

# GURMAT STUDY

Using Technology, To Spread the message of Sikhism

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## BHAGAT NAMDEV JI

Guru Granth Sahib recognizes many saints of the Bhakti movement of medieval India. Bhagat Kabir Ji, Bhagat Farid Ji, Bhagat Namdev Ji etc. are some of the saints belonging to this movement which swept across the North India from 1100 A.D. till 1600 A.D. When Fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Sahib compiled Guru Granth Sahib, they decided to give recognition to the saints of Bhakti movement, that is the reason that Guru Granth Sahib contains verses of such saints. In some cases Guru Granth Sahib is the only voice remained for such saints over the years. **There are 61 Shabads in 18 Raags of Bhagat Namdev Ji** which were included by Guru Arjan Dev Sahib during compilation of Guru Granth Sahib.



According to the generally accepted version of the current traditions, Bhagat Namdev Ji was born in AD 1270 to Damasheti, a low-caste tailor, and his wife, Gonabai, in the village of Naras-Vamani, in Satara district of Maharashtra. Janabai, the family's maidservant and a bhakta and poetess in her own right, records the tradition that Namdev Ji was born to Gonabai as a result of her worship of Vitthala in Pandharpur. Namdev Ji was married before he was eleven years of age to Rajabal, daughter of Govinda sheti Sadavarte. He had four sons and

one daughter, Under the influence of saint Jnanadeva, Bhagat Namdev Ji was converted to the path of bhakti. Vitthala of Pandharpur was now the object of his devotion and he spent much of his time in worship and kirtan, chanting mostly verses of his own composition.

In the company of Jnanadeva and other saints, he roamed about the country and later came to the Punjab where he is said to have lived for more than twenty years at Ghuman, in Gurdaspur district, where a temple in the form of samadh still preserves his memory. This temple was constructed by Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and the tank by its side was got repaired by Rani Sada Kaur, Mother-in-law of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In his early fifties, Bhagat Namdev Ji settled down at Pandharpur where he gathered around himself a group of devotees. His abhangas or devotional lyrics became very popular, and people thronged to listen to his kirtan.

Bhagat Namdev Ji's hymns have been collected in Namdevachi Gatha which also includes the long autobiographical poem Tirathavah. His Hindi verse and his extended visit to the Punjab carried his fame far beyond the borders of Maharashtra. Sixty-one of his hymns in fact came to be included in Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. These hymns or Shabads share the common

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characteristic of lauding the One Supreme God distinct from his earlier verse which carries traces of idolatry and saguna bhakti. In the course of his spiritual quest, Namdev had, from being a worshipper of the Divine in the concrete form, become a devotee of the attributeless (nirguna) Absolute.



The legend about Bhagat Namdev Ji is that at Gurdaspur, Bhagat Namdev Ji was asked by a king to show miracles which he refused as it meant interfering in God's way. Bhagat Namdev Ji was thrown before a drunken elephant to be crushed to death. God saved His own saint. Bhagat Namdev Ji spent the last days of his life in village Guman.

Bhagat Nam Dev Ji is a pioneer of the Radical bhakti School. Though he appeared a century earlier than Bhagat

Kabir Ji, his religious and social views are very much like those of Bhagat Kabir Ji. He unambiguously rejects all the four fundamentals of Vaisnavism. Though in his devotional approach, he is clearly a monotheist, he makes many pantheistic statements too, e.g., every thing is God; there is nothing but God; consider the world and God to be one; the foam and the water are not different. Like Bhagat Kabir Ji and the Sufis, Bhagat Namdev Ji is very other worldly.

Bhagat NamDev Ji not only claims union with God, but, like Bhagat Kabir Ji, also states that more than once God miraculously intervened on his behalf to reveal Himself to him, or help him. Without doubt, Bhagat Nam Dev Ji's approach remains otherworldly both before and after his achievement. He never initiated any religious institution or movement. His was a solitary search for God, without creating any social or religious organisation.

We find that in his negation of Vaisnava doctrines, in his metaphysical ideas, methodology and goal, and more particularly in his otherworldly approach to the world and society, Bhagat Namdev Ji's views are quite identical with those of Kabir.

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