

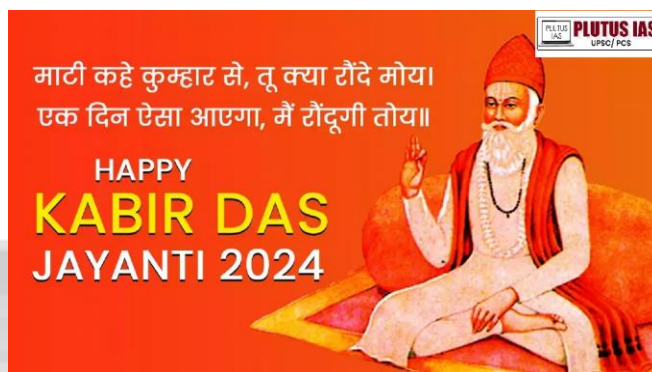


Date - 26 June 2024

BHAKTI MOVEMENT IN INDIA AND BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SANT KABIR DAS

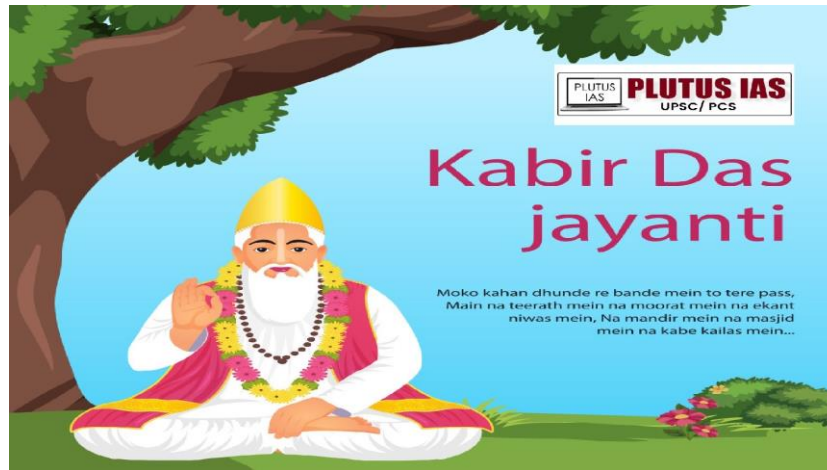
(This article is related to the section ' Medieval Indian History, Art & Culture and Heritage, Contribution of Kabir Das in Bhakti Movement, Important Personalities of Bhakti Movement in India' under UPSC Civil Services Mains Exam General Studies Paper- 1 and ' Bhakti Movement in India, Sant Kabir Das, Kabir Bijak (Poems and Verses), Kabir Granthavali, Kabir Ke Dohe' under UPSC Preliminary Exam. It also includes suggestions from the PLUTUS IAS Team. This article is related to ' Bhakti Movement in India and Birth Anniversary of Sant Kabir Das' under ' Daily Current Affairs '.)

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- Recently, the Prime Minister of India celebrated the 647th birth anniversary of Kabir Das, a medieval saint and poet prominent in the Bhakti movement, on June 22, 2024.
- In India, Kabir Das Jayanti is celebrated on Jyeshtha Purnima date according to the Hindu Lunar Calendar.

KABIR DAS :



- Kabir Das was a mystical poet and saint of 15th century medieval India.
- His early life was spent in a Muslim family, but he was greatly influenced by his teacher, Ramananda, a prominent pioneer of the Bhakti movement, who belonged to the Hindu religion.
- He was born in Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh, and was brought up by a Hindu weaver couple.
- Kabir Das was an important figure of the Nirguna branch of the Bhakti movement, which emphasized devotion and love for God.
- His works are famous as the greatest poems of the Gyanmargi sub-branch of the Nirgun branch of the Bhakti period of Hindi literature. |
- Kabir received spiritual guidance from his gurus, such as Ramanand and Sheikh Taqi, and gave a unique shape to his philosophy.
- Kabir's couplets which he wrote in the form of his own verses reflect his fame.
- His works were written in Hindi language and he used his couplets to make people aware. |
- His works have significantly enriched Indian literature and the development of Hindi language.
- The works written by him in Brajbhasha and Awadhi dialects are famous even today.
- Kabir Das's writings had a great influence on the Bhakti movement and include texts like Kabir Granthawali, Anurag Sagar, Bijak and Sakhi Granth.
- His verses are found in the Guru Granth Sahib, the scripture of Sikhism.
- His major creative works were compiled by the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev.
- He gained most fame for his two-line couplets, known as '**Kabir's couplets**'.
- **Language** : Kabir's works were written in Hindi language, which were easy to understand. To make people aware, he used to write his articles in the form of couplets.

BHAKTI MOVEMENT IN INDIA :

- The Bhakti movement was a very important literary phenomenon or movement in the cultural history of the medieval period in the entire cultural history of India, which originated mainly in India between the 6th and 17th centuries and spread very rapidly in the then Indian society.
- The main objective of this movement was to propagate fervent devotion to a personal god or deity, emphasizing direct spiritual experience, love and devotion as a means to salvation and divine attainment.
- The Bhakti movement in India eliminated many social inequalities such as caste, creed and religion, leading to profound changes in religious practices, social relations, cultural expressions and philosophical ideas across India.
- This movement originated in the southern states of India, probably in the Tamil region, where Alvars (devotees of Vishnu) and Nayanars (devotees of Shiva) and Vaishnava and Shaiva poets propagated devotion through poetry.
- The Alvars and Nayanars traveled from one place to another singing hymns in the Tamil language in praise of their gods.
- The feeling of glory and love of God was expressed in his works.
- Established by the Bhakti movement as a way and way to attain God through Bhakti Yoga.
- This movement gave a new direction to logical religious ideas in place of the religious ostentation, evil practices etc. prevalent in the medieval society of India and spread and enriched social unity in place of communal fanaticism, mutual animosity and caste discrimination.
- On the one hand, Saguna Bhakti traditions in India during the Bhakti movement focused on the worship of specific deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and their incarnations or various forms of the Goddess, often conceptualized in anthropomorphic forms. On the other hand, Nirguna Bhakti was based on the worship of an abstract form of God.

SOCIAL SYSTEM OF INDIA AT THE TIME OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT :

- The Bhakti movement was an important movement among the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities in the Indian subcontinent.
- During this period, socio-religious reformers made devotion to God the main basis.
- In this movement in India, poets from high and low castes made literature an important medium, which firmly established popular fiction.
- These saints criticized communal fanaticism and caste discrimination in the society and claimed the relevance of religion in the field of genuine human aspirations.
- All the poets of the Bhakti movement in India considered devotion to God as the true means of attaining freedom from the illusions of the world for all people in India.

- The devotion of the poets of the Bhakti movement was based on selfless and exclusive devotion.
- This movement played a meaningful role against the divisive and destructive elements of the then Indian society and established the path of attaining God through Karma Yoga, Gyan Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga.
- The Bhakti period poets gave importance to devotion to God and tried to eradicate idol worship.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN BHAKTI MOVEMENT :

- The Bhakti movement brought significant changes for women in Indian society.
- This movement provided women with a medium to express their spirituality and devotion, helping them break out of domestic roles.
- Women actively participated in religious meetings, sang devotional songs and participated in spiritual discussions!
- Women saints also had an important contribution in this movement. Through his writings he promoted religious sentiments and reduced caste discrimination.
- This movement helped in bringing positive changes in the spiritual life of women and gave them more equality in the society.

ANDAL :

- Andal was a female Alvar who saw herself as the beloved of Vishnu. His works and the sense of devotion inherent in them are prominent even today.

KARAIKAL AMMAIYAR :

- Karaikal Ammaiyar was a devotee of Shiva. He adopted the path of rigorous penance to achieve his goal.
- His works have been preserved within the Nayanar tradition.

IMPORTANT PERSONALITIES OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT :

KANNADA REGION :

- The Bhakti movement in the Kannada region was started by Basavanna (1105–68) in the 12th century.

MAHARASHTRA :

- The Bhakti movement in Maharashtra began in the late 13th century. Its supporters were called Varkari. Its most prominent names include Gyandev (1275–96), Namdev (1270–50), and Tukaram (1608–50).

ASSAM :

- Srimanta Sankardeva was a Vaishnava saint who was born in 1449 AD in Nagaon district of Assam. He started the Neo-Vaishnav movement.

BENGAL :

- Chaitanya was a famous saint and reformer of Bengal, who popularized the Krishna cult.

NORTH INDIA :

- Many poets were associated with the Bhakti movement in this region from the 13th to the 17th century.
- Kabir, Ravidas, and Guru Nanak explained the importance of the formless God (Nirguna Bhakti).
- Mirabai (1498–1546) of Rajasthan composed devotional verses in praise of Krishna and sang his praises.
- Surdas, Narsingh Mehta, and Tulsidas also made invaluable contributions to Bhakti literature and the Bhakti movement and enhanced its glorious legacy.

Thus the Bhakti movement played an important role in ending caste discrimination, religious ostentation and fanaticism in medieval Indian society.

Source – The Hindu and Indian Express.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM :**Q.1. Consider the following statements regarding the Bhakti movement in India and Kabir Das.**

1. Kabir Das was a person of the Gyanmargi sub-branch of the Nirguna branch of the Bhakti period of the Bhakti movement.
2. The works of Kabir Das have significantly enriched the development of Indian literature and Hindi language.
3. The Bhakti movement started from South India and reached North India.
4. Because of the Bhakti movement, women Helped in getting out of domestic roles.

Which of the above statement/statements is/ are correct?

- A. Only 1, 2 and 3.
- B. Only 2, 3 and 4.
- C. None of these.
- D. All of the above.

Answer – D

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM :

Q.1. Outline the main reasons for the emergence of the Bhakti movement in India and discuss how the Bhakti movement influenced Indian society. Played an important role in ending communal fanaticism, religious ostentation and caste discrimination in the society? present a rational opinion. (Word limit - 250 marks - 15)

Dr. Akhilesh Kumar Shrivastava

“MAHARASHTRA’S WATER CRISIS.”

THIS ARTICLE COVERS “DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS” AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF “MAHARASHTRA’S WATER CRISIS.” THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT TO THE “ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY.” SECTION OF THE UPSC—CSE EXAM.

ABOUT NEWS:

Following last year’s insufficient monsoon season, the Maharashtra government declared numerous areas in the state affected by drought. This scenario starkly contrasts with the State’s coastal regions, where frequent heavy rainfall has resulted in significant flooding. Marathwada’s challenges are influenced by its geographic location, topography, soil composition, agricultural methods, and crop selections.

RAIN-SHADOW EFFECT:

- Marathwada is situated in the rain-shadow area of the Western Ghats. Upon encountering these mountains, moist winds from the Arabian Sea ascend and cool, resulting in substantial rainfall (2,000-4,000 mm) on the western slopes.
- However, when these winds cross the Ghats and descend into Western Maharashtra and Marathwada, they lose most of their moisture, leading to significantly lower rainfall (600-800 mm) in Marathwada.
- Climate change exacerbates the situation in central Maharashtra, where drought severity and frequency have increased. Consequently, Marathwada and North Karnataka have emerged as the second driest regions in India after Rajasthan.

EFFECTS OF RAIN-SHADOW AREAS ON CROPS:

- Due to its low rainfall, Marathwada’s crops are profoundly affected. Agricultural practices in the region are ill-suited to the climate, exacerbated by sugarcane cultivation, a major contributor to the water crisis.

- Sugarcane requires 1,50-2,50 cm of water during its growing season and demands nearly daily irrigation, unlike pulses and millets, which need only four or five irrigations per crop cycle.
- Since the 1950s, the area under sugarcane has steadily increased until plateauing in recent years. Now, sugarcane occupies 4% of the total cropped area but consumes a staggering 61% of irrigation water.
- This shift has significantly reduced the average river outflow in the upper Bhima basin. Government policies supporting sugarcane pricing and sales have further expanded its cultivation, diverting irrigation from more nutritious crops.
- Despite the **Maharashtra Water and Irrigation Commission's (1999)** recommendation to restrict sugarcane cultivation in areas receiving less than 1,000 mm of rainfall annually, production has continued to grow.
- The government has been promoting sugarcane-juice-based ethanol production since December 2023, despite concerns over its sustainability in water-stressed regions where 82% of Maharashtra's sugar is produced from low-rainfall areas.

ROLE OF TOPOGRAPHY AND SOIL:

- The characteristics of soil and topography play crucial roles in Marathwada's agricultural landscape. The region is predominantly endowed with clayey black soil, known locally as "**regur**," which is fertile and adept at retaining moisture.
- However, it has a low infiltration rate, leading to surface water runoff rather than groundwater recharge during rainfall.
- To mitigate this runoff, Maharashtra has invested in constructing numerous dams, making it the state with the most large dams in India (1,845).
- The soil's low hydraulic conductivity means it holds water for extended periods after rain, which can result in crop losses, as **WELL Labs' research** in the area has observed.
- Despite the soil's moisture-retentive properties, water scarcity in Marathwada varies significantly. The region is crisscrossed by parallel tributaries of the Godavari and Krishna rivers flowing southeast, each flowing through valleys separated by gently sloping hills.
- These valleys typically have perennial groundwater, while upland areas rely on seasonal groundwater. Groundwater slowly migrates underground from uplands to valleys, causing wells in upland areas to dry up a few months after the monsoon season, exacerbating water scarcity in these regions.
- Therefore, these upland areas face severe water shortages and deserve targeted assistance to overcome their natural disadvantages.

RESILIENCE OF MARATHWADA:

- Achieving water resilience in Marathwada hinges on strategic approaches that maximise available resources and promote sustainable practices.
- **Supply-side solutions** involve traditional watershed management techniques such as constructing water-conserving structures like contour trenches, earthen bunds, and gully plugs. These structures help retain rainwater, but they often accumulate silt, reducing their effectiveness over time.
- Leveraging funds from programs like the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** could facilitate the design and implementation of silt-trapping mechanisms. Concurrently, training programs for farmers on regular desilting can increase the longevity and efficiency of these structures.
- To manage water demand effectively in a region with limited rainfall, practices include adopting water-efficient irrigation methods, cultivating drought-resistant crops, and diversifying livelihoods.
- Marathwada should transition to high-value, low-water-consuming crops better suited to local conditions. Additionally, shifting sugarcane production to states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal, where water resources are more abundant, is crucial for sustainable water management.
- Fostering water resilience in Marathwada necessitates a holistic approach that balances conservation efforts with sustainable agricultural practices and economic diversification.
- By optimising water use, enhancing watershed management, and promoting crop diversification, Marathwada can mitigate water scarcity challenges and build resilience for the future.

MAINS BASED QUESTION:

Q. CROPPING PATTERN IN INDIA IS MAINLY DRIVEN BY PRICES PREVAILING IN THE MARKET IRRESPECTIVE OF THE CLIMATIC CONDITIONS. CRITICALLY ANALYSE THE ROLE OF THE MSP AND GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES IN EMPOWERING FARMERS TO PRACTICE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PRACTICES.

Vishal Yadav

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