

Difference Between Alvars and Nayanars

Alvars and Nayanars has been an important part of Indian history. These poet-saints were responsible for bringing in the bhakti movement during the 7th century to 10th century not only in the southern parts but also in other parts of India.

Historians have always been interested in knowing about the difference between Nayanars and Alvars. They have noted the names of 12 Alvar saints and 63 Nayanar saints in the historical records. The major difference between Alvars and Nayanars is listed in the table below-

Alvars	Nayanars
Alvars existed between the 5th - 10th centuries AD. Some sources also reveal that they lived between 4200 BCE – 2700 BCE.	Nayanars are known to have been around between the 6th-8th centuries AD.
The Alvars were ardent devotees of Lord Vishnu and his avatars.	Nayanars were followers of Lord Shiva and his avatars.

<p>Nathamuni, a leader of the Shrivaisnava sect, is believed to have gathered the hymns of the Alvars in the 10th century. He introduced the regular singing of hymns in the Vaishnava temples of South India.</p>	<p>Nambiyandar Nambi, in the 10th century, compiled the hymns of the Nayanars in an anthology called the Tevaram. The hymns were set to Dravidian music and became part of the services of South Indian temples.</p>
<p>The hymn collection of the Alvars is called Naalayira Prabandham, or the Collection of 4,000 Songs.</p>	<p>Inscriptions during the reign of the Chola king Rajaraja the Great (985–1014) record an introduction describing the singing of the Nayanar hymns in the great temple at Thanjavur (Tanjore). Manikkavachakar's hymns collected in Tiruvachakam or Sacred Utterance are also associated with the Nayanars.</p>

The names of 12 Alvar saints are found in historical records.

There were known to be 63 Nayanar saints.

Who Were the Alvars and Nayanars?

The Alvars was a term used for a group of mystics from South India who sang joyous songs in praise of the Hindu God Vishnu. They existed from the 7th to the 10th century and sang from temple to temple. Historical records describe the Alvars as falling unconscious while singing rapturously before the image of Lord Vishnu.

The Nayanars were Tamil poets-saints-musicians from the 7th and 8th centuries who were devotees of the Hindu God Shiva and composed devotional poems or hymns in his honor, praising his great beauty. One of the characteristics of the Nayanars and the Alvars was that they wandered from place to place and sang beautifully composed poems in honour of the deities.