

# Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra

Special class

## UPSC Mains Question

- Discuss the ways in which the national democratic awakening of the Indians found expression in the religious sphere during the British raj. (250 words, 15m)

ब्रिटिश राज में भारतीयों की राष्ट्रिय लोकतांत्रिक जागरूकता किन तरीको से धार्मिक क्षेत्र में अभिव्यक्त हुई? चर्चा कीजिए

## Why bhakti and Sufi saints were critical of Jainism and Buddhism?

- a. The Bhakti Saints moved against the austerities propagated by the Buddhist and Jain schools and professed that ultimate devotion to god was the means to salvation.
- b. Bhakti movement also led to the downfall of Jainism and Buddhism in South
- c. The idea of renunciation, which is central to Buddhism and Jainism, was adopted by Shaivites and Vaishnavites. In response to the simplicity and life negation of the heterodox sects bhakti movement celebrated life with festivals and rituals.

**If “Bhakti” existed in the Indian tradition since ancient times, then why did the word “movement” get associated with it over time?**

Various scriptures, including the Gita, and Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions of ancient India, have been found to provide the foundation of this doctrine. The Bhakti Movement in South India evolved from a mere religious doctrine into a mass movement based on religious equality and widespread social involvement for the first time during this time in history between the seventh and tenth centuries.

## Nirguna and Saguna Sect in Northern India

- The Bhakti movement, a part of Hinduism, saw two streams that looked differently toward the nature of the divine (Brahman) – Nirguna and Saguna.
- **The concept of Nirguna Bhakti is that God has no form**, is all-pervading and omnipresent, and has no attributes or qualities whatsoever. Nirguna Bhakts believe in this eternal all-pervading presence that transcends time and space.
- As contrasted to this, **Saguna Brahman** was viewed as having form, attributes and quality. God appeared as a form.

# Alvar and Nayanars

- The period between the 7th to 9th centuries saw the arrival of new religious movements, led by the Alvars (saints devoted to Vishnu) and Nayanars (Saints devoted to Shiva) who came from various castes involving those considered as “untouchable” such as the Pulaiyar and the Panars.
- Taking cues from the early Tamil literature of Sangam (the earliest example of Tamil literature authored during the first century of the Common Era) the Nayanars and Alvars combined ethos of heroism and love with bhakti values.



The **Nalayira Divya Prabandham** is a collection of 4,000 Tamil verses (Naalayiram in Tamil means 'four thousand') composed by the **12 Alvars**.



- **Nayanars:** In the 6th to 8th century, they were a **group of 63 saints (in Tamil Nadu)** who were faithfully devoted to the Hindu god Shiva. A total of 63 Nayanars came from **various castes and backgrounds: untouchables, peasants, hunters, potters, soldiers, Brahmanas and chiefs.** □
- In addition to Sambandar, Sundarar, Appar, and Manikkavasagar, they were also well known.
- **Karaikkal Ammaiyar** is one of the greatest figures of early **Tamil literature**, a Bhakti poet and saint who probably lived during the 6th century AD. She was **one of the three women amongst the 63 Nayanmars**, a group of saints devoted to the Hindu god Shiva. “Ammaiyae” literally means mother. She absolutely **defies all patriarchal norms** of beauty, taking a fearful and reverential image.



# Shankaracharya

- **Adi Shankaracharya:** Shankaracharya started a Hindu revivalist movement.
- The **nonduality (Advaita)** he preached was established through the establishment of four Mathas: Dwaraka, Puri, Badrinath, and Sringeri.
- Fundamentally, Sankara's **Advaita or non-dualism** had its **roots in Vedanta or Upanishadic philosophy.**
- His followers are called Smarthas.
- He was born in Kaladi in Kerala.
- His doctrine of Advaita or Monism was **too abstract** to appeal to the **common man.**
- Moreover, there was a **reaction** against the Advaita concept of **Nirgunabrahman (God without attributes)** with the emergence of the idea of Sagunabrahman (God with attributes).

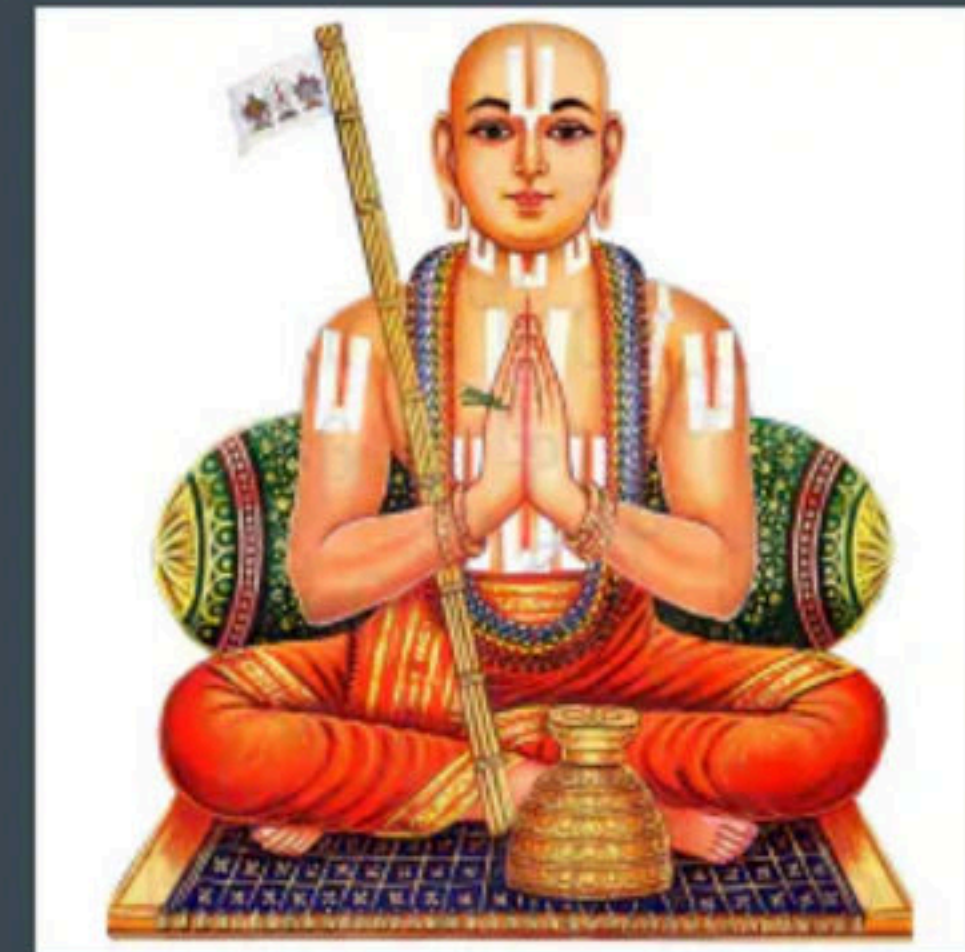


**Gyaan Marg would have restricted it to Brahmins only, than  
lower classes**



# Ramanuja

- In the 12th century, Ramanuja, who was born at Sriperumbudur near modern Chennai, preached Visishtadvaita. According to him, God is Sagunabrahman
- He also advocated prabattimarga or path of self-surrender to God.
- Given by Ramanujacharya in the 12th century.
- Vishisht Advaita is a non-dualistic school of Vedanta philosophy.
- It is non-dualism of the qualified whole, in which Brahman alone is seen as the Supreme Reality, but is characterized by multiplicity.
- He challenged the monist ideology of Adi Sankara and in his effort to widen the social base to include social groups other than Brahmans.
- It can be described as qualified monism or qualified non-dualism or attributive monism.



# Ramanuja

- It is a school of Vedanta philosophy which believes in all diversity subsuming to an underlying unity.
- Combination of **Vaishnavism with Monism** and believed **Vishnu to be the Brahman** and believes in **Saguna Brahman (with attributes)**.
- Its way of salvation lies in practicing devotion or loving faith.
- Atman and Brahman looks different at times in two distinct entities but both are inseparable.





55. The world's second tallest statue in sitting pose of Ramanuja was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India at Hyderabad recently. Which one of the following statements correctly represents the teachings of Ramanuja ?

- (a) The best means of salvation was devotion.
- (b) Vedas are eternal, self-existent and wholly authoritative.
- (c) Logical arguments were essential means for the highest bliss.
- (d) Salvation was to be obtained through meditation.

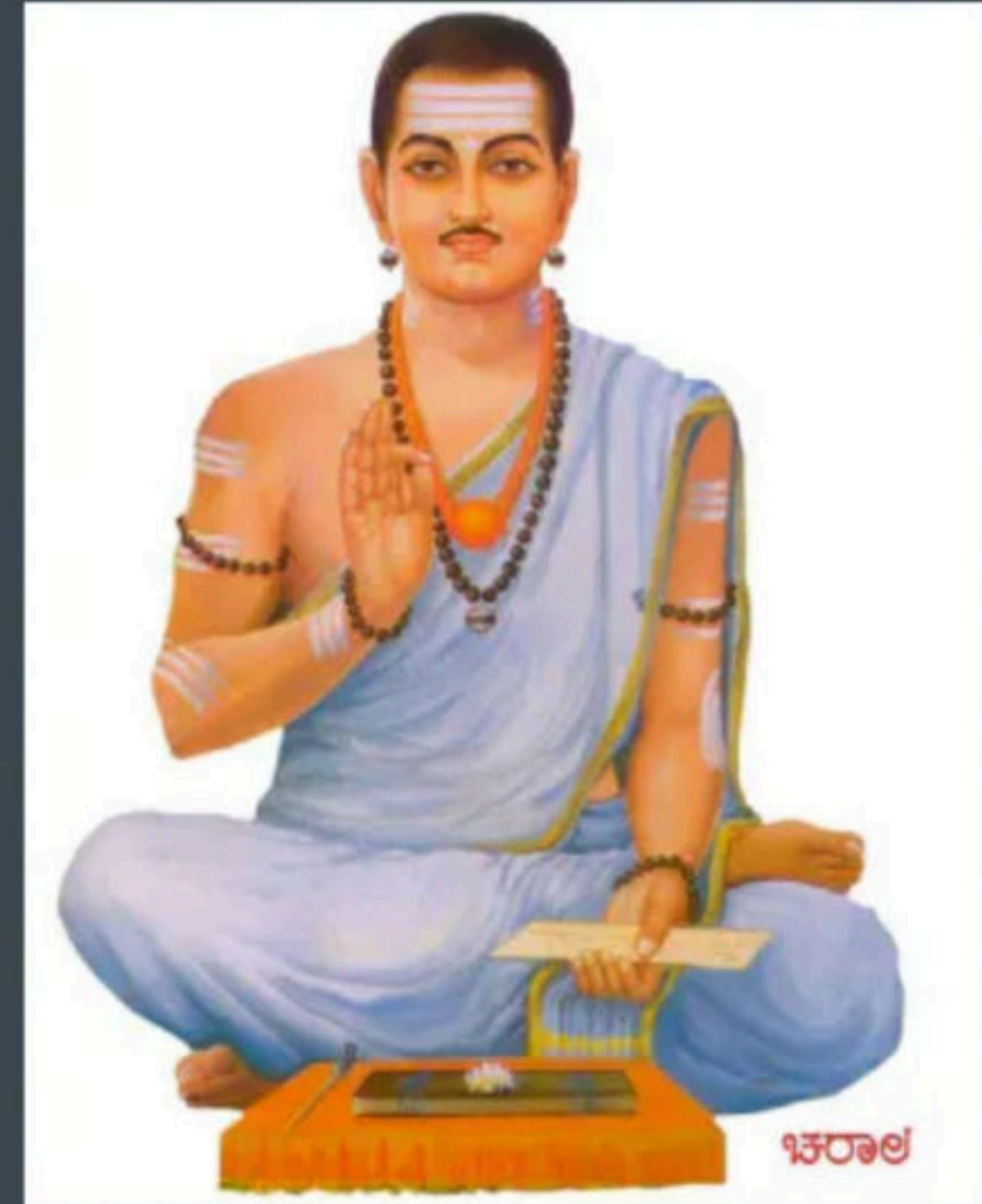
## Basavanna (1106-68)

- The twelfth century witnessed the emergence of a new movement in **Karnataka**, led by a Brahmana named **Basavanna (1106-68)** who was a minister in the court of a Kalachuri ruler
- His followers were known as Virashaivas (heroes of Shiva) or **Lingayats (wearers of the linga)**
- Lingayats believe that on **death the devotee will be united with Shiva and will not return to this world.** Lingayats of Kannada region questioned the theory of rebirth
- Therefore they do not practise funerary rites such as cremation, prescribed in the Dharmashastras. Instead, they ceremonially **bury their dead**



## Basavanna (1106-68)

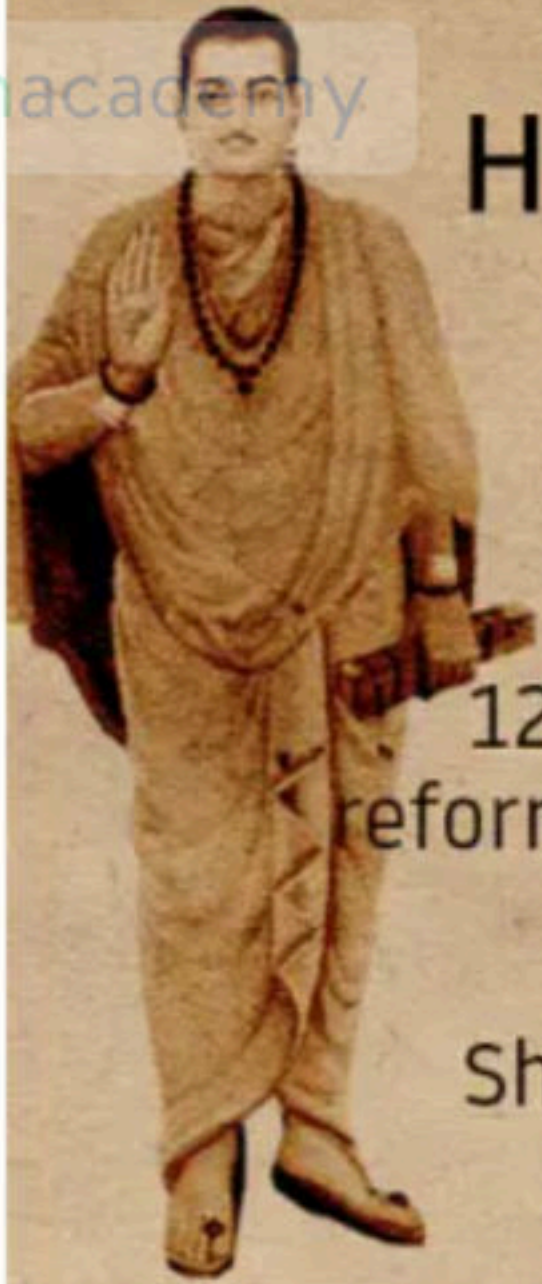
- The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the “pollution” attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas.
- The Lingayats also encouraged certain practices disapproved in the Dharmashastras, such as post-puberty marriage and the remarriage of widows.
- Our understanding of the Virashaiva tradition is derived from vachanas



## Basavanna (1106-68)

- 17-18% of Karnataka's population is Lingayat, can impact 90-100 seats in Karnataka's assembly
- Separate religion as Lingayats





# How do Lingayats and Veerashaivas differ?

## Lingayat:

12th-century social reformer Basava's sect

Shiva as a formless entity

**Basava's vachanas**  
Does not believe in the caste system

Bans temples and icon worship

Origin

Worship

Belief

Religious institutions

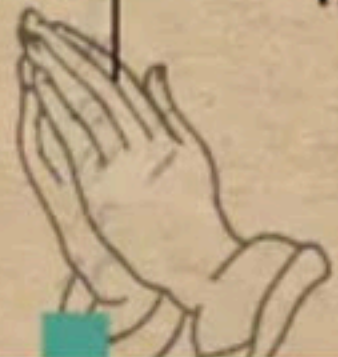
## Veerashaiva:

Born out of Shiva's lingam, followers of the panch peeth

Shiva from the Vedas, as a human

**The Vedas**  
Believes in the caste system

Has temples and priests



**With reference to the cultural history of medieval India, consider the following statements**

- **Siddhas (Sittars) to Tamil region were monotheistic and condemned idolatry.**
- **Lingayats of Kannada region questioned the theory of rebirth and rejected the caste hierarchy.**

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- A) Only 1**
- B) Only 2**
- C) Both 1 and 2**
- D) Neither 1 nor 2**

**Which of the following statements is/are not correct about Bhakti tradition in South India?  
[2013-II]**

- 1. Earliest Bhakti Movements in India were led by Alvar and Nayanar saints.**
- 2. Nalayira Divyaprabandham, frequently described as Tamil Veda is an anthology of compositions by the Alvars.**
- 3. Karaikkal Ammaiyyar, women Alvar saints, supported patriarchal norms.**

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below**

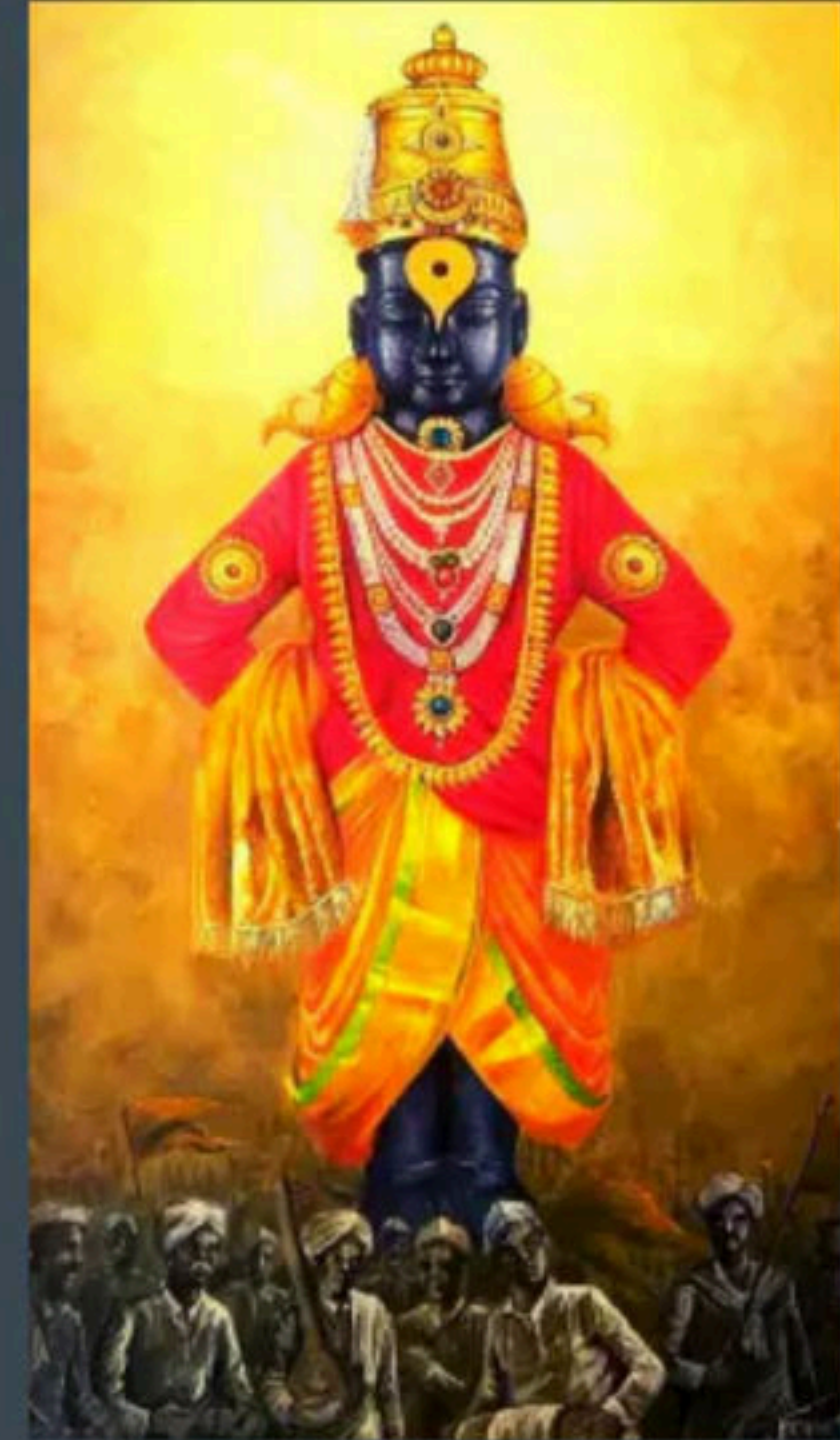
- (a) 1 and 2**
- (b) Only 3**
- (c) Only 2**
- (d) All of these**

## Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra

- Vitthal Devta - The Bhakti movement in Maharashtra centred around the shrine of Vithoba or Vitthal, the residing deity of Pandharpur, who was considered the manifestation of Krishna
- Impact of Naath Panth - Lower classes, Yoga
- Caste system will become weak and a common Maratha identity will emerge
- Ramdas - Daasbodh Book - Shivaji - Generally, the Bhakti focus was on the spiritual path and salvation, but saint Ram Das did the work of connecting both worldly and spiritual life, so Maharashtra religion opened the way for progress in the material world as well.

आध्यात्मिक जीवन के साथ साथ सांसारिक जीवन

- Better utilisation of Human resources when caste system divisions are broken, foundation of Maratha Empire under Shivaji



- The Bhakti movement is divided into two sects:
  - **Varakaris** – The mild devotees of God **Vitthala** of Pandharpur, who are more emotional, theoretical and abstract in their viewpoint, lord **Krishna**
  - **Dharakaris** – The heroic followers of the cult of Ramadasa, the devotee of God **Rama**, who are more rational, concrete and practical in their thoughts.



## Jnaneswar (1275 – 1296 CE)

- A 13th-century mystical poet-saint of Maharashtra who wrote a commentary of Bhagavad Gita called Jnaneswari which served as a **foundation** of the **Bhakti ideology** in Maharashtra.
- He was strictly against caste distinctions and believed that the only way to attain God was through Bhakti.
- He also composed **"Amritanubhava"** (immortal experience), based on the philosophy of the Upanishads and **"Haripatha"**, a song admiring Hari (Vishnu).



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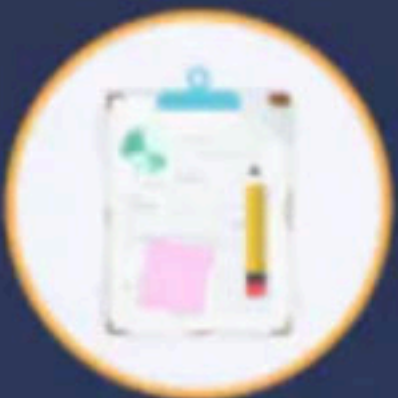
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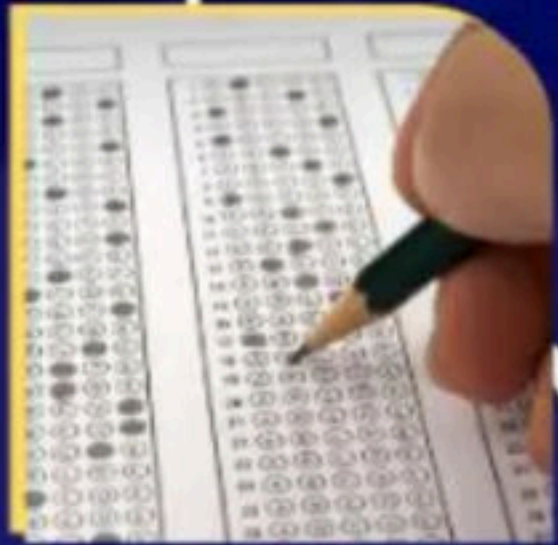


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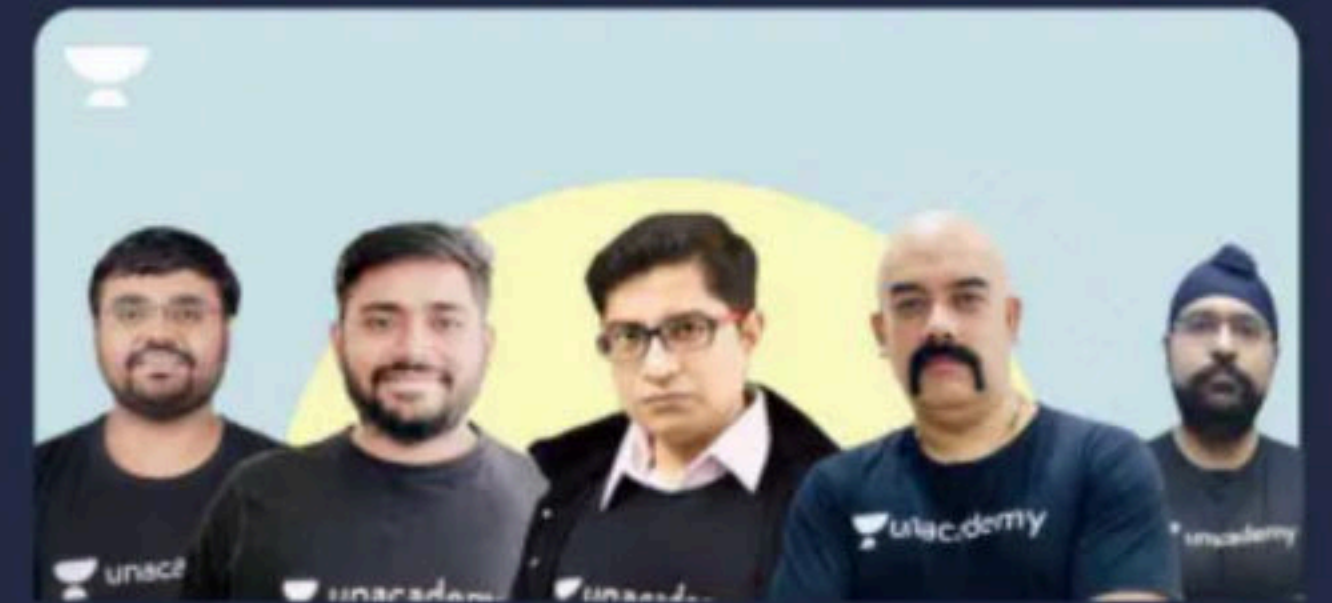
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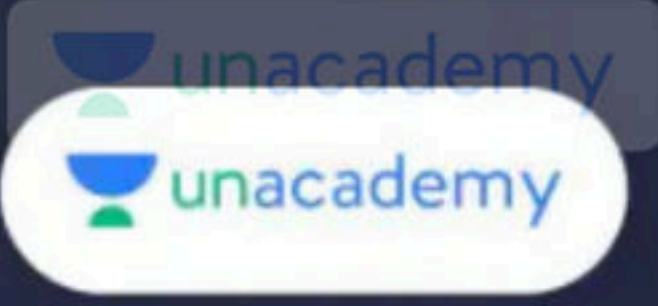
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