

## Prelims Master Program (2023-24) – Ancient, Medieval, Art and Culture

### Handout 17: Bhakti Movement (1)

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Bhakti is inherent in Indian culture. However, at a particular turn of history, Bhakti took the form of a popular movement. It didn't remain merely a religious movement but became the largest socio-cultural movement in India. It assimilated within itself both 'high' Brahmanic culture and 'lower' tribal culture, orthodoxy as well as liberalism, and elitism as well as popular elements. So, it was heterogenous in character.

The term **Bhakti-marga** is one of the three ways to achieve moksha.

- Karma: Yajna, Japa, Tapa, Anushtana, Vratas etc.
- Jnana
  - Knowledge, based on Upanishads
  - Spiritual practices like Shravana, Manana, Nididhyasa
- Bhakti
  - The root is **Bhaj**.
    - It means share/possess.
    - It encapsulates notions of belonging, loyalty, loving, or even simply liking. It may be a devotion **towards Guru, a king, and a god**.
  - **In religious sense**, it is a method of worship (upasana paddhati), where there is an **intense emotional love/devotion for a personal god**.
    - It may be Vishnu/Shiva, Vyankatesha, Vithoba, Ram/Krishna/Radha/Durga.
  - In bhakti, it's the emotion that matters.

#### **Basic Concepts:**

**(a) Saguna/Nirguna:** Two alternative ways of imaging the nature of the divine (Brahman) –

- Saguna Sakar: with form, attributes and quality.
- Nirguna Nirakar: formless, without attributes or quality.

**(b) Panth and Sampradaya:** Each of the major divinities of Hinduism—Vishnu, Shiva, and the various forms of the Goddess—have distinct devotional traditions.

**(c) Vidha:** Various devotional practices like reciting the name of the god, singing hymns in praise of the deity, wearing or carrying identifying emblems, and undertaking pilgrimages to sacred places associated with the deity.

**(d) Bhav:** In Bhakti, there is an emotional relationship between the god and the devotee.

- Different local traditions explored various possible relationships like servant-master, a friend-friend, a parent-child, a child-parent, and a woman-beloved.

### Evolutionary Story:

(a) Although **Vedic religion** was primarily worship through Yajna and Mantras, some elements of Bhakti can be notice there. Bhakti has been inherently present in the Indian culture. The term bhakti first time appears in **Shvetashvetara Upanishad**. But it only appears once there.

(b) However, as a social-religious ideology, we find the full extent exposition of Bhaktism in the text, **Bhagvat Gita**, first, which possible written during the **post-Mauryan era**. It explicitly uses the word "bhakti" to designate a religious path (marga).

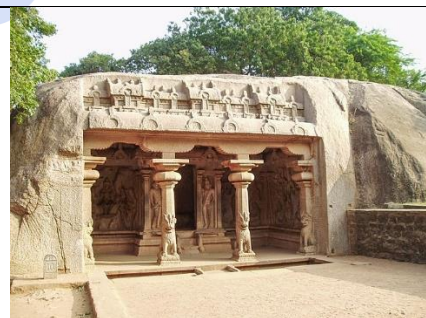
In this era, Hindu Synthesis took place in which:

- **Non-Aryan/tribal elements** were assimilated by **Sanskritizing many local deities into Aryan pantheon** through the practice of land-grants (process of cultural integration)
- The idea of **avataravad** was accepted.
- Reduction in complex sacrificial **rituals**
- Various **Buddhist influences** were incorporated.
- Absorption of **foreigners** (Greeks, Shakas and Kushanas)
- Emergence of **Shaivism and Vaishnavism**
- Started the **cult of temple**.
- Composition of **smriti, epics and Puranic literature** which form the basis of the ideas and practices of classical Hinduism.

(c) **Gupta period** was characterized as the zenith of classical/Puranic Hinduism. As the focus was towards assimilation, it was broadly characterized by tolerance, acceptance, and synthesis.

(d) Trends in **North India**: during **post-Gupta** and **Early Medieval period**:

- **Tantricism** became dominant in some regions.
- Development of **Shaiva Tantra** in **Kashmir**.
- Emergence of **Nathpanthi** reaction to Tantricism.
- In parts of North India, Bhaktism got associated with **feudalism**.



Matsyah Kurmo Varahas-cha  
Narasimhas-cha Vamana  
Ramo Ramas-cha Ramas-cha  
Buddha Kalki-cha te dasa  
—Adivaraha cave (7th century),  
Mahabalipuram; earliest avatar-  
related inscription in India

(e) Trends in **South India**: Meanwhile, in the **post-Gupta era** (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries), Bhakti appeared as a popular movement.

By this time, the Sanskrit/Puranic Tradition had reached Tamil region. It mixed with the Sangam-era intense love poetry + Northern Puranic Bhakti to create an intensely emotional bhakti movement. It was deeply rooted in Tamil tradition and yet was pan-Indian in ethos.

- Here the initiative was taken by 12 **Alwar** and 63 **Nayanar saints**.
  - This *bhakti* is **basic**, even **alimentary**, and **never simply cerebral**.
  - Singing of **devotional songs** composed in **vernacular language** by ‘poet-saints’
  - Cultivation of **personal experience**.
    - Devotion verges on **possession**— possessed through a **musical, poetic idiom**.
  - It leads to the **creation of communities** of those possessed.
  - Consideration of **both sexes and all social strata** as potential devotees
    - It became a social movement with popular base.
- There was also an emergence of **Shankar’s philosophy of Advaita Vedanta** at the same time.

However, in the **Early Medieval period**, there was a fundamental re-orientation.

- Brahmanic elements started to enter the Bhakti movement. They were known as **Vaishnava Acharya**.
- **Association with monarchy and temple cult**
  - Simultaneously, there was the rise of **Imperial Cholas**. There emerged a religious structure based on an **alliance between monarchy and Brahmins** who were being **supported by idol worship and temple cult**.

**(f) North India in Medieval Times:**

- The establishment of the **Delhi Sultanate** in the early 13th century witnessed great outburst of many diverse and widespread socio-religious movements in various parts of the country drawing upon the concepts of bhakti.
- During 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was a wide-scale renaissance in north India and Bhakti became the main creed of Indians.

In view of these wide and at times even basic differences among various bhakti movements, they must be discussed individually in order to clearly bring out the characteristics of each one of them and also to discover elements of unity and diversity among them.



Bhakti as a popular movement arose in **South India** in the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries in poems that the **Alvars** (12 Vaishnav saints) and the **Nayanars** (63 Shaiva saints) composed in **Tamil** to gods. The Tamil word that is used by Alvars and Nayanmars to express their devotion to their god was **anbu**, which means love.

Bhakti changed its complexion when it reached south India. **Important features of Tamil bhakti of Alvars and Nayanars:**

- **Vishnu and Shiva** were the focus of Alwar and Nayanar bhakti.
- **The interaction between the Sangam and Puranic elements** introduced various themes from the **Puranic myths**.
  - Skanda → Murugan.
  - Mayon and Krishna themes were identified with each other.
- They composed in **Tamil language** to reach the popular base.
  - Tamil language for devotion emerged as alternative to Sanskrit.
- It contained the **element of social radicalism**, against Brahmanical social order.
  - The saints themselves came from varied backgrounds. Many leading saints of the Bhakti movement were not Brahmins, and a sizeable number hailed from the most marginalised castes.
  - They rejected caste-based discrimination and subordinate position of women.
  - Tamil Bhakti **broke away from the ritual-oriented Vedic religion**.
    - While it did accept the Vedas as a figurehead of scriptural authority. It did not unconditionally endorse, rather dismissed, the Vedic practices and rituals such as fire sacrifice.
  - Thus, it discarded caste norms and rituals and foregrounded pure piety in their place.
- They were **hostile to Buddhism and Jainism** for their corrupt practices and elitism.
  - At that time, Jainism and Buddhism enjoyed a privileged status with court patronage in South India and had become rigid and formal.
  - Bhakti movement not only won to the fold of Hinduism many adherents of Buddhism and Jainism, but they also won over many **tribals**.
- It included efforts to make people more **ethical, sensitive, egalitarian, compassionate and spiritual**.
- They formed **community of bhakts**. (bhakta-kula).

	<b>Alvars</b>	<b>Nayanars</b>
<b>Meaning</b>	Those who dive deep, absorbed in the divine, immersed in God	Nayanmar is an honorific. Never used by themselves.
<b>Saints</b>	12 Vaishnav saints	63 Shaiva saints
<b>Nature of Bhakti</b>	Initially: Prominence of Krishna avatara (Mayon/Mal).	Initially, Shaivism was not very popular in cities (Pashupat, Kapalik,

	<p>Later: Emergence of Vaishnav Sampradayas</p> <p>Developed the notion of <b>prapatti</b> (complete surrender) later developed in the Srivaishnavism</p>	Kalamukhas, Aghora). But Nayanars provided popular acceptance.
<b>Visualization of God in Poetry</b>	<p>Lover–beloved Mother–child (less prominent)</p> <p>Devotional songs of love, longing, ecstasy, and service. “Madness” of religious exaltation: “run, jump, cry, laugh, and sing, and let everyone witness it.”</p>	<p>Master and slave. Nayanars described themselves as atiyar (servant) or tontar (slave).</p> <p>Poems frequently refer to the experience of ‘melting’ before the lord, descriptions of ecstatic worship, where the devotee stammers, tears pour out, when he dances.</p>
<b>Extra Facts</b>	108 Divya Desams	Term: <b>Siddhar</b>
<b>Books</b>	<p><b>Nalayira Divya Prabandham</b> (4000 verses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Composed by <b>Nathmuni</b> (leader of Srivaishnavism) He collected and systematised the teachings of the Alvars and declared them equivalent to the Vedas.</li> <li>Status of Tamil Veda due to Ramanuja (Tamil Vaishnav = Ubhay Vedantins)</li> <li>Srirangam Temple (South), Badrinath (North): daily chanting of hymns today</li> </ul> <p>Hagiographies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Divyasuricharitam</b> by Garudavahana (12<sup>th</sup> c)</li> </ul>	<p>Three Books: Tirumurai, Vedas and Shaiva agamas</p> <p>Canonization of <b>Tirumurai</b> (anthology)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1-7 books: Nambiyandar Nambi</b> compiled <b>Tevaram</b> (Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar) in 10th c. It is sung in temples since Rajaraja Chola era (10th c)</li> <li>12th book: Sekkizhar's <b>Periya Puranam</b> (Great Purana, life depiction of 63 Nayanmars)</li> </ul>

### Some important saints:

Alvar	Nayanars
<p><b>Nammalvar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greatest of the 12</li> <li>1352/4000 compositions.</li> <li>Developed the notion of prapatti.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Three Muvar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sambandar: Koon Pandian was converted.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Madhurkavi:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disciple of Nammalvar, recorded and compiled his works.</li> </ul> <p><b>Kulshekhara</b> (Belonged to royal Chera family)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Author of Perumal Tirumoli (Tamil) and Mukundamala (Sanskrit)</li> <li>Imp role in reviving <b>Koodiyattam</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appar: Mahendravarman I was converted.</li> <li>Sundarar</li> </ul> <p><b>Manikkavacakar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not in 63 Nayanars but associated with them.</li> <li>Works included in Tirumurai.</li> <li><b>Tiruvachakam:</b> Collection of hymns</li> </ul> <p>Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kulachirai Nayanar: Pandya Minister</li> <li>Cheraman Perumal</li> </ul>
<p><b>Andal</b> (the one who rules)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only female Alvar, Queen of Tamil Bhakti.</li> <li>Her poetry on Krishna-Gopis was laced with pangs of separation and longing for union with lord. Highly emotional and erotic.</li> <li>Tradition: married to Ranganathaswamy and later merged into the idol.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Three female saints</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Karaikkal Ammaiyar</li> <li>Mangaiyarkkarasiyar</li> <li>Isainaniyar</li> </ul>

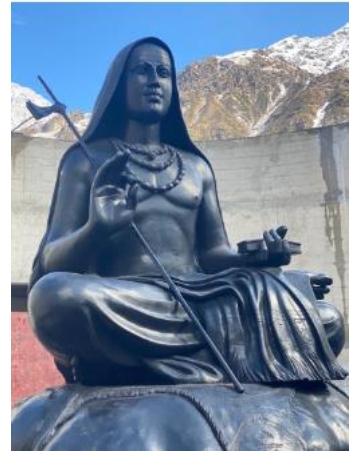
- The idea of bhakti was soon **introduced in the temple.**
  - By the Chola era**, the nexus between court-priest was created through the network of land-grants and temple institution. It helped in political centralization and social integration.
  - With it, Tamil bhakti **lost its radical anti-brahmanism** and **temple-cult emerged as the most important manifestation.**
- In time, the **Sri Vaishnava** community, dominated by Brahmans and Vellalas, comes to view the Alvars as its forebears, while the **Shaiva Siddhanta** community, led relatively more exclusively by Vellalas, roots itself in the Nayanars.
- Soon, anthological and hagiographical corpuses developed. There was also a body of theological writing that emerged.
- The temple situation also marked out a **sacred geography** for the first time. This also provided a network for future religious interaction.
- Not only temples, but there was also the emergence of **Mathas.**
  - Established many mathas and guhai (caves) for teacher-disciples living and meditation. This institution later spread all over the country.
  - Many mathas became pilgrimage centres and played important role in popularizing new religious thoughts.



### Adi Shankaracharya

(Also called as Hindudharmoddhakara)

Very little is known about his personal life. He is often considered to be the founder of the Advaita Vedanta school, but was actually a great systematizer, not the founder. **Shankara Digvijaya** (life of Adi Shankara) by **Anandigiri** is a hagiography of Adi Shankaracharya written during the Vijayanagar era, and established Shankaracharya as the rallying symbol of the era. However, the book has not survived. Another Shankar Digvijaya by **Madhavarachya/Vidyaranya**, who was Jagadguru of Shringeri Pitham, has survived.



#### **Background:**

- The Upanishads form the basic texts and Vedanta philosophy interprets them.
- **Badarayan** (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century) wrote **Brahma Sutra** to systematize and summarize the philosophical and spiritual ideas in the Upanishads.
- **Gaudapada** (6<sup>th</sup> century) was a grand teacher of Shankaracharya. He wrote **Mandukya Karika** commentary on the one of the shortest Upanishads called Mandukya.
  - Shankaracharya's commentary on it is at the core of his Advaita philosophy.

**Adi Shankara** tried to revive Hinduism through Vedantic philosophy.

- He used Vedanta as a cohesive idea to unite all strands, based on the Vedic dictum of 'One Truth, Many Expositions'.
- He gave a new interpretation to Upanishadic philosophy. He **systematized Advaita by as jnanamarga**.
- To justify his view, he wrote **commentaries on Prasthanatrayi** (10 Upanishads, Brahmasutra and Bhagavad Gita). Such philosophy was attractive for the scholars/elites.

"Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiva Naparaha."

- **Brahma Satyam:** it exists.
  - The supreme truth of Brahman. It is Nirguna and sat-chit-ananda (truth-consciousness-bliss).
- **Jagat Mithya:** all creation is mithya. (Mayavada)
  - In his view, this **world** is nothing but illusion or **maya**.
  - Brahman, the spirit that suffuses the cosmos, is the sole reality; other than Brahman, everything else, including the universe, material objects and individuals are illusory (maya).
- **Jivo Brahmaiva Naparaha:** Jiva (atman) and Brahma both are one and the same. There is nothing else. (eka Brahmo dwitiyo nasti). Thus, it is Advaita.
  - Thus, Brahman is Paramarthika Satyam, Absolute Truth, and one's atman or self is identical to it.



- Shankara's Hinduism does not see God as external to the universe. God dwells in the universe, but God is not the universe; He is in it and beyond it. The world is in God, and the two are indivisible.
- To justify his stand, he focused on **four Mahavakyas** from Upanishads.
  - Aham Brahmasmi
  - Tat Tvam Asi
  - Ayam Atma Brahma
  - Prajnanam Brahma (Consciousness is Brahma)
- **How to achieve Moksha?**
  - Jnanamarga = Sa Vidya ya Vikumtaye
  - Shankara gave primary importance to jnana yoga
  - Realising that Atman-Brahman are one and the same, and that Brahma is satchitanand (pure consciousness) only leads to **moksha**.
  - Moksha can be attained while alive (jivanmukti) or after death (videhamukti).  
**Once you get moksha, you become Brahma, you experience being Brahma.** It is a state of bliss (anand).
- **Compositions**
  - Commentary on Prasthanatrayi
  - Upadesha-sahasri
  - Vivekachudamani

Adi Shankara was not merely a philosophical thinker who reconciled the doctrines and traditions of the ancients with a robust interpretation for the future; he was also a practical reformer.

- For common people, he authorized **idol-worship** to popularize gods among them.
  - To Adi Shankara, bhakti yoga (the practice of worship) was merely a step towards jnana yoga (the cultivation of knowledge).
  - Shankara thus tried to connect Vedic Hinduism with Puranic Hinduism.
  - Over 100 Stotrams for singing
    - Bhaj Govindam
    - Nirvan Shatakam (atma shatakam)
    - Dakshinamurti Stotra (for Shiva)
    - Govinda-Asthaka (for Vishnu)
    - Saundarya Lahari (for Shakti)
    - Kashi Panchakam
    - He even wrote on Tantra.
- **Rituals**
  - **Smart Puja:** Five Hindu gods (Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti, Ganesh, Surya), include a sixth impersonal nirguna god in their practice.
  - He **purified the worship of the Shakti**, which had become somewhat questionable due to Tantric practices. He introduced the samayachara form of Devi worship, involving hymns of exquisite beauty like the Soundarya Lahari.

- **Travelled widely** in South and North (Shankar Digvijay) He was engaged in spirited debates and refuted opposing ideas.
- In order to give **ideological-institutional unity to Hinduism**.
  - He **established 4 mathas** in 4 directions to create religious boundary and envelope whole India.
    - Jyotirmath at Badrinath
    - Govardhan Math at Puri
    - Kalika Math at Dwaraka
    - Sharada Peetham at Shringeri
    - Additionally: Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham in Kanchipuram
  - **Dashnami Sect** of wandering monks: Shankara also created **disciples sannyasis** (Hindu ascetic youth) who took learned shastras, travelled across, and debated with other religious groups across India. They took the message of his faith all across India.
  - **Kumbha Mela**
- His ready acceptance of many Buddhist principles and practices so narrowed the gap between the two faiths as to make the **absorption of Buddhism** by the parent faith inevitable in India.
- **Social Commentary**
  - His ideas seem Brahminical and elitist. However, by conceiving of Oneness in this manner, he laid the philosophical groundwork for the fundamental equality of all human beings.
  - In Upadeshsahasri, Shankara states that any bheda (discrimination) based on class or caste or parentage is a lack of liberating knowledge.
  - Shankara's liberated individual understands and practises the ethics of non-discrimination, since the high-born and the low are all part of the same Oneness.

## Vaishnava Acharya Tradition: From South to North

### Various Schools of Vedanta:

Acharya	Vedantic Philosophy
Shankaracharya (8 <sup>th</sup> c)	Advaita Vedanta
Ramanujacharya (11 <sup>th</sup> c)	Vishishtha Advaita
Madhvacharya (13 <sup>th</sup> c)	Dvaita Vedanta
Nimbarkacharya (13 <sup>th</sup> c)	Dvaitadvaita
Vallabhacharya (16 <sup>th</sup> c)	Shuddha Advaita
Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (16 <sup>th</sup> c)	Achintya Bhedabheda

### (1) Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita (Srivaishnavism)

- Founder: **Nathamuni**
- Real founder: **Yamunacharya** was the real founder.
- Most salient contribution: **Ramanujacharya** (1017-1137, 120 years)
  - Ramanuja succeeded Yamunacharya at **Srirangam** as the head of the temple.
  - Initially, he was a pupil of advaita philosopher **Yadava-Prakasha** at Kanchipuram. However, soon he got disillusioned with the philosophy of advaita.
- **Vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja:**
  - His commentaries on the Gita and on the Brahmasutras contested Adi Shankara's interpretations of those scriptures.
    - He **criticized** Shankara's **Nirguna Brahma**.
      - According to Ramanuja, Brahm cannot be nirguna, it cannot be without 'quality', because we can experience it. It, in itself, is an attribute. Thus, Brahma is not nirguna, it has attributes.
        - Brahma is the same as **Vishnu**, as per Ramanuja.
    - Ramanuja also **rejects Mayavad**.
      - Jagat is not mithya, it's a part of Brahma.
    - Ramanuja also **rejects** that **atman** (chit) and **Brahman** (paramatman) **are identical**.
      - As per Ramanuja, Chit (atma) and Achit (body) are both parts of Ishvara. So, they are part of Ishvara, but not identical.
  - So, Ramanuja in a way supported Advaita, that everything is Brahma, but
    - Brahma is not Nirgun but Vishnu.
    - Jagat is not Mithya, it's a part of Brahman. Thus, Mayavada is not true, it's the creative power of Brahma.
    - Thus, it is Qualified (Vishishtha) Monism (Advaita).
  - Further, for Ramanuja, against Shankara, **knowledge** alone is not enough for salvation. It has to be followed by devotion (**bhakti**) to attain salvation.

- Thus, Ramanuja's chief contribution was to mingle Vedic Brahmanism with bhakti.
  - He gave **philosophical justification to Bhakti**, made it scholarly acceptable and helped in its popularization.
  - It became the chief component of all Vaishnava movements.
- However, the idea of Krishna, Radha and cowherds are absent from Ramanuja's Vaishnavism.
- **Persecution?**
  - According to Vaishnavite tradition, Vaishnavites were persecuted by a Chola king and Ramanuja was made to flee to Karnataka.
  - **Bittideva**, a Jain Hoysala ruler of Belur in Karnataka. Ramanuja converted Bittideva into Vaishnavism and christened him **Vishnu Vardhana**. He built a very ornate and sculpturally magnificent temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu, **Channa Kesava, in Belur**.
- **Social aspect:**
  - He brought organisational energy into the faith, conducting daily pujas and annual temple festivals, **allowing image-worship and more inclusive temple-based rituals** at the Srirangam Mutt he headed and in other nearby temples.
  - **Pancharatra Tradition**
    - It is a temple ritual which deals with the construction of temples, rituals in temples, idols, initiation of vaishnavites, their religious marks, etc.
  - Ramanuja tried to establish a careful balance between orthodox Brahmanism and popular bhakti which was open to all.
  - He advocated bhakti as a mode of worship accessible to all including the Sudras and even the outcastes. While propagating bhakti, he did not observe caste distinctions and even tried to eradicate untouchability. He **permitted women and worshippers of the lower castes** to participate in temple worship, a privilege they had been denied.
  - Ramanuja also allowed the **chanting of the popular Alvar hymns**, which were sung in **Tamil**, the language of the people, rather than in the arcane Sanskrit.
  - Ramanuja's reforms spread across southern India to other major Vaishnavite temples and can be seen in many ways as a **reinvention of Hinduism, taking Shankara's work to the masses**.
- **Literature**
  - Vedantasara, Vedantadipa, and his commentaries on Bhagavad-Gita and Brahma-Sutra.



King  
Vishnuvardhana,  
queen Shantala  
Devi,  
Chennakeshava  
temple at Belur.



Statue of Equality, Hyderabad

# A proponent of social equality

E. RAJESH PATHAK

‘K<sup>n</sup>ower of the self, with his divine eyes looks equally at the inner-self lying within Brahmin, cow, elephant, dog and an outcaste’, says the Bhagavad Gita. The one who emulated this message and worked upon it throughout his life was Sri Ramanujacharya. The ‘Statue of Equality’, unveiled recently in Hyderabad, is part of the ‘Sri Ramanuja Sahasrabdi Samarohanam’ that concludes on February 14.



The statue of Ramanuja unveiled recently in Hyderabad. ■ PHOTO: AP

Not just in the realm of spirituality, but the initiatives of Ramanuja, who lived a thousand years ago, for social equality were equally notable. He made it mandatory to sing in temples the songs written by saints belonging to oppressed castes. He had the gates of Tirunarayana Perumal temple opened to all castes and communities. Ramanuja learned different schools of dharma from five different acharyas. But it was Sri Nambi (Ghoshtipoorna) from whom he learnt the Ramayana.

Another guru from whom Ramanuja learnt the Vedas and the Nalayira Divya Prabandham was Periya Nambi, also called Mahapoorna. It is believed that Periya Nambi initiated Ramanuja into Vaishnavism. This bhakti cult reached its zenith in south India under the Azhwars, the devotees of Vishnu.

Ramanuja made this cult of devotion prominent as ‘Prapatti’, which is the essence of Ramanuja’s

Saranagati Gadya. It means seeking refuge with Vishnu and gaining moksha from the world.

Inspired by ‘Prapatti’, during the 14th century, Ramanand Swami pioneered the Bhakti movement in north India, thus creating a bridge between the bhakti movements of the South and the North.

## Post-Ramanuja developments

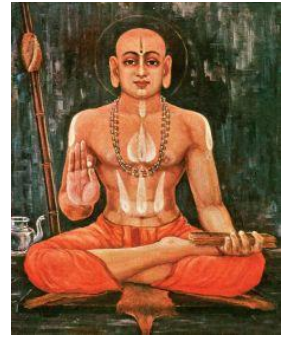
His followers got divided:

Vadakalai (school of northern learning)	Tenkalai (school of southern learning)
Vadakalai believed that prappatti could be achieved through karma	Karma is unnecessary. God's love is spontaneous and brings salvation by itself.
Vadakalai keeps Om exclusive to Brahmanical groups.	Tenkalai were comparatively liberal. The mantra Om namo Narayana is for all.
Vadakalai made <b>Kanchipuram</b> their main centre of activities.	<b>Srirangam</b> emerged as the prominent centre of Tenkalai



## (2) Madhvacharya's Dvaita Vedanta (13<sup>th</sup> c)

- Also known as **Anandatirtha**.
- Madhvacharya **rejected advaita completely**, and gave the idea of dualism.
  - **He was a critic of both Shankara as well as Ramanuja.**
  - Atman and Brahman are fundamentally separate from each other. These are two different realities, never the same.
  - Tattvavada
    - He divides the things into two tattvas:
      - **Svatantra Tattva:** Ishvara/Brahman.
      - **Paratantra Tattva:** Jagat (achit) and Jiva/atman (chit).
    - Paratantra Tattvas are dependent, but they cannot be one with Ishvara. Thus, it is dvaita.
  - For Madhva, **Brahman** was not an impersonal/nirguna being but **another name for Vishnu**.
    - Vishnu is the object of worship and devotion. God-soul relationship is like master-servant. **Liberation is achieved through only the grace of God.**
    - Thus, his philosophy gave support to **Krishna Bhakti**.
- His greatest work is **Anuvyakhyana**.
- **Udupi Ashta Mathas**
  - The main area of his influence was Karnataka. Madhvacharya established eight mathas in Udupi, with a murti he obtained from Dwarka.
- Madhvacharya's ideas led to the founding of **Haridasa sect** of Vaishnavism in Karnataka, known for their devotional songs and music. During the rule of the Vijayanagar Empire in South India, the Haridasa movement spread out from Karnataka.



### Haridasi Tradition

This movement took shape before and during the Vijayanagara Empire. The main objective of this movement was to propagate the Dvaita philosophy of Madhvacharya to the masses through a literary medium known as Dasa Sahitya.

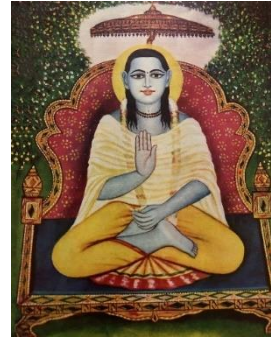
The Haridasas represented two groups, the **Vyasakuta** and **Dasakuta**

- **Vyasakuta:** proficient in the Vedas, Upanishads and other Darshanas.
  - Eminent saints-scholars: Naraharitirtha, Jayatirtha, Sripadaraya, **Vyasatirtha**, Vadirajatirtha etc.
  - **Raghavendra Swami** (1595-1671)
    - He was the adhipati of Kumbakonam Math.
- **Dasakuta:** used Kannada devotional songs to reach the people.
  - Saint poets like **Purandaradasa** and **Kanakadasa** earned the devotion of King Krishnadevaraya.
  - **Annamacharya** was a composer of early Carnatic music composed hundreds of Kirtanas in Telugu at Tirupati.



### (3) Nimbarkacharya's Dvaitadvaita (Bhedabhed) (13<sup>th</sup> c)

He was a Telugu Brahmin, born in a **Karnataka**. Most of his life was spend in **Vrindavana**. His followers believe that he was the re-incarnation of Sudarshan chakra.



- He accepted Dvaita part – Ishvara is different from Jiva and Jagat (**distinct**, bheda). But he added that Jiva/jagat also depend on Ishvara, so they are kind of **identical** (monism, Advaita, abheda).
  - However, where Ramanuja made difference subordinate to non-difference, Nimbarka emphasized both difference (bheda) and non-difference (abheda) equally.
- Nimbarka identified Ishvara/Brahman with **Radha-Krishna**. So, Radha-Krishna were considered to be the supreme form. Both are conjointly understood to be the eternal deity.
  - Only by *surrender* to Radha-Krishna (not through their own efforts) could they attain the grace necessary for liberation from rebirth.
  - Thus, Nimbarka played a major role in spreading the worship of the divine couple Radha and Krishna and founded Nimbarka Sampradaya.
- Books:
  - Vedanta-Parajita-Saurabh, a commentary on Brahma-sutra.
  - Siddhanta-Ratna (dasha-shloki)
- This sect has been popular in Mathura-Vrindavan region. However, many books about this once-popular cult, were destroyed by Muslims during the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1659–1707), and thus little information has survived about Nimbarka and his followers.

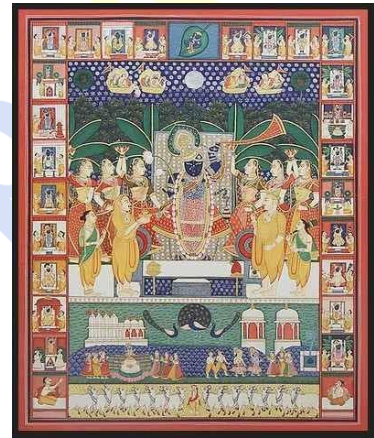
### (4) Vallabhacharya's Shuddhadvaita (aka Saakar Brahnavad) (1479-1531)

- His philosophical ideas were the **culmination** of philosophical thought during the Bhakti Movement.
- He was born in a Telugu Brahmin family in Varanasi. His family escaped to the Champaran of Chhattisgarh during the conflicts in the late 15th century.
- He participated in a **philosophical debate at Vijayanagara** and was honoured with the **kanakabhishekam** by Krishnadevaraya on victory.
- **Philosophy of Shuddha Advaita**
  - Vallabha rejected concept of Maya.
    - There is no real difference between atman and brahman. There is no question of Bheda and Abheda. Jiva and Jagat are all Brahma. **Brahma is everything.**
    - Individual souls are not clouded by maya. **The world of Maya is not unreal, but a power of Brahma.** Jagat and jiva are all real.





- His brahma is equal to **Krishna personified. Everything is Krishna's Leela.** There is absolute identity among them.
  - According to Vallabha, Brahman consists of existence (sat), consciousness (chit), and bliss (ananda), and manifests completely as Krishna himself.
- **Krishna-bhakti through Pushti-marga**
  - Liberation is considered secondary to the enjoyment of Shri Krishna's bliss. Its aim is Shri Krishna's happiness. The purpose of this tradition is to perform sevā (selfless service) out of love for Krishna.
    - Thus, **Bhakti** is the means to attain not Mukti, but eternal service of Krishna and participation along with His activities in divine Vrindavana.
  - **Pushti** (divine grace).
    - Any personal efforts such as good karma or rituals are not essential.
    - It is about spontaneous, selfless, motiveless love for Krishna. It is expressed through self-less service (seva) to Krishna.
    - No caste, creed, color, sex or age prevents one from attaining Shri Krishna's Grace.
  - **Rejected asceticism and monastic life.** It suggested that through loving devotion to God Krishna, any householder could achieve salvation.
  - The three pillars of Pushtimarga are:
    - Raga (Haveli Sangeet)
    - Bhog (pure veg food)
    - Vastra Shringar
- Books: **Anubhashya, Bhagwat Tika Subodhini**
- Legacy preserved in **Braj Region** and in Mewar (**Nathdwara** temple of Srinathaji).
- His successor was his son **Vitthalnath** who was honoured by **Akbar**.
- **Pichwai** paintings
- **Ashtachhap** poets



## Lingayat Sect (Virshaivas)

- **Why is it called Lingayat?**

- They considered Shiva to be supreme god and worshipped him in the linga form.
- As a mark of devotion, a small linga is worn around the shoulder.

- **Saints**

- The main proponent of the sect is **Basavanna** (not the founder). He served in the court of Kalachuri king Bijjala II (1157-67).
- Other important saints are **Allama Prabhu**, **Channabasavanna** and **Akka Mahadevi**.

- **Spread**

- There was growing popularity and numbers in this new community whose **membership was open and inclusive**.
- Soon it led to **royal patronage** in some Deccan kingdoms like Vijayanagara, particularly during the reign of **Devaraya II** (r. 1422–46 CE).
- It thrived in northern Karnataka during the **Vijayanagara Empire** (14th-18th century). From the Karnataka region, the Virashaiva movement spread to other parts of South India.
- Some later royal dynasties in Karnataka became followers of Lingayatism. One of the most remembered is the Lingayat queen **Rani Chennamma of Kittur** (1778–1829).

- **Anuhav Mantapa**: hall of spiritual experience.

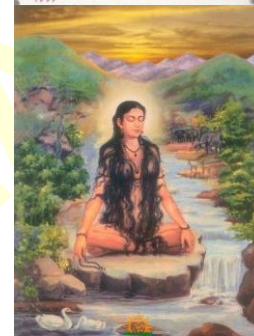
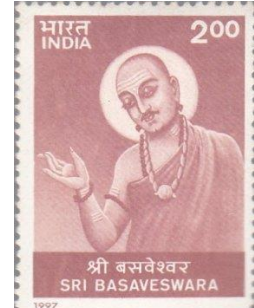
- **Radicalism**

- **Not ritualistic in nature.**

- They primarily conceived their **god as personal and formless**.
- Unlike Tamil Bhakti, Basava championed devotional worship that **rejected temple worship and rituals led by Brahmins** and replaced it with **personalised direct worship of Shiva**.
- They rejected the Vedic tradition of sacrifices, rituals, varna system, belief in karma-reincarnation, and superstitions.
- Lingayats have their own priestly class called **Jangamas**.
- They don't cremate the dead but **practice symbolic burial**. Death is just merging with Shiva, so no penance required.

- **Social radicalism**

- **Gender:**



Akka Mahadevi by  
Nilima Sheikh

- They broke the Brahminical taboos which regarded women as inferior and unfit for spiritual self-realisation.
- They also discouraged child marriage, it also encouraged widow marriage.
- **Caste:** Originally, they didn't follow caste hierarchy.
- Although it espoused **ahimsa**, it critiqued Jainism, which was very influential in Karnataka.
- **Vachana Literature**
  - Saints expressed their thoughts in single line philosophical utterances/spiritual experiences/mystical thoughts called Vachans.
  - This literature flourished esp. after 15<sup>th</sup> century.
    - To this day **about 12,000 vachanas** of this period have been discovered
    - They are authored by over 100 spiritual seekers and saints, **including over 30 women**. The poet saints called themselves '**Sharanas**' (or **vachanakars**). They hailed from almost all classes of society, professions, and castes – including outcastes or “untouchables”.
  - Vachanas were not written by/for academic philosophers, but for ordinary people in their mother tongue, **Kannada**.
  - Vachanas are commonly **recited and sung** in the villages and towns of Karnataka both in religious and secular functions.



### **Maharashtra Dharma**

#### **Mahanubhava sect (Paramarga)**

- It was founded by **Chakradhar Swami** in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.
  - He himself is considered as the avatar of Krishna by his disciples.
  - His earliest biography is known as **Leela Charitra**, authored by **Mhaimbhat** in late 13<sup>th</sup> century.
- It follows bhakti philosophy as per Dvaita tradition.
- It didn't recognize caste distinctions.

#### **Varkaris**

- It emerged around the **Vithoda** or **Vitthala** of **Pandharpur** in Maharashtra.
  - Panduranga, a local deity entered into Brahmanical fold as an avatara (incarnation) of Vishnu.
  - Thus, they accepted idol worship (**saguna**). However, they are not the followers of Ramanuja but that of Shankara, thus followers of **Advaita**.

- Varkari Saints: **Nivruttinath, Jnanadeva, Muktabai, Eknath, Namdev and Tukaram.**
  - They used **Marathi** language.
  - Emphasized upon the idea of **social equality** and **religious tolerance**.
  - No need to renounce **householder's life** to do bhakti.
  - They used to go on annual **pilgrimage** (vari) to Pandharpur on Ashadhi Ekadashi.



### Dharkari Sect (Ramdasi Tradition)

It was a militant form of Bhakti movement. Dharkaris don't promote pilgrimages. They rather give importance to harmonious relationship between worldly life and spiritual life. The most important saint in this tradition was **Samarth Ramdas**.



- Not only he was a popular bhakti saint (who focused on worship of **Ram** and **Hanuman**), but also a **social commentator**, as can be observed in his **Dasbodh**.
  - **Dasbodh** was a commentary on contemporary social issues, in Marathi.
  - He also composed **Asmani Sultani** and **Parachakra-niroopan** based on his experiences in north India.
- He tried to **synthesize spiritual and political life**.
- He established many **mathas** which were led by his disciples, including female disciples also, including **Venabai** and **Akkabai**.
- He used **Hindi, Urdu, Arabic or Sanskrit words** so long as his writing remained simple. He introduced new words to these languages.



(PS: He composed the aarti to Ganapati **Sukhakarta Dukhaharta** has become very popular after Lokmanya Tilak propagated public festivals of Ganesh.)

### Social-political message of the Varkari Sect:

- **Social Dimensions:**
  - Importance to **sacrifice, forgiveness, simplicity, peaceful co-existence, compassion, non-violence, love and humility** in social life.
  - **No neglect of worldly life.** Religious regeneration in the mundane life. Thus, its impact is clearly visible in political and social life of Maharashtra today.
  - There was **denial of caste element** in MH dharma.
    - In Maharashtra bhakti, there was a **synthesis of Bhagavata Purana bhakti + Shaiva Nathpanthi based social protest.**

- With God as the Ultimate Truth, Varkaris accepted ultimate equality among men. Varkaris bow in front of each other because “everybody is Brahma.”
- Eknath insisted on eating with ‘Untouchables’.
- Namdev attracted individuals from diverse classes and castes during community-driven bhajan singing sessions. His companions during worship sessions included:
  - Kanhopatra (a dancing girl)
  - Sena (a barber)
  - Savata (a gardener)
  - Chokhamela (an untouchable Mahar)
  - Janabai (a maid)
  - Gora (a potter)
  - Narahari (a goldsmith)
  - Dnyaneshvar (a Brahmin)
- Elevation of the **status of women.**
  - Tukaram accepted disciples and devotees without discriminating gender. One of his celebrated devotees was **Bahina Bai**, a Brahmin woman.
  - Other important women saints: **Muktabai, Janabai, Venabai, Kanhopatra etc.**
- **Political dimension:**
  - Unlike normal belief that Hinduism is **sahishnu**, Maharashtra dharma is **jayishnu**, cry for victory.
  - Samarth Ramdas tried to synthesize spiritual with political.
    - He seems to have met **Guru Hargobind** in north.
    - He was a political theorist and possibly helped **Shivaji**. Most probably, the people who formed the army of Shivaji were exposed to the teachings of Dharkari sect, and were therefore a formidable force.
- **Cultural dimension:** it gave emphasis on Marathi language and Marathi identity.
  - There was development of Marathi literature: **Owee** (Jnanadeva), **Abhang** (Tukaram) and **Bharud** (Eknath).
  - **Jnaneshvara:** Jnaneshvari, Amrutanubhava, Bhavartha Dipika
  - **Tukaram:** Gatha
    - *Mahatma Gandhi, while under arrest in Yerwada Central Jail translated Tukaram's poetry.*
  - **Eknath:** Eknathi Bhagvat, Bhavartha Ramayana