

Unit -1

New Religious Ideas and Movements



Learning Objectives

To acquire the knowledge of

- ❖ Devotional movement of Azhwars and Nayanmars
- ❖ *Advaita* philosophy of Adi Shankara and *vishistadvaita* of Ramanuja
- ❖ Bhakti cult in Northern India and its prominent exponents
- ❖ Interaction between Hinduism and Islam, leading to the birth of new cults notably Sufism
- ❖ Teachings of Kabir and Guru Nanak
- ❖ Impact of Bhakti Movement



Introduction

Medieval India saw an extraordinary production of devotional poetry, which were not restricted to one particular religion but inspired by different religious movements. The exponents of these movements held the view that total devotion (*bhakti*) to God could save man from the pitfalls of life and earn him salvation. It was also believed that one does not have to go to temples or perform rituals, for God is omnipresent and resides inside every human. The *Bhagavad Gita* proposed that the path of *bhaktimarga* (the path of *bhakti*) is superior to the two other religious approaches, namely,

the path of knowledge (*jnana*) and the path of rituals and good works (*karma*), providing inspiration to the exponents of Bhakti cult.

Bhakti Movement: The Beginnings

The Bhakti movement, or the resurgence of devotional practices, started in Tamil Nadu around seventh century AD (CE). It included reciting the name of the God or Goddess, singing hymns in their praise, wearing religious marks or carrying identity emblems, and undertaking pilgrimages to sacred places associated with the deity. It emphasised the mutual emotional attachment and love of a devotee towards a personal God and of the God for the devotee