



## **A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT ON INDIAN LITERATURE**

**Barnali Choudhury**

Assistant Professor & Head

Department of English, Kanya Mahavidyalaya

Geetanagar, Guwahati-781021 Assam, India

Email: [barnalichoudhury3323@gmail.com](mailto:barnalichoudhury3323@gmail.com)

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### **ABSTRACT :**

*Without the basis of Bhakti, India's religious and cultural traditions would be unimaginable. Whereas the intellectual schools of thought are exclusive to the Indian elite, Bhakti has come to define a way of life for a vast majority of the country's citizens. The movement has a profound effect on society by lowering the bar for God. The religious and cultural milieu of that region gave rise to the Bhakti movement, a socio-cultural mass movement that spread from South India in the eighth and ninth CE and reached the North during the mediaeval era. It caused a pushback against the standard order of deep, thought-provoking observations. It became a protest against the walls of caste, creed, color, and race in order to reach out to the vast majority of people who had up to now been kept outside the rigid framework of Sanskritic tradition. Its inclusive outlook and pan-Indian viewpoint sparked an abundance of devotional literature, music, and song that revitalized India's spiritual life.*

**Keywords: :** *Influence, Bhakti, Movement, Indian, Literature, Sanskritic, Tradition, Scriptures.*

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### **I.Introduction:**

Millions of people in India had their thoughts significantly impacted by the *Bhakti* movement between the ninth and fifteenth centuries. It became a pan-Indian movement around the turn of the fourteenth century, when it began to absorb northern India. "A major many-sided movement occurred in Hindu culture and sensibility during the sixth and ninth centuries," writes Ramanujan, who has traced the subsequent split and 'shift' in Hindu fashion. This metamorphosis is commonly referred to as "*Bhakti*" (1983: 103). The book's greatest accomplishment, according to him, is "bringing the high to the low, esoteric contradiction to



the man on the street, transmuting old and arcane thoughts into living modern experiences; at the same time, finding commonplace metaphors for the timeless". Narada asserts that there is no distinction between "higher" and "lower" devotees in terms of their adoration of God based on attributes like birth, education, beauty, social standing, material belongings, or religious observances.

All creatures, from the biggest tree to the tiniest blade of grass, and from the most exalted to the lowest, ought to serve Hari, says Sri Chaitanya. This is acknowledged by Adi Shankara, who writes in the Manisha Panchakam that a jnani is a guru to everyone who seeks him out, irrespective of caste or social standing.

The Sanskrit terms Bhaj + Ktin are the sources of the word *Bhakti*. "To serve" or "to give" or "to participate" is what the word "Bha" signifies (Ramachandran 31). To put it simply, it's a burning desire to serve God and experience heaven. "Bhakti" is defined by K.S. Narayanachar as "living for God and living in God, in thought, emotion, and action."

### **Idea of Bhakti Movement:**

The Bhakti movement (800–1700 CE) spread throughout North, West, East, and North Eastern India after starting in South India. It gave rise to an enormous body of literature, the majority of which were poems and songs that were sung at common masses, temples, Dargas, and Gurdwaras.

In the twelfth CE, Ramananda propagated the Bhakti movement in northern India. Literary works in languages like Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi, etc. grew as a result of this. The Hanuman Chalisa and Ramcharitmanas are two of Tulsidas' best-known compositions.

### **Bhakti Movement and Indian Literature:**

The concept "*Bhakti literature*" describes the devotional writings of many saints, poets, and mystics who used a variety of literary forms and languages to convey their love and devotion to God. It became a popular movement that opposed the hegemony of Brahmanical orthodoxy and ritualism in various parts of India.



The Bhakti movement, which opposed idolatry in general, was founded on monotheistic ideas. The Bhakti reformers proclaimed that redemption could only be obtained by intense devotion and faith in God, and they believed in liberation from the cycle of life and death. Bhakti Literature promoted the spread of regional languages and literature by using native tongues to write devotional writings. For instance, Tamil literature and language growth are a result of the Bhakti movement in Tamil Nadu.

As a literary movement, it brought spiritual subjects and freed poetry from praising kings. From the perspective of style, it eliminated the dominance of Sanskrit metrical forms and introduced easy-to-understand styles such as Vachanas (in Kannada), Saakhis, Dohas, and other forms in other languages. Religious intolerance developed from both religions' appreciation of eliminating disparities in beliefs and behaviors. Additionally, the movement changed Sikhism's cultural norms and abandoned the Brahmins' status. The Effect of the Bhakti Movement on Indian Literature is of great value for the researchers and academicians.

**II. Objectives of the Study:** The major objectives of the study are-

1. To study the idea of Bhakti Movement.
2. To analyse how Bhakti Movement directly and indirectly connected to Indian Literature

**III . Methodology:**

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on secondary sources. Research papers, research articles, books, newspapers, magazines, paper clips, and journals form the foundation of secondary sources. The main vision of the paper is to focus Bhakti Movement in Indian Literature.

**IV. Analysis and Discussion:**

The Bhakti movement placed a strong emphasis on the oneness of all the Hindu gods, self-surrender to God, universal human equality and brotherhood, and devotion to God as the highest ideal in life. The Bhakti movement's rejection of the caste system had a significant influence on Indian society. The Bhakti movement pushed for social equality and opposed the



caste system. It placed more emphasis on devotion to a personal god than on the ceremonial aspects of orthodox Hinduism. It inspired many to look for a direct, no-middleman relationship with God.

#### **Earlier Work:**

1. **Dr. Suman Ahlawat (2022)**, in his research paper titled "*Bhakti movement and its impact on Indian literature*" highlights that While the intellectual elite of India is restricted to certain schools of thought, Bhakti has come to define a way of life for a vast majority of the country's citizens. The movement had a profound effect on society by making God more approachable. The religious and cultural milieu of that region gave rise to the Bhakti movement, a sociocultural mass movement that spread from South India in the eighth and ninth CE and reached the North during the mediaeval era. It caused a pushback against the standard order of deep, thought-provoking observations.
2. **Preeti Oza (2020)**, in her research paper titled "*History of Protest Literature in India: Trails from the Bhakti Literature*" states that with the use of colloquial language, the Bhakti movement in India has been a ground-breaking phenomenon that gave abstractions a distinct face and a firm shape. As a religious movement, it placed a great emphasis on the emotional and intimate connection that exists between followers and a personal God.
3. **Manager Pandey (2001)**, in his research paper titled "*Bhakti Poetry: Its Relevance and Significance*" focuses that A new stage of development and evolution is entered by the Bhakti Movement, Indian society, its literature, and its culture.
4. **Dr. Rekha Pande (2000)**, in the paper titled "*The Bhakti Movement - A Historiographical Critique*" focuses that Even if the idea of Bhakti is very old in Indian religion, there were certain notable movements and modifications from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> CE that altered its basic essence and molded the character of the solidified society.

#### **Discussion:**

The Rigvedic hymns serve as the foundation for the idea of *Bhakti*, which began to take shape during the Epic and Puranic periods of Hinduism. The Bhagavata Purana, the Vishnu



Purana, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Mahabharata all specifically mention Bhakti Yoga referred to as the Path of Devotion as a means of achieving salvation.

According to Laxmana Murthy, there is a general consensus that the Bhagavad Gita presents the most comprehensive articulation of Bhakti in all its dimensions. The Bhakti sutras of Narada and Shandilya were written after the Bhagavad Gita (1989: 11). The Bhakti mentioned in the Gita is jnana bhakti, or bhakti via knowledge, according to Avadesh Kumar Singh's history of the Bhakti movement in India. He argues that while acknowledging the Gita's complex meanings, the Narada Bhakti Sutra offers a formulaic interpretation of Jnana-Bhakti.

The Srimad Bhagavata established it in an illustrated manner in the ninth CE. He points out that bhakti is described in eleven different ways in the Narada-Bhakti-Sutra: loving God's beautiful form; loving God's blessed qualities; loving God's worship; loving God's remembrance; loving God's service; loving God as a friend; loving God as a son; loving God as a husband; loving in submission to God; loving being wholly submerged in or absorbed in God; and loving. "Differences like caste, learning, beauty, family, fortune, and profession among others that have plagued Hindu society for long are eradicated... in one fell swoop".

Bhagavata divides Bhakti into nine distinct categories: "Sakhyamatma nivedanam/Sravanam kirtanam visnoh/Smaranam padasevanam/Archanam vandanam dasyam." Aspects of bhakti include hearing accounts of Lord Vishnu's heroic deeds, praising Him, meditating on Him, taking refuge at His feet, adoring Him, bowing down to Him as an attendant, serving Him as an attendant, becoming friends with Him, and committing oneself to Him. Though both Shankara and Ramanuja advocated for jnana marga, it is commonly believed that jnana, when completely developed, becomes bhakti, and vice versa. "Love that is persistent and fearless" is how Sri Ramanuja describes bhakti (snehanupurvam anudhyanam bhaktih).

The works of 63 Nayanars (Shaivite devotees), 12 Alvars (Vaishnavite devotees), Saranas, Dasas, Vachana sahitya of Veerashaiva poets like Basavanna, Pada kavitha of Annamacharya, Kshetrayya, and other great masters of Carnatic music have contributed to the enrichment of the South Indian Bhakti movement. Due to their immense influence, we can also



acknowledge the efforts of later bhakti poets like as Sri Aurobindo and Tagore. The development of the Bhakti movement was greatly aided by the 75 followers of bhakti who lived in southern India during the second and seventh CE, under the Pallava and Pandya kings.

One of the early Shaivite saints, Karaikkal Ammaiyar, lived in the fifth century and is thought to have been a contemporary of the Vaishnavite saints, Bhuttalwar and Peialwar. This occurred at approximately the same time. They later influenced the intellectual frameworks that Madhava and Ramanuja constructed. The Nalayira Divya Prabandham, or Tamil Veda, consists of four thousand hymns. The Twelve Alvars wrote these hymns. Many people consider the 1,102 poems that are credited to Nammalvar to be the most significant. This is a regular daily rite carried out at the Sri Vaishnava temples. In the form of Tamil poetry, they offer the main ideas found in the Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas. According to S. Abid Husain, "the Alvars played a significant part in making the Hindu religion a live experience for the ordinary people in the south." Their principal sources of inspiration were the Vishnu Purana, the Bhagavad Gita, and other sacred Hindu literary works. Vishnu Bhakti gained the status of a separate religion with a significantly larger appeal to the general public than any of its opponents thanks to their profound devotion to Vishnu and literary prowess (61).

The easiest method to get in touch with God, so the saying goes, is to recite Andal's Thiruppavai, a holy book that is supposed to be read during the Dhanurmasa. The fact that the Alvars are from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, including a woman and sudras, shows how accepting of caste, class, and gender the bhakti religion had become. Up until that point, the larger, pan-Indian heritage served to maintain these divisions. "The Alvars emphasized the primacy of bhakti, which was typified by total surrender to God and reciting of nama (nama smaranam). According to the people's vernacular, their simplified and new conception of bhakti allowed everyone, regardless of class or economic standing, to enter (Singh 308).

There are four main lineages of Vaishnava sampradayas: Shuddhadvaita ('pure non-dualism') of Rudra sampradaya espoused by Vishnuswami and Vallabhacharya; Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism) of Sri Ramanujacharya; Dvaita or Brahma sampradaya of Sri Madhvacharya and Achintya Bheda Abheda (literally, 'inconceivable difference and non-



difference') of Gaudiya Vaishnavism espoused by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu; and Dvaitadvaita of Kumara sampradaya espoused by Nimbarka (Klostermaier 1998).

The theological sects of the Virashaiva and Haridasa were more well-liked while Karnataka was ruled by the Vijayanagara Empire. Madhvacharya's philosophical perspective served as an inspiration for the Kannada Haridasas. It is believed that two of Sripadaraya's disciples, Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa, had a major influence on the evolution of Carnatic music. Another offshoot that can be linked to this Karnataka movement is Yakshagana. Between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, a significant Bhakti movement was established in Northern India by mystics known as "Sants," including Meera Bai, Kabir, Sur Das, Tulsi Das, Tukaram, and others. Northern India saw the growth of this movement. Sant Mat is the name of their system of philosophy; it literally means "point of view of the Sants." They chose to communicate their immense love for God in common language above the burden of rituals and the intricacies of beliefs.

One distinguishing feature of their beliefs is "an equality opposed to the qualitative disparities of the Hindu caste system and to those between Hindus and Muslims" (Woodhead 71–72). The Saints are divided into two groups: those who reside in the north and those who do not. Writers from the north, such as Raidas and Kabir, used the native Hindi language, while writers from the south, such as Ramananda and Namdev, used Marathi. Notwithstanding their diversity, there are a few defining traits that allow you to recognize them.

Some of these traits are a non-sectarian outlook, the use of vernacular poetry, belief in divinity, rejection of religious rituals, understanding of caste and liturgy, strong ties to the oppressed groups, such as women and the untouchables, and submission to the God "who dwells in the heart." It appears that Kabir, Raidas, and possibly other Sants were initiated by the Vaishnava saint Ramananda.

Other Sikh spiritual masters like Guru Nanak are also included in the Sant Mat. They did not belong to any particular sect; rather, their followers created the groups that bore their names, such as Advait Mat, Radhasoami, Dadu Panth, Dariya Panth, Kabir Panth, and so on. On the other hand, poets from Sindhi and Sufi traditions from the Middle Ages, including Jalal



ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, appear to have shared a connection with the poet-saints of Sant Mat (Alsani 637–638).

Renowned for promoting the Vaishnava school of Bhakti Yoga, which focused mostly on Lord Krishna and Radha, was Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He died in 1533, having been born in West Bengal in 1486. As a result of his efforts, the Hare Krishna mantra was chanted more frequently. Individuals who continue in his footsteps are called Gaudiya Vaishnavas. Chaitanya selected six pious men to assist him in organizing and disseminating his bhakti doctrine. Sanatana Goswami, Gopala Bhatta Goswami, Raghunatha Bhatta Goswami, Raghunatha Dasa Goswami, and Jiva Goswami were these six saints. They are referred to as the Six Goswamis collectively. Bengal is heavily influenced by Chaitanya culture. Songs of the Dark Mother, also known as Shyama Sangeet, were composed by Ramprasad Sen in the seventeenth century and focused on Ma Kali.

A great body of poetry that came straight from the heart was created by Bhakti's literature, which was marked by an ecstatic note. According to one historical source, "the Nayanmars, the Alvars, the Virasaivas, and the bhasha poets from all castes, regions, faiths, and genders supplemented" this new literary genre.

Virashaiva authors like Dasimayya, Basavanna, Allama, and Mahadeviyakka helped the vachana poetry style flourish for about two centuries during the eleventh and the twelfth century. It is the most fervent poetry produced in Kannada, the local language, and is written in an easygoing, conversational style. Sanskrit, the traditional language of pundits, is not used in it. "A religious song written in free verse in the Kannada language" is what Ramanujan (1973) defines as a Vachana. One possible translation for the word Vachana is "saying" or "thing spoken."

The conventional and folk practices are disliked by the Vachana poets. In one vachana, for example, Basavanna mocks the pointless chanting of Vedic hymns in front of God and criticizes the custom of offering animal sacrifices during ancient festivals. His intense dedication is evident from the fact that he views his entire body as a temple. According to Devara Dasimayya, the differences between the sexes are purely aesthetic. These poets reject the worship of multiple gods because they are monotheists. Vachana poetry is a type of protest



poetry that questions the dominant tradition and the preaching and practices that are connected to it.

The poets Annamacharya and Kshetranya immediately spring to mind when one considers poets from the Pada tradition. Just 12,000 of the 32,000 kirtanas and padams that Annamacharya (1408–1503), called Padakavitapitamaha (Father of the Pada school of poetry), composed about Lord Sri Venkateshwara, are currently available. These compositions have had a tremendous impact on bhakti literature. Annamacharya, also called Padakavitapitamaha (Father of the Pada tradition of poetry), flourished from 1408 to 1503. He believes that Lord Venkateshwara, the Absolute Reality, has taken on many forms in each of Vishnu's reincarnations. Throughout his Adhyatma sankirtanas, he emphasizes the value of virakti and bhakti. He contends that mental stability is crucial and that everyone should be treated equally. His Sringara Keerthanas, in the final charanam, attain the pinnacles of spiritual bliss by attributing it to Lord Venkateshwara and his consort, all the while maintaining a sensual tone.

#### **Major Findings of the Study:**

The major findings of the study are-

1. The Bhakti movement has made a great impact in promoting vernacular languages. Bhakti saints wrote poetry in local tongues, which opened up literature to a wider readership.
2. The Bhakti movement's development freed Muslims and Hindus from incorrect superstitions.
3. Religious intolerance developed from both religions' appreciation of eliminating disparities in beliefs and behaviors. Additionally, the movement changed Sikhism's cultural norms and abandoned the Brahmins' status.
4. The Bhakti movement has two distinct intellectual streams: Saguna and Nirguna. Saguna stood in for the poet-saints who wrote poetry glorifying a form-given god. Nirguna stood for the poet-saints who worshipped god without limitation or form.
5. The Bhakti movement pushed for social equality and opposed the caste system. It placed more emphasis on devotion to a personal god than on the ceremonial aspects of orthodox Hinduism. It inspired many to look for a direct, no-middleman relationship with God.



## V. Conclusion:

Whereas the intellectual schools of thought are exclusive to the Indian elite, Bhakti has come to define a way of life for a vast majority of the country's citizens. The movement has a profound effect on society by lowering the bar for God. The Bhakti Saints argued that complete devotion to God would be the sole route to heaven, in contrast to the austerities of the Buddhist and Jain traditions. Though it was unable to achieve its objective in the strictest sense, the Bhakti movement brought much-needed attention to the need of altering the outdated religious structure in society. The Bhakti movement, which opposed idolatry in general, was founded on monotheistic ideas. The Bhakti reformers proclaimed that redemption could only be obtained by intense devotion and faith in God, and they believed in liberation from the cycle of life and death.

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