

## **Bhakti movement**

### **BHAKTI MOVEMENT IN INDIA AND PUNJAB-by ARUN JOSHI , 9888933043, SRI KRISHNA INSTITUTE , JALANDHAR**

An important landmark in the cultural history of medieval India was the silent revolution in society brought about by a galaxy of socio-religious reformers, a revolution known as the Bhakti Movement. This movement was responsible for many rites and rituals associated with the worship of God by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Indian subcontinent. For example, Kirtan at a Hindu Temple, Qawaali at a Dargah (by Muslims), and singing of Gurbani at a Gurdwara are all derived from the Bhakti movement of medieval India (800-1700). The leader of this Hindu revivalist movement was Shankaracharya, a great thinker and a distinguished philosopher. And this movement was propounded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Namadeva, Tukaram, Jayadeva. The movement's major achievement was its abolition of idol worship. The leader of the bhakti movement focusing on the Lord as Rama was Ramananda. Very little is known about him, but he is believed to have lived in the first half of the 15th century. He taught that Lord Rama is the supreme Lord, and that salvation could be attained only through love for and devotion to him, and through the repetition of his sacred name. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was an ascetic Hindu monk and social reformer in 16th century Bengal. A great proponent of loving devotion for God, bhakti yoga, Chaitanya worshiped the Lord in the form of Krishna. Sri Ramanuja Acharya was an Indian philosopher and is recognized as the most important saint of Sri Vaishnavism. Ramananda brought to North India what Ramanuja did in South India. He raised his voice against the increasing formalism of the orthodox cult and founded a new school of Vaishnavism based on the gospel of love and devotion. His most outstanding contribution is the abolition of distinctions of caste among his followers. Followers of Bhakti movement in 12th and 13th Century included saints such as Bhagat Namdev, and Saint Kabir Das, who insisted on the devotional singing of praises of lord through their own compositions. Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru and founder of the Sikhism, too was a Nirguna Bhakti Saint and social reformer. He was opposed to all distinctions of caste as well as the religious rivalries and rituals. He preached the unity of God and condemned formalism and ritualism of both Islam and Hinduism. Guru Nanak's gospel was for all men. He proclaimed their equality in all respects. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries continued to witness the rise of many religious reformers. The exponent of the Rama cult and the Krishna cult among the Vaishnavas branched off into a number of sects and creeds. The leading light of the Rama cult was saint-poet Tulsidas. He was a very great scholar and had made a profound study of Indian philosophy and literature. His great poem, 'Ramacharitamanasa', popularly called Tulsi-krita Ramayana is very popular among the Hindu devotees. He set before the people the image of Sri Rama as all virtuous, all powerful, the Lord of the World, and the very embodiment of the Supreme Reality (Parabrahma). The followers of the Krishna cult founded the Radha Ballabhi sect under Hari Vamsa in 1585 A.D. Sur Das wrote 'Sursagar' in Brajhasha, which is full of verses of the charm of Lord Krishna and his beloved Radha.

## **Sufism**

The terms Sufi, Wali, Darvesh and Faqir are used for Muslim saints who attempted to achieve development of their intuitive faculties through ascetic exercises, contemplation, renunciation and self-denial. By the 12th century A.D., Sufism had become a universal aspect of Islamic social life as its influence extended over almost the entire Muslim community. Sufism represents the inward or esoteric side of Islam or the mystical dimension of Muslim religion. However, the Sufi saints transcending all religious and communal distinctions, worked for promoting the interest of humanity at large. The Sufis

were a class of philosophers remarkable for their religious catholicity. Sufis regarded God as the supreme beauty and believed that one must admire it, take delight in His thought and concentrate his attention on Him only. They believed that God is 'Mashuq' and Sufis are the 'Ashiqs'. Sufism crystallized itself into various 'Silsilahs' or orders. The 4 most popular among these were Chistis, Suhrawardis, Qadiriya and Naqshbandis. Sufism took roots in both rural and urban areas and exercised a deep social, political and cultural influence on the masses. It rebelled against all forms of religious formalism, orthodoxy, falsehood and hypocrisy and endeavoured to create a new world order in which spiritual bliss was the only and the ultimate goal. At a time when struggle for political power was the prevailing madness, the Sufi saints reminded men of their moral obligations. To a world torn by strife and conflict they tried to bring peace and harmony. The most important contribution of Sufism is that it helped to blunt the edge of Hindu-Muslim prejudices by forging the feelings of solidarity and brotherhood between these two religious communities.

### **Some Important Bhakti Reformers:**

**Ramanuja:** Born in A.D. 1166 in a small town near Chenni (Madras), Ramanuja was a worshipper of Vishnu and preached Vaishnavism. He had a great following in the South. **Ramananda:** The greatest preacher of this cult in north India was Ramananda. He discarded all caste distinctions and his disciples belonged to all castes.

**Kabir:** He was perhaps the most popular reformer of his times. He was a disciple of Ramananda. Kabir was against idol worship or any sort of rituals. **Namdeva:** He was a Maratha saint, born into a low family. He too believed in the oneness of God. He travelled far and wide and had discussions with the Sufis. A large number of Muslims also became his followers.

**Chaitanya Mahaprabhu:** He was a religious teacher from Bengal and an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna. HE travelled widely and popularized hymns sung in praise of Krishna. **Mirabai:** Mirabai was a Rajput princess and a passionate devotee of Krishna. She preached in Brijbhasha, the common language of the people. Her song and verses are very popular even today.

**Guru Nanak :** Nanaka was born in 1469 in the village to Talwandi. Presently the place is known as Nankana in the Sheikhpura district of West Punjab. His parents belonged to Khatri caste. His father Kalu was the Patwari of the village. Nanaka was educated in the village school.

**Vallabhacharya :** Vallabhacharya was a Tailang Brahmin. He preached the worship of Vishnu in the form of Krishna. He was born in 1479 in the Telugu country. He visited Mathura, Vrindavan and many other sacred places and finally settled at Varanasi. The feeling of Bhakti or devotion can be traced back to the Rig Veda. It is the very first hymn of the Rig Veda, which gives expression to a feeling of intimacy with the highest god. In the Katha Upanisad it is said that the divine help, which is the reward to Bhakti, is necessary before one can be saved.

**SUFI SAINTS FROM PUNJAB:** 1. Farīduddīn Mas'ūd Ganjshakar (Punjabi (1173–1266) was a 12th-century Sufi preacher and saint of the Chishti Order of South Asia. Fariduddin Ganjshakar is generally recognized as the first major poet of the Punjabi language, and is considered one of the pivotal saints of the Punjab region. Revered by Muslims and Hindus, he is considered one of the fifteen Sikh bhagats, and selections from his work are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh sacred scripture. He is buried in Pakpattan, in present-day Punjab, Pakistan. The city of Faridkot bears his name. According to legend, Farīd stopped by the city, then named Mokhalpūr, and sat in seclusion for forty days near the fort of King Mokhal. The king was said to be so impressed by his presence that he

named the city after Bābā Farīd, which today is known as Tilla Bābā Farīd.

2. Baba Sain Mir Mohammed Sahib (c. 1550 – 11 August 1635), popularly known as Mian Mir, was a famous Sufi saint who resided in Lahore, specifically in the town of Dharampura (in present-day Pakistan). He was a direct descendant of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab. He belonged to the Qadiri order of Sufism. He is famous for being a spiritual instructor of Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. HE LAID THE FOUNDATION STONE OF HARIMANDIR SAHIB.

3. haykh Ahmad al-Farūqī al-Sirhindī (1564–1624) was an Indian Islamic scholar from Punjab, a Hanafī jurist, and a prominent member of the Naqshbandī Sufi order. He is described as Mujaddid Alf Thānī, meaning the "reviver of the second millennium", for his work in rejuvenating Islam and opposing the heterodoxies prevalent in the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar. Most famous of his works are a collection of 536 letters, collectively entitled Collected Letters or Maktubat, to the Mughal rulers and other contemporaries. It consists of three volumes.

4. Bulleh Shah (1680–1757) was a Punjabi Sufi poet, humanist and philosopher. His full name was Abdullah Shah. Bulleh Shah is believed to have been born in 1680, in the small village of Uch, Bahawalpur, Punjab, in present day Pakistan. His lifespan also overlapped with the Punjabi poet Waris Shah (1722–1798), of Heer Ranjha fame, and the Sindhi Sufi poet Abdul Wahab (1739–1829), better known by his pen-name, Sachal Sarmast . The verse form Bulleh Shah primarily employed is called the Kafi, a style of Punjabi, Sindhi poetry used not only by the Sufis of Sindh and Punjab, but also by Sikh gurus. Bulleh Shah died in 1757. His tomb is located in Kasur, present day Pakistan.

5. Damodar Das Arora was a famous Punjabi poet, belonging to the Jhang District. He is famous for his poetic narration of the tale of Heer Ranjha, which is titled Heer Damodar. This was the first Punjabi language poem about this famous love-legend. He was a contemporary of Heer and Ranjha.

6. Shah Hussain (1538–1599) was a Punjabi Sufi poet who is regarded as a Sufi saint. He was the son of Sheikh Usman, a weaver, and belonged to the Dhudha clan of Rajputs. He was born in Lahore (present-day Pakistan). He is considered a pioneer of the Kafi form of Punjabi poetry. His tomb and shrine lies in Baghbanpura, adjacent to the Shalimar Gardens. Hussain was also the first Sufi poet of Punjabi who adopted the popular measure of Kafi to express his mystic ideas. The credit of introducing the element of the popular love-legends of Punjab (Heer Ranjha and Sohni Mahiwal) to Sufi Verse .

7. Sultan Bahu (ca 1628 – 1691) was a Muslim Sufi and saint who founded the Sarwari Qadiri Sufi order. Sultan Bahu was born in Anga, Soon Valley, in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. Like many other Sufi saints of South Asia Sultan Bahu was a prolific writer. More than forty books on Sufism are attributed to him, mostly in Persian. His verses are sung in many genres of Sufi music including qawwali and kafi. Tradition has established a unique style of singing his couplets. Sultan Bahu is a direct descendant of Ali, the cousin of Muhammad. The mausoleum of Sultan Bahu located in Garh Maharaja, Punjab, Pakistan was originally built on his grave but has had to be moved twice when the Chenab River changed its course. It is a popular Sufi shrine,

8. Waris Shah (1722–1798) was a Punjabi Sufi poet, renowned for his contribution to Punjabi literature. He is best known for his seminal work Heer Ranjha, based on the traditional folk tale of Heer and her lover Ranjha. Heer is considered one of the quintessential works of classical Punjabi literature. The story of Heer was also told by several other writers—including notable versions by Damodar Das, Mukbal, and Ahmed Gujjar—but Waris Shah's version is by far the most popular today. Waris Shah is also called Shakespeare of the Punjabi language because of his great poetic love story, Heer Ranjha.

Many verses of Waris Shah are widely used in Punjab in a moral context.

One of the more popular is "Waris Shah; Naa adataan jaandiyan ne, Bhavein katiye poriyan poriyan ji"  
Waris Shah's rendering of Heer: " Awwal hamad Khuda da vird kariye Ishq kita su jag da mool mian  
Pehlaan aap hi Rabb ne ishq kita Te mashooq he nabi rasool mian ”

### **The Buddhism and Jainism**

The Buddha : Also known as Sakyamuni or Tathagata. Born in 563 BC on the Vaishakha Poornima Day at Lumbini near Kapilavastu in Nepal. His father Suddhodhana was the Saka ruler. His mother, Mahamaya, of the Kosala Dynasty died after 7 days of his birth. Brought up by step mother Gautami. Married at 16 to Yoshodhara . Enjoyed the married life for 13 years and had a son named Rahula. After seeing an old man, a sick man, a corpse and an ascetic, he decided to become a wanderer. Left his palace at the age of 29 in search of truth ( also know as Mahabhinishkramana or the Great Renunciation and wandered for 6 years. Attained enlightenment at 35 at Gaya in Magadha (Bihar ) under the Pipal tree. Delivered the first sermon at Sarnath where his five disciples had settled. His first sermon is called “ Dharmachakrapravartan” or “Turning the wheel of Law”. Attained Mahaparinirvana at Kushinagar in 483 BC at the age of 80 in Malla republic.

### **Jainism :**

Founded by Rishabha. There were 24 Tirthankaras (Prophets or Gurus) , all Kshatriyas. First was Rishabhath ( Emblem : Bull) The 23rd Tirthankar Parshwanath ( Emblem: Snake) was the son of King Ashvasena of Banaras. The 24th and the last Tirthankar was Vardhaman Mahavira (Emblem : Lion). He was born in Kundagram (Dist : Muzaffarpur, Bihar in 599 BC. His father Siddhartha was the head of Jnatrika clan. His mother was Trishla, sister of Lichchavi Prince Chetak of Vaishali. Mahavir was related to Bimbsara. Married to Yashoda, had a daughter named Priyadarsena, whose husband Jamali his first disciple. At 30, after the death of this parents, he became an ascetic. In the 13th year of his asceticism, he attained supreme knowledge (Kaivalya). From now on he was called Jaina or Jitendriya and Mahavira, and his followers were named Jains .He also got the title of Arihant. At the age of 72, he attained death at Pava , near Patna in 527 BC.

### **Note: Buddhist Councils**

The first Buddhist council took place in 483 BC at Sattaparni. Religious doctrine were compiled and embodied in Pali canon. The literature is known as Tripitakas. President of the council was Mahakashapa. Upali recited the Vinay Pitaka and Ananda recited the Sutta Pitaka. Vinay Pitaka was the rules of the order and Sutta Pitaka was the great collection of the Buddha's sermons on matters of doctrine and ethics. The second council was held in 383 BC, 100 years after Buddha's death at Vaishali under the presidentship of Sabbakami. Here Buddhism was divided into Sthaviras and Mahasanghikas. The third council was held in 250 BC at Patliputra in the reign of Ashoka. The president was Tissa Mogaliputta. A decision was taken to send missionaries to various parts of the subcontinent. Here a new Pitaka or Abhidharma Pitaka was added. Secondly canonical literature was precisely and authoritatively settled. The fourth Buddhist council was held in the 1-2nd AD at Kundalavana, Kashmir in the reign of Kanishka under the leadership of Vasumitra and Asvagosha. Here Buddhism was divided into two broad sects the Mahayana and Hinayana. Hinayana treated Buddha as nothing more than a human being whereas Mahayanism treated him as God and worshipped his idol. Bodhisatva of Mahayanism was a saviour and would help every living organism in attaining Nirvana. The Mahayana sect adopted Sanskrit in place of Pali as their language. The earliest text is Lalitvistara. Later another

sect Vajrayana appeared in eastern India. The chief divinities of this sect were the Taras. They did not treat meat, fish, wine etc as taboo in dietary habit and freely consumed them. Ashoka, Kanishka, Harsha and Palas of Bihar and Bengal were great patron of Buddhism. Upagupta converted Emperor Ashoka to Buddhism. Ashvagosha was first biographer of Buddha who wrote Buddha Charitam in Sanskrit. Nagarjuna propounded the theory of Shunyavada. Pushyamitra Sunga persecuted the Buddhist. Shashanka the Gauda king cut the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya. Buddha gave his first sermon at Sarnath where his five former disciples had settled. To these five ascetics he preached his first sermon and called it Dharma Chakraparavartana. Buddha emphasised on the importance of non-violence and forbade the killing of animals as part of religious practices.

## **India News - Times of India**

## The Bhakti Movement

- What is it?

**Hindu Religious movement** that started spontaneously during late medieval ages( 800-1700 AD) during Islamic rule in the North to "**save Hinduism**" from forceful conversions.

- Where did it start?

In the south in **ancient Tamil Nadu** and spread in the North.

- It's start and spread:

At the onset main spiritual practice is loving devotion among Shaivite and Vaishnavite Saints. During 14th to 17th centuries it spread through Central and Northern India initiated by spiritual teachers called "Sants" or saints. Some examples are Ravidas, Ramdas, Srimat Sankardeva, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Vallabhacharya, Meera Bai, Kabir, Tulsidas, Namdev, Tukaram. Although in the south it mainly focused on worship of Shiva and Vishnu, in the north it was mainly Rama and Krishna-- both incarnations of Vishnu. Different regions of India saw emergence of sects that focused on worship of God. Denounced the caste system and hierarchy of the Brahmins.

### More details:

Sant's teachings mainly included educating common man to cast aside rituals and caste system, superstitious beliefs and spread the love of God by simplifying the complex Sanskrit scriptures. Many devotional songs and poetry was created during this time in local dialect to spread the word of God, e.g.- Kabir's Dohas, Mira bai's Krishna Bhajans. As per Hindu Mythology and principles Goddesses were not excluded from this. In the 17th century Ramprasad Sen from Bengal wrote many devotional songs dedicated to Ma Kali that included his many conversations with the Goddess Kali detailing philosophy of the Vedanta teachings.