

BHAKTI MOVEMENT (PART-3)

B.A (HONS) PART-3 PAPER-5

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IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

◎ Ramanuja

- He was one of the earliest reformers.
- Born in the South, he made a pilgrimage to some of the holy places in Northern India.
- Considered God as an Ocean of Love and beauty.
- Teachings were based on the Upanishads and Bhagwad Gita.
- He had taught in the language of the common man. Soon a large number of people became his followers.
- Ramanand was his disciple
- He took his message to Northern parts of India.

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

◎ Ramananda

- He was the first reformer to preach in Hindi, the main language spoken by the people of the North.
- Educated at Benaras, lived in the 12th Century A.D.
- Preached that there is nothing high or low. All men are equal in the eyes of God.
- He was an ardent worshipper of Rama
- Welcomed people of all castes and status to follow his teachings
- He had twelve chief disciples. One of them was a barber, another was a weaver, the third one was a cobbler and the other was the famous saint Kabir and the fifth one was a woman named Padmavathi.
- Considered God as a loving father.

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

◎ *Kabir*

- Disciple of Ramananda.
- It is said that he was the son of a Brahmin widow who had left him near a tank at Varanasi. A Muslim couple Niru and his wife who were weavers brought up the child. Later he became a weaver but he was attracted by the teachings of Swami Ramananda.
- He wanted unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. Preached that both the Hindus and the Muslims are the children of a single God.
- Had no faith in idol worship, religious rituals and ceremonies
- He taught that Allah and Eswar, Ram and Rahim are one and the same. They are present everywhere.

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

- The devotees of Kabir were known as Kabir Panthis. Thousands of people, both Hindus and Muslims became Kabir's followers. He probably lived in the fifteenth century A.D.
- **Namdeva**
 - Namdeva was a waterman by birth.
 - He was from Maharashtra, composed beautiful hymns in Marathi. They are full of intense devotion to God.
 - Worshipped Vishnu in the form of Lord Vithoba
 - Some of his verses are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs
 - A large number of people from different Castes became his followers.

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

◉ *Guru Nanak*

- He was the founder of the Sikh religion
- From his childhood, he did not show any interest in worldly affairs. At the age of 29, he left his home and became a Sadhu.
- He went to Mecca and Medina. He had travelled far and wide to spread his teachings. Guru Nanak had finally settled at Kartharpur
- He laid emphasis on pure and simple living
- Preached the Unity of God and condemned idolatry
- He was against the caste system. Guru Nanak's followers were called the Sikhs.

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

- He started the *Langer or the common kitchen*, where people belonging to all castes or religions could have their meals together
- Nanak's teachings were in the form of verses. They were collected in a book called the *Adi Granth*. Later *Adi Grantham* was written in a script called *Gurmukhi*. The holy book of the Sikhs is popularly known as '*Grantha Sahib*'. It contains verses from Kabir, Namdeva and other Bhakti and Sufi saints.

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

◉ Chaitanya

- He was a saint from Bengal
- A great devotee of Lord Krishna
- From his very childhood, he had showed great interest in education and studied Sanskrit. He married the daughter of a Saintly person.
- At the age of 24, he renounced the worldly life and became a Sanyasi.
- Travelled all over the Deccan, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa
- His followers regarded him as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He helped the old and the needy. He was

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

opposed to the inequalities of the caste system. He emphasized the need for tolerance, humanity and love.

- He spread the message of Bhakti in Bengal, he popularized '*Sankritan*' or public singing of God's name. His songs are still very popular in Bengal.
- He was addressed '*Mahaprabhu*' by his followers.

◎ Tulsi Das

- Goswamy Tulsidas was a *devotee of Rama*. His work gives the story of Rama in Hindi. He was the foremost in popularizing Rama cult.
- His other works in Hindi are *Janaki Mangal* and *Parvathi Mangal*. In his writings he insists the duty of a son to his parent, duty of a student to his teacher and duty of a king to his people.

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

◉ *Guru Ramdas*

- He was a famous teacher. He was born in A.D. 1608. Chatrapati Shivaji, the great Maratha ruler, was a follower of Ramdas.
- Stressed upon the equality of all men before God. He said that anyone could attain God's favour by means of Bhakti.
- He was not merely a religious preacher but also a Nation Builder.

◉ *Tukaram*

- He was a saint who lived in Maharashtra.
- Composed a large number of verses called *Abhangas* or devotional songs in praise of Panduranga or Krishna
- Believed in one God who was kind, merciful and protective

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

- He wrote all his *abhangas* in Marathi
- ⊙ *Jnaneshwar*
- He is one of the greatest saints of Maharashtra
- Worshipped Vishnu in the form of Vithoba or Krishna
- At the age of fourteen, he translated the Bhagawad Gita into the Marathi language. This book is called Jnaneshwari.

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

◉ Akkamahadivi

- Also known as Akka or Mahadevi was a bhakta from the southern region of Karnataka and a devotee of Shiva in the 12th century
- Legends tell of her wandering naked in search of her Divine Lovers; her poetry, or *Vacanas* tell of her frustration with societal norms and roles that restricted her. They also bear witness to her intense, all-encompassing love for Shiva, whom she addresses as Chennamallikarjuna.
- Through Shiva and Shiva alone is her love fulfilled; through separation from her “lord white as jasmine” is her heart broken. Her sayings – pithy, poetic, and full of wisdom – are still popular.

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

◉ Janaba

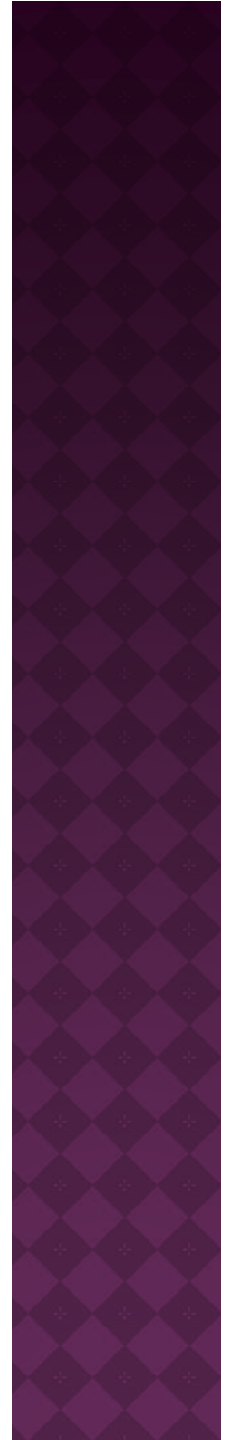
- Born around the 13th century in Maharashtra in a low-caste Sudra family. When she was still a child, her mother died, and her father, shortly before his own death, took her to work as a maid in the upper-caste family of Namdev, one of the most revered of the Bhakti poetsaints. While within this household, she continued to serve Namdev, both as a servant and as his devotee.
- She wrote over three hundred poems focusing on domestic chores and the restrictions facing her as a low-caste woman

◉ *Muktabai or Muktai*

- She a saint in the Varkari tradition who wrote forty-one abhangs. She was born in a Deshastha Brahmin family, the last of the four children of Vitthal Govind

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

Kulkarni and Rukmini, a pious couple from a village near Paithan on the banks of the Godavari. Vitthal lied about his marriage to be initiated into sanyas. When found out, the couple was excommunicated from the caste. Later Vitthal and Rukmini ended their lives, hoping their children would be accepted into society after their death. The orphaned children had to resort to begging, but all four went on to contribute abhangs and commentaries on the Gita. Her most popular abhanga is Tātīche Abhanga (The Song of the Door).



IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

- ◉ *Lalla or Lai Ded*

- She was one of the earliest Kashmiri mystic poets of the fourteenth century
- Refused to stay confined to domestic tyranny and its power hierarchy.
- Adopted a famous Kashmiri Shaiva saint as her spiritual guide, and became an ardent devotee of Shaivism.
- She was also a yogini, a mendicant ascetic, who wandered about preaching the yogic doctrines as the best means of ultimate absorption into the Supreme.
- The true saint, according to her, was, “the servant of all mankind through his humility and loving kindness”. She did not believe in the efficacy of external observances, ritualism, or idol worship. She insisted on the performance of duty for duty’s sake

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

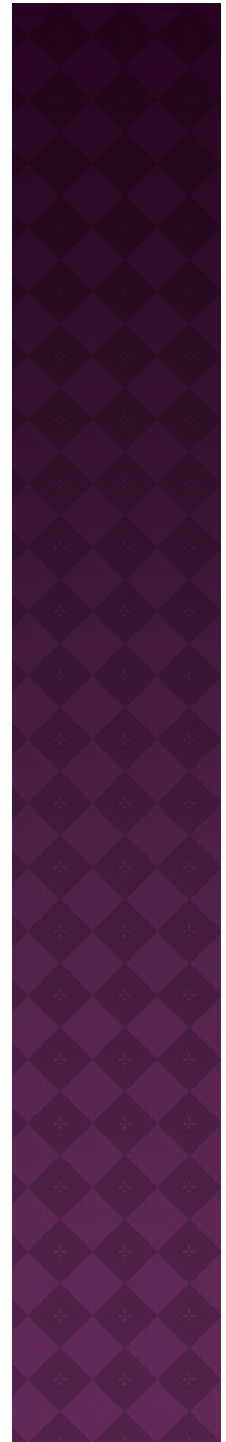
◉ *Mirabai, or Mira*

- A Bhakti poet of the fifteenth century, is said to have been born into a ruling Rajput family.
- Her poetry tells of her vision of Lord Krishna when she was a child; from that point on Mira vowed that she would forever be his bride. Despite her wishes, she was married to Prince Bhoj Raj of the Rajput kingdom of Mewar at a young age. Her husband died after some years. The hostility increased as Meera refused to commit sati. She neither wore the mourning garb, nor followed any of the customs expected of a royal woman grieving a lost husband. Instead she claimed that now she was free to devote herself completely to

IMPORTANT BHAKTI SAINTS

the worship of Krishna. Mira's devotional practices became increasingly intense. She often sang and danced herself into ecstasies, even in public places like temples. News about her spread all over India and she soon attracted a following of devotees from all social groups and castes.

- She became the foremost exponents of the Bhakti movement and a remarkable example of feminism in India.



EFFECTS OF THE BHAKTI MOVEMENTS

The Bhakti movement had brought the Hindus and the Muslims closer to each other. The equality concept preached by the leaders reduced the rigidity of the caste system to a certain extent. The suppressed people gained a feeling of self-respect. The reformers preached in local languages. It led to the development of Vernacular literature. They composed hymns and songs in the languages spoken by the people. Therefore there was a remarkable growth of literature in all the languages. A new language Urdu, a mixture of Persian and Hindi, was developed. The Bhakti movement freed the common people from the tyranny of the priests. It checked the excesses of polytheism. It encouraged the spirit of toleration. The gap between the Hindus and the Muslims was reduced. They began to live amicably

EFFECTS OF THE BHAKTI MOVEMENTS

together. It emphasized the value of a pure life of charity and devotion. Finally, it improved the moral and spiritual ways of life of the medieval society. It provided an example for the future generation to live with the spirit of toleration.

