## Introduction to Bhakti Movement

Bhakti movement was a mass movement that came into recognition from the 8th century to 16th century.

It was the voice of the general population that tread on the path of God together, irrespective of caste, creed, gender or religion.

The Bhakti Movement was an inspirational movement, inspiring the older and younger generations of the country to wake up to their original self.

The credit of reviving the Hindu faith, on vedic scriptures and Gods goes to Sri Adi Shankara.

Later other acharyas came and expanded their theories and movement.

With Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s advent in Bengal, the Bhakti Movement saw a new surge of devotional mellows.

Even as the Iron Age began, people started losing their intelligence to the power of Maya.

Atheism and other religions subscribing to it drowned the general masses into the ocean of ignorance.

They started to lose their memory capacity and became far too short-sighted.

## Early Days of the Bhakti Movement

Even after Adi Shankara established the [**Advaita School of Thought**](https://spiritmeaning.com/claims-of-advaita-vedanta/), the common man was not able to grapple with the intricacies of the teachings.

There arose a great amount of dissatisfaction.

Sri Adi Shankaracharya's theory now appeared esoteric, inaccessible and far-fetched to the intelligence of the larger population.

The masses were drowning in the pandemonium of new-age tyrants who started taking control over the lives of innocent people.

This is when, the land of Bharath witnessed an overwhelming rediscovery phase with the advent of Sri Ramanujacharya.

The phase lasted till the departure of the Supreme Lord Sri Chaitanya.

Hence, as mentioned in the Bhagavatham, Bhakti Devi reveals that she was born in South India.

It indicates the movement of Ramanuja or the foundation of Sri Sampradaya which revolves around [**Kainkaryam, Prapatti and Dasya Bhava**](https://spiritmeaning.com/sri-sampradaya-explains-sharanagati/) for Sriman Naryana.

This was just the beginning.

Before Sri Ramanuja’s advent the [**12 Alvars**](https://spiritmeaning.com/tag/azhwars/) left behind great Tamil-Bhakti works, poems, literature and Bhajans that could easily melt the hearts of devotees.

It is their works that became a great repository of teachings in the [**Ramanuja Sampradaya**](https://spiritmeaning.com/the-ramanujacharya-system/).

Bhakti, an integral aspect of Sanatana Dharma reappeared in a glorious and heart-touching manner.

It was during this period that the concept of "Ishta Devata" became prominent more than ever.

Tales of Sages and their Ishta Devatas, (deity of their heart) became the talk of the common folk of Bharath.

In a nutshell, the surge of Bhakti ran through the hearts of millions.

Like how the Alvars contributed to the Bhakti Movement in Vaishnavism, Shaivism too saw huge contributions of the [**63-Nayanars**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nayanars) who sang glories of Lord Shiva in a mood of surrender and love for Him.

The 63 Nayanars had extraordinary lives and set examples of Ideal surrender and love for Lord Shiva.

Hence, the Supreme Being could be summoned by the innocent heart.

India became a land where the Supreme Being appeared.

He took the forms of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Sri Vitthal, Lord Shiva and a host of deities in ways which one can never imagine.

These deities offered direct shelter to their devotees.

## Theme of the Bhakti Movement

The theme of the Bhakti movement is indeed Bhakti a k a pure devotional service unto the Supreme Lord Vishnu, Krishna, Rama, Shiva or Devi.

However, this movement was beyond the achievement of Liberation, which is often the theme of other movements like that of Buddhism, Jainism and some schools of Hinduism.

There is another type of liberation which has been my life-long pursuit and keeps me motivated.

This liberation is a state "Beyond Moksha”.

Sanatana Dharma calls it Bhakti.

When pure consciousness is directly experienced as the "other", it is seen as the all-perfect entity.

Moksha in other schools means dissolving ourselves.

However, the sweetness of Bhakti movement was that to maintain an individual identity with regards to that of Bahgawan.

We exist, yet attain liberation.

This is the nature of Bhakti or pure devotional service.

Devotees exist in a liberated state to serve the Lord and so they maintain an individual identity.

Thus, to make the relationships sweeter, we have the [**4 Rasas**](https://spiritmeaning.com/an-introduction-to-the-4-rasas/).

To elucidate these 4 Rasas various Acharyas propagated them and lived their lives in accordance with the Bhakti Philosophy.

Hence, Bhakti is the highest possibility of humanity as one unit.

Sri Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Vallabhacharya, and Sriman Gauranga Mahaprabhu have great solutions for the common folk.

### Bhakti Rejects Moksha

The mood of the Bhakti movement is something like this…

The Supreme Consciousness, which is "I", the original "Me" comes to our direct experience, as a separate entity.

This is the highest state of liberation; Liberation, unimaginable by any stretch of knowledge or Wisdom.

It is direct perception beyond the realm of wisdom.

In this type of liberation, one need not lose one's body-mind.

There is no need to merge into the ocean of Consciousness as the Jnanis (followers of Advaita) proclaim.

When we see our highest possibility as a separate entity, He remains with us as our doting parent, friends, master (as per your mood or rasa).

Our own innermost self, the supremely intimate aspect stays with us by our side, caring, like a concerned mother cajoles her dear one.

What will the feeling be like, can anyone even imagine?

This experience is beyond any experience of liberation.

Many devotees have attained that state of being.

They continue to exist in Permanence even after their material body fades away.

They exist in pure spiritual form in the spiritual realm.

Their original self always exists with the Supreme Being by their side.

Bhaktaraj Prahalad is ancient yet the most apt example to illustrate the mood of Bhakti, the love of God for his devotees and vice-versa.

## Some Bhakti Sages

Bhakti Sages have left their mark on people through their exemplary life, movement, works and teachings.

Even today people recall their glory in various states and parts of the world.

There are many sages who contributed to the Bhakti movement.

They impacted the lives of kings, nawabs, renunciants, courtiers, queens, and even the common man.

They came from various states of India and influenced the inmates of their motherland by writing works in their regional languages and encouraging others to follow the Bhakti Path.

Some of them were:

1. Tulsidasji Goswami Maharaj
2. Sriman Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
3. [**Mahaprushya Sankardeva**](https://spiritmeaning.com/the-story-of-shankar-deva-part-3/)
4. 12 Alvars
5. 63 Nayanars
6. 6 Acharyas
7. Tukaram
8. Tyagaraja
9. Mirabai
10. Ramanada
11. 6 Goswamis
12. Narsingh Mehta

Who can forget the tales of how Goswami Tulsidas met Sri Hanumanji, Sri Rama and Sri Laxmana in person?

The tales of Sri Thyagaraja, the singing saint of Tamil Nadu's Thiruvarur district and his rendezvous with Sri Rama can never be forgotten.

They have the capacity to drench one’s heart with pure love for God

Who can forget Sri Mirabai's tryst with her eternal paramour Lord Sri Krishna of Dwaraka?

What about Lord Gauranga Mahaprabhu in the mood of Sri Radha pining for union with his beloved Krishna of Vrindavan.

So, the list is endless.

*Thanks for reading!*