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## **CULTURE: AN INTRODUCTION**

**T**he English word ‘Culture’ is derived from the Latin term ‘cult or cultus’ meaning tilling, or cultivating or refining and worship. In sum it means cultivating and refining a thing to such an extent that its end product evokes our admiration and respect. This is practically the same as ‘Sanskriti’ of the Sanskrit language. The term ‘Sanskriti’ has been derived from the root ‘*Kri* (to do) of Sanskrit language. Three words came from this root ‘*Kri; prakriti*’ (basic matter or condition), ‘Sanskriti’ (refined matter or condition) and ‘vikriti’ (modified or decayed matter or condition) when ‘prakriti’ or a raw material is refined it becomes ‘Sanskriti’ and when broken or damaged it becomes ‘vikriti’.



### **OBJECTIVES**

After studying this lesson you will be able to:

- understand the concept and meaning of culture;
- establish the relationship between culture and civilization;
- Establish the link between culture and heritage;
- discuss the role and impact of culture in human life.

### **1.1 CONCEPT OF CULTURE**

Culture is a way of life. The food you eat, the clothes you wear, the language you speak in and the God you worship all are aspects of culture. In very simple terms, we can say that culture is the embodiment of the way in which we think and do things. It is also the things



that we have inherited as members of society. All the achievements of human beings as members of social groups can be called culture. Art, music, literature, architecture, sculpture, philosophy, religion and science can be seen as aspects of culture. However, culture also includes the customs, traditions, festivals, ways of living and one's outlook on various issues of life.

Culture thus refers to a human-made environment which includes all the material and non-material products of group life that are transmitted from one generation to the next. There is a general agreement among social scientists that culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of behaviour acquired by human beings. These may be transmitted through symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment as artefacts. The essential core of culture thus lies in those finer ideas which are transmitted within a group—both historically derived as well as selected with their attached value. More recently, culture denotes historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols, by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and express their attitudes toward life.

Culture is the expression of our nature in our modes of living and thinking. It may be seen in our literature, in religious practices, in recreation and enjoyment. Culture has two distinctive components, namely, material and non-material. Material culture consists of objects that are related to the material aspect of our life such as our dress, food, and household goods. Non-material culture refers to ideas, ideals, thoughts and belief.

Culture varies from place to place and country to country. Its development is based on the historical process operating in a local, regional or national context. For example, we differ in our ways of greeting others, our clothing, food habits, social and religious customs and practices from the West. In other words, the people of any country are characterised by their distinctive cultural traditions.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.1

1. How can you say that Culture and Sanskriti carry the same meaning?

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2. Fill in the blanks:

a. All the achievements of human beings and groups can be called.....

b. Culture has two distinctive components viz. material and.....

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**Notes**

## 1.2 CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

The word 'culture' and 'civilization' are often used synonymously. However, they have clearly defined meanings differentiating them. 'Civilization' means having better ways of living and sometimes making nature bend to fulfill their needs. It also includes organizing societies into politically well-defined groups working collectively for improved conditions of life in matters of food, dress, communication, and so on. Thus some groups consider themselves as civilized and look down upon others. This disposition of certain groups has even led to wars and holocausts, resulting in mass destruction of human beings.

On the other hand 'culture' refers to the inner being, a refinement of head and heart. This includes arts and sciences, music and dance and various higher pursuits of human life which are also classified as cultural activities. One who may be poor and wearing cheap clothes may be considered 'uncivilized', but still he or she may be the most cultured person. One possessing ostentatious wealth may be considered as 'civilized' but he may not be cultured

Therefore, when we think of culture, we have to understand that it is different from civilization. As we have seen, culture is the 'higher levels of inner refinement' of a human being. Humans are not merely physical beings. They live and act at three levels: physical, mental and spiritual. While better ways of living socially and politically and better utilization of nature around us may be termed as civilization. This is not enough to be cultured. Only when the deeper levels of a person's intellect and consciousness are brought into expression can we call him/her 'cultured'.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.2

1. What is the difference between culture and civilization?

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2. Give two similarities of culture and civilization.

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## 1.3 CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Cultural development is a historical process. Our ancestors learnt many things from their predecessors. With the passage of time they also added to it from their own experience and gave up those which they did not consider useful. We in turn have learnt many things from our ancestors. As time goes we continue to add new thoughts, new ideas to those already existent and sometimes we give up some which we don't consider useful any



more. This is how culture is transmitted and carried forward from generation to next generation. The culture we inherit from our predecessors is called our cultural heritage. This heritage exists at various levels. Humanity as a whole has inherited a culture which may be called human heritage. A nation also inherits a culture which may be termed as national cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage includes all those aspects or values of culture transmitted to human beings by their ancestors from generation to generation. They are cherished, protected and maintained by them with unbroken continuity and they feel proud of it.

A few examples would be helpful in clarifying the concept of heritage. The Taj Mahal, Swami Narayan Temple of Gandhinagar and Delhi, Red Fort of Agra, Delhi's Qutub Minar, Mysore Palace, Jain Temple of Dilwara (Rajasthan) Nizamuddin Aulia's Dargah, Golden Temple of Amritsar, Gurudwara Sisganj of Delhi, Sanchi Stupa, Christian Church in Goa, India Gate etc., are all important places of our heritage and are to be protected by all means.

Besides the architectural creations, monuments, material artifacts, the intellectual achievements, philosophy, treasures of knowledge, scientific inventions and discoveries are also the part of heritage. In Indian context the contributions of Baudhayan, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya in the field of Mathematics, Astronomy and Astrology; Kanad and Varahmihir in the field of Physics; Nagarjuna in the field of Chemistry, Susruta and Charak in the field of Medicines and Patanjali in the field of Yoga are profound treasures of Indian Cultural heritage. Culture is liable to change, but our heritage does not. We individuals, belonging to a culture or a particular group, may acquire or borrow certain cultural traits of other communities/cultures, but our belongingness to Indian cultural heritage will remain unchanged. Our Indian cultural heritage will bind us together e.g. Indian literature and scriptures namely Vedas, Upanishads Gita and Yoga System etc. have contributed a lot by way of providing right knowledge, right action, behavior and practices as complementary to the development of civilization.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.3

1. What is cultural heritage?

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2. Give some examples of cultural heritage.

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**Notes**

## 1.4 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

Now let us discuss some general characteristics, which are common to different cultures throughout the world.

1. **Culture is learned and acquired:** Culture is acquired in the sense that there are certain behaviours which are acquired through heredity. Individuals inherit certain qualities from their parents but socio-cultural patterns are not inherited. These are learnt from family members, from the group and the society in which they live. It is thus apparent that the culture of human beings is influenced by the physical and social environment through which they operate.
2. **Culture is shared by a group of people:** A thought or action may be called culture if it is shared and believed or practiced by a group of people.
3. **Culture is cumulative:** Different knowledge embodied in culture can be passed from one generation to another generation. More and more knowledge is added in the particular culture as the time passes by. Each may work out solution to problems in life that passes from one generation to another. This cycle remains as the particular culture goes with time.
4. **Culture changes:** There is knowledge, thoughts or traditions that are lost as new cultural traits are added. There are possibilities of cultural changes within the particular culture as time passes.
5. **Culture is dynamic:** No culture remains on the permanent state. Culture is changing constantly as new ideas and new techniques are added as time passes modifying or changing the old ways. This is the characteristics of culture that stems from the culture's cumulative quality.
6. **Culture gives us a range of permissible behaviour patterns:** It involves how an activity should be conducted, how an individual should act appropriately.
7. **Culture is diverse:** It is a system that has several mutually interdependent parts. Although these parts are separate, they are interdependent with one another forming culture as whole.
8. **Culture is ideational:** Often it lays down an ideal pattern of behaviour that are expected to be followed by individuals so as to gain social acceptance from the people with the same culture.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.4

1. What is meant by permissible behaviour patterns?



Notes

2. How can you say that culture is dynamic?
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## 1.5 IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE IN HUMAN LIFE

Culture is closely linked with life. It is not an add-on, an ornament that we as human beings can use. It is not merely a touch of colour. It is what makes us human. Without culture, there would be no humans. Culture is made up of traditions, beliefs, way of life, from the most spiritual to the most material. It gives us meaning, a way of leading our lives. Human beings are creators of culture and, at the same time, culture is what makes us human.

A fundamental element of culture is the issue of religious belief and its symbolic expression. We must value religious identity and be aware of current efforts to make progress in terms of interfaith dialogue, which is actually an intercultural dialogue. As the world is becoming more and more global and we coexist on a more global level we can't just think there's only one right way of living or that any one is valid. The need for coexistence makes the coexistence of cultures and beliefs necessary. In order to not make such mistakes, the best thing we can do is get to know other cultures, while also getting to know our own. How can we dialogue with other cultures, if we don't really know what our own culture is?

The three eternal and universal values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness are closely linked with culture. It is culture that brings us closer to truth through philosophy and religion; it brings beauty in our lives through the Arts and makes us aesthetic beings; and it is culture that makes us ethical beings by bringing us closer to other human beings and teaching us the values of love, tolerance and peace.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.5

1. What does culture provide for a decent life?
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2. Which individual would be called uncultured in society?
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### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Culture has been derived from Latin term 'Cult' or 'Cultus' meaning tilling or refining.
- 'Sanskriti' is derived from Sanskrit root 'Kri' meaning to do.



- Culture may be defined as the way an individual and especially a group live, think, feel and organize themselves, celebrate and share life.
- Culture has different characteristics. It can be acquired, lost or shared. It is cumulative. It is dynamic, diverse and gives us a range of permissible behaviour-pattern. It can change. Culture includes both material and non-material components.
- In deeper sense it is culture that produces the kind of literature, music, dance, sculpture, architecture and various other art forms as well as the many organizations and structures that make the functioning of the society smooth and well-ordered.
- Culture provides us with ideas, ideals and values to lead a decent life.
- Self restraint in conduct, consideration for the feelings of others, for the rights of others, are the highest marks of culture.
- A cultural heritage means all the aspects or values of culture transmitted to human beings by their ancestors to the next generation.
- Architectural creations, monuments, material artifacts, the intellectual achievements, philosophy, pleasure of knowledge, scientific inventions and discoveries are parts of heritage.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. How will you define the concept of culture?
2. How is culture and civilization synonymous?
3. What is cultural heritage?
4. What are the general characteristics of culture?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****1.1**

1. Culture's literal meaning is to do and Sanskriti also literally means refining and cultivating.
2. a. Culture  
b. Non-material.

**1.2**

1. Culture is what we are and civilization is what we possess or we make use of.
2. Changes in both culture and civilization occur. Civilization is advanced state of culture.



### 1.3

1. Culture that we inherit from our ancestors is called our cultural heritage.
2. Taj Mahal, Red Fort of agra, Vedas, Upnishads and Gita  
(Architectural monuments, Treasures of knowledge, Scientific and intellectual achievements)

### 1.4

1. Culture forms an ideal pattern of behaviour that is expected to be followed by individuals.
2. Culture is changing constantly. New ideas and new techniques are added from time to time.

### 1.5

1. Culture provides us with ideas, ideals and values to lead a decent life.
2. One who does not have self restraint in thought in feelings and in action, may be called an uncultured individual.





**2**

## **INDIAN CULTURE**

**H**ave you ever thought of the amazing progress we, as human beings, have made in various spheres of life, be it language, literature, art and architecture, science or religion? Have you ever wondered how all this has been possible? This happened because, we did not have to make a fresh beginning each time, but were able to make use of and build on the work of past generations. You have never had to bother about having to make your own script or creating a new language system for yourself. These are already given to you which you enjoy as a member of society. Then you build on it by making your contribution or addition which further becomes an asset for the coming generations. This is a continuous and never-ending process. It is a precious possession unique to human beings and is known as culture. Culture is a way of life. You, your family has a culture and so does your region and your country. You may be curious to know about the uniqueness of Indian culture and find out its distinct characteristics. In this unit we will understand how Indian culture is unique and what are its characteristics.



### **OBJECTIVES**

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- *describe the distinctive features of Indian culture;*
- *identify the central points and uniqueness of Indian culture;*
- *discuss the importance of spirituality in Indian culture;*
- *explain the points of diversity and underlying unity in it; and*
- *trace the process of infusion into and integration of elements from other cultures in Indian culture.*



Notes

## 2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIAN CULTURE

Indian culture is as many sided as life. It includes intellectual and social aspects of any human being. It also takes account of the aesthetic instinct as well as the spiritual impulses of human being. It has also, in effect, an appeal to the subconscious as a force making for the formation of character.

Look at the map of India and you see India is a vast country with a lot of diversity in her physical and social environment. We see people around us speaking different languages, having different religions and practising different rituals. You can also see these diversities in their food habits and dress patterns. Besides, look at the myriad forms of dance and music in our country. But within all these diversities there is an underlying unity which acts as a cementing force. The intermingling of people has been steadily taking place in India over centuries. A number of people of different racial stock, ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs have settled down here. Let us not forget that the composite and dynamic character of Indian culture is a result of the rich contributions of all these diverse cultural groups over a long period of time. The distinctive features of Indian culture and its uniqueness are the precious possession of all Indians.

### 2.1.1 Continuity and Change

Many great cultures had developed in different countries and regions of the world. Many of them have perished or have been replaced by other cultures. However Indian culture has had an enduring character. Despite major changes and upheavals significant threads of continuity can be traced throughout the course of Indian history right upto the present day.

You may have read about the Harappan civilization which flourished in the Indian subcontinent over 4500 years ago. Archaeologists have found evidences to show that cultures existed here even before the matured phase of the Harappan civilization. This tells us that we have a very long history behind us. And yet what is amazing is that even today the pattern of a house in an Indian village is not very different from that of a Harappan house. Some aspects of Harappan culture are still practised, such as, the worshipping of Mother Goddess and Pashupati. Similarly, Vedic, Buddhist, Jain and many other traditions continue to be followed even today. At the same time one should not lose sight of the changes as are evident in the multistoried buildings in the metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Delhi, quite unlike the Harappan houses that had only one storey. The point to be noted here is that continuity and change in our civilization has gone hand in hand. In fact, a remarkable feature of Indian culture is that along with continuity it has kept on changing, whereas the basic spirit of our culture continued. It has kept on discarding what was becoming irrelevant in the modern age. In our long history, there have been periods of ups and downs. As a result, movements have grown and reforms brought about. The reform movements in the Vedic religion brought about by Jainism and Buddhism in sixth century BC and the religious and social awakening in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in



modern India are a few examples when revolutionary changes were brought about in Indian thought and practices. Yet the thread of basic philosophy of Indian culture continued and still persists. Thus a process of continuity and change has always been a feature of Indian culture. This shows the dynamic character of our culture.

### 2.1.2 Variety and Unity

Indian culture, over the last three millennia, has successfully, but quietly, observed the best assimilable parts from other religions and cultures, from time to time and integrated them into itself.

Indeed few cultures in the world have such variety as the Indian culture. You may perhaps wonder why the people of Kerala use coconut oil while the people of Uttar Pradesh use mustard oil for cooking. This is because Kerala is a coastal state and coconut grows here in plenty. While Uttar Pradesh is a plain area which is favourable for the growth of mustard. What is the similarity in the Bhangra dance of Punjab or the Pongal of Tamil Nadu or the Bihu dance of Assam? Both are celebrated after a rich harvest of crops. Have you noticed the different languages that we speak like Bengali, Tamil, Gujarati or Oriya? India is the home of many forms of dance and music which we normally use for festivals and social functions like marriages or the birth of a child.

A large number of languages and dialects are spoken in our country which has led to the growth of a great variety of literature. People belonging to eight great religions of the world co-exist here in a harmonious manner. Do you know that India is home to many religions of the world like Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism and of course Hinduism. Numerous styles of architecture, sculpture and painting have developed here. Different styles of music and dance, both folk and classical, exist in the country. So also are numerous festivals and customs. This wide variety has led to the making of Indian culture both composite one and rich and beautiful at the same time. Why is there so much variety in our culture? There are many reasons for this. The vastness of the country and variation in its physical and climatic features is an obvious reason for the variety.

The second important reason for the variety in our culture is the intermingling among various ethnic groups. Since time immemorial, people from far and near have been coming and settling here. We find people belonging to different racial stocks like the Proto-Australoids, the Negroids and the Mongoloids living in India. Various ethnic groups like Iranians, Greeks, Kushanas, Shakas, Hunas, Arabs, Turks, Mughals and Europeans also came to India, settled here and intermixed with the local population. The people belonging to other cultures brought their cultural habits, thoughts and ideas, which got amalgamated into the existing culture. You will be surprised to know that it was only around second century BC that stitched clothes such as salwars, kurtas, topees, etc. were brought to India, by the Kushanas, Shakas and Parthians. Prior to that Indians wore clothes which were unstitched. The latest is the introduction of shirts, trousers, skirts, etc. which were brought by the Europeans in



## Notes

the eighteenth century. India through the ages has shown a remarkable capacity for assimilation of ideas. This has contributed to the variety and richness of our culture.

Along with contacts with outside cultures, cultural exchange between different regions of India has also continued. The Chikan work of Lucknow, Phulkari embroidery of Punjab, Kantha embroidery of Bengal, Patola of Orissa show a distinct regional flavour. Although the centres in the South, North, East and West of India have their characteristic cultures, yet these did not develop in absolute isolation. In spite of physical barriers, Indians used to travel from one part of the country to another for trade or pilgrimage. Some regions were joined together through conquests or by alliance. As a result, people transmitted cultural habits and thoughts from one part of the country to the other. Military campaigns too took people from one place to another. This helped in exchanging ideas. Such contacts have led to the development of commonness in Indian culture, which has been maintained throughout our history. Another unifying factor is climate. Despite geographical diversity and climatic variations India experiences an inherent unity. The system of monsoons is the most important component of the Indian climatic pattern and this gives unity to the whole country. The coming of the monsoon has ensured that agriculture remains the main occupation of the people of India. On the other hand the differences in physical features have affected the food habits, dress, houses and economic activities of people leading to the formation of social, economic and political institutions. These factors in turn influenced the thinking and philosophy of the people. The variety in physical features and climate of India has thus led to the development of a variety of cultures in different regions. The typical features of different regions have given some identity to these cultures.

The composite nature of our culture is reflected in our music, dance forms, drama and art forms like paintings, sculpture and architecture as well. Our literature in different languages also reflects this composite nature.

Unity in diversity is reflected in our political forms as well. During the early Vedic period, society was pastoral, that is, people used to move from place to place in search of pastures. But as these people started practising agriculture, they settled down. This settled life led to community development and growth of towns which needed rules and regulations. Thus emerged a political organisation. This included the *sabhas* and *samitis* which were political bodies through which people participated in governance. In course of time, the concept of *rashtra* emerged and possession of territory became the new measure of power. In some places, republics came up. The period from sixth to fourth century BC is known as the age of *mahajanapadas* in India. In these kingdoms kings had more powers. Subsequently large empires were also established with emperors exercising absolute powers. You may be aware of ancient rulers such as Ashoka, Samudragupta and Harshavardhana. The Mughals also established a vast empire in India. The British established themselves in India and in 1858, India became a part of the British Empire. However in 1947, we were able to gain our freedom after a long struggle. Today we are a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic and a uniform system of government prevails over the length and breadth of the country.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.1**

1. Name the state where Bhangra is a popular dance form.
2. What is the dance form of Assam known as?
3. Who brought salwars, kurtas, topees etc. to India around second century BC?
4. Which region is famous for Patola?

**Notes****2.1.3 Secular Outlook**

The secular character of Indian culture is a result of the intermingling of people belonging to diverse cultural groups over a long period of time. There have been instances of occasional conflicts here and there, but by and large, people have lived together peacefully for centuries. The popular cultural traditions of India are the best examples of such cultural synthesis in which a large number of people belonging to different religious groups come together.

You are aware that there is a great variety of thoughts and habits in our country. Among such a variety, dominance of one particular thought is not possible. You will recall that Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsees and Jews live in India. The constitution declares India to be a secular country. Everyone is free to profess, practise and propagate any religion of his/her own choice. The state has no religion of its own and all religions are treated equally by the state. No one is to be discriminated on the basis of religion. The people have, to a large extent, developed a broad outlook and they believe in the concept of live and let others live.

Right to freedom of religion ensures secular nature of our polity. In the Western context development of secularism meant complete separation of the church and the state. In India secularism is taken as a more positive concept to cope with the complex social structure in the country with a view to protecting the interests of all, particularly the minorities.

**2.1.4 Universalism**

The concept of coexistence has not been confined to the geographical and political boundaries of the country only. India has a universal outlook and it has been promoting the message of peace and harmony to the entire world. India has been raising a strong voice against racialism and colonialism. It has protested against the formation of power blocks in the world. In fact India became one of the founder members of the non-aligned movement. India is committed to the development of other underdeveloped nations. In this manner, India has been discharging her responsibilities as a part of the world fraternity and has been contributing to the progress of the world.



It has to be remembered that the subcontinent of India has been one cultural unit throughout the ages, cutting across political boundaries.

### 2.1.5 Materialistic and Spiritualistic

Culture is spiritual development of a race or nation in the field of mind, interests, conduct, thought, art, skills and civilization.

India is popularly known to be a land of spirituality particularly to the West. However, Indian history from ancient times to present day shows that the developments of materialistic and non-materialistic culture have been going on alongside. You will recall that the Harappan civilization was an urban one. It had a systematic town planning where roads cut each other at right angles. They had a profound knowledge of mathematics, weights and measures. They had built their towns in a scientific manner and had an elaborate drainage system. The Harappans had external trade and travelled across the seas to trade with the Sumerians.

Excellent books on medicines, planets, stars, and plants were written. Discoveries of theories-like “earth rotates around the sun” or “earth is round” were made by Indians long before Europe accepted them. Similarly in the area of mathematics and in the field of medicine and other sciences India’s achievements in ancient times have been remarkable. There was no opposition or resistance by religious or other thoughts in pursuing such knowledge.

In philosophical thought even atheistic thinking developed and grew in India. You may be aware that Jainism and Buddhism are silent about the existence of God. What does all this tell us? Indeed, that Indian culture has been both materialistic and non-materialistic or spiritualistic.

The culture of India is the living expression of the simplicity and profundity of her people.

## 2.2 CULTURAL IDENTITY, RELIGION, REGION AND ETHNICITY

Our cultural identities are based on various factors such as religion and region. As a result each Indian possesses multiple identities. Which of these identities asserts itself at a certain point of time and prevails over the others, depends on the political, social or economic context in which the person finds himself/herself. Thus each person may have some things in common with another, but may be vastly different in some other aspects. For example, except belief, forms of worship and rituals, there may be little that is common among those who follow a particular faith from the point of view of the whole country. Even in the forms of worship and rituals there are sectorian and regional differences.





Thus culturally, Hindus are not all similar, nor are all the Muslims. Brahmins in Tamil Nadu are quite different from their counterparts in Kashmir. Similarly, Muslims in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh are dissimilar in several aspects of their culture. Regional identities are more real. People of different religions and *jatis* may have common regional cultural traits like language, food, dress, values and also the worldview. In Bengal, both Hindus and Muslims take pride in being Bengalis. Elsewhere one finds Hindus, Christians and Muslims sharing several elements of regional culture.

In principle, different religious groups owe their allegiance to different religious doctrines. For instance the Vedas and Shastras may be sources of inspiration for Hindus, Koran and Hadees for Muslims, and the Bible for Christians. However, at the level of rituals and life styles there is a lot of intermingling among followers of different religions.

Ethnic culture is strong among the tribal groups. For example, in the small state of Nagaland, there are more than a dozen tribes and they differ from each other in their dress, speech and beliefs. Bastar district of Chhattisgarh has several groups claiming different ethnic origins.

## 2.3 CULTURAL INFLUENCES

In the modern context, there are at least three significant influences on our culture. They are westernisation, emergent national cultural styles and popular culture.

Before independence some Western modes were adopted by the aristocracy and members of the civil services. The influence, over the years, has spread to the middle classes and to a small extent, to the villages as well. The growing demand for English medium schools in the villages is a proof of this statement.

During the struggle for freedom a new style emerged. This became a national style. For example the Gandhi cap and khadi may now be only ceremonial and a symbol, but it contributed to the unity of the country and provided commonness to culture.

Popular culture which is the product of mass media is another unifying factor. The impact of films has been tremendous. Radio and television also reshape images and attitudes. Their hold on us is undeniable. Modern media has promoted issues that are of both traditional and public interest.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.2

1. Give two examples of people who came to India from outside and settled here.
2. Which component of climate gives unity to India?
3. Name the civilization with which the Harappans were known to have had trade relations across the seas.

**Notes****WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- The meaning of culture is very wide and comprehensive. It has been defined as a sum total of integrated learned behaviour. It connotes a way of life of the people living in a society.
- Culture constitutes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society.
- Due to its adaptability and comprehensiveness, Indian culture has survived through the ages.
- Unity in diversity is one of the major characteristics of Indian culture which makes it unique.
- A synthesis of various cultures came about through the ages to give shape to what is recognised as Indian culture today.
- Spirituality and value based life style is the core of Indian culture but it has a scientific temperament too.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. What are the different components of culture?
2. Give the meaning of material and non-material culture.
3. Define the secular character of Indian culture.
4. Describe the distinctive features of Indian culture.
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - a. Cultural synthesis in India
  - b. Spirituality
  - c. Adaptability as a characteristic of Indian culture
6. Explain in detail unity in diversity in the context of Indian culture.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****2.1**

1. Punjab



2. Bihu
3. Kushans, Shakas and Parthians
4. Orissa

## **2.2**

1. Kushans and Mughals
2. Monsoons
3. Sumerian



**3****ANCIENT INDIA**

**D**o you think that the culture of Indian people has been the same since the beginning? The answer is no. No culture remains the same. And this is true of India as well. It has gone through many phases of change. Do you know why these changes occur? This is because every dynasty, every invader who comes and settles down in the country leaves their marks on the culture of that country. In order to understand the present culture of Indian people, it is necessary to understand the process it has gone through in the past. Thus, in this lesson we will attempt to take a look at the life of the people of Ancient India. You will read about the various stages of ancient Indian history from the Harappan times through Vedic, Mauryan and Gupta periods. The emphasis is on the changing nature of Indian society with corresponding changes in society and culture. When we read history we can understand how the modern world has emerged over long centuries of development. It is important to appreciate what we have achieved in the past to make our future worthwhile.

**OBJECTIVES**

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- appreciate the importance and relevance of studying history;
- recognise the Harappan culture as the first known urban culture in India;
- examine the nature of Vedic society, religion and philosophy;
- explain reasons for the rise of Jainism and Buddhism;
- trace the early history of south India during this period;
- review significant cultural developments during the rule of successive empires; and
- examine the general dynamism of cultural developments in ancient India.



### 3.1 IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING HISTORY

I am sure you have often asked yourself why you are studying history. Studying history is one way of getting to know the past. History is an attempt to understand how and why our ancestors lived as they did, what difficulties they met with and in what manner they overcame them. It is important for you to be acquainted with the past to understand better what is happening in the India of today. After going through this lesson you will come to know the story of your country, which started many centuries ago.

History is no longer treated as merely a study of dates and events and that too largely only political events. Its scope has been widened to include many aspects of life. These include the study of patterns of life, which we call culture. Culture was once defined as that which relates to art, architecture, literature and philosophy. Now it includes all the activities of a society. Therefore the emphasis of history has shifted from the study of only the upper groups of society to all levels of society. It now covers information on kings and statesmen as well as on ordinary people who make history. It includes the study of art and architecture, of the evolution of languages in India, literature and religion. Now we do not look only at what was happening at the aristocratic level of society. We also try to reconstruct the interests and concerns of people at lower levels. This makes history more interesting and helps us understand our society for better.

The people that went into the making of our society, at both the aristocratic and the ordinary level, were not all indigenous to India, to start with. Many came from other regions and settled down in India. They married locally, intermixed with the existing people and became a part of Indian society. Our society, therefore, has a rich heritage of different kinds of people. Because of this large variety of people, there has been an equally large variety of religions, languages, and customs in our country.

The correct understanding of history depends on two things. One is a careful and critical use of source material given to us by historians defending certain statements which should be decided on rational analysis. Secondly, historical events have causes and these causes should be fully examined. Above all, even the past must be subjected to a critical analysis. It is only in this way that historical knowledge will advance.

The past of India goes back several thousand years. We learn about it from the evidence which our ancestors have left behind. For the near past we have written and printed records. For times when printing was not known, there are records written by hand on paper. But earlier still, when paper was not made, records were written on dried palm leaves, the bark of the birch tree and plates of copper and in some cases, they were inscribed on large rocks, pillars, stone walls or tablets made of clay and stone. There was a time still further back when even writing was unknown. Our knowledge of the life of people in those ancient days comes from the objects which they left behind, for example,



their pottery or their weapons and tools. These are things which are solid and which you can see and touch and these have sometimes to be literally dug out of the earth. They are all clues in the game of a historical treasure hunt but they form a part of our culture. But these clues can be of many kinds. The clues most commonly used are manuscripts. Manuscripts are ancient books, written either on dried palm leaves or the thick bark of the birch tree, or on paper. (Generally the latter kind have survived, though books written on paper are not as old as the others). Some of the languages in which the very old books are written are languages which we in India do not use in everyday life any more, such as Pali and Prakrit. Others are written in Sanskrit and Arabic, which we still study and sometimes use in our religious ceremonies although we do not use them at home. Another language Tamil, which is spoken in South India and whose literature goes to an early period in used even today. These are called 'classical languages' and the history of many parts of the world is recorded in various classical languages. In Europe, ancient manuscripts were often written in Greek and Latin; in western Asia, they were written in Arabic and Hebrew, and in China, classical Chinese was used.

### 3.2 ANCIENT INDIA

India has a continuous history covering a very long period. Evidence of neolithic habitation dating as far back as 7000 BC has been found in Mehrgarh in Baluchistan. However, the first notable civilization flourished in India around 2700 BC in the north western part of the Indian subcontinent, covering a large area. The civilization is referred to as the Harappan civilization. Most of the sites of this civilization developed on the banks of Indus, Ghaggar and its tributaries.

The culture associated with the Harappan civilization is the first known urban culture in India. The Harappans built the earliest cities complete with town planning, sanitation, drainage system and broad well-laid roads. They built double storied houses of burnt-bricks each one of which had a bathroom, a kitchen and a well. The walled cities had other important buildings such as the Great Bath, Granaries and Assembly Halls.

Agriculture was the main occupation of the Harappans who were living in rural areas. Those living in the cities carried on internal and external trade and developed contacts with other civilizations such as Mesopotamia. They were excellent potters. Various types of utensils, toys, seals, figurines have been excavated from different sites. Harappans also had the technical knowledge of metals and the process of alloying. The bronze sculpture of a dancing girl found in Mohenjodaro testifies the sculptural skills and aesthetic sense of the Harappans. Shell, ivory, bone and faience were used as material for different crafts and objects. Lothal was a dockyard situated in Dholaka Taluk of Ahmedabad in Gujarat. It was also a well planned wall city. It was an important centre of sea trade with the western world. Another important town in Gujarat was Dhaulavira while Kalibangam was in Rajasthan.



Numerous seals carrying the images of the one-horned rhinoceros known as unicorn, peepal leaves and a male god throw light on the religious beliefs of the Harappans. It appears that they worshipped plants and animals and the forces of nature. They worshipped a male god resembling Lord Shiva of later times and a mother goddess among others. They probably believed in life after death and also in charms and spells. Seals engraved with animal figures like the humped bull, elephant and rhinoceros suggest that these animals were considered sacred. 'Peepal' has been found depicted on many seals.

Harappans knew how to write and most of their seals contain some form of script. But unfortunately no one has yet been able to decipher that script. As a result, our knowledge of the Harappan civilization is based on the archaeological evidence alone. The figures of men and women on various seals found in the excavations reveal that the people knew the art of spinning and weaving. They were perhaps the first people to cultivate cotton. A large number of Indus seals found in Mesopotamia which indicated of a possible trade between the Indus valley and Mesopotamian civilization.

By 1800 BC the Harappan civilization began declining. However, we do not know the exact reasons why this happened.

### 3.3 VEDIC CULTURE

A few centuries after the decline of the Harappan civilization, a new culture flourished in the same region and gradually spread across the Ganga-Yamuna plains. This culture came to be known as the Aryan culture. There were significant differences between this culture and the culture which preceded it.

Aryans settled on the banks of rivers Indus (Sindhu) and Saraswati (which is now non-existent). They composed many hymns in honour of the gods and goddesses they worshipped. These were compiled in four Vedas - the *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. The word veda means knowledge of the sacred spiritual knowledge. These vedas were considered infallible as they imparted the highest spiritual knowledge. Initially the Vedas were transmitted orally. Since our knowledge of the early Aryans is based on these Vedas, the culture of this period is referred to as the Vedic Culture. Scholars divide the vedic period into the earlier and later Vedic period. The earlier is represented by the *Rig Veda* while the latter by all other Vedic literature including the *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*. Two epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*, though compiled much later, also throw light on the life and society of an earlier period. For this period archaeological evidence has also been found in some areas of Uttar Pradesh.

Rig Veda contains about 250 hymns in praise of Indra who is described as a destroyer of cities and there are 200 hymns in praise of God Agni. Do you know that Agni is looked upon as an intermediary between gods and humans?



## Notes

## Society and religion

Though Aryan society was patriarchal, women were treated with dignity and honour. The family was the smallest social unit; several families (*kula*) made a village (*grama*) and several villages formed a *vis*. A number of villages formed a tribe or *jana* which was ruled by a chief called *rajan*. His chief function was to protect the tribe from external attack and maintain law and order. He was assisted by the members of two councils called *sabha* and *samiti*. The *Purohita* performed religious functions while the *senani* looked after military activities. There was no concept of the state or kingdom at this stage. Although the post of *Rajan* had become hereditary, he could be removed from power if found weak and inefficient or cruel.

Towards the later Vedic period, society was divided into four *varnas* - Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. This was also called the Varna-Vyavastha. To begin with it denoted categories of people doing different kinds of functions but with the passage of time this division became hereditary and rigid. The teachers were called Brahmins, the ruling class was called Kshatriyas, farmers, merchants and bankers were called Vaishyas while the artisans, craftsmen, labourers were called Shudras. Moving from one occupation to another became difficult. Simultaneously, the Brahmins also occupied a dominant position in the society.

Another important social institution of the time was the system of *chaturashrama* or the division of life span into four distinct stages i.e. *brahmacharya* (period of celibacy, education and disciplined life in guru's ashram), *grihastha* (a period of family life), *vanaprastha* (a stage of gradual detachment and *sanyasa* (a life dedicated to spiritual pursuit away from worldly life). However it should be noted that these stages were not applicable to women or to the people of lower *varnas*. Women were respected by the society, enjoyed freedom, had access to education and were often free to choose their partners through *swayamvara*. *Purdah* and *sati* was not prevalent. The ultimate aim of life was to attain *moksha* or salvation through the pursuit of *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*. *Karma* or performance of duty without any expectation or return was preached in the Bhagavad Gita.

The early Vedic people worshipped forces of nature and personified them as gods and goddesses. Indra, Agni, Varuna, Marut were some of their gods while Usha, Aditi, Prithvi were some of their goddesses. Some of the solar Gods and goddesses referred to in the Rig Veda are Surya, Savitri and Pushan. *Yajna* (sacrifice) was performed along with chanting of Vedic hymns. People poured *ghee* (clarified butter) and other ingredients into the fire to invoke the blessings of gods. Agni or fire was looked upon as an intermediary between Gods and humans. The Vedic people prayed individually as well as collectively for the welfare of the *jana*.

There was a change in religious practices during the later Vedic period. The prominent Gods of the early Vedic period like Indra, Agni and Varuna lost their prominence and





popularity. Their place was taken by a new trinity of Gods where Brahma enjoyed the supreme position, while Vishnu became the preserver and Shiva completed the trinity. The religion became extremely ritualistic. Sanskrit mantras, which were the monopoly of Brahmins, became an essential part of all religious functions. This made the Brahmins very powerful and the Yajnas expensive. Participation in them was restricted to the upper three classes. The kings performed *Ashvamedha*, *Rajasuya* and *Vajapeya* sacrifices to establish their position. It is very interesting to know that some elements of the culture of the Vedic Age have survived over a period 3,000 yrs and continues to be a part of Indian culture even today. By the end of the latter Vedic age changes started occurring in the society. For the first time people started discussing certain beliefs such as creation of the universe, life after death and essence of life. These were questions which were dealt with in great detail in the Upanishads.

### Material life and economy

The Aryans were primarily pastoral and agricultural people. They domesticated animals like cows, horses, sheeps, goats and dogs. They ate simple food consisting of cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables, milk and various milk products. They drank a beverage called *Soma*. Games of chess, chariot racing etc. were their modes of entertainment.

In the early period there was no money transaction or taxes. *Bali* or voluntary donation was prevalent. Cows were the measure of wealth. As the time passed, extensive use of iron brought great changes in their material life. Iron axes enabled them to clear forests leading to the expansion of agriculture throughout the Gangetic plains. Iron tools resulted in varied crafts and technology. Use of iron weapons and horses enabled them to fight wars and defend themselves better against enemies. Increasing number of crafts, availability of surplus food and growth of population led to specialisation of skills and urbanisation. Towns and cities grew and territorial states emerged. High quality earthenware called 'Painted Grey Ware' and 'Northern Black Polished Ware' have been found in many areas. Coins came into circulation. Trade was carried on, both overland and through waterways, enhancing material prosperity.

By sixth century BC, there were some sixteen large territorial states in North India and upper Deccan known as Mahajanapadas. Important among them were Anga, Magadha, Kosala, Kashi, Kuru, and Panchala.

## 3.4 POPULAR RELIGIOUS REFORMS

This period (B.C. 600 to B.C. 200) is important not only for political unity of the country but also for cultural unity. Ancient India saw the rise of two very important religions, Jainism and Buddhism which left a lasting influence on Indian life and culture. Vedic religion was



## Notes

earlier also known as Brahmanism because the Brahmins played a major role in it. Later it came to be called Hinduism. The Brahmins had developed a vested interest demanding large charities at the end of the scarifies. As a result, the sacrifices became very costly. Moreover, the Brahmins considered themselves superior to the other varnas and became arrogant. This led to the unpopularity of Brahminism and a need for reforms was felt.

Besides, there were other factors like the reaction of the Kshatriyas to the Brahmin claim for supremacy and the Vaisya's demand for an improved social position. The Vedic religion had become very complex and ritualistic. The reforms led by the Kshatriyas and aided by the poorer masses who could not afford the high cost of sacrifices, resulted in the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism around sixth century BC. These new religions that is Jainism and Buddhism also influenced the religious beliefs and several practices of Hinduism.

The founder of Jainism is believed to be *Rishabhadeva*, the first of the twenty four *tirthankaras* and as the last *tirthankara* Mahavira developed and gave final shape to the Jain doctrines.

The Jains lay great emphasis on severe penance and asceticism. Lord Mahavira asked them to take five vows - not to tell lies; not to injure life; not to own property; not to steal; and to maintain chastity (celibacy). He also asked the Jains to follow the three-fold path of Right belief, Right Conduct and Right Knowledge.

Later, the Jains were split into two sects the *Shvetambaras* (white clothed ones) and the *Digambaras* (the naked ones). Most of followers of Jainism belong to the trading community.

The other movement was led by Gautama Buddha (563 - 483 BC), a younger contemporary of Mahavira. He taught the Four Noble Truths. His path was the middle path. He believed that there is sorrow in this world and that desire is the cause of that sorrow and it can be conquered by following the Eight Fold Path (*ashtangika marga*). The eightfold path comprises:

- (1) Right understanding,
- (2) Right thought,
- (3) Right speech,
- (4) Right action,
- (5) Right livelihood,
- (6) Right effort,
- (7) Right mindfulness
- (8) Right concentration.

Basically both these movements were against the orthodox and ritualistic Brahmanical religion. Both the reformers emphasised a good moral life and the importance of ethics.



Both of them founded an order of monks, established monasteries called *sthanakas* in Jainism and *viharas* in Buddhism.

Later, Buddhism was also split into two divisions- the Hinayana and the Mahayana to which a third called Vajrayana was added subsequently. Buddhism spread to a very large part of the world- Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Japan, Thailand, Korea, Mongolia and Afghanistan. Even today a substantial population of these countries is Buddhist.

Hinduism underwent many changes in history. It gave rise to several religious sects within itself with varying beliefs and practices. Like Buddhism, some sects of Hinduism also spread outside India, particularly in the countries of South East Asia. Later Hindu tradition even accepted the Buddha as one of the incarnations (*avatara*) of Vishnu.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.1

Answer the following questions:

1. Where were the most of the sites of Harappan civilization found?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What was the main occupation of the people of Harappan civilization?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Where do you find evidence of neolithic habitation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How do you say that a language existed in Harappan civilization?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How would you know that Harappans had sculpture skill?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Name some of the vedic literature of Aryans?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How does man attain Salvation or moksha?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How was vedic yajna performed initially?  
\_\_\_\_\_





9. Which were the yajnas performed by kings to establish their position?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What change did the later vedic period practice in their religious ceremonies?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What were the modes of entertainment of the Aryans?  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Name some of the Mahajanapadas of sixth century BC of North India and upper Deccan?  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. In how many sects did Jainism split?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. How many paths does the Ashtangika has?  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What were monasteries called in Jainism and Buddhism?  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Name the 3 divisions of Buddhism?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **3.5 THE PERSIAN INVASION AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN CULTURE**

In the first half of sixth century BC, there were a number of small tribal states in north west India. There was no sovereign power to unite these warring tribes. The Achaemenid *rulers* of Persia or Iran took advantage of the political disunity of this region. Cyrus, the founder of *the Achaemenid dynasty*, and his successor Darius I annexed parts of Punjab and Sindh. It was believed to be the most fertile and populous part of the Achaemenid empire. Indian subjects were also enrolled in the Achaemenid army.

The Persian rule in north western India lasted for nearly two centuries. During this period there must have been regular contact between the two regions. The naval expedition of Skylax probably encouraged trade and commerce between Persia and India. Some ancient Persian gold and silver coins have been found in Punjab.

Though the mountainous passes in the north western border were being used from very early times, it seems that Darius entered India through these passes for the first time. Later on, a section of Alexander's army traversed the same route, when he invaded Punjab.



The administrative structure of the Mauryan empire was influenced in some measure by that of the Achaemenid rulers of Persia. It may be mentioned here that the Persian title of *satrapa* (governor) continued to be used by the Indian provincial governors as *kshtrapa* for quite a long time.

The cultural effects of the contacts with the Persians were also significant. The Persian scribes brought into India a new style of writing. It is called *kharoshthi*. It was derived from the Aramaic script, which was written from right to left. Many of Asoka's inscriptions found in north western India are written in *kharoshthi*. This script continued to be used in north western India till about third century AD. The Persian influence may also be traced in the preamble of Asokan edicts. The Mauryan art and architecture were also greatly influenced by the Persian art. The monolithic pillar edicts of Asoka with their bell-shaped capitals are somewhat like the victory pillars of the Achaemenid emperors which have been found in Persepolis.

The Persian influence found in Chandragupta Maurya's court was in the form of the ceremonial hair bath taken by the emperor on his birthday. It was in typical Persian style. It is mentioned in the *Arthashastra* that whenever the king consults the physician or the ascetic, he should sit in a room where the sacred fire was kept. This indicates the influence of Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Iranians.

### 3.6 THE GREEK (MACEDONIAN) INVASION AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN CULTURE

During the fourth century BC, the Greeks and the Persians fought for supremacy over West Asia. The Achaemenid empire was finally destroyed by the Greeks under the leadership of Alexander of Macedon. He conquered Asia Minor, Iraq and Iran and then marched towards India. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Alexander was greatly attracted towards India because of her fabulous wealth.

On the eve of Alexander's invasion, north western India was divided into a number of small principalities. Lack of unity among them helped the Greeks to conquer these principalities one after another. However, Alexander's army refused to march ahead when they heard about the vast army and the strength of the Nandas of Magadha. Alexander had to return. He died at Babylon at the young age of 32 on his way back to Macedon.

Alexander hardly had any time to reorganise his conquests. Most of the conquered states were restored to their rulers, who had submitted to his authority. He divided his territorial possessions covering parts of eastern Europe and a large area in western Asia into three parts and placed them under three Greek governors. The eastern part of his empire was given to Seleucus Nikator, who declared himself a king after the death of his master, Alexander.



Though the contact between the Macedonians and ancient Indians was for a brief period, its impact was fairly wide in range. Alexander's invasion brought Europe, for the first time, in close contact with India, as routes, by sea and by land, were opened between India and the West. A close commercial relation was also established. The traders and craftsmen used to follow these routes. Alexander asked his friend Nearchus to explore the sea coast from the mouth of the Indus to the Euphrates in search of harbours. The Greek writers have left many valuable geographical accounts of this region for us.

Alexander's invasion paved the way for political unification of north western India by conquering the warring tribes of this region. It seems that by his campaigns Alexander made Chandragupta Maurya's work of annexing this area easier. Soon after Alexander's departure, Chandragupta defeated one of his generals, Seleucus Nikator and brought the whole of north western India upto Afghanistan under his control.

The influence of Greek art is found in the development of Indian sculpture as well. The combination of the Greek and the Indian style formed the Gandhara School of art. Indians also learnt the art of making well-shaped and beautifully designed gold and silver coins from the Greeks. The Greeks had some influence on Indian astrology as well.

Many valuable information about the social and economic condition of northern and north western India of that time are known from the Greek accounts left by Arrian, admiral Nearchus, and Megasthenes. They tell us about the developed condition of many crafts, existence of a brisk trade with the outside world, and about the general prosperous condition of the country. Much has also been said in these accounts of carpentry as a flourishing trade in India. It seems the fleet which Alexander sent along the western coast of India under Nearchus was built in India.

Alexander's adventure also helped the West to know something about the Indian life and thinking. It has been said that the ideas and notions of Indian philosophy and religion which filtered into the Roman empire flowed through the channel opened by Alexander.

As the Greek writers left dated records of Alexander's campaign, it helped us a great deal to frame the chronology of ancient Indian history. The date of Alexander's invasion - 326 BC provides a definite 'marker' for arranging the sequence of historical events in India.

### 3.7 ASHOKA THE GREAT : REPRESENTING THE ACME OF INDIAN CULTURE

Ashoka occupies a unique place in the history of India. His policies of universal peace, non-violence and religious harmony find no parallel in the monarchs of the world.

Ashoka stands out as a monarch who combined successful kingship with idealism and philosophy. Like other rulers, Ashoka too began his reign with war - the conquest of



Kalinga. However, the mindless destruction of life and property in this war shattered him so greatly that he vowed never to wage any war again. Instead he adopted the policy of *Dhamma Vijaya* that is conquest through *dhamma*. In his thirteenth major Rock Edict, Asoka states that true conquest is by piety and virtue. Such a decision taken by a king, who lived in an era where military might was the measure of power, earned him a unique place in history.

Ashoka was a true humanist. His policies were oriented towards the welfare of his people. His *dhamma* was based on social responsibility. Besides giving importance to respecting brahmins, and servants, obedience to elders, abstention from killing living beings, *dhamma* also asked people to live in religious harmony. It combined in itself the good points of all sects. Ashoka proved to be a tolerant monarch who, although himself a Buddhist, never sought to impose his personal religion on his subjects. In his twelfth major Rock Edict, he states that in honouring of other sects lies the honour of one's own sect.

As a king, Ashoka set a very high ideal for himself. He saw himself as a father and the subjects as his children. He communicated his thoughts and philosophy to his people by inscribing them on stone pillars and rock surfaces. These edicts are remarkable examples of Mauryan architecture and also of engineering skills. They are the living monuments of his times.

Ashoka attempted to educate his subjects by pointing out the wastefulness of expensive rituals. He asked people to practice *ahimsa*. He himself gave up the practices of the royal hunt and pleasure tours and instead began *Dhamma Yattas* tours for the furtherance of *Dhamma*. By giving his empire a common *Dhamma*, a common language, and practically one script (Brahmi) he brought further political unification. India has been a secular country since the Buddhist age. Though he himself became a Buddhist he did not impose it on the others but followed a tolerant religious policy. He made gifts and grants to non Buddhist as well as anti-Buddhist.

Ashoka's fame also rests on the measures that he took to spread the message of peace amongst the different regions of the world. He sent ambassadors to the Greek kingdoms and the West. Indian culture spread to far-away lands. According to a Buddhist tradition, Asoka sent Buddhist missions to regions such as Sri Lanka and Central Asia. Buddhism spread to different parts of the world and although it is no longer a major force in India today, yet it continues to be popular in Sri Lanka and the Far Eastern countries.

The Varna system popularly known as the caste system which had arisen in the Vedic Age now became well established and gradually became the dominant form of social organization throughout India. Along with the new religions and philosophy the growth of cities, crafts and trade furthered the process of cultural unity in our country. Asoka unified the entire country under one empire and renounced the use of war as state policy. On the other hand he says that he strives to discharge the debt he owes to all living creatures.



## Notes

## 3.8 ART AND ARCHITECTURE: MAURYAN BEGINNINGS

The Mauryan contribution to art and architecture was significant. Ashoka is known to have built 84,000 stupas to commemorate various events of Buddha's life. According to Megasthenes, Pataliputra's grandeur matched that of the cities of Persia.

Ashokan edicts were inscribed on stone pillars that were made of single columns of polished sandstone and had capitals on their top. The best preserved of all Ashokan edicts stands at Lauriya Nandangarh (Bihar). This thirty-two feet tall column has an almost fifty ton seated lion capital placed on its top, an engineering feat worth admiring. The bull capital from Rampura is also another fine example of Mauryan sculpture. The most famous capital is the one at Sarnath, which shows four lions and the *Dharmachakra*. You must be familiar with this as this has been adopted as the national emblem of the Republic of India.

Besides pillars, few Mauryan figures have also come to light. The most well known of these is the Yakshi from Didarganj. The beauty of these figures lies in the exactness of their workmanship and in the fact that they appear to be made from one single stone. Like the pillars, these figures are polished with a unique surface gloss (now called Mauryan polish). You will be amazed to know that despite all these centuries this gloss has not lost its shine. Besides the language that has been used in nearly all the inscriptions and Prakrit which appears to have become the lingua franca of the country and in the Brahmi script the earliest known Indian script.

Another noteworthy aspect of Mauryan architecture is the rock cut caves. The Lomash Rishi (with its impressive entrance) and the Sudama caves are examples of such architecture. These caves cut from solid rock were provided by Ashoka for non-Buddhist monks. These caves marked the beginning of the rock cut architecture which was patronised by later rulers too. His rock edicts were inscribed in the local language and the local script.

## 3.9 POST - MAURYAN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Although the Greeks, Shakas, Parthians, and Kushanas were foreigners, they were slowly absorbed into the local population. Since they were warriors, the law givers assigned them the status of *Kshatriyas*. It should be noted that such a large scale assimilation of foreigners into the Indian society took place only in the post-Mauryan times. We can say roughly from about 200 BC to about 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. profound changes took place in the economic and political life and vital developments in different aspects of cultural life of our country i.e. religion, art and science as well as technology. There was a significant advancement in foreign trade both by land and by sea, besides emergence of various crafts.

Many foreign rulers adopted Vaishnavism. In the Besnagar Pillar inscription, Heliodorus (the Greek ambassador of the Indo-Greek king Antialkidas) describes himself as a *Bhagavata* i.e. worshipper of Vishnu. Similarly some coins of Kanishka also show the





figure of Siva on them. You will recall that one of the Kushan rulers was called Vasudeva, clearly indicating his *vaishnava* faith. Do you know the importance attached to the year of Kanishka's accession i.e. 78 A.D.. Well, it marks the beginning of the Saka era.

The interaction among different foreign ethnic groups and the Indians played an important role in their choice of one or the other Indian religions. Some foreign rulers also turned to Buddhism, as this did not create the problems of fitting into the caste system. Menander converted to Buddhism. Kanishka too is remembered for his services to this religion. However this increasing popularity of Buddhism brought about a major change in the religion. Buddhism in its original form was too abstract for the foreigners. They therefore advocated a simpler form through which they could satisfy their religious cravings. Around the same time Buddhism split into two schools: the *Mahayana* or the Great Wheel and the *Hinayana* or the Small Wheel. The former believed in image worship, rituals and *Bodhisattvas*, (incarnations of Buddha) while the latter continued the practices of the earlier Buddhism.

The *Mahayana* received royal patronage from Kanishka, who convened the fourth Buddhist Council to finalise its teachings. He also set up many stupas in memory of the Buddha.

### Art and Sculpture

Central Asian invasions led to further development of Indian art and sculpture. Close contacts with the western world introduced many new forms in Indian art. The most significant development was the growth of the Gandhara school of art. This school borrowed features from both the Greek and Roman art forms. Many images of the Buddha from the Kushan period have Apollonian faces, their hair is in the Graeco-Roman style and their draperies arranged in the style of a Roman *toga*. This assimilation of artistic features was probably because many artisans from different countries trained in different schools came together under the Kushan rule.

Mathura, which was the centre of the indigenous school of art, was also influenced by the invasions. A number of images from here of terracotta and red sandstone, which have definite Saka-Kushan influence, have survived. The most famous is the headless statue of Kanishka from Mathura. While the earlier Buddhists had used only symbols to depict the Buddha, the Mathura school became the first to make faces and figures of the Buddha. Folklores such as the *Jatakas* were drawn out in long panels on rock faces. Besides the images of Buddha, which were made in large numbers, statues of Mahavira were also produced.

### Deccan and South India

The Satavahanas in the Deccan held an important position under the Mauryas. After the death of Ashoka, they assumed total independence. They became very powerful and made their capital at Paithan or Pratisthan on the river Godavari. The Satavahanas soon entered into conflict with the foreign satraps, especially the Shakas. It was under



Gautamiputra and his son Vasishthiputra Satkarni that the Satavahanas became very powerful. They extended their kingdom, cleared forests, made roads and administered their State well. New towns came up and trade was carried on with far off countries like Persia, Iraq and Combodia.

### **Kharavela of Kalinga**

Another kingdom which rose to a position of importance after the Mauryas was Kalinga. Kalinga included modern Orissa and parts of Northern Andhra. Its most important ruler was Kharavela. The Hathigumpha Inscription in a Jain cave at Udaigiri hills would give us a detailed account of his reign, but unfortunately it is not easily decipherable. It is definitely known that he was a great administrator as well as a brave warrior. He carried out works of piety and public utility, like building roads and gardens.

### **South India**

The area which lies to the south of the river Krishna and Tungabhadra is called South India. It was the region of the Cholas, Cheras and the Pandyas who were constantly at war with each other.

### **Sources**

The main source of information about these kingdoms and the life of the people is the Sangam literature. That is why this period from the beginning of the 1st century B.C. to the end of 2nd century A.D. is called the Sangam period of the history of South India.

### **Cholas**

Karikala was the most important ruler of this kingdom. He defeated the combined forces of the Cheras and the Pandays. He succeeded in pushing back an invasion from Ceylon. Karikala has been credited with many welfare activities. He got many canals dug so that water from the river Cauvery could be used for irrigation purposes. Karikala patronised works of literature and art. He was a follower of the Vedic religion.

### **Pandays**

The Pandyan empire was founded by a woman king. She maintained a huge army. She also encouraged trade and patronised art as well as literature.

### **Life and Culture**

The people during this period lived a simple life. They were fond of music, dancing and poetry. Many musical instruments like drums, flutes, pipes, etc. were popular.

Most of the people lived in valleys and a majority of them were farmers. Others were herdsmen. There were artisans and craftsmen also who mainly lived in towns. There were merchants specially in the coastal areas and trade was carried on by sea.





## Society

The Greeks, Kushanas, Shakas and Parthians were called Yavanas. They soon merged with the Indian society and adopted Indian names and inter-married. Even their coins started carrying the images of Indian gods like Vishnu, Ganesha and Mahesha. The fact that they had adapted to the Indian society easily may explain why foreign rulers patronised Buddhism.

## The Age of Harshvardhana

King Harshvardhana decided that he must subdue the petty warring rulers and bring them under his domain. He devoted six important years of his life to do so. Hiuen Tsang, a Chinese traveller and Bana Bhat, his court poet, have given detailed accounts of Harsha's reign. According to Hiuen Tang, King Harshvardhana had an efficient government. He further tells us that families were not registered and there was no forced labour,

## Harsha's religious activities

Do you know that Harsha built many hospitals and rest houses? He also gave grants to many religions especially Buddhism and Hindu Religion. Later in his life Harsha became more inclined towards Buddhism.

Harsha's literary activities had some important plays e.g. Nagananda Ratnavali and Priyadarsita. He collected learned men around him as is evident from the report of Hiuen Tsang and Bana Bhat. Bana wrote Harsha's famous biography, Harshcharita as well as the literary piece Kadambari.

**Kingdoms of the Deccan and the South:** You have read about the Satavahanas who controlled the Deccan for a long time. After their decline, many small kingdoms came up in the Deccan. The first one among them was that of the Vakatakas, who tried to build a strong state, but they did not last long

After the Vakatakas came the Chalukyas of Vatapi and Kalyani. Pulakesin was a powerful ruler of the Chalukya dynasty. The Chalukyas kept fighting with the Rashtrakutas (towards the north) and the Pallavas (towards the south). The Chalukya rule came to an end in 753 A.D. when the Rashtrakutas defeated them.

The capital city of Vatapi was a prosperous one. There were trade relations with Arabia, Iran and the Red Sea port to the west, as well as with South-East Asia. Pulakesin II sent an ambassador to king Khusrao II of Persia. The Chalukyas patronised art as well as religion. They build temples and cave shrines in the deccan hills. Many of the sculptures of the Ellora caves were created at this time under the patronage of the Chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas.



### **INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.2**

Answer the following questions:

1. What were the sources of information about the social and economic conditions of the people of northern and north-western India in fourth century BC?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is Dhamma vijaya according to king Ashoka?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. State the views of Ashoka in his twelfth major rock edict?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Where do you find edicts of Ashoka?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Where is the national emblem of India taken from?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What were the features borrowed by Gandhara school of art from Greek and Roman art forms?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Describe the uniqueness of Mathura school of art?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **3.10 CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT DURING THE GUPTA PERIOD**

The last phase of ancient Indian history starts in early fourth century A.D. and ends in about the 8<sup>th</sup> A.D. The Guptas built a strong and powerful kingdom and under the political unity and state patronage that was provided by them, cultural activities increased manifold. You will recall that following the Greek invasion, various art forms in India had been markedly influenced by Graeco-Roman styles. This art mainly depicted the Buddha or Buddhist thought. But during the Gupta period art became more creative and Hindu gods and goddesses also came to be portrayed.

The artistic achievement of the age is exhibited in the delicate workmanship and the variety of designs shown in different kinds of Gupta coins. The general scheme that was followed was to exhibit the portrait of the king on one side of the coin or an appropriate goddess



with her associated symbols on the other side. The king is shown in many positions - shooting a tiger or a lion, playing a musical instrument seated on a high backed couch etc. On the reverse in most cases was Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and in some cases Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and arts.

Besides coins, Gupta art found adequate expression in monuments and sculptures. The skilled artists of this age used their tools and skills to express the ideals and philosophical traditions of India through various art forms. They decorated even the niches and corners of religious places with statues of gods and goddesses. The images of gods were treated as symbols representing attributes associated with the gods. Hence the gods were shown having four or eight arms in each carrying a symbol or an *ayudha* (weapon) although they were depicted in human forms. Stone, terracotta, and other materials were used to construct the abodes of gods and goddesses.

Examples of the Gupta art can be seen at the *dashavatara* temple at Deogarh and the cave temples in Udaigiri hills. However, the most famous examples of Gupta art that still remain are the numerous seated and standing images of Buddha from Sarnath.

The school of art that thrived at Sarnath provides us with some of the most pleasing and graceful images of the Buddha. Besides stone, Gupta artists were also skilled in bronze. A two metre high bronze image of Buddha has been discovered at Sultanganj (near Bhagalpur in Bihar). Examples of sculptures in caves created during this period are traced to the famous Ellora Caves.

### Architecture

The Gupta architecture has survived in a few shrines, rock cut caves (Ajanta) and temples, such as the *Dashavatara* temple at Deogarh. These structures were mainly made of stone and bricks. Some references in the works of Kalidasa give us a glimpse of Gupta architecture. The poet has given a vivid picture of a well-planned town with a network of roads, market places, big sky-touching palaces and mansions with terraces. The palaces had many inner apartments. They had court-yards, prisons, court-room and *sabhagriha*. Their verandahs opened on roofs lit with moon-beam at night. The pleasure garden which was attached to palace contained all sorts of seasonal flowers and trees.

Archaeological evidence about Gupta architecture is however poor. However, examples of Gupta shrines have been discovered in the jungles of Central India, especially in the Bundelkhand region. These include the one at Bhitargaon in Kanpur district.

### Painting

Painting as an art form reached a high degree of perfection during the Gupta times. The wall frescoes at the Ajanta caves (Aurangabad) and the one at Bagh caves (near Gwalior) bear evidence of this. Although Ajanta paintings belong to the period between the first to the seventh century AD yet most of these were produced during the Gupta time. These



paintings depict various scenes from the life of the Buddha. The skill with which the human, animal and plant figures have been drawn shows the refined and sensitive nature of Gupta art. The conception of beauty was a characteristic of Gupta art. Expression through art was given importance as it was regarded as a means for the attainment of spiritual joy.

### 3.11 THE PALLAVAS AND THE CHOLAS

Any account of ancient India is incomplete without referring to the two dynasties of South India i.e. the Pallavas and the Cholas and their contribution to art, architecture, administration and conquests. Quite a few dynasties rose in the South from the early centuries of the Christian era. Among them the Pallavas were great patrons of art and architecture. The 'ratha' at Mahabalipuram style of temples built by them were fine examples of rock-cut temples. The Pallavas also built structural temples like the Kailashanath and Vaikunthperumal temples at Kanchipuram. The Kailashanath temple is a huge structure with thousands of images and is said to be the "largest single work of art ever undertaken in India". There is also a set of *bas* reliefs found at Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram) which is attributed to the pallava period. The Pagodas built at Mahabalipuram go back to the first century AD.

Temple building activity flourished in India from the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards. While the North Indian temples were built in the *Nagara* style consisted of the shikaras (spiral roofs), the garbhagriha (sanctum) and the mandap (pillared hall), the temples in the South were built in the *Dravida* style completed



Group of monuments at Mahabalipuram near Chennai



Sun Temple, Konarak, Odisha



with vimana or shikhara, high walls and the gateway topped by gopuram. After the Pallavas (6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century AD) the tradition of building temples was further developed by the Cholas (10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century AD) in the south.

Do you know that the temple was the central place in the village? It was the gathering place for the villagers who would come here everyday and exchange ideas and discuss all matters of common interests. It served as a school too. During festival days dances and dramas were also performed in the temple courtyard.

The achievements of the Cholas also lie in their conquests across the seas and developing democratic institutions for governance at the village level. The village panchayat called *sahha* or *ur* had extensive powers. It had control over finances too. This body included several committees which looked after various aspects of village administration. A very detailed account of the functioning of the *sabhas* is available from one of the Chola inscriptions. The Chola rulers were also great builders. The Dravida style of temple architecture reached its zenith under the Chola rulers. One of the finest example of this style is the Rajarajeshwar or Brihadeshwara temple. During this period one also notices great achievements in the field of sculpture.

Great progress was made in literature both religious and secular. Sanskrit also became the language of the courts in many parts of the country. Tamil literatures also made great progress. The Alvars and the Nayanars, the Vaishnavite and Shaivite saints made lasting contributions to it. In spite of the dominant position of Sanskrit in most parts of the country, this period marks the beginning of many Indian languages as well as distinct scripts in different parts of the country. In short, we can say that by the time, the ancient period of Indian history came to an end, India had developed a culture which was marked by features that have characterized it ever since.

### 3.12 TRANSFORMATION OF VEDIC BRAHMANISM INTO PURANIC HINDUISM

The transformation of the ancient brahmanical faith into modern Hinduism can be regarded as the most distinguishing feature from the Gupta period onwards. Buddhism no longer received as much royal patronage as it did earlier. Brahmanism had come to the forefront. The Gupta rulers especially provided filling to the Bhagavata Sect of Hinduism. They called them selves *Bhagavatas*, worshipped Lord Vishnu performed *Asvamedha* yajnas, gave large donations to brahmanas, and built many temples. The Puranas were finally compiled in this age. Vishnu emerged as the god of devotion and came to be represented as the preserver of *dharma*. Numerous legends gathered around him and a whole Purana called *Vishnu Purana* was compiled in his honour. Similarly a law book called the *Vishnumriti* was also named after him. Above all, by the fourth century AD there came into being a famous Vaishnava work called '*Shrimadbhagavad-purana*' which taught devotion to Lord Krishna. A few Gupta kings also were worshippers of Shiva, the god of





## Notes

destruction. Bhagavatism which was a contemporary to Buddhism and Jainism in origin and owed its birth to the stream of thought which began with Upanishads reached its zenith and became the most popular sect during this age. The theory of Ten *Avatars* or incarnations of the supreme god Vishnu came to be accepted and among them, Krishna was considered the most important.

Besides Vishnu, Brahma, Surya, Kartikeya, Ganesha, Durga, Lashmi, Saraswati and others were also worshipped as were lesser gods like Indra, Varuna, Yama etc. The snakes, the yakshas, and the Gandharvas also continued to be revered. Even animals, plants, rivers and mountains were looked upon with reverence and cities like Banaras and Prayag became places of pilgrimage. Idol worship became popular. Thus the prominent features of modern Hinduism took shape during the Gupta period.

Although Buddhism was on its decline, yet it continued to have its following. Besides the artistic creations of Ajanta and Ellora, the images of Sarnath Buddha belonging to this time show that Buddhism was also quite popular. Even Jainism commanded some following during the Gupta period.

### 3.13 NALANDA'S EMERGENCE AS A GREAT CENTRE OF LEARNING

Nalanda became a great centre of learning during Harsha's reign. Students from different parts of the world came here to imbibe learning. Although all the remains mounds of Nalanda have not yet been excavated, yet the evidence of a huge complex of buildings has been uncovered. Some of these were as many as four storey high. According to Hiuen Tsang, Nalanda housed as many as 10,000 students. It was supported by the revenues of 200 villages.

Although this huge monastic-educational establishment was primarily a centre for learning of Mahayana Buddhism, yet the curriculum included secular subjects as well. Grammar, logic, epistemology and sciences were taught here. Students were encouraged to develop a spirit of enquiry and reasoning. Active discussions and debates were taking place. Harsha is said to have invited a thousand learned monks of Nalanda to take part in the philosophical assembly at Kanauj. In his account, Hieun-Tsang has given a detailed account of Nalanda.

Thus university continued to be the centre of intellectual activity till the twelfth century.



#### INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.3

Answer the following questions:

1. What were the features of Gupta coins?

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2. Where is Dashavatara temple located?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What are cave temples in Udaigiri hills famous for?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How high was the bronze statue of Buddha found at Sultangaj (near Bhaglpur)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Where do you find the Gupta art form of painting?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Where was a philosophical assembly during Harsha reign took place?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 3.14 CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

According to tradition, christianity was brought to India by Saint Thomas in the first century A.D. According to legends, the Parthian king Gondophernes (C. 19- 45 A.C.) sent a messenger to Syria to look for a skilful architect who would build for him a new city. The messenger returned with St. Thomas, who converted him and many members of his court to Christianity. The truth of the legend is doubtful. It was most probably the frequent trade and movement between India and the west which was responsible for bringing this disciple of Lord Christ to India. The merchants, traders and even craftsmen frequently travelled along popular land and sea routes. St. Tomas preached christianity in many parts of India. He was killed at Mylapore (near Madras). The tomb of St. Thomas is still to be found at the same place. A large community of christians known as Syrian Christians continue to reside in Kerala even today.

The Christian Church has two major divisions-the Roman Catholic church and the Protestant church. The holy book of the Christians is the Bible. The Bible contains two parts: the old Testament and the New Testament. The Bible today is available in all major languages spoken in our country.

Today, we have over one and a half crore Christians in India. Several charitable institutions under their patronage are flourishing in all parts of our country. Perhaps the most famous Christian social worker, he has contributed a great deal for the welfare of the poor and home less in our country.

**Notes****INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.4**

Answers the following questions

1. How did Christianity come to India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the divisions of the Christian Church?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who was mother Teresa?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Name the two structural temples built by Pallavas at Kanchipuram?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What were the different style in temple architecture during the Pallavas and the Cholas?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Name the temple built by Cholas?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What was the style of sculpture in the Chola period called?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What style of work do you find at Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- India has a continuous history covering a very long period dating as far back as 7000 BC;
- The Harappans built the earliest cities complete with town planning, sanitation, drainage system and broad well-laid roads;
- Agriculture was the most important occupation of the rural people.
- The vedic people have contributed immensely in various fields such as literature, religion and philosophy;





- Towards the latter Vedic people society was divided into four varnas Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.
- Important religions i.e. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism evolved and interactions between them resulted in a synthesis in Indian culture.
- The early Vedic people worshipped forces of nature and personified them as Gods and goddesses.
- The Mauryans set up the first great empire in North India and under the rule of Ashok the Great it reached great height in many fields;
- The Mauryan contribution towards art and architecture was significant.
- Temple architecture reached its pinnacle of glory under the Pallavas who were great builders.
- Examples of the Gupta art can be seen at the Dashavtara temple at Deogarh and the cave temples in Udaigiri temples.
- King Harsha came to the throne of Thaneswar after he had lost his family in tragic circumstances.
- Two persons have given detailed accounts of Harsha's reign. One is Hiuen Tsang—a Chinese pilgrim; the other is Bana Bhat—his court poet.
- Harsha was an efficient and benevolent ruler. He indulged in many welfare activities. He gave endowments for great public servants, rewarded people who did work of a high intellectual calibre and encouraged religious activities by giving gifts to various sects. He built many hospitals and rest houses. Nalanda became a great centre of learning during Harsha's reign.
- Harsha was also a literary person. He himself wrote plays and collected learned men around him.
- The achievements of the Cholas also lie in their conquests across the seas and developing democratic institutions for governance at the village level.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. How do you differentiate the culture of Aryans with the Harappans?
2. State the circumstances which leads to the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism in the sixth century BC?
3. What were the impact of Persian invasions on Indian culture?
4. What were the outcome of the Macedonian invasion on ancient Indians?



5. How did the transformation of vedic brahmanism into puranic Hinduism take place in ancient India?
6. Describe the development of Indian culture during the rules of successive empire?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****3.1**

1. On the banks of Indus, Ghaggar and its tributaries.
2. Agriculture
3. In mehergarh in Baluchistan dated back to 7000 BC.
4. The seals contained some form of script.
5. One horned rhinoceros known as unicorn appeared on seals. A bronze sculpture of a dancing girl was found in Mohanjadaro. This testifies the sculpture skill of these people.
6. Veda – Rig, Atharva, Sama, Yajur and Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishada.
7. By dharma, artha and kama
8. It was performed along with chanting of Vedic hymns.
9. Ashramedha, Rajasuya, Vajapeya Yajnas
10. It was became more ritualistic. Instead of Indra, Agni, Varuna gods a new trinity of gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva were worshipped.
11. Games of chess, chariot racing etc.
12. Anga, Magadha, Kosala, Kashi, Kuru, Panchala.
13. Two – Svetambaras (white clothes ones), Digambaras (the naked ones)
14. 8 (Eight)
15. Sthanakas in Jainism and Viharas in Buddhism.
16. Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana

**3.2**

1. Greek accounts left by Arrian, Admiral Nearchus and Megasthenes.
2. True conquest is a conquest by piety and virtue i.e. welfare of people.
3. The honour of one sect lies in honouring other sects.
4. At Lauriya Nandangarh (Bihar)

5. From the famous Ashoka pillar, capital at Sarnath.
6. (i) Apollonian faces (ii) Hair style (iii) Draperies arrangement
7. (i) They started faces and figures of Buddha  
(ii) Folklore were drawn out on long panels and rock faces.  
(iii) They build statues also.

### 3.3

1. One side the portrait of king in different positions and the other side contained the goddess with her associated symbols.
2. At Deogarh
3. Gupta art
4. 2 metre high
5. (i) Wall frescoes of the Ajanta caves (Aurangabad)  
(ii) Bagh caves (near Gwalior)
6. At Kanauj

### 3.4

1. St Thomas a skilful architect was a Christian. He was accidentally called by the Parthian king Gondaphernes in C-19/45 AD as an architect. St. Thomas converted many members into Christianity.
2. (i) The Roman Catholic Church  
(ii) The Protestant Church
3. A famous Christian social worker who did a great work for poor and homeless.
4. Kalidashanath and Vaikunthaperumal.
5. Nagara style and Dravida style
6. Rajarajeshwar/Brihadeshware Temple
7. The Dravida Style
8. Bas Reliefs



**4****MEDIEVAL INDIA**

**D**evelopments in the field of religion, folk art and language in India during the medieval times have been important milestones in the evolution of the composite culture of India. New religions movements like Sufi and Sikhism along with Bhakti movement contributed to this process. If you look around, you will see the impact of Islam on many aspects of Indian culture. You might have visited some famous monuments in India. These monuments stand as the symbols of the composite nature of Indo-Islamic culture in India. You can also see how various religions in India, including Islam, have influenced each other. Besides, every region in India is famous for giving shape to some folk art or the other. Development of folk arts through which the common people display their creativity is another significant aspect of Indian culture. The various regional languages that we speak today too have an interesting history which evolved during this period.

**OBJECTIVES**

After reading this lesson you will be able to :

- understand society during medieval times;
- trace the rise of Islam and Sufism;
- describe the political situation of India in medieval times;
- examine the influence of Islam on Indian religion;
- trace the growth of the Bhakti movement;
- examine the development of folk arts, painting and music during the medieval period;
- trace the rise of modern Indian languages;

- discuss the rise of Sikhism and the Sikh power in India; and
- trace the developments in South India.

## 4.1 LIFE OF PEOPLE UNDER DELHI SULTANATE

When the Muslim invaders came to India they decided to make it their home. They inter-married and took to the culture of the Indians. There was a mutual exchange in ideas and customs. In dress, speech, manners and intellectual outlook, the two influenced each other very profoundly. Some of these changes are described below.

### Society

The Indian society was divided into four major groups. They were the aristocrats, the priests, the towns people and the peasants.

### Aristocrats

The aristocrats included the Sultan and his relatives, nobility and the landholders. There were also the Hindu rajahs, chiefs, Hindu merchants and bankers. They concentrated all the wealth as well as the power in their hands. Needless to say that they were a group of very powerful people. They lived in great style and luxury. The Sultan outmatched everyone in this. He had to do it so as to maintain his superiority and his status. He had to show that he was different from the others. Whenever a new sultan came to the throne, the Khutba or sermon was read out in his name in the Friday prayers at the mosques and coins were issued in his name. This established the new ruler on the throne. To maintain his distinction as the ruler, he was provided with many officers and servants at the royal household where he lived in great luxury. Even the nobility imitated his style and showed off their wealth.

### The Priests

The Priests were another important class of people in the society. Among the Hindus, they were the Brahmins and Ulemas among the Muslims. They were given grants of tax-free land for their maintenance and were often very powerful. The Ulemas wielded great influence on the Muslim Sultans and often influenced their policies. But at other times like during the reign of Ala-ud-din Khalji, they were even ignored. Sometimes the priests were not interested in religious affairs but were more interested in worldly affairs.

### The Town People

In the town lived the wealthy merchants, traders and artisans. The nobility, the officers and the soldiers also stayed in the towns, that were the administrative and military centres. Places where the Sufi and Bhakti saints lived and places which housed important temples and mosques had become pilgrim centres. The artisans lived in their own special quarters.





In fact, the weavers lived in the weaver's colony, the goldsmith lived in a colony inhabited by goldsmiths and so on. This was the general pattern for all artisans and craftsmen. These people supplied luxury goods were also sent abroad for trade. The royal *karkhanas* or workshops employed these workers for producing beautiful goods which were often used as gifts to be given away by the Sultans.

### **The Peasants**

The peasants, of course, lived in the villages and were often the worst off. They paid huge taxes to the state as land revenue. Any change of dynasty had no effect on their lives. Their life continued as before.

The caste system was very rigid and intercaste marriages and intercaste dining was totally prohibited. But exchange of ideas did take place on a large scale. Those who converted themselves to Islam did not forget their old customs. Thus, exchange of ideas and customs took place. Many Hindu customs were adopted by the Muslims while many Muslim customs were adopted by the Hindus, like those concerning food, dress, clothing and music, besides many others.

### **Trade**

Trade was flourishing and many new towns came up to encourage trade. Some communities like the Banias, Marwaris and Multanis made trade their special vocation. The banjaras traded in caravans and were continuously on the move carrying goods from one place to another.

Delhi was the centre for the incoming as well as outgoing goods. There was rice from the East, sugar from Kanauj, wheat from the Doab and fine silks from the South. Besides, there were luxury goods like metalware, ivory, jewellery, cotton textiles and many other. Goods from outside India like East Africa, Arabia and China also came to Delhi. According to Ibn Batuta, Delhi at that time was a magnificent city.

The growth of trade encouraged the use of money and at this time came into use the silver *tanka* (coin). It was the most commonly used currency and was introduced by Iltutmish. Even the system of weights, that were used at that time, continued to be in use until the recent adoption of the metric system.

### **Religious Condition**

When Islam came to India, Hinduism was in vogue. But by this time Hinduism had degenerated itself. There were superstitious beliefs, rituals and sacrifices. Brahmins had become very powerful and the caste system was very rigid. The people, especially the lower classes, were ill-treated. Islam was the opposite of what was in practice among the Hindus. It talked of equality, brotherhood and oneness of God. There were no dogmas in Islam. On the other hand, it had a simple doctrine and a democratic organisation.



The coming of Islam did not bring in many changes in the political structure of the country. On the other hand, it challenged the social pattern of society. The important result of this contact was the emergence of the Bhakti movement and the Sufi movement. Both the movements were based on the fact that God was supreme, all men were equal for Him and Bhakti or devotion to Him was the way to achieve salvation.

## 4.2 RISE OF ISLAM AND SUFISM

The Muslims first came to India in the eighth century AD mainly as traders. They were fascinated by the socio-cultural scenario in this country and decided to make India their home. The traders who came to India from Central and West Asia carried back with them traces of Indian science and culture. As a result they became cultural ambassadors of India by disseminating this knowledge to the Islamic world and from there to Europe. The immigrant Muslims also entered into matrimonial alliances with the local people and learned to live together in harmony. There was mutual exchange of ideas and customs. The Hindus and Muslims influenced each other equally in dress, speech, manners, customs and intellectual pursuits. The Muslims also brought with them their religion, Islam which had a deep impact on Indian society and culture. Let us find out more about Prophet Mohammad and Islam in this lesson.

Prophet Mohammad preached Islam in the seventh century AD in Arabia. He was born in AD 571 in the Quraysh tribe of Arabia. He migrated to Madina from Mecca in AD 622 and this marked the beginning of the Hijira Era. According to the Muslim belief, Quran is the message of Allah revealed to Mohammad through his archangel Gabriel. It has been translated into several languages.

The five fundamental principles of Islam are:

- (1) Tauhid (belief in Allah)
- (2) Namaz (prayers, five times a day)
- (3) Roza (fasting in the month of Ramzan)
- (4) Zakat (giving of alms)
- (5) Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca)

Prophet Mohammad's sayings are preserved in what is called the Hadith or Hadees. After his death the Caliphate was established. There were four pious Caliphs.

Islam talked of equality, brotherhood, and the existence of one God. Its arrival particularly made a profound impact on the traditional pattern of Indian society. The rise of both the Bhakti and the Sufi movements contributed immensely in this regard. Both the Bhakti and the Sufi movements believed that all humans are equal, God is supreme and devotion to God is the only way to achieve salvation.





## Notes

## 4.2.1 Rise of Sufism

Sufism is a common term used for Islamic mysticism. The Sufis were very liberal in their religious outlook. They believed in the essential unity of all religions. They preached spirituality through music and doctrines that professed union with God. Sufism originated in Iran and found a congenial atmosphere in India under the Turkish rule. Their sense of piety, tolerance, sympathy, concept of equality and friendly attitude attracted many Hindus, mostly from lower classes, to Islam. Sufi saints such as Moinuddin Chisti, Nizamuddin Auliya, Fariduddin Ganj-e-Shakar were the pioneer sufis who are still loved, respected and honoured in India. The sufis were also influenced by the Christian and Buddhist monks regarding the establishment of their *khanqahs* and *dargahs*. *Khanqah* the institutions (abode of Sufis) set up by the Sufis in northern India took Islam deeper into the countryside. *Mazars* (tombs) and *Takias* (resting places of Muslim saints) also became the centres for the propagation of Islamic ideas. These were patronized both by the aristocracy and the common people. The Sufis emphasized respect for all human beings.

The Sufis were organised into religious orders or *silsilahs*. These *silsilahs* were named after their founders such as Chishti, Suhrawardi, Qadi. and Naqshbandis. According to Abul Fazl, the author of the *Ain-i-Akbari*, there were as many as fourteen *silsilahs* in India during the sixteenth century. Each order had its own *khanqah*, which served as a shelter for the Sufi saints and for destitutes, and later developed as a centre of learning.

Ajmer, Nagaur and Ajodhan or Pak Pattan (now in Pakistan) developed as important centres of Sufism. These also started the tradition of *piri-muridi*, (teacher and the disciple). In order to attain a state of mystical ecstasy, the sufis listened to poetry and music (*sama*) which were originally in Persian, but later switched to Hindawi or Hindustani. They preached the unity of God and self-surrender unto Him in almost the same way as the votaries of the *Nirgun Bhakti* movement did. Music attracts everybody, irrespective of language. Slowly such music attracted the Hindus who started visiting the *dargahs* in large number. The Hindu impact on Sufism also became visible in the form of *siddhas* and yogic postures.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.1

1. The beginning of which era is marked by Prophet Mohammad's migration to Madina from Mecca?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is Roza?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who brought Hindu followers to Islam by their attitude of piety, tolerance concept of equality and sympathy?  
\_\_\_\_\_



4. Name the author of *Ain-i-Akbari*.

### 4.3 POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The rulers of Delhi, who ruled from 1206-90, were Mamluk Turks. They were followed by the Khiljis, Tughlaqs, Sayyids and Lodis, who ruled northern India from Delhi till 1526. All these rulers were called Sultans. A Sultan was supposed to rule over a territory on behalf of the Khalifa or Caliph, who was considered to be the spiritual and temporal head of the Muslims. Both the names of the Khalifa and the Sultan used to be read in the *khutha*, (Friday prayers) by the local Imams.

In 1526 the Delhi Sultans were replaced by the Mughals, who initially ruled from Agra and later from Delhi till 1707. Thereafter, the Mughal rule continued only nominally till 1857 when the dynasty ended. The Mughals did not ask for any investiture but continued to send presents to the Khalifas. They also got the *khutba* read in their own names.

However, Sher Shah, a local Afghan ruler, challenged the Mughal ruler, Humayun and kept him away from the throne of Delhi for about fifteen years (1540-55). Sher Shah's reign stands out for many outstanding achievements. Among these was the construction of several roads, the most important being *Sarak-i-Azam* or Grand Trunk Road extending from Sonargaon (now in Bangladesh) to Attock (now in Pakistan) and run through Delhi and Agra a distance of 1500 *kos*. The other roads were from Agra to Burhanpur, Agra to Marwar and from Lahore to Multan. He struck beautiful coins in gold, silver and copper which were imitated by the Mughal Kings.

Mughal emperor Akbar who ruled from 1556-1605 was a great ruler in the history of India. He made a sincere effort to foster harmony among his subjects by discouraging racial, religious and cultural biases. He tried to develop friendly relations with the Hindus. To fulfil his imperialist ambitions he entered into matrimonial alliances with the Rajput rulers. His greatest contribution was the political unification of the country and the establishment of an all powerful central government with a uniform system of administration. Akbar was a great patron of art, architecture and learning. As a secular minded monarch he also started a faith called *Din-i-Illahi* which encompassed ideas from various religions. On every Thursday, scholars from different religions came to debate on religious issues raised by the emperor. This was done at the Ibadat Khana in Fateh Pur Sikri at Agra. Though illiterate Akbar patronised scholars and learned men. In his court there were nine such Navratna Mulla Do Pyaza, Hakim Humam, Abdur Rahim Khan e Khanan, Abul Tayal, Tansen, Raja Todar Mal, Raja Man Singh, Faizi and Birbal. Akbar's policy of liberalism and tolerance was continued by his successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. However this policy was abandoned by Aurangzeb.



Aurangzeb's short sighted policies and endless wars in different parts of the country (especially in South India) resulted in the disintegration of the Mughal empire.

The rise of the Marathas in the south, the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali, unrest amongst the nobility in the court and the rise of the Sikhs in north- western India destroyed whatever was left of the Mughal power. Economically India was still the biggest exporter in the world and had great wealth, but it was left far behind in the process of modernisation.

#### 4.4 CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

It was in the field of art and architecture that the rulers of this period took a keen interest. The composite cultural characteristic of the medieval period is amply witnessed in these fields. A new style of architecture known as the Indo- Islamic style was born out of this fusion. The distinctive features of Indo-Islamic architecture were the (a) dome; (b) lofty towers or minarets; (c) arch; and (d) the vault.

The Mughal rulers were great lovers of nature. They took pleasure in spending their time in building beautiful forts and gardens. The famous Mughal gardens like the Shalimar Bagh and the Nishat Bagh are important elements of our cultural heritage. There were waterways and fountains criss-crossing these gardens and finally, there were gardens with stages or levels. The water, while cascading from one stage to another, was made to fall in small streamlets with lamps lit behind them, making the water shimmer and lend a special charm to the whole atmosphere. It could also be made to flow over a chiselled and sloping slab, so that the water flowing over it shimmered. The best example of this type of garden is the Shalimar Gardens of Lahore (now in Pakistan). The Lahore garden has three stages. But a better example can be seen in India at Pinjore Garden situated on the Chandigarh-Kalka road where we have a seven-stage garden. This impressed the British so much that they created a three-stage garden in the Vice-Regal Lodge (now the Rashtrapati Bhawan) in New Delhi. It was on these very lines that the famous Vrindavan Garden in Mysore were built in the twentieth century.

The *pietra dura* or coloured stone inlay work on marble became very popular in the days of Shah Jahan and the finest examples of this type of work are available in the Red Fort in Delhi and the Taj Mahal at Agra. Besides, the structures within the Fatehpur Sikri complex, the forts at Agra and Lahore and the Shahi mosques in Delhi and Lahore are an important part of our heritage. During this period mosques, tombs of kings and *dargahs* came to dominate the landscape.

#### Coinage

Another aspect of art, which is of great importance to us, is connected with Numismatics (the study of coins) which is a major source of information for any period in history. The

coins of Muslim kings are valuable in history. Their designs, calligraphy and mint marks give us plenty of interesting information on this period. From the royal titles, the name and place of minting we can find out the extent of the monarch's kingdom as well as his status. Muhammad Tughlaq's coins were minted at Delhi, Daulatabad and several other provincial capitals and had at least twenty-five different varieties. Some of the legends found on the coins are quite interesting. The warrior in the cause of God' and 'he who obeys the Sultan obeys the Compassionate', are a few examples.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.2

Fill in the blanks:

1. The names of the Khalifa and the Sultan were read in the\_\_\_\_\_.
2. A local Afghan ruler challenged the Mughal ruler Humayun and kept him away from the throne of Delhi for about fifteen years.
3. To fulfil his imperialist ambition Akbar entered into matrimonial alliances with the \_\_\_\_\_ rulers.
4. The Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi was known as \_\_\_\_\_ during British rule.
5. The *pietra dura* or coloured stone inlay work on marble became very popular in the days of\_\_\_\_\_.

## 4.5 BHAKTI MOVEMENT

The Sufis were not the only popular religious teacher of the time. There were also the Bhakti saints. Their teachings were similar to those of the Sufis but they had been teaching for a longer time. They were popular among the artisans, craftsmen and traders in the towns. The people in the villages also flocked to listen to them.

The Sufi and Bhakti saints had many thoughts and practices in common. Their essential belief was in the need to unite with God. They laid stress on love or devotion as the basis of the relationship with God. To achieve all this a Guru or a Pir was needed.

The Bhakti saints attacked the rigidity in religion and the objects of worship. They disregarded caste and encouraged women to join in their religious gatherings. The Bhakti saints did their entire teaching in the local vernacular language to make it comprehensible even to simple minds.

The Bhakti saints belonged to various backgrounds but mainly from the lower castes.



**Notes**

Many were artisans by origin or belonged to the less prosperous class of cultivators. They stressed the need for tolerance among humans and religions.

The Bhakti movement was long known in the South. The idea of preaching Bhakti through hymns and stories was traditionally done by the Alvars and the Nayannars of the Tamil devotional cult. You will read about them later in this book

**Guru Nanak**

Guru Nanak was born of a Khatri family in the village of Talwandi which is now called Nankana. Though Guru Nanak was trained in accountancy, he preferred the company of saints and sufis. Some time later, he had a mystic vision. He left home for the company of saints and pirs. He composed hymns and sang them to the accompaniment of the 'rabab', which is a musical instrument. His hymns are popular even today. He emphasised love and devotion for the one and only God. He strongly denounced idol worship, pilgrimages, sacrifices and rituals as a way to achieving God. He demanded purity of character and conduct as the first condition of approaching God. He believed that anyone could achieve a spiritual life while doing his duties as a householder.

**Ramanuja**

Ramanuja was from the South and he taught in the language of the common people. His disciple was Ramananda who took his Guru's message to the northern parts of India.

**Ramananda**

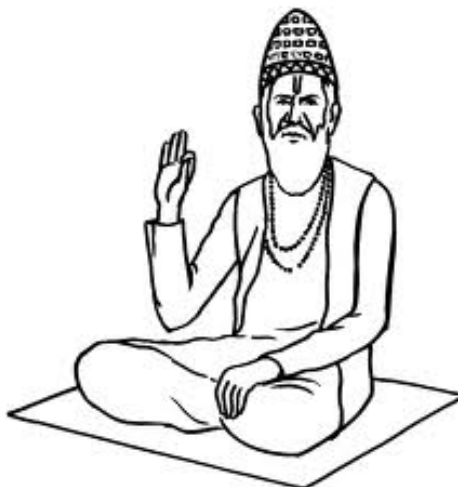
Ramananda was born at Allahabad and educated at Varanasi. He preached at both these places. He wanted to rid the Hindu religion of its evil customs and practices. He wanted people to know that all men were equal in the eyes of God and there was nobody high born or low born. His followers belonged to different walks of life. For example, Kabir was a weaver, Sadhana was a butcher, Ravidasa was a cobbler and Sena was a barber.





**Notes****Kabir**

Kabir was Ramananda's favourite disciple. Like Nanak, he criticised the existing social order and called for Hindu-Muslim unity. Kabir, the son of a Muslim weaver, strongly denounced idol worship, taking part in formal worship such as Namaz, pilgrimages or bathing in rivers. He wanted to preach a religion which was acceptable to all and that would unite all religions. He emphasised the unity of God. He called Him by several names such as Rama, Gobinda, Hari and Allah. You must have read his 'Dohas' or 'couplets' in Hindi.

**Chaitanya Mahaprabhu**

Chaitanya was a saint from Bengal. He was a devotee of Lord Krishna. Though he was a Brahman he condemned the caste system and emphasised on the equality of all. He wanted the people to know that true worship lay in love and devotion. He used to go into a trance singing devotional songs in praise of Lord Krishna.

**Mirabai**

Mirabai was another Bhakti Saint who worshipped, composed and sang songs in praise of Lord Krishna. Like Chaitanya, she too would go into a trance in her love for the God.

**Namadeva**

Namadeva was a tailor. He wrote in Marathi. His poetry spoke of intense love and devotion to God.

**Popularity of the Bhakti Movement**

How did the Bhakti movement become so popular with the people? An important reason was that they challenged the caste system and the superiority of the Brahmanas. They welcomed the ideas of equality and brotherhood which the Sufi saints also preached. People were no longer satisfied with the old religion. They wanted a religion which could satisfy both their rationality as well as emotions.





## Notes

All the Bhakti saints emphasised oneness of God. They said that the path to God lay in devotion and Bhakti to Him and not in any rituals. They condemned rituals and sacrifices.

In northern India, it developed into two streams, *nirguna bhakti* and *saguna bhakti*. The *nirguna bhaktas* were devotees of a formless God even while calling him variously as Rama, Govinda, Hari or Raghunatha. The most conspicuous among them were Kabir and Nanak. The *saguna bhaktas* were devotees of Rama, the son of Dasharatha, or Krishna, the son of Devaki and Vasudeva. Some of the best examples of *Saguna bhaktas* were Tulsidas, who idolised Rama in his famous *Ramcharita Manas*, and Surdas, who sang praises of Krishna in his famous *Sursagar*. Raskhan, a Muslim poet, who was a devotee of Lord Krishna, also belonged to this tradition.

The first important feature of bhakti movement was the concept of oneness of God and brotherhood of all human beings. It did not discriminate against anyone on the basis of caste or gender. Its second important feature was surrender into God, who is all pervasive and capable of solving the problems of the devotees. The third important feature of bhakti was an intense personal devotion to God with an emphasis on a good moral life. It was felt that chanting the name of God constantly purified the soul and prepared one for His grace. A true devotee does not want heaven or *moksha*. He only wants to chant the Lord's name and be born again and again to sing His praise.

In addition, came the *guru* or spiritual teacher, whose function was to provide people with hope, strength and inner courage. He was supposed to be a person who had marched ahead on the path of bhakti and had probably realised God and hence was capable of leading others into Him. This brought in a system of *pahul*. *Pahul* was the sanctified water offered by a master to the pupil or *shishya* as a token of his being accepted as a trainee on his march to godliness. The Sikhs performed "washing of the swords" ceremony, called *khande ka pahul*, evolving as the *pir-muridi* custom (the saint-soldier concept). Have you been able to notice here some features of the Bhakti tradition, which were similar to the practices and ideas of the Sufis?

The spirit of Bhakti pervaded the whole of India and found vivid and beautiful expression in the religious poetry of the medieval saints and mystics, no matter what religious faith they believed in. Their literary compositions, rendered into *geet*, *qawali*, etc united the people, as nothing else could have done. It also stimulated the development of regional languages.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.3

Answer the following questions

1. What were the two main streams of bhakti movement?

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2. Name an important *nirguna* and *saguna* bhakti poet.
- 

#### 4.6 DEVELOPMENT OF FOLK ARTS

The rural masses got opportunities to display their creative skills in many fields. Several occasions associated with agricultural operations, for example the tilling of soil, sowing of saplings, picking of cotton, pulling out the weeds and many other social functions provided opportunities for singing and dancing. Does this sound familiar to you? Yes, the festivals and rituals you perform today have continued from the past with necessary changes in keeping with time.

The advent of rains became occasions for dancing and merry-making. The gods were invoked and special *pujas* offered in the temples. It was also an occasion for enjoying the swings. Similarly, ladies on their spinning wheels accompanied by other ladies would sit together and sing till late into the night. This was a common sight in almost all the villages in India.

It is important to note that almost every region developed its own peculiar dance form with a local flavour. Thus *Garba*, *Kalbella*, *Bhangra*, *Giddha*, Bamboo dance, *Lavani* and innumerable other dance forms, came into existence. Today, some of these are performed during the Republic Day celebrations as well as on other festive occasions.

Formal education was not considered very important for women but this did not prevent them from showing their talent in various other fields. They displayed their creativity in needlework. In Rajasthan, girls came up with beautiful designs on *odhanis*, shirts and *ghagras*. The Rajasthanis also created beautiful designs of tie and dye work in fabrics used both by women and men. Even today, we find the people of Rajasthan as the most colourfully dressed in India. Their lavishness could be seen in the way they decorated their animals (horses, bullocks, camels and even elephants). In Punjab, the girls created beautiful *phulkaris*. In and around Lucknow, came up the *chikan* work on shirts, *salwars*, *odhanis* and even sarees. It appears that the dramatists about whom Bharata mentions in his *Natyashastra* (fifth century AD) had not completely disappeared. The *tamasha* and the *lavani* forms of dance drama were developed in Maharashtra; the *Pandavanis* in central India and Merasis in northern India applied such art forms with slight modifications. So also the puppeteer, the bard and the mime moved from place to place, entertaining people in various ways. The acrobat and the juggler also could be seen moving from place to place. In some areas the martial arts were developed, while wrestling has been popular all over India since time immemorial.



Notes



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.4

1. Name any two important folk dances.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Name any one important type of needlework that developed in India.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 4.7 PAINTING

Another area which was influenced by Islamic culture was painting. Humayun had spent more than twelve years in Persia as a refugee. He brought painters with him to India when he became the ruler of Delhi once again in 1555. Famous among them were Mir Sayid Ali and Abdus Samad who nurtured the tradition of painting manuscript. An example of it is *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza*, which has nearly 1200 paintings. The period also witnessed the flowering of portrait and miniature paintings. However, what is amazing is that some of these painters tried to paint the classical *ragas*, thereby giving form and colour to such abstract conceptions as music. Seasons or *baramasa paintings* were similarly given artistic forms. Can you ever estimate the creativity of these artists? Nowhere else in the world except perhaps in China, artists have tried to paint music or seasons.

Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan continued to give patronage to these artists and as a result, the Mughal school of painting continued to flourish. Akbar as a liberal ruler extended his patronage to painting. He also employed a large number of Hindu painters like Daswant and Basawan Lal. Consequently, there was a fusion of Persian and Indian styles (of painting) during his period. The European influence on Indian painting too was noticed.

The Mughal school of painting reached its zenith under Jahangir who was a famous painter. His court was adorned with famous painters like Ustad and Abul Hasan. Mansur was famous for his miniature painting. However Aurangzeb due to his orthodox views and political preoccupations, stopped patronising music and painting. Like their masters, some princes also extended patronage to painters. Thus, besides the Mughal school, the Rajput and the Pahari schools of painting also received encouragement. Even the upper classes in society started patronising painters. As a result, the *havelis* (big mansions) of the rich and temples were profusely embellished. These *havelis* in Rajasthan attract a large number of tourists even today. You can visit these havelis if you find an opportunity to visit Rajasthan.

The Mughal school of painting from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century gave rise to the Indo-Persian school of miniature art. The Mughal court painters introduced landscapes



together with human figures and costumes. When they came in touch with the traditional Indian styles, they became more natural. Signing on the miniatures as a tradition also started. Artists were now employed on monthly salaries. They illustrated such important works as the *Changeznama*, *Zafarnama* and the *Ramayana*.

## 4.8 MUSIC

The Mughal emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, patronised several musicians. Tansen, who adorned the court of Akbar, not only sang the classical *ragas* but also composed new ones. It is said that Shah Jahan himself was quite a good singer. These musicians entertained the emperors at different times of the day and in different seasons with appropriate *ragas*.

During the Turko-Afghan rule in India, a synthesis of Indo Iranian music had started. During the Mughal rule, it developed further. It is interesting to note that Aurangzeb was against music, but the largest number of books on classical Indian music in Persian were written during his time. In the North, a distinct school known as the Hindustani school of music came into being and its speciality lay in producing sweet and rapturous melodies to suit different moods of life. The *ragas* and the *raginis* were personified accordingly. Khayal, Thumri and Ghazal were also elaborated during this period. Tansen, was in a sense the pioneer of this school. Similarly, in the south, the Carnatic school of music developed. However, ordinary people retained the flair for folk music and folk songs to commemorate their local chiefs like Alha-Udal, Dulla-Bhatti, Jaimal-Phatta etc.

## Indo-Mughal Culture

The Mughal rulers discarded the Afghan titles of Sultan and styled themselves as *Badshah* (emperor) and *Din-e-Panah* (protector of faith). Further, to evoke reverence among the subject for the emperor, they started the practice of *jharokha darshan* or making public appearances through specially built windows. They also encouraged the court practice of *sijda* (low prostration before the kings) and concentrated religious and political power more firmly in their hands.

## 4.9 RISE OF MODERN INDIAN LANGUAGES

Another important development during this period was the emergence of several modern Indian languages. Urdu perhaps originated around Delhi. It developed as a camp language in the army of Allauddin Khilji when they were stationed in the Deccan around fourteenth century AD. In fact, the states of Bijapur and the Golconda in the Deccan became the cradles of Urdu literature. The language soon developed its own grammar and became a distinct language.



As time passed, it came to be used by the elite as well. The famous poet Amir Khusrau, who composed poetry in this language, also played some part in making it popular. Besides poetry, beautiful prose, short stories, novels and drama were written in Urdu during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the first half of the nineteenth century Urdu journalism played a very important role during the struggle for independence.

Along with Urdu, nearly all other modern Indian languages like Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Khari Boli, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Sindhi, Kashmiri as well as the four South Indian languages - Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam – came to acquire their present form and developed during this period.

#### 4.10 NEW FAITHS

During this period, two new religious faiths flourished in India. They were Sikhism and Zoroastrianism. To bring the established reforms within religion various reform movements also started in India,

##### Sikhism

The Sikhs, who mostly belong to Punjab, form a sizable group of our population. The orthodox Sikhs believe that their religion was revealed by God to Guru Nanak, whose spirit entered the second and the subsequent *gurus* till the tenth Guru. Guru Gobind Singh, ordained the Sikhs to treat the *Adi Granth*, popularly known as the *Guru Granth Sahib*, as their Guru. But the students of history and religion think that the seeds for the birth and growth of this religion were present in the Bhakti movement, in its *nirguna* branch. The Sikhs basically believe in a formless God, equality of all mankind, need of a *guru* and the *pahul* tradition.

Sometimes, the gurudom was conferred on the son and sometimes on the best disciple. The fifth guru, Guru Arjun Dev, gave the Sikhs three things. The first was in the shape of the *Adi Granth*, which contains the sayings of five gurus and other allied saints. The second was the standardised script for Gurmukhi in which the *Adi Granth* was first written. And finally, the site and the foundation of the Har Mandir sahib or the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht at Amritsar, the highest seat from where the dictats for the entire Sikh community are issued.

The tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa, which means “the pure”, in 1699. He also ordained the Sikhs to take five vows, namely, keeping of *kesh* (long hair and a beard), *kangha* (comb), *kada* (a metallic bangle), *kirpan* (a sword) and *kaccha* (an underwear extending to a little above the knees). Consequently, these symbols became the distinguishing marks of a Sikh. He further added that after his death the *Adi Granth* will be the guru of the Sikhs and they have to pay obeisance to this holy book.

Music has always been an important feature of Sikhism and they believed that through music one can attain ecstasy or *samadhi*.

**Zoroastrianism**

The Parsi or Zoroastrian religion was founded by Zarathushtra or Zoroaster, in the eighth century BC. He preached monotheism in the region now known as Persia.

He taught the worship of fire and the presence of good and bad in the form of Ahura Mazda and Ahura Man. He also taught the ethical doctrine of kindness and charity. These doctrines are enshrined in the Zend Avesta.

The Zoroastrian religion spread over the whole of Persia and remained the dominant religion till the eighth century AD when Muslims conquered this region. Most of the Parsis migrated to different parts of the world. They also came to India and settled at Navsari in Gujarat, and later on spread to almost all parts of India. They have contributed a lot to Indian culture. It was Dadabhai Naoroji, the famous nationalist leader and a Parsi, who exposed the hollowness of the British claim of civilizing India and not exploiting it. Another outstanding figure, who belonged to this community, was Jamshedji Tata, a pioneering Indian industrialist. He established an iron and steel industry in India in the face of the toughest competition posed by the British steel mills and yet continued to prosper. The Parsees also established a large number of public charities. Zoroastrianism is not a proselytising religion and no new entrants are accepted into its fold under any circumstances.

Thus, we can see that the cultural stream in India continued to assimilate all the newcomers and the resulting cultural interaction gave Indian culture its characteristic multidimensional, multilingual, multireligious and yet composite nature.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.5**

Fill in the blanks

1. \_\_\_\_\_ founded the Khalsa and fixed the vow of five Ks.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ worship the fire, believe in good and bad and encourage kindness and charity.

**4.11 SOUTH INDIA**

Between the ninth and eleventh centuries AD, a dynasty known as the Cholas was ruling the Cholanad region in Southern India. The Cholas developed a strong army, besides a powerful navy. Rajendra Chola is said to have conquered some Indonesian islands. They also developed democratic institutions at the village level. Even Buddhism and Jainism flourished in this region. Literature, fine arts, sculpture and metal castings of the highest order flourished under their patronage. The fourteenth century saw the rise of a new state



### Notes

called Vijayanagara now called Karnataka. To the north of this state across the Tungabhadra river rose a new Islamic state, called the Bahamani, now known as Andhra Pradesh. The Bahamani and Vijayanagara kingdoms were pitted against each other over the rich Raichur Doab.

In the Chola region, the Tamil language was popular. In Karnataka, Kannada, in Andhra, Telugu and in Kerala, Malayalam flourished, all having different scripts. It is just possible that originally the entire region spoke Tamil, as it is a very old language. But by the middle ages, the four languages had come to have distinct identities. However, between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, Vijayanagara achieved great heights. Some foreigners, who visited these areas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, have praised the kings, the town and the people. The remains of Vijayanagara found in Hampi dazzle the world even today.

During the Chola period, Kanchi became a great seat of learning. The Vijayanagara kings also became great patrons of art and learning.



### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- The early Turkish rulers (1206-1526) were called Sultans, as they were supposed to rule on behalf of the Caliphs.
- The Mughals replaced the Sultans of Delhi. They patronised music, painting and architecture and they ruled India till 1707. They also built a large number of buildings. The Mughal empire weakened and disintegrated after 1707. In this chaos, emerged the British East India Company, as a political power.
- The Sufis with their attitude of piety, tolerance, sympathy, and concept of equality had deep impact on the Indian people.
- The Bhakti movement of fourteenth and sixteenth centuries developed into two streams; *nirguna* and *saguna*.
- The people developed their own regional and local folk traditions of dance and music.
- The medieval period saw the emergence of Urdu. This period saw the rise of the present-day Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam in the south and Assamese, Bengali, Hindi or Khari-boli, Punjabi and Gujarati languages in the north.
- Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak. Guru Arjun Dev finalised the present script of Gurmukhi, the *Adi-Granth* and the site of Har-Mandir in Amritsar.
- Zoroastrianism was founded by Zoroaster in eighth century BC in Persia.
- The Cholas conquered parts of Bengal and Indonesia. They introduced democratic institutions at the village level.



- Kanchi became a great seat of learning.
- Vijayanagara's remains have been found at Hampi in Karnataka. In the Andhra region, flourished the Bahmani state.
- The Indian society at this time was divided into four major groups - the aristocrats, the priests, the town people and the peasants.
- Trade flourished in Delhi as the centre of all incoming as well as outgoing trade.
- Islam had a great influence on the Indian society. There were two important religious movements during this period – The Sufi and the Bhakti movements.
- The most important Sufi saints were Chishti, Firdausi, and Nizam-ud-din Auliya.
- Some well known Bhakti saints were Guru Nanak, Ramanuja, Ramananda, Kabir, Chaitanya, Mirabai and Namadeva.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. Describe the political situation of India in medieval times.
2. Discuss the influence of Islam on Hinduism.
3. Examine the role played by the Bhakti movement in enriching Indian culture.
4. Write a note on the rise of modern Indian languages.
5. Discuss the rise of the new faiths namely Sikhism and Zoroastrianism.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****4.1**

1. Beginning of Hijira era
2. Roza is fasting in the month of Ramzan
3. The Sufis
4. Abul Fazl

**4.2**

1. *Khutba*
2. Shershah
3. Rajput







4. Vice-Regal Lodge
5. Shah Jahan

### 4.3

1. *Nirguna* and *Saguna* bhakti are the two main streams of this movement.
2. Nanak and Kabir (any one) *Nirguna* poets, Tulsidas and Surdas (any one) *Saguna* Poets.

### 4.4

1. Garba, Kalbelia, Bhangra (any two)
2. Phulkari in Punjab, Chikan work in Lucknow (any one)

### 4.5

1. Guru Gobind Singh
2. Zoroastrians



## 5

**MODERN INDIA**

**T**he history of our country can safely be divided into ancient, medieval and modern periods. The ancient period started long ago, as long as humans have lived on earth. In an earlier lesson you read about what happened in Medieval India i.e. from about the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and lasted till the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Now, we shall read about the Modern period in History. During the last two periods you must have found the society, economy, polity and culture very different from each other. These differences which you may also call progress, developed, continued and increased at a very fast pace and had very much more deeper impact on our lives.

You may recall that all those who came to India from outside such as the Turks, the Afghans, and the Mughals made India their home. But the British colonial rulers always remained foreigners to this land. Nonetheless they brought profound social, economic and political changes to suit their interests and in the process left deep imprints on many aspects of Indian culture. If you see the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi you can have a clear picture of the British impact on Indian architecture. You see the pattern repeated in many buildings in Kolkata, Mumbai and in several other parts of the country. All these have now become a part of our cultural heritage. Apart from these architectural remains, the colonial state also left behind a uniform system of government, a system of education based on Western ideas, science and philosophies. It would be very interesting for you to know that the social and religious reform movements begun in the nineteenth century helped to build a modern India as well. Modern literature in Indian languages were all deeply influenced by the spread of English education and through it India's intimate contact with the ideas and institutions of the West.



Notes

**OBJECTIVES**

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- trace the events that were taking place in the West during the eighteenth century and their impact on India;
- describe the closing years of eighteenth century India;
- examine the social conditions of the Hindus and Muslims during this period;
- list the contributions of social and religious reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swamy Dayananda Saraswati and others;
- appreciate the role of press and newspapers in generating nationalism among the people; and
- appreciate India's struggle for independence.

**5.1 RISE OF THE WEST AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIA**

From 1450 onwards, three important developments had changed the shape of Europe: (i) the invention of printing press, (ii) the beginning and the spread of the Renaissance and the Reformation movements and (iii) the discovery of new trade routes. Thereafter, Europe made great progress in the fields of science, exploration and gunnery. Soon, their armies and navies became the best in the world. Scientific education began to spread. Logic and reason thus became the touchstone on which the old dogmas and learning were tested.

Among these European countries, the Portuguese and then the Dutch, the French and finally, the British entered into a race to control the trade from India. The British ultimately succeeded in not only controlling trade but also the country and for about two centuries India remained under her domination where her entire human resources were recklessly exploited and her wealth was drained away for the benefit of the ruling nation. To further their interest the British used the prevailing social and political situation in India. Where a large number of states had cropped up after the decline of the Mughal Empire. The British took advantage of this situation and had one ruler fight against the other or supported a usurper to the throne. Though Tipu Sultan of Mysore tried to use the same principle as used by the British, that is making use of the rivalry between the French and the British, he could not match the superior diplomacy and fire power of the British.

The British domination of India was built upon successive phases. The first phase consisted of taking hold of the Indian trade. They bought Indian goods at very low prices and sold them in the Western markets at very high prices, thereby making enormous profits without giving anything to the peasants. In this, they were helped by the Indian Seths and gomastas.



In the second phase, the British took control of the production activities in a manner that would suit their export objectives. In the process they successfully destroyed the Indian industries. This was because India was a potential buyer of their goods. The third phase was an intensified phase of British Imperialism and colonial exploitation when India was ruled by the British for fulfilling British economic interests.

The Britishers came to India for making profits through trade. Slowly they gained political and economic control of the country. After the Battle of Plassey in 1757 A.D., they had become the real masters of Bengal. They used political control over Bengal to increase their trade and export of foreign goods. They eliminated the Indian as well as foreign rivals in trade so that there could be no competition. They monopolised the sale of raw cotton and made the Bengal weaver pay exorbitant prices. They imposed heavy duties on Indian goods entering Britain so as to protect their own industry.

With the coming of the industrial revolution in Europe, the Indian industries were hit very hard. By 1813, the Indian handicrafts lost both the domestic as well as the foreign market. Indian goods could not compete with the British factory made products, where machines were used.

On the other hand, the English merchants had accumulated a lot of wealth which they now invested in setting up industries and trade. The East India Company helped in financing and expanding their industrial base. During this time there was a class of manufacturers in England who benefitted more from manufacturing than trading. They were interested in having more raw materials from India as well as sending their finished goods back. Between 1793 and 1813, these British manufacturers launched a campaign against the company, its trade monopoly and the privileges it enjoyed. Ultimately in 1813, they succeeded in abolishing the East India Company's monopoly of Indian trade. With this India became an economic colony of industrial England.

As a result, Indian hand made goods faced extinction as British machine made goods were cheaper. These goods either had a free entry or paid very low tariff rates to enter India. Indians were to be modernised so that they could develop taste for western goods and buy them. The Indian industries suffered as a result of exploitation at the hands of the British, who did not at all care about Indian trade interests. They did not protect Indian trade nor did they introduce any advanced technology in the country during this period. Indian handicrafts suffered when foreign goods were given free entry. On the other hand, Indian handicrafts were taxed heavily when they entered Britain. Indian sugar mills paid duty three times its original price when sent to Britain. So the trade from India virtually came to a stop.

India had become an excellent consumer of British goods and a rich supplier of raw materials by the year 1813 A.D.



Since England wanted to exploit India for commercial gains, that is, by buying raw materials and selling finished goods, they introduced steam ships and railways in India. The railways opened a vast market to the British and facilitated export of Indian raw material abroad.

Do you know that it was in 1853 that the first railway line running from Bombay to Thane was opened to public? The railways connected the raw material producing areas with the exporting ports. As a result British goods flooded the Indian market.

Do you know that the railways played an important role in the national awakening of the country, too? They helped to bring people and ideas come closer together—something that the British had never anticipated. Isn't this ironical?

Do you know that it was again in 1853 that Dalhousie opened the first telegraph line from Calcutta to Agra and also introduced the postal service in India?



### **INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.1**

1. Who succeeded in gaining political control over India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who among the Indian rulers tried to use the rivalry between the French and the British but could not succeed?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many phases of the British domination in India can be seen?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **5.2 INDIA IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND CULTURE**

Indian in the eighteenth century was a picture of many contrasts and contradictions.

Economically agriculture was the main occupation of the people. Since the rulers were constantly at war, they did not have the time to improve agricultural conditions of the land.

Foreign trade was flourishing under the Mughals. India imported pearls, raw silk, wool, dates, dried fruits from the Persian Gulf region; Coffee, gold, drugs and honey from Arabia; tea, porcelain and silk came into India from China; luxury goods were also brought in from Tibet, Singapore, Indonesian Islands, Africa and Europe.

Indian exported raw silk, silk fabrics, indigo, sugar, pepper and many other things. India's cotton textiles were famous all over the world.



In spite of such a favourable balance of trade, India's economic condition could not improve because of constant warfare. Within the country, there were revolts of the Sikhs, Jats, Marathas and from outside, foreign invasions, like that of Nadir shah (1739 A.D.) and Ahmad Shah Abdali (1761), were common.

By the eighteenth century European countries like France, England, Portugal and Spain were interested in trading with India. They helped in creating more political and economic instability in the country and ultimately they destroyed its economy. But, by this time, India's fame had spread all over the world as a land of beautiful handicrafts.

Socially, there was no unity of pattern in the social and cultural life of the people. Whether they were Hindus or Muslims, there was division among them on the basis of region, tribe, language and caste. Caste rules were to be observed in matters of marriage, diet, inter-dining as well as in choosing a profession. Any one found disobeying rules was most likely to be thrown out of the community.

In the field of science that India, which was so advanced, had by now neglected her mathematics and sciences. They remained ignorant of the advances made in the field of science by the West.

Teachers were respected in society during those times. Education was steeped in tradition. The students were taught reading and writing along with arithmetic. Girls seldom went to school. Education was not patronised by the State, but by local rulers, members of the aristocracy and benevolent contributors.

### **Hindu-Muslim Relations**

Friendly relations existed between the people of the two religions. Religious tolerance was practised. The wars were political and fought for selfish reasons rather than for religion. Members of both the communities participated in each others festivals. Many Hindus had faith in Muslim saints while many Muslims showed an equal respect for Hindu gods and saints. In fact, the upper class Hindus and Muslims had many more things in common with each other than with the lower classes of their own community. Besides, the Muslims had adopted the Indian style and culture so well that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other.

## **5.3 SOCIAL CONDITIONS**

By the turn of the century, the condition of women had little to be happy about. The birth of a girl child was considered to be unfortunate. Girls were married off in their childhood. Polygamy was permitted. Women had no right to property or divorce.

Perpetual widowhood was the injunction of the society, especially amongst the upper castes. These widows could not wear coloured clothes, or attend marriages since their





## Notes

presence was considered inauspicious. As child marriages were common in such occasions sometimes even the infant girls became widows and were condemned to perpetual widowhood.

Inter-caste marriages were not allowed. Even the prevailing social system did not permit a person from a lower caste to eat with a person of a higher caste. The condition of muslim women was much the same. They faced immense hardship due to the practice of purdah, polygamy, lack of education and rights to property.

### 5.4 SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORMERS

Christian priests came to India along with the employees of the East India Company to perform their religious rituals at the time of baptism, marriage, burials and church service. But these priests soon started preaching Christianity to the non-Christian employees of the Company as well. Slowly they started opening schools that were attended by the Indian children. It were these missionaries, who also started the printing press and magazines for disseminating Christian precepts and literature.

Along with Christian propaganda, English education was introduced which had a great impact on the society and economy of India. Though the purpose of introducing English education was to fulfil British political and administrative needs, it opened the windows for Indians to the West. They imbibed new ideas of liberalism, rationalism, democracy, equality and freedom. Soon English language also became the lingua franca of the English educated Indians and acted as a cementing force.

#### Ram Mohan Roy

Ram Mohan Roy is known as the harbinger of the modern age in India. He mastered several languages including Greek and Latin. His role in reforming the Hindu society and the reawakening of India is important. As a large number of social practices prevalent amongst the Hindus at that time claimed to have religious sanctions. Raja Ram Mohan Roy cited extensively from the religious texts to show that this was not true. The foremost in the list was *sati*. Sati was immolation by a widow on the funeral pyre of her dead husband which had become a self practice in different parts of Bengal and Rajasthan. Ram Mohan Roy took up cudgels against it and ultimately got it banned. He founded the Brahmo Samaj, which carried his message of rationalism and the principle of social equality. His followers believed in the worship of one supreme god (monotheism) and opposed idol worship, polytheism and ritualism.

Debendra Nath Tagore (1817-1905) succeeded Raja Ram Mohan Roy as the leader of the Brahmo Samaj. He tried to put new life into the Samaj and propagated Raja Ram Mohan Roy's ideas.



**Notes**

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) took over the leadership from Tagore. All this time the Samaj laid emphasis on individual freedom, national unity, solidarity, democratization of all social institutions and of social relations. The Brahmo Samaj became the first organized vehicle for the expression of national awakening in India.

### **Prarthana Samaj and Ranade**

The Prarthana Samaj was established in Bombay by Dr. Atma Ram Pandurang in 1867. They tried to introduce social reforms like inter-caste dining, inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage and improvement of the lot of women and depressed classes. According to Ranade, rigidity in religion would not permit success in social, economic and political spheres. He believed in the unity of God and de-emphasised idol worship as well as caste system.



### **Ramakrishna Paramhansa**

Ramakrishan Mission was founded by Swami Vivekananda to regenerate Indian society. He was a disciple of Gadadhar Chattopadhyaya, later known as Ramakrishna Paramhansa.

Vivekananda gave final shape to the teachings of Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He advocated liberty, free thinking and equality. He emphasised oneness of all religions. He promoted the vedanta philosophy, which he considered to be the most rational system of thought.



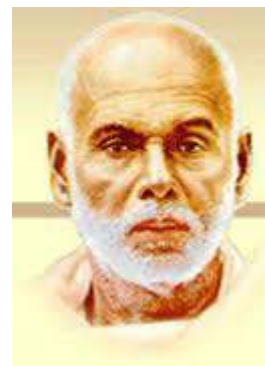
### **Theosophical Society and Annie Besant**

The reform movement was also strengthened by the Theosophical Society founded by Madame H.P. Blavatsky (1837-91) and Colonel H.S. Olcott along with others.

Annie Besant promoted studies of ancient Indian religions, philosophies and doctrine. She also established the Central Hindu School to encourage education.

### **Narayana Guru**

Narayana Guru was a great saint of South India. He was born in Kerala in September 1854. He underwent preliminary education under the guidance of a local teacher. He became well versed in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil. He had set his heart on the path of renunciation right from his adolescent days.





After his parents died he set out on his journey in quest of true knowledge. He came in contact with Chattampi Swamikal. They became great associates. They spent their time serving holy men, meditating in solitude and making pilgrimages.

Both Swamikal and Narayana realised that the all round progress of Kerala depended on the goodwill and co-operation among the Nayar and the Ezhava communities, in which they were born respectively. The conflict between these two communities threatened to ruin Kerala. They decided to work to bring the two communities together.

Naranaya Guru was a social as well as religious reformer. He lived a life of an ascetic and did much to improve the spiritual as well as the social life of the people of Kerala.

## Muslim Reform Movement

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the most prominent social reformer among the Muslims. He realised that Muslims could only make progress if they took to modern education. Syed Ahmad Khan was against religious intolerance, ignorance and irrationalism. He denounced purdah, polygamy and easy divorce. Syed Ahmad Khan started the Aligarh movement. He established the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. It was meant to be a centre for spreading Sciences and Culture. It later grew into Aligarh Muslim University.

The Aligarh Movement helped in the Muslim revival. It gave them a common language—Urdu. A Muslim press was also developed for the compilation of works in Urdu. Unfortunately, in his later years Syed Ahmad Khan encouraged the Indian Muslims not to join the National Movement. He felt that education and not politics was needed by them. In a way he encouraged the forces of communalism and separatism at this stage.

## Social Reform

Do you know that nearly all religious reformers contributed to the social reform movement too? This was because the backward features of Indian Society, such as casteism and inequality of sexes, had religious sanctions in the past. There were two main objectives of the social reform movements. These were: (a) emancipation of women and giving them equality with men, (b) removal of caste rigidities, especially the abolition of untouchability and the upliftment of the depressed classes.

## Emancipation of Women

The most striking change in the Indian social life of today is that in the position of women. Attempts have been made by the State and reformers to do away with the practice of early marriage by legislation.





Notes

The women themselves have been zealous in making attempts to improve their lot in all possible ways, like better facilities regarding education and social abuses. There is now a growth of political consciousness among women. In 1930 the Sharda Act was passed fixing the minimum age for marriage for boys at 18 and girls at 14. Do you know that Maharishi Karve was awarded the Bharat Ratna for his great work in the field of women's education? He started schools for girls, as well as working houses for widows and destitutes. Soon this movement gained momentum and many schools and colleges were opened for women.

### Struggle against Caste System

Immense work has been done in this field by the Ramakrishn Mission and the Arya Samaj. The Arya Samaj especially has contributed a lot towards it by their Shuddhi Movement, that is, a form of purification by which those Hindus who had converted to Islam or Christianity could come back to their own religion.



Champions of the backward classes were B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. Ambedkar opened many schools and colleges for their benefit. Mahatma Gandhi, on the other hand, championed the cause of untouchables whom he called Harijans. He asked for temples to be thrown open to them as well as for equal treatment to them.



Even the Constitution of Free India has given the legal and constitutional support to this movement. Untouchability was declared a punishable offence. But we still have a long way to go to achieve our cherished goal of a society based on complete equality and equity, a society where all the members—men or women coming from any social or economic background—are happy and their needs fulfilled. And we will all have to work together to bring about such a situation.

### Swami Dayanand

Swami Dayanand's greatest asset was his mastery over the Sanskrit language and the *Vedas*. He felt that the myriad social and religious evils which had crept into the Hindu society over the centuries were due to the lack of true knowledge of the Vedas. Therefore, he challenged the Hindu society on the issues of idolatry and women education.







In 1875, he founded the Arya Samaj. Its main aim was to propagate the true knowledge of the *Vedas* and discard all evils that had crept into the Hindu society later in its name. He opposed untouchability. He was similarly opposed to polytheism, *avataravada* and ritualism. His slogan was 'go back to the Vedas' whose authority he accepted.

For the first time in the history of India, the *Vedas* were printed in India under his patronage. Personally, his most important work was *Satyartha Prakasha* (The Light of Truth).

In 1883, Swami Dayanand left his body after an eventful life. His followers started a Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) School and College in Lahore (now in Pakistan) in 1886. This DAV movement has carried forward his work since then and now has over 750 institutions under one umbrella.

As a result of the works of these two pioneers and other equally well-known personalities and organizations like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Radhakanta Deb, the Theosophical Society and the Arya Samaj, a large number of people in eastern and north-eastern India were substantially awakened and many of the social evils were banned with the help of the Britishers.

### Jyotirao Govindrao Phule (1827-90)

Known popularly as 'Jyotiba', Jyotirao Govindrao Phule was born in Pune (1827) in a lower caste family of malis. According to him the only way to improve the lot of the lower castes and women was through education. So he opened a school especially for the lower castes and also started the Satya Shodhak Samaj in 1873. His main aim was to seek social justice for the people belonging to the so-called untouchable and backward classes. Recognition for this work came to him in later years and he was elected to the Poona Municipality as a member.



### Pandita Rama Bai (1858-1922)

One of the most important names among women social reformers of this time in India and more so, in Maharashtra, is that of Pandita Rama Bai. After her parents died, she along with her brother continued to travel from place to place, giving discourses on the *Puranas*. Consequently, her reputation as a scholar and religious speaker spread far and wide that the pundits of Kolkata also invited her to address the people of the city. Everyone was astounded by her knowledge and elocution. So people began calling her *pandita*, a title bestowed on the learned women.

In 1882, Rama Bai moved back to Pune. Naturally, she was drawn to the Prarthana Samaj, a reformation society which was propagating the message of the Brahmo Samaj in



Maharashtra. Here, she also concentrated on improving the condition of women. In 1890, she started Sharda Sadan, a home for widows.

Mahadev Govind Ranade, R.G. Bhadarkar, Dadabhai Naoroji, Behramji Malbari were other well known personalities, who worked for social reforms in Western India.

## 5.5 PRESS AND THE GROWTH OF MODERN INDIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

In 1798, lithography was invented. It used the specially prepared surface of a stone for printing a script, a picture, or drawing. A large number of copies of the same text could be printed in this way. From about 1820 onwards, hundreds of pamphlets and books were printed, which catered to the needs of the growing literate population of India. It was the biggest boon which the West had conferred on India. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century, the press had become a powerful tool for influencing public opinion.

Since the new printing presses were not costly, their number grew at a fast pace. This, in turn, encouraged a large number of writers to produce literature in different Indian languages. Their original works as well as translations and adaptations of old Indian and Western classics helped enrich our cultural heritage. This helped to bring about an awakening of the Indians.

Weeklies, fortnightly journals and daily newspapers were published almost in every language. Although the total number of readers of newspapers was small as compared to their number in the European countries, a whole new set of national literature in the form of novels, essays and poems played a significant role in generating nationalism. Bankim Chandra's *Anandamatha*, Dinabandhu Mitra's *Neeldarpan*, Bhartendu Harish Chandra's *Bharat Durdasha*, Lakshminath Bezbarua's works in Assamese, Subramaniam Bharti's writing in Tamil and Altaf Hussain's works in Urdu stirred the minds of the Indians.

### Role of Newspapers

Thus by the end of the nineteenth century the press in India had become a powerful and an important instrument for creating, spreading, influencing and sharpening public opinion.

Consequently, the newspapers played a significant role in the dissemination of anti-British feelings by discussing, criticizing and commenting on government policies and on major social and economic issues. This helped in promoting a pan-Indian consciousness and in giving important political education to the people of India.

Some important Newspapers

Bengal                      *The Hindoo Patriot* (English)

*The Amrita Bazar Patrika* (English)





Bombay	<i>Maharatha</i> (English), <i>Kesari</i> (Marathi)
Madras	<i>The Hindu</i> (English), <i>Swadeshmitran</i> (Tamil)
Punjab	<i>The Tribune</i> (English)
	<i>Kohinoor</i> , <i>Akhbar Am</i> (Urdu)

## 5.6 INDIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Independent India can rightly be proud of her achievements too. One of the most important achievements of post-independent India is the laying of a sound foundation for a secular and democratic republic. The parliamentary system of governance adopted since independence has stood the test of time and India is the largest parliamentary democracy in the world today. Integration of the erstwhile princely states into the Indian union is another major achievement. The reorganization of the states is still an ongoing process and new states and union territories are being formed as per needs and desire of the people. Economic planning has been introduced after independence to ensure the country's economic growth with social justice. As a result, India has made considerable progress in the sphere of economic development, particularly in the field of agriculture and agro-based industries. India has also made commendable progress in the fields of science and technology. In the high technology areas also she is fast catching up with the highly developed countries. India's voice is now heard with respect in international meetings because of her political and economic stability and diplomatic stature in the region. The issue of India becoming a permanent member of the UN security council is similarly gaining wide acceptance today.

### 5.6.1 Nationalist Movement—The Beginning

British imperialistic colonialism was the chief cause of India's backwardness in every sphere. Indians were now coming to realise this truth. The peasants and the workers were the worst victims of British greed and apathy. The industrialists and the capitalists were also not satisfied with the British rule. The intelligentsia at this time played a significant role. They were the first ones to realise the true nature of British rule in India. Their initial hope that the British would be benevolent rulers was shattered. Now they could see that the British were greedy and selfish, guided by sheer personal self-interest and that of Britain in general. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century all Indians were united in that, they had all realised they had a common enemy—the Britishers, who were out to destroy India for their own benefit. The Britishers did help in bringing about administrative and economic unification of the country. They introduced the communication systems of railway, telegraph and post as well as developed roads and motor transport, which contributed to this unification. Western thought and education, that came to India with the British, helped in arousing the consciousness of the Indian people. Modern ideas of democracy, humanism, nationalism and sovereignty of



the people started guiding Indians towards nationalism. The press and literature played an equally important role in spreading nationalistic feelings. There were many patriotic writers who inspired the people with their writings. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century also came a revival of the ancient glory of India. It was spearheaded by some enlightened Europeans, who studied India's past and brought out its depth and glory. Some eminent educated Indians also contributed in this revival by spreading the awareness of it in the country. The racial arrogance and discrimination on the part of the British rulers in India, the agitation of the Britishers against the Ilbert Bill, Lord Lytton's anti-India measures and the holding of the lavish British King's Durbar in India when many Indians were dying due to famine—all led to the intensification of anti-British feelings among Indians. All these became the reasons for the spread of nationalistic feelings in the country during the 19th century. These feelings took the form of a nationalistic movement with the advent of the Indian National Congress, started by A.O. Hume in 1885. The history of the Indian National Congress became the history of the nationalist movement in India. The Congress did not achieve much politically during this period, that is, in the first 20 years of its inception. But it did succeed in creating political awareness and a feeling of unity. This phase can be called an era of moderates in the national movement.

The formation of the Muslim League is considered to be the first fruit of the British master strategy of 'Divide and Rule'. The British were happy that they had succeeded in separating the 62 million Muslims from the Hindus. Thus arose the evil monster of communalism in our country.

### **The Home Rule Movement**

The First World War broke out in 1914. The Congress decided to support the British. It was believed, especially by the Moderates, that the British would be obliged to grant freedom to India after the war. But it was soon realised that this hope would not be fulfilled as the war was being fought to retain colonies. Consequently, two Home Rule Leagues were set up during 1915-16. One was started by Tilak at Poona and the other by Annie Besant at Madras. These Leagues aimed at the achievement of Swaraj or self-government. They gave the Indian nationalists a definite goal to achieve. The movement avoided violent or revolutionary methods. The Home Rule Leagues worked as auxiliary units of the Congress.

#### **5.6.2 1905-1918 Period**

The period between 1905 and 1918 in our national movement is called the Era of Extremists. The Extremists criticised the Moderates on these grounds—failure to define India's political goals, using mild and ineffective methods and failure to make the movement a mass movement. The Extremists believed in direct political action and in demanding Swaraj or self-rule instead of constitutional reforms. The radical faction of extremists was led by the trio popularly known as - Lal, Bal, Pal i.e. Lala Laj Pat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and



Bipin Chandra Pal, Bankim Chandra, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda Saraswari and Aurobindo Ghosh inspired the extremist philosophy by their ideas and preachings. Curzon's repressive policies in India, which culminated in the partition of Bengal on communal lines in order to 'Divide and Rule', became the immediate cause of agitation. There was an agitation against the partition of Bengal. The means adopted were 'Boycott' of foreign goods and adoption of 'Swadeshi' or indigenously produced goods. The 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' soon spread and became countrywide movements. All sections of the society including students and women became active in the agitation. It became a mass movement. The British government used all kinds of violent repressive measures to suppress it.

### 5.6.3 1919-1934 Period

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms introduced Dyarchy in the provinces with the Government of India Act, 1919. The Moderates welcomed these reforms, while the Extremists rejected them. The Rowlatt Act was also passed in 1919 to suppress political violence. At this juncture appeared a new face in the political arena of India's freedom movement. This was Gandhi, who filled the vacuum created in the top leadership of the Congress. Gandhi had led the movement against discrimination meted out to Indians in South Africa. He had used the political weapon called Satyagraha (Truth force, or Love force, or Soul force). His first triumph in India was the Champaran Satyagraha. This was the beginning of the third phase of the freedom struggle which can be called the Gandhian Era. A movement against the Rowlatt Act was launched. But Gandhi took it back because violence erupted. He was strictly against violence. The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre took place in Amritsar on April 13, 1919. More than 1000 people were massacred on the orders of General Dyer. The Khilafat Movement started in November, 1919. The aim was to pressurise the government to set right the wrongs done to the Muslims on the issue of Turkey. The Khilafat Movement merged with the non co-operation movement under Gandhi's leadership. He issued a manifesto on 10th March, 1920 spelling out his philosophy of non-violent, non co-operation. He laid down an elaborate programme of boycott of anything British including jobs, courts, schools, colleges, functions and goods. A constructive programme included promotion of Swadeshi, removal of untouchability and promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity. C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru planned to break the system from within the councils under the banner of 'Swaraj Party'. But it failed within three years. Revolutionary activities were revived in 1922 and went on till 1934 sporadically. Prominent revolutionaries included the names of Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Rajguru, Sukhdev, Bismil, Ashfaqullah and many others. There were revolutionary communists like M.N. Roy, Dange, and Muzaffar. Some communists were given long term sentences in the Meerut conspiracy case. The Simon Commission was constituted in 1919 and sent to India for reviewing the political situation. It had to face non-violence but bitter protest demonstrations everywhere it went, as no Indian was included in the Commission. Lala Lajpat Rai died of injuries he received in a lathi charge while leading a peaceful demonstration at Lahore. An outline of a constitution for India was drawn as Nehru Report in 1928. In



the Lahore Session of the Congress in 1929, the slogan of Purna Swaraj as the goal was adopted; 26th January, 1930 was celebrated as independence day. Gandhi undertook Salt Satyagraha, popularly known as Dandi March, on 6th April, 1930. The Civil Disobedience Movement went on till 1934. In between there was the Round Table conference. But the Movement had to be suspended. Gandhi retired from the Congress in October 1934. Gandhi took up the cause of the 'Depressed Classes' and the 'Untouchables', whom he called 'Harijans'. The Harijans Sewak Sangh was established.

#### 5.6.4 Achievement of Independence

In 1935, Government of India Act was passed. It evolved a concept of All India Federation. Provincial Autonomy was introduced. Only 14 per cent of the population could vote. Separate electorates were provided for Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans, among others. The Act discouraged the emergence of national unity, encouraging separation and communalism. The Congress condemned the Act, but it decided to take part in the elections. Elections were held in 1937. Congress Ministers were formed in seven out of the eleven provinces. This brought relief to the people in various ways. Socialist ideas grew both within the Congress as well as outside it. Prominent Congress leaders like Nehru and Bose were also influenced by socialist ideas. The British policy of divide and rule led to communalism. The British rulers started playing one community against another. They tried to stem the rising nationalism by appeasing the Muslims and inducing them to ask for privileges as 'minority rights'. Communal electorates were aimed at the same target of dividing Indians and weakening the national unity. As a result of communalism, the two-nation theory was evolved in 1938 and clearly spelt out by Jinnah in 1940. Non-Muslim communalism never assumed such serious dimensions as the Muslim communalism. It was rather a reaction to the latter. A session of the Hindu Mahasabha was held at Benaras in 1933. The Arya Samaj established by Swami Dayanand and the Shuddhi Movement under the auspices of the Samaj were important movements for strengthening and purifying the Hindu community. Dr. Hedgewar founded the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS). This was aimed at awakening and organising the Hindu people as well as imbuing in them an intense spirit of nationalism. The 'Shakha' technique was evolved for this purpose. When the Second World War started in 1939, the Congress demanded complete independence. The Cripps Mission, in 1942 offered 'Dominion Status' to India at the end of the war. The Congress rejected the offer. The Quit India Movement for complete independence was launched by Gandhi and the Congress in August, 1942. Movement under the leadership of Jai Prakash Narain were also active during this period. The movement—both violent as well as non-violent—failed, but the British realised that they will have to quit soon. Subhash Chandra Bose and Rash Behari Bose launched the Indian Independence League and the Indian National Army (INA), also called Azad Hind Fauj, at Singapore in 1943. With the help of the Japanese, the INA reached the Indian borders and captured Kohima. But there was a reversal and Japan was defeated by the British Army. The INA Movement also collapsed while Subhash Chandra Bose was



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reported killed in an air crash in August, 1945. After the end of the war, elections were held in India in the beginning of 1946. The Congress won most of the seats. The Cabinet Mission came to India in March, 1946 to speed up the transfer of power to Indians. It published its recommendations on May 16. The Cabinet Mission Plan was an elaborate one for the ultimate transfer of power. There was disagreement on the Plan between the Congress and the Muslim League. In the course of events, the Viceroy invited the Congress under Nehru to form an Interim Government. The Muslim League was furious and it resulted in communal riots and a lot of bloodshed. The Interim Government could not do anything as the League did not co-operate and stuck to their demand for a separate Muslim country—Pakistan. British Prime Minister Attlee announced in February, the Plan for the transfer of Power by June 1948. Lord Mountbatten was sent as Viceroy to India in March to make arrangements for the same. The Congress had to accept the partition of India due to many pressures, especially because of the widespread communal bloodshed and the uncompromising attitude of the League and Jinnah. India became free on 15th August, 1947 after partition. At the stroke of midnight (14th-15th August) transfer of power took place.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.2

1. What is the method of printing done with the help of a specially prepared surface of a stone to print a script called?
2. Who is the author of *Anandamatha*?
3. Who gave the slogan “back to the Vedas”?
4. When did Jyotiba Phule start the Satya Shodhak Samaj?



## WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- The events like invention of the printing press, the Renaissance and Reformation in Europe led to the spread of learning, which encouraged people to question dogmas.
- India's contact with the West had positive effects, as this led to a number of religious and social reforms that challenged social evils such as the *sati* system, child marriage, denial of widow remarriage, illiteracy, female infanticide and the caste system.
- The followers of Swami Dayanand, a great Vedic scholar, founded the Arya Samaj in 1875 and fought against untouchability, polytheism, and idolatry and pleaded for equal status for women.
- The invention of lithography in 1798 was a milestone as it helped the Indians to set up printing presses in many cities and start newspapers and journals. It also led to a tremendous growth of the modern Indian languages.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Describe the impact of Renaissance and Reformation Movement in Europe on India?
2. Examine the role of Arya Samaj in the reform movement.
3. What was the contribution of Dayanand Saraswati in the field of education?
4. What is lithography? How has it been helpful in the growth of Indian languages?
5. Examine the role of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the awakening of Indians.
6. Write an essay on India's struggle for freedom.

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****5.1**

1. England
2. Tipu Sultan of Mysore
3. Three phases

**5.2**

1. Lithography
2. Bankin Chandra
3. Swami Dayanand
4. 1873

**Notes**





## 8

## RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY IN ANCIENT INDIA

As soon as November and December come in we find new calendars flooding the market. Some calendars are very colourful. They are marked with different colours. Some even have small pictures on the dates. They are holidays and we look forward to them. You also look forward to them. Yes, they are religious festivals or national festivals and India has plenty of religions that are flourishing. Processions on the road, good food, clothes, gifts, people worshipping in their religious places, wishing each other is a common sight. Yes, India is a beautiful, lovely and a lively country to be in. This is because religion has always been a significant factor in influencing the lives of people in India from the earliest times. It would, indeed, be very interesting to study religion in its diverse forms through the various stages of its growth. The relationship between religion and philosophy has been an intimate one and hence their growth and development need to be studied in an interrelated manner. In this lesson you will study about the development of religions and philosophy in ancient India.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the meaning of religion;
- identify the characteristics of various religions movements in ancient India;
- explain the ideas of the six schools of Vedic philosophy;
- examine the role played by the Charvaka School;



## Notes

- explain the Jaina theory of reality;
- examine the contributions of Buddhist philosophy.

## 8.1 RELIGION

Religion is the science of soul. Morality and ethics have their foundation on religion. Religion played an important part in the lives of the Indians from the earliest times. It assumed numerous forms in relation to different groups of people associated with them. Religious ideas, thoughts and practices differed among these groups, and transformations and developments took place in the various religious forms in course of time. Religion in India was never static in character but was driven by an inherent dynamic strength.

Every system of philosophy in India is a quest for Truth, which is one and the same, always and everywhere. The modes of approach differ, logic varies, but the purpose remains the same – trying to reach that Truth.

“I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world tolerance and universal acceptance .. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.”

– Swami Vivekananda at Parliament of world Religions in Chicago 1893

Indian spirituality is deeply rooted in ancient philosophical and religious traditions of the land. Philosophy arose in India as an enquiry into the mystery of life and existence. Indian sages called Rishis or ‘seers’, developed special techniques of transcending the sense and the ordinary mind, collectively called yoga. With the help of these techniques, they delved deep into the depths of consciousness and discovered important truths about the true nature of human being and the universe.

The sages found that the true nature of the human being is not the body or the mind, which are ever changing and perishable but the spirit which is unchanging, immortal and pure consciousness. They called it the Atman.

The Atman is the true source of human’s knowledge, happiness and power. The rishis further found that all individual selves are parts of infinite consciousness which they called Brahman. Brahman is the ultimate reality, the ultimate cause of the universe. Ignorance of human’s true nature is the main cause of human suffering and bondage. By gaining correct knowledge of Atman and Brahman, it is possible to become free from suffering and bondage and attain a state of immortality, everlasting peace and fulfillment known as Moksha.

Religion in ancient India meant a way of life which enables a human to realize his true nature and attain Moksha.



Thus philosophy provided a correct view of reality, while religion showed the correct way of life; philosophy provided the vision, while religion brought about the fulfillment; philosophy was the theory, and religion was the practice. Thus in ancient India, philosophy and religion complemented each other.

‘May we hear that which enlightens our minds, may we see Divinity everywhere, may we feel the presence of the Almighty within us and all the actions of our bodies and minds be in the service of that Almighty Being; may we have peace unending’.

– (Rig-Veda 1-89)

## 8.2 PRE-VEDIC AND VEDIC RELIGION

From the archaeological findings in the pre and proto-historic sites it seems that these people believed in the sanctity of the creative force and venerated the male and female aspects of divinity. It appears that they were worshippers of the forces of nature like the sun and the moon. This belief is also partly substantiated by the early literature of the Aryans. The nature of the religious beliefs and practices of the Aryans is also known from the Rig Veda, They believed in many gods like Indra, Varuna, Agni, Surya and Rudra. Sacrifices, and ritual offering of food and drink to fire in honour of the Gods, constituted the main religious practices. The Sama Veda and the Yajur Veda elaborated the different aspects of the sacrificial acts and this ritualism was further elaborated in the Brahmanas. The Atharva Veda contained a great deal of animistic beliefs. The seers entertained doubts about the utility and efficacy of the Vedic ritualism. Polytheism was challenged by monotheistic ideas and the various deities were introduced as different ways of naming one eternal entity.

The Aranyaka and Upanishad sections of the Vedic literature envisage a progressive outlook. The Upanishads, represent the early stage in the origin and development of the religions-metaphysical concepts which were used later by the religious leaders and reformers of ancient and medieval India. Some of them followed the traditional lines while others proceeded along the paths of unorthodoxy.

- India down the ages attempted to grapple with the fundamental problems of life and thought. Philosophy in India began with a quest after the highest truth- truth not as mere objective certitude, but as being closely linked with the development of personality and leading to the attainment of the highest freedom, bliss and wisdom. It demanded, therefore, not only a philosophical discipline of reasoning, but also a discipline of conduct and the control of emotions and passions.
- Thus the synthesis between deep philosophical analysis and lofty spiritual discipline is an abiding feature of Indian philosophy and its outlook is entirely different from that of western philosophy.
- It is hoped that it will serve not only to make plain the spiritual aspirations of an ancient nation, but also to show the relevance of those aspirations to the modern



## Notes

world and thus forge a powerful link in the chain of human fellowship and universal concord.

- Philosophy in India is not a product of speculation but of experience, direct and personal. A true philosopher is he whose life and behaviour bear testimony to the truths he preaches.

### 8.3 UNORTHODOX RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

The religious movements associated with persons like Mahavira and the Buddha in about the middle of the first Millennium BC fall under this category. There were many other creeds during this time as well. The creeds preached by some of them contained elements that were not in keeping with the Vedic tradition. They ignored the infallibility and supernatural origin of the Vedas. Unlike the Vedic seers who were Brahmin sages, many of these new teachers were Kshatriya. Both Buddhism and Jainism were atheistic creeds in the beginning. However, Buddhism endorsed the doctrine of the Law of Karma and upheld the belief in rebirths of the embodied skandhas and the inevitability of suffering in the very existence of beings. Many of these view points are also found in the major Upanishads.

### 8.4 THEISTIC RELIGIONS

Creeds of theistic character evolved almost simultaneously with the non-theistic religions. The important deities of these religions were not primarily Vedic ones but those that came from unorthodox sources. Influence of pre-vedic and post-vedic folk elements were most conspicuous in their origin. The primary factor that motivated these creeds was Bhakti, the single-souled devotion of the worshipper to a personal god with some moral link. This led to the evolution of different religious sects like Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Saktism, which came to be regarded as components of orthodox Brahminism. These sects in course of time came to have a significant impact on the popular forms of Buddhism and Jainism.

### 8.5 FOLK CULTS

The worship of Yakshas and Nagas and other folk deities constituted the most important part of primitive religious beliefs, in which Bhakti had a very important role to play. There is ample evidence about the prevalence of this form of worship among the people in early literature as well as in archaeology.

**Vasudeva/Krishna Worship:** A Sutra in Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* refers to the worshippers of Vasudeva (Krishna). The Chhandogya Upanishad also speaks of Krishna, the son of Devaki, a pupil of the sage Ghora Angirasa who was a sun-worshipping priest. A large number of people worshipped Vasudeva Krishna exclusively as their personal God and they were at first known as Bhagavatas. The Vasudeva-Bhagavata cult



grew steadily, absorbing within its fold other Vedic and Brahminic divinities like Vishnu (primarily an aspect of the sun) and Narayana (a cosmic God). From the late Gupta period the name mostly used to designate this Bhakti cult was Vaishnava, indicating the predominance of the Vedic Vishnu element in it with emphasis on the doctrine of incarnations (*avatars*).

## 8.6 VAISHNAVA MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTH

The history of the Vaishnava movement from the end of the Gupta period till the first decade of the thirteenth century AD is concerned mainly with South India. Vaishnava poet-saints known as *alvars* (a Tamil word denoting those drowned in Vishnu-bhakti) preached single-minded devotion (*ekatmika bhakti*) for Vishnu and their songs were collectively known as *prabandhas*.

## 8.7 SHIVAISM

Unlike Vaishnavism, Shaivism had its origin in antiquity. Panini refers to a group of Shiva-worshippers as Shiva-bhagavatas, who were characterised by the iron lances and clubs they carried and their skin garments.

**Shaiva Movement in the South:** The Shaiva movement in the South flourished at the beginning through the activities of many of the 63 saints known in Tamil as Nayanars (Siva-bhakti). Their appealing emotional songs in Tamil were called *Tevaram Stotras*, also known as *Dravida Veda* and ceremonially sung in the local Shiva temples. The Nayanars hailed from all castes. This was supplemented on the doctrinal side by a large number of Shaiva intellectuals whose names were associated with several forms of Shaiva movements like Agamanta, Shudha and Vira-shaivism.

The philosophy must give a theory which will be simplest in its nature and, at the same time, will explain all the principles which are left as insoluble by science. At the same time will harmonize with the ultimate conclusions of science as well as establish a religion which is universal and is not limited by sects or doctrines or dogmas.

When we are concerned with philosophy as a science, it means a set of thoughts put into a system, such that one of them does not contradict another in the set and the entire set as a whole is coherent.

‘Science means knowledge partially unified, while philosophy means knowledge completely unified . . . . Beyond the knowable is the unknowable, but in that realm of the unknowable laid the solution of all the principles regarding the nature of the soul, of the heavens, of God and everything.’

– Herbert Spencer



Notes

## 8.8 MINOR RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

Worship of the female principle (Shakti) and of Surya did not achieve equal importance as the other two major brahminical cults. The female aspect of the divinity might have been venerated in the pre-Vedic times. In the Vedic age respect was shown also to the female principle as the Divine Mother, the Goddess of abundance and personified energy (Shakti). However, clear reference to the exclusive worshippers of the Devi is not to be found until a comparatively late period. As mentioned earlier, Surya has been venerated in India from the earliest times. In Vedic and epic mythology, Sun and his various aspects played a very important part. The East Iranian (Shakadvipi) form of the solar cult was introduced in parts of northern India in the early centuries of the Christian era. But it was only at a comparatively late period that god figured as the central object in religious movements.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.1

1. Which sections of the Vedic literature envisage a progressive outlook?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Which doctrine was endorsed by Buddhism?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Name the sects which made Buddhism and Jainism popular?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How did Vedic age respect female principle?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What are the different forms of Shaiva movements?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 8.9 VEDIC PHILOSOPHY

Religion of the Rig Vedic people was very simple in the sense that it consisted mainly of worship of numerous deities representing the various phenomena of nature through prayers. It was during the later Vedic period that definite ideas and philosophies about the true nature of soul or Atman and the cosmic principle or Brahman who represented the ultimate reality were developed. These Vedic philosophical concepts later on gave rise to six different schools of philosophies called *shada darshana*. They fall in the category of the orthodox system as the final authority of the Vedas is recognised by all of them. Let us now find out more about these six schools of Indian philosophy.



**Notes**

### **Samkhya System**

The Samkhya philosophy holds that reality is constituted of two principles one female and the other male i.e. Prakriti, Purusha respectively. Prakriti and Purusha are completely independent and absolute. According to this system, Purusha is mere consciousness, hence it cannot be modified or changed. Prakriti on the other hand is constituted of three attributes, thought, movement and the change or transformation of these attributes brings about the change in all objects. The Samkhya philosophy tries to establish some relationship between Purusha and Prakriti for explaining the creation of the universe. The propounder of this philosophy was Kapila, who wrote the *Samkhya sutra*.

Infact Samkhya school explained the phenomena of the doctrine of evolution and answered all the questions aroused by the thinkers of those days.

### **Yoga**

Yoga literally means the union of the two principal entities. The origin of yoga is found in the *Yogasutra* of Patanjali believed to have been written in the second century BC. By purifying and controlling changes in the mental mechanism, yoga systematically brings about the release of purusha from prakriti. Yogic techniques control the body, mind and sense organs. Thus this philosophy is also considered a means of achieving freedom or *mukti*. This freedom could be attained by practising self-control (*yama*), observation of rules (*niyama*), fixed postures (*asana*), breath control (*pranayama*), choosing an object (*pratyahara*) and fixing the mind (*dharna*), concentrating on the chosen object (*dhyana*) and complete dissolution of self, merging the mind and the object (*Samadhi*). Yoga admits the existence of God as a teacher and guide.

### **Nyaya**

Nyaya is considered as a technique of logical thinking. According to Nyaya, valid knowledge is defined as the real knowledge, that is, one knows about the object as it exists. For example, it is when one knows a snake as a snake or a cup as a cup. Nyaya system of philosophy considers God who creates, sustains and destroys the universe. Gautama is said to be the author of the Nyaya Sutras.

### **Vaisheshika**

Vaisheshika system is considered as the realistic and objective philosophy of universe. The reality according to this philosophy has many bases or categories which are substance, attribute, action, genus, distinct quality and inherence. Vaisheshika thinkers believe that all objects of the universe are composed of five elements—earth, water, air, fire and ether. They believe that God is the guiding principle. The living beings were rewarded or punished according to the law of *karma*, based on actions of merit and demerit. Creation and destruction of universe was a cyclic process and took place in agreement with the wishes of God. Kanada wrote the basic text of Vaisheshika philosophy.



## Notes

A number of treatises were written on this text but the best among them is the one written by Prashastapada in the sixth century AD.

Vaisheshika School of philosophy explained the phenomena of the universe by the atomic theory, the combination of atoms and molecules into matter and explained the mechanical process of formation of Universe.

**Mimamsa**

Mimamsa philosophy is basically the analysis of interpretation, application and the use of the text of the *Samhita* and *Brahmana* portions of the Veda. According to Mimamsa philosophy Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge, and religion means the fulfilment of duties prescribed by the Vedas. This philosophy encompasses the Nyaya-Vaisheshika systems and emphasizes the concept of valid knowledge. Its main text is known as the Sutras of Gaimini which have been written during the third century BC. The names associated with this philosophy are Sabar Swami and Kumarila Bhatta.

The essence of the system according to Jaimini is Dharma which is the dispenser of fruits of one's actions, the law of righteousness itself. This system lays stress on the ritualistic part of Vedas.

**Vedanta**

Vedanta implies the philosophy of the Upanishad, the concluding portion of the Vedas. Shankaracharya wrote the commentaries on the Upanishads, *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Shankaracharya's discourse or his philosophical views came to be known as Advaita Vedanta. Advaita literally means non-dualism or belief in one reality. Shankaracharya expounded that ultimate reality is one, it being the Brahman.

According to Vedanta philosophy, 'Brahman is true, the world is false and self and Brahman are not different, Shankaracharya believes that the Brahman is existent, unchanging, the highest truth and the ultimate knowledge. He also believes that there is no distinction between Brahman and the self. The knowledge of Brahman is the essence of all things and the ultimate existence. Ramanuja was another well known Advaita scholar.

Among different schools of philosophy was found one philosophy which reached the climax of philosophic thought that the human mind can possibly reach, and that is known as the Vedantic philosophy.

Vedanta philosophy has ventured to deny the existence of the apparent ego, as known to us, and in this respect Vedanta has its unique position in the history of philosophies of the world.

Vedanta is a philosophy and a religion. As a philosophy it inculcates the highest truths that have been discovered by the greatest philosophers and the most advanced thinkers of all ages and all countries.



Vedanta philosophy teaches that all these different religions are like so many roads, which lead to same goal.

Vedanta (the end of the Vedas or knowledge) refers to the Upanishads which appeared at the end of each Veda with a direct perception of reality.

The core message of Vedanta is that every action must be governed by the intellect – the discriminating faculty. The mind makes mistakes but the intellect tells us if the action is in our interest or not. Vedanta enables the practitioner to access the realm of spirit through the intellect. Whether one moves into spirituality through Yoga, meditation or devotion, it must ultimately crystallize into inner understanding for attitudinal changes and enlightenment.

### 8.10 CHARVAKA SCHOOL

Brihaspati is supposed to be the founder of the Charvaka School of philosophy. It finds mention in the Vedas and Brihadaranyka Upanishad. Thus it is supposed to be the earliest in the growth of the philosophical knowledge. It holds that knowledge is the product of the combination of four elements which leaves no trace after death. Charvaka philosophy deals with the materialistic philosophy. It is also known as the *Lokayata* Philosophy - the philosophy of the masses.

According to Charvaka there is no other world. Hence, death is the end of humans and pleasure the ultimate object in life. Charvaka recognises no existence other than this material world. Since God, soul, and heaven, cannot be perceived, they are not recognised by Charvakas. Out of the five elements earth, water, fire, air and ether, the Charvakas do not recognise ether as it is not known through perception. The whole universe according to them is thus consisted of four elements.

### 8.11 JAIN PHILOSOPHY

Like the Charvakas, the Jains too do not believe in the Vedas, but they admit the existence of a soul. They also agree with the orthodox tradition that suffering (pain) can be stopped by controlling the mind and by seeking right knowledge and perception and by observing the right conduct. The Jaina philosophy was first propounded by the *tirthankar* Rishabha Deva. The names of Ajit Nath and Aristanemi are also mentioned with Rishabha Deva. There were twenty-four *tirthankaras* who actually established the Jaina *darshan*. The first *tirthankar* realised that the source of Jaina philosophy was Adinath. The twenty-fourth and the last *tirthankar* was named Vardhaman Mahavira who gave great impetus to Jainism. Mahavira was born in 599 BC. He left worldly life at the age of thirty and led a very hard life to gain true knowledge. After he attained Truth, he was called Mahavira. He strongly believed in the importance of celibacy or *brahmacharya*.



## Notes

**Jain Theory of Reality: Seven Kinds of Fundamental Elements**

The Jainas believe that the natural and supernatural things of the universe can be traced back to seven fundamental elements. They are *jiva*, *ajivaa*, *astikaya*, *bandha*, *samvara*, *nirjana*, and *moksa*. Substances like body which exist and envelope (like a cover) are *astikaya*. *Anastikayas* like 'time' have no body at all. The substance is the basis of attributes (qualities). The attributes that we find in a substance are known as *dharmas*. The Jainas believe that things or substance have attributes. These attributes also change with the change of *kala* (time). From their point of view, the attributes of a substance are essential, and eternal or unchangeable. Without essential attributes, a thing cannot exist. So they are always present in everything. For example, consciousness (*chetana*) is the essence of the soul; desire, happiness and sorrow are its changeable attributes.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.2**

1. How many schools of Shada Darshan exist?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Name the founder of Samkhya Philosophy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who is the originator of Yoga?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Who is said to be the author of the nyaya Sutras?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Which school of philosophy says Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the philosophy of the Upanishad?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Which school holds that knowledge is the product of the combination of four elements which leaves no trace after death?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How many 'tirthankaras' does Jaina Darshan have?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. When was Mahavira born?  
\_\_\_\_\_



10. Which 'tirthankara' was named Vardhman Mahavira?

11. Name the seven fundamental elements of Jainas?

### 8.12 PHILOSOPHY OF THE BUDDHA

Gautama Buddha, who founded the Buddhist philosophy, was born in 563 BC at Lumbini, a village near Kapilavastu in the foothills of Nepal. His childhood name was Siddhartha. His mother, Mayadevi, died when he was hardly a few days old. He was married to Yashodhara, a beautiful princess, at the age of sixteen. After a year of the marriage, he had a son, whom they named Rahul. But at the age of twenty-nine, Gautama Buddha renounced family life to find a solution to the world's continuous sorrow of death, sickness, poverty, etc. He went to the forests and meditated there for six years. Thereafter, he went to Bodh Gaya (in Bihar) and meditated under a pipal tree. It was at this place that he attained enlightenment and came to be known as the Buddha. He then travelled a lot to spread his message and helped people find the path of liberation or freedom. He died at the age of eighty.

Gautama's three main disciples known as Upali, Ananda and Mahakashyap remembered his teachings and passed them on to his followers. It is believed that soon after the Buddha's death a council was called at Rajagriha where Upali recited the *Vinaya Pitaka* (rules of the order) and Ananda recited the *Sutta Pitaka* (Buddha's sermons or doctrines and ethics). Sometime later the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* consisting of the Buddhist philosophy came into existence.

#### Main Characteristics

Buddha presented simple principles of life and practical ethics that people could follow easily. He considered the world as full of misery. Man's duty is to seek liberation from this painful world. He strongly criticised blind faith in the traditional scriptures like the Vedas. Buddha's teachings are very practical and suggest how to attain peace of mind and ultimate liberation from this material world.

**Realization of Four Noble Truths.** The knowledge realized by Buddha is reflected in the following four noble truths:

- a. **There is suffering in human life.** When Buddha saw human beings suffering from sickness, pain and death, he concluded that there was definitely suffering in human life. There is pain with birth. Separation from the pleasant is also painful. All the passions that remain unfulfilled are painful. Pain also comes when objects of sensuous pleasure are lost. Thus, life is all pain.



## Notes

- b. **There is cause of suffering.** The second Noble Truth is related to the cause of suffering. It is desire that motivates the cycle of birth and death. Therefore, desire is the fundamental cause of suffering.
- c. **There is cessation of suffering.** The third Noble Truth tells that when passion, desire and love of life are totally destroyed, pain stops. This Truth leads to the end of sorrow, which causes pain in human life. It involves destruction of ego (*aham or ahamkara*), attachment, jealousy, doubt and sorrow. That state of mind is the state of freedom from desire, pain and any kind of attachment. It is the state of complete peace, leading to *nirvana*.
- d. **Path of Liberation.** The fourth Noble Truth leads to a way that takes to liberation. Thus, initially starting with pessimism, the Buddhist philosophy leads to optimism. Although there is a constant suffering in human life, it can be ended finally. Buddha suggests that the way or the path leading to liberation is eight-fold, through which one can attain *nirvana*.

**Eight-fold Path to Liberation (*Nirvana*)**

- (i) **Right Vision.** One can attain right vision by removing ignorance. Ignorance creates a wrong idea of the relationship between the world and the self. It is on account of wrong understanding of man that he takes the non-permanent world as permanent. Thus, the right view of the world and its objects is the right vision.
- (ii) **Right Resolve.** It is the strong will-power to destroy thoughts and desires that harm others. It includes sacrifice, sympathy and kindness towards others.
- (iii) **Right Speech.** Man should control his speech by right resolve. It means to avoid false or unpleasant words by criticizing others.
- (iv) **Right Conduct.** It is to avoid activities which harm life. It means to be away from theft, excessive eating, the use of artificial means of beauty, jewellery, comfortable beds, gold etc.
- (v) **Right Means of Livelihood.** Right livelihood means to earn one's bread and butter by right means. It is never right to earn money by unfair means like fraud, bribery, theft, etc.
- (vi) **Right Effort.** It is also necessary to avoid bad feelings and bad impressions. It includes self-control, stopping or negation of sensuality and bad thoughts, and awakening of good thoughts.
- (vii) **Right Mindfulness.** It means to keep one's body, heart and mind in their real form. Bad thoughts occupy the mind when their form is forgotten. When actions take place according to the bad thoughts, one has to experience pain.





(viii) **Right Concentration.** If a person pursues the above seven Rights, he will be able to concentrate properly and rightly. One can attain *nirvana* by right concentration (meditation).

Except for Charvaka school, realisation of soul has been the common goal of all philosophical schools of India.

According to Victor Cousin, the great French Philosopher, 'India contains the whole history of philosophy in a nutshell'. Again he says: 'When we read with attention the poetical and philosophical monuments of the East, above all those of India, which are beginning to spread in Europe, we discover there many a truth and truths so profound, and which make such a contrast with the meanness of the results at which the European genius has sometimes stopped. That we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East, and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy.'

I am sure you would like to know more about Buddhism. We will go to Bodhgaya in Bihar. Tread reverently along this ancient path. Begin with the Mahabodhi tree where something strange happened - realization of truth or spiritual illumination. Tradition states that Buddha stayed in Bodhgaya for seven weeks after his enlightenment.

There you must also see the Animeshlocha Stupa which houses a standing figure of the Buddha with his eyes fixed towards this tree. Bodhgaya is also revered by the Hindus who go to the Vishnupada temple to perform 'Pind-daan' that ensures peace and solace to the departed soul.

You can also visit Rajgir and empathise with the Chinese traveller Fa-hein who visited this place 900 years after the death of Buddha. He wept over the fact that he was not fortunate enough to listen to the sermons of Buddha that were delivered here. Many stories which you might have read about Buddha have their origin here. Imagine Buddha on his first alms begging mission while staying in a cave here. It was here that the Mauryan king Bimbisara joined the Buddhists order. Remember reading the story how a mad elephant was let loose by Devadutta to kill Buddha. Well, this incident took place here. Finally it was from Rajgir that Buddha set out on his last journey. The first Buddhist Council was held in the Saptaparni cave in which the unwritten teachings of Buddha were penned down after his death. Even the concept of monastic institutions was laid at Rajgir which later developed into an academic and religious centre.

In your lesson on Architecture, you will read about Nalanda university. It was established in the 5th century BC. It is the world's earliest university. Since Buddha encouraged learning, monks and scholars gathered here for discourses. So much so that by 5th B.C., Nalanda acquired the position of a well established monastery under the Guptas.



Notes



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.3

1. What was the childhood name of Gautama Buddha?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Where did Gautama Buddha meditate?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Where did Gautama Buddha get enlightenment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What does the Sutta Pitaka contain?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Who recited the Vinaya Pitaka?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What are the four noble truth of Gautama Buddha?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Which philosophical school of India has difference of opinion about realization of soul?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Origin of religion can be traced to the pre-vedic society.
- Developments in religion in ancient India proceeded along the traditional lines as well as along the paths of unorthodoxy.
- The systems of Indian philosophy that originated from the Vedas are called Orthodox systems.
- Samkhya philosophy holds that reality is constituted of the self and non-self that is *purusha* and *prakriti*.
- Yoga is a very practical philosophy to realise the 'Self'.
- Nyaya presents a technique of logical thinking.
- Vaisheshika gives us the principles of reality which constitute the universe.



- Mimamsa philosophy is basically the analysis of the Vedic scriptures.
- Charvakism, Jainism and Buddhism are known as the unorthodox systems.
- Charvaka is the materialistic philosophy, it believes that there is no existence other than matter.
- According to Jain philosophy, liberation is the escape of jiva from matter (body).
- Buddha reflected his knowledge in four noble Truths (i) There is suffering in human life (ii) There is cause of suffering (iii) There is end to suffering and (iv) There is way to end suffering.
- Buddha suggested eight fold path for liberation. These are: (i) right vision (ii) right resolve (iii) right speech (iv) right conduct (v) right means of livelihood (vi) right effort (vii) right mindfulness and (viii) right concentration.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. Define the various characteristics of religious movements of ancient India?
2. What was the role played by Charvaka School in the religious movement of India?
3. How does the Charvaka School differ from the other philosophical schools?
4. Explain how Shada Darshana falls in the category of an orthodox system.
5. How does Buddhist philosophy contribute to become a better human being?
6. How can you say that Mimamsa philosophy is basically the analysis of Vedic scriptures?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****8.1**

1. The Aranyanka and Upanishad
2. Law of Karma
3. Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Saktism
4. Divine mother, the goddess of abundance and personified energy(shakti).
5. Agamanta, Shudha and Vira-shaivism

**8.2**

1. Six



### Notes

2. Kapila who wrote the Samkhya sutras.
3. Yogasutra of Patanjali
4. Gautama
5. Mimamsa school
6. Vedanta, the concluding portion of Vedas.
7. Charvaka School
8. 24
9. 599 B.C.
10. Twenty fourth or the last tirthankar.
11. Jiva, Ajivaa, Astikaya, Bandha, Samvara, Nirjana, Moksa.

### 8.3

1. Siddhartha
2. Under a Peepal tree at Bodh Gaya, Bihar
3. Bodh Gaya, Bihar
4. Buddha's sermons, or doctrines and ethics.
5. Upali
6. There is suffering in human life.  
There is cause of suffering.  
There is cessation of suffering.  
Path of Liberation.
7. Charvaka School



## 9

## RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

Nearly every month a programme is going on in any auditorium in the city where songs of the Sufi saints and Bhakti saints are sung. The popularity of these programmes can be seen from the attendance that is there. They are patronized by the government, by big business houses and even by individuals. The songs and the teachings of the Sufi and the Bhakti saints are relevant even today. Do you know the medieval period in India saw the rise and growth of the Sufi movement and the Bhakti movement. The two movements brought a new form of religious expression amongst Muslims and Hindus. The Sufis were mystics who called for liberalism in Islam. They emphasised on an egalitarian society based on universal love. The Bhakti saints transformed Hinduism by introducing devotion or bhakti as the means to attain God. For them caste had no meaning and all human beings were equal. The Sufi and Bhakti saints played an important role in bringing the Muslims and Hindus together. By using the local language of the people, they made religion accessible and meaningful to the common people.



### OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- understand the reasons for the rise of Sufism and Bhakti movements in Medieval India;
- trace the growth of the Sufi movement;
- identify the major silsilahs of the Sufis;
- explain the main tenets of Sufism;
- explain the philosophy of the Bhakti saints, Sant Kabir and Guru Nanak;



## Notes

- rise of Sikhism;
- explain the ideology of the Vaishnavite saints;
- recognise the contribution of Sufi and Bhakti saints towards the growth of a composite Indian culture.

## 9.1 THE SUFI MOVEMENT

## Background-Rise of Islam

You will recall that Islam was founded by Prophet Muhammad. Islam saw the rise of many religious and spiritual movements within it. These movements were centered mainly around the interpretation of the Quran. There were two major sects that arose within Islam - the Sunnis and Shias. Our country has both the sects, but in many other countries like Iran, Iraq, Pakistan etc. you will find followers of only one of them.

Among the Sunnis, there are four principal schools of Islamic Law, These are based upon the Quran and Hadis (traditions of the Prophet's saying and doings). Of these the Hanafi school of the eighth century was adopted by the eastern Turks, who later came to India.

The greatest challenge to orthodox Sunnism came from the rationalist philosophy or *Mutazilas*, who professed strict monotheism. According to them, God is just and has nothing to do with man's evil actions. Men are endowed with free will and are responsible for their own actions. The *Mutazilas* were opposed by the Ashari School. Founded by Abul Hasan Ashari (873-935 AD), the Ashari school evolved its own rationalist argument in defence of the orthodox doctrine (*kalam*). This school believes that God knows, sees and speaks. The Quran is eternal and uncreated. The greatest exponent of this school was Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111 AD), who is credited with having reconciled orthodoxy with mysticism. He was a great theologian who in 1095 began to lead a life of a Sufi. He is deeply respected by both orthodox elements and Sufis. Al-Ghazali attacked all non-orthodox Sunni schools. He said that positive knowledge cannot be gained by reason but by revelation. Sufis owed their allegiance to the Quran as much as the *Ulemas* did.

The influence of the ideas of Ghazali was greater because of the new educational system set up by the state. It provided for setting up of seminaries of higher learning (called *madrasas*) where scholars were familiarised with Ashari ideas. They were taught how to run the government in accordance with orthodox Sunni ideas. These scholars were known as *ulema*. *Ulema* played an important role in the politics of medieval India.

## The Sufis

Contrary to the *ulema* were the Sufis. The Sufis were mystics. They were pious men who were shocked at the degeneration in political and religious life. They opposed the vulgar





display of wealth in public life and the readiness of the *ulema* to serve “ungodly” rulers. Many began to lead a retired ascetic life, having nothing to do with the state. The Sufi philosophy also differed from the *ulema*. The Sufis laid emphasis upon free thought and liberal ideas. They were against formal worship, rigidity and fanaticism in religion. The Sufis turned to meditation in order to achieve religious satisfaction. Like the Bhakti saints, the Sufis too interpreted religion as ‘love of god’ and service of humanity. In course of time, the Sufis were divided into different *silsilahs* (orders) with each *silsilah* having its own *pir* (guide) called *Khwaja* or *Sheikh*. The *pir* and his disciples lived in a *khanqah* (hospice). A *pir* nominated a successor or *wali* from his disciples to carry on his work. The Sufis organised *samas* (a recital of holy songs) to arouse mystical ecstasy. Basra in Iraq became the centre of Sufi activities. It must be noted that the Sufi saints were not setting up a new religion, but were preparing a more liberal movement within the framework of Islam. They owed their allegiance to the Quran as much as the *ulema* did.

### Sufism in India

The advent of Sufism in India is said to be in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One of the early Sufis of eminence, who settled in India, was Al-Hujwari who died in 1089, popularly known as *Data Ganj Baksh* (Distributor of Unlimited Treasure). In the beginning, the main centres of the Sufis were Multan and Punjab. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Sufis had spread to Kashmir, Bihar, Bengal and the Deccan. It may be mentioned that Sufism had already taken on a definite form before coming to India. Its fundamental and moral principles, teachings and orders, system of fasting, prayers and practice of living in *khanqahs* had already been fixed. The Sufis came to India via Afghanistan on their own free will. Their emphasis upon a pure life, devotional love and service to humanity made them popular and earned them a place of honour in Indian society.

Abul Fazl while writing in the *Ain-i-Akbari* speaks of fourteen *silsilahs* of the Sufis. However, in this lesson we shall outline only some of the important ones. These *silsilahs* were divided into two types: *Ba-shara* and *Be-shara*. *Ba-shara* were those orders that followed the Islamic Law (Sharia) and its directives such as *namaz* and *roza*. Chief amongst these were the Chishti, Suhrawardi, Firdawsi, Qadiri and Naqshbandi *silsilahs*. The *be-shara silsilahs* were not bound by the *Sharia*. The Qalandars belonged to this group.

### The Chishti Silsilah

The Chishti order was founded in a village called Khwaja Chishti (near Herat). In India, the Chishti *silsilah* was founded by Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti (born c. 1142) who came to India around 1192. He made Ajmer the main centre for his teaching. He believed that serving mankind was the best form of devotion and therefore he worked amongst the downtrodden. He died in Ajmer in 1236. During Mughal times, Ajmer became a leading pilgrim centre because the emperors regularly visited the Sheikh’s tomb. The extent of his popularity can be seen by the fact that even today, millions of Muslims and Hindus visit his



## Notes

*dargah* for fulfilment of their wishes. Among his disciples were Sheikh Hamiduddin of Nagaur and Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. The former lived the life of a poor peasant, cultivated land and refused Iltutmish's offer of a grant of villages. The *khanqah* of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki was also visited by people from all walks of life. Sultan Iltutmish dedicated the Qutub Minar to this Saint. Sheikh Fariduddin of Ajodhan (Pattan in Pakistan) popularised the Chishti *silsilah* in modern Haryana and Punjab. He opened his door of love and generosity to all. Baba Farid, as he was called, was respected by both Hindus and Muslims. His verses, written in Punjabi, are quoted in the *Adi Granth*.

Baba Farid's most famous disciple Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (1238-1325) was responsible for making Delhi an important centre of the Chishti *silsilah*. He came to Delhi in 1259 and during his sixty years in Delhi, he saw the reign of seven sultans. He preferred to shun the company of rulers and nobles and kept aloof from the state. For him renunciation meant distribution of food and clothes to the poor. Amongst his followers was the noted writer Amir Khusrau.

Another famous Chishti saint was Sheikh Nasiruddin Mahmud, popularly known as Nasiruddin *Chirag-i-Dilli* (The Lamp of Delhi). Following his death in 1356 and the lack of a spiritual successor, the disciples of the Chishti *silsilah* moved out towards eastern and southern India.

### The Suhrawardi Silsilah

This *silsilah* was founded by Sheikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi. It was established in India by Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya (1182-1262). He set up a leading *khanqah* in Multan, which was visited by rulers, high government officials and rich merchants. Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya openly took Iltutmish's side in his struggle against Qabacha and received from him the title *Shaikhul Islam* (Leader of Islam). It must be noted that unlike the Chishti saints, the Suhrawardis maintained close contacts with the state. They accepted gifts, jagirs and even government posts in the ecclesiastical department.

The Suhrawardi *silsilah* was firmly established in Punjab and Sind. Besides these two *silsilahs* there were others such as the Firdawsi *Silsilah*, Shattari *Silsilah*, Qadiri *Silsilah*, Naqshbandi *Silsilah*.

## 9.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUFI MOVEMENT

The Sufi movement made a valuable contribution to Indian society. Like the Bhakti saints who were engaged in breaking down the barriers within Hinduism, the Sufis too infused a new liberal outlook within Islam. The interaction between early Bhakti and Sufi ideas laid the foundation for more liberal movements of the fifteenth century. You will read that Sant Kabir and Guru Nanak had preached a non-sectarian religion based on universal love. The Sufis believed in the concept of *Wahdat-ul-Wajud* (Unity of Being) which was promoted



by Ibn-i-Arabi (1165-1240). He opined that all beings are essentially one. Different religions were identical. This doctrine gained popularity in India. There was also much exchange of ideas between the Sufis and Indian yogis. In fact the *hatha-yoga* treatise *Amrita Kunda* was translated into Arabic and Persian.

A notable contribution of the Sufis was their service to the poorer and downtrodden sections of society. While the Sultan and *ulema* often remained aloof from the day to day problems of the people, the Sufi saints maintained close contact with the common people. Nizamuddin Auliya was famous for distributing gifts amongst the needy irrespective of religion or caste. It is said that he did not rest till he had heard every visitor at the *khanqah*. According to the Sufis, the highest form of devotion to God was the service of mankind. They treated Hindus and Muslims alike. Amir Khusrau said “Though the Hindu is not like me in religion, he believes in the same things that I do”.

The Sufi movement encouraged equality and brotherhood. In fact, The Islamic emphasis upon equality was respected far more by the Sufis than by the *ulema*. The doctrines of the Sufis were attacked by the orthodoxy. The Sufis also denounced the *ulema*. They believed that the *ulema* had succumbed to world by temptations and were moving away from the original democratic and egalitarian principles of the Quran. This battle between the orthodox and liberal elements continued throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Sufi saints tried to bring about social reforms too.

Like the Bhakti saints, the Sufi saints contributed greatly to the growth of a rich regional literature. Most of the Sufi saints were poets who chose to write in local languages. Baba Farid recommended the use of Punjabi for religious writings. Shaikh Hamiduddin, before him, wrote in Hindawi. His verses are the best examples of early Hindawi translation of Persian mystical poetry. Syed Gesu Daraz was the first writer of Deccani Hindi. He found Hindi more expressive than Persian to explain mysticism. A number of Sufi works were also written in Bengali.

The most notable writer of this period was Amir Khusrau (1252-1325) the follower of Nizamuddin Auliya. Khusrau took pride in being an Indian and looked at the history and culture of Hindustan as a part of his own tradition. He wrote verses in Hindi (Hindawi) and employed the Persian metre in Hindi. He created a new style called *sabaq-i-hindi*. By the fifteenth century Hindi had begun to assume a definite shape and Bhakti saints such as Kabir used it extensively.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.1**

1. Who were called Ulemas?



## Notes

2. What do you mean by Kalam?

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3. Who was called Data Ganj Baksh?

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4. How many Silsilahs Ain-i-Akbari speaks about?

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5. Where is the Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti Khanqah located?

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6. What is the other name of Islamic law?

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7. Who is called Chirag-i-Dilli (The Lamp of Delhi)?

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### 9.3 THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

The development of Bhakti movement took place in Tamil Nadu between the seventh and twelfth centuries. It was reflected in the emotional poems of the Nayanars (devotees of Shiva) and Alvars (devotees of Vishnu). These saints looked upon religion not as a cold formal worship but as a loving bond based upon love between the worshipped and worshipper. They wrote in local languages, Tamil and Telugu and were therefore able to reach out to many people.

In course of time, the ideas of the South moved up to the North but it was a very slow process. Sanskrit, which was still the vehicle of thought, was given a new form.

Thus we find that the Bhagavata Purana of ninth century was not written in the old Puranic form. Centered around Krishna's childhood and youth, this work uses Krishna's exploits to explain deep philosophy in simple terms. This work became a turning point in the history of the Vaishnavite movement which was an important component of the Bhakti movement.

A more effective method for spreading of the Bhakti ideology was the use of local languages. The Bhakti saints composed their verses in local languages. They also translated Sanskrit works to make them understandable to a wider audience. Thus we find Jnanadeva writing in Marathi, Kabir, Surdas and Tulsidas in Hindi, Shankaradeva popularising Assamese, Chaitanya and Chandidas spreading their message in Bengali, Mirabai in Hindi and Rajasthani. In addition, devotional poetry was composed in Kashmiri, Telugu, Kannad, Oriya, Malayalam, Maithili and Gujarati.



The Bhakti saints believed that salvation can be achieved by all. They made no distinction of caste, creed or religion before God. They themselves came from diverse backgrounds. Ramananda, whose disciples included Hindus and Muslims, came from a conservative brahman family. His disciple, Kabir, was a weaver. Guru Nanak was a village accountant's son. Namdev was a tailor. The saints stressed equality, disregarded the caste system and attacked institutionalised religion. The saints did not confine themselves to purely religious ideas. They advocated social reforms too. They opposed sati and female infanticide. Women were encouraged to join *kirtans*. Mirabai and Lalla (of Kashmir) composed verses that are popular even today.

Amongst the non-sectarian Bhakti saints, the most outstanding contribution was made by Kabir and Guru Nanak. Their ideas were drawn from both Hindu and Islamic traditions and were aimed at bridging the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims. Let us read in some detail about them.

Kabir (1440-1518) is said to have been the son of a brahman widow, who abandoned him. He was brought up in the house of a Muslim weaver. Kabir believed that the way to God was through personally experienced bhakti or devotion. He believed that the Creator is One. His God was called by many names - Rama, Hari, Govinda, Allah, Rahim, Khuda, etc. No wonder then that the Muslims claim him as Sufi, the Hindus call him Rama-Bhakta and the Sikhs incorporate his songs in the *Adi Granth*. The external aspects of religion were meaningless for Kabir. His beliefs and ideas were reflected in the *dohas* (Sakhi) composed by him. One of his dohas conveyed that if by worshipping a stone (idol) one could attain God, then he was willing to worship a mountain. It was better to worship a stone flour-grinder because that could at least fill stomachs.

Kabir emphasised simplicity in religion and said that bhakti was the easiest way to attain God. He refused to accept any prevalent religious belief without prior reasoning. For him, a man could not achieve success without hard work. He advocated performance of action rather than renunciation of duty. Kabir's belief in the unity of God led both Hindus and Muslims to become his disciples.

Kabir's ideas were not restricted to religion. He attempted to change the narrow thinking of society. His poetry was forceful and direct. It was easily understood and much of it has passed into our everyday language.

Another great exponent of the *Nankana* school was Guru Nanak (1469-1539). He was born at Talwandi (Nakana Sahib). From an early age, he showed leanings towards a spiritual life. He was helpful to the poor and needy. His disciples called themselves Sikhs (derived from Sanskrit *sisya*, disciple or Pali *sikkha*, instruction).

Guru Nanak's personality combined in itself simplicity and peacefulness. Guru Nanak's objective was to remove the existing corruption and degrading practices in society. He showed a new path for the establishment of an egalitarian social order. Like Kabir, Guru





## Notes

Nanak was as much a social reformer as he was a religious teacher. He called for an improvement in the status of women. He said that women who give birth to kings should not be spoken ill of. His *vani* (words) along with those of other Sikh Gurus have been brought together in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs.

### The Vaishnavite Movement

You have read that saints such as Kabir, Namdev and Guru Nanak had preached devotion toward a *nirankar* form of God. During this period, another movement based upon devotion towards a *sakar* form of God had also developed. This movement, called the Vaishnavite movement, centered around the worship of Rama and Krishna, who were seen as incarnations (*avatars*) of Lord Vishnu. Its main exponents were Surdas, Mirabai, Tulsidas and Chaitanya. Their path to salvation was expressed through the medium of poetry, song, dance and *kirtans*.

Surdas (1483-1563) was a disciple of the famous teacher, Vallabhachara. He was a blind poet, whose songs are centered around Krishna. His *Sursagar* recounts the exploits of Krishna during his childhood and youth with gentle affection and delightfulness.

The love for Krishna was also expressed through the songs of Mirabai (1503-73). Widowed at an early age, she believed in a spiritual marriage with her Lord. Her poems have a quality of their own and are popular even today.

The Vaishnavite movement spread in the east through the efforts of Chaitanya (1484-1533). Chaitanya considered Krishna not as a mere incarnation of Vishnu but as the highest form of God. The devotion for Krishna was expressed through *Sankirtans* (hymn session by devotees) which took place in homes, temples and even street processions. Like other Bhakti saints, Chaitanya too was willing to welcome everyone, irrespective of caste, into the fold. The saints thus promoted a sense of equality amongst the people.

The worship of Rama was popularised by saints like Ramananda (1400-1470). He considered Rama as the supreme God. Women and outcastes were welcomed. The most famous of the Rama bhaktas was Tulsidas (1532-1623) who wrote the *Ramacharitmanas*.

The Vaishnavite saints developed their philosophy within the broad framework of Hinduism. They called for reforms in religion and love amongst fellow beings. Their philosophy was broadly humanist.

## 9.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BHAKTI AND SUFI MOVEMENTS

You will recall that the Bhakti movement was a socio-religious movement that opposed religious bigotry and social rigidities. It emphasised good character and pure thinking. At a time when society had become stagnant, the Bhakti saints infused new life and strength.





They awakened a new sense of confidence and attempted to redefine social and religious values. Saints like Kabir and Nanak stressed upon the reordering of society along egalitarian lines. Their call to social equality attracted many a downtrodden. Although Kabir and Nanak had no intention of founding new religions but following their deaths, their supporters grouped together as Kabir *panthis* and Sikhs respectively.

The importance of the Bhakti and Sufi saints lies in the new atmosphere created by them, which continued to affect the social, religious and political life of India even in later centuries. Akbar's liberal ideas were a product of this atmosphere in which he was born and brought up. The preaching of Guru Nanak were passed down from generation to generation. This resulted in the growth of a separate religious group, with its separate language and script Gurmukhi and religious book, Guru Granth Sahib. Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs grew into a formidable political force in the politics of North India.

The interaction between the Bhakti and Sufi saints had an impact upon Indian society. The Sufi theory of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* (Unity of Being) was remarkably similar to that in the Hindu Upanishads. Many Sufi poet-saints preferred to use Hindi terms rather than Persian verses to explain concepts. Thus we find Sufi poets such as Malik Muhamniad Jaisi composing works in Hindi. The use of terms such as Krishna, Radha, Gopi, Jamuna, Ganga etc. became so common in such literature that an eminent Sufi, Mir Abdul Wahid wrote a treatise *Haqaiq-i-Hindi* to explain their Islamic equivalents. In later years this interaction continued as Akbar and Jahangir followed a liberal religious policy.

The popular verses and songs of the Bhakti saints also served as forerunners of a musical renaissance. New musical compositions were written for the purpose of group singing at *kirtans*. Even today Mira's *bhajans* and Tulsidas's *chaupais* are recited at prayer meetings.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.2**

1. Which work became the turning point in the history of Vaishnavite movement?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Adi Granth is a holy work of which religion?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How did Kabir and Guru Nanak become popular among the masses?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Who said this, 'Women who give birth to kings should not be spoken ill of?'  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Who wrote Sur Sagar?



### Notes

### Philosophy in Medieval India

The major religious movements were brought about by the mystics. They contributed to the religious ideas and beliefs. Bhakti saints like Vallabhacharya, Ramanuja, Nimbaraka brought about new philosophical thinking which had its origin in Shankaracharya's *advaita* (non-dualism) philosophy.

### *Vishistadvaita* of Ramanujacharya

*Vishistadvaita* means modified monism. The ultimate reality according to this philosophy is Brahman (God) and matter and soul are his qualities.

### *Sivadvaita* of Srikanthacharya

According to this philosophy the ultimate Brahman is Shiva, endowed with Shakti. Shiva exists in this world as well as beyond it.

### *Dvaita* of Madhavacharya

The literal meaning of *dvaita* is dualism which stands in opposition to non-dualism and monism of Shankaracharya. He believed that the world is not an illusion (*maya*) but a reality full of differences.

### *Dvaitadvaita* of Nimbaraka

*Dvaitadvaita* means dualistic monism. According to this philosophy God transformed himself into world and soul. This world and soul are different from God (Brahman). They could survive with the support of God only. They are separate but dependent.

### *Suddhadvaita* of Vallabhacharya

Vallabhacharya wrote commentaries on Vedanta Sutra and Bhagavad Gita. For him, Brahman (God) was Sri Krishna who manifested himself as souls and matter. God and soul are not distinct, but one. The stress was on pure non-dualism. His philosophy came to be known as *Pushtimarga* (the path of grace) and the school was called Rudrasampradaya.



### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- The Bhakti and Sufi movements were liberal movements within Hinduism and Islam emphasising a new and more personalised relationship between the human being and God.



- The message of the Sufi movement was universal love and brotherhood of man.
- Because of their belief in the concept of unity of being, Sufis were able to establish an ideological relationship with Hindu thought.
- The Bhakti movement grew amongst Nayanars and Alvars of the south and stressed a new method of worship of God based upon devotional love.
- The Bhakti saints were divided into the *Nirgun* and *Sagun* believers.
- Unlike the *Nirgun* believers the *Sagun* believers saw God as having a definite form such as Rama or Krishna.
- The Bhakti and Sufi saints made valuable contributions to medieval Indian society in terms of laying a liberal foundation and promoting a tremendous growth of regional literature and local languages.

**TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. How did Sufi movement progress in Islam?
2. How will you differentiate the Chisti Silsilah with the Subrawardi Silsilah?
3. The Bhakti Saints and the Sufi Saints were the two faces of a coin. Elaborate.
4. What were the similarities between Guru Nanak and Kabir?
5. Write a short paragraph on the Vaishnovite movement of India?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****9.1**

1. Scholars with orthodox sunni ideas.
2. Orthodox doctrine of Islam religion.
3. Al-Hujwari
4. Fourteen
5. Sharia
6. Ajmer
7. Sheikh Nasiruddin Mahmud.

**9.2**

1. Bhagavata Purana

## MODULE - IV

### *Religion and Philosophy*

### Religion and Philosophy in Medieval India



#### Notes

2. Sikh religion
3. These ideas were drawn from the Hindu and Muslim traditions. They also used simple languages.
4. Guru Nanak
5. Surdas



## 10

## RELIGIOUS REFORM MOVEMENTS IN MODERN INDIA

We are a very lucky people today. We are free from foreign domination and also free from many other rigidities which our ancestors had to face. The Indian society in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was caste ridden, decadent and rigid. It followed certain practices which are not in keeping with humanitarian feelings or values but were still being followed in the name of religion. A change was therefore needed in society. When the British came to India they introduced the English language as well as certain modern ideas. These ideas were those of liberty, social and economic equality, fraternity, democracy and justice which had a tremendous impact on Indian society. Fortunately for our country there were some enlightened Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati and many others who were willing to fight and bring in reforms in society so that it could face the challenges of the West.



### OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- identify some common characteristics of religious and social reform movement;
- explain the role played by Raja Rammohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj in bringing about religious reforms;
- recognise the Prarthana Samaj as an institution that worked for religious as well as social reform;
- explain the ideology of the Arya Samaj and its contributors to social and religious reforms;



- *examine the contribution of the Ramakrishna Mission to India's awakening in the nineteenth century;*
- *appreciate the efforts of the Theosophical Society in promoting ancient Indian religions;*
- *discuss the contribution of the Aligarh Movement towards cultural and educational reforms amongst the Muslims; and*
- *examine the reforms carried out by the Sikhs and the Parsees to make their society enlightened.*

### 10.1 COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century a number of European and Indian scholars started the study of ancient India's history, philosophy, science, religions and literature. This growing knowledge of India's past glory provided to the Indian people a sense of pride in their civilization. It also helped the reformers in their work of religious and social reform for their struggle against all type of inhuman practices, superstitions etc.

Since they had become associated with religious beliefs, therefore most of the movements of social reform were of a religious character.

These social and religious reform movements arose among all communities of the Indian people. They attacked bigotry, superstition and the hold of the priestly class.

They worked for abolition of castes and untouchability, *purdah* system, *sati*, child marriage, social inequalities and illiteracy.

Some of these reformers were supported directly or indirectly by the British officials and some of the reformers also supported reformative steps and regulations framed by the British Government.

### 10.2 BRAHMO SAMAJ AND RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY

Men and women enjoy certain rights and freedom today. But do you know that they were given to us by the untiring efforts made by certain reformers. Among the great reformers of this period, Raja Rammohan Roy deserves special mention. He presented a fine combination of East and the West. A man of great literary talent and well versed in Indian culture, he also made special effort to study Christianity and Islam so that he could deal with them with understanding. He felt great revulsion for many practices prevailing in India that enjoyed religious approval.



**Notes**

His main pre-occupation was how to rid the Hindu religion of both image worship, sacrificial rites and other meaningless rituals. He condemned the priestly class for encouraging these practices. He opined that all the principal ancient texts of the Hindus preached monotheism or worship of one God. His greatest achievement in the field of religious reform was an setting up in 1828 of the Brahmo Samaj. The Brahmo Samaj was an important organization of religious reforms. It forbade idol-worship and discarded meaningless rites and rituals. The Samaj also forbade its members from attacking any religion. It believed in the basic unity of all the religions. Raja Rammohan Roy believed that man should adopt truth and goodness and should give up things based on falsehood and superstition.

Raja Rammohan Roy was not merely a religious reformer but a social reformer also. His greatest achievement was the abolition of Sati in 1829. Raja Rammohan Roy realized that the practice of Sati was due to the extremely low position of Hindu women. Therefore he started working as a stout champion of women's rights. He worked very hard for years to stop this practice of 'Sati'. In the early 1818 he set out to rouse public opinion on the question of Sati. On the one hand he showed by citing the authority of the oldest sacred books that the Hindu religion at its best was opposed to the practice and on the other, he appealed to reason and humanity and compassion of the people. He visited the burning ghats of Calcutta to try and persuade the relatives of widows to give up their plan of self-immolation. His campaign against Sati aroused the opposition of the orthodox Hindus who bitterly attacked him.

Raja Rammohan Roy was also deeply opposed to the caste system that prevailed in Indian society. A humanist and democrat to the core, he wrote and talked against the caste system. Another important area that concerned him was Hindu theology. Study of the Vedas and Upanishads gave him ground to show that monotheism was the original Hindu belief and hence he denounced polytheism and idolatry. In fact the philosopher did not insist on the creation of a new religion but merely endeavoured to 'purify' the Vedic religion from the crude and most ignorant superstitions. He proclaimed that there is only one God for all religions and for all humanity. He wrote in Bengali and English. He was an ardent promoter of English education. He was also well versed in the Persian language and some of his most liberal and rational ideas were expressed in his early writings in that language.

He advocated the abolition of polygamy (a practice of man having more than one wife) and child marriage. He wanted women to be educated and given the right to inherit property. He condemned the subjugation of women and opposed the prevailing ideas that women were inferior to men in intellect or in a moral sense. He advocated the rights of widows to remarry.

To bring his ideas into practice, Raja Rammohan Roy founded the Brahmo Sabha in 1828 which later came to be known as Brahmo Samaj. It was open to all persons regardless of their colour, convictions, caste, nationality, and religion. It emphasised human dignity, opposed idol worship and condemned social evils like *sati pratha*. It was not meant to be



## Notes

a separate religious sect but only a place where all those who believed in one true God could meet and pray. No images were allowed and no sacrifices and offerings permitted.

Debendra Nath Tagore (1817-1905), the son of Dwarkanath Tagore, founder member of Brahmo Samaj, succeeded Raja Rammohan Roy as the leader of the Brahmo Samaj. He put new life in the Samaj and propagated Raja Rammohan Roy's ideas. Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1884) took over the leadership of the Samaj from Tagore. The Brahmo Samaj stood for the principles of individual freedom, national unity, solidarity and collaboration and the democratisation of all social institutions and relations. It thus became the first organised vehicle for the expression of national awakening and inaugurated a new era for the people of India. However, the Brahmo Samaj was weakened by internal dissensions and its influence remained confined to urban educated groups. But it left its impact on the intellectual, social and political life of Bengal.

### 10.3 PRARTHANA SAMAJ AND RANADE

The Prarthana Samaj was established in Bombay by Dr. Atma Ram Pandurang (1825-1898) in 1876 with the objective of rational worship and social reform. The two great members of this Samaj were Shri R.C. Bhandarkar and Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade. They devoted themselves to the work of social reform such as inter-caste dining, inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage and improvement of the lot of women and depressed classes.

Mahavdev Govind Ranade (1842-1901) devoted his entire life to Prarthana Samaj. He was the founder of the Widow Remarriage Association (1861) and the Deccan Education Society. He established the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha as well. To Ranade, religious reform was inseparable from social reform. He also believed that if religious ideas were rigid there would be no success in social, economic and political spheres. MG Ranade was the leader of social reformation and cultural renaissance in Western India.

Ranade's great message to the persons who were involved in social service was "Strength of numbers we cannot command, but we can command earnestness of conviction, singleness of devotion, readiness for self-sacrifice, in all honest workers in the cause."

Although Prarthana Samaj was powerfully influenced by the ideas of Brahmo Samaj, it did not insist upon a rigid exclusion of idol worship and a definite break from the caste system. It did not regard the Vedas as the last word, nor did it believe in the doctrine of transmigration of the human soul and incarnation of God. Its central idea was one positive belief in the unity of God.

### 10.4 DEROZIO AND YOUNG BENGAL MOVEMENT

Henry Lui Vivian Derozio, joined the Hindu College of Calcutta as a teacher. He had



come from Scotland to sell watches in Calcutta, but later made the spread of modern education in Bengal as his life's mission.

Derozio promoted radical ideas through his teaching and by organizing an association for debate and discussions on literature, philosophy, history and science. He inspired his followers and students to question all authority. Derozio and his famous followers, known as the Derzians and Young Bengal, were fiery patriots. They cherished the ideals of the French Revolution (1789 A.D.) and the liberal thinking of Britain. Derozio died of cholera at the young age of 22.

The Young Bengal Movement continued even after Derozio's dismissal and his sudden death. Though deprived of leadership, the members of this group continued preaching radical views through teaching and journalism.

### **Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar**

Another outstanding reformer in Bengal was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891 A.D.). A scholar of great depths, he dedicated himself to the cause of the emancipation of women. It was due to his sincere efforts that obstacles to the marriage of widows were removed through a law in 1856. He played a leading role in promoting education of girls and started and helped the setting up a number of schools for girls. Vidyasagar did not concern himself much with religious questions. However, he was against all those who opposed reforms in the name of religion.

## **10.5 SPREAD OF THE REFORM MOVEMENTS IN WESTERN AND SOUTHERN INDIA**

After Bengal, the most important region where the movement for reforms spread was western India. Bal Shastri Jambekar was one of the first reformers in Bombay. He attacked Brahmanical orthodoxy and tried to reform popular Hinduism.

In 1849, the Parmahansa Mandali was founded in Poona, Satara and other towns of Maharashtra. Its followers had faith in one God and they opposed caste system. At its meetings, members took food cooked by low-caste people. They favoured education of women and supported widow remarriage. Mahadev Ranade believed that without social reforms it was not possible to achieve any progress in the political and economic fields. He was a great advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Two other great reformers in Western India were Gopal Hari Deshmukh Lokahitwari and Jotirao Govindrao Phule popularly known as Jotiba. They worked for the upliftment of women, took up the cause of women and downtrodden masses. Jyotiba with his wife started a girls school in Poona, in 1857. He also opened a school for the children of the depressed classes. Jotiba Phule was also a pioneer of the widow remarriage movement in



Maharashtra. He challenged the dominance of Brahmins and worked for organizing and activating the masses. He championed the cause of villagers and actively worked for rural development in Maharashtra. Jotiba was given the title of 'Mahatma' for his work for the cause of the oppressed. In 1873, he founded the Satya-Shodhak to give strength to his movement and make it popular.

In the southern parts of the country. Kandukuri Veeresalingam (1848-1919) pioneered the movement in support of widow remarriage and girls education in Andhra. Veda Samaj founded in Madras in 1864 advocated discarding of caste distinctions and promotion of widow remarriage and women's education. It condemned the superstitions and rituals of orthodox Hinduism and propagated belief in one supreme God. Chembeti Sridharalu Naidu was the most popular leader of the Veda Samaj. He translated books of the Veda Samaj in Tamil and Telugu.

An important movement particularly significant for the emancipation of the so-called backward and oppressed sections of Indian society was started by Shree Narayana Guru (1854-1928) in Kerala. In 1903 he founded the Shree narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) to carry on the work of social reform. Shree Narayana Guru considered differences based on caste and religion as meaningless and advocated what he called 'One Caste, one Religion and on God' for all.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.1

1. State the circumstances that lead to the foundation of Brahmo Samaj?

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2. What were the principles of Brahmo Samaj?

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3. How did Prathana Samaj help reducing social disparities?

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4. Who was M.G.Ranade?

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### 10.6 SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI (1824-1883) AND ARYA SAMAJ

Attend a meeting of the Arya Samaj any day. You will find many women attending it. They are also performing yajana and reading the scriptures. This was the basic contribution of Mool Shanker an important representative of the religions reform movement in India from

**Notes**

Gujarat. He later came to be known as Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883). He founded the Arya Samaj in 1875.

The most influential movement of religious and social reform in northern India was started by Dayanand Saraswati. He held that the Vedas contained all the knowledge imparted to man by God and essentials of modern science could also be traced in them. He was opposed to idolatry, ritual and priesthood, particularly to the prevalent caste practices and popular Hinduism as preached by the Brahmins. He favoured the study of western science. With all this doctrine, he went about all over the country and in 1875 founded the Arya Samaj in Bombay.

Satyarth Prakash was his most important book. The use of Hindi in his writings and preachings made his ideas accessible to the common people of northern India. Arya Samajis opposed child marriages and encouraged remarriage of widows. It made rapid progress in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

A Network of schools and colleges for boys and girls was established throughout northern India to promote the spread of education. Dayanand Anglo-Vedic School of Lahore, which soon developed into a premier college of Punjab, set the pattern for such institutions. Instruction was imparted through Hindi and English on modern lines. Lala Hansraj played a leading role in this field. In 1902, Swami Shradhananda started the Gurukul near Hardwar to propagate the more traditional ideas of education. This was set up on the pattern of ancient Ashrams.

Arya Samaj tried to inculcate the spirit of self-respect and self-reliance among the people of India. This promoted nationalism. At the same time one of its main objectives was to prevent the conversion of Hindus to other religions. It also prescribed a purificatory ceremony called *suddhi* for those Hindus who had been converted to other religions like Islam and Christianity.

## **10.7 THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

Gadadhar Chattopadhyaya (1836-86) was a poor Brahmin priest who later came to be known as Ramakrishna Paramahansa. His education did not proceed beyond the elementary stage and he had no formal education in philosophy and Shastras. He dedicated his life to God. He believed that there were many roads to God and the service of man was the service of God, because man was the embodiment of God. Hence sectarianism had no place in his teachings. He realised the divinity in humanity and looked upon the service of mankind as a means to salvation.

Narendra Nath Datta (1863-1902) later known as Swami Vivekananda was the most devoted pupil of Ramakrishna Paramahansa who carried the message of his Guru Ramakrishna all over the world, specially in America and Europe.



### Notes

Vivekananda was proud of India's spiritual heritage, but he believed that no individual or nation can live by holding himself or itself apart from the community of others. He condemned the caste system, rigid rituals, century old superstitions and advocated liberty, free thinking and equality.

Vivekananda was indeed, a patriot from the core of his heart. He had tremendous faith in the evolution of Indian culture and an intense zeal to revive all that was good and great in her culture so as to serve her in all possible ways for her onward march.

Swami Vivekananda laid stress on Ramakrishna's teaching on the essential oneness of all religions. He promoted the Vedanta philosophy which he considered the most rational system.

The principal feature of Vivekananda's social philosophy was his insistence on the upliftment of the masses. For him, service to the poor and downtrodden was the highest religion. To organise such service, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897. This Mission to date has played an important role in providing social service in times of national distress like famine, floods, and epidemic. Many schools, hospitals, orphanages are run by it.

In 1893 he participated in the All World Religious Conference (Parliament of Religions) at Chicago in the United States of America. He argued that Vedanta was the religion of all and not of the Hindus alone. His address there made a deep impression on the people of other countries and thus helped to raise the prestige of Indian culture in the eyes of the world. Though his mission was mainly of religious nature, he was keenly interested in the improvement of all aspects of national life. He expressed his concern for the miserable and poor conditions of the people and said that neglect of the masses is a sin. He frankly stated, "It is we who are responsible for all our misery and all our degradation." He urged his countrymen to work for their own salvation. For this purpose bands of workers devoted to this cause were trained through the Ramakrishnan Mission. Thus Vivekananda emphasized social good or social services.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.2

1. Who founded Arya Samaj?

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2. Where was first Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College established?

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3. How according to Gadadhar Chattopadhaya can you achieve salvation?

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4. What was the original name of Swami Vivekanand?

5. What according to Swami Viveknand was the highest religion?

### 10.8 THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AND ANNIE BESANT

Theosophical society has played an important role in the history of the religion, society and culture of modern India. It was founded in the USA in 1875 by a Russian spiritualist Madame H.P. Blavatsky and an American Col. H.S. Olcott. Its objective was to promote studies in ancient religions, philosophies and science, develop the divine powers latent in man and form a universal brotherhood of man.

The Society was introduced to India in 1879 and its headquarters were set up at Adyar near Madras in 1886. Its influence spread under Annie Beasant in 1893 who played an important role in India's struggle for freedom. She and her associates advocated the revival and strengthening of the ancient religions of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism. They recognized the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul. They also preached the universal brotherhood of man. They helped to impart to the educated Indians a sense of pride in their own country. Annie Beasant's movement was a movement led and supported by westerners who glorified Indian religious and philosophical traditions. This helped Indians to recover their self-confidence.

In fact the activities of Annie Besant in the field of education were more significant. She founded the Central Hindu College at Banaras which she later handed over to Madan Mohan Malaviya. He developed that college into the Banaras Hindu University. Although the Theosophical Movement did not enjoy mass popularity, its work under the leadership of Annie Besant for awakening of the Indians was remarkable. She contributed a great deal to the development of national spirit in Indians. The headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar became a centre of knowledge with a library of rare Sanskrit books.

The society fought against untouchability and advocated upliftment of women. Annie Besant dedicated her whole life to the cause of Indian society. She described her mission in these words: "The Indian work is first of all the revival, the strengthening and uplifting of the ancient religions. This has brought with it a new self-respect, and pride in the past; belief in the future, and as an inevitable result, a great wave of patriotic life, the beginning of the rebuilding of a nation".

One of Mrs. Besant's many achievements in India was the establishment of the Central Hindu School. Annie Besant made India her permanent home and took a prominent part in Indian politics. "The needs of India are, among others, the development of a national spirit



and an education founded on Indian ideas and enriched, not dominated by the thoughts and culture of the West”. She always supported Home Rule for Indians and established a Home Rule League in 1916 to spread the message of self rule.

Branches of the Theosophical Society were opened all over India and its Journal *Theosophist* had a wide circulation. The Society gave a helping hand in social and religious reform, especially in south India. Most of the work done by it was influenced by Annie Besant.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.3

1. Where was The Theosophical Society founded?

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2. Who founded the Theosophical Society?

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3. Where was the head quarters of the Theosophical Society in India?

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4. Who established Home Rule League in 1916?

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### 10.9 ALIGARH MOVEMENT AND SAYYID AHMAD KHAN

You have just read about reform within the Hindu religion, its practices and social institutions. A similar reform movement was also taking place within Islam. The Muslim upper classes had tended to avoid contact with Western education and culture and it was only after the revolt of 1857 that modern ideas of religious reform began to appear. The beginning was made by the Muhammedan Literary Society founded in Calcutta in 1863 founded by Nawab Abdul Latif 1828-1893. It promoted discussion of religious, social and political questions in the light of modern ideas and encouraged upper and middle class Muslims to adopt Western education. It also played an important role for Muslim Unity. The Muslim masses were also influenced by movements carried on by the Chishti sufis who preached not only submission to God but also promoted the veneration of saints. Another movement is associated with Shah Waliullah in Delhi, who opposed the unorthodox religious practices and revived the Shia sect and strict monotheism. The philosophical and learned tradition of the Firangi Mahal in Lucknow was incorporated into the new educational syllabus and propagated throughout India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sharitulla of

**Notes**

Bengal was the leader of the Faraizi movement Bengal which took up the cause of the peasants and even spoke against the caste system among the Muslims.

The most notable of the Muslim reformers was Sayyid Ahmed of Rai Bareilly, in Uttar Pradesh. He attracted the Muslim artisans of the declining weaving towns of Allahabad and Patna finding a ready audience and giving the common people dignity and an identity through a common faith at a time of social dislocation. He realised that unless the Muslims adapted themselves to the changed circumstances of British rule, they would be deprived of all new opportunities for status and prosperity. He was highly impressed by modern scientific thought and worked all his life to reconcile it with Islam. He interpreted the Quran in the light of rationalism and science. He urged the people to develop a critical approach and freedom of thought. He also warned against fanaticism, narrow-mindedness and exclusiveness. He asked the people to be broadminded and tolerant. In 1883 he said: “Now both of us (Hindus and Muslims) live on the air of India, drink the holy waters of the Ganga and Jamuna. We both feed upon the products of the Indian soil... we are a nation and the progress and welfare of the country, and both of us, depend on our unity, mutual sympathy, and love, while our mutual disagreement, obstinacy and opposition and ill-feeling are sure to destroy us”.

Syed Ahmed Khan rightly felt that isolation would harm the Muslim community and to prevent that he did his best to create a link with the progressive cultural forces of the outside world. He worked hard to remove the hostility of the British rulers towards the Muslims whom they considered as their real enemies.

He felt that the religious and social life of the Muslims could be improved only with the help of modern Western scientific knowledge and culture. Therefore, promotion of modern education was the first task. As an official, he founded schools at many places. He got many Western books translated into Urdu. He started the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875 at Aligarh. It was meant to be a centre for spreading Western sciences and culture. Later, this college grew into the Aligarh Muslim University.

The liberal, social and cultural movement started by Sayyid Ahmad Khan among the Muslims is known as the Aligarh Movement as it originated in Aligarh. The Anglo-Oriental College was the centre of this movement. It aimed at promoting modern education among Muslims without weakening the ties with Islam. It became the central educational institution for Indian Muslims.

The Aligarh Movement was largely responsible for the Muslim revival that followed. It provided a focal point for the scattered Muslim population in different parts of the country. It gave them a common fund of ideas and a common language - Urdu. A Muslim press was developed for the compilation of works in Urdu.

Sayyid Ahmad's efforts extended to the social sphere as well. He worked for social reforms. He wanted women to be educated and advocated the removal of the purdah. He was also against polygamy.

**Notes****Religious Refrorms Movements in Modern India**

There were several other socio-religious movements which in one way or the other helped the national awakening of the Muslims. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had founded the Ahmediya Movement in 1899. Under this movement, a number of schools and colleges were opened all over the country, imparting modern education. In the field of religion the followers of this movement emphasized the universal and humanitarian character of Islam. They favoured the unity among Hindus and Muslims.

One of the greatest poets of modern India, Muhammad Iqbal, (1876-1938) also profoundly influenced through his poetry, the philosophical and religious outlook of the younger generation of Muslims as well as of Hindus. He urged the adoption of a dynamic outlook that would help change the world. He was basically a humanist.

**10.10 REFORM MOVEMENTS AMONG PARSIS**

Religious reform began among the Parsis in Mumbai in the middle of the 19th century. In 1851, the Rehnnumai Maz'dayasan Sabha or Religious Reform Association was founded by Nauroji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, S.S. Bengalee and others. They started a journal Rast Goftar, for the purpose of social-religious reforms among the Parsis. They also played an important role in the spread of education, specially among girls. They campaigned against the entrenched orthodoxy in the religious field and initiated the modernization of Parsi social customs regarding the education of girls marriage and the social position of women in general. In course of time, the Parsis became socially the most westernized section of Indian society.

**10.11 RELIGIOUS REFORM AMONG SIKHS**

Religious reform among the Sikhs was started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the Khalsa College started at Amritsar. Through the efforts of the Singh Sabhas (1870) and with British support, the Khalsa College was founded at Amritsar in 1892. This college and schools set up as a result of similar efforts, promoted Gurumukhi, Sikh learning and Punjabi literature as a whole.

After 1920 the Sikh momentum gained momentum when the Akali Movement rose in Punjab. The chief object of the Akalis was to improve the management of the Gurudwaras or Sikh Shrines that were under the control of priests or Mahants who treated them as their private property. In 1925, a law was passed which gave the right of managing Gurudwaras to the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee.

**10.12 IMPACT OF THE REFORM MOVEMENT**

The British wanted to appease the orthodox upper section of society. As a result only two important laws were passed. Some legal measures were introduced to raise the status of

women. For example Sati was declared illegal (1829). Infanticide was declared illegal. Widow remarriage was permitted by a law passed in 1856. Marriageable age of girls was raised to ten by a law passed in 1860.

A law passed in 1872, sanctioned inter-caste and inter-communal marriages. The other law passed in 1891, aimed at discouraging child marriage. For preventing child marriage, the Sharda Act was passed in 1929. According to it a girl below 14 and a boy below 18 could not be married. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially after 1919 the Indian national movement became the main propagator of social reform. Increasingly, the reformers took recourse to propaganda in the Indian language to reach the masses. They also used novels, dramas, short stories, poetry, the Press and in the thirties (1930's), the cinema too spread their views.

Numerous individuals, reform societies, and religious organizations worked hard to spread education among women, to prevent marriage of young children, to bring women out of the purdah, to enforce monogamy, and to enable middle class women to take up professions or public employment. Due to all these efforts Indian women played an active and important role in the struggle for independence of the country. As a result many superstitions disappeared and many others were on their way out. Now, it was no longer a sin to travel to foreign countries.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.4**

1. Who started Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Where is the Aligarh Muslim University located?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What were the views of Sayyid Ahmed Khan for Muslim women?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Where was the Muhammedan Literary Society established?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Give the names of any three famous socio-religious reformers of the Parsis.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- The impact of British rule in India led to a number of social and religious reforms.

**Notes**

**Notes****Religious Refoms Movements in Modern India**

- Raja Rammohan Roy can be regarded as the central figure of India's awakening for championing the spread of modern education, science and technology and for his relentless fight against many social evils.
- R.G Bhandarkar and M.G. Ranade carried out their work of religious reforms in Maharashtra through the Prarthana Samaj by propagating inter-caste marriages, freedom from priestly domination and improvement of the lot of women.
- Swami Dayananda Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj and pleaded for the right of individuals to interpret Vedas and free themselves from the tyranny of priests. Besides all this, the organisation fought against untouchability and caste rigidity as well as worked for promoting modern education.
- Swami Vivekananda, a great humanist, through his Ramakrishna Mission condemned religious narrow mindedness, advocated free thinking and emphasised on service for the poor.
- The Theosophical Society, under the guidance of Annie Besant, promoted studies of ancient Indian religions, philosophies and doctrines.
- Religious reforms among the Muslims were carried out by Sayyid Ahmad Khan who encouraged Muslims to adopt modern education; denounced polygamy, purdah system and spoke against religious intolerance, ignorance and irrationalism.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. What was Raja Ram Mohan Roy's role in the social reforms in India?
2. How would you say that Prathana Samaj was doing religious as well as social reforms?
3. How will you justify the Arya Samaj's faith in Vedas?
4. Explain how Rama Krishna Mission helped in awakening India in the nineteenth century?
5. Discuss the efforts of Sayyid Ahmed Khan in removing the evils of Muslim community?
6. The contributions of The Theosophical Society in the development of Indian society cannot be forgotten. Elaborate.
7. Write a short note on the reforms undertaken by the Sikh reformers.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****10.1**

1. Practices prevalent in the society such as Sati Pratha, Caste system.
2. Oppose idol worship. No to sacrifices, no to offerings, Sati Pratha condemnation, Human dignity.





3. By doing inter-caste marriage, inter-caste dining, widow remarriage, improvement of the lot of women and depressed classes.
4. A strong follower of Prathana Samaj ideology.

**10.2**

1. Arya Samaj was founded by Dayanand Saraswati.
2. At Lahore in 1886.
3. The service of mankind is a means to salvation
4. Narendra Nath Datta.
5. Service to the poor and downtrodden.

**10.3**

1. U.S.A.
2. H.P. Balavatsky –a Russian and Col H.S. Olocott – an American.
3. Adyar near Chennai
4. Mrs. Annie Besant.

**10.4**

1. Sayyid Ahmed Khan
2. Aligarh
3. Removal of Purdha system and Education for women.
4. At Calcutta in 1863.
5. Dadabhai Naoroji, S.S. Bengalee, Nauroji Furdongi.



## 20

## SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

In the previous lesson you have learnt about the social structure in India. You read about tribal, rural and urban societies, about stratification in terms of caste and class, about family, marriage, and the position of women in Indian society. The Indian society has evolved through the ages and advancements have taken place in diverse fields. You have also read in earlier lessons about social reforms in the Indian society. However, in every society there are socio-cultural issues that need to be addressed and tackled. Security of people, particularly of the vulnerable sections, such as women, children and the elderly people is a major concern in the contemporary Indian society. In this lesson, we will read about the major socio-cultural issues that need our immediate attention, if we have to preserve our social and cultural values. Some of the important socio-cultural issues that need to be addressed today are casteism, dowry, communalism, drinking, drug addiction, etc. The issues discussed here are not comprehensive. There are many other issues faced by the nation in general and regions and communities in particular, that all of us should think about. Can you make a list of other such issues?



### OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson you will be able to

- list some major issues and problems of contemporary Indian society;
- discuss issues like caste system, dowry, substance abuse etc.;
- examine the issues related with vulnerable groups like the children, women and the elderly people; and
- discuss economic issues like poverty and unemployment.

**20.1 CASTE SYSTEM**

As you have already learnt in the previous lesson, there are four castes. Can you remember them? Write them here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_; 2. \_\_\_\_\_; 3. \_\_\_\_\_; and  
4. \_\_\_\_\_.

The caste system in India has its roots in ancient India. Just as the ashrama dharma laid down rules and duties with reference to the individual's life in the world, varna or caste system prescribed duties with reference to the particular caste to which an individual belonged. Earlier they were all regarded equal in social status and could take up any profession they liked. There was no restriction in the matter of eating food or marriage with members of other profession. But with the beginning of specializing in hereditary professions and coming in contact with the indigenous people situations changed and the birth of the person decided their caste. Hence the varna system that developed during that time was the outcome of the social and economic development. But as time passed, it led to the division of society into high-caste and low-caste people who could not mix with each other. Inter-caste dining or marriage was forbidden. People belonging to the so called lower castes were exploited and slowly down the ages, their condition became miserable. They were poor and did not enjoy equality in society. They were not even allowed to draw water from the common wells of the villages, or even could go to the temples or to come close to the people of the so called higher castes. Thus caste system hampered the healthy growth of different professions as entry into a particular profession was based on birth and not on ability.

Caste-based discrimination has at times even led to violence. The caste-system also makes the working of democracy in our country difficult. Society gets divided into artificial groups that tend to support the candidate who belongs to their caste. They do not pay much attention to the fact whether he/she is a deserving candidate or not. This is not good for the health of democracy in India. Our country cannot make real progress unless this system is uprooted completely.

During the post-independence period, i.e. after 1947, the Government has taken cognizance of these issues and tried to tackle them through legislation (enacting laws to counter these issues) as well as by social action (by involving the civil society, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and social groups. These steps have helped in improving the situation but still a lot more needs to be done.

Visit the house of a person who belongs to a community other than yours. Do you find any difference in their way of living and eating habits? Write a short essay bringing out the differences as well as similarities.

**Notes**



## Notes

## 20.2 ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN

Our Constitution gives equal rights to both men and women in every field. Today, women enjoy voting rights, right to inheritance and property. In fact, the Constitution lay down that the government should promote with special care the interests of the weaker sections of the people. Several laws have been passed since independence to promote the interests of women. These laws relate to marriage, inheritance of property, divorce, dowry, etc. In 1976, the Equal Remuneration Act was passed to provide for equal remuneration to men and women for similar work.

Recently, the government has started a scheme for the protection of girl child. The scheme is called '**Ladli**', in which an amount is set aside at the time of the birth of a girl child which she gets when she completes eighteen years of age. This amount is then used for the education or the marriage of the child. Similarly, there is another scheme called 'Jaccha Baccha scheme'. Under this scheme, the state governments take care of the birth of the child and all expenditure related to medical assistance for the upbringing of the child.

However, in spite of these provisions, we find a lot of discrimination against women.

### 20.2.1 Gender Discrimination

In India females are discriminated in various fields like health, education and jobs. The girls carry the liability of dowry on their head, and they have to leave their parents home after marriage. Besides, in order to safeguard their old age parents prefer to have male offspring. Many female babies are aborted, abandoned, deliberately neglected and underfed simply as they are girls. This is worst in the state of Rajasthan. But now there is a great change in this direction. In some states like Haryana where girl child ratio is very low, the government has taken out many schemes to promote education of girls. Reservation of jobs for women and even six months maternity leave is provided to them besides many others.

The World Bank Document, "A New Agenda for Women's Health and Nutrition" (Washington 1995) estimates that in developing countries, 450 million adult women have their development problems due to lack of protein input during their childhood. In many communities, women and girls get less food or poor quality food compared to men and boys. When they are ill, they get less attention or receive some attention only when the disease becomes extremely serious. There is ample evidence at the global level of disparity in health status between men and women and their access to medical services.

In a majority of the countries, literacy rate for women is significantly lower than that for men. In 66 countries, the gap between the male and female literacy rates is estimated to be larger than 10 percentage points and in 40 countries, it is larger than 20 percentage points in the age group of 6-11, which corresponds to primary level education. According to 2011 census, there is a gap of 16.7 percent between the literacy rate of men and women

i.e. men's literacy rate is 82.14 percent compared to women's literacy rate that stands at 65.46 percent. About 24.5 percent (85 million) of the girls in the world are estimated to be out of school compared to 16.4 percent (60 million) boys.

In most Indian families, a girl child is least welcome although in India women were respected from the early ages. Even though there are growing instances of girls excelling in education, tradition, custom, and social practices place greater value on sons than on daughters, who are often viewed as an economic burden. This attitude of the society also stands in the way of the girl child being able to achieve her full potential. A recent report on the girl child makes the following observations: ***“Girls are the world's most squandered gift. They are precious human beings with enormous potential, but across the world, they are generally the last to have their basic needs met and first to have their basic rights denied.”***

The need of girls for food clothing, shelter, healthcare, education, nurture, and time to play often goes unmet. Their rights to safety, freedom from harassment and exploitation, as also their rights to grow, develop and blossom, are denied.

Prejudice against the girl child becomes clearer and sharper from the data in sex ratio in the age group 0-6 years. In the Census, 2011 this ratio has been recorded as 914, down from 927 in the Census, 2001. The child sex ratio has steadily declined from 976 in 1961 to 914 in 2011.

### 20.2.2 Dowry System

The practice of dowry is one of the worst social practices that has affected our culture. In independent India, one of the landmark legislations is the passing of the Dowry Prohibition Act in 1961 by the Government of India. Despite the fact that the practice of both giving as well as accepting dowry is banned by law and such acts are punishable offences, the system is so thoroughly imbedded in our culture that it continues unabated. Whether it is rural or urban India, the blatant violation of this law is rampant. Not only dowry deaths, even most of the acts of domestic violence against women including psychological as well as physical torture are related to matters of dowry. Some of the very basic human rights of women are violated almost every day. Sometimes it is heartening to see some girls stand firm to assert their rights against dowry. But there is an urgent need to strengthen such hands by taking some concrete as well as comprehensive social, economic, political and administrative measures in order to free Indian society of this disease.

Find out a girl child who is not going to school. Tell her parents that the government has started a scheme called **Ladli** for the development of the girl child and that she will no longer remain a burden to them; rather she will become an asset. So they should send her to school.



Notes



**Notes**



### **INTEXT QUESTIONS 20.1**

1. How does caste system affect democracy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the '*Ladli*' scheme of government of India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which Act prohibits dowry violations?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **20.3 SUBSTANCE ABUSE/ADDICTION**

The habitual use of or dependence on harmful substances like liquor/alcoholic drinks, tobacco, bidis/cigarettes, drugs (for other than prescribed medical treatment) called substance abuse or addiction. As the range of addictive substances continues to expand, more and more persons particularly, in the younger age groups get addicted. There are many factors that are responsible for pushing the young as well as adults into the trap of substance abuse. These factors include peer-pressure, non-conducive family environment and stress.

Substance abuse is a condition which needs medical and psychological help. The parents have to be considerate to children, particularly during their transition from childhood to adolescence and adulthood, when many changes occur in their physique. Adolescents are naturally curious, they are exploring new worlds, ideas, behaviors and relationships. In the process, some are exposed to drugs. Unless their environment, families, schools and friends educate them about the ill effects of using drugs, they are likely to be trapped. Drinking and smoking are the most common as well as harmful addictive actions.

Drinking or intake of liquor /alcohol is a very serious problem of the society. The easiest pastime is to drink and forget worries, frustrations, even though temporarily. Its addiction creates serious consequences. Even with meagre earnings, drunkards buy liquor keeping the family needs at stake. If they cannot afford the standard variety, which is expensive, they go for the cheap variety. At times they drink even the poisonous things. After drinking, they lose their senses. Sometimes it results in death or permanent disability. Most of the time, they ill-treat their wives and children after drinking.

Smoking is a habit which is very harmful to health, even more than drinking. Not only does it harm the smokers themselves, but also the people around them who are affected by the smoke in the atmosphere. If we respect the rights of others, then we should not smoke in



public places like buses, trains, markets, offices etc. Smoking is a major cause of pollution and develops deadly diseases like cancer, heart diseases, breathing problems etc. According to World Health Organization, tobacco use, particularly smoking, is number one killer all over the world. The Union cabinet has banned smoking in public places. It has banned the sale of tobacco products near schools and colleges. It is mandatory for manufacturers of these products to issue a warning to the consumers of its ill effects with a caption on the product itself.

**Notes**

## 20.4 COMMUNALISM

India is a country of different religious faiths. Persons belonging to different communities such as Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, etc. live in India. The aggressive attitude of one community towards the other creates tension and clashes between two religious communities. Hundreds of people die in communal riots. It breeds hatred and mutual suspicion. Communalism is an issue that needs to be tackled and eradicated. It poses a great challenge to democracy and unity of our country. It is therefore, a major obstacle in the path of our progress. Education is one very important means through which we can hope to bring peace and harmony in society. We must remember that we are all human beings first, before we belong to a religious community. We must respect all religions. Our country is secular, which means that all religions are treated equally and everyone is free to follow their own religion.

Try to meet any person who is addicted to smoking, drugs, drinking or gambling. Tell him the ill effects of these things and suggest some ways to overcome this habit.

## 20.5 ISSUES RELATED TO THE ELDERLY

The world population is ageing. Globally, the aged were 8% in 1950, 10% in 2000 and estimated to increase to 21% in 2050. In India, the number of elder persons was 5.8% (25.5 million) in 1961. In 1991 this figure increased to 6.7% (56.6 million). In 2011, it is estimated to increase to 8.1% (96 million) that is expected to grow to 137 million in 2021. The size of the Indian elderly (60 years and above) is expected to triple in the next few decades. Providing social, economic, and psychological support to the aged is emerging as a fundamental concern of social development.

With the joint family breaking down, especially in the urban areas, where nuclear families are the trend, the aged are increasingly becoming unwelcome members in their own families. Community support base to the aged is assuming greater importance. Our culture to respect elders should be again imbibed in young generation so that the aged can maintain their self respect. Remember, the elderly people should be respected. They have looked after you when they were younger and now it is your turn to pay back. You must look after and serve your old grandparents.



**Notes**

Visit an old home and talk to the elderly people living there. Think how you can help them in living a better and happy life.



### **INTEXT QUESTIONS 20.2**

1. What is substance abuse?

---

2. What is number one killer according to World Health Organization?

---

3. What is the expected population of the aged people in India by 2021?

---

4. What is the main reason for the elderly people not being looked after?

---

### **20.6 ISSUES OF POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT**

India is a large country in area. It is roughly 2.4 percent of the total area of the world. But do you know what percentage of the world's population it has? Well, it is about 16.7%. As per Census 2011, India's population is 1210 million. With such a huge population, some economic problems have developed. These are the problems of unemployment, inflation, poverty and price rise. A large section of our population lives under the poverty line. There is a huge unemployment. Inflation and price rise has added to the problem.

With a significant number of people living below the poverty line, its impact on socio-economically marginal families in the form of poor quality of life, disease, low literacy, malnutrition, and child labour becomes a serious concern. Nearly a quarter of the population that belongs to the scheduled category is almost entirely below poverty line. Poverty is a fundamental problem, hindering development objectives.

Unemployment is a situation where an able bodied person, willing to work fails to find a job to earn a living. Chronic unemployment and the consequent poverty are responsible for the erosion of human values. Under the compulsion of poverty, parents do not hesitate even to send their children to the labour market. Millions of children miss their childhood because of this phenomenon. They remain uneducated, and ignorant – which results in their unemployment or under-employment and consequent poverty.

**20.6.1 Beggary**

It is a painful experience to come across beggars wherever we go. At the market place, railway station, hospital, temple, even at road crossings, you will notice some people approaching you with open palms. They ask for money or food. We also see many children begging in the streets. Beggary is a major social problem in India. The major causes of beggary in our country are poverty and unemployment. These days many gangs are operating in our society as well, that thrives on begging in an organized manner. However beggary is a social curse which must be eradicated. If you see beggars on the road or elsewhere, tell them that begging is an offence punishable by law both for the one who is begging and the one who gives alms.

**Notes****20.7 PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN**

No country can progress unless it pays adequate attention to the development of children. A child is the future citizen of the country. Only those children who grow in a healthy atmosphere can contribute to the development and strength of their country. Our country has a large population of children. It is our duty to make sure that they are provided with the opportunities for good health and education.

A large number of children, because of poverty, do not go to school or are withdrawn from schools before they complete their elementary education and are forced to start working at a young and tender age in factories, brick-kilns, restaurants, hotels, shops etc. This hampers their growth physically, mentally, and emotionally. They grow with hatred and agony and fail to become worthy citizens of the nation.

A child in the age group of 6-14 years is supposed to be in the school. But unfortunately, of the 200 million Indian children in this age group, about 11.3 million are labourers. The estimate by NGOs puts it at 60 million, of which 2,00,000 work as domestic help and almost an equal number as bonded labourers. These children become vulnerable to physical and mental exploitation, they are starved, beaten and even sexually exploited. This is a serious problem and is generally known as 'child abuse'.

Right to Education Act, 2009 provides for education of all children between the age of 6-14 years of age. Once this cherished goal of education for all is achieved, the state of our children will be much better.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 20.3**

1. What is the population of India as per 2011 census?



**Notes**

2. What causes people to beg for money, food and clothes from other people?

3. If you come across a beggar, what advice would you give to him/her?

4. What is child abuse?



**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- The evils such as dowry, child labour, child abuse, drug abuse and drinking have assumed alarming proportions in recent times.
- Gender discrimination against women and girls and the related difficulties they face in Indian society is so rampant that it prevents them from realizing their full potential.
- Break down of the joint family system and the emergence of the nuclear family has increased the problems faced by elderly persons.
- Poverty and unemployment have detrimental effects upon the quality of life in society.



**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. How does casteism become a hindrance in selecting a profession of choice by an individual?
2. "Dowry is a social problem." Elaborate.
3. How is the development of female persons beneficial to a nation?
4. A Child is an asset of our country. Do you agree with this statement?
5. Do you think that Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 is effective for curbing dowry problem? Give a reasoned answer.
6. "Girls are the world's most squandered gift." Discuss.
7. Poverty and unemployment are the root cause of many social problems. Discuss.



**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS**

**20.1**

1. Society gets divided into artificial groups that tend to support the candidate who belongs to their caste. They do not pay much attention to the fact whether he/she is a deserving candidate or not.

**Notes**

2. A scheme for the protection of girl child, in which an amount is set aside at the time of the birth of a girl child which she gets when she completes eighteen years of age. This amount is used for the education or the marriage of the child.

3. The Dowry Prohibition Act in 1961

**20.2**

1. The habitual use of or dependence on harmful substances like liquor/alcoholic drinks, tobacco, bidis/cigarettes, drugs (for other than prescribed medical treatment) called substance abuse or addiction.

2. Tobacco

3. 137 million

4. With the joint family breaking down, especially in the urban areas, where nuclear families are the trend, the aged are increasingly becoming unwelcome members in their own families.

**20.3**

1. 1210 million

2. Poverty and unemployment

3. Begging is an offence punishable by law both for the one who is begging and the one who gives alms.

4. A child in the age group of 6-14 years is supposed to be in the school. But unfortunately, of the 200 million Indian children in this age group, about 11.3 million are labourers. The estimate by NGOs puts it at 60 million, of which 2,00,000 work as domestic help and almost an equal number as bonded labourers. These children become vulnerable to physical and mental exploitation, they are starved, beaten and even sexually exploited. This is a serious problem and is generally known as 'child abuse'.

**21**

## **SPREAD OF INDIAN CULTURE ABROAD**

**P**eople have started travelling a lot today. They go by road, by air, by sea, by rail and any other way they can. But do you know people travelled long distances even in those days when there were no trains or aeroplanes in India. India had been in contact with the outside world commercially right from about the middle of the third millennium B.C. Even though India is surrounded by sea on three sides and the Himalayan in the north but that did not stop Indians from interacting with the rest of the world. In fact they travelled far and wide and left their cultural footprints wherever they went. In return they also brought home ideas, impressions, customs and traditions from these distant lands. However, the most remarkable aspect of this contact has been the spread of Indian culture and civilization in various parts of the world, especially Central Asia, South East Asia, China, Japan, Korea etc. What is most remarkable of this spread is that it was not a spread by means of conquest or threat to life of an individual or society but by means of voluntary acceptance of cultural and spiritual values of India. In this lesson we shall find out how Indian culture spread to other countries and the impact it had on these countries. This lesson also brings forward the beautiful idea that peace and friendship with other nations, other societies, other religions and other cultures help our lives and make it more meaningful.



### **OBJECTIVES**

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- *explain various modes through which Indian culture spread abroad;*
- *identify the trade routes through which traders went and became the first cultural ambassadors to spread Indian culture;*





- *explain the role of ancient universities, teachers and missionaries in the spread of Indian culture;*
- *trace the spread of Indian culture in East Asia and the Southeast Asian countries;*
- *describe India's trade relations with the Roman empire;*
- *discuss the spread of Buddhism in many countries as a religion of peace;*
- *examine the impact of Sanskrit language on the language and literature of these countries;*
- *give an account of the popularity of Indian Epics, Indian Philosophy, Indian modes of administration and law in these countries;*
- *illustrate the shared heritage in the form of huge temples, sculptures and paintings produced over the centuries in these countries; and*
- *describe India's cultural interaction with the Arab civilization.*

### **21.1 SPREAD OF INDIAN CULTURE THROUGH TRADERS, TEACHERS, EMISSARIES AND MISSIONARIES**

In ancient times, traders from India went to distant lands in search of new opportunities in business. They went to Rome in the west and China in the east. As early as the first century BC, they travelled to countries like Indonesia and Cambodia in search of gold. They travelled especially to the islands of Java, Sumatra and Malaya. This is the reason why these countries were called Suvarnavdipa (*suvarna* means gold and *dvipa* means island). These traders travelled from many flourishing cities like Kashi, Mathura, Ujjain, Prayag and Pataliputra and from port cities on the east coast like Mamallapuram, Tamralipti, Puri, and Kaveripattanam. The kingdom of Kalinga had trade relations with Sri Lanka during the time of Emperor Ashoka. Wherever the traders went, they established cultural links with those places. In this way, the traders served as cultural ambassadors and established trade relations with the outside world.

Like the east coast, many cultural establishments have also been found on and near the west coast. Karle, Bhaja, Kanheri, Ajanta and Ellora are counted among the well known places. Most of these centres are Buddhist monastic establishments.

The universities were the most important centres of cultural interaction. They attracted large numbers of students and scholars. The scholars coming from abroad often visited the library of Nalanda University which was said to be a seven storey building. Students and teachers from such universities carried Indian culture abroad along with its knowledge and religion. The Chinese pilgrim Huiyen-tsang has given ample information about the universities he visited in India. For example, Huiyen-tsang describes his stay at two very important universities—one in the east, Nalanda and the other in the west, Valabhi.



## Notes

Vikramashila was another university that was situated on the right bank of the Ganges. The Tibetan scholar Taranatha has given its description. Teachers and scholars of this university were so famous that the Tibetan king is stated to have sent a mission to invite the head of the university to promote interest in common culture and indigenous wisdom.

Another university was Odantapuri in Bihar which grew in stature under the patronage of the Pala kings. A number of Monks migrated from this university and settled in Tibet.

Two Indian teachers went to China on an invitation from the Chinese Emperor in AD 67. Their names are Kashyapa Martanga and Dharmarakshita. They were followed by a number of teachers from universities like Nalanda, Takshila, Vikramashila and Odantapuri. When Acharya Kumarajiva went to China, the king requested him to translate Sanskrit texts into Chinese. The scholar Bodhidharma, who specialised in the philosophy of Yoga is still venerated in China and Japan.

Acharya Kamalasheel of Nalanda University was invited by the king of Tibet. After his death, the Tibetans embalmed his body and kept it in a monastery in Lhasa.

Another distinguished scholar was Jnanabhadra. He went to Tibet with his two sons to preach Dharma. A monastery was founded in Tibet on the model of Odantapuri University in Bihar.

The head of the Vikramashila University was Acharya Ateesha, also known as Dipankara Shreejnana. He went to Tibet in the eleventh century and gave a strong foundation to Buddhism in Tibet. Thonmi Sambhota, a Tibetan minister was a student at Nalanda when the Chinese pilgrim Huiyen-tsang visited India. Thonmi Sambhota studied there and after going back, he preached Buddhism in Tibet. A large number of Tibetans embraced Buddhism. Even the king became a Buddhist. He declared Buddhism as the State religion. Among the noteworthy teachers, Kumarajiva was active in the fifth century.

## 21.2 SPREAD OF INDIAN CULTURE THROUGH OTHER MODES

**Romas or Gypsies** Some groups of Indians went abroad as wanderers. They called themselves Romas and their language was Romani, but in Europe they are famous as Gypsies. They went towards the West, crossing the present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan. From there, their caravans went through Iran and Iraq to Turkey. Travelling through Persia, Taurus mountains and Constantinople, they spread to many countries of Europe. Today they live in Greece, Bulgaria, States of former Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Russia, Poland, Switzerland, France, Sweden, Denmark and England. It took them almost four hundred years to spread to these countries. By that time, though they had forgotten their original home, they did retain their language, customs, ways of living, and their professions.

The Romas are known for their dance and music as well. It is said that every Roma musician is a splendid artist.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.1****Notes**

1. Who spread our culture abroad?

---

2. Which two universities did Chinese pilgrim Huien–tsang visit?

---

3. Name the Tibetan scholar who gave a description of Vikramashila University?

---

4. Who were the two teachers who visited China during AD 67?

---

5. Why did Acharya Kumarajiva go to China?

---

6. Who were Gypsies in ancient times?

---

**21.3 INDIAN CULTURE IN CENTRAL ASIA**

From the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. onwards India maintained commercial contact with China, Central Asia, West Asia and the Roman empire. Central Asia is a landmass bound by China, Russia, Tibet, India and Afghanistan. Traders to and from China regularly crossed the region despite hardships. The route, that was opened by them, later became famous as the Silk Route. The route was so named because silk was one of the chief mercantile commodities of China. In later times, the same route was used by scholars monks and missionaries. The route served as a great channel for the transmission of cultures of the then known world. The impact of Indian culture was felt strongly in Central Asia.

Among the kingdoms of Central Asia, Kuchi was a very important and flourishing centre of the Indian culture. It was the kingdom where the Silk Route bifurcates and meets at the Dun-huang caves in China again. Thus, there is the Northern and the Southern Silk Route. The Northern route goes via Samarkand, Kashgarh, Tumshuk, Aksu, Karashahr, Turfan and Hami and the Southern route via Yarkand, Khotan, Keriya, Cherchen and Miran. Many Chinese and Indian scholars travelled through these routes in search of wisdom and to propagate the philosophy of Buddhism.



## Notes

Cultural exchanges that took place between India and the countries of Central Asia are visible from the discoveries of ancient stupas, temples, monasteries, images and paintings found in all these countries. Along the route there were resting places for Monks and Missionaries, for pilgrims and merchants and later these became famous centres of Buddhist learning. Silk and jade, horses and valuables changed hands, but the most lasting treasure that travelled along the route was Buddhism. Thus, the trade route transmitted religion and philosophy, ideas and beliefs, languages and literature, and art and culture.

Khotan was one of the most important outposts. It was on the Southern Silk Route.

The history of cultural relationship between India and the kingdom goes back to over two millennia. Khotan was famous for its silk industry, dance, music, literary pursuits, commercial activities and for gold and jade exports.

The history of the Indo-Khotanese relationship is witnessed by a continuous flow of teachers and monks from India to Khotan. Coins found from the first century AD bear engravings in Chinese on the obverse and Prakrit in Kharosthi script on the reverse providing evidence of a composite culture in Khotan. A large number of Sanskrit manuscripts, translations and transcriptions of Buddhist texts in Sanskrit were discovered from the monasteries buried in sand.

## 21.4 INDIAN CULTURE IN EAST ASIA

### China

The contact between India and China began around the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C. Indian culture first entered China with two monk scholars—Kashyapa Martanga and Dharmarakshita who went to China in AD 67 on the invitation of the Chinese Emperor Ming Ti.

After Kashyapa Martanga and Dharmarakshita, there was a continuous flow of scholars from India to China and from China to India. The Chinese were a highly cultured people. They listened to the thrilling stories of the Buddha with great attention. The Chinese who came in search of wisdom wrote about India and the Indian culture to such an extent that today they are the most important sources of Indian history. Prominent teachers from the Indian Universities and monasteries became famous in China. For example, a scholar named Bodhidharma went to China from Kanchipuram. He went to Nalanda, studied there and left for China. He carried the philosophy of Yoga with him and popularized the practice of '*dhyana*', (meditation), which was later known in China as *ch'an*. Bodhidharma became such an eminent figure that people began to worship him in China and Japan.

The Buddhists philosophy appealed to the Chinese intellectuals because they already had a developed philosophical school in Confucianism.



In the fourth century AD Wei Dynasty came to power in China. Its first Emperor declared Buddhism as the state religion. This gave an impetus to the spread of Buddhism in China. Thousands of Sanskrit books were translated into Chinese. Braving the hazards of a long and perilous journey they came to visit the land of the Buddha. They stayed in India and collected Buddhist relics and manuscripts related to Buddhism and learnt about it staying at the various educational centres.

With the spread of Buddhism, China began to build cave temples and monastic complexes on a large scale. Colossal images were carved on the rocks and caves were beautifully painted from the inside. Dun-huang, Yun-kang and Lung-men are among the most famous cave complexes in the world. Indian influences are quite evident on these complexes.

The two way traffic of scholars and monks was responsible for cultural contacts and exchange of ideas.

### **Korea**

Korea is situated on the Northeast of China. Korea received Indian cultural elements through China. Sundo was the first Buddhist Monk who entered Korea, carrying a Buddha image and sutras in AD 352. He was followed by Acharya Mallananda, who reached there in AD 384. In AD 404, an Indian monk built two temples in the Pyongyang city in Korea. He was followed by a number of teachers from India. They brought philosophy, religion, the art of making images, painting, and metallurgy. Many scholars came to India from Korea in search of knowledge. They were trained in astronomy, astrology, medicine and in several other fields of knowledge. Monasteries and temples acted as centres of devotion and learning all over Korea. A large number of Buddhist texts were translated there.

The philosophy of '*dhyana yoga*' reached Korea in the eighth to ninth century AD. The kings and queens, princes and ministers, even warriors began to practise yoga to be brave and fearless. Out of devotion to wisdom, Buddhist texts were printed by the Koreans in six thousand volumes. Indian scripts had also reached Korea by then.

### **Japan**

The story of Indian culture in Japan is believed to go back to more than fifteen hundred years. But the earliest historical evidence of Indian culture going to Japan is from AD 552. At that time, the Korean Emperor sent a Buddhist statue, sutras, instruments for worship, artists, sculptors, painters and architects as gifts for the Japanese Emperor.

Soon, Buddhism was given the status of State Religion. Thousands of Japanese became monks and nuns.

Sanskrit was accepted as the sacred language in Japan. Monks were given special training



## Notes

to write the Sanskrit syllables and mantras. The script in which all these are written is known as 'Shittan'. Shittan is believed to be Siddham, the script that gives 'siddhi' (accomplishment).

Even today, there is a keen desire among the Japanese scholars to learn Sanskrit. As the language of Buddhist scriptures, it is a cementing force between India and Japan. Buddhist sutras, translated into Chinese, were brought to Japan during the time of Prince Shotokutaishi in the seventh century, who was highly impressed by their philosophy.

**Tibet**

Tibet is situated on a plateau to the north of the Himalayas. The people of Tibet are Buddhists. The Tibetan king Naradeva is believed to have sent his minister Thonmi Sambhot accompanied by sixteen outstanding scholars to Magadha where they studied under Indian teachers. After sometime, Thonmi Sambhot went to Kashmir. It is said that he devised a new script for Tibet in the seventh century on the basis of Indian alphabets of the Brahmi script. Till today, the same script is being used in Tibet. It also influenced the scripts of Mongolia and Manchuria.

It seems Thonmi Sambhot carried with him a number of books from India. On going back to Tibet, he wrote a new grammar for the Tibetans which is said to be based on the Sanskrit grammar written by Panini. The king was so attracted to the literature brought by him that he devoted four years to study them. He laid the foundation for the translation of Sanskrit books into Tibetan. As a result, from seventh to seventeenth century, there were continuous effort on translation. According to this tradition, ninety-six thousand Sanskrit books were translated into Tibetan.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.2**

1. Why was the route to China named as silk route?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Where is Kuchi? Why is it famous?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Where were the coins of the first century AD bearing engraving in Chinese on the obverse and Prakrit in Kharosthi script on the reverse discovered?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are Dun-huang, Yun-kang and Lung-men?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. When did the philosophy of 'dhyana yoga' reach Korea?  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Notes**

6. How did Indian culture reach Japan?

7. What is known as Shittan in Japan?

8. How many books of Sanskrit language got translated into Tibetan during seventh century to seventeenth century AD?

## 21.5 INDIAN CULTURE IN SRI LANKA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

### Sri Lanka

You might have read the great epic called Ramayana in which Lord Rama, King of Ayodhya goes to Sri Lanka to bring back Sita. It is possible that the Lanka of that time and Sri Lanka might be different places. King Ashoka made great efforts to propagate Buddhism outside India. He sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Sri Lanka to spread the message of the Buddha. A number of other scholars also joined them. It is said that they carried a cutting of the Bodhi tree from Bodhgaya which was planted there. At that time Devanampiya Tissa was the king of Sri Lanka. The teachings of the Buddha were transmitted orally by the people who had gone from India. For around two hundred years, the people of Sri Lanka preserved the recitation of Buddhist scriptures as transmitted by Mahendra. The first monasteries built there are Mahavihar and Abhayagiri.

Sri Lanka became a stronghold of Buddhism and continues to be so even today. Pali became their literary language. Buddhism played an important role in shaping Sri Lankan culture. The Dipavansa and Mahavamsa are well known Sri Lankan Buddhist sources.

With Buddhism, Indian Art forms also reached Sri Lanka, where the themes, styles and techniques of paintings, dance, folklores and art and architecture were taken from India. The most renowned paintings of Sri Lanka are found in the cave-shelter monasteries at Sigiriya. King Kashyap is believed to have converted it into a fortified place in the fifth century AD. Figures painted in the cave are in the Amaravati style of India.

### Myanmar

People and culture of India began to reach Myanmar in the beginning of the Christian era. Myanmar is situated on the route to China. People coming from the port towns of Amaravati and Tamralipti often settled down in Myanmar after the second century AD. The people who had migrated included traders, brahmins, artists, craftsmen and others.



## Notes

In Burma, Pagan was a great centre of Buddhist culture from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. It is still famous for its magnificent Pagodas. King Aniruddha was a great builder who built Shwezegon Pagoda and about a thousand other temples. They also developed their own Pali language and translated both Buddhist and Hindu scriptures in their version of Pali.

Indian traditions were quite strong at the Burmese court. Up to the recent times the court astrologers, soothsayers and professors were known to be brahmins called *ponnas*. Most of them were believed to be from Manipur. Pundits were said to be very active. They were also known for their knowledge of science, medicine, and astrology.

**Thailand**

Till the year 1939, Thailand was called Siam, its original name. Indian cultural influences began to reach there in the first century AD. It was first carried by Indian traders, followed by teachers and missionaries. The Thai kingdoms were given Sanskrit names such as Dwaravati, Shrivijay, Sukhodaya and Ayutthiya. The names of their cities also indicate a strong cultural interflow. For example, Kanchanaburi is from Kanchanapuri, Rajburi is from Rajpuri, Lobpuri is Lavapuri, and names of the cities like Prachinaburi, Singhaburi are all derived from Sanskrit. Even the names of the streets like Rajaram, Rajajrani, Mahajaya and Cakravamsha remind us of the popularity of the Ramayana.

Brahminical images and Buddhist temples began to be constructed in third and fourth century AD. The earliest images found from Thailand are those of Lord Vishnu.

At different points of time, the Thai kingdom was shifted from one place to another. At every place a number of temples were built. Ayutthiya (Ayodhya) is one such place where large number of temples still stand though today most of the temples there are in ruins. There are four hundred temples in Bangkok, the present capital of Thailand.

**Cambodia**

The famous kingdoms of Champa (Annam) and Kamhuja (Cambodia) were ruled by the kings of Indian origins. The history of deep-rooted cultural relationship between India and Cambodia goes back to the first and second centuries AD. In Kamhuja, Kaundinya dynasty of Indian origin ruled from the first century A.D. We can reconstruct their history from numerous Sanskrit inscriptions and from literary works. We can also see their splendour from the magnificent temples.

Cambodians constructed huge monuments and embellished them with sculptural representations of Shiva, Vishnu, Buddha and other divinities from Indian Epics and the Puranas. The episodes from these texts were chosen by the kings to symbolise great historical events. Sanskrit remained their language for administration till the fourteenth century.

**Notes**

Their kings bore Sanskrit names. Brahmins assumed the highest position. The government was run according to the Hindu polity and Brahminical jurisprudence. Ashrams were maintained in temple vicinities as seats of learning. A large number of localities were given Indian names like Tamrapura, Dhruvapura and Vikramapura. The name of months in their language are known as *chet*, *bisak*, *jes*, *asadh* and so on. In fact, thousands of such words are still in use with a slight variation in pronunciation.

Angkor Vat is supposed to be the abode of Vishnu, that is, Vaikunthadhama. Its five towers are said to be the five peaks of the Sumeru mountain. The king Suryavarman is portrayed there as an incarnation of Vishnu who had attained a place in heaven because of his meritorious deeds. The temple represents a square mile of construction with a broad moat running around adding to its spectacular charm. Scenes from Ramayana and Mahabharata are engraved on the walls of this temple. The largest among all of them is the scene of *Samudra manthan* that is churning of the ocean.

Another grand temple constructed at Yashodharapura in the eleventh century, known as Baphuon, is embellished by scenes from the epics such as the battle between Rama and Ravana, Shiva on mount Kailasha with Parvati and the destruction of Kamadeva.

### **Vietnam (Champa)**

Indian culture was carried to the distant land of Vietnam by a number of enterprising traders and princes who migrated and established themselves as pioneers in the field of politics and economics. They named the cities there as Indrapura, Amaravati, Vijaya, Kauthara and Panduranga.

The people of Champa are called Cham. They built a large number of Hindu and Buddhist temples. The Cham people worshipped Shiva, Ganesha, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Parvati, Buddha and Lokeshwara. Images of these deities and Shivalingas were housed in the temples. Most of the temples are in ruin now.

### **Malaysia**

Malaysia was known to us since ancient times. There are references in the Ramayana, the Jataka stories, Malindapanha, Shilapadikaram, Raghuvamsha and many other works. Evidence of Shaivism has been discovered in Kedah and in the province of Wellesly. Female figurines with trident have been unearthed. The Head of a Nandi made of granite stone, a relief of Durga image, Ganesha and Shivalingas belonging to the seventh and eighth centuries have been discovered from various sites.

Brahmi, in its late form, was the script of ancient Malaysia. Tablets of Buddhist texts written in a script that resembles old Tamil have been found at Kedah. Sanskrit was one of the source languages for them. Till today a fairly large number of Sanskrit words can be seen in their language, for example, *svarga*, *rasa*, *guna*, *dahda*, *mantri*, *dhapati*, and *laksha*. Hanuman and Garuda were known in Malaysia for their superhuman qualities.



## Notes

Sanskrit inscriptions are the earliest records of our cultural relations with Malaysia. They are written in Indian script of fourth and fifth centuries AD. The most important inscription is from Ligor. Over fifty temples were found around this place.

## Indonesia

In the field of religious architecture, the largest Shiva temple in Indonesia is situated in the island of Java. It is called Prambanan. It was built in the ninth century. It has a Shiva temple flanked by Vishnu and Brahma temples. Opposite these three temples are temples constructed for their *vahanas*. They are Nandi (Bull) for Shiva, Garuda for Vishnu and Goose for Brahma. In between the two rows are the temples dedicated to Durga and Ganesh, numbering eight in all, surrounded by 240 small temples. It is an example of wonderful architecture. The stories of Ramayana and Krishna, carved on the walls of the temple, are the oldest representations in the world.

Sanskrit hymns are recited at the time of puja. Over five hundred hymns, *stotras* dedicated to Shiva, Brahma, Durga, Ganesha, Buddha, and many other deities have been discovered from Bali. In fact Bali is the only country where Hindu culture flourished and survived. Today, while the entire Archipelago has accepted Islam, Bali still follows Hindu culture and religion.

A large number of scriptural works have been found from Java. They are mostly written on palm leaves in their ancient script called Kawi. Kawi script was devised on the basis of Brahmi. Some of them contain Sanskrit verses (*shlokas*) followed by commentary in Kawi language. Among the texts on Shaiva religion and philosophy, *Bhuvanakosha* is the earliest and the longest text. This has five hundred and twenty five shlokas in Sanskrit. A commentary is written to explain the meaning.

Perhaps no other region in the world has felt the impact of India's culture and religion as South East Asia. The most important source of study of the remains of this cultural intercourse and impact are the Sanskrit inscriptions written in Indian script. They have been found all over this region and a study of these inscriptions and other literature shows that the language, literature, religious, political and social institutions were greatly influenced by India. The Varna system and the division of society into the four castes i.e. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras was known to them. But the system was not as rigid as in India. It was more like in the Rig Vedic age where the society was divided on the basis of profession and not on the basis of birth especially in Bali. Even some of their marriage customs are similar.

The most popular form of amusement was the shadow play called Wayung (like the Indian puppet shows) where the themes are derived mainly from the epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata, still very popular in South East Asia.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.3

1. Name the first two monasteries of Sri Lanka?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How did Buddhism reach Sri Lanka?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which language became the literary language of Sri Lanka?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is Angkor Wat?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What are the five towers of Angkor Wat called?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is portrayed at the Angkor Wat? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What does the Angkor Wat temple represent?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What is engraved on the walls of Angkor Wat?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Which is the most important scene engraved on the walls of Angkor Wat?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What is embellished at Baphuon?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Name some cities of Vietnam (Champa) whose name were based on Indian culture?  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Where were evidences of Shaivism discovered in Malaysia?  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. What are some of the important figurines unearthed in Malaysia?  
\_\_\_\_\_



Notes



14. Which are some of the words of Sanskrit find place in the Malaysian language?

---

15. Which is the most important inscription of the fourth and fifth centuries AD in Malaysia?

---

16. How many temples were found at Ligor?

---

17. What is Prambanan?

---

18. What is constructed opposite the three temples of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma?

---

19. How many temples are there in the Java island of Indonesia?

---

20. Which stories were carved on the walls of the temples in Indonesia?

---

21. What was discovered at Bali in Indonesia?

---

## 21.6 CONTACTS BETWEEN INDIA AND THE ARAB CIVILIZATION

India's links with West Asia, by land as well as sea routes, goes back to very ancient times. These ties between the two culture zones (the idea of nations had not yet developed) became particularly close with the rise and spread of Islamic civilization in West Asia. About the economic aspects of this relationship, we have from about mid-ninth century AD a number of accounts by Arab and other travellers, such as Sulaiman, the Merchant, Al-Masudi, Ibn Hauqal, Al Idrisi, etc, which attest to a flourishing commercial exchange between these areas. Evidence for a very active interaction in the cultural sphere, however, goes back to the eighth century and earlier.

The fruitful cultural intercourse between India and West Asia is evident in many areas. We shall see here how the Islamic world was enriched as a result of this. In the field of astronomy, two important works namely the *Brahma-sphuta-siddhanta* better known to the Arab world as *Sindhin* and *Khandakhadyaka* (known as *Arkand*) were brought to Baghdad by embassies from Sindh. With the help of Indian scholars of these embassies, they were



**Notes**

translated into Arabic by Alfabari, who probably also assisted Yakub Iun Tarik. Later Aryabhata's and Varahamihira's works on astronomy were also studied and incorporated into the scientific literature of the Arabs.

Another important contribution of India to Arab civilization was mathematics. The Arabs acknowledged their debt to India by calling mathematics '*hindisa*' (pertaining to India). Indian mathematics, in fact, became their favourite field of study and discussion, its popularity being enhanced by the works of Alkindi among others. They were quick to appreciate the revolutionary character of the Indian decimal system with its concept of zero; a contemporary Syrian scholar paid glowing tribute to it: 'I wish only to say that this computation is done by means of nine signs. If those who believe, because they speak Greek, that they have reached the limits of science, should know these things, they would be convinced that there are also others who know something'.

A number of Arab sources dating back to the tenth and thirteenth centuries inform us about several Indian works on medicine and therapeutics that were rendered into Arabic at the behest of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid, the ruler of Baghdad from AD 786 to 809. Indian scholars were also involved in these translations. For instance, the *Sushruta Samhita* was translated by an Indian called Mankh in Arabic.

Apart from astronomy, astrology, mathematics, and medicine, Arabs admired with keen interest many other aspects of Indian culture and civilization as well. They translated Indian works on a wide variety of subjects, but did not remain satisfied with the translations and went on to work out original compositions based on or derived from the treatises they translated. The other fields of Indian knowledge they studied included works on snake poison, veterinary art and books on logic, philosophy, ethics, politics and science of war. In the process their vocabulary was also enriched considerably. For instance, in the field of shipping, of which they were renowned masters, you can easily identify a number of Arabic words that had Indian origin: *hoorti* (a small boat) from *hori*, *banavi* from *baniya* or *vanik*, *donij* from *dongi* and so on.

## 21.7 INDIA'S CONTACT WITH ROME

It was Southern India which had the monopoly of the products that were in great demand in the West. In fact, the first three centuries of the Christian era saw a profitable sea-borne trade with the West represented mainly by the Roman Empire which had become India's best customer. This trade happened mostly in South India and is testified both by literary texts and finds of Roman coins specially at Coimbatore and Madurai. Items like pepper, betel, spices, scents and precious stones like beryl, gem, diamond, ruby and amethyst, pearls, ivory, silk and muslins were in great demand. This trade with Rome was bound to bring in gold to India which gave her a favourable position in trade and established a stable gold currency for the Kushana empire of those days. The Tamil kings even employed '*yavanas*' to guard their tents on the battlefield and the gates of Madurai. In ancient India the term '*yavana*' was used for people belonging to Western Asia and the Mediterranean

**Notes**

region and included Greeks and Romans. Some historians feel that the 'yavana' bodyguards might have included Roman legionaries.

By this time Kaveripattinam had become a very important centre of foreign trade. At Kaveripattinam raised platforms, godowns and warehouses for storing goods unloaded from ships were constructed on the beach. These goods were stamped with the 'Tiger' emblem of the Cholas after payment of customs duty and then passed on to merchants' warehouses (pattinappalai). Close by were "settlements of Yavana merchants and quarters of foreign traders speaking various tongues". They were served by a big bazar where all necessary things were available. Here one could find "vendors of fragrant pastes and powders, of flowers and incense; tailors who worked on silk, wool or cotton; traders in sandal, coral, pearl, gold and precious stones; grain merchants; washer men; dealers in fish and salts; butchers; blacksmiths, carpenters, coppersmiths, goldsmiths; painters, sculptors, cobblers and toy-makers. There were also horses brought to the market from distant lands beyond the seas."

Most of these goods were gathered for export. According to Pliny, India's exports included pepper and ginger which fetched a price that was a hundred times more than their original value. There was also a demand for incenses, spices and aromatics from India. Lavish consumption of these commodities took place in Rome.

The importance of trade with foreigners was quite high as one can understand from the number of ambassadors that were either sent to or received by the Indian kings. A Pandya king sent an ambassador to Roman Emperor Augustus of the first century BC. Ambassadors were also sent to Troy after AD 99. Claudius (from Ceylon), Trajan, Antonmis, Puis, Instiman and other ambassadors adorned the courts of various Indian kings.

The volume of trade with Rome was so high that to facilitate its movement, ports like Sopara, and Barygaza (Broach) came to be built in the west coast, while the Coromandal coast in the east carried on trade with "Golden Chersonese (Suvarnabhumi) and Golden Chyrse (Suvarnavipa)". The Chola kings equipped their ports with lighthouses, exhibiting blazing lights at night to guide ships to ports. At a site called Arikamedu near Pondicherry specimens of the famous Italian pottery known as Arretine with the Italian potter's stamps imprinted on them and the fragment of a Roman lamp have also been found.

There is evidence of foreign trade in the Andhra region as well. Some of its ports and inland towns took part in this trade. Thus, the town of Paithana (Pratishthana) shipped abroad stones, tagara, cotton, muslin and other textiles. The Andhra king Yajnasri issued a rare type of coin figuring the ship as the symbol of the state's sea-borne trade.

## 21.8 THE SHIPS AND FOREIGN TRADE

Trade thus became a very important mode that helped in the spread of Indian culture abroad. Even in very ancient times our ships could sail across the vast open seas and reach

**Notes**

foreign shores to establish commercial ties with several countries. The literature, art and sculpture of the neighbouring countries clearly shows the influence of Indian culture and civilization. Even in places like Surinam and the Caribbean Islands that are as far as the American coast, there is evidence of ancient Indian culture.

Samudra Gupta (AD 340-380) not only had a powerful army but also had a strong navy. Some inscriptions discovered in the Trans-Gangetic Peninsula and the Malaya Archipelago testify to the activities of Indian navigators in the Gupta age. Hsuan-tsang, who visited India during the reign of Emperor Harsha (AD 606-647), has also written a detailed description of India during those times. The Chola rulers had built a strong navy and conducted raids across the sea.

The Portuguese have noted that some merchants in India owned as many as fifty ships. According to them, it was a usual practice for the merchants to have their own ships.

Certain objects belonging to the Indus Civilization found at various sites in the West prove that there were trade and cultural contacts with the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations in the third millennium BC. India also had contacts with ancient Persia, Greece and Rome which provided a great impetus to the exchange of cultural, religious and social ideas. This flourishing trade contact with the Roman Empire is confirmed by the Roman historian Pliny who deplored the drain of wealth from Rome to India.

## **21.9 WHAT DID THE INDIANS LEARN FROM THIS CONTACT**

The Indians learnt many new things from the foreigners for examples minting of gold coins from the people of Greece and Rome. They learnt the art of making silk from China. They learnt how to grow betel from Indonesia. They established trade contact with the foreigners. The art and culture of the various countries got itself reflected over the Indian culture, but than this was reflected in the other countries also.



### **INTEXT QUESTIONS 21.4**

1. How old is economic relations between India and Arab?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Name some of the prominent travellers of Arab.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Name the two astronomical works given to Arab world by India.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Notes**

4. What was the contribution of India in the field of mathematics to the Arabs?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Who translated Sushruta Samhita into Arabic?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. At whose behest, Indian works on medicine and therapeutics were rendered into Arabic?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What other fields of Indian knowledge was studied by Arabs?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Where were Roman coins found in India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What were the things in great demand in Arab?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. How was a stable gold currency established for the Kushana empire?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Who were Yavanas?  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What was the work of Yavanas in ancient India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Where were specimens of famous Italian pottery Arretine found in India?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Which Andhra kings issued a rare type of coin figuring the ship as the symbol of state's seaborne trade?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- Indian culture spread to various parts of the world in ancient times through different modes.
- Indian Universities were famous for their standards of education which attracted students from many countries. These students acted as agents for spreading Indian culture.



- Sanskrit/Buddhist texts were translated into different languages. They became the best modes to spread Indian culture.
- A large number of monasteries and temples were built in all these countries where Indian culture and religion reached.
- Indian art styles were adopted by the artists of many countries.
- Indian Epics are famous in many countries. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are popular Epics in Southeast Asian countries.
- Sri Lanka was the first country to embrace Buddhism.
- Indian script Brahmi was the model for many scripts in the Southeast Asian countries.
- A large number of Sanskrit inscriptions found in these countries are the major sources for the history of Indo-Asian cultural connections.
- Buddhism is a living religion in countries like Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia.
- An important contribution of India to Arab civilization was mathematics.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. What were the various modes through which Indian culture spread abroad?
2. What was the role of the ancient universities in spreading Indian culture abroad?
3. How would Buddhism reach the countries of East Asia as a religion of peace?
4. Give an account of the Indian culture in Thailand?
5. Describe the religious architecture of Indonesia?
6. Briefly describe India's trade relations with the Roman Empire.
7. Ancient India had a great access to sea and foreign trade. Discuss.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****21.1**

1. Traders, teachers, emissaries and missionaries.
2. Nalanda and Valabhi universities.
3. Taranatha, the Tibetan scholar.
4. Kashyapa Martanga and Dharmarakshita

**Notes**

5. He went on the request of the king to get some Sanskrit texts translated into Chinese.
6. People who left India and wandered in Europe or settled there, were the ambassadors of Indian culture abroad.

**21.2**

1. Because silk was the main mercantile commodity of China.
2. Kuchi was in Central Asia. It was a famous centre of Indian culture. Silk route bifurcated here.
3. Khotan an oasis kingdom.
4. Famous cave complexes of the world
5. In the eighth to ninth century AD
6. Indian culture reached Japan through Korea. In 552 AD the Korean emperor sent a Buddha statue, sutras, implements for worship, artists, sculptors, painters, and architects as gifts for Japanese emperor.
7. A script in which mantras and syllables are written in known as shittan.
8. 96,000 Sanskrit books.

**19.3**

1. Mahavihar and Abhayagiri
2. It was Ashoka who sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra along with a delegation to Sri Lanka. A branch of Bodhi tree from Bodhgaya was planted here.
3. Pali
4. It is supposed to be the abode of Vishnu.
5. They are called the five peaks of the Sumeru Mountain.
6. The king Suryavarman is portrayed as an incarnation of Vishnu. He had attained a place in heaven because of his meritorious deeds.
7. It represents a square mile of construction with a broad moat running around adding to its spectacular charm.
8. Scenes from Ramayana and Mahabharata are engraved on the walls of this temple.
9. The scene of Samudra manthan(churning of the ocean)
10. Scenes from the epics of Rama and Ravana, Shiva on mount Kailasha with Parvati and the destruction of Kamdeva.
11. Indrapura, Amaravati, Vijaya, Kauthara, Panduranga.
12. In Kedah and in the province of Wellesly



**Notes**

13. Female figurines with trident, the head of Nandi, a relief of Durga image, Ganesha and Shivlingas.
14. Some words are svarga, rasa, guna, dahda, mantri, dhipati, laksha
15. The most important inscription is from Ligor.
16. Over fifty temples.
17. The largest Shiva temple on the island of Java is called Prambanan.
18. There are temples of vahanas of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma
19. Eight big temples, surrounded by 240 small temples.
20. Ramayana and Krishna
21. Over five hundred hymns, stotras dedicated to Shiva, Brahma, Durga, Ganesha, Buddha and many other deities have been discovered.

**21.4**

1. It started in the ninth century AD.
2. Sulaiman the merchant, Al-masudi, Ibn Hauqal, Al Idrisi.
3. (a)Brahma-sphuta – siddhanta better known as Sindhin in Arab.(b) Khandakhadyaka – known as Arkand.
4. The decimal system with its concept of zero.
5. Mankh
6. Caliph Harun al-Rashid.
7. Works on snake poison, veterinary art and books on logic, philosophy, ethics, politics and science of war.
8. At Coimbatore and Madurai
9. Items like pepper, betel, spices, scents, precious stones likes beryl, gem, diamond, ruby, amenthyst, pearls, ivory, silk, muslins.
10. The trade with Rome brought in gold to India. This established a stable gold currency for the Kushana Empire.
11. People belonging to Western Asia and the Mediterranean region. It included Greeks and Romans.
12. Guarding tents on the battle fields and the gates of Madurai.
13. At a site called Arikamedu near Pondicherry.
14. Yajnasri.