DEVOTIONAL PATH TO THE DIVINE

MODULE 2

### The Saints of Maharashtra

* **Between**the **thirteenth**and the **seventeenth centuries**, many **saint-poets**such as ***Janeshwar***, ***Namdev***. ***Eknath***, and ***Tukaram***, **women**such as ***Sakkubai***, and the **family**of **Chokhamela**from **Maharashtra inspired people**to **follow**the ***bhakti***of the **Vitthala temple**in **Pandharpur**as well as that of **the god that lives in**the **people's hearts**.
* They **rejected**all **kinds of rituals**, **unnecessary display of piety**, and **discrimination**on **the basis**of **caste**.
* They **rejected the concept**of **renouncing the world**and **preferred**to **stay**with **their families**and **serve fellow humans**. This was a **new form of *bhakti***where **happiness**was in **sharing the pain** of others.

### Nathpanthis, Siddhas, and Yogis

* ***Nathpanthis***, ***Siddhacharas***, and ***Yogis*preached renunciation** (self-sacrifice),and **taught**that the **path**to **salvation**was **through meditation**on the **formless Ultimate Reality**and **the oneness**of the **human soul**with it.
* They **preached**intense **training**of **the mind**and **body**through **yogasanas**, **breathing excercises**, and **meditation**.
* These **groups**were **popular among**the '**low**' **castes**and their **criticism**for the **common Vedic religion**created a **base**for a ***new religion***to ***become***a ***common power***in the ***north***.

### Islam and Sufism

* **Sufis**were **Muslim mystics**who **rejected hypocrisy**in **religion**and ***emphasised love***and ***devotion***to ***God***and *compassion* for *fellow human beings*.
* **Islam**is a **strictly monotheistic religion**which **believes**in **submission**to **one God**, **rejects idol worship**, and **preaches collective worship**of **God**.
* **Muslim scholars**developed a **holy law**called the **Shariat**which the **sufis rejected**because they **wanted union**with **God**just **like**a **lover**seeks **unity**with his **beloved**.
* **Sufis composed**expressive **poems**and **music**,and also **rich prose**that included **fables**and **anecdotes**.
* Great **sufi saints**include ***Ghazali***, ***Rumi***, and ***Sa'adi***who **believed**that **the heart**can **be trained**to **look**at the **world**with a **different perspective**.
* They used **zikr**(**chanting of a name or formula**), **contemplation**, **sama**(**singing**), **raqs**(**dancing**), **discussion of parables**, **breath control**, etc., **under**the **guidance**of **a master**called a ***pir***.
* **Genealogies**of **sufis**were **known**as ***silsilas****,*and **each followed**a **different method**of **ritual practice**and **instruction**.
* After the **establishment of**the **Delhi Sultanante**,major **sufi**centres **developed**in **India**, of **which**the **Chishti silsila**was one of the most influential.
* This order has had many thinkers,such as **Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti**of **Ajmer**, **Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki**of **Delhi**, **Baba Farid**of **Punjab**, **Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya**of **Delhi**, and **Bandanawaz Gisudaraz**of **Gulbarga**.
* **Sufi masters**held **assemblies**in their ***khanqahs***or ***hospices***where all kinds of **devotees came** to ***discuss spiritual matters***, ***solve their worldly problems***, or ***attend music and****dance* sessions.
* People mostly **associated sufis**with **magical powers**. **So their tombs**or ***dargahs***became **places**of **pilgrimage**for **people**of **all ages**and **castes to visit and pay**their **respects**.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*