

## **Analyzing the Parallels Between Avatar and Khidr and Comparison of Khajava Khidr and Vishnu Avatar Matsya with Sufi-Hindu Mystical Understanding**

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### **Abstract**

*India has many cultural, religious, and mythological riches in geography. It has caused the birth of many different cultural, religious, philosophical ideas and mythological elements in this land, home to many religious elements and tribes for centuries. It is observed that these emerging concepts are in an interaction or have similar characteristics.*

*According to Islamic understanding, a Khidr prophet still exists. It can take different dimensions and shapes and is outside the concept of time. At the same time, it is known that Khidr, God, came to help save people in difficult situations. Khidr can also be found in different places, and he is believed to have some supernatural powers that God gave him. The concept of Avatar, which has a great place in Indian mythology, has been the subject of Indian epics and sacred Indian books. It appears in mythology that God Vishnu descended to Earth in various ways and performed some good deeds for the benefit of people.*

### **Keywords**

*Khidr, Avatar, Vishnu's Matsya, Khaja Khidr, Indian Mythology, Sufism, Hinduism, examination, by fish travel, Incarnation.*

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## **Objective**

In this academic study, I examined two concepts belonging to two different beliefs along with mythological elements. Basically, I have studied the two religions and tried to reveal their similarities and differences.

## **Methodology**

I generally benefited from holy books, clergy, and documentaries on religions in this academic study. The interviews and studies I have conducted with the clergy have led to the emergence of such an academic study.

## **Introduction**

Like two great oceans, Islam and Hinduism are dispersed throughout the world. Religions are concepts that govern human life and seek to make people happy. At the same time, some definitions of belief systems call attention to mythological elements. Many mythological elements can be encountered in Hinduism and Sufism, both of which have mystical backgrounds.

Khidr is defined as a savior, a helper, or a guide in Islamic societies. The phrase “to catch up like a Khidr” is a phrase frequently spoken by all Islamic believers these days. According to Islamic belief, believers make sincere prayers and requests to God when they are in great need or helpless, and as a result, God guides the believers in answering these prayers or saves them from a troubled situation. Getting rid of this difficult process sometimes takes place with people and sometimes with different temporal and spatial events. People often don’t know who Khidr is, but they can feel it. “Al-Khidr (/ÈxjdYr/) (Arabic: qáúÍóÖöÑ, romanized: al-Khair), also transcribed as al-Khadir, Khader, Khidr, Khizr, Kathir, Khazer, Khadr, Khedher, Khizir, Khizar, Khilr, is a figure described but not mentioned by name in the Quran as a righteous servant of God possessing great wisdom or mystic knowledge. In various Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, Khidr is described as a messenger, prophet, or wali.”<sup>1</sup> It is possible to see the concept of Khidr in all areas of life. “Khidr guards the sea teaches secret knowledge, and aids those in distress”.<sup>2</sup>As a concept, Khidr can be seen as containing only Islamic elements. However, there are definitions close to the concept of Khidr in tens of nations and religions that lived in the past and still exist. “The concept of an avatar in Hinduism, Dûraoða, and Sorûsh in Iranian epics, Samael (the divine prosecutor) in Judaism, Elijah among the Druze, John the Baptist in Armenia, etc.”<sup>3</sup> It is also possible to find information about Khidr’s behavior, appearance, and events she encountered in many different sources. “In al-Bukhari’s collection of hadith, the prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying: “He was named al-Khidr

because after he sat upon barren land, it became green with vegetation.” Khidr is called the green man”.<sup>4</sup>Regarding Khidr, there is no information in the Qur’an about body characteristics or exact physical appearance. We can obtain some hints from hadiths, Quran verses, and some saint’s discourses. However, as can be understood from the information above, Khidr acts independently of time and place. It is not possible to say anything about when he was born or how he lived. because it can be said that Khidr shows angelic features rather than human features. because angels are responsible for fulfilling the orders they receive from Allah. “Muslim scholars identify him as Khir, although he is not explicitly named in the Quran and there is no reference to him being immortal or being especially associated with esoteric knowledge or fertility.”<sup>5</sup>Khidr is also responsible for fulfilling the duties given by God. It would be incorrect to attribute human characteristics to Khidr and show them in some worldly characteristics. The concept of time in the world and the concept of time perceived by Khidr may not be the same. Khidr can be found during the same time period in different regions and in different guises. because Allah has appointed Khidr to solve people’s problems and be a guide. In the holy book of Islam, Khidr was attributed with extraordinary characteristics, and the prophet Moses was assigned almost a guide mission, guiding or teaching Allah’s orders.

“The cycle of myths and stories surrounding al-Khir originated in a vague narrative in the Qur’ân (18:60–82) that describes the long and arduous journey of Mûsâ (Moses) and his servant to the “meeting of the two seas.” In the course of their travels, they lose a fish they had taken with them. While they are looking for the fish, a man of God appears and agrees to allow Mûsâ to follow him and teach him the knowledge that has been granted to him by God. The man performs seemingly senseless deeds along the way—he sinks a boat, kills a young man, then restores a wall in a city hostile to them. Mûsâ questions what the man has done and receives a satisfactory explanation for everything, but, by questioning, Mûsâ forfeits the man’s patronage.”<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the Qur’an clearly states that Allah will come to help those who believe. God’s help should not be perceived as descending to the earth and physically meeting with the servants. There are an unlimited number of angels or spiritual beings under Allah’s command. These spiritual beings perfectly fulfill the duties that come from God. Allah can respond to the sincere wishes and prayers of His servants through the spiritual beings He has created. Certain examples of this are in the Qur’an. “Say, ò Prophet,ú “Who rescues you from the darkest times on land and

at sea? He ùaloneú you call upon with humility, openly and secretly: “If You rescue us from this, we will be ever grateful.”<sup>7</sup>

Hinduism is known as one of the oldest and most ancient religions on earth. It is also known for its polytheistic and idol worship. Hinduism has not spread much outside of Indian geography. It can be said that the local scale has remained. Hindus believe in the continuous succession of life and death, i.e., reincarnation. Religious teachers, or “gurus, are of great importance in their beliefs. Hindus pray and celebrate together or alone, even if their theology and philosophy are entirely separate. “Unity in diversity” is a term often used in contemporary Hinduism. The most important principle in Hinduism is dharma. Dharma is a concept that points to a set of principles ranging from the way people act as a result of their social and religious positions to their religious practices. He worships the highest reality and states that all people will realize the truth. According to most sects and beliefs of Hinduism, there is no such thing as eternal hell or damnation.

The events and symbols claimed to have happened in the past within the religion of Hinduism have great importance in religion. Because forms and patterns in the perception of worship are in all areas of religious life, and it is a religious concept that is frequently used in religious rituals. Hindus think that the spirit of that idol will come through religious motifs and patterns in their worship. Many characters that appear in the Mahabharata or Ramayana epic take their place in daily life. The main reason for the understanding of worship with all shapes and idols is considered “the mobility of the soul.” Hinduism is a religious framework in which there are a lot of mystical symbols and idols. In religious rituals, statues and figures of gods and goddesses are in the foreground. Hinduism is described as a polytheistic religion. However, this issue is highly controversial. Depictions of God, Goddess, or famous Hindu elders are very common in temples. However, besides all these god and goddess pictures, there are also depictions and idols of the avatars of the gods. “Avatar (Sanskrit: 5\$>0, avatâra; pronounced [P<PtaĐrP]) is a concept within Hinduism that in Sanskrit literally means “descent”. It signifies the material appearance or incarnation of a powerful deity, goddess or spirit on Earth”.<sup>8</sup> According to belief, the Gods did not remain silent in the face of difficulties experienced on earth or in space and came down to the earth in different disguises to help the oppressed, innocents, and orphans, and help humanity. “The relative verb to “alight, to make one’s appearance” is sometimes used to refer to any guru or revered human being”.<sup>9</sup> It is possible to say that the shapes of the avatars change in response to geography, events, or time. Because none of the avatars are alike and they differ in terms of the tasks they take on.”The term usually refers to

the 10 appearances of Vishnu: Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar), Narasimha (half man, half lion), Vamana (dwarf), Parashurama (Rama with the axe), Rama (hero of the Ramayana epic), Krishna (the divine cowherd), Buddha, and Kalkin (the incarnation yet to come). The number of Vishnu's avatars is sometimes extended or their identities changed, according to local preferences".<sup>10</sup> In the epic Mahabharata, which is known as one of the longest epics in the world, the good deeds of Avatars against evil are frequently mentioned. The frequent warfare and heroism of the gods are discussed. "The concept of avatar within Hinduism is most often associated with Vishnu, the preserver or sustainer aspect of God within the Hindu Trinity or Trimurti of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Vishnu's avatars descend to empower the good and fight evil, thereby restoring Dharma".<sup>11</sup> Prayers are religious rituals that are made for believers' requests from God or for getting out of a difficult situation. According to religions, the way Gods or Goddesses answer prayers may differ. "Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and an increase in unrighteousness, O Arjun, at that time I manifest Myself on earth. Whenever righteousness wanes and unrighteousness increases, I send myself forth. For the protection of the good and for the destruction of evil, and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being age after age".<sup>12</sup>

Sufism takes its source from Islam, but with its perspective and interpretations, it forms the mystical and philosophical aspects of Islam. According to Sufism, verses and hadiths have two aspects. The first direction is the inner part, and the second direction is the outer part. Anyone who hears the outer part can understand, but the idea that it is necessary to deepen in the eye of the heart and faith in order to understand the inner part finds it broad.

"In Sufism, al-Khidr represents the saint and the spiritual master. For Sufi Qur'anic commentators, al-Khidr represents spiritual guidance (scuba) as distinguished from instruction (ta lim). In hagiographies, Khidr gives humankind initiation, guidance, and liturgies. The famous Sufi Ibn al-'Arabi reported receiving al-Khidr's mantle of initiation (khirqa) twice, and the poet and mystic al-Rumi's relationship to Shams-e Tabrizi was described by Rumi's son, Sultan Veled, as being like that of Moses and Khidr".<sup>13</sup>

People who are supposed to live in India and claim to have had some miracles have managed to be remembered from the past to the present. One of these names is Khaja Khidr. "In India, the Prophet, Saint, or Deity known as Khwaja Khizr (Khadir), Pir Badar, or Raja Kidar, is the object of a still surviving popular cult, common to Muslims and Hindus. His principal shrine is on the Indus near Bakhar, where he is worshipped by devotees of both persuasions".<sup>14</sup> One of the biggest reasons why people with titles such as Pir, Baba, and Hazrat come from the past to the present

without being forgotten is their supernatural powers. “In western Asia, Moslem or Hindu symbolic art shows the Saint, Al Khizr, dressed in a green coat being carried on top of the water by a fish which conveys him over the river of life”.<sup>15</sup> Khaja Khidr’s life, beliefs, and values have led to debate between Hindus and Muslims. Even with different names, Hindus valued Khidr and built temples in his name.”In the Hindu cult, the Khwaja is worshiped with lights and by feeding Brahmans at a well, and like in Hindu and Muslim practice, by setting a float in a pond or river a little boat which bears a lighted lamp. Ichnographically Khwaja Khizr is represented as an aged man, having the aspect of a faqir, clothed entirely in green and moving in the waters with a ‘fish’ as his vehicle”.<sup>16</sup>

In Hinduism, the concept of God’s descent to earth is one of the most emphasized concepts. Incarnation is stressed over and over again. However, God or Gods do not descend directly to the earth, but they can enter into other persons or bodies. “Matsya, (Sanskrit: “Fish”) is one of the 10 avatars (incarnations) of the Hindu god Vishnu. In this appearance, Vishnu saved the world from a great flood. Manu, the first man, caught a little fish that grew to a giant size. When the flood approached, Manu saved himself by tying his boat to the horn on the fish’s head”.<sup>17</sup> Lord Matsya is depicted as a man-fish man;<sup>18</sup> this is how he took his place in religion and mythology. The upper part of the body is a human, and the lower part is a fish, or in the form of a human standing on a fish. It has four hands, which are usually seen holding the conch, sand, discus, and protective and blessing postures. It is known for its ability to protect living things in streams and transport them to other regions. “The Ayidhya-Mahatmya of the Skanda Purana mentions 12 avatars of Vishnu, with Matsya as the 2nd avatar. Matsya is said to support Manu, plants, and others like a boat at the end of Brahma’s Day (pralaya).”<sup>19</sup> Avatar is a feature especially used by the god Vishnu, and this god has ten avatars Matsya (a fish avatar of Vishnu); besides, Shiva also had local avatars and two sons. “.Matsya Purana(Machcha), is holy Purana and it describes the creation, protection, and destruction of the world”<sup>20</sup>. According to the belief, Vishnu came to the world with a different appearance (avatar) every time in order to save people during times of chaos in the world.”In the anthropomorphic form, the upper half is that of the four-armed man and the lower half is a fish. The upper half resembles Vishnu and wears the traditional ornaments and the kirita-mukuta (tall conical crown) as worn by Vishnu”.<sup>21</sup> In the Avatara myths, it is the Asuras, who are members of hell, who want to create turmoil on earth by fighting for the sky, an area belonging to the gods, and it is seen that they are victorious over the Devas from time to time. In this case, the gods asked Vishnu for help, and he descended to earth in the form of

an avatar and established a new order. Vishnu, who came as a more perfect being each time, had descended to earth nine times until today, and it was believed that he would attain perfection on his tenth and final coming (Kalkin), where he would appear on a white horse.

“Manu started living in an ashram near the banks of the Krithamala River. One day, he went to the pond near the Ashram for taking bath. When he cupped the water, he saw a small fish in his hands. After seeing the fish, he tried to leave it in the pond but the fish spoke that it will be eaten by all the bigger fish living in the pond and requested he saves her. Manu kept the fish in his Kamandal. Lord Vishnu appeared in Matsya Avtar and said that he was doing this Maya and he came here to protect the Dharma and destroy Adharma so he took this Avtar as a fish. He further said as he saved the life of the fish so he granted him an opportunity to save the living beings on earth. Lord Vishnu said within seven days from then, the whole world would immerse in the water and Manu will have to save all the Vedas, Sapta Rishis, and Brahma Gyana along with the pair of every living being and seeds of all the plants and plantation. When the day comes, Manu did exactly what Lord Vishnu had explained to him to do. He saved all the Saptarishi and Vedas along with other things and kept them on the boat which was created by the deities. He tied the boat with the horn of that Matsya (fish) by using Vasuki (snake) as a rope.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Result and Discussion**

Hinduism and Islam contain two different religious beliefs and some rituals of their own. However, it is common to see similar definitions and practices in the religions of Islam and Hinduism. Interactions or similarities can be seen in belief systems that have lived as neighbors in the same region for a long time. Furthermore, some concepts that Hinduism calls Sanskrit and Islam call Arabic may contain the same or similar content under different names. At the same time, parallels can be found in the reason why God created the Earth, galaxies, planets, and living things. The concept of being a good individual, which is inherent in almost every religion, is frequently emphasized in Islamic and Hindu holy books and principles. In belief systems, prayer is known as a tool that brings the individual closer to God. And God’s response to His servants is similar in Islam and Hinduism. There are pictures, objects, and statues of beings that are considered sacred in Hinduism. People think that after the love and worship given to these respected people, their souls will enter the idols. That’s why these different objects appear in some people’s lives. However, in Islam, bans and restrictions were imposed on branches of art such as painting, miniatures, and sculpture because they reminded people of old

beliefs. Because the belief in paganism, which dominated the Arabian Peninsula before Islam, has been banned due to the possibility of its re-emergence in some branches of art,

“The true nature of Khwaja Khizr is already clearly indicated in the two stories (Story of Prince Mahbub, the ballad of Niwal Dai), summarized, as well as in the iconography. Khizr is at home in both worlds, the dark and the light, but above all master of the flowing River of Life in the Land of Darkness: he is at once the guardian and genius of vegetation and of the Water of Life and corresponds to Soma and Gandharva in Vedic mythology, and in many respects to Varuria himself, though it is evident that he cannot, either from the Islamic or from the later Hindu point of view be openly identified with the supreme deity. We shall find these general conclusions amply confirmed by further examinations of the sources of the Islamic legends of al-Khadir. In the Qur’an (Sura XVIII, 59-81) occurs the legend of Musa’s search for the Ma’jma ‘al-Bahrain, which is probably to be understood as a ‘place’ in the far west at the meeting of two oceans; Musa is guided by a ‘servant of God’, whom the commentators identify with al-Khadir, whose abode is said to be upon an island or on a green carpet in the midst of the sea”?.<sup>23</sup>

“In India, Khwaja Khidr is depicted as resembling Vishnu’s Matsya (fish) Avatar”.<sup>24</sup> Khaja Khidr and Avatar Matsya seem to have similar characteristics. In particular, it is seen that both characters dominate the seas and rivers and dominate the creatures living in the seas. Khaja Khidr is perceived by Hindus as Avatar Matsya. The reason for this is that it can travel on fish in the sea, and it is shown as evidence to take people in distress on the fish and carry them to a safe area. Matsya is also depicted as half-human or as a human standing on a fish. The two characters are similar in this respect. Khidr and Avatar are two concepts that are similar in terms of mission and meaning. Both terms mean to descend. At the same time, the green color of the Matsya Avatar is another factor that increases the similarity ratio with Khidr.

“The Hindu identify Khawaja as Jind Pir (properly Zinda Pir), i.e. the living Pir who is no other than the incarnation of the river Indus, elsewhere called Uderolal, Darya Shah, etc., to whom they burn a light. The central building with the silver doors, be it tomb, temple or cenotaph, contains a niche which is the seat of the saint and above which a slab of stone clumsily built into the wall bears a Persian inscription which has been translated thus.”<sup>25</sup>



## Conclusion



Chishti (11 March 2018). "10 Sufi tales about khwajaKhidr". The Sufi Tavern. Retrieved 16 November 2021.(17th-century Mughal painting of al-Khidr)



A. L. Dallapiccola (2003). Hindu Myths. The University of Texas Press. pp. 19–20. ISBN 978-0-292-70233-2.(Matsya, Central India, 9th - 10th century. British Museum)

In Islam and Sufism, all sovereignty belongs to Allah. In Hinduism, there is the concept of Trimurti. And three gods shared the power to rule all matter. When we look at the concepts of Avatar and Khidr, it is seen that helpless but good people who are in a difficult situation in both concepts go to their aid. Both their effective use of the river or stream and their ability to communicate with the living things in the river are perceived as clues in terms of the proximity between the two terms. It is known that Khidr and Matsya generally use fish as a means of transportation and helping people. There are parts in the Vedas, the holy book, in which Matsya is described as half-human in places. "However, the sculpture and engraving of Matsya, drawn while traveling on a fish, are in the British Museum".<sup>26</sup> It is also believed that Khidr and Matsya are immortal. It appears in the mythologies of both religions that they discovered the secret of negativity as a result of drinking from *Aab-i Hayat*, that is, the water of eternal life.

"According to deeper philosophy, the Fountain of Youth is not an actual spring or water but a fountain of knowledge that is eternal and never gets old or dies. As Al-Khidr or Khawaja Khizr, the only person believed to have had access to the Water of Life or Aab-i-Hayat, it is believed by cultures that he still lives on a remote, unknown island; he is sometimes seen by people dressed in green as "a man of God" and helps those in distress. There are also temples devoted to him by Hindus and shrines by Muslims who pay homage to this living saint".<sup>27</sup>

The terms Avtar and Khidr have extraordinary properties. Avtar, God's Vishnu, personally changes form to come to help innocent people, and while doing this, sometimes in the form of a fish, sometimes in the form of a lion, sometimes in the form of a warrior, and fighting on the side of the good, it shows God's support for believers who are on the right path. Khidr, on the other hand, is an extraordinary character sent by Allah whose life span is determined by Allah. Khidr, like the Avatar, can change shape and show extraordinary features. Khidr can be seen in many different disguises. But one cannot then understand it. Khidr gets his power directly from Allah. It can move as much as God allows. In Islam, there are some spiritual forces assigned by Allah. A group of them are angels. Tasks are given to angels, and angels only do those tasks and have limits. Avtar and Khidr descend to the earth for some missions in different formats and have no concept of time or mortal human character. They are excluded from actions such as eating or resting, having a family, and sleeping. However, their time is limited, and they change places immediately after their duties are over. There are also a number of other principles, such as being a guide. It is a well-known topic in Hindu mythology that Avtar Matsya was a fish man who saved thousands of people from drowning in the sea. It is known that Khaja Khidr, who also lived in India, traveled on a fish on the river and helped some tribes escape from the tyrants in this way.

“In the Syrian Lay of Alexander, and in the Qur’anic version, the fish swims away, and in the latter is said to reach the sea. A connection with the story of Manu and the ‘fish’ may be predicated in the Manu myth (SatapathaBramana, I.8.i); the ‘fish’ (Lhasa) is from the beginning alive, but very small, and precariously situated, for it comes into Manu’s hands when he is washing and asks him to rear it. Manu provides it with water, and after it has grown great, releases it in the sea; and when the Flood comes, it guides the Ark through the Waters by means of a rope attached to its horn. A noteworthy variant of the Manu legend, with a closer parallel to the Alexander and Qur’anic versions with respect to the desiccation of the ‘fish’, occurs in Jaimimya Brahmana, . 193, and Pancavimsa Brahmana, xiv. 5. 15; here Sarkara, the ‘sisumara’, refuses to praise Indra, Parjanya, therefore, strands him on dry land and dries him up with the north wind (the cause of the desiccation of the fish is thus indicated). Sarkara then finds a song of praise for Indra, Parjanya restores him to the ocean (as does Khizr, though unintentionally, in the Qur’anic version), and by the same laud Sarkara attains heaven, becoming a constellation.”<sup>28</sup>

Legendary events are frequently encountered in Hindu-Sufi mythologies. Because mysticism takes its power from extraordinary stories.

“That in the late Indian iconography Khizr’s vehicle is an unmistakable fish, and not the crocodilian makara, need not surprise us, for other instances of the alternative use of Makara and ‘fish’ could be cited from Indian iconographic sources; in some early representations, for example, the river-goddess Ganga is shown supported by a maker, but in the later paintings by a fish”.<sup>29</sup>

In Hindu and Sufi philosophy, the concept of spiritual or bodily maturation, or getting closer to God, seems possible only with spiritual methods. Mysticism has always added extraordinary events or metaphysical issues to its belief system. In Hinduism, meditation, and yoga, zikr (repetition of Allah’s name) tafakkur (Deepen think), and muraqaba (Sufi Meditation) in Sufism, are accepted as tools to bring the spirit closer to God, and they begin their spiritual journeys by cleansing the soul and heart. Deepening in mysticism or trying to connect with sacred values is always the first target. According to Islamic understanding, metaphysical tension is possible. It is predicted that believers can perceive some objects or substances that are not perceived by the five senses if they pray sincerely and are good believers. It is at the forefront of the topics frequently covered by Sufis that if the heart overflows with the love of Allah, the individual changes size or becomes able to sense other worlds. At the same time, it is in the news that many gurus or rishis who took control of their body desires and desires in Hinduism walked on fire or lived for years without eating. From the Hindu and Sufi points of view, Zinda Pir and Matsya, as they are known in Khidr or Hinduism, ruled the rivers, saved people in need of help, communicated with animals, and used fish very often in their travels. Also, they showed metaphysical features in two characters and won the favor of the people. There are many different statues or pictures of Matsya and Khidr. Sometimes on the fish, and sometimes on the boat while saving people. According to the epics told, time zones and river names are other remarkable parallels.

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