

Chapter 8 Devotional Paths To The Divine

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

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) Advaita

(b) Alvars

(c) Basavanna, Allama Prabhu, Akkamahadevi

(d) Pandharpur

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

Answer:

Beliefs and Practices of the Nathpanthis, Siddhas, and Yogis

1. Criticism of ritual and other aspects of conventional religion.
2. Renunciation of the world.
3. Path of salvation in meditation on the formless.
4. Ultimate reality and realisation of oneness.
5. Intense training of mind and body through practices like yogasanas, breathing exercises, and meditation.

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:

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

5. What were the major beliefs and practices of the Sufis?

Answer:

- Sufis were Muslim mystics. They rejected outward religiosity and gave emphasis on love and devotion to God. They inspired people to be compassionate towards all fellow human beings.
- They rejected idol worship and considerably simplified rituals of worship into collective prayers.
- They believed that the heart can be trained to look at the world in a different way.

- They developed elaborate methods of training using zikr, meaning chanting of a name or sacred formula, contemplation, sama Le. singing, raqs, Le. dancing, discussion of parables, breath control etc. under the guidance of a master called pir.

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

Answer:

Yes, many teachers rejected prevalent religious beliefs and practices because they had numerous shortcomings and they promoted division in society.

7. What were the major teachings of Baba Guru Nanak?

Answer:

Msyor Teachings of Baba Guru Nanak

1. Worship of one God.
2. Irrelevance of caste, creed, and gender for attaining liberation.
3. The pursuit of active life with a strong sense of social commitment.
4. Nam, the dam, is the major essence of his teachings.
5. Nam-japna, kirt-kama, and vand Chakhna basis of right belief, and worship, honest living and helping others.
6. The idea of equality.

8. For either the Virashaivas or the saints of Maharashtra, discuss their attitude towards caste.

Answer: Attitude of the Virashaivas towards caste :

They believed in the equality of all human beings. They were against Brahmanical ideas about caste and the treatment of women. They wished for a society where people of all backgrounds could live in harmony without any feelings of high and low, rich and poor.

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

Answer: Mirabai was a Rajput princess married into the royal family of Mewar. But she had no interest in the worldly affair. She was an ardent devotee of Krishna and wanted to devote her time to the worship of her lord. She had no belief in princely status and other norms of high-class society. Her devotion to her deity was supreme. Hence, she left the royal palace and began to lead a simple life with ordinary people.

10. Find out whether in your neighbourhood there are any dargahs, gurudwaras or temples associated with saints of the Bhakti tradition in your neighbourhood. Visit any one of these and describe what you see and hear.

Answer: Students are suggested to do this exercise themselves.

11. For any of the saint-poets whose compositions have been included in this chapter, find out more about their works, noting down other poems. Find out whether these are sung, how they are sung, and what the poets wrote about

Answer: Mainly Guru Nanak. Read the chapter and write down.

12. There are several saint-poets whose names have been mentioned but their works have not been included in the chapter. Find out more about the language in which they composed, whether their compositions were sung and what their compositions were about.

Answer: For self attempt.

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. What did the Puranic stories consist of? [V. Imp.]

Answer: The Puranic stories consisted of local myths and legends

2. Who were the Pulaiyar and the Panars?

Answer: They were considered untouchables

3. How many Alvars were there?

Answer: There were 12 Alvars.

4. Name the two sets of compilations of Nayanar's songs.

Answer: Tevaram and Tiruvacakam.

5 Name the set of compilation of Alvars' songs.

Answer: Divya Prabandham.

6. What did Ramanuja propound?

Answer: He propounded the doctrine of Vishishtadvaita or qualified oneness in that the soul even when united with the Supreme God remained distinct.

7. What is abhang?

Answer: It is a Marathi devotional hymn.

8. Name any two saints of Maharashtra.

Answer: Namdev and Tukaram

9. Who were Sufis?

Answer: Sufis were Muslim mystics.

10. Name any two great Sufis of Central Asia.

Answer: Ghazzali and Rumi.

11. What are namghars? [Imp.]

Answer: They are houses of recitation and prayer, a practice that continues even today.

12. What was known as dharmsal?

Answer: Baba Guru Nanak created a sacred place which was known as dharmsal. It is now known as Gurudwara.

13. To whom did Baba Guru Nanak appoint as his successor?

Answer: Guru Nanak appointed Guru Angad, one of his followers, as his successor.

14. What is Guru Granth Sahib?

Answer: Guru Granth Sahib is the holy scripture of the Sikhs.

15. Why did the Mughal emperor Jahangir order the execution of Guru Aijan in 1606?

Answer: The Mughal emperor Jahangir looked upon the Sikh community as a potential threat and therefore he ordered the execution of Guru Aijan.

16. What did the terms 'nam', 'dan' and 'isnan' mean? [V. Imp.]

Answer: The terms nam, dan and isnan meant right worship, welfare of others and purity of conduct.

17. Who compiled the compositions of Baba Guru Nanak?

Answer: Guru Angad compiled the compositions of Baba Guru Nanak.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Who were the Nayanars and Alvars? Write about them in brief. [V. Imp.]

Answer: The Nayanars and Alvars led religious movements in south India during the seventh to

ninth centuries. The Nayanars were devotees of Shiva while the Alvars were the devotees of Vishnu. They came from all castes including those considered 'untouchable' like the Pulaiyar and the Panars. They preached love of Shiva or Vishnu as the path to salvation. They went from place to place composing beautiful poems in praise of the deities enshrined in the villages they visited and set them to music. There were 63 Nayanars who belonged to different caste backgrounds. There were 12 Alvars who came from equally divergent backgrounds.

2. Who was Ramanuja? What are the main points of his preachings?

Answer: Ramanuja was a Bhakti saint. He was born in Tamil Nadu in the 11th century. He was deeply influenced by the Alvars.

The main points of his preachings are :

- Ramanuja taught people that the best means of attaining salvation was through intense devotion to Vishnu. Vishnu in His grace helps the devotee to attain the bliss of union with Him.
- He propounded the doctrine of Vishishtadvaita or qualified oneness in that the soul even when united with the Supreme God remained distinct.

3. What do you mean by Khanqahs? What purpose did it serve? [V. Imp.]

Answer: Khanqahs were houses of rest for travellers especially one kept by a religious order. Sufi masters usually held their assemblies here. Devotees of all descriptions including members of the royalty and nobility, and ordinary people flocked to these Khanqahs. Here, they discussed spiritual matters, sought the blessings of the saints in solving their worldly problems or simply attended the music and dance sessions.

4. "The songs are as much a creation of the saints as of generations of people who sang them." Explain. [V. Imp.]

Answer: The works of the saints were composed in regional languages and could be sung. They became very popular and were handed down orally from one generation to another. Usually, the most deprived communities and women transmitted these songs. They even added their own experiences to them. Thus, the songs as we have them today are as much a creation of the saints as of generations of people who sang them. They have become a part of our living culture.

5. Who was Kabir? How do we know about him?

Answer: Kabir probably lived in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. He was one of the most influential saints. He was brought up in a family of Muslim jalahas or weavers settled in or near the city of Benaras, now Varanasi. We have little reliable information about the life of Kabir. We come to know of his ideas from a vast collection of verses called sakhis and pads, which are said to have been composed by him and sung by wandering bhajan singers.

6 Who were the followers of Baba Guru Nanak?

Answer: Baba Guru Nanak had a large number of followers. They belonged to a number of castes but traders, agriculturists, artisans and craftsmen predominated. Thus, the followers of Guru Nanak were all householders and adopted productive and useful occupations. They were expected to contribute to the general funds of the community of followers.

7 Why was the Mughal emperor Jahangir hostile to the Sikh community? How did the Sikh movement gain momentum? [V. Imp.]

Answer: By the beginning of the 17th century the town of Ramdasapur, Amritsar had developed around the central Gurudwara known as Harmandir Sahib, the Golden Temple. It was a virtually self-governing body and the modern historians refer to the early 17th-century Sikh community as 'a state within a state'. This made the Mughal emperor Jahangir hostile to the Sikh community. He looked upon them as a potential threat and he ordered the execution of Guru Arjan in 1606. It is from this time the Sikh movement began to gain momentum. It was a development that

culminated, in the institution of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. Write in brief about the ideas of Shankara and Ramanuja.

Answer: Shankara. He was one of the most influential philosophers of India. He was born in Kerala in the eighth century. He was an advocate of Advaita or the doctrine of the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme God, the Ultimate Reality. He taught that Brahman, the only or Ultimate Reality, was formless and without any attributes. He considered the world around us to be an illusion or maya, and preached renunciation of the world and adoption of the path of knowledge to understand the true nature of Brahman and attain salvation. Ramanuja.

He was born in Tamil Nadu in the eleventh century and was deeply influenced by the Alvars. He preached that the best means of attaining salvation was through intense devotion to Vishnu. Vishnu in His grace helps the devotee to attain the bliss of union with Him. He propounded the doctrine of Vishishtadvaita of qualified oneness in that the soul even when united with the Supreme God remained distinct

2. Write a brief note on new religious developments in north India. [V. Imp.]

Answer: During the thirteenth century a new wave of the Bhakti movement began in north India. This was an age when Islam, Brahmanical Hinduism, Sufism, various strands of Bhakti, and the Nathpanths, Siddhas and Yogis influenced one another. Ordinary people such as craftsmen, peasants, traders, etc. showed their interest in listening to these new saints. Kabir and Baba Guru Nanak did not approve orthodox religion.

Tulsidas and Surdas accepted existing beliefs and practices but wanted to make these accessible to all. Tulsidas conceived of God in the form of Rama. His Ramacharitmanas is a unique creation, Surdas was an ardent devotee of Krishna. His compositions compiled in the Surasagar, Sursaravali and Sahitga Lahari, express his devotion. Shankaradeva of Assam emphasised devotion to Vishnu and composed poems and plays in Assamese. He began the practice of setting up namghars or houses of recitation and prayer. Saints like Dadu Dayal, Ravidas and Mirabai are worth-mentioning here.

Mirabai was a Rajput princess and was married into the royal family of Mewar in the 16th century. She became a disciple of Ravidas, an untouchable saint. She devoted her life to Lord Krishna. She composed a number of bhajans expressing her intense devotion. A unique feature of most of the saints is that their works were composed in regional languages and could be sung. Therefore, they became very popular among the common mass.