

CHAPTER-VII

DEVOTIONAL PATHS TO THE DIVINE

2MARKS QUESTIONS:

1: What are namghars?

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

2: 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.

3: What did the terms 'nam', 'dan' and 'isnan' mean?

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

4: 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.

5: 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.

6: 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.

7: To whom did Baba Guru Nanak appoint as his successor?

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

4 MARKS QUESTIONS:

1: Who were the Nayanars and Alvars? Write about them in brief.

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 intense 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: What do you mean by Khanqahs? What purpose did it serve?

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.

3: “The songs are as much a creation of the saints as of generations of people who sang them.’ Explain.

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.

4: Why was the Mughal emperor Jahangir hostile to the Sikh community? How did the Sikh movement gain momentum?

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 Aijan 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.

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.

7MARKS 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 bom 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 bom 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.

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 craftspersons, peasants, traders, etc. showed their interest in listening to

these new saints. Kabir and Baba Gum Nanak did not approve orthodox religious.

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 Sursagara, 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.

**MULTIPLE CHOICE ON DEVOTIONAL
PATHS TO THE DIVINE**

1. Which devotional path evolved since the 8th century?

- a) Bhakti
- b) Sufism
- c) None of these
- d) Both A & B

2. Which was NOT the supreme deity of Hindu worshipped during Bhakti movement?

- a) Shiva
- b) Vishnu
- c) Ganesha
- d) Durga

3. Religious biographies are called

- a) Autobiography
- b) Geography
- c) Photography
- d) Hagiography

4. Ramanuja was born in which state of India?

- a) Kerala
- b) Tamil Nadu
- c) Andhra Pradesh
- d) None of these

5. Allama Prabhu was the companion of:

- a) Ramanuja
- b) Basavanna
- c) Shankara
- d) Kabir

6. Vitthala is a form of

- a) Shiva
- b) Vishnu
- c) Krishna
- d) Ganesha

7. Who rewrote the Gita in Marathi?

- a) Saint Janeshwara
- b) Chaitanya
- c) Basavanna
- d) Virashaiva

8. Nathpanthis, Siddas and Togis made devotional religion popular in:

- a) North
- b) South
- c) East
- d) West

Q9. Sufis were Mystics.

- a) Hindu
- b) Boddh
- c) Muslim
- d) Christian

10. The Sufi master held their assemblies in their

- a) Temple
- b) Courtyards
- c) Khanqahs
- d) None of these

MCQ'S Answers:

<u>Q. NO'S</u>	<u>Answers</u>
Q1	D
Q2	C
Q3	D
Q4	B
Q5	B
Q6	B
Q7	A
Q8	A
Q9	C
Q10	C

SUMMARY ON DEVOTIONAL PATHS TO THE DIVINE

The growth of towns, trade, and empires brought people together, and new ideas began to emerge. Local cults followed the worship techniques taught by the Puranas. According to the Puranas, worshipers can get God's blessing regardless of their caste status.

The Nayanars and Alvars were new religious groups led by saints who worshipped Shiva and Vishnu. Shankara was a well-known Indian philosopher who was born in the eighth century in Kerala.

In the eighth century, two new religious movements Sufism and Bhakti emerged.

Devotion to God without discrimination on the basis of caste was taught by the Bhakti and Sufi saints.

Both Sufism and Bhakti movements had several common traits and spread as popular movements at about the same time.