

Module 5

Old and New Religion

Religion

- i) collective belief in a supernatural agency
- ii) closely connected with the social and economic organisation of local communities
- iii) as the social worlds alters so do the beliefs

Changes in Hinduism

- i) the worship of new deities
- ii) the construction of temples by royalty
- iii) the growing importance of Brahmins,

Importance of Brahmins

Brahmins earned a lot of respect in society because of their knowledge of Sanskrit. Their dominant position was consolidated by the support of their patrons. A patron is an influential, wealthy individual who supports another person-an artist, a craftsman, learned man. New rulers aspiring for fame used the services of Brahmins for writing their prashasti.

Bhakti movement

Idea of bhakti is of a loving, personal deity that devotees could reach without the aid of priests or elaborate rituals.



Images of Bhakti Saints



New Religion-Islam

Merchants and migrants first brought the teachings of the holy Quran to India in the seventh century. Muslims regard the Quran as their holy book and accept the sovereignty of the one God, Allah, whose love, mercy and bounty embrace all those who believe in Him, without regard to social background.

Various interpretation of Islam

i) Shia Muslims

ii) Sunni Muslims

The Shia Muslims believed that the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali, was the legitimate leader of the Muslim community, and the Sunni Muslims accepted the authority of the early leaders (Khalifas) of the community, and the succeeding Khalifas.

Time and Historical Periods

The study historical time is made easier by dividing it into periods. In the middle of the nineteenth century British historians divided the history of India into three periods:

- i) Hindu
- ii) Muslim
- iii) British

Demerits of this division

It is based on the idea that the religion of rulers was the only important historical change, and that there were no other significant developments – in the economy, society or culture. Such a division ignored the rich diversity of the subcontinent.

Another division of time

i) Ancient-- includes a wide range of early societies – hunter-gatherers, early farmers, people living in towns and villages, and early empires and kingdoms.

ii) Medieval-- includes the spread of peasant societies, the rise of regional and imperial state formations – sometimes at the cost of pastoral and forest people – the development of Hinduism and Islam as major religions and the arrival of European trading companies.

iii) Modern-- the “medieval” period is often contrasted with the “modern” period. “Modernity” carries with it a sense of material progress and intellectual advancement.