

INDIAN RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICES

UNIT 3

PRE VEDIC AND VEDIC RELIGION

- The Vedic Age was a significant era in Ancient Indian History. As such, the questions from this topic have always been featured in the history segment of the UPSC Prelims.
- The Vedic age itself is divided into the Early Vedic Period (1500 – 1000 BCE) and Later Vedic Period (1000 – 600 BCE)*.
- The early Dravidian religion constituted a non-Vedic form of Hinduism in that they were either historically or are at present Āgamic.
- The Agamas are non-Vedic in origin, and have been dated either as post-Vedic texts, or as pre-Vedic compositions.
- The civilisation covers the period from 2800 to 1900 B.C. (Kenoyer, 1998; Shinde & Willis, 2014) and in history, this period is known variously as the IVC, Harappan civilisation or the pre-Vedic period as it refers to the era before the Vedas were written.
- Women were educated through Vedic studies. Widow remarriage was practiced. During the post-vedic period the Gotra system and Ashram system started.
- The position of the women was lowered and was deprived of education and political involvement.
- Vedic religion, also called Vedism, the religion of the ancient Indo-European-speaking peoples who entered India about 1500 BC from the region of present-day Iran.
- It takes its name from the collections of sacred texts known as the Vedas.
- 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.
- The history of Hinduism is often divided into periods of development.
- The first period is the pre-Vedic period, which includes the Indus Valley Civilization and local pre-historic religions, ending at about 1750 BCE.
- The Rig-Veda Samhitas is the oldest extant Indic text.
- It is a collection of 1,028 Vedic Sanskrit hymns and 10,600 verses in all, organized into ten books (Sanskrit: mandalas).
- While Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaishesika are not based on the Vedas, they accept the authority of the Vedas.
- Thus the schools of Lokayukta or Carvaka, Buddhism, and Jainism are considered as the non-vedic or materialist philosophies in Indian culture.

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BUDDHISM

- Buddhism is a religion that is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama.
 - The main principles of this belief system are karma, rebirth, and impermanence.
 - the 3 gods of Buddhism
1. Vajrapāṇi (Buddhist deity)
 2. Mañjuśrī (Buddhist deity)
 3. Avalokiteśvara (Buddhist deity)
- Buddhism is an Indian religion or philosophy.
 - The Buddha ("the Awakened One"), a Śramaṇa; who lived in South Asia c. 6th or 5th century BCE.
 - Followers of Buddhism, called Buddhists in English, referred to themselves as Sakyan-s or Sakyabhikṣu in ancient India.
 - Buddhism is a non-theistic religion (no belief in a creator god), also considered a philosophy and a moral discipline, originating in India in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE.
 - It was founded by the sage Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha l. c. 563 - c.
 - Buddhists believe that human life is a cycle of suffering and rebirth, but that if one achieves a state of enlightenment (nirvana), it is possible to escape this cycle forever.
 - Siddhartha Gautama was the first person to reach this state of enlightenment and was, and is still today, known as the Buddha.
 - Buddhism and Hinduism agree on karma, dharma, moksha and reincarnation.
 - They are different in that Buddhism rejects the priests of Hinduism, the formal rituals, and the caste system.
 - Buddha urged people to seek enlightenment through meditation.
 - Indeed, since Siddhartha was born into a Hindu family, Buddhism is considered to have originated in part from the Hindu religious tradition and some Hindus revere Buddha as an incarnation of a Hindu deity.
 - In the Himalayan region, especially in Tibet and Nepal, Tara's status is more that of a supreme goddess or female Buddha than a bodhisattva.
 - She is referred to as the Wisdom Goddess, the Embodiment of Perfected Wisdom, the Goddess of Universal Compassion, and the Mother of all Buddha's.
 - Brahma is a leading god (deva) and heavenly king in Buddhism.
 - He is considered as a protector of teachings (dharmapala), and he is never depicted in early Buddhist texts as a creator god.
 - According to the 2011 census, 79.8% of the population of India practices Hinduism, 14.2% adheres to Islam, 2.3% adheres to Christianity, 1.7% adheres to Sikhism, 0.7% adheres to Buddhism and 0.4% adheres to Jainism.
 - The Muslim invasion of India nearly wiped out Buddhism.
 - From 712 A.D. onwards, their invasions of India became more frequent and recurrent.
 - As a result of these invasions, Buddhist monks have sought refuge in Nepal and Tibet.
 - In the end, Vajrayana Buddhism faded out in India, its birthplace.
 - Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism who later became known as "the Buddha," lived during the 5th century B.C.
 - Gautama was born into a wealthy family as a prince in present-day Nepal. Although he had an easy life, Gautama was moved by suffering in the world

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JAINISM

- 2005 - Supreme Court of India gave verdict that Jainism, Sikhism (and Buddhism) are distinct religions, but are inter-connected and inter-related to Hinduism, so these three are part of wider broader Hindu religion, based on the historic background on how the Constitution had come into existence after.
- Jainism teaches that the path to enlightenment is through nonviolence and reducing harm to living things (including plants and animals) as much as possible.
- Like Hindus and Buddhists, Jains believe in reincarnation. This cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is determined by one's karma.
- Despite theological differences between Jain and Hindu teachings – for instance, Hinduism teaches that the universe was created, but Jainism does not – the two religions share many similarities in their teachings and practices.
- Rishabhadeva is considered as the first real founder of Jainism.
- He is the first Tirthankara in Jainism and is also said to have lived millions of years ago.
- Both Jains and Hindus believe that every living creature has a soul within, jiva or jiva-atma. However, the Jains do not believe in the concept of param-atma, like Shiva or Vishnu, who embodies the cosmic soul.
- JAINS ARE VEGETARIANS. WE EAT VEGETABLES, SQUASH, BEANS, PEAS, TOMATOES, FRUITS, AND LETTUCE. JAINS DO NOT EAT STEAK, HAMBURGERS, HOT DOGS, OR ANY OTHER KIND OF MEAT.
- JAINS ALSO DO NOT EAT CHICKEN, EGGS, TURKEYS, OR ANY POULTRY ITEMS.
- Jains ritually worship numerous deities, especially the Jinas. In Jainism a Jina as deva is not an avatar (incarnation), but the highest state of omniscience that an ascetic tirthankara achieved.
- Out of the 24 tirthankaras, Jains predominantly worship four: Mahāvīra, Parshvanatha, Neminatha and Rishabhanatha.
- Jainism has a fourfold order of muni (male monastics), aryika (female monastics), Śrāvaka (layman) and sravika (laywoman).
- This order is known as a sangha.. Many Jains are in general caste.
- The word Hindu is an exonym, and while Hinduism has been called the oldest **religion in the world, many practitioners refer to their religion as Sanātana Dharma** (Sanskrit: सनातन धर्म, lit.
- Besides accepting Krishna as one of the nine Vasudevas, the Jains liberally extend their support to the view which accepts Krishna as belonging to the status of the great chieftains of the age, and one who had obtained supreme glory and was very kind-hearted.
- Jainism was born in India about the same period as Buddhism. It was established by Mahavira (c. 599 - 527 BC) in about 500 B. C.
- He was born near Patna in what is now Bihar state. Mahavira like Buddha belonged to the warrior caste.
- Jainism is one of the oldest religions in India. Present historians say that it is at least 5000 years old but Jains believe it to be eternal.
- Jainism is thought to have begun in the Indus valley civilization around 3000 B.C.

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SIX SYSTEM INDIAN PHILOSOPHIES

- The six principal Hindu darshans are Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.
- There are six major schools of Vedic philosophy—Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedanta, and five major heterodox (sramanic) schools—Jain, Buddhist, Ajivika, Ajñana, and Charvaka.
- These are known as Vaisheshika, Nyaya, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta or Uttar Mimamsa.
- These six systems of philosophy are said to have been founded by sages Konada, Gotama, Kapila, Patanjali, Jaimini and Vyasa, respectively.
- Brihaspati, a philosopher, is traditionally referred to as the founder of Charvaka or Lokāyata philosophy, although some scholars dispute this.
- Examining this tradition from its establishment by Socrates in the fifth century BCE through Plotinus in the third century CE and the eclipse of pagan philosophy by Christianity, Pursuits of Wisdom examines six central philosophies of living — Socratic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Epicurean, Skeptic, and the Platonist life.
- The Shad-Darsanas (the six schools of philosophy) or the Shat-Sastras are: the NYAYA, founded by Gautama Rishi, the VAISESHIKA by Kanada Rishi, the SANKHYA by Kapila Muni, the YOGA by Patanjali Maharshi, the PURVA MIMAMSA by Jaimini, and the UTTARA MIMAMSA or VEDANTA by Badarayana or Vyasa.
- Shankaracharya is known as the father of Indian Philosophy. He was the prominent exponent of the Advaita Vedanta School of philosophy.
- Socrates is considered by many to be the founding father of Western philosophy—as well as one of the most enigmatic figures of ancient history.
- Thus 'darshans' suggests vision. In other words, 'darshans' is a whole view revealed to the inner self, what we term as the soul or the spirit or the inner being. Philosophy or 'darshans' is concerned with the vision of 'truth and reality'. In Sanskrit, the 'philosophy' is also referred to as 'tatva'.
- Charvaka, also called Lokayukta (Sanskrit: “Worldly Ones”), a philosophical Indian **school of materialists who rejected the notion of an afterworld, karma, liberation** (moksha), the authority of the sacred scriptures, the Vedas, and the immortality of the self.
- Carvaka system is furthermore considered as positivists, atheists and egoistic hedonistic thinkers. Their motto is thus concluded as: 'Eat, drink and be merry'.
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- Plato (Ancient Greek: Plátōn, "wide, broad-shouldered"; c. 428/427 – c. 348/347 BC) was an ancient Greek philosopher, the second of the trio of ancient Greeks including Socrates and Aristotle said to have laid the philosophical foundations of Western culture.

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SHANKARACHARYA

- Shankara is most known for his systematic reviews and commentaries (Bhasyas) on ancient Indian texts. Shankara's masterpiece of commentary is the Brahmasutrabhasya (literally, commentary on Brahma Sutra), a fundamental text of the Vedanta school of Hinduism.
- The 70th Shankaracharya, Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswati is the current Shankaracharya, before which, the matha was headed by Sri Jayendra Saraswathi, the 69th Shankaracharya.
- Other scholars say that Shankaracharya authorship of the commentaries on the Brahman Sutra, the ten principal Upanishads as well as the Bhagavad Gita are beyond doubt.
- Shankaracharya was an early 8th century Indian philosopher who consolidated the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta.
- Adi Shankara had a famous debate with Mandana Mishra in which the wife of Mandana Mishra, Ubhaya Bhārati, was the referee. After debating for over fifteen days, Mandana Mishra accepted defeat. Ubhaya Bhārati then challenged Adi Shankara to have a debate with her in order to 'complete' the victory.
- He established four major mathas in different regions of India - Badrinath, Dwarka, Puri, Sringeri. He established them to propagate the philosophy of advaita vedanta and to promulgate the concept of Sanatana dharma.
- The appointment of Shankaracharya is done by Bharat Dharma Mahamanda, an apex body of Indian sadhus, as well as Kashi Vidwatparishad. Bharat Dharma Mahamandal follows the guidelines mentioned in Mahanushasan, a book written by Adi Shankaracharya.
- Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya (788–820 CE) was born in Kaladi in Kerala and, after travelling the length and breadth of India three times in his spiritual journeys, died in Kedarnath at the young age of 32.
- A tradition says that Shiva, one of the principal gods in Hinduism, was Shankara's family deity and that he was, by birth, a Shakta, or worshipper of Shakti, the consort of Shiva and female personification of divine energy. Later he came to be regarded as a worshipper of Shiva or even an incarnation of Shiva himself.
- Shankaracharya is known as the father of Indian Philosophy. He was the prominent exponent of the Advaita Vedanta School of philosophy.
- Thereafter he preaches in the corners of India about Vedas, the unity of the nation etc. His Holiness is an eminent Mathematician and a scholar. He has authored the books on the basis of Vedic Mathematics and has devoted all his books to the Late Bharti Krishna Tirthaji Maharaja.
- The Advaita tradition emphasizes that, since Brahman is ever-present, Brahman-knowledge is immediate and requires no 'action', that is, striving and effort, as articulated by Shankara; yet, it also prescribes elaborate preparatory practice, including yogic Samadhi,
- He said Sai Baba was projected superior to lord Hanuman and other Hindu Gods by the trust, which was unacceptable. "Sai Baba's real name was Chand Miya who is dead and we treat him as a ghost and not God," said Swami Swaroopanand.
- It was repaired by King Gopaditya (426–365 BC) and by King Lalitaditya (697–734).
- Abdullah directed his message to south India at a time when India had sent someone from the south to defend its case in the United Nations; He wrote that Shankaracharya, someone from the south, came to Kashmir where his dialogue with a Kashmiri Hindu lady, in which he was outwitted, led to the development of Shaivism.

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VARIOUS PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINES

- These are known as Vaisheshika, Nyaya, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimansa and Vedanta or Uttara Mimansa. These six systems of philosophy are said to have been founded by sages Konada, Gotama, Kapila, Patanjali, Jaimini and Vyasa, respectively. These philosophies still guide scholarly discourse in the country.
- The doctrines are: 1. Doctrine of Metaphysics 2. Doctrine of Causation 3. Doctrine of Form and Matter.
- Janice explains to Paula, who is not a philosophy student, that although it is not always broken down in this exact way, a common approach to the branches of philosophy is through five categories: ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, logic, and aesthetics.
- These six main areas of educational philosophy are perennialism, essentialism, behaviourism, progressivism, reconstructionism, and existentialism. These philosophical areas evolved and broadened from the four classical views of philosophy to shape to the different styles of teachers in today's schools.
- There are four pillars of philosophy: theoretical philosophy (metaphysics and epistemology), practical philosophy (ethics, social and political philosophy, aesthetics), logic, and history of philosophy.

They have been included to show how they relate to the Basic Doctrines.

1. Godhead. ...
 2. Plan of Salvation. ...
 3. Atonement of Jesus Christ. ...
 4. Dispensation, Apostasy, and Restoration. ...
 5. Prophets and Revelation. ...
 6. Priesthood and Priesthood Keys. ...
 7. Ordinances and Covenants. ...
 8. Marriage and Family.
- Three basic concepts form the cornerstone of Indian philosophical thought: the self or soul (atman), works (karma), and liberation (moksha).
 - It is impossible to identify one person who is supposed to be the “father” or “mother” of philosophy, but Thales, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Confucius and Lao Zi might be considered influential figures within their respective traditions.
 - Socrates is considered by many to be the founding father of Western philosophy—as well as one of the most enigmatic figures of ancient history.
 - Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant: these are the seven philosophers who stand out from the rest in what is known as the ‘modern’ period in philosophy. Their thought defines the mainstream of classical or early modern philosophy, largely responsible for shaping philosophy as we now know it.
 - Instead, he thinks that there are ten: (1) substance; (2) quantity; (3) quality; (4) relatives; (5) somewhere; (6) sometime; (7) being in a position; (8) having; (9) acting; and (10) being acted upon (1b25–2a4). I shall discuss the first four of these kinds in detail in a moment.

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OTHER HETERODOX SECTS

- The Heterodox school of philosophy, often known as the Nastika school, denies the Vedic notion of authority. Charvaka (Brihaspati), Jainism, and Buddhism are regarded as heterodox schools of thought since they do not recognise the authority of the Vedas as the orthodox system of philosophy.
- These are orthodox (astika) Hindu philosophy schools that recognise the authority of the Vedas; schools that do not accept the authority of the Vedas are heterodox (Nastika) Hindu philosophy schools such as Buddhism, Jainism, Ajivika, and Charvaka.
- Against the background of rigid Vedic religion, based on sacrifices & polytheism, the 6th century India witnessed the rise of heterodox & monotheist belief systems like Jainism, Buddhism, and Ajivakas etc. These systems opposed complex and time-labor-money consuming Vedic rituals and sacrifices.
- 1666–1708 CE). There are six major schools of Vedic philosophy—Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedanta, and five major heterodox (sramanic) schools—Jain, Buddhist, Ajivika, Ajñana, and Charvaka.
- Against the background of rigid Vedic religion, based on sacrifices & polytheism, the 6th century India witnessed the rise of heterodox & monotheist belief systems like Jainism, Buddhism, and Ajivakas etc. These systems opposed complex and time-labor-money consuming Vedic rituals and sacrifices.
- What are Indian philosophy's heterodox schools? Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mms, and Vedanta are the six primary schools of Vedic philosophy, whereas Jain, Buddhist, Ajivika, Ajana, and Charvaka are the five major heterodox (shamanic) schools.
- Conventionally, the terms “heterodox sects” or its less pejorative equivalents are used for new religious groups, networks, and movements from the 12th century onward. Here, we will use the same periodization and leave mainstream Buddhist and Daoist traditions, as well as Christianity, out of consideration.
- Hinduism. The main schools of Indian philosophy that reject the absoluteness of the Vedas, including Buddhism and Jainism, were regarded as heterodox by Hinduism.
- The word Hindu is an exonym, and while Hinduism has been called the oldest religion in the world, many practitioners refer to their religion as Sanātana Dharma (Sanskrit: सनातन धर्म, lit. Today, although the religious meaning remains, the adjective heterodox can describe someone who adheres to any atypical beliefs, such as scientists who buck the current thinking or politicians who do not toe the party line. The word can be a synonym of heretical, which describes someone with contrary beliefs.
- expressed by a variety of terms. In relation to religious life, orthodoxy means correct or sound belief according to an authoritative norm; heterodoxy refers to belief in a doctrine differing from the norm.
- These various sects, including Buddhism and Jainism are together known as heterodox sects.
- The United States could be considered a heterodox nation. It has many different political, religious and social beliefs and doctrines that are sometimes in opposition to one another or do not align.

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BHAKTI MOVEMENT

- Bhakti movement in Hinduism refers to ideas and engagement that emerged in the medieval era on love and devotion to religious concepts built around one or more gods and goddesses. Bhakti movement preached against the caste system using the local languages so that the message reached the masses.
- Bhakti Movement started from South India, by Alvaras and Nayanars. Alvaras are the devotees of Lord Vishnu and Nayanars are devotees of Lord Shiva. These devotees travelled to various places singing hymns in praise of their Gods.
- The main principles of Bhakti movement were : (1) God is one, (2) To worship God man should serve humanity, (3) All men are equal, (4) Worshipping God with devotion is better than performing religious ceremonies and going on pilgrimages, and (5) Caste distinctions and superstitious practices are to be given up.
- The Bhakti movement emphasized the unity of all the different Hindu gods, the surrender of the self to God, equality and brotherhood of all people, and devotion to God as the number one priority of life. One of the most important impacts of the Bhakti movement on Indian society was the rejection of the caste system.
- Challenge from Rival Religion: the impact of the Muslim rule and Islam put dread in the heart of Hindu masses. The Hindus had suffered a lot under some of the fanatic rulers. They wanted some solace to heal their despairing hearts. Influence of Sufism: The Sufi saints of the Muslim community also inspired the movement.
- The leader of the Bhakti movement focusing on Lord Rama was Ramananda. He was a 14th century Vaishnava poet who founded the Ramanadi Sampradaya. He taught that Lord Rama is the supreme Lord, and that salvation could be attained only through love for and devotion to him, and through the repetition of his sacred name.
- Saguna and Nirguna are the two different ideological streams of the Bhakti movement.
- The Bhakti tradition continues in a modified version even in the present day. The movement probably began in the Tamil region around the 6th and 7th century AD and achieved a great deal of popularity through the poems of the Alvars and Nayanars, the Vaishnavite and Shaivite poets.

Stages of Bhakti | Elevation to Krishna Consciousness :

1. Sravana dasa – Hearing (1st stage of Bhakti)
 - 2. Varana dasa – acceptance (2nd stage of Bhakti)**
 3. Smarana dasa – remembrance (3rd stage of Bhakti)
 4. Bhavapana dasa – attainment of ecstatic spiritual emotions (4th stage of Bhakti)
- The main features of Bhakti were - emphasis on the devotion and individual worship of a deity rather than the performance of sacrifices. Another feature was the housing of deities in temples.
 - Bhakti movement in Hinduism refers to ideas and engagement that emerged in the medieval era on love and devotion to religious concepts built around one or more gods and goddesses. Bhakti movement preached against the caste system using the local languages so that the message reached the masses.
 - The main features of Bhakti are: (i) A loving relationship between a devotee and his personal god. (ii) Bhakti emphasised devotion and individual worship of a god or goddess rather than performance of elaborate sacrifices. (iii) Discarding of any discrimination based on gender, caste or creed.

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SUFI MOVEMENT

- 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.
- Baha-ud-Din Naqshband (1318-1389) of Turkestan founded Naqshbandi order of Sufism. Khwaja Razi-ud-Din Muhammad Baqi Billah whose tomb is in Delhi, introduced the Naqshbandi order in India. The essence of this order was insistence on rigid adherence to Sharia and nurturing love for the Prophet.
- Central Ideas: The idea of soul, divine proximity, divine love and self annihilation are central to the theory of Sufism. Love of humanity: According to Sufism, love of God meant love of humanity and thus, they stressed that service to God is nothing but service of humanity.
- Sufism, mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God.
- Sufism started in India during the 11th and 12th centuries. This happened when Sufi saints arrived in India, especially in Lahore and Multan of the Indian subcontinent. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, a disciple of Khwaja Osman Haruni, introduced this order to India while propounding it.
- Sufism originated after the death of Mohammed in 632, but it did not develop into orders until the 12th Century. The orders were formed around spiritual founders, who gained saint status and shrines built in their names.
- Haqiqa (Arabic is one of "the four stages" in Sufism, shari'a (exoteric path), tariqa (esoteric path), haqiqa (mystical truth) and marifa (final mystical knowledge, unio mystica).
- That is the case for Ajmer Sharif, the tomb of Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti (the first Sufi saint that had come to India) in Ajmer, or the tomb of Nand Rishi in Charar-e Sharif in Kashmir.
- Sufic psychology identifies seven levels of the nafs, which have been identified in the Quran. The process of growth depends on working through these levels. These are: tyrannical self, regretful self, inspired self, serene self, pleased self, pleasing self and the pure self.
- THE FIRST TWO URDU & SUFI POETS Qutub Shah & Wali Deccani: SELECTED POEMS & BIOGRAPHIES.
- 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”.
- Bahadur Shah Zafar, a Sufi King convicted as a Salafi rebel.
- The four main Sufi orders – Chishti, Qadiriyya, Suhrawardiyya and Naqshbandi order were practiced in India.
- Sufi saints introduced the mystical version of Islam. It comprises a number of mystical paths aimed at determining the nature of humanity and God, as well as facilitating the experience of divine love and wisdom in the world. Sufism had a profound impact on South Asia's religious, cultural, and social life.
- Sufism originated in Arabia and Persia region as a reaction against the worldliness of the early Umayyad period.
- The Three Pillars of Sufism: Humility, Charity, Truth.

SOCIO RELIGIOUS REFORMS MOVEMENT OF 19TH CENTUARY

- 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.

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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:

1. Reformist

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

2. Revivalist

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

- 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.

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 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.

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- Chandavarkar, basically a philosopher, was a great leader of the Prarthana Samaj.

MODERN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

- Religious practices may include rituals, sermons, commemoration or veneration (of deities or saints), sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trances, initiations, matrimonial and funerary services, meditation, prayer, music, art, dance or public service.
- According to the 2011 census, 79.8% of the population of India practices Hinduism, 14.2% adheres to Islam, 2.3% adheres to Christianity, 1.7% adheres to Sikhism, 0.7% adheres to Buddhism and 0.4% adheres to Jainism.
- The practice of a religion may also include sermons, commemoration of the activities of a god or gods, sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trance, initiations, funerary services, matrimonial services, meditation, music, art, dance, public service, or other aspects of human culture.
- According to some estimates, there are over 4,000 religions, faiths groups, and denominations that exist around the world today. Researchers and academics generally categorize the world's religions into five major groups: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism.
- World religions are a category used in the study of religion to demarcate the five—and in some cases more—largest and most internationally widespread religious movements. Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are always included in the list, being known as the "Big Five".
- The most common rituals practiced in all Hindu households are puja, meditation, silent prayers, yoga, recitation of scriptures from Bhagavad Gita or bhajans, reading religious books, participating in Satang (prayer meets), performing charitable work, visiting a temple, and chanting the name of their beloved God.

Major religious groups

- Christianity (31.7%)
 - Islam (25%)
 - Irreligion (15.2%)
 - Hinduism (14.9%)
 - Buddhism (6.6%)
 - Folk religions (5.6%)
 - Sikhism (0.3%)
 - Judaism (0.2%)
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- Religious practices may include rituals, sermons, commemoration or veneration (of deities or saints), sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trances, initiations, matrimonial and funerary services, meditation, prayer, music, art, dance or public service.