

DECLINE OF DELHI SULTANATE

The main causes of the downfall of the Delhi Sultanate were: (i) despotic and military type of governments that did not win the confidence of the people; (ii) degeneration of the Delhi sultans; (iii) The Sultanate became too vast and could not be controlled effectively; (iv) financial instability; and (v) the number of slaves increased to 1,80,000 in Firoz Shah's time, which was a burden on the treasury.

RELIGION IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

Muslim invasions brought Islam to India, which led to a conflict between Hinduism and Islam. This resulted in the development of two popular movements during the period: (i) the Sufi movement and (ii) the Bhakti movement.

Sufi Movement

The Sufi doctrine was based on union with God, which can be achieved through love of God, prayers, fasts and rituals, regardless of whether the devotee is Hindu or Muslim. The Sufis formed orders under a Pir or Sheikh, Sufi, a Persian word, devotes wandering Muslim preachers or saints who wear long woollen robes and are pure in their conduct. However, it also means the religious and philosophical preaching of Islam. Sufism is a Muslim devotional movement that parallels the Bhakti movement, a Hindu devotional movement. However, Sufism separated itself from Islamic fundamentalism, which prohibits music and dance. The Sufis preached religious brotherhood, and toleration beyond the borders of (slam and danced and sang devotional songs praising God. Instrumental music and universal religious brotherhood this cult. It emphasised on the spiritual experience and was not bound by the

principles of the Holy Quran and the Shariat (Muslim code of conduct laid down by Prophet Muhammad). There are a number of Sufi sects, the most popular among them are the—Chistis, Kalanandaris, Khadrisas, Nakshabandis, Shustris, Sohrawardis and Yazdanis. The famous Sufi saints are Sheikh Shah Waliullah (Delhi), Sheikh, Moinuddin Chisti (Ajmer), Sheikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi (Agra), Salim Chisti (Fatehpur Sikri), Sheikh Bahauddin (Multan), Sheikh Farid Yazadani (Delhi), Sheikh Nizamuddin Aulia (Delhi), and Shaikh Mirmiyam (Lahore).

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 rituals or religious ceremonies. Some of the notable bhakti saints are Mahatama Kabir, Guru Nanak Dev, Chaitanya and Meera Bai.

MAHATMA KABIR (1440-1518)

Sant Kabir is considered to be nominally a Muslim, although his thoughts were Hindu. There is no concrete knowledge of his past, but he is said to have been born of a Hindu widow who left him near a pond as a toddler. He was found and brought up by a Muslim weaver, Meru and his wife Nima, in a liberal environment where he came in contact with both Muslim and Hindu religions. In his early years he became a disciple of Ramananda at Banaras) and followed the Bhakti Marga (path of devotion). Later, he followed Shankracharya's Jnana Marga (path of knowledge). He criticised both Hindu and Muslim ideas of God and tried to equate them by stressing that both religions are identical. He preached of humanity and equality, of the Quran

and Puranas, Ram and Rahim, Krishna and Karim. He expressed his ideas in dohas or poetic couplets.

GURU NANAK DEV (1469-1539)

Sikh history begins with, Guru Nanak, who founded the religion. Western historians have found it difficult to put together most of his life history but in Sikh history, his life is recorded in the janam sakhis which record the various, events., of Nanak's life and his sayings, in the form of small stories. Western historians discount the janam sakims as unreliable historical evidence, but Sikh historians argue that the stories are both historically reliable and central to the understanding of Sikhism. However, both Western and Sikh historians agree on a number of events as central to Guru Nanak's life, vision and mission. Bom in 1469. Nanak became an accountant to the Muslim governor of Sultanpur. During this time, he had a vision of God and the presence of God in the human soul. His vision of God demanded that he teaches people about the true nature of God anti the presence of God in humanity. Guru Nanak then began to journey around the country, with this objective and it is these journeys that make up the janam sakhis. Eventually he established a village in Punjab, called Kartarpur, for all his followers to live in. Throughout his life, he seems to have been : deeply hostile to the Mughal administration. He referred to Babur the conqueror as 'the Messenger of Death', and was profoundly troubled by the number of deaths the Mughal conquest was built on.

He described God without any reference to Hindus or Muslims. He wanted his followers to eat together in a common kitchen called a langar, without consideration of any caste or religion and he called their community Khalsa. He expressed his ideas in the form of verses in

his book Adi Granth. These verses make up the central teachings of the Sikh sacred scriptures called the Adi Granth. The core teaching of Sikhism is one truth: God is one God and is behind, and present in, all of creation, particularly in each human soul. God can be directly comprehended by an individual by examining his or her soul; this examination is carried out by meditating on the name of God. There is no need for intermediaries such as rituals, priests, fasting, churches, mosques or anything else. All other Gods are human particularisations of the one God, that is, they particularise one aspect of God. So, all religions are both legitimate and illegitimate. Perhaps the most radical of Guru Nanak's teachings was the rejection of caste or class. As all human beings contain God within themselves, social distinction and inequality are the externalisation of humanity's sinfulness. The ideal community is one in which no social distinctions are in place. The early history of Sikhism under Guru Nanak and the first four Gurus is largely an attampte to build a class and free society.

The Guru is one of the principal concept of Sikhism, and before his death, Guru Nanak appointed his successor Guru Angad Dev as his successor. Guru Anged Dev invented the present from of Guru Mukhi Script. He was followed by nine more Gurus; the tenth and last declared the office to be discontinued and there has been no Guru since. While Guru Nanak established the central teachings of Sikhism, each Guru who followed added significantly to the religion (which was one aspect of the office of Guru). The figure of the Guru gave Sikhis a stable continuity from its earliest and most volatile period; it also made it adaptable to changing situations.

The figure of the Guru, who had the same authority as the founding Guru, allowed the

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religion to change and adapt to a growing community and to the growing hostility from the Mughal emperors. The Khalsa emerged as a strong military group under Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth Guru) and distinguished themselves from other people by five Ks, viz., (i) Kesha (hair), (ii) Kanga (comb), (iii) Kara (iron bracelet), (iv) Kirpan (holy dagger), and (v) Kacnchha (garment). Guru Gobind Singh named the Granth Sahib as the everlasting Guru of the Sikhs.

CHAITANYA (1485-1533) Chaitanya was born in Nadiya (Nava island in Bengal) to Jagannath Mishra" and Shachidevi. During his early years he became well versed with many dharma shashtras and opened a school in his native village to teach the Vedas. His early name was Vishvambhara and his life changed after he was exposed to the teachings of Eshwari Puri in Gaya. He left his home and closed his school to become a wandering preacher who adopted a unique form of worshipping/and praising Lord Krishna, through song and dance. He became very popular in the north and in Orissa and Other southern regions such as Tirupati, Kanchi, Srirangam, Gokarna and Udupi. His most inspired follower was Vasudeva Bhadracharya who helped him to become popular in Orissa.

MEERA BAI (1503-1570) She was born to Rana Ratan Simha in Medta (Rajasthan) in 1503 but was brought up by Tatarao Daudgi after Rana Ratan Simha was killed during a battle with Babur. During her early years she was influenced by Vaishnavism and truth for love. At a very young age she became an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna and she continued to devote much of her time worshipping Lord Krishna's idols even after her marriage to Bhojaraja Sangrama Simha (son of Maharana

Sangha). After the death of Bhojaraja, she devoted her life entirely to the services of Lord Krishna, She discarded all her worldly ties and surrendered herself completely to God. She occupies a high place in the history of Indian religious thought and is considered to be one of the founders of the Bhakti Cult. Meera Bai wrote many books; among them Geet Govind ki Teeka, Raag Govind and Phutik. Alpaada manifest her single minded devotion. She has been immortalised by her compositions, which are popular even today.

Sikhism

The Sikhs are one of the most prosperous and politically important religious minorities in India. The religion itself is of comparatively recent origin—it dates to the time of Babur—but the history of its community—called Panth, or 'Path' by the faithful—is a deeply rooted aspect of Sikh life. Since its inception, the Sikh community has played a major role in Indian history. The Mughals understood that Sikhism was a separatist movement as by the eighteenth century, the Sikhs had established a separate kingdom with its capital in Lahore. The Sikhs were a major force in the British Allied army as the British gradually annexed the whole of India in the 1850s. After Indian independence, the Sikh community, half of which had to flee Muslim Pakistan after the partition, became economically and politically the most significant and successful minority community in India. The Sikhs are unique as a religious movement. Founded in the deepest spirituality and mysticism, they are a radically egalitarian group rooted deeply in their sense of community, called 'brotherhood' (khalsa), and history. The khalsa is unified by one aspect: all Sikhs are disciples of the founding Gurus of the

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religion, the word, 'Sikh', means if disciple. However, they are also, a highly militant religion and society; the community has; to be protected with the highest martial vigilance and ability. Since the seventeenth century, Sikh fighters have been, feared throughout India for their ability and sheer courage. The British, who employed them in their army in the nineteenth century, referred to them as; the greatest of the 'martial races'. They are an add mixture; on one hand, Sikhism is one of the most deeply spiritual and; profoundly mystical religions of the world, advocating a social harmony and egalitarianism unrivalled by any other major religion, with the possible exception of Buddhism, an the other hand, the, Sikh community is a militant, warrior community, willing to fight, sacrifice, or assassinate to protect or further the aspirations of the community.

The core of Guru, Nanak's teachings involve three fundamental doctrines.

- ❖ **Nam** (The Name) A direct, unmediated experience, of God can be attained by meditating on God's name (Nam); this name, according to Guru Nanak, is ek, or 'one'. Each human being can overcome their sinfulness and achieve a mystical union with God by meditating on this name.
- ❖ **Sabad** (The Word) God is revealed through the spoken word (sabad). The spoken word reveals the; nature and name of God as well as the methods by which one can meditate on the name and achieve union with God.
- ❖ **Guru** (The Teacher) The Name and the Word are revealed through the Guru; knowledge of both only comes through the Guru. The Sikh concept of

the Guru, is different from the Hindu concept, for the Sikh Guru is , synonymous with the Name and the Word.

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