

Bhakti and Sufi movement



GEOGRAPHY
WITH SHABIR

Prelude

Feature

- During this time number of gods and sculptures and religious text increased.
- Many different forms had been attributed to deities (Shiva and Vishnu)
- Puranas were compiled during the 3rd and 10th -century CE
- Vedic deities like **Indra, Agni**, etc had become marginal. Vedic mantras had the glimpses of shiva and Vishnu, but their form were elaborated in Puranas.
- Mingling of '**Great**' and '**little**' tradition of Hinduism as one.
- Treatment of chosen deity as supreme to other deities → rise in tension among various tradition.

How

- Compilation and composition of Puranic text into simple sanskrit verses, made them accessible to women and shudra.
- Acceptance of new local beliefs into traditional Hinduism. E.g. **Jagannath** as form of Vishnu, **local female deities** were incorporated in puranic framework **as the wife of principle male deity** – Lakshmi to Vishnu, Parvati to Shiva, etc.
- Even Buddhism had been influenced with these contemporary developments.
- Some **sculpture Buddhist deities have also** been found in which they were represented like Hindu god/goddesses. E.g. 10th century sculpture of Marichi found in Bihar.



sculpture of Marichi

Bhakti movement:

- It originated in 8th -century south India (now Tamil Nadu and Kerala), and spread northwards. It swept over east and north India from the 15th century onwards, reaching its zenith between the 15th and 17th century CE.
- It regionally developed around different gods and goddesses.
- **It was inspired by many poet-saints.** They emerged as the leader of community of devotees.
- They preached using the local languages so that the message reached the masses
- The movement has traditionally been considered as an influential social reformation in Hinduism.
- It provided an individual-focused alternative path to spirituality **regardless of one's caste or birth or gender.**
- Scriptures of the Bhakti movement include the **Bhagavata Purana** and **Padma Purana**.

Why:

- Too many gods started to confuse people.
- In **previous system** Gods were not equally accessible to women and lower caste.
- **Out castes were denied salvation.**
- Monopoly of brahmins over spiritual texts.
- Ancient Indian texts, dated to be from the 1st millennium BCE, such as the **Shvetashvatara Upanishad**, the **Katha Upanishad** and the **Bhagavad Gita** mention Bhakti. Gita introduces **bhakti** marga (the path of faith/devotion) as one of three ways to salvation.
- Emergence of non Brahmin poet saint preaching bhakti.

'Great' - Traditions that emanated from dominant social categories, including priests and rulers.
'Little' - Local practices that did not necessarily correspond with those of the great tradition

Type of bhakti tradition.

Nirguna bhakti- bhakti of abstract form of god. Nirguna bhakta's poetry were **Jnana-shrayi**, or had roots in knowledge. Kabir and Guru Nanak

Saguna bhakti- worship of specific deity or its form. Saguna bhakta's poetry were **Prema-shrayi**, or with roots in love. **Alvars**- worshippers of Vishnu and **Nayanars**- worshippers of Shiva.

Alvars and Nayanars saints travelled from place to place singing hymns in Tamil and identified Shrine where large temples were developed later.

Impact:

- ☐ Weakened caste system.
- Basavanna – opposed caste system and notion of untouchables in his vachana
- Tondaradippodi – he told Lord Vishnu love those who express their love for his feet, even though they are outcast, more than those Chaturvedins who are strangers and without allegiance to your service.



- **Appar** – he considered Shiva as composer of law book and asked every one to take refuge to shiva without giving much importance to caste, Gotra and kula. Only devotion is needed to get the love from god.
- ❑ Weakened the brahminical dominance.
- Emphasised on pure devotion rather on rituals.
- **Nalayira Divyaprabandham** – composition by Alvars, considered as 5th veda or tamil veda
- **Basavana** – he did not prscribed to Dharmasutra nor did he believed in rebirth.
- ❑ Challenged patriarchial norms and traditonnal notion for female’s role as wife and mother and female beauty
- **Andal** – she saw herself as beloved of Vishnu.her composition still sung.
- **Karaikkal Ammaiyar** – She adopted the path of extreme asceticism. Conidered Shiva as her father, forest as home and described herself as demoness
- **Mira Bai** – defied her husband, became wandering saint after escaping her murder conspiracy. She composed songs expressing intense emotion.
- ❑ Ideas of the Tamil bhaktas (especially the Vaishnavas) were incorporated within the Sanskritic tradition, culminating in the composition of one of the best-known Puranas, the **Bhagavata Purana**.
- ❑ Development of vernacular literature.
- Nalayira Divyaprabandham – composition by Alvars, considered as 5th veda was in tamil.
- **Vachana** of basavan were in kannad language.
- Composition of kabir – **Bijak, Kabir granthawali** and **Adi Granth sahib**, as well as poetry in several language and dialect. Use of **mystical expressions** – “Fire raging in the ocean” , “ lotus which blooms without flower”.
- ❑ Development of vernacular music in the form of Hymns, Bhajans, doha and poetry –
- Tamil hymns of Alvars and Nayanars
- Doha in Kabir granthawali is sung even today.
- Many bhajans like those composed by Mira bai are filled with melody.
- ❑ Major Tamil bhakti hymns opposed Buddhism and Jainism- because of the competition for royal patronage.



Karaikkal Ammaiyar



108ft, Statue of Basavana at Bidar

Vachana of Basavana:-

When they see a serpent carved in stone they pour milk on it. If a real serpent comes they say: “Kill. Kill.” To the servant of the god who could eat if served they say: “Go away! Go away!” But to the image of the god which cannot eat they offer dishes of food.

Relation with contemporary rulers

- Chola ruler supported brahmins and bhakti tradition.
- Made generous grants – land grant.
- Built large temples- e.g. shiva temple at Chidambaram, Tanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram.
- Most spectacular example of metal sculpture is the bronze statue of Natraj.
- Chola ruler Parantaka I consecrated metal image of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar in Shivatemple these images were taken out during festive prosetion
- Chola kings also introduced singing of tamil Shaiva hymns in temple. They also organised them in text called **Tevaram**.
- Mughal painting depicts Jahangir with jogi
- Aurangjeb wrote a letter to a jogi expressing his gratitude to him and asked him to call for his service whenever needed.

Important bhakti saints:

Shankaradeva –

In the late 15th century, Shankaradeva emerged as one of the leading proponents of Vaishnavism in Assam. His teachings, often known as the Bhagavati dharma because they were based on the Bhagavad Gita and the Bhagavata Purana, focused on absolute surrender to the supreme deity, in this case Vishnu. He emphasised the need for **naam kirtan**, recitation of the names of the lord in sat sanga or congregations of pious devotees. He also encouraged the establishment of satra or monasteries for the transmission of spiritual knowledge, and **naam ghar** or prayer halls. Many of these institutions and practices continue to flourish in the region. His major compositions include the **Kirtana-ghosha**.



Ramanuja –

- * He was born at Sriperumbudur near modern Chennai.
- * He preached Visishtadvaita in the 12th century.
- * According to him, God is Sagunabrahman.
- * He encouraged Prabattimarga or path of self-surrender to God.
- He invited the downtrodden to Vaishnavism.

Ramananda –

- He was born at Allahabad.
- Initially he was a follower of Ramanuja.
- Later he founded his own sect and preached his principles in Hindi at Banaras and Agra.
- Ramananda was the first to employ the vernacular medium to spread his ideas.
- He opposed the caste system and chose his disciples from all sections of society irrespective of caste.

Ramananda's disciples were:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| * Kabir | * Sadhana |
| * Raidasa, he was a cobbler | * Dhanna, he was from a Jat farmer |
| * Sena, he was a barber | * Naraharai, he was a goldsmith |
| | * Pipa, he was a Rajput prince |

Kabir –

- Kabir was the most famous disciple of Ramananda.
- He was brought up by a Muslim couple who were weavers by profession.
- He had a curious mind in learning new things and he learnt much about Hinduism in Benares.
- Kabir's aim was to reunite Hindus and Muslims and form harmony between them.
- He is regarded as the greatest of the mystic saints.
- His followers are called Kabirpanthis.
- They aided the common people to shed age-old superstitions and attain salvation through Bhakti or pure devotion.
- Criticized all forms of worship of idols.
- Kabir's poems have survived in several languages and dialects; and some are composed in the special language of *nirguna* poets, the **sant bhasha**. Others, known as **ulatbansi** (upside-down sayings), are written in a form in which everyday meanings are inverted.



Guru Nanak –

- Guru Nanak was born in Talwandi near Lahore.
- He was a disciple of Kabir.
- He was founder of the Sikh Religion.
- He condemned caste difference and rituals like bathing in holy rivers.
- He established a centre at **Kartarpur named Dera Baba Nanak on the river Ravi**. His idea of religion was highly practical and strictly moral.
- His one of the famous sayings was "Abide pure amidst the impurities of the world".

Mira bai –

- She is best known female poet in Bhakti tradition
- She attributed Krishna as her lover
- She was Rajput married against her will
- Defied her husband and escaped her murder conspiracy became wandering saint.
- She became popular in Rajasthan for her bhajans.

Nathpanthis, Siddhas, and Yogis

- They condemned the ritual and other aspects of orthodox religion and the social order, using simple, logical arguments.
- They encouraged renunciation of the world.
- To them, the path to salvation lay in meditation and to achieve this they advocated intense training of the mind and body through practices like yogasanas, breathing exercises and meditation.
- These groups became particularly popular among "low" castes.



Sufism:-

- In the early centuries of Islam a group of religious minded people called Sufis turned to asceticism and mysticism in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution.
- They were critical of the dogmatic definitions and scholastic methods of interpreting the Qur'an and Sunna (traditions of the Prophet) adopted by theologians.
- they laid emphasis on seeking salvation through intense devotion and love for God by following His commands, and by following the example of the Prophet Muhammad
- The Sufis sought an interpretation of the Qur'an on the basis of their personal experience.
- The word used for Sufism in Islamic texts is **Tasawwuf**.

How

- Sufis began to organise communities around the hospice or **khanqah** (Persian) controlled by a teaching master known as **shaikh** (in Arabic), **pir** or **murshid** (in Persian).
- He enrolled disciples (murids) and appointed a successor (khalifa).
- **Sufi Silsilas** –
 - It literally means a chain, signifying a continuous link between master and disciple.
 - stretching as an unbroken spiritual genealogy to the Prophet Muhammad.
 - It was through this channel that spiritual power and blessings were transmitted to devotees.
- When the shaikh died, his tomb-shrine/dargah became the centre of devotion for his followers. This encouraged the practice of pilgrimage or ziyarat to his grave.
- Sufis remember God either by reciting the **zikr** (the Divine Names) or evoking His Presence through **sama'** (literally, "audition") or performance of mystical music.
- Some mystics initiated movements based on a radical interpretation of sufi ideals.
- They ignored rituals and observed extreme forms of asceticism. Because of their deliberate defiance of the shari'a they were often referred to as **be-shari'a**,

Be-shari'a - were those who ignored rituals and observed extreme forms of asceticism. They deliberately defied sharia. They were known by different names - Qalandars, Madaris, Malangs, Haidaris, etc.

Ba-shari'a - were those who followed sharia.

Both **Be-shari'a** and **Ba-shari'a** opposed dogmatic definition and growing materialism of caliphate.

Silsilas:

□ Chisti –

- The **khanqah** was the centre of social life, It comprised several small rooms and a big hall (jama'at khana) where the inmates and visitors lived and prayed.
- On one occasion, fearing a Mongol invasion, people from the neighbouring areas flocked into the khanqah to seek refuge.
- There was an open kitchen (langar), run on futuh (unasked-for charity)
- It attempted to assimilate local tradition e.g. bowing before the Shaikh, offering water to visitors, shaving the heads of initiates, and yogic exercises.
- Sama was integral to Chistis and exemplified interaction with indigenous devotional traditions.
- Chistis adopted local language in communication and literature:-
 - Baba Farid composed verses in local language which was later incorporated in **Guru Granth Sahib**.
 - Long poem/Masnavi- to express idea of divine love using human love as an allegory. E.g. **Prem-akhyan** (love story) **Padmavat** composed by Malik Muhammad Jayasi it was the love story of Rani Padmini and Ratanen
 - Short poem in **Dakhini** (Indo-Aryan language spoken in southern India) attributed to Chishti Sufis who lived around the town of Bijapur, Karnataka. These poems were probably sung by women while performing household chores like grinding grain and spinning.
 - Chistis also contributed to **lurinama** or lullabies and **shadinama** or wedding songs.
 - Kannada **vachanas** of the Lingayats and the **Marathi abhangs** of the sants of Pandharpur had inspired Sufis in this region.



khanqah



- ✓ Among chisti saints the most revered shrine is that of Khwaja Muinuddin, popularly known as “Gharib Nawaz” (comforter of the poor).
- ✓ Muhammad bin Tughlaq (ruled, 1324-51) was the first Sultan to visit the shrine,
- ✓ The shrine was located on the trade route linking Delhi and Gujarat
- ✓ The spirited singing of pilgrims bound for Ajmer that inspired Akbar to visit the tomb. He also had a mosque constructed within the compound of the dargah
- ✓ Jahanara’s biography of Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti, titled **Munis al Arwah** (The Confidant of Spirits)
- ✓ **Amir Khusrau** – the great poet, musician and disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. He introduced **Qwal-a** hymn sung at the opening or closing of qawwali.

□ **Suhrawadi** –

- It was founded by Sihabuddin Suhrawadi and introduced in india by Bahuddin.
- It was richest order and soon became unpopular.

□ **Piradausia** –

- It was the only silsila to have originated in india.
- It was founded by sarafuddin.
- He composed – ‘Maqtubat’ and ‘Malfazat’ which dealt with life and teachings of sufi saints.
- It was confined to Bihar.

□ **Qadri** –

- It was the most secular order.
- It was founded by Sheikh Jilani Qadri.
- Dara shikoh followed this silsila.

□ **Naqshbandi** –

- It was founded by Sheikh Biqabullah
- Sheikh Niyamtullah was the greatest scholar of this silsila
- It was the most conservative silsila
- Aurangzeb followed this silsila

Most sufi lineages were named after a founding figure. For example, the Qadiri order was named after Shaikh Abd’ul Qadir Jilani. However, some like the Chishti order, were named after their place of origin, in this case the town of Chisht in central Afghanistan.

Relation with contemporary rulers –

- Sufis kept distance with the ruler.

But –

- They accepted donation, king helped them to setup charity trust.
- Using donation immediately in charity like food, cloths, home and ritual made Sufis very popular among masses.
- King demonstrated their support to Sufis.
- When the Turks set up the Delhi Sultanate, they resisted the insistence of the ulama on imposing sharia as state law because they anticipated opposition from their subjects.
- King resorted to Sufis to interpret Sharia as they derived authority directly from god. This provided legitimation from them in non-Muslim subjects.
- Kings wanted their tomb in the vicinity of Sufi shrines
- Other sufis such as the Suhrawardi under the Delhi Sultans and the Naqshbandi under the Mughals were also associated with the state.
- The modes of their association were not the same as those of the Chishtis.
- In some cases, sufis accepted courtly offices.