CHAPTER I

Bhakti, its origin and development
CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

BHAKTI, ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT.

India, the celestial land of Aryans, has been a Home of spiritual life, as revealed in the Srutis, Smrtis, Itihasa, Puranas and Tantras of the Aryans. Spiritual life - whether in the form of disinterested action (निष्ठवः क्रमः or भस्म ) or devotion (प्राप्तन् or भक्ति ) or spiritual contemplation and concentration (त्योः ) or divine wisdom (अत्मविद्याः or अलाद्याः ) - is the true genius of India from times immemorial; and the Vedas and the Upanisads are a Mystic lore of the seers of Yore. Unitive life with God or the Saguña Brahman or oneness of the Atman with the Parmatman or Nirguna Brahman or the Godhead in one form or another (i.e. by means of भक्ति , भोज or भोति ) has been the eternal theme of Indian Philosophy and Religion right upto the modern times.

As regards the relation of the Self with the Supreme, of the Jivatman with the Parmatman,
Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says "I am seated in the heart of all and on me as string is strung all". God is thus the self in self and the substance of the Middle Apparent Universe; and as such He is the one and only Ultimate Reality behind the Universe. His true nature is best revealed in the Gītā and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. It is hence that Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, the prominent advocate of the Žnāna mārga, holds that the Gītā is the quintessence of all the Śāstras. While Śrī Vallabhācārya, the prominent advocate of Bhakti-mārga, holds that the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is also the quintessence of all the Śāstras, including the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtras and

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the Gītā. 3

De facto, there is a continuous flow of spiritual experience from the Vedas to the - 
Upanisads, from the Upanisads to the Brahma 
Sūtras and the Gītā and from the Gītā to the 
Bhāgavata, as revealed in the glorification of 
the Bhāgavata. 4

According to the three-fold stay of 
fountain source of Divine Love and Divine 
wisdom (i.e. प्रेम व उपनिषदः, ब्रह्मसूत्रः और 
गीताः ) God is the subtle and mysterious Power 
(i.e. पशुकुलकार ) that pervades and sustains 
the Universe in the form of पुरुषः and प्रकृति 
or cit and a-cit and the Unification of the Self

3. शिशुभृत्य भक्तमाये भक्तिः गौरीभ्यं शिरोमयी प्रभुं धर्मेण सृष्टिः 
मिलत भागवतं दशमात्रमेव पुरुषस्य रसिका गुप्तं तत्काव्यं ||
भ 11.3.

4. इदं भागवतं तत्स्य कस्य वद्यवन्दलिनयं शरं 
दशमात्रमेव साहित्यविद्यावन्धमेव ||

cit & a-cit
with God (स्वरूप-परमार्थ देव) is the Summum bonum of human life. Bhakti and Jñāna apparently differ in form; but in essence they are one at bottom in God-realisation or Anubhava. As heat and light merge in the Sun, so Divine wisdom and Divine Love merge in Anubhava, as revealed by the medieval Saint of Gujarāt Sri Akhājī and the modern Saint Sri Sāgar.

Before proceeding to the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata, the theme of this Thesis, I would trace here in brief the origin and development of Bhakti in India from the ancient times to the modern times.

De facto, the origin of Bhakti may be traced to the Vedas; for the element of Bhakti is vividly seen in the utterances of the Sacred Seers of the Vedic times.
East, as revealed by Prof. Valenkar. Dr. Thoothi remarks that the natural and simple life of action and devotion round the Yajñas is portrayed in the Rgveda. In course of time in the process of deifying the powers of Nature and wisely adjusting the tenor of life, Secrets of Nature were revealed to man in terms of Rta, Vrata and Dharma, the very essence and embodiment whereof was declared as manifest in the Brahman - the one and only Truth behind the structure of this Universe.

It is described in various ways by the wise. This tendency to philosophise and to seek the meaning of life completes its purpose in the Upanisads.

7. Prof. Valenkar: "Bhakti Marga in the Rg-Veda".

8. Dr. Thoothi: "The Vaisnavas of Gujarat". P. 33.

9. (Ved. Sām. 2.6.4.14.144 46)
Besides the Samhitās, the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads, there were ten sub-sciences, grouped under the six Vedāṇgas (viz. Phonetics, metre, grammar, etymology, Kalpa and Jyotisa) and the four Upvedas (viz. the science of medicine, military science, science of music and mechanics). All the ten sciences have their own importance in the proper organisation and management of life itself, which is conceived as a Yajña (a sacrifice). Of these the Kalpa Sūtras developed into three interdependent branches viz. the Srauta Sūtras, the Grhya Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras, wherefrom several schools of thought have arisen from time to time, known as Smṛtis and the Darsanas, which deal with the active as well as the contemplative side of human life. 10

10. Dr. Thoothi: "The Vaisnavas of Gujarat" - P. 35 and 36.
BHAKTI IN THE VEDAS.

Karma, Upāsanā and Jñāna are the three main aspects of the Vedic religion; and the Bhakti aspect of the Vedic religion is revealed in terms of hymns, prayers and parables. A systematic discussion of the theory and practice of Bhakti was left out in the Vedic traditions referred to above, because Bhakti is concerned with the very nature of man's being as a whole. The devotional element in the Vedas and the Vedic scriptures has been all the time known, understood, experienced and lived by all, men and women alike. Therefore, Bhakti was only illustrated and mentioned without any doctrinal paraphernalia in the early scriptures.

According to the Rgveda, God is realised by the triple means of Karma, Jñāna and Bhakti (i.e., disinterested action, divine love and divine wisdom).

11. Dr. Thoothi: "The Vaisnavas of Gujarat" - P. 37.

12. तिष्ठे ज्ञाने कर्मकर्मा निद्राय निद्रेः नानु सति R.V. 4.8:43:44 तिष्ठे ज्ञाने कर्मकर्मा निद्रेः नानु सति R.V. 6.7:4
Dr. Thoothi truly remarks that essentially Bhakti is not the theory or a doctrine; nor is it the statement of a theory of life which must necessarily be stated in terms of a philosophy. Bhakti refers essentially to an attitude — a spiritual attitude. The formation of a theory of the attitude would prove an absurd undertaking, at least in the early history of man. The Vedic Seers declared the glory of prayer and the peace which it yields. Like the flavour of the flower, it reveals the very inmost heart of man's self-surrender in the Yajñas of the Vedic ancestors.  

THE VEDIC IDEAS ABOUT GOD.

The philosophy behind the Yajñas and the rituals of Yajñas were the heritage of but a few. In fact, Indian thought — record begins with the Vedas. At first the ideas about God and His nature were poly-theistic. But this poly-theism (soon developed into Heno-theism)

Heno-theism, in due course, evolved into mono-theism which culminated in Monism or Brahmanism (Sveta\textsuperscript{a}vataropanisad) i.e. the Eternal Infinitude or the Eternal Equator of Infinite Macrocosp. However, the Upan\text{\textsuperscript{is}}adic ideas could at best make their appeal only to the intelligent, but fell flat on the average man.

**BHAKTI IN THE UPA\text{\textsuperscript{IS}}ADS.**

The nature of Bhakti, in the true sense of the term (love and faith) is first seen in the Svet\textsuperscript{a}svataropanisad which identifies Brahman with God Rudra-Siva. Siva is knowable by love and faith; and having known Siva, one attains eternal peace. It is only, however, by the initiation of a Guru that one realises God. In the Brhad\text{\textsuperscript{a}}ranyaka Upanisad, Y\text{\textsuperscript{a}}j\text{\textsuperscript{n}}avalkya says that God is all in all and that God realisation is

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14. दिक्षातेऽवर्णितस्तिताः परिचितिः शीलाः।।

शिवम् श्रातिमन्त्र शाश्वते॥

sv\textsuperscript{a}u. 4:14

15. भास्ववधुः परिशिष्टम् सिद्धः देवे भवन्ति गृहः।।

साक्षी सृष्टिः हेमपी सारस्वते महात्मोऽ॥

sv. p. 6:23
the summum bonum of human life. He is the summum bonum of human life. He is...
BHAKTI IN THE GĪTĀ AND THE PURĀNAS.

It will be seen from the above that Bhakti is in fact, a genuine growth of the Indian Soil and not a foreign graft from without, as believed and maintained by the Christian missionaries. Dr. Thoothi says - "In the Mahābhārata, the Gītā declares for the first time in the history of Hinduism, that Bhakti is the highest form of the religious attitude. And the Bhakti tradition, supposed to be handed down orally through generations of saintly men and women, is said to be ultimately recorded in the Purāṇas as a popular philosophy of the highest and the best that men and women should live for and strive to serve. The view and way of life of a true aspirant are best recorded in the Gītā. The Gītā has presented to us non-sectarian theism of a most comprehensive type, based on the below-mentioned

20 Dr. Thoothi: "The Vaisnavas of Gujarat" - P. 37.
Upaniṣadic doctrine of Idealism with which it is throughout consistent. Gītā's Bhakti is broad-based on faith in God. Faith develops into love and the sincere and single-minded lover of God is ultimately united to God by virtue of Bhakti Yoga i.e. continuous concentration on God, as revealed in the Gītā. Bhakti in the Gītā is thus the chief means to the end of God-realisation. It is not an end in itself, as believed by Sage Nārada and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

**THE UPAŅIṢĀDIC IDEALISM.**

According to the Upaniṣadic philosophy, existence can be comprehensively and completely divided under two heads viz. the Perceiver (र्क or र्क्त) and the Perceived (र्क्त). The two are not absolutely distinct but are inter-related to each other. The unravelling of the mystery of the relationship between these two (र्क्तर्क्तसङ्केत) is in truth the goal of all philosophies. When the Perceiver shakes off his egoism (अहंकार - small or great) and

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21. इन्तेरुपरिवर्त्ये पिताः पुरुषोऽस्ते। ते गृहानि निद्यासिंग्वेऽनि। 
श्वेतानां वाहिमायम्। 
गात्रं: 1: 22
the Perceived is deprived of its name and form
( "अनामी" ), both of them merge into the
Absolute ONE ( "अनिर्वाणी" ) which is neither the
subject nor the object of perception. The Absolute
is the supreme and only Reality and that is the
God of the Upanisads represented by AUM. The
capacity to appear as the Many is inherent in the
Reality Itself. \(^{22}\) The only standpoint from
which we can really solve and realise the relation­
ship between the subject or Perceiver and the
object or the Perceived is when we transcend both.
No amount of reasoning can enable us to arrive
at such a stage.\(^ {23}\)

BHAKTI IN THE BHAGAVATA SCHOOL.

From the Sruti Yuga, we shall pass on to the
Smṛti Yuga to consider the view and way of life,
as preached by the system of Bhagavatism. There
was an age of revolt (600 B.C. to 300 A.D.)

\(^{22}\) R. Krsna Swami Aiyer : "Outlines of Vedanta"
P. 31.
against the Vedic cult of sacrifice and the Upaniṣadic doctrine of Impersonal Godhead (Nirguṇa Brahmāṇ), led by Gautama, Mahāvīra and Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva in their systems of philosophy known as Buddhism, Jainism and Bhāgavatism respectively.

In the Bhāgavata School, the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the Impersonal Godhead was fused with devotional worship of a Personal God (Sagūṇa Brahmāṇ); and in course of time a theistic school of Vaiṣṇavism was evolved. There was an aversion to interested action (Sakāma Karma or Yajña) and stress was laid on morality, discounting the metaphysical discussions about God. The Chief sources of Bhakti or devotion to a Personal God according to the Bhāgavata system of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva are the Nārāyanīya Section of the Mahā-Bhārata, the Gītā, Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, Śāndilya Bhakti Sūtra and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The Bhāgavata creed of Bhakti begins with self-surrender, culminates in Self Knowledge and ends in Union with God. During the critical period of about a thousand years,

Brāhmaṇism came out at least triumphant with the decay of Buddhism, with a new statement of the religion of the Vedas; and Neo-Brāhmaṇism had to re-interpret Yajña, Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti as seen in the Gītā, and Bhakti was given its due place in the Brāhmaṇical ideal of life. The best of Buddhist and Jain doctrines was absorbed in the Neo-Brāhmaṇism. By the advocacy of the Bhāgavata School, the masses were emancipated in many ways from the inferiority complex inherited from Brāhmaṇism; and the Brāhmaṇ's claim to superiority over the rest of humanity had to yield to the power of the new consciousness, awakened by Bhāgavatism.

The Bhāgavata School believes that whoever adores

![Verse from Bhāgavata Purāṇa](https://example.com/verse.png)
God is God's own, irrespective of all considerations of birth, parentage and social status. Only he realizes God who lives in God i.e. who is a God-man in the true sense of the term. 26

It is in the Gītā that we find for the first time the full description of the Bhakti-Yoga where Bhakti is said to be the best means to attain to the Karma Yoga i.e. the active life of selfless work without an eye to the fruit thereof, 27 as distinguished from the contemplative life of the Sanyāsin of the Upaniṣads. 28 It should, however, be noted that Bhakti in the Gītā is only a means to the end of Ātma Parmātma Yoga, and not an end in itself, as held by Sage Nārada. 29 Moreover, it does not mention the worship of Vāsudeva in his fourfold form (कृष्ण), as advocated

26. मा हि पार्थ व्यपरातित्वेऽवै देवं देवं जप्येऽन्यस्। ब्रह्माण्डेऽवै शुभांशुश्रुषाः क्षणं परं गलिस् ॥ अन्वेषाः ६ ३२

27. नामाचरणानिधिकांस्त तत्र अत्रेयं अनुवृत्त ॥ अन्वेषाः २ ४७

28. अत्रेयविरुध्दिदिव्य निम्ना पुरा प्रोच्चा समानस्य ॥ यजुर्वेदो यज्ञवल्लो कर्मिनामुपासनस् मोहस्माः ॥ अन्वेषाः ३ ३

29. ना तु तेन अन्तिकां दोषो च विप्रकुलम् ॥ कर्मस्थवतान् ॥ N.B.S. २५ & २६
by the Pañcarātra system which consists of the worship of Vāsudeva in his four-fold form.

It is a characteristic element of the Bhāgavata School and appears to have been evolved shortly after the Gītā was composed, and not later than the Second Century B.C. Sri Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā is identified with Brahman (व्रतदेव) which is both Personal as well as Impersonal. and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa too believes that Sri Kṛṣṇa is God Himself.

De facto the Bhakti cult of the Gītā is a purifying and ennobling factor par excellence in the life of a single-minded, true devotee of God. It is indeed unique and non-sectarian; and hence the Gītā is accepted as one of the three stays of Hinduism (प्रख्यात लघुत). S.C. Roy holds that

30. डॉ. मुन्दोपाद्याय “गुरु का निर्देश” पृ. २७०

31. गीताधर्मकोष परमार्थ दार्शनिक: परमार्थ दार्शन: I मा कल्याणसारालिक निबंधयुक्तभाषा इक्ष्म: II

32. गीताधर्मकोष परमार्थ दार्शन: पंडित: परमार्थ दार्शन: I गीताधर्मकोष परमार्थ दार्शन: II
the Gītā belongs to the pre-sectarian period of the religious history of India, as it certainly was a product of the pre-systematic period of philosophical thought in ancient India. The stream of Bhakti which took its rise in India from the height of the Vedic hymns flows continuously and uninterruptedly through the stony rocks of the intellectualistic Upaniṣads and reaches its sublimest purity of devotion and profoundest depth of speculations in the fertile soils of the "Happy Valley" of the Gītā, standing, as it does at the foot of the lofty ranges of Himalayan speculations of the Upaniṣads with their peaks radiant with milk-white snows of the vedic songs melting at the touch of the sunshine of Divine grace and inspiration. 33

Besides, Dr. R. D. Rānade too holds that inscriptive/records of the second century B.C. historical documents of 4th century B.C. and

and philological evidence of the 6th century B.C. 
prove that the Bhāgavat-Gītā was a pre-Pāṇiniyan composition. 34

All the colophons in the different Adhyāyas 
of the Bhagavad-Gītā include the expression  
उपनिषद्यानुजय . So according to the colophons, we 
must understand that the Gītā is the cumulation of 
the Upaniṣads, which has been sung.

Finally, in the Gītā-Dhyāna, we have a - 
celebrated verse. 35 Are we then not justified 
by reading this verse as giving the highest 
compliment to the Bhagavad-Gītā by calling it 
उपनिषद्यानुजय ?

Gītā's Bhakti reaches its climax in the 
Bhāgavata Purāṇa wherein Bhakti is believed to be 
an end in itself, for it is Love for love's sake 
without any ulterior motive whatsoever, like that

34.(i) Pāṇini is supposed to have lived in the 
6th Century B.C.
(ii) Dr. R. D. Rānade: "The Bhagavad-Gītā as a 
Philosophy of God-realisation" (page 38-39, 
104-105).

35. (i) उपनिषद्यानुजयः साधनात देवताय गोपत्वत्वकर्त्तवः | 
पाषाण नास्ति खुदीमात्वचा दु:हेम मीलासृष्टि महतः || 
गीताउपनिषद्यानुजयः वैद्यात् । वे०४
of Gopīs' for Lord Kṛṣṇa, as revealed in the Sequel. It is open to one and all, whether he be a Saint or a Sinner, irrespective of caste or sex.

BHAKTI AS UPAŚANĀ IN THE SMRTI-YUGA.

As regards the development of Bhakti, it may be said that Bhakti as Upāsanā (उपासना) i.e. an emotional approach to God existed in the Vedic times. The Mundakopanishad exhorts the aspirant to concentrate continuously on AUM so as to beoned with It. In the Gopatha AUM is said to be the true and perfect Name of God, and accordingly, it is laid down therein that constant meditation on AUM or constant Japa (recitation) of AUM leads one to beatitude. 36 In view of the triple cosmic function, God as Saguna Brahman is called Brahmā, the creator, Viṣṇu the protector and Siva, the destroyer of the universe. Godhead, the Nirguna Brahman is beyond the reach of the three

36. अभ्युच्चे उपासना।
अंतः तत्वं शृङ्खुं लोकं।
ष १ ॥ (गोपथ उपाधि ३ तन्त्रार्थ-१९)
Gunas. In the Brahma Sutras or Vyās, God is said to be the origin, sustenance and ultimate resort wherein the universe is finally resolved.

In the Nyāya Darsana of Gautama and the Vaiśeṣika-Darsana of Kanāda, He is called Īsvara and believed to be the efficient cause of this universe. The Sāmkhya Darsana of Kapil is atheistic but the Yoga Darsana of Patañjali believes in Īsvara as the Puruṣa Vīśeṣa i.e. Puruṣa par excellence, as He is untouched by the Act-force and its consequences and untainted by egoism or ne-science.

In the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā of Jaimini, Karman is believed to be the omnipotent force of this universe. The Uttara Mīmāṁsā or Vedānta regards Īsvara as Saguṇa Brahman. The Gītā speaks of God as Puruṣottama or Parmātma or Vāsudeva who is both Personal and Impersonal,
while the Bhāgavata Purāṇa calls Him Bhagavān or Śrī Kṛṣṇa, above the trinity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheṣa. It will thus be seen that God was originally named as AUM in the Vedic scriptures but with the development of Bhakti, in course of time, He is spoken of in various ways in the Hindu scriptures, such as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa or Śiva.

**BHAHTI IN THE ĀCĀRYA-YUGA.**

From the Smṛti Yuga, we shall now pass on to the Ācārya-Yuga of Śrī Saṃkara, Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Nimbārka, Śrī Madhva, Śrī Vallabha and Śrī Caitanya to review, in brief, the Bhakti in those times. In about 800 A.D., the great — philosopher Saṃkara (788-820 A.D.) initiated a movement which may be called New Hinduism. In the light of the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Vedānta Sūtras (i.e., वेदान्त सूत्र, the Vedānta Sūtras), he tried to re-state, reform and reorganise the old Brahmanical traditions. He was, however, indifferent regarding the question of the highest Deity that man should worship, whether it be Śiva, Viṣṇu,
Sūrya, Ganapati or Sakti; for worship of this sort was only a means to the end of self-realisation, and not an end in itself.

South India was in fact, the original home of the cult of Bhakti, whether of Siva or of Vigna, as a mass religion, as is seen from the lives of the Southern Saiva Saints and the Vaisnava Alwārs. In South India Saivism or Vaisnavism is traceable from very early times and its influence grew by its conflict with Buddhism and Jainism. The cult of Love was quite popular in South India even during the 6th and the 7th centuries. The Saiva Saints sing of the impermanence of things worldly, condemn the ways of the worldly-minded and exhort all to wake up to a spiritual life. The Alwārs ignore the distinction of caste and sex, of knowledge and ignorance and attach importance only to love of God as the means of salvation. They advocate the path of self-surrender or Prapatti, either like that of the baby-cat ( ) or that of the baby-monkey ( )

39. उत्तरम् शाङ्किते | विधिम् । । । ।
Besides, instead of the worship of the five-fold God (पंच देवीसभा) advocated by Śri Śamkara, the Alwārs prescribed the worship of only one God i.e. monotheism. The age of Alwārs was followed by the age of Ācāryas the chief of whom was Śri Rāmānuja (2027-1137 A.D.). He upheld the Alwār doctrines, emphasised the Personal aspect of God and founded Śri Vaiṣṇavism, wherein he advocated Bhakti with Prapatti i.e. love and devotion to God Viṣṇu. He put the Bhakti cult on a secure philosophical basis in his doctrine of Viśiṣṭādvaita (i.e. Qualified Monism) of the triune form of Cit, acit and Hari. In his view the end of life is not merger in the Absolute but continued blissful existence in union with God. Śri Mimbārka advocated the doctrine of Mono-dualism (मोनद्विद्वाद) and emphasised the worship of Rādhākrṣṇa. Śri Madhva (1199-1277 A.D.) was a Dualist out and out (द्विलक्ष्य); for what he insists on is the existence of five fundamental dualisms. He advocated the worship of the one God Viṣṇu with the attitude of servitude (सत्यिकफ्त).
Sri Vallabha (1473-1553 A.D.) explains the phenomena of the Universe by involutions and evolutions of Brahman i.e. Sat, Cit and Ānanda in his doctrine of Pure Monism. According to him Moksa is possible only by devotion and grace, and not by Jñāna and Karma as expressed by M.M. Dwivedi.

Sri Caitanya (1486-1533 A.D.) insists upon the right attitude of mind - whether of a lover of peace (प्रेम) or a servant (दया) or a friend (सौभाग्य) or a beloved (नीता) or for union with God. Besides the above mental attitude, he attaches the greatest importance to the continual chanting of the Lord's Name and holds that only Madhura Rati develops into Mahā Bhāva, the climax of Divine Love. In fact salvation lies in turning away from the world of sense and the false self to the inner true self and thence to God. In his doctrine of Acintya Bhedbhāva he warns that wealth and sex are the two rocks whereon many souls are ship-wrecked and...

hence Vaishnavas must scrupulously guard themselves against these two pit-falls.

From the age of Ācāryas, we shall now pass on to the age of Saints - South, North, West and East.

BHAKTI IN THE NĀTH YUGA AND SANTA YUGA.

Gorakha, the best exponent of Nath-ism flourished in the 9th and the 10th centuries, when Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism were competing for supremacy. The doctrine of Gorakha or Nathism is, in brief, as follows:

The goal of human life is to eternalise real self or Reality at the root of the Universe, by transcending the lower self, which consists of the vital essence - the sexual power, the vital power and the mind. The first two can be controlled by mind-control and the mind can be controlled through intellectual analytical perception (i.e. Jhāna) or through the constant recitation (a Guru Mantra (i.e. saving word of God given by a Guru). When we rise above the pairs of opposites and the Tripatis of experience, we enjoy
Sahajā Samādhi, the goal of human life. Nathism is thus a kind of Rāja Yoga of the Upanisads open to all classes, requiring a mental and moral detachment from the "Middle Apparent." The influence of Gorakha's Ātma Yoga on later Santism has been tremendous; for his vocabulary, ideology, and delineation are fully reflected in the writings of Saints like Jñānadeva, Rāmānand, Kabīr, Nānaka and Dādu. Both the Nathaśastra and the Saints were reformers; but as the Saints had more to do with the laymen, they added theism and devotionalism in their precepts. Besides, Hinduism was influenced by Islam from 1200 A.D. to 1757 A.D. and so - Santism came to the front to stem the tide of Islam, as will be seen from the cult of Bhakti of the Saints - South, North, West (i.e. Mahārāṣṭrā and Gujarāt) and East. It is true that the Saints of the South, the North, the West and the East speak different languages, but the thoughts expressed by them are essentially the same; for

41. Dr. Mohan Singh: "Gorakha and Medieval Mysticism".
God is their religion in one form or another and the attainment of the egoless state (सूक्ष्म अवस्त्रिति) is the burden of their songs.

SAINTS OF NORTH INDIA - RĀMĀNANDA, KABĪR, NĀNAKA AND OTHERS.

De facto, it was Saint Rāmānanda who broke down the conservatism of Rāmānuja and founded a new cult of his own for spiritual perfection. Thus from the South the cult of Bhakti flowed to the North through Rāmānanda. He did away with caste-distinction and ceremonials and preached in vernacular. His Nirguna Bhakti cult was popularised and spread in all directions by his twelve disciples, the chief of whom was Kabīr. 42

KABIR.

After Rāmānanda, Saint Kabīr was the central personality in the religious history of medieval

42. जस्ति शालिक उपजी, काये रामानाद! प्रागात कठीं अबोधीने, स्ताल दीय नलखो।
India. He spoke the language of the people - plain, simple and direct and expressed the simple thoughts of a simple heart in the common language of the people. He was, therefore, revered alike by the Hindus and Muslims. He was the Guru of the middle ages, who revived the dying spirit of True Religion. He preached that God is all in all and that man in his perfect form is God. Being an introvert, he firmly struck at the external paraphernalia of religious life whether in Hinduism or Islam and exhorted all to realise their Godhood by the mystic way of Surata Sabda Yoga leading to Sahaja Samādhi or Sahajavastha as preached in Nāthism.

NĀNAKA, DĀDU, DAYĀL, TULSIDĀS
AND SŪRĐĀSA.

Nānāka (1469-1538 A.D.) the founder of Sikhism and Dādu Dāyāl (1544-1603 A.D.), the founder of Dādu Panth or Brahma Sampradāya were the great followers of Kabīr's ideals. They were the staunch supporters of True Religion and Hindu-Muslim Unity.

43. भारत का जन्म राष्ट्रीय तत्त्व धरित्रिकानुसार एकत्र हेतु
साहित्यी "अवकाश".
and held that man must purify him of all sense of ego and surrender his life entirely to God for self-perfection. They believe in the oneness of all life and the Mystic way of Sūrata Sabda Yoga for Sahaja Samādhi. Tulsīdāsa and Sūradāsa were the advocates of Saguṇa Bhakti Cult, Tulsīdāsa emphasised the devotion of Rāma; while Sūradāsa of Kṛṣṇa.

SAINTS OF WEST INDIA -
MAHĀRĀSHTRA AND GUJARĀT.

The noteworthy Saints of Maharashtra are Jñāndeśa (1276-1297), Nāmdeva (1271-1351), Ekanātha (1534-1598), Tukārāma (1610-1651) and Rāndāsa (17th Century). They were the followers of the Vārakārī Sampradāya and are saints par excellence.

While North Indian Mysticism was strongly protestant and democratic, West India was conservative and

45. Dr. R. D. Ranade: "Mysticism in Mahārāshtra"
Page 42.

44. तानां छे सुरं सुरं
तुसारं छे सुरं
सुरेण राम रामम्
हे राम राम ।
— ४१६
sought to abolish caste exclusiveness, arrogance and superiority rather than abolishing caste altogether. The burden of their teaching is that we have not only to know God but also to be, to feel and to expand pari passu. Bhakti is a life-process, and not a mere intellectual creed. They preached Para Bhakti based on Divine Wisdom. Tukārām's Abhaṅgas are most popular even today all over Mahaṛāṣṭra.

The noteworthy saints of Gujarāt are Nārasinhr Mehta, Mīrābāi, Akhājī, Pṛitama, Chotama, Dhīro, Śrī Nṛsinhācārya and Śrī Sāgar. All of them preach love-devotion to God based on Divine Wisdom and constant recitation of God's Name - whether in the form of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa or Guru Govinda.

THE TWO CURRENTS OF BHAKTI -

SAGUNA AND NIRGUNA.

It will be evident from the above that the schools of Saints popularised the Bhakti cult among the classes and the masses and raised the prestige of the Upaniṣadic Mysticism. The Nirguna Bhakti cult popularised by Śrīmā Rāmānanda and his twelve disciples, was advocated and supported by
the noteworthy saints of North India (except Tulsidas and Surdas), Maharashtra and Gujarat; while the Saguna Bhakti cult, inaugurated by the Acaryas like Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva, Vallabha and Sri Caitanya, was advocated and supported by the Northern saints like Tulsidas and Surdas and to a certain extent by Tukaram, Namdev, Eknatha and Ramdas of Maharashtra and by Narsinh Mehta, Mirabai and Pratama of Gujarat. The aspirants of the Nirguna Bhakti cult seek to be oned with the Godhead (निर्गुण भक्ति) by means of Para-Bhakti while the aspirants of the Saguna Bhakti cult seek unitive life with God (सागुण भक्ति) by means of love-devotion (लभ्यता परिपूर्ण and प्रेमभक्तिवृत्ति).

Genuine Bhakti is adoration of the Divine through self-surrender. Life of a Bhakta is truly a God-centred life. The spirit within him craves for abiding satisfaction which only the Eternal Infinite or the Brahman can give. God is the only refuge for a true devotee, who looks to no one else for relief in distress and in times of troubles and tribulations. The Bhakta loves all, irrespective of colour, creed, caste or country, for the sake of the Divine Beloved, whom he sees animating all. He sees ONE in all and all in ONE. De facto the -
distinction between God and Godhead (देवता एवं देवी) is a distinction without a difference like the distinction between water and ice. God is all and God-realisation, in one form or another, is the Summum bonum of human life.

A complete picture of the Bhakti cult is thus unfolded before our mind's eye from the vedic times to the medieval period. Like the advent of Muslims, who ruled India from the 13th to the 18th centuries, the advent of Christianity too, with its missionary zeal in the period of British Rule, has greatly stimulated modern religion and life in the 19th and the 20th centuries. Broadly speaking, the Saivas believe in Siva and the Vaishnavas believe in one of the Avatāras of Viṣṇu (as Rāma or Kṛṣṇa) as God in the same sense as the Christians believe in Christ as the object of devotion and reverence and praise, as the Personal God. Through Him and His service alone salvation can be secured.

Before summing up the main theme of the origin and development of Bhakti, it would be
relevant to our purpose to make a passing reference here to other phases of Bhakti (besides Saivism and Vaishnavism) evolved in 'Suifism', 'Tantrism', 'Lingayatism' and 'the Santa-Mata'or 'Radha Swami Pantha' which inculcate the God-like worship of the Guru.

Suifism is a Mystic cult of Islam and the goal of the Suhi is the realisation of the unity of Jiva with Brahman through self-annihilation (कल्पना). Dr. Tripathi remarks that SuFis recognise four stages for self-realisation -

1. Sariat,  
2. Tarikat,  
3. Hakikat, and  

According to Suifism, Love is the fundamental basis as well as the sustaining power of the world. Not only that, Brahman is all love and as such, it can be realised only through self-annihilation (कल्पना) which is possible only through concentrated love, wherein love itself undergoes expansion and sublimation and is thus realised in every atom of the world - in every object of existence. This
is the "Aham Brahmasmi" of Vedānta. As in Vedānta, Sufism also accepts the unity of Jīva and Brahman as between the spark and the fire or the waves and the sea. The lover loses the very idea of the personal self in Love (Brahman) and is ultimately merged in love (Brahman) itself. Sufism looks upon God as the Beloved and the aspirant thinks himself to be the ardent lover of the Beloved.

"Sanam" is the term used for the Beloved in Persian literature and this term is freely used by Sufi poets in connection with Brahman — the ideal of Realisation. As the language of Sufism is much akin to that used by mundane lovers and beloveds — the term 'Iske Mizājī' is used for ordinary or earthly love and "Iske Hakīkī" for celestial love.

Sufism is thus akin to Saguna Bhakti in its early stage and to Nirguna Bhakti or Jñāna Marga in the last stage of unification with God.

Like Sufism, Tantrism too had made a great influence on Indian philosophy and religion.

During the Tantric age i.e. from 700-1200 A.D. thousands of Tantras were written by the Buddhists and the Hindus. The Tantra prescribes a Sādhana of its own for a happy life on earth, Heaven hereafter and at length Mokṣa or liberation. According to Mahāyāna Buddhism, the real Noumenon is only "Śunya", corresponding to the Upaniṣadic Brahman; and the triune form of "God, World and Souls" is only the Revelation or condensation of the "Śunya". The Śunya can be conceived and realised by the aspirant, if the mind is properly attuned to the highest wave-length of the "Śunya", (i.e. 2,50,000 according to Dr. B. Bhattācārya), by constant meditation. It advocates a life of selfless work for others and meditation of Śunya with full trust and faith in the Supreme Energy or Divinity or Śunya behind the world structure. The Hindu Tantric view believes in the dual aspects of the one Brahman. It holds that Śiva is the unchanging consciousness and Sakti, its changing power appearing as mind and matter. The two aspects of Śiva-Sakti are intimately connected with each other.
How the one can be both is a Mystery. In fact, the world is the self whether as 'I' (स्वात्मक) or as 'This' (तस्मात्) and the aim of the Sadhana should, therefore, be to attain pure and perfect Cit or consciousness (स्वात्मज्ञान). Perfect experience is Experience of the whole – that is of consciousness as "Being" (ज्ञान-सम्बन्ध) and consciousness as Power to become (शिर्सन-सम्बन्ध).

Tantri-ism is thus akin to Jñāna Marga or Nirguna Bhakti cult wherein the Self is identified with the Self-in-self or the Self of the Universe (स्व-सम्बन्ध and शिर्सन-सम्बन्ध).

Besides Saivism and Vaiṣṇavism, there was evolved in the Karnatak the Lingayata cult or Vīra Saivism by Basava. It is called Lingayata, because it is a religion with a Siva-linga as its guiding and central theme. It has a path, practice and philosophy all its own. In it Guru, Linga, and Jangama (i.e., a moving ascetic) command the same reverence as "Hari, Guru and Santa" in other religions. The ascetic travels from place to place preaching religion and morality to all. The Lingayat religion recommends the five-fold mode
of living (i.e. शिक्षाचार, सत्सागर, शिलाचार, पूर्वाचार and गुणाचार) and the eight-fold path of God-realisation (i.e. पुरुष, लिंग, श्रीमंग, मदर, पालिका, गुरुमात्री, भक्ति and तंत्र).

The tradition is that the Sect was founded by five ascetics who are held to have sprung from the five heads of Siva incarnation age after age and is said to have been the reviver of the faith. In every Lingāyata village, there is a monastery, and each is affiliated to one of the five original monasteries.

Every Lingāyata must belong to a monastery and must have a Guru; he need not visit a temple at all. Both morality and Bhakti are very prominent in Lingāyata literature. Each Lingāyata worships his own Jangama Guru and the Linga is to the devotee what the sacred thread is to the twice-born Hindu. 47

In addition to Saivism, Vaisnavism, Lingavatism, there has been evolved in modern times the Santa-Mata or the Rādhāswāmī Pantha, wherein there is an unparallelled, wonderful and sincere devotion to Guru, who is looked upon as God incarnate for the disciple, as was seen in the Medieval Nirguna Bhakti cult of Kabir, Akhaji and others. The teachings of the Santa-Mata are based on three essential beliefs viz.: (a) Belief in the existence of God; (b) Belief in the oneness of the essence of God and the spirit entity in man; and (c) Belief in the continuity of life after death. It lays great stress on God-like Guru-Bhakti and on self-discipline. The triple Mystic way of the Santa-Mata for God-realisation consists of (i) Smarana, (ii) Dhyāna and (iii) Bhajana, the Persian names whereof are "Zikr, Fikr and Sūrata Sabda Yoga.

To conclude, no particular part of India can claim monopoly in spiritual speculation and revelation. Owing to the infinite diversity of

48. Dr. K.A. Thakkar: "Mysticism in Gujarat" - P. 57 & 60
individuals, there is no one fixed method of approach to God for all. Each has his path which, if sincerely followed, will procure for him the fruit of his Sadhanā. In order that one may have a complete and comprehensive view of the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata, I have also given in the Appendix a brief outline of the various trends of Bhakti abroad, especially as seen in the prevailing great religions of the world.

The distinctive and novel features of each type of Bhakti will be discussed in detail in the sequel.

To sum up, I have given here a bird's eye-view of the origin and development of Bhakti in India right from the Vedic times to modern times, comparing and contrasting it with Sūfism and Tāntrism which have come to stay here in order that we may comprehend the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata in all its varied aspects.