

# Major Figures of the Bhakti Era

**Ramanuja** (1017-1137 A.D.): wrote commentaries on Brahma Sutras, Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishad; expounded Visishtadvaita or qualified monism

**Basava** (12th Century), treasurer turned saint of Karnataka preached equality to all and taught the way to reach God through one's vocation; his followers constitute the Lingayat or the Veerashaiva cult. His promise poems known as the Vachanas preached devotion to Lord Shiva as the means of salvation

**Madhva** (1239-1319): Broke completely with the Upanishadic doctrine of unity of God and the human soul. Taught "Dvaita" dualism.

**Ramanada** (15th century): A disciple of Ramunuja, he was a worshipper of Lord Rama. He taught perfect love for God and human brotherhood.

**Kabir** (1440-1510): Disciple of Ramananda, he believed in formless God. He was the first to reconcile Hinduism and Islam.

**Guru Nanak Dev** (1469-1538): He was the founder of Sikh religion. He preached against idol worship, caste system and worship of one God through prayer and meditation.

**Purandara Das** (15th Century) A singer-saint of Karnataka who sang the praises of Lord Krishna; among the greatest composers of South Indian (a.k.a. Carnatic) classical music.

**Dadu Dayal** (1544-1603) A disciple of Kabir, he was a supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity. His followers were known as Dadu Panthis.

**Chaitanya** (1468-1533) A devotee of Lord Krishna, he was the founder of modern Vaishnavism in Bengal. He popularized Kirtan.

**Shankaradeva** (1499-1569) Spread the Bhakti cult in Assam.

**Vallabhacharya** (1479-1531) Exponent of Krishna cult. He worshipped Krishna under the title "Srinathji."

**Surdas** (1483-1563) A disciple of Vallabhacharya, he showed intense devotion to Gadhya and Krishna.

**Mirabai** (1498-1563, picture) Staunch devotee of Lord Krishna, she composed number of songs and poems in honor of Krishna.

**Haridas** (1478-1573, picture): a great musician saint who sang the glories of Lord Vishnu.

**Tulasidas** (1532-1623, picture): Depicted Rama as the incarnation. He wrote *Ramcharitmanas*.

**Namdeva** (1270-1309) (Maharashtra): A disciple of Vishoba Khechar, he was a devotee of Vittoba (Vishnu).

**Jnanesvara** (1275-1296): Wrote "Jnaneswari", a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita.

**Eknath** Wrote commentary on verses of the Bhagavad Gita: A devotee of Vithoba.

**Tukaram**: Contemporary of Maratha king Shivaji; a devotee of Vithal he founded the Varkau sect. His teachings are contained in Abhangas.

**Ram Das**: Author of Dasabodh, his teachings inspired Shivaji to establish an independent kingdom in Maharashtra