya) recognise only *videhamukti* (*mukti* after death), the Ekasarana preceptors have recognised, in addition, *jivanmukti* (*mukti* during lifetime). Among the five different kinds of *videhamukti*, the Ekasarana rejects the *Sayujya* form of *mukti*, where the complete absorption in God deprives *jiva* of the sweetness and bliss associated with *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is thus

not a means to *mukti* but an end to itself, and this is strongly emphasised in Ekasarana writings—Madhavdeva begins his Namaghosha with an obeisance to devotees who do not prefer *mukti*.

## **Krishna is identical to Narayana**

Narayana often manifests through *avatars*, and Krishna is considered as the most perfect one who is not a partial manifestation but Narayana himself. It is in the form of Krishna that Narayana is usually worshiped. The description of Krishna is based on the one in Bhagavat Puran, as one who resides in Vaikuntha along with his devotees. Thus the worshipful form is different from other forms of Krishna-based religions (Radha-Krishna of Caitanya, Gopi-Krishna of Vallabhacharya, Rukmini-Krishna of Namadeva and Sita-Rama of Ramananda). The form of devotion is infused with the *dasya* and *balya bhava* in the works of Sankardev and Madhabdev. *Madhura bhava*, so prevalent in the other religions, is singularly absent here.

## **Four Principles**

The *cari vastu* or the *Four Principles* defined this religious system are:

- *Naam* — the chanting and singing the name and the qualities of God. In general, only four names are most important: *rama-krishna-narayana-hari*)
- *Deva* — worship of a single God, that is Krishna.
- *Guru* — reverence of a Guru, or Spiritual Preceptor.

- *Bhakat* — the association or the congregation of devotees (*bhaktas*)

Sankardev defined the first, second and fourth of these, whereas Madhavdev introduced the third while at Belaguri when he accepted Sankardev as the *guru* for himself and for all others who accepted his faith. The four principles are revealed and their meaning explained at the time of initiation (*xonronlowa*).

## Four Books: sacred texts

The single most important religious text is the Bhagavata, especially the Book X (*Daxama*). This work was transcreated from the original Sanskrit Bhagavata Purana to Assamese in the 15th and 16th centuries by ten different individuals, but chiefly by Srimanta Sankardev who rendered as many as ten Cantos (complete and partial) of this holy text.

Three other works find a special place in this religion: *Kirtan Ghoxa*, composed by Sankardev; and *Naam Ghoxa* and *Ratnavali*, composed by Madhavdev.

## Denominations

The religion fissured into four *sanghati* (*samhatis* or sub-sects) soon after the death of Srimanta Sankardeva. Sankardev handed down the leadership to Madhabdev, but the followers of Damodardev and Harideva did not accept Madhabdev as their leader and formed their own group (*Brahma sanghati*). Madhabdeva at the time of his death did not name a successor.



After his death three leaders formed their own denominations: Bhabanipuria Gopal Ata (*Kaal sanghati*), Purushottam Thakur Ata, a grandson of Sankardev (*Purusa sanghati*) and Mathuradas Burhagopal Ata (*Nika Sanghati*). They differ mostly in the emphasis of the *cari vastus* (four fundamental principles)

### **Brahma sanghati**

The Brahma sanghati developed as a result of Damodardev and Haridev moving away from Sankardev's successor Madhabdev's leadership. Over time this sanghati brought back some elements of Brahminical orthodoxy. The vedic rituals which are generally prohibited in the other sanghatis are allowed in this *sanghati*.

Brahmins too found this *sanghati* attractive and most of the Sattras of this *sanghati* have traditionally had Brahmin *sattradhikars*. Among the *cari vastus*, *Deva* is emphasised, worship of the images of the *deva* (Vishnu and the chief incarnations, Krishna and Rama) are allowed. Among the gurus Damodardev is paramount. Later on they came to call themselves *Damodariya* after Damodardev.

### **Purush sanghati**

The Purush sanghati was initiated by the grandsons of Sankardeva—Purushottam Thakur and Chaturbhuj Thakur—after the death of Madhavdev. The emphasis is on *Naam*. Sankardeva has a special position among the hierarchy of *Gurus*. Some brahminical rites as well as the worship of images is tolerated to some extent.

## **Nika sanghati**

This *sanghati* was initiated by Padma, Mathuradas and Kesava Ata. The emphasis is on *sat-sanga*. This sanghati is called *Nika* (clean) because it developed strict codes for purity and cleanliness in religious matters as well as in general living, as laid down by Madhabdeva. Idol worship is strictly prohibited and it gives special importance to Madhavdev.

## **Kala sanghati**

The Kala *sanghati*, initiated by Gopal Ata (Gopaldev of Bhavanipur) and named after the place of his headquarters Kaljar, placed its emphasis on *Guru*. The *sattariya* of this *sanghati* came to be considered as the physical embodiment of *Deva*, and the disciples of this sect are not allowed to pay obeisance to anyone else. This sect was successful in initiating many tribal and socially backward groups into the Mahapuruxia fold, and it had the largest following among the different *sanghatis*. The Dihing sattrā, one of the large sattrā's received royal patronage; but the largest sattrā, Moamara, forged an independent path and the followers of this sect were responsible for the Moamoria rebellion against the Ahom royalty.

## Chapter 6

# Bahlul Lodi and Lodi Dynasty

## Bahlul Lodi

**Bahlul Lodi** (1401/1406 – 12 July 1489) was the chief of the PashtunLodi tribe. Founder of the Lodi dynasty from the Delhi Sultanate upon the abdication of the last claimant from the previous Sayyid rule. Bahlul became sultan of the dynasty on 19 April 1451 (855 AH).

## Early life

Bahlul's grandfather, Malik Bahram Khan Lodhi, a Pashtun tribal chief of Lodhi tribe. He later took service under the governor of Multan, Malik Mardan Daulat . Malik Bahram had a total of about five sons. His eldest son, Malik Sultan Shah Lodi, later served under the Sayyid dynasty ruler Khizr Khan and distinguished himself by killing in the battle later's worst enemy Mallu Iqbal Khan. He was rewarded with the title of Islam Khan and in 1419 appointed the governor of Sirhind. Bahlul, the son of Malik Kala, the younger brother of Malik Sultan was married to Malik Sultan's daughter.

In his youth, Bahlul was involved in the trading of horses and once sold his finely bred horses to the Sayyid dynasty Sultan Mohammad Shah. As a payment he was granted a *pargana* and raised to the status of *amir*. After the death of Malik Sultan, he became the governor of Sirhind. He was allowed to add Lahore to his charge. Once, Sultan Muhammad Shah asked for his

help when the Malwa Sultan Mahmud Shah I invaded his territory. Bahlul joined the imperial army with 20,000 mounted soldiers. By his cleverness, he was able to project himself as a victor over the army of the Malwa Sultan and Sultan Muhammad Shah conferred on him the title of *Khan-i-Khanan*. He also accepted Bahlul's occupation over a large part of Punjab.

In 1443, Bahlul attacked Delhi but he did not succeed. During the reign of last Sayyid ruler Sultan Alam Shah, Bahlul again made another unsuccessful attempt to capture Delhi in 1447. Finally, when Alam Shah retired to Badaun in 1448, a minister of Alam Shah, Hamid Khan invited him to occupy the throne of Delhi. After the voluntary abdication of the throne by Alam Shah, Bahlul Shah ascended the throne of Delhi on 19 April 1451 and adopted the title of *Bahlul Shah Ghazi*. Alam Shah continued to live in Badaun till his death in July 1478.

## **Reign**

After ascending to the throne, Bahlul decided to dispose of Hamid Khan. His cousin and brother-in-law Malik Mahmud Khan alias Qutb-ud-din Khan (Governor of Samana) imprisoned Hamid Khan.

In 1479, Sultan Bahlul Lodi defeated and annexed Sharqi dynasty based at Jaunpur. Bahlul did much to stop rebellions and uprisings in his territories, and extended his holdings over Gwalior, Jaunpur and upper Uttar Pradesh. Just like the previous Delhi Sultans, he kept Delhi the capital of his kingdom. In 1486, he appointed his son, Babrak Shah as viceroy of Jaunpur. In time, this proved to be problematic, as

his second son, Nizam Khan (Sikandar Lodi) was named successor, and a power struggle ensued upon his death in July 1489. The site of his grave is disputed. The Archeological Survey of India has long designated a building close to the shrine of the noted Sufi saint Nasiruddin Chirag-e-Delhi in a locality that goes by his name, 'Chirag Delhi', as Bahlul Lodi's tomb. Other historians argue that the Sheesh Gumbad in the Lodi Gardens is actually to be identified with his tomb.

## **Marriages**

Bahlul married two times:

- Shams Khatun, daughter of Malik Shah Sultan Lodhi, his first cousin;
- Bibi Ambha, daughter of a Hindu goldsmith

## **Lodi dynasty**

The **Lodi dynasty** was an Afghan dynasty that ruled the Delhi Sultanate from 1451 to 1526. It was the fifth and final dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate, and was founded by Bahlul Khan Lodi when he replaced the Sayyid dynasty.

## **Bahlul Lodi**

Bahlul Khan Lodi (r. 1451–1489) was the nephew and son-in-law of Malik Sultan Shah Lodi, the governor of Sirhind in (Punjab), India and succeeded him as the governor of Sirhind during the reign of Sayyid dynasty ruler Muhammad Shah.

Muhammad Shah raised him to the status of an Tarun-Bin-Sultan. He was the most powerful of the Punjab chiefs and a vigorous leader, holding together a loose confederacy of Afghan and Turkish chiefs with his strong personality. He reduced the turbulent chiefs of the provinces to submission and infused some vigour into the government. After the last Sayyid ruler of Delhi, Alauddin Alam Shah voluntarily abdicated in favour of him, Bahlul Khan Lodi ascended the throne of the Delhi sultanate on 19 April 1451. The most important event of his reign was the conquest of Jaunpur. Bahlul spent most of his time in fighting against the Sharqi dynasty and ultimately annexed it. He placed his eldest surviving son Barbak on the throne of Jaunpur in 1486.

## **Sikandar Lodi**

Sikandar Lodi (r. 1489–1517) (born Nizam Khan), the second son of Bahlul, succeeded him after his death on 17 July 1489 and took up the title *Sikandar Shah*. He was nominated by his father to succeed him and was crowned sultan on 15 July 1489. He founded Agra in 1504 and built mosques. He shifted the capital from Delhi to Agra. He abolished corn duties and patronized trade and commerce.

He was a poet of repute, composing under the pen-name of Gulruk. He was also patron of learning and ordered Sanskrit work in medicine to be translated into Persian. He curbed the individualistic tendencies of his Pashtun nobles and compelled them to submit their accounts to state audit. He was, thus, able to infuse vigor and discipline in the administration. His greatest achievement was the conquest and annexation of Bihar.

## **Ibrahim Lodi**

Ibrahim Lodi (r. 1517–1526), the youngest son of Sikandar, was the last Lodi Sultan of Delhi. He had the qualities of an excellent warrior, but he was rash and impolitic in his decisions and actions. His attempt at royal absolutism was premature and his policy of sheer repression unaccompanied by measures to strengthen the administration and increase the military resources was sure to prove a failure. Ibrahim faced numerous rebellions and kept out the opposition for almost a decade. He was engaged in warfare with the Afghans and the Mughal Empire for most of his reign and died trying to keep the Lodi Dynasty from annihilation. Ibrahim was defeated in 1526 at the Battle of Panipat. This marked the end of the Lodi Dynasty and the rise of the Mughal Empire in India led by Babur (r. 1526–1530).

## **Fall of the empire**

By the time Ibrahim ascended the throne, the political structure in the Lodi Dynasty had dissolved due to abandoned trade routes and the depleted treasury. The Deccan was a coastal trade route, but in the late fifteenth century the supply lines had collapsed. The decline and eventual failure of this specific trade route resulted in cutting off supplies from the coast to the interior, where the Lodi empire resided. The Lodi Dynasty was not able to protect itself if warfare were to break out on the trade route roads; therefore, they didn't use those trade routes, thus their trade declined and so did their treasury leaving them vulnerable to internal political problems. In order to take revenge of the insults done by Ibrahim, the

governor of Lahore, Daulat Khan Lodi asked the ruler of Kabul, Babur to invade his kingdom. Ibrahim Lodi was thus killed in a battle with Babur. With the death of Ibrahim Lodi, the Lodi dynasty also came to an end.

## **Afghan factionalism**

Another problem Ibrahim faced when he ascended the throne in 1517 were the Pashtun nobles, some of whom supported Ibrahim's older brother, Jalaluddin, in taking up arms against his brother in the area in the east at Jaunpur. Ibrahim gathered military support and defeated his brother by the end of the year. After this incident, he arrested those Pashtun nobles who opposed him and appointed his own men as the new administrators. Other Pashtun nobles supported the governor of Bihar, Dariya Khan, against Ibrahim.

Another factor that caused uprisings against Ibrahim was his lack of an apparent successor. His own uncle, Alam Khan, betrayed Ibrahim by supporting the Mughal invader Babur.

## **Rajput invasions and internal rebellions**

Rana Sanga, the Hindu Rajput leader of Mewar (r. 1509–1526), extended his kingdom, defeated the Lodi king of Delhi and was acknowledged by all the Rajput clans as the leading prince of Rajputana. Daulat Khan, the governor of Punjab region asked Babur to invade the Lodi kingdom, with the thought of taking revenge from Ibrahim Lodi.



## **Battle of Panipat, 1526**

After being assured of the cooperation of Alam Khan and Daulat Khan, Governor of the Punjab, Babur gathered his army. Upon entering the Punjab plains, Babur's chief allies, namely Langar Khan Niazi advised Babur to engage the powerful Janjua Rajputs to join his conquest. The tribe's rebellious stance to the throne of Delhi was well known. Upon meeting their chiefs, Malik Hast (Asad) and Raja Sanghar Khan, Babur made mention of the Janjua's popularity as traditional rulers of their kingdom and their ancestral support for his patriarch Emir Timur during his conquest of Hind. Babur aided them in defeating their enemies, the Gakhars in 1521, thus cementing their alliance. Babur employed them as Generals in his campaign for Delhi, the conquest of Rana Sanga and the conquest of India.

The new usage of guns allowed small armies to make large gains on enemy territory. Small parties of skirmishers who had been dispatched simply to test enemy positions and tactics, were making inroads into India. Babur, however, had survived two revolts, one in Kandahar and another in Kabul, and was careful to pacify the local population after victories, following local traditions and aiding widows and orphans.

Despite both being Sunni Muslims, Babur wanted Ibrahim's power and territory. Babur and his army of 24,000 men marched to the battlefield at Panipat armed with muskets and artillery. Ibrahim prepared for battle by gathering 100,000 man (well-armed but with no guns) and 1,000 elephants. Ibrahim was at a disadvantage because of his outmoded infantry and internecine rivalries. Even though he had more men, he had

never fought in a war against gunpowder weapons and he did not know what to do strategically. Babur pressed his advantage from the start and Ibrahim perished on the battlefield in April 1526, along with 20,000 of his men.

## **Accession of Babur and the Mughals**

After Ibrahim's death, Babur named himself emperor over Ibrahim's territory, instead of placing Alam Khan (Ibrahim's uncle) on the throne. Ibrahim's death marked the end of the Lodi dynasty and led to the establishment of the Mughal Empire in India. The remaining Lodi territories were absorbed into the new Mughal Empire. Babur continued to engage in more military campaigns.

## **Mahmud Lodi**

Ibrahim Lodi's brother, Mahmud Lodi, declared himself Sultan and continued to resist Mughal forces. He provided around 4,000 Afghan soldiers to Rana Sanga in Battle of Khanwa. After the defeat, Mahmud Lodi fled eastwards and again posed a challenge to Babur two years later at the Battle of Ghaghra

## **Religion**

Like their predecessors, the Lodhi Sultans stylized themselves as the deputies of the Abbasid Caliphs, and thus acknowledged the authority of a united Caliphate over the Muslim World. They provided cash stipends and granted revenue-free lands (including entire villages) to the Muslim ulama, the Sunni

Muslim *shaikhs*, the claimed descendants of Muhammad, and the members of his Quraysh tribe.

The Muslim subjects of the Lodis were required to pay the zakat tax for religious merit, and the non-Muslims were required to pay the jizya tax for receiving state protection. In some parts of the Sultanate, the Hindus were required to pay an additional pilgrimage tax. Nevertheless, several Hindu officers formed a part of the Sultanate's revenue administration.

Sikandar Lodi, whose mother was a Hindu, resorted to strong Islamic orthodoxy to prove his Islamic credentials as a political expediency. He destroyed Hindu temples, and under the pressure from the ulama, allowed the execution of a Brahman who declared Hinduism to be as veracious as Islam. He also banned women from visiting the mazars (mausoleums) of Muslim saints, and banned the annual procession of the spear of the legendary Muslim martyr Salar Masud. He also established sharia courts in several towns with significant Muslim population, enabling the qazis to administer the Islamic law to Muslim as well as non-Muslim subjects.

## Chapter 7

# Ahmad Shah II and Battle of Nagaur

## Ahmad Shah II

**Qutb-ud-Din Ahmad Shah II**, born **Jalal Khan**, was a ruler of the Muzaffarid dynasty, who reigned over the Gujarat Sultanate from 1451 to 1458. He defeated invading Malwa forces at the battle of Kapadvanj. He tried to capture Nagor and came in conflict with Rana Kumbha of Chittor.

## Reign

In 1451, after death of Muhammad Shah II, the nobles placed his son Jalál Khán on the throne with the title of Kutb-ud-dín or Qutb-ud-dín Ahmad Shah II. Sultán Mahmud Khilji of Malwa Sultanate had invaded Gujarat and had laid siege to Sultánpur. Malik Alá-ud-dín bin Sohráb Kutb-ud-dín's commander surrendered the fort, and was sent with honour to Málwa and appointed governor of Mandu. Sultán Mahmúd, marching to Sársa-Páldi, summoned Bharuch, then commanded by Sídi Marján on behalf of Gujarát Sultanate. The Sídi refused, and fearing delay, the Málwa Sultán after plundering Baroda (now Vadodara) proceeded to Nadiad, whose Bráhmans astonished him by their bravery in killing a mad elephant. Qutb-ud-dín Sháh now advancing met Sultán Mahmúd at Kapadvanj where, after a doubtful fight of some

hours, he defeated Sultán Mahmúd, though during the battle that prince was able to penetrate to Kutb-ud-dín's camp and carry off his crown and jewelled girdle. The *Mirāt-i-Sikandari* ascribes Kutb-ud-dín's victory in great measure to the gallantry of certain inhabitants of Dholka called Darwāziyahs. Muzaffar Khán, who is said to have incited the Málwa Sultán to invade Gujarát, was captured and beheaded, and his head was hung up at the gate of Kapadvanj. On his return from Kapadvanj Kutb-ud-dín built the magnificent Hauzi Kutb or Kánkariya Tank about a mile to the south of Áhmedábád.

According to the *Mirāt-i-Sikandari* (Persian Text, 50–57) this war between Málwa and Gujarát was controlled by the spiritual power of certain holy teachers. The war was brought on by the prayers of Sheikh Kamál Málwi, whose shrine is in Áhmedábád behind Khudáwand Khán's mosque near Sháh-i-Álam's tomb, who favoured Málwa. Kutb-ud-dín's cause was aided by the blessing of Kutbi Álam who sent his son the famous Sháh Álam time after time to persuade Kamál to be loyal to Gujarát. At last Kamál produced a writing said to be from heaven giving the victory to Málwa. The young Sháh Álam tore this charter to shreds, and, as no evil befell him, Kamál saw that his spiritual power paled before Sháh Álam and fell back dead. Sháh Álam against his will accompanied Kutb-ud-dín some marches on his advance to Kapadvanj. Before leaving the army Sháh Álam blessed a mean camp elephant and ordered him to destroy the famous Málwa champion elephant known as the Butcher. He also, against his wish for he knew the future, at the Sultán's request bound his own sword round Kutb-ud-dín's waist. In the battle the commissariat elephant ripped the Butcher and some years later Kutb-ud-dín by accident gashed his knee with

the saint's sword and died. In the same year Sultán Mahmúd Khilji attempted to conquer Nagor then held by Fírúz Khán, a cousin of the Áhmedábád Sultán. Kutb-ud-dín Sháh despatched an army under the command of Sayad Atáulláh, and, as it drew near Sámbar, the Málwa Sultán retired and shortly after Fírúz Khán died. Kumbha Rána of Chittor now began interfering in the Nágor succession on behalf of Shams Khán, who had been dispossessed by his brother Mujáhid Khán, and expelled Mujáhid. But as Shams Khán refused to dismantle the fortifications of Nágor, the Chittor chief collected an army to capture Nágor, while Shams Khán repaired to Kutb-ud-dín Sháh for aid and gave that sovereign his daughter in marriage.

Upon this Kutb-ud-dín sent Rái Anupchand Mánek and Malik Gadái with an army to Nágor to repulse the Rána of Chitor. In a battle near Nágor, the Gujarát troops were defeated, and the Rána after laying waste the neighbourhood of that city, returned to Chitor. In 1455–56, to avenge this raid, Kutb-ud-dín Sháh marched against Chittor.

On his way the Devra Rája of Sirohi attended Kutb-ud-dín Sháh's camp, praying him to restore the fortress of Abu, part of the ancestral domain of Sirohi, which the Rána of Chittor had wrested from his house. The king ordered one of his generals, Malik Shaâbán, to take possession of Ábu and restore it to the Devra chieftain, while he himself continued to advance against Kumbhalmer. Malik Shaâbán was entangled in the defiles near Ábu, and defeated with great slaughter, and shortly after Kutb-ud-dín Sháh, making a truce with Chittor, retired to his own country. On his return the Málwa sovereign proposed that they should unite against Chittor, conquer the

Rána's territories, and divide them equally between them. Kutb-ud-dín agreed and in 1456–57 marched against the Rána by way of Ábu, which fortress he captured and handed to the Devra Rája. Next, advancing upon Kumbhalmer, he plundered the country round, and then turned towards Chittor. On his way to Chittor, he was met by the Rána, and a battle was fought, after which the Rána fell back on his capital, and was there besieged by the Gujarát army.

The siege was not pressed, and, on the Rána agreeing to pay tribute and not to harass Nágor, Kutb-ud-dín withdrew to Gujarát, where he gave himself up to licentious excess. Meanwhile, the Rána by ceding Mandisor to Málwa, came to terms with the Sultán of Mándu, and within three months attacked Nágor. Kutb-ud-dín Sháh, though so overcome with drink as to be unable to sit his horse, mustered his troops and started in a palanquin. As soon as the Rána heard that the Gujarát army was in motion he retired, and the king returned to Áhmedábád. In 1458, he again led an army by way of Sirohi and Kumbhalmer against Chitor, and laid waste the country. Soon after his return, according to one account by an accidental sword wound, according to another account poisoned by his wife, Kutb-ud-dín died in May 1458 after a reign of seven years and seven days. His after-death title is *Sultán-i-Gházi*, the Warrior King.

## **Succession**

On the death of Qutb-ud-dín Ahmad Sháh II, the nobles raised to the throne his uncle Dáúd, son of Ahmad Shah I. But as Dáúd appointed a carpet-spreader to high offices and committed improper acts, he was deposed after reign of seven

or, according to some source twenty seven days. In 1459 his half-brother Fateh Khán, the son of Muhammad Shah II by Bíbi Mughli, a daughter of Jám Júna of Samma dynasty ruling from Thatta in Sindh; was seated on the throne at the age of little more than thirteen with the title of Mahmúd Sháh I, later popularly named Mahmud Begada.

The close connection of Fateh Khán with the saintly Sháh Álam is frequently mentioned by with Gujarát chroniclers. According to the *Mirāt-i-Sikandari* (Persian Text, 66–70) of his two daughters Jám Júna intended Bíbi Mughli the more beautiful for the Saint and Bíbi Mirghi the less comely for the Sultán. By bribing the Jám's envoys the king secured the prettier sister.

The enraged Saint was consoled by his father who said: My son, to you will come both the cow and the calf. After Muhammad Shah II's death, fear of Kutb-ud-dín Ahmad Shah II's designs against the young Fateh Khán forced Bíbi Mughli to seek safety with her sister, and on her sister's death she married the Saint. Kutb-ud-dín made several attempts to seize Fateh Khán. But by the power of the Saint when Kutb-ud-dín attempted to seize him, Fateh Khán in body as well as in dress became a girl.

According to one account Kutb-ud-dín met his death in an attempt to carry off Fateh Khán. As he rode a mad camel, the king struck at the phantom, and his sword cleaving the air gashed his knee.

This was the Saint's sword, which against his will, for he knew it would be the death of the king, Qutb-ud-dín forced Sháh Álam to bind round him before the battle of Kapadvanj against Mahmud Khilji of Malwa Sultanate.



## **Architecture**

He built Qutbuddin Mosque in Ahmedabad during his father's reign which was completed in 1446.

## **Battle of Nagaur**

The **Battle of Nagaur** was fought between the Rajputs of Mewar and the Nagaur Sultanate. It started within Nagaur as a feud between two brothers, Mujahid Khan and Shams Khan. Shams Khan was defeated and took aid from Rana Kumbha the ruler of Mewar. Shams Khan was able to take Nagaur from his brother with the help of the Rana, but he refused to fulfill his promise to demolish a part of the battlements of the fort. This resulted in another war in which Rana Kumbha won and annexed Nagaur.

## **Background**

Feroz Khan, Sultan of Nagaur died in 1455. He belonged to the family of Kings of Gujarat Sultanate, and was originally a governor of the province of Nagaur, under the Delhi Sultanate. He had however thrown off his allegiance to Delhi and become independent. On his death, his elder son, Shams Khan, succeeded him, but his younger son, Mujahid Khan, deposed him and prepared to take his life. Shams Khan fled to Rana Kumbha for shelter and help. Kumbha who had long had designs on Nagaur, gladly embraced this opportunity of carrying them out, and agreed to place Shams Khan on the throne of Nagaur on the condition that he acknowledged

Kumbha's supremacy by demolishing a part of the battlements of the fort of that place. Shams Khan accepted the terms.

## **Battle**

Rana Kumbha marched with a large army to Nagaur, defeated Mujahid, who fled towards Gujarat, and placed Shams Khan on the throne of Nagaur, and demanded of him the fulfillment of the condition. But Shams Khan humbly prayed to the Maharana to spare the fort, for otherwise his nobles would kill him after the Maharana was gone. He promised to demolish the battlements himself later on. The Maharana granted this prayer and returned to Mewar.

No sooner, however, had Rana Kumbha reached Kumbalgarh when he got the news that Shams Khan instead of demolishing, began to strengthen the fortification of Nagaur. This brought Kumbha on the scene again with a large army. Shams Khan was driven out of Nagaur, which passed into Kumbha's possession. The Maharana now demolished the fortification of Nagaur and thus carried out his long-cherished design.

## **Battle with Qutb-ud-din**

Shams Khan fled to Ahmedabad, taking with him his daughter, whom he married to Sultan Qutb-ud-din Ahmad Shah II. The Sultan thereupon espoused his cause and sent a large army under Rai Ram Chandra and Malik Gadday to take back Nagaur. Rana Kumbha allowed the army to approach Nagaur, when he came out, and after a severe engagement, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Gujarat Sultanate army, annihilating it.

Only remnants of it reached Ahmedabad, to carry the news of the disaster to the Sultan.

## **Aftermath**

Rana Kumbha took away the treasury of Shams Khan a large store of precious stones, jewels and other valuable things. He also carried away the gates of the fort and an image of Hanuman from Nagaur, which he placed at the principal gate of the fortress of Kumbalgarh, calling it the Hanuman Pol.

## Chapter 8

# Guru Nanak, The Founder of Sikhism is Born

**Gurū Nānak**(15 April 1469 – 22 September 1539), also referred to as **Bābā Nānak** ('father Nānak'), was the founder of Sikhism and is the first of the ten Sikh Gurus. His birth is celebrated worldwide as Guru Nanak GURPURAB on *Katak Pooranmashi* ('full-moon of Kattak'), i.e. October–November.

Nanak is said to have travelled far and wide across Asia teaching people the message of *ik onkar* (ੴ, 'one God'), who dwells in every one of his creations and constitutes the eternal Truth.

With this concept, he would set up a unique spiritual, social, and political platform based on equality, fraternal love, goodness, and virtue.

Nanak's words are registered in the form of 974 poetic hymns, or *shabda*, in the holy text of Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib, with some of the major prayers being the *Japji Sahib* (*jap*, 'to recite'; *ji* and *sahib* are suffixes signifying respect); the *Asa di Var* ('ballad of hope'); and the *Sidh Gosht* ('discussion with the Siddhas'). It is part of Sikh religious belief that the spirit of Nanak's *sanctity*, divinity, and religious authority had descended upon each of the nine subsequent Gurus when the Guruship was devolved on to them.

# Biography

## Birth

Nanak was born on 15 April 1469 at Rāi Bhoi Kī Talva village (present-day Nankana Sahib, Punjab, Pakistan) in the Lahore province of the Delhi Sultanate, although according to one tradition, he was born in the Indian month of Kārtik or November, known as Kattak in Punjabi.

Most *janamsakhis* (ਜਨਮਸਾਖੀ, 'birth stories'), or traditional biographies of Nanak, mention that he was born on the third day of the bright lunar fortnight, in the Baisakh month (April) of Samvat 1526. These include the *Puratan* ('traditional' or 'ancient') *janamsakhi*, *Miharbanjanamsakhi*, *Gyan-ratanavali* by Bhai Mani Singh, and the *Vilayat Vali janamsakhi*. The Sikh records state that Nanak died on the 10th day of the Asauj month of Samvat 1596 (22 September 1539 CE), at the age of 70 years, 5 months, and 7 days. This further suggests that he was born in the month of Vaisakh (April), not Kattak (November).

## Kattak birthdate

In as late as 1815, during the reign of Ranjit Singh, the festival commemorating Nanak's birthday was held in April at the place of his birth, known by then as Nankana Sahib. However, the anniversary of Nanak's birth—the Gurburab (*gur* + *purab*, 'celebration')—subsequently came to be celebrated on the full moon day of the Kattak month in November. The earliest record of such a celebration in Nankana Sahib is from

1868 CE. There may be several reasons for the adoption of the Kattak birthdate by the Sikh community. For one, it may have been the date of Nanak's enlightenment or "spiritual birth" in 1496, as suggested by the *Dabestan-e Mazaheb*.

The only janamsakhi that supports the Kattak birth tradition is that of Bhai Bala. Bhai Bala is said to have obtained Nanak's horoscope from Nanak's uncle Lalu, according to which, Nanak was born on a date corresponding to 20 October 1469 CE. However, this janamsakhi was written by Handalis—a sect of Sikhs who followed a Sikh-convert known as Handal—attempting to depict the founder as superior to Nanak. According to a superstition prevailing in contemporary northern India, a child born in the Kattak month was believed to be weak and unlucky, hence why the work states that Nanak was born in that month.

Bhai Gurdas, having written on a full-moon-day of the Kattak month several decades after Nanak's death, mentions that Nanak had "obtained omniscience" on the same day, and it was now the author's turn to "get divine light."

According to Max Arthur Macauliffe (1909), a Hindu festival held in the 19th century on Kartik Purnima in Amritsar attracted a large number of Sikhs. The Sikh community leader Giani Sant Singh did not like this, thus starting a festival at the Sikh shrine of the Golden Temple on the same day, presenting it as the birth anniversary celebration of Guru Nanak.

Macauliffe also notes that Vaisakh (March–April) already saw a number of important festivals—such as Holi, Rama Navami, and Vaisakhi—therefore people would be busy in agricultural

activities after the harvest festival of Baisakhi. Therefore, holding Nanak's birth anniversary celebrations immediately after Vaisakhi would have resulted in thin attendance, and therefore, smaller donations for the Sikh shrines. On the other hand, by the Kattak full moon day, the major Hindu festival of Diwali was already over, and the peasants—who had surplus cash from crop sales—were able to donate generously.

## **Family and early life**

Nanak's parents, including father Kalyan Chand Das Bedi (commonly shortened to Mehta Kalu) and mother Mata Tripta, were both Hindu Khatri and employed as merchants. His father, in particular, was the local *patwari* (accountant) for crop revenue in the village of Talwandi.

According to Sikh traditions, the birth and early years of Nanak's life were marked with many events that demonstrated that Nanak had been blessed with divine grace. Commentaries on his life give details of his blossoming awareness from a young age. For instance, 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 per custom. Notable lore recounts that, as a child, Nanak astonished his teacher by describing the implicit symbolism of the first letter of the alphabet, resembling the mathematical version of one, as denoting the unity or oneness of God. Other stories of his childhood refer to strange and miraculous events about Nanak, such as the one witnessed by Rai Bular, in which the sleeping child's head was shaded from the harsh sunlight by, in one account, by the stationary shadow of a tree or, in another, by a venomous cobra.

Nanaki, Nanak's only sister, was five years older than him. In 1475, she married and moved to Sultanpur. Jai Ram, Nanaki's husband, was employed at a *modikhana* (a storehouse for revenues collected in non-cash form), in the service of the Delhi Sultanate's Lahore governor Daulat Khan, at which Ram would help Nanak get a job. Nanak moved to Sultanpur, and started working at the modikhana around the age of 16.

As a young man, Nanak married Sulakhani, daughter of Mūl Chand (aka Mula) and Chando Raṁi. They were married on 24 September 1487, in the town of Batala, and would go on to have two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Chand (or Lakhmi Das). Nanak lived in Sultanpur until c. 1500, which would be a formative time for him, as the *puratanjanamsakhi* suggests, and in his numerous allusions to governmental structure in his hymns, most likely gained at this time.

## **Final years**

Around the age of 55, Nanak settled in Kartarpur, living there until his death in September 1539. During this period, he went on short journeys to the Nathyogi centre of Achal, and the Sufi centres of Pakpattan and Multan. By the time of his death, Nanak had acquired several followers in the Punjab region, although it is hard to estimate their number based on the extant historical evidence.

Guru 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 his successor, Guru Nanak died on 22 September 1539 in Kartarpur, at the age of 70. Guru Nanak's body was never found. When the quarreling



Hindus and Muslims tugged at the sheet covering Nanak's body, they found instead a heap of flowers — and so Nanak's simple faith would, in course of time, flower into a religion, beset by its own contradictions and customary practices.

## **Journeys (*Udasis*)**

During first quarter of the 16th century, Nanak went on long *udasiya* ('journeys') for spiritual pursuits. A verse authored by him states that he visited several places in "*nau-khand*" ('the nine regions of the earth'), presumably the major Hindu and Muslim pilgrimage centres.

Some modern accounts state that he visited Tibet, most of South Asia, and Arabia, starting in 1496 at age 27, when he left his family for a thirty-year period. These claims include Nanak's visit to Mount Sumeru of Indian mythology, as well as Mecca, Baghdad, Achal Batala, and Multan, where he would debate religious ideas with opposing groups. These stories became widely popular in the 19th and 20th century, and exist in many versions.

In 1508, Nanak visited the Sylhet region in Bengal. The *janamsakhis* suggest that Nanak visited the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya in 1510–11 CE.

The Baghdad inscription remains the basis of writing by Indian scholars that Guru Nanak journeyed in the Middle East, with some claiming he visited Jerusalem, Mecca, Vatican, Azerbaijan and Sudan.

## Disputes

The hagiographic details are a subject of dispute, with modern scholarship questioning the details and authenticity of many claims. For example, Callewaert and Snell (1994) state that early Sikh texts do not contain such stories. From when the travel stories first appear in hagiographic accounts of Guru Nanak, centuries after his death, they continue to become more sophisticated as time goes on, with the late phase *Puratan* version describing four missionary journeys, which differ from the *Miharban* version.

Some of the stories about Guru Nanak's extensive travels first appear in the 19th-century *Puratan* janamsakhi, though even this version does not mention Nanak's travel to Baghdad. Such embellishments and insertion of new stories, according to Callewaert and Snell (1993), closely parallel claims of miracles by Islamic *pirs* found in Sufi *tadhkirahs* of the same era, giving reason to believe that these legends may have been written in a competition.

Another source of dispute has been the Baghdad stone, bearing an inscription in a Turkish script. Some interpret the inscription as saying *Baba Nanak Fakir* was there in 1511–1512; others read it as saying 1521–1522 (and that he lived in the Middle East for 11 years away from his family). Others, particularly Western scholars, argue that the stone inscription is from the 19th century and the stone is not a reliable evidence that Guru Nanak visited Baghdad in early 16th century. Moreover, beyond the stone, no evidence or mention of Guru Nanak's journey in the Middle East has been found in any other Middle Eastern textual or epigraphical records.

Claims have been asserted of additional inscriptions, but no one has been able to locate and verify them.

Novel claims about his travels, as well as claims such as Guru Nanak's body vanishing after his death, are also found in later versions and these are similar to the miracle stories in Sufi literature about their *pirs*. Other direct and indirect borrowings in the Sikh *janamsakhis* relating to legends around Guru Nanak's journeys are from Hindu epics and *puranas*, and Buddhist Jataka stories.

## **Posthumous biographies**

- The earliest biographical sources on Nanak's life recognised today are the *janamsakhis* ('birth stories'), which recount the circumstances of the guru's birth in great detail.

*Gyan-ratanavali* is the *janamsakhi* attributed to Bhai Mani Singh, a disciple of Guru Gobind Singh who was approached by some Sikhs with a request that he should prepare an authentic account of Guru Nanak's life. As such, it is said that Bhai Mani Singh wrote his story with the express intention of correcting heretical accounts of Guru Nanak.

One popular *janamsakhi* was 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. According to such scholars, there are good reasons to doubt the claim that the author was a close companion of Guru Nanak and accompanied him on many of his travels.

Bhai Gurdas, a scribe of the Guru Granth Sahib, also wrote about Nanak's life in his *vars* ('odes'), which were compiled some time after Nanak's life, though are less detailed than the *janamsakhis*.

## **Teachings and legacy**

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

There are two competing theories on Guru Nanak's teachings. The first, according to Cole and Sambhi (1995, 1997), based on the hagiographical *Janamsakhis*, states that Nanak's teachings and Sikhism were revelations from God, and not a social protest movement, nor an attempt to reconcile Hinduism and Islam in the 15th century.

The other theory states that Nanak was a Guru, not a prophet. According to Singha (2009):

Sikhism does not subscribe to the theory of incarnation or the concept of prophet hood. But it has a pivotal concept of Guru. He is not an incarnation of God, not even a prophet. He is an illumined soul.

The hagiographical *Janamsakhis* were not written by Nanak, but by later followers without regard for historical accuracy, containing numerous legends and myths created to show respect for Nanak. In Sikhism, the term *revelation*, as Cole and Sambhi clarify, is not limited to the teachings of Nanak. Rather, they include all Sikh Gurus, as well as the words of men and women from Nanak's past, present, and future, who

possess divine knowledge intuitively through meditation. The Sikh revelations include the words of non-Sikh *bhagats* (Hindu devotees), some who lived and died before the birth of Nanak, and whose teachings are part of the Sikh scriptures.

The Adi Granth and successive Sikh Gurus repeatedly emphasised, suggests Mandair (2013), that Sikhism is "not about hearing voices from God, but it is about changing the nature of the human mind, and anyone can achieve direct experience and spiritual perfection at any time." Guru Nanak emphasised that all human beings can have direct access to God without rituals or priests.

The concept of man as elaborated by Guru Nanak, states Mandair (2009), refines and negates the "monotheistic concept of self/God," where "monotheism becomes almost redundant in the movement and crossings of love."

The goal of man, taught the Sikh Gurus, is to end all dualities of "self and other, I and not-I," attaining the "attendant balance of separation-fusion, self-other, action-inaction, attachment-detachment, in the course of daily life."

Guru Nanak, and other Sikh Gurus emphasised *bhakti* ('love', 'devotion', or 'worship'), and taught that the spiritual life and secular householder life are intertwined. In the Sikh perspective, the everyday world is part of an infinite reality, where increased spiritual awareness leads to increased and vibrant participation in the everyday world. Guru Nanak described living an "active, creative, and practical life" of "truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity" as being higher than the metaphysical truth.

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

- *Vand Shhako* (ਵੰਡ ਛਕੋ, 'share & consume'): Share with others, help those who are in need, so you may eat together;
- *Kirat Karo* ('work honestly'): Earn an honest living, without exploitation or fraud; and
- *Naam Japo* (ਨਾਮ ਜਪੋ, 'recite His name'): Meditate on God's name, so to feel His presence and control the five thieves of the human personality.

## Legacy

Nanak is considered the founder of Sikhism. The fundamental beliefs of Sikhism, articulated in the sacred scripture Guru Granth Sahib, include faith and meditation on the name of the one creator; unity of all humankind; engaging in selfless service, striving for social justice for the benefit and prosperity of all; and honest conduct and livelihood while living a householder's life.

The Guru Granth Sahib is worshipped as the supreme authority of Sikhism and is considered the final and perpetual guru of Sikhism. As the first guru of Sikhism, Guru Nanak contributed a total of 974 hymns to the book.

## Influences

Many Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak's message was divinely revealed, as his own words in Guru Granth Sahib state that his

teachings are as he has received them from the Creator Himself. The critical event of his life in Sultanpur, in which he returned after three days with enlightenment, also supports this belief.

Many modern historians give weight to his teachings' linkage with the pre-existing *bhakti*, *sant*, and *wali* of South Asian/Islamic tradition. Scholars state that in its origins, Guru Nanak and Sikhism were influenced by the *nirguni* ('formless God') tradition of the Bhakti movement in medieval India. However, some historians do not see evidence of Sikhism as simply an extension of the Bhakti movement. Sikhism, for instance, disagreed with some views of Bhakti saints Kabir and Ravidas.

The roots of the Sikh tradition are perhaps in the sant-tradition of India whose ideology grew to become the Bhakti tradition. Fenech (2014) suggests that:

Indic mythology permeates the Sikh sacred canon, the *Guru Granth Sahib* and the secondary canon, the *Dasam Granth* and adds delicate nuance and substance to the sacred symbolic universe of the Sikhs of today and of their past ancestors.

## **In the Bahá'í Faith**

- See also: Bahá' í Faith in India

In a letter, dated 27 October 1985, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India, the Universal House of Justice stated that Guru Nanak was endowed with a "saintly character" and that he was:

...inspired to reconcile the religions of Hinduism and Islám, the followers of which religions had been in violent conflict.... The Bahá'ís thus view Guru Nanak as a 'saint of the highest order'.

## **In popular culture**

A Punjabi movie was released in 2015 named Nanak Shah Fakir, which is based on the life of Guru Nanak, directed by Sartaj Singh Pannu and produced by Gurbani Media Pvt. Ltd.

## **Places visited**

### **Uttarakhand**

- Gurudwara Reetha Sahib, Champawat, Uttrakhand
- Nanakmatta

### **Andhra Pradesh**

- Gurudwara Pehli Patshahi Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

### **Bihar**

- Gurudwara Sri Guru Nanak Sheetal Kund – Rajgir
- Patna

### **Delhi**

- Gurudwara Nanak Piao, Delhi
- Gurudwara Majnu Ka Tila, Delhi



## **Gujarat**

- Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Lakhpat, Gujarat

## **Haryana**

- Panipat

## **Jammu and Kashmir**

- Hari Parbat, Srinagar

## **Punjab**

- Gurudwara Shri Ber Sahib, Sultanpur Lodhi
- Gurudwara Shri Hatt Sahib, Sultanpur Lodhi
- Gurudwara Shri Kothri Sahib, Sultanpur Lodhi
- Gurudwara Shri Guru Ka Bagh, Sultanpur Lodhi
- Gurudwara Shri Sant Ghat, Sultanpur Lodhi
- Gurudwara Shri Antaryamta, Sultanpur Lodhi
- Dera Baba Nanak
- Gurudwara Manji Sahib, Kiratpur Sahib
- Achal Batala.

## **Sikkim**

- Gurudwara Nanak Lama, Chungthang, Sikkim
- Gurudongmar Lake

## **Pakistan**

- Nankana Sahib

- Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur, Kartarpur
- Gurdwara Sacha Sauda, Farooqabad
- Sultanpur Lodhi
- Gurdwara Rori Sahib, Gujranwala
- Gurdwara Beri Sahib, Sialkot
- Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Hasan Abdal
- Gurudwara Chowa Sahib, Rohtas Fort
- Narowal

## **Bangladesh**

- Gurdwara Nanak Shahi, Dhaka

## **Afghanistan**

- Gurduara Baba Nanak Dev Ji, Jalalabad
- Chashma Sahib Patshahi Pahili, Jalalabad

## **Iran**

- Gurudwara Pehli Patshahi, Mashhad

## **Iraq**

- Baba Nanak Shrine, Baghdad

## **Sri Lanka**

- Gurudwara Pehli Patshahi Batticaloa
- Koti, now known as Kotikawatta

# Sikhism

**Sikhism** or **Sikhi** is an Indian Dharmicmonotheistic religion that originated in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent around the end of the 15th century CE. Sikhism is one of the youngest of the major religions and the world's fifth-largest organized religion, with about 25–30 million Sikhs as of the early 21st century. However, according to rough estimates, there are around 120–150 million (12–15 crore) Sahajdhari or non-khalsa Nanakpanthi sikhs across the world who also believe in 10 Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib.

Sikhism developed from the spiritual teachings of Guru Nanak, the first Guru (1469–1539), and of the nine Sikh gurus who succeeded him. The tenth guru, Gobind Singh (1666–1708), named the Sikh scripture *Guru Granth Sahib* as his successor, bringing to a close the line of human gurus and establishing the scripture as the last eternal 11th living guru, a religious spiritual/life guide for Sikhs. Guru Nanak taught that living an "active, creative, and practical life" of "truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity" is above metaphysical truth, and that the ideal man "establishes union with God, knows His Will, and carries out that Will". Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Guru (1606–1644), established the concept of mutual co-existence of the *miri* ('political'/'temporal') and *piri* ('spiritual') realms.

The Sikh scripture opens with the *Mul Mantar* (ਮੂਲ ਮੰਤਰ), fundamental prayer about *ik onkar* (ੴ, 'One God'). The core beliefs of Sikhism, articulated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, include faith and meditation on the name of the one creator;

divine unity and equality of all humankind; engaging in *seva* ('selfless service'); striving for justice for the benefit and prosperity of all; and honest conduct and livelihood while living a householder's life. Following this standard, Sikhism rejects claims that any particular religious tradition has a monopoly on Absolute Truth.

Sikhism emphasizes *simran* (ਸਿਮਰਨ, meditation and remembrance of the teachings of Gurus), which can be expressed musically through *kirtan*, or internally through *naam japna* ('meditation on His name') as a means to feel God's presence. It teaches followers to transform the "Five Thieves" (i.e. lust, rage, greed, attachment, and ego).

The religion developed and evolved in times of religious persecution, gaining converts from both Hinduism and Islam. Mughal rulers of India tortured and executed two of the Sikh gurus—Guru Arjan (1563–1605) and Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621–1675)—after they refused to convert to Islam. The persecution of Sikhs triggered the founding of the *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 as an order to protect the freedom of conscience and religion, with members expressing the qualities of a *Sant-Sipāhī* ('saint-soldier').

## Terminology

The majority of Sikh scriptures were originally written in the alphabet of *Gurmukhī*, a script standardised by Guru Angad out of *Laṁṁā* scripts historically used in present-day Pakistan and North India. Adherents of Sikhism are known as *Sikhs*, meaning 'students' or 'disciples' of the Guru. The anglicised

word *Sikhism* derives from the Punjabi verb *Sikhi*, which connotes the "temporal path of learning" and is rooted in the word *sikhana* ('to learn').

## Philosophy and teachings

Sikhism is classified as an Indian Dharmic religion along with Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism.

The basis of Sikhism lies in the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors. Sikh ethics emphasize the congruence between spiritual development and everyday moral conduct. Its founder Guru Nanak summarized this perspective as: "Truth is the highest virtue, but higher still is truthful living." Sikhism lays emphasis on *Ēk nūr te sab jag upjiā*, 'From the one light, the entire universe welled up.'

### Concept of God

Most sources call Sikhism a monotheistic religion as it believes in *Ik Onkar* (One God),. However some sources call it a monistic and panentheistic religion. According to Nesbitt (2005), English renderings of Sikhism as a monotheistic religion "tend misleadingly to reinforce a Semitic understanding of monotheism, rather than Guru Nanak's mystical awareness of the one that is expressed through the many. However, what is not in doubt is the emphasis on 'one'."

In Sikhism, the overall concept of God is *Waheguru* ('wondrous Teacher') considered to be *nirankar* ('shapeless'), *akal* ('timeless'), *karta purakh* ('the creator'), and *agam agochar* ('incomprehensible and invisible').

In a literal sense, God has no gender in Sikhism, though metaphorically, God is presented as masculine and God's power as feminine. For example, God is repeatedly referred to by the name *akaal purkh* ('beyond time and space') and *nirankar* ('without form') by the tenth guru Guru Gobind Singh Ji, but he also refers to God as his father, and God's creative power as his mother.

Similarly, another example is that the scripture and eternal guru, the Guru Granth Sahib says that all humans are soul-brides who long to unite with their husband Lord. In addition, the gurus also wrote in the Guru Granth Sahib that there are many worlds on which the transcendental God has created life.

The Sikh scripture begins with God as *ik onkar* (ੴ), the 'formless one', understood in the Sikh tradition as monotheistic unity of God. *Ik onkar* (sometimes capitalized) is more loosely rendered 'the one supreme reality', 'the one creator', 'the all-pervading spirit', and other ways of expressing a diffused but unified and singular sense of God and creation.

## **Worldly Illusion**

*Māyā*, defined as a temporary illusion or "unreality", is one of the core deviations from the pursuit of God and salvation: where worldly attractions give only illusory temporary satisfaction and pain that distracts from the process of the devotion of God. However, Nanak emphasised *māyā* as not a reference to the unreality of the world, but of its values. In Sikhism, the influences of ego, anger, greed, attachment, and lust, known as the *pānj chor* ('five thieves'), are believed to be particularly distracting and hurtful. Sikhs believe the world is

currently in a state of *kali yuga* ('age of darkness') because the world is led astray by the love of and attachment to *maya*. The fate of people vulnerable to the five thieves, is separation from God, and the situation may be remedied only after intensive and relentless devotion.

## **Timeless Truth**

According to Guru Nanak, the supreme purpose of human life is to reconnect with *Akal* ('The Timeless One'), however, egotism is the biggest barrier in making this connection. Using the Guru's teaching remembrance of *nām* (the divine Name of the Lord) leads to the end of egotism. Guru Nanak designated the word *Guru* ('teacher') to mean the voice of "the spirit": the source of knowledge and the guide to salvation.

As *ik onkar* is universally immanent, *Guru* is indistinguishable from *Akal* and are one and the same. One connects with *Guru* only with accumulation of selfless search of truth. Ultimately the seeker realises that it is the consciousness within the body which is the seeker/follower of the Word that is the true *Guru*. The human body is just a means to achieve the reunion with Truth. Once truth starts to shine in a person's heart, the essence of current and past holy books of all religions is understood by the person.

## **Liberation**

Guru Nanak's teachings are founded not on a final destination of heaven or hell, but on a spiritual union with the *Akal*, which results in salvation or *jivanmukti* ('enlightenment/liberation within one's lifetime'), a concept also found in Hinduism. Guru

Gobind Singh makes it clear that human birth is obtained with great fortune, therefore one needs to be able to make the most of this life.

Sikhs accept reincarnation and karma concepts found in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, but do not necessarily infer a metaphysical soteriology akin to those found in those other religions. However, in Sikhism, both karma and liberation "is modified by the concept of God's grace" (*nadar*, *mehar*, *kirpa*, *karam*, etc.). Guru Nanak states that "the body takes birth because of karma, but salvation is attained through grace." To get closer to God, Sikhs: avoid the evils of *maya*; keep the everlasting truth in mind; practice *shabadkirtan* (musical recitation of hymns); meditate on *naam*; and serve humanity. Sikhs believe that being in the company of the *satsang* (association with *sat*, 'true', people) or *sadh sangat* is one of the key ways to achieve liberation from the cycles of reincarnation.

### **Power and Devotion (Miri and Piri)**

Sikhism was influenced by the Bhakti movement, but it was not simply an extension of Bhakti.

Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru and the founder of Sikhism, was a Bhakti saint. He taught that the most important form of worship is *Bhakti* (devotion to Bhagvan). Guru Arjan, in the *Sukhmani Sahib*, recommended the true religion is one of loving devotion to God. The *Guru Granth Sahib* includes suggestions on how a Sikh should perform constant Bhakti. Some scholars call Sikhism a Bhakti sect of Indian traditions, adding that it emphasises "*nirguni Bhakti*," i.e. loving devotion



to a divine without qualities or physical form. While Western scholarship generally places Sikhism as arising primarily within a Hindu Bhakti movement milieu while recognizing some Sufi Islamic influences, some Indian Sikh scholars disagree and state that Sikhism transcended the environment it emerged from. The basis of the latter analysis is that Bhakti traditions did not clearly disassociate from Vedic texts and their cosmologies and metaphysical worldview, while the Sikh tradition clearly did disassociate from the Vedic tradition.

Some Sikh sects outside the Punjab region of India, such as those found in Maharashtra and Bihar, practice *aarti* (the ceremonial use of lamps) during Bhakti observances in a Sikh gurdwara. But, most Sikh gurdwaras forbid *aarti* during their Bhakti practices.

While emphasizing Bhakti, the Sikh gurus also taught that the spiritual life and secular householder life are intertwined, and not separate. This logically follows from the panentheistic nature of Sikh philosophy. In Sikh worldview, the everyday world is part of the Infinite Reality, increased spiritual awareness leads to increased and vibrant participation in the everyday world. Guru Nanak described living an "active, creative, and practical life" of "truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity" as being higher than the metaphysical truth.

The 6th Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind, after Guru Arjan martyrdom and faced with oppression by the Islamic Mughal Empire, affirmed the philosophy that the political/temporal (*Miri*) and spiritual (*Piri*) realms are mutually coexistent. According to the 9th Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur, the ideal Sikh

should have both *Shakti* (power that resides in the temporal), and *Bhakti* (spiritual meditative qualities). This was developed into the concept of the "saint soldier" by the 10th Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh.

The concept of man as elaborated by Guru Nanak refines and negates the "monotheistic concept of self/God", and "monotheism becomes almost redundant in the movement and crossings of love." The goal of man, taught the Sikh gurus, is to end all dualities of "self and other, I and not-I", attain the "attendant balance of separation-fusion, self-other, action-inaction, attachment-detachment, in the course of daily life".

## **Singing and Music**

Sikhs refer to the hymns of the gurus as *Gurbani* ('Guru's word'). ShabadKirtan is the singing of Gurbani. The entire verses of Guru Granth Sahib are written in a form of poetry and rhyme to be recited in thirty-one Ragas of the Classical Indian Music as specified.

However, the exponents of these are rarely to be found amongst the Sikhs who are conversant with all the Ragas in the Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak started the Shabad Kirtan tradition and taught that listening to kirtan is a powerful way to achieve tranquility while meditating; Singing of the glories of the Supreme Timeless One (God) with devotion is the most effective way to come in communion with the Supreme Timeless One. The three morning prayers for Sikhs consist of Japji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, and Tav-Prasad Savaiye. Baptised Sikhs (Amritdharis) rise early and meditate, then recite all the Five Banis of Nitnem, before breakfast.

## Remembrance of the Divine Name

A key practice by Sikhs is remembrance of the *Naam* (divine name) *Waheguru*. This contemplation is done through *Nām Japna* (repetition of the divine name) or *Naam Simran* (remembrance of the divine Name through recitation). The verbal repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable has been an ancient established practice in religious traditions in India, however, Sikhism developed *Naam-simran* as an important Bhakti practice. Guru Nanak's ideal is the total exposure of one's being to the divine Name and a total conforming to Dharma or the "Divine Order". Nanak described the result of the disciplined application of *nām simraṇ* as a "growing towards and into God" through a gradual process of five stages. The last of these is *Sach Khaṇṇ* (*The Realm of Truth*) – the final union of the spirit with God.

## Service and Action

The Sikh gurus taught that by constantly remembering the divine name (*naam simran*) and through selfless service (*sēvā*) the devotee overcomes egotism (*Haumai*). This, it states, is the primary root of five evil impulses and the cycle of birth and death.

Service in Sikhism takes three forms: *Tan* (physical service, i.e. labor), *Man* (mental service, such as dedicating your heart for service of others), and *Dhan* (material service, including financial support). Sikhism stresses *kirat karō*: that is "honest work". Sikh teachings also stress the concept of sharing, or *vaṇṇ chakkō*, giving to the needy for the benefit of the community.

## **Justice and Equality**

Sikhism regards God as the true king, the king of all kings, the one who dispenses justice through the law of *karma*, a retributive model and divine grace.

The term for justice in the Sikh tradition is *niau*. It is related to the term *dharam* which in Sikhism connotes 'moral order' and righteousness (derived from but become distinct from the etymologically related Hindu concept of dharma). According to the Tenth Sikh Guru Guru Gobind Singh, states Pashaura Singh (a professor of Sikh studies), "one must first try all the peaceful means of negotiation in the pursuit of justice" and if these fail then it is legitimate to "draw the sword in defense of righteousness". Sikhism considers "an attack on dharam is an attack on justice, on righteousness, and on the moral order generally" and the dharam "must be defended at all costs". The divine name is its antidote for pain and vices. Forgiveness is taught as a virtue in Sikhism, yet it also teaches its faithful to shun those with evil intentions and to pick up the sword to fight injustice and religious persecution.

Sikhism does not differentiate religious obligations by gender. God in Sikhism has no gender, and the Sikh scripture does not discriminate against women, nor bar them from any roles. Women in Sikhism have been in positions of leadership, including leading in wars and issued orders or hukamnamas.

## **Ten Gurus and Authority**

The term Guru comes from the Sanskrit *gurū*, meaning teacher, enlightener, guide, or mentor. The traditions and philosophy of

Sikhism were established by ten Gurus from 1469 to 1708. Each Guru added to and reinforced the message taught by the previous, resulting in the creation of the Sikh religion. Guru Nanak was the first Guru and appointed a disciple as successor. Guru Gobind Singh was the final Guru in human form. Before his death, Guru Gobind Singh decreed in 1708, that the Gurū Granth Sāhib would be the final and perpetual Guru of the Sikhs.

Guru Nanak stated that his Guru is God who is the same from the beginning of time to the end of time. Nanak said to be a God's slave and servant, but maintained that he was only a guide and teacher.

Nanak stated that the human Guru is mortal, who is to be respected and loved but not worshipped. When Guru, or SatGuru (The true Guru) is used in *Gurbani* it is often referring to the highest expression of truthfulness.

Guru Angad succeeded Guru Nanak. Later, an important phase in the development of Sikhism came with the third successor, Guru Amar Das. Guru Nanak's teachings emphasised the pursuit of salvation; Guru Amar Das began building a cohesive community of followers with initiatives such as sanctioning distinctive ceremonies for birth, marriage, and death. Amar Das also established the *manji* (comparable to a diocese) system of clerical supervision.

Guru Amar Das's successor and son-in-law Guru Ram Das founded the city of Amritsar, which is home of the Harimandir Sahib and regarded widely as the holiest city for all Sikhs. Guru Arjan was arrested by Mughal authorities who were suspicious and hostile to the religious community he was

developing. His persecution and death inspired his successors to promote a military and political organization of Sikh communities to defend themselves against the attacks of Mughal forces.

- The Sikh gurus established a mechanism which allowed the Sikh religion to react as a community to changing circumstances. The sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, was responsible for the creation of the concept of Akal Takht (*throne of the timeless one*), which serves as the supreme decision-making centre of Sikhism and sits opposite the Harmandir Sahib. The Akal Takht is located in the city of Amritsar. The leader is appointed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Pabandhak Committee (SPGC). The Sarbat *Ālsā* (a representative portion of the Khalsa Panth) historically gathers at the Akal Takht on special festivals such as Vaisakhi or Hola Mohalla and when there is a need to discuss matters that affect the entire Sikh nation. A *gurmatā* (literally, 'guru's intention') is an order passed by the Sarbat *Ālsā* in the presence of the Gurū Granth Sāhib. A *gurmatā* may only be passed on a subject that affects the fundamental principles of Sikh religion; it is binding upon all Sikhs. The term *hukamnāmā* (literally, 'edict' or 'royal order') is often used interchangeably with the term *gurmatā*. However, a *hukamnāmā* formally refers to a hymn from the Gurū Granth Sāhib which is given order to Sikhs.

# Scripture

There is one primary scripture for the Sikhs: the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*. It is sometimes synonymously referred to as the *Ādi Granth*. Chronologically, however, the *Ādi Granth* – literally, 'First Volume' – refers to the version of the scripture created by Guru Arjan in 1604. The *Gurū Granth Sāhib* is the final expanded version of the scripture compiled by Guru Gobind Singh. While the *Guru Granth Sahib* is an unquestioned scripture in Sikhism, another important religious text, the *Dasam Granth*, does not enjoy universal consensus, but is considered a secondary scripture by many Sikhs.

## ***Ādi Granth***

The *Ādi Granth* was compiled primarily by Bhai Gurdas under the supervision of Guru Arjan between the years 1603 and 1604. It is written in the Gurmukhī script, which is a descendant of the Laṇṇā script used in the Punjab at that time. The Gurmukhī script was standardised by Guru Angad, the second guru of the Sikhs, for use in the Sikh scriptures and is thought to have been influenced by the Śāradā and Devanāgarī scripts. An authoritative scripture was created to protect the integrity of hymns and teachings of the Sikh Gurus, and thirteen Hindu and two Muslim bhagats of the Bhakti movement sant tradition in medieval India. The thirteen Hindu *bhagats* whose teachings were entered into the text included Ramananda, Namdev, Pipa, Ravidas, Beni, Bhikhan, Dhanna, Jaidev, Parmanand, Sadhana, Sain, Sur, Trilochan, while the two Muslim *bhagats* were Kabir and Sufi saint Farid. However, the bhagats in context often spoke of transcending

their religious labels, Kabir often attributed to being a Muslim states in the *Adi Granth*, "I am not Hindu nor Muslim." The Gurus following on this message taught that different methods of devotion are for the same infinite God.

## **Guru Granth Sahib**

The Guru Granth Sahib is the holy scripture of the Sikhs, and is regarded as the living Guru.

## **Compilation**

The Guru Granth started as a volume of Guru Nanak's poetic compositions. Prior to his death, he passed on his volume to Guru Angad (Guru 1539–1551). The final version of the Gurū Granth Sāhib was compiled by Guru Gobind Singh in 1678. It consists of the original Ādi Granth with the addition of Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns. The predominant bulk of Guru Granth Sahib is compositions by seven Sikh Gurus – Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, Guru Teg Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. It also contains the traditions and teachings of thirteen Hindu Bhakti movement *sants* (saints) such as Ramananda, Namdev among others, and two Muslim saints namely Kabir and the Sufi Sheikh Farid.

The text comprises 6,000 *śabads* (line compositions), which are poetically rendered and set to rhythmic ancient north Indian classical music. The bulk of the scripture is classified into sixty *rāgas*, with each Granth *rāga* subdivided according to length and author. The hymns in the scripture are arranged primarily by the *rāgas* in which they are read.



## Language and script

The main language used in the scripture is known as *Sant Bhāṣā*, a language related to both Punjabi and Hindi and used extensively across medieval northern India by proponents of popular devotional religion (bhakti). The text is printed in Gurumukhi script, believed to have been developed by Guru Angad, but it shares the Indo-European roots found in numerous regional languages of India.

## Teachings

The vision in the Guru Granth Sahib, states Torkel Brekke, is a society based on divine justice without oppression of any kind. The Granth begins with the *Mūl Mantra*, an iconic verse which received Guru Nanak directly from Akal Purakh (God). The traditional Mul Mantar goes from Ik Oankar until Nanak Hosee Bhee Sach.

- One God exists, truth by name, creative power, without fear, without enmity, timeless form, unborn, self-existent, by the Guru's grace.
- (Punjabi: ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥, romanized: *Ika ōaṁkāra sati nāmu karatā purakhu nirabha'ū niravairu akāla mūrati ajūnī saibhaṁ gura prasādi*)

## As guru

The Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh ji, named the Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib as his successor, terminating the

line of human Gurus and making the scripture the literal embodiment of the eternal, impersonal Guru, where Gods/Gurus word serves as the spiritual guide for Sikhs.

- All Sikhs are commanded to take the Granth as Guru
- (Punjabi: ਸੱਬ ਸਿੱਖਣ ਕੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨਯੋ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ।,  
romanized: *Sabb sikkhaṁ kō hukam hai gurū mānyō granth*)

The Guru Granth Sahib is installed in Sikh *Gurdwara* (temple); many Sikhs bow or prostrate before it on entering the temple. The Guru Granth Sahib is installed every morning and put to bed at night in many *Gurdwaras*. The Granth is revered as eternal *gurbānī* and the spiritual authority. The copies of the Guru Granth Sahib are not regarded as material objects, but as living subjects which are alive. According to Myrvold, the Sikh scripture is treated with respect like a living person, in a manner similar to the Gospel in early Christian worship. Old copies of the Sikh scripture are not thrown away, rather funerary services are performed. In India the Guru Granth Sahib is even officially recognised by the Supreme Court of India as a judicial person which can receive donations and own land. Yet, some Sikhs also warn that, without true comprehension of the text, veneration for the text can lead to bibliolatry, with the concrete form of the teachings becoming the object of worship instead of the teachings themselves.

## **Relation to Hinduism and Islam**

The Sikh scriptures use Hindu terminology, with references to the Vedas, and the names of gods and goddesses in Hindu bhakti movement traditions, such as Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma,

Parvati, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Rama, Krishna, but not to worship. It also refers to the spiritual concepts in Hinduism (*Ishvara, Bhagavan, Brahman*) and the concept of God in Islam (*Allah*) to assert that these are just "alternate names for the Almighty One".

While the *Guru Granth Sahib* acknowledges the Vedas, Puranas and Qur'an, it does not imply a syncretic bridge between Hinduism and Islam, but emphasises focusing on nitnem banis like Japu (repeating mantra of the divine Name of God – Waheguru), instead of Muslim practices such as circumcision or praying on a carpet, or Hindu rituals such as wearing thread.

## **Dasam Granth**

The *Dasam Granth* is a scripture of Sikhs which contains texts attributed to the Guru Gobind Singh. The *Dasam Granth* is important to a great number of Sikhs, however it does not have the same authority as the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Some compositions of the *Dasam Granth* like Jaap Sahib, (Amrit Savaiye), and Benti Chaupai are part of the daily prayers (Nitnem) for Sikhs. The first verse of the ardās prayer is from Chandi di Var. The *Dasam Granth* is largely versions of Hindu mythology from the Puranas, secular stories from a variety of sources called *Charitro Pakhyon* – tales to protect careless men from perils of lust.

Five versions of *Dasam Granth* exist, and the authenticity of the *Dasam Granth* has in modern times become one of the most debated topics within Sikhism. The text played a significant

role in Sikh history, but in modern times parts of the text have seen antipathy and discussion among Sikhs.

## **Janamsakhis**

The Janamsākhīs (literally *birth stories*), are writings which profess to be biographies of Guru Nanak. Although not scripture in the strictest sense, they provide a hagiographic look at Guru Nanak's life and the early start of Sikhism. There are several – often contradictory and sometimes unreliable – Janamsākhīs and they are not held in the same regard as other sources of scriptural knowledge.

## **Observances**

Observant Sikhs adhere to long-standing practices and traditions to strengthen and express their faith. The daily recitation of the divine name of God *VaheGuru* and from a memory of specific passages from the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*, like the *Japu* (or *Japjī*, literally *chant*) hymns is recommended immediately after rising and bathing. Baptized Sikhs recite the five-morning prayers, the evening and night prayer. Family customs include both reading passages from the scripture and attending the gurdwara (also *gurdwārā*, meaning *the doorway to God*; sometimes transliterated as *Gurudwara*). There are many gurdwaras prominently constructed and maintained across India, as well as in almost every nation where Sikhs reside. Gurdwaras are open to all, regardless of religion, background, caste, or race.

Worship in a gurdwara consists chiefly of the singing of passages from the scripture. Sikhs will commonly enter the

gurdwara, touch the ground before the holy scripture with their foreheads. The recitation of the eighteenth century *ardās* is also customary for attending Sikhs. The *ardās* recalls past sufferings and glories of the community, invoking divine grace for all humanity.

The gurdwara is also the location for the historic Sikh practice of "Langar" or the community meal. All gurdwaras are open to anyone of any faith for a free meal, always vegetarian. People eat together, and the kitchen is maintained and serviced by Sikh community volunteers.

### **Sikh festivals/events**

Guru Amar Das chose festivals for celebration by Sikhs like Vaisakhi, wherein he asked Sikhs to assemble and share the festivities as a community.

Vaisakhi is one of the most important festivals of Sikhs, while other significant festivals commemorate the birth, lives of the Gurus and Sikh martyrs. Historically, these festivals have been based on the moon calendar Bikrami calendar. In 2003, the SGPC, the Sikh organisation in charge of upkeep of the historical gurdwaras of Punjab, adopted Nanakshahi calendar. The new calendar is highly controversial among Sikhs and is not universally accepted. Sikh festivals include the following:

- Vaisakhi which includes Parades and Nagar Kirtan and occurs on 13 April or 14 April. Sikhs celebrate it because on this day, which fell on 30 March 1699, the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, inaugurated the Khalsa, the 11th body of Guru Granth Sahib and leader of Sikhs until eternity.

- Nagar Kirtan involves the processional singing of holy hymns throughout a community. While practiced at any time, it is customary in the month of Visakhi (or Vaisakhi). Traditionally, the procession is led by the saffron-robed Panj Piare (the five beloved of the Guru), who are followed by the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy Sikh scripture, which is placed on a float.
- Band Chor Diwas has been another important Sikh festival in its history. In recent years, instead of Diwali, the post-2003 calendar released by SGPC has named it the Bandi Chhor divas. Sikhs celebrate Guru Hargobind's release from the Gwalior Fort, with several innocent Raja kings who were also imprisoned by Mughal Emperor Jahangir in 1619. This day continues to be commemorated on the same day of Hindu festival of Diwali, with lights, fireworks and festivities.
- Hola Mohalla is a tradition started by Guru Gobind Singh. It starts the day after Sikhs celebrate Holi, sometimes referred to as *Hola*. Guru Gobind Singh modified Holi with a three-day Hola Mohalla extension festival of martial arts. The extension started the day after the Holi festival in Anandpur Sahib, where Sikh soldiers would train in mock battles, compete in horsemanship, athletics, archery and military exercises.
- Gurpurbs are celebrations or commemorations based on the lives of the Sikh Gurus. They tend to be either birthdays or celebrations of Sikh martyrdom. All ten Gurus have Gurpurbs on the Nanakshahi calendar, but it is Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh who

have a gurburb that is widely celebrated in Gurdwaras and Sikh homes. The martyrdoms are also known as a Shaheedi Gurburbs, which mark the martyrdom anniversary of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur.

## **Ceremonies and customs**

Khalsa Sikhs have also supported and helped develop major pilgrimage traditions to sacred sites such as Harmandir Sahib, Anandpur Sahib, Fatehgarh Sahib, Patna Sahib, Hazur Nanded Sahib, Hemkund Sahib and others. Sikh pilgrims and Sikhs of other sects customarily consider these as holy and a part of their *Tirath*. The Hola Mohalla around the festival of Holi, for example, is a ceremonial and customary gathering every year in Anandpur Sahib attracting over 100,000 Sikhs. Major Sikh temples feature a *sarovar* where some Sikhs take a customary dip. Some take home the sacred water of the tank particularly for sick friends and relatives, believing that the waters of such sacred sites have restorative powers and the ability to purify one's *karma*. The various Gurus of Sikhism have had different approaches to pilgrimage.

Upon a child's birth, the Guru Granth Sahib is opened at a random point and the child is named using the first letter on the top left hand corner of the left page. All boys are given the last name Singh, and all girls are given the last name Kaur (this was once a title which was conferred on an individual upon joining the Khalsa).

The Sikh marriage ritual includes the *anand kārāj* ceremony. The marriage ceremony is performed in front of the Guru

Granth Sahib by a baptized Khalsa, Granthi of the Gurdwara. The tradition of circling the Guru Granth Sahib and Anand Karaj among Khalsa is practised since the fourth Guru, Guru Ram Das. Its official recognition and adoption came in 1909, during the Singh Sabha Movement.

Upon death, the body of a Sikh is usually cremated. If this is not possible, any respectful means of disposing the body may be employed. The *kīrtan sōhilā* and *ardās* prayers are performed during the funeral ceremony (known as *antim sanskāra*).

## **Initiation and the Khalsa**

Khalsa (meaning "pure and sovereign") is the collective name given by Guru Gobind Singh to those Sikhs who have been fully initiated by taking part in a ceremony called *ammrit sañcār* (nectar ceremony). During this ceremony, sweetened water is stirred with a double-edged sword while liturgical prayers are sung; it is offered to the initiating Sikh, who ritually drinks it. Many Sikhs are not formally and fully initiated, as they do not undergo this ceremony, but do adhere to some components of Sikhism and identify as Sikhs. The initiated Sikh, who is believed to be reborn, is referred to as Amritdhari or Khalsa Sikh, while those who are not initiated or baptised are referred to as Keshdhari or Sahajdhari Sikhs.

The first time that this ceremony took place was on Vaisakhi, which fell on 30 March 1699 at Anandpur Sahib in Punjab. It was on that occasion that Gobind Singh baptised the Pañj Piārē – the five beloved ones, who in turn baptised Guru Gobind Singh himself. To males who initiated, the last name Singh,



meaning "lion", was given, while the last name Kaur, meaning "princess", was given to baptised Sikh females.

Baptised Sikhs wear five items, called the Five Ks (in Punjabi known as *pañj kakkē* or *pañj kakār*), at all times. The five items are: *kēs* (uncut hair), *kaṛghā* (small wooden comb), *kaṛā* (circular steel or iron bracelet), *kirpān* (sword/dagger), and *kacchera* (special undergarment). The Five Ks have both practical and symbolic purposes.

## History

Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the founder of Sikhism, was born in the village of *Rāi Bhōi dī Talwandī*, now called Nankana Sahib (in present-day Pakistan). His parents were Punjabi KhatriHindus.

According to the hagiography *Puratan Janamsakhi* composed more than two centuries after his death and probably based on oral tradition, Nanak as a boy was fascinated by religion and spiritual matters, spending time with wandering ascetics and holy men. His friend was Mardana, a Muslim. Together they would sing devotional songs all night in front of the public, and bathe in the river in the morning. One day, at the usual bath, Nanak went missing and his family feared he had drowned. Three days later he returned home, and declared: "There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim" ("*nā kōi hindū nā kōi musalmān*"). Thereafter, Nanak started preaching his ideas that form the tenets of Sikhism. In 1526, Guru Nanak at age 50, started a small commune in Kartarpur and his disciples came to be known as *Sikhs*. Although the exact account of his itinerary is disputed, hagiographic accounts state he made five

major journeys, spanning thousands of miles: the first tour being east towards Bengal and Assam; the second south towards Andhra and Tamil Nadu; the third north to Kashmir, Ladakh, and Mount Sumeru in Tibet; and the fourth to Baghdad. In his last and final tour, he returned to the banks of the Ravi River to end his days.

There are two competing theories on Guru Nanak's teachings. One, according to Cole and Sambhi, is based on hagiographical *Janamsakhis*, and states that Nanak's teachings and Sikhism were a revelation from God, and not a social protest movement nor any attempt to reconcile Hinduism and Islam in the 15th century.

The other states that Nanak was a guru. According to Singha, "Sikhism does not subscribe to the theory of incarnation or the concept of prophethood. But it has a pivotal concept of Guru. He is not an incarnation of God, not even a prophet. He is an illumined soul." The second theory continues that hagiographical *Janamsakhis* were not written by Nanak, but by later followers without regard for historical accuracy, and contain numerous legends and myths created to show respect for Nanak.

The term *revelation*, clarify Cole and Sambhi, in Sikhism is not limited to the teachings of Nanak, but is extended to all Sikh gurus, as well as the words of past, present and future men and women, who possess divine knowledge intuitively through meditation. The Sikh revelations include the words of non-Sikh bhagats, some who lived and died before the birth of Nanak, and whose teachings are part of the Sikh scriptures. The *Adi Granth* and successive Sikh gurus repeatedly emphasised,

states Mandair, that Sikhism is "not about hearing voices from God, but it is about changing the nature of the human mind, and anyone can achieve direct experience and spiritual perfection at any time".

## **Historical influences**

The roots of the Sikh tradition are, states Louis Fenech, perhaps in the Sant-tradition of India whose ideology grew to become the Bhakti tradition. Furthermore, adds Fenech:

Few Sikhs would mention these Indic texts and ideologies in the same breadth as the Sikh tradition, let alone trace elements of their tradition to this chronological and ideological point, *despite the fact* that the Indic mythology permeates the Sikh sacred canon, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and the secondary canon, the *Dasam Granth* ... and adds delicate nuance and substance to the sacred symbolic universe of the Sikhs of today and of their past ancestors.

The development of Sikhism was influenced by the Bhakti movement; and Vaishnava Hinduism. however, Sikhism was not simply an extension of the Bhakti movement. Sikhism developed while the region was being ruled by the Mughal Empire.

Two of the Sikh Gurus, Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur, refused to convert to Islam and were tortured and executed by the Mughal rulers. The Islamic era persecution of Sikhs triggered the founding of the Khalsa, as an order for freedom of conscience and religion. A Sikh is expected to embody the qualities of a "Sant-Sipāhī" – a saint-soldier.

## Growth of Sikhism

After its inception, Sikhism grew as it gained converts among Hindus and Muslims in the Punjab region. In 1539, Guru Nanak chose his disciple Lahiṇā as a successor to the Guruship rather than either of his sons. Lahiṇā was named Guru Angad and became the second Guru of the Sikhs. Nanak conferred his choice at the town of Kartarpur on the banks of the river Ravi. Sri Chand, Guru Nanak's son was also a religious man, and continued his own commune of Sikhs. His followers came to be known as the Udasi Sikhs, the first parallel sect of Sikhism that formed in Sikh history. The Udasis believe that the Guruship should have gone to Sri Chand, since he was a man of pious habits in addition to being Nanak's son.

Guru Angad, before joining Guru Nanak's commune, worked as a *pujari* (priest) and religious teacher centered around Hindu goddess Durga. On Nanak's advice, Guru Angad moved from Kartarpur to Khadur, where his wife Khivi and children were living, until he was able to bridge the divide between his followers and the Udasis. Guru Angad continued the work started by Guru Nanak and is widely credited for standardising the Gurmukhī script as used in the sacred scripture of the Sikhs.

Guru Amar Das became the third Sikh Guru in 1552 at the age of 73. He adhered to the Vaishnavism tradition of Hinduism for much of his life, before joining the commune of Guru Angad. Goindval became an important centre for Sikhism during the Guruship of Guru Amar Das. He was a reformer, and discouraged veiling of women's faces (a Muslim custom) as well

as sati (a Hindu custom). He encouraged the Kshatriya people to fight in order to protect people and for the sake of justice, stating this is Dharma. Guru Amar Das started the tradition of appointing *manji* (zones of religious administration with an appointed chief called *sangatias*), introduced the *dasvandh* ("the tenth" of income) system of revenue collection in the name of Guru and as pooled community religious resource, and the famed *langar* tradition of Sikhism where anyone, without discrimination of any kind, could get a free meal in a communal seating. The collection of revenue from Sikhs through regional appointees helped Sikhism grow.

Guru Amar Das named his disciple and son-in-law Jēhā as the next Guru, who came to be known as Guru Ram Das. The new Guru faced hostilities from the sons of Guru Amar Das and therefore shifted his official base to lands identified by Guru Amar Das as Guru-ka-Chak. He moved his commune of Sikhs there and the place then was called Ramdaspur, after him. This city grew and later became Amritsar – the holiest city of Sikhism. Guru Ram Das expanded the *manji* organization for clerical appointments in Sikh temples, and for revenue collections to theologically and economically support the Sikh movement.

In 1581, Guru Arjan – youngest son of Guru Ram Das, became the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. The choice of successor, as throughout most of the history of Sikh Guru successions, led to disputes and internal divisions among the Sikhs. The elder son of Guru Ram Das named Prithi Chand is remembered in the Sikh tradition as vehemently opposing Guru Arjan, creating a faction Sikh community which the Sikhs following Guru Arjan called as *Minas* (literally, "scoundrels").

Guru Arjan is remembered in the Sikh for many things. He built the first Harimandir Sahib (later to become the Golden Temple). He was a poet and created the first edition of Sikh sacred text known as the *Ādi Granth* (literally "the first book") and included the writings of the first five Gurus and other enlightened 13 Hindu and 2 Muslim Sufi saints. In 1606, he was tortured and killed by the Mughal emperor Jahangir, for refusing to convert to Islam. His martyrdom is considered a watershed event in the history of Sikhism.

### **Political advancement**

After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan, his son Guru Hargobind at age eleven became the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, and Sikhism dramatically evolved to become a political movement in addition to being religious. Guru Hargobind carried two swords, calling one spiritual and the other for temporal purpose (known as *mīrī* and *pīrī* in Sikhism). According to the Sikh tradition, Guru Arjan asked his son Hargobind to start a military tradition to protect the Sikh people and always keep himself surrounded by armed Sikhs. The building of an armed Sikh militia began with Guru Hargobind. Guru Hargobind was soon arrested by the Mughals and kept in jail in Gwalior. It is unclear how many years he served in prison, with different texts stating it to be between 2 and 12. He married three women, built a fort to defend Ramdaspur and created a formal court called Akal Takht, now the highest Khalsa Sikh religious authority.

In 1644, Guru Hargobind named his grandson Har Rai as the Guru. The Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan attempted political means to undermine the Sikh tradition, by dividing and

influencing the succession. The Mughal ruler gave land grants to Dhir Mal, a grandson of Guru Hargobind living in Kartarpur, and attempted to encourage Sikhs to recognise Dhir Mal as the rightful successor to Guru Hargobind. Dhir Mal issued statements in favour of the Mughal state, and critical of his grandfather Guru Arjan. Guru Hargobind rejected Dhir Mal, the latter refused to give up the original version of the Adi Granth he had, and the Sikh community was divided.

Guru Har Rai is famed to have met Dara Shikoh during a time Dara Shikoh and his younger brother Aurangzeb were in a bitter succession fight. Aurangzeb summoned Guru Har Rai, who refused to go and sent his elder son Ram Rai instead. The emperor found a verse in the Sikh scripture insulting to Muslims, and Ram Rai agreed it was a mistake then changed it. Ram Rai thus pleased Aurangzeb, but displeased Guru Har Rai who excommunicated his elder son. He nominated his younger son Guru Har Krishan to succeed him in 1661. Aurangzeb responded by granting Ram Rai a jagir (land grant). Ram Rai founded a town there and enjoyed Aurangzeb's patronage; the town came to be known as Dehradun, after *Dehra* referring to Ram Rai's shrine. Sikhs who followed Ram Rai came to be known as Ramraiya Sikhs. However, according to rough estimates, there are around 120–150 million (12–15 crore) Guru Har Krishan became the eighth Guru at the age of five, and died of smallpox before reaching the age of eight. No hymns composed by these three Gurus are included in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the uncle of Guru Har Krishan, became Guru in 1665. Tegh Bahadur resisted the forced conversions of Kashmiri Pandits and non-Muslims to Islam, and was publicly

beheaded in 1675 on the orders of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi for refusing to convert to Islam. His beheading traumatized the Sikhs. His body was cremated in Delhi, the head was carried secretly by Sikhs and cremated in Anandpur. He was succeeded by his son, Gobind Rai, who militarised his followers by creating the Khalsa in 1699, and baptising the *Pañj Piārē*. From then on, he was known as Guru Gobind Singh, and Sikh identity was redefined into a political force resisting religious persecution.

Guru Gobind Singh inaugurated the Khalsa (the collective body of all initiated Sikhs) as the Sikh temporal authority in the year 1699. It created a community that combines its spiritual purpose and goals with political and military duties. Shortly before his death, Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed the *Gurū Granth Sāhib* (the Sikh Holy Scripture) to be the ultimate spiritual authority for the Sikhs.

The Sikh Khalsa's rise to power began in the 17th century during a time of growing militancy against Mughal rule. The creation of a Sikh Empire began when Guru Gobind Singh sent a Sikh general, Banda Singh Bahadur, to fight the Mughal rulers of India and those who had committed atrocities against Pir Buddhu Shah. Banda Singh advanced his army towards the main Muslim Mughal city of Sirhind and, following the instructions of the Guru, punished all the culprits. Soon after the invasion of Sirhind, while resting in his chamber after the Rehras prayer Guru Gobind Singh was stabbed by a Pathan assassin hired by Mughals. Gobind Singh killed the attacker with his sword. Though a European surgeon stitched the Guru's wound, the wound re-opened as the Guru tugged at a



hard strong bow after a few days, causing profuse bleeding that led to Gobind Singh's death.

After the Guru's death, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur became the commander-in-chief of the Khalsa. He organised the civilian rebellion and abolished or halted the Zamindari system in time he was active and gave the farmers proprietorship of their own land.

Banda Singh was executed by the emperor Farrukh Siyar after refusing the offer of a pardon if he converted to Islam. The confederacy of Sikh warrior bands known as *misl*s emerged, but these fought between themselves. Ranjit Singh achieved a series of military victories and created a Sikh Empire in 1799.

The Sikh empire had its capital in Lahore, spread over almost 200,000 square miles (520,000 square kilometres) comprising what is now northwestern Indian subcontinent.

The Sikh Empire entered into a treaty with the colonial British powers, with each side recognizing Sutlej River as the line of control and agreeing not to invade the other side. Ranjit Singh's most lasting legacy was the restoration and expansion of the Harmandir Sahib, most revered Gurudwara of the Sikhs, with marble and gold, from which the popular name of the "Golden Temple" is derived.

After the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839, the Sikh Empire fell into disorder. Ranjit Singh had failed to establish a lasting structure for Sikh government or stable succession, and the Sikh Empire rapidly declined after his death. Factions divided the Sikhs, and led to Anglo-Sikh wars. The British easily defeated the confused and demoralised Khalsa forces, then

disbanded them into destitution. The youngest son of Ranjit Singh, named Duleep Singh, ultimately succeeded, but he was arrested and exiled after the defeat of Sikh Khalsa.

## **Singh Sabha movement**

The Singh Sabha movement, a movement to revitalize Sikhism, also saw the resurgence of the Khalsa after their defeat by the British in the Anglo-Sikh wars, and the subsequent decline and corruption of Sikh institutions during colonial rule, and the proselytization of other faith groups in the Punjab. It was started in the 1870s, and after a period of interfactional rivalry, united under the Tat Khalsa to reinvigorate Sikh practice and institutions.

The last Maharaja of the Sikh Empire, Duleep Singh, converted to Christianity in 1853, a controversial but influential event in Sikh history.

Along with his conversion, and after Sikh Empire had been dissolved and the region made a part of the colonial British Empire, proselytising activities of Christians, Brahmo Samajis, Arya Samaj, Muslim Anjuman-i-Islamia and Ahmadiyah sought to convert the Sikhs in northwestern Indian subcontinent into their respective faiths. These developments launched the Singh Sabha Movement.

The first meeting of the movement was in the Golden Temple, Amritsar in 1873, and it was largely launched by the Sanatan Sikhs, Gianis, priests, and granthis. Shortly thereafter, Nihang Sikhs began influencing the movement, followed by a sustained campaign by the Tat Khalsa, which had quickly gained dominance by the early 1880s. The movement became a

struggle between Sanatan Sikhs and Tat Khalsa in defining and interpreting Sikhism.

Sanatan Sikhs led by Khem Singh Bedi – who claimed to be a direct descendant of Guru Nanak, Avtar Singh Vahiria and others supported a more inclusive approach which considered Sikhism as a reformed tradition of Hinduism, while Tat Khalsa campaigned for an exclusive approach to the Sikh identity, disagreeing with Sanatan Sikhs and seeking to modernize Sikhism.

The Sikh Sabha movement expanded in north and northwest Indian subcontinent, leading to more than 100 Singh Sabhas. By the early decades of the 20th century, the influence of Tat Khalsa increased in interpreting the nature of Sikhism and their control over the Sikh Gurdwaras. The Tat Khalsa banished Brahmanical practices including the use of the *yagna* fire, replaced by the *Anand Karaj* marriage ceremony in accordance with Sikh scripture, and the idols and the images of Sikh Gurus from the Golden Temple in 1905, traditions which had taken root during the administration of the *mahants* during the 1800s.

They undertook a sustained campaign to standardize how Sikh Gurdwaras looked and ran, while looking to Sikh scriptures and the early Sikh tradition to purify the Sikh identity.

The spiritual successors of the Singh Sabha include the Akali movement of the 1920s, as well as the modern-day Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), a gurdwara administration body, and the Akali Dal political party.

## **Partition of India**

Sikhs participated and contributed to the decades-long Indian independence movement from the colonial rule in the first half of the 20th century. Ultimately when the British Empire recognized independent India, the land was partitioned into Hindu majority India and Muslim majority Pakistan (East and West) in 1947. This event, states Banga, was a watershed event in Sikh history. The Sikhs had historically lived in northwestern region of Indian subcontinent on both sides of the partition line ("Radcliffe Line").

According to Banga and other scholars, the Sikhs had strongly opposed the Muslim League demands and saw it as "perpetuation of Muslim domination" and anti-Sikh policies in what just a hundred years before was a part of the Sikh Empire. As such, Sikh organizations, including the Chief Khalsa Dewan and Shiromani Akali Dal led by Master Tara Singh, condemned the Lahore Resolution and the movement to create Pakistan, viewing it as inviting possible persecution; the Sikhs largely thus strongly opposed the partition of India. During the discussions with the colonial authorities, Tara Singh emerged as an important leader who campaigned to prevent the partition of colonial India and for the recognition of Sikhs as the third community.

When partition was announced, the newly created line divided the Sikh population into two halves. Along with the Hindus, the Sikhs suffered organized violence and riots against them in West Pakistan, and Sikhs moved en masse to the Indian side leaving behind their property and the sacred places of Sikhism. This reprisals on Sikhs were not one sided, because as Sikhs

entered the Indian side, the Muslims in East Punjab experienced reprisals and they moved to West Pakistan. Before the partition, Sikhs constituted about 15% of the population in West Punjab that became a part of Pakistan, the majority being Muslims (55%). The Sikhs were the economic elite and wealthiest in West Punjab, with them having the largest representation in West Punjab's aristocracy, nearly 700 Gurdwaras and 400 educational institutions that served the interests of the Sikhs. Prior to the partition, there were a series of disputes between the majority Muslims and minority Sikhs, such as on the matters of jhatka versus halal meat, the disputed ownership of Gurdwara Sahidganj in Lahore which Muslims sought as a mosque and Sikhs as a Gurdwara, and the insistence of the provincial Muslim government in switching from Indian Gurmukhi script to Arabic-Persian Nastaliq script in schools. During and after the Simla Conference in June 1945, headed by Lord Wavell, the Sikh leaders initially expressed their desire to be recognized as the third party, but ultimately relegated their demands and sought a United India where Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims would live together, under a Swiss style constitution. The Muslim League rejected this approach, demanding that entire Punjab should be granted to Pakistan. The Sikh leaders then sought the partition instead, and Congress Working Committee passed a resolution in support of partitioning Punjab and Bengal.

Between March and August 1947, a series of riots, arson, plunder of Sikh and property, assassination of Sikh leaders, and killings in Jhelum districts, Rawalpindi, Attock and other places made Tara Singh call the situation in Punjab as "civil war", while Lord Mountbatten stated "civil war preparations were going on". The riots had triggered the early waves of

migration in April, with some 20,000 people leaving northwest Punjab and moving to Patiala. In Rawalpindi, 40,000 people became homeless. The Sikh leaders made desperate petitions, but all religious communities were suffering in the political turmoil. Sikhs, states Banga, were "only 4 million out of a total of 28 million in Punjab, and 6 million out of nearly 400 million in India; they did not constitute the majority, not even in a single district".

When the partition line was formally announced in August 1947, the violence was unprecedented, with Sikhs being one of the most affected religious community both in terms of deaths, as well as property loss, injury, trauma and disruption. Sikhs and Muslims were both victims and perpetrators of retaliatory violence against each other. Estimates range between 200,000 and 2 million deaths of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. There were numerous rapes of and mass suicides by Sikh women, they being taken captives, their rescues and above all a mass exodus of Sikhs from newly created Pakistan into newly independent India. The partition created the "largest foot convoy of refugees recorded in [human] history, stretching over 100 kilometer long", states Banga, with nearly 300,000 people consisting of mostly "distraught, suffering, injured and angry Sikhs". Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan flooded into India, Muslim refugees from India flooded into Pakistan, each into their new homeland.

## **Khalistan**

In 1940, a few Sikhs such as the victims of Komagata Maru in Canada proposed the idea of Khalistan as a buffer state between an independent India and what would become

Pakistan. These leaders, however, were largely ignored. The early 1980s witnessed some Sikh groups seeking an independent nation named Khalistan carved out from India and Pakistan. The Golden Temple and Akal Takht were occupied by various militant groups in 1982. These included the Dharam Yudh Morcha led by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the Babbar Khalsa, the AISSF and the National Council of Khalistan.

Between 1982 and 1983, there were Anandpur Resolution demand-related terrorist attacks against civilians in parts of India. By late 1983, the Bhindranwale led group had begun to build bunkers and observation posts in and around the Golden Temple, with militants involved in weapons training. In June 1984, the then Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi ordered Indian Army to begin Operation Blue Star against the militants. The fierce engagement took place in the precincts of Darbar Sahib and resulted in many deaths, including Bhindranwale, the destruction of the Sikh Reference Library, which was considered a national treasure that contained over a thousand rare manuscripts, and destroyed Akal Takht. Numerous soldiers, civilians and militants died in the cross fire. Within days of the Operation Bluestar, some 2,000 Sikh soldiers in India mutinied and attempted to reach Amritsar to liberate the Golden Temple. Within six months, on 31 October 1984, Indira Gandhi's Sikh bodyguards Satwant and Beant Singh assassinated her. The assassination triggered the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. According to Donald Horowitz, while anti-Sikh riots led to much damage and deaths, many serious provocations by militants also failed to trigger ethnic violence in many cases throughout the 1980s. The Sikhs and their neighbors, for most part, ignored attempts to provoke riots and communal strife.

## **Sikh people**

Estimates state that Sikhism has some 25-30 million followers worldwide. But however according to rough estimates, there are around 120–150 million (12–15 crore) Sahajdhari or non-khalsa Nanakpanthi sikhs across the world who also believe in 10 Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib. According to Pew Research, a religion demographics and research group in Washington DC, "more than nine-in-ten Sikhs are in India, but there are also sizable Sikh communities in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada." Within India, the Sikh population is found in every state and union territory, but it is predominantly found in the northwestern and northern states. Only in the state of Punjab do Sikhs constitute a majority (58% of the total, per 2011 census). The states and union territories of India where Sikhs constitute more than 1.5% of its population are Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarakhand and Jammu & Kashmir. Forming 4.7% of the total population, the western Canadian province of British Columbia is home to over 200,000 Sikhs and is the only province (or similar major subnational division) in the world outside India with Sikhism as the second most followed religion among the population.

Sikhism was founded in northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent in what is now Pakistan. Some of the Gurus were born near Lahore and in other parts of Pakistan. Prior to 1947, in British India, millions of Sikhs lived in what later became Pakistan. During the partition, Sikhs and Hindus left the newly created Muslim-majority Pakistan and mostly moved to Hindu-majority India — with some moving to Muslim-majority



Afghanistan) — while numerous Muslims in India moved to Pakistan. According to 2017 news reports, only about 20,000 Sikhs remain in Pakistan, and their population is dwindling (0.01% of the country's estimated 200 million population). The Sikhs in Pakistan, like others in the region, have been "rocked by an Islamist insurgency for more than a decade" and face discrimination in every day life.

## **Sikh sects**

- Sikh sects are sub-traditions within Sikhism that believe in an alternate lineage of gurus, or have a different interpretation of the Sikh scriptures, or believe in following a living guru, or hold other concepts that differ from the orthodox Khalsa Sikhs. The major historic sects of Sikhism have included Udasi, Nirmala, Nanakpanthi, Khalsa, Sahajdhari, Namdhari Kuka, Nirankari, and Sarvaria.

The early Sikh sects were Udasis and Minas founded by Sri Chand – the elder son of Guru Nanak, and Prithi Chand – the elder son of Guru Ram Das respectively, in parallel to the official succession of the Sikh Gurus. Later on Ramraiya sect grew in Dehradun with the patronage of Aurangzeb. Many splintered Sikh communities formed during the Mughal Empire era. Some of these sects were financially and administratively supported by the Mughal rulers in the hopes of gaining a more favorable and compliant citizenry.

After the collapse of Mughal Empire, and particularly during the rule of Ranjit Singh, Udasi Sikhs protected Sikh shrines, preserved the Sikh scripture and rebuilt those that were

desecrated or destroyed during the Muslim–Sikh wars. However, Udasi Sikhs kept idols and images inside these Sikh temples. In the 19th century, Namdharis and Nirankaris sects were formed in Sikhism, seeking to reform and return to what each believed was the pure form of Sikhism.

All these sects differ from Khalsa orthodox Sikhs in their beliefs and practices, such as continuing to solemnize their weddings around fire and being strictly vegetarian. Many accept the concept of living Gurus such as Guru Baba Dyal Singh. The Nirankari sect, though unorthodox, was influential in shaping the views of Tat Khalsa and the contemporary-era Sikh beliefs and practices. Another significant Sikh sect of the 19th century was the Radhasoami movement in Punjab led by Baba Shiv Dyal. Other contemporary era Sikhs sects include the 3HO, formed in 1971, which exists outside India, particularly in North America and Europe.

## **Sikh castes**

According to Surinder Jodhka, the state of Punjab with a Sikh majority has the "largest proportion of scheduled caste population in India". Although decried by Sikhism, Sikhs have practiced a caste system. The system, along with untouchability, has been more common in rural parts of Punjab. The landowning dominant Sikh castes, states Jodhka, "have not shed all their prejudices against the lower castes or dalits; while dalits would be allowed entry into the village gurdwaras they would not be permitted to cook or serve langar." The Sikh dalits of Punjab have tried to build their own gurdwara, other local level institutions and sought better material circumstances and dignity. According to Jodhka, due

to economic mobility in contemporary Punjab, castes no longer mean an inherited occupation, nor are work relations tied to a single location. In 1953, the government of India acceded to the demands of the Sikh leader, Master Tara Singh, to include Sikh dalit castes in the list of scheduled castes. In the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 20 of the 140 seats are reserved for low-caste Sikhs.

Over 60% of Sikhs belong to the Jat caste, which is an agrarian caste. Despite being very small in numbers, the mercantile Khatri and Arora castes wield considerable influence within the Sikh community. Other common Sikh castes include Sainis, Ramgarhias (artisans), Ahluwalias (formerly brewers), Kambojs (rural caste), Labanas, Kumhars and the two Dalit castes, known in Sikh terminology as the Mazhabis (the Chuhars) and the Ravidasias (the Chamars).

## **Sikh diaspora**

Sikhism is the fourth-largest amongst the medium-sized world religions, and one of the youngest. Worldwide, there are 30 million Sikhs, which makes up 0.4% of the world's population.

Approximately 75% of Sikhs live in Punjab, where they constitute over 60% of the state's population. Large communities of Sikhs migrate to the neighboring states such as Indian State of Haryana which is home to the second largest Sikh population in India with 1.1 million Sikhs as per 2001 census, and large immigrant communities of Sikhs can be found across India. However, Sikhs only comprise about 2% of the Indian population.

Sikh migration to Canada began in the 19th century and led to the creation of significant Sikh communities, predominantly in South Vancouver and Surrey, British Columbia, and Brampton, Ontario. Today temples, newspapers, radio stations, and markets cater to these large, multi-generational Indo-Canadian groups. Sikh festivals such as Vaisakhi and Bandi Chhor are celebrated in those Canadian cities by the largest groups of followers in the world outside the Punjab.

Sikhs also migrated to East Africa, West Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. These communities developed as Sikhs migrated out of Punjab to fill in gaps in imperial labour markets. In the early twentieth century a significant community began to take shape on the west coast of the United States. Smaller populations of Sikhs are found within many countries in Western Europe, Pakistan, Mauritius, Malaysia, Philippines, Fiji, Nepal, China, Afghanistan, Iran, Singapore, United States, and many other countries.

## **Prohibitions in Sikhism**

Some major prohibitions include:

- **Haircuts:** Cutting or removing hair from any body part is strictly forbidden including shaving or trimming facial and nostril hairs for both Amritdhari (formally baptized) and Keshdhari (non-baptized and practicing) Sikhs.
- **Intoxication:** Consumption of drugs, alcohol, tobacco and other intoxicants is not allowed for Amritdhari Sikhs and Keshdhari Sikhs. Drugs and

tobacco are forbidden for all. Cannabis is generally prohibited, but ritually consumed in edible form by some Sikhs.

- **Gambling:** Gambling, also called *jooa* in traditional Indian languages, be it in any form like lottery, roulette, poker, American or British bingo, is prohibited in some codes of conduct, such as the Sikh Rehat Maryada.
- **Priestly class:** Sikhism does not have priests, as they were abolished by Guru Gobind Singh (the 10th Guru of Sikhism). The only position he left was a Granthi to look after the Guru Granth Sahib; any Sikh is free to become Granthi or read from the Guru Granth Sahib.
- **Eating meat killed in a ritualistic manner (*kutha meat*):** Sikhs are strictly prohibited from eating meat killed in a ritualistic manner (such as halal or kosher, known collectively as *kutha* meat in Sikhism), or any meat where langar is served. It is *patit* for Sikhs to eat anything which is an animal product from a ritualised slaughter. For many Sikhs (and in some Sikh sects, e.g. Akhand Kirtani Jatha) Damdami Taksal, Nanaksar, eating any meat is believed to be forbidden, but this is not a universally held belief.
- **Having extramarital sexual relations**

## Chapter 9

# Birth of Babur

**Babur**(14 February 1483 – 26 December 1530), born **Zahīr ud-Dīn Muhammad**, was the founder of the Mughal Empire and first Emperor of the Mughal dynasty (r. 1526–1530) in the Indian subcontinent. He was a descendant of Timur and Genghis Khan through his father and mother respectively. He was also given the posthumous name of **Firdaws Makani** ('Dwelling in Paradise').

Of Chagatai Turkic origin and born in Andijan in the Fergana Valley (in present-day Uzbekistan), Babur was the eldest son of Umar Sheikh Mirza (1456–1494, governor of Fergana from 1469 to 1494) and a great-great grandson of Timur (1336–1405). Babur ascended the throne of Fergana in its capital Akhsikent in 1494 at the age of twelve and faced rebellion. He conquered Samarkand two years later, only to lose Fergana soon after. In his attempt to reconquer Fergana, he lost control of Samarkand. In 1501 his attempt to recapture both the regions failed when Muhammad Shaybani Khan defeated him. In 1504 he conquered Kabul, which was under the putative rule of Abdur Razaq Mirza, the infant heir of Ulugh Beg II. Babur formed a partnership with the Safavid ruler Ismail I and reconquered parts of Turkistan, including Samarkand, only to again lose it and the other newly conquered lands to the Sheybanids.

After losing Samarkand for the third time, Babur turned his attention to India and employed aid from the neighbouring Safavid and Ottoman empires. Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi,

Sultan of Delhi, at the First Battle of Panipat in 1526 CE and founded the Mughal Empire. At the time, the sultanate at Delhi was a spent force that was long crumbling. The Mewar kingdom, under the able rule of Rana Sanga, had turned into one of the strongest powers of northern India. Sanga unified several Rajput clans for the first time after Prithviraj Chauhan and advanced on Babur with a grand coalition of 100,000 Rajputs. However, Sanga suffered a major defeat in the Battle of Khanwa due to Babur's skillful positioning of troops and modern tactics. The Battle of Khanua was one of the most decisive battles in Indian history, more so than the First Battle of Panipat, as the defeat of Rana Sanga was a watershed event in the Mughal conquest of northern India.

Babur married several times. Notable among his sons are Humayun, Kamran Mirza and Hindal Mirza. Babur died in 1530 in Agra and Humayun succeeded him. Babur was first buried in Agra but, as per his wishes, his remains were moved to Kabul and reburied. He ranks as a national hero in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Many of his poems have become popular folk songs. He wrote the *Baburnama* in Chaghatai Turkic; it was translated into Persian during the reign (1556–1605) of his grandson, the Emperor Akbar.

## Name

ʾahīr-ud-Dīn is Arabic for "Defender of the Faith" (of Islam), and *Muhammad* honours the Islamic Prophet. The name was chosen for Babur by the Sufi saint Khwaja Ahrar, who was the spiritual master of his father. The difficulty of pronouncing the name for his Central Asian Turco-Mongol army may have been responsible for the greater popularity of his nickname Babur,

also variously spelled **Baber**, **Babar**, and **Bābor**. The name is generally taken in reference to the Persian word *babur* (ببر), meaning "tiger". The word repeatedly appears in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and was borrowed into the Turkic languages of Central Asia. Thackston argues for an alternate derivation from the PIE word "beaver", pointing to similarities between the pronunciation *Bābor* and the Russian *bobr* (бобр, "beaver").

Babur bore the royal titles *Badshah* and *al-ʿultānu ʿl-ʿazam wa ʿl-ʿāqān al-mukkarram pādshāh-e gāzī*. He and later Mughal emperors used the title of *Mirza* and *Gurkani* as regalia.

## Background

Babur's memoirs form the main source for details of his life. They are known as the *Baburnama* and were written in Chaghatai Turkic, his mother-tongue, though, according to Dale, "his Turkic prose is highly Persianized in its sentence structure, morphology or word formation and vocabulary." *Baburnama* was translated into Persian during the rule of Babur's grandson Akbar.

Babur was born on 14 February 1483 in the city of Andijan, Andijan Province, Fergana Valley, contemporary Uzbekistan. He was the eldest son of Umar Sheikh Mirza, ruler of the Fergana Valley, the son of Abū Saʿīd Mirza (and grandson of Miran Shah, who was himself son of Timur) and his wife Qutlugh Nigar Khanum, daughter of Yunus Khan, the ruler of Moghulistan (a descendant of Genghis Khan).

Babur hailed from the Barlas tribe, which was of Mongol origin and had embraced Turkic and Persian culture. They had also



converted to Islam centuries earlier and resided in Turkestan and Khorasan. Aside from the Chaghatai language, Babur was equally fluent in Persian, the *lingua franca* of the Timurid elite.

Hence, Babur, though nominally a Mongol (or *Moghul* in Persian language), drew much of his support from the local Turkic and Iranian people of Central Asia, and his army was diverse in its ethnic makeup. It included Persians (known to Babur as "Sarts" and "Tajiks"), ethnic Afghans, Arabs, as well as Barlas and Chaghatayid Turko-Mongols from Central Asia.

## **Ruler of Central Asia**

### **As ruler of Fergana**

In 1494, eleven-year-old Babur became the ruler of Fergana, in present-day Uzbekistan, after Umar Sheikh Mirza died "while tending pigeons in an ill-constructed dovecote that toppled into the ravine below the palace". During this time, two of his uncles from the neighbouring kingdoms, who were hostile to his father, and a group of nobles who wanted his younger brother Jahangir to be the ruler, threatened his succession to the throne. His uncles were relentless in their attempts to dislodge him from this position as well as from many of his other territorial possessions to come. Babur was able to secure his throne mainly because of help from his maternal grandmother, Aisan Daulat Begum, although there was also some luck involved.

Most territories around his kingdom were ruled by his relatives, who were descendants of either Timur or Genghis Khan, and were constantly in conflict. At that time, rival

princes were fighting over the city of Samarkand to the west, which was ruled by his paternal cousin. Babur had a great ambition to capture the city. In 1497, he besieged Samarkand for seven months before eventually gaining control over it. He was fifteen years old and for him the campaign was a huge achievement. Babur was able to hold the city despite desertions in his army, but he later fell seriously ill. Meanwhile, a rebellion back home, approximately 350 kilometres (220 mi) away, amongst nobles who favoured his brother, robbed him of Fergana. As he was marching to recover it, he lost Samarkand to a rival prince, leaving him with neither. He had held Samarkand for 100 days, and he considered this defeat as his biggest loss, obsessing over it even later in his life after his conquests in India.

For three years, Babur concentrated on building a strong army, recruiting widely amongst the Tajiks of Badakhshan in particular. In 1500–1501, he again laid siege to Samarkand, and indeed he took the city briefly, but he was in turn besieged by his most formidable rival, Muhammad Shaybani, Khan of the Uzbeks. The situation became such that Babur was compelled to give his sister, Khanzada, to Shaybani in marriage as part of the peace settlement. Only after this were Babur and his troops allowed to depart the city in safety. Samarkand, his lifelong obsession, was thus lost again. He then tried to reclaim Fergana, but lost the battle there also and, escaping with a small band of followers, he wandered the mountains of central Asia and took refuge with hill tribes. By 1502, he had resigned all hopes of recovering Fergana; he was left with nothing and was forced to try his luck elsewhere. He finally went to Tashkent, which was ruled by his maternal uncle, but he found himself less than welcome there. Babur

wrote, "During my stay in Tashkent, I endured much poverty and humiliation. No country, or hope of one!" Thus, during the ten years since becoming the ruler of Fergana, Babur suffered many short-lived victories and was without shelter and in exile, aided by friends and peasants.

## **At Kabul**

Kabul was ruled by Babur's paternal uncle Ulugh Beg II, who died leaving only an infant as heir. The city was then claimed by Mukin Begh, who was considered to be a usurper and was opposed by the local populace. In 1504, Babur was able to cross the snowy Hindu Kush mountains and capture Kabul from the remaining Arghunids, who were forced to retreat to Kandahar. With this move, he gained a new kingdom, re-established his fortunes and would remain its ruler until 1526. In 1505, because of the low revenue generated by his new mountain kingdom, Babur began his first expedition to India; in his memoirs, he wrote, "My desire for Hindustan had been constant. It was in the month of Shaban, the Sun being in Aquarius, that we rode out of Kabul for Hindustan". It was a brief raid across the Khyber Pass.

In the same year, Babur united with Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqarah of Herat, a fellow Timurid and distant relative, against their common enemy, the Uzbek Shaybani. However, this venture did not take place because Husayn Mirza died in 1506 and his two sons were reluctant to go to war. Babur instead stayed at Herat after being invited by the two Mirza brothers. It was then the cultural capital of the eastern Muslim world. Though he was disgusted by the vices and luxuries of the city, he marvelled at the intellectual abundance there,

which he stated was "filled with learned and matched men". He became acquainted with the work of the Chagatai poet Mir Ali Shir Nava'i, who encouraged the use of Chagatai as a literary language. Nava'i's proficiency with the language, which he is credited with founding, may have influenced Babur in his decision to use it for his memoirs. He spent two months there before being forced to leave because of diminishing resources; it later was overrun by Shaybani and the Mirzas fled. Babur became the only reigning ruler of the Timurid dynasty after the loss of Herat, and many princes sought refuge with him at Kabul because of Shaybani's invasion in the west. He thus assumed the title of *Padshah* (emperor) among the Timurids—though this title was insignificant since most of his ancestral lands were taken, Kabul itself was in danger and Shaybani continued to be a threat. Babur prevailed during a potential rebellion in Kabul, but two years later a revolt among some of his leading generals drove him out of Kabul. Escaping with very few companions, Babur soon returned to the city, capturing Kabul again and regaining the allegiance of the rebels. Meanwhile, Shaybani was defeated and killed by Ismail I, Shah of Shia Safavid Persia, in 1510.

Babur and the remaining Timurids used this opportunity to reconquer their ancestral territories. Over the following few years, Babur and Shah Ismail formed a partnership in an attempt to take over parts of Central Asia. In return for Ismail's assistance, Babur permitted the Safavids to act as a suzerain over him and his followers. Thus, in 1513, after leaving his brother Nasir Mirza to rule Kabul, he managed to take Samarkand for the third time; he also took Bokhara but lost both again to the Uzbeks. Shah Ismail reunited Babur with his sister Khānzāda, who had been imprisoned by and forced to

marry the recently deceased Shaybani. Babur returned to Kabul after three years in 1514. The following 11 years of his rule mainly involved dealing with relatively insignificant rebellions from Afghan tribes, his nobles and relatives, in addition to conducting raids across the eastern mountains. Babur began to modernise and train his army despite it being, for him, relatively peaceful times.

## **Foreign relations**

The Safavid army led by Najm-e Sani massacred civilians in Central Asia and then sought the assistance of Babur, who advised the Safavids to withdraw. The Safavids, however, refused and were defeated during the Battle of Ghazdewan by the warlord Ubaydullah Khan.

Babur's early relations with the Ottomans were poor because the Ottoman Sultan Selim I provided his rival Ubaydullah Khan with powerful matchlocks and cannons. In 1507, when ordered to accept Selim I as his rightful suzerain, Babur refused and gathered Qizilbash servicemen in order to counter the forces of Ubaydullah Khan during the Battle of Ghazdewan. In 1513, Selim I reconciled with Babur (fearing that he would join the Safavids), dispatched Ustad Ali Quli the artilleryman and Mustafa Rumi the matchlock marksman, and many other Ottoman Turks, in order to assist Babur in his conquests; this particular assistance proved to be the basis of future Mughal-Ottoman relations. From them, he also adopted the tactic of using matchlocks and cannons in field (rather than only in sieges), which would give him an important advantage in India.

## **Formation of the Mughal Empire**

Babur still wanted to escape from the Uzbeks, and he chose India as a refuge instead of Badakhshan, which was to the north of Kabul. He wrote, "In the presence of such power and potency, we had to think of some place for ourselves and, at this crisis and in the crack of time there was, put a wider space between us and the strong foeman." After his third loss of Samarkand, Babur gave full attention to the conquest of North India, launching a campaign; he reached the Chenab River, now in Pakistan, in 1519. Until 1524, his aim was to only expand his rule to Punjab, mainly to fulfill the legacy of his ancestor Timur, since it used to be part of his empire. At the time parts of North India were part of the Delhi Sultanate, ruled by Ibrahim Lodi of the Lodi dynasty, but the sultanate was crumbling and there were many defectors. Babur received invitations from Daulat Khan Lodi, Governor of Punjab and Ala-ud-Din, uncle of Ibrahim. He sent an ambassador to Ibrahim, claiming himself the rightful heir to the throne, but the ambassador was detained at Lahore, Punjab, and released months later.

Babur started for Lahore in 1524 but found that Daulat Khan Lodi had been driven out by forces sent by Ibrahim Lodi. When Babur arrived at Lahore, the Lodi army marched out and his army was routed. In response, Babur burned Lahore for two days, then marched to Dibalpur, placing Alam Khan, another rebel uncle of Lodi, as governor. Alam Khan was quickly overthrown and fled to Kabul. In response, Babur supplied Alam Khan with troops who later joined up with Daulat Khan Lodi, and together with about 30,000 troops, they besieged

Ibrahim Lodi at Delhi. The sultan easily defeated and drove off Alam's army, and Babur realised that he would not allow him to occupy the Punjab.

### **First battle of Panipat**

In November 1525 Babur got news at Peshawar that Daulat Khan Lodi had switched sides, and he drove out Ala-ud-Din. Babur then marched onto Lahore to confront Daulat Khan Lodi, only to see Daulat's army melt away at their approach. Daulat surrendered and was pardoned. Thus within three weeks of crossing the Indus River Babur had become the master of Punjab.

Babur marched on to Delhi via Sirhind. He reached Panipat on 20 April 1526 and there met Ibrahim Lodi's numerically superior army of about 100,000 soldiers and 100 elephants. In the battle that began on the following day, Babur used the tactic of *Tulugma*, encircling Ibrahim Lodi's army and forcing it to face artillery fire directly, as well as frightening its war elephants. Ibrahim Lodi died during the battle, thus ending the Lodi dynasty.

Babur wrote in his memoirs about his victory:

By the grace of the Almighty God, this difficult task was made easy to me and that mighty army, in the space of a half a day was laid in dust.

After the battle, Babur occupied Delhi and Agra, took the throne of Lodi, and laid the foundation for the eventual rise of Mughal rule in India. However, before he became North India's ruler, he had to fend off challengers, such as Rana Sanga.

## **Battle of Khanwa**

The Battle of Khanwa was fought between Babur and the Rajput ruler of Mewar, Rana Sanga on 16 March 1527. Rana Sanga wanted to overthrow Babur, whom he considered to be a foreigner ruling in India, and also to extend the Rajput territories by annexing Delhi and Agra. He was supported by Afghan chiefs who felt Babur had been deceptive by refusing to fulfil promises made to them. Upon receiving news of Rana Sangha's advance towards Agra, Babur took a defensive position at Khanwa (currently in the Indian state of Rajasthan), from where he hoped to launch a counterattack later.

According to K.V. Krishna Rao, Babur won the battle because of his "superior generalship" and modern tactics; the battle was one of the first in India that featured cannons and muskets. Rao also notes that Rana Sanga faced "treachery" when the Hindu chief Silhadi joined Babur's army with a garrison of 6,000 soldiers.

Babur recognised Sanga's skill in leadership, calling him one of the two greatest non-Muslim Indian kings of the time, the other being Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara.

## **Battle of Chanderi**

This battle took place in the aftermath of the Battle of Khanwa. On receiving news that Rana Sanga had made preparations to renew the conflict with him, Babur decided to isolate the Rana by inflicting a military defeat on one of his staunchest allies, Medini Rai, who was the ruler of Malwa.



Upon reaching Chanderi, on 20 January 1528, Babur offered Shamsabad to Medini Rao in exchange for Chanderi as a peace overture, but the offer was rejected.

The outer fortress of Chanderi was taken by Babur's army at night, and the next morning the upper fort was captured. Babur himself expressed surprise that the upper fort had fallen within an hour of the final assault. Medini Rai organized a *jauhar*, during which women and children within the fortress immolated themselves. A small number of soldiers also collected in Medini Rao's house and proceeded to kill each other in collective suicide. This sacrifice did not seem to have impressed Babur who did not express a word of admiration for the enemy in his autobiography.

## **Religious persecution**

Babur defeated and killed Ibrahim Lodi, the last Sultan of the Lodi dynasty, in 1526. Babur ruled for 4 years and was succeeded by his son Humayun whose reign was temporarily usurped by the Suri dynasty. During their 30-year rule, religious violence continued in India.

Records of the violence and trauma, from Sikh-Muslim perspective, include those recorded in Sikh literature of the 16th century. The violence of Babur in the 1520s was witnessed by Guru Nanak, who commented upon it in four hymns. Historians suggest the early Mughal period of religious violence contributed to introspection and then the transformation in Sikhism from pacifism to militancy for self-defense. According to Babur's autobiography, *Baburnama*, his campaign in northwest India targeted Hindus and Sikhs as well

as apostates (non-Sunni sects of Islam), and an immense number were killed, with Muslim camps building "towers of skulls of the infidels" on hillocks.

## **Personal life and relationships**

There are no descriptions about Babur's physical appearance, except from the paintings in the translation of the *Baburnama* prepared during the reign of Akbar. In his autobiography, Babur claimed to be strong and physically fit, and that he had swum across every major river he encountered, including twice across the Ganges River in North India.

Unlike his father, he had ascetic tendencies and did not have any great interest in women. In his first marriage, he was "bashful" towards Aisha Sultan Begum, later losing his affection for her. Babur showed similar shyness in his interactions with Baburi, a boy in his camp with whom he had an infatuation around this time, recounting that: "Occasionally Baburi came to me, but I was so bashful that I could not look him in the face, much less converse freely with him. In my excitement and agitation I could not thank him for coming, much less complain of his leaving. Who could bear to demand the ceremonies of fealty?" However, Babur acquired several more wives and concubines over the years, and as required for a prince, he was able to ensure the continuity of his line.

Babur's first wife, Aisha Sultan Begum, was his paternal cousin, the daughter of Sultan Ahmad Mirza, his father's brother. She was an infant when betrothed to Babur, who was himself five years old. They married eleven years later,

c. 1498–99. The couple had one daughter, Fakhr-un-Nissa, who died within a year in 1500. Three years later, after Babur's first defeat at Fergana, Aisha left him and returned to her father's household. In 1504, Babur married Zaynab Sultan Begum, who died childless within two years. In the period 1506–08, Babur married four women, Maham Begum (in 1506), Masuma Sultan Begum, Gulrukh Begum and Dildar Begum. Babur had four children by Maham Begum, of whom only one survived infancy.

This was his eldest son and heir, Humayun. Masuma Sultan Begum died during childbirth; the year of her death is disputed (either 1508 or 1519). Gulrukh bore Babur two sons, Kamran and Askari, and Dildar Begum was the mother of Babur's youngest son, Hindal. Babur later married Mubarak Yusufzai, a Pashtun woman of the Yusufzai tribe. Gulnar Aghacha and Nargul Aghacha were two Circassian slaves given to Babur as gifts by Tahmasp Shah Safavi, the Shah of Persia. They became "recognized ladies of the royal household."

During his rule in Kabul, when there was a time of relative peace, Babur pursued his interests in literature, art, music and gardening. Previously, he never drank alcohol and avoided it when he was in Herat. In Kabul, he first tasted it at the age of thirty. He then began to drink regularly, host wine parties and consume preparations made from opium. Though religion had a central place in his life, Babur also approvingly quoted a line of poetry by one of his contemporaries: "I am drunk, officer. Punish me when I am sober". He quit drinking for health reasons before the Battle of Khanwa, just two years before his death, and demanded that his court do the same. But he did not stop chewing narcotic preparations, and did not

lose his sense of irony. He wrote, "Everyone regrets drinking and swears an oath (of abstinence); I swore the oath and regret that."

## **Family**

### **Consorts**

- Maham Begum (married in 1506), chief consort
- Aisha Sultan Begum (married 1499–1503), daughter of Sultan Ahmed Mirza
- Zainab Sultan Begum (married in 1504), daughter of Sultan Mahmud Mirza
- Masuma Sultan Begum (married in 1507), daughter of Sultan Ahmed Mirza and half-sister of Aisha Sultan Begum
- Bibi Mubarika (married in 1519), Pashtun of the Yusufzai tribe
- Gulrukh Begum (not to be confused with Babur's daughter Gulrukh Begum, who was also known as Gulbarg Begum)
- Dildar Begum
- Gulnar Aghacha, Circassian concubine
- Nargul Aghacha, Circassian concubine

The identity of the mother of one of Babur's daughters, Gulrukh Begum is disputed. Gulrukh's mother may have been the daughter of Sultan Mahmud Mirza by his wife Pasha Begum who is referred to as Saliha Sultan Begum in certain secondary sources, however this name is not mentioned in the Baburnama or the works of Gulbadan Begum, which casts

doubt on her existence. This woman may never have existed at all or she may even be the same woman as Dildar Begum.

## **Issue**

Babur had several children with his consorts:

## **Sons**

- Humayun (6 March 1508 – 27 January 1556), son with Maham Begum, succeeded Babur as the second Mughal Emperor
- Kamran Mirza (died 1557), son with Gulrukh Begum
- Askari Mirza, son with Gulrukh Begum
- Hindal Mirza, son with Dildar Begum
- Ahmad Mirza, son with Gulrukh Begum, died young
- Shahrukh Mirza, son with Gulrukh Begum, died young
- Barbul Mirza, son with Maham Begum, died in infancy
- Alwar Mirza, son with Dildar Begum, died in childhood
- Faruq Mirza, son with Maham Begum, died in infancy

## **Daughters**

- Fakhr-un-Nissa Begum, daughter with Aisha Sultan Begum, died in infancy.
- Aisan Daulat Begum, daughter with Maham Begum, died in infancy.

- Mehr Jahan Begum, daughter with Maham Begum, died in infancy.
- Masuma Sultan Begum, daughter with Masuma Sultan Begum. Married to Muhammad Zaman Mirza.
- Gulzar Begum, daughter with Gulrukh Begum, died young.
- Gulrukh Begum (Gulbarg Begum). Identity of mother is disputed, may have been Dildar Begum or Saliha Sultan Begum. Married to Nuruddin Muhammad Mirza, son of Khwaja Hasan Naqshbandi, with whom she had Salima Sultan Begum, wife of Bairam Khan and later the Mughal Emperor Akbar.
- Gulbadan Begum (c. 1523 – 7 February 1603), daughter with Dildar Begum. Married Khizr Khwaja Khan, son of her father's cousin Aiman Khwajah Sultan of Moghulistan, son of Ahmad Alaq of Moghulistan, the maternal uncle of Emperor Babur.
- Gulchehra Begum, daughter with Dildar Begum. Married firstly in 1530 to Sultan Tukhta Bugha Khan, son of Ahmad Alaq of Moghulistan, the maternal uncle of Emperor Babur. Married secondly to Abbas Sultan Uzbek.
- Gulrang Begum, daughter with Dildar Begum. Married in 1530 to Isan Timur Sultan, ninth son of Ahmad Alaq of Moghulistan, the maternal uncle of Emperor Babur.

## **Death and legacy**

- Babur died in Agra at the age of 47 on 5 January [O.S. 26 December 1530] 1531 and was

succeeded by his eldest son, Humayun. He was first buried in Agra but, as per his wishes, his mortal remains were moved to Kabul and reburied in Bagh-e Babur in Kabul sometime between 1539 and 1544.

It is generally agreed that, as a Timurid, Babur was not only significantly influenced by the Persian culture, but also that his empire gave rise to the expansion of the Persianate ethos in the Indian subcontinent. He emerged in his own telling as a Timurid Renaissance inheritor, leaving signs of Islamic, artistic literary, and social aspects in India.

For example, F. Lehmann states in the *Encyclopædia Iranica*:

His origin, milieu, training, and culture were steeped in Persian culture and so Babur was largely responsible for the fostering of this culture by his descendants, the Mughals of India, and for the expansion of Persian cultural influence in the Indian subcontinent, with brilliant literary, artistic, and historiographical results.

Although all applications of modern Central Asian ethnicities to people of Babur's time are anachronistic, Soviet and Uzbek sources regard Babur as an ethnic Uzbek. At the same time, during the Soviet Union Uzbek scholars were censored for idealising and praising Babur and other historical figures such as Ali-Shir Nava'i.

Babur is considered a national hero in Uzbekistan. On 14 February 2008, stamps in his name were issued in the country to commemorate his 525th birth anniversary. Many of Babur's poems have become popular Uzbek folk songs, especially by Sherali Jo'rayev. Some sources claim that Babur is a national

hero in Kyrgyzstan too. In October 2005, Pakistan developed the Babur Cruise Missile, named in his honour.

*Shahenshah Babar*, an Indian film about the emperor directed by Wajahat Mirza was released in 1944. The 1960 Indian biographical film *Babar* by Hemen Gupta covered the emperor's life with Gajanan Jagirdar in the lead role.

One of the enduring features of Babur's life was that he left behind the lively and well-written autobiography known as *Baburnama*. Quoting Henry Beveridge, Stanley Lane-Poole writes:

His autobiography is one of those priceless records which are for all time, and is fit to rank with the confessions of St. Augustine and Rousseau, and the memoirs of Gibbon and Newton. In Asia it stands almost alone. In his own words, "The cream of my testimony is this, do nothing against your brothers even though they may deserve it." Also, "The new year, the spring, the wine and the beloved are joyful. Babur make merry, for the world will not be there for you a second time."

## **Babri Masjid**

The Babri Masjid ("Babur's Mosque") in Ayodhya is said to have been constructed on the orders of Mir Baqi, one of the commanders of his army. In 2003 the Allahabad High Court ordered the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct a more in-depth study and an excavation to ascertain the type of structure beneath the mosque. The excavation was conducted from 12 March 2003 to 7 August 2003, resulting in 1360 discoveries.



The summary of the ASI report indicated the presence of a 10th-century temple under the mosque. The ASI team said that, human activity at the site dates back to the 13th century BCE. The next few layers date back to the Shunga period (second-first century BCE) and the Kushan period. During the early medieval period (11–12th century CE), a huge but short-lived structure of nearly 50 metres north–south orientation was constructed. On the remains of this structure, another massive structure was constructed: this structure had at least three structural phases and three successive floors attached with it. The report concluded that it was over the top of this construction that the disputed structure was constructed during the early 16th century. Archaeologist KK Muhammed, the only Muslim member in the team of people surveying the excavation, also confirmed individually that there existed a temple like structure before the Babri Masjid was constructed over it. The Supreme Court judgement of 2019 held that there is nothing to prove that the structure, which was destroyed before the construction of the mosque, was a temple and that the remains of the structure was used for its construction.

## **Andijan**

**Andijan** is a city in Uzbekistan. It is the administrative, economic, and cultural center of Andijan Region. Andijan is located in the south-eastern edge of the Fergana Valley near Uzbekistan's border with Kyrgyzstan.

Andijan is one of the oldest cities in the Fergana Valley. In some parts of the city, archeologists have found items dating back to the 7th and 8th centuries. Historically, Andijan was an important city on the Silk Road. The city is perhaps best

known as the birthplace of Babur who, following a series of setbacks, finally succeeded in laying the basis for the Mughal dynasty in the Indian subcontinent and became the first Mughal emperor. Andijan also gained notoriety in 2005 when government forces opened fire on protestors, killing hundreds in what came to be known as the Andijan Massacre.

Andijan was developed into an important industrial city during the Soviet era. Manufactured goods produced in the city include chemicals, domestic appliances, electronics, foodstuffs, furniture, plows, pumps, shoes, spare parts for farming machines, various engineering tools, and wheelchairs.

## **History**

### **Toponymy**

The origin of the name of the city is uncertain. Arab geographers of the 10th century referred to Andijan as "Andukan," "Andugan," or "Andigan." The traditional explanation links the name of the city to the Turkic tribal names *Andi* and *Adoq/Azoq*.

### **Early and recent history**

Andijan is one of the oldest cities in the Fergana Valley. Marhamat city of Andijan The ruins of Ershi, the capital of the Davan (Parkana) state, with more than 70 cities with a rich and dense population of the V - IV and IV centuries BC. In some parts of the city, archeologists have found items dating back to the 7th and 8th centuries. Historically, Andijan was an important city on the Silk Road.

The city is perhaps best known as the birthplace of Babur who, following a series of setbacks, finally succeeded in laying the basis for the Mughal dynasty in the Indian Subcontinent and became the first Mughal emperor.

After the formation of the Khanate of Kokand in the 18th century, the capital was moved from Andijan to Kokand. In the mid-19th century, the Russian Empire began occupying the area of present-day Central Asia. In 1876, the Russians conquered the Khanate of Kokand and the city of Andijan along with it.

Andijan was the center and flashpoint of the Andijan Uprising of 1898 in which the followers of Sufi leader Madali Ishan attacked the Russian barracks in the city, killing 22 and injuring 16-20 more. In retaliation, 18 of the participants were hanged and 360 exiled.

On 16 December 1902, much of the city was leveled by a severe earthquake which destroyed up to 30,000 homes in the region and killed as many as 4,500 residents. After Soviet rule was established in Andijan in 1917, the city quickly became an important industrial city in the Uzbek SSR.

## **Modern history**

During the Soviet demarcation of Central Asia, Andijan was separated from its historical hinterland as the Ferghana Valley was divided among three separate Soviet republics. Andijan itself became part of the Uzbek SSR.

During World War II, many Soviet citizens were evacuated to Andijan and the surrounding towns. Of the Jewish refugees

fleeing Nazi-occupied Poland and banished by the Soviets to Siberia and Central Asia, some relocated to Andijan starting in 1941.

In the 1990s, Andijan and the surrounding region became politically unstable. Poverty and an upsurge in Islamic fundamentalism produced tensions in the region. The town, and the region as a whole, suffered a severe economic decline following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Repeated border closures badly damaged the local economy, worsening the already widespread poverty of Andijan's inhabitants.

### **May 2005 massacre**

On 13 May 2005, Uzbekistan's military opened fire on a mass of people who were protesting against poor living conditions and corrupt government. The estimates of those killed on 13 May range from 187, the official count of the government, to several hundred. A defector from the SNB alleged that 1,500 were killed. The bodies of many of those who died were allegedly hidden in mass graves following the massacre.

The Uzbek government at first stated that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan organized the unrest and that the protesters were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Critics have argued that the radical Islamist label has been just a pretext for maintaining a repressive regime in the country.

Whether troops fired indiscriminately to prevent a colour revolution or acted legitimately to quell a prison break is also disputed. Another theory is that the dispute was really an inter-clan struggle for state power. The Uzbek government

eventually acknowledged that poor economic conditions in the region and popular resentment played a role in the uprising.

## **Geography**

Andijan is located 450 metres (1,480 ft) above sea level in the south-eastern edge of the Fergana Valley near Uzbekistan's border with Kyrgyzstan. By road it is 22 kilometres (14 mi) northeast of Asaka and 68.6 kilometres (42.6 mi) southeast of Namangan. Andijonsoy flows along the city.

Food: Andijan is also known with fascinating dishes, one of the most popular food is Plov also known (Osh) in the local language. Nevertheless, there are some other delicious foods as well such as Somsa, Monti and Dolma in the local language. However, Andijan is also known for its dance called Andijan polka and it has been reported that this dance history goes all the way back to the old centuries.

## **Demographics**

- In 2000, Andijan had a population of 333,400. Representatives of many ethnic groups can be found in the city. Uzbeks are the largest ethnic group, followed by Tajiks.

## **Economy**

Andijan has been an important craft and trade center in the Fergana Valley since the 15th century. After annexation by the

Russians in 1876, the economy of the city started to grow significantly. Several industrial plants were built in Andijan after the city was connected with Russia with a railway line in 1889.

Several hospitals, pharmacies, banks, and printing houses were established in the city during that period. After Soviet rule was established in late December 1917, both light and heavy industries developed significantly. Andijan became the first city in Uzbekistan to be fully supplied with natural gas.

Andijan remains an important industrial city in independent Uzbekistan. There are 48 large industrial plants and about 3,000 small and medium enterprises in the city.

Manufactured goods produced in the city include chemicals, domestic appliances, electronics, foodstuffs, furniture, plows, pumps, shoes, spare parts for farming machines, various engineering tools, and wheelchairs. Andijan is also home to over 50 international companies, five of which produce spare parts for GM Uzbekistan.

## **Education**

There are four higher education institutions in Andijan City. Andijan state university, Andijan medical institute, Andijan machine-building institute and Andijan branch Tashkent state agrarian university. The Andijan Medical Institute is the largest of the four. The city is also home to four colleges, one academic lyceum, 21 vocational schools, 47 secondary schools, three music and art schools, nine sports schools, and 86 kindergartens.

## **Notable people**

- Babur (1483–1530) — an emperor and founder of the Mughal Empire in Medieval India
- Nodira (1792–1842) — a poet and stateswoman
- Cho' lpon (1897–1938) — an influential poet, playwright, novelist, and literary translator
- Abbos Bakirov (1910–1974) — a film actor and director, People's Artist of Uzbekistan (1939)
- Halima Nosirova (1913–2003) — an influential opera singer, People's Artist of Uzbekistan (1937)
- Mukarram Turg' unboyeva (1913–1978) — dancer, People's Artist of Uzbekistan (1937); generally regarded as the founder of modern Uzbek stage dance
- Fotima Borukhova (1916–2009) — opera singer, People's Artist of Uzbekistan (1950)
- Shahodat Rahimova (1919–1979) — singer and actress, People's Artist of Uzbekistan (1940)
- Muhammad Yusuf (1954–2001) — poet and a member of the Supreme Assembly of Uzbekistan, People's Poet of Uzbekistan (1998)
- Robert Ilatov (born 1971) — Israeli politician and member of the Knesset for Yisrael Beiteinu.
- Ruslan Chagaev (born 1978) — WBAheavyweightboxing champion

## **Fergana Valley**

The **Fergana Valley** is a valley in Central Asia spread across eastern Uzbekistan, southern Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan.

Divided into three republics of the former Soviet Union, the valley is ethnically diverse and in the early 21st century was the scene of ethnic conflict. A large triangular valley in what is an often dry part of Central Asia, the Fergana owes its fertility to two rivers, the Naryn and the Kara Darya, which run from the east, joining near Namangan, forming the Syr Darya river. The valley's history stretches back over 2,300 years, when Alexander the Great founded Alexandria Eschate at its southwestern end.

Chinese chroniclers date its towns to more than 2,100 years ago, as a path between Greek, Chinese, Bactrian and Parthian civilisations. It was home to Babur, founder of the Mughal Dynasty, tying the region to modern Afghanistan and South Asia. The Russian Empire conquered the valley at the end of the 19th century, and it became part of the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Its three Soviet republics gained independence in 1991. The area largely remains Muslim, populated by ethnic Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz people, often intermixed and not matching modern borders. Historically there have also been substantial numbers of Russian, Kashgarians, Kipchaks, Bukharan Jews and Romani minorities.

Mass cotton cultivation, introduced by the Soviets, remains central to the economy, along with a wide range of grains, fruits and vegetables. There is a long history of stock breeding,



leatherwork and a growing mining sector, including deposits of coal, iron, sulfur, gypsum, rock-salt, naphtha and some small known oil reserves.

## **Geography and geology**

The Fergana Valley is an intermountain depression in Central Asia, between the mountain systems of the Tien-Shan in the north and the Gissar-Alai in the south. The valley is approximately 300 kilometres (190 mi) long and up to 70 kilometres (43 mi) wide, forming an area covering 22,000 square kilometres (8,500 sq mi). Its position makes it a separate geographic zone.

The valley owes its fertility to two rivers, the Naryn and the Kara Darya, which unite in the valley, near Namangan, to form the Syr Darya. Numerous other tributaries of these rivers exist in the valley including the Sokh River.

The streams, and their numerous mountain effluents, not only supply water for irrigation, but also bring down vast quantities of sand, which is deposited alongside their courses, more especially alongside the Syr Darya where it cuts its way through the Khujand-Ajar ridge and forms the valley. This expanse of quicksand, covering an area of 1,900 km (750 sq mi), under the influence of south-west winds, encroaches upon the agricultural districts.

The central part of the geological depression that forms the valley is characterized by block subsidence, originally to depths estimated at 6 to 7 kilometres (3.7 to 4.3 mi), largely filled with sediments that range in age as far back as the

Permian-Triassic boundary. Some of the sediments are marine carbonates and clays. The faults are upthrusts and overthrusts. Anticlines associated with these faults form traps for petroleum and natural gas, which has been discovered in 52 small fields.

## **Climate**

The climate of this valley is dry and warm. In March the temperature reaches 20 °C (68 °F), and then rapidly rises to 35 °C (95 °F) in June, July and August. During the five months following April precipitation is rare, but increases in frequency starting in October. Snow and frost, down to -20 °C (-4 °F) occurs in December and January.

## **History**

Fergana, on the route to Tarim Basin from the west, remained at the boundaries of a number of classical era empires.

### **Achaemenid Empire**

As early as 500 BC, the western sections of the Fergana Valley formed part of the Sogdiana region, which was ruled from further west and owed fealty to the Achaemenid Empire at the time of Darius the Great. The independent and warlike Sogdiana formed a border region insulating the Achaemenid Persians from the nomadic Scythians to the north and east. It was forcibly settled by exiled Greeks from the Anatolian coast, who had rebelled or otherwise given Persia trouble. Eventually, it had a significant Greek community. The capital of the region

was known to the Greeks as Cyropolis, named after Cyrus the Great. The Sogdian Rock or Rock of Ariamazes, a fortress in Sogdiana, was captured in 327 BC by the forces of Alexander the Great; after an extended campaign putting down Sogdian resistance and founding military outposts manned by his Greek veterans, Alexander united Sogdiana with Bactria into one satrapy.

### **Hellenistic settlement**

In 329 BC, Alexander the Great founded the city of Alexandria Eschate "The Furthest", probably renaming Cyropolis. This was in the southwestern part of the Fergana Valley, on the southern bank of the river Syr Darya (ancient Jaxartes), at the location of the modern city of Khujand, in the state of Tajikistan. Supplemented by Alexander's veterans, it was later ruled by Seleucids before secession of Bactria.

After 250 BC, the city probably remained in contact with the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom centered on Bactria, especially when the Greco-Bactrian king Euthydemus extended his control to Sogdiana.

There are indications that from Alexandria Eschate the Greco-Bactrians may have led expeditions as far as Kashgar and Ürümqi in Chinese Turkestan, leading to the first known contacts between China and the West around 220 BC. Several statuettes and representations of Greek soldiers have been found north of the Tian Shan, on the doorstep to China, and are today on display in the Xinjiang museum at Urumqi (Boardman). Of the Greco-Bactrians, the Greek historian Strabo too writes that:

they extended their empire even as far as the Seres (Chinese) and the Phryni. The Fergana area, called Dayuan by the Chinese, remained an integral part of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom until after the time of Demetrius I of Bactria (c. 120 BC), when confronted with invasions by the Yuezhi from the east and the SakasScythians from the south.

After 155 BC, the Yuezhi were pushed into Fergana by the alliance of the powerful Xiongnu and the neighboring Wusun from the north and east, invaded urban civilization of the Dayuan, eventually settling on the northern bank of the Oxus in the region of Transoxiana in modern-day Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, just north of the HellenisticGreco-Bactrian Kingdom.

The Greek city of Alexandria on the Oxus was apparently burnt to the ground by the Yuezhi around 145 BC. Pushed by these twin forces, the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom reoriented itself around lands in what is now Afghanistan, while the new invaders were partially assimilated into the Hellenistic culture left in Fergana Valley.

## **Han dynasty**

According to the Han dynasty*Records of the Grand Historian* or *Shiji*, based on the travels of Zhang Qian and published around 126 BC, the region of Fergana is presented as the country of the Dayuan (Ta-Yuan), possibly descendants of Greeks colonists (Dayuan may be a transliteration of "Great Ionians"). The area was renowned for its Heavenly Horses, which the Chinese tried to obtain from the Dayuan with little success until they waged war against them in 104 BC.

The Dayuan were identified by the Chinese as unusual in features, with a sophisticated urban civilization, similar to that of the Bactrians and Parthians: "The Son of Heaven on hearing all this reasoned thus: Fergana (Dayuan) and the possessions of Bactria and Parthia are large countries, full of rare things, with a population living in fixed abodes and given to occupations somewhat identical with those of the Chinese people, but with weak armies, and placing great value on the rich produce of China" (*Book of the Later Han*).

Agricultural activities of the Dayuan reported by Zhang Qian included cultivation of grain and grapes for wine-making. The area of Fergana was thus the theater of the first major interaction between an urbanized culture speaking Indo-European languages and the Chinese civilization, which led to the opening up the Silk Road from the 1st century BC onwards.

The Han later captured Dayuan in the Han-Dayuan war, installing a king there. Later the Han set up the Protectorate of the Western Regions

## **Kushan**

The Kushan Empire formed from the same Yuezhi who had conquered the Hellenistic Fergana. The Kushan spread out in the 1st century AD from the Yuezhi confederation in the territories of ancient Bactria on either side of the middle course of the Oxus River or Amu Darya in what is now northern Afghanistan, and southern Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Kushan conquered most of what is now northern India and Pakistan, driving east through Fergana. Kushan power also

consolidated long distance trade, linking Central Asia to both Han Dynasty China and the Roman Empire in Europe.

### **Sassanid (3rd-5th centuries)**

The Kushans ruled the area as part of their larger empire until the 3rd century AD, when the Zoroastrian Persian Sassanid Empire invaded Kushan territory from the southwest. Fergana remained under shifting local and Transoxian rulers thereafter. For periods in the 4th and 5th centuries, the Sassanid Empire directly controlled Transoxiana and Fergana, led by the conquests of Shapur II and Khosrau I against the Kushans and the Hephthalite Empire.

### **Hepthalites**

Sassanid rule of Fergana was interrupted by the Hepthalites, possibly Persian or Turkic.

### **Gokturks**

Hephthalite rule was ended by the Gokturks in mid of 6th century. The Turkic Khaganates ruled it until the first quarter of 8th century when it was subjugated by the Tang dynasty

### **Ikhshids**

The Kingdom of Ferghana was ruled by the Ikhshids, who submitted as vassal to the Chinese Tang between 659 and 790. It was attacked by the Tibetan Empire in 715.

The Umayyad Caliphate in 715 desposed the ruler, and installed a new king Alutar on the throne. The Chinese sent

10,000 troops under Zhang Xiaosong to Ferghana. He defeated Alutar and the Arab occupation force at Namangan and reinstalled Ikhshid on the throne.

## **Islamic invasions**

- During the 8th century, Fergana was the location of fierce rivalry between Tang dynasty China and the expansion of Muslim power. The Umayyads waged several wars against the Sogdian and Turkic population. They were defeated by the Turgesh who came dominated the Ferghana Valley until their defeat by Tang in 750. At the same time, the Abbasids defeated the Umayyads and sent their forces to Central Asia. This was leading to the Battle of Talas in 751, which resulted in a victory for the Abbasids and the disengagement of China from Central Asia. Two antecedent battles in 715 and 717 had seen the Chinese prevail over Arab forces. A series of Arab, Persian, and later Turkic Muslim rulers reigned over the Fergana.

## **Samanid, Karakhanid and Khwarezmid rules**

The Samanid Empire, rising from the Arab Muslim conquest of Persia, pushed into what was then called Greater Khorasan, including Transoxiana and the Fergana Valley from the West. In 819, Ahmad ibn Asad—son of Asad ibn Saman—was granted authority over the city of Fergana by Caliph Al-Ma'mun's governor of Khorasan, Ghassan ibn 'Abbad, as a reward for his support against the rebel Rafi' ibn Laith. Following the death of his brother Nuh, who ruled in Samarkand, Ahmad and

another brother Yahya were given rule over the city by Abdallah, the governor of Khurasan.

By the time of Ahmad's death in 864 or 865, he was the ruler of most of Transoxiana, Bukhara and Khwarazm. Samarkand and Fergana went to his son, Nasr I of Samanid, leading to a series of Samanid Dynasty Muslim rulers of the valley. During demise of Samanids in 10th century, Fergana Valley was conquered by Karakhanids. Eastern part of Fergana later was under suzerainty of Karakhitays. Karakhanid rule lasted till 1212, when Khwarezmshahs conquered the western part of the valley.

### **Mongol-Turkic rule**

Mongol ruler Genghis Khan invaded Transoxiana and Fergana in 1219 during his conquest of Khwarazm. Before his death in 1227, he assigned the lands of Western Central Asia to his second son Chagatai, and this region became known as the Chagatai Khanate. But it was not long before Transoxian Turkic leaders ruled the area, along with most of central Asia as fiefs from the Golden Horde of the Mongol Empire. The Fergana became part of a larger Turco-Mongol empire. This Mongolian nomadic confederation known as Barlas, were remnants of the original Mongol army of Genghis Khan.

After the Mongol conquest of Central Asia, the Barlas settled in Turkistan (which then became also known as *Moghulistan* - "Land of Mongols") and intermingled to a considerable degree with the local Turkic and Turkic-speaking population, so that at the time of Timur's reign the Barlas had become thoroughly Turkicized in terms of language and habits. Additionally, by



adopting Islam, the Central Asian Turks and Mongols also adopted the Persian literary and high culture which had dominated Central Asia since the early days of Islamic influence. Persian literature was instrumental in the assimilation of the Timurid elite to the Perso-Islamic courtly culture.

Heir to one of these confederations, Timur, founder of the Timurid dynasty, added the valley to a newly consolidated empire in the late 14th century, ruling the area from Samarkand.

Located on the Northern Silk Road, the Fergana played a significant part in the flowering of medieval Central Asian Islam. Its most famous son is Babur, heir to Timur and famous conqueror and founder of the Mughal dynasty in Medieval India. Islamic proselytizers from the Fergana Valley such as al-Firghani الفرغاني, al-Andijani الأنديجاني, al-Namangani النمنگاني, al-Khojandi ديالخوجن spread Islam into parts of present-day Russia, China, and India.

The Fergana valley was ruled by a series of Muslim states in the medieval period. For much of this period local and southwestern rulers divided the valley into a series of small states.

From the 16th century, the Shaybanid Dynasty of the Khanate of Bukhara ruled Fergana, replaced by the Janid Dynasty of Bukhara in 1599. In 1709 Shaybanid emir Shahrukh of the Minglar Uzbeks declared independence from the Khanate of Bukhara, establishing a state in the eastern part of the Fergana Valley. He built a citadel to be his capital in the small town of Kokand. As the Khanate of Kokand, Kokand was capital

of a territory stretching over modern eastern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, southern Kazakhstan and all of Kyrgyzstan.

## **Russian Empire**

Fergana was a province of Russian Turkestan, formed in 1876 out of the former khanate of Kokand. It was bounded by the provinces of Syr-darya in the North and Northwest.

Samarkand in the West, and Zhetysu in the Northeast, by Chinese Turkestan (Kashgaria) in the East, and by Bukhara and Afghanistan in the South. Its southern limits, in the Pamirs, were fixed by an Anglo-Russian commission in 1885, from Zorkul (Victoria Lake) to the Chinese frontier; and Khignan,

Roshan and Wakhan were assigned to Afghanistan in exchange for part of Darvaz (on the left bank of the Panj), which was given to Bukhara. The area amounted to some 53,000 km (20,463 sq mi), of which 17,600 km (6,795 sq mi) are in the Pamirs.

Not all the inhabitants of the area were happy with this state of affairs. In 1898 Muhammed Ali Khalfa proclaimed a jihad against the Russians. However, after about 20 Russians had been killed, Khalfa was captured and executed. When the 1905 Revolution spread across the Russian Empire, some Jadids were active in the Fergana Valley. When the Tsarist regime extended the military draft to include Muslims, this led to a revolt which was far more widespread than that of 1898, and which was not entirely suppressed by the time of the Russian Revolution.

## **Soviet Union**

In 1924, the new boundaries separating the Uzbek SSR and Kyrgyz SSR cut off the eastern end of the Fergana Valley, as well as the slopes surrounding it. This was compounded in 1928 when the Tajik ASSR became a fully-fledged republic, and the area around Khujand was made a part of it. This blocked the valley's natural outlet and the routes to Samarkand and Bukhara, but none of these borders was of any great significance so long as Soviet rule lasted. The whole region was part of a single economy geared to cotton production on a massive scale, and the overarching political structures meant that crossing borders was not a problem.

## **Post Soviet breakup**

With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the establishment of independent republics, borders have been strongly enforced, though the impact of the new international borders was minor until 1998-2000. Uzbekistan regularly closes its borders with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, strangling trade and causing immense difficulties for those who live in the region.

People in the Tajikistan city of Khujand traveling to the Tajik capital of Dushanbe, unable to take the more direct route through Uzbekistan, have to cross a high mountain pass between the two cities instead, along a terrible road. Communications between the Kyrgyzstan cities of Bishkek and Osh pass through difficult mountainous country. Ethnic tensions also flared into riots in 1990, most notably in the town of Uzgen, near Osh. There has been no further ethnic

violence, and things appeared to have quieted down for several years. However, the valley is a religiously conservative region which was particularly hard-hit by President Karimov's secularization legislation in Uzbekistan, together with his decision to close the borders with Kyrgyzstan in 2003. This devastated the local economy by preventing the importation of cheap Chinese consumer goods. The deposition of Askar Akayev in Kyrgyzstan in April 2005, coupled with the arrest of a group of prominent local businessmen brought underlying tensions to a boil in the region around Andijan and Qorasuv during the May 2005 unrest in Uzbekistan in which hundreds of protestors were killed by troops. There was violence again in 2010 in the Kyrgyz part of the valley, heated by ethnic tensions, worsening economic conditions due to the global economic crisis, and political conflict over the ouster of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in April 2010. In June 2010, about 200 people have been reported to be killed during clashes in Osh and Jalal-Abad, and 2000 more were injured. Between 100,000 and 300,000 refugees, predominantly of Uzbek ethnic origin, attempted to flee to Uzbekistan, causing a major humanitarian crisis.

The area has also been subject to informal radicalization.

## **Agriculture**

In Tsarist times, out of some 1,200,000 ha (3,000,000 acres) of cultivated land, about two thirds were under constant irrigation and the remaining third under partial irrigation. The soil was considered by the author of the 1911 *Britannica* article to be admirably cultivated, the principal crops having been cotton, wheat, rice, barley, maize, millet, lucerne,

tobacco, vegetables and fruit. Gardening was conducted with a high degree of skill and success. Large numbers of horses, cattle and sheep were kept, and a good many camels are bred. Over 6,900 ha (17,000 acres) were planted with vines, and some 140,000 ha (350,000 acres) were under cotton.

Nearly 400,000 ha (1,000,000 acres) were covered with forests. The government maintained a forestry farm at Marghelan, from which 120,000 to 200,000 young trees were distributed free every year amongst the inhabitants of the province. Silkworm breeding, formerly a prosperous industry, had decayed, despite the encouragement of a state farm at New Marghelan.

## **Industry**

Coal, iron, sulfur, gypsum, rock-salt, and naphtha are all known to exist, but only the last two have ever been extracted in significant quantities. In the late 19th century there were a few small oil-wells in Fergana, but these no longer function. In the Tsarist period the only industrial enterprises were some seventy or eighty factories engaged in cotton cleaning. Leather, saddlery, paper and cutlery were the principal products of the domestic or cottage industries. This was not greatly added to in Soviet times, when industrialisation was concentrated in the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara.

## **Trade**

Historically the Fergana Valley was an important staging-post on the Silk Road for goods and people traveling from China to the Middle East and Europe. After crossing the passes from

Kashgar in Xinjiang, traders would have found welcome relief in the fertile abundance of Fergana, as well as the possibility of purchasing further high-quality silk manufactured in Margilan.

The most famous export from the region were the 'blood-sweating' *Heavenly Horses* which so captured the imagination of the Chinese during the Han dynasty, but in fact these were almost certainly bred on the Steppe, either west of Bukhara or north of Tashkent, and merely brought to Fergana for sale. In the 19th century, not surprisingly, a considerable trade carried on with Russia; raw cotton, raw silk, tobacco, hides, sheepskins, fruit and cotton and leather goods were exported, and manufactured wares, textiles, tea and sugar were imported and in part re-exported to Kashgaria and Bokhara. The total trade of Fergana reached an annual value of nearly £3.5 million in 1911. Nowadays it suffers from the same depression that affects all trade that either originates in or has to pass through Uzbekistan. The only significant international export is cotton, although the Daewoo plant in Andizhan sends cars all over Uzbekistan.

## **Transport**

Until the late 19th century, Fergana, like everywhere else in Central Asia, was dependent on the camel, horse and donkey for transport, while roads were few and bad. The Russians built a *trakt* or post-road linking Andijan, Kokand, Margilan and Khujand with Samarkand and Tashkent in the early 1870s. A new impulse was given to trade by the extension (1898) of the Transcaspian railway into Fergana as far as

Andijan, and by the opening of the Orenburg-Tashkent or Trans-Aral Railway in (1906).

Until Soviet times and the construction of the Pamir Highway from Osh to Khorog in the 1920s the routes to Kashgaria and the Pamirs were mere bridle-paths over the mountains, crossing them by lofty passes. For instance, the passes of Kara-kazyk, 4,389 m (14,400 ft) and TENGHIZ-bai 3,413 m (11,200 ft), both passable all the year round, lead from Marghelan to Karateghin and the Pamirs, while Kashgar is reached via Osh and Gulcha, and then over the passes of Terek-davan, 3,720 m (12,205 ft); (open all the year round), Taldyk, 3,505 m (11,500 ft), Archat, 3,536 m (11,600 ft), and Shart-davan, 4,267 m (14,000 ft). Other passes leading out of the valley are the Jiptyk, 3,798 m (12,460 ft), S. of Kokand; the Isfairam, 3,657 m (12,000 ft), leading to the glen of the Surkhab, and the Kavuk, 3,962 m (13,000 ft), across the Alai Mountains.

The Angren-Pap railway line was completed in 2016 (together with the Kamchiq Tunnel), giving the region a direct railroad connection to the rest of Uzbekistan.

The Pap-Namangan-Andijon railway line is going to be electrified.

## **Historical demography**

The information contained in the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica* gives the full information from the 1897 census, the only one held in the Russian Empire before 1917, and helps illuminate a situation rendered obscure by the vagaries of Soviet

Nationalities policy in the 1920s and 1930s. The population numbered 1,571,243 in 1897, and of that number 707,132 were women and 286,369 were urban.

The population was estimated at 1,796,500 in 1906; two-thirds were Sarts and Uzbek. They lived mostly in the valley, while the mountain slopes above it were occupied by Kyrgyz, partly nomadic and pastoral, partly agricultural and settled. The other nations were Kashgarians, Kipchaks, Bukharan Jews and Gypsies. The governing class was primarily Russian, who also constituted much of the merchants and industrial working class. However, another merchant class in West Turkestan were commonly known as the *Andijanis*, from the town of Andijan in Fergana. The majority of the population were Muslims (1,039,115 in 1897).

The divisions revealed by the 1897 census, between a largely Tajik-speaking area around Khuhand, hill-regions populated by Kyrgyz and a settled, population in the main body of the valley, roughly reflect the borders as drawn after 1924. One exception is the town of Osh, which had a majority Uzbek population but ended up in Kyrgyzstan.

The one significant element that is missing when looking at modern accounts of the region are the Sarts. This term Sart was abolished by the Soviets as derogatory, but in fact there was a clear distinction between long-settled, Persianised Turkic peoples, speaking a form of Qarluq Turkic that is very close to Uyghur, and those who called themselves Uzbeks, who were a Kipchak tribe speaking a Turkic dialect much closer to Kazakh, who arrived in the region with Shaibani Khan in the mid-16th century. That this difference existed and was felt in



Fergana is attested to in Timur Beisembiev's recent translation of the *Life of Alimqul* (London, 2003). There were few Kipchak-Uzbeks in Fergana, although they had at various times held political power in the region. In 1924, however, Soviet policy decreed that all settled Turks in Central Asia would thenceforth be known as "Uzbeks," (although the language chosen for the new Republic was not Kipchak but Qarluq) and the Fergana Valley is now seen as an Uzbek heartland.

## **Administrative divisions**

In 1911, the province was divided into five districts, the chief towns of which were Fergana, capital of the province (8,977 inhabitants in 1897); Andijan (49,682 in 1900); Kokand (86,704 in 1900); Namangan (61,906 in 1897); and Osh (37,397 in 1900); but Old Marghelan (42,855 in 1900) and Chust (13,686 in 1897) were also towns of importance.

The Valley is now divided between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In Tajikistan it is part of Soghd Region or vilayat, with the capital at Khujand. In Uzbekistan it is divided between the Namangan, Andijan and Fergana viloyati, while in Kyrgyzstan it contains parts of Batken, Jalal-abad and Osh oblasts, with Osh being the main town for the southern part of the country.

Cities in the Fergana Valley include:

- Uzbekistan
- Andijan
- Fergana
- Kokand

- Namangan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Batken
- Osh
- Jalal-Abad
- Tajikistan
- Khujand

## **Border disputes**

The most complicated border negotiations in the Central Asia region involve the Fergana Valley where multiple enclaves struggle to exist.

Three countries share in the tangled border region; Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan all have historic and economic claims to the region's transport routes and natural resources. Negotiations between the three countries are often tense and are prone to conflict.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, border negotiations left substantial Uzbek populations stranded outside of Uzbekistan. In south-western Kyrgyzstan, a conflict over land between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks exploded in 1990 into large-scale ethnic violence; the violence reoccurring in 2010. By establishing political units on a mono-ethnic basis in a region where various peoples have historically lived side by side, the Soviet process of national delimitation sowed the seeds of today's inter-ethnic tensions.

Conflicts over water have contributed to border disputes. For instance, the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in

Jalal-Abad Region is kept open in a limited way to help irrigation, however inter-ethnic disputes in border regions often turn into national border disputes. Even during the summer there are border conflicts over water, as there is not enough to share.

## Chapter 10

# Other Facts

## Battle of Mandalgarh and Banas

The **Battle of Mandalgarh and Banas** were two major battles fought between Rana Kumbha of Mewar and Mahmud Khalji of Malwa which resulted in decisive defeat of the latter.

In 1442 Rana Kumbha left Chittor to invade Haraoti. Finding Mewar unprotected, the Sultan of Malwa, Mahmud Khalji, burning with a desire to take revenge and wipe off the disgrace of his defeat in the Battle of Sarangpur in 1437, invaded Mewar.

## Destruction of Bana Mata Temple

- Arriving near Kumbalmer the Sultan prepared to destroy the temple of Bana Mata in Kelwara. A Rajput chieftain named Deep Singh collected his warriors and opposed the Sultan. For seven days Deep Singh successfully repulsed all attempts of the Sultans army to take possession of the temple.

On the seventh day, Deep Singh was killed and the temple fell into the hands of the Sultan. He razed it to the ground and destroyed the stone image that was kept in the temple. Flushed with success, he started for Chittor, and leaving a part of his army to take the fortress, advanced to attack Rana Kumbha,

sending his father, Azam Humayun, towards Mandsaur to lay waste to the Rana's country.

## **Battle of Mandalgarh**

When Rana Kumbha heard of these events, he left Haraoti to return to his dominions and came upon the Sultan's army near Mandalgarh. A battle was fought here without any decisive result. A few days later the Rana made another attack on the Sultan who was utterly defeated and fled towards Mandu.

## **Battle of Banas**

To retrieve this disaster, Mahmud set about preparing another army, and four years later, on 11-12 October 1446 A.D. he went towards Mandalgarh with a large army. Rana Kumbha attacked him while he was crossing the Banas River, and having defeated him drove him back to Mandu.

## **Aftermath**

Mahmud Khalji suffered defeats at the hands of Rana Kumbha and was humbled thrice. For about 10 years after these defeats, Mahmud Khalji did not venture to take offensive against Rana Kumbha.

## **Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi**

**Abd-al-Razzāq Samarqandī**(1413–1482) was a Persian Timurid chronicler and Islamic scholar. He was for a while the

ambassador of Shah Rukh, the Timurid dynasty ruler of Persia. In his role as ambassador he visited Kozhikode in western India in the early 1440s. He wrote a narrative of what he saw in Calicut which is valuable as information on Calicut's society and culture. He is also the producer of a lengthy narrative or chronicle of the history of the Timurid dynasty and its predecessors in Central Asia, but this is not so valuable because it is mostly a compilation of material from earlier written sources that are mostly available from elsewhere in the earlier form.

## Early life

Abd-al-Razzāq was born in Herat on 7 November 1413. His father Jalal-ud-Din Ishaq was the qazi and imam of the Shah Rukh's court in Herat. He studied with his father and his elder brother Sharif-ud-Din Abdur Qahhar and together with them obtained an ijazah (license) from Shams-ud-Din Mohammad Jazari in 1429. After the death of his father in 1437, he was appointed the qazi of the Shah Rukh's court.

## Travel and writing

Abd-al-Razzāq was the ambassador of Shah Rukh, the Timurid dynasty ruler of Persia to Kozhikode, India, from January 1442 to January 1445. He wrote a 45-page narrative of this mission to India. It appears as a chapter in his book *Matla-us-Sadain wa Majma-ul-Bahrain* (مطلع السعدين ومجمع البحرين) (The Rise of the Two auspicious constellations and the Confluence of the Two Oceans), a book of about 450 pages which contains a detailed chronicle of the history of his part of the world from 1304 to

1470 and which takes much of its contents from other writings. Abd-al-Razzāq's narrative of his visit to India includes describing the life and events in Calicut under the Zamorin and also of the Ancient City of Vijayanagara at Hampi, describing their wealth and immense grandeur. He also left accounts of the shipping trade in the Indian Ocean during the 15th century.

Abd-al-Razzāq's *Matla-us-Sadain wa Majma-ul-Bahrain* also included a detailed account of diplomatic relations between Shah Rukh's state and Ming China.

In particular, it incorporated the first-hand account the mission Shah Rukh sent to Beijing in 1420–1422, written by its participant Ghiyāth al-dīn Naqqāsh.

## **Kumbha of Mewar**

**Kumbhakarna** (r. 1433–1468 CE), popularly known as **Rana Kumbha**, was the ruler of Mewar kingdom in India. He belonged to the Sisodia clan of Rajputs. Rana Kumbha is known for his illustrious military career against various sultanates and patronization of art and architecture.

### **Early life**

Rana Kumbha was born in a Hindu Rajput family of Sisodia clan. Kumbha was a son of Rana Mokal Singh of Mewar by his wife, Sobhagya Devi, a daughter of Jaitmal Sankhla, the Paramara fief-holder of Runkot in the state of Marwar. He was

the 48th Rana of Mewar and succeeded Rana Mokal Singh in the year 1433 CE as the ruler of Mewar.

## **Early period**

After being overrun by the armies of Alauddin Khalji at the turn of the 13th century, Mewar had become relatively insignificant. Rana Hammira is credited with casting off the Turkic yoke and establishing the second Guhila dynasty of Chittor in 1335. The title *Rana*, and later *Maharana*, was used by rulers of this dynasty.

Rana Hammira's grandson, Maharana Mokal was assassinated by two brothers (Chacha and Mera) in 1433. Lack of support, however, caused Chacha and Mera to flee and Rana Kumbha ascended the throne of Mewar. Initially, Rana Kumbha was ably assisted by Ranmal (Ranamalla) Rathore of Mandore, together they attacked Malwa and captured the Sultan. However Rana Kumbha had Ranmal assassinated because of his growing power, leading to an enmity between the Sisodia and Rathore clans, which would last for decades.

In November 1442, Mahmud Khalji, Sultan of Malwa, commenced a series of attacks on Mewar. In 1442 the Sultan destroyed the Bana mata temple and started for Chittor, however he was intercepted by the Rana and a battle was fought at Mandalgarh. The first day was a stalemate, however the next day the Rana made another attack in which the Sultan was defeated and forced to retreat. The Sultan prepared another army and in 1446 he invaded Mewar again, Rana Kumbha attacked the Sultan's army while they were crossing the Banas river and once again defeated the Malwa army.



## **Expansion and reaction of the sultans**

Rana Kumbha after consolidating his rule started a campaign to conquer the neighbouring states. He conquered Sambhar, Ajmer and Ranthambore amongst other regions. He also subjugated the Rajput states of Dungarpur, Bundi and Kotah. These states had previously paid tribute to the Sultans of Malwa and Gujarat resulting in hostilities between Mewar and the Sultans. Kumbha would further interfere in the politics of Nagaur finally resulting in an all out war between Mewar and the Sultanates.

The ruler of Nagaur, Firuz (Firoz) Khan died around 1453-1454. This set into motion a series of events which tested Kumbha's mettle as a warrior. Shams Khan (the son of Firuz Khan) initially sought the help of Rana Kumbha against his uncle Mujahid Khan, who had occupied the throne. After becoming the ruler, Shams Khan, refused to weaken his defenses, and sought the help of Ahmad Shah II, the Sultan of Gujarat (Ahmad Shah died in 1442). Angered by this, Kumbha captured Nagaur in 1456, and also Kasili, Khandela and Sakambhari.

In reaction to this, Ahmad Shah II captured Sirohi and attacked Kumbhalmer. Mahmud Khalji and Ahmad Shah II then reached an agreement (treaty of Champaner) to attack Mewar and divide the spoils. Ahmad Shah II captured Abu, but was unable to capture Kumbhalmer, and his advance towards Chittor was also blocked. Rana Kumbha allowed the army to approach Nagaur, when he came out, and after a severe

engagement, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Gujarat army, annihilating it. Only remnants of it reached Ahmedabad, to carry the news of the disaster to the Sultan.

Mahmud Khalji captured Ajmer and in December 1456, conquered Mandalgarh. Taking advantage of Kumbha's preoccupation, Rao Jodha (the son of Ranmal Rathore) captured Mandore. It is a tribute to Rana Kumbha's skills that he was able to defend his kingdom against this multi-directional attack. The death of Qutb-ud-din Ahmad Shah II in 1458, and hostilities between Mahmud Begada (the new ruler of Gujarat) and Mahmud Khalji allowed Rana Kumbha to recapture his lost territories.

Rana Kumbha successfully defended Mewar and expanded his territory at a time when he was surrounded by enemies like Mahmud Khalji of Malwa, Qutbuddin Ahmad Shah II of Gujarat Sultanate, Shams Khan of Nagaur and Rao Jodha of Marwar.

## **Construction of forts**

Kumbha is credited with having worked assiduously to build up the state again. Of 84 fortresses that form the defense of Mewar, 32 were erected by Kumbha. The chief citadel of Mewar, is the fort of Kumbhalgarh, built by Kumbha. It is the highest fort in Rajasthan (MRL 1075m).

## **Other architecture**

Rana Kumbha commissioned the construction of a 37 metre high, nine-storey tower at Chittor. The tower, called *Vijay*

*Stambha* (Tower of Victory), was completed probably between 1458–68, although some sources date it to 1448. The tower is covered with sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses and depicts episodes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

There are many inscriptions on the *Stambha* from the time of Kumbha.

- Verse 17: Kumbha is like the mountain Sumeru for the churning of the sea of Malwa. He humbled its king Muhammad.
- Verse 20: He also destroyed other lowly Mleccha rulers (of the neighborhood). He uprooted Nagaur.
- Verse 21: He rescued twelve lakh cows from the Muslim possession and converted Nagaur into a safe pasture for them. He brought Nagaur under the control of the Brahmanas and secured cows and Brahmanas in this land.
- Verse 22: Nagaur was centre of the Mleccha. Kumbha uprooted this tree of evil. Its branches and leaves were automatically destroyed.

The Ranakpur *Trailokya-dipaka* Jain temple with its adornments, the *Kumbhasvami* and *Adivarsha* temples of Chittor and the Shantinatha Jain temple are some of the many other structures built during Rana Kumbha's rule.

## Contributions in arts and music

Kumbha was himself well versed in veena playing and patronised musicians as well as artists in his court. He himself wrote a commentary on *Gita Govinda* of Jaidev and explanation

on *Chandisatkam*. He also wrote treatise on music called "*Sageet raj*", "*Sangeet mimansa*"; "*Sangeet ratnakar*" and "*Shudprabandha*". He was author of four dramas in which he used Sanskrit, Prakrit and local Rajasthani dialects. In his reign the scholars Atri and his son Mahesa wrote *Prashashti* on Kirti stambha. He was well versed in Vedas, Upanishad, and Vyakrana.

## **Death and aftermath**

James Tod, a British administrator in Rajputana who is still much lauded by Rajputs but generally considered unreliable by modern historians, mistakenly believed Rana Kumbha to have married Mira Bai. But Kumbha was murdered in 1468 and Mirabai was born in 1498. Thus, it was an error on the part of Tod to think so. Kumbha was killed by his son Udaysimha (Udai Singh I), who thereafter became known as *Hatyara* (Murderer). Udai himself died in 1473, with the cause of death sometimes being stated as a result of being struck by lightning but more likely to have also been murder.

The lightning strike claim allegedly occurred when Udai was in Delhi, whence he had gone to offer his daughter in marriage to the Delhi Sultan in return for his support for regaining Mewar which was captured by his brother Raimal. In five years of his reign, he lost much of Mewar territory and made Abu Deora Chief independent and gave Ajmer, Sakambhari to Marwar's Rathore king Jodha as a token of friendship (they were cousins). Udai Singh was succeeded not by his son but another brother, Raimal of Mewar. Raimal sought the help of Sultan of Delhi and a battle ensued at Ghasa in which Sahasmall and Surajmall, the rebel brothers were defeated by Prithviraj,

second son of Raimal. However, Prithviraj could not ascend the throne immediately because Raimal was still alive. Nevertheless, he was chosen as the crown prince, as his younger brother Jaimal was killed earlier, and his elder brother Sangram Singh was absconding since the fight between the three brothers.

Prithviraj was ultimately poisoned and killed by his brother-in-law, whom Prithviraj had beaten up for maltreating his sister. Raimal died of grief a few days later, thus paving way for Sangram Singh to occupy the throne. Sangram Singh, who had, meanwhile, returned from self-exile, ascended the throne of Mewar and became famous as Rana Sanga.

## **Ranmal**

**Ranmal** (1392 – October 1438), also called **Ran Mal** or **Ridmal**, was the Rathore ruler of Marwar from 1428 to 1438. A notable expansionist and skilled warrior, Ranmal is also noteworthy for having twice served as regent of the kingdom of Mewar under two different kings.

After having been displaced as heir to Marwar in favour of a younger brother, Ranmal had joined the court of his brother-in-law, Rana Lakha Singh of Mewar. There, he amassed significant influence, eventually becoming regent to his minor nephew Mokal Singh following the death of Lakha in 1421. In 1428, Ranmal returned to Marwar to claim his ancestral throne, left vacant by the deaths of his father and brothers. When Mokal Singh was assassinated five years later, Ranmal once again took on the governance of Mewar, now in the name of Mokal's young son Kumbha.

During both his regencies of Mewar, as well as his rule of his own kingdom, Ranmal had launched numerous successful military campaigns against neighbouring states, which included the kingdoms of Gujarat, Bundi, and Malwa. However, he was greatly resented by the nobles of Mewar due to the considerable Rathore influence he brought to the Sisodia kingdom. When a Mewari prince was murdered on his orders, a coup was launched against him in 1438, culminating in his assassination and the invasion of Marwar. The latter was left weakened in the aftermath and it took his successor Jodha many years to restore it to its former prominence.

## **Background**

Ranmal was born in 1392 as the only son of Rao Chunda, the Rathore ruler of Marwar, by his wife Suram De Sankhali, daughter of Bisal. By right of primogeniture, as the eldest son of his father, Ranmal was initially heir-apparent to the throne. However, under the influence of his favourite wife Sona Mohil, Chunda was persuaded to instead appoint her son Kanha as his successor. In response Ranmal, now disinherited, left Mandore and embarked on a self-imposed exile.

## **Exile in Mewar**

Ranmal travelled to Chittor, the fortress-capital of the kingdom of Mewar. There, he was welcomed and given a place at court by the ruler of the state, Rana Lakha Singh, who was the husband of Ranmal's sister Hansa Bai. The prince rapidly gained influence at the Mewari court, with his power reaching its zenith following the death of Lakha Singh in 1421.

Hansa Bai, due to the minority of her young son Mokal Singh, entreated Ranmal to administer the state on behalf of the new Rana. He fulfilled this role admirably over the following years, launching military campaigns against Mewar's rivals. These include Firuz Khan of Nagaur, Ahmad Shah I of Gujarat and the Hadas of Bundi. However, there was resentment among the nobles at the growing Rathore influence at court, in particular regarding the level of nepotism with which Ranmal awarded high positions. This ill-feeling even extended against the young Rana himself, eventually becoming a factor in his assassination over a decade later.

## **Reign**

Ranmal's father Chunda was killed in battle in 1423 and was succeeded, as the latter had planned, by his younger son Kanha. However, in 1428, Kanha too died and was followed by another son of Chunda, who also had a short reign. Seeing an opportunity, Ranmal marched on the capital city, Mandore, at the head of a Mewari army and seized the throne, becoming the new Rao of Marwar.

A skilled warrior, Ranmal began expanding Rathore territory. He is recorded as conquering the city of Bikrampur after killing a certain Bhati chief named Kelana, possibly referring to Rao Kelana of Pugal, who was among those responsible for killing his father. Further to this, he defeated Hasan Khan, the Pathan ruler of Jalore, and also occupied Nagaur, with the towns of Nadol, Jaitaran and Sojat too being brought under his control. He also introduced some reforms, both in Marwar and earlier in Mewar, including the improvement of the existing systems of weights and measures.

## **Regent of Mewar**

In 1433, Rana Mokal Singh was assassinated in a conspiracy, thus once more leaving a small child as ruler of Mewar, now in the person of Mokal's son Kumbha. Hansa Bai, now the queen-grandmother, again called on her brother Ranmal to take charge of the state until the new Rana reached his majority. Ranmal, accompanied by some of his twenty-four sons, returned to Chittor, nominally taking up the position of caretaker to his minor great-nephew, though for all intents and purposes, he became the true power in the kingdom.

The new regent's first action was to strike the allies of Mewar's rival kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa, the latter of which having sheltered Mokal's killers. The rulers of Bundi, Abu, Bhoola and Basantgarh were crushed and the Sultan of Malwa, Mahmud Khalji, was defeated in the Battle of Sarangpur in 1437. He also began to hunt down the conspirators, with some being killed and others being forced into hiding. One of them, Mokal's paternal uncle Chacha, had his daughter Bharmali taken captive and married by Ranmal. 500 other girls belonging to the families of the fugitives were captured and given out by Ranmal to his favourites.

One of Mokal's brothers, Raghavdev, objected to this action and took the women into his protection. He began to grow apprehensive of the growing Rathore influence in the court and started preparing a resistance to Ranmal. Conversely, Ranmal also viewed the Mewari prince as a threat and too launched a conspiracy. Events came to a head when Ranmal invited Raghadev to present him with a traditional robe of honour. However, unknown to the latter, the sleeves of the robe had



been sown in such a way so as to restrict his movement. Raghadev was then ambushed by Ranmal's men, who immediately cut down the incapacitated prince.

## **Assassination**

The murder of Raghadev had a profound impact on public opinion of Ranmal, with both nobles and the general population already being resentful of his domination at court. Many grew fearful for the life of the young Rana, prompting chiefs to begin curtailing the regent.

Prince Chunda, eldest son and at one-time heir to the late Rana Lakha Singh, was called back to the city to avenge his brother's death. While Chunda re-entered Mewar and removed Rathore outposts outside Chittor fortress, nobles conspired against Ranmal from within.

They enlisted the help of Chacha's daughter Bharmali, who was one of the wives of Ranmal. On the night of Diwali, 1438, she plied him with alcohol until he fell into a drunken stupor and tied him to his bed with his own turban. Ranmal was then set upon by assassins sent by the Mewari nobles. In spite of his bonds, he was able to stand upright, but unable to defend himself, he was ultimately killed.

The death of Ranmal caused a significant falling out between the kingdoms of Marwar and Mewar, resulting in the former's capital, Mandore, and its surrounding lands being occupied by Mewar's army. It took Ranmal's son and successor Jodha (who had barely escaped from Chittor alive himself) several years to reestablish Marwar's former eminence and territory.

## **Family**

Ranmal married multiple times, as was common among the Rajput elite. His wives were:

- Kodamde Bhatiyani, daughter of Ranigde, Rao of Pugal
- Bharmali, daughter of Chacha, son of Kshetra Singh, Rana of Mewar
- Rami Bai, daughter of Lalaji Songira of Nadol
- Hansamati Parihar
- Tribhuvan De
- Sarangde
- Nabhal Deval De

He had twenty-four sons, many of whom subsequently became ancestors of new Rathore clans. They were:

- Jodha, succeeded as Rao of Marwar
- Akhai Raj - ancestor of the Kumpawats and Jaitawats
- Kandhal - ancestor of the Kandhals, Rawtots and Baneerots
- Champa - ancestor of the Champawats
- Lakha - ancestor of the Lakhawats
- Bhakharsi - ancestor of the Bala Rathors
- Dungarsi - ancestor of the Dungarots of Bhadraran
- Jait Mai - ancestor of the Bhojrajots of Palasani through his son Bhoj Raja
- Mandla - ancestor of the Madlawals of Saroonda and Bhanwarani
- Pata - ancestor of the Patawats

- Rupa - ancestor of the Rupwats of Bheloo and Chakhoo
- Karana - ancestor of the Karnots, the clan of Durga Das Rathore
- Sanda - ancestor of the Sandawats
- Mandan- ancestor of the Mandanots of Alay
- Natha - ancestor of the Nathotas of Jhajhu-Nathoosar.
- Uda - ancestor of the Udawats of Udasar in Bikaner
- Bera - ancestor of the Bairawats of Dodhot
- Hapa
- Adawal
- Sanvar
- Jagmal - ancestor of the Khetsighot
- Sagata
- Govind
- Karam Chand