

1. In India's rich musical heritage, 'Khayal' and 'Thumri' hold a prominent role. Discuss.

Approach:

One needs to explain the features and unique characteristics of Khayal and Thumri, how they are different from other form of music.

Introduction:

Owing to India's vastness and diversity, Indian Music encompass numerous genres, multiple varieties and forms which include classical music, folk music, modern music i.e pop,jazz, etc. It has a history spanning several millennia and developed over several geo-locations spanning the sub-continent.

Body:

There are many types of music, which belong to different categories, some are closer to classical bent and some are experimenting with global music. Khyal and Thumri, considered to be sub classical hindustani music form, played a pivotal role in India's rich music heritage, due to its various unique features –

(Aspirants should provide at least 4-5 unique features of Thumri and Khayal, and due focus should be on how these music forms are different from earlier music forms and the impact it had on Indian Music in future)

Unique features of Khayal:

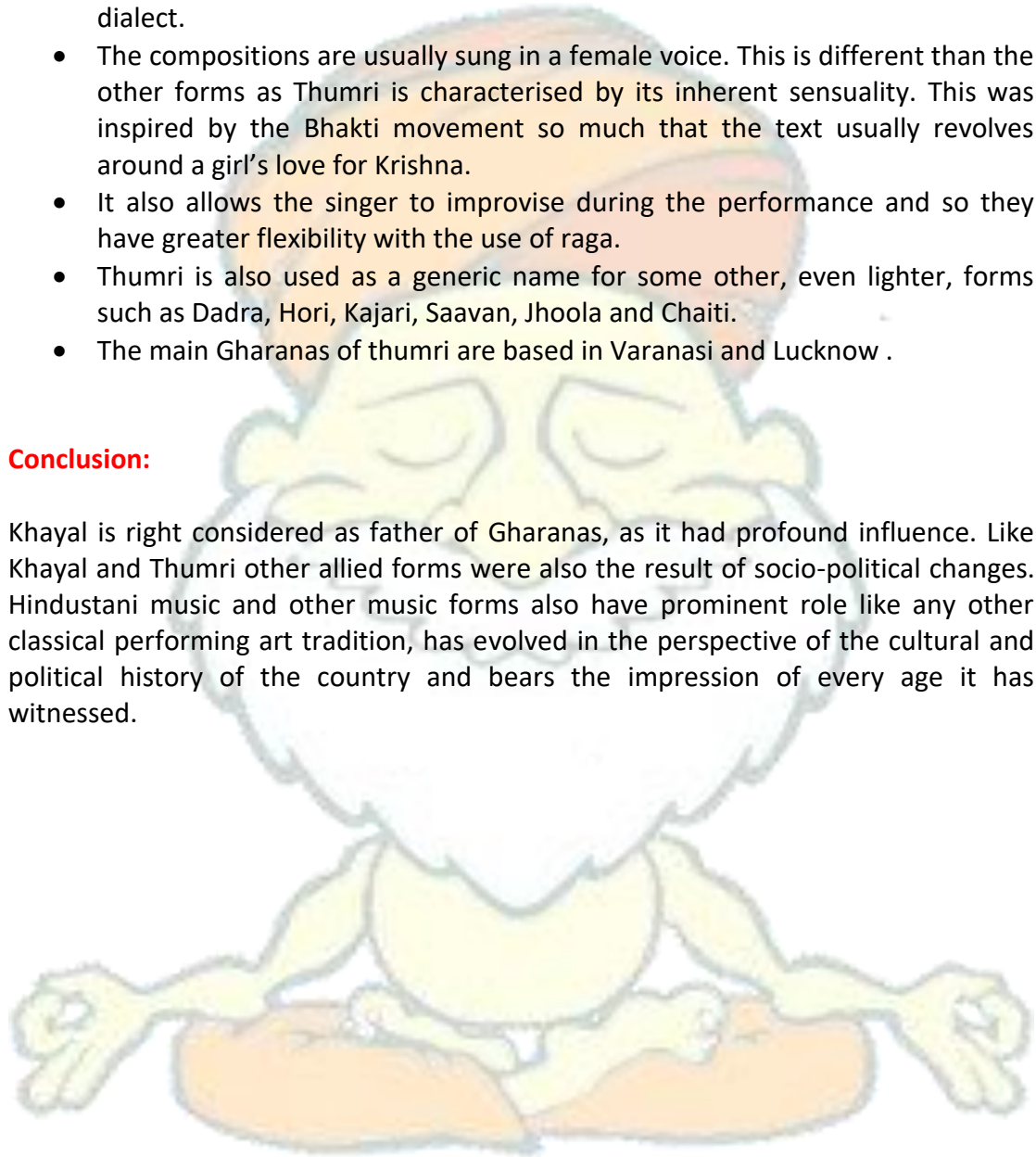
- Khayal has been treated as brand ambassador of Hindustani Music. The word 'Khayal' is derived from Persian and means "idea or imagination".
- Freedom to improvise: This form is popular amongst the artists as this Provides greater scope for improvisation. Everyone has the freedom to make changes.
- Germination of Gharanas: When the Mughal empire fell, musicians found refuge in several smaller states which gave them shelter, security, and honour. The individual creative genius of great masters created specific singing styles that gave birth to different gharanas of Khayal singing. Most of these gharanas are known by the name of the cities they were localised, such as Gwalior, Agra, Jaipur, Patiala, Rampur, Saheswan, Kairana, etc.
- Major purpose of the Khayal is entertainment: Khyal has been developed mainly for entrainment purpose in the court of different kings. Later on it has been spread all over.
- In khayal, simple words are used and which helps masses to understand the meaning and relate into their daily life easily.
- Khayal can be sing in different Ragas, which attracts the masses according to the situation.

Unique Features of the Thumri music:

- Thumri is not only music, it is expression of the feelings, and forms of communication, form of dramatic expression. The Compositions are either romantic or devotional in nature.
- It is based on mixed ragas and is commonly considered to be semi-classical Indian music. The language of the composition is usually Hindi in Braj Bhasha dialect.
- The compositions are usually sung in a female voice. This is different than the other forms as Thumri is characterised by its inherent sensuality. This was inspired by the Bhakti movement so much that the text usually revolves around a girl's love for Krishna.
- It also allows the singer to improvise during the performance and so they have greater flexibility with the use of raga.
- Thumri is also used as a generic name for some other, even lighter, forms such as Dadra, Hori, Kajari, Saavan, Jhoola and Chaiti.
- The main Gharanas of thumri are based in Varanasi and Lucknow .

Conclusion:

Khayal is rightly considered as father of Gharanas, as it had profound influence. Like Khayal and Thumri other allied forms were also the result of socio-political changes. Hindustani music and other music forms also have prominent role like any other classical performing art tradition, has evolved in the perspective of the cultural and political history of the country and bears the impression of every age it has witnessed.



2. Sufi and Bhakti poets have contributed immensely to India's literary and spiritual heritage. Elucidate.

Approach:

It expects students to write about the contribution of Sufi and Bhakti poets to literary and spiritual heritage with appropriate examples and chronological developments.

Introduction:

In the early centuries of Islam a group of religious minded people called Sufis turned to asceticism and mysticism in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate. At the same time in India, process of disseminating Brahmanical ideas exemplified by the works accessible to women and shudras, who were generally excluded from Vedic learning and Brahmanas accepting and reworking the beliefs and practices popularly known as Bhakti movement.

Body:

Contribution of Sufi poets to India's literary heritage:

- By the eleventh century Sufism evolved into a well developed movement with a body of literature on Quranic studies and sufi practices.
- Baba Farid composed verses in the local language Hindavi, which were incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib.
- Some others composed long poems or masnavis to express ideas of divine love using human love as an allegory. For example, the prem-akhyan (love story) Padmavat composed by Malik Muhammad Jayasi revolved around the romance of Padmini and Ratansen, the king of Chittor. Their trials were symbolic of the soul's journey to the divine.
- Short poems in Dakhani; a variant of Urdu attributed to Chishti sufis who lived in Deccan during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These poems were probably sung by women while performing household chores like grinding grain and spinning.
- Other compositions were in the form of lurinama or lullabies and shadinama or wedding songs.
- Malfuzat; conversations of sufi saints. An early text on malfuzat is the Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad, a collection of conversations of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, compiled by Amir Hasan Sijzi Dehlavi, a noted Persian poet.
- Maktubat; letters written by sufi masters, addressed to their disciples and associates. Tazkiras; biographical accounts of saints. The fourteenth-century Siyar-ul-Auliya of Mir Khwurd Kirmani was the first sufi tazkira written in India.

Contribution of Sufi poets to India's spiritual heritage:

- They were critical of the dogmatic definitions and scholastic methods of interpreting the Qur'an and sunna (traditions of the Prophet) adopted by theologians.

- Instead, they laid emphasis on seeking salvation through intense devotion and love for God by following His commands, and by following the example of the Prophet Muhammad whom they regarded as a perfect human being.
- The sufis thus sought an interpretation of the Qur'an on the basis of their personal experience.
- This encouraged the practice of pilgrimage or ziyarat to his grave, particularly on sheikh's death anniversary or urs (or marriage, signifying the union of his soul with God). This was because people believed that in death saints were united with God, and were thus closer to Him than when living. People sought their blessings to attain material and spiritual benefits. Thus evolved the cult of the sheikh revered as wali.
- Some mystics ignored rituals and observed extreme forms of asceticism. They were known by different names – Qalandars, Madaris, Malangs, Haidaris, etc. Because of their deliberate defiance of the shari'a they were often referred to as be-shari'a, in contrast to the ba-shari'a sufis who complied with it.

Contribution of Bhakti poets to India's literary heritage:

- The Bhagavad Gita, a post-Vedic scripture composed in 5th to 2nd century BCE, introduces bhakti marga as one of three ways to spiritual freedom and release, the other two being karma marga and jnana marga.
- One of the major anthologies of compositions by the Alvars, the Nalayira Divyaprabandham, was frequently described as the Tamil Veda, thus claiming that the text was as significant as the four Vedas in Sanskrit that were cherished by the Brahmanas.
- The Tirumurai, a compilation of hymns on Shiva by sixty-three Nayanar poet-saints, developed into an influential scripture in Shaivism.
- Two 12th-century influential treatises on bhakti were Sandilya Bhakti Sutra – a treatise resonating with Nirguna-bhakti, and Narada Bhakti Sutra – a treatise that leans towards Saguna-bhakti.
- Kabir Bijak, Kabir Parachai of Kabir, Ramcharitmanas of Tulasidas, Abhangas of Namdev remains pioneering literary heritage of Bhakti poets.

Contribution of Bhakti poet to India's spiritual heritage:

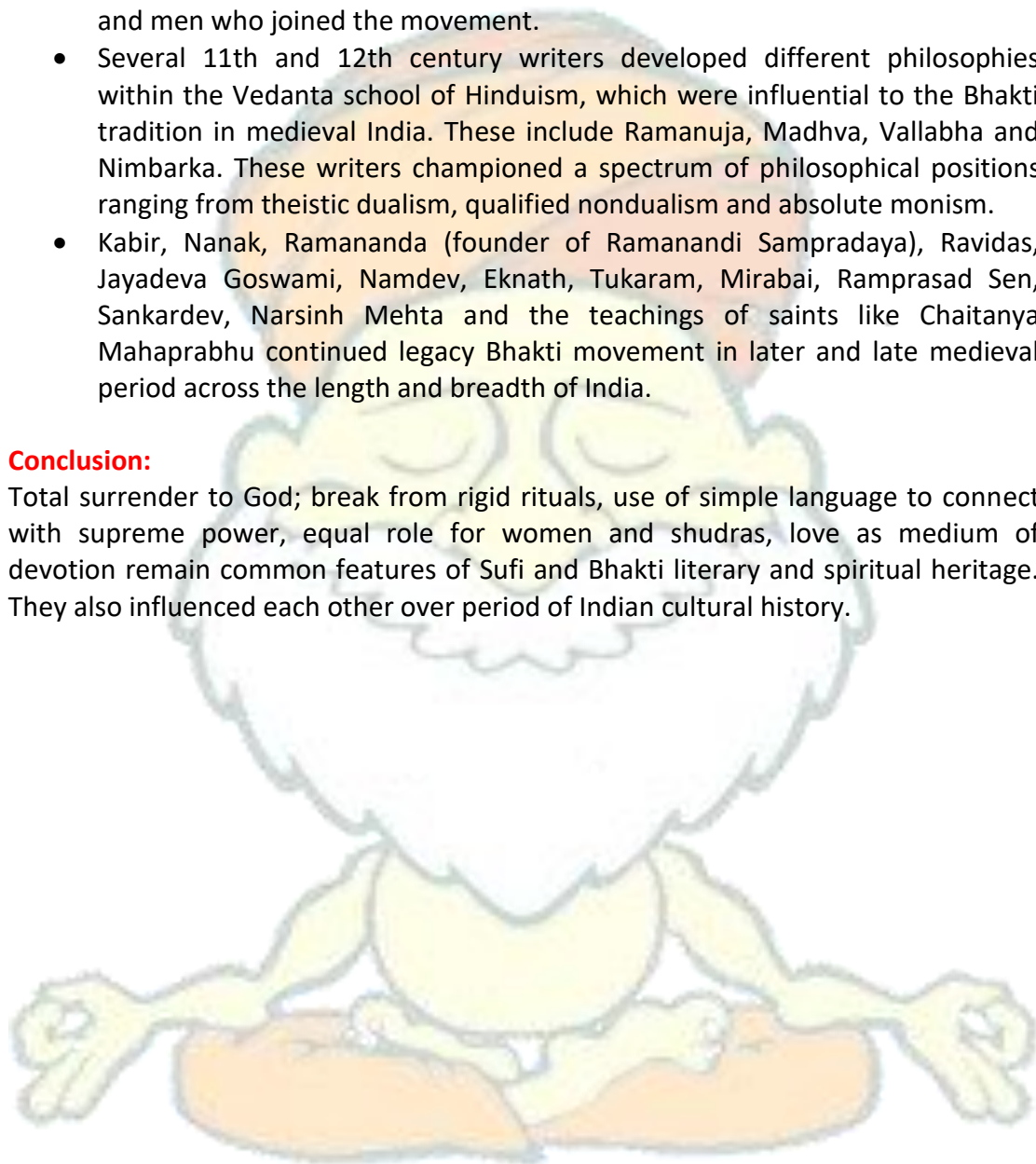
- Bhakti traditions into two broad categories of saguna and nirguna. The former included traditions that focused on the worship of specific deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and his avatars and forms of the goddess or Devi, all often conceptualised in anthropomorphic forms. Nirguna bhakti on the other hand was worship of an abstract form of god.
- Some of the earliest bhakti movements (c. Sixth century) were led by the Alvars; who are immersed in devotion to Vishnu and Nayanars; who were devotees of Shiva.
- Alvars and Nayanars initiated a movement of protest against the caste system and the dominance of Brahmanas or at least attempted to reform the system.
- Perhaps one of the most striking features of these traditions was the presence of women. For instance, the compositions of Andal, a woman Alvar,

were widely sung (and continue to be sung to date). Andal saw herself as the beloved of Vishnu; her verses express her love for the deity. Another woman, Karaikkal Ammaiyar, a devotee of Shiva, adopted the path of extreme asceticism in order to attain her goal.

- The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the pollution attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas. They also questioned the theory of rebirth. Virashaiva tradition derived from vachanas composed in Kannada by women and men who joined the movement.
- Several 11th and 12th century writers developed different philosophies within the Vedanta school of Hinduism, which were influential to the Bhakti tradition in medieval India. These include Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Nimbarka. These writers championed a spectrum of philosophical positions ranging from theistic dualism, qualified nondualism and absolute monism.
- Kabir, Nanak, Ramananda (founder of Ramanandi Sampradaya), Ravidas, Jayadeva Goswami, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram, Mirabai, Ramprasad Sen, Sankardev, Narsinh Mehta and the teachings of saints like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu continued legacy Bhakti movement in later and late medieval period across the length and breadth of India.

Conclusion:

Total surrender to God; break from rigid rituals, use of simple language to connect with supreme power, equal role for women and shudras, love as medium of devotion remain common features of Sufi and Bhakti literary and spiritual heritage. They also influenced each other over period of Indian cultural history.



3. The fairs and festivals in India resonate with the weather and the harvest cycles. Illustrate with the help of suitable examples.

Approach:

It expects students to write about the fairs and festivals celebrated at the time of weather and harvest cycles in India across different geographical region with suitable examples.

Introduction:

India being one of the oldest agricultural societies, fairs and festivals have roots in crop season. Geographical expanse, agro-climatic diversity and diversity of religious ideas play important role in fairs and festivals celebrated to pray for bountiful crops or to express gratitude for good rain and harvest season.

Body:

Festivals of harvest season:

- Makar Sankranti – Celebrated for showing gratitude to Sun(Surya) god which is observed in second week of January. People thank the nature for good produce during winter harvest. This festival also denotes entry of the Sun in to zodiac sign of Makara (capricorn). In some part of the country this day is considered as auspicious day for buying cattle and hence cattle/bullock fairs are conducted in many part of the country.
- Lohri – Lohri is celebrated on the last day of Paush month (12-13 January) In Punjab. Generally after Lohri farmers starts cutting their winter crops.
- Baisakhi – Punjab and Haryana celebrate this thanking god for good crop they produced. People wear best colourful dresses and sing happiest songs on the melodious beats of Dhol.
- Pongal – Pongal is celebrated with the distribution of new crop “Shankarai Pongal” which is basically rice cooked in milk and jiggery distributed as a Prasad.
- Bihu – The farmers of Assam celebrate and cherish the efforts of cultivation. It marks the beginning of Assamese New Year. Assamese celebrate Bihu thrice a year, which signify the distinct cycles of farming - Bhogali/Magh Bihu (January), Bohag/Rongali Bihu (April), and Kongali Bihu (October).
- Wangala – During this festival farmer worships Sun god with immense devotion. Wangala is the merriment of 100 drums played by Garo tribes of northeast India.
- Chapchar Kut: It is mizo festival celebrated across Mizoram. It is a festival held during the period when the bamboos and trees that have been cut down are being awaited to dry to be burnt for jhumming.
- Thrissur Poorama: It is one of the biggest temple festivals of Kerala. This is a post-harvest festival. It is celebrated in the Malayalam month Of Medom (April- May) in Thrissur.

Along with harvest festival, based on weather pattern, in the month of Kartik of Hindu calendar many cattle and camel fairs are organised.

- Sonepur Cattle Fair is held on Kartik Purnima (full moon) over the months of November and December in Sonepur, Bihar on the confluence of river Gandak. It is also known as Harihar Kshetra Mela and it attracts visitors from all over Asia.
- The Pushkar Fair, also called locally as Kartik Mela or Pushkar ka Mela is an annual multi-day livestock fair and cultural fair held in the town of Pushkar, Rajasthan. The fair starts with the Hindu calendar month of Kartik and ends on the Kartik Purnima.

Conclusion:

The fairs and festivals not only bring the people from different backgrounds and ethnicities closer but also turn the country into an alluring carnival, always having something new to offer to its tourists and visitors.

Conclusion:



4. The Chinese adventurism in the Ladakh region is a manifestation of Chinese expansionism and its aggressive posturing as an imminent global superpower. Comment.

Approach:

A candidate is expected to put forth their opinion based on these kind of issues. However, it is necessary to adopt a neutral approach while answering this question. For introduction, a candidate can start with briefing of the issue. Whereas, in the main body part it is expected to write how China's policy of expansion and their aggressive posturing as an imminent global superpower has manifested as Chinese adventurism in the Ladakh region. To sound neutral, it is necessary to write down what counter and suo motu measures India has taken to contain Chinese aggression in Ladakh. While concluding one can end up by showing what extra steps India should take to counter Chinese expansionism and aggression.

Introduction:

Tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) pose the biggest national security challenge to New Delhi in at least 20 years. The clashes in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh have claimed 20 Indian lives, the first incident of fatalities on the India-China border in 45 years. China has revived its claim on the entire Galwan Valley and has asked India to pull back from the areas.

Body:

In 2017, India and China agreed to amicably resolve the Doklam standoff that lasted for more than two months. No blood was spilt then, and no shots fired. However, the situation this time is different due to following reasons behind China's aggression:

- Salami slice strategy: There is a clear shift in Chinese foreign policy post the COVID-19 outbreak. This is seen in China's rising tensions with the U.S., its threats against Taiwan, repeated naval incidents in the South China Sea, and a new security law for Hong Kong.
- The tensions along the LAC are part of this shift. To understand this shift, one has to get a sense of the sources of China's conduct.
- Today's China is an ambitious rising power which wants to reorient the global order. When it was rising, China had adopted different tactical positions — "hide your capacity and bide your time", "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development".
- That era is over. Under President Xi Jinping, the Chinese think they have arrived. With the global economy in the doldrums, globalisation in an irrecoverable crisis accentuated by the COVID-19 outbreak, and the U.S. under an isolationist President taking the most aggressive position towards China since Richard Nixon, Beijing believes the global order is at a breaking point.
- It is fighting back through what game theorists call "salami tactics" — where a dominant power attempts to establish its hegemony piece by piece. India is one slice in this salami slice strategy.

- Changed perception about International table: China doesn't see India as a 'swing state' any more. It sees India as an ally-in-progress of the U.S. If India is what many in the West call the "counterweight" to China's rise, Beijing's definite message is that it is not deterred by the counterweight. This is a message not just to India, but to a host of China's rivals that are teaming up and eager to recruit India to the club.
- Within this broader framework there could be a host of factors — local, regional and global — that influenced China's moves. When most of the world's big powers are grappling with the pandemic, revisionist powers such as China have more room for geopolitical manoeuvring.
- Europe has been devastated by the virus. The U.S. is battling in an election year the COVID-19 outbreak as well as the deepest economic meltdown since the Great Depression.
- A confluence of all these factors, which point to a decline in the country's smart power, allowed China to make aggressive moves on the LAC.

Hence, it is clear that Chinese adventurism in the Ladakh region is a manifestation of Chinese expansionism and its aggressive posturing as an imminent global superpower. However, India is not a silent observer when China moves with aggression. Its following counter and suo motu measures have proved to be an 'eyeball to eyeball' answer.

- Military: India has moved in additional divisions, tanks and artillery across the LAC to match Chinese deployments. Further, India has approved the purchase of 33 Russian fighter jets and upgrades to 59 war planes at a cost of Rs. 18,148 crore.
- Economic: Citing the "emergent nature of threats" from mobile applications, including popular ones of Chinese origin such as TikTok, ShareIt, UC Browser, and Weibo, the government has banned 224 Chinese apps. Further, India's trade deficit with China fell to \$48.66 billion in 2019-20 on account of the decline in imports. The trade deficit stood at \$53.56 billion in 2018-19 and \$63 billion in 2017-18.

On 1st April, 2020, India and China completed their 70 years of diplomatic relations. Both sides should acknowledge that the situation is precarious, and that the recent days in particular have undone decades of painstakingly negotiated confidence-building mechanisms.

Conclusion:

Good neighbourhood relations are crucial for national stability and well-being. If India is to disengage from economic involvement with China and build the capacities and capabilities it needs in manufacturing, and in supply chain networks closer home, it cannot be a prisoner of the short term. However, through Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, India can try to replace Chinese products with domestic products in the sectors where it is possible. Further, it needs to boost up its economic relations with other countries so that there exists the real mettle to stand one on one in terms with China.

5. What are your views on the recently enacted farm laws? In your opinion, what are the most important provisions therein? Substantiate your views.

Approach:

As the question is directed towards recently enacted farm laws, it becomes necessary for candidate to put forth their own views on the recently enacted farm laws. It also asks to enlist the most important provisions therein with relative examples. Here, a candidate can start with introducing which new farm laws are enacted by the government. In the main body part candidate can put forth their views on recently enacted farm laws with respect to backend and frontend operations. It is also necessary to enlist the most important provisions with relative substantiation. However, in the conclusion one can explain how it is going to be beneficial for the farmer and what are the necessary steps needed to be taken to ensure better implementation of provisions.

Introduction:

In order to revive the Indian economy, the Central government has announced the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. Agricultural reforms are part of the third tranche of the economic package announced under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan to counter Covid-19 pandemic which may yield better income for farmer in coming days. In this direction, the newly introduced ordinances have been enacted by the government recently.

Body:

The central government introduced major agricultural market reforms through three reform laws as The Essential Commodities Amendment Bill 2020 (ECA), The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 and The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020. These bills are aimed at transformation of agriculture in the country and raising farmers' income.

- The amendment to ECA would deregulate the commodities such as cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potatoes. It will help to lessen the fears of private investors of excessive regulatory interference in their business operations.
- Any limits under ECA over these commodities will be imposed only in exceptional circumstances such as war, famine, extraordinary price rise and natural calamity.
- The freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply will lead to harnessing economies of scale and attract private sector/foreign direct investment into the agriculture sector.
- It will help drive up investment in cold storages and modernization of the food supply chain.
- An amendment to FPTC will create an ecosystem where the farmers and traders would enjoy freedom of choice of sale and purchase of agri-produce.

- It will also promote barrier-free inter-state and intra-state trade and commerce outside the physical premises of markets notified under State agricultural produce marketing legislations.
- It empowers farmers for engaging with processors, wholesalers, aggregators, large retailers, exporters etc. and thus eliminating intermediaries resulting in full realization of price.
- Farmers have been provided adequate protection. Sale, lease or mortgage of farmers' land is totally prohibited and farmers' land is also protected against any recovery.
- It also provides an effective dispute resolution mechanism with clear timelines for redress.
- These reforms are expected to build necessary agrarian infrastructure in the country which will lead to build "One India, One Agriculture Market".

With respect to the above mentioned views following are the most important provisions of the laws which are beneficial to the farm sector.

- The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 will create an ecosystem where the farmers and traders will enjoy freedom of choice of sale and purchase of agri-produce.
- It will also promote barrier-free inter-state and intra-state trade and commerce outside the physical premises of markets notified under State Agricultural Produce Marketing legislations.
- The farmers will not be charged any cess or levy for sale of their produce and will not have to bear transport costs. The Bill also proposes an electronic trading in transaction platform for ensuring a seamless trade electronically.
- The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 will empower farmers for engaging with processors, wholesalers, aggregators, wholesalers, large retailers, exporters etc., on a level playing field. Price assurance to farmers even before sowing of crops. In case of higher market price, farmers will be entitled to this price over and above the minimum price.
- It will transfer the risk of market unpredictability from the farmer to the sponsor. Due to prior price determination, farmers will be shielded from the rise and fall of market prices.
- It will also enable the farmer to access modern technology, better seed and other inputs. It will reduce cost of marketing and improve income of farmers.
- The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 will remove commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities.
- This will remove fears of private investors of excessive regulatory interference in their business operations. The freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply will lead to harnessing of economies of scale and attract private sector/foreign direct investment into agriculture sector.

Conclusion:

These newly introduced reforms are the most awaited reforms since the Independence of India in 1947. It has opened up a new window to improve the farmers income by better price realisation. In the long run it will help India to achieve its target to double farmers income by 2022.

