



UNIQUE STUDY POINT

Chapter 8 Devotional Paths to the Divine

Question 1: Match the following:

The Buddha	namghar
Shankaradeva	worship of Vishnu
Nizamuddin Auliya	questioned social differences
Nayanars	Sufi saint
Alvars	worship of Shiva

Answer:

The Buddha	questioned social differences
Shankaradeva	namghar
Nizamuddin Auliya	Sufi saint
Nayanars	worship of Shiva
Alvars	worship of Vishnu

Question 2: Fill in the blanks:

- (a) Shankara was an advocate of _____.
- (b) Ramanuja was influenced by the _____.
- (c) _____, _____, and _____ were advocates of Virashaivism.

(d) _____ was an important centre of the Bhakti tradition in Maharashtra.

Answer: (a) Shankara was an advocate of **advaita**.

(b) Ramanuja was influenced by the **Alvars**.

(c) **Basavanna, Allama Prabhu** and **Akkamahadevi** were advocates of Virashaivism.

(d) **Vitthala temple** was an important centre of the Bhakti tradition in Maharashtra.

Question 3: Describe the beliefs and practices of the Nathpanthis, Siddhas and Yogis.

Answer: Beliefs and Practices of the Nathpanthis, Siddhas, and Yogis are as follows:

- The Nathpanthis, Siddhas and Yogis believed in the renunciation of the world.
- They criticised the rituals and other aspects of conventional religion and the social order, using simple, logical arguments.
- For them, the path of salvation lay in meditating on the formless Ultimate Reality.
- They stressed on intense training of the mind and body through yogasanas, breathing exercises and meditation.
- These groups became particularly popular among "low" castes.

Question 4: What were the major ideas expressed by Kabir? How did he express these?

Answer: Major ideas expressed by Kabir and his way of expressing them:

- Rejection of orthodox religion and religious traditions.
- Religion was accessible to all.
- Criticism of all external worship of Brahmanical Hinduism and Islam
- No caste system.
- Belief in formless God.
- Bhakti and devotion is the only path of salvation.
- He expressed his ideas through couplets.

Kabir expressed his ideas in a vast collection of verses known as sakhis and pads. Some of these were later collected and preserved in the Guru Granth Sahib, Panch Vani and Bijak.

Question 5: What were the major beliefs and practices of the Sufis?

Answer: The Sufis believed in union with God as a lover seeking his beloved. They also believed that the heart could be trained to look at the world in a different way. They rejected the elaborate rituals and codes of behavior demanded by Muslim religious scholars. The Sufis developed various methods of raving using Zikr (chanting of a name or sacred formula), contemplation, singing and dancing.

Question 6: Why do you think many teachers rejected prevalent religious beliefs and practices?

Answer: Many teachers rejected prevalent religious beliefs and practices because all such beliefs advocated social differences. They believed in the power of personal devotion and supported the idea of a Supreme God. They believed that the only path to salvation was through bhakti or devotion.

Question 7: What were the major teachings of Baba Guru Nanak?

Answer: Baba Guru Nanak emphasised on the worship of one God. According to him, caste, creed or gender were irrelevant for attaining liberation. Liberation for him was the pursuit of an active life with social commitment. He gave the motto of nam, dan and isnan, which meant right worship, welfare of others and purity of conduct. The sacred space thus created by Guru Nanak was known as dharmsal. It is now known as Gurdwara.

Question 8: For either the Virshaivas or the sants of Maharashtra, discuss their attitude towards caste.

Answer: Both the Virshaivas as well as the saints of Maharashtra rejected social inequality and caste differences. They strongly opposed the Brahmanical ideas about caste and the treatment of women. They were also against all forms of ritual and idol worship.

Question 9: Why do you think ordinary people preserved the memory of Mirabai?

Answer: Mirabai became a disciple of Ravidas, a saint from a caste considered “untouchable”. She was devoted to Krishna and composed innumerable bhajans expressing her intense devotion. Ordinary people have preserved the memory of Mirabai because her songs openly challenged the norms of the upper castes.

Extra Questions
Very Short Answer Questions

1. What is hagiography?

Answer: Hagiography is the writing of the lives of saints.

2. Which regional tradition did Marathi poets represent?

Answer: The Marathi saints represented or focused on the Vitthala (a form of Vishnu) temple in Pandharpur, as well as on the notion of a personal god residing in the hearts of all people.

3. Who were Sufis?

Answer: Sufis were Muslim mystics. They rejected outwardly religiosity and emphasised love and devotion to God and compassion towards all fellow human beings.

4. How did Sufis spread their ideas?

Answer: The Sufis, like the saint poets, composed poems expressing their feelings and a rich literature in prose, including anecdotes and fables developed around them.

5. Who was Surdas?

Answer: Surdas was an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna. His compositions compiled in Sursagara, Sursaravali, and Sahitya Lahari express his devotion.

6. Which holy town developed under Sikhism?

Answer: The town of Ramdaspur (Amritsar) developed around the central Gurdwara called Harmander Sahib (Golden Temple).

7. What was the contribution of Chola and Pandya kings in this period?

Answer: Between the tenth and twelfth centuries, the Chola and Pandya kings built elaborate temples around many of the shrines visited by the saint-poets, strengthening the links between the bhakti tradition and temple worship.

Short Answer Questions

1. How did Mirabai express her devotion for Lord Krishna?

Answer: (i) Mirabai was a devotee of Lord Krishna.

(ii) For expressing her intense devotion, she composed many bhajans.

(iii) Mirabai's bhajans openly challenged the norms of upper castes and also became popular with masses.

2. How did the idea of one supreme God evolve?

Answer: (i) One attractive idea was the idea of a supreme God who could relieve humans from such bondage of birth and rebirth, if approached with devotion or Bhakti.

(ii) This idea of Bhagvadgita grew popular in this era.

3. Who were Nayanars and Alvars?

Answer: Between the 7th and 9th century, a new religious movement led by Nayanars (devotees of Shiva) and Alvars (devotees of Vishnu) who came from all castes including untouchables like the Pulaiyars and the Panars gained momentum.

4. How did dargah become a place of pilgrimage?

Answer: Often people attributed Sufi masters with miraculous powers that could relieve others of their illness and troubles. The tomb or dargah of a Sufi saint became a place of pilgrimage to which thousands of people of all faiths thronged.

5. What did Tulsidas conceive?

Answer: (i) Tulsidas conceived God in the form of Rama.

(ii) Tulsidas's composition, the Ramcharitmanas written in Awadhi (a language of Eastern UP) is important both as an expression of his devotion and as a literary work.

6. What were the evils prevalent in the Hindu religion?

Answer: (i) The idea that all human beings are not equal at birth.

(ii) Likewise, the belief that social privileges came from birth in a noble family or a higher caste.

7. How did Shiva, Vishnu and Durga emerge as supreme deities?

Answer: (i) Shiva, Vishnu and Durga came to be worshipped as supreme deities through elaborate rituals.

(ii) At the same time, Gods and Goddesses worshipped in different areas came to be identified with Shiva, Vishnu or Durga.

8. What did the Marathi saint poets believe in?

Answer: (i) The Marathi, saint poets rejected all forms of rituals, outward display of piety and social differences based on birth.

(ii) They even rejected ideas of renunciation and preferred to live with their families. Earning their livelihood like any other person while humbly serving fellow human beings in need. The Bhakti movement now focused on humanism.

9. What did Sufis believe in? What were their methods?

Answer: (i) The Sufis believed that the heart can be trained to look at the world in a different way.

(ii) They developed the methods of training using zikr (chanting of a name or sacred formula), contemplation, sama (singing), raqs (dancing), discussion of parables, breathe control, etc. under the guidance of a pir or master.

10. How did Sufis preach?

Answer: (i) The Sufi masters held their assemblies in their Khanqahs or hospices.

(ii) Devotees of all descriptions including members of the royalty and nobility, and ordinary people flocked to these khanqahs.

(iii) They discussed spiritual matters, sought the blessings of the saints in solving worldly problems, or simply attended the music and dance sessions.

11. How did Sufism emerge strong in India?

Answer: (i) A large number of Sufis from Central Asia settled in Hindustan from the 11th century onwards.

(ii) This process was strengthened with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, when several major Sufi centres developed all over the subcontinent.

12. Who was Guru Nanak? What did he start?

Answer: (i) Baba Guru Nanak (1469–1539) was born at Talwandi.

(ii) He started a regular worship that consisted of the singing of his own hymns which was followed by his followers.

(iii) Irrespective of caste, creed or gender, his followers ate together in the common kitchen called langar.

Long Answer Questions

1. Give five principles of Bhakti tradition.

Answer: The principles of Bhakti tradition are as follows:

- One Supreme God
- Good Deeds
- No Belief in Rituals
- Opposed to the Rigidity of the Caste System
- Condemned Idol and Image Worshi

2. What was the Virashaiva tradition of Karnataka?

Answer: (i) This sect was founded by Basavanna.

(ii) This sect rejected the authority of the Vedas and opposed the Brahmanical claims to superiority.

(iii) The Lingayat men usually wear a small linga in a silver case on a loop strung over the shoulder. The Lingayats believe that on death, the devotee will be united with Shiva and will not return to this world. They ceremonially burnt their dead.

The Lingayat movement is also known as Virashaiva movement.

3. Examine the contribution of Chaitanya.

Answer: (i) Perhaps the greatest saint of the Bhakti movement was Chaitanya.

(ii) He preached the religion of one God under the name of Krishna.

(iii) Like his predecessors, Chaitanya too laid stress upon perfect devotion to God as the only way to salvation.

(iv) His followers included the Hindus from the lower classes of society and even some Muslims.

(v) He condemned the caste system and preached brotherhood.

4. How did Kabir appeal to people?

Answer:(i) Like his Guru Ramananda, Kabir preached his teachings in Hindi.

(ii) His inspiring devotional couplets or dohas had a great appeal to the common people.

(iii) He advised his followers not to waste time in finding God in the idol or in the temples, because he lives in the pure hearts.

(iv) He stressed the necessity of a Guru or a spiritual guide under whose instructions one can acquire knowledge about God.

5. What were the main pillars of Islam?

Answer: Those who accepted Islam and its principles practised the five pillars of Islam. They were:

- Belief in one God (Allah) and Muhammad as his prophet,
- The duty of offering prayers five times daily (Namaz),
- Giving alms to the poor (Zakat),
- Fasting in the whole month of Ramzan gets (Sawab),
- Making pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).

6. Why were the works of saints in North India unique?

Answer: (i) The works of saints in North India were unique as they were composed in regional languages and could be sung.

(ii) They were immensely popular and were handed down orally from generation to generation.

(iii) Usually, poor, women and deprived communities transmitted these songs, adding their own expressions.

(iv) Their compositions became a part of our living popular culture.

7. How did Guru Granth Sahib evolve?

Answer:(i) The three successors of Guru Angad wrote under the name of Nanak and all of their compositions were compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604.

(ii) To this compilation, were added writings of Shaikh Farid, Sant Kabir, Bhagat Namdev and Guru Tegh Bahadur.

(iii) In 1706, this compilation was done by his son and successor Guru Gobind Singh.

(iv) It is now called Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs.

Hots (Higher Order Thinking Skills)

1. What was the attitude of Alvars and Nayanars towards various cults in India?

Answer: (i) The Alvars and Nayanars claimed that their compositions were as important as the Vedas.

(ii) They held that their text was as significant as the four Vedas in Sanskrit that was cherished by the Brahmans.

(iii) The images of their saints are worshipped side by side with those of Vishnu and his various incarnations (avtars).

(iv) The Nayanars composed their devotional songs with the highest spiritual sentiments and set up Shaivism on a strong footing.

2. Examine Kabir as a great saint of Sant movement.

Answer: (i) The most famous teacher of the Sant movement was Kabir.

(ii) These were the main objectives of his teachings: (a) to achieve inward spiritual bliss, (b) condemnation of empty rituals, (c) to foster harmony between Hinduism and Islam.

(iii) He believed in one formless God, rejected both Vedas and Quran and the supremacy of the Brahmans and Mullahs.

3. How did Sufi saints promote universal brotherhood?

Answer: (i) The Sufi saints preached love of mankind and universal brotherhood.

(ii) They were against all distinctions of caste, colour, creed and sect.

(iii) The Hindus as well as the Muslims were offered food prepared in one and the same kitchen.

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