MINOR SECTS VAISHNAVISM
Ramananda, Swami Narayan, Kabir & Nanak

Sect founded by Ramananda:

Ramananda is said to have been born towards the end of thirteenth century. Ramanand's followers worship Rama either singly or conjointly with his wife Sita as the Supereme Beings. Probably Ramananda was a disciple of Ramanuja. The favorite book of this sect is Bhaktamala Nabhaji - containing biographies of a number of saints of the sect; and two out of them, Surdas and Tulsidas are very well known, Suradas was blind, he wrote a vast number of stanzas in praise of Vishnu. Tulsidas is known in every household of Hindi speaking regions of India for his Ram charita Manas — in simple Hindi depicting the victory of Rama over Ravana the king of Lanka.

Sect founded by Sahajananda, Swami Narayana:

He started his mission of devotion and purity in personal life of Vaishnava sect as a crusade against the licentious habits of Vallabhacharyas. He became so popular for his stress on consistency of moral character; that he received a lot of opposition from the local Brahmans and had to shift from Allachabad of North India to Jetlapur in Gujarat, Western India. He erected a temple of Narayana (otherwise Vishnu or Krishna as the Supreme Being). He prescribed a code of conduct for his disciples for observance of duty and purity in life. His disciples are broadly, divided in to two classes Sadhus i.e. holymen and Grihastas or house holders. The three principal shrines, two in Gujarat and one at Delhi have three figures (i.e) Krishna in his character as 'deliverer;' from evil, Vishnu’s is image in the middle and Laxmi, the concert of Vishnu on the right. In some Temples Swami Narayana ie Sahajananda is also worshiped as an incarnation of a portion of Vishnu. Siksha-patrim a Manuel of instructions written by Swami Narayana containing two hundred and twelve precepts is their book for guidance. Some of the precepts are as follows (i) No disciple of mine must ever intentionally kill any living thing (2) The killing of any animal even for sacrifice to God is forbidden (3) Suicide is prohibited (4) No flesh meat should ever be eaten (5) Taking of liquor even as medicine is prohibited (6) All theft is prohibited even on
the pretext of religious cause (7) Adultery is strictly prohibited (8) No false accusation must be laid against any one for self-interest. (9) A truth which causes injury to self or others should not be told. (10) Holy men should bear with patience abusive language or even biting from wicked persons (11) Games of chance and gambling are prohibited. (12) No where except Jaganath Puri must cooked food or water be accepted from a person of low caste (13) Practice of intense love for Krishna accompanied by proper performance of one’s duties (14) Having perceived by abstract meditation that the spirit is distinct from its three bodies i.e gross, subtle and causal and that it is a portion of the one Spirit of the Universe – Brahma, every man ought to worship Krishna at all the times. (15) The philosophical doctrine approved by me is visisthadvaita of Ramanuja and the desired heavenly abode is Golaka. To worship Krishna, be united with Him and get salvation from cycles of birth and death is the aim of human life.

Sect founded by Kabir:

Kabir was a weaver and his biographies indicate, that he was a Hindu by birth and was brought up by a Muslim family. He is believed to have lived in North India i.e in Benares and Gorakhpur during fifteenth and sixteenth century. Like a true Vaishnva he was affectionate, tolerant towards all human beings irrespective of their religion caste. He was disciple of Ramananda. His name Kabir’ in Arabic language means “the Great”.

He denounced all types of idolworship and taught Vaishnavism as a form of strict monotheism. True religion according to Kabir is sincere devotion to God, who may be identified as Vishnu, Krishna, Rama or Hari or even by the names current among Muhammadans.

During that period Vaishnavism in its universal receptivity was open to influences from Islam, and Islam though insisting on oneness of God has its school of Sufi philosophers and saints who held opinion almost exactly like that of Vaishnavism. Kabi accepted the principle of Unity of God. He maintained that God and Man are the parts of the same essence. His views are embodied in sudh-vidhan, and other Hindi works, as well as in Guru-Grantha Sahib, of Sikhs. Some of his couplets convey the message of absolute reliance on Guru the Guide for leading a pure life.

The word of the teacher or Guide is to followed with heart and soul. That a drop falls in to the ocean, all can perceive but that the drop and the ocean are one, few can comprehend.

The Key-note of Kabir’s teaching was that the foremost duty of the disciple is to obey his Spiritual Teacher. He maintained that every individual should search for true and trustworthy Spiritual Teacher- or Guru-and having found one, to make him his master-and to submit mind, conscience and even body to
him for proper guidance. He constantly warned his disciples to investigate the truth of every word he uttered. During the time of Babar, as emperor, Kabir was with him a celebrated disciple, Guru Nanak who was to become the founder of a new sect in Punjab in later years.

**Sect founded by Nanak:**

The sect founded by Nanak called themselves *Sikhs* or disciples to express their close dependence on their teacher or *Guru*. He accepted the basic principle of Kabir’s doctrine that a virtuous life may not be necessarily a spiritual life. Spiritual life is of course a virtuous life, but there is something, more than virtue. A virtuous man when submits himself before a true Guru, and follows him with devotion he is on the spiritual path. Nanak died in 1538 and was succeeded by Angad who was probably illiterate but was the inventor of a peculiar alphabet called Guru-Mukhi (a modification of Devanagari, Hindi) in which the sikh Granth was written. It is said that at the time of his death Nanak, preferred Angad instead of his own son.

Though Nanak created the Sikh sect for a better understanding between Hindus and Muslims, a violent political antagonism started soon between the two communities. When the Sikhs began to unite for the progress of their material as well as spiritual interests, they rapidly developed military taste and abilities. This was not tolerated by the Muslim rulers. Both parties treated each other as worst enemy.

Angad nominated Amardas as his successor but it was the fourth Guru Ramdas who inspired the Sikhs to have a political union. The decaying Mughal Empire was unable to hold its own against the military power of the Sikhs. Ramadas purchased a tank called *Amritasar* (lake of nectar) out of the offerings he received from his disciples and built a temple there, which became the rallying point for the whole Sikh community. Ramadas was succeeded by his son Arjun who codified the precepts of all previous Guru’s, especially Nanak. So he compiled a sacred book known as Granth. The sixth, seventh and eighth Guru’s were not very important. The ninth Guru Teg-Bhadur was imprisoned and tortured by Islam- fanatic Emperor Aurangzeb. His son Govind singh succeeded him as the tenth Guru. Burning to take revenge his father’s death he laid emphasis on developing absolute faith on *Guru* prime and wanted his community to. *Hear the word of the Guru, the.*

Nanak was born in a village called Talvandi near Lahore in 1469, a few years before the birth of Chaitanya in Bengal. He never claimed that he was introducing a new religion. In his initial years he made a pilgrimage to all important temples of India, and hajj to Mecca, and a story is told that when be was reproved by the Kazi for lying down with his feet towards ka’bha, he replied;*put my feet in that direction where the house of God is not.*
He tried to free Vaishnavism which was badly distorted in North India by idolatry, caste and superstitions; He found that Islamic - Sufi saints were tolerant and liberal. He wanted to bring that type of tolerance and liberalism in Hindu religion. He said that God is One and Supreme. We may call Him in different names like Brahma, Govinda, Vishnu, Siva etc. According to Nanak His name as Hari is most vibrating, He said that God or the Supreme Being created the universe by His will and out of Himself. It is an expansion of His own essence for His own amusement (Khela). Expansion has three attributes: sattva (absolutely pure) Rajas (partly spiritual and partly material) and Tamas- (totally material) He taught that in this Kaliyuga, the repetition, of the name HARI is the only solution for getting freedom from the cycle of birth and death and its sufferings. He said that benevolent works, knowledge and, performance of ceremonies are definitely virtuous but absolute reliance is to be put on the Guru. Govind accepting and propagating the above principle thought of establishing an independent dominion for Sikhs on the ruins of the Mughal Empair. He converted the Sikhs in to a class of fighting men. As against the Hindu casts system —which he thought was responsible for disunion of the Hindus and the victory of the Mughals, he proclaimed social equality among all the members of Sikh community. They were to add to their names a title of singh(lion). They were instructed to keep long hair, carry a sword, wear short trouser, refrain from smoking and to take oath not for worshiping Idol of any kind, not to bow before any one except a Sikh Guru and never to run away from his foe. He substituted ‘war’ in the place of ‘peace’ as a religious duty.

Govind refused to choose his successor and he instructed the Sikh community to regard the Granth sahib (sahib is to personify) as the Guru, Sikhism believes in Unity of God but God manifests Himself every where and in every thing. They accept Krishna and Rama as manifestations of the Supreme Being. The point on which they insist is not to indulge in Idol or image worship. But they treat the Sacred Book as having life, decorating it fanning it, putting it to bed in night almost in the same manner by which Vaishnavas worship the image of Krishna, They worship war-weapons, War was included in the Sikh religion by Govind. The Golden Temple at Amurtsar is called Hari Mandir or Durbar sahib. The Granth is worshiped in the temple like a deity.

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