

2. Work of the Saints

The tradition of Sants that began in Maharashtra with Shri Chakradhar, Sant Namdeo, Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Chokha Mela was continued by Sants coming from various strata of society. In this group of Sants are included Sant Goroba, Sant Sawata, Sant Narhari, Sant Eknath, Sant Shaikh Mahammed, Sant Tukaram, Sant Niloba etc. Similarly, Sant Janabai, Sant Soyarabai, Sant Nirmalabai, Sant Muktabai, Sant Kanhopatra and Sant Bahinabai Shiurkar are also included.

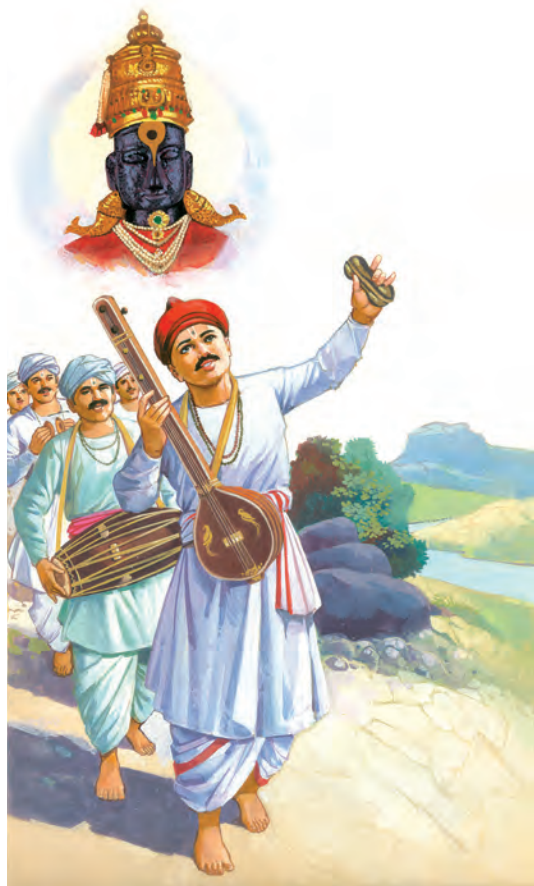
They taught people various virtues like compassion, non-violence, charity, service, equality and brotherhood. No one is inferior, no one is superior. All are equal. Such was the sentiment that was created by Sants in the minds of people. Similarly, Samarth Ramdas also rendered his work in Maharashtra.

Shri Chakradhar Swami : Shri Chakradhar Swami was originally a prince from Gujarat. He became an ascetic, and came over to Maharashtra. He moved all over Maharashtra preaching equality. He did not believe in any discrimination based on gender or caste. So, several men and women became his followers. The sect he established is known as 'Mahanubhav' sect. Memorable incidents from his life have been compiled in a book titled 'Leelacharitra'.

Sant Namdeo : Sant Namdeo was a great devotee of Vitthal. He lived in the village Narasi. He composed numerous songs in praise of god, performed



Shri Chakradhar Swami



Sant Namdeo

‘Keertans’ (songs and stories based on a religious theme) everywhere and brought about general awakening among the people. He moved all over Maharashtra to spread Bhagwat dharma and taught the people deep devotion to God. He instilled in them the desire to protect their religion. Sant Namdeo later travelled all over India spreading the message of humanity. He travelled to the Punjab and spread the message of equality among the people there. He composed songs in Hindi. Even today, some of his verses are included in ‘Guru Granth Sahib’, the holy book of the Sikhs. His songs are still sung all over Maharashtra with great love and devotion.

Sant Dnyaneshwar : Sant Dnyaneshwar’s family belonged to Apegaon. Nivruttinath and Sopandeo were his brothers. Muktabai was his sister. Bigoted men of the time used to look down upon these children because they were the offspring of a ‘Sanyasi’. It happened like this. Their father took ‘Sanyas’ and retired from worldly life. As a Sanyasi, he left home. But later on, obeying the order of his guru, he returned home and started living with his wife. Their four children were born afterwards. The narrow-minded religious leaders did not think it right that a ‘Sanyasi’ should have children. People persecuted these children and banished them from their community.

Once Dnyaneshwar went round the town begging for alms. But no one would give him any alms. He had to listen to abusive language instead. Young

Dnyaneshwar was deeply pained by this incident. He entered his hut and locked the door from inside to grieve over his lot. Muktabai came and knocked at the door. She said, “Open the door, Dnyaneshwar. How can we remain drowned in our own sorrow ? Who will then look to the welfare of the world ?” These words of his sister gave new hope to Dnyaneshwar. He forgot his personal sorrow and started his work. Everywhere, the poor and backward people were being oppressed in the name of the religion. Dnyaneshwar went among the people and taught them to have faith in God. ‘Give equal treatment to all. Help those in trouble and allay their misery.’ This was the gist of his advice to the people. Dnyaneshwar’s words are heard in every nook and corner of Maharashtra for the last seven hundred years.

In those days, all religious teaching was confined to Sanskrit books. The language of ordinary people in everyday use was Marathi. Dnyaneshwar wrote his outstanding book ‘Dnyaneshwari’ in Marathi. He thus opened wide for his



Sant Dnyaneshwar

people the doors of knowledge, where he preached the ideal of brotherhood among all men. At a very early age, at Alandi near Pune, Dnyaneshwar took 'Samadhi', that is, put himself in a trance from which he never came out. Even today, on the eleventh day of Ashadh and Kartik, lakhs of pilgrims go to Alandi-Pandhari with devotion.



Sant Eknath

Sant Eknath : Sant Eknath carried on the work started by Sant Namdeo and Sant Dnyaneshwar. He lived in Paithan. He preached that the way to reach God was through devotion – 'Bhaktimarg'. He wrote numerous religious songs – 'Abhangs', 'Owees' and 'Bharuds'. His advice to the people was not to accept any distinction of high and low. He made friends with the poor and the downtrodden and taught them devotion to God. His love extended

even to the dumb animals. He exhorted the people to love all living beings and practised what he preached.

One day he was going to the river Godavari for a bath. It was noon and very hot. The sand bed along the riverside was very hot too. He heard the crying of a poor child sitting on the hot sand. Eknath looked around and saw the child. He rushed to him and looked around for the child's parents. He picked up the child in his arms, wiped his tears and reached him home.

In this way, by his personal example, Eknath impressed the message of love and equality on the minds of the people.

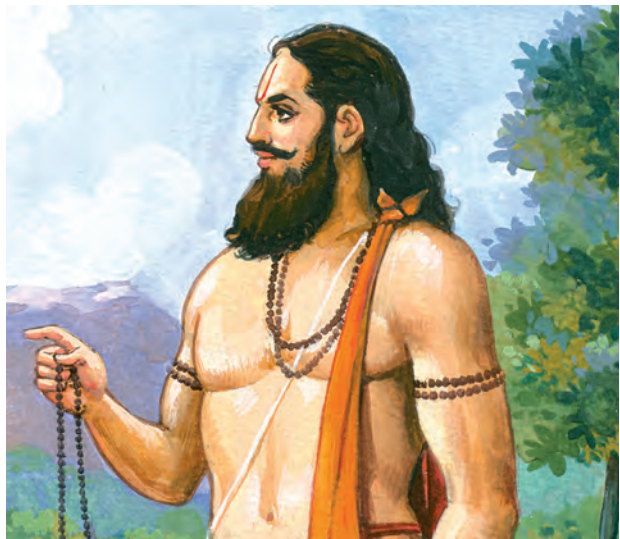
Sant Tukaram : Two great saints, Tukaram and Ramdas lived in Shivaji's time. Tukaram came from Dehu, near Pune. He owned a farm and also a grocery shop. His forefathers used to lend money to the needy people. But



Sant Tukaram

Tukaram drowned in the river Indrayani, all the record of loan papers he had, thus giving relief to many. He would go to the neighbouring hill and sing songs in praise of God Vitthal. On the eleventh day, 'ekadashi' of the month of Ashadh and Kartik, he would go to Pandharpur. He wrote devotional songs – 'Abhangs' and performed 'Keertans'. Thousands flocked to listen to him. Shivaji Maharaj also attended his Keertans. Sant Tukaram preached to the people about the virtues of pity, forgiveness and peace of mind. He also gave them the message of equality. 'He alone is a saint, and God dwells with him who calls the weak and the downtrodden as his own'. He impressed this truth on the minds of the people. He made them think. People accepted him as a great religious leader and showered their praise on him. Even today, all over Maharashtra, we hear people proclaiming 'Gyanba - Tukaram' the names of the two great saints. Sant Dnyaneshwar is called 'Gyanba' also. Even today, 'Tukaram Gatha' is read in every household.

Samarth Ramdas : At the same time, the hills and valleys of Maharashtra were filled with the echoes of 'Jai, Jai Raghuveer Samarth' (Glory be to the great Rama) an invocation constantly on the lips of the great saint Ramdas. Ramdas was born at Jamb on the banks of the Godavari in Marathwada. His birthday falls on Ram-Navami, the day on which the great hero, Rama, was born. Narayan was his real name but he preferred to call himself Ramdas, the servant of Rama. Through his great book 'Dasbodh' he taught men the ways of good life. Through his 'Manache Shlok' (stanzas addressed to



Samarth Ramdas

the mind) he gave people lessons in good thoughts and good conduct. To popularise the worship of strength, he raised the temples of Hanuman, the god of strength. He exhorted people to be strong and told them of the power that resides in a united people. He taught them to organize themselves and fight against injustice. This gave courage to the people.

The work of the saints brought about a great awakening among the people. Religion once again became a thing to be respected and a spirit of self-reliance was born. People regained their lost confidence. This great awakening among the people brought about by the saints helped Shivaji in his fight for Swaraj.



EXERCISES

1. Fill in the blanks :

- (a) Sant Namdeo was a great devotee of
- (b) At a very early age, at near Pune, Dnyaneshwar took 'Samadhi'.
- (c) Sant Tukaram drowned in the river, all the record of loan papers he had.
- (d) To popularise the worship of strength, Samarth Ramdas raised the temples of

2. Write the answer in one sentence.

- (a) What discrimination did Shri Chakradhar Swami not believe?

- (b) What desire did Sant Namdeo instil among the people?
- (c) What advice was rendered by Sant Eknath?
- (d) What message was propagated by Samarth Ramdas?

3. Give answers in three or four sentences.

- (a) Why did Sant Dnyaneshwar lock himself in his hut?
- (b) What message did Sant Tukaram give?

Activity

Collect the pictures of Sants other than those included in this lesson and below the pictures, write their thoughts.

