



Bhakti Movement

Bhakti Movement and its Features

- ❖ The term “Bhakti” symbolises devotion or a passionate love for the divine.
- ❖ The Bhakti movement was based on the doctrine that the relationship between the God and the man is through love and worship rather than through performing any ritual or religious ceremonies.
- ❖ The Bhakti movement was **a major Hindu religious revival movement during medieval India that sought to bring reforms to all strata of society by preaching the practice of devotion to achieve salvation.**

❖ Features:

- ❖ Intense love and devotion as the means of Salvation.
- ❖ Unity of God (Universalism) and repeating the one true name again and again.
- ❖ **Rejection of rituals and Ceremonies**
- ❖ No Caste Discrimination and keeping an open mind on religious and gender issues.
- ❖ They allowed both women and men to seek Salvation, They even took their meals together from the common kitchen & they condemned women Infanticide and Sati Practice.
- ❖ Using local and Regional languages to spread their messages.
- ❖ They Stressed the Idea of Personal God.
- ❖ They Despised Priests who they thought were middleman and instead focused on establishing a personal Connection with God.

Origin Of Bhakti Movement

❖ The Bhakti movement originated in the southern parts of India, especially in Tamilnadu between 6th and 10th Century AD, it slowly percolated to the Northern belt by the end of 15th Century.

❖ In South India, There were Two Main Groups of Bhakti Saints:

❖ 1) Nayanars (Shiva devotees) 2) Alvars (Vishnu Devotees)

❖ Similarities between Nayanars & Alvars:

❖ The Alvars and Nayanars were opposed to Brahmanical domination and were also opposed to Jainism and Buddhism.

❖ Most of their Poetries were focused on the love between the devotee and God.

❖ They Spoke and wrote in Vernaculars like Tamil and Telugu so that the common people could easily read and recite it.

❖ Presence of Priest is not required in Bhakti Tradition.

❖ This made their movement immensely popular.

❖ Together They laid foundation of Bhakti movement in India.

❖ Alvars:

1. There were 12 Alvars, the 12 Alvars Composed a Text “**Nalaiyra Divya Prabandham**”.
2. Andal was the only female Alvar Saint and is referred as “**Meera of South**”.

❖ Nayanars:

1. They were group of 63 Tamil Saints who adopted extreme Ascetism to attain the larger Goal.
2. The Three Nayanars **Appar** , **Sambandar** and **Sundarar** Compiled a collection of Poems called **Tevaram** in the 10th Century.
3. Among Nayanars were Brahmins and Nobles but they aslo included the Oil-Mongers and the Vellalas.

❖ Virshaiva Movement/LINGAYATS(12th Century AD):

- The Virshaivas are a Shaivite sect in Hinduism that emerged in the 12th Century AD in the Karnataka during the reign of **Kalachuri Dynasty**. They opposed elaborate rituals prescribed by Hindu Priests. The Sect was founded by **Basavanna**. The Followers were Called **Virshaiva**(Heroes of Shiva) or the **Lingayats** (wearers of Shivalinga).

• Virshaiva Movement Included:

- Worshipping Shiva in his Manifestations as Linga.
- Wearing Linga on left Shoulder, thus Known as Lingayats.
- Burying their dead instead of Cremating them(they believe that devotee will be united with shiva and not return)
- Questioning the theory of re-birth and Challenging the Caste System.
- Encouraging Post-Puberty Marriages and Widow Remarriages.

Two Schools Of Bhakti

❖ Nirguna School:

- The Bhakti saints were divided into two schools depending on the way they imagined God.
- One School of thought imagined God as formless with no attributes or Quality.
- They are more focus on acquiring Knowledge.
- They rejected the Scriptures and condemned every form of Idol Worship.
- The Prominent figures of this school of thought were **Kabir , Guru Nanak & Dadu Dayal.**

❖ Saguna School:

- Saguna School thought of God as having a definite form, quality and positive attributes and the God manifests himself in incarnations such as Rama and Krishna.
- His spirit is to be found in the Idols and images worshipped at home and in Temples.
- They are more focused on Love and Devotion.
- They accept the spiritual authority of the Vedas and the need of a human Guru as mediator between God and his Devotee.
- **Ramanuja , Ramananda and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu** belonged to this school of thought.

Prominent Bhakti Saints

❖ Shankaracharya (c. 788 – 820 CE):

- One of the mystic Bhakti poet-saint leaders who gave a new orientation to Hinduism.
- He was **born in Kaladi in Kerala**. He propounded the **Advaita** (Monism) philosophy and the idea of Nirgunabrahman (god without attributes).
- In Advaita, the reality of the world is denied and Brahman is considered the only reality. It is only Brahman at its base that gives it its reality.
- His famous quotes include, '**Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya Jivo Brahmatra Naparaha**' meaning, "The Absolute Spirit is the reality, the world of appearance is Maya" and '**Ekameva Adviteeyam Brahma**' meaning, "The absolute is one alone, not two".
- He set up mathas at Dwarka, Puri, Sringeri and Badrinath.

❖ Ramanuja (c. 1017 – 1137 CE):

- In the 12th century, Ramanuja, who was born at Sriperumbudur near modern Chennai, preached **Vishista Advaitavada** (qualified monism).
- According to him, God is **Saguna Brahman** (with attributes) and the creative process including all the objects in creation are real and not illusory as was held by Shankaracharya.
- Therefore, according to Ramanuja, God, soul, and matter are real. However, God is the inner substance and the rest are his attributes.
- In **Vishista Advaitavada**, the universe and Brahman are considered two equally real entities, as in dualism, but here the universe is not separate from Brahman but is formed out of Brahman.
- The famous analogy given for this is the sea and wave – **Brahman is the sea** and the objects of the world, both living and nonliving are the waves upon this sea.
- He authored **Sribhashya, Vedanta Dipa, Gita Bhasya and Vedantasara**.

❖ Ramananda (c. 1400 – 1476 CE):

- He is regarded as the **founder of the Ram cult in north India** as his object of Bhakti was Ram since he worshipped Ram and Sita.
- Ramananda was a 15th-century poet-saint who was born at Prayag (Allahabad) and preached his principles at Benaras and Agra. His followers are called **Ramanandis**.
- He was originally a follower of **Ramanuja**, His disciples were Kabir(a Muslim weaver), Sena (a barber) , Sadhana (a butcher).
- He rejected the monopoly of the Sanskrit language over the teachings of religious texts. He preached in local languages to popularise his teachings.

❖ Guru Nanak (c. 1469 – 1539 CE):

- The first Sikh Guru and the founder of [Sikhism](#), who was also a **Nirguna Bhakti** saint and social reformer.
- **“Abide pure amidst the impurities of the world”**, was one of his famous sayings.
- He aimed at bridging distinctions between the Hindus and the Muslims in order to create an atmosphere of peace, goodwill and mutual give and take.

❖ Chaitanya mahaprabhu (1486 – 1534 AD):

- **Chaitanya** was another well-known saint and social reformer of Bengal who popularised the Krishna cult.
- He **Spread the Bhakti Movement to North Eastern India**.
- Chaitanya is said to have travelled all over India, including Vrindavan where he revived the Krishna cult.
- He believed that through love and devotion, song and dance, a devotee can feel the presence of God.

❖ Kabir(1440 – 1510):

- One of the **most famous disciples of Ramananda** who belonged to the 15th century. His iconic verses are found in the Sikh holy scripture, **Adi Granth**.
- According to tradition, it is believed that he was born near Benaras to a Brahmin widow who abandoned him after his birth and was brought up in the house of a Muslim weaver.
- He strongly denounced idol worship, pilgrimages, rituals, caste system especially the practice of untouchability and laid great stress on the equality of man before God.
- Kabir's object was to reconcile Hindus and Muslims and establish harmony between the two sects.
- He emphasised the essential oneness of all religions by describing Hindus and Muslims "as pots of the same clay". To him, Rama and Allah, temple and mosque were the same.

❖ Mirabai (1498 – 1546):

- Mira belonged to a high class ruling Rajput family and was married to the son of **Rana Sanga of Mewar** at an early age but she left her husband and family and went on a pilgrimage to various places.
- Her poetry portrays a unique relationship with Lord Krishna as she is not only being portrayed as the devotee bride of Krishna, but Krishna is also portrayed as in pursuit of Mira.

❖ Tulsidas (1532 – 1623):

- Greatest Saint Poet of Ram Bhakti Cult of Vaishnavism , author of "**Ramcharithamanas**", "**Gitawali**", "**Kavitawali**".

❖ Dandu Dayal (1544 – 1603):

- He is the founder of Dandu path.

The Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra

❖ Jnanesvara/Jnanadeva (1271 – 1296 AD):

- The head of Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra, founder of Marathi language and literature.
- He wrote Commentary on Bhagavatgita called as “Bhavarthadipka”.

❖ Ekknath(1533-1599):

- The Great Scholar Saint from Maharashtra.
- He Wrote Commentaries on Ramayana called the “Bhavartha Ramayana”.

❖ Tukaram:

- He Wrote Devotional Poems called As “Abhangas”.

❖ Ramdas (1608 – 1681 AD):

- ❖ The last great Saint poet from Maharashtra.
- ❖ “Dasabodha” is the compilation of his writings and sermons.

