
UNIT 2 MEDIEVAL DALIT THINKERS

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit brings to the attention of the students about few Dalit thinkers and ideologues in the medieval Indian society through Bhakti movements in both South and North India. The line of thought and interpretation of medieval bhakti movement in this unit might be odd, divergent, and / or even controversial, as almost all scholars on these movements present them differently. We try to interpret the bhakti movement as a subaltern, Dalit assertion through religious philosophies. The poetic expression of individual bhakti saints is also seen as Subaltern challenge to ritualism and intellectualism, by emphasising the aspect of love, service and surrender as way to liberation. For a change, the unit looks at not individual thinkers as such but collective thinkers in the mass movement.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Bhakti movements transformed not only the religious but also the social thought and life of the people in India. (Chinnathambi 1994, 8). Medieval bhakti movement is a concrete rising of the indigenous wisdom and a mass movement. The proponents of these are mostly from the so-called lower strata of society. Even though the elements of Sanskritization and brahmanical influence characterised in Bhakti movement we only consider them as hijack of subaltern philosophical and religious rising by the brahmanical forces. In fact one could interpret the medieval bhakti as a collective, assertive and affirmative aspect of indigenous people towards their own identity. It is a cumulative effort of the community of people. The rise of Saivism, Vaishnavism and Saktism expressed in these movements all over the medieval India is only a resurrection of buried traditions of the people. There have been individual champions who are luminaries in Bhakti movements.

Even in the strong polemic attitude towards *sramanic* traditions like Buddhism and Jainism, we see the challenging attitude of the subaltern towards the political and ideological powers that crushed their own traditions. The tendency of leaning towards the Vedic tradition, accepting the Vedas as generic scriptures could be interpreted not as accepting the Brahmanical hegemony but as trying to get a support, though from a 'wrong' ally. Here it is good to think of a proverb, 'out of pan, into the fire.' To escape from the political and ideological hegemony of the Buddhist and Jaina rulers of the South, the saints and thinkers of bhakti movement took the support of another culturally and religiously alien tradition, Vedic culture. The consequences are far more vivid in the history when Brahmanism idealised bhakti and incorporated all these 'little' bhakti traditions into its 'great' Vedic and Vedantic tradition. The concept of cultic worship, service the people and the Divine, surrender, love and devotion are seen as the concrete philosophical contribution of the subalterns through Saiva, Vaishnava and Tantric traditions. In the individual saints or poets we find such an expression of love and devotion, as contrary to hegemonical ritualism and intellectualism.

2.2 MEDIEVAL BHAKTI TRADITION: MASS MOVEMENT

One of the remarkable features of medieval India was the development of the *bhakti* movements. The saints of the *bhakti* movement did not create a new religion or attach themselves to a particular sect or caste. It only strengthened their own bonds, be it religious or social. They did not insist on the study of scriptures. They believed in oneness of God who may be called by any name, Rama, Siva or Krishna or even Allah. They were against caste system and image worship. It was indeed the golden age of revivalism of Indigenous tradition in south India. The shrines visited by these saints and celebrated by them in their hymns became particularly sacred as Kings and Religious leaders regarded them as worthy of special attention. Even though Brahmanical hegemony through bhakti tradition assimilated (or rather swallowed) the indigenous village deities into either Saiva or Vaishna traditions, still *bhakti* as a mass movement is rightly considered a subaltern movement.

2.3 NECESSITY, EMERGENCE AND IMPACT OF POPULAR APPEAL

Any dry speculative thinking could be hailed as high intellectual product of human community. When philosophical thought have become property of certain group of people who claim to be highly intellectual, they become stumbling block for all to have access to it. The classical period of Indian philosophical system one witnesses such a situation. The ordinary emotions and concerns of the people were not very well addressed. They felt alienated in those discussions. There was a dire need to address their concerns. The Upanisadic teachings were about abstract and speculative concepts, far from the perception and thinking pattern of ordinary people. There arose a necessity to popularize these teachings. Even within Vedic and Vedantic tradition, all the secondary literature, *smṛti*, are written to fulfil this need. The epics, *puranas* are essentially different from the Vedic literatures. They arose not among the priestly classes but among traditional bards called *sutas*. They are martial poetry, concerned not with the praise of deities but of kings and nobles, not connected with the details of sacrifices, but with events like wars, and imbued not with higher philosophical motives, but with the practical purpose of gaining some reward from the audience before whom they were

recited. We do not have them in their original and untampered form. They are added to by different hands at different periods. They are people's literature with common authorship. To the nucleus of each story, many pieces of the indigenous poetry containing legends were connected or unconnected with the life of the epic heroes, of sacred poetry dealing with numerous myths and legends of brahmanical origin. There are large sections devoted to philosophy and ethics, cosmologies and genealogies in the fashion of ancient stories, legends, fables and parables. These additions indicate the great popularity these people's literature has enjoyed at all times. The zealous spirit of compilers to bring together all that could be collected in it is vibrant. These poets, 'are using every means in their power to expound, illustrate, and popularize, what the philosophy of the self, a lofty philosophy of ethical autonomy, with emphasis on the application of these principles to the problems of daily life.'

2.4 COUNTERING SOUTH INDIAN JAINA AND BUDDHIST POLITICAL POWERS

During the Kalabhra in south India Buddhism began to flourish under their royal patronage. Kanci is referred to as a great seat of Buddhist learning during the time of Hiuen Tsang in 7th Cen. CE. In Pallava Country there were one hundred monasteries where 10000 *bikshus* lived, while there were only a small number of Bikshus in the Pandya country. Jainism also had its influence in the Tamil country from very early times. References to Jaina monasteries at Puhar and Madurai support the prevalence of it. Kanci, has been also a seat of Jaina culture from 1st Cen. CE. Till the 7th Cen. CE, Jaina monasteries were very influential. Jainism and Buddhism attracted people by appealing to logic and reason and began to make rapid strides in south. People accepted the teachings of those traditions and respected and welcomed their ideas. The cruelty of slaying the dumb animals in sacrifices was openly condemned, as non-killing was the backbone of the ideals of those religions. In addition there were condemnations of the unnecessary rituals and practices. Regarding the caste system, Buddha differentiated the individuals according to their qualities and not according to their birth. This gave the superiority of religion.

Hostility prevailed between Jainas and Saivas. Preaching against Jainism and Buddhism, counteracting them, the intense emotional devotion to Siva and Vishnu were characteristic of south Indian bhakti movement. Calling for public debates, competing in the performance of miracles and testing the truth of the doctrines by means of ordeals, became the order of the day. The once predominant religions, Buddhism and Jainism, lost their ground. The exponents of bhakti brought about the decline of the Jaina and Buddhist sects in the south. They established the superiority of the Vaishnava and Saiva faiths, mainly through their advocacy of bhakti, emotional surrender of the self to personal God. In 7th cen. Jainism had the royal support of the Pallava king Mahendravarman and Pandya king Arikesari Maravarman and a great art of Tamil Nadu was under the influence of the Jains. To set out to safeguard their religion, the indigenous Saivaites and Vaishnavaites felt the call to revive their tradition. A great wave of religious enthusiasm for Saivism and Vaishnavism attained its peak in the early part of the 7th C. While the early Pallavas and Pandyas patronized Jainism and Buddhism, later Pallavas, Vijayanagara kings and later Cholas did the same either to Saivism or Vaishnavism. Conversion of the kings along with the people, encouraging the saints and rise of building the huge temples (typical south Indian temple-culture) were seen as the triumph of local traditions.

One cannot be blind to the fact that the same thing turned out to be oppressive system. It is another sad fall out of bhakti movement, when this revivalism was hijacked by hegemonic priestly-political-economic powers. Bhakti movement is interpreted usually by many scholars that it is a reclaiming the Vedic and Vedantic tradition from the popular front. The egalitarian outlook of Buddhism and Jainism gave a blow to caste ridden Hindu society. The anti-Vedic temper along with new vision of social order in these traditions become very attractive. To regain the hierarchical power the priests of Hinduism tried bhakti as a means. The saints emerged from various castes and that portrayed a picture that the bhakti is above discrimination. Though the Alvars, south Indian Vaishnava saints, did not actively preach against the caste system, they disregarded caste distinctions; in fact Tiruppan Alvar belonged to the *pana* caste. South Indian Saivism and Vainavism have always depended for its strength on the support of the masses. Besides this mass revivalism, a strong sanskritization process influenced by bhakti tradition was witnessed in the medieval period. Revivalism of Vedic ideas and structures was in a success. A move to give a Vedic touch to everything including Indian languages, religious traditions and sects, was found during bhakti period. This is also a reason for many scholars to neglect the bhakti movement as indigenous people's uprising and movement. While we do not intend to brush aside this aspect, we try to emphasise on the mass appeal.

Important among the bhakti saints of Karnataka are Madhva and Basaveswara. Basava led a crusade against the caste system and popularized the worship of Siva in Karnataka. His followers were known as lingayats. They do not observe many Hindu practices like *shraddha* and the cremation of the dead. They bury the dead bodies. Lingayatism is a force to reckon with even today.

2.5 BHAKTI SAINTS OF NORTH INDIA

In the north India, the movement arose as a result of the Muslim establishment. Except for the political tyranny of few Sultan and Mugal kings, the egalitarian outlook of Islam and the conception of equality of all the followers were more appealing. *Bhakti* is one of the three ways to attain salvation the two other being *jnana* and *karma*. The saints emphasized the one, the other or the third at different times. The saints eulogized the *bhaktimarga* as it suited the needs of the time. They said there was no necessity to worship images to attain salvation, as the Muslims were iconoclasts and disregarded temples and images of gods. The feature of bhakti movement in North is different from the bhakti of south. The leading reformers in the north rejected image worship, rituals and other ceremonies and positively opposed the caste system. Secondly, they had to contend with Islam; but they did not oppose it. They tried to harmonise the two religions, Hinduism and Islam. Various forms of this conciliation and combination could be seen from the teachings of Kabir and Nanak. Subalterns are very great thinkers and humanist in this sense of adoption, reconciliation North Indian bhakti movement is the witness to it. Guru Nanak's movement that became a religion of Sikhism is a clear witness of subaltern upraising of equality and unit.

Namdeva, a tailor 1270-1350, was a robber-chief in early life. He became an ardent devotee of Vithoba, god of Pandharpur, but later considered Vithoba as no more than a symbol of the supreme soul that pervades the universe. He was opposed to idol worship and he condemned fasts, pilgrimages, sacrificial ceremonies and all external observances.

Ramananda, hailed from the Vaishnava sect, was born at Prayag (Allahabad) and lived during the last decades of the 14th century and the first half of the 15th

century. He popularized the bhakti movement in the north. His disciples hailed from different castes, In fact, his twelve disciples including a jat, a barbar, cobbler and a Muslim. Chief among them were Dhanna, Saindas, Ravidas, Kabir. He gave equal status to women. The most famous disciple was Kabir who tried to bring harmony between the Hindus and Muslims. The disciples of Kabir hail from both religions. The sayings of Kabir are collected in a book titled *Bijaka*. Ramananda stressed the unity of god and eradication of the various differences. He condemned caste. On his study of the *sastras* he proved that the observance of caste discriminations was unnecessary. Their devotion to God was devoid of rites and ceremonies. He was thus the harbinger of a rational and coordinated form of religion, and it appealed to the masses in all parts of north.

Kabir of the 15th century was the greatest follower of Ramananda. He tried to harmonize Hinduism with Islam. He thought that Rama was not different from Al Rahim of the Muslims. His emphasis was pre eminently on strict moral conduct. Besides condemning the caste system, idol worship, sanctity of baths in sacred rivers and other formalities, he disapproved the orthodox Muslim practices like adherence to mosques, performance of *sunnat*, and the practices like *Namaz* and *Roza*. In fact, his creed resembled that of the Sufis, for like them he laid stress on ardent love towards the supreme God. In his propagation of sincere love regardless of formalities and in his stress on religious tolerance, Kabir may be said to have worked towards universal religion. He was not dogmatic at all. He condemned narrow creeds and sectarianism.

Vallabha 1479-1531, stressed on the value of detachment from worldly pleasures. He preached devotion to Krishna and urged unconventional love condemning carnal pleasures to appeal to God. Caitanya, was strongly opposed to caste distinctions and ceremonials of the Hindus. But he did not condemn idol worship or pilgrimages.

Nanak 1469-1538, became the founder of Sikhism, harmonized Hinduism and Islam. He had no faith in the caste system or in bathing in sacred rivers. Sikhism and Sufism resembled each other closely. He was a strong advocate of monotheism. According to him God does not belong to any particular people, Muslim or Hindu. Rightly it has been said that Kabir was the spiritual ancestor of Nanak. He urged that the only way of worshipping God is to sing His praises and to meditate on His name. He laid stress also on practical morality. Nobility of character was emphasized. Sincerity and honesty were given a lofty place.

Tukaram (1608-1650) in Maharashtra, was a prominent saint and spiritual poet during the Bakti movement. He denied outrightly caste hierarchy in Hindu religion and attacked rituals present in Hindu Dharma. His public religious discourses used to be mixed with poetry. He preached focussing on everyday behaviour of human persons. For him, true expression of religion was in a person's love for his fellow human beings rather than in ritualistic observance of religious orthodoxy including mechanical study of the scriptures. In his poetic compositions he touched upon various issues of society, religion and human personality. He worked for the society's enlightenment emphasising community service and musical group worship which is called, *warakari* tradition. (Wikipedia 2011)

2.6 PHILOSOPHY OF POPULAR LITERATURE

The popular Tamil Saiva *Tevaram* and other *Tirumurais*, Vaishava *Divyaprabandam*, are the collection of *bhakti* hymns of the saints. Singing popular hymns marked by high literacy quality and at times by great philosophical insight

were the remarkable feature of bhakti saints. The spiritual exaltation experienced by them as they stood worshipping at the various shrines of Siva or Vishnu is reflected in the hymns. While these hymns satisfied the intellectuals, they also intensely appealed to the masses on account of the emotional outpourings. Devotional hymns had created a new literary genre of lyrical poetry and devotional music. They became also the basic material for modern Saiva Siddhanta and Visistadvaita philosophy. Philosophy as the systematization of the experiences and institutions of the sages and saints was fulfilled here. They moulded the characters and outlook of generations of the people and their culture.

The *Divya Prabandham* is the collective corpus of the passionate hymns of the Alvar mystics (5th-8th centuries A.D.). Nathamuni in the 10th century, retrieved and compiled this *bhakti* treasure. Their works enjoy the status of “*dravida*” or Tamil Veda. The *Divya Prabandham* is in the form of adoration of the deities of 108 temples (*divya desams*) situated in different parts of the country, and employs every form of poetics (*aNi*) and prosody (*chandam*) available in Tamil. The bhakti expressed in these hymns is deeply emotional. The devotion calls for absolute loving surrender to the Lord who, though supreme and transcendent, makes himself accessible to his devotees through his *avatrās*. In his tense concern for the world, he descends from time to time in the form of an incarnation, *avatara*. According to tradition, there have been only nine such incarnations; there is one yet to come. In each case the god descended to earth when the world was in dire danger of being overwhelmed by the ocean of chaos or of perishing from the attacks of evil persons. God is with them. Krishna, as God becomes the chief object of worship among the ordinary folk of India, a divinity of remarkable psychological completeness, standing to his worshippers not only in the relation of father, friend and elder brother, but also of lover and husband and even of son.

Saiva Bhakti

Unlike Visnu, Siva is not generally believed to incarnate himself for the welfare of the world, but he is said to have manifested himself temporarily in many disguises in order to help his devotees or for other worthy purposes. Siva is looked on their deity as a god of love and grace. The literature of Tamil Saivism describes him in very exalted terms and with strong moral emphasis. In the finished form of Tamil Saivism all the capricious and harsh elements of the old Siva have practically disappeared, and the god has become the compassionate father of all things living, who cares for them in his love and justice and defends them from evil.

Saiva *bhakti* propagates *carya*, physical act of service as *Dasa marga* that leads to *saloka*, to be in the abode of God. Bhakti is the basic power of Saiva religion which has a deep root into Dravidian and subaltern people. The sole aim in bhakti is to reach God through Love. God is Love and the soul has to transform itself into Love for complete Union. Ceremonies, rituals, temples, are but means to establish human in the love of God. God’s Form is Love; His attributes and knowledge are Love; His five functions, namely, creation, sustaining, obscuration, destruction and bestowal of grace, are Love. His organs like arms and feet and His ornaments like the crescent moon are also Love. These things are assumed by the Nirmala God, not for His own benefit but for the benefit of humankind. (Sivajnana Siddhiyar, Sutra 1.67)

One of the surest means of attaining God Siva is Bhakti by the practice of love, love to God, love to His devotees and love to his creatures. None of the innumerable ways or religious practices will be of any use if not accompanied with

Love. No amount of penance, self-torture or asceticism will of any use if without love. Tirumular in his *Tirumandiram*, 10th Saiva *Tirumurai*, says, “Even if people practice religious austerities to the extent of offering slices of their own flesh as oblation and roast and fry the same in the fire with their bones as fuel, it is impossible to reach our precious Gem, Siiva, except to those whose hearts are mellowed and melt with Love.” Appar in his *Tevaram* says, “Even though in million waters he bathes, if for the Lord he bears no love, He appears the fool who water pours, with a pot holes, and shut the lid and thinks the water safe.” The quality of Love is such that the lover becomes completely merged in the beloved. He had become transformed into Love itself. *Tirumular* further states, “Love and God are, fools say, not one; Love and God, they know not, are one; Love and God, when men know, are one; As love they merge in God as one.”

Four Margas

Saiva bhakti promotes four ways of reaching God, they are known as *dasamarga*, *satputra marga*, *sahamarga* and *sanmarga*, associated with *carya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*. These four means lead one to *saloka*, *samipa*, *sarupa*, *sayujya* respectively. The *dasamarga* is service oriented, which expresses the entire labour class of subalterns. Labour itself is a way to attain liberation. Though one can extend this as a slavery interpreted and propagated by later caste hegemony, there is a deep philosophical insight in this. Labour is not regarded as useless and meant for this worldly and despised as low, as in Brahmanical categories. Menial labour and service is great and itself is a means to liberation. *Dasa marga* in Saiva bhakti is described as washing and leaning God’s temple, gathering flowers and making garlands of various types for adorning God with, burning lights in temples, and praising God and carrying out the behest of Godly Saints. By these duties the followers of *dasa marga*, attain liberation, which is to be in the world of God. The four paths deal with the physical and mental activities of a devotee who has dedicated his life for the realization of union with God or liberation. Devotion and loving service is the fundamental background on which all these activities are based and it is necessary to vivify all acts of worship.

2.7 BHAKTI AS PEOPLE’S PHILOSOPHY

Personification and anthropomorphism of God

The saints of the bhakti movement tried to create a feeling of personal rapport between the devotee and god. God is a person, not a concept or an abstract reality. God is experienced in the concrete situations. God shares the experience of people. God is seen as any human being. He loves, gets angry, protects, needs a house, has a family, needs rest at night, comes to visit people in their streets. All of these express the personification of God in terms of human experience which is typical of Dalit religious philosophy. Concept of God is purely anthropomorphic.

In the last analysis, the love of the devotee towards God is like that of a lover towards his beloved where there was no place for any other person. The bhakti movement became an instant success as devotion was preached and practised in the languages of the people. Bhakti saints emphasized that bhakti was the only means to attain salvation. *Prapatti* is quicker means to *moksa*. Bhakti is *patti*, total surrender to the deity, unceasing meditation and devotion to God.

Temple culture

Bhakti movements influenced the emperors from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries

and the Colas studded the country with temples for Siva in granite, which are still existing in all their glory, even after the lapse of thousand years. The number of such huge temples has caused foreign critics to remark that ‘the Tamils are a race of temple builders.’ Having stressed the importance of the *avatara*, the Alvars paved the way for the exaltation of image worship. The temple became not only the centre of social life but also a rich storehouse of Vaishnava iconography

Deification of Saints

The deification for the Alvars and especially woman saint, Andal is an important feature of Vaishnavism and influenced the Vaishnava iconographic development to a great extent. Images of all the Alvars came to be set up in all the Vishnu temples and worship offered to them on special occasions. Andal, in particular, acquired the honoured position of Vishnu’s consort and came to be accepted as an incarnation of Bhudevi.

2.8 SAKTISM AND TANTRISM AS PEOPLE’S RELIGION

The worship of Sakti is very ancient in India and very much indigenous. Although the mother goddess seems to have been venerated in the Indus valley civilization, little place is given to goddesses in the Vedic literature. Female deities were worshipped on the popular level from earliest times. She is considered as a consort of Siva. She is known variously as Sakti, Devi, Chandi, Chamunda, Durga, Uma, Amman and Mahamaya. Etymologically, Sakti is the power of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. She is the power of Maya, makes Siva determinate, endowed with the attributes of knowledge, will and action. Sakti as a name used to identify a number of local goddesses. Sakti worship is the deity’s power in the form of his consort. This has taken various forms, from simply representing the deity with his consort to singling her out as the chief object of worship. The concept underlying worship of Sakti is that since the eternal Siva is inactive Sakti is active. The creation of the world and the work of grace and liberation are her functions. Hence Sakti becomes more important than Siva himself, who is static and ineffective without his wife. Although erotic practices might well be expected, not all Saktism is erotic. Some forms are highly philosophical. Rites and rituals of a sacramental and magical nature accompanied with diagrams and gestures comprise a wide ranging practice which has not been sufficiently studied for us to get an overview or a very penetrating understanding. The texts which describe the elaborate rites and theories connected with saktism are called *tantras*.

In *Tantra* the development of psychic powers is sought by special yogic practices, depending upon physiological identifications. There are said to be six cakras, concentrations of psychic power, at different points along the chief vein, *susumna*, of the body which runs up the spinal column. At the base is the serpent power, *kundalini*, which is normally quiescent but can be awakened by yoga. Being aroused the serpent power goes up the great vein, passing through the six *cakras* of power, and unites itself with the great center of psychic energy, *sahasrara*, which is at the top of the vein inside the skull and is generally symbolized as a lotus. The awakened serpent power is supposed to give supernatural knowledge and magical faculties, and many of the claims to yogic and tantric marvels are justified from this dubious physiology. Complete union of the serpent power with the psychic centre in the skull is thought to bring liberation. The union of Sakti and Siva, by means of *kundalini* is the most advanced form of tantric *sadhana* or

practice. In *kundalini* yoga, the body is the manifestation of Sakti and the *kundalini* is the most powerful manifestation of Sakti's sexual force. This sexual force is not denied; it is used to activate the *cakras* and bring about union.

2.9 FOLK TRADITIONS: EXPRESSION OF INDIGENOUS WISDOM

As India is rich with plurality of cultures and folklore, folk philosophies should be unearthed, especially in the context of subaltern studies. Generally so-called 'little' traditions are ignored and unfortunately due to the absence of records in writing, the philosophical reflections of folk thinkers were not preserved effectively. The ordinary people express their philosophy not in a written form but through their proverbs, myths, celebrations, rituals, worship, etc. Hence it is an unarticulated philosophy which belongs to this 'little' tradition. Folklore denotes the rituals, worships, beliefs, tales and proverbs of the folk. It is the residue of the antique culture. In certain stories people express that their rights were taken away by others by cheating, conspiracy and that's why they are now made economically poor and socially backward. Since they are subservient and docile, they keep silence. In all folk stories, in beginning there was one community, equality, fraternity, happiness; no division, no suffering, etc. It could be called 'a golden period'. In folk consciousness, there is always a golden period in the past. Seeing the present ('dark age') reality which is full of problems, sufferings, divisions, cheating, inequality and what not, people not only dream about the golden future but also retrospect a golden past.

2.10 TAMIL SIDDHAS' SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION

The siddha movement in the south India, displays a move intense anti ritualistic, even anti establishment attitude, combined with a radical social attitude with an expressed disregard and contempt for the rigid social structure of medieval Indian society. **Against temple worship:** They preached against the temple worship itself to save the people from the exploitation of the priests. The Siddhas denounced all external forms of worship, sacrifices and rituals since they were convinced of the need to realize the supreme God within the heart of man. They spoke against bogus priests with a very drastic attack asking for whom they are performing these *poojas* when God is within. Sivavakkiyar says that neither God nor even the devils would accept the offerings made by the priests. He accuses them of extracting money from the people by uttering lies. Karuvurar condemns that persons who collectively devise methods for performing rituals do not derive any benefit. **Against Vedas and mantras:** God cannot be realized just by recitation of the Vedas and other holy books. They suggest that only by renouncing desires, God be realized in the mind. Pampatticittar criticises that Vedas, *agamas*, *sastras*, *tantras* and *puranas* are useless. Those who preach them do not know even their real meaning and such preachings are useless. They accuse the Vedas are written for earning the bread of some persons.

On idol worship: Ordinarily idol worship is only symbolic of the personified God. The temple expresses the individual character of the vedic rites. The presiding deity or God dwells in it in human fashion, in an image or symbol. The priest is an intermediary between the god and the devotee. But it would appear that the symbolic nature of idol worship would have been lost sight of and the common masses would have been exploited in the name of God by those in charge of the

temples. Sivakkiyar rejects the idea that God will reside in idols made of stone and metals and he says the god will not be found in stones. He rejects the performances of sacrifices by offering oblation and taking baths in tanks and rivers. The bodily impurities are removed, but that of the mind will still persist and by taking bath one becomes a saint. They wanted to save the common masses from the exploitation of the organized but degenerated priest and temple managers. **Revolt against caste:** the caste is vehemently condemned. The cruelties committed by the high caste is strongly condemned. Among human beings there is no difference and laments over the differences observed.

2.11 LET US SUM UP

Bhakti movements transformed not only the religious but also the social thought and life of the people in India. Subalterns are very great thinkers and humanist in this sense of adoption, reconciliation. North Indian bhakti movement is the witness to it. Guru Nanak's movement that became a religion of Sikhism is a clear witness of subaltern upraising of equality and unity.

2.12 KEY WORDS

Dasamarga : Path of service to liberation as promoted in Saiva bhakti movement.

2.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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