

NCERT SOLUTIONS

CLASS - 12th



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Subject : History

Chapter : 6

Chapter Name : Bhakti - Sufi Traditions

Q1 Explain with examples what Historians mean by integration of cult.

Answer. The phase of bhakti-sufi tradition was marked by the increasing visibility of God and goddesses in sculpture as well as in texts. The gods and goddesses were worshipped in a variety of forms.

Historians try to explain that :

There were two processes at work : one was a process of disseminating Brahmanical ideas. This is exemplified by the composition, compilation and preservation of puranic texts in simple Sanskrit verse, this was meant to make it accessible to women and Shudras, because they were excluded from vedic learning. Also, there was a second process at work - that of Brahmanas accepting and reworking the beliefs and practices of these and other social categories.

The most striking examples of this process is evident at Puri, Orissa, where the principal deity was identified as Jagannatha, a form of Vishnu. Such instances of integration are evident amongst goddess cults as well.

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Q2 To what extent do you think the architecture of mosque in the subcontinent reflect a combination of universal ideals and local traditions?

Answer. There were many developments that came in, with the advent of Islam in the subcontinent. One of the most striking features noted was that of architecture that Islam brought with itself.

The architectural features of mosque in the subcontinent reflect a complex blend of a universal faith with local traditions. Some of the features are universal like the orientation of the mosque is

towards Mecca, which is evident in the placement of Mihrab (prayer niche) and the Minbar (pulpit). However, there are several features that show variations such as roofs and building materials.

For example : The Shah Hamadan mosque in Srinagar on the banks of the Jhelum, is often regarded as the "jewel in the crown" of all the existing mosques of Kashmir. It was built in 1395 and it is one of the best examples of Kashmiri wooden architecture.

A mosque in Kerala (Fig. 6.9 in NCERT book) shows that it has the Shikhara-like roof.

Another mosque named Atiya mosque (Fig. 6.10 in NCERT book) in Mymensingh district, in Bangladesh is built with brick, in 1609.

These examples clearly reflect that the mosque architecture was a combination of universal faith blended with local traditions.

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Q3 What were the similarities and differences between the be-shari'a and ba-shari'a Sufi traditions?

Answer. The Shari'a is the law governing the Muslim community. It is based on the Qur'an and the hadis, teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

There was 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. Some of the mystics initiated movements based on a radical interpretation of Sufi ideals. They took to mendicancy and observed extreme forms of asceticism. They defied the Shari'a and were known as the be-shari'a. On the other hand, those who complied with the laws of Shari'a were known as the ba-shari'a.

The similarities between both of them is that, that the sufis interpreted the Quran on the basis of their personal experiences.

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Q4 Discuss the ways in which the Alvars, Nayanars and Virashaivas expressed critiques of the caste system.

Answer. The earliest bhakti movements in sixth century were led by Alvars and Nayanars. The Alvars were the devotees of Vishnu and the Nayanars were the devotees of Shiva. They used to travel from place to place singing hymns in Tamil in praise of their gods.

Attitude towards caste system : Some historians are of the view that the Alvars and Nayanars initiated movement of protest against the caste system and the dominance of Brahmanas or at least attempted to reform the system, as the bhakts hailed from diverse social backgrounds ranging from Brahmanas to artisans and cultivators and even from castes considered "untouchable". This was basically done because during those times people from lower castes and women did not have access to the holy books and Vedas.

The Virashaiva tradition emerged in Karnataka in the twelfth century. It was led by a Brahmana named Basavanna (1106-68) who was a minister in the court of a Chalukya king. His followers were known as Virashaivas (heroes of Shiva) or Lingayats (wearers of the linga).

Attitude towards caste system : They challenged the idea of caste and the "pollution" attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas. They also questioned the theory of rebirth. The Lingayats also encouraged certain practices that were disapproved by the Dharmashastras, such as post-puberty marriage and widow remarriage.

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Q5 Describe the major teachings of either Kabir or Baba Guru Nanak, and the ways in which these have been transmitted.

She learnt this text from bhikkhuni Buddhamita.

Answer. Kabir was born a Hindu but was raised by a poor Muslim weaver. He was initiated into bhakti by guru Ramchandra.

Teachings of Kabir :

→ He described god as shapeless and formless. He drew the range of tradition to describe the Ultimate Reality. He used words like Allah, Khuda, Hazrat, and pir from Islam. He also used terms drawn from Vedantic traditions, like alakh (the unseen), nirakar (formless), Brahman, Atman, etc.

→ He was against idol worship.

→ He was against polytheism and supported the idea of monotheism.

→ He was of the notion that God is one but is called by different names.

→ His teachings and ideas were clear. His ideas crystallised through dialogue and debate with the traditions of Sufis and Yogis.

Baba Guru Nanak was born in a Hindu merchant family in 1469 in Nankana Sahib. He spent most of his time among Sufi and bhaktas.

His teachings are :

→ He advocated a form of nirguna bhakti. He repudiated the external practices of the religions he saw around him.

→ He rejected sacrifices, ritual baths, image worship, austerities and scriptures of both Hindus and Muslims.

→ He proposed a simple way to connect to the Divine by remembering and repeating the Divine Name.

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Q6 Discuss the major beliefs and practices that characterised Sufism.

Answer. The major beliefs and practices that characterised Sufism were :

→ Sufis were against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution.

→ Sufis were critical of the dogmatic definitions and scholastic methods of interpreting the Qur'an and Sunna (traditions of the Prophet) adopted by theologians.

→ Sufis laid emphasis on seeking salvation through intense devotion and love for God.

→ The Sufis sought an interpretation of the Qur'an on the basis of their personal experience.

→ They organised langar (an open kitchen) to feed people. From morning till late night people from all walks of life - soldiers, slaves, singers, merchants, poets, travellers, rich and poor came there.

→ Singing and Dancing became an important part of the tradition which was earlier not approved in the Islam.

→ The Sufis remember God either by reciting the Zikr (the Divine Names) or evoking His presence through Sama or performance of mystical music.

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Q7 Examine how and why rulers tried to establish connection with the tradition of the Nayanars and the Sufis.

Answer. Tradition of the Nayanars :

Nayanars were the devotees of Shiva. The earliest bhakti movements in the sixth century were led by the Alvars and the Nayanars. They travelled from place to place singing hymns in Tamil in praise of their gods. The powerful Chola rulers supported Brahmanical and bhakti traditions, making land grants and constructing temples for Vishnu and Shiva. Some of the most magnificent Shiva temples, including those at Chidambaram, Thanjavur, and Gangaikondacholapuram, were constructed under the patronage of Chola rulers. The Chola kings often attempted to claim Divine support and proclaim their own power and status by building splendid temples that were adorned with stone and metal sculpture to recreate the visions of these popular saints who sang in the language of the people. These kings also introduced the singing of Tamil Shaiva hymns in the temples under royal patronage.

Tradition of the Sufis :

A group of religious-minded people called the Sufis turned to asceticism and mysticism in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution. Pilgrimage, called *ziyarat*, to the tombs of Sufi saints is prevalent in the Muslim world. This practice is an occasion for seeking the Sufi's spiritual grace. Muhammad bin Tughlaq was the first Sultan to visit the shrine, but the earliest construction was funded in the late fifteenth century by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji of Malwa. Even Akbar visited the tomb at Ajmer. He used to go there to seek blessings for conquests, fulfillment of vows, and the birth of sons. The sultans also believed that the Auliya could intercede with God in order to improve the material and spiritual conditions of ordinary human beings.

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Q8 Analyse, with illustration, why bhakti and Sufi thinkers adopted a variety of languages in which to express their opinions.

Answer. The bhakti and Sufi thinkers adopted a variety of languages to express their opinions because the languages used during the medieval period in India were Sanskrit and Persian.

These languages were not properly known to all the people as the women and Shudras were not allowed access to the puranic texts which were composed in Sanskrit. This kept them aloof from the Vedic learning.

The traditions of bhakti and Sufi became popular because the poet-saints emerged as leaders and these traditions accommodated and acknowledged women and the lower-castes, categories considered ineligible for liberation within the orthodox framework.

→ The Alvars and the Nayanars, who led some of the earliest bhakti movements in South India travelled from place to place singing hymns in Tamil, in praise of their gods.

→ The Virashaiva tradition became popular in Karnataka. The understanding of Virashaiva tradition is derived from 'vachanas' (sayings). These were composed in Kannada.

→ The Sufi saints conversed in Hindavi, the language of people. Baba Farid composed verses in local language.

→ Kabir's poems have survived in several languages.

→ Baba Guru Nanak spelt out his message through hymns and teachings. His ideas were spread through hymns called 'shabad' in Punjabi, the language of the region.

Thus we can conclude that the bhakti and Sufi thinkers adopted various local languages in order to connect to the local people.

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Q9 Read any five of the source included in this chapter and discuss the social and religious ideas that are expressed in them.

Answer.

→ The chaturvedin (Brahmana versed in the four Vedas) and the "outcaste" (Source-1) : This was composed by Tondaradippodi who was a Brahmana, he was an Alvars. From the above source we can say that the Alvars were against the caste system and dominance of Brahmanas or at least attempted to reform the system.

→ Shastras or devotion? (Source -2) : This is a verse composed by Appar, a Nayanar saint. The Nayanars claimed that their compositions were as important as the Vedas.

→ The bronze Image of Karaikkal Ammaiyar (Source-3) : Karaikkal Ammaiyar, a devotee of Shiva, adopted the path of extreme asceticism in order to attain her goal. Her compositions were preserved within the Nayanar tradition.

→ Declining a royal gift (source-9) : This is an excerpt from a Sufi text that describes the proceedings at Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya's hospice. This excerpt shows that the Sufis maintained distance from worldly powers and possession.

→ The one Lord (source-10) : This is a composition attributed to Kabir. This shows that Kabir preached the idea of One God who is called by different names.

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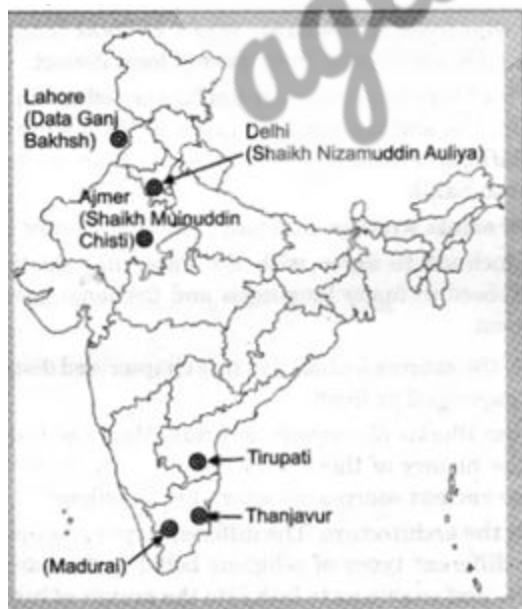
Q10 On an outline map of India, plot three major Sufi shrine, and three places associated with temple (one each of a form of Vishnu, Shiva and the goddess).

Answer. The three major Sufi shrines are :

Lahore, Delhi and Ajmer.

The three places associated with temple of Vishnu, Shiva and the goddess are :

Tirupati, Thanjavur and Madurai.



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