



1. Explain with examples what historians mean by the integration of cults.

Ans: During the period of the 10th Century to the 17th Century, an important trend noticed in the religious life in India is the worship of God in many forms. Many God and Goddesses appear in the sculptures and texts but they are various forms of the original deities only. These original deities are Vishnu, Shiva, and Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Parvati.

Historians have noticed the two marked trends in the socio-religious life of those days. The first was dissemination of the Brahminical ideas. The Brahminical texts were reproduced in simple Sanskrit. They were now made available to women and shudras, who did not have access to Brahminical literature by and large. The second was the Brahmins who were working on the beliefs and practices. It was a process of evolution, wherein traditional classical traditions were getting new shapes continuously as they were being impacted by the traditions of common people throughout the land.

Now let us look at the two of the following examples.

1. A very good example of the above description is the temple of Jagannatha at Puri in Orissa. The temple is of Lord Jagannatha who is another form of Vishnu only. The word Jagannatha means one who owns the world.

2. There were many local gods; their statues were often created by wood and stones by tribals. Even families began to have Kul Devata. The Goddesses were also created in wood and stone. They all were in various forms only often of Vishnu.

2. To what extent do you think the architecture of mosques in the subcontinent reflects a combination of universal ideals and local traditions?

Ans: With the arrival of Islam in the Medieval ages, the architecture of Islam also came to India. However, the Arab-cum-Islamic architecture got impacted by the local traditions and rites too. Hence, we see a fusion of the two. This can be further elaborated by the examples of architecture mainly the constructions of the mosques of those days.

Some features of the architecture of mosques are universal. All mosques have orientation towards Mecca. This is manifested in the placement of Mehrab and Minar within a mosque. But at the same time we have influences that can be described only as local influences. A 13th Century mosque in Kerala has a shikhar like roof unlike a normal mosque where it is dome. The Shah Hamdan Mosque in Kashmir is made of Kashmiri woods and its facade is like that of a temple. The Atia Mosque in Bangladesh is made of bricks, though its roof is round. Thus, we can see that the architecture of Mosques is that of fusion.

3. What were the similarities and differences between the be-shari'a and ba-shari'a sufi traditions?

Ans: Shari'a is the Islamic law that is applied in a truly Islamic country. The Shari'a law owes its origin to the Holy book of Quran, Hadis (Law book of Islam) and teachings of Prophet Muhammad. In the medieval ages the Islamic world witnessed a big social and religious movement called Sufi movement. Sufi movement was the people-centric and not God-centric. It believed serving people was

the real form of worship. Sufi movement has had many branches too. One group of Sufi preachers took very radical path. They were mystics who renounced material world took to the life of asceticism. Further they also rejected the supremacy of the Shari'a laws. Such sufis were called be-shari'a.

On the other hand , there were sufi saints who criticised the extravagant lifestyle of monarchs and Khaliphates but did not reject Shari'a laws. For them Shari'a laws were sacrosanct. These Sufi saints have been called be-shari'a.

4. Discuss the ways in which the Alvars, Nayanars and Virashaivas expressed critiques of the caste system.

Ans: The early Bhakti Movement was led by Alvars and Nayanars. It was the period of the 6th Century. Alvars are those who were disciples of Vishnu and Nayanars were those who claimed themselves the followers of Lord Shiva. They travelled place to place and would sing devotional songs in Tamil in the name of Shiva or Vishnu as the case may be. Apart from being a religious movement it was a social movement too. Many historians are of the view that Alvars and Nayanars gave a blow to the caste system and Brahminism. This is corroborated by the fact that the movement was open to people from diverse background. The Bhaktas came from the castes of Brahmin to artisans to even those that were considered untouchables.

Virashaivas was a movement of the 12th Century that took place in Karnataka. The movement was led by a Brahmin named Basavanna (1106-68), who was a minister in the court of Chalukya king. The followers of Basavanna are called Virashaivas and they worshipped Shiv. They were also called and perhaps more often Lingayats, which literary means wearer of Lingas. They challenged the caste system and they challenged the idea of any caste being pollutant. This helped them grow support among marginalised sections of the society. Virashaivas also attacked some evil practices supposedly not approved by Shashtras, such as post puberty marriage and remarriage of widows. Further they also questioned the theory of rebirth.

5. Describe the major teachings of either Kabir or Guru Nanak and the way they have been transmitted. (or)

Explain the teachings of Guru Nanak. Did he want to establish a new religion?

Ans: Kabir is a great poet-cum-saint of Indian society. He has had appeal among Hindus and Muslims alike as it is believed that he was born as Hindu but was brought up by a muslim couple. He wrote poems that exhorted both communities to take to social reforms.

The major teachings of Kabir were as follows:

1. Kabir described God as nirankar (having no shape). He used the terms drawn from Islamic tradition like Allah, Khuda, Hajrat and Peer but also used words of Vedic traditions like Alakh ( the unseen) and nirakar ( the formless). Thus, he freely took to both traditions viz. Islamic and Vedantic.
2. He repudiated idol worship and polytheism.
3. He emphasised on the oneness of God though there can be many names of His.
4. He criticised religious rituals of hindus and muslims alike.
5. He also preached against caste discrimination.
6. He combined the Sufi traditions of love of God with the Hindi tradition of remembrance of God.
7. He also emphasised the dignity of labour.

Thus, the essence of the teachings of Kabir was simple living based on love and respect all. He wrote in simple language to be understood by common man of the country.

Guru Nanak and his teachings:

Guru Nanak was born in a Hindu family in 1469 at Nankana Saheb on the bank of the river Ravi. His birth place is now in Pakistan. He learnt Persian, Arabic, Hindi and Mathematics. He spent time in the company of Sufi saints and Bhaktas of various socio-religious movements.

The major teachings of Guru Nanak are as follows:

1. He rejected the religious texts of both Hindus and Muslims.
2. He preached God is Nirakar viz. without any shape.
3. He criticised the religious practices like ceremonial bath, sacrifices , idol worship and emphasised simplicity.
4. He called upon his followers to connect to divine by remembering and repeating the divine name.

Guru Nanak expressed himself in Punjabi, the language of the local people in a lyrical form called Shabad. Shabad can be recited in various ragas.

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