

Nimbarka, Sampradaya, Dvaita-Advaita / Bheda-Abheda Philosophy

April 29, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



Nimbarka was a well-known Indian saint and thinker associated with the Bhakti tradition. He emphasized the importance of devotion, love, and faith in God. His teachings encouraged people to develop a personal connection with the divine through simple practices like prayer and devotion. He played an important role in spreading spiritual ideas in an easy and relatable way, helping people understand the path of devotion in everyday life.

Life and Background

- Nimbarka was an important Indian saint, philosopher, and spiritual teacher associated with the **Bhakti tradition**.
- He is generally believed to have lived between the **11th and 14th centuries CE**, though his exact dates remain uncertain and debated among historians.
- He was a **Telugu-speaking Brahmin**, likely born in **South India**, but his major spiritual activities and influence later spread to **North India**, especially in the **Mathura-Vrindavan region**.
- Nimbarka lived the life of a **yogi and teacher**, guiding people towards spirituality through **devotion (bhakti)** rather than complex rituals or dry intellectualism.

- Some scholars identify him with an earlier philosopher named **Bhaskara**, but this identification is not universally accepted.
- He founded a devotional sect known as the **Nimbarka Sampradaya (also called Nimandi or Nimavat sect)**.
- His followers, known as **Nimbarkas**, played a significant role in spreading his teachings across North and Eastern India.
- His teachings simplified spiritual ideas and made them more **emotional, accessible, and relatable for common people**.

Philosophy (Dvaita-Advaita / Bheda-Abheda)

- Nimbarka is best known for his **philosophy of Dvaita-Advaita (dualistic non-dualism)**.
- This means that the **soul and God are different, but at the same time closely connected**.
- He also explained this idea through **Bheda-Abheda (difference and non-difference)**.
- **According to him:**
 - The **world and Brahman (God) are both real**
 - The universe exists as a **part or power of God**
 - He did not agree that the soul and matter are the body of God, as that would make God imperfect
 - Instead, he believed that everything depends on God but still has its own identity

Bheda-Abheda Philosophy of Nimbarka

- Nimbarka's philosophy is called **Bheda-Abheda**, meaning **difference and non-difference at the same time**. It is also known as **Dvaita-Advaita**.
- He divides reality into three main categories:
 - **God (Isvara)** - the supreme and independent reality
 - **Souls (cit/jiva)** - living beings
 - **Matter (acit/jagat)** - the physical world
- **God is independent**, while **souls and matter are dependent** on God for their existence.
- **Difference (Bheda):**
 - Souls and matter are **distinct from God** because they have their own qualities and identities.
- **Non-difference (Abheda):**
 - Souls and matter are **not completely separate from God**, as they cannot exist without Him.
- This relationship is explained as **natural difference and non-difference (svabhavika bhedabheda)**.
- Nimbarka uses simple examples to explain this idea:
 - **Sun and its rays**
 - **Snake and its coil**
- These show how something can be both connected and distinct at the same time.
- According to him, all three - **God, souls, and matter are eternal**, but only God is fully independent.
- He also explains their roles:
 - **God (Brahman)** - controller (niyantra)
 - **Soul (jiva)** - enjoyer/experiencer (bhokta)

- **World (jagat)** - object of enjoyment (bhogya)
- Major Works: Nimbarka contributed significantly to Vedantic literature. His important works include:
 - *Vedanta-Sutra-Bhasya*
 - *Prapanca-Sutra-Bhasya*
 - *Dashasloki*
- These texts explain his philosophy of Bheda-Abheda and the importance of devotion.

Role in the Bhakti Movement

- Nimbarka is regarded as an important figure in the **Bhakti Movement**, which emphasized **personal devotion to God**.
- He strongly promoted the worship of **Radha-Krishna (Radha-Madhav)** as the highest form of divine reality.
- His path focused on **Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion)** as the easiest and most effective way to attain liberation (moksha).
- He supported **Saguna Bhakti**, meaning the worship of God with form and attributes, unlike saints such as Kabir who promoted **Nirguna Bhakti** (formless God).
- His teachings encouraged **love, surrender, and emotional connection with God**, making religion more personal and meaningful.

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/nimbarka/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.