

BHAKTI-SUFI TRADITIONS CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND DEVOTIONAL TEXTS (C.EIGHTH TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURY)

This chapter is divided into two parts.

The chapter is based on the new/ latest syllabus.





This chapter deals with the religious beliefs which occurred during 8th to 18th century. Historian used many sources to know the changes of religious traditions.



• TEXTUAL RECORD

- The Compositions attributed to poet saints. These were compiled by disciples or devotees generally after the death of saints.
- Hagiographies or biographies of saints written by their followers.
- The sculptures of many saints and the devotions by the many kingdoms also provide the sources to know about the famous saints.

• CHALLENGES TO USE THESE SOURCES-

- The generations of devotees tended to elaborate on the original message.
- They occasionally modified or even abandoned some of the ideas that appeared problematic or irrelevant in different political, social and cultural context.
- Hagiographies or biographies of saints may not be literally accurate.



A MOSAIC OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

- During this period, a large number of gods and goddesses in sculpture as well as in texts appeared.
- ➤ This indicated the continued and extended worship of the major deities such as Vishnu, Shiva and the goddesses, visualized in a variety of forms. Integration of cults and great and little traditions, disseminating Brahmanical ideas.

THE INTEGRATION OF CULTS

- ➤ Historians who have tried to understand these developments suggest that there were at least two processes at work.
- ➤ One was a process of disseminating Brahmanical ideas. This was exemplified by the composition, compilation and preservation of Puranic texts in simple Sanskrit verse . They were meant to be accessible to women and Shudras who were excluded from Vedic learning.



(Jagannatha (extreme right) with his sister Subhadra (centre) and his brother Balarama (left)

- ➤ There was a second process at work that of the Brahmanas accepting and reworking the beliefs and practices of other social categories also. This was known as great and little traditions.(by sociologist –Robert Redfield)
- ➤ Through an example we can say that a local deity, in Puri (Odisha) whose image was and continues to be made of wood by local tribal (little tradition) specialists, was recognized as a form of Vishnu. These local deities were often incorporated within the puranic frame work by providing them with an identity as a wife of the principal male deities-sometimes they were equated with Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu.(Great Traditions)



TANTRIC WORSHIP



- The forms of worship often associated with goddess were classified as Tantric.
- Tantric worship was wide spread in the subcontinent. It was open to women and men.
- Those who followed Tantric rejected the caste and class within the ritual context.
- Many of these ideas influenced Shaivism and the Buddhism, especially in eastern, northern and southern part of this sub-continent.



CONFLICTS THAT AROSE AT THAT TIME

- ➤ During this time the principles deities are Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva which have very little reference in puranic traditions.
- The principles deities of Vedic pantheon Agni, Indra and Soma become marginal figures.
- > However in spite of these discrepancies the Vedas continued to be revered as authoritative.
- ➤ There were conflicts between those who followed the Vedic tradition and those who practiced the Tantric way of worshipping deities.
- ➤ Those who valued Vedic tradition often condemned the practices that went beyond the performance of sacrifices and chanting of mantras.
- ➤ On the other hand those who engaged in Tantric practices ignored the authority of the Vedas.
- ➤ The devotees often tended to project their deity either Vishnu or shiva but the relation with other tradition like jais or Buddhism were often fraught with tension



Saguna (with attributes)

- ➤ Saguna included the bhakti traditions that focused on the worship of specific deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and his avatars (incarnations) and forms of the goddess or Devi.
- Examples –Alwar, Nayanars, Virashaiva

Nirguna (without attributes).

- Nirguna bhakti on the other hand was worship of an abstract form of god.
- ➤ Examples- Kabir Panthi, Sufi Saint, Yogi, Nathpanthi, Madari, Kanlandar



THE ALVARS AND NAYANARS OF TAMIL NADU

- During the sixth century, some of the Bhakti movements in south India were led by the Alvars and the Nayanars.
- The literal meaning of the Alvars is those who are immersed in devotion to Vishnu.
- The meaning of the word Nayanars is those who were devotees of Shiva.
- They travelled from place to place singing hymns in Tamil in praise of their gods.
- During their travels the Alvars and Nayanars identified certain shrines as abodes of their chosen deities.
- Later big temples were built at those places and developed as pilgrimage centre's.
- According to some historians, the Alvars and the Nayanars started a movement of protest against the caste system and the Brahmanas and attempted to reform the system.
- The devotees came from the different social backgrounds such as artisans, cultivators and even from the caste that were considered "untouchable"
- The saint –poets the Alvars and the Nayanars were opposed to Buddhism and Jainism.
- This hostility is well marked in their compositions particularly of the Nayanars.



DIFFERENCE IN ALVARS AND NAYANARS

BASE	ALWARS	NAYANARS	
Devotees	Vishnu	Shiva	
No of saints	12	63	
Compositions	ons Nalayira Divyaprabbandham(Tamil Tevaram		
	Veda)		
Saints	Tondaradippodi	Appar, Sambandars,	
		Sundarar	
Female saints	Andal,	Karaikkal Ammaiyar	

RELATION WITH THE STATE

studyship with

- From the 2nd half of the first millennium Buddhism and Jainism was supported by Pallavas and pandays.
- ➤ In theis new Bhakti tradition saints opposed the Jainism and Buddhism
- The Chola rulers supported the bhakti traditions and built temples for Shiva and Vishnu.
- ➤ Some of the magnificent temples for Shiva such as temples in Chidambaram, Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholpuram were constructed under their patronage.
- ➤ The Chola rulers built temples often to claim divine support and proclaim their own power and status and adorned those temples with stone and metal sculpture to represent the visions of the popular saints.
- They made the spectacular representations of Shiva in bronze sculpture.
- ➤ The Chola kings introduced the singing of Tamil Shaiva hymns under royal patronage, taking the initiative to collect and organize them into a text (Tevaram).
- ➤ According to Inscriptional evidence, the Chola king Parantaka I had constructed the metal images of Appar,Sambandar and Sundarar in a Shiva temple.
- > These were carried in procession during the festivals of these saints.

*** THE VIRASHAIVA TRADITION IN KARNATAKA**

- studyship with
- ➤ During the twelfth century, In Karnataka the Virashaiva movement was started by a Brahmana named Basavanna (1106-68).
- ➤ He was a Jaina and a minister in the court of a Chalukya king.
- ➤ His followers were known as Virashaivas(heroes of Shiva) or Lingayats(wearers of the linga)

LINGAYATS AND THEIR BELIEF

- Lingayats are an important community even today. They worship Shiva in the form of linga.
- They wear a small linga in a silver case over the left shoulder.
- Jangama or wandering monks are revered.
- ➤ Lingayats believe that after death, the devotee will be united with Shiva and will not return to this world.
- ➤ Therefore, they do not practice funerary rites such as cremation as prescribed in the Dharmashastras. Instead, they ceremonially bury their dead body.



CHALLENGE TO THE CASTE SYSTEM

- ➤ The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the "pollution" attributed to some groups by Brahmanas.
- They also questioned the theory of rebirth.
- ➤ So that a number of followers who were marginalized within the Brahmanical social order also attracted to this bhakti tradition.
- ➤ The Lingayats also practiced certain approvals that were rejected by the Dharmashastras such as post-puberty marriage and the remarriage of wodows.
- ➤ Our knowledge about the Virashaiva tradition is came from vachanas (literally,sayings)composed in kannada by those who joined the movement.

❖ RELIGIOUS FERMENT IN NORTH INDIA

studyship with

- ➤ Like in south India, in this time Bhakti movement also spread in north India. Though historian did not found any compositions in north India till 14 century.
- ➤ According to historians, in north India in this period several Rajput states emerged and in most of these states Brahmanas occupied important place by performing rituals. So there was no attempt to question their position directly.
- ➤ At the same time there were other religious leaders who were out of the orthodox Brahmanical systems, and were gaining ground.
- ➤ These included the Naths, Jogis and Siddhas. Many of them came from artisanal groups such as weavers who were well organized. They become powerful due to increasing urban centers and long distance trade.
- ➤ These religious leaders questioned the authority of the Vedas and expressed them in local language. In spite of their popularity, they were unable to win the support of the ruling elites.
- Turkish conquest culminated in the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate.
- ➤ The power of many Rajput rulers was thus undermined and also of the Brahmanas who were associated with those kingdoms.
- The coming of the Sufis was a significant part of these developments.



NEW STRANDS IN THE FABRIC ISLAMIC TRADITIONS (ARRIVAL OF ISLAM INTO INDIA)

- 1. Arab merchants frequented ports along the western coast in the first millennium CE, they settled in the Malabar Coast.
- 2. In 711 an Arab general named Muhammad Qasim conquered Sind, which became part of the Caliph's domain.
- 3. Later the Turks and Afghans established the Delhi Sultanate. This continued with the establishment of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century.
- 4. Theoretically, Muslim rulers were to be guided by the *ulamas*. Ulemas are theologians who are well versed in Islamic laws. Rulers ruled according to the *sharia*. The sharia is the law governing the Muslim community. It is based on the Quran and the hadiths.
- 5. Muslims ruled and protected people of all the religions but collected Jizya tax from the Non- Muslims. Several rulers gave land endowments and granted tax exemptions to Hindu, Jain, Zoroastrian, Christian and Jewish religious institutions and also expressed respect to the Saints.

❖ FAITH OF RULERS AND THEIR SUBJECTS

- ➤ In 711 AD an Arab General, Muhammed bin qasim conquered Sind and make it as a part of the caliph's domain. Later, during the thirteenth century the Turks and Afghans established the Delhi Sultanate.
- ➤ Sultanates were also formed in the Deccan and other parts of the subcontinent. Islam was recognized as the religion of several areas. This continued with the establishment of the Mughal Empire.
- ➤ Muslim rulers were to be guided by the **Ulama**, which were expected to ensure that they ruled according to the **Sahri'a**.

Ulma-The scholars of Islamic studies, who perform various religious, juridical and teaching functions to preserve the Islamic traditions.

Shari'a -the lawa which govern the muslim community. It includes

Quran-Holy book

Hadis-Traditions of prophet

Qiyas-Reasoning by analogy

Ijma-Consensus of the community.

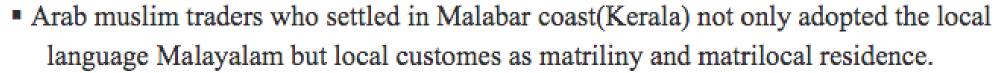
- ➤ The category of zimmi was developed. The Zimmi means "protected" and is derived from the Arabic word zimma, protection. It was developed for peoples who followed revealed scriptures, such as the Jews and Christians, and lived under muslim rule. They paid a tax called jizya and received protection from muslims. In India this status was extended to Hindus as well.
- In general, rulers often adopted a flexible policy towards their subjects.
- ➤ For example, several rulers gave land endowments and granted tax exemptions to Hindu, Jaina, Zoroastrian, Christian and Jewish religious institutions. They also showed respect and devotion towards non-Muslim religious







- ➤ All those who adopted Islam have the similarity in their practice. They follow the five pillars of the faith
- ➤ The five pillars of faith in Islam
 - There is one God, Allah, and Prophet Muhammad is his messenger (shahada)
 - Offering prayers five times a day (namaz/salat)
 - Giving alms (zakat)
 - Fasting during the month of Ramzan (sawam)
 - Performing the pilgrimage to Mecca(hajj)
- ➤ However in spite of this similarity there were so many diversities occurred in their tradition due to sectarian affiliations and local customary practices.
 - Muslim communities were divided into two main sects –shi'a (Believe that Ali will be successor of prophet) and sunni (Believe that Abu Bakr will be).
 - There were many branches of shi'a and sunni in this sub continent like Khojahs ismailis,
 - Khojah, a branch of Isamailis (Shia sect) adopted the indigenous literary geners to disseminating the ideas of Quran.
 - They used devotional poem in Punjabi, Multani, Sindhi, Kachchi, Hindi, Gujarati known as –
 Ginan (Knowledge) in special ragas during daily prayers.



- studyship with krati
- The complex of a universal faith with local traditions also found in architecture of mosques.
- Some architectural features of mosques are universal such as face toward Mecca and the placement of the mihrab (prayer niche) and the minbar (pulpit).
- However there were variations found in roof or building materials
 - " Shah Hamdan Mosque of Srinagar built by kashmiri wooden(Jewel in the crown)
 - " Atiya mosques, Bangladesh built with bricks
 - " Mosque in Kerala Shikhara like roof

NAME OF COMMUNITIES



- Today we often use the term Hindu or Muslim for these communities but the historian find out from inscriptions and Sanskrit text that this term was not used for these people till 14 century.
- Instead these term people were identifies by their region as Turkish for Turushka, Tajika for Tajikistan or Parshika for Persia.
- Sometime Turks or Aghan were referred as Shakas and Yavans(Greeks)
- A term Mlechchha also used for these migrants which means they did not follow the norms of caste system and spoke different language instead of Sanskrit.
- Hindu term was not used for the religion as we saw that it was used for the people who live near the river Sind.

THE GROWTH OF SUFISM



- The groups of religious minded people were called as Sufis in Islam. It is an English word. The word used for Sufism in Islam is Tasawwuf.
- The term sufi were defined by many ways by historians-
- It is derived from suf meaning wool, refer the course woolen clothes worn by sufis
- Some told that it is derived from safa mens purity
- It may also derived from suffa, the platform outside the prophet mosques, where followers assembled to learn about faith.
- They were critical of the dogmatic definitions and scholastic methods of interpreting the Quran.
- They emphasized on seeking salvation through intense devotion and love for God by following his command.
- They emphasized interpretation of Quran on the basis of personal experience.







* KHANQAHS

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➤ Khanqahs or hospices were the religious places where sufi saints teach their followers and held the practices. The control of Khanqahs was under a pir ,saikh or murshid. He performed various duties as-

Duties of Pir or Saikh or Murshid

- He enrolled his disciples (murids) and appointed a successor (Khalifa)
- He established rules for spiritual conduct and interaction between persons and the master.

♦ SILSILAS

- ➤ Silsila literally meaning a chain signifies a continuous link between master and disciple, stretching as an unbroken spiritual genealogy to the Prophet Muhammad.
- > Through this channel the spiritual power and blessing transmitted to devotees.
- ➤ Sufi silsilas began to appear in different parts of the Islamic world around the twelfth century.



* DARGAH

- ➤ Dargah is a Persian term. Its meaning is tomb-shrine. When the sheikh died, his tomb shrine became the center of devotion for his followers.
- This encouraged the practice of pilgrimage or ziyarat to his grave, particularly on his death anniversary.or urs
- It was believed that, after death the soul of sheikh get united with the soul of Allah.
- ➤ People sought their blessings to attain material and spiritual benefits. Thus evolved the cult of the sheikh revered as wali.

❖ BA-SHARIA AND BE-SHARIA SUFIS

BA-SHARIA	BE-SHARIA		
1.Ba sharia were those Sufis who adhere	1.Be-sharia Sufis were those who ignored		
with the Shariat	shariat		
2. They organized themselves around	2. They boycott the khanqahs and took		
Khanqahs.	mendicancy and observed celibacy		
3. They were called as saikh or wali.	3. They were known by different names-		
	Qaladars, Madaris, Malangs, Haidaris etc.		

• LIFE IN THE CHISHTI KHANQAH

- studyship with
- The khanqah was the centre of social life. It comprised several small rooms and a big hall where inmates and visitors lived and prayed.
- The Shaikh lived in a small room on the roof of the hall where he met visitors in the morning and evening.
- There was an open kitchen (langar). From morning till evening people from all walks of life, came to seek the blessings from the Shaikh in various matters.
- Other visitors included poets such as Amir Hasan Sijzi and Amir Khusru and the court historian Ziyauddin Barani and all of them wrote about the Shaikh.

• DIFFERENT PRACTICES WERE ADOPTED BY THE CHISHTIS IN THEIR KANQAH AS

- Bowing before the Shaikh
- Offering water to visitors
- Shaving the heads of initiates
- Yogic exercises

➤ Major Teachers of the Chisti Silsila

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Sr no	Sufi Teacher	year of birth	LOCATION	
1	Shaikh Muinuddin Sijzi	1235	Ajmer	
			(Rajasthan)	
2	Khwaja Qutbuddin	1235	Delhi	
	Bakhtiyar Kaki			
3	Saikh Fariduddin Ganj	1265	Ajodhan(Pakistan	
	I Shakr)	
4	Shaikh Nizamuddin	1325	Delhi	
	Auliya			
5	Shaikh Nasiruddin	1356	Delhi	
	Chiragh-I			

➤ Most famous sufi teacher in India ,Shaikh Nizamuddin appointed his disciple to set up hospices in various parts of the sub continent. In this way they came in touch with the people which led to the popularization of chishti practices, teachings and also the fame of Shaikh.



CHISHTI DEVOTIONALISM: ZIYARAT AND QAWWALI

- ➤ Pilgrimage on the tombs of Sufi saints is called as Ziyarat in all over the Muslim world. This practice is an occasion for seeking the Sufi's spiritual grace (barakat).
- ➤ For more than seven centuries people from different walks of life expressed their devotion at the dargahs of the five great Chishti saints.
- ➤ The use of music and dance including mystical chants performed by specially trained musicians or qawwals to evoke divine ecstasy is also part of ziyarat.
- ➤ The Sufis remember God either by reciting the zikr(the Divine Names)or evoking His presence through sama or performance of mystical music known as qawwali.

❖ DARGAH OF KHWAJA MUINUDDIN

studyship with

- ➤ The most popular dargah in India was of Khwaja Muinuddin, popularly known as "Gharib Nawaz" (comforter of the poor). The dargah became so popular because of the following reasons.
- The austerity and piety of the Shaik, greatness of his spiritual successors and the patronage of royal visitors.
- ➤ Location of Ajmer was another factor for its popularity. As it was located on the trade route connecting Delhi and Gujarat, it attracted number of travellers.
- ➤ Muhammad bin Tughlaq was the first Sultan to visit this dargah. And the construction of tomb was funded by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji of Malwa.
- ➤ Akbar, the Mughal emperor visited dargah at Ajmer fourteen times in his life and these visits were aimed at seeking blessings for new conquests, fulfilling his of vows and to get sons.
- ➤ Many of his wishes were soon fulfilled and thus as an offering:
 - He gave generous gifts on each visit.
 - He offered a huge cauldron to facilitate cooking for pilgrims.
 - He even got a mosque constructed within the dargah

***** LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

- studyship with krati
- ➤ By the various local languages sufi tradition become popular in different region. They also influenced by the various Bhakti tradition.
- ➤ The Chishtis composed their poems in several languages. The Chishtis used Hindavi or Persian language.
- ➤ Some Sufis such as Baba Farid composed poetry in local language. Some Sufis composed long poems or masnavis to express ideas of divine love using human love as an allegory. For example-Padmavat composed by Malik Muhammad Jayasi, the romance of Padmini and Ratensen, king of Chittor.
- Sufi poetry was composed in the Dakhani language around the Bijapur and Karnataka region. Women while performing household chores like grinding grain and spinning sang these poems.
- ➤ Other poems were in the form of lurinama(lullabies) or wedding songs(shadinama). The Sufis of this region were inspired by the kannada vachanas of the Lingayats and the Marathi abhangs of the sants of Pandharpur.
- > By this medium Islam gradually gained a place in the village of the Deccan.

SUFIS AND THE STATE

- ➤ The chishtis tradition was austere, maintaining a distance from worldly power but it did not isolate political power.
 - The Sufis accepted unsolicited grants and donations from the political elites. The sultans set up charitable trusts (auqaf) as endowments for hospices and granted tax-free land (inam).
 - The chishtis accepted donations in cash and kind and used for their immediate requirements such as food, clothes, living quarters and ritual necessities such as sama. The moral high status of the Sufis attracted people from all walks of life.
- The kings wished to secure their support by paying respect to the sufis as
 - Kings simply did not need to show their association with Sufis and also required legitimating for them.
 - When the Turks set up the Delhi Sultanate, Sufis resisted the insistence of the ulama on imposing shari'a as state law because they anticipated opposition from their subjects.
 - The sultans also came to depend on the sufis to interpret the Sahri'a. It was believed that Auliya could intercede with god to improve the material and spiritual conditions of the people. As a result, kings got the shrines of the Sufis near built near their tombs.
- ➤ However there were instances of conflict between the Sultans and the sufis.
 - To assert their authority both expected certain rituals performed such as prostration and kissing of the feet etc.
 - Sufi saikh was addressed with high sounding titles. For example Nizamuddin Auliya addressed as Sultan-ul-mashaikh by their disciples.



NEW DEVOTIONAL PATHS IN NORTHERN INDIA:

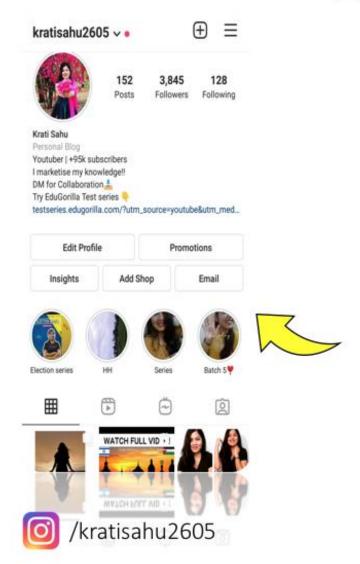
- Kabir was a poet-saint of 14th-15th centuries.
- Kabir's verses were compiled in three distinct traditions
 - The Kabir Bijak is preserved by the Kabirpanth in Uttar Pradesh.
 - The Kabir Granthavali is associated with the Dadupanth in Rajasthan.
 - Many of his verses were included in the Adi Granth Sahib.
- Kabir described the ultimate reality as Allah, Khuda, Hazarat and Pir. He also used terms from vedantic traditions, like alakh, nirakar, brahmin, atman, etc.
- Kabir accepted all types of philosophy i.e. Vedantic traditions, Yogic traditions and Islamic ideas.
- Kabir's ideas probably crystallised through dialogue and debate.
- The message of Guru Nanak is spelt out in his hymns and teachings, where he advocated a form of Nirguna bhakti.

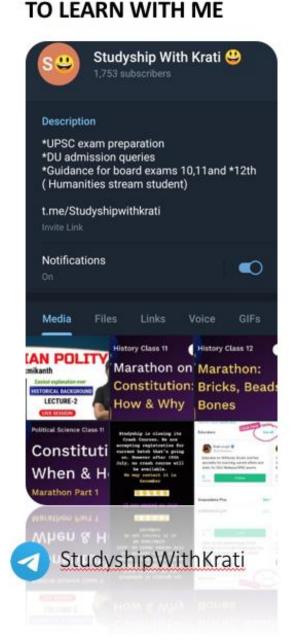


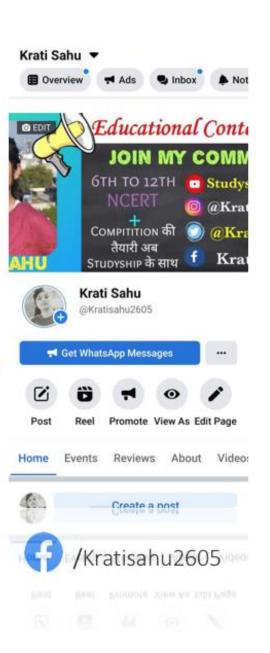
- According to Guru Nanak, the absolute or 'rab' had no gender or form. His ideas expressed through hymns called 'Shabad' in Punjabi.
- Guru Arjan compiled Guru Nanak's hymns along with the hymns of Baba Farid, Ravidas and Kabir in the Adi Granth Sahib. Later, Guru Gobind Singh included the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur and this scripture was known as the 'Guru Granth Sahib.'
- Mirabai was a famous woman-poet of Bhakti tradition. She composed many songs that were characterised by intense expression of emotions.
- Mirabai's song inspired poor and low caste people in Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- Shankaradeva in the late fifteenth century was a leading proponent of Vaishnavism in Assam.
- He emphasised the need for 'Naam Kirtan' and encouraged the establishment of 'Satra' or monas tries and 'naam ghar' or prayer halls. His major compositions include the 'Kirtana-ghosha'.

LET'S CONNECT





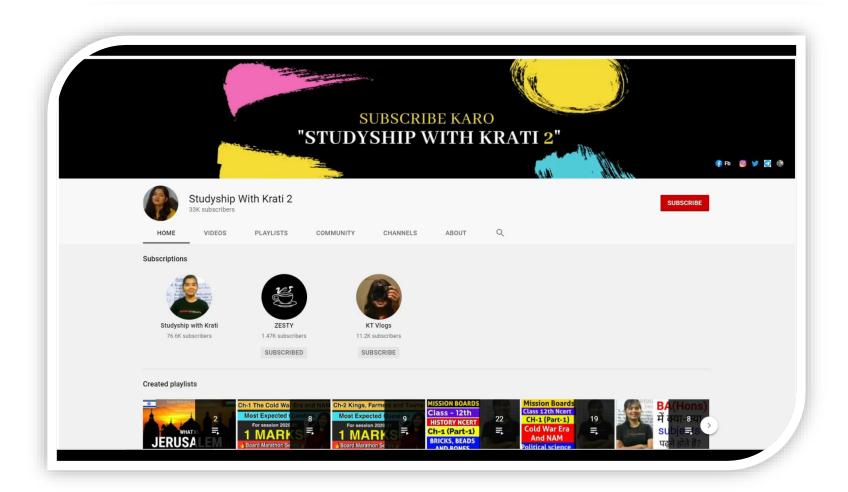








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