Art & Culture · GS - I

Evaluate the nature of the Bhakti Literature and its contribution to Indian culture.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2021	GS - I	Art & Culture

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Devotional character; Saguna and Nirguna traditions; vernacular languages; social equality; literary contributions; music and performing arts; cultural synthesis

Model Answer

Introduction

Bhakti literature emerged from devotional movements that emphasised personal devotion to God, spiritual equality and the use of regional languages.

Nature of Bhakti Literature

- **Devotional:** Focused on love and surrender to a personal God, as seen in the works of Mirabai and Surdas.
- **Socially critical:** Challenged caste discrimination and ritualistic practices; Kabir criticised religious orthodoxy.
- **Linguistically diverse:** Composed in Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, Hindi, Bengali and other vernacular languages.
- **Philosophically varied:** Included both Saguna Bhakti (worship of God with attributes) and Nirguna Bhakti (formless divine).

Contribution to Indian Culture

- **Literary enrichment:** Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* and Kamban's *Ramavataram* enriched regional literary traditions.

- **Social reform:** Saints such as Ravidas questioned caste hierarchies and promoted human dignity.
- **Music and performing arts:** Bhajans, kirtans and devotional compositions shaped India's musical heritage.
- **Cultural synthesis:** Shared devotional spaces encouraged dialogue across religious communities.

Conclusion

Bhakti literature democratised religious expression, strengthened regional identities and left a lasting legacy of spiritual humanism and cultural pluralism.

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