



QUICK REVISION MODULE (UPSC PRELIMS 2024) ART & CULTURE

Bhakti and Sufi Movement

Early tradition of Bhakti Movement:

- » The Bhakti movement sought to bring religious reforms by adopting the **method of devotion to achieve salvation**.
- » It was **prominent in eighth-century** south India and spread northwards.
- » It swept over east and north India from the 15th century onwards, reaching its peak between the 15th and 17th century CE.
- » The **singing and chanting of devotional compositions** was often a part of Bhakti.
- » Expressions of devotion ranged from the routine worship of deities within temples to ecstatic adoration where devotees attained a trance-like state.

- » Bhakti traditions **accommodated women and the “lower castes”** as well.
- » Remarkable diversity was a character of Bhakti movement
- » Two traditions of Bhakti movement: **Saguna and Nirguna**
- » **Saguna** included traditions that focused on the worship of specific deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and his avatars (incarnations) and forms of the goddess or Devi, all often conceptualised in anthropomorphic forms (with attributes)
- » **Nirguna bhakti** was worship of an abstract form of god (without attributes).
- » Two types of Bhakti saints emerged who were **Alvars and Nayanars**.

Alvars

Devotees of Lord Vishnu

Work of Alwar saints: Nalayira Divyaprabandham (also known as the Fourth Veda)

Andal was the most famous female Alwar saint.

Nayanars

Devotees of Lord Shiva

Work of Nayanar Saints: **Tevarams** and **Tevacrams**.

Karaikal Ammaiyar was the most famous female Nayanar saint.

Alwar and Nayanar tradition

- » Alwar and Nayanar saints travelled from place to place **singing hymns in Tamil** in praise of their gods.
- » During their travels the Alvars and Nayanars identified certain shrines as abodes of their chosen deities.
- » Very often **large temples** were later built at these sacred places.
- » **Women Devotees:** One of the most striking features of these traditions was the presence of women. These women renounced their social obligations, but did not join an alternative order or become nuns. Their very existence and their compositions posed a challenge to patriarchal norms. Eg: **Andal** (Alwar saint) and **Karaikal Ammaiyar** (a devotee of Shiva or follower of Nayanar tradition)

Compilations of devotional literature

By the tenth century the compositions of the 12 Alvars were compiled in an anthology known as the **Nalayira Divyaprabandham (“Four Thousand Sacred Compositions”)**. The poems of **Apper, Sambandar** and **Sundarar** form the **Tevaram**, a collection that was compiled and classified in the tenth century on the basis of the music of the songs.

- » While Buddhism and Jainism had been prevalent in this region for several centuries, drawing support from merchant and artisan communities, these religious traditions received occasional **royal patronage**.
- » Both Nayanars and Alvars were revered by the peasants.
- » The powerful **Chola rulers (ninth to thirteenth centuries)** supported Brahmanical and bhakti traditions, making land grants and constructing temples for Vishnu and Shiva
- » These kings also introduced the singing of **Tamil Shaiva hymns** in the temples and organised them into a text called **Tevaram**

Veershaiva and Lingayat Movement-

- » The twelfth century witnessed the emergence of a new movement in Karnataka, led by a Brahmana named **Basavanna (1106-68)**.
- » Basavanna was initially a Jaina and a minister in the court of a Chalukya king.
- » His followers were known as **Virashaivas** (heroes of Shiva) or **Lingayats** (wearers of the linga).
- » Lingayats believe that **on death the devotee will be united with Shiva** and will not return to this world. Therefore they do not practise funerary rites such as cremation, prescribed in the Dharmashastras. Instead, they ceremonially bury their dead.
- » The Lingayats **challenged the idea of caste and the “pollution”** attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas.
- » They also **questioned the theory of rebirth**. These won them followers amongst those who were marginalised within the Brahmanical social order.
- » The Lingayats also **encouraged certain practices disapproved in the Dharmashastras**, such as post-puberty marriage and the remarriage of widows.
- » The understanding of the Virashaiva tradition is derived from **Vachanas** (literally, sayings) **composed in Kannada** by women and men who joined the movement.

Bhakti Movement in North India

- » The period after the **thirteenth century** saw a new wave of the bhakti movement in north India.
- » A unique feature of most of the saints is that their works were **composed in regional languages** and could be sung.
- » They became immensely popular and were handed down orally from generation to generation.
- » Usually the poorest, most deprived communities and women transmitted these songs, often adding their own experiences.
- » Some of them like **Kabir and Baba Guru Nanak** rejected all orthodox religions.
- » Others like Tulsidas and Surdas accepted existing beliefs and practices but wanted to make these accessible to all. Tulsidas conceived of God in the form of Rama.
- » **Surdas** was an ardent devotee of **Krishna**. His compositions, compiled in the Sursagara, Surasaravali and Sahitya Lahari, express his devotion.
- » Also contemporary was **Shankaradeva of Assam (late fifteenth century)** who emphasised devotion to Vishnu, and composed poems and plays in Assamese. He began the practice of setting up namghars or houses of recitation and prayer, a practice that continues to date.
- » This tradition also included saints like **DaduDayal, Ravidas and Mirabai**.

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Beyond the Rana's palace

This is a song composed by Mirabai:

*Ranaji, I have left your norms of shame,
and false decorum of the princely life.*

I have left your town.

*And yet Rana why have you kept up
enmity against me?*

Rana you gave me a cup of poison.

I drank it laughing.

*Rana I will not be destroyed by you.
And yet Rana why have you kept up
enmity against me?*



Why do you think Mirabai left the Rana's palace?

Some Important Bhakti Saints



Ramanuja

The earliest exponent of the Bhakti movement was **Ramanuja** who was appointed the successor of his teacher **Yamunamuni**. He travelled all over India and ultimately settled down at **Srirangam**. He established **Vaishnavism** on a sound foundation. He founded Visistadvaita Siddhanta or qualified monism and according to him, the way to salvation lies through **Karma, Gyan and Bhakti**. He wrote **Sribasya** and **Gitabhasya**.

The next leader of the Bhakti movement was **Nimbarka**, a younger contemporary of Ramanuja. He was worshipper of **Krishna** and **Radha**. He founded Dvaitadvaita or dualistic monism. He wrote **Vedanta Parijatasaurabha**, a commentary on Brahmasutras. He settled in **Mathura**.



Nimbarka



Madhavacharya

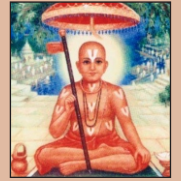
He ranks with **Sankaracharya** and **Ramanuja** as one of the three principal philosophers of the Vedanta system. He propounded **Dvaita** or **dualism**. According to him, the final aim of man is the direct perception of **Hari** which leads to Moksha or eternal bliss.



Vallabhacharya

Born in Varanasi, he propounded **Suddhadvaita Vedanta** (Pure nondualism) and philosophy called **Pustimarga** (the **path of grace**) He founded a school called **Rudra Sampradaya**. He identified Brahman with Sri Krishna, characterised by **Sat** (Being), **Cit** (consciousness) and **Ananda** (bliss). According to him, salvation is through **Sneha** (deep rooted love for God). He was the author of a number of scholarly works in Sanskrit and Brajbhasa, the important being Subodhini and Siddhant Rahasya

Born at Prayag, he was the **first great Bhakti saint of North India**. He opened the door of Bhakti to all without any distinction of birth, caste, creed or sex. He was a **worshipper of Rama** and believed in **two great principles**, namely as perfect love for god and human brotherhood. **His disciples included:** (a) Kabir, a Muslim weaver; (b) Raidasa, a cobbler; (c) Sena, a barber; (d) Dhanna a Jat peasant; (e) Sadhana, a butcher; (f) Narahari, a goldsmith; and (g) Pipa, a Rajput prince. Ramananda has been described as **“the bridge between the Bhakti movement of the South and the North.”**



Ramananda



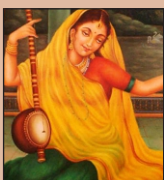
Namadeva

Namadeva, who flourished in the first part of the **14th** century, was a tailor who had taken to banditry before he became a saint. His poetry which was written in **Marathi breathes** a spirit of intense love and devotion to God. Namadeva is said to have travelled far and wide and engaged in discussions with the Sufi saints in Delhi.

Chaitanya was the greatest saint of the Bhakti movement. Born at **Navadwip** in **Bengal**, his original name was **Vishwambhar Mishra**. He was responsible for the popularity of Vaishnavism in Bengal through his Kirtans. He began the **Achintayabhedabhedavada School** of theology. He preached the religion of intense faith in one Supreme Being whom he called **Krishna or Hari**. He adored Krishna and Radha and attempted to spiritualise their lives in **Vrindavan**. He settled permanently at Puri where he died. After his death, his followers systematised his teachings and organised themselves into a sect called GaudiyaVaishnavism. **KrishnadasaKaviraja** wrote his biography, **Chaitanyacharitamrita**



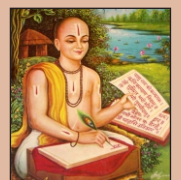
Chaitanya



Mirabai

A great saint of the Bhakti movement, she was the only child of **Ratnasingh Rathor of Merta**. She was married to Rana Sanga's eldest son and heir apparent Bhojaraj in **1516**. She was highly religious from her childhood and a follower of the **Krishna cult of Vaishnavism**. After the death of her husband, she devoted herself completely to religious pursuits. Mirabai is said to have composed numerous devotional songs.

He was a **great poet** and a **devotee** of **Rama**. He composed the famous. Ramcharitamanas in Hindi, expounding the various aspects of Hindu dharma. His other creations are **VinayaPatrika** and **Kavitavali**.



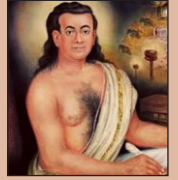
Tulsidas



Surdas

As a saint and a poet, he preached the religion of love and devotion to a personal God. Surdas was a devotee of Lord Krishna and Radha. He made use of Brajbhasa in his works which include **Sursagar, Sahitya Ratna and Sur Sarawali.**

Other well known Saguna bhakti saints were **Sankardev** who popularised Vaishanava bhakti in Assam



Shankar Dev



Narsari

The original name of Narsari was Narasimha Mehta. He popularised **Vaishnava** cult in Gujarat.

Born near **Benaras**, he led the life of a normal householder. A disciple of **Ramananda**, his mission was to preach a religion of love which would unite all castes and creeds. He emphasised the **unity of god** whom he calls by several names, such as **Rama, Hari, Allah, etc.** He strongly **denounced Hindu and Muslim** rituals. He strongly **denounced the caste system**, especially the practice of untouchability. However, he was not a social reformer, his emphasis being reform of the individual under the guidance of a true guru. His dohas and sakhī (poems) are found in the **Bijak**. After Kabir's death, his Muslim disciples organised themselves in Maghar, and the Hindu disciples were organised into an order by **Surat Gopala**, with their centre at Banaras



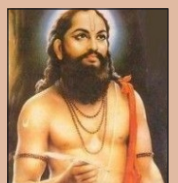
Kabir



Other Nirguna saints

Other Nirguna saints were **DaduDayal**, who founded the **Brahma Sampradaya** or **Parabrahma Sampradaya**, **Malukdasa** a follower of Kabir, **Sundardasa** and **Dharanidasa**.

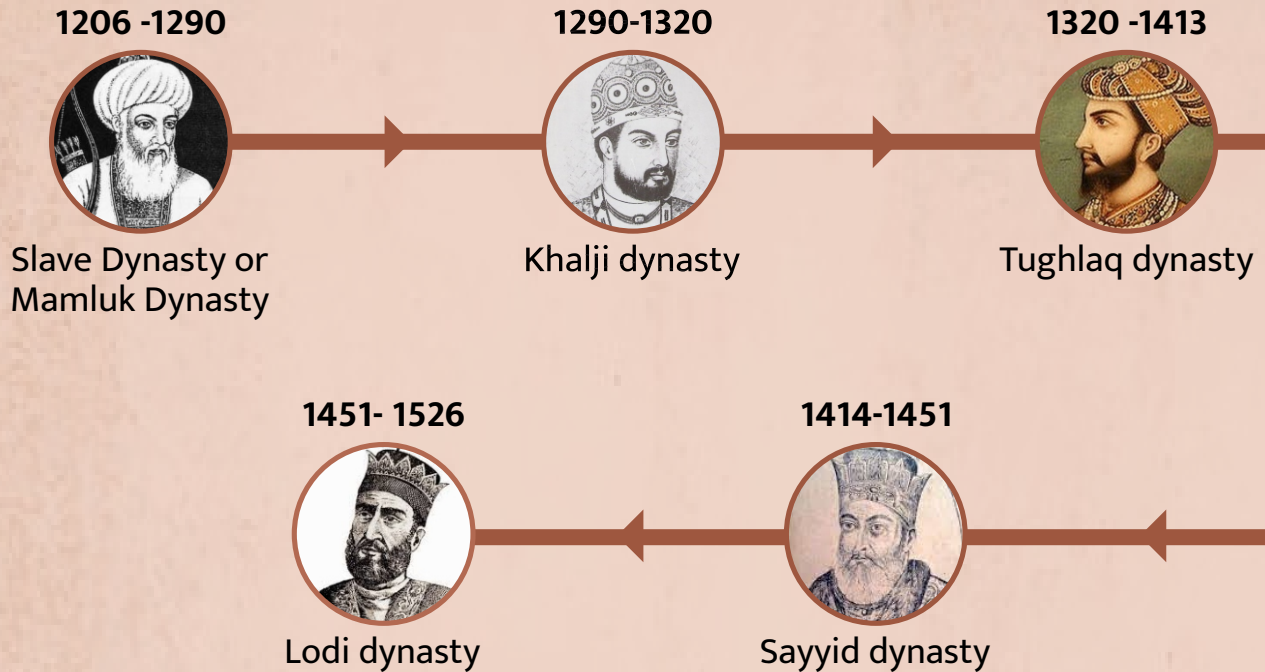
The bhakti saints of Maharashtra were the proponents of **Maharashtra Dharma**. Jnandeva; Namadeva, Eknatha, Tukaram and Ramdas were some of the great Bhakti saints in Maharashtra



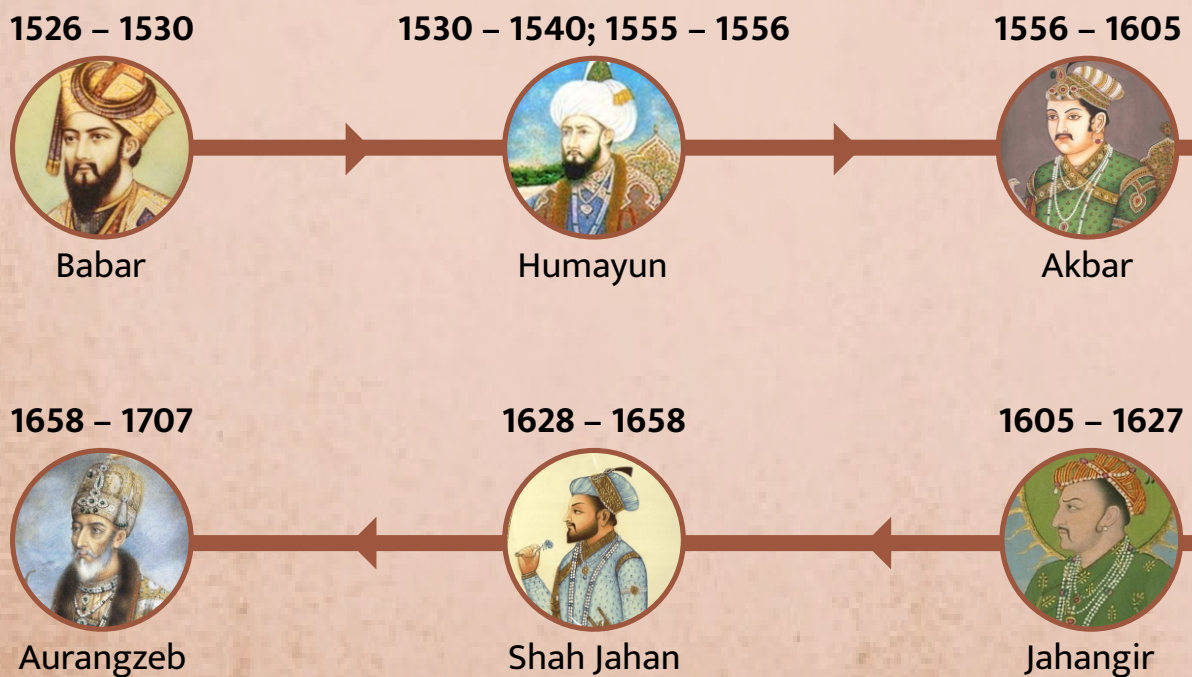
Bhakti Saints from Maharashtra

Timeline of Major dynasty during Bhakti and Sufi movement:

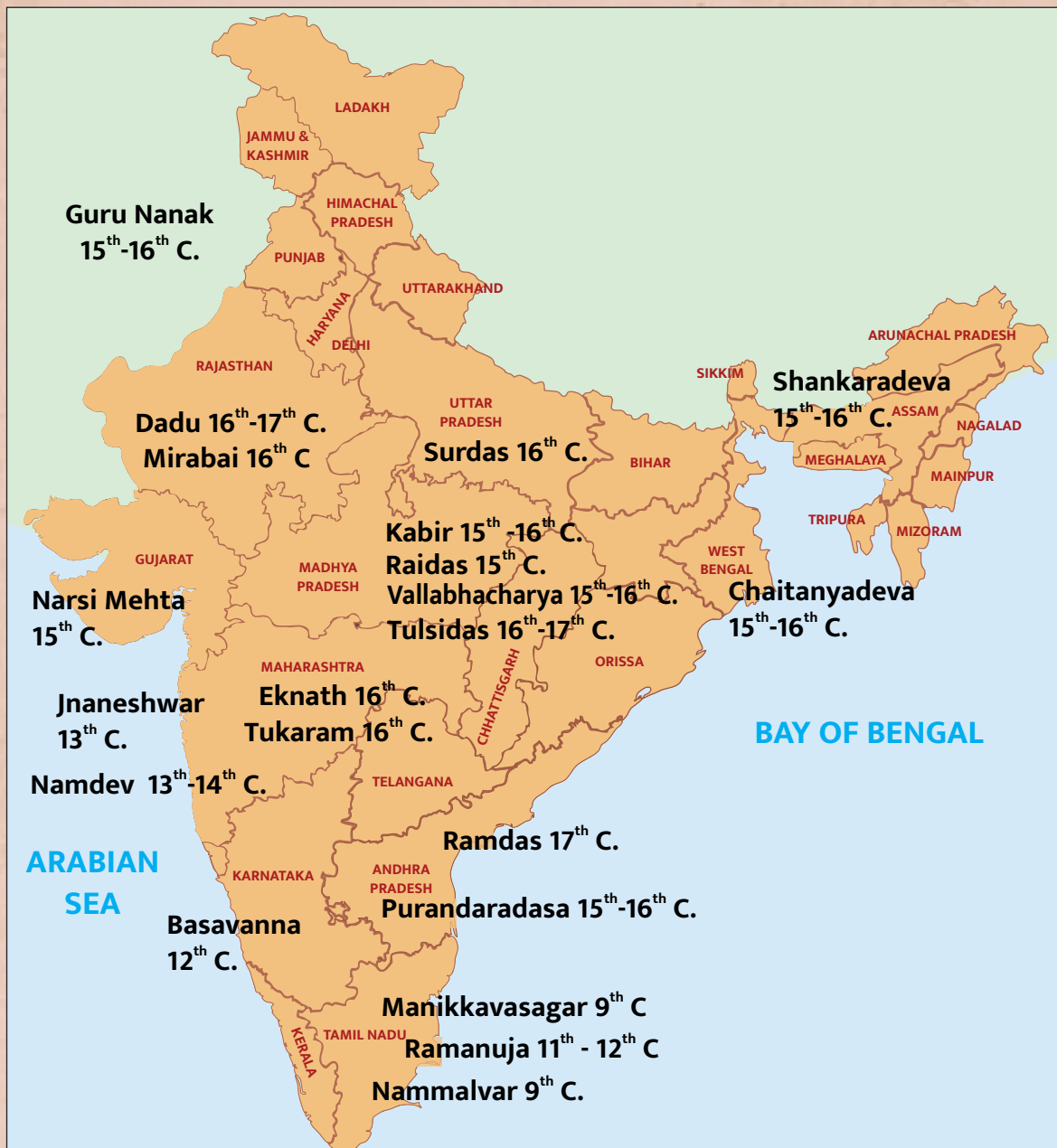
Delhi Sultanate



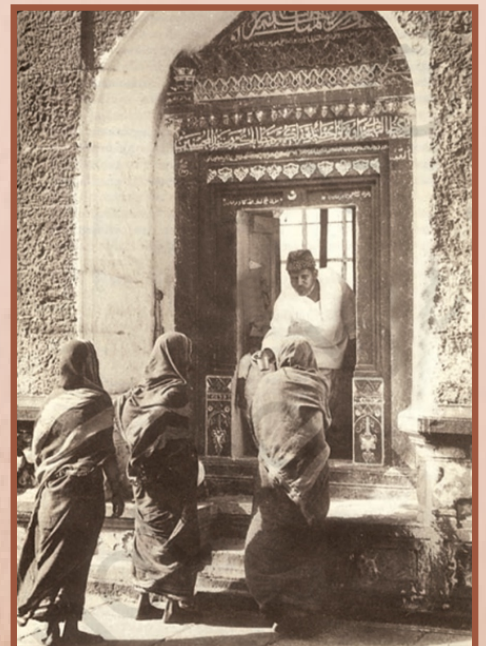
Mughal empire



Major bhakti saints and the regions associated with them



Sufi Tradition



- » It is derived from the word Suff which means a piece of woollen cloth. This is because woollen clothes were generally associated with ascetics.
- » Soon after, the establishment of Islam was hijacked by many Islamic theologians who diluted the original tenants of Islam. They started to give dogmatic and scholastic explanations to the Quran, the Hadis, and the Sunnah.
- » In this scenario, by the end of the 10th century AD, Sufis emerged to purify Islam spiritually.
- » They claimed a direct spiritual genealogy and unbroken chain between Allah, the prophet, and them.
- » Sufis created many Silsila or orders and started visiting different places.
- » There were two broad Sufi orders:
 - » **Bashara** – Those who obeyed Islamic laws.
 - » **Beshara** – Those who were more liberal.
- » By the 12th century, the Sufis were organised in **12 orders or Silsilas.**, of which the two most important ones were: **Chisti** and **Suhrawadi Silsila**

Chisti Silsila	Suhrawadi Silsila
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The founder was Shaikh Moinuddin Chisti and he was based in Ajmer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The founder was Shaikh Bahauddin Zakaria.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Moinuddin Chisti was popularly known as Gharib Nawaz. » He started a community food service whereby in his kitchen food for the poor was prepared on daily basis. » Another important Chistia saint in India was Fariduddin-Ganj-i-Shakar also known as Baba Farid whose teachings were incorporated in Sikhism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » He got an official position in Delhi Sultanate » Itutmish gave him the title of Shaikh-ul-Islam meaning Leader of Islam. » Unlike the Chistis, the Suhrawardis accepted maintenance grants from the Sultans and took an active part in politics. » They advocated a combination of ilm with mysticism.

Major Teachers of The Chishti Silsila

Sufi Teachers	Year of Death	Location on Darga
Shaikh Muinuddin Sijzi	1235	Ajmer (Rajasthan)
Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Khaki	1235	Delhi
Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar	1265	Ajodhan (Pakistan)
Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya	1325	Delhi
Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i Delhi	1356	Delhi

Some key terms associated with Sufism

- » **Sufi, Pir:** Saint
- » **Murshid:** Master/Teacher
- » **Murid:** Followers
- » **Khanqah:** Place where Sufis lived
- » **Hospice:** House of rest for travellers, especially one kept by a religious order.
- » **Zikr:** Recitation of God's name
- » **Tauba:** Repentance
- » **Fanaa:** Spiritual merging with the Almighty
- » **Sama:** Musical gathering
- » **Ilm:** scholarship
- » **Terms related to reconstruction of Sufi tradition:**
- » **Malfuzat:** conversation of Sufi saints
- » **Maktubat:** written letters of Sufi Saints
- » **Tazkiras:** biographical account of Sufi Saints

Contribution of Bhakti-Sufi movement

- » Both emphasized a **simple form of religion** based on **love** and **devotion**.
- » Both were **highly critical of the orthodox rigidities** and caste rigidities in the society.
- » Both tried to uplift the **position of women** and **untouchables**.
- » They were also **highly critical of the unjust laws** of that time.
- » The bhakti and Sufis facilitated the growth and promotion of **regional literature of India**.
- » They were one of the greatest representatives of the **secular ethos** of the country.

Timeline Some Major Religious Teachers In The Subcontinent

500-800 ce	Appar, Sambandar, Sundaramurti in Tamil Nadu
800-900	Nammalvar, Manikkavachakar, Andal, Tondaradippodi in Tamil Nadu
1000-1100	Al Hujwiri, Data Ganj Bakhsh in the Punjab; Ramanujacharya in Tamil Nadu
1100-1200	Basavanna in Karnataka
1200-1300	Jnanadeva, Muktabai in Maharashtra; Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti in Rajasthan; Bahauddin Zakariyya and Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar in the Punjab; Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki in Delhi
1200-1300	Jnanadeva, Muktabai in Maharashtra; Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti in Rajasthan; Bahauddin Zakariyya and Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar in the Punjab; Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki in Delhi

1300-1400	Lal Ded in Kashmir; Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sind; Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi; Ramananda in Uttar Pradesh; Chokhamela in Maharashtra; Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri in Bihar
1400-1500	Kabir, Raidas, Surdas in Uttar Pradesh; Baba Guru Nanak in the Punjab; Vallabhacharya in Gujarat; Abdullah Shattari in Gwalior; Muhammad Shah Alam in Gujarat; Mir Sayyid Muhammad Gesu Daraz in Gulbarga, Shankaradeva in Assam; Tukaram in Maharashtra
1500-1600	Sri Chaitanya in Bengal; Mirabai in Rajasthan; Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, Tulsidas in Uttar Pradesh
1600-1700	Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi in Haryana; Miyan Mir in the Punjab

Note: These time frames indicate the approximate period during which these teachers lived.



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