



GS FOUNDATION BATCH FOR CSE 2024

**Ancient and Medieval Indian
History and Culture- 11**

**(Bhakti Movement and Vedantic
Philosophy – Part 1)**

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Ancient and Medieval Indian history and Culture
Bhakti Movement and Vedantic Philosophy – Part 1
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Bhakti is inherent in Indian culture. However, at a particular turn of history, Bhakti took the form of a socio-religious movement, and soon it became the largest cultural movement in India. From the viewpoint of the time period, it covered more than 1000 years and it lingers even today.

It is an inclusive cultural phenomenon. 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.

Meaning of the term - Devotion?

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

- **Karma**
 - Yajna, Japa, Tapa, Anushthana, Vratas etc.
- **Jnana**
 - Knowledge, as described in Upanishads
 - Spiritual practices like Shravana, Manana, Nididhyasa
- **Bhakti**
 - The root is **Bhaj**. It means attachment, participation, fondness for. It may be a devotion towards **Guru, a king, and a god**.
 - In religious sense, it is a mode of worship, where there is an intense emotional love/devotion for a personal god. It may be Vishnu/Shiva, Vyankatesha, Vithoba, Ram/Krishna/Radha/Durga.

Basic Concepts:

- (a) Saguna/Nirguna:** Two alternative ways of imaging the nature of the divine (Brahman) –
- Saguna Brahman was envisioned and developed as with form, attributes and quality.
 - Nirguna Brahman was the concept of the Ultimate Reality as 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 Background:

(a) Although **Vedic religion** was primarily worship through Yajna and Mantras, some elements of Bhakti can be seen even in ancient texts like Vedas and Upanishads. Bhakti has been inherently present in the Indian culture. The term bhakti first time appears in **Shvetashvatara 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. It explicitly uses the word "bhakti" to designate a religious path (marga). In fact, by the **post-Maurya period**, Bhakti emerged because of assimilation between higher Brahmanic culture and lower tribal culture.

Challenges to Hinduism during the **post-Mauryan period**:

- Influx of many foreign rulers.
- Greeks were primarily idol-worshippers.
- Emergence of Mahayana Buddhism.
- There was rising Avadana literature.

To counter/because of all these, 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 **avataravat** was accepted.
- Reduction in complex sacrificial **rituals**
- Various **Buddhist influences** were incorporated.
- 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) All this change reached its zenith during the **Gupta period** which was characterized as the zenith of classical 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 and it overpowered Bhakti for some time.
- Emergence of **Nathpanthi** reaction to Tantricism
- Development of **Shaiva Tantra in Kashmir**

Meanwhile, in the **post-Gupta era** (6th and 7th centuries), Bhakti appeared in **South India** as a popular movement.

- Here the initiative was taken by 12 **Alwar** and 63 **Nayanar saints**.

- Alwar and Nayanar saints made a demand not simply of religious equality but also of social equality. That's why initially Bhakti movement in south India was also a **social movement**, apart from being a **religious movement**.
- There is emergence of **Shankar's philosophy of Advaita Vedanta** at the same time.

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

- Brahmanic elements started to penetrate 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**.
 - 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;

(e) 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.
- These movements have been seen as **a continuation or revival of the older South Indian bhakti movement**. However,
 - Each one of the later movements which grew in the Sultanate period had a **historical context of its own** and its own peculiarities.
 - Moreover, **non-conformist monotheistic movement** (e.g. Kabir and other 'low-caste' saints) bears only superficial resemblance to the variants of the movement.

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.

Tamil Bhakti Tradition

Bhakti as a movement arose in **South India** in the 7th -10th centuries in poems that the Alvars (12 Vaishnav saints) and the Nayanars (63 Shaiva saints) composed in Tamil to the 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:

- Sangam intense love poetry + Northern Puranic Bhakti → **Northern bhakti element transformed into intense emotional movement.**
 - By this time, the Sanskritic/Puranic Tradition - had reached Tamil region. It drew on earlier Tamil secular traditions of love poetry of Sangam era and was deeply rooted in Tamil tradition and ethos.
 - It became a social movement with a popular base.
- **Vishnu and Shiva** became the primary focus of Alwar and Nayanar bhakti.
- **The interaction between the Sangam and Puranic elements** introduced various themes from the **Puranic myths.**
 - Skanda became Murugan.
 - Mayon and Krishna themes were identified with each other.

Important features of Tamil bhakti:

- It contained the **element of social radicalism**, against Brahmanical social order.
 - They rejected caste-based discrimination and subordinate position of women.
 - The saints themselves **came from varied backgrounds.**
 - While the lower castes had been excluded from Vedic scholarship and Vedic worship, the path of bhakti advocated by these saints was open to all, irrespective of caste.
- 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.
- Efforts to make people more **ethical, sensitive, egalitarian, compassionate and spiritual.**
- They composed in **Tamil language** to reach the popular base. Tamil language for devotion emerged as alternative to Sanskrit.
- 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.**
- The temple situation also marked out a **sacred geography** for the first time. This also provided a network for future religious interaction.

	Alvars	Nayanars
Meaning	Those who dive deep, absorbed in the divine, immersed in God	Nayanmar is an honorific. Never used by themselves.
Saints	12 Vaishnav saints	63 Shaiva saints
Nature of Bhakti	Initially: Prominence of Krishna avatara (Mayon/Mal). Later: Emergence of Vaishnav Sampradayas Developed the notion of prapatti (complete surrender) later developed in the Srivaishnavism	Initially, Shaivism was not very popular in cities (Pashupat, Kapalik, Kalamukhas, Aghora). But Nayanars provided popular acceptance.
Visualization of God in Poetry	Lover–beloved Mother–child (less prominent) Devotional songs of love, longing, ecstasy, and service. “Madness” of religious exaltation: “run, jump, cry, laugh, and sing, and let everyone witness it.”	Master and slave. Nayanars described themselves as atiyar (servant) or tontar (slave). 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.
Extra Facts	108 Divya Desams	Term: Siddhar
Books	<p>Nalayira Divya Prabandham (4000 verses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composed by Nathmuni (leader of Srivaishnavism) He collected and systematised the teachings of the Alvars and declared them equivalent to the Vedas. Status of Tamil Veda due to Ramanuja (Tamil Vaishnav = Ubhav Vedantins) Srirangam Temple (South), Badrinath (North): daily chanting of hymns today <p>Hagiography: Divyasuricharitam by Garudavahana (12th c)</p>	Three Books: Tirumurai, Vedas and Shaiva agamas <p>Canonization of Tirumurai (anthology of 12 books)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-7 books: Nambiyandar Nambi compiled Tevaram (Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar) in 10th c. It is sung in temples since Rajaraja Chola era (10th c) 12th book: Sekkizhar's Periya Puranam (Great Purana, life depiction of 63 Nayamars)

Some important saints:

Alvar	Nayanars
<p>Nammalvar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greatest of the 12 • 1352/4000 compositions • Developed the notion of prapatti. <p>Madhurkavi:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciple of Nammalvar, recorded and compiled his works <p>Kulshekharar (Belonged to royal Chera family)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author of Perumal Tirumoli (Tamil) and Mukundamala (Sanskrit) • Imp role in reviving Koodiyattam 	<p>Three Muvar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sambandar: Koon Pandian was converted. • Appar: Mahendravarman I was converted. • Sundarar <p>Manikkavacakar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not in 63 Nayanars but associated with them. • Works included in Tirumurai. • Tiruvachakam: Collection of hymns
<p>Andal (the one who rules)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only female Alvar, Queen of Tamil Bhakti. • Her poetry on Krishna-Gopis was laced with pangs of separation and longing for union with the lord. Highly emotional and erotic. • Tradition: married to Ranganathaswamy and later merged into the idol. 	<p>Three female saints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karaikkal Ammaiyan • Mangaiyarkkarasiyan • Isainaniyan

Adi Shankaracharya

(Also called as Hindudharmoddhakara)

*I do not think that I know it well. Nor do I know that I do not know it.
Among us those who know, know it; even they do not know that they do not know.*

— Kena Upanishad

Very little is known about his personal life. Shankara Digvijaya (life of Adi Shankara) by Anandigiri was written during the Vijayanagar era, and established Shankaracharya as the rallying symbol. He is often considered to be the founder of the Advaita Vedanta school, but was actually a systematizer, not a founder.

Background:

- The Upanishads form the basic texts and Vedanta philosophy gives an interpretation.
- **Badarayana** (4th-5th century) wrote **Brahma Sutra** to systematize and summarize the philosophical and spiritual ideas in the Upanishads.
- **Gaudapada** (6th 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, which was used as a cohesive idea to unite all strands, based on the Vedic dictum of 'One Truth, Many Expositions'.

To justify and promote his idea, he wrote **commentaries on Prasthana-trayi (10 Upanishads, Brahmasutra and Bhagvad Gita)** and tried to reinvigorate the Upanishadic thought. He gave a new interpretation to Upanishadic philosophy. Such philosophy was attractive for the scholars/elites. Shankaracharya **systematized Advaita by as jnanamarga**

- **Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiv Naparaha.**
 - **Brahma Sat** – it exists.
 - The supreme truth of Brahman is Nirguna, sat-chit-ananda (truth-consciousness-bliss). It is **neti, neti**.
 - **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, is ever changing, transient and illusory (maya).
 - **Jivo Brahmaiva Napara** – both are the same. Atman-Brahman is one and the same. There is nothing else. (*eka Brahmo dwitiyo nasti*)
 - 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.

- Know that Atman-Brahman is one and the same, which is Satchitanand. Realising this and accepting the true self, pure consciousness, as the only reality (sat), leads to **moksha** or salvation, defined by some as a state of bliss (ananda).
- **Jnanamarga:** Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye.
 - Adi Shankara gave primary importance to jnana yoga. It is knowledge which gives Moksha, or spiritual release while alive (jivanmukti) or after death (videhamukti). **Once you get moksha, you become Brahma, you experience being Brahma.**
- To justify his stand, he focused on **four Mahavakyas** from Upanishads.
 - Aham Brahmasmi
 - Tat Tvam Asi
 - Ayam Atma Brahma
 - Prajnanam Brahma (Consciousness is Brahma)
- For common people, he authorized **idol-worship** to popularize gods among them.
 - To Adi Shankara, bhakti yoga (the practice of worship) was an important step towards jnana yoga (the cultivation of knowledge).
- **Compositions**
 - Commentary on Prasthanatrayi
 - Upadesha-sahasri
 - Vivekachudamani
 - Saundarya Lahari
 - Over 100 Stotrams
 - Bhaj Govindam
 - Nirvan Shatakam
 - Kashi Panchakam

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.

- **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 Goddess**, which had become somewhat questionable thanks to dubious practices introduced by the tantrics, and 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.
 - Famous debate with **Mandan Mishra**
- 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
- Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham in Kanchipuram (became important later)
- **Dashnami Sect** of wandering monks: Shankara also created his 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**
 - Despite such ideas being seen by many as Brahminical and elitist, Advaita Vedanta, by conceiving of Oneness in this manner, lays the philosophical groundwork for the fundamental equality of all human beings. Advaita Vedanta realises that all living beings are essentially one, and thus essentially equal.
 - 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

Various Schools of Vedanta:

Shankaracharya (8 th c)	Advaita Vedanta
Ramanujacharya (11 th c)	Vishishtadvaita
Madhvacharya (13 th c)	Dvaita Vedanta
Nimbarkacharya (13 th c)	Dvaitadvaita
Vallabhacharya (16 th c)	Shuddha Advaita
Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (16 th c)	Achintya Bhedabhedha

Vishishtadvaita (Srivaishnava) Sect:

- 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 Kanchipura. However, soon he got disillusioned with the philosophy of advaita.
- **Vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja:**
 - Ramanuja speaks about three 'eternal' principles:
 - **chit** (the individual soul)
 - **achit** (the material world)
 - **Ishvara** (the Supreme soul).
 - His commentaries on the Gita and on the Brahma Sutras contested Adi Shankara's interpretations of those scriptures.
 - Shankara's Nirguna Brahman was criticized by Ramanuja.
 - He argued when there is knowledge, there must be a knower [thus refuting Shankara]
 - Thus, Brahman cannot be nirguna, it cannot be without 'quality', because we can experience it. It in itself is an attribute.
 - Ramanuja also rejects that atman (chit) and paramatman (Ishvara) are identical.
 - Ramanuja's conception
 - Chit and Achit are both parts of Ishvara. Chit is its atma and achit is its body. So, they are part of Ishvara, but not identical.
 - So, Ramanuja in a way supported Advaita, that everything is Brahman. But he rejects Mayavada. Jagat is not mithya, it's a part of Brahman.
 - Brahman is the same as Vishnu, as per Ramanuja.
 - Further, for Ramanuja, against Shankara, **knowledge** alone is not enough to save a soul. It has to be followed by devotion (**bhakti**) to attain salvation.
 - Thus, Ramanuja's chief contribution was to mingle Vedic Brahman with 'bhakti' which became the chief component of all Vaishnava movements.

- He gave philosophical justification to Bhakti and helped in its popularization.
 - However, the idea of Krishna, Radha and cowherds are absent from Ramanuja's Vaishnavism.
- **Persecution?**
 - According to Vaishnavite tradition, Vaishnавites were persecuted by a Chola king and Ramanuja was made to flee to Karnataka.
 - **Bittideva**, a Jain Hoyasala 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.



Statue of Equality, Hyderabad

A proponent of social equality

E. RAJESH PATHAK

Knower 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.

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.

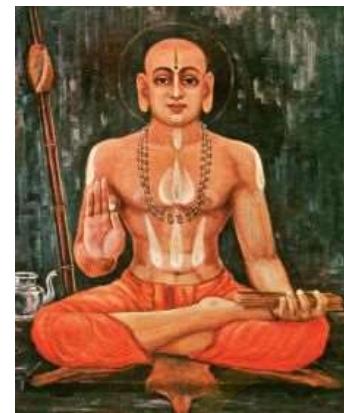


The statue of Ramanuja unveiled recently in Hyderabad. ■ PHOTO: AP

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Madhvacharya's Dvaita Vedanta (13th c)

- Also known as **Anandatirtha**.
- Madhvacharya rejected advaita **completely**. He was a critic of both **Shankara** as well as **Ramanuja**. He gave the idea of dualism.
 - 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.
 - Brahma of Vedanta is not an impersonal being but another name for Vishnu or Hari. He is the object of worship and devotion. God-soul relationship is like master-servant. Liberation is achieved through only the grace of god.
- 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.



Nimbarkacharya's Dvaitadvaita (Bhedabhed) (13th c)

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

(Time: Some believe he pre-dated Shankaracharya by a century, while other believe his time was after Ramanuja. It is disputed. But his ideas were prevalent in 13th and 14th centuries.)



- His idea:
 - He accepted Dvaita part – Ishvara is different from Jiva and Jagat. But he added that Jiva/jagat also depend on Ishvara. So, they are **distinct** (dualism, dvaita, bheda) yet dependant, so they are kind of **identical** (monism, Advaita, abheda).

- Nimbarka equally emphasizes both difference (bheda) and non-difference (abheda), as against Ramanuja, who makes difference subordinate to non-difference.
- He identified Ishvara/Brahman with **Radha-Krishna**, where both are conjointly understood to be the eternal deity. He emphasized on the importance of Krishna and cowherdresses headed by Radha. 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.

Vallabhacharya's Shuddhadvaita (1479-1531)

- 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 **philosophical debate at Vijayanagara** and was honoured with the **kanakabhishekam** by Krishnadevaraya on victory.
- His philosophical ideas were the culmination of philosophical thought during the Bhakti Movement.
- **Philosophy of Shuddha Advaita**
 - There is no real difference between atman and brahman. There is no question of Bhed and Abhed. Brahma is everything. Jiva and Jagat are all Brahma.
 - Individual soul is not clouded by maya. **The world of Maya is not unreal, but a power of Ishvara.** Jagat and jiva are all real.
 - His brahma is equal to Krishna personified. All things are Brahma. **Everything is Krishna's Leela.** There is absolute identity among them.
- **Krishna-bhakti**
 - **Bhakti** is the means to attain not Mukti, but eternal service of Krishna and participation along with His activities in divine Vrindavana. Focus of Vallabha's Krishna Bhakti is on
 - Krishna's childhood pranks with Yashoda (**vatsalya bhav**)
 - Youthful Krishna in relationship with gopis (**madhura bhav**)
 - Many **lilas** of Krishna (eg. Krishna's protection of the good (divine grace) and his victory over evils, all with allegory and symbolism)
 - **Nirvana** is attainable through **Pushti** (divine grace). Any personal efforts such as good deeds or religious observances are not essential.
 - He founded Krishna-centered **Pushtimarg** of Vaishnavism in the **Braj region** of India.



- **Rejected asceticism and monastic life**, suggested that through loving devotion to God Krishna, any householder could achieve salvation.
- Book – **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



Lingayat Sect (Virashaivas)

- **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 shoulder.
- 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.
- **Saints**
 - The main proponent of the sect is **Basavanna** (not the founder). He served in the court of Kalachuri king Bijnala II (1157-67). In his memory, the capital of Kalyani Chalukyas today is called as Basavakalyana, which is in North Karnataka.
 - Other important saints are Allama Prabhu, Channabasavanna and Akka Mahadevi. **Akka Mahadevi** was one of the early female poets of Kannada language of the 12th c.
- Royal Patronage
 - 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).
 - Later important royal dynasties in Karnataka became followers of Lingayatism.
 - One of the most remembered is the Lingayat queen **Rani Chennamma of Kittur** (1778–1829), known for her inspiring role in the anti-colonial struggle against the British.
- **Anuhav Mantapa** "hall of spiritual experience."
- **Vachana Literature**
 - Saints expressed their thoughts in single line philosophical utterances called Vachans.
 - Vachanas were utterings of mystics based on their spiritual experiences and reflection.

While some commonality of thoughts can be distilled, there is a great individuality and diversity among them.
 - This literature flourished esp. after 15th century. To this day about 12,000 vachanas of this period authored by over a hundred spiritual seekers and saints, including over 30 women have been discovered.
 - Vachanas were not written by/for academic philosophers, but for ordinary people in their mother tongue, Kannada. The poet saints called themselves '**Sharanas**'. They hailed from almost all classes of society, professions, and castes – including outcastes or "untouchables".



- Radicalism

- Not ritualistic in nature.

- Lingayatism is often considered a Hindu sect, sharing beliefs with other Indian religions, but it rejected the Vedic tradition of sacrifices, rituals, varna system, belief in karma-reincarnation, and superstitions.
 - 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 have their own priestly class called Jangamas.
 - They don't cremate the dead but practice symbolic burial. They believed that after death, everyone vanishes into Lord Shiva. Death is just merging with the god, so no penance required.

- Social radicalism

- They opposed discrimination against women in the spiritual field. They broke the Brahminical taboos which regarded women as inferior and unfit for spiritual self-realisation.
 - They discouraged child marriage, it also encouraged widow marriage.
 - Originally, they didn't follow caste hierarchy.
 - Although it espoused ahimsa, it critiqued Jainism, which was very influential in Karnataka.



Akka Mahadevi by
Nilima Sheikh

Haridasi Tradition in Deccan

The Bhakti movement during this time involved Haridasas (devotee saints). Like the Virashaiva movement of the 12th century, this movement presented another strong current of devotion, pervading the lives of millions.

- The Haridasas represented two groups, the **Vyasakuta** and **Dasakuta**
 - Vyasakuta: required to be proficient in the Vedas, Upanishads and other Darshanas.
 - Dasakuta: conveyed the message of Madhvacharya through the Kannada language to the people in the form of devotional songs.
- **Vijayanagara Era**
 - The **Dvaita** philosophy of Madhvacharya was spread by eminent disciples
 - Naraharitirtha, Jayatirtha, Sripadaraya, **Vyasatirtha**, Vadrajatirtha etc.
 - 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.



Raghavendra Swami (1595-1671)

- He was the adhipati of Kumbakonam Math.
- Wrote commentaries on Upanishads from Dvaita standpoint.
- Was accomplished Veena player himself, and wrote with Venu Gopala as mudra.
- Took sanjivan samadhi at Mantralayam.

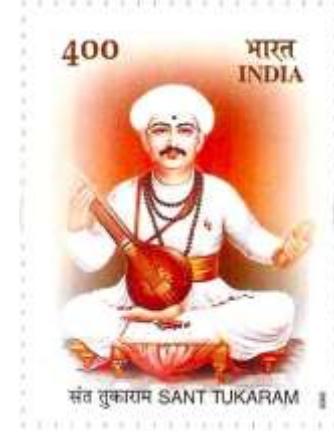
Maharashtra Dharma

(A) Mahanubhava sect (Paramarga)

- It was founded by Chakradhar Swami in the 13th 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 13th century.
- It follows bhakti philosophy as per Dvaita tradition.
- It didn't recognize caste distinctions.

(B) Varkaris

- It emerged around the cult of **Vithoda** or **Vitthala**, centered around **Pandharpur** in Maharashtra.
 - Varkari saint poets identify Him with **Krishna** who came to meet the devotee Pundalik and transformed from a folk deity to Vishnu-Krishna. 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.
- Although this is a saguna bhakti tradition, **Namdeva** is a revered Guru in Dadupanthis and his Nirguna compositions are included in Guru Granth Sahib.*



Vari

- It is almost 800 years old tradition of pilgrimage, where pilgrim walks a distance of over 250km in 3 weeks. It takes place twice every year – during Ashadh and Kartik. (also some in Chaitra and Magh)
- The first procession (palakis) to be organised carrying the padukas is that of Jnanadeva from Alandi followed by other Varkari saints (Tukaram's from Dehu; Eknath from Paithan, Namdeva from Pandharpur) from their birthplace to Pandharpur.

- On the way, the pilgrim chants Lord's name (naam-jap), sings songs (abhangs) and reads sacred books (haripath). During the processions the devotees are organised in groups known as dindi.
- They are devotees of Krishna and Tulsi is his favourite plant, Varkaris wear rosary of Tulsi beads and they are strict vegetarians.
- On reaching the temple, they take sacred dip in Chandrabhaga.



(C) Ramdasi Tradition

Most important saint was a **Samarth Ramdas**.

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

Aarti to Ganpati **Sukhakarta Dukhaharta** has become very popular after Lokmanya Tilak propagated public festivals of Ganesh.



Social-political message of the Varkari Sect:

- Social Dimensions:** There was a synthesis of Bhagavata Purana bhakti + Shaiva Nathpanthi based social protest.
 - Importance to **sacrifice, forgiveness, simplicity, peaceful co-existence, compassion, non-violence, love and humility** in social life.
 - There was **denial of caste element** in MH dharma.
 - With God as the Ultimate Truth, Varkaris accepted ultimate equality among men. Varkaris bow in front of each other because "everybody is Brahma."
 - 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.
- **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.
- **Political dimension:** Unlike normal belief that Hinduism is sahishnu/tolerant, MH dharma is **jayishnu**, cry for victory.
 - Samartha Ramdas tried to synthesize spiritual with political.
- **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 wrote Jnaneshvari, Amrutanubhava
 - Tukaram - Gatha (*Mahatma Gandhi, while under arrest in Yerwada Central Jail translated Tukaram's poetry*)
 - Eknath - Bhagvat, Bhavartha Ramayana



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