

APPOLO STUDY CENTRE

VEDIC AGE, RELIGION

6th term II

Unit 1

Vedic Culture in North India and Megalithic Culture in South India

Vedic Age

- The first phase of urbanisation in India came to an end with the decline of Indus Civilisation. A new era, called Vedic Age began with the arrival of Aryans.

Vedic Age - It is a period in the History of India between 1500 BC (BCE) - 600 BC (BCE). It gets its name from four 'Vedas'.

Who were the Aryans?

- The Aryans were Indo-Aryan language speaking, semi nomadic pastoralists.
- They came from Central Asia in several waves of migration through Khyber Pass of Hindu Kush Mountains.
- Though cattle rearing was their main occupation, they also practised slash and burn agriculture.

Slash and burn agriculture - It is a farming method that involves clearing the land by cutting and burning all the trees and plants on it. Cultivation is done

there for a short time and then abandoned. People then move to a new piece of land for cultivation.

Time, Spread and Sources	
Geographical range	North India
Period	Iron Age
Time	1500 BC (BCE) - 600 BC (BCE)
Sources	Vedic Literature
Nature of Civilisation	Rural

Aryans and their Home in India

- Aryans of the Rig Vedic Period were semi-nomadic. They were basically pastoral people with cattle as their main source of wealth.
- In the Rig Vedic times, the Aryan homeland was the Punjab, which was at that time called Sapta Sindhu, the land of seven rivers.
- Around 1000 BC (BCE), Aryans in India moved eastward and settled in Indo-Gangetic Plain.
- Use of iron axes and ploughs became widespread.

Four Vedas 1. Rig 2. Yajur 3. Sama 4. Atharva

Sources

Vedic literature

Vedic literature can be classified into two broad categories.

1. **Shrutis** - The Shrutis comprise the four Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. They are considered sacred, eternal, and an unquestionable truth. 'Shruti' means listening (or unwritten) ones that were transmitted orally through generations.
2. **Smritis** - A body of texts containing teachings on religion such as Ithihasas, Puranas, Tantras and Agamas. Smritis are not eternal. They are constantly revised.
'Smriti' means definite and written literature.

National Motto

“Satyameva Jayate” “(Truth alone triumphs)” is taken from Mundaka Upanishad.

Archaeological Sources

- Material remains such as iron implements and pottery from the archaeological sites in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan along the Indus and the Ganges.

Vedic Culture

Polity and Society

- The Rig Vedic polity was kinship - based. Kula (clan) was the basic unit of the polity. It was under a head called Kulapati. Several families joined together to form a Grama (village). Grama was headed by Gramani. A group of villages was called Vis (clan) and was headed by Vishayapati. Rajan was the head of the Jana (tribe) and he was addressed as Janasyagopa (guardian of the people). There were several tribal kingdoms (Rashtras) during Rig Vedic period (Bharatas, Matsyas, Puras).

King

- The main responsibility of the Rajan was to protect his tribe. His powers were limited by tribal assemblies namely Vidhata, Sabha, Samiti and Gana. Of these Vidhata, (the tribal assembly) was the oldest.

Sabha - a council of elders.

Samiti - assembly of people

- The king appointed a purohit (chief priest) to assist him. In economic, political and military matters, the king was assisted by the Senani (army chief). Gramani was the leader of the village.
- When the Aryans moved east ward- into Ganges-Yamuna-Doab regions, the early settlements were replaced by territorial kingdoms. Hereditary kingship began to emerge. In the monarchical form of government, the power of the king increased and he performed various rituals and sacrifices to make his position strong.

- Many Janas or Tribes were amalgamated to form Janapadas or Rashtras in later Vedic period. The importance of Samithi and Sabha diminished and the Vidhata completely disappeared. New states emerged. Bali was a voluntary contribution of the people to the King. In the later Vedic period bali was treated as tax and collected regularly. The Kuru and Panchala kingdoms flourished and large cities like Ayodhya, Indraprastha and Mathura also emerged during this period.

Bali - a tax consisting of 1/6 of the agricultural produce or cattle for a person.

Social Organization

- The Vedic family was patriarchal. The fair complexioned Aryans distinguished themselves from dark complexioned non-Aryans whom they called Dasyus and Dasas. Within the early Vedic Society there were three divisions (Treyi) ; the general public were called Vis, the warrior class was called Kshatriyas and the Priestly class was named Brahmanas. At a later stage, when the Aryans had to accommodate non-Aryan skilled workers in their social arrangement, a rigid four-fold Varna system was developed, i.e., the priestly Brahmanas, the warrior Kshatriyas, the land owning Vysyas and the skilled workers sudras. Thus a graded social order emerged.
- Although the Vedic Age is evidenced by good number of texts, it does not have adequate amount of material evidences.

Status of women

- In Rig Vedic society, women relatively enjoyed some freedom. The wife was respected as the mistress of the household. She could perform rituals along with her husband in their house. Child marriage and sati were unknown. There was no bar on the remarriage of widows. Nevertheless, the women were denied right to inherit property from their parents. They played no role in public affairs.
- In the later Vedic period the role of women in society, as well as their status, even within the family, declined. Women could no longer perform rituals in the family. The rules of marriage became much more complex and rigid. Polygamy became common. Widow remarriage was not

encouraged. Education was denied to women. Intercaste marriages were spurned.

Economic Life

- Economy in the Vedic period was sustained by a combination of pastoralism and agriculture. Though occupation of Rig Vedic Aryans was cattle rearing, there were carpenters, chariot makers, potters, smiths, weavers, and leather workers. **Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP)** was attributed to this period. Horses, cows, goats, sheep, oxen and dogs were domesticated.
- When Aryans permanently settled in Sindh and the Punjab regions they began to practise agriculture. The staple crop was yava (barley). There is no mention of wheat or cotton in the Rig-Veda, though both were cultivated by the Indus people. Two crops a year were raised.
- In the later Vedic period the Aryans tamed elephants, apart from cow, goat, sheep and horse. In addition to craftsmen of early Vedic period there were also jewellers, dyers and smelters. Pottery of this period was **Painted Grey Ware Culture**.
- Use of iron plough and axe helped to put more areas of land under cultivation. Crops of wheat, rice and barley were cultivated. With the growth of agriculture, the idea of private possession of land came into existence. New crafts and arts developed leading to surplus production of commodities for sale.
- Trade became extensive. Barter system was prevalent (exchange of goods). They used Nishka, Satmana (gold coins) and Krishnala (silver coins) for business transactions.

Metals Known to Rig Vedic People

- Gold (Hiranya)
- Iron (Shyama)
- Copper/ Bronze (Ayas)

Religion

- Rig Vedic Aryans worshipped mostly the earthly and celestial gods like Prithvi (Earth), Agni (fire), Vayu (wind), Varuna (rain), Indra (Thunder). There were also lesser female deities like Aditi (goddess of eternity) and Usha (appearance of dawn). Their religion was Yajna centered. The mode of prayer was recitation of Vedic hymns. People prayed for the welfare of Praja (children) Pasu (cattle) and Dhana (wealth). Cow was considered a sacred animal. There were no temples. Idol worship had not yet come into existence.
- Later on priesthood became a profession and a hereditary one. New gods were perhaps adopted from non-Aryans. Indra and Agni lost their importance. Prajapathi (the creator) Vishnu (the protector) and Rudra (the destroyer) became prominent. Sacrifices and rituals became more elaborate.

Education

Gurukula System of Education

- The gurukula system is an ancient learning method.
- The word Gurukula is a combination of the Sanskrit Word Guru (teacher or master) and Kula (family or home).
- The shishyas resided with their guru and served them and simultaneously learnt and gained knowledge.
- The students received education through oral tradition meaning rote learning, and were required to memorise everything.
- The subjects of the study included the four Vedas, Ithihasas, Puranas, grammar, logic, ethics, astrology, maths and military science.
- The students were also trained to lead a disciplined life.
- Only Dvijas could be Shishyas. No women could have formal education.

Age - based Ashramas

- Towards the end of the later Vedic period, the concept of four stages in life (the four ashramas) developed.
 - Brahmacharya (Student Life)
 - Grihastha (Married Life)
 - Vanaprastha (Going to the forest to meditate)
 - Sanyasa (Leading a life of an ascetic so as to attain Swarga)

CONTEMPORARY CULTURE IN SOUTH INDIA AND TAMIL NADU

- The early Vedic culture in northern India coincided with Chalcolithic cultures that prevailed in other parts of the sub-continent. Since, people used copper (chalco) and stone (lithic), it was called Chalcolithic period.
- Though Chalcolithic culture of India was contemporary to the mature phase of Harappan culture, they continued to exist even after the decline of the latter.
- The later Vedic culture in north India and the Iron Age in south India belong to the same period.
- Towards the end of Iron Age, people stepped into what is known as Megalithic Culture (600 BC (BCE) and AD (CE) 100).
- Megalithic Period in ancient Tamilakam synchronised with the pre Sangam period. The Black and Red Ware Pottery became the characteristic of the Megalithic period.

MEGALITHIC / IRON AGE IN TAMILNADU

- The term 'Megalith' is derived from Greek. 'Megas', means great and 'lithos' means stone. Using big stone slabs built upon the places of burial is known as Megalith.

Some of the Megalithic / Iron Age Archaeological Sites in Tamil Nadu Adichanallur - Thoothukudi District

- Among the artefacts unearthed were Urns, pottery of various kinds (Red Ware, Black Ware), iron implements, daggers, swords, spears and arrows, some stone beads and a few gold ornaments.
- Bronze objects representing domestic animals and wild animals like tiger, antelope and elephant have been unearthed.
- The people were skilful in making pottery and in working stone and wood.

Keezhadi - Sivagangai District

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) excavated an ancient town dating to Sangam Age in Keezhadi village at Tirupathur taluk. Excavations have produced evidence for brick buildings, and well laid - out drainage system. Tamil - Brahmi inscription on pottery, beads of glass, carnelian and quartz, pearl, gold ornaments and iron objects, shell bangles, ivory dice have been unearthed. In 2017, ASI sent two samples of these for Radio carbon dating to Beta Analytic, Florida, USA. They dated samples as 200 BC (BCE). The Roman artefacts found at the site add to the evidence of ancient Indo -Roman trade relations.

Periplus mentions the steel imported to Rome from Peninsular India was subjected to duty in the port of Alexandria.

Porunthal - Dindigul District

- **Finds** - Grave goods, glass beads (in red, white, yellow, blue and green), iron swords, pottery with Tamil Brahmi scripts, pots filled with rice, semi-precious metals such as quartz, carnelian, bangles made of glass and shell.
- The discovery of iron sickle, pike, and tip of ploughs provide evidences that they had the practice of rice cultivation in Tamil Nadu. A pot of rice from Porunthal site proves that rice was people's staple food.

Paiyampalli - Vellore District

- **Archaeological Finds** –Iron artefacts, along with Megalithic Black and Red Ware Pottery have been found.
- Evidence for iron smelting has come to light at Paiyampalli. The date of this culture, based on radio carbon dating, is 1000 BC (BCE).

Kodumanal – Erode District

- It is identified with the Kodumanam of Pathitrupathu. More than 300 pottery inscriptions in Tamil – Brahmi have been discovered there. Archaeologists have also discovered spindles, whorls (used for making thread from cotton) and pieces of cloth, along with tools, weapons, ornaments, beads, particularly carnelian.
- A Menhir found at burial site is assigned to the Megalithic period.

Megalithic Monuments in Tamil Nadu

- The people who lived during the last stages of the New Stone Age began to follow the Megalithic system of burial. According to this system, the dead body was placed in a big pot along with burial goods. The Megalithic monuments bear witness to a highly advanced state of civilisation with the knowledge of iron and community living.
- **Dolmens** are Megalithic tombs made of two or more upright stones with a single stone lying across the burial site. Megalithic Dolmens have been found in Veeraraghavapuram village, Kanchipuram district, Kummalamaruthupatti, Dindigul district, and in Narasingampatti, Madurai district.
- **Menhir**–In Breton Language 'Men' means “stone” and 'hir', “long.” They are monolithic pillars planted vertically into the ground in memory of the dead.
- Menhir at Singaripalayam in Tirupur District and at Vembur in Theni District points to the existence of an ancient settlement along the banks of River Uppar. Menhirs are found at Narasingampatti, Madurai district, Kumarikalpalayam and Kodumanal in Erode district.
- **Hero Stones** – A Hero Stone is a memorial stone raised in remembrance of the honourable death of a hero in a battle or those who lost their lives

while defending their village from animals or enemies. Hero stones are found at Maanur village near Palani, Dindigul district, Vellalankottai, Tuticorin district, and Pulimankombai, Dindigul district.



11th Vol -I

Unit - 2

Early India: The Chalcolithic, Megalithic, Iron Age and Vedic Cultures

Introduction

- A conventional view of the timeline of Indian history would simply shift its themes from the Indus Civilization through the Vedic Culture to the Age of the Mahajanapadas. But, if we consider the time after the decline of the Indus Civilization, covering from c. 2000 BCE to 600 BCE and the space stretching from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Arunachal Pradesh to Gujarat, it is clear that diverse cultures and people who spoke different languages lived in ancient India. This chapter focuses on the Late Harappan, Chalcolithic, Iron Age and Vedic Cultures and the Aryans, except for the Indus Civilization which was covered in the previous lesson. Essentially, it deals with the history of India from about 3000 BCE, up to the emergence of the Mahajanapadas, with a focus on social and economic changes.

Sources

- The history of India, after the decline of the Indus Civilization around 1900 BCE, is characterised by the presence of nomadic microlith-using hunter-gatherers and pastoral, semi-sedentary and sedentary agro-pastoral communities of the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Iron Ages and Vedic Cultures. We have two main types of sources for this long span of time (c. 3000 to 600 BCE) in Indian history. One source is the archaeological sites and material culture including pottery, plant remains and metal objects. The other is Vedic literature. There are no written documents for this period, since the Vedic texts were transmitted orally. At this point of time, people had not developed a script in India, except the symbols of the Indus script which are yet to be deciphered. Correlating the archaeological cultures and the information related to various groups of people from the Vedic texts is not an easy task. There are various theories on the identity of the originators of the Indus Civilization, and various other archaeological cultures. We are dealing with diverse cultures and communities with different modes of living in this space-time unit.

- The Early Vedic culture is correlated with some of the Chalcolithic cultures of India, while the Later Vedic culture is correlated with the Painted Grey Ware Culture of the Iron Age in North India.
- Unlike the age of Indus Civilization, when the urban sites and farming cultures were in a limited area, we notice cultural, agricultural and technological expansion and developments in many parts of India in this period accompanied by the growth of craft production and population. A strong cultural foundation was laid across India during this period, which finally culminated in the Early Historic period. The extensive foundations for the village settlements of India were laid during this period.

Literature of the Vedic Age

- The Vedas (*Vid* = to know, *Vidya*) are one of the earliest known texts to have been composed in India. The language of the Vedas is described as Vedic Sanskrit. The Vedas are four: *Rig* is the oldest, and the others being *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*. The Vedic texts were memorized and orally transmitted by Brahmins from generation to generation. They were written down in the later period, after the introduction of writing. The earliest known written manuscripts of the Vedas date to the 10-11th century CE. They contain information about the polity, society, religion and philosophy, and hence they are a source for writing history
- The main collections of Vedic hymns are called *samhitas*. The *Rig Vedicsamhita* is the earliest text. The *Rig Veda* is dated to between 1500 and 1000 BCE. The *Rig Veda* contains 10 books. Books 2 to 7 are the earliest and the Books 1, 8, 9 and 10 are assigned to a later period. *Samhitas* are ritualistic texts, and they explain the social and religious importance of rituals. Each *samhita* has added texts called *brahmanas*, which have commentaries on the hymns and rituals. Each *brahmana* has an *aranyaka* (forest text) and an *upanishad*. The *aranyakas* contain mystical ritual instructions to be undertaken in secret by the sages who live in the forests. *Upanishads* deal with philosophical enquiries.
- The *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva Vedas* are dated to a slightly later period. The *samhitas* of the *Sama*, *Yajur* and *Atharva Vedas*, and the *brahmanas*,

aranyakas and *upanishads* attached to the Vedas are the Late Vedic texts. The *Sama Veda* was composed in musical notes which are considered to constitute the basis of Indian music. The *Yajur Veda* has rituals and hymns. The *Atharva Veda* contains charms and magical spells.

Pre-Aryan, Late Harappan and Chalcolithic Cultures of India

- The Pre-Harappan cultures are the earliest Chalcolithic cultures of India, and they are found in the time before the beginning of the mature phase of the Harappan culture, and continued to exist in the later period. The other Chalcolithic cultures of India are more or less contemporary to this phase of Harappan culture and they continued even after its decline. Unlike the mature urban phase of the Harappan civilization, Chalcolithic cultures were pastoral and based on farming, generally rural in nature. They used copper and stone blades and pottery and also low grade iron in the later period. Their settlements were sedentary or semi-sedentary. In the northwestern and western regions of India, the early farming cultures are associated with the Chalcolithic cultures rather than the Neolithic cultures.
- The Chalcolithic people also began to domesticate animals in addition to agriculture. They had cattle, sheep, pigs and goats and buffaloes. Evidence has been found of turtles and fowls in their settlements. The houses were made of stone, mud bricks, mud and perishable wooden materials, and built on a stone foundation. Silos (well prepared pits) meant for storage of grains have also been found. The walls were made with bamboo frames. People used black and red ware and black on red ware pottery. These sites have produced a large quantity of copper objects. They used copper objects such as flat axes, bangles rings, antimony rods, knives, blades, socket-less axes, barbed and tanged arrow heads, choppers and chisels.

Ochre Coloured Pottery Ware Culture

- Ochre Coloured Pottery Ware culture is found in northern India dating to the Chalcolithic period. The OCP pottery has red slip and appears ochre in colour (the ochre colour comes off when the pottery is touched) and hence, it is called Ochre Coloured Pottery. It has black painted designs. The OCP comes in the form of jars, storage jars, bowls, and basins. The

OCP culture dates to 2600- 1200 BCE and is found in the Indo- Gangetic plain and may have had some associations with early Vedic culture.

- The OCP culture is seen as an impoverished Harappan culture and some scholars see it as unrelated to the Harappan culture. The OCP sites produced copper figures and objects and therefore it is also known as “copper hoard culture.” It is a rural culture and has evidence of the cultivation of rice, barley, and legumes. They also had pastoralism with evidence of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, and dogs. The villages had wattle-and-daub houses. They used copper and terracotta ornaments. Animal figurines have also been found.

Chalcolithic Cultures of South India

- The southern part of India has not produced cultural evidence of a fullfledged chalcolithic culture. Perforated and spouted vessels have been found in some sites. Copper bronze tools like chisels and flat axes occur at these sites. Stone tools continued to be used in this area. Black on red ware pottery is found. These people survived through animal rearing and agriculture. Millets, pulses and horse gram were cultivated, and fruits, leaves and tubers were collected.

Iron Age in North India

- The Iron Age in North India coincides with the painted Grey Ware culture. The painted grey ware is dated to from. 1100 to 800 BCE. More than 1000 sites have been identified with painted grey ware pottery in northern India, with a major concentration in the Ganga-Yamuna valley. These ceramics succeeded the Black and Red Ware Culture in the eastern Ganga valley and Central India. The pottery was fine grey in colour with painted geometric designs. The painted grey ware laid the foundation of the early political formations. It correlates with the Kuru-Panchala kingdom known from the Vedic texts. The Painted Grey Ware cultural phase is followed by Northern Black Polished Ware culture (NBPW), which is associated with the Mahajanapada and Mauryan periods. The Painted Grey ware sites reveal the development of agriculture and pastoralism, and the settlements of this period grew in dimension. They show a large scale population increase in the northern part of India. The

Iron Age in North India was coeval with Painted Greyware Culture, and in South India it was associated with Megalithic burial mounds.

Megalithic/ Iron Age in Tamilnadu

- The burial system followed by the people of Neolithic period continued into the Megalithic period. A circular tomb using big stone slabs built upon the place of burial is known as a megalith. Such megaliths have been found in many parts of Tamilnadu . The urn burial system was another type of practice and is evidenced in Adichanallur (present Thoothukudi district). Black-ware is peculiar to burial sites in Tamilnadu. Interestingly, black-ware is found mostly in burial mounds and not in human habitations. In a majority of urn burials, the use of stone is almost non-existent. However, urn burials are grouped under megalithic because the materials - the pottery, iron objects, beads of semi-precious stones kept in them - are identical to those found in the stone burials.
- The end of Megalithic burial practice is assigned to third-second centuries CE. During this period Brahmi writing akin to Ashokan Brahmi has been discovered in Kodumanal (Erode District). There is also evidence of the megalithic tradition continuing into later centuries. During the Sangam period people still remembered urn burials. The four primitive hero-stones with Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, datable to third to second centuries BCE found in the upper part of the Vaigai valley, support the authenticity of the hero stone tradition described in the Sangam Tamil literature in the context of cattle raids. Scholars infer, based on such evidence, that the some of the Sangam poems could be assigned to the early first century BCE or a little earlier. The tradition of erecting hero stones in memory of dead warrior-heroes is considered to be an extension of the menhir type of megalithic tradition. Menhirs, upright monumental stones, and dolmens made of big slabs or boulders are megalithic tombs found in Tamilnadu.

Black and red ware, along with partial human remains and iron objects, were unearthed recently at Vadamalkunda in Krishnagiri, Tamilnadu. A few stone slabs were also found at the site. A centuries-old menhir at Singaripalayam excavated near Kundadam in Tiruppur district points to the existence of an ancient settlement along the banks of River Uppar.

Megalithic Sites in Tamilnadu Adichanallur

- Adichanallur, 22 km from Tirunelveli, is located in Thoothukudi district. In 1876, a German ethnologist and naturalist, Andrew Jagor conducted an excavation at Adichanallur. He carried with him samples of backed earthenware, utensils of all sizes and shapes, a considerable number of iron weapons and implements, and great quantities of bones and skulls. These are now housed in a Berlin Museum. Burial Site-Adichanallur The then district Collector of Tirunelveli A.J. Stuart and the famous linguist Bishop Robert Caldwell visited Adichanallur subsequently, found it was a quartz site. Quarrying was immediately banned and archaeological excavation commenced under the supervision of Alexander Rea. Rea prepared a comprehensive account of his findings, illustrated by photographs, and was published in the annual report of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), 1902-03. Nearly a hundred years later, the ASI carried out another excavation and brought out more information. The report is awaited.

The burial mound at Adichanallur yielded the following:

- Urns and pottery of various kinds in large numbers.
- Iron implements, including spades and weapons (daggers, swords, spears and arrows). Some stone beads and a few gold ornaments
- Bronze objects representing the domestic animals such as buffalo, goat or sheep and cock, and wild animals like tiger, antelope and elephant.
- Traces of cloth and wood.
- The engraving of animals on bronze and on ornaments is indicative of the primitive workmanship. (Caldwell could stumble upon a copper bangle during his inspection at the site.) The people were evidently skilful in moulding pottery, in casting or brassing metals, in weaving and in working stone and wood. The presence of husks of rice and millet indicates domestication of these grains. Iron weapons were used for both war, and for animal sacrifices. The discovery of sacrificial implements prompted Caldwell to conclude that the people of Adichanallur were not adherents of Vedic religion.

Paiyampalli

- Paiyampalli is a village in Tirupathur taluk, Vellore district. The Archaeological Survey of India carried out an excavation in the 1960s and unearthed black and red ware pottery in this megalithic site. A large number of urn burials were also found in this region. The date of this culture, based on radio carbon dating, is 1000 BCE.

Kodumanal

- Kodumanal, 40 km from Erode, is located on the northern bank of Noyyal river, a tributary of the Cauvery. A series of excavations were carried out during the 1980s and 1990s. The most recent was in 2012. In habitation trenches and megalithic burials of Kodumanal, the goods unearthed included pots, weapons, tools, ornaments, and beads, particularly carnelian, akin to those found at Mohenjodaro. Since carnelian was not known to this region in ancient times, it may have been brought to Kodumanal from outside.
- In the Sangam work Pathitru Pathu, a place called Kodumanam belonging to the Chera king, is praised for gemstones and therefore some archaeologists argue that Kodumanam is the ancient name of Kodumanal. Hoards of Roman coins have been discovered and it is believed that this is a result of the export of gemstones to the Roman world, resulting in return a huge inflow of gold from the latter into the region. Conches and bangles, remnants of furnaces, a kiln floor filled with ash soot, and potsherds with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions are other finds in the site. Pit burials, urn burials and chamber tombs of different types excavated at Kodumanal and the names inscribed on potsherds may indicate habitation by multi-ethnic groups. The graffiti etched on potsherds give a lot of information about the people and their activities. A menhir found at a burial site is assigned to the Megalithic period. According to Y. Subbarayalu, Kodumanal is coeval the Sangam anthologies (second century BCE to second century CE).

The Aryans and Rig Vedic Society

- So far we have considered the Late Harappan Cultures, Chalcolithic and Painted Grey ware Cultures. Let us now turn to the evidence from the Vedic texts, which, unlike the archaeological evidence that tell us only

about the material culture, throw light on the ethnic and cultural identities of people. Because of the references found in the Vedas, the Aryan question is one of the important issues concerning the early history of India.

The Aryans

- The attempt to write a history of India began when the Europeans colonised India. They compiled the archaeological and literary sources, as well as oral traditions. Certain notions, for example the Aryans, were developed and used in the colonial context, when many parts of Asia and Africa were under the influence of the European powers. The concept of race was widely prevalent at that time to classify and categorize people. Some of the views reflect the racist ideas of colonial times. The Aryan theory was linked to the blue-eyed white race and its connection with Europeans. Nazis used the Aryan concept for their political agenda, ultimately leading to the Holocaust. The recent studies have established that the word Aryan does not denote race, but only refers to the original speakers of Indo-Aryan languages.

Philologists study language in oral and written forms of languages based on historical evidence. They use etymology, comparative linguistics, literary criticism, history, and linguistics in their studies.

- Though the *Rig Veda* is in Sanskrit, about 300 words of the Munda and Dravidian languages have been identified in it, suggesting cultural mix with earlier inhabitants. From the Vedas it is evident that Aryans used domesticated horses and chariots. Their chariots had spoked wheels and they used bows and arrows. They practiced agriculture and pastoralism. They buried and also cremated the dead. The cult of fire and the use of soma drink were prevalent among the speakers of the Indo-Aryan languages.
- The home of Indo-Europeans and Indo-Aryans is still a matter of debate. Many scholars are of the view that the Aryans came to India as migrants from Central Asia. It is also believed that several waves of Indo-Aryan migration might have happened. There are several factors which support this hypothesis. The traits of the culture of Aryans cover Eastern Europe and Central Asia which is geographically interlinked with India and West

Asia and Europe. One of the accepted areas of the Aryan home is Eastern Europe Central Asia, north of the Black Sea. The Bactria-Margina Archaeological Complex is closely related to Aryan culture dated to 1900 BCE-1500 BCE. Ceramics of South Central Asian archaeological sites resemble those found in the Swat valley.

- References to the names of Indo- Europeans languages are found in an inscription dated to 2200 BCE discovered in modern Iraq. Anatolian inscriptions of 1900-1700 BCE and Kassite inscriptions of 1600 BCE (Iraq) and Mittani inscriptions of 1400 BCE (Syria), Bhogaz Goi inscriptions referring to names similar to the Vedic gods (1400 BCE) have the common features of the Indo-European languages, but no such inscriptions are found in India.
- The term *asva* and several other terms in Rig Veda have common roots in various Indo-Aryan languages. In the *Rig Veda*, the term *asva* (horse) occurs 215 times and *vrishabha* (bull) 170 times. Tiger and rhinoceros, which are tropical animals, are not mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. There is no trace of the urban way of life in the *Rig Veda*. Hence, the identity of Aryans is not correlated with the Harappan culture, where there is no evidence for horse. Nowadays, DNA studies are also used for understanding ancient migrations. M17 a genetic marker (DNA) is said to have been found among the speakers of Indo- Europeans.

Rig Vedic Culture

- Rig Vedic Samhita is the earliest text that relates to the Early Vedic period. The Early Vedic culture is placed between 1500 BCE and 1000 BCE. The political, social and economic aspects of life of this period are reflected in the Rig Vedic hymns.

Geography

- In the Indian subcontinent, the early Aryans lived in the area of eastern Afghanistan, Pakistan, Punjab and fringes of Western Uttar Pradesh.

Dasas and Dasyus

- The Rig Vedas speak about not only the Aryans, but also about the non-Aryan people, whom the Aryans encountered in India. When the Rig

Vedic people moved into India they came into conflict with people whom they referred to as Dasyus or Dasas. Evidently the Aryans differentiated themselves from the dark native people who had different cultural practices, and sought to maintain their distinction. The Rig Veda has references to several other groups. Simyu and Kikata are grouped with the *dasyus*. Sambara son of Kulitara is mentioned as a chief with 90 forts or settlements. Varchin was another chief with many troops. The *Rig Veda* mentions the defeat of a chief called Sambara by Divodasa of the Bharata clan.

Polity and Political Clashes

- The concept of polity developed in the Rig Vedic time. Various units of habitation and divisions such as the *janas*, *vis*, *gana*, *grama* and *kula* are referred to in the *Rig Veda*. The Vedas speak about the Aryans and their enemies and the battles they fought with them. The battles were fought more for cattle and material wealth and the war booty acquired was shared. They not only fought with the non-Aryans, but also fought among themselves. They invoked the support of the gods in their battles. They strongly believed that prayers, sacrifices and rituals could offer support in their mundane life. The god Indra is called *Purandara*, which means destroyer of settlements, which were perhaps fenced or planned townships.

The term Jana means tribe

- The Bharatas and Tritsu were the ruling Aryan clans who were supported by Vasishta, the priest. The region of India was named Bharata Varsha after the tribe of Bharatas. The Bharata clan was opposed by ten chiefs and five out of them were Aryans. This battle was known as the Battle of Ten Kings. The battle took place on the banks of the river Paurushni, identified with the river Ravi. In this battle, Sudas won and he became important leading to the dominance of Bharata clan. The Purus were one of the defeated clans. The Purus and Bharatas formed an alliance and later they formed Kuru clan. Later the Kurus allied with Panchalas and established their control over the Upper Ganga Valley.

Social Divisions

- The Vedic people distinguished themselves from the non-Aryan people. Varna was the term used by Aryans to refer to colour and category. The *Rig Veda* refers to *Arya varna* and *Dasa varna*. The Dasas and Dasyus were conquered and treated as slaves. They came to be considered sudras in the later period. Social classes were classified as warriors, priests and common people. Sudras as a category of people appeared at the end of the *Rig Vedic* period. Slavery was common and slaves were given as gifts to the priests, but there is no reference to wage labour. Horse-drawn chariots and bronze objects were possessed by a few, suggesting social distinction. Vedic society was argely egalitarian initially, and social ctions emerged later. According to the *Purusha Sukta* of the *Rig Veda* the various varnas emerged thus: Brahmanas from the mouth, the kshatriya from the arms, the vaisya from the thighs and the sudra from the feet of *Purusha*, when he was sacrificed. These social divisions are considered to have arisen towards the end of the early Vedic period. Various professional groups such as warriors, priests, cattle-keepers, farmers, barbers are also mentioned. *Panis* were itinerary traders or perhaps caravan traders. *Panis* are also seen as enemies in some verses.

Tribe and Family

- Kinship was the basis of the social structure of Rig Vedic society. People were identified with specific clans and the clans formed the tribe or *jana*. The term *jana* occurs in the *Rig Veda* 21 times but *janapada* does occur even once. The term *vis*, whi h refers to the common people, occurs 170 times and they lived in *gramas* (villages). The family (*griha*) was the main social unit within the tribe. It was headed by the *grihapati* and his wife was known as *sapatni*. And the family at that point of time was perhaps a joint family.

Women

- Women had a respectable position but it is not possible to generalise about this. Society was essentially patriarchal with a preference for male children and cattle. The birth of a son was preferred perhaps because of the martial nature of the society, which required male members for their clashes to establish do over the territories. Having ten sons was

considered as a blessing. Women attended assemblies and offered sacrifices. Marriage was common but primitive were also continued. Polyandry seems to have existed, and widow remarriage was also known. People married at the age of 16-17, according to scholars, and there is little evidence of child marriage.

Economy: Agriculture

- Archaeological evidence points to the development of agriculture among the Rig Vedic people. The ploughshare is mentioned in the Rig Vedas. The field was known as *kshetra* and the term *krishi* referred to ploughing. The terms *langla* and *sura* referred to plough and the term *sita* meant the furrow created by ploughing. Water for irrigation was probably drawn from wells by cattedriven water-lifts using pulleys. They had knowledge of different seasons, sowing, harvesting and thrashing. They cultivated barley (*yavam*) and wheat (*godhuma*).

Pastoralism

- Cattle rearing was an important economic activity for the Aryans, although they practiced agriculture. Cattle were considered wealth. The term for war in the Rig Veda was *gavishthi* which means search for cows (which is the contemporary term (*goshti*) for factions as well). The donations to the priests were mainly cows and women slaves but not land, which reveals the importance of pastoralism. There was no private property in land.

Craft Production

- The Rig Veda mentions artisans such as carpenters, chariot-makers, weavers and leather-workers. Copper metallurgy was one of the important developments of this period. The term *ayas* in the Rig Veda refers to copper and bronze. *Karmara*, smith, is mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. Likewise, there are references to *siri* or yarn, indicating spinning which was done by women and to carpenters, *takshan*. Weaving of clothes of wool is also referred to and obviously it was necessary in the cold weather. Some of the crafts were fulltime crafts, involving specialists.

Trade, Exchange and Redistribution

- Trading activities were limited though traders were present during the Early Vedic period. *Panis* are referred to as traders and they were perhaps caravan traders. The word *pan* means barter, which was a mode of exchange. *Nishka* was a gold or silver ornament used in barter. A priest received 100 horses and 100 *nishka* as fee for sacrifices. The *danas* and *dakshinas* offered to people were means of redistributing resources. The *dakshina* was both a fee for a specific service and also a means of distributing wealth. The distribution of cows helped spread pastoral activities and economic production.

Transport

- Bullock carts, horses and horse-drawn chariots were used for transport. There are references to the sea (*samudra*) and boats (*nau*). Boats driven by 100 oars are mentioned.

Polity and Administration

- The polity of the Rig Vedic period was that of a tribal society. The chief of the tribe was the main political head and he was called *rajan*. The kings lived in multipillared palaces. They offered gifts of cattle, chariots and horse ornaments and gold to the priests. *Rajan* was a hereditary chief. He was perhaps elected by the assembly called *samiti*. The main duty of the king was to protect the tribe. He protected wealth, fought wars, and offered prayers on behalf of gods. The king had authority over the territory and people.
- Vedic society was militaristic. Bows, daggers, axes and lances were the main weapons of war. Tributes and booty collected from war were redistributed by the king. There are also references to gift of *dasas* or slaves. The king *Trasadasyu*, the chief of the Purus, gave away 50 women as a gift. The chief was known as *gopa* or *gopati* which means, chief of cattle.
- The assemblies called *sabha*, *samiti*, *vidhata* and *gana* are mentioned in the *Rig Veda*. *Sabha* was the assembly of elders or the elites, *samiti* was an assembly of people, and *vidhata* was the assembly of tribe. They

performed military and religious functions. Women attended the *sabhas* and *vidhatas*. The king sought the support of the *samiti* and *sabha* for his activities. There are debates about the exact nature of these assemblies and functions. Most of our understanding of the conditions of Vedic society depends upon the interpretations of various terms.

- Sometimes it is hard to reconstruct the original meaning. *The purohita* or priest offered advice to the king. Vedic priests advised the kings, inspired them and praised their deeds. In turn they received rewards for their services. *Senani* was the chief of army. There is no evidence of tax collecting officers. Perhaps people made voluntary contribution called *bali* to the king. Some scholars say that *bali* was an imposed tax, and not voluntary. There is no reference to the administration of justice. The officer who controlled the territory was called *Vrajapati*. He helped the *kulapas* or heads of fighting groups called *gramini*. *Gramini* was the head of the village and fighting

Vedic Religion and Rituals

- Religion and rituals played an important role in Vedic society. In the Rig Veda, the natural forces sun, moon, rivers, mountains and rains were defined as divinities. The religion was naturalistic and polytheistic. Indra was the most important god and he was called Purandara. *Agni* was seen as intermediary between god and people. *Surya* was a god who removed darkness. *Ushas* was the goddess of dawn. *Aditi*, *Prithvi* and *Sinivali* are other goddesses. *Varuna*, the god of water was next in importance. This god was the upholder of natural order. *Soma* was the god of plants and the drink was named after him. *Soma* drink was part of the ritual and the preparation of this intoxicating drink is explained in many hymns. *Maruts* was the god of strength. Interestingly there are few references to *Rudra* or *Siva*. Rituals were adopted as a solution to many issues and the problems of day-to-day life and thus the priests had an important role in the society.

Characteristics of Society

- In the early Vedic period lineage and tribes constituted society, and the king had limited power. The various tribal groups of Aryans and non-Aryans fought to control the territories. Social divisions did not take deep root, although the concept of *varna* and Aryan identities existed.

Pastoralism was predominant and cattle centred clashes were common, although agriculture did play an important role. The archaeological sites suggest different types of craft production including metal, carpentry, pottery and clothes.

Later Vedic Culture

- The Later Vedic culture is dated to the period between 1000 BCE and 700-600 BCE. The Painted Grey Ware Culture of the Iron Age, which has been identified by archaeologists at many excavated sites, is associated with the Later Vedic culture. This period witnessed political, social, economic complexity and developments.

The Late Vedic Texts

- The Later Vedic texts were composed after the Rig Veda Samhitas. The Yajur, Sama and Atharva Vedas were composed after the *Rig Veda*.

Eastward Expansion of the Aryans

- The Aryan speakers expanded from the Punjab to Western Uttar Pradesh in the Ganga Yamuna doab in the Later Vedic period. The history of ancient India was thus marked by the movement of cultures, and interactions and battles among various groups for territories and resources. It has been suggested that while the Aryans migrated to the region of eastern part of the Ganga valley, the Indo-Iranians migrated from the region of Iran to the region of Punjab. The later Vedic texts speak about the region of Kuru Panchala which falls in the Indo-Gangetic divide and the Upper Ganga Valley. The area mentioned as the southeastern boundary of the Aryans in Rig Veda is listed in *Aitreya Brahmana* as the midland, which indicates the movement of Aryans into the Ganga valley in the Later Vedic period. Perhaps this expansion was induced by the need for water and land resources, fresh, less occupied territories and population pressures.
- The Kurus, Panchalas, Vashas and Ushinaras are the tribes of this period. References to the Saraswati and Dhristavati rivers occur in the later Vedic texts also. Around 1000 BCE, the Vedic Aryans moved towards Kosala region in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Videha in North Bihar, where the

Vedic people encountered the local people following Chalcolithic material culture. In the Upper Ganga valley, the Vedas acquired Munda words indicating that Munda speaking-people lived in the Ganga valley. The region of Kosala and Videha were the easternmost territories of the Aryan expansion during this period. By the end of the Vedic period Panchala and Videha were Aryanised. The area beyond this region in the east was seen as an alien territory. In the *Atharva Veda*, the people of Anga and Magadha (Bihar) were seen as enemies. Similarly, the Pundras of Bengal and the Andhras were seen as outside the Aryan identity in the *Aitreya Brahmana*. This suggests that these regions were not influenced by Aryan culture. What we gather is that the process of Aryanization gradually spread from the north-west to the south-east mainly into the Ganga Valley.

Later Vedic Culture and Iron

- Iron was an important metal used for implements in this period. It was called *syama-ayas* or *krishna-ayas* or the dark metal. Iron is believed to have played an important role in the conversion of the forests of the Ganga Valley into agricultural lands. By the end of Vedic period, the knowledge of iron had reached eastern Uttar Pradesh and Videha. Earlier it was believed that iron originated around 700 BCE, but recent research dates the beginning of iron to around 1200 BCE or even earlier. The early views gave excessive emphasis to iron to the colonization of the Ganga Valley, but new scholarship argues that iron was not the only factor behind the expansion of the population.

Settlements and territories

- With the intensification of agriculture, the Later Vedic people led a settled life leading to formation of territorial units. The term *janapada*, referring to territory, is found in the *Brahmanas* dated to ca. 800 BCE. There are more than 1000 sites of painted Grey Ware culture in this area, suggesting that new settlements came up and the Upper Ganga Valley was densely populated. People lived either in mud-brick houses or houses with wattle and daub walls. The foundations for the towns must have emerged during the later Vedic period. This was a period of intense interactions. The term *nagara*, referring to commercial quarters, is found in the later Vedic texts. However, large towns appeared only at the end of the Vedic period. The sites of Hastinapura and Kausambi are considered proto

urban (urban-like) settlements. The material culture of this period shows more diversity and is an improvement over the Early Vedic period. It can be surmised that there was surplus production to support various classes such as chiefs, princes and priests.

Political Organization

- In the Early Vedic Age tribal polities were dominant. The king was elected by assemblies. In the Later Vedic period the assemblies became less important and the power of the king increased. The influence of assembly called *vidhata* disappeared, while *samiti* and *sabha* continued in the period. The development of large kingdoms reduced the power of the assemblies. The Rajan was the leader who led the army in the battle. The concepts of *Samrat/Samrajya* developed and they suggest the increase in the power and ambition of the king. The legitimization of kingship became important with the performance of various sacrifices such as *vajapeya* and *rajasuya*. The king developed more control over the territory, people and resources. *Purohita*, which means ‘one who places the king in the forefront’, became important in the establishment of polity and kingship. Monarchy developed.
- The Rajan became the controller of the social order. *Srauta* sacrifices (sacrifices to achieve some benefits) were carried out to control the resources. The kings presented cows, horses, chariots, gold, clothes and female slaves to the priest. The *Aitreya Brahamana* says that king has to provide 1000 pieces of gold and cattle to the Brahmana who anoints him. Thus the priest became important in the formation of polity and royalty.
- The terms such as *rashtra*, to denote a territory, and *rajya*, meaning sovereign power appeared. The king received voluntary or compulsory contribution called *bali* from the people (*vis*). Such voluntary contributions became tributes. The Mahabharata offers clues to historical development and is suggestive of the power struggle to control the territories. The *Ramayana* too is suggestive of the Aryan expansion and the encounters with native people in the forest.
- The territorial formations and the development of lineages became stronger during the Later Vedic period. Romila Thapar characterises the developments in the first millennium BCE as the movement from lineage

to state. The development of state level political organization emerged only after 500 BCE, and the Later Vedic society was therefore in transition. Several lineages became more territorial and settled in the Later Vedic Age. This is evidenced by the term *janapada*, as we saw earlier. The mid-first millennium BCE had political organisations such as *rajya* and *ganasanghas* (oligarchies) and these institutions developed in the later Vedic period.

- As we saw earlier, the clans of Bharatas and Purus combined to form the Kurus, and along with the Panchalas they occupied the central part of the Ganga-Yamuna doab. Panchala territory was in north-western Uttar Pradesh. The Kuru-Panchalas became one major ethnic group and Hastinapur became their capital. The war between the Kauravas and Pandavas was the theme of the Mahabharata and both of them belonged to the clan of Kurus. Traditions say that Hastinapur was flooded and the Kuru clan moved to Kausambi near Allahabad.
- Sacrifices and rituals gained importance in the Later Vedic society. The king became more independent. Rituals dominated kingship, and this increased the power and influence of the *Rajanyas* and the *Brahmanas*, while distancing the king from the *vis*. The *Asvamedha-yaga* involved letting a horse loose into areas where it moved freely; this was an assertion that the authority of the king was recognized, and a battle ensued when the horse was challenged. The *vajapeya* ritual involved a chariot race. Such innovative modes of rituals helped to increase the power of the king. The formation of social, distinctions became prominent.

Social Organization

- The social transformation in the Later Vedic Period is much more clearly reflected in the references in the Vedic texts. The social divisions of varna became more established. Teaching was seen as the occupation of the Brahmanas. The wives of Brahmanas and cows were given important status. Rajanya refers to kshatriyas and they were the warriors and rulers who received bali as tax. Striking changes took place in the Varna System. There was an increase in the privileges of the two higher classes, the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas at the cost of the Vaisyas and Sudras. In the PanchavimsaBrahmana, the Kshatriya is placed first, higher than the Brahmana but in the Satapatha Brahmana, the Brahmana is placed higher

than Kshatriya. In later Vedic society the importance of the purohita (priest) is stressed, as mentioned in the Vedic texts. The Kshatriyas challenged Brahmanical supremacy and their exclusive privilege of entering the asramas, a regulated four stage life namely brahmacharya, grihastha, vanaprastha and sanyasa. The outcome of this was the birth of Jainism, Buddhism and Ajivakam.

- The system of four Varnas had taken deep root and became rigid in the course of time. The popularity of rituals helped the Brahmanas to attain power. Brahmanas became important and the kings supported them, although they had conflicts with Rajanyas, the warrior nobles. The concept of dvija (twice-born) developed and the upanayana (sacred thread) was limited to the upper sections of the society. This ceremony marked the initiation for education. The fourth varna was denied this privilege and the Gayatri mantra could not be recited by the Sudras. Women were also denied upanayana and Gayatri mantra. The king asserted his authority over the three varnas. The Aitreya Brahmana refers to the Brahmana as the seeker of support and he could be removed by king from his position.
- Certain craft groups managed to attain higher status. For example, the Rathakaras, the chariot makers, had the right to wear the sacred thread. Vaisya referred to the common people. They were involved in agriculture, cattle breeding and artisans. Later they became traders. Vaisyas paid tax to the kings. Some social groups were placed in ranking even below the Sudras. However, cross varna marriages did happen.
- The idea of gotra emerged in the later Vedic period. Gotra literally meant 'cowpen' and it referred to a group of people from a common ancestor. Persons of the same *gotra* were considered as brothers and sisters and could not therefore intermarry. Several unilineal descent groups existed with common ancestors. Several related clans formed the tribe.

Family

- The household became more structured, which means it became more organised. The family was an important social unit. The family was patriarchal with patrilineal descent. The relations within the family were hierarchical. Polygyny (taking many wives) was prevalent. Several

household rituals were also developed for the welfare of the family. The married man with his wife was the yajamana.

- The concept of asramas, referring to various stage of life, was not well established in this time. While brahmacharya, grihastha and vanaprastha are mentioned, sanyasa had not developed.

Women

- The status of women declined as the society became more structured and the patriarchal family became more important. In the family the father was the head. The right of primogeniture was strong. Though women had participated in rituals in the Rig Vedic period, they were excluded in the later Vedic period. Daughters are spoken of as a source of trouble. Their work was to look after the cattle, milking animals and fetching water.

Economy

- The economic activities of this period were quite diversified. Agriculture, pastoralism, craft production and trade contributed to the economic development.

Agriculture

- Agricultural activities increased during the Late Vedic period. The Satapatha Brahmana mentions rituals related to ploughing undertaken by the kings. This suggests the importance given to cultivation by the rulers, and the shift to agriculture to support the increasing population. The god Balarama is depicted with a plough, which suggests the importance of cultivation. The Vedic people cultivated barley and rice, and wheat. Wheat was the staple food of Punjab region. The Vedic people began to use rice in the Ganga- Yamuna doab. The use of rice, rather than wheat, is noticed in the Vedic rituals.

Pastoralism

- Pastoralism continued to be important. Cattle were considered sacred. They became part of exchange and redistribution. The offering of cattle as part of *dakshina* continued. Pastoralism supplemented agriculture.

Craft Production

- Arts and crafts proliferated during the Later Vedic age and craft specialization took deep roots, when compared to early Vedic period, since more occupational groups are mentioned in this period. Evidence of iron work is noticed from about 1200 BCE. Metals such as copper, tin, gold, bronze and lead are mentioned. These metals were smelted and worked by specialized groups. The copper objects were used for making weapons for war and hunting. Weaving was undertaken by women. Leatherwork, pottery and carpentry were well known. Terms such as kulala referring to potters and urna sutra referring to wool appear. Bow makers, rope makers, arrow makers, hide dressers, stone breakers, physicians, goldsmiths and astrologers are some of the specialized professional groups mentioned in the texts. Professions such as physicians, washerman, hunters, boatman, astrologer and cook are mentioned. References to the elephant are often found in the Atharva Veda, along with the elephant keeper. The increase in references to such groups indicates a society in transformation. The performers of Vedic sacrifices were also a type of service providers. The priest played an important role in legitimizing the role of king through various rituals. Wealth was measured in terms of cattle and animals. There is a mention of offerings of 20 camels, 100 gold necklaces, 300 horses and 10,000 cows as dakshina.

Trade and Exchange

- Trade and exchange had developed in the Later Vedic age. The material culture found in the archaeological sites reveals the movement of commodities and materials. Specialised caravan traders existed. No evidence of coins has been found and therefore barter must have been the medium of exchange. The introduction of coins took place after about 600 BCE.

Religious Faith and Belief System

- During the Later Vedic period the upper Ganga Doab was the centre of the Aryan culture. This region is described as the land of Kuru-Panchalas. The Vedic gods Agni and Indra lost their importance. Prajapati became the main deity. Rudra, the god of rituals, identified with Siva, became important. The Satapatha Brahmana lists the names of Rudra as

Pasunampatih, Sarva, Bhava and Bahikas. Vishnu was conceived as the protector of people. There is no reference to Vishnu's incarnations. Each varna had its own deities.

Rituals

- Rituals became important in society. It was believed that rituals and sacrifices could solve many problems. The rituals became more complex, required more resources, and took longer time. This indirectly reflects the demand for rituals and the formation of elite groups who could spend more resources on rituals and sacrifices. The correct performance of rituals was stressed. Stress was laid on paying dakshina. Numerous rituals were prescribed for solving all kinds of day to day problems. The resort to rituals and sacrifices as a solution for problems led to the view that material wealth could achieve anything. The ideas in the Upanishads argue against such a view, and stress the importance of realising the atman or inner self. Such degeneration of rituals and the material-oriented nature of the priests created dissension and led to the development of heterodox faiths such as Buddhism and Jainism which emphasized correct human behaviour and discipline.

Philosophy and Education

- The disciplines of philosophy, literature and science developed in this period. Various branches of learning such as literature, grammar, mathematics, ethics and astronomy developed. Education was limited to males. Teacher-pupil relationship was cultivated through person-oriented training. The development of Vedic texts and the importance given to pronunciation, grammar and oral transmission suggest training in utterances and memorization, as part of the Vedic system of education. The development of various types of texts could be considered as developing solutions for certain mundane issues and a quest for knowledge. Araynakas are concerned with priests who were in the forests.
- Upanishads (which means to sit nearby) texts with philosophical enquiries, were composed during this period. They were also referred to as *Vedanta*, since they were attached as the last part of the Vedic texts.

- They lay stress on knowledge and the realization of the self or *atman* and *Brahman* (the Supreme Being), meditation, cycle of birth and death. They convey the ideas of karma, and good conduct, self-restraint, mercy and generosity as virtues. Despite the ritual dominated aspects of Vedic life, some seers were in pursuit of knowledge and virtuous conduct.

Dara Shukoh, the Mughal prince, translated the Upanishads into Persian in 1657, much before the colonial scholars developed any interest in ancient Indian literature.

Other aspects of Life

- The Late Vedic culture has evidence of music and fine arts. Music instruments such as lute, flute and drum are referred to in the texts. With the development of cultivation and pastoralism, different types of food and drinks made of grains, milk and ghee and plants were consumed. Evidence of the use of silk and ornaments of metal, gold and copper is found. Metal mirrors were also used. The archaeological sites have uncovered beads and ornaments and the fabrication of glass beads was also developed in the later part of the Vedic period.

Characteristics of Later Vedic Society

- Later Vedic period is marked by lineages of clans, and small kingdoms developed in many parts of the Ganga valley, leading to the development of the state after 600 BCE. The idea of janapada and rashtra as territorial units had developed. The raja wielded much power and the social divisions began to strike deep roots. The varna system had developed well and Sudra identity became more marked during this period.

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Cultural Development in South India

Introduction

- The political history of south India during the sixth century to ninth century CE was marked by conflicts between the Chalukyas of Badami (also known as Western Chalukyas), and the Pallavas of Kanchi. At the same time, the period also saw great advancements in the field of culture and literature. It also broke new grounds in areas like devotional literature, art and architecture. The Bhakti movement, which impacted the entire sub-continent, originated in the Tamil country during this period.

Sources

- Inscriptions on copperplates, on temple walls and pillars form a major source of historical information for this period. Inscriptions issued by Chalukyas in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit languages, and Pallavas in Tamil and Sanskrit, recording land grants to Brahmins, as well as the royal and the non-royal gifts made to religious establishment are equally important sources. The Aihole inscription of Pulikesin II composed by his court poet Ravikirti in Sanskrit is among the most important of Chalukyan inscriptions. Kavirajamarga, a work on poetics in Kannada, Vikramarjuna-vijayam, also called Pampa-bharata, by Pampa in Kannada, which were all of a later period, and Nannaya's Mahabharatam in Telugu also provide useful historical data.
- However, pride of place must go to Tamil literature. The Bhakti movement which originated in South India found its greatest expression in the songs composed by the Azhwars and Nayanmars. The poems of the Vaishnavite Azhwars were later compiled as the Nalayira Divya Prabhandam. The Saiva literature was canonized as the Panniru Tirumurai. The Thevaram, composed by Appar (Thirunavukkarasar), Sambandar (Thirugnanasambandar) and Sundarar; and Thiruvavasagam by Manickavasagar are prominent texts which are read as sacred literature to this day. Periyapuranam written by Sekizhar, in a later period, also provides much historical information. The Mathavilasa Prahasanam

written by Mahendravarman I in Sanskrit, is an important source for the Pallava period.

- Many inscriptional sources including the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta and the Aihole inscription of the Chalukya king Pulakesin II provide details of Pallava - Chalukya conflict. The Kuram copper plates of Parameshwaravarman and the Velurpalayam copper plates of Nandivarman III record their military achievements. Coins help us to understand the economic condition of the period. Buddhist sources such as Deepavamsa and Mahavamsa, written in Pali, the accounts of Chinese travellers Hiuen Tsang and Itsing give us details about the socio-religious and cultural conditions of the Pallava times. The ninth and tenth century writings of Arab travellers and geographers such as Sulaiman, Al-Masudi, and Ibn Hauka also tell us about the socio-political and economic conditions of India of this period. The sculptures in the temples in Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal reflect the culture of the times.

I Chalukyas and Pallavas

Chalukyas

- There are two Chalukya families: Chalukyas of Badami (Vatapi) and Chalukyas of Kalyani. This lesson concerns only the Chalukyas of Badami. Chalukya dynasty emerged as a strong power with its founder Pulikesin I (c. 535- 566 CE) fortifying a hill near Badami. He declared independence from the Kadambas. It is said that he conducted yagnas and performed the asvamedha sacrifice. The capital Badami was founded by Kirtivarman (566-597). Pulikesin I's grandson Pulikesin II (609-(642), after defeating Mangalesha, proclaimed himself as king, an event that is described in the Aihole inscription. One of the most outstanding victories of Pulikesin II was the defeat of Harshavardhana's army on the banks of the Narmada. The kings of Malwa, Kalinga, and eastern Deccan accepted his suzerainty. His victories over Kadambas of Banvasi, and Gangas of Talakad (Mysore) are also worthy of note. However, his attempt to attack Kanchipuram was thwarted by Mahendravarma Pallava. This led to a prolonged war between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas. Narasimha Varman I (630-668), the Pallava King, attacked and occupied Badami. Pulikesin II died in the battle. Pallava control over Badami and the southern parts of the Chalukya empire continued for several years. In the mideighth century,

the Badami Chalukyas were overpowered and replaced by the Rashtrakutas.

From Kuram Copper Plate

(Line 12). The grandson of Narasimhavarman, (who arose) from the kings of this race, just as the moon and the sun from the eastern mountain; who was the crest-jewel on the head of those princes, who had never bowed their heads (before); who proved a lion to the elephant-herd of hostile kings; who appeared to be blessed Narasimha himself, who had come down (to earth) in the shape of a prince; who repeatedly defeated the Cholas, Keralas, Kalabhras, and Pandyas; who, like Sahasrabahu (i.e., the thousand-armed Kartavirya), enjoyed the action for a thousand arms in hundreds of fights; who wrote the (three) syllables of (the word) vijaya (i.e., victory), as on a plate, on Pulikesin's back, which was caused to be visible (i.e., whom he caused to turn his back) in the battles of Pariyala, Manimangala, Suramara, etc., and who destroyed (the city of) Vatapi, just as the pitcher-born (Agastya) (the demon) Vatapi.

Chalukya Administration

State

- The king was the head of the administration. In dynastic succession primogeniture was not strictly followed. Generally, the elder was to be appointed as yuvaraja while the king was in the office. The heir apparent got trained in literature, law, philosophy, martial arts and others. Chalukyan kings claimed to rule according to dharma-sastra and nitisastra. Pulikesin I (543-566) was well-versed in manu-sastra, puranas, and itihisas. In the beginning, the Chalukya kings assumed titles such as Maharajan, Sathyasrayan and Sri-Pritivi-Vallaban. After defeating Harshavardhana, Pulikesin II assumed the title of Parameswaran. Bhattarakan and Maharajathirajan, soon became very popular titles. In the Pallava kingdom, kings took high-sounding titles such as Dharma maharajaadhi raja, Maharajadhiraja, Dharma maharaja, Maharaja. In the Hirahadagalli plates the king is introduced as the performer of agnistoma, vajapeya and asvamedha sacrifices.

Aihole Inscription of Pulikesin II

The Megudi temple at Aihole (in Karnataka) stands on top of a hill. On

the eastern wall of this Jaina temple is a 19-line Sanskrit inscription (dated to 556 Saka era: 634-635). The composer is a poet named Ravikriti. The inscription is a prashasti of the Chalukyas especially the reigning king Pulikesin II, referred to as Sathyasraya (the abode of truth). It highlights the history of the dynasty, defeat of all his enemies, especially Harshavardhana.

- The wild boar was the royal insignia of the Chalukyas. It was claimed that it represented the varaha avatar of Vishnu in which he is said to have rescued the Goddess of the Earth. The bull, Siva's mount, was the symbol of the Pallavas.

Royal Women

- Chalukya dynasty of Jayasimhan I line appointed royal ladies as provincial governors. They also issued coins in some instances. Vijaya Bhattariga, a Chalukya princess, issued inscriptions. Pallava queens did not take active part in the administration of the kingdom, but they built shrines, and installed images of various deities, and endowed temples. The image of Queen Rangapataka, the queen of Rajasimha, is found in the inscription in Kailasanatha temple in Kanchipuram.

The King and His Ministers

- All powers were vested in the king. Inscriptions do not specifically speak of a council of ministers, but they do refer to an official called mahasandhi-vigrahika. Four other categories of ministers are also referred to in the epigraphs: Pradhana (head minister), Mahasandhi-vigrahika (minister of foreign affairs), Amatya (revenue minister), and Samaharta (minister of exchequer). Chalukyas divided the state into political divisions for the sake of administration: Vishayam, Rastram, Nadu and Grama. Epigraphs speak of the officials like vishayapatis, samantas, gramapohis and mahatras. Vishayapatis exercised the power at the behest of the kings. Samantas were feudal lords functioning under the control of the state. Gramapohis and gramkudas were village officials. Mahatras were the prominent village men.

Provincial and District Administration

- Generally, the king appointed his sons as the provincial governors. The governors called themselves raja, marakka-rajana and rajaditya-rajaparameswaran. Some governors held the title maha-samanta and maintained troops. The chief of vishaya was vishayapati. In turn, vishaya was divided into pukti. Its head was pogapati.

Village Administration

- The traditional revenue officials of the villages were called the nalakavundas. The central figure in village administration was kamunda or pokigan who were appointed by the kings. The village accountant was karana and he was otherwise called gramani. Law and order of the village was in the hands of a group of people called mahajanam. There was a special officer called mahapurush, in charge of maintaining order and peace of the village. Nagarapatis or Purapatis were the officials of the towns.

Religion

- The Chalukyas patronised both Saivism and Vaishnavism. They built temples for Siva and Vishnu. Brahmin groups were invited from the Gangetic regions and settled to perform regular pujas and conduct festivals and ceremonies in the temples. Notable Chalukya rulers like Kirtivarman (566-597), Mangalesa (597-609), and Pulikesin II (609-642) performed yagnas. They bore titles such as parama-vaishana and paramamaheswara. Chalukyas gave prominent place to Kartikeyan, the war god. Saiva monasteries became centres for popularising Saivism. Chalukyas patronised heterodox sects also and lavishly donated lands to the Jain centres. Ravikirti, the poet-laureate of Pulikesin II, was a Jain scholar. In the reign of Kirtivarman II (744-755) a Jain village official built a Jain temple in a place called Annigere. The prince Krishna (756-775) appointed Gunapata, a Jain monk, as his master. Pujyapata the author of Jainentriya-viyakarnam was a Jain monk, a contemporary of Vijayadityan (755-772). According to Hiuen Tsang, there were many Buddhist centres in the Chalukya territory wherein more than 5000 followers of the Hinayana and Mahayana sects lived.

Literature and Education

- Chalukyas used Sanskrit in pillar inscriptions such as in Aihole and Mahakudam. A seventh-century inscription of a Chalukya king at Badami mentions Kannada as the local prakrit, meaning the people's language, and Sanskrit as the language of culture. A chieftain of Pulikesin II authored a grammar work *Saptavataram* in Sanskrit.

Chalukya Architecture

- Historically, in Deccan, Chalukyas introduced the technique of building temples using soft sandstones as medium. In Badami, two temples are dedicated to Vishnu and one each to Siva and to the Jaina *tirthankaras*. Their temples are grouped into two: excavated cave temples and structural temples. Badami is known for both structural and excavated cave temples. Pattadakal and Aihole are popular for structural temples.

Aihole (Ayyavole)

- Built in 634, Aihole, the headquarters of the famous medieval Ayyavole merchants' guild was an important commercial centre. About seventy temples are located in Aihole. The earliest stone-built temple is Lad Khan temple. Its unique trait is a stucco pillar with a big capital distinct from northern style. A temple dedicated to the goddess Durga was built on the model of Buddha Chaitya. It stands on a raised platform in the form of semi-circle. Another temple, dedicated to the same goddess is called Huccimalligudi, which is rectangular in shape. Chalukyas also built Jain temples. Megudi Jain temple is illustrative of the evolution of temple architecture under the Chalukyas. The mandapa-type caves are preserved at Aihole.

Badami (Vatapi)

- There are four caves in Badami. The largest cave temple built by Mangalesa is dedicated to Vishnu. The reclining posture of Vishnu on the snake bed and Narasimha are exquisite examples of Chalukya art. Irrespective of religion, architectural features share a common style. It establishes the technical importance and the secular attitude of both patron and architect.

Pattadakal

- Pattadakal, a quiet village in Bagalkot district of Karnataka, is famous for its exquisite temples. Pattadakal was a centre for performing royal rituals. The Virupaksha temple was built at the order of queen Lohamahadevi to commemorate the conquest of Kanchipuram by her husband Vikramaditya II. The unique feature of the structural temple built by Rajasimha at Mamallapuram was adopted here by the Chalukyas. Monuments are generally associated with the rulers who built them. However, here we also have signatures of the architects who conceived the edifices and the skilled craftspeople who created them. The east porch of the Virupaksha temple has a Kannada inscription eulogizing the architect who designed the temple. The architect was given the title *Tribhuavacharya* (maker of the three worlds). Several reliefs on the temple walls bear signatures of the sculptors who carved them.
- At the south-eastern corner of the village is the Papanatha temple. Similar to the Virupaksha temple in its basic plan, it has a *shikara* in the northern style. The outer walls are richly decorated with many panels depicting scenes and characters from the Ramayana. The eastern wall has a short Kannada inscription, giving the name of the architect Revadi Ovajja, who designed the shrine. In Pattadakal, Chalukyas built more than ten temples which demonstrate the evolution in Chalukya architecture. On the basis of style these temples are classified into two groups: Indo-Aryan and Dravidian.

Painting

- Paintings are found in a cave temple dedicated to Vishnu in Badami. Chalukyas adopted the Vakataka style in painting. Many of the paintings are of incarnations of Vishnu. The most popular Chalukya painting is in the palace built by the King Mangalesan (597-609). It is a scene of ball being watched by members of royal family and others.

Pallavas

- There is no scholarly consensus about the origin of the Pallavas. Some early scholars held the view that the word Pallava was a variant of Pahlava, known as Parthians, who moved from western India to the

eastern coast of the peninsula, during the wars between the Sakas and the Satavahanas in the second century CE. But many scholars today regard them native to south India or “with some mixture of north Indian blood”.

- The Pallavas were associated with Tondaimandalam, the land between the north Pennar and north Vellar rivers. Simhavishnu is believed to have conquered the Chola country up to the Kaveri and consolidated his dynastic rule, started by his father Simhavarman. Simhavishnu, vanquishing the Kalabhras, conquered the land up to the Kaveri, thereby coming into conflict with the Pandyas. Simhavishnu’s successor Mahendravarman I (590-630), whom Appar, converted from Jainism to Saivism, was a patron of arts, and a poet and musician in his own right.
- During Mahendravarman’s reign, the army of Pulikesin II annexed the northern part of Pallava kingdom and almost reached the Pallava capital of Kanchipuram. Subsequently, during the reign of Narasimhavarman I (630-668), the Pallavas managed to settle scores by winning several victories over the Chalukyas with the aid of their ally Manavarman, a Sri Lankan prince, who later became ruler of the island kingdom. The climax was Narasimhavarman’s invasion of the Chalukyan kingdom and his capturing of the Badami. Narasimhavarman claims to have defeated the Cholas, Cheras and Kalabhras. Two naval expeditions despatched to help Manavarman were successful, but this Sri Lankan ruler subsequently lost his kingdom.
- The Pallava-Chalukya conflict continued during the subsequent decades, with some intermittent peace. During the reign of his grandson, Paramesvaravarman I (670-700), Vikramaditya of the Chalukya kingdom invaded the Pallava country. Paramesvaravarman fought against him with the support of the Gangas and Pandyas. As a result, the Pallavas came into conflict with the Pandyas in the south. In the early ninth century, the Rashtrakuta king, Govind III, invaded Kanchi during the reign of the Pallava Dantivarman. Dantivarman’s son Nandivarman III aided by western Gangas and Cholas, defeated the Pandyas at the battle of Sripurambiyam or Thirupurambiyam. Aparajita, grandson of Nandivarman III, lost his life in a battle fought against Aditya I of the Chola kingdom who invaded Tondaimandalam. This sealed the fate of the Pallavas. Thereafter, control over Tondaimandalam passed into the hands of the Cholas.

About the Cheras

Though the Kerala region seems to have been under the rule of the Chera Perumals during the period from sixth to ninth century little is known about its history until the beginning of the ninth century.

Pallava Administration

- Under the Pallavas, kinship was held to be of divine origin and was hereditary. The king took high-sounding titles, some of which, such as maharajadhiraja, were borrowed from north Indian traditions. The king was assisted by a group of ministers, and in the later Pallava period this ministerial council played a prominent part in state policy. Some of the ministers bore semi-royal titles and may well have been appointed from among the feudatories.
- Distinctions are made between amatyas and mantrins. While a mantri is generally understood to be a diplomat, amatya is a counsellor. Mantri Mandala was a council of ministers. Rahasyadhikrita was a private secretary of the king. Manikkappandaram-Kappan was an officer in charge of the treasury (Manikka - valuables; Pandaram - treasury; Kappan - keeper). Kodukkappillai was the officer of gifts. They were central officers under the Pallava king. Kosa-adhyaksa was the supervisor of the Manikkappandaram-kappan. Judicial courts were called Adhikarna Mandapa and judges called Dharmadhikarins. Fines are mentioned in the Kasakudi plates of Nandivarman Pallava as Karanadandam (fine in superior/ higher court) and Adhikaranadandam (fine in district level).
- The governor of a province was advised and assisted by officers in charge of districts who worked in close collaboration with local autonomous institutions, largely in an advisory capacity. They were built on local relationship of caste, guilds, craftsmen and artisans (such as weavers and oilmongers), students, ascetics and priests. There were assemblies of villagers and also representatives of districts. General body meetings of the assembly were held annually, and meetings of smaller groups were responsible for implementing policy.

Land Grants

- Land ownership was with the king, who could make revenue grants to his officers and land-grants to Brahmans, or else continue to have land

cultivated by smallscale cultivators and landlords. The latter was the most common practice. Crown lands were leased out to tenants-at-will. The status of the village varied according to the tenures prevailing. The village with an inter-caste population paid land revenue. The brahmadeya villages were donated to a single Brahman or a group of Brahmans. These villages tended to be more prosperous than the others because no tax was paid. There were devadana villages, donated to a temple, and the revenue was consequently received by the temple authorities and not by the state. The temple authorities assisted the village by providing employment in the service of the temple. This last category of villages gained greater significance when in later centuries the temples became the centres of rural life. During the Pallava period the first two types of villages were predominant.

In 1879, eleven plates held together by a ring of copper, its two ends soldered and stamped with a royal seal depicting a bull and a lingam (the Pallava symbol) were discovered in Urrukkattukottam, near Puducherry. It records a grant of a village made in the twenty-second year of the king Nandivarman (753 CE). The inscriptional text commences with a eulogy of the king in Sanskrit, followed by the details of the grant in Tamil, and a concluding verse in Sanskrit.

Village Life

- In the village, the basic assembly was the sabha, which was concerned with all matters relating to the village, including endowments, land, irrigation, cultivated, punishment of crime, the keeping of a census and other necessary records. Village courts dealt with petty criminal cases. At a higher level, in towns and districts, courts were presided over by government officers, with the king as the supreme arbiter of justice. The sabha was a formal institution but it worked closely with the urar, an informal gathering of the entire village. Above this was a district council which worked with nadu or district administration. Villages populated entirely or largely by Brahmans preserved records of the functioning of assemblies and councils. The link between the village assembly and the official administration was the headman of the village.

Tank Irrigation

- A special category of land, eripatti or tank land, was known only in south India. This land was donated by individuals, the revenue from which was set apart for the maintenance of the village tank. Rainwater was stored in the tank so that land could be irrigated during the annual long, dry spell. The tank, lined with brick or stone, was built through the cooperative effort of the village, and its water was shared by all cultivators. The maintenance of these tanks was essential to the village. Practically every inscription from the Pallava period pertaining to the rural affairs refers to the upkeep of the tank. Next in importance came wells. Water was distributed by canals, which were fitted with sluices to regulate the water level and prevent overflowing at the source. The distribution of water for irrigation was supervised by a special tank committee appointed by the village. Water taken in excess of allotted to a particular cultivator was taxed.

Revenue and Taxation

- Land grants recorded mainly on copperplates provide detailed information on land revenues and taxation. Revenue came almost exclusively from rural sources, mercantile and urban institutions being largely unplanned. Two categories of taxes were levied on the village. The land revenue paid by the cultivator to the state varied from 1/6th to 1/10th of the produce, and was collected by the village and paid to the state collector. In the second category were local taxes, also collected in the village but utilized for services in the village itself. The tax money was spent for repairing irrigation works, illuminating the temple, etc. When the state land tax was inadequate, the revenue was supplemented by additional taxes on draught cattle, toddy-drawers, marriage-parties, potters, goldsmiths, washermen, textile-manufacturers, weavers, brokers, letter-carriers, and the makers of ghee.
- The loot and booty obtained in war added to the revenue of the state. Pallava considered war to be very important and a series of sculptures depicting the important events connected with the reign of Nandivarama Pallava, notably Pallava troops attacking a fort are seen in the Vaikunta Perumal temple at Kanchipuram. This fort is depicted in the sculptures as having high ramparts with soldiers attacking it and elephants standing near it.

Pallava Army

- Much of the state revenue went to maintain the army. The king maintained a standing army under his direct control. The army consisted of foot-soldiers, cavalry and a small force of elephants. Chariots were by now almost out of use and in any case were ineffective in the hilly terrains, as much of the fighting took place there. Cavalry, though effective, was expensive, as horses had to be imported. The Pallavas developed a navy and built dockyards at Mamallapuram and Nagapattinam. However, the Pallava navy was inconsiderable compared to the naval strength of the Cholas who succeeded them.

Trade

- Kanchipuram was an important trading centre in the Pallava period. The merchants had to obtain license to market their goods. Barter system generally prevailed but later the Pallavas issued gold and silver coins. Merchants had their own organizations such as Manigramam. In foreign trade, spices, cotton textiles, precious stones and medicinal plants were exported to Java, Sumatra, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, China and Burma. Mamallapuram was an important seaport. Traders founded guilds and called themselves as sudesi, nanadesi, ainurruvar and others. Their main guild functioned at Aihole. Foreign merchants were known as Nanadesi. It had a separate flag with the figure of bull at the centre, and they enjoyed the right of issuing vira-sanas. The jurisdiction of this guild stretched over entire south-east Asia. The chief of this guild is registered in the inscriptions as pattanswamy, pattnakilar, and dandanayaka. Its members were known as ayyavole-parameswariyar.

Maritime Trade

- Unlike in the Ganges plain, where large areas were available for cultivation, the regions controlled by the Pallavas and the Chalukyas commanded a limited income from land. Mercantile activity had not developed sufficiently to make a substantial contribution to the economy. The Pallavas had maritime trade with south-east Asia, where by now there were three major kingdoms: Kambuja (Cambodia), Champa (Annam), and Srivijaya (the southern Malay peninsula and Sumatra). On the west coast, the initiative in the trade with the West was gradually passing into the hands of the foreign traders settled along the coast, mainly Arabs. Indian

traders were becoming suppliers of goods rather than carriers of goods to foreign countries, and communication with the west became indirect, via Arabs, and limited to trade alone.

Society

- Brahmins as learned scholars in literature, astronomy, law and others functioned as the royal counsellors. Not only were they in the teaching profession, they were also involved in agriculture, trade and war. They were exempted from paying taxes and capital punishment. The next important social group which ruled the state was called sat-kshatriyas (quality kshatriyas). Not all the kshatriyas were of warring groups; some of them were involved in trading as well. They also enjoyed the right to read the Vedas, a privilege denied to lower varnas. The trading group maintained warriors for protection and founded trade guilds. The people who were at the bottom of the society worked in agriculture, animal husbandry, and handicraft works. People engaged in scavenging, fishing, dry-cleaning and leather works were positioned outside the varna system. Most scholars agree that Aryanisation or the northern influence on the south picked up pace during the Pallava period. This is evident from the royal grants issued by the kings. The caste structure had firmly established. Sanskrit came to be held in high esteem.
- Kanchipuram continued to be a great seat of learning. The followers of Vedic religion were devoted to the worship of Siva. Mahendravarman was the first, during the middle of his reign, to adopt the worship of Siva. But he was intolerant of Jainism and destroyed some Jain monasteries. Many of the great Nayanmars and Alvars, Saiva and Vaishanava poet-saints lived during his time. Buddhism and Jainism lost their appeal. However, Hiuen-Tsang is reported to have seen at Kanchi one hundred Buddhist monasteries and 10,000 priests belonging to the Mahayana school.

Growing influence of Brahmanism

- Perhaps the most obvious sign of the influence of Aryan culture in the south was the pre-eminent position given to Brahmins. They gained materially through large gifts of land. Aryanisation is also evident in the evolution of educational institutions in the Pallava kingdom. In the early part of this period education was controlled by Jains and Buddhists, but gradually the Brahmins superseded them. The Jains who had brought

with them their religious literature in Sanskrit and Prakrit, began to use Tamil. Jainism was extremely popular, but the competition of Hinduism in the succeeding centuries greatly reduced the number of its adherents. In addition, Mahendravarman I lost interest in Jainism and took up the cause of Saivism, thus depriving the Jains of valuable royal patronage. The Jains had developed a few educational centres near Madurai and Kanchi, and religious centres such as the one at Shravanabelagola in Karnataka. But a vast majority of the Jaina monks tended to isolate themselves in small caves, in hills and forests.

Monasteries and Mutts

- Monasteries continued to be the nucleus of the Buddhist educational system and were located in the region of Kanchi, and the valleys of the Krishna and the Godavari rivers. Buddhist centres were concerned with the study of Buddhism, particularly as this was a period of intense conflict between orthodox and heterodox sects. But Buddhism was fighting a losing battle. Royal patronage, which the Buddhists lacked, gave an edge to the protagonists of Vedic religions.

Apart from the university at Kanchi, which acquired a fame equal to that of the Nalanda, there were a number of other Sanskrit colleges. Sanskrit was the recognized medium, and was also the official language at the court, which led to its adoption in literary circles. In the eighth century the mathas (mutts) became popular. This was a combination of a rest house, a feeding-centre, and an education centre, which indirectly brought publicity to the particular sect with which it was associated.

Growing Popularity of Sanskrit

- Mahendravarman I composed Mathavilasa Prahasanam in Sanskrit. Two extraordinary works in Sanskrit set the standard for Sanskrit literature in the south: Bharavi's Kiratarjuniya and Dandin's Dashakumaracharita. Dandin of Kanchipuram, author of the great treatise on rhetoric Kavyadarsa, seems to have stayed in Pallava court for some time.

Rock-cut Temples

- Mahendravarman I is credited with the introduction of rock-cut temples in the Pallava territory. Mahendravarman claims in his Mandagappattu

inscription that his shrine to Brahma, Isvara and Vishnu was made without using traditional materials such as brick, timber, metal and mortar. Mahendravarman's rock temples are usually the mandapa type with a pillared hall or the mandapa in front and a small shrine at the rear or sides.

II. Ellora - Ajanta and Mamallapuram

- Aurangabad district in Maharashtra is the centre of the groups of caves in Ellora and Ajanta. The Ellora group of caves are famous for sculptures while the Ajanta group of caves are famous for paintings. The dates of these temples range from c. 500 to c. 950 CE. But the activity of creating cave temples may have started two hundred years earlier. The first cave temple was created for the Ajivikas. Some of the temples are incomplete.

Ellora

- The rock-cut cave temples in Ellora are in 34 caves, carved in Charanadri hills. Without knowledge of trigonometry, structural engineering, and metallurgy, the Indian architects could not have created such exquisite edifices. The patrons of these caves range from the dynasties of Chalukyas to Rashtrakutas. The heterodox sects first set the trend of creating this model of temples. Later, orthodox sects adopted it as a medium of disseminating religious ideologies. These temples were linked to Ajivikas, Jainism, Buddhism, and Brahmanism. The earliest temples are modest and simple with no artistic claims. But, the later temples are elegant edifices.
- Mural paintings in Ellora are found in five caves, but only in the Kailash temple are they preserved. Some murals in Jain temples are well preserved. Not only animals, birds, trees, flowers are pictured elegantly, but human emotions and character - greed, love, compassion are depicted with professional skill.

The Ellora caves were designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.

Heterodox I/ Buddhist caves

- There are 12 Buddhist caves. Every Buddhist cave temple is of a unique model in architecture. Some are modest; while others are double-storeyed

or triple-storeyed. The plans of the caves demonstrate that these were designed as religious centres where monks stayed and the disciples were trained in religious treatises and scriptures. The main hall in the centre and the cubical rooms on either side were used as monasteries for teaching and preaching. This is attested by a figure, in cave number six, of man reading a manuscript on a folding table. The panels in these caves portray scenes from the life of the Buddha. Three different characters are identified by the sculptures in the caves. The central figure is Buddha found in three sagacious postures: meditating (dhyana mudra), preaching (vyakhyana mudra) and touching the earth by index finger of right hand (bhumi-sparsha mudra).

Goddesses

- Buddhist caves represented goddesses by way of the carved images of Tara, Khadiravanitara, Chunda, Vajradhat-vishvari, Mahamayuri, Sujata, Pandara and Bhrikuti. In cave twelve, a stout female figure is depicted wearing a waistband and headgear of a cobra. Khadrivani-tara also holds a cobra in one of her hands in the same cave.

Heterodox II / Jain caves

- A few Jain caves are also seen in Ellora group and are distinct from others. But they are incomplete. The figures of Yakshamatanga, Mahavira, Parsvanatha, and Gomatesvara are surrounded by attendants.

Caves of Vedic Religions

- The earliest caves in these groups are modest and simple. Mostly, they are square-shaped except Kailasanatha cave (cave-16), which is a massive monolithic structure, carved out of a single solid rock. This temple is said to represent Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva. The temple is two storeyed and the Kailasa temple is on the first one. The lower storey has carved life-size elephants, which looks like they are holding up the temple on their backs. The temple exterior has richly carved windows, images of deities from the Hindu scriptures and Mithunas (amorous male and female figures). Most of the deities to the left of the temple entrance are Saivite and the deities to the right of the entrance are Vaishnavite. The courtyard has two huge pillars with the flagstaff and a Nandi mandapa. The wedding ceremony of Siva- Parvati, the attempted lifting of the Kailasa

mountain by Ravana, and the destruction of Mahisasura by the goddess Durga are beautiful specimens. Weapons and musical instruments of the gods are also depicted through the panel sculptures. An interesting sculpture is that of the river goddess Ganga mounted on a crocodile and the river goddess Yamuna mounted on a tortoise.

Ajanta

- The Ajanta caves are situated at a distance of about 100 km north of Aurangabad in Maharashtra. Totally 30 caves have been scooped out of volcanic rocks. Though chiefly famous for mural paintings, there are some sculptures too. The Hinayana sect of Buddhism started the excavation of caves in Ajanta. The patrons were the kings who ruled the Deccan plateau during the period c. 200 BCE to 200 CE. Inscriptions speak of the patrons who range from kings to merchants. First phase of the caves belong to the period from c. 200 BCE to 200 CE. The second phase started from c. 200 CE to 400 CE.

Paintings

- Ajanta caves are the repository of rich mural paintings. Paintings of the early phase are mostly in caves nine and ten, which belong to the period of the Satavahanas. The authors of Ajanta paintings followed ingenious techniques. First, they plastered the ridged surface of the volcanic rock. This plaster was made of vegetable fibres, paddy husk, rock-grit, and sand. This surface was overlaid with a thin layer of lime, ready to receive the pigment. Recently it was noticed that a stretch of cloth was reinforced on the surface for the application of pigment.
- The colours were extracted out of natural objects and minerals. The prominent colours used are black, red, white, yellow, blue and green. The aesthetic features of the paintings are garland, necklaces, headgear, earrings and the perfection of the movements of the human hands. The story panels are attractive and informative. Scenes from the Jataka stories and select episodes from the life history of Buddha are the central theme of the paintings.
- The celestial figures of Kinnaras, Vidyadharas and Gandharvas are depicted in paintings and sculptures. In the paintings of the later period Bodhisattva is shown in larger relief. Though a variety of human moods

are presented, the dominant ones are of compassion and peace. Light and shadow are intelligently used. Human figures depicted in different colours have been interpreted to mean that they are from different ethnicities.

- Architecture and Sculpture Architecturally, Ajanta caves are grouped into two: chaityas and viharas. The chaityas have vaulted ceilings with long halls. In the rear end of the halls the statue of Buddha is seen. The sculpture of Buddha in the garbagriha is in the classical model. His image is the embodiment of benevolence. Heaviness is the general character of the sculptures. Sculptures of Yakshis and Hariti with children are significant. Bodhisattva carved out independently is another important feature. The popular Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is depicted in painting and sculpture.

Mamallapuram

- The iconic Shore Temple of Pallavas at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) was constructed during the reign of Rajasimha (700-728). The temple comprises three shrines, where the prominent ones are dedicated to Siva and Vishnu. The exterior wall of the shrine, dedicated to Vishnu, and the interior of the boundary wall are elaborately carved and sculpted. In southern India, this is one amongst the earliest and most important structural temples. Unlike other structures of the region, the Shore Temple is a five-storeyed rock-cut monolith. The monolithic vimanas are peculiar to Mamallapuram.
- The Rathas there are known as the Panchapandava Rathas. The Arjuna Ratha contains artistically carved sculptures of Siva, Vishnu, mithuna and dwarapala. The most exquisite of the five is the Dharmaraja Ratha, with a three-storied vimana and a square base. The Bhima Ratha is rectangular in plan and has beautiful sculptures of Harihara, Brahma, Vishnu, Skanda, Ardhanarisvara and Siva as Gangadhara.
- The most important piece of carving in Mamallapuram is the Descent of the Ganga (variously described as 'Bhagirata's Penance' or 'Arjuna's Penance'). The portrayal of puranic figures with popular local stories reveals the skill of the artists in blending various aspects of human and animal life. The sculptural panel in the Krishna mandapa, where village

life with cows and cowherds is depicted with beauty and skill, is yet another artistic wonder to behold.

Conclusion

- Rock-cut temples were common in the Pallava period. The structural temples and the free-standing temples at Aihole and Badami in the Deccan and at Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram provide testimony to the architectural excellence achieved during the period.
- The Deccan style of sculpture shows a close affinity to Gupta art. Pallava sculpture owed a lot to the Buddhist tradition. Yet the sculpture and the architecture of the Deccan and Tamil Nadu were not mere offshoots of the northern tradition. They are distinctly recognizable as different and have an originality of their own. The basic form was taken from the older tradition, but the end result unmistakably reflected its own native brilliance.

III. Devotional Movement and Literature

Tamil Devotionalism

- The emergence of regional polities in south India necessitated the establishment of states based on a certain ideology. In the context of the times religion alone could be the rallying point. The Pallavas of Kanchipuram in north and the Pandyas of Madurai in south of Tamil country patronised the religious movement of Bhakti, spearheaded by the elite and the wealthy merchant class. The local temple became the nucleus of this movement. Bhakti became the instrument to touch the hearts of people emotionally, and mobilize them.
- Bhakti cult as a religious movement opened a new chapter in the history of Tamilnadu in the early medieval period. A strong wave of Tamil devotionalism swept the country from the sixth through the ninth centuries. The form was in hymns of the Nayanmars and the Azhwars. The saints of Saivism and Vaishnavism simplified the use of Tamil language with the application of music. They brought the local and regional ethos into the mainstream. Azhwars (totally 12) and Nayanmars (totally 63), came from different strata of Tamil society, such as artisans and cultivators. There were women saints as well like Andal, an Azhwar

saint. The poet Karaikkal Ammaiyar (Tilakawathi), and the Pandya queen Mangayarkkarasiyar were prominent female Nayanmar saints. The refashioning of Saivism and Vaishnavism by the Bhakti saints effectively challenged Buddhism and Jainism. The influence of the Bhakti movement is still discernable in Tamilnadu.

Sources

- Hymns of Thevaram corpus; Nalayiradivya-prapandam; Periyapuranam; Tiru-thondarthogai; Manickavasakar's Tiruvasagam; Hymns engraved on the walls of temples. Miniature sculptures in the circumambulation of temples; paintings in the temples.

Bhakti as Ideology

- The term Bhakti has different connotations. It includes service, piety, faith and worship. But it also has an extended meaning. It is an enactment of emotion, aesthetics and sensitivity. Bhakti hymns have three major themes: First and foremost is the idea of devotion to a personal god. The second is a protest against orthodox Vedic Brahmanism and the exclusiveness of the Brahmans in their access to divine grace and salvation. The third is the outright condemnation of Jains and Buddhists as heretics.

Bhakti and the Arts

- Originating with folk dancing, the choreography of temple dancing became highly sophisticated and complex renderings of religious themes as apparent in the final form. From the Pallava period onwards trained groups of dancers were maintained by the more prosperous temples. Classic scenes from puranas, and itihisas were sculpted on the walls of the temples, in bronze and stone. Subsequently, artists were attached to the temples with state patronage in order to promote the fine arts like music, dance and others. Religious hymns set to music were popularized by the Tamil saints, and the singing of these hymns became a regular feature of the temple ritual. The veena was probably the most frequently used instrument. Sometime around the fifth century CE, it was replaced in India by a lute with a pear-shaped body. Some two centuries later it took the form in which it is found today—a small gourd body with a long finger-board.

Azhwars and Nayamars

Azhwars

- Azhwars composed moving hymns addressed to Vishnu. They were compiled in the Nalayira Divviiyaprabandhamby Nadamuni, at the end of the ninth century. Nadamuni who served as a priest at the Ranganatha temple in Srirangam is credited with compiling this work comprising four thousand poems. Periyalvar lived in Srivilliputtur during the reign of Pandyan king Maravarman Srivallabha in the ninth century. The themes are mostly Krishna's childhood. Krishna is the hero in Andal's hymns. Her songs convey her abiding love for Krishna. Nammalvar, from Kurugur (Alvar Tirunagari), now in Thoothukudi district, is considered the greatest amongst Alvars. Nammalvar authored four works that include the Tiruvaymoli. Vaishnava devotees believe that his hymns distil the essence of the four Vedas. From the twelfth century, the Vaishnava hymns were the subject of elaborate and erudite commentaries.

Nayanmars

- The prominent Saiva poets include Tirunavukarasar (Appar), Tirugnanasambandar and Sundarar, and Manikkavasagar. Nambi Andar Nambi compiled their hymns into an anthology of eleven books, towards the end of tenth century. The first seven books, commonly known as Thevaram, contain the hymns of Sambandar (I to III), Appar (books IV to VI) and Sundarar (book VII) and Manikkavasagar (book VIII). Sekkilar's Periyapuram is the twelfth thirumurai of the Saiva canon. It is a hagiography of the sixty-three Nayanmars but contains an undercurrent of historical information as well. This collection of 12 books is named Panniru Tirumurai. The Periyapuram relates many stories about Nayanmars and the miraculous episodes in their lives.

Impact

- The devotional movement manifested itself as a great social transformation. The apogee of its movement was the coming up of temples that became prominent in the Tamil landscape. Temples, in later Chola times, became great social institutions. Politically, the Bhakti movement prompted the rulers to establish the settlements for the invited Brahmin groups from the north of the Indian sub-continent. Royal

members, local administrative bodies and individuals initiated the calendrical celebrations and festivals to be conducted in the temples for which they started making endowments to meet their expenditure. It directly speeded up the emergence of state in Tamil country and indirectly integrated the different social groups into the religious fold through the instrumentality of temple institutions. Over the centuries the Bhakti movement spread all over India, and resulted in a transformation of Hinduism.

Adi Sankara (788-820)

- Bhakti or devotional movement incorporated different sections of the society into mainstream politics through the motto of service, surrender and sacrifice. Every layman could understand this motto because Bhakti literary canons were composed in Tamil in simple syntactic and semantic style. But, with the arrival of Adi Sankara Bhakti discourse began in Sanskrit in a philosophical mode.

Advent of Adi Sankara

- Against the background of the emerging pan-Indian need for an ideology to evolve statehood, a new doctrine was expounded by Sankara from Kaladi, Kerala. With his new doctrine of Maya (illusion) he held debates with his counterparts from different sects of religions and won over them. Fundamentally, Sankara's Advaita or non-dualism had its roots in Vedanta or Upanishadic philosophy. His attempts to root out Buddhism and to establish smarta (traditionalist) mathas resulted in the establishment of monasteries in different places viz., Sringeri, Dvaraka, Badrinath, and Puri, which were headed by Brahmin pontiffs. Sankara looked upon Saiva and Vaishnava worship as two equally important aspects of the Vedic religion. Monastic organization and preservation of Sanskrit scriptures were the two major thrusts of Sankara school.

Sri Ramanujar (1017-1138)

- Sri Ramanujar, a native of Sriperumpudur, underwent philosophical training under Yataavaprakasara in Kanchipuram in Sankara school of thought. The young Ramanujar did not agree with the teachings of his *guru* and was fascinated by the teachings of the Srirangam school of thought. Yamunacharya who once found him in Kanchi invited him to

Srirangam. But as soon as he reached Sri Rangam, Yamunacharya passed away. Ramanujar was then declared the head of monastery in Srirangam. He took control of monastery, temple and united the sect with efforts at modifying the rituals in temples. Ramanuja was a teacher-reformer and a great organiser. He challenged the monist ideology of Adi Sankara and in his effort to widen the social base to include social groups other than Brahmans. Described as qualified monism, his philosophy of Visishtadvaita influenced many thinkers and developed into a separate tradition. A century after his death, there was a schism which developed into two separate schools under Vedanta Desikar and Manavala Mamuni. Ramanuja took interest in propagating the doctrine of Bhakti to social groups outside the varnashrama system. He influenced some temple authorities to permit the social groups outside the varnashrama system to enter into temple at least once a year. It is believed that due to the perceived threat to their religious faith and existence, Ramanujar had to leave his place of residence.

Conclusion

- The developments in south India that took place during this time facilitated the fusion of north Indian and south Indian traditions and paved the way for the evolution of a composite Indian culture. The popularity of the bhakti cult in various parts of India was inaugurated by the Tamil devotional cult, indicating that 'maximum of common characteristics was beginning to merge in the various regions of the sub-continent'. Quoting M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, we can sum up the significance of bhakti ideology as 'the cementing force bringing together kings, Brahmin priests and the common people in a harmonious manner to strengthen the rule of the newly established Hindu kingdoms based on the caste system.'

Religion

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5- Social and Religious Reform Movements in the 19th Century

- English education, introduced with the object of producing clerks, also produced a new English-educated middle class. This class came under the influence of western ideas and thoughts. Christianity also had its effect on the newly emerging middle class. Though small in number, the educated middle class began to take a lead in political as well as in reform movements. The Indian reformers were, however, quite hesitant to subject their old notions and habits to critical scrutiny. Instead they attempted to harmonize both Indian and Western cultures. Their ideas and their actions helped to mitigate social evils such as sati, female infanticide, and child marriage and various superstitious beliefs.
- The reform movements of nineteenth century in the realm of religion fall under two broad categories: reformist movements like the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Aligarh Movement; and the revivalist movements such as the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Deoband Movement. There were also attempts to challenge the oppressive social structure by Jyotiba Phule in Pune, Narayana Guru and Ayyankali in Kerala and Ramalinga Adigal, Vaikunda Swamigal and Iyothee Thassar of Tamil Nadu.

Raja Rammohan Roy and Brahmo Samaj

- Rammohan Roy (1772–1833) was one of the earlier reformers influenced by the Western ideas to initiate reforms. He was a great scholar, well-versed in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and English apart from his knowledge in his mother tongue, Bengali. Rammohan Roy was opposed to meaningless religious ceremonies and all forms of pernicious social customs. Yet he wanted to preserve continuity with the past. In his religio-philosophical social outlook, he was deeply influenced by monotheism and anti-idolatry. Based on his interpretation of the Upanishads, he argued that all the ancient texts of the Hindus preached monotheism or worship of one God.

- Deeply concerned with the prevailing customs of sati, child marriage, and polygamy he published tracts against them and petitioned the government to legislate against them. He advocated the rights of widows to remarry. He wanted polygamy to end. His opinions were resisted fiercely by orthodox Hindus. He appealed to reason and humanity and compassion of the people. He visited the crematorium of Calcutta to try and persuade the relatives of widows to give up their plan of self-immolation. His campaign played a key role in forcing the Governor-General William Bentinck's legislation abolishing sati in 1829.
- Ram Mohan Roy condemned the subjugation of women and opposed the prevailing ideas that women were inferior to men. He strongly advocated education for women. He gave his full support for the introduction of English language and western sciences in schools and colleges. Rammohan found in the Upanishads a new revelation of one infinite, divine Being, the eternal Brahman, while Hinduism as he saw in the daily life around him was a perversion of their teaching.
- Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahma Samaj in 1828. On 20 August 1828 he opened a temple in Calcutta, where there was no image. There he laid down that 'no religion should be reviled or slightly or contemptuously spoken off or alluded to.' The Samaj forbade idol-worship and condemned meaningless religious rites and ceremonies. However, from the beginning, the appeal of the Brahma Samaj remained limited to the intellectuals and enlightened Bengalis. Though the Samaj failed to attract the people from the lower sections of society, its impact on the culture of modern Bengal and its middle class was quite significant.

Maharishi Debendranath Tagore

- After the death of Ram Mohan Roy (1833), Maharishi Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), the poet Rabindranath Tagore's father, carried on the work. He laid down four articles of faith:
 1. In the beginning there was nothing. The one Supreme Being alone existed who created the Universe.
 2. He alone is the God of Truth, Infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, eternal, omnipresent, the One without second.

3. Our salvation depends on belief in Him and in His worship in this world and the next.
4. Belief consists in loving Him and doing His will.

Keshab Chandra Sen & Brahma Samaj of India

- Debendranath was a moderate reformer. But his younger colleagues in the Sabha were for rapid changes. The greatest of these, Keshab Chandra Sen, (1838–84) joined the movement in 1857. He was greatly influenced by Christianity, believing in its spirit but not in the person of its founder. But in 1866 a split occurred in the ranks of Brahma Samaj. Keshab left the Samaj and founded a new organization. Debendranath's organization, thereafter, came to be known as Adi Brahma Samaj. After Keshab had his fourteen-year-old daughter married to an Indian prince, in contravention of the Samaj's condemnation of child marriages, the opponents of child marriage left the Brahma Samaj of India and started the Sadharan Samaj, which developed anti-Christian tendencies.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

- Another outstanding reformer in Bengal was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820–1891). While Ram Mohan Roy and others looked to western rationalist ideas to reform society, Vidyasagar argued that the Hindu scriptures were progressive. He provided evidence from scriptures that there was no sanction for burning of widows or for the prohibition on the remarriage of widows. He wrote a number of polemical tracts, and was the pioneer of modern Bengali prose. He played a leading role in promoting education of girls and helped them in setting up a number of schools. He dedicated his whole life for the betterment of the child widows of the Hindu society. The movement led by Vidyasagar, resulted in the Widows' Remarriage Reform Act of 1856. This Act was intended to improve the lot of child widows and save them from perpetual widowhood.

Prarthana Samaj

- The Maharashtra region was another region where reform activities gained Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar steam. A movement similar to the Brahma Samaj, but founded in Bombay in 1867, was Prarthana Samaj. Its founder was Dr. Atma Ram Pandurang (1825–1898). The two distinguished members of this Samaj were R.C. Bhandarkar and Justice

Mahadev Govind Ranade. They devoted themselves to activities such as intercaste dining, inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage and improvement of women and depressed classes. Ranade (1842–1901) was the founder of the Widow Marriage Association (1861), the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha (1870) and the Deccan Education Society (1884).

While the above reformers worked among the upper castes, during the same time Jyotiba Phule worked for the uplift of depressed castes and the cause of women. His book *Gulamgiri* ('Slavery') is an important work that condemned the inequities of caste.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj, 1875

- In the Punjab, the reform movement was spearheaded by the Arya Samaj. It was founded (1875) by a wandering ascetic in the western Gangetic plain, Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–83). Swami Dayanand later settled in the Punjab to preach his ideas. His book, *Satyarthaprakash*, enjoyed wide circulation. He declared the practices such as child marriage, the prohibition of widow remarriage, and the alleged polluting effects of foreign travel had no scriptural sanction. The positive principles enunciated by Dayanand were: strict monotheism, condemnation of idolatry, and rejection of Brahman domination of ritual and social practices. He also rejected superstitious beliefs in Hinduism, especially Puranic literature and his cry was "go back to Vedas."
- Arya Samaj attempted to check the incidence of religious conversion in British India. One of its main objectives was counter-conversion, prescribing a purificatory ceremony called *suddhi*, directed at Hindus who had converted to Islam and Christianity. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period of great turmoil in undivided Punjab with intense debates between Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The primary achievements of the Arya Samaj were in the field of social reform and spread of education. The Samaj started a number of Dayananda Anglo-Vedic schools and colleges.

Ramakrishna

- As we saw earlier, the Brahmo Samaj, as a response to Christian and rationalist criticism had criticised idolatry and other orthodox Hindu practices. The popularity that Ramakrishna (1836–86), a simple priest of Dakshineswar near Kolkata, gained in the latter half of the nineteenth century was a response to this. He emphasised the spiritual union with

god through ecstatic practices such as singing bhajans. An ardent worshipper of goddess Kali, the sacred mother, he declared that the manifestations of the divine mother were infinite. In his view, all religions contain the universal elements which, if practised, would lead to salvation. He said, “Jiva is Siva” (all living beings are God). Why then talk of showing mercy to them? Not mercy, but service, service for man, must be regarded as God.’

Ramakrishna Mission

- Ramakrishna’s primary achievement was his ability to attract educated youth who were dissatisfied with the rational orientation of religious reform organizations such as the Brahma Samaj. After his death in 1886, his disciples organised themselves as a religious community and undertook the task of making his life and teaching known in India and abroad. The chief spirit behind this task was Vivekananda. Following the organizational structure of Christian missionaries, Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission which did not restrict itself to religious activities but was actively involved in social causes such as education, health care and relief in times of calamities.

Swami Vivekananda

- Narendra Nath Datta (1863–1902), later known as Swami Vivekananda, was the prime follower of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. An educated youth, he was drawn to Ramakrishna’s message. Dissatisfied with conventional philosophical positions and practices, he advocated the practical Vedanta of service to humanity and attacked the tendency to defend every institution simply because it was connected with religion. He emphasized a cultural nationalism and made a call to Indian youth to regenerate Hindu society.
- His ideas bred a sense of self confidence among Indians who felt inferior in relation to the materialist achievements of the West. He became famous for his addresses on Hinduism at the 1893 World Congress of Religions in Chicago. Despite his fame, he was condemned by orthodox Hindus for suggesting that the lower castes should be allowed to engage in the Hindu rituals from which they were traditionally excluded. Vivekananda’s activist ideology rekindled the desire for political change among many western-education young Bengalis. Many of the youths who were involved in the militant nationalist struggle during the Swadeshi

movement following the Partition of Bengal were inspired by Vivekananda.

Theosophical Movement

- During the nineteenth century, Hindu religion and culture were being discredited in the West, especially due to missionary propaganda. However, some Western intellectuals looked to the East for spiritual salvation as a remedy to the materialistic orientation of the West. The Theosophical Society, founded by Madame H.P. Blavatsky (1831–1891) and Colonel H.S. Olcott (1832–1907) played a key role in this. Founded in the USA in 1875, it later shifted to India at Adyar, Chennai in 1886. Theosophical Society stimulated a study of the Hindu classics, especially the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. The Theosophical Society also played an important role in the revival of Buddhism in India. Western interest in Hindu scriptures gave educated Hindus great pride in their tradition and culture.

Contribution of Annie Besant

- In India the movement became further popular with the election of Annie Besant (1847–1933) as its president after the death of Olcott. She played a role in Indian nationalist politics, and formed the Home Rule League demanding home rule to India on the lines of Ireland. Annie Besant spread Theosophical ideas through her newspapers called New India and Commonweal.

Jyotiba Phule

- Jyotiba Govindrao Phule was born in 1827 in Maharashtra. Phule is chiefly known as Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule as the earliest leader of the non-Brahman movement. He opened the first school for “untouchables” in 1852 in Poona. He launched the Satyashodak Samaj (Truth-Seekers Society) in 1870 to stir the non-Brahman masses to self-respect and ambition. Phule opposed child marriage and supported widow remarriage, which was prohibited particularly among high-caste Hindus. Jyotiba and his wife Savitribai Phule devoted their lives for the uplift of the depressed classes and women. Jyotiba opened orphanages and homes for widows. Unlike many contemporary nationalists he welcomed British rule and missionary activities on the ground that British rule enabled lower castes to challenge the supremacy of Brahmins. His work,

Gulamgiri (Slavery) is an important text that summarized many of his radical ideas.

Narayana Guru

- Born to poor parents in Kerala, Narayana Guru (1854– 1928) evolved into a poet and scholar in Malayalam, Tamil and Sanskrit. In his days the people of depressed classes had no access to temples, streets, public tanks and wells and educational institutions. Men and women belonging to lower castes were not allowed to wear the upper garments. Disturbed by the terrible caste tyranny, that the lower caste people suffered, he dedicated his whole life for the betterment of the oppressed. He set up the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, an organization to work for the uplift of the “depressed classes”. He established a grand temple at Aruvipuram and dedicated it to all. His movement inspired a radical transformation of Kerala society, especially among the Ezhavas. Thinkers and writers such as Kumaran Asan and Dr Palpu were influenced by his ideas and carried forward the movement.

Ayyankali

- Nineteenth - century Kerala region was plagued by caste discriminations of worst kind. Certain social groups were not only considered untouchable but also un-seeable. However, the strident campaigns by thinkers such as Narayana Guru and Ayyankali (1863–1941) in the context of larger political and economic changes ushered in tremendous social changes, especially in the caste structure. Ayyankali was born in 1863 at Venganoor in Thiruvananthapuram then in the princely state of Travancore.
- The discrimination he faced as a child turned him into a leader of an anti-caste movement and who later fought for basic rights including access to public spaces and entry to schools. Ayyankali challenged many caste conventions such as clothing style; he wore clothes associated with upper castes that were prohibited for lower castes. He rode on an ox-cart challenging the ‘ban’ on untouchables from accessing public roads used by caste Hindus. Inspired by Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali founded the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam (Association for the Protection of the Poor) in 1907 which campaigned and raised funds to educate the lower caste Pulaya people.

Islamic Reforms

- After the suppression of great revolt of 1857 Indian Muslims looked to Western culture with suspicion. The community feared that Western education, Western culture and Western ideas would endanger their religion. Therefore only a small section of Muslims accepted the new avenues for modern education. Consequently, Indian Muslims as a community lagged behind in comparison to the Hindu elite of various parts of India.

Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan

- As Indian Muslims steadily lost ground in education, in the public services and in general leadership in India, there was a realization that there was no alternative but to accept modern education if the community was to go on the path of progress. The man who gave life and soul to it was Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898). Born in Delhi into a noble Muslim family, Sayyid Ahmed Khan thought that lack of education, especially modern education, had harmed the Muslims greatly and kept them backward. He exhorted the Muslims to accept Western science and take up government services. He founded a scientific society and translated many English books, especially science books into Urdu. He believed that the interest of the Muslims would be best served if they bonded with the British Government rather than pitch in with the rising nationalist movement. So he advised the Muslims to take to English education and to concentrate on it.

Aligarh Movement

- Say id Ahmed Khan's m o v e m e n t , the "Aligarh movement ," is so called because it was centred around the Aligarh Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental college founded by him in 1875, which is a landmark in the history of Indian Muslim education. The college was raised to the status of a university in 1920. Aligarh produced a huge body of intelligentsia over successive generations who played a key role in public life.

Deoband Movement

- Deoband was a revivalist movement organized by the orthodox Muslim Ulema with the twin objectives of propagating the pure teachings of the Quran and the Hadith as well as encouraging the spirit of Jihad against the foreign and un-Islamic elements. The Ulema under the leadership of

Muhammad QasimWanotavi (1832-80) and Rashid Ahmad Gangotri (1828-1905) founded the school at Deoband in the Saharanpur district of the U.P in 1866. The school curricula shut out English education and western culture. The instruction imparted was in original Islamic religion and the aim was moral and religious regeneration of the Muslim community. The Deoband School did not prepare its students for government jobs but for the preaching of Islamic faith.

- In politics, the Deoband School welcomed the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. In 1888 the Deoband Ulema issued a religious decree (fatwa) against Syed Ahmed Khan's Organisation called "The United Patriotic Association" and "The Muhammeden Anglo - Oriental Association." It is said the Deoband Ulema were mainly influenced by their determination to oppose Sir Syed Ahmed's activities. Maulana Mahmud-ul-Hassan became the new Deoband leader. The Jamait-UL-Ulema (council of theologians) led by him gave a concrete shape to Hassan's ideas of protection of the religious and political rights of the Muslims in the overall context of Indian unity.
- In the middle of the nineteenth century the reform activities of the educated Parsis (the Zoroastrians who had fled from Iran in the tenth century in the face of religious persecution) began in Mumbai. Furdunji Naoroji founded the Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Sabha (Parsis' Reform Society) in 1851. Rast Goftar (The Truth Teller) was the main voice of the movement. The leaders of the Sabha criticized elaborate ceremonies at betrothals, marriages and funerals. They opposed both infant marriage and the use of astrology. Behrramji Malabari organized a campaign for legislation against the practice of child marriage. The community produced many leaders such as Pherozechah Mehta and Dinshaw Wacha who played a big role in the early Congress.

Sikh Reforms Movement (Nirankaris and Namdharis)

- The wave of reform movements did not leave any community untouched. Among the Sikhs of Punjab too there were attempts to reform. Baba Dayal Das, founder of the Nirankari Movement, stressed the worship of god as Nirankar (formless). Rejection of idols, rejection of rituals associated with idolatry, reverence for the authority of Guru Nanak and of the Adi Granth formed the essence of his teachings. He reiterated the prohibition on meat-

eating, and liquor consumption. The Namdhari Movement, founded by Baba Ram Singh, was another socio-religious movement among the Sikhs.

- The Namdharis insisted on wearing the symbols of Sikhism except the kirpan (sword). Instead Baba Ram Singh wanted his followers to carry a lathi. It considered both men and women equal and accepted widow remarriage. It prohibited the dowry system and child marriage. In the wake of the gathering influence of Arya Samaj and the Christian missionaries, the Singh Sabha of Amritsar was established. Its main objective was to restore the purity of Sikhism. With the support of British, it established Khalsa College for the Sikhs in Amritsar. Singh Sabha was a forerunner of Akali Movement.

Ramalinga Swamigal

- Popularly known as Vallalar, Ramalinga Swamigal or Ramalinga Adigal (1823–1874), was born in Marudhur, a village near Chidambaram. After his father's death, his family moved to his brother's house at Chennai. Despite having no formal education he gained immense scholarship. Ramalinga emphasised the bonds of responsibility and compassion between living beings. He expressed the view that 'those who lack compassion for suffering beings are hardhearted, their wisdom clouded'. He showed his compassion and mercy on all living beings including plants. This he called jeevakarunya.
- He established the Samarasa Vedha Sanmarga Sangam in 1865 and it was renamed "Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Satya Sanga" which means "Society for Pure Truth in Universal self-hood". Ramalinga also established a free feeding house for everyone irrespective of caste at Vadalur (1867), in the wake of a terrible famine in south India in 1866. His voluminous songs were compiled and published under the title Thiruvarutpa (Songs of Grace). His radical views deeply disturbed Saiva orthodoxy, who condemned his writings as Marutpa (songs of ignorance).

Vaikunda Swamikal

- Vaikunda Swami (1809–1851), one of the earliest crusaders for social justice in south India was born at Sasthan Koil Vilai, the present Samithoppu, a village near Kanyakumari. His original name Mudichudum Perumal was changed to Muthukutty by his parents due to objection raised by the upper caste Hindus. Muthukutt had no

opportunity to have any systematic school education but acquired knowledge of various religious texts. He preached the ideas of equality and advocated the rights of depressed class people in the face of stiff opposition from upper castes as well as the princely state of Travancore. Vaikunda Swamikal criticised the rule of the British and the rule of Rajah of Travancore as the rule of White devils and Black devils respectively.

- He visited Tiruchendur temple and experienced a new vision. Calling himself Vaikundar, he requested the people to give up all the irrelevant rites and rituals in their worship. His preaching's against the prevailing religious order brought about a considerable change in the attitude of the lower caste people. In 1833, Vaikundar commenced his meditation at Samithoppu for the abolition of caste differences and social integration of the society. During this period, he led a life of a hermit. In south Travancore, there were many restrictions on lower caste people such as what they could wear and not wear. At a time when there was prohibition on certain sections on wearing headgear he advocated the wearing of a turban in protest. It gave a sense of honour to the oppressed people and offered a spirit of self-respect.
- A new confidence was installed in the minds of his followers. Like the other contemporary reform movements of India in the 19th century, Vaikunda Swamigal condemned the worship of idols. The low caste people had no temples for their gods, they erected small pyramids of mud or bricks in their honor, plastered and white-washed. He considered this kind of worship as an uncivilized custom. The people sacrificed goats, cocks and hens. He condemned these religious customs and campaigned against animal sacrifice.
- Vaikunda Swamigal founded Samathuva Samajam to unite all the people of various castes. He organized inter-dining to accomplish it. Even though he was imprisoned by the Maharajah of Travancore, he never gave up his principles. His followers called him respectfully as Ayya (father). His cult was also known as Ayya Vazhi (The Path of Ayya). His message emancipated the people from the unjust social customs and superstitious beliefs. His ideas are collected into a text called Akila Thirattu.

C. Iyothee Thassar

- Pandithar Iyothee Thassar (1845–1914) was a radical Tamil scholar, writer, siddha medicine practitioner, journalist and socio-political activist. Born in

Chennai, he was fluent in Tamil, English, Sanskrit and Pali languages. He initiated a new knowledge practice by using journalism as a tool to make inroads into the print public sphere, which, was hitherto an upper caste domain. He campaigned for social justice and worked for the emancipation of the “untouchables” from the caste clutches.

- He worked for the construction of a casteless identity and castigated caste hegemony and untouchability. He considered education as an important tool for empowerment and became the driving force behind the establishment of several schools for the “untouchables” in Tamil Nadu. Pandithar Iyothee Thassar founded the Advaidananda Sabha to raise the voice for the temple entry of the “untouchables”. In 1882, John Rathinam and Iyothee Thassar established a movement called, Dravida Kazhagam and launched a magazine called Dravida Pandian in 1885. He founded the Dravida Mahajana Sabha in 1891 and organised the First Conference of the association at Nilgiris.
- He started a weekly journal, Oru Paisa Tamilan, in 1907 and published it until his demise in 1914. Pandithar Iyothee Thassar was disappointed with the Hindu dharma, which served as the basis for propagating and validating caste in Hindu society. Influenced by the Theosophist organizer, Colonel H.S. Olcott, he went to Sri Lanka in 1898 and converted to Buddhism. In the same year, he founded the Sakya Buddhist Society at Madras to construct the rational religious philosophy through Buddhist religion. He argued that the so-called untouchables were originally Buddhists who were stigmatized by Brahminism.
- He further constructed an alternative history through the interpretation of Tamil literature and folk traditions of Tamil from a Buddhist standpoint. In addition, he stated that the revival of Buddhism could liberate the people from the evil of caste that afflicted the Hindu society. He called the “untouchables” Sathi Petham Atra Dravidar (Casteless Dravidians) and urged them to register as casteless Dravidians in the Census.

NOTE

- ❖ It was also to the credit of Vidyasagar that the first age of consent Act was enacted in 1860. The age for marriage was fixed as ten years. It was raised to twelve and thirteen years in 1891 and 1925 respectively. Sadly, as reported in the Age of Consent Committee (1929), the law remained on paper and the knowledge of it was confined to judges, lawyers and a

few educated men.

- ❖ In 1893 Arya Samaj split over the question of doctrinal purity. Swami Shraddhananda (1857-1926), a charismatic figure after Dayananda, accused the group running the DAV School of being too Westernized and thereby ignoring the founder's ideology. From 1900 onward, he established his own network of schools, the Gurukulas, which were outwardly modelled after ancient Hindu seats of learning, emphasising the study of the Vedas.
- ❖ Ramalinga bore witness to hunger and poverty in the country: "I saw poor people, emaciated with hunger and terribly weary, going to every house, yet their hunger was not removed, and my heart suffered intensely. Those who suffer with relentless disease, I saw them in front of me and my heart trembled. I saw those people, poor and of unmatched honor, their hearts weary, and I grew weak."
- ❖ Vaikunda Swamikal criticised the rule of the British and the rule of Rajah of Travancore as the rule of White devils and Black devils respectively.

APPOLO
STUDY CENTRE

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Unit - 13. Cultural syncretism: Bhakti movement in India

Introduction

- Like all cultural traditions, religion too does not exist in isolation. It adapts to existing situations and meets both social and spiritual needs of the people. As a country with a long history, religion in India developed by interacting with various traditions. Vedic religion, which came with the advent of Aryan-speaking peoples to India, absorbed many elements from the Indus civilization. Mother goddess worship had its origins in Harappa. Similarly an image found in the Indus script has been identified as that of Siva. The prime Vedic gods were Indra, Varuna, Agni, etc. and it was only later that the worship of Siva and Vishnu developed. In the mid-first millennium before the Common Era (B.C.) two great religions emerged in the Indo-Gangetic valley: Buddhism and Jainism (apart from other heterodox religions such as Ajivika) which challenged the orthodox Vedic religious practices.
- Similarly, in the mid-first millennium of the Common Era, in the southern country, a great religious tradition flourished in the form of a devotional or bhakti movement. Bhakti as a religious concept means devotional surrender to a supreme god for attaining salvation. Even though texts such as the Bhagavad Gita talk about the path of bhakti, or bhakti-marga, the movement gained force only in this period. Historians argue that this emerged in opposition to the ethical, fatalistic and atheistic traditions of Jainism and Buddhism. Vedic theism incorporated certain features from both. While Adi Sankara provided Hinduism with a philosophic doctrine of Advaita to counter the heterodox religions it remained at the intellectual level. It was the great Saiva Nayanmar and Azhwars, with their moving verses, gave form to the Bhakti doctrine and won the support of the people. Historians refer to this as the Bhakti movement. This movement, supported by the ruling kings, made a deep and lasting impact on all aspects: social, political, religious, cultural and linguistic. Thus south India became the home of religious renaissance from the 7th to the 10th century. With theologians like Ramanujar it turned into a philosophical and ideological movement in the eleventh century. Inspired

by many poet-saints the bhakti cult became widespread from 14th century in the whole of India. We will discuss here the general features of the bhakti movement, its main proponents, the two different trends of the movement and its impact on social and cultural life of the people.

Bhakti Movement in the South

- The transformation of a tribal society into a well-structured social order and the emergence of a powerful monarchical system of governance necessitated patronizing one religion or the other to legitimize authority. Buddhism and Jainism were predominantly patronized by the merchant class and they were also supported by the state. The Bhakti movement originated among the landholding castes, and it was critical of Buddhists and Jains. This also led to a fight for royal patronage.

Conflict with Buddhism & Jainism

- **Sources:** The bhakti literature, mostly puranas and hagiographical texts, provide information about the religious conflicts in Tamilnadu. Thevaram consists of the hymns by the three Nayanmars: Appar (Thirunavukkarasar), Sambandar (Thirugnanasambandar) and Sundarar. Together these constitute the seven of the twelve Saiva Thirumurais. The Eighth Thirumurai consists of the hymns of Manickavasakar. Many of these hymns articulate their criticism of Jainism and Buddhism. Periyapuram by Sekkizhar which narrates the stories of the sixty-three Nayanmars is an important source for the study of the Bhakti movement. The hymns of the Vaishnava saints, Azhwars, are compiled as Nalayira Divya Prabandham. The importance of the bhakti poems lie in the fact that they are still read, sung and revered by people, and they also form an important part of Tamil literary tradition. Epigraphical sources and iconography also provide much information.

Conflicts

- The earliest instances of conflict between Saivism and Vaishnavism on the one hand and the Sramanic sects of Buddhism and Jainism on the other hand occurred during the Pallava period.
- Mahendravarma Pallava I, a Jain by faith, persecuted those belonging to other religions. Appar, a Jaina in his early life, called Darmasena, later

turned to Saivism under the influence of his sister. Mahendravarman at the instance of his Jaina advisers tried to reconvert Appar first by persuasion and then by persecution. But eventually it ended in the king's own conversion to Saivism.

- According to tradition, Sambandar defeated the Jains in a theological debate and consequently his opponents were impaled. Maravarman Arikesari (640- 670), also known as Koon Pandyan, who converted from Saivism to Jainism, was later re-converted under the influence of Sambandar. According to a Saivite legend, after his re-conversion, he ordered a massacre of Jains in Samantham, a village in Madurai district.
- Bhakti literature and hagiographies contain copious details about the conflicts between Saivism and Vaishnavism on the one hand and the heterodox sects such as Buddhism and Jainism. The philosophical treatises such as the Saiva Siddhanta texts contain elaborate disputations of Buddhist and Jain philosophies. Some of the Saiva Siddhanta texts, such as Sivagnana Sithiyar, contain a separate section called 'parapakkam' which essentially refute Buddhist and Jain theological arguments. Bhakti literature and hagiography narrate instances of conflict and the defeat of heterodoxy. Inscriptions indicate that such conflict was accompanied by violence with the impaling of many monks.
- Despite the sophisticated philosophical disputation, it was the nature of the Bhakti movement and the royal patronage that it received that ultimately led to the downfall of Buddhism and Jainism. By the eleventh century, both these religions were effectively defeated. While Buddhism was wiped out in the Tamil country as in much of India Tamil-speaking Jain communities have survived in pockets in Tamil Nadu to this day. Temples and shrines were destroyed or fell into disuse while many artefacts were lost due to neglect and vandalism. To this day one can see decapitated statues of Buddha and the Jain thirthankaras in many parts of Tamil Nadu.
- Despite this, the orthodox and heterodox interacted with each other and they have left a mark. The idea of renunciation, which is central to Buddhism and Jainism, was adopted by Saivites and Vaishnavites. In response to the simplicity and life negation of the heterodox sects bhakti movement celebrated life with festivals and rituals. Similarly, the high

value accorded to vegetarian food habits and the prohibition on killing of animals may be traced to this influence. The supremacy accorded to the Tamil language was a response to the fact that the heterodox religions used north India Prakrits. Most importantly, bhakti exponents posited that, unlike the fatalistic religions of Buddhism and Jainism, devotion to Vishnu and Siva could overcome fate.

- Thus Vedic Hinduism was transformed by the conflict with Buddhism and Jainism.

Spread of Bhakti Movement to the North

- When the popularity of the bhakti movement in south India reached its peak, the doctrine of bhakti was expounded at the philosophical level by a series of Vaishnava scholars and saints. Ramanujar expounded the philosophy known as Vishistadvaita, or qualified monism. His teaching qualified Adi Sankara's emphasis on absolute monism or the oneness of the 'supreme' and the 'souls'.
- If the Bhakti movement flourished in the Tamil country from the seventh century, it was only from the fifteenth century that there was an extraordinary outburst of devotional poetry in north India. The society had degenerated into a caste-ridden community with practice of segregation, polytheism and idolatry. The religious minded saints raised their voice of protest against rites and ceremonies, superstitions, and unwanted formalisms. A popular monotheistic movement along with Vaishnava Bhakti movement came to be launched. The monotheists followed a path which was independent of dominant religions of the time, Hinduism and Islam. They denied their allegiance to either of them and criticized superstitious and orthodox elements of both the religions.
- The advent of Islam with the Turkish conquest posed a challenge to Vedic scholars and priests. By the end of the fourteenth century Islam had spread to large parts of India. A considerable section of the Indian population had taken to Islam. Combined with state power, the universal message of Islam with emphasis on equality attracted the lower sections of society.

The new political and social situation created conditions for the growth of non-conformist movements with anti-caste, anti-vedic and anti-puranic

traditions. The resultant changes in the cultural sphere were: development of regional languages, the evolution of Hindustani (Hindi), and of Indo-Muslim music and architecture.

- The Hindu response to Muslim political power was complex. While there was considerable hostility to the new religion there was also a tendency to internal reform to strengthen Hinduism so as to face the challenge. An important outcome of the encounter was the rise of syncretic sects and major poets and Saints such as Kabir, Guru Nanak, and Ravidas.

Impact of Sufism

- In parallel with the Bhakti movement in Hinduism, Sufism played a similar role in Islam. The terms Sufi, Wali, Darvesh and Fakir are used for Muslim saints who attempted to develop their intuitive faculties through ascetic exercises, contemplation, renunciation and self-denial. By the 12th century, Sufism had become an influential aspect of Islamic social life as it extended over almost the entire Muslim community.
- Sufism represents the inward or esoteric side and the mystical dimension of Islam. Sufi saints transcended religious and communal distinctions, and worked for promoting the interest of humanity at large. The Sufis were a class of philosophers remarkable for their religious catholicity and 74eggar74ce. Sufis regarded God as the supreme beauty and believed that one must admire it, take delight in His thought and concentrate his attention on Him only. They believed that God is 'Mashuq' (beloved) and Sufis are the 'Ashiqs' (lovers). Sufism crystallized into various 'Silsilahs' or orders. The most popular Sufi orders were Chistis, Suhrawardis, Qadiriyaahs and Naqshbandis.
- Sufism took root in both rural and urban areas, and exercised a deep social, political and cultural influence on the masses. It rebelled against all forms of religious formalism, orthodoxy, falsehood and hypocrisy, and endeavoured to create a new world order in which spiritual bliss was the ultimate goal. At a time when struggle for political power was the prevailing trend, the Sufi saints reminded people of their moral obligations. In a world torn by strife and conflict they tried to bring peace and harmony. The most important contribution of Sufism is that it helped to blunt the edge of Hindu-Muslim conflicts and prejudices by forging the

feelings of solidarity and brotherhood between these two religious communities.

Salient Features of Bhakti Movement

1. The bhakti reformers preached the principles of monotheism (oneness of God)
2. They believed in freedom from the cycle of life and death. They advocated that the salvation could be attained only by deep devotion and faith in God.
3. They emphasized the self-surrender for obtaining the bliss and grace of God.
4. Gurus could act as guides and preceptors.
5. They advocated the principle of Universal brotherhood.
6. They criticized idol worship.
7. They stressed the singing of hymns with deep devotion.
8. Arguing that all living beings, including humans, were god's children they strongly denounced caste system which divided people according to their birth.
9. They condemned ritualism, pilgrimages and fasts.
10. They did not consider any language as sacred and composed poems in the language of the common people.

Proponents of Bhakti Movement

Kabir

- Kabir is probably the most important cultural figure of medieval India. His iconoclastic poetry which ridiculed and ritual, and emphasized the universality of god won many adherents. Little concrete historical evidence is available on his life. He was probably a weaver. Said to be a

disciple of Ramananda, he learnt Vedanta philosophy from him. According to the popular Tazkirah-i-Auliya-i-Hind (Lives of Muslim Saints), he was a disciple of the Muslim Sufi, Shaikh Taqi. Kabir was a religious radical who denounced with equal zest the narrowness of sectarianism, both Hindu and Islam. His message appealed to the lower classes of Hindu community. The most salient features of his teachings is denunciation of polytheism, idolatry, and caste. He was equally unsparing in his condemnation of Muslim formalism. He was a true seeker after God, and did his best to break the barriers that separated Hindus from Muslims. What appealed to the millions of his followers through the ages, however, is his passionate conviction that he had found the pathway to God, a pathway accessible to the lowest as well as the highest. His poetry is still recited across large parts of India.

Ravidas

- Ravidas was a poet saint of the bhakti movement during the 15th to 16th century. Venerated as a guru (teacher) in the regions of Punjab, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, the devotional songs of Ravidas made a lasting impact upon the bhakti movement. The life details of Ravidas are uncertain and contested. Most scholars believe he was born in a family of tanners. Ravidas was one of the disciples of the bhakti saint-poet Ramananda. Ravidas' devotional songs were included in the Sikh Scriptures. Ravidas spoke against social divisions of caste and gender, and promoted unity in the pursuit of personal spiritual freedoms

Guru Nanak

- The saint with the biggest institutional influence was Guru Nanak (1469–1539) who founded the Sikh religion which shows undoubted syncretic influence. As a mono theistic religion Sikhism emphasized the oneness of god and adherence to a strict morality. Over two centuries, under the leadership of its ten gurus, Sikhism expanded swiftly in the Punjab region winning numerous adherents. Sikh teachings resulted in the creation of a strong sense of community. The politics of the times created conflicts with the Mughal Empire leading to persecution which resulted in the martyrdom of its gurus. Guru Govind Singh was the last guru. After him the Granth Sahib was considered the guru. While the teachings of Guru Nank is the Adi Granth. The Guru Granth Sahib, part from the teachings

of its other gurus, incorporates the writings of many Bhakti poets and Sufi saints such as Ramananda, Namadeva, Kabir and Sheikh Farid.

Chaitanya (1485–1533)

- Chaitanya of Bengal represents an aspect of the bhakti movement that is very different from that seen in the lives and teachings of Kabir and his successors. Chaitanya's concern, unlike that of Kabir, was not with bringing people to an understanding of a God, beyond all creeds and formulations; it was to exalt the superiority of Krishna over all other deities. It was, in other words, a revivalist, not a syncretic movement, a return to a worship of Vishnu under one of his most appealing forms, the loving ecstatic Krishna.
- The Bengal Vaishnavites did not try to reform Hinduism. Instead, they emphasized devotion to Krishna. Chaitanya, however, made disciples from all classes. He popularised the practice of group devotional singing accompanied by ecstatic dancing. His movement became popular in Bengal and Orissa.

Namadeva

- Namadeva, a son of a tailor and an inhabitant of the village of Naras-Vamani in Satara district of Maharashtra, under the influence of Saint Janadeva, was converted to the path of bhakti. A staunch devotee of Vitthala of Pandarpur, Namdeva spent much of his time in worship along with his followers, chanting mostly in his own verses. He wrote many abhangs (songs composed and sung by saints in Maharashtra in praise of God's glory) in Marathi and Hindi. He travelled as far as Punjab where his teachings became so popular that they were later absorbed in the Guru Granth. Love god with all your heart to lead a pious life surrendering everything to him with steadfast devotion is the essence of his message.

Ramananda (1400-1470)

- While Chaitanya of Bengal belonged to the philosophical school of Madhavacharya (a chief advocate of Dvaita school of vedhanta), Ramananda was of Ramanuja's philosophical thought. Ramananda was born at Prayag (Allahabad) and received his higher education in Hindu religious philosophy at Banaras and joined the school of Ramanuja as a

preacher. He visited the holy places of North India and preached Vaishnavism. Ramananda introduced radical changes in Vaishnavism by founding his own sect based on the doctrine of love and devotion to Rama and Sita. He preached equality before God. He rejected caste system, particularly the supremacy of Brahmins as the sole custodians of Hindu religion. The people from the lower strata of the society became his followers. His twelve disciples included Ravidas, Kabir and two women. Ramananda was the first to preach his doctrine of devotion in Hindi, the vernacular language. It gained him a good deal of popularity among the people of all classes. His followers were divided into conservative and radical schools.

Mirabai (1498-1546)

- Mirabai was born in Kudh of Merta district of Rajasthan. She was the great granddaughter of Rana Jodhaji, founder of Jodhpur. She was married to Bhoj Raj, son of Rana Sanga of Mewar. She became a devotee of Lord Krishna, left the palace and began singing her songs (bhajans) and preaching the path of love on God. Mirabai preached the worship of God in the name of Krishna and stressed that no one should be deprived of His divine grace on the ground of birth, poverty, age and sex. Her devotional songs and lyrics constitute a rich cultural heritage. Her bhajans are sung with fervour to this day. Her teachings carried the message of divine worship to almost every Hindu household.

Sur Das

- Sur Das lived at the court of Akbar and was popularly known as the blind bard of Agra. Sur Das is believed to have been a disciple of Vallabacharya who was a Vaishnava preacher in the Sultanate period. Vallabhacharya was the founder of Pushtimarga (way of grace). Sur Das preached religion of love and devotion to a personal God. He wrote inspiring and moving poems, Hindi poems about Lord Krishna. Krishna's bal lila constitutes the first great theme of Sur Das poetry. According to him, love is a sublimated theme r e p r e s e n t I n g the irresistible attraction of the gopis of Brindavan towards Krishna. The intensity of passion displayed by the gopis is an expression of the natural attraction of the human spirit towards the divine soul. His popular works are Sur Sagar, Sur Saravali and Sahitya Lehari. His monumental work Sur Sagar or Sur's Ocean is a story of Lord Krishna from the birth to the departure for Mathura.

Tuka Ram

- Tuka Ram was born in 1608 in a village near Poona, Maharashtra. He was a contemporary of Maratha Shivaji and saints like Eknath and Ramdas. After his early life as a trader he started spending his time singing devotional songs in praise of his favourite deity Lord Vithoba of Pandarpur.
- Tuka Ram believed in a formless God. According to him, it was not possible to enjoin spiritual joy with worldly activities. He stressed the all-pervasiveness of God. He rejected Vedic sacrifices, ceremonies, pilgrimages, idol worship, etc. He also preached the virtue of piety, forgiveness and peace of mind. He spread the message of equality and brotherhood. He tried to foster Hindu-Muslim Unity. Some of his verses are devoted to this theme. He wrote his abhangas in Marathi

Impact of the Bhakti Movement

- Salvation which was previously considered attainable only by people of the first three orders in the social hierarchy became available to everyone. Bhakti movement provided women and members of the lower strata of the society an inclusive path to spiritual salvation. Literature on devotional songs in regional languages became profuse. The poet-saints of this movement championed a wide range of philosophical positions, ranging from theistic dualism of Dvaita to absolute monism of Advaita. Much of the regional practices such as community singing, chanting together of deity names, conducting festivals, going on pilgrimages, performing rituals relating to Saivism, and Vaishnavism have survived to this day.

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Unit - 19. Towards Modernity

Introduction

- By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, India had produced a small English-educated intelligentsia, closely associated with British administration or British trade. The ideas and the work of the Christian missionaries had already begun to have its impact. Bengal was the first province to be affected by the British influence and so it was here that several ideas of reform originated. British administration, English education, and European literature brought to India a new wave of thoughts that challenged traditional knowledge. Rationalism as the basis for ethical thinking, the idea of human progress and evolution, the concept of natural rights associated with the Enlightenment, were the new ideas which led to what has been termed as Indian Renaissance. The spread of printing technology played a crucial role in the diffusion of ideas.

Emergence of Reform Movements

- The British characterized Indian society in the nineteenth century as being caught in a vicious circle of superstitions and obscurantism. In their view idolatry and polytheism reinforced orthodoxy impelling the people to follow them blindly. The social conditions were equally depressing. And the condition of women was deplorable. The practice of sati came in for particular condemnation. The division of society according to birth resulting in the caste system was also criticized. Most importantly, the British argued that without their intervention there was no possibility of deliverance from these evils for Indians. Needless to say, this was a self-serving argument, articulated by missionaries and Utilitarians to justify British rule.

Utilitarians: believers in the doctrine of greatest happiness of the greatest number

- India was a much bigger, more complex and diverse country in the early nineteenth century. Conditions varied vastly across it. The social and cultural evils had been fought by Indian reformers through the ages. But the advent of the British with their Enlightenment ideas undoubtedly

posed a new challenge. This chapter looks at how social reform movements emerged in various parts of the country.

- The development of the Western culture and ideology forced the traditional institutions to revitalize themselves. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the expression of protest and desire for change were articulated through various reform movements. These movements aimed at reforming and democratizing the social institutions and religious outlook of the Indian people. The emergence of new economic forces, spread of education, growth of nationalist sentiment, influence of modern Western thoughts, ideas and culture, and awareness of the changes taking place in Europe strengthened the resolve to reform.
- What gave these reform movements an ideological unity were rationalism, religious universalism and humanism. This perspective enabled them to adopt a rational approach to tradition and evaluate the contemporary socio-religious practices from the standpoint of social utility. For example, Raja Rammohun Roy repudiated the infallibility of the Vedas and during the Aligarh Movement, Syed Ahmed Khan emphasized that religious tenets were not immutable. As Keshab Chandra Sen said, 'Our position is not that truths are to be in all religions, but that all established religions of the World are true.'
- These movements enveloping the entire cultural stream of Indian society brought about significant practices in the realms of language, religion, art and philosophy. These reform movements can be broadly classified into two categories:
 1. Reformist Movements
 2. Revivalist Movements
- Both the movements depended in varying degrees on an appeal to the lost purity of religion. The primary difference between them lay in the degree to which they relied on tradition or on reason and conscience. The social reform movements formed an integral part of the religious reforms primarily because all the efforts towards social ills like caste- and gender-based inequality derived legitimacy from religion. Initially, the social reform movement had a narrow social base - they were limited to the upper and middle strata of the society that tried to adjust their modernized views to the existing social reality. From then on, the social

reform movements began to percolate to the lower strata of society to reconstruct the social fabric. Heated debates among the intellectuals expressed in the form of public arguments, tracts and journals played a big role in taking new ideas to large sections of the people, as well as to reformulate older ideas in a new form.

- At the start, organizations such as the Social Conference, Servants of India and the Christian missionaries were instrumental in giving an impetus to the social reform movements along with many enlightened individuals about whom we dwell on in the following pages. In later years, especially by the twentieth century, the national movement provided the leadership and organization for social reform.

Brahmo Samaj (1828)

- Raja Rammohun Roy was a man of versatile genius. He established the Brahmo Samaj in August, 1828. The Brahmo Samaj was committed to “the worship and adoration of the eternal, unsearchable, immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe”. His long term agenda was to purify Hinduism and to preach monotheism for which he drew authority from the Vedas. He emphasized human dignity, opposed idolatry and social evils such as sati. A retired servant of the East India Company, he was conversant in many languages including Persian and Sanskrit. His ideas and activities were aimed at the political uplift of society through social reform. He was a determined crusader against the inhuman practice of Sati. His tract written in 1818, A Conference Between an Advocate for and an Opponent of the Practice of Burning Widows cited sacred texts to prove that no religion sanctioned the burning alive of widows. His efforts fructified and the Company through an enactment of law (1829) declared the practice of sati a crime.
- The overall contribution of Brahmo Samaj can be summed up as follows
 1. It denounced polytheism, idol worship, and the faith in divine avatars (incarnations)
 2. It condemned the caste system, dogmas and superstitions.
 3. It wanted the abolition of child marriage, purdah system and the practice of sati

4. It supported widow remarriage

- Inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution, Rammohun Roy left for Europe and died in Bristol. After his death there was a steady decline but for the new lease life given to it by Devendranath Tagore (father of Rabindranath Tagore). After him the organization was taken forward by Keshab Chandra Sen from 1857. The strength of the organization is known from the number of branches it had in 1865, 54 Samajas (fifty in Bengal, two in North West Province, one each in Punjab and Madras). In course of time, the Brahmo Samaj broke into two namely Devendranath Tagore's, 'Brahmo Samaj of India' and Keshub Chandra Sen's 'Sadharan Brahmo Samaj'.
- In Tamilnadu, Kasi Viswanatha Mudaliar was an adherent of the Samaj and he wrote a play titled Brahmo Samaja Natakam to expound the ideas of the Samaj. He also wrote a tract in support of widow remarriage. In 1864, a Tamil journal titled Tathuva Bodhini was started for the cause of the Brahmo Samaja.
- The Brahmo Samaj met with great opposition from orthodox elements in Bengal society such as the Hindu Dharma Sabha. However, there were also reformers such as Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, who advocated the same ideas but drew on Hindu scriptures as authority.
- Even though the Brahmo Samaj did not win many adherents, it had a big impact on the intellectuals. In the early stages, many young men seized of the radical ideas avidly propagated them. Tagore's family was a Brahmo family and its influence can be seen in his writings and ideas.

The Prarthana Samaj (1867)

- An off-shoot of the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, was founded in 1867 in Bombay by Atmaram Pandurang (1823- 98). The Prarthana Samaj as an organization never had any great influence but its members, like M. G. Ranade (1852-1901), R. G. Bhandarkar, and K.T. Telang, were among the great leaders of nineteenth-century Maharashtra and they became the founders of the social reform movement in later years.

- Prarthana Samaj was similar to Brahma Samaj, but it was consciously linked with the bhakti tradition of the Maharashtrian saints. The Prarthana Samaj continued its work mainly through educational work directed at women and workers at the lower level. It concentrated on social reforms like inter-dining, inter-marriage, remarriage of widows, and uplift of women and depressed classes.
- The National Social Conference organized at the initiative of M.G. Ranade met each year immediately after the Indian National Congress (1885) annual sessions. Justice Ranade was an erudite scholar with a keen intellect and under his able guidance the Prarthana Samaj became the active centre of a new social reformation in western India. He was one of the founders of the Widow Marriage Association and was an ardent promoter of the famous Deccan Education Society. Its object was to impart such education to the young as would fit them for the unselfish service of the country. When Ranade died in 1901, his leadership was taken over by Chandavarkar.

Arya Samaj (1875)

- The founder of the Arya Samaj was Dayananda Saraswati (1824–83). Dayananda, a Gujarati, left home in his youth to become an ascetic. For seventeen years he wandered around India. In 1863 he became a wandering preacher, and five years later he added the establishment of schools to his activities. In 1872 he met the Brahmos in Calcutta. In 1875 he founded the Arya Samaj and published his major work the Satyarth Prakash. In his view, contemporary Hinduism had become degenerate. Therefore he rejected puranas, polytheism, and idolatry, the role of Brahmin priests, pilgrimages, many rituals and the prohibition on widow marriage. As a good Sanskrit scholar, he made a call to “Back to the Vedas”. He wanted to shape society on the basis of the Vedas. He disregarded the puranas. Like the other social reformers, he encouraged female education and remarriage of widows.
- Swami Dayananda’s sphere of influence was largely in the Punjab region where the trading community of Khatri experienced great mobility in colonial times. However, in the Punjab region, there was much communal conflict among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Dayananda’s Shuddhi (purification) movement i.e., conversion of non-Hindus to Hindus was

controversial and provoked controversies especially with the Ahmadiya movement.

- Arya Samaj is considered to be a revivalist movement. Dayananda's influence continued into the twentieth century through the establishment of Dayananad Anglo Vedic (DAV) schools and colleges.

Ramakrishna Mission (1897)

- As we saw above, the early reform movements in Bengal were radical, questioning and criticising tradition very strongly. In response to this emerged the Ramakrishna Mission as an important religious movement. Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836–1886), a poor priest in a temple at Dakshineswar near Kolkata, had no formal education but led an intense spiritual life. He had a deep faith in the inherent truth of all religions and tested its belief by performing religious service in accordance with the practices of different religions. According to him 'all the religious views are but different ways to lead to the same goal.' In a backlash, the later generation of Western educated intellectuals were drawn to Ramakrishna's broad view, mysticism and spiritual fervour. He expounded his views in short stories and admirable parables which were compiled by an admirer as Ramakrishna Kathamrita (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna).
- The most famous among his disciples was a young graduate of the Calcutta University named Narendranath Dutta, afterwards famously called Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902). Emphasising practical work over philosophizing he established the modern institution of the Ramakrishna Mission. He carried Ramakrishna's message all over India and the world. His learning, eloquence, spiritual fervour and personality gathered round him a band of followers across the country, many of whom also joined the national movement. He attended in 1893 the famous, 'Parliament of Religions' at Chicago, and made a deep impact on those congregated there. The Mission opened schools, dispensaries and orphanages and helped people during their time of distress caused by calamities.

Theosophical Society (1886)

- Even as Indian intellectuals felt challenged by western Enlightenment and rationalistic movements, there was a strain of thinking in the West which

looked to the East for spiritual salvation. From this idea emerged the Theosophical Society, founded by Madam H.P. Blavatsky and Colonel H.S. Olcott in the United States of America in 1875. They came to India in 1879 and established their headquarters at Adyar in 1886. Under the leadership of Annie Besant, who came to India in 1893, the Theosophical Society gathered strength and won many adherents. The Theosophical Society started associations across south India. Though involved in many controversies, the Society played an important role in the revival of Buddhism in India. Iyothethoss Pandithar, the radical Dalit thinker, was introduced to modern Buddhism through his interaction with Colonel Olcott who took him to Sri Lanka. There he met many Buddhist monks including the renowned revivalist Anagarika Dharmapala and Acharya Sumangala.

Swami Vivekananda was a personification of youth and boldness and referred to as the Morning Star of the Modern India. In the words of Valentine Chirol, 'the first Hindu whose personality won demonstrative recognition abroad for India's ancient civilization and for her newborn claim to nationhood.'

Satya Shodhak Samaj (1873)

- While the movements discussed above were largely focussed on upper castes there were some exceptional movements which mobilized lower castes and articulated their perspective. The most important among them was Jyotiba Phule, who belonged to the Mali (gardener) community. Born in 1827, he received initial education in a mission school but had to discontinue it in 1833. Jyotiba Phule waged a life-long struggle against upper caste tyranny. In his quest for the truth, Phule read the Vedas, the Manu Samhita, the Puranas, and the thought of Buddha, Mahavira and the medieval Bhakti saints extensively. He also acquainted himself with Western thought, and Christian and Islamic religions. Phule judged the whole culture and tradition through the spirit of rationality and equality. While the principle of equality called for a total rejection of caste system, authoritarian family structure and subordination of women, the principle of rationality demanded the removal of superstitions and ritualism.
- Phule held radical views on social, religious, political and economic issues. He considered the caste system as an antithesis of the principle of human

equality. He sought to raise the morale of the non-Brahmins and united them to revolt against the centuries old inequality and social degradation. Towards this end Phule founded the Satya Shodak Samaj (Society for Seeking Truth) in 1875. His most important book is Gulamgiri (Slavery).

- Phule looked upon education of the masses as a liberating and revolutionary factor.
- Since women and deprived and downtrodden were the worst sufferers in the society, Phule argued that women's liberation was linked with the liberation of other classes in society. Equality between classes as also between men and women was stressed by Phule. During marriages he asked the bridegroom to promise the right of education to his bride.
- Phule also tried to translate his ideas into actual struggles. He urged the British Government to impart compulsory primary education to the masses through teachers drawn from the cultivating classes. He started a school for girls in Poona in 1851 and one for depressed classes with the assistance of his wife Savitri. He also started schools for the "untouchables" and founded a home for widow's children.
- In his work we find the beginnings of the later day non-Brahman movement of Maharashtra.

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922)

- Pandita Ramabai was foremost among the Indian leaders who worked for the emancipation of women. She came from a learned family and was a great scholar of Sanskrit and addressed many learned groups in different parts of the country. She was given the title of "Pandita" and "Saraswati" for her deep knowledge of Sanskrit. After the death of her parents she and her brother travelled to different parts of the country. They went to Calcutta in 1878. Two years later her brother also died. A little later in 1880 she married a Bengali belonging to a family of lower social status. Thus, even at that time she was bold enough to marry a man of a different caste and different language. After the death of her husband two years later she returned to Poona and started the Arya Mahila Samaj with the help of leaders like Ranade and Bhandarkar. 300 women were educated in the Samaj in 1882.

- Ramabai started the Sharada Sadan (shelter for homeless) for the destitute widows with the help of Ranade and Bhandarkar. But soon she was accused of converting Hindu women to Christianity and hence had to shift her activities to Khedgoan near Poona. She established a Mukti Sadan (freedom house) there. Soon there were 2000 children and women in the house. Vocational training was given make them self-reliant.

Sri Narayana Guru

- This movement emerged in Kerala and was born out of conflict between the depressed classes and the upper castes. It was started by Sri Narayana Guru (1854- 1928) spearheading a social movement of the Ezhavas of Kerala, a community of toddy tappers. The Ezhavas were the single largest group in Kerala constituting 26% of population. A great scholar in Malayalam, Tamil and Sanskrit, Sri Narayana Guru established the Sri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam in 1902. The SNDP Yogam took up several issues such as (i) right of admission to public schools. (ii) recruitment to government services. (iii) access to roads and entry to temples; and (iv) political representation. The movement as a whole brought transformative structural changes such as upward social mobility, shift in traditional distribution of power and a federation of 'backward classes' into a large conglomeration. As a response to the prohibition on Ezhavas into temples, Sri Narayana Guru established new temples, and empowered the community to modernize itself. Great personalities such as the poet Kumaran Asan Dr. Palpu and Sahodaran Ayyappan emerged from the movement, and made a lasting impact in the democratization of Kerala Society. Even though the Guru himself was not directly involved in the movement, the Vaikom Satyagraha, organized to protest against the ban on the entry of Ezhavas on the temple streets of Vaikom made a deep impact on subsequent temple entry movements.

Islamic Reform Movements

- The Revolt of 1857 and its brutal suppression by the British had an adverse impact on the Muslims of South Asia. While they were viewed with suspicion by the British for the 1857 insurgency, the Muslims themselves withdrew into a shell and did not use the opportunities opened up by colonial modernity. Consequently, they lagged behind in

education and attendant employment opportunities. In this context, a few decades later some reform movements emerged among the Muslims.

Aligarh Movement (1875)

- Aligarh Movement was started by Syed Ahmad Khan in 1875. He wanted to reconcile Western scientific education with the teachings of the Quran. The Aligarh movement aimed at spreading (i) Modern education among Indian Muslims without weakening their allegiance to Islam, and (ii) Social reforms among Muslims relating to purdah, polygamy, and divorce.
- Syed's progressive social ideas were propagated through his magazine Tahdhib-ul-Akhluq (Improvement of Manners and Morals). Syed Ahmad Khan's educational programme emphasized from the outset the advantages of the use of English as the medium of instruction. In 1864 he founded a Scientific Society of Aligarh for the introduction of Western sciences through translations into Urdu of works on physical sciences. The same year he founded a modern school at Ghazipur. In 1868 he promoted the formation of education committees in several districts, to initiate modern education among the Muslims.
- During his visit to Europe in 1869-70 he developed the plans of his life-work, a major educational institution for Indian Muslims. In order to promote English education among the Muslims, he founded in 1875 a modern school at Aligarh, which soon developed into the Muhammdan Anglo-Oriental College (1877). This college was to become the Muslim University after his death. It became the nursery of Muslim political and intellectual leaders.
- In 1886 Syed Ahmad Khan founded the Muhammedan Anglo Oriental Educational Conference as a general forum for spreading liberal ideas among the Indian Muslims. He rejected blind adherence to religious law and asked for a reinterpretation of the Quran in the light of reason to suit the new trends of the time. He attempted to liberalize Indian Islam and made it amenable to new ideas and new interpretations. In this mission he had to face the brunt of vehement attacks of orthodox theologians.

Ahmadiya Movement (1889)

- The Ahmadiya movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmed (1835–1908) in 1889 established a different trend. While emphasizing the return to the original principles enunciated in the Quran, Ghulam Ahmed became controversial when he claimed to be a Messiah, which was considered heretical by mainstream Islam. But he won many converts. His primary work was to defend Islam against the polemics of the Arya Samaj and the Christian missionaries. In social morals the Ahmadiya movement was conservative, adhering to polygamy, veiling of women, and the classical rules of divorce.

The Deoband Movement (1866)

- The Deoband movement was organised by the orthodox section among the Muslim ulemas as a revivalist movement with the twin objective of propagating the pure teachings of the Quran and Hadis among Muslims. The movement was established in Deoband in Saranpur district (by Mohammad Qasim Nanotavi (1833-1877) and Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1828–1905) to train religious leaders for the Muslim community. In contrast to the Aligarh Movement, which aimed at the welfare of Muslims through Western education and support of the British Government, the aim of the Deoband Movement was religious regeneration of the Muslim community. The instruction imparted at Deoband adhered to classical Islamic tradition.
- The seminary at Deoband was founded in 1867 by theologians of the School of Wali-Allah. Muhammad Qasim Nanotavi took a prominent part in counter-polemics against the Christian missionaries and the Arya Samajists. The principal objectives of the seminary at Deoband were to re-establish contact between the theologians and the educated Muslim middle classes, and to revive the study of Muslim religious and scholastic sciences. As a religious university Deoband soon became an honoured institution, not only in Muslim India but also in the world of Islam at large.

Nadwat al-'ulama

- A school less conservative than Deoband and more responsive to the demands of the modern age was the Nadwat al- 'ulama,' founded in 1894

at Lucknow by the historian Shibli Nu'mani and other scholars. The school aimed to offer an enlightened interpretation of religion in order to fight the trends of agnosticism and atheism which had followed the advent of modern Western education.

Farangi Mahal

- The third famous traditional school is the much older one at Farangi Mahal in Lucknow. Farangi Mahal accepted Sufism as a valid experience and a valid field of study. Another traditionalist movement was the ahl-i-hadith or of the followers of the dicta of the Prophet.

Parsi Reform Movements

- Zoroastrians, persecuted in their Persian homeland, migrated in large numbers to the west coast of India in the tenth century. As a trading community they flourished over the centuries. A close-knit community it too was not left untouched by the reform movements of the nineteenth century.
- The Rahnumai Madayasan Sabha (Religious Reform Association) was founded in 1851 by a group of English educated Parsis for the "regeneration of the social conditions of the Parsis and the restoration of the Zoroastrian religion to its pristine purity". The movement had Naoroji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, K. R. Cama and S.S. Bengalee as its leaders. The message of reform was spread by the newspaper Rast-Goftar (Truth Teller). Parsi religious rituals and practices were reformed and the Parsi creed redefined. In the social sphere, attempts were made to uplift the status of Parsi women through education, removal of the purdah, raising the age of marriage and the like. Gradually, the Parsis emerged as the most westernised section of the Indian society. They played a key role in the nationalist movement and in the industrialization of India.

Sikh Reform Movement

- The Sikh community could not remain untouched by the rising tide of rationalist and progressive ideas of the nineteenth century. The Singh Sabha Movement was formed in 1873, with a two-fold objective (i) to make available modern western education to the Silks (ii) to counter the proselytizing activities of Christian missionaries as well as Hindu

revivalists. A network of Khalsa Schools was established throughout Punjab. The Akali movement was an offshoot of the Singh Sabha Movement. The Akali movement aimed at liberating the Sikh Gurudwara from the corrupt control of the Udasi Mahants (priests). The Government passed the Sikh Gurudwara Act in 1922 (amended in 1925), which gave control to Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) as the main body.

Reform Movements in Tamilnadu

- As we saw earlier, the reform movements of the north India had its own impact on Tamilnadu. Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj had their branches. Keshab Chandra Sen visited Madras and lectured here. But Tamilnadu also saw its own reform movements.

Vaikunda Swamigal (1809-1851)

- The Sri Vaikunda Swamigal's cult, which survives to this day, was organized in the 1830s. Born in a poor family (1809) at Sastankoil Vilai (now known as Swamithoppu), a village then in south Travancore (the present day Kanyakumari district), Muthukutti, spent his childhood in the village pial school, learning religious and moral texts. He also learnt the Bible and became well-versed in Christian theology. At the age of twenty two, Muthukutti, cured of a skin disease, after a holy bath in the sea during his visit to the Murugan temple at Tiruchendur (Thoothukudi district), claimed that Lord Vishnu had given him a rebirth as his son. On his return from Tiruchendur, assuming the new name of Sri Vaikundar, he practised austerities for two years. Soon his fame spread far and wide.
- In his preaching Vaikundar attacked the traditional caste-ridden Travancore society and its ruler for collecting excessive taxes from the lower caste people. He was arrested and jailed by the Raja of Travancore for his "seditious speeches". When he was released from jail (1838) he became more popular among the people. His followers called him Aiya (father) and his cult came to be known as Aiya Vazhi (path of the father). His teachings were compiled as a text called Akila Thirattu which is recited religiously to this day.

- Vaikunda Swamy instructed his followers to give up worship of pudams. He also exhorted them not to offer animal sacrifices to their deities. He advocated vegetarianism.
- As a symbol of protest, Vaikunda Swamy urged his followers to wear a turban, a right which was permitted only to upper castes in those days. As a part of his effort to practice equality, Vaikunda Swamy regularly organized inter-dining through his Samathuva Sangam, among different castes. In his feeding centres called Nilal Tangals, caste-based restrictions were broken down. The Vaikunda Swamy cult posed a serious challenge to the spread of Christianity in south Travancore even after his death in 1851.

Vallalar Ramalinga Swamigal (1823-1874)

- Ramalinga Swamigal was born in a modest family near Chidambaram and spent his early life in Madras. He never had formal schooling, but exhibited great scholarship. Inspired by the Saiva Thevaram and Thiruvagasam hymns, he began to compose moving poems on his own. In his time, Saiva religion was in the grip of Saiva monasteries such as those at Thiruvaduthurai, Dharumapuram and Thiruppanandal. Ramalinga Swamigal's poems expressed radical ideas and condemned bigotry and irrationality. He underwent certain mystical experiences which he expressed in his poems. This was resented by the orthodox elements in Saiva religion. He established the Sathya Dharma Salai at Vadalur where he began to feed poor people, especially in the context of the 1860s famine and pestilence, irrespective of caste and creed. He founded the Sathya Gnana Sabhai to organize his followers. This brought him into conflict with established Saivite orders, and matters came to a head when his followers published his poems under the title of Thiruvarutpa (Songs of Grace) in 1867. Orthodox Saivites under the Sri Lankan reformer Arumuga Navalar criticized this as blasphemous and launched a tract war. But ultimately, Ramalinga Swamigal's contribution was recognized and his writings inspired universal ideas, and undermined sectarianism in Saiva religion.

Buddhist Revivalism and Iyothethoss Pandithar (1845-1914)

- As we saw in an earlier lesson, Buddhism had been practically wiped out in the Tamil country by the beginning of the second millennium. Towards

the end of the nineteenth century, there was a revival of Buddhism. The publication of the complete edition of Jeevaka Chintamani (1887) and Manimekalai (1898) were landmarks in the recovery of heterodox traditions.

- But the most important figure was Iyothethoss Pandithar (1845– 1914). A native doctor by profession, he was an erudite scholar. He also came under the influence of Colonel Olcott of the Theosophical Society. In the 1890s he began a movement among the Adi Dravidars arguing that they were the original Buddhists who had been consigned to ‘untouchability’ due to their opposition to Vedic Brahminism. He re-read classical Tamil and other texts to make his case. He also encouraged the conversion to Buddhism. He found the greatest following in north Tamilnadu and among the working classes of the Kolar Gold Fields. In this movement, M. Singavelu and Prof P. Lakshmi Narasu also played an important role. Pandithar ran a weekly journal called Oru Paisa Tamilan (later Tamilan) from 1908 until his death.

Christian Missionaries

- The official religious policy of the East India Company was one of neutrality towards the native religions. Their reason for continuing this policy was the belief that the earlier Portuguese rule had come to an end because of their attempts to forcibly convert people to Christianity. As a result of this concern, the Company government prohibited the entry of missionaries into the territories under their control.
- In 1793 two English missionaries, William Carey and John Thomas, both Baptists, set out to India with the intention of starting a mission. In view of the ban on missionary activity they settled down in the Danish Colony of Serampore, north of Calcutta. Carey, along with two other missionaries, Joshua Marshman and William Ward established the Serampore Mission in 1799.
- The Serampore missionaries were the first evangelical Baptist missionaries in India. They were followed later by other missionary groups belonging to different Protestant denominations. Before the arrival of the Serampore missionaries, several centuries earlier, there were Christian missions in the Portuguese territory of Goa, and also on the Malabar Coast and the

Coromandel Coast. The work of the earlier missionaries was limited both geographically and in terms of the number of conversions to Christianity. Thus major attempts at proselytization began during the nineteenth century.

- The missionaries organised schools for the socially and economically and pleaded for their economic improvement through employment in the state service. They also fought for their 'civil rights' that included access to public roads, and permission for the women of these groups to wear upper garments.
- The missionaries gave shelter to orphaned children and other destitute widows in their missions and provided education for them in their boarding schools. Particularly after the famines which were quite common during the nineteenth century, about which we discussed in the previous lesson, the missionaries organized relief. Providing shelter and succour gave these an opportunity to convert people to Christianity. In Tirunelveli district many villages took to Christianity during famines, especially in the last quarter of nineteenth century. The same phenomenon was witnessed in Andhra where Malas and Madigas embraced Christianity in a big way.
- The Company government did little to provide modern education for the native population. For a long time, the provision of elementary school facilities to the native population, especially in the interiors for the disprivileged and the poor people, was a responsibility willingly accepted by the Christian missionaries. It must be noted that the Christian Missionaries took the initiative of establishing Hospitals and Dispensaries.

Significance of the Reform Movements

- The orthodox sections of the society could not accept the scientific and ideological onslaught of the socio-religious reformers. As a result of this, the reformers were subjected to abuse, persecution, issuing of fatwas and even assassination attempts by the reactionaries. However, in spite of opposition, these movements contributed towards liberation of the individual from the conformity born out of fear. The translation of religious texts into vernacular languages, emphasis on an individual's right to interpret the scriptures, and simplification of rituals made worship a more personal experience. The movements emphasised the

human intellect's capacity to reason and think. By weeding out corrupt elements in religious practices, the reformers enabled their followers to counter the official taunt that their religions and society were decadent and inferior. It gave the rising middle classes the much needed cultural roots to cling to.

