

Lesson at a Glance

- Various kinds of **Bhakti** and **Sufi** movements evolved since the eighth century.
- Before the emergence of large kingdoms, different groups of people worshipped their own gods and goddesses.
- Several people also showed their interest in the teachings of the Buddha or the Jains.
- Others felt attracted to the idea of a Supreme God. Such people sought the path of Bhakti to approach this Supreme God. As a result, Shiva, Vishnu and Durga came to be recognised as supreme deities. People began to worship them through elaborate rituals.
- The seventh to ninth centuries saw the emergence of new religious movements, led by the **Nayanars** (saints devoted to Shiva) and **Alvars** (saints devoted to Vishnu) who came from all castes including untouchables.
- They criticised the Buddhists and Jains and preached ardent love of Shiva or Vishnu as the **path of salvation**.
- Elaborate temples were built by the Chola and Pandya kings between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Thus, the Bhakti tradition got strongly linked with temple worship.
- **Shankara**, a Bhakti saint, was an advocate of **Advaita** or the doctrine of the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme God which is the Ultimate Reality. He preached **renunciation of the world** and **adoption of the path of knowledge**.
- **Ramanuja**, another Bhakti saint, was deeply influenced by the Alvars. According to him the best means of attaining salvation was through intense devotion to Vishnu.
- **Virashaiva movement** was initiated by Basavanna and his companions. This movement began in Karnataka in the mid-twelfth century. The Virashaivas were against all forms of ritual and idol worship.
- The saint-poets of Maharashtra such as Janeshwar, Namdev, Eknath and Tukaram inspired people through their songs in simple Marathi. These saints rejected all forms of ritualism, outward display

- of piety and social differences based on birth. They also rejected the idea of renunciation and preferred to live with their families.
- Several other religious groups such as Nathpanthis, Siddhas and Yogis also criticised the ritual and other aspects of conventional religion and the social order. They advocated renunciation of the world. They inspired people to lay in **meditation** on the formless Ultimate Reality and the realisation of oneness with it. They gave importance to *yogasanas*.
- Sufis were Muslim mystics. They rejected outward religiosity and emphasized love and devotion to God and comparison towards all fellow human beings.
- Islam propagated **monotheism** i.e. submission to one God. It rejected idol worship,
- Muslim scholars developed a holy law called **Shariat**. The Sufis rejected the elaborate rituals and codes of behaviour demanded by Muslim religious scholars.
- The Sufis too composed poems like the saint-poets. Some of the great Sufis were Ghazzali, Rumi and Sadi.
- The Sufi saints developed elaborate methods of training using *zikr* (chanting of a name or sacred formula), contemplation, *sama* (singing), *rags* (dancing), discussion of parables, breath control etc. under the guidance of a master or *pir*. Thus, emerged the *silsilas*, a genealogy of Sufi teachers. The Chishti *silsila* is worth-mentioning in this regard.
- The Sufi teachers held their assemblies in their *Khanqahs* or hospices (houses of rest for travellers). Here, they discussed spiritual matters.
- Sufi shrines are visited by devotees of all backgrounds.
- A new wave of **Bhakti movement** began in north India after the 13th century. This was an age when Islam, Brahmanical Hinduism, Sufism, various strands of Bhakti and the Nathpanthis, Siddhas and Yogis influenced one another.
- Kabir and Baba Guru Nanak rejected all orthodox religions. Others like Tulsidas and Surdas accepted existing beliefs and practices but wanted to make these accessible to all. Tulsidas's composition, the *Ramcharitmanas*, written in Awadhi, is important both as an expression of his devotion and as a literary work.
- Surdas was an ardent devotee of Krishna.
- Dadu Dayal, Ravidas and Mirabai were some other important saints of this tradition.

- The works of these saints were composed in regional languages and therefore they became very popular.
- We come to know about Kabir through his *sakhis* and *pads*, Kabir's teachings were based on complete rejection of the major religious traditions. He believed in a formless Supreme God and preached that the only path to salvation was through Bhakti or devotion.
- Guru Nanak emphasised the importance of the worship of one God. He insisted that caste, creed or gender was irrelevant for attaining liberation. He used the terms *nam*, *dan* and *isnan* for the essence of his teachings which actually meant right worship, welfare of others and purity of conduct.

■ TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

Let's Recall

Q. 1. Match the following:

The Buddha	<i>namghar</i>
Shankaradeva	worship of Vishnu
Nizamuddin Auliya	questioned social differences
Nayanars	Sufi saint
Alvars	worship of Shiva

Ans. The Buddha	questioned social differences
Shankaradeva	<i>namghar</i>
Nizamuddin Auliya	Sufi saint
Nayanars	worship of Shiva
Alvars	worship of Vishnu

Q. 2. Fill in the blanks:

- Shankara was an advocate of
- Ramanuja was influenced by the
- and were advocates of Virashaivism.
- was an important centre of the Bhakti tradition in Maharashtra.

- Ans. (a) Advaita
 (b) Alvars
 (c) Basavanna, Allama Prabhu, Akkamahadevi
 (d) Pandharpur.

Q. 3. Describe the beliefs and practices of the Nathpanthis, Siddhas and Yogis.

- Ans. (i) They advocated renunciation of the world.
 (ii) They believed that the path to salvation lay in meditation on the formless God and the realisation of oneness with it.
 (iii) To achieve this they advocated intense training of the mind and body through practices like *yogasansas*, breathing exercises and meditation.
 (iv) They did not believe in the ritual and other aspects of conventional religion and the social order.

Q. 4. What were the major ideas expressed by Kabir? How did he express these?

- Ans. The major ideas expressed by Kabir include:
 (i) Rejection of major religious traditions.
 (ii) Criticism of all forms of external worship of both Brahmanical Hinduism and Islam.
 (iii) Criticism of priestly classes and caste system.
 (iv) Belief in a formless Supreme God.
 (v) Emphasis on Bhakti or devotion to achieve salvation.
 Kabir expressed his ideas in a vast collection of verses known as *sakhis* and *pads*. These are said to have been composed by him and sung by wandering *bhajan* singers.

Let's Understand

Q. 5. What were the major beliefs and practices of the Sufis?

- Ans. (i) Sufis were Muslim mystics. They rejected outward religiosity and gave emphasis on love and devotion to God. They inspired people to be compassionate towards all fellow human beings.
 (ii) They rejected idol worship and considerably simplified rituals of worship into collective prayers.
 (iii) They believed that the heart can be trained to look at the world in a different way.
 (iv) They developed elaborate methods of training using *zilcr*, meaning chanting of a name or sacred formula, contemplation, *sama* i.e. singing, *raqs*, i.e. dancing, discussion of parables, breath control etc. under the guidance of a master called *pir*.

Q. 6. Why do you think many teachers rejected prevalent religious beliefs and practices?

Ans. Many teachers rejected prevalent religious beliefs and practices because these were based on social differences, excess ritualism and outward display piety.

Q. 7. What were the major teachings of Baba Guru Nanak?

Ans. (i) Baba Guru Nanak emphasised the importance of the worship of one God.

(ii) He insisted that caste, creed or gender was irrelevant for attaining liberation. His idea of liberation was based on the pursuit of active life with a strong sense of social commitment.

(iii) He used the terms *nam*, *dan* and *isnan* for the essence of his teaching, which actually meant right worship, welfare of others and purity of conduct.

(iv) He gave importance to right-belief and worship, honest living and helping others.

(v) Guru Nanak, thus, promoted the idea of equality.

Let's Discuss

Q. 8. For either the Virashaivas or the saints of Maharashtra, discuss their attitude towards caste.

Ans. Attitude of the Virashaivas towards caste :

They believed in the equality of all human beings. They were against Brahmanical ideas about caste and the treatment of women. They wished for a society where people of all backgrounds could live in harmony without any feelings of high and low, rich and poor.

Q. 9. Why do you think ordinary people preserved the memory of Mirabai?

Ans. Mirabai was a Rajput princess married into the royal family of Mewar. But she had no interest in the worldly affair. She was an ardent devotee of Krishna and wanted to devote her time to the worship of her lord. She had no belief in princely status and other norms of high class society. Her devotion to her deity was supreme. Hence, she left the royal palace and began to lead simple life with ordinary people.

Let's Do

Q. 10. Find out whether in your neighbourhood there are any dargahs, gurudwaras or temples associated with saints

of the Bhakti tradition in your neighbourhood. Visit any one of these and describe what you see and hear.

Ans. Students are suggested to do this exercise themselves.

Q. 11. For any of the saint-poets whose compositions have been included in this chapter, find out more about their works, noting down other poems. Find out whether these are sung, how they are sung, and what the poets wrote about.

Ans. For self attempt.

Q. 12. There are several saint-poets whose names have been mentioned but their works have not been included in the chapter. Find out more about the language in which they composed, whether their compositions were sung and what their compositions were about.

Ans. For self attempt.

