

Vidya Bhawan Balika Vidyapith, LKR.

Class-7th, Sub. -Social Science(History)

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To be continued

Ch9- Reaching God through devotion

The Sufi Movement

The counterpart of Bhakti movement was the Sufi movement in Islam. The Sufi saints too believed in reaching God through love & devotion and in being kind and compassionate towards all the people. The sufis were disgusted by the vulgar display of wealth & loss of moral values among the rich Muslims. Like the bhakti poets, the Sufis too composed poems expressing their unconditional love towards God & humanity. Many Sufi orders evolved in India.

Gradually, the sufis were organised into 12 orders or Silsilahs. The chief among them were the Suhrawardi and Chisti Silsilah.

The Suhrawardi Silsilah arose in the period of Delhi Sultanate. Its founder in India was Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya. Punjab, Sindh and Bengal became three important centres of this Silsilah.

The Silsilah was led by a Sufi saint who lived in their abodes, called khanqahs along with their disciples. Devotees of all classes from the ordinary people to the upper class nobility and even royalty regularly visited these Khanqahs. In these Khanqahs, there were open kitchen or langars. Khanqahs were open to all. When the pir or the Sufi saint who was the head of the khanqah died, his grave would become a dargah and a centre of pilgrimage.

Among the different Sufi Silsilah, the Chisti Silsilah was the most influential. Great teachers like Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti of Ajmer and Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi belonged to this Silsilah. Every year, thousand of devotees visit the dargahs of these two Sufi saints.

Sufi saints developed elaborate methods of training using zikr(chanting of the name of sacred formula contemplation, sama(singing) , ragas(dancing) and discussion of parables.

Thus, during the 15th and 16th century, the bhakti and Sufi saints had created a common platform on which people belonging to different castes, classes and creeds could come together, understand each other and develop a bond based on humanism and brotherhood.

KABIR

According to legends, Kabir was the son of a Brahman widow who abandoned him after his birth and he was brought up in the house of a Muslim weaver. He too became a weaver but while living in Benaras, he came in contact with Hindu and Muslim saints. He rejected all rituals and ceremonies and preached a religion of love which would unite all the people. Kabir's poems were written in the form of a spoken Hindi of the ordinary people. His followers were both Hindus and Muslims who were attracted by Kabir's message of love and brotherhood. Kabir's rejection of the caste system, especially the practice of untouchability and his opposition to all kinds of discrimination between human beings – on the basis of caste, religion and wealth – made him very popular among the common people. Here is an excerpt from the *doha* of Kabir.

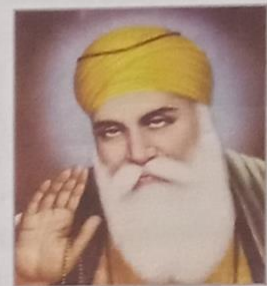
*Paahan pooje hari mile
To main poojon pahar
To se yeh chakki bhali
Jiss se koot khaye sansar*

Kabir who lived in the 15th century, said that there is only one God whom he called by several names such as Rama, Hari, Govinda, Allah, Sain, Sahib, etc. He rejected idol worship, rituals, and pilgrimages. The mission of Kabir was to preach a religion of love which could unite all castes and creeds. The teachings of Kabir are in the form of short poems called *dohas*. After his death the teachings of Kabir were written down as *Kabir Vani*. Later *Kabir Granthavali* and *Bijaka* were also composed which contain the ideas of this great *Bhakti* Saint. Kabir used many languages to reach out to the people. Hindi, Persian, Arabic and Turkish words are found in his teachings. The followers of Kabir which included both Hindus and Muslims came to be known as *Kabirpanth*.



GURU NANAK

Guru Nanak, from whose teachings the Sikh religion is derived, was born in the village of Talwandi (Now called Nankana Sahib, in Pakistan) on the bank of river Ravi in 1469 AD. Guru Nanak, also spoke of 'one God' and believed that God can be reached through selfless love and devotion. It is said that Guru Nanak toured all over India and even beyond to Sri Lanka in the south and Mecca and Medina in the west. Guru Nanak laid great emphasis on purity of character and conduct as the first condition for approaching God. Guru Nanak expressed his ideas through hymns called "Shabad" in Punjabi, the language of the region. Guru Nanak sung these hymns while his attendant Mardana played the musical instrument Rabab. Like Kabir, he also rejected idol-worship, pilgrimages and rituals. Like Kabir, he rejected distinctions, based on caste, wealth, creed and gender. Guru Nanak allowed women to attend his sermons along with men. After Guru Nanak's death, his ideas led to the rise of a new faith called Sikhism. Guru Nanak was the first of the ten Gurus of Sikhs. Guru Nanak passed away in 1539 AD but by that time a large number of people became his followers. The nine descendants of Guru Nanak are: Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Har Govind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Kishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh.



Guru Nanak