**Egalitarian Approach of the Bhakti Sants**

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Bhakti movement originated in the southern regions during the 9th century and spread in Maharashtra, Bengal, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab provinces till the 16th century. The cult of Bhakti was followed by a host of sants like Sankaracharya, Ramanuja, Ramananda, Namdeva, Kabir, Dadu, Nanak, Chaitnya, Tulsidas, Meera Bai and many others. In contrast to earlier or old religious movements, Bhakti movement was liberal in the nature. Bhakti sants whether *nirgun* (unmanifest form of God or formless God) or *sagun* (with attributes or God with form) both were broad minded and liberal in their approach and outlook. They influenced a large number of people by their philosophy and created a space for socially and economically underprivileged sections of the society. Caste and gender did not epose any threat to them and they stood for the right of shudras (the lowest of the four traditional castes in Hinduism) and women in the religious spheres. In the following pages, an attempt has been made to discuss the space created in religion and society for shudras and women by the bhakti sants.

**I**

During medieval India, a number of religious systems were prevalent. Old religious movements continued to flourish in their traditional and modified forms and some new also emerged. Among the old religious movements were Virshaivism or Lingyats in south India, Varkari and Mahanubhava in Maharashtra and Vaishnavism in north India. These religious movements and their leaders were liberal towards women. Virshaivism, also known as Lingayat, which emerged in Karnataka (South India) in twelfth century, questioned patriarchal values and structure, advocated that the spiritual path was open for women, and encouraged them to follow it. Basava, a prominent sant of Virshaivism who revised and reformed the movement, made no distinction between man and woman in terms of access to spirituality. Similarly, Devara Dasimayya, prominent sant of this movement says: ‘suppose you cut a tall bamboo in two, make the bottom piece a woman and the head piece a man, rub them together till they kindle; tell me now, the fire that’s born is it make male or female’? It is interesting that The Virashaiva movement was popularized by a number of *vachana* writers of Kannada, both male and female, coming from all section of the society.[[1]](#endnote-2)

Mahanubhava Panth emerged in Maharashtra in the second half of thirteenth century. This sect emphasised on the worship of Krishna. Women were also initiated into this sect. One disciple named Saranga Pandit, objected the high visibility of women within the *panth*, at this, a prominent sant of Mahanubhava Panth and the author of *Sutrapatha*, Chakradhar retorted: ‘why should these women not come here for the sake of religion? Is there any difference between your soul and their soul?’ It is noteworthy that women entered the Mahanubhava order not as sexual objects but as spiritual human beings equals of men. It is significant that the Varkari *panth* valorises a socially deviant figure like Kanhopatra, a prostitute. Mahupati in *Bhakta Lilamrta* and the *Bhakta Vijaya*, gives the hagiographical details of her life. Sultan of Bider tried to abduct her she gave up her life in front of Lord Vittal.[[2]](#endnote-3) Some of the Vaishnava and Nirguna bhakti sants and Tantrik teachers proclaimed the rights of shudras and women to participate fully in the spiritual sphere. They welcomed the aboriginals and hills tribes into the Hindu fold.[[3]](#endnote-4)

Sant Namdeva (1269-1344) and Sant Kabir (1440-1518) opened the doors of religion for all men and women, whether high or low, and to all who were considered to be of inferior caste and untouchables.[[4]](#endnote-5) Guru Nanak (1469-1538), first guru of the Sikhs, rejected the notion that woman was inferior to man. Guru Nanak’s goal of emancipation was open to women as to men. He mentioned that ‘God created both men and women. His light is in both; He has female as well as male devotees (*sewaks*)’.[[5]](#endnote-6) Sant Dadu (1544-1603), a close contemporary of Akbar, emphasized the equality of men and women and advocated that the path of liberation was open to women as well. In *Dadu Janmalila*, Dadu advocated celibacy even for women. He suggested that the female devotees could pursue spiritual life without being subordinate to men.[[6]](#endnote-7)

Besides, giving some space to women in religion and in matter of salvation, bhakti sants raised voice against some social evils prevalent in society in their writings, especially *purdah* (curtain; a practice of keeping women in seclusion). Sant Kabir was against the veiling of women.[[7]](#endnote-8)Dadhraj, a saint in the Narnaul district, also raised his voice against *purdah*.[[8]](#endnote-9) Some bhaktisants preached against the long notion of impurity of women during menstruation. In the *Uttararsha* of Lilacharita, Chakardhar comments, ‘there are different kinds of secretions in the human body-mucus, saliva, faeces etc, menstruation is just one of these, and it cannot pollute the body’.[[9]](#endnote-10)

Sant Kabir rejected the long set idea of impurity associated with the woman who gives birth to a child. Due to this discrimination, women were kept in isolation for a fixed period and the practice was referred as *sutak* (the period of ‘impurity’ for a woman after she has given birth to a child). Kabir mentioned that ‘if generation of life is something impure then both land and water are impure in which life is generated all the time. Impurity is there in death as in birth, and there is impurity everywhere’. Though, in this verse, there is no direct reference of women but there is hardly any doubt that Kabir was talking primarily with reference to the impurity attached to women.[[10]](#endnote-11) Similarly, Guru Nanak also rejected the taboos of impurity associated with menstruation and childbirth. Guru Nanak preached that ‘if the idea of *sutak* is admitted, there is impurity in everything. The cow-dung and the wood contain worms and there is no grain of corn without life. There is life in water, which makes everything green and is used in kitchens. How can one avoid impurity then?’ In another couplet, Guru Nanak says ‘why denounce her who gives birth to *rajas* (rulers).[[11]](#endnote-12)

Some bhakti sants were against the practice of *sati* (most commonly used to denote the woman who burnt herself on her husband’s funeral pyre). Kabir did not subscribe to the belief that the woman who became *sati* acquired merit.[[12]](#endnote-13) Sant Tulsidas (1532-1623) was against the practice of *sati*. He is said to have persuaded a woman not to become *sati*.[[13]](#endnote-14) Dadu was sympathetic towards the widows.[[14]](#endnote-15)

**II**

In north India, the supremacy of Brahmans and sport provided to them by rulers and rigid caste system were the main reasons for the growth of bhakti movement. Consequently, any sect of philosophical school which challenged this social order and the privileges of the Brahmans had to face hostility of the powerful Brahmans and political authority.[[15]](#endnote-16) Thus, in north India, rigid caste system and caste taboos ware main obstacle for the promotion of bhakti. It was a challenge for some bhakti sants because they were influenced by the *Bhagvad Gita*, which advocates that ‘in the sight of God all devotees are equal whether they are born in sin or not, and to whatever caste or sect they may belong.[[16]](#endnote-17)

In the 11th century, Sant Ramanuja (1017-1237) came with new ideology. Ramanuja argued that for salvation, the grace of God was more important than knowledge about him.[[17]](#endnote-18) For Ramanuja, *jnana* (knowledge) and *karma* (deeds) are the means to bhakti, which alone is the means to liberation. Through *bhakti*, the individual soul becomes more conscious of its relation to God until it surrenders itself to God who takes the place of the self. Unlike the Nayanars and Alvars who distrusted book learning, Ramanuja tried to link bhakti with the tradition of *Vedas*.[[18]](#endnote-19) Ramanuja showed a patronize attitude towards to the women and the shudra. He further argued that the path of bhakti was open to all, irrespective of caste, he enrolled disciples from all caste. He tried to work out a compromise between the Brahmans and non-Brahmans, and between them all on the one hand and the shudras on the other. The social implications of Ramanuja’s thought were egalitarian, and he is seen as ‘a social reformer’ who did away with the distinctions of caste. Thus, Ramanuja was a bridge between the popular movement based on bhakti and total surrender to God (*prapatti*).[[19]](#endnote-20) Thus, Ramananda’s disciples included Ravidas, who was a cobbler by caste, Kabir, who was a weaver, Sena, who was a barber by caste, and Sadhana, who was a butcher.

The first region in north India where the early strings of bhakti movement can be seen is Maharashtra. Sant Namdeva’s poetry breathes a spirit on intense love and devotion to God. Namdeva was broad minded in enrolling disciples from all castes. Another sant, Ramananda, a follower of Raghuwanand (the follower of Ramanuja) settled in Banaras (Varanasi), popularized the worship of Rama as an *avatar* of Vishnu and taught his doctrine of bhakti to all the four *varnas*. Ramananda threw the doors of bhakti open to all caste and professions, including the most despised and degraded.He is said to have enrolled disciples from all castes, including the low castes. He disregarded the ban on people of different castes cooking or eating their meals together.[[20]](#endnote-21) Similarly, the ascetics of the Ramananadi sect led a minor social revolution in the Ganges basin by recruiting women, shudras and untouchable castes into their sects.[[21]](#endnote-22)

 Kabir a disciple of Ramanuja was a weaver (*julaha*) by caste. In one of his autobiographical verses, Kabir asserts that although his caste is ridiculed by everyone, ‘he is proud of it because it enables him to remember the name of the Creator’.[[22]](#endnote-23) Kabir contests caste in strong and ambiguous terms to hammer the point that liberation, the supreme aim of human life is open to all, including the lowest of the low.[[23]](#endnote-24) He questioned the legitimacy of the hierarchical *varna* (literally, colour; used for the ideal norm of the four-caste social order) order based on the principle of inequality. It is interesting that Kabir’s tradition of emphasising the fundamental equality of man and rejecting differences based on caste, race or religion, his opposition to scriptural knowledge and adherence to empty rituals was carried forward by Nanak in the Punjab and by Dadu in Rajasthan.[[24]](#endnote-25)

Similarly, Sant Ravidas or Raidas (1450-1520), who lived as a leather worker (*chamar*) in Benaras, was conscious that he belongs to the category of the people regarded as untouchables, and his caste and lineage are regarded as low and mean and his birth has of no account. He goes into legendary and mythical past to identify the persons who were redeemed by bhakti despite their low position, ‘a hunter, a prostitute, and one reborn as an elephant – all of whom were saved in spite of their degraded state. And Balmik, who was an out-caste but who attained high status due to his devotion of god. He was loved by god, and his fame was not confined to this world but spread to all the three worlds. If such low grade being could be saved, why not Ravidas? He writes that ‘a Brahman of high lineage who performs all the duties prescribed for the Brahman but who has no devotion in his heart, who does not lodge God in his heart, and who does not listen to his praises, is as low in the eyes of god as the *chandal* in the eyes of the Brahman’.[[25]](#endnote-26) For him, God is both transcendent and immanent, who alone is eternal and unique. He advocated, through loving devotion and complete dedication one can achieve salvation. This involves rejection of the prevalent beliefs, modes of worship and scriptures. In *Guru Granth Sahib* (Holy Scripture of the Sikhs), he writes that there is greater emphasize on the importance of the sant and greater concern for the outcaste, including the *malechh*’ (an outcaste, to be shunned by all persons particularly by the first three *varnas*).[[26]](#endnote-27)

For Guru Nanak, caste distinctions are discriminatory, oppressive and unjust in social and religious terms. God has no ‘caste’ and gives no consideration to caste. None should be regarded as high and low on the basis of his caste. Guru Nanak placed shudra and the untouchable at par with Brahman and the Khatri, just as the woman was placed at par with the man. Against the Brahmans and Khatris, Guru Nanak identifies himself with the lower castes and the untouchables.[[27]](#endnote-28)

He founded the *Parabrahama Sampardaya* with a view of uniting different faiths in one bond of love and comradeship. He admitted both Hindus and Muslims as his disciples. Dadu is considered to be a Muslim cotton-carder, but there is no point in talking of Muslim ‘influence’ on him. But two points must be made in relation to Dadu’s attitude towards Islam: one, simply that he does not identify himself with Muslims; two that his own position is close to that of the *sufis*. He emphasized the equality of men and women and advocated that the path of liberation was open to all.[[28]](#endnote-29)

Sant Dadu founded the *Parabrahama Sampardaya* with a view of uniting different faiths in one bond of love and comradeship. From the *bani* of Dadu, it appears that he rejected much that was ‘new and false in Hinduism’, the Vedas, the Vedeantic philosophy, ritualism and formalism, priesthood, idolatry, the use of rosary, pilgrimages and ceremonial ablutions and caste and caste marks. He continued to work as a cotton-carder.[[29]](#endnote-30) Dadu’s successor was Rajjab Ali Khan, known as Rajjab Das or Rajjabji (1538-98). Rajjab advocated, above all, a philosophy of devotion and labour. For him, a man who did not labour could only not feed his family, but had no right to repeat the name of Rama.[[30]](#endnote-31)

In the eastern India, Chaitnaya (1486-1533) a prominent Krishna bhaktis said to have travelled all over India, including Bengal, Orissa and Brindavana. He revived Krishna cult by popularized musical gathering or *kirtan* as a special form of mystic experience in which the outside world disappeared by dwelling on God’s name. He extorted an extraordinary influence, particularly in the eastern parts of India, and attracted a large following, including some Muslims and people from the low castes.[[31]](#endnote-32)

The followers of Chaitnaya carried forward his tradition of making no distinction among the devotees on the basis of caste, religions or sex. However, the Goswamis of Vrindavana who edited and commented on Chaitanaya’s works did try to put forward an orthodox gloss on his thoughts.The disciples of Shankardeva (1449-1568), such as Madhavadeva of Assam, influenced many tribal people to give up human sacrifice, and embrace Vaishnavaism in eastern India. Madhavadeva led the life of a householder, but his successors were ascetics.[[32]](#endnote-33) Narsimha Mehta (1500-1580) of Gujarat was an erudite student of Advaita(non-dualistic) philosophy. His approach was based on *jnan* and bhakti. He was a Brahman by birth but he did not believed in caste system and untouchabality. He mixed freely with the untouchables, whom he used to call *Harijan* or the men of God.[[33]](#endnote-34)

Sant Tulsidas (1532-1623) of Varanasi, postulated salvation for the lowliest if he constantly repeated the name of Rama, and accorded him a status to the Brahman. Besides them, Meera Bai (b. 1498) of Marwar (Rajasthan)and Sant Surdas of sixteenth century in west Uttar Pradesh, popularised worship of Radha and Krishna and preached bhakti to the people of all castes, even more among women than among men. In Maharashtra, the most influential and the supreme exponent of bhakti was Tukaram, who lived in the first half of the seventeenth century. His songs or *abhangs* breathe a spirit of love and devotion to Vitobha, an incarnate form of Vishnu at Pandhurpur. Tukaram says of himself, ‘I was born in a shudra family, thus was set free from pride’.[[34]](#endnote-35)

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both devotional and Tantric disciplines were attributed to Ramananda; both twice born Hindus as well as members of the servant and untouchable castes, women were recruited into the sect.[[35]](#endnote-36) Similarly, Bairagis led the life of ascetic and some of them worshipped Rama and Krishna, the two incarnation of Lord Vishnu. They visited pilgrim centres and wore rosaries of Tulsi. But there were other Bairagis who believed that Vishnu was a non-incarnate Supreme Being. Both Hindus and Muslims were admitted into their religion and their community was open to all.[[36]](#endnote-37)

**III**

In retrospect, one can observe that all the sants mentioned above remained within the broad framework of Hindu religion. Their philosophic beliefs were a brand of vedantic monotheism, which emphasised the fundamental unity of God and the Created world. These sants were broad minded and liberal in their approach and outlook. They were aware of the fact that in the contemporary society the status of women and shudras in religion was marginalized. They had no access to spiritual life, thus, otherwise marginalized women suffered a dual deprivation from the path of religion. As a challenge, many bhakti sants opened the path of salvation for women and raised their voices against prevalent taboos and exploitative institutions against women. They criticized caste system and caste taboos in their writing openly. The age old caste structure was simply laid aside. These sants welcomed into their fold everyone, irrespective of gender, caste and creed. Thus, the approach of the bhakti sants was humanistic and egalitarian. They tried to provide equal status to the marginalized people especially women and shudra by promising them not only the prospect of release (*moksha*), but as bhakts, gave them a high status even in the phenomenal world.

**Notes and References**

1. Rekha Pande, ‘Virshaivism’, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, PHISPIC, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 72-73. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Vijaya Ramaswamy,*Walking Naked: Women, Society, Spirituality in South India*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1997,pp. 204, 207, 212 & 217. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. There was vehement opposition to these trends by the large body of the Brahmans, and by the writers of the Hindu *Dharmashahstras* who laid the greatest possible emphasize on maintenance of ceremonial purity against contamination by people considered unclean. This implied drawing into a shell in order to keep away from contact with the powerful Muslim community. Hence, they tried to regulate the lives of the Hindus by insisting on the fulfilment of the minute details of the caste system: Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Mughal Empire* (*1526-1748*), (Part II), New Delhi: Har Anand Publishers, 1999, p. 426. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Savitri Chandra Shobha, *Medieval India and Hindi Bhakti Poetry: A Socio-Cultural Study*, New Delhi: Har Anand, 1996, p. 72. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, Vol. I, New Delhi: S. Chand, 1963, p.196. See also,J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History*, Chandigarh: Publication Bureau, Panjab University, 1979 (first pub. 1969), p. 192. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, ‘Dadu and the Dadu-Panthis’, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, pp. 444-46. Dadu is a Turkish word, which means brother or servant. According to tradition, he was adopted son of Lodi Brahman of Ahmadabad. Dadu was a disciple of Kabir, whose chief monastery, named Dadudwara, is in village Naraina in Jaipur state (Rajasthan). His followers are known as Dadu-panthis: Shahabuddin Iraqi, *Bhakti Movement in Medieval India: Social and Political Perspectives*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2009, p. 189; *Gur Shabad Ratnakar Mahankosh* (*Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature*), (Punjabi), ed. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 2011 (first pub. 1930), p. 1590. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. A. Rashid, *Society and Culture in Medieval India* (*1206-1556 A.D.*), Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1969, p. 247. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. He held the doctrine of monotheism, regarding God is one, the supreme reality, all beautiful, incomparable and all-pervading: Zahir Uddin Malik, ‘Role of Sufis and Bhaktas in North-Western India During the Eighteenth Century’, Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur (eds.), *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, New Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009, p. 171. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. It is said that Chakardhar was assassinated in 1274, because Demati, the wife of a powerful Brahman minister Hemadri had deserted her husband in order to join the Mahanubhava order: Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Walking Naked*,pp. 211-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. J.S. Grewal, ‘Kabir and the Kabir-Panthis’, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, p. 400. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, Vol. I, pp. 242-44 & 372. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. J.S. Grewal, ‘Kabir and the Kabir-Panthis’, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, pp. 400-01. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
13. Madan Gopal, *Tulasi Das* (*A Literary Biography*), New Delhi: The Bookabode, 1977, p. 114. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
14. J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, ‘Dadu and the Dadu-Panthis’, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, pp. 444-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
15. In south India, the bhakti movement began as a reaction against the rigidity of caste system and caste taboos. However, the supremacy of Brahmans and caste taboos remained the same. In the temple, the deity was treated as a living king, and an elaborate ritual and ceremonial was developed to emphasise his position. These ceremonial were presided over by the Brahmans who continued to use the traditional caste restriction. Knowledge of religious books was still considered only way for the salvation: Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Delhi Sultanat*, pp. 251-52. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
16. Malka Muhammad, *The Foundations of the Composite Culture in India*, Delhi: Aakar Books, 2007, pp. 245-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
17. Ramanuja was keen to overthrow the doctrine of illusion (*maya*) on the basis of the *Brahmasutras* and the *Upniashads*: J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, p. 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
18. Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Delhi Sultanat*, p. 249. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
19. It can also be argues that, it was Ramanuja rather than Sankaracharya (788-820) who stood forth as the guiding spirit of a movement, which brought important changes in popular religion, attitude to God, and His relationship with man. He thus, prepared the ground for meeting the challenges of a new age: Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Delhi Sultanat,* pp. 249-50. See also, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, p. 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
20. Sant Jnandev or Jnaneshwar, a prominent saint of Varkari Panth in twelfth century, wrote a commentary on *Gita* in which equal stress was laid on *jnan*, *karma* andbhakti. Jnaneshwar broke the supremacy of Sanskrit and wrote commentary in Marathi, which was language of the people: Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Delhi Sultanat*, p. 253. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
21. Ramananda performed a particularly significant role in the development of both Hindu religion and Hindi literature. Moreover, the followers of Ramananda wrote much of their sectarian literature in the vernacular languages of upper India rather than in Sanskrit: Richard Burghart, ‘The Founding of the Ramanandi Sect’, David N. Lorenzen (ed.), *Religious Movements in South Asia 600-1800*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 227. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
22. Rameshwar Prasad Bahuguna, *Beyond Theological Diffeences: Sant-Vaishnava Interaction in Medieval India*, New Delhi: Indian Historical Review, 2009, p. 60**.** [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
23. J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, p. 30. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
24. Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Mughal Empire*, p. 428. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
25. J.S. Grewal, ‘Sant Ravidas’, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, p. 412. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
26. J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, p. 31. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
27. J.S. Grewal, ‘The Sikh Movement’, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, p. 451. Guru Nanak founded a new faith and a new *panth*, with his own compositions as the exclusive scriptures, the institution of *dharmsal* with its congregational worship and community meal, and the installation of a single successor as the Guru: Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, Vol. I, p.196. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
28. Dadu continued to work as a cotton-carder but began to accept food and other gifts for his disciples: J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga (eds.), ‘Dadu and the Dadu-Panthis’, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, pp. 444-46. Dadu is a Turkish word, which means brother or servant. According to tradition, he was adopted son of Lodi Brahman of Ahmadabad. Dadu was a disciple of Kabir, whose chief monastery, named Dadudwara, is in village Naraina in Jaipur state (Rajasthan). His followers are known as Dadu-panthis: Shahabuddin Iraqi, *Bhakti Movement in Medieval India: Social and Political Perspectives*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2009, p. 189; *Gur Shabad Ratnakar Mahankosh* (*Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature*), (Punjabi), ed. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Patiala: Punjab Languages Department, 2011 (first pub. 1930), p. 1590. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
29. J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, ‘Dadu and the Dadu-Panthis’, J.S. Grewal (ed.), *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, pp. 425 & 444-46. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
30. The orthodox section in Maharashtra was represented by Guru Ramdas, a religious leader of Maharashtra (during Shivaji’s time) who put forward a philosophy of activism, but was equally vehement in asserting the privileges of the Brahmans. He set up large numbers of *maths* attached to temples to propagate his ideas. Shivaji became his disciples and have some donation for the maintenance of the maths: Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Mughal Empire,* p. 428. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
31. Born and educated in Nadia, which was the centre of Vedantic rationalism, Chaitanya’s tenor of life was changed when he visited Gaya at the age of 22 and as initiative into the Krishna cult by a recluse. Chaitnaya who under the influence of a *sanyasi* called Madhavendra Puri, broke away from his life as a householder and became a renouncer. He became a god-intoxicated devotes who incessantly uttered the name of Krishna: Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Delhi Sultanat*, p. 256. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
32. Tantrism which did not make much difference between Brahmans and non-Brahmans in the spiritual sphere remained widespread, as also Shakti worship or worship of female deities: Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Mughal Empire*, p. 427. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
33. Malka Muhammad, *The Foundations of the Composite Culture in India*, p. 258. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
34. Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals*, *Mughal Empire*, pp. 427-28. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
35. The Ramananadi sect, which is said to have been founded by Swami Ramamand, a follower of Raghuwanand (the follower of Ramanuja) in the fourteenth century: Richard Burghart, ‘The Founding of the Ramanandi Sect’, David N. Lorenzen (ed.), *Religious Movements in South Asia 600-1800*, pp. 227 & 231. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
36. Rameshwar Prasad Bahuguna, *Beyond Theological Diffeences: Sant-Vaishnava Interaction in Medieval India*, p. 72. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)