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SUBJECT : HISTORY

CLASS XII

Chapter 1 (New)

**Politics, Society and Religion
in the Punjab
(Late 15th - Early 16th
Centuries)**

(English Medium)

Chapter 1

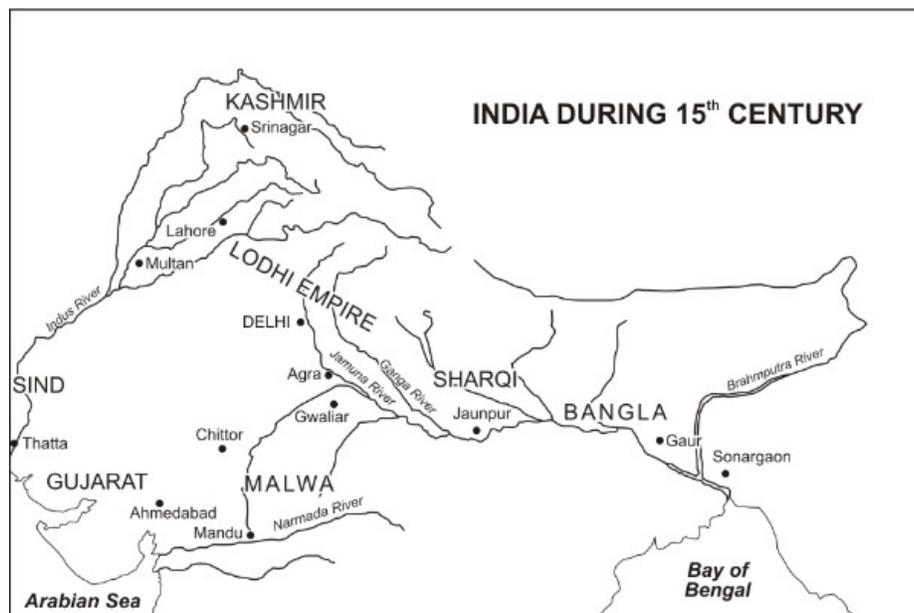
Politics, Society, and Religion in the Punjab (Late 15th - Early 16th Centuries)

1. Introduction
2. Politics and Government
3. Islamic Society
4. 'Hindu' Society
5. Islam: Sunnis, Shias, and Sufis
6. Brahmanical Systems: Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism
7. New Religious Movements: Goraknathi Jogis, *Vaishnava Bhakti* and *'Bhagat' Kabir*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We may state at the outset that Punjab for our present purpose is the geographical region between the Himalayas in the north, the Thar desert in the south, the river Jamuna on the east, and the Indus on the west.
- 1.2 With the conquest of Punjab by Mahmud of Ghazni, Muslim soldiers, administrators, scholars, men of letters, and learned and pious men adopted Punjab as their home. More numerous than these immigrant Muslims were the people of the region who accepted Islam voluntarily or under duress. An important component was added to social order of Punjab.

- 1.3 It may be noted that the Arab and Persian writers referred to the peoples of the subcontinent as 'Hindus'. India came to be called Hindustan, the country of the 'Hindus'. Evidently, the term 'Hindu' connoted a non-Muslim Indian.
- 1.4 There was no single system of religious beliefs and practices among the 'Hindus'. In our depiction of 'religion' we talk of Islam, represented largely by the Sunnis, the Shias, and the Sufis. For the 'religion' of the 'Hindus' we talk of Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism, the traditional Brahmanical systems. The new movements among the 'Hindus' were represented by the Gorakhnathi Jogis, Vaishnava *bhakti*, and 'Bhagat' Kabir.



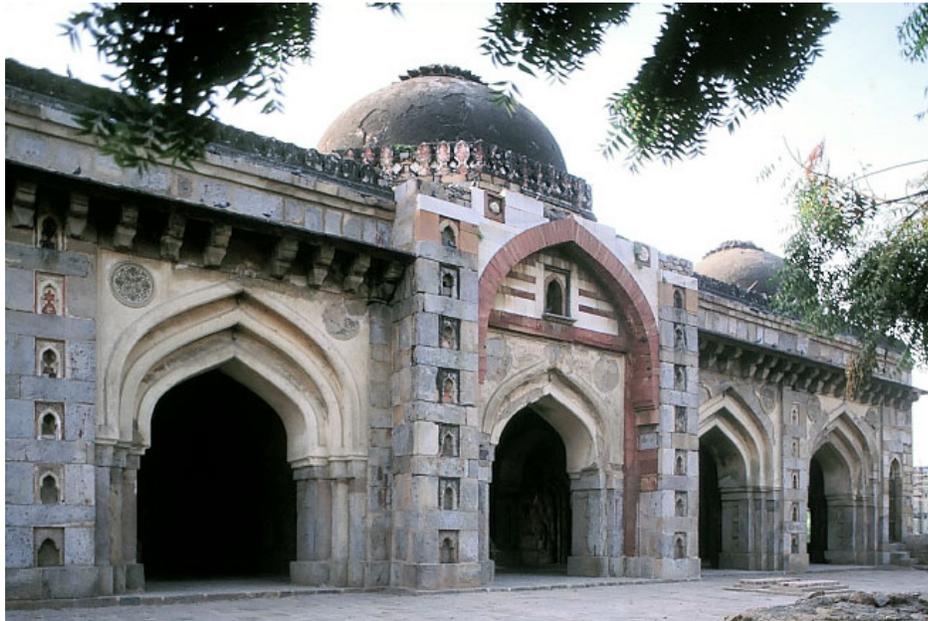
2. Politics and Government

- 2.1 Delhi came under the control of Bahlol Lodi in 1451. On his death in 1489 he was succeeded by his son Sikandar (1489-1517). Upon his

death in 1517 his son Ibrahim succeeded to the throne. Ibrahim died in the battle of Panipat in 1526. All the three Lodi rulers added new territories to the Sultanate of Delhi. The most notable conquest was that of the Sharqi Sultanate of Jaunpur. Bahlol conquered its western part in 1486, and Sikandar completed the process in 1495. Ibrahim Lodi conquered Dholpur and Gwalior with some other territories in Rajasthan but lost Chanderi to Rana Sanga. There was no warfare in the Punjab in the time of Bahlol and Sikandar. The most dramatic events in the Punjab were related to Babur. He occupied the trans-Jhelum territories of the Lodis in 1519. In 1520 he occupied Sialkot and sacked Saidpur (Eminabad). In 1524 he occupied Lahore and sacked Dipalpur. His victory in the battle of Panipat put an end to the Lodi dynasty.

- 2.2 The Lodi Sultans acknowledged the authority of the Abbasid Khalifas, styling themselves as their deputies (*nāib*). They were Sunni Muslims and they could appeal to Sunni Muslims in critical situations. Sikandar Lodi destroyed some temples, prohibited the annual procession of the spear of the legendary Muslim martyr Masud Salar, and forbade Muslim women to visit the *mazārs* (mausoleums) of Muslim saints. He yielded to the pressure of the *'ulamā* and allowed the execution of a Brahman who maintained that his faith was as true as Islam.

2.3 Sikandar's interest in judicial reform was partly due to his 'religious orthodoxy'. Establishment of the *qāzī's* court in a number of towns was the result of his interest in the administration of justice. With or without the assistance of the expounder (*muftī*), the *qāzīs* administered the *sharī'at* in all those towns and cities which contained a considerable proportion of Muslim population. It is not generally known that the *qāzī's* court was open to non-Muslims for matters relating to property.



Moth ki Masjid, built in the reign of Sikandar Lodi Lodi by his minister.

2.4 State patronage under the Lodi Sultans, as under their predecessors, was confined virtually to the learned Muslims (*'ulamā*) and the Sufi *shaikhs* who received stipends in cash or revenue-free lands (*madad-i-ma'āsh*) for the maintenance of mosques and *khānqahs*. Such patronage was extended to the descendants of the Prophet,

and to the members of the tribe to which he belonged. By contrast, the non-Muslim subjects of the Lodi Sultans and their predecessors suffered some disabilities. They were obliged to pay the poll tax, called *jizya*, as the price of their protection by the state. In some parts of the Lodi Sultanate, the Hindus had to pay a pilgrimage tax also.

2.5 The political and administrative power in the territories of the Lodi Sultans was almost exclusively the prerogative of Muslims. By far the most dominant among them were the Afghan tribal leaders. They were the real co-sharers of power with the Sultan. Notwithstanding occasional transfers, they tended to regard their territories (*sarkār*) as hereditary possessions.

2.6 Hindu participation in the revenue administration of the Lodi Sultans was very considerable, particularly on the middle and lower rungs. Brahmins and Khatrias in the Punjab were encouraged to learn Persian. The local administrators often employed Hindu accountants and worked with the assistance of Hindu *qanungos* familiar with local customs, castes and clans. Many *chaudharis* were Hindu. In all the non-Muslim villages the village headmen (*muqaddams*) and factitious were Hindu and so were many of the village accountants (*patwaris*).

3. Islamic Society

3.1 The titled nobility, Khans and Maliks, were next in importance to the Lodi Sultans. They lived a life of luxury and ostentation in imitation of the Sultans. They had their armies, palace-like mansions, harems,

dancing girls and concubines, slaves, musicians and boon companions. They expressed their piety in raising mosques, patronizing the *'ulamā*, and paying homage to holy men.

3.2 The *'ulamā* or the learned men of Islam formed an important section of the middling class. Apart from their role in the administration of justice, they tried to guard the *shari'at* through public congregations and the traditional system of education. The major subjects of higher education were interpretation of the Quran (*tafsir*), tradition with regard to the sayings and actions of the Prophet (*hadis*), and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The Sufi *shaikhs* were venerated by all sections of the Muslim community. The descendants of *shaikhs* and *pirs*, known as *shaikhzadas* and *pirzadas*, were held in great respect, and many of them had considerable material means. Equally respectable were the *sayyids* whose social status was well recognized by the Afghans. Then there were scholars, soldiers, clerks, traders, shopkeepers, physicians, scientists and men of letters among Muslims.

3.3 Furthermore, there were artisans and craftsmen: masons, blacksmiths, dyers, weavers, leather-workers, shoe-makers, oil-pressers, water-carriers and the like. The slave was an important article of trade in the market, and the institution of slavery was an integral part of Muslim society in India as elsewhere in the world.

3.4 The cities and towns of the Punjab served as the centres of administration and Muslim culture. Known for their learned men were the cities like Lahore and Multan and the towns like Tulamba, Ajodhan, Jalandhar, Sultanpur, Sirhind, Thanesar, Panipat, Samana and Narnaul. Altogether, they cultivated 'religious sciences' and secular sciences like medicine, astronomy and mathematics.

3.5 Those who wished to address themselves to the common people started making use of the indigenous dialects. The Sufis adopted the language of the people among whom they lived and worked. Indeed, Shaikh Fariduddin Shakarganj, popularly known as Baba Farid, composed verses in Punjabi during the early thirteenth century for his message to reach the people of Punjab. There was an oral tradition of heroic and love poetry in Punjabi. It was beginning to be used as a literary language.

4. 'Hindu' Society

4.1 As in other parts of the Lodi Sultanate, the number of Hindus in the Punjab was larger than the number of Muslims, except in its western parts. Hindus lived in towns and cities as well as in the countryside. Even in towns founded by the Afghan administrators the proportion of Hindus was very considerable. They were predominant in the countryside, except in those areas where a whole tribe or a clan had accepted Islam.

4.2 The character of Hindu population had undergone a sea change during the five centuries of Turkish and Afghan rule. The Rajput ruling classes had been dislodged from power. Their remnants among the Hindus were found in the intermediary *zamindars* called *Rais*. In a few pockets they enjoyed local power under the authority of the Lodi Sultans. The loss of Rajput sovereignty meant also the loss of traditional patronage to Brahmans. They acted as family priests to perform various rites and ceremonies; they looked after the temples and taught in *pathshalas*; they expounded scriptures to a humbler but more numerous class of patrons; and they cultivated religious and secular sciences. Many of them had taken to professions like trade and money-lending, agriculture or even petty service. They were extremely meticulous about observing rites and ceremonies, whether personal, social or religious.

4.3 In the social sphere the Brahmans were less important than the Khattris. Besides participation in the civil administration of the Lodis, the Khattris had taken to trade and banking. They made large profits as *sahukars* and merchants and invested their earnings in landed property. They had probably gained much from the development of commerce during the fourteenth century and retained some of this advantage during the fifteenth. But the Khattris as a class were not reluctant to take to shopkeeping and money-lending even in the

countryside. They felt proud of their old Kshatriya lineage, and they were certainly older than the Rajputs.

- 4.4 In the countryside there was a preponderance of Jats, particularly in the upper Rachna and Bari Doabs, the Bist Jalandhar Doab and the Satlej-Jamuna Divide. They had their *chaudharis* and *muqaddams*, many of whom were important as intermediaries between the cultivators and the rulers. The bulk of the Jats were ordinary cultivators.
- 4.5 The cultivators of land needed the services of several categories of people in the village. They needed the carpenter, the leather-worker, the potter and the agricultural labourer for cultivation. They needed the services of many others for their social life, like the *jhiwar* and the *nai* who performed more than one service. There were several other categories, but their number varied from village to village. One village could have a few weavers, and another one or two goldsmiths; one village could have a few shoe-makers, and another could have a few oil-pressers. Similarly, a brewer, a *bhat*, a singer, a dyer or a tailor could be found in many villages.
- 4.6 The Hindus of Punjab during the late fifteenth century did not correspond to the four-caste *varna* order. Alberuni had observed in the eleventh century that in theory there were four *varnas* among the Hindus, but below the four *varnas* there were several professional and crafts groups, like the shoe-maker, the weaver, the washerman,

the basket-maker, the fisherman, the boatman, the hunter and the juggler. In the fifteenth century, strictly speaking, there were no Kshatriyas in Punjab. The Brahman caste was no longer the most important or the most honoured. Nevertheless, the *varna* order was cherished as the ideal. The Rajputs, the Khatri and the Brahmans were proud of their lineage, regarding themselves as socially superior to the rest of the 'Hindu' population.

- 4.7 Some of the traditional 'sciences' were cultivated by Brahmans and Khatri. The study of the Vedas, Upanishads and the Puranas was an important part of Hindu learning. The branches of knowledge cultivated by the Khatri and Brahmans were mathematics, astronomy, medicine, grammar and prosody. There was some interest in jurisprudence, architecture and music, and also in astrology, palmistry and magic. Most of the scholars were found in cities and towns.
- 4.8 Women were respected as daughters, wives and mothers among the Rajputs, Khatri and the Brahmans but their position was clearly subordinate to that of men. A childless widow was expected to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband to become a sati, and she who did not immolate herself was 'ill-treated' for the rest of her life. In no case was a widow supposed to remarry. The ideal of chastity dictated the practice of child-marriage. These practices were prevalent in northern India before its conquest by the Turks.

5. Islam

- 5.1 All Muslims formally subscribed to the belief that there was only one God, Allah, and Muhammad was His messenger (*rasul*). Sectarian division had appeared among Muslims before the advent of the Turks into Punjab. It is easy to identify two old sects: the Sunni and the Shia. A parallel interpretation of Islam was propagated by Sufis. Of all these sectarian and religious groups the most important were the Sunnis and the Sufis.
- 5.2 The Sunni *'ulama* accepted and popularized a theology that highlighted Allah's uniqueness. He sends men astray and He shows them the straight path. The Sunnis believed that Muhammad was the last of the prophets, and the Quran was literally the speech of Allah. They believed in angels, the day of judgment, paradise and hell. They professed equal respect for all the first four Khalifas.
- 5.3 The supreme aim of life for the Sunnis was to earn sufficient religious merit to enter paradise. The path to paradise was well paved by right conduct and right belief. There were four practices which insured piety; five daily prayers (*namaz*), daily fast (*rozah*) during the month of Ramzan, pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), and charity to brother Muslims (*zakat*). All these observances were rather external, devoid of religious emotion. The majority of Muslims could perform only the daily prayers and keep fast in Ramzan.

- 5.4 The Shias recognized the authority of the Quran as the revealed word of Allah and they subscribed to the finality of Muhammad's prophethood. But they rejected the first three Khalifas and regarded Ali alone as the true successor of the Prophet and, therefore, the first Imam. The twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, had disappeared from the world and he was expected to reappear to restore righteousness and justice. The martyrdom of Husain (Ali's son), in the Shia belief, had paved the way to paradise for all Shias. Based on this belief was the great importance attached to the *ta'ziya* for the annual commemoration of his death. It was their considered view that they should conceal their true identity. But the Sunnis felt their presence in almost all the cities and large towns of the Punjab.
- 5.5 More and more people were coming under the influence of the Sufis. If anything, the influence of the Sufis in Punjab was more pervasive than elsewhere in the country. Lahore was known as the abode of many *shaikhs* since the time of Ali al-Hujwiri, the author of the *Kashf al-Mahjub*, who had settled in Lahore during the rule of the Ghaznavids. He was venerated by successive generations as Data Ganj Bakhsh (the bestower of treasures). The Chishti and the Subrawardi Sufi orders (*silsilahs*) were oldest in Punjab. The *khanqah* of Shaikh Farid Chishti at Pakpattan remained an eminent centre from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. His successor in

the early sixteenth century, Shaikh Ibrahim, was known as the 'Second Farid'.

5.6 There is a wide range of ideas in Sufi literature produced in India and abroad. Some verses of the Quran were often quoted by the Sufis: 'Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth'; 'He loveth them and they love Him'; 'Adore, and draw thou nigh.' To verses from the Quran were added some 'sayings' of the Prophet. However, the most fundamental feature the Sufi way of life was the mystical experience of the Sufis. The relationship between God and man was that of love, and this mutual relationship eventually led to unification. One had to die to one's human self (*fana*) to be able to subsist in God (*baqa*).

5.7 The *shaikh* as a guide (*pir*), who showed the path to his disciple (*murid*), held a crucial position both in theory and practice. One of the most important practices of the Sufis was 'remembrance of God' (*zikr*). Throughout the Islamic world the *shaikhs* thought of sama' or *qawali* as good for spiritual progress. The practice of audition was never discarded by the shaikhs in India despite opposition from the *'ulama*.

6. Brahmanical Systems

6.1 There were pockets of Tantric Buddhism in the Punjab hills. In the plains, there were Jain monks with a lay following among traders and shop-keepers of many a town in Punjab. The wandering monks (*yatis*) were rather small in number but they were obtrusive because

of their peculiar appearance. They were known for their ascetical living and their meticulousness about non-injury to living beings, both visible and invisible. They were unpopular because of their atheistical system of beliefs.

6.2 The majority of the 'Hindus' were associated with the Brahmanical systems represented by Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism. Temples dedicated to Shiva as the supreme deity were looked after by Shaiva Brahmans who also cultivated Shaiva literature, the *Agamas* and *Puranas*. There were Shaiva monks too, generally known as *sanyasis*. They belonged to several different orders, traditionally considered to be ten. They were known as Dasnamis. They generally wore ochre-coloured garments, though some of them went naked and others carried tiger's or panther's skin over their shoulders. Almost all of them wore ash marks on their foreheads, known as *tilak*. The *sanyasis* wandered from place to place, but they also founded establishments called *maths*.

6.3 Turning to Vaishnavism in Punjab we notice that the Vaishnava texts *par excellence* were known to Alberuni in the eleventh century: the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Bhagavata Purana* and the *Vishnu Purana*. Temples dedicated to Vishnu as the supreme deity, as Lakshmi-Narayan or one of his incarnations, were looked after by Vaishnava Brahmans. The ascetics among the Vaishnavas were generally known as *bairagis*. They recognized merit in ceremonial ritual and

pilgrimage to sacred places. They advocated abstention from meat and liquor.

- 6.4 The Shaktas worshipped the Goddess in her various forms, giving primacy to the active principle or the cosmic force (*shakti*) which sustains the universe and the various manifestations of gods. Animal sacrifice in honour of Durga or Kali, or any other terrible form of the Goddess, was an essential element.

7. New Religious Movements

- 7.1 Within Shaivism a new movement arose probably after the Ghaznavid conquest of the Punjab. It was initiated by Gorakhnath. Hathayoga was adapted to a theological system with Shiva as the supreme deity. The protagonists and the followers of this movement came to be known as Gorakhnathi *jogis* or simply as *jogis* (from *yogi*). They figure frequently in Indian Sufi literature. In the fifteenth century they enjoyed great influence in Punjab. The Tilla of Gorakhnath in the Sindh Sagar Doab remained their premier establishment, but jogi centres (*maths*) were established at many other places. In the early sixteenth century there were twelve different sections known as *bhekh-bara*. The adept among the disciples were allowed to wear ear-rings (*mudra*), and they were known as *kanpata* (ear-torn). They were also allowed to use the epithet *nath* (master) with their names. The *jogis* kept with them a blowing horn (*singi*). An important feature of their monastic centres

was a continuous fire (*dhuni*). Their centres maintained a common kitchen (*bhandar*) for all the permanent and temporary inmates.



Babur visiting Gorakh-hatri:
From the Babur-Nama

7.2 The psycho-physical techniques of the jogis were meant to attain to liberation-in-life (*jiwan-mukti*), a state of everlasting bliss (*sahaj*). It was also a state of great power, because the *jogi* then became a

siddha, possessing supernatural powers. He could assume any shape or form he liked. He could become tiny or huge, light or heavy, and obtain everything at will; he could walk on water or fly in the air. The *jogis* were believed to be capable of prolonging their life by practising suspension of breath. They were associated with alchemy, possessing the knowledge of turning base metals or even ash into gold. They were associated with herbal medicine too. In accepting disciples they disregarded the differences of caste.

7.3 In Vaishnavism arose a new movement known as the *bhakti* movement. The path of *bhakti* came to be regarded as a valid path for liberation, like the path of knowledge (*jnana* or *gian*) and the path of correct observance of ritual (*karma*). In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Vaishnava *bhakti* began to be addressed to the human incarnations of Vishnu, that is Rama and Krishna, and it began to be claimed that *bhakti* was the only path to liberation. The consorts of Rama and Krishna, namely Sita and Radha, were associated with them; the images of Sita-and-Rama and of Radha-and-Krishna were installed in temples dedicated to them.

7.4 The cult of Rama *bhakti* was popularized by Ramanand in northern India during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. His disciples established centres (*maths*) at many places. The Ramanandi *bairagis* derived much strength from these establishments. An integral part of these establishments were *pathshalas* for teaching and *goshalas* for

cows. The daily round of worship was well established. The cult of Krishna was popularized in the north by Chaitanya in Bengal and Orissa and by Vallabhacharya in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Chaitanya cultivated the emotional side of Krishna *bhakti* through *kirtanas* or devotional poetry sung with musical instruments and in ecstatic dance. Vallabha developed the ceremonial side of Krishna *bhakti* in temples where the daily round of his activities were ceremonialized from the early morning when the Lord awoke till he went to bed at night for sleep. Vaishnava *bhakti* was meant primarily for the upper or middling castes, though its protagonists made some use of the language of the people and they were more indulgent towards the lower castes.

7.5 For a really lower-class movement we have to look to the Sants of northern India. In *Guru Granth Sahib* they have been called 'Bhagat'. They discarded the idea of incarnation and the practice of image-worship in temples. In fact they did not address their devotion to Vishnu. Kabir, who lived mostly in Benaras denounced much of the religious belief and practice of his time. The *mulla* and the *pandit*, the guardians of Muslim and Hindu orthodoxy, were 'pots of the same clay'. The Hindu and Muslim revelational scriptures, the Vedas and the Quran, were discarded along with their custodians. Kabir does not believe in Vishnu. All his ten incarnations (*avatars*), including Rama and Krishna, are a part of *maya* which is constantly subject to

annihilation. In unambiguous and uncompromising terms Kabir denounced worship of images in temples, purificatory bathings, ritual fasts and pilgrimage to places regarded sacred. His God, neither Hari nor Allah (but one may call Him Hari or Allah) does not reside in the east or in the west; He resides in the heart of man. Love involves sacrifice of self, and metaphorically of life. Kabir's *bhakti* is an ardent quest in which he is completely involved at the peril of his life. Kabir's system came to possess the originality of a new faith. His ineffable God is both immanent and transcendent, and to Him alone Kabir offers his love and devotion.

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EXERCISES

I. Short questions of 1 mark each:

1. Identify the geographical region of Punjab.

2. Name the different categories of Muslim people in the region in the 15th century.
3. Who were the 'Hindus'?
4. Identify new movements among the Hindus in the late 15th century.
5. Which areas did Babur occupy in 1519-24?
6. What kind of judicial reform was introduced by Sikandar Lodi?
7. Did non-Muslims use the qazi's court?
8. Whose authority did the Lodi Sultan acknowledge?
9. Who were the muqaddams?
10. What was the work of a patwari?
11. Who were the shaikhzadas and pirzadas?
12. What were the four pillars of Islam?

II. Questions of 3 marks each (35-40 words):

1. What was the connotation of the term 'Hindu' in the late 15th century?
2. Which religions were practised in the 15th century Punjab?
3. What was the contribution of the Lodi rulers to the Sultanate of Delhi?
4. How did Babur put an end to Lodi dynasty?
5. Identify the categories of people who received state patronage under the Lodis.
6. Describe the life of the nobility under the Lodi Sultans.
7. How did the position of the kshatriyas change with the establishment of Turko-Afghan rule?

8. What were Alberuni's observations on the caste system?
9. Identify the 'traditional sciences' studied by Brahmans and Khattris.
10. Comment on the position of women in the 15th century.

III. Questions of 5 marks each (100-150 words):

1. Describe the administrative functioning of the Lodi Sultans.
2. Comment on the position of the Hindus in the late 15th century.
3. Describe the various categories of people who formed the Islamic society in the 15th century.
4. Identify the changes in 'Hindu' society under the Turkish and Afghan rulers.

IV. Map Work: Mark the following places on the Map:

Jaunpur, Gwalior, Sialkot, Saidpur, Dipalpur, Lahore, and Panipat.

Write a detailed note on any one place.