

## CHAPTER 5: THE LIFE OF PEOPLE

When foreign invaders settle in a country, they bring with them new patterns of living. These patterns influence the culture of the country, which has been conquered. In this lesson, we will study such changes in each section of society.

### THE ARISTOCRACY

- ✓ The aristocracy was the ruling class and consisted of the Sultan, the nobles, the Hindu princess, and the landholders. The Sultan lived in great splendor at the court in Delhi.
- ✓ The Sultan was a special person and each day, his activities at the court were carried out with much ceremony and ritual to emphasize his special qualities. He had a large household with many officers and servants.

### THE PRIESTS

- ✓ The priests and the teachers of religion, such as the brahmins and the ulema, were also an important part of the society. Those who acted as advisers to the ruler had a tremendous influence.
- ✓ Some of them were wealthy as they had received grants of land. The Sultans respected the important brahmins and continued to give them grants of land. Amongst both the brahmins and the ulema, there were those who had settled down in the rural areas.

### THE PEOPLE OF TOWNS

- ✓ The development of trade led to an increase in the number of towns during this period. The people living in the towns were largely merchants, traders and artisans, with some nobles and officials.
- ✓ Most towns were trading centres. Some were administrative and Military centres, and these had a larger number of officials and soldiers.
- ✓ The artisans lived according to their craft in a special part of the city.

### THE PEASANTS

- ✓ Life of peasants remains almost the same with the coming of Turks and Afghans; only people who were affected were upper strata of the society.
- ✓ Caste system was still practised. In fact, the people who converted to Islam still followed caste rules.
- ✓ Many Hindu – Muslim customs got intermingled.

### TRADE

- ✓ Every town had a market-place where the traders would gather to buy and sell their goods. Large fairs were also common.
- ✓ But there were some communities who made trade their special work, such as the **baniyas** and the **multanis**, who showed great initiative and travelled all over the country, even as far south as Malabar.
- ✓ The **banjaras** owned large caravans and transported goods from market to market.
- ✓ Goods came to Delhi from all over the country—large mounds of white rice from the east, sugar from Kanauj, wheat from the Doab and fine silks from the south.



- ✓ Bengal was the main centre of trade with China.
- ✓ The growth of trade encouraged the use of money. Large numbers of coins were minted and issued. The most commonly used coin was the **silver tankah** which was started by the Sultan Iltutmish.

## **RELIGION**

The coming of Islam to India resulted in the borrowing of religious ideas by Hindus and Muslims from each other. This, in turn, led to two religious trends becoming very popular. One was the Sufi movement, and the other came to be known as the bhakti movement.

### **THE SUFI MOVEMENT**

Among the Muslims, who had come from Persia and other lands in the eleventh century were some *Sufis*. The **qawwah** were songs sung by sufi saints in praise of God. Sufis had a teacher who called **pir**. The sufis did not try to convert Hindus to Islam but advised Hindus to be better Hindus by loving the one true God.



- **Mum-ud-din Chishti** was one of the better known sufi saints. He is associated with the city of Ajmer where he died in 1236. He maintained that devotional music was a way of coming close to God. The music was beautifully played or sung, it was almost like being in the presence of God.
- Nizam-ud-din Auliya had his centre in the neighbourhood of Delhi.
- Other sufi saints were: Saiyid Muhammad Gesudaraz at Gulbarga, Shah Alam Bukhari at Gujarat, Baha-ud-din Zakariya at Multan and Shaikh Shihab-ud-din.

### **THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT**

- ✓ 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 were from the non-brahman castes. The bhakti teachers 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. They stressed the need for tolerance among men and religions. They objected to the division of society into castes. They disapproved of the low status given to women.

- **Chaitanya** was a religious teacher who preached in Bengal. He became a devotee of Krishna and composed many hymns for Krishna.



- In Banaras, there was a weaver called **Kabir** who was also a bhakti saint. The **dohas** or couplets which Kabir composed and taught to his followers are still recited. Kabir tried to make a bridge between Hinduism and Islam.
- **Nanak** founded the Sikh religion. His teachings in the form of verses are included in a scripture called the Adi Granth which was compiled by his fourth successor in the early 17th century. Nanak taught that the only way to be close to God is to love God.
  - Nanak insisted that his followers must be willing to eat in a common kitchen—**langar**—where anyone could take a meal, irrespective of caste.



- The followers of the tenth guru came to be known as the **Khalsa**, which means "the pure". In the seventeenth century, Khalsa became a strong military group.
- It was then that the Sikhs distinguished themselves from other people by the five characteristics which are commonly called the five K's—kesha (hair), kangha (comb), kara (iron bracelet), kirpan (dagger) and kachchha (underwear).



- Some other bhakti saints were **Namadeva** and in a later period **Tukaram**, both of whom, continued to preach the idea of devotion to God through love.

### LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

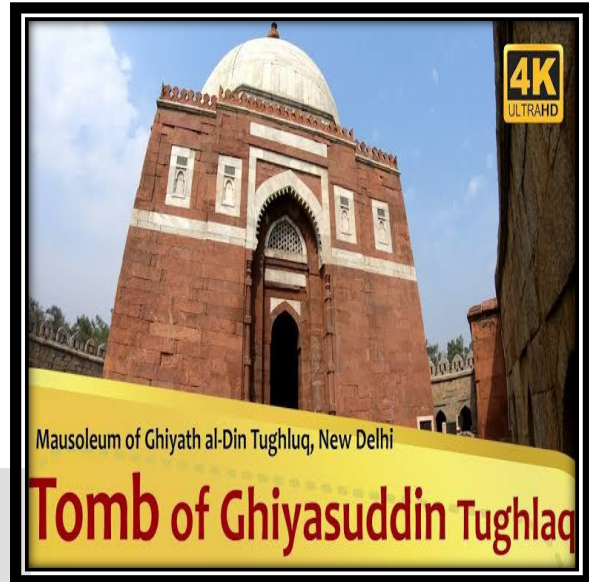
- ✓ The bhakti teachers throughout India always taught in the **language of the region**, so that, the ordinary people could understand them.
- ✓ The two forms of **Hindi, Braj and Avadhi**, were used.
- ✓ **Punjabi** was beginning to emerge in the north; **Gujarati** in western India and Bengali in eastern India, Marathi in the north-west Decan, Kannada in the region around Mysore, Telugu in Andhra and of course **Tamil** had been spoken for many centuries in the region south of Andhra. **Oriya** (spoken in Orissa), Assamese and Sindhi had their origin about this time as also did Malayalam in Kerala. Some of these languages grew out of **Apabhramshas and Prakrits**.
- ✓ The court language in most parts of the country was now **Persian**. Out of the mixture of Persian and Hindi, there grew a new language - **Urdu**.
- ✓ **Sanskrit** was used in the religious rituals of the **shaivites** and **vaishnavites**; it was also used on ceremonial occasions in the courts of certain Hindu rulers.
- ✓ Popular literature in **Sanskrit**, such as the Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, was now available in the regional languages. The writings of **Kamban in Tamil and Pothana in Telugu** made their works available to people who did not know Sanskrit.
- ✓ There were a number of poets and writers, who wrote original works—epic poems, lyric, poems, plays in the various languages. The Telugu poet, **Srinadha** composed many poems in honour of Shiva, such as the **Haravilasa**. **Malik Muhammad Jayasi's Padmavat** is famous in Hindi.

### ARCHITECTURE

- **Delhi Sultanate**
- ✓ The Turks and Afghans brought with them from Persia and Central new styles and techniques of architecture as well as mixed with indigenous Indian styles.
- ✓ Two important architectural forms which began to be widely used were the **true arch and the dome**. The **true arch** is a pointed arch which is not supported by a beam but by stones placed obliquely to form the point. The **dome** is a large area enclosed by a hollow semi-circular roof.



- ✓ Another structure which was frequently used was the tall, slender tower or **minaret**.
- ✓ The shape of these buildings was often similar to those of Persia and Central Asia, but the decoration was largely Indian because Indian craftsmen used to construct the buildings.  
Examples: Qutub Minar, citadel of Firoz Tughluq, known as Firoz Shah Kotla , tombs of the Lodi kings at Delhi, etc.



### Provincial kingdoms

- ✓ The provincial dynasties also beautified their capitals and forts. The **Sharqi rulers of Jaunpur** built beautiful mosques in the city; **Ahmed Shah of Gujarat** built Ahmedabad, which was then one of the most elegant cities of India. The rulers of Malwa built their palaces on the hill of Mandu.
- ✓ Most of these buildings were built of stone because stone was easily available in these areas. However, in Bengal at places, such as **Gaur and Pandua**, the construction was of bricks.
- ✓ Stone is not so easily found all over eastern India. In Kashmir, the architects followed the Central Asian pattern and built structures in wood.
- ✓ The **Bahmani rulers** build the cities of **Gulbarga and Bidar**. Some of these continued the older style of architecture. Others were built in the Persian style, such as the Jama Masjid of Gulbarga and the Madrasah at Bidar. Perhaps the best known of these buildings was to be the **Gol Gumbaz** at Bijapur, the tomb of one of the Bijapuri kings. Its dome is said to be one of the largest in the world.
- ✓ Further south, the **Vijayanagara kings** gave large donations for building temples. The Vijayanagara kings spent vast sums of money on repairing and rebuilding parts of the earlier Chola temples. The work of the Vijayanagara period can be recognised by the richness of the carving and ornamentation.

### Painting and Music

- ✓ The earlier tradition of painting - delicate miniature paintings was continued. The artists were now decorating books belonging to the king and the courtiers.

- ✓ Music also came to be enriched by new forms. The **Hindustani style of music** which developed at this time was influenced by forms from Persia and the Arab world. In addition, there were certain instruments which became popular such as the sitar, sarangi and tabla.

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