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Conceptions of Angel in both Beliefs and Comparing the Concepts of Trimurti and Trimurat from The Islamic Sufi Perspective

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Abstract

The concepts of Trimurat and Trimurti are identical to the concept of Angel in Islam. Although the naming of the concepts is different, the duties and definitions of the concepts and even their functions are the same. Dara Shukah was one of the Sufi writers and Prince of India who best summarized his time and shed light on the concepts I mentioned above with his work called Majma-'ul-Bahrain. Sufism, such as the philosophical or metaphysical aspect of

Islam, has managed to attract people's attention in every era and has managed to reach large masses with the principles it follows. The concept of an angel finds a wide place in Islam. The concept of angels is known as extraordinary beings responsible for carrying out the orders of God. The fact that there are some religious characters close to the concept of angels in Hinduism brings the two beliefs together at some common points.

Keywords: Hinduism, Sufism, Angel, Prince Dara Shukah, Trimurti, Trimurat

1. Introduction

Sufism is known as the philosophical aspect of Islam, which takes its source from Islam and acts according to Islamic principles but uses different methods in terms of interpreting religious issues. "Sufism may be best described as Islamic mysticism or asceticism, which through belief and practice helps Muslims attain nearness to Allah by way of direct personal experience of God."¹ Unlike other Islamic groups and formations, Sufism includes many subjects such as heart cleansing, maturation, getting closer to God, and a metaphysical journey. Sufism, which comes from a mystical background, may show closeness to other belief systems with some of the topics it comes into contact with. "Sufism is a tradition within Islam that focuses on the inner search for the Divine, much like many Hindu and yoga traditions. It is often referred to as Islamic mysticism."² Sufism is often interpreted as a mystical, metaphysical, inner journey. The goal of Sufism is always to reach God. According to Sufis, one can reach Allah with a pure heart and a body matured by the love of Allah. "Sufism is a way of life in which a deeper identity is discovered and lived. This deeper identity, beyond the already known personality, is in harmony with all that exists. This deeper identity, or essential self, has abilities of awareness, action, creativity, and love that are far beyond the abilities of the superficial personality."³ Extraordinary themes and events take place in Sufism. Some of the principles and definitions used by Sufism may be similar to other belief systems. The inner journey seen in all belief systems with a mystical background, the maturation of the heart, the mind, or the search for the mysterious truth, and the desire to reach the unknown and extraordinary goals also manifests itself in some other belief systems.

"Its focus is upon devotion, contemplation, learning, and creativity. It is not a sect or a tendency, it is a dimension of Islam, the spiritual interiority of the faith, akin to Zen in Buddhism, and manifested as a host of Orders and brotherhoods led by teachers (called Sheikhs) and their followers (called Mureed), who compose a vast network of adherents spanning the Earth, from West Africa to the Middle East, to the Indian Subcontinent, Indonesia and China, and further East into the West. Sufism shares similar touchpoints to aspects of the mystical traditions of Christianity, Buddhism, and other religions, and embodies in its nature (and in the life of the Sufi) a metaphysical journey towards understanding oneself, the world, and God"⁴

¹ Mubaraz Ahmed, <https://institute.global/policy/what-sufism>, Posted on: 1st December 2017,

² <https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/11029/sufism>, March.23.2022

³ <https://sufism.org/sufism>, The Threshold Society, March.2.2023

⁴ <https://sufifestival.org/what-is-sufism/>, March.1.2023

As I have indicated in the examples above, Sufism is an integral part of Islam. And at the same time, Sufism has been taking all its motivation from Islam. Believing in angels in Sufism is one of the 5 pillars of Islamic Sufism. Sufism always obeys the rules and prohibitions of Islam. Angels are seen as holy. All angels have been given duties by Allah. According to Muslims, angels or Malaika (Arabic name of Angel) were created before humans to carry out Allah's orders and communicate with humans. According to Muslims, angels were created by Allah like all other living things. According to Islamic theology, angels convey messages from Allah to humanity. The duties of angels are given by God. The exact number of angels is unknown.

“The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], ‘We make no distinctions between any of His messengers.’ And they say, ‘We hear and obey. [We seek] your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination.’”⁵

“*Jibril* (Gabriel) is a good news bearer”.⁶ Both the Qur'an and the Hadith make mention of him. On Muhammad's Night of Power, the Angel *Jibril* revealed Allah's words to him in the form of the Qur'an. As a result of his role in communicating Islam to humanity, he is also known as the “Angel of Revelation”.⁷ *Mika'il* (The Angel) is a fictional character created by *Mika'il*. *Mika'il* (Christians refer to him as Michael) is a human being's companion. “The archangel of mercy is often depicted as providing nourishment for bodies and souls while also being responsible for bringing rain and thunder to Earth.”⁸ He is recognized as the bringer of rain, which irrigates the land and aids in the distribution of food. He is said to protect religious sites and reward good conduct. He begs Allah to forgive people's sins as the Angel of Mercy. On the Day of Judgement, it is thought that both the Angel *Jibril* and the Angel *Mika'il* will be there. *Izra'il* - The Angel of Death, who removes people's souls once they die. “Azrail or Izrail is the archangel of death. He and his subordinative angels are responsible for parting the soul from the body of the dead and will carry the believers to heaven and the unbelievers to hell.”⁹ *Israfil* – The angel who will appear on the Day of Judgment. “It is said that the angel *Israfil* sounded a trumpet to announce the Day of Judgment.”¹⁰ Everyone who died after his trumpet will be

⁵ Quran, 2:285

⁶ Stephen Burge *Angels in Islam: Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's al-Haba'ik fi Akhbar al-malik* Routledge 2015 ISBN 978-1-136-50473-0 chapter 3

⁷ Webb, Gisela (2006). "Gabriel". In McAuliffe, Jane Dammen (ed.). *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*. Vol. II. Leiden: Brill Publishers. doi:10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00071. ISBN 978-90-04-14743-0

⁸ Matthew L.N. Wilkinson *A Fresh Look at Islam in a Multi-Faith World: A Philosophy for Success Through Education* Routledge 2014 ISBN 978-1-317-59598-4 page 106

⁹ Juan Eduardo Campo *Encyclopedia of Islam* Infobase Publishing, 2009 ISBN 978-1-438-12696-8 page. 42

¹⁰ Sophy Burnham *A Book of Angels: Reflections on Angels Past and Present, and True Stories of How They Touch Our Lives* Penguin 2011 ISBN 978-1-101-48647-4

resurrected and they will gather in a great square. *Munkar* and *Nakir* are the angels in charge of interrogating the souls of those who have died. Angels, according to Sufi Muslims, are always with them. “*Al-Kiram* and *Al-Katibun*”¹¹ are the names of two angels who sit on either shoulder. One angel keeps track of the person's positive deeds, while the other keeps track of the bad deeds. Allah will evaluate each person based on their deeds, determining whether or not they are deserving of Paradise (Jannah) or Hell (Jahannam). Angels have certain characteristics. They are not like humans or other beings. Angels show different characteristics from other created creatures. The characteristics of angels are clearly stated in the Qur'an.

“They are created from light. They have no free will. They tell people's behavior to Allah. They are unlimited. They are invisible. However, in special cases, they can show themselves to people. An example is the Angel *Jibril* revealing himself to the Prophet Muhammad”.¹²

Hinduism, which is in the category of polytheistic religions, emerged in the region of India and is among the belief systems that have the most participants in the world. “As a religion, it is the world's third-largest, with over 1.2–1.35 billion followers, or 15–16% of the global population, known as Hindus.”¹³ It is not known how Hinduism, which is considered to be one of the oldest beliefs in the world, emerged or its founder. Developing locally, Hinduism has spread to wide areas, especially in recent years, with the developing technological developments. “Hinduism, major world religion originating on the Indian subcontinent and comprising several and varied systems of philosophy, belief, and ritual.”¹⁴ Hinduism has mystical and metaphysical elements such as Sufism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Mystical elements such as attaining personal maturity, purification from sins, and attaining the knowledge of God through experience and knowledge are part of the belief system.

“Hindus understand the Divine (existence, pure being, light of consciousness) to: 1) Manifest in different forms; 2) Be understood and worshipped by various means; 3) Speak to each individual in different ways to enable them to not only believe in the Divine but experience and know the Divine. This embrace of pluralism has contributed to the incredible spiritual and religious freedom one witness within Hinduism — in its many deity traditions, paths or yogas, schools of thoughts, saint traditions, ways of worship”¹⁵

¹¹ Quran 82:11

¹² Zakir Naik, *Similarities Between Hinduism and Islam*, New Delhi, Adam Publisher and Distributors, 2015, p.23

¹³ "Hindu Countries 2021". *World Population Review*. 2021. Retrieved 2 June 2021.

¹⁴ Narayanan, Vasudha, Basham, Arthur Llewellyn, Smith, Brian K, Buitenen, J.A.B. van, Gold, Ann G, Doniger, Wendy and Dimock, Edward C.. "Hinduism". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 22 Mar. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hinduism>. Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁵ <https://www.hinduamerican.org/hinduism-basics> Marc.2.2023

It contains dozens of mythological elements in Hinduism. Extraordinary events, miraculous stories, and chains of metaphysical events are reflected in holy books and national Indian epics. The greatest example of this is the epic of Ramayana and Mahabharata. At the same time, the Avatars of the Gods Vishu and Krishna also support this perception of extraordinary character.

There is no particular concept of angels in Hinduism. "The Bhagavad Gita is Hinduism's main sacred text. While Hinduism doesn't feature angels in the sense that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam do."¹⁶ However, Hindus believe that there are certain superbeings, which perform acts, which cannot be done by normal human beings. These superbeings too are worshipped as deities by some Hindus. "In the earliest Vedic literature, all supernatural beings are called Devas and Asuras."¹⁷ Manuscript texts appear in Hinduism as seen in other religions. These written texts are Veda, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishad, Itihasas, and Puranas. Indication of religious principles is made according to written texts.

The concepts of Deva and Asura are often covered in the Bhagavad Gita and Veda. "Asura is known as antigods enemies of the gods in heaven."¹⁸ Asuras resembles the devil (shaitan) with this feature. "Deities who are eleven in heaven; who are eleven on earth; and who are eleven dwelling with glory in mid-air; may ye be pleased with this our sacrifice."¹⁹ The definition of the angel in Hinduism and the characteristics of the angel are clearly laid out in the Vedas. Extraordinary events have formed the characteristic features of the terms Asura Deva. It is seen that the expressions of goodness and evil are also placed in the concept of angels. It is also believed in the existence of guardian angels in Hinduism. The name of the angel who displays these extraordinary features and protects living things is "Atman."²⁰ Supernatural events, characters, and powers are often seen in Hinduism. We often see these extraordinary powers and wars in Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata, and Ramayana, which are considered holy books.

"The Devas and Asuras, Angels and Titans, powers of Light and powers of Darkness in Rigveda, although distinct and opposite in operation, are in essence consubstantial, their distinction being a matter not of essence but of orientation, revolution or transformation. In this case, the Titan is potentially an Angel, the Angel still by nature a Titan; the Darkness in actu is Light, the Light in potentia Darkness; whence the designations Asura and Deva may be

applied to one and the same Person according to the mode of operation,"²¹

Prince Muhammad Dara Shikuh or Shukoh, in their book *Majma-ul-Bahrain*, or *The Mingling of The Two Oceans* examined Hinduism from a Sufi perspective and recorded their conclusions. In his work, he tried to reach a conclusion based on the similarities between the name and the task. *Majma'ul Bahrain* (The confluence of two seas) means meeting or merging two oceans in Persian. "In this work, Prince Shukah tried to reveal the similarities between Sufism-Vedantism and Islam-Hinduism."²² In this work, which he deals with a mystical approach, discovering the common aspects of the two religions stands out as the basic principle. "Its Hindi version is called Samudra Sangam Grantha and an Urdu translation titled Nūr-i-Ain was lithographed in 1872"²³

"According to Sufis, there are the two divine attributes of Beauty (Jamal) and Majesty (Jalal) which encircle the whole creation while, according to Indian devotees, there are three attributes of God, collectively called "Tirgun" (Triguna), "Sat" (Sativa), "Raj" (Rajas), and "Tam" (Tamas), which means creation, duration, destruction the Sufis (on the other hand) viewing and accepting the quality of Duration as the attribute of Beauty (Jamal). But as three attributes are included in one another, the Indian devotees name them "Tirmurat" (Trimurti), or Barhma (Brahma), Bishun (Vishnu), Mahish (Mahesvara), who are identical to Jibra'il, Mika'il, Israfil of Sufi phraseology. Barhma or Jibrail is the (superintending) angel of creation, Bishun (Vishnu) or Mika'il is the angel of Dyratation(existence), Mahish (Mahesvara) or Israfil is the angel of Destruction. Now water, wind and fire are also allied with these(superintending) angels, thus water goes with Jibra'il fire with Mika'il, and air with Israfil and this three thigs are manifest in all living's beings. Thus, Barhma who appears as the water or (moisture) of the tongue, is the cause of Divine utterance and is (further) the source of the power of speech Bishun (Vishnu) who is like in the eyes, is the source of light, refulgence and eye sight; Mahish (Mahesvara), who is the air in the nostrils is instrumental in creating the two blowing horns, namely the two breaths which if cut off or (stopped) lead to death. Now, Tirgun (Triguna), which constitutes the three divine attributes of creation. Duration and Destruction is manifested through Barhma (Brahma), Bishu (Vishnu), and Manish (Mahesvara) who attributes are manifest in all the creation of the world. When a creature is born, it lives for an appointed period and then it is annihilated. Shakt or the potential power of the three attributes is called Tirdivi (Tridevi) Now Tirmurat (Tirmurti) gave birth to Barhma,

¹⁶ By Whitney Hople, <https://www.learnreligions.com/angels-of-the-bhagavad-gita-124013>, Updated on August 26, 2018

¹⁷ Monier Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary" Etymologically and Philologically Arranged to cognate Indo-European Languages, Motilal Banarsidass, page. 121

¹⁸ Wendy Doniger, The Hindu an Alternative History, Delhi, Speaking Tiger Publishing Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2009, p.697

¹⁹ The Rig Veda Samhita Verse 11, HH Wilson (Translator), Royal Asiatic Society, WH Allen & Co, London

²⁰ <https://www.learnreligions.com/guardian-angels-in-hinduism-124346>

²¹ Ananda Coomaraswamy (1935), Angel and Titan: An Essay in Vedic Ontology, Journal of the American Oriental Society, volume 55, pages 373-374, Rigveda 1.163.3

²² "Dalhousie Road renamed after Dara Shikoh: Why Hindutva right-wingers favour a Mughal prince". 7 February 2017.

²³ Gopalkrishna Gandhi, <https://thewire.in/history/why-we-should-oppose-the-aurangzeb-of-aurangzeb>, August.15.2015

Bhishun, and Mahish, while Tirdivi was the mother of these three Sarasti (Sarasvati), Parbati (Parvati), Lachmi (Lakshmi), Sarasti is connected with Rajugun (Rajoguna) and Barhma, Parbati with Tamugun(Tamoguna) and Manish and Lachmi with Satugun (Satvaguna) and Bishun(Vishnu)".²⁴

2. Result and discussion

Interaction, sharing, communication, or feeding from the same source are features that can be seen in every society in every century. India, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia are regions that constantly receive immigration. For this reason, the foundations of many civilizations were laid in these regions. But there are differences and thick lines between religions and civilizations or traditions. It is understood that religions adopt the characteristics of the society in which they were born or are intertwined with the culture. But religion and culture are two different definitions. Since some religions could not make this distinction, they continued to live locally. Buddhism originated in India as a reaction to Hinduism. However, it renewed itself with the principles and methods it brought and gained an international direction. Mysticism is at the forefront of Sufism and Hindu beliefs. The matter is divided into visible and invisible. The invisible meaning is sought under the visible. In Hinduism, the idea that matter is the representation of the spirit has prevailed. "It is possible that Hindu culture had the concept of angels in its earliest time similar to the concept of angels in Islam."²⁵ It is also noteworthy that Hinduism is based on the concept of incarnation, which means the manifestation of God and spiritual beings in bodily forms. For this reason, Hindus believe that even God appears in human form and the human being is called Avtar. This concept transforms man into God and God into the man. Because of this belief, it is difficult to distinguish between the divine and the earthly, the angelic and the devil, the one to be worshiped and the one to be damned. It is not known how the god figures, whose numbers are not yet known, emerged in Hindu belief. The deification of spiritual beings with the concept of angels by humans is at the forefront of the issues discussed in the Hindu belief system. The tradition of material worship and the use of idols in worship and the idea that the spirit of God can enter these idols have led to the sanctification of every substance.

In his religious Sufi titled *Majma'ul Bahrain*, Prince Dara Shukah looked at the concept of angels in two belief systems with a mystical eye and especially examined the content of the definitions of Trimurat and Trimurti with their duties and naming. These terms, which mean trinity, follow the events of the universe and are responsible for maintaining order. Prince Shukah *Majma'ul Bahrain* has often questioned Islam-Hindu terms, which he compares from the Sufi perspective, on the trinity. That trinity is always Barhma (Brahma) or Jibrail is the (superintending) angel of creation, Bishun (Vishnu) or Mika'il is the angel of Duration (existence), Mahish (Mahesvara) or Israfil is the angel of Destruction. In Islamic Sufism, it is known that angels are expressed by some elements in the universe. In

the work named *Majma'ul Bahrein*, Prince Shukah revealed that the holy beings who are often expressed as gods in Hinduism are expressed with the same element as the holy beings who are expressed as angels in the Islamic understanding. Jibril-Brahma-water, Maheshwara-Israfil-air, Michael-Vishnu-fire (citation 25).

When the concepts of Trimurat and Triguna (Trimurti) are viewed from a Sufi point of view, it is seen that the meaning functions of the terms are identical. The exact equivalents of definitions such as Sat" (Sativa), "Raj" (Rajas), and "Tam" (Tamas), (creation), (duration), (destruction) in Hinduism are also available in Islamic Sufism (According to Sufis, there are the two divine attributes of Beauty (Jamal) and Majesty (Jalal) as the duties that God has given to angels is named.

The idea of having extraordinary features appears frequently in all Indian scriptures and epics. The Trimurti or holy trinity is concerned with the continuation of the universe and living life. However, although their number is small, there is also a monotheistic belief in Hinduism. "Faith is described by some to be monotheistic, where all deities are believed to be forms of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, as popularized by the Advaita philosophy."²⁶ According to the Islamic Sufi understanding, Allah would not directly interfere with the functioning of the world, but if an intervention was necessary, he would do it through angels, that is, angels that He created with extraordinary features. It is possible to find similar claims to this approach in Hinduism. "Its most notable expression is to be found in the theological conception of the Trimūrti, the manifestation of the supreme God in three forms of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. Trimūrti is really the three manifestations of their own sectarian god, whom they regarded as Brahman or Absolute".²⁷ In Hinduism, there is a perception of one absolute and one supreme power that dominates everything. This concept of supreme God refers to Brahman. It is understood that Brahman also shares his powers with the trinity, namely Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma. However, there is no idea how this trinity philosophy became God. The Sufi point of view claims that this concept of trinity, *trimurti*, or *trimurat* is angels and they do the same task as angels in Islamic Sufi religious philosophy. In both religions, the extraordinary properties of both the duties on the universe and the concepts of angels are confirmed, and it is known that they have special duties, were created by Allah, and do not have mortal characteristics. God determines the terms of office. Their main duties are to ensure the continuity of the universe, to take back the souls of living things on Earth, to bring about the end of the Universe, to follow natural events, or to convey news from Allah to selected people.

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