

Sant Namdev Life and Hymns

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According to the current tradition Sant Namdev was born on Sunday, the 11th day of the *Sudi* (light half) of the month of *Kartika* in the *Saka* year 1192 (A.D. 1270) at Pandharpur, the famous holy place of pilgrimage in Maharashtra. His father Dama Seti and mother Gonabai belonged to the caste of tailors and followed the occupation of dealers in cloth Dama Seti and Gonabai and probably their ancestors possessed great devotional enthusiasm for Vitthala or Vithoba of Pandharpur. They were living in Narasi Bamani, now known by the name Bhave-Narasinghpur, a village near Karhad in Satara District- They left Narasi Bamani some years before the birth of Namdev and settled at Pandharpur.

It is said that Namdev bore the marks of saint-hood from his very childhood. When he was five years old he was sent to school but there he made no progress at all in the usual studies. He used to sing *Kirtanas* of his favourite God Vitthala of Pandharpur. Generally, he used to go in the temple of Vitthala and sing and dance with *talas* in his hands, the whole day. His love and devotion increased with his years. He did not show any liking or capacity for the usual occupation of his family.

Namdev was married at the age of nine to Rajai, the daughter of Govinda Seti. He had four sons and one daughter by her. As years passed, Namdev grew to be more and more otherworldly and lost all interest in the charms of domestic life. He was greatly interested in attending religious assemblies and exercising himself in song and devout practices so that he used to remain absent from home for weeks together. His parents were growing weak and helpless, but all these considerations could not change Namdev's thoughts. Namdev found it very hard in his mind to engage himself in worldly affairs. He went on with his usual way and spent his time in devotion with his spiritual companions.

Namdev became very famous for his devotion. One day his *guru* and friend Jnanesvara came to him and invited him to accompany him in a pilgrimage to holy places. Namdev was greatly pleased and the very next day they started on the pilgrimage to the north. They visited almost every important place on the way. A religious *wada* would be held every evening where they stopped and Namdev was engaged in singing prayers and *Sankirtanas*. A large number of persons were attracted by his daily devotion and *Sankirtanas*. Jnanesvara, generally would sit quiet and enjoy his soul-stirring songs. Thus their pilgrimage was not merely a visit to holy places with usual routine of worship and prayers but also an opportunity

to propagate their *bhakti* cult among the masses. In this way Namdev influenced to a great extent, the *bhakti* cult of northern India.

Namdev came back from his pilgrimage and took to his usual life and Pandharpur. Though he used to spend almost whole of his time in religious exercise and *Sankirtana* as before, yet he felt something wanting in him. He was in search of truth. That is why he was feeling some uneasiness. He came to know of a great saint Visobakhecara and went to see him. Visobakhecara gave him *diksa* and disclosed the truth to Namdev. The result of this meeting was that Namdev's idea that God is omnipresent and omniscient and can be attained only by idol worship, changed. He realized that idol worship was merely a lower stage of spiritual progress and would not be the ultimate aim. Namdev stayed with Visobakcara for several months and received instructions from him. After some time, he returned to Pandharpur with a newer and knowledge.

In the meantime, Namdev's friend Jnaneswara took *Samadhi* at Alandi, Namdev felt the want of Jnaneswara ver keenly. As a result of change in his outlook, Vitthala became for him, no more than a symbol of supreme soul, that pervades the universe. He became completely indifferent to his household duties at this stage. He left his home and started his second pilgrimage to northern India. He visited several holy places of the north. He went to Mathura, Dwaraka, Marwar, Hastinapur(Delhi) and lastly to Punjab. He went on a preaching tour from place to place but stayed at Bhutwinda near Amritsar for some time. Here he received a pupil called Bohordas, who remained in the constant with him and was devotedly attached to him.

After sometime Namdev moved to a solitary place and built a small hut to live in. But he was so famous that people came and settled near him. Thus a village was founded which is called Ghomana today. He spent there the last twenty years of his life in perfect peace. During these days he composed his Hindi poems which are full of his ripe thoughts and experiences. It is said that in his last days he came back to Pandharpur where he took *smadhi* on the 13th day of the *badi* (dark half) of the month of *asu*, *saka* year 1272 (A.D. 1350) at the age of eighty.

Namdev's Marathi poems were written during his stay at Padharpur when he was only sentimental *bhakta*, who was often found in tears, cries and emotions. In that stage of his religious experiences Vitthala of Pandharpur was he sole object of his devotion aud worship, and he never separated himself from the feet of Vitthala. In his Hindi poems, however, there is a changed or development in his thoughts and religious faith. At this stage Vitthala was for him no more than a symbol of the great soul that pervades the universe. He was still a *bhakta* but not a victim of sentiment

which formerly troubled him and did not give him the perfect peace of mind. An attitude of spiritual indifference was now his supreme object of life. This growth of spiritual thought is clearly expressed in his Hindi poems.

The 61 hymns of Sant Namdev in the Guru Granth Sahib in 18 Page's.

Sr. No.	Name of Ragas	No.of Shabad	Page No.of Guru Granth Sahib
1.	Gauri	1	345
2.	Asa	5	485-86
3.	Gujari	2	525
4.	Sorath	3	656-57
5.	Dhanasari	5	692-94
6.	Todi	3	718
7.	Tilang	2	525
8.	Bilawal	1	857-58
9.	Gaund	7	873-75
10.	Ramkali	4	972-73
11.	Mali Gaura	3	988
12.	Maru	1	1105
13.	Bhairo	12	1163-67
14.	Basant	3	1195-96
15.	Sarang	3	1252-53
16.	Malor	2	1292
17.	Kanra	1	1318
18.	Prabhati	3	1350-51

Reference:

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