

## Impact of Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra

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### Abstract

Bhakti movement was important religious and social revolution in mediaeval India. It was great revolution which created humanity and willingness of devotees. Impact of bhakti movement was started to spread all over India. Its impact widely seen throughout Maharashtra. This movement began in Maharashtra in 12 the century which helped to change the social life of the people. There were many saints like Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Tukaram, Sant Ramdas, Sant Namdev Sant Eknath, Sant Chokhamela etc. who tried to create humanity among the people by singing, Bhajan kirtan etc and gave the truth and loyal message by Their work awakened a sense of devotion and it led to criticize bad customs and traditions such as rituals, cast discrimination and It helped to gain importance of Marathi language, culture, literature etc.. This movement became foundation of devotional and Cultural density.

### Key words

Bhakti movement, Saints, impact

### Objectives

1. To investigate the beginnings and growth of the Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra, with a focus on the teachings of saints such as Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Namdev, Sant Tukaram, and Sant Eknath.
2. To evaluate the Bhakti Movement's social effects, particularly its contribution to lowering caste prejudice and fostering equality among various societal groups.
3. To research the movement's effects on religion, such as the transition from ritualism to direct communication with God and personal devotion (Bhakti).
4. To comprehend the Bhakti Movement's cultural and political effects, particularly how it indirectly influenced Maharashtra's subsequent movements and regional identity.
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6. To investigate whether Bhakti concepts are still applicable in contemporary Maharashtrian society

### Introduction

Between the 13th and the 17th centuries, a major socio-religious shift occurred in Maharashtra with the Bhakti Movement, which prioritized devotion (bhakti) over ritualism and social system. Many saints tried to spread

humanity by singing Bhajan kirtan Abhang and created peaceful, joyful atmosphere and preached loyal and truth among the people and people also enjoyed the devotional environment like Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Namdev, Sant Eknath, and Sant Tukaram led it and were instrumental in forming the region's spiritual and cultural landscape. By encouraging the use of Marathi in religious discourse, this movement helped the public get access to spiritual understanding. It promoted equality, social justice, and a close relationship with God particularly devotion to Lord Vitthal of Pandharpur while opposing traditional Brahmanical rituals. The Bhakti saints disseminated their ideas through kirtans and devotional poetry which brought individuals from many castes and communities together. Bhakti movement was one of the important religious movements where the people came to understand faith of reality, humanity and visual sense of life.

### **Features of the Bhakti Movement**

The Maharashtra Bhakti Movement's social, religious, and cultural influence was formed by a few unique characteristics.

Devotion as the fundamental principle: Rather than ceremonies or sacrifices, emphasis is placed on individual devotion to God, particularly Vithoba of Pandharpur. Rejection of caste discrimination

Saints encouraged unity among all facets of society by promoting equality and opposing strict caste hierarchies.

Use of local language: With Abhangas religious teachings were communicated in plain Marathi, making them understandable to the public.

Rituals and the supremacy of priests are criticized: The movement prioritized inner purity and a close relationship with God while opposing intricate rituals.

Emphasis on moral and ethical living: It encouraged virtues like devotion, humility, compassion, and truth in daily life.

Kirtans and community involvement: A pilgrimage to Pandharpur and group singing enhanced social cohesion.

**1. Religious Impact:** The religious impact of the Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra was profound as it transformed spirituality into a simple, personal, and accessible practice. It emphasized devotion (bhakti) over rituals, sacrifices, and priestly control, allowing individuals to establish a direct connection with God. The worship of Vithoba became central, symbolizing a compassionate and approachable deity for all devotees. Saints like Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram spread spiritual teachings through simple Marathi, making religious knowledge available to the common people. Overall, the movement reduced rigid religious practices and promoted inner purity, faith, and equality in spiritual life.

**2. Social Impact:** The social impact of the Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra was significant as it promoted equality and challenged rigid caste divisions. It opposed untouchability and encouraged the participation of all sections of

society, including lower castes and women, in religious and social life. Saints like Sant Chokhamela emphasized dignity and justice for marginalized communities, while teachings of Sant Tukaram spread messages of unity, compassion, and brotherhood. By stressing moral values and human equality, the movement helped create a more inclusive and harmonious social structure in Maharashtra.

**3. Cultural Impact:** The cultural impact of the Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra was profound, as it enriched the region's traditions through devotional expressions like abhangas, bhajans, and kirtans. Saints such as Sant Tukaram and Sant Namdev contributed significantly to devotional literature and music, making spirituality a part of everyday life. The movement strengthened collective practices like the Warkari pilgrimage to Pandharpur, fostering unity and shared cultural identity. Overall, it deeply influenced Maharashtra's art, music, and folk traditions, creating a vibrant and devotional cultural heritage.

**4. Linguistic Impact:** Bhakti saints used Marathi instead of Sanskrit. This helped spread religious ideas among the common people and contributed to the development of the Marathi language. The linguistic impact of the Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra was highly significant, as it promoted the use of Marathi as a medium of religious and literary expression. Instead of Sanskrit, saints like Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Eknath, and Sant Tukaram composed devotional works such as abhangas and commentaries in simple Marathi, making spiritual knowledge accessible to common people. This not only spread religious ideas widely but also contributed to the growth, development, and standardization of Marathi language and literature, giving it a strong cultural and literary identity.

**5. Political Impact:** The political impact of the Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra was indirect but important, as it fostered a sense of unity, equality, and collective identity among people across different castes and communities. By promoting moral values such as justice, humility, and welfare of society, the movement influenced the ethical foundation of leadership and governance. The teachings of saints helped in shaping a socially cohesive environment, which later supported the emergence of Maratha power under Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Thus, the movement contributed to the development of a more people-oriented and morally guided political outlook in Maharashtra.

### **Comparative Analysis.**

A comparative analysis of the impact of the Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra shows that while its religious influence was foundational promoting devotion to Vithoba and reducing ritualism. its social impact was more transformative, challenging caste hierarchy and promoting equality through saints like Sant Chokhamela. The cultural and linguistic impacts were closely interconnected, as devotional practices like abhangas and kirtans enriched cultural life while simultaneously strengthening Marathi through the works of Sant Tukaram and Sant Eknath. In contrast, the political impact was indirect, shaping values of unity and ethical governance that later influenced leadership during the time

of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Overall, while religious change initiated the movement, its broader social and cultural effects had a deeper and more lasting influence on Maharashtra's society.

### **Conclusion**

Through devotion to Vithoba, the Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra transformed society in a comprehensive way. In addition to enhancing culture through devotional customs and fortifying the Marathi language through the writings of saints like Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram, it fostered social equality and togetherness by overcoming caste barriers. Despite having an indirect political impact, it contributed to the formation of moral principles and a sense of community, which in turn influenced Chhatrapati's leadership ideals. Maharaj Shivaji. All things considered, the movement was instrumental in building a more diverse, culturally rich, and morally sound society in Maharashtra. The Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra was not only a religious movement but also a social, cultural, and linguistic revolution. It attempted to remove inequalities in society and gave Marathi culture a distinct identity. Even today, its influence is visible in the Wari tradition and saint literature.

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