B A 2ND Semester (Honours)

Paper-Social Formations and Culture Patterns of the Medieval World

Unit- IV: Religion and Culture in Medieval Europe

Topic- Religion in Medieval Europe

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Religion of Medieval Europe was dominated by Christianity and Christian Church. From birth to death, whether a peasant, a serf, a noble, a lord or a king's life was dominated by church. Various Christian religious institutions, such as monasteries and convents, became important, rich and powerful. The lives of many medieval people including monks and nuns were dedicated to Catholic Church and religion.  
            Some aspects of Catholic religion of Medieval Europe were  
            1. During this period the great cathedrals of Europe were built and Catholic Church started its Universities in Paris, Tubingen, Cambridge and Oxford. Catholic Church was the leading church and leading church leader, bishops and archbishops dominated the laws of land.  
            2. In this period Pope was so powerful that he could even excommunicate a king for his misdeeds. Apart from the Roman Catholic Churches new churches like Lausanne Cathedral and Regensburg cathedral were built for accommodating increased population.  
            3. The Benedictines who were forbidden their rights of property and get involved in worldly concerns and desires. They performed their manual duties and devoted in learning and writing scriptures on history and Science.  
            4. The Christian Monasteries were the centers of knowledge. Monks copied the manuscripts of various languages.  
            5. Visiting holy shrines like Church of St. Jems at Satingo in Spain, Canterbury Cathedral in England and Sites of Jerusalem and Rome. The Mission was considered to redeem people from their sins and open gates of heaven.  
            6. Iconoclasm or establishment of icon of Jesus Christ and his family members was an important aspect of religious life of medieval Europe. But that was forbidden by Byzantine Emperor Leo III during 726-730 A D. who had directed to accept the Cross instead of the icon of Christ.  
            7. Establishing the superiority of Pope became important during this period. In 380 Christianity became the state religion of Rome but king was still supervisor to Pope. But in 6th century, during Byzantine rule king lost its control over the church. The power and prosperity of Pope had expanded whole of Europe during the rule of Pope Gregory I (590-608). Saint Banifes expanded Christianity in Germany. The Benedictines were instrumental in popularizing Christianity.  
             The power of Byzantine Empire started to decrease for the growing power of Islam and Lombards invasion during 800 A D. Pope Leo III declared Charlamagne as Roman Emperor. Thus the tradition of recognition of Pope for appointing king was started.  Pipe was directly involved like a political leader in the Crusades fought between Turks and Christians.  
             8. After the downfall of Roman Empire Carolingan Empire was established by Charles Martel. Pepin, son of Charles Martel saved Italy from Lombard invasion. So Pope Stephen II honored him as "Patrician of the Romans'. Christianity expanded in Carolingan during the reign of Charlemagne. Even he established Christian school in his palace. He was awarded the "Emperor of Romans" by Pope Leo III. So the empire came to be known as Holy Roman Empire.Charlemague's period was known as.  
        Carolingan Renaissance for the development of art, architecture, religion and literature  
             .9. In the later Medieval period (11th -15th century) changes came to Christian religion for the rise of Monasticism, Crusades, loss of spirituality, Pope's inclination towards worldly pleasures and rise of feudalism. The feudal lords interfered in the activities of churches, appointed the bishops, sometimes who were not interested in spiritual activities. Moreover kings were also interfered there. It was Pope Gregory VII made the Churches free from complete royal and feudal interference.  
             .10. The non Christian people basically Muslims and Jews faced trial and punishment like death sentences known as Inquisition. The Catholic Church and Pope were directly involved such activities known as "Papal Inquisition" of 1230. In Spain within 200 years 32,000 were killed.  
             11. The conflict between Roman Emperor Henry IV and Pipe Gregory VII was started regarding the appointment of a new bishop which was known as Investiture Controversy. The bishops who were appointed by king did not respect the church and more inclined towards worldly activities. Moreover the king collected the revenue of a church area but deposited the less amount to the church. Protest came from Pope Gregory VII who declared that only Pope had the right of selecting a bishop. After some initial opposition king Henry IV accepted Pope's declaration.  
               The religious life of medieval Europe was dominated by all these events and aspects where the church and Pope led a dominant role. Conflict between Church and State (Pope and king) was another important aspect of the period.

References-

1. Social Formations and Cultural Patterns of the Medieval World- Dr C R Satapathy
2. Madhajugiya Bishwar Samajik-Sanskritik Itihas- Anurag Bora

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