

CHAPTER-IV

***BHAKTI* MOVEMENT AS A MASS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM IN ALL INDIA PERSPECTIVE**

The *Bhakti* movement was driven by some saints all over in the country. It was not emerged all of a sudden. It developed in different times at different places. First time it emerged in the south India and then flowed to another parts of the country and gradually it influenced basically the socio-religious conditions of the society. It was a time when no any technical mode of communication was there. Now the question arise as to how the renaissance flourished in a vibrant way even to the remotest parts of the country and how did the propagators disseminate their messages of socio-religious reformation among the masses. The propagators, with a view to spread the messages of *Bhakti*, used some non-technical devices in the form of literature and culture

4.1 Different Phases of *Bhakti* Movement:

Phase-wise expansion of *Bhakti* Movement in all-India perspective:

4.1.1. 1st phase: In South India

4.1.2 2nd phase: In North India

4.1.3. 3rd phase: In East India

4.1.1 1st phase: In South India:

Bhakti Movement was started and flourished in southern part of India between the fifth and the ninth century A.D. It arose basing mainly on social and religious

actions and reactions of the society and masses. It was started on the two parallel lines of Vaishnavism and Śaivism. Earlier the societies were dominated by selected group of people of Brāhmaṇas. They followed the Vedic rituals and Yajna etc. and deprived the common people to take part in the ritual functions. In the mean time to fulfill the religious necessities the Ālvārs and the Nayanmārs came forward and started a new cult of religion. The Ālvārs, followers of Vaishnavism, and the Nayanmārs, followers of Śaivism, were inspired by mystical vision and love for God. The songs and hymns of the Ālvārs are collectively described as *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*.¹ The collection of the hymns of the Saivites is known as *Thirumurāi-Thevaram*. The *Nārāyaṇiya Dharma*, mentioned in the *Gītā* and *Karma- Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga* as the way of salvation, is the central idea of *Bhakti* movement of southern India. All the discriminations of caste, sex, class, religion, gender, status or culture were ignored there. The outstanding teaching of the cult of southern India was that God is accessible to all by love and self surrender to Him.

4.1.2. 2nd phase: In North India:

The *Bhakti* movement that was started earlier in Southern India, spread to Northern part and flourished. It was thirteenth century when among the two cults of Vaishnavism and Śaivism flourished in southern part of India, only Vaishnavism flowed to the northern India and was divided into two sub sects-one centering round the worship of Kṛṣṇa and the other was of Rāma.

¹ Goswami, U. (1987). *Vaishnav Bhaktidhara aru Santa katha*. P.9

In this part of the country *Bhakti* movement was spearheaded by great legends Swāmī Rāmānanda, Kabīrdās, Nānak, Tulsīdās, Ballabhācārya, Suradās, and Mīrabāi etc.

4.1.3. 3rd phase: In East India:

The *Bhakti* movement gradually flowed towards the eastern part of the country. In the 15th century it entered and covered Bengal and Assam. In this part of the country the movement took a definite shape under the spiritual leadership of Caitanya in Bengal and Śaṅkaradeva in Assam.

Generally media in a communication system can be divided into three basic categories-

1. The Presentational media: the voice, the face, the body etc.
2. The Representational media: books, paintings, photographs etc.
3. The Mechanical media: radio, television, telephone etc.

The *Bhakti* cult in India as well as in Assam was disseminated mainly by the first two basic categories of media, i.e,

- The Presentational media
- The Representational media

4.2 A Brief Life History of the Reformers of *Bhakti* Movement

4.2.1 Ālvārs:

Indian *Bhakti* Movement was started first in South India. During 6th to 9th centuries in Tamil regions of India, a group of twelve poets-saints known as Ālvārs

flourished there who started and influenced the great *Bhakti* movement in India. They were greatest worshiper of Lord Viṣṇu. They were devoted *Vaiṣṇava*. The term Ālvārs means to immense one self. One who dives deep into the ocean of the countless attributed of God is known as Ālvārs. Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Being for them. They composed many sacred verses and hymns through which they praised Lord Viṣṇu. The songs and hymns of the Ālvārs are collectively described as *Nālāyirā Divya Prabandham*. They spread *Bhakti* wandering all over the southern parts of India. All the discriminations of caste, sex, class, religion, gender, status or culture were ignored by them because Ālvārs belonged to various castes, creeds, status or culture of that contemporary society.

4.2.2. Nayanārs:

Nayanārs were a group of poet-saints of Tamil region who flourished during 6th to 9th centuries in south India. They influenced the *Bhakti* movement in India along with cotemporary Ālvārs. Nayanārs were a group of sixty three great mystic poet saints. They were great worshiper of Lord Śiva. They followed different way to pray their God Śiva. Such as- *Brahmacāryam*, *Gṛhastham*, *Vānaprastham* and *Sanyāsam* etc. they composed many hymns to pray to Lord Śiva. These hymns were collected by Nimbī Ander. Nāmbī, in the 10th century, was known as ‘Tevaram’. They went for pilgrimage all the South Indian regions and spread *Bhakti* through great literary works.

4.2.3. Nāthamuni:

Nāthamuni, the foremost and noted *Ācārya* and theologian of Vaiṣṇava Tradition of South India, who recognized and re-established Ālvārs’ *Bhakti* cult through

his immense philosophical analysis of Ālvārs works. He was born in 824 AD at Virānaryanapuram in Tamilnadu in a Brāhmīṇ family. His son was the great saint Yamunācārya. He went for pilgrimage in various places of North India such as Mathurā, Purī, Badrīnāth and spread *Bhakti* cult of the Ālvārs. Nāthamuni collected devine songs or poems created by Ālvārs to worship God Viṣṇu and re-composed those songs. The book in which these songs are accumulated is known as *Nālāyirā Divya Prabandham* -one of the greatest works of *Bhakti* cult and movement of India. There were 4000 songs in that book. Nāthamuni was also called as ‘Yogīndra’ because he had excelled in Yoga. Śrī Nāthamuni had written three great books such as *Nyāya Tatva*, *Yoga Rahasya* and *Puruṣa Nirṇaya*. The greatest saint was died in 924 AD in Gangaikanda.

4.2.4. Yamunācārya:

Yamunācārya was a great and distinguished Vaiṣṇava saint and devotee from South India who spread the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa through his divine literary works. He believed the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Yamunācārya was the grandson of Nāthamuni –the greatest saint of all the time. He was born in 953 AD. His parents were Īśvaramuni and Śradhmini. He was born on the bank of river Yamunā while his parents went for pilgrimage with his grandfather Nāthamuni. So he was named Yamunā in the memory of the sacred river Yamunā. He was a disciple of Bhāṣyacārya. He was brilliant in his studies since his childhood. He could win his guru’s heart for his calm and sweet character. Yamunācārya contributed a lot towards spreading Ālvārs’ works. He was also known as Ālvandara. He defeated the court pundit

Akṣiyālvār of the Pandya kingdom showing his excellence in wisdom for which he was gifted half of the Pandya Dynasty. Yamunācārya worshipped Śrī Ranganātha and spent his rest of the life devoting to and worshipping the Lord's feet. He propagated and established '*Biśistadvaita*'- a philosophical theory which explains that soul and matter are not considered quite inseparable. He wrote many valuable books, such as '*Stotra Ratnam*', *Siddhitrayam*, *Angam Parmayam*, *Gītārtha Saṁgraha*, *Mahāpuruṣa Nirṇayam*, *Cathuśloki* and *Māyā Vadha Khaṇḍnam*.

4.2.5. Śāṅkarācārya:

Śāṅkarācārya, the greatest Indian philosopher, theologian and saint, was born in the 8th century in Kāladi in Kerala in a simple Brāhmīṇ family. He lost his father very early. He was known as the incarnation of Lord Śiva. Right from his childhood he was very much interested in spiritualism and *Sanyāsa Dharma*. His guru was Govinda Bhagatapada. Under his guidance and training he mastered *Vedas*, *Purāṇas* and *Upaniṣads* etc. He also gained expertise in different forms of *Yoga* and also gained knowledge of '*Brahma*'. He was the founder of '*Advaita Vedānta*' in which it was believed that the soul is the same as the highest metaphysical reality (Brahma). The Hindu monastic tradition is also started by the saint that was known as '*Dashanami*'. He spread and propagated his philosophy travelling all over India which helped to establish a society of unity in diversity and formed a good communication among the masses. His literary works can be divided into three types- *Bhāṣya* (commentary), *Prakaraṇa Grantha* (Philosophical Treatise) and *Stota* (Devotional Hymns). *Brahma*

Sūtra, *Vivekāchūḍāmani* etc. are his great contributions to Hinduism. This great saint died in 820 A.D. in Kedārnāth of Uttarākhanda, India. He was known as ‘Jagadguru’.

4.2.6. Rāmānujācārya:

Rāmānuja, the theologian, philosopher and one of the greatest ācāryas of South Indian *Bhakti* Movement, was born to a Hindu Brahmin family in Śrīperumbudur, Tamilnadu in 1017 CE. Indian *Bhakti* Movement was greatly influenced by this great saint’s philosophical findings. His parents were Keava Samayāji and Kāntimathi. He married a girl named Rāshambal. After his father’s death he went to Kāñcipuram and settled there. There he joined the school of Guru Yādavaprakāśa, a teacher of *Advaita* philosophy and follower of Śāṅkarācārya’s monastic system. But Rāmānuja found faults with Yādavaprakāśa’s religious writings and conflict started between them and as a result they were separated. Then he joined Rāmānujacārya as his disciple. He was a propagator of *Bīṣiṣṭadvaita Vedānta*. Rāmānuja was the first saint who rejected Śāṅkarācārya’s philosophical theories and gave an alternative interpretation of them. Rāmānuja emphasized on ‘qualitative monism’ and ‘quantitative pluralism’ of souls. He said that both Brahman (Lord) and world of matter are two different absolutes and both are metaphysically real. Rāmānuja contributed a lot to *Bhaktism* through his following literary works such as:

- I. *Vedānta Saṁgraha*
- II. *Śrī Bhāṣya*
- III. *Gītā Bhāṣya*
- IV. *Vedānta Dīpa*

- V. *Vedānta sāra*
- VI. *Śaraṇāgati Gadya*
- VII. *Śrī Vaikuntha Gadya*
- VIII. *Nitya Grantha etc.*

He died in 1137 A.D. in Sri Rangam, Tamilnadu.

4.2.7. Rāmānanda:

Rāmānanda was the first saint of *Bhakti* Movement in North India. He was born in Alahabad in 14th century. He was a great follower of Rāmānuja. He opened the door of *Bhakti* cult for all without any discrimination of caste, creed, birth and sex. He was a great worshiper of Lord Rāma. His philosophy of *Bhakti* was based on two main principles, viz. Love for God and Brotherhood. Hindi was the medium of his teachings and discourses. His messages directly reached the common people of his times. His teachings were mixture of *Advaita Vedānta* and *Vaiṣṇava Bhakti*. He had twelve great disciple who belonged to different castes and social backgrounds. They were- Anantananda, Susurānanda, Skhananda, Narahariasa, Bhavananda, Bhagat Pipo, Kohir, Sen, Dhanna, Ravidas, Sursuri and Padyawati. He was the founder of *Rāmānandī Sampradāya*. The members of his Sampradāya are known as *Rāmānandī*. He preached that God is only one and humanity is one large family. He spread *Bhaktism* all over the North Indian regions. He composed many devotional poems. *Gyanlīlā* and ‘*Yogacintāmaṇī*’ were great literary contributions of Rāmānanda. The first philosopher poet of *Bhakti* movement of North India was died in 15th century in Varanasi of Uttar Pradesh.

4.2.8. Kabīr Dās:

Kabīr Dās was the first and the greatest saint of *Nirguṇa Bhakti* Cult who contributed a lot to the *Bhakti* and Sufi movements of medieval India during 15th century. The Indian mystic poet saint was indeed born to a Brāhmīn widow. But due to fear of Hindu custom her mother abandoned him near a pond. Infant Kabīr was picked up by a Muslim couple Nīru and Nīma and brought him up. He was born in 1398 in Kāśī. Though he was in amidst the Muslim family, he became a great Sādhu later. He was the well-known disciple of his guru Rāmānanda who gave him all kinds of spiritual training. He was illiterate. But he composed many devotional songs or poems verbally which were known as *Dohā*, *Sloka* and *Sākhī*. His poems were in *Avadhi*, *Braj* and *Bhojpurī* languages. His literary works were found in *Kabīr Bijak*, *Kabīr Paricay*, *Granth*, *Ādi Granth* and *Kabīr Granthāvali*. The great poet saint was followed by many people. His followers were known as '*Kabīr Panthī*'. Kabīr Dās was the orgainator of Sant Mat Sect. Teachings of Kabīr Dās are meant for all - Hindus, Muslims and *Śikhs*. He was the first saint who co-ordinated both the Hindus and Muslims. According to him, every life has relationship with two most important principles of spirituality- *Jivātma* and *Paramātmā*. He followed oneness with the Lord. The great saint died in 1518 in Maghar.

4.2.9. Guru Nānak:

Guru Nānak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in 15th April of 1469 in Rai Bhoi ki Talvand, now in Nanaka Sahib, Punjab, in a Hindu family. His father was Mehtā Kālu and mother was Mātā Tripta. He was brilliant since his childhood and

showed greatness in spirituality and divine subjects. He married to Mātā Sālākhani. Gurunānak did not like Hindu conservative social customs. He had a Muslim friend with whom he used to pray and meditate. But one morning Nānak went to take a bath in the river but did not return for three days. Three days later he miraculously came out of the river and told everyone that he had been to the court of God. There after he started to disseminate his knowledge acquired from God. Then onward he was followed by many people getting attracted to his new philosophy and people started to call him ‘Guru Nānak’. He started to preach new branch of religion which was known as Sikhism. His religion was based on peace and kindness. He set up a very unique path of spiritual, social and political reformation based on unity, equality, love, goodness and virtue. Guru Nānak wrote 974 verses or hymns which were accumulated in a book known as ‘*Guru Granth Sāhib*’- the Holy text of Sikhism. He died on 22nd September, 1539 at the age of 70 in Kartarpur, in Mughal dynasty, now in Pakistan.

4.2.10. Mīrābāi:

Mīrābāi was one of the greatest women saints and Hindu mystic poets who influenced the *Bhakti* movement in North India. She was a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa who devoted whole life under the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Mīrābāi was born in 1498 in a village named Kudki in the district of Pali in Rajasthan. She was the daughter of King Ratan Singh of Udaypur. She was brought up amidst *Vaiṣṇava* culture and that paved her path to devotion of Lord Kṛṣṇa. One day she asked her mother who her bridegroom would be. Her mother showed her an image of Lord Kṛṣṇa and said that Lord Kṛṣṇa would be her bridegroom. Since then she fell

in love with Lord Kṛṣṇa and devoted her life to Him. Apart from this a saint gave her a statue of Lord Kṛṣṇa which she kept all the time with her. She spent most of her time with that idol which proved her tremendous devotion for Lord Kṛṣṇa. In 1516 she was married to a crowned prince Bhojraj of Mewar. During her married life she could not give up worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa. Her husband died in a battle a few years later. Thereafter her troubles began to start. Her brother-in-law and other relatives tried to deviate her from devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa but her devotion increased more. She started to write poems to praise or worship Lord Kṛṣṇa. She remained as a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa till her last day.

4.3 Messages of *Bhakti* movement:

The *Bhakti* movement was first developed in the Southern part of India. Then it spread towards the Northern and Eastern India gradually. This movement evolved because of the social and religious actions and reactions. There were three main reasons behind the development of *Bhakti* movement in India.

The Tamil literature was the oldest literature among the modern Indian literature. In Tamil literature there were two periods of literature- from 6th A.D to 9th A.D it was called as *Bhakti Kāl* (period of devotion) and from 2nd A.D to the *Bhakti Kāl* (period of devotion) was known as Pre-period of Devotion. During that period the literatures were created by Buddhists and Jain communities.

The literatures created by Buddhists and Jain communities were mainly religious. Significantly all the literary works composed by them were against the

Vaishnavism and Śaivism. They tried to convert the common people religiously. But the people became irritated with these two communities.

On the other hand the common people were restricted to cooperate in the ritual activities organized by the Vedic people. A discrimination of caste, class and religion prevailed during that period in the society.

People wanted such a society where all could live equally without any discrimination of class, caste or religion etc. They wanted a simple but universal religious system where all people could cooperate without any hesitation. To remove such social complexities the Ālvārs and the Nayanārs came forward. They brought a wave of devotional sentiment in which all the people could dissolve themselves irrespective of any distinctions. They propagated the messages of devotion which brought reformation in both the aspects-

I) Religious

and

II) Social

Messages of Social and Religious Reformation:

The Ālvārs and the Nayanārs were the pioneers of *Bhakti* movement in all over India. Both the religious and social conditions were very much unstable during that period. They started to disseminate the concept of *Bhakti* not violently but spiritually, which turned into a movement. The central motive of this movement was to bring renaissance in both religious and social fields. The Ālvārs and Nayanārs disseminated the concept of *Bhakti* and considered the *Vedas* as their source of concept of devotion.

The Ālvārs were Vaishnavites and the Nayanārs were Śaivites. They propagated the messages of *Vedas*. The people were annoyed by the Jains and Buddhists, and accepted the ideology of Vaishnavites and Śaivites. They did not allow any religious discrimination and considered all as the devotees of God.

In order to bring social reformation by removing the social disorders the Ālvārs and Nayanārs disseminated the messages of devotion. The people of that period were deprived by priestly communities because they were not allowed to cooperate directly in religious functions. But the Ālvārs and Nayanārs established a casteless and classless society and established devotion as the supreme path of salvation rather than *Karma* and *Jnāna*. Following them the ācāryas and other social reformers in all over India disseminated the *Bhakti* messages for social and religious reformation.

4.4 The medium through which *Bhakti* Movement was propagated:

4.4.1 In South India:

The Ālvārs and Nayanārs of Southern India were the pioneers of *Bhakti* movement of India. They brought a wave of devotion which could reform the social and religious phenomenon peacefully. During that period, of course, no technical devices of communication were there. Therefore, those pioneers took the help of literary and cultural devices to disseminate messages of devotion. The books and the devotional songs and hymns were significant media to lead the spiritual wave in all over the country.

The Ālvārs and the Nayanārs used the Tamil language, the language of the common people of the south Indian contemporary society, to compose literature. At

the same time they had command over the *Saṃskṛt* language too, so they composed their literature from the gist of Vedā etc. The Ālvārs of Vaishnavism and the Nayanārs of Shaivism were wandering saints and singers inspired by mystical visions and were moved by intense burning love for their God. The *Nālāyirā Divya Prabhandham* containing the hymns of Ālvārs was considered to be significant devotional poetry in the world.² It was a collective composition. The verses of the ‘*Nālāyirā Divya Prabhandham*’ prevailed verbally for many a centuries. Actually, Nāthamuni compiled those verses according to their author, composer, subject matter and rhythm and named them as ‘*Nālāyirā Divya Prabhandham*’.³ Moreover, the ‘*Thirumurāi Thevaram*’ was another collection of hymns of Shaivite saints which was considered to be significant composition of *Bhakti* movement.

The Ālvārs contributed a lot towards *Bhakti* movement. They composed devotional songs and hymns which had mystical and devotional flavour. All the compositions were based on the glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa or Lord Viṣṇu. All the Ālvārs represented all classes of the society. Pyegoi Alvar was the first poet among the Ālvārs. He propagated the messages of Viṣṇu *bhakti* not in a particular place, but roamed from one place to another to spread it. He composed as many as one hundred verses which were known as ‘*Mudāltiruwantadi*’ and based on devotion and devotional advices. Some verses were on different incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. And some verses sang the glory of child Kṛṣṇa. Bhuttalvar was said to be the incarnation of the *Goda* of Viṣṇu. He composed as many as hundred verses which were known as

² Krishnan, O. (2005). *Hindutva Or Dhammatva*. P.111

³ Goswami, U.N. (1987). *Vaishnav Bhakti Dhara Aru Santa Katha*. P.14

‘*Tiruwāntādi*’ where he described the noble qualities of God and significance of devotion etc. He propagated the devotional messages roaming from place to place. Peyalvar too composed hundred verses which were compiled with the title as ‘*Muntram Tiruwāntād*’i. Different incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu were found in that composition. *Nānāmukhān Tiruwāntādi* and *Tiruchandāviruttam* were other two great compositions of Tirumolixoyi.

‘*Nalyira Divya Prabandhama*’ and ‘*Tirubāyāmali*’ were collection of one thousand and three hundred songs which were mainly based on the religious faith and philosophy. Those songs were composed by Nāmmālvār. Other ‘*Perumal Tirumoli*’ was composed by Kulashekharā. Another two significant compositions ‘*Tirupallandu*’ and ‘*Tirumoli*’ were composed by Peri Alvar, a *Brāhmaṇa* and based on theological subject matter consisted of many songs and verses. The only lady Alvar Audal composed one hundred and forty three numbers of mystical songs in ‘*Nachiyar Tirumoli*’ where she depicted Lord Kṛṣṇa as her hero and herself as heroin. ‘*Tirumaloi*’ was based on total surrender of self to the Lord. Again the ‘*Tiruplpi-alachi*’ contained the morning prayers to Lord. Another composition ‘*Amalandipiran*’ had great religio-philosophical significance which was the only composition of Tiruppan.

After the Ālvārs, the *Ācāryas* set up the milestone of Vaiṣṇava literature in Tamil. The period of Ālvārs was called the period of intuition. They composed songs and hymns and verses on the Love of Lord Viṣṇu. They got attracted to the fondness of Lord Viṣṇu and assimilated themselves with the Lord. Again the period of the

Ācāryas was called as the age of reason. The *Ācāryas* firmly established the theories of God with opinion and logic. They merged the *Jñāna* and *Karma* with *Bhakti* and showed the path of salvation⁴. Nāthamuni, the first of these *Ācāryas*, introduced the *Tamil Prabandha* into public worship and raised it to the rank of *Vedas*.⁵ Nāthamuni (824-924 A.D), the theologist, compiled the verses and hymns of the Ālvārs and named it as *Nālāyirā Divya Prabandhama. Gitārtha Sangraha, Āgama Pramānya, Siddhi Traya, Strota Ratna* were valuable compositions of Tamil Vaishnavism composed by Yamunācārya, who was grandson of Nāthamuni. Śankarācārya established the religious philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*. He brought a reformation to the Vedic religion and established spiritual philosophy in the society.

Rāmānuja (1017-1137A.D) proved that *Bhakti* was the central teaching not only of the *Tamil Prabandha* but also of the *Upaniṣads, Brahma- Sūtras* and *Bhāgavad Gītā*, these three are collectively called *Prasthāna traya*(three fundamental texts). He provided firm philosophical tenents for the *Bhakti* Movement with his systematic and coherent interpretations of *Prasthāna Traya*. He constructed the philosophical system of *Viśiṣṭa-advaita* which recognizes the three ultimate realities- God, Soul and Matter. Thus he gave a theistic interpretation that provided the basis of devotion. Rāmānuja made an attempt to reconcile Brahmanical tradition with the devotional spirit of Ālvārs. Brahmanical tradition was tied down to mechanical soulless ritualism, caste discriminations and *Saṁskṛt* hymns of the *Vedas*. Intense soulfull love of God in the tradition of *Bhakti* replaced the mechanical ritualism. In addition to

⁴ Das, P. (2016). *Nava-Vaisnava Dharmar itibritya*. P.47

⁵ Krishnan, O. (2005). *Hindutva Or Dhammatva*. P.110

Bhakti, Rāmānuja also introduced the path of absolute self surrender to God. The path of self surrender was open to all whereas *Jñāna Yoga*, *Karma Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga* were open only to the first three castes. Rāmānuja did his best for the uplift of the lower castes in those days of brahmanical orthodoxy.⁶

4.4.2 In North India:

After the demise of Rāmānuja, the wave of *Bhakti* Movement entered the Hindi belt, i.e. the Northern part of the country. Of the Vishnavism and Śaivism of South India, only the Vaishnavism flowed to the Northern part and was divided into two sub sects again- the first one was developed on centering round the worship of Lord Rāma and the other one of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In South India the *bhakti* cult was developed centering round worshipping of Lord Śiva and in north India it grew up centering the worshipping of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Viṣṇu.⁷ *Bhakti* movement was spearheaded by Svāmī Rāmānanda in the entire region. As the common people of the contemporary society did not have command over *Saṁskṛt* Language so the verses of *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads* written in *Saṁskṛt* were not easily accessible for common masses. Rāmānanda thought for all levels of people, so he composed the hymns using vernacular language, not in *Saṁskṛt*, and sang them among the common people. Thus he preached the *Bhakti* cult. Lord Rāma was his God and so composed all the hymns glorifying Lord Rāma.

⁶ Ibid. P.112

⁷ Choudhery, M. (2002). *Sarba Bhāratīya Bhakti Āndolan aru Sankardeva Mulyāyan*. P.68

Rāmānanda was the first to compose poems and hymns in vernacular language. Considering Lord *Rāma* as the idol of worship Rāmānanda propagated the messages of *Bhakti* irrespective of castes and religion.

After Rāmānanda *Bhakti* cult was carried forward by Saint Kabīr. Monotheistic saint Kabīr propagated his religious philosophy through poems and songs. His '*Dohā*'s are still occupy a unique position in Hindi literature. His verses were compiled in a book '*Bijak*' by one of his followers. Kabīr was illiterate. He disseminated his messages verbally.

Another religious composition '*Bānī*' was composed by a Brāhmīṇ saint Dadu. *Bānī* was a composition of five thousand verses and devotional songs which were divided into thirty seven chapters. Besides '*Bānī*', the followers of Dadu composed so many literatures in Hindi which were against of the caste discrimination of the society. *Sūr Sāgar* was another literary composition of Sūrdās consisted of songs and poems. *Sūr Sāgar* which was based on *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, had immense impact upon the *Bhakti* cult of North India. Sūrdās used the Braja language to disseminate *Bhakti* cult. *Rām Carit Manas* is a very famous literature of the Hindi belt of India written in Hindi which had a significant role in all India *Bhakti* Movement. The central hero of worship in *Rām Charit Manas* was Lord *Rāma* and the subject matter of the same is taken from '*Adhyātmā Rāmāyaṇa*'. The great work was written by Goswāmī Tulsīdās in 1584 A.D. The book was based on the deep devotion to Lord *Rāma* and Lord *Rāma*'s love for his devotees. A fair and friendly relationship between God and the devotees is depicted in the book. Tulsīdās's another religious significant composition is *Vinayapatrikā*.

Simple but the theological songs were thought to be the convenient media of dissemination of the messages of *Bhakti* by Śikh saint Guru Nānaka. He was a monotheistic and the songs he composed were based on monotheism. He roamed from place to place and sang the songs to disseminate his religious ideology in the entire north India, which became more popular among the masses. His writings were compiled as *Gurugranthasāheb*. Tremendous literatures in order to propagate *Bhakti* cult were composed in *Braja* language under the spiritual leadership of Ballabhācārya. These were like reservoir of *Bhakti*-literature in the northern part of this country. After his demise his son Bitthalnāth organized a community of eight prominent poets who used to sing and chant the glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This group of eight poets also used *Braja* language-the vernacular language of the society to make the messages of Lord Kṛṣṇa very convenient and easy to understand by the common masses. This group was also famous as Astasāp.⁸

After the poets of Astasāp, chanting of the names of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of songs was continued and spearheaded by Mīrābāī. Those songs were devotional as well as spiritual which Mīrābāī used to sing and chant. The songs composed by Mīrābāī were mainly flavoured with the *Ātmanivedana* (total surrender of self to the Lord). Some songs were sensed with *Dāśya* (servitude). The songs were in both *Braja* and *Mārwāri* language. Those songs based on glory of Lord Kṛṣṇa occupied a unique position in the Indian *Bhakti* literature and played a significant role in the *Bhakti* movement.

⁸ Goswami, U.N. (1987). *Vaishnav Bhakti Dhara Aru Santa Katha*. P.79

In the eastern part of the country mainly in Bengal, *Bhakti* cult took an extraordinary shape with the aroma of a new form of chanting the glory of Lord which was known as *Samkīrtana*. It was a system of chanting the name of Lord Kṛṣṇa in a congregational manner. And it was first introduced by Caitanya. He disseminated the messages of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and told that all people were equal in the eyes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya and his followers chanted God's name roaming from place to place. Chanting (*Kīrtana*) of God's name was one of the best ways of devotion. And at the same time it was a system that the devotees were influenced easily and quickly. Gradually the common masses started to follow such type of congregational prayer system in anywhere and everywhere. This system became popular as a medium of propagation of *Bhakti* cult. Caitanya did not propagate the *Bhakti* cult accompanied by his followers. But he lived a simple life by which he showed the philosophy of his life. Under the spiritual leadership of Caitanya, both literary and cultural aspects in Bengal took a new shape.

In Assam the *Bhakti* cult was spearheaded by Śaṅkaradeva who disseminated through literary and cultural devices. Śaṅkaradeva wrote many books in both vernacular language and *Saṁskṛt*. But all the people of the contemporary society during that period were not literate to go through those literary compositions. Under the circumstances the cultural as well as the audio-visual media played a significant role in propagating *Bhakti* messages.

4.5 Receivers:

The wave of *Bhakti* movement flowed from east to west and north to south during the time of between 8th to 15th centuries. The receivers of the communication system of *Bhakti* movement were seen of the following categories:

- Some people did not have knowledge on *Saṃskṛt* language. As a result they could not read the holy scriptures of religious philosophy written in *Saṃskṛt*. As a result they remained deprived of reading the scriptures. The leaders of *Bhakti* movement composed all the literatures in their vernacular language so that the common people could acquire the devotional messages.
- Some people were illiterate. They could not read the scriptures written even in vernacular languages. For those people the cultural devices were convenient media to acquire the devotional messages and to understand the religious philosophy involved therein.
- Some people were tortured by priestly community. The priestly community did not allow the common people to take active part in the ritual functions including the worship of gods and goddesses. As a result caste discrimination rooted deeply among the common people. The *Bhakti* movement brought a cult of monotheism where devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa or Lord Rāma was thought to be an ideal worship.

Thus in different times and at different places the *Bhakti* movement as a reformatory resurgence awoke and its wave flew to almost each and every part of the country. Pioneers from various parts of the country led the movement and contributed

a lot to make it bloom. The pioneers adopted the non-technical devices to make socio-religious messages popular among the masses. They disseminated the messages through both literary and cultural resources which played the role of powerful medium even in absence of fast technology.

Thus the *Bhakti* movement which was actually a spiritual movement helped in the spiritual uplift of the society. The movement from east to west as well as north to south belts became a mass movement which was spiritual in real sense. Leaders from different corners of the country drove the renaissance successfully only with the help of those literary and cultural tools as media of communication.