

# Bhakti movement

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# Bhakti movement

- The **Bhakti movement** was an important historical religious movement in medieval Hinduism that sought to bring religious reforms to all strata of society by adopting the method of devotion to achieve salvation.
- It was prominent in eighth-century south India (now Tamil Nadu and Kerala states), and spread northwards.
- It swept over east and north India from the 15th century onwards, reaching its zenith between the 15th and 17th century CE.
- The Bhakti movement regionally developed around different gods and goddesses, and some sub-sects were Vaishnavism (Vishnu), Shaivism (Shiva), Shaktism (Shakti goddesses), and Smartism.
- Bhakti movement preached using the local languages so that the message reached the masses. The movement was inspired by many poet-saints, who championed a wide range of philosophical positions ranging from theistic dualism of Dvaita to absolute monism of Advaita Vedanta.

- The Sanskrit word *bhakti* is derived from the root *bhaji*, which means "divide, share, partake, participate, to belong to".
- The word also means "attachment, devotion to, fondness for, homage, faith or love, worship, piety to something as a spiritual, religious principle or means of salvation".
- Ancient Indian texts, dated to be from the 1st millennium BCE, such as the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, the Katha Upanishad and the Bhagavad Gita mention Bhakti.

- There's no creation or creator there,  
no gross or fine, no wind or fire,  
no sun, moon, earth or water,  
no radiant form, no time there,  
no word, no flesh, no faith,  
no cause and effect, nor any thought of the Veda,  
no Hari or Brahma, no Shiva or Shakti,  
no pilgrimage and no rituals,  
no mother, father or guru there...
- — *Kabir, Shabda 43, Translated by K Schomer and WH McLeod*

- The early 15th-century Bhakti poet-sant Pipa stated
- Within the body is the god, within the body the temple,  
within the body all the Jangamas  
within the body the incense, the lamps and the food-offerings,  
within the body the puja-leaves.

After searching so many lands,  
I found the nine treasures within my body,  
Now there will be no further going and coming,  
I swear by Rama.

- The movement started as a response to the evil practices that had crept into Hinduism. Some of the other reasons which fueled the spread of the movement across the country were:
- The spread of Islam
- Emergence of great reformers
- Influence of Sufi sects
- Influence of Vaishnavism and Shaivism ideologies
- It preached **equality**.
- **It preached universal brotherhood**
- **It strove hard to rid the religion and society of evil practices**
- Perhaps the most important aspect of the movement was its emphasis on the route of '**Bhakthi**' rather than **superficial rituals** as the mode to realize god and salvation.

- **The movement developed under two different schools of thought.**
- **Nirgunabhakthi**
- They believed in formless worship
- It was introduced by Adi Shankara
- Some of the other Bhakthi saints who preached this school of thought are- Kabir, Guru Nanak, Dadu Dayal etc
- **Sagunabhakthi**
- It believed in the worship of form.
- It believed that god is the biggest manifestation of everything perfect
- It included philosophers such as- Ramanuja, Nimbaraka, Madhva, Vallabha, Meera Bhai, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Tulsidas, Surdas etc

# Shankaracharya



- Shankara was born in the southern Indian state of Kerala, according to the oldest biographies, in a village named Kaladi sometimes spelled as Kalati or Karati.
- He was born to Nambudiri Brahmin parents. becomes the disciple of a teacher named Govinda Bhagavatpada Several texts suggest Shankara schooling with Govindapada happened along the river Narmada in Omkareshwar, a few place it along river Ganges in Kashi (Varanasi) as well as Badari (Badrinath in the Himalayas). Adi Sankara is believed to have died aged 32, at Kedarnath in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand, a Hindu pilgrimage site in the Himalayas.
- Texts say that he was last seen by his disciples behind the Kedarnath temple, walking in the Himalayas until he was not traced.
- Some texts locate his death in alternate locations such as Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu) and somewhere in the state of Kerala He wrote commentaries on **Brahmasutras**. His popular works include- **Vivekachudamani, Saundaryalahari, Bhajagovindam, Shivananda Lahari**
- The followers of Shankaracharya are called as **Smratas**

- “Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiva Na Aparah—Brahman is alone real; this world is unreal; and the Jiva or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman.”
- His teachings are available in the book *Upadesa Sahasri: A Thousand Teachings*, written by the great philosopher himself.
- The teacher is one who is endowed with the power of furnishing arguments pro and con, of understanding questions [of the student], and remembers them. The teacher possesses tranquility, self-control, compassion and a desire to help others, who is versed in the Śruti texts and unattached to pleasures here and hereafter, knows the subject and established in that knowledge. He is never a transgressor of the rules of conduct, devoid of weaknesses such as ostentation, pride, deceit, cunning, jugglery, jealousy, falsehood, egotism and attachment. The teacher's sole aim is to help others and a desire to impart the knowledge.
- — *Adi Shankara, Upadesha Sahasri*

# Ramanujacharya (1017-1137AD)



- He was born at **Sriperumbudur**.
- He was the disciple of **Yamuna Muni and Vedprakash**
- He founded the philosophy called **Vishishta Advaita and preached Vaishnavism**
- Kulottanga Chola who was a Shaivite banished Ramanujacharya for preaching Vaishnavism
- He wrote **Sri Bashya** and was the **head of Srirangam Vaishnava Math**
- **Ramanujacharya** preached **Shudras and outcastes** could also attain salvation by completely surrendering to the will of the guru.
- He was also referred to as **Ilaya Perumal** which means the radiant one.

# Vishishta Advaita

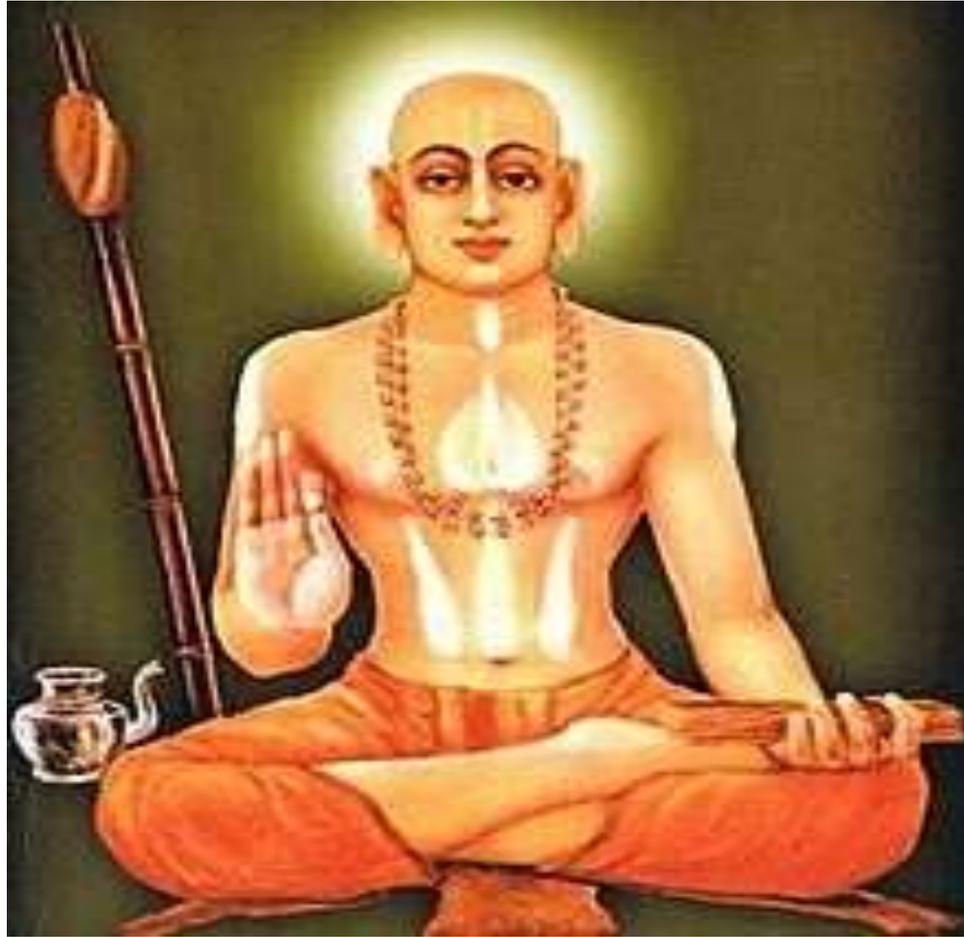
- This school grew out of worship of Lord Vishnu
- It is a non-dualistic school of Vedanta philosophy. It is non-dualism of the qualified whole, in which **Brahman alone exists, but is characterized by multiplicity.**
- Unlike some Hindu philosophies, **Visishtadvaita** doesn't see the world as **simply illusion, which would make it separate from Brahman.** The material world is a part of Brahman's nature.
- **Moksha**, or spiritual liberation, is seen as the joy of contemplating Brahman (rather than release from the life-death-rebirth cycle), and that joy is the result of devotion, praise, worship and contemplating the divine perfection.

# Nimbaraka



- He was the disciple of Ramanujacharya
- He was the first to introduce **Radhamadhav cult** which was centered in the worship of Radha and Madhav
- He founded the philosophy called **Dwita Advaita**. It was centered on the balance between **Advaita and Visishtadvaita**.
- He wrote **Dashasloki and Vedanta**
- He was also a prominent astronomer
- Its philosophy held that men were trapped in physical bodies constricted by **prakrti**(matter) and that only by surrender to Radha-Krishna (not through their own efforts) could they attain the grace necessary for liberation from rebirth; then, at death, the physical body would drop away.

# Madhvacharya



- Shri Madhvacharya was born to Narayana Bhatta and **Vedavati** in **Pajaka**, a small place near **Udupi**. He was born in 1238, on the auspicious day of **Vijayadashami**, and he was named **Vasudeva**.
- He was the third of the **trinity of philosophers** who influenced Indian thoughts after the ages of the Vedas and Puranas (the other two being **Shankaracharya** and **Ramanujacharya**)
- He propounded the philosophy of **Dwaita or Dualism**.
- He was initiated into **sanyastva** by **Achyutapreksha**
- At the time of initiation, he was given the name **Purnaprajna**. It was also **Achyutapreksha** who gave him the title '**Madhva**' by which he was more famously known.
- Madhvacharya wrote commentaries on several important Hindu holy texts, including the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutra.
- He wrote various texts that detailed his philosophy which he called **Tattvavada**, or as it is more popularly known, **Dvaita**. Some of his works were the **Gita Bhashya**, **Brahma Sutra Bhashya**, **Anu Bhashya**, **Karma Nirnaya**, and **Vishnu Tattva Nirnaya**.

- **Dvaita philosophy**

- The basic tenet of Dvaita philosophy is the refutation of the Mayavada of Sri Shankara. Dvaita emphasizes that the world is real and not just an illusion.
- The soul is bound to this world through ignorance
- The way for the soul to release itself from this bondage is to seek the grace of Sri Hari
- To reach Sri Hari, one has to practice Bhakthi, there is no other way
- To practice Bhakthi, one needs to meditate
- To meditate, one needs to clear the mind and attain detachment by studying the sacred texts

# Vallabhacharya



- He was also known as '**Achinitabhadra**'
- He was the first to promote Krishna Bhakthi on the basis of **Maha Bhagvad Purana**
- He founded the philosophy of **Shuddha Advaita** which believed in absolute union.
- He prescribed **Pushtimarga** as the means for salvation (extreme devotion to God)

# Basavanna



- He was a 12<sup>th</sup> century administrator, philosopher, poet, Lingayat saint in the Shiva-focused Bhakti movement.
- He raised social awareness through his poetry, popularly known as **Vachanaas**.
- He introduced new public institutions such as the **Anubhava Mantapa** (or, the “hall of spiritual experience”), which welcomed men and women from all socio-economic backgrounds to discuss spiritual and mundane questions of life, in open.
- He was a propagator of Visishtadvaita
- Basavanna literary works include the **Vachana Sahitya in Kannada Language**. He is also known as **Bhaktibhandari, Basavanna or Basaveswara**.

# Ramananda



- He was a **14<sup>th</sup> century Vaishnava devotional poet** saint
- He developed his philosophy and devotional themes
- Evidence also suggests that **Ramananda was influenced by Nathpanthi ascetics** of the Yoga school of Hindu philosophy.
- An early social reformer, Ramananda accepted disciples without discriminating anyone by gender, class, caste or religion. His disciples included- Kabir, **Ravidas, Bhagat Pipa and others.**
- His verse is mentioned in the **Sikh scripture Adi Granth.**
- Some of his works include- **Gyan-lila and Yog-cintamani (Hindi), Vaishnava Mata Bhajabhaskara and Ramarcana paddhati (Sanskrit).**

# Kabir (1440-1510 AD)



- He was a 15<sup>th</sup> century Indian mystic poet and saint, whose writings influenced **Hinduism's Bhakti movement** and his verses are found in **Sikhism's scripture Guru Granth Sahib**.
- He was a **disciple of Ramananda**
- He mounted a spirited attack against the **superficial religious practices** followed by both **Hindus and Muslims**
- Kabir suggested that **Truth is with the person who is on the path of righteousness**, considered all creatures on earth as his own self, and who is passively detached from the affairs of the world.
- He was the first to **reconcile Hinduism and Islam**.
- He believed in formless God.
- Kabir's legacy survives and continues through the **Kabir panth** ("Path of Kabir"), a religious community that recognizes him as its founder and is one of the Sant Mat sects. Its members are known as **Kabir panthis**.
- He wrote- **Sabad, Bijak, Doha, Holi, and Rekhtal**. He propagated **Ram Bhakti**.

# Guru Nanak (1469-1538 AD)



- He was born in **Talvandi near Lahore**
- Guru Nanak's birth anniversary is celebrated as **Guru Nanak Gurburab by Sikhs all over the world.**
- In 1496, although married and having a family, Nanak set out on a set of spiritual journeys through **India, Tibet and Arabia that lasted nearly 30 years.**
- The last part of his life was spent at **Kartarpur in the Punjab**, where he was joined by many disciples attracted by his teachings.
- The most famous teachings attributed to Guru Nanak are that there is only one God, and that all human beings can have direct access to God with **no need of rituals** or priests. His most radical social teachings denounced the **caste system** and taught that everyone is equal, regardless of caste or gender.
- He introduced the concept of god- that is '**Vahiguru**', an entity that is shapeless, timeless, omnipresent and invisible. Other names for God in the Sikh faith are **Akaal Purkh and Nirankar.**
- **Guru Granth Sahib, the holiest book of the Sikhs**, contains 974 poetic hymns composed by Guru Nanak

# Mirabai



- **Meera**, better known as **Mirabai**<sup>l</sup> and venerated as **Saint Meerabai**, was a 16th-century Hindu mystic poet and devotee of Krishna. She is a celebrated Bhakti saint, particularly in the North Indian Hindu tradition.
- Mirabai was born into a Rajput royal family in Kudki (modern-day Pali district of Rajasthan) and spent her childhood in Merta.
- She is mentioned in *Bhaktamal*, confirming that she was widely known and a cherished figure in the Bhakti movement culture by about 1600 CE.
- Most legends about Mirabai mention her fearless disregard for social and family conventions, her devotion to Krishna, her treating Krishna as her husband and being persecuted by her in-laws for her religious devotion.
- She has been the subject of numerous folk tales and hagiographic legends. Hindu temples, such as in Chittorgarh fort, are dedicated to Mirabai's memory.

# *Meera's* temple to Krishna at Chittor Fort, Rajasthan



- She was the most popular Bhakthi reformer
- She was born in Rajasthan
- She became the wife of **Rana Bhojraj**, one of the royal families in Rajasthan
- She was the first to introduce **Giridhara Gopala cult of Brindavan** and also the first to introduce **Bhajan** in Bhakthi movement
- Her bhajans were composed in the language of **Vraj Bhasha**

- My Dark One has gone to an alien land.  
He has left me behind, he's never returned, he's never sent me a single word.  
So I've stripped off my ornaments, jewels and adornments, cut my hair from my head.  
And put on holy garments, all on his account, seeking him in all four directions.  
Mira: unless she meets the Dark One, her Lord, she doesn't even want to live.
- — *Mira Bai, Translated by John Stratton Hawley*

# Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

- He was the most popular Bhakthi reformer from Bengal
- He was born at **Nabadwip** (Bengal)
- He was the disciple of **Keshav Bharti**.
- He was also known as **Gouranga and Vishwambar**
- He preached Vaishnavism in Bengal and Odisha
- Puri became the main centre of his activities
- He was also the first to introduce **Kirtans** in Bhakthi movement
- The form of Vaishnavism that he preached came to be called as '**Gudik Vaishnavism**'

# Tulsidas

- He was a contemporary of Akbar.
- He wrote '**Ramcharit Manas**' in the language of Avadi
- He founded the **Sankatmochan Temple** dedicated to **Lord Hanuman in Varanasi**, believed to stand at the place where he had the sight of the deity
- Tulsidas started the **Ramlila** plays, a folk-theatre adaption of the Ramayana
- Other works of Tulsidas include: **Dohavali, Sahitya ratna or Ratna Ramayan, Gitavali , Krishna Gitavali or Krishnavali and Vinaya Patrika**

# Dadu Dayal

- He was born into the community of weavers at Ahmedabad
- He preached Nirgunabhakthi
- His teachings were compiled in the form of '**Dadu Dayaram ki Bani**'
- Shankar Dev:
- He was the first to preach Vaishnavism in Brahmaputra valley
- He was the founder of **Eka Saranadharm** and **Veerapurushamarga**
- He is widely credited with building on past cultural relics and devising new forms of **music (Borgeet)**, **theatrical performance (Ankia Naat, Bhaona)**, and dance (**Sattriya**), literary language (**Brajavali**).

# Purandaradasa

- He was a **Haridasa philosopher** from Karnataka
- He is considered as the father of Carnatic music
- One of his most notable works is ***Dasa Sahithya***
- He introduced the **RagaMayamalavagowla** as the first scale to be learnt by beginners in the field – a practice that is still followed today.
- Most of his keertanas deal with social reform and pinpoint the defects in society
- **Gnaneshwar**
- He was one of the earliest **Maratha reformers**
- He wrote **commentary on Bhagvad Gita** called as **Gnaneswari**, popular known as **Maratha Bhagvad Gita**
- His followers are known as **Varkaris**.
- They believe in attaining the **presence of God through religious songs or Bhajans and prayers**.
- They worship **Lord Vithoba** whom they believe to be the incarnation of **Lord Vishnu**.

# Ekhnath

- He was one of the first reformers to emphasize the growth of Marathi language
- He preached that one could devote oneself to God by leading a family life and discharging all functions of a householder.
- His works include numerous religious songs called **Abhangas, Owees, and Bharuds.**
- **Namdev**
- He was a **tailor by profession**
- He emphasized on cultural unity of the Marathas by introducing a tradition called **Mahapurusha Sampradaya**
- He believed in **equality of all men and women**
- He advocated the practice of **devotion to realize god**
- Some of his devotional songs are found in the **Guru Granth Sahib**

- **Tukaram**  
He was contemporary of Shivaji
- He is considered as the greatest Maratha Bhakthi reformer
- He made popular the **Vithoba cult**
- He composed devotional songs on **Vithalswamy** called as **Abhangs**
- He preached the message of equality and universal brotherhood
- **Samard Ramdas**
- He was guru of **Shivaji**
- He inspired Shivaji for founding **Swaraj**
- The message were compiled in the form of the text called '**Dasabodha**'
- He was a devotee of **Lord Rama**. He established **Ashramas** all over India.

# Sufism



- **Sufism**, mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God.
- It consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of humanity and of God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world.

- Islamic mysticism is called *taṣawwuf* (literally, “to dress in wool”) in Arabic, but it has been called Sufism in Western languages since the early 19th century.
- An abstract word, Sufism derives from the Arabic term for a mystic, *ṣūfī*, which is in turn derived from *ṣūf*, “wool,” plausibly a reference to the woolen garment of early Islamic ascetics.
- The Sufis are also generally known as “the poor,” *fuqarā’*, plural of the Arabic *faqīr*, in Persian *darvīsh*, whence the English words *fakir* and *dervish*.

- Though the roots of Islamic mysticism formerly were supposed to have stemmed from various non-Islamic sources in ancient Europe and even India, it now seems established that the movement grew out of early Islamic asceticism that developed as a counterweight to the increasing worldliness of the expanding Muslim community
- only later were foreign elements that were compatible with mystical theology and practices adopted and made to conform to Islam.
- The Sufis have been further responsible for a large-scale missionary activity all over the world, which still continues. Sufi vocabulary is important in Persian and other literatures related to it, such as Turkish, Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto, and Punjabi.
- Through the poetry of these literatures, mystical ideas spread widely among the Muslims.

# Salient features of Sufism

- Sufis were a group of **religious-minded people who turned to asceticism and mysticism** in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution.
- Sufism derives its inspiration from Islam.
- These Sufis had a deep study of **vedantic philosophy** and had come in contact with great sages and seers of India.
- **Sufism emphasized upon leading a simple life.** Sufi saints preached in Arabic, Persian and Urdu etc.
- The Sufis were divided into 12 orders each under a mystic Sufi saint like Khwaja Moinuddin Chisthi, Fariuddin Ganj-i-Shakar, Nizam-uddin Auliya etc.
- While the orthodox Muslims depend upon external conduct and **blind observance of religious rituals, the Sufi saints seek inner purity.**

- They were critical of the **dogmatic definitions and scholastic methods** of interpreting the Qur'an and Sunna (traditions of the Prophet) adopted by theologians.
- Instead, they laid emphasis on seeking **salvation through intense devotion and love for God by following His commands**, and by following the example of the Prophet Muhammad whom they regarded as a perfect human being.
- The Sufis thus sought an interpretation of the **Qur'an on the basis of their personal experience**
- Devotion is more important than **fast (Roza) or prayer (Namaz)**.
- Sufis bridged the communal divide as is evidenced by the reverence the Subcontinent's non-Muslim population exhibited for Sufi saints. Sufism around the world and in the Subcontinent had the depth to connect beyond caste, creed and gender

# Liberal outlook associated with Sufism

- It does not believe narrow societal classification such as caste
- They awakened a new sense of confidence and attempted to **redefine social and religious values.**
- Their stress on **social welfare led to the establishment of works of charitable nature, opening of orphanages and women service centres.**
- A notable contribution of the Sufis was their **service to the poorer and downtrodden sections of society.** Nizamuddin Auliya was famous for distributing gifts amongst the needy irrespective of religion or caste.
- At a time when struggle for political power was the prevailing madness, **the Sufi saints reminded men of their moral obligations.**
- To a world torn by strife and conflict they tried to bring peace and harmony.
- Other ideas emphasized by Sufism are **meditation, good actions, repentance for sins, performance of prayers and pilgrimages, fasting, charity and suppression of passions by ascetic practices.**

# Sufi orders (Chisti)

- It was founded by **Sheikh Abdul Chisti**
- It was introduced in **India** by **Sheikh Moinuddin Chisti**.
- His Dargah is at **Ajmer**
- **Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki** was the chief disciple of **Moinuddin**.
- **Ilutmush** dedicated **Qutub Minar to Bakhtiar Kaki**
- Sheikh Nizamuddin was the most popular Sufi saint in India.
- **Amir Khusro**, the greatest musician and literary giant was also the disciple of Sheikh Nizamuddin.
- A system called **Nadasampradaya** was followed which meant burying disciples near as one family
- Sheikh Salim Chisti was the last great saint of this order. He was held in great respect by Akbar.
- **Qamkhana** were hermitages of Chisti saints outside the city

# Suhrawardi

It was founded by **Shihabuddin Shuhrawardi**

It was introduced in India by **Bhauddin**

It was the richest order and very soon became unpopular

- **Firadausia**

It was the only Sufi order which was **founded and developed within India**

It was founded by **Sharafuddin**, it was confined to Bihar

He composed **Maqtubat** and **Mulfazat** literature

The above dealt with the lives and teachings of Sufi saints

- **Qadri**

It was the most **secular Sufi silsila**

It was founded by **Sheikh Jilani Qadri**

**Dara Shikoh**, son of Shah Jahan followed this order

- **Naqshbandi**

It was founded by **Sheikh Biqabullah**

It was introduced into India by **Sheikh Pirsai**

**Sheikh Niyamtulla** was the greatest scholar of this school

It was the **most conservative** of the orders.

**Aurangzeb** followed this order