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Bhakti movement & Sufi Movement

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Why is in news? How the Bhakti movement flourished under Mughals

At a recent rally in Madhya Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a link between the 14th century social reformer and Bhakti saint Sant Ravidas and the Mughals.

While laying the foundation stone of a temple dedicated to Ravidas, Modi praised him for holding his ground and showing courage to fight against the “oppressive rule” of the Mughal Empire.

As historians have noted, not only did the Bhakti movement in the north carry influences of the culture introduced by the Muslim rulers, it, in fact, flourished to a large extent thanks to the politico-administrative structure envisaged under the Sultanate and Mughal rulers.

Bhakti Movement:

The term ‘Bhakthi’ refers to ‘devotion’. As a movement, it emphasized on the mutual intense emotional attachment and love of a devotee toward a personal god and of the god for the devotee.

This movement **originated in South India** in the 7th and 10th CE, mostly in the **poems of Alvars and Nayanars**.

These poems were composed in Tamil; the poems were addressed to Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva respectively

Bhakti soon spread to North India, appearing most notably in the 10th-century Sanskrit text the Bhagavata-Purana.

It swept over east and north India from the 15th century onwards, reached its peak between the 15th and 17th century CE.

The Bhakti Saints moved **against the austerities propagated by the Buddhist and Jain schools** and professed that ultimate devotion to god was the means to salvation.

Some of the common teachings associated with this movement are:

It **preached equality**. This was in stark contrast to the reality where the society was divided on the lines of religion, caste, gender etc. Ex: Disciples of Ramananda included a weaver, cobbler, barber

It preached **universal brotherhood** built on values such as love, care, and affection etc for everyone in the society. Ex: Kabir preached universal brotherhood through his Dohas.

It **strove hard to rid the religion and society of evil practices** that had crept into the society over the years. Ex: Guru Nanak condemned caste difference and rituals like bathing in holy rivers. His idea of religion was highly practical and strictly moral.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the movement was its **emphasis on the route of ‘Bhakthi’ rather than superficial rituals** as the mode to realize god and salvation.

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Two different schools of thought:

Nirgunabhakthi: They believed in formless worship. It was introduced by Adi Shankara. Some of the other Bhakthi saints who preached this school of thought are- Kabir, Guru Nanak, Dadu Dayal etc

Sagunabhakthi: It believed in the worship of form. It believed that god is the biggest manifestation of everything perfect. It included philosophers such as- Ramanuja, Nimbaraka, Madhva, Vallabha, Meera Bhai, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Tulsidas, Surdas etc.

Sufi Movement:

The word 'Sufi' derives its name from another Arabic word 'Suf which means wool. The Muslim saints who wore **garments of coarse wool** began to be called Sufi saints.

Sufism entered India in the **12th century with Muslim invaders** and became popular in the 13th century.

The Sufi's main theme was **Wahadut-ul-Wajud** (Unity of God).

It developed first in Iraq. The first Sufi saint was **Begum Rabia of Bashera in Iraq**.

Sufi orders were called as **Silsilas**

Two broad Sufi orders:

Bashara – Those who obeyed Islamic laws.

Beshara – Those who were more liberal.

The Beshara was also called 'mast kalandar'. They comprised wandering monks who were also called Baba. They did not leave any written accounts.

Major Sufi Orders:

Chisti:

Chishtiya Order was founded in India by **Khwaja Moin-Uddin Chishti**.

It emphasised the **doctrine of the unity of being with God** (wa?dat al-wuj?d) and members of the order were also pacifists.

They **rejected all material goods** as distractions from the contemplation of God.

They abstained from connection with the secular state.

Recitation of the names of God, both aloud and silently (dhikr jahr?, dhikr khaf?), formed the cornerstone of Chisht? practice.

The Chishti teachings were carried forward and popularized by disciples of Khwaja Moin-Uddin Chishti like Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Fareeduddin Ganj-e-Shakar, Nizam uddin Auliya and Naseeruddin Charagh.

Suhrawardi Order:

It was founded by **Sheikh Shahabuddin Suharwardi Maqtul**.

The Suhrawardis, unlike the Chishtis, accepted maintenance grants from the Sultans.

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Naqshbandi Order:

It was founded by the **Khwaja Baha-ul-din Naqsh** band.

In India, this order was established by Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi.

From the beginning, the mystics of this Order stressed on the observance of the Shariat.

Qadiriyya Order:

It was popular in Punjab.

Sheikh Abdul Qadir of Badaun founded it in the 14th century.

They were supporters of the Mughals under Akbar.

Similarities between Bhakti and Sufi Movement:

The Bhakti and Sufi movements also had a **profound impact on Indian culture and society**.

Bhakti poetry and music, for example, have become an integral part of Indian cultural heritage, and the Sufi tradition has contributed significantly to Indian classical music.

Both movements also **influenced the growth of vernacular literature** in India.

The Bhakti and Sufi movements were two significant religious movements that emerged in medieval India.

While they originated in different religious traditions, they **shared a common emphasis on personal devotion to God** and the **rejection of religious formalism**.

These movements played a vital role in **promoting religious tolerance and harmony** in India and had a profound impact on Indian culture and society.

Difference between Bhakti and Sufi Movement:

Sufi Movement is a **mystical branch of Islam** that emerged in the 8th century AD. The word 'Sufi' is derived from the Arabic word 'suf', which means wool, as the early Sufis wore simple woolen garments.

The movement emphasized the importance of seeking a personal experience of God through **meditation, contemplation, and inner purification**.

The Sufis believed that the **ultimate goal of human life is to achieve union with God**, and this can be attained by developing a deep love and devotion for the divine.

On the other hand, the Bhakti Movement emerged in India around the 8th century AD and emphasized the **importance of devotion (bhakti) to a personal god or goddess**.

The movement **challenged the rigid caste system of Hinduism** and emphasized that anyone, regardless of their caste, could attain salvation through devotion to god.

The Bhakti movement **emphasized the importance of love and devotion to god**, rather than ritualistic practices, as the path to salvation.

Both the Sufi and Bhakti movements emphasized the **importance of personal experience** and the attainment of a **direct relationship with the divine**.

However, the two movements **differed in their practices and teachings**. While the Sufis emphasized the importance of inner purification, meditation, and contemplation, the Bhakti movement focused on devotion to god and the importance of singing hymns and chants in the worship of the divine.

Another significant difference between the two movements is **their origins**.

While the Sufi movement emerged within Islam, the Bhakti movement originated within Hinduism but later influenced other religions such as Sikhism and Buddhism.

Conclusion:

The Sufi Movement and Bhakti Movement are two spiritual movements that emerged in different parts of the world and emphasized the importance of personal experience and devotion to the divine.

While the Sufi movement focused on inner purification and contemplation, the Bhakti movement emphasized devotion to god and the importance of singing hymns and chants.

Despite their differences, both movements have had a significant impact on their respective religions and continue to influence people's spiritual lives even today.