

Religious Resistance of Hindu Monasteries and Akharas in Kashi

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Every society flourishes and develops by preserving its religious memories and cultural values. Religion occupies a deeply significant place in the foundational traditions of society. When an external religion or culture enters a society due to changing times and circumstances, situations of conflict often arise. Such conflicts emerge because of the conservative traditions of one's own religion, the rigid rules and beliefs of another faith, and ideological as well as violent assaults on the identity of one's religion.

In the Indian context, many regions of ancient religious significance were subjected to ideological and forceful attacks. Religious movements and resistance in India can be traced back to the Jain and Buddhist periods, but they became more widespread after the advent of Islam in the medieval era. Among the most important centers of Sanatan spirituality are Ayodhya, Kashi, and Mathura. Ayodhya is associated with Lord Rama, Kashi with Lord Shiva, the Adi Yogi, and Mathura with Lord Krishna. The entire Sanatan tradition, along with the Shaiva and Vaishnava religious traditions, is deeply connected with these sacred places.

Indian sacred pilgrimage centers were repeatedly attacked by foreign invaders. To safeguard Vedic and Sanatan culture, Adi Guru Shankaracharya laid the foundation of monasteries (mathas) and akharas.

Kashi, also known as Banaras or Varanasi, has long been a spiritual and educational center of India. For centuries, it has served as a hub of knowledge, philosophical discourse, intellectual achievement, and universal acceptance. It is believed that scholars from across India sought to establish the authenticity of their knowledge in Kashi before disseminating it elsewhere. Great personalities such as Lord Buddha, Adi Guru Shankaracharya, Sant Kabir, Goswami Tulsidas, and Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati regarded Kashi as the center for validating and propagating their ideas.

Kashi is often described as the cultural capital of India. Since ancient times, it has voiced resistance in defense of Sanatan culture. Some of India's oldest and most renowned monasteries and akharas were established here. The present research article highlights the religious and social resistance movements associated with Kashi.