

Unit- V : BHAKTI MOVEMENT

B.A. History, 2nd Semester, Paper : History of Delhi Sultanate (1200-1556 AD)

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Introduction

Bhakti movement originated in Tamil Nadu in South India around 6th Century AD. The **Alvar** and **Nayanar** saints were the propagators of the Bhakti faith. The Alvar were the devotees of **Vishnu** and Nayanars were the devotees of Shiva. They wandered from one place to the other and preached their faith and identified certain places as shrines of the abode of deities. Later, large temples were built and the images of the saints were worshipped in the shrines.

Alvar and Nayanar saint were from different sects of society; **12 Alvar Vaishnavite saints and 63 Nayanar Shaivitesaints** propagate for the growth of Bhakti Movement in the south India. They were considered as important propagators and promoters of the Vedas. The best example is the *Nalayira Divyapra Bandham*, an anthology in the 10th century was the compositions by the 12 Alvars. This was considered as the *Tamil Veda* and recognized as the four Vedas cherished by the Brahmanas. The presence of women devotees was a distinguished feature of Alvar- Nayanar tradition. Women devotees to be mentioned are: **Andal**, a great woman devotee of Alvar tradition. **Karaikhal Ammaiyar**, woman devotee of Nayanar tradition. These women devotees denounced patriarchal norms and challenged them through their life styles and compositions.

Ideology:

They believe that salvation or freedom from the bondage of birth and death can be attained by three means: **Jnana**(knowledge), **Karma**(action), and **Bhakti**(devotion). With the passage of time Bhakti was regarded as the most important. Singing and chanting of devotional songs were part of worship. It criticised caste system, and opposed to dominance of the Brahmanas in the society. It focused that all human being are one and the same and one God. Thus withstanding class, creed and gender even women were accommodated in social platforms. **Brahmanas took important part in the society and also women played an important role.**

Bhakti movement with the emergence of Buddhism and Jainism, then also the decline of the Rajputs and the Marathas the Bhakti movement was kept inactive for some period. Moreover, India was invaded by the Muslim invaders and Islam rooted in India. However, the Islamic faith influenced the Hindu community of one being and one God. It was then, during the last part of the rule of Muhammad-bin Tughlaq, the Sultanate rule started declining, socio-religious reformers from all sections of people sprang up. Hence there was a new revival, a social and religious revolution and this movement revived the Bhakti movement. The leader of the Hindu revivalist movement was **Shankaracharya**, who was a great thinker and a distinguished Philosopher.

Ramanuja:

He lived in the 11th century AD, born in a Brahmin family near Madras. He attempted to assimilate Bhakti to the tradition of Vedas. According to him Moksha(salvation) lies through

Karma(action), Gyan(Knowledge), and Bhakti(devotion). He propounded the concept of Vishish tadvaita(qualified monoism/one God). He preached the doctrine of personal devotion to God (Saguna Ishvara). His followers are called Vaishnavas. Ramanuja can be rightly called the founder of the Bhakti movement. Among the later exponents of the Bhakti movement, we may discuss on the following:

Ramananda:

He was the founder of Bhakti movement in the North India. He was influenced by the teaching Ramanuja. He stressed his teaching on love and devotion, he also stressed among his followers the abolition of caste practices. He popularized the cult of Rama and Sita in place of worship of Krishna and Radha. His disciples were **Raidas**(Cobbler), **Kabir**(Weaver), **Dhanna**(Farmer), **Sena**(Barber) and **Pipa** the Rajput.

Guru Nanak(1469-1538):

He was the founder of Sikh faith in Punjab. Born in Talwandi now Nankana Sahib to a Khatri family. He emphasized on one God and was against idolatry. His teaching gave rise to Sikhism. He initiated the practice of community kitchen.

Vallabhacharya:

Born to Telegu parents in 1479 near Banaras. He emphasized on the worship of Krishna as an incarnation of the Almighty God. He lived in the court of Krishnadevaraya of Vijaynagar, founded the **Pushti sect**.

Chaitanya(1485-1533 AD):

He was born in Nadia district of West Bengal. He was the most popular among the Vaishnava saints, regarded as the founder of modern Vaishnav sect of Bengal. He preached during the reign of Sultan Allaudin Shah of Bengal and Gajpati ruler of Orissa. He emphasized universal love and brotherhood as the first step to the love of God. He died at Puri. His biography is **Chaitanya Charitmala**. His philosophy was called **Achitya bhadavala**. He is considered as an incarnation of Krishna by his followers, his image is seen in every Bengali home and is worshipped.

Mirabai(1498-1546):

She married to Bhojraj, she was Rathor Princess of Mevata and daughter inlaw of Rana Sanga of Mewar. She belonged to Krishna cult of Vaishnavism.

Tulsidas(1532-1623 AD):

Born in Brahmin family in Varanasi, belonged to Ram Bhakti cult of Vaishnavism. He wrote **Ramacharit Manas, Gitawali, Kavitawali, Vinay Patrika etc.** He propounded the worship of Rama as an incarnation.

IMPACT OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT: Bhakti movement was a wide spread movement from all sections of the society and from different regions of India. Its impact was significant.

Religious impact: Brought about reformation of Hinduism. It denounced the former religious practices as caste system and idolatry. Bhakti movement was also against positions and exploitation by the Brahmanas. Bhakti movement saved Hinduism from the exploitation of

Islam. The saints of Bhakti emphasized on oneness of human being, one God, equality and brotherhood. Bhakti movement led to the foundation of Sikh religion in Punjab by Guru Nanak Dev.

Social Impact: It brings unity and understanding between religious differences, somehow lessened high or low class, race or creed. It brought harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims. Saints from all sections emerged.

Cultural Impact: It enriched regional languages. The reformers preached in their own mother tongue.

Political Impact: Bhakti movement led to the growth of Sikh and Marathas power. **Guru Nanak** and his nine successors in Punjab enhanced brotherhood and oneness of human beings.

Tuka Ram in Maharashtra also emphasized on unity and brotherhood. They condemned casteism, differences between rich and poor. Great leaders like **Guru Govind Singh** in Punjab and **Shivaji** in Maharashtra emerged.