



Mains Practice Question

Q. Many of the Bhakti saints were rebels who chose to defy the currents of their time through their writings. Comment. (250 words)

15 May, 2019 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Give brief introduction of Bhakti movement.
- State core principles of Bhakti movement which defied the existing social system and values.
- Give conclusion.

Introduction

The beginning of Bhakti movement took place in South India between the 7th and the 12th centuries through the teachings of poet saints known as Alvars and Nayanar whose hymns were collected and compiled in the 10th century. Kabir, Guru Nanak, Mirabai, Surdas, Tulsi Das, Chaitanya are some of the prominent saints of Bhakti movement.

Body

Bhakti saints rose voice against the popular social conventions and evils of that time such as:

- **Rejection of ritualism:** Instead of rituals they emphasized on worshipping god by love and devotion.
- **Criticized casteism:** The Bhakti saints emphasized stress on equality of all castes. They said that no one is high or low in front of god. Everyone is equal.
- **Monotheism:** Bhakti saints condemned polytheism, Bhakti Movement was monotheistic, believing in one God who was the Supreme Being and the Creator.
- **Use of common vernacular languages and local dialect:** Since these saints wanted to reach the masses which were excluded due to rigid caste rules, Bhakti saints used local dialects as a means of communication, preached in the form of couplets rather than traditional prose. The Bhakti movement promoted the growth of vernacular language and literature in different parts of the country. Kabir used Hindi, Nanak Gurmukhi and Chaitanya Bengali.
- **Hindu-Muslim amity:** Due to stress on castes equality, other religions came closer to Hindu religion. Bhakti saints emphasized Hindu Muslim amity, tolerance and friendship.

Conclusion

Thus rebellious impact of Bhakti movement was felt in all spheres of Hinduism. It reformed the religion to a great extent. The evils of caste system, the unnecessary ritualism and Brahmanical orthodoxy of Hinduism received a setback due to the powerful voices of eminent socio-religious reformers during the movement. A deep-rooted change came about to laid the foundations of a liberal and composite Indian society.

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