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Religious Developments in Medieval India

Q. Answer in brief.

1. Who were the Nayanars and Alvars?  
Ans Alvars and Nayanars is a poet saints from South India during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The Alvars were worshippers of Vishnu and the Nayanars were worshippers of Shiva.

2. Who was Meerabai?  
Ans Meerabai was a Rajput princess who was an ardent devotee of Krishna. She was married at a young age to the crown prince of Mewar. After his death, she left the palace and lived the life of a wanderer singing and dancing in praise of Krishna in India?

3. What were the two main Sufi orders?  
Ans The two important sects of Sufi in India were those of the Suhaywardi and Chisti.

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4. Where is the dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya located?  
Ans The dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya is located in Ajmer.

5. What is Langar?  
Ans Langar is a common kitchen at gurdwaras where all devotees eat together.

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Ans Answer in detail.

1. What was the Bhakti Movement? What factors led to the growth of the Bhakti Movement?

Ans

The movement based on Bhakti, or the devotion of god by the bhaktas or the known as the Bhakti Movement.

By the early medieval period, Hinduism had become associated more with rituals and superstition than with devotion. The caste system had become rigid. The common people were unhappy as they were not allowed to

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worship their gods directly. Further, many customs like untouchability and sati, which were unfair to the poor, the lower castes and women, also started getting the sanction of religion.

Q How did Shankaracharya and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu influence religions thought?

Ans Shankaracharya lived in Kerala sometimes around 800 CE. He preached that god and human beings are actually one entity and that gods resides in each one of us. He believed that knowledge and wisdom are ways to reach god. Even though his ideas were not exactly the same as that of the Bhakti saints, he paved the way for the Bhakti Movement. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born in Nabadwip, Bengal, in the 15th century CE. He believed that god, in the

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form of Krishna, resides in all of us. Only love and pure devotion can bring us closer to him. The devised or pasticheous kind of devotional song called kirtan, which is still in popular use today.

3. Write what you know about -  
3.1 Kabir ji. Jaisas.

Ans:1) Kabir - One of the best known and greatest thinkers of the Bhakti Movement was Kabir. He lived during the reign of Sikandar Lodi. Kabir had no formal education. But when he came in contact with the Bhakti saint Ramanand, he learnt to express complex ideas through simple poems. These poems were known as dohas. He believed god was everywhere, and in everything, and that people should show their love for god by loving all his creations.

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Kabir attacked the orthodox practices of both the Hindus and Muslims, and emphasised like love for god as the basic for all religions. For doing so, Kabir struck at the root of the apparent differences between Hinduism and Islam, and brought out the essential similarities among all religions.

ii) Tulidas - Tulidas was born and brought up in the Kashi, Uttar Pradesh. He lived during the reign of the Mughal emperor, Jahangir. This devotee of Rama wrote the Ramcharitmanas and other shorter works in Hindi.

4) What are the main teaching of Sikhism?

Ans Guru Nanak preached that there was one god (Ik Onkar), who was without any form (Nirakar) and eternal (Akal). He advised his followers to recite satnam or the 'true name'. Only through good actions could one reach god. It was not necessary to renounce

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The world. One could live as a householder and still reach god. Nanak believed in universal brotherhood. He insisted that his followers should eat together at langars (common kitchens). Guru Nanak's teachings laid the foundations of Sikhism. The gurus who followed Nanak gave Sikhism its modern form.

Q. What were the effects of the Bhakti and Sufi movements?

Ans. The basic philosophy of the Bhakti and Sufi movements is that there is only one god, and people call this god by different names. This brought about a better understanding between different communities.

2. By objecting to the meaningless practices and superstitions that had taken hold of the society, the saints made people realise that distinctions made on the basis of religion, caste and

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gender were superficial, cruel and wrong.

3. Since the Bhakti and Sufi saints preached in regional languages, they helped in the development of vernacular language and literature and find that people regardless of their religion, while from diverse religious backgrounds visit the dargahs of the Sufi pirs to offer prayers.