

Religious Movements in 15th-16th Centuries

I. Bhakti Movement

The Bhakti movement was based on the doctrine that the relationship between God and man is through love and worship rather than through performing any ritual or religious ceremonies.

It was in South India for the first time that Bhakti movement grew from a mere religious doctrine to a broad based popular movement based on social and religious equality. It was led by popular saint poets called 'Alvars' who represented emotional side of Vaishnavism through collective songs called Prabandhas. It declined after the 10th century.

But it was revived as a philosophical and ideological movement by 'acharyas' (who represented intellectual side of Vaishnavism in the 11th century). Most important among them was Ramanuja, whose disciple Ramananda took it to North India.

Main Features : 1. Discarded rituals and sacrifices 2. Emphasised purity of heart and mind, humanism and devotion 3. Monotheistic in nature 4. God has either form (Saguna) or be formless (Nirguna) 5. Knowledge was a constituent part 6. An egalitarian movement. Denounced casteism. 7. Best form of worship is singing Bhajans and realisation of God by personal effort. No need of priestly class 8. Saint, preached in local languages.

S. No	Philosophy	Founder
1.	Vishishtadvaita	Ramanuj Acharya
2.	Dvaitadvaita / Bhedabheda	Nimbark Acharya
3.	Dvaita	Madhva Acharya
4.	Shuddhadvaita	Vishnu Swami

Bhakti Saints

1. Ramanuja (11th-12th Century) : The Vaishnava saint from South India. The earliest exponent of Bhakti movement and Vishishtadvaita philosophy.

2. Ramananda (14th-15th Century) : The first great Bhakti saint of North India who opened the doors of Bhakti without any distinction of birth, caste, creed or sex.

- 3. Kabir (1440-1510) :** The most radical disciple of Ramananda, who was opposed to caste, creed, image worship, unnecessary rituals and sought to remove distinction between Hindus and Muslims and believed in social unity.
- 4. Guru Nanak (1469-1538) :** A Nirguna Bhakti saint and social reformer. The first Sikh Guru and founder of Sikhism.
- 5. Chaitanya (1486-1533) :** One of the great saints of Krishna Bhakti cult and founder of Gaudiya or Bengal Vaishnavism.
- 6. Vidyapati (14-15th Century) :** Maithili saint-poet who wrote thousand of love-ballads on Radha-Krishna ('Padavali').
- 7. Purandar Das (1480-1564) :** The foremost and the most prolific Vaishnav saint-composer in Karnataka. Believed to have laid the foundation of the modern phase of Karnataka music.
- 8. Mirabai (1498-1546) :** The Rathor princess of Merwara and daughter-in-law of Rana Sanga of Mewar. The most well-known woman Bhakti saint of the Krishna cult of Vaishnavism.
- 9. Vallabhacharya (1479-1531) :** A great saint of the Krishna Bhakti cult of Vaishnavism, who propounded the philosophy of Pushti Marg.
- 10. Surdas (1483-1563) :** A blind poet of Ujjain. He sang the glory of Krishna in his 'Sursagar'.
- 11. Tulsidas (1532-1623) :** The greatest saint-poet of the Ram Bhakti cult of Vaishnavism. The celebrated author of 'Ramcharitamanas', 'Kavitawali' and 'Gitawali'.
- 12. Shankara Deva (1449-1568) :** The founder of the Vaishnava devotional movement in Assam.
- 13. Dadu Dayal (1544-1603) :** A Nirguna Bhakti saint belonging to the tanner caste, who was born in Gujarat but spent his whole life in Rajasthan. Founder of the Dadu panth.
- 14. Thyagaraja (1767-1847) :** A Telugu who spent his life in Tamil Nadu. The greatest saint-composer of Karnataka music. He adorned God in the form of Rama, the incarnation of Vishnu and Hero of Valmiki's Ramayana.

Bhakti saints of Maharashtra Dharma

1. Jnanesvara/Jnanadeva (1271-1296) : The fountain-head of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra, founder of Marathi language and literature, wrote a long commentary on the Bhagvad Gita, called the 'Bhavarthadipka', more commonly known as 'Jnaneshvari'.

2. Namadeva (1270-1350) : A contemporary of Jnanesvara. He was a tailor by caste and was opposed to all caste distinctions. The object of his devotion was Vithoba or Vithal (identified with Vishnu) of Pandharpur. The cult of Vithoba or Vithal known as Varkari sect was founded by Namadeva.

3. Eknath (1533-1599) : A great scholar saint from Maharashtra who wrote a commentary on the Ramayana called the 'Bhavartha Ramayana' and another commentary on the eleventh book of the Bhagavata Purana

4. Tukaram (1598-1650) : The greatest Bhakti poet from Maharashtra, wrote devotional poems, known as Abhangas, which are the glory of devotional poetry.

5. Ramdas (1608-1681) : The last great saint poet from Maharashtra. 'Dasabodha' is the compilation of his writings and poems

II. SUFI MOVEMENT

1. Sufism is the mystical movement in Islam. The sufis while accepting the Shariat did not confine their religious practice to formal adherence and stressed cultivation of religious experience aimed at a direct perception of God.

2. The sufi doctrine was based on union with God which can be achieved through love of God, prayers, fasts and rituals, without reference to Hindu or Muslim.

3. Main Features : Organised in different Silsilas (orders) 2. Absorbed variety of ideas and practices from Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. 3. Sufis aimed at service of mankind through spiritual self development 4. Eager for Hindu-Muslim unity and cultural synthesis 5. Opposed to orthodoxy, they preached faith and devotion to God. 6. Discouraged materialistic life but not in favour of complete renunciation.

Sufi Saints

1. Khwaja Ali Hujjwiri (11th Century) : Also Known as Data Ganj Baksh, the earliest Sufi saint of eminence known to have settled in India, the author of the celebrated manual of Sufism entitled 'Kashf-ul-Mahjub'.

2. Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya (1182-1262) : The founder of the Suhrawardi order who founded the first leading Khanqah in India at Multan.

3. Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti (1141-1236) : The founder of the Chisti order-the first and most popular liberal Sufi order in India. He settled down at Ajmer about 1206. Other Chisti Sufi saints who followed Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti or Khwaja Ajmeri were: Sheikh Hamiduddin Nagauri (1192-1274); Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, (died 1236) in whose memory Qutub Minar was built by Iltutmish; Baba Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar (1175-1265) popularly known as Baba Farid, built his Khanqah at Ajodan (Punjab) and was the first great Punjabi poet of Sufism; Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (1236-1325) who gained the popular title Mehboob-i-Ilahi (the beloved of the God), built his Khanqah in Delhi and was one of the most famous Sufi saint of the Chisti Order; Shaikh Nasiruddin Mahmud (d.136), the charismatic Chisti saint, who was later known as Chirag-i-Delhi (the Lamp of Delhi); Syed Muhammad Gesu Daraz (d. 1421) who settled down at Gulbarga (Karnataka) was popularly known as Bandanawaz (Benefactor of God's creatures) and authored more than 30 books on Sufism-he was one of the early writers and poets in Urdu.

4. Shaikh Badruddin Samarkandi (13 Century) : Founded Firdausi order which was restricted to Bihar.

5. Shah Nayamatullah Qadiri and Shah Abdullah Shuttari (15th Century) : Shah Nayamatullah Qadiri founded the Qadiriya order and Shah Abdullah Shuttari (d. 1458) founded the Shuttari order. The former spread in Uttar Pradesh and Deccan, while the latter spread mainly in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Miyan Mir (1550-1635) was the most popular Sufi saint of the Qadiriya order.

6. Khwaja Baqi Billah (15 -1603) : Founded the Naqshbandi order and its most famous saint was Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (d.1625) known as Mujaddid Alif.

Sufi Words Meaning

1. Tasawwuf-->Sufism
2. Shaikh ->Spiritual teacher
3. Murid --- Disciple
4. Khafah--->Successor
5. Khanqah --->The hospice
6. Sama--->Musical recital
7. Raksa --->Dance
8. Fan--->Self annihilation

Achievements of Bhakti and Sufi Movements

1. They influenced each other and inherited from each other
2. Bhaktism reformed Hinduism and Sufism liberalised Islam
3. Both put breaks on orthodoxy.

4. Both encouraged social reform measures 5. Atmosphere of inter-religious fraternity was created. Hindu and Muslims reconciled 6. Development of regional languages 7. A cultural synthesis took place which transformed a Muslim rule in India to a national govt, under Akbar.

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