Eknāth Remembered and Reformed:

Bhakti, Brahmans, and Untouchables in Marathi Historiography

Jon Milton Keune

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation investigates how stories about the Marathi *sant*-poet Eknāth of Paiṭhaṇ (1533-1599) interacting with untouchables changed over the course of three centuries of textual repetition and dramatic representation. In tracing memories of Eknāth over such time and through various Marathi public spheres, the dissertation sheds light on why Eknāth has come to be viewed in complicated and conflicted ways in the present. This examination of stories, particularly as they pertain to inter-caste relations and the expression of a *bhakti* social outlook, offers a chance to view how understandings of devotional religion and caste changed in Maharashtrian society between 1700 and the present. At the heart of these stories is a narrative tension between Eknāth's boundary-transgressing actions that are presented in spiritually egalitarian terms, and societal expectations about ritual purity and brahman-ness. I show that although the details of the stories change through various repetitions and renditions, this tension endures and produces an ambiguity in the narrative that (perhaps intentionally) makes Eknāth's social allegiance impossible to determine. My sources for this study include hagiographical texts (ca. 1650-1800), biographical books and essays (1880-1925), and six major dramas and films (1903-2005) – all of which richly portray aspects of Eknāth's life, and nearly all of which are in Marathi. In the course of preparing this historiographical analysis, I introduce many Marathi sources to the English scholarly world for the first time and call attention to several historical texts and plays that have been forgotten or overlooked by Marathi scholars as well.

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Notes on Transliteration and Format

Scholars have addressed the challenges of rendering Marathi words into English in various ways. For the sake of clarity and consistency, I want to advise readers of my choices. I retain diacritical marks on most Marathi words and place names throughout the dissertation, as readers of a dissertation will likely tolerate visual inelegance for the sake of precision. The only major exceptions are the words Maharashtra, Marathi, and brahman (the caste), names of Indian cities that are commonly known, and Marathi words that occur in English quotations or titles without diacritics. *Anusvar*s that precede consonants I transliterate as the nasal letter corresponding to the given consonant's class (guttural, retroflex, palatal, dental and labial). In other words, *anusvar*s before *k*, *c*, *ṭ*, *t* and *p* are written *ṅ*, *ñ*, *ṇ*, *n*, and *m* respectively, as they would be pronounced aloud. Final *anusvar*s are transliterated as *ṁ*.

I represent the pronunciation of Marathi words rather than adhere to a strict formula when transliterating their orthographic appearance (which works for transliterating Sanskrit but is artificial for Marathi). For example, the name of the *sant* at the center of this study – एकनाथ – will be transliterated as it is pronounced (Eknāth) rather than as it would look if transliterated as a Sanskrit word (Ekanātha).

Since this dissertation considers Marathi literature that spans four centuries and a variety of dialects and styles (and spelling and printing errors in modern texts), readers will see some variation in how Marathi words are spelled. Standardizing or noting all of the variations would be impractical; I will simply reproduce them in my transliterations and comment on them only when they are extremely confusing and might hinder readers' understanding.

In this dissertation when I refer to an author whose text under consideration was written in Marathi, I will use diacritics to transliterate his or her name. This results in consistent but

occasionally unconventional transliterations (e.g., the Marathi surname "Ok" rather than "Oak"). If a Maharashtrian author has written something in English, I will not use diacritics. In the few cases when an author writes in both Marathi and English and I refer to both texts at the same time, I do not use diacritics. Similarly, when the name of a Marathi publisher involves an English word, I transliterate it as a Marathi word even though it looks strange (e.g., *Pāpyular* rather than Popular, and *Vhīṇas* rather than Venus). I will also follow the Marathi convention of abbreviating first names by syllable rather than initial (e.g., La. Rā. Pāṅgārkar), except in the cases of repeated citations in footnotes, where only the initials will appear.

Finally, bibliographic citations usually are intended to inform readers where to find further information or evidence that supports the author's argument. This is true in my dissertation, but since my analysis is so sensitive to historiography, I want my citations to clearly and easily highlight the original date of publication. Therefore I have adopted a system of stating the original publication date followed by the version that I cite in brackets (e.g., Lakṣmaṇ Rāmcandra Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra : Caritra āṇi Vāṅmay Darśan* (Pune: Varadā Buks, 1910 [2003]).

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For my parents,

Robert and Jean

Introduction

Stories about inter-caste relations are central to how the 16th-century poet-saint Eknāth is remembered and to how his significance is understood in western India. These stories feature how Eknāth, a brahman, conducted himself with compassion and openness toward untouchables and thereby upset his fellow brahmans. Since competing religious and social values regarding caste are at the heart of these stories, the changes that the stories underwent over time offers an unusual window into the recent social history of caste itself. This is particularly helpful because the literary and performative genres that convey these portrayals (before the 1960s) are unofficial, popular, and therefore quite different from the legal and political discourses that scholars ordinarily use as sources of historical information about caste. By observing how portrayals of Eknāth's inter-caste relations changed over three centuries, this dissertation documents and analyzes developments in the historiography of *bhakti* and caste between the 17th century and the present.

Descriptions of *bhakti* traditions in India routinely include a reference to the greater degree of social inclusivity than these traditions achieved than the Hindu milieus from which they emerged.[1] One can observe a concern for broad-based accessibility at work in the poets' choice of language; *bhakti* poetry and songs were composed in the commonly spoken vernaculars rather than Sanskrit, which was known to only a learned, elite minority. The most obvious demonstration of this social inclusivity is the fact that men and women of various castes

[1] A small sampling of these description includes: Karine Schomer, "Introduction: the Sant Tradition in Perspective," in *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, ed. Karine Schomer, et al. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 1; Eleanor Zelliot, "The Medieval Bhakti Movement in History," in *Hinduism: New Essays in the History of Religions*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 144; Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas: 1600-1818*, ed. Gordon Johnson, vol. 2.4, New Cambridge History of India (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 18-19.

and no caste populate the ranks of poets and devotees of these traditions. Although the idea of a singular, unified, pan-Indian *bhakti* movement has been crucially qualified (shown to be one particular tradition's self-understanding rather than an empirical description of a broader history),[2] the socially inclusive aspect of the *bhakti* traditions is surely more than a mere trope or historiographical contention. One cannot overlook the importance of the low-caste weaver Kabīr, the untouchable cobbler Ravidās, and the poetess Mīrābāī, for example, among their brahman male counterparts in the North Indian *bhakti* traditions. Similarly, the untouchables Tiruppāṇ and Tirumaḻicai are accepted among the twelve major saint-poets in the Tamil Vaiṣṇava tradition, and their Tamil Śaiva *bhakti* contemporaries included the untouchable poet Nandaṇār and the poetess Karaikkāl Ammaiyār. Examples and details vary from region to region.

Of course, there is no shortage of caveats and counter-examples that challenge the theme of inclusivity.[3] Even when the inclusive character of a given *bhakti* tradition is clear, the precise social ramifications that derived from this inclusivity are much more complicated and difficult to explicate. If caste status no longer barred people from attaining ultimate religious benefits or from the ability to express their devotion for others within *bhakti* traditions, did devotees in these traditions perceive this spiritual inclusivity to imply anything significant about the social order?

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[2] John S. Hawley, "The Four *Sampradāy*s: Ordering the Religious Past in Mughal North India," *South Asian History and Culture* 2, no. 2 (2011): 160-161; John S. Hawley, *India's Real Religion: The Idea of the Bhakti Movement* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, forthcoming); John S. Hawley, *The Bhakti Movement – From Where? Since When?*, Occasional Publication (New Delhi: India International Centre, 2009).

[3] Patton Burchett, "Bhakti Rhetoric in the Hagiography of 'Untouchable' Saints: Discerning Bhakti's Ambivalence on Caste and Brahminhood," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 13, no. 2 (2009): 115-141; David N. Lorenzen, "Bhakti," in *The Hindu World*, ed. Sushil Mittal, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 185-186.

Nearly all scholars outside of India (and many within) have responded in the negative or at least voiced serious reservations.[4]

The question about the relation of *bhakti* and caste has been incisively and consistently raised in the context of the main Marathi *bhakti* tradition. The Vārkarī *sampradāy* (literally, the tradition of those who make the annual pilgrimage to Viṭṭhal's temple in Pandharpur) is an especially good example of this ambivalence about caste.[5] The untouchable *sant* Cokhāmeḷā and three early *śūdra sant*s from around the 14th century were recognized as important members of the tradition from the 16th century onward (in the compositions of Eknāth himself), if not earlier.[6] The most popular *sant* in the tradition, Tukārām, was a *śūdra*.[7] The two main brahman *sant*s in the tradition are both remembered to have endured a great deal of trouble with brahman authorities because of caste. Jñāndev was born into a ritually impure family (his father went back on his vow of renunciation and started a family), and several stories about Eknāth depict him enduring his fellow brahmans' wrath for interacting with untouchables. The Vārkarī tradition that developed around these *sant*s regularly promoted and continues to promote itself as a caste-inclusive community, although sympathetic outsiders observed that the vestiges of caste

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[4] For example, Karen Pechilis, *The Embodiment of Bhakti* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 29; David N. Lorenzen, *Religious Movements in South Asia 600-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 10.

[5] Jon Keune and Christian Lee Novetzke, "Vārkarī," in *Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, ed. Knut Axel Jacobsen. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 617-626.

[6] The standard collection of Eknāth's short poems includes nine short compositions about Cokhāmeḷā, as well as thirteen about the *śūdra* (gardener) *sant* Sāvatā Māḷī, 31 about the *śūdra* (potter) *sant* Gorā Kumbhār, and 79 compositions about the *śūdra* (tailor) *sant* Nāmdev. One might question whether these short poems were composed by Eknāth himself or only attributed to him; in the absence of conclusive historical proof, it is worth noting that these poems do appear in multiple collections of Eknāth's poetry, and there are no glaring problems with the language that would encourage a skeptical attitude about them. Eknāth and Nānāmahārāj Sākhre, *Śrī Eknāth Gāthā, Śrī Bhānudās-mahārāj āṇi Śrī Janārdana-mahārāj yāñcyā Abhaṅgāsahit* (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1990 [2002]), #3554-3687.

[7] Tukārām belonged to the Kunbī *jāti*, who are conventionally assumed to be cultivators, although Tukārām himself was a vegetable seller.

have not disappeared from contemporary practice.[8] Frank discussions of caste within the Vārkarī tradition have tended to be suppressed or even precluded by the predominant, insistent theological vision that Vārkarīs do not observe caste boundaries; it is a very sensitive topic among Vārkarīs themselves. In contrast, many non-Vārkarī Marathi scholars and most foreign scholars have paid much attention to the role of caste in Marathi *bhakti* literature and contemporary practice, as we shall see in the Chapter One.

One thing strikes me as problematically missing from scholarship on *bhakti* and caste – sensitivity to how the conceptual frameworks in which religion and society were understood slowly changed over time and among different social groups. A rough sense of some of these differences can be gained by comparing *bhakti* texts (questions about authorship notwithstanding) with hagiographical writings about the authors that appeared centuries later – and those, in turn, with contemporary devotees' understandings. While all of these are obviously connected, differences among them inevitably appear, since the contexts across time are indeed so vastly different. Tropes and words, especially in relation to social tension, are interpreted variously over time. The study of *bhakti*, inclusivity, and caste could benefit significantly from a greater awareness of these subtle but significant changes. Such work has been begun by Christian Novetzke, who has helpfully brought the notion of "memory" to the study of *bhakti* traditions and opened further avenues of research into how the personae of *sant*s and their deeds were historiographically reconstructed at different points in history.

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[8] Iravati (Irawati) Karve and D. B. Mokashi joined parts of the great annual pilgrimage (*vārī*) in the 1950s and 1960s and wrote about their experiences, which included observations of groups of Vārkarīs subtly observing caste boundaries in the ways in which they organized themselves into groups (*diṇḍī*s). Irawati Karve, ""On the Road": A Maharashtrian Pilgrimage," in *The Experience of Hinduism: Essays on Religion in Maharashtra*, ed. Eleanor Zelliot, et al. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1951 [1988]), 143-173; D. B. Mokashi, *Palkhi: An Indian Pilgrimage*, trans. Philip Engblom (Albany: SUNY Press, 1964 [1987]).

The *sant* at the center of my study – Eknāth of Paithan – offers an ideal subject for observing how social memory changes over time. It is now a commonly held idea among many Maharashtrians that Eknāth criticized the caste system and advocated social equality in the 16th century. When I was doing my field research and asked random people (aside from scholars) whether Eknāth did this, more often than not my interlocutors would look at me briefly as if I were stupid and answer (in Marathi), "Of course he did. He was a social reformer (*samāj sudhārak*)." Some people would then cite as evidence a story about Eknāth eating at an untouchable girl's home (actually a scene from the film *Dharmātmā* that came out in 1935), but most proclaimed this information as if it were simply self-evident and my raising the question at all only confirmed for them that I was a foreigner who did not know their culture.

Some and perhaps much of the credit for this "self-evident" belief about Eknāth goes to the Maharashtrian public school system. Children who attend public schools (of all language mediums) learn in the fourth grade that Eknāth taught about social equality.[9] In their textbooks the children read that Eknāth behaved with equal respect toward everyone, that he compassionately brought the poor and "backwards" close to him, and he that taught others to act likewise.[10] According to this interpretation of Eknāth's life, which has been taught since at least 1970, Eknāth's actions epitomized social inclusivism and the abandonment of caste hierarchy.[11]

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[9] Jaysiṅgrāv Pavār, ed. *Śivchatrapatī (Iyattā Cauthī)* (Puṇe: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Pāṭhyapustak Nirmiti va Abhyāsakram Saṁśodhan Maṇḍaḷ, 2009), 7-8.

[10] Ibid.

[11] I observed a copy of this textbook printed in 1970 and confirmed that this same narrative was present in that edition. One of the librarians at the center for Maharashtra State Textbook Bureau (Shivajinagar, Pune) said that these books are the only authorized textbooks for public schools in Maharashtra since schoolbooks were standardized in the state in 1967. The Marathi version of the textbook was written first, and all other language textbooks used in Maharashtra are translations from the Marathi. Nivedita Bhide, Personal communication, June 26, 2010.

There are notable segments of the Maharashtrian population, however, who do not see Eknāth this way, as we shall see in subsequent chapters. Critical Marathi scholars point out that social reform and social equality are modern notions that are only anachronistically and problematically read into a 16th-century context. Many *dalit*s dismiss out of hand the idea that Eknāth or any of the Marathi *sant*s was truly concerned about social change, since equality for them was confined only to the realm of spirituality. Marxist interpreters argue that if Eknāth and other *sant*s advocated anything like social equality (and it is not clear that they did), then the prevailing economic, political and social structures at the time made it impossible for them to effect any change.

What accounts for the differing ideas about Eknāth's significance? How could this 16th-century figure be understood if we were to set aside ideas of social equality and question the assumption that caste was universally understood to involve the same fixed hierarchy for different people at different times? How did people understand Eknāth in past centuries? What terms and categories were used to portray Eknāth's actions in other historical contexts than those where caste was at issue? How did he come to be remembered in the ways that he is now? To address these questions, we will need to look intensively for as broad a range of sources from as many time periods as possible. Only this historiographically thorough approach will allow us to appreciate how the image of Eknāth as reformer was itself re-formed over time.

Approach

My approach in this dissertation has much in common with Christian Novetzke's trailblazing work on Nāmdev.[12] Like Novetzke, I focus on devotional narrations of a saintly

[12] Christian Lee Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory : a Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

figure's life – hagiography – and read these narratives with the confidence that although they do not function as direct records of political and economic history, they do indeed convey valuable information about the conceptual universe and social worlds in which their authors lived. When it comes to the study of caste in history, this way of focusing on social memory actually offers a valuable supplement to more strictly historical and political investigations.

Compared to the approach that Novetzke adopts in his book, my scope of project is considerably narrower. In this dissertation I am not proposing a new theory about how *bhakti* functions in general; in fact, I am not yet sure how what I have discovered about the social memory of Eknāth relates to *sant*s and *bhakta*s whose lives are not so vividly remembered in terms of caste tension or who are not brahmans. These questions I must leave for future research and analysis. What I seek to accomplish here is an incisive case study of how the apparent clash between the commonly held *bhakti* value of inclusivity or "spiritual egalitarianism" and the persistent expectations of caste purity and boundary observance is parsed and represented.

In the course of my research I considered supplementing my mainly textual and multimedia sources with ethnographic research into social memory. Paul Connerton discussed how ritual and bodily practices are eminently observable sites of social memory, and there are aspects of the social memory related to Eknāth that are ideal examples to observe. The traditions that have developed around commemorating Eknāth's birthday (a three-day celebration in February/March) in his hometown Paithan, and the annual pilgrimage from Paithan to the Vārkarīs' holy city of Pandharpur (carrying replicas of Eknāth's sandals, as other groups do with other *sant*s' sandals elsewhere) are perfect examples of what Connerton proposes. With this in mind, I attended the birthday celebrations twice (in 2009 and 2010) and joined the 18-day, 300km pilgrimage as well (2010). While my less than totally fluent Marathi language skills may have kept me from picking up interesting nuances and details, I was struck by how little in these

events yielded insights into the social memory of Eknāth and caste. In the weeks that I spent at these events, in which people bombard each other with stories about Eknāth, I never heard anyone tell a story about Eknāth interacting with untouchables. Similarly, on a particular day when the pilgrim group stopped for part of an afternoon and organized a two-hour Eknāth *bhārūḍ* performance marathon (consisting of enacted metaphorical drama-poems), none of the nearly thirty performed *bhārūḍ*s were the famous ones that Eknāth composed to be spoken as if from the mouths of untouchables. That references to untouchables were absent in the stories told at these events is useful and intriguing to have observed, although it is rather disappointing. For the present purposes, therefore, it has seemed best to leave to the side these particular aspects of "Eknāth performance" in contemporary times.

Chapter Overview

The shape of this dissertation is very straightforward and mostly chronological. Chapter One begins by summarizing a simple, recent biography of Eknāth in order to introduce readers to Eknāth's persona and raise some of the issues involved with his social memory. I then provide a literature review consisting of the early history of non-Indians who wrote about Marathi *bhakti* traditions, a few examples of important Marathi writings about Eknāth (which are dealt with extensively in Chapter Four), and a comprehensive overview of everything that has been published about Eknāth in English and German (the only non-Indian languages in which literature on Eknāth has been published, to the best of my knowledge).

Intensive analysis of the source materials begins in Chapter Two, where I discuss the three earliest hagiographical documents that convey stories about Eknāth's life. The earliest text is attributed with some confidence to Eknāth's grandson Mukteśvar and therefore may have been

composed in the first half of the 17th century, not long after Eknāth died (probably in 1599). This text – the *Śrīkhaṇḍyā-ākhyān* (Tale of Śrīkhaṇḍyā) – is a poetic composition of only around ninety verses, and it tells a single story about the god Kṛṣṇa disguising himself as a brahman named Śrīkhaṇḍyā and working in Eknāth's home as a servant. The second text, misleadingly entitled the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* (Story of Pratiṣṭhān/Paithan), is similarly difficult to date with precision but may have been composed around 1700. It conveys a range of stories that comprise most of Eknāth's life. The *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* seems to have remained exclusively within one family and did not circulate until the family published it in 1948. The third text was composed in 1760 and introduced what became the standard set of stories about Eknāth – the *Eknāth-caritra* (Story of Eknāth). The author, Keśavsvāmī, was closely connected to Eknāth's descendants in Paithan, and his 2,500-verse text (more than twice as long as the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*) had proportionately more stories. These three texts, all of which focus exclusively on Eknāth, represent the earliest and most foundational renditions of nearly all later stories about him. By the end of Chapter Two, we will be able to identify two very different interpretive frameworks that were used in them to justify Eknāth's interactions with untouchables.

Chapter Three observes hagiographical texts that recycled and transformed stories about Eknāth that had been introduced earlier. For this reason I refer to these texts practically as "later hagiography" (1762-1800), despite the fact that there is not much time difference between them and the "earlier hagiographies" (1650-1760) that I examine in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three I examine how Eknāth's name and a few epithets to describe him appear on early Marathi lists (*santamālikā*s) of saintly figures. I also consider 36 very short compositions by a variety of Marathi authors that describe Eknāth. The heart of the chapter is devoted to how Eknāth's stories are retold in two important "collective hagiographies" – large compilations of hagiographical stories about many figures that are integrated into narrative wholes. The two

texts are the *Bhaktavijay* (1762) and *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (1774) of Mahīpati. The precise sources for the *Bhaktavijay*'s stories about Eknāth are unknown. The *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* is deeply indebted to the *Eknāth-caritra*, but it embellishes and transforms some of the stories in important ways. In this chapter we will begin to trace how a standard portrayal of Eknāth is coalescing, and how an ambiguous tension about *bhakti* egalitarianism and caste-based ritual purity has become endemic to it.

Chapter Four considers possible alternative, non-*bhakti* sources of information about Eknāth's social memory. This includes religious legal records, political chronicles, appeals to genealogy, and institutional histories of the Eknāth-related temples in Paithan and the Eknāth Research Institute in Aurangabad. I then observe how caste and inter-caste relations are and are not represented in the earliest modern Marathi biographies of Eknāth (1880-1925) and early English and Urdu biographies (1927-1934). I conclude with a consideration of the four major interpretative vectors that shape the growing (and quite repetitive) Marathi literature about Eknāth in the second half of the 20th century. In this chapter we will observe how stories of Eknāth's inter-caste relations had become accepted as standard parts of his biography, but few authors chose to focus on them intensively.

Chapter Five documents how interactions with untouchables became extremely important to portrayals of Eknāth in three major Marathi plays (1903, 1933, and 1964), one important feature film (1935) and two made-for-VCD films (2004 and 2005). One politically controversial play invented many scenarios and portrayed Eknāth as unambiguously advocating the destruction of brahman privilege and establishment of social equality for the sake of a Hindu nationalist vision of unity. Almost all of the other plays and films recycled traditional stories of Eknāth interacting with untouchables, and they routinely enhanced these stories with comedy and slapstick. In this chapter we will see how stories of caste tension were crucially transformed,

often in ways that tried to make them more entertaining and thereby make the productions more marketable.

The dissertation concludes with a short section of review, an overarching analysis of trends and themes, and a consideration of how to conceive of Eknāth's social memory in the context of 20th-century *dalit* and low-caste movements that rejected Eknāth and the *bhakti* tradition completely. By the end of the dissertation, we will have surveyed everything that has been written about Eknāth and his inter-caste relations between 1650 and the present. We also will have observed how the tension between devotional egalitarianism and ritual purity has been reframed in many ways. These variants are united, however, in preserving a deep ambiguity about how *bhakti* and caste fit together.

Outline of Maharashtrian History (1500-present)

It will be helpful to review briefly a history of west-central India in order to appreciate some of the historical and cultural dynamics that impinge on the abovementioned source materials, even though the indefinite backgrounds of some texts do not allow them to be placed with precision. To establish a sort of historical anchor for this dissertation, I should state that after reviewing the scholarly Marathi literature on Eknāth, I find it reasonable to adopt the dates of Eknāth's birth and death that have now become widely accepted, if not yet proven unquestionably – 1533 and 1599.[13]

[13] These were first proposed by one of the most influential scholars of the Marathi *sant*s, La. Rā. Pāṅgārkar, who presented a very persuasive argument based on stone inscriptions and references in 17th century Marathi texts. Lakṣmaṇ Rāmcandra Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra : Caritra āṇi Vāṅmay Darśan*, 9 ed. (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1910 [2003]), 141.

The region in which Eknāth lived is deeply marked by the footprints of multiple kingdoms and cultures. According to epigraphic references, the town of Pratiṣṭhāna (Paithan, where Eknāth was born) dates back to around 300 BCE.[14] It was the capital of the Śātavāhana Empire for a time around 100 BCE to 100 CE,[15] and knowledge of its existence was widespread. Pratiṣṭhāna is mentioned in Latin by Pliny and Ptolemy and (it seems) in Chinese by the traveling Buddhist monk Xuán Zàng (Hieun-Tsiang, 玄奘), who visited the city in the 7th century.[16] Sixty kilometers north of Paithan is the massive complex of rock-cut caves at Ellora, which were carved during Rāṣṭrakūṭa rule between the 5th and 8th centuries.[17] The first Marathi-speaking dynasty – the Yādava Empire – was based at the town and fort of Devagiri, approximately twenty kilometers northwest of modern-day Aurangabad) for most of the 13th century. The last minister to the last Yādava king was Hemadri, whose *Caturvarṇa-cintāmaṇi* (Mind-Jewel of the Four Castes) became a classic *dharmaśāstra* text. Jñāndev also composed his rendering of the *Bhagavad-gītā* into Marathi (the *Bhāvārtha-dipikā* or *Jñāneśvarī*) at the end of the 13th century, and he refers to the last independent Yādava king Rāmadeva in his colophon. According to tradition, Jñāndev completed this text in the town of Nevāsā, 50km west of Paithan, and Jñāndev

[14] R. S. Morwanchikar, *The City of the Saints: Paithan through the Ages* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1985), 9.

[15] Ibid., 15-17. There is some debate over the exact dates.

[16] Ibid., 12. For his information about Xuán Zàng, Morwanchikar refers to Hwui Li and Samuel Beal, *Life of Hiuen-Tsiang* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1914). It appears that there is some ambiguity about the exact location of Xuán Zàng's description in the English translation of the Chinese text (due to the challenge of back-transliterating from Chinese), but Morwanchikar clearly feels confident that all of the landscape features (and Buddhist caves) that Xuán Zàng describes point to Pratiṣṭhāna.

[17] Remarkably, no awareness of these incredible caves is indicate in any of the literature about Eknāth, despite the fact that the location (Daulatābād) where he is remembered to have lived with his guru for twelve years is only a few kilometers away. From the tall hill (Sūlī-bhañjan) where Eknāth is said to have meditated, one could easily walk to the caves in several hours.

as a boy supposedly was once forced to appear before a brahman religious council in Paithan.[18] Although none of this directly affects the stories about Eknāth, knowledge of this rich early history in the region helps one to appreciate some of the cultural valences that lie behind later social memories, especially with respect to the widespread Hindu nationalist narrative that Muslims intruded in the region and disrupted the culture that was there.

In 1294 the Devagiri fort was captured by Ala-ud-din Khilji, and although he returned it to the Yādavas in exchange for tribute, this event initiated their dynasty's rapid decline. In 1327, Muhammad bin Tughluq decided to rename the fort and town Daulatābād and make it the southern capital of the Delhi sultanate.[19] While Tughluq was in the North, some of his local administrators in Daulatābād revolted and eventually split away to form the Bahmani sultanate. Subsequently the region into which Eknāth was born remained firmly under the control of the Bahmani sultanate – for nearly two centuries before Eknāth's birth.[20] It should also be noted that a prominent center of *ṣūfī* activity was founded near Daulatābād in the town of Khultābād.[21] At the end of the 15th century, the large Bahmani sultanate (which covered most of the Deccan Plateau at its height) shattered into five smaller kingdoms, with the Nizām Shāh or Ahmadnagar sultanate (due to its capital being at Ahmadnagar, 90km southwest of Paithan) controlling the territory that included Paithan, Daulatābād, and the region.

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[18] The Sanskrit name for this town is Pratiṣṭhāṇa (sometimes Pratiṣṭhānapura), but in Marathi it is nearly always referred to as Paithan. I will be referring to it as Paithan throughout this dissertation.

[19] Haroon Khan Sherwani, *The Bahmanis of the Deccan* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1985), 13.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*, 2 ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004). I have yet to encounter any scholarship on the impact of Khultābād (which continues to be an active *ṣūfī* enclave today) on the neighboring environment, including the Marathi *bhakti* traditions. The topic of Muslim authors of Marathi *bhakti* poetry has received a bit of attention, but I am not aware of any deep historical or sociological research in this area. Cf. Rāmcandra Cintāmaṇ Ḍhere, *Musalmān Marāṭhī Santkavī*, 3 ed. (Puṇe: Padmagandhā Prakāśan, 1967 [2008]).

Eknāth's life overlaps surprisingly well with the reign of the Nizām Shāh sultanate in Ahmadnagar, who held control of the region only during the 16th century before it was conquered by Akbar and the Mughals in 1600.[22] Some scholars have opined that the rulers of the Nizām Shāh sultanate had open attitudes toward religion and language.[23] Unfortunately little intensive scholarship has been done on historical materials themselves that could conclusively shed light on the social conditions outside the palace during this period, although there has been research on the political history of the sultanate itself.[24]

The first half of the 17th century was a very tumultuous period in west-central India, as Mughal forces, having eliminated the Nizām Shāh sultanate, attemped to expand southward into the Ādil Shāh sultanate, whose capital was at Bījāpūr. Local Hindu chiefs and hired troops (who were increasingly identified by the term Marāṭhā) in the region shifted alliances among various sultanates and minor factions. From among these military leaders, Śivājī began slowly and successfully raiding, hiding, fighting, and forging greater alliances with local petty rulers. He had himself crowned in 1674, which allowed him to claim greater sovereignty and taxation rights as well as to demand greater fealty from the petty rulers below him.[25] By the time of his death in 1680, Śivājī had amassed a substantial treasury and command of over one hundred forts in western Maharashtra. He established the foundation of an empire that would expand greatly over the next century. It is worth noting that the first text about Eknāth that we will consider was

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[22] S. Gordon, *The Marathas*, 41.

[23] Vidyut Bhagwat, "Hindu-Muslim Dialogue: A Rereading of Sant Eknath and Sant Shaikh Muhammad," in *Mārga: Ways of Liberation, Empowerment, and Change in Maharashtra*, ed. M. Naito, et al. (Delhi: Manohar, 2008), 88; Hugh van Skyhawk, "The Influence of Sufism on the Śrī-Eknāthī-Bhāgavat," in *Devotional Literature in South Asia, Current Research 1985-1988*, ed. R. S. McGregor. (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 73.

[24] Radhey Shyam, *The Kingdom of Ahmadnagar* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966); M. Siraj Anwar, *Mughals and the Deccan: Political Relations with Ahmadnagar Kingdom* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 2007).

[25] S. Gordon, *The Marathas*, 89.

likely written around in the first half of the 17th century, although nothing in the text seems to indicate a particular relation to its historical circumstances.

Śivājī's son met with rather less success, although this was in part due to adjustments by Aurangzeb and his generals to the Marāṭhās' guerilla tactics.[26] Śivājī's grandson Śāhū was more fortunate, in one sense, because he appointed a particularly skillful brahman from the Konkan Coast, Bālājī Viśvanāth, as his minister (*peśva*) in 1713. Although Śāhū was technically the king of the Marāṭhās, it was through Bālājī's diplomacy and military decisions that the empire began to stabilize. Bālājī was also responsible for appointing fellow members of his sub-caste (Citpāvan brahmans) to influential and lucrative positions.[27] At Bālājī's death in 1720, his son Bājīrāo I was appointed minister in his place. This initiated a fundamental transition of power in the Maratha Empire. The second hagiographical text about Eknāth appears to have been composed around 1700, during the period of growing instability, but as with the previous textual example, there is little information to link this text to particular historical circumstances.

Bājīrāo I effectively assumed control of the Marāṭhā kingdom, with its capital at Pune, and he decreed that Śivājī's descendants should live far away from the action, in Kolhāpūr and Sātārā. Under Bājīrāo I, the Empire took advantage of infighting among the Mughal princes and greatly expanded its territory northward. Bājīrāo I also continued his father's policy of appointing Citpāvan brahmans to choice administrative positions, and the city of Pune took on its distinctly brahman character during this time (1720-1740).[28] Bājīrāo I died in 1740 and his son assumed power, later expanding the Marāṭhā Empire into Orissa and parts of Bengal. In 1752, the Mughal throne in Delhi became a protectorate of the Marāṭhās. Continued expansion of the

[26] Ibid., 94.

[27] Ibid., 113.

[28] Ibid., 130.

Empire was checked only by a decisive defeat in 1761 at Panipat (80km north of Delhi), after which the various Marāṭhā generals began to assert greater independence, and the unified empire was transformed into more of a patchwork confederacy.[29] The third major and most influential hagiographical text about Eknāth was composed in Paithan in 1760, at the height of Marāṭhā power. This text, the *Eknāth-caritra* of Keśavsvāmī, was likely composed in Paithan, however, which was not under Marāṭhā control but rather belonged to the Nizām of Hyderabad. It is an interesting and quite surprising fact that despite the Marāṭhā Empire's power and size (which by 1780 included most of northern India), much of the center and eastern side of what is now Maharashtra never fully came under Marāṭhā control.

The Marāṭhās' defeat at Panipat did not signal a decline in their fortunes, but it did initiate a significant change in their administration, as regional Marāṭhā generals became the leaders of noble houses (now Marāṭhā by *jāti*, which had become recognized as *kṣatriya*).[30] Starting in the 1770s, some of the Marāṭhā houses began to be attacked by the British, who were consolidating their own centers of power.[31] British fortunes continued to increase, and the Marāṭhā noble houses were too fractured to resist. In 1803 the British forced all of the Marāṭhā houses to sign disastrous treaties, and in 1818 the Peśva-led Empire was formally disbanded as the British subjugated the remaining major Marāṭhā kingdoms, making them dependent princely states.[32] All of the hagiographical texts written about Eknāth (aside from the important early three) were composed between 1762 and 1800, during a period of relative political stability and

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[29] Ibid., 153.

[30] Prachi Deshpande, "Caste as Maratha: Social Categories, Colonial Policy and Early Twentieth-century Maharashtra," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 41, no. 1 (2004): 7-32.

[31] S. Gordon, *The Marathas*, 164.

[32] Ibid., 176-177.

slow Marāṭhā decline. It is worth noting here that although some local rulers in Maharashtrian history did patronize the Viṭṭhal temple in Pandharpur and some of the temples devoted to particular *sant*s, this major Marathi *bhakti* tradition was never the official cult of any ruler or administration. Likewise, all of the major *sant*s except for Jñāndev (and perhaps Nāmdev, depending on his actual dates) composed their *bhakti* literature while dwelling in territory that was ruled (however this exactly appeared in various contexts) by Muslim rulers. It is important to try to place historically the texts that we will be considering, but it is often unclear how *bhakti* and hagiographical texts before 1800 related to their social and historical circumstances.

In the 19th century, several movements and trends are important to recognize in relation to this dissertation. First, the spread of British education, translation of English books into Marathi, and general permeation of Western ideas about history, science, religion, and society all had a tremendous impact on the currents within Marathi thought.[33] Second, starting in the middle of the 19th century, a number of brahmans in Pune and Bombay began to publish, advocate, and organize for social and religious change. These brahman social reformers consistently denounced the practices of child marriage, widow remarriage, dowry, and polygamy. Caste equality was on the agenda of some brahman reformers, but it was neither regularly nor very actively pursued by them. In this context it is important to recognize the liberal religious reform organization, the Prārthanā Samāj, which was founded in 1867 and came into its most prominent form under the leadership of Rāmkṛṣṇa Gopāḷ Bhāṇḍārkar and Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe at the turn of the 20th century. Two important pieces of this group's agenda were

[33] Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere: Western India Under Colonialism* (London: Anthem Press, 2002), 55-100.

to reinterpret and renew interest in the Marathi *sant*s and their literature.[34] Third, social and political changes in relation to caste were demanded much more vocally by a number of prominent low-caste and untouchable movements in the region, particularly those led by Jotibā Phule especially between 1873 and 1890 and B. R. Ambedkar between 1927 and 1956. Finally, there have been and continue to be strong nationalist movements in Maharashtra, and this has left a deep impression on many aspects of Marathi thought and politics, and on Maharashtrians' views of the past.

Shape and Emphasis of the Dissertation

My sources for this dissertation are comprehensive, consisting of everything that has been written, composed, enacted and produced between 1650 and the present that offers information or insight into how Eknāth has been remembered. Only in a few cases did I come across a reference to texts or source material (e.g., two very early films) that I was unable to observe personally. In the process of searching for four years (two of them while living in India), I uncovered information related to Eknāth's social memory to an extent that is unparalleled in English or Marathi. Few of these materials are familiar or known to the English academic world. Many are unfamiliar to Marathi scholars as well. The existence of one valuable text (an early 20th-century Urdu biography of Eknāth) has gone completely unnoticed until now.

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[34] Dvārkānāth Govind Vaidya, *Prārthanāsamājācā Itihās* (Mumbaī: Prārthanā Samāj, 1927); J. V. Naik, "D. G. Vaidya and the Prarthana Samaj," in *Region, Nationality and Religion*, ed. A. R. Kulkarni, et al. (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1999), 185-202.

One of the greatest challenges for the reader of this dissertation will be to cope with the very large number of stories and their different renditions that I include. At the center of the dissertation are stories about Eknāth's interactions with untouchables, and I pay close attention to how these are framed and phrased differently over time. Since most of these stories will recur through multiple texts, readers will likely become familiar with their basic plot. In addition to these inter-caste stories, however, I have intentionally mentioned other stories about Eknāth that are not strictly speaking essential to my arguments. My goal in doing this is to offer readers both a sense of the general content of my sources as well as the relative scope of the narratives within them. Stories about Eknāth's inter-caste relations are an important way in which Eknāth has been remembered, but they do not comprise the only way – and in many cases not even the primary one. I have tried to give readers the chance to experience how the concern at the heart of this dissertation fits with the broader social memory of Eknāth as author, teacher, semi-divine figure (*avatār*), and literary innovator.

Given the fact that very few of the Marathi sources that I use are accessible to English readers and that many of my sources are rare and even unknown to most Marathi readers, to focus exclusively on stories that bear immediately on my analysis would have run the risk of misrepresenting the sources as overly concerned with caste, social relations and social hierarchy. Therefore I have tried to balance the concerns of my analysis with a desire to introduce accurate the texts in their narrative entirety. Due to the immense quantity of source material, maintaining this balance has been a challenge that I have not always managed to meet consistently. This also has contributed to the unfortunately large size of the dissertation. Were more of this source material easily accessible to readers, I could have foregone the task of introducing it at such length and instead concentrated more narrowly on analysis.

Chapter One – Background and Literature Review

In order to trace how memories of Eknāth and caste have changed over time, we need to begin near the end. The practical reason for this is that one must have at least a general sense of Eknāth's life and deeds in order to appreciate the more meticulous historiographical investigation in the chapters ahead. From a more methodological standpoint, an examination of social memory cannot but begin by first acknowledging the fundamental role of the present as one's initial frame of reference, before being able to ask, "How did this come about?" As was discussed in the introduction, there is no other honest, hermeneutically self-reflexive point of entry into the course of social memory than to begin near the end.

At this point readers might hope or expect to find a thorough, critical introduction to Eknāth that situates him in his historical context and takes into account the differing opinions in recent scholarship. Such an introduction is unarguably valuable, important and necessary for research on the historical Eknāth, and in fact, I will soon be providing just such an introduction elsewhere.[1] That is not my goal here, however. Questing for a thorough, critical biography at this point in the dissertation may actually impede the proper line of my investigation (focusing as it does on the contours of memory) by assuming a significantly different set of historical questions and concerns. Although strict historical investigation (i.e., seeking the Eknāth of history) certainly does not preclude one from being sensitive to the historiographical means by which information about Eknāth has been transmitted (i.e., the Eknāth of memory), the trajectory and destination of the investigations are quite different.

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[1] Jon Keune, "Eknāth," in *Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, ed. Knut Axel Jacobsen, vol. 4. (Leiden: Brill, 2012 forthcoming).

I am investigating the historiographical record for its own sake rather than as means of locating the Eknāth who lived in the 16th century. Who Eknāth actually was (and there is no reason to doubt his historical existence) is neither a central nor an urgent question for this dissertation. Far more important are the ways in which people understood and remembered him, how the persona of Eknāth was shaped by the various historical and social circumstances of those memories, and how records of these memories might shed light on the complicated relationship between *bhakti* and caste. In light of these goals, it makes more sense to acquaint ourselves initially with the persona of Eknāth as portrayed in a popular, modern recitation of his biography rather than in a critical, scholarly one. At the same time, I acknowledge that readers who are unfamiliar with Eknāth will want more information than such a popular rendition offers about his life and significance. Therefore, I will comment on and supplement this popular rendition as necessary, keeping in mind that much more thorough and critical reflections await in the chapters ahead.

A Common Biographical Sketch of Eknāth

For a popular biographical sketch of Eknāth we could turn to several possible sources, each offering a slightly different take on Eknāth's life and significance. For example, we could visit a devotional book stall at a Maharashtrian pilgrimage site and pay twenty rupees (less than 50 cents) for a slim, pocket-sized devotional biography of Eknāth such as the one by Anant Paiṇhaṇkar.[1] In this book we would find lengthy descriptions and dialogues about Eknāth's devotion to his guru, Eknāth's many miracles, and stories about various deities coming

[1] Anant Paiṭhaṇkar, *Śrī Eknāth Caritra* (Mumbaī: Dhārmik Prakāśan Saṁsthā, 1974 [2007]). I obtained my copy in a stall outside the Eknāth Samādhi Mandir in Paithan in 2009, but this book is available all around Maharashtra.

clandestinely to Eknāth's house to serve him. But Paithankar would provide us with scant information about Eknāth's inter-caste relations, and we would learn almost nothing about what Eknāth himself wrote.

If we were to imagine ourselves in the small shoes of a 10 year-old Maharashtrian schoolchild, we could pick up (for only 15 rupees) a nicely illustrated book about Eknāth written by Sujātā Gānū.[2] In her 32 pages of narrative printed in large font, we would find twelve well-known stories that Gānū selected in order to impress aspects of Eknāth's character upon young readers. We would find edifying accounts of Eknāth's industrious diligence as a student, his patience in the face of adversity, his respectful treatment of people who belonged to other religions and castes, and his care for animals. We would not obtain, however, a rich understanding of how Eknāth's biography unfolded chronologically.

If we wanted a more multimedia experience of Eknāth, we could stop by a local music store or a devotional book stand and bring home a recent made-for-VCD film about Eknāth, such as the one written and directed by Rāju Phulkar.[3] Viewing this VCD, we would witness Eknāth patiently and always with a smile endure the various schemes devised by arrogant brahmans to trouble him, and we would hear and see many examples of his poetry and *bhārūḍ*s engagingly performed (in a modern style) as parts of the larger biographical narrative. However, we would learn nothing of Eknāth's childhood and very little of his life before getting married. Although we might find the VCD quite entertaining, we also might be left wondering how much creative license the director and producer took in order to present it this way.

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[2] E.g., Sujātā Gānū, *Sant Śrī Eknāth Mahārājāñce Caritra* (Puṇe: Me. Ādarśa Vidyārthī Prakāśan, 2006).

[3] E.g., Rāju Phulkar, "Sant Eknāth Mahārāj : Marāṭhī Video Compact Disc," (Puṇe: Sumeet, 2004). VCDs (Video Compact Discs) are currently more popular than DVDs at devotional book stands, as they are not only more affordable but also more easily playable (having fewer anti-pirating restrictions). Phulkar's "Sant Eknāth Mahārāj," which consists of two discs, cost me 65 rupees (less than $1.50) at a music store on Laxmi Road in Pune.

Paiṭhaṇkar's popular devotional book, Gānū's children's literature and Phulkar's VCD would all have their advantages and drawbacks, and in fact, we will consider some of them in greater depth in the final two chapters of the dissertation. Each of them deals with the social, inter-caste aspect of Eknāth's biography that is at the center of this dissertation, but another short book foregrounds the issue more clearly and will therefore be more helpful in orienting us to the social memory of Eknāth's inter-caste relations. Furthermore, since its publication was sponsored by the Maharashtra government, it will also introduce us to the political undercurrents at work in discussions of social equality and religion.

The short, illustrated book *Saint Eknath* was published by the Government of Maharashtra as part of an effort in the late 1960s to introduce important Maharashtrian figures to a pan-Indian audience and thereby try to foster inter-regional harmony.[4] Priced at only fifty paise in 1968, this book was quite affordable for a wide audience. Although the author, Shridhar Kulkarni, came to this project with significant scholarly credentials, the simple language and informal tone in this 26-page text are clearly adapted to an audience of non-specialists.[5] Since *Saint Eknath* was written in English so as to reach a broad, non-Maharashtrian audience who

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[4] Shridhar (Ranganath) Kulkarni, *Saint Eknath* (Delhi: Maharashtra Information Centre; Government of Maharashtra, 1966 [1968]), i-ii. Kulkarni and his publishers never state this openly, but one presumes that a major source for this inter-regional friction was the redrawing of state boundaries along linguistic lines, which brought the modern state of Maharashtra in its current form into being on May 1, 1960. Tensions over linguistic representation in particular territories were a major force behind the *Saṁyukta Mahāṛāṣṭra Samitī* (United Maharashtra Committee) at the time and, and these disputes continue to be a point of contention on the southwestern Maharashtra-Karnataka border. On the *Saṁyukta Mahārāṣṭra Samitī,* see Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 41-45; Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 195-197; for more on ongoing border disputes, see Vasant Ramchandra Bhandare, *Maharashtra-Karnataka Border Dispute: Politics of Manipulation* (Bombay: Kirti Prakashan, 1985).

[5] Before *Saint Eknath*, Kulkarni had published an extensive scholarly/devotional work on Eknāth's historical contribution to the Vārkarī *sampradāy*: Śrīdhar Raṅganāth Kuḷkarṇī, *Nāthāñcā Bhāgavatdharma* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 1958). In the course of his life Kulkarni published over a dozen Marathi books on medieval Marathi literature as well. The author of *Saint Eknath* was an accomplished Marathi scholar.

were unacquainted with Eknāth (similar to some readers of this dissertation, I assume),[6] and since nearly all of the information that it contains is widely accepted and uncontroversial, *Saint Eknath* will serve well as an introduction here.[7]

Kulkarni prefaces his biographical presentation of Eknāth with remarks that frame the *sant* and his significance in a particularly social way, namely, that Eknāth was the first Marathi *sant* to teach and demonstrate that "service to humanity is the way of realizing God."[8] This hews closely to a very common 20th-century interpretation of Eknāth, which perceives his social and religious contribution leading to an important political development. Hindus who were, as Kulkarni writes, "groaning under the yoke of a foreign rule and demoralized before the cultural onslaught of Islam," were "electrified" by the "inspiring examples" of Eknāth and other *sant*s and thereby mobilized into a "veritable mass movement."[9] As we will see in greater detail in Chapter Four, this popular modern narrative lifts up Eknāth's social concerns and inter-caste relations as a key component in the broader agenda of political emancipation. Throughout his short book, Kulkarni frequently reminds his audience of Eknāth's socio-political significance.[10] This is another benefit of using *Saint Eknath* as a starting point for examining social memory – it is impossible to overlook how the biography of 16th-century Eknāth is seen in this instance

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[6] The Maharashtra Information Centre also published similar biographies in English about the other three most famous Marathi *sant*s. M. A. Karandikar, *Saint Namdev* (Delhi: Maharashtra Information Centre, 1985); Keshav Vishnu Belsare, *Tukaram* (Delhi: Maharashtra Information Centre, 1967); S. V. Dandekar, *Dnyanadeo* (Delhi: Maharashtra Information Centre, 1969).

[7] Although Kulkarni touches on most of the main biographical points of Eknāth's life in *Saint Eknath*, he does so in an oddly circuitous way. Therefore, I will be reordering some of Kulkarni's narrative into their conventional chronological sequence.

[8] S.R. Kulkarni, *Saint Eknath*, 3.

[9] Ibid., 1-3.

[10] Notably, the publisher's goal for the book – fostering inter-regional harmony in India – is pursued by Kulkarni in a manner that shows little concern for inter-religious harmony. As is typical of most 20th-century Maharashtrian historiography, Muslims and Islam are depicted as foreign, invasive and oppressive. For more on this historiographical pattern, see P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 18, 128-134.

through a peculiarly modern lens. It is clear that historiographical operations are at work here to explain Eknāth's significance for the present.

Having articulated his interpretative perspective, Kulkarni begins his biographical sketch. Eknāth was born in 1533 to an illustrious brahman family in the ancient town of Pratiṣṭhāna (now called Paithan).[11] His great-grandfather Bhānudās was remembered for having rendered an important service to the Vārkarī tradition at an acute time of need.[12] Bhānudās traveled to the palace of the king of Vijayanagar in order to rescue the stone image of Viṭṭhal that was being held captive there and bring it back it to its original home in Pandharpur, where the Vārkarīs had become despondent in its absence.[13]

Shortly after Eknāth was born, both of his parents died, leaving him to be raised by his loving grandparents. Even as a small boy, Eknāth showed deep spiritual inclinations and intellectual promise. When he was twelve years old, without giving any notice to his grandparents, Eknāth suddenly ran away from Paithan.[14] Kulkarni's description – Eknāth

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[11] There is some debate about Eknāth's year of birth, but 1533 is the most commonly accepted date.

[12] For more on Bhānudās, see Justin E. Abbott and Narhar Godbole, *Bhanudas: Translated from Mahipati's Bhaktavijay Chapters 42 & 43*, Poet-Saints of Maharashtra (1926).

[13] Kulkarni cites the widespread idea (endorsed by, among others, the prominent Marathi philosopher and spiritual leader, R. D. Ranade) that the Viṭṭhal image had been intentionally removed to the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar in order to protect it against iconoclastic Muslim soldiers. Yet Kulkarni does not invest his full confidence in this, as he later qualifies his remarks with "whatever the reason [for the statue's disappearance from Pandharpur]…" S.R. Kulkarni, *Saint Eknath*, 3-4. Others presume that the king of Vijayanagar (often, but not always, identified importantly as Kṛṣṇadevārāya) simply stole the Viṭṭhal image from Pandharpur out of greed. This is the position of the renowned Vārkarī leader whose book on the Vārkarīs became the standard scholarly overview of the tradition. Śaṅkar Vaman (Sonopant) Dāṇḍekar, *Vārkarī Pantācā Itihās*, 3 ed. (Āḷandī: Prā. Dāṇḍekar Dhārmik Vāṅmay Prakāśan, 1927 [1966]), 45-47. One of the foremost Marathi scholars of religious history gives it little credence, although he does note that there is solid evidence that the Viṭṭhal image was moved to preserve it from Muslim iconoclasts in other cases. Rāmcandra Cintāmaṇ Ḍhere, *Śrīviṭṭhala: Eka Mahāsamanvay*, 2 ed. (Puṇe: Padmagandhā Prakāśan, 1984 [2005]), Ch. 6. In popular memory, the reason for the statue's arrival in Vijayanagar is of little importance; what drives the narrative is that the king became attached to the image and refused to return it to Pandharpur, thus necessitating Bhānudās' intervention.

[14] Ibid., 5. This story is narrated and explained in various ways by interpreters who attempt to explain why the otherwise well-behaved Eknāth run away from home. One very common extension of this story is that Eknāth had exhausted the wisdom of his teachers in Paithan, prayed in a Śiva temple for guidance, and heard a mysterious voice tell him to seek out Janārdana in Daulatābād as his future guru.

"played truant" – accurately conveys the ambivalent feeling with which this episode is remembered, as Eknāth's act appears insensitive and irresponsible, in light of how his grandparents were affected.[15] Not knowing where Eknāth was or if he was even alive, the grandparents grieved for many years before Eknāth eventually returned.[16] Eknāth departed from Paithan in order to become the disciple of a locally famous *svāmī*, Janārdana. According to the most common story (which Kulkarni recites), Janārdana was a learned seer, a devotee of the god Dattātreya (whom he met personally and regularly), and the commander of the great fort at Daulatābād.[17] Under Janārdana's tutelage, Eknāth undertook austerities, studied a number of Sanskrit and Marathi texts, and went with him on a pilgrimage to several holy sites (Tryambakeśvar and its environs) near the modern town of Nāśik. It was here that Eknāth composed his first text, the *Catuḥślokī Bhāgavat,* which commented on several verses of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.* Kulkarni omits a commonly told story – while on that local pilgrimage Janārdana was so inspired by a local *sādhu* friend's discourse on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* that he told Eknāth to take heed and write down the gist of his message. Thus according to tradition, Eknāth first began writing at the command of his guru.[18]

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Many versions of this story do not specify the length of Eknāth's absence. When an exact number is stated, it is usually twelve.

[17] Eknāth's tutelage under Janārdana is universally accepted, but Janārdana's exact occupation is another rough edge in the popular narrative. Most stories concur with Kulkarni that Janārdana was the fort commander (*killedār*). Some stories indicate that Janārdana was more like an accountant or treasurer (*mutsaddī*), and others indicate more vaguely that he was simply an "officer" (*subhedār*). I have yet to encounter a reference to Janārdana and his occupation in Daulatābād beyond what is said about him in Eknāth-related literature and the few short, informal, modern biographies of Janārdana that corroborates any of these stories. In any case, that Janārdana loyally served the local Muslim ruler is never doubted – a troublesome detail for Hindu nationalist interpreters. Notably, although Janārdana's precise affiliation to a religious tradition is unclear in stories about him, he is always said to be a devotee of Dattātreya, and he is never associated with the Vārkarī tradition in hagiographical and early biographical literature. One 21st-century filmmaker takes creative license with this and portrays him as a Vārkarī.

[18] Ibid., 10.

After leading Eknāth on his first pilgrimage, Janārdana instructed him to make a longer, solo pilgrimage tour of the famous Hindu shrines in India. After Eknāth had completed his tour of northern India and paused at Paithan (where he was reunited with his grandparents) on his way southward, Janārdana instructed him to stop, get married, and live as a householder. Kulkarni explains that this may have been done in part to console Eknāth's worried and quite elderly grandparents.[19] Janārdana arranged a marriage to a young woman named Girijā, who belonged to a wealthy family in Bījāpūr.[20] In stark contrast to the wives of the Marathi *sant*s Nāmdev and Tukārām, Girijā is remembered to have supported and encouraged Eknāth's activities with unwavering enthusiasm. In Kulkarni's words, "Girijabai not only espoused the man, Eknath, but also his mission of reforming society in the teeth of determined opposition."[21]

Kulkarni goes on to mention several events that occurred after Eknāth settled down in Paithan, in the long period (roughly several decades) between the time of his marriage and the end of his life. These vignettes follow no particular logical sequence and are largely unconnected to one another, and therefore I will refer to them as the "independent episodes." Kulkarni describes a number of these independent episodes: Eknāth poured holy Gangā water into the mouth of a parched donkey, he tolerated a "ruffian" (all other renditions specify a Muslim or an untouchable) who spat on him and thereby forced him to bathe 108 times, and Eknāth pulled down a beam from the roof of his house in the absence of other dry firewood one

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[19] Ibid.

[20] The connection to this family in Bījāpūr (probably connoting the region under the control of the Ādil Shāh sultanate generally rather than the town by that name, which was the sultanate's capital) is never explained, but it would be historically plausible if Eknāth's ancestors had moved from that region (specifically, the town of Mhaisāḷ on the current Maharashtra-Karnataka border) to Paithan, as informed sources claim. R. S. Ināmdār, Personal communication, June 6, 2010. Also see Madhukar Gosāvī, "Sant Śrī Eknāth Gharaṇyācī Pramāṇbhūt Vaṁśāvaḷ," in *Svānanda Vārsā*, ed. Ra. Sā. Ināmdār. (Aurangābād: Śrīeknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 2005), 16. Another version of this story (less commonly known) says that Girijā's father was a *śāstrī* in Daulatābād. Cf. Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan, *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*, ed. Raghunāth Hamaṇpanth Koṭnīs (Mumbaī: Trinity Publicity Society, 1948), 4:53-55.

[21] S.R. Kulkarni, *Saint Eknath*, 8.

rainy night to cook a meal for some travelers who arrived unexpectedly and requested food.[22] Eknāth was also summoned to Varanasi when *paṇḍit*s there heard that he was composing a Marathi commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Although they were initially outraged, Eknāth won them over so completely that they seated him and his book (the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat*) atop an elephant and paraded them through the streets.[23] Eknāth once served to "hungry Harijans" food that had been prepared for ritual offering at the death anniversary for his ancestors (*śrāddha*), and he once ate a meal at the home of an untouchable family. These may seem like rather random events that have no clear connection to each other, but there is much more to these independent episodes – the particular episodes that Kulkarni mentions as well as the narrative role of the episodes generally – than initially meets the eye. It will be worthwhile to step back and consider them briefly before rejoining Kulkarni's presentation.

If one were to tally all of the independent episodes among the various recitations of Eknāth's biography (by Kulkarni and others), the total would reach 20 to 25, depending on how one counted. Although interesting academically, this grand total does not straightforwardly represent actual social memory. Not all of the independent episodes circulated equally; some are standard in biographies of Eknāth while other episodes are rarely repeated, and a few unprecedented ones appear in print for the first time only in the 20th century. Since the content of the stories is so self-subsistent and unconnected to other stories, independent episodes behave like modules, which can be included in or omitted from a given biography without disrupting its narrative flow. Most of these stories highlight Eknāth's compassion, patience and generosity, as we shall observe more closely in the next two chapters.

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[22] Ibid., 23-24.

[23] Ibid., 5. Although Eknāth had much earlier composed a Marathi commentary (*Catuḥślokī Bhāgavat*) on several verses in the second *skandha* of the *BhP*, it was the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat*, which commented in Marathi on the whole 11th *skandha*, that upset the *paṇḍit*s in Varanasi according to this story.

Many but not all of the independent episodes involve a miraculous turn of events. Notably, Kulkarni omits most of these wonders, although they are quite popular and regularly repeated by other biographers and the general public. Three such stories that Kulkarni leaves out of his book are: Eknāth causing a stone bull (Nandi) to eat grass from his hand, stand up and jump in a river; Eknāth being visited by various deities in humble disguises who serve him clandestinely; and Eknāth summoning his deceased ancestors to partake in the ceremonial feast at their own death anniversary (*śrāddha*). These wondrous events, as we shall witness frequently in the next two chapters, are central to more overtly devotional renditions of Eknāth's biography, particularly as such episodes reinforce the perception of Eknāth as a spiritually gifted person or an *avatār* (human manifestation of a deity). This does not mean that Kulkarni refrains from using devotional language in *Saint Eknath* (since he freely refers to Eknāth as "God incarnate" and as a "messenger of God"),[24] but he does so in a particular, nuanced way that is common to many 20th-century Indian academics who write about Hindu traditions – emphasizing the importance of a scientific worldview, and denouncing "superstitious" and fantastic beliefs, while nonetheless asserting that the activities of deities and *sant*s are in some sense "true" and relevant to modern life. We will consider this pattern of scholarship further in Chapter Four.

The most important thing about the independent episodes for this dissertation is that they are the main source of words, images and inspiration for thinking about Eknāth as a social actor who crossed caste boundaries and freely interacted with untouchables. Stories about Eknāth's inter-caste relations occur exclusively in the independent episodes and not in the more chronologically anchored stories about Eknāth (i.e., in the periods between his birth and marriage, and at his death). This is a significant fact that other scholars have overlooked.

[24] Ibid., 8, 26.

Because of the "modularity" of these independent episodes, the stories about Eknāth's inter-caste relations can be included or left out without drastically affecting the flow of the overall biography. Kulkarni includes two stories of inter-caste relations: Eknāth feeding the "hungry Harijans" and Eknāth eating at the untouchable family's home. Kulkarni claims that these are examples of Eknāth's "reforming zeal."[25] These and other such stories will comprise the primary narrative data that we will use throughout this dissertation, and it is important to recognize how they fit within and go absent from the larger narrations of Eknāth's life.

Returning once again to Kulkarni's narration of Eknāth's life, Eknāth and Girijā had two daughters and a son. Both daughters were married into "respectable" families, and one of them subsequently had a son, Mukteśvar, who became a highly acclaimed Marathi poet. Eknāth's son, Hari (commonly known as Haripaṇḍit) grew into a very bright young man who took a dim view of his father's unorthodox behavior. Haripaṇḍit specifically disapproved of Eknāth writing and teaching in Marathi rather than Sanskrit, and he resented Eknāth's willingness to eat food in the homes of "strangers."[26] So Haripaṇḍit departed from Paithan and settled in Varanasi.[27] Eknāth soon missed his son, so he traveled to Varanasi to try and entice Haripaṇḍit to come back.[28] Haripaṇḍit demanded that Eknāth cease teaching in Marathi and eating outside his home (where the food was certain to be ritually pure), and Eknāth acquiesced in order to bring his son home.

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[25] S.R. Kulkarni, *Saint Eknath*, 8.

[26] Ibid., 6-7.

[27] In light of these Varanasi references in stories about Eknāth, it would be wise to keep in mind Rosalind O'Hanlon's recent discussion of the migration of brahman *paṇḍit*s from Paithan to Varanasi in the 16th century. Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Letters Home: Banaras Pandits and the Maratha Regions in Early Modern India," *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2009): 1-40.

[28] One might imagine that the story of Eknāth's earlier visit to Varanasi and would have had some impact on the story of Haripaṇḍit's orthodoxy and shift to Varanasi. For example, one could imagine listeners hearing both stories and wondering why Haripaṇḍit completely disregarded the Varanasi *paṇḍit*s' great praise of his father's work, or wondering whether the *paṇḍit*s in Varanasi welcomed Eknāth back when he came to fetch his son. Interestingly, no writer – scholarly or devotional – connects these narratives together in any way. The stories are completely separate and autonomous.

Once back in Paithan, however, Eknāth took pity on a poor widow who had made a vow to feed one thousand brahmans, and he went with Haripaṇḍit in tow to eat at her home and help to fulfill her vow. When Eknāth finished his meal, he asked Haripaṇḍit (who was waiting nearby) to take away his plate. Haripaṇḍit lifted up the plate, but another plate appeared immediately below. This occurred one thousand times, miraculously fulfilling the poor widow's vow and humbling Haripaṇḍit in the process.[29]

As Eknāth approached the end of his life, he was in the process of composing a Marathi rendition of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which would later become known as the *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa*. Knowing that he would not live to bring the work to fruition, he requested a disciple named Gāvbā to complete it for him.[30] Shortly thereafter, in 1599, Eknāth died at the age of 66.[31]

After concluding his biographical sketch of Eknāth, Kulkarni gives an overview of Eknāth's main writings. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* was a very influential text for Eknāth's thinking and writings. His first composition, as mentioned above, was the 1,000-verse *Catuḥślokī Bhāgavat*, which commented on four verses of the *BhP* (2.9.32-35). His second commentary – also in Marathi – covered the entire eleventh section or canto (*skandha*) of the *BhP* and became known eponymously as the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat.* This large text (18,000 verses) is considered to be Eknāth' *magnum opus*, and it has taken a place alongside Jñāndev's *Jñāneśvarī* and

[29] Earlier I stated that Kulkarni avoids telling stories that involve miracles, and this story of the 1,000 plates is something of an exception. Unlike almost all of the other miraculous vignettes (which Kulkarni excludes), this one is not an independent episode. It is essential to the larger narrative of how Haripaṇḍit first rejected but was eventually reconciled with Eknāth's unorthodox behavior. Without referring to this miracle (or replacing it with a more mundane alternative), the narration of the change in Haripaṇḍit's character would not make sense.

[30] Ibid., 9. Kulkarni leaves out a widely accepted detail that Gāvbā was both mute and mentally impaired, so Eknāth's command that Gāvbā finish his book effected a miraculous transformation in the boy.

[31] Kulkarni leaves unmentioned that Eknāth drowned himself (*jalasamādhi*) in the sacred Godāvarī River that flows around the town of Paithan.

Tukārām's *Gāthā* as the three most authoritative texts in the Vārkarī tradition.[32] Although Eknāth began writing the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* in Paithan, he completed it in Varanasi, as the colophon of the text itself states. While there, Eknāth also rendered into Marathi a story from the 10th chapter of the *BhP* about Rukmiṇī's choice to marry Kṛṣṇa – the 1,700-verse *Rukmiṇī Svayaṁvara*, whose colophon testifies to its completion in 1571.[33] As mentioned earlier, near the end of Eknāth's life he began the *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa* and composed 25,000 verses before passing the project on to his disciple, who wrote a further 15,000 verses. He critically edited the *Jñāneśvarī*, which had become "corrupted" in the two and a half centuries after Jñāndev's death. Eknāth wrote several short, philosophical works in Marathi that together total around 3,000 verses. He also composed over 3,000 short poems (*abhaṅga*s), in addition to religious discourses and drama-poems (*bhārūḍ*s).[34]

In the remainder of *Saint Eknath*, Kulkarni discusses Eknāth's historical and social significance, highlighting two themes consistently: Eknāth's exemplary use of multiple languages and the social effects of Eknāth's theological teaching. In light of the publisher's interest in intra-regional harmony, it is hardly surprising that Kulkarni would draw attention to Eknāth's polyglossia. In this short volume of cultural advocacy (or propaganda, depending on one's view), Eknāth and other Marathi *sant*s are promoted as inspiring models of how to

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[32] The *Jñāneśvarī, Eknāthī Bhāgavat* and *Tukārām Gāthā* are regularly referred to as the Vārkarī "*prasthāna-traya"* ("three points of origin" in the sense of three foundational, authoritative texts), on the model of the *prasthāna-traya* of Vedānta (the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Upaniṣad*s and *Brahma-sūtra*s).

[33] Kulkarni's text mistakenly states that this story is from the 19th *skandha* of the *BhP*. Since a scholar like S. R. Kulkarni would have known that the *BhP* contains only twelve *skandha*s, I suspect this was a typographical error. Ibid., 12. It should also be noted that the *Rukmiṇī Svayamvara* is one of Eknāth's most popular writings, and one finds far more copies of it Marathi manuscript archives than of any other text by Eknāth. The source of this text's unique popularity derives from a popular belief that transcribing this text is auspicious for finding a good husband for an unmarried daughter.

[34] Ibid., 10-12. When compiled together as they are in modern publications of Eknāth's *Gāthā* (poetry collection), these short poetic compositions total much closer to 4,000. I do not know why Kulkarni claims 3,000 here.

embrace multi-lingualism in modern India rather than insist on the superiority of any single language.[35] Kulkarni states that Eknāth was "well versed" in Marathi, Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, and Eknāth composed poetry in not only Marathi but also various dialects of Hindi as well as in Telugu and Kannada.[36] Although Kulkarni's claim that Eknāth "knew" Arabic and Persian well and that he "composed" in Telugu and Kannada may be an exaggeration, he is certainly correct in pointing out that Eknāth used multiple languages and vocabularies in his oral and written compositions.[37] Kulkarni also states that Eknāth "virtually resuscitated Marathi literature" which had decayed in the 250 years since the time of Jñāndev.[38] This claim is hyperbolic as well, since there were in fact earlier Marathi authors and contemporaries of Eknāth who are relatively overlooked and under-studied, in part because their existence does not fit the very common historical narrative of cultural decline during Muslim rule that Kulkarni is reciting.[39] Nonetheless, Eknāth's contribution to Marathi literature is unquestionably very

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[35] Ibid., 13. On this point Kulkarni's interests in *Saint Eknath* diverge from more common portrayals of Eknāth. Kulkarni emphasizes the contemporary relevance of Eknāth specifically as a polyglot; others interpret this multi-lingual capability only as further evidence of Eknāth's erudition. Of course, most other authors were also writing for a primarily Marathi audience, unlike Kulkarni.

[36] Ibid., 24, 13.

[37] In the interest of padding Eknāth's already impressive linguistic resume, Kulkarni probably had in mind a number of short poems that are attributed to Eknāth, composed mainly in Marathi but with sentences or words from other languages. Furthermore, several poems composed wholly in a pidgin of Hindi, Dakhani and other languages are also attributed to Eknāth. Eknāth's chosen language for composition was overwhelming (more than 99%) Marathi. A much better model of a Maharashtrian *sant*'s multi-lingualism would be Nāmdev. C.L. Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory*, 214.

[38] Ibid., 25.

[39] For example, there was in fact a good deal of Marathi literature composed in the centuries prior to Eknāth's birth, but the authors mainly belonged to the Mahānubhāv *sampradāy*, whose membersintentionally distanced themselves from the larger Maharashtrian society (even to the extent of using encoded scripts). This state of affairs changed when Mahānubhāv leaders decided to publicly challenge negative stereotypes of the group in the early 20th century, and the Mahānubhāvs' literary contributions are still only slowly being acknowledged by literary historians. Anne Feldhaus, *The Religious System of the Mahānubhāva Sect* (Delhi: Manohar Press, 1983), 6-7. Eknāth as an author had a number of contemporaries, one of whom (Dāsopant of Ambā Jogāī) was extremely prolific. Eknāth, Dāsopant and three others are commonly referred to conventionally as the "*Eknāth Pañcak*" ("Eknāth Pentad"). Cf. Shankar Gopal Tulpule, *Classical Marāṭhī Literature : From the Beginning to A.D. 1818*, History of Indian Literature (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979), 259-364. Eknāth's name is by far the most famous, and his compositions may in

substantial, and one cannot dispute that he is the most highly regarded Marathi author of the 16th century.

The other major theme that Kulkarni consistently draws out in *Saint Eknath* is the social dimension of Eknāth's religious teachings. He writes that Eknāth overcame his religious and social detractors, even though "his advocacy of social equality and abolition of distinctions of class, caste and creed was far in advance of his times."[40] Eknāth's interactions with untouchables were examples of his "reforming zeal."[41] "He was essentially a poet of the common man to whose spiritual welfare he dedicated his life and his work."[42] "While preaching simple devotion and social equality, Eknath read a new meaning in Bhakti" such that "true devotees formed one family having no distinctions of caste and colour."[43] He sought to build a society based on "a feeling of equality and brotherhood" and used his voice to "denounce caste distinctions."[44] "He equated the highest state of development with the attainment of the highest truth, which meant for him the discovery of the divine in every being."[45] Kulkarni's understanding of how Eknāth viewed caste is quite clear.

At the same time, Kulkarni is careful to note that in preaching this lesson of equality based on theological principles of divine omnipresence and proper *bhakti*, Eknāth brought about

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fact be aesthetically more appealing, but he was not as utterly peerless as Kulkarni makes him out to be. The important material advantage that Eknāth had over his contemporaries was that he belonged to a very large religious tradition (the Vārkarī *sampradāy*) that continues to be vibrant in Maharashtra.

[40] S.R. Kulkarni, *Saint Eknath*, 8.

[41] Ibid., 8.

[42] Ibid., 13.

[43] Ibid., 18.

[44] Ibid., 19.

[45] Ibid., 22.

real socio-political change. Eknāth developed a "new consciousness of belonging to the one and same religious brotherhood."[46] This promoted a "feeling of oneness among the people."[47] More explicitly, Kulkarni explains that Eknāth could "diagnose the disease that had sapped the inner strength of the people of his time and made them incapable of withstanding the terrific onslaught of the Muslims and other forces aimed at their enslavement."[48] Most tellingly, Kulkarni explicitly states the historical frame of reference that he has in mind: Eknāth's work was justified by "the founding of a new kingdom of spiritually strong, self-reliant people by Chhatrapati Shivaji within half a century of the saint's death."[49] Anyone familiar with modern Maharashtrian history will quickly recognize this famous theme, which appeared most famously in M. G. Ranade's *Rise of the Maratha Power* in 1900.[50]

In light of how important social change and equality are to Kulkarni's sketch of Eknāth, it is remarkable that he offers only two stories as evidence to support this view: Eknāth feeding and eating with untouchables and Eknāth's insistence on writing in Marathi rather than in Sanskrit. There are in fact other, commonly known hagiographical stories (as we shall see in the next two chapters) that Kulkarni could have cited to bolster his claim about Eknāth's social egalitarianism, although it is perhaps unfair to expect that Kulkarni provide it all in this overtly introductory text. Precisely because of this editorial choice, *Saint Eknath* is an utterly appropriate book to orient us to the historiographically entangled notion that Eknāth was a reformer who promoted and practiced social egalitarianism. Like Kulkarni, some modern interpreters of Eknāth have

[46] Ibid., 15.

[47] Ibid., 15.

[48] Ibid., 21.

[49] Ibid., 22.

[50] Mahadev Govind Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power* (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1900 [1961]), 64-76.

been prone to interpret a great deal of social significance out of very limited narrative evidence when it comes to Eknāth and caste. These social interpretations of Eknāth are almost invariably bound up within larger historical and political narratives, although the connection is not always presented as obviously as it is in *Saint Eknath*.

It would be helpful at this point to step back and recall our goal. I have used Kulkarni's introductory booklet at this stage only as a heuristic starting point for tracing of social memory about Eknāth and caste. As discussed earlier, other points of entry would have also been possible sources for a provisional sketch of Eknāth's life, and they would have highlighted other aspects of his persona and legacy. This is not to imply that Kulkarni's *Saint Eknath* is idiosyncratic in its social interest. Quite the contrary, nearly all books (in all languages) on Eknāth in the 20th century at the least mention his "teachings" of equality or stories about his inter-caste relations, even if only in passing. Kulkarni foregrounds the issue more clearly than some other portrayals, however, which naturally fits the line of inquiry in this dissertation well.

Literature Review of Eknāth Studies

The overwhelming majority of research on Eknāth, not surprisingly, is published in Marathi. The four earliest and most important hagiographical writings about Eknāth are: Mukteśvar's short, puranic-styled *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān* (Tale of Śrī Khaṇḍyā, mid-17th century), Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan's *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* (Story of Pratiṣṭhān, ca. 1700), Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra* (Story of Eknāth, 1762), and the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (Essence of the Bhaktas' Divine Play, 1774) by the great Vārkarī hagiographer Mahīpati. Since I will focus on these and other minor hagiographical works extensively in Chapters Two and Three, I will refrain from discussing them here.

Modern Marathi biographical writing on Eknāth (i.e., from 1880 onwards) tends to pursue one or more of four main concerns: an interest in Eknāth's significance as a social unifier in the socio-political history of Maharashtra, a non-dual mystical or "spiritual" interest in the philosophical contents of Eknāth's writings, an explicitly devotional interest in Eknāth's miracles and semi-divine status, and an interest specifically in Eknāth's social outlook and teachings about caste. Although I will discuss these materials extensively in Chapter Four, it will be useful to note a few outstanding examples here in order to appreciate a rough timeline of how the modern discourses around Eknāth took shape. After doing this, we will focus more intently on the English and German language scholarship that has shaped how Eknāth has been perceived by scholarly audiences outside India. By doing so, I do not imply that the Marathi scholarship on Eknāth is of lesser importance. Quite the contrary, the Marathi scholarship is undeniably central to the proper study of Eknāth's social memory. In order to approach it with a clearer vision, however, we should identify our own (i.e., European and American) scholarly memory of Eknāth first.

The first modern biographical work on Eknāth was published in 1883 by a relatively obscure administrator in Poona High School, Dhoṇḍo Bāḷkṛṣṇa Sahasrabuddhe. His book follows the common pattern of biographical composition at the time by including a long section of representative excerpts from Eknāth's own writings after narrating his biography.[51] In 1890 the free-thinking, reform-minded Rājarāmśāstrī Bhāgavat wrote a long, socially incisive biographical essay on Eknāth for the education and edification of the students whom he taught in Bombay.[52] In 1910 the socially conservative historian of the Marathi *sant*s, Lakṣmaṇ

[51] Dhoṇḍo Bāḷkṛṣṇa Sahasrabuddhe, *Paiṭhaṇ yethīl Prasiddha Sādhu, Kavi va Tatvavette Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra* (Mumbaī: Nirṇayasāgara Pres, 1883).

[52] Rājārām Rāmkṛṣṇa Bhāgvat, "Eknāthāñce Caritra," in *Rājārāmśāstrī Bhāgvat yāñce Nivaḍak Sāhitya - Lekhasaṅgraha 4*, ed. Durgā Bhāgvat, vol. 4. (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1890 [1979]), 73-112.

Rāmcandra Pāṅgārkar, wrote what would become the most influential and standard biography of Eknāth in Marathi.[53] All three of these early Marathi biographies relied heavily on the hagiography of Keśavsvāmī as conveyed through Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*. The first major English work on Eknāth appeared in Justin Abbott's critical introduction to and translation of Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* in 1927.[54] This book had a significant impact on Marathi scholarship on Eknāth as well as English scholarship, as will be discussed in greater detail below. Biographical works on Eknāth also have been published in Urdu, Kannada (already in 1894), Tamil and Oriya as well.[55] Interestingly, I have yet to come across an independent biography of Eknāth in Hindi or Gujarati, although Pāṅgārkar's book was translated into Hindi in 1932 and has been reprinted at least once.[56]

As we consider biographical writing on Eknāth, as a point of reference it should be noted that Eknāth's own writings began to appear in print in Parśurām Ballāḷ Goḍbole's *Navnīt* series, which was the first major printing of classical Marathi literature, beginning in 1854.[57] Except for the *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa*, all of Eknāth's major compositions appeared in print between 1867

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[53] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*.

[54] Justin E. Abbott et al., *The Life of Eknāth* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1927 [1997]).

[55] The Urdu biography that I was able to see is Śaikh Cānd, *Śrī Eknāth* (Auraṅgābād: Anjuman Taraqqī-i-Urdū, 1934(?)). WorldCat displays an incomplete listing of a second Urdu biography that is apparently held at the Urdu Research Centre of the Sundarayya Vignana Kendram (SVK) in Hyderabad. *Eknāth kī Savāniḥ' Umrī: Śā'irī aur Dūsre Kārnāme*, (s.n., n.d.). In Kannada: Pha. Gu. Haḷakaṭṭi, *Ēkanātha Sādhugaḷa Caritreyu* (Dhāravāḍa: Jñānavardhaka Chāpakhāne, 1894); Yallōguḍḍō Kulakarṇi, *Śrī Ēkanātha Mahārājara Caritreyu* (Ānandavana: Lēkhakaru, 1931); Eṃ. Subōdha Rāmarāv, *Ēkanātha*, 2nd ed. (Beṅgaḷūru: Subōdha Prakaṭanālaya, 1972). In Tamil: Cu Aṉavaratavināyakam Piḷḷai, *Ēkanātar* (Madras: Aṉavaratavināyakam Piḷḷai, 1931). In Oriya: Gorācānda Miśra, *Santha Ekanātha* (Kaṭaka: Grantha Mandira, 1977).

[56] Lakṣmaṇ Rāmcandra Pāṅgārkar, *Śrīeknāth-caritra aur Śrīnāth-Vāṇi kā Prasād*, trans. Lakṣmaṇ Nārāyaṇ Garde (Gorakhpur: Gītā Pres, 1932 [2007]). Although I did not search intensively for Hindi and Gujarati biographies of Eknāth and other books may exist, it surprises me that books on Eknāth written in Dravidian languages were easier to find.

[57] I have not had the opportunity to check the complete run of this series to fully ascertain how much of Eknāth's work was published and when it appeared. Jayā Daḍkar et al., *Saṅkṣipta Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś* (Mumbaī: Jī. Ār. Bhaṭkaḷ Phāuṇḍeśan, 2003), 292.

and 1888.[58] Eknāth's short poetic compositions (collectively referred to as his *Gāthā*) were first printed in a collection in 1893, followed by other collections in 1903, 1906 and 1908 – none of which were identical.[59] The 1908 collection, edited by Hari Tryambak Āvaṭe, was one part of a five-volume series of *sant* poetry collections called the *Gāthā Pañcak* (The Five *Gāthās*). Three of the other *Gāthā*s are collections of poetry attributed to Jñāndev, Nāmdev and Tukārām, and the fifth *Gāthā* contains the poetry of numerous less famous Marathi *bhakti* authors. This set was republished by Kāśīnāth Anant Jośī in 1933 under the name *Sakal Santa Gāthā* (*Gāthā*s of All of the *Sant*s), which was widely read and came to be accepted as standard printed edition of the Vārkarī *sant*s' short poetry.[60] The printing of Eknāth's *Gāthā* is significant for this dissertation, because this collection contains the *bhārūḍ*s, which were central for later scholars and interpreters, who were interested in exploring social themes in Eknāth's writings.

With these important events in the history of Marathi Eknāth scholarship in mind, let us now turn to how Eknāth has been approached by non-Indian observers. Since 1498, decades before Eknāth was born, Roman Catholic missionaries were present in Marathi-speaking areas of the Konkan Coast.[61] Some of them were deeply engaged with Marathi language, as is evidenced by the writings of the English Jesuit Thomas Stephens. Having arrived in Goa in 1579 and thus

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[58] Guruprasād Pākhmoḍe, *Sant Eknāthāñce Abhanga: Svarūp va Samīkṣā* (Nāgpūr: Vijay Prakāśan, 2005), 38. Pākhmoḍe provides a list of the editors and publication dates for six of Eknāth's works.

[59] Eknāth, *Eknāthī Gāthā*, ed. Rāvjī Śrīdhar Gondhaḷekar, et al. (Puṇe: s.n., 1893); Eknāth, *Śrīeknāth Mahārājāñcyā Abhaṅgāñcī Gāthā*, ed. Rā. Ra. Tukārām Tātyā (Mumbaī: Tattvavivecak Chāpkhānā, 1903); Eknāth, *Eknāthsvāmīkṛt Abhaṅgācī Gāthā* (Mumbaī: Induprakāś Pres, 1906); Eknāth, *Śrīeknāthmahārāj Yāñcyā Abhaṅgācī Gāthā*, ed. Tryambak Hari Āvaṭe (Puṇe: Indirā Chāpkhānā, 1908).

[60] Pra. Na. Jośī, "Svāgat," in *Śrī Sakal Santa Gāthā*, ed. Ra. Rā. Gosāvī. (Puṇe: Sārthī Prakāśan, 2000), vi. Although the *Sakal Santa Gāthā* is regarded as standard and even "authoritative" by most Vārkarīs, it is not a critical edition. In fact, the basis on which editors selected and edited these poems was never revealed and remains unknown. Āvaṭe clearly states that they were "corrected" (*durusta karūn tayār kelī*) before printing, but he does not explain what these "corrections" were or why they were deemed necessary to carry out. Eknāth, *Śrīeknāthmahārāj Yāñcyā Abhaṅgācī Gāthā*, facepage.

[61] Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 128.

living in India as a contemporary of Eknāth for approximately two decades, Stephens composed a lengthy *purāṇa* about the life of Jesus and a grammar of the Marathi that he encountered in Goa.[62] Perhaps because they were based mainly on the Konkan Coast (where the Vārkarī *sampradāy* had little if any presence), Roman Catholic missionaries and scholars showed little interest in Marathi *bhakti* literature or hagiography until the late 20th century.

The Protestants were different. The two earliest Protestant missionary observers of Marathi *bhakti* traditions landed in India under the auspices of Scottish Presbyterian organizations: John Stevenson (Scottish Missionary Society), who landed in 1823 in Bombay, and John Murray Mitchell (Free Church of Scotland), who came in 1849.[63] Stevenson's observations were rather idiosyncratic, particularly as he sought to situate Viṭṭhal of Pandharpur within a hypothetical, supposedly forgotten Buddhist background.[64] Mitchell was much more engaged with Marathi *bhakti* writings, but he focused (as most Protestant missionaries did)

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[62] Gaṁ. De. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś (Khaṇḍa Pahilā - Marāṭhī Granthakār, I.S. 1070-1866)* (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya Saṁskṛti Maṇḍaḷ,1977), 102. Also see Thomas Stephens and Nelson Falcao, *Phādar Thomas Sṭīphanskṛt Khristapurāṇa* (Beṅgaluru: Khristu Jyotī Pablikeśans, 2010); Nelson Falcao, *Kristapurāṇa: A Christian-Hindu Encounter* (Anand, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2003); Justin E. Abbott, "The 'Arte de Lingoa Canari', the 'Doutrina Christam', and the 'Adi' and 'Deva Puran' of Thomas Stephens," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 3, no. 1 (1923): 159-164. Some argue that the language in Stephens' grammar (which he called Canarese, based on his location) was not Marathi but properly Konkani. The difference between these two languages systems (i.e., two separate languages vs. language and dialect) is highly contentious, politically fraught, and beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[63] Philip Constable, "Scottish Missionaries, 'Protestant Hinduism' and the Scottish Sense of Empire in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century India," *Scottish Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (2007): 287, 294.

[64] John Stevenson, "An Account of the Bauddho-Vaishnavas, or Vitthal-Bhaktas of the Dakhan," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 7, no. 1 (1843): 64-73. Stevenson published another article that may hold relevant material, but I have unfortunately not been able to observe it personally. See John Stevenson, "An Essay on the Vernacular Literature of the Marathas," *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (1841). It should be noted that Stevenson's name was misspelled in the titles of some articles. John Stevenson and John Wilson, "On the Ante-Brahmanical Worship of the Hindus in the Dekhan," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 5, no. 1 (1839): 189-197; John Stephenson [Stevenson], "On the Ante-Brahmanical Worship of the Hindus (from p. 195 v.5 no.1)," Ibid., no. 2: 264-267; John Stephenson [Stevenson], "On the Ante-Brahmanical Worship of the Hindus in the Dekhan (Continued from p. 267, Vol V)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 6, no. 2 (1841): 239-241; J. Stevenson, "On the Intermixture of Buddhism with Brahmanism in the Religion of the Hindus of the Dekkan," Ibid.7, no. 1 (1843): 1-8; John Stevenson, "The Ante-Brahmanical Religion of the Hindus," Ibid.8 (1846): 330-339.

almost exclusively on the late 17th-century *sant* Tukārām and his "protest" against the established Hindu tradition at his time.[65] Mitchell's work does not deal with Eknāth, but it exemplifies the inclination that some Protestant missionaries had to find in Marathi *bhakti* poetry a teaching of social equality.[66]

Two short English works by Indian writers were published in 1896 and 1918, but they seem to have had little circulation and were not picked up by later scholars.[67] The first English publication on Eknāth to enjoy a significant audience came from the pen of another missionary in 1927.[68] A remarkable second-generation missionary with the American Marathi Mission, Justin Edwards Abbott was the main force behind translating and preparing the twelve-volume "Poet-Saints of Maharashtra" series that was published with the cooperative efforts of Scottish and American missions. As is the case with many of the books about other *sant*s in this series,

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[65] Philip Constable insightfully notes that Mitchell's and later missionaries' keen interest in Tukārām was sparked both by Tukārām's popularity among Hindus at the time and by the similarities his poetry bore to late 18th- and early 19th-century English Romantic poets and the particular form of piety that they expressed. P. Constable, "Scottish Missionaries, 'Protestant Hinduism' and the Scottish Sense of Empire in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century India," 298. On the topic of the Protestant predilection for Tukārām, Nicol Macnicol's selection of 108 Marathi poems from among various *sant*s exemplifies Protestant missionary interests well: eight poems of Jñāndev were translated, two of Muktābāi, twelve of Nāmdev, three of Janābāī, seven of Eknāth, and 69 of Tukārām. Nicol Macnicol, *Psalms of Maratha Saints: One Hundred and Eight Hymns translated from the Marathi* (Calcutta: Association Press, 1919).

[66] John Murray Mitchell, "Paṇḍharpūr," *Indian Antiquary* 11 (1882); John Murray Mitchell, "Tukārām," *Indian Antiquary* 11 (1882); John Murray Mitchell, *In Western India: Recollections of my Early Missionary Life* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1899), esp. 231. In the section of his memoirs (*In Western India*) just cited, Mitchell provides a description of his journey to Pandharpur and a short conversation about caste and equality with a group of Mahārs (untouchables) whom he met there.

[67] Deenanath Ganguli, "Eknath: A Religious Teacher of the Deccan," *The Calcutta Review* 53 (1896); *Shri Ekanath: A Sketch of His Life and Teachings*, (Madras: G. A. Natesan & Co., 1918 [1935]). Ganguli provides mainly an extended summary of Sahasrabuddhe's Marathi book on Eknāth that was published three years earlier, although he does include an additional page of his own conclusions. As for the Natesan publication (whose author's name is never revealed), it is clear that either Sahasrabuddhe's book or Ganguli's article was available to him. Some of the information he offers about Eknāth differs from other authors, but it is hard to say whether this is due to his own embellishments (or mistakes) or perhaps to variations in the transmission of stories that were circulating around the orbit of Tanjore Maratha establishments as opposed to in Maharashtra. For example, a Tamil translation of Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* was published some years earlier. Cf. Mahīpati, *Paktalilamruta Vacanam*, trans. Rajaram Kovintarav Iramanantayokikal, 2 ed. (Chennai: Mataras Rippan Acciyantiracalaiyil Patippikkappattatu, 1912). I am not aware of any research on the reception of the Marathi *sant*s in Tamil Nadu; this is an area for further research.

[68] J.E. Abbott et al., *The Life of Eknāth*.

Abbott's stories about Eknāth are translations of 18th-century collective hagiographies by Mahīpati of Tāhārābād. A short set of Eknāth stories appears in the first of Mahīpati's texts, the *Bhaktavijay* (1762), and was published in the first of the two volumes entitled *Stories of Indian Saints*.[69] The much longer set of stories (taken from Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*) was extensive enough for Abbott to commit a separate volume in the series to it, *The Life of Eknath*.[70] This book deserves the primary credit for introducing Eknāth's name to the world outside Maharashtra. Abbott provides substantive notes in his preface and appendices, reviewing the hagiographical sources for information about Eknāth, providing an overview of Eknāth's most prominent compositions, and summarizing what recent scholars had written about Eknāth's life.[71] Abbott's list of source materials on Eknāth's remained the most comprehensive treatment of this topic available in English, until this dissertation.[72] Abbott clearly held Eknāth in very high esteem: "My own feeling regarding Eknāth is that, although he does not enjoy the popularity of Tukārām as to his writings, in character, in ideals, in learning, in the consistency and nobleness of his life, he is the greatest of the Marāṭhā poet-saints."[73] Despite Abbott's

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[69] Justin E. Abbott et al., *Stories of Indian Saints: A Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya*, 2 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1933 [1982]).

[70] J.E. Abbott et al., *The Life of Eknāth*. Abbott correctly notes that this set of stories from Mahīpati formed the basis of two very popular Marathi biographies of Eknāth – La. Rā. Pāṅgārkar's *Eknāth Caritra* in 1910 and Ja. Ra. Ājgāvkar's *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñce Caritra* in 1925. Thus Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* had become the normative hagiographical account of Eknāth both in Marathi and English at the beginning of the 20th century. Ibid., viii.

[71] Ibid., 240-259., Abbott notes that his overview of Eknāth's writings relied to a large extent on the first edition of a magisterial work on Marathi literature, V. L. Bhāve's *Mahārāṣṭra Sārasvat*. Vināyak Lakṣmaṇ Bhāve, *Mahārāṣṭra Sārasvat* ed. Śaṅkar Gopāḷ Tuḷpuḷe, 6th ed., vol. 1 (Mumbaī: Pāpyular Prakāśan 1898-99 [1982]), 190-213.

[72] J.E. Abbott et al., *The Life of Eknāth*, 260-264.

[73] Ibid., ix.

attraction to the persona of Eknāth, however, he appears to have written nothing else about him.[74]

Four years after Abbott's book appeared, another American Marathi Mission missionary, Wilbur Stone Deming, drew extensively and exclusively on Abbott's translated volume in order to write a modern prose biography of Eknāth.[75] Whereas Deming's earlier book on the Marathi religious leader Rāmdās contributed to English language scholarship on Maharashtra, his treatment of Eknāth offered nothing new and had little impact.[76] The fact that this book was published only four short years after Abbott's volume on Eknāth perhaps indicates a desire (felt at least by Deming and his publisher) for another English book on Eknāth at the time.

In 1966 the short book on Eknāth by S. R. Kulkarni that we observed in the first half of this chapter was published.[77] It appears to have circulated a good deal, although academic readers would have recognized immediately (by seeing the pictures, if nothing else) that it was a popular and not a scholarly work. In other words, although it represented a particular Indian interpretation of Eknāth well, it did not influence non-Indian scholarship.

The Maharashtrian Sanskrit scholar G. V. Tagare became interested in Eknāth in the latter part of the 20th century as well and wrote a substantial introduction to a reprint of Abbott's

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[74] Abbott wrote nothing more about Eknāth in his other articles and books. I have not had the time to check Abbott's correspondence with the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions or the issues of the American Marathi Mission's newspaper *Dnyanoday* during the nearly 25 years that Abbott was its editor between 1881 and 1910. Justin Edwards Abbott, "Letter to Darmouth College" in Alumni Files - Class of 1876, MS no. (Hanover NH: Rauner Special Collections Library).

[75] Wilbur Stone Deming, *Eknath: A Maratha Bhakta* (Bombay: Karnatka Printing Press, 1931). Deming uses the term "Maratha" here as a geographical descriptor (i.e., Maharashtrian) rather than as the name of a *jāti*. This convention was not uncommon in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

[76] Wilbur S. Deming, *Rāmdās and the Rāmdāsīs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928).

[77] S.R. Kulkarni, *Saint Eknath*.

The Life of Eknath.[78] Tagare outlined Eknāth's writings in slightly greater detail than Abbott; otherwise his only contribution was to call attention to an early hagiographical text (the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*) that was rediscovered and published since Abbott's work had come out. As will be discussed extensively in the next chapter, the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* was preserved by a family that claims to be descendants of Eknāth, so no one outside that family was aware of this text and its previously unknown stories until it was published in 1948. Tagare later published his own short biography of Eknāth, in which he rehearsed some of the recent scholarship on Eknath and summarized Eknāth's major writings in greater detail.[79] Tagare presented a biography of Eknāth's life that, for the first time in English, took into full account the stories in the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* as much as other hagiographical sources. He also argued strongly against a theory that had generated much conversation in Marathi, namely, whether Eknāth's *paramaguru* (guru's guru) was a *ṣūfī*.[80] Tagare sided with tradition and stridently asserted that this figure was the god Dattātreya himself. Also, although Tagare admits at one point that Eknāth was "not anti-Muslim,"[81] he presents an even more vociferous Hindu nationalist reading of history than we saw in Kulkarni's *Saint Eknath*.[82] Like Kulkarni, Tagare highlights Eknāth's interest in breaking down caste hierarchy as a way to unite Hindu society against the local Muslim rulers at the time. Tagare's work was a significant English publication on Eknāth, but since the Marathi scholarship

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[78] Tagare's introduction first appeared in the 1981 reprint edition of *The Life of Eknath*.

[79] G. V. Tagare, *Eknath*, Makers of Indian Literature (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993).

[80] Ibid., 7-8. This controversy had been brought assertively into English for the first time by the great Marathi scholar S. G. Tulpule, who unhesitatingly presented the *ṣūfī* connection as "the historical truth" that Eknath had "concealed" in order to avoid trouble from more orthodox brahman quarters. S.G. Tulpule, *Classical Marāṭhī Literature*, 353. I find this argument interesting but unpersuasive, as I discuss later in this chapter.

[81] G.V. Tagare, *Eknath*, 7.

[82] The first two sentences of Tagare's book clearly indicate what awaits the reader in the pages ahead: "It was one of the darkest periods in the history of Maharashtra. Hindu kings of North India had already capitulated." Ibid., 1.

on Eknāth is much richer and since few other scholars (English or Marathi) have relied on Tagare's work, it will not be a major resource for this dissertation beyond serving as an example of the Hindu nationalist narrative.

In the last three decades, three dissertations have been written in European languages about Eknāth, and two of those authors have continued to write on Eknāth. The first was Raymond Crow in 1989, who wrote on Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s (metaphorical drama-poems) as a literary genre for which Eknāth is especially well known.[83] The major contribution of Crow's work was to open up this literary field to English readers by providing an overview of the topics, patterns and contents of the more than 300 such compositions, which typically portray an everyday scene (e.g., a common social character in daily life, a game, an animal, etc.) in such a way that the audience can perceive both a mundane literal meaning and a philosophical-theological lesson from it. Although *bhārūḍ*s were and still are commonly performed within the Vārkarī tradition, Crow limited his scope to analyzing the corpus of printed *bhārūḍ*s in the *Sakal Santa Gāthā*. After completing his dissertation (which remains unpublished), Crow left the academic world and made no further scholarly contributions.

The most prolific western scholar of Eknāth has been Hugh van Skyhawk, an American who undertook his graduate studies in Heidelberg under the great German scholar of Maharashtra, Günther-Dietz Sontheimer. Skyhawk's publications on Eknāth vary widely but tend to involve ethics and teachings in Eknāth's writings, Hindu-Muslim synthesis and attention

[83] Raymond Wiles Crow Jr., "The Bhāruḍs of the Marāṭhī Sant Eknāth" (University of Pennsylvania, 1988). As Crow notes, the exact etymology of the word *bhārūḍ* (sometimes spelled *bhāruḍ*) is not known, but several possible origins have been proposed: 1) *bhārata-rūḍha*, meaning "a long, intricate and tiresome story" or "obscure and difficult passage; a riddle," 2) *bahu-rūḍha*, meaning "widespread, popularly known song," 3) *bhāruṇḍa* – a two-headed bird in the *Mahābhārata*, and 4) *bharāḍa*, meaning "a form of religious entertainment with *bhajan*s, drums and dancing." In common Marathi usage, it is simply a "popular song with two meanings." Many *bhārūḍ*s display four characteristics: they are allegorical and couched in the persona of a particular human character, animal, game, government document or festival; they have a strongly dramatic form that allows them to be enacted as well as sung, their target audience is common folk, and they stress ethical behavior and devotion within a nondual theological framework. Ibid., 173-177.

to the porous boundaries among religious systems and especially folk traditions. It will be useful to look quickly over his articles and book.

Before completing his dissertation in 1988, Skyhawk published three short articles. The first of them observes Eknāth's use of satire in his *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* as a means of teaching social and ethical lessons.[84] Another article records Skyhawk's observations of a *bhārūḍ* performance in 1982 and his brief description about how a *bhārūḍ* fits together.[85] The third article deals with how Eknāth provided the Vārkarī tradition with a model for integrating the world-renouncing attitude that is appropriate to a proper *bhakta* with the worldly life of a householder, or in other words how to combine the second and fourth stages (*gṛhasthāśrama* and *sannyāsāśrama*) of a traditional brahman male's life.[86]

Skyhawk's dissertation translates the second chapter of the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* into German and provides copious footnotes along the way.[87] This monograph is the most scholarly approach to the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* available in a European language, and Skyhawk's notes offer many helpful entry points for accessing Marathi scholarship on Eknāth. Although Skyhawk starts to develop a historiographic sensitivity in detecting how memories of Eknāth have been used for particular ends by different people, his main goal throughout the book (and in many of his articles) is to detect influences of *ṣūfī* thought and practice on Eknāth's writings. In particular, Skyhawk rehearses at length the arguments among Marathi scholars in the mid-20th

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[84] Hugh van Skyhawk, "Satire in the Writings of Śrī Sant Ekanāth," in *Essays on Folk Tales, Satire and Women*, ed. Giovanni Bandini, *South Asian Digest of Regional Writing*, vol. 9. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980), 42-64.

[85] Hugh van Skyhawk, "*Ekanāthī-bhāruḍe* as a Performance Genre," in *South Asian Digest of Regional Writing*, ed. Lothar Lutze, vol. 10. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1981), 48-56.

[86] Hugh van Skyhawk, "Bhakti-yoga and the *Gṛhastha-sādhaka*: Ethics, Ascetics, and Married Life in the Writings of Eknāth," in *Bhakti in Current Research, 1979-1982*, ed. Monika Thiel-Hortmann. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983), 343-352.

[87] Hugh van Skyhawk, *Bhakti und Bhakta: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Heilsbegriff und zur religiösen Umwelt des Śrī Sant Ekanāth* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990).

century regarding the identity of Eknāth's *paramaguru*. Following the lead of V. S. Bendre and R. C. Ḍhere (and subsequently S. G. Tulpule), Skyhawk insists that the guru of Eknāth's guru was not the god Dattātreya as is traditionally believed but rather a *ṣūfī* of the Kādirī order. In support, Skyhawk cites (with greater and lesser degrees of persuasive force) various forms of evidence that he finds in subtle teachings and numerology within the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat*.[88] Skyhawk argues forcefully against the oversimplified Hindu vs. Muslim typology that many 20th-century scholars took for granted, but his irrepressible desire to detect Muslim influences in Eknāth's writing sometimes leads him to find echoes of religious syncretic elements in passages where it may simply not exist.

Skyhawk's post-dissertation articles that deal with Eknāth include a short synopsis of his dissertation's argument about Eknāth's spiritual lineage,[89] a richly footnoted summary of parts of his dissertation that relate to a democratic sense in Marathi *bhakti*,[90] his reflections on Eknāth's death (*samādhi*) and contemporary memorial customs in Paithan,[91] a summary of Eknāth's teaching about guru-devotion in the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat*,[92] a good discussion of the Marathi film about Eknāth "*Dharmātmā*,"[93] and an anthropological consideration of (among other events) the

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[88] Ibid., 13-14.

[89] H.v. Skyhawk, "The Influence of Sufism on the Śrī-Eknāthī-Bhāgavat," 67-79.

[90] Hugh van Skyhawk, "Ekanāth and the *Ekanāthī-Bhāgavat*," (1995). This manuscript still awaits publication.

[91] Hugh van Skyhawk, "A Note on Death and the Holy Man in South Asia," in *Ways of Dying: Death and its Meanings in South Asia*, ed. Elisabeth Schömbucher, et al., *South Asian Studies*, vol. 33. (1999), 190-202.

[92] Hugh van Skyhawk, "Guru-Bhakti in the Śrī-Ekanāthī-Bhāgavat: the Relationship of Kṛṣṇa and Uddhava as a Metaphor of Divine Love (Prem)," in *Bhakti in Current Research, 1982-85*, ed. M. K. Gautam, et al. (Lucknow: Indo-European Publications, 2000), 319-332.

[93] Hugh van Skyhawk, "Social Expression of Unity with the Divine: the Saint's Conduct as a Component of Hindu Ethics," in *In the Company of Gods: Essays in Memory of Günther-Dietz Sontheimer*, ed. Aditya Malik, et al. (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), 211-223. A portion of this article was published several years earlier in French. Hugh van Skyhawk, "Saint, Cinéma et *Dharma*: Ekanāth et les Intouchables au Temps de V. Śāntārām," in *Construction Hagiographiques dans le Monde Indien*, ed. Françoise Mallison. (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 2001), 325-336.

religious processions carried out by Eknāth's ancestors in Paithan on the occasion of his death anniversary.[94] Skyhawk published several articles related to sufism and religiously syncretic practices in Maharashtra,[95] as well as on ethnographic work in Pakistan that he conducted for his

[94] Hugh van Skyhawk, "Cleansing and Renewing the Field for Another Year: Processions between Holy Places as Networks of Reflexivity," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 158, no. 2 (2008): 353-370. This article I find to be the most theoretically reflective of Skyhawk's publications on Eknāth. However, in 2010 when I attended the same processions in Paithan that Skyhawk described (i.e., as part of the festivities to celebrate Eknāth's birthday, known as Eknath Ṣaṣṭhī), my experience and observations of the events were very different. For example, whereas Skyhawk says that the nocturnal procession of the palanquin bearing replicas of Eknāth's sandals "retraces the steps" that were taken earlier in the day by the diurnal procession, the two processions that I witnessed followed utterly different paths. Skyhawk describes the nocturnal procession of the Eknāth *pālkhī* unequivocally as "solemn" and devoid of the "shouting, drumming, and loud music" that accompanies a similar procession during the day, but the nocturnal procession (which participants regularly called by the Persian word *chabinā*) that I attended was replete with the kind of brass band that one usually sees at Indian weddings, a drum section and throngs of Vārkarīs clanging hand cymbals (*ṭāḷ*). Ibid., 355. Skyhawk describes an event on the evening before the processions in which people gather in the courtyard of Eknāth's traditional home and a man begins to act as if he were possessed, which Skyhawk interprets as a "satirical" representation of actual possessions at a festival that occurs on the same day in a relatively nearby town where a syncretic Hindu-Muslim saint is honored. Ibid., 367. During the several days that I was in Paithan for Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī, frequently interacting with various descendants of Eknāth who organize the festival, my inquiry about the mock possession event that Skyhawk describes was met with puzzlement, and I was told that no gatherings or events at all occur on the night before Eknāth's birthday. The only event that seems remotely similar occurred within the nocturnal procession itself, when the group halted in front of a Devī temple and a member of the group performed one of Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s called "*Jogvā.*" As with many of his *bhārūḍ*s, in "*Jogvā"* Eknāth conveys his theological message through the voice and representation of a non-Sanskritic, socially marginal character – in this case, a servant of the Goddess who has become possessed (*jogvā,* in Marathi). In my interpretation, although the audience did laugh at the antics of the performer (who was personally familiar to many of them) this was not an instance of satire but of memorializing Eknāth's presence in his hometown, in front of a Devī temple near Eknāth's home that he may have personally visited.

[95] Hugh van Skyhawk, "The Heart of Religion: a Sufi's Thoughts on the Relations between Religious Communities," in *'Minorities' on Themselves*, ed. Hugh van Skyhawk, *South Asian Digest of Regional Writing*, vol. 11. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989 [1986]), 73-88; Hugh van Skyhawk, "Islamic Tradition and Universal Brotherhood in the Writings of Two Contemporary Deccanī Sufis," in *Islam, Politics, and Society in South Asia*, ed. André Wink. (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1991), 117-131; Hugh van Skyhawk, "Nasīruddīin and Ādināth, Nizāmuddīn and Kāniphnāth: Hindu-Muslim Religious Syncretism in the Folk Literature of the Deccan," in *Flags of Fame: Studies in the Folk Culture of South Asia*, ed. Heidrun Brückner, et al. (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1993), 445-467; Hugh van Skyhawk, "Vaiṣṇava Perceptions of Muslims in 18th Century Maharashtra," in *Islam and Indian Regions*, ed. A. L. Dallapiccola, et al. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993), 203-215; Hugh van Skyhawk, "*Pīr*-worship and *Śaiva-bhakti* in the Literature of the *Nāgeś-saṁpradāy*," in *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature. Research Papers Presented at the Fifth Conference on Devotional Literature in new Indo-Aryan Languages*, ed. Alan W Entwistle, et al. (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1994), 255-270; Hugh van Skyhawk and Ian R. Duncan, "Holding the World Together: *Lakasaṁgraha* in the cult of a Hindu/Muslim Saint and Folk Deity of the Deccan," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 147, no. 2 (1997): 405-424; Hugh van Skyhawk, "Father Thomas Stephens and the *Kristapurāṇa*: Hindu-Christian Religious Syncretism in Goa in the Early 17th Century," in *Studies in Early Modern Indo-Aryan Languages and Culture. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages (Seattle, July 1994)*, ed. Alan W. Entwistle. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 354-370; Hugh van Skyhawk, "Der Muslimische Beitrag zu Religiösen Literatur Marāṭhī-sprechender Hindus," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 153, no. 1 (2003): 87-99.

habilitationsschrift.[96] Skyhawk has not completely stopped studying Maharashtra and Eknāth, but his recent interests have turned mainly to Islam and Himalayan cultures in northern Pakistan.

Although Skyhawk has researched and written a good deal on Eknāth, his scholarship has not had a very deep impact in the broader academic community. This may be due to his tendency to focus on intriguing curiosities rather than topics that connect to larger scholarly conversations, or to the material effect of his residing in Germany and publishing in edited volumes whose audiences are relatively small. Although Skyhawk's work has not found a very wide readership, he has dealt with unique topics and indicated some future avenues of research.

The most recent scholar to write a dissertation on Eknāth is the Slovakian historian/ethnographer Dušan Deák, who recently wrote his dissertation on Eknāth in the History Department at the University of Pune.[97] Like Skyhawk, Deák focuses on historical points of Hindu-Muslim overlap, and also like Skyhawk, his scholarship remains relatively unknown by a wide readership. [98] In my opinion, however, Deák has carried out the most thorough, thoughtful and measured treatment to date of the question of Eknāth's spiritual lineage. After taking stock of all of the written evidence that has been presented to support the idea that Eknāth's *paramaguru* (named Cānd Bodhle, and many variations on that name), he points out some historical problems in the main spiritual pedigree (*sijrā*) attributed to the Muslim Marathi poet Śekh Mahāmad that scholars usually cite when asserting a link between Cānd Bodhle and the

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[96] Hugh van Skyhawk, *Libi Kisar: Ein Volksepos im Burushaski von Nager, Mit Beiträgen und Ergänzungen von Hermann Berger un Karl Jettmar* (Wisebaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1996).

[97] Dušan Deák, "The Relations Between the Varkari Cult and the Sufis, with Special Reference to Eknath and Śekh Mahammadbaba Śrigondekar" (University of Pune, 2003).

[98] Dušan Deák, "Contextualizing the Past: the Saint and 'His' Environment," *Asian and African Studies (Bratislava)* 17, no. 2 (2008): 290-313.

Qādirī *ṣūfī* order.[99] He also notes that at the time of Eknāth, the Qādirī *ṣūfī*s were known to be "orthodox and urban dwelling," unlike the mendicant like figure who meets Janārdana and Eknāth. Furthermore, Śekh Mahāmad's other poetry tends to portray *ṣūfī*s quite negatively as arrogant and false.[100] Deák ultimately suggests that we resist the temptation to situate Cānd Bodhle into any neat institutional category, and he suggests that the evidence points to the greater likelihood that Cānd Bodhle was a popular, yoga-practicing, *bhāṅg*-consuming religious itinerant who freely borrowed from whatever ideas and traditions were around him.[101] Unlike Skyhawk and Crow, Deák is still quite active in the research field and will undoubtedly continue to publish novel, interesting work.

The three scholars whom we have just observed – Crow, Skyhawk and Deák – have all focused most of their research attention directly on Eknāth, but they have not connected their scholarship to larger scholarly conversations or succeeded in introducing their findings to a broad audience. The two final scholars whose research we will observe – Jayant Lele and Eleanor Zelliot – present something of the opposite case.

Although his main area of research is development studies and political science, Jayant Lele brought his analytical tools to bear on the *bhakti* tradition of Maharashtra. Lele's initial

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[99] Throughout this dissertation I will use the Marathi rendering of Śekh Mahāmad's name, since it is through Marathi that he is known.

[100] Dusan Deak, "Maharashtra Saints and the Sufi Tradition: Eknath, Chand Bodhle and the Datta Sampradaya," *Deccan Studies* 3, no. 2 (2005): 27.

[101] Ibid., 22-47. If Cānd Bodhle was originally a syncretic, idiosyncratic mendicant, he was apparently a very famous and respected one who was quickly and grandly memorialized after his death. His sizable, impressive *dargāh* is still maintained quite close to the Daulatābād fort. It can be reached by walking about 40 meters south of the fort entrance and the following a dirt lane east (off the main road) for about 200 meters, at which point a small stone gateway on the north side of the path will lead to the *dargāh*, at coordinates 19°56'34.05"N by 75°13'24.46"E. On a large sign in Urdu (Nashtaliq) and Devanagari are written "Dargāh Hazratśāh Cānd Sāhab (Bodhle)" and the date of his death anniversary or '*urs* (the 13th of Ramzān). The tomb combines Muslim and Hindu elements, including large pieces of recycled pillars and construction from structures that clearly date to the Yādava era (11th - 13th c.), if not earlier. For as large and old as this *dargāh* is, relatively few people in the town seem to know about it (which is why I have provided the coordinates and directions). I am extremely grateful to Rājeś Nāīk and Bhagvān Dube for bringing me to this site.

foray into this field appeared in a special issue of the *Journal of Asian and African Studies* devoted to the contemporary meaning and significance of *bhakti* literature and practice, and for which Lele wrote both the introductory article and his own separate article.[102] In his introductory article, Lele raises questions about how to understand *bhakti* traditions as advocating for and effecting socio-political change historically and in the modern world. He also encourages deeper reflection on the stereotype of *bhakti* traditions as quietistic, a view that he claims was inherited from colonial and neo-colonial sources.[103] Although the articles in the special issue that Lele introduces deal with many regions and traditions of India, Lele consistently returns to the Vārkarī tradition and Marathi *sant*s as a sort of baseline in setting out his theoretical framework. While this peculiar perspective reflects Lele's own Maharashtrian heritage, it also coincides nicely with the fact that half of the twelve articles in the special issue either pertain to Maharashtra or are written by people with Marathi background.[104] (Indeed, among the various languages and regions of India, Marathi and Maharashtra seem to be represented disproportionately well in scholarship on *bhakti* and social change.) In his other article in the special issue Lele offers a reading of the *Jñāneśvarī* that highlights its emphasis on "inter-subjectivity" and its potential for strengthening the bonds of community. He proposes that such a liberative reading of this text may offer a way for Maharashtrians to overcome the sociological gap between highly educated, progressive urban policy-makers and the rural, agrarian masses

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[102] Jayant Lele, "The Bhakti Movement in India: A Critical Introduction," in *Tradition and Modernity in Bhakti Movements*, ed. Jayant Lele. (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 1-15; Jayant Lele, "Community, Discourse and Critique in Jnanesvar," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 15, no. 1-2 (1980): 104-112.

[103] J. Lele, "The Bhakti Movement in India: A Critical Introduction," 6.

[104] In addition to Lele's two articles, see Balkrishna Govind Gokhale, "'Bhakti' in Early Buddhism," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 15, no. 1-2 (1980): 16-28; Jayashree Gokhale-Turner, "'Bhakti' or 'Vidroha': Contintuity and Change in Dalit Sahitya," Ibid.: 29-42; Bhalchandra Nemade, "The Revolt of the Underprivileged: Style in the Expression of the "Warkari" Movement in Maharashtra," Ibid.: 113-123; Eleanor Zelliot, "Chokhamela and Eknath: Two "Bhakti" Modes of Legitimacy for Modern Change," Ibid.: 136-156.

whose cooperation is needed in order to institute those policies. In the process of making this argument, Lele introduces for the first time – in 1980 – a theme that would persist throughout his writings, namely, that although the Vārkarī tradition now implicitly tends to maintain the caste-based social order, it carries within itself "a critical impulse with a potential for creating revolutionary social practice."[105]

Seven years later, Lele reflected further on what he saw as the revolutionary potential of the Vārkarī tradition, particularly as it was borne out in the writings of Jñāndev and Tukārām.[106] While pointing out ways in which Jñāndev and Tukārām criticized the selfishness of the ego, which he says could form the basis of a revolutionary attitude, Lele directly confronts the social reality that the subtle observance of *jāti* and *varṇa* remain integral to the Vārkarī tradition. His explanation for this is that Vārkarī leaders tended to be "enthralled" by the "poetic merit" of *sant* literature, such that the aesthetics of the poetry took precedence over any socially operative message. In effect, reading and hearing *bhakti* poetry for its aesthetic value became the "orthodox" approach among Vārkarīs, and the revolutionary potential of the tradition was thereby suppressed.[107] Lele extended this line of thought in two later articles that deal with the Vārkarīs, *bhakti*, and the rejection of the *bhakti* tradition by *dalit* groups.[108]

Lele's arguments attempt to trace the dynamic interplay between conservative and revolutionary impulses in the history of the Vārkarī tradition mainly by focusing on its inception

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[105] Jayant Lele, "Community, Discourse and Critique in Jnanesvar," Ibid.: 106.

[106] Jayant Lele, "Jñāneśvar and Tukārām: an Exercise in Critical Hermeneutics," in *Religion and Society in Maharashtra*, ed. Milton Israel, et al. (Toronto: Centre for South Asian Studies, 1987), 115-130.

[107] Ibid., 122.

[108] Jayant Lele, "Vārkarī Sampradāyātīl Krāntikārak Āśay," *Samāj Prabodhan Patrikā* Oct-Dec (1991): 183-186; Jayant Lele, "From Reformism to Interest Group Pluralism: The Relevance of the Non-Brahman Movement for an Understanding of Contemporary Maharashtra," in *Writers, Editors and Reformers: Social and Political Transformations in Maharashtra*, ed. N. K. Wagle. (Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1999), 13-22.

(as represented by Jñāndev), the conclusion of its main creative period (in Tukārām) and its modern socio-political manifestation, which is non-revolutionary and implicitly caste observant. Unfortunately, Eknāth never appears in Lele's work, despite the fact that Eknāth could have been the most insightful and interesting example of the competing conservative and revolutionary impulses that Lele describes. Lele also advances his arguments mainly by considering the *sant*s' compositions rather than hagiographical stories or memories about them. In the chapters that follow I hope to address precisely these gaps that Lele has left unexplored. Although his scholarship was not directly relevant to the study of Eknāth, Lele's framing of Vārkarī history and sociology is indeed inspirational for my project.

Around the same time as Lele, Eleanor Zelliot brought Eknāth, his stories, and some of his compositions to the English-reading public through her pioneering articles on caste, *bhakti* and social critique. After researching and writing primarily on B. R. Ambedkar and the *dalit* movement in Maharashtra,[109] Zelliot became interested in Eknāth when she learned that many of his *bhārūḍ*s depict untouchables (*mahār*s) reproving and ironically teaching religious lessons to brahmans. Unlike all of the other scholars mentioned in this chapter, Zelliot focused keenly on the social deeds, teachings and significance of Eknāth rather than his inter-religious background or philosophy.

Prior to her writings specifically on Eknāth, Zelliot published an influential and widely read overview of "the *bhakti* movement" in India.[110] Although the trope of a singular *bhakti*

[109] Zelliot's dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania in 1969 was the first example of serious scholarship on Ambedkar. Although she has published dozens of articles on Ambedkar, *dalit* movements and *dalit* literature since that time, her dissertation came to print only much later. As she writes, "Distribution will be mostly to Dalits in a low key way, since the work really belongs to them." Eleanor Zelliot, *Dr. Balasaheb Ambedkar and the Untouchable Movement* (Delhi: Bluemon Books, 2004), vii. A bibliography of her extensive work can be found at "Carleton College: History: Eleanor Zelliot," http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/history/faculty/facpubs/bibzelliot/, Accessed June 11, 2011.

[110] E. Zelliot, "The Medieval Bhakti Movement in History," 143-168.

movement that historically moved across the subcontinent (which Zelliot was repeating) has rightly been challenged,[111] this article made a significant contribution at the time by consolidating English scholarship on the various regional traditions and offering a rich bibliography. Within this article Zelliot briefly mentions Eknāth, particularly as the author of "a remarkable series of poems which as yet remain untranslated" – the *bhārūḍ*s, in many of which Eknāth makes dramatic use of untouchable and socially marginal characters to give voice to his spiritual messages.[112] Zelliot's subsequent work on Eknāth followed two main paths, by viewing him among other Marathi *sant*s (especially the untouchable *sant* Cokhāmeḷā) in order to set up insightful comparisons, and by looking closely at particular examples of Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s.

In "Chokhamela and Eknath," which appeared in the special issue of *Journal of Asian and African Studies* edited by Lele, Zelliot compared how the figures of Cokhāmeḷā and Eknāth have been portrayed (and in some cases omitted) in movements of social and political change in 20th century Maharashtra. She notes that although the inclusion of Cokhāmeḷā among the Vārkarī *sant*s was cited by proto-nationalist interpreters of Maharashtrian history (e.g., M. G. Ranade) as evidence that Maharashtrians have it within themselves to overcome caste divisions and unite for the greater communal good, Ambedkar abandoned the Marathi *sant*s, including Cokhāmeḷā, as ineffective models for effecting social change. Most untouchables in Maharashtra (especially from the majority Mahār *jāti*) followed Ambedkar's lead, and only a few retained any interest in and affiliation with Cokhāmeḷā.[113] Zelliot observes some of Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s that teach spiritual equality among the castes and notes some of the stories about Eknāth

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[111] J.S. Hawley, *The Bhakti Movement – From Where? Since When*; J.S. Hawley, "The Four *Sampradāy*s: Ordering the Religious Past in Mughal North India," 160-183.

[112] E. Zelliot, "The Medieval Bhakti Movement in History," 155.

[113] E. Zelliot, "Chokhamela and Eknath: Two "Bhakti" Modes of Legitimacy for Modern Change," 143.

interacting with untouchables as possible precedents for viewing Eknāth as a liberal and liberating figure. In 20th-century literature, however, she found no untouchable authors who mentioned Eknāth.[114] Rather, Eknāth's image seems to have captured the imagination of only "the elite reformer, the wise and scholarly Brahman whose compassion allows him to rise above caste distinctions."[115] Despite the meager record of Cokhāmeḷā and Eknāth being perceived as inspirational models for social change, however, Zelliot nonetheless regards them as "a potential reservoir of ideas and models that are latently shared by most Maharashtrians, that could be drawn on for urging change in the future."[116]

In her article "Four Radical Saints in Maharashtra" Zelliot again considers Eknāth alongside other figures, this time proposing that they could all be understood as "radical saints" who had the courage to break with tradition and convention.[117] In an interesting comparative move, Zelliot goes beyond the conventional boundaries of the Vārkarī tradition to consider Eknāth and Cokhāmeḷā alongside Guṇḍam Rāüḷ (a 13th-century holy man in the Mahānubhāv tradition) and Gāḍge Mahārāj (an idiosyncratic, wandering *kīrtan* performer and advocate for social change in the early 20th century). When describing Eknāth, she again cites his *bhārūḍ*s and hagiographical stories as evidence of radicalness. What Zelliot extracts from her comparison are three common themes: the lowly have equal access to God, God is expected to be compassionate, and there is no notion of being polluted by contact with untouchables or

[114] My experience for the most part reconfirms Zelliot's observation, with a couple minor exceptions that I will discuss in the conclusion of this dissertation. Even these exceptions confirm the underlying sentiment in Zelliot's observation, namely that Eknāth has not been viewed as an inspirational figure by 20th-century *dalit* authors.

[115] E. Zelliot, "Chokhamela and Eknath: Two "Bhakti" Modes of Legitimacy for Modern Change," 152.

[116] Ibid., 153.

[117] Eleanor Zelliot, "Four Radical Saints in Maharashtra," in *Religion and Society in Maharashtra*, ed. Milton Israel, et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 130-144.

menstruating women (because they are understood to be non-polluting).[118] She also provocatively proposes that although none of the four radical saints had any disciples or descendants who followed their unorthodox paths, these saints may have an indirect legacy in that the "Untouchable movement" in Maharashtra asserted itself more intensely and audaciously than in other parts of India.[119]

Without question, the most popular of Zelliot's articles on Eknāth and probably the most popular article on Eknāth in English is her translation and interpretation of Eknāth's *bhārūḍ* that is in the form of an inter-religious conversation – the *Hindu-Turk Saṁvād*.[120] This composition portrays a brahman and a Muslim challenging each other to justify his own practices and beliefs. The piece ends on a surprisingly amicable note, with both interlocutors agreeing that God is not limited to one *dharma* and does not discriminate on the basis of people's *dharma*s. The composition is not representative of Eknāth's interests as reflected in either his hagiography or other writings; Eknāth did not write extensively about Hindu-Muslim relations or about Islam. Rather, the prospect of reading an earthy, comical, apparently 16th-century exchange between a Hindu and a Muslim accounts for the understandable popularity of this piece. Zelliot does well to highlight the degree of inter-religious mingling and interaction among various Hindus, Muslims and people who fit both or neither category, especially in 16th-century western India. To my thinking, it would be wise to read the *Hindu-Turk Saṁvād* in the context of Eknāth's

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[118] Ibid., 141.

[119] Ibid., 142.

[120] Eleanor Zelliot, "A Medieval Encounter between Hindu and Muslim: Eknath's Drama-poem Hindu-turk Samvad," in *Images of Man: Religion and Historical Process in South Asia*, ed. Fred Clothey. (Madras: New Era, 1982), 171-195. This article has been reprinted. Eleanor Zelliot, "A Medieval Encounter between Hindu and Muslim: Eknath's Drama-Poem Hindu-Turk Samvad," in *India's Islamic Traditions, 711-1750*, ed. Richard Eaton. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). My citations refer to the page numbers in the first printing.

other *bhārūḍ*s and writings, keeping in mind Eknāth's aim in the *bhārūḍ*s.[121] Reading this *Saṁvād* as an example of a 16th-century inter-religious dialogue involves abstracting the text from its genre and context, thereby skewing our perception of the text itself. Nonetheless, Zelliot has made a notable scholarly contribution by bringing this *bhārūḍ* to the English-reading world.

In 1987 Zelliot returned to Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s to highlight the incredible diversity of characters – especially figures from "a wide sweep of the non-Sanskritic world" – that appear in them.[122] She describes some of these socially marginal characters and tries to contextualize them by citing secondary research when possible. This article is a provocative, solid introduction to the *bhārūḍ*s, which demonstrate that Eknāth was an unusually keen and sensitive observer of the society around him. At the end of the day, however, particularly in light of how Eknāth never unequivocally condemns caste and how caste hierarchy remained entrenched after his death, Zelliot confesses, "It is difficult to know what to make of all of Eknath's empathy."[123]

Zelliot's articles on Eknāth introduce a stronger concern for social analysis than anyone else who has written on Eknāth in English or in Marathi (with the possible exception of two Marxist Marathi historians – Bā. Raṅ. Suṇṭhaṇkar and Gaṅ. Bā. Sardār). She also did well to call attention to the truly fascinating corpus of Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s, which still remains a largely untapped resource for scholarship. Furthermore, were it not for conversations with Eleanor, her articles on Eknāth and the inspiration they sparked, I probably would not have become interested

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[121] It should be noted that another translation and interpretation of the *Hindu-Turk Saṁvād* has recently appeared in V. Bhagwat, "Hindu-Muslim Dialogue: A Rereading of Sant Eknath and Sant Shaikh Muhammad," 77-93. N. K. Wagle has analyzed this *bhārūḍ* for what he sees are its depictions of inter-religious issues. Narendra K. Wagle, "Hindu-Muslim Interactions in Medieval Maharashtra," in *Hinduism Reconsidered*, ed. Günther-Dietz Sontheimer, et al. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), 51-65.

[122] Eleanor Zelliot, "Eknath's Bharude: The Sant as a Link between Cultures," in *The Sants*, ed. Karine Schomer, et al. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 91. Zelliot's title uses a transliterated Marathi plural form of the word *bhārūḍ*.

[123] Ibid., 108.

in Eknāth myself. Now that I am interested, I propose that a somewhat different, more historiographically sensitive approach will be insightful for appreciating the perceived links among Eknāth, caste and social change.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Eknāth has received infrequent and disjointed attention among writers of European languages. Although Roman Catholic missionaries were deeply engaged with Marathi, they showed no interest in *bhakti.* Although Protestant missionaries were interested in *bhakti* and social equality from the mid-19th century onward, it was not until Justin Abbott's translation of hagiographical stories in 1927 that much was known about Eknāth outside of the Marathi-speaking world. Crow, Skyhawk and Deák have all researched aspects of Eknāth as a writer of *bhārūḍ*s and as a figure with a possible religiously syncretic background, but their work has been restricted for various reasons to a limited readership and remains unconnected from larger scholarly conversations. Lele and Zelliot have looked more broadly at Marathi *bhakti* and social change, and Zelliot made some initial steps into considering Eknāth's role in those changes. Both Lele and Zelliot are clear, however, about the fact that the relation between Marathi *bhakti* and social change in history is very unclear. While the contents of Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s and hagiographical stories about his social relations are intriguing, one cannot avoid the fact that *bhakti* in Maharashtra did not result in any effective criticism of caste hierarchy, much less a social revolution. Yet there remains something attractive and even perhaps compelling about the Vārkarī tradition for Lele and Zelliot, and one senses in their writing that despite the course of modern history, there is still the hint of a wish that the latent revolutionary impulse in this tradition might somehow still be activated.

In a broad sense, my own questions about how to understand Eknāth in terms of social equality and a challenge of caste hierarchy are inspired by Lele's and Zelliot's work. My approach to addressing these concerns, however, will diverge significantly. If we want to consider how Eknāth left (or, more precisely, did not leave) a social impact or legacy after him, I believe that analyzing Eknāth's writings and trying to reconstruct what he might have thought about these issues actually ignores a great deal of historiographically interesting material that could shed light on how Eknāth came to be understood in the ways that he is today. I argue that it is more revealing to observe how perceptions of Eknāth and caste changed over time than to wonder about what Eknāth himself may or may not have thought.

Rather than investigate Eknāth's writings, this dissertation will focus on investigating how Eknāth has been remembered by hagiographers, historians, scholars, and creative artists in the last few centuries. Some readers may find my prioritization of "secondary" writings on Eknāth (hagiography, scholarship, and dramatic productions) over the "primary" works composed by Eknāth to be dubious or even backwards. It is indeed a legitimate question – how will we be able to discern how, for example, the earliest hagiographers shaped their portrayals of Eknāth without first having a clear idea of what Eknāth actually thought, based on his writings? I want to state clearly that I am not dismissing Eknāth's writings as unimportant or saying that I have excluded them completely from my consideration; in fact, I turn to writings attributed to Eknāth whenever they explicitly are remembered and referred to within the historiographical record.

I have chosen to refrain from investigating Eknāth's own writings as a separate, major source of information for my dissertation for three main reasons. First, the most potentially valuable and interesting texts of Eknāth that could be relevant to this project (i.e., Eknāth's short poems, including the *bhārūḍ*s) are unfortunately also some of the most unstable and unverifiable

ones in terms of authenticity. As mentioned earlier, the circumstances under which Eknāth's *Gāthā* (collection of short poems) was compiled, the sources that were used, what biases those sources may have had, the decisions that were made about including/excluding particular compositions, and the nature of the "corrections" that the editor made in these compositions are all unknown. Although one good, scholarly examination of the *Gāthā* and its various editions has been carried out,[124] there is nothing remotely like a critical edition of Eknāth's short poetry. In short, citing poetry from Eknāth's *Gāthā* by itself is not firm ground on which to base historical or historiographical arguments. By this, I do not mean to question the authenticity of all the short poetry attributed to Eknāth or even of any specific compositions; I am simply calling attention to their relatively problematic value as a source of strictly historical information. It is a very different case, however, when a hagiographer or historian as part of his narrative refers explicitly (or unambiguously and implicitly) to a composition attributed to Eknāth. In those instances (and there are a number of them), I certainly do include the cited writings of Eknāth within my scope of inquiry.

One example may clarify my point: in the corpus of Eknāth's *Gāthā* there are more than forty *bhārūḍ*s in which the main speaker and actor is explicitly identified within the text as an untouchable. These fascinating texts still await thorough exploration, and it would be a wonderful project to read and analyze them all. But such a project would not help us much to understand how Eknāth has been remembered. In fact, none of the hagiographers refer to any *bhārūḍ*s at all. These compositions simply do not appear in the earliest records of public memory. In the early 20th century the *bhārūḍ*s were printed in Eknāth's *Gāthā* (so, obviously they had been written and preserved by someone), and in the mid-20th century the *bhārūḍ*s were,

[124] G. Pākhmoḍe, *Sant Eknāthāñce Abhanga: Svarūp va Samīkṣā*.

in a sense, "re-discovered" by scholars who then drew on them to revise their understandings of Eknāth. In my project, I will trace the importance of the *bhārūḍ*s for the social memory of Eknāth only when the *bhārūḍ*s are actually mentioned, as this information is readily apparent in the historiographical records. To start my investigation by reading these *bhārūḍ*s, however, would have required making assumptions about the *bhārūḍ*s' authorship, circulation and memory for which I lack evidence to support.[125]

The second reason that I prioritize the secondary works on Eknāth over his primary works is that working directly with Eknāth's literary corpus is practically prohibitive due to its sheer size, internal diversity and challenges of language. Although Eknāth's writing style is regularly praised as accessible, straightforward and plain, my less-than-fluent Marathi skills prevent me from concurring. The time commitment required to read the hagiographical material on Eknāth is already substantial; there is simply not time to include more.

Third, some scholarship in English and a bit more scholarship in Marathi has already been carried out in the hope of reconstructing what Eknāth may have thought about various topics, including caste and social equality. An intensive historiographical investigation such as I am undertaking, however, is truly novel. Although Marathi scholars have done some limited comparison of hagiographical stories, no one has approached the scale and depth of my project. Furthermore, by focusing on the historiography of Eknāth, I will be bringing a very large amount of material to the awareness of English readers for the first time. This is an exciting prospect.

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[125] One additional, valuable line of investigation would be to explore the manuscript record for Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s, particularly among the old working notebooks of *kīrtan* performers that are held in various archives across Maharashtra, in order to see which *bhārūḍ*s were repeated often, which occurred in the oldest notebooks, etc. The results of such research would supplement my project by offering another, more performative or oral register of social memory that my investigation of hagiographies and history books does not take adequately into account. Such a manuscript search would be immensely time consuming, however, and there was not scope for it in this dissertation.

In this chapter we have observed a common, popular rendition of Eknāth's biography to introduce provisionally how Eknāth has been remembered. We have also reviewed everything that has been written specifically about Eknāth in European languages (which in this case happen to be English and German). Now we are ready to move on to the heart of the dissertation. The next two chapters (Two and Three) will look closely at how Eknāth's social relations have been described in Marathi hagiographical literature roughly from 1650 through 1800.

Chapter Two – Eknāth Remembered in Early Hagiography (1650-1760)

Having rehearsed a popular Indian biography of Eknāth and reviewed what has been written about him in English and German, it is possible now to ask the question that lies at the heart of this dissertation, "How did Eknāth come to be known in this way?" The first step towards a comprehensive answer is to identify the earliest recorded stories and observe their repetition and transformation, and in some cases, their disappearance over time. The texts that bear these data bring with them a common challenge when working with *bhakti*-related writings. Although these texts reveal provocative images and intriguing patterns in their depictions of Eknāth's social relations, it is very difficult to identify precisely their historical, authorial and reception contexts. In most cases, the information is simply not available. Here the theoretical questions about history and historiography that were raised in the Introduction come to bear on the actual challenge of gleaning historically useful and reliable information from *bhakti* texts.

Two qualifiers should be kept in mind as we approach this particular set of Marathi texts. First, in order to focus on and do justice to the topic at hand – Eknāth and caste – many other interesting issues about Eknāth's life and writings must fall outside the scope of this project. I provide background information about these texts to the extent that it helps to frame the stories with which we are concerned. To compensate for my necessarily brief overviews of the texts themselves and to compensate for the fact that most of them are not available to English readers, I have provided appendices that contain a full translation of the shortest text and detailed chapter outlines of longer ones.

The second caveat for this chapter is to acknowledge the legacy of Marathi manuscript loss. Whereas Sanskrit manuscripts in India have tended to be viewed as valuable artifacts that

merited care and preservation, few Marathi manuscripts have enjoyed similar esteem. Some notable collections of Marathi manuscripts were amassed through the personal diligence of scholars such as Vi. Kā. Rājvāḍe and An. Kā. Priyoḷkar, and through the long-running sectarian interests of Rāmdāsī and Mahānubhāv *maṭh*s.[1] Aside from these impressive but limited efforts at the beginning of the 20th century, however, no widespread or systematic collection of Marathi manuscripts has been made, and many are now irretrievably lost.[2] Marathi manuscripts that survive in archives across western Indian have yet to be centrally catalogued (there is no Marathi *Catalogus Catalogorum*), and many archival collections suffer from lack of funding and maintenance.[3] In short, the manuscript record of the Marathi texts under consideration must be acknowledged to be fragmentary and limited. The range of manuscripts that I was able to track down for this project during two consecutive years of searching in India thus offers at best only a glimpse of the circulation patterns and popularity of these texts.

Most of the stories about Eknāth that are current today can be traced to three texts: the *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān* (*Tale of Lord Khaṇḍyā*) written by Eknāth's grandson Mukteśvar (mid-17th

[1] The Rājvāḍe collection is divided between the Bhārat Itihās Saṁśodhak Maṇḍaḷ in Pune and the Rājvāḍe Saṁśodhan Maṇḍaḷ in Dhuḷe. Priyoḷkar was in charge of Marathi manuscript collection at the Mumbaī Marāṭhī Grantha Saṅgrahālay. The remarkable contribution of Rāmdāsī maṭhs to the preservation of *bhakti*-related manuscripts has yet to be adequately studied and appreciated. The well-preserved Marathi collection of the Saraswati Mahal Library in Tanjāvūr benefitted greatly from Rāmdāsī labors, and the vast collection of the Śrī SamarthVāgdevatā Mandir in Dhuḷe is comprised of manuscripts that were gathered from various Rāmdāsī *maṭh*s around Maharashtra. Mahānubhāv *maṭh*s also were diligent in preserving texts of their tradition. The Marathi Department of Marathwada University in Aurangabad has gathered a noteworthy collection of manuscripts from Mahānubhāv maṭhs and is presently scanning them. For more information on archives in Maharashtra, a decent overview (slanted toward historical and economic documents) can be found in the second chapter in K. N. Chitnis, *Research Methodology in History* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2006), 4-29.

[2] Mention must be made of the ongoing efforts of V. L. Manjul, the retired librarian from the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, who has done much to compile an index of many archives' Marathi manuscript holdings as well as to collect or photocopy manuscripts from smaller locales around the Maharashtra. It is hoped that his work will set a solid foundation for the new Centre for the Study of Marathi Culture (under the auspices of the American Institute of Indian Studies in Pune) to enable future scholars to locate and access manuscripts expediently.

[3] Some libraries and archives have not catalogued the hundreds and thousands of Marathi manuscripts that they possess (e.g. Jayakar Library at the University of Pune and the Ahmadnagar Aitihāsik Sangrahālaya), and others have maintained their collections so poorly that many of the manuscripts listed in their catalogues can no longer be found in their archives (e.g. the Bhārat Itihās Saṁśodhak Maṇḍal in Pune).

century), the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* (*Story of Pratiṣṭhān*) of Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan (late 17th century) and the *Eknāth-caritra* (*Story of Eknāth*) by Keśavsvāmī (1760). The *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān* (*ŚKĀ*) is a well composed and widely circulated poem of only 90 verses that narrate a single hagiographical episode in which the god Kṛṣṇa works clandestinely as a servant in Eknāth's home. The *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* (*PC*) seems to have circulated very little, if at all, before was published in 1948. Its 1,029 verses focus mainly on Eknāth's life from the time he was orphaned as a child through the time that he married and became a young householder. Eknāth's later life is not described, and his death is mentioned only in passing. In contrast, the *Eknāth-caritra* (*EC*) is the largest and most widely circulated of the early texts and is comprised of some 2,650 verses that cover the duration of Eknāth's life and death. The only feature common to all three of these texts is that they were composed in verse. Their literary styles, much of their content and their manuscript legacies differ widely. The episode narrated in the *ŚKĀ* was known by all of the later writers, but the authors of the *PC* and *EC* seem to have been unaware of each other.

This chapter is devoted to introducing these three early primary texts and their depictions of Eknāth. The next chapter will survey how the early stories of Eknāth were recycled in the compendia of hagiographical stories compiled by Mahīpati and Bhīmasvāmī in the latter half of the 18th century. These collective works testify to the existence of at least one or two more early hagiographical sources that have been lost and forgotten. Therefore, these extant texts about Eknāth do not allow a comprehensive map to be drawn of the stories' early circulation patterns. Nonetheless, in the course of this and the next chapter we will achieve a comprehensive review of every extant caste-related story written in Marathi about Eknāth in the two centuries between his death and 1800.[4]

[4] In 1927 Justin Abbott made a basic assessment of all the hagiographical sources on Eknāth that were available to him at that time; this work has remained the standard one in English. In Marathi, R.C. Ḍhere published a more comprehensive study of these sources in 1951. Ḍhere's essay has yet to be surpassed, which is partially due to the

The Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān of Mukteśvar

Although Mukteśvar is widely regarded as one of the greatest and most sophisticated *paṇḍit*-poets (as opposed to *sant*-poets) in Marathi and although he is famous for being Eknāth's grandson, very little is known about Mukteśvar as a person.[5] A few bits of biographical information are consistently repeated without dispute: Mukteśvar was the son of one of Eknāth's daughters, he was born in and lived most of his life in Paithan, and he died in the town of Tervāḍ (on the Maharashtra-Karnataka border, twelve miles south of Sāṅglī).[6] It is also clear that his personal deity was Dattātreya, a god whose devotees initiated a brahmanical, semi-*bhakti* revival in the 15th and 16th centuries in the western Deccan.[7] Mukteśvar's fame arose mainly from his Marathi renderings of five *parvan*s of the *Mahābhārata*, which earned him the reputation as

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high quality of his scholarship but also to the relative lack of interest among Maharashtrian scholars for this historiographical line of inquiry about *bhakti* figures. Cf. Justin E. Abbott, "Notes on the Life of Eknāth," in *The Life of Eknath*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1927 [1997]), 260-270; Rāmcandra Cintāmaṇ Ḍhere, "Mahārāṣṭramahodāyācā Agradūt," in *Vividhā*. (Puṇe: Nīlakaṇṭh Prakāśan, 1951 [1967]), 110-158 and esp. 120-126.

[5] A distinction is conventionally and somewhat ambiguously drawn in Marathi literature between religious poetry/poets and academic or artistic poets (*sant-kavī, sant-kāvya* on one side and *pant-kavī, paṇḍit-kavī, paṇḍitī-kāvya* on the other). The categorization of minor poets and writings is debatable, but the division mainly functions to distinguish between the Vārkarī poets (and sometime Rāmdās and his followers) and less explicitly religious writers of commentaries on Sanskrit poetry or poetry for poetry's sake (many of whom were patronized by the Peshwa rulers). Ma. Vā. Dhoṇḍe, "Paṇḍitī Kāvya," in *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś: Samīkṣā-sajñā*, ed. Vijayā Rājādhyakṣa (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya āṇi Saṁskṛtī Maṇḍaḷ, 2002), 187-188; Ma. Vā. Dhoṇḍe, "Santkāvya," in *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś: Samīkṣā-sajñā*, ed. Vijayā Rājādhyakṣa (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya āṇi Saṁskṛtī Maṇḍaḷ, 2002), 365-366.

[6] Vināyak Lakṣmaṇ Bhāve, *Mahārāṣṭra Sārasvat*, ed. Śaṅkar Gopāḷ Tuḷpuḷe, 5th ed. (Mumbaī: Popular Prakāśan, 1963), 251-257; S.G. Tulpule, *Classical Marāṭhī Literature*, 361-370; Śaṅkar Gopāḷ Tuḷpuḷe, "Mukteśvar," in *Marāṭhī Viśvakoś* (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Saṁskṛtī Maṇḍaḷ, 1985), 13: 675-676; He. Vi. Ināmdār and Vasant Jośī, *Eknāthkālīn Marāṭhī Vāṅmay* (Pune: Snehavardhan, 2005), 74-75; G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 261-265; Vi. Ha. Kuḷkarṇī, "Mukteśvar-1," in *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś: Khaṇḍa Pahilā (Marāṭhī Granthakār 1070-1877)*, ed. Gaṁ. De. Khānolkar. (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya Saṁskṛti Maṇḍaḷ, 1977), 231-237. La. Rā. Pāṅgārkar's 10-page introduction to Mukteśvar is now dated and states as fact information that has since then been reconsidered. Lakṣmaṇ Rāmcandra Pāṅgārkar, *Kavivarya Mukteśvar: Caritra āṇi Kāvyavivecan* (Poona: La. Rā. Pāṅgārkar, 1922), 13-22.

[7] Research into the early historical development of devotion to Dattātreya is still wanting, but a provisional introduction can be found in the fifth chapter of Rigopoulos' work. Cf. Antonio Rigopoulos, *Dattātreya: the Immortal Guru, Yogin, and Avatāra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 109-134.

Marathi's first *paṇḍit*-poet and inspired several Marathi poets to follow suit.[8] He also composed a Marathi version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and many shorter and occasional poems, most of which deal with puranic stories. No information is available about the years of his birth and death, his general biography or anything else about him as a person; even his name is a matter of some debate.[9] According to a disputed legend (*dantakathā*), Mukteśvar was mute as a child until Eknāth miraculously loosened his tongue, became his guru and inspired him to write poetry.[10] If one were to use this legend as a tentative historical reference point, it would appear that Mukteśvar must have been born at least several years before Eknāth's death in 1599. Even if one disregards this legend and its implication for calculating the year of Mukteśvar's birth, his life can still be placed confidently in the early seventeenth century, based on his undisputed relationship to Eknāth as his grandson.[11]

The manuscript legacy of the *ŚKĀ* is substantial, diverse, and indicative of a wide circulation. In addition to being incorporated by later writers into their own works, it also continued to be transcribed as an independent text, perhaps due to its poetic quality and easily

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[8] In his rendition of the *Ādī Parva,* Mukteśvar mentions Eknāth as the father of his mother (*mātṛjanak*). See Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, vol. 7, Mahārāṣṭra Kavi Caritra (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925), 185.

[9] At the heart of this debate is the effort to make sense of the various self-references (i.e., Mudgal, Mukteśvar, Cintāmaṇīsut and Līḷāviśvambhar) in this author's writings, which may or may not indicate that "Mukteśvar" was the writer's name at birth. V.H. Kuḷkarṇī, "Mukteśvar-1," 261-262.

[10] V.L. Bhāve, *Mahārāṣṭra Sārasvat*, 252. The earliest textual reference to this legend that I have found dates only to 1906. In a footnote about a praise poem (*āratī*) by Mukteśvar to Eknāth, editor Dāmodar Keśav Ok notes that the verse saying that Eknāth "caused a mute person to speak the Rāmāyaṇa" makes this legend about Mukteśvar "believable" (*viśvāsaṇīya*). Cf. Mukteśvar and Dāmodar Keśav Ok, *Mahārāṣṭra-Kavivarya-Mukteśvarkṛt Sphuṭakāvyeṁ* (Mumbaī: Nirṇayasāgara Press, 1906), 292. I find this unconvincing and feel that the story more likely applies to the more famous and oft-repeated story about Eknāth accepting a dull-witted and mute boy named Gāvbā as his disciple and inspiring him to finish writing Eknāth's *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa* after Eknāth died. For this story of Gāvbā, see Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* 24:27-93. Cf. J.E. Abbott et al., *The Life of Eknāth*, 227-233.

[11] Cf. V.H. Kuḷkarṇī, "Mukteśvar-1," 261. The only wildly alternative date that has been proposed (perhaps unintentionally) is by S. G. Tuḷpuḷe: "it seems probable that he lived during the first half of the 16th century." S.G. Tulpule, *Classical Marāṭhī Literature*, 368. Tulpule gives no support for this claim, and in a later publication he places Mukteśvar more logically in the 17th century. Therefore I presume his reference to "the first half of the 16th century" to be a mistake or typographical error. Ś.G. Tuḷpuḷe, "Mukteśvar," 675.

managed size. The text has been published twice (thrice, including a reprint), and I have tracked down seven manuscripts of it as well.[12] Dā. Ke. Ok, the editor of the version printed in 1906, states that he relied on two manuscripts in order to make his own edition, and in his critical notes he refers to "other" (plural but uncounted) manuscripts of this text.[13] Thus Ok's edition testifies to the existence of at least four manuscripts that he observed. The text of the other printed version (1903) matches none of the aforementioned manuscripts exactly and contains some variant readings that Ok never mentions in his edition in 1906. The editor of the 1903 edition, Tukārām Tātyā, says nothing about his sources, although it is clear from his text and notes that he observed at least two manuscripts. Furthermore, none of the seven manuscripts that I collected matches the printed versions or each other exactly, so they are obviously different from the ones that the editors used. Adding up the total of cited and collected texts, we find that at least thirteen unique manuscripts of *ŚKĀ* were extant at the beginning of the 20th century. I found only two of the manuscript editions amid other poetry in working notebooks (*bāḍa*s) of Marāṭhī *kīrtan* performers; the majority of manuscripts (including the manuscripts cited in one of the printed editions) were transcribed as independent texts in *pothī* form: sheets of paper folded in half, sometimes stitched with a string at the crease.[14]

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[12] Mukteśvar, "Eknāth-caritra (Śrīkhāṇḍyākhyān)," in *Mahārāṣṭra-Kavivarya-Mukteśvarkṛt Sphuṭakāvyeṁ*, ed. Dāmodar Keśav Ok, *Kāvyasaṅgraha*. (Mumbaī: Nirṇayasāgara Press, 1906); Mukteśvar, "Śrī Eknāthāceṁ Caritra," in *Śrīeknāth-mahārājāñcyā Abhangācī Gāthā*, ed. Rā. Rā. Tukārām Tātyā. (Mumbaī: Tattvavivecak Press, 1903), 125-129. Ok's edition of the *ŚKĀ* was reprinted in 1975 in a volume of Mukteśvar's short works. The text itself is exactly the same. Ok's footnotes about variant readings were retained in the reprint, but his critical notes (which new editor transformed into endnotes) were inexplicably lost because of a serious printing error by the publisher. Cf. Mukteśvar and V. K. Lele, "Eknāth-caritra," in *Mukteśvarakṛta Sphuṭakāvye: Vivecaka Prastāvanā, Mūla Saṃhitā, Pāṭhabheda, va Vistṛta Ṭīpā yāṃsaha*. (Anamol Prakāśan, 1975), 175-182. Because of the publisher's error, pages 161 through 176 were collated out of sequence, after page 32 of the appended notes at the end of the book.

[13] As I mentioned on page iv, in this dissertation my direct transliteration of Marathi names sometimes varies from the traditional English rendering of the name. In this case, the surname Ok is frequently transliterated in English as "Oak" (which is, indeed, how it is pronounced). Following contemporary transliteration protrocal, I render it "Ok."

[14] For an informative introduction of the compilation and usage of *bāḍa*s, as well as how they differ from the more formally inscribed *pothī* manuscript format, see C.L. Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory*, 102-110.

There is not space here for a comprehensive analysis of each *ŚKĀ* manuscript, but a few notes about them are in order. This text is called regularly by one of two names that appear on manuscript title pages and in their concluding verses: *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān* and *Eknāth-caritra* (and close variations such as *Śrīkhaṇḍyākṛṣṇākhyān, Yeknāth-caritra* and *Yaknāth-caritra*). Five manuscripts and a printed text bear the name *Eknāth-caritra* (or a close variation), whereas only one manuscript and a printed text are named within the text as *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān.*[15] Both names suit the text, since they refer to the story's two main characters. In Marathi literature, including at time when the *ŚKĀ* was written, the term *caritra*, when used in the name of a text, tended to refer to an extended composition with multiple stories about a historical figure (e.g., the 1rth-century *Līḷācaritra* about the Mahānubhāv tradition's founder or the 16th-century *Gurucaritra* about an important founding figure in the Datta *sampradāy*).[16] On the other hand, the term *ākhyān* (tale, parable) appears rarely in the titles of early Marathi texts. In fact, Mukteśvar appears to have been the first Marathi writer to name compositions in this way.[17] For these reasons and in order to avoid confusion with Keśavsvāmī's unequivocally named *Eknāth-caritra*, I will break with the more established convention (which I suspect reflects the preference of

[15] The printed edition of Tukārām Tātya entitles the text *Śrī Eknāthāceṁ Caritra* (The Story of Śrī Eknāth), although the final verse of this edition clearly calls itself *Śrīkhaṇḍyākṛṣṇākhyān*.

[16] The difference in usage between these two terms leads Abbott to conjecture that Mukteśvar may have written a full biography of Eknāth called the *Eknāth-caritra,* of which only the episode named *ŚKĀ* is extant. Given that Mukteśvar entitles other compositions "*ākhyān"* and that there are no full *caritra*s among Mukteśvar's writings, I disagree with Abbott and suspect that the *ŚKĀ* is a complete work in itself rather than a part of something larger. J.E. Abbott, "Notes on the Life of Eknāth," 261. For more on Marathi *caritra*s cf. Rāmcandra Cintāmaṇ Ḍhere, *Santāñcyā Caritrakathā: Prācīn Marāṭhīt̄īl Santcaritrapar Vāṅmayāceṁ Darśan* (Puṇe: Puṣpak Prakāśan, 1967), esp. 19-21; Rameścandra Pāṭkar, "Caritra," in *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś: Samīkṣā-sajñā*, ed. Vijayā Rājādhyakṣa (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya āṇi Saṁskṛtī Maṇḍaḷ, 2002), 118.

[17] Mā. Nā. Ācārya, "Ākhyānkāvya," Ibid., 28.

copyists rather than Mukteśvar) and refer to this composition of Mukteśvar by the name *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān.*[18]

In the two printed versions and two manuscripts, the name Mukteśvar occurs within the text itself, and epithets that Mukteśvar commonly used (Viśvambharu or Līḷāviśvambharu, which refers to his personal deity Dattātreya) appear in most of the manuscripts that lack the name Mukteśvar. That Mukteśvar's name does not consistently appear may be a consequence of the fact that many of the manuscripts either condense or lack those framing verses at the text's beginning and conclusion that provide information about the author.

The longest and most elegant edition of the story – 94 verses – is represented in the printed text edited by Ok. Three other versions have 87 verses, three have around 70 verses, one has 52 verses and one fragmentary manuscript (of 35 extant verses) was clearly missing some of the middle and final pages. The seven verses that the 87-verse texts lack (as compared to the 94-verse text) are scattered within the text and only provide more details to the narrative; it is not as if a complete episode or story is missing. Many individual words and phrases vary from manuscript to manuscript, and it often appears (in penmanship and orthographical errors and inconsistencies) that the scribes responsible for copying these texts were not of the highest caliber.

For my analysis I have chosen to work mainly with the 94-verse text edited and printed by Ok, as its narrative is the most complete and meaningful, its style is the most elegant (and thereby in keeping with Mukteśvar's reputation), and the editor provides uniquely critical and comparative notes. These are my informed preferences; I am not arguing that this version is the

[18] I suspect that *Eknāth-caritra* was preferred by copyists and that *Śrīkhaṇḍhyākhyān* was the title given by Mukteśvar on the grounds that the later tradition may have sought to clarify the text as being specifically about Eknāth, whereas the earlier tradition (Mukteśvar) may have desired to highlight the text's puranic character by highlighting the role of Kṛṣṇa/Śrīkhaṇḍyā. I admit that this reasoning is quite speculative.

oldest or the most authentic. The variations between this edition and other versions of the text are largely inconsequential for us; only one of the variant verses in the *ŚKĀ* has a possible reference to social differentiation. Interested readers can consult Appendix A for my full translation of the *ŚKĀ*.

Stylistically, the *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān* is similar to Mukteśvar's other short compositions in its refined and rhythmically precise style as well in its puranic mode of narration, as Mukteśvar depicts divine figures mingling freely in earthly settings.[19] Mukteśvar writes elegantly and creatively in the flexible Marathi *ovī* style.[20] The *ŚKĀ* is one of several short *ākhyān*s that Mukteśvar wrote, including the *Hariścandrākhyān* and *Hanumantākhyān*. Aside from a single three-line poem praising Jñāndev, the only non-puranic character who received attention of Mukteśvar's writings was Eknāth.[21] Eknāth is the focus of four very short praise-poems by him, but the *ŚKĀ* by far exceeds them in length and complexity.[22] Mukteśvar's relatively minor excursions to praise Jñāndev and Eknāth comprise the full extent of his attention to *bhakti* figures; his artistic ambitions were usually directed elsewhere. So Mukteśvar's story about

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[19] Mukteśvar has yet to receive attention in English scholarship beyond the short description in S. G. Tulpule's *Classical Marathi Literature.* The most thorough discussion of Mukteśvar's life and works in Marathi is A. Kā. Priyoḷkar's introduction to his edition of the first *parva* of Mukteśvar's *Mahābhārata*. Mukteśvar and A. Kā. Priyoḷkar, *Mukteśvarkṛt Mahābhārata Ādiparva (Khaṇḍa 1)* (Mumbaī: Marāṭhī Grantha Sangrahālaya, 1951).

[20] *Ovī* is by far the most popular meter in Marathi poetry, due to its flexibility and venerable reputation after Jñāndev (13th c.) used it in his classic text, the *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā* or *Jñāneśvarī.* Each *ovī* verse consists of four feet. The first three feet are approximately the same length (9-15 syllables) and rhyme at the end. The final foot is shorter (6-9 syllables) and ends in a syllable that does not follow the rhyme scheme of the other feet. *Ovī* composers regularly take great liberty regarding the lengths of each verse, but the rhyme scheme is usually observed. Cf. Mo. Ra. Vāḷambe, *Sugama Marāṭhī Vyākaraṇ Lekhan* (Puṇe: Nitīn Prakāśan, [1988] 2006), 166-167.

[21] In June 2010 I came across a manuscript in the Deccan College Library archives attributed to Mukteśvar called *Bhānudās-caritra,* about Eknāth's great-grandfather (and likewise an ancestor of Mukteśvar). I have never seen this text mentioned in scholarship on Mukteśvar or on Marathi literature in general. I cannot yet comment on the possibility that this text was actually composed by Mukteśvar. If it is authentic, it would be the earliest written record of the story about Bhānudās returning the Viṭṭhal image from Vijayanagar to Pandharpur. Cf. Līḷāviśvambhara (Mukteśvar), "Bhānudās-caritra" in Marathi Manuscript Collection, MS no. 3108 (Pune: Deccan College).

[22] Mukteśvar, "Eknāth-caritra (Śrīkhāṇḍyākhyān)," 285, 291-293.

Eknāth is a significant but plausible departure from the topics on which he more commonly wrote. There is no evidence to suggest that the *ŚKĀ* is a pseudograph.[23]

The *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān* – Text

The *ŚKĀ* opens by invoking Gaṇeś and Dattātreya and praising Eknāth for several verses with words and phrases that intentionally have multiple meanings (*śleṣa*).[24] Mukteśvar then describes how Viṣṇu (referred to as Kṛṣṇa later in the text) was so deeply impressed by Eknāth's *bhakti* and vow to give food to visitors that he wanted to come and serve Eknāth personally.[25] So the god takes the form of a wandering brahman, arrives at Eknāth's home in Pratiṣṭhān (Paithan) and offers his services in exchange for food and cast-off clothing. Eknāth accepts him, and the brahman sets about fetching water from the nearby river, washing dishes and clothes, and grinding sandalwood for Eknāth's *ṭiḷaka* (sectarian mark on the forehead). It is from the sandalwood (Sk. *śrīkhaṇḍa*) that Śrīkhaṇḍyā's name derives, although attentive listeners may also hear in it a faint echo of the name *Śrīkānta* ("Husband of Śrī/Lakṣmī" – Viṣṇu).[26] Śrīkhaṇḍyā eventually works in Eknāth's home for twelve years.

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[23] One early biographer of Eknāth in the 20th century opined that because the *ŚKĀ* does not bear Mukteśvar's name and because it did not seem to him to be written in Mukteśvar's style, the *ŚKĀ* was probably written later by a devotee and slipped into Mukteśvar's corpus. It seems to me that this scholar did not investigate the matter deeply enough to support such a strong claim. For example, he does not take into account that although the word "Mukteśvar" is not in the text, the name Līlāviśvambhar (which Mukteśvar commonly used elsewhere) clearly does appear at the end. J.R. Ājgāvkar, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, 48.

[24] E.g., in verse 2 Eknāth places *suman* – meaning both "flowers" and "good mind" – at the feet of his guru. (*Tyāce caraṇīṁ eknātheṁ | suman ṭhevileṁ puruṣārtheṁ*). The use of the word *suman* here in Marathi in the sense of "flower" is unusual. Mukteśvar certainly selected this word for the sake of rhetorical flourish, often following draws on conventions in Sanskrit poetry.

[25] Throughout all editions of this text, the names Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa both appear and are often interchanged, although Kṛṣṇa occurs slightly more often.

[26] Especially in rural forms of Marathi today, speakers often add a *–yā* to the first syllable of someone's full name to create a familiarized form. Mukteśvar does not make explicit the meaning of Śrīkhaṇḍyā's name in the *ŚKĀ*, but later authors who recycle this story explain it more clearly. (*PC* 10:88)

Meanwhile in Dvārkā, a brahman was practicing austerities (*tapas*) to win a vision of Kṛṣṇa. Pleased with the brahman, Kṛṣṇa comes to meet him in a dream and advises him to go to Paithan to actually see him (take *darśan*), as Kṛṣṇa is working there under the name Śrīkhaṇḍyā. So the brahman travels to Paithan and inquires at Eknāth's home where he can find Kṛṣṇa. When Eknāth suddenly recognizes Śrīkhaṇḍyā's true identity, Śrīkhaṇḍyā disappears. The brahman ascetic vows to end his life if he does not receive *darśan*, and eventually Eknāth doubles the threat by repeating the vow himself. Kṛṣṇa reappears, describes his pleasure at having served Eknāth for twelve years, gives *darśan*, and disappears again. The brahman ascetic praises Eknāth, calling him a complete manifestation of God (*avatār saṁpūrṇa*), and then he departs as well.[27] Mukteśvar concludes the text on a theological note that highlights the efficacy of *bhakti* and the eagerness with which God receives sincere devotion.

Notably, this earliest story about Eknāth contains not even a passing reference to non-brahmans, much less overtones of caste tension. Each of the characters that appears is identified as a brahman, but since there are no non-brahman characters, this is not a distinguishing characteristic within the narrative. In the fifth verse Eknāth is said to have regularly done service or worship to brahmans (*brāhmaṇpujan karitase*).[28] In the eighth verse Viṣṇu comes from Dvārkā in "brahman dress" (*brāhmaṇ veśe*). In verse 20, Mukteśvar says that a brahman arrived in Dvārkā to undertake austerities in hope of seeing Kṛṣṇa. Throughout the text, the word "brahman" appears with such frequency that the reader can easily become confused about which brahman Mukteśvar is referring to in a given situation.

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[27] Given that this is poetry (where grammar rules do not strictly apply), one might also render the adjective *saṁpūrṇa* adverbially here – "completely an *avatār*" – or it may be noteworthy that the final syllable *saṁpūrṇa* conveniently fits the *ovī* rhyming scheme in this verse and may not need to convey any deep significance.

[28] Incidentally the catchy first half this verse is repeated by later authors more often than any other verse in the *ŚKĀ* – *gaṅgātīrī ati pāvan | vikhyāt jagī pratiṣṭhān* (on the bank of the extremely pure Gangā, in the world-famous Pratiṣṭhān). Gaṅgā is a common name used for the Godāvarī River, and Pratiṣṭhān is the ancient name for Paithan.

While there is no reference in the *ŚKĀ* to caste tension or Eknāth's relations to non-brahmans, there is a word that Mukteśvar uses for Eknāth which is potentially relevant to our concerns. In verse 69, Eknāth is called by an epithet that plays on his name but is regularly used for various Hindu deities: *anātha-nāth* (Protector of the helpless).[29] The epithet fulfills no clear semantic role in this verse; in fact, it seems to be merely filling out the meter. Another minor but noteworthy reference appears in a variant of verse 7, which describes Eknāth's vow to give food (*sadāvarta*) to anyone who comes to his home.[30] In the variant verse, Eknāth is described as *prīti bahut anāthī* ("very dear among the helpless" or "dear to many helpless people").[31] Although quite provocative, this phrase occurs only in one manuscript; no other edition of the *ŚKĀ* has these words. Four manuscripts have an orthographically close but semantically very different reading – *yeti bahut annārthī* (many [people] came for food: *anna-ārthī*).[32] In any case, there is no clear implication about the identities – caste or otherwise – of the *anātha* (helpless) in

[29] The origin of Eknāth's name is unclear (perhaps related to the family's *kuladaivatā* Ekavīrā or to the fact that he was an only child), and although he is routinely called simply "Nāth" (alongside "Eknāth") in many texts, there is no evidence or memory of Eknāth being connected to the Nāth *sampradāy*. It seems likely to me that the epithet *anātha-nāth* became applied to Eknāth later due to its similarity to his name and aptness for memories of his social interactions.

[30] Molesworth defines *sadāvarta* (also written *sadāvartta,* which similarly derives from *sadāvrata* – "a vow [to give food] always") as a vow to distribute food indiscriminately and daily to mendicants and travelers. Dāte identifies it with the social institution of *annachatram*. Kane equates it with *anna-dāna-māhātmya* ("greatness of the gift of food") and highlights the importance of giving food to brahmans in this vow according to *dharmaśāstra* texts. J. T. Molesworth, *Molesworth's Marathi-English Dictionary* (Pune: Shubhada-Saraswat Prakashan, 1857 [2005]), 817; "Mahārāṣṭra Śabdakoś," ed. Yaśvant Rāmkṛṣṇa Dāte, et al. (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1932 [1995]), 3007; Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra Vol. 5 Part 1* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1958), 437.

[31] Mukteśvar, "Eknāth-caritra (Śrīkhāṇḍyākhyān)," 276.

[32] [Mukteśvar], "Eknāth-caritra" in Marāṭhī Manuscript Collection, MS no. 414.Ca2(740) (Dhuḷe: Rājvāḍe Saṁśodhan Mandir), v. 3. To be clear, I am supplying the name of an author or text in brackets whenever a given manuscript can be reliably identified but does not explicitly contain that information itself.

the examples above in the *ŚKĀ*.[33] Later texts about Eknāth that repeat this story will fill in more details.

In two places in *ŚKĀ* Mukteśvar describes Eknāth's activity of service to others in a way that became quite common in later texts. In both verse 2 and verse 80, Mukteśvar repeats one theme almost exactly: "he undertook heartfelt service, regarding Janārdana as among the people" (*sevā ārambhilī bhāvārtheṁ, jani janārdana mhaṇavunī*, v. 2) and "habitually regarding Janārdana among people, [Eknāth] did service by his own volition" (*janī janārdana mhaṇavunī nem, sevā karitī nijabhāveṁ*, v.80).[34] *Janī* is the locative of the Marathi *jan* (people), so this epithet literally means "Janārdana in/among people." The phrase intentionally plays on the word Janārdana, which is the name of Eknāth's beloved guru as well as an epithet for Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa.[35] One of the most consistently articulated themes in later stories about Eknāth is his supreme devotion to his guru, so it is quite plausible to imagine that listeners and readers would understand the phrase to refer both to Eknāth's guru and to Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa together. The implication of this epithet is drawn out in later hagiographies: Eknāth understood Janārdana to be among the people so that Eknāth's public service was service to his guru and to God.[36] There is no explicit indication in the *ŚKĀ* that Mukteśvar has this in mind, but I find it unlikely that Mukteśvar was unaware of the dual meanings of "Janārdana."

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[33] *Anātha* in Marathi literally means "without a lord/master," but is commonly used to connote someone who is susceptible to harm and lacking a protector. A related common translation is "orphan." Eknāth himself was orphaned as a child, so this connection may have resonated with listeners/readers. There are no stories about Eknāth helping orphans specifically, however, so I find it more plausible to read the word as "protector-less/helpless."

[34] As is the case with many Marathi verses cited in this chapter, my quotations follow the text as given, with all its grammatical and orthographic deviation from "standard" Marathi.

[35] Eknāth's guru Janārdana never appears in the *ŚKĀ* nor is any other reference made to him. It is highly unlikely, however, that a Marathi audience would hear the name "Janārdana" in a story about Eknāth without thinking of Eknāth's guru.

[36] Of course the idea of hospitality to guests as service to God is ancient and widely acknowledged in India. *Athithi devo bhava* (Taittirīya Upaṇiṣad 1.11.4) is an obvious precursor.

As with the discussion of *anātha* (helpless) above, here too the word *janī* (in/among the people) says nothing explicit about caste or its transgression. Nothing in the *ŚKĀ* necessitates that these references be read as referring to a concern for non-brahmans. As provocative as the references to *anātha* and *janī* may seem, we ought not read too much into them at this stage.

Mukteśvar's artistic skill is certainly on display in the *ŚKĀ,* with his use of *śleṣa* and close observance of meter. This text also may function to enhance Mukteśvar's own prominence by relating a wondrous story about his grandfather. The *ŚKĀ* also illustrates *bhakti*-related themes such as God being deeply moved by a *bhakta*'s devotion and God showing a preference for devoted service (Eknāth) over the practice of austerities (the ascetic from Dvārkā). The text demonstrates Eknāth's greatness in puranic style by depicting him as someone who merited the personal attention of a deity. But does the narrative itself have any special significance?

There is, of course, the possibility of a historical substratum for the story – someone came to Paithan, worked in Eknāth's home, and in later memory became associated with Kṛṣṇa himself. We have no access to this layer of history and thus no way to verify or disprove it. I find a different possibility more likely – that Mukteśvar drew inspiration from an earlier mythological story and modeled aspects of his *ŚKĀ* on it. There was already an important regional narrative precedent for Kṛṣṇa being so impressed with a person's *bhakti* that he comes to Maharashtra and stays. It is one of the founding stories for how Kṛṣṇa first came to Pandharpur and became known as Viṭṭhal.

The early history of Pandharpur as a pilgrimage town and Viṭṭhal as a deity are too complex and contested to summarize here.[37] It will suffice for our purposes simply to note that

[37] For further reading on Pandharpur and Viṭṭhal, see J. Keune and C.L. Novetzke, "Vārkarī," 617-618; Guy A. Deleury, *The Cult of Viṭhobā* (Pune: Deccan College, Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1960 [1994]); R.C. Ḍhere, *Śrīviṭṭhala: Eka Mahāsamanvay*. Although some may find Ḍhere's search for singular historical origins too optimistic and narrow, his book represents the most current and informed opinion on these matters.

approximately between the 13th and 16th centuries stories began to appear in Sanskrit that proposed an explicitly Kṛṣṇaite mythological background for the arrival of Viṭṭhal in Pandharpur. The basic plot is that Kṛṣṇa was so impressed with the wholehearted *bhakti* that a man named Puṇḍalīk (or Puṇḍarīk) was showing to his parents that Kṛṣṇa comes to Pandharpur to meet him in person. Puṇḍalīk is so intent on his parents, however, that he tells even Kṛṣṇa to wait. So Kṛṣṇa has waited and continues to wait, standing in Pandharpur. This Puṇḍalīk story first appeared in the two *Pāṇḍuraṅga-māhātmya*s that are contained in the *Padma* and *Skanda Purāṇa*s. It has multiple, complex recensions in Sanskrit and Marathi that have received some attention as possible sources of information about the origins of Pandharpur.[38] Different renditions contain slightly different details (e.g., whether Kṛṣṇa came from Govardhana, Vaikuṇṭha or Dvārkā), and it appears that over time the name Kṛṣṇa was equated with and in some cases was replaced by the name Viṭṭhal. Although it is impossible to determine exactly which version of this story may have been known to Mukteśvar, it is quite likely that some version of this story was circulating and available to him. If nothing else, Eknāth himself likely composed poetry containing dozens of references to the basic story.[39] I confess that there is no direct evidence to support this theory of influence, but I cannot think of a more meaningful explanation about why Mukteśvar crafted the narrative of the *ŚKĀ* as he did. My argument here is not that Mukteśvar necessarily modeled his *ŚKĀ* after the story about Puṇḍalīk; I am merely suggesting that Mukteśvar may have had the Puṇḍalīk story in mind when he composed the *ŚKĀ*.

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[38] I. M. P. Raeside, "The "Panduranga-Mahatmya" of Sridhar," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 28, no. 1 (1965): 81-100; Erik Reenberg Sand, "The Legend of Puṇḍarīka: the Founder of Pandharpur," in *The History of Sacred Places in India as Reflected in Traditional Literature*, ed. Hans Bakker. (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 33-61; Christian Lee Novetzke, "A Family Affair: Krishna Comes to Pandharpur and Makes Himself at Home," in *Alternative Krishnas: Regional and Vernacular Variations on a Hindu Deity*, ed. Guy Beck. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 113-138.

[39] Eknāth and N. Sākhre, *Śrī Eknāth Gāthā, Śrī Bhānudās-mahārāj āṇi Śrī Janārdana-mahārāj yāñcyā Abhaṅgāsahit*, E.g., #230, #351, #385, #392, etc.

It is also possible that the audience of the *ŚKĀ* may have made the link between the Puṇḍalīk and Eknāth, since both of them had such outstanding devotion that Krṣṇa was attracted to come and stay.

As will become apparent when compared with the later hagiographies that we will consider, the *ŚKĀ* is a very different kind of text, which in many ways justifies the conventional classification of Mukteśvar as a *paṇḍit-kavī*.[40] The *ŚKĀ* seems unconcerned about conveying information about Eknāth's life and deeds. Instead, this artistic, polished text grafts Eknāth into a sort of puranic narrative in which Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa becomes the center of attention. While the manuscript evidence of the *ŚKĀ* reveals that copyists did not fully appreciate and replicate all of the nuances of Mukteśvar's literary effort, the text nonetheless became quite popular, and the basic plot of the *ŚKĀ* eventually became one of the more frequently repeated and stable stories about Eknāth in the hagiographic corpus. The *ŚKĀ*'s inclusion of the terms *anātha-nātha* and *janī-janārdana* are also noteworthy; these will take on a much greater significance in later stories.

The *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* of Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan

Whereas the manuscript legacy of the *ŚKĀ* is complex and testifies to a broad circulation, the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* presents the opposite case. The text's author, Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan, was known only to the family that possessed a copy of his manuscript until one of the family members allowed the *PC* to be published finally in 1948. Since the book's publication, no further biographical details about the author have come to light beyond the four bits of

[40] On the *sant-kavi* vs. *paṇḍit-kavi* distinction, see footnote 5 earlier in this chapter.

biographical information that were revealed in the text itself. Kṛṣṇadās' invocation at the beginning of the *PC* is slightly revealing: he invokes Pāṇḍurang (Viṭṭhal) as his ancestors' family deity (*kuladaivatam*), and states that he "constantly remembers" (*smareṁ ... sadā*) a person named Uddhav, whom he calls a *rājayogī*.[41] At the end of the sixth chapter the author says that his family's "dharma" (*kuladharma*) is Malhār, an alternative name for the popular Maharashtrian folk deity Khaṇḍobā. Kṛṣṇadās' second name Jagadānanda-nandan literally means "son of Jagadānanda," but nothing at all is known about Jagadānanda.[42] The *PC* has a peculiar and mysterious background, and it is necessary to understand the circumstances under which it was preserved and published in order to appreciate its unusual reception history.

For more than three centuries, the small village of Vaṭhār (sixteen miles northeast of Sātārā, 47 miles south of Pune) has been home to a family of brahmans who consider themselves to be descendants of Eknāth. Traditionally they have gone by the family name Gosāvī, as have the families of Eknāth's descendants in Paithan, although there is no evidence or recent memory of contact between the two Gosāvī clans until after the publication of the *PC*.[43] The manuscript

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[41] K. Jagadānanda-nandan, *PC*, vv. 1:1-2. When citing the text of the *PC* itself I will refer to chapter and verse rather than page number. When citing introductory articles in this book I will include the names of the sections with the page numbers, to compensate for the publisher's unfortunate practice of paginating each article and appendix separately.

[42] According to one theory, Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan's name is unprecedented because it is actually a pseudonym that was adopted by someone in the family lineage of Eknāth, namely Uddhavsvāmī's great-grandson, Śāmjī (a sixth generation descendant of Eknāth, according to the Vaṭhār Gosāvī's family tree). Bāḷkṛṣṇa Śāmrāv Ināmdār, *Sant Eknāth Vaṁśācyā Vaṭhār Śākhecā Kulavṛttānta* (Puṇe: Self-published, 2008), 27. This is different than what I previously communicated to Christian Novetzke. Christian Lee Novetzke, "The Brahmin Double: the Brahminical Construction of Anti-Brahminism and Anti-Caste Sentiment in Religious Cultures of Precolonial Maharashtra," *South Asian History and Culture* 2, no. 2 (2011): 249n36.

[43] Gosāvī (which in this case likely means "director of a *maṭh*" and not a mendicant *yogī*) is the most common and oldest surname that the family uses. Some members of the family also now go by Ināmdār (literally "bearer of an *inām,*" as the family was officially gifted a portion of the taxes levied of nearby towns for the maintenance of their household). Similarly, in Paithan some family members have used the surname Jāgīrdār, since local rulers there granted one of their ancestors this administrative right to the income from some local taxes. One also occasionally sees members of the Paithankar Gosāvīs going by the name Paithankar or Nāthvāle ("one who is connected to Nāth/Eknāth") as well.

of the *PC* was preserved in relative obscurity in the home of the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs (the Gosāvīs of Vaṭhār).[44] In 1941, a retired judge from Bombay happened to visit the town and see the *PC* manuscript in Gosāvī family possession.[45] Through a sequence of reports and contacts, the head of the Gosāvī household was eventually persuaded to allow the manuscript to be published.[46] The book was printed in 1947 and released publicly at a religious function in 1948.[47] Therefore until 1948 no one who wrote about Eknāth was aware that this text existed. The original manuscript was lost during the anti-brahman riots which swept across much of Maharashtra following Gandhi's assassination in 1948, and the newly produced handwritten copy of the manuscript that was used for publication could not be found after it was sent to the publisher.[48] Lest one suspect that this manuscript is merely a hoax, however, it should be noted that a photograph of the final page of the original manuscript is reproduced at the conclusion of the book.[49] Despite intensive searching, I have never seen nor heard anyone claim that the text is a somehow fraudulent.

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[44] "X-kar" is a very common and convenient Marathi expression that simply means "one who is from X."

[45] The most detailed narration of how this manuscript was "discovered" is in an introduction ("*Manogat"*) by the writer of the prose edition of the *PC* published in 2005. Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan and Bāḷāsāheb Śāmrāv Ināmdār, *Pratiṣṭhān Caritra : Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan Kṛt Ovibaddha Sant Eknāth Caritrācā Gadya Anuvād* (Pune: Bā. Śā. Ināmdār, 2005), 18-19.

[46] For the more thorough rendition of how the *PC* manuscript came to publication, see K. Jagadānanda-nandan, *PC*, Prastāvanā, 6.

[47] These two dates are printed on different pages at the beginning of the book, and this has led to bibliographic confusion in libraries. Likewise, the names of the editor and publisher are printed ambiguously. Some secondary authors consequently have cited this publication in different ways and given the wrong impression that there were multiple editions in 1947 and 1948. There is only one edition.

[48] R. S. Ināmdār and B. S. Ināmdār, Personal communication, August 22, 2010. The Ināmdār brothers (who belong to the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvī family) said that a number of old manuscripts were hurriedly removed from Vaṭhār and stored at a remote farmhouse when anti-brahman unrest grew. Somewhere in the confusion of removing the manuscripts and bringing them back after the violence had subsided, the *PC* manuscript could no longer be found.

[49] Ibid., Appendix, 8.

This text and genealogy of the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs have been the subject of numerous short books and pamphlets published by two elderly brothers of the family who now reside in Pune and go by the surname Ināmdār. Bāḷkṛṣṇa Śāmrāv Ināmdār composed and published a prose rendering of the *PC* in 2005, along with an introduction and a few critical footnotes.[50] His elder brother, Raghunāth Śāmrāv (Nānāsāheb) Ināmdār has been very active in collecting old family papers (including official *sanad*s, *inām*s and letters from Maharashtra State Archives), doing genealogy, and publishing this information in an attempt to reconstruct as much of their family history as possible back to the time of Eknāth.[51]

In the course of several conversations mainly with Ra. Śā. Ināmdār in Pune in 2009 and 2010, I became acquainted with the brothers, their writings and arguments. They readily admit that the branch of Eknāth's descendants who live in Paithan (the Paithankar Gosāvīs) reject their claim to common ancestry. While the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs maintain that Eknāth had a grandson named Uddhav who left Paithan and eventually settled in Vaṭhār, the Paithankar Gosāvīs argue that the name Uddhav never appears in their family tree, and they have no knowledge of any ancestor moving to Vaṭhār.[52] In rebuttal, the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs point to their own family tree documentation and centuries-old, official letters between their ancestors and local Marāṭhā rulers in Kolhāpūr, including a *sanad* (a copy of which is held in the Maharashtra State Archives at

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[50] K. Jagadānanda-nandan and B.Ś. Ināmdār, *Pratiṣṭhān Caritra : Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan Kṛt Ovibaddha Sant Eknāth Caritrācā Gadya Anuvād*.

[51] Although the Ināmdār brothers are not scholars by vocation, they have done an admirable job of weighing evidence and being frank about relative strengths and weaknesses in their arguments as they make their family's historical information public. They also stress that they have no interest in seeking material benefit (such as legal rights to temple income or land ownership) through their genealogical efforts.

[52] The gist of this disagreement has been printed. Cf. M. Gosāvī, "Sant Śrī Eknāth Gharaṇyācī Pramāṇbhūt Vaṁśāvaḷ," 15-29. Further arguments and rebuttals (mainly between the two Ināmdār brothers themselves) are found in three more short publications: Rā. Śā. Ināmdār, *Svānandāce Kavaḍse - 1* (Puṇe: Self-published, 2005); Ra. Śā. Ināmdār, *Svānandāce Kavaḍse - 2* (Puṇe: Self-published, 2005); Ra. Śā. Ināmdār, *Bhrāmarī* (Puṇe: Self-published, ca.2007).

Kolhāpūr) that is signed by Śivājī's grandson Śāhjī, declaring that the income of the village of Vaṭhār be designated for the support of Uddhav and his descendants. Uddhav is described in this *sanad* as the "grandson of the *svāmī*, who had previously lived in the *svāmī*'s *maṭh* in Paithan" (*svāmice nātu paiṭhaṇī ajivarī svāmīcā maṭh āhe tetheṁ rāhāt hoto)*, and the *sanad* was given so that the family should continue to be able "to keep on celebrating in good form the death-memorial and festival of Śrī" (*śrīcī puṇyatitha va utchah* [*utsav*] *cālvūn sukharūp rāhṇe*).[53]

I make this apparent digression into genealogical disputes only to highlight that the background from which the *PC* emerged is contentious but not outlandish. Although the *PC* was largely unknown until 1948, and although the descendants of Eknāth in Paithan today continue to deny its authority, several respected 20th-century scholars of Marathi literature that regardless of the genealogical debate, the *PC* merits attention as an important early hagiographical work on Eknāth.[54] I concur and treat the *PC* accordingly.

As stated earlier, the only available information about the background of this text and its author come from within the text itself: the invocation of the god Pāṇḍuraṅg, the reference to a figure named Uddhav who is called enigmatically a "*rājayogī*," the mention of the family's *dharma* (*kuladharma*), and the colophon of the scribe who copied the manuscript.[55] After the

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[53] K. Jagadānanda-nandan, *PC*. Pariśiṣṭa, 7-8. It is obvious in these statements that the name Eknāth is never explicitly mentioned. I find it very unlikely that a different "*svāmī*" is indicated by this reference.

[54] R.C. Ḍhere, "Mahārāṣṭramahodāyācā Agradūt," 123; G. V. Tagare, "Introduction: Eknāth and his Works," in *The Life of Eknāth*, ed. Justin E. Abbott. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1997), xiii; H.V. Ināmdār and V. Jośī, *Eknāthkālīn Marāṭhī Vāṅmay*, 31.

[55] Dāte in the *Mahārāṣṭra Śabdakoś* defines *rājayogī* as someone who practices the particular the tradition of *rāja yoga*, which according to Dāte is a separate branch of yoga from *haṭha yoga.* Tulpule and Feldhaus in their *Dictionary of Old Marathi* note that the term *rājayoga* was used by the 13-14th century Marathi poet Mukundarāj to name "an easy mode of meditation." Although it has precedents in Marathi literature, the word is not common, and based on currently available information it is impossible to know confidently what Kṛṣṇadās means by the term in the *PC.* In light of the *sanad* possessed by the family, perhaps *rājayogī* refers to a *yogī* who is officially patronized by a king. This Uddhav (aka Uddhavsvāmī) is not widely known figure in Maharashtra, although he is highly revered as an ascetic and wonder-worker by the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs. Two short books about Uddhavsvāmī have been published by the Ināmdār brothers. Cf. Bāḷkṛṣṇa Śāmrāv Ināmdār, *Śrī Uddhav-līlāmṛt* (Puṇe: Self-published, 2009); Ra. Śā. Ināmdār, *Sant Eknāthāñce Nātū Uddhavsvāmī Caritra* (Puṇe: Namratā Bhaṭ, 2005).

conclusion of the text, the scribe provides his name (Rāmbhaṭ, son of Śāmbhaṭ), the date on which he finished his transcription work (the tenth day of the waxing moon in the month of Āṣāḍh in Śaka 1717 or 1795 CE) and a note that the copy belongs to "*Uddhavātmaja Śāmjī Gosāvī Vaṭhārkar*" (Śāmjī Gosāvī, son of Uddhav, of Vaṭhār). The fact that the names Rām, Śām and Uddhav (a second Uddhav who came two generations later than the *rājayogī* Uddhav) all appear in the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs' family tree leads the editor of the printed version of the *PC* to relate the colophon to those generations of the Gosāvī family. The editor of the *PC* therefore interpolates 1698 – a completely speculative but arithmetically possible – as the year in which Kṛṣṇadās wrote the original manuscript.[56]

Neither the name Kṛṣṇadās nor Kṛṣṇa appears in the Gosāvī's family tree, so it is not immediately apparent that the author belonged to the family. Another significant piece of information is Kṛṣṇadās' reference to the deity Malhār being his "family's dharma" (*kuladharma*). (6:100) Malhār – or Khaṇḍobā, as he is more widely known – is a very popular deity among Maharashtrians, and the occasional pilgrimage to his main temple in Jejurī (30 miles southeast of Pune) one of the state's larger religious festivals. Although far more popular among non-brahmans, Malhār/Khaṇḍobā is also worshipped both as a family deity and in general by some Deśastha Brahmans.[57] The term *kuladharma* (often paired with *kulācāra,* "family custom") is a conventional way of denoting an inherited familial duty to conduct periodically some form of *pūjā* particularly to Malhār/Khaṇḍobā in Jejurī or to one of the local goddesses in

[56] K. Jagadānanda-nandan, *PC*, Prastāvanā, 4.

[57] How Malhār/Khaṇḍobā came to be included among the household deities of some Deśastha brahman families has not, to my knowledge, been studied. For another example of this phenomenon, cf. Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer, "God as the King for All: the Sanskrit Mallāri Māhātmya and its Context," in *The History of Sacred Places in India as Reflected in Traditional Literature*, ed. Hans Bakker. (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 105.

Maharashtra.[58] The name Malhār appears in the family tree of the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs (who are Deśastha brahmans), although this mere fact is insufficient to support any grand conclusions.[59] Kṛṣṇadās' reference to Malhār need not imply his inclusion in the Gosāvī lineage, but it may suggest at least that he was a Deśastha Brahman living in what is now southwestern Maharashtra, where devotion to Malhār is more common. Whatever Kṛṣṇadās' blood lineage may have been, the fact that he "remembers" (*smareṁ*) the *rājayogī* Uddhav suggests that he at least belonged to Uddhav's spiritual lineage, if not his blood lineage.

Given the difficulty in dating the *PC*, it is impossible to say with certainty whether it is historically the second or third text known to have been composed about Eknāth (i.e., whether it was composed before or after Keśavsvāmī's *EC*).[60] The *PC* and *EC* both inherited narrative tropes from the *ŚKĀ,* but they disagree on several significant details about Eknāth's life, and each text includes several stories that the other does not. A thorough comparison of the *PC* and *EC* can conducted more meaningfully later in the chapter. For now, it will suffice simply to note that most Marathi scholars, in the absence of any counter-evidence, have regarded the *PC* as slightly older than Keśavsvāmī's work on Eknāth.

[58] As a point of comparison, we could observe that a member of the Paithankar Gosāvī clan also uses the terms of "*kuladharma-kulācāra*" to describe his family's ritual obligations to their *kuladaivatā* Ekavīrā, whose temple they visit in the nearby town of Cāṇḍhoḷ. M. Gosāvī, "Sant Śrī Eknāth Gharaṇyācī Pramāṇbhūt Vaṁśāvaḷ," 26.

[59] K. Jagadānanda-nandan, *PC*, Prastāvanā, 3.

[60] The editor of the *PC* text claims the inclusion of Eknāth's daily routine and the relatively little emphasis on miracles are evidence that the *PC* was written before the *EC.* I do not see why this conclusion is necessary. Ibid., Prastāvanā, 5.

The *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* – Text

The *PC* is comprised of 1,029 verses divided among eleven chapters. It begins with a Sanskrit verse invoking Pāṇḍurang and then fourteen Marathi verses (in *ovī* meter) praising Eknāth with grandiose language. In verse 16 the author abruptly switches to a simpler and more straightforward narrative style (also in *ovī*), and he retains this style for the remainder of the text. Kṛṣṇadās concludes each chapter with a very small stylistic flourish, linking the number of the finished chapter to particular annual festivals and their customs. For example, at the end of the first chapter, Kṛṣṇadās suddenly mentions the staff (*guḍhī*) that Maharashtrians traditionally erect by their homes on the first day of the Marathi new year (*guḍhī pāḍvā*), at the conclusion of the fifth chapter Kṛṣṇadās mentions offering milk to snakes (*nāg pañcmī*), and in the tenth chapter he refers to earning victory (*vijay daśmī*).[61] These associations between chapter numbers and festivals are superfluous and have nothing to do with the content of the chapters; they merely play with the numbers of the chapters. These unnecessary references and the author's penchant for using repetitive and nonsensical forms of a word in the same phrase (e.g., *bhajanīṁ bhaje, ekī ekatveṁ, paripūrṇa pūrṇatveṁ*) stand in noticeable contrast to Mukteśvar's refined style and rhetorical skill in the *ŚKĀ*.

Chapters 1 through 5 follow a chronological order, narrating Eknāth's birth, orphaned status, referral to a guru, guru-devotion, wedding, and household daily routine. Chapters 6 through 9 narrate a string of independent episodes that require no particular sequence. Among the stories in these chapters are Eknāth giving water to one hundred thirsty donkeys, healing a leprous brahman by gifting him surplus earned merit, protecting a philosopher's stone while its

[61] For deciphering the brief and sometimes cryptic references to these festivals, Mukund Dātār's introductory article "Svāgat" in the recent prose publication of the *PC* has been invaluable. K. Jagadānanda-nandan and B.Ś. Ināmdār, *Pratiṣṭhān Caritra : Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan Kṛt Ovibaddha Sant Eknāth Caritrācā Gadya Anuvād*, 12-13.

owner was on pilgrimage, conducting a memorial feast (*śrāddha*) for his ancestors, and celebrating the death memorial (*puṇyatithi*) of his guru. The final two chapters provide an extended narration of the Śrīkhaṇḍyā story. The plot and sometimes the words of the *PC*'s rendition of the story coordinate very closely with Mukteśvar's *ŚKĀ*. We can tell that Kṛṣṇadās knew Mukteśvar's text well before writing his own. The *PC* is an imperfect exemplar of a full Marathi *caritra* since it says little about Eknāth's death, but it is clearly much more like a *caritra* than the *ŚKĀ* is. A thorough outline of each chapter in the *PC* can be found in Appendix B at the end of this dissertation.

Although it is no peer to the *ŚKĀ* aesthetically, the *PC* offers a far greater wealth of material for analysis. Several vignettes highlight Eknāth's activities as an extremely devoted brahman disciple. At one point Kṛṣṇadās offers a narrative reflection on how Eknāth's non-dualist perception of the world supports Eknāth's socially transgressive actions. Most important for our purposes, the eighth chapter of the *PC* is devoted to a story specifically about Eknath feeding untouchables and thus provoking the wrath of his fellow brahmans. Each of these three topics merits detailed consideration.

Throughout the *PC,* Eknāth routinely conducts rituals and honors brahmans. When the young Eknāth (an orphan) excels in his Vedic studies and is advised by his caretaker/grandfather to seek out Janārdana as his guru, Eknāth moves to Ahmadnagar to join Janārdana, who is serving as an accountant in the court of a local ruler.[62] There Eknāth's morning rituals include taking an ash-bath, chanting the Gāyatrī mantra, reciting the 24 names (of Viṣṇu, probably), prostrating himself before his guru, and attending to all the details of his guru's morning

[62] The town is called by the names Amadāvatī and Āmadā Nagar in the *PC,* but it is clear that these are merely attempts to Sanskritize the name. Its identity as Ahmadnagar is clear. If one were inclined to locate this episode's historical context, the time period would have coincided within the long reign of the Burhan Nizām Shāh I (r. 1510-1553), whose capital was Ahmadnagar. Cf. R. Shyam, *The Kingdom of Ahmadnagar*, 57-103.

rituals.[63] (3:3-7) In the evening he studies the Vedas, offers black sesame to the manes, anoints the deity and recites the *Sukta* (*Puruṣa-sukta*?) "commendably with accents." (3:33-34) After his wedding, Eknāth's daily routine in Paithan is said to include all necessary and occasional rituals as well as nine acts that Kṛṣṇadās states are vital to "brahman-ness" lest one attain "*śudra*-ness": bath, *sandhyā*, recitation, worship of the god image, the *vaiśvadeva* ritual, doing *pūjā* to guests, throwing ghee on the fire, and performing the *brahmayajña* to ancestors. (5:73-75) Kṛṣṇadās lists eighteen *purāṇa*s that Eknāth makes a point of hearing read aloud.[64] Throughout the *PC* Eknāth consistently honors brahmans and remains in their company when meals are served. All of the important characters who have extended appearances in the narrative are brahmans as well: Eknāth's grandparents; his guru, Janārdana; the leprous brahman whom Eknāth heals (6:41-84); the pilgrim named Parisā Bhāgvat who entrusts Eknāth with a touchstone (chapter 7); and Śrīkhaṇḍyā and the ascetic brahman in Kṛṣṇadās' rendition of the story from the *ŚKĀ* (chapters 10 and 11). Eknāth's social world in the *PC* is filled with brahmans, although not as exclusively as it was in the *ŚKĀ*. One impression that is reinforced consistently in the *PC* is that Eknāth is very active and unfailingly regular in carrying out ritual duties as a brahman. These rituals are clearly understood to be essential components in Eknāth's daily life and identity.

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[63] Bā. Śā. Ināmdār suggests in a footnote on these verses that ash rubbing and an ash bath are elements of Dattātreya devotion, as they are prescribed in the *Guru-caritra* (ch. 29) but not practiced among the Vārkarīs. The chapter of the *Guru-caritra* that Ināmdār cites, however, speaks only generally to the power of ash and not the specific practices mentioned by Kṛṣṇadās. Nonethless, it does seem likely that the ash-related practices described in *PC* probably have more connection to Dattātreya devotion than to any other known tradition that was in Maharashtra during Eknāth's and Kṛṣṇadās' times. Little about the Maharashtrian Nāths at that time is known; they too may have practiced "bathing" in ash. Cf. K. Jagadānanda-nandan and B.Ś. Ināmdār, *Pratiṣṭhān Caritra : Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan Kṛt Ovibaddha Sant Eknāth Caritrācā Gadya Anuvād*, 51.

[64] Kṛṣṇadās specifically mentions the *Kāśī, Kāḷika* [sic.] and *Brahmottara khaṇḍas* (of the *Skanda Purāṇa*), along with the *Bhaviṣyottara, Bhāgavata, Matsya, Mārkaṇḍeya, Brahma, Kaivarta, Brahmāṇḍa, Vāmana, Varāha, Vāyu, Nārada, Linga, Padma, Agni, Kūrma* and *Garūḍa Purāṇa*s. (5:82-91) For comparison with other lists of the eighteen major *purāṇa*s, cf. Cornelia Dimmitt and J.A.B. van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978).

More than any other aspect of Eknāth's personality as it is depicted by Kṛṣṇadās' in the *PC*, Eknāth's unhesitating devotion to his guru comes most clearly and shockingly to the fore. The third chapter begins with a description of Eknāth's daily routine of doing service (*guru-sevā*) to Janārdana, and the author goes into great detail about how Eknāth prepared water, ash and other implements for Janārdana's toilet, bathing and ash rubbing. (3:2-18) Kṛṣṇadās then describes the first of three extreme acts of Eknāth's devotion. Eknāth sets out a low stool with a basin before it so that Janārdana can wash his mouth and clear his lungs. Kṛṣṇadās narrates, "'Feet-water I will of course revere without doubt, and additionally, the guru's washed mouth, sweat, saliva and spittle,' [said] Ekā…. Who would touch the water in the basin? But going to hide behind the tulsi altar, he gulped it down out of devotion. Saliva, spit, phlegm and bile became just like water. There, Ekā joyfully drank it as if it were *guru-prasād*." (3:19, 21-22) Kṛṣṇadās finds it important to specify each of the bodily substances involved, and he depicts Eknāth hiding behind (*āḍ jāūnī*) a tulsi altar to veil his act from public scrutiny. It is clear that this activity is intended to be disgusting and shocking. After narrating the event, Kṛṣṇadās does not dwell on it immediately, although later in the text he explains this extreme (and extremely repulsive) act of devotion in greater detail.

Later that day Janārdana hosts a large, elaborate meal for brahmans. At the meal's conclusion, Eknāth realizes that the leftover food *(uccişṭha*) on his guru's plate is a form of blessed *prasād*, and he cannot restrain himself. "Abandoning all shame, Ekā became a cow-mouth.[65] Without hesitation, Ekā ran to receive the leftovers. Along with the leftovers, he licked

[65] The proper Marathi word for cow-mouth is *gomukha*, but the text has *gomukhī.* Molesworth's Marathi-English Dictionary defines *gomukhī* as someone who takes a vow to pick up his food with his mouth (without using his hands). If that is the intended meaning, I do not know what significance it would have in this case, since the text does not mention anything about a vow. The *PC*'s editor bizarrely suggests that cow-mouth (*gomukhī*) here refers to a sacred river site (*tīrtha*) called Gāyamukhī near Amrāvatī in north-central Maharashtra, and Janārdana's leftovers are like the pilgrims who go there. Dr. Sucheta Paranjpe, with whom I read this text, insightfully suggested that

and swallowed the plates made of stitched leaves too. Then women began to talk. He had done something extraordinary in the early morning." (3:51-53) Apparently Eknāth was not entirely successful in hiding his earlier drinking incident from onlookers. The women report to Janārdana that Eknāth had not thrown out the spittle-water that morning but rather consumed it. Janārdana listens and responds, "This devotion is extremely profound" (*he bhajan ati sakhol*).[66] (3:55) The impression that Eknāth's behavior made on people is certainly strong, but it is not unambiguously good.

The author comments that although Janārdana appreciated Eknāth's fervor, he perceived these extreme actions to be "burdens" (*vojheṁ*) that would bring upon him "shame in all respects" (*lāj sarvathā*).[67] (3:58) Kṛṣṇadās marvels for several verses at how Eknāth's unhesitant and uninhibited devotion differs from that of egoistic and hypocritical devotees, but the tone abruptly changes as then he narrates Janārdana's stern warning about Eknāth's behavior. "You collected the leaves and leftovers and licked them yourself without hesitation. And you drank defiling (*amaṅgal*) water.[68] Who gave you this idea? To hell with this idea about your body (*dehabuddhī*); you have thrown away your own purity (*śuddhī*). From now on, hold firm to a

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gomukhī generally evokes the image of a cow coming after a meal to graze on the leftover food and leaf-plates. I find this interpretation to be the most meaningful and plausible.

[66] *Bhajan,* while more commonly used in contemporary Marathi to connote a call-and-answer style of devotional song, is often used in the *PC* interchangeably with *sevā* or *bhāvā* to name the activity of devoted service.

[67] The antecedent of "him" in the text is unclear; Janārdana could be worrying about Eknāth's reputation or his own.

[68] Apffel-Marglin wisely warns against naively conflating the meanings of oppositional pairs (in this case *śuddha/aśuddha* with *maṅgal/amaṅgal*), but in this passage it does indeed appear that consuming *amaṅgal* (inauspicious) water adversely affects bodily purity (*śuddhī*). Unfortunately, Kṛṣṇadās offers no discussion of *amaṅgal* and *śuddhī*, and he uses the terms too infrequently to theorize about his analytical schema. Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, "Types of Opposition in Hindu Culture," in *Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society*, ed. John Braisted Carman, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 65-83.

good idea (*sadbuddhī*) and always act according to the three purities (*triśuddhī*).[69] You too should take the path that people take." (3:72-74) Janārdana voices serious concern about Eknāth's total disregard for bodily purity and his socially deviant behavior.[70] When he recommends that Eknāth adopt a more conventional path, however, Eknāth responds with the most extraordinary soliloquy in the entire text.

Instead of touching his guru's feet and meekly accepting Janārdana's advice as he usually does, this time Eknāth politely resists and reorients Janārdana's advice to propose a vision of uncompromising *bhakti* that is performed for the public good. (3:75-91) Eknāth makes two main points: one about foolish human nature and the other about the nondual nature of reality. First, he argues that merely walking the "people's paths" helps no one, since people always prefer sense objects over spiritual things and will naturally drift away from spiritual discipline to drown in the sea of mundane existence (*saṁsāra*). People actually need to be pushed off those familiar paths in order to discover their true relation to Janārdana, "because of whom people have humanity/people-ness" (*janāsī jyāceni janapaṇ*). (3:76) Secondly, Eknāth argues that Janārdana (guru and God, as we observed earlier) pervades all reality, so that nothing in the world could be completely unclean. Janārdana also pervades people themselves despite their ignorance of him. "Actually everyone is Janārdana, but to the ignorant observer they seem to be simply people. This true statement is authoritative; the Vedas and Purāṇas have praised it." (3:82) In effect, Eknāth lobbies to be allowed to continue his wholehearted service to Janārdana both for the sake

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[69] "Three purities" (*triśuddhī*) here connote body, mind and speech (*kāyā-mana-vāca),* a conventional Marathi way of saying "in complete and total purity." Cf. "Triśuddhī," in *Mahārāṣṭra Śabdakoś*, ed. Yaśvant Rāmkṛṣṇa Dāte (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1935 [1995]), 4:1585.

[70] There is undeniably some cognitive dissonance in Janārdana's argument here. Firstly, the "idea or consciousness of the body" (*dehabuddhi*) is usually considered to be a spiritual hindrance that must be overcome, but Janārdana's perceived problem with Eknāth points in the opposite direction – namely, that Eknāth should be not less but more concerned about bodily purity. Drawing a connection between *dehabuddhī* and ritual purity, as Janārdana's argument appears to do here, is noteworthy. Equally noteworthy is that Eknāth in this story largely ignores this point and instead argues about the social dimension of *bhakti*.

of the integrity of his own *bhakti* and for the good of people generally. Although Eknāth does not explicitly say so at this point, the idea of serving God (and guru) by serving people is not at all a logically distant step. Eknāth's argument also articulates the idea of *janī-janārdana* (God in/among the people). In the *ŚKĀ janī-janārdana* was only an epithet; in the *PC* it becomes a theological principle with immediate social implications. Although the general ideas expressed in Eknāth's soliloquy here resonate in later hagiographies, nowhere else does Janārdana criticize Eknāth's actions as an undesirable "burden" nor does this articulate theo-sociological argument come out of Eknāth's mouth. This dialogue is unique to the *PC*, and it is one of the aspects that makes the *PC* more articulate about the social implications of *bhakti* than later hagiographical works.

Two further extreme acts of devotion merit note, although neither generates the same degree of reflection as the instance that we have just witnessed. In the fourth chapter, Eknāth overhears Janārdana telling a servant to summon some loathsome men (*kuścit*) to clean out his toilet-mound, which had become full.[71] (4:4) Eknāth thinks to himself, "Another person should not be allowed to touch my *svāmī*'s feces… Only fools would call the place of my *svāmī* Janārdana's defecation merely an impure/unholy place (*apavitra sthān*)." (4:6-7) So Eknāth himself proceeds to clean the area, at the center of which is a large, partially buried pot that had seen "five to ten" years' worth of constant use. (4:28) As when describing the contents of the spittle-water that Eknāth drank, Kṛṣṇadās again goes into great detail about Eknāth's activity, specifying eight different implements that he used and describing how Eknāth's body was be-smeared in the process of hauling away the filth. (4:24-39)

[71] Molesworth plausibly suggests that *kuścit* is a corruption of the Sanskrit *kutsit* (detestable, loathsome, filthy). It is not a common Marathi euphemism (malphemism?) for people of low or no caste, and it does not appear again in the *PC* or anywhere else in the hagiographical literature about Eknāth.

By keeping his mind focused on Janārdana, Eknāth is not bothered by the stench of his task but smells only sandalwood. (4:30-31) Eknāth fully cleans and washes the area, scatters fragrant black powder (*bukā*) and draws shapes with colored powder (*rāngoḷī*) on the ground for Janārdana to enjoy the next time he comes there to do his business. (4:35-39) When the *kuścit* men who had been summoned for the work finally arrive, they stand back and watch in amazement, as do the small crowd of people who had gathered. Janārdana eventually returns home, and on seeing Eknāth's work, he stands for a moment with his hands pressed to his forehead in amazement before fetching water to wash Eknāth. (4:44-45) Some later hagiographers refer to this incident briefly in passing; only Kṛṣṇadās narrates it thoroughly and with such colorful detail.

The final instance of Eknāth's extreme devotion is presented in the ninth chapter. Now an established householder in Paithan, Eknāth hosts a feast for brahmans on the occasion of his guru's death anniversary (*puṇyatithi*). When everything is laid out and the feast is about to commence, Eknāth discovers that he has no *ghee* to pour on his guests' rice and thereby give the customary signal for them to start eating. After searching the neighborhood and local shops in vain, Eknāth solves the problem by miraculously turning buckets of water from a nearby well into *ghee* and proceeding with the feast. The brahmans are so pleased with this wondrous *ghee* that they excitedly pour out their drinking cups, fill them with *ghee*, and take them home as they depart. (9:64) When the feast concludes, Eknāth is left in a state of bliss, and a very strange scene occurs:

> Then Eknāth unreservedly rolled in the leftovers (*ucciṣṭa*). Eknāth rolled in the brāhmaṇs' leftovers. Other simple, guileless people who understood [the activity] also rolled in the leftovers. Brāhmaṇ-leftovers are powerful. Kṛṣṇa's hand has touched them.… So casting aside greatness, the great brāhmaṇ (Eknāth) rolled in the leftovers…. Because of Eknāth's activity, leftovers were on his whole body. Putting aside status, he

> eagerly rolled…. They threw [leftovers] at each other and ran. They happily sang the stories of Kṛṣṇa. Then they all danced…. Taking morsels of leftovers, they threw them powerfully at each other…. Then they reached the bank of the Gaṅgā.[72] There they played *humbarī* and began to bathe.[73] (9:67-73)

In contrast to the two earlier instances of Eknāth's extreme behavior, Kṛṣṇadās makes no mention of people standing back and watching Eknāth in amazement. Instead, it appears that in this case people freely join in the fun. The action of rolling in food and throwing it at one another is, to my knowledge, absolutely unprecedented in Maharashtrian culture and Marathi literature, and perhaps in the Indian culture generally.[74] Although the characters in the story are not depicted as being amazed, Kṛṣṇadās almost certainly knew that his readers would be shocked. Kṛṣṇadās' repetitive description of Eknāth rolling in the leftover food touched by others' saliva (*ucciṣṭa*) is not especially poetic or elegant aesthetically, and the bizarreness of the activity would certainly not have been lost on his audience if Kṛṣṇadās had written it only once. There must be something else behind Kṛṣṇadās' decision to write in this way. Once he finishes describing this strange scene, however, Kṛṣṇadās again offers no further comment. His narrative simply moves on, as Eknāth returns from his bath and begins setting up places in his courtyard for more crowds of people to eat.

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[72] The Godāvarī River is routinely referred to as "Gaṅgā," as it is here.

[73] Molesworth's Marathi-English Dictionary and Tulpule and Feldhaus' *A Dictionary of Old Marathi* define *humbarī* as a play or game among cowherd-children. The word likely derives from the verb *humbarṇe* – to moo or bellow loudly.

[74] By way of comparison, one might observe the description in the *Sūr-sagar* of the Gopās "scramble all over" a sacred anthill that is constructed of food grains at the Annakūṭ festival in Jatipura. It seems to me that the understanding of and background for this custom are quite different from the *PC*'s account of specifically rolling in *ucciṣṭa* (i.e., food touched by the saliva of other people). Cf. Charlotte Vaudeville, "Govardhan, The Eater Hill," in *Devotional Literature in South Asia: Current Research 1985-1988*, ed. Ronald Stuart McGregor. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 8. I am grateful to Jack Hawley for bringing this point of comparison to my attention.

So what are we to make of these three extreme and unusual acts of devotion? Especially since none of them clearly follows any known precedent or pattern of ritualistic or devotional behavior, I think it would be misguided to seek their significance in the content of the acts themselves. None of Eknāth's actions are described by Kṛṣṇadās with overtones of moral or ritual iniquity; the point of the stories obviously is not that Eknāth is inattentive or lax in his ritual conduct and purity. More likely, it is the shocking quality of the acts that is central here, especially since Kṛṣṇadās' particular way of narrating these episodes (e.g., dwelling on disgusting details or repeating astonishing sentences about Eknāth rolling in food) shows that he anticipated his audience's response and strove to enhance their shock.

After Janārdana criticized Eknāth's obliviousness to impurity, Eknāth responded that since Janārdana is subtly present in everything, nothing in the world is capable of causing real bodily impurity. Utter devotion to Janārdana's omnipresence trumps any concern about norms of purity, regardless of whether onlookers will understand this or not. In fact, Eknāth argues, continuing this extraordinary devotion to Janārdana is vital for maintaining a correct vision of the world – something that people who are absorbed in their worldly ways would not otherwise see. So while Eknāth otherwise maintains many elements of an orthodox, ritual-oriented life as a brahman, his extreme devotion and vision of Janārdana as omnipresent push him beyond conventional behavior.[75] Kṛṣṇadās conveys the extremity of this lesson pointedly when he depicts Eknāth putting this principle into practice in ways that egregiously transgress the norms

[75] Some aspects of Eknāth's transgressive acts may bring to mind the antinomian ritual behaviors (e.g., the *pañcamakara*) of *tantra* practitioners. While one can never fully rule out the possibility of the subtle pervasion and long-forgotten influence of tantric practices (e.g., as practiced to some extent by the Maharashtrian Nāths) on more "mainstream" religious traditions, I think it would be a mistake to associate Eknāth's deeds with *tantra* here. Janārdana's rebuke of Eknāth's carelessness about purity and Eknāth's continued close observance of other aspects of brahman ritual life indicate a very different matrix of ritual practice than that of *tāntrika*s, who understand their activities to be empowering precisely because they contravene orthodox ritual norms. Eknāth's transgressions of ritual boundaries occur accidentally in his pursuit of other goals; Eknāth is not iconoclastically fighting tradition.

of bodily purity. It is in this perspective, I believe, that the most acute episode of specifically social tension in the *PC* ought to be read as well.

In the eighth chapter Kṛṣṇadās narrates a story whose plot hinges on inter-caste distinction and transgression. On the day of the annual *śrāddha* ceremony to propitiate his ancestors, Eknāth prepares a sumptuous feast for brahmans so that they would conduct the requisite rituals according to custom.[76] Eknāth summons a host of brahmans to eat, and before the meal they go to the river for a ritually purifying bath. In an aside, Kṛṣṇadās explains that on this particular day Eknāth was especially observant of his vow to feed anyone who asked. Any creatures that approached his door (cats, dogs, *fakīr*s or destitute beggars) he would treat as manifestations of Brahman. (8:9-11) In general, Kṛṣṇadās says, Eknāth's nature (*svabhāvo*) was to have a feeling of sameness (*samabhāvo*) everywhere (8:7), but especially on the *śrāddha* day Eknāth "behaved without distinction to everyone" (*abheda sarvāsī vartat*).[77] (8:19)

To prepare for the feast, a group of *cāṇḍāḷ*s (untouchables) are carrying wood to the kitchen for cooking. They become so captivated by the fragrance of dishes that they ask Eknāth to share with them this magnificent cuisine that, in their poverty, they could only dream about.

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[76] Kane has an extremely long section on *śrāddha*, a term that encompasses a broad range of rituals, including death rites for the recently deceased as well as monthly and yearly memorial rites on the death anniversaries of ancestors. Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra Vol. 4* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1953), 334-551. The memorial *śrāddha* that Eknāth conducts here entails both a meal that was intended exclusively for brahmans and a ritual involving the offering of rice balls (*piṇḍa*s), black sesame seeds and sometimes other materials. Ibid., 383. Kane notes three main opinions in *dharmaśāstra* texts as to what the most important aspect of the ritual is: the feeding of brahmans, the offering of rice-balls (*piṇḍa*s) as food to the ancestors, or both. Ibid., 481-482. Michaels adroitly summarizes Kane's section by pointing that textual and ethnographic sources demonstrate "great latitude" in stating the details of these rituals. Axel Michaels, *Hinduism Past and Present*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998 [2004]), 147. For our purposes, we should note that in the *PC* Kṛṣṇadās mentions both *piṇḍa*s and feeding brahmans as components of the ceremony. Many later hagiographers do not mention *piṇḍa* offerings but focus solely on the feeding of brahmans. Suffice it to say that it is the violation of the ritual expectation to feed brahmans exclusively that lies at the heart of this particular story about Eknāth.

[77] Kṛṣṇadās struggles unsuccessfully to explain how Eknāth's egalitarian conduct is different on the *śrāddha* day as opposed to the rest of the year. Also, *svabhāvo* and *samabhāvo* end oddly in "*o"* in order to fit the rhyme scheme in the *ovī* verse.

Eknāth complies in his typical manner: "Janārdana is in all beings. The enjoyer is one. To imagine division is foolish." (8:29) When Eknāth enters the kitchen and tells the servants to serve the meal because "Janārdana is hungry," the servants peer outside and retort that they only see beggars waiting. They plead with Eknāth that if he serves this excellent food to beggars, he will lose all the ritual merit that would have accrued by feeding brahmans. Overriding the servants' reluctance, Eknāth himself grabs a basket, fills it with cooked rice and begins to serve. (8:41) The untouchables, whom Kṛṣṇadās here calls "dog-cookers" (*śvapac*), are elated. They eat well and thank Eknāth with a reverent "*johār*" (a respectful Marathi greeting used especially by untouchables).[78] (8:43-44)

Afterwards, however, Eknāth is clearly self-conscious about what has just occurred, and he enjoins the kitchen staff not to tell the brahmans about this event. Beyond his control, one of the untouchable women (referred to in the text variously as a *mātangiṇī* and a *cāṇḍāḷiṇī*) brings her food to the riverbank to eat, and some of the bathing brahmans see her. They revile her and demand that she leave, but the woman responds that since she has received food directly from Eknāth on this day, she too ought to be treated as one of his ancestors. (8:52) Not surprisingly, the brahmans are appalled at both her audacity and Eknāth's behavior. "Eknāth – such a sage – has acted utterly against prescribed rites (*avidhī*)." (8:53) A group of them begins arguing vociferously (and a bit comically) about how they should respond. In the meantime, Eknāth sends a brahman messenger to summon the brahmans to eat, but they rough him up and send him back. (8:65) When the messenger reports this to Eknāth, he only laughs and says that the

[78] The term *johār* is a common word for greeting, used often (but not exclusively) by untouchables in medieval Marathi writings. Tulpule and Feldhaus claim that it is a corruption of the Sk. *jaya-kāra* ("Victory" or "Hail"). In addition to being a particularly untouchable way of greeting, it is also sometimes understood as a public announcement that an untouchable person is arriving. More than thirty *bharūḍ*s attributed to Eknāth are written as if coming from the mouth of a *Mahār* (untouchable), usually beginning with the call "*johār māybāp johār*" (greetings, Mother/Father, greetings).

brahmans are Nārāyaṇa, from whom one should revere even a beating. (8:69) The intrepid messenger tries again, but the brahmans still refuse to come for the meal and offer the ritual rice-balls to Eknāth's ancestors. In despair, Eknāth calls out directly to the ancestors, who then miraculously arrive, sit down and eat.[79] (8:76) The brahmans finally arrive and are astonished at the sight. (8:87-88) After the ancestors depart, Eknāth comes out and without a trace of animosity invites the brahmans to his feast again. This time the brahmans agree, marveling at the scene and declaring Eknāth's deeds to be admirably "incomprehensible" (*agamya*). (8:94)

Several aspects of this story merit comment. First, this is the richest and most important early story of Eknāth navigating caste tensions, and it offers a great deal of material for analysis. The description of the self-assured untouchable woman at the riverside is unique to the *PC*, although the story of Eknāth defying ritual convention and feeding non-brahman guests at the *śrāddha* meal is repeated in nearly all of the hagiographies. As we shall see later in the dissertation, the two more widely circulated hagiographies both replace the untouchable guests in this story with three Muslim mendicants who are actually the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva (the *trīmurti*) in disguise. Eventually, however, it is this rendition involving untouchables that became the standard portrayal in 20th-century theater and film.[80]

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[79] There is a minor literary precedent for ancestors miraculously appearing to eat at their own *śrāddha* ceremonies in a story that Mahīpati tells about Jñāndev. Jñāndev and his siblings were born into out-caste status because their father had married, become a *sannyāsī*, and was then commanded by his guru to return home and start a family. In hopes of being invested with a sacred thread, Jñāndev and his brothers appeal their case (in vain) to a council of brahmans in Paithan. The children stay at the home of a brahman in Paithan during that time who was about to hold a *śrāddha* ceremony in memory of his ancestors, but when the brahmans of Paithan learned that he was hosting these out-caste children, they refused to participate. Jñāndev rectifies the situation by summoning the ancestors themselves to eat the meal, which in turn helps to impress the brahmans of Paithan enough to re-admit the boys to caste. (*BhV* 9:79-103) Novetzke notes that the original version of the story about Jñāndev (repeated nearly verbatim from the *Ādi* (Beginning) of Nāmdev) may date to either 14th century if composed by Nāmdev himself or to the time of Eknāth, if composed by Viṣṇudās Nāmā. C.L. Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory*, 141.

[80] This story is also told in Mahīpati's *Bhaktavijay*, which is probably how the drama and film producers encountered it.

Second, the portrayal of untouchables is sympathetic, if idiosyncratic. When the untouchables ask Eknāth to let them eat, they note that in their own poor homes they lack the resources to assemble such a tasty meal ("if spice is available, then there is no salt – such is our food"). (8:25) They appeal directly to Eknāth's vow to provide food to whoever asks. The untouchables' request is polite and reflective of the fact that they realize that their request puts Eknāth in a difficult situation, since they acknowledge that the meal is "for brahmans." (8:29) A revealing aspect of Kṛṣṇadās' portrayal of the untouchables is that he calls the same group in this story by four different names – *cāṇḍāḷ* (a child of a inter-caste union)*, śvapac* (Sk. "dog-cooker"), Mātaṅg (the Māṅg *jāti* of untouchables, who are traditionally rope-workers and the absolute lowest social group in a village) and *antyaj* (Sk. "untouchable"). This variation in names is probably not Kṛṣṇadās showing off his vocabulary. Rather, Kṛṣṇadās here is employing the same rhetorical strategy that he has used in other settings. Kṛṣṇadās knows that his audience will find this inter-caste scene shocking, and he increases the dramatic effect further by using several different names for untouchables. One surprising omission, especially given that Kṛṣṇadās is a Marathi author writing for a Marathi audience, is that the largest and most common Maharashtrian untouchable group – the Mahārs – are never mentioned whereas the Māṅgs (a much smaller community) are. This is especially strange since Eknāth's own writings mention Mahārs far more often than to any of the names for untouchables that Kṛṣṇadās uses; the word Mahār and the Mahār community certainly existed at the time. Although Kṛṣṇadās' omission of Mahārs is too significant to have been accidental, I confess that I do not know what to make of it.

Third, the untouchable woman who eats on the riverbank speaks to the group of brahmans with startling audacity. When challenged about the food she responds, "Ekobā gave it

to us.[81] Becoming the ancestors, we went to his house. He made us all satisfied. You should go for food. The food is prepared. I will take my time and eat on the Gaṅgā (Godāvarī) riverbank. Today we are Eknāth's ancestors. Why have you scolded so much? I thought [to have] food on the bank of the Gaṅgā, so I came here." (8:50-52) At no point in the text are her words rebuked, dismissed or even qualified. The group of brahmans is shocked when their attempts at bullying her fail, and they turn their outrage to Eknāth directly. The assertive untouchable woman is apparently left in peace to eat her meal. What is most significant about this part of the story is that it depicts Eknāth's behavior having a social effect on people who act independently of him. Whereas Eknāth's "feeling of sameness everywhere" (3:7) might be interpreted in other sections of the *PC* as merely an aspect of Eknāth's spiritual progress, in this story it changes the social world around him. His actions put the untouchable woman into a position to assert herself. Situated as it is in an 18th-century *bhakti* hagiography, this story is very significant.

Finally, this vignette of feeding the untouchables on the *śrāddha* day vividly portrays the "both-and" quality of Eknāth's social relations: he is both deeply concerned about the ritual of *śrāddha* (and the role that brahmans play in it), and he disregards caste boundaries by seeing Janārdana among the untouchables whom he feeds. Eknāth consciously and unhesitatingly breaks with convention by feeding the untouchables the *śrāddha* food, and he actively disregards the arguments of his servants who try to dissuade him. They argue, "Brahman-food has been made. So we should give it to them (the untouchables)? If it were given now, it would no longer be brahman-food. Then your preparations will go in vain, making brahman-food without any brahmans. Why did you go through this trouble?" (8:36-37) Rather than argue with his servants,

[81] "Ekobā" is a rendering of Eknāth's name that shows respectful familiarity. The *-bā* at the end of the name literally means "father" but is intended metaphorically. The same transformation is at work in arriving at the name Viṭhobā from Viṭṭhal, Jñānobā from Jñāndev, and Tukobā from Tukārām. One encounters renderings of these *sant*s' names more often in spoken Marathi than in formal Marathi texts.

Eknāth picks up a basket and sets to the task himself. His only worry is that if he delays, then "Janārdana will go away angry." (8:38) In other words, the action in this scene of caste boundary transgression hinges on Eknāth's perception of God's presence in all beings, including cats, dogs, *fakīr*s, and untouchables. Concerns about the purity and efficacy of the *śrāddha* ritual are acknowledged and consciously subordinated to other priorities.

At the same time, Eknath recognizes that his activity will not be appreciated by others, and he clearly cares about the ramifications of that perception (i.e., that it will anger the brahmans and preclude them from ritually offering rice-balls to his ancestors). Rather than stand up to the brahmans and insist that their anger is misplaced, Eknāth meekly tries to deal with the effects of his social transgression first by trying to conceal the issue from the brahmans and then by continuing to revere them as gods on earth from whom even a beating is auspicious. Kṛṣṇadās' portrayal of the brahmans' outrage borders on the comical, as he depicts eight different responses within the group that range from strict "break and throw away his sacred thread" to the violent "pull out his *śikhā* (tuft of hair on his otherwise shaved head) and place it in his hands" to the more sympathetic "give him *prāyaścitta* and purify him. [Otherwise] his preparations will be destroyed. Nothing should be done in vain." (8:54-60) Despite Kṛṣṇadās' own irreverent portrayal of the brahmans, at no point does he ever give the impression that Eknāth's respect for the petulant brahmans is anything but heartfelt and honest. Even after his unconventional approach to the *śrāddha* is vindicated when his ancestors appear and eat (thus obviating the need for brahmans to make a ritual food offering to them), Eknāth still reaches out and respectfully re-invites the brahmans who had spurned him. In Kṛṣṇadās' rendition of this story, the brahmans are humbled only by the miraculous and unexpected appearance of the ancestors, not by Eknāth. Although Eknāth's actions defy the social order and transgress caste boundaries, he never vocally or directly confronts that order. Eknāth in the *PC* wholeheartedly

supports the brahmans and endorses their status in society, even when they persecute him and beat up his servants.

In summary, the *PC* portrays Eknāth unequivocally as a brahman who is deeply concerned with carrying out rituals properly, and although he shows no sense of self-entitlement as a brahman, he consistently reveres the status of other brahmans. At the same time, Eknāth in the *PC* has such an overwhelming and unhesitating desire to revere and serve his guru Janārdana, that it even makes Janārdana uneasy. Eknāth responds to his guru's admonishment to heed bodily purity and social convention ("walk in the paths of the people") in the third chapter by arguing that Janārdana's pervasion of the world requires that concerns about bodily and ritual purity become subordinate to the act of guru-service, which is ultimately for the good of the people as well.

In crafting the narrative flow of the *PC,* Kṛṣṇadās highlights Eknāth's devotion in extreme and shocking ways. Eknāth disregards bodily purity in order to consume spittle-water and clean his guru's toilet, he bizarrely rolls in leftover food, and he ignores both ritual protocol and social purity to feed untouchables before brahmans on the *śrāddha* of his ancestors. Although Eknāth remains rooted in a brahman-centered and ritualized social order, his sense of devotion and theological perception impels him to transgress that order in his service to his guru, whom he perceives to be present everywhere, including in people of no caste standing.

Although the *PC* is provocative on many levels, the extremely limited circulation of this text precluded its stories and ideas from shaping later memories of Eknāth in the broader society. What the text of the *PC* represents is an early alternative rendering of Eknāth's life, despite the fact that it had little influence.

The Eknāth-caritra of Keśavsvāmī

Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra* is a long text that enjoyed wide circulation, and most of its stories eventually became the standard hagiography of Eknāth. Eknāth's descendants in Paithan and others still read it aloud (*pārāyaṇ*) annually as part of their celebrations for Eknāth's birthday.[82] It remains part of the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs' spiritual practices as well, as they annually celebrate his memory.[83] As it offers a thorough description of episodes in Eknāth's life and death in a smooth narrative framework, the *EC* also held a natural appeal to later writers. Through a series of transcriptions and translations that we will observe in the next chapter, the stories in the *EC* became the foundation of Eknāth's biographical information available in English as well. Thus the *EC* became the source for most of what is commonly known about Eknāth both in Marathi and English.

Very little is known about the background of Keśavsvāmī.[84] Most of the available information about him is found in the final thirteen verses of some (not all) *EC* manuscripts, including the Paithankar Gosāvīs' manuscript that was eventually published.[85] This passage

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[82] Yogīrāj Gosāvi (16th generation descendant of Eknāth, based in Paithan), Personal communication, July 10, 2010. Disciples of a guru near Nāgpūr who claim a spiritual ancestry to Eknāth also use the text in this way. Keśavsvāmī and Puruṣottam Eknāthtātya Pānse, *Śrīsant Eknāth Mahārāj yāñce Ovibaddha Caritra* (Nāgpūr: Puruṣottam Eknāthtātya Pānse, 1980), 2.

[83] Among the papers that Ra. Śā. Ināmdār shared with me was a list of ritual activities during the part of the year called *caturmās*. Ra. Śā. Ināmdār, Personal communication, April 13, 2009.

[84]Keśavsvāmī is also sometimes called Keśav and occasionally Keśavkavi. The name Keśavsvāmī is relatively common, and our Keśavsvāmī should not be confused with a different Keśavsvāmī who was a prolific author and prominent disciple of Rāmdās.

[85] The Paithankar Gosāvī's manuscript of the *EC* has been edited and published by one of its members. No date is printed on the *pothī*-format book itself, but one of the current members of the Gosāvī family has informed me that it was published sometime between 1997 and 1999. (Yogīrāj Gosāvī, Personal communication, April 6, 2011) I acquired a copy from one of the devotional stalls outside the Eknāth Samādhi Mandir in Paithan. For no apparent reason, the final thirteen verses about Keśav's background were omitted from the printed version, despite being in the manuscript. Keśavsvāmī and Madhukar Gosāvī, *Śrīkeśavkṛt Ovībaddha Śrīeknāth Caritra* (Paiṭhaṇ: Madhukarbuvā Gosāvī, ca.1997).

gives the following chain of transmission: Ādī Nārāyaṇa – Brahmā – Atri – Dattātreya – Janārdana – Eknāth – Rāghobā – Mādhav – Mādhav's son (*mādhav-putra*) – Trimbak – Keśav. How this chain ought to be interpreted is disputed. The Gosāvī family in Paithan identifies all of the figures who come after Eknāth in this list as his blood descendants.[86] However, a curious shift occurs in the wording toward the end of the chain. Whereas the familial terms of son, father and grandson are used for everyone through the fourth generation after Eknāth (up to Mādhav-putra), the fifth-generation figure Trimbak (Keśavsvāmī's father) is not called by any of these terms but is said to have "obtained authority" (*adhikārī lābhlā*) from his predecessor.[87] This discrepancy has led some but not all Marathi scholars to view this verse as evidence that Keśavsvāmī was not a descendant of Eknāth but rather a member of his spiritual lineage.[88]

Whether Keśavsvāmī's lineage connection to Eknāth is familial or spiritual, we can safely assume that Keśavsvāmī was in a position to be familiar with the stream of Eknāth's living memory in Paithan at the time. Also in his preface verses, Keśavsvāmī claims that Eknāth manifested himself to him while Keśavsvāmī was going to bathe at a pond near Devagiri – a place that is shown in one of Keśavsvāmī's stories in the *EC* to be geographically significant for Eknāth's own practice. Obviously, this claim bolsters Keśavsvāmī's authority as he writes about Eknāth. The verses conclude by stating that the *EC* was completed in 1760.[89] Aside from these

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[86] M. Gosāvī, "Sant Śrī Eknāth Gharaṇyācī Pramāṇbhūt Vaṁśāvaḷ," 19.

[87] Ibid., 20, verse 5.

[88] Gaṁ. De. Khānolkar, "Keśav-1," in *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś: Khaṇḍa Pahilā (Marāṭhī Granthakār 1070-1877)*, ed. Gaṁ. De. Khānolkar. (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya Saṁskṛti Maṇḍaḷ, 1977), 47.

[89] M. Gosāvī, "Sant Śrī Eknāth Gharaṇyācī Pramāṇbhūt Vaṁśāvaḷ," 20. The relevant verses are 7-8 and 12. Khānolkar notes some disagreement about the completion date of the *EC*. 1760 is widely accepted among Eknāth's devotees and some scholars (such as R. C. Ḍhere), but an alternative date of 1720 has been proposed on the basis of a manuscript with a slightly different colophon. S. G. Tuḷpuḷe apparently prefers this date. G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 47. I am more inclined toward the 1760 date. The collective hagiographer Mahīpati (whose work we shall review in the next chapter) clearly did not have access to Keśavsvāmī's *EC* when he finished his first collective hagiography (*BhV*) in 1762, but included nearly the whole *EC* in his third collective hagiography (*the*

bits of information, Keśavsvāmī includes no other autobiographical data within the *EC* itself. It is clear from his writing style and inter-textual references that Keśavsvāmī felt confident in his skill as a writer. In the first chapter he composes his Marathi verses in a variety of different Sanskrit meters – something that he probably expected his readers to find impressive and indicative of a scholarly education.

According to a reliable bibliographic reference, the earliest printing of the *EC* appears to have occurred in 1886, but I have yet to encounter even a second citation of it, much less a copy of this early book itself.[90] Three printed editions of the *EC* are available, but the only one that enjoyed wide distribution was printed in 1903 and is now very rare.[91] The other two publications were produced in small locales and intended explicitly (as stated in their prefaces) for use by devotees in those areas.[92] Although the *EC* was the source of the stories about Eknāth that were regularly repeated, its importance is not reflected in publication. I suspect that the reason for this is that *EC* was incorporated almost completely and, in some parts, nearly verbatim into a later hagiographical compilation of stories about many *sant*s (Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*, as we will see in the next chapter). On the other hand, the *BhL* is not very common in published form either, so it may be best to refrain from drawing any conclusions about popularity based on the publication of this material.

BhL), even though some of its stories obviously contradicted what Mahīpati had written earlier in the *BhV*. Mahīpati clearly had no qualms about reciting stories the *EC*, so it seems unlikely that he would have set the *EC* aside if he had known about it while composing the *BhV*. If Keśavsvāmī had finished writing the *EC* in 1760 – only two years before Mahīpati finished his *BhV* – perhaps the *EC* simply had not circulated widely, and Mahīpati was not yet aware of it. This also might explain why Mahīpati included two very different sets of stories about Eknāth in his own writing.

[90] G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 47.

[91] Keśavsvāmī, "Eknāth-caritra," in *Śrīeknāth Mahārājāñcyā Abhaṅgāñcī Gāthā*, ed. Rā. Ra. Tukārām Tātyā. (Mumbaī: Tattvavivecak Press, 1903).

[92] Keśavsvāmī and M. Gosāvī, *Śrīkeśavkṛt Ovībaddha Śrīeknāth Caritra*; Keśavsvāmī and P.E. Pānse, *Śrīsant Eknāth Mahārāj yāñce Ovibaddha Caritra*.

In contrast to its low profile in print, the manuscript legacy of the *EC* is considerable. I was able to locate and photocopy five manuscripts, of which one had survived in its entirety and two others were missing only a few chapters.[93] Three of these manuscripts bear colophons with transcription dates. The oldest and most influential manuscript is possessed by the Gosāvī family in Paithan; its transcription date is Śaka 1714 (1793 CE) – only 38 years after the text was composed. This manuscript was the basis for the printed edition by Madhukar Gosāvī (ca. 1998) and probably the Tātya edition of 1903.[94] The other manuscripts with intact colophons were transcribed rather later – in 1847 and 1871.[95]

Little would be gained by a detailed investigation of variations among these texts and manuscripts; there are remarkably few variations. The difference between the longest printed edition of *EC* (2,652 *ovī*s) and the shortest printed edition is a mere seven verses, and the complete manuscript that I found is only slightly smaller (2,638 *ovī*s). Among all of the manuscripts and printings there are literally only two sections that vary significantly, and both of these are easily explained. One manuscript begins with ten verses of extended invocation and praise that all of the other manuscripts lack.[96] The other major variation is the inclusion or

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[93] Keśavsvāmī, "Eknāth-caritra" in Manuscript Collection, MS no. 25.131 (Pune: Bhārat Itihās Saṁśodhak Maṇḍaḷ); Keśavsvāmī, "Eknāth-caritra" in Marathi Bāḍa Collection, MS no. 490 (Dhuḷe: Śri Samarth Vāgdevatā Mandir); Keśavkavi, "Eknāth-caritra" in Marathi Manuscript Collection, MS no. 28.4/2 (Aurangābād: Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir); Keśav, Ibid.in, MS no. 256 (Pune: Centre for the Study of Marathi Culture); Keśavsvāmī, Ibid.in, MS no. 172. Coincidentally, MS no. 256 at the Centre for the Study of Marathi Culture bears a scribal colophon stating that it was copied in 1847 by a member of the Gosāvī family in Vaṭhār.

[94] Tātya does not provide the background of the manuscript that he used, but it is clear that it closely resembles the Gosāvī manuscript. The verse numbers of the Gosāvī and Tātya publications match exactly (except that Gosāvī refrained from printing the colophon, as he states in Gosāvī "Sant Śrī Eknāth Gharaṇyācī Pramāṇbhūt Vaṁśāvaḷ, 19), but many spellings and occasional words are different in these two texts.

[95] Keśav, "Eknāth-caritra" in Marathi Manuscript Collection, MS no. 256 (Pune: Centre for the Study of Marathi Culture); Keśavsvāmī, "Eknāth-caritra" in Marathi Manuscript Collection, MS no. 172 (Pune: Centre for the Study of Marathi Culture).

[96] Keśavsvāmī, "Eknāth-caritra" in Marathi Manuscript Collection, MS no. 172 (Pune: Centre for the Study of Marathi Culture).

exclusion of the 13-verse colophon as described above. Aside from these two, no variations are more than two verses, and they all consist of only minor omissions, additions or alternative wordings. None involves an altered meaning or narration. It might be possible to discern two main branches of manuscript transmission based on similarities among the three particular variations in chapters 15, 20 and 30. Given the lack of major differences among these versions of the text, however, such a lemma distinction is of little value. Although major variations are not present among copies of the *EC*, each manuscript is nonetheless unique in terms of word choice and spelling within the verses. This may indicate the divergence of many sub-branches in the text's circulation, but I find it more likely that scribes at different places and times heard the *EC* being read aloud and then transcribed what they had heard.

In this dissertation I work mainly with the Madhukar Gosāvī edition of the *EC,* which was based on a manuscript possessed by Eknāth's descendants in Paithan. Gosāvī's stated intention in publishing this edition was to make it available to other devotees for use in public readings (*pārāyaṇ*), just as the manuscript is used for *pārāyaṇ* annually as part of Eknāth's birthday celebrations in Paithan.[97] By using this edition, I make no arguments or claims about it being more authentic than the other editions, although I am inclined to view it as such. The fact that it is used by Eknāth's descendants in Paithan for *pārāyaṇ* ensures that it is a well-known and publicized version of the text. Unfortunately, this printing is beset by a number of errors that resulted in the omission of short passages. Most of these errors occur in apparently random places, although one omission (as will be seen) is so crucial that it may have been intentional. The Gosāvī edition also inexplicably lacks the 13- verse colophon that was present in the

[97] Keśavsvāmī and M. Gosāvī, *Śrīkeśavkṛt Ovībaddha Śrīeknāth Caritra*, ii.

manuscript.[98] To compensate for these shortcomings, I supplement my analysis by referring to other printed editions of the *EC*.

The text of the *EC* is comprised of 2,652 verses (2,665 with the colophon) that are divided unevenly among 31 chapters. In terms of genre, the *EC* is a quintessential *caritra,* spanning the entirety of Eknāth's life and including a very broad range of stories. The first nine chapters narrate Eknāth's birth, childhood, discipleship, and marriage. The final three chapters describe Eknāth's final acts, including his taking *samādhi* in the Godāvarī River. The nineteen chapters in the middle of the text contain independent episodes with no chronological sequence in the narrative. Full outlines of all chapters in the *EC* can be found in Appendix C. Being more than two and a half times the size of the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*, not surprisingly the *EC* contains many more stories than the *PC*. In the first and shortest chapter (only 29 verses), Keśavsvāmī shows off his poetic skills, switching rapidly and rather jarringly among several different meters. This short burst of rhetorical fireworks ends with the first chapter, however, and Keśavsvāmī settles on a flexible variation of *ovī* meter for the remainder of the text.[99]

As mentioned earlier, the narratives of the *EC* and the *PC* diverge in many ways. Some stories found in the *PC* are omitted or only mentioned briefly in the *EC,* most notably the acts of extreme devotion. Readers of the *EC* will not be shocked by depictions of Eknāth drinking his guru's spittle, phlegm and bile; that story does not appear. The extended story (21 verses) in the *PC* of Eknāth cleaning Janārdana's toilet is mentioned in the *EC* in a single verse and only in passing. The *PC*'s stories of Eknāth rolling in leftover food and joining a food fight are completely absent from the *EC*. The untouchables (*caṇḍāḷ*s) whom Eknāth feeds the *śrāddha*

[98] M. Gosāvī, "Sant Śrī Eknāth Gharaṇyācī Pramāṇbhūt Vaṁśāvaḷ," 19.

[99] Keśavsvāmī's *ovī*s consist of four feet of eight to twelve syllables each, in which the final syllables in the first three feet rhyme and the final syllable of the fourth foot does not rhyme.

feast in the *PC* are replaced in the *EC* by Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, who suddenly arrive at his door in the guise of Muslim mendicants.

Eknāth's devotion is also portrayed in the *EC* as impelling him wholeheartedly to transgress social conventions, but the author of the *EC* makes no effort in his narration to evoke any shock in the reader. The *EC* highlights miraculous feats and Eknāth's semi-divine status in a way that the *PC* did not. Keśavsvāmī makes this clear to readers at the beginning of the *EC* (1:5), describing how even the young child Eknāth's habits "did not appear human but divine" (*nase mānavācyā pari dev bhāse*). This theme of Eknāth's divinity is maintained consistently throughout the *EC*. The theme of the Marathi *sant*s being *avatār*s is by no means unique to the *EC* or Eknāth; only two years after the *EC* was composed, Mahīpati in his *BhV* employed the idea of *avatār* as a major rubric in order to unify dozens of famous saintly figures through mythology (i.e., through the image of Viṣṇu in his court assigning *avatār*-ships to various deities and sages to come to earth as *sant*s and *bhakta*s). In other words, that Eknāth is called an *avatār* in the *EC* is not extraordinary in Marathi *bhakti* literature, but it is significant in the historiography of Eknāth's life.

Many important details about Eknāth's life are different between the two texts. The *PC* states that Eknāth is told by his grandfather to become a disciple of Janārdana; in the *EC* Eknāth hears a voice in a temple and suddenly runs off to Janārdana, leaving his despondent grandparents to search for him in vain for many years. In the *PC* Eknāth and Janārdana live in "Amadāvatī" (Ahmadnagar), whereas in the *EC* they are always based at Devagirī/Daulatābād.[100]

[100] The differences in these place-names reflect both historical and contrived tensions between parties that were naming them. Ahmadnagar ("Town of Ahmad") was founded in 1494 by Ahmad Nizām Shāh as the capital of what would become the Nizām Shāh sultanate (one of the five Deccan sultanates that emerged from the fracture of the Bāhmani sultanate in the late 15th century). R. Shyam, *The Kingdom of Ahmadnagar*, 38. The name "Amadāvatī" is an obvious and to my knowledge unprecedented attempt by Kṛṣṇadās in the *PC* to sanskritize the name Ahmadnagar. This is obvious because in 2:2 Kṛṣṇadās calls the town "Āmadā Nagar." The town of Devagīri ("Mountain of the gods") was established by Bhillama V in 1185 as the capital of the Yādava kingdom, and the fort

The circumstances of Eknāth's meeting the god Datta are different in the two compositions, as are details about where and how Eknāth's wife was found.

As mentioned earlier, the *EC* contains many additional stories that are not found in the *PC*. In the *EC* Eknāth miraculously takes on the form of his guru (who in the *EC* is the commander of Daulatābād Fort for a Muslim ruler) and leads the troops victoriously in battle so as to avoid disturbing Janārdana's meditation. Eknāth practices austerities on a mountain, is given shade by a compassionate cobra, goes on a long pilgrimage of North India, makes a pilgrimage to Pandharpur, tells a long story about his great-grandfather Bhānudās, nurses a weak untouchable thief who escaped from prison, shows mercy to four thieves that he discovers trying to loot his home, is at first condemned and then felicitated in Varanasi for writing a Marathi commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇā* (popularly known as the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat*) and, and at Rāma's command begins writing a Marathi *Rāmāyaṇa* (the *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa*) but ends his life in a river (*jalasamādhi*) before finishing it. None of these stories is in the *PC.* A full overview of all differences between the stories in these and other texts can be found on the chart in Appendix F, which lists all of the major stories about Eknāth and where they can (or cannot) be found in each of the major hagiographical texts reviewed in this dissertation. In light of the quantity and quality of the differences between the *PC* and *EC,* the texts appear to represent two separate but not explicitly competing streams of remembering Eknāth in the 18th century.

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was constructed in the early 13th century. The town and fort were renamed Daulatābād ("City of Wealth") by Muhammad bin Tughluq when he established a second capital for the Delhi Sultanate there in 1327. See Richard Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives*, ed. Gordon Johnson, vol. I.8, The New Cambridge History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 33-58. In addition to the original name change, the naming of this place continued and continues to reflect Hindu-Muslim tension in the region. Cf. Nile Green, "Who's the King of the Castle? Brahmins, Sufis and the Narrative Landscape of Daulatabad," *Contemporary South Asia* 14, no. 1 (2005): 21-37. Interestingly, Keśavsvāmī in the *EC* refers to the place as both Devagīri and Daulatābād.

The chapters at the beginning and end of the *EC* tell stories that follow a specific chronological sequence. The first nine chapters describe Eknāth's childhood (very briefly) and his discipleship to Janārdana. Through several episodes Eknāth demonstrates his spiritual prowess to Janārdana, who consequently takes him to meet his own guru Datta and then on to a short pilgrimage to Tryambak (near the city of Nāśik). Janārdana sends Eknāth on a grand pilgrimage of India, but when Eknāth's worried grandparents finally discover his whereabouts, Janārdana is persuaded to tell Eknāth to return to Paithan and settle down as a householder. Eknāth's wedding is performed, he and his wife settle in Paithan, and soon thereafter Eknāth's grandparents and Janārdana die. The final two chapters of the *EC* narrate Eknāth's final days and deeds, including his taking *samādhi* in a river and some wondrous events that occur as people establish a memorial to him. In the expansive middle nineteen chapters of the *EC,* Keśavsvāmī narrates many independent episodes. The exceptions to the otherwise lack of a sequence in this section are a number of two- and three-story sets, wherein Eknāth performs one or two good deeds, accrues merit (*puṇya*) and then encounters someone in unfortunate circumstances who requests Eknāth to donate his surplus merit and release him from the karmic bondage of his past misdeeds. Coincidentally, these small sets of stories all follow a pattern that is immediately relevant to how Eknāth's social relations were remembered, as we shall see in detail shortly.

A comprehensive examination of everything in the *EC* that relates to caste and social hierarchy would be too large to be feasible here, but some highlights from the text will suffice to convey Keśavsvāmī's general outlook and attitude. We will begin by observing several important epithets and themes in the text and then investigate noteworthy stories more thoroughly.

The *Eknāth-caritra* – Key Phrases and Epithets in the Text

The most common epithet that Keśavsvāmī uses for Eknāth is the term *avatār,* which occurs as both a single word and as a component of compound terms (i.e., *pūrṇāvatār*, *bhavanāvatār* and *līlāvatār*). In the few times that this word appeared in the *PC,* it referred only to Kṛṣṇa or Dattātreya but never to Eknāth. In the *EC,* however, Keśavsvāmī calls Eknāth an *avatār* more than 50 times, describing Eknāth unambiguously as carrying out a divine purpose in the world. Keśavsvāmī is also fond of using the word *jagadoddhār* and *jagadoddhārak* ("world-upliftment" and "world-uplifter") to describe Eknāth.[101] These words occur 25 times in the text, often when Keśavsvāmī describes Eknāth's purpose or function when performing a *kīrtan.*[102] In the *PC* Eknāth performs several *kīrtan*s and has a good reputation for them, and *kīrtan* performance is one of Eknāth's most regular activities throughout his adult life. Somewhat less frequently, Eknāth is described as engaging in *dīnoddhāra* ("upliftment of the lowly") and being *dīnadayāḷ* ("compassionate to the lowly"), and in a similar vein he frequently participates in situations in which the words *patita* and *anātha* ("fallen" and "orphan/helpless") are used to describe the people with whom he interacts. In these cases, the terms always connote low-caste, untouchable, or poor people whose caste is not stated.[103]

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[101] As with the term *avatār*, these two terms involving *uddhār* are also commonly used (at least by Mahīpati, and I assume others as well) to describe the work other Marathi *sant*s. This is a common trope.

[102] In its Maharashtrian form, a *kīrtan* involves a cycle of textual reading, devotional songs and an exposition of that text by the *kīrtankār* (performer of the *kīrtan*). For more on Marathi *kīrtan*s, cf. Anna Schultz, "From Sants to Court Singers: Style and Patronage in Marathi Kirtan," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 17, no. 2 (2009): 127-146; C.L. Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory*, 81-82.

[103] Two notable exceptions to this pattern deserve mention. First, in one story Kṛṣṇa attends one of Eknāth's *kīrtan*s secretly in the form of a poor brahman, and he describes himself to Eknāth as "*anāthā.*" Also, the concluding statement after Chapter 27, which tells a story about Eknāth persuading a merchant to engage in more spiritual practices (e.g., repeating the names of Viṣṇu, taking a ritual bath before eating), summarizes the story as an example of purifying (*pāvan*) the fallen (*patita*). Such concluding statements in simplistic Sanskrit appear after the

The epithet *janī-janārdana* appears very infrequently in the *EC*. This epithet was used in the *PC* to describe Eknāth's way of seeing God in the world, but in the *EC* it bears a very different meaning – Eknāth's own status as an *avatār* of Kṛṣṇa/Janārdana among the people in the world. (7:65, 8:8) This way of using of *janī-janārdana* is indicative of how Keśavsvāmī views Eknāth generally – his divinity is constantly emphasized, and upliftment (of the world and of the lowly) is a basic element in his purpose as an *avatār*. The only apparent counter-example of this in the *EC* is a praise-song (*āratī*) that Eknāth sings shortly before his death (occurring between verses 31:40 and 31:41). It begins, "When I looked at people, Janārdana appeared" (*avalokitāṁ jana dise janārdana*).[104] This is not truly an exception, however, as in this instance *jana* and *janārdana* are not Keśavsvāmī's own words but instead occur in a poem that Keśavsvāmī quotes directly and attributes to Eknāth himself.

Finally, a very provocative but confusing word is used on three occasions in relation to Eknāth – *viṣamatā*. This is a common word in contemporary Marathi, particularly as it is used to translate the English word "inequality" in political discourse. In older Marathi, however, this word in its nominal form is far less common than the adjective *viṣam*, which has two main meanings: "hostile/angry" and "unequal."[105] The word *viṣam* clearly connotes "hostile/angry" three times in the *EC* (10:46, 12:46 and 22:77). One of these instances describes how the

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conclusion of around half the chapters in the Gosāvī edition of the *EC* as well as some other manuscripts and editions.

[104] Cf. Eknāth, *Śrī Eknāth Gāthā, Śrī Bhānudās, Śrī Janārdana Yāñcyā Abhaṅgāsaha*, ed. Nānāmahārāj Sākhre (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1990 [2008]), #4005. This composition appears at the very end of Sākhre's and others' editions of the *Gāthā*, which makes me wonder if the poem was acquired not from the notebooks of *kīrtan* performers but from its appearance in Keśavsvāmī's text. Not enough is known about the compilation of Eknāth's short poems to be able to ascertain whether this poem had a legacy apart from its appearance in the *EC*.

[105] The noun *viṣamatā* is listed only in contemporary dictionaries of Marathi. The older dictionaries (J. Molesworth's *Marathi-English Dictionary*, S. G. Vaze's *The Aryabhushan School Dictionary, Marathi-English* and Y. R. Dāte's vast Marathi-Marathi dictionary, the *Mahārāṣṭra Śabdakoś*) as well as Tulpule and Feldhaus' *Dictionary of Old Marathi* do not list *viṣamatā* at all.

brahmans felt about Eknāth, and the other two cases describe how Eknāth did not feel about anyone. All three clearly carry the meaning "hostile/angry" and there is no instance of the adjective *viṣam* meaning "unequal" in the *EC.* In its nominal form (*viṣamatā*), however, the meaning is slipperier in at least some cases. One ambiguous instance may fit the meaning of hostility better than inequality. In chapter 20, Eknāth discovers four thieves snooping around his house, and Keśavsvāmī comments that *viṣamatā* never touched Eknāth's heart. (20:45) One could certainly understand why a person in Eknāth's situation would have felt hostility toward the thieves. At the same time, it is possible that Keśavsvāmī is implying that Eknāth felt no inequality, in the sense of distinguishing between friends and enemies (and, in fact, Mahīpati later interprets the story in this way). A second instance of the word is even more ambiguous, as neither definition suits the context well. As Eknāth sets out to find Jñāneśvar's *samādhi*, a large group of devoted folk (*bhāvik jana*) suddenly congregates and wishes to come along. Eknāth welcomes them, and Keśavsvāmī comments that Eknāth felt not even a bit of *viṣamatvā.*[106] (16:5-6) There would be no reason for Eknāth to have ill feelings toward a group of devotees, and a sense of non-discrimination or equality seems to be similarly out of place (unless there was something about these devotees' identities that Keśavsvāmī did not tell us). The only alternative that I can think of is that Eknāth felt "indifferent" to their participation, but this is not within the conventional range of definitions. The third example of *viṣamatā* offers the clearest support for a reading as "inequality." In 11:78, Eknāth welcomes three Muslim mendicants or *malaṅg*s (who Keśavsvāmī later reveals are the *trimūrti* in disguise) into his home to eat shortly before his

[106] I suspect that *viṣamatā* and *viṣamatvā* have the same basic meaning, since their nominal endings both function in the same way. If Keśavsvāmī coined the term *viṣamatā*, since it does not appear to have been a common Marathi word at the time when he wrote, it is just as plausible that he would invent the word *viṣamatvā* to have the same meaning.

śrāddha feast – a variation on the story in *PC* 8:20-92.[107] Keśavsvāmī notes that *viṣamatā* never touched Eknāth's consciousness (*viṣamatā sparśa nahīṃ kadhīṁ*). The larger narrative in this episode clearly highlights Eknāth as not making a distinction among people; hostility would have had no role here. Furthermore, in 11:30, although Keśavsvāmī does not use the word *viṣamatā* itself, he describes Eknāth's vow to distribute food to any guests who arrive at any time. This verse indisputably parallels verse 7 of Mukteśvar's *ŚKĀ*, but Keśavsvāmī adds a major innovation: Eknāth would not ask the guests about their family or *jāti.*[108] Even if the meaning of the word *viṣamatā* is ambiguous in the *EC* generally, the gist of Keśavsvāmī's message in chapter 11 is clear.

The *Eknāth-caritra* – Major Themes in the Text

Having reviewed important words and epithets, let us now consider some general themes in the *EC* that convey a feeling of this text. In the *EC* deities are so impressed with Eknāth's devotion and skill at *kīrtan* performance that they come to visit him personally on six separate occasions: Kṛṣṇa/Viṣṇu comes three times (8:50-63, 11:15-29 and 19:14-72), Dattātreya visits

[107] The term *malaṅg* is most likely used here to connote a poor Muslim mendicant who is not necessarily affiliated with a particular *ṣūfī* order but is inclined toward syncretic views and practices. See D. Deak, "Maharashtra Saints and the Sufi Tradition: Eknath, Chand Bodhle and the Datta Sampradaya," 29; Ed(s). "Malang," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 6:228. One short poetic work (specifically, a *bharūḍ*) attributed to Eknāth also describes a *"malaṅg-phakīr*," mentioning that he "eats the *bhang* of self-knowledge," is absorbed in bliss and is poor. Eknāth and N. Sākhre, *Śrī Eknāth Gāthā, Śrī Bhānudās-mahārāj āṇi Śrī Janārdana-mahārāj yāñcyā Abhaṅgāsahit*, #3944.

[108] Mukteśvar: *avalambileṁ sadāvarta | samayīṁ āliyā abhyāgat | bhojan deūn icchātṛpta | pūjā karī manobhāveṁ.* Keśavsvāmī: *yāhivarī sadāvarta | samaī jo ye atita | bhojan dyāveṁ yāvattṛpta | na vicārit kuḷāyātī.* (As in other instances, this word *yātī* is an alternative vernacularization of *jāti.*) Marathi readers will see that the first three feet are basically the same; the differences between the verses are due to the use of synonyms and different tenses of the same verb. The fourth foot, however, has a completely and crucially different meaning ("he conducted worship sincerely" versus "he did not ask about family or *jāti*").

Eknāth in Paithan twice (8:35-49 and 24:42-54), and Gaṅgā/Godāvarī in human form comes to hear a *kīrtan* once (27:3-33). References to Muslims occur several times in the text, although in three instances Keśavsvāmī emphasizes that no actual Muslims are involved (Dattātreya in *malaṅg* garb in 3:10-56, the brahman ascetic Candramābhaṭ/Cānd Bodhle designing a Muslim shrine in Daulatābād for his *samādhi* (5:50-57) and the *trimūrti* dressed as *malaṅg*s in 11:76-80). In the fourth instance, Eknāth warns a *sannyāsī* against performing grand miracles in public lest it attract the Yavanas' (Muslims') attention. (15.19)

The *EC* does not reveal a similar interest in highlighting the shocking extremes to which Eknāth's *bhakti* drives him in the *PC*, although the theme of purity is undeniably present in the *EC*. In the beginning of the second chapter, Keśavsvāmī describes Eknāth's supreme devotion to his guru, which causes Eknāth to disregard any difference between "high" and "low" tasks and therefore happily wash his guru's clothes and clean his toilet. (2:2-7) In the midst of this description, Keśavsvāmī comments, "He saw ritual prohibition and injunction as worldly. The certainty of devotion to his guru was in his heart. He was ready to serve in all places without weariness."[109] (2:6) The sentiment of this verse is reinforced in an episode in the next chapter, in which Janārdana takes Eknāth to meet his guru, Dattātreya. Datta appears through the power of *māyā* (illusion) as a leather-clad figure who eats and speaks like a "*malaṅg* or *fakīr*" and is accompanied by a dog. (3:16-17) Datta milks the dog, mixes food into the milk and shares it with Janārdana. Once their meal is finished, Datta asks Eknāth to clean the vessels. Eknāth does so but first eats leftovers as *prasād*. Eknāth has no qualms about possible impurity in this case (unlike in a later rendition of this story in the *Bhaktavijay*).

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[109] A key phrase here – *vidhiniṣedh laukik pāhī* – here is ambiguous. It could be read as "he saw the rules of ritual injunction and prohibition as worldly (of secondary importance)" or "he observed the worldly rules of ritual injunction and prohibition." The semantic difference between the two is significant, the effect of this phrase on the larger verse is not. *vidhiniṣedh laukik pāhī | guru sevecā niścay hṛdayī | sevesī sādara ṭhāyīṁ ṭhāyīṁ | ubag kāhīṁ nayecī*

At the same time, there is another consistent theme throughout the *EC* of Eknāth doing his bath and *sandhyā* rituals,[110] as well as invariably respecting and honoring other brahmans' concerns about ritual and social norms, even when they use the ritual system as a pretext to torment Eknāth. Furthermore, Eknāth conspicuously observes the ritual practice of bathing with his clothes on after interacting with untouchables in two prominent episodes, as we shall soon observe.[111] So when Keśavsvāmī explains that Eknāth observes ritual injunctions as worldly, as mentioned above, both of the words "observe" and "worldly" are significant; even if the injunctions are understood as worldly, Eknāth still observes them.

Another theme that is readily apparent in the *EC* is that brahmans as a group are depicted in a very unflattering light as they resist and torment Eknāth out of self-interest, resentment, arrogance and generally poor behavior.[112] Three examples demonstrate this pattern well. In Chapter 11, the brahmans complain to themselves about Eknāth attracting attention away from them and their rituals. "Through his actions, everyone has become a *bhakta* of God. Many worldly customs have been abandoned. Now they think only about their spiritual state. They do not heed our concerns (*goṣṭī*)." (11:36-37) In the next chapter, the brahmans again express their displeasure, "Since long ago men and women were under our command (*ājñeṁt*) for their familial customs. Now they are all sunk completely in praising the name and greatness of Eknāth." (12:10) In the next chapter, a wealthy householder suddenly arrives in Pratiṣṭhān. The brahmans hear of this and run out to meet him, but their minds are fully focused on their account

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[110] *Sandhyā* rituals are everyday practices consisting of meditation, repeating mantras and other small acts every morning and evening.

[111] No explanation for clothed bathing is provided in the *EC*. Kane describes several situations in which clothed bathing is prescribed for purification after contact with a ritually unclean person (including Buddhists, Jains, fallen brahmans, menstruating women, *mlecchas* as well as *cāṇḍālas*). Cf. Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra Vol. 1*, Revised and Enlarged ed. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1941), 169.

[112] The Marathi word used regularly to describe the brahmans' actions is *chaḷ* (torment or torture).

books (*vahyā sampūrṇa pāhatī*). The householder bursts their bubble of hope as he asks them where he can find Eknāth. They say to themselves, "This patron (*yajamān*) will leave us," and quickly ask him for a gift (*dakṣiṇā*) before he goes. (13:23-26) Sentiments like these drive the brahmans to torment Eknāth in various ways: sending beggars to Eknāth's home to exploit his vow to give food (11:53-58), taunting Eknāth by praising someone else's poetry as greater in front of him (12:9-13), scheming elaborately to catch Eknāth eating at an untouchable's home (17:48-56), and even mocking the dying Eknāth that his miraculous powers in life can do nothing to save him from death (30.52). The brahman *sannyāsī*s and *paṇḍit*s in Varanasi are quick to persecute Eknāth for composing a Marathi commentary on the Bhāgavata Purāṇā (chapters 23 and 24).

Eknāth not only resists the brahmans' various schemes and tricks; he triumphs in the face of them – another theme in the *EC*. For example, the brahmans refuse to perform rituals before Eknāth's *śrāddha* feast because Eknāth had fed three *malaṅg*s (the *trimūrti* in disguise) before feeding them. They mock Eknāth's independent ways and taunt him that since he is so powerful, the ancestors themselves will surely come down from heaven to eat without the brahmans first doing the requisite rituals. When this does in fact occur, Eknāth reverently gives all of the credit back to the brahmans, "By the grace of your blessed words, the ancestors came to this world." (11:108) In chapter 12, the very same poet whose skills the brahmans praised before Eknāth later seeks Eknāth out to help him, as he was near death but had not finished a Marathi Rāmāyaṇa that he was composing. Eknāth tells him he will have eleven additional days to live, and the brahmans mock Eknāth's confidence. When Eknāth's words are vindicated and the poet

does manage to finish his book before dying, the brahmans are amazed and say, "All the faults that would bring defilement (*dūṣaṇ*) are actually ornaments (*bhūṣaṇ*) to Nāth." (Pānse 12:54)[113]

Another prominent theme in the *EC* is that Eknāth routinely seeks forgiveness rather than permission. Throughout the *EC* Eknāth is found repeatedly apologizing to brahmans after they are outraged, but he never consults them beforehand. After serving the *malaṅg*s/*trimūrti* before the brahmans at the *śrāddha* feast and thereby upsetting the brahmans, Eknāth pleads with them not to be angry, requests them to honor him with their presence at the *śrāddha*, and asks them to forgive his offense (*aparādha*). Although Eknāth asks for forgiveness, he never confesses that he has done anything wrong or inappropriate. He simply asks the brahmans to excuse him and not be angry. This pattern of apology is followed in nearly every episode. In the twelfth chapter Eknāth rebukes a *sannyāsī* for showing off his powers and recommends drastically that *samādhi* (ritual suicide) is the only remedy. After the *sannyāsī* is buried alive, the brahmans hear of it and demand that Eknāth justify his position on the basis of scriptural authority. Eknāth responds, "You are powerful brahmans; I am lowly (*dīn*) and a fool. Of course I have not heard or learned the *śāstra*s to know where in them the statement of this custom (*vidhīceṁ vacan*) might be. Such a fool [as I] must revere the water that washed your feet (*caraṇatīrtha*) in order to be purified." (15:33-35)

In chapters 22 through 24, Eknāth deals with various brahmans from Varanasi in relation to the Marathi commentary on eleventh chapter of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa that he was composing. The first few chapters of Eknāth's work in progress are brought to Varanasi by a householder who was so impressed with the work in Paithan that he wanted to spread its fame. The brahmans

[113] This line is not present in the Gosāvī edition, the Tātya edition and one of the manuscripts. Pānse and two manuscripts, however, include it (and two further manuscript fragments are missing the whole chapter). In my reading, this verse seems to be further articulating a sentiment from the previous verse (i.e., not adding new content to the story), and the narrative feels slightly disjointed without this verse. My citation of 12:54 here thus reflects the Pānse edition and not the Gosāvī edition.

whom he encounters in Varanasi, however, are outraged that the book is being written about the *BhP* in "*prākṛt*" (Marathi). An important *sannyāsī* there dispatches some disciples to Paithan to summon Eknāth for an investigation. Eknāth happily agrees to come. Throughout the events that occur in Varanasi, Eknāth maintains his calm demeanor (which impresses everyone) and unhesitatingly submits himself to whatever the brahman authorities there feel is best, even helpfully suggesting that they throw his book in the river if they deem it worthless (which they in fact do).[114] He not only concedes to his persecutors' demands, he even suggests improvements for how they might carry out their interrogation. Through a series of introspective moments and miraculous events, Eknāth is vindicated without making any effort or offering any resistance.

This pattern holds true in the stories about Eknāth's son Haripaṇḍit in chapter 28. Haripaṇḍit rejects Eknāth's interest in Marathi and social openness, and he moves to Varanasi to be around more like-minded folk. Eknāth soon misses him and goes to bring him back, but Haripaṇḍit first lectures his father on how they should all conduct themselves as "praiseworthy, superior brahmans" (*vandya variṣṭha brāhmaṇ*), and he demands that Eknāth agree to some conditions before consenting to return. (28.40) Eknāth does so in order to bring his son home. As seen before, Eknāth neither actively resists his interlocutors' demands nor actively concedes that his own behavior and thinking are wrong; he is content to go along and allow other brahmans to set the narrative stage. As in previous stories, through wondrous and mundane events, Eknāth's position over against Haripaṇḍit is vindicated without Eknāth defending himself. Eknāth's reverence for brahmans and their authority is an important and unambiguous

[114] Opposition from more orthodox quarters to the composition of religious texts (or, as Pollock argues, simply poetry, whose content often happens to be religious) in vernacular languages is a common theme in the cultural memory of *bhakti* traditions in several regions. Cf. Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), esp. 310-314. One could also observe brahmans' opposition to Tulsīdās' composition of the *Rāmcaritmānas* in Avadhī, which was roughly contemporary with Eknāth. Cf. Philip Lutgendorf, *The Life of a Text: Performing the Rāmcaritmānas of Tulsīdās* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 9.

theme throughout the *EC*, and the pattern of him offending, apologizing and being vindicated holds true in almost all of the stories, with the slight but remarkable exception of a story in Chapter 17 that we will observe in detail later.

A final theme in the *EC* that is relevant to our line of inquiry is Eknāth's socially inclusive activities. Many episodes refer to Eknāth interacting with and making himself accessible to people in lower social echelons. In the description of a *kīrtan* performance, the attendance of people such as women and *śūdra*s (*strīśūdrādī*) is mentioned alongside other devotees. (11:14) As observed earlier, the brahmans in Paithan worry about Eknāth turning all of the people (*samasta lok*) into *bhakta*s (11:36), but they highlight that it is especially the simple and foolish people (*bhoḷe mūrkha lok*) that have become enchanted (*mohile*) by him. (11:41) Eknāth's public discourses are said to have been given for the good of simple and guileless people (*bhālyāṁ bhoḷyāṁ*, 12:7) and to have been especially popular among the guileless devotees (*bhoḷībhāvik*). (12:17) In contrast to references such as these in the *EC*, women, *śūdra*s and simple people were not mentioned at all in the *ŚKĀ* or the *PC*. In the next chapter, Eknāth prepares to attend a symbolic wedding of two newly carved images of Viṭṭhal and Rukmiṇī and to be the party of the "groom" (Viṭṭhal), and he explicitly invites "the lowly, destitute, lame, blind and crazy (or foolish – *khuḷe*)" to also join his devotees as members of the groom's wedding party. (13:77) Although some of these labels, especially when spoken by the brahmans, certainly have a sharp pejorative edge, in other instances Keśavsvāmī uses them as merely descriptive.

In much that I have said so far, I have been trying to give readers an overview of important terms and themes in the *EC* that have a bearing on how Eknāth is situated in his social environment. Having set this out as background, we now focus our attention on four episodes that directly depict Eknāth's interactions with untouchables. These stories are noteworthy both

for their portrayal of Eknāth within the compass of the *EC* itself and for their centrality among late 19th- and 20th-century memories of Eknāth.

The *Eknāth-caritra* – Stories in the Text

If one were to ask random people in Maharashtra today what they knew about Eknāth's life, one of the first stories that they would undoubtedly tell has its roots in the 17th chapter of the *EC*, which became popular much later because the black and white film *Dharmatma* (1935) was based on it. The *EC* version of the story has two distinct parts. Keśavsvāmī begins by introducing an untouchable man (*anāmik*) who is described as contemplative (*antarniṣṭha*) and having mature knowledge (*jñān paripāk*).[115] One day he happens to meet Eknāth, who gladly (*sukhasthitī*) engages with him in conversation. (17:21-22) The brahmans hear of this encounter and warn Eknāth that talking about knowledge (*jñāna*) with an untouchable person is bad conduct (*durācaraṇ*). Eknāth's response to this is his strongest resistance to caste orthodoxy in any of the hagiographical works examined thus far; Eknāth challenges the brahmans to specify what exactly makes this man an untouchable. "This form (*ākṛti,* i.e., the untouchable man's body) is like that of you images-of-Brahman (*brahmamūrtti*). By what marks (*lakṣaṇeṁ*) have you ascertained that he is *anāmik*? I perceived no notion of his *anāmik*-ness. In terms of the

[115] Keśavsvāmī tends to call this man *anāmik* (lit. unnamed or anonymous, sometimes translated loosely as unmentionable) and, less often, *antyaj* (person of lowest position, untouchable). Both Molesworth and Date define *anāmik* as a general term for any social class below śudras, but Tulpule and Feldhaus in *A Dictionary of Old Marathi* are more specific: "belonging to a type of Untouchable caste whose very name is not to be pronounced by higher-caste persons." The precise identity of this particular "type of Untouchable caste" is unclear, but it seems unlikely to me that the taxonomy involved here in the term *anāmik* connotes more precise than the group of people more commonly referred to as "untouchable." For this reason I translate *anāmik* as "untouchable" rather than literally as "anonymous."

Self, I saw only sameness. (*samān sārikhā*) What marks reveal his *anāmik*-ness?"[116] The brahmans brusquely dismiss Eknāth's question ("To hell with such knowledge!") and demand that Eknāth both stop giving knowledge to the *anāmik* man and undergo ritual purification. After his audacious initial question, Eknāth offers no further rebuttal. He submits to the brahmans' demand for purification (but does not promise to refrain from doing this again), and he prostrates himself and asks them to excuse his transgression (*aparādh*). (17:29) The brahmans tell Eknāth to bathe with his clothes on (*sacela*) in order to become pure.[117] Eknāth responds, "Of course (*avaśya*)" and goes. The brahmans bring a ritual mixture of the five products of a cow, smear them on Eknāth, say a mantra and then bluster (*karit valganā*) to each other about how extremely praiseworthy their deed is. (17:33-34) Keśavsvāmī's tone here is unmistakable as he pejoratively refers to the brahmans' self-congratulation as "blustering."

In the next verse, Keśavsvāmī returns to the untouchable man, who is so inspired by his talk with Eknāth that he goes home and tells his wife, who then wants to meet Eknāth too. "Service to a good person is such a gentle fate for those of low caste (*nīca yāti*).[118] A desire has sprung up in me to bring and affectionately worship him." But she immediately has second thoughts ("He is a high, superior brahman and we are extremely low people"). She is wracked

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[116] It is quite a suspicious coincidence that Eknāth's question here – the most pointed and critical in the whole *EC* – is largely missing from the Gosāvī edition because of what appears to be a printing error. In the Gosāvī edition verse 17:25 begins but then suddenly merges with the ending of verse 27 to create a conspicuously flawed *ovī* verse of six feet that do not accord with one another in meter or meaning. The Gosāvī edition contains several of these printing errors, but the fact that this particular message was left out is hard to dismiss as mere accident. All other printed versions and manuscripts contain this verse. Since Pānse's rendering is slightly different and less meaningful than the others (also an interesting fact), I herewith provide the verses from the Tātya edition: *nāth mhaṇti brahmamūrtti | tumhāsārikhī hehī ākṛtī | koṇe lakṣaṇeṁ yāpratī | anāmik niścit jāṇatasāṁ* || 7:25 || *yāceṁ anāmikpaṇāceṁ jñān | maja tava na dise oḷakhaṇ | disto ātmaveṁ paripūrṇa | sarvāṁsamān sārikhā* || 7:26 || *tyācyā anāmikpaṇāceṁ lakṣaṇ | koṇteṁ dyāveṁ nivḍūṇ | aikonī kṣobhale brāhmaṇ | prativacan bolatī* ||7:27 ||

[117] As mentioned earlier, Kane states that ritual bathing while clothed is prescribed in multiple *dharmaśāstra*s as a purificatory remedy after contact with Buddhists, Jains, fallen brahmans, menstruating women, *mlecchas* as well as *cāṇḍāla*s. Cf. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra Vol. 1*, 169.

[118] As mentioned earlier, *yātī* is a alternative vernacular rendering of *jāti*.

with regret (*anutāp*) and begins to cry. (17:34-37) Her husband responds, "But the powerful one (*samartha*) does not know high and low – such is Śrī Nāth's equanimous mindset (*samabuddhī*)." The man reassures his wife that Eknāth will indeed accept their invitation. She begins cooking, and as the man departs to summon Eknāth, he says, "Nāth will come to our home, dear, and by that we will be uplifted (*uddhare*)."[119]

The untouchable man goes to Eknāth's house and invites him, and Eknāth respectfully accepts. A brahman spy (*her*) overhears it and quickly spreads the news to create an uproar among the brahmans, who then scheme how to catch Eknāth in the act. Keśavsvāmī comments at length about how the brahmans' mind are clouded by pride and arrogance. The rest of the episode consists of Eknāth calmly going and eating at the untouchable's home and the brahmans' various strategies to catch him. The brahmans' scheme is frustrated by the fact that although some of them see Eknāth eating at the untouchable's home, other brahmans observe Eknāth eating at his own home at the same time. They discuss at length how to account for such a feat, and Keśavsvāmī repeats that their minds were clouded by pride. (17:73) Back at the untouchables' home, the hosts rejoice in Eknāth's presence, praise him and say, "We unprotected ones *(anāthāṁ*) have been uplifted (*uddharileṁ*)."[120] (17:75) Before leaving, Eknāth says a Sanskrit *śloka* to them which, according to Keśavsvāmī*,* is authorized (*saṁmatā*) for giving to brahmans and others who have the six *guṇa*s (*ṣaḍguṇayutā*).[121] (17:82) This reference to the

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[119] The verbs in this sentence are technically in past tense, but the context makes it obvious that they refer to the future.

[120] The word *anāthāṁ* likely bears a polyvalence of not only "unprotected" but also "Eknāth-less."

[121] There is no widely recognized Marathi convention of "six *guṇa*s' to which Keśavsvāmī is referring. If we resist the urge to render the term more generally as *sadguṇayutā* ("linked with good qualities") and read the word as it is and, then the logical reference work to consult is Śrīdhar Śāmrāv Haṇamant's *Saṅket-koś* ("Treasury of Signs" or "Encyclopedia of Signs" – the authoritative work on Marathi numerology). Haṇamant shows a broad range of literary precedents for the idea of "six guṇas," ranging from the six qualities of God to the six qualities that one ought to learn from a dog. The most plausible candidates in this case are the six natural *guṇa*s of a good person (*saha guṇa satpuruṣāce - svābhāvik*) as stated in the Bhartṛhari's *Nītiśatakam* (courage in calamitous times, patience

Sanskrit *śloka* has little significance in the *EC*; in Mahīpati's rendition of this story in the *BhV* it is one of the crucial hinges in the plot, since the brahmans in that rendition claim that the untouchable man is not qualified to hear this Sanskrit verse.

In this two-part episode, we see very clearly once again a combination of Eknāth breaking with tradition in order happily to discuss a religious topic with an untouchable as well as acquiescing to orthodox brahman demands to maintain social purity afterwards. Unlike other such stories, in this case Eknāth pauses to ask his critics here exactly how they can identify his interlocutor as an untouchable. This is not a critique of untouchability itself; a reader might imagine Eknāth agreeing with the apologetic view of untouchability being the consequence of anyone's bad thoughts and behavior rather than being an unshakable stigma associated with the social location of one's birth. As much as modern readers would have liked to witness a more extended conversation about the nature of untouchability here, neither the brahmans nor Eknāth in this story finds it necessary to do so.

In our investigation so far, this is also the first story in which the brahmans demand that Eknāth undergo a purification ritual, whose key elements (bathing with clothes on, smearing *pañcagavya*, and reciting mantras) Keśavsvāmī finds important to describe with a hint of disapproval. In the second part of the episode Keśavsvāmī has the untouchable couple summarize the moral of the story: Eknath is a superior brahman, they are low people, but this does not matter since Eknāth does not recognize these categories due to his equanimous mindset

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in fortunate times, erudition, heroism in battle, pleasure in victory and devotion toward acquiring knowledge) and the six *guṇa*s of self-knowledge (*sahā guṇa - ātmyāce*) as given in the *Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* (omniscience, permanence, perpetual contentment, having the form of consciousness, independence and perpetual wakefulness). Śrīdhar Śāmrāv Haṇamant, *Saṅket-koś* (Puṇe: Ānand Mudraṇālaya, 1964), 158. In light of the ambiguity and lack of a Marathi convention about "six *guṇa*s," it is safe to conclude that this reference is of little importance to text as a whole.

(*samabuddhi*).[122] Effectively, Eknāth is seen conducting himself within and negotiating the effects of two realms simultaneously – a realm of ritual purity that is ordered by caste distinctions and a realm of devotional egalitarianism that does not sense or regard caste differences by means of *samabhāva, samabuddhi,*or the idea that God is in all beings (*janī-janārdana*).

The second vignette that deserves extended attention similarly appears for the first time in the *EC* and is without precedent. Keśavsvāmī introduces an untouchable (*anāmik*) thief who had languished in prison for so long that his body was left emaciated and weak. He finds a way to escape one day but is too weak to move.[123] After saying a quick prayer, he begins to hear a distant *kīrtan* that energizes him enough to go outside. He crawls toward the sound of a *kīrtan* that Eknāth is performing, enjoys it, and returns the next night to listen again.[124] This time he enters the courtyard of Eknāth's home where Eknāth is performing, sits in a place where "no one would be polluted," and eventually faints because of weakness after the *kīrtan* finishes and everyone departs. (21:5-23) Eknāth happens to notice him, feels great compassion, and asks if he can help. Noticing that the man is starving, Eknāth wakes up his family to cook food that would be appropriate to the man's weak condition. Eventually the man regains enough strength to speak and tells Eknāth his story. Eknāth comforts him and tells the man to stay without worry as long as he likes and eat until his body returns to health. Word of Eknāth's extraordinary hospitality spreads, but in this instance his good deed actually does go unpunished; Keśavsvāmī

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[122] The word *samabuddhī* does not appear anywhere else in the *EC.* In the *PC samabuddhī* also does not appear, although *samadṛṣṭī* does. This is not a novel term in Marathi, as it occurs in Jñāndev's *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā* 12:57 as well as the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* 11:58.

[123] The circumstances of the thief's sudden freedom are not narrated clearly in the text itself.

[124] Here too Keśavsvāmī offers insufficient detail: where did the thief go on the first night? How did he sustain himself before returning on the second night?

mentions no opposition from the brahmans in town. He concludes the vignette by commenting, "The superiority of compassion (*dayā*) is to be established at the head of all *dharma* – this was the mark of Śrī Nāth's own nature." (21:40)

The episode of the untouchable thief concludes here, but its significance does not. In the next chapter Eknāth encounters what Keśavsvāmī calls a *brāhmaṇ rākṣasa* (brahman demon) who begs Eknāth to transfer his surplus merit and thereby release him from the demonic consequences of his earlier sins. Eknāth reports that he had accrued merit both by doing his daily rituals and by feeding a poor, fallen untouchable (*dīn patita antyaj*). The *rākṣasa* chooses the merit from feeding the untouchable, and when Eknāth transfers it to him by putting a drop of water on his hand, the *rākṣasa* is immediately freed.[125] (21:44-59) When Eknāth returns home, the untouchable thief who by that time had stayed in Eknāth's home and eaten for a night and a day, feels strong enough to depart. (21:61) This final reference to the untouchable thief acts as a sort of bookend to hold the stories of the untouchable thief and brahman *rākṣasa* together.

In line with Keśavsvāmī's comment about the preeminence of compassion, one could read these two vignettes as demonstrating how Eknāth shows compassion towards people on opposite ends of the social spectrum: an untouchable man in one instance and a fallen brahman on the other. It is striking, however, that Eknāth's compassion toward the untouchable generates merit that effectively pays off the brahman *rākṣasa*'s prior sins. The juxtaposition in this instance could be perceived as a mere coincidence, but in the *EC* this karmic transaction occurs a second time, as we shall observe and discuss later.

Two more relevant vignettes occur in rapid succession in chapter 26. These stories too are without precedent in the other hagiographical works, and they too became quite popular in

[125] According to Sucheta Paranjpe, who assisted me in reading parts of the *EC,* transferring ownership ritually by means of a drop of water was common in some levels of Maharashtrian society even into the mid 20th century.

later social memory. In the first story, Keśavsvāmī introduces a man whom he initially describes as "some haughty being" (*koṇī prāṇi unmatta*) but later identifies as a *caṇḍāḷ*.[126] (26:16) The man is chewing and carelessly spitting tobacco when Eknāth suddenly walks by on his way to bathe in the river. Some of the spit happens to land on Eknāth, but the man feels no regret. Keśavsvāmī describes Eknāth's mindset after the offense, "I am a praiseworthy superior brahman (*vandya variṣṭha brahmaṇ*); he is a low-*jāti,* low-caste person (*nīca yātī varṇahīn*). Even though I was spat upon, I should feel no hint of self-pride."[127] (26:18) Eknāth continues on his way to the river and bathes. He begins to worry about the demerit that the spitting man would accrue because of the incident, so he returns to the man, who is scared (*ghāvarleṁ*) to see Eknāth again. Eknāth surprises him, however, by apologizing, "Truly forgive my offense (*aparādh*). You were naturally at the place where you spit every day, and because I came on the path, the spit fell on me.… Having looked discerningly at the matter, no pollution (*dūṣaṇ*) should come to you. This unjustice (*anyāya*) is completely mine. So I have come to request this [forgiveness] of you." (26:22-24) On hearing this, the man (whom Keśavsvāmī now identifies as a *caṇḍāḷ*) has a great change of heart and says that he, being protector-less (*anātha*), is the one who should ask for forgiveness of Eknāth. He prostrates himself before Eknāth (something that Eknāth in the *EC* usually does to others), and Eknāth, who is "compassionate to the lowly" (*dīnadayāḷ*), embraces the repentant *cāṇḍāḷ* man. (26:24-28) With his sin and remorse burned

[126] Keśavsvāmī uses the term *prāṇi* or *prāṇī* several times in a neutral way to describe a person in the *EC*; one should not take the term here derogatorily. This verse is the only place in the *EC* where the term *caṇḍāḷ* appears.

[127] This verse is a rather inelegantly composed, and its meaning (i.e., Eknāth acknowledging social difference) seems inconsistent with what Keśavsvāmī has narrated elsewhere in the *EC*. Pānse's edition differs slightly but plausibly by reading that Eknāth felt he should not feel the self-pride at being a brahman spat upon by a low caste person (i.e., Eknāth rejected the pride of caste distinction). Gosāvī and all other versions read it as Eknāth making the social distinction but knowing that he should not feel self-pride. This is a small but important difference.

away, and with sincerity (*bhāvārtha*) blazing in his heart, the man thanks Eknāth and goes on his way.

Eknāth's calmness in this episode is certainly impressive, and this episode is often mentioned in connection with a common 20th-century epithet for Eknāth, "*Śānti-brahma*" (brahman of calmness).[128] More interesting, is that Eknāth in this story (unlike stories involving *samabhāva, samadṛṣṭi* or *viṣamatā*) is actually quite aware of and concerned about the caste difference between him and the untouchable who spat on him. It is this very caste-conscious awareness that impels him to return to the man. Eknāth recognizes the sinful effects of careless man's spit touching a brahman, and Eknāth apologizes for his role in generating that sin. In this story the laws of purity, caste, merit and demerit are understood to be in full effect, and even Eknāth's regret cannot change this. Notably, this story will become fairly unstable in later renditions, and its details will routinely change. No other rendition will highlight Eknāth's sympathetic concern about caste difference in the way that Keśavsvāmī does, however.

Immediately after the story of the repentant spitting man, Keśavsvāmī tells another very short story of Eknāth's compassion to an untouchable person. While going to take his bath in the Gaṅgā and do his routine *sandhyā* ritual on one hot day, Eknāth witnesses an untouchable (*anāmik*) woman running to the river to collect water. She is unaware that her son had come running behind her but had fallen in the scorching sand on the riverbank. The boy begins to cry as the sand burns his skin. Eknāth runs to him, picks him up, puts him on his shoulder, and asks the boy where he comes from.[129] The boy indicates the directions to his home, and Eknāth delivers him. Eknāth then returns to the river and bathes. (26:39-45) His bath, Keśavsvāmī

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[128] This epithet for Eknāth is also the name of one of the historical novels written about him. Cf. Līlā Goḷe, *Śāntibrahma* (Puṇe: Snehal Prakāśan, 1983 [2008]).

[129] The words *uddhāraṇ* and *patita* are not actually used, but Eknāth is literally lifting up the fallen in this vignette.

carefully notes, is done while wearing his clothes (*sahavastreṁsī*), as Eknāth was compelled to do in the story in chapter 17 in order to be purified after talking with the spiritually adept untouchable man.[130] This time, however, Eknāth bathes in his clothes completely on his own volition, since Keśavsvāmī also points out that this event of Eknāth's picking up the untouchable boy was not known to anyone. (26:46)

As with the story about the untouchable thief whom Eknāth welcomed into his home and nursed back to health, the stories of his compassion to untouchables in chapter 26 conclude with an episode in which his accrued merit ultimately benefits a brahman. Sometime after Eknāth delivered the untouchable boy to his proper home, a leprous brahman man arrives at Eknāth's home, saying that he was told in a *tapas*-induced vision that Eknāth possessed extra merit that could be used to heal him. In the vision, the man was told that Eknāth had rescued an untouchable boy. Eknāth gladly transfers the extra merit to him, and the brahman's leprosy disappears.

With this story about lifting the untouchable boy, two patterns in the *EC* have now become clear. As in the story of Eknāth discussing spiritual matters with an untouchable in chapter 17, in this story he again bathes with his clothes on. Keśavsvāmī offers no comment about why Eknāth does this, and since he notes that this episode was not known to anyone, there is no indication that Eknāth was compelled by others to do it.[131] Not every story of Eknāth's interaction with untouchables ends with him taking this ritually purifying bath, but it is

[130] The word *sahavastreṁ* (with clothing) ends strangely in *–sī* here in order to fit the *ovī* rhyme pattern.

[131] It is possible that I make a connection in this story that the author and his Marathi audience would have found unnatural. When Keśavsvāmī says that no one knew of Eknāth picking up the untouchable boy, this is probably to highlight the miraculous nature of the leprous brahman's dream and not the fact that Eknāth bathed with his clothes on because of his own sense of purity. Regardless, in the *EC* Eknāth bathes a second time with his clothes on – something that only makes sense in terms of ritual purification.

impossible to overlook that Eknāth in the *EC* undergoes this ritual twice. Ritual purification remains an important detail for Keśavsvāmī to include.

The other pattern that we see is that after Eknāth gains merit from interacting with untouchables, he transfers that merit to afflicted brahmans who are suffering for their own sins.[132] Reading this as a socio-political metaphor is tempting – the upliftment of untouchables indirectly benefits brahmans as well (through decreased social tension, or the securing of an ally to oppose the power of the middle castes). We cannot completely rule out such an interpretation, although it strikes me as peculiarly modern and probably anachronistic. Thus I am inclined against a strictly metaphorical reading of this merit economy pattern.

Instead, I would recommend a more complicated interpretation. In this pattern Eknāth demonstrates that his devotional, egalitarian approach has universal benefit, as it aids untouchables immediately in these two cases and by doing so does not irrevocably harm Eknāth karmically (for interacting so closely with untouchables) but rather accrues demonstrably genuine merit. The devotional, egalitarian realm is shown to be ultimately valid and effective even in the ritual, caste-ordered realm. Yet, by bathing while clothed, Eknāth also demonstrates that at least some elements of the economy of ritual purity and pollution are still in force. The *EC* reveals Keśavsvāmī's (and perhaps the oral tradition's) understanding of the tangled economies of purity and merit – something that perhaps Keśavsvāmī himself is not interested in elucidating. In other words, I find in this pattern evidence that Keśavsvāmī himself was wrestling with how to reconcile concerns for egalitarian *bhakti* with caste-based purity laws. That we cannot observe clearly a grand theory of how the jurisdictions of these two realms fit together is endemic to the narrative itself. Keśavsvāmī and the tradition are trying to figure that

[132] Although the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* does not include any stories about Eknāth bathing with his clothes on, it does include a story about Eknāth generating surplus merit (by giving water to 100 donkeys and hearing the Bhāgavata Purāṇa read) and gifting that merit to a leprous brahman. (*PC* 6:41-80)

out too. It is notable, however, that Keśavsvāmī and most of the later authors nonetheless regard this complicated tension as important to portray. Authors of later renderings of Eknāth's life will not show the same level of interest in trying to hold the two realms explicitly together, although the tension produced by them overlapping will strangely endure.

Near the end of the *EC* Keśavsvāmī tells a few stories about Eknāth's son that rehearse the persistent tension in the *EC* between caste observance according to the *śāstra*s and its transgression on the grounds of *bhakti*. The stories also demonstrate one final time Eknāth's predominantly non-confrontational approach in the *EC* to resolving these tensions. In Chapter 28, shortly after introducing Eknāth's children, Keśavsvāmī describes how Eknāth's only son, Hari (Haripaṇḍit), had become an acclaimed scholar but was so thoroughly displeased by Eknāth's composing in Marathi and his performance of world-uplifting (*jagaduddhār*) *kīrtan*s that he moves his wife and two sons to Varanasi.[133] (28:17) After some time Eknāth misses his son so much that he travels to Varanasi to invite him home. Haripaṇḍit receives him happily but says he will come home only if Eknāth agrees to two conditions: he will compose nothing further in Marathi, and he will avoid eating food prepared by other people (*parānna*). He chides Eknāth, "We are praiseworthy, superior brahmans, and I am a skilled paṇḍit. People should listen to what I say, and food from our own home should be arranged."[134] (28:40) Keśavsvāmī immediately comments on this sentiment, "Pride about knowledge and pride about *jāti* are firm

[133] Hari's third son, Raghobā, is said to have been especially fond of Eknāth, so he remained in Pratiṣṭhān. The Gosāvī family in Paithan today regards Raghobā is their common ancestor.

[134] *Āpaṇ* is a general reflexive pronoun (which could be translated as "I" or "you") as well as an inclusive plural first-person pronoun ("we" which includes both the speaker and listener). I think that the most likely translation is "we" here, based on the context of the statement. In considering Haripaṇḍit's pride, it would be wise to recognize Paithan's reputation for being a base of brahman orthodoxy. Descendants of brahmans from Paithan who settled in Varanasi in the 17th century were leaders in formulating and articulating the laws that governed caste distinctions and restrictions. Ananya Vajpeyi, "Politics of Complicity, Poetics of Contempt: A History of the Śūdra in Maharashtra, 1650-1950CE" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2004), Esp. ch. 1.

bonds when it comes to spiritual things. Thoughts must be guarded continually in order to remove them [the two kinds of pride]."[135] (28:43)

Preliminary Analysis

In the *EC* Keśavsvāmī conveys a fuller and much smoother image of Eknāth than we saw in the *PC*. This is at least partially a result of the much greater length of the *EC*. Keśavsvāmī consistently reinforces the idea that Eknāth is not merely human but an *avatār* whose everyday interactions (especially with the lowly, helpless and fallen) are part of his larger purpose to "uplift" the world. Aside from the incident in which he critically questions the brahmans in chapter 17 about how to identify the marks of an untouchable, in the *EC* Eknāth acquiesces to demands about maintaining purity remarkably quickly. He makes a point of bathing with his clothes on after picking up the untouchable boy, despite the fact that there was no external compulsion. The caste tension in the story of him eating at the untouchable couple's home in chapter 17 is also resolved smoothly (if only vaguely) by images of two Eknāths eating simultaneously in different places. Keśavsvāmī offers few details about how that occurred, but it is in keeping with the frustrated brahmans' exasperated comment that everything that would harm other people somehow turns out marvelously for Eknāth. Eknāth in the *EC* transgresses caste boundaries and endures persecution from orthodox quarters, but it is as if he has a karmic wind at his back. God is figuratively on and literally at Eknāth's side; Eknāth is visited by Kṛṣṇa, Dattātreya, and Gaṅgā personally six different times. This explicit mythological framework for Eknāth's actions is noticeably different from the way that Kṛṣṇadās' *PC* wove

[135] *vidyābhimān jātyābhimān | paramārthī heṁ dṛḍhabandhan | yāceṁ vyāvayā nirasan | manogat krakṣūna cālatase.*

stories together by concentrating far more on Eknāth's particular way of seeing Janārdana in the world and the social and ritual implications of that vision. Eknāth's actions in the *PC* were more accomplishments of devotion in service to Janārdana. In the *EC* Eknāth's miraculous feats (and there are more miracles in the *EC*) occur more because he is an *avatār* who has been sent to "uplift" people in the world. The term *avatār* is not merely coincidental in this text, despite the fact that *avatār* language is used to describe other *sant*s in contemporary Marathi hagiographical texts as well. Eknāth's identity as an *avatār* is used to explain and justify his confidence in interacting with untouchables and to integrate those actions into a larger narrative whole.

Although the theological frames of the *PC* and *EC* are quite different, the themes of Eknāth's social interactions are quite similar (and unlike the *ŚKĀ*, which includes no inter-caste stories). Eknāth continues both to transgress caste boundaries by interacting with untouchables and to seek reconciliation from the brahmans for doing so. In the *EC,* in addition to seeking forgiveness from the brahmans, ritual purification is added to the equation. By composing the *Eknāth-caritra* Keśavsvāmī vastly increases the hagiographical corpus of stories, and it is clear that his text circulated widely. The *EC* had a very significant impact on later memories about Eknāth, as we shall soon see. After observing the stories about Eknāth's social relations as told in later hagiographical works in the next chapter, we will be able to undertake a more substantial assessment and analysis of trends in this hagiographical literature.

Chapter Three – Eknāth Remembered in Late Hagiography (1762-1800)

In addition to the independent hagiographical texts written solely about Eknāth that we have observed in Chapter Two, memories of Eknāth also have been conveyed (arguably, with greater effectiveness) within compendia of stories about many different *sant*s. When referring to such compendia of saintly figures' hagiographical stories, scholars of India have tended to recruit with little explanation a vague term from confessional Christian studies – hagiology.[1] The unspoken distinction is that hagiography refers to faith-filled writings about a single saintly figure, while hagiology connotes (at least in the Indian cases) a collection of stories about many saintly figures. Although "hagiology" (literally, "the study of saints") has apparently sufficed as a translation of more descriptive Indic terms – *nāmāvaḷ/nāmāvali* (list or row of names), *santanāmāvali* (list of *sant*s' names), and *bhaktamāla* (garland of *bhakta*s), among others – I have proposed that we could represent these texts more precisely with the term "collective hagiography."[2] Such hagiographical compendia are "collective" both in the sense that they gather together or collect various independent stories, and in that they perform a constructive role in demarcating a group or collective as an entity itself. In the Marathi literature, it is

[1] "Hagiology" has been used by scholars of devotional traditions in various regions. On the saints in the Rādhāvallabhā tradition, see Rupert Snell, "Synoptic and Sectarian Bhakti in the Poetry of Dhurvdas," in *Devotional Literature in South Asia: Current Research* ed. R. S. McGregor. (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 247; W. L. Smith, *Patterns in North Indian Hagiography*, Stockholm Studies in Indian Languages and Clture (Stockholm: Department of Indology, University of Stockholm, 2000), 8. On the Tamil Śaiva Nāyanārs, see R. Champakalakshmi, "From Devotion and Dissent to Dominannce: the Bhakti of the Tamil Alvars and Nayanars," in *Religious Movements in South Asia 600-1800*, ed. David N. Lorenzen. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 74; Vidya Dehejia, *Slaves of the Lord* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988), 2.

[2] Jon Keune, "Making Myth and Making it Available: Collective Hagiography and its Uses," (2007). William Smith provides a very helpful overview of these and individual hagiographical texts, but he does not apparently feel the need to distinguish taxonomically between the individual and the collective. Cf. W.L. Smith, *Patterns in North Indian Hagiography*, Esp. 1-18.

possible to distinguish feasibly between two kinds of collective hagiography, which I will for the sake of convenience call "minimal" and "maximal."

Minimal Collective Hagiographies

The minimal works, which are commonly called in Marathi *nāmāvaḷi* (row or list of names)*, santamālā* (garland of *sant*s) or *santamālikā* (little garland of *sant*s), are simple and often quite rough poems that consist of a string of *sant*s' names and perhaps an epithet or a few descriptive words.[3] Figures from the *purāṇa*s and Sanskrit literature are often listed at the beginnings of such lists, followed by a list of Marathi (and occasional North Indian) *sant*s and figures, depending on the author's interests and sectarian allegiance. Some *santamālikā*s end with a *phalaśruti* (statement that lauds the salvific benefits) of reciting the names of the *sant*s. Taking into consideration the inclusion of many *santamālikā*s within large, well-worn notebooks (*bāḍa*s) that have obviously been used extensively by their *kīrtan*-performing owners, and since the names of the lists' authors (when provided at all) are rarely well known, *santamālikā*s probably functioned largely as practical mnemonic aids.

In the examples of *santamālikā*s that I found, Eknāth is included routinely among the other outstanding figures of Marathi (and sometimes North Indian) devotional literature and hagiography, and he is described briefly in ways that emphasize mythological and divine connections (e.g., Eknāth as the *avatār* of Vyāsa, and Śrīkhaṇḍyā carrying water at his home)

[3] The most famous exemplar of this form of writing is the Braj-bhāṣā *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhādās from around 1600. I have yet to encounter any scholarship (in any language) on these Marathi minimal collective hagiographies, so it would be premature to say anything about how early this genre appears in Marathi and what inter-regional influences and circulation may have taken place.

and his fortunate birth in the illustrious family of the great *bhakta* Bhānudās.[4] Eknāth's social interactions are not mentioned in any of these short works that I found.[5] One *santamālikā* that I came across bears Eknāth's *mudrikā* (his signature tag, "Ekā-Janārdana"). Interestingly, it concludes with the phrase, "*janārdana janī dekhiyelā*" (Janārdana appeared in/among the people), which is obviously quite similar to a phrase commonly repeated in the *PC* and occasionally in the *EC*.[6]

Maximal Collective Hagiographies

The earliest Marathi examples of maximal collective hagiography appear to have been written in the late 17th century by a poet named Uddhav-cidghana (sometimes mistakenly written "ciddhana").[7] Unfortunately, the composition that made him most famous, his *Bhaktisārāmṛt*,

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[4] Ekeśvar Avadhūt, "Santamālikā," in *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, ed. Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvḳar, vol. 7. (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925), 189; "Bāḍa", in Marathi Bāḍa Collection, MS no. 796 (Dhuḷe: Śrī Samartha Vāgdevatā Mandir). The *santamālikā* by Basavaliṅga in the second cited manuscript calls Eknāth an *avatār* of Vyāsa who was born in Pratiṣṭhān, and Śrīkhaṇḍyā carried water at his home. In verse 55 of an apparently popular *santamālikā,* the author Devadās mentions God taking the form of Uddhav (probably the Uddhav who came with Eknāth's wife and served him) and coming to Eknāth's home. I found three manuscripts of this text. Cf. Devadās, "Santamālikā" in Marathi Manuscript Collection, MS no. 1856 (Tānjāvūr: Sarasvati Mahal Library); Devdās, "Santamālikā" in Marathi Manuscript Collection, MS no. 1857 (Tānjāvūr: Sarasvati Mahal Library); Devadās, "Santamālikā " in Ibid., MS no. 191 (Puṇe: Centre for the Study of Marathi Culture).

[5] These lists of *sant*s are not devoid of caste awareness, however, as the name of untouchable *sant* Cokhāmeḷā appears regularly. It should be noted that there are more *santamālikā*s that mention Eknāth than the ones that I personally observed. The most influential biographer of Eknāth in the 20th century also mentions short works by Uddhav-cidghana, Raṅganāth, Śivasvāmī, Rāmāvallabhadās, Siddhacaitanya, Mukund, Jairāmsut and Uddhavsut. Unfortunately he gives no indication of where he found these texts or how Eknāth is described in them. I have not come across either these texts or even bibliographic references to them elsewhere. L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, 144.

[6] Eknāth (attributed), "Santamālikā" in Marathi Bāḍa Collection, MS no. 796 (Dhuḷe: Śrī Samarth Vāgdevatā Mandir), 37-38. If this *santamālikā* were indeed composed by Eknāth, it would technically predate Nābhādās.

[7] The signature name (*mudrikā*) "Uddhav-cidghana" represents a pairing of the author's own name with that of his guru, like that of Ekā-Janārdana.

has not been seen for nearly a century.[8] In addition to his collective hagiography, Uddhav-cidghana also wrote hagiographies of individual *sant*s such as Jñāndev and Gorā Kumbhār. There is an *Eknāth-caritra* by one "Uddhav" listed in the Bhārat Itihās Saṁśodhak Mandir's catalogue of Marathi manuscripts, but it could not be located in the archives, despite multiple extensive searches for it.[9] Scholars of Marathi literature also refer to two further early collective hagiographies – the *Santavijay* and *Bhaktavijay* of an otherwise unknown poet named Dāso Digambar of Junnar (not to be confused with the more famous and prolific Dāsopant alias Dāso Digambar of Ambā-jogāī, who lived around the same time as Eknāth).[10] Although manuscripts of these two texts were apparently extant in the early 20th century, they have not been seen since then.[11]

Whatever reputation Uddhav-cidghana's writings may have earned him, his name was lifted up most prominently by Mahīpati (1715-1790) in his voluminous collective hagiographies that drew (with overt gratitude) on the works of Nābhādās, Uddhav-cidghana and others. Mahīpati's works ultimately became the standard source of information about the Marathi *sant*s

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[8] Since Mahīpati in his *Bhaktavijay* cites Uddhav-cidghana as one of his sources for stories, it is quite possible that he was drawing on Uddhav-cidghana's *Bhaktisārāmṛt* for the stories about Eknāth that were retold in the *BhV*. G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 24.

[9] Although I requested several searches for this text in 2009 and 2010, the librarians could not locate the manuscript that is listed in their index. No other Uddhav's come to mind as possible authors of this text, so perhaps it was composed by Uddhav-cidghana. However, I have never come across a reference mentioning that Uddhav-cidghana wrote a complete *caritra* about Eknāth either.

[10] In both of these cases the word "Digambar" reflects the individuals' affiliation with the deity Dattātreya (who is regularly called "Dattā Digambar") and is not related to the Jain Digambar tradition. I believe that Dušan Deák's advice about *digambar* referring metaphorically to spiritual liberation (i.e., not clad in the three *guṇa*s) applies in these cases. D. Deak, "Maharashtra Saints and the Sufi Tradition: Eknath, Chand Bodhle and the Datta Sampradaya," 24.

[11] G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 133. Khānolkar notes that V. L. Bhāve's encyclopedic overview of Marathi literature cited passages in Dāso Digambar's two texts that show that Bhāve must have read them somehow. Neither Khānolkar or S. G. Tuḷpuḷe were able to find these texts in any form, however. Cf. V.L. Bhāve, *Mahārāṣṭra Sārasvat* 142, 224, 478. A biography of Eknāth published in 1910 also cites the *Bhaktisārāmṛt* specifically as a source of some unique stories about Nāmdev and Bhānudās, which indicates that the author was familiar with the text. L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, 17.

for both devotees and scholars.[12] Having introduced Mahīpati in print elsewhere, I will only summarize some relevant points about him and his writings here.[13] Mahīpati hailed from a brahman family of practicing Vārkarīs in the town of Tāhārābād, 25 miles north of Ahmadnagar, and he took on duties as the village accountant (*kulkarṇi*) at a young age when his father died.[14] A conflict with the local Muslim administrator (*jāgīrdār*) and a dream in which he met the *sant* Tukārām prompted him to resign his post as *kulkarṇi* and devote himself to worshipping and writing about the *sant*s. It is highly likely that he became a professional *kīrtankār,* and in his later life he wrote four very large collective hagiographies and numerous shorter religious works. Only two of Mahīpati's collective hagiographies contain stories about Eknāth, but the length of these stories is so great that they make Eknāth the second-most-written-about *sant* in all of Mahīpati's writings.[15] Only Tukārām, whom Mahīpati regarded as his spiritual guru, is the subject of more verses.

Mahīpati's first and most widely circulated text, the *Bhaktavijay* (*BhV*)*,* was completed in 1762. It is comprised of stories about around fifty *sant*s (depending on how one counts minor appearances), divided into 57 chapters containing some 10,000 *ovī*s. Manuscripts of the *BhV* abound and in light of the length of this text, it is not feasible to attempt a comparison of them

[12] One sees Mahīpati's name also written Mahīpatī and Mahipatī. Among devotees he is known as Mahīpatibūvā (*būvā* being a common Marathi appellation to a *kīrtankār*'s or guru's name), and in reference to his hometown he is also call Mahīpati Tāhārābādkar. His descendants go by the surname Kāmbḷe.

[13] Jon Keune, "Gathering the Bhaktas in Marāṭhī," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* (2007): 169-187.

[14] Novetzke misidentifies Mahīpati's hometown as a different Tāhārābād near Nāsik. C.L. Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory*, 53. Mahīpati's Tāhārābād (a very small village in the countryside) is located to the west of the town Rāhūrī and northwest of Ahmadnagar. A sizable temple was recently constructed to enclose Mahīpati's *samādhi* on the north side of the village, and a family of Mahīpati's descendants (with the surname Kāmbḷe) oversees their ancestral Viṭṭhal temple in the village.

[15] Outlines of the relevant chapters on Eknāth in Mahīpati's works can be found in Appendix D.

here.[16] Some comparison was carried out by Justin Abbott and Narhari Godbole when they translated this book into English as part of the Poet-Saints of Maharashtra Series.[17] In the *BhV*'s two chapters (392 verses) on Eknāth, Mahīpati did not draw on any single known precedent for his stories (unlike stories about Eknāth in his *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*, which follows Keśavsvāmī's *EC* very closely).[18] Some of the *BhV*'s stories are similar to the *PC* but not the *EC,* and other stories are found in the *EC* but not the *PC.* The *BhV* differs completely from other stories on a couple of details (e.g., in the *BhV*, Eknāth's parents do not die while he is a boy) and the *BhV* includes two unprecedented stories – Eknāth meets Datta a second time in 45:105-116, and Eknāth deals with a mean neighbor in 45:157-170. Mahīpati provides more commentary and general praise of Eknāth, bhakti, and religious themes than any other hagiographer. For our concerns about Eknāth's social relations, three stories merit comment. As is clear in the first chapter of the *BhV* with its mythological setting in Viṣṇu's court, Mahīpati attempts to pull as many stories as possible into an explicit Vaiṣṇava theological framework. In this sense, the stories about Eknāth already fit quite well, as Eknāth was already regarded as one of the foundational Vārkarī *sant*s by Mahīpati's time.

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[16] The Bhārat Itihās Saṁśodhak Maṇḍal possesses eight manuscripts (of which only one is complete), the Rājvāḍe Saṁśodhan Maṇḍal has one manuscript, and the Śrī Samarth Vāgdevatā Mandir in Dhuḷe has six manuscripts. Two printed versions in my possession differ from each other only by a few missing/additional *anusvar*s. Abbott's translation is also quite faithful to these texts. Cf. Mahīpati, *Śrī Bhaktavijay*, ed. Jñāneśvar Tāndaḷe (Puṇe: Amol Prakāśan, 2007); Mahīpati, *Srī Bhaktavijay*, ed. Śaṁ. Rā. Devaḷe (Puṇe: Sarasvatī Grantha Bhāṇḍār, 2002). I use the Tāndaḷe edition, cross-referenced with Abbott's translation, as my text for quotation in this dissertation.

[17] J.E. Abbott et al., *Stories of Indian Saints: A Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya*. Abbott mentions that in addition to four printed versions of the *BhV*, he was also able to consult a manuscript possessed by a 6th generation descendant of Mahīpati, which yielded 103 additional verses (most of which are additional general praise by Mahīpati, and none of which pertain to Eknāth). Ibid., vol.1, pg. 465. Parts of the *BhV* (but strangely not those about Eknāth) were also rendered loosely in an English book. Cf. C. A. Kincaid, *Tales of the Saints of Pandharpur* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1919).

[18] Mahīpati states his indebtedness to Uddhav-cidghana in 1:39, but Uddhav's *Bhaktisārāmṛt* is not available to consult. It is possible is that Mahīpati was following Uddhav for his stories about Eknāth in the *BhV*. Of course, this only punts the question of origins further back in history: from where did Uddhav get these stories?

In *BhV* 45:27-34, Mahīpati lists a number of things that demonstrate Eknāth's intense devotion and service to his guru Janārdana. Along with mundane acts such as massaging Janārdana's feet and preparing *pān* for him, Mahīpati mentions that Eknāth drank the contents of Janārdana's spittoon and cleaned Janārdana's toilet area by hand, as we read in Kṛṣṇadās' *PC* (and which Keśavsvāmī mentioned only obliquely in passing). As short as these descriptions and references are, they are nonetheless more substantial in the *BhV* than in Keśavsvāmī's *EC* or Mahīpati's later *BhL*. At the same time, Mahīpati in the *BhV* mentions the incidents without comment or drawing attention; they are simply demonstrations of Eknāth's devotion here. The shocking element of bodily impurity is not highlighted, as it was in the *PC*.

In *BhV* 45:74-130 Mahīpati tells an extended story about Janārdana taking Eknāth to meet the god Dattātreya. This story has some things in common with *EC* 3:10-56, but the *BhV* is much longer, contains more and different details (e.g., Eknāth meets Datta twice), and, most importantly and astonishingly, in this story Eknāth utterly fails to overcome his revulsion at the idea of dining with a Muslim. Whereas in the *EC* Datta's appearance as a *fakīr* or *malaṅg* is depicted as surprising but not horrifying, in the *BhV* Mahīpati emphasizes the imposingness of Datta's form. Before Datta arrives, Janārdana warns Eknāth not to be afraid and to be ready for the fact that although Datta often and easily changes his form, he tends to appear with a body that "ignorant people" would "revile" (*ninditī*, 45:76). Datta then leads Eknāth into the forest (unlike in the *EC*, where they go to a mountaintop) and Datta appears as a Muslim (*avindha*) seated on a horse.[19] Eknāth is terrified and worries that he is seeing an actual Muslim (*yavana*) with a large forehead, bloodshot eyes and weapons in his hands. Furthermore, this figure speaks *yavanī* language with Janārdana. In the *EC* Datta arrived in the form of a strange but harmless

[19] Mahīpati often uses the word *avindha* (unpierced) to connote Muslim men by referring to their unpierced ears.

mendicant; in the *BhV* Datta appears as a threatening Muslim military officer. Datta and Janārdana sit down for a meal, and an opulent feast with golden, jewel-encrusted plates suddenly appears. Datta tells Janārdana to invite Eknāth to join them, but Eknāth is apprehensive (*vikalpa*) about the situation and says, "What kind of food from a *yavana* should be eaten?" (or in other words, "How could I eat food from a *yavana*?"), and Eknāth then runs "far" away. (45:89) After Datta disappears, Janārdana discusses the event with Eknāth and explains that there was no reason for apprehension.[20] Janārdana comforts him and tells him not to fear next time. Eknāth apologizes that his fear revealed his inadequate trust in Janārdana.

On another day they both go out to the jungle again, and Datta again meets them in Muslim form. This time, however, Datta appears as a *malaṅg,* accompanied by a wife and a dog. Datta and Janārdana embrace and again speak *yavanī* language as they prepare to eat. This time the *BhV* story sounds more like its *EC* counterpart; Datta milks the dog and mixes some food from his begging bag into it. When they sit to eat, Datta again tells Janārdana to invite Eknāth to eat. This time too, Eknāth has misgivings and says, "I see a *fakīr*. How can I do what is wrong/improper (*anucit*)?" (45:112) Janārdana tries to persuade him, but Eknāth resists and asks his guru for *prasād* even though he will not join them. Janārdana lovingly gives him a handful of leftovers (*uccişţa*), which Eknāth then puts in his pocket before going somewhere alone. Unfazed by Eknāth's lack of hospitality and friendliness, Datta tells Janārdana that Eknāth will become a profound Marathi writer, and Datta disappears. Janārdana seeks out Eknāth again and asks him what he had done with the *prasād*. Eknāth confesses, "I threw it away," which prompts Janārdana to take some of the *pān* that he is chewing and place it in Eknāth's mouth.

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[20] Here I think Abbott's usually trustworthy translation misses the mark, as he writes "You met Him here without effort, and wrong thoughts came into your heart." In the Marathi, Janārdana is not so much reprimanding but simply explaining to Eknāth, "He was ready to meet you, but apprehension/doubt really entered your heart." (*to tuja bheţţāṁ anāyāseṁ | parī vikalpa cittās ālā kīṁ*) (45:92)

These detailed depictions of Datta in two different Muslim forms in the *BhV* are intriguing and practically cry out for further examination (e.g., the pairing of martial and religious mendicant forms, their relation to what is known of such figures historically, etc.), but in keeping with the scope of this dissertation, it is Eknāth's responses that must be our primary focus here. Unlike every other story about Eknāth that has been observed so far, in this case Eknāth balks at eating with what he thinks is a Muslim. Eknāth actually fails. The notion of sameness or equality (*sama*), whether as a vision of sameness (*samadṛṣṭi*) as in the *PC* or as an equanimous consciousness (*samabuddhi*) as in the *EC*, is absent here. Mahīpati is not explicit about exactly why Eknāth perceives a problem with this case of commensality. The words that Eknāth uses in his questions are not very revealing. In the first instance Eknāth simply questions the possibility of eating food from a Muslim (*kaiseṁ… bhakṣāveṁ*), leaving the reason for not eating unsaid, perhaps since Mahīpati could assume that this would be obvious to his audience. In the second instance Eknāth is only slightly clearer, calling the situation "wrong" or "improper" (*anucit*). So when Abbott translates *anucit* as "unlawful," he is taking some hermeneutic liberty. Eknāth's hesitation is described only in terms of custom and proper behavior, whatever the popular perceptions of Hindu law regarding those customs may have been in Eknāth's or Mahīpati's time.[21] Since his own guru is freely interacting and eating with someone who appears to be a Muslim, the weight of the dilemma is increased. Yet Eknāth rejects this transaction of food three times – twice as he runs away, and once when he throws

[21] A thorough discussion of what Hindu attitudes toward Muslims may have been in 16th-century Maharashtra when Eknāth lived and in Mahīpati's 18th century is beyond the scope of this dissertation, especially since so little thorough scholarship has been done on this topic. We should at least note one 16th-century condemnation of brahmans who work for Muslim rulers. The poet Mahāliṅgadās in his *Siṁhāsanabattiśī* (*Thirty-Two [statements] about the Throne*) writes, "And they are *mlecchas*, who day and night serve the *yavanas* who entrapped them in lies… Those who forget the six permissible occupations of a brahman (*ṣaṭkarma*) and proudly do clerkship (*kārkoni*) have little authority to say the Gāyatrī mantra." Mahālingadās' censure would, of course, apply to Janārdana and Eknāth. Cited in Brahmānand Deśpāṇḍe, "Śrīeknāthkālīn Samājsthitī," in *Sant Eknāth: Ek Samgra Abhyās*, ed. Aśok Kāmat. (Puṇe: Deśastha Ṛgvedī Brāhmaṇ Śikṣaṇottejak Saṁsthā, 2002), 65.

away the *prasād*. Eknāth is clearly not a model of behavior or a hero in this story. Janārdana never appears upset by these failures, even as they go directly against his own advice to Eknāth. Therefore it seems to me that for Mahīpati, issues of purity, social interaction and Eknāth's behavior are only secondary to this narrative; the main message of this story is Janārdana's persistent good-will and compassion in teaching Eknāth an unintuitive spiritual lesson.

The final vignette in the *BhV* that merits discussion combines elements of stories from the *PC* and *EC*. Mahīpati sets the stage for this story by first narrating the arrival and devoted labors of Śrīkhaṇḍyā (Kṛṣṇa in disguise). (46:35-44) Śrīkhaṇḍyā is therefore present throughout the story that follows. As in the *PC* and the *EC,* the *BhV* contains a story of Eknāth's *śrāddha* ceremony for his ancestors, at which the local brahmans are outraged to discover that were not served first but are then humbled to see Eknāth's own ancestors miraculously arrive. (*BhV* 46:54-116) There are some notably different twists in this version of the narrative, however. As Eknāth's wife and workers are preparing the feast, an *anāmik* man and his wife who happen to be sweeping the street outside smell the food.[22] They both vocally despair at never having the chance to taste such fine cuisine. Eknāth happens to hear their lament and immediately tells his wife to prepare to serve the food. Eknāth's wife (who almost never appears in any of these stories as an active character) recommends that he invite the whole community of untouchables (*atiśūdra*). She explains practically that if they were to serve only the couple, then the two would go home and tell everyone else, who would in turn come to Eknāth's home to ask for food later anyway. Moreover she adds, "Janārdana is in all beings (*janārdana āhe sarvāṁ bhūtīṁ*), so

[22] In the two Marathi printed editions that I observe, the editors gloss some key words in different ways. When the words *anāmik* and *antyaj* appear, Devaḷe provides the word "Mahār" in footnotes. Tāndaḷe obviously wants to avoid this straightforward caste identification and therefore provides *anoḷakhī* (un-acquainted, unknown) and *pati* (husband) respectively. *Pati* makes sense in the narrative only because the verse has the woman speaking to the *antyaj*, who is clearly her husband. (46:49-50) Abbott translates *anāmik* as "unnameable" but provides "out-caste" in parentheses.

we should make the untouchables (*anāmik*) content."[23] (46:58) So Eknāth goes out to issue the public invitation with extreme compassion (*ati kaḷvaḷe*). Along with the food, Eknāth offers (*arpaṇ*) to the untouchables the flowers and colored rice with which he was going to felicitate the brahmans. Eknāth sets plates near the hands of the untouchables (*śūdrāṁ hātīṁ*) and serves them.[24] Mahīpati narrates, "Having understood with certainty that Janārdana is in the people (*janī*), Eknāth abandoned any qualms, since the Enjoyer [of the food] is Kṛṣṇanāth." (46:62) Thus served by Eknāth himself, the untouchables eat their fill and say, "Blessed Eknāth, your deed has satisfied us. We untouchable, low-jātī people (*antyaj yātihīn*) have never seen such food. You will be remembered as the compassionate (*dayāvant*) Vaiṣṇava in birth after birth." (46:64-65) Eknāth gives them *pān,* and they depart, taking all the leftovers with them.

Meanwhile the brahmans who were taking their ritual baths before the meal hear the news and are outraged. They go to Eknāth's house and deliver a very sharp and articulate condemnation, "Listen, you *karmabhraṣṭa* (one whose observance of proper ritual behavior is lax). You pulled an unimaginable trick: without feeding the brahmans you first worshipped (*pūjileṁ*) the corrupt untouchables (*duṣṭā antyajāṁ*). Today is the death memorial for your ancestors. What, were they [your ancestors] *anāmik*s so that you worshipped the many *ati-śūdra*s that are denounced in the Vedas and *śāstra*s?[25] Because of your act, there will now be a mixing of castes (*varṇasaṁkar*). Your very body registers this defiled behavior (*bhraṣṭācār*); brahman behavior has vanished." (46:73-76) They resist Eknāth's attempts to placate them and

[23] Here the Marathi is utterly clear - *janārdana āhe sarvāṁ bhūtīṁ* - Janārdana is in all beings.

[24] In this story Mahīpati refers to the same untouchable guests with the terms *atiśūdra* and *śūdra*.

[25] *Atiśūdra* (lit. "extreme *śūdra*") is fairly common Marathi word for "untouchable."

eventually eject him from the caste and depart (*ghāloni gele vāḷīt*).[26] (46:84) As momentous as being out-casted would seem to be, Mahīpati offers no comment about it. Although the brahmans threaten to put Eknāth out of caste in other stories, this is the only instance in the hagiographical literature where it actually is said to occur. Eknāth is quite disturbed by this, but his position is vindicated when his ancestors themselves appear and eat. The brahmans witness this and are impressed but cautious, forced to acknowledge that Eknāth possesses great powers but not wanting to lose face.

Unlike other stories about the oppressive brahmans in the *PC* and *EC*, in this case the brahmans do not repent. Instead, they plan to continue laying blame on Eknāth. "We should all go to Eknāth tomorrow and tell him properly that he should undergo purification (*prayāścitta*) and remain in his own caste (*svayātīṁt*). Otherwise if we were to simply regard him as pure (*pavitra*), then our own pride/egoism (*ahaṁtā*) would be in vain.[27] So let us punish Eknāth and bring him to proper brahman behavior (*satkarmīṁ*)." (46:100-101)

When the brahmans summon and confront Eknāth later, he strongly resists their demand for purification and even suggests that such action would be improper. "I will certainly not undergo purification. As Śrīkṛṣṇa is my mother and father (*māybāp*), how can I do what is wrong (*viparīt*)?"[28] (46:105) Yet despite Eknāth's firm rejection, two verses later the purification is suddenly, inexplicably completed. The brahmans insist that it is necessary for his body to be cleaned, they bring Eknāth to the river, apply ash and cowdung, say some mantras

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[26] Tulpule and Feldhaus' *Old Marathi Dictionary* shows that *vāḷīt ghālṇe* (to put one into an ejected state) was not a very rare phrase, since it occurs in several early Marathi texts.

[27] Mahīpati seems to feel no discomfort that he is putting very unlikely words in their mouths; no one would openly say that they want to preserve their ego (*ahaṁtā*).

[28] This appears to be simply a dramatic oath (with *māybāp* metaphorically meaning something like "lord" or "master"), but it also may indicate the importance of Kṛṣṇa devotion to Eknāth.

from the Vedas. (46:107) Mahīpati mentions no further protest from Eknāth, who appears to have somehow, suddenly acquiesced to the brahmans' demands.

Immediately after this occurs, a brahman traveler with leprosy arrives with a message that Śiva had told him in a dream to meet Eknāth. As we saw in the *EC,* Eknāth's feeding of the untouchables was such a great deed that the merit (*puṇya*) earned from it could heal the leprous brahman. When this indeed occurs and the brahmans see it, they finally change their opinions about Eknāth. They now call him an *avatār* of Viṣṇu, who, since he is not a normal man, actually requires no ritual purification. Mahīpati concludes the vignette by commenting that whether people despise or praise Eknāth, he is always content and afflicted with neither excessive sorrow nor pleasure. (46:128) As we saw in the *EC*, there is a tension in the narrative over how to reconcile Eknāth's ritually impure, inclusive behavior toward untouchables with the ritual purity that is expected of a brahman. The same sequence occurs: Eknāth interacts with untouchables, he is ritually purified (although not by bathing clothed, as in the *EC*), and the extra merit that he accrued goes to the benefit of an afflicted brahman. The *BhV* provides a rather uninspired rationalization for this karmic tangle – purity rules do not apply to Eknāth, since he is not a normal man. Mahīpati maintains the tension between inclusive devotion and ritual purity in this story but recognizes that there is something deeply unsatisfying about it and tries to provide an explanatory release.

That Mahīpati presents stories in which Eknāth fails (when meeting Datta in Muslim form) is truly remarkable, especially since Mahīpati calls him an *avatār* in other places in the *BhV*. Janārdana is thoroughly patient and understanding of the boy (and Eknāth does indeed come across in these stories seeming very immature), so this story as Mahīpati tells it in the *BhV* may have more to do with attitudes toward Muslims or with Janārdana's reputation than with Eknāth's devotion or notions of purity. In contrast, Mahīpati's story about the *śrāddha* meal is

very much in keeping with established trends of how Eknāth is portrayed as compassionate and inclusive toward untouchables. Mahīpati's narratives are richer than Keśavsvāmī's, and Mahīpati is more willing to fill in details and enhance the narrative to resolve open questions and cognitive dissonance. Yet one major dissonance remains as it was in earlier texts – Eknāth initially resists the brahmans' demand for purification, but Eknāth ends up somehow being purified. This narrative gap it is repeated in Mahīpati's other text about Eknāth, the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*.

Mahīpati's *BhL* contains a very large section (2,358 *ovī*s) on Eknāth, which is only roughly three hundred verses shorter than the text that it so closely follows but never acknowledges – Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra*. Unlike with Mahīpati's first collective hagiographical effort (the *BhV*), his third collective hagiography seems to have circulated much less in manuscript form. In contrast to the dozens of *BhV* manuscripts that I encountered in various Marathi archives, I came across a record of only one partial manuscript of the *BhL*.[29] It is also rarely held in libraries and has not been frequently printed in Marathi. After much searching, I obtained a rare edition that was published in 1988. The editor of this edition states that his main reason for publishing it was that it had been out of print for fifty years by that time.[30]

The influence of the *BhL*'s stories about Eknāth is nonetheless extremely important for modern scholarship, and I honestly wonder how this was materially possible with so few manuscripts. All of the early Marathi biographical writings about Eknāth (1880 through 1940) drew on the *BhL* as their main source of information. Justin Abbott's English translation of the

[29] Cf. Mahīpati, "Bhaktalīlāmṛt" in, MS no. 29/2037 (Pune: Bhārat Itihās Saṁśodhak Maṇḍaḷ). I have not yet been able to see this manuscript. When I requested it in 2010, it could not be found in the archive.

[30] Mahīpati, *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*, ed. Vi. Ke. Phaḍke (Puṇe: Yaśvant Prakāśan, 1988), 7.

BhL rendered Mahīpati's section on Eknāth into English under the title *The Life of Eknāth*.[31] Originally published in 1927, this book has remained in high demand and has been subsequently reprinted several times (although some publishers unwittingly rendered Justin E. Abbott as Justine Abbott in their reprints). As is the case with Abbott's other translations of poetry in the Poet-Saints of Maharashtra Series (of whose thirteen volumes Abbott and his assistant Narhar R. Godbole translated all but one), his rendition of the *BhL* tends to follow the Marathi phrasing closely and sometimes awkwardly rather than taking more liberties with the text to produce smoother English.[32]

The *BhL* consists of 51 chapters containing nearly 10,800 *ovī*s. Mahīpati completed the *BhL* in 1774 – his third collective hagiography after the *BhV* (1762) and the *Santalīlāmṛt* (1767). Mahīpati does not apologize for writing so extensively or for scattering stories about a single *sant* (such as Eknāth) across multiple texts. Rather, he cites several Sanskrit precedents for writing in this way: the eighteen *mahāpurāṇa*s required supplementation by eighteen minor ones, there are four Vedas instead of only one, and the *Mahābhārata* consists of eighteen parts. Mahīpati claims that that Kṛṣṇa has commanded him to write similarly so that people will be able to take in the stories piece by piece instead of being overwhelmed by them all at once. (*BhL* 1:85-90) As mentioned earlier, Mahīpati includes almost the entire *EC* in this text, although he never mentions it explicitly.[33] Not surprisingly, therefore, the stories about Eknāth in the *BhL* are very similar to those in the *EC*. Mahīpati embellishes some aspects of the narration in the

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[31] J.E. Abbott et al., *The Life of Eknāth*.

[32] Abbott and Godbole translated Mahīpati's entire *BhL* but divided the stories among three separate volumes of the series. Mahīpati's twelve chapters on Eknāth and sixteen chapters on Tukārām were printed as separate books on each *sant*. The remainder of the *BhL* was printed under a different title: Justin E. Abbott et al., *Nectar from Indian Saints*, Poet-Saints of Mahārāshtra (Poona: Aryabhushan Press, 1935).

[33] Abbott also notes that a few parts of the *BhL* stories about Eknāth are pulled almost verbatim from Mahīpati's *BhV*. J.E. Abbott, "Notes on the Life of Eknāth," 261.

BhL beyond what was written in the *EC.* For example, the description of Eknāth's childhood is nearly 40 verses longer in the *BhL,* and Eknāth's cleaning of Janārdana's toilet area is described in slightly more detail. Some stories from the *EC* are abridged or dropped in the *BhL.* There is no description of Eknāth singing an extraordinary *kīrtan* in Pandharpur after he tells the story of Bhānudās, and Eknāth's trip to Alaṅkapūr (modern Āḷandī) to visit Jñāndev's *samādhi* is much briefer and leaves out sub-plots. Some details are rearranged, such as the sequence of events around Janārdana's death and Eknāth's celebration of his death memorial, and the *BhL*'s narration of how Eknāth composed a Marathi version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Three further revisions by Mahīpati require closer attention for our concerns: the stories of Eknāth caring for the escaped untouchable thief, Eknāth being spat upon, and Eknāth eating in an untouchable couple's home.

In light of how much trouble Eknāth's brahman neighbors caused whenever Eknāth's actions went against custom and religious law in stories in the *EC*, it is stunning that they apparently remained silent after Eknāth nurses an untouchable thief back to health. In Mahīpati's rendition of the story, Eknāth's good deed does indeed invoke the brahmans' ire. Mahīpati enhances this story as well, adding that thief calls himself a "Mahār of the untouchable *jāti*" who became a thief in order to find food to eat.[34] (21:193) On the day after Eknāth welcomes the thief into his home, he dutifully reports to the town authorities (*grāmādhikārī*) that one of their prisoners had escaped. The authorities say that since Eknāth has taken him in to his home, he may remain there without punishment. (21:199-200) Eknāth continues to feed the Mahār man, and his health returns. In the *BhL*, Mahīpati adds a transitional scene that was anticipated but conspicuously absent in the original rendition of the story in the *EC.* A group of brahmans discusses the matter: "What Eknāth has done is improper (*anucit*). He brought an

[34] This is notably the first occurrence of the term Mahār in any of the hagiographical writings about Eknāth.

untouchable (*anāmik*) thief into his home for many days. By this clean and unclean are mixed (*bhraṣṭākār hot*), and defilement has certainly been stirred up. There is reason for benevolence, but are there no other *jāti*s?" (23:7-9) After a few more comments by the brahmans about how thieves cannot be reformed, this inserted transitional scene ends and the narration once again follows the *EC* rendition – Eknāth's hospitality is vindicated by transferring the merit from it and saving a brahman *rākṣasa*.[35]

In the *EC* we observed a story about Eknāth being accidently spat upon by an unrepentant *cāṇḍāḷ*. In the *BhL* the narrative is largely the same, except that the arrogant, careless *cāṇḍāḷ* is replaced by a haughty Muslim (*yavana… unmatta*). (22:109) Mahīpati embellishes the story slightly, describing Eknāth's train of thought in detail as he tries to figure out how to get the unrepentant spitter to repent and avoid accruing demerit for this largely accidental event (since apparently the Muslim is also subject to the laws of karma). In the *EC*'s version of the story Eknāth simply returns to the spitter after his bath and apologizes to him, thereby shaming the spitter into repentance. Mahīpati's rendition in the *BhL* is slightly different: Eknāth goes home, prepares food, offers some to his household deity and then brings some of the rest (now *prasād*) to where the Muslim man lived. (22:116-117) When Eknāth apologizes to the Muslim and offers him the food, the Muslim man feels contrite and offers his apology in return. It is not totally clear why Mahīpati changes the identity of the spitter to a Muslim in the *BhL*, although the pattern of the spitter's behavior is characteristic of Muslim characters in Mahīpati's writings about other *sant*s and *bhakta*s. Mahīpati consistently depicts them as initially threatening and rude, but after some sort of transformative event or experience they become humble and good-

[35] Abbott consistently translates *rākṣasa* as "ghost."

hearted – perhaps indicative of the general perception of Islam in late 18th century Maharashtra, once the Maratha Empire had become firmly established.[36]

The most significant inter-caste story that Mahīpati retells about Eknāth in the *BhL* (or anywhere else in his writings) is Eknāth eating at the untouchable couple's home. Mahīpati's rendering of the story follows the plot of its predecessor in the *EC*, but Mahīpati supplements and smoothes out the narrative in some important ways so as to frame the story more explicitly in terms of the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* sensibility that Mahīpati is trying to instill throughout all of his collective hagiographies. Some of his innovations would have surprisingly influential effects on later renditions of the story.

Going beyond the *EC* version of the story, Mahīpati introduces the man not simply as a wise untouchable but as a former Vaiṣṇava hero and *yogabhraṣṭa* – someone whose *yoga* or religious practice was interrupted, thus resulting in a rebirth that reflects the influence of both good and bad *karma*.[37] Because of some undefined "fault" (*doṣāstava*) this man was born as a low-caste Mahār (*mahār hīnayātī*) but he is clearly virtuous. (19:138) In Keśavsvāmī's *EC* this man suddenly appears and starts talking with Eknāth. In the *BhL*, Mahīpati provides some background, describing how he and his wife were very devoted *bhakta*s who regularly attended Eknāth's nightly *kīrtan*s. Mahīpati also gives the man a name – Rāṇyā Mahār. One evening at a *kīrtan* Rāṇyā works up the courage to ask publicly, "At the time when Śrī Hari, who pervades all

[36] H.v. Skyhawk, "Vaiṣṇava Perceptions of Muslims in 18th Century Maharashtra," 203-215. Jim Laine points out a more pejorative, counter-example of how Mahīpati portrays Muslims in a fourth collective hagiography that his attributed to him, the *Santavijay*. James W. Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 59-60. It should be kept in mind, however, that there are well-grounded questions about whether the *Santavijay* actually was written by Mahīpati or merely attributed to him. R.C. Ḍhere, *Santāñcyā Caritrakathā: Prācīn Marāṭhītīl Santcaritrapar Vāṅmayācem Darśan*, 77.

[37] The *yogabhraṣṭa* a relatively common trope used in Marathi religious literature to account for why bad things have happened to an apparently good person or why people of low or no caste are endowed with great skills and intelligence. A Sanskrit precedent in which the term functions with its literal meaning is the *Bhagavad-gītā* 6:41-42.

things, took his cosmic form (*viśvarūp*), in what place was I, a low-caste person?" Eknāth responds that Rāṇyā was together with Kṛṣṇa. Hearing this, Rāṇyā is satisfied, and all thoughts of difference and dualism disappear (*bhedābhed nirasale samasta kalpanādvait māvaḷale,* 19:148). Mahīpati further emphasizes, "to his mind, the difference among castes and *jāti*s was completely forgotten" (*varṇayāti bhed niḥśeṣ tyācyā cittās nāṭhave,* 19:149).[38] Rāṇyā begins to perceive Eknāth as an *avatār* of Viṣṇu and Pāṇḍuraṅg (Viṭṭhal). This incident so deeply impresses Rāṇyā that he and his wife even move their residence in order to be closer to the path where Eknāth walked for his daily bath in the river. This whole scene is a major embellishment that was not present in the *EC*'s rendition of the story.

Rāṇyā later invites Eknāth to be their guest for a meal, and Eknāth agrees to come. Mahīpati describes how Rāṇyā and his wife, although monetarily poor (*durbaḷ saṁsār*), prepare for the visit by collecting food and undertaking practices that mark them as increasingly good Vaiṣṇava *bhakta*s: they put a tulsi altar (*vṛndāvan*) by their door, wash all their clothes and vessels, take baths routinely (*nitya nemeṁ*), engage constantly in remembering God's name (*nāmasmaraṇ*), observe fasting days, and listen to Eknāth's *kīrtan*s. (19:158-161) In contrast to the *EC,* which says very little about this untouchable couple, Mahīpati describes their piety in great detail. Finally Rāṇyā's wife decides that they are ready to host Eknāth, so Rāṇyā meets Eknāth one day while he is walking to his bath and invites him. What has happened up to this point in the story is not in the *EC* at all, and it will be clear that although the *BhL* follows the *EC* story from this point onwards, Mahīpati alters the story significantly.

[38] The verb *āthavṇe* (to remember) and its negation *nāṭhavṇe* are commonly used in not only in the sense of mnemonic recall of something learned in the past but also in the general sense of being conscious and aware of something. When figures in these hagiographical stories are in desperate situations, they often "remember" (call to mind) Hari or another deity, and this consciousness in itself is described as having salvific results.

Eknāth accepts Rāṇyā's invitation, saying, "You are a loving Vaiṣṇava *bhakta*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāth has certainly witnessed your sincerity and has been pleased. Brahmans who are proficient in the Vedas and *śāstra*s may be turned away from devotion to Śrī Hari. They may be completely adorned with the twelve virtues (*guṇa*s), but an untouchable (*antyaj*) may indeed be superior to them. Someone may be of low caste but God may have great respect for him." (19.169-170) Eknāth then crucially cites a verse from the "great *Bhāgavata*" (*Bhāgavata-purāṇa* 7.9.10).[39] "A dog-cooker (*śvapac,* untouchable) who has offered his mind, speech, efforts, wealth, and life to God is regarded as superior to a brahman who has the twelve qualities but is turned away from the lotus-feet of Viṣṇu. He [the untouchable] purifies his family, unlike the one [brahman] who has great arrogance."[40]

Nearby, some brahmans happen to overhear Eknāth's conversation. Whereas in the *EC* the brahmans condemn Eknāth for discussing *jñāna* with the untouchable, in the *BhL* they are enraged by Eknāth quoting this Sanskrit verse to Rāṇyā. One of them claims (wrongly) that this verse was actually not from the *BhP* but from the Vedas (*śruti*) itself, which untouchables have no right (*adhikār*) to hear.[41] The brahmans demand that Eknāth undergo purification. Eknāth responds that Rāṇyā Mahār is a good and spiritually accomplished Vaiṣṇava *bhakta* whom they should not call an untouchable (*antyaj*). (19:178) Eknāth says, "Not one mark of an untouchable (*anāmik*) appears on his body. All that the *Bhāgavat dharma* has said he indeed possesses. I am

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[39] Although the Sanskrit verse is given in the Marathi edition that I have (edited by Devaḷe), its precise location is not stated. Abbott does identify the precise verse in the *BhP*.

[40] *Viprād dviṣaḍ-guṇa-yutāt aravinda-nābha-pāda-aravinda-vimukhāt śva-pacam variṣṭham manye tad-arpita-manaḥ-vacana-iha-hita-artha-prāṇam. Punāti saḥ kulam na tu bhūrimānaḥ.* This is a not a surprising Sanskrit verse to see Mahīpati drawing into his rendition of this story. Eknāth himself refers to this verse in his *magnum opus*, which is a commentary on the 11th skandha of the Bhāgavāta Purāṇa. Eknāth and Jñāneśvar Tāndaḷe, *Sārtha Śrīeknāthī Bhāgavat* (Puṇe: Sarasvatī Pablikeśans, 1999), 14:292.

[41] Mahīpati does not point out the brahman's misidentification of the text. It is not clear if Mahīpati recognizes the error or if the term "Vedas" is being used in a very loose way to connote any text with scriptural authority.

certain that he is authorized to the knowledge of this doctrine. Through his feeling of devotion (*bhaktibhāveṁ*) Śrī Hari was made obedient and gave him an unmediated vision of his Parabrahmā form. Seeing his great longing, I spoke something that was relevant here (*kiṁcit anvaya boliloṁ*).[42] Please excuse this offense (*aparādh*), powerful ones." (19.178-181) In the *EC* rendition of the story Eknāth only asked the brahmans how they were certain that Eknāth's interlocutor was an untouchable; here Mahīpati has Eknāth articulate a more thorough theological response, even quoting a Sanskrit verse to support himself.

The brahmans do not listen to Eknāth but press on with the need for purification, which Eknāth undergoes immediately and without resistance. Unlike in the *EC,* where Eknāth bathed in his clothes and had the five substances from the cow smeared on him, in the *BhL* there is no reference to his clothes, and Mahīpati mentions that only ash and cow dung are smeared on his body. Also unique to the *BhL,* the untouchable man witnesses what has happened, feels terrible and goes home to inform his wife. (19:189) As in the *EC* Rāṇyā's wife despairs (but for a different reason in the *BhL*) at how caste differences are bound to prevent Eknāth from coming to them. Rāṇyā comforts her, saying, "Eknāth is an ocean of grace; he will not disregard the poor (*dīn*)." (19:191) Rāṇyā meets Eknāth again, invites him to come later that day, and Eknāth accepts. The brahmans are highly suspicious and say to one another, "He has resolved to commit a defiling act. Through his deed, a mixing of castes (*varṇasaṁkar*) will occur." (19.196)

In the *EC* Eknāth is observed eating simultaneously in the untouchable couple's home and in Eknāth's own home, by means of a vaguely miraculous event that is not described in detail. In the *BhL,* the same event occurs, but Mahīpati ensures that his audience understands

[42] Abbott's translation "I spoke a little line" seems to imply that Eknāth wants to minimize the significance of what he had just done. In the Marathi, Eknāth asks the brahmans to forgive his "offense" and shows great respect to them, but he does not in any way apologize for his action as if it were wrong.

very clearly what is happening. "What did that Pāṇḍuraṅg do? He took the form of Eknāth and appeared at the *anāmik*'s home." (19.211) Mahīpati then describes how the brahmans race back and forth between Eknāth's home and the area of town where untouchable lived, seeing what appears to be Eknāth in both places.[43] Mahīpati explains philosophically that the event is actually easy to understand. Just as an object and its reflection are one, the sun and its brilliance are one, or the blue in the sky and the sky itself are one, so too Eknāth and Pāṇḍuraṅg appear in the same form. (19:225) By inserting this divine activity into the narrative Mahīpati has greatly enhanced the story from the *EC*. This embellishment would become central to the most widely repeated story of Eknāth's inter-caste activities for the next 150 years. Having made these momentous revisions, Mahīpati then follows the *EC* narrative closely for the rest of the story without enhancing it.

The story of two simultaneous Eknāths obviously frustrates the attempt to censure Eknāth (a brahman) for eating food from the hands of untouchables, despite his openly stated intention to do so. This effectively prevents the antagonistic brahmans from calling him to task for it while also giving the act a divine stamp of approval. But this construal is also fraught with narrative dissonance. According to Mahīpati, Eknāth agrees to come to Rāṇyā's home for a meal, but the narrative then switches to describe Pāṇḍuraṅg-as-Eknāth actually sitting down and eating. Mahīpati says nothing more about Eknāth himself, except that he is seen eating at his own home. Was Eknāth aware of this divine scheme? Did he actually not keep his word to Rāṇyā that he would come? Was he aware of Pāṇḍuraṅg's covert activity, which allowed Rāṇyā's meal to proceed without the human Eknāth? Mahīpati does not specify but rather leaves his audience with the sense of surprise and mystery. By narrating the story in this way Mahīpati

[43] Mahīpati specifically calls this area by a now common Marathi word - *mahārvāḍā* – the area of a town (or outside the borders of an old town) where Mahārs were allowed to live, apart from caste Hindus.

effectively releases Eknāth from the responsibility of ritual impurity because of his interaction with Rāṇyā Mahār. At the same time, however, Eknāth cannot be allotted full credit for the act either. This ambiguity and mystery would make the story of Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home the most repeated but unstable story in the whole hagiographic corpus about Eknāth.

In the *BhL* Mahīpati greatly enhances the stories that he inherited from Keśavsvāmī by pulling them all into an overt Vaiṣṇava frame, as he did in the *BhV*. Each chapter about Eknāth begins and concludes with invocations of Viṭṭhal's name and references to Vārkarī mythology. Overtly Vaiṣṇava and Vārkarī elements are added to some of the stories, as is most obvious in Mahīpati's description of Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home. Mahīpati gives the untouchable man a name (Rāṇyā) as well as an unclear but sympathetic past as a Vaiṣṇava hero who for some unknown reason happened to be born a Mahār. He and his wife are depicted as taking on particular practices of good and faithful Vaiṣṇavas as part of their devotion to Eknāth. More than any other hagiographic text thus far, Mahīpati's *BhL* is closely aligned with a particular religious tradition (the Vārkarīs), as Mahīpati attempts to pull all of his hagiographical stories into a generally Vaiṣṇava and more specifically Vārkarī orbit.

To complete this stream of our investigation of all stories about Eknāth and inter-caste relations through 1800, one final collective hagiography must be briefly considered. These stories are quite unusual, and their origin is unclear. The author Bhīmasvāmī (alias Bhīmakavi) lived mainly in the town of Śirgāv, where he was the head of a *maṭh* devoted to the veneration of the late 17th-century poet and *sādhu* Rāmdās.[44] Relatively little is known about Bhīmasvāmī

[44] Much research remains to be done on the Rāmdās *sampradāy* and its religious and political influence in pre-colonial Maharashtra. An introduction to these matters can be found in J.W. Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*, esp. 52-62. A longer but quite dated work on the *sampradāy* by W.S. Deming, *Rāmdās and the Rāmdāsīs*. For a fascinating description of the heated historiographical conversations over Rāmdās' political significance in the 20th century, see P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 183-191.

beyond what his own writings reveal.[45] In addition to an independent *caritra* about Rāmdās and some occasional poetry, Bhīmasvāmī wrote a collective hagiography in 1797 that he named *Bhaktalīlāmṛt.* Since Mahīpati had completed a text by that same name, and since Bhīmasvāmī's stories have little in common with Mahīpati's, it seems unlikely that Bhīmasvāmī was aware of Mahīpati's composition when he applied the name *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* to his own.[46] This text is written not in *ovī* but in much more simple poetic couplets. In contrast to Mahīpati and Keśavsvāmī, Bhīmasvāmī did not belong to the Vārkarī *sampradāy* but rather, as a Rāmdāsī, was quite invested in the maintenance of caste hierarchy and an aggressive Hindu expression over against Islam. Bhīmasvāmī's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (which I will refer to as *BhL2*) seems to have circulated little, if at all; none of its unprecedented stories were repeated by later writers. A single manuscript of the text is preserved in the Śrī Samarth Vāgdevatā Mandir in Dhuḷe, and it was published by the Satkāryottejak Sabhā, an organization co-founded by V. K. Rājvāḍe for promoting the memory of Rāmdās.[47]

The whole *BhL2* consists of 3,721 verses that are divided unevenly among hundreds of unnumbered small chapters or sections. Each verse consists of two feet of roughly similar but unequal length, which do not rhyme or follow a specific meter. More than the first third of the book is devoted to stories about Rāmdās and his early disciples, followed by stories about Bhānudās and Eknāth, and then 29 other figures (some of whom are familiar to the Vārkarī tradition and others who are not). The section on Eknāth is relatively long, with 417 verses in 31

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[45] Khānolkar also mentions the existence of an earlier Bhīmasvāmī (whom he labels Bhīmasvāmī-1) who headed a Rāmdās *maṭh* but in the Tanjore Maratha capital Tānjāvūr.

[46] G.D. Khānolkar, "Bhīmasvāmī-2," 222.

[47] Bhīmasvāmī Śirgāvkar, "Bhaktalīlāmṛt," in *Rāmdās āṇi Rāmdāsī: Bhāg Dusrā - Śrīsamarthāñcī Don Junīṁ Caritreṁ*. (Dhuḷe: Satkāryottejak Sabhā, 1906); Bhīmasvāmī Śirgāvkar, "Bhaktalīlāmṛt" in Marathi Manuscript Collection, MS no. 541 (Dhuḷe: Śrī Samarth Vāgdevatā Mandir). For more on the Satkāryottejak Sabhā, see P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 184.

chapters, which I have outlined in Appendix E. Most of the stories are told in such a terse fashion (few exceed eight verses) that they resemble sketches or outlines rather than full stories. As noted but not discussed by Abbott, some of Bhīmasvāmī's stories are quite different from all of the other hagiographical texts.[48] In Bhīmasvāmī's handling of stories that involve Islam, however, he appears to leave a characteristically Rāmdāsī, anti-Muslim mark on the narratives. For example, in other texts Eknāth and Janārdana meet Datta, who is dressed as a *fakīr*. In Bhīmasvāmī's version, the meeting is pushed completely out of the waking world; Janārdana simply has a dream of eating a meal with a *fakīr* and upon waking he suspects that this was a vision of Datta. (6:1-10) Bhīmasvāmī points out that although Janārdana and Eknāth worked in the service of Muslims, they never actually enjoyed it. (2:7) He adds other stories in which Muslims behave as imperious, arrogant rulers who question Eknāth's and the brahman clerks' charity to a poor pregnant woman (3:1-22) and persecute Eknāth because the mistress of a Muslim soldier (*paṭhān*) spreads a false rumor that he had acted improperly to her. (22:1-9) Given the period during which Eknāth and Janārdana lived, it would have indeed been likely that they would have interacted in various ways with Muslims, and it is in fact surprising that the other hagiographers mention Muslims so little. At the same time, it is hard to imagine that Bhīmasvāmī, writing at the very end of the eighteenth century, somehow had picked up a set of stories about Eknāth and Muslims that the others had missed. Much more likely, Bhīmasvāmī was inserting some of his own concerns and creations into his collective hagiography.

Among all of Bhīmasvāmī's stories about Eknāth, only three of them mention untouchables. The story of Eknāth's *śrāddha* ceremony appears in *BhL2*, in which untouchable people (*antej*, a variant of *antyaj*) smell the good food and ask to partake. (13:4-6) Kṛṣṇa

[48] J.E. Abbott, "Notes on the Life of Eknāth," 262.

himself, who had come to Eknāth's home earlier (similar to the Śrīkhaṇḍyā stories, except that he keeps the name Kṛṣṇa in this story), serves the food to the untouchables. The brahmans again get upset and refuse to eat. In Bhīmasvāmī's story, Kṛṣṇa himself is responsible for summoning Eknāth's ancestors from heaven (*svarga*) and feeding them. After the ancestors finish eating, they take *pān*, bizarrely give curses (*śivyā*) to "them," and then depart.[49] (13:11) The brahmans are impressed by the scene, and they return to revere Eknāth. This is Bhīmasvāmī's only story about Eknāth in which brahmans get upset and trouble Eknāth; otherwise, Bhīmasvāmī does not depict brahmans as antagonistic.

Bhīmasvāmī also repeats the story of Eknāth picking up the untouchable (*antyaj*) boy from the burning sand, as we saw in the *EC* and *BhL*. Bhīmasvāmī's sketch of the story (only four verses long) roughly follows the other stories. Unique to Bhīmasvāmi's text, Eknāth is introduced as having just come from a bath. After picking up the untouchable boy, Bhīmasvāmī notes, he takes another bath. (26:10) This story as well is extremely short, and unlike in the *EC* and *BhL*, in Bhīmasvāmī's version Eknāth's merit from this act do not get transferred to a brahman later. It is simply an isolated vignette, but the fact that Eknāth takes a second bath seems to parallel the concern in the *EC* rendition for bathing with clothes on after touching the untouchable child.

The third relevant sketch in the *BhL2* narrates Eknāth eating in an untouchable couple's home (*EC* 17:19-84, *BhL* 19:138-239), but Bhīmasvāmī's version is unique in several ways. Bhīmasvāmī's rendition begins by framing the story, "One day there was a *śvapac* devotee. A wonder (*naval*) occurred." He narrates that a man, acting on behalf of his wife, invited Eknāth to

[49] The antecedent of "them" is not at all clear in the text. If viewed in isolation, the sentence appears to say that the ancestors cursed Kṛṣṇa and Eknāth's family, which would make no sense. In the context of the larger story that is familiar to us from elsewhere, we might imagine that the ancestors give curses to the antagonistic brahmans. Or perhaps the word *śivyā* is a typographical error.

eat at his home, and Eknāth agreed. They prepare a great meal, but when the man goes to Eknāth's home to summon him, one of Eknāth's disciples reports that Eknāth had already eaten and was taking a nap. The man goes home crying and informs his wife that Eknāth has disregarded or ignored (*upekṣīlem̐*) them. They ask why they should go on living, and they close their door and light a fire (perhaps to commit suicide?). Having witnessed this devotion, God (*dev*) resolves to visit them personally, so he takes Eknāth's form and comes to the door. A brahman on the street happens to see what he thinks is Eknāth sitting and eating at the untouchable's home, and he calls it a defilement (*bhraṣṭākār*). When he goes to Eknāth's home, however, he witnesses Eknāth performing a *kīrtan,* and he realizes that what he had seen earlier was not Eknāth but God himself. Bhīmasvāmī concludes without commenting on the significance of the story but only states that he gladly sings this story of Nārāyaṇa's great *bhakti*. (27.1-20)

Strikingly, Eknāth is completely removed from any possibility of commensality with the untouchables in this rendition; he has already eaten and is sleeping. Bhīmasvāmī provides no details about how this misunderstanding occurred, but the couple interprets it as Eknāth having forgotten them. It is only because of God's perceptivity that this wonder occurs; there is no indication in this story that Eknāth is even aware of it. All of the main action occurs between the untouchable couple and God. In light of the earlier renditions of the story, it seems that Bhīmasvāmī here is attempting to separate Eknāth clearly and completely from the possibility that he ate with untouchables.

Two further sketches in the *BhL2* relate to Eknāth's dealings with figures that Bhīmasvāmī names as *śūdra*s, and neither story has a precedent in the earlier hagiographical literature. In the first story, a poor *śūdra* man regularly attends Eknāth's *kīrtan*s, and in the course of listening, he begins to feel remorse (*anutāp*) about his life. So he and his wife sell their

home and live in humble service in Eknāth's doorway.[50] Eknāth observes that the wife's clothes are tattered, so he wants to give the couple something to help them subsist. A figure named Kṛṣṇapā (another name for Śrīkhaṇḍyā, I presume) tells Eknāth to test the man first. Suddenly a creditor appears at Eknāth's home, demanding that Eknāth immediately remit 5,000 rupees that are owed to him. Arrangements are made to deliver the money to the creditor, and the poor *śūdra* is recruited alongside Eknāth's other servants to carry some of it in a pot on his head. The *śūdra* accidentally drops the pot on the way, and in the course of putting the coins back in the pot, he somehow runs out of space and cannot fit in the two last coins. So he puts the two coins in his mouth to carry. When the creditor counts the money that has arrived, two rupees are discovered to be missing, and Kṛṣṇapā contributes the missing amoung from his own pocket. When the group returns to Eknāth's home, the *śūdra* delivers the two missing coins to Eknāth, although Bhīmasvāmī does not say why. When the two coins are placed before Eknāth in Kṛṣṇapā's presence, the coins suddenly grow into a heap of coins that are given to the poor but demonstrably honest *śūdra*. Bhīmasvāmī comments that the *śūdra* man had passed his test, and his poverty consequently disappeared. (14:1-15)

In this very brief sketch, in which verbs are often missing and the nouns often lack declensions to show their case, Bhīmasvāmī leaves the reader wondering about several essential details, the most important of which is why the *śūdra* did not give the coins directly to the creditor. In stark contrast to Mahīpati's penchant for smoothing out his narratives, Bhīmasvāmī's style leaves out so many details that the story becomes difficult to fully

[50] The text here is cryptic and only mentions that he felt *anutāp* (regret, remorse), but it does not state the reason for his remorse. Based on the content of the rest of the story, it seems feasible that Eknāth's *kīrtan*s pointed out some kind of shortcomings or sins to the man.

understand.[51] Furthermore, the notion of Eknāth testing someone's faith is completely absent in earlier hagiographies; in stories about Eknāth, this narrative tool is unique to the *BhL2*.

The second story about a *śūdra* in the *BhL2* depicts an agricultural scene: a donkey gets loose, eats the crops in the *śūdra* man's field, and then becomes trapped in a thorny hedge. The *śūdra* farmer is angry that his crops have been destroyed but instead of beating the donkey (since "one should not beat dumb living things," 18:4), he decides to wait for the owner to arrive in order to give him a beating instead. Just then Eknāth happens to pass by and is pained at the sight of the donkey covered with thorns. He takes it to the river to drink and pulls out the thorns. The *śūdra* man follows them to the river and reports to Eknāth that his field was destroyed. Eknāth tells him that it actually was not destroyed, and he should return to look at it again. When the *śūdra* does so, he discovers that the damage done by the donkey had disappeared. He returns and worships Eknāth, and Eknāth responds, "That you did not beat our donkey is a credit (*dhanya*) to you."[52] Bhīmasvāmī concludes the vignette with his own comment, "Wherever there is such compassion to living beings, Nārāyaṇa is fully there." (18:1-12)

In these stories about *śūdra*s and the poor, honest untouchable, a clear pattern emerges: good-hearted socially "low" people behave ethically, endure sufferings in tests or test-like situations, ask for no favors, and are richly rewarded for their good actions. In the two stories about *śūdra*s, Eknāth is compassionate but otherwise plays no major role. Rather than convey anything about Eknāth, these stories seem to be more like morality plays that are designed to represent and reinforce particular behaviors, particularly among people of lower social strata.

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[51] I am grateful for the advice of Sujata Mahajan and Mukund Datar in interpreting the terse, difficult Marathi of this chapter.

[52] It is not clear from the story whether Eknāth's use of "our" indicates that the donkey belongs to himself or that the donkey merits the respect one should feel towards all living beings as if they were treasured possessions.

Bhīmasvāmī's *BhL2* stands somewhat apart from the other texts that include stories about Eknāth, and it appears to use Eknāth for a number of different ends, some of which are unclear. Many other new, independent episodes about Eknāth appear. For example Janārdana builds a new house for himself and his wife, but then in a dream he is told to give it to Eknāth and build a second home for himself. (9:1-15) Bhīmasvāmī offers no comment about the story's significance. Interestingly, Bhīmasvāmī attempts to mitigate what must have been for some Hindu listeners a very problematic aspect of the Eknāth story – his working with rather than resisting the Muslim powers of his time. Bhīmasvāmī points out that Eknāth and Janārdana did not actually enjoy their work. This is something that no other hagiographer of Eknāth does; surprisingly, in fact, none of them appear to be overly troubled by this connection at all. That it bothered Bhīmasvāmi more perhaps does make sense, however, in light of what is at least a stereotype of the Rāmdāsī tradition's strong and vociferous opposition to Islam in Maharashtra.[53] As for how Bhīmasvāmī portrayed Eknāth in relation to caste tensions and interaction, the *BhL2* offers relatively little of interest except for the fact that he employs the figure of Eknāth in order to teach general ethical tenets. This may be indicative of Bhīmāsvāmī's outlook as the director of a Rāmdāsī *maṭh*.

Minor and Independent References

One final set of texts must be observed in order to complete our observation of all of the early stories about Eknāth's inter-caste relations. A number of short, occasional poems refer to

[53] Most Marathi historians in the 20th century, particularly in the wake of V. K. Rājvāḍe's arguments, have viewed Rāmdās and his followers as virulently opposed to Muslim rule and perhaps to Islam in general. P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 128-133. To what extent this interpretation of Rāmdās is historically accurate is still unclear to me. Bhīmasvāmī's text appears to confirm the presence of some kind of anti-Muslim sentiment.

stories about Eknāth and aspects of his character. Few of these short compositions can be contextualized with confidence in terms of authorial circumstances and audience, and few of the compositions are by authors whose names are widely known, when their names were recorded at all. While the texts' vague backgrounds hinder us from drawing strong conclusions, these compositions are nonetheless useful to indicate how Eknāth has been remembered. Indeed, one might argue that precisely because these compositions are so brief and succinct, their depictions are especially valuable as indicators of social memory.

Contextualizing all of these references and attempting to verify their authenticity would be an impractically complicated endeavor, and in many cases, an impossible one. For our purposes, it will suffice simply to classify these diverse, short compositions into three groups: compositions that praise Eknāth but say nothing about his social situation or activities, compositions that refer to Eknāth's compassion and egalitarian attitude, and compositions that refer specifically to stories about Eknāth's social relations. Of the 36 brief compositions that I came across (and there are others, no doubt), 21 of them make no reference to Eknāth's social behavior at all, ten refer to Eknāth's inclusive actions or attitude and five specifically mention interactions with people of low social standing.

Poems in the largest subset of short compositions praise Eknāth in general ways, depicting him most often as an *avatār* who came for the good of the world and as an efficacious figure worthy of devotion and reverance.[54] Some of these general compositions mention God (as

[54] Mukteśvar, "Pada 6," 285; Mukteśvar, "Pada 7," 286; Keśavsvāmī, "Stavana," in *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*, ed. Raghunāth Hamaṇpanth Koṭnīs. (Mumbaī: Trinity Publicity Society, 1948), Appendix, 4; Tukārām (attributed), "Abhanga," in *Śrīeknāth Mahārājāñcyā Abhangāñcī Gāthā*, ed. Rā. Ra. Tukārām Tātyā. (Mumbaī: Tattvavivecak Press, 1903), 124; Niḷobā (attributed), "Āratī," in *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, ed. Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, vol. 7. (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925), 188; Anonymous, "Āratī," in *Śrīeknāth-mahārājāñcyā Abhangācī Gāthā*, ed. Rā. Rā. Tukārām Tātyā. (Mumbaī: Tattvavivecak Press, 1903), 129; Ra. Śā Ināmdār, *Sāmpradāyika Āratī: Śrī Sant Uddhav Svāmī* (Puṇe: Self-published, 2006), 6 and 27; Amṛtarāya, "Pada," in *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, ed. Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, vol. 7. (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925), 189; Avadhūta, "Āratī," Ibid., 191; Ānanda Gopāḷdāsa, "Āratī," in *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*, ed. Raghunāth Hamaṇpanth Koṭnīs. (Mumbaī: Trinity Publicity Society, 1948), Appendix, 6; Tukārām (attributed), "Abhaṅga," in

Śrīkhaṇḍyā) serving Eknāth in his home by carrying water or grinding sandalwood.[55] Eknāth's grandfather Bhānudās is also mentioned in some of these compositions, highlighting Eknāth's membership in an illustrious family of *bhakta*s.[56] These are the same themes that appeared regularly in the *santamālikā*s, as we observed earlier in this chapter.

Nine short compositions about Eknāth refer to his equanimous social vision and inclusive activities. Most frequently, this sentiment appears in words with the prefix *sama-* (same or equal) – as in *samatā* (sameness), *samadarśī* (impartial or equal-viewing) and *samasamān* (same or common) – and in having a single common respect towards everyone.[57] One composition states that Eknāth turns *anātha* (protector-less) people into *sanātha* (protected).[58] In several of these compositions a new epithet for Eknāth appears – *bhūta-dayā* (one who is compassionate

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Eknāth Caritra : Caritra āṇi Vāṅmay Darśan, ed. Lakṣmaṇ Rāmcandra Pāṅgārkar. (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1910 [2003]), 147. It should be noted that the three compositions in this list that are attributed to Tukārām and Niḷobā do not appear in other collections of their poetry; they may be pseudonymous.

[55] Mukteśvar, "Śloka," in *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, ed. Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, vol. 7. (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925), 183; Niḷobā and Nānāmahārāj Sākhre, *Āratī*, Śrī Niḷobā Gāthā (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1990 [2004]), #1569; Bālājīpant Parāḍkar, "Āryā," in *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, ed. Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, vol. 7. (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925); Moropant, "Śrīnāth-caritra," in *Moropantkṛt Prakaraṇe, Bhāg 1*, ed. Ja. Bā. Moḍak. (Puṇe: Ja. Bā. Moḍak, 1883), 51-52. The final composition by Moropant in this short list appears to be the source for one quite well-known line (verse 15, about Śrīkhaṇḍyā's duties) that has been strangely often attributed to other people. Ājgāvkar attributes it to Parāḍkar, and some others attribute to Moropant's nephew Āppa. See Tukārām Tātya's remarks in Mukteśvar, "Eknāth-caritra (Śrīkhāṇḍyākhyān)," 286.n7. I highlight this apparently obscure confusion because this verse has been used as the model for the poetic *āryā* form in Marathi public school textbooks. Therefore the verse is very widely known, and through it schoolchildren regularly become acquainted with the story of Śrīkhaṇḍyā serving Eknāth in his home.

[56] Mukteśvar, "Āratī 2," 183; Tukā Vipra, "Śloka," in *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, ed. Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, vol. 7. (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925), 192-193.

[57] Kṛṣṇadayārṇava, "Stotra," in *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*, ed. Raghunāth Hamaṇpanth Koṭnīs. (Mumbaī: Trinity Publicity Society, 1948), Appendix, 3; Moropant, "Āryā," in *Śrīeknāth-mahārājāñcyā Abhangācī Gāthā*, ed. Rā. Rā. Tukārām Tātyā. (Mumbaī: Tattvavivecak Press, 1903), 124; Viṭṭhal, "Āratī," in *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, ed. Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, vol. 7. (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925), 190; Anonymous, "Āratī," 130; Mukteśvar, "Āratī 1," 291. As part of his extended commentary on the tenth *skandha* of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Kṛṣṇadayārṇava includes a provocative set of *ovī*s about Eknāth, in which he says that Eknāth lived out his non-discriminatory guru devotion through his actions in the world. Cited in J.R. Ājgāvkar, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, 188.

[58] This interaction with the mentally impaired (*mati-maṇḍa*) boy is mentioned in several of the compositions cited above as well as Ṭhākurdās, "Āratī," in *Śrīeknāth-mahārājāñcyā Abhangācī Gāthā*, ed. Rā. Rā. Tukārām Tātyā. (Mumbaī: Tattvavivecak Press, 1903), 129.

towards living beings) and in one case, *dayā-bhūta* (Compassionate Being).[59] One *pada* calls Eknāth an "*avatār* of compassion (*karuṇā*)."[60] As we shall see in the next chapter, the ambiguity in this epithet allows its users to gesture subtly and non-specifically towards Eknāth as an egalitarian social actor while highlighting, much less controversially, Eknāth as a caretaker of animals.

Only four of the 32 short compositions explicitly refer to Eknāth's interactions with people of low social standing. In one anonymous composition, Eknāth is called an *avatār* of Mahāviṣṇu who came to uplift the meek and lowly (*hīnā dinā*) in the Kali *yuga*. Later in the same verse, the author states that Eknāth saved the meek, lowly and protectorless (*tārileṁ hīndīnāṁ anāthāṁ*).[61] Notably, this is the only short composition in which these words appear, and this particular verse (verse 13) is missing in a later printing of this composition.[62] In two other short compositions, the authors (both of whom appear to be Rāmdās devotees and therefore may be connected somehow) mention the episode of Eknāth giving *śrāddha* food to untouchables.[63]

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[59] The epithet *bhūta-dayā* occurs in several compositions referred to above, as well as Anonymous, "Pada," in *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, ed. Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, vol. 7. (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925), 187; Moropant, "Āryā," Ibid., 191. The *pada*, whose author Ājgāvkar claims is anonymous, is attributed by another prominent Marathi scholar to Eknāth's contemporary Dāsopant. L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, 147.

[60] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, 144-145. This citation is a *pada* that is attributed to Mukteśvar but has been almost certainly pseudonymously composed. The final verse contains the signature tag "*Mukteśvar mhaṇe*" (Mukteśvar says), which is very similar to the tags of Nāmdev and Tukārām. Mukteśvar's tag in almost all other composition is *"līlāviśvambharū."* In addition, the language of this *pada* is quite simplistic and does not display the sophistication that one otherwise sees in Mukteśvar's work.

[61] Anonymous, "Eknāth Namaskār Stotra," in *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*, ed. Raghunāth Hamaṇpanth Koṭnīs. (Mumbaī: Trinity Publicity Society, 1948), Appendix, 5.

[62] Anonymous, "Śrī Eknāth Stutipar Naman," in *Śrīsant Eknāth Mahārāj yāñce Ovibaddha Caritra*, ed. Puruṣottam Eknāthtātya Pānse. (Nāgpūr: Puruṣottam Eknāthtātya Pānse, 1980). The pages in this book are not numbered. This composition appears at the end of the book, before the two pages of corrections (*śuddhipatra*).

[63] Ātmārām Rāmdāsī, "Abhanga," in *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj yāñceṁ Caritra*, ed. Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, vol. 7. (Mumbaī: Keśav Bhikājī Ḍhevaḷe, 1925), 189; Rāmdās-śiṣya, "Abhaṅga," in *Eknāth Caritra : Caritra āṇi*

An unprinted composition entitled *Yeknāth-caritra* by one Meghaśyām briefly rehearses some episodes in Eknāth's life before focusing mainly on the story of Śrīkhaṇḍyā's arrival and service.[64] Three verses merit quotation here in full: "having understood it as a custom/ritual (*vidhī*), he served all beings. Then some people spoke [about Eknāth's deeds]. Many brahmans put him out of caste (*vāḷīṁt ghātle*). He abandoned power (*sāmarthya*) for grace (*kṛpestava*). Then he became praised throughout the world. Prosperity and Perfection (*riddhisiddhī*) served at his home."[65] (vv.7-9) Notably, Meghaśyām echoes the isolated story of Eknāth's excommunication that first appeared in Mahīpati's *BhV* 46:84, and as in Mahīpati's version, the catalyst for this event was Eknāth's service to all beings, which, based on other stories about him, includes untouchables. Yet Meghaśyām also makes clear that Eknāth goes on to become "praised throughout the world" or meet with good fortune after the excommunication.

The most remarkable short composition about Eknāth is an independent retelling of the story in which Eknāth eats at an untouchable couple's home.[66] The author is a minor poet named Khaṇḍerāya who took *samādhī* in 1766 (between the composition dates of Mahīpati's *BhV* and *BhL*). Khaṇḍerāya also composed hagiographical episodes about Nāmdev and Tukārām, and both of these compositions bear the word *caritra* in their titles.[67] Khaṇḍerāya's story about

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Vāṅmay Darśan, ed. Lakṣmaṇ Rāmcandra Pāṅgārkar. (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1910 [2003]), 151. Ātmārām also states that Eknāth appeared to Rāmdās. (v.10) Rāmdās-śiṣya does not mention this.

[64] Khāṇolkar lists one Meghaśyām in his *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś* but says nothing more than that he was a Rāmdāsī poet. G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 239.

[65] *Sarvābhūtī bhaji vidhī teṁ jāṇunī | mag kāṁhī koṇi bole jan* ||7|| *kiteka brāhmaṇīṁ vāḷīṁt ghātle | sāmarthya ṭākileṁ kṛpestava* ||8|| *mag te praṁśāṁsā jālī digantarīṁ | riddhisiddhī gharī volagaṇya* ||9||. Meghaśyām, "Yeknāth Caritra" in Marāṭhī Bāḍā Collection, MS no. 1312 (Dhuḷe, Mahārāṣṭra: Śrī Samarth Vāgdevatā Mandir), 142-144.

[66] Khaṇḍerāya, "Eknāth-caritra," in *Laghukāvyamālā, Bhāg Pahilā*, ed. Vāman Dājī Ok. (Mumbaī: Nirṇaysāgar, 1895), 158-161.

[67] G.D. Khānolkar, "Khaṇḍerāya," 53.

Eknāth follows the same general plotline as other versions, but many details are different, as is the text's overall message.

Khaṇḍerāya introduces Eknāth as an *avatār* of the Marathi *sant* Jñāndev who came into the world for the purpose of uplifting the lowly (*dīnoddhāraṇ karāvayālā*). One day while performing a *kīrtan*, Eknāth presents a metaphor (*upamā*) that compared the quality of water, which takes on the color of its container, to that of a person taking on new qualities by encountering a holy man (*sādhu*). (vv.2-3) An untouchable man named Viveknāk Mahār is in attendance that day, and he is quite impressed by Eknāth's message.[68] Viveknāk invites Eknāth to eat at his home, but Eknāth responds, "How can food be taken at the home of an *anāmik*?" (7) Viveknāk reminds Eknāth of the metaphor he used in his *kīrtan*, and Eknāth feels regret about his response. Eknāth says, "*Yeto*" (I will come) and departs. (9) This response is ingeniously ambiguous in the narrative. Although *yeto* literally means "I come" (with the sense of "I will come"), it is also used as the standard, polite Marathi way of taking leave from a person (i.e., "I am going now").[69] So Eknāth's response here – "*yeto*" – is in fact the most uncertain thing that he could have told Viveknāk, and Khaṇḍerāya's audience would feel this ambivalence all the more after hearing Eknāth question how he could accept food from an untouchable just moments earlier. Nonetheless, Viveknāk is pleased to hear Eknāth say, "*yeto*." Viveknāk goes home to make preparations with his wife, and Eknāth returns to his *maṭh.*

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[68] Feldhaus and Tulpule's *Dictionary of Old Marathi* shows that the affix *-nāk* was an honorific title based on the Sanskrit *nāyak* (leader) and was not uncommon in older Marathi literature. Molesworth states that *-nāk* is an affix of "courtesy" specifically for the names of Mahārs. Zelliot states that until the beginning of the 20th century all Mahār names ended in *-nāk*. E. Zelliot, "Chokhamela and Eknath: Two "Bhakti" Modes of Legitimacy for Modern Change," 146. Vā. Dā. Ok claims that the affix applies to Mahār names in the Konkan "and other" regions. Khaṇḍerāya, "Eknāth-caritra," 159.n1.

[69] Conventionally, Marathi speakers have felt to take leave by saying, "I am going" (*jāto*) would be tantamount to inauspiciously implying, "I am going… to heaven" (i.e., "I am dying").

Word starts to travel around town that Eknāth has promised to eat at Viveknāk's home, and when Eknāth's disciples hear of it, they fear that a "calamity" (*vighna*) will arise because of it. They scheme to divert Eknāth's attention by inviting him listen to a reading of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, to which Eknāth gladly agrees. (14) Yet Eknāth sees through the ploy, and when the meal time arrives, he goes to Viveknāk's home "internally" (*antargatineṁ gele*). (16) In the next verse Khaṇḍerāya clarifies that Eknāth's travel occurs by means of *yoga,* or in other words through Eknāth's miraculous spiritual power. Eknāth eats the food in Viveknāk's home and belches in satisfaction. (17) He departs from the untouchables' home but happens to leave behind his "*gītā*" and his staff.[70] Viveknāk's wife is also distraught that Eknāth departed before taking *pān*, so she tells Viveknāk to pack up everything and take it to Eknāth's *maṭh*. (21) Eknāth's disciples meet Viveknāk at the doorway to the *maṭh* and ask him disrespectfully (*dhuḍakāvīlā*) why he has come. Eknāth comes out and explains to his stunned disciples that he had left his *Gītā* and staff at Viveknāk's home when he had gone there to eat. The disciples express their confusion, since they were sitting with Eknāth and reading the *Bhāgavat* the whole time. Khaṇḍerāya concludes by commenting on the incomprehensible greatness of a *sādhu*. (27)

As with other renditions of this story, Khaṇḍerāya's version does not allow Eknāth to dine unequivocally at the untouchables' home; Eknāth remains visibly at his home during the whole episode. Khaṇḍerāya narrates several innovations to the story, however. Eknāth initially resists Viveknāk Mahār's invitation until Viveknāk reminds him of what he was teaching in his own *kīrtan*s. Based on Eknāth's equivocal response "*yeto*," the audience for this story would be held in suspense about what Eknāth in fact will do. Eknāth's disciples attempt to run

[70] It is not clear to me what *gītā* here refers to. I presume that it is a copy of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, but I do not know what its significance would be. In Eknāth's *maṭh*, his disciples invite him to open the cloth wrapper of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. Khaṇḍerāya specifies that Eknāth forgot his *gītā* at Viveknāk's home, and it is the *gītā* that is later delivered to Eknāth.

interference in his plans and prevent the meeting, but unlike in the other renditions of this story, Eknāth himself (not God) consciously, intentionally and openly accomplishes the feat of appearing in two places at the same time. Therefore in this story, Eknāth becomes the exemplar not of an egalitarian *bhakta* in society but rather a wonder-working yogic *sādhu*. Remarkably, at the pen of Khaṇḍerāya, Eknāth is made to represent miraculous power of *yoga* rather than *bhakti*.

In summary, the short compositions about Eknāth continue the trend that we observed in the long individual hagiographies and in the renderings of stories about Eknāth in the collective hagiographies: the predominant portrayal of Eknāth is that of a semi-divine being (*avatār*) who is worthy of devotion in his own right. Few are willing to narrate any details about Eknāth interacting with people of low social standing. Khaṇḍerāya, as we just witnessed, successfully transmitted deep ambiguity in his narration of Eknāth eating with the untouchables. As in the *BhL*, the miracle of two Eknāths overwhelmed the daring act of caste boundary transgression, although Khaṇḍerāya demonstrated that this miracle can just as easily (and perhaps more easily) be explained through the great spiritual powers of a holy man as through Eknāth's *bhakti*. Among the 36 short references I have observed, only Meghaśyām points unambiguously toward Eknāth's social interactions by describing him serving all beings (not specifically untouchables), being put out of caste because of it, yet still becoming successful and famous. Much more common than explicit references to particular caste-transgressive stories among these short compositions are general epithets. One of these epithets introduces a new term in relation to Eknāth that would later become quite popular – *bhūta-dayā* (compassionate to living beings).

Analysis of Stories about Eknāth's Social Interactions

The purpose of this chapter and the previous chapter has been to document comprehensively all of the stories that have been written about Eknāth and his inter-caste relations from the time of his death in 1599 through roughly 1800, when the final hagiographical texts containing stories about him were composed. This includes six major texts, of which the earliest three focus exclusively on Eknāth and the final three are collective hagiographies that include Eknāth's stories among those of many other figures. In light of the quantity of the material covered, a short review may be helpful. The brief *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān* (early 17th c.), by the highly acclaimed poet Mukteśvar, narrates a single *purāṇa*-like episode about Kṛṣṇa coming to Eknāth's home and living as a servant, perhaps modeled after the myth of Viṭṭhal and Puṇḍalīk. The story that was introduced in this skillfully composed poem became a standard feature in nearly all later sets of stories about Eknāth. The *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* of Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan (ca. 1698) highlights the ways in which Eknāth's extreme devotion to his guru Janārdana and his understanding of Janārdana (both guru and God) in the world lead him to disregard norms of bodily and social purity. The *PC* must be seen only as an alternative hagiographical account, since it does not seem to have circulated, and many of its stories were not repeated in a way that reveals an undisputable connection to it. The longest and eventually the most influential of all of the texts that we have observed, the *Eknāth-caritra* of Keśavsvāmī (1760), emphasizes Eknāth's identity as an *avatār* whose purpose is to uplift the world through his *kīrtan*s and acts of compassion. The *EC* provides the earliest record of the stories about Eknāth's interaction with untouchables that became well-known later.

In the minimal collective hagiographies (the short Marathi lists of religious figures called *santamālikā*s), we observed that Eknāth's name is consistently included, but the pithy descriptions of him highlight only divine associations and mention nothing about caste or social interactions. In two of his maximal collective hagiographies, Mahīpati recycles stories about Eknāth and fits them into his larger efforts to consolidate and promote a Vārkarī form of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*. His source for the small number of stories in the *Bhaktavijay* (1762) is not clear, but Mahīpati's many stories about Eknāth in the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (1774) obviously and closely followed Keśavsvāmī's *EC*. Mahīpati enhances the stories that he repeats, ultimately producing smoother narrations by supplying (and perhaps inventing) details in the stories. His *BhL* became the standard hagiographical source for later authors who wrote about Eknāth. The Rāmdāsī *maṭh* director Bhīmasvāmī also incorporates some stories about Eknath into his collective hagiography, the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (1798). Bhīmasvāmī includes fewer stories about untouchables than Mahīpati, some morality play-like stories about *śūdra*s, less jaded portrayals of brahmans, and stridently anti-Muslim sentiments. There is no evidence that Bhīmasvāmī's renditions of stories about Eknāth had any impact or were even known outside the confines of the Rāmdāsī *maṭh* that he supervised. Therefore this text is marginal to the broader social memory of Eknāth.

As noted at the beginning of the chapter, these texts are by no means the full record of stories about Eknāth, and what all is known about the manuscript record does not allow a comprehensive analysis of how the stories were transmitted or circulated. It should also be kept in mind that these texts (aside from the *BhL2*) were products of and tools for the living performative Vārkarī tradition that used and still uses stories about the *sant*s as essential

elements in their *kīrtan*s.[71] We see evidence of this tradition in how frequently the texts depict Eknāth himself performing *kīrtan*s, in Mahīpati's almost certain career as a *kīrtankār* and his fondness for describing *kīrtan*s, as well as in the ongoing use of Keśavsvāmī's *EC* in the practice of public reading (*pārāyaṇ*). These texts, for the most part (the *PC* being the counter-example) should be viewed as instruments for the transmission and reinforcement of a public, performed tradition. The instability of stories and the differences among renditions of them in different texts is not a surprise; it is, in fact, to be expected. As we saw, stories about Eknāth's interactions with untouchables tended to be especially unstable, and details within the stories changed often among the renditions. This too is not a surprise, since these stories would likely be the most controversial in performance settings, in which performers and authors had to craft their narrations in ways that did not upset their audiences. Consequently, perhaps, stories about Eknāth's interactions with untouchables tended to retain a sense of ambiguity even when the informational details changed. The works that we have just viewed all reveal a tension between conveying an inclusive and egalitarian side of Eknāth's behavior with a respect for brahman traditions and a willingness to acquiesce to brahman demands regarding purification.

Given the fragmentary nature of the textual record and the inherent instability of these stories as the inscribed moments of a broader oral and performative tradition, focusing too narrowly and intensely on the details of the stories as if they revealed historical information about Eknāth would be truly misguided. The strong temptation to read fascinating but isolated phrases or ideas as normative must be kept in check; handling these materials requires that they be grasped, in a sense, somewhat more loosely. In doing so, I recommend taking a conservative

[71] Technically Mukteśvar's *ŚKĀ* probably cannot be said to have arisen from a Vārkarī context (since it does not appear that Mukteśvar was a Vārkarī), but the *ŚKĀ* was fully embraced by the Vārkarīs.

analytical approach at this time. There are indeed grounds that could be cited easily for more radical, synthetic and constructivist interpretations of these texts, such as Eknāth's philosophical response to his guru in *PC* 3:79-94, his challenging the brahmans to identify marks of untouchability in *EC* 17:24-28, his rejection of the need for purification after feeding untouchables in *BhV* 46:105, and his defense for quoting a Sanskrit verse to Rāṇyā Mahār in *BhL* 19:137-152. Clearly the potential for this interpretation is not limited to only one or two texts. As possible source texts for constructive theology, these citations are extremely rich. In the next chapter, indeed, we will see a few examples of Marathi writers who make these more radical interpretive moves and cite these texts as they reinterpret Eknāth in their own times. For the purposes of my project, however, such interpretations would not have sufficient integrity as strict analyses of the whole texts, and I thus resist using them as hermeneutical keys. Therefore, while highlighting the provocative aspects of particular stories and intriguing details of individual discourses, I have tried to remain focused on larger patterns and themes as better representatives of the texts' overall import.

One pattern in these texts that has not yet been explicitly acknowledged in secondary literature on Eknāth is that in nearly all the stories about him, the main characters whose castes or social statuses are stated represent opposite poles. Eknāth himself is a brahman, and he is regularly depicted as one, albeit a rather unorthodox one. When brahmans are mentioned explicitly in these hagiographical texts, they tend to be portrayed in one of three ways. Most often, the image is unflattering, as brahmans strive to maintain their arrogance, pride, and sources of income while persecuting Eknāth for his socially inclusive acts. Brahmans also appear in afflicted forms, as the effects of earlier misdeeds result in their becoming leprous or demonic (in the form of a *rākṣasa*). Some brahman characters are extremely positive, however.

All of the deities who take on forms are described specifically as brahmans when they come to Eknāth and serve him. Low-caste and untouchable figures also play major roles. Most of the prominent non-brahman characters in stories about Eknāth are untouchables (named by various words – *antyaj, anāmik, cāṇḍāḷ, mahār, māṅg, atiśūdra, śvapac,* and sometimes *śūdra*).[72] Functionally in the narratives, social hierarchy is clearly an essential dimension in which the characters are placed and narrative tensions are enhanced and resolved. Remarkably, almost no characters in these stories are ever explicitly said to be *vaiśyas* or *kṣatriya*s and belong to the conventional middle of the social spectrum (something that these stories intriguingly have in common with Eknāth's own short poems). This may reflect the historical social landscape of Maharashtra, which has indeed been conspicuous in its relative lack of members of the two middle castes. More likely, the use of social poles is part of the narrative strategy itself to heighten the sense of tension and potential conflict of interests.

One consistent and striking theme that emerges in these texts' depictions of Eknāth's social relations is the two-stage pattern of Eknāth transgressing caste boundaries by interacting with untouchables and then apologetically conceding to the brahman community's demands that he ritually maintain his status as a brahman. All of the major renditions of stories that involve untouchables portray Eknāth as acting without hesitation or consideration of possible ill consequences.[73] The only story in which Eknāth pauses at instances of possible social impropriety are his failures to overcome a fear of interacting with Datta in Muslim form (*BhV* 45:89-91, 112-116), which, as mentioned above, may indicate that these stories represent an

[72] Surprisingly, in these texts the term *śūdra* is sometimes clearly used to describe a person who is untouchable. Broader research in 18th-century Marathi literature would need to be carried out to analyze the frequency and significance of this semantic slippage.

[73] I specify "major renditions" here to account for the fact that some of the shorter compositions (e.g., Khaṇḍerāya's *Eknāth-caritra*) do portray some hesitation on Eknāth's part.

exceptionally different narrative goal. Different reasons are cited in the texts for Eknāth's unself-conscious interest in inter-caste relations: service to Janārdana who is understood to be in/among the people, a vow to give food to whoever asks, compassion to someone in distress, and approval of a spiritually adept seeker. In all of these examples, significantly, Eknāth's action is immediate and automatic. Equally consistent, Eknāth speaks and behaves toward brahmans in ways that show only unswerving and unquestioning respect toward the institution of brahman authority. It is part of the background narrative throughout all of the texts that Eknāth feeds and honors brahmans, he continuously apologizes and humbles himself before brahmans even when they are obviously only tormenting him, he readily concedes that they are far more knowledgeable about the Vedas and *śāstra*s, and he ultimately acquiesces to their (and perhaps his own, in instances when there are no brahmans around) demands of ritual bathing in order to be purified after interacting with untouchables.

Within this two-stage pattern, it is also significant that while Eknāth is shown consistently apologizing to the brahmans for his "offense" and asking for their pardon (*kṣamā*), he seems to do this only in order to pacify the brahmans' anger. The word for "offense" in these stories is usually *aparādh.* One would need to study the use of these words in other texts at greater length to prove it, but it may be that *aparādh* points only to the transgression of a social convention or expectation rather than a religiously significant misdeed (such as *doṣ* or *pāp*). He concedes to undergo purification, but in none of the stories does he confess that he has done anything wrong. In one story (*BhV* 46:105) he even states this explicitly. With the exception of agreeing to his son's condition not to eat food from others in order to bring his son back home, Eknāth is also never depicted as promising to refrain from an action that angers the brahmans. As discussed briefly in Chapter Two, Eknāth in all of these stories appears to be negotiating the

value systems of two simultaneous realms: the realm of devotional egalitarianism in which Eknāth does not see or feel caste as a boundary that limits his social interactions, and the ritual realm of caste and purity in which Eknāth is forced to dwell by his fellow brahmans and against which he offers little resistance. Aside from a few instances of Eknāth philosophically proposing a reason for their overlap, in which the notion of untouchability might be suspended or disregarded if a person is spiritually keen, the two worlds remain starkly and unarticulatedly separate.

This separation between the ritual/purity realm and the devotional/egalitarian realm is at the heart of the most awkward narrative transitions among these texts. In three related stories (Eknāth asking about the marks of an untouchable in *EC* 17:24-28, his rejecting the need for purification in *BhV* 46:105, and quoting the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in defense in *BhL* 19:137-152), there is a conspicuous gap in the authors' narrations of Eknāth's questioning of or resistance to the brahmans' demand for purification (*prāyaścitta*) and the performance of purification itself. In each case, a transition is jarringly absent, leaving the reader wondering what occurred in between. The *BhV* example is the starkest, as Eknāth directly refuses to undergo purification (and even points out the impropriety of undergoing it needlessly), yet in each of the stories somehow purification suddenly takes place with no further comment. Even Mahīpati, who elsewhere freely augments his inherited stories to smooth over and remove cognitively dissonant elements, does not touch this narrative gap. Were these occurrences not so uniformly scattered across different texts, manuscripts, authors and time periods, one might suspect that the texts had been tampered with systematically so that key verses were removed. There is, however, nothing to suggest that such a thing occurred; it appears that the narrative gap is simply preserved across different renditions and retellings of the story. The devotional/egalitarian realm and the ritual/caste realm seem to be poles in these stories that never meet. Or, perhaps the poles do in a

sense "meet" in the narrative itself by simply being portrayed there, even if they are not brought together in a satisfying narrative conclusion. This unresolved tension in the hagiographical stories will be replicated and reinterpreted in the later memories of Eknāth, but within other rubrics and conceptual frameworks as Eknāth and the *sant*s become a part of new discourses in the 19th and 20th centuries, as we shall see in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four – Eknāth in Marathi History and Scholarship (1800-present)

The final major text that we observed in Chapter Three was Bhīmasvāmī's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*, which was completed in 1797. While it is impossible to determine exactly when all of the minor and independent compositions about Eknāth were written, most of the figures who composed them (at least the authors who are identified) are known to have lived in the 18th century. Thus it is safe to say that our investigation has observed the literary record of Eknāth-related memories through 1800, which coincides with the twilight of the Peshwa Empire. By the end of 1803, the British had forced all of the ruling Maratha houses (Śinde, Hoḷkar, Gaikvāḍ, etc.) within the Peshwa Empire to sign harshly one-sided treaties. In 1818 the British disbanded the Peshwa completely and transformed the Maratha ruling families into princely states under the British crown.[1] Starting in roughly 1800, nearly eight decades passed during which almost nothing new about Eknāth was written and publicized in Marathi; the literary record of Eknāth's memory went almost completely silent until the first major, modern biography of Eknāth was published in 1883.

Since we have no substantial literary record to go on between the cessation of hagiographical writing on Eknāth around 1800 and the emergence of printed biographies of him in 1883, where else might we look for information on how Eknāth was remembered? This problem presents a timely opportunity to review possible alternative sources of information both for this short century and for the dissertation more generally: the Marathi courtly chronicles (*bakhar*s), records of brahman religious courts (*dharmasabhā*s), family histories and claims of lineage, institutional histories, and official tax and patronage records. As we shall see, not all of

[1] S. Gordon, *The Marathas*, 176-177.

these are equally productive of information about Eknāth, but even the silence of a set of records about Eknāth can be informative.

Alternative Sources for a Historiography of Eknāth

The Marathi *bakhar*s (chronicles) have recently attracted the attention of scholars outside India, although Maharashtrian scholars have been drawing on them (not always critically) as sources of information about the history of the Maratha rule for nearly 150 years.[2] The Marathi word *bakhar* most likely is the result of metathesis – a rearrangement of the sounds in the Perso-Arabic term *khabar*. Although the words are clearly linked, what they connote is quite different. Whereas a *khabar* is a newsletter or report that was dispatched to relay official information among courts during the Mughal era, a Marathi *bakhar* is more of a historical-political chronicle written in prose about a ruler, noble family or important event (e.g., the infamous defeat of the Marathas at the Battle of Panipat in 1761).[3] Two early *bakhar*s dating from before 1600 describe a kingdom in the North Konkan and the fall of Vijayanagar, but most of the exemplars in this genre were composed between 1690 and 1820, and they deal with the Maratha ruler Śivājī, the brahman Peśvā rulers that succeeded him, and outstanding families of nobles during those periods.

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[2] R. V. Herwadkar, *A Forgotten Literature: Foundations of Marathi Chronicles* (Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1994); P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 19-39; Velcheru Narayan Rao et al., *Textures of Times: Writing History in South India 1600-1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 223-234.

[3] R.V. Herwadkar, *A Forgotten Literature: Foundations of Marathi Chronicles*, 2. Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam mistakenly state that *akhbār* (the plural form of *khabar*) is the Perso-Arabic root of *bakhar*. V.N. Rao et al., *Textures of Time*, 226.

Vi. Kā. Rājvāḍe testified to the existence of some 200 *bakhar*s, but only around 70 have been published (all in Marathi).[4] Notably, the Marathi *bhakti* poets and *sant*s almost never appear in these works, a fact that testifies to the very different configuration of religious concerns among the ruling elites in western India in the 17th and 18th centuries.[5] The only exception of which I am aware is a story in one *bakhar* that depicts the 17th-century *sant* Tukārām urging Śivājī to seek the counsel of the more militant-minded *sādhu* Rāmdās.[6] Since no secondary literature on *bakhar*s that I have read indicates any interest in the *bhakti* poets beyond the narration of a historically dubitable Tukārām-Śivājī connection, since no secondary literature on Eknāth notes that any *bakhar*s have mentioned him, and since indicators of Maratha elites' literary preferences generally point away from *bhakti* literature,[7] it has seemed ill-advised to attempt to search through the more than 70 published *bakhar*s in the unlikely hope of discovering previously unnoticed references to Eknāth. I cannot say with certainty that Eknāth is not mentioned in any of the *bakhar*s, but the likelihood that such a reference exists is extremely small. The near absence of references to *bhakti* figures and poetry in the *bakhar*s does raise the question of how to comprehend the lack of overlap between these two very large and significant discursive realms. As interesting as a thorough consideration of the Maratha elites' attitudes

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[4] R.V. Herwadkar, *A Forgotten Literature: Foundations of Marathi Chronicles*, 8.

[5] Herwadkar summarizes the kinds of religious concerns expressed in the *bakhar*s, which tend to revolve around dream interpretation, Śivājī's patron goddess Bhāvānī, tales of Muslim (i.e., the enemy's) extreme and fanatic character, and acts of generosity that accord with orthodox Sanskritic expectations. Ibid., 65-70. Note that when I say that the *bakhar*s almost never refer to *sant*s, I do not include Rāmdās in the list of *sant*s. Rāmdās does appear in some *bakhar*s about Śivājī.

[6] R. V. Herwaḍkar, ed. *Śakakarte Chatrapati Śivājī Mahārāj yāñce Saptaprakaraṇātmak Caritra, Malhar Rāmāv Chitṇis Viracit* (Puṇe: Vhīnas Prakāśan,1967), 60-61. Cited in P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 226 n12.

[7] Veena Naregal notes that from the time of Śivājī's grandson Śāhūmahārāj (1682-1749) onwards, Maratha and Peśvā elites showed a moderate degree of interest in copying and collecting manuscripts. Based on the information available, however, it appears that their literary tastes were much more oriented toward reproducing Sanskrit texts such as the *Ṛg Veda* and *Bhagavad Gītā* than Marathi manuscripts. Among those who did sponsor the copying of a Marathi manuscript, not surprisingly, the *Jñāneśvarī* was the most popular. V. Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere*, 28-32.

toward the literature and institutions of the Marathi *bhakti* tradition would be, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Another attractive possible source of historical information related to Eknāth is the records of legal decisions made by councils of brahmans (*dharmasabhā*s) in some of the influential religious centers around western India. As Rosalind O'Hanlon has insightfully demonstrated in her recent article on purification in pre-colonial western India, *dharmasabhā*s continued to command much respect well into the 18th century, when their authority was gradually displaced by a more centralized legal system under the Peshwas.[8] Highly respected *dharmasabhā*s were known to be based in Nāśik, Kolhāpūr, Pandharpur, Paithan and a few other towns,[9] and records of these councils' decisions were commonly preserved by the families who traditionally led them – the *dharmādhikārī*s (literally, authorities or directors of *dharma*). Not surprisingly, given Paithan's long-standing, strongly orthodox brahman character, the town's *dharmasabhā* was regarded as one of the most authoritative in the region.[10] One of the most common issues that were taken before the councils dealt with ritual impurity that was perceived

[8] Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Narratives of Penance and Purification in Western India, c.1650-1850," *Journal of Hindu Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): Esp. 65-69.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid. As further confirmation of the Paithan *dharmasabhā*'s good reputation, we might note that a dispute over rights to authority and administration of a popular *pīr*'s shrine near Sātārā (which at that time was part of the Ādil Shāhī or Bījāpūr sultanate) was taken before the *dharmasabhā* in Paiṭhaṇ in 1611. R. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives*, 145-150. A far more famous example of more indeterminate historicity is the 13th-century *sant* Jñāndev, who went before a council of brahmans (not explicitly called a *dharmasabhā* in the story) to plead his case that he and his siblings be admitted to full brahman standing (which their father had lost because he took a vow of *sannyāsa* but later had a family). Mahīpati narrates this story in his *BhV* 9:20-78, which Christian Novetzke says is taken nearly verbatim from a composition called the *Ādi* (Beginning) that is attributed to Nāmdev. C.L. Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory*, 120. Novetzke notes that there is some debate over whether the *Ādi* was composed by the 14th-century Nāmdev or one Viṣṇudās Nāmā who was a contemporary of Eknāth. Manuscripts that contain portions of the *Ādi* date to the mid 17th century, several decades after Eknāth died. Ibid., 141. Either way, the story of Jñāndev and the Paithan *dharmasabhā* is further evidence of the council's importance by the time that Eknāth lived.

to arise from mixing with "impure" people and from engaging in activities that were prohibited for one's given caste.[11]

Since the *dharmasabhā* at Paithan was clearly so important, since it was almost certainly active during Eknāth's time, and since several stories about Eknāth mention him getting into serious trouble with the brahman community in Paithan with regard to ritual purity, one naturally wonders whether these *dharmasabhā* records may even speak directly about Eknāth. Records of some *dharmasabhā*s have been published, but unfortunately only a few from the Paithan council are among them.[12] On one of my field trips to Paithan, with the help of Eknāth's descendants and a former mayor of Paithan, I located the *dharmādhikārī* family (who happen to use Dharmādhikārī as their surname now) and inquired into the current location of these records. Unfortunately, they said that the older generation who would know about these matters has passed away, and the younger generations have taken no interest. I was told by one of the elder members of the family that no one in the family now knows anything about such records or where they might be.[13] While this is indeed frustrating news, I still have some hope that the records may still appear in another location. One of the previous mayors of Paithan, Bāḷāsāheb Pāṭil, who was quite influential in the town during the decades that he was in office, donated a good deal of material to the Marathwada Archives in Aurangabad.[14] I was told by the archivist

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[11] R. O'Hanlon, "Narratives of Penance and Purification," 54.

[12] Rosalind O'Hanlon, Personal communication, December 14, 2009.

[13] There is, of course, the chance that the family members with whom I spoke were not totally forthcoming with me. However, my other contacts in Paithan, who belong to respected and influential families, also advised me that they were skeptical that the current (younger) members of the Dharmādhikārī family would know much about such historical matters. The family recently built a new residential building on the site of their traditional home, which would mitigate against the possibility that these records have lain forgotten in some corner.

[14] I did not discover when exactly Pāṭil made this donation, but it is mentioned in 1979 in an English overview of Maharashtrian archives. *Maharashtra Archives at a Glance*, (Bombay: Department of Archives, Government of Maharashtra, 1979), 17. Cited in K.N. Chitnis, *Research Methodology in History*, 21.

there that this donation consisted of "five to ten" large bundles (*rumāl*s) of documents written in Moḍī (cursive Marathi) script that no one in the office can read,[15] and due to a lack of funding they have not been able to hire a Moḍī expert even to find out what these documents are, much less to catalogue and prepare them for others to view.[16] For now, at least, no relevant records from Paithan's *dharmasabhā* are available to shed light on our investigation.

In Chapter Two we observed some of the disagreements among groups over the genealogy of Eknāth's descendants, particularly in relation to the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* and the Gosāvī family in Vaṭhār who have asserted that they too are a branch of the family tree. Further research could certainly be carried out among the Gosāvī families (both in Vaṭhār and in Paithan) and on the records that they possess. It is difficult to predict the degree to which these records would speak to the larger social memory of Eknāth and not narrowly reflect the families' own interests.

We also could take into account occasional claims to familial or spiritual lineage that were made by people far removed from Paithan. In the course of my research I have come across a small number of such claims, one of which has taken on a life of its own at the hands of Sanskrit scholars. This is an appeal to membership in Eknāth's lineage by two *dharmaśāstra* experts in Varanasi in the early 17th century – Āpadeva, who composed the *Mīmāṁsā-nyāya-*

[15] Moḍī (literally, "broken by bending," or "twisted") is a cursive Marathi script that scribes normally used for business, accounting and official writing. Since sentences can be written without lifting the pen from the page and since most of its characters are streamlined versions of Devanagari characters (often called "Bālbodh" in Marathi), it was understood to be a faster, more efficient way to write. Almost all official Marathi documents between the time of Śivājī in the mid 17th century until Indian Independence in 1947 used Moḍī script, and one regularly finds the *bāḍa*s of *kīrtan* performers written in Moḍī as well. One who knows Marathi can learn to read and write in Moḍī with a month or two of practice (and it used to be compulsory in Marathi-medium schools until a generation ago), but without training, only a small fraction of what is written in Moḍī is decipherable. Large archives in Maharashtra often maintain a network of "Moḍī experts" who are available to assist scholars in accessing the information in these archives. It is not a surprise that people in the Marathwada Archives could not read Moḍī. Most of that archive's holdings are official records of the Aurangabad region when it belonged to the Nizām of Hyderābād in the 19th and early 20th centuries, all of which are written in Urdu and Persian.

[16] Mrs. Shahnaz Khan, Personal communication, August 16, 2010.

prakāśa, and his son Anantadeva, who wrote the *Smṛti-kaustubha* and other Sanskrit works. Āpadeva is the more famous and influential of the two, but it was Anantadeva who claimed that he and his father were related to Eknāth, whom he described as "a learned brahman fully endowed with Vedic knowledge, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, who lived on the bank of the Godāvarī."[17] Anantadeva states that he is a fourth-generation direct descendant of Eknāth, through a son of Eknāth whose name was also Āpadeva (like that of Anantadeva's father, but two generations earlier).[18]

This claim of common ancestry was first brought to the attention of English-reading audiences by Franklin Edgerton, who was frankly skeptical since Eknāth is remembered to have only one son, whose name was Hari.[19] Furthermore, dated commentaries on Āpadeva's undated *Mīmāṁsā-nyāya-prakāśa* indicate that Āpadeva must have lived in the early 17th century – a bit too early to accommodate Anantadeva's claim to be a fourth-generation descendant of Eknāth (since Eknāth died in 1599). At the same time, Edgerton suggested with impressive elusiveness that it was "extremely likely" that Anantadeva's reference to Eknāth was "not entirely meaningless."[20] Three decades later, P. K. Gode raised this issue in an article that he wrote on

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[17] *āsīt godāvarī-tīre veda-vedi-samanvitaḥ | śrī-kṛṣṇa-māneka ekanāthabhidho divjaḥ* (Introduction v.13) Anantadeva, *Smṛti-kaustubha* (Bombay: Nirṇayasagara Press, 1909). Cited in Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra Vol. 1 Part 2*, Revised and Enlarged ed. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1975), 960. It is worth noting that Anantadeva does not refer to Eknāth ever living in Varanasi, despite the fact that hagiographical sources routinely tell the story of Eknāth defending his *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* before *paṇḍit*s in Varanasi and the colophons of the *EBh* and the *Rukmiṇī-svayamvara* both stating Varanasi as the site where they were completed. In short, there were memories of Eknāth living in Varanasi for a short time, but Anantadeva does not mention this.

[18] Anantadeva, *Smṛti-kaustubha*, Introduction, v.16. Anantadeva's lineage claim runs thus: Eknāth – Āpadeva (I) – Anantadeva (I) – Āpadeva (II) – Anantadeva (II). So the figure under consideration here is "Anantadeva II," and his father and the author of the *Mīmāṁsā-nyāya-prakāśa* is Āpadeva II.

[19] Franklin Edgerton, *The Mīmāṁsā-nyāya-prakāśa; or, Āpadevī: a Treatise on the Mīmāṁsā System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), 17-18.

[20] Ibid.

Āpadeva, but he did nothing more than to repeat Edgerton's doubts.[21] The familial link was also cited by the editor of another work attributed to Anantadeva, and he did not hesitate to accept the claim at face value.[22] The public credibility of this claim was boosted significantly when the great 20th-century *dharmaśāstra* scholar P. V. Kane weighed in with his opinion. Kane also revealed that an independent Sanskrit text from the 18th century repeated the Eknāth-Āpadeva-Anantadeva claim.[23] Although he acknowledged the doubts of previous scholars, Kane simply stated that it was "unnecessary" to respond to them "at the present," and without offering a reason, he endorsed Anantadeva's claim as having historical merit.[24] In recent years, this lineage connection has been taken for granted by Sheldon Pollock and Rosalind O'Hanlon when referring to Āpadeva, perhaps out of their desire to illustrate further the already quite evident connection between brahman clans in Paithan to Varanasi in the 16th and 17th centuries.[25]

In my opinion, Edgerton was correct in his skepticism about Anantadeva's claim to be a descendant of Eknāth. Popular memory unequivocally recalls Eknāth having only one son

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[21] P. K. Gode, "Āpadeva, the Author of the Mīmāṁsānyāyaprakāśa and Mahāmahopādhyāya Āpadeva, the Author of the Adhikaraṇacandrikā and the Smṛticandrikā: Are They Identical?," in *Studies in Indian Literary History*, ed. P. K. Gode, vol. 3. (Bombay: Singhi Jain Śāstra Śikṣāpīṭh, 1954), 40.

[22] Anantadeva, *The Mano'nurañjana Nāṭakam*, ed. Mangal Deva Shastri, vol. 76, The Princess of Wales Sarasvatī Bhavana Texts (Allahabad: The Superintendent, Printing and Stationery, 1938), 1-2.

[23] Kane cites the *Viṭṭhala-ṛg-mantra-sāra-bhāṣya* of Kāśinātha, who is more widely known for his *Dharmasindhu*. I have not personally investigated this reference. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra Vol. 1 Part 2*, 960. It should also be noted that Kane seems to have had Eknāth on his mind while writing this volume of his *History of Dharmaśāstra,* as he mentions Eknāth again while describing the *dharmaśāstra* writer named Dalapati or Dalādhīśa (author of the *Nṛsiṁha-prasāda*). Without any support, Kane states, "It is not unlikely that Sūryapaṇḍita, said to be the guru of the author, is the same as Sūrya, the father of the great Maratha saint Ekanātha..." Ibid., 862. Since we know almost nothing about Eknāth's father, I have serious doubts about the veracity of this claim.

[24] Ibid., 963.

[25] Sheldon Pollock, "Introduction: Working Papers on Sanskrit Knowledge Systems on the Eve of Colonialism," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 30, no. 5 (2002): 435; Rosalind O'Hanlon and Christopher Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are? Pandit Networks and the Problem of Livelihoods in Early Modern Western India," *Indian Economic and Social Review* 45, no. 3 (2008): 395; R. O'Hanlon, "Letters Home: Banaras Pandits and the Maratha Regions in Early Modern India," 3.

whose name was Hari, and I have yet to encounter an alternative story (written or oral) that mentions either a second son or a son with a name other than Hari. Moreover, no names ending in *-deva* appear in either the Paithankar or the Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs' family trees. Unless Eknāth had a second son named Āpadeva who was completely wiped from all records and memory (a highly unlikely prospect), it is impossible to accept Anantadeva's lineage claim as he stated it. Yet, also with Edgerton, I suspect that there was some other basis for Anantadeva's claim even if it is not literally true. As O'Hanlon and Minkowski have demonstrated, the network of brahman families between Paithan and Varanasi was undeniably strong and important,[26] and this coincides fairly well with (is slightly later than) the time in which Eknāth's conservative son Haripaṇḍit was said to have moved to Varanasi. One aspect of Haripaṇḍit's move that is regularly remembered (in *EC* 28:18, for example) is that he had three sons, of whom the youngest one, Rāghobā, remained with Eknāth in Paithan when Haripaṇḍit moved to Varanasi. Rāghobā is remembered as the ancestor of the Paithankar Gosāvīs and as the heir of Eknāth's legacy (including the inheritance of property and temples) in Paithan. Haripaṇḍit's other two sons, however, are never mentioned again.[27] Given that Rāghobā was remembered specifically as the youngest of the siblings, and one would expect the rights of inheritance being given to the eldest, it is plausible to imagine that Haripaṇḍit's two older sons may have remained in Varanasi and may have started their own families there. Although neither of those two sons was named Āpadeva, their presence could have at least afforded a well-grounded opportunity for Eknāth's memory to develop among some families in Varanasi. This is, of course, no more than

[26] R. O'Hanlon and C. Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are," 253-277; R. O'Hanlon, "Letters Home: Banaras Pandits and the Maratha Regions in Early Modern India."; Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Speaking from Siva's Temple: Banaras Scholar Households and the Brahman 'ecumene' of Mughal India," *South Asian History and Culture* 2, no. 2 (2011).

[27] The Vaṭhārkar Gosāvīs claim that one of the two elder sons was named Uddhav and that he eventually moved to Vaṭhār, which the Paithankar Gosāvīs dispute.

speculation, and I am not aware that anyone after Anantadeva continued to claim Eknāth as an ancestor.

Much more interesting than the question of Āpadeva's and Anantadeva's actual lineage is the question of why Anantadeva, a known scholar of *dharmaśāstra* and son of a famous *dharmaśāstra* scholar, would be inclined to flaunt a connection to Eknāth, who never composed in Sanskrit and was (at least in some circles) notorious for transgressing some of the very laws governing social interaction that Āpadeva and Anantadeva so actively promoted. It would seem that Eknāth either must have accrued an impressive enough reputation by that time (roughly the mid 17th century) to override any allegations or unorthodoxy, or Eknāth's name was known and appreciated to some extent in Varanasi, unburdened by any awareness of his inter-caste transgressions. Whatever the status of Eknāth and his relation to Anantadeva may have been, this connection appears to have remained an isolated reference that was of interest only to scholars. In the course of two years research on Eknāth's memory in Maharashtra, I did not encounter anyone who had heard of this claim aside from professional Sanksrit scholars and academics who had read Kane.

A less prominent claim of Eknāth as an ancestor came from the opposite end of the subcontinent, in the town of Māyūram near Tānjāvūr, where one Mādhavsvāmī composed a Marathi translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* around 1700. Mādhavsvāmī's translation was printed sequentially in multiple issues of the *Journal of the Tanjore Sarasvathi Mahal Library*. Before each section, the editor introduced Mādhavsvāmī as the grandson of "Eknāth Mahārāj,"[28]

[28] The use of the term *mahārāj* here is very common among Vārkarīs at least to show respect to the *sant*-poets. I am confident that "Eknāth Mahārāj" refers here to our Eknāth of Paithan.

although he did not reveal the grounds on which this identification was made.[29] This lineage connection was repeated by some Marathi scholars, but it was eventually proven that although Mādhavsvāmī's grandfather was indeed named Eknāth, he was a devotee of Gaṇeś and lived in the town of Bīḍ (60km southeast of Paithan and not on the Godāvarī River) rather than Eknāth of Paithan.[30]

The name "Eknāth" is not common in Marathi, and its meaning has been the topic of some debate. Some argue that it is related to the *kuladaivatā* (family deity) of Eknāth's ancestors, Ekavīrā (a form of the more widely known Maharashtrian goddess Reṇukā), so that the name means "Protector of Ekavīrā" or "one whose protector is Ekavīrā."[31] Others suggest that this name was given to him by his grandfather after the death of Eknāth's parents to reflect the fact that the boy had become the one (*ek*) remaining heir to and protector of the family lineage (which would put even greater emphasis on the importance of Eknāth's *śrāddha* rituals).[32] There is no evidence in Marathi that anyone bearing the name Eknāth before our *sant* of Paithan,[33] but later at least two authors are known to have also had this name. One was an

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[29] "Editorial," *Journal of the Tanjore Sarasvathi Mahal Library* 7, no. 4 (1951-1952); "Editorial," *Journal of the Tanjore Sarasvathi Mahal Library* 12, no. 1 (1958); "Editorial," *Journal of the Tanjore Sarasvathi Mahal Library* 13 (1959).

[30] G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 29.

[31] K. Jagadānanda-nandan, *PC*, 6:40.

[32] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, 17.

[33] At the Yellammā Devī temple in Saundatti/Savadatti (25 miles north of Dharwād in northern Karnataka) there is a shrine to one Eknāth, as he is associated to the local goddess. The local stories about him portray him unambiguously as a little-known Śaiva *yogī* who gave counsel to Yellammā. Based on the age of the Yellammā Devī temple (built approximately in the 12th century), this Eknāth (if he is as old as the temple) clearly precedes Eknāth of Paithan. I have seen nothing to indicate that there was any relation between these two Eknāths. I am grateful to Mr. Dilip Khapre for taking me to visit the Yellamma temple in Saundatti (his family's *kuladaivatā*) on November 18-19, 2009. More famously, Eknath is the family name of the popular contemporary author and meditation instructor Eknath Easwaran, who was originally from Kerala. My strong suspicion is that Eknath in this case has some kind of relation to Śaiva mythology or background. "Eknath Easwaran | Blue Mountain," http://www.easwaran.org/eknath-easwaran.html, Accessed July 4, 2011. Thus there is a remote possibility that the name Eknāth may have come to Paithan through Śaiva or Nāth channels, but there is absolutely nothing to indicate

obscure 17th-century author of a book on Vedānta, who was a devotee of Dattātreya and lived in the town of Mañjarath, located halfway between Paithan and Nāndeḍ on the Godāvarī River.[34] The other was a devotee of Gaṇeś (an uncommon but not unprecedented allegiance in pre-colonial western India) who lived in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in the town of Bīḍ.[35] Eknāth of Bīḍ had a guru named Janī-Janārdana, who appears to have been a student of Janārdana of Daulatābād (the guru of Eknāth of Paithan).[36] Eknāth of Bīḍ confusingly adopted the same signature name (*nāmamudrikā*) for concluding his compositions as did Eknāth of Paithan – Ekā-Janārdana. This almost certainly was done to imitate Eknāth of Paithan and thereby enhance Eknāth of Bīḍ's status, and the two identical *nāmamudrikā*s led to 19th- and early 20th-century scholars mistakenly attributing several compositions to Eknāth of Paithan when they were actually composed by Eknāth of Bīḍ. [37] There is no evidence of a direct relationship between these Eknāths. The proliferation of this name probably indicates the quickly growing reputation of Eknāth of Paithan.

Another source of information to consider is the histories of the few small *maṭh*s, temples and institutions that claimed to have some historical connections to Eknāth. Due to time and logistical constraints, I have not been able to pursue these claims thoroughly. Nonetheless, it would be useful to note the initial directions that such an investigation could take, and these

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that the *sant* or his family would have had this connection in mind when endowing the name. If there were a historical Śaiva or Nāth stratum of significance behind the naming of Eknāth of Paithan, it was long ago completely obfuscated and forgotten.

[34] G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 29.

[35] Ibid. It should be noted that Bīḍ is often transliterated in English as Beed.

[36] D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, 19 n2; J.R. Ājgāvkar, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, 21; G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 93.

[37] G.D. Khānolkar, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 30.

claims do offer a few occasional (not mutually connected or systematic) glimpses into how Eknāth's name and memory have been invoked.

In his edition of Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra*, Puruṣottam Eknāth-tātyā Pānse states that his guru Bagājī Mahārāj (early-mid 20th century) had had an immediate encounter (*sākṣātkār*) with Eknāth while meditating. Following his *sākṣātkār*, Bagājī annually celebrated Eknāth's birthday and death memorial (the same day, Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī) at his *āśram.*[38] This involved a serial reading (*pārāyaṇ*) of Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra* and a large public meal at which attendees sat on the ground in long rows (*paṅkti*) to eat. [39]

According to a short hagiography of Bagājī (composed in verse by a man named Sītārām) at the beginning of Pānse's edited volume, Bagājī had been told by his own guru to make an annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur (*vārī*) and to visit Paithan for Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī.[40] When Bagājī arrived in Paithan for the first time, he felt welcomed and was quite impressed. Shortly thereafter, Eknāth is said to have visited him in a vision (which Bagājī insisted was *sākṣātkār* while awake and not a dream), and Eknāth told Bagājī to begin a tradition of celebrating Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī in the town of Varūḍ (about 60 miles west-northwest of Nāgpūr) on the bank of the

[38] The first hagiographical reference to the celebration on this day – the sixth day of the first half (*vadya*) of the month of Phālgun – is in the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* (9:7-100), as Eknāth arranges a great festival in honor of Janārdana's death. This particular day is remembered to be the day on which Janārdana was born, Eknāth was born, Eknāth had *sākṣātkār* of Datta, Eknāth received his blessing at the end of his studies from Janārdana, Janārdana died, and Eknāth died. The festival is mentioned in *EC* 10:23 as well. It is highly likely that this festival has a very long history. Nowadays it is celebrated mainly in Paithan over the course of three days, during which more than 200,000 people regularly attend. One also finds Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī (also called Nāth Ṣaṣṭhī) celebrated in the few other places where Eknāth is prominently remembered, but it is otherwise not a widely recognized festival.

[39] Keśavsvāmī and P.E. Pānse, *Śrīsant Eknāth Mahārāj yāñce Ovibaddha Caritra*, 1-2.

[40] Sītārām and Puruṣottam Eknāthtātya Pānse, "Bhaktamahimāmṛt," in *Śrīsant Eknāth Mahārāj yāñce Ovibaddha Caritra*. (Nāgpūr: Puruṣottam Eknāthtātya Pānse, 1980), 45:62-76.

Vasiṣṭha River.[41] It is unclear whether Bagājī's guru had any connection to Eknāth's spiritual lineage; Bagājī cites his *sākṣātkār* alone as the basis of his authority.[42]

The brief hagiography of Bagājī reveals many efforts by Sītārām to interweave Eknāth's memory with Bagājī's own activities. Early in his narrative, Sītārām lays out the Eknāth-Bagājī connection unequivocally: "Many people gathered for the pilgrimage (*yātrā*) to sit for a meal (*paṅkti*) on the bank of the Vasiṣṭha River, just as they came to the banks of the Gaṅgā (Godāvarī) for Nāth Ṣaṣṭhī.[43] There the Gaṅgā (Godāvarī) flowed; here, the *tīrthā* of the Vasiṣṭha. There Eknāth himself lived; here was Bagājī. Bagājī and Eknāth: there was no duality or difference. For what hint of dualism could there be between God and *bhakta*?"[44] In another story, Bagājī prepares a feast for a large crowd of people, and when he discovers that he has no ghee for the food, he prays to Eknāth and turns water into ghee in order to save the event from disgrace.[45] On another occasion, a leprous brahman comes to Bagājī, claiming that Eknāth had told him in a dream to attend Bagājī's Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī celebration and eat at Bagājī's *paṅktī* in order to be healed.[46] There is no evidence to suggest that Bagājī's influence and reputation extended much beyond the local areas in Vidarbha (eastern Maharashtra) where he lived. He is

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[41] Ibid., 4:103.

[42] A famous precedent for *sākṣātkār* being cited as the sole and sufficient spiritual link to a *sant* (and source of authority) is Nānāmahārāj Sākhre of Āḷandī. Originally a wealthy brahman in Pune, Sākhre (whose family name is Jośī) had a conversion experience when listening to a *kīrtan*, after which he distributed his wealth and adopted a life of renunciation. He moved to nearby Āḷandī (where Jñāndev is said to have been entombed alive at the end of the 13th century) and meditated while fasting for several weeks on the banks of the Indrayāṇī River. Ultimately he is said to have had an immediate encounter (*sākṣātkār*) of Jñāndev. So Sākhre claimed spiritual authority on the basis of his *sākṣātkār* of Jñāndev, independent of any guru-disciple lineage. Kisan Mahārāj Sākhre, Personal communication, March 5, 2009.

[43] Eknāth is regularly referred to simply as "Nāth," which is neither an allusion to nor a conflation with the Nāth *sampradāy*. Similarly, Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī is frequently called Nāth Ṣaṣṭhī.

[44] Sītārām and P.E. Pānse, "Bhaktamahimāmṛt," 4:25-27.

[45] Ibid., 5:33-54.

[46] Ibid., 5:59-84.

noteworthy as a recent example of how a small, independent guru-centered tradition has incorporated the memory of Eknāth as central to its own identity.

Another town in eastern Maharashtra – Mohapā on the Madhugaṅgā River (around 30km northwest of Nāgpūr) – was said to be home to a svāmī who claimed to be of Eknāth's spiritual lineage through Eknāth's son Haripaṇḍit. The most influential biographer of Eknāth in the 20th century, La. Rā. Pāṅgārkar, cited this information as possible evidence of Haripaṇḍit's conversion to Eknāth's liberal ways.[47] Given the relative proximity of Mohapā to Varūḍ (which we just observed in relation to Bagājī Mahārāj), I suspect that these two traditions that remember Eknāth prominently are connected, but I have no evidence of this.

In one of the Maharashtra State Gazetteers, there is also a reference to Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī being celebrated annually in a small town called Poṭī, some 19 miles south of Vardhā on the Vardhā River.[48] At the turn of the 20th century it apparently drew several thousand visitors to the Eknāth temple in town. In recent years, however, the event seems to have been discontinued due to a larger fair being held at the same time in a nearby town.[49]

According to an esteemed Maharashtrian scholar who is writing a book on Vārkarī *maṭh*s in Pandharpur, several of these institutions were founded by disciples within Eknāth's spiritual

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[47] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, dahā. This information is stated in the preface to the second edition of Pāṅgārkar's book.

[48] R. V. Russell, ed. *Central Provinces District Gazetteers: Seoni District, Volume A: Descriptive* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press,1907), 254. It should be noted that Vardhā commonly has been rendered in English as "Wardhā."

[49] "The Gazetteers Department - Wardha," http://www.maharashtra.gov.in/english/gazetteer/wardha/places_Poti.html, Accessed June 20, 2011. It is not clear from this reference whether the fair in the neighboring town is also a celebration of Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī or of something unrelated to Eknāth.

lineage or descendants of Eknāth. Interestingly and surprisingly, more *maṭh*s in Pandharpur claim historical links to Eknāth than to any other Varkari *sant*.[50]

These references are admittedly disparate and idiosyncratic in their various ways, and I mention them not to support a specific argument but rather to suggest potential byways for future research on institutional sites where Eknāth's memory has been preserved and promoted. Of course, no such consideration would be complete without taking into account the temples and activities in Paithan and the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir in Aurangābād.

Located strategically within a bend in the Godāvarī River,[51] the town of Paithan (historically called Pratiṣṭhāna) has an ancient heritage that dates back to 300 BCE,[52] and it hosts dozens of temples and shrines from many religious traditions – Jain, Muslim, Mahānubhāv, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Devī and medieval saintly figures such as Śivadīnanāth, Amṛtarāya and Kṛṣṇadayārṇava. Currently, however, none of these other traditions in Paithan remotely approaches the institutional legacy and prominence of Eknāth's. The main foci of Eknāth reverence are two temples known as the Gāvātle Mandir (literally, the "in-the-town temple") where Eknāth is said to have lived and worshipped, and the Samādhi Mandir that commemorates Eknāth's voluntary death in the river.

The sizable Gāvātle Mandir is located in the middle of a dense neighborhood of mainly brahmans on the hillock in the old, southern part of Paithan. The main hall (*maṇḍapa*) consists of a large, open rectangular floor in the center where most of the temple's programs take place.

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[50] "Esteemed Indian scholar," Personal communication, February 13, 2010. I am honoring this person's request to be credited anonymously in this dissertation.

[51] The Godāvarī River has always been an important resource for Paithan, although its flow is now highly regulated by the immense Jayakwadi Dam, which came into operation in 1976. Because of the sheer size of the 10km long dam and the amount of water that now it holds upstream from the town (creating the "Nāth Sāgar" or Eknāth Sea), it is difficult to imagine how the Godāvarī and Paithan looked before the dam was built.

[52] R.S. Morwanchikar, *The City of the Saints*, 9.

The space is surrounded by ornate wooden pillars and a railing that separates the rectangle from the space beyond, allowing people to walk fully around the rectangle. The pillars support a balcony that runs along three sides of the open rectangle, and the whole area is covered by a roof made of wooden beams and metal sheets. On one side of the *maṇḍapa* is a small space that is separated from the rest of the floor by an iron railing, and on the floor there a trap door opens to a large cistern (*rāñjaṇ*) below. The shrine reminds visitors of the oldest recorded story about Eknāth (in Mukteśvar's *ŚKĀ*), in which Kṛṣṇa worked as a servant in Eknāth's home, mainly carrying water from the river and, it is believed, filling this very cistern.[53] Through a small doorway on the western wall opposite the main entrance, the small *garbha-gṛha* (most sacred area in which deities' images are kept) contains a shrine that holds a small stone image of the Vārkarīs' main deity, Viṭṭhal (also known as Pāṇḍuraṅg).

This particular image is slightly different from other images of Viṭṭhal in that his right hand (which rests at his hip, as with all other Viṭṭhal images) is open and points downward. The image is widely known as Vijay Pāṇḍuraṅg.[54] A well-known hagiographical story in Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra* tells of how it first came to Paithan. The image was originally carved for a devoted, wealthy merchant in Karnataka. When it was completed, the merchant started having regular dreams of Viṭṭhal saying that he wanted to dwell in the home of Eknāth in Paithan. After consulting with local priests to confirm the meaning of the dream, the merchant gifted the image to Eknāth.[55]

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[53] This story first appeared in the writings of Eknāth's grandson Mukteśvar and in every subsequent major hagiography as well.

[54] I do not know what the "victory" in Vijay Pāṇḍuraṅg represents. Since the image is said to have originated in Karnataka, perhaps Vijay (or the image's hand position) is connected to Vijayanagar or the Vijayanagar Empire in some way.

[55] Keśavsvāmī and M. Gosāvī, *Śrīkeśavkṛt Ovībaddha Śrīeknāth Caritra*, 13:3-63.

Also in the shrine with the Vijay Pāṇḍurang image are the silver replicas of Eknāth's sandals (*pāduka*s), fashioned in a style that is common to other Vārkarī *sant*s' *pāduka*s. These replicas are brought out of the temple for processions only for Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī and for the annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur (*vārī*). Above the shrine hangs a painting which appears to be rather old (perhaps late 19th century) of a three-headed Dattātreya, who is remembered by tradition (as we observed in Chapters Two and Three) to have been Eknāth's *paramaguru*, who blessed Eknāth with the promise that he would become a great writer.

The southern and eastern stone walls of the *maṇḍapa* separate it from the lanes outside. The northern and western walls are part of a larger, old stone construction in which three families of Eknāth's descendants currently live. The construction style of some of these living areas is the same as the *garbha gṛha*, which seems to indicate that they were all built together. It also appears that further living quarters used to extend to the west of the temple, but they are now dilapidated and unused. Some parts of the building on the northern side in which two families of Eknāth's descendants dwell have been renovated and built up. The wooden *maṇḍapa* was clearly added after the earliest stone parts of the temple. The authoritative scholar on the history of architecture in Paithan, R. S. Morwanchikar, states that the Gāvātle Mandir's wooden *maṇḍapa* was completed around the turn of the 19th century and was a gift of one of the extremely wealthy brahmans (called *sāhukār*s) who helped to finance the Peśvā government in its later years, Rāmcandra Vānoḷe.[56] This temple/residence structure is where the living descendants of Eknāth claim that Eknāth himself lived, and I was told that a team from the Archeological Survey of India felt that the foundational building dated back to the 16th century

[56] R. S. Morwanchikar, *Woodwork in Western India* (Delhi: Puja Publishers, 1994), 86-87. For more on *sāhukār*s, see Irawati Karve, *Maharashtra: Land and Its People*, revised ed., Maharashtra State Gazetteer (Mumbai: Gazetteers Department, State of Maharashtra, 2009), 81.

when Eknāth lived.[57] Across the lane from the Gāvātle Mandir is another large home that Morwanchikar claims was finished "by about the early nineteenth century."[58] Although only families of Eknāth's descendants now live in the home, it apparently served as a *maṭh* for disciples for some time.

Slightly less than a kilometer to the northwest of the Gāvātle Mandir stands the Eknāth Samādhi Mandir, near the riverbank. The temple stands in a large courtyard surrounded by tall (nearly 20 feet) walls and four entrances with large double-doors. The Samādhi Mandir has an ornate two-story wooden *maṇḍapa* carved in the same style as the Gāvātle Mandir (and indeed, Morwanchikar says that they were constructed at the same time, at the turn of the 19th century). Instead of a *garbha-gṛha*, however, along the Samādhi Mandir's western wall is a raised platform, on which stands the large stone memorial shrine for Eknāth's *samādhi*. Outside the temple to the west, a large stone stair (*ghāṭ*) leads down to the Godāvarī River.[59] Leading up to the temple on the eastern side are rows of stalls that sell devotional items, CDs and trinkets. Due to its location away from other buildings, and because of its large and open spaces, the Samādhi Mandir accommodates pilgrims and visitors much more easily than the Gāvātle Mandir. During the main Eknāth-related festive occasions – Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī and the departure and return of the Eknāth palanquin on its annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur (*vārī*) – processions of Eknāth's descendants who accompany the silver replicas of his sandals (*pāduka*s) from the Gāvātle Mandir to the Samādhi Mandir are central events.

Not specifically related to Eknāth but relevant to social memory that involves inter-caste matters, about 100 meters to the northeast of the Samādhi Mandir at the edge of a small colony

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[57] Yogīrāj Gosāvī, Personal communication, August 20, 2006.

[58] R.S. Morwanchikar, *Woodwork in Western India*, 83.

[59] I believe this *ghaṭ* is called the Lakṣmī-tīrthā, and it has a history that precedes Eknāth.

of homes (whose residents mostly were of Mahār background, I was told) is a stone platform on which has been constructed a shrine to the Mahār *sant* Cokhāmeḷā (popularly called Cokhobā). I was told by local residents that the shrine is cared for by people in the neighborhood.[60] Next to it stands a small building with two rooms and a small stone-paved courtyard which locals refer to as the Cokhobā *dharmaśāḷā* (literally, "religious school" but in this case meant more loosely as a building attached to a shrine for religious functions). In the course of several field trips to Paithan, I met two different late middle-aged men who had been appointed as full-time caretakers of the *dharmaśāḷā.* I am not aware of any other Vārkarī *sant* having his or her own shrine in Paithan aside from Eknāth and Cokhāmeḷā.[61] I was not able to obtain a thorough history of this place or reconfirm with others what I was told, but local residents reported to me what they understood of its past. According to them, the stone image in the Cokhobā Mandir was around 150-200 years old, and it was apparently held for some time in a very small shrine at the same spot as the current Mandir. A major flood hit the town in 1970 and damaged that small shrine, which was subsequently torn down so that the present, slightly larger *mandir* structure could be built. During Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī, I observed that a diverse group of saffron-clad *sādhu*s and Mahār Vārkarī pilgrims stays at the Cokhobā Mandir and its *dharmaśāḷā*. Although it is small, the Cokhobā Mandir near the Eknāth Samādhi Mandir continues to be active. I will comment further on this in the conclusion of the dissertation.

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[60] Local visitors at Cokhobā Mandir in Paithan, Personal communication, February 20, 2010. I did not record all of the names of the people with whom I spoke at the Cokhobā Mandir, but one of these friendly men whom I continued to meet on subsequent visits is Sopān Viṭṭhalrāv Bāṅgar, who lives in the neighborhood and runs a stall selling devotional items (powders for sectarian marks, the ubiquitous red *kumkum,* tulsi necklaces, etc.) and plastic toys on the path leading up to the Eknāth Samādhi Mandir.

[61] Within the Eknāth Samādhi Mandir are two small statues of Jñāndev and Tukārām tucked into a recess in one of the walls that surrounds the temple. They are quite inconspicuous, however, and I did not even notice them until my fourth visit.

Not surprisingly, the Gosāvī family in Paithan is somewhat reticent about revealing to outsiders the financial details of the sponsorship that they currently receive, and in the interest of preserving good relations with them I did not press them for this information. I was informed by a knowledgeable source that the Eknāth Saṁsthān currently owns over 700 acres of land around Paithan and Pandharpur (most of which was donated to them relatively recently by devotees, not long ago by local rulers).[62]

The sources that we have considered thus far offer rather little information about the Eknāth temples in Paithan – together referred to as the Eknāth Saṁsthān (the Eknāth Foundation) – which obviously benefitted from a great deal of organized financial support.[63] The earliest hagiographical writings describe Eknāth in his years as a householder living in some sort of sizable home that could accommodate guests and audiences for his *kīrtan*s. Keśavsvāmī in his *EC* (completed in 1762) mentions Eknāth's home specifically but briefly. He writes that the townspeople were so impressed with Eknāth's *kīrtan*s that they built him an *āśram* that "quickly" grew into a *vāḍā* (large house or mansion).[64] The earliest biographer of Eknāth claims that Eknāth himself was patronized by the local Muslim ruler (the Nizām in Ahmadnagar) with an annual 700-rupee donation to sponsor the festival commemorating the death of Eknāth's guru.[65] Another author, in contrast, states that the first recipient of official patronage was a fifth-

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[62] Managing Trustee of the Śrī Sant Eknāth Mahārāj Viśvasta Maṇḍaḷ, Personal communication, March 4, 2010. As a result of court cases in the latter half of the 20th century, administration of the Eknāth Saṁsthān's properties, trust fund and caretaking duties were divided among branches of the Gosāvī family and an independent group based in Paithan – the Viśvasta Maṇḍaḷ. The two parties work together in many ways, but naturally there are some tensions between them. It was neither necessary nor diplomatic to probe deeply into these details for the purpose of this dissertation.

[63] I came across a reference to a short article by a highly respected historian of Maratha period Maharashtra, but I had already departed India by that time and could not gain access to it. No doubt this article would be relevant for my description here. A. R. Kulkarṇī, "Paiṭhaṇce Nāth Saṁsthān," *Bhāratīya Itihās āṇi Saṁskṛti* 2 (1965): 43-53.

[64] Keśavsvāmī and M. Gosāvī, *Śrīkeśavkṛt Ovībaddha Śrīeknāth Caritra*, 8:22.

[65] D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, 199.

generation descendant of Eknāth named Chayyābuvā (hypothetically in the early 18th century), who received inheritable rights (*inām*) to a share in the revenue of three towns.[66] The same author claims that tax revenue from eleven more towns was gifted to the Eknāth Saṁsthān in subsequent generations, although it is not clear exactly how much income these towns brought in or how many of these rights were passed on and therefore accumulated over generations by the Eknāth Saṁsthān.[67] By the 1880s, according to one report, the Eknāth Saṁsthān was apparently receiving 22,000 rupees annually from a combination of the Nizām of Hyderabad, the British administration and several of the Marāṭhā noble families (the Śindes, Gāikwāḍs, Hoḷkars and Bhosḷes).[68]

The most valuable and independently verifiable way to check the details of these donations to the Eknāth Saṁsthān would be to search the official archives of the kingdoms themselves, which are now parceled out among three Indian state archives. The Andhra Pradesh State Archives in Hyderabad holds whatever records remain from the Nizām Shāh sultanate that ruled over the region which included Paithan from 1490 to 1600 (the entire duration of Eknāth's life).[69] Given my linguistic limitations, the potential headaches of working with archive bureaucracies even to gain admission, and the uncertainty about what useful records of the Nizām Shāh sultanate might still remain, I refrained from searching the Andhra Pradesh State Archives.

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[66] Raṅganāth Yaśvantrāv Deśpāṇḍe, "Śrīeknāthāñcā Vaṁśavṛkṣa," in *Svānanda-Vārsā*, ed. Ra. Śā. Ināmdār. (Aurangābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 2005), 49.

[67] Ibid.

[68] D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*.

[69] These records would be in Persian and possibly Marathi written in Moḍī script (as the Nizāms relied greatly on local brahman scribes and accountants to coordinate their administration on the local level). Stewart Gordon, "Hindus, Muslims, and the Other in Eighteenth-century India," in *Surprising Bedfellows: Hindus and Muslims in Medieval and Early Modern India*, ed. Sushil Mittal. (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 1999), 227.

The Pune Archives maintains the vast collection of records from the period of Peshwa rule in the Maratha Empire (roughly 1600 to 1865, although the large majority of records pertain to the latter half of that range).[70] This archive's materials are comprised of records from several different Maratha and Peshwa administrations (with different local administrators), all of which have been processed by British officials who reorganized the records for the purpose of getting clarity about land rights, patronage obligations and opportunities for "alienation" of property. Since the historical inquiries of most newcomers do not fit well with the peculiar British way of organizing the records (both Maratha and British records), the learning curve involved in simply using the Pune Archives is very steep. With the aid of some astute guides, I began a preliminary investigation into their holdings and found a number of relevant records.[71]

Relevant records in the Pune Archive include contracts on tax rights, patronage disbursements, official correspondence and the like. For example, one document written in Moḍī dated 1828 records the right of Rāmkṛṣṇa Eknāth Gosāvī (of the Eknāth Saṁsthān in Paithan) to receive a portion of the annual taxes on the nearby town of Ḍhorkīṇ as support from the Peshwa Bājīrav II, in continuation of earlier patronage commitments.[72] According to this document, Gosāvī would have been entitled to receive 850 rupees annually, but he had apparently taken an advance of 182 rupees and 6 aṇṇas in the previous year, so that his funding in 1828 would be reduced accordingly to 667 rupees and 10 aṇṇas.[73] Another record from 1824 states the Eknāth Saṁsthān's right to receive some of the annual taxes on the town of Vāṭegāv.[74] Another set of

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[70] K.N. Chitnis, *Research Methodology in History*, 6.

[71] I am extremely grateful to Michihiro Ogawa, Dr. Śrīkānt Raṇadive, and Mr. Sudhīr Khare, as well as to the staff at the Pune Archives, for their valuable orientation and assistance.

[72] These two towns are mentioned also in Raṅ. Ya. Deśpāṇḍe's summary of the Eknāth Saṁsthān's revenues.

[73] "Official Letter to Rāmkṛṣṇa Eknāth Gosāvī", in Moglaī Jamāv, Rumāl 182, MS no. 1 (Pune: Pune Archives).

[74] Ibid., MS no. 2.

letters are copies of correspondence from a Peshwa to "Rāmcandra bin Kṛṣṇa Gosāvī" (Rāmcandra son of Kṛṣṇa Gosāvī, following the Arabic convention) in relation to the latter's request for sponsorship as they build an *annachatram* (a charitable food and lodging institution) in Paithan. After some discussion, the Peshwa agreed to grant the Eknāth Saṁsthān rights to tax income from the nearby town of Toḍolī, totaling 1,646 rupees per year.[75] Doubtlessly, there are far more records in the Pune Archives that could shed light on the Peshwas' patronage of the Eknāth Saṁsthān, but a thorough and systematic investigation would be immensely time consuming, as the records are organized according to location of the town whose tax is being delegated rather than by grantee.

The final archive that holds records that are relevant to the Eknāth Saṁsthān is the Marathwada Archives in Aurangabad, which has documents of correspondence and interaction between administrators of the Eknāth Saṁsthān and the Nizām of Hyderabad from 1880 through 1946. The Marathwada Archives hold more than 70 pages of correspondence in Urdu records between the Eknāth Saṁsthān and the Nizām, pertaining mainly to the Saṁsthān's right of *jāgīr* (a portion of tax revenues from a particular town or district) and whether it might be transferred and maintained in the 1940s. Due to bureaucratic difficulties, I was not allowed to have direct access to these records.[76] For our purposes, however, it suffices simply to note that the Eknāth

[75] When Mr. Khare was helping me to document these records, he did not find an exact date written on the letters but rather a reference to the full date being stated in earlier records within the particular record container that we were observing. I had hoped to follow up in a future meeting with Mr. Khare, but his untimely demise has made it impossible to complete this documentation before I submit my dissertation. "Official letters from the Peshwa to Rāmcandra bin Kṛṣṇa Gosāvī", in Peśve Daptar, Ghaḍṇī, Rumāl 388, MS no. 32179 A, Ka, Kha (Pune: Pune Archives). I estimate that these records are from the early decades of the 19th century.

[76] I am grateful to Mrs. Shahnaz Khan at the Marathwada Archives for summarizing the contents of some of these documents, even though my repeated, thorough and sincere efforts to provide the necessary application paperwork were apparently insufficient to allow me direct access to these materials. Personal conversation, Shahnaz Khan, August 16, 2010.

Saṁsthān was receiving significant financial support from the Nizām of Hyderabad even in the first half of the 20th century.

Although the exact details of patronage by various Nizāms, Peshwas and the British Raj are yet to be explored fully, it is clear that by the early 19th century the Eknāth Saṁsthān was receiving very significant funding from multiple official sponsors. This information does not reveal much about the contours of Eknāth's social memory, but it unequivocally demonstrates that Eknāth's name and temples were widely enough known to attract attention and interest in official acts of beneficence from the local and not-so-local rulers. The institutionalization of Eknāth's memory in Paithan through state sponsorship of temples and families of Eknāth's descendants was a well-endowed, quite official affair.

The final institution that merits attention here is the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir (Eknāth Research Institute) in Aurangabad,[77] which was established in 1951 by group of devoted scholars and admirers of Marathi *sant* literature, and with the encouragement of one of the major Vārkarī leaders in Pandharpur, Dhuṇḍamahārāj Deglūrkar. It appears that the main impetus for the group to focus on Eknāth came from Baḷvantrāv Ghāṭe, a lawyer from Aurangabad, who had a special fondness for Eknāth's writings that was instilled in him as a child. [78] In 1949, the same group of men had founded the Śrīnāth Vaṅmayopāsak Maṇḍaḷ (Committee of Servants of Eknāth's Literature) for the purpose of publishing more and better literature on Eknāth. One goal of the

[77] The term *mandir* usually connotes the sense of temple (most often Hindu), but it also has the less religious sense of "house of" when preceded by another noun, e.g., *nāṭya-mandir* (theater, or literally, dance-house"), *rāja-mandir* (palace or literally, "house of the king"). Other research institutes in Maharashtra also use the term *mandir* in this way, such as the Bhārat Nāṭya Saṁśodhan Mandir (for research on Marathi theater) in Pune, the Rājvāḍe Saṁśodhan Mandir (for research on pre-colonial Maharashtrian history) in Dhuḷe and the less commonly known Marathi name of the famous Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune – the Bhāṇḍārkar Prācya Saṁśodhan Mandir.

[78] *Eknāth Darśan Khaṇḍa 1-lā*. (Auraṅgābād: Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir,1952), ek. The pagination of the preface to this book follows a scheme used in the prefaces of many Marathi books, namely, spelling out the page number (*ek, don, tīn, cār,* etc.) rather than using small Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, etc.).

group was to address what they perceived as the lack of a "satisfying" (*tṛpta karṇāre*) biography of Eknāth that would be accessible for the devotees who came to Paithan. The Maṇḍaḷ held a competition that attracted several manuscripts of new biographies, from which they selected one that they then published in 1950 with financial support from the Hyderabad State Government (to which Paithan belonged at the time the group began its projects).[79] The second major goal was to publish an edited book of scholarly articles on Eknāth's writings, following the model of what had been published nearly two decades earlier on the *sant* Jñāndev's writings.[80]

As that edited volume was coming together, the members of the Śrīnāth Vaṅmayopāsak Maṇḍaḷ decided at one of their meetings to expand their scope and adopt a more tangible, visible presence in the community. Thus they founded the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir in 1951. Using funds donated by local admirers of Eknāth and his writings (not necessarily Vārkarīs or formal devotees), the group constructed a small building in Aurangabad to house ESM's library and provide a space for events and activities. One of the ESM's members collected some 1,500 manuscripts (mostly Sanskrit) in local towns, and donations continued to arrive to expand the library. Around 20,000 rupees from branches of the Maharashtra State Government were donated to add on to the original building, and construction was complete in 1957.[81]

At its founding, the members of the ESM stated four main goals for the new institute: collecting, researching and pushing affordable books on Eknāth and other Marathi *sant*s; translating *sant* literature from other languages into Marathi; arranging occasional speakers to

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[79] Mahādev Śāstrī Jośī, *Paiṭhaṇce Nāth* (Paiṭhaṇ: Śrīnāth Vāṅmayopāsak Maṇḍaḷ, 1950), i.

[80] *Eknāth Darśan Khaṇḍa 1-lā*. 1; cf. Narahara Bāḷkṛṣṇa Deśmukh, ed. *Śrī Jñāneśvar Darśan*, 2 vols. (Ahmadnagar: Vāṅmayopāsak Maṇḍaḷ,1934).

[81] Baḷvant Girirāv Ghāṭe, ed. *Eknāth Darśan Khaṇḍa 2-rā (Bhāgavatkhaṇḍa)* (Auraṅgābād: Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir,1961), 14.

speak about the *sant*s' lives and literature; and offering scholarships for cultural studies.[82] To my knowledge, no translations have been completed or scholarships offered, but the first and third of these goals (publishing *sant*-related literature and arranging events) have been met successfully. Every year at the time of Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī (late February or early March) the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir sponsors two or more days of speakers and events on the institute's premises, as well as other very occasional lectures at other times in the year. Their library, comprised mostly of religious literature and Sanskrit texts (not specifically related to the *sant*s) continues to be open to the public on most weekday evenings. One cabinet holds publications specifically about Eknāth, although it is clear that most acquisitions occurred decades ago. Nonetheless, the ESM library contains many rare books on Eknāth (most of which are rare because they were printed locally and in small numbers, not because they are especially old), and it is the largest single collection of Eknāth-related literature that I have encountered. Nowadays, a small group of retirees meets at ESM once a week to read and discuss some of the major works of Marathi *bhakti* literature (e.g., the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* and the *Jñāneśvarī*). The ESM's library and offices continue to be in the original small structure that was built in 1951, and they rent out the rest of the building to a small primary school.

Since its inception 60 years ago, the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir has published at least 32 books (that I am aware of). Four books by one author are in Hindi and the others are in Marathi. Thirteen of these books directly pertain to Eknāth,[83] and the remainder focus on other Marathi

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[82] Ibid., 13.

[83] *Eknāth Darśan Khaṇḍa 1-lā*; Nā. Vi. Baḍve, ed. *Śrī Eknāth Mahārājāñcī Bhāruḍe (Vivaraṇasaha)*, vol. 1 (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir,1968); Nā. Vi. Baḍve, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārājāñcī Bhāruḍe (Savivaraṇ)*, vol. 2 (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 1978); Saśikālā S. Bāpaṭ, *Nāthāñce Haripāṭh Vivaraṇ (Āgamī)* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 2001); Paṇḍit Jagmohanlāl Caturvedi, *Eknāth aur Tulsīdās:* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 1954); Paṇḍit Jagmohanlāl Caturvedi, *Sant Eknāth* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 1982); Gopāl Nilakaṇṭha Dāṇḍekar, *Śrī Sant Eknāth* (Mumbaī: Majeṣṭik Prakāśan, 1974); Manorharpanth Deshpande, *Saint Eknath: Light for Life Divine* (Aurangabad: Sri Eknath Sanshodhan Mandir, 1977); Eknāth and Dhuṇḍāmahārāj Deglūrkar, *Haripāṭh Vivaraṇ* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan

*sant*s (especially Jñāndev and Nāmdev, but notably not Tukārām) and general *bhakti*-related topics. Most of the books on Eknāth examine his writings, others are more biographical, and two are edited volumes of short articles on various topics.

Over the years on Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī the ESM has also published an occasional magazine-like *viśeṣāṅk* (literally, "special issue") entitled *Saṁśodhan Patrikā "Ekā Janārdanī."* I am aware of five such issues,[84] and there appears to be some momentum now to publish it annually. The issues contain articles on various topics related to Eknāth's writings and life, written by various authors including EŚM members, prominent Marathi scholars (e.g., Śaṅ. Go. Tuḷpuḷe, Yū. Ma. Paṭhāṇ and Satīś Baḍve), Vārkarī leaders (*mahārāj*s), and the occasional orthodox Hindu paṇḍit. One recent EŚM member, Kumud Gosāvī (who is not related to the Gosāvīs in Paithan), has regularly published short books on Eknāth for the Śrī Sant Eknāth Mahārāj Viśvasta Maṇḍaḷ (a group that helps manage the affairs of the Eknāth Samādhi Mandir in Paithan).[85] She and some others in Aurangabad have also been active in promoting a small temple called Dattadhām that was built in a few decades ago on the peak of the tall, distinctive hill called Śūlabhañjan (or Sūḷibhañjan) north of Daulatābād and west of Khultābād, where Eknāth is said to have meditated

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Mandir, 1955); B. H. Gharpure, *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa Saṅkṣipta* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 1962); B.G. Ghāṭe, ed. *Eknāth Darśan Khaṇḍa 2-rā (Bhāgavatkhaṇḍa)*; Baḷvant Girirāv Ghāṭe and Madhukar Dattātreya Jośī, eds., *Śrīnāth-Bhāvāñjali* (Auraṅgābād: Śrīeknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir,1973); Vināyakbūva Ṭopare, *Kavitā Saṅgraha* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 1956); Ra. Śā. Ināmdār, *Svānanda-Vārsā* (Aurangābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, 2005).

[84] Yu. Ma. Paṭhāṇ, ed. *Saṁśodhan Patrikā "Ekā-Janārdanī"* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir 1986); Kumud Gosāvī, ed. *Saṁśodhan Patrikā "Ekā-Janārdanī"* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir 2008); Kumud Gosāvī, ed. *Saṁśodhan Patrikā "Ekā Janārdanī" - Bhāvārtharāmāyaṇa Viśeṣāṅk* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir 2009); Kumud Gosāvī, ed. *Saṁśodhan Patrikā "Ekā Janārdanī" - Bhāvārtharāmāyaṇa Saṁvād Viśeṣāṅk* (Auraṅgābād: Śrī Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir 2010). A *viśeśāṅk* was also apparently published in 2005, but I have not seen it.

[85] Kumud Gosāvī, *Yugapravartak Sant Eknāth* (Paiṭhaṇ: Saṁśthān Śrī Sant Eknāth Mahārāj Viśvasta Maṇḍaḷ, 2009); Kumud Gosāvī, *Bhārūḍ - Bhāvārtha*, 2 ed. (Paiṭhaṇ: Saṁsthān Śrī Sant Eknāth Mahārāj Viśvasta Maṇḍaḷ, 2003 [2009]); Kumud Gosāvī, *Sant Eknāth*, Bhāratīya Caritramālā (Puṇe: Karnāṭak Prakāśan Saṁsthān, 2003); Kumud Gosāvī, ed. *Ekā Janārdanī: Sant Eknāth Mahārāj Samādhi Catuḥśatābdī Varśa Sohaḷā* (Paiṭhaṇ: Saṁyojan Samitī, Nāth Catuḥśatābdī Saṅgatā Sohaḷā,1989).

with his guru Janārdana and met Dattātreya.[86] As the temple's name implies, Dattadhām is devoted mainly to Dattātreya, but the figures of Eknāth and Janārdana are represented prominently in the shrine and in paintings on the temple walls. In other words, Dattadhām is devoted to Dattātreya specifically as he is remembered to have participated in the lives of Janārdana and Eknāth, rather than as he is portrayed in the wider Datta tradition.

Although the institutional footprint of the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir is rather small (since it attracts relatively few visitors to its library, and its events draw mostly local attendees), it has left a significant mark on public perceptions of Eknāth through its publications, which comprise the majority of the Marathi literature published on Eknāth since 1950. A very small number of articles in the edited volumes and *viśeṣāṅk*s published by EŚM focus on Eknāth's inter-caste relations (and most of these articles deal with Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s), and a short congratulatory letter from B. R. Ambedkar stating his appreciation of Marathi *sant* literature and its potential for the "moral rearmament of man" was included in EŚM's first publication.[87] In general, however, EŚM's events and publications have offered quite little scope for considering the social side of Eknāth's memory. We will return to this issue later in the chapter.

These disparate historical sources for information about Eknāth – *dharmādhikārī* records, family histories, appeals to inclusion in the lineage, patronage and tax records, and institutional histories – offer supplementary, if fragmentary, perspectives on the spread of Eknāth's legacy and memory. Clearly many avenues for further research remain to be pursued in depth,

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[86] I have not yet been able to ascertain when and why this temple was built. At least when I visited in 2009 and 2010, a temple priest was living on the premises, but he had been brought in from eastern Maharashtra and said that he knew little about the history of the temple building itself. A memorial booklet about Śūlabhañjan and Eknāth's connection to it was published in 1998, but it does not provide much information about the temple itself. Cf. Kumud Gosāvī, ed. *Śīlalekh* (Khultābād, Ji. Auraṅgābād Śrī Dattadhām Śūlabhañjan Parvat,1998).

[87] *Eknāth Darśan Khaṇḍa 1-lā*. unnumbered page in preface. It is very surprising to find Ambedkar's letter here. I am immensely curious to know how his opinion was solicited and this letter was received. No one at EŚM currently knew about this.

particularly in relation to the search for the *dharmādhikārī* papers and the patronage records of the Eknāth Saṁsthān that are held in various archives. My purpose in mentioning them here is to demonstrate the scope of materials that are available and to get a sense of the institutional legacies that have been built up around Eknāth's memory. Given the literally conservative nature of these records – official, state-related and family – it should not be surprising to find relatively little of interest to our investigation into social relations. While they are valuable supplements to this project, they offer little about the social memory of Eknāth's inter-caste relations in comparison with the more narrative, textual record revealed in manuscripts and books.[88]

History, Devotion, and Caste in Early Biographies of Eknāth (1883-1931)

At the beginning of this chapter, we noted the 80-year gap in the literary record between the last major hagiographical composition on Eknāth and the first major modern biography of him. With the establishment of British rule (in western India, officially from 1818), the introduction and development of Western ideas about history and education, and the development of Marathi print culture, the Marathi literary scene underwent tremendous change. Works of the Marathi *sant*-poets, *paṇḍit*-poets and composers of non-religious folk dramas (*tamāśā*s and *lāvaṇī*s) as well, were printed for the first time. In her analysis of the development of a Marathi literary public, Veena Naregal has pointed out that these publications were an important component of the broad effort to canonize pre-colonial poetic traditions as part of the Marathi literary past and enhance the public standing of Marathi as a vernacular language during

[88] Further research into what can be known of the history and establishment of the Cokhobā Mandir near the Eknāth Samādhi Mandir would be the major exception to my claim here. Their physical proximity is quite interesting, but it did not appear to me that anyone except Mahārs visit the Cokhobā Mandir or even know about it.

the period of British rule.[89] The publication of Marathi poetry (including *sant* poetry) in the 19th century promoted a sense of public, vernacular, regional identity.

During this period, the Marathi genre of *caritra* also underwent a major transformation, as Marathi authors came under the influence of English styles of writing history and the word *caritra* itself took on the meaning of the English word "biography." Rā. Śrī. Jog has discussed this, arguing that although Marathi writers did not make a complete break with the older hagiographical style of writing about individuals, the "modern," biographical *caritra* did certainly have a different character. Whereas the older style was written in verse, focused on conveying a devotional message, had extraordinary heroes, and gave much scope to the wondrous (miraculous) within its narrative, the new biographical style was written in prose, valued objectivity over devotion,[90] focused on worldly human subjects, and eschewed stories that contravened the laws of nature.[91] One of the main purposes of the first biographies published in Marathi was to convey information about foreign people and cultures, sometimes at the behest of British educational administrators, and often with the hope of instilling particular moral attitudes in Indian subjects.[92] Thus the earliest biographies were actually Marathi translations of books that had been written in English. Examples of biographies of non-Indians that were translated in Marathi include Christopher Columbus (1849), Socrates, King Cyrus of Persia and Catherine the Great (all in 1852), followed by books on George Washington (1872) and the East India

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[89] V. Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere*, 184.

[90] We need not agree with Jog's understanding of objectivity here to appreciate his claim that the newer biographical style had greater confidence to challenge and break with popular hagiographical narratives.

[91] Rā. Śrī. Jog, "Caritre, Itihās āṇi Vāṅmayvicār," in *Marāṭhī Vāṅmayācā Itihās (1800 te 1874)*, ed. Rā. Śrī. Jog, vol. 4. (Puṇe: Mahārāṣṭra Sāhitya Pariṣad, 1965 [1999]), 540.

[92] For a good review of how historical scholarship was first represented in Marathi print, see P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 82-85.

Company officer Robert Clive (1873).[93] The first two Indian figures to have their biographies translated from English and published in Marathi were Rammohan Roy and the 18th-century Peshwa statesman Nānā Phaḍṇavīs in 1852. The book on Phaḍṇavīs remarkably brought a set of stories "full circle," having been originally composed in the Marathi chronicle *Bhāūsāhebāñcī Bakhar* in 1761, then interpreted (with other Marathi sources) in an English biography in 1851, and finally translated back into Marathi and published in 1852.[94] The first biographical book to be written completely in Marathi (not translated) was a set of very short sketches of Indian poets – Janārdana Rāmcandrajī's *Kavi-caritra* in 1860, which we will consider in more detail shortly.[95] The first Marathi biography devoted to a single figure that was not a translation was published in 1872 about the Hindu apologist and reformer, Viṣṇubāvā Brahmacārī.[96] By way of comparison, the first full-length biography of Eknāth appeared in 1883.

Although it is true that nothing of significant scale was published about Eknāth between 1800 and 1880, this does not mean that nothing at all was written about him. A very short description of Eknāth appeared in 1860 in Janārdana Rāmcandrajī's *Kavi-caritra*. Pulling together information from indological books and articles published in English, Rāmcandrajī summarized the lives of 170 Sanskrit, Marathi, Telugu, and Tamil poets as well as the Hindi poet

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[93] R.Ś. Jog, "Caritre, Itihās āṇi Vāṅmayvicār," 547-551. Jog provides short reviews of these works and, in most cases, of the original books from which they were translated as well. Interestingly, it appears that a single Marathi word had not become fully accepted as the name for this genre in the mid 19th century. Among these five works, the terms *itihās* (history) and *vṛttānta* (news, events) are used in the book titles rather than the term *caritra*. Jog unhesitatingly classifies these as *caritra*s, however, since they all attempt to portray the life and deeds of historical figures and are based on biographies in English.

[94] Ibid., 545. Archibald Macdonald, *Memoir of the Life of the Late Nana Farnavi* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1852 [1927]).

[95] Janārdana Rāmcandrajī, *Kavicaritra, Mhaṇje Hindusthānātīl Prācīn va Arvācīn Kavi āṇi Granthakāra yāñce Itihasa* (Mumbaī: Gaṇpat Kṛṣṇājī Chāpkhānā, 1860). I came across this reference too late to allow time for me to seek a copy of this very rare book and view it personally.

[96] Rāmcandra Pāṇḍuraṅg Śāstrī Ajrekar, *Śrī Viṣṇubāvā Brahmacārī yāñce Caritra* (Mumbaī: Ātmārām Kaṇhobā, 1872).

Sūrdās in the course of 276 pages.[97] Scholars of Marathi literature consider the *Kavi-caritra* to be the first example of "modern" biographical writing in Marathi,[98] although it has been criticized for relying too extensively on *dantakathā* (legends) and in this sense being similar to Mahīpati's hagiographical writings.[99] Rāmcandrajī's short description of Eknāth in the *Kavi-caritra* was completely overlooked or forgotten by later writers, with the single exception of an author who noted in passing that it provided "little" (*alpa*) information.[100]

As mentioned in Chapter Three, compositions of the Marathi *sant*s began to appear in print widely in 1854, with the publication of the first of Parśurām (Tātyā) Goḍbole's 17-volume *Navnīt* series.[101] The sixth volume of the series, published in 1868, included excerpts from the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* and Eknāth's *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa*.[102] By way of introducing these excerpts, Goḍbole included a page of biographical notes about Eknāth. This is the earliest modern biographical summary of Eknāth's life written in prose that I have observed. Goḍbole recites important basic pieces of information: Eknāth's birth year is uncertain, Eknāth was a great

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[97] J. Daḍkar et al., *Saṅkṣipta Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 83. The distinctly South Indian orientation of the *Kavicaritra* is quite intriguing, since it breaks with the collective hagiographical tradition of linking the Marathi *sant*s to their North Indian counterparts. It should be noted that another author (G. C. Bhate) has claimed that the *Kavi-caritra* contains stories about only 61 poets rather than 170; I do not know the reason for this discrepancy, but I feel that the description of the work in Daḍkar et al. is more extensive and precise than in Bhate's book. Cf. Govind Chimnaji Bhate, *History of Modern Marathi Literature 1800 to 1938* (Poona: Aryabhushan Press, 1939), 108-109.

[98] G.C. Bhate, *History of Modern Marathi Literature*, 108.

[99] R.Ś. Jog, "Caritre, Itihās āṇi Vāṅmayvicār," 546.

[100] Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar, *Mahārāṣṭra-kavi-caritra*, vol. 3 (Mumbaī: Dāmodar Sāṁvaḷrām āṇi Maṇḍaḷī, 1913), Introduction, 6. Ājgāvkar refers to another short description of Eknāth in an early encyclopedia-like book; this too I have not had the chance to view personally. Cf.Raghunāth Bhāskar Goḍbole, *Bhārat Khaṇḍācā Arvācīn Koś* (Puṇe: Raghunāth Bhāskar Goḍbole, 1881).

[101] Technically, some *sant* literature was published slightly earlier in a monthly journal called *Sarvasaṅgraha* that Goḍbole had also edited, but Goḍbole's *Navnīt* series was much more widely read and influential. Bha. Śrī. Paṇḍit, "Kāvya," in *Marāṭhī Vāṅmayācā Itihās*, ed. Rā. Śrī. Jog, vol. 4. (Puṇe: Mahārāṣṭra Sāhitya Pariṣad, 1973 [1999]), 272.

[102] The first five volumes of *Navnīt* may also include excerpts of Eknāth's works, but I have not had the opportunity to view either the original volumes.

Sanskrit *paṇḍit* who preferred to compose in simple and accessible Marathi, and Eknāth made a *śuddha prat* ("pure copy") of the *Jñāneśvarī*.[103] Remarkably, Goḍbole devotes a whole paragraph – nearly a quarter of his entire biographical summary – to highlight what he calls Eknāth's benevolent or philanthropic (*pāropakārik*) disposition, which he illustrates by citing the stories of Eknāth giving his *śrāddha* ceremony's food to untouchables (*antyaj*) and Eknāth picking up the untouchable (*cāmbhār*) boy from the burning sand. These two stories get more attention from Goḍbole than any other stories about Eknāth. He summarizes, "It is clear that in Eknāth's heart there was a feeling of love (*prem-bhāva*) for people of low *jāti*."[104] It is surprising that he chose to foreground this aspect of Eknāth's persona so prominently, especially since the excerpts of Eknāth's writings that he is introducing relate only to devotional and theological topics. It is also worth noting the new appearance of the term *pāropakārik* (literally "related to the good [*upakār*] of another [*para*]"), to describe Eknāth.[105] However, as with Rāmcandrajī's sketch of Eknāth, Goḍbole's description was almost completely overlooked by

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[103] Parśurāmpant Tātyā Goḍbole and Rāvjī Śāstrī Goḍbole, *Navnīt athvā Maraṭhī Kavitāñce Veṁce*, Rev. ed., vol. 6 (Puṇe: Citraśāḷā Chāpkhānā, 1878 [1910]), 33-34. I have not been able to check the 1868 edition of this volume to see whether or how Goḍbole's description of Eknāth was affected by the "many changes" that he said went into the revised 1878 edition. It is clear at least that a sample of Eknāth's writing had been included in the 1868 edition. Ibid., 3. Also, modern Marathi scholars commonly use the term *śuddha prat* to describe Eknāth's edition of the *Jñāneśvarī*, although there is also good reason to call it a "revised edition." The common assumption behind this is that Eknāth "purified" (corrected) the book from all of the errors that had crept into copies that were circulating at his time and hindered readers' understanding. This is mentioned briefly in the first verse of the additional colophon that bears Eknāth's name at the end of most editions of the *Jñāneśvarī*. Stories about this are narrated in *EC* 16:69-77 and *BhL* 19:120-129.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Since this clearly sanskritic term has not been used to describe Eknāth until 1883 (despite it suiting older stories about him very well), might *pāropakār* be an early 19th-century Marathi neologism to translate an English and perhaps specifically Christian concept such as "charity"? In other words, could this be an instance of how the cross-cultural interaction in colonial western India added to the range of Marathi vocabulary and ideas? It may be speculative, based only on this one word, but others have persuasively argued that the reading of Marathi *bhakti* poets (esp. Tukārām) by Christian missionaries eventually fed back into the discourse of some Maharashtrian interpreters. See P. Constable, "Scottish Missionaries, 'Protestant Hinduism' and the Scottish Sense of Empire in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century India," 292.

later biographers, who preferred to draw more directly on the earlier hagiographical source material and reconstruct Eknāth's life for themselves.

Early biographies (1883-1925) – Dho. Bā. Sahasrabuddhe

In 1883 the first major Marathi biography of Eknāth appeared.[106] Relatively little is known about its author, Dhoṇḍo Bāḷkṛṣṇa Sahasrabuddhe, who was described on the title page as the "Assistant Master" of Poona High School.[107] In addition to his book on Eknāth, Sahasrabuddhe published a book that discussed possible locations of places described in ancient and medieval literature (1889), as well as a biography of a late 18th-century Peshwa general (1891).[108] These eclectic interests may indicate that Sahasrabuddhe's interest in history was something of a personal hobby rather than a systematic academic investigation. In the introduction to his book on Eknāth, he states quite generally that it is the "true and important duty" of humans to look beyond "worldly" (*prāpañcik*) matters and think about "ultimate" (*pāramārthik)* and "extra-worldly" (*pāralaukik*) things.[109] The lives of "great souls" (*mahātme*) such as Jñāndev, Rāmdās, Tukārām and Eknāth are models of self-knowledge, philanthropy (*paropakār*) and ethical action. But since so few biographies (*caritra*) of these old "*sādhu-kavi*"

[106] D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*.

[107] More research on Poona High School would be necessary in order to appreciate the political and social implications of Sahasrabuddhe's employment there.

[108] J. Daḍkar et al., *Saṅkṣipta Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 594.

[109] D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, Introduction, 1.

have been printed in Marathi, Sahasrabuddhe thought to make a contribution to the language by writing this book.[110]

Sahasrabuddhe refers to Mahīpati's *BhL* in many footnotes in his book; this is clearly his hagiographical source of information about Eknāth. Although he sometimes raises critical questions about the narrative as Mahīpati presents it, Sahasrabuddhe rarely incorporates information from anywhere else. Sahasrabuddhe structures his book in a way that would become standard for all of the subsequent major biographies of Eknāth in Marathi – the first half of the book presents Eknāth's life and activities, with the early chapters following his life chronologically from birth through marriage and settling down, and the latter two chapters handling the various independent episodes by arranging them under the headings "Virtuousness and Extraordinary Qualities" (*sādhutva āṇi alaukik guṇa*) and "Wondrous Miracles" (*adbhut camatkār*). In the second half of the book Sahasrabuddhe considers the qualities of Eknāth's writings, provides general overviews to some of his major works, and then summarizes what he feels are the nine important topics in Eknāth's writings: God/Brahman, the path to Brahman, *karma-mārg* (image worship, rituals, recitations of deities' names, etc.), external holiness (*pavitratā*), internal purity, remembering God's name, restraining the senses and their temptations, inter-personal conduct and "miscellaneous issues."[111] His textual analysis includes some of Eknāth's short compositions (still unpublished at the time) that he acquired from the collection held by Eknāth's descendants in Paithan.[112] Sahasrabuddhe concludes his book with

[110] Ibid., Introduction, 2. Throughout the book, Sahasrabuddhe prefers to use the word *sādhu* when referring to Eknāth rather than *sant.* Other authors around the turn of the 20th century also used the term in this general way to mean "virtuous person" rather than a specific kind of professional holy man.

[111] This list of key teachings is presented only at the beginning of the relevant chapter. Ibid., 143.

[112] Ibid., 157n1.

an intriguing and surprising feature – a one-page appendix of information about official patronage of the Eknāth Saṁsthān at the time.

In the biographical first half of the book, Sahasrabuddhe mainly follows the sequence of events narrated in Mahīpati's *BhL*. The only major deviation is that Sahasrabuddhe understandably chooses to place information about Eknāth's great-grandfather Bhānudās at the very beginning of the book, rather than leaving it buried late in the narrative as it was in the *BhL* (a *kīrtan* by Eknāth in Pandharpur, according to Mahīpati). Occasionally he ventures to explain, discuss or embellish a particular story. For example, when the young Eknāth hears a voice in the temple telling him to seek out Janārdana to be his guru, he suddenly leaves Paithan without telling his grandparents. At this point Sahasrabuddhe offers the plausible explanation that since Eknāth was the last remaining heir of the family, he would have been expected to take on many cares and responsibilities to maintain his household and preserve the lineage.[113] Eknāth realized that if he were to remain in Paithan, he would not have the freedom to follow his spiritual quest, and he knew that his grandparents would have refused to let him go. Therefore, he had no choice but to run away without telling them. In the most well-known renditions of this story, Eknāth's truancy was always something of a tension; Sahasrabuddhe explained it in a way to make it cohere with the broader image of Eknāth as a model of ethical behavior. Occasionally Sahasrabuddhe identifies his own interpretations directly, but more often they are mixed in freely with his narrative so that only a very informed reader could discern them.

In comparison to the *BhL*, Sahasrabuddhe shows rather more interest in Eknāth's relationship to his guru Janārdana, his receiving *darśan* from Dattātreya, and the esoteric knowledge (*brahmavidyā*) that Janārdana ultimately imparted to Eknāth. Sahasrabuddhe is the

[113] Ibid., 9.

first to put much emphasis on this special esoteric teaching, which would become a prominent feature in later renditions of Eknāth's life (especially in film and theater).[114] While Sahasrabuddhe's emphasis on Eknāth's dutiful discipleship and engagement in ascetic practices (*tapaścaryā*), pilgrimage (*yātrā*) and esoteric knowledge seems to portray Eknāth as exemplifying conventionally orthodox Hindu practices, he presents a rather surprising message at the heart of Janārdana's ultimate esoteric lesson to Eknāth: there is no other meritorious act like working for the good of another person (*paropakārāsārhkeṁ puṇya nāhīṁ*).[115] This is novel and important; none of the hagiographical accounts indicate that Janārdana gave Eknāth such a teaching. It is not clear where Sahasrabuddhe acquired this idea or why he included it; it appears that he has made a significant interpolation in the biography of Eknāth by including this. Also, although earlier hagiographical accounts of Eknāth's life never strictly asserted that the path of *bhakti* was opposed to or utterly separate from more Sanskritic ritual forms and practices, none of them proposed quite the combination of interests that we find in Sahasrabuddhe's book. We will return to this issue shortly.

Two other notable patterns appear in Sahasrabuddhe's presentation of Eknāth. In keeping with his time and trends in Marathi biographical writing, Sahasrabuddhe is clearly self-conscious about how to handle stories involving miracles and wonders. This issue arises for the first time in the book with the story of the young Eknāth hearing what Sahasrabuddhe calls a "voice from the sky" (*ākāśvāṇī*), which tells Eknāth to seek out Janārdana. In this instance, Sahasrabuddhe offers a footnote pointing to his fuller discussion of miracles later in the book and simply requests his readers not to fault him for including the descriptions of miraculous (*adbhut*)

[114] I cannot identify anything in the hagiographical accounts that corresponds exactly to this bestowal of secret knowledge that Sahasrabuddhe mentions. I wonder if Sahasrabuddhe is applying to the life of Eknāth an external model of how a guru-disciple relationship should function.

[115] D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, 29.

events that his historiographical predecessors passed down.[116] In the main text of his narrative, Sahasrabuddhe calmly recites the story of Eknāth's departure for Paithan and then steps back to offer the explanation mentioned above – as the only remaining heir in the family, Eknāth knew he would be burdened with expectations that would have curtailed his spiritual pursuits. In this way Sahasrabuddhe conveys the traditional story, notes its potential trouble for critical modern readers, and subtly offers an alternative, sensible interpretation without debunking or refuting the tradition.

In his tenth chapter, which deals directly with miraculous stories, Sahasrabuddhe takes the first several pages to discuss some readers' potential concerns. Some may object that stories about the voice from the sky, the meeting with Dattātreya and other miraculous stories could be squared with the "enlightened" worldview of the late 19th century.[117] Sahasrabuddhe says that it is his duty to convey the stories reported from tradition. Anticipating that this response may not assuage all critics, he impatiently recommends that they just skip over this chapter because it is not right to arrogantly insist that one's own tastes be shared by everyone.[118] He argues that miraculous stories are simply part of the traditional biography of Eknāth, and if they were left out, then the world would not be shown his "true nature" (*kharem̐ svarūp*).[119] Furthermore, stories about Greek, Roman, Christian and other western heroes contain similarly miraculous

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[116] Ibid., 6.

[117] Sahasrabuddhe describes his modern context as "the 19th century, which has arrived at the peak of enlightenment (*sudhārṇukecyā śikharās pom̐clelyā ekoṇīsāvyā śatakāmt*)." The word *sudhārṇuk* is not a common Marathi term; Sahasrabuddhe may have coined it himself, or perhaps it was current in particular intellectual circles as a translation of an English word. The related words *sudhārak* and *sudhāraṇ* were and are conventionally used to translate "reformer" and "reform," both in a social and religious sense. Sahasrabuddhe's use of the word does not seem to match this usage. He does not specifically mention science or rationality, but I think we could safely infer that these are in the background of his thinking.

[118] D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñcem̐ Caritra*, 76-77.

[119] Ibid.

stories, but western historians still read them. So Marathi readers should not hold themselves to a different standard, especially when it is the miraculous stories that first attract the attention of most people to faith in God (*śraddhā*).[120] If deception and misconduct were involved, then of course one needs to regard miraculous claims critically, but miracles involving figures who are models of ethical and selfless behavior (e.g., Jñāndev, Eknāth, Rāmdās and Socrates) do not merit such skepticism. Sahasrabuddhe concludes his discussion of miracles by noting that it is very difficult say whether Eknāth truly (*kharokhar*) performed miracles or not. It is clear from his discussion, however, that Sahasrabuddhe personally feels obligated to include these stories so that others may have the opportunity to encounter and believe in them.

The second notable pattern that one sees in Sahasrabuddhe's biography is a relatively mild presentation of Muslims, particularly in comparison to the almost universally negative portrayal of them in later Marathi publications. When Eknāth is first told to go and meet his guru, Sahasrabuddhe states that the voice says (according to English style, in quotation marks) that Janārdana is in the employment of the Muslim ruler (*yavana pādśahācyā padarīṁ āhe*).[121] He makes no comment or indication that there is anything untoward in this arrangement. Rather, Sahasrabuddhe says later that Janārdana impressed the ruler with his courage and loyalty so much that he granted Janārdana great authority. Furthermore, the ruler not only refrained from harassing Janārdana, he even closed the court (*mogal-darbār*) every Thursday so that Janārdana could spend the day worshipping Dattātreya.[122] Sahasrabuddhe comments that Janārdana's

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[120] Ibid., 77-78.

[121] Ibid., 6. Although the phrase *padarī asṇe* can refer to a person serving or working for a ruler (as I think it means in this case), the phrase literally means "to be within the fold of" or slightly more metaphorically, "to be under the care of protection of" someone.

[122] Ibid., 13. Most hagiographies and biographies include a version of this claim, although they disagree about whether the weekly holiday was Thursday or Friday. Some modern biographers (e.g., Pāṅgārkar and the book published by Natesan, which we shall consider soon) concur with or simply follow Sahasrabuddhe in stating that the day was Thursday, although none of them produces any evidence to support this. The weight of tradition

maintenance of his spiritual and ritual routine while working among people who oppose "Vedic *dharma*" because they do not understand it was a "shining example" (*ḍhaḷḍhaḷīt udāharaṇ*) of how to live out the *dharma* in one's complicated worldly life without renouncing everything (including "country") to become a *sannyāsī*.[123] That Janārdana did not abandon his own *dharma* but rather maintained it while serving the Muslims was a "miracle" (*camatkār*).[124]

Of course, this is not to imply that Sahasrabuddhe casts Muslims and Islam in a positive or even a neutral light. When Sahasrabuddhe describes the tomb of a holy man Candrabhaṭ (whom Eknāth and Janārdana meet near Nāśik) who died in Daulatābād, he mentions that the tomb was built in Muslim style so that it would not be destroyed by Muslims, although this simply repeats Mahīpati's narrative in the *BhL*.[125] In the episode of the arrogant Muslim spitting on Eknāth, Sahasrabuddhe enhances the story slightly, saying that the Muslim thought to aggravate Eknāth specifically because he was acting like a good brahman. The sequence of Eknāth taking a bath, returning and being spat on again occurs many times, and eventually a small crowd gathers to witness Eknāth's amazing patience. Ultimately, the Muslim's mouth becomes sore because of all the spitting, and he apologizes to Eknāth for his offenses.[126] To someone who is not familiar with popular images of Islam in 20th-century Marathi literature,

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(Keśavsvāmī's *EC* 3:4, Mahīpati's *BhL* 13:155) is clearly on the side of Friday, but only the final of the early biographers (Ājgāvkar) repeats this date. Friday would also be the day for the important Muslim congregational Friday prayers (*jumu'ah*).

[123] Ibid., 14. Sahasrabuddhe clearly has mixed feelings about the attitudes of Muslims. He grants the Muslim leader the civility to arrange his weekly plans respectfully around Janārdana's meditation, but at the same time Muslims still oppose Hindus generally. In my reading, Sahasrabuddhe holds a somewhat self-contradictory position here, or at least he does not explain himself adequately.

[124] Here Sahasrabuddhe uses *camatkār* only in a figurative sense; readers should not associate this "miracle" with the stories involving supernatural forces that Sahasrabuddhe elsewhere admits modern readers may find difficult to accept. Ibid., 13.

[125] Ibid., 41.

[126] Ibid., 69-70.

these few portrayals (and there are only these three in Sahasrabuddhe's book) may seem quite derogatory. In comparison to later Hindu views about Muslims and Islam, however, Sahasrabuddhe's depictions are quite mild and in the case of Eknāth's expectorating antagonist perhaps even a bit whimsical.[127]

Sahasrabuddhe's presentation of Eknāth and caste is slightly different from the hagiographical portrayals that came before. In general, he seems to avoid mentioning caste as much as possible, as if caste differences and tension are either no longer important or should not be important for his readers. In keeping with the hagiographical literature, issues of caste and inter-caste relations come unavoidably to the fore in the independent episodes, which Sahasrabuddhe handles in the two final chapters of the biographical section of the book. The first reference appears in the ninth chapter, in which Sahasrabuddhe discusses Eknāth's virtues and qualities: eloquence in teaching, poetic skill, liberal generosity and extreme patience, absence of pride, compassion, courage, charity and renunciation of sensual pleasures.[128] As an example of Eknāth's universal appeal, Sahasrabuddhe writes, "Everyone from casteless Mahārs and Māṅgs to the high caste brahman community and even people of other *dharma*s could be found at Eknāth's *kīrtan*s."[129] Shortly thereafter, he states that Eknāth's generosity (*dātṛtva*) was so great and the understanding of nonduality (*advaita*) was so deeply impressed on him that feelings of caste or group distinction (*jñātibhedācī bhāvnā*) had completely disappeared.[130] Interestingly, Sahasrabuddhe uses here the less common and more general term *jñātibhed*

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[127] This vignette of the Muslim man exhausting himself by spitting repeatedly on Eknāth is portrayed especially well and to good comic effect in one of the recent VCD movies about Eknāth. R. Phulkar, "Sant Eknāth Mahārāj : Marāṭhī Video Compact Disc."

[128] D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, 62-75.

[129] Ibid., 63.

[130] Ibid., 65.

("difference of caste, group, species or kind") rather than the more specifically caste-related *jātibhed* ("difference of caste"). To illustrate Eknāth's compassion, Sahasrabuddhe cites the episode of Eknāth picking up the lost child of "extremely low and even untouchable" status (*atinīcāñcīṁ va antyajāñcīṁ-suddhāṁ*) from the hot sand.[131] He embellishes the story slightly, saying that Eknāth not only picked up the child and carried him on his shoulder, but he wiped off the child with his own clothes, gave the child a sweet, and took the child back to the Mahār neighborhood. In this case the child's untouchable status is clearly a pivotal issue in the story, and Sahasrabuddhe makes sure to emphasize it through his repetitive phrasing.

In the tenth chapter on miracles, Sahasrabuddhe includes two episodes that relate to caste. He provides bolded subheadings for each miracle to guide the reader through the text. "First Miracle: Compassion" (*camatkār pahilā - bhūtadayā*) is the story of untouchables (*antyaj*) eating before brahmans in the feast for Eknāth's ancestors. When the brahmans refuse to eat after the untouchables, Eknāth is not bothered. He sets places for the feast, and his own ancestors come to eat along with the ancestors of those brahmans who had refused to participate (a slight embellishment on Sahasrabuddhe's part).[132] Although the troublesome brahmans initially wanted to put Eknāth out of caste for the sin of mixing with untouchables (*varṇasaṅkar*), the miracle convinces them of the error of their ways, and they repent. Compared with how the hagiographers described this story, Sahasrabuddhe's rendering is calm and succinct, and although he does not squelch or hide the harsh judgment of the antagonistic brahmans, he does not dwell on it.

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[131] Ibid., 71.

[132] Ibid., 83-84.

In the second miracle, which he calls "Caste Distinction" (*jātibhed*), Sahasrabuddhe narrates the story of Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home.[133] The story follows Mahīpati's rendition in the *BhL*, although Sahasrabuddhe inexplicably changes the Mahār man's name from Rāṇyā to Rāmā.[134] He introduces Rāmā as a devoted, wise Mahār of good conduct who, with his wife, was a great admirer of Eknāth and regular attendee of his *kīrtan*s. So Rāmā invited Eknāth to come for a meal, confident that Eknāth would not refuse because of his regard for the ultimatum that God/Janārdana is among the people (which Sahasrabuddhe innovatively calls a *mahāvākya* or "great saying").[135] Sahasrabuddhe narrates that Eknāth accepted the invitation because he was fully aware of Rāmā's devotion, faith and good conduct. He simply mentions that the brahmans in Paithan wanted to catch Eknāth in a situation where they could condemn him, but he does not dwell on their malice. Ultimately, they witnessed Eknāth simultaneously sitting in his own home and eating at the Mahār family's house. After Eknāth finished his meal at the Mahārs' home, he suddenly became invisible at that spot. Sahasrabuddhe simply ends the vignette there without comment, and he says nothing more about Eknāth and caste in the remainder of the book. Interestingly, caste and social distinctions are not among the topics that Sahasrabuddhe discusses in his analysis of Eknāth's literature.

In the context of his entire book, it is clear that social tensions and caste are not among Sahasrabuddhe's primary concerns, but he does not try to hide this aspect of Eknāth's background completely. His choice of words (e.g., *mahāvākya*) and obvious interest in Eknāth's

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[133] Ibid., 84-85.

[134] This is a very strange alteration for Sahasrabuddhe to make, since most Marathi speakers would almost certainly recognize Rāmā as a woman's name.

[135] The term *mahāvākya* conventionally refers to the four supreme or normative statements in the Upaniṣads according to the Advaita Vedanta philosophical tradition. Sahasrabuddhe's use of this term for *janī janārdana* is without precedent.

relationship to his guru and the spiritual message he imparted (which he calls *brahma-jñāna*) situates Eknāth in a general, non-sectarian, liberal Hindu framework more than in an explicitly Vārkarī one. When Sahasrabuddhe does mention caste and caste distinctions, he does not focus on them for long and does not comment on them. Sahasrabuddhe seemed to take for granted that Eknāth disregarded caste distinctions and boundaries, but he apparently felt no desire to emphasize this message to his audience in the final decade of the 19th century. In general, this first modern biography of Eknāth is socially moderate and pleasantly readable, and it is not keen on using the story of Eknāth to impart any particular moral lesson. In subsequent literature, Sahasrabuddhe's book is usually cited as the first biography of Eknāth, but it is rarely used as an important source of information about Eknāth.[136]

Early biographies (1883-1925) – Rā. Rā. Bhāgvat

In 1890, seven years after Sahasrabuddhe's book, the second biographical work on Eknāth appeared in print – a 39-page essay by the remarkably freethinking historian and linguist, Rāmśāstrī (alias Rājārāmśāstrī) Rāmkṛṣna Bhāgvat (1851-1908), who was a professor of Sanskrit at the elite St. Xavier's College in Bombay.[137] Originally published by Bhāgvat himself and freely distributed to his students (as Bhāgvat was often inclined to do),[138] "*Eknāthāñce Caritra*"

[136] As noted in Chapter One, this book was summarized in English in a journal in Bengal in 1896. In that article, the interpreter commented at greater length on what he understood to be Eknāth's promotion of social equality than did Sahasrabuddhe. D. Ganguli, "Eknath: A Religious Teacher of the Deccan," 268-283. I have never seen this article cited in literature about Eknāth; it is only through internet searches that I came across it at all.

[137] Durgā Bhāgvat, "Jīvankathā," in *Rājārāmśāstrī Bhāgvat yāñce Nivaḍak Sāhitya - Prastāvanā Khaṇḍa*, ed. Durgā Bhāgvat, vol. 6. (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1979), 13-36; Go. Ma. Kulkarṇī, *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś (Khaṇḍa Dusrā, Bhāg Ek - Marāṭhī Granthakār I. Sa. 1878 te 30 Epril 1960)* (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya āṇi Saṁskṛtī Maṇḍaḷ, 2003), 111-112.

[138] Durgā Bhāgvat, "Prastāvanā," in *Rājārāmśāstrī Bhāgvat yāñce Nivaḍak Sāhitya - Lekhasaṅgraha 1*, ed. Durgā Bhāgvat, vol. 4. (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1979), 3.

attempts both to provide an overview of Eknāth's whole life and to lift him up as a model of good brahman social conduct.[139] In many ways, Bhāgvat's essay stands in sharp contrast to Sahasrabuddhe's biography. It is arguably the most critical, reflective and scholarly writing about Eknāth until Rā. Ciṁ. Ḍhere's incisive biographical essay was published in 1951.[140]

Throughout the essay, Bhāgvat comes across as a well-read professor holding forth on topics that strike him as important, if they are sometimes tangential. For example, Bhāgvat begins his essay with two pages that discuss the ancient history of Paithan/Pratiṣṭhān before finally mentioning the man who is the subject of the essay.[141] The next several sections (which, together, comprise one third of the essay) broadly sketch out the chronologically sequential stories in Eknāth's life, apparently following the narrative of Mahīpati's *BhL*. Bhāgvat unfortunately neglected to mention his sources of information in this otherwise scholarly essay. Two short sections at the center of the essay are devoted to examples of "vision of sameness" (*samadṛṣṭī*) and the torments inflicted on Eknāth by orthodox brahmans (*śāstrī*s and *purāṇik*s) in Paithan; these sections obviously draw on material from the independent episodes. Another section observes Eknāth's relationship with his son and Eknāth's death, and in the final two sections Bhāgvat elucidates how Eknāth's biography is relevant to his late 19th-century audience.

In contrast to Sahasrabuddhe's book, concern about caste and inter-caste relations permeates the entire essay, and Bhāgvat frequently returns to an unambiguous refrain of spiritual egalitarianism. The first place that this refrain occurs is in Janārdana's main lesson for Eknāth: people of all *jāti*s have equal authority to seek refuge in and show their devotion to God. "In

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[139] Rājārām Rāmkṛṣṇa Bhāgvat, *Eknāthāce Caritra* (Mumbaī: Phyāmilī Pres, 1890); R.R. Bhāgvat, "Eknāthāñce Caritra," 73-112.

[140] R.C. Ḍhere, "Mahārāṣṭramahodāyācā Agradūt," 110-158.

[141] R.R. Bhāgvat, "Eknāthāñce Caritra," 73-74.

fact, in God's home there is no kind of caste difference" (*arthāt devace gharī koṇtyāhī prakārcā jātibhed nāhī*).[142] It is most likely that Bhāgvat was following Sahasrabuddhe's lead here, but Bhāgvat grandly attributes this sentiment to none other than the great nondualist philosopher Śaṅkara himself. He repeats it many times throughout the essay as the operative principle that drives Eknāth's social interactions. When describing Janārdana's fame that had accrued from his personal interactions with the god Dattātreya, Bhāgvat notes that although Janārdana happened to be a brahman, Dattātreya is just as graceful to Mahārs and even to Muslims.[143] Furthermore, based on the story of Eknāth witnessing Datta speak with Janārdana in the language of Muslims, Bhāgvat argues that just as God accepts all *jāti*s, so too are all languages acceptable to God.[144]

Later, when describing Eknāth's daily routine after marrying and settling down, Bhāgvat notes that Eknāth was fond of reading the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and he then goes off on an interesting tangent that is central to our interests. Bhāgvat cites the common legend that the sage Vyāsa had composed the eighteen major Purāṇas (*mahāpurāṇa*s) and the *Mahābhārata*, but his mind was not satisfied. So Vyāsa composed the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which finally put his mind at ease. Bhāgvat comments at this point that there are basically two kinds of "brahmanic religion" (*brāhmaṇī dharma*): one that adheres zealously and rigidly to a myriad of rules (i.e., one that is *karmaṭh*) and one that consists of the nondual ultimate reality Brahman (*brahmamaya*).[145] Bhāgvat explains, "If the basis of sacred knowledge is stated particularly in terms of the deficient brahmanic form of religion that makes distinctions on the basis of caste,

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[142] Ibid., 76.

[143] Ibid., 77. This particular claim would have been offensive to traditional Dattātreya devotees at Bhāgvat's time, since the tradition (which, as noted earlier, is quite different from Datta's appearance in stories about Eknāth) took on a very brahman-centered form that strongly approved of maintaining caste distinctions and ritual purity.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid., 84.

then it is no surprise that the mind of a great sage such as Vyāsa was not satisfied."[146] Since (in Bhāgvat's argument) the eighteen *mahāpurāṇa*s all represent this caste-obsessed deficient religious form, Vyāsa could only find satisfaction by composing the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which Bhāgvat claims is free of caste distinctions. Bhāgvat repeats, "In God's home there is no caste difference." The great beauty of the superior brahmanic religion, which has the doctrine (*siddhānta*) of egalitarian vision (*samadṛṣṭī*) at its core, held a natural appeal for Vyāsa. It is on the basis of this egalitarian vision that Eknāth taught, wrote and conducted himself among others. Eknāth taught and demonstrated that *bhakti* and not *jāti* was the only thing that mattered to God.[147] Bhāgvat claims that Eknāth was the first to proclaim this teaching in Marathi.[148]

When compared with the hagiographers and other biographers, it is quite remarkable that Bhāgvat devotes a whole section of his essay exclusively and explicitly to Eknāth's egalitarian vision (*samadṛṣṭī*), although it fits perfectly with Bhāgvat's very socially oriented argument. The stories that Bhāgvat repeats in this section will come as no surprise, but he interprets and embellishes some of them in very interesting, creative ways. At the beginning of the section, he cites the verse from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* that proclaims that a faithful untouchable (*caṇḍāḷ*) is better than a vain, undevoted brahman.[149] Following this maxim, Eknāth gave food equally to all people, such as in the episode of the *śrāddha* feast for Eknāth's ancestors.[150] More precisely, Bhāgvat presents two such *śrāddha* episodes – on one occasion Eknāth feeds his special food to hungry Muslim mendicants (*fakīr*s), which angers the invited brahmans, and they put him out of

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[146] Ibid. *Jar khālcyā pāyarīcyā vidyece arthāt brāhmaṇī dharmācyā jātibhedātmak kotyā svarūpāce viśeṣ varṇan karūn, vyāsāsārkhyā mahāpuruṣācyā cittavṛttīs samādhān vāṭle nāhī, tar tyāt naval nāhī.*

[147] Ibid., 87.

[148] Ibid., 101.

[149] Ibid., 88.

[150] Ibid., 89.

caste.[151] On the second occasion, Eknāth serves the food to a group of hungry untouchables, which angers the invited brahmans, and they put him out of caste.[152] I find it impossible to believe that Bhāgvat did not realize that these were two variations of a single story. More likely, Bhāgvat presented them as separate stories in order to illustrate the extent to which the brahmans in Paithan sought to trouble Eknāth.

Also in the section are the stories about Eknāth nursing a Mahār thief back to health and inspiring him to repent, and Eknāth patiently coping with a Muslim who spat on him.[153] Bhāgvat also recites the story of Eknāth picking up a Mahār boy from the hot sand. He notes that Eknāth did not pause to consider which *jāti* the boy belonged to; he simply saw someone in need and felt compassion. Bhāgavat embellishes the story by noting that when Eknāth delivers the boy to the neighborhood of the Mahārs, a group of brahmans see him on the way and mutter, "Defilement, defilement" (*bhraṣṭākār, bhraṣṭākār*) and, "Mixing, mixing" (*saṁkar, saṁkar*, as in *varṇasaṁkar*).[154] Surprisingly, Bhāgvat notes that Eknāth takes a second bath after the episode, but he does not comment on why.[155]

Bhāgvat's most brilliant embellishments and interpretations appear in his narration of Eknāth eating at the home of Rāṇyā Mahār. In Mahīpati's version of the story, Rāṇyā asks Eknāth rather abstractly where he, an untouchable, was when Kṛṣṇa showed his universal form to

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[151] This version of the story parallels Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra* 11:76-120 and Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* 17:68-115.

[152] This is, largely, the rendition of the story in Kṛṣṇadās' *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* 8:20-92 and in Mahīpati's *Bhaktavijay* 46:45-101.

[153] R.R. Bhāgvat, "Eknāthāñce Caritra," 90. Notably, Bhāgvat narrates the episode of the Muslim in only two sentences, in which the Muslim spits on Eknāth only once, and there is no comment about the Muslim's intention.

[154] Ibid., 91.

[155] Indeed, by mentioning that Eknāth bathed a second time after delivering the untouchable child, Bhāgvat seems to undercut his own argument. Elsewhere Bhāgvat freely tweaks the traditional stories to fit his argument, but here he did not. I honestly do not know why Bhāgvat included this reference.

Arjuna.[156] According to Bhāgvat, Rāṇyā's question adopts a more pointed meaning – "If brahmans and I were together in Kṛṣṇa's universal form, then why do brahmans understand me and my *jāti* to be so untouchable?"[157] In Bhāgvat's presentation, the emphasis of Rāṇyā's question shifts away from the identity of untouchables and toward the problem of brahman chauvinism. Bhāgvat follows the *BhL*'s rendition of the story up to the point when Eknāth actually eats at Rāṇyā's home. Unlike every other version of this story, Eknāth simply eats at the untouchable family's home. Bhāgvat says nothing about Eknāth appearing simultaneously in two places or about God taking Eknāth's form and eating at the untouchables' home. In Bhāgvat's rendition Eknāth eats unambiguously with Rāṇyā Mahār and his family.[158]

Bhāgvat begins a new paragraph by commenting on how in each such event, the purity-obsessed brahmans threatened Eknāth with the prospect of being outcasted. Rather ambiguously, Bhāgvat suddenly begins narrating another story, as if it were the consequence of the Rāṇyā Mahār story. This apparent follow-up piece does not actually follow any traditional rendition of the Rāṇyā Mahār story, however. Instead, the vignette belongs to the end of the story in Mahīpati's *BhV* in which Eknāth is forced to be purified for feeding untouchables before brahmans at his ancestors' *śrāddha*, although Bhāgvat never openly admits this.[159] So his narrative gives the appearance that after Eknāth eats at Rāṇyā's home, the brahmans demand that Eknāth undergo purification (*prāyaścitta*). Eknāth resists, arguing that he has not been defiled and therefore needs no purification. The brahmans, however, insist and drag Eknāth into the

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[156] Mahīpati, *BhL* 19:146-147.

[157] R.R. Bhāgvat, "Eknāthāñce Caritra," 91. *Jar mī brāhmaṇāṁbarobarac viśvarūpāt hoto, tar brāhmaṇ malā va mājhyā jātīlā itke aspṛśya kā samajtāt*?

[158] Ibid., 92.

[159] *BhV* 46:54-128.

river. In the river, the brahmans perform what Bhāgvat sarcastically calls a "theatrical imitation of purification" (*prāyaścittāci nāṭkī nakal*).[160] Bhāgvat explains here that the brahmans had actually forcibly purified Eknāth many times in the past for activities that they deemed to be polluting. Eknāth never wished for this, but his desires were irrelevant. Eknāth's ritual purifications were performed for the sake of the orthodox brahmans. For, based on the brahmans' understanding of ritual purity, they would no longer be able to accept gifts of food from Eknāth if he were ritually impure. In Bhāgvat's creative, cynical interpretation, the orthodox brahmans purify Eknāth because they cannot bear to part with the free meals that Eknāth gives them.[161]

The story according to Bhāgvat does not end there, however. While Bhāgvat is explaining the brahmans' selfish motives, Eknāth has been left standing in the river, with the brahmans starting to perform the purification rite. Suddenly, a leprous brahman arrives at the river's edge, saying that he had been told by Śiva in a dream to come to Paithan and meet Eknāth. Śiva informed him that Eknāth had accrued great merit by picking up the untouchable boy from the hot sand – precisely the action that the orthodox brahmans earlier had publicly called "defilement." If Eknāth were willing to transfer this merit, the brahman's leprosy would be healed. Bhāgvat comments, "The merit that had accrued to Eknāth in God's home was the same merit that the orthodox brahman community in Paithan wanted to purify!!!"[162] Bhāgvat

[160] R.R. Bhāgvat, "Eknāthāñce Caritra."

[161] Ibid., 92.

[162] Ibid., 93. *Je puṇya devāce gharī eknāthācyā nāvāvar rujū hote, taslyā puṇyābaddal* Paithan*kar karmaṭh maṇḍaḷī tyās prayāścitta dete*!!! (The three exclamation points are Bhāgvat's.)

concludes this section passionately with a direct eulogy to Eknath: "Blessed are you, Eknāth…. You have scrubbed clean the name of Maharashtra's brahmans."[163]

Bhāgvat summarizes rather idiosyncratically three important points to take away from the biography of Eknāth in relation to Maharashtra. Eknāth demonstrated that high spiritual achievement is independent of the compulsion toward or prohibition of image worship (*mūrti-pūjā*).[164] It is also clear from Eknāth's biography that the people who persecuted Eknāth were orthodox brahman zealots (*karmaṭh brahmaṇ*), and it is such orthodox zealotry that lies at the heart of persecution by people of all religions.[165] Finally, Eknāth initiated a "great religious movement" (*dharmasambandhi moṭhī caḷvaḷ*) to lift up the Marathi language without the aid of wealthy or royal patrons.[166]

He concludes the essay by noting that although people of every community in Maharashtra ought to hear of Eknāth's deeds and the deeds of non-brahmans as well, Bhāgvat feels that the life of Eknāth is especially relevant to brahmans at the end of the 19th century. After considering all of these stories about Eknāth, brahmans will be able to see clearly two very different paths before them: the praiseworthy path free of caste distinctions that Eknāth walked, and the path of the inferior, caste-distinguishing brahmans who harassed Eknāth. Bhāgvat beseeches his caste-brothers to consider both of these paths wisely and consciously choose one of them.[167]

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[163] Ibid. *Eknāthā dhanya tujhī…. Mahārāṣṭra brāhmaṇṇāñce nāv tū ujaḷ karūn ṭheviles.*

[164] Ibid., 104. This is an odd conclusion to draw from the material that Bhāgvat presents, especially since Bhāgvat never brought up the issue of image worship earlier. I presume that one of Bhāgvat's assumed audiences is the Maharashtrian religious reform group, the Prārthana Samāj, who strongly spoke out against image worship.

[165] Ibid., 104-109.

[166] Ibid., 110-111.

[167] Ibid., 112. Christian Novetzke's insightful notion of the "brahman double," by which pre-colonial brahman authors and performers offered portrayals of particularly bad brahmans in order to deflect potential criticism of

Four noteworthy aspects of Bhāgvat's essay deserve comment. First, Muslims play no major role in Bhāgvat's biography of Eknāth beyond serving as social markers of divine inclusivity and Eknāth's liberal social outlook and generosity. Unlike most biographical accounts of Eknāth in the 20th century, Bhāgvat does not make Muslims out to be foreign invaders who offer the necessary narrative backdrop against which Eknāth could work for a revival of Hindu pride and self-religion (*svadharma*). Muslims and Islam are not the enemies in Bhāgvat's account; the real opposition to Eknāth comes from brahmans who differentiate on the basis of caste and insist on ritual purity.

Second, Bhāgvat does not include any miracles in his narration, and he does not find it necessary to discuss the role of miracles in hagiographical stories. The only possible exception is Eknāth's direct encounter with Dattātreya, which Bhāgvat apparently perceived to be within the realm of worldly possibility. Aside from this divine episode, when Bhāgvat narrates a traditional story that ends in a miracle, he simply ends the story early so that nothing miraculous occurs. This is the case with his presentation of Eknāth feeding the Muslims and untouchables his ancestors' *śrāddha* feast; Bhāgvat stops narrating the story before the ancestors appear. Similarly, when the leprous brahman arrives and claims that Eknāth can heal him, Bhāgvat does not mention whether any healing actually took place. Rather, he simply turns his attention elsewhere. This strategy allows Bhāgvat to skirt the thorny issue of how to interpret traditional miraculous stories in the modern world. More central to Bhāgvat's argument, however, Eknāth does not need these miracles in order to be vindicated; his conduct alone suffices to demonstrate that he is a proper, devoted person in Bhāgvat's eyes.

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themselves seems to apply very explicitly in Bhāgvat's case, as he clearly proposes two contrary paths that brahmans might follow. It is not clear to me who all were included in Bhāgvat's intended audience, so I am not prepared to comment on whether or not Bhāgvat hoped to deflect potential criticism of liberally minded brahmans such as himself. It is clear that he hoped his message would affect a brahman audience, at least. C.L. Novetzke, "The Brahmin Double," 232-252.

Third, Bhāgvat regularly uses the term *samadṛṣṭī* (egalitarian vision, or vision of sameness) to name Eknāth's social outlook. We first encountered this word in Chapter Two, in Kṛṣṇadās' *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*. There is no evidence that Bhāgvat was aware of this book; none of the stories that he includes in his biographical essay bear the peculiar characteristics of Kṛṣṇadās' hagiography. So it seems more likely that Bhāgvat arrived at this apt term independently.

Finally, Bhāgvat not only highlights the brahman community in Paithan as the tormenters of Eknāth, he actively enhances these stories beyond the forms in which they occurred in the hagiographies. In Bhāgvat's account, the brahmans put Eknāth out of caste multiple times, they cry, "Defilement!" when Eknāth picks up the Mahār boy, they actively turn Eknāth's son Haripaṇḍit against him,[168] and they purify Eknāth for their selfish desires to keep receiving free food from him. Bhāgvat brings the differences between Eknāth and his persecutors into even greater contrast, as if they were not sufficiently clear already. His reason for doing this becomes clear in his conclusion, where he applies Eknāth's biography to the context of brahman social relations in late 19th-century Maharashtra. Earlier in his essay, when he discussed Vyāsa and the *purāṇa*s, Bhāgvat proposed two kinds of "brahmanic" religion – non-dual egalitarian versus zealously orthodox, as represented by Eknāth and by the brahmans who persecuted him, respectively. Elsewhere in his writings, Bhāgvat used slightly different, more revealing terms. Having judged the term "Hindu" to be too vague and confusing, Bhāgvat preferred to distinguish between a generous nondual religious system that was based in the Vedas and Upaniṣads and articulated by Śaṅkara, which Bhāgvat called "brahmanic" (*brāhmaṇī*) or "upaniṣadic" *dharma,* as opposed to a system that focused on endless rituals and caste distinctions that ultimately

[168] R.R. Bhāgvat, "Eknāthāñce Caritra," 100.

benefitted only brahman priests and begging mendicants, which he called by a derogatory Marathi word for brahman – *bhaṭī dharma*.[169]

Despite Bhāgvat's remarkable willingness, even eagerness, to show brahman social practices in a harsh and unforgiving light, and despite his resolute, foundational assumption that true *dharma* does not differentiate based on caste, the audience for this essay on Eknāth turned out to be quite small. It is evident from his conclusion that Bhāgvat was writing primarily to his fellow brahmans. Although he reproaches brahmans for poor social conduct, he nonetheless is still concerned primarily with them. Furthermore, Bhāgvat's recommended religious path – *brāhmaṇī dharma* – in promoting a liberal, egalitarian interpretation of sanskritic Hindu tradition, nevertheless remains within the literary and philosophical field that was the cultural territory predominantly of brahmans. Even the name that he proposed for this tradition – *brāhmaṇī dharma* – used the word "brahman" (most likely in its philosophical sense of the ultimate reality Brahman). In this way, Bhāgvat's interpretation of Eknāth remains a primarily brahman, if self-critical, exercise.

Strikingly, Bhāgvat's essay was not very influential in subsequent writing about Eknāth. This may have been a natural consequence of the very limited number of copies that Bhāgvat printed and the fact that he did not use an independent publisher. Relatively few scholars in the 20th century show any awareness of Bhāgvat's essay or its contents. It is also quite likely, however, that the essay's peculiar combination of focusing intensely on brahmans, being very critical of brahmans, and promoting a very brahman-specific agenda also hindered a broader audience from finding Bhāgvat's creative interpretation of Eknāth appealing and useful. Although Bhāgvat's published essay was not influential in scholarship on Eknāth, it is possible

[169] Durgā Bhāgvat, *Prastāvanā Khaṇḍa*, ed. Durgā Bhāgvat, 6 vols., vol. 6, Rājārāmśāstrī Bhāgvat yāñce Nivaḍak Sāhitya (Puṇe: Varadā Buks, 1979), 66-67.

that Bhāgvat's role as a teacher at a prestigious college in Bombay left an impression on creative students who would eventually be involved in the theatrical and film productions about Eknāth in the 1930s and 1940s, especially since they focused so intensely on Eknāth's conduct and inter-caste relations. This is a topic for the next chapter.

After Bhāgvat's essay was published in 1890, it would be two decades before another major biography of Eknāth appeared.[170] In this intervening period, the first theatrical play about Eknāth was written (and, I presume, performed) in 1903.[171] More essential to future scholarship on Eknāth, collections of his poetry (Eknāth's *Gāthā*) were edited and published during this period as well. In fact, between 1893 and 1908 four different editions were printed, and none of them stated how or why it differed from the others.[172] Sahasrabuddhe had included a small number of Eknāth's short poems (*abhaṅga*s) in his biography of Eknāth in 1883; he said that he had gained access to them through Eknāth's descendants in Paithan.[173] With the publication of these *Gāthā*s, a new and valuable resource for interpreting Eknāth became readily available to scholars. Although each of the four *Gāthā* editors claimed straightforwardly to be publishing poetry written by Eknāth, none of the editors fully revealed how they had compiled their respective collections or the bases on which they chose to include or exclude particular poems.

Early biographies (1883-1925) – La. Rā. Pāṅgārkar

[170] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*.

[171] Vāsudev Raṅganāth Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth (Bhaktirasapar va Aitihāsik Nāṭak)* (Puṇe: Āryabhūṣaṇ Chāpkhānā, 1903).

[172] Eknāth, *Eknāthī Gāthā*; Eknāth, *Śrīeknāth Mahārājāñcyā Abhaṅgāñcī Gāthā*; Eknāth, *Eknāthsvāmīkṛt Abhaṅgācī Gāthā*; Eknāth, *Śrīeknāthmahārāj Yāñcyā Abhaṅgācī Gāthā*.

[173] D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, 157n1.

The first biography of Eknāth to make extensive use of these *Gāthā*s was Lakṣmaṇ Rāmcandra Pāṅgārkar's *Eknāth Caritra*, which was published in 1910 and subsequently became the most widely read and accepted rendition of Eknāth's life and thought.[174] The book eventually went through nine "editions," although the only major change among them all was that in the second edition (1922) Pāṅgārkar appended a long section that summarized Eknāth's writings.[175]

This *Eknāth Caritra* was only one item in a very long list of publications by Pāṅgārkar, all of which dealt directly with Marathi literature and especially that of the *sant*s. He wrote biographies of Moropant (1908), Tukārām (1910), Jñāndev (1912) and Mukteśvar (1921), as well as scholarly devotional works on the writings of Rāmdās (1924) and several volumes on other *bhakti*-related topics. What brought Pāṅgārkar the most fame during his lifetime, however, was his work as founder and editor of a serial for educated readers about *bhakti* and Marathi literature – "Mumukṣu" (Seeker of Liberation), whose first issue appeared in 1907.[176] His writings on the Marathi *sant*s were tremendously influential in presenting their lives in a modern biographical yet strongly devotional idiom.

In many ways Pāṅgārkar's biography is similar to that of Sahasrabuddhe, who had published on Eknāth nearly three decades earlier. Pāṅgārkar brusquely (and to my mind,

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[174] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*.

[175] Ibid., dahā. In the reprint of the seventh "edition" the publisher states that the second and third editions involved revisions (although not many); all of the other "editions" were actually only reprints. Ibid., unpaginated preface material. I have also occasionally seen the title written as *Śrī Eknāth Mahārajāñcaṅceṁ Saṅkṣipta Caritra* (Eknāth's Abridged Biography), but there is no difference between this version and the others whose titles do not include the word *saṅkṣipta*. I suspect that this title may reflect Pāṅgārkar's own perception that he had written a shorter, more accessible (i.e., abridged) biography of Eknāth at the behest of his friends, although he originally had in mind to write something much longer and more thorough. In this sense, all of these editions reflect the "abridged" version of what Pāṅgārkar had originally envisioned, rather an abridged version of anything he published. Ibid., cār, Introduction to the First Edition. Cf. Lakṣmaṇ Rāmcandra Pāṅgārkar, *Śrī Eknath Mahārājāñceṁ Saṅkṣipta Caritra* (Puṇe: Yaśvant Pres, 1911).

[176] G.M. Kulkarṇī, *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś (Khaṇḍa Dusrā, Bhāg Ek - Marāṭhī Granthakār I. Sa. 1878 te 30 Epril 1960)*, 93; J. Daḍkar et al., *Saṅkṣipta Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 337-338.

unfairly) dismisses Sahasrabuddhe's effort, saying that it merely summarized Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*.[177] Although Pāṅgārkar admits that the *BhL* is indeed the most thorough rendition of stories about Eknāth, he states that he pays close attention to Keśavsvāmī's influential hagiography as well, since it differed slightly from the *BhL*.[178] Pāṅgārkar also highlights that he includes several famous stories about Eknāth that were being repeated orally but had never been written down.[179]

The structure of Pāṅgārkar's book is quite similar to that of Sahasrabuddhe's biographical section, although Pāṅgārkar is indisputably more thorough, scholarly and ultimately successful as an author. Pāṅgārkar also had published collections of Eknāth's poetry available to draw on, which he did extensively and consistently throughout his book to support his assertions about Eknāth. This is, in my opinion, Pāṅgārkar's greatest innovation and contribution to the shape of scholarship on Eknāth in the 20th century. Pāṅgārkar weaves excerpts from Eknāth's writings (especially Eknāth's short poems) into the biographical presentation so frequently and smoothly that the reader can feel (sometimes misleadingly so) that the voice of Eknāth himself is speaking along with Pāṅgārkar.

Among all of the authors considered so far in this dissertation, Pāṅgārkar is the most reflective and articulate about what is involved in writing a *sant*'s biography. He proposes that the ideal author will integrate three concerns. The first of these is a deep consideration of and sensitivity towards how the Vārkarīs have understood the *sant*s and their writings. He reprimands recent attempts by "well-educated people" (*suśikṣit lok*) to rely exclusively on their

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[177] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, sāt. This is the exact same criticism that Abbott had of Pāṅgārkar's work.

[178] Ibid. Oddly, Pāṅgārkar claims that Keśavsvāmī's *EC* was the basis for the stories of Eknāth in Mahīpati's *BhV* as well as *BhL*. As the *BhV* contains significantly different stories from the *BhL* and the *EC*, I am very surprised that Pāṅgārkar made this claim. I do not know what he was thinking, and he did not offer an explanation.

[179] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, āṭh.

own thinking and observe the writings of the "*sādhu*s" through non-traditional lenses while looking down on the Vārkarīs themselves as uneducated and simple folk.[180] While Pāṅgārkar is careful to say that he is not promoting blind faith (*andha-śraddhā*) in the correctness of Vārkarī views, he noticeably refrains from specifying where and when the biographer is free to have a critical eye and offer alternative interpretations.[181] Second, a good biographer should be attuned aesthetically to the "beauty of expression and thought" in the *sant*s' writings.[182] Finally, the biographer ought to have a clear and expansive vision of history. He holds up the Marathi historian Vi. Kā. Rājvāḍe as an outstanding role model for how history should be written, although he rejects Rājvāḍe's harsh interpretation of the *sant*s and Vārkarīs as politically passive and dangerous to the health of modern Indian society.[183] Thus Pāṅgārkar's ideal biographer combines Rājvāḍe's historical vision with Mahīpati's literary zest (*rasāḷpaṇā*) and the Vārkarīs' devotional attitude. To a great extent, this is the path that Pāṅgārkar himself takes.

Sahasrabuddhe devoted several pages to the problem of miraculous stories in a modern biography; Pāṅgārkar is noticeably less bothered by this. Instead, he seems comfortable with these miraculous elements, even asserting with a hint of pride that there are more miraculous stories about Eknāth than about any other Maharashtrian *sant*.[184] He offers no reflective or thorough consideration of how to understand such miraculous stories but is rather quite content to deploy the kind of argument he uses to rebut doubts about Kṛṣṇa coming to serve Eknāth as Śrīkhaṇḍyā – "For one who is ultimately *nirguṇa* (without attributes, namely Kṛṣṇa as the

[180] Pāṅgārkar does not specify who these "well-educated people" are that he is criticizing.

[181] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, pāc.

[182] Ibid., sahā. Pāṅgārkar quotes the English words "beauty of expression and thought" here, but he does not mention whether he has taken inspiration from an English text or thinker on this topic.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Ibid., 85.

supreme deity), what is difficult about taking on attributes and being manifest in the world?"[185] Pāṅgārkar's biography of Eknāth is written through the eyes of faith, and this may help to account for this book's popularity.

Perhaps due to his unapologetic devotion to the Marathi *sant* tradition, Pāṅgārkar takes a much more active interest in source materials than any of his predecessors. In addition to his remarks about Sahasrabuddhe, Mahīpati and Keśavsvāmī, he provides a long list of authors who composed *santamālikā*s that mention Eknāth,[186] and he concludes the biographical portion of his book with a chapter consisting only of independent, short poems by various authors that praise Eknāth.[187] Pāṅgārkar identified persuasive evidence to argue that Eknāth died in 1599 rather than 1609, as most people had previously believed.[188] He also introduced several new hagiographic stories that are without textual precedent, as we shall observe shortly.

Like Sahasrabuddhe, Pāṅgārkar begins his biography with stories about Bhānudās and then narrates Eknāth's life from birth through the time that he settled down as a householder. Pāṅgārkar also tames the diversity of independent stories by arranging them into several categories: Eknāth's devotion to his guru, his virtuousness (*sādhutva*),[189] stories about Śrīkhaṇḍyā, and (innovatively) Eknāth's pilgrimages and their relationship to his writings.

In the chapters that cover the chronologically independent episodes, Pāṅgārkar includes several new stories. It is worth mentioning them here, since some of them would become popular in plays and films about Eknāth. A band of miscreant brahmans tells a poor brahman

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[185] Ibid., 116.

[186] Ibid., 144.

[187] Ibid., 144-153.

[188] Ibid., 141.

[189] Despite Pāṅgārkar's expressed low opinion of Sahasrabuddhe, it is clear in many places such as his choice of words here that Pāṅgārkar nonetheless drew extensively on Sahasrabuddhe's book.

that they will give him two hundred rupees if he can evoke Eknāth's anger. The poor brahman attempts to do so by rudely interrupting Eknāth in this middle of his worship and by jumping on the back of Eknāth's wife while she serves food, but she and Eknāth respond calmly and compassionately.[190] Three greedy visitors of the *vaḍārī jāti* came to Paithan to hear Eknāth's *kīrtan* but eventually sneak into Eknāth's home and fall asleep on his bed. When Eknāth discovers them, he ensures that they are comfortable, insists that they stay the night, and he gives them a meal the next morning.[191] Pāṅgārkar is the first published source for a very popular story in the 20th century about Eknāth giving holy Gaṅgā water to a donkey. Eknāth is said to have undertaken a pilgrimage that involves carrying a pot of water from the Gaṅgā River in northern India to the holy site of Rāmeśvaram in southern India (a feat that is considered very difficult and meritorious), but when he sees on the way a parched donkey that was near death, Eknāth effectively ends the pilgrimage by giving the Gaṅgā water to the donkey.[192] Finally, Eknāth's *kīrtan*s inspire a dancing girl (*veśyā*) to renounce her erotic business and live a chaste life. When she comes to Eknāth to repent, Eknāth dismays the people around him by welcoming her and treating her well.[193] None of these stories resembles what had been written about Eknāth earlier, and Pāṅgārkar unfortunately does not reveal where he encountered them beyond simply stating that they are "popular."[194]

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[190] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, 87-89.

[191] Ibid., 95-96. The identification of these people as *vaḍārī* (which Molesworth's dictionary describes as *śūdra*s who are known for catching rats and splitting stones) is rather surprising. I am not aware of any other reference to this group in literature by or about Eknāth.

[192] Ibid., 96-97. There is no other reference to Eknāth undertaking such a pilgrimage, and only two other stories about him mentions that he ever traveled south of Paithan at all.

[193] Ibid., 97-98.

[194] Ibid., āṭh. As will be clear in the next chapter, the story of the poor brahman who is bribed into trying to anger Eknāth first appeared in a play about Eknāth in 1903. I do not know if Pāṅgārkar was familiar with this play, or

Several stories that Pāṅgārkar recycles from other authors idisplay embellishments or variations. For example, the Muslim man spits on Eknāth exactly 108 times,[195] and after he repents, according to Pāṅgārkar, Eknāth sings an *abhaṅga* to him about how Allah's presence is not confined to a *masjid* and Allah is the same as the Hindu supreme deity, Parameśvar.[196] In telling the story about Eknāth picking up the Mahār boy, Pāṅgārkar explains that Eknāth bathed in the river afterwards because that is what he had intended to do before coming across the boy (i.e., not a second time since Eknāth did not bathe before picking up the child).[197] That Pāṅgārkar mentions the bathing at all seems to indicate that he wants to rule out the alternative interpretation of the act's significance – that Eknāth bathed in order to ritually purify himself after touching the untouchable boy.

Eknāth's inter-caste relations are mentioned in Pāṅgārkar's biography to the same moderate extent that they are in Sahasrabuddhe's book. Pāṅgārkar refers to Eknāth interacting with untouchables in the relevant independent stories. Unlike Bhāgvat, he does not go out of his way to highlight this as a central theme in Eknāth's life. The first place that inter-caste dynamics

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whether the play represented a story that was already popular anyway and reached Pāṅgārkar through word of mouth.

[195] The number 108 can be significant in many ways according to Hindu custom and thought; the one that strikes me as most relevant here is that a rosary of tulsi beads *(tuḷsīmālā*) such as the Vārkarīs wear always has 108 beads. So Eknāth bathing 108 times might be considered to be parallel to one cycle of prayers with a *mālā*.

[196] L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, 86-87. I cannot find this *abhaṅga* (composed in Hindi/Urdu rather than Marathi) in any of the *Gāthā* versions. Pāṅgārkar does not reveal where he found it. The original is: *myāhajadameṁ yāne allā khadā | aur kyā jagā khālī paḍā?* ||1|| *caroṁ vakhat haiṁ namajoṁ ke | aur kyā vakhat haiṁ coroṁ ke* ||2|| *ekā janārdana kā bandā | jamīn asmān bhare khudā* ||3|| Based on Pāṅgārkar's notes in Marathi, my translation is: "Allāh is understood to be perpetually in the *masjid*, so the rest of the world is, what, devoid of God? There are four (*cāroṁ*) daily times to pray to God, so the rest of the day belongs to, what, a thief (*coroṁ*)? Ekā-Janārdana has a rule: earth and sky are filled with God." The first two stanzas are clearly modeled after one of the most famous lines in the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* (1:129) – "The Sanskrit language was made by the gods, so Prākṛt (Marathi) came from what, thieves?" Perhaps Eknāth came up with a nice turn of phrase and put it to use in multiple compositions. The fact that this particular Hindi composition does not appear in any of the published collections of Eknāth's poetry, however, does raise the suspicion that it was composed by someone else and attributed to Eknāth.

[197] Ibid., 104.

appear is the same reference that Bhāgvat made – Eknāth welcomed and addressed people of all castes at his *kīrtan*s.[198] Notably, in making this reference, Pāṅgārkar even uses the same uncommon word as Bhāgvat to describe Eknāth's social outlook – *samadṛṣṭī* – although Pāṅgārkar never explicitly mentions that he is aware of Bhāgvat's essay much less cites it. This strikes me as too much of a coincidence to be merely an accident; I suspect that Pāṅgārkar intentionally avoided referring to Bhāgvat and his interpretation of Eknāth's life.

Slightly later in the book, Pāṅgārkar uses the word *samadṛṣṭī* again and offers a slightly apologetic explanation that qualifies its scope. He notes that Eknāth regarded Mahārs who are devotees of God (*haribhakta*s, not just any Mahārs) as greater than unorthodox (*nāstika*) and poorly behaved brahmans, although this did not imply that Eknāth was fond of caste intermixing (*saṁkarpriya*).[199] Rather, Eknāth was one of those exceptional great souls (*ucca koṭice mahātme*) who was able to suppress his consciousness of bodies (*dehabhāv*), such that his vision of sameness (*samadṛṣṭī*) perceived both brahmans and untouchables (*cāṇḍāḷ*s) equally.[200] Pāṅgārkar uses the word again in relation to Eknāth's treatment of the low caste *vaḍārī* intruders in his home, in the unprecedented story that was summarized above; he says that because of Eknāth's *samadṛṣṭī,* brahmans, Muslims and Mahārs all appeared the same to him.[201] Pāṅgārkar employs a close form of the word to explain the episode in which Eknāth gives Gaṅgā water to the parched donkey as well. Eknāth's traveling companions are distraught that their *yātrā* had gone in vain since Eknāth had just poured out the water that they were taking to Rāmeśvaram (to pour on the *liṅga* in the Rāmanāthasvāmī temple). In response Eknāth explains that, quite the

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[198] Ibid., 55.

[199] Ibid., 63.

[200] Ibid., 64.

[201] Ibid., 85.

contrary, they have indeed anointed God and fulfilled their entire *yātrā* – God was equally present in the form of the parched donkey, since ultimately nothing exists in the universe apart from God. Pāṅgārkar narrates that when the companions heard this explanation, they were reminded once more of Eknāth's "*samadarśan*" (equanimous seeing).[202]

Finally, Pāṅgārkar embellishes two stories that involve untouchables. In his narration of Eknāth eating at Rāṇyā Mahār's home, Pāṅgārkar introduces Rāṇya and his wife as very devoted and pure.[203] He then elaborates quite revealingly and far more than any other author on what "pure" in this case means. "Rāṇyā and his wife lived with far more cleanliness (*phār svacchatene*) than other Mahārs. They did not cook anything inauspicious (*amaṅgal*) or eat anything that was bad or vile (*vāīṭsāīṭ*). They ably took on the sound of Viṭṭhal's name in their work. In body, they were Mahārs; but in all of their conduct they were like brahmans! Their *jāti*-fellows considered them jokingly (or jeeringly? *thaṭṭene*) as 'the brahmans among us.' And in the virtues of pure conduct (*suddhācaraṇ*) and devotion to God, they were much superior (*phārac śreṣṭha*) to hundreds of thousands of brahmans."[204] Pāṅgārkar leaves no room for misunderstanding – Eknāth interacts with these Mahārs because they are so truly extraordinary, pure, clean and well behaved that, to Pāṅgārkar's thinking, they are not actually like Mahārs. Mahīpati had commented somewhat on how devoted and respectable Rāṇyā and his wife were, but Pāṅgārkar takes this commentary to a truly new level, explicitly making them Mahār in name (body) only. After introducing Rāṇyā and his wife, Pāṅgārkar quickly summarizes the rest of the

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[202] Ibid., 97. Pāṅgārkar does not comment on whether or not he understands there to be a difference between *samadṛṣṭī* ("vision of sameness") and *samadarśan* ("seeing of sameness"). In my reading, if there is any significant difference, it is that this story pertains specifically to a *yātrā* and ritual acts that would include the act of seeing (*darśan*) the deity's image in the temple and the deity seeing the worshipper.

[203] Ibid., 102. Pāṅgārkar notes Rāṇyā was called Viveknāk by other authors, which shows that Pāṅgārkar was familiar with Khaṇḍerāya's rendition of this story (which we observed near the end of Chapter Three).

[204] Ibid., 103.

story. In Pāṅgārkar's narration, the brahmans are suspicious and watchful of Eknāth's actions, but they do not engage in the same expressions of outrage and futile blustering that Mahīpati described. They simply see Eknāth in two places, feel astonished, cannot distinguish the "true" Eknāth from among the two appearances, and ultimately figure out that because Rāṇyā had such great devotion Pāṇḍuraṅg (Viṭṭhal) himself must have taken Eknāth's form and eaten at Rāṇya's home.[205]

The only other major reference to Eknāth's social interactions is Pāṅgārkar's rendering of the story about the *śrāddha* feast. According to Pāṅgārkar, when the food for the *śrāddha* is ready, Eknāth overhears several Mahārs outside his door lamenting to each other that they will never be able to taste such fare. Eknāth suggests to his wife that they should serve the Mahārs, and she happily responds that they should invite not only them but their wives, children and neighbors as well since there is so much food. Since Janārdana is in all beings (*sārvāṁ bhūtī*), serving the Mahārs will satisfy Janārdana/God.[206] The meal occurs, the brahmans become angry and refuse to eat, and Eknāth's own ancestors miraculously appear.[207] The next day, the brahmans meet and unanimously decide that they should take Eknāth to the river to be purified. Pāṅgārkar states this with no apparent emotion or judgment, and he simply concludes the story here, without saying whether the purification ritual occurred or not. Pāṅgārkar's depiction of the brahmans and their outrage conspicuously lacks the zest of the major hagiographers, and he seems to make as much effort to avoid describing the poor behavior of brahmans as Bhāgvat

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid., 89-90. Interestingly, within this one short paragraph, Pāṅgārkar uses the terms Mahār, *antyaj*, *atiśūdra* and *anāmik* all to name these same people.

[207] Ibid., 91n1. Pāṅgārkar clarifies that no hagiographical source claims that the ancestors of other brahmans also appeared in Eknāth's home. Although he does not specify his interlocutor here, Pāṅgārkar is clearly refuting Sahasrabuddhe's rendition of the story. D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñcem Caritra*, 84.

made to highlight it. Pāṅgārkar shows no interest in making the brahmans look bad, despite the fact that the traditional stories did exactly that.

It is quite obvious that although Pāṅgārkar critically and carefully marshals hagiographical material about Eknāth into his modern biography (which includes faithfully passing on the idea that Eknāth did not distinguish among castes), his writing nonetheless retains a distinctly conservative, pro-brahman orientation. When compared with the depictions of antagonistic brahmans in Bhāgvat's essay, this book appears rather like a negative exposure – the same characters, context and image are all there, but the colors are bizarrely different. For Pāṅgārkar, Eknāth appears as the model devotee whose extraordinary spiritual progress allowed him to see beyond caste. Yet Pāṅgārkar himself clearly has not achieved this vision, as he subtly adjusts the stories to make Eknāth's interactions with untouchables less socially threatening. His rendering of Rāṇyā Mahār into a brahman in all but body is a fine example of this tendency, as is Pāṅgārkar's delicate handling of stories of brahmans behaving badly. Sahasrabuddhe's biography dealt little with issues of caste, as if they were not worth much attention. In Pāṅgārkar's book, we see that caste is still a very sensitive topic, and Pāṅgārkar is doing his best to prevent more socially conservative readers from feeling uncomfortable. Although he described Eknāth's vision of sameness on multiple occasions, Pāṅgārkar himself apparently did not share it.

Early biographies (1883-1925) – Ja. Ra. Ājgāvkar

In 1925 a fourth major biography of Eknāth was published,[208] touting itself as superseding Pāṅgārkar's widely read and frequently reprinted book. Like Pāṅgārkar, its author

[208] J.R. Ājgāvkar, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*.

Jagannāth Raghunāth Ājgāvkar (1879-1955) was not interested solely in Eknāth. Ājgāvkar's early career was spent in small editing positions at Marathi newspapers in Pune and Bombay. Although he also wrote at least ten books on a wide variety of religious and cultural topics, Ājgāvkar became most widely known for his 11-volume series, *Mahārāṣṭra-kavi-caritra-mālā* (Garland of Biographies of Maharashtrian Poets), which began to be published in 1908 and eventually totaled over 3,000 pages. Ājgāvkar included in the series the major Vārkari *sant*s and *paṇḍit*-poets, but his greatest contribution was to put together a very diverse and extensive collection of poetry by minor and obscure figures. On the basis of this series, the great Marathi scholar Śaṅkar Gopāḷ Tuḷpuḷe described Ājgāvkar as the hardest working and most prolific biographer of poets since Mahīpati.[209] Ājgāvkar's biography of Eknāth was the seventh book in this series.

Ājgāvkar respectfully acknowledges the earlier biographies by Sahasrabuddhe and Pāṅgārkar (he makes no mention of Bhāgvat), but he claims that with the passage of time they both had become outdated and incomplete.[210] He promotes his book as contributing much new information about Eknāth, drawing on recently published research from the Bhārat Itihās Saṁśodhak Maṇḍaḷ in Pune. Although he expresses his disagreement with Pāṅgārkar on several points and introduces a few bits of new information related to the history of Eknāth's descendants,[211] ultimately it is difficult to accept his claim to have superseded Pāṅgārkar. One novel aspect of Ājgāvkar's work that distinguishes it from Pāṅgārkar's more pious biography is that Ājgāvkar boldly shares his opinions about whether particular compositions were truly

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[209] Śaṅkar Gopāḷ Tuḷpuḷe, "Ājgāvkar, (Mahārāṣṭra-Bhāṣābhūṣaṇ) Jagannāth Raghunāth," in *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś (Khaṇḍa Dusrā, Bhāg Ek - Marāṭhī Granthakār I. Sa. 1878 te 30 Epril 1960)*, ed. Go. Ma. Kulkarṇī (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya āṇi Saṁskṛtī Maṇḍaḷ, 2003), 9.

[210] J.R. Ājgāvkar, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, Introduction, 6.

[211] Ibid., 173-177.

composed by their conventionally attributed authors (something that is fairly rare in Marathi scholarship in general). For example, Ājgāvkar cites several reasons why he does not believe that Mukteśvar composed the *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān*.[212]

Ājgāvkar's biography follows roughly the same pattern as those by Sahasrabuddhe and Pāṅgārkar, commenting on Bhānudās and the family's illustrious background and then sketching out the chronologically fixed events in Eknāth's life. Ājgāvkar arranges a small number of independent episodes into conveniently sized chapters that are not characterized by any specific theme, and in this sense he follows the model of the hagiographers. He then summarizes Eknāth's literature, discusses the spread of Eknāth's descendants, observes some other Marathi poets who were contemporaries of Eknāth and, like Pāṅgākar, he includes a short chapter comprised of various poets' compositions that praised Eknāth. Throughout the book Ājgāvkar dwells especially on stories of Eknāth being visited by various deities, Eknāth's devotion to Janārdana and Eknāth's qualities of compassion (*bhūtadayā*), nonviolence (*ahiṁsa*), and concern to translate knowledge from Sanskrit writings into Marathi.

When discussing Eknāth's meeting with Dattātreya, Ājgāvkar comments that the story of the meeting is told in a "somewhat different fashion" by "some people."[213] He then offers a very sensational, unprecedented tale: when some mischievous brahmans in Daulatābād hear that Janārdana was taking Eknāth to meet Dattātreya, they want to see it for themselves. They are especially keen on this since a rumor had been circulating that every Friday Janārdana would go to a secret place to meet Datta, who appeared in the form of a Muslim accompanied by a wife

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[212] Ibid., 48. Ājgāvkar claims vaguely that the *ŚKĀ* does not seem like Mukteśvar's style, and he points out that Mukteśvar's name does not appear in the composition. I cannot comment as to the issue of style (although the *ŚKĀ* is remarkably different than *sant*-poets' compositions), but later scholars have shown that the *nāmamūdrikā* Līlāviśvambhara that appears in the *ŚKĀ* was indeed used often by Mukteśvar. Thus I cannot assert with certainty that the *ŚKĀ* was composed by Mukteśvar, but I find Ājgāvkar's arguments against it unpersuasive.

[213] Ibid., 26.

who cooked a non-vegetarian meal. So the brahmans follow Eknāth and Janārdāna to a clearing. There the brahmans are shocked to see Janārdana embrace a Muslim man and his wife. The brahmans begin muttering to each other that if Janārdana, whom they had considered such a great *sādhu,* was defiling himself by accepting food from a Muslim every week, then they need to return to the town to make arrangements to put him out of caste. They decide against taking immediate action, however, because they want to stay and observe what other lurid events might unfold. The Muslim woman sets a large earthen pot on a fire and begins preparing a meal. The pot eventually comes to a violent boil, so she asks Datta what to do. He responds that she should add some chicken. So she cuts up many (literally, "ten five" – *dahāpāc*) chickens and puts them into the pot. The furious boil continues, so she asks Datta's advice again and is told to add a goat. So she cuts off the head of the goat and adds its flesh to the pot. This too does not quench the stew from seething, so she inquires once more. This time Datta points his finger at the group of brahmans who had come to observe the event. The woman takes out a large knife and approaches the onlookers, who decide that they have seen enough and take off running. Eknāth too wants to run away, but Janārdana takes him by the hand and makes him sit down. Once the mischievous brahmans have departed, suddenly the two Muslims and the boiling pot vanish, and in their place stands Datta, manifested in his three-faced form.[214] Ājgāvkar does not comment on this strange story, and one cannot help but wonder if he included it in his book for pure shock value rather than any relevance it might have to Eknāth's biography.

More than the minor additions and contributions that Ājgāvkar made in his biography, it is what he chose to omit that is the greatest interest to us. Incredibly, in the course of his 195-page book, Ājgāvkar does not mention caste in any way except to identify some characters as

[214] Ibid., 27.

brahmans (as Mukteśvar did in his *ŚKĀ*). As remarkable as it is that Ājgāvkar could write a biography of Eknāth without including any of the now standard stories that deal with caste distinctions, it is worth recognizing how he was able to accomplish this. Ājgāvkar simply chose – and it had to have been a conscious choice – to omit the independent episodes in which inter-caste relations were a factor, and he almost completely avoided the issue of caste in the poems of Eknāth that he included in his book.[215] Due to the modular nature of this aspect of Eknāth's biography that we observed in Chapter One, inter-caste relations could be ignored without compromising the biography as a whole. It is difficult to imagine that Ājgāvkar's readers would not have wondered about this conspicuous omission, but perhaps they may not have minded if they were interested primarily in the history of Marathi literature. I confess that I am at a loss to explain why Ājgāvkar did not include stories about Eknāth interacting with untouchables.[216]

In any case, despite Ājgāvkar's sterling self-advertisement of his book in its introduction, his biography of Eknāth ultimately failed to displace Pāṅgārkar's work as the standard, modern description of Eknāth's life. While Ājgāvkar's omission of stories about untouchables is a glaring fault in his book, I suspect that there were two greater reasons that it did not supersede Pāṅgārkar's work. Pāṅgārkar's work was written in a more aesthetically pleasing way, particularly as it incorporated Eknāth's own writings into the narrative in very creative ways; Ājgāvkar did not manage to replicate this success. Also, Ājgāvkar was perhaps too open and critical in his opinions about traditional beliefs and ideas, such as challenging commonly held

[215] Among the other short poems that Ājgāvkar includes, he cites one of Eknāth's "*Johār*" (i.e., Mahār) *bhārūḍ*s as exemplary for the genre. He says nothing about its contents or its name, however; that Eknāth speaks through the mouth of a Mahār in this *bhārūḍ* did not elicit any comment from Ājgāvkar.

[216] Broader research into Ājgvāvkar's other books in his literary series and his other publications may reveal an explicit attitude or perspective that went unexpressed in this book on Eknāth.

notions of authorship. By taking a more conservative approach to matters of religious devotion, Pāṅgārkar probably appealed to a wider audience.

Early biographies (1883-1925) – Summary and Analysis

We have now observed the four earliest major biographical works on Eknāth in Marathi and their descriptions of Eknāth's inter-caste relations. Sahasrabuddhe (1880) neither highlighted nor suppressed these stories and summarized Eknāth's social outlook in terms of charity and generosity. Bhāgvat's biographical essay (1893) focused specifically on Eknāth's social interaction, which he characterized by the term "vision of sameness" (*samadṛṣṭī*) and a mantra-like refrain of caste distinctions having no place in God's home. Pāṅgārkar (1910) created what effectively became the standard biography of Eknāth by combining a strong devotional perspective with an awareness of historiographical sources and a keen appreciation of how Eknāth's literature could be used to support his biographical narrative. Pāṅgārkar did not shy away from stories about Eknāth interacting with untouchables, and he too used the term *samadṛṣṭī*, but his narrations of the inter-caste stories display a deep underlying unease about them, which led him to explain apologetically why these caste boundary transgressions were not as radical as they seemed. Ājgāvkar (1925), as we have just witnessed, did not attempt to make sense of Eknāth's inter-caste relations; he completely ignored them.

All four of the texts handle stories about miracles very carefully, aside from Bhāgvat's essay, which largely avoids stories that involve them.[217] The other three include miraculous stories but are all circumspect about how they should be interpreted. Sahasrabuddhe frames the

[217] Given Bhāgvat's cultural and historical interests, I assume that he must have written about how to understand religious miracle stories in the modern world, but I have not read enough to comment on this.

issue in terms of historiographical integrity (one must report the traditional stories) and a kind of aesthetic preference (people who do not like miraculous stories should not impose their taste on others). Pāṅgārkar initially postures as if he will be a critical interpreter of history, but his high regard for the Vārkarī tradition overrides any deep questioning of the miracles. Ājgāvkar tends to avoid addressing the issue directly and merely presents non-miraculous interpretations alongside the miracle stories. Although all of them write in a modern historical register, none of them straightforwardly questions the tradition that conveys these stories about Eknāth.

When comparing these four texts, one can see that Bhāgvat's is clearly the outlier both in terms of social perspective and reception (or more accurately, lack of reception). It is quite striking how little attention the other three, more influential authors gave to issues of caste and hierarchy. Part of the reason for this may have been that the stories about Eknāth's inter-caste relations were parsed so ambiguously in the hagiographical materials; they indicated no clear embrace of egalitarian values or concern as opposed to maintaining ritual purity or vice versa. To weigh in with a strong social interpretation of stories about Eknāth (as Bhāgvat did) would be very politically fraught, particularly at a time when caste in the political landscape was shifting and uncertain, with the growing movements for low-caste and untouchable rights. Rather than address the thorny issue of the place of caste in the Vārkarī tradition and Marathi *bhakti* generally, the three main authors (all of whom were brahmans) opted to focus more on Eknāth's literary, philosophical and spiritual contributions. By doing so, these books in effect established trends that would be followed in most historical writing about Eknāth throughout the 20th century. One thing that this indicates, I suspect, is that writing on the Marathi *sant*s had begun to find homes in a few well-defined analytical fields. Aspects that belonged to popular religion (including miraculous stories) and social practice (caste) were not easily accommodated. The image of Eknāth in these writings changed accordingly.

Early biographies: English and Urdu

Before concluding our look at early biographies, we ought to take into account publications in languages aside from Marathi. As mentioned briefly in Chapter One, the earliest biographical essay on Eknāth in English (1896), printed in a serial in Calcutta, was a summary of Sahasrabuddhe's book, although in the final few pages the author highlighted Eknāth's egalitarian conduct more than Sahasrabuddhe had.[218] I have not come across any references to this essay in other English or Marathi scholarship. The second work on Eknāth in English (1918) was printed by the large publishing house G. A. Natesan in Madras, and the author's name is strangely not mentioned.[219] The nameless author never states his sources of information, and while several details in this book match Sahasrabuddhe's biography better than other sources, the renditions of stories differ slightly in places as well (e.g., that the Muslim who spit on Eknāth was a "tool" of others).[220] Based on how often the author refers to the Marathi *sant*s as belonging to a "religious revival" and "movement" that helped Maharashtra to "recover its nationalist consciousness,"[221] it also appears that the author was familiar with M. G. Ranade's *Rise of the Maratha Power.*[222] The author notes that Eknāth's opposition to religious bigotry in his time has "induced the English-educated reformers of India to claim Ekanath as a social reformer,"[223] although Eknāth's own writings contain little "bespeaking agreement with the

[218] D. Ganguli, "Eknath: A Religious Teacher of the Deccan," 268-283.

[219] *Shri Ekanath: A Sketch of His Life and Teachings*. Based on the author's perspective in the book, I strongly doubt that he was a missionary or a Christian.

[220] Ibid., 43.

[221] Ibid., 57.

[222] M.G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power*.

tenets of our present-day reform movement."[224] In general, the author interprets Eknāth as aiding the movement toward Maharashtrian independence more than inspiring social change. Although this book apparently was reprinted at least once, I have not come across secondary references to it.

Far more influential was the American Marathi Mission missionary Justin Edwards Abbott's book on Eknāth (1927), which was primarily an English translation of what Mahīpati's *BhL* (1774) had narrated about Eknāth, which itself had drawn completely from Keśavsvāmī's *EC* (1760). Abbott enveloped his meticulous translation of Mahīpati with his own critical comments in the book's short preface and extensive appendices. In addition to his solid review of hagiographical source material, Abbott drew on the Marathi scholarship that was available to him at the time, including the biographies of Pāṅgārkar and Ājgāvkar despite disparaging them as being mere "resumés of the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* account."[225] Above all else, Abbott was impressed by Eknāth's character, ideals and consistency, which made Eknāth in Abbott's opinion "the greatest of the Marāṭhā poet-saints."[226] However, Abbott wrote nothing else about Eknāth aside from this book, which has enjoyed immense popularity and continues to be reprinted. Shortly after Abbott's book first appeared, another American Marathi Mission missionary, Wilbur Stone Deming, rendered Abbott's translation of Mahīpati's verse into a simple biography of Eknāth that contributed nothing new and had little influence.[227]

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[223] It is not clear to me who these "English-educated reformers" who speak about Eknāth are. Perhaps the author is referring to figures in the Madras Presidency with whom I am not familiar. To my knowledge, no major Indian "reformer" in the Marathi-speaking region strongly claimed explicitly that Eknāth was "social reformer."

[224] *Shri Ekanath: A Sketch of His Life and Teachings*, 45.

[225] J.E. Abbott et al., *The Life of Eknāth*, viii.

[226] Ibid., ix.

[227] W.S. Deming, *Eknath: A Maratha Bhakta*.

Finally, we cannot conclude our consideration of early biographies of Eknāth without taking into account one final, exceptional example – Śekh Cānd's 130-page Urdu biography *Śrī Eknāth,* which appears to have been published in 1934 (but actually could not have been, as I will discuss shortly). Cānd's biography of Eknāth had absolutely no influence in Marathi literature. Indeed, it was utterly forgotten and overlooked in Marathi and English scholarship.[228] Although Śekh Cānd's biography had no influence on Marathi literature about Eknāth, it offers a remarkable glimpse into how a Maharashtrian Muslim interpreted the life and significance of Eknāth.

Cānd offers no autobiographical notes in *Śrī Eknāth* and his name is (unsurprisingly) unknown to reference works on Marathi literature, but a recent published article fortunately offers some valuable background information about him.[229] Born in Ahmadnagar in 1907 to a poor family, Cānd attended a local religious school (*madrāsa*) as a child and then municipal schools through high school. He completed a bachelor's degree at Deccan College in Pune in 1931, a second bachelor's degree in Arabic Literature from the University of London (having received a scholarship), and also a law degree in London in 1935. He returned to India the next year, practiced law briefly in Ahmadnagar and Bombay, and then taught Persian and Arabic at Ismail Yusuf College (Yogeshwari, Bombay) and Deccan College between 1937 and 1944. An old acquaintance from London invited him to Delhi to serve in the Ministry of Education in

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[228] Ś. Cānd, *Śrī Eknāth*. I was lucky to come across it when searching for literature about Eknāth on the network of library holdings in WorldCat; a hard copy of a book held at Aligarh Muslim University in Delhi was microfilmed through the South Asia Microform Project and contributed to the United States Library of Congress. Thus, in this very roundabout and extremely fortuitous manner, I obtained access to it. During two years spent in India (2008-2010) I did not encounter anyone who knew that this book existed, and many scholars were amazed and interested to hear about it. I am grateful for assistance from Joel Lee to interpret parts of this text when I first encountered it. Dr. Y. M. Pathan and Mr. Asgar Ali of Aurangabad translated the book into English for me, and it is on the basis of this rough, preliminary translation that I offer provisional comments about it. Page numbers in my citations will refer to the translated manuscript that they gave to me.

[229] Apparently a whole biography has been published about him in Urdu as well, but I have not seen it. Sa'idi Sahar, *Śaikh Cānd: Hayāt aur Adabī Khidmāt* (Auraṅgābād: Salmā Nishāt, 1998).

1944, and Cānd was subsequently appointed Director of Education in Quetta (Baluchistan) in 1945. When the nation of Pakistan came into existence two years later, Cānd was transferred to Karachi and served as an administrator in various ministries there. He received a national award (the *Tamgha-i-Pakistan*) for his civil service and was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Karachi in 1961. Poor health forced him to resign from the position shortly thereafter, and he remained in Karachi, editing large Deccani Urdu texts until his death in 1981.[230] Aside from *Śrī Eknāth*, Śekh Cānd published six articles in English in the *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* (as well as many articles in Urdu, apparently),[231] and he edited several classic texts of Persian and Deccani Urdu literature.[232]

In light of N. S. Akhter's biographical sketch of Cānd, there is a problem with the publication date of *Śrī Eknāth*. The title page of the book states that the book was published in 1934, and after Cānd's name is listed as the author, the degrees B.A. and L.L.B. are also printed. According to Akhter, Cānd was in London during 1934 and did not complete his law degree until

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[230] N. S. Akhter, "The Life and Literary Contributions of Professor Shaikh Chand Hussain of Ahmadnagar," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate Research Institute* 66-67 (2006-2007): 15-21.

[231] It is clear from his English articles that Śekh Cānd wrote his name C. H. Shaikh in English ("H." being his father's name, Hussein). I make no claims about how his name should be written; I am simply providing enough information that interested readers can locate his relevant publications. See C. H. Shaikh, "Some Important Personalities of Baghdad During the Latter Half of the 4th and the Earlier Quarter of the 5th Centuries of Islam - Pt. 1," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 1 (1940); C. H. Shaikh, "Some Important Personalities of Baghdad During the Latter Half of the 4th and the Earlier Quarter of the 5th Centuries of Islam - Pt. 2," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 2 (1940-1941); C. H. Shaikh and M. A. M. Khan, "A Dakhanī Manuscript," Ibid.; C. H. Shaikh, "Literary Personages of Ahmadnagar - Pt. 1," Ibid.; C. H. Shaikh, "Literary Personages of Ahmadnagar - Pt. 2," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 3 (1942); C. H. Shaikh, "A Copy in Ms. of the Persian Translation of Vālmīki's Yogavāsiṣṭha Made Under the Auspices of Prince Dārā Shukūh," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 3 (1942); C. H. Shaikh, "A Descriptive Handlist of the Arabic, Persian and Hindusthānī Belonging to the Satara Historical Museum at Present Lodged at the Deccan College Research Institute, Poona," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 4 (1942-1943); C. H. Shaikh, "Translations of the Mahābhārata into Arabic and Persian," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 5 (1943-1944).

[232] N.S. Akhter, "The Life and Literary Contributions of Professor Shaikh Chand Hussain of Ahmadnagar," 18-19. An author search on Shaikh Cand in the WorldCat library catalog system brings up more references to than even Akhter mentions. Not being able to read Urdu, I cannot offer further comment on them.

1935.[233] Also, Cānd mentions a film about Eknāth that was shown in Bombay, Pune and Ahmadnagar. I am confident that this film was "Dharmātmā," which was first screened in Maharashtra in December 1935.[234] So it seems impossible that *Śrī Eknāth* was published in 1934 in Aurangabad, when the 27 year-old Cānd was studying law in London. Akhter claims that Cānd published "nearly two dozen" research articles during his years in Bombay and Pune (1937-1944), so I suspect that *Śrī Eknāth* must have been actually published sometime within this period.[235] Or perhaps Akhter has printed incorrect dates about Cānd's studies, or the published date on the title page of *Śrī Eknāth* refers to something other than the Common Era or contemporary dating systems in Maharashtra with which I am familiar.

Cānd prefaces his book by saying that for some years he had been collecting information about Paithan, which was a district capital in the period of the Nizām Shāh sultanate in Ahmadnagar in the 15th and 16th centuries, and it was through this research that he acquired information about Eknāth. A descendant of Eknāth in Paithan at the time, one Bhānudās Jāgīrdār, requested that Cānd publish a book on Eknāth. Strangely, in trying to illustrate the prominence of Eknāth, Cānd claims that "eleven or twelve" biographies about Eknāth were written by American and British authors, "many" of Eknāth's works have been translated into English, and an "American producer" made a film about Eknāth that was released in Bombay,

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[233] I do not know where Akhter found his information about Śekh Cānd. My first suspicion would be that some his biographical details about Cānd may be incorrect. I doubt that *Śrī Eknāth* was written by someone else and attributed to Cānd, since the title page lists Cānd's law degree after his name (which would have been quite a prescient pseudographical feat, if Akhter's dates are correct and Cānd did not receive the degree until December 1935).

[234] Technically a black and white film "Sant Eknath" was directed and produced by "The Father of Indian Cinema" Dhundiraj Gopal Phalke in 1926, but I do not believe that it was screened widely.

[235] N.S. Akhter, "The Life and Literary Contributions of Professor Shaikh Chand Hussain of Ahmadnagar," 18. Unfortunately Akhter makes no mention of *Śrī Eknāth* at all; it appears that he too did not realize that this book existed.

Pune and Ahmadnagar.[236] I am quite confident that only two English books narrate the life of Eknāth (Abbott's and Deming's), and only a sliver of Eknāth's works have been translated into English.[237] There was certainly no American producer involved in any film about Eknāth. These clearly incorrect statements give a poor first impression of Cānd as a scholar in *Śrī Eknāth*, but fortunately the rest of the book conveys much more reliable information.

Cānd devotes a little less than half of his book to Eknāth's biography as such, and the remainder of the book contains sections on Eknāth's miracles, poetry, teachings, and importance. Scattered throughout his book are comments that reveal his familiarity with Mahīpati's *BhL* and Pāṅgārkar's biography. Cānd's section on Eknāth's teachings runs too parallel to a section in Deming's book on Eknāth to be a mere coincidence, but Cānd never cites Deming. Aside from the strange references to English publications and Americans in the introduction, Cand's tone and approach are scholarly and quite respectful.

Of course, what makes Cānd's biography of Eknāth most interesting is the fact that Cānd is a Muslim. Not surprisingly, he brings a unique perspective to many stories. When Cānd first introduces Eknāth's guru Janārdana, he notes that Mahīpati claimed Janārdana would meet Dattātreya, who was dressed like a Muslim. In fact, says Cānd, he was dressed like a Muslim because he was a Muslim.[238] Every Friday Janārdana would meet his elderly Muslim *murshad* (spiritual guide or guru) to discuss spiritual matters.[239] After Eknāth had demonstrated his faithful service to Janārdana for six years, Janārdana feels it was time to introduce Eknāth to his

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[236] Shaikh Cand, *Śrī Eknāth (English Translation Manuscript)*, trans. Asgar Ali, et al. (Aurangabad, [1934] 2010), 5.

[237] Justin E. Abbott, *Bhikshugita: the Mendicant's Song (A Translation of the 23rd Chapter of the Eknathi Bhagavata)* (Madras: Sumata Books, 1928 [1989]).

[238] S. Cand, *Śrī Eknāth (English Translation Manuscript)*, 13.

[239] I realize that *murshid* is the more standard transliteration for this Arabic term, but I am choosing to retain the spelling *murshad* out of faithfulness to the translation that was prepared for me.

murshad, so he brings Eknāth along to his next Friday meeting. When the elderly Muslim man arrives, he brings with him a cow named Kāmadhenu[240] which he requests Janārdana to milk. The *murshad* then crumbles some bread into the milk, eats it with Janārdana and asks Eknāth to wash the pot. Eknāth brings the pot to a nearby stream, puts water in it, and drinks the contents. When Eknāth returns, the *murshad* touches Eknāth's head with his hand, thereby sending Eknāth into a "world of self-forgetting." Cānd explains that Eknāth was very much influenced by *taṣawwuf* (Sufism).[241] Cānd repeats this theme frequently throughout his book – Eknāth was influenced by Sufism both spiritually and socially, so that he treated all people as equal regardless of caste.

We know this story from Mahīpati's *BhL*, and Cānd conspicuously inverts a number of elements in it. Readers should keep in mind that in iconography and mythology, Dattātreya is regularly accompanied by a cow named Kāmadhenu (a Sanskrit name that means literally, the "cow of desire," which grants wishes). In Mahīpati's verse, Dattātreya appears dressed as a Muslim, accompanied by a dog that Janārdana milks. Ultimately Dattātreya takes on his true form, and the dog transforms into Kāmadhenu. In contrast, Cānd portrays a Muslim sage arriving with a cow named Kāmadhenu that Janārdana then milks. By including the reference to the cow named Kāmadhenu, Cānd's rendition starts to look less like an alternative story that had actually been circulating and more like a contrived inversion of the standard traditional story.

In the *BhL* (13:108-124) Mahīpati told a story about Eknāth donning Janārdana's armor and leading his troops into battle in order to avoid interrupting Janārdana's meditation. When describing this story, Śekh Cānd draws a conclusion that no Marathi author has wanted to touch:

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[240] S. Cand, *Śrī Eknāth (English Translation Manuscript)*, 14.

[241] Ibid., 16.

Eknāth "fought as a soldier in a battle on behalf of Muslims."[242] Almost invariably, whenever Marathi authors commented on the political and cultural circumstances of Eknāth's time, they immediately highlighted the idea of oppressive rule by foreign invaders and only then perhaps mention a rigid Hindu societal formation; Cānd describes the historical context without mentioning Muslims and simply states that the condition of Hinduism was "not satisfactory" because the brahmans had damaged its image.[243] In the story of the Muslim who spits on Eknāth, Cānd notes that the original story in Mahīpati's *BhL* did not state that he spat intentionally on Eknāth or that he spat 108 times. So Cānd takes Pāṅgārkar to task for introducing a "poisonous" claim without explaining himself or citing his source for the story.[244]

Cānd claims that the "most important" aspect of Eknāth's thought was his "disbelief" in caste – something that Eknāth inherited through his spiritual lineage, which led back to Sufism.[245] According to Cānd, hagiographers who wrote about Eknāth unnecessarily inserted more "orthodox" elements in their writings because they found Eknāth's liberal social outlook problematic.[246] Cānd is obviously disappointed about this, as he clearly respects Eknāth's liberal social attitude. In his conclusion, Cānd writes, "Considering the valuable contribution of Eknāth, it is the noble duty of every citizen of the country to take lessons from the life and works of Eknāth and behave accordingly."[247]

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[242] Ibid., 20.

[243] Ibid., 27.

[244] Ibid., 40.

[245] Ibid., 96, 101.

[246] Ibid., 100.

[247] Ibid., 105.

None of what Cānd claims is terribly surprising. Given the character of several stories (especially Dattātreya dressed as a Muslim) one might expect Cānd to draw links between Eknāth and Islam, and he certainly lives up to this expectation. As an outsider to the Hindu tradition who is not enmeshed into the social expectations of family and *jāti*, perhaps Cānd has greater freedom to openly state that the hagiographers and biographers of Eknāth (with a few exceptions) seem to have routinely nuanced their presentations in order to take off a sharper, more critical social edge. Cānd's book is the earliest claim that Eknāth's *paramaguru* was a Muslim, well before any of the Marathi scholars drew this connection. Cānd apparently does not explicitly call this man a *ṣūfī*, which is interesting because Cānd freely says that Eknāth was influenced by Sufism elsewhere.[248] In general, I do not believe anything here deeply challenges or overturns Dušan Deák's argument that Eknāth's *paramaguru* was probably not a *ṣūfī* but rather a popular itinerant Muslim holy man, as I mentioned in Chapter One.[249]

Vectors of Interpretation in the 20th Century

It has been valuable to observe several early biographies of Eknāth, as authorial concerns and narrative styles had transformed significantly from the earlier hagiographical models. This has taken us through the Marathi literature (as well as English and Urdu) about Eknāth until 1950. At this point, rather than continue analyzing publications about Eknāth individually for the latter half of the 20th century, it will be more meaningful to shift our approach somewhat and take stock the four most important vectors that shape this body of writing. This more bird's-eye

[248] Of course, I am basing my analysis completely on the translation that was prepared for me. One of the translators, Yu. Ma. Paṭhān, is a very highly regarded and accomplished scholar in Maharashtra, so I do not think my trust is misplaced, but I am aware that my thinking about this text is not based directly on the Urdu text itself.

[249] D. Deák, "Contextualizing the Past: the Saint and 'His' Environment," 290-313.

approach will offer greater insight since most of what was written about Eknāth in Marathi after 1950 (and arguably, even since Pāṅgārkar's biography in 1910) has largely repeated themes and information that had become established and accepted. In other words, one finds relatively little in the way of new perspectives on and information about Eknāth. Also, since the number of publications about Eknāth (and the other Marathi *sant*s) expanded in the latter half of the 20th century, it would be extremely tedious (if not impossible) to consider each book and article individually.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir was behind a great deal of the material published about Eknāth from 1950 onwards, although several substantial independent scholarly books and edited volumes were published as well. Many of these edited volumes confusingly include the word *Darśan* in their titles (as do their counterparts about other *sant*s), perhaps to convey the sense that each short article offers a "portrait" or "glimpse" of Eknāth rather than a full biography (*caritra*).[250] The anniversary of Eknāth's birthday also provided occasion for Marathi serials to devote an issue particularly to Eknāth.[251] Looking over the material that has been published about Eknāth in the second half of the 20th century, one sees that a sizable majority (more than two-thirds) of it focuses exclusively on Eknāth's writings, and most of the remainder considers Eknāth's historical context and significance. These more historical and biographical works are the locus of the observations ahead.

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[250] In addition to the two *Eknāth Darśan* volumes that were published by EŚM, two further books by other editors and publishers bear this name as well: He. Vi. Ināmdār, ed. *Sant Eknāth-Darśan* (Puṇe: Kāṇṭinenṭal Prakāśan,1983); Gaṅgādhar Bāḷkṛṣṇa Sardār, ed. *Eknāth-darśan* (Puṇe: Mukund Nārāyaṇ Bhiḍe,1972 [1978]).

[251] The examples of special issues in Marathi serials of which I am aware (and I am confident that there are others) are: *Pailatīra (Divāḷī Vārṣik: Sant Śrīeknāth Mahārāj Viśeṣāṅk)*. vol. 15 (Kolhāpūr: 1998); *Kalyāṇī (Sant Eknāth Mahārāj Viśeśāṅk)*, (Puṇe, 1997). One further magazine-like memorial booklet that is very similar to those published by the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir was published privately on the 400-year anniversary of Eknāth's death is Ināmdār Bandhu, *Smaraṇikā : Śrī Eknāth Samādhī Catuḥśatabdī Varṣa 1998-99* (Puṇe: Self-published, 1999).

I propose that four main interpretive vectors have shaped the biographical narratives of Eknāth's life in 20th-century Marathi literature, viewing him as an exemplary proponent of particular ideals or as playing a key role in broad historical developments. The most pervasive and articulate of these is the "unification" interpretation of the *sant*s as preparing the social ground to support the development of self-rule in Maharashtra – a very influential idea formulated initially by Mahadev Govind Ranade.[252] Similarly pervasive but harder to summarize succinctly is a primary interest in spiritual (*adhyātmik*) and nondual philosophical insight, as presented in Maharashtra perhaps most famously through the writings and influence of Ramcandra Dattatreya Ranade. A third interpretive vector highlights stories of miracles and interaction with deities so as to reinforce the idea that Eknāth was associated with divinity and divine powers. The fourth vector – materialist interpretation of the *sant*s in history – was not widely influential in a direct way for literature on Eknāth (since few people aside from its two main proponents endorsed it wholeheartedly), but it offered a unique interpretive alternative for imagining Eknāth's social significance.

Although Marathi writers and thinkers had been wrestling with how write a native Maharashtrian historical narrative (as opposed to accepting their history as written by the British) for several decades before him,[253] the politically moderate scholar, religious reformer and judge Mahadev Govind Ranade introduced what would become an extremely influential historical

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[252] M.G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power*. Ranade probably drew on earlier currents of thought to formulate this grand narrative. One of the currents may have been from Rā. Rā. Bhāgvat (whom we observed earlier). According to Prachi Deshpande, Bhāgvat argued that the Marathi *bhakti* tradition disrupted the caste hierarchy and cleared the ground for a unified Maharashtrian society (*mahārāṣtra-maṇḍaḷ*) to be established. P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 130.

[253] Deshpande points to a public event in 1867 as an important historical landmark in the Marathi writing of Maharashtrian history. Before a student gathering in Bombay, Neelkanth Janardan Kirtane read an essay that was highly critical of the widely accepted version of Maratha history that had been written by James Grant Duff in 1826. Kirtane's critique was apparently the first public show of dissatisfaction with Duff's history and signaled the beginning of great efforts on the part of Maharashtrians to recover their own sense of history from the *bakhar*s and other Marathi sources. P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 97.

narrative in 1900. According to his novel argument, the Marathi *bhakti* poets from Jñāndev in the 13th century onward stirred up a religious movement that, among other things, endowed Marathi with a great literature and "modified the strictness of the old spirit of caste exclusiveness," which thereby brought *śūdra*s to a "position of spiritual power and social importance almost equal to that of the brahmans."[254] As an example of this, Ranade cited Eknāth feeding a group of untouchables before a group of brahmans and then being vindicated by his ability to heal a leper when those zealous orthodox brahmans could not.[255] This empowerment and the establishment of social almost-equality subsequently prepared Maharashtrians "in a way no other nation in India was prepared, to take the lead in re-establishing a united native power in the place of foreign domination."[256] This, argued Ranade, was what "Saint Ramdas" meant when he urged Śivājī's ruling son to establish "Maharashtra Dharma."[257]

Thus M. G. Ranade drew crucial and largely novel connections between the Marathi *sant*s, the rise of Śivājī, and the establishment of the Maratha Empire. According to his narrative, the *sant*s such as Eknāth had played an essential role in challenging caste hierarchy and unifying Maharashtrian society for the sake of self-respect, Hindu religious self-expression and ultimately self-rule. Ranade situated the *sant*s' religious and social teachings firmly within

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[254] M.G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power*, 76.

[255] Ibid., 67-68. This story comes from Mahīpati's *Bhaktavijay* 46:45-128, which is slightly different from the more commonly recited version of the story in the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (in which Eknāth feeds Muslims before the brahmans). Ranade's rendition of the story is slightly embellished, however, as he claims that the orthodox brahmans could not cure the leper. In Mahīpati's version, the brahmans do not try to heal the leper but only watch while Eknāth does. Cf. J.E. Abbott et al., *Stories of Indian Saints: A Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya*.

[256] M.G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power*.

[257] Ibid. There is not space here for a full discussion of the influential idea of Maharashtra Dharma and how it has been reinterpreted in the 20th century. For a good overview, see P. Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 128-138.

the narrative arc of history that led to confident, competent political independence.[258] Of course the link between Śivājī under Muslim rule and Indians under British rule is not hard to see. This narrative became a standard, almost universal feature in 20th-century biographical writing about Eknāth, and authors became fond of pointing out ways in which they perceived Eknāth to be subtly resisting Muslim oppression and preparing his people to fight for their dignity and self-determination, such as we observed in Chapter One with Shridhar Kulkarni's short book on Eknāth.[259]

The second vector of interpretation I will provisionally call "spiritual," for lack of a better term. As hopelessly vague as the word "spiritual" is, it nonetheless functions as the English equivalent to the Marathi word *"adhyātmik*," which is indeed very common in the literature on Eknāth that exemplifies this vector. One could certainly argue that the historical roots of a "spiritual" reading of Eknāth's biography and writings run quite deep, but I am most concerned with it as a trend in 20th century interpretation.[260] "Spiritual" and "mystical" streams of interpretation obviously abound in the history of Marathi literature as well as in other languages throughout India (both historically and especially in the early 20th century). Constrained by space, I must focus my discussion on late 20th-century Maharashtra. As a primary example of

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[258] As a member of the Hindu reformist group, the Prarthana Samaj, Ranade also gave a speech specifically on Eknath. While it does demonstrate Ranade's skill as an orator, it is not especially interesting to a scholar of Eknāth. Ranade's nine-page speech can be condensed into a single sentence: Eknāth's unique contribution to Maharashtra was his rendering the easy and enjoyable teachings of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (what Ranade calls the "*Bhāgavat Dharma"*) accessible to everyone including women and *śūdra*s. The speech is actually more about Ranade's understanding of *Bhāgavat Dharma* than about Eknāth. Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe, "Eknāth," in *Nyā. Mū. Mahādev Govind Rānaḍe hyāñcī Dharmapar Vyākhyāneṁ*, ed. Dvārkānāth Govind Vaidya. (Mumbaī: Karnāṭak Pres, 1940), 204-212.

[259] A few notable examples of this vector are: Narhar Raghunāth Phāṭak, *Śrī Eknāth: Vāṅmay āṇi Kārya* (Mumbaī: Mauj Prakāśan Gṛha, 1950 [1963]); Ś.R. Kuḷkarṇī, *Nāthāñcā Bhāgavatdharma*; S.R. Kulkarni, *Saint Eknath*; G.V. Tagare, *Eknath*; M.Ś. Jośī, *Paiṭhaṇce Nāth*; R.C. Ḍhere, "Mahārāṣṭramahodāyācā Agradūt."

[260] In addition to referring to "spiritual" as a translation of *adhyātmik*, one might also consider "spirituality" as a sociologically identifiable factor in modern society. As background for this idea (which I have yet to fully incorporate into my analysis of Eknāth interpretation), I have in mind Peter Van der Veer, "Spirituality in Modern Society," *Social Research* 76, no. 4 (2009): 1097-1120.

this approach, we should consider the work of an influential and popular philosopher, Ramcandra Dattatreya (alias Gurudev) Ranade (1886-1957), who published over a dozen books in English, Marathi and Hindi and was regarded as a spiritual guide to scholars such as Shankar Gopal Tulpule.[261]

One of his most widely read books that relates to the Marathi *sant*s is *Mysticism in Maharashtra*.[262] R. D. Ranade states that through the work of the *bhakti* poets, "mysticism" which was philosophical and abstract in the *Upaniṣad*s and other Sanskrit texts (e.g., the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Nārada Bhakti-sūtra* and *Śāṇḍilya Bhakti-sūtra*), became devotional and "engrossed itself in the practical upliftment of humankind."[263] In other words, these poets translated knowledge about God-devotion and self-realization from Sanskrit into Marathi and spread these teachings and techniques equally among the people. Thus, *bhakti* could be also termed "democratical [sic] mysticism," since it is essentially mysticism that is openly available to everyone.[264] This mysticism is not unique to the Vārkarīs, R. D. Ranade argues, but in Maharashtra most of the teachers happened to be Vārkarīs. The various poets all practiced the same mysticism but in slightly different ways: Jñāndev was intellectual, Nāmdev was social, Eknāth synthesized the worldly and spiritual, Tukārām was intensely personal, and Rāmdās was an active mystic.[265] In R. D. Ranade's view, Eknāth was extraordinary for two main reasons:

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[261] Ranade was a prolific author who mostly wrote in English, but also much in Marathi and a little bit in Kannada. One noteworthy book by R. D. Ranade that relates to this study is a collection of excerpts from Eknāth's writings. The focus of this book is restricted only to Eknāth's writings, and contains a very short biographical introduction of spiritual milestones in Eknāth's life. Rā. Da. Rānaḍe, *Eknāth Vācanāmṛta* (Puṇe: Snehal Prakāśan, 1955).

[262] Ramcandra Dattatreya Ranade, *Mysticism in Maharashtra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1933 [1982]). To my knowledge, M. G. Ranade and R. D. Ranade were not related, although they both belonged to the same *jāti* (Konkanastha Brahman).

[263] Ibid., 1.

[264] Ibid., 16.

[265] Ibid., 20.

maintaining an intensely spiritual life while remaining a householder, and breaking ranks with the erudite *paṇḍit*s in Paithan to compose his texts in Marathi rather than Sanskrit so that they would be accessible to everyone.[266] One particular sentence in which Ranade described Eknāth is often cited by others: "With Jñānadeva philosophy had reigned in the clouds; with Ekanātha it came down upon the earth and dwelt among men."[267]

As is typical of this interpretive vector, R. D. Ranade noted that Eknāth disregarded caste and insisted on treating people equally, but this was simply a result of his nondual mystical outlook.[268] Consequently, addressing issues of social change and caste-related tensions are not priorities in literature that is shaped by this spiritual interpretive vector. Not surprisingly, this vector is quite well represented among Marathi scholars and literati who confess a general, nonsectarian spirituality, sometimes a personal guru relationship, but not necessarily an affiliation to a particular religious tradition or community.[269]

Although most of the early biographers struggled to reckon with the miraculous nature of so many stories about Eknāth, and although most contemporary scholars now regularly disregard these aspects of the stories, there continues to be a very large section of the reading public who find Eknāth's wonders and appeals to his divine status compelling. At most any devotional book stall or shop in a Maharashtrian pilgrimage town today, one can easily find at least a couple exemplars of short, inexpensive, illustrated booklets that narrate stories about Eknāth. Such publications are often filled with dialogue and focus on stories that involve wondrous surprises.

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[266] Ibid., 256-257.

[267] Ibid.

[268] Ibid., 217, 257.

[269] Some examples of this vector are: Pāṇḍuraṅg Āṭhavale, "Sant Eknāth," in *Śrāddha*, vol. 1. (Mumbaī: Satvicar Darśan, 1976 [2009]), 139-196; Śaṁ. Dā.. Peṇḍse, *Bhāgavatottam Sant Śrī Eknāth*, Mahārāṣṭrācā Bhāgavat Dharma (2) (Nāgpūr: Nāgpūr Prakāśan, 1971); Mukund Raghunāth Dātār, *Santkavī Eknāth (Vyaktitvāce Darśan āṇi Vāṅmauācā Paramārśa* (Puṇe: Snehal Prakāśan, 1997).

Doubtlessly, some readers are impressed by such stories and derive a better impression of Eknāth through them. These miraculous stories also tend to involve a good deal of emotional suspense, as the innocent and meek hero Eknāth humbly enters into dilemmas inflicted on him by arrogant people in positions of power (antagonistic brahmans or Muslims). It is difficult to deny that watching Eknāth be vindicated while his arrogant antagonists are shocked and humbled in these stories does elicit some amount of emotional gratification.[270]

Finally, although the materialist interpretations of the Marathi *sant*s are not widely shared or the main interpretive vector of many books and articles about Eknāth in the 20th century, they have acted as noteworthy points of reference that indirectly had an impact on some scholars. Basically, there are only two examples of books shaped primarily by the materialist vector. Bā. Raṅ. Suṇṭhaṇkar was the first to insist that in their historical contexts, the Marathi *sant*s were straightforwardly social reformers (*samāj sudhārak*) who were part of a movement (*caḷvaḷ*) against the domination by the professional brahman religious classes. [271] Suṇṭhaṇkar attempted to reconstruct some of the details of this movement and its leaders by drawing directly on poetry attributed to the *sant*s, although in the end he confessed that despite the glimmer of hope for major social change, the old social order (as characterized by caste) simply could not be overthrown.[272] Suṇṭhaṇkar concludes on a very somber tone: "In my opinion, whatever role the *Bhāgavat Dharma* played in history, it has now run out."[273]

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[270] Some examples: K. Gosāvī, *Sant Eknāth*; K. Gosāvī, *Yugapravartak Sant Eknāth*; Bāḷkṛṣṇa Laḷīt, *Śrī Sant Eknāth Mahārāj Caritra* (Puṇe: Amol Prakāśan, 2007); A. Paiṭhaṇkar, *Śrī Eknāth Caritra*.

[271] Bāḷkṛṣṇa Raṅgarāv Suṇṭhaṇkar, *Mahārāṣṭrīya Sant-maṇḍaḷāce Aitihāsik Kārya* (Mumbaī: Lokvāṅmay Gṛha, 1948 [2008]), 32-33.

[272] Ibid., 117.

[273] Ibid., 132.

G. B. Sardar adopted a more modest perspective than Suṇṭhaṇkar.[274] He admired Suṇṭhaṇkar's effort to analyze the history of the *sant*s in terms of societal change, but he strongly critiqued Suṇṭhaṇkar's naivete about the literal truth of the *sant* poetry that he relied on as basic historical information.[275] Sardar also expressed his admiration for M. G. Ranade's historical narrative that vitally connected the societal contributions of the *sant*s to the emerging political formation of Maratha rulers, although he felt that Ranade was not frank about the shortcomings of the *sant*s.[276] In essence, Sardar followed Suṇṭhaṇkar somewhat in proposing that the *sant*s did indeed seek to change society. In Sardar's view, however, the *sant*s never aimed at full-scale revolution but instead had resigned themselves to softening the harshness of caste divisions.[277] Sardar's unique contribution to the argument was that this failure was not due to the *sant*s themselves, but that they and the common people in society were at too much of an economic and material disadvantage to start a real social revolution, in contrast to what occurred in medieval Europe.[278] Therefore, rather than aspire towards a futile revolution, the *sant*s chose to remain within the peculiarly Indian social constraints, by and large, and do their best to act with

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[274] Gangadhar Balkrishna Sardar, *The Saint-Poets of Maharashtra: Their Impact on Society*, trans. Kumud Mehta (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1969). The revision, translation and reprinting sequence of this book is a bit complicated. The Marathi first edition as published in 1950, but in each of the subsequent four editions Sardar kept adding new chapters (but apparently left the previously printed chapters alone). Since the chapters even in the first edition hold together only loosely, it was easy to append new chapters. The English translation of this book was based on the first edition. Consequently, the English translation lacks three chapters ("The Idea of Dharma in the *Jñāneśvarī*," "Great Sant Cokhāmeḷā," and "Fruits of Religious Awakening" that appeared only in later editions. I will be citing the English translation, although I have read the Marathi edition as well. This will not create any major problems, as the first two "missing" chapters in the English translation are not relevant to our concerns, and the final chapter, in my opinion, does not add anything very new that Sardar had not already discussed in the first edition of the book. Cf. Gaṅgādhar Bāḷkṛṣṇa Sardār, *Sant Vāṅmayācī Sāmājik Phalaśrutī* 7 ed. (Mumbaī: Lokvāṅmay Gṛha, 1950 [2006]).

[275] G.B. Sardar, *The Saint-Poets of Maharashtra: Their Impact on Society*, 11.

[276] Ibid., 2.

[277] Ibid., 20.

[278] Ibid., 34.

courage and determination.[279] Eknāth's role in all of this was to challenge the brahman *paṇḍit*s' monopoly in Paithan, the "very bastion of orthodoxy," by championing the cause of women and *śūdra*s. In this sense, "Eknatha was the true founder of Maharashtra's school of liberal and moderate thought."[280]

Although Marxist thought has been quite popular among historians in other parts of India, the materialist interpretive vector never appealed to a wide audience in Maharashtra, at least among historians whose research included the *sant*s.[281] The only notable literary impact that this materialist vector had in regard to interpreting Eknāth was on Jayant Lele and Eleanor Zelliot, both in terms of their concerns for social analysis and their sober assessments of how little actual change the *sant*s were able to effect in Maharashtrian society.

As general and speculative as it may be, it may be helpful to consider who are represented by these various vectors of interpretation. Where in society do we find these vectors coming into play? Who uses them? The unification vector is extremely widespread and can be found regularly (at least referred to, if not fully explict) in academic literature especially in the fields of Marathi and literature (less so in history and the social sciences), popular media such as newspapers and magazines, and importantly, in public school textbooks. The unification vector is almost as widespread and unconsciously accepted in Maharashtra as the assumption that all historical Muslim rulers in Maharashtra were oppressive, cow killing, temple destroying religious bigots. The Maharashtrian Muslims that I have met unsurprisingly do not accept this (the unification vector or the stereotype of Muslim rulers). One might imagine that *dalit* groups

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[279] Ibid.

[280] Ibid., 82.

[281] Some elements of this line of thought have been integrated into the very few examples of scholarship by *dalit* authors on the *sant* traditions. Cf. Śaṅkararāv Kharāt, *Santāñcī Sāmājik Dṛṣṭī* (Puṇe: Continental Prakāśan, 2005).

would be more skeptical of this interpretation; more empirical research would be needed to determine this for certain. The spirituality vector is also quite diffuse in society. In my experience, I encountered this interpretation of Eknāth's significance most strongly among middle-class brahmans who (in my opinion) were not overly committed to any particular religious practice. Maharashtrians who were engaged seriously with reading one of Eknāth's longer texts almost always cited spirituality as the reason for their activity. I was surprised to encounter a good number of Maharashtrian middle-class non-brahmans (Marathas, specifically) who saw in Eknāth a great spiritual leader. The miraculous interpretive vector is well-represented among attendees and organizers of the annual Eknāth Ṣaṣṭhī festivities in Paithan (which I attended twice) and the annual pilgrimage of Eknāth's palanquin to Pandharpur on *vārī* (which I joined once). Not surprisingly, administrators and town officials liked to point out where in Paithan various miracles occurred, and I listened to many rural Vārkarī devotees excitedly tell me stories about the wondrous deeds of Eknāth (although there were no small number of more skeptical Vārkarīs as well). The materialist vector, in my experience, is represented among a small number of scholars and liberal artists. Most Maharashtrian *dalit*s with whom I spoke did not participate in this interpretative vector aside from the assessment that the *bhakti* tradition did not change Marathi society, perhaps because they had little interest in paying heed to that period of history. The Mahār Vārkarīs that I met in Paithan (and a few non-Vārkarī Mahārs elsewhere) were more amenable to this interpretation.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have observed how the memory of Eknāth has been preserved and inflected through the establishment of institutions and in the composition of Marathi biographical

literature. A small number of disparate bits of information testify to Eknāth's spreading reputation – the sudden appearance of other men with his name shortly after he died, authors claiming familial connections (including, strangely, a Varanasi-based *dharmaśāstra* scholar), and scattered references to Eknāth in relation to *guru*s and *maṭh*s around Maharashtra. The official patronage records of the temples and descendants of Eknāth in Paithan offer a clearer indication that Eknāth's reputation was growing, although more research needs to be carried out to determine more precisely and reliably when this significant patronage developed. Of course, by looking to religious institutional records and the histories of institutions such as the Eknāth Saṁsthān and the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, we ought not be surprised to see a fairly conservative dynamic at work. The Eknāth Saṁsthān was and is inherently interested in preserving and increasing their facilities and activities, as well as providing for the livelihoods of some of Eknāth's living descendants. Likewise, the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir, whose members are mostly middle-class, aging brahmans in Aurangabad, strives to preserve Eknāth's memory according to values that they hold dear. The sharp, challenging social edge that we see in some of the stories about Eknāth obviously would not sit well in such settings.

The biographies of Eknāth show a rather similar pattern. Two of the early biographers (Sahasrabuddhe and Pāṅgārkar) repeated Mahīpati's stories about Eknāth's interactions with untouchables. Pāṅgārkar, as we saw, made sure to qualify some of those stories to ensure that no one had the impression that Eknāth was meeting with untouchables for their own sake, but only because those people were so pure and devoted as to be untouchable in name only. Ājgāvkar conspicuously omitted all of the caste-related stories from his biography. Only the freethinking Bhāgvat delved into the stories about Eknāth's caste boundary transgression. Yet, in the end, his

critical and challenging essay seems to have had mainly a brahman audience in mind.[282] Even in being harshly critical of brahman social behavior, Bhāgvat was still a brahman addressing other brahmans and trying to preserve aspects of brahman-hood that he endorsed.

In tracing the four major interpretive vectors, we observed how socially charged issues were parsed in different ways. The miraculous vector largely ignored social and inter-caste topics. The spiritual vector allowed for the possibility of transcending caste distinctions, but only because it endorsed a nondual philosophical or mystical stance that (in theory) denigrated all distinctions. The unification interpretive vector, which is numerically the best represented in 20th century Marathi literature, held up Eknāth's egalitarian social outlook as admirable but only because it supported the narrative of unifying Maharashtrian Hindus against a common enemy. The materialist vector opened a narrative and analytical space in which to look at Maharashtrian history and conclude that if *sant*s such as Eknāth truly were interested in social change and reform, later generations did not carry it further.

Surprisingly, however, the image of Eknāth challenging social norms and advocating for social change was actually carried further. It just did not occur much in the institutional and literary sources that we have reviewed here in this chapter. In the next chapter, we will see that Eknāth's inter-caste relations and especially the stories about him interacting with untouchables became the most popular, marketable and entertaining aspects of his life that were depicted in Marathi theater and film.

[282] As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it would be interesting to explore further the possibility that Bhāgvat was also writing about bad and good brahmans for the purpose of improving relations between brahmans and non-brahmans. More research would be necessary to appreciate accurately who exactly Bhāgvat's audience was. Based on my current impression, the main audience for his essay on Eknāth was indeed brahmans.

Chapter Five – Eknāth on the Marathi Stage and Screen

No serious investigation of how Eknāth has been remembered in the 20th century could overlook the impact of Marathi theater and film. It may be impossible to precisely gauge the effects of such portrayals in the first half of the 20th century (since appropriate data are scarce), but this unavoidable shortcoming ought not prevent us from considering this media, which almost certainly shaped popular impressions of Eknāth in the 20th century more broadly and viscerally than any literature. The first such production about Eknāth that may come to mind is the black and white film *Dharmātmā* that was released by the Prabhat Film Company in 1935. This film has rightfully attracted attention, both because of the controversy that preceded its release and because it was the first depiction of the renowned theater actor Bālgandharva on film and in a male role.[1] Having been re-released on VCD and DVD recently, *Dharmātmā* is now the most accessible film about Eknāth, but historically it was not the only or even the most viewed production. Quite the contrary, *Dharmātmā* is but one instance of a much broader and completely overlooked pattern of representing Eknāth's inter-caste relations on stage and screen. Including *Dharmātmā*, five films and three major plays were produced with Eknāth as their main character between 1903 and 2005.

There is a clear chain of influence among most of these productions, so it will make the most sense to review this material more or less in chronological order. I will begin by observing two early plays – Vināyak Raṅganāth Śirvaḷkar's *Śrī Eknāth* (1903) and Keśav Sītārām Ṭhākre's *Kharā Brāmhaṇ* ("True Brahman," 1933). Also in this first section I review a short, obscure

[1] Although others cite information about this film, it is only van Skyhawk's articles that have discussed it in any detail in English. It should be noted that a shorter version of the same article was published earlier in French. H.v. Skyhawk, "Saint, Cinéma et *Dharma*: Ekanāth et les Intouchables au Temps de V. Śāntārām," 36-42; H.v. Skyhawk, "Social Expression of Unity with the Divine: the Saint's Conduct as a Component of Hindu Ethics."

literary English play about Eknāth by Harindanath Chattopadhyay (1927), and I rehearse the little information that is available about two early films – Dhuṇḍirāj Govind Phāḷke's silent film "Sant Eknāth" (1926) and Harshadrai Sakerlal Mehta's Tamil film "Eknath" (1938). I will then consider the two most influential productions of the century – V. Shantaram's film *Dharmātmā* (1935) and Gopāḷ Govind Śirgopīkar's widely performed play *Bhāva Toci Dev* (1964). Finally two recent made-for-VCD films about Eknāth are also worth taking into account as representative of contemporary, low-budget devotional productions – Rāju Phulkar's *Sant Eknāth Mahārāj* (2004) and Rājeś Limkar's *Sant Eknāth* (2005).

Whereas 20th-century Marathi writers paid relatively little attention to Eknāth's inter-caste relations (as we observed in the previous chapter), film and theatrical productions about Eknāth from the same time period regularly and often exclusively focused on Eknāth's interactions with untouchables. Therefore these productions offer a very rich source of information about the social memory of Eknāth in the 20th century.

Early Productions (1903-1934)

Professional Marathi drama is commonly said to have begun in the early 18th century with what are known as the "Tanjore Maratha dramas." These were composed in the Maratha kingdom in Tamil Nadu and are now of literary interest, but they do not seem to have had much impact in the larger Maratha Empire.[2] Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s, which were usually performed and not simply recited, might also be cited as evidence that a limited tradition of acting was established already in the 16th century (although these are mainly oral and difficult to trace with certainty).

[2] S.G. Tulpule, *Classical Marāṭhī Literature*, 416-418.

Marathi scholars often claim that Viṣṇudās Bhāve's *Sītā-svayamvara* (1843) was the first "modern" indigenous Marathi drama, although it was clearly modeled on a Kannada performative genre called *yakṣagaṇa*.[3] In the course of history, Bhāve's play appears to have been a unique and isolated composition that left no legacy. A more stable foundation for modern Marathi theater was laid with the translation and adaptation of plays by classical Sanskrit authors and of Shakespeare (*Othello* in 1867, *The Tempest* in 1875, and *Hamlet* in 1886).[4] Of particular note, Aṇṇasāheb Kirloskar adapted Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* for the Marathi stage (1881) by incorporating theatrical techniques from contemporary Parsi-Gujarati and Urdu dramas and thereby introducing a form of musical drama that would become standard in Marathi theaters for decades to come.[5] The appreciation of Marathi dramas still required a very refined taste, however, and audiences for these performances were quite small.

A major turning point in early Marathi theater came in 1892, with the production of the first widely popular musical play – *Rāṇā Bhīmdev* (King Bhīmdev) – by Vināyak Raṅganāth Śirvaḷkar, a high school teacher in Pune.[6] This play brought Śirvaḷkar a good deal of fame, and he went on to write at least seven more plays and two novels in the subsequent two decades. Śirvaḷkar tended to focus on subjects of regional identity and significance (e.g., the Marathas' defeat at the Battle of Panipat and the important Peshwa general Mahādajī Śinde) and on the lives of the Marathi *sant*s. After *Rāṇā Bhīmdev*, Śirvaḷkar is most remembered for his play *Śrī*

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[3] Sunita Deshpande, *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Marathi Literature*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2007), 1:163-164.

[4] Rā. Śrī. Jog, ed. *Marāṭhī Vāṅmayācā Itihās (1875 te 1920)*, vol. 5 Pt.2 (Puṇe: Mahārāṣtra Sāhitya Pariṣad,1973 [1999]), 8.

[5] S. Deshpande, *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Marathi Literature*, 1:165; R.Ś. Jog, ed. *MVI5.2*, 5-6, 20-21.

[6] R.Ś. Jog, ed. *MVI5.2*, 22. *Rāṇā Bhīmdev* had quite a distant pedigree, having been adapted in Marathi by Śirvaḷkar from Richard Brinsley Sheridan's English play *Pizarro* (1799), which in turn had been an adaptation of *Spanier in Peru* (1796) by the German playwright August von Kotzebue. Cf. Julie A. Carlson, "Trying Sheridan's Pizarro," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38, no. 3/4 (1996): 359-378.

Tukārām (1901). Śirvaḷkar wrote plays about Eknāth (1903), *Nāmdev* (1904), and *Jñāndev* (1904) as well.[7] Some Marathi scholars credit Śirvaḷkar with being the most influential early playwright to attract a broad audience to Marathi theater.[8] Sources of information about Śirvaḷkar are incomplete and sometimes conflicting, however; it appears that a thoroughly researched overview of Śirvaḷkar and his plays is yet to be written.

Śirvaḷkar's *Śrī Eknāth* (1903)

In his preface to the published version of his play *Śrī Eknāth*, Śirvaḷkar noted that his father was a very active Vārkarī who had made the annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur more than fifty times, and a relative of the family there was a "famous *sādhu*" there.[9] He claims that more than anyone else, this *sādhu* figure deserves the credit for inspiring him to start writing plays filled with devotion (*bhaktirasapar nāṭake*).[10] *Śrī Eknāth* did not meet with the acclaim that his plays *Rāṇā Bhīmdev* and *Śrī Tukārām* enjoyed, but it appears to have been still fairly well received. The single newspaper review of *Śrī Eknāth* that I came across was quite positive, praising the play's skillful combination of devotion, heroism and comedy.[11] The reviewer opined, "Plays such as this are extremely important in today's social situation," apparently referring to how Eknāth was a model of good conduct and *bhakti* at a time when some people felt religious values were in rapid decline. In his introduction to *Śrī Eknāth*, Śirvaḷkar proudly

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[7] G.M. Kulkarṇī, *Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś (Khaṇḍa Dusrā, Bhāg Ek - Marāṭhī Granthakār I. Sa. 1878 te 30 Epril 1960)*, 155; J. Daḍkar et al., *Saṅkṣipta Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 569; R.Ś. Jog, ed. *MVI5.2*, 28.

[8] J. Daḍkar et al., *Saṅkṣipta Marāṭhī Vāṅmaykoś*, 569.

[9] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 8.

[10] Ibid.

[11] "Śrīeknāth," *Kesarī*, May 12 1903, 5.

quotes the positive review given to his earlier play on Tukārām by the great Sanskrit scholar R. G. Bhandarkar. I assume Śirvaḷkar wished to demonstrate by this that his plays were being appreciated by a sophisticated, discerning audience.

Extant published copies of *Śrī Eknāth* are extremely rare now. I came across a crumbling, ant-eaten one in the library at the University of Pune. Another copy appears to be held at the University of Mumbai. A small number of Śirvaḷkar's other plays are also scattered among various university libraries in India.[12] Although little information is available about Śirvaḷkar's philosophical and social outlooks, he obviously has no qualms about taking a liberal, reformist perspective when it came to interpreting the life of Eknāth. In his introduction to the play, Śirvaḷkar quotes excerpts from the writings of M. G. Ranade and R. G. Bhandarkar, who praised Eknāth generally as a teacher and promulgator of "Bhāgavat Dharma." In their definition of the term, Bhāgavat Dharma basically promotes the path of devotion (*bhakti*) over the paths of ritual action (*karma*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) on the grounds that *bhakti* is not only the easier path in general, but it is also more accessible to women and to all people regardless of caste.[13]

Considering that Śirvaḷkar wrote specifically a play about Eknāth and not an academic biography, he provides a surprisingly thorough and precise bibliography of his reference materials, which included Mahīpati's *BhV* and *BhL,* Sahasrabuddhe's book and Bhāgvat's essay on Eknāth, as well as three English histories of India.[14] Śirvaḷkar clearly had done some research

[12] My impression is based on a book search in the growing network of Indian university library holdings, IndCat, the Online Union Catalogue of Indian Universities (http://indcat.inflibnet.ac.in/indcat/).

[13] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 3-4. M.G. Ranade and Bhandarkar were both outstanding members of the Prārthanā Samāj, a liberal Maharashtrian organization that promoted religious reform based on a neo-Vedantic philosophy mixed with devotional theism. Some of Tukārām's poetry was held in high regard by them as exemplifying proper *bhakti*. Cf. D.G. Vaidya, *Prārthanāsamājācā Itihās*.

[14] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 9.

before sitting down to write. Śirvaḷkar may have cited his sources so thoroughly in order to support his novel attempt to connect an actual historical event to a tale of Eknāth leading his guru's troops into battle (which comprises the play's entire second act).[15]

Śirvaḷkar knew the various renditions of Eknāth's life in hagiographical and biographical literature well, and he intentionally altered some of the stories to produce a grander, more cohesive narrative that held the various scenes together. Śirvaḷkar significantly reworked two figures in particular. In the conclusion of some traditional hagiographies, a mute, intellectually dull, brahman boy named Gāvbā was briefly introduced only in order to set up his being surprisingly chosen by Eknāth to finish composing his *Rāmāyaṇa* when Eknāth died. In Śirvaḷkar's play, Gāvbā is present throughout the entire play, and he is not portrayed as dull but rather as borderline insane – a liminal fool-like character who freely inserts poignant, comedic and critical comments into others' conversations.[16] Śirvaḷkar reworks the figure of Rāṇyā Mahār even more significantly. In Mahīpati's *BhL* Rāṇyā appeared in a single independent episode, in which he hosted Eknāth for a meal at his home. Śirvaḷkar transforms Rāṇyā into a main character that appears in more than half of the play, in many different stories. Śirvaḷkar attempts

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[15] In that act, Tufal Khan, the usurper to the throne of a minor Deccan Muslim kingdom, convinces some of the Hindu governors in the region north of Daulatābād to join him in attacking the fort as part of his campaign to defeat Murtaza Nizām Shāh I (based in Ahmadnagar). Unlike most Marathi historians in the 20th century, Śirvaḷkar understood these events to be more than mere internecine squabbling among Muslim factions. Rather, in Śirvaḷkar's eyes the attacker Tufal Khan was a true villain, the *bādśāh* Murtaza (the ruler over the territory in which Eknāth lived) was worthy of high respect. Based on the information available to him, Śirvaḷkar postulated that Tufal Khan must have attacked the Daulatābād around 1570, near the end of Eknāth's twelve-year stay with Janārdana there. So when Eknāth led a battle on behalf of his guru, he was fighting against Tufal Khan. Unfortunately Śirvaḷkar's connection is historically impossible, since the dates to not in fact overlap as he claims, and Tufal Khan is not known to have ever actually attacked Daulatābād itself. Nonetheless, Śirvaḷkar's interest in the 16th-century historical context and his non-pejorative perspective on Muslims is remarkable. For more information on tensions between Tufal Khan and the Murtaza Nizām Shāh sultanate between 1569 and 1574, see R. Shyam, *The Kingdom of Ahmadnagar*, 153-162.

[16] In crafting the character of Gāvbā as a crazy fool for his Marathi drama, Śirvaḷkar had two very different sources of inspiration available in Marathi translation at the time: the jester (*vidūṣaka*) in Sanskrit dramas (e.g., Māḍhavya in *Śakuntala*) and the fools in Shakespeare's plays. Both of these had been translated into Marathi, and Śirvaḷkar may have been able to read English and Sanskrit as well.

to encompass almost the whole life of Eknāth in his play, which consists of five acts. Each act has four scenes except for the long fourth act, which is comprised of seven scenes that portray independent episodes that Śirvaḷkar stitched together.

The play begins with Eknāth meditating in the Śiva temple and hearing a voice tell him to seek out his guru in Daulatābād. The rest of the first act portrays Eknāth's clandestine departure from Paithan, his grandparents' grief, and Janārdana's acceptance of Eknāth as his disciple.[17] Act Two depicts Eknāth's service to his guru at Daulatābād. In two quite embellished and detailed scenes, Eknāth dons his guru's armor and leads troops into battle, captures the enemy general (Tufal Khan) and is richly rewarded by the *bādśāh*.[18] The first two scenes of Act Three portray Janārdana's satisfaction with Eknāth's spiritual progress, his esoteric teaching, Eknāth's encounter with Dattātreya dressed as a Muslim, and Eknāth's pilgrimage to northern India.[19]

Until this point in the play, Śirvaḷkar basically follows Mahīpati's narrative from the *BhL*, adding a few embellishments along the way. For our concerns, the most significant embellishment is Janārdana's final esoteric teaching on Eknāth, for which Śirvaḷkar clearly was inspired by Bhāgvat's socially critical essay. In the *BhL* Janārdana offered no such esoteric lesson. In Śirvaḷkar's play, Janārdana teaches Eknāth about proper *dharma.*[20] "There are no such distinctions as *jāti*, family, *gotra* (lineage or clan), high, low and the like.[21] A Mahār has the same right to undertake selfless acts of devotion (*niṣkāma bhakti*) as the highest brahman.

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[17] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 1-14.

[18] Ibid., 15-31. This story can be found in *EC* 34-73 and *BhL* 13:108-137.

[19] Ibid., 32-42.

[20] Earlier in this same soliloquy Śirvaḷkar has Janārdana refer to *dharma* specifically as Bhāgavat Dharma, which is what M. G. Ranade, R. G. Bhandarkar and others in the Prarthanā Samāj called their own faith.

[21] *Gotra* is traditionally understood to connote a brahman family's affiliation to one or another particular ancient sage (*ṛṣi*). This is not translatable into a succinct English expression.

Cokhāmeḷā had a personal encounter (*sākṣātkār*) with Viṭhobā while the zealously rigid (*karmaṭh*) brahmans did not even catch a whiff of Viṭhobā's fragrance. Keep this in mind – in God's home devotion (*bhakti*) is supreme, not *jāti*."[22] This is a significant innovation, which combined elements from Sahasrabuddhe's book and Bhāgvat's essay on Eknāth.[23] In the remainder of Act Three, Eknāth returns from his long pilgrimage to Paithan and preparations are made for his wedding to Girjā (spelled Girijā in other renditions of the story).[24]

Act Four and nearly all of Act Five consist of independent episodes that Śirvaḷkar weaves into one long narrative. The first scene opens in a cave in the hills, where five thieves talk among themselves and justify their crimes to each other (Śirvaḷkar depicts them as guilty but not entirely void of moral direction).[25] They then begin to plan how to pilfer from their next target – Eknāth and his wedding guests. The thief in charge is named Rāṇyā.[26] As becomes clear later, this is Rāṇyā Mahār who will later invite Eknāth to eat at his home. Śirvaḷkar has taken great poetic license by turning him into a thief, as there is no hagiographical precedent for this. Once the thieves agree on their plans, Rāṇyā sets off for the town center while the other four thieves walk toward Eknāth's home. Some soldiers discover Rāṇyā, interrogate him and beat him severely. When they turn their attention elsewhere for a moment, however, Rāṇyā manages to escape, and he staggers toward Eknāth's home to find his fellow thieves.[27]

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[22] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 34.

[23] Sahasrabuddhe introduced the idea that Janārdana gave Eknāth a grand final lesson, and Bhāgvat composed the words that Śirvaḷkar quotes almost exactly. D.B. Sahasrabuddhe, *Śrī Eknāth Mahārāj Yāñceṁ Caritra*, 26; R.R. Bhāgvat, "Eknāthāñce Caritra," 76.

[24] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 43-63. Śirvaḷkar embellishes some these scenes significantly. They are not pertinent to our investigation, however, and I will forego a description of them here.

[25] Ibid., 65.

[26] Ibid., 64-65.

[27] Ibid., 64-68.

The next scene opens at Eknāth's home, where Eknāth and Girjā are discussing the wedding (which apparently had just finished). The four thieves appear and demand Girjā's jewelry. She is scared, but Eknāth calmly tells her to consider the thieves as her brothers (*te tujhe bhāūc āhet*), with whom she should gladly share her jewelry.[28] When the thieves approach to remove the jewelry from her body, they are all suddenly struck blind (paralleling the traditional story of the four thieves in Eknāth's house who suddenly go blind). They repent for their actions but wonder aloud how they will now feed their families.

At that moment, the badly beaten Rāṇyā stumbles onto the scene. Eknāth takes pity on him, and Girjā brings him food. (Thus Śirvaḷkar ties in the traditional story of Eknāth and his wife nurturing the escaped Mahār thief back to health.) Rāṇyā says he will never steal again. He marvels that Eknāth treated him with such kindness despite their difference in caste.[29] Eknāth responds, "The distinction that you are a Mahār and I am a brahman didn't come to my mind. In God's home, we two are one (*parameśvarācyā gharīṁ āpaṇ ubhayatāṁ ekac āhoṁ*)."[30] The police (*kotvāl*) then arrive at Eknāth's home to take away Rāṇyā for hundreds of thefts that he has committed. Eknāth responds that Rāṇyā has reformed, and he vouches for Rāṇyā's future actions. This satisfies the policeman, and he departs. Immediately thereafter, Śrīkhaṇḍyā arrives at Eknāth's home for the first time, saying that he has been impressed with Eknāth's behavior and wants to serve him. Thus in this one scene, Śirvaḷkar manages to integrate three distinct independent episodes.

The next scene proceeds in the same way but is anchored by a dramatically embellished story of Eknāth picking up the Mahār child from the hot sand. The scene opens with a group of

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[28] Ibid., 71.

[29] Ibid., 73.

[30] Ibid., 74.

brahmans at the riverside grumbling about all of the things they hate about Eknāth.[31] Off to one side, a little boy writhes on the ground and several times interrupts their litany of complaints by crying, "Oh, oh, oh, I'm dying, I'm dying, I'm dying!" After this happens several times, one of the brahmans comments, "Well, who does this brat belong to? He keeps on howling away for no reason. Better to just ignore him." He then returns to reviling Eknāth and conspiring against him.

Eknāth and Rāṇyā arrive on the scene. Eknāth picks up the child, cleans him off and puts him on his shoulder. He gives Rāṇyā some money to buy a dried milk sweet (*peḍhā*) and bring it to the child. The boy says that his mother had told him to wait there on the sand while she went looking for Eknāth to touch his feet in reverence (something that Śirvaḷkar added to the story). Rāṇyā returns, gives the sweet to the boy, and he points out to Eknāth that this boy is a Mahār. Rāṇyā offers to take the boy back to his mother.

Before going, Rāṇyā suddenly poses to Eknāth the challenging question that Mahīpati's *BhL* narrated – where were Mahārs and brahmans when Kṛṣṇa showed his universal form? In the context of the dialogue and action, this question arises too quickly and unexpectedly, revealing a conspicuous narrative seam between two traditional stories that Śirvaḷkar stitched together. Eknāth responds that they "became completely one" (*samaras jhāle*) in Kṛṣṇa's form.[32] Rāṇyā then invites Eknāth to eat at his home later that day to break his fast.[33] Eknāth accepts, and he repeats the refrain about God being concerned only about devotion (*bhakti*) and

[31] Ibid., 76-79.

[32] Ibid., 80.

[33] In this play, the idea of fasting on the eleventh day (*ekādaśi*) of the month is quite important, as it continues to be for active Vārkarīs today.

not about caste. Eknāth then quotes the sentence from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which outrages the brahmans.

Śirvaḷkar highlights one character in the group of antagonistic brahmans as their leader, calling him "*dharmādhikārī*." Although the presence of such a figure makes good sense historically, no hagiographical rendition of the story ever mentioned a *dharmādhikārī*. After Eknāth says the verse from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* to Rāṇyā, the *dharmādhikārī* steps in and condemns Eknāth for speaking Sanskrit to a Mahār. Eknāth defends Rāṇyā, saying that he is a great Vaiṣṇava *bhakta* and has no sign of untouchability on his body (again, following Mahīpati's *BhL*). The *dharmādhikārī* threatens to put Eknāth out of caste if Eknāth dares eat at Rāṇyā's house, and all the brahmans depart. At that moment, Śrīkhaṇḍyā arrives on the scene.

In the hagiographical episode of Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home, the details of Eknāth's presence were very unstable among the various renditions (did Eknāth himself go to the untouchables' home, did God take the form of Eknāth, did Eknāth magically project himself in two places at the same time, etc.). Śirvaḷkar handles this in a very different way by staging a conversation between Eknāth and Śrīkhaṇḍyā, in which Eknāth asks for advice about his dilemma. After the brahmans threaten Eknāth with being outcasted if he does indeed eat with Rāṇyā, Eknāth begins to wonder if he personally should follow through on the invitation or if he might be able to send someone else as a proxy (*parbhāre*) to eat in his place.[34] Śrīkhaṇḍyā replies that both options are equally good, but (for no apparent reason) he suggests that Eknāth go home and have full confidence that the god Pāṇḍuraṅg (Viṭṭhal) himself will take Eknāth's form and go to Rāṇyā's home if he finds Rāṇyā's heart to be pure.[35] Śrīkhaṇḍyā comments that

[34] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 84.

[35] Ibid. Admittedly, Śrīkhaṇḍyā's response (that Eknāth should be confident that God will take his form and visit Rāṇyā) is a non sequitur if viewed in terms of narrative logic. By adding this explanatory embellishment to the

Pāṇḍuraṅg in fact is used to eating with Mahārs, and he cites a story about the god eating yogurt with the Mahār *sant* Cokhāmeḷā.[36] Śrīkhaṇḍyā leaves the decision up to Eknāth, however, saying that both options are equally good.

Audience members who are unfamiliar with the traditional story will find Śrīkhaṇḍyā's presumption about God taking Eknāth's form and visiting Rāṇyā to be a strange non sequitur. Those who are familiar with the traditional story may have sympathy with Śirvaḷkar's intention, however. By including this short extra dialogue, Śirvaḷkar tries to represent simultaneously Eknāth's continuing good-will toward Rāṇyā, Eknāth's disregard of caste distinctions, and Eknāth's intention to keep his promise to Rāṇyā, all while still allowing for the traditional story of Eknāth appearing in two places to take its course. Śirvaḷkar was obviously bothered by the questions raised by this scene in the traditional narrative, and he tried to ease the narrative tension by embellishing it slightly.

Eknāth ultimately agrees with Śrīkhaṇḍyā's suggestion, and they both start to return to Eknāth's home. Suddenly a man appears and spits on Eknāth. As we saw in the hagiographical record, this figure is sometimes called a *cāṇḍāḷ* and sometimes a Muslim. Śirvaḷkar shies away from linking him to any community with a major contemporary presence (or perhaps links him indirectly to both of his previous incarnations in previous renditions) and instead refers to him as a *śiddhī* or Siddī – a descendant of East Africans who fought in Mughal armies as mercenaries and slaves.[37] Śrīkhaṇḍyā gets very upset and wants to beat the man, but Eknāth calms him and

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story, Śirvaḷkar is obviously struggling (unsuccessfully, I think) to smooth over a rough edge in the traditional narrative.

[36] Cf. J.E. Abbott et al., *Stories of Indian Saints: A Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya*, 23:64.

[37] The most well-known Siddī figure in Maharashtrian history is Malik Ambar, who was brought from Abyssinia (Ethiopia) by Arab traders to India as a slave to fight in the Mughal army. He quickly acquired a great reputation and eventually emerged as a warlord in the western Deccan (and the ruler of the declining Nizām Shāh kingdom from 1610-1625) who mobilized several Maratha chiefs with guerilla tactics to fight off much larger Mughal armies at the beginning of the 17th century. He is remembered for introducing the military tactics that Śivājī later employed

says, "Parameśvar has given us an opportunity to restrain our emotions (*manonigraha*). Such an opportunity will not come again."[38] Eknāth bathes again at the river, and when he returns the man spits on him again. This sequence repeats once more, and then Eknāth suggests to Śrīkhaṇḍyā that he go home and bring the man something to eat so that "his hunger will be satiated and he will stop tossing tobacco in his mouth."[39]

The next scene opens at Rāṇyā's home, where he and his wife have been waiting for Eknāth to arrive and are starting to despair. Rāṇyā's wife Jānakāī wonders if Eknāth would have been more prompt about an invitation to eat at a brahman household, but Rāṇyā responds that Eknāth would be taking a great risk by eating with them. Rāṇyā was present with the brahmans at the riverside when they all denounced Eknāth for picking up the Mahār child and quoting Sanskrit to Rāṇyā. His wife laments, "You've listened to so many *pothī*s and *purāṇa*s, but have you ever heard in them that a brahman ate at a Mahār's home? Viṭhobā will eat in our home, but never, never a brahman."[40] Rāṇyā also starts to despair as he works through the cold logic of the situation. "Nāth Mahārāj said that all *jāti*s are alike to Viṭhobā, who only cares about *bhakti*. *Jāti* depends on people's behavior. We don't eat any meat. We fast on the eleventh day (*ekādaśi*). We make the annual pilgrimage (*vārī*) to Paṇḍhari (Pandharpur) with Eknāth. Day and night we're doing whatever he tells us. So after doing all of this, if Eknāth still won't come

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with great success in the region and for founding a village that would grow into the city of Aurangabad. S. Gordon, *The Marathas*, 42-52; R. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives*, 105-128. A small contingent of Siddīs controlled the Janjira sea fort on the Konkan Coast at Murud, south of Mumbai, starting in the 16th century, boosted by Malik Ambar at the start of the 17th century, and remaining largely independent until Indian independence in 1947. Faaeza Jasdanwalla, "African Settlers on the West Coast of India: the Sidi Elite of Janjira," *African and Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2011): 41-58.

[38] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 86.

[39] Ibid., 87.

[40] Ibid., 88.

to break his fast at our house, then what difference would it make if we live or die?"[41] Rāṇyā's wife agrees, and they start to tie nooses with which to hang themselves. They place the nooses around their necks and start singing alternate verses of a famous *bhārūḍ* attributed to Eknāth – "Open the door, woman, open the door."[42]

This *bhārūḍ* invokes the Goddess by many names, particularly recalling her terrible and fearsome forms. This *bhārūḍ* could be interpreted as simply a recollection and mental *darśan* of the Goddess (asking the Goddess to open the door and reveal herself in her terrible splendor), but modern Marathi interpreters have tended to read it as a subtle protest against atrocities committed by Muslim rulers at the time (Eknāth asking the destructive Goddess to come forth and destroy sinners).[43] Following the latter interpretation, the *bhārūḍ* as sung by Rāṇyā and Jānakāī could have overtones of vindication. Otherwise Śirvaḷkar may have had a less harsh meaning in mind such as, "Open the door to heaven, Goddess, we are about to die." It is also possible that Śirvaḷkar was employing the song for precisely that characteristic that *bhārūḍ*s most famous for – having multiple simultaneous meanings. In any case, as Rāṇyā and his wife continue singing the *bhārūḍ*, tightening the nooses on their necks and preparing to commit suicide, suddenly Eknāth's voice starts singing outside their home. It also sings a *bhārūḍ* attributed to Eknāth, but one with a contrary meaning – "Woman, close the door."[44] This *bhārūḍ*

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[41] Ibid., 89.

[42] Ibid. The full text of this composition can be found in the most commonly available edition of Eknāth's *Gāthā*. Eknāth, *Śrī Eknāth Gāthā, Śrī Bhānudās, Śrī Janārdana Yāñcyā Abhaṅgāsaha*, #3910. It is number 3914 in some other common editions.

[43] Ḍhere does not specify that Eknāth is implying specifically Muslims as being the enemy here, but he does interpret the *bhārūḍ* as Eknāth invoking the Goddess (through the mouth of a goddess worshipper) to violently overthrow the wicked powers. Rāmcandra Cintāmaṇ Ḍhere, "Bayā Dār Ughaḍ," in *Vividhā*. (Puṇe: Nīlakaṇṭh Prakāśan, 1966 [1967]), 67.

[44] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 90; Eknāth, *Śrī Eknāth Gāthā, Śrī Bhānudās, Śrī Janārdana Yāñcyā Abhaṅgāsaha*, #3911. In other common *Gāthā* editions, this is composition number 3915.

recounts various puranic stories in which deities shower their wrath on enemies, and each verse concludes with a pacifying tone as if asking the Goddess to become calm. One can easily imagine this particular vignette having a strong dramatic impact, as the climax of the scene (and perhaps the entire play) is reached with the help of two of Eknāth's own *bhārūḍ*s.

Eknāth (actually, Viṭṭhal in Eknāth's form) pulls the nooses off Rāṇyā and his wife and asks them to fill his plate. At this point the *dharmādhikārī* and his companions burst in. The *dharmādhikārī* spitefully remarks, "You enjoy eating the Mahār's food so much, why not just fill your belly with dung (*śeṇ*)? Low one (*nicā*), you're now put out of caste forever. Marry your sons to Mahār girls, and give your daughters to Mahārs. You low one (*adhmā*), *cāṇḍāḷ,* you affliction to my body – you've become an untouchable (*ḍom*)!!!"[45]

Eknāth responds that what he is eating is the rice of faith (*bhāva*), the lentil sauce of renunciation and the ghee of peace, all of which the *dharmādhikārī* too would savor if he were willing to try them. Another antagonistic brahman retorts that Eknāth speaks nonsense and is not a real (*assal*) brahman by *jāti*. Eknāth responds that the brahmans are behaving like Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, who was plagued by demonic doubts about who he really is and what he ought to do.[46] Then, adopting the *BhG* narrative further by taking on the role of Kṛṣṇa revealing his true form, Eknāth starts to sing another famous *bhārūḍ* in which he speaks as if he were a Mahār – "*Johār māybāp johār.*[47] 'You're a Mahār from what town?' If you're truly asking, then listen respectfully. My native place is Nirākār ("Formless"), but I left it for the sake of

[45] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 91. For some reason, Śirvaḷkar has the *dharmādhikārī* use two words (*adhmā* and *ḍom*) that are more common to Hindi usage than to Marathi.

[46] Ibid., 93.

[47] "*Johār*" is regarded as the conventional Marathi greeting that untouchables would give to others instead of saying "*namaskār*." *Māybāp* literally means "mother-father" but in this case has a general familiar yet respectful sense of address. In the collection of Eknāth's short poetry there are more than forty *bhārūḍ*s that begin with the trope *"Johār māybāp johār*."

bhakti. Now I live in Kāyāpūr ("Body-town")…"[48] This *bhārūḍ* describes the how the supreme God (who is *nirguṇa,* without qualities) takes on form and name so that people can show their devotion to him. This is quite an impressive, dramatic use of Eknāth's composition, bearing multiple meanings as a *bhārūḍ* and as a metaphor for Kṛṣṇa (in the form of Viṭṭhal-Eknāth) revealing his supreme form.

When Eknāth finishes his *bhārūḍ* (although in the play he only sings part of the entire piece), other brahmans arrive at Rāṇyā's home and report that they had just eaten with Eknāth in Eknāth's home. The *dharmādhikārī* refuses to believe. Rāṇyā and his wife are emboldened and ask the brahmans if they would like to partake of their food as well. The *dharmādhikārī* and his colleagues storm off to Eknāth's house to investigate. As they go, the fool Gāvbā is with them and challenges the *dharmādhikārī* to wager some sort of penance if they find Eknāth at home. The *dharmādhikārī* says that he will feed one thousand brahmans and never again speak of purification in regards to Eknāth's inter-caste relations. As the brahmans depart, the scene ends.

The rest of the scenes in Act Four depict Eknāth's encounter with the banker from whom he borrowed several hundred rupees to finance his celebration of Janārdana's death anniversary. In Śirvaḷkar's portrayal, the banker is a Gujarati merchant named Umīcand – details that are not in Mahīpati's version of the story. Śirvaḷkar embellishes this story as he did with Eknāth's battle, but since the stories do not pertain to Eknāth's inter-caste relations, it is not necessary to review them here.[49] As a demonstration of Śirvaḷkar's sense of humor however, let us observe briefly one incident in the fifth scene. When the banker confronts Eknāth to return his money, Eknāth's wife jumps in with an offer to sell her jewelry and pay off the debt. She quickly

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[48] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 93; Eknāth, *Śrī Eknāth Gāthā, Śrī Bhānudās, Śrī Janārdana Yāñcyā Abhaṅgāsaha*, #3894.

[49] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 95-112.

removes her necklaces and bangles and tells Gāvbā (the fool) to take them to the goldsmith. Gāvbā looks at the jewelry and says, "Honestly, these won't bring more than eight to twelve *anna*s. They don't even look real, like that fake jewelry that actresses wear in plays."[50]

In Act Five, the first scene depicts Eknāth in Kāśī defending his Marathi commentary, the third scene depicts him meeting Jñāndev in Āḷandī and editing the *Jñāneśvarī*, and the fourth scene portrays Śrīkhaṇḍyā's departure and Eknāth's death. Only the second scene portrays an issue with inter-caste relevance, as Śirvaḷkar presents the story of the death anniversary feast for Eknāth's ancestors. In Śirvaḷkar's rendition Rāṇyā Mahār, his wife, and some other Mahārs happen to walk by Eknāth's home while food is being prepared for the feast. So, unlike in the earlier rendition of the story (in Mahīpati's *BhV*), in this case Eknāth is already close friends with the Mahārs who smell his food.[51] Eknāth asks Śrīkhaṇḍyā whether he thinks it is a good idea to invite the Mahārs to eat before the brahmans, and Śrīkhaṇḍyā approves.[52] The Mahārs are served, the *dharmādhikārī* hears of it, and he comes to chastise Eknāth again for transgressing caste boundaries and ruining his *śrāddha* ceremony.[53] Gāvbā asks the *dharmādhikārī* what he would do if Eknāth's ancestors were to appear, and the *dharmādhikārī* responds that he would fall at their feet. Eknāth argues that the *dharmādhikārī* had witnessed God himself eating in

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[50] Ibid., 98. This story stands out in that it is one of the few vignettes in which Eknāth interacts with someone who presumably belongs to one of the middle castes.

[51] It is interesting here that although Śirvaḷkar usually follows the traditional stories found in Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*, in this case he follows the *Bhaktavijay*'s version of the story. The only major difference between the two versions is that in the *BhL* Eknāth serves the *śrāddha* food to three Muslim mendicants, whereas in the *BhV* he serves the food to untouchables. This is noteworthy because it shows that Śirvaḷkar (and as we shall see, other playwrights) is not simply using the *BhL* as his source but synthesizing from multiple sources in order to achieve a narrative in which Eknāth relates more systematically with untouchables.

[52] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 128.

[53] Mixed in with this story is the short tale of the poor brahman man trying to anger Eknāth in order to win two hundred rupees from the other brahmans. Pāṅgārkar called this a "popular" story with no textual hagiographical support. The story's appearance in Śirvaḷkar's play predates Pāṅgārkar's reference by at least seven years and is thus the earliest known appearance this story in Marathi literature. It is not clear whether Śirvaḷkar heard this story elsewhere or created it himself. Cf. L.R. Pāṅgārkar, *Eknāth Caritra*, 87-89.

Rāṇyā's home, but the *dharmādhikārī* refuses to believe that interpretation (although he does not argue against it).[54] Eknāth prepares the feast as planned, and the ancestors of Eknāth and the other brahmans appear.

Unlike in other renditions, the ancestors here directly confront the *dharmādhikārī* and the other brahmans and rebuke them for abusing their authority to torment others. Specifically, the hatred and resentment that they demonstrate towards Eknāth puts them at odds with God (Parameśvar). Because of their behavior they, their ancestors, and their descendants will never achieve liberation unless they take refuge at Eknāth's feet. In short, the ancestors command the *dharmādhikārī* and the antagonistic brahmans to become faithful, obedient followers of Eknāth. The scene ends (incredibly) with the *dharmādhikārī* and brahmans prostrating themselves before Eknāth.[55]

As we have seen, Eknāth's social outlook and inter-caste relations are a central part Śirvaḷkar's all-but-forgotten play, which is all the more remarkable since it was written in 1903, by which time only Bhāgvat had given serious attention to this theme in Eknāth's life. Whereas in the hagiographies, social issues, and tensions were limited to some of the independent episodes (which could be effectively ignored if the stories were not repeated), Śirvaḷkar's arrangement and connection of the scenes allows these issues to pervade almost the entire play (as it depicts Eknāth's adult life). Śirvaḷkar clearly borrows from Bhāgvat ("In God's home there is no *jāti*") in order to insert an egalitarian message into Janārdana's climactic "esoteric" teaching to Eknāth. He also incorporates Eknāth's own compositions (mainly *bhārūḍ*s) into the play, thereby adding a sense of greater authenticity to his embellished portrayal of his life. His rendering of Viṭṭhal/Eknāth eating at the untouchable Rāṇyā's home is particularly innovative, as

[54] V.R. Śirvaḷkar, *Śrī Eknāth*, 134.

[55] Ibid., 137.

Viṭṭhal/Eknāth introduces the image of Kṛṣṇa's universal form and then recasts that image by singing a Mahār *bhārūḍ* by Eknāth himself – a truly brilliant synthesis of metaphor, image, and theology.

Śirvaḷkar cannot completely escape the ambiguity surrounding the story of Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home, although he certainly seems to try. The short dialogue that he adds in which Śrīkhaṇḍyā counsels Eknāth ends up only repeating and perhaps even enhancing the ambiguity rather than resolving it. If indeed it would be equally good (as Śrīkhaṇḍyā states) for Eknāth to go personally to Rāṇyā's home or to go to his own home and trust that God will attend in his place, why does Śrīkhaṇḍyā suggest that Eknāth go home? Śirvaḷkar takes many liberties with other stories, and he was aware of Bhāgvat's unambiguous rendering of the story (Eknāth simply eating at Rāṇyā's home), but for some reason in this case he opted not to revise Mahīpati's rendition of the story. It is clear from the dialogue that Śirvaḷkar was not using the two Eknāth images as an opportunity to dazzle his audience with some visual trick on stage; he chose to adhere to the commonly repeated version of the story even though he did not apparently like it. Perhaps this story as it was ambiguously rendered by Mahīpati had become too widely accepted as an example of a miracle to be depicted as only an example of inter-caste commensality. The gravity of a stabilized social memory about the story prevented interpretations from escaping its orbit. Rāṇyā's wife happens to confirm this herself when she laments, "You've listened to so many *pothī*s and *purāṇa*s, but have you ever heard in them that a brahman ate at a Mahār's home?"

Chattopadhyay's *Ekanath* (1927)

A very different example of an early play about Eknāth is Harindranath Chattopadhyay's *Ekanath*, which was written in sophisticated, literary English and published for the first time in 1927.[56] Chattopadhyay was a poet, actor, activist and brother of the famous Indian stateswoman Sarojini Naidu and of Virendranath Chattopadhyay. His poetry is known for its expression of classical Indian mythology and neo-Vedanta themes in a high literary English register – something that his largely neglected plays demonstrate as well.[57] Chattopadhyay composed a number of devotional plays: on Jayadeva, Ravidās, and the Buddha as well as on several Marathi figures – Puṇḍalik, Cokhāmeḷā, Eknāth, Sakubāī and Tukārām. It is not clear to me what sparked Chattopadhyay's special interest in Marathi *bhakti* figures and what hagiographical sources he used for his plays aside from *Ekanath.* He appears to have written them before Abbott's translations of Mahīpati were published.

His play on Eknāth is quite short (only fifteen pages, consisting of four scenes without stage notes), which gives the impression that they were intended to be read rather than performed. The brief second scene depicts Janārdana telling Eknāth to become a householder and spread knowledge in the world (to which Eknāth eloquently responds, "You are a bow of wisdom that has shot me like an arrow into the shadowy world.").[58] At the heart of the other three scenes is the challenge of interacting among different social groups (inter-religious and inter-caste).

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[56] Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, "Ekanath," in *Poems and Plays*, ed. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. (Madras: The Hogarth Press, 1927), 277-294.

[57] G. S. Balarama Gupta, "The Plays of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya," in *Indian English Literature: Some Forays*. (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2003), 139.

[58] H. Chattopadhyaya, "Ekanath," 286.

The first scene portrays Eknāth's encounter with Dattātreya, who is dressed as a Muslim. Unlike all of the modern Marathi biographers of Eknāth, Chattopadhyay models his rendition of the story surprisingly on the way it was told in Mahīpati's *BhV*, which depicts Eknāth being scared off by Datta's Muslim form and unable to overcome his fear. Chattopadhyay uses Janārdana in this setting to convey a message of inter-religious sensitivity. Eknāth resists interacting with the figure who appears to be a Muslim because Eknāth insists that the man is "an unbeliever and an enemy of our old deities" who breaks statues of Hindu deities and butchers cows.[59] Janārdana responds that "we Hindus" are no better, treating cows as mere possessions, feeding them inadequately and by playing "shrieking pipes" and loud drums outside mosques to defy the sacred silence of Muslims' worship.[60] Janārdana pushes Eknāth to see beyond surface appearances, and he literally forces Eknāth to drink dog-milk that Datta offers. When the milk touches Eknāth's lips, Eknāth declares that he has been enlightened to comprehend ultimate, nondual reality.[61]

Scene Three portrays Eknāth, now married and settled, feeding untouchables and enduring the subsequent wrath of outraged brahmans. The scene opens with a dialogue between a "scavenger" and his wife. The scavenger takes a high-minded view to his work, calling the task of cleaning the earth the "most noble profession."[62] His wife responds cynically, "You almost talk as if you were a Brahmin." The man states that caste is only an appearance in which fools believe. His wife counters that these appearances are "heavy chains" that the scavengers will never break. He speculates generously that the brahman is even more bound by these

[59] Ibid., 280.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 283.

[62] Ibid., 287.

chains, and "a day will come when he will seek deliverance at our hands."[63] They both then catch the scent of food cooking in Eknāth's home, and the wife longs to taste it. The man takes an austere spiritual view that God has graciously "blessed" scavengers with "comfortable stomachs" unlike the typical brahman – "that idle sleepy yawning dolt who rounds a more than square meal off with a loud belch, adding each day to the circumference of his balloonlike belly."[64] Eknāth invites the scavengers and their families to eat with them as they "perform the mystic Shraddha of our ancestors."[65]

Scene Four opens with two brahmans condemning Eknāth for giving food to the scavengers rather than to them. "You have veiled in a dark veil of shame the sacred Vedas. You have cast our pride to the dim winds which woo the low-born limbs of *panchama*s and fan them in their sleep."[66] Eknāth's only defense is that he did "what a strange wisdom told a fool to do, though the whole world might laugh at him.... I, whom the world calls high-born, have this day performed the Shraddha of my ancestors by serving with my pair of humble hands sweet so-called low-borns a holy meal."[67] The ancestors then appear and approve of Eknāth's deed, saying, "in your eyes the old ancestral light of love and peace in which the dark of differences lies bleeding with splendour, blossomed like the dawn in which your soul has wakened to behold the Brahmin and the Panchama grown one."[68]

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[63] Ibid., 288.

[64] Ibid., 289.

[65] Ibid., 290.

[66] Ibid., 291. Kane notes that the category of *pañcama* (literally "the fifth" category, of untouchables, in addition to the four castes) is a modern concept with no roots in the classical Sanskrit *dharmaśāstra* literature. Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra Vol. 2 Part 1* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1941), 167-168.

[67] H. Chattopadhyaya, "Ekanath," 293.

[68] Ibid., 294.

Chattopadhyay rewrites all of the dialogues in this play so that they are vastly different from the hagiographical sources. His very philosophical portrayal of Eknāth's relations with untouchables expresses an ideal of a unified society. The grounds on which this unification would occur are extremely vague, however. In the second half of the play Eknāth comes across as a mystic whose actions and teachings are so profound that they are beyond mundane comprehension. When he defends himself, even Eknāth himself seems to not fully understand why he has invited untouchables to eat the *śrāddha* meal. It is left to the ancestors to reveal the grand significance of the deed. Since the play is written in such a high, literary form of English, I presume that its audience must have been quite limited. I have yet to come across any reference to this play; no Marathi or English scholarship has ever mentioned it.

Ṭhākre's *Kharā Brāmhaṇ* (1933)[69]

The second play about Eknāth in Marathi was written by Keśav Sītārām Ṭhākre,[70] who is most renowned for his political activism and that of his son Bāḷasāheb, who founded the Maharashtra-focused Hindu nationalist Śiv Senā party. Ṭhākre was one of the leading figures in the non-brahman (*brāhmaṇetar*) movement in the early 20th century as well as the *Saṁyukta Mahārāṣṭra Sabhā* in 1939 that lobbied for the creation of a Marathi-speaking state.[71] Ṭhākre belonged to the Cāndrasenīya Kāyastha Prabhū (CKP) *jāti* cluster, which historically were

[69] I do not know why Ṭhākre uses this strange spelling of "brahman" in his title; "*brāmhaṇ*" is not a typographical error. Perhaps *brāmhaṇ* is a non-standard vernacular pronunciation of brahman, so that by using this word Ṭhākre hopes to demonstrate disdain toward or deviance from orthodoxy.

[70] The name Ṭhākre is regularly transliterated "Thackeray" in English. Ke. Sī. Ṭhākre is also commonly called *Prabodhankar* ("Enlightener" or "Awakener"), reflecting his political and social efforts as well as a serial that he edited called *Prabodhan*.

[71] R.Ś. Jog, ed. *MVI5.2*, 123; T.B. Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay*, 41.

comprised of scribes and administrators for various rulers in western India.[72] This group was usually regarded *kṣatriya,* but their skills as writers frequently brought them into competition with Maharashtrian brahmans. As a result, fierce, long-running tension developed between CPKs and brahmans in Maharashtra.[73] Ṭhākre's interest in "non-brahman" activism, while seeking to mobilize *sūdra*s and untouchable groups in western India, follows a very different agenda than those of Ambedkar and Phule. Ṭhākre's play about Eknāth, *Kharā Brāmhaṇ* (True Brahman), demonstrates his political inclinations quite well.

The short play (*nāṭikā*) was first performed in 1933 at Bombay Theater by a group called Radio Stars Theater Group (*nāṭyasaṁsthā*). According to Ṭhākre, it ran for 75 consecutive days and was then performed by the same troupe fifty more times in venues around western Maharashtra. Later it was performed periodically by other groups for twelve years as well.[74] The play was printed at least three times and has been included in the multi-volume collection of Ṭhākre's writings.[75]

Kharā Brāmhaṇ is very different from other plays and films about Eknāth in that it makes no attempt to represent his life as it was recorded in the hagiographies. Almost a third of the entire play goes by before Eknāth even appears on stage. Only a few of the characters and

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[72] S. Gordon, *The Marathas*, 145.

[73] Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Maharashtrian Social History 1500–1800," Public lecture at Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, December 16, 2009. O'Hanlon has done very interesting research on a number of Marathi and Sanskrit legal texts called *jātiviveka*, which attempt to adjudicate precise hierarchies of *jāti*s and their respective rights and duties. One anticipates that this research will be published in the near future. For a glimpse at one historical example of such conflict, see N. K. Wagle, "Ritual and Change in Early Nineteenth Century Society in Maharashtra: Vedokta Disputes in Baroda, Pune and Satara, 1824-1838," in *Religion and Society in Maharashtra*, ed. Milton Israel, et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 145-177.

[74] Keśav Sītārām Ṭhākre, *Kharā Brāmhaṇ*, vol. 3, Pabodhankār Ṭhākre Samagra Vāṅmay (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya āṇi Saṁskṛtī Maṇḍaḷ, 1999), 279.

[75] The earliest copy that I have of the play is its third edition, published in 1953. It was first published in 1933. This third edition is identical to the one published in Ṭhākre's collected writings. Keśav Sītārām Ṭhākre, *Kharā Brāmhaṇ*, 3 ed. (Mumbaī: Rāmkṛṣṇa Prakāśan Maṇḍaḷ, 1953).

references in the play bear any similarity to the traditional stories. Not surprisingly, its tone is extremely polemical, the dialogues often insulting and combative, and a very critical focus on inter-caste politics always takes center stage.

The play's arrangement of acts and scenes is rather arbitrary – the first act consists of one long scene, the second act has two scenes, and the third act contains four scenes. Dialogue and action in each of them are interspersed with songs (including Ṭhākre's instructions for *rāga* and rhythm), some of which are Eknāth's and some of which were composed by Ṭhākre. Ṭhākre noted that when troupes omitted the songs, the play tended to suffer from a lack of *rasa* (zest or flavor).[76]

The play opens at a Rāma temple in Paithan, with Viṭhu Mahār standing outside with his widowed daughter-in-law Sītā (whose husband, we later learn, died in battle).[77] When brahmans start coming out of the temple and gazing inappropriately at her, Viṭhu advises her to go home. Viṭhu prays to God that he wishes he could enter the temple, and a passing brahman and Maratha man overhear him. They comment to each other that Viṭhu is wearing a *māḷā* and is thus identifiable as a Vārkarī. They note that Eknāth taught the Bhāgavat Dharma and opened the door of liberation to non-brahmans (*brāhmaṇetara*)[78] – a term that has not appeared in the texts we have reviewed until now.[79] The brahman man teasingly prods Viṭhu to enter the temple, and he mockingly bows to him. Some other brahmans, including Gāvbā (who is also a crazy fool in this play, but with a darker sense of humor) come out of the temple and demand that the first

[76] K.S. Ṭhākre, *Kharā Brāmhaṇ*, 279.

[77] That this is a Rāma temple is itself significant. Rāma is not traditionally worshipped widely in Maharashtra, but he is very important to the mythology of Hindu nationalists. To my knowledge, there is no temple to Rāma in Paithan.

[78] Here Bhāgavat Dharma is used in its older Marathi sense as another term for the Vārkarī *sampradāy*, not necessarily in its sense of the Prārthanā Samāj's reformist idea of Bhāgavat Dharma.

[79] K.S. Ṭhākre, *Kharā Brāmhaṇ*, 1-4.

brahman now bathe in the river with his clothes on since he has touched a Mahār.[80] Things go downhill from there.

The brahmans complain about how the untouchables are a terrible and dirty nuisance, especially after Eknāth started puffing up their pride with ideas of equality.[81] If untouchables were to be admitted to temples, then they would want to eat with brahmans, and then marry the brahmans' daughters, and finally the *sanāthana dharma* would be destroyed, the brahmans say. When Viṭhu protests politely that they should not denigrate Eknāth, the brahmans become enraged that Viṭhu has dared to question them. They demand that Viṭhu place his garland (which Viṭhu had intended somehow to lay at Rāma's feet in the temple) at their own feet. Viṭhu resists, saying that God's garland does not belong at anyone else's feet. The brahmans shout that he has become insolent, and they push the Maratha man to intervene. The Maratha takes his cue (somewhat confusedly and at first hesitantly) and eventually strikes Viṭhu on the forehead with a wooden staff. Viṭhu starts bleeding profusely and becomes half-conscious, and everyone else leaves the stage.[82]

Just then Eknāth's wife Girjā happens to come to the temple and discover Viṭhu, whom she apparently already knows well. She cares for him and reviles the brahmans when they return to the scene. In other stories, if Girjā (Girijā) is mentioned at all, she is said to be meek and kind; in Ṭhākre's play she is quick to anger and sarcastically critical of the injustice she sees. She picks up Viṭhu's garland, now smeared with Viṭhu's blood, and demands that she be let into the

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[80] It is interesting that Gāvbā is portrayed as somewhat crazy by Ṭhākre as well as by Śirvaḷkar. I assume that Ṭhākre adopted the idea from Śirvaḷkar's earlier play, because the hagiographical texts are univocal in their depictions of Gāvbā as mentally slow. This is something peculiar to Śirvaḷkar's and Ṭhākre's plays; one does not find Gāvbā portrayed this way anywhere else.

[81] K.S. Ṭhākre, *Kharā Brāmhaṇ*, 14.

[82] Ibid., 15.

temple to lay it at Rāma's feet. Because the blood is that of a faithful *bhakta*, God is sure to accept it, she insists.[83] The brahmans refuse, and she argues back, ultimately eliciting from them a confession that they would prefer that Muslims destroy the image of Rāma inside and turn the temple into a mosque than that untouchables be allowed to enter it.[84] As she and the brahmans struggle, Eknāth arrives on the scene. He firmly tells Girjā to stop arguing with the brahmans, since caring for Viṭhu's medical needs should be the priority at that moment. Eknāth comforts Viṭhu, reminding him that Viṭhu's brave son fought at Eknāth's side when they went into battle near Daulatābād. When Viṭhu asks for water, Eknāth looks to the brahmans and sees the small vessel that they carry to sprinkle the ground to purify it after untouchables walked on it. The brahmans refuse to give him the water, and Eknāth asks rhetorically, "Were you created by God or by Satan (*Saitān*)?"[85] He decides to move Viṭhu to his own home and care for him there. The brahmans threaten that if he does so, Eknāth's home will effectively become the home of a Mahār (*mahārvāḍā*). Eknāth responds, "Then the Vedas' and God's (Nārāyaṇa's) wish will be fulfilled."[86] Eknāth and his wife take Viṭhu home.

The next act opens with Gāvbā dressed as a Muslim (*paṭhāṇ*) and talking with the temple priest. The priest is surprised but hesitant to judge, since he knows that Gāvbā is slightly insane. He asks Gāvbā what is going on, and Gāvbā states that he has converted. He explains that after Eknāth and Girjā took Viṭhu into their home, the brahmans put them out of caste and made them into Mahārs like Viṭhu. Subsequently, Eknāth and Girjā abandoned their home in the brahman neighborhood and moved in next to the Mahārs. At that time, Gāvbā decided to cease being a

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[83] Ibid., 20.

[84] Ibid., 22.

[85] Ibid., 24.

[86] Ibid.

brahman as well, but he chose to become a Paṭhāṇ because unlike Mahārs, Paṭhāṇs do not fear brahmans. In a slightly crazy but significant line, Gāvbā tells the brahman priest, "Everyone needs to become a Mahār, Māṅg, Dheḍ, Cāmbhār or Muslim, otherwise tribes of Paṭhaṇs from Peshawar (Afghanistan) need to come and stand on the chests of Paithan's *bhaṭ*s (brahmans). There is no other path for uplifting the untouchables."[87] The brahman calls Gāvbā a lowlife (*pājī*) and walks away.

The scene continues with Eknāth being approached by a Gujarati banker who demands that a loan that he had given to Eknāth be repaid immediately. Girjā and Sītā both give their jewelry, and Viṭhu signs over the deed to his farm in order to cover the debt.[88] This is a vastly different turn of events from the traditional story, in which Eknāth's debt is miraculously covered by Kṛṣṇa going at night in the form of Śrīkhaṇḍyā to the banker and materializing the cash. Ṭhākre has employed this story as a rather blunt metaphor for how, according to Ṭhākre, Gujarati merchants in Bombay have connived away the wealth of Maharashtrians. The story takes another strange turn, however, when a Muslim horseman suddenly arrives and gives Eknāth a large bag of gold as appreciation from Murtazā Nizām Shāh for successfully leading the battle near Daulatābād.[89] Thus although Eknāth has become a Mahār, he is also now a wealthy official (*sardār*) for the local ruler.

The next two scenes (Act 2:2 and Act 3:1) focus on two female characters that Ṭhākre invents – the courtesan Hirakaṇī, who performs for brahmans and wealthy Paithan residents, and

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[87] Ibid., 29. The use of the word *uddhar* is multivalent in that it was regularly used in the hagiographical literature to name Eknāth's salvific activity, and in the 20th century came to used in a more political sense of improving the social and material situations of untouchables. I think that it is safe to assume that Ṭhākre is mainly concerned with the modern sense of *uddhar*.

[88] Ibid., 31-35.

[89] Ibid., 37.

Viṭhū's daughter-in-law Sītā. Sītā enters the scene screaming because she has been assaulted by the temple priest. Gāvbā catches the temple priest, roughs him up but ultimately lets him go when Eknāth arrives and calms him down. Hirakaṇī and Sītā both lament their fragile situations in life, and Hirakaṇī leaves the stage briefly to return with a rope (understood to be a large wick) that she has lit on fire. She says that she intends to light a ceremonial fire to purify the world, and Sītā becomes scared of the implication. Eknāth stops her and says, "You want to burn your sinful worldly life? Then burn it."[90] The scene ends here in suspense. The next scene opens with Hirakaṇī dressed (more or less) as a Vārkarī, singing a religious song. It is clear that she has taken initiation from Eknāth.

Hirakaṇī approaches Viṭhu and asks for help with a problem in Paithan. Apparently a cattle disease is spreading, and cows are dying all around the town. The Mahārs are refusing to remove the carcasses, however. Viṭhu says that the Mahārs are indeed protesting to bring attention to their mistreatment. Suddenly Sītā arrives and announces that Eknāth, the repentant temple priest, and Śrīkhaṇḍyā (who plays no significant role in this play) are all out hauling away the dead cows. Viṭhu realizes that he cannot let his beloved guru Eknāth do this alone, so he too joins.

Later in the scene, the antagonistic brahmans bemoan how Paithan and their lives have changed. Since they barred Eknāth from reading the *purāṇa*s in the Rāma temple, he has started working out of the Viṭṭhal temple in the Mahār neighborhood, which has now become the center of Paithan's religious activities. Even the brahmans' own wives now attend Eknāth's talks. One of the brahmans smiles and reveals that he has set in motion a scheme to change things – he has

[90] Ibid., 42-48.

summoned a religious judge from Kāśī to come and make an official judgment on Eknāth.[91] Another brahman reveals another scheme – he tricked the town mayor (*pāṭīl*, a Maratha) into signing an official complaint to the local Muslim ruler, claiming that Eknāth and the untouchables have been deliberately poisoning the cows to sow unrest. The ruler will have to dispatch a police investigator (*kotvāl*) to take care of the problem.[92]

The next scene (3:2) opens with the sound of a cracking whip, human screams, and an angry voice yelling. As the curtain rises, Viṭhu is bound with heavy ropes and the investigator is torturing him to confess to poisoning the cattle. Eknāth rushes onto the scene and asks why the *kotvāl* had not investigated the case properly but simply assumed Viṭhu's guilt. Eknāth claims that for the past eight years, not a single untouchable has eaten any meat in Paithan, and the real crime is that someone submitted a false complaint.[93] They meet with the mayor, who realizes that he has been played by the brahmans, and he repents.[94]

The final scene of the play portrays Eknāth's trial before the *svāmī* from Kāśī. The *svāmī* initially challenges Eknāth about rendering the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* into Marathi, but the brahmans of Paithan quickly commandeer the trial and accuse Eknāth of destroyed the *sanātana dharma* by interacting with untouchables.[95] The *svāmī* asks Eknāth directly whether his conduct, thinking and teachings are opposed to the *sanātana dharma*, and Eknāth simply and

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[91] Ibid., 53.

[92] Ibid., 55.

[93] I take this reference to mean that Eknāth was the catalyst for the untouchables to become Vārkarīs (in Ṭhākre's loose use of the tradition) and thereby stop eating meat, rather than that the untouchables were already vegetarians (and thereby "pure" in the way that Pāṅgārkar describes) before Eknāth joined them.

[94] K.S. Ṭhākre, *Kharā Brāmhaṇ*, 56-59.

[95] That the *svāmī* is first interested in Eknāth's Marathi composition seems to me to be only a link back to the hagiographical story in which the *paṇḍit*s in Varanasi challenge Eknāth on account of his writing. Ṭhākre has brought the skeptical *paṇḍit* community to Paithan in the form of the *svāmī*. In the hagiographical story, the *paṇḍit*s show no interest in Eknāth's inter-caste interactions; they only care about him writing in Marathi.

provocatively answers, "Yes."[96] Eknāth states that he has inducted the Mahārs into Bhāgavat Dharma and shown them the "satanic-ness of the religion of brahman mendicants" (*bhikṣukī dharmācā saitānīpaṇā*).[97] He insists that he will not preserve religious tradition at the cost of relinquishing the untouchables' rights to be treated as humans. The *svāmī* comments to himself that he has no argument against Eknāth on this point. The brahmans threaten Eknāth that the only possible purification for his corrupt deeds is ritual death. Eknāth counters that purification would first require remorse, but he has done nothing wrong and feels no remorse. He asks the *svāmī* to join him and "teach the dharma of humanity to Hindu society."[98] If humane treatment cannot be extended to the hundreds of thousands of "our dharma-brothers," then not even Satan himself would believe brahmans blustering about liberation (*mokṣa*) in the old religion.

Eknāth presses the attack. "I am ready to destroy the brahman privilege (*brāhmaṇya*) for the sake of uplifting untouchables."[99] One of the brahmans asks, "If brahman privilege disappears, what's left?" Eknāth responds, "Hindutva![100] Strong, unified Hindutva. In order to preserve it, we need to bring the untouchables near. Even more, the time has come to offer brahman privilege as a sacrifice for the sake of Hindutva. Then the whole world will praise the humanity of him as a true brahman (*kharā brahmaṇ*)."[101]

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[96] K.S. Ṭhākre, *Kharā Brāmhaṇ*, 69.

[97] Ibid., 70.

[98] Ibid., 71.

[99] Ibid., 72. It is difficult to translate *brāhmaṇya* into English succinctly. The term connotes the status, business, privileges and duties that come from being a brahman. I translate it "brahman privilege" here for the sake of brevity.

[100] Ṭhākre almost certainly had Savarkar's use of the word *hindutva* in mind here.

[101] K.S. Ṭhākre, *Kharā Brāmhaṇ*.

The antagonistic brahmans are appalled by this, and they begin to sense that the tide of the trial is turning against them. Gāvbā confronts them, "It is your honor to light the fire [of sacrifice, as Eknāth just mentioned]. If you light it, it will burn." The brahmans refuse to light this figurative fire, preferring to start a literal one instead. Suddenly voices start calling out that the Mahār neighborhood has started to burn. Confusion erupts, and in the process Sītā succumbs to the flames. The *svāmī* sees this and says, "Damn our brahman-knowledge and our egoistic brahman privilege!"[102] The antagonistic brahmans are shocked to hear this and ask him what he means. The *svāmī* responds, "Shut up, fools." Eknāth follows up on his previous argument, saying that there is no other way to liberate Hindus from untouchability. The *svāmī* agrees, approaches Viṭhu, calls the Mahār *bhakta* a "true brahman," and embraces him. The play ends with the whole cast saying, "*Tathastu, Tathastu, Tathastu* (Let it be so)."[103]

Ṭhākre mentions in his brief notes on the play that troupes regularly had a great problem (*moṭhī aḍcaṇ*) with the two scenes involving the courtesan Hirakaṇī, so he decided to rewrite those two scenes to remove her from the play (although these removed scenes are still printed with the play). Ṭhākre does not specify what this problem was. It may have had something to do with the fact that she walks onto stage carrying a rope that is actually on fire (not a comforting sight for theater attendees). Or some people may have taken offense at depictions of some kinds of people patronizing a dancer and prostitute.

Two short articles in the Pune-based brahman nationalist newspaper *Kesarī* reveal that Ṭhākre's play was quite controversial among some audiences as well. A gathering of temple priests in Pune condemned the play in no uncertain terms, saying that it appeared to have been

[102] Ibid., 75.

[103] Ibid., 76.

written for the purpose of spreading hatred of brahmans.[104] Another group of brahmans lodged an official complaint with the Assistant Collector, who ultimately ruled that the play could be performed in the district only if significant changes were made. Other districts would be notified of the controversy, and immediate action would be taken to close the play if there were unrest as a result of its other performances.[105] According to the article, Ṭhākre revised the play to be less offensive. Judging by the hostile language and belligerent tone of the version that we have just reviewed, it appears that the printed versions that I consulted were the unchanged, original script.[106]

Ṭhākre obviously took enormous liberty in his portrayal of Eknāth, and the play bears little resemblance to the hagiographical stories. Also in stark contrast to the hagiographical and biographical literature (aside from Bhāgvat, to an extent), Ṭhākre's entire play takes place against a backdrop of intense and openly violent inter-caste tension. The brahmans' treatment of Viṭhū is vicious and nasty. Eknāth makes no effort to reconcile himself to the brahmans' expectations or to respect anything about them. For most of the play, Eknāth functions contentedly as a Mahār.

This radical interpretation of Eknāth's life is not absolutely disconnected from the persona portrayed in earlier literature, but it is indeed a major departure from the traditional narrative. Throughout the play the theme of uplifting untouchables recurs explicitly, which connects with earlier discourse about Eknāth. The earlier discourse was much more vague,

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[104] "Vartamānsār: Sabhā-Saṁmelaneṁ," *Kesarī*, July 14 1933, 11. In a particularly poignant coincidence, the other major statement by this group of orthodox brahmans that was mentioned in the article was their univocal condemnation of a recent inter-caste marriage.

[105] "Kharā Brāhmaṇ Sudhārlā," *Kesarī*, August 15 1933, 12.

[106] I have not been able to observe the first or second editions of this play. Given the level of controversy stirred up by it, I expect that other newspaper reviews and articles could be found as well.

however, and "upliftment" was usually cast in a more overtly religious framework, as Eknāth's activities were described with terms that were usually used for Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu (e.g., *dīnoddhara*). Religious language is present and operative in Ṭhākre's plays, and the Vārkarī tradition is even depicted (minimally) and appealed to, but in the end, the course that the religious tradition may take is something fully within humans' control. Finally, when Eknāth presents his position to the *svāmī* from Kāśī, Ṭhākre's intentions become explicit. Eknāth will happily abandon and destroy the system of brahman privilege (which Ṭhākre does not participate in anyway) in order to arrive at a the pure essence of his religion – Hindutva. This is of course not a neologism on Ṭhākre's part; Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's book *Hindutva* was published one decade before Ṭhākre's *Kharā Brāmhaṇ*. Ṭhākre's Eknāth wholeheartedly and unhesitatingly fights for a more socially egalitarian Hindu society, but a particular kind of Hindu society – one that has a very explicit and vigorous political expression. More research could be done to understand exactly how *Kharā Brāhmaṇ* was received when it was performed. Its ultimate impact on how Eknāth was remembered in 20th-century Maharashtra, however, was clearly quite minimal. As a production about Eknāth, this play was soon forgotten.

Early Films about Eknāth

Two early films about Eknāth also merit mention here, although both of them may no longer be extant and the available information about them is quite incomplete. Dhuṇḍirāj Govind Phāḷke (better known as Dādāsāheb Phāḷke) was both the first director of a full-length Indian film (*Raja Harishcandra* in 1913) and the first director of a film on Eknāth (*Sant Eknath* or *The Saint of Paithan* in 1926). Despite much searching, I could not locate an extant copy of Phāḷke's silent film on Eknāth, and I have neither seen nor heard of any testimony that one still

exists. An unpublished register of information about silent films in India held in the library at the National Film Archives of India in Pune presents information about the film based on its listing by the Bombay Board of Film Censors. Phāḷke's *Sant Eknath* passed the Censor Board on January 15, 1926. It was a total of 104 minutes long and consisted of 6,233 feet of film. Phāḷke wrote the script as well as directed the film and the names of two actors are listed: Gotiram Pardeshi in the role of Eknāth and Bhaurao Datar in the role of "Pathan."[107] Based on the character named "Pathan," we may assume that a Muslim was one of the film's main characters, but nothing is forthcoming about the content of the film itself. I have come across a reference to the film in a biographical work on Phāḷke, but it only describes an interesting event that occurred while shooting the film. Apparently at one point in the film a *sannyāsī* was supposed to appear in a procession, but the actor who was playing the role refused to shave his head for the scene. The next day Phāḷke arrived on the set with his own head shaved and thereby cajoled the reluctant actor into participating.[108] Although Phāḷke directed other films on *sant* figures (Nāmdev, Dāmājī, Mirābāī, Janābāī, and Kabīr), these account for only a very small fraction of his entire filmography.[109]

The other early film about Eknāth was directed by Harshadrai Sakerlal Mehta and released in 1938. Novetzke claims that this film is in Tamil but offers no source for his information.[110] Fragmentary information on the internet appears to support this.[111] Perhaps

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[107] B. V. Dharap, "Filmography of Indian 'Silent' Films," (Pune: National Film Archives of India, n.d.), 69. The original listing can be found in the Bombay Government Gazette, Feb. 4, 1926 listing of the Bombay Board of Film Censors, page 341.

[108] Bāpū Vāṭve, *Dādāsāheb Phāḷke (Bhāratīya Citrapaṭsṛṣṭīce Janak)* (Dillī: Nāśanal Buk Ṭrasṭ, 1995), 84; Bāpū Vāṭve, *Mahārāṣṭrāce Śilpakār Dādāsāheb Phāḷke* (Mumbaī: Mahārāṣṭra Rājya Sāhitya āṇi Saṁskṛtī Maṇḍaḷ, 2002), 52. Both books present this story, although the latter publication's description is more thorough.

[109] B. Vāṭve, *Dādāsāheb Phāḷke (Bhāratīya Citrapaṭsṛṣṭīce Janak)*, 86.

[110] C.L. Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory*, 272n4.

further confirmation could be found in research on the early history of Tamil film. For now, we may simply note that the film existed, even if we know nothing about it.

***Dharmātmā* (1935)**

Without question, the most well-known and the most expensive representation of Eknāth on stage or screen was the Prabhat Film Company's *Dharmātmā*.[112] Prabhat as a film studio had already established a strong presence in the growing Marathi and Hindi film industries (as Prabhat shot each of their early films twice – once in Marathi and once in Hindi).[113] Its film *Amṛtamanthan* (Churning of the Nectar) showed for more than 25 weeks at a time when most films ran for no more than two, and it became the highest earning film in 1934.[114] The director of that film, a 33 year-old Jain from Kolhāpūr named Shantaram Rajaram Vankudre (better known as V. Shantaram), was quickly hired for additional films with Prabhat. Shantaram had decided to do a film about a Marathi *sant*, particularly Tukārām. Ke. Nārāyaṇ Kāḷe was hired to write the script.[115] Feeling that Tukārām was too otherworldly and socially passive, however, Kāḷe recommended Eknāth as a more interesting figure, particularly because of how important

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[111] "Eknath (1938)," http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0239365/, Accessed July 23, 2011; "Eganathar," http://tamil.galatta.com/entertainment/oldmovies/oldmoviedetails/year/1938/name/Eganathar.html, Accessed July 23, 2011. It appears that the title of this film has been transliterated into English in different ways.

[112] I want to express my gratitude to Meera Kosambi for several insightful conversations in 2010 about early 20th-century Maharashtrian history and popular culture, for her advice about accessing the National Film Archives of India, and for lending me some important rare books from her personal library.

[113] Rachel Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2006), 31.

[114] Ibid., 33.

[115] The script apparently was published in a special issue of the Marathi serial *Nirbhīḍ* in Bombay in 1936 that was devoted completely to the film after it was finally released. Pramod Kale (son of K. N. Kāḷe), Personal communication, May 27, 2010. I have not seen a copy of this issue. The script was printed more recently with a good introductory article and valuable appendices as well. Ke. Nārāyaṇ Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā* (Mumbaī: Pāpyular Prakāśan, 1982).

the notion of equality (*samatā*) was to him. Shantaram agreed.[116] Kāḷe was a socially liberal, intellectual brahman who objected to the portrayal of miracles in the film. Shantaram had a similar social outlook and approved of Kāḷe's desire convey a social message in the film, but Shantaram also had to be mindful of the film's popular appeal and commercial viability and thus supplemented it in ways that he found necessary to attract a wider audience.[117]

Shantaram and other artists at Prabhat also had connections to the most famous actor of the Marathi stage at the time, Bālgandharva (Nārāyaṇ Śrīpad Rājahaṁs), as they had worked and performed in his theater troupe in Pune when they were younger. In 1935 Bālgandharva came into grave financial difficulties and closed his troupe, so Shantaram and Prabhat reached out to him with a deal for their upcoming film that they believed would benefit everyone. The producers banked on the ability of Bālgandharva's name to draw a large audience throughout India, particularly because he would be appearing for the first time not only in film but also in a male role (Bālgandharva had previously only performed in female roles on stage). Bālgandharva was not necessarily a good fit for the character of Eknāth, but this was not Prabhat's initial concern. Bālgandharva's name was famous, he was looking for work, and that role of Eknāth was open. To foreground Bālgandharva's name even more, Prabhat arranged for the film to be released under the name "Balgandharva-Prabhat Productions," for which Bālgandharva would

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[116] Ibid., āṭh.

[117] Ibid., dahā-akrā. One example of Shantaram's additions was a well-choreographed scene in which a group of *apsara*s (nymphs) dance in suggestive outfits in a stylized heavenly forest. This scene appears as a cut-away from Eknāth while he performs a *kīrtan* (25:40 in the film); when Eknāth mentions *apsara*s in a line about the various forms that God has created, the viewing audience continues to hear Eknāth's *kīrtan* but suddenly sees *apsara*s dancing amid waving branches and falling stardust. It is quite a jarring and bizarre transition, since nowhere else in the film does any remotely similar scene appear. Kāḷe's script does not call for it. Shantaram inserted it especially for audiences of the Hindi version of the film who would see it in northern India. Pramod Kale, Personal communication, May 27, 2010. One reviewer of the film felt that it was out of place and superfluous and surmised that it had been inserted "for Punjab" (*panjābsāṭhī*, to appeal to a northern audience who were apparently dance scenes). Śāmrāv Niḷkaṇṭh Ok, "Pariśiṣṭa 1 (Reprinted review of *Dharmātmā*)," in *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, ed. Ke. Nārāyaṇ Kāḷe, et al. (Mumbaī: Pāpyular Prakāśan, 1982), 65-69. This is a reprint of a review that was published shortly after *Dharmātmā* was released. The original publication was Śāmrāv Niḷkaṇṭh Ok, "Chāyānād," *Pratibhā*, February 1 1936.

consequently receive half of the film's earnings.[118] *Dharmātmā* was a film about Eknāth, but its main selling point was the participation of Bālgandharva, and already by May 1935 (before the shooting of the film even began) the relationship between the actor and the studio was being advertised to stir up interest.[119]

In *Filming the Gods* Rachel Dwyer discusses the "devotional film" as a genre in early Indian cinema, pointing out that both the first and the "best" examples of this genre (as it is vaguely defined) came out of Maharashtra (Torney and Chitre's *Pundalik* in 1912, and the group of films about *sant*s produced by Prabhat Films in the 1930s and 1940, respectively).[120] Devotional films in the 1930s often took inspiration from Gandhi's teachings and activities,[121] despite the fact that Gandhi himself had a very low opinion of cinema,[122] Two decades after *Dharmātmā* had been released, Shantaram reflected that he had intended for his audience to connect Eknāth's attitude about untouchability with Gandhi's campaigns in the 1930s.[123] As has been discussed by Dwyer and Skyhawk, *Dharmātmā* was in fact originally named *Mahātmā*, and the name was changed at the behest of the Bombay Board of Film Censors, who felt that the

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[118] Bāpū Vāṭve, *Ek Hotī Prabhātnagarī* (Puṇe: Anant Vi. Dāmle, 1993), 100.

[119] "Film News," *Kiran Weekly*, May 4 1935, 4. This publication, which provides weekly updates on Marathi and Hindi films by many studios, is held in the library of the National Film Archives of India. Coincidentally, the NFAI is located several hundred meters away from the erstwhile studios of the Prabhat Film Company (now occupied by the National Film and Television Institute).

[120] R. Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*, 63, 72.

[121] Ibid., 69. For more on how Hindi cinema in particular drew on the persona and teachings of Gandhi, see Rachel Dwyer, "The Case of the Missing Mahatma: Gandhi and the Hindi Cinema," *Public Culture* 23, no. 2 (2011): 349-376.

[122] R. Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*, 70.

[123] V. Shantaram, "The Eternal Conflict," *Filmfare*, January 6 1956, 32-33. Cited in R. Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*, 75.

political association of the film with Gandhi was troublingly overt.[124] As Novetzke argues, however, *Dharmātmā* is less of a subtle endorsement of Gandhi than a statement that Maharashtrians already had a proto-Gandhi in the 16th century – Eknāth.[125] Although words and implications of the Gandhian campaign to abolish untouchability do appear in *Dharmātmā*, the film is very much about Eknāth as Kāḷe and Shantaram interpreted him. The Gandhian overlay is an undeniable aspect of this film, but it is not the hermeneutical key to interpret the film as a whole.

The film that was initially entitled *Mahātmā* was first submitted to the Board of Film Censors in Bombay for approval at the end of September 1935 and was rejected two weeks later, in the Board's words, "on the grounds that it treats a sacred subject irreverently and deals with controversial politics."[126] They made four specific recommendations. First, Prabhat had to change the film's title, since the appeal to Gandhi was too explicit and troubling for the British government. Second, Prabhat had to remove two scenes in which Eknāth interacts closely with untouchables – once hosting an untouchable girl in his home, and once standing and singing among untouchables in the Mahār neighborhood. The first scene was judged to be injurious to religious sensibilities, and problem with the second will be discussed later in this chapter. Neither of these scenes had a hagiographical precedent. Third, Prabhat had to add something to the film to demonstrate more clearly that Śrīkṛṣṇa was a divine *avatār*, since he otherwise came across as only a witty servant. Finally, Prabhat had to change the name of the judge who comes from Kāśī at the end of the film to deliver a ruling on Eknāth's actions. The figure's original

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[124] R. Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*, 75; H.v. Skyhawk, "Social Expression of Unity with the Divine: the Saint's Conduct as a Component of Hindu Ethics," 216.

[125] C.L. Novetzke, "The Brahmin Double," 247.

[126] "The Bombay Governmental Gazette: Register of Films Examined by the Bombay Board of Film Censors - October 1935," (Bombay: Secretary, Board of Film Censors, 1935), 2146.

name was Śaṅkarācārya Jagadguru, which was obviously supposed to evoke an association with one of the four *śaṅkarācārya*s who are regarded as arbiters of orthodox Hindu thought and practice.[127]

As was the case for Prabhat's other early films, *Dharmātmā* was shot once in Marathi and once in Hindi, thereby resulting in two separate films that each needed to pass the censors before they could be shown.[128] The Hindi version was similarly prohibited by the Board of Censors in Bombay. Each Indian state had its own Board of Censors, however, and the original Hindi version of *Dharmātma* (bearing its original name, *Mahātmā*) was approved immediately by the Bengal Board of Censors.[129] Therefore, Prabhat's film about Eknāth was first shown in Hindi and in Calcutta, with the original name *Mahātmā* in October 1935 – nearly two months before it was finally approved with alterations for screening in Bombay.[130] Apparently, the Bombay censor board contained at least one very conservative Hindu member, and the film was approved only after significant correspondence, a personal interview with one Principal Hamill who directed the Board, and full acquiescence by Prabhat to make the requested changes in the Marathi and Hindi versions of the film.[131] The film was first shown in Bombay on December 7, 1935, after months of anticipation.

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[127] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 62-63.

[128] The actors in both films remained mostly the same. Only the main antagonist in the film, the *mahant* Saccidānanda, was played by two different actors. In this way, although Prabhat produced and wrote mainly Marathi films, their translators helped them transform the material immediately into Hindi, thus giving them access to the pan-Indian film market as well. Śāntārām Āṭhavaḷe, "Prabhātcā Dharmātmā," in *Śrīeknāth Darśan*, ed. Aravind Doḍe. (Mumbaī: Sudarśan Prakāśan, 2006), 230-232.

[129] Ibid., 107. I have not attempted to find any reviews of *Mahātmā* in newspapers from Calcutta, although I suspect that some must exist and their contents may be interesting.

[130] "Film News," *Kiran Weekly*, November 2 1935, 9.

[131] The original Marathi film was 14,953 feet long, and after cuts and revisions it was 12,997 feet. The revised version was 13,680 feet long, although it seems that the Hindi version is no longer extant. I do not know why the Hindi version was longer. "The Bombay Governmental Gazette: Register of Films Examined by the Bombay Board of Film Censors - October 1935," 2146; "The Bombay Governmental Gazette: Register of Films Examined by the

As we saw in the cases of Śirvaḷkar and Ṭhākre, some creative license was required to adapt traditional stories about the life of Eknāth to a full-scale dramatic production. Kāḷe did an especially good job of this by weaving multiple traditional stories together and inventing new characters to connect the scenes smoothly. Like Śirvaḷkar and Ṭhākre, Kāḷe included in his script a fool character for comic relief. Whereas the other two changed Gāvbā into a crazily wise character, Kāḷe reshaped Śrīkhaṇḍyā into a wittily sarcastic jester who subtly mocks Eknāth's antagonists. The antagonists in *Dharmātmā* are similar to the brahmans of the traditional story, but Kāḷe adjusted their characters somewhat – inventing a proud, brawny, orthodox *mahant* (holy man) named Saccidānanda and his coterie of arrogant, dull-witted disciples, as well as the local administrator (*ināmdār*) who enjoys a mutually beneficial power relationship with the *mahant*. Kāḷe's most significant innovation was the creation of a young Mahār girl – Jāī – who treats Eknāth and his wife with great affection, and whom they in turn treat as their own daughter. Although the main tensions in the film are between Eknāth and Saccidānanda, it is often Jāī whose actions are the catalyst for advancing the narrative and causing social tensions to become manifest. Eknāth's son Haripaṇḍit (played by Kāḷe himself) also is a prominent character in the film. His actions in the film differ from those in the traditional stories, but his general character is the same – exasperated by Eknāth's unorthodox ways, ashamed of whispers and rumors he hears in town because of it, and inclined to strike out on his own path.

The pivotal scene in the film is Eknāth eating at the home of Jāī and her parents, generally as this story was portrayed in Mahīpati's *Bhaktalilāmṛt*. The name of Jāī's father is Rāṇū, which clearly imitates Rāṇyā Mahār in Mahīpati's story. Although Eknāth eating at Rāṇyā's home was originally an isolated, independent episode in Mahīpati's rendition,

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Bombay Board of Film Censors - December 1935," (Bombay: Secretary, Board of Film Censors, 1936), 2330; "The Bombay Governmental Gazette: Register of Films Examined by the Bombay Board of Film Censors - November 1935," (Bombay: Secretary, Board of Film Censors, 1935), 193.

everything in *Dharmātmā* is connected to it. Thus *Dharmātmā* never attempts to narrate Eknāth's full life and shows no interest in Eknāth's childhood, his guru, his vision of Datta, or his death. Its scope is limited to this story of inter-caste commensality.

The film begins in the *maṭh* of the *mahant* (named Saccidānanda), as he sits on a traditional swing while bare his arms and upper body are washed by two women who attend him. Townsfolk take the water that he has been washed in and, treating it as *prasād*, drink it devotedly. One of the older men proclaims, "Saccidānanda! Oh, what divinity (*aiśvarya*)! Unlike that wretched Eknāth. Always making a fuss about equality (*samatecī baḍbaḍ*)." The *mahant* hears Eknāth's name and shouts, "Ugh, Eknāth! Infidel! (*Dharmabhraṣṭa*!)." Another old man agrees, "Yes, that Eknāth sees no difference between brahmans, merchants, oil-pressers, tobacco-sellers, Mahārs, Māṅgs, women or men." Yet another pipes in, "Anyone at all can approach Eknāth. [sarcastically] He's become a great *mahātmā*!"[132] One of the men then flings a banana peel out the window, and the camera follows it to the dusty ground outside, where it lands at the feet of a shirtless, scruffy sweeper (understood to be an untouchable). He looks up and says, "Nāth," and slowly turns to his fellow sweeper as a mournful *sāraṅgī* starts to play. He speaks in a non-standard Marathi dialect, "Nāth is God to us. We fall and touch his feet. Because of Nāth we were able to see our little girl again, otherwise she would have died on the hot sand, writhing in agony. No one else paid attention to her cries."[133] This is obviously a

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[132] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 1. It should be noted that there are some minor differences between the printed script and the dialogue in the film itself; in fact, it appears that the printed version reflects the original script before it was edited to appease the Censor Board. Furthermore, the English subtitles in the commonly available DVD version of the film gloss over many Marathi expressions and largely fail to convey the social tensions and nuances in the original script. Through the currently available subtitles one can follow the gist of the film, but much is lost (unnecessarily) in translation. V. Shantaram, "Dharmatma," (Mumbai: Eros Multimedia Pvt. Ltd., 1935 [2009]). This DVD version is part of a 10-disc Collector's Set of Prabhat Films. It is also available as a single DVD and on VCD, although the VCD currently does not have subtitles.

[133] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 2. The English subtitles for this line are representative of their overall mediocre quality: "Nath is a God for all of us who are of low caste. Because of the Mahatma we are able to see our daughter alive today. Or she would have died struggling in the desert, and we would not have bothered to know."

reference to the hagiographical story of Eknāth picking up the untouchable boy from the hot sand, although Kāḷe applies the reference his invented female character Jāī.

The next scene turns to a dialogue between Eknāth's son Haripaṇḍit and Girijā, in which Haripaṇḍit voices his frustration with Eknāth's behavior. This sort of scene recurs periodically throughout the film until Haripaṇḍit's shame finally impels him to fully dissociate himself from his parents. In this particular scene at the beginning of the film, Haripaṇḍit eventually storms off to tell Eknāth what he feels. Haripaṇḍit opens a door and finds Eknāth seated in prayer, singing an *abhaṅga* to God, "Faith itself is God, faith itself is God (*bhāva toci dev*). Have no doubts about this. Through faith comes the fruit of devotion, through faith one obtains God…"[134] As Haripaṇḍit hears his father singing (Bālgandharva in the role of Eknāth, performing the *abhaṅga*), he becomes visibly calmed. Haripaṇḍit listens for some time and even visibly becomes inspired by the words. As the *abhaṅga* ends, Śrīkhaṇḍyā (who had been assisting Eknāth with his worship) comes out of the room and teasingly reminds Haripaṇḍit that he had been angry and wanted to reprimand Eknāth. Haripaṇḍit embarrassedly walks away.

Jāī appears for the first time in the next scene, as she runs away from two of the *mahant'*s disciples. They chase her through the streets of Paithan shouting, "Thief! Thief!" They throw stones at her, and she falls unconscious outside Eknāth's door. He emerges, and the disciples inform him that for the last weeks Jāī had stealing flowers from trees their *maṭh.* They demand that he give her to the police to be whipped as punishment. Eknāth responds, "Lashes of a whip for stealing flowers! If God had to measure your and my sins by this standard, what tortures

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Whereas the subtitles indicate that the untouchable speaker blames himself for not noticing his missing child, the script places the blame on the larger community that saw her but did nothing. One can emphathize with whoever wrote the subtitles, however, as the sound quality of the man's voice is quite low, and it is difficult to discern his final sentence.

[134] Ibid., 3. This *abhaṅga* is attributed to Eknāth in some but not all of the *Gāthā*s. Cf. Eknāth, *Śrīeknāth Mahārājāñcyā Abhaṅgāñcī Gāthā*, #965; Eknāth, *Eknāthsvāmīkṛt Abhaṅgācī Gāthā*, 175.

await us!"[135] Eknāth shames the disciples into leaving her alone and then cares for her until she regains consciousness and her parents arrive to fetch her. Before she leaves, Jāī asks Eknāth to take her flowers and offer them to God in his worship. Eknāth does so and sings another *abhaṅga* – "Those who are called low caste, women, *śūdra*s and lowly people: God dwells in all beings. There is no room for lowliness…"[136]

Kāḷe adds other such scenes to the story to highlight the differences between the views of Eknāth and those of the *mahant* and his followers, often portraying the *mahant*'s concern about Eknāth's increasing popularity. The traditional story of Eknāth feeding untouchables at his *śrāddha* ceremony is also included in the film. Following many others (e.g., Sahasrabuddhe, Pāṅgārkar, Śirvaḷkar) the rendition of this story in *Dharmātmā* follows Mahiipati's *BhV* rather than the *BhL*. In the film, however, the *mahant* and his followers are invited first, but they vocally refuse to go. Only after this rejection is articulated does Eknāth feed Rāṇū and the other Mahārs. The brahmans of course refuse to perform the *śrāddha* rituals, saying that Eknāth's ancestors will suffer because of his actions. Eknāth is clearly bothered by this idea.

Interestingly, the script and the film diverge somewhat in how they resolve this problem, which is probably a result of the film being revised to please the Bombay Censor Board. In the script, Śrīkhaṇḍyā reminds Eknāth about his teaching that children are simply small forms of God.[137] So if Eknāth were to feed some children and pray to God, then in effect he would be carrying out the ritual. So three untouchable children are seated and given food, and as they eat,

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[135] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 4.

[136] *jayā mhaṇtī nīcavarṇa strīśūdrādi hīna jana | sarvāṁbhūtīṁ dev vase nīcā ṭhāyī kāy nase…* ibid., 7; Eknāth, *Śrī Eknāth Gāthā, Śrī Bhānudās, Śrī Janārdana Yāñcyā Abhaṅgāsaha*, #2504.

[137] This particular supposed teaching of Eknāth is not familiar to me. It had not occurred earlier in the film; it seems that Kāḷe conveniently invented and inserted it here.

images of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are superimposed on them.[138] The film depicts Eknāth's worry, but then the camera suddenly cuts inexplicably to a scene of Śrīkhaṇḍyā walking into the home with three children clinging to him and playfully harassing him, omitting Śrīkhaṇḍyā's explanation. The camera cuts again and suddenly Eknāth is praying to God as three children eat, and the images of the deities appear as the do in the script. Without Śrīkhaṇḍyā's explanation (as provided in the script), the sequence of events in the film makes no sense, and the significance of feeding the three children is completely left up to the audience's interpretation. This is one of several scenes in *Dharmātmā* that have been noticeably disrupted by the edits that were carried out to please the Censor Board. To the unknowing viewer, the flow the narrative feels mysteriously interrupted, as indeed it is.

After the meal, the *mahant* stops two of the untouchable men as they walk home and points out that Eknāth had actually invited the brahmans to eat first. He plants doubts in their minds about Eknāth's true allegiance and challenges the untouchable men to see what would happen if they invite Eknāth to eat at their homes. The men go home and discuss it with other untouchables. An argument heats up among them, but everyone becomes silent when Jāī arrives. She had picked up on enough of their conversation to get the idea that she ought to invite Eknāth, so she then sets off to do it, despite the protests of the other untouchables. In the meantime, the *mahant* tells his disciples to spread news preemptively that Eknāth is going to eat at an untouchable's home.

When Jāī arrives at Eknāth's home, she gleefully jokes around with Eknāth and Girijā, which annoys Haripaṇḍit all the more. Haripaṇḍit tries to reprimand her, pointing out the social chasm that he insists should stand between her as a Mahār and them as brahmans. But Jāī takes

[138] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 21.

this in stride, pointing out that Eknāth had taught her that caste is unimportant. When she teases Haripaṇḍit about not giving her an obvious, physical reason for the difference between their castes, he becomes enraged and slaps her. Everyone including Haripaṇḍit himself is shocked by this, and Jāī recoils, now taking his speech about caste difference to heart. Eknāth tries to comfort Jāi, but she responds by repeating the essence of Haripaṇḍit's words: "I'm a Mahār. You are brahmans. Our home is on top of a rubbish heap (*ukirḍā*). Our clothes are all tattered and torn. Mother and Father have to do filthy work in the dung and muck. We have only stale *capātti*s (flatbread) to eat. No, no, brahmans and Mahārs are not alike. And I was going to invite you to our home to eat. I was sure that you'd come. But you're a brahman. How could you eat at a Mahār's home? Oh God, oh God…"[139] She starts to cry, and Eknāth tries again to comfort her. He tells her that he will indeed come to eat at her home, and after giving some resistance at first she accepts his word and quickly transforms from an image of utter despair to one of unrestrained joy.[140] She sets off to inform her parents, dancing through the streets and singing "tomorrow Eknāth is coming to eat at our home" as she goes.

As the news spreads, the town is in an uproar. Eknāth prepares to depart for Jāī's home and says a quick prayer, "God, you are behind me, protecting." At that moment, Śrīkhaṇḍyā, who is standing behind Eknāth, suddenly transforms into Viṣṇu and holds out his hand over Eknāth in a sign of blessing.[141] Eknāth departs. Then, superimposed on the image of Viṣṇu is a slightly transparent image of Eknāth, who walks to a couch and sits down while Viṣṇu watches

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[139] Ibid., 30.

[140] As dramatic as this scene is, the performances in it are regrettably uneven. The child actress (named Vasantī) who plays Jāī noticeably forces her exaggerated displays of emotion, particularly as they flip quickly from playfulness to grief to joy. In contrast, Bālgandharva (Eknāth) appears nearly void of emotion in most of the scene. When he delivers the line the he will join Jāī for a meal (which one would think is a high point in the film), he is looking uninterestedly off into the distance rather than directly at Jāī.

[141] This scene occurs at 1:07:10-48 in the film.

him. The image of Eknāth becomes opaque, and the image of Viṣṇu fades, revealing Śrīkhaṇḍyā standing in the same place. The gist of these visual changes is that while Eknāth goes to eat at Jāī's home, God takes on the form of Eknāth and sits at home.

As we have seen many times in the hagiographical and biographical literature, this story is very unstable. Its occurrence in *Dharmātmā* is no less so. Kāḷe's original script mentions nothing about a second Eknāth and in this way is similar to Bhāgvat's innovatively unambiguous rendering of narrative – Eknāth simply eats at the untouchables' home. By comparing the film with the script, it is obvious that the scene with Eknāth, Viṣṇu and a second Eknāth image was added later. It is not in the script.[142] Also, Prabhat Studio's official correspondence with the Censor Board mentions this scene but conveniently glosses over a vital detail by noting only generally that the *BhL* story involves Viṣṇu taking on the form of Eknāth so that people see two Eknāths in two places at the same time. The Prabhat letter neglects to mention that the film does not in fact adhere to the *BhL* story completely (in which Eknāth stays home and God eats at the untouchables' home), but instead significantly and clearly portrays Eknāth himself dining with untouchables.[143] Even in a film that completely revolves around the issue of social equality, the idea of Eknāth eating with untouchables was still controversial.

As Eknāth walks through town toward the Mahār neighborhood, all of the townsfolk try (and utterly fail) to hide their overwhelming curiosity. Śrīkhaṇḍyā follows behind and is stopped by one *śāstrī* who hesitatingly and self-consciously asks, "So….. Eknāth has gone out all dressed up today into the hot sun….. Does he have a special invitation somewhere?" Śrīkhaṇḍyā responds in typical form, "Special? He has an invitation to a place that until today no brahman

[142] For the sake of reference, iff this short scene had appeared in the script, it would have been included between scenes 29 and 30 as they were printed. K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 32.

[143] "Pariśiṣṭa 2 (Official Letter from Prabhat Studios to Secretary of Bombay Board of Film Censors)," in *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, ed. Ke. Nārāyaṇ Kāḷe, et al. (Mumbaī: Pāpyular Prakāśan, 1982), 62-63.

has ever been invited." Another man then asks, "Is Eknāth truly going to eat at the Mahārs' home?" Śrīkhaṇḍyā responds by playing on his words, "What else? How is it possible to eat falsely, sir?"[144]

Eknāth eats in the Mahārs' (surprisingly spacious) home, and people from around the town see him. A brief scene appears in which some people also see Eknāth sitting at home – a scene was added after the original film was finished. So the rest of the film proceeds without any reference to the dual image, and the *mahant* does not deal with any ambiguity about where Eknāth actually was as he prepares his schemes. This is another instance in which the Censor Board's interference disrupted the smooth narrative of the film.

Eknāth expresses his gratitude to Rāṇū, who had been concerned that Eknāth may not feel comfortable in his simple, inauspicious (*amaṅgal*) home. Eknāth says, "Rāṇū, you are inauspicious? Actually I feel that your hut is an auspicious mother's home (*māherghar*).[145] Rāṇū, if every Mahār kept this clean and pure, then the distinction between Mahārs and brahmans would automatically disappear (*āpoāp nāhisā hoīl*)."[146] Rāṇū turns to his fellow Mahārs asks if they can implement what Eknāth just said, and they agree that the next day they will clean up the neighborhood. This dialogue is not present in the hagiographical records, although the sentiment of it accords with some earlier attempts (e.g., Mahīpati's *BhL* and Pāṅgārkar's book) to justify Eknāth's close interaction with this particular untouchable on the basis of his extraordinarily pure conduct and clean lifestyle. The impulse to clean up the whole

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[144] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 32.

[145] The notion of *māherghar* (home of a married woman's parents) is frequently used in Marathi literature and culture to connote a place where one feels truly at home, aside from where one normally lives. This derives from the custom of a married woman returning to her parents' home at least once per year (usually for the celebration of Lakṣmī Pūjan in August/September), whereas she otherwise would live with her husband and in-laws.

[146] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 34.

Mahār neighborhood is utterly novel, however, and as Novetzke rightly notes, this is one of the aspects of *Dharmātmā* that clearly reflects Gandhi's social campaigns.[147]

The *mahant*, his followers, and the main political power in town (the *inamdar*) all try to figure out how to effectively deal with Eknāth. Some of the Mahārs hear of this and come to the meeting as well. Tempers rise as the Mahārs insist on asking why Eknāth should be punished, but the *mahant* and *ināmdār* only feel that the Mahārs have become too assertive. The *ināmdār* threatens to punish the Mahārs as they all owe him money, and some of the Mahārs become angry that this indebtedness is also an injustice. The Mahārs threaten to resist violently, and the *ināmdār* has them forcibly removed from the meeting.[148]

After Eknāth eats with the untouchables and has been put out of caste (a surprisingly underwhelming event), Haripaṇḍit finally decides to leave and consequently (albeit reluctantly) joins the *mahant* and his followers. Eknāth wishes him well, and the *mahant* is extremely pleased. The film suddenly cuts to the Mahār neighborhood, where they are cleaning up as Eknāth recommended. The *ināmdār* follows through on his earlier threat and arrives with troops to remove the Mahārs from their land. Eknāth apparently hears of the trouble and comes to the place, but the *mahant* tells his staff-wielding minions to attack Eknāth before he can arrive. Śrīkhaṇḍyā rushes to the scene and throws himself on Eknāth's body to protect him, and both are beaten badly. The *mahant* smiles and watches until the crowd dissipates and some townsfolk carry the unconscious body of Eknāth back home. Obviously, none of these events have any precedent in the hagiographical record.

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[147] C.L. Novetzke, "The Brahmin Double," 247. For more on Gandhi's views on how clean lifestyles would spur on social acceptance of untouchables, see Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Removal of Untouchability* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1954), 175.

[148] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 37.

The Censor Board's complaints left their mark on this scene as well. According to the script shows, the scene was supposed to begin with Eknāth already in the Mahār neighborhood, singing and overseeing their cleaning. In the script, when the *ināmdār* arrives and demands that the Mahārs all pay their debts or lose their homes, Eknāth offers to give up his own house in order to save the Mahārs. The *ināmdār* refuses, tension escalates, and some of the Mahārs take up arms and begin fighting with the *ināmdār'*s men. As a scuffle breaks out, Eknāth steps in and tells the *ināmdār* firmly, "Stop! Ināmdār Sāheb, get out of here and save your life."[149] None of this made it into the film, since the Censor Board demanded that Eknāth not be depicted in the Mahār neighborhood while they clean. I strongly suspect that the Board's greater unspoken concern related to the image of Eknāth's presence among the Mahārs as they start to revolt.

The film's final scenes are unmistakably similar to the conclusion of Ṭhākre's play, although no one has ever pointed this out. A religious authority from Kāśī arrives in Paithan at the behest of the *mahant*, and a public trial for Eknāth takes place.[150] Before the trial Eknāth speaks with some Mahārs and says that the brahmans have done him a favor (*upakār*) by putting him out of caste, as it better enables him to serve the Mahars.[151] Immediately thereafter, one of the mahant's disciples arrives and tells Eknāth to come to the *maṭh* and attend the court case led by the learned *śāstrī* from Kāśī.[152]

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[149] Ibid., 45-46.

[150] Since the film is following Ṭhākre's play, it would be timely to recall that Ṭhākre was likely borrowing the idea of a Varanasi-based judge from the hagiographical stories of Eknāth being tested in Varanasi because he wrote a Marathi commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

[151] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 49.

[152] Ibid., 51. One of the other demands of the Censor Board was the original name for the *śāstri*, Śaṅkarācārya Jagadguru, be changed, probably because of its association with the four living *śaṅkarācārya*s who are regarded by many Hindus as the seats of orthodoxy. Consequently, in the film this figure is named Yati Prajñānanda Sarasvati instead.

Kāḷe obviously borrowed extensively from Ṭhākre's play to write the final scenes of *Dharmātmā*.[153] Kāḷe's script specifies where the brahmans and untouchables should sit in the hall and where Eknāth should stand; these are almost exactly the specifications in Ṭhākre's play. The case proceeds in relatively the same fashion as well, although in the film the *mahant* begins directly by accusing Eknāth of corrupting the *dharma* by mingling and eating with untouchables (unlike in Ṭhākre's play, where the impurity issue arises only after the *śāstrī* inquires about Eknāth's Marathi commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*). Eknāth argues that while he has regularly mixed with untouchables, this interaction is not at all destructive of religion. Instead, the opposite is the case, since "compassion is the foundation of *dharma*."[154] As in Ṭhākre's play, the *śāstrī* finds himself unable to argue with Eknāth's reasoning. Eknāth points out that he has written about this in his "book" (which he does not specify further) and offers to read some of it aloud for the *śāstrī*.[155] The *śāstrī* agrees to listen, and Eknāth starts to sing verses from a text that lies before him. These verses are not in any of Eknāth's writings; they appear to have been composed for the film itself:

> Hail mighty, excellent *svāmī*. I sincerely touch my head to your feet.
> Have mercy on this helpless one (*anāthā*, here Eknāth) and give *darśan* now.
> I am without faith, devotion, knowledge or renunciation.
> I have not memorized the *śāstra*s or studied the Vedas.
> To not cause suffering but instead happiness – this is called *ahiṁsa.*
> Having understood this first virtue, listen to the qualities of truth.
> There are many high and low *jātī*s, but one shouldn't say, "One of them is mine."
> Similarly many towns lie on the Gaṅgā's banks, but no town claims the river as its own.

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[153] I suspect that Ṭhākre may have commented on this case of unacknowledged borrowing, but I have not searched.

[154] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 53. This sounds very similar to what Keśavsvāmī says about Eknāth in his *Eknāthcaritra.* "The superiority of compassion (*dayā*) is to be established at the head of all *dharma* – this was the mark of Śrī Nāth's own nature." (21:40) I find no reason to think that Kāḷe had Keśavsvāmī in mind in this case; the idea that compassion is vital to *dharma* is probably common enough that it could arise in multiple places on its own.

[155] On this point the film differs from Ṭhākre's play, in which the court case opened with the complaint against Eknāth writing a Marathi commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and then moving to his interaction with untouchables.

> The food in the left hand is given to the right hand,
> Who gives and who receives? It is the one Soul who is in all beings.

Eknāth stops singing briefly to comment with a few pithy sentences: "Without love, it is impossible for people to come together. Without people coming together, society (*samāj*) will never arise. And if there is no society, then what purpose would there be for *dharma*?" He resumes singing. "Understand that food, clothing, wealth and honor are only worldly yearnings. Behaving with affection toward all beings – this is everyone's innate duty."[156]

As Eknāth sings the final verses, the rhythm speeds up, and the audience (including the *śāstrī* and Haripaṇḍit) break out in huge smiles and appear ready to swoon because of their rapturous enlightenment. When Eknāth finishes, the *śāstrī* jumps up, embraces him and says, "Eknāth, you truly are a Mahātmā." He reprimands Haripaṇḍit for being ashamed of Eknāth and chastises the *mahant* for summoning him needlessly from Kāśī. The *mahant*'s former allies and disciples suddenly turn on him and chase him out of town. The film concludes with Haripaṇḍit reconciling himself to Eknāth, asking Jāī for her forgiveness, and promising to treat her as a genuine sister.[157]

Judging from news reports in film magazines regarding *Dharmātmā*, there was a great sense of anticipation about this film, but after it finally passed the Censor Board and was shown, it met with rather mixed reviews. A number of scenes suffered from the last-minute editing that the Censor Board required, consequently disrupting the narrative and making the film appear less professionally produced than it actually was. Remarkably, the film's treatment of untouchability seems to have created no major problems for audiences or the reviewers, although the

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[156] K.N. Kāḷe et al., *Dharmātmā: Citrakathā*, 53-54.

[157] Interestingly, Haripaṇḍit's reconciliation with Jāī occurs only in the film and not in the script. I do not know why.

descendants of Eknāth in Paithan at the time apparently filed lawsuits against Prabhat Films and Kāḷe for the liberties that they took in depicting Eknāth's life.[158] The casting for the film was rather problematic, particularly as Haripaṇḍit was several inches taller and looked a bit older than his mother. This age disparity was exacerbated by her tendency to refer to Haripaṇḍit tenderly as "Bāḷ" (child or baby). The child actress who played Jāī, however, was widely praised, as was V. Shantaram's directing.[159] English language newspapers had generally quite positive reviews as well.[160] It appears to have run for at a couple months after it was released, so although the film was not a great success, it was certainly not a failure.[161]

The main problem with the film was Bālgandharva, who clearly struggled as a film actor. One articulate reviewer described Bālgandharva's performance in *Dharmātmā* as so bland that it was as if the film lacked a main character, like "Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark."[162] The assistant director of *Dharmātmā*, Śāntārām Āṭhavaḷe, wrote extensively in his memoirs about Bālgandharva's plight.[163] He said that Bālgandharva was quite uncomfortable playing a male role; he even found it difficult to sing freely while wearing a moustache.[164] He had trouble adjusting to the way that a film is produced, as a single scene would be shot several times in a

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[158] Pramod Kale, Personal communication, May 27, 2010. I have not researched legal records to confirm the details of these cases.

[159] "Dharmātmyāce Guṇadharma," *Kesarī*, December 20 1935, 10; Ś.N. Ok, "Pariśiṣṭa 1 (Reprinted review of *Dharmātmā*)," 59; Ś. Āṭhavaḷe, "Prabhātcā Dharmātmā," 232.

[160] Rachel Dwyer provides excerpts from four reviews. R. Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*, 75-76.

[161] A news article printed three weeks after the film's release stated that the film was being shown daily in Pune, Bombay and Kolhāpūr, and due to popular demand it was slated to be shown elsewhere in Maharashtra for at least a few more weeks. "Film News," *Kiran Weekly*, December 28 1935, 21.

[162] Ś.N. Ok, "Pariśiṣṭa 1 (Reprinted review of *Dharmātmā*)," 60.

[163] Ś. Āṭhavaḷe, "Prabhātcā Dharmātmā," 228-240. This original source of this article was Śāntārām Āṭhavaḷe, *Prabhātkāla* (Puṇe: Vhīṇas Prakāśan, 1965).

[164] Ś. Āṭhavaḷe, *Prabhātkāla*, 233.

row before moving on to another scene.[165] He also regularly lost his place and could not effectively remember his lines. Āṭhavaḷe resorted to painting his lines in large characters on sheets of plywood so that Bālgandharva could refer to them while acting.[166] In addition to the extra technical trouble this created, it deflated Bālgandharva's self-confidence. Āṭhavaḷe had seen Bālgandharva act many times in plays, and he was well aware of the actor's great talent. After working with Bālgandharva in *Dharmātmā*, Āṭhavḷe confessed that he was "pained" (*vyākuḷ*) to see how much the star had fallen.[167]

Bālgandharva's mediocre performance impacted the reception of the film all the more because Prabhat had been marketing it exclusively and extensively as the great actor's first appearance in film and in a male role. Advertisements for the film featured Balgandharva prominently. Although the ads always depicted other cast members in costume, Balgandharva appeared in them dressed in a fine turban and stately long coat – never as Eknāth.[168] Prabhat did this intentionally to generate suspense and curiosity about how he would eventually appear in the film.[169] Even if Bālgandharva had performed well, he may not have been able to live up to all of the hype.

A message of social equality runs throughout the film. *Dharmātmā* reinforced the peculiar combination of the *BhV*'s version of the *śrāddha* meal (involving untouchables rather than Muslims) with the *BhL*'s version of Eknāth eating with the untouchables as the standard social memory. The film includes elements of Gandhi's campaign against untouchability, and

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[165] B. Vāṭve, *Ek Hotī Prabhātnagarī*, 104.

[166] Ś. Āṭhavaḷe, "Prabhātcā Dharmātmā," 235.

[167] Ibid.

[168] These advertisements can be found in December 1935 issues of *Kiran Weekly* and almost certainly in other film-related publications and newspapers at the time.

[169] B. Vāṭve, *Ek Hotī Prabhātnagarī*, 105.

the emphasis on cleanliness in relation to caste status in one scene is conspicuous. It is also striking that Kāḷe's original script for the film was more radical and unambiguously egalitarian than the film eventually was allowed to be.

Dharmātmā poses some new and important factors in our consideration of how Eknāth's social outlook and inter-caste relations were depicted. First, it is obvious from the advertisements, pre-screening announcements and reviews of the film that economics and marketability were major factors in how the film was produced and brought to the screen. Viewers were enticed into the theater to see this film not because it was about Eknāth and untouchability, but because of Bālgandharva. The director was well aware that he needed to supplement the original script sometimes with scenes (such as the dancing *apsara*s) that would keep fickle viewers' attention. It would be naïve to read too much significance into the film and script without also taking into account the economic factors that allowed the film to come into existence.

In the same vein, the issue of social equality in *Dharmātmā* was explicitly linked to religious ideas and themes, but more than specifically religious appeals, the dialogues and messages of the film seem to fit into a more general, non-sectarian framework of "public spirituality," for lack of a better term. There is nothing overly harsh and challenging in the film; viewers are not asked to critically rethink their positions and behavior. The calm spiritual messages, such as the ones that Eknāth enunciates at the end of the film, are generally affirmative and do not disrupt the viewers' sense of being engrossed in the film. Eknāth, untouchability and social equality become, in a word, entertainment.

***Bhāva Toci Dev* (1964)**

Presentations of *Dharmātmā* were limited to some major cities that had film theaters in 1935 and 1936, and it played for no more than three months, after which the film was largely neglected until its re-release on VCD. In contrast, the play *Bhāva Toci Dev* was performed more than 1,500 times over the course of a decade, mostly in small Maharashtrian towns and venues across the Maharashtrian countryside. Although one would be hard pressed to find data to confirm it statistically, it is highly probable that *Bhāva Toci Dev* reached a much larger (albeit more scattered) audience than *Dharmātmā*. Despite its popularity, or perhaps because its popularity was so peculiarly focused outside urban centers, *Bhāva Toci Dev* has been completely forgotten or overlooked by scholars who have written about Eknāth.[170]

The play's author, Gopāḷ Govind (alias Nānāsāheb) Śirgopīkar literally grew up around theatrical drama. His father Govind Rāmcandra (alias Aṇṇasāheb or Śāmrāv) founded a children's theater troupe in 1923 and staged performances in Kolhāpūr and neighboring towns.[171] The troupe struggled financially until he recognized that mythological plays about deities and miracles were consistently profitable. In 1932 Śirgopīkar founded a new troupe that included adult actors – the Ānand Saṅgīt Maṇḍaḷī (roughly, the Blissful Music Group). The following year they became famous for their musical play about Kṛṣṇa, *Gokuḷcā Cor* (the Thief of Gokula),

[170] I must express my immense gratitude to Śaśikalā and Rajaṇī Śirgopīkar for sharing with me their memories of Gopāḷ Govind Śirgopīkar – their father and husband, respectively, and the author of *Bhāva Toci Dev*. They also provided me with a printed copy of the play and rich information about the fascinating inter-caste, inter-religious troupe that performed it. Without their generous assistance, I would have found very little of this information on my own. I am also grateful to Manohar Kulkarṇī and the staff at the Bhārat Nāṭya Saṁśodhan Mandir in Pune for bringing me into contact with the Śirgopīkars.

[171] Anant Hari Limaye, *Sahyādricī Śikhare*, vol. 2 (Puṇe: Ināmdār Bandhu Prakāśan, 1963), 53.

which the troupe went on to perform more than 3,000 times in the next three decades.[172] Govind Śirgopīkar's son Gopāḷ therefore grew up immersed and active in theater, although his father required him to finish his college degree in physics before he could formally join the troupe in 1947. By that time the elder Śirgopīkar had already developed the troupe into a disciplined, fiscally sound business with well-established traveling routes and a history of performances in nearly 600 towns throughout Maharashtra and Goa.[173] Gopāḷ Śirgopīkar inherited both the established troupe and good business practices from his father.[174] From 1950 onwards, the troupe was in Gopāḷ's hands.[175]

To appreciate properly how this play about Eknāth was received, it is necessary to understand how Ānand Saṅgīt Maṇḍaḷī (ASM) operated. Unlike drama companies who were based in urban centers like Bombay and Pune (e.g., Bālgandharva's old company), ASM was always on the road. Instead of having their own theater building, the troupe owned three large trucks, a custom-made cloth tent that could seat one thousand people, an electric generator and waterproof containers to carry costumes and props as they traveled.[176] During the four months of monsoon season (roughly the end of May through September) the troupe would stay mostly at Śirgopīkar's home in Kolhāpūr in order to rest, write new plays, construct new sets and rehearse

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[172] Ibid., 63. According to the troupe's meticulous records, in 1934 alone the troupe performed *Gokuḷcā Cor* 130 times and earned 65,000 rupees.

[173] Ibid., 55.

[174] The two Śirgopīkars' discipline in keeping business records was apparently held in very high regard. A long newspaper article published in 1964 recommends this approach in detail to other drama organizations. (This article was given to me by Śaśikalā Śirgopīkar, and unfortunately the page number was not recorded). Vā. Ya. Gāḍgīḷ, "Jamākharcācā Tol Sāmbhāḷlā Mhaṇje Nāṭyasaṁsthā Jagte – Śirgopīkar," *Maharashtra Times*, November 22 1964.

[175] A.H. Limaye, *Sahyādricī Śikhare*.

[176] V.Y. Gāḍgīḷ, "Jamākharcācā Tol Sāmbhāḷlā Mhaṇje Nāṭyasaṁsthā Jagte – Śirgopīkar," *Maharashtra Times*, November 22 1964.

intensively.[177] For most of the rest of the year the troupe was on tour mainly in rural Maharashtra. The Śirgopīkars tended to eschew urban areas in favor of smaller towns where no other developed forms of entertainment would compete with them for audiences. Over time, several "lines" – commercially viable touring routes– became standard for the troupe in various parts of Maharashtra.[178] Each year the troupe would choose a different line (so that a given town would not be revisited until at least eight years later),[179] and at each new town they would clear a field, set up their tent and put on seven or eight performances (usually) over the course of a couple weeks before packing up and moving on to another town. Since most of the towns where they performed did not have other organized forms of entertainment, news of ASM's performances would travel quickly through word of mouth (thus minimizing advertising costs), and people traveled in from miles around to attend. The troupe's schedule also took into account the harvest times of various crops (rice, mangoes, millet, etc.), since Śirgopīkar knew from experience that farmers and townsfolk would be in a celebratory mood and have money to spend at those times.[180]

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[177] Śaśikalā spoke fondly of these days, and she described her father as a very open-minded man who welcomed people from diverse backgrounds into the troupe and their home. By living so closely with the troupe for so long, they felt like a family to her. Rajaṇī agreed that the atmosphere was quite creative and friendly, but she noted that so many people living in the house also created an immense amount of work (cooking and cleaning) for the women at that time. Śaśikalā and Rajaṇī Śirgopīkar, Personal communication, February 16, 2010.

[178] During one of our meetings, Śaśikalā called one of the former drivers for the troupe in order to reconstruct a list of some of these lines. The section of lines that they remembered together at that time were: 1) Nāgpūr-Porlā-Mālāpūr-Himbirjā-Lākhāḍūr- Brahmapūrī-Cāṇḍā-Bhāṇḍār-Godhīya, 2) Ahmadnagar-Śrīrāmpūr-Veḷāpūr-Tākḷībhān-Rāhurī-Kopargāv, 3) Aurangabad-Nāndeḍ-Bīḍ-Jālnā-Usmānābād-Mūrtījāpūr-Hyderabad, 4) Sātārā-Kolhāpūr-Karhāḍ-Beḷgāv, 5) Māvarḍā (Goa)-Bāsko-Maḍvāv-Śivḷī-Sākḷī-Ḍicoḷī-Pañjī, 6) Kārvā-Aṅkoḷā-Hublī-Ratnagirī-Māḷvaṇ, 7) Muruḍ-Cipḷūṇ-Drevadaṇḍ-Devapad-Guhāghar. These are all names of cities and towns that were memorable as landmarks; most of the performances were in smaller towns and locales between these places. The only area of Maharashtra that appears conspicuously missing to me is the northwestern region (Khāndeś) including Nāśik and Dhuḷe, but the aforementioned list is not precise and exhaustive (so perhaps a line in that region was forgotten or overlooked). Śaśikalā and Rajaṇī Śirgopīkar, Personal communication, March 12, 2010.

[179] V.Y. Gāḍgīḷ, "Jamākharcācā Tol Sāmbhāḷlā Mhaṇje Nāṭyasaṁsthā Jagte – Śirgopīkar," *Maharashtra Times*, November 22 1964.

[180]Śaśikalā and Rajaṇī Śirgopīkar, Personal communication, February 16, 2010.

ASM's plays such as *Bhāva Toci Dev* were unmistakably entertainment, and the survival of any given play depended on whether or not it could attract audiences. Unlike the teacher Śirvaḷkar who did not rely on writing dramas for income, and the journalist Ṭhākre who received support from his political allies, the playwright Śirgopīkar (like the artists at Prabhat Films) had no other source of income. Thus the marketability of their production was paramount. Many aspects of *Bhāva Toci Dev* were designed to appeal to a wide audience who did not necessarily have much formal education. Comedy and slapstick are essential to the play, and it contained many songs and dances. *Bhāva Toci Dev* was also renowned for its "trick scenes." Śirgopīkar's prior education in physics was especially useful as he designed illusions to surprise and captivate his audiences.

Both the elder and younger Śirvaḷkar recognized that mythological and devotional plays were well-attended in the venues where they performed. As mentioned earlier, the elder Śirgopīkar's play about episodes in Kṛṣṇa's life was immensely successful and profitable; it was in fact the most successful of any play in the troupe's repertoire for over five decades. The younger Śirgopīkar penned a few dramas at the start of his career, but he too only attracted sizable audiences when he started writing plays about the Marathi *sant*s. The play about Eknāth (*Bhāva Toci Dev*) was his first and most successful effort, and he both performed in it (in the role of Śrīkhaṇḍyā) and directed it over 1,500 times, starting in 1964. Śirgopīkar also wrote relatively successful plays about the *sant*s Tukārām (1970 with 1,000 performances), Jñāndev (1978 with 1,000 performances) and Nāmdev (1984 with 500 performances).[181] Later in his career, he collaborated with other troupes in urban venues on a few comedies, and he designed a creative educational play, *Parīkṣepūrvīcyā Sāt Rātrī* (The Seven Nights Before the Exam), that

[181] Śaśikalā and Rajaṇī Śirgopīkar, Personal communication, February 16, 2010.

sought to teach schoolchildren about science through comedy and song.[182] From 1975 onwards, the troupe relinquished its marathon itineraries across Maharashtra and settled into performing mostly in Bombay and Pune.[183]

Bhāva Toci Dev consists of four connected acts and a limited cast of characters: Eknāth, his wife Girijā, Śrīkhaṇḍyā, Rāṇū Mahār and his daughter Rādhā, and two invented brahman antagonists. The role of Rāṇū was distantly inspired by Rāṇyā Mahār in Mahīpati's *BhL* but more immediately Rāṇū in *Dharmātmā.* Rādhā appears to be a teenage version of *Dharmātmā*'s Jāī. The two antagonistic brahmans are Vicitraśāstrī, who claims to be the leader of Paithan's brahman community, and Vicitraśāstrī's enthusiastic but unhelpful disciple Lokhaṇḍyā. Although these two regularly try to create trouble for Eknāth, they come across as comically arrogant, backward-thinking and ultimately ineffective bullies. Even their names inspire ridicule – *vicitra* means "strange," and *lokhaṇḍa* means "iron" (in contrast to the more pleasant sandalwood (*śrīkhaṇḍa*) from which Śrīkhaṇḍyā's derives). When the two appear together, Lokhaṇḍyā eagerly tries to support his guru but usually ends up asking innocent questions that undercut Vicitraśāstrī's position and leave him exasperated. Eknāth and Girijā are both relatively staid characters, but everyone else frequently cracks jokes, teases each other and generally maintains a very light-hearted tone for the play. The content of the play only loosely builds on the traditional story about Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home (Rāṇū and Rādhā, in this case). Aside from brief references to some other traditional stories, most of the play revolves around scenes that Śirgopīkar created either for comedic effect or for his famous trick scenes.

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[182] A.H. Limaye, *Sahyādricī Śikhare*, 66.

[183] Śaśikalā and Rajaṇī Śirgopīkar, Personal communication, March 12, 2010.

The first act opens with Vicitraśāstrī and Lokhaṇḍyā coming to Eknāth's home to air their grievances. Eknāth is out taking his morning bath in the river, so Girijā offers the men a cup of milk while they wait. This sets up a long, humorous conversation between Vicitraśāstrī and Lokhaṇḍyā about whether they would maintain ritual purity if they drank this milk from Girijā, whether the milk may have ritually unclean water in it (which Vicitraśāstrī insists that he can see), whether the milk-producing cow had ingested ritually unclean water, and so on.[184] The brahmans eventually decide to leave, and Rādhā and Śrīkhaṇḍyā enter the scene. Rādhā wants to hang a bell at Eknāth's home for use before his daily worship, but she is too short to reach the ceiling. She eventually persuades Śrīkhaṇḍyā to get down on his hands and knees so that she can stand on his back. As she hangs the bell, her father Rāṇū arrives and scolds her for letting her feet touch Śrīkhaṇḍyā.[185] He insists that she touch her head to Śrīkhaṇḍyā's feet out of respect and apology, but she impetuously demands that she will do so only after Śrīkhaṇḍyā touches her feet. Eknāth appears, learns about the situation, and thanks Rādhā for hanging the bell. Rāṇū protests that she has committed a great sin, as "our" (untouchables') feet ought never to touch a brahman. Eknāth chides him, "Rāṇū, innocent devotion doesn't know small or great. A baby may lovingly kick its mother; is this a sin?"[186]

Later in the scene, without any apparent provocation, Rāṇū reveals to Eknāth that he has always wanted to invite a brahman to his place to eat but was afraid to ask.[187] Eknāth responds that he and Girijā will gladly come and fulfill his wish. Vicitraśāstrī and Lokhaṇḍyā return at

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[184] Gopāḷ Govind Śirgopīkar, *Bhāva Toci Dev* (Puṇe: Vi. Ra. Paracure, 1964), 3.

[185] Ibid., 14-17.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Ibid., 21. I do not understand why Śirgopīkar chose to phrase Rāṇū's question in this vague manner. Rāṇū does not ask Eknāth specifically, which runs oddly counter to both the traditional story and the logic of the narrative, as Rāṇū does not appear to be familiar with any other brahmans.

that moment and denounce everything that is taking place in Eknāth's home. Vicitraśāstrī suddenly recognizes that he is standing on ground that he considers impure due to the presence of Rāṇū and Rādhā. He sends Lokhaṇḍyā to fetch water to sprinkle on the ground to purify it, and at that moment Śrīkhaṇḍyā happens to arrive, carrying water from the river. Vicitraśāstrī asks him if this is Gaṅgā (Godāvarī) water, and Śrīkhaṇḍyā replies that actually both Gaṅgā and Yamunā (rivers represented as goddesses here) were busy so he had to fetch Sarasvatī water instead.[188] An Indian audience would know that fetching Sarasvatī water is quite strange, since the Sarasvatī River is regarded as invisible. Vicitraśāstrī is very impressed, however, and he asks Śrīkhaṇḍyā for a bucket of Sarasvatī water to sprinkle on the ground.

Lokhaṇḍyā takes the bucket from Śrīkhaṇḍyā, but when he tips it over, nothing comes out. This is the first of Śirgopīkar's trick scenes, which involves a bucket with a trap inside to hold the water if tipped from one direction but release it if tipped from the opposite side. Śrīkhaṇḍyā says, "Oh, Sarasvatī must have vanished; she won't appear for just anyone."[189] He then takes the bucket and of course is able to pour out the water. Rādhā comes near and asks if she can wash her hands, and Śrīkhaṇḍyā pours the same water on her hands. This angers Vicitraśāstrī and Lokhaṇḍyā, who proceed to condemn Eknāth, demanding that he undergo purification. Vicitraśāstrī concludes, "This brahman of southern Kāśī (a common epithet for the town of Paithan) has become corrupt. Now the destruction of the universe (*pralaya*) will begin." Eknāth responds and concludes the act by saying, "*Pralaya*! No. Now it's time for the

[188] The Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī are conventionally regarded as the *triveṇī* ("three rivers") whose confluence is said to effectively purify one who touches it, thereby releasing them from the cycle of rebirth. The Gaṅgā and Yamunā are both physical rivers in northern India. The Sarasvatī is understood to be an invisible, spiritual river.

[189] G.G. Śirgopīkar, *Bhāva Toci Dev*, 24.

upliftment of the world. God, may my hands do service to promote the common right (*samān hakkā*) of all beings."[190]

The second act is roughly based on the traditional story of Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home, although Śirgopīkar embellishes the story extensively. As Rāṇū and Rādhā prepare for Eknāth and Girijā to arrive (in this play Girijā accompanies Eknāth to the meal), Vicitraśāstrī and Lokhaṇḍyā pay a visit and casually warn Rāṇū that if Eknaath actually eats at Rāṇū's home, the brahmans of Paithan may become so offended that they would violently attack Eknāth afterwards. Rāṇū takes this to heart and discusses it at length with Rādhā, but Śrīkhaṇḍyā eventually passes by and reassures them that nothing could dissuade Eknāth from coming. Eknāth and Girijā eventually arrive, and to Rāṇū's protests Eknāth responds, "Although people think that I am doing *adharma* by eating at your home, I am actually doing it in order to awaken Janārdana among the people."[191] The second half of the sentence – "to awaken Janārdana among the people" (*janateṁtlyā janārdanālā jāg karṇyākaratāṁc mī to kartoṁ āhe*) – clearly builds on earlier iterations of *janī janārdana* (God in/among the people), but the meaning here is different and honestly somewhat confusing. If I understand Śirgopīkar's script correctly, he intends Eknāth to say that he wants to awaken a sense of God or a sense of the divine in people (as a sort of general evocation of spirituality). This is a unique statement in the whole play, however, as Eknāth never refers to Janārdana again. Eknāth goes on to say that if his son Haripaṇḍit were open to Eknāth's way of thinking, he would even arrange a marriage between him and Rādhā.[192] Obviously, this statement is completely unprecedented; nowhere in

[190] Ibid., 31. This is the first occurrence of the word *hakkā* (right, as in human right) in any of the literature about Eknāth that we have reviewed.

[191] Ibid., 49.

[192] Ibid.

traditional stories on in the family histories that are known to me is there any reference of inter-caste marriage, much less a brahman-Mahār union. Śirgopīkar took immense liberty with the traditional stories when he wrote his play.

The meal proceeds happily. Vicitraśāstrī and Lokhaṇḍyā do indeed return to Rāṇū's home carrying sticks and try to create a commotion. Śrīkhaṇḍyā stands watch outside, however, and by arguing with them and using his own miraculous powers (being Kṛṣṇa, as he is), he prevents the brahmans from entering the home, and they go away frustrated. Interestingly, although Śirgopīkar clearly had no reservations about depicting miracles in his play, he chose not to include the commonly repeated miracle of Eknāth appearing in two places at once. Was this a difficult scene to portray on stage? Was Śirgopīkar extraordinarily bold in his portrayal of Eknāth? Did Śrīkhaṇḍyā's miraculous actions to ward off the antagonistic brahmans replace the miracle of the two Eknāths? Whatever Śirgopīkar's reasoning may have been, in this play Eknāth unambiguously eats with untouchables.

The events in Act Three are almost completely Śirgopīkar's creation. This act mainly allows the cast to perform various songs and *bhārūḍ*s that were composed by Eknāth. The premise of the act is that Vicitraśāstrī managed to dissuade the townsfolk from attending Eknāth's daily *kīrtan*. Rāṇū and Rādhā (who defied the boycott) arrive, and Rāṇū suggests that for a change Eknāth should take a break and be the audience while the rest of them perform.[193] So Rāṇū, Rādhā, Girijā and Śrīkhaṇḍyā all perform various songs for Eknāth, and Eknāth struggles to restrain himself from performing as well. Finally Rāṇū invites Eknāth to perform some songs – *gauḷaṇ*s – about Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd girls (*gopī*s), which are very popular

[193] Ibid., 53-54.

among rural Maharashtrians.[194] As Eknāth performs these five *gauḷaṇ*s, another trick scene occurs.

Shortly before Eknāth begins singing, Rādhā finds an excuse to leave the stage. When Eknāth starts singing, the actress who plays Rādhā comes on stage dressed in a traditional Maharashtrian nine-yard sari (longer than the common Indian five-yard sari and wrapped in a different way), with bangles on her arms and flowers in her hair. As Eknāth sings, she dances and represents the song's lyrics to the audience. (The rest of the cast does not regard her as Rādhā during this scene.) When one *gauḷaṇ* ends and the actress exits, Eknāth says a few sentences to introduce the next *gauḷaṇ*. In the brief period of Eknāth's monologue (around 20 seconds), the actress is back stage changing her outfit. When Eknāth starts his second *gauḷaṇ*, the actress comes out dressed in nine-yard sari of a different color, with a different blouse, different bangles and different flowers in her hair. This happens with each new *gauḷaṇ* – the actress returns to the stage wearing a completely different outfit. The audience would know that changing any sari (to say nothing of a nine-yard sari) so quickly would be inconceivable. That the actress accomplishes this in under 20 seconds four times in rapid succession was astounding, and audiences raved about it.[195]

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[194] *Gauḷan* (also *gavḷaṇ*) is a term for "milkmaid" and also refers to a set of songs that Eknāth composed, set in the mouths of *gopī*s who are longing for Kṛṣṇa. Unlike the rest of Eknāth's compositions, some *gauḷaṇ*s contain a slightly erotic character.

[195] One newspaper reviewer singled out this trick scene as the highlight of the whole play (which he also reviewed very positively), saying hyperbolically that his cameraman even struggled to keep up with the actresses' quick costume changes. "Bhav Toci Dev: An Excellent Drama," *Nagpur Times*, Nov 9 1966. Śaśikalā explained to me that the troupe practiced the outfit changes thousands of times and had timed each part of the change precisely. The actress began by wearing five different blouses, one on top of the other. The troupe had nine-yard saris custom made so that they could be clipped on and off, thereby foregoing the slow process of wrapping and unwrapping the sari. Separate assistants stood ready to change her bangles and flowers. Each time she came back stage to change, the assistants quickly carried out their sequence of changes that allotted, for example, only two seconds to change the bangles and two seconds to change the flowers. One assistant changed the readymade sari, while another helped the actress take off her outermost blouse. In less than 20 seconds, the actress could return to stage and dance again. The troupe was very proud of this scene. Śaśikalā Śirgopīkar, Personal communication, February 16, 2010.

The final act takes place in Eknāth's home. Two large wooden pillars stand in the middle of the stage. Śrīkhaṇḍyā says that he must depart, but before he goes he wants to sit and rest against one of the pillars. Just then a brahman man arrives from Dvārkā and says that he has come to take *darśan* of Kṛṣṇa, who is serving Eknāth under the name Śrīkhaṇḍyā. Everyone starts searching for Śrīkhaṇḍyā, but he has vanished. In a rather sudden turn of events, Eknāth mourns that Kṛṣṇa has gone and decides that the time has come for his own life to end so that he may be with Kṛṣṇa forever. He walks into the river, and voices off-stage chant calmly that Eknāth has drowned. The remaining characters are stunned, and Rāṇū asks what they will do now that Eknāth is no longer with them. A voice (belonging to Śrīkhaṇḍyā and therefore Kṛṣṇa) comes from one of the columns saying, "But Eknāth has not departed from among you. He has not left you." Kṛṣṇa then appears on one of the columns and says, "People, Eknāth has not left you but is now moving among you in book-form (*granthas-rūpānaṁ*). In book-form Eknāth has become immortal. Look, this is Eknāth." On the second column opposite the image of Kṛṣṇa, Eknāth appears with five placards bearing the names of his major compositions.[196] Thus the play concludes.

Newspaper reviews of *Bhāva Toci Dev* were quite positive.[197] One reviewer highlighted the fact that although the action of the play moved rather slowly, this allowed the cast to skillfully and vividly evoke various *rasa*s (sentiments) on stage.[198] Another reviewer was especially impressed by the sense of surprise and mystery that the trick scenes evoked; he found

[196] Ibid., 73-74. These images of Kṛṣṇa and Eknāth in the columns are trick scenes of some sort, but I do not know how they were accomplished, and I struggle to imagine even how exactly they appeared.

[197] Surely other newspaper reviews of this play must exist. I have not searched intensively for them.

[198] "Bhāva Toci Dev: Ek Sundar Nāṭyā – Ānand Saṅgīt Maṇḍaḷīcā Kharokhar Gaurav Viṣay," *unknown newspaper* 1966. This review was given to me by Śaśikalā Śirgopīkar but without full bibliographic details.

them quite appropriate representations of the miracles in stories about Eknāth.[199] Another found the play to be a "pleasing… combination of message, music and miracles." He praised the trick scenes, the uniformly excellent set, and fine performances by the cast.[200] Of course, these newspaper reviews represent the views of reporters in major cities (where the troupe performed only occasionally), and Śirgopīkar's troupe spent most of its time in rural areas. Although direct evidence of rural audiences' responses are impossible to know, the fact that *Bhāva Toci Dev* attracted enough paying viewers to merit being performed over 1,500 times indicates the play's popularity.

As was the case in *Dharmātmā*, marketability and entertainment are central to how *Bhāva Toci Dev* was written and performed. Śirgopīkar designed some of his scenes only in order to stage songs, dances and trick scenes. Consequently, relatively little of the traditional stories about Eknāth appear in this play. In keeping with a very clear pattern in depictions of Eknāth, the story of him eating at the untouchables' home is central in *Bhāva Toci Dev*. Strikingly, Śirgopīkar depicts this scene unambiguously, and elsewhere Eknāth comments that he would gladly arrange the marriage of his son (brahman) with Rāṇū's daughter (Mahār) if his son were willing. (Of course, this statement of hypothetical intention is a far cry from actually arranging the marriage). Eknāth, Girijā, Śrīkhaṇḍyā and Rādhā all interact throughout the play without regard for caste, and Eknāth's occasional statements about the unimportance of caste reinforce this impression. At some points Eknāth is shown trying to persuade Rāṇū of the irrelevance of caste. Unlike in *Dharmātmā*, Rāṇū never refers to Eknāth as a god. Despite the widespread assumption of socially egalitarianism in the play, however, there is no strong sense the audience

[199] Rājā Kārḷe, "Camatkārāśivāy... Namaskār Nāhīṁ!," *Loksatta* n.d. This citation also was given to me with incomplete bibliographic details.

[200] "Bhav Toci Dev: An Excellent Drama," *Nagpur Times*, Nov 9 1966. The reporter also mentioned that the "discerning critic" G. D. Madgulkar was quite impressed.

is expected to be inspired, transformed or challenged by anything that is depicted. *Bhāva Toci Dev* is so thoroughly comical and light-hearted that it seems misguided to ponder the plays' meaning and significance too deeply. Even more than *Dharmātmā* was, this play is entertainment.[201]

VCD Films

Two recent low-budget films about Eknāth have been produced by companies that specialize in Marathi devotional films about saintly figures. None of the devotional films by these companies, to my knowledge, has been shown in a theater; they appear to have been produced specifically to be sold as inexpensive Video Compact Discs. One can find made-for-VCD films such as these next to collections of CDs and cassettes of *sant*s' songs in the stalls of pilgrimage towns and in Marathi music shops. Because these films are so low-budget and recent, I have not found any background information about the films themselves or the people who produced them. Neither of these two VCD films about Eknāth is significantly innovative in its portrayal of him. However, they do offer two recent and very different examples of how the memory of Eknāth has been represented in a modern, explicitly devotional register.

The first film, *Sant Eknāth Mahārāj* (2004), features some actors from Marathi theater and takes a very light-hearted approach to the life of Eknāth.[202] In the course of ninety minutes, the film presents many traditional stories about Eknāth, mainly following the renditions as presented in Mahīpati's *BhL*. The film begins by briefly portraying a relatively mature Eknāth

[201] It is quite possible, however, that a rural Maharashtra audience may have derived a message from this play that is not apparent to me.

[202] R. Phulkar, "Sant Eknāth Mahārāj : Marāṭhī Video Compact Disc."

searching late at night for the tiny mistake in Janārdana's accounts. When Janārdana discovers him hard at work, he gives Eknāth a special blessing and a short spiritual lesson: Eknāth will one day have direct vision of the god Pāṇḍuraṅg (Viṭṭhal) if he recognizes that Pāṇḍuraṅg is in all beings and according loves all people. Of course, Janārdana in the traditional renditions of the story never referred to Pāṇḍuraṅg and was focused exclusively on Dattātreya. Phulkar's film glosses over this difference and presents everything within an overtly Vārkarī framework (for example, Janārdana and Eknāth both wear the typical Vārkarī sectarian mark, which consists of a long narrow U in the middle of the forehead, with one saffron below and a black dot above within the U). After this short scene with Janārdana, the rest of the film narrates various independent episodes until Eknāth's death at the end of the film. In this way the film hews closer to the hagiographical narrations of Eknāth's life than to the film and theatrical productions that shaped stories around a single, thorough-going narrative.

Stories included in the film are (in order of their presentation): Eknāth being spat upon and bathing many times, Eknāth picking up the untouchable child, the poor brahman who tries to upset Eknāth and thereby collect 200 rupees, Eknāth feeding untouchables at the śrāddha ceremony, Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home, Śrīkhaṇḍyā working for Eknāth and departing, Eknāth giving water to a donkey, and Eknāth cleaning up Jñāndev's tomb. Phulkar (the director) connects all of the scenes that involve untouchables by situating the character Rāṇū Mahār in all of them. Eknāth's antagonists throughout the film are several brahmans, who are led by a portly, saffron-clad *svāmī* with a bushy moustache and a bejeweled earring. His head is shaved except for a long *śikha* (tuft of hair) that he twirls deviously around his finger whenever he schemes to create trouble for Eknāth.

The soundtrack to the film keys the audience into what kind of emotion is most appropriate in a given situation, similar to the way that music is used in American and Marathi

soap operas (not that I claim to be an expert in that area). For example, when the red betel-juice spittle leaves the Muslim man's mouth and splashes on Eknāth's cotton shawl, the sound of deep, imposing kettle drums rumbles in the background. When Eknāth then smiles, shakes his head with amicable patience and chuckles at adversity (as he does throughout the film), the audience hears a few measures of light-hearted music that dispel any sense of tension in the scene. Almost invariably, when the antagonistic brahmans scheme to entrap Eknāth, a goofy, bouncy musical refrain accompanies the scene, such as one might find in a cartoon. Although the brahmans criticize Eknāth particularly about his friendship and openness with Rāṇū, and although they do actually trouble him (by refusing to join him for his *śrāddha* feast, for example), only rarely is there a sense of real tension or threat about their actions. More often, they appear as bumbling enemies whose foolish schemes amusingly backfire on them in the end, much as the brahman antagonists appeared in *Bhāva Toci Dev*.

Phulkar takes a few relatively small liberties with the traditional stories in order to make the scenes of the film connect to each other. For example, after Eknāth delivers the untouchable child to his parents (who are Rāṇū and his wife, in the film), Rāṇū thanks him and makes a special request. Since untouchables are not allowed in the temple, Rāṇū asks Eknāth to perform a *bhārūḍ* outside so that they can watch. Of course Eknāth probably would not have been performing *bhārūḍ*s literally inside temples to begin with, so Rāṇū would have been able to attend; this is merely a thin pretext for the Phulkar to include a *bhārūḍ* performance scene. The issue of temple admission appears nowhere else in this film or in any other stories about Eknāth.

The *bhārūḍ* scene, in addition to being very well performed, is indicative of another aspect of how Eknāth is remembered in recent times. Although *bhārūḍ*s have been regularly included in collections of Eknāth's poetry in manuscript and printed form, and although they seem to have been quite regularly performed at Vārkarī festivities for centuries, in recent decades

the performance of *bhārūḍ*s has been identified as Eknāth's unique contribution to the general Maharashtrian folk heritage.[203] Entertainment has always been a hallmark of *bhārūḍ*s, which attract audiences and attempt to subtly convey spiritual messages, but in recent decades this entertainment aspect has come into much greater prominence.[204] Thus one now finds *bhārūḍ* performers frequently and very liberally mixing comedy into their performances. Numerous VCDs consisting of only *bhārūḍ* performances are on the market; Phulkar himself even produced one.[205] Although it does not relate to caste and social issues, it will be informative to observe this *bhārūḍ* more closely, since it is now such a widely known and appreciated part of the current popular memory of Eknāth.

After Rāṇū's request, later that evening after the sun has gone down, Eknāth performs a *bhārūḍ* for Rāṇū. The scene is highly staged, with a group of men playing tradition instruments and singing along (to his credit, Phulkar used an actual group of Vārkarī musicians for this scene). The particular *bhārūḍ* that Eknāth performs is the most famous one to modern listeners; even many non-Vārkarī Maharashtrians will have heard it. The core *bhārūḍ*, usually called

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[203] I suspect that this more recent idea that Eknāth contributed the *bhārūḍ* to Maharashtrian folk culture is connected with stagings of, for lack of a better term, folk performance samplers – theatrical productions consisting almost entirely of various dances, music, and entertaining acts all brought under the banner of Maharashtrian identity. One of the early examples of this was a production called *Mahārāṣṭra Darśan*, created by Vasant Bāpaṭ. This production toured around Maharashtra in the mid-1960s, conveying a message of the diversity within unity of the Marathi-speaking region around the time of the Saṁyukta Mahārāṣṭra movement. For bringing this production to my attention I am grateful to Vidyut Bhagwat, who performed one of Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*s in the production. Vidyut Bhagwat, Personal communication, January 13, 2010. I have not been able to find out more information about "Mahārāṣṭra Darśan," but I observed an Eknāth *bhārūḍ* being performed also as part of a recent folk arts production that was put on in Pune and around Maharashtra at least between 2009 (perhaps earlier) and 2011 – *Marāṭhī Bāṇā*, created by Aśok Hāṇḍe. Both of these productions explicitly encourage taking pride in Marathi and Maharashtra.

[204] An elderly and highly respected *bhārūḍ* performer in Paithan lamented that entertainment and comedy have become so central to the craft of *bhārūḍ* performance nowadays that performers and audiences show little concern about any spiritual message that Eknāth originally hoped to convey. Community of Vārkarī elders (introduced to me by Parīkṣit Gosāvī) in Paithan, Personal communication, March 7, 2010.

[205] *Horā Aikā Dādāṅno - Nāthāñce Bhārūḍ* (Pune: Sumeet, n.d.).

Viñcū (Scorpion), is a standard one in collections of Eknāth's poetry.[206] The refrain is "A scorpion stung, a scorpion stung; the scorpion of desire and anger has stung; darkness and sweat have come over my body." The four verses of the *bhārūḍ* describe how the effects of the scorpion sting spread through the body as *tamoguṇa* (the quality of darkness or dullness), which is counteracted by applying *sattvaguṇa* (the quality of virtue). A bit of tingling from the poison remains, but this is calmed by Janārdana. By itself this *bhārūḍ* is quite short, but at the hands of the great Maharashtrian folk performer Śahīr Sābḷe in the mid 20th century, it was greatly embellished into a larger set performance (including particular music, extra lines, dialogue, and other elements) that has become so familiar that most people no longer distinguish between Eknāth's core *bhārūḍ* and Sābḷe's rendition of it.[207]

In Sābḷe's rendition, the *bhārūḍ* performer begins by singing an invocation, "The sun has dawned, light has fallen on the flat hills; I give my respects (*namaskār*) to them." He then suddenly grabs his foot and begins to hop up and down while singing, "*A ga ga ga ga gaaaa! Viñcū cāvalā!*" (Oh no, no, no, no! A scorpion stung me!). He and the accompanying musicians engage in a *bhajan*-like repetition of the phrase *viñcu cāvalā*, which concludes with a very rhythmic coda, "*viñcū cāvalā, viñcū cāvalā, viñcū cāvalā, ho!*" As the performer proceeds to sing the verses of the *bhārūḍ*, other actors (in the film, Rāṇū and his friend) constantly interrupt by asking about the meanings of words and commenting on what that they mistakenly hear the performer say. For example:

Eknāth: *manuṣya iṅgaḷī ati dārūṇa* (this is part of a verse in the original *bhārūḍ*)

Rāṇū: *ahā! mhaṇje atīt dārūṇaṁ* (*dārūṇe)!*

[206] Eknāth, *Śrī Eknāth Gāthā, Śrī Bhānudās, Śrī Janārdana Yāñcyā Abhaṅgāsaha*, #3790.

[207] Shantanu Kher, Personal Communication, July 30, 2011.

Eknāth: *dārūca āṇi iṅgaḷīca kāhī sāmbhandha nāhī*

dārūṇa mhaṇje bhayaṅkara

Rāṇū's friend: *ooo, bhayaṅkar mhaṇje to abhyaṅkar kā?*

Eknāth: *bhayaṅkarcā āṇi abhyaṅkarcā sambandha nāhī.*

abhyankar navhe. bhayaṅkara. bhayaṅkara mhaṇje ati bhayaṅkara.

Rāṇū's friend: *āṇi ati bhayaṅkar mhaṇje…*

Eknāth: *khūp bhayankara.*

Rāṇū's friend: *āṇi khūp bhayaṅkara mhaṇje…*

Eknāth: *māyandaḷ bhayaṅkara.*

Rāṇū's friend: *āṇi māyandaḷ bhayaṅkara mhaṇje…*

Eknāth: *tujhā dāt khālyāvar, kevḍhā trās hoīl, tevḍhā bhayaṅkara.*

Rāṇū's friend: *bāpre!*

The original Marathi is very lyrical, rhythmic and witty. Unfortunately, most of this is lost in translation:

Eknāth: Scorpions are extremely dreadful (*ati-dārūṇa*) for people

Rāṇū: What, they passed out because of too much liquor (*atīt dārūṇaṁ*)?

Eknāth: Scorpions have nothing to do with liquor.

Dreadful (*dārūṇa*) means terrible (*bhayaṅkar*).

Rāṇū's friend: Oh, you mean that Mr. Abhyaṅkar? (a Maharashtrian brahman surname)

Eknāth: "Terrible" (*bhayaṅkar*) has nothing to do with Mr. Abhyaṅkar.

Terrible. Terrible means extremely terrible.

Rāṇū's friend: And extremely terrible means…

Eknāth: Really terrible.

Rāṇū's friend: And really terrible means…

Eknāth: Abundantly terrible.

Rāṇū's friend: And abundantly terrible means…

Eknāth (annoyed): As terrible as it would be if you were to eat your own tooth.

Rāṇū's friend (shuddering): Oh God!

Despite the disruptive questions of Rāṇū and his friend, and despite their misguided and tame comments about liquor, tobacco and women, Eknāth eventually performs the entire *bhārūḍ* and explains its meaning to Rāṇū and his friend in the process. It is quite an entertaining scene.

Phulkar handles with noticeable care the scenes of Eknāth feeding Rāṇū's family and Eknāth eating at their home. On the *śrāddha* day the scent of good food wafts outside Eknāth's home and Rāṇū's family smells it as they pass.[208] Phulkar embellishes this scene by having Rāṇū's son catch a glimpse of *lāḍū*s (milk-based sweets) in Eknāth's home and then throwing a very public tantrum because he wants to have one. Śrīkhaṇḍya passes by and talks with them, explaining to the boy that Eknāth needs to keep the food pure. The boy asks why, and Śrīkhaṇḍyā responds elliptically that they (Rāṇū and his family) do not understand brahman festivals. Eknāth hears this from his window and sternly tells Śrīkhaṇḍyā to stop. He comes outside and invites the untouchable family to eat. Interestingly, when Eknāth and Śrīkhaṇḍya discuss the situation, they both conspicuously avoid calling Rāṇū and his family by any word other than the simple pronoun "them." Although the context makes it obvious that the family are untouchables (and the outraged brahmans later call them *aśprṣya*s and *śūdra*s), Eknāth and

[208] This scene occurs at around 37:00 on the first of the two VCDs of this film.

Śrīkhaṇḍyā avoid using any specific caste-related terms for them, perhaps tacitly adhering to a kind of political correctness. In all other respects, this scene proceeds in the same manner as it was narrated by Mahīpati in the *BhL.*

Later, when Eknāth prepares to go to Rāṇū's home to eat, Śrīkhaṇḍyā approaches him and asks slyly if today he plans to forego his daily *kīrtan* in the temple.[209] Eknāth smiles and responds, "What difference is there between Rāṇū's home and a temple?" He then goes on his way, and Śrīkhaṇḍyā stands in the scene alone. Śrīkhaṇḍyā smiles, looks at the camera and says, "Now let's have some fun with the brahmans." Śrīkhaṇḍyā then takes Eknāth's form, walks out the door and goes in the opposite direction of the real Eknāth. Although the audience will know that Eknāth himself went to eat at Rāṇū's home, the film does not depict it but rather focuses on the Śrīkhaṇḍya-Eknāth who went to the temple (which leads to an extended song and dance at the temple grounds).

Throughout the film, it is simply taken for granted that Eknāth unambiguously and completely disregards caste distinctions, and Phulkar makes no great effort to convey this lesson to the audience. Oddly, the position of Śrīkhaṇḍyā (Kṛṣṇa) in relation to caste appears much more ambivalent. In some scenes he seems to assume the importance of caste differences, such as when he earnestly tells that Rāṇū's son that they cannot eat the food prepared for the *śrāddha* feast. In other scenes he appears to stoke the outrage among the brahman antagonists against Eknāth, only to walk away with a devious smile on his face (as if he is toying with the brahmans). This apparent ambivalence may simply be the result of the actor's slightly confused performance or the lack of clarity on the part of the screenwriter or director. Or, it may

[209] This scene occurs at 3:50 on Disc 2.

intentionally preserve the sense of ambiguity about Eknāth's true allegiance that has become central to this story throughout its various retellings.

At the end of the film, after a long scene of Eknāth sitting at his writing desk as a stack of *pothī*s that he composes grows ever taller beside him, Eknāth develops a bad cough and looks noticeably older. He informs his family and friends that it is time for him to end his earthly existence, and he encourages them to celebrate the sixth day of the bright fortnight of Phālgun. The community (including the formerly antagonistic brahmans, who now all appear sympathetically concerned) gathers around Eknāth as he shares some final moments with them. Rāṇū asks, "Who is going to protect the *śūdra*s' honor now?" Eknāth responds emphatically but vaguely, "The one who has always watched over you – Parameśvar (God)."[210] Eknāth leads the small group in chanting Viṭṭhal's name, and he walks into the river and submerges himself.

Phulkar's *Sant Eknāth Mahārāj* is more of a biographical presentation of Eknāth's life than any of the films and plays in the century since Śirvaḷkar's play. It presents the stories in an overtly Vārkarī frame by means of visual cues (such as the sectarian mark and tulsi necklace) and references to Viṭṭhal in places where the traditional stories had none. Eknāth is consistently depicted transgressing caste boundaries, and the independent episodes involving untouchables are utterly central to the film. However, the scenes of song and dance (including Eknāth's *bhārūḍ*) are also prominently featured, and it is telling that when Eknāth departs to eat with Rāṇū, Phulkar chose not to portray their meal but instead followed Śrīkhaṇḍyā-Eknāth to an extended dancing scene at the temple. As was the case in *Bhāva Toci Dev*, a very light-hearted mood pervades the film, and scenes of inter-caste tension are sources more of comedy than of

[210] 27:50 on Disc 2.

suspense. In short, Phulkar's film portrays Eknāth's life in a devotionally but highly entertaining way.

The second made-for-VCD film is Rājeś Limkar's *Sant Eknāth* (2005).[211] Although the background music during the film is quite good (being patched together from CDs of Marathi devotional music), the actors are obviously not professional, and the extremely and needlessly languid style of this nearly three-hour long film truly challenges the viewer's patience. As was the case with the previous film, *Sant Eknāth* presents a broad narrative of Eknāth's life, following Mahīpati's *BhL*. Limkar begins the film with a scene in which Eknāth (played by a child actor) asks his grandparents what happened to his parents – the only instance of a film or theater production showing interesting in Eknāth's childhood. After Eknāth becomes Janārdana's disciple, an adult actor steps into the role for the rest of the film. The film contains a scene in which Eknāth meditates on a mountain, with a real, live cobra wrapped around the actor's neck.[212] As with Phulkar's production, this film omits all references to Dattātreya, although unlike Phulkar, Limkar does not strive to integrate Eknāth into the Vārkarī tradition either. After Eknāth completes his meditation training, Janārdana gives him a very bland final instruction ("travel around the country and learn new things") and sends him off on a pilgrimage with the equally bland benediction, "may you be successful" (*yaśasvī ho*).[213]

Eknāth in this film appears very human. For example, Limkar portrays an unprecedented scene in which Eknāth, after he has married and lived in Paithan for a while, is approached by a

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[211] Rājeś Limkar, "Sant Eknāth," (India: Fountain Music Company, 2005).

[212] Of course the real cobra does not cooperate with the traditional story and fan out its hood to shade Eknāth from the sun, but the fact that the actor allowed it to be placed on his neck is impressive in itself. Unfortunately, the camera catches the fluttering of cloth at the very edge of the shot where most likely a snake handler stood, ready to jump into the scene if necessary. Ibid., Disc 1, Part 1, 31:35.

[213] Ibid., Disc 1, Part 2, 0:30.

poor woman at his home. She asks for some food, and they have a short conversation. The woman, who speaks a non-standard form of Marathi, points out that while uneducated rural folk (*aḍāṇī*) like herself enjoy Eknāth's *kīrtan*s, they have trouble understanding everything that he says. She recommends that he speak more simply and use more basic words.[214] Eknāth is surprised to hear this since apparently he had not considered it before, and he visibly starts wondering how he could express himself differently. The woman departs, and he sits down at his desk to write. After thoughtfully staring into the distance for a while, he slowly begins to speak and write, "The sun has dawned, light has fallen on the flat hills; I give my respects to them…. A scorpion stung…"[215] In this film, Eknāth learns to address common people in simple language only at the behest of the poor woman – something that is never mentioned in the traditional stories.

Similarly, the story of Eknāth inviting untouchables to eat the food for the *śrāddha* ceremony also comes across as a moment of genuine learning for Eknāth. A small family of untouchables (none of whom are named in this film) is cutting grass outside Eknāth's home when they smell the good food. The young boy among them says that he is hungry, and his father responds, "Yes, you're hungry. I'm hungry too, but these brahmans can't understand our hunger. We're Mahārs. It's our fate to eat scraps, crumbs and rough things. We can't go in there and eat their food." The boy's mother adds, "Just wait, maybe they'll throw out some leftover food with their leaf-plates once they're finished."[216] As they talk, Eknāth is standing just around the corner of a wall from them, listening to their conversation. He had been about to

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[214] Ibid., Disc 2, Part 2, 2:00.

[215] As mentioned earlier, Marathi speakers often conflate this *bhārūḍ* by Eknāth with its very popular setting by Śāhīr Sābḷe. Limkar has done that here. The first line (*sūrya ugavalā…*) was actually composed by Sābḷe, although in the film Limkar obviously attributes it to Eknāth himself.

[216] R. Limkar, "Sant Eknāth," Disc 2, Part 2, 19:00.

leave and call the brahmans to eat, but when he hears the Mahārs' words, he is stunned.[217] He stands for some time and finally thinks to himself, "Eknāth, you always say that there is no caste difference…. These people are hungry. Action is greater than just words. Think about this." Slowly Eknāth reaches the decision to invite the Mahārs in to eat. The rest of the story follows the course of Mahīpati's rendition.

Surprisingly, in the entire duration of Limkar's film (nearly three hours), the abovementioned two scenes are the only significant portrayals of Eknāth's relations with people of low social status. When a group of antagonistic brahmans voices their grievances against Eknāth later in the film, they make two extremely brief references to Eknāth's inter-caste relations, and the family of unnamed Mahars merely appears again at the end of the film when Eknāth dies, but otherwise the issue of caste difference plays no major part in Limkar's film. The scene of Eknāth eating at the Mahārs' home is conspicuously absent.

Unlike previous films and plays, this film portrays the character Uddhav (who came with Girijā's side of the family to the wedding and stayed on to serve Eknāth, as mentioned in the traditional stories), the story of Daṇḍavat-svāmi, who accidentally resurrects a dead donkey (based on a traditional story) and thereby attracts unwanted attention, and the death of Girijā (completely unprecedented in stories about Eknāth), which moves Eknāth to end his own life. The stories of Daṇḍavat-svāmī and Girijā's death are particularly remarkable, because they exemplify the darker, rather tragic tone that much of this film strangely takes. It will be useful to consider them more thoroughly.

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[217] Eknāth's face in this scene to me seems actually horrified – a rather more extreme emotion that I would have anticipated in this situation. I confess that the actors and director in this film sometimes baffled me as to which emotions exactly they were trying to convey. My interpretation is that the actors themselves (most of whom do not appear trained or professional) were not fully conscious or in control of how they appeared.

Daṇḍavat happens to be practicing his peculiar devotional routine of prostrating himself before everything as if it were God. In the traditional rendition of this story, Paithan's brahmans goad him into bowing before a donkey's carcass, which suddenly jumps up and lives again, leaving Daṇḍavat as surprised as everyone else.[218] In the film, the brahmans are not involved in the early narrative, but the donkey's resurrection impresses everyone so much that the brahmans and others start to regard Daṇḍavat as a god and worship him. Daṇḍavat comes to Eknāth to help him escape the attention.[219] In keeping with the traditional story, in the film Eknāth recommends that Daṇḍavat take *samādhi* by being buried alive (as Jñāndev did, Eknāth points out). Daṇḍavat is agitated by the idea but agrees. In the middle of the night, Eknāth leads Daṇḍavat into a tomb and seals the entrance. Throughout the scene, Daṇḍavat is very disturbed and afraid, Eknāth is calm but stern. Suspenseful, spooky music plays in the background. This morbid ambience, lasting nearly ten minutes, is completely unlike the other films and plays about Eknāth.

In the traditional stories about Eknāth, Girijā's death is never mentioned. For that matter, in them she functions mostly as a narrative placeholder (Eknāth's agreeable wife) with very little personality of her own. Near the end of Limkar's film, at the conclusion of one of Eknāth's *kīrtan* performances, she is depicted simply sitting with her back against a wall, with her eyes closed.[220] Eknāth calls out to her a couple times, thinking that she is asleep, but she does not respond. As Eknāth walks closer, suspenseful music starts to play, and the ominous sound grows louder while the images on the screen become darker. The camera switches to a close-up of Eknāth's stunned and increasingly distraught face as he realizes that Girijā has just died. Uddhav

[218] Mahīpati, *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*, 19:19-53.

[219] R. Limkar, "Sant Eknāth," Disc 3, Part 1, 22:45.

[220] Ibid., Disc 3, Part 2, 26:00.

also sees that she is dead, and he begins not just to cry but to wail loudly and stumble around the scene, completely forlorn. After two full minutes of Uddhav howling and Eknāth's grief slowly emerging on his face, Eknāth stoically tells Uddhav to go, say goodbye to the guests who attended the *kīrtan,* and welcome in the next group (for a second *kīrtan*, apparently). The camera then spends another full minute showing tears well up in Eknāth's eyes as he continues to sit with his dead wife's body and tragic music plays in the background.

In Limkar's film, Girijā's death saps Eknāth of his will to live. He quickly and gloomily makes final arrangements before ending his own life. He tells his son Haripaṇḍit that he will now have to take over the household, he tells the townsfolk to celebrate the sixth day of the first half of the month of Phālgun, and he gives two very vague final lessons to everyone: awaken the sense of God (Parameśvar) within you, and do not discriminate between "high and low" (*ucca-nica bhedabhāv*). He puts his palms together, makes a sign of respect to the assembled audience, and slowly descends a stone staircase into the river while a simple, sober devotional song plays in the background.

One might anticipate that Limkar's *Sant Eknāth* would be quite similar to Phulkar's *Sant Eknāth Mahārāj* since they are both made-for-VCD films marketed by companies who specialize in religious devotional music and media. The two films are vastly different, however. Setting aside shortcomings in the acting, script, production and direction of Limkar's film as well as all the possibly misleading impressions that they may unintentionally give to the viewer, it is clear that someone chose to depict Eknāth's life in a very peculiar way. There is a dark, foreboding sense to this film, and it is probably no accident that so much time is spent highlighting solemn and tragic scenes. Eknāth comes across as very human in the film (not as a semi-divine, carefree figure with an otherworldly calmness). He rarely smiles, and when dealing with antagonists, his face conveys annoyance and even a hint of spite. Limkar does not completely avoid scenes of

social difference and tension, but they appear only briefly and are quickly relegated to the background. Eknāth in this film teaches social equality occasionally, but it is not a prominent or important part of the film. Interestingly, in focusing on the shocking and morbid, Limkar found little space in his incredibly long production to accommodate stories about caste-related tension.

Why does Eknāth in this film appear so unusual? It is possible that the artists and technicians responsible for making the film had something in mind that they failed to express effectively. Another possible reason that I find more likely is hinted at in the advertisements that are interspersed among the six parts of this film on the video compact discs. Every thirty minutes, viewers of *Sant Eknāth* are shown several advertisements for other Marathi films that were also produced by Fountain Entertainment. The excerpted sections of the advertised films tend to focus on morbid, shocking and miraculous events. For the film on the minor Marathi *sant* Gorā Kumbhār (the potter), a clip is shown of Gorā preparing his clay by stamping in a small pit. Sticking out of the mud are two small legs, in accordance with the story of Gorā being so absorbed in repeating Viṭṭhal's name that he accidentally trampled his own child to death.[221] Clips from the film *Dhanya Dhanya Pativratā* (Blessed, Blessed is the Dutiful Wife) depict an impoverished, leprous husband asking his dutiful wife to arrange for him a tryst with a prostitute. As an advertisement for *Śivabhakta Cāṅguṇā* (Cāṅguṇā, the Devotee of Śiva) we see a clip of an ascetic testing a young mother by demanding that she kill and cook her young son for him.

There is obviously a pattern in these advertisements. Morbid, shocking, dramatic and miraculous stories are apparently in demand commercially, and Fountain Entertainment seeks to supply consumers with what they want. Limkar's story of Eknāth appears to have adopted some of these characteristics. To be fair, however, Phulkar's film about Eknāth contained similar

[221] J.E. Abbott et al., *Stories of Indian Saints: A Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya*, 17:99-127.

advertisements, but it was nonetheless light-hearted and humorous. A broader assessment of these low-budget devotional films would need to be made, but it appears that there may be multiple, commercially viable sub-genres in which producers can present stories about a devotional figure such as Eknāth.

Conclusion

Since nearly all of the material covered in this chapter is available only in Marathi and in many cases has been all but lost and forgotten even among Marathi speakers, it has been necessary to review it in some detail. In the process of doing this, several patterns have appeared. Some scenes became practically standard and were regularly repeated despite their original instability in the hagiographical texts. Eknāth feeding untouchables food from the *śrāddha* feast (as presented in the *BhV*) and Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home (as presented in the *BhL*) were depicted regularly and with the same cast of characters in nearly all of the major productions. Although the plays and films usually adopted their stories (whether consciously or not) from the *BhL*, they ignored or forgot the *BhL*'s story about Eknāth feeding the *śrāddha* food to three Muslim mendicants (instead of untouchables), opting for the *BhV* version of the story instead.

The stabilization of this pairing is probably related to the fact that the main plays and films effectively connected and unified all of the traditional stories about Eknāth's inter-caste activities. As we first observed in Chapters One and Two, the hagiographical stories about Eknāth dealing with untouchables were isolated, independent episodes that could be retained or dropped by an author without affecting the larger narrative of Eknāth's life. There was no sense that the untouchable figures in various episodes were related, much less identical. This changed

in the films and plays, as the character Rāṇyā/Rāṇū became the quintessential Mahār who (with his family) represented untouchables in every scene. This development may have been the inevitable result of films and plays reckoning with a necessarily limited cast of characters and with the aesthetic need to portray a unified narrative. Or, it may also represent a coalescing narrative about Eknāth interacting with untouchables.

Another scene that became stabilized, in a sense, was one that was remarkably unstable in the hagiographical and biographical texts. From the time that the story first appeared around 1700 (in Kṛṣṇadās' *PC*), authors clearly wrestled with how to depict Eknāth eating at the untouchable family's home. Many authors adopted the tactic of using a dual image of Eknāth, by which God's intervention allowed Eknāth both to eat with the untouchables and to stay at home. It is fascinating to observe in the films and plays that this dual-image narrative could not be easily abandoned by those who wanted to clarify the ambiguity. Śirvaḷkar clearly felt uncomfortable with it and thus inserted a dialogue between Eknāth and Śrīkhaṇḍyā in an attempt to reconcile the tangled agendas in the story. Kāḷe's *Dharmātmā* script abandoned the dual image so that Eknāth unambiguously ate at Rāṇū's home, but the Censor Board effectively forced the film producers to reinsert the two images of Eknāth. Śirgopīkar's *Bhāva Toci Dev* escaped the ambiguity and depicted a single Eknāth but retained the miraculous element by shifting it slightly elsewhere in the scene. Furthermore, the play is so light-hearted that it is hard to discern whether this is significant. If the dual-image narrative was originally used to make Eknāth's eating with the untouchables less problematic, it subsequently took on a life of its own as story about a miracle rather than about caste, so that it became nearly impossible and perhaps even sacrilegious for later writers (e.g., Śirvaḷkar and Kāḷe) to make the story exclusively about caste.

The most obvious pattern that emerges in this chapter is that caste and social equality are depicted far more prominently in 20th-century plays and films about Eknāth than in literature and scholarship during the same period. This may reflect the liberal tendencies and interests of playwrights and script writers – a creative group that one might expect to hold more liberal social and religious views than the general populace. As public productions, however, these plays and films depended on audiences being receptive. Something about Eknāth's social outlook and interactions with untouchables seems to have captured the imaginations of Marathi producers and consumers alike. Perhaps the writers and audiences felt that caste tensions were contentious issues at the time, and they appreciated seeing the issues represented on stage and screen (often in a humorous way to release the pressure) as they tried to reckon with their own beliefs and values. In other ways, caste distinctions and inter-caste relations often came to be treated as uncontroversial elements of productions that were capable of being staged to produce laughter in the same way as other mundane relations of difference and hierarchy, such as between men and women, children and parents, or teachers and students.

Ṭhākre's play and Limkar's VCD both adopted (in different ways) dark and ominous tones, but otherwise the portrayals of Eknāth were remarkably positive and even comical. The comedy in these productions certainly takes off some of the uncomfortable, threatening edge of depiction of caste tensions. It is probably no surprise that comedic and sympathetic characters were regularly added to the scripts: the jester-like figures of Gāvbā and Śrīkhaṇḍya, and the irresistibly likable and innocent girls Jāī and Rādhā. Yet, as we can observe in the changes among *Dharmātmā*, *Bhāva Toci Dev* and Phulkar's VCD, comic relief has multiple functions. While it can offer relief or insight in a tense scene, it also has an attractive quality even in scenes that are not tense. Comedy by itself is marketable. Starting with *Dharmātmā* and continuing to

the present, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish whether productions of Eknāth's life ought to be interpreted in terms of education, edification or entertainment.

Conclusion

My goal in this dissertation has been to investigate how the social memory of Eknāth has changed over time, particularly in relation to the stories about him interacting with untouchables. As I stated in my introduction, these memories as inscribed in various kinds of hagiographical texts and modern biographical literature, and as represented in plays and films, reflect the sensitivity that the authors and producers felt about a socially inclusive Hindu tradition and the enduring issue of caste hierarchy. The ways in which stories about Eknāth are told offer something of an index to the changing conceptual, narrative and emotional contexts in which caste difference has been expressed in this period.

By adopting an intensively historiographical approach and drawing on a diverse set of source materials, I have highlighted how Eknāth's controversial deeds were described differently over time. Western scholars who knew of Eknāth from Justin Abbott's translations of Mahīpati and the re-released film *Dharmātmā* already had an idea of how challenging a figure he was to summarize in familiar social categories. By looking deeply into unexplored literary and performative Marathi sources, I have shown that ambivalence about his inter-caste relations has posed a continual problem for interpreters. Having traversed more than three centuries of Marathi materials in this dissertation, it will be helpful to review its main discoveries and to identify some patterns that have become clear.

Review

In Chapter Two we observed three hagiographical texts that narrated stories exclusively about Eknāth. The earliest and shortest of these – Mukteśvar's *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān* (ca. 1650) –

told a single story of Kṛṣṇa taking the human form of Śrīkhaṇḍyā and becoming a servant in Eknāth's home. This became standard in later portrayals of Eknāth's life. Although the provocative epithet *janī-janārdana* (God in/among the people) appears in the *ŚKĀ*, it was used only for Kṛṣṇa himself, and the text made no mention of inter-caste relations. The *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* of Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan (ca. 1698) included several stories that depicted Eknāth flagrantly disregarding social convention and ritual purity to carry out extreme acts of devotion – drinking his guru's spittle water, cleaning his guru's toilet by hand, rolling in leftover food, and feeding untouchables before brahmans at his ancestors' death memorial. Kṛṣṇadās explained that Eknāth's motivation for such actions was a kind of theological aesthetic – described as a "feeling of sameness" (*samabhāva*), a "vision of sameness" (*samadṛṣṭi*), and a sense that his guru and God were present in all people (*janī-janārdana*), who therefore merited his respect and service regardless of caste. Far more influential than the *PC* was Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra* (1760), which portrayed Eknāth in an overtly mythological way as a divine *avatār* who had come for the upliftment of the world (*jagadoddhar*) and especially of the lowly (*dīnoddhar*). The *EC* is the source text for the standard stories involving Eknāth and untouchables: picking up an untouchable boy from the hot sand, nursing the untouchable thief back to health, forgiving the untouchable who accidentally spits on him, and most importantly, eating in some form at an untouchable's home.

The *PC* and *EC* explained the grounds for Eknāth's inter-caste relations in very different ways – Eknāth's sense of God in all beings (in the *PC*) as opposed to a mythology of Eknāth's salvific purpose (in the *EC*). It is possible that this difference may be related to the temporal gap between them (keeping in mind that the *PC*'s composition date is unknown). Although their understandings of Eknāth differed greatly, the texts conveyed with similar clarity a sense of tension over how Eknāth's caste boundary transgression fit with a caste-based understanding of

ritual purity. In both texts Eknāth unwaveringly reveres the brahmans and attempts to mitigate their outrage against him. In the *PC* he tries to hide from the brahmans the fact that he fed the *śrāddha* meal to untouchables before them (*PC* 8:46), and in the *EC* he submits to ritual purification by bathing with his clothes on after interacting with untouchables. (*EC* 17:33-34) He even appears to embrace the clothed bathing ritual himself when no one compels him to do so. (*EC* 26:45)

In every case of interacting with untouchables and then reckoning with brahmans' anger and (in some cases) demands for purification, a divine or miraculous event occurs at the end to vindicate the inter-caste relation – Eknāth's ancestors appear, leprous brahmans are healed, and two images of Eknāth are seen simultaneously. Yet, as the case of the dual Eknāth images at home and eating with untouchables (*EC* 17:19-84) more vividly conveys, these wondrous events make for very ambiguous conclusions to the stories. Eknāth's social actions are miraculously vindicated, but the miracles do nothing to resolve the worldly tension between the realm of devotional egalitarianism and the realm of caste-based ritual purity. They successfully depict Eknāth as a figure who merits or accomplishes divine intervention, but what does this imply for the audience? Is caste boundary transgression the prerogative only of the *avatār*s, whose special status allows them to escape the social conventions to which non-*avatār*s must conform? As a result of the miracles in these stories, tension between the devotional and the ritual realms remained essential to later renditions of these stories.

In Chapter Three we saw that few of the minimal collective hagiographies (lists of names and epithets) said anything that could be construed as related to Eknāth's social actions. Similarly, most of the short, independent compositions about Eknāth were interested in Eknāth's status as an *avatār* who is worthy of worship, although a sizable minority praised Eknāth's compassion and concern for the lowly. The most significant contributions to later memories

about Eknāth came from the two collective hagiographies of Mahīpati – the *Bhaktavijay* (1762) and the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (1774). The *BhV*, drawing on unknown sources for its short set of stories about Eknāth, remarkably depicted Eknāth as a boy failing to overcome his fear of pollution and otherness when he met Datta, who appeared twice in different Muslim forms. (*BhV* 45:74-130) The *BhV* notably conveyed the story of Eknāth feeding untouchables his *śrāddha* meal before feeding brahmans – the rendition of this story that became standard in Marathi plays and films (rather than the *EC* and *BhL* versions, in which Eknāth fed three Muslim mendicants). Mahīpati's *BhL* borrowed extensively from Keśavsvāmī's *EC*, slightly altering some stories (e.g., making the untouchable spitter in the *EC* into a Muslim) and embellishing others to suit a more overtly Vaiṣṇava theology. Most significantly, Mahīpati embellished the story of Eknāth eating at the untouchables' home. In the *BhL*, the untouchable's name becomes Rāṇyā Mahār and is described as a pious and sincere Vaiṣṇava. Mahīpati also adds an important interpretive embellishment later in the story: when the images of Eknāth appear simultaneously at Rāṇyā's home and at Eknāth's own home, this is because Pāṇḍuraṅg (Viṭṭhal, God) had taken on Eknāth's form and dined with Rāṇyā. Unlike in the earlier rendition of the story by Keśavsvāmī, Mahīpati explained the miracle of two images in the *EC* and clarified how the miracle happened. In the process, however, Eknāth is distanced from actually eating at the untouchables' home. (*BhL* 19:206-239) Mahīpati actually enhanced the tension between Eknāth's devotional egalitarian deed (accepting Rāṇyā's invitation) and the abiding concern for caste purity (since Eknāth actually stayed home).

We also observed two significant alterations of this story as two other authors tried to alleviate the tension: in Bhīmasvāmī's rendition Eknāth conveniently forgets about accepting the untouchable man's invitation, leaving it up to God to take Eknāth's form and fill in for him. (*BhL2* 27:1-20) In Khaṇḍerāya's rendition, God is not in the picture; Eknāth spiritually projects

a second image of himself to eat at the untouchable's home while Eknāth sits safely in his own place. The story of Eknāth "eating" at the untouchables' home is frequently repeated, but each new repetition is never quite the same. By the end of Chapter Three, it was clear that this was a very unstable story that authors frequently found desirable to revise. Yet in their revisions, they all still managed to preserve the sense of ambiguity about what ethical and ritual ramifications Eknāth's actions.

In Chapter Four we considered alternative sources of historical information about how Eknāth was remembered. Institutional histories of the temples devoted to him in Paithan and patronage records in official archives of relevant Peshwa, Muslim and British rulers all demonstrated that the institutional legacy in Paithan enjoyed substantial official support. By the nature of these historical records, however, they offer very little information that is directly relevant to the question of how Eknāth's character was remembered. Similarly, much of the Marathi historiographical *bakhar* literature dates to relevant periods for Eknāth-related research, but the scope of this literature almost never includes the Marathi *sant*s. This fact, in tandem with Veena Naregal's observation that Maratha and Peshwa elites tended not to sponsor the transcription of Marathi texts, points to the significant gap between *bhakti* and elite spheres of Marathi discourse.

As we reviewed early biographical writings about Eknāth (1883-1925), we saw that authors tended to handle stories about Eknāth and caste very carefully. Sahasrabuddhe and Pāṅgārkar both included some stories about Eknāth interacting with untouchables. Sahasrabuddhe had little to say about these stories, although his infrequent references to Janārdana's socially oriented final lesson may indicate that he was not averse. In contrast, Pāṅgārkar was clearly uncomfortable with the idea of Eknāth befriending a Mahār; he embellished the traditional story of Rāṇyā Mahār to highlight all of the ways that Rāṇyā was not

the typical Mahār. Ājgāvkar avoided caste altogether by shockingly omitting all of the stories about Eknāth and untouchables. Rā. Rā. Bhāgvat was the major exception to this pattern. He placed Eknāth's inter-caste relations at the center of his biographical overview, but he made it explicit at the essay's conclusion that he considered Eknāth a model specifically for how brahmans ought to conduct themselves in society. Bhāgvat's essay had little subsequent influence on academic writing about Eknāth, but some of his ideas and phrases were picked up by Marathi playwrights.

In Chapter Four we also observed four interpretive vectors in Marathi literature about Eknāth from 1950 to the present. The unification vector interprets Eknāth as taking a special interest in untouchables, but any concern about ethics and justice was quickly overshadowed by the historiographical interest in narrating the rise of Śivājī and the cohesion (historically and at the times of the interpreters) of Marathi-speaking Hindus in the presence of dominant others. The spiritual and miraculous vectors were largely unconcerned about the social world. Only the small number of people who followed the materialist vector viewed caste tensions and social change as a major concern, and they invariably concluded somberly that the *bhakti* poets were ineffective agents of change.

The plays and films that we observed in Chapter Five presented an astonishing contrast to the modern Marathi literature's relative disinterest in issues of caste, purity and social tension. The film *Dharmātmā* was already known for this, but I have shown how its depiction of Eknāth was not unique on the Marathi stage and screen. In the six major plays and films that we considered, Eknāth's interactions with untouchables were central to nearly all of them. Śirvaḷkar's play in 1903 initiated the trend of focusing on inter-caste relations while depicting Eknāth's life. Śirvaḷkar strung together several independent episodes about Eknāth and untouchables from the hagiographic literature, unifying them narratively and creatively by

making Rāṇyā Mahār the main character in all of them. Śirvaḷkar also introduced a jester-like character (by giving Eknāth's disciple Gāvbā a benevolently crazy streak) for a bit of comic relief. Both of these features were picked up and amplified in various ways in later productions. While 20th-century Marathi scholarly literature largely ignored the uncomfortable issue of caste from their portrayals of Eknāth, plays and films from the same time focused on it. Ke. Sī. Ṭhākre based his entire play (*Kharā Brāmhaṇ*, 1933) on violent caste tensions, employing the unification narrative and having Eknāth proclaim that the upliftment of untouchables would lead toward an overtly political end – Hindutva. *Dharmātmā* (1935), *Bhāva Toci Dev* (1964) and Rāju Phulkar's VCD about Eknāth (2004) all lightened the topic through the use of humor. Indeed, in the latter two productions, comedy and slapstick were so ubiquitous that it seemed that the theme of inter-caste tension was being positively exploited for its entertainment value.

Notable patterns, themes and trends over time

It is worthwhile to note what kinds of stories and aspects of stories disappear from the renditions of Eknāth's life over time. The *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra* contained several stories that were not repeated, but this may be due to its strangely isolated manuscript history. Perhaps these stories did not "disappear" by any authorial act but rather simply did not circulate and therefore no one knew of those stories. More significantly, there are no examples after the *PC* of extreme devotion being used as a major theme. The story of Eknāth drinking his guru Janārdana's spittle-water is referred to in the *BhV* and *BhL2*, but it is only passed over quickly in those texts. Similarly, the story of Eknāth cleaning Janārdana's toilet area is referred to in all of the later texts (surprisingly, in fact), but none of them compare to the obvious pleasure that Kṛṣṇadās took in narrating this story in the *PC*. The story of Eknāth rolling in leftovers and throwing food

remained unique to the *PC*; it was not mentioned even obliquely in another text. More directly relevant to our study, the story of Eknāth serving *śrāddha* food to untouchables is prominently repeated (although in the *EC* and *BhL* the untouchables become Muslims). Without awareness of other extreme acts in the background, however, the audiences of these other texts would not relate the *śrāddha* story to extreme devotion. In the modern biographical, theatrical and film renditions of Eknāth's life, the idea of extreme devotion is completely absent, as are the stories about spittle water and toilet cleaning. Although there apparently was a time when extreme devotion was an important interpretive theme for understanding Eknāth's life, it did not endure for long.[1] It might be possible that the extreme acts appeared less compellingly extreme as audiences grew more lax in their observation of purity laws. I still suspect that audiences who cared nothing about ritual purity (to push the argument to its hypothetical extreme) would nonetheless feel some sort of visceral repulsion to the image of Eknāth drinking water mixed with his guru's spittle, phlegm, bile and mucus or Eknāth digging into Janārdana's toilet with his hands. On one level, the extreme acts are ritually impure; on another level, they are simply disgusting. If audiences were aware that these stories of revolting extreme acts existed, they may well have been grateful to be spared from seeing them depicted on the stage or screen.

Another aspect of the early renditions of Eknāth's life that appears to have become gradually less compelling is Eknāth engaging in specifically brahman customs and rituals. The early hagiographies highlight Eknāth's great respect for brahmans, together with the various rituals he faithfully carries out and the Sanskrit texts that he studies. Of course no one ever

[1] We would do well to keep in mind that the Marathi *bhakti* tradition does have other stories of *bhakti* expressed with extremely violent overtones, such as Gorā Kumbhār crushing his child as he stamped to mix mud and repeated God's name. This theme is much more prominent in other traditions, such as the Tamil Śaiva Nāyanārs. Dennis Hudson, "Violent and Fanatical Devotion among the Nāyanārs: A Study in the Periya Purānam of Cēkkilār," in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees: Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism*, ed. Alf Hiltebeitel. (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 373-404.

forgets that Eknāth is a brahman; he constantly gets into trouble because his fellow brahmans feel that he is not brahman enough. But modern biographers and the producers of films and plays in the 20th century pay little attention to Eknāth's daily rituals and behaviors that he undertakes which mark him as a brahman. The narrative that develops over time comes to emphasize his difference from other brahmans, especially since most other brahmans in these narratives are antagonistic towards him. This is especially clear if we compare the three earliest hagiographies (1650-1772) to the 20th-century plays and films; the effort to depict Eknāth himself as participating in the world of brahman ritual and authority gradually fades away. In later depictions, others impose on Eknāth the expectations of the realm of ritual purity; Eknāth himself shows little interest in it, although he is sometimes forced to accommodate to it (by undergoing undesired purification rituals). Eknāth's behavior was rather more complex in the early hagiographies.

As noted earlier, several stories about Eknāth became standard and were repeated routinely over time. The story of Śrīkhaṇḍyā was included in every major hagiography, although its miraculous character added a further challenge for the biographers to deal with. The other story that recurs most consistently in the hagiographical material is Eknāth serving his *śrāddha* food to marginal non-brahmans before seating the brahmans. One version (*BhV* 46:102-107) depicts the brahmans forcing Eknāth to undergo a purification ritual in the river for this offense. Most interestingly, although the most influential major hagiographies (*EC* and *BhL*) portrayed these non-brahmans as the *trimūrti* who were disguised as Muslim mendicants, it was the less commonly circulated version (*BhV*) of the story involving untouchables that became standard in the plays and films. In light of other trends of how Eknāth's social memory took shape in the 20th century, I propose that this counter-intuitive choice was made by playwrights and film producers because portraying Eknāth as serving untouchables simply fit the gradually

consolidating identity of Eknāth better. The stock of stories about Eknāth was there, and choices were made in the 20th century about portraying him more extensively as relating to untouchables. In the 20th century, the image of Eknāth helping and eating with untouchables had become fixed in the Marathi social memory.

The other story about Eknāth that became most standard was of him apparently eating at the untouchables' home. As argued above, the miraculous aspect of the story effectively (and perhaps conveniently) obfuscated Eknāth's true role in it. The early 20th-century Muslim interpreter Śeikh Cānd suggested boldly that "orthodox elements" had been added to some stories so as to make them more palatable to a conservative audience. That theory might be well applied to this story: the miraculous and divine element deflects any responsibility from Eknāth for the act of eating or going back on hiw word and not eating at the untouchables' home. Of course, full credit for the socially radical deed is deflected from Eknāth too. Intriguingly, as we saw at the beginning of the 20th century, the addition of a divine explanation of dual Eknāth images effectively pushed this story into a different register. The original story in the *EC* described two images of Eknāth but left the forces behind this wonder a mystery. Mahīpati in the *BhL* added God (quite understandably) into the narrative and made it into a miracle. As we saw in the biographies, 20th-century interpreters of Eknāth were very circumspect about how they handled miracle stories, which is what we also see in Śirvaḷkar's play (1903) and Kāḷe's script for *Dharmātmā* (1935) as well. As noted in the previous chapter, Śirvaḷkar added a dialogue in which Śrīkhaṇḍyā told Eknāth that eating at Rāṇyā's home or going to his own home were equally good options, but he nonetheless recommended that Eknāth go home. This very strange advice, as I argued, tries to allow Eknāth to save face – he was honest in accepting Rāṇyā's proposal, Eknāth's ritual purity is preserved, and the now standard story of the dual images could be repeated. I suspect that this story – now unavoidably remembered as a miracle

story – was simply too widely accepted to omit the miracle of two images, even though the strange little dialogue that Śirvaḷkar inserted is an indication that he was not satisfied with the narrative. The case of Kāḷe's script is even more revealing, Kāḷe wanted Eknāth simply to go and eat at Rāṇū Mahār's home, but the Bombay Censor Board refused on the grounds that it did not adequately show Śrīkhaṇḍyā's identity as an *avatār*. In other words, the story could not be allowed to proceed unless the miracle was reinserted. Aside from two exceptions (Bhāgvat's essay and the portrayal in *Bhāva Toci Dev*, in which other miracles by Śrīkhaṇḍyā were added), the ambiguity of whether Eknāth actually ate at the untouchables' home simply refused to go away.

Observing the variations in these inter-caste stories about Eknāth from a distance, it is quite striking how much ambiguity authors and audiences tolerated when it came to reconciling Eknāth's devotional egalitarianism with the societal concern for caste-based ritual purity. This ambiguity is reproduced so consistently that it is actually difficult to imagine that this was a mere accident or unwilling accommodation to tradition.[2] The productive side of ambiguity is that it does not confront anyone with a choice or challenge one party to join another. Perhaps the ambiguity that we see replicated so consistently in stories about Eknāth is indicative of the moderateness of the Marathi *bhakti* tradition generally. In a sense, this may even be the curse of inclusivity, as the tradition attempts to include and avoid alienating those caste-observant people who do not fully share the socially inclusive attitude.

Astute readers will have noticed that throughout this dissertation, we have heard nothing from the voices of those who were most deeply affected by questions of caste hierarchy and

[2] I am grateful to Jack Hawley for helping me to see this line of analysis.

equality – *śūdra*s, untouchables and *dalit*s themselves.[3] This must be addressed, particularly as it points the way toward further, more insightful analysis of the social memory of Eknāth and the Vārkarī *sant*s in the 20th century.

The Conspicuously Missing Piece: Śūdras and Dalits on Eknāth

As has been well documented, leaders of most of the major low-caste and untouchable social movements in late 19th-century and early 20th-century western India had quite negative views of the contemporary Vārkarī tradition, and they had little use for the poetry and stories of the *sant*s. The first major low-caste leader, Jotirao Phule, publicly dismissed the *sant*s and their literature as irrelevant to the cause of low-caste people, arguing that the *bhakt sant*s had accommodated too much to caste hierarchy and therefore become powerless to change it.[4] He postulated that the only reason that the *bhakti* tradition had embraced low castes and untouchables was to ward off the threat of them converting to Islam.[5] Veena Naregal has suggested that Phule's low opinion of the *bhakti* poets was based not only on a reading of them

[3] I use the terms "untouchable" and "*dalit*" here to recognize the fact that political and social formations of these *jāti* communities (in Maharashtra, particularly Mahārs, Māṅgs and Cāmbhārs) have significantly changed in the past century with the mobilization work of B. R. Ambedkar. I want to acknowledge and use terms that people use for themselves, and *dalit* is one such example in the late 20th century. At the same time, in my field work in 2008-2010, I regularly encountered urban Mahārs who now prefer the term to call themselves *bahujan samāj* (literally, society of many people, which was popularly coined by Jotirao Phule) rather than *dalit*s (literally, broken or ground down). When I spoke with Mahārs in small towns and in the countryside, they were confused when I used the term *bahujan samāj* and (based on my limited experience) seemed to refer to themselves simply as Mahārs. There is obviously a great deal of political correctness, identity politics, variation among geo-political and social groups even within the Mahār *jāti*. I do not make any claims or arguments about this in my dissertation. I am using the term *dalit* to refer to untouchables of various groups in the late 20th century because it was an important term for self-identification at least among some in this community, despite the fact that times and trends appear to be changing.

[4] Eleanor Zelliot, "A Historical Introduction to the Warkari Movement," in *Palkhi*, ed. Philip C. Engblom. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), 47.

[5] Philip Constable, "Early Dalit Literature and Culture in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Western India," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 2 (1997): 325.

but on quite practical concerns as well, particularly as Phule strongly resisted the way that the *sant*s were being used by liberal Hindu reformers such as M. G. Ranade and the Prārthanā Samāj to salvage good aspects of Hindu tradition for modern times.[6]

B. R. Ambedkar was similarly dismissive of the Marathi *bhakti* tradition as an effective means for untouchables to assert their rights. Ambedkar both spoke out against untouchables revering the *sant*s and actively went to pilgrimage destinations to persuade untouchables not to participate.[7] Zelliot has pointed out that as Ambedkar rose to prominence, interest waned in the main Vārkarī Mahār *sant* Cokhāmeḷā, whom some untouchables still revered.[8] The fact that Ambedkar wrote an even remotely positive letter of commendation in the Eknāth Saṁśodhan Mandir's first publication is therefore very surprising. I do not believe that scholars of Ambedkar are aware of this letter, so reproducing his words here may be of some value:[9]

> I am happy to know that there has come into existence the Eknath Research Society in Aurangabad. In my young days I was very fond of the literary works of the Maharashtra Saints and I can say how great a contribution the reading of this literature can make to the moral rearmament of man. I wish the Society every success and can promise all help from the People's Education Society.
>
> Signed, B. R. Ambedkar, Aurangabad, Sept 2, 1951

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[6] V. Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere*, 52.

[7] Christoph Jaffrelot, *Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analysing and Fighting Caste* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2005), 48.

[8] E. Zelliot, "Chokhamela and Eknath: Two "Bhakti" Modes of Legitimacy for Modern Change," 142. Philip Constable has done and continues to do interesting scholarship on pre-Ambedkar untouchable groups that lifted up Cokhāmeḷā as a hero to mobilize untouchables to adopt an egalitarian *bhakti* outlook and strive for political rights. P. Constable, "Early Dalit Literature and Culture in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Western India," 317-338; P. Constable, "Scottish Missionaries, 'Protestant Hinduism' and the Scottish Sense of Empire in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century India," 278-313.

[9] *Eknāth Darśan Khaṇḍa 1-lā*. sāt.

Was Ambedkar just being nice when he wrote this? Is there a chance that it is a forgery? Is there more to Ambedkar's views about the *bhakti* tradition than is commonly acknowledged? The letter seems much more positive than he is otherwise known to have been about the subject. In any case, following the leads set by Phule and Ambedkar, almost no *dalit* or *śūdra* authors have found it worth their time to comment on Eknāth. Surely one of the reasons for this apparent lack of interest is that low-caste and *dalit* leaders had actively encouraged their followers to abandon the Vārkarī tradition (including Cokhāmeḷā, Tukārām and Eknāth). Among some *dalit*s in the late 20th century, one also encounters the sentiment that Eknāth could not have been egalitarian because of the sheer fact that he was a brahman.[10]

That Eknāth was of little interest to low-caste and *dalit* authors in the 20th century is not a surprise. He was (aside from Ambedkar's anomalous letter) intentionally neglected, and the narratives of inter-caste relations that may have been appealing to brahmans were probably received quite differently by untouchables and *dalit*s in the 20th century. Perhaps in earlier centuries the idea of a brahman graciously inviting untouchables to eat a special meal, him eating at untouchables' homes, or him picking up an untouchable child from hot sand were somehow more gratifying in a social setting where the extremes of caste hierarchy were less questioned and seemed more irrevocably fixed. In the 20th century, when other social and political ways of being opened up in India, and as caste did become radically questioned, such *bhakti* stories no longer held the same appeal.

But obviously those inter-caste narratives did continue to appeal to someone. As *dalit*s more firmly and thoroughly dissociated themselves from the *bhakti* tradition from the 1920s

[10] I was made aware of this sentiment among at least some contemporary *dalit*s through a conversation with an important *dalit* Marathi poet and editor/publisher. I want to make clear that I am not attributing this sentiment to this man; he merely informed me that the feeling is widespread, and he is in a position to speak about that observation with authority. Dr. Gangadhar Pantawane, Personal communication, December 22, 2009.

onward, what sense are we to make of the prominent ways in which Eknāth's inter-caste relations were portrayed in Marathi theater and film of the same period? One possibility is, of course, that the productions' authors (aside from Ṭhākre) were brahmans, and the productions' audiences were probably comprised of the higher castes who would be more amenable to the idea that untouchables eventually could be folded into Hindu society. Another possibility is Novetzke's idea of the "brahman double," by which we might imagine that these authors and producers were portraying evil brahmans in order to win the approval of non-brahman audiences on behalf of the good brahmans who do not conduct themselves in this way. I wonder if there may be a third possibility, particularly in light of the comedic element in so many of the 20th-century productions. *Bhāva Toci Dev*, which was performed widely across the Maharashtrian countryside between 1964 and 1974, could not have been attended by high caste Indians exclusively. Perhaps something about portraying the caste tensions in stories about Eknāth was engaging in a way that audiences found enjoyable. Just as the narrative of unification offered an escape route (in theory at least) from the extremes of caste-based social hierarchy, maybe another way of coping with caste and untouchability was to put them on stage in their crassest, most absurdly foolish form in order to induce those whose lives were affected by them to laugh. As a reliable source of comedy, slapstick images of foolish caste prejudice could be marketed as entertainment.

Conclusion

Looking back over the diverse materials that we have considered in this dissertation – various kinds of hagiographies, introductions to literary compendia, modern biographies, historical plays, political drama, entertaining film and theater, devotional VCDs – it is clear that

Eknāth's life has been represented before a very wide variety of audiences who had a wide variety of interests and perspectives. Yet despite this great diversity, a standard image and story of Eknāth gradually consolidated with brahman-untouchable relations as a central feature. It did not have to occur this way. Quite the contrary, the modular structure of the earliest hagiographies themselves were even inclined against it. The stories about Eknāth and untouchables, situated as they were in independent episodes, could have been easily omitted. That they were not merely retained but actually enhanced by combining episodes from different sources to create a super-narrative about Eknāth and caste is quite remarkable. I would suggest that this super-narrative, which preserved an ambiguous sense about Eknāth's social inclusivity and enforced observance of caste boundaries, was an effort to nod to these diverse audiences and hold them together. Ambiguous inclusivity could be marketed to create a wider audience.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Full translation of Mukteśvar's *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān*

Appendix B – Outline of Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan's *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*

Appendix C – Outline of Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra*

Appendix D – Outline of relevant chapters in Mahīpati's *Bhaktavijay*

Appendix E – Outline of relevant chapters in Mahīpati's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*

Appendix F – Outline of relevant chapters in Bhīmasvāmī's *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*

Appendix G – Table of all major Eknāth stories and their textual locations

For the sake of brevity in the outlines, I have consistently used the following abbreviations when the identity of the figures is obvious:

C – Cakrapāṇī (Eknāth's grandfather)

D – Dattātreya (a god, Janārdana's guru

E – Eknāth

G – Girijā (Eknāth's wife)

J – Janārdana (Eknāth's guru)

K – Keśavsvāmī (author of *Eknāth-caritra*)

KJ – Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan (author of *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*)

M – Mahīpati (author of *Bhaktavija* and *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*)

Ś – Śrīkhaṇḍyā (Kṛṣṇa, who comes to serve in Eknāth's home)

Appendix A – Full translation of Mukteśvar's *Śrīkhaṇḍyākhyān*[11]

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1. Om, obeisance to guru, Sustainer of the Universe. He is the god Dattātraya, guru of the world. By means of direct vision he was impressed upon Janārdana, whose hand signals "fear not."

2. At Janārdana's feet Eknāth placed flowers (:: good mind) as a virtuous act. Regarding Janārdana to be among people (:: causing people to say Janārdana's name), he began sincere service.[12]

3. Ekā Janārdana's greatness seems hidden to the *purāṇa*s and *Veda*s, the limit of calmness, perseverance, and compassion. His complete profundity grew.

4. Like the one who was the Guru of the World or perhaps the *avatār* of Brahma or Harihara (Viṣṇu/Śiva), he (Eknāth) became an *avatār* for the sake of *bhakti*.

5. On the banks of the extremely sacred Gaṅgā (Godāvarī) in the world-famous Pratiṣṭhān lived Eknath, who honored brahmans (*brahmaṇpūjan karītase*).[13]

6. This ocean filled with *guru-bhakti* pleased Viṣṇu through devotion. Viṣṇu always dwelled in Eknath's house on the extremely sacred bank of the Godā (Godāvarī).

7. Having taken up the vow to distribute food (*sadāvarta*), when guests came at the appropriate time he gave them as much food as they wished. He served them wholeheartedly.

8. Knowing that such was his (Eknāth's) situation, Viṣṇu established his fame – Śrīpati arrived from Dvārkā dressed as a brahman.

9. He ran for the sake of helping *bhakta*s, arrived and stood in the courtyard. Eknath saw the sight and immediately had compassion.

10. The brāhman spoke gentle words, "Through your *darśan* I have become content. *Svāmī*, I will serve you with respect for some time.

11. Listen, Father Eknath, I should live in service to you now. This is my heart's desire. Do me this favor now.

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[11] The primary Marathi source for this translation was contained in Dā. Ke. Ok's collection of Mukteśvar's short poetry, which happens to be the longest version of the text that I found. Mukteśvar, "Eknāth-caritra (Śrīkhāṇḍyākhyān)," 275-291.

[12] In order to convey the dual meanings of *śleṣa* passages, I have placed the second meaning within parentheses and introduced by two colons (:: second meaning).

[13] Throughout the *ŚKĀ* (and many other Marathi texts) the Godāvarī River is consistently referred to as the Gaṅgā.

12. I want no salary at all and need only enough food to survive. Give me very old clothes. I will serve day and night."

13. Then Eknāth said, "Tell me your name. What is your family? From where have you come?"

14. [Kṛṣṇa] said, "Sir, I am the extent of my family. My name is Kṛṣṇa. People know me."

15. Your fame has come to my ears. Having freed my mind from desire, I came running to this place to serve you.

16. Thus having spoken then, Śrihari began his service filling the *kāvaḍ*[14] with Gaṅgā water and carrying it himself.

17. The life of the world carried water (:: sustains life*)*. He filled completely the large clay pot. He used to grind sandalwood for the brāhmaṇ (Eknāth).

18. He washed the clothes and dishes, offering service everywhere. At the time of worshipping the deities, he quickly [came and] stood nearby.

19. He filled cool, clean Gaṅgā water in the water vessels. At one time he filled all the vessels for the brahman (Eknāth).[15]

20. He was ready like this everywhere. He did not know about shirking duties. He paid no heed to his body's needs. See, he was always joyful.

21. He was absorbed in service this way for 12 years. Such was the manner of the Lord, helping his *bhakta*s day and night.

22. Elsewhere, in Dvārkā, a brahman arrived faithfully with to undertake austerities with great effort. So he sought a good place.

23. A wave of bliss through Kṛṣṇa's grace created a city on the banks of the Gomatī - the extremely excellent Dvārkā, a second heaven with the power of (bringing about) *mokṣa*.

24. He sat down under a tree in a *tuḷsī* forest on the bank of the Gomatī. With flowers (:: good mind) he did *pūjā* to Kṛṣṇa's feet. In his mind was contemplation of Kṛṣṇa.

25. He began a strict vow with regards to food (a fast). With his mouth he said "Kṣṇa-kṛṣna." The brahman, in Self-contemplation, was completely absorbed in Hari.

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[14] A *kāvaḍ* is a wooden yoke from which hang two clay pots for carrying water. The yoke is carried by balancing it on a person's shoulder.

[15] "At one time" perhaps refers to an unknown story of Śrīkhaṇḍyā's miraculous power, which on one occasion apparently accomplished a whole day's work of water carrying in only one trip.

26. Focusing his mind, he endured cold and heat. He held the Lord in his heart. The life of the world had compassion.

27. For 12 years like this, he worshipped the Lord with faith. [Kṛṣṇa] was pleased (*prasanna*). In a dream, he told the brahman some news.

28. "The one for whom you are doing *tapas* is not here in Dvārkā. He dwells happily in Pratiṣṭhān, a servant at the feet of [his] *bhakta*.

29. In Pratiṣṭhān at the house of Eknāth who is himself an *avatār,* I have taken the form of an *avatār* and serve without hesitation.

30. I have given the name Śrīkhaṇḍyākṛṣṇa as my sign." The brāhman awoke and remembered the dream constantly.

31. "I saw a marvel in the dream. His mind was amazed. What kind of *bhakta* is Eknath? God himself serves him!"

32. He awoke and sat up. His voice cried out "Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa!" The sky could not contain his bliss; his mind was amazed.

33. "Blessed, blessed Eknāth, who behaved as if the Lord Ramākānt (Viṣṇu) were in all beings." "I have been pleased in that place."[16]

34. So he quickly went. "When will I see Pratiṣṭhaṇ? When will I see Ekā-janārdan?" There is a great urgency for *darśan*.

35. He went on the way with extreme haste; he quickly arrived at the bank of the Gaṅgā. Then the ascetic saw before him the parent (*soyrā*) of the world carrying *kāvaḍ*.[17]

36. The ascetic looked closely. The Life-of-the-world had come to life. Unknowingly, *darśan* occurred. The ascetic was satisfied.

37. God saw the ascetic. [God thought,] "His arrival was not good. I need to go from here. The ascetic will reveal me."

38. Then the brahman ascetic reverently inquired, "What is your name, sir? Do you know Eknāth?"

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[16] Strangely, the verb in the final foot (*sukhavlo*) is in first-person singular and does not at all fit the context of the rest of the verse, in which is otherwise in the voice of the brahman ascetic. Also, many manuscripts also have this surprising first-person verb here. It is as if the sentence suddenly switched voices from the brahman to Kṛṣṇa in mid-sentence.

[17] *Soyrā* in contemporary Marathi usage usually means "family relative," but in *sant* literature also can have the sense of "parent" or "caretakers."

39. He listened and walked, having filled the *kāvaḍ*s with water. He did not say anything but stood silently when the ascetic spoke.

40. God said to the ascetic (sarcastically), "Who are you talking to? You, a great vow-taker, have arrived! Go look in the town ahead." Then he walked off with the *kāvaḍ*s.[18]

41. [The ascetic said] "Sir, come. The Eknāth whom I mentioned certainly has a residence in Pratiṣṭhān. Tell me immediately."

42. Having taken up the *kāvaḍ*s quickly, God went with great haste. Then the ascetic thought, "I have come here for darśan."

43. "So let's go quickly to take *darśan* of Kṛṣṇa and then bathe in the Gaṅgā. So he paid reverence [to the Godāvarī?]."

44. Having worshipped the Gaṅgā water, in the town he eagerly arrived at Eknath's house, where everyone obtains relief.

45. As the ascetic entered the yard, Eknāth saw him. Then he stood up out of respect and bowed to him.

46. He said, "Oh sir, brahman who is rich in *tapas*-merit, sit down and let me do *pūjā*." The ascetic said "I have a request. Give me *darśan* of Kṛṣṇa."

47. I, a vow-taker, have come from Dvārkā at the confluence of the Gomatī, holding the desire in mind – introduce me to Kṛṣṇa soon."

48. Then Eknāth said, "Could there be a void that exists without him? He has permeated absolutely everywhere. Look. Pay attention and look.

49. Alright, look in this world. There is no difference between the world and the creator. The one who is the creator, himself is the world.

50. How do you imagine a difference of *darśan* there? Speech has caused *darśan* and seer to disappear. So consider the seeing (*dṛśya*)."

51. The ascetic said, "Look, why are you talking about this self-knowledge? Having held the love in my heart, I have come to this place.

52. Unmediated *darśan* will happen. This sign was told in the dream. Is there one known as Kṛṣṇa-śrīkhaṇḍyā in your house?

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[18] The signals for sarcasm in this sentence are the pairing of *moṭhā* with *ālā* (great… came). The editor notes that such a rude answer could have been expected from an uncouth, unfamiliar water-carrier (*pāṇakyās*). Mukteśvar, "Eknāth-caritra (Śrīkhāṇḍyākhyān)," 278n6.

53. [Give me] *darśan* quickly, or else I'll give up my life." Having listened to these final words, Eknāth sat the brahman down.

54. Eknāth said to the disciple, "Invite Kṛṣṇa quickly. Right now, having filled *kāvaḍ*s with Gaṅgā water, he has brought them.

55. Look, he'll be in the shrine or else in the kitchen or upstairs. Look everywhere."

56. The disciples looked immediately. Śrīkhaṇḍyā then disappeared on the spot. Having realized this, Eknāth cried out to Kṛṣṇa.

57. "Victory, victory, oh Life-of-the-world. Oh Janārdana, Pervader-of-the-world, Caretaker-of-the-world, Guide-of-people, sadguru, Savior-of-the-world,

58. Kṛṣṇa, Kānhā, Lotus-eyed one, Vāsudev, Slayer-of-Madhu, Enchanter-of-the-mind, you should run to [my] aid and protect [me]. The wealth-of-merit (the brahman ascetic) is standing there.

59. Vastness-of-the-universe, eternal, Protector-of-the-poor, graceful, compassionate, blessed one. Run, give [me] what [I] ask for at this time.

60. You who are marked by the Śrīvatsa, Wearer-of-the-Vanamālā (Kṛṣṇa's long garland), you care for your reputation**,** you watch over your calves, have mercy on [this] brahman.

61. You are an ocean of compassion, dwelling happily in the heart forever; the ascetic, having a longing for your *darśan*, has stood in the courtyard.

62. If you will not give *darśan*, the ascetic will abandon his life. For that reason, I too will resolutely abandon my body.

63. You should come immediately Lord-of-the-world, you are father-mother to bhaktas. Give *darśan* to the ascetic now, One-beyond-the-*guṇa*s, Storehouse-of-virtue.

64. Oh, where have you gone? The brahman has set out to give his life. If *darśan* does not happen, understand that his body will go to destruction.

65. Hearing Ekājanārdana's speech, Cakrapāṇī's heart melted. He applied sandalwood on both hands and departed from the shrine.

66. Throat choked with emotion, eyes wet, Śrīkṛṣṇa spoke gentle words, "Where has this ascetic come from? Because of him I have become manifest."

67. The brahman had *darśan*. He shouted "Victory, Victory" joyfully. In delight he spoke, "Svāmī Śrīkṛṣṇā, through you I have become one-who-has-a-protector (*sanāth*).

68. My mind's wish has gone. In *darśan,* I have achieved my goal. Having placed my firm devotion at your feet, my joy and happiness have overflowed

69. Samadhi came over Eknath, Purifier-of-the-fallen, Protector-of-the-helpless. Having brought meditation to the place of the soul, he served in his own bliss and happiness.

70. Then Hṛṣikeś spoke, "12 years have passed since I came to your *āśram*. Know that I was at peace.

71. My mind's desire has not been fulfilled; I should be near you for more time," having said this, the Omnipresent One suddenly became invisible.[19]

72. Eknāth came out of *samādhi*.[20] First he honored the guest, "Through you I have accomplished what I wanted. You are a very powerful ascetic."

73. Such was the celebration of God's *bhakta*. Men and women saw and were surprised again and again. Even all the gods of heaven [were surprised].

74. Kṛṣṇa sold [himself] for the sake of *bhakti*. He reveled in servile work. Such was the Husband-of- Kamaḷā's (Kṛṣṇa's) boundless style of love.

75. In the heart and the uttermost borders of earth, Hari protects pervasively. Murārī cooperates with *bhakta*s, protecting at every time.

76. Hearing thus at that time, the ascetic said, "They have saved. They have certainly saved. Śri Kṛṣṇa's feet were shown.

77. How to extol the greatness? *Brahma-jñāna* does not look like this. I see that Paithan on the bank of the Gaṅgā has a protector by means of you.

78. The greatness cannot be described by me. You are a complete *avatār*. Understand, truly, that having fruit of previously earned merit, I have seen the feet of God.

79. The ascetic and Eknāth conversed in sounds of delight. They bathed, understanding each other to be in an ocean of nectar.

80. Thus was the eagerness of the *bhakta*s of God; they remembered Puruṣottam (Kṛṣṇa). Regarding Janārdana in people, he (Eknāth) did heartfelt service.

81. Having worshipped the guest, given food and satisfied him, Eknāth understood him to be the Lord and then prayed.

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[19] This sentence is slightly unclear. It appears that Kṛṣṇa is stating his regret at having to leave, but he leaves anyway.

[20] By "*samādhi*" I understand Mukteśvar to mean that Eknāth had been absorbed in a state of bliss.

82. "By body, speec, wealth and mind, he understood that the ascetic's feet contained God. Have mercy on my lowliness, powerful Soul-of-the-world.

83. Then the brahman spoke gentle words, "Since birth I have not forgotten your feet." Taking leave, the brahman departed contentedly.

84. Janārdana is the doer and enjoyer. Śrīkṛṣṇa, taking various forms, fulfills the desire of one who always has him in mind.

85. The story of Kṛṣṇa is extremely difficult. The Vedas too do not understand its greatness. He shows the greatness of the Dvāpāra yuga in the Kali yuga.

86. In his *saguṇa* form, his fondness is for the Gopīkās. In his unmanifest *nirguṇa* form, he loves the gods. He made the two meet and reached equanimity (*samānatva*).

87. This event was similar. In the meeting of Eknā-janārdan and the brahman, the Best-of-the-world created the story of the *bhakta*s.

88. The leftover food (*ucciṣṭa*) was taken out from Dharma's house - this is famous in the *purāṇa*s.[21] Here it is the same way, if you look at it - the Blessed One in Eknath's house.

89. Kṛṣṇa's compassionate eye is a boat. Holding the firm rope of the sincerity of a *bhakta*'s faith, one makes it across worldly life.

90. Not understanding at all the life of Hari – that greatest friend of devotion – those who have great experience are lifted up, having meditated a saving mantra in one's heart.

91. That which was Ekā-janārdanī's personal goal is Mukteśvar's supreme goal. Holding the basic thread [of the story], the Protector-of-the-universal play made [Mukteśvar] speak.

92. Mukteśvar has told the story. Holding these words sincerely, they accrue merit. The supreme goal has been successful in the three worlds.

93. Such a supreme story as this is purifying. The greatness of the *bhakta* is increased. Blessed, blessed is Ekā-janārdan. You have shown your own greatness.

94. Having seen this story, Mukteśvar put into words the ideas of God's *bhakta* (Eknath). Everything is the play of the Protector-of-the-Universe (or Dattatreya). He (God) understands its end.

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[21] The editor cites Mukteśvar's Marathi rendering of the *Sabhāparva* of the *Mahābhārata* 9:50-53 as longer rendition of this story, in which Kṛṣṇa removes leftover food from Rājasūya's home. Mukteśvar, "Eknāth-caritra (Śrīkhāṇḍyākhyān)," 281n3.

Appendix B – Chapter Outline of Kṛṣṇadās Jagadānanda-nandan's *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*[22]

Ch. 1 – Introduction, E's childhood, Cakrapāṇī advises E to meet Janārdana

Sk1 Sanskrit invocations of Gaṇeś and Pāṇḍurang
Mar1 Marathi invocation of Uddhav the *rājayogī*
1:1-16 Invocations of E, emphasizing bhakti and nonduality
Praise of seeing sameness in all beings (*sarvabhūtīṁ samān*)
Introduction of the *Pratiṣṭhān-caritra*, benefits of listening to the *PC* (*phalaśruti*)
1:17-20 E's birth, childhood
17-18 E as avatār of Vyāsa
19-20 Death of E's parents because of unauspicious stars (*mūḷ nakśatra*)
1:21-25 Cakrapāṇī's background
1:26-96 Discussion between C and E
26-32 C says he will soon die, C recommends E to go to Janārdana
33-59 E responds that he should not leave C, soliloquy on duty of serving elders
38-55 Example of father-mother *bhakta* Puṇḍalīk, Viṭṭhal's visit
60-76 C is pleased with E's response, but C persuades E to go to J
77-80 E agrees to go, E praises J
81-96 KJ's commentary on danger of *māyā* (= love between E and C here)
1:97-101 Closing

Ch. 2 – E meets J in Amdāvatī, J questions E's intentions, Cānd Bodh's visit and blessing

2:1-9 E comes to Amdāvatī, E seeks out J
2:10-20 J meets E, E is overjoyed
2:21-29 J inquires about E's background, E summarizes
2:30-40 J reproaches E for abandoning his grandparents and duties
2:41-55 E responds
41-49 E describes sinfulness of lying to one's sadguru, theologizes about truth
50-55 E praises and theologizes about J
2:56-97 J accepts E as disciple
56-59 J satisfied by E's explanation
60-66 J starts teaching E
67-73 J & E meet Cānd Bodh/Candraśekhar/*avatār* of Datta
71 Cānd Bodh chews *pān* and places it in E's mouth, blesses E
74-80 E impressed by J's teaching, J teaches Kṛṣṇa worship
81-91 KJ tells story: Kṛṣṇa fetches Sandīpani's son (guru service)
92-93 KJ's praise of good disciples
94-97 E eats with J, E serves J *pān*
2:98-103 Closing

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[22] The source material for this outline is the original printed version of the text. K. Jagadānanda-nandan, *PC*.

Ch. 3 – E's service routine, accounting, eating leftovers, discussion of extreme devotion

3:1 Introduction
3:2-22 E's morning routine
3-6 ash-bath
7 Gāyatrī-mantra, recitation of 24 names (of Viṣṇu)
8 E reveres J, sings kīrtan
9 E sings Hari's story, many songs
10 E gives flowers to J
11 E sweeps, puts away bed, meets J in courtyard
12-15 E prepares J's water and toiletry utensils
16-22 J washes his mouth
21-22 E drinks J's spittle
3:23-30 E with J at ruler's court, E helps with accounting
27 highly technical sentence of E's accounting work
3:31-100 E and J return home in evening
33-45 E's rituals, performances and reverence to brahmans
46-56 brahmans eat meal, E eagerly consumes leftovers
57-68 brahmans marvel at E's actions, KJ praises guru-devotion
58 J feels that E's actions are a burden
69-100 J and E discuss E's actions and social acceptability
69-74 J reprimands E and gives E recommendations
75-94 E presents theologically argued defense
95-100 J is pleased, and J & E experience non-duality
3:101-102 Closing

Ch. 4 – E cleans J's toilet, J washes E, E's wedding, E goes to Paithan, J goes to Daulatābād

4:1 KJ: this chap picks up where chap 3 left off
4:2-45 E cleans J's toilet area
2-5 J instructs servants to summon "bad-minded" men to clean his toilet
6-23 E reflects on holiness of anything related to J
9-23 KJ's comparisons
9-14 Lanka and *rākṣasa*s were purified by touch of Janārdana's feet
14-23 J as Kṛṣṇa purified Gokuḷ, Yaśodā, *gopikā*s, demons, etc.
24- 45 E cleans J's toilet area
26-27 implements used in the effort
28-36 E cleans the toilet
37-42 J learns of the event and is amazed
43-45 J washes E by hand
4:46-100 E's wedding
46-52 J plans and seeks a bride for E
53-55 bride is found - daughter of *śāstrī* in Daulatābād
56-63 Cakrapāṇī is invited to Ahmadnagar, C meets J
64-86 Description of marriage ceremony
87-93 J hosts everyone for feast, gives leave to depart
4:94-100 J gives leave to C and E

5:101-104 E moves to Pratiṣṭhāna, J moves to Daulatabad
5:103-104 Datta/Candraśekhara gives darśan to J in Daulatābād
5:105-106 Closing

Ch. 5 – E in Pratiṣṭān, E's devotional and daily routine

5:1-29 E comes to Pratiṣṭhān
4-10 E's great *bhakti* to his guru even when apart
11-16 Cakrapāṇī and wife die, E does appropriate rituals
17 -29 KJ's praise of E (*dhanya dhanya…*)
30-56 KJ's commentary
30-37 On the authority of bhakti
38-39 great sants have self-knowledge
40-44 On the incomparable greatness of *sādhu*s
45-53 On the greatness of the *sant*s (Jnāndev, Mudgal, Mukundarāj, Nāmdev, Tukā, Sāvatā, Kabīr, etc.)
54-56 E's *guru-bhakti*
5:57-99 E's daily routine
57-71 morning worship/devotion (10 *ghaṭikā*s)
72-78 Nine rituals appropriate to brahmans (10 *ghaṭikā*s)
79-80 E gathered people, ate meals, rolled out a carpet (20 *ghaṭikā*s)
81-91 E listened to the 18 *purāṇa*s read aloud (10 *ghaṭikā*s)
92-95 E worshipped J's *pādukā*s in the morning and evening (3 *ghaṭikā*s each)
96-97 E listened to *harikīrtan* (20 *ghaṭikā*s)
98-99 E slept (1.5 *ghaṭikā*s)
5:100-101 Closing

Ch. 6 – E's *seva* to J's *pāduka*s, 100 thirsty donkeys, E gifts merit to heal leprous brahman

6:1-14 E's morning routine
6:6-14 KJ's praise of E's non-dual practice and achievement
6:15-23 E gives water to 100 thirsty donkeys
6:24-40 E's worship of the god image (*devatārcana*)
28-36 Viṣṇu's 24 names
39-40 *kuladaivatā* Ekavīrā
6:41-99 E and the leprous brahman
41-51 leprous brahman prays to Śaṅkar to save him
52-58 Śaṅkar responds: the holy *sādhu* E has surplus virtue that can save
59-76 brahman meets E and requests merit of one act (two possibilities: hearing BhP or watering donkeys)
77-80 E chooses to give the merit of Bhāgvat-listening
81-92 KJ praises greatness of hearing Bhāgvat
93-99 brahman is healed, praises E and departs
6:100-101 Closing

Ch. 7 – Parisa Bhāgvat's philosopher's stone (*parisā*)

7:1-4 KJ's praise of Eknāth
7:5-98 Story of Parisā Bhāgvat
6-22 Parisā serves Rukmiṇī, Rukmiṇī gives touchstone as reward
23-29 Parisā goes on pilgrimage but worries about touchstone's security
30-33 Parisā resolves to give stone to E
34-48 Parisā & E discuss arrangement, E accepts, Parisā sets off on pilgrimage
49-52 E puts stone in Gangā for safekeeping
53-60 Parisā regrets giving stone to E, Parisā hurries back to Paithan
61-70 E welcomes and felicitates Parisā, E performs kīrtan
71-80 Parisā angrily stunned to learn that E threw stone in Gangā
81-88 E pulls many touchstones from Gangā water
89-96 Parisā repents and asks for E's forgiveness
97-98 E commands Parisā to go on pilgrimage again
7:99-100 Closing

Ch. 8 – E's *śrāddha* feast, food given to *cāṇḍaḷ*s before brahmans

8:1-2 Intro
8:3-99 *śrāddha* at E's home
6-19 E treated all guests as equally Janārdana on that day
20-31 workers/*caṇḍāḷ*s request food
32-41 E discusses with cooks, E serves food made for brahmans
42-44 *caṇḍāḷ*s are pleased
45-47 E and staff keep event secret
48-53 conversation between *mātaṅgiṇī* and brahmans
54-75 brahmans refuse to eat after *caṇḍāḷ*s
76-92 E summons ancestors to eat
93-99 E re-invites brahmans to eat
8:100-101 Closing

Ch. 9 – Phālgun vadya 6 festival, story of missing ghee, E rolls in leftovers, food fight

9:1-6 Praise of Eknāth's non-dual devotion & service
9:7-100 E's feast to celebrate sixth day of first half of Phālgun (for death of J)
10-20 E invites 10,000 brahmans to feast
21-26 E does *pujan* and *harikīrtan*
27-29 feast is set
30-45 E searches in vain for *ghee*
46-55 brahmans react variously to lack of *ghee*
56-60 E miraculously transforms water into *ghee*
61-66 brahmans enjoy feast
67-75 E rolls in leftovers, food fight, bath in river

76-81 E invites everyone esp. weak and poor to eat after brahmans finish
82-100 E performs *harikīrtan*
94-100 Kṛṣṇa himself comes for *harikīrtan* in form of poor brahman
9:101-102 Closing

Ch. 10 – adapted *ŚKĀ* story Pt 1 – Viṣṇu comes to serve as "Kṛṣṇabhaṭ"/Śrīkhaṇḍyā

10:1-4 KJ praises E
10:-13 KJ praises Kṛṣṇa, E's devotion to Kṛṣṇa
10:14-98 Śrīkhaṇḍyā serves E
22-28 Viṣṇu talks with Rukmiṇī about how to repay debt to *bhakta*s
29-63 Viṣṇu takes poor brahman form, requests work from E, E accepts
64-74 Viṣṇu serves E
75-81 Gaṅgā purified by touch of Kṛṣṇa's feet when he gathered water
82-98 Śrīkhaṇḍyā/Viṣṇu serves E
10:99-100 Closing

Note: the names Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa and Śrīkhaṇḍyā are freely interchanged in this chapter

Ch. 11 – adapted *ŚKĀ* story Pt 2 – Rukmini tells ascetic in dream about Ś, E's *samādhi*

11:1 Intro
11:2-84 Ś works at E's home
2- 21 Ś/Kṛṣṇa's service to E
19-21 KJ's metaphor of bee happily lost in a lily
22-44 Rukmiṇī worries about Kṛṣṇa so tells ascetic in a dream where Kṛṣṇa is
45-58 ascetic comes to Paithan to meet Ś/Kṛṣṇa
59-69 ascetic meets E and informs him of the dream
70-75 E summons and searches for Ś/Kṛṣṇa to no avail
76-84 E and ascetic observe Kṛṣṇa in each other and rejoice, ascetic departs
11:85-95 E's devotion and guru-service
11:96-108 *phalaśruti* and KJ's narrative play on theme of non-duality
11:109-111 Closing

Addendum - scribal colophon

Appendix C – Chapter Outline of Keśavsvāmī's *Eknāth-caritra*[23]

Ch. 1 – E's childhood, abandonment of grandparents, E welcomed by Janārdana

1:1-2 Introduction
1:3-12 E's childhood, precociousness, call to leave home
6-9 *paurāṇik*/tutor confesses that child E's intelligence exceeds his own
11-12 E called by voice in a Śiva temple, abandons grandparents for Devagirī
1:13-29 E in Devagirī with Janārdana
19 J sees in E a "form of Datta" (*śrīdatta-rūpa*)
20 E without any help sees non-duality (*abhed-ārtha*) in all creation
27 J senses that E will work for upliftment of the world (*jagaduddharaṇ*)

Ch.2 – E's service to J, accounting mistake corrected, E fights battle on J's behalf

2:1-4 Introduction, praise of E as ideal *bhakta*, E's divinity
2:5-9 E's service in daily routine
6 rituals injuctions/prohibitions are worldly, E not disgusted by anything
7 E cleans J's toilet when cleaner came late one day
2:10-14 E does all kinds of service joyfully, for 8 years and 8 months
2:15-25 E stays up late and solves problem of imbalanced ledger
2:26-33 E's service and basic daily routine
27-28 E loved reciting Jñāndev's works
30-33 J combined worldly and spiritual ends when he worked in ruler's court
2:34-73 E fights battle victoriously in J's place so as not to disturb J's meditation
35-39 messenger informs king about approaching enemy and tries to summon J
40-55 E takes on J's form, leads troops to great victory
56-57 news of the victory spreads
58-73 J regaled for victory at court, J mystified by events, J discerns E's role
2:74-84 J returns home, embraces E and both enjoy nondual absorption
2:85 Keśav's conclusion

Ch.3 – Janārdana frequents mountain, E meets Datta (in *malaṅg* dress) fearlessly, D blesses E

3:1-3 Praise, summary of ch. 2, foreshadowing of ch. 3
3.4-56 J, E and Datta on mountain near Devagirī
4 king gave accountants Fridays off
5-6 J used to frequent a mountaintop and lake w/ 1,000 lingas, north of Devagirī
7-9 D would meet J there and merge in nonduality
10-56 Episode of D meeting E

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[23] The source material for this outline mainly follows Keśavsvāmī and M. Gosāvī, *Śrīkeśavkṛt Ovībaddha Śrīeknāth Caritra*. For missing or confusing verses, I have supplemented with Keśavsvāmī, "Eknāth-caritra."; Keśavsvāmī and P.E. Pānse, *Śrīsant Eknāth Mahārāj yāñce Ovibaddha Caritra*.

10-15 once J thought to bring along E to meet D
16-19 D appeared in Muslim garb, speaking Muslim language
21-27 D and J share meal of dog's milk and food
28-36 D tells E to wash dishes, E consumes leftovers, D is pleased
37-45 D blesses, praises and portends great things for E, J is pleased
46-50 D takes own form and embraces E
51 J and E do reverence, D gives blessing, D disappears
52-56 K summarizes and praises this episode

3:57-58 Conclusion

Ch.4 – E's austerities at Sūryakuṇḍ, a cobra provides shade for E

4:1-5 Summary of ch. 3, introduction
4:6-75 E's austerities at Suryakuṇḍ, wonder of the shade-providing cobra
6 J recommends E undertake austerities at Sūryakuṇḍ (Sulī-bhanjan)
7-17 E's routine, background of Sūryakuṇḍ, E sees Kṛṣṇa
18-24 angry cobra is converts by touching E, cobra gives E shade with its hood
25-74 pious śudra farmer and E
25-37 farmer brings milk and food to E to serve him
38-54 on 3rd day farmer is surprised to see cobra, shouts, E is awoken
55-74 Kṛṣṇa appears in flash of light, gives darśan, śudra praises E
75 E remembers J and departs to meet him
4:76-81 E returns to tell J about events, J is pleased, E continues to serve J
4:82-87 K introduces next chapter on E's pilgrimage with J to Pañcāvatī
83 J tells E to visit pilgrimage sites

Ch.5 – E's local pilgrimage with J, Candramābhaṭ, J tells E to make pan-Indian pilgrimage

5:1-2 Introduction
5:3-49 J and E visit Pañcāvatī, Tryambak, meet Candrabhaṭ
3-7 J and E undertake pilgrimage w J's servants
7-49 encounter with J's friend, Candramābhaṭ
7-9 about Candramābhaṭ's *tapas* practice
10-19 Candramā's explanation of *Catuḥślokī Bhāgvat*
20-28 J impressed and commands E to write a version
29-32 J, E and Candramā share books and pūjā
33-44 E finishes *CBh*, others are impressed and pleased
45-49 all go to Tryambak for *darśan*, J & E return home
5:50-57 Candramābhaṭ arrives in Devagirī, dies, is given Muslim-friendly *samādhi*
5:58-59 E returns to J, J instructs E to go on pilgrimage
60-70 long aside by Keśav praising E as his sadguru
71- 114 J tells E to go on pilgrimage to N and S
96-99 J specifies where all E should go
5:115-117 Conclusion

Ch.6 – Cakrapāṇī's search for Eknāth

6:1-2 Introduction
6:3-63 Cakrapāṇī searches for E
3-22 C and wife despair at E's disappearance, search everywhere in vain
23-34 the reassuring *paurāṇik*
35-41 years pass, C searches and despairs
42-45 *paurāṇik* visits J, learns of E's whereabouts
46-56 C and wife visit J, are reassured that E is on pilgrimage
57-63 C gets s letter from J telling E to end pilgrimage and settle in Pratiṣṭhān
6:64-65 Conclusion, foreshadowing of ch.7

Ch.7 – E's North Indian pilgrimage, E returns and settles in Pratiṣṭhān

7:1-3 Introduction
7:4-94 E on pilgrimage in North India
4-8 description of general journey
9-10 bathing in various rivers, sites in "Madhya"
11-18 places of Kṛṣṇa's activity: Gokul, Mathurā, Vṛndāvan
19-23 Prayāg
24-30 Kāśī
31-41 Gayā
42-72 Puṣkar
73-89 Dvārkā and *kīrtan* performance
90-92 southern road (to Paithan)
93 E arrives in Paithan
94 K's narrative transition
7:95-118 E returns and settles in Pratiṣṭhān
95-98 E quietly but confidently enters Paithan
99-105 E reunites coolly with grandparents
106-114 E reads J's letter and resolves to stay
115-118 rumors of E spread through Paithan
7:119 Conclusion

Ch.8 – E settles in Paithan, Kṛṣṇajāyantī celebration, Viṣṇu, D & J attend E's *kīrtan*, J disappears

8:1-3 Introduction, K praises E
8:4-6 E's grandparents adjust emotionally to his return and new life
8:7-26 E becomes established in Paithan
7-20 E as *nāth*, *janī janārdana*, *mahāpuruṣ*, *satpuruṣ* among the people
21-22 townspeople build him a house (*vāḍa*)
23-24 C and wife come to live with E there
25-26 Kṛṣṇa takes brahman form and accompanies E during *kīrtan*s
8:27-88 Celebration of Kṛṣṇa's birthday (Kṛṣṇajāyantī), E's *kīrtan*
28-32 E's fame as a *kīrtankār* spreads
33-34 J comes for celebrations, J brings money to fund it
35-49 Datta comes and works as doorkeeper, D announces J's arrival to E
50-63 Kṛṣṇa attends and leads refrain (*dhrupad*) while E performs *kīrtan*
57-61 Kṛṣṇa introduces himself as an *anātha* brahman named Viṭṭhal

64-72 *kīrtan* reaches climax, shared meal (*gopāl-kāḷā*)
73-88 program ends, C asks E to marry, J approves and blesses E final time
8:89-95 J departs and disappears on Devagirī peak
94-95 everyone in Pratiṣṭhān marvels and the guru-disciple pair
8:96-101 Conclusion, foreshadowing of next chapter

Ch.9 – E's wedding, couple settles in Paithan, Uddhav comes to serve, E's grandparents die

9:1-4 Keśav on authority and writing
9:5-68 E's wedding to Girijābāī
5-16 E's supporters promote the wedding
17-23 a brahman man dreams about offering his daughter to E in Pratiṣṭhān
24-42 bride's relatives in Vijāpūr deś are informed, travel to Pratiṣṭhān
32-42 Uddhav (E's "son of a brother") was very helpful and devoted
43-68 wedding customs and rituals (described in much detail)
8:69-79 E and Girijā settle in Paithan, attended by Uddhav
70-76 Uddhav wants to serve E
77 reference to Uddhav serving Kṛṣṇa
9:80-84 E's grandparents die
9:85-87 Conclusion

Ch.10 - Uddhav serves E, E celebrates Phalgun vadya 6, E's loan is miraculously paid by Kṛṣṇa

10:1 Introduction
10:2-15 Uddhav's service to E
10:16-18 E honors J's death anniversary
10:19-40 celebration of Phalgun vadya 6 (J's death anniversary)
10:41-88 E's large debt after the celebration
42-43 Uddhav had taken out Rs.700 loan in E's name from banker
44-52 banker presses E for return, forces E into fast until he returns money
53-88 Kṛṣṇa takes the form of Uddhav and discreetly repays the loan
53-63 Kṛṣṇa visits banker in the night, repays loan
64-70 banker is ashamed that he made E vow to fast, goes to see E
71-84 E, Uddhav and banker converse and realize Kṛṣṇa's miracle
85-88 summary of story
10:89-91 Conclusion

Ch.11 – Kṛṣṇa attends E's *kīrtan*, E feeds *malaṅg*s/*trimūrti* for *śrāddha*, E summons ancestors

11:1-2 Introduction
11:3-33 E's regular devotions and performances
3-29 Kṛṣṇa/Viṭṭhal attends and supports E musically in kīrtan
5-7 one *haribhakta* tells of dream: Viṭṭhal is in Pratiṣṭhān
12-15 E reads *BhP* aloud in Marathi, so women and śudras understand

15-29 Viṣṇu comes as brahman named Keśav and listens to *BhP*
30-33 E's vow to feed whatever guest comes, regardless of *jāti*
11:34-69 brahmans torment E
36-42 brahmans discuss E as threat to their livelihoods
43-50 brahmans complain about E's popularity
51-52 brahmans declare that they will no longer eat at E's house
53-58 brahmans decide to direct beggars to E's place to milk his generosity
59-67 brahmans send 4 visitors to E's house on rainy night
- E burns furniture to prepare meal
68-69 Keśavsvāmī comments
11:70-120 E's *śrāddha* for ancestors, feeding *malaṅg*s/*trimūrti*, brahmans scheme
70-76 brahmans and *purohit*s are invited for the feast, go to bathe
76-80 *trimūrti* in form of *malaṅg*s appear, demand food, E serves
81-101 brahmans refuse to do rites, challenge E to summon his own ancestors
102-105 E invites 3 ancestors to eat, E credits brahmans command for miracle
106-120 tormenting brahmans are humbled by the miracl
11:121 conclusion

Ch.12 – E's teaching method, brahmans taunt E, E enables Kṛṣṇadās to complete his *Rāmāyaṇa*

12:1-9 Keśvsvāmī praises Eknāth
5-7 E's teaching method
12:9-56 brahmans taunt E about Kṛṣṇadās, E miraculously saves and inspires him
9-13 brahmans resent E's success and praise the poet Kṛṣṇadās as better than E
13-18 E does not take bait to compete
19-56 E miraculously extends Kṛṣṇadās' life to finish writing his *Rāmāyaṇa*
19-29 Kṛ approaches E about impending death & unfinished text
30-34 E impressed with text, promises Kṛ will live 11 more days to finish
35-52 Kṛ completes book, receives E's blessing and disappears
53-56 brahmans marvel at how E turns their schemes upside-down
12:57 conclusion

Ch.13 – Kannada merchant gives Viṭṭhal image to Eknāth, E performs V&R wedding

13:1-2 intro, praise of E
13:3-41 Vijay-Pāṇḍurang *mūrti* is brought to E's home
3-21 merchant from Karnataka created *mūrti* of Viṭṭhal
- merchant had troubling dreams, was told to give image to E
22-41 householder brings image to E, describes his dream
13:42-63 Viṭṭhal image installed at E's home
42-47 ritual preparations and events
48-49 feast for the people
50-56 E offers butter to image and image eats it
57-62 E's humility about the event
63 E performs a *kīrtan*
13:64-110 wedding of Viṭṭhal and Rukmiṇī in Karnataka
64-75 householder asks E come to and perform wedding for Rukmiṇī image

76-90 preparations are made and group travels from Pratiṣṭhān to Karnataka
91-93 wedding is performed
94-96 E performs a *kīrtan*
97-103 E and party take leave and return to Pratiṣṭhān
104-108 E arrives in Pratiṣṭhān, Viṭṭhal image henceforth known as married
109-110 E resolves to make pilgrimage to Pandharpur
13:111 conclusion

Ch.14 – E on pilgrimage to Pandarpur, E performs *kīrtan* and tells story about Bhānūdās

14:1-19 E goes on pilgrimage to Pandharpur (Ppur)
1-10 E: pilgrimage to Ppur is appropriate since Viṭṭhal visited him in Pratiṣṭhān
8 E does a *kīrtan* before setting out from Pratiṣṭhān
10 E had vowed to always perform *kīrtan* (*sadāvrata*)
11-19 people in Ppur hear of E's coming and make plans for E to do a *kīrtan*
14:20-45 E arrives, takes *darśan* of Viṭṭhal image
20-24 E is welcomed and brought to temple
25-29 description of Viṭṭhal image
30-41 E and Viṭṭhal both cry and enjoy nondual experience
42-45 E does bath, *sandhyā* rituals, E prepares for *kīrtan*
14:46-148 Keśavsvāmī narrates Bhānudās story (as background for E's *kīrtan*)
46-58 Rāmrājā of Vidyānagar is good *bhakta* who wanted Viṭṭhal at his palace
48 Viṭṭhal agreed on 2 conditions:
- movement from Ppur to Vidyānagar must occur in only 1 day
- Viṭṭhal image must be carried only by hands of "pure" people
59-69 chain of brahmans hand the image from one to another to meet conditions
70-73 Viṭṭhal's new temple is secured like a prison
74-86 at Ppur pilgrimage *bhakta*s grieve Viṭṭhal's absence
- *bhakta*s ask Bhānudās to fetch him
75-78 many *sant*s present: Nāmdev, Jñāndev, Sāvatāmāḷī, Cokhā, etc.
86-90 Bhānudās travels to Vidyānagar and stays in a shop but can't sleep
91-107 Bhānudās enters secure temple and meets Viṭṭhal
91-95 Bhānudās is miraculously able to open all the doors
96-102 Bhānudās & Viṭṭhal meet, Bhānudās sings an *abhaṅga*
103-107 Bh asks Viṭṭhal to return
- Viṭṭhal gives Bh necklaces from his neck, including gems
108-114 Bh sings *kīrtan* on riverbank, priest sees missing necklace, confronts Bh
115-119 king decrees that Bh be impaled on spike, Bhānu sings another *abhaṅga*
120-121 when Bh approaches wooden spike, new shoots sprout, all are amazed
122-129 king feels great remorse and apologizes profusely
130-137 Bh secures permission to return Viṭṭhal to Ppur
138-148 Bh returns Viṭṭhal according to Viṭṭhal's conditions
138-141 Viṭṭhal becomes very small, Bh carries him on his shoulder
142-147 Bh returns to Ppur, people rejoice, Bh puts image in temple
148 Keśavsvāmī: this is the same image that still stands in the temple
14:149-161 E performs the *kīrtan*
155-161 listeners are enraptured and Ppur experiences new wonder

14.162-165 E returns to Pratiṣṭhān and performs *kīrtan* there
14.166-167 Conclusion

Ch. 15 – Daṇḍavat's miracle/*samādhi*, brahmans condemn E, E makes Nandi eat & jump in river

15:1-2 E goes back to routine of *kīrtan* performance after returning to Pratiṣṭhān
15.3-26 E and *paramahaṁsa sannyāsī* named Daṇḍavat
3-8 Introduction of Daṇḍavat: constantly prostrated himself to everything as god
9-11 brahmans challenge Daṇḍavat to revere dead donkey carcass
12-13 donkey comes back to life at Daṇḍavat's touch
14-20 E reprimands Daṇḍavat for display that will attract attention of Muslims
21-26 E recommends Daṇḍavat take *samādhi* and Daṇḍavat immediately does
15:27-61 brahmans challenge E about authority to recommend *samādhi*
27-31 brahmans reprimand E for not consulting them
- brahmans ask what scriptural grounds there are for E's recommendation
32-36 E responds humbly that he submits to brahman authority
37-44 brahmans challenge E to make stone Nandi statue eat fodder
45-55 Nandi responds to E
43-44 reference to Jñāneśvar causing buffalo to speak Vedas
54-55 Nandi eats fodder, then jumps into pool in river
56-59 E reveres brahmans
60 Keśavsvāmī comments on value of brahman authority
61 brahmans absolve E of any wrongdoing
15:62-63 Conclusion

Ch. 16 – E goes to Jñāneśvar's *samādhī*, E meets Jñāndev and clears site, E edits *Jñāneśvarī*

16:1-2 Summary of previous chapter's events
16:3-68 E and group take *yātrā* to Jñāneśvar's *samādhi* site
3-7 E states desire to see Jñāneśvar's place, welcomes *bhakta*s to join him
8-12 group arrives at Indrāyaṇī bank - a desolate and scary place
13-28 E meets Jñāndev
13-17 E searches for *samādhī* site, E locates *ajāna* tree
18-20 Jñāneśvar comes to E (spiritually?)
21-28 Jñāneśvar takes E to site, E stays there 3 days/nights
29-37 Kannaḍa Lingāyat trader appears and provides for camp on the riverbank
38-44 E returns, eats, invites group to work on clearing the *samādhi* site
45-54 group clears roots from Jñāneśvar's throat, generally cleans the area
55-63 work is completed, people rejoice, remaining bhaktas take *darśan*
- trader suddenly disappears
64-68 E and group return to Pratiṣṭhān
16.69-72 Pratiṣṭhān townsfolk celebrate party's return
16.73-77 E edits the *Jñāneśvarī*
16.78-79 conclusion

Ch. 17 – E eats at the home of untouchable family, suspicious brahmans see 2 Eknāths

17:1-5 introduction and praise of E
17:6-11 Keśav of Dvārkā (Kṛṣṇa as servant) takes leave of E after 12 years of service
17:12-18 description of Uddhav's abiding service to E
17:19-84 E eats at the home of untouchable
19-23 unnamed untouchable approaches E and they converse
24-28 brahmans become angry, E defends actions and cites spiritual sameness
29-34 brahmans argue that E must perform prāyāścitta with 5 products from cow
35-47 untouchable is very impressed with E, tells wife
- untouchable man invites E for meal, E accepts
48-52 brahmans are amazed and try to catch E in the act
53-56 E oblivious to brahmans' outrage, carries on with his daily routine
57-63 untouchable summons E, E goes to untouchable's home
64-73 brahmans are confounded, seeing E at home and at untouchable's home
74-81 E enjoys meal with untouchables, they revere and worship him
82 E gives a Sanskrit mantra to untouchables
83-84 E returns home, devotees rejoice at wonder
17:85-87 Conclusion

Ch. 18 – brahman and touchstone, E accidentally throws it in river, E reveals many stones

18:1-6 Intro, general praise of E, Kṛṣṇadās comments on spiritual virtues
18:7-76 householder entrusts E with touchstone (*parisā*)
7-13 householder has good fortune to find parisa, becomes disturbed
- householder decides to take pilgrimage
14-29 householder attends E's *kīrtan*, entrusts stone to E, asks E to take care of it
30-33 E places *parisā* in god-house, accidentally throws it in Gaṅgā w/ flowers
34-47 householder stops pilgrimage, returns, complains that E has lost his *parisā*
48-68 E doesn't recall where he put it, E pulls up many *parisā*s from Gaṅgā
- E asks householder to identify which one is his
69-76 householder retrieves his *parisā*, regrets anxiety, E is calm
18:77-81 Conclusion

Ch.19 – E's daily routine; story of Sri Khandya, ascetic comes for darshan of Kṛṣṇa

19:1-4 Praise of E
19:5-13 Overview of E's daily routine
19:14-72 Śrīkhaṇḍyā comes to serve
14-24 brahman (Ś) arrives, asks to serve, E inquires about background
25-30 ŚK's tasks
33-72 ascetic arrives for *darśan*
34-39 ascetic has dream about Kṛṣṇa, comes to Pratiṣṭhān
40-55 ascetic arrives, tells E his desire for *darśan*, search for Ś ensues
56-62 Kṛṣṇa himself appears, gives *darśan*, says he will return to Dvārkā
Kṛṣṇa will serve E three times for 12 years each
63-72 ascetic praises E, they eat together, ascetic takes leave
19:73 conclusion

Ch.20 – E finds 4 thieves in his home and gives food, thieves feel remorse and ask forgiveness

20:1 Introduction
20:2-9 around the time of a *kīrtan*'s conclusion, 4 thieves wanted to steal something
- seeing everyone asleep, they entered E's home
- they find nothing and wondered if God was playing a trick on them
- they start to regret their actions; this home must belong to someone great
20:10-14 suddenly E appeared, and thieves were moved to convert
E has mercy, E takes pity on them
20:15-19 thieves describe their situation: wanted to steal, found nothing, suddenly saw E
20:20-31 after meeting E thieves feel tired of stealing and ask E for forgiveness
20:32-34 E forgives and asks them to take *prasād* before going
20:35-38 Girijā and Uddhav are woken to prepare food, thieves are satisfied
20:39-43 thieves are thankful, fall at E's feet and depart
20:44-45 Conclusion

Ch.21 – E nurtures the untouchable thief, E gives surplus merit to brahman *rākṣasa*

21:1-4 Introduction, praise of E
21:5-41 E cares for a nearly-dead untouchable thief
5-14 background about the thief: not fed in priosn, near death, decides to escape
15-24 untouchable likes E's *kīrtan*, crawls to E's place and collapses
25-38 E cares for untouchable, wakes family to prepare food
39-41 Keśavsvāmī lauds value of compassion, news of E's deed spreads
21.42-58 E saves the brahma *rākṣasa* by gifting him surplus merit
42-46 E encounters the *rākṣasa* who lived in a tree near where E bathes
47-53 *rākṣasa* tells story, asks E for help
54-48 E offers a *puṇya*, *rākṣasa* is redeemed
21:59-63 Conclusion

Ch.22 – E writes part of *EBh*, householder brings it to Varanasi, *sannyasī* there disapproves

22:1 Introductory praise: E lifts up the community (*samāj*) of devotees
22:2-8 Overview of texts written by E: *CBh*, *abhaṅga*s, *EBh*, etc.
22:9-94 E composes and defends *EBh*
9-16 E writes first 2 chapters, an impressed householder brings text to Varanasi
17-64 householder in Varanasi approached by students and sādhus
- *EBh* is condemned for being written in Marathi, E is summoned
65-82 Students accompany householder to Pratiṣṭhān to speak with E
77 - students are amazed that there is no animosity (*viṣam*) in E's response
83-94 E happily agrees to return with them to Varanasi

Ch.23 – E in Varanasi with *sannyāsī*s, Kṛṣṇa takes on E's form, 300 *sannyasī*s repent

23:1-6 General praise of E, sometimes referring to previous episodes
23:7-78 E converts *sannyāsī*s in Varanasi
7-13 E comes to Varanasi

14-20 book is brought to *svāmī*s in Varanasi, they discuss what to do
21-27 *sannyāsī*s don't read the book but decide they should punish E
28-33 *sannyāsī*s come to punish E, but Kṛṣṇa appears in E's place
- *sannyāsī*s bow before him
- some students see *sannyāsī*s bowing to E, report it to the *ācārya*
34-48 main *sannyāsī* is disturbed by news, comes to investigate and interrogate E
42 - main *sannyāsī* was merely a heap of pride
49-58 E politely requests mercy from the *sannyāsī*
- E tells *sannyāsī* to throw *EBh* in the Gaṅgā if he deems it useless
59-69 *sannyāsī*'s heart is melted by E's humility, he touches his head to E's feet
70-72 E responds that *sannyāsī* shouldn't humble himself like that
73-78 main *sannyāsī* and other 300 *sannyāsī*s praise E, invite him to their *maṭh*s
23:79 Conclusion

Ch.24 – E finishes *EBh*, *EBh* thrown in Gaṅgā and returned, *EBh* & Eknath felicitated

24:1-5 Introduction and praise of E
24:6-99 E vs. tormenting Varanasi *paṇḍit*s
6-12 converted *sannyāsī* (from previous chapter) welcomes E to his *maṭh*
13-21 *paṇḍit*s are outraged at E's acceptance in Varanasi
22-30 *paṇḍit*s: E's Marathi book should be drowned in the Gaṅgā
31-36 *sannyāsī* disagrees with *paṇḍit*s, *paṇḍit*s grab *EBh* and leave *maṭh*
- E is undisturbed
37-45 *paṇḍit*s throw *EBh* into river, Bhāgīrathī returns it to E and praises him
46-96 everyone praises and reveres E
58-70 *EBh* set on an elephant, E paraded in great celebration for 7 days
71-74 *sannyāsī* decrees feasts on some days
75-97 E stays on with *sannyāsī* 4 more days
97-99 E begins to take leave and return to Pratiṣṭhān
24:100-101 Conclusion

Ch.25 – E meets Dāsopant, Dāsopant comes to Pratiṣṭhān, Datta appears as E's door-keeper

25:1 Keśavsvāmī praises E
25:2-21 E and Dāsopant
2-4 E decides to return to Pratiṣṭhān, Dāsopant hears of it and wants to meet E
5-9 about Dāsopant: Datta devotee, had darśan of D after 30 years, ascetic
10-21 E meets Dāsopant, visits his home, invites D to Pratiṣṭhān
25:22-39 E welcomed back to Pratiṣṭhān with great celebration
30 after revering Gaṅgā and remembering Janārdana, E begins *kīrtan*
25:40-61 Dāsopant comes to Pratiṣṭhān to celebrate *Kṛṣṇajayanti*
42-54 Dāsopant arrives, sees Dattā serving as door-keeper, Dāsopant reveres E
55 E welcomes Dāsopant into his home
56 D brings palanquin and horses with him
57 E does *kīrtan*
58 *Gopāḷkālā* celebrated
59 Dāsopant calls E a *pūrṇāvatār*

25:62-63 conclusion

Ch.26 – An untouchable spits on E, E picks up untouchable boy, E's merit heals leprous brahman

26:1-5 Introduction
26:6-14 rehearsal of previous episodes to praise E
26:15-34 *cāṇḍāḷ* accidentally spits on E
20 E felt compassion and wanted him to become pure (*śuddha*)
24 hearing E's extremely dear words, the *cāṇḍaḷ*'s heart melted
29 E says that *cāṇḍāḷ* wouldn't be bound to sin because of the event
26:34-38 E returns home, Keśavsvāmī praises him
26:39-46 E lifts untouchable boy from burning sand
26:46-65 E gifts surplus merit to heals a brahman's leprosy
53 E's merit from picking up the untouchable child could heal disease
63 E gives the merit and the man is healed
26:66-67 Conclusion

Ch.27 – Gaṅgā comes to hear E's *kīrtan*s until attracted men follow her, E convinces non-practicing merchant neighbor to pray

27:1-2 Introduction
27:3-33 Gaṅgā comes to hear E's *kīrtan*s, curious men follow her, she doesn't return
14-20 once some foolish men follow, see her disappear in Gaṅgā, are amazed
21-33 Gaṅgā doesn't return, men feel remorse and confess to E, E consoles them
27:34-75 E starts worldly Hindu merchant neighbor on spiritual practices
34-38 E noticed that his neighbor never came to listen to *kīrtan* or *purāṇa*
- E feared for his spiritual well-being
39-52 man says he's involved in business
- E discusses worldly/spiritual matters, man says he'll try
53-75 slowly the man begins visiting E, bathing ritually, reciting Viṣṇu's names
69 merchant nearly dies, remembers the Name, repels death
72 merchant realized that E had saved him from his sins at time of death

Ch.28 – E's family, Haripaṇḍit moves to Varanasi and returns, miracle of 1,000 plates

28:1-9 Intro and praise of E
28:10-14 E has one son Hari and two daughters Godūbāī and Gaṅgābāī
28:15-108 Story of Haripaṇḍit
17 - Hari dislikes E's Marathi speeches and his *kīrtan*, so he leaves for Varanasi
18 - Hari had 3 sons, of which the youngest Rāghobā stayed behind and served E
24-35 E comes to Varanasi and stays with Hari, asks Hari to return
36-44 Hari agrees on 2 conditions:
- no more writing Marathi books
- no eating food made by others (*parānna*)
45-47 Hari takes over preaching but in Sanskrit, attracts little interest

48-103 poor woman's vow to feed 1000 brahmans, miracle of 1,000 plates
28:104-108 Hari apologizes E, tells E to resume Marathi discourses
28:109 conclusion

Ch.29 – E begins to write *Rāmāyaṇa*

29:1-5 Intro and praise of E by rehearsing previous episodes
29:6-104 E begins writing a Marathi *Rāmāyaṇa*
6 E was fond of Rāma in his heart; Rāma knew of E's fame and came to him
8 Rāma requests E to write a book about him
23-104 long summary of the contents of E's *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa*
29:105-112 E prepares for his death, has no need to finish *BhR*
- E says disciple Gāvbā will complete *BhR*
29:113-115 conclusion, foreshadowing of next chapter

Ch.30 – E makes Gāvbā complete *BhR*, E begins to die as town says goodbye

30:1-48 E makes Gāvbā finish writing *BhR*
1-12 Gāvbā's background: born to brahman family, mute and dull-witted
13-28 parents hands over Gāvbā to live with E
29-43 E teaches Gāvbā to say God's names but Gāvbā only says "Eknāth"
44-48 E touches Gāvbā's head and imparts capability to finish writing *BhR*
30:49-76 E's death/*samādhi*
52 some detractors mock: E did great wonders but will still die like everyone else
59 people say that E certainly isn't human but *pūrṇabrahma*
60 people praise E, calling him *jagadoddhārī avatār*
65 people command Uddhav to prepare public procession

Ch.31 – E's death/*samādhi*, Conclusion

31:1-4 Praise for E, rehearsal of some past episodes
31:5-25 E's procession to Gaṅgā for *samādhī*
7 E brings himself into the Gaṅgā and takes a bath
8 E carries *vīṇā* (stringed instrument) on his shoulder and begins a *kīrtan*
25 leaving the city, procession comes to the Lakṣmī-tīrtha on the Godāvarī
31:26-44 E's final *kīrtan*
29 wise men ask E when he would come back again as an *avatār*
30 E sings an *abhaṅga* that satisfies everyone
31-35 Keśavsvāmī comments on *abhaṅga* and praises E
40 as death nears, E sang a final *āratī*
44 E enters the Gaṅgā and gives up his life
31:45-49 People mourn, E's body is cremated
48 brahmans witness E's death and cremate the body according to ritual
31:50-77 praise of E, establishment of E's *samādhi* shrine
71 at the site of his *samādhi* a *tuḷsī* plant began to grow
74 E's sandals (*pādukas*) were established at the *samādhi*
31:78-90 Keśavsvāmī reflects modestly on his own work and ability, conclusion

Appendix D – Chapter Outline of Mahīpati's *Bhaktavijay*[24]

Ch.45 – E's childhood, service to J, E as accountant, E reluctantly meets Datta twice, E as householder, *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa*, E and the converted reviler

45:1-8 invocation
45:9-13 E's birth
- E parents don't die
- E's parents "exceedingly devoted" to him

45:14-23 E visits J
- E happens to visit J one day (no background story to this)
- J tests E, asks if he's sulking and running away from parents
- E says he's only come out of sense of love and renunciation of the world

45:24-34 E's service of J
- E would massage J's feet at night
- E made pān for J
- E would bring spittoon, materials for worship
- E eats J's leftovers
- at night J would cough and spit bile into spittoon; E would drink it
- E would clean J's toilet with his own hands

45:35-38 J's estimation of E
- E is serving J without parents' knowledge
- parents grow old
- J would send food and clothes to them

45:39-57 E works as accountant
- E stays up late one night to search for tiny error

50-57 E finds error and is overjoyed

45:58-68 E's blessed day
- E's soliloquy on devotion to J

45:69-73 E as J's disciple
- J teaches mantra *Rāma Kṛṣṇa*

45:74-82 J takes E to meet Dattātreya
- J warns E not to fear Datta's form
- J tells E to eat whatever is given
- J takes E to the "jungle"

45:82-88 Datta appears in form of a Muslim, sitting on a horse
- broad forehead, bloodshot eyes, holding weapons
- speaks in Muslim language
- E thinks that he is a real Muslim
- J and Datta eat on jeweled plate
- Datta calls for E to join

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[24] The source material for this outline follows mainly the English translation of the sections on Eknāth as presented in J.E. Abbott et al., *Stories of Indian Saints: A Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya*. For uncertain translations, I have consulted Mahīpati, *Srī Bhaktavijay*; Mahīpati, *Śrī Bhaktavijay*.

45:89-91 E is skeptical
- E asks, "How can I eat food of a Muslim?"
- E runs away "a good distance"
- Datta disappears and E is astonished
- E asks J who the Muslim man was

45:92-100 J removes E's doubt
- J says E has missed great opportunity
- J tells E that another chance may come

45:101-104 E apologizes, consents to J's advice

45:105-111 Manifestation of Datta
- Datta reappears as *fakīr* with she-dog
- J and Datta speak Muslim language
- Datta is hungry, milks dog and crumbles bread into milk

45:112-116 E's hesitation
- E wonders if it is lawful to eat with a *fakīr*
- J encourages E , but E still fearful
- J gives E morsel of leftovers but E stays distant
- Datta asks J who E is

45:117-130 Datta's blessing
- Datta: E will write *Bhāgavat*, *BhR*, *pada*s
- J asks E if he ate the morsel; E had thrown it away
- J takes *pān* from his own mouth and puts it in E's mouth

45:131-137 J sends E back to Pratiṣṭhān
- J tells E to live as householder

45:138-148 E as householder
- E begins to live with his wife (no mention of a wedding)
- E worships an old idol of Pāṇḍurang
- E hosts brahmans and eat with them
- E listens to *purāṇa*s and performs *harikīrtan*

45:149-156 Rāma commands E to compose Marathi *Rāmāyaṇa*

45:157-203 E and the reviling neighbor who converts
- 157-170 Reviler opposes E composing in Marathi, converts after seeing miracle
- 171-178 Reviler intends to become E's disciple
- 179-189 E talks with the reviler
- 190-198 the reviler is tested
- 199-203 reviler is proved a hypocrite

45:203-206 conclusion

Ch. 46 – E feeds untouchables at *śrāddha*, brahmans purify E, E heals brahman leper, Śrīkhaṇḍyā, E's dream of Jñāndev, E's trip to Āḷandī

46:1-6 invocation

46:7-44 Story of Śrīkhaṇḍyā
- 7-16 Kṛṣṇa comes in brahman form to E
- 17-23 life of a servant
- 24-34 Kṛṣṇa's daily routine

35-44 origin of Śrīkhaṇḍyā's name
46:45-101 E feeds untouchables first at *śrāddha* feast
45-53 Eknath invites brahmans to *śrāddha* for his ancestors
54-61 Eknath untouchables first
62-68 untouchables are pleased
69-84 brahmans are outraged about E's deed
84 brahmans put E out of caste
85-101 ancestors attend the feast
46:102-107 brahmans force purification on E for feeding untouchables
105 E refuses penance, argues that he done nothing wrong
107 brahmans smear ashes and cowdung on him, repeat vedic mantras
46:108-128 brahman leper arrives from Trimbak
- Śiva told brahman in dream to meet E
- Śiva said that E feeding untouchables was a "holy deed"
- that E might be willing to share for his healing
- brahmans: feeding untouchables first can't possible by a holy deed
117-128 E cures the leper
46:129-158 Śrīkhaṇḍyā's identity revealed, Ś departs
46:163-179 Jñāndev visits E in dream, E travels to Āḷandī to clean Jñāndev's *samādhi*
46:180-185 on J's ability to see Janārdana in everything
46:186 conclusion, foreshadowing of next chapter (on Rāmdās)

Appendix E – Chapter Outline of Mahīpati's *Bhaktlīlāmṛt*[25]

Ch.13 – E's childhood, E serves J, E leads battle, E corrects ledger, E cleans J's toilet, E meets Dattātreya

13.1-9 General introduction
13.10-11 Intro to E
13.12-58 Childhood of E (including background on Bhānudās not in *EC*)
13.59-65 E hears voice in Śiva temple telling him to meet J in Devagirī
13.65-78 E meets J
13.79-10165 E serves J
- 108-124 E takes on J's military form to fight attacking enemy
- 125-137 J is regaled at king's court (for E's victory), J realizes what occurred
- 138-148 E seeks and finds minor error in ledger, J is impressed
- 149-154 E cleans J's toilet, J decides to introduce E to Dattātreya
- 13.155-165 J's worship of and relationship with Dattātreya

13.166-205 J takes E to meet Datta
- 186 Mahīpati: Datta (in Muslim form) tests E's faith by eating bread/milk with J

13.206-208 Conclusion

Ch.14 – E meditates, cobra gives shade, J & E meet Candrabhaṭ, E sets off on pilgrimage

14.1-8 Intro
14.9-23 J teaches E
14.24-110 E meditates and experiences miracles on a mountain
- 24-36 J sends E to meditate on Mount Sulabhā
- 37-46 cobra provides shade for E
- 47-73 pious farmer and wife give milk to E
- 74-89 farmer witnesses cobra coiled around E's body and alerts E
- 90-110 Viṣṇu manifests himself to E and farmer
- 111-116 E returns to tell J

14.117-176 J and E go on pilgrimage to Tryambak
- 123-146 J and E meet Candrabhaṭ
- 147-151 the pilgrims continue their journey
- 152-172 J encourages E to compose *Catuḥślokī Bhāgavat*
- 173-176 Candrabhaṭ is entombed alive in Muslim-looking tomb at Devagiri

14.177-194 J sends E on long pilgrimage to Mānas Lake and Rāmeśvar
- 193-205 E departs

14.206-209 Conclusion

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[25] The source material for this outline follows mainly J.E. Abbott et al., *The Life of Eknāth*. For confusing and uncertain passages I have consulted Mahīpati, *Bhaktalīlāmṛt*.

Ch.15 – E's grandparents search for E, E's travels in N India, E performs *kīrtan*s, Kṛṣṇajayantī, J tells E to marry

15.1-8 Intro
15.9-69 E's grandparents search for E
9-54 grandparents are distressed, meet *purāṇik* who eventually meets J
55-69 E's grandparents meet J
15.70-106 E's travels in N India
15.107-130 E returns to Pratiṣṭhān and settles
131-136 E performs *kīrtan*s, Pāṇḍurang takes brahman form and attends
137-144 Mahīpati praises E's goodness
15.145-190 E celebrates Kṛṣṇajāyantī
15.191-203 J instructs E to marry
15.204-205 Conclusion

Ch.16 – E's wedding, E's grandparents die, J dies, Phālgun vadya 6, E's loan is repaid

16.1-7 Invocation, introduction
16.8-63 E marries Girijā
8-12 grandparents search for bride
13-25 brahman man in distant village has dream of wedding his daughter to E
26-40 wedding preparation, Uddhav comes and wants to serve
41-55 wedding is celebrated
56-63 description of E and wife Girijā
16.64-67 death of E's grandparents
16.68-97 death of J and celebration of Phālgun vadya 6
16.98-129 merchant wants back his loan, Viṭhobā miraculously repays it for E
16.130-146 Viṭhobā's identity is discovered
16.147-151 Conclusion

Ch.17 - Brahman torment E, four brahmans guests on a rainy night, three *fakīr* guests, Kṛṣṇadās finishes his *Rāmayaṇa*, Vijay-Pāṇḍuraṅg image arrives, wedding of Pāṇḍuraṅg & Rukmiṇī

17:1-5 introduction
17:6-12 E gives readings from *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*
17:13-29 God appears in guise of brahman named Keśav
17:30-54 brahmans are envious of E and devise ways to torment him
17:55-67 E's hospitality for four brahman travelers on rainy night
- E burns a wooden beam from his own roof to cook for them
17:68-80 E's hospitality to three *fakīr*s (actually the *trimūrti*)
17:81-111 brahmans persecute E
17:112-115 brahmans continue envying E
17:116-124 brahmans unsuccessfully tempt Eknāth to envy rival poet Kṛṣṇadās
17:125-153 Kṛṣṇadās comes to E for help, E says Kṛṣṇadās will live 11 additional days
146-153 Kṛṣṇadās completes his *Rāmāyaṇa* and dies
17:154-201 Kannaḍa merchant makes image of Viṭṭhal, has dreams, delivers it to E
17:202-225 E performs wedding of Pāṇḍurang and Rukmiṇī images for merchant

17:226 Conclusion

Ch.18 - E's pilgrimage to Pandharpur, E tells story of Bhānudās

18.1-6 Invocation, introduction
18.7-19 E plans pilgrimage to Pandharpur
18.20-25 E starts pilgrimage to Pandharpur
18.26-38 E journeys to Pandharpur
18.39-59 E arrives at Pandharpur
18.60-73 E meets w *bhakta*s at Pandharpur
18.74-202 E tells story of Bhānudās
18.203-204 Conclusion

Ch.19 - E and Śrīpad, E makes Nandi eat and jump into river, Āḷandī, Rāṇyā Mahār's invitation to E to eat at their home

19:1-7 Invocation
19:8-18 E returns to Pratiṣṭhān
19:19-58 E and the miracle Śrīpad resurrecting a donkey
- 19-28 Śrīpad's devotion that does not make distinctions
- 29-36 Śrīpad worships a dead donkey
- 37-46 donkey is brought back to life
- 47-50 E rebukes Śrīpad for his dangerously ostentatious miracle
- 51-58 E buries Śrīpad alive (*samādhi*)

19:59-99 E defends himself against brahman detractors, miracle of the animated Nandi
- 59-64 brahmans accuse E of unlawful act in entombing Śrīpad
- 65-80 brahmans demand a miracle of E; E makes a stone Nandi eat stalks
- 81-88 some brahmans disbelieve miracle
- 89-99 E makes bull jump into river

19:100-129 E restores Jñāndev's *samādhi* and edits the *Jñāneśvarī*
- 100-105 E goes to Alaṅkāpuri (Āḷandī)
- 106-119 God miraculously provides food for group while in a desolate area
- 120-129 E corrects text of Jñāneśvarī

19.130-137 God-as-Keśava asks E for permission to depart
19.137-239 E "eats" at home of Rāṇyā Mahār
- 153-161 Rāṇyā's wife wants to invite E to eat with them
- 162-170 E invited by Rāṇyā and wife
- 171-193 E recites *BhP* śloka to Rāṇyā and brahmans get angry
- 194-203 E accepts Rāṇyā's invitation to dine
- 204-239 God in E's form eats at Rāṇyā's home

19.240 Conclusion

Ch.20 – E and the touchstone, Śrīkhaṇḍyā, E and the four thieves, E's helps Mahār thief

20:1-7 invocation
20:8-10 brahmans accuse E of working through demons (for having two images appear)
20:11-54 E and the Paithan-based brahman who found a touchstone

20:55-62 E's daily routine
20:63-130 Śrīkhaṇḍyā
63-93 Śrī Khaṇḍyā comes to serve E
94-130 Śrīkhaṇḍyā's identity revealed by ascetic, Śrīkhaṇḍyā departs
20:131-167 E and the four thieves
20:168-201 E nurses Mahār thief from near death back to health
20:202-203 Conclusion

Ch.21 – E and brahman *rākṣasa*, E defends his *EBh* in Varanasi

21:1-5 Invocation
21:6-11 brahmans complain about E's kindness to Mahār thief
21:12-25 brahman *rākṣasa* requests E's surplus merit
21:26-29 E makes pilgrimage to Pandharpur
21:30-200 E and the *Eknāthī Bhāgavat* in Varanasi
37-43 brahman brings copy of *EBh* to Varanasi
44-59 E accused in Varanasi for composing Marathi translation of *BhP*
60-67 brahman who carried *EBh* is brought before *svāmī*
68-77 E is summoned to Varanasi by chief *sannyāsī*
78-157 two disciples go from Varanasi to Paithan to summon E, E goes
158-175 *sannyāsī* is converted by reading *EBh* and witnessing E's humility
176-189 *paṇḍit*s in Varanasi revile E
190-200 *paṇḍit*s throw *EBh* into river, Bhāgirathī catches it and returns it to E
21:201-202 Conclusion

Ch.22 – *EBh* is felicitated, E writes *Rukmiṇī Svayamvara*, Dāsopant, E and the spitting Muslim, E rescues Mahār boy from sand, E cleanses leper, Gaṅgā attends *EBh* reading

22:1-7 Invocation
22:8-44 *EBh* is praised and paraded through Varanasi on an elephant, E writes *RuSv*
22:45-47 E returns to Paithan
22:48-65 E meets Dāsopant on the way
22:66-78 E welcomed back to Paithan
22:79-101 Kṛṣṇajayantī, Dāsopant arrives in Paithan
22:102-149 E's good deeds
102-107 Mahīpati praises E
108-123 E forgives Muslim who spits on him
124-133 E rescues Mahār boy from hot sand
134-149 E cleanses a leper
22:150-184 Gaṅgā herself comes to hear reading of *EBh*
22:185-186 Conclusion

Ch.23 – E converts the impious merchant, E's children, Stories about Haripaṇḍit

23:1-7 Invocation
23:8-35 E converts the impious merchant

23:36-41 E and Girijābāī's children
23:42-177 E deals with his son's arrogance
42-51 E's son Haripant becomes learned *śāstrī*
52-55 Haripant's conceit and shame about E, departure for Varanasi
56-64 E's grandson Rāghobā stays behind in Paithan
65-81 E misses Haripant and goes to Varanasi to meet him
82-87 E accepts Haripant's conditions to return to Paithan
88-95 E stops *kīrtan* performance and Hari reads in Sanskrit (unpopular)
96-178 Haripant converted by miracle of the 1,000 plates
23:178 Conclusion

Ch.24 – E resumes *kīrtan*s, Gāvbā, *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa*, E's final message and death, miraculous *aśvattha* tree

24:1-10 Invocation
24:11-26 E resumes his *kīrtan* performances
24:27-60 E cares for dull boy Gāvbā
24:61-93 E starts composing the *Bhāvārtha Rāmāyaṇa*
61-71 Rāma tells E to compose Marathi *Rāmāyaṇa*
72-85 E begins composing *BhR*
86-93 E empowers Gāvbā to finish writing *BhR*
24:94-142 E final days
94-108 E tells of his approaching departure
109-118 E goes into river to end his life (*jalasamādhi*)
119-126 E's final message
127-133 E's death
134-142 *aśvattha* tree miraculously sprouts from E's ashes
24:143-146 Conclusion, Mahīpati's transition to next set of stories about Tukārām

Appendix F – Chapter Outline of Bhīmasvāmī's *Bhaktlīlāmṛt*[26]

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1 E's childhood and early life, E meets J in Aurangābād, E initiated
  1:1-3 E's background, father performed *upanāyanā* and marriage (child marriage?)
  1:4-10 E introduced by father to J, E works as servant, gradually acquires knowledge
  1:11-16 after 6 months, Datta arrives and commands J to initiate E (*anugraha*)

2 E handles Persian letter, E cleans J's toilet, E passes test by sucking "deadly sore" on J's leg
  2:1-6 E responds to Persian letter so as to not interrupt J's meditation
  2:7 although E and J did work for Muslims, they had no affection for it
  2:8-13 E cleans J's toilet
  2:14 J's other disciples hated E because of his great service
  2:15-27 E volunteers to suck a "deadly sore" (actually a wrapped mango) on J's leg

3 E and clerks take pity on poor pregnant woman, E resists Muslims' claims that she is lying

4 E searches accounts to find missing coin (*rukā*)

5 J tells E to throw out the contents of his spittoon, E drinks it instead

6 J has dream about he and E meeting *fakīr* who milks dog, mixes food and eats with them
  - J wakes up and says it must have been Datta

7 J goes on pilgrimage to Kāśī, J leaves E in charge of *maṭh*, local governor comes to *maṭh* but worries about worshipping E in J's place, messenger arrives with J's approval

8 servants in J's home dislike E, servants hide J's books so J will be angry with E, trick does not work because of a miracle

9 J takes a wife, builds new house, receives dream that he should give it to E and build another new one for himself

10 short story of Kṛṣṇa (Śrī Khāṇḍyā), J says E should marry

11 E writes *Ramāyaṇa*, E flies like Hanumān while writing about his jump to Lanka

12 E ponders *Ramāyaṇa* scene that miraculously causes his hair to grow quickly

13 E's *śrāddha* ceremony; untouchables smell food and are served by Kṛṣṇa himself
  13:11 E's ancestors take *pān,* give *śivyā* (curses?) and depart

14 E and the poor *śūdra*

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[26] The source material for this outline follows the section about Eknāth in B. Śirgāvkar, "Bhaktalīlāmṛt," 70-88. This outline reflects the fact that I read some stories in much greater detail than others. I provide this only as an index for guiding interested readers to the text itself, not as an authoritative summary.

14:1-5 pious *śūdra* and wife serve at E's home, are very poor but request nothing
14:6-7 Kṛṣṇa stops E from giving anything, K says he wants to test the *śūdra*
14:8-13 pot of coins must be delivered to banker, *śūdra* spills pot, returns all coins
14:14-15 *śūdra* passes Kṛṣṇa's test and miraculously receives heap of coins

15 when E went for bath, was spat on three times by a person (whose identity is unspecified)
14:4 E goes home, fills plate with food, offers to deity to become *prasād*
14:5 E gives food to man, after consuming *prasād* the man person feels regret

16 E destroys precious turban to get water from well to give to thirsty dog

17 Dāsopant and J come to Paithan to see J's disciples, see Kṛṣṇa and Datta working for E
17:2 J and Dāsopant are guru-brothers

18 *śūdra*'s crops are destroyed by someone's untied donkey, *śūdra* does not beat the donkey, E sees and approves, *śūdra*'s crops are miraculously restored

19 E prepares feast but finds no *ghee*, E fasts for 3 days so that others can be served

20 Great feast at E's home but no ghee, Kṛṣna makes ghee from water

21 E gives raw sugar (*guḷ*) to a boy

22 E wrongly accused by Paṭhāṇ's mistress of improprieties, E is miraculously saved

23 E's son Hārbājī moves to Kāśī but returns on condition that E not eat outside, miracle of many plates (only 4 mentioned)

24 E insulted by hateful man (*kuṭāḷ*), Kṛṣṇa gets angry but E calms him

25 brahman man gives E a touchstone for safekeeping

26 uncompassionate woman asks E for a son, E picks up untouchable boy from sand

27 Story of untouchable who invites E to eat at his home
27:1-5 untouchable devotee (*bhāvik*) invites E to eat at his home, E says "I will come"
27:6-12 Eknāth apparently forgets, untouchable man and wife despair
27:13-19 God takes E's form and eats with them, brahmans see two E's sleeping and eating

28 E's daughter Līlābāī marries Viśvambhar, has son Mukteśvar

29 brahman comes and asks to see Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣna disappears

30 E has dream of God asking for marriage; so E writes *Rukmiṇī Svayamvara*, E dies before completing *Ramayāṇa*

31 *aśvatthā* tree still at site of E's *samādhi*, vow of the tailor bhakta and his pair of *dhotī*s

Appendix G – Table of all major stories about Eknāth and their textual locations

Story or Reference	*PC*	*EC*	*BhV*	*BhL*	*BhL2*
Background of Cakrapāṇī (E's grandfather)	1.21-25				
E's childhood	1.17-20	1.3-10		13.10-58	1.1-3
E lives with his parents			45.9-13		1.1-3
E's father gives E to J as servant					1.7-8
J initiates E at Datta's command					1.9-16
E leaves Paithan without telling grandparents		1.11-12		13.59-64	
Cakrapāṇī sends E to J	1.26-29				
E meets J	2.10-20	1.13-29	45.14-23	13.65-78	
J interrogates and reproaches E	2.21-40		45.14-23		
J satisfied by E's response, accepts E as disciple	2.56-66				
E's morning routine of service	3.3-15		45.24-34		
E drinks J's spittle-water	3.21-22		45.24-34		5.1-4
E serves J		2.5-14	45.24-34	13.79-107	
E takes J's form to lead battle		2.34-73		13.108-137	
E responds to Persian letter for J					2.1-7
E helps J w accounting at Amdāvatī court	3.23-30				
E searches account books for error late at night		2.15-25	45.39-49	13.138-148	4.1-8
E helps serve brahmans, eats leftovers	3.30-56				
J reprimands E for extreme acts	3.57-74				
E responds to J's critique of extreme bhakti	3.75-94				
E cleans J's toilet	4.24-45	2.7	45.35	13.149-153	2.8-13
E passes test by sucking "deadly sore" on J's leg					2.15-27
E & clerks charity to pregnant woman					3.1-22
J introduces E to Cānd Bodh in Amdāvatī	2.67-73				
J introduces E to Datta near Devgiri		3.10-56	45.74-82	13.154-205	
J has dream of Datta and drinking dog milk					6.1-10
E has doubts about Datta's Muslim appearance			45.89-91		
J & E meet Datta a second time			45.105-116		
J's servants envious of E, conspire but are frustrated					8.1-20
J builds house for self and wife, J told to give it to E					9.1-15
J teaches E and sends E to meditate on Mt. Sulabhā		4.6-24		14.9-46	
E, the pious farmer & the cobra		4.25-54		14.47-89	
E has vision of Hari on Sulabhā		4.55-74		14.90-116	
J & E meet Candrabhaṭ		5.3-49		14.117-172	
Candrabhaṭ takes samādhi in Muslim tomb		5.50-57		14.173-176	

Story or Reference	*PC*	*EC*	*BhV*	*BhL*	*BhL2*
E goes on pilgrimage to North India		5.58-114		14.177-205	
E's grandparents search for E		6.3-63		15.9-69	
E's northern pilgrimage in detail		7.4-93		15.70-106	
E returns to Pratisthan		7.95-118	45.131-137	15.107-130	
E's *kirtan*s		8.25-37		15.131-144	
E celebrates *Kṛṣṇa-jayanti*		8.33-72		15.145-190	
J tells E to marry		8.73-88		15.191-203	
J departs and disappears on Devgiri peak		8.89-95			
E's bride is found	4.46-55	9.5-42		16.8-25	
E's wedding	4.64-86	9.43-68		16.26-55	
E moves to Pratiṣṭhān, J moves to Daulatābād	4.101-102				
Datta gives *darśan* to J at Amdāvatī	4.103-104				
E and wife settle down	5.4-10	9.69-79	45.138-148	16.56-63	
E's grandparents die	5.11-16	9.80-84		16.64-67	
E's daily routine	5.57-99				
J dies				16.68-69	
E celebrates Phālgun *vadya* 6	9.7-66	10.19-40		16.70-97	
E runs out of ghee, turns water into ghee	9.30-60				20.1-14
Food-fight on Phālgun *vadya* 6 celebration	9.67-75				
E rolls in leftovers at Phālgun *vadya* 6	9.67-75				
E's wife fasts for 3 days to conserve ghee for others					19.1-20
E's morning routine of devotion (incl. *pāduka* worship)	6.1-14				
E gives water to 100 donkeys	6.15-23				
E gives Gaṅgā-water to one donkey (only in Pāṅgārkar)					
E destroys precious turban to give water to dog					16.1-7
E worships god-image, *kuladaivatā* = Ekavīrā	6.39-40				
E heals leprous brahman	6.41-99				
Merchant demands E's debts to be repaid		10.42-88		16.98-146	
E gives readings from *BhP*		11.3-15		17.6-12	
God appears as brahman Keśava		11.15-33		17.13-29	
Brahmans envy and torment E		11.34-58		17.30-54	
E and G host four brahmans on rainy night		11.59-67		17.55-67	
E gives *śrāddha* food to 3 Muslims/*trimūrti*		11.76-80		17.68-80	
E gives *śrāddha* food to untouchables	8.20-47		46.54-61		13.1-7
brahmans persecute E for *śrāddha* offense	8.54-75	11.81-101	46.69-94	17.81-97	13.8
E's ancestors come to dine at *śrāddha*	8.76-92	11.102-120	46.85-101	17.98-115	13.9-11
brahmans ritually purify E for *śrāddha* offense			46.102-107		
E & Krsna test the poor *śūdra* man					14.1-15

Story or Reference	*PC*	*EC*	*BhV*	*BhL*	*BhL2*
brahmans praise poet Kṛṣṇadās		12.9-18		17.116-124	
Kṛṣṇadās seeks E's help to finish writing *Rāmāyaṇa*		12.19-52		17.125-153	
Kannada merchant gives Viṭṭhal image to E		13.3-63		17.154-201	
Wedding of Viṭṭhal/Rukmiṇī images		13.64-110		17.202-225	
E makes pilgrimage to Pandharpur		14.1-45		18.7-73	
E tells story of Bhānudās		14.46-148		18.74-202	
E performs extraordinary *kirtan* in Pandharpur		14.149-161			
E returns to Paiṭhaṇ from Pandharpur		14.162-165		19.8-18	
sannyāsī raises dead donkey, takes *samādhi*		15.3-26		19.19-53	
Brahmans outraged at E's advice to take *samādhi*		15.27-44		19.54-70	
E makes stone bull (Nandi) eats and jump into river		15.45-55		19.71-99	
E goes to Alaṅkāpuri (Āḷandī)		16.3-68	46.163-179	19.100-119	
E edits/corrects the *Jñāneśvarī*		16.69-77		19.120-129	
Keśava/God departs		17.6-11		19.130-137	
E eats at home of untouchables		17.19-84		19.138-239	27.1-20
E and the touchstone	7.5-98	17.7-76		20.11-52	25.1-8
E's daily routine	cf. 5.57-59	19.5-13		20.55-62	
Śrīkhaṇḍyā serves E	ch.10-11	19.14-72	46.7-44	20.63-130	10.1-11, 29.1-26
E and the four thieves		20.2-44		20.131-167	
E cares for outcaste thief		21.5-41		20.168-201	
brahmans criticize E's care for thief				21.6-11	
E gives surplus merit to restore brahman *rākṣasa*		21.42-58		21.12-25	
E goes to Pandharpur again				21.26-29	
E reviled by hateful man, Kṛṣna is angry but E is not					24.1-7
Overview of E's literary works		22.2-8		21.30-36	
E's *EBh* taken to Varanasi		22.9-64		21.37-67	
E summoned to Varanasi		22.65-94		21.68-104	
E in Varanasi		23.7-78		21.105-175	
Brahman pandits revile *EBh*, throw it in river		24.6-36		21.176-200	
EBh manuscript rescued by Gaṅgā, E and *EBh* paraded on elephant through Varanasi		24.37-99		22.8-43	
E meets Dāsopant		25.2-59		22.48-101	17.1-22
J and Dāsopant are guru-brothers					17.2
E restores *śūdra*'s crops for his compassion to donkey					18.1-12
E forgives *caṇḍāḷ*/Muslim/man who spits on him		26.15-34		22.108-123	15.1-6
E picks up untouchable boy from sand		26.39-46		22.124-133	26.1-14
E heals leper with surplus merit	cf. 6.31-99	26.46-65	46.108-116	22.134-149	
E accused of improprieties by *pathān*'s mistress					22.1-9

Story or Reference	*PC*	*EC*	*BhV*	*BhL*	*BhL2*
Gaṅgā (personified) attends E's *kīrtan*s		27.3-33		22.150-184	
E converts impious merchant		27.34-75		23.8-35	
E's children are introduced		28.10-14		23.36-41	
E's daughter Līlābāī has son Mukteśvar					28.1-11
Haripaṇḍit is ashamed of E and moves to Varanasi		28.15-47		23.42-95	23.1-4
Haripaṇḍit converts via miracle of 1000 plates		28.48-103		23.96-176	23.5-12
E resumes *kīrtan*s		28.104-108		24.11-26	
E begins writing Marathi *Rāmāyaṇa*		29.6-19	45.149-156		11.1-5, 12.1-16
E's neighbor reviles him for writing Marathi			45.157-170		
E has dream of God asking marriage; E writes *RuSv*					30.1-16
Summary of E's *Rāmāyaṇa*		29.23-104			
E cares for Gāvbā		30.1-43		24.27-60	21.1-11
Rāma tells E in a dream to write a Marathi *Rāmāyṇa*		29.8		24.61-85	
E enables Gāvbā to finish *BhR* on E's behalf		30.44-48		24.86-93	
E announces his impending death/departure		30.49-76		24.94-108	
E goes to river, gives final message		31.5-44		24.109-126	
E's death and aftermath		31.45-74		24.127-142	31.1-18