

Narsinh Mehta

February 26, 2022

In news—Researchers of Bhakta Kavi Narsinh Mehta University (BKNMU), Junagadh, discovered a new species of spider and named it *Narsinhmehtai* in honour of Narsinh Mehta recently.

About Narsinh Mehta-

- He was a **15th century poet and a devotee of Lord Krishna.**
- It is believed that he was **born in Talaja in present-day Bhavnagar district** in 1410 and died in Junagadh in 1480s.
- **His family had its origin in Vadnagar in north Gujarat, and the caste name is believed to be Pandya** but as members of the family were officers in kingdoms of those days, they were called Mehta (one who keeps books of accounts) which later on became the family name.
- He used to **spend time in Krishna-bhakti (devotion to Lord Krishna) even after his marriage** to Manekba, paying little attention to family duties.
- He is believed to have run away from home and done tapascharya at a Shiva temple in Talaja for seven days.
- After that, Mehta relocated with his family to Junagadh.
- There too, he used to remain submerged in Krishna bhakti, writing and singing bhajan-kirtans and was a man of no means.
- **One of his bhajans narrates how Ra Mandlik, the then ruler of Junagadh had imprisoned him**, accusing the poet of not having seen Lord Krishna and yet claiming to have done so.
- **Mehta penned more than 750 poems, called padd in Gujarat, that mainly deal with devotion to Lord Krishna, gyan (wisdom) vairagya (detachment from worldly affairs).**

- Others like Shalmshano Vivah, Kunvarbainu Mameru, Hundi and Harmala are believed to be autobiographical accounts of different occasions in his life.
- **'Vaishnavajn to tene kahiye', Mahatma Gandhi's favourite bhajan is Mehta's creation.**
- His ***Padho re popat raja ramna***, a Bhajan refers to the mind of a person as parrot and urges him to worship and praise the god.
- Elsewhere, in bhajans like Vanla re vaya kanuda, he talks about calls of various birds.
- Mehta is **believed to have been declared an outcast by the Nagar community in Junagadh for going to harijanvas** (Dalit locality) and singing bhajans and kirtans with harijans.
- Nagars in those days were devotees of Hatkeshwar or Lord Shiva whereas Mehta declared himself a devotee of Lord Krishna.
- Mehta is **regarded as adikavi (the first poet) and bhakta kavi (devout poet) in Gujarati literature.**
- The Junagadh university set up by the state government in 2017 and a lake in Vastrapur in Ahmedabad is named after Mehta.
- **Narsinh Mehta Award**, which was instituted at the initiative of Morari Bapu and poet Manoj Khanderia in 1999 recognises lifetime contribution of a poet is among the most prestigious awards in Gujarati literary worlds today.