

**Ramdas** (c. 1608 – c. 1682), also known as **Samarth Ramdas** or **Ramdas Swami**, was an Indian [Hindu](#) saint, philosopher, poet, writer and spiritual master. He was a devotee of the [Hindu](#) deities [Rama](#) and [Hanuman](#).

Ramdas or previously Narayan was born at Jamb, a village in present-day [Jalna district](#), [Maharashtra](#) on the occasion of [Rama Navami](#), probably in 1608 CE.<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup> He was born into a [Marathi Deshastha Rigvedi Brahmin](#) family to Suryajipant and Ranubai Thosar.<sup>[[2](#)]</sup> His father was thought to have been a devotee of the Vedic deity, [Surya](#). Ramdas had an elder brother named Gangadhar. His father died when Narayan was only seven years of age. He turned into an introvert after the demise of his father and would often be noticed to be engrossed in thoughts about the divine.

As per legend, Narayan fled his wedding ceremony in Asangao near Jamb, at age 12, upon hearing a *pandit* (Hindu priest) chant the word '*Saawadhaana!*' (Beware!) during a customary Hindu wedding ritual. He is believed to have walked over 200 km along the banks of Godavari river to [Panchavati](#), a Hindu pilgrimage town near [Nashik](#). He later moved to Taakli near Nashik at the confluence of Godavari and Nandini river. At Taakli, he spent the next twelve years as an ascetic in complete devotion to Rama. During this period, he adhered to a rigorous daily routine and devoted most of his time to meditation, worship and exercise. As per legend, he once blessed a widow lady of a long married life, without knowing that her husband has just died. It is said that he was able to give life back to the dead body of her husband and this act of miracle made him very famous in Nashik. He is thought to have attained enlightenment at the age of 24. He adopted the name Ramdas around this period. He later had an idol of Hanuman made from cowdung installed at Taakli.

### Pilgrimage and spiritual movement

Ramdas left Taakli a few years later and then embarked on a pilgrimage across the Indian subcontinent. He traveled for twelve years and made observations on contemporary social life. He had these observations recorded in two of his literary works *Asmani Sultania* and *Parachakraniroopan*.<sup>[[3](#)]</sup> These works provide a rare insight into the then prevalent social conditions in the Indian subcontinent. He also traveled to regions in the vicinity of the Himalayas during this period. Around this time, he met the sixth Sikh Guru [Hargobind](#) at [Srinagar](#).<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup>

After the pilgrimage, he returned to [Mahabaleshwar](#), a hill-town near [Satara](#). Later while at Masur, he arranged for Rama Navami celebrations that were reportedly attended by thousands. As part of his mission to redeem spirituality among the masses and unite the Hindu populations, Ramdas initiated the Samarth sect. He established several *matha* (monasteries) across the Indian subcontinent. He may have established between 700 and 1100 *matha* during his travels. Narahar Phatak in his biography of Ramdas claims that the actual number of *matha* founded by him may have been far fewer.<sup>[[4](#)]</sup> Around 1648 CE, he had an idol of Rama installed at a newly built temple in Chaphal, a village near Satara. Initially, he had eleven Hanuman temples constructed in various regions of southern Maharashtra. These are now together referred to as the *11-Maruti* (see list below).

### 11-Maruti

Location	Region	Year
Shahapur	Karad	1644
Masur	Karad	1645
Chaphal Vir Maruti	Satara	1648
Chaphal Das Maruti	Satara	1648
Shinganwadi	Satara	1649
Umbraj	Masur	1649
Majgaon	Satara	1649
Bahe	Sangli	1651
Manapadale	Kolhapur	1651
Pargaon	Warananagar	1651
Shirala	Sangli	1654

### Literary works

Ramdas had extensive literature written during his lifetime. His literary works include [Dasbodh](#), *Karunashtakas*, *Sunderkand*, *Yuddhakand*, *Poorvarambh*, *Antarbhav*, *Aatmaaram*, *Chaturthman*, *Panchman*, *Manpanchak*, *Janaswabhawgosavi*, *Panchsamasi*, *Saptsamasi*, *Sagundhyan*, *Nirgundhyan*, *Junatpurush*, *Shadripunirupan*, *Panchikaranyog*, *Manache Shlok* and *Shreemad Dasbodh*. Unlike the saints subscribing to [Warkari](#) tradition, Ramdas is not considered to embrace pacifism. His writings include strong expressions encouraging militant means to counter the barbaric [Islamic](#) invaders.<sup>[5]</sup>

A major portion of his Marathi literature is in the form of verses.

Listed below are some of his notable literary works.

- *Manache Shlok*<sup>[6]</sup> (co-written by Kalyan Swami)
- [Dasbodh](#)<sup>[7]</sup>
- *Shree Maruti Stotra*
- *Aatmaaram*
- *11-Laghu Kavita*
- *Shadripu Nirupan*

- *Maan Panchak*
- *Chaturthmaan*
- *Raamayan (Marathi-Teeka)*

His compositions include numerous [aarti](#) (worship rituals). One of his most popular *aarti* commemorates the Hindu deity [Ganesha](#), and is popularly known as [Sukhakarta Dukaharta](#). It is believed that the *bhajan* (devotional song) "[Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram](#)" is based on a *mantra* composed by Ramdas. <sup>[8][9]</sup>

His other works include an *aaratee* commemorating Hanuman, *Satrane Uddane Hunkaar Vadani* and an *aaratee* dedicated to the Hindu deity Vitthala, *Panchanan Haivahan Surabhushan Lila*. He also composed *aarti* in dedication to other Hindu deities. His well-known work *Dasbodh*<sup>[10]</sup> has been translated to several other Indian languages. The original copy of *Dasbodh* is currently placed at a *matha* in Domgaon, a village in present-day [Osmanabad district](#), Maharashtra. <sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## Philosophy

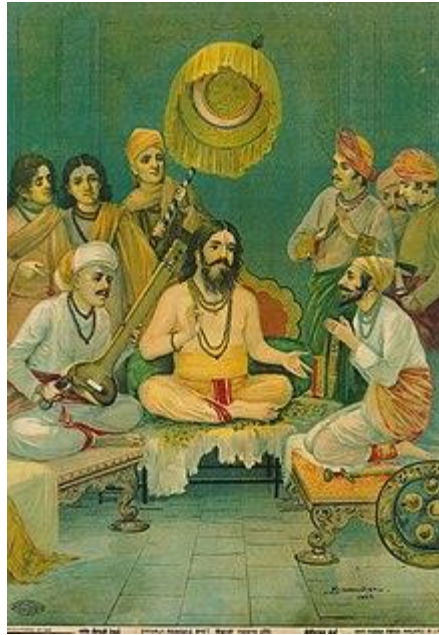
Ramdas was a proponent of [Dvaita](#), a philosophy first proposed by the 13th-century Indian philosopher, [Madhvacharya](#).<sup>[11]</sup>

Ramdas was an exponent of [Bhakti Yoga](#) or the path of devotion. According to him, total devotion to Rama brings about spiritual evolution. He endorsed significance of physical strength and knowledge towards individual development. He expressed his admiration for warriors and highlighted their role in safeguarding the society. He was of the opinion that saints must not withdraw from society but instead actively engage towards social and moral transformation. He aimed to resuscitate the Hindu culture after its disintegration over several centuries owing to consistent foreign occupation. He also called for unity among the Marathas to preserve and promote the local culture.<sup>[5]</sup>

He encouraged the participation of women in religious work and offered them positions of authority. He had 18 female disciples, among who Vennabai headed the *matha* at Miraj near [Sangli](#) while Akkabai managed *matha* at Chaphal and [Sajjangad](#) near Satara. He is said to have once reprimanded an aged man who voiced his opinion against female participation in religious affairs. Ramdas reportedly responded by saying "Everyone came from a woman's womb and those who did not understand the importance of this were unworthy of being called men". In *Dasbodh*, Ramdas eulogizes the virtues of aesthetic handwriting (Chapter 19.10, Stanza 1–3p). <sup>[12]</sup>

## Samarth sect

Ramdas initiated the Samarth sect to revive spirituality among the various sections of Indian society. He established several *matha* during his lifetime.



Ramdas meeting Chhatrapati [Shivaji I](#)

### Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Bhonsle I

The first Maratha ruler [Chhatrapati Shivaji](#) Bhonsle I was a contemporary of Ramdas. (It is still controversial)<sup>[13]</sup> <sup>[14][15][16]

### Guru Hargobind

According to a manuscript in the Sikh tradition known as *Panjāh Sakhīān*, Ramdas Swami met [Guru Hargobind](#) (1595 - 1644) at [Srinagar](#) near the [Garhwal hills](#). This meeting also finds a mention in an 18th-century Marathi literary work known as *Ramdas Swamichi Bakhar*, composed by Hanumant Swami. The meeting probably took place in the early 1630s during Ramdas' pilgrimage to northern India and Hargobind's journey to Nanakmatta, a town in present-day [Uttarakhand](#). Before the meeting, Hargobind had probably returned from a hunting excursion.<sup>[17][18]</sup>

During their conversation, Ramdas Swami reportedly asked "I had heard that you occupy the Gaddi (seat) of Nanak. Nanak was a *tyāgī sādhu*, a saint who had renounced the world. You possess arms and keep an army and horses. You allow yourself to be addressed as Sacha Patshah, the true king. What sort of a *sādhu* are you?" Hargobind replied, "Internally a hermit and externally a prince. Arms mean protection to the poor and destruction of the tyrant. Baba Guru Nanak had not renounced the world but had renounced *māyā* - the self and ego." Ramdas is reported to have said, "*Yeh hamare man bhavti hai*" (This appeals to my mind).<sup>[17][18]</sup>

### Residences

Ramdas moved all across the Indian subcontinent and usually resided in caves (*ghal* in Marathi). Some of these are listed below.<sup>[19]</sup>

- Ramghal, [Sajjangad](#)
- Morghal, at Morbag near [Sajjangad](#)
- Tondoshighal, north of Chaphal
- Taakli, near [Nashik](#)

## Samarth Ramdas

- Chandragiri, opposite Vasantgad, near [Karad](#)
- Helwak, near [Helwak](#) village
- Shiganwadi, near Chandragiri
- [Shivtharghal](#), near [Mahad](#)<sup>[20]</sup>

### Timeline of Residences of Samartha Ramdas

Year	Year	Location of stay	Age
FROM	TO		
1608	1620	Jamb (Jalna)	0 to 12
1620	1632	Nashik	12 to 24
1632	1644	<i>nationwide pilgrimage</i>	24 to 36
1645	1651	Chafal	37 to 43
1652	1655	Shivtharghal	44 to 47
1657	1660	Shivtharghal	49 to 52
1660	1672	Chafal	52 to 64
1672	1675	Shivtarghal	64 to 68
1676	1682	Sajjangad	68 to 74

### Death

For five days prior, he had ceased consuming food and water. This practice of fasting unto death is known as *Praayopaveshana*. He continuously recited the *taaraka mantra* "Shree Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" while resting beside an idol of Rama brought from Tanjore. His disciples Uddhav Swami and Akka Swami remained in his service during this period.<sup>[21]</sup> Uddhav Swami had the final rites performed.

### Legacy

Samartha Ramdas Swami served an inspiration for a number of Indian thinkers, historians and social reformers such as [Bal Gangadhar Tilak](#), [Keshav Hedgewar](#), [Vishwanath Rajwade](#), Ramchandra Ranade, and [Vinayak Damodar Savarkar](#). Tilak derived inspiration from Ramdas when devising aggressive strategies to counter the British colonial rule.<sup>[22]</sup> [Nanasaheb Dharmadhikari](#), a spiritual teacher promoted Ramdas Swami's philosophy through his spiritual discourses. [Gondavalekar Maharaj](#), a 19th-century spiritual master promoted Ramdas' spiritual methods through his teachings. [Bhausaheb Maharaj](#), founder of the [Inchegeri Sampradaya](#) used *Dasbodh* as a means of instruction to his disciples. *Dasbodh* has been translated and published by the American followers of [Ranjit Maharaj](#), a spiritual teacher of the Inchegeri Sampradaya.

Ramdas had a profound influence on [Keshav Hedgewar](#), the founder of Hindu nationalist organization [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh](#). Hedgewar quoted Ramdas on numerous occasions and would often note the latter's views in his personal diary. According to one entry in his diary dated 4 March 1929, Hedgewar writes "Shri Samarth did not want anything for himself. He mindfully guarded against self-pride which could result from success and greatness. Ingraining this discipline, he devoted himself to the welfare of his people and a higher self-realization."<sup>[23]</sup>

### **Cultural Legacy**

Ramdas Swami is a revered spiritual figure in Maharashtra and remains relevant to contemporary society in Maharashtra, thanks to his literary contributions. An *aarti* composed by him in reverence of the Hindu deity Ganesh is often recited first in numerous Hindu rituals. [Maruti Stotra](#), his hymn in praise of Hanuman is commonly recited by school children as well as wrestlers at traditional gyms known as [akhada](#) in Maharashtra.<sup>[24]</sup> Generations of Marathi children have been reciting *Manache Shlok* at home or at school.<sup>[25][26]</sup> Swatantravir Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, an Indian independence activist and writer is believed to have derived inspiration from *Dasbodh*.<sup>[27]</sup> Ramdas' teachings and philosophy have been promoted and endorsed by various political and social organizations in Maharashtra.