

Theoretical Aspects and trends of Medieval India

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ABSTRACT: The medieval Indian time frame, the period of Indian history is known for its financial foundation and advancements in the range of agrarian deliver. Loads of advancement works did in this period. Give it a chance to be in any field Architecture, horticulture, exchange and trade, culture thus on. The harvests of medieval India framed the significant piece of the India in those circumstances. India being a horticultural nation since time immemorial the economy normally relied upon the yield generation. The medieval rulers in India endeavored to enhance the nature of the yields create and for this the rulers enhanced the water system offices. Indian soil in those circumstances was rich in composts and tad of manuring and working upgraded the harvest deliver. The Mughal rulers attempted to enhance the methods for water system, providing of enhanced seeds, taking care of dairy cattle issues, and offices of transport to build the harvest profitability. The harvest generation prompted the solid foundation of sound land income framework and consequently made the medieval rulers built up a solid armed force and expansive realms. Amid the medieval govern in India, our nation was acquainted with new harvests which prompted the upgrade of fares and in this manner it influenced the medieval exchequer.

Keywords: Medieval Period, history, India, architecture, trade, commerce, forts, monuments etc.

INTRODUCTION

The historical backdrop of India incorporates the ancient settlements and social orders in the Indian subcontinent; the progression of civilisation from the Indus Valley Civilisation to the inevitable mixing of the Indo-Aryan culture to shape the Vedic Civilisation; the ascent of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism; the beginning of a progression of intense lines and domains for over three centuries all through different geographic ranges of the subcontinent, including the development of Muslim territories amid the Medieval period entwined with Hindu powers; the coming of European dealers and privateers, bringing about the foundation of British India; and the consequent freedom development that prompted the Partition of India and the making of the Republic of India. Considered a support of civilisation, the Indus Valley Civilisation, which spread and thrived in the north-western piece of the Indian subcontinent from 3300 to 1300 BCE, was the main real civilisation in South Asia. A modern and mechanically progressed urban culture created in the Mature Harappan period, from 2600 to 1900 BCE. This civilisation fallen toward the begin of the second thousand years BCE and was later trailed by the Iron Age Vedic Civilisation. The period saw the organization of the Vedas, the original writings of Hinduism, blend into Janapadas (monarchical, state-level countries), and social stratification in view of standing. The Later Vedic Civilisation reached out finished the Indo-Gangetic plain and a significant part of the subcontinent, and in addition saw the ascent of real commonwealths known as the Mahajanapadas. In one of these kingdoms, Magadha, Gautama Buddha and Mahavira engendered their Shramanic theories amid the fifth and 6th century BCE.

A large portion of the subcontinent was vanquished by the Maurya Empire amid the fourth and third hundreds of years BCE. From the third century BCE onwards Prakrit and Pali writing in the north and the Tamil Sangam writing in southern India began to prosper. Wootz steel began in south India in the third century BCE and was sent out to outside nations. Amid the Classical time frame, different parts of India were led by various lines for the following 1,500 years, among which the Gupta Empire emerges. This period, seeing a Hindu religious and scholarly resurgence, is known as the established or "Brilliant Age of India". Amid this period, parts of Indian civilisation,

organization, culture, and religion (Hinduism and Buddhism) spread to a lot of Asia, while kingdoms in southern India had oceanic business joins with the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Indian social impact spread over many parts of Southeast Asia which prompted the foundation of Indianised kingdoms in Southeast Asia (Greater India). The most critical occasion between the seventh and eleventh century was the Tripartite battle focused on Kannauj that went on for over two centuries between the Pala Empire, Rashtrakuta Empire, and Gurjara Pratihara Empire. Southern India saw the ascent of numerous supreme forces from the center of the fifth century, most prominent being the Chalukya, Chola, Pallava, Chera, Pandyan, and Western Chalukya Empires. The Chola administration vanquished southern India and effectively attacked parts of Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bengal in the eleventh century. The early medieval period Indian science impacted the advancement of arithmetic and cosmology in the Arab world and the Hindu numerals were presented.

Muslim manage began in parts of north India in the thirteenth century when the Delhi Sultanate was established in 1206 CE by Central Asian Turks; however prior Muslim successes made restricted advances into present day Afghanistan and Pakistan as right on time as the eighth century. The Delhi Sultanate administered the real piece of northern India in the mid fourteenth century, yet declined in the late fourteenth century. This period likewise observed the development of a few capable Hindu states, eminently Vijayanagara, Gajapati, Ahom, and in addition Rajput states, for example, Mewar. The fifteenth century saw the coming of Sikhism. The early present day time frame started in the sixteenth century, when the Mughal Empire conquered the greater part of the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal Empire endured a progressive decrease in the mid eighteenth century, which gave chances to the Maratha Empire, Sikh Empire and Mysore Kingdom to practice control over huge territories of the subcontinent.

Prehistoric Era(Until c. 1500 BCE)

Stone Age

Evidence of anatomically modern humans in the Indian subcontinent is recorded as long as 75,000 years ago, or with earlier hominids including homo erectus from about 500,000 years ago. Isolated remains of homo erectus in Hathnora in the Narmada valley in central India indicate that India might have been inhabited since at least the middle Pleistocene era, somewhere between 500,000 and 200,000 years ago. Tools crafted by proto-humans that have been dated back two million years have been discovered in the northwestern part of the subcontinent. The ancient history of the region includes some of south Asia's oldest settlements and some of its major civilisations. The earliest archaeological site in the subcontinent is the Paleolithic hominid site in the Soan river valley. Soanian sites are found in the Sivalik region across what are now India, Pakistan, and Nepal. The MESOLITHIC period in the Indian subcontinent was followed by the Neolithic period, when more extensive settlement of the subcontinent occurred after the end of the last ice age approximately 12,000 years ago. The first confirmed semi-permanent settlements appeared 9,000 years ago in the Bhimbetka rock shelters in modern Madhya Pradesh, India. The Edakkal caves are pictorial writings believed to date to at least 6,000 BCE, from the Neolithic man, indicating the presence of a prehistoric civilisation or settlement in Kerala. The Stone Age carvings of Edakkal are rare and are the only known examples from south India. Traces of a Neolithic culture have been alleged to be submerged in the Gulf of Khambhat in India, radiocarbon dated to 7500 BCE. Neolithic agricultural cultures sprang up in the Indus valley region around 5000 BCE, in the lower Gangetic valley around 3000 BCE, represented by the Bhirona findings (7570–6200 BCE) in HARYANA as well as Mehrgarh findings (7000–5000 BCE) in PAKISTAN; AND later in southern India, spreading southwards and also northwards into Malwa around 1800 BCE. The first urban civilisation of the region began with the Indus valley civilisation.

Vedic period

The Vedic period is named after the Indo-Aryan culture of north-west India, although other parts of India had a distinct cultural identity during this period. The Vedic culture is described in the texts of Vedas, still sacred to Hindus, which were orally composed in Vedic Sanskrit. The Vedas are some of the oldest extant texts in India. The Vedic period, lasting from about 1500 to 500 BCE, contributed the foundations of several cultural aspects of the Indian subcontinent. In terms of culture, many regions of the subcontinent transitioned from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Age in this period.

Medieval India

Medieval India refers to the period of the Indian subcontinent's history from the 6th century to the 16th century. It is divided into two periods: The 'early medieval period' which lasted from the 6th to the 13th century and the 'late medieval period' which lasted from the 13th to the 16th century, ending with the start of the Mughal Empire in 1526. The Mughal era, from the 16th century to the 18th century, is often referred to as the early modern period,^[2] but is sometimes also included in the 'late medieval' period.

Western India

In western India, there were the kingdoms of Gujarat and malwa. Ahmed shah who founded the city of Ahmadabad, had strengthened the power of Gujarat. During the reign of Hushang Shah, malwa region became important and powerful. Hushang shah built the beautiful fortress city of mandu. Gujarat and malwa, however, were frequently at war with each other, which in reality reduced their power.

Rajput Kingdoms

There were two important Rajput kingdoms, namely Mewar and Marwar. These two were recurrently at war with each other. In spite of the fact that the two royal families had marriage relations. Rana Kumbha of Mewar was the powerful ruler of this time. He was a man of many interests, as he was a poet, musician, and powerful ruler. During the period, many other kingdoms had been risen in Rajasthan, Bikaner was one of them.

Vijayanagara Kingdom

Vijayanagara Kingdom was founded by two brothers Harihara and Bukka. In 1336, Harihara and Bukka conquered the territory of the Hoysala (i.e. modern Mysore State) and proclaimed themselves as an Independent ruler of the Vijayanagara Kingdom. Harihara and Bukka made Hastinavati (modern Hampi) their capital. Apart from these big kingdoms, there were many other smaller kingdoms, especially along the eastern coast (from Orissa to Tamil Nadu). These smaller kingdoms were being frequently attacked by either the Bahmanis or the Vijayanagara rulers. In 1370, Vijayanagara conquered Madurai. It was also active on the west coast. Meanwhile, the Bahmani kingdom was engaged in fighting against its northern neighbors, namely the kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa. All these kingdoms of the subcontinent became powerful, because of the handsome income that came through the land revenue and trade. Gujarat and Bengal received big profits from overseas trade especially with western Asia, East Africa, South-East Asia, and China. The Bahmani and Vijaynagara kingdoms also took part in the overseas trade. Besides trade, local culture, literature in the regional language, architecture, paintings, and new religious ideas were developed in these kingdoms.

Sufi Movements

During the eleventh century, some of the Muslims (especially who had come from Persia and nearby regions) were fundamentally Sufis. They settled in different parts of India and soon gathered plenty of Indian followers. The Sufi ideology promoted love and devotion as means of coming nearer to God. The true God's devotees bound to came close (both) to God and to one's fellow men. Secondly, Sufis suggested that prayers, fasts, and rituals were not as important as the true love of God. The Sufis, as they were promoting true love to God and fellow men, they were pretty flexible and tolerant for all other religions and sects, and advocated that the paths to God can be many. The Sufis, further, promoted respect for all human beings. This was the reason that the orthodox Ulema did not approve of the ideology of Sufis and said that Sufi teachings were not in agreement with orthodox Islam. Many of the Hindus also respected the Sufi saints and became followers. However, the Sufis did not attempt to deceive or convert Hindus to Islam, but rather advised Hindus to be better Hindus by loving the one true God. One of the most popular Sufi saints was Muin-ud-din Chishti. He lived most of his life in the city of Ajmer (where he died in 1236). Muin-ud-din Chishti emphasized on the devotional music and said that the devotional music is one of the ways to go closer to the God. The Ulema did not approve of linking music with religion or God. However, Chishti's followers held gatherings at the places where some of the finest music could be heard. The qawwali was a familiar form of singing at the sufi gatherings. Some songs sung in Hindi were also popular.

Baba Farid who lived at Ajodhan (now in Pakistan) was also a popular Sufi saint. Nizam-ud-din Auliya was the Sufi saint who was loved by both the Sultans and by the public. His center was in the neighborhood of Delhi. Nizam-ud-din Auliya was a brave and honest man and he advocated with his free mind. If Nizam-ud-din Auliya did not like any action of even the Sultan, he said so and was not afraid as were so many other people.

Bhakti Movement

During the seventh century, Bhakti movement evolved in the south part of the country (especially in the Tamil speaking regions). Over a period of time, it spread in all the directions. The alvars and the nayannars of the Tamil devotional cult had started the tradition of preaching the idea of bhakti through hymns and stories. Most of the saints of Bhakti movement were from the non-Brahman families. Like Sufi ideology, the bhakti ideology also taught that the relationship between man and God was based on love, and worshipping God with devotion was better than merely performing any number of religious ceremonies. Bhakti Saints emphasized on the tolerance among men and religions. Chaitanya, the devotee of Krishna, was a religious teacher who preached in Bengal. He composed many hymns dedicated to Krishna.

Chaitanya had traveled different parts of the country and gathered a group of his followers. At the end of his life, he settled at Puri in Orissa. In Maharashtra, the Bhakti ideology was preached by Jnaneshvara. Jnaneshvara had translated Gita in Marathi. Namadeva and in a later period, Tukaram, were the pretty popular saints of Bhakti movement. Kabir, who was basically a weaver, was also a Bhakti saint (in Banaras). The dohas (or couplets), which Kabir composed and preached to his followers are still recited.

Trade and Commerce in Medieval Period

Among the merchant classes, some specialized in wholesale trade, and others in the retail trade. The wholesale traders were known as 'seth' or 'bohra' and the retail traders were known as 'beoparis' or 'banik.' In south India, the community 'chettis' formed the trading class. Besides, there was a special class, 'banjaras,' who specialized in the trading. The banjaras used to move from one place to another place, sometimes with thousands of oxen, laden with food grains, salt, ghee, and other daily use stuff. The 'sarrafs' (shroff) are specialized in changing money, keeping money in deposit or lending it, or transmitting it from one part of the country to the other by means of 'hundi.' The 'hundi' was a letter of credit payable after a certain period. The use of hundis made it easier to move goods or to transmit money from one part of the country to another. When needed, the hundis were cashed at a discount rate, which sometimes included insurance so that the cost of goods lost or destroyed in transit could be recovered. Taking the advantage of these facilities, the Indian merchants could easily ship goods to countries of West Asia as well where there was Indian banking houses. English and Dutch traders who came to India during the seventeenth century found that the Indian financial system was highly developed, and the Indian merchants were very active and alert. The trading community of medieval time in India was considerably large in number and included some of the richest merchants of the world.

For example, Virji Vohra had a large fleet of ships and he dominated Surat trade for several decades; Malaya Chetti dominated the Coromandel Coast; Abdul Ghaffoor Bohra was much popular trader who left 85 lakhs of rupees in cash and goods at the time of his death in 1718. Merchants and traders lived in lofty houses with colored tiles, wore fine clothes, and had people carrying flags and banners before them when they moved out in public. The French traveler, Bernier, however, written: "the merchants tried to look poor because they were afraid that they might be squeezed of their wealth." Bernier's observation might be wrong because the emperors right from the time of Sher Shah passed many laws to protect the property of the merchants. The laws made (for the traders) by Sher Shah were very strict. Secondly, Mughal Emperor Jahangir made a provision that "if anyone, whether nonbeliever or Musalman should die, his property and other belongings should be left for his heirs, and no one should interfere with them." In a case where the respective (rich) person had no heir, an inspector should be appointed and also there would be separate guardians to guard the property, so that its value might be expended in a lawful and social expenditure, such as the building of mosques and sarais, repair of broken bridges, and the digging of tanks and wells."

Architecture

The Mughals built magnificent forts, palaces, gates, public buildings, mosques, baohs (water tank or well), etc. Besides, they also constructed formal gardens with running water. Use of running water even in the palaces and in

the pleasure resorts was a special feature of the Mughals. Babur was very fond of gardens and hence he constructed a few in the neighborhood of Agra and Lahore. Some of the Mughal gardens, such as the Nishat Bagh garden (in Kashmir), the Shalimar Bagh (in Lahore), the Pinjore garden (in Chandigarh) etc. can be seen even today. Sher Shah also had given a new stimulus to the Indian architecture. His famous mausoleum at Sasaram (Bihar) and his mosque in the old fort at Delhi are considerable examples of architectural marvels. Akbar was the first Mughal ruler who had the time and means to undertake construction on a large scale. He built a series of forts, the most famous of which is the fort at Agra. Agra fort was built of red sandstone, which had many magnificent gates. In 1572, Akbar commenced a palace-comfort complex at Fatehpur Sikri (36 kilometers from Agra), which was completed in eight years. The climax of fort building was reached at Delhi with the construction of Lal Qila (Red Fort) by Shah Jahan. The Gujarat style of architecture was used most widely in the palace built probably for the Rajput wife or wives. Persian or Central Asian influence can be seen in the glazed blue tiles used for decoration in the walls or for tiling the roofs. One of the most magnificent constructions was the Buland Darwaza (Lofty Gate), which was constructed in 1576 at Fatehpur Sikri to commemorate Akbar's victory in Gujarat.

CONCLUSION

Sufism, an important aspect of Muslim spiritual life, holds extraordinary position in medieval Indian history. Right from the time of Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer, the mystics of Islam, i.e. Sufis, have made great contribution in different fields of medieval life. No doubt the general sources of our medieval history provide all sorts of information about different events, personalities etc. of the medieval period. However, the Sufi literature, produced in medieval India, is also of great historical significance. This literature, whether in the form of malfuzat, tazkiras, maqtubat or brochures and treatises of Sufi thought and practices, is a precious treasure. We come across a lot of information through these work not only of spiritual but social, cultural and even political life of medieval India. Number of works dealing with various sufi aspect were produced up to the fifteenth century in Indian sub-continent. Sources say the process of writing books on Sufis and Sufism increased rapidly. Sufis and their followers greatly contributed in this context. Innumerable Sufi works were compiled during the 16th centuries. These works also include malfuzat, biographical accounts, i.e. tazkirahs, maktubat (collection of the saints' letters), etc. As a matter of fact the whole Sufi literature of these two centuries is of great historical significance. This too sheds flood of light on various aspects of medieval life - social, cultural, religious, academic and political.

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