



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 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 the 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 virtually self-governing body and the modern historians refer to the early 17th century Sikh community as 'a state within 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 which 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 craftspersons, peasants, traders, etc. showed their interest in listening to these new saints. Kabir and Baba Guru 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 Surasagar, Surasavali 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.

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