



ALIGARH

Unit 3:

Module 3- Indian Religion, Philosophy, and Practices

Pre-Vedic and Vedic Religion, Buddhism, Jainism, Six System Indian Philosophy, Shankaracharya, Various Philosophical Doctrines , Other Heterodox Sects, Bhakti Movement, Sufi movement, Socio religious reform movement of 19th century, Modern religious practices.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

To sensitize students towards issues related to 'Indian' culture, tradition and its Composite character.



Unit 3:

Religion in the Early Vedic Period

Learn about the different Gods worshipped by the Early Vedic people, their mode of worship, and their religious beliefs.

Important Gods of the Early Vedic Period

The Early Vedic Period or the Rig Vedic period began in 1500 BC and continued up to 1000 BC. The religion during this period was simple, and people worshipped the natural forces – the sky, the sun, the moon, the thunder, the wind, the dawn, and the air. To praise their Gods, the Vedic people composed hymns and offered animal sacrifice. The Rig Vedic people worshipped a total of thirty-three Gods and Goddesses. These Gods and Goddesses were divided into three categories – terrestrial, aerial, and celestial. The people believed in Karma, that is, they believed that a person would be punished or rewarded according to their deeds.

Mode of Worship

The Early Vedic people followed a simple mode of worship. They worshipped the natural forces, and their religion primarily consisted of some obligations and prayers. Hymns were an important part of the religion. The Vedic people chanted hymns to praise their Gods. They also performed certain ritual sacrifices known as yajnas to please their Gods. Apart from offering animal sacrifices, they offered fruits, milk, ghee, wine, grains, etc., by throwing them into the fire as part of yajnas. The fire was considered sacred and believed to act as an intermediary between man and God. Animals like cows, horses, bulls, buffaloes, and rams were offered as sacrifices. The Early Vedic people did not build any temples or shrines. They also did not worship any idols or images of Gods.

Religious Beliefs

The theory of rebirth and life after death was not properly formed in this period, and the idea was very vague. They believed that when a person died, their soul departed to the 'Pitralok' (land of fathers). There, the soul was received by Yama, who rewarded or punished a person according to their deeds. The idea of transmigration had not developed properly during this period. Even though the Rig Vedic people worshipped many Gods and Goddesses, they still believed in the concept of one God who had different names. They believed in the idea of one supreme power governing the entire universe. The Religion followed by the Rig Vedic people, that is, worshipping forces of nature and offering sacrifice, formed the base of Hinduism. Henotheism or Kathenotheism is found in the hymns of the Early Vedic period, that is, praising one God but not denying the others.

Important Gods of the Early Vedic Period

The people in the Early Vedic period worshipped the natural forces. They believed that God was capable of conferring both blessings and punishment on humankind. The Gods were divided into three categories – Terrestrial, Aerial, and Celestial:

- **Terrestrial Gods** – Agni, Soma, Brihaspati, Prithvi
- **Aerial Gods** – Rudra, Vayu, Indra, Maruts, Prajanya
- **Celestial Gods** – Varuna, Dyayus, Surya, Savitri, Mitra, Vishnu, Asvin, Usha, Pusha



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The **terrestrial Gods** were also known as Prithvishthana, **the aerial Gods** were otherwise known as the Antarishastana, and the **celestial Gods** were known as dyusthana.

Indra was the most important God during the Early Vedic period. He had many names – Vritrahan (slayer of Vritra, a demon), Purandara (breaker of forts), and Maghavan (bounteous). There are a total of 250 hymns that were devoted to him. He is also considered the rain God and warlord. Some other names of Indra were Pulushi, Tonan, Atsujit, and Purbhid. The second most important God during the Early Vedic period was Agni (Fire Goddess). A total of 200 hymns were devoted to Agni. People believed Agni to be an intermediary between them and the Gods. They believed that the offerings they gave to Agni were transmitted to the Gods in the form of smoke. The third most important God of the Early Vedic period was Varuna. He was believed as the upholder of cosmic law, and therefore, it was believed that he regulated all activities in the universe. Some other Gods of this period were Rudra (God of animals), Dyaus (the oldest God), Yama (God of death), Aditi (mother of Gods), Ashwin (God of youth, immortality, and health), and Sindhu (Goddess of the river).

Conclusion

The Early Vedic people worshipped the natural forces. They believed in a total of thirty-three Gods and Goddesses. Their Gods were divided into three categories – terrestrial, aerial, and celestial. They composed hymns and offered sacrifice as a means of worshipping their Gods. Even though they believed in many Gods, Henotheism or Kathenotheism is found in their hymns, that is, they worshipped one God but did not deny the others. The Early Vedic people did not build any temples or shrines, as they did not believe in idol worship. They believed that once a person dies, the soul travels to Pitralok, where it is punished or rewarded according to its deeds. In other words, they believed in the concept of Karma. Some important Gods and Goddesses of the period were Indra, Agni, and Varuna. Indra was the God of Rain, Agni was the Goddess of Fire, and Varuna was the administrator of Cosmic Law



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Buddhism and Jainism**Causes of Origin**

1. The Kshatriya reaction against the domination of the priestly class called Brahmanas. Mahavira and Gautama Buddha, both belonged to the Kshatriya clan.
2. Indiscriminate killing of cattle for Vedic sacrifices and for food had led to the destabilization of the new agricultural economy which was dependent on cattle for ploughing the fields. Both Buddhism and Jainism stood against this killing.
3. The growth of cities with the increase in the circulation of Punch Marked coins and trade and commerce had added to the importance of Vaishyas who looked for a new religion to improve their position. Jainism and Buddhism facilitated their needs
4. The new forms of property created social inequalities and the common people wanted to get back to their primitive form of life
5. Growing complexity and degeneration of Vedic religion.

Difference between Jainism and Buddhism and Vedic Religion

1. They did not attach any importance to the existing Varna system
2. They preached the Gospel of non-violence
3. They accepted Vaishyas, including the Moneylenders who were condemned by Brahmanas
4. They preferred simple, puritan and ascetic living

Buddhism

Gautama Buddha and Buddhism Gautama Buddha was born in 563 BC in the Republican clan of Shakyas in Lumbini near Kapilavastu. His mother was a princess from Kosalan dynasty.

Four Sights of Buddha's life at the age of 29 had moved him to the path of renunciation. They are

- An old man
- A diseased person
- An ascetic
- A dead person

Important events in the life of Buddha

Events	Places	Symbols
Janma	Lumbini	Lotus and Bull
Mahabhinishkramana		Horse
Nirvana	Bodh Gaya	Bodhi Tree
Dharmachakra Pravartana	Saranath	Wheel
Mahaparinirvana	Kusinagar	Stupa



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Doctrines of Buddhism**• Four noble truths**

1. Dukha – life is full of sorrow
2. Samyuda – there are causes for the sorrow
3. Nirodha – they can be stopped
4. Nirodha gamini Pratipada – Path leading towards the cessation of sorrow

• Ashtangika Marga

1. Right observation
2. Right determination
3. Right exercise
4. Right action
5. Right speech
6. Right memory
7. Right meditation
8. Right livelihood

• Madhya Marga – to avoid the excess of both luxury and austerity**• Triratna** – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha**Special features of Buddhism and the causes of its spread**

1. Buddhism does not recognize the existence of god and soul
2. Women were also admitted to the Sangha. Sangha was open to all, irrespective of caste and sex
3. Pali language was used which helped in the spread of Buddhist doctrines among the common people
4. Ashoka embraced Buddhism and spread it to Central Asia, West Asia and Srilanka
5. Buddhist

Councils

First Council: The first council was held in the year 483 B.C at Saptaparni caves near Rajgriha in Bihar under the patron of king Ajatshatru, during the first council two Buddhist works of literature were compiled Vinaya and Sutta Pitaka by Upali

Second Council: The second council was held in the year 383 B.C at Vaishali under the patron of king Kalashoka

Third Council: The third council was held in the year 250 B.C at Patliputra under the patron of King Ashoka the Great, during the third council Abhidhamma Pitaka was added and Buddhist holy book Tripitaka was compiled.

Fourth Council: The fourth council was held in the year 78 A.D at Kundalvan in Kashmir under the patron of king Kanishka, during this council Hinayana and Mahayana were divided.



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Causes of the decline of Buddhism

1. Buddhism succumbed to the rituals and ceremonies which it had originally denounced
2. They gave up Pali and took Sanskrit. They began to practice idol worship and received numerous offerings from devotees
3. Monasteries came under the domination of ease-loving people and became the centre of corrupt practices
4. Vajrayana form started to develop.
5. Buddhists came to look upon women as objects of lust.

Importance and influence of Buddhism Literature**1. Tripitaka**

1. Sutta Pitaka – Buddha's sayings
2. Vinaya Pitaka – Monastic code
3. Abhidhamma Pitaka – religious discourses of Buddha

2. Milindapanho – dialogue between Menander and Saint Nagasena**3. Dipavamsha and Mahavamsha** – the great chronicles of Sri Lanka**4. Buddhacharita by Ashvagosa****Sects**

1. Hinayana (Lesser Wheel) - They believe in the real teachings of Gautam Buddha of attaining Nirvana. They do not believe in idol worship and Pali language was used in the Hinayana text.

2. Mahayana (Greater Wheel) - They believe that Nirvana is attained by the grace of Gautam Buddha and following Bodhisattvas and not by following his teachings. They believe in idol worship and Sanskrit was used in Mahayana text

3. Vajrayana - They believe that Nirvana is attained by the help of magical tricks or black magic.

Bodhisattvas

1. Vajrapani
2. Avalokitesvara or Padmapani
3. Manjushri
4. Maitreya (Future Buddha)
5. Kshitigriha
6. Amitabha/Amitayusha

Buddhist architectures

1. Places of Worship – Stupas containing the relics of Buddha or Bodhisattvas.

Chaityas are the prayer hall while Viharas are the place of residence of monks

2. Development of Cave architecture eg. Barabar caves in Gaya

3. Development of Idol worship and sculptures



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4. **The growth of universities of par excellence** which attracted students from all over the world

Jainism

- Jainism believes in 24 Tirthankaras with Rishabdev being the first and Mahavira, contemporary of Buddha being the 24th Tirthankara.
- The 23rd Tirthankar Parshwanath (Emblem: Snake) was the son of King Ashvasena of Banaras.
- The 24th and the last Tirthankar was Vardhman Mahavira (Emblem: Lion).
- He was born in Kundagram (Distt Muzaffarpur, Bihar) in 599 BC.
- His father Siddhartha was the head of Jnatrika clan. His mother was Trishla, sister of Lichchavi Prince Chetak of Vaishali.
- Mahavira was related to Bimbisara.
- Married to Yashoda, had a daughter named Priyadarsena, whose husband Jamali became his first disciple.
- At 30, after the death of his parents, he became an ascetic.
- In the 13th year of his asceticism (on the 10th of Vaishakha), outside the town of Jrimbhikgrama, he attained supreme knowledge (Kaivalya).
- From now on he was called Jaina or Jitendriya and Mahavira, and his followers were named Jains.
- He also got the title of Arihant, i.e., worthy. At the age of 72, he attained death at Pava, near Patna, in 527 BC.

Five vows of Jainism

- Ahmisa – non-violence
- Satya – do not speak a lie
- Asteya – do not steal
- Aparigraha – do not acquire property
- Brahmacharya – celibacy

Three main principles

- Ahimsa
- Anekantavada
- Aparigraha

Triratna of Jainism

- Right faith – Samayak Shradha
- Right Knowledge – Samayak Jnan
- Right Conduct – Samayak karma



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Five types of knowledge

- Mati jnana
- Shruta jnana
- Avadhi jnana
- Manahparayaya Jnana
- Keval Jnana

Jain council

- 1st Council at Patliputra under the Patron of Chandragupta Maurya in 300 BC during which the 12 Angas were compiled
- 2nd Council at Vallabhi in 512 AD during which the final compilation of 12 Angas and 12 Upangas was done

Sects

- Shwetambars – Sthulabhadra – People who put on white robes. Those who stayed back in the North during the times of famine
- Digambars – Bhadrabahu – Exodus of monks to Deccan and South during the times of Magadhan famine. They have a naked attire Jain Literature Jain literature used Prakrit, which is a common language of people than using Sanskrit. In this way, Jainism reached far and wide through people.

The important literary works are

- 12 Angas
- 12 Upangas
- 10 Parikramas
- 6 Chhedsutras
- 4 Mulasutras
- 2 Sutra Granthas
- Part of Sangam literature is also attributed to Jain scholars.



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Six system of philosophy

The Hindu philosophy is categorized into six Orthodox and three heterodox philosophies. The classification is based on the acceptance of the authority of the Vedas. The Orthodox school of philosophy also called the Aastika School believes in the authority of Vedas, while the Heterodox school of philosophy, popularly known as Nastika School rejects the principle of authority of Vedas.

Six Orthodox Schools of Hindu Philosophy

The six orthodox schools are called as shatdarshanas and include Nyaya, Sankhya, Yoga, Vaisheshika, Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa (Vedanta Philosophy). Most of these schools of thought believe in the theory of Karma and rebirth. Moksha (salvation) is believed to be the liberation from the cycle of birth and death and is the ultimate goal of human life.

1. Nyaya

The founder of Nyaya is Akshapada Gautama and it dated back to 2nd Century BCE. It is a school that deals with logic and epistemology. Its main objective is to help to eliminate ignorance of knowledge. It enlists four valid (Pramana) and four invalid means of gaining knowledge. It is very closely linked with Vaisheshika School.

2. Vaisheshika

Popularly understood as the atomistic school of Indian Philosophy. It elaborates on seven elements of matter with the nomenclature of Saptapadartha- Dravya (substance and also includes the Panchamahabhutas), Guna (Qualities), Karma (activities), Samanya (generalist traits), Vishesh (specialty), Samavaya (inter-relatedness) and the last addition which is Abhaava i.e absence.

3. Samkhya

Samkhya is an extremely complex school of philosophy that goes deep into the understanding of the creator and the creation. There are terms like Mahat, Purusha, Prakriti, Tri-Gunas, that are explored in this school. The school is credited to Sage Kapila.

The Mahat is the universal cosmic spirit. Purusha is the passive element whereas Prakriti is the active element which creates Manas (Mind) and the three Gunas- Sattva (Calm and composed), Rajas (momentum, dynamism and egoistic) and Tamas (imbalanced, chaotic and destructive).

4. Ashtanga Yoga

While Samkhya highlights the three Gunas of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, the eight-limbs of Yoga Sutras of Patanjali highlight how to connect with the greater cosmic essence and enhance spirituality. These eight-limbs include- **Yama** (moral conduct), **Niyama** (Discipline), **Asana** (right posture), **Pranayama** (effective breathing), **Pratyahara** (withdrawing the senses), **Dharana** (to concentrate on one object), **Dhyana** (meditation), and **Samadhi** (supreme bliss/salvation).



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5. Purva Mimamsa

Sage Jaimini is associated with Purva Mimamsa who is considered to be the disciple of Sage Vyasa. This text provides details on why it is important to conduct Vedic rituals for a person to attain the last ultimate goal of life which is Moksha (usually understood as Salvation). This deals with Karma Khanda i.e. action based compendium of knowledge in the Vedas.

6. Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta

Vedanta, as the name suggests, is the last of the four forms of Vedas, the other three being Brahmanas, Samhitas, and Aranyakas. Aranyakas and Vedanta form the Jnana Khanda viz. a more metaphysical element for a person to explore. The beginning of Vedanta is credited to Sage Bhadraryana.

Vedanta was analyzed and interpreted by many thinkers that deserve a definite mention -- Advaita Vedanta by Shankaracharya, Visisht Advaita by Ramanujacharya, Dvaita Vedanta by Madhavacharya, Dvaitadvaita Vedanta by Nimbaraka and Shuddha Advaita Vedanta by Vallabhacharya

Unorthodox (heterodox) System of Indian Philosophy

The religions or schools of Philosophy that do not accept the authority of Vedas are termed as unorthodox. Buddhism and Jainism are unorthodox systems of philosophy; they dismiss the concept of God. They also oppose the caste system prevalent in society. These are renowned to be the heterodox schools of Indian philosophy. These are different from the six schools of Indian Philosophy.

- **Carvaka** It focuses on the materialistic way of living and the pleasures of life. This philosophy is renowned for being known as Lokayukta Philosophy.
- **Buddhism** The principles and ideals of Buddhism has been established by Gautam Buddha. It has been enshrined and conserved by the **Buddhist councils**. It focuses on universal truth and noble truths.
- **Jainism** The followers of Jainism oppose the caste system. It has been established by Rishabha Dev. They mostly follow five principles Ahimsa, Satya, Asetya, Bhattacharya, and Aparigraha



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Shankaracharya**Who Was Shankaracharya?**

Shankaracharya (born **Adi Shankara**) was an Indian philosopher who lived from about 788-820 CE. He is considered one of the most influential figures in the history of Indian philosophy. He is best known for his philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, which teaches that there is a single reality, which is the underlying basis of all appearances.

Shankara is also credited with unifying the various schools of Hindu thought and helping to revive Hinduism after the Islamic invasions.

Shankaracharya's Early Life

Shankaracharya was born in 788 AD in a small village in the southern Indian state of Kerala. At a very young age, he showed an intense interest in spiritual matters and the nature of the universe. He renounced the world at the age of 16 and went on a spiritual journey that would take him across India.

During his travels, **Shankaracharya** learned about the different spiritual traditions of India and came to see them as all part of a single, unified tradition. He also began to develop his philosophy, which sought to unite all of India's diverse religious traditions under a single umbrella. In the end, Shankaracharya succeeded in uniting India's diverse religious communities into a single, cohesive whole.

Shankaracharya's Political Career

Shankaracharya's political career was one of the most significant in Indian history. He was able to unite India under one religion, and his teachings continue to be influential even today. His work as a teacher and philosopher is unrivalled, and his legacy will continue to be remembered for many years to come.

Shankaracharya's Religious Beliefs

Shankaracharya was born into a family of Hindu Brahmins in the 8th century AD. At a young age, he attained enlightenment and soon became a revered religious and spiritual leader. He was a staunch defender of the Hindu faith and is credited with uniting India under one banner.

Shankaracharya's teachings revolve around the concept of Advaita Vedanta, which advocates that there is only one reality and that all difference is an illusion.

What Were His Main Contributions To Hinduism?

Shankaracharya is considered one of the most influential philosophers in Hinduism. He was responsible for defining and systematising religion in its current form. He also contributed to the development of Advaita Vedanta, a school of Hindu philosophy that emphasises non-duality and the unity of all reality.



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Shankaracharya is an important figure in Hindu history and continues to be revered by followers today.

What Was His Main Philosophy?

Shankaracharya was a Hindu philosopher who lived during the 7th and 8th centuries AD. He is considered one of the most influential figures in the history of Hinduism and is responsible for much of the philosophy that we see in the religion today.

The main philosophy of **Adi Shankaracharya** was that knowledge is the only thing that can save people from suffering. He believed that ignorance was the root of all suffering and that humans could only find true happiness by seeking knowledge.

What Are Some Of His Famous Quotes?

Shankaracharya was a well-known philosopher who is credited with defining Hinduism. He authored numerous texts on the subject and is considered one of the most influential thinkers.

“The ignorant man mistakes the true knowledge for ignorance.”

“The Self is not born, does not die; It is unborn, eternal, and ever-existing.”

“There is only one way to get rid of the error: to know the truth.”

How Has He Influenced Modern Hinduism?

Shankaracharya was an Indian philosopher who lived in the 8th century AD. He is considered one of the most influential figures in the development of Hinduism, and his teachings continue to be adequate to this day.

Adi Shankaracharya played a significant role in systematizing the Vedanta philosophy, one of the primary schools of Hindu thought. He also helped to revive Hinduism after centuries of decline. His teachings continue to be studied and debated by modern Hindus, and his influence can be seen in the various ways that Hinduism is practiced today.

Conclusion

Shankaracharya was a towering figure in Indian history, and his influence is still felt today. He was an influential philosopher and religious leader and is credited with uniting India under one banner.

He also championed the Advaita (non-dualist) philosophy, which holds that Brahman (the unchanging reality) is the only thing that truly exists. The teachings of **Shankara** are still studied and debated by scholars worldwide. He was an incredible thinker and philosopher, and his legacy is undisputed.



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Bhakti Movement**What is Bhakti Movement?**

The Bhakti movement was a religious reform movement initiated by Hindu saints to follow the path of devotion to reach salvation. In the Indian subcontinent, this movement resulted in numerous rites through practicing devotional rituals among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. They expressed themselves through composing devotional compositions in temples, Gurudwaras, and Masjids. The image of a bhakti singer-songwriter is popular all over the world. Most world civilizations have had bards, who served as chroniclers and satirists, mocking the meaningless conventions of their times while also writing and performing poems.

Here, we will provide information on 'what is bhakti movement or bhakti religion?' who started bhakti movement and more details from this article.

Medieval Indian History of Bhakti Movement

In India, the celebrated image of a religious songwriter was fully realized in the Bhakti movement, which was eventually named after him. Perhaps the strict caste structure, the complex ritualism that constituted religion, and the inherent need to transition to a more fulfilling manner of devotion and salvation spurred this movement. 'Surrender to God' was emphasized by Bhakti poets. Even now, a modified version of the Bhakti movement is practiced.

The Alvars and Nayanars, Vaishnavite and Shaivite poets, are thought to have started the movement in the Tamil region around the 6th and 7th centuries AD, and their works gained a lot of popularity. These poets, who came from both the upper and lower castes, produced a strong body of literature that has established their place in the popular canon.

Who Started the Bhakti Movement?

The movement started by Basavanna (1105-68) in the 12th century in the Kannada region threatened the caste system. While the orthodoxy held out, the Bhakti movement or bhakti religion in this region produced a rich vein of literature known as Vachana Sahitya, which was written by Basava and his adherents (Akkamahadevi, Allama Prabhu, Devara Dasimayya, and others). These Vachanas were composed of pithy aphorisms and imparted some astute observations on spiritual and social matters in unambiguous language.

Basavanna, the founder of the movement in Karnataka, was King Bijjala's minister. He used his great position to initiate social reform programs, and he saw his verses as a means of reaching out to the masses. He was ultimately defeated by orthodoxy, but he established a new way of thinking in society that has survived to the present day, and he remains an inspirational figure in Karnataka to this day.



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The Bhakti movement in Karnataka, and indeed throughout India, challenged the caste system, emphasized the individual's direct connection to god, and the prospect of salvation for all via good deeds and simple living as a social movement. It was a literary movement that freed poetry from singing kings' praises and introduced spiritual themes to poetry. It put an end to Sanskrit metrical forms' hegemony in literature by introducing simple and accessible styles like Vachanas (in Kannada) and other forms in diverse languages.

Background: the Bhakti movement in South India

During the era between the 7th and the 10th centuries, the Saiva Nayanar saints and Vaisnava Alvar saints of South India extended the concept of bhakti to all elements of society, regardless of caste or sex. Some of these saints were women, and some were from lower castes. The saint poets preached bhakti with great emotion and attempted to promote religious equality.

Bhakti and the South Indian Acharyas

When the bhakti movement's popularity in South India was waning, some bright Vaishnava Brahmin scholars (acharyas) defended the concept of bhakti on a philosophical level. The first of them was Ramanuja (11th century). He provided philosophical support for bhakti. He attempted to create a careful balance between orthodox Brahmanism and popular bhakti that was open to all.

Many popular socio-religious movements developed in North and East India and Maharashtra from the 13th to 15th centuries. These movements were marked by a focus on bhakti and religious equality. During the Sultanate period, almost all bhakti movements were linked to one or more South Indian vaishnava acharyas. Many scholars argue that the Sultanate period's bhakti activities were a continuation or resurgence of the previous bhakti movement or bhakti religion for these reasons. They claim that philosophical and ideological links existed between the two as a result of contact or diffusion.

Influences Made by the Bhakti Movement in the Society

The influence of the Bhakti movement is given below:

Socio-Economic Factors

It has been suggested that the medieval Indian bhakti movements (medieval Indian history) represented popular sentiments against feudal oppression. The verses of the bhakti saints, from Kabir and Nanak to Chaitanya and Tulsidas, include aspects of revolutionary rebellion to feudalism, according to this viewpoint. In this light, medieval bhakti movements are frequently viewed as India's counterpart of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. This is also referred to as medieval Indian history.



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Socio-Economic Changes

The huge popularity of Kabir, Nanak, Dhanna, Pipa, and other monotheistic movements can only be completely explained in the context of some significant socio-economic developments in the time after the Turkish conquest of Northern India. Unlike the Rajputs, the Turkish ruling class lived in cities. The concentration of resources in the hands of the ruling class resulted from the extraction of massive agricultural surpluses.

The demand for manufactured products, luxuries, and other necessities by this resource-wielding class resulted in the widespread acceptance of many new techniques and crafts. In the 13th and 14th centuries, this resulted in an increase in the number of urban artisans.

Features of Bhakti Movement

There are more features of the bhakti movement. Let us look at some of the features of the bhakti movement here. All of the saints involved with the monotheistic movement have certain similar teachings that give the movement its fundamental unity.

1. The majorities of monotheists was from the lower castes and were conscious of a similarity of thought among them. The majority of them were aware of each other's influences and teachings. They reference one other and their ancestors in such a way in their lyrics that it suggests a harmonious ideological affinity between them.
2. The Vaishnava principles of bhakti, the Nathpanthi movement, and Sufism inspired all monotheists in different ways and to varying degrees. The monotheistic movement is the result of a synthesis of these three traditions.
3. There was only one method for monotheists to establish a relationship with God through the personal experience of bhakti. The Vaishnava bhakti saints followed a similar route, but there was one major difference in their perceptions: they were all labeled monotheists since they uncompromisingly believed in one God. Nanak's God was then non-incarnate (Nirankar), eternal (Akal), and ineffable (Alakh). Monotheistic bhakti became Nirguna bhakti rather than Saguna bhakti, as it had been for Vaishnavites who believed in many human incarnations of God.
4. Monotheism took a course that was distinct from both the prominent religions of the time, Hinduism and Islam. They refused allegiance to either of them and criticized both religions' superstitions and orthodox aspects.

List of Important Saints of Bhakti Movement

The important saints of the Bhakti Movement were:

- Ramanuja
- Ramananda
- Sant Dnyaneshwar
- Kabir
- Guru Nanak



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- Sant Namdev
- Mira Bai
- Vallabhacharya
- Sant Eknath
- Chaitanya Maha Prabhu
- Samarth Guru Ramdas
- Sant Tukaram

Did you know?

It will be simpler to understand the eclectic spirit of many modern Indian figures such as Raja Rammohun Roy, Kesab Chandra Sen, Bhai Girish Chandra Sen, Tagore, Gandhi, Abul Kalam Azad, and Ambedkar if we truly understand the medieval bhakti movement.

We can see Ambedkar's reaction to Hindu scriptures in the bhakti movement. It's easy to see why, in a time when communal tensions were at an all-time high, Kabir became a powerful figure for both Gandhi and Tagore.

Conclusion

Thus, in this article we have covered about Bhakti movement and its important aspects. It was said to be a Hindu religious revival movement and said to be occurred during the medieval period in India. It focused on achieving the salvation through devotion. It connected the individual directly with the God and believes in the unity of the God.



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Sufism in India

Islam entered India in the 7th century CE in the form of merchants from Saudi Arabia who traded with the western coastal regions of India. After that in the north, the religion entered Multan and Sind when the regions were captured by Muhammad Bin Qasim in the 8th century CE. Sufism, however, gained prominence in the 10th and 11th centuries during the reign of the Delhi Sultanate.

In India, Sufism adopted many native Indian concepts such as yogic postures, music and dance. Sufism found adherents among both Muslims and Hindus.

There were two broad Sufi orders:

1. **Bashara** – Those who obeyed Islamic laws.
2. **Beshara** – Those who were more liberal.

The Beshara was also called ‘mast kalandar’. They comprised wandering monks who were also called Baba. They did not leave any written accounts.

- Sufism was a liberal reform movement within Islam. It had its origin in Persia and spread into India in the 11th century. Most of the Sufis (mystics) were persons of deep devotion who disliked the display of wealth and degeneration of morals following the establishment of the Islamic empire. They laid great emphasis on love as the bond between God and the individual soul. Love of God meant love of humanity and therefore, Sufis believed service to humanity was tantamount to service to God. In Sufism, self-discipline was considered an essential condition to gain knowledge of God by a sense of perception. While the orthodox Muslims emphasise external conduct, the Sufis lay stress on inner purity. The orthodox Muslims believe in the blind observance of rituals, the Sufis consider love and devotion as the only means of attaining salvation. Sufism also laid stress on meditation, good actions, and repentance for sins, prayers, pilgrimage, fasting, charity and controlling of passion by ascetic practices.
- By the 12th century, the Sufis were organised in 12 orders or Silsilas. A Silsila was generally led by a prominent mystic who lived in a Khanqah or hospice along with his disciples. The link between the teacher or pir or murshid and his disciples or murids was a vital part of the Sufi system. Every pir nominated a successor or wali to carry on his work. Gradually, the Khanqahs emerged as important centres of learning and preaching. Many Sufis enjoyed the sama or musical congregation in their Khanqahs. In fact, qawwali developed during this period.
- The four most popular Silsilas were the Chistis, Suhrawardis, Qadririyas and Naqshbandis.



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The Chisti Silsila

- The Chisti order was established in India by Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chisti (also known as Gharib Nawaz) around c.1192 CE. After staying in Lahore and Delhi, he finally shifted to Ajmer which was an important political centre and already had a sizeable Muslim population.
- His fame grew more after his death in c. 1235 CE, when his grave was visited by the then Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, after which the mosque and dome were erected by Mahmud Khalji of Malwa in the 15th century. After the support of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, the patronage of the dargah reached unprecedented heights. Qutub ud din Bhakhtiyar Kaki established the Chisti presence in Delhi under the patronage of Sultanate ruler Iltutmish.
- **Apart from Muin-ud din Chisti, the other important Chistis were:**
 1. Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Shakar (c.1175 – 1265 CE) – also known as Baba Farid. He confined his activities to Hansi and Ajodhan (in modern Haryana and the Punjab respectively). His outlook was so broad and humane that some of his verses are later found quoted in the Adi Granth of the Sikhs.
 2. Nizamuddin Auliya (c. 1238 – 1325 CE).
 3. Nasiruddin Chiragh – i – Dehlavi.
 4. Sheikh Burhanuddin Gharib – He established the Chisti order in the 13th century in the Deccan.
 5. Muhammad Banda Nawaz (Deccan city of Bijapur region).
- The Chistis led a simple, austere life and conversed with people in Hindawi, their local dialect. They were hardly interested in effecting conversions, though later on, many families and groups attributed their conversions to the “good wishes” of these saints. These Sufi saints made themselves popular by adopting musical recitations called sama, to create a mood of nearness to God. Nizamuddin Auliya adopted yogic breathing exercises, so much so that the yogis called him a Sidh or “perfect”. The Chistis preferred to remain aloof from state politics and shunned the company of rulers and nobles.

The Suhrawardi Silsila

- The Suhrawardi order entered India at about the same time as Chistis but its activities were confined largely to the Punjab and Multan.
- This Silsila was founded by Shihabuddin Suhrawardi in Baghdad and was established in India by Bahauddin Zakariya.
- Unlike the Chistis, the Suhrawardis accepted maintenance grants from the Sultans and took an active part in politics.



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- Suhrawardis believed that a Sufi should possess the three attributes of property, knowledge and hal (mystical enlightenment). They, however, did not support excessive austerities and self-mortification. They advocated a combination of ilm (scholarship) with mysticism.

The Naqshbandi Silsila

- This Silsila was established in India by Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi. It was later propagated by his successors, Shiekh Baqi Billah and Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1563 – 1624). They practised silent meditation of the heart, so were called “silent Sufis”.
- The Sufis of this silsila believed that the relationship between man and God was that of the slave and the master, unlike Chistis who believed it to be a relation between a lover and beloved.
- Sufis observed the Shariah law in its purest form and denounced all biddats (innovations in religion). They were against the liberal policies of Akbar like granting high status to many non-Muslims, abolishment of jizya and the ban on cow slaughter. They also were against sama (religious music) and the practice of pilgrimage to the tombs of saints.
- After the death of Sirhindi, the order was represented by two important mystics, each having a different approach. Conservative approach under the leadership of Shah Waliullah and liberal approach under the leadership of Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Jahan.

The Qadri Silsila

- Sheikh Abdul Qadir and his sons, Sheikh Niamatullah, Mukhdum Muhammad Jilani and Miyan Mir established the Qadri silsila during the Mughal rule and this order was popular in Punjab. Another famous saint of this order was Shah Badakhshani. The Mughal princess Jahanara and her brother Dara were disciples of this silsila.
- Qadris believed in the concept of Wahdat-al-Wajood meaning “Unity of Existence” or “Unity of Being”, i.e. God and his creation are one and similar. The saints of this silsila dismissed orthodox elements.

Impact of Sufism

The liberal and unorthodox elements of Sufism had a profound impact on medieval Bhakti saints. In the later period, the Sufi doctrines influenced the religious perspective of the rulers along with reminding them of their moral obligations. For example, the Mughal Emperor, Akbar’s religious outlook and religious policies were shaped a lot under Sufism.

1. Sufism influenced both rural and urban regions and had a deep political, cultural and social influence on the masses. Spiritual bliss became the ultimate aim and the people could raise their voice against all forms of orthodoxy, falsehood, religious formalism



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and hypocrisy. In a world torn by strife and conflict, the Sufis tried to bring peace and harmony.

2. The most important contribution of Sufism is that it helped to develop a bond of solidarity and brotherhood between Hindu and Muslim communities. The Sufi saints are revered not only by Muslims but also by a huge number of Hindus and their tombs have become a common place of pilgrimage for both communities.

Important Sufi Terms in India

- Sufi, Pir, Murshid – Saint
- **Murid** – Followers
- **Khanqah** – Place where Sufis lived, hospices
- **Khalifa** – Disciples
- **Zikr** – Recitation of God's name
- **Taubah** – Repentance
- **Fanaa** – Spiritual merging with the Almighty
- **Urs** – Death
- **Sama** – Musical gathering



Socio religious reform moment in 19th century

India in the 19th century witnessed a series of reform movements undertaken in various parts of the country. These movements were oriented toward a restructuring of the Indian society along modern lines.

Background

- The Indian society in the first half of the 19th century was caste-ridden, decadent and rigid.
- The conquest of India by the British during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, exposed some serious weaknesses and drawbacks of Indian social institutions.
- When the British came to India, they introduced the English language as well as certain modern ideas. These ideas were those of liberty, social and economic equality, fraternity, democracy and justice which had a tremendous impact on Indian society.
- As a consequence, several individuals and movements sought to bring about changes in social and religious practices with a view to reforming and revitalizing society.
- These efforts, collectively known as the Renaissance, were complex social phenomena. It is important to note that this phenomenon occurred when India was under the colonial domination of the British.
- There were some enlightened Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati and many others who were willing to fight and bring reforms to society so that it could face the challenges of the West.

Types of Reform Movements

Basically, there were two kinds of reform movements in the 19th century in India. Given below are the details about the same, important from the civil services exam preparation:

Reformist: - These movements responded with the time and scientific temper of the modern era.

Revivalist: - These movements started reviving ancient Indian traditions and thoughts and believed that western thinking ruined Indian culture and ethos.

Reformist Movements

Some of the reformist movements of the 18th and 19th centuries are discussed below:

Brahmo Samaj

Founded in 1828 in Calcutta by pioneer social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772 – 1833), the movement fought against idol worship, polytheism, caste oppression, unnecessary rituals and other social evils like Sati, polygamy, purdah system, child marriage, etc. Society also



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strove for women's rights like widow remarriage and education of women. It also fought, attacked prevailing superstitions among Hindus.

Aligarh Movement

Sayyid Ahmed Khan founded Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh in 1875. Later, it became Aligarh Muslim University. It offered modern education to Muslims.

Prarthana Samaj

- In 1863, Keshub Chandra Sen helped found the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay.
- The Prarthana Samaj preached monotheism and denounced priestly domination and caste distinctions.
- Its activities also spread to South India, through the efforts of the Telugu reformer, Veeresalingam.
- Chandavarkar, basically a philosopher, was a great leader of the Prarthana Samaj.

Revivalist Movements

Some of the revivalist movements are discussed below:

Arya Samaj

- The social and religious reform in North India was spearheaded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) who founded the Arya Samaj in 1875.
- This society strove against idolatry, polytheism, rituals, priesthood, animal sacrifice, child marriage and the caste system. It also encourages the dissemination of western scientific knowledge.
- They worked for the improvement in the condition of women, advocated social equality and denounced untouchability and caste rigidities.

Deoband Movement

It was a revivalist movement. In 1866, Muhammad Qasim Wanotavi and Rashid Ahamad Gangohi founded a school in Deoband (Uttar Pradesh, Saharanpur District). Deoband movement focused on uplifting the Muslim community through religious education.

Other Important Movements**The Theosophical Movement**

Though Annie Besant's name is most associated with this society, it was actually founded by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in New York (later shifted to Madras) in 1875. It promoted the study of ancient Hindu, Buddhist and Zoroastrian philosophies. It promoted the concept of universal brotherhood, as expounded in the Upanishads and Vedas. It laid stress on occultism.

**Ramakrishna Mission**

This mission was founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897 in Belur near Calcutta to promote the teachings of Vivekananda's Guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It opposed the caste system and untouchability. It focused on the universality of all religions and propagated Vedanta.

Satyashodhak Samaj

This society was founded by Jyotirao Govindrao Phule on 24 September 1873 in present-day Maharashtra. It campaigned against idolatry and the caste system. It advocated rational thinking and rejected the priesthood. Jyotirao Phule is said to have used the term 'Dalit' for the oppressed castes.

Young Bengal Movement

This movement was started by Henry Louis Vivian Derozio in Calcutta in the 1820s. Derozio was an Anglo-Indian college teacher in Calcutta, and he encouraged radical thinking among his students. He criticized the prevailing religious practices of orthodox Hinduism. He also inspired free-thinking and propagated the spirit of liberty, equality and freedom.

Widow Remarriage Association

Pandit Vishnu Shastri founded Widow Marriage Association in 1860.