# **Sec A, Answer to the Question no. 1**

Christine de Pisan (also known as Christine de Pizan) (born 1364, Venice, Italy; died 1430, Poissy, France) was an Italian poet and author to many books. She took literacy from her father, Thomas de Pisan, about Italian, French and Latin learning in her childhood. Later, she was married to a royal secretary, Etienne du Castel. Unfortunately, she was widowed on a young age. She lost her father by then as well, having only her mother and her children with her. Their economical foundation almost broke apart. As the other women of that time, she could remarry. However, Christine chose the other way and started studying the history, poetry and philosophy. Finally, she started to write herself and produced a lot of writings, which eventually helped her financially. But she was not only upto the money she got from her writings. The corpus Christine produced was rich in size and range. In those, she included many coeval phenomena which really hold some importance. All her writings were widely accepted and in demand in various libraries partly because of the importance of her late father who had once held at court and partly because she wrote with her imagination and intelligence (Hughes and Hughes 142). However, she is often considered to be one of the earliest feminist writers who talked about the rights and to dos of women of her time of different sorts. She raised her voice against the patriarchal presumptions by the male authors, like Jean de Meung, of her time. Consequently, she went on to write self help books for the women whose husbands were far from home due to the wars that took place on that time, which worked as a stepping stone towards those women’s financial freedom in that medieval period of Europe. All her works had a socio-political impact on that time which made her a popular writer of that time.

Talking about the works, there were a lot of writings in the Medieval France produced by Christine de Pisan, which had a huge socio-political impact of the then time. Christine produced a large number of vernacular works. It included lyric poetry, courtly romance, moral tales, literary criticism, instruction for knights, instruction for women and on important public matters especially for the peace among the warring factions in France (142). She also wrote for the rights of women, raised voice against patriarchy in her works, attacked misogyny, guided the women from the elite class, to the servant to the peasant class to lead a life with dignity. Her poetry and moral tales helped the then women to realize their rights and what to do to lead a happy life without being dependent on someone else for living. Besides she wrote and guided the knights, gave them instruction on the best way they should protect their empire. Particularly in her prose works, de Pizan's range of topics is broad and varied: she demonstrates her preoccupations with and concern for the women of her time, gives ample religious and moralistic advice, composes conduct manuals for knight and prince, the list is long. She told the worthy knights to listen to the wise men’s decision and advise as it is often best for the long term. She also advised some great instructions for the wives of the knights. In her writings, she told them to be self-sufficient, as their husbands were far away from home due to wars. She also told them the way they could be self-sufficient in her self-help books. All her works had crucial socio-political impact. Her writings awakened the then women to lead a life with dignity, so they worked for themselves. As a result, they achieved somewhat greater position in their society than the before. Besides, the knights and the warring factions were influenced by her writings and worked accordingly. So, cruelty towards women lessened to some extent due to her works. Additionally, women achieved power and social position, so consequently they achieved political support as well. This helped the social harmony to get increased between men and women of all sorts of the Medieval Europe. Finally, it can be said that, the works Christine de Pisan produced in Medieval France had significant socio-political impact.

Christine de Pisan also worked to lessen the patriarchal presumption of the then society and the male authors. She raised her voice through her write ups against the misogyny practices in that coeval Europe. Such a male writer was Jean de Meung. Christine wrote against Meung’s popular Roman de la Rose:

How can it be good and useful that he [de Meung] accuses so excessively, impetuously, and falsely, blames and defames women for several serious vices, claiming that their morals are full of perversity, and throughout so many rejoinders and by means of all of his characters he cannot seem to repeat his accusations often enough? ... He is so insistent about not telling a secret to a woman, who is so bereft of discretion, as he recalls, and I can't imagine where in the devil he found so much nonsense and so many futile words as are hurled at them throughout that long trial … (Hughes and Hughes 143)

Therefore, we can see that, Christine wrote about the unfair words of Jean de Meung against women. There, he talked about the courtly love of the Rose and blamed women in general. In Christine’s writings, she condemned this kind of content from Meung and rather attacked his words. She didn’t hesitate at all the attack the misogyny (hatred towards women) of Meung. Here Gerson and Christine attacked Jean de Meun's continuation of the Rose as an "exhortation to vice" and, against those who defended the moral intentions underlying Jean de Meun's depiction of vice, argued that it was insufficient for an author simply to portray folly or sin in the hope that readers would therefore eschew such sin themselves (Rigby 155). Christine also mentioned that, there is some women in the society who is less virtuous and dishonest. But seeing those few women, all the women shouldn’t be blamed. Her words go as:

Indeed, as he blames women in general, I am led to believe it is because he has never known or frequented any virtuous women, but through knowing a few who are dissolute and evil, as the lecherous are in the habit of doing, he believed or pretended to know what all are like, just because he never had any experience of others. If only he had blamed the dishonest ones and suggested that this sort should be shunned it would have been good and just advice. But no! instead he accused all women without exception. (Hughes and Hughes 143)

So, it is clear that, Jean de Meung’s Roman de la Rose was misleading to a large extent. Author Sylvia Huot said that, “Whether or not these Meun's personal beliefs was for Christine less important than the fact that certain readers might be swayed by the uncritical presentation of such values” (Huot 363). Thus, Cristine defended the women of her time with her aggressive and rigorous writing style.

In the meantime Christine wrote her poems and literatures, she also worked on some self-help books which worked as a stepping stone towards the elite class women’s financial independence in medieval Europe. There was a series of her self-help books and those were so popular. Especially women were the main targeted readers of those books. On that time, local French knights were obliged to fight for their lords. So, Christine compiled her valuable advices in those books for the wife of a knight, stating how to manage the overall estate while her husband is far from home at war. She told them to be wise so that they can manage their affairs capably as they had to live quite a long time alone without their husbands. She also stated to follow the best suited course of actions for their revenues, so that they do not live under someone’s debt and disgrace. Besides, she shouldn’t live an extravagant life as that costs so much and may invite creditors shout at the door. Additionally, she should be a good manager and knowledgeable about farming and weather. She might have workers to do all the farming for her, but she should always instruct them what they should do and audit their work and the whole revenue generated. She should always wake up first and instruct her labors. In this way, she could gain a hold of her life herself and gain financial independence as they are working for themselves now. So indeed, Christine’s self-help books were a stepping stone towards the women’s financial independence in the medieval Western Europe, while patriarchy was highly supported by the catholic Christian society. There was little need or opportunity for a formal education for the women. They were then considered as less able than men and should honor and be obedient to their husbands regardless of how their husbands behaved. Husbands were then legally permitted to beat their wives due to any supposed disobedience. However, these limitations did not entirely constrain medieval women from participating in Christian life outside their own homes (Cossar 131). In such situation, Christine’s advices really helped them starting to be financially independent. According to Joan Kelly, Christine de Pisan was identified the first to hold modern feminist views and then to survey other early figures who followed her in expressing prowoman ideas up until the time of the French Revolution (Kelly 4). She advocated for women's equality.

To conclude, Christine de Pisan worked a lot on the rights of the medieval European women. She showed them the path of dignity in the society. Whenever needed, she defended the women from the patriarchal presumptions of the then society and male authors through her robust writings. To provide more support to the women, she wrote some self-help books to guide the women on how they should lead their life to achieve financial independence. Her endeavors on that adverse situation are praiseworthy and much appreciated.

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# **Sec B, Answer to the Question no. 1**

The status of women in Christianity and Islam in current time is pretty good. They have almost all facilities nowadays as a man has. However, this was not always the case in the past. In the early phases and the developing periods of the religions, the status and the role of women were not so hefty. Nevertheless, there was some contradiction of the role of women in the two religions as well. A comparative analysis of that is given below by the interpretations of the religious texts the Bible and the Quran.

In Christianity, women were under the authority of men. They weren’t allowed to pursue education; it was forbidden at that time. They were permitted to go to the churches and attend religious occasions. But the were obliged to remain silent at the church, even though they had something to ask, they couldn’t. They were told to ask those to their husband outside the church. Therefore, it can be said that, women were suppressed on that time.

Whereas, to some extent, somewhat similar situation to Christianity was there in case of the status of women in Islam. They were also under the authority of men, particularly their husband. But in contradiction, women were permitted to pray with men, study religious book (Quran). They were also permitted to take part in commercial interactions. But they were strictly instructed of veiling and seclusion. So, they had to hide their beauty, instructed to show their beauty only to their very own and close people.

By this study, I think that interpretations of the Bible and the Quran were undertaken to read back and reinforce traditional patriarchal customs. That is because, the religious texts suggest the subordination of women towards men. This system explicitly supports the patriarchal system in the society. Therefore, reading the interpretations, the followers of the religions had a clear idea of this legally and religiously permitted patriarchy and practiced them in reality in including that in their tradition.

# **Sec B, Answer to the Question no. 4**

The social status and position of women in Aztec culture and West African cultures and that of the Abbasid caliphate and Frankish Empire was really diverse. There were some similarities but a lot of contradiction. Aztec and West African women used to get more value, rights and facilities than the women of Abbasid caliphate and Frankish Empire.

Starting with the social position of women in Aztec culture, they experienced quite an independent life to some extent. Women were then generally expected to manage household works and to care their children. However, they were free to do commercial exchange. So, they worked on various sectors and was financially free. It was not that they had to give the money that they earned to their family, they were free to use their own wealth for their personal satisfaction. The Aztecs admired their women, they let them study, provided responsibility for many important works in the society. Just like the Aztec culture, the West African cultures also placed their women at a high place in the society with much dignity and freedom. They could move freely about their localities, villages or cities. Although this is a fact that, female slavery existed in their culture.

Whereas, in Abbasid caliphate, the status of women declined with time. They were male dominated, where women were forced to be veiled. Concubines and slaves were common at that time. The women didn’t have the opportunity to take education, their area of expertise was very much restricted to household works. Even, the slaves and the concubines had more freedom than the wife of a family. Quite same treatments were provided to the Frankish women as well. Women were limited to be good mothers and manage household works. Only difference is, they had more Christian values, while Abbasid women had more Islamic values.

From this study, it can be said that, there is some obvious difference between the cultural views towards women of different empires. Aztecs and Africans had a wider view towards their women, whereas, Frankish and Abbasids had comparatively narrow idea towards their women.

# **Sec C, Answer to the Question no. 3**

The Austronesian-speaking people (often referred to as Austronesian people) were a diasporic community and oceanic nomads. They had good command over seafaring skills. Using those skills, they could easily and quickly move around the oceans and reach various destinations. Often they couldn’t reach the interior regions because of the indigenous people, however, the coastal areas were in their control. So, transporting various products around the places were a regular task for them and with their special skill of seafaring, the monopolized trade wherever they went. By this way, they covered almost everywhere around the Indian Ocean World by the first half of second millennium.

In the pre-1500, the Austronesian speaking people could move wherever they wanted, with some obstacles obviously. The world was not so connected then as it is not. So people welcomed them to come to their coasts as they traded various products from the other places. As they made the intercontinental trades possible and more open, they could move freely. Whereas, the nomadic people can’t move freely as the Austronesian now, because of geographical, political and technical reasons. Because the world is connected through various types of networks, its not needed to search for new trading opportunities in coastal areas now comparing the pre-1500 time. So oceanic nomad communities now can freely move around their nation now, but not internationally.

Because of Austronesian people moving across the oceanic circuits of the Indian Ocean World, it was able to exchange the different cultural activities around the nations and expanding trade opportunities making growth in economy.

# **Sec C, Answer to the Question no. 4**

Ibn Muqaffa (Ibn al-Muqaffa) was a Persian author and translator, who interpreted the Quran and talked about the idea of kingship or caliphate more clearly. His tone was managerial. According to his interpretation, the leader must the obeyed by the people, but with justification. They should obey their leader, do whatever he tells them as long as he upholds the law and its sanctions. Besides, he talked about the authority of the Deputy and suggested some fundamental change to the essentials of a Deputy’s responsibilities. He also suggested to take out the authority of developing law from the hands of the ‘ulama and their conflicting schools. Additionally, he suggested some roles for the civilians and the soldiers as well. Seeing his interpretations closely, it can be said that, Ibn Muqaffa suggested the importance of kingship or leadership, however, there were some essential changes to the then systems which would help the society to establish more harmony and connectivity throughout.

I think, Ibn Muqaffa’s interpretations of the Quran about kingship resulted in strong political consolidation for the Abbasid Empire. The ne Abbasid dynasty followed his interpretations and quickly and decisively consolidated against the various competing and conflicting political groups. They also reformed their social, political and administrative system of their Islamic Empire.

On modern days, I can think of Arabians, Iranians, Egyptians and some other Islamic nations justifying Caliph as Ibn Muqaffa did.