



BHAKAT SURDAS

Surdas ([Sanskrit](#): सूरदास, [romanized](#): *Sūradāsa*) was a 16th-century blind [Hindu](#) devotional [poet](#) and [singer](#), who was known for his works written in praise of [Krishna](#).^[2] His compositions captured his devotion towards Krishna. Most of his poems were written in the Braj language, while some were also written in other dialects of medieval Hindi, like Awadhi.^[3]

Sūrdās's biography is most often told through the lens of the [Vallabha Sampradāya](#) aka the [Pustimārga](#). The Puṣṭimārga regards Sūrdās as an initiated disciple of [Vallabha](#), and his hagiography is told in the [Caurāsī Vaiṣṇavan kī Vārtā](#) by Gokulnāth and Harirāy. Sūrdās' poems, along with those of other Aṣṭachāp poets, form a central part of Puṣṭimārga liturgical singing-worship. However modern scholars consider the connection between Sūrdās and Vallabha and his sect to be ahistorical.^[4]

The book *Sur Sagar* (Sur's Ocean) is traditionally attributed to Surdas. However, many of the poems in the book seem to be written by later poets in Sur's name. The *Sur Sagar* in its present form focuses on descriptions of Krishna as the lovely child of [Gokul](#) and [Vraj](#), written from the [gopis](#)' perspective.

Life and work

[The Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature](#) suggests a birth year of 1258 into a Brahmin family of Uttar Pradesh.^[6] Sources state he was either a [Sārasvata Brāhmaṇa](#), a [Jāta](#), or a [Dhārṇī](#).^[6]

Surdas, whose name translates to "servant of the sun", is celebrated as the pinnacle of poetic artistry in [Braj bhasha](#). This language is linked to the [Braj](#) region, where Krishna is said to have spent his childhood. The hagiographer [Nabha Dass](#), in his [Bhaktamal](#), praised Surdas for his poetic skill, especially in depicting "Hari's playful acts", a reference to Krishna's divine activities. Surdas also composed poems about Ram and Sita but primarily focused on Krishna's life and deeds.^[7]

Poetry

Surdas's poetry was written in a dialect of [Hindi](#) called [Braj Bhasha](#), until then considered to be a very plebeian language, as the prevalent literary languages were either [Persian](#) or [Sanskrit](#). His work raised the status of the Braj Bhasha from a crude language to that of a literary one.^[8]

Surdas's poems are collectively known as the *Sursagar* or "Ocean of Sur" due to a large volume of poems attributed to his name. The traditional format of the *Sursagar* is divided into twelve parts, similar to the Hindu scripture, the [Bhagavata Purana](#). Just as the *Bhagavata Purana* describes the life and actions of [Krishna](#), the *Sursagar* also takes on a similar feat with a majority of its poems dedicated to Krishna. Many of the poems found in *Sursagar* are *pad*s, containing six to ten rhymed verses. Other subject matter covered include [Rama](#) and [Sita](#), [Vishnu](#), [Shiva](#), heroes within Hinduism like [Gajendra](#) and [King Bali](#), and the poet's spiritual struggles.^{[9][10]}

Philosophy

Eight disciples of [Vallabha Acharya](#) are called the [Aṣṭachāp](#), (Eight seals in Hindi), named after the oral signature *chap* written at the conclusion of literary works. Sur is considered to be the foremost among them.^[11]

Coverage

Several films have been made about the poet's life. These include:^[12] *Surdas* (1939) by Krishna Dev Mehra, [Bhakta Surdas](#) (1942) by [Chaturbhuj Doshi](#), *Sant Surdas* (1975) by [Ravindra Dave](#), *Chintamani Surdas* (1988) by Ram Pahwa.

The legend of the blind poet [Bilwamangala](#) (identified with Surdas) and Chintamani has also been adapted several times in Indian cinema. These films include:^[12] [Bilwamangal](#) or *Bhagat Soordas* (1919) by Rustomji Dhotiwala, *Bilwamangal* (1932), [Chintamani](#) (1933) by Kallakuri Sadasiva Rao, [Chintamani](#) (1937) by [Y. V. Rao](#), *Bhakta Bilwamangal* (1948) by Shanti Kumar, *Bilwamangal* (1954) by [D. N. Madhok](#), *Bhakta Bilwamangal* (1954) by Pinaki Bhushan Mukherji, [Chintamani](#) (1956) by [P. S. Ramakrishna Rao](#), *Chintamani* (1957) by M.N. Basavarajaiah, [Chilamboli](#) (1963) by G. K. Ramu, *Bilwamangal* (1976) by Gobinda Roy, *Vilwamangal Ki Pratigya* (1996) by Sanjay Virmani.