

Lesson-6

Bhakti and Sufi Tradition

Q1:-Discuss the ways in which the Alvars, Nayanars and Virashaivas expressed critiques of the caste systems.

Ans:- Some historians suggest that the Alvars and Nayanars initiated a movement of protest against the caste system and the dominance of Brahmanas or at least attempted to reform the system. To some extent this is corroborated by the fact that bhaktas hailed from diverse social backgrounds ranging from Brahmanas to artisans and cultivators and even from castes considered "untouchable".

* The twelfth century witnessed the emergence of a new movement in Karnataka, led by a Brahmana named Basavanna (1106-08). His followers were known as Virashaivas or Lingayats (Wearers of the linga).

* The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the pollution attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas. They also questioned the theory of rebirth. These won them followers amongst those who were marginalised within the Brahmanical social order.

* The Lingayats also encouraged certain practices disapproved in the Dharmashastras, such as postpuberty marriage and the remarriage of widows.

Q2:- Analyse, with illustrations, why bhakti and sufi thinkers adopted a variety of languages in which to express their opinions.

Ans:- Bhakti thinkers and different languages which were adopted by them to express their opinion.

- (i) Early Bhakti Saints Pali, Prakarat Tamil and Malyalam etc. languages.
- (ii) The Brahmins of South Indian put his views and ideas in Sanskrit and local languages.
- (iii) Kabir's poems have survived in several languages and dialects, and some are composed the special languages of nirguna poets.
- (iv) Baba Guru Nanak, Ravidas etc. composed their hymns in various languages such as Punjabi and Hindi etc.
- (v) Mirabai compose her Bhajans in Rajsthani and Hindi.
- (vi) Some saint of Maharastra and Gujarati uses Marathi and Gujarati language.

According to Sufi thinkers -

- (i) Sufi thinkers also live with peoples. They uses serveral languages. They uses Hindvi or persian language.

(ii) Baba Farid used local language. Hindvi persian, Panjabi, Urdu and some other form of languages are also seen.

(iii) A different genre of Sufi poetry was composed in an around the town of Bijapur, Karnataka. These were short poems in Dakhani (a variant of Urdu) attributed to Chisthi Sufis who lived in this region during the 17th and 18th centuries.

(iv) Some Sufi saints give their pledge in Telgu, Malayalam languages.

Q3:- "Kabir was a famous saint of Bhakti period". Examin that statement.

Ans. Kabir was a famous saint of Bhakti period. That facts is examine by the following points :

Kabir's Teachings :

(i) Kabir did not accept the caste distinction. He believed that none could be high or low on the score of caste.

(ii) Kabir was opposed to customs and rituals. He has opposed worship, roja-namaj, pilgrimage and haj etc.

(iii) Kabir believed in the unity of all religions according to him, there is no distinction between Hindu-Muslim. The destination of both is the same only the paths are different.

(iv) His teachings openly ridiculed all forms of external worship of both Brahmanical Hinduism and Islam the pre-eminence of the priestly classes and the caste system.

(v) Kabir opposed caste distinction, condemned bad company, stressed upon - meditation and love. He identified the teacher with God.

Q4:- Explain with examples what historians mean by the integration of cults.

Ans:- From tenth to 17th century the most striking religious features is the increasing visibility of a wide range of gods and goddesses in sculpture as well as in religious books at one level, this indicates the continued and extended worship of major deities Vishnu, Shiva and goddesses like Durga, Laxmi -

- Historians who have tried to understand these developments suggest that there were at least 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, explicitly meant to be accessible to women and Shudras, who were generally excluded from Vedic learning.

- At the same time there was a second process at work that of the Brahmanas accepting and reworking the beliefs and practices of these and other social categories.

Example - Through an instance we can say that a local deity whose image was and continues to be made of wood by local tribal specialists, was recognised as a form of Vishnu.

These local deities were often incorporated within the Puranic framework by providing them with an identity as a wife of the principal male deities - sometimes they were equated with Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu.