

Emergence of Composite Culture

Growth and Impact of Composite Culture

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate led to the beginning of a new phase in the cultural development of the country. The assimilation of the Turkish, Arabic and Persian cultures with Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism led to the development of a new culture known as the Indo-Islamic culture. This culture was neither purely Muslim nor completely Hindu but was a fusion of both religions. The Mughal Period marked the consolidation of the composite culture in India.

Factors Leading to the Growth of Composite Culture

Factors which led to the growth of composite culture during the Mughal Period:

- The rich cultural traditions of the Mughals and the centuries old glorious cultural traditions of the Hindus created an atmosphere of religious tolerance. This marked the growth and consolidation of the composite culture imbibing the main features of Hinduism and Islam.
- Because the Mughal kings had immense wealth, they were able to provide patronage to various writers, poets and other works of fine arts and literature.
- The Mughals built various monuments and buildings incorporating the features of Hindu and Islamic art. This further consolidated the composite culture of the country.
- The long and settled period of peace and productivity which prevailed during the Mughal rule paved the way for kings and nobles for undertaking extensive works of art.

Impact of the Composite Culture

- Various dresses, social amenities and festivals which were introduced by the Mughals in India were accepted by the people and became a part of the Indo-Islamic culture.
- The Turks not only brought new musical instruments such as the 'rabab' and 'sarangi' with them but also introduced new musical modes. Amir Khusro introduced many Persian and Arabic ragas. He also developed the style of 'qawwalis' and 'khayals'.
- There was a fusion of Persian and Indian style of painting during the reign of Akbar. Of 17 painters appointed by Akbar, 13 were Hindus. The most important work in painting produced during the Mughal period is 'Dastan-i-Amir Hamza' which contains about 1200 paintings. During the reign of Jahangir, the Persian influence in the paintings began to decline.
- Architecture was deeply influenced by the Indo-Islamic style of architecture. Some of its features were
 - The Islamic features introduced the concept of spaciousness, massiveness and width to Indian architectural designs.
 - The Turks did not carve any human and animal figures on the walls of the structures but instead used geometrical and floral designs. Verses from the Quran were also engraved on the walls of the structures. The Turks and the Mughals borrowed Indian motifs such as swastika, bell and lotus.
 - The design of the golden 'kalash' at the top of the temple was adopted by the Muslims. They placed a stone 'kalash' on the domes of mosques and tombs.
 - The Indian style of architecture was profoundly impacted by the Turkish and the Mughal style. For example, many temples of Vrindavan assimilated the Mughal style of architecture.
 - The Turkish and the Mughal style of architecture influenced the palaces and forts built by many local rulers.

- The local languages and literature were also influenced by the Indo-Islamic style of architecture. Persian was the official language of the Mughals. This enabled the country to develop close cultural contact with Persia.
- One of the greatest developments in language was the origin of Urdu. Urdu developed as a mixture of Persian, Arabic, Hindi and other regional languages. It was known as 'Zaban-e-Hindavi' as it was similar to that of Hindi. It developed rapidly during the Mughal rule.
- Many Sanskrit books were translated into Persian and Urdu. Some great Urdu poets were Amir Khusro and Mirza Ghalib.

Sufism

The spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence led to the development of two liberal religious reform movements in India—the Sufi and Bhakti movements in India.

Sufism was a Muslim movement whose followers seek to find divine truth and love through direct encounter with God. The Sufi saints were organised into 12 orders or 'silsilas' meaning a chain or a continuous link between the master and the disciple. The leader of the order was called a 'pir', while the disciple was called a 'murid'. The Chisti and Suhrawardi orders became extremely popular in India.

- The Chisti order was introduced in India by Khwaja Muin-ud-Din Chisti. He came to India with Mahmud of Ghazni and settled in Ajmer. An annual festival called 'Urs' is celebrated at his dargah or the tomb.
- Nizamuddin Auliya, Sheikh Nasiruddin Mahmud and Salim Chisti were popular Sufi saints of the period.
- The Suhrawardi order was founded by Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya.

Doctrines and Teachings of Sufism

- All religions are equal. It preached the fundamental unity of all religions.
- It is possible to reach God only through personal devotion and not by following any ritual.
- The human soul is the manifestation of the supreme God.
- All people are equal irrespective of their caste, class, creed and religion.
- Inner purity and self-discipline are essential for gaining knowledge about God.

Impact of Sufism

- It led to unity between Hindus and Muslims.
- It played a great role in promoting feelings of tolerance among the rulers.
- People began to understand and appreciate the faiths and beliefs of the other religion.
- It influenced literature and many poets such as Amir Khusro and Malik Muhammad Jayasi composed poems in praise of Sufi principles.

The Bhakti Movement

The Bhakti Movement originated in India as a reaction against the caste system and ritualism. It was started by the Vaishnava and Saiva saints of south India. The Tamil Vaishnavites in the 11th and 12th centuries preached personal devotion to God as a means to reach God. The Bhakti Movement was a religious reform movement. Ramanujacharya, Kabir, Nanak, Namdeo and Mirabai were followers of the Bhakti cult.

Doctrines of the Bhakti Cult

Main doctrines of the Bhakti movement were:

- There is only one God and all people are equal in the eyes of God.
- One can attain God not through rites and rituals but through love, devotion and salvation.
- Everyone should live a pure and a simple life.
- A guru is an enlightened teacher whose help is necessary for realising God or for attaining salvation.

Impact of Bhakti Movement

- Bhakti movements emphasised on the feelings of universal brotherhood and religious tolerance. As a result, an environment of mutual love and respect was created among different sections of society.
- The Bhakti saints preached their teachings in the local language. This led to the development of the local and vernacular languages.
- The teachings of Kabir, Nanak and Ravidas denounced the caste system and promoted the idea of equality. They discarded rituals. This brought about new social awakening among the people.

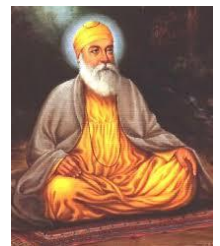
Bhakti Saints

Kabir: Saint Kabir believed in one God. According to him, Ram, Rahim and Allah were the names of one God. He spread the message of love and unity between Hindus and Muslims. He taught people to be tolerant and surrender themselves to one God. He outrightly rejected the caste system, rituals and idol worship. He spread his message in the form of 'dohas' or couplets which are still very popular.

Guru Nanak: Guru Nanak was born in 1469 at Talwandi in present day Pakistan. His teachings were

- There is only one God and the entire Universe is created by him.
- All people are equal irrespective of their caste. People should follow the principle of universal brotherhood.
- True spiritual knowledge can be gained under the guidance of a guru.
- He believed that personal devotion to one God could lead to salvation irrespective of caste, creed or sect.

Mirabai: She was the princess of Mewar who lived during the time of Akbar. She renounced the world and became a devotee of Lord Krishna. She sung many devotional songs dedicated to Lord Krishna. Her poetry is known as 'Padavali'.



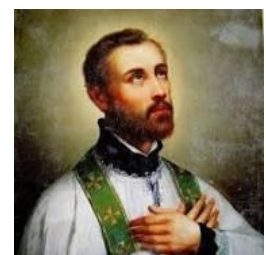
Guru Nanak

Influence of Christianity

Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut in 1498 AD. His arrival marked the beginning of not only trade relations of Europeans with Indians but also of the visits of Roman Catholic missions to India. Initially, the activities of the missionaries were restricted to Goa, Cochin, Tuticorin and other coastal areas. St Francis Xavier was the first Jesuit missionary who arrived to India in 1542. Another missionary, Robert de Nobili played an important role in spreading Christianity in India.

St Francis Xavier

- He came to Goa in 1542 and spent the initial months in treating the sick in hospitals. He then began to spread the word of God to the people.
- In 1584, he sent three missionaries to the three main Indian centres to establish missions and to spread Christianity.
- He worked relentlessly for ten years and preached the teachings of Lord Jesus.
- After his death, his body was enshrined in the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa.



St Francis Xavier

Robert de Nobili

- He arrived at Goa in India in 1604. He later moved to Madurai in 1606.
- He learnt Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu and studied Indian philosophy. He distanced himself from his fellow missionaries and adopted the dress and diet of the natives and lived an ascetic life.
- He was accused by other missionaries of straying away from the principles according to which a missionary should live his life.
- Later in life, he visited Sri Lanka. After returning to India, he spent the last three years in poverty. He died in 1656.

Impact of the Christian Missionaries

- To learn and understand Indian languages, the missionaries compiled dictionaries and grammar codes of the Indian languages. For example, the English Jesuit Thomas Stephens compiled an epic in Konkani and published the grammar code of Konkani.
- The missionaries taught Western music to the Indians. They also introduced new musical instruments.
- The missionaries also patronised arts, paintings and sculpture. These were largely religious in themes.
- The Portuguese Church introduced European architectural ideas in India. This included high-pitched roofs, balconies and verandas.
- The missionaries spread knowledge of the country's flora, fauna, people, customs and religion to the Western world with their popular letters sent from the mission field.

Thus, we find that the mediaeval period in India witnessed acceptance and assimilation of several religions and cultures in India.