

## **IMPORTANT QUESTION CLASS – 12 <=GHC FM7 <5 DH9 F!\* BHAKTI SUFI TRADITIONS7 <5 B; 9 G' -B' F9 @; =CI G'6 9 @9: G AND DEVOTIONAL TEXTS**

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### **Question 1.**

**Who were Alvars and Nayanars?**

**Mention the support they got from the Chola rulers.**

**Answer:**

Alvars: Alvars were those people who immersed themselves in devotion to Vishnu.  
Nayanars Nayanars were the devotees of Shiva. They initiated the early Bhakti Movement during the 6th century CE.

Support from Chola Rulers Alvars and Nayanars got support from the Chola rulers in the form of land grants for the construction of splendid temples with stone and metals sculpture to recreate the visions of these popular saints who sang in the language of people.

### **Question 2.**

**Explain the meaning of Sufi Silsila.**

**Answer:**

Sufi Silsila began to flourish in different parts of Islamic world around the 12th century. The literal meaning of Silsila was a chain, signifying a continuous link between master and disciple. It stretched as an unbroken spiritual lineage to the prophet Muhammad. It was through this channel that spiritual power and blessings were transmitted to devotees. Special rituals for initiation were followed, e.g. taking an oath of allegiance, wearing a patched garment and shaving the hair.

### **Question 3.**

**Why do thousands of devotees visit dargahs of Muslim saint?**

**Answer:**

Pilgrimage, called Ziyarat to the tombs of Sufi saints is very common all over the Muslim world. For more than seven centuries people of various creeds, classes and social backgrounds have travelled to the dargahs of the five great chisthi saints and expressed their devotions. This practice is an occasion for seeking the sufi's spiritual grace (barakat).

### **Question 4.**

**Explain the features of Islamic religion which contributed to its spread through the sub-continent.**

**Answer:**

The development of Islam was not restricted to ruling aristocrats, actually it spread far and wide, through the sub-continent, amongst various social strata i.e. peasants, artisans, warriors, merchants, etc.

All those who adopted Islam accepted the five pillars of this religion. These are:

1. There is one God, Allah and Prophet Muhammad is his messenger (Shahada).
2. Offering prayers five times a day (namaz/salat).
3. Giving alms (Zakat).
4. Fasting during the month of Ramzan (Sawm).
5. Performing the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj)

The universal features were often overlaid with diversities in practice derived from affiliations (Sunni, Shia) and local customary practices to convert from different social backgrounds. For example, Arab Muslim traders adopted local customs such, as matriliney and matrilocality residence. There was also difference in the architecture of mosque due to the change of regions.

### **Question 5.**

**“The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the ‘pollution’ attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas,” Critically examine the statement.**

#### **Answer:**

The Lingayats or Virshaivas emerged in the 12th century in Karnataka under the leadership of Basavanna. They worshipped Shiva in his manifestation as a linga and usually wore a small linga in a silver case on a loop strung over their left shoulder.

They believed that on death the devotee would be united with Shiva and would not return to this world. They challenged some important ideas given in our dharmashastras.

The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the ‘pollution’ attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas. They did not accept the theory of rebirth. They did not follow the varna system in our society given by the Brahmanas. These won the large number of followers among the marginalised section of the society.

Moreover, the Lingayats encouraged certain practices like post-puberty marriage and the remarriage of widows. Our dharmashastras disapproved these practices. Even the Lingayats did not practise funerary rites such as cremation, prescribed in the dharmashastras. They ceremonially buried their dead.

In this way the lingayats rejected the caste system and other practices followed in our society given by the Brahmanical scriptures.

### **Question 6.**

**Mention any two universal architectural features of Mosque.**

**Answer:**

Mosque is regarded as the basis of Islamic religious life. It has an open compound and pillars on all sides. The roof stands on all these pillars. In the middle of the compound, there is a pond, which is artificially made. Here, devotees can take bath or wash themselves before offering Namaz.

Some special architectural features of Mosque are:

- Mosque has orientation towards Mecca. It makes evident in the placement of the mihrab (prayer niche) and the minbar (pulpit).
- Mosque blends a universal faith with local traditions. In Kerala, we find the shikhara like roof and in Bangladesh, we find dome like roof. In Kashmir we find the Shah Hamadan mosque which is the best example of Kashmiri wooden architecture, decorated with paper mache.

### **Question 7.**

**Identify the relationship between the Sufis and the state from the eighth to the eighteenth century.**

**Answer:**

A major feature of the Chishti tradition was austerity, including maintaining a distance from worldly power. However, this was by no mean a situation of absolute isolation from political power.

The sufis accepted unsolicited grants and donations from the political elites. The Sultans in turn set up charitable trusts (auqaf) as endowments for hospices and granted tax-free land (inam).

The Chishtis accepted donations in cash and kind. Rather than accumulate donations, they preferred to use these fully on immediate requirements such as food, clothes, living quarters and ritual necessities (such as sama). All this enhanced the moral authority of the shaikhs, which in turn attracted people from all walks of life.

Further, their piety and scholarship, and people's belief in their miraculous powers made sufis popular among the masses, whose support kings wished to secure.

Kings did not simply need to demonstrate their association with sufis; they also required legitimation from them. When the Turks set up the Delhi Sultanate, they resisted the insistence of the ulama on imposing shari'a as state law because they anticipated opposition from their subjects, the majority of whom were non-Muslims. The Sultans wanted their tombs to be in the vicinity of sufi shrines and hospices.

However, there were instances of conflict between the Sultans and the sufis. To assert their authority, both expected that certain rituals be performed such as prostration and kissing of the feet. Occasionally the sufi shaikh was addressed with high-sounding titles. For example, the disciples of Nizamuddin Auliya addressed him as Sultan-ul-Mashaikh (literally, Sultan amongst Shaikhs).

Other sufis such as the Suhrawardi under the Delhi Sultans and the Naqshbandi under the Mughals were also associated with the state. However, the modes of their association were not the same as those of the Chishtis. In some cases, sufis accepted courtly offices.

### **Question 8.**

**Identify the relationship of the Alvars and Nayanars of Tamil Nadu with the state from the eighth to the eighteenth century.**

**Answer:**

The relationship of the Alvars and Nayanars of Tamil Nadu with the state is discussed below:

- Some of the earliest bhakti movements were led by the Alvars (literally, those who were immersed in devotion to Vishnu) and Nayanars (who were devotees of Shiva).
- They preached their message in Tamil. During their travel they identified certain shrines as abodes of their chosen deities. And these were developed as centres of pilgrimage.
- One of the major themes in Tamil bhakti hymns was the poet's opposition to Buddhism and Jainism. The main reason for this opposition was competition between members of other religious traditions for royal patronage.
- The Chola rulers (ninth to thirteenth centuries) supported Brahmanical and Bhakti traditions, making land grants and constructing temples for Vishnu and Shiva.
- The Chola rulers constructed many Shiva temples e.g. Chidambaram, Thanjavur and Gangaikandacholapuram. They done this to proclaim their own power and status.
- This was also the period when some of the most spectacular representations of Shiva in bronze sculpture were produced.
- Both Nayanars and Alvars were revered (admire) by the Vellala peasants. Not surprisingly rulers tried to win their support as well.

Thus, we can say that the Chola rulers had intimate relations with the both Alvars and Nayanars as they had much honour and status in the society.

### **Question 9.**

**Explain the teachings of Kabir. How did he describe the ultimate reality through his poems?**

**Answer:**

The historians tried to reconstruct Kabir's life and timings through a study of compositions attributed to him and later hagiographies.

Verses ascribed to Kabir have been compiled in three distinct traditions, viz, Kabir Bijak, Kabir Granthavali and Adi Granth Sahib. All these compilations were made long after the death of Kabir. Kabir's poems have survived in several languages and dialects.

The significance of Kabir's poems is as follows:

Source of Inspiration:

Kabir's poems have been a source of inspiration to those who questioned rigid and unrooted social institutions, ideas and practices in search of God.

Taken from both Hinduism and Islam:

The significance of Kabir's poem also lies in the fact that his teachings were inspired by both Hinduism and Islam which sometimes expressed diverse and conflicting ideas. For instance, some poems imbibed Islamic ideas and used monotheism and attacked Hindu polytheism and idol worship while others used the Sufi concept of zikr and ishq to express the Hindu practice of nam-simaran i.e. remembrance of God's name.

Kabir's ideas crystallised through dialogue and debate and his legacy was claimed by several groups. The traditions, he drew to describe ultimate reality through his poems are:

Islamic Traditions:

He described the ultimate reality as Allah, Khuda, Hazrat and Pir.

Vedantic Tradition:

He used the terms Alakh (Unseen), Nirakar (Formless), Brahman, Atman, etc to describe the ultimate reality.

Yogic Tradition:

Other terms with mystical connotations such as shabda (sound) or Shunya (emptiness) were drawn from yogic tradition.

### **Question 10.**

**Explain how the biography of the saint poetess Mirabai has been primarily constructed. How did she defy the norms of society?**

**Answer:**

Reconstruction of Mirabai's: Biography The reconstruction of biographies of Mirabai has been done from the bhajans composed by herself (transmitted orally for centuries).

Royal affiliations of Mirabai From the bhajans it has been reconstructed that she was a Rajput princess from Merta in Marwar. She was married to a prince of the Sisodia clan of Mewar, Rajasthan, which had been done against her wishes so she defied her husband. She even refused to submit to the traditional role of wife and mother.

Recognition of Krishna as lover: She recognised Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, as her lover. Because of her behaviour, her in-laws once tried to poison her, but she managed to escape the in-laws home and preferred to live as a wandering saint and composing the songs of bhakti and love for the Krishna. Her compositions are known for intense expression of her emotion.

Defiance of social barriers: In some traditions, Mirabai has been mentioned as a disciple of Raidas, a leather worker. It indicates that she did not recognise the bonds of caste system and the practices of the society. For her intense love of Krishna, she rejected all the comforts of her husband's palace and donned the saffron robe of the renouncer or the white robe of widow.

Popular source of inspiration: Mirabai, now-a-days recognised as the source of inspiration instead of attracting a sect or group of followers. Still she and her songs are popular among the poor or 'low caste' population in the State of Gujarat and Rajasthan.