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Popular Beliefs and Religious Issues

Lesson Plan

Contents

- ▶ An overview of the religious changes in Medieval India
- ▶ Understanding the Bhakti Movement, the rise of vernaculars, the rise of new religious ideas and beliefs

Objectives

- ▶ To understand the social changes brought about by the interaction of religions and customs and beliefs
- ▶ To learn the dynamics of new religious movements and the people associated with them
- ▶ To know about the rise of Guru Nanak and Sikhism, Kabir and the Sufis
- ▶ To appreciate the diversity and adjustments in people's beliefs and customs, and the rise of vernaculars

Teacher's Aids

- ▶ Globe
- ▶ Pictures, charts, atlas and wall maps
- ▶ Blackboard
- ▶ Internet

Tips for Teacher

- ▶ Explain the diversity of beliefs and customs that arose from the interaction of Hindu and Muslim cultures.
- ▶ There were many changes—in religion, society, customs, language, etc. Explain them along with the rise of vernaculars, the spread of religious trends across the country and the rise of new thought in the Hindu way of life and worship, and in the emergence of Kabir, Guru Nanak and the Sufis.
- ▶ Be prepared to answer questions from students on religion—what is advaita, what is saguna and nirguna bhakti, what are the basic differences between the Indian religions and the Abrahamic religions, etc.
- ▶ Students should be encouraged to know places, locations and their placement on the maps.

■ Background and Reading

- ▶ Read the lesson aloud and explain, sharing the aids, etc., pausing to examine and explain the data in the boxes.
- ▶ Particularly focus on the diversity and amalgamation of beliefs, customs and cultures and the emergence of new thought in India—highlight the fact that this country has seen the rise of four religions and a thought process: Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and the Sufis.

The Bhakti Movement

- ▶ Change in society included changes in the religious trends and elements.
- ▶ New Hindu philosophy based on a revival of the 'Upanishads' grew.
- ▶ Tantricism, based on matras, yogic mudras, etc., also came up [Tantra began with the rise of Buddhism and its modifications along with changes in Hinduism].
- ▶ Sikhism emerged under the Sikh Gurus.
- ▶ Two religions entered India: Islam and Christianity.
- ▶ The churning of thoughts and beliefs gave rise to two movements: Bhakti and Sufism.

In North and South India

- ▶ Bhakti means devotion—could be devotion to a guru or any other teacher.
- ▶ The Bhakti Movement was based on devotion to God.
- ▶ Began in South India and later spread to North India—the philosophers preached against caste system and were not in keeping with orthodox Hindu customs.
- ▶ Two streams of bhakti saints—Nayanars devoted to Lord Shiva—later called Shaivites in the 15th century; Alvars devoted to Lord Vishnu and were Vaishnavas.
- ▶ All preached love and reverence through their hymns—followed Saguna bhakti [worship of God with a form] or Nirguna bhakti [worship of formless God].
- ▶ Preached in the local language—vernaculars—Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, Gujarati, Braj and Marathi—teachings derived from the 'Bhagavad Gita' and the 'Bhagavata Purana'.
- ▶ Their teachings broadly: Belief in one God; treat all people as equals; self-control.

Adi Shankaracharya

- ▶ Great religious leader—Advaita philosophy—Born in Kerala in the 9th century—one God, one world—Established four Mathas or religious centres in four corners of India: Badrinath [Jyotirmath in the North]; Dwaraka [Sharadapeeth in the West]; Puri [Govardhana math in the East]; and Sringeri [Sringeri math in the South]—teachings based on the 'Upanishads' for which he wrote detailed commentaries.

Ramanujacharya

- ▶ 12th century—treated all human beings as equal—preached that one can attain salvation by surrendering to God.

Saint Ramananda

- ▶ Devotee of Lord Rama–spread the message of Hindu-Muslim unity, universal brotherhood and surrender to God.
- ▶ His famous disciples: Ramdas, Kabir, Dhanna; he was the first person to preach in Hindi.

Vallabhacharya

- ▶ Brahmin–worshipped Lord Krishna.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

- ▶ Devotee of Lord Krishna–preached universal love–believed one can attain God through love, devotion, song and dance–songs called kirtans–sung in chorus with musical instruments–spread the message of Bhakti in Bengal, Assam and Odisha.

Mira Bai

- ▶ A Rajput princess–married to the ruler of Mewar–devotee of Lord Krishna–songs in praise of him called Mira’s bhajans give a picture of the times and the status of women.

Surdas

- ▶ Blind saint poet–poems composed to Lord Krishna–called ‘Sur Sagar’.

Tulsidas

- ▶ Devotee of Lord Rama–wrote the ‘Ramcharitmanas’.

Ramdas

- ▶ He fought against the discriminatory practices of Brahmins and made his followers raise their voice against the caste system.

Madhavacharya

- ▶ He propagated the Dvaita school of Hindu philosophy.
- ▶ Maharashtra – Bhakti movement wide-spread – Sant Gyaneshwar spread it using Marathi–hymns in praise of God called abhangs–others: Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram.

Kabir

- ▶ Saint poet–15th century–born in a weaver family–lived mostly in Benaras–disciple of Saint Ramananda–criticised the harmful practices of both Hindus and Muslims–many of his poems included in the ‘Adi Granth’–preached philosophy through dohas [couplets]–laid stress on Hindu-Muslim unity–died at Maghar near Gorakhpur–writings compiled as Kabir Vani–also later in Kabir Granthavali and Bijak–followers both Hindus and Muslims called Kabirpanthis–main teachings: Oppose caste system; believe in universal brotherhood; oppose discrimination of people based on religion; believe in one God; reject evil practices and beliefs.

Guru Nanak

- ▶ Born at Talwandi near Lahore in 1469–founder of Sikhism.
- ▶ Word ‘Sikh’ derives from Sishya meaning disciple–ten Sikh Gurus–Guru Nanak the founder and Guru Gobind Singh the tenth–Nanak neglected school and engaged in discussions with holy men.
- ▶ Received enlightenment in 1496–then travelled to preach the message of love and brotherhood–through kirtans and bhajans now compiled in the ‘Adi Granth’–introduced sangats [people gathering to hear the guru] and pangats [people eating together at langars or free community kitchens].
- ▶ Guru Angad organised the Gurmukhi script.
- ▶ Guru Gobind Singh organised Sikhs into a disciplined military order called the Khalsa [pure] and gave the five symbols of Sikhism–kangha, kesh, kada, kaccha, kirpan.
- ▶ Main teachings of Guru Nanak–Believe in one God, do not worship idols, oppose discrimination, do good deeds, reject the caste system, inculcate virtues like charity, truthfulness and forgiveness.
- ▶ Many poems of the Bhakti poets are included in the ‘Adi Granth’.
- ▶ He had a Hindu disciple named Bhai Bala and a Muslim disciple called Bhai Mardana.

The Ten Sikh Gurus

- ▶ Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Dev, Guru Ram Dev, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind Singh, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh.

Sufi Movement

- ▶ After establishment Turkish empire, many Sufi saints came to India–through prayer one can unite with God–simple life–organised into religious orders called silsilahs–like Chishti, Suhrawadi, Naqshbandi–each led by a teacher or pir and followers called murids.

Sufi Saints

- ▶ Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti; Baba Farid; Nizamuddin Auliya; Salim Chishti.
- ▶ Moinuddin Chishti came to India in AD 1192 and died in AD 1230.

Baba Farid

- ▶ Preached in North India–many verses included in the ‘Adi Granth’.

Nizamuddin Auliya and Salim Chishti

- ▶ Preached religious tolerance–that Ishwar and Allah are the same and only the names are different.
- ▶ Bhakti and Sufi movements brought religious reforms–hope to people who suffered–taught people in local languages which made it easy to understand their philosophy–many kings followed their principles and adopted religious tolerance as their policy.

Oral Assignment

- A. Ask for answers at random from the students. Confirm the right answers. Let them write down the correct answers if they like in their books.

Written Assignment

- B–G. The teacher has two options—(i) Either do these exercises orally first and then ask the students to write them down. OR (ii) Ask the students to write the answers on their own. Then the teacher can announce the correct answers to the students and they can ask their partners to cross-check them.

In either case, the answers can be written as homework and the teacher can check them in the class.

Think Tank

- H. **HOTS question:** Discuss the two questions in class and let the students write the answers to H and I as homework. Teacher should assess individual work.